

Yiddish in Britain: Immigration, Culture and Politics, 1896-1910

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I, William Marshall Pimlott confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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Note on Transliteration

This dissertation uses the YIVO transliteration system. Nearly all of the texts analysed here were written before the standardisation of Yiddish and this poses complexities with transliteration – where possible every transliteration adheres to the YIVO guidelines. All titles of newspapers and periodicals are transliterated according to Leonard Prager’s specification in *Yiddish Culture in Britain*.

Abstract

This thesis concerns the growth and transformation of the Yiddish press in Britain between 1896-1910, with particular attention to politics and literature. At the end of the 19th Century, the Yiddish press expanded in Britain - this dissertation argues that this change intensified the diversity of political and cultural horizons for immigrant Jews. The press had hitherto consisted mainly of the party organs of small radical groupings. At the beginning of the century there began to develop both a mainstream and commercial press alongside iterations of a more diverse radical press. Yiddish journalists within this new “orthodox” or “commercial” Yiddish press criticised institutional Anglo-Jewry, preferring a diverse politics of liberalism and Jewish nationalism. The new broader Yiddish radical press, Social Democrats as well as Socialist Zionists, alongside the better known Anarchist groupings, went further and advanced ideologies stressing Jewish liberation and regeneration. Yiddish literary creation in Britain, more extensive, complex and challenging than previously accounted for, and intensely inspired by modern literature from Eastern Europe and America, found inspiration in the critique of British Jewish immigrant life. This dissertation refocuses attention away from “anglicisation” towards countervailing and contemporaneous processes which saw immigrant Jews construct a new Jewish culture and politics in Britain on their own terms. Tracing the activity of this intelligentsia, however transient, also begins to develop an understanding of the contribution Yiddish culture in Britain played in the development of modern Jewish politics and culture internationally.

Impact Statement

This thesis contributes to the history of immigration to Britain and the history of British Jewish life. By putting non-English language sources at the centre of its analysis of intellectual and cultural life among immigrant Jews in Britain, it argues for the importance of polylingual approaches to British history.

Britain has always been a multilingual site of encounters between different ethnic and religious groups - and yet even today this history is often expressed monolingually. This dissertation argues that broadening a linguistic source base offers different political and theoretical considerations about how immigrants live and interpret their lives. Moreover, international as well as local contexts shape how immigrants perceive and articulate life in Britain. Foreign language use within Britain is a porous site of exchange and confrontation between immigrant and “native” groups. The extensive exploration of Yiddish literature in Britain offers new perspectives on different literatures and their interaction within Britain. But there are also broader ramifications for life in Britain. In a recent tumultuous period of British politics characterised by intense debate around immigration, little attention has been paid to the discourses of immigrants themselves - and this project argues for a greater role for immigrant and transnational actors’ perspectives in discourses around immigration. Important too is that attention is paid to minority and endangered languages such as Yiddish - these languages serve as crucial venues for the expression of the autonomy and agency of minority populations.

Parts of this research have been presented in public forums such as local historical societies as well as at academic conferences in Britain and in the United States - and perspectives informed by this research have influenced writing in academic and non academic publications. My teaching has also been inspired by this research. I hope to continue to find new conduits and ways of bringing my research to greater and broader publics, academic and non-academic. The significant literary and cultural legacies of Yiddish in Britain offer important opportunities for artistic as well as academic endeavours.

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Introduction

Three days before the UK voted to leave the European Union by referendum, a music producer posted the following:

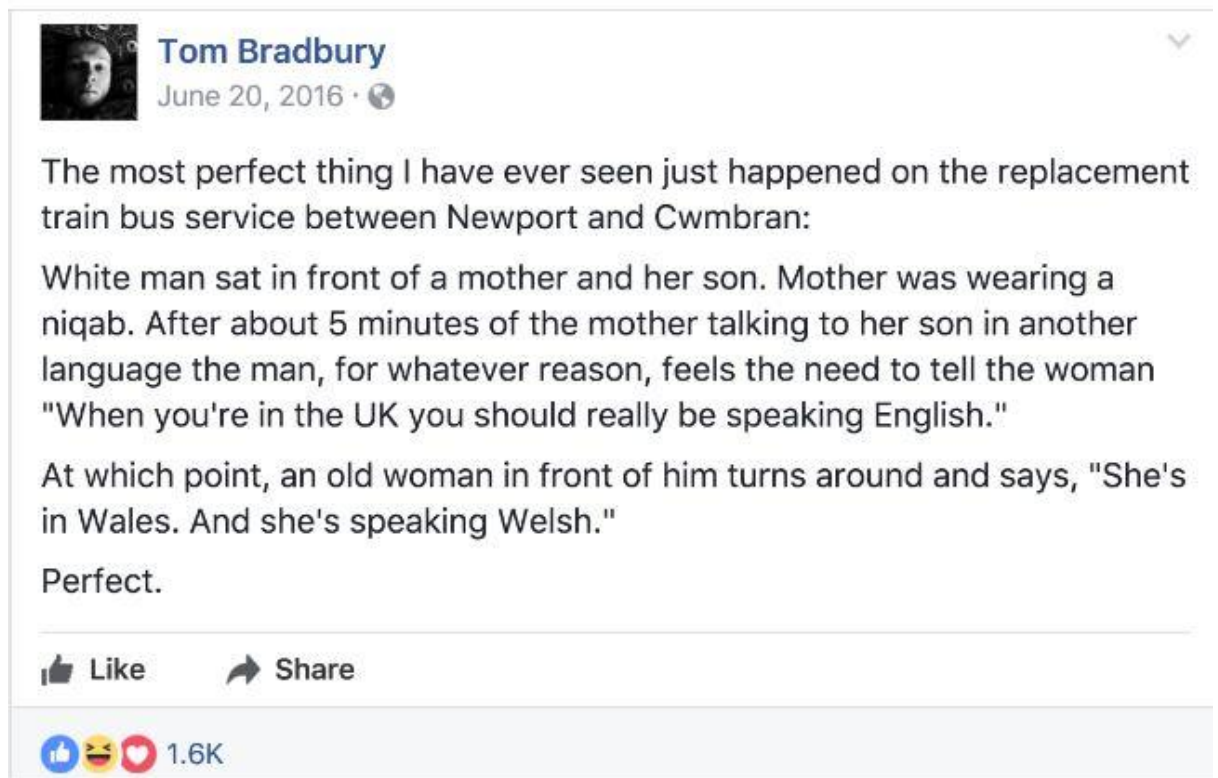


Fig 1: Screenshot of Tom Bradbury Facebook Post, June 20 2016.

The post went viral. There were more than 14 000 shares on Facebook and the story was reprinted in the *Times*, as well as across online publications such as the *BBC* and *Metro*. But almost as quickly as it achieved widespread dissemination, the truth of the post was cast into doubt. Tom Bradbury's post had an uncanny resemblance to a series of similar posts in the US.

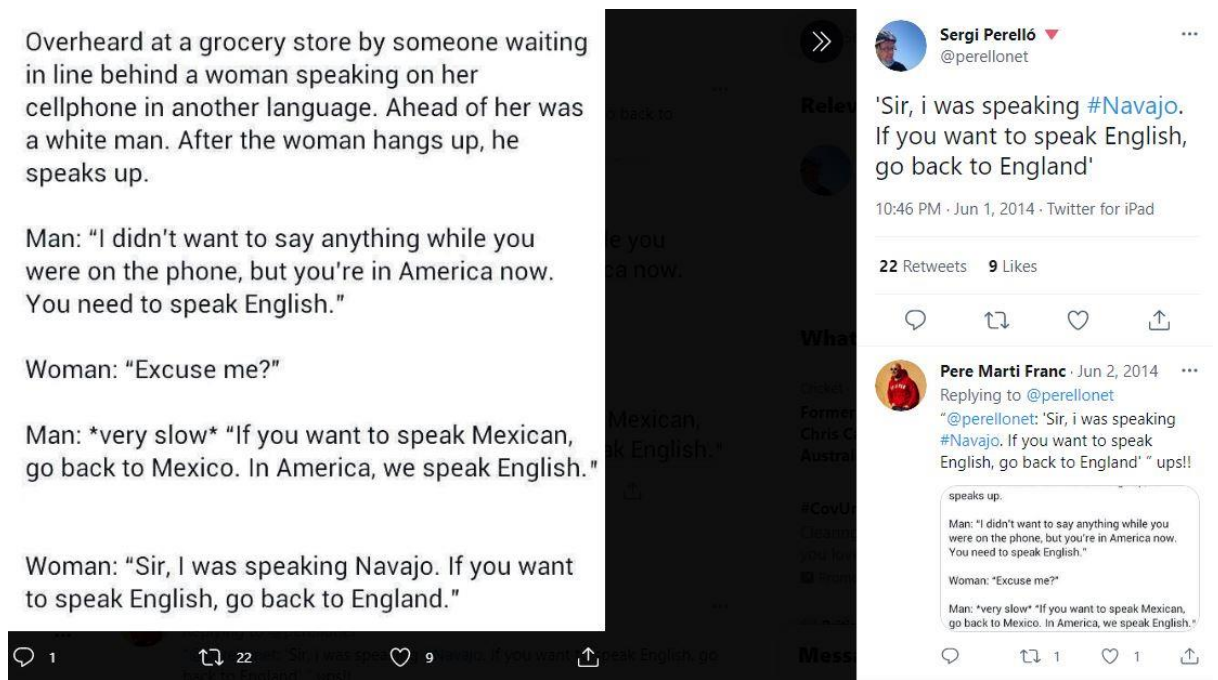


Fig 2: Screenshot of Sergi Perelló Twitter Post, June 1 2014.

Tom Bradbury insisted on the truth of his post, but subsequently deleted it. The story of his post has already become source material for academic studies of virality. As researchers Ryan Cordell and Jonathan Fitzgerald write:

The story was, as Bradbury declares, “perfect,” particularly in a moment of political tension over the precise political issues the story brings into relief. We came across Bradbury’s post because it was shared quite eagerly by many people in our own social networks, including a great many academics who no doubt think of themselves as critical, even skeptical, readers.

In this story’s neat perfection it recalls the nineteenth-century vignette—far more interested in emotional truths than factual truths.¹

¹ Ryan Cordell and Jonathan D. Fitzgerald, “Classifying Vignettes, Modelling Hybridity,” in *Going the Rounds: Virality in Nineteenth-Century American Newspapers*, ed. Ryan Cordell (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020), coda

The authors concluded that fake news captures people on all sides of the political spectrum. Such a conclusion is no doubt useful when considering the Yiddish press in Britain c1900. The British Yiddish press, too, featured many stories which were “far more interested in emotional truths than factual truths.”

This particular anecdote was shared because it staged an encounter where intolerance lost. An immigrant, confronted by a xenophobic “native”, makes an appeal to language for legitimacy. This appeal, calling on a higher level of indigenesness, defeats their racist attacker. In Bradbury’s version of the story, it is the fact that the woman in the Niqab speaks Welsh that defeats the xenophobe’s nativism - Welsh is more indigenous than English - in the Perelló story it is Najavo. In both cases a “native’s” call for the use of English by an immigrant is trumped by the immigrant’s defence of their use of a “more” indigenous language. The stories seem to argue that language is the most important proof of legitimacy. If an immigrant can prove that they speak the language of the nation they are in, and if possible, a more indigenous language, then they are impervious to nativist attacks.²

<https://manifold.umn.edu/read/untitled-bd3eb0af-fdad-4dd6-9c94-3fd15d522ab6/section/96e952af-500a-43e4-965e-f08e574a4d61>.

² A similar intersection of fake news and arguments around historical legitimacy occurs around an apocryphal Disraeli remark. Disraeli is alleged to have responded, after being on the receiving end of antisemitic aspersions cast on him from the Irish politician Daniel O’Connell, “Yes, I am a Jew, and when the ancestors of the right honorable gentleman were brutal savages in an unknown island, mine were priests in the temple of Solomon.” Countless books and internet articles repeat this boast. In truth Disraeli response was more muted: “I admire your scurrilous allusions to my origins.” See David Cesarani, *Disraeli: The Novel Politician* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 68-69.

For a supposedly tolerant or liberal or anti-anti immigrant story this is based on a troubling premise. The story does not reject the idea that immigrants must legitimise themselves - it only asks for different terms of legitimation. The stories argue that immigrants must not demonstrate that they can speak English, or American English, in the UK and the USA, but they should speak Welsh, or Najavo, if they need to prove their superior right to talk (and implicitly, to exist). But what if they speak another language? What role do citizens who speak other languages play in the modern nation state? What role might reading in these languages play in readjusting histories of immigration and immigrant culture and politics? In many senses the set of questions that Bradbury's post raises take us back from 2016 - the occasion of a referendum that tried to redefine who would and would not be allowed into Britain - to 1906, when a different set of legislators debated a very similar question. But this dissertation does not explore what immigrants on buses might have said in Welsh, it focuses on what they did write in newspapers in Yiddish.

How can different cultures and politics develop in a language that is neither indigenous nor imperial? The Yiddish press in Britain between 1896-1910 expressed different articulations of Jewish identity. Immigrant political and cultural priorities were not focussed around anglicisation, or other variations of assimilation and acculturation. Instead different Eastern European Jewish political and cultural frameworks structured lives that wanted to be defined by freedom, autonomy and self-sufficiency. Far from viewing Yiddish politics and culture in Britain in this period only through concepts of marginalisation

and ghettoisation, this thesis argues that Yiddish in Britain represented a radical opening and site of exchange between British Jewish culture, British Yiddish Culture and different Eastern European and North American sites of Yiddish culture. In doing so this thesis aims to recentre British Jewish history away from narratives of anglicisation and one directional cultural exchange. Foreign languages that are not indigenous structure modern lives in Britain, and the stories they tell are legitimate. This dissertation tells one set of these stories.

a) British Jewish Life in a time of Transformation: Histories and Historiographies

British Jewish history's most important transformation occurred with a wave of immigration that occurred towards the end of the 19th Century.³ The entry of over 120 000 Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, and the presence of many more transmigrants for different periods of time, completely changed the demography of the British Jewish community.⁴ This dissertation deals primarily with the Yiddish material that this community published - the newspapers, journals and pamphlets, which give us important insights into the lives of the individuals who arrived.

³ The foundational accounts of this period are: Lloyd Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant in England, 1870-1914* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1960), Vivian Lipman, *Social History of the Jews in England 1850-1950* (London: Watts & Co, 1954), David Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews: Social Relations and Political Culture 1840-1914* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), Susan Tananbaum, *Jewish Immigrants in London, 1880-1939* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2014), W.D Rubinstein, *A History of the Jews in the English-speaking World: Great Britain* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1995), Eugene Black, *The Social Politics of Anglo-Jewry, 1880-1920* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988) and William J Fishman, *East End Jewish Radicals 1875-1914* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co, 1975).

⁴ Gartner, *Jewish Immigrant*, 30. V. D Lipman estimates 100 000 immigrants for 1881-1905. Lipman, *Social History*, 90.

The conceptual framework of immigrant and native, of Eastern European or “Russian” Jew and English Jew, can imply a false static quality to each category. In reality both groups were in the process of transforming themselves under the various pressures and opportunities of modernity - urbanisation, upwards social mobility, Westernization or acculturation and assimilation - their encounter with each other further inflected how these groups negotiated these changes.⁵ The community that arrived in large numbers after 1880 left Russia due to a complex intersection of different factors. The Jewish community in the Russian Empire had expanded from approximately 1 000 000 in 1800 to 5 189 000 in 1897.⁶ In the Pale of Settlement, where Eastern European Jews were confined, this massively expanded Jewish population was not able to participate in the growth of the Russian economy. Jews were prevented by discriminatory laws from profiting from industrialisation in Russia.⁷ This meant that Eastern European Jews were left in an increasing state of immiseration. Young Jews were also being forced into conscription which often also meant conversion.⁸ Added to this difficult economic situation was a situation of increasing violence against Jews in Eastern Europe. Pogroms - acts of violence carried out with tacit state approval against Jews - broke out in 1881 in Elizavetgrad and then in

⁵ This analysis is indebted to the comparative approach to different Jewries - in this case Ottoman and Russian - presented in Sarah Abrevaya Stein, *Making Jews Modern* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004) 1-19. Benedict Anderson’s work on emerging print cultures and nationalism is also an important reference – although this dissertation argues that Jewish nationalism was just one of several important movements of Jewish regeneration, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

⁶ Lloyd Gartner, *Jewish Immigrant*, 21.

⁷ Arcadius Kahan, “The Impact of Industrialization in Tsarist Russia on the Socioeconomic Conditions of the Jewish Population,” in *Essays in Jewish Social and Economic History* ed. Roger Weiss (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 1-70, Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 147-155.

⁸ Tananbaum, *Jewish Immigrants*, 22.

Kiev, Kishinev, Yalta, Znamenko and Odessa.⁹ Further incidents - Bismarck's expulsion of alien Poles from Germany in 1886, the expulsion of Jews from Russian cities such as Moscow and Kiev in 1890, persecution in Romania in 1897 and 1899, and new pogroms in Russia in 1903 and 1905-6 meant that push motivations for emigration were maintained at high levels throughout the period 1880-1914.¹⁰ Immigrants were also leaving for the Americas or Palestine based on new ideological convictions - of schemes designed for communal welfare "for the sake of the Jewish people rather than personal gain" or more explicitly for Jewish national reasons.¹¹ Some ended up in Britain as a stopping place on their way to these other destinations. Once Jews decided to leave Eastern Europe, the most important factor in deciding whether they actually did was the availability of information and proximity to a railroad.¹² The role of family networks also played a crucial role.¹³ A key source of information throughout this period was the Yiddish press.

The journey from Eastern Europe to London was often fraught and difficult - for one it was illegal.¹⁴ Emigration started with leaving Russia to gain access

⁹ Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 51-52.

¹⁰ Gartner, *Jewish Immigrant*, 41-49. For more on Bismarck and the growth of antisemitism in Germany see Jonathan Steinberg, *Bismarck: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 388-402. For the situation of Romanian Jewry in the period, see Carol Iancu, *Jews in Romania 1866-1919: From Exclusion to Emancipation* trans. Carvel de Bussy (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 144-146, 168-172.

¹¹ Gur Alroey, "Aliya to America? A Comparative Look at Jewish Mass Migration, 1881-1914," *Modern Judaism* 28:2 (May 2008): 109-133.

¹² Gur Alroey, "Information, Decision and Migration: Jewish Emigration from Eastern Europe in the Early Twentieth Century," *Immigrants and Minorities* 29 (March 2011): 33-63.

¹³ Eric Goldstein, "Beyond the 'Shtetl': Small-Town Family Networks and the Social History of Lithuanian Jews." *Jewish social studies* 24, no. 1 (2018): 34-74.

¹⁴ Hans Rogger, *Jewish Policies and Right-Wing Politics in Imperial Russia* (London: Macmillan, 1986) 176-187.

to the port cities from where a ship could be boarded for England. This often meant illegal border crossings from Russia into Germany in order to travel to the ports of Bremen, Hamburg and Libau, or further travel by land to Rotterdam.¹⁵ The illegal crossings were fraught and exposed emigrants to the dangers of traffickers and the local population. Once the ship was boarded there could be further problems. The boat journey itself left a significant impression on those who wrote about the experience afterwards and was a frequent topic for fictionalisation. It could be a place for encounters with German anti-Semitism.¹⁶

The main ports of arrival were Glasgow, Grimsby, Harwich and London. From the ports most immigrants travelled to cities with strong manufacturing industries and with substantial and growing Jewish populations, such as London, Leeds, Manchester, Glasgow and Birmingham.¹⁷ London remained the most significant destination, with roughly two times as many Jews in Britain living in London than in the rest of Britain combined.¹⁸ Charitable help and reception, which will be explored in more detail later, was rudimentary. Often the focus was on encouraging the migrants to move quickly to

¹⁵ Gartner, *Jewish Immigrant*, 32.

¹⁶ Memoirs which refer to these journeys are: Arn Gorelik, *Shturemdike Yorn* (New York: Grenich Printing Corp, 1946), Shneur-Zalman Osipov, *Mayn Lebn: Derinerungen un Iberlebungen fun a Yidishn Sotsyalist* (Boston: Ark, 1954), Avrom Frumkin, *In friling fun yidishn sotsyalism* (New York: A Frumkin yubiley komitet, 1940), Thomas Eyges, *Beyond the Horizon* (Boston: Group Free Society, 1944). For German antisemitism on the boat journey, Gorelik, *Shturemdike Yorn*, 111.

¹⁷ Lipman, *Social History*, 102-103. David Cesarani has analysed the rich mythology that developed around stories where immigrants recounted that they believed that they had arrived in America when they were only in England, see David Cesarani, "The Myth of Origins: Ethnic Memory and the Experience of Migration," *Patterns of Migration, 1850 1914: Proceedings of the International Academic Conference of the Jewish Historical Society of England and the Institute of Jewish Studies, University College London*, ed. Aubrey Newman and Stephen W Massil (London: The Jewish Historical Society of England and the Institute of Jewish Studies, 1996), 251-2.

¹⁸ Lipman, 100-103.

Liverpool where they would then embark for the United States, Canada or other destinations within the British empire.¹⁹ Those without any acquaintances had a significantly more difficult beginning than those who did. New immigrants had to find lodgings.²⁰ Then there was the question of employment. Not only was it unsteady, and sometimes there were no opportunities - but many immigrants, lacking factory experience, had to return to the “small trades” of tailoring, baking, hawking, shoemaking or cabinet making.²¹ This work was characterised by difficult working conditions and intense competition.²² After a few years many immigrants left for America, or instead chose to stay.²³

It is important to describe the social and economic realities for Jewish immigrants to Britain while also emphasising the heterogeneity of this group. Jewish immigrants came to Britain from across Eastern Europe, from Galicia within the Austro-Hungarian empire, from Romania but predominantly from the northwest of the Pale of Settlement. Regional differences were very important for the Jews from these different areas.²⁴ In general, these immigrants were very poor before they arrived in Britain.²⁵ A growing minority

¹⁹ Gartner, *Jewish Immigrant*, 43.

²⁰ Lipman, *Social History*, 105.

²¹ Fishman, *Jewish Radicals*, 42-43.

²² Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 185-214.

²³ Nicholas Evans, “Aliens *en route*: European Transmigration through Britain, 1836-1914” (PhD Diss., University of Hull, 2006), 99-103, Nicholas Evans, “The development of transmigrant historiography in Britain,” in *Migrant Britain: Histories and Historiographies: Essays in Honour of Colin Holmes*, ed. Jennifer Craig-Norton, Christhard Hoffmann, Tony Kushner (London: Routledge, 2018), 224-234.

²⁴ The relative importance of regional identity for Jewish immigrants has been underexplored within research on Jewish immigration to Britain: this receives limited attention in the fifth chapter of this dissertation but needs further investigation. See Lipman, *Social History*, 86-87, Gartner, *Jewish Immigrant*, 283, Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 155.

²⁵ Feldman, 159-160.

of the immigrants were women.²⁶ Women were confined to jobs with lower pay and were often denied the opportunity to rise up the professional ladder.²⁷ Sometimes wives were left behind abandoned in Eastern Europe or in Britain, leaving them in desperate situations.²⁸ Birth rates were high, posing additional challenges to the resources of immigrant families.²⁹ In general immigration appears to have been unidirectional and, in the absence of firm evidence, it can be assumed that few, save those repatriated, returned to Eastern Europe once they had made it to Britain.³⁰

Men and women alike worked overwhelmingly in the garment trade, but also in trade and commerce, carpentry and a variety of smaller trades.³¹ Wages in these trades were often low and the cost of living could be expensive. Especially in London, the need to live in a small part of the East End in London caused rents to rise causing significant accommodation problems, overcrowding and sanitation.³² In addition, there was crime, sex work and human trafficking – even if levels of Jewish crime were lower than in the population at large.³³

Jewish immigrants were often deeply ingrained in networks that spanned the Atlantic and reached back to Eastern Europe. The post carried information and money from immigrants in Britain back home, while the main bank in the

²⁶ Feldman, 157.

²⁷ Tananbaum, *Jewish Immigrants*, 152, Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 203, 213-214.

²⁸ Gartner, *Jewish Immigrant*, 168-171.

²⁹ Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 159

³⁰ Feldman, 159.

³¹ Gartner, *Jewish Immigrant*, 58.

³² Lipman, *Social History*, 104-106, Gartner, *Jewish Immigrant*, 150-156.

³³ Gartner, 183-186.

East End sent huge volumes of remittances (1 million roubles) according to one report, to Russia and Poland each year.³⁴ The Yiddish press was an important addition. It carried crucial information for immigrants and emigrants, while even offering opportunities in the letters pages to connect family members across great geographical distances - or give them bad news.³⁵

These material conditions affected immigrants' relationship to reading and to newspapers. Although many immigrants were very poor, the advantages of newspaper reading were numerous enough to make the small outlay worthwhile. Eastern European Jews had high levels of literacy - but this did not necessarily prepare them for the highly germanized Yiddish that Yiddish journalists wrote in.³⁶ The newspapers gave vital information about immigrants' lives at home and abroad, they offered entertainment and respite, they were a political outlet and source of resistance and organisation and they began to lead to the identity formation of those who used them. Sharing newspapers reduced costs. Newspapers were read aloud - and for the benefit of those who could not read.³⁷ In fact, sometimes those who could not read felt so strongly about the politics of newspapers that they would offer to sell what they could not read themselves.³⁸ Reading was often a communal endeavour - although this does not mean that all the readers

³⁴ Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 153-155.

³⁵ A letter in November 1896 thanked the editors of the *Idisher Ekspres* for giving details of a beloved father's funeral, "Dankzogung," *Der Idisher Ekspres*, November 20, 1896, 6. Goldstein, "Beyond the Shtetl," 34-74.

³⁶ For a discussion of East European Jewish literacy and the Yiddish press see Tony Michels, *A Fire in Their Hearts: Yiddish Socialists in New York* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 109-110.

³⁷ This is staged memorably in *Tsharli der Unterpreser* - see chapter 5, p273-4.

³⁸ Frumkin, *In friling*, 68.

belonged to one community. Newspapers were often the first sign of political factionalism and diverging political identities: did you read the *Ekspres* or the *Arbayter Fraynd*?³⁹ Libraries were a necessity given the cost of books and the lack of space to read in. Local council libraries provided books in Yiddish - as they did in Russia), but immigrant Jews soon established their own libraries so that they could have a greater selection of Yiddish and Hebrew periodicals, pamphlets and books.⁴⁰ This dissertation explores in chapter 3 the establishment of immigrant libraries as a crucial part of the growth of Yiddish sub and countercultures, and as a means of gaining intellectual autonomy. Reading, like the press, had commercial alongside instrumental and symbolic value, it was pleasure, necessity, and politics, or a combination of all three.

The growth of the Yiddish press must be understood within the developments in journalism that were occurring in a booming anglophone transatlantic newspaper industry. On one hand new technological developments were increasing the speed and audacity of the press (the telegraph, the telephone, the typewriter).⁴¹ On the other a new generation of journalists, “The New Journalism” and the establishment of the Daily Mail (in a very similar time period to the *Idisher Ekspres*) were trying to revolutionise journalism by making it more accessible and relevant for readers.⁴² This was

³⁹ Michels links the communal endeavour of newspaper reading to the individual pursuit of self-education. Michels, *Fire in Their Hearts*, 113.

⁴⁰ Jeffrey Veidlinger, *Jewish Public Culture in the Late Russian Empire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 29-39.

⁴¹ Joel Wiener, “Get the news! Get the news!” – speed in transatlantic journalism, 1830–1914,” in *Anglo-American Media Interactions, 1850–2000*, ed. Joel Wiener and Mark Hampton (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 48–61.

⁴² See Adrian Bingham and Martin Conboy, *Tabloid Century: The Popular Press in Britain, 1896 to the Present* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2015) and Joel Wiener, “How new was the new

the era of the scoop and the rise of the tabloid. These media revolutions were now coming from America towards Britain: “the challenge to older traditions of newspaper production emanated from America.”⁴³ Critics in Britain perceived these new developments as endangering journalistic standards, and their influence was felt in the Yiddish press of the time which was also modernising itself along a similar path. British Yiddish journalists of the era criticised the new sensationalism of the Yiddish press.⁴⁴ This means that there are considerable methodological issues for the historian who wants to draw conclusions from a media that was distinguished by a growing emphasis put on rapacity, velocity and sensationalism; which often veered into unreliability. In response to this, this dissertation aims to not only analyse the Yiddish press in this period by its own statements but also by its critics, while also trying to cross reference its claims in other Yiddish and English-language media as far as possible.

The Jewish community these immigrants were arriving in would have been nearly as alien as their new surroundings. British Jewish historical accounts have in the past stressed the homogeneity of Anglo-Jewry before the arrival of the large wave of immigration after 1881. A community of 60 000 was “well organized in its communal life, emancipated politically and assimilated socially.”⁴⁵ Important political battles had been won: Jews in Britain were emancipated – they could vote and be elected as members of Parliament –

journalism?” in *Papers for the Millions: The new journalism in Britain, 1850s to 1914*, ed. Joel Wiener (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 47-71.

⁴³ Wiener, “Get the news!”, 49.

⁴⁴ There is a broader discussion of discourses around the Yiddish press in Chapter 1.

⁴⁵ Lipman, *Social History*, 84.

and looked forward to ever greater political and social integration.⁴⁶ In the light of this substantial progress the new waves of immigrants could be construed to represent a threat to the victories that had been achieved. This phrasing of the history naturally needs some nuance. Historians have shown that the homogeneity of these communities may have been overemphasised.⁴⁷ The community was already increasingly divided by the entry and ascension of Eastern European immigrants before 1880. And the elite that constituted the leadership of the community was itself to some extent divided - especially during the period of mass immigration.⁴⁸ A greater nuance when considering the established community must also be applied to the immigrant community.

The new influx of immigrants changed how British Jewry interacted with the rest of world Jewry. The British Jewish historian Vivian Lipman wrote that “in assessing the character of organized Jewish life in East London in the 1881-1914 period, one may note the development, for the first time in any strength, in Anglo-Jewry of cultural and political trends linking Anglo-Jewry with Eastern Europe.”⁴⁹ Certainly the arrival of these individuals increased links with Eastern Europe. And yet British Jewish life, or traditional Anglo-Jewish life, was already deeply engaged with global Jewish politics. Nowhere was this more true than in the realm of Jewish national and international politics.

⁴⁶ For Western European context see David Sorkin, *Jewish Emancipation: A History Across Five Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 210-223.

⁴⁷ See for example Bill Williams, *The Making of Manchester Jewry: 1740-1875* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1976) and Bill Williams, “East and West’: Class and Community in Manchester Jewry, 1850–1914,” in *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry*, ed. David Cesarani (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).

⁴⁸ Daniel Gutwein, *The Divided Elite: Economics, Politics and Anglo-Jewry 1882-1917* (Leiden: E.J Brill, 1992).

⁴⁹ Lipman, *Social History*, 131.

The paradigmatic figure of Moses Montefiore (1784-1885) is one example of this.⁵⁰ But Colonel Albert E.W. Goldsmid (1846-1904), as well as others, also demonstrates the ambition that British Jewry felt, at times aiming to lead world Jewry, or at the very least to actively intervene.⁵¹ This internationalism is important because the entry of immigrant Jews led to a confrontation: who was better connected with the new Jewish politics, and who could act for who? Much of the story of the immigrant encounter deals with actions abroad and not just those in Britain.

The established Anglo-Jewish community tried, in fits and starts, to help newly arrived immigrants. The traditional communal welfare organisation of Anglo-Jewry, the *Board of Guardians*, at first declined to help immigrants because it feared this would encourage immigration.⁵² In its place a Jewish baker, Simha Becker, tried in 1894-1895 to provide temporary accommodation for immigrants but the *Board of Guardians* succeeded in closing this rudimentary shelter.⁵³ However, wealthy and influential backers came to its rescue and the *Poor Jews' Temporary Shelter* was founded in 1895 and moved to its permanent site at 84 Leaman Street in 1886.⁵⁴ In time there would be a growing communal and philanthropic apparatus for helping immigrants: there was the *Jewish Association for the Protection of Girls and*

⁵⁰ The Damascus Affair (1840) in particular shows the significance of British Jewry's international commitments. See Abigail Green, *Moses Montefiore: Jewish Liberator, Imperial Hero* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2010), 133-157 and Jonathan Frankel, *The Damascus Affair: "Ritual Murder", politics and the Jews in 1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

⁵¹ Sharman Kadish, 'A Good Jew and A Good Englishman': *The Jewish Lads' & Girls' Brigade 1895-1995* (London: Valentine Mitchell, 1995), 8-11.

⁵² Gartner, *Jewish Immigrant*, 42.

⁵³ Gartner, *Jewish Immigrant*, 52-53.

⁵⁴ Lipman, *Social History*, 92.

Women, founded in 1885, the *Four Per Cent Industrial Dwellings Company* built affordable housing, and the *Jewish Board of Guardians* offered apprenticeships and loan provisions, while there were numerous educational establishments offering services.⁵⁵ And yet this philanthropy, though doubtlessly enormously helpful to immigrants, also contained an element of social control. Through these philanthropic institutions elite members of Anglo-Jewry were able to decide, by holding the purse strings, what behaviours and practices should be endorsed. This can be overstated. Historians such as David Feldman have pointed to the lack of agency this attributes to the immigrants themselves.⁵⁶

A traditional historiographical narrative of British Jewish history traces a diminishing apologism for Jews in Britain and for Britain's positive treatment of Jews, and a higher level of criticism of the difficulties of British Jewish life, in Tananbaum's account a movement from "early sanitized accounts of anglicisation" to "more critical analyses".⁵⁷ This has become an almost universally accepted narrative. According to this point of view the overall tenor of Anglo-Jewish history towards the narrative of British Jewish life was at first resoundingly positive. The story of British exceptionalism, and a history of tolerance which led to the flourishing of the Jewish community, dominated the field of British Jewish history.⁵⁸ Cecil Roth, the preeminent

⁵⁵ Lipman, 92, 105-6, Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 300-301, Tananbaum, *Jewish Immigrants*, 71-90.

⁵⁶ Susan Tananbaum well contextualises the question of social control within the broader historiography, emphasising Feldman's intervention. Tananbaum, 6, Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 329-352.

⁵⁷ Tananbaum, *Jewish Immigrants*, 4-5.

⁵⁸ The most concise summary of this changing historiographical framework is to be found in Ben Peter Gidley, "Citizenship and Belonging: East London Jewish Radicals 1903-1918" (PhD Diss., Goldsmiths College, University of London, 2003), 20-21. Very similar syntheses

historian, “the apogee of Anglo-Jewish historical Whiggishness” as Michael Clark writes critically, aimed to focus his arguments about Jews in Britain on their successful integration.⁵⁹ But this was interrupted by later historians who brought greater critical nuance to this portrayal. A watershed moment was William Fishman’s *East End Jewish Radicals 1875-1914*. This work emphasised a community within a community, a sub- or counterculture, and dismantled previous emphases on unity, introducing class as an important tool for analysis of division within the Jewish community. Other historians, in the wake of this work, who came to be known as the “new school of English Jewish history” began to analyse British Jewish history far more critically.⁶⁰ Their important divergences mean that it might be incorrect to label them a “new school of English Jewish history”.⁶¹ And yet this framework of tackling British Jewish history itself remained closely entangled with conceptions tied to the nation state.⁶² More recent scholarship has moved away from this conception to emphasise the importance of international identities and exchange as a framework for understanding British Jewish history and culture.⁶³

of British Jewish history, marking a general movement from alleged Anglo-Jewish historical naivety to a more studied awareness are also to be found in Michael Clark, *Albion and Jerusalem: The Anglo-Jewish Community in the Post-Emancipation Era, 1858-1887* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) and Tananbaum, *Jewish Immigrants*, 4-6. The most consistent apologist for this view of the historiography is Todd Endelman, see Todd Endelman, “Anglo-Jewish Historiography and the Jewish Historiographical Mainstream” *Jewish Culture and History*, 12, 1-2 (2010), 28–40.

⁵⁹ Clark, *Albion and Jerusalem*, 13-14.

⁶⁰ Gidley, “Citizenship and Belonging”, 20-21.

⁶¹ Ben Gidley argues persuasively that the term is insufficient to mark the different approaches of these historians. Gidley, 20 fn16.

⁶² Gidley, 21.

⁶³ Gidley, 21. Vivi Lachs, *Whitechapel Noise: Jewish Immigrant Life in Yiddish Song and Verse, London 1884-1914* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2018), 67-90.

A focus on the potential for international and post-nation state understandings of identity in fact returns to an earlier line of difference in this historical scholarship. For Gartner his work on Jewish immigrants to England was unapologetically a work of modern Jewish history, “a work of Jewish history, with an English background.”⁶⁴ For David Feldman, perhaps the author of the most significant response to Gartner’s work, the emphasis is different, making the “overarching claim” that “some of the central issues in modern English history, such as the nature of Victorian liberalism, the growth of the collectivist state and the history of the working class can be seen in a new light by close examining their relation to the Jewish minority.”⁶⁵ This dissertation, which uses primarily Yiddish source material, might naturally be assumed to belong to Jewish history more than English. But it is both; it argues that a coalition of factors both local and international defined the experience of Jewish immigrants to Britain, and that its contribution is at once to Jewish and British history.

Yiddish has a history as long, if not longer, than Jewish settlement in Britain. Yiddish originated either near the Rhine Valley in the 9th Century or the Danube in the 10th Century or in both.⁶⁶ From its inception it marked the linguistic encounter of Jewish populations with Christian populations. Since then, Yiddish has itself been subject to different hierarchical judgements at

⁶⁴ Gartner, *Jewish Immigrant*, 9.

⁶⁵ Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 387-8. Feldman perceptively argues that immigrant radical and Anglo-Jewish philanthropic discourses themselves attempted to limit fluid immigrant identities to a binary of either Englishman or Jew, and that historians should not uncritically repeat this distinction. Feldman, 8-10.

⁶⁶ Jeffrey Shandler, *Yiddish: Biography of a Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 9-13. Shandler argues persuasively that there is no single definitive origin for Yiddish, and that given the scant evidence it is better to focus on analysing the different models that attempt to account for its origin.

different historical moments. As historian Jeffrey Shandler puts it, the status of Yiddish correlated “to how both Jews and others conceptualize Jewish difference.”⁶⁷ Within Anglo-Jewish historiography almost no attention is paid to language - it is taken as a given that all significant scholarship on British Jewish history, perhaps with the exception of Georg Halpern’s early work on Jewish immigration, *Die Jüdischen Arbeiter in London* (1903), is in English.⁶⁸ In fact this ignores crucial historical contributions in Yiddish.⁶⁹ Furthermore a narrative informed by considerations of language undermines this supposed linear progression (itself Whiggish, although it purports to criticise this) of British Jewish history from naive apologism to critical appraisal. Instead a tradition of British Jewish history which uses more than English to try and trace the historical journeys of its polylingual subjects can be built - which predates the work of the “New Jewish Historians”. Tsherikover’s work on Jewish radicalism in Britain (1945), Lloyd Gartner’s extensive use of Hebrew periodicals in *Jewish Immigrant in England* (1960), followed by the scholarship of the two multilingual Jewish historical collections (1966 and 1975) and Yiddish source material, through the latter work of Fishman (1975), Prager (1990), Feldman (1994), Gidley (2003), Lachs (2018, 2021)

⁶⁷ Shandler, *Yiddish*, 5.

⁶⁸ Halpern wrote in German: Georg Halpern, *Die Jüdischen Arbeiter in London* (Stuttgart and Berlin: J. G. Cotta’sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1903).

⁶⁹ There are two main collections of essays which cannot be ignored and that each contain several Yiddish essays: in *Jews in England: Studies and Materials 1880-1914* (New York: YIVO, 1966) and *Studies in the Cultural Life of the Jews in England*, ed. Dov Noy and Issachar Ben-Ami (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1975). There is also the work on the Jewish labour movement of Herts Burgin, *Di Geshikhte fun der idisher arbeter bavegung in amerike, rusland un england* (New York: Di ferayntikte idishe geveerkshaftn, 1915) and Elye Tsherikover, *Geshikhte fun di idisher arbeter bavegung in di fareynikte shtatn* (New York: Yivo, 1945), 76-137.

and Grafen (2020).⁷⁰ This different narration of British Jewish history, emphasising multilingual sources and histories, complicates Anglo-Jewish narratives, and portrays different conceptions of British Jewish history. They emphasise the diversity of British Jewish identities, the importance of cultural difference, and the contestations between different conceptions of Jewish modernity and different configurations of power within British Jewish discourses.

b) Why Britain's Yiddish Press?

The British Yiddish press is largely uninvestigated.⁷¹ Its remarkable size and scope make this all the more surprising. There is far more information and analysis about the institutions that were created to help British immigrant Jews than the institutions they created, wrote for or worked in.⁷² This imbalance creates problems around bias and power. The Yiddish press offers a possible readjustment to the assessment of these critical concerns. It may, briefly, have been the print representative of a majority of Jewish opinion in Britain.⁷³ As such it offers the possibility to give greater insights about Jewish life in Britain. What did Jews in Britain think about the

⁷⁰ This work is cited variously above, except for Alexander Grafen, "The Whitechapel Renaissance and its Legacies: Rosenberg to Rodker" (PhD diss., University College London, 2020).

⁷¹ There is valuable scholarship on the Yiddish press, but considering its scope there is much more work to be done. See for example, Leonard Prager, *Yiddish Culture in Britain: A Guide* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1990) – henceforth cited as *YCIB* and, Lachs, *Whitechapel Noise*.

⁷² This dissertation only explores the Yiddish press, and not (except when they interacted) the two other central institutions of immigrant life in this period – the Yiddish theatre and the friendly societies (*kheyvres*) – more research is needed on these. The Yiddish press of the contemporary Yiddish speaking community in London is also beyond the scope of this dissertation

⁷³ David Cesarani, *The Jewish chronicle and Anglo-Jewry, 1841-1991* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 250.

experience of immigration? What did they make of the political and cultural offerings that were made available to them by Anglo-Jewry and that they built themselves? What role did immigrant Jews have in defining their own lives? This whole dissertation rejects the idea of interrogating how immigrants “conformed” to British society to instead analyse how they built their own society - and to do so it goes to the texts that immigrants themselves wrote about their lives.

What has been written about the Yiddish press predominantly analyses early Jewish radical, and particularly anarchist, activity.⁷⁴ This was a fraction of the output of the Yiddish press. This dissertation aims to analyse the Yiddish press much more broadly. It analyses a variety of British Yiddish newspapers from different political positions in the period 1896-1910. Often historians of the Jewish press have focussed on one publication, or the work of one journalist.⁷⁵ It is necessary to try and understand the broader political and cultural views of the Yiddish intelligentsia who wrote the texts of these newspapers and the newspapers’ readership. The Historian Derek Penslar has argued that:

The history of the Jewish press represents a microcosm of the Jewish public sphere. The growth in the late nineteenth century of the mass-circulation Jewish press in Russia and the United

⁷⁴ See Anne Kershner, “Yiddish as a Vehicle for Anglicisation” in *Patterns of Migration, 1850-1914: Proceedings of the International Academic Conference of the Jewish Historical Society of England and the Institute of Jewish Studies, University College London*, ed. Aubrey Newman and Stephen W Massil (London: The Jewish Historical Society of England and the Institute of Jewish Studies, 1996), 59-67, Fishman, *East End Jewish Radicals*, Susanne Marten-Finnis and Heather Valencia, *Sprachinseln: Jiddische Publizistik in London, Wilna und Berlin 1880-1930* (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 1999), 19-52.

⁷⁵ David Cesarani focussed on *The Jewish Chronicle*, and in Yiddish contexts there is Kalman Weiser’s writing on the career of Noah Prylucki, or Sarah Abrevaya Stein’s writing on *Der Fraynd*.

States, where the voice of the Jewish radical intelligentsia came to compete with that of the Jewish bourgeoisie, corresponded to a structural transformation of the Jewish public sphere no less great than that wrought by the growth of mass politics in society as a whole.⁷⁶

This is also the case for Britain. The Yiddish press as source material has the tantalising promise of showing us the concerns of the ordinary Jewish immigrant – how political and cultural engagement interacted with their agency.⁷⁷ However, the Yiddish press was itself a zone where different groups and classes competed for power and influence, where different sides of the “Jewish radical intelligentsia” competed with each other and with the “Jewish bourgeoisie”.⁷⁸ The press also often interacted with voluntary associations, or was even their mouthpiece, associations which were, in Jeffrey Veidlinger’s words, “the preeminent institutions for the expression, presentation and encapsulation of Jewish public culture.”⁷⁹

This dissertation takes as its beginning when the *Idisher Ekspres* came into the ownership of the Jewish community (1896) and finishes in the year after the Milton brothers’ fatalistic British Yiddish play *Der Khaos oder di letste*

⁷⁶ Derek Penslar, “Introduction: The Press and the Jewish Public Sphere,” *Jewish History* 14, no.1 (2000): 4. Penslar’s introduction to the special issue dedicated to the Jewish press grapples with Habermas’ conception of the public sphere and its application to Jewish history, see Jürgen Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* (Darmstadt: Hermann Luchterhand Verlag, 1962).

⁷⁷ In part this focus on politics (and culture) is inspired by the work of Dror Wahrman and his analysis of the intersection of agency and contingency, see Dror Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class: The political representation of class in Britain c. 1780-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 8-9.

⁷⁸ This follows critiques of Habermas which have emphasised the bourgeois public sphere as being an exclusionary space and have instead suggested that it is more useful to consider a series of public spheres where influence and power are contested. See Jeffrey Veidlinger, *Jewish Public Culture*, 8-9.

⁷⁹ Veidlinger, *Jewish Public Culture*, xii.

idishe hofnung (1909), published by the London Hebrew Publishing company. Partly this periodisation is dictated by the availability of the source material, its relevant abundance and the state of existing scholarship. But to a great extent it is also because this is the most important period to study for Britain as a Yiddish centre. From 1896 onwards the Yiddish press expanded and consolidated itself: it had become a commercial industry as well as a political instrument. For the first time there were a variety of enduring commercial and political publications. There were even competing Yiddish language dailies. English language newspapers, the bastions of anglicisation, were forced to produce Yiddish language supplements. This period was characterised by a dizzying rise in the opportunities that Yiddish newspapers, politics, plays, poems and novels offered Jews living in Britain. Through the press British Jewish life became integrated in ways it had never been before with the development of the new Jewish politics, with new cultures of literary and artistic creation across Eastern Europe and the international diaspora. This periodisation deserves special attention that hitherto has been more focussed on earlier histories of Jewish radicals in the 1880s and 1890s.

Even within this short period of 1896-1910 there were signs of the beginning of decline of Yiddish as an important medium for Jewish political and cultural life. Harrowing developments in international Jewish life were accompanied by increasing threats of exclusion and intolerance within the British context. This was the period when the Yiddish press in Britain first became the dominant mouthpiece of Jewish life in Britain, but it was also a time when

British Jews, and particularly immigrant Jews, were at great risk. This dissertation analyses the important ramifications of this rise of the Yiddish press and the politics and culture that surrounded it. The Aliens Act of 1905 was the beginning of the end of this period of dominance - hastened not just by the increasing difficulties for immigrants to enter Britain, but also the greater popularity, freedom and success of other Jewish centres. 1910 marked the final end of this slow period of departure of the generation of Yiddish intellectuals whose activities in Britain took Yiddish in Britain to its apogee between 1896 and 1910. The First World War would put a unique further strain on the immigrant community, and Yiddish afterwards would decline - this dissertation instead examines its flourishing, its growth, its assertion of power - and what the implications were for British Jewish and transnational political and artistic formulations.

Again the heterogeneity of the Jewish community in Britain around 1900 must be emphasised. On one hand there was an older Anglo-Jewish elite, and on the other, as Bill Williams has demonstrated, there was a “highly tessellated and exceptionally mobile social scene, with Eastern Europeans already at every stage of economic improvement.”⁸⁰ The Yiddish press in Britain was mostly the product of the interaction of these two subgroups. One was the class of Eastern European *nouveaux riches*: “an Eastern European bourgeoisie”, labelled an *Alrightnik* class by Williams. The American Yiddish editor, journalist and novelist Abraham Cahan invented the term to describe a similar group in New York. *Alrightnik* however, as a term, was invented to

⁸⁰ Williams, “East and West in Manchester Jewry,” 19.

satirise the self-interested excess of certain more excessive members of this group, and so is perhaps not entirely appropriate as a description for the whole new class.⁸¹ Many individuals in the emergent Eastern European Jewish bourgeoisie, from the Gintsburg family who published the *Idisher Ekspres*, to the Hebrew printer and poet Joseph Massel (1850-1912), through to the most important Yiddish publisher Israel Naroditsky (1874-1942), showed a serious and engaged interest in the plight of their coreligionists. These printers, and others we know less about, employed another group, an immigrant intelligentsia, to staff the new Yiddish newspapers. Often these intellectuals and polemicists found their feet in London before making much more significant careers outside of Britain.

This dissertation will argue that the Yiddish press' insights help us refashion our conception of immigrant life at the turn of the century. Historians of British Jewry in this period have focussed on two central transformations of the Jewish community in this period: economic and cultural. Eastern European Jewish immigrants were proletarianised upon arriving in Britain before, over the course of subsequent generations, seeing rapid improvement in their economic situation.⁸² On the other hand they were also anglicised – or chose to anglicise themselves – a transformation of Eastern European Jewish cultural and political life to adapt to English norms. The two processes were to a great extent interrelated. And yet anglicisation remains difficult to define precisely. It refers firstly to the linguistic transformation that

⁸¹ Lachs also uses the concept of "alrightnik". Lachs, *Whitechapel Noise*, 26-27.

⁸² Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 162-5. Feldman emphasises the "centrality of proletarianisation to the history of Jews in Eastern Europe and the countries to which they emigrated between 1880-1914." Feldman, 165.

meant that immigrant Jews, and particularly their children, began to communicate in English and not Yiddish. But it is also a process at once partially coercive and consensual, where practices of worship and cultural and political forms of organisation were transformed to realign with the norms of the pre-existing Anglo-Jewish community. This process was sped up by the communal efforts that the Anglo-Jewish community made to help immigrant Jewry, particularly in its charitable provision – its schools and its soup kitchens, even Working Clubs, that were designed to promote the English language and a conception of British norms. At times even the Yiddish press in Britain could be argued to be advocating anglicisation - this was no doubt in part the case for the anarchist and socialist press of the late 1880s and 1890s.⁸³

The complexity of anglicisation lies in the fact that neither community was fully “English” nor fully compliant with these processes, nor was either static. Did anglicisation mean - to use a distinction Susan Tananbaum introduces - acculturation or assimilation? For Tananbaum, “acculturation is the process of adopting “the culture of another social group” and does not imply fully casting off one’s culture of origin.” Assimilation, however, “is more extreme

⁸³ Tananbaum, *Jewish Immigrants*, 48 and Anne Kershen, “Yiddish as a Vehicle for Anglicisation,” 59-67. The American Yiddish press has often been assessed primarily through the light of anglicisation, see Mordecai Soltes, *The Yiddish Press: An Americanizing Agency* (New York: Columbia Teachers College, 1950). The relationship was complex, as Irving Howe wrote on Abraham Cahan, “while Cahan did foresee the assimilation of the Jews in America, both his paper and his own work transcended the limits of assimilationist ideology.” Irving Howe, *World of our Fathers* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), 530. Recent scholarship has tried to explore these limits, see Ri J Turner, “Confronting the Jewish Rejection of Jewish Particularism: Chaim Zhitlowsky’s Anti-Assimilationist Intervention in the American Yiddish Press,” *Res Rhetorica* 7:2 (2020): 17-32.

and involves shedding attributes of one's "former culture."⁸⁴ But how can we measure "adopting the culture of another group" when both groups - Anglo-Jewish and Eastern European immigrant - are changing under external and internal pressures? And why use as our starting point the influence of Anglo-Jewish culture on immigrant Jewry, and not the other way round? For many Yiddish journalists writing in Britain in this period anglicisation was a process to be resisted, not embraced. Advocates for anglicisation had argued that Jews who transformed themselves into English citizens, who renounced Eastern European habits, language and culture, would be accepted unquestionably as English citizens – but that furthermore their failure to adopt English cultural norms might endanger the whole community. This was a very strong emancipationist argument that the best possible future for Jews in Britain relied on degrees of assimilation. And yet English tolerance became at the turn of the 19th Century a commodity in small supply. The Aliens Agitation (1901-6), a sustained campaign against immigration to the U.K, carried for many British Yiddish journalists deep antisemitic undertones. It undermined the terms of the emancipation argument. And Anglo-Jewish support for bans on immigration seemed not to represent active support for the British Jewish community, but instead indifference to Eastern European Jewry. This dissertation explores discourses of resistance to anglicisation.

Anglicisation can be understood, furthermore, as a historiographical phenomenon. Gartner's work, and many of the key historiographical

⁸⁴ Tananbaum, *Jewish Immigrants*, 1. Tananbaum situates her discussion of anglicisation within theoretical discussions of American sociology.

contributions that followed it, argued that a process of anglicisation led to a generation of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe becoming English Jews within one generation. This argument, by exploring the history of immigrant Jewry only through the lens of its eventual anglicisation, ignored or underplayed the flourishing Yiddish culture of this period. The transformational process of anglicisation occurred at the same time as non-English Jewish forms of culture and politics achieved their greatest élan in Britain: and central to this politics and culture was Yiddish. If we are to set anglicisation as a key stage in the “dialectic” of immigration, to quote historian Bill Williams, “the recurrent, and usually abrasive, interaction between established families and newcomers of all kinds”, what do we call its parallel and contrasting process – that led to the flourishing of Eastern European Jewish institutions that changed the shape of communal life in the other direction – towards a greater integration of British Jewish culture with modern, European and Eastern European Jewish culture and politics?⁸⁵ This dissertation is an attempt to pinpoint what this phenomenon was and how a key institution that was part of it, the Yiddish press, engaged with anglicisation, its opposite process. Anglicisation could be a vehicle for modernity – but so too could the Eastern European Jewish culture that

⁸⁵ Bill Williams, *Making of Manchester Jewry*, 331. In recent work on British Jewry it is perhaps Avram Taylor who comes closest to defining this process with the term “variegated acculturation”, although this still puts the emphasis on anglicisation as a unidirectional process. See Avram Taylor, “‘In Glasgow but not quite of it’? Eastern European Jewish immigrants in a provincial Jewish community from c.1890 to c.1945” *Community and Change* 28:3 (2013): 451-477. This dissertation is inspired by the work of scholars who have emphasised the importance of a dialectic approach, both in relation to the porousness and hybridity of Jewish encounters with non-Jews (here principally explored through the engagement with an already “anglicised” Jewish community), and with modernity. See Israel Bartal and Scott Ury, “Between Jews and their neighbours: Isolation, Confrontation and Influence in Eastern Europe” *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* v24 (2012): 3-30 and Scott Ury, *Barricades and Banners: The Revolution of 1905 and the transformation of Warsaw Jewry* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 4, 12.

immigrants sought to reproduce once they arrived– and the new hybrid culture that resulted within Britain itself.⁸⁶

This dissertation explores the positive contribution of Yiddish culture and politics in Britain– the new societies and institutions that built a culture. Moshe Rosman’s distinction between subculture and counterculture, developed in a Jewish context from the ideas of sociologists John Milton Yinger and Floyd James Davis, is instructive here. For Rosman a subculture is a group who while differing from the majority by language, value, tradition or lifestyle, nonetheless “shares many of the values of the larger society and strives to achieve them.”⁸⁷ When, however, discrimination and exclusion prevent assimilation, then there forms a counterculture, “in which a central element of the normative system of the group is conflict with the values of the majority society it is in. The counterculture defines itself largely by virtue of its contradictions with respect to the majority.”⁸⁸ Reframing the conversation away from anglicisation, and focussing instead on the rhetoric and ideologies advanced by the Yiddish press, is to pinpoint when Jews in Britain formed at once both a counterculture and a subculture. Anglicisation is a concept which reduces the complexity of the dialectical processes taking place in this period – in the interaction of modernity and the interrelation of different Jewish

⁸⁶ Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 347.

⁸⁷ Moshe Rosman, *How Jewish is Jewish History?* (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2007), 114.

⁸⁸ Rosman, *How Jewish is Jewish History?*, 115. Vernon Lidtke, in his work on German social democratic culture, avoids the term “subculture” for fear that it underplays the porousness between sub- and dominant culture – the use of both “sub” and “counter” by Rosman seems to avoid this risk. Vernon Lidtke, *The Alternative Culture: the Socialist Labor Movement in Imperial Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 5-7.

communities in Britain. This monolithic process of anglicisation must be viewed as attenuated, criticised, opposed and challenged.

Both Yankev Shatsky, and Sol Liptzin, prominent scholars of the Yiddish press and Yiddish literature respectively, have described London as a transitory place which soon began to lose personnel to New York and other centres.⁸⁹ This dissertation will try to enrich our understanding of this transience. For Tsherikover Britain, or London in particular, played a pioneering role in the development of the Jewish workers movement in the United States. The truth lies somewhere between Shatsky, Liptzin and Tsherikover's appraisals. Although Britain was not as hospitable a centre for Yiddish politics or culture as America, it served briefly as an important meeting point for many figures who would go on to define Jewish history in the 20th Century, Chaim Weizmann, Joseph Haim Brenner and Ahad Ha'am, and a host of more minor Jewish historical figures. What London offered and failed to provide to the Jewish intelligentsia in this period, specifically in how it interacted with the Yiddish public sphere, helps us better understand Jewish history more globally.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Sol Liptzin, *A History of Yiddish literature* (New York: Jonathan David Publishers, 1972), 368-369. Yankev Shatsky, "Prese bay yidn: geshikhte fun der yidisher prese," in *Di Algemeyne Entsiklopedye*, vol. 3 (Yidn) (New York: Dubnov Fund and CYCO, 1942), 251-254. When Shatsky lists the bibliographical sources there is not one article or monograph about the Yiddish press in Britain.

⁹⁰ Recent work by historians has focussed on exploring the complex international relations between different Yiddish centres and cultures. Tony Michels has emphasised the importance of understanding Yiddish cultural production as being multipolar, while Eric Goldstein and Hagit Cohen have analysed how and why the Yiddish press could be more successful at different historical moments in the US than in Eastern Europe. See Tony Michels, "Exporting Yiddish Socialism: New York's role in the Russian Jewish Workers' Movement" *Jewish Social Studies* 16:1 (Fall 2009): 1-26, Eric L. Goldstein, "A Taste of Freedom: American Yiddish Publications in Imperial Russia" in *Transnational Traditions*, ed. Ava F. Kahn and Adam D. Mendelsohn (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2014), 105-139, Hagit Cohen "The USA-Eastern European Yiddish Book Trade and the

Recent British Jewish historiography has branched away from what David Feldman has described as the “triad” understanding of immigrant groups:

A population of immigrants whose vibrant religious practice and confrontation politics led to conflict with the established communal leaders and institutions; second an acculturated and decadent community of British-born Jews; and third, a majority population liable to be hostile to both foreigners and Jews” to emphasise instead their interaction and their hybridity.⁹¹

The two Jewish communities were not a community apart. Indeed some of the most consistently heroised or demonised figures in the Yiddish press were those such as Moses Gaster, Israel Zangwill and Joseph Cowen, who straddled both worlds. This dissertation explores the dynamism of transferral between the two communities and investigates some of the individuals who bridged the two worlds. Equally much British Jewish history has focussed on London. This dissertation, by focussing on a newspaper created and published for many years in Leeds, and also considering numerous pieces of writing covering what was known in the period as the “provinces”, aims to move beyond a London-centric investigation of this period.

The years 1896-1910 were when the Yiddish press was at its most diverse and arguably commercially successful. These years were also crucial in the

Formation of an American Yiddish Cultural Center, 1890s–1930s,” *Jews in Russia and Eastern Europe* 57, no. 2 (2006): 52–84. This dissertation aims to contribute to this conversation.

⁹¹ David Feldman, “Mr. Lewin Stein goes to parliament: rethinking the history and historiography of Jewish immigration,” *East European Jewish Affairs*, 47, no. 2-3 (2017): 135.

development of British Jewish life in Britain. In this period some of the gravest threats to Jewish political gains occurred: in France to emancipated Jews through the Dreyfus affair (1894-1906), notably the Boer War (1899-1902), the 1903 Kishinev Pogrom, the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) and the 1905 Russian Revolution and ensuing pogroms, the British anti-Alien agitation (1901-1906).⁹² This dissertation focusses on how these events shaped lives and politics within Britain.⁹³ This was also a period of intense activity for international organisations that tried to help their Jewish constituents, whether the organisations were explicitly Jewish or not. There was the International Socialist Workers and Trade Union Congress in London in 1896, the Zionist Congresses, especially the Fourth Congress in 1900, the Sixth Congress in 1903 and Seventh Congress in 1905 (both in Basel). It was the complex interaction of these international events, and their implications for domestic politics in the UK, that defined both the relative triumphs of these movements in the UK and their failures. This time period was the high point of British Yiddish life in terms of the abundance and diversity of Yiddish journalistic and associational activity, but it can also be used to mark the beginning of its decline. After 1906, and by 1910, many of the most important members of the British Yiddish journalistic intelligentsia had left Britain – the end of mass Jewish immigration to Britain meant that

⁹² Recent scholarship has explored the reception and cultural impact of the Aliens Act on the British public: Hannah Ewence, *The Alien Jew in the British imagination, 1881-1905: space, mobility and territoriality* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019) and David Glover, *Literature, Immigration, and Diaspora in Fin-de-Siècle England. A Cultural History of the 1905 Aliens Act* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). There has been little focus on the Yiddish language reception.

⁹³ Enormous coverage was given to these international events in particular – but in so far as much of it was reproduced from other sources, and resembles accounts from other diasporic centres, it is only when it differs and worked to shape life in Britain that it is covered in this dissertation.

the community increasingly spoke English. Yiddish, although still a crucial medium, could no longer compete with English for hegemony within British Jewish life.⁹⁴

It is important to avoid an overly simplistic binary between immigrant and “native” communities, and yet such are the force of these terms in the rhetoric of the period that some labels are needed to distinguish the two. For the “native” community the term “Anglo-Jewry” has been used to describe the English speaking Jewish community that existed before the arrival of the immigrant Jews. This label, “Anglo-Jewry” is largely a construction.

Historians, as discussed earlier, have explained the diversity and lack of unity of this community. But it remains a useful label to easily explain the Yiddish press’ target of reference. For the other side of the community the term “Eastern European Jews” has been used. This term may seem anomalous given that many of the Yiddish writers that are under question identified as Russian Jews - most of Eastern Europe was part of the Russian Empire through this period. However, the term is used here to mean Yiddish speaking Jews who arrived in Britain after 1880. Of course this label has flaws - for one, some parts of this community did not speak Yiddish but instead Russian or Polish. But again it is useful to label one side of the rhetorical field.

⁹⁴ This decline should not be overstated – the existence and important of Morris Myer’s daily *Di Tsayt* from 1913-1950 – of the Yiddish theatre for even longer, and of various other cultural and social organisations, shows that Yiddish contributed to British Jewish life throughout the 20th Century – and deserve scholarly attention – even if it became less significant. See conclusion.

Precision is also needed when defining British and English. English and British have different meanings: the former gestures towards an indigenous national identity while the latter signals a dynastic loyalty to the crown. During this period the Yiddish press used English and British almost interchangeably.⁹⁵ This was perhaps not simply a question of ignorance or semantic confusion. For one, the Yiddish press in Britain showed a very high level of acuity regarding contemporary events in Britain, and indeed elsewhere in the world. It is highly unlikely it would deliberately confuse these terms. It is more probable that the confusion comes from the relative similarity with Russian as a term. Russian was used not just to label the territorial confines of Russia but also those actions and areas coming under imperial Russian rule. In such a case the use of English and England underscores the Yiddish journalists' awareness that the imperial project of Britain was often motivated by the hegemony of English projects within it, as ethnic Russian concerns dictated the politics of the Russian empire. This interchangeability of the terms signals not simply naivety but instead a more cynical awareness of the machinations of empires.

Developments in the British Jewish community in this period must be brought into deeper conversation with the history of (Eastern) European Jewry. This dissertation aims to contribute to the growing scholarship on the interaction of diaspora nationalism within Jewish communities across Eastern and Western Europe. This scholarship has worked to displace a focus on the

⁹⁵ This is most obvious when discussions of places in Ireland take place. Events in Limerick proved that England had a Jewish problem. Leon J. Dolidanski, "Di limerik geshikhte" [The Limerick Story], *Der Londoner Yud* 10, April 29, 1904, 5-6.

institutional development of Zionism (at times becoming almost a Palestinocentrism) to look at broader Zionist and non-Zionist cultural and political nationalisms.⁹⁶ It has also reemphasised the importance of the nation, and the interlinked autonomisation, in Jewish projects of political modernisation.⁹⁷ In addition it has also viewed the growth in nationalism not as a response only to antisemitism but also in parallel to other local nationalisms.⁹⁸ This dissertation aims to contribute to this scholarship and to apply elements of its analysis to the British context. On one hand an assessment of Jewish political life in this period broadly concurs with the emphasis on Jewish nationalism as a stimulating force for broader projects of autonomy and modernisation. Jewish nationalism became a crucial rallying cry for the early development of the commercial Yiddish press in Britain.⁹⁹ Jewish nationalism in the Yiddish press was also in part a response to conceptions of British nationalism – this is explored in chapter 2. However, the periodisation of this dissertation (1896-1910) means that the development of new forms of Yiddish culture that this dissertation explores did not take place under the guise of a Yiddishist diaspora national politics -

⁹⁶ The following texts have been consulted from this burgeoning subfield of Jewish history: David Myers, "Is there still a "Jerusalem School?" Reflections on the state of Jewish historical scholarship in Israel," *Jewish History* 23 (2009): 389-406 and David Myers, "Was there a 'Jerusalem School?': An Inquiry into the First Generation of Historical Researchers at the Hebrew University." *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* 10 (1994): 66-92 provide a highly useful overview of the field. Important other sources of analysis are: Joshua Karlip, *The Tragedy of a Generation: The Rise and Fall of Jewish Nationalism in Eastern Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), Simon Rabinovitch, *Jewish Rights, National Rites: Nationalism and Autonomy in Late Imperial and Revolutionary Russia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), Joshua Shanes, *Diaspora nationalism and Jewish identity in Habsburg Galicia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), Kalman Weiser, *Jewish People, Yiddish Nation: Noah Prylucki and the Folkists in Poland* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011). Shanes goes as far as naming the heavy focus on Zionism "Zionist chauvinism." Shanes, *Diaspora Nationalism*, 5.

⁹⁷ Rabinovitch, *Jewish Rights*, 4-6.

⁹⁸ Shanes, *Diaspora Nationalism*, 9.

⁹⁹ This development has important similarities with the Yiddish press in Galicia, investigated by Shanes. *Diaspora Nationalism*, 109-148.

or at least not as it is conventionally understood, as being Bundist.¹⁰⁰ In fact some of the main vectors for Yiddish's cultural development were Zionist - both liberal and socialist. The anti-Zionist and anti-nationalist politics of the Social Democrats, as well as that of the better known Anarchists, argues against the idea that Jewish nationalism (Zionist or diaspora nationalist) was entirely hegemonic in this period.¹⁰¹ In reality, important anti-Zionist and anti-nationalist discourses were also prevalent (as well as Jewish territorial solutions that were not centred around Palestine). It is too great a leap to suggest that nationalism formed a community around which immigrant and non-immigrant Jews in Britain united - in fact it was one contested ideological arena amongst others.¹⁰² This dissertation chooses to emphasise the social and cultural forms which created community - even if ideologies remained actively contested in the pages of the Yiddish press and at the public meetings of the various political groupings.

The events and responses this dissertation describes prove that Britain was not a remote or disconnected factor in international Jewish life – nor in the

¹⁰⁰ Yiddishist projects of autonomy play an important role in the British context but within Zionist and anti-national social democratic political contexts. This is in great part because the flourishing of Jewish politics in Yiddish in Britain occurred before Yiddishism became mostly synonymous with the Bund (or smaller folkist parties). Nonetheless the same Yiddishist processes were beginning to take place, “the movement to transform Yiddish from a folk language and culture into the focal point of a modern Jewish identity and European *Kultur* in the twentieth century” even if not under what would come to be known later as an explicitly Yiddishist (ie Bundist) politics. Weiser, *Jewish People*, xiii.

¹⁰¹ This seems to some extent to be the argumentative conclusion of Shanes. This would seem an overstatement of the importance of Jewish nationalism, even if this dissertation would also emphasise, as per Shanes, “the interconnectedness and fluidity of all Jewish ideologies and political movements” - in particular by stressing the similarities in their organisational and institutional structures.” Shanes, *Diaspora Nationalism*, 10.

¹⁰² Benedict Anderson's analysis of nationalism and print culture remains helpful - but would underplay the heterogeneity of ideologies that were at stake in the Yiddish press in Britain in this period. e Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

development of new forms of diaspora politics. The collaborations and conflicts that marked Jewish life in Britain between 1896-1910, between socialists and Zionists, English language liberals and Jewish nationalists and particularists, foreshadowed similar encounters that took place later in the century in Eastern Europe. Analysis of the Yiddish language public sphere in Britain shows similar ideological and political conflicts that the work of historians such as Jonathan Frankel and Ezra Mendelsohn on Jewish mass politics in Eastern Europe have diagnosed. It would be wrong to ignore the history of Jews in Britain confronting these issues of political and social autonomy.

Language politics, and Yiddish in particular, played a significant role within this broader Eastern European diaspora nationalist politics. Many early pioneers of the Yiddish press, especially socialists and anarchists, at first used Yiddish in an instrumental fashion as a way of bringing their political message to the Yiddish-speaking masses.¹⁰³ Eventually Yiddish came to accrue a greater importance in of itself as a vehicle for Jewish identity and for projects of regeneration and modernisation.¹⁰⁴ Yiddish as a national language could be conceived as conveying a legitimacy to Jewish national projects. This gave Yiddish a new role beyond its instrumental advantage of allowing communication with the Jewish masses. This growth in the significance of Yiddish occurred in Britain too. In the period 1896-1910 Yiddish, and its possible political and cultural dimensions, became a site for

¹⁰³ See Shandler, *Yiddish*, 150-164,

¹⁰⁴ See David Fishman, *The Rise of Modern Yiddish Culture* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005), 3-47 and Barry Trachtenberg, *The Revolutionary Roots of Modern Yiddish, 1903-1917* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2008), 3-19.

community. This dissertation aims to contribute to the growing scholarship on language politics within Eastern European Jewish history in two ways. Firstly, it underlines the ideological flexibility and interchangeability of Yiddish within the British context around 1900. Yiddish as a vehicle for national renewal, or for cultural development, was proposed by different parties across the political spectrum: by mainstream Yiddish newspapers, by socialist Zionists, and by socialists.¹⁰⁵ All of these groups, in differing degrees, viewed Yiddish as having an important symbolic value. The two opposing camps that would define the language politics of the Eastern European Jewish diaspora in the 20th Century - Yiddishist diaspora nationalists on one side and Zionist Hebraicists on the other – had not yet formed.¹⁰⁶ In this period in Britain it was still the lingua franca for parties across the political spectrum. Indeed in chapter 3 it is argued that Zionists were some of the firmest advocates for the use of Yiddish as the primary language of communication.¹⁰⁷ This dissertation argues against an ahistorical backreading of later Jewish politics, particularly Bundist, onto the more flexible Jewish language politics of this earlier period.

Secondly, this dissertation wants to reinforce existing scholarship which has pointed to the complexity of Yiddishist ideology. Historian Joshua Karlip's

¹⁰⁵ Scholars have emphasised the similarities of these positions despite their ostensible differences. All desired a transformation of East European Jewry, see for example Trachtenberg, *Revolutionary Roots*, 14.

¹⁰⁶ This ideological battle over the different valencies of Jewish languages and their suitability for new projects of transformation should not be conceived as being limited to Yiddish and Hebrew: German too played a crucial role. See Marc Volovici, *German as a Jewish Problem: The Language Politics of Jewish Nationalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020).

¹⁰⁷ This is consistent with broader research on East European Jewry which has shown that the divergence between Zionists and other diaspora nationalists over the use of Yiddish grew greater over time, particularly after 1910. See Shandler, *Yiddish*, 153-4.

different definitions of Yiddishism's: the radical and national-romantic are very instructive here. For the former Yiddish "would liberate modern Jewish culture from a specific Jewish content and demolish the artificial boundary between the Jewish and the universal." For the latter Yiddish meant "the preservation of a Jewish national essence that survived the transformation of the Jews from a religious ethnicity to a modern nation."¹⁰⁸ This elaboration of the priorities of different Yiddishist camps, which was being articulated from the beginning of the 20th century, informs this investigation of the language politics of Yiddish in Britain from 1896-1910. Different parties within Britain viewed the use of Yiddish as falling between the particular and the universal, between a site of exchange and transaction and a source of authenticity. This dissertation tries to elaborate the different meanings of Yiddish to different political groupings, particularly in its discussion of the activities of the Socialist Zionists in chapter 3.

This dissertation wants to add a third dimension, however, to the existing scholarship on language politics and the different meanings of Yiddish. This is the commercial dimension of the Yiddish language press. The turn to Yiddish was a bid to increase profits in what was a competitive capitalist marketplace. Innovation within the Yiddish press was often triggered as much by this profit motive as by instrumental or symbolic concerns - after all the newspapers themselves carried almost as many adverts as they did editorials. Chapter 1 considers how different commercial considerations of

¹⁰⁸ Joshua Karlip, *The Tragedy of a Generation: The Rise and Fall of Jewish Nationalism in Eastern Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 20-21.

the Yiddish press can help us explain the needs and desires of the Yiddish press' readers. The empowerment of a newspaper reading public and the background of the British press and tabloid environment meant that editors more than ever had to compromise on their own political intentions and focus on readers' political and technological desires. By analysing the press as a commercial entity, the two central strands of Jewish history in this period can be rewardingly brought together: the upwards social mobility of British Jewry can be in part measured by the increasing business acumen of the expanding Yiddish press, while its growing political and Jewish national consciousness is also more evident in its pages. The press, part business and part political tribune, serves thus as a site of encounter between two parts of Jewish history that are often left asunder.¹⁰⁹ This dissertation also does not dismiss "commercial" Yiddish newspapers as an essential source for the history of the period.

Britain must be understood as being part of a network which stretched west from Eastern Europe to North America. Britain was a centre of Jewish immigrant politics and culture, and London was the third greatest urban centre for Eastern European Jewry outside of Eastern Europe.¹¹⁰ The comparison between Yiddish life in Britain and the US can be productive:

¹⁰⁹ This can lead to the strangely disembodied effect where modern Jewish politics is considered outside of the material and commercial constraints that were placed on its transmission. In putting emphasis on this commercial element I am deeply indebted to the work of Eric Goldstein: Eric Goldstein, "Reassessing Kasriel H. Sarasohn, Architect of the Modern Jewish Press," Lecture, *Association for Jewish Studies Annual Conference*, December 16, 2020. In a British context, this attempt to link the commercial and political spheres is indebted to Todd Endelman's analysis of their (unnecessary) divergence. Todd Endelman, "English Jewish History," *Modern Judaism* 11:1 (Feb 1991): 95..

¹¹⁰ Daniel B Schwartz, *Ghetto: The History of a Word* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019), 92.

Britain's Yiddish press and politics developed partly in tandem with New York and there were many similarities. Yiddish presses were pioneered in both cases by radicals before there was a consolidation into commercial and radical publications. There were also important differences that this dissertation tries to draw out. Many of the most important Yiddish intellectual figures in Britain would later move elsewhere. If historians have underlined the influence of Britain on the wider Yiddish world in the earlier period, it was true of this middle period (1896-1910) too - and perhaps the intellectuals such as Kalman Marmor and Leon Dolidanski reached even broader constituencies than their earlier radical predecessors. Understanding the particular environment of Jewish life in Britain, and the challenges it brought, can offer some contribution to how these same actors would later treat political and social questions in the US.

E.P Thompson wrote that:

The making of the working class is a fact of political and cultural, as much as of economic, history. It was not the spontaneous generation of the factory system. Nor should we think of an external force – the “industrial revolution” – working upon some nondescript undifferentiated raw material of humanity, and turning it out at the other end as a “fresh race of beings”... The working class made itself as much as it was made.”¹¹¹

Thompson's plea for attention to the agency of ordinary people within the broader processes of historical development needs to be made in a

¹¹¹ E. P Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, (London: Victor Gollancz, 1963), 213.

polylingual key. How did Jews in Britain refashion themselves? This dissertation turns to the Yiddish press for the answer.

c) Chapter Outlines

The first chapter tells the history of the Yiddish press in Britain up to the entry of the pioneering Yiddish newspaper *Der Idisher Ekspres*.¹¹² The *Idisher Ekspres* became the first enduring Yiddish-language daily newspaper in Britain. This success firstly has to be grounded in the context of the Leeds Jewish community – and this involves a significant decentring of British Jewish historical narratives that focus on London. Equally the *Ekspres* was also the product of non-Jewish and Jewish interaction. The *Ekspres* was important as the first successful commercial Yiddish newspaper in Britain - it was also the first long-term successful Yiddish newspaper in Britain to not be the product of a small radical grouping. It tried to present itself as a uniquely communal and representational organ. As the subject of fierce critiques, this newspaper must be understood as part of broader discussions within the immigrant Jewish community about what a Yiddish newspaper ought to be - and what editorial standards, in both content and material quality, it ought to meet. This political and cultural confrontation between different groups within the Yiddish journalistic community presents the Yiddish language press in Britain not as a direct voice of the immigrant community but instead as a site of contestation between different groups.

¹¹² Here I follow Prager's transcription, see *YCiB*, 329.

The second chapter of this dissertation explores the political and cultural positions of two important newspapers of the mainstream Yiddish press – the *Idisher Ekspres* and the *Idisher Zhurnal*. It explores these newspapers' growing criticism of the inadequacy of Anglo-Jewish communal support – and their attempts to intervene themselves in individual issues. A case study of one particular campaign – about the death of a Jewish immigrant in the workhouse – showed the new ambition but also limitations of the press' role in Jewish life in Britain. These newspapers developed a broader critique of the politics of anglicisation and emancipation that lay behind Anglo-Jewish communal intervention. A climate of growing antisemitism in Europe but also increasingly in Britain led to stronger rejections of emancipatory discourses. Instead the *Ekspres* and *Zhurnal* offered an enthusiastic endorsement of a nascent Jewish nationalism.

The third chapter moves beyond the mainstream Yiddish press to consider the radical Yiddish press. In the first years of the 20th Century movements and societies began to play an increasingly important role in London's Jewish immigrant life. This radical life was more diverse and influential than previous historical accounts have indicated. The Zionist Socialists, the Jewish Social Democrats, as well as the more researched Anarchists movement, all had newspapers and their own organs, *Koysel Mayrove*, *Di Naye Tsayt*, *Der Arbayter Fraynd*, respectively, but they also had physical club houses, cultural groups (choirs, theatre troupes) and could offer an alternative life to Jewish immigrants, a social and political counterculture. These groups, all deeply engaged with international Jewish and non-Jewish

political movements, offered ideological solutions to the problems of poverty and antisemitism. Instead of viewing them through the light of their mutual opposition to each other, this chapter argues that their similarities are more important: they all aimed to engage British immigrant Jews in a political and cultural life that lay outside of conventional British society. The most important legacy of these movements may well have been the individuals they brought together who would go on to play far greater roles in Jewish and non-Jewish political and cultural trends in America and Eastern Europe.

The fourth chapter explores the spaces that mediated the encounter between immigrant and English born Jews – and individuals who moved between the two worlds. Towards 1906 there were increasing signs of a reappraisal of the role of Yiddish for the Anglo-Jewish community. A new generation of cultural activists could make the case for Yiddish as one tool for integrating British Jewry into the international Jewish political world. The Anglo-Jewish newspapers the *Jewish World* and the *Jewish Chronicle*, hitherto key proponents of anglicisation, began to publish Yiddish-language supplements. These supplements were the product of complex motivations. The Anglo-Jewish community wanted to emphasise a different set of political and cultural priorities that were both domestic and international, and to win over immigrant Jewry to these. Their attempt gives a valuable insight into the politics and culture of both Anglo-Jewry and immigrant Jewry – it also argues against understandings of the immigrant Jewish community as separate or closed off – while emphasizing the polyvalency of Yiddish as a language for engagement between different groups.

The fifth chapter explores Yiddish literature in Britain between 1896 and 1910. In Britain, as elsewhere, the Yiddish press and Yiddish literature were complexly interwoven. Eastern European Jewish literature both enriched Yiddish newspapers, and criticised them from outside their pages. The British Yiddish literature of this period offers a potent combination of Eastern European Jewish literary norms with established Anglo-Jewish literary practices and traditions. It also attempted to synthesise and critique the challenges that Jewish immigration to Britain posed. It looked outwards to Eastern European Jewish life more broadly to detail the limitations of the new Jewish politics of Jewish nationalism and socialism, as well as of different aesthetic models and frameworks. A paradox begins to develop: British Yiddish literature can boast a fertile range of exacting texts, but thematically they tend to point to the unfeasibility of Britain as a host for what these writers think modern Jewish life should be.

Chapter 1: British Yiddish Journalism and *Der Idisher Ekspres*

a) Concise History of Yiddish Press until *Der Idisher Ekspres*

i) Origins and Ideologies

Leonard Prager's work offers the best existing summary of the Yiddish press in Britain can be found in an article written for the *Jewish Quarterly* in 1963, in the bibliography he published in 1969, and in his encyclopaedia, *Yiddish Culture in Britain*.¹ Perhaps a key source for Prager, but one that has not received attention more broadly, is Yankev Shatsky's "Geshikhte fun der yidishe prese" in the *Algemeyne Entsiklopedye*.² These more objective historical accounts need to also be compared with the various accounts written by those who were involved as journalists and editors.³ Various assertions and counter assertions from all of these sources make unravelling the history difficult: this is especially the case as many of the newspapers are no longer available to consult.

The history of the early Yiddish press in London is the story of ephemeral publications that rarely lasted beyond several issues. The first newspaper which has any bibliographical record is the *Londoner Yidish-Daytshe*

¹ Leonard Prager, "The Glory and Gloom of the Anglo-Yiddish Press", *Jewish Quarterly*, 11, 2 (1963), 9-11, Leonard Prager, "A Bibliography of Yiddish Periodicals in Great Britain (1867-1967)", *Studies in Bibliography and Booklore*, 9:1 (Spring 1969): 3-32. Leonard Prager, *Yiddish Culture in Britain*.

² Shatsky, "Prese bay yidn," 251-254.

³ These accounts are principally: Jacob Hodess, "Tsu der geshikhte fun der english-yidisher prese" [On the history of the English-Jewish press], *Yidn in England : Shṭudyes Un Maṭerialn, 1880-1940*, (New York: YIVO, 1966), 40-71. Marmor, *Mayn Lebns-geshikhte* (New York: YKUF, 1959), Moyshe Bekerman, "Yidishe Zhurnalistik in London 1913-1914," *Loshn un Lebn* 19, 8-9 (1958), 27-32, Leon Kreditor, "Mayn ershter redaktor: tsum 70 yorik yubileum fun Kalman Marmor," *Loshn un Lebn* 88, 5 (1947) 16-18.

Tsaytung (The London Yiddish-German Newspaper, London, 1867), followed by the weekly *Hashofer* (The Shofar, London, 1874), and then the *Londoner Izraelit* (London, 1878).⁴ This changed with the first newspaper to sustain a longer printing run, *Der Poylisher Yidl* (The Little Polish Jew, 1884, London), which Fishman describes as the first socialist newspaper in Yiddish (after 16 issues it changed its name to *Di Tsukunft*, The Future, 1884-1889, London).⁵ Edited by Morris Winchevsky, this newspaper has attracted more attention than any other British Yiddish journal, notably in an essay analysing its methods of discourse, and as part of the broader history of Jewish radicals in Britain.⁶ William Fishman remarks that “the editors tried to free it from the dilettantism of the folksy press - not always with success.”⁷ For Prager the “very name” of the newspaper “was a protest against the condescension and contempt of the anglicised Jews.”⁸ But the newspaper has also been seen as itself an anglicizing force. Anne Kershen writes of the *Poylisher Yidl* and other early Yiddish anarchist and socialist journals that “it was not only the Anglo-Jewish establishment, so recently emancipated, that was eager to encourage the process; intellectual refugees and home-grown socialists saw Yiddish as the vehicle for educating, organising and Anglicizing the exploited Jewish proletariat.”⁹ Kershen’s analysis usefully illustrates that the Yiddish

⁴ The Shofar is a horn blown in the synagogue on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

⁵ Leonard Prager, “A Bibliography of Yiddish Periodicals in Great Britain,” 24. William Fishman, “Morris Winchevsky’s London Yiddish Newspaper: One Hundred Years in Retrospect”, *The Second Annual Nokhem Stencl Lecture in Modern Yiddish Literature*, August 9, 1984 (Oxford: Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies, 1985), 4.

⁶ Marten-Finnis and Valencia, *Sprachinseln*, 19-50, and William Fishman, *East End Jewish Radicals*.

⁷ Fishman, *East End Jewish Radicals*, 91.

⁸ Prager, “The Glory and Gloom of the Anglo-Yiddish Press,” 9-10.

⁹ Kershen, “Yiddish as a Vehicle for Anglicisation”, 59.

press, despite its use of the Yiddish language, did not necessarily have to oppose anglicisation – even if in later periods it did so.¹⁰

Jacob Hodess, himself a British Yiddish journalist, offers a third dimension for considering these early newspapers, that moves beyond whether they were a protest against anglicisation or one of its agents.¹¹ Hodess writes that despite its radical origins, the *Poylisher Yidl* was *yidishlekh* (in the Jewish style).¹² For Hodess, newspapers of the period can be divided between those that were *yidishlekh*, and those which were not, such as the *Arbayter Fraynd* (Workers' Friend, 1885-1932, London). Hodess observes that while the conservative community always avoided the radical Yiddish press, some of the "maskilim" (modernisers proponents of the *Haskalah*, the Hebrew enlightenment), who did enjoy the *Poylisher Yidl* and the *Tsukunft*, held back from the "new clique which did not have any Jewish content and was not a product of a disciplined party, only consisting of a group of excited people - people, not Jews."¹³ The *Arbeter Fraynd* was produced by such a "clique." It went from being a monthly to a weekly, and then became an anarchist publication. Shatsky and Prager praise the merit of its translations from world literature.¹⁴ The socialists split from the *Arbeter Fraynd* in 1891. They began to publish their own journal *Di Fraye Velt* (The Free World) which existed for two years (1891-1892).¹⁵ In 1896, Avrom Frumkin, published a journal *Der*

¹⁰ Opposition to anglicisation within the Yiddish press is the subject of the second chapter of this dissertation.

¹¹ Hodess' life is explored in depth in chapter 4.

¹² Hodess, "Geshikhte fun der english-yidisher prese," 55.

¹³ Hodess, 58.

¹⁴ Shatsky, "Prese bay yidn," 253, Prager, "The Glory and Gloom of the Anglo-Yiddish Press," 10.

¹⁵ Shatsky, 254.

Propagandist (The Propagandist, which ran for approximately 10 issues), and Morris Winchevsky published 11 numbers of a socialist weekly *Der Veker* (The Waker, 1892-3, London).¹⁶ Shatsky also mentions a short run of *Di Epokhe* (The Epoch, 1889, London), published three times a week by the novelist Ezyer Bloshtayn.¹⁷

The early Yiddish journalistic sphere in Britain (1884-1896) was dominated by publications broadly serving socialist or anarchist ideological ends. This is not to say that the socialist press had been the mainstay from the beginning. At the margins of the Yiddish press in Britain were also newspapers that pursued religious aims. In 1894-5 Yitskhok Volf Metshik published a strictly orthodox weekly, *Hatsoyfe* (The Scout), which changed its name to *Der Idisher Observer* (The Jewish Observer, 1894-95, London).¹⁸ There was also *Hashulamis*, published in Mainz, Germany from 1882, and in London 1886-1895.¹⁹ Hodess identifies *Hatsoyfe* as being part of an upswing in interest in the Jewish press in the late 1890s, triggered by *Hatsoyfe's* provision of general information that did not demand too much from its readership, and by the Dreyfus affair.²⁰

¹⁶ Winchevsky's memoirs are an important resource, see Morris Winchevsky, *Der Meshugener Filozof in England* (New York: Forward Association, 1920) and Morris Winchevsky, *Erinerungen* (Moscow: Shul un Bukh, 1926). See Prager, "Bibliography," 24, has *Der Propagandist* as being published in London in 1897 and there being 10 copies. Frumkin's anarchist work in Britain is analysed in more depth in chapter 3.

¹⁷ Shatsky, "Prese bay yidn," 253

¹⁸ Prager, "Bibliography," 26. "Hatsoyfe/Hatzophe [sic] ('The Scout'). London. Weekly. Edited by Yitskhok-Volf Metshik [J. A. Meczyk], Organ of the extreme orthodox Machzikey Hadas. 1:1 -3:10; 2 March 1894 - 6 December 1895.'

¹⁹ Prager, 28.

²⁰ Hodess, "Geshikhte fun der english-yidisher prese," 59.

This study argues that the publication of the *Ekspres* and to some extent the *Zhurnal* too marks the decisive moment where a different journalistic model came into being in Yiddish London.²¹ The entry of these commercial Yiddish newspapers meant that the Yiddish press became less defined by only the special interest groups and their agendas, but also by the audience of Eastern European Jews that they catered to and needed to sell to, and the owners of these newspapers. This in turn won bigger audiences which enabled the production of daily editions. The *Ekspres* is, however, a paradoxical example of this, as it started as a political enterprise and became a commercial one. The *Ekspres* fits uneasily into the history of the Yiddish press in Britain partly because it marks a change from a narrative imported from the history of the American Yiddish press. In the U.S.A, the charismatic Yiddish journalist and editor Abraham Cahan (1860-1951) ran a newspaper, the *Forverts* (Forward, New York, 1897-present day) that was both commercially successful and politically committed. Historians, when looking to synthesise the complexity and diversity of the English Yiddish press, have turned to Cahan's example and focussed their attention on the Yiddish newspaper *Di Tsayt* (1913-1950) and its editor, Morris Myer (1876-1944). *Di Tsayt* had a similarly stable political position (broadly Zionist-socialist) and a single figure who represented it. But focussing on *Di Tsayt* misses the years that marked many of the key developments that defined the British Yiddish press (the establishment of the first dailies for example) and even important

²¹ There were other less successful and less long-living newspapers than the *Ekspres*, notably *Bril's Speshel* (1901-1904) and *Bril's Telefon* (1901-1906), see Yekhezkel Vortsman, "Di idishe prese in england" [The jewish press in England], *Der idisher kempfer*, June 21, 1907, 12, YCiB, 174. According to Vortsman these newspapers were written and produced single-handedly by Moyshe Bril (1860-1921).

parts of Myer's journalistic career itself.²² The *Ekspres*, whose editors were various, and whose political position was more ambiguous, was itself one of a broader array of other mainstream Yiddish newspapers and presents a more complex picture.²³

The *Ekspres* (1895) entered the scene as a weekly and soon became a daily (1900), after a change in ownership.²⁴ After its appearance there followed a great number of similar newspapers and undertakings, though many were far more ephemeral. During this period there was still the plethora of left-wing and radical publications, but *Der Ekspres*, through its growth and becoming a daily – and then its long life-span - became the most important of this period. It also forged a path for other Yiddish dailies which followed: *Der Yudishe Tageblat* (1901-1910, London), *Der Advertayzer* (1904-1905, London), *Der Idisher Zhurnal* (1905-1914, London), *Dos Naye Yidishe Tageblat* (1908-1909, London) *Londoner Yudishes Tageblat* (1909-1910, London), *Di Tsayt* (1913-1950, London) and its evening edition *Ovend Nayes* (1914-40, London), *Di Velt* (1915-1916, London) and its evening edition *Ovend Post* (1915-1916, London), *Unzer Tribune* (1916, London), *Di Yidishe Shtime* (1916, London).²⁵ The Newspaper Directory, a national source of information on newspapers that are published, lists only the *Ekspres* from 1901-1913,

²² See chapter 3 for Myer's earlier Yiddish press activity.

²³ The Cahan and *Forverts* focussed model is itself increasingly put into a broader perspective within US Jewish press history. See Eric Goldstein, "Reassessing Kasriel H. Sarasohn."

²⁴ The *Ekspres* was founded in 1895 but only entered Jewish ownership in 1896 – and copies are only available from this year onwards – this is why the years 1896-1910 and not 1895-1910 have been chosen.

²⁵ Prager, "Bibliography," 3-32. Prager's bibliography remains the most comprehensive source outside of his encyclopaedia, *Yiddish Culture in Britain*.

and in 1914 lists *Der Idisher Ekspres*, *Der Idisher Zhurnal* and *Di Tsayt*.²⁶ Of interest from a regional perspective is the *Yidishe Tsaytung* (1902-1903, Glasgow) which was at first a weekly and then a daily. Shatsky writes this was the first attempt to publish a Yiddish daily outside of London.²⁷ There was also the daily *Der Idisher Telegraf* (1908, Manchester). The *Idisher Ekspres* was the first enduring, successful commercial Yiddish newspaper that pioneered Yiddish journalism in Britain.

b) The British Yiddish Press in International Context

Given the paucity of writing on the British Yiddish Press, it is natural to want to contextualise the British Yiddish press internationally. Shatsky's work allows us to view Britain as developing the first and most significant Yiddish press in Western Europe. For a chronological comparison, the first (enduring) Yiddish daily newspaper in France was published in 1926, in Copenhagen there was a brief attempt in 1914.²⁸ There is possible evidence of collaboration between Yiddish journalists in France and England much later in the shape of *Di 7 Teg Ilustrirt* (1928, Paris), which Prager notes was "advertised as [a] joint Paris-London venture, but actually [was] published in Paris."²⁹ Even more ambitious was *Di Tribune* (1915-1927, Copenhagen, London, Berlin, Vienna) which reached across Europe. In the US there was a daily as early as 1881, but the first that endured, the *Yudishes Tagesblatt*, was published from January 1885 through to April 1928.³⁰ As regards

²⁶ Mitchell's *Newspaper Press Directory*, (London: Mitchell, 1901-1914).

²⁷ Shatsky, "Prese bay yidn", 253.

²⁸ Shatsky, 254-256.

²⁹ Prager, "Bibliography," 18.

³⁰ Shatsky, "Prese bay yidn," 259.

circulation, the figures for the U.S.A are very high: in 1900 there were three dailies with a circulation of 66 252, by 1915 10 dailies with a circulation of 605 705.³¹ Currently we are without exact, or even approximate figures for the UK, as was the case in Gartner's time.³²

If the British Yiddish Press owes much to broader trends and developments in Jewish life in the late 19th Century, it is also essential to understand how the *Ekspres* was part of a flourishing Jewish press landscape in Britain. The East End Yiddish press, and especially its journalists, was not exclusively in binary opposition to the more established Anglo-Jewish press, but in a form of dialogue with it. Cesarani traces a changing newspaper landscape of which Yiddish became a key component. In the 1870s lower costs meant that newspapers revenues increased and they expanded nationwide.³³ With this process there was also "a more vigorous style".³⁴ These changes affected the Jewish community, and after a long period as the unthreatened champion of Jewish journalism, *The Jewish Chronicle* was threatened with a rival, *The Jewish World*, (1873-1937).³⁵ The *World* had been purchased by wealthy communal figures in 1900, and then developed into something that "was lively to read, well-illustrated and unashamedly populist in its politics."³⁶ It was the growing success of this newspaper, and a change in communal attitudes, which led to a highlight of British Yiddish history, a moment when

³¹ Shatsky, 271.

³² "However, we do not know much about their [Yiddish Newspapers] circulation, their staffs, or their influence as leaders or followers of opinion." Gartner, *Jewish Immigrant*, 259.

³³ Cesarani, *Jewish Chronicle and Anglo-Jewry*, 68.

³⁴ Cesarani, 68.

³⁵ We must also not forget the fact that the Yiddish press itself was a rival to the *Jewish Chronicle*. Cesarani, 96.

³⁶ Cesarani, 69.

both these two Anglo-Jewish papers began to publish Yiddish supplements – this is the subject of Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

The *Jewish Chronicle* had been vociferously anti-Yiddish.³⁷ It avoided topics that concerned East End Jewry or might paint them in a bad light, and it ignored Yiddish overall.³⁸ It did not carry a Yiddish advert until 1898.³⁹ After chaos caused by alarm about a fire in a Yiddish theatre which caused several deaths in 1887, the newspaper castigated Yiddish theatre: “The recent event ought to be a lesson to avoid such performances of strolling minstrels acting in the jargon and helping to keep up the alienation of the foreign contingent.”⁴⁰ The *JC* opposed the use of Yiddish at school prizegivings and argued the Board of Guardians, a charity for helping poor Jewish immigrants, should not help anyone unable to speak adequate English.⁴¹

Cesarani, in his history of the *Jewish Chronicle*, points to a softening in 1898, when reports on the Yiddish press began, and most of all in 1901 with the use of Yiddish to publicise the census.⁴² But in the climate of the Aliens Act (1906), which the *JC* opposed, suddenly Yiddish culture started to be viewed differently. In the *Jewish Chronicle* of the 17th of August, 1906, an editorial ran:

³⁷ Cesarani, 78,

³⁸ Cesarani, 81. Notably it avoided the Lipski case and the Jack the Ripper cases.

³⁹ Cesarani, 270 fn 36.

⁴⁰ *Jewish Chronicle*, February 18, 1887. See also Cesarani, *The Jewish Chronicle and Anglo-Jewry*, 78.

⁴¹ Cesarani, 78.

⁴² Cesarani, 78.

It should be a serious consideration whether, even at some risk of appearing to accentuate our separation as a people, it would not be to our interest to submit to the prevalence of Yiddish with a view to its becoming a Jewish Esperanto, a *lingua franca*, making for our greater solidarity and linking more closely the sympathy between our brethren throughout the world.⁴³

The flexibility and dynamism of the British press environment needs to be emphasised.

The British National press between 1900-1910 appears relatively fascinated by Yiddish and its culture, reporting with great curiosity on the British Yiddish theatre, on disputes between British Yiddish newspaper proprietors, on books on Polish Jewish history, on the Czernowitz conference, and on policemen learning Yiddish (and this interest stretches from the *Manchester Guardian* through to the *Daily Mail* and *Times*).⁴⁴ British Jewish history has focused on a supposed Anglo-Jewish abhorrence for Yiddish as a jargon or slang. Yet the broader birth of interest in Yiddish, for Jews and non-Jews alike, a foreign language with a fascinating culture that had hitherto been underappreciated, deserves attention too.⁴⁵ This interest was not confined to English Jews: non-Jews were also interested in this new language and culture on their doorstep.

⁴³ *Jewish Chronicle*, August 17, 1906, 9.

⁴⁴ See for example *Daily Mail*, March 24, 1905, 5 or *Times*, April 18, 1907, 3.

⁴⁵ In fact Cesarani has already signalled this in less detail when he chronicles a changing attitude at the *Jewish Chronicle* during this period. Cesarani, *The Jewish Chronicle and Anglo-Jewry*, 78-100.

c) History of *Der Idisher Ekspres*

i) The genesis of the *Idisher Ekspres*: Gavazzi King and the Liberal Newspaper

Shatsky writes extremely briefly of the weekly *Ekspres* (1896): “Early on in Leeds, and then from 1899 in London as a daily (until 1901).” Prager himself in his article for the *Jewish Quarterly* scarcely comments on the *Ekspres*, except to observe that it meant that Britain could boast a Yiddish daily from 1896 to 1950 (incorrect given that the *Ekspres* was a daily only from 1900) and that the “standards were not below those of the popular English-language press”.⁴⁶ He comments more lengthily in *Yiddish Culture in Britain*:

Periodicals which enjoyed longevity were either organs satisfying the real needs of a mass audience, or select-audience journals surviving in an inhospitable climate through the self-sacrifice of a leader and small discipleship. When, in 1895, the Leeds Liberal Party candidate Gavazzi King saw that a Yiddish weekly could be helpful in attracting Jewish votes, the viable *Der Idisher Ekspres* [sic] was born. This paper, which became a daily in 1900 and moved to London in 1904, did not merely report news in Yiddish which could be found elsewhere in English. It was in close touch with its readers, understood their fears and hopes, enlisted their sympathies and fought their battles. Moreover, it was cited with respect by Yiddish papers throughout the world. In 1926, the *Ekspres* was absorbed by *Di post*, which was in competition with Moris Mayer's *Di Tsayt* (1913-1950) and finally expired in 1935.⁴⁷

Gavazzi King was indeed the individual behind the *Ekspres*, but he was not a liberal candidate for parliament. In fact he was a liberal agent, who was also the manager of a Liberal Leeds weekly, the *Leeds Express*.⁴⁸ King lived a

⁴⁶ *YCiB*, 11.

⁴⁷ Prager, “Glory and Gloom,” 11.

⁴⁸ Mitchell's *Newspaper Press Directory*, 1894.

picaresque life. Before working entirely in politics as a liberal agent, in Sleaford, Tewkesbury and Hornsey, he had worked as a journalist, his most prominent role being his time as managing editor of the *Leeds Express*.⁴⁹ He was also involved in druidism, occupying druid high office, and later involved in the development of cinema in Britain as a founder and then secretary of the Cinematograph Exhibitors' Association of Great Britain and Ireland.⁵⁰ As Gavazzi King was already managing editor of a local weekly, it would have been easier for him to start publishing a Yiddish newspaper. But it was also unexpected. "The first person who created in England a large Yiddish newspaper was a *Christian*," Yekhezkel Vortsman wrote.⁵¹ That a non-Jew would found arguably Britain's most important Yiddish newspaper is perhaps not as surprising as it first seems. Historians have long emphasised the porousness of relations between Jews and non-Jews in this period. In any case, King was not the managing director for long.

The entry in the *Newspaper Directory*, that we might fairly presume King authored, is intriguing:

Jewish Express. Friday, 1*d*.

INDEPENDENT. - Established January 21, 1895.

Circulates amongst the Jewish people all over the Kingdom, and also abroad.

Jewish Express contains a digest of the week's news, a letter from a Russian correspondent, a story by the great writer 'Spector,' a translation of the 'Vale of Cedars,' and a short story, and articles on Jewish questions by prominent writers.

⁴⁹ "Mr. Gavazzi King", *Gloucestershire Echo*, January 16, 1933, 6.

⁵⁰ Mr. Gavazzi King", 6.

⁵¹ Vortsman, "Idishe prese in England," June 14, 1907, 12.

Great attention is given to news. In fact this is the only Jewish newspaper in England.

*Publisher - W Gavazzi King.*⁵²

We should note that even at its very beginning, the *Ekspres* understood itself as a uniquely representative organ. It certainly was not, however, “the only Jewish newspaper”, especially as the *Jewish Chronicle* is listed in the same volume. We might suspect that King had mistranslated from the Yiddish title of the newspaper and had meant to write the only *Yiddish* newspaper (which itself was also untrue, but might perhaps have had some worth as a statement if we understood that it was the only Yiddish newspaper established enough to have an entry in the *Newspaper Directory*). The other alternative is that King, after all not a member of the Jewish community of Leeds, might have simply been ignorant of the broader Jewish community and its publications. Also important is how it emphasises that it is read in Leeds, all over the country and also abroad, but also likewise contains overseas writing (in this case the Yiddish writer Mordecai Spector, (1858-1925)).

The *Ekspres*’s foundation was a collaboration between Jews and non-Jews, and a very successful one at that (and one that took place outside of London, in Leeds). This points to supporting the view that the Jewish community was not hermetically sealed from outside contact. However, it was also an institution that saw itself from the beginning as part of a transnational

⁵² *NPD*, 1896.

conversation (through its inclusion of Eastern European writers such as Spector, but also its audience).

ii) A Leeds Newspaper

To look at the *Ekspres* without considering the differences in the Leeds Jewish community to elsewhere would be to fall into a London-centric lens. The Jewish community of Leeds was indeed quite different from other British Jewish immigrant communities. London, Manchester and Liverpool all had substantial Jewish communities before the great wave of immigration from Eastern Europe, whereas Leeds, for example, had only approximately 100 Jewish immigrants living there in 1851.⁵³ The Leeds community, in line with the burgeoning tailoring trade, expanded exponentially. In the 1880s it was 6 000, and by 1904 it was between 15 000 to 20 000.⁵⁴ In parallel, industry exploded: Sir Montagu Burton's garment factory started on a small scale in 1900 and by 1921 it had become the largest clothing manufacturer in the world.⁵⁵ This dominance of immigrant Jewry in the community, far higher than elsewhere for a substantial Jewish centre, is an explanation for why no Jewish newspaper prospered there except for the Yiddish *Ekspres*. Jewish political and civic engagement in the community also developed quickly: in 1899 there was the first Jewish justice of the peace and in 1904 the first Jewish city councillor.⁵⁶ This unique lack of an older Anglo-Jewish

⁵³ Ernest Krausz, *Leeds Jewry: Its History and Social Structure* (Cambridge: W. Heffer and Sons, 1964), 28.

⁵⁴ Krausz, *Leeds Jewry*, 6.

⁵⁵ Krausz, 29.

⁵⁶ Murray Freedman, *Leeds Jewry, the First Hundred Years*, (Leeds: Jewish Historical Society of England, Leeds Branch, 1992), 18.

component, meant that Leeds possessed a confidence to resist and criticise the norms that Anglo-Jewry sought to impose on immigrant Jews.⁵⁷ The community was also not as extensively targeted by radicals as the London immigrant community was, though we might dispute the explanation that this was because the struggle to survive left little time for politics.⁵⁸ A paradox lies at the centre of the Leeds context for this Yiddish newspaper: although it clearly makes sense that the strongest, or at least most exclusively, immigrant community would lead to the first Yiddish newspaper, it is less expected that this newspaper would be the result of a non-Jew's vision.

It would have been easy for the story of the newspaper to have ended with the particular Liberal campaign for which it had come into existence. But the purchase of the newspaper by the Ginzburg brothers from Gavazzi King meant that it came into ownership of members of the community, which led to its rapid development. On the 6th of November, 1896, the new proprietors wrote a letter to their readers, explaining their intentions.⁵⁹ They announced that their new proprietorship was an honour, but one which took much effort

⁵⁷ James Appell, "The Jews of Leeds: Immigrant Identity in the Provinces 1880-1920," *New Directions in Anglo-Jewish History* ed. Geoffrey Alderman (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2010) 27.

⁵⁸ Appell, "The Jews of Leeds," 37. Leeds was a hotbed for a different kind of radical to the earlier anarchists and socialists, it was a centre for socialist Zionism. Appell's thesis that the level of poverty affected the scope of radicalism seems a difficult hypothesis to sustain as Jews in London and elsewhere were equally impoverished. This argument has also been employed by Yankev Meytlis to explain why British Yiddish activity was less than in the U.S. Yankev Meytlis, "Der YIVO-opteyl in london: a kapitl zikhroynes fun di draysiker yorn," [The YIVO branch in London: a capter of memoirs about the thirties] in *Studies in the Cultural Life of the Jews in England* ed. by Dov Noy and Issachar Ben-Ami (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1975), 85.

⁵⁹ Ginzburgs (Brothers), "Tsu unzere lezer", *Der Idisher Ekspres*, November 6, 1896, 4.

and a lot of money (“shveres gelt”), and that they knew the responsibility they had taken upon themselves.⁶⁰

The publishing of a newspaper, and a Yiddish one at that, is not a private business, but a community affair. A Yiddish (‘yidishe’) newspaper, and especially the *Ekspres* in its current position, is a thing which belongs morally to the foreign Jews in England. It is their newspaper, their friend, and that which looks after their interests.⁶¹

The Ginsburgs went on to stress their altruistic motives.

Not the love of money, not the hope of doing good business moved us to take such a step. We know well that we are not doing as well with Yiddish as with the living languages. The day is still far off when the jargon literature will give profit like English literature, but we do it from a feeling of duty.⁶²

The brothers argue that the unprofitability of Yiddish journalism shows their commitment is to the community. Crucially there is also a communal aim: “We are Jews and we know that a newspaper is the only way to raise the morale of our brothers.”⁶³ They also stated: “We hope that readers will quickly find out that the newspaper has improved, taken out of Christian hands and into Jewish ones.”⁶⁴ Understandably they point to the fact that the

⁶⁰ Ginzburgs (Brothers), “Tsu unzere lezer”, 4.

⁶¹ Ginzburgs, 4. “Dos aroysgebn fun eyn tsaytung, un eyn yidishe dertsu, iz nit a privat biznes, nor a klal zakh. Eyn yidishe tsaytung, un nokh der “ekspres” dertsu in zayn yetstiger pozitsyon, iz a zakh vos gehert moralish tsu di forene yidn in England. Es iz zeyer tsaytung, zeyer fraynd, un der vos bazorgt zikh vegn ale zeyere interesn.”

⁶² Ginzburgs, 4. “Nit di libe tsu gelt, nit di hofnung gute biznes tsu makhn hot undz bavogn aza shrit tsu makhn. Mir veysn gut az mir haltn nokh nit azoy vayt mit yidish vi mit di lebendike shprakhn. Der tog iz nokh vayt ven di zhargonishe literatur vet kenen gebn profit vi di englishe, ober a gefil fun pflikht [sic].”

⁶³ Ginzburgs, 4. “Mir zaynen yidn un mir veysn dos a tsaytung iz der eyntsiker mitl oyfstuheybn dem moralishn tsushtand fun undLYLPFe brider.”

⁶⁴ Ginzburgs, 4. “mir hofn dos di lezer veln gikh oysgefinen dos di tsaytung hot zikh farbesert aroysgeyendik fun kristlikhe hent in yidishe.”

previous owners did not know what was written in the newspaper. The Ginzburg brothers also pledged to spare no expense and effort to make the newspaper as good as possible – this entailed hiring more staff alongside existing staff and remaining apolitical – giving space to anyone to express their opinion. Despite their earlier criticism, they also thank Gavazzi King for making the *Ekspres* a paper whose high standard they appreciate.⁶⁵

Were they right to thank Gavazzi King? A look in the *Yorkshire Evening Post* and the *Leeds Mercury* hint at why and how the Ginzburg brothers came to own the newspaper.⁶⁶ King was no stranger to controversy in his turbulent life. We can read elsewhere of him being prosecuted for organising lectures on Sundays.⁶⁷ King seems to have become involved with a wages scandal connected to a Yiddish journalist he employed. He had found him at a conversion hostel, which aimed to convert Jews to Christianity, and then promised him higher wages than he would ever pay him in Leeds. A desire to escape the legal consequences of his dishonest labour practices might have been King's reason for selling the *Ekspres*.

From the Ginzburg brothers credo we see a key difference that marks the *Ekspres* out from its earlier rival publications. Whereas the early Yiddish radical press was concerned with its editors shaping public opinion (mostly for socialism), the *Ekspres*, bar the brief reference to “raising the morale” is viewed by its proprietors as something that ought to reflect the community.

⁶⁵ Ginzburgs, 4.

⁶⁶ *Yorkshire Evening Post*, January 10, 1896,4, *Leeds Mercury*, January 11, 1896.

⁶⁷ *York Herald*, February 28, 1894, 4.

The editorial line is declared to be neutral: “The *Ekspres*, then as now, remains apolitical, and free for anyone to express their opinion.”⁶⁸ Despite the brothers “protests” about their not making profit, the newspaper was a business and needed to sell copies and advertising space.⁶⁹ Nor did the newspaper have an explicitly anglicising mission. Instead it seems to simply acknowledge its readers as both Jews and Englishmen, without stressing any inherent contrast: “As before it will tackle all questions that relate to Jews, as Jews and as Englishmen.”⁷⁰ The newspaper in the same issue elsewhere carries the mottos: “The *Ekspres* is the echo of the Russian and Polish Jews in England” and “*The Ekspres* is the mirror of the Jews in England.”⁷¹ These slogans show again the representative and community-minded attitude of the *Ekspres*.

The *Ekspres* marked a change in direction for the Yiddish press in Britain. Here was a newspaper that claimed it was apolitical, ran as a business, and that aimed to represent its immigrant readers as both Jews and Englishmen (while also acknowledging them as immigrants).⁷² What remained to be seen was whether it would be a success.

⁶⁸ Ginzburg Brothers, “Tsu unzere lezer,” 4. “Der Ekspres vi frier azoy yetst, blaybt umpartayish, un fray far yedn oystsudrikn zayne meynung.”

⁶⁹ Hodes, “Geshikhte fun der english-yidisher Prese,” 60. Hodes also suggests the brothers did indeed do it for profit, as well as wanting to please their father, and for the more idealistic reasons they give (serving the community).

⁷⁰ Ginzburg Brothers, “Tsu unzere lezer,” 4. “Azoy vi frier vet er bahandlen ale fragen velkhe zaynen negeye yidn, als yidn un als englander.”

⁷¹ *Der Idisher Ekspres*, 6th November 1896, 3, 5. “Der ‘ekspres’ iz der vider kol fun di rusishe un poylishe yidn in England”, “der ‘ekspres’ iz der shpigl fun di yidn in england.”

⁷² For Vortsman the distinction was between the previous mainstay of the “organ tsaytung” [an organ newspaper, ie a political newspaper] and the *Ekspres* was a “shund tsaytung” [a lowbrow, sensationalist newspaper]. See Vortsman, “Idishe prese in England,” June 21, 1907, 12, and July 12, 1907, 12.

iii) Move to London and Technological Upgrade: Becoming a Daily

The next most significant event in the history of *Der Idisher Ekspres* was its move to London, where it expanded and became a daily newspaper. Early signs of the increased ambition and scope can be seen between two issues in May 1897, where the *Ekspres* is newly emblazoned with a banner reading: “London, Leeds, Manchester, Edinburgh, Dublin.”⁷³ By the 5th of January 1900 the slogan along the top read: *The Jewish Express*: the only recognised organ of the community circulates everywhere where Jews reside.⁷⁴ But the biggest development came on June 22nd 1900.⁷⁵ In a notice taking the best part of a page, the proprietors announce that they have moved the main office, the editorial department and the printing from Leeds to 89 Commercial Street London. The notice boasts of the great expense they have gone to fix the new office up with the “latest, best and quickest machines for printing.”⁷⁶ They vaunt new technology: the *Ekspres* will now be printed electrically with linotype machines, and it is the first time a Yiddish newspaper and Yiddish print will be set with linotype (as Yiddish is read the other way round to English the machines had to be built especially for the *Ekspres*).⁷⁷ This level of capital investment marked the newspaper out from its socialist and anarchist rivals: they often struggled to find the funds to print from week to week and worked from only one machine that they would pass from individual to individual.⁷⁸ The *Ekspres*’s move to London would make it

⁷³ *Der Idisher Ekspres*, 14th May 1897, 1 and 21st May 1897, 1.

⁷⁴ *Der Idisher Ekspres*, 5th January 1900, 1.

⁷⁵ *Der Idisher Ekspres*, 22nd June 1900, 6.

⁷⁶ *Der Idisher Ekspres*, 22nd June 1900, 6. “Letste, beste un shnelste mashineri tsum drukn.”

⁷⁷ *Der Idisher Ekspres*, 22nd June 1900, 6.

⁷⁸ Avrom Frumkin gives the best account of the fragility of the anarchist press. Frumkin, *In friling*, 73-150. The first issue of *Di Naye Tsayt* was beset by technical issues, see chapter 3.

richer in content and the machines will make it more beautiful in form. Finally, presumably with an eye to attracting advertisers, they claimed that it was the biggest Yiddish printer in England.⁷⁹ The Yiddish newspapers in Britain in this period supplemented the income from selling newspapers with other printing jobs.

The move to London put the *Ekspres* in the “Yiddish Fleet Street” that A Abrahams described later:

The stretch of Whitechapel road extending from opposite London Hospital westwards was the Yiddish Fleet Street of those days. It was around that area that the Yiddish dailies and weeklies were published: the old *Journal*, the *Jewish Post*, the *Jewish Express*, and a host of trade union and Zionist publications which catered for the Yiddish-speaking population. The newspapers were bounded up with printing presses of their own which worked also as commercial printers; for a great deal of the commerce of the neighbourhood, wholesale as well as retail, was conducted in that language. Letterheads and invoice books were in many cases printed in both Yiddish and English, and the same applied to the correspondence, and to the announcements on shop windows. It was a life of its own, compact, vigorously competitive, and very tenacious of custom and habit brought from far afield.⁸⁰

On Friday July 20th 1900 there came even bigger news: readers could now get a daily edition of the *Ekspres* for a halfpenny from Sunday the 22nd of July.⁸¹ The newspaper boldly stated that “everyone knows it is the only representative of the Jewish community and the echo of our brothers in the

⁷⁹ *Der Idisher Ekspres*, 22nd June 1900, 6.

⁸⁰ A Abrahams, “End of an Era” in *The Jewish Monthly* 4, 9 (1950), 572-577. The description of this area resembles the famous Yiddish journalistic hub of East Broad in New York.

⁸¹ *Der Idisher Ekspres*, July 20, 1900, 6. The weekly would still exist and cost one penny

whole kingdom of England.”⁸² It goes on to say that “the daily *Express* will treat all Jewish questions, correspondences, articles and novels by the best writers... The daily as well as the 1d. weekly *Ekspres* will still always be ready to advance justice for the Jewish public.”⁸³

The *Ekspres*'s decision to expand and release a daily, shows us a second key development. The Ginzburg brothers' investment had paid off and the *Ekspres* clearly represented significant potential for business expansion. Historians as well as Yiddish journalists themselves have underlined the importance of dailies within the Yiddish press' development – the existence of dailies marked a maturation of the Yiddish press and meant it could compete with the non-Jewish press.⁸⁴ The *Ekspres* was not just an innovation in its new apolitical direction; its expansion suggests a substantial demand for Yiddish journalism and gives us a sense of how important Yiddish newspapers had become.

d) The *Ekspres*'s journalists

Who were the journalists who worked for the *Ekspres* and later the *Zhurnal* – a similar rival newspaper established in 1905? The extensive use of pseudonyms and the practice of publishing articles without naming their authors, as well as the very limited Yiddish language history of the Yiddish

⁸² *Der Idisher Ekspres*, July 20, 1900, 6. “Vi es iz bekant alemen, dos der “Idisher Ekspres” iz der eyntsiker fartreter fun der yidisher gemeynde un iz der *vider kol* fun unzere brider in gants malkhes England.”

⁸³ *Der Idisher Ekspres*, July 20, 1900, 6. “Der “teglekher ekspres” vet bahandlen ale yidishe frages, korespondentsyes, artiklen un romanen fun di beste shrayber...der “teglithe ekspres” vi der 1d.diker vokhentlekh Ekspres vet imer zayn gegreyt forsubrengen di gerekhtikeyt fun dem yidishn publikum.”

⁸⁴ See Stein, *Making Jews Modern*, 25-30.

press in England, makes answering this question difficult. But the key protagonists are possible to identify, even if we must settle for a lesser degree of certainty than would be the case if analysing newspapers today.

The first editor of the *Ekspres* was Leon J Dolidanski (1868-1935).⁸⁵ His vision and purpose helped to define the mainstream Yiddish press in Britain. Dolidanski was born in the Vilna region and studied there. He later immigrated in the 1890s to Leeds where he was employed to edit the *Ekspres*. When the *Ekspres* moved to London and became a daily, Dolidanski moved with it, leaving in 1904 to go on to found the rival daily the *Zhurnal* before in 1906 emigrating to America. At his farewell gathering Dolidanski “received among other appreciative messages, a glowing testimonial from Israel Zangwill.”⁸⁶ In America he became one of the main editorial members of the *Yidishes Tageblatt* (1885-1928), a newspaper that in 1884 had become “the first successful daily in the Yiddish language anywhere in the world.”⁸⁷ He was lured to the *Tageblatt* on the suggestion that he would become its editor, but this was never to materialise.⁸⁸ There, Dolidanski won a reputation for his reporting on Zionist conferences. He also wrote for *Der Yud* (edited in Warsaw, published in Krakow, 1899-1902) and for the Hebrew language press.

⁸⁵ Here and throughout this chapter the principle biographical references are Shmuel Niger, *Leksikon fun der Nayer Yidisher Literatur* (New York: Altveltlekhn Yidishn Kultur-Kongres, 1956-1981) forthwith as *LNYL*, Zalmen Rayzn, *Leksikon fun der Yidisher Literatur, Prese un Filolgye* (Vilna: Kletskin, 1926-29) as *LYLPF*, and as specified before, Leonard Prager, *Yiddish Culture in Britain* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1990) as *YCiB*. For Dolidanski see *LNYL* vol 2. 444 and *LYLPF* vol 1. 660, *YCiB* p205 and Bernard G. Richards, “An Editor Held in Reserve: An Episode in the History of Yiddish Journalism,” *American Zionist*, September-October, 1965, 25-26.

⁸⁶ Richards, “An Editor Held in Reserve,” 26.

⁸⁷ Goldstein, “Reassessing Kasriel H. Sarasohn, Architect of the Modern Jewish Press.”

⁸⁸ Richards, “An Editor Held in Reserve,” 25-26.

Dolidanski's key collaborator at the *Ekspres* was Elieser Lazarus Leizerovitz (1859-1919).⁸⁹ Leizerovitz arrived in the UK in 1898 and was naturalised in 1905. His witnesses were the leading lights in anglophone Zionism in Britain: Leopold Greenberg (a later editor of the *Jewish Chronicle*) and Joseph Cowen. On Leizerovitz's gravestone it reads: "he dedicated all his life to Zion." Leizerovitz may have been an even more dedicated servant to the Zionist cause than Dolidanski.

Hyman Polski (1875-1944) was the third member of the editorial staff; he played an especially important role in the early issues of the *Ekspres*, predominantly authoring *Shund* (lowbrow, sensationalist fiction) but occasionally writing editorial pieces.⁹⁰ Born in Skidl in Grodno province, he emigrated to England when he was young where he worked in a tailor's shop during the day and wrote at night. He also worked successfully as a photographer. He wrote initially for the sporadic London Yiddish newspaper *HaShulamis* (London, 1886-1895), before working for the *Ekspres*.⁹¹ He wrote for the New York newspapers *Yidishe Gazeten* (New York, 1874-1928) and *Morgn Zhurnal* (New York, 1901-1971). In 1910 he emigrated to South Africa where he was to become a veteran of the South African Yiddish press.

⁸⁹ I am grateful to Clive Lambert, great-grandson of Leizerovitz, for sharing these details with me.

⁹⁰ *LNYL* vol 7. 94 and *LYLPF* vol 2. 863-4. One of these pieces is analysed in depth in chapter 5.

⁹¹ For more information on *HaShulamis* and the Brill Yiddish printing family, see *YCiB* 173-4, 307.

Last, but by no means least, was Isaac Stone (1855-1916 – anglicised from Yitskhok Shteyn.)⁹² Though he was just older, aged over 40 when the the *Ekspres* came into Jewish ownership in 1896, he was much older than the other journalists, and took the pen name “der zokn” (the old man). His career spanned the earlier socialist Yiddish press in Britain. He wrote for *Der Poylisher Yidl* and the *Arbayter Fraynd* through to the *Ekspres*. Kalman Marmor described Stone as “possibly the first to write a workers song in Yiddish”.⁹³

The differences between these journalists mean that it is difficult to generalise. However, examining the lives of these journalists in tandem provides some insight. Certainly, all of them, with the important exception of Stone, pursued careers in Yiddish journalism that were outside of socialist political activity. They worked for newspapers that catered to a broader audience. They published initially in London before moving to other countries where they enjoyed differing degrees of success. If politically or culturally biased, it was towards maskilism (the ideology of the Jewish enlightenment) and Zionism. We cannot know the hierarchy within the office – Stone and Dolidanski are both described as editors of the *Ekspres*. In fact, their differences are a helpful explanation for the relative incoherence of some of the *Ekspres* and *Zhurnal*'s political differences. Even Stone, who we would assume held conventionally socialistic or anarchistic ideas, wrote an attacking piece against trade unions in the first issue of the *Arbayter*

⁹² LNYL vol 6. 375-377 and LYLPF vol 2. 620-1, Lachs, *Whitechapel Noise*, 30.

⁹³ LNYL vol 6. 375-377.

Fraynd.⁹⁴ All of them wrote for Jewish newspapers abroad – be it in Europe or across the Atlantic – they also made journeys to go and work in distant destinations but brought with them their profession as Yiddish journalists which all of them had first properly established in London. It is important to challenge generalisations regarding the identity of the Yiddish press’ journalists and readers: not all of them were working class, nor were they all (at least in the immediate past) from Eastern Europe, nor from the same places in Eastern Europe.

e) Perceptions and Receptions of *Der Idisher Ekspres*

Yiddish language secondary sources give us contrasting views of the *Expres*. An extremely positive account of the *Ekspres* is given by Jacob Hodess, who later became editor of the newspaper.⁹⁵ However, several of his comments are repudiated by Kalman Marmor and Yekhezkel Vortsman’s completely contrary accounts, and it is likely that Hodess slightly exaggerates the successes of the *Ekspres*.⁹⁶ As an editor (at a later stage) of the paper it is understandable that at moments he overstated its influence and reach. Nonetheless, his analysis of the newspaper affirms an understanding of it being an ideological and business innovator. He claims that Jews in London, even when the paper was based in Leeds, also read it as they did not have an equivalent paper.

⁹⁴ *LNYL* vol 6. 375-377. Of course, in the flux of the development of early anarchist and socialist ideas it is not necessarily a given that an anarchist would be in favour of trade unions.

⁹⁵ Hodess, “Geshikhte fun der english-yidisher prese,” 60-61.

⁹⁶ Marmor and Vortsman are the subjects of chapter 3.

Hodess makes several claims about the *Ekspres*. First of all he argues that it is no surprise that the *Ekspres* spread outside of England to Belgium and France. Admiring the editor Dolidanski's gift for journalism and his splenetic humour, he remarks that: "although his language was far from perfect, he was always direct and logical."⁹⁷ Tellingly, Hodess writes that "the direction of the *Yidish Ekspres* was carried out in a Jewish way."⁹⁸ For Hodess the *Ekspres* was the first newspaper since the *Poylisher Yidl* which represented the whole community and did not aim for only one particular ideological end. The newspaper stood up for striking workers in the East End and criticised the *Jewish Chronicle's* lack of support for their cause, as well as featuring letters from Berlin, Jerusalem and Argentina.⁹⁹ Hodess also writes that the newspaper was one of the first Jewish newspapers in the world to come out in support of Herzl's *Judenstaat* (Jews' State – a foundation text of Zionism).¹⁰⁰ In the midst of a local Zionist argument, Herzl even wrote to the paper and his letter was published.¹⁰¹ The importance of the Zionist position is that it shows this newspaper stood on the side of the immigrants unlike an organ of Anglo-Jewry such as *The Jewish Chronicle*, which was far more reticent about Zionism.¹⁰² Hodess notes how the growth of Zionism among immigrant Jews in London increased their readership of the Yiddish press, while the press in turn did much to make the community more aware of Zionism.¹⁰³

⁹⁷ Hodess, 61.

⁹⁸ Hodess, 61. "Di tendents fun idishhn ekspres iz geven ekht yidishlekh."

⁹⁹ Hodess, 61

¹⁰⁰ Hodess, 61

¹⁰¹ Hodess, 62.

¹⁰² *Jewish Chronicle*, August 17, 1900.

¹⁰³ Hodess, "Geshikhte fun der english-yidisher prese," 68.

Hodess is the only source that gives such attention to the importance of the *Ekspres* – or is indeed positive about it. Other Yiddish newspapers in London have generally been held to be more significant. Much praise has been given to the newspaper, *Di Tsayt* (1913-1950), which was published later. This was the view of Morris Bekerman, who remarked that “*Di Tsayt* became without a doubt the most popular newspaper in London.”¹⁰⁴ This too appears to have been Liptzin’s opinion. He remarks that Morris Myer “raised the level of Yiddish journalism by attracting Sholem Asch, Abraham Reisen and Baal-Makshoves as his collaborators on this daily.”¹⁰⁵ But we can view the *Ekspres* as a pioneer that paved the way for later newspapers such as *Di Tsayt*, and that could also boast important contributors.

Kalman Marmor, one of the key protagonists in chapter 2 of this dissertation, presents another viewpoint on the *Ekspres* which merits consideration. Leon Kreditor, in a moving essay entitled ‘My First Editor’, describes how he came to be a Yiddish journalist.¹⁰⁶ In a fortuitous encounter with Kalman Marmor in the Herzl Nordau club reading room, the young Kreditor approached Marmor, at the time a Yiddish newspaper editor, with an article which he wrote in the room while Marmor read. When Marmor finished reading, Kreditor gave him the article he had just been writing, and Marmor promised to print it that day. Kreditor writes that he was surprised that Marmor had become an editor of the *Ekspres* (in fact he may have briefly edited *Der Idisher Advertayzer* which

¹⁰⁴ Bekerman, “Yidishe Zhurnalistik,” 31.

¹⁰⁵ Liptzin, “A History of Yiddish Literature,” 369. This is a strange comment given the list of high profile contributors to Yiddish publications that substantially precede *Di Tsayt*.

¹⁰⁶ Kreditor, “Mayn ershter redactor,” 17

later merged with the *Ekspres*): “The *Ekspres* was an orthodox newspaper with shund novels.”¹⁰⁷ Frumkin also described the *Ekspres* as orthodox.¹⁰⁸ Kreditor alleged that Marmor would only have entered into this kind of hack journalism for money or perhaps to improve the standards of Yiddish journalism in Britain.

Marmor himself furnishes many more negative descriptions of the *Ekspres*. During his first ever visit to London he wrote that:

In Yiddish I normally read the fine literary weekly, *der Yud*, which the publisher *Ahkiasef* publishes in Krakow. The *Idisher Ekspres* here, which is only a caricature of a newspaper, I cannot look at. I prefer to read the *Daily Chronicle* or the *Daily Telegraph* in English and a German newspaper, like, for example, the *Neue Freie Presse*, where Dr Herzl and Dr Max Nordau work.¹⁰⁹

His views have scarcely changed by the time of his second visit, when he moved to London for a longer period to be with his wife Sore Shifre. In London Marmor created a cultural group, *Mayrove*, dedicated to reawakening Jewish national culture among the East London Jewish

¹⁰⁷ Kreditor, 17. “Der ekspres iz geven an ortodoksishe tsaytung mit shund romanen.”

¹⁰⁸ Frumkin, *In friling*, 147.

¹⁰⁹ Marmor, *Mayn Lebns-Geshikhte*, 504. “In yidish leyen ikh geveynelekh dem faynem literarishn vokhnblat, “der yud”, vos farlag “Akhyasef” git aroys in kroke. Dem high teglekhn yidishn “ekspres,” vos iz nor a karikatur fun a tsaytung, kon ikh nit onkukn. Ikh leyen liber dem ‘deyli kronikl’ oder dem ‘deyli telegraf’ in english un a daytshe tsaytung, vi, lemoshl, di “naye fraye prese”, vos es arbetn oykh mit dr hertsl un dr maks nordoy.” Fascinating is that in this passage and later we learn where and how he read these papers: in City libraries and later in the Herzl Nordau club which has a cooperative library. See Marmor, 586.

masses.¹¹⁰ In a furious rant, triggered by criticism his “bearers of culture” – ie the members of his society, had faced from the *Ekspres*, he wrote:

The “*Idisher Ekspres*” over here is a private business paper for publishing sold advertisements, which it inserts between re-printed reading material from Europe. It is full of errors, printed on cheap, stained newspaper paper, and often attacks this culture-club of cultural hard workers and intelligent proletariat, amongst whom are hardworking Hebrew teachers and our own significant scholars, which are forced here to become pedlars. The vulgar and unscrupulous *Idisher Ekspre*” calls them by such names as “ignoramus” and “crude youths”, these committed bearers of Yiddish culture, who maintain with their hard worked-for pennies this Yiddish library, and spread to the immigrant Jews in London modern literature in Yiddish and Hebrew, as well as the valuable work of learning and the Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment).¹¹¹

But the *Idisher Ekspres* could also come to help. Marmor observes that:

“Even the conservative “*London Ekspres*” labelled them [the West-End Jews in the British Zionist Federation] as aiming to ‘kick out’ the East-Enders (Yiddish speaking) Jews from the federation.”¹¹² By his third visit his views had scarcely changed.

From the Yiddish press for a general audience I cannot learn anything. At that time it consisted for the most part of poorly re-

¹¹⁰ *Mayrove*, this society, is analysed in depth in chapter 3.

¹¹¹ Marmor, 586.

‘Der higer ‘*Idisher Ekspres*’, a privat ‘biznes-blat tsu farefntlekhn far getsoltn “advertayzments”, velkhe er shtelt arayn tsvishn ibergedruktn fargreyztn leze-shtof fun eyrope, oyf bilike, farflekte tsaytung-papir, bafalt oft dem dozikn kultur-farayn fun kulturele horepashnike un intelinte proletaryet, tsvishn zey oykh tikhtike hebreyishe lerer un badayndike heymishe lomdim, vos zaynen do getsvungen gevorn tsu vern pedler. Der vulgarer herfkerdik “*Idisher Ekspres*” ruft on mit azelkhe nemen vi ‘amaratsim’ un ‘grobe yungen’ di dozike ibergegebene yidishe kultur-treger, velkhe haltn oyf mit zeyere shver-farhorevete penys di dozike yidishe biblyotek, un farshpraytn tsvishn di imigrantishe yidn in london moderne literatur in yidish un hebreyish, vi oykh vertfule verk fun lomdes un haskole.”¹¹¹

¹¹² Marmor, 613. “Afile der konservativer “*londoner ekspres*” hot zey derklert als getsilt ‘aroystsushtupn’ di ist-ender (yidish-shprekhendike) yidn fun der federeishon.”

printed reading material. A daily Yiddish newspaper in London was not even ashamed to print a shund novel from a book, which was on sale in the bookshop.¹¹³

After this he also criticises the London Yiddish press more broadly for thinking that immigrants did not care for issues concerning life in Britain but “only wait for a bit of news from the old home, the European Eastern-Countries.”¹¹⁴ His last reference to the Yiddish press in Britain is of a similar tone:

That newspaper, which on the surface was lovely, [*Idisher Zhurnal*] pleases me no more than the old fashioned orthodox-respectable ‘*Ekspres*’, which was printed on bad stained paper with ugly letters.¹¹⁵

Marmor's criticised the low quality of the newspaper itself. Physically it was poor, with stained paper, while its news was mostly plagiarised and did not concern local Jews. It is useful to know that we must treat the Ginzburgs' boasts about the technological quality of their newspaper with a pinch of salt. Marmor's friend Yekhezkel Vortsman's extensive and withering critique of the *Ekspres* makes many of the same criticisms: in addition Vortsman criticised how long it took for news to be printed, how tasteless the coverage of

¹¹³ Marmor, 680. “Fun der londonder yidisher prese far dem algemeynem oylem kon ikh zikh gornit oplernen. Zi iz demolt bashtanen tsum grestn teyl fun shlekht-ibergedruktn leyenshtof. A teglekhe yidishe tsaytung in london hot zikh afile nit geshemt iberstudrukn ir shund-roman fun a bukh, vos gefint zikh tsum farkoyf in der bukhhandlung.” At this point he also criticises *Bril's Telephone* for copying New York Yiddish newspaper editorials word for word. The *Ekspres* was not the unique British Yiddish press target of his ire.

¹¹⁴ Marmor, 680.

¹¹⁵ Marmor, 725. “Fun ot der oyserlekh-sheyner tsaytung [*Idisher Zhurnal*] gefelt mit [sic] nit mer vi fun dem altmodishn ortodoksish-balebatishn “*Ekspres*”, vos iz gedrukt oyf shlekhte farflekte papir mit miese bukhshtabn.”

dramatic events such as pogroms was, and how easy it was for commercial ventures to buy the support of the *Ekspres*.¹¹⁶ Establishing what the historian Joseph Buckman was perhaps picking up on when he described the *Idisher Ekspres* as “centrist”, Marmor views the *Idisher Ekspres* as a representative of staid non-radical political viewpoints.¹¹⁷ In this context “orthodox” is both a reference to these newspapers’ greater religious conservatism and also to their conventional politics.¹¹⁸ Marmor and Vortsman were also reacting negatively to the commercialism of the *Ekspres*, which had much in common with the Yiddish press in the USA, and went against the more didactic and ideological press traditions of the Eastern European Yiddish press that they had been raised on.¹¹⁹

Were Marmor and Vortsman’s criticisms fair? They contradict Hodess, who saw the *Ekspres*’ as engaged and even radical, especially with its firm advocacy of the Zionist cause. Marmor himself even quotes an intervention from the *Idisher Ekspres* which spoke up for immigrant Jews against the English Zionist Federation.¹²⁰ Any reading of the newspaper also contradicts his assertion that the *Ekspres* took no interest in local causes: the following chapter will explore these interventions. That Marmor, a radical socialist and

¹¹⁶ Vortsman, “Idishe prese in England,” June 14, 1907, 12-13, June 21, 12-13, July 12, 11-12.

¹¹⁷ Joseph Buckman, *Immigrants and the Class Struggle: the Jewish Immigrant in Leeds 1880-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983) 111.

¹¹⁸ In fact even the more radical newspapers made use of religion for polemical purposes – and were far from being anti-religious, see chapter 3.

¹¹⁹ Goldstein, “A Taste of Freedom”, 123-36. Goldstein elaborates how criticism by Eastern European Jewish intellectuals of the influence of the US Yiddish press in Eastern Europe, much of which is very similar to the disdain of Marmor and Vortsman, can also be read as a defensive reaction to commercial Yiddish publications threatening the established intelligentsia’s hold on the Yiddish public sphere.

¹²⁰ Marmor, *Mayn Lebns-Geshikhte*, 613.

Zionist, would negatively describe the *Ekspres* as “orthodox” is perhaps only tribute to the fact that it represented a broad audience and its editorial line tried to echo that. Certainly, interventions on behalf of Eastern European Jews in labour disputes and in questions of communal Zionism seem to confirm that the *Ekspres* could be radical at crucial junctures. Marmor himself was struggling to rouse the Jewish workers into joining his Jewish national organisation, and some of his bitterness might stem from the difficulty he was experiencing in achieving his aims. He soon left to become editor of the American *Poale Tzion* journal, *Der Idisher Kemfer*.

Taken together, Hodess, Marmor and Vortsman point both to the *Ekspres*'s importance and its limitations. If it represented the beginning of a broader, more representative and more economically successful Yiddish press in Britain, it could also be criticised strongly on the grounds of its quality and even its ideology.

How did the press relate to the broader immigrant experience? This is a question that this whole dissertation tries to answer. For Vortsman the Yiddish press was a symbol for everything that was wrong with Jewish life in London: “In Jewish England the saying has come true that “the press is the mirror of life.” Poor and depressed is the Jewish press there.”¹²¹ But for the journalist Yeshaye Rafalovitsh (1870-1956), who occasionally wrote essays

¹²¹ Vortsman, “Idishe prese in England”, July 12, 12. “Iz es in yidishn England mekuyem gevorn dos vort az “di prese iz der shpigl fun’m lebn.” Orem un farkhoyshekht iz di dortike yidishe prese.”

for the *Ekspres*, the *Ekspres* and the broader Yiddish press in Britain meant something very different. Surveying the London East End he could write:

You see that we are no longer in Eysishok [a stereotypical Eastern European provincial shtetl] there are such new kinds of things to be found here which one still does not see in the small and not in the large Jewish cities in Russia. Large signs, mostly in Yiddish, tell the Jews in the East End about different items of news, a new shop is opening, from New York a troupe of actors have arrived, in so and so synagogue the praying will start at such or such time, a new newspaper will soon begin to appear... exactly that, the new newspaper, proves, how large the difference is between the Jew who was previously an Eysishoker and is now a London resident in the East End.¹²²

For Rafalovitsh Jewish life in London, and particularly its Yiddish press, brought a modernity that Jewish life in the Russian empire could not offer – and internationalism too – it connected London with Jewish life in New York. In the end Vortsman and Marmor’s critique of the Yiddish press in Britain must be considered in part a homage: their attacks show a jealousy of its influence. They are also a useful corrective to Hodess’ and Rafalovitsh’s excessive praise of a press that was flawed too. In the following chapters of the dissertation the political and cultural interventions of these different sections of the British Yiddish press will be investigated.

¹²² Yeshaye Rafalovitsh, “Dos leben fun di yudishe emigrantn in London” [The life of Jewish emigrants in London], *Der Yud*, May 10, 1900, 3-6. “Zeyt ir on do iz fort nit eyshishok, es gefint zikh do azelkhe mini naves, vos men zeht zey nokh nit in di kleyne un nit in di groyse yudishe shtet in rusland. Groyse afishn, mehrstens in yidishn, dertseyln di yidn in ist-end farshidene naves: es efnt zikh a naves magazin, fun nyuyork iz ongekumen a trupe aktyoren, in der un der shul vet onheybn dos davnen tsu der un der tsayt, a naye tsaytung heybt on in gikhn tsu ersheyne... ot take di naye tsaytung bavayzt aykh, vi groys es iz der untershid fun dem yuden vos iz amol geven a eyshishoker un haynt a londoner bevoyner in ist-end...” Rafalovitsh also draws attention to the way the Yiddish press had come to define street life and its visual appearance.

Conclusion

This chapter has told the story of the Yiddish press in Britain up until the advent of the *Idisher Ekspres* in 1896. This Leeds newspaper's new (allegedly) apolitical stance, and rapid expansion and publication as a daily, represented radical novelties in the British Yiddish press environment. However, it was also criticised for not being radical enough and for its poor production quality. By fitting the story of the *Ekspres* into a broader history of the London Yiddish press from its beginnings, we can see what a key development from the earlier London Yiddish press this represented both in scale and direction. The *Ekspres* did not have didactic or narrowly ideological aims, and its successful growth perhaps encouraged the great increase in Yiddish newspapers. This chapter introduced the idea that this vigorous Yiddish cultural development was not confined to the British Yiddish press alone, but also affected the whole community. At this same key juncture, between 1896-1910, Anglo-Jewry, and indeed the whole country to a lesser extent, became much more interested and engaged with Eastern European Jewry in England and abroad. The fruits of this engagement were a burgeoning Yiddish and English language Jewish press, with writers who moved between the two worlds, and key Anglo-Jewish publications which themselves began to publish supplements in Yiddish. This dynamic journalistic environment contributes usefully to recent historiographical debate, which has sought not to view the Eastern European Jews in Britain as a world apart, but to also look at how they interact with other actors –

British Jews and non-Jewish Britons. The *Ekspres*'s international outlook, which prided itself from its beginnings on its international audience, international cultural offerings and international contributors, shows that we must read it in as part of international Jewish history and not just within the British context.

The history of the newspaper itself also tells a consistently surprising story. Set up by a Christian in Leeds, it became the (immigrant) Jewish community's beacon in London. Founded for political ends, it quickly became a firm advocate for an apolitical stance. Viewed by one of its principal employees as a key force in British Yiddish journalism, by another it was viewed as orthodox and respectable drivel. This chapter was concerned with finding as far as possible the concrete facts around one newspaper as a starting point for broader reflections on Yiddish culture and history in Britain, and it points immediately to the importance of studying these sources on their own terms, and not through the lens of anglicisation, which is not a framework that they adopted.

This chapter argues that these years and this newspaper mark a turning point for a whole community as it learns to articulate itself in Yiddish in the midst of cultural and social change as mass immigration meant Anglo-Jewry's makeup was irreversibly changed.

Chapter 2: Der Idisher Ekspres, Der Idisher Zhurnal and the response to Anglicisation

Introduction

The previous chapter explored the expansion and development of the British Yiddish press, principally through the *Idisher Ekspres* (1896-1926) and to an extent through its later rival the *Idisher Zhurnal* (1905- 1914). It also contextualised this within the broader history of the Yiddish press in Britain. These newspapers, which flourished commercially, introduced a change in the British Yiddish press environment in terms of both scale and ideology. Advertising themselves as impartial and suitable for the average reader, they claimed to be less politically determined than the earlier anarchist and socialist presses. But in this self-fashioning, this chapter will argue, the newspapers were in fact representing political viewpoints that were not any more mainstream or less factional than any pre-existing press publications.

Examining and contextualising the claims of these Yiddish newspapers does not necessarily give us a perfect impression of the politics or reading habits of the Eastern European Jewish everyman or everywoman living in Britain at the turn of the century. But in many respects the standard reader never existed. Instead, this chapter aims to show the complexities and contradictions of what will be called the mainstream Yiddish press in Britain. This chapter does not just focus on the writings of its premier polemicists – who will be introduced in the first part of this chapter - but on the readers who submit contributions about the other actors of the period. It aims to argue that the sum of all these different perspectives was that the British Yiddish

mainstream press strongly resisted anglicisation. It tested the limits of what the press could achieve in the Jewish immigrant community as it sought to oppose the institutions that Anglo-Jewry had constructed to mediate immigrant Jewry's adaptation to British politics and culture. To understand how the mainstream press did so, acting both as a reporter of events and occasionally as an active intervenor in them, it is necessary to understand the communal infrastructure of British Jewry at the end of the 19th Century and its alleged failings. Criticising these failings, and the different events and circumstances that aggravated the inadequacy of anglicisation as an ideology for structuring the life of Jewish immigrants, the mainstream Yiddish press began to develop a coherent critique of anglicisation. This is the subject of the second part of this chapter. The political and cultural discourse contained within these two newspapers did not limit itself to negatively criticising Anglo-Jewry and its institutions. It also offered its own positive advocacy for different conceptions of Jewish regeneration – often interlinked with the burgeoning cause of Jewish nationalism.

The *Idisher Ekspres* was eight pages long and the majority of its text consisted of isolated news stories: train crashes, earthquakes, ships sinking. Its reporting was increasingly focused on the Russian Empire as events there became more and more dangerous for the Jewish population. At the beginning and end of every issue came local adverts from local businesses. Much of its reporting was simply copied from English language newspapers. The *Idisher Zhurnal*, the other newspaper analysed in this chapter, was edited by Leon J. Dolidanski after he left the *Ekspres* (1904). It was very

similar to the *Ekspres*, although it trumpeted its differences: the *Zhurnal* used *nikudim*, diacritical signs which made reading the Hebrew alphabet easier, it had a finer script and claimed that it provided a better separation of advertised content and actual journalism. However, its four-page daily edition had far more in common with the *Ekspres* than was meaningfully different. In both newspapers, editorials within the issues by the editors are the most substantial material for analysis. These pieces were not simply reprinted from the English or foreign Yiddish press. Instead they represented the attempts of the journalists working for the *Ekspres* and the *Zhurnal* to participate, and even intervene, in British Jewish life.

These newspapers represent one possible constellation of discourses and views, perhaps a more popular one than the socialistic, anarchistic or socialist zionistic press. Their discourse made appeals and interventions within the community but was just one contesting element in a pool of active Eastern European Jewish political and cultural activity. Not just modernity, but questions of citizenship and belonging can be applied to this community and source base during this period.¹ But that is not the approach of this chapter. Instead this chapter wants to ask: How much autonomy (intellectual, cultural) can immigrant communities attain in Britain? How do immigrants respond to antisemitism and the incompatibility of Britishness with their own identities? And how did Jews resident in Britain balance national and transnational appeals to their politics and culture?

¹ Gidley, "Citizenship and Belonging," 69-96.

a) Critique of Communal Institutions

i) Communal Institutions in Jewish Britain

A reading of the Yiddish Press in Britain around 1900 would give the impression that Anglo-Jewry provided little support to the Eastern European immigrant community. In truth, the communal, institutional and philanthropic role that Anglo-Jewry carried out in the lives of Eastern European immigrants to Britain was substantial. This is not necessarily the impression that the Yiddish press provides. Instead one of the most enduring and consistent subjects of the mainstream Yiddish press in this period is the inadequacy of charity and support provided by Britain's more established, richer Jews. Why this contradiction between provision and expectation?

It is important to contextualise the charitable institutions that Anglo-Jewry established to help poor or disadvantaged Jews in Britain before the wave of mass immigration, which were to go on to help immigrant Jews after 1880. Many of these institutions had initially been set up to prevent Jews from taking recourse to the Poor Law and ending up in the workhouse.² Several different charitable institutions were united under one umbrella when in 1858 a resolution of the three City synagogues established "a Board of Guardians ... appointed to attend to the relief of the strange and foreign".³ After its establishment the Board began to carry out a whole set of functions: "relief,

² Lipman, *Social History*, 50.

³ Lipman, 56-7.

temporary and fixed allowances, the assistance of emigration and provision of clothing” that these institutions had formerly carried out, alongside newer ones such a “granting of loans in appropriate cases, the loan on repayment of tools and machines, the collection of statistics, visiting the poor in their homes and the improvement of the sanitary conditions in their environment.”⁴ Indeed the expansion of these functions shows the flexibility of this organisation which became “the principal agency through which the London Jewish community conducted its social service.”⁵

The extent of the charitable work completed by the Board of Guardians should not be underestimated. At the beginning of the wave of mass immigration, in 1881, it has been estimated that roughly one in four Jews in Britain received some form of charitable relief from the Board of Guardians or similar organisations, with the London Jewish Board of Guardians helping the vast majority (7 911 of the 11 099 helped).⁶ The loan department of the Board lent £183, 013 in the years 1880-1906, estimated to be some £182 000 000 in today’s money.⁷ From 1885 onwards the Jewish Board of Guardians helped over 10 000 individuals a year, by 1904 it was over 20 000.⁸ The board was also helped in its efforts by a separate committee, the Mansion House Russo-Jewish Relief Fund, which allocated the money from the Mansion House appeals and was meant exclusively to help refugees

⁴ Lipman, 50.

⁵ Lipman, 57.

⁶ Joseph Jacobs, *Studies in Jewish Statistics: Social, Vital and Anthropometric* (London: D Nutt, 1891), 12-14.

⁷ Feldman, “Mr Lewinstein,” 142.

⁸ Tananbaum, *Jewish Immigrants in London*, 57.

from Russia.⁹ At its peak, in 1905, this committee helped almost three thousand individuals.¹⁰

Perhaps the most famous individual charitable institution was the Poor Jews' Temporary Shelter, often referred to simply as "the Shelter". Even its foundation demonstrates the thorniness of interactions around communal action and philanthropy. It was first established in 1884 as an improvised establishment to help immigrants by the baker Simon Cohen, known as Simkhe Becker.¹¹ The Jewish Board of Guardians, appalled at the conditions of the place, but more significantly perhaps, opposed to the idea of any establishment that might encourage immigrants, succeeded in having it closed within the year.¹² This led to a selection of wealthy donors stepping in to support the shelter on a firmer footing in 1885. In 1900 a new flood of Romanian Jewish immigrants, fleeing persecution, arrived in Britain needing urgent help. To help deal with this latest wave of immigration the Board of Guardians took control of the Shelter's administration and partially abandoned their policy of trying to encourage immigrants either not to come or to be repatriated back to Eastern Europe.¹³ The Shelter helped thousands of newly arrived immigrants, sheltering over 2000 in 1901.¹⁴ These two institutions were the most important but also attracted the greatest ire of the immigrant press. Anglo-Jewry was proud of its charitable institutions, the

⁹ Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 300-301.

¹⁰ Vivian Lipman, *A Century of Social Service 1859-1959: The Jewish Board of Guardians* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959), 290-291.

¹¹ See Gartner, *Jewish Immigrant*, 52-54, Tananbaum, *Jewish Immigrants*, 58.

¹² Lipman, *Social History*, 92.

¹³ Gartner, *Jewish Immigrant*, 54.

¹⁴ Tananbaum, *Jewish Immigrants*, 58.

Board of Guardians could write in its annual report of 1893 that “it is certain that the fair fame of the Jews in England is intimately bound up with, if indeed it does not directly depend on, the manner in which they apply themselves to grapple with this question of the care of their poor, aggravated as it has become in recent years by the immigration consequent on the cruel Russian persecution.”¹⁵ Anglo-Jewry was proud to think that the quality of its philanthropic provision, how they “grapple[d] with this question of the care of the poor”, had won itself a reputation abroad, “fair fame.” How could the Board imagine that Jews abroad would esteem what many immigrant Jews in Britain were deeply critical of?

ii) The Board of Guardians and The Jewish Shelter

At first the Board of Guardians received criticism in the Yiddish press for its indifference and even cruelty. How could the board, the *Ekspres* would argue in 1900, present a smiling face to the community when it had a £400 deficit and had helped less people in 1899-1900 than in the year before?¹⁶ Often, as was the pattern in the *Ekspres*, an editorial, which we might reasonably assume was written by Dolidanski, was followed up by a more passionately argued piece by Leiserowitz. The latter, in the same issue, criticises the Leeds Jewish Board of Guardians for its arrogance. Acting like a court and judges, instead of helping a man who had come to solicit two shillings, they

¹⁵ See Tananbaum, *Jewish Immigrants*, 55 from JBG, *Annual Report*, 1893, 11.

¹⁶ “Di bord of gardyens miting” [The Board of Guardians Meeting], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, April 6, 1900, 4.

gave him two slaps in the face and sentenced him to hard labour.¹⁷ As a response Leiserowitz argued that the East End Jewish community must organise and form their own community (while also criticising East End Jewish turncoats who would go over to the other side and then treat those below themselves particularly poorly). Yekhezkel Vortsman, writing for the Warsaw newspaper *Der Yud* (1899-1902) about why immigrants came to Britain, said that there was only one rule: “*Either earn and live, or die!*”¹⁸ This communication to an Eastern European audience suggested that there was no support network for immigrants who could not, or would not, work.

Criticism of the communal support of Anglo-Jewry was heightened when as time went on more and more crises beset Eastern European Jewry, notably the impoverishment of Romanian Jewry around 1900 and the Kishinev pogrom in 1903. The Board of Guardians was criticised for a deeply deficient response to these crises. In 1899-1900 the persecution of Romanian Jews along with famine prompted a report authored by the Board which did not mention the Jewish misery there but instead thought simply of the costs it might entail for their own organisation.¹⁹ The Board’s report did not blame the Romanian government for the antisemitic actions, but instead professional agitators. And the focus of the report was the amount of money it had spent

¹⁷ Elieser Leizerovitz, “Yidishe englishe voylteter” [Jewish English philanthropists], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, April 6, 1900, 4. Leizerovitz’s accusations find an echo in autobiographical accounts from the period – one describes the harrowing experience of attending a soup kitchen – something the author vowed to never do again. See A Yeshive Bokher, “Mayn Ershter yor in England” [My first year in England], Folder 48, Box 71, England Collection (RG 116), YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, New York, 12-13. The English branch of YIVO ran an autobiography competition and several of the entries are a useful source narrating the experience of the “first year in England.”

¹⁸ Yekhezkel Vortsman, “Yudishe parnosos in London,” *Der Yud*, December 4, 1902, 5. “Un do iz a klal: oder fardin un leb, oder shtarb!”

¹⁹ “Iber di welt” [Around the World], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, June 5, 1901, 3.

repatriating Romanian refugees in Britain back to Romania – a course of philanthropic action which did not receive a positive reception. The *Ekspres's* response was withering: “[The report] Would win first prize for wickedness and hypocrisy.”²⁰ Later the *Ekspres* hoped sarcastically that the report would remain an eternal document “in history so that later generations [should] know what good people lived in England at the beginning of the 20th century.”²¹ The policy of repatriation was bitterly opposed elsewhere by the *Ekspres*.²²

One doctor who spoke to the *Ekspres* explained that the English Jewish community was sicker than any other. He said that it did nothing to raise money for Kishinev, and shirked its international responsibilities leaving them to other countries.²³ When rich Jews make a fuss about helping foreign Jews, it was with the selfish intention of encouraging them to stay where they are:

In previous times, when persecution came upon the Jews in one country, they had the sympathy of Jews in other countries, those fleeing were helped... the persecutions of Jews have remained as in the past, but the good Jewish heart is no longer there. Money is given, but with what conditions? That Jews should stay where they are and not dare to travel elsewhere.²⁴

²⁰ “Iber di velt,” 3. “Volt gekrogn dem ershtn prayz far di hipokrisi un shlekhtkayt.”

²¹ “Iber di velt,” 3. “In geskhikhte um di shpetere doayres zoln visn vos far a gute mentshn in england hobn gelebt in onfang fun 20-ten yorhundert.”

²² See ILYLPFael [pseud. Dolidanski], “Tsu der tsayt” [About the Times], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, May 4, 1904, 2.

²³ ILYLPFael [pseud. Dolidanski] “On a harts” [Without a Heart] *Der Idisher Ekspres*, July 1 1903, 4.

²⁴ “Iber di velt” [Around the World], *Der Idisher Zhurnal*, December 1, 1905, 2. “In amolike tsaytn ven a gzeyre iz gekumen oyf yidn in eyn land hobn zey nor di simpati gehat fun yidn in andere lender, men hot geholfn di antlofene.... Di gzeyres oyf di yidn zaynen gebliben vi amol, dos gute yidishes harts iz nit mer do. Gelt vert gegeben, ober mit vos far a bedingung? Dos di yiden zoln blayben zitsen oyf'n ort un nit vagn avektsuforn.”

Using a religious precedent, in the Haman Klapper Purim issue of *Der Idisher Zhurnal*, an anonymous author complains that while the story of Purim remains ever contemporary, Jews lack the courage and strength of previous generations. In the story of Purim, a Persian King, Akhashverosh (Xerxes) is almost persuaded to kill all the Jews in his empire by an advisor, Haman. Making reference to this story, the article alleged that Jews today were friends with Haman and lent money to the Akhasheveroshes.²⁵ Elsewhere, in the *Idisher Zhurnal*, it was put more pithily: “The Jewish Board of Guardians has from the beginning put its own monetary calculations above Jewish interests. Jewishness for the Board of Guardians means pounds, shillings and pennies.”²⁶

Much of this critique is so extreme that it seems unfair. But it is a question of misconceptions. The journalists at the *Ekspres* and *Zhurnal* did not view the Board as sufficiently ambitious, as trying to provide enough help. In this regard the focus on the pecuniary miserliness of the Board is in a sense a critique of the Board’s limited scope: it aimed only to provide as many services as possible to Jews in Britain. For these journalists, the wealth of Anglo-Jewry and of the Board’s management meant that these services ought to be more extensive. For the *Ekspres* and *Zhurnal* Jews needed help not just in Britain but across Europe, and Jews in Romania or Russia ought

²⁵ “Purim!”, *Der Idisher Zhurnal (Hamon Klaper)*, March 11, 1906, 2.

²⁶ “Iber di velt” [Around the World], *Der Idisher Zhurnal*, August 1, 1906, 2. “Di yidishe bord of gardyens hot fun onfang ongeshtelt ire gelt oysrechnungen hekher fun yidishe interesn. Yidishkayt far di bord of gardyens meynt funtn, shilings un pennis.”

to be helped.²⁷ This international expectation of outreach exceeded the Board's view of its own remit. Policies such as repatriation fell at the fault line between helping Jews at home and helping Jews abroad. Where any Jew in Britain, for the *Ekspres*, was worthy of help, for the Board it was only those who were more permanently settled who ought to qualify for aid. This communal conflict shows the different identity and politics amongst the immigrant population or at least its journalists: they identified much more closely with Eastern European Jewry and wanted political and communal action to coincide with this.

The Shelter also came in for much attention. One notice in "Londoner Drama" (London Drama), in the *Ekspres* of the 11th of December, 1896, criticised a new superintendent at the Jewish Shelter who did not take immigrants to the address they wanted, but instead far from London.²⁸ This triggered a prompt response from a communal figure, Khayim Volf Rosenfeld, who defended the new manager, Samfer.²⁹ The letter insisted that it was not the manager's fault, but the fault of the man sent to collect immigrants from the ship. Rosenfeld insisted that the new manager did more than the old manager, and also reeled off an impressive list of statistics for the shelter (1668 guests, 27345 meals and 500 meals for those without food). On January the 8th, 1897, a much more critical article about the

²⁷ Dolidanski wrote at length in the East European Yiddish press about Anglo-Jewry's failings in this regard. See Leon J. Dolidanski, "Briv fun London" [Letter from London], *Der Yud*, February 14, 1901, 7 and "Briv fun London" [Letter from London], *Der Yud*, February 21, 1901, 6.

²⁸ "Londoner drama" [London Drama], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, December 11, 1896, 5.

²⁹ "Jewish shelter", *Der Idisher Ekspres*, December 18, 1896, 5.

shelter was printed.³⁰ It argued that the shelter had started to be used to help the ship companies and not the poor immigrants who needed it. The *Zhurnal* meanwhile printed a letter which claimed not just that money had gone missing at the Shelter, but that the affair had been hushed up and newspapers asked not to write about it.³¹ This scrutiny of the running of the Shelter shows the role that the Yiddish press played as an outlet for frustration and for interventions that challenged established community interests and procedures. It was a different role than the English language Jewish press had previously played – which had served as a mostly uncritical ally for raising funds.³²

iii) Communal alternatives

The *Ekspres* and *Zhurnal*, as mentioned previously, aimed not just to critique an existing system of communal support but to try and encourage new projects, particularly where East End Jews would play a more important role. The East End Scheme was a bold scheme to build a large synagogue in the East End and to pay for a rabbi for the synagogue and a friendly society for its members. It has often been treated by historians as principally motivated by the power struggle between two rival Ashkenazi Synagogue Organisations: the United Synagogue and the Federation of Synagogues.³³

³⁰ "Der shelter" [The Shelter], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, January 8, 1897, 4.

³¹ "Korespondents" [Correspondence], *Der Idisher Zhurnal*, June 1, 1905, 3.

³² See for example a thank you in the *Jewish Board of Guardians Annual Report* (London: Waterlow and Sons, 1896), 20. "The Board also gladly renews its record of gratitude... to the Jewish Press which by its enlightened efforts contributes largely to guide and sustain public opinion on behalf of the Board and of the poor."

³³ Lipman, *Social History*, 128-131, Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 326-7, 348, and most definitively, Gutwein, *Divided Elite*, 224-306. Gutwein situates the struggle within a confrontation between Nathaniel Rothschild and Samuel Montagu.

These two organisations contested influence in the East End, especially as the high number of immigrants made its future importance for Jewish religious politics evident. The plan was initially devised by Lord Nathaniel Rothschild (1840-1915) as a way for the United Synagogue to challenge the Federation's dominance of the East End. For the Yiddish press the East End Scheme became a powerful symbol of the lack of Eastern European Jewish representation. Rabbi Schewzik (1855-1915), a rabbi who the Federation had rejected, fiercely took up the scheme and the *Ekspres* enthusiastically backed him.³⁴ Schewzik's programme went beyond the plan for a synagogue and called for a yeshiva or Hebrew college, a court of arbitration, a labour bureau (to find work for workers without charge), a people's kitchen, and lectures.³⁵ In many ways its ambition to set up a whole range of institutions for Eastern European Jews was a precursor to the efforts of socialist or Zionist socialist figures such as Kalman Marmor, which will be explored in chapter 3 of this dissertation. The *Ekspres* criticised richer Jews for lacking the necessary will to try and improve the East End, and viewed this as the perfect plan to improve the situation.³⁶ It also backed the idea of bringing intellectual nourishment to Jewish England, which it viewed as being extremely deficient. For the *Ekspres* Anglo-Jewry could never perceive this failing as the English Jewish newspapers and the Hebrew press portrayed England as a paradise.³⁷ The *Ekspres* called on everyone to support

³⁴ Gutwein, 245-253.

³⁵ "Di ist end skim: eyn oysfihrikher barikht" [The East End Scheme: A Detailed Report], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, January 8, 1897, 4.

³⁶ "A tsu groyser order" [A too great order], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, January 8, 1897, 4.

³⁷ "A tsu groyser order," 4.

Schewzik.³⁸ Schewzik himself opened the East End Scheme up to ordinary workers, offering memberships for workers for just 3 to 6 pennies a day.³⁹

Schewzik's scheme was not to be successful. The *Ekspres* reported in its next issue, with the provocative title: "Throwing sand in the eyes", that the English Jewish community was not happy with Rabbi Schewzik's suggestions and the American backers he had found to fund the project.⁴⁰

The article expressed frustration with the rhetoric of English Jewry, which either made fun of the scheme, or claimed there was already enough provision in the East End. The library, the Working Men's Club and the dayonim (religious judges) of the Beys Din (religious court) were all portrayed as being exclusionary or prejudicial to foreign Jews. The scheme ran into further issues when the more religious community turned against the scheme because it would involve the demolition of site where there already existed a Talmud Torah.⁴¹ By this stage Schewzik had become a folk hero of the *Ekspres*. They defended his scheme, joking that as Moabites and Ammonites (two biblical tribes) came together to fight the Jews, so the United Synagogue and the Federation joined together to attack Schewzik.⁴² The article explains how Schewzik had emptied dirty houses, saved card players, helped young people, and given food stamps to people so they would not have to go and suffer at the hands of the Board of Guardians.⁴³

³⁸ "Di ist end skim: eyn oysfirelekher barikht," 4.

³⁹ "A tsu groyser order," 4.

⁴⁰ "Shitn zamd in di oygn" [Throwing sand in the eyes], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, January 15, 1897, 4.

⁴¹ "Umzistike kloles" [Futile curses], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, 22nd January 1897, 6, "Tsu vos iz di gevaltn" [To what purpose all the shouting], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, 29th January 1897, 4.

⁴² Letter, *Der Idisher Ekspres*, 5th March 1897, 4.

⁴³ Letter, 4

But serious philanthropic support on this level was not forthcoming from Anglo-Jewry, and immigrant Jews were not able to finance the project themselves.

Beyond the East End Scheme, the campaign for an explicitly Jewish hospital and dispensary often figured in the Yiddish press – as it did in the English language press. These schemes were anathema to Anglo-Jewry who viewed them as endangering their own identity as Englishmen: why should they need a separate hospital or dispensary? Though the *Zhurnal* could report enthusiastically that the question of a Jewish dispensary was gaining some momentum, it would not be until 1919 that a Jewish hospital would be established.⁴⁴ A report from Manchester, printed in the *Ekspres*, commented:

The hospital will despite all this fuss come into being, and the Jews who maintain many synagogues and other charitable things with their pennies will also maintain the hospital, because in general our Jews [ie East End Jews] still do not understand the greatness of the blessing of being a goy.⁴⁵

The *Ekspres* was sure its readership would never embrace the level of assimilation that it claimed Anglo-Jewry had adopted. Anglo-Jewry was completely set against a Jewish hospital and for the *Ekspres* journalist this showed that they revelled in their assimilation - “the blessing of being a goy”.

⁴⁴ “Iber di velt” [Around the World], *Der Idisher Zhurnal*, 5th October 1900, 2. Tananbaum, *Jewish Immigrants*, 50.

⁴⁵ “Mantshester posten” [Manchester posts], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, 5th October 1900, 6 “Der hospital vet ober trots ale tantserayen tsu shtand kumen un di yidn velkhe haltn mit zeyere pennis fil shuln mit andere dvorim shebetsedoke veln oykh dem hospital oyshaltn, vayl bikhlal farshteyen unzere yidn in algemeyn nokh nit di groyskeyt fun der mitsve a goy tsu zayn.”

But behind the sarcasm there was a growing confidence on behalf of Eastern European Jewry that they could and would establish their own veritably Jewish communal institutions.

iv) A Case Study of the fate of Yehudah Berkowits Beskin

The Yiddish press in this period was itself changing. It was increasingly ready to intervene as a more active agent in immigrant Jewish life – and where the English language press did not.. A closer focus on one incident can show this process in action. Yehudah Berkovitz Beskin, an immigrant Jew who died in the workhouse, would become a cause celebre for the *Idisher Ekspres* at the end of the year 1896.

In the winter of 1896 a reader, a Ruben Yakob Levin, wrote in to report that a woman of his acquaintance had seen a dying Jewish man trapped in a workhouse, and had been unable to help him before he died alone.⁴⁶ In the next issue of the newspaper a journalist went with witnesses to verify the story.⁴⁷ In a newspaper where much of the source material was plagiarised, this investigative approach marked the importance of the story. The editors put the story at the front of the paper, on page two (the front page was always covered with adverts) and not on pages four or five, where matters affecting the Jewish community were normally placed. In addition, it was

⁴⁶ Ruben Yakob Levin, “A hunger toyt - a yid shtarbt fun hunger in'm londoner vork-hoyz” [A man dead from hunger – a jew dies from hunger in the London workhouse], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, November 20, 1896, 5.

⁴⁷ A Londoner (A Londoner), “Eglo hoarufo” [The heifer with the broken neck] *Der Idisher Ekspres*, November 27, 1896, 2. There is no coverage of these events in the English language Jewish press.

given a richly symbolic title, “Eglo hoarufo” (Heifer with the broken neck) a reference to a part of the book of Deuteronomy, which deals with atonement for an unsolved murder.⁴⁸ The title of the article emphasised the author’s view that the community was responsible for this death in the workhouse. The article is also written by a pseudonymous ‘A Londoner’, and the text insists repeatedly on its own accuracy: it names witnesses who signed the veracity of the interview as then published, and it also prints the address of the principal witness, Freyde Rutshmeyn.

The *Ekspres* relayed Freyde’s account. Freyde Rutshmeyn would visit an acquaintance in the workhouse once every fourteen days. On one such visit, as she walked past the beds, she heard a weak voice calling for mercy and asking her to listen to him for a while in Yiddish. This voice belonged to an old sick man who began to tell his life story. His name was Yehudah Berkovitz Beskin, formerly a rich man in St Petersburg. He had been living with a daughter there, who was studying to become a midwife, but he had been turned out of the city. As his son had moved abroad, he decided to come to London. Unable to find his son in London, he became sick when staying in a lodging house. There he waited for a receipt from an agent that would allow him to access his own fortune. When the receipt did not come, he was forced out of the boarding house and told to go to the Board of Guardians who would be able to cash his receipt and sort out the situation. But the Board of Guardians only gave him a piece of paper which meant that his landlord transported him into the “hell” of the workhouse. There he had

⁴⁸ Deuteronomy, 21.1-9.

no friends, no food, and received no more than a tiny daily piece of bread. Beskin implored Rutshmeyn to help him by going and getting his papers in order to free him. Freyde then went to the Chief Rabbi, who sent her to another Rabbi who visits the workhouse. But wary of visiting this Rabbi, who had a reputation for not being friendly to foreign Jews, she went to three separate Rabbis who each gave her a different answer. When she was next able to visit Beskin, two weeks later, he was already on death's door, but the staff of the workhouse would not let her stay there with him. In desperation she turned to the Rabbi of the Hope Street Synagogue, the Kamenitser Magid (the Kamenitser Preacher), who said that they would let her know when Beskin was dying. In the end he passed away without Rutshmeyn being informed. Outraged, Rutshmeyn ran to the Beys Din (religious court) to look for answers for the indifference of the Rabbis – but the article is interrupted before we receive them. The article suggests that the Rabbis ought not only to have made sure that Beskin received better care – but at the very least that he should not have been left to die alone. Rutshmeyn's account describes the indifference of two sections of British Jewish society – the Board of Guardians and the rabbinate – whose inaction leads to Beskin's lonely death – an unsolved murder.

The story may not have been true. Elements of it seem designed to extract sympathy more than follow veracity. Why for example must the victim be described as being a rich man? Would a poor person somehow be less deserving of communal support? But the story clearly struck a nerve with the *Ekspres'* editors – and perhaps with their audiences. A second more in-depth

account of the tragedy set up an ongoing conversation in the newspaper. In the next issue the newspaper's diary column, "Londoner Drama", reports that a "certain reverend" alleged that the whole report was made up and attacked the newspaper and its writers.⁴⁹ But according to the columnist, who wrote the article concerned, this kind of response was as effective as a "dog barking against the moon" – the author knew that the story seemed too true to be so easily dismissed.⁵⁰ In the letter section of the paper a furious and rude letter is printed, claiming that the Beskin story is not worth the paper it is printed on.⁵¹

The editors of the *Ekspres* lent in to the controversy they were causing. In a continuation of the "Eglo hoarufu article", "A Londoner" (A Londoner), the anonymous pseudonymous author, claims that he is happy that so many have read the column and cared and cried, but that regret is not enough.⁵² He moves on to attack the Rabbis, concluding that the foreign Jews will soon see who their leaders are. In a further polemical editorial of the *Idisher Ekspres* issue of December 11th, 1896, 'A Londoner' upped the ante significantly.⁵³ Accusing English Jews of reading the English language newspapers in the hope that the English will treat them better, and of oppressing the Yiddish newspapers, "A Londoner" alleged that the English Jews had no sympathy for their brothers and those who now lie dead in the

⁴⁹ "Londoner Drama" [London drama], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, 4th December 1896, 4.

⁵⁰ "Londoner Drama," 4.

⁵¹ "Brief Kasten" [Letter box], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, December 4, 1896, 6.

⁵² A Londoner,"Eglo hoarufu" [The heifer with the broken neck], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, December 4, 1896, 5.

⁵³ A Londoner,"Eglo hoarufu" [The heifer with the broken neck], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, December 11, 1896, 2

workhouse. The article quotes a malicious rumour spread by the reverends, which claims that Beskin was in fact a “shnorer” (scrounger) and had an infectious disease which meant he could not be welcomed anywhere. It also criticises the clergy for not taking any criticism appropriately, and instead only attacking the socialists, asking: “Is then our Torah not social?”⁵⁴. There is the suggestion of a concrete plan to move forward: if 30 or so members of the community and the Chief Rabbi are made honorary visitors, then there would be greater scrutiny of the workhouse. In the same issue of the *Ekspres* there is a report that at a public meeting of the Zionist and Proto-Zionist organisations, Bney Zion (Sons of Zion) and Hovevei Zion (Lovers of Zion) a speaker who mocked the “asembliynikes” (Assembly-niks) and “eglo ho-arufanikes” (Heifer with the broken neck-niks) was booed on stage.⁵⁵ The polemic had spilled out onto the streets and into the lecture halls of the East End. Hayman Polski, author of much of the weekly instalments of serialised novels entered the fray with his own dramatic prose piece in the next issue.⁵⁶ In it he retold the Beskin story in a far more dramatic hue, suggesting that the whole community had blood on their hands, and in turn criticising the rabbis. He also noted that this was only one case they found out about when they might have missed very many. Polski’s article finishes with a ringing endorsement of the *Idisher Ekspres*, as the only newspaper that cared about foreign Jews.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ A Londoner, “Eglo hoarufo” December 11, 2. “Iz den unzer toyre nit sotsyal?”

⁵⁵ “London kleynikeyt” [London trifles], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, 11th December 1896, 5.

⁵⁶ Hayman Polski, “A por verter tsu londoner yidn” [A Few Words to London Jews], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, 18th December 1896, 3.

⁵⁷ Polski, “A por verter,” 3.

In the very last *Ekspres* of the year 1896 there is the last “Eglo hoarufo” column of “A Londoner”, which this time is signed at the end by Ish Levy (A Levy Man – ie a Jew belonging to the Levite tribe, who have special religious and educational responsibilities).⁵⁸ Defending himself as someone who writes these columns for no financial gain, he thanks Hayman Polski for his intervention, which by asking for help from his brothers showed his “Jewish, human and brotherly heart”.⁵⁹ Giving the story another injection of energy, the debate now became about kosher food at the workhouse. A reporter went and interviewed the superintendent of the workhouse, Mr Valens, to ask about this and about Beskin’s death.⁶⁰ The reporter questions him about the poor treatment the Jews have received. Mr Valens responded that they have as much right to good treatment as Christians, and asks for an example. When the reporter cites Beskin, Valens is able to specify the causes of death (consumption, which as the journalist notes is not the “infectious disease” that the “Rabbis” had complained of).⁶¹ Valens explains that the key problem is that the nurses cannot communicate with the Jewish sick who only speak Yiddish, and that the reverends have not been attending enough to help with interpreting. Valens too responds positively to the reporter’s suggestion that respectable businessmen who know the language be allowed to visit the sick. Valens even claims that they have served kosher meat for twenty five years since the request of a Mr Franklin, though when questioned by the reporter about whether the meat is salted according to religious law, he

⁵⁸ A Londoner, ‘Eglo hoarufo’ [Heifer with the broken neck], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, December 25, 1896, 5.

⁵⁹ A Londoner, ‘Eglo hoarufo’, 5. “Yidish, mentshlikh un briderlikh harts.”

⁶⁰ “Di vorkhoyz: eyn unterhaltung mit’n superintendent Mr Valens” [The Workhouse: A conversation with superintendent Mr Valens], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, January 1, 1897, 3.

⁶¹ “Di vorkhoyz: eyn unterhaltung,” 3.

answers that he does not know. A letter a week later from a Y B Gintsler, a typesetter at the *Ekspres*, tells a story of a young Polish Jew who went blind after his wedding and is now suffering in the workhouse from hunger, misery and even from *goyim* (a pejorative word for non-Jews).⁶² The letter ends with a prayer that the philanthropy of Mr Venthal can mean that there is not a second victim like this.

The action that Ish Levy had been campaigning for took place. In an article titled “Help yourselves”, Levy announces that as a follow up to the interview with Mr Valens, there will now be five official visitors to the workhouse, Messrs Venthal, Goldshtayn, Fledman, Levin and Livai, and Levy also publishes their addresses.⁶³ The following reports, published from the next issue onwards, reduced the dramatic and journalistic centrality of the workhouse story until the 21st of May 1897, when Ish Levy published a new article, “The secrets of the Workhouse”.⁶⁴ The Beskin affair had featured in the pages of the *Ekspres* for six months by this point.

The *Ekspres* in the case of Beskin exercised a dynamic and investigative journalism – almost an engaged journalism. Reports that outraged the journalists and community led to the newspaper promoting action to try to help the community. But there is also a question of the aims of the *Ekspres*: did it want to help Beskin, or argue that it was best placed to represent the

⁶² Y B Gintsler, “In di vorkhoyz,” [In the Workhouse], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, January 8, 1897, 5.

⁶³ Ish Levy, “Helft zikh aleyn” [Help yourselves], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, January 8, 1897, 5.

⁶⁴ Ish Levy, “Di geheymnisse fun vorkhoyz” [The Secrets of the Workhouse], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, May 21, 1897, 2.

community? The intervention of the *Ekspres* shows its ambition to be an important new advocate for foreign Jews within English society, and its opposition to another key group, the religious establishment, that were also vying for this role. The question of English Jews not doing enough to help Eastern European Jews, their Yiddish language and culture, is also linked rhetorically by the polemicist “A Londoner” of the *Ekspres* to the death of Beskin. In fact, in Valens’ account, Beskin dies because at the Workhouse the staff there do not speak Yiddish. The reports of public meetings about the Beskin affair – how it spread from the page to the lecture hall - shows how the press was just one part of an active Yiddish public sphere.

The solution to the problems raised by the Beskin case for the *Ekspres* was thoroughly reformist. The *Ekspres* did in the end not want to abolish poverty, or the workhouse, but instead to guarantee visitors at the workhouse would ensure proper treatment for Jews. At this stage the *Ekspres* was still not firmly against the radical left. After all, a *Idisher Ekspres* editorial could still write: “Is our Torah not then social?”⁶⁵ This would change as Jewish radicals began to advance more revolutionary solutions to these social problems.

v) The Limitations of the British Yiddish Press

The Beskin affair, criticism of the Jewish shelter’s provision, and fierce advocacy for the East End scheme all reveal a central political and social ambition of the *Idisher Ekspres*: to demand better welfare and provision from

⁶⁵ A Londoner, “Eglo hoarufu,” December 11 1896, 2

the richer parts of Anglo-Jewry. In addition to problems with the *Jewish Board of Guardians* there were also issues with the cost of rent and the cost of Jewish ritual slaughter.⁶⁶ The newspaper's proprietor even offered to guarantee an insurance company so that poor Jews would be able to pay and have access to care.⁶⁷ But this advocacy also aimed to bolster the newspaper's influence and justify its claim to be the true representative of East End Jewry.

The newspaper was far from incorruptible and was also liable to radically change its own position. The *Ekspres* became interested in a story about Jews buying property in Pitsea, a town in the Essex countryside not far from London. An article entitled: "Reckless People: A Fight between Jews and Christians" described East End Jews who had begun to buy land in Essex and set themselves up as farmers.⁶⁸ In August 1897, 300 hundred Jews went to South End for a land sale. Accompanying the auction were free lunches, where the Jews allegedly ate non-kosher food. Frederick Francis Ramuz, an entrepreneurial estate agent, had pioneered a selling technique: he would lure customers to Pitsea with free train fares and then serve food and drink in a marquee as lots were auctioned. He called them "champagne auctions".⁶⁹ The *Ekspres* reported that Jews bought plots for £26 and one master tailor

⁶⁶ "Vos yidishe lendlords konen" [What jewish landlords can do], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, May 4, 1898, 4, "Nider mit di lendlords" [Down with the landlords], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, Feb 3, 1899, 5, "A rusishe korobke" [A Russian Tax on Kosher Meat], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, August 4, 1899, 4.

⁶⁷ "Di yidn un inshurans kompanis" [The jews and insurance companies], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, January 7 1898, 5.

⁶⁸ "Amo pezizo: geshleg tsvishn yidn un kristn" [Reckless people: a fight between Jews and Christians], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, August 6, 1897, 4.

⁶⁹ Dennis Hardy and Colin Ward, *Arcadia for All: The Legacy of a Makeshift Landscape* (London: Mansell, 1984), 194.

bought a public house for £132. None of the Christians could afford the high prices the Jews paid and by the end of the sale there was allegedly a riot between the Christians and the Jews. Local farm labourers even came with sticks to assist the Christians. Only at sunset were the Christians forced to withdraw as they had fewer numbers. According to a Jewish farmer who lived nearby, prices had never climbed so high before, especially as the land was no good for farming but only useful for property development, and he doubted Pitsea would become a desirable area. The *Ekspres* was deeply disapproving of this vulgar purchasing spree: the Jews it was reporting on had been bamboozled by the displays of hospitality and in addition had succeeded in causing resentment to local non-Jews.

In November 1897, the *Idisher Ekspres*, however, completely changed its tune. It had sent a journalist along to one of the auctions that took place on Monday the 23rd of October 1897.⁷⁰ The subsequent article, remarkably uncritical compared to the preceding one, praised the views, the weather, and the excellent future that the company Protheroe and Morris could envisage. In fact a letter to the *Jewish Chronicle* is quoted next in the *Ekspres*, which insists that the sales in August were not coerced but based on the will of the Jews concerned. Their main motivations had been both property speculation, but also the establishment of a Jewish colony in Pitsea for East End workers to commute from.⁷¹ An accompanying *Ekspres* article

⁷⁰ "A seyl in Pitsea" [A sale in pitsea], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, November 5, 1897, 6.

⁷¹ "Di eseks land" [The Essex land], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, December 3, 1897, 6.

endorsed this novel idea, and called on its readers to help the Jews with the project.⁷²

The *Ekspres* thus veered from a complete condemnation of the property racket in Pitsea, portraying the Jewish customers as greedy, venal, and deliberately misinformed, until an *Ekspres* journalist had experienced the hospitality there. The *Ekspres* may have been intensely concerned with the difficulties Eastern European Jews were going through, and how they were perceived by the broader public, but it was also far from infallible.

Equally the Yiddish press had blind spots. Although both newspapers regularly reported on events outside of London, and the *Ekspres* had started as a Leeds weekly, the Yiddish press still received criticism for not paying enough attention to the rest of the country:

Why is the country neglected by them (the Yiddish newspapers)? Such large cities as Manchester, Leeds and Liverpool, which help to maintain the existence of a Yiddish newspaper, you won't read any Jewish news about them in a Yiddish newspaper... the Jew in the country buys the newspaper, pays for advertisements, and for that gets nothing back in return⁷³

⁷² "Di land in eseks" [The land in Essex], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, December 3, 1897, 6.

⁷³ "Briv fun liverpul..." [Letter from Liverpool], *Der Idisher Zhurnal*, 22nd May, 1905, 3. "vorum vert es di kontri bay zey [the Yiddish newspapers] farnakhlesikt? Azelkhe groyse shtet vi Manchester, Leeds un Liverpool, velkhe helfn oyshalt'n dem eksistents fun eyn yidisher tsaytung, vet ir fun zey nit lezn keyne yidishe naves in eyn yidisher tsaytung... der yid in der kontri koyft di tsaytung, tsolt far advertayzments, un far dem krigt er gornisht." In part this letter does gesture paradoxically to the attention these newspapers did give the "provinces".

As if to confirm the point of the relationship between the *Zhurnal* and the rest of the country having become somewhat one directional, in the next column there is a letter that asserts that hundreds buy the *Zhurnal* there.⁷⁴ If we detect an abundant amount of critique of other Jewish communal institutions in the Yiddish press, it also consented, occasionally, to printing criticism of itself.

⁷⁴ "Briv fun Leeds" (Letter from Leeds), *Der Idisher Zhurnal*, May 22, 1905, 3.

b) Resistance to Anglicisation

i) What was Anglicisation?

Historians have emphasised the polyvalence of anglicisation and its interactions with modernity. As historian David Feldman wrote: “The immigrant colony was the site of conflict, not between traditionalism and modernity, East European habit and English innovation, but between diverse and contending conceptions of what anglicisation and modernity actually meant. It is not enough for us to say that anglicisation was inevitable; this merely raises the question, ‘which form of anglicisation?’⁷⁵.

Perhaps anglicisation was indeed inevitable. This would certainly fit a teleological argument that is often addressed to all immigrant groups who are expected to eventually cohere to notions of Englishness. And if anglicisation is understood even more simply as the process by which immigrant Jews became English speakers, or simply English subjects, then it would seem impossible to deny the importance or centrality of this process which would define if not the first generation then subsequent generations. But it is important to question two elements of this argument. First, an excess of this argument goes so far as to imply not just that British Jewish charitable communal institutions helped to mould immigrant Jews into English Jews – but that even the Yiddish ones did.⁷⁶ Any reading of the Yiddish press more generally, and not just the socialist and anarchist journals *Der Poylisher Yidl*

⁷⁵ Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 347.

⁷⁶ Tananbaum, *Jewish Immigrants*, 48 and Kershen, “Yiddish as a Vehicle for Anglicisation”, 59-67.

and the *Arbayter Fraynd*, would contradict this. Furthermore, underlying the overall argument about anglicisation, there is the suggestion that the whole period of Jewish mass immigration, including the period here in question (1896-1910), was part of a uniform, if never specifically quantifiable, process whereby immigrant Jews gave up their language (Yiddish), their customs and way of life (religious affiliation or Jewish political affiliation) in order to willingly conform to Anglo-Jewish norms in order to achieve better economic and social opportunities. This chapter first argues that Jewish immigrants themselves presented perhaps the most coherent critique of anglicisation. In addition immigrant Jews set up institutions and participated in communal activities that far from chiefly representing a process of becoming English, instead represented the creation of something new. Nor were these institutions necessarily as insignificant as some historians have argued.⁷⁷

The process, whereby immigrant Jews began to enjoy a free press, the ability to establish and participate in political organisations, and claim for themselves autonomy and freedom is a process that needs another name. In what Bill Williams has called the “dialectic of immigration”, we must pay attention and delineate the process that went in the other direction to anglicisation, and the acculturation and assimilation that it entailed.⁷⁸ This

⁷⁷ Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 351. A selective reading of Yiddish and English sources can give this impression, but the Yiddish press (perhaps obviously) points to the existence of many more flourishing immigrant institutions than these readings would imply. Often, indeed, it is the participation of Anglo-Jewish individuals that is heralded by Jewish immigrants as bringing about the decline of a society, see for example: A Bernshteyn, “Briv” [Letter], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, January 3, 1901, 4. Bernshteyn complains that a Glasgow Talmud Torah was established by immigrant Jews and then flourished, only to decline when it was taken over by English [ie Anglo] Jews.

⁷⁸ Bill Williams, *Making of Manchester Jewry*, 330-1. “The overall effect of Eastern European settlement was to emphasise the collective self-interest of the ‘more fortunate’ Anglo-Jewish families. It gave new edge to the recurrent, and usually abrasive, interaction between

countervailing phenomenon, where it was not just the development of a Yiddish print culture but also the deeper integration of Jewish immigrants into a new transnational political and cultural sphere also represented the achievement of a limited political and cultural autonomy that was unavailable at that moment in Russia. Though elements of this process were certainly informed by the English experience, adaptation to some English norms was not the leading process: instead Jewish transnational political and cultural formation was.

Historians have long been aware of this opposite process to anglicisation.

Geoffrey Alderman wrote perceptively that:

The major impact of the immigrants is to be found in the challenge they mounted to the rule of the so-called Cousinhood, that small group of interrelated monied families which affected to rule Anglo-Jewry in the age of emancipation.⁷⁹

And later in the same article returned to this theme of challenge: “The generation of the emancipation wished for nothing better than to be accepted by the host society as Britons of the Jewish persuasion. The immigrants mounted a sustained challenge to this assimilatory view, by insisting upon the preservation of their separate ethnic identity and (worse still!) by parading

established families and newcomers of all kind which provided communal history with its basic dialectic.” Williams use of the term “dialectic” introduces a helpful frame for analysing anglicisation and its opposite as competing interlinking processes occurring at the same time.

⁷⁹ Geoffrey Alderman, “Academic Duty and Communal Obligation Revisited” in *Migrant Britain: Histories and Historiographies: Essays in Honour of Colin Holmes*, ed. By Jennifer Craig-Norton, Christhard Hoffmann, and Tony Kushner (London: Routledge, 2018), 111.

it for all to see.”⁸⁰ Bill Williams wrote more damningly of the failed nature of this challenge: “a Jewish leadership [Anglo-Jewish leadership], powered by the imperatives of toleration, successfully undermined a rich immigrant culture, eradicated Yiddish in a single generation and pushed both religion and Socialism to the periphery of Jewish working-class life.”⁸¹ It is important, however, to push deeper and not erase an extraordinary written record in Yiddish by only telling the subsequent story of its “eradication.” Historians have given little attention to critiques of anglicisation coming from the immigrant community – and have also concentrated on socialism as an opposition to anglicisation at the expense of other expressions of opposition. The *Idisher Ekspres* and *Idisher Zhurnal* expressed one such critique, and from outside the socialist immigrant community. This allows us to begin to reassess how weak the opposition to anglicisation really was, and what terms it was expressed in.

ii) Events from abroad and in Britain destabilise anglicisation’s legitimacy

External historical events to the British Jewish community – which will be detailed in the following section – in the period 1896-1910 put a strain on anglicisation’s argument. The abandonment of Eastern European Jewish values was meant to be predicated on the subsequent acceptance by a tolerant non-Jewish community. But this model of emancipation was under

⁸⁰ Alderman, “Academic Duty,” 111.

⁸¹ Bill Williams, “The Anti-Semitism of Tolerance” in *City, class and culture: Studies of social policy and cultural production in Victorian Manchester*, ed. Alan J. Kidd and K.W. Roberts (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), 94.

threat – at first in Europe and then in Britain itself. It was unavoidable, therefore, that there would be discussion and contemplation about how, and if, a Jewish identity was compatible with a new British identity.

Often the trigger for this sort of reconsideration were historical events involving resurgent British patriotism. One such was the Queen's 60th Jubilee (1897). Its influence was felt in different ways across the *Idisher Ekspres*. The *Ekspres* first reported about the Jubilee in the context of the national celebrations, commenting on how all of England was preparing for the great holiday.⁸² But the article also observes that specifically Jews ought to celebrate: "In Victoria's time England has remained the only country in Europe which does not know of hatred for the Jews."⁸³ The only negative thing the newspaper could find to say was that British Jews did not talk enough about Zion. There were reports on how different parts of the community celebrated: *Machzike Hadath* (Upholders of the Faith – a militant Orthodox religious organisation) petitioned the Queen to make her jubilee procession go via their Brick Lane synagogue, while synagogues throughout the country put on special celebrations and services.⁸⁴ Unfortunately, there was also the story of a roof on Mare street collapsing because of the celebrations.⁸⁵ The *Ekspres* at this early stage could still enthusiastically back expressions of gratitude for Britain's tolerance to its Jewish community.

⁸² "Avoydes" [Works], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, January 15, 1897, 4.

⁸³ "Avoydes," 4. "In viktoryes tsayt iz england geblibn di ayntsike land in yurop vos veys nit fun yudenhas."

⁸⁴ "Report", *Der Idisher Ekspres*, June 14, 1897, 2, 'Mekhane Isroel' [Camp of Israel], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, July 2, 1897, 3. For more on *Machzike Hadath* see Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 335.

⁸⁵ "Oyf hinershe fislekh" [On an unsteady footing], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, July 2, 1897, 3.

The *Ekspres* compared the Queen's Jubilee favourably to celebrations in Russia for the Tsar, where the joy was forced, and celebrations were accompanied with a song from the book of lamentations.⁸⁶ And although worker and rich man celebrated together, the worker had a hungry look on his face as the factory was closed. But typical of the diverse and unpredictably content of the newspaper, it is an article entitled 'London yiden-freser' (London Jew-Gobblers) that provides another side of the story.⁸⁷ Commenting that relations between foreign Jews and Christian poor had been difficult in East London, the article notes that the tension in the St George's East area rose especially high during the jubilee period: "There took place a wild scene that can be compared to a pogrom in the Russian (pej) country."⁸⁸ A Christian called Sullivan kicked a Jewish man, and the whole street erupted into conflict. After the Christians found out that Sullivan was on the point of death in hospital, they returned and attacked the Jews in a house. The police arrested two tailors, Yakob Kominsky and Volf Bernshtayn. The reappearance of the comparison to Russia shows what dangers could befall East European Jews in Britain, even if they felt overall at ease. And the danger of violence was heightened in moments where British national feeling was being encouraged and celebrated.

A key backdrop to Jews living in Western European countries was the Dreyfus affair (1894-1906), which through the late 19th Century and early 20th Century seemed to invalidate prior political assumptions of Jews living

⁸⁶ 'Londoner maysim' [London deeds], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, July 2, 1897, 4.

⁸⁷ "London yidn-freser" (London jew-gobblers), *Der Idisher Ekspres*, July 2 1897, 4.

⁸⁸ "London yidn-freser," 4. "Hot zikh opgeshpilt eyn vilde tsene velkhe kon farglaykht vern mit di pogrom in katsapen land."

in Western Europe. With emancipation from legal constraints and the winning of equal rights over the course of the 19th Century there was meant to be a corresponding decline in antisemitism. The Dreyfus affair suggested this no longer held. As the *Ekspres* itself described it, Jews had left their ghettos thinking they had found equal rights, but now needed a place to shelter from the storm.⁸⁹ On British soil, which had seemed completely safe, there was now a rising jingoism and patriotism, and a corresponding rise in anxiety in the pages of the *Idisher Ekspres* when the Boer war started in 1899. The Boer war posed a twin threat to Jews in Britain: Jews were blamed for involving Britain in the war, by speculating on the stock market in South Africa and thereby bringing Britain into the war, and then accused of not contributing enough to the British war effort, especially in terms of volunteers for the army.⁹⁰ The title of the piece, “Partners tsum farlirn” (Partners for losing), evokes the difficult paradox for British Jews. British Jews were expected to stump up money, but never granted a share of the resulting profits. In a particularly polemical line of the article, which is prescient for the immigrant experience in Britain to the present day, there is a criticism of how Jews in Britain are viewed by the British: “When a Jew performs a hateful deed they discover his Jewishness, even if he has perhaps managed to hide it, but for a good deed the Jew is forgotten.”⁹¹ British identity seemed incompatible to Eastern European Jews with the feelings of the British themselves: unable to comprehend dual identities, British and Jewish, they instead chose to select one identity depending on the situation.

⁸⁹ “Mit 50 yor tsurik” [50 years ago], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, March 4, 1898, 4

⁹⁰ “Partners tsum farlirn” (Partners for losing), *Der Idisher Ekspres*, November 3, 1899, 4

⁹¹ “Partners tsum farlirn,” 4. “Ven a yid tut a heslikhen tat gefint men zayn yidishkayt oys, er meg dos ver veys vu behaltn, tsu a gute zakh ober do vert der yid fargesn.”

This comes down to a key paradox for Britain at the time. It was viewed internationally, or at least by the Western powers, as a centre for tolerance and liberal values, especially in connection to Jews: “We are hated and despised in all of Europe with the exception of England, which is an island in a sea of antisemitism.”⁹² But the journalists of the *Idisher Ekspres* viewed these values as contingent on Jewish cooperation. Otherwise, in a climate of growing patriotism, the Jews would be victims: “And who else is as foreign as the Jews.”⁹³ The *Ekspres* even went so far as to advocate for the founding of a Jewish corps which would fight in the Boer war, urging young unmarried British Jews to sign up to fight for the British army and later in the same issue of the newspaper giving an address where they could sign up.⁹⁴ It was argued that this approach had worked in America, where Jews were viewed to have sacrificed much for the American nation. Colonel Goldsmidt, a prominent Anglo-Jewish officer, was celebrated upon his departure for the front as an example for British Jewry. The *Ekspres* insisted that all donations to the war effort clearly mark that they were from Jewish donors.⁹⁵ In a climate of jingoism and nationalism the *Idisher Ekspres* advocated for Jewish youth to fight for the British. In doing so it signalled its own faith in Britain as a safe haven for British Jews, or at least as long as they sacrificed enough for it.

⁹² “1900”, *Der Idisher Ekspres*, 5th January 1900, 4. “Mir zaynen farhast un ferakhtet in gants eyropa mit di oysname fun england, velkhe iz an inzel in a yam fun antisemitizm.”

⁹³ “1900”, 4. “Un ver iz nokh azoy fremd vi di yidn?”

⁹⁴ “1900”, 4.

⁹⁵ “Do un dort un iberall” [Here, there and everywhere], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, 5th January 1900, 4.

But this was not to last. British antisemitism and xenophobia began to grow. This was due to both economic competition from Jewish immigrants but also the incompatibility of British nationalism with the growth of the immigrant population, which then subsequently nourished xenophobia and antisemitism. This took institutional form in the growth of the British Brothers League (1901-1905), a mass organisation of some 12 000 members, and another similar organisation, the Londoner's League. It also came to engage parliamentary interest with the establishment of the Parliamentary Alien Immigration Committee.⁹⁶ This interlocked anti-immigrant coalition between mass political movements and parliamentarians could not be ignored by immigrant Jewry – especially as the Committee then formed a Commission, which effectively put immigration on trial (and was to culminate in the Aliens Act (1906)). The leadership of the British Brothers League strictly maintained that it was anti-alien and not antisemitic – preferring to avoid questions of immigrants' origins. This was sometimes a difficult task given the antisemitism of many of its members.⁹⁷

The Yiddish press was not taken in. For the *Ekspres*, these developments and especially the commission, meant that England now had a Jewish question.⁹⁸ Another article went further:

The Royal Commission is the “yellow patch” for the Jews in this country, the yellow patch on the jacket reminded a Jew in the Middle Ages that he was a Jew, a (?), hated and despised Jew,

⁹⁶ Colin Holmes, *Antisemitism in British Society 1876-1939* (London: Edward Arnold, 1979), 89-93.

⁹⁷ Holmes, *Antisemitism*, 95-96.

⁹⁸ “Der royal komishon” [The Royal Commission], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, May 7, 1902, 4.

lower than all people, abandoned by everyone and the same is now conveyed to us in England by the royal commission concerning alien immigration.⁹⁹

The metaphor is repeated a second time at the end of the article: “And so is also this “yellow patch”, the royal commission, the sign of Goles in England at the beginning of the 20th century.”¹⁰⁰ The references to “Goles” (the Hebrew term for living in diaspora, but with a negative association connoting exile) shows the insistence of the editorialist on how Britain no longer resembled a home. The historicization by appeal to medieval precursors of antisemitism shows the gravity with which these developments were perceived by immigrant Jewish writers. It also underlines a change in atmosphere: the *Ekspres* would no longer write of English exceptionalism or tolerance, instead it looked to Russia, Germany and France, and indeed to the medieval past, to conclude that emancipation was in danger.

The scale of the threat prompted a reappraisal by the press. It is unlikely to be a coincidence that the first issue of the *Idisher Zhurnal* was concerned with reporting at length the events of an anti-Aliens Act meeting.¹⁰¹ The political danger Jews found themselves in also triggered greater curiosity in the press. The press in turn had few options for making a meaningful opposition to this new legislation. Apart from passionate, desperate editorials, often alongside more sober pieces showing the economic and

⁹⁹ “Troyerige may gedankn” [Sad May thoughts], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, May 7, 1902, 5. “Di royal komishon iz di “gelbe late” far di yidn in dem land, di gelbe late oyf dem rok hot in mitelalter dermont a yidn az er iz a yid, a faynd, ferhaster, ferakhteter yid, nideriker vi ale mentshn, hefker far alenen, dos zelber dermont unz yetst in england di royal komishon vegen elyen imigreyshon.”

¹⁰⁰ “Troyerige may gedankn,” 5. “Un azoy vi oykh dize “gelbe late”, di royal komishon, der tsaykhn fun goles in england tsum onfang fun 20ten yorhundert.”

¹⁰¹ “Elyen bil...protest miting” [Alien Bill... Protest Meeting], *Der Idisher Zhurnal*, May 19, 1905, 1.

demographic errors in the calculations of the anti-alienists, or depicting holes in the suggested legislation, the Yiddish press could register complaints but not change the political situation. It was in a climate of heightened insecurity that the Yiddish press began to attack Anglo-Jewry and its indifference to Alien legislation.

iii) Criticism of the role of English Jews

Antisemitism, both domestic and foreign, contributed to a change in the Yiddish press' conception of the possibilities of life in England and further aggravated its attitude towards anglicisation as a process. But always central to the Yiddish press' criticism of anglicisation was the role of Anglo-Jewry, who played the most significant role in advocating for and institutionalising this process. In polemical columns with titles such as "Sekond-hendig Englender" (Second-hand Englishmen) and "Angloisatsya vi azoy" (How to do Anglicisation), the *Ekspres* attacked the loss of Eastern-European Jewish culture and the role the richer English Jews had in encouraging this process.¹⁰² Earlier in this chapter the extent of criticism of Anglo-Jewish communal institutions was demonstrated. But here we can begin to trace the broader conclusions that immigrant Jewry was beginning to draw at the same time from these experiences. English Jews were at once providing inadequate support, but also offering a model that immigrant Jews ought to reject. "Sekond-hendig Englender" described how inadequate communal charity can serve as a coercive arm for the aims of one part of the

¹⁰² "Sekond-hendik englender" [Second-hand Englishmen], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, December 25, 1896, 4. 'Angloisatsye vi azoy' [How to do anglicisation], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, December 3, 1897, 4.

community on the other: “Prison, just like the workhouse and the infirmary, are the schools for our anglicisation”¹⁰³ The article even makes a comparison to the English, who it is suggested build their own schools, hospitals and clubs wherever they go, whereas the “second hand Englishmen” (the editor’s label for established British Jews) denigrate and do not protect their own Jewish culture in England. In this polemic British and Jewish identity are being shown to be incompatible. Why should a Jewish citizen of Britain, a foreign Jew living in the East End, conform to the national culture of Britain, when British people all over the world strain to preserve their national culture wherever they are. The *Ekspres* was considering Eastern European Jews in Britain not as a religious minority, as Anglo-Jewry depicted itself at the time, but as a national minority. That it did so was also linked to the way the British perceived themselves when they went abroad, and to British projects of colonialism. It was British behaviour in its colonies which the *Ekspres* was referencing for its model of extra-territorial nationality – and showing the inadequacy of Anglo-Jewry’s emancipatory politics. The idea of Eastern European Jews giving up their national culture and maintaining only their religion was too clearly in contradiction with the British model itself. But this relation to anglicisation was not simply a relationship of Jews to British identity, but operated through the mediation of Eastern European Jews comparing themselves to Anglo-Jewry. In “Angloisatsya vi azoy” (Anglicisation as follows) anglicisation is described as an “opgot” (deity/idol) which the English Jews created.¹⁰⁴ Stating that Jews who migrate to England

¹⁰³ “Sekond-hendig englender,” 4. “Di prizon, azoy vi di vork-hoyz un infermeri, zaynen di skuls far di anglosizirung far unzere brider.”

¹⁰⁴ “Angloisatsye vi azoy,” 4.

in fact easily learn the English language, the author criticises the idea that they should imbibe British moral traits, commenting that if they want to learn from their neighbours they ought to go play the races, drinking, or start hitting their women.¹⁰⁵ The linguistic and cultural values are cleverly upended by the Yiddish author, who points to the possible negative qualities that cultural anglicisation might mean. The article holds special contempt for a recent *Jewish Chronicle* suggestion that Jews who cannot speak English should be denied the vote.¹⁰⁶ This contempt for the Jewish masses is held up again as proof that rich Jews are not doing enough for their coreligionists. If some American and British scholarship has perceived Yiddish newspapers as active participants in the anglicisation of immigrants, the *Idisher Ekspres* represents a different viewpoint. It actively rejects anglicisation and acculturation, wanting to maintain a strong Eastern European Jewish identity on British soil. But how could this be maintained? And what forms of compromise did it involve? And what risks were inherent to anglicisation – which claimed to hold all the answers?

It is in response to the Aliens agitation that these questions became more urgent. A sharp editorial called “Soup Kitchen Politics”, argued that the Anglo-Jewish community supported putting limits on immigration because that would reduce the burden on its own charitable work. What it did not realise is that those who, like the Chief Rabbi and chairman of the Jewish Board of Guardians, want to limit immigration to make Jewish life in Britain

¹⁰⁵ “Angloisatsye vi azoy,” 4.

¹⁰⁶ “Angloisatsye vi azoy,” 4.

safer, in fact endanger themselves: “[the chief Rabbi and the other grandees] have not seen what a blind man can detect, that the agitation is not against foreigners as foreigners, but against Jews as Jews, and instead of openly, like human beings, tackling the enemy, it is better to show them a friendly face because that will cost less.”¹⁰⁷ “Soup Kitchen Politics” is a pithy term, typical of the editorial talent that was on display in the *Ekspres* and *Zhurnal*. It summarises the Yiddish press’ disappointment at the lack of courage of Anglo-Jewry.

The reverse of the discussion of established Anglo-Jewry’s attempts to compel immigrant Jewry to assimilate is the focus on the failures of Eastern European Jewish institutions to properly educate the next generation in even the most rudimentary elements of Jewish culture and religion. Articles focus on the lack of education for women (which as a subject is also neglected - the focus of the newspaper and its contributors revealing its male bias), the loss of Yiddish as a language for learning *chumash* (the Pentateuch in book form).¹⁰⁸ One particular pertinent remark concerns the press itself: ““Our brothers cannot bear that they might read the truth in a Yiddish newspaper.”¹⁰⁹ Yiddish had a lowered status in a community that valorises English. Jewish English society is viewed as an almost uniquely non-religious, non-Jewish environment: “However bad the situation for Jews is

¹⁰⁷ “Sup kitshen politik” [Soup Kitchen Politics], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, April 1, 1903, 4. “[Zey] hobn nit gezen dos vos a blinder kon dertapn, az di agitatsye iz nit kegn fremde als fremde, nor kegn yidn als yidn, un anshtot aroys vi mentshn bakemfn di faynt, vayzt men beser tsu zey a frayndlikhn ponem, vayl dos vet kostn biliker.”

¹⁰⁸ “Ma nesa lakhotinu” [What will be done to our sister?], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, January 1, 1897, 4, “Vi azoy darf men lernen?” [How does one learn?], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, January 5, 1897, 2.

¹⁰⁹ “Mi yazra da-a”, *Der Idisher Ekspres*, January 22, 1897, 4. “Unzere brider viln nit layden az zey lezn dem emes in a yidishe tsaytung.”

elsewhere, it's even worse in England. In no country is Jewishness as dormant as in England."¹¹⁰ Immigration to England and America was also viewed as weakening the traditional bases of Jewishness and Jewish learning in Russia, where Yeshivas were starting to be closed and there were not the giants of previous years.¹¹¹ As with much of the content of the *Idisher Ekspres*, this also had an explicitly communal dimension:

In this regard we cannot rely on our "illustrious ones", for they take so little interest in such things. Otherwise one would learn far more Yiddish in the Jewish schools than one learns now. If we all want the younger generation to be ours, we must find ways to win it over. If we will not draw them to us at a young age, then afterwards all work will be in vain.¹¹²

The Yiddish press blamed Anglo-Jewry for being insufficiently philanthropic, ie not giving enough money, and for being culturally weak and overly anglicised. But the newspaper was also a key space for the creation of a different project, one that would not be dependent on the generosity of rich Jews in England. This was the project of an international Jewish people. It is in this context that the *Idisher Ekspres* must be viewed and analysed in the field of the Jewish national project that was both debated within its pages, and that inspired many of its journalists.

¹¹⁰ "A kritishe tsushtand" [A critical situation], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, 5th February 1897, 4. "Vi shlekht dos yudentum shteyt andersvu, shteyt er in england nokh erger. In keyn land iz di yidishkeyt nit azoy ayngeshlofn vi in england."

¹¹¹ "Vos iz tsu ton" [What to do], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, May 7, 1897, 4.

¹¹² "Meykhadolim eyemo" [Terror into the chambers], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, November 5, 1897, 4. "In dem hinzikht iz zikh oyf unzere "groyse" nit tsu farlozn, vayl zey nemen iberhoypt in azelkhe zakhn gants veynik interes, zonst volt men in di yidishe skuls fil mer yidish gelernt vi men lernt yetst. Oyb mir viln ale dos der yunger dor zol zayn unzerer, muzn mir zukhn mitlen vi azoy tsu gevinen im. Oyb mir veln im tsu unz nit tsu tsien yungerheyt, vet nokher ale arbet zayn umzist."

iv) The British Yiddish Press and history

To try and understand the unique situation that was taking place for immigrant Jews in Britain looking to the past was often the most useful resource. Using anniversaries or the occasion of the new century became the opportunity for reflection on a changing political situation that risked endangering the British Jewish immigrant community.

One such piece considered the Sephardi community.¹¹³ The evocative subtitle of the piece “a Jubilee or the anniversary of a death” explains much of its critical argument. Instead of celebrating the 250th anniversary of the Sephardic community in London, the author views this as an opportunity to learn what not to do so that the Eastern European Jewish community does not decline like the Sephardi community. The failure of the Sephardi community is “the result of the great crisis which we also faced, when every spark of nationality, of fraternity, has died out amongst the Jewish people, when the Jews have ceased to be Jews.”¹¹⁴ For the author Jewishness without a sense of nationality and brotherhood is not viable: but the remedy is also education:

And the best insurance money which a community pays is the money it spends on the young generation teaching them Yiddish, the money that it spends teaching the children the

¹¹³ “A dzhubeli oder a yor-tsayt” [A jubilee or the anniversary of a death], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, June 5, 1901, 4.

¹¹⁴ “A dzhubeli oder a yor-tsayt,” 4. “der rezultat fun groysn krizis vos iz bay unz geven, ven bay dos yudishe folk iz opgeshtorbn yeder funk fun natsyonalitet, fun briderlikhkeyt, ven yidn hoben oyfgehert tsu zayn yidn.”

Jewish religion, Jewish literature and history, those are the signs that which can maintain a community.¹¹⁵

A crucial piece, again centring the Aliens Act, is the editorial “Two Hundred and Fifty Years.”¹¹⁶ Retelling the story of Menasseh Ben Israel and British Jewry since readmission, the article recounts a bitter fight for civil rights. The article summarises the British community as not being known for its intelligence or faith, but for the important role it plays in the world, but there are signs that the bad luck that followed Jews for 250 years has not ceased, as with the Alien agitation there are worrying contemporary signs of the growth of antisemitism:

Rabbi Menasseh ben Israel was not able in his time to ensure that England might become a refuge for the Jews who flee from the sword of Khmelnitsky, and nor have the sons of Israel in England now been able to make sure that England should not be closed in the time of such massacres by Khmelnitsky’s grandchildren, and that severely darkens the shine of fortune of the English Jews, the heightened atmosphere of the remembrance of Jewish progress in England in the 250 years is suppressed by the law against foreign immigration which will at the end of the month come into force at a very bad time.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ “A dzhubeli oder a yor-tsayt,” 4. “Un di beste inshurens gelt vos a gemeynde tsolt iz dos gelt vos zi shpendet dem yungn dor yidish tsu lernen, di geld vos zi git oys tsu lernen di kinder yidishe religyon, yidishe literatur un geshikhthe, dos zaynen di tsaykhn vos kenen a gemeynde oyshaltn.”

¹¹⁶ “Tsvey hundert un funftsik yor” [Two Hundred and Fifty Years], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, December 6, 1904, 4.

¹¹⁷ “Tsvey hundert un funftsik yor,” 4. “Nit oysgefirt hot rebbe menashe ben israel in zayn tsayt az england zol vern a miklat far di yidn vos antloyfn fun shvert Khmelnitski, un nit oysegefirt hobn di gute bney yisroel in england yetst az men zol zikh nit farshlisen in der tsayt fun azelkhe hariges durkh Khmelnitski’s eyniklekh un dos fartunklt shtark dem sheyn fun glik fun di englishe yidn, di gehoybene shtimung bay der dermonung fun yidishn progres in england in di 250 yor vet aruntergedrikt durkh dem gezets kegn fremde aynvanderung vos vet tsu ende fun dem khoydesh arayn in kraft tsu zeyer a shlekhte tsayt.”

History showed Anglo-Jewry failing again to protect Jews from Eastern Europe, the opposite of a whiggish narrative of benign tolerance. British Jewish history is defined by repeated failures to help – and at crucial moments – not a triumphant series of successful interventions. Another piece represents a wholesale rejection of Jewish emancipation. Discussing “The New Century”, the piece uses the occasion for a chance to reflect on the lessons learned from the last century. Characterising the 19th Century as a moment when Jews tried to win legal rights by begging Christians for them, the article criticises this policy as failed. Instead a new, prouder, politics was needed that did not plead for rights but asserted the need for a Jewish country: by the end of the 20th Century, the article ventures, they would have it. Central to this nationalist ideology is the withering contempt it holds for emancipation, describing it as a “*zelmord politik*” – suicide politics.¹¹⁸ The Yiddish press was occasionally characterised by its external opponents, or by rival publications, as lowbrow and unintellectual. But these sophisticated responses, steeped in a historical awareness, show that the Yiddish press and its journalists were able to theorise and intellectualise Jewish life in Britain. More importantly, the close attention paid to the historical moment, its rupture and challenges, shows us what a turbulent time these journalists were living in – and how under threat Yiddish speaking Jews and Yiddish political and cultural activists were.

¹¹⁸ “Der nayer yohrhundert” [The New Century], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, January 3, 1901, 4.

c) Political Intervention in place of Anglicisation

i) The Ekspres as Zionist. What kind of Zionism?

It is wrong to assume that the Jews of Western Europe (amongst whom were the older members of Anglo-Jewry), gave up or lost an authentic Jewish culture to confine themselves to identifying as Jewish in a purely religious sense. Eastern European Jews did not embody a higher, more authentic and undoctored Jewishness, which then came into conflict with a false or weak Western European assimilated or acculturated Jewishness. This was itself often the Jewish nationalist argument. In fact Anglo Jewry had always maintained its own cultural norms that differed from British norms outside of religion. More than this, the community was not indifferent to the development of different, or more clearly defined forms of Jewish national identity at the end of the 19th Century and beginning of the 20th Century. Likewise, it is wrong to assume that Eastern European Jews coming to Britain were pure living embodiments of a permanent traditional *Yidishkayt* (Jewishness): in fact many of the most important intervenants in British Jewish life during this period, as well as many individuals who did not involve themselves in the press records that make up most of this account, were undergoing processes of modernisation (which might crudely be labelled assimilation or acculturation), and these actors were often the most active in the new Jewish national movement. Nor, at this embryonic stage in the development of Jewish nationalism, was Zionism a single construct, nor was Jewish nationalism limited to the conception of a home in *Erets Isroel* (The Land of Israel).

The *Idisher Ekspres* did not embrace Zionism for tradition's sake: in fact it was a modern movement which was deeply untraditional. Zionism used new, popular forms of political media and organisation: such as the newspaper and journal, that, alongside other new political praxa developed by the socialists and anarchists, were themselves important parts of Eastern European Jewish life in this period. The *Ekspres* advocated for Zionism as a rallying cause for the Eastern European Jewish audience it wanted to represent which might offer a path away from the communal deficiencies it had diagnosed in Anglo-Jewry's offering. But Zionism itself became a site of communal conflict. During this period Zionism internationally, and within Britain, went through a great period of turbulence: the press' reaction to this helped inform its own growth and development. Historians have often viewed the growth of the vernacular press as an essential element in the formation of nationalisms and national projects: the *Idisher Ekspres* can be analysed partly in this light, even if its relationship to language and nation is complex.

The *Idisher Ekspres* was proud of its history of advocacy for Zionism: "The "*Ekspres*" was the first which propagandised for Zionism in England, before even one of the English newspapers turned itself towards the side of Zion and took its present position."¹¹⁹ "On the contrary might anyone say that there is in the world a private paper where one writes as much about Zionism

¹¹⁹ "Der tshif rabbi iber tsionizm" [The Chief Rabbi on Zionism], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, December 2, 1898, 4. "Der "ekspres" iz gevezn der ershter vos hot in england far'n tsionizm propagandirt, nokh befar eyne fun di englishe tsaytungen iz af dem zayt fun tsion bakert gevorn un hot genumen ir yetsige shtelung."

as in the *Ekspres*?" Leiserowitz asked.¹²⁰ It even claimed that as a consequence there was no need for a Zionist organ in Britain.¹²¹ In an article critical of the Chief Rabbi's stance on Zionism, the *Ekspres* not only gave its own view of the history of Zionism (Herzl was not the creator of the organisation, but its organiser, directing the already established Chovevei Tsion in a more efficient direction), but denied completely Chief Rabbi Adler's accusation that Zionists are somehow anti-religious.¹²² In a revelatory part of the article, the *Ekspres* disputes any idea that Zionism activism would give Jews trouble in England, that they might be accused of dual loyalty: "Nothing is more natural for the Englishman than that the Jewish people should strive for its independence."¹²³ This is an important reiteration of an earlier point. The British example could be interpreted to mean that Jews should strive for their own nation, and that even the English would take to this and appreciate it – not that Jews should assimilate to the British nation.

The debate around Zionism occurs in the *Ekspres* not simply through printed opinion pieces, but also substantially through written reports from public meetings and from the Zionist congresses. These meetings were very well attended. At an East End Hovevei Zion meeting, a report observed that not since the mass meeting attended by Herzl had they had such a large and enthusiastic meeting in the East End.¹²⁴ To an extent Zionism defined mass

¹²⁰ Elieser Leizerovitz, "Der ershte krumer trot" [The first crooked step], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, 4th September 1901, 5. "Aderabe zol imetser zogn oyb es iz faran in der velt a privat blat vu men shraybt azoy fil tsionizm vi in ekspres?"

¹²¹ Leizerovitz, "Der ershte krumer trot," 5.

¹²² Leizerovitz, "Der ershte krumer trot," 5.

¹²³ Leizerovitz, "Der ershte krumer trot," 5. "Keyn zakh iz bay di englander nit azoy natirlekh vi dos dos yidishe folk zol shtreben tsu ir zelshtendikeyt.

¹²⁴ "Makhne yisroel" [Camp Israel], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, December 11, 1896, 5.

gatherings in this period. Likewise a meeting held at the Princes Street Shul to welcome a leader of the New York Bney Zion, Mr Levinson, was full.¹²⁵ An ongoing theme in the *Ekspres* was a perceived lack of concrete political action by the political leadership: an article entitled “Redn un ton” (Talking and Doing) called for more action and less discussion.¹²⁶ As with other topics discussed in the *Idisher Ekspres*, there was also an element of communal conflict. English Jews, which an article alleges were overwhelmingly Chovevei Zion because of the influence of Montefiore, were quiet when it became a big movement and there were big meetings in the East End at the Jewish Men’s Working Club.¹²⁷ This article too calls for a grassroots movement from the ground up. Herzl himself took umbrage with this article and the *Ekspres* hastened to defend its standpoint which criticised the Chovevei Zion headquarters.¹²⁸ Behind this was a strong continuation of an anti-materialist critique, which belonged to the *Ekspres*’ understanding of Zionism (and we can infer angered the more established Chovevei Zionists).¹²⁹ The *Ekspres* also heavily criticised a *Jewish Chronicle* article that slandered Eastern European Jews as only buying shares in Herzl’s Colonial Bank to do good business.¹³⁰ As in the case of the workhouse, Hayman Polski also contributed a dramatic piece about Zionism, “Der finsterer tog” (The Dark Day), where he connected the pain of Tishe Bov (the saddest day of the Jewish calendar, commemorating the destruction of the

¹²⁵ “Bney tsion” [Sons of Zion], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, February 5, 1897, 3.

¹²⁶ “Redn un ton” [Talking and doing], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, January 22, 1897, 4.

¹²⁷ “Ahar Ha-Rash”, *Der Idisher Ekspres*, July 2, 1897, 4

¹²⁸ “A misfarshteyenis” [A misunderstanding], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, August 6, 1897, 4.

¹²⁹ “A misfarshteyenis,” 4.

¹³⁰ “Do un dort un iberl” [Here, there and everywhere], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, December 3, 1897, 6.

Temple in Jerusalem) to the pain of the immigrant experience, before suggesting this energy should be catalysed into building a new Jewish homeland.¹³¹

It has often been suggested that the scale of immigrant Zionism was small or limited.¹³² The Yiddish press gives a different picture: the many reports included from all over the British Isles suggest a flourishing network of societies. On one hand the *Ekspres* could emphasise how significant Zionism was in Britain. When it came to Shekel sales it was second only to Russia.¹³³ But it also satirised the constant splitting of societies.¹³⁴ It is probable that immigrant Zionism's real strength lay somewhere between the Yiddish press' high estimations and historians much more critical verdicts.

¹³¹ "Der finsterer tog" [The Dark Day], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, 6th August 1897, 5.

¹³² Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 346. Gideon Shimoni, "Poale Zion: A Zionist Transplant in Britain (1905-1945)," *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* 2 (1986): 228-32. Shimoni quotes a letter Ahad Ha'am wrote to Simon Dubnow: "What shall I write to you about Jewish life here?... Judaism, in our sense of the word, is in *Galut* here much more than in Russia. There are Zionist "meetings"... But in all these things there is no breath of life and you feel at once that the whole thing is only an exotic plant which has been brought from abroad and artificially stuck in the ground, without any deep roots." Ahad Ha'am to S. Dubnow, 18 December 1907, Aryeh Simon (ed.), *Letters of Ahad Ha'am* [Hebrew], IV, (Tel Aviv 1958) 99. See also: Cohen, Stuart A. "How Shall We Sing of Zion in a Strange Land?": East European Immigrants and the Challenge of Zionism in Britain, 1897-1918." *Jewish Social Studies* 1:2 (1995): 101-122. The lack of Zionist activity in Britain is portrayed as being especially the case for the socialist strain of Zionism, but equally true for Zionism as a whole. "Whatever advantages the Zionists might have hoped to reap from that situation were negated by the paucity of active support which they were themselves able to arouse in immigrant circles. Their own attempts to yoke the demand for Jewish national regeneration to the socialist struggle for proletarian emancipation, for instance, seemed hardly to touch the mass of immigrants. Mutatis mutandis, the fragility of the very few Poale Zion societies which saw the light of day mirrored that of the anti-Zionist socialist groups whose doctrines they contested. Implying that they wished a plague on the two parties, most immigrants simply ignored both, preferring to place their faith (and money) in the nonradical Jewish trade union movement and in Jewish Friendly Societies." Cohen, "How Shall we sing of Zion", 105.

¹³³ ILYLPFeal [pseud. Dolidanski], "Tsu der tsayt" [To the time], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, March 1, 1905, 3.

¹³⁴ ILYLPFeal [pseud. Dolidanski], "Ershter april naves" (First april news), *Der Idisher Ekspres*, April 1, 1903, 4.

ii) Change and Consolidation of British and Immigrant Zionism

During the period (1896-1910) Zionism both came into being and subsumed Chovevei Tzion (Lovers of Zion), before there was the split with the Territorialists (who split officially in 1905 from the main Zionist movement because they advocated for Jewish settlement in other locations beside Palestine). First there was the process of unification of Chovevei Zion and Zionist clubs.¹³⁵ After this came the development of the English Zionist Federation. There was a regularly slot in the paper for Zionist and Chovevei Zionist news. As Zionism grew so too did its celebrities. One issue boasted an extensive interview with Moses Gaster, another a supplementary photo of Dr Herzl, about whom they wrote that: "The picture of Dr Herzl should be found in every Yiddish house as a symbol of patriotism in a Jewish heart. The picture should remind us that we have a goal in front of us, we have a hope for better times."¹³⁶ By late 1898 the *Ekspres* had settled on its own recommendations for the Zionist movement in Britain: It needed to get rid of the military uniforms and move power from headquarters to local branches.¹³⁷

¹³⁵ "Doyreshi tsion" [Demanders of Zion], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, August 6, 1897, 3.

¹³⁶ "Di tsionistische bevegung: eyn intervyyu mit rev doktor gaster" [The Zionist Movement: an interview with Rev. Doctor Gaster] *Der Idisher Ekspres*, August 6, 1897, 3. "Dr Hertsl", *Der Idisher Ekspres*, September 3, 1897, 4. "Dos bild fun dr hertsl darf zikh gefinen in yede yidishe hoyz, als a simbol fun patriotizm in a yidishe harts. Dos bild zol erinern, dos mir hobn a tsil far zikh, mir hobn a hofnung oyf besere tsaytn."

¹³⁷ "Vos iz tsu ton" [What to do], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, January 7, 1898, 4.

The creation of the federation of English Zionists was a key moment. It would bring the victory of the Zionists – who followed Herzl’s new political organisation – over the pre-existing national organisation of Chovevei Tsion in England. The *Ekspres* announced its establishment in the light of the creation of another federation: the Trade Union Federation.¹³⁸ This twinning of trade unionism and Zionism, both federations working in the interests of Eastern European Jews in Britain, would be more in evidence in the activities of Kalman Marmor and the creation of Poale Tsion in the UK, which is explored in the next chapter. The English Zionist Federation would be an enduring target for the *Ekspres*’s criticism, not least for inflating its membership.¹³⁹ This is an interesting precursor to arguments advanced by later historians who have argued against the importance of early Zionism based on criticism at a later stage of transparently inflated memberships and empty organisations. Clearly this was a problem from the beginning (and not just from West End to East End Jews) – as much a rhetorical weapon as an existing fact.

The biggest challenge for the *Ekspres*’s Zionism was the Uganda scheme. The *Ekspres* was a very proud supporter of Herzl and political Zionism.¹⁴⁰ Herzl and the political Zionists proposed a scheme for Jewish settlement in Uganda (properly in Kenya) in 1903. But it became clear, not least when a large debate played out in the pages of the *Ekspres* itself, that the Uganda

¹³⁸ “Di tsionistische federeyshon” [The Zionist Federation], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, February 3, 1899, 4.

¹³⁹ “Di tsionistische federeyshon,” 4.

¹⁴⁰ ILYLPFeal [pseud. Dolidanski], “Roym un yerusholim” [Rome and Jerusalem], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, February 3, 1904, 4.

scheme was not generally popular.¹⁴¹ The *Ekspres* was forced into a difficult position. It never lost faith in Herzl and political Zionism, but it also was not ready to go over to the Territorialist cause after Herzl's death (the Territorialists supported the Uganda scheme and similar proposals for Jewish settlement outside of Palestine).¹⁴²¹⁴³ This shows a certain degree of flexibility in the *Ekspres*: but also its aim to bridge factions. Often it simply preached unity.¹⁴⁴ For many years it was a cheerleader for Israel Zangwill, printing his speeches and heaping praise on him. But sensitive to its audience, or perhaps simply disagreeing on principled grounds, the mainstream Yiddish press did not follow his change of position when he definitively broke with the Zionist organisation in 1905. The *Ekspres* simply wished Zangwill would give up the Territorialist cause and come back to the Zionists.¹⁴⁵ The *Zhurnal* celebrated the final end of the Uganda project and wished only that it had come earlier.¹⁴⁶

iii) Resistance to young Zionists and anti-socialism

The *Ekspres* viewed itself with some pride as having been an important player in Zionism in Britain. Jacob Hodess, writing about the history of the Yiddish press in Britain, and himself having worked on the *Ekspres*, would

¹⁴¹ "Briv" [Letters], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, 8th October, 1903, 6.

¹⁴² For faith in political Zionism see: "Unzer politisher fortschrit" [Our political progress], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, September 6, 1905, 6.

¹⁴³ ILYLPFeal [pseud. Dolidanski], "Tsu der tsayt" [In time], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, September 6, 1905, 6.

¹⁴⁴ See "Unzer politisher fortschrit" [Our political progress], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, September 6, 1905, 6.

¹⁴⁵ ILYLPFeal [pseud. Dolidanski], "Tsu der tsayt" (To the Time), *Der Idisher Ekspres*, September 6, 1905, 6.

¹⁴⁶ "Iber di velt" [Around the World], *Der Idisher Zhurnal*, August 1, 1905, 2.

proudly quote from a letter Herzl wrote the editors.¹⁴⁷ Perhaps it is in this light that we should view the *Ekspres's* opposition to younger Socialist Zionists: it resented their challenge to its legitimacy as the most important Zionist periodical in Britain.¹⁴⁸ It may also have been the newspaper's aversion to outright socialism.

The *Idisher Ekspres's* position on Eastern European Jewish radical and social politics was complicated. From its first issues it carried trade union reports and articles about trade union activity. Of special interest within the paper was the question of Eastern European Jews engaging with English Trade Unionism, and it advocated learning more about trade unionism and from the English Trade unions.¹⁴⁹ In conflicts between the various unions and the socialist and anarchist movements, it was difficult for the *Express* to find a line which won it popularity, and letters were critical of the *Ekspres* for allegedly only defending itself and not correctly reporting events.¹⁵⁰ The *Ekspres* itself claimed it wanted only for the unions to unite, but that both sides view it as biased.¹⁵¹ An individual letter expressing thanks is printed as being received from workers, who thanked the *Ekspres* for its efforts to win them employment again.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁷ Hodes, "Geshikhte fun der english-yidisher prese," 40-71.

¹⁴⁸ See in particular the highly critical article concerning Kalman Marmor and *Mayrove* in *Der Idisher Ekspres*, 7th January, 1903, 4 and 6. This individual and group will be discussed later in the dissertation.

¹⁴⁹ "Vegn di federeyshon" [About the federation], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, December 18, 1896, 2.

¹⁵⁰ "Rakhmones ponimlekh" [Faces of pity], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, January 22, 1897, 5.

¹⁵¹ "Der vos iz nit far mir iz kegn mir" [He who is not for me is against me], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, January 29 1897, 4.

¹⁵² "A efontlikher dank" [A public thank you], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, January 22, 1897, 5.

The balance, if not a happy one, was not to last. The rupture between the *Ekspres* and the workers' movements and their associated political parties was a gradual affair. While in the context of the workhouse question the editorial line could still be found to defend the socialists, gradually anti-socialist and anti-anarchist views snuck into the paper.¹⁵³ In this position the *Ekspres* attacked the anarchists and socialists for their hostility to religion: "Our brothers have caught the aura of socialism and made a new religion of Yom Kippur balls, of Jewish antisemites and of other such things."¹⁵⁴

Nonetheless the *Ekspres* reaffirmed its commitment to improving the situation of workers.¹⁵⁵ The *Ekspres* also viewed the anarchists and socialists as not paying sufficient attention to the Jewish dimension of the worker's question.¹⁵⁶ The *Ekspres* claimed it wanted genuine social reform, but in a gradual non-alienating or extreme manner.¹⁵⁷ It eventually advocated for a close union between Zionism and Socialism, but continued to criticise all the other Socialist and Anarchist organisations.¹⁵⁸

The *Ekspres* praised a pamphlet published by Dr Landau in Vienna that argued that social democrats were no less antisemitic than other parties.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵³ A Londoner, "Eglo hoarufu" [The heifer with the broken neck], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, 11th December 1896, 2 for the defence.

¹⁵⁴ "Zeyt vos ihr tut!" [See what you are doing!], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, March 5, 1897, 4. "Unzere brider hobn dem reyekh fun sotsializm gekhapt un gemakht derfun a naye religyon fun yom kipur beler, fun yidishe antisemithn un fun nokh azelkhe zakhes."

¹⁵⁵ "Zeyt vos ihr tut!" 4.

¹⁵⁶ "Tsionizm un treyd yunions" [Zionism and Trade Unions], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, May 5, 1899, 4.

¹⁵⁷ "Tsionizm un treyd yunions," 4.

¹⁵⁸ "Tsionizm un treyd yunions," 4.

¹⁵⁹ "Do un dort un iberall" [Here, there and everywhere] *Der Idisher Ekspres*, November 5, 1897, 3.

Interestingly this article also connects the socialists' antisemitism in Vienna to their opposition to Chovevei Zion. The *Ekspres* was beginning to equate socialism with opposition to Jewish nationalism and to antisemitism – this would be a mainstay of criticism of Jewish and non-Jewish social democracy.¹⁶⁰ The *Ekspres* paid unstinting coverage to the question of antisemitism, especially in a foreign setting. This kind of ambivalence, between the private Yiddish press balancing its need not to alienate its readers, many of whom were workers, but its own ideological preference away from an open language of socialism, was brought most clearly to the fore by a strike that took place at the *Idisher Zhurnal* itself. The strike, the result of a row between the *Ekspres*'s owner Zhuk and his unionised staff, ended up lasting for four months and severely disrupted the newspaper's production.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ See chapter 3 for more on this.

¹⁶¹ "Der Idisher Zhurnal tsu zayne lezer" [The Jewish journal to its readers], *Der Idisher Zhurnal*, January 4, 1906, 2.

iv) Broader Politics

It would be a mistake to suppose the Jewish community in the East End of London lived in a vacuum. Recent research has drawn attention to the complex and multifarious interactions between Jews and non-Jews.¹⁶² The Yiddish press likewise was fully aware that a world existed beyond Jewish politics; the Aliens Act, and the organisation against it, made this only too clear. Likewise, Jewish politics was also a response to political movements and developments outside of the Jewish community. The *Ekspres* despaired of the lack of interest in much of the community about many broader political issues. One, the question of school reform, came to a head in 1902:

For us the question of under whose oversight the schools should be is very important. And yet in the whole time we have still not heard any Jews that might speak out about this. The English Jews do not know how far the new laws will affect their own, they do not have the courage to open their mouths... That is very sad to see that fifty years after the Irish they got all their rights and they will not have the courage to speak a word out as Jews. Such freedom is little more than decorated slavery.¹⁶³

For the *Ekspres* the lack of interest when freedom is threatened is exasperating, but yet again it points to the enfeebled and powerless nature of Anglo-Jewry.

¹⁶² Feldman, "Lewinstein goes to Parliament," 138, and Daniel Renshaw, *Socialism and the Diasporic Other: A Comparative Study of Irish Catholic and Jewish Radical and Communal Politics in East London, 1889-1912* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2018).

¹⁶³ ELYLPFa, "Iber di velt" [Around the World], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, November 5, 1902, 2. "Far undz iz di frage gants vikhtik unter vemes oyfzikht di skuls zoln zikh gefinen. Un dokh in der ganster tsayt hobn mir nokh nit gehert yidn zoln kegn dem a vort oysreydn...Di englishe yidn veysn nit vi vayt di naye gezetse vet zey onriren, zey hoben ober nit dem mut a moyl tsu efenen...Dos iz zeyer troyerik tsu zen dos mit fuftsik yor shpeter vi di ire hobn zeyere ale rekhte gekrogn zoln zey dem mut nit hobn vegn aza vikhtike frage a vort oystsureydn als yidn. Aza frayhayt iz nit mer vi di ferputste shklafnheyte."

The Yiddish press was aware of the political situation in Britain. It knew, for example, that the Lord Mayor of the City of London was a position defined by pomp and not political clout; it castigated English Jewish journalists for overcelebrating a Jewish Lord Mayor, and warned that the Jewish Lord Mayor's decision to bring Jewish soldiers to the Mansion House to recognise them posed a risk.¹⁶⁴ If there was competition in the aristocracy between Jews and non-Jews for military posts it was sure to cause antisemitism.¹⁶⁵ Its real fury was reserved for those who only came to the Jewish community when election time arrived. The Territorialists who were campaigning in the East End for the MP of their choice, the *Ekspres* contended, were not just trying to oust the one Jewish MP who had stood up for Eastern European Jews, Stuart Samuel, but were aiming to replace him with an antisemite, David Hope Kyd.¹⁶⁶ Elsewhere one correspondent wrote in and complained about their local MP in Sheffield, Howard Vincent, who proved that there is antisemitism in England.¹⁶⁷ And the *Zhurnal* could not resist complaining about a Jewish candidate for MP in Finsbury who had attacked his Canadian opponent by calling him an alien. This was likely to bring little success, at any moment the Mr Cohen in question could have been reminded that he himself is a foreigner.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁴ "Vos iz a lord meyer" [What is a lord mayor], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, November 13, 1896, 6.

¹⁶⁵ "Vos iz di simkhe" [What is the celebration] *Der Idisher Ekspres*, January 7, 1903, 4.

¹⁶⁶ "Bletlakh" [Little pages], *Der Idisher Zhurnal*, January 4, 1906, 2.

¹⁶⁷ "Briv fun Sheffield" [Letter from Sheffield], *Der Idisher Zhurnal*, August 1, 1906, 3.

¹⁶⁸ "Iber di velt" [Around the world], *Der Idisher Zhurnal*, July 2, 1905, 2.

Meanwhile Jewish politics and broader politics were coming together. The liberal candidate for Leeds, Sir Samuel Montagu, was interviewed by the Degel Tsion (Flag of Zion) club in Leeds. Montagu insisted that because of his involvement with English politics and his career as a businessman he could not become involved with Zionist politics. However, no doubt as a sop to the growing importance of the Zionist movement in Britain, he did explain that when there was practical work to do it would be different:

Zionism is good, very good for all foreign Jews, it holds everyone in an association. But we English born Jews only need Zionism when there is practical work to be done and then we will also be there.¹⁶⁹

In the same copy of the *Ekspres* there was a report of the activity of Joseph Cowen, a leading Zionist in the English Zionist Federation, who had contacted every member of parliament before the election and informed them about the Zionist cause – and how it would reduce immigration to Britain. Select responses were featured – the MP in St George’s in the East End being particularly enthusiastic about the scheme. The mainstream Yiddish press aimed to inform its readers about political issues that affected them, but it was also the record of increasingly serious attempts to mobilise by Jewish political organisations in Britain.

Conclusion

¹⁶⁹ “A intervyyu mit sir semuel montagyu iber tsionizm” [An interview with sir Samuel Montagu about zionism), *Der Idisher Ekspres*, October 5, 1900, 2. “Der tsionizm iz gut, zeyer gut far ale foreyne yidn, er halt alemen in a farband. Nor uns geborene english yidn broykhen tsionizm nor ven es iz do praktishe arbayt tsu ton un dan veln mir oykh zayn dabay.”

This chapter has argued that the *Idisher Ekspres* and *Idisher Zhurnal* are both the product of, and participant in, a transformation of immigrant Jewry as it began to organise itself and express a new cultural and political autonomy. These newspapers began to actively intervene in philanthropic and social debates, anchoring their representative functions as organs of Eastern European Jewry. These two newspapers advocated for new organisational bodies and greater communal help for their readers. But they also diagnosed components of Anglo-Jewish life which they did not recognise as a model – in some cases the opposite. If its critique of anglicisation formed the negative ideological component of the newspaper, Zionism and Jewish nationalism was the positive ideology that seemed to promise freedom. The growth of Zionism coalesced around a new Jewish politics that was also interlinked and involved with socialism and trade unionism. But the *Ekspres* distrusted radical politics and advocated for gradualism and reform, in the process of doing so alienating the anarchist, socialist and trade union groups. This meant that it was also opposed to a young generation of socialist Zionists. The next chapter will explore Jewish activists, cultural workers and politicians who pushed past the limits of the *Ekspres*' world view and tried to set up the institutions that would make flourishing Jewish radical countercultures in Britain.

Chapter 3: Britain's Forgotten Yiddish Radicals: Socialist Zionists and Jewish Social Democrats and the Yiddish Press

Introduction

In the first years of the 20th Century different political and cultural movements and societies began to play an increasingly important role in London's Jewish immigrant life. William Fishman's pioneering work, *East End Jewish Radicals*, introduced a significant readjustment to British Jewish history.¹ Whereas previously accounts of immigrant life had focused on the relative success of Jewish immigrants' integration within British society, Fishman focused on the Jewish anarchist movement's resistance and struggle, also underlining the importance of class. Fishman was able to describe one vivid subculture. The Anarchists were just one part of the story: in fact Jewish radicalism was far broader in this period.² These movements in part need to be integrated within their broader Jewish political contexts.

¹ For a well balanced summary of this historiographical development see the introduction to this dissertation see Gidley, "Citizenship and Belonging", 20-21.

² Fishman downplayed the importance of the Social Democrats: "A small, esoteric group, more inward-looking in their concern for maintaining doctrinal purity. (Like Talmudists they debated endlessly, in public and private, on the correctness of theoretical interpretation, while the Anarchists were preaching to, and activating, the workers in the streets and factories.) Their party paper, *Di Naye Tsayt*, founded by another Gentile, Beck [sic], in 1904, struggled on as a weekly or fortnightly sheet until 1908." Fishman, *East End Jewish Radicals*, 261. Historian Claudie Weill observes that "there seems to have been a greater Bundist influence than assumed by William Fishman" and goes on to name the East End Jewish Branch of the Social Democratic Federation which no doubt had more influence than Fishman attributes to it, but it was not simply a branch of the Bund but chose instead to affiliate itself with the English S.D.F, albeit maintaining links with the *Bund*, as detailed later. The Socialist Zionists are discussed only in the context of their speeches given at the Jubilee Street club. Fishman, *East End Jewish Radicals*, 261, 286, Claudie Weill, "Russian Bundists in Exile, 1898-1925" in *Jewish Politics in Eastern Europe: The Bund at 100* ed. Jack Jacobs (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 50. For evidence of the relative unimportance of the anarchists within the Yiddish press see: "Dos folkhoyz un di anarkhistiche lumperey" [The people's house and the anarchist thuggery], *Di Naye Tsayt*, January 6, 1905, 1 and Osipov, *Mayn Lebn*, 139, Gorelik, *Shturmedike Yorn*, 116-117.

Britain's relative marginality as a Jewish centre means that its important contributions to broader modern Jewish political questions, about Zionism, Jewish Social Democracy, and the development of the international Yiddish press, have gone unarticulated. By focusing on these movements, anglicisation as a framing narrative can be displaced and attention can be better paid to the transnational and modern Jewish political and cultural lives that immigrants managed to build for themselves, outside of Anglo-Jewry's institutions.

Zionist Socialists, the Jewish Social Democrats and the Anarchists all had newspapers and their own organs, *Der Koysel Mayrove* (1902), *Di Naye Tsayt* (1904-1907), *Der Arbayter Fraynd* (1885-1932), respectively, but they also had physical club houses, cultural groups (choirs, theatre troupes) and could offer an alternative life to Jewish immigrants, a political and social counter culture.³ This chapter investigates these political, social and cultural offerings to try and contribute to a significantly broader understanding of the various radicalisms of this period and their confrontations. Historians have focused overwhelmingly on Anarchism in the period of mass immigration, and in general the focus on radicalism has chosen earlier periodisations.⁴ These different political movements need to be assessed together in terms of their interrelation within Britain's Yiddish language politics. These

³ The transliteration of these journal's names follows *YCiB*, 124, 382, 484.

⁴ The pathbreaking example of scholarship on Jewish radicalism in this period remains Fishman, *East End Jewish Radicals*, but Fishman's focus was predominantly on the anarchist movement. More recent work has also tended to focus on either an earlier period, for example Feldman's analysis ends in 1899 and separates Zionism from Socialism, *Englishmen and Jews*, 330-335, 342-347. Lachs' work also focusses on the significant figures of the earlier period, in particular Morris Winchevsky (1856-1932), who left London for New York in 1894, before the period in discussion here, Lachs, *Whitechapel Noise*, 91-132.

movements asked searching questions about the possibilities for immigrant organisations: Are Zionism and Socialism compatible? What form can cultural autonomy take? Is political autonomy possible without a state? What does Jewish emancipation mean and look like? Indeed, it may well be the case that these organisations' social and cultural offerings were more significant than their political achievements.

Between 1896 and 1910 there was the establishment of many international organisations to which these movements contributed. There was the *International Socialist Workers and Trade Union Congress* in London in 1896, the Zionist Congresses, the Fourth in London (1900) and the tumultuous *Sixth and Seventh Zionist Congresses* in Basel in 1903 and 1905. All of the movements were tested by the difficult events of the period – which put Eastern European Jews in Britain under the highest possible strain - most notably the Boer War (1899-1902), the 1903 Kishinev Pogrom, the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) and the 1905 Russian Revolution and the pogroms that followed it, the British anti-Alien agitation (1901-1906). These movements tried to define themselves in response to these international events and what their implications for the domestic politics in the UK would be; they competed to find the most convincing answers.

The ideological and cultural manifestations of different Jewish political movements writing and working in Yiddish amongst Jewish immigrants to Britain were not the mirror image, in smaller form, of the same developments that were occurring in Eastern Europe and in New York and elsewhere. Local

factors meant that these movements had different ideas and trajectories. Key to this are two considerations: one, the role of Britain as a stopping point between Russia and the US; and secondly, the ideological position of Britain as a place of both free movement and free speech, but a location where the former was under increasingly severe threat.

This chapter traces the development and shape that these movements took, before analysing the encounters and divergences that occurred when the groups reacted with each other, sometimes positively, at others violently. It shows the diversity and complexity of immigrant politics – and it further realigns history of immigrant life away from the overweening narrative of anglicisation.

a) Mayrove and the Socialist Zionists

Historians have underplayed the importance of the early Zionist Socialist movement in Britain. They would characterise the movement as lacking active support, as “fragile”.⁵ In fact its contribution to immigrant life in Britain and the international Zionist movement can be viewed as significant. The robustness of the movement becomes more evident when we analyse its own newspapers, programmes and documents, and not simply those of its opponents. Socialist Zionists in Britain created a network of Yiddish journalists that then went on to be very influential in the American Yiddish

⁵ The two central pieces of research that explore specifically the activities of the Socialist Zionists are: Gideon Shimoni, “Poale Zion,” 228-32 and Cohen “Zion in a Strange Land?” 101–122, see footnote 133 in chapter 2.

press environment and also played a crucial role in the formulation of Western European opposition to the Uganda scheme (a plan to establish a Jewish National Home in Uganda). The most important figures in this movement were undoubtedly the iconoclastic Yekhezkel Vortsman (1878-1938) and Kalman Marmor (1876-1956).⁶

Some biographical information about these figures and their comrades in the movement is essential for understanding the eventual positions that they took. Vortsman was born to a wealthy family in Zvonetske, Podolia, Ukraine; he then studied in Switzerland, eventually being awarded a PhD in Chemistry at Basel. Vortsman became a Zionist very early, and in Switzerland he founded the first Zionist academic club with Chaim Weizmann (1874-1952), Nachman Syrkin (1868-1924) and others. He attended the the 1st, 3rd, 5th, 6th, 7th and 12th Zionist conferences. Moving to London after his studies he became involved with the Yiddish journalistic world there, and notably published two pamphlets, one of which was one of the first on the subject of Zionism in Yiddish, *What do the Zionists want? (Vos Vilen di Tsienistn?,* London, 1901) and the other was on the subject of the National Fund, *The Jewish National Fund (Der Yidisher Natsyonal Fond,* London, 1903) . Not afraid of controversy, he was a passionate opponent of the political Zionists and Ugandists. He emigrated to America in 1907 and there enjoyed a long Yiddish journalistic career, editing Yiddish newspapers from across the

⁶ Here and throughout this chapter the principle biographical references are as in the preceding chapter: *Leksikon fun der Nayer Yidisher Literatur*, 1st ed. Shmuel Niger, Yaakov Shatski, (New York: Alveltlekhn Yidishn Kultur-Kongres, 1956-1981) forthwith as *LNYL* and *Leksikon fun der Yidisher Literatur, Prese un Filolgye*, 2nd ed. Zalmen Rayzn (Vilna: Kletskin, 1926-29) as *LYLPF*. For Marmor see *LNYL* vol 6. 113-119 and *LYLPF* vol 2. 491-500, for Vortsman *LNYL* vol 3. 307-308, *LYLPF* vol 1. 915-917.

United States, such as California's *Kalifornye Idishe Shtime* (1922-1949) to Georgia's *Der Idisher Shtern*.

Kalman Marmor was no less of a controversial figure. A dedicated scholar of the earlier Jewish socialist activists Morris Winchevsky (1856-1932) and Dovid Edelshtat (1866-1892), his own work as a political activist and journalist has not received extensive scholarship. His autobiography, an unreliable but deeply evocative work *Mayn Lebns-geshikhte*, is one excellent but problematic source for immigrant life in this period, and for the remarkable transformations of Marmor's own life.⁷ There has also been important scholarship on his time spent in Switzerland (which preceded and overlapped with his time in London).⁸ Marmor was born in Maisiagala, Vilna district, Lithuania, in 1876. His parents intended him to be a rabbi, but he gave up his studies to become a turner, becoming involved in the workers' movement and joining the labour opposition.⁹ In 1899 he resumed his studies and went to study in Switzerland. There he became a Zionist, and he eventually moved more permanently to London in 1902 where he lived until he left for the U.S in 1906 (he had spent a spell during the Summer of 1901 in London). From then on, Marmor lived in the U.S apart from a short period of three years at the Institute of Jewish Proletarian Culture (Institut Evreiskoi Proletarskoi Kul'tury) in Kiev, which he visited at the Soviet Union's invitation

⁷ Marmor, *Mayn Lebns-geshikhte*.

⁸ Tamar Lewinsky, "Kalman Marmor in Switzerland: Reconstructing a Sojourner's Biography" in *East European Jews in Switzerland*, ed. Tamar Lewinsky and Sandrine Mayoraz (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 125–148.

⁹ Marmor, *Mayn Lebns-geshikhte*, 705.

in the 1930s. In America he pursued a career as a left wing activist, scholar and teacher until his death in 1956.

Marmor was highly productive when in London. He founded the Jewish National Radical club *Mayrove* (1902-3), co-founded the first London branch of *Poale Tzion* (1903), edited in turn three London Yiddish newspapers, *Der Londoner Yud* (weekly, 1904), *Der Advertayzer* (Daily, 1904-5) and *Di Yudishe Frayhayt* (monthly, 1905) and cultivated important friendships with Moses Gaster (1856-1939), Chaim Weizmann (1874-1952) and Josef Chaim Brenner (1881-1921), the latter of whom he worked with closely in Poale Tzion activities, even signing his work with Brenner's signature. Eventually the offer of editing a new *Poale Tzion* newspaper, *Der Idisher Kemfer* (1906-1931) in the U.S became too hard to resist, and he left Britain in January 1906.

Vortsman and Marmor, whose friendship itself was complicated, did not work alone. They were accompanied by other figures who helped write in their journals and give speeches for their societies. Dov-Ber Aberson (1873-1929) was a key member of their group, giving speeches in favour of the Zionist cause across the country. He would be a Poale Tzion activist for the duration of his life, and he also emigrated to America and worked for publications Marmor edited in Philadelphia and Chicago (*Der Idisher Kemfer*, *Der Yidisher Kuryer* 1887-1944).¹⁰ William Pozniak (1884-1919), who emigrated to England with his parents in 1896, was the secretary of their group

¹⁰ LNYL vol. 1, 9-10.

Mayrove, “one of the first Zionist organisations in that country” according to *Reyzn’s* lexicon.¹¹ He also wrote for the Glasgow Yiddish newspaper *Di Yidishe Tsaytung*. He too would emigrate to America, working across America for various daily and weekly newspapers. In 1916 he published a translation into Yiddish (*Dos shvartse Bukh*) of an important collection of materials about pogroms against Jews in Poland and Galicia at the beginning of the First World War.¹²

Yosef-Khayim Kohen Lask (1868-1937) was the oldest and most experienced member of this group.¹³ He had been raised in a Hasidic family and then was won over to the cause of the maskilim (advocates of the Jewish enlightenment). In 1891 he came to London having become entangled and endangered by his involvement in the revolutionary movement in Russia. He was an important figure in British Jewish communal life and was instrumental in the creation of Jewish education institutions for immigrant Jews. He was also president of the anti-Sunday trading league, an organisation set up to oppose attempts to stop Jews trading on Sundays (which they needed as compensation for not working on the Sabbath). Alongside these figures there were also contributions from individuals who were more peripheral such as Yude-Leyb Kahan (1881-1937), who was a watchmaker and folklorist; Isroel Giborski, the setter Uri Munits, Yehoshua Pozniak (William’s brother) and others.

¹¹ *LNYL* vol. 7, 115, *LYLPF* vol. 2, 874-879.

¹² *LNYL* vol. 7, 115.

¹³ *LNYL* vol. 4, 320-321, *LYLPF* vol. 2, 13-13.

This group of younger Zionists and the newspapers and pamphlets they produced differed in three main respects from earlier Zionist-friendly publications such as *Der Idisher Ekspres* and journalists such as Leon J. Dolidansky and Elieser Leiserowitz.¹⁴ Firstly, they put a much greater emphasis on the development of Jewish national culture, and that included both Hebrew and Yiddish culture, within the remit of its activities. And secondly, these were Zionists who were oppositional within the Zionist movement – who were active participants in networks around the Democratic Fraction.¹⁵ This in part explains their advocacy for cultural Zionism and their opposition to the Uganda scheme, which proposed a Jewish national home in East Africa outside of Palestine. Thirdly, this group wanted to forge a new synthesis of Zionism with Socialism.¹⁶ These radicals form a Zionist Socialist generation that succeeded earlier Jewish Socialists and Anarchists, and whose radical activities aimed to offer a version of Jewish freedom. The ambitious scope of this group's activities can lead us to argue against previous periodisations, such as that of Feldman, which view Jewish heights of radical influence as taking place in 1889-90 and 1910-14.¹⁷ In fact *Mayrove* and its activities show that radical Zionism also played a significant role in the years 1901-6. Furthermore, in response to growing scholarship

¹⁴ **List of Zionist Yiddish Publications Associated with Kalman Marmor and others in London**, *Der Koysel Mayrove* ('The Western Wall'). 1-2 November - December 1902. Y, *Der Londoner Yud* 19 February -23 September 1904. Y, *Der Advertayzer* August 1904 - August 1905, *Di Yudishe Frayhayt* July 1904 (Trial Number), April-June 1905.

¹⁵ David Vital, *Zionism: The Formative Years* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 190-198. Vital's judicious remark that in general the members of this movement within Zionism (the Democratic Fraction) might "be thought of as early twentieth-century liberals of distinct, yet entirely mild national persuasion, who would have been comfortable in, say, the radical wing of the contemporary Liberal Party in Great Britain" perhaps underemphasises the strength of the inclination towards socialism, and the idiosyncrasy, of the London followers of this group.

¹⁶ Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics*, 311.

¹⁷ Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 351.

that argues that Britain and the USA's Yiddish speaking Jewish communities influenced Eastern European Jewish culture, and not just the other way round, we should also measure the influence and importance of Marmor and his cultural group not just in terms of their impact in the UK, but also in the transnational Jewish national space which they occupied.¹⁸ These individuals offer part of a picture which suggests that the UK was not simply a point of transition, but an *ir miklat*, a point of refuge, for Eastern European Jews

i) Mayrove, Britain's Radical Zionist institution

Marmor, Vortsman et al created a new cultural Zionist club, *Mayrove*, which aimed to rectify the poor state of Zionism in Britain. This club was formed before the creation of Poale Tzion in the UK (in 1903) – it represented an attempt to create a Socialist Zionist society in Britain according to the ideas of Vortsman, Marmor et al. *Mayrove* was eventually abandoned when Marmor and others founded Poale Tzion branches in Britain. Nonetheless, *Mayrove* offers important insights into the organic spread of Socialist Zionist ideas and how Jewish national radicalism was adapted to Jewish life in Britain.

Marmor viewed the Russian revolutionary group present in London (the anarchist constellation around the Berner Street Club) as being as anglicised as many of the English Jews he met.¹⁹ He searched for a Jewish national

¹⁸ Tony Michels has emphasised the need to consider the development of Yiddish culture as multipolar. Michels, "Exporting Yiddish Socialism," 2-3.

¹⁹ It is unclear exactly who Marmor meant by this group: whether he meant the Social Democrats around Theodore Rothstein, or the Anarchists.

movement in Britain. There was already the Herzl-Nordau club, at 14 Union Street, otherwise known as “The Free London Jewish Library” (di londoner yudishe fraye laybreri). It was a crucial venue for young Zionists. It was also an institution beset with problems. It struggled to raise money, but perhaps more importantly it fell short of the ambitions of the young Zionists to transmit higher culture. The events that were lowbrow were much better attended than the educational events they wanted to offer “because the audience prefers jolly anecdotes with funny songs.”²⁰ It was also criticised for its material conditions – it was a “dark and damp cellar...the damp gives you a tickle in the nose.”²¹ A Hirsh Hasid (a probable pseudonym of Marmor) was willing to overlook poor material conditions to gain spiritual nourishment, but there were not enough Hebrew journals – just the local press – and if you wanted Russian news you would have to go to the missionary library. “One begins to reflect, what can be the reason, that brings the library to such a condition when there is only one library for all of London’s Jews, and she, the only daughter has such a demeanour!”²² There was also an ongoing row over whether the library should be put in the charge of the Zionist societies in London as it looked like the institution might not be sustainable.²³ Marmor criticised the fact that it was named after Herzl and Nordau and not after writers such as “Mendele Mokher Sforim, [Yitskhok Yoyel] Linetski, Sholem

²⁰ Hirsh Hasid (pseud. of Marmor), “Tzionizm in London” (Zionism in London), *Der Londoner Yud* 4, March 11, 1904, 10. “vayl dos publikum glaykht beser fraylikhe anekdotn mit komishe lidlekh.”

²¹ Hirsh Hasid (pseud. of Marmor), “Tzionizm in London” [Zionism in London], *Der Londoner Yud* 5, March 18, 1904, 10.

²² Hasid, “Tzionizm in London,” 10. “Ir heybt on tsu ibertrakhtn vos ken zayn di sibe, velkhe brengt di laybreri tsu aza tsushtand es iz in gantsn do eyn aynztike laybreri, far ale londons yidn, un zi di basyekhide hot aza ponem!”

²³ Kh Morgenshtern, “Tzionizm in London” [Zionism in London], *Der Londoner Yud* 9, April 22, 1904, 14-15.

Alechem or Yitskhok Leybush Peretz.”²⁴ This was a sign of Marmor’s own ideological position. Marmor was opposed to political Zionists such as Herzl and Nordau, and deeply invested in Eastern European Jewish literary culture, as typified by the authors he named.

Out of this “damp cellar” there came great ideas. It was there that Marmor and the other individuals named above came together to found the group *Mayrove*. Together they began to discuss how they could raise Jewish national feeling amongst the immigrant Jews and use it against the “Bourgeois Zionists”, who they criticised for being not in the slightest interested in the wishes of the Jewish masses.²⁵ Eventually this group of young radicals decided to give an institutional shape to their meetings. Meeting at Vortsman’s flat, they devised a program, came up with a list of statutes and created their own society.²⁶ The program of their movement advertises itself as the protocol for a whole movement, giving the instructions for how other clubs might be set up and what their meeting protocols would be.²⁷

A first priority of their group was organisation.²⁸ “There are no activists amongst the Zionists in the state of England,” Marmor opined.²⁹ For Marmor, the need for Zionists to organise was partly due to a change in how Jewish

²⁴ Marmor, *Mayn Lebns-geshikte*, 569.

²⁵ Marmor, 572.

²⁶ Marmor, 574.

²⁷ *Program fun di Maaravim* [Programme of the *Mayrove*’s], (London: Naroditsky Press, 1902).

²⁸ Kalman Marmor, “Tzionisten, organizirt aykh” [Zionists, organise yourselves], *Koyse/ Mayrove*, December 1, 1902, 2-6.

²⁹ Kalman Marmor, “Vos viln mir” [What we want], *Koyse/ Mayrove*, December 1, 1902, 1. “Es zaynen nito keyn mentshn-tuer tsvishn di tsonistn in melukhes england”.

politics was managed. Previous forms of organisation, from the middle ages, had fallen apart in the modern age: "The old middle-age organisation has fallen apart and where it has not fallen apart we have torn it down with force but in its place we have not created a new one".³⁰ Marmor and his fellow Socialist Zionists rejected the existing system of Jewish political organisation. The still prevalent figure of the *Shtadlan* (intercessor), who intervened on behalf of the Jewish community to national bodies, was not fit for purpose in the modern age.³¹ For the kind of liberation that Marmor desired through Zionism, different political forms of expression would be needed. In reference to Purim and the Megillah, and the later generations of intercessors, Marmor wrote:

But the question arises whether a people can be freed through intercessors? That can only be an unfortunate kind of help and not a solution, no, no intercessors can understand the exalted word liberation, for that reason we have to have free people not intercessors!³²

Marmor was instead advocating for a mass politics which every Jew, and especially Jewish workers and the working masses, would be involved in. This literature was a call to this group, "organise yourselves" as he wrote.³³ In practice the *Mayrove* group was evolving a critique of Herzlian Zionism, which Marmor either criticised as "bourgeois Zionism" (*balebatish tsionizm*)

³⁰ Marmor, "Vos viln mir," 3. "Di alte mitel-alterlikhe organizatsyon iz tsefn un vu zi iz nit tsefn hobn mir ir mit gevald tserisn ober oyf ir ort hobn mir keyn naye nit geshafn."

³¹ Scott Ury, *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, "Shtadlan," 2010.

³² Ales der zelber (pseud. Kalman Marmor or Yoysef-Khayim Kohen-Lask), "Farbaygeyndik" [Going by], *Der Londoner Yid*, February 26, 1904, 8. "nor di frage shtelt zikh tsu ken a folk bafrayt vern mit shtadlones? Dos kon nor zayn a umgliklekhe hilf ober nit keyn erlezung, neyn keyne shtadlones kenen nit farshteyn dos hoykhe vort bafrayung datsu darf men hobn fraye mentshn nit keyn shtadlones yo!"

³³ Kalman Marmor, "Tsionisten, organizirt aykh," 2-6.

or “bluff Zionism” (blof tsionizm).³⁴ In this critique and its direction Marmor was part of a broader international movement, where younger Zionists sought to change the movement’s character, to move it away from an elite and towards the masses. According to Marmor the first issue of *Koysel Mayrove* was praised in the Hebrew newspaper *Ha-Magid* (The Preacher, Lutsk, Berlin, Krakow, Vienna, 1856-1903) : “they praised the “*Western Wall*” for the youthful life-force which it brought into the Zionist movement.”³⁵

The program of their young society reveals their other priorities. Partly their work was to raise consciousness amongst the Jewish masses of their Jewish national identity, and the key instrument was “Hebrew education of Jewish children and their involvement in Jewish history and literature as a basis for Jewish national self-awareness.”³⁶ But it was not just for children. A duty of every member was “to expand *national-Jewish* literature and the arts; to agitate orally (mouth to mouth) and to bring Zionism into the *family* and into *life*.”³⁷ In fact, the text of the programme of the new society *Mayrove* was a compromise. In the context of their young idealism it was hard to come up with a concrete and easily defined programme. Marmor writes that they had enough ideas for a whole federation.³⁸ But they were able to focus on two main aims: the organisation of the Jewish masses on the basis of the principles of self-help (“Zelbsthilfe”, which perhaps makes more sense in this

³⁴ Marmor, *Mayn Lebns-geshikte*, 600.

³⁵ Marmor, 597. “*Ha-Magid* hot gelaybt dem ‘koysel meyrove’ far dem yugtlekh lebns-shtrom, vos er trogt arayn in der tsionistisher bavegung.”

³⁶ *Program fun di Maaravim*, 1902, 4. “Di hebreische ertsung fun di yidische kinder un zeyer antviklung in der yidisher geshikhte un literatur oyf dem yesod fun natsyonalen selbst-bevustzayn.”

³⁷ *Program fun di Maaravim*, 6. “Tsu farbraytn *natsyonal-yudische* literatur un kunst-zakhn; agitirn mindlikh (po al po) un arayntrogn dem tsionizm in der *familye* un in *lebn*.”

³⁸ Marmor, *Mayn Lebns-geshikte*, 574.

context as being understood as autonomy or independence) and the struggle to put Zionism on a democratic footing in the UK. Marmor also emphasised the importance of supporting the Jews who would live outside of a possible future Jewish state.³⁹ As part of their programme they wanted to start trade unions, workers' cooperatives, employment bureaus, support clubs, education clubs, schools for children and adults, lectures, meetings, mass meetings and demonstrations, to publish their own journal in Yiddish and to spread national and democratic literature in different languages, to arrange literature evenings and concerts, excursions.⁴⁰ This expansion of their society to include events covering every part of cultural life was enthusiastically endorsed by those on the sidelines: letters to *Koysel Mayrove* called for an orchestra and a workers' bureau under the control of the society.⁴¹ In *Der Londoner Yud* there was an ongoing debate in the letters column over whether all benefit societies should become Zionist.⁴²

The extent of this cultural and societal ambition shows *Mayrove's* desire to create a whole social movement culture structured around Jewish nationalism. This vision of a parallel culture and leisure society, structured around social activities, was in part inherited from the Social Democratic tradition in Germany. There political activists had conceived of political organisations extending their activities to a full range of communal and cultural functions. Marmor, Vortsman et al. would have seen institution and culture building like this in Vilna in the early 1890s and a certain social

³⁹ Marmor, 582.

⁴⁰ Marmor, 574-575.

⁴¹ "Nakhes Kastn" [Pleasure chest], *Koysel Mayrove*, December 1, 1902, 7-8.

⁴² *Der Londoner Yud* 2, 26.02.1904, 11, *Der Londoner Yud* 3, 4.03.1904, 11.

cultural milieu of this sort was already in place among the anarchists in the East End.⁴³ *Mayrove* wanted to go far beyond what had been seen so far within the Yiddish speaking milieu in London.

At the very beginning of the society's existence there were already disagreements. Marmor opposed the use of "democratic" in their statutes as he argued that it would confuse people who associate the word with countries like Switzerland and the U.S which in his eyes were not true democracies.⁴⁴ They also argued about which language should be used for the society's official minutes: Hebrew tying Yiddish four votes to four and Yiddish being eventually chosen.⁴⁵

Another motivating factor behind *Mayrove* was the frustration of the group with the level of Jewish cultural activity in the East End. They felt that the Jews in England did not appreciate the superior Jewish literature and visual art they esteemed. The *Mayrove* would try to spread Jewish artwork, through posters and postcards, to Jewish workers in England, as well as pictures of Jewish writers, actors and musicians.⁴⁶ They also wanted to devise a catalogue of Yiddish works to change the reading tendencies of English Jews, which they viewed as superficial and overly diverse.⁴⁷ Another crucial invention was the "Nakhes Kastn" (Pleasure Chest), a box in which workers could place questions they had that *Mayrove* members would then respond

⁴³ Tony Michels, "Exporting Yiddish Socialism," 6-7 and Fishman, *East End Jewish Radicals*, 286-7.

⁴⁴ Marmor, *Mayn Lebnsghesichte*, 575.

⁴⁵ Marmor, 584.

⁴⁶ Marmor, 577.

⁴⁷ Marmor, 577.

to at their talks.⁴⁸ The attitude of *Mayrove* seems at first paradoxical: they look to the people and folk culture for the cultural basis of the Jewish nationalism they propose, but they also treat the existing Jewish immigrants as deeply ignorant and needing the education that they would offer. This ideological contradiction is central to Marmor's views, where he repeatedly praises the strength and insight of the Jewish masses, while denigrating any signs of an organic British Yiddish culture, such as the local Yiddish press (for example *Der Idisher Ekspres*).

In practice *Mayrove* offered cultural evenings, public educational meetings, and a journal. The first cultural evening took place on the 16th of November 1902, and Marmor described it as having made a "furore in the young immigrant world."⁴⁹ There was a musical programme of piano, violin and song. *Mayrove* members read texts by Yehalel (Yehudah Leyb Levin, 1844-1925), Mendele Mocher Sforim (1836-1917), Sholem Aleichem (1859-1916), David Edelstadt (1866-1892) and Morris Rosenfeld (1862-1923). In this selection we can see the exact synthesis *Mayrove* was striving to accomplish: giving Jewish immigrants in London the varied fruits of Eastern European Jewish literary culture. Marmor himself offered three items during the evening: a talk on the Yiddish painter Ephraim Moses Lilien (1874-1925), a reading of Yitskhok Leybush Peretz (1852-1915) and a reading of a satirical composition of his own.⁵⁰ The evening ended with a discussion of

⁴⁸ Marmor, 585.

⁴⁹ Marmor, 592.

⁵⁰ Marmor, 592.

the question: must a Socialist also be a Zionist? And does a Zionist have to be a Socialist?

Recent research on the impact of American (and to a lesser extent English) Yiddish cultural production on Eastern European culture helps to explain some of the undercurrents underpinning Marmor and *Mayrove's* cultural position. Eric Goldstein has argued that political restrictions in Russia meant that the early Yiddish press flourished in the UK and the USA.⁵¹ A symptom of this was the proliferation of texts written by American Yiddish authors which Eastern European Jewish intellectuals reviled as a negative influence on the masses. The profits from these books and works, however, far exceeded those by the more esteemed writers such as Perets and Sholem Aleichem that Marmor admired. Much of Marmor and the group's derision for *Shund* can be understood as part of a broader cultural shift. Marmor represented the educated intelligentsia of Eastern European Yiddish society and his aim was to spread its culture to the masses. The culture he encountered that had developed organically in Britain's Yiddish speaking community held little or no interest to him.

Marmor was at the centre of an international network of young Zionists. He often corresponded with the Geneva office of the Democratic Fraction for a Jewish University (Hokhshul), but also with Nachman Syrkin who was working for Herut (lit. Freedom— a Zionist opposition movement that resisted the political priorities of Herzl and the other Political Zionists) in Berlin. As

⁵¹ Goldstein, "A Taste of Freedom", 105–143.

issues of *Mayrove* spread out around Britain, a brother club, “Pioneers of Zion” (Khalutsi Tsyon) was founded in Leeds, and its secretary Yoel Rozovsky, would send Marmor updates.⁵² There is much evidence in the Zionist British Yiddish press for diverse Zionist undertakings across the UK during this period such as the growth of women’s Zionist societies, donations to the National Fund being given at weddings.⁵³ Marmor names one activist, a Hillel Halperin, who came all the way from Leeds just to talk to him about *Mayrove*.⁵⁴ Marmor himself was ubiquitous as a speech-giving, giving in his account a particularly successful talk on Moses Hess (1812-1875) at a packed Kings Hall.⁵⁵

Mayrove viewed education as one of its central aims. The organisation of meetings was the main part of this. The sheer volume of speeches that *Mayrove* delivered is remarkable: lectures took place three times a week in the evening, Thursday 9-11, Friday 8:30-10:30 and Saturday 5:30 to 7:30. They were presented in series. Marmor quotes an advert from the fourth series from his archive. He gave at least ten talks in six months, on subjects as diverse as “the prophets and the mob”, “reform in Mohammedism”, “Individualism” and “the Freedom Struggle in Hungary.”⁵⁶ Aberson, Pozniak and Vortsman were also active speakers. The talks, at least according to

⁵² Marmor, *Mayn Lebnsgheshtke*, 607.

⁵³ *Der Londoner Yud* 3, March 4, 1904, 11, *Der Londoner Yud* 7, March 30, 1904, 3.

⁵⁴ Marmor, *Mayn Lebnsgheshtke*, 607.

⁵⁵ Marmor, 608-10. It is no coincidence that he chose Hess and Rabbi Tsvi Hirsh Kalisher – their attempts to fuse proto-Zionism with Socialism were deeply inspirational for Marmor. These two figures were also subject of work he did later in *Der Teglekher Yidisher Advertayzer*.

⁵⁶ Marmor, 676-7. “Dem 15-ten yanuar 1904: redner kalman marmor. Teme: di neviim un der hamoyn.” Dem 28ten yanuar: “reform in mahomedinizm”, redner, kalman marmor. Dem 25tn februar. “der individualizm” redner k marmor, der bafayungskampf in ungarn, redner k marmor,”

Marmor, were generally very well received, described by the *Jewish Chronicle* as “rays of light from East London”.⁵⁷ Marmor was invited by the Union of Jewish Literary Societies to join the society, but as they would not let him give talks in Yiddish it came to nothing.⁵⁸

Both the number, and the alleged success, of these speeches is striking. Of course they only form a small fraction of the speeches Marmor and his colleagues gave in their lives: Marmor was estimated to have given thousands.⁵⁹ Many historians have downplayed the extent to which Jewish immigrant societies may have enjoyed popularity or exerted influence. Marmor is probably guilty of some exaggeration when he mentions full audiences – that is a common practice of Yiddish journalism of the period. The interest of the *Jewish Chronicle*, the Union of Jewish Literary Societies and of other young Zionists who travelled from as far as Leeds show that the society was wielding influence far and wide amongst immigrant Jewry. If *Mayrove* took its vision of Zionist culture to a certain extreme in terms of the extent of its output, Zionism as a cultural as well as a political movement did increase in importance in this period. There was a Zionist literature evening in Liverpool, and the performance of a Zionist play in Leeds.⁶⁰ Hebrew education started to flourish in Liverpool.⁶¹ Perhaps the crucial change is that these later expansions of Jewish culture were more explicitly connected to Zionism and not the broader conception of Jewish national culture, as

⁵⁷ Marmor, 678. “Likht shtraln fun mizrekh london”

⁵⁸ Marmor, 678.

⁵⁹ *LNYL* vol. 6 114.

⁶⁰ *Der Londoner Yud* 9, April 22, 1904, 15.

⁶¹ *Der Londoner Yud* 13, July 1, 1904, 4.

encompassing Eastern European Jewish culture, that *Mayrove* had first advocated for.

Mayrove, and its sister society in Leeds *Khalutsi Tsion*, were individual and independent examples of a broader cultural phenomenon that accompanied and was driven by the tension between cultural Zionism and political Zionism: the construction of a parallel society, and the matching institutions, as both preparation and active part of the new Jewish state. A brochure by Vortsman, *Der Yudishe Natsyonal Fond* [The Jewish National Fund], paid for by the *Mayrove*, calls on Jews to support the new national fund to help buy land in Israel (and to encourage a sense of ownership of all Jews of the Zionist project - the National Bank left control to only those Jews who could buy shares).⁶² Crucial to this pamphlet's argumentation, which is part history of Zionism and part conversation between a keen Zionist and an interlocuter who is reluctant to part with his money for yet another cause, is the desire to make supporting the National Fund part of everyday life. Such everyday items as stamps, and money, via the new currency the Shekel, became an opportunity to support Zionism.⁶³

ii) Utopian Conception of Zionism

Mayrove's name is itself representative of the idiosyncratic views of this grouping – and Marmor in particular. Marmor suggested “*Mayrove*”

⁶² Ben Adom (pseud. Yekhezkel Vortsman), *Der Yidisher Natsyonal Fond* [The Jewish National Fund] (London: Naroditski, 1903).

⁶³ Ben Adom (pseud. Yekhezkel Vortsman), *Der Yidisher Natsyonal Fond* (London: Naroditski, 1903), 6.

(Western), because in the Talmud (a grouping of texts in Judaism containing rabbinic commentaries on numerous subjects) the Jews who lived in Erets Yisroel (present day Israel) were called the “Sons of the West” (Bney Mayrove), and so the name worked for those who wanted a state in Israel.⁶⁴ He also argued that it would remind them of the sadness of the destruction of the Second Temple – a crucial event in Jewish history - which the Western Wall in Jerusalem evokes. Marmor writes in his autobiography, however, that his real reasons were not the ones that motivated the others in the group to agree to the new name. They simply enjoyed the opposition “Mayrove” would give their group to the *Mizrakhi* (lit. Eastern), the religious Zionists that the group opposed. Marmor at that time viewed political Zionism and the Basel programme (formulated at the first Zionist Congress in Basel in 1897 – “Zionism aims at the creation of a home for the Jewish people in Palestine to be secured by public law”) as just being the first step of a greater programme: the renaissance of Western Asia.⁶⁵ This would be the renaissance of the Jewish prophets Israel and Yehuda, whose social and ethical prophecies would serve the interests of all of mankind.⁶⁶ “Mayrove”, and the idea of the west, had a special meaning for Marmor.

The program and rules for the new society embody the prophetic utopianism Marmor recalls in his autobiography: “The members of *Mayrove* are fighting for internal and external freedom for their people and land, and work with the

⁶⁴ Marmor, *Mayn Lebns-geshikte*, 576.

⁶⁵ Vital, *Zionism: The Formative Years*, 3-4.

⁶⁶ Marmor, *Mayn Lebns-geshikte*, 576.

purpose of their prophets, for Jewish rebirth.”⁶⁷ Present too, explicitly, is a call to restore Western Asian culture in the holy land of Israel: “The members of the *Mayrove* consider their people as the true representatives of the west-Asian classical culture as it is printed in [the work of] their prophets and work for the renaissance of this culture on the land of Erets Yisroel (The Holy Land of Israel)”⁶⁸. The program also advertises that this country will give the same rights to foreigners and natives alike, while also following the Basel program.⁶⁹

The idea of a Zionism that would encompass much of Western Asia, but on a principle of inner and outer liberation is emblematic of the contradictions that stalked Marmor’s thinking on the issue throughout this period. Marmor was a fervent anti-imperialist. He supported India against Britain, and like much of the Eastern European Jewish community was clearly on the side of Japan against Russia (1904-5).⁷⁰ But his desire for liberation for the Jewish people, interior and exterior, was nonetheless predicated on the “conquest of the Holy land of Israel”⁷¹ For Marmor there was no contradiction, at this stage, between his own anti-Imperialism and his fervent Zionism. In fact he would later leave the Zionist movement over their lack of consideration for the existing Arab population.⁷² Perhaps in this context his discussion of the conquest of Erets Yisroel meant liberating it from Turkish rule.

⁶⁷ *Program fun di Maaravim*, 1. “Di “mayrovim” kemfn far di inerlikhe un oyserlikhe frayhayt far zeyer folk un land, un arbetn - im zinen fun zeyere neviim - far di yudishe renesans.”

⁶⁸ *Program fun di Maaravim*, 2. “Di “mayrovim” betrakhtn zeyer folk far dem virklikhn fartreter fun di mayrev-aziatishe klasisher kultur azoy vi zi iz gedrikt bay zeyer neviim un arbetn far di renesans fun diezer kultur oyf dem boden fun arets yisroel.”

⁶⁹ *Program fun di Maaravim*, 2-6.

⁷⁰ *Der Londoner Yud* 1, 4-5.

⁷¹ *Program fun di Maaravim*, 3. “Eroberung fun erets yisroel.”

⁷² *LYLPF*, vol. 2 493.

The foundations for Marmor's attachment to Socialist Zionism are interesting because they have a very different basis to the mainstream of Poale Tzion, whose propaganda began to be circulated later by Marmor in *Der Londoner Yud*. Marmor looked to the ancient Hebrew prophets, via 19th Century proto-Zionists Moses Hess (1812-1875) and Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer (1795-1874), as inspiration for his project. In one sense his programme was classically Marxist in its view that "all should work from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs" - a motto that Marx made famous in his work *The Critique of the Gotha Program*.⁷³ Marmor's desire to see Jews liberated, however, was not just connected to their transformed economic role in modern society. Marmor had loftier ideas about how Socialist Zionism, in his society *Mayrove's* formulation, might liberate Jews psychologically. Poale Tzion (Labour Zionist movement), on the other hand, called for Jewish Socialist Zionism in part because of a role that Jews had been forced into. "The position which Jews have held until now in economic life," argues the reprinted notice from Poale Tzion, "they are now losing completely: according to how capitalism is developing in Russia, their role as middleman is becoming completely superfluous...The majority of our brother Jews must now move over into the proletariat."⁷⁴ Such an explicitly economic justification for Jewish socialism is different to Marmor's earlier thinking. In other respects his ideology was also changing.

⁷³ *Program fun di Maaravim*, 2. "ale zolen arbayten nokh di kreften un bekumen nokh bedirfnis".

⁷⁴ "Erets yisroel un tsionizm" [The land of israel and zionism], *Der Londoner Yud* 4, 11.03.1904, 4. "Di positsye vos yidn hobn bis itster fernumen in ekonomishn lebn, ferlirn zey in gantsn: loyt es entwikt zikh der kapitalizm in rusland, vert zeyer rolye als fermitler in gantsn iberik...dos rov fun unzere brider yidn muzn ariber in der armey fun proletariat."

b) Zionist Socialism and Poale Tzion

Marmor went to Basel for the Zionist Congress in 1903 and then returned to London. Marmor abandoned the *Mayrove* society at this point and began to spread a much more explicitly party line Poale Tzion Zionism to other parts of British Jewish immigrant society. This may have been due to the contacts he made in Basel but it is also possible this was because of the international growth of Poale Tzion. As early as 1900 there were Poale Tzion clubs in New York's Lower East Side, and in Geneva that year a group of students flew the national Jewish flag at the workers' May Day demonstrations.⁷⁵ But in the years afterwards Socialist Zionism grew in an unregulated form, not solely dominated by Poale Tzion, which allowed for the sort of idiosyncrasies that *Mayrove* represented.⁷⁶ Marmor and Vortsman may even have seen *Mayrove* as a possible model for how Socialist Zionism might be constructed – in the end this model was not successful. As the Poale Tzion movement grew in strength and was fortified by becoming a lightning rod for opposition to the Uganda scheme, there seemed less room for societies that were not explicitly Poale Tzion such as *Mayrove*. This is no doubt why from this moment on Marmor focussed only on Poale Tzion activity. This started with the creation of a London Poale Tzion organisation in 1903. With the help of his friend Barnet Grinberg, a member of the Jewish National Tailors, Machinists and Pressers Union, Marmor and Grinberg managed to influence Lewis Lyons (1862-1918), the leader of the United Garment Workers of

⁷⁵ Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics*, 311-313.

⁷⁶ Frankel, 328.

Great Britain Union, to found the British Poale Tzion Club. Marmor explains that at that time many unionised workers, after Kishinev, had become interested in Jewish national questions.⁷⁷ They also organised talks for the union members of the Poale Tzion club. Marmor argues that this club was the basis for Poale Tzion in the US and the UK. This claim is no doubt too grandiose – as mentioned before there had already been Poale Tzion clubs before Marmor's intervention – but Jewish immigrant workers in Britain were perhaps more susceptible to Socialist Zionism than some historians have credited.⁷⁸

All of the *Mayrove* members had jobs as well as taking part in the activities of the group: making leather purses, fixing watches, office work, sewing clothes or making furniture. Marmor, who hitherto had supported himself by taking the money of his wife Sore-Shifre, turned to journalism to make a living. There he was able to help the Zionist Socialist cause. He first worked for a new weekly, the *Londoner Yud*, published by a group of Hebrew teachers. This impressive 16 page weekly newspaper is itself a distinctive achievement of the movement. But its rich backers lost faith in Marmor's radicalism and after 12 issues they brought in Kohen Lask and Dolidanski - much more conservative writers and editors – to work on it. The paper allegedly initially earned praise from Peretz himself for having nothing plagiarised in it (itself a

⁷⁷ Marmor, *Mayn Lebngeshikte*, 678.

⁷⁸ Stuart A. Cohen, *English Zionists and British Jews : The Communal Politics of Anglo-Jewry, 1895-1920* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 59-61, 124-127. Cohen's focus on the anarchists negative reaction to Poale Tzion might be supplemented by the ample evidence of Social Democratic frustration with the movement. Nonetheless the alleged weakness of the Socialist Zionists compared to the Anarchists and Social Democrats, and especially their lack of a charismatic figure such as Rudolf Rocker, seems harder to countenance.

withering commentary on the current state of English Yiddish, and international Yiddish journalism).⁷⁹ Marmor would also edit a daily, *Der Advertayzer*.⁸⁰ There he claims he was also able to spread Yiddish and Hebrew culture.⁸¹ He also used it for polemical positions: the *Advertayzer* became the only Yiddish newspaper which called the British government as corrupt as the Russian, given its activities in South Africa, other colonies, and the whipping up of hatred against Jews.⁸² He attacked Britain for its apparent wealth which contrasted with the poverty around, concluding that “such a nation is not rich, its whole glory is not worth more than the glory of Carthage or Rome a short time before they collapsed”.⁸³

Mayrove is an example of Zionist Socialist organising that did not endure. There was also a certain degree of loss that came with the change in Marmor’s direction towards a more doctrinaire Poale Tsionism. Marmor’s utopian conception of regeneration of Western Asia was lost. And much of his investment in the pursuit of Jewish national culture – which for Marmor had meant Eastern European Yiddish culture - became moderated. Instead both the literature and political articles he edited became far more negative about life outside of Israel and the possibilities of Eastern European Jewish culture in diaspora. This was not explicitly caused by Poale Tsion. In fact their notice, cited above, was very clear that it aimed to “lead a permanent

⁷⁹ Marmor, *Mayn Lebns-geshikhte*, 683.

⁸⁰ Marmor, 698.

⁸¹ Marmor, 699.

⁸² Marmor, 707.

⁸³ Marmor, 707. “Aza natsyon iz nit raykh, ir gantser glants iz nit vert mer vi der glants fun kartago oder roym a kurste tsayt eyder zey zaynen tsefaln”.

struggle for citizens' and national rights in the diaspora countries."⁸⁴ This shows their clear support for Jews in the diaspora. But there was no longer an interest in Jewish national culture that was not explicitly Zionist. Poems that Marmor began to print were very different in tone. "The Oath" (Di Shevue), printed in *Di Yudishe Frayhayt*, was an anthem no doubt designed to impersonate the *Bund* (Jewish Social Democratic National Movement) anthem also called 'The Oath' (Di Shevue) written by An-sky (1863-1920) in 1902:

We Raise our hand towards the East and swear
On Zion's flag, on her holy ground,
On everything we love, that we esteem as holy
By our heroes broken sword"⁸⁵⁸⁶

Another Poale Tsion poem, "Briders un shvester" (Brothers and Sisters) may have taken inspiration from the first line of the Anski's "Di Shvue", which starts with these words. The Poale Tsion poem "Briders un Shvester" shows how conceptually limited life outside of Erets Yisroel had become:

Enough already of being suffocated in the Ghetto
Of dying in cellars without hope, without light

⁸⁴ "Erets yisroel un tsionizm" [The Land of Israel and Zionism], *Der Londoner Yud*, 4, March 11, 1904, 5. "Firn a shtendikn kamf far birgerlikhe - natsyonale rekht in di goles lender."

⁸⁵ "Di shvue" [The Oath], *Di Yudishe Frayhayt*, July 1, 1904, 3.

"Mir heybn di hent kegn miLYLPFekh un shveren

Bay tsion ir fon, bay der heyliker erd,

Bay alts vos mir libn, vos heylik mir ern

Bay unzere heldn's tsebrokhne shverd."

⁸⁶ Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics*, 275.

...

In our times are disgraced
The Jewish women in the middle of the street
In the middle of the day are robbed and smashed to pieces
The goods of the poor Jewish masses.⁸⁷

A poem written from Leeds, by Phillip Max Raskin (1880-1944), showed that such poems could also be home grown. Raskin will be analysed in greater depth in Chapter 5. In his “Jewish Freedom” (*Di Yudishe Frayhayt*), he writes:

A coward is he, a slave, a traitor
Who does not help free his people from slavery.⁸⁸

The doctrinaire violence of the poem is a fitting illustration of the changed tone of Marmor’s cultural position.

c) The Social Zionists and Mainstream British Zionism

⁸⁷ “Briders un shvester” (Brothers and Sisters), *Di Yudishe Frayhayt* 2-3, April-June 1905, 8.
“Genug shoyn oykh tsu vern in gheto farshtikt,
Tsu shtarbn in kelters on hofnung, on likht

...

In unzere tsaytn, es vern geshendt
Di yudishe froyen in miten di gasn,
In mitn tog vern tseroybt un tsheshmetert
Dos guts fun di orime yidische masn.”

⁸⁸ Phillip Max Raskin, “Di Yudishe Frayhayt” [The Jewish Freedom], *Di Yudishe Frayhayt* 2-3, April-June 1905, 27.

“A feygling iz yener, a shklaf, a fareter,
Vos helft nit bafrayen fun knekhtshaft zayn folk.”

The *Mayrove* group had two courses of action available to them. They wanted to help change the direction of Zionism in the UK by starting a dynamic grassroots movement – the *Mayrove* club. And they also wanted to reform the existing Zionist institution the *English Zionist Federation* (EZF, 1899- present day). The *Mayrove* group tried to wrestle the *English Zionist Federation* away from the West End Jews and towards the East End Jews. The rhetoric towards the West End Jews was inflamed by the language of social injustice and indifference to the suffering of poor East End Jews. As Dov-Ber Aberson, wrote:

I can do without your philanthropic- pity Zionism, your national-English- Yiddish culture fraternity. Among we goles (diaspora, exile) Jews, Zionism is something higher, a question of Jewish-National independent creation, of Jewish-National life or death and you come into our holy temple with church incense!⁸⁹

Marmor, Aberson and others felt that West-End Jews had abandoned Jewish culture and religion, “you come with church incense into our holy temple!” and were now trying to bring assimilation into what should be a Jewish, ie Eastern European Jewish, movement. But it was also an argument about power: Aberson wants Zionism to be in the hands of a national mass movement, not a “philanthropic-pity” (filantropish-rakhmones) Zionism. This critique of different political forms is another sign of how *Mayrove* embodies

⁸⁹ Dov Aberson, “Di balebatishe konstitutsyon-makher” [The Bourgeois Constitution Makers], *Koysel Mayrove* 3, January 1902, 2. “Ikh bin aykh moykhl ayer filantropish-rakhmones tsionizm, ikh bin aykh moykhl ayer natsyonal-english-yudish-kultur-bridershaft. Bay unz goles yidn iz der tsionizm etvos hekheres, erhobenes. Bay unz iz der tsionismus a frage fun yudish natsyonale zelvstendike shafung, a frage fun yudish natsyonale leben oder toyt, un ir kumt mit kirkhn veyrekh in unzre heylikn tempel!”

a revolutionary activism and not a reformism (as embodied by the Yiddish press publications discussed in the previous chapter).

And yet Marmor, for one, did not entirely exclude himself from working with the groups that he and his colleagues criticised. He was deemed important enough to be invited to a London hotel to a secret conference that Dr Herzl was participating in with the English Zionist Federation, on the 13th of January 1903, about the El Arish scheme (a plan to settle Jews, with British imperial help, in the Sinai peninsula).⁹⁰ Marmor claims that Leopold Greenberg (1861-1931) tried to stop any of the East End Jews present from speaking, but Sir Francis Montefiore (1860-1935) allowed them to speak. Herzl, unhappy with the conflict that he was witnessing between different parts of Anglo-Jewry, observed that the issue was that the English Zionists were not doing enough work. He quoted the phrase: "When the mill has no corn, the stones rub together."⁹¹ The third issue of the *Koysel Mayrove*, which Marmor published shortly after this conference, warned the West End Jews not to misrepresent the conference, and identified Herzl as a doctor figure who cannot prescribe anything for his patient because he is simply ill with laziness.⁹² He also criticised the factionalism of East End Jewry's activists, arguing that all the "ism's" did not interest workers who were struggling to survive. There were also pieces by other *Mayrove* members attacking the English Zionist Federation.

⁹⁰ David Vital, *Zionism: The Formative Years* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 1982.

⁹¹ Marmor, *Mayn Lebns-geshikte*, 604.

⁹² Marmor, 604.

Marmor's relationship to the English Zionist Federation was complex. Although he, like the rest of the *Mayrove* group, was harshly critical of its West End attitudes, which he viewed as exclusionary to East End Jews, he was nonetheless welcomed by its establishment. A conflict came about between the two groups because the Federation had decided that many of its constituent membership groups were only "paper clubs" (clubs that had no significant membership). They then welcomed in Joseph Cowen (1868-1932) and Leopold Greenberg to settle their debts.⁹³ But they would only accept this if they were allowed to change the constitution, and their changes outraged East End Jews. The Yiddish press, in both Glasgow and London ("Even the *Ekspres*", as Marmor writes) came out firmly against these developments.⁹⁴ But Marmor himself was invited to join the much criticised English Zionist Federation executive, which he declined on the grounds of his "proletarian pride" (*proletarisher shtolts*).⁹⁵

Marmor attending high level English Zionist Federation meetings could be interpreted as a proof of the argument that Gartner has advanced, that "relations between East End Zionist and West End Zionist were warmer than in other areas of communal activity."⁹⁶ But it also points to the openness that could exist in general between East and West End Jewry. Marmor actively engaged with other groups of Anglo-Jewish civic society, such as the Union of Jewish Literary Societies. But as the Alien Bill came closer, the devious

⁹³ Marmor, 613. For the fullest exploration of this communal conflict, and the stakes underlying it, the following article, is crucial: Kalman Marmor, "Di Elyen Bil" [The Alien Bill], *Di Yudishe Frayhayt* 2-3, April-June 1905, 13-26.

⁹⁴ Marmor, *Mayn Lebns-geshikte*, 614.

⁹⁵ Marmor, 615.

⁹⁶ Gartner, *Jewish Immigrant*, 267.

nature of some of the politics of the West-End Zionist federation created a more serious rupture. It is in this context that Marmor's article "Di Elyen Bil" (The Alien Bill) must be understood. As the 1902 Royal Commission on Alien Immigration began to collect evidence, and right-wing anti-immigrant forces coalesced around the *British Brothers League*, the position of Eastern European Jews in British society became increasingly fragile.⁹⁷ The Zionist group around Marmor was far from blind to this. In *Der Londoner Yud*, the weekly newspaper Marmor began to edit and in which he published the other members of the group, there were frequent pieces on what this change in the British political situation meant and information about the exact nature of the new law.⁹⁸ *Der Londoner Yud* also reported a meeting of young Zionists, where the speaker, a Mr Butsinski, explained how damaging the bill would be.⁹⁹ The meeting ended with a collection for the *Jewish National Fund* (the fundraising arm of the Zionist organisation) and the singing of *Ha Tikva* (The Zionist national anthem). Socialist Zionists, and the broader immigrant community, were deeply affronted by the possible forthcoming ban on immigration.

Some parties within the English Zionist Federation began to try and stop the practice whereby constituent groups of the Federation could elect anyone as their delegates to the main Zionist conferences. Instead they wanted to change the rules so that only English born Jews could be elected. It

⁹⁷ Dolidanski, "Di limerik geshikhte," 5-6. This article about an Irish boycott of Jewish business people in Limerick nonetheless contains ample evidence of rising antisemitism and the increased fragility of the British immigrant Jewish community.

⁹⁸ See for example: Leon J. Dolidanski, "Der elyen bil: a lesson un a moral" [The Alien Bill: A Lesson and a Moral], *Der Londoner Yud* 11, May 6, 1904, 2-3.

⁹⁹ "Tseyirey oyhavey tsiyoyn" [Young Lovers of Zion], *Der Londoner Yud* 9, 22.04.1904, 16.

appeared as if the English Zionists were trying to exclude Eastern European Jews. The EZF declared: “But they must also be residents of England, so that one cannot elect foreign delegates.”¹⁰⁰ Marmor labelled this an “anti-national method... [a] Zionist alien bill.”¹⁰¹ The exclusion was not to be too serious. The young Zionists were still able to elect many of their delegates. But events like this reinforced the sense of exclusion that some Jews felt towards the shared Anglo-Jewish spaces and encouraged attempts to develop their own cultural institutions.

This incident was part of a broader conflict between Ugandists and Zionists. Marmor and his colleagues were in the latter camp, and many members of Anglo-Jewry were in the former. The group around *Mayrove* had been affiliated with the Zionist opposition, the Democratic Fraction. Individuals in *Mayrove* were friendly with Democratic Fraction members and they were in frequent correspondence. But the issue of Uganda gave the opposition a much more important issue to unite around than Cultural Zionism. It was this issue that was to lead to Marmor, Chaim Weizmann and Moses Gaster uniting, in the words of Zalman Rayzn’s lexicon, to lead the struggle against Uganda.¹⁰² Using *Der Londoner Yud* to spread their side of the story, the journal published an article showing that Gaster expressed his opposition to the Uganda scheme. Even after both the political Zionists and the Democratic Fraction had tried to find peace, Marmor published an incendiary

¹⁰⁰ Kalman Marmor, “Di elyen bil” [The Alien Bill], *Di Yudishe Frayhayt* 2-3, April-June 1905, 23. “nur zey muzn oykh *englishe aynvoyner zayn, azoy az men zol keyne oyslendishe delegatn veyln.*”

¹⁰¹ Marmor, “Di elyen bil,” 23. “Anti-natsyonalen mitl... tsionistishn elyen bil”.

¹⁰² *LYLPF* vol 2. 491-500.

piece by Vortsman rejecting peace after some compromises had been eventually reached.¹⁰³ It is difficult to assess to what extent the activities of this group contributed to the failure of the Uganda scheme. At the very least it shows the growing confidence of a different, younger generation of British based Zionists and the increasing power they attempted to wield – partially affecting international developments within Zionism. But they were not the only young and dynamic group of radicals.

b) The Social Democrats

The founding of *Di Naye Tsayt* can in no way be compared to other earlier efforts. Times have changed. The opportunity for a good newspaper is now much greater than before, the chemical elements are there, electric force is in place.¹⁰⁴

The Jewish social democratic movement in London, or as it called itself the East London Jewish Branch of the Social Democratic Federation, was competing with Marmor and the other young Socialist Zionists. Its principal achievements in the period of study being focused on here (1896-1910) was its Yiddish language party organ *Di Naye Tsayt* (1904-1906) which unlike the earlier *Di Naye Velt* (1900-1901) lasted for a much more substantial period of

¹⁰³ Moses Gaster, "Tsaytungen un zhurnalen" [Newspapers and Journals], *Der Londoner Yud* 1, February 19, 1904, 6, Yekhezkel Vortsman, "Sholem?" [Peace?], *Der Londoner Yud* 10, April 29, 1904, 2-3.

¹⁰⁴ Shmuel Peskin, "Di yidishe sotsyalistishe bavegung in England un amerika – tsu di grindung fun di naye tsayt" [The jewish socialist movement in England and America – on the founding of the naye tsayt], *Di Naye Tsayt*, April 22, 1904, 5. "Di grindung fun di "naye tsayt" ken alzo far keyn fal nit ferglikhn vern mit ale andere frierdike enlikhe grindungen. Di tsaytn hobn zikh geendert. Di meglikhkayt far a gute tsaytung in England iz yetst fil greser vi a mol di khemische elementn zaynen do elektrishe kraft shtekt derbay." Shmuel Peskin (1871-1939) was a New York based socialist involved with the *Forverts*,

time; and the establishment of a People's House (*folkshoyz*) which served as a sort of club and community centre for its members. This part of the chapter will first provide context about the history of the Jewish social democratic movement in England, and then focus on the individuals who were responsible for its leadership and journal. After this there will be an exploration of the ideological position of *Di Naye Tsayt* and the politics it was offering immigrant Jewry. Lastly, with the investigation of both articles from *Di Naye Tsayt* and from the memoirs of activists of the period, this chapter will investigate what the lived reality of participation in the Jewish Social Democratic movement was.

The most famous and most studied Jewish political movement in the East End is the anarchist movement. But as the title of Avrom Frumkin's Anarchist memoir, *In friling fun yidishn sotsyalizm* (In the spring of Jewish Socialism) suggests, in this period there was a considerable overlap between socialist and narrowly anarchist groupings – anarchists themselves could and would identify more broadly as socialists.¹⁰⁵ Often groups would split and then re-coalesce. Historians have often chosen to focus on an earlier period of trade union activism. This is in many respects understandable – the movement was significant and combative– key figures such as Morris Winchevsky were active in this period before they emigrated. But in terms of the diversity of immigrant Jewish political activity, and the extent of their offerings, it can be argued that this later period, particularly 1900-1906, is also important.

¹⁰⁵ Avrom Frumkin, *In friling fun yidishn sotsyalizm: zikhroynes fun a zhurnalist* (New York: A frumkin yubiley komitet, 1940).

Around the turn of the century a more concrete and lasting group coalesced that dedicated itself to social democracy and not to anarchism. This group, affiliated to the Social Democratic Federation and announcing itself as their East London Jewish Branch, began to publish an organ in 1900, *Di Naye Velt*, which was not to be long lived (this must not be confused with an earlier socialist effort, *Di Fraye Velt* (1891)). “Founded with a sixpence in the pocket by a handful of committed comrades, willing to sacrifice themselves, in the time it existed [*Di Naye Velt*] quickly acquired a circle of friends and followers and after that grew, until it developed into a large and influential weekly” was the modest assessment of the editors of the first issue of its successor, *Di Naye Tsayt*.¹⁰⁶ Unfortunately it only lasted a few months. The progress of the movement, however, continued unabated. On the fourth anniversary of the East London Jewish Branch of the SDF, in 1904, the editors of *Di Naye Tsayt* could maintain that “seldom can any social-democratic group point to such progress in such a short period of time.”¹⁰⁷ After the Kishinev pogrom in 1903, the flourishing of Jewish and non-Jewish Russian revolutionary movements, and then the corresponding crackdown against them, a flood of politically active immigrants and refugees came to London and revolutionised the fortunes of the Social Democratic movement: “the whole physiognomy of

¹⁰⁶ “Vider in kamf” [Again to battle], *Di Naye Tsayt*, March 4, 1904, 4. “gegrindt mit eyne zeks pennis in keshene fun a heyfele ibergegebne un oper-lustike genosn, hot zi zikh, in der tsayt vos zi hot ekzistirt, rash erworben a krayz fun fraynde un onheynger un nokhanand gevaksn, biz zi hot zikh entviklt in a groyse un aynflusraykhe vokhnblat.”

¹⁰⁷ “Der firter yubileums-fest fun der ist londoner yidisher brantsh fun der s.d.f” [The fourth Jubilee celebration of the east london jewish branch of the S.D.F], *Di Naye Tsayt*, October 7, 1904, 1. “Zeltn a velkhe sotsyal-demokratishe grupe vet konen ontsaygn oyf a zelkhe forshrit, in aza kursten meshekh tsayt.”

the London East End changed.”¹⁰⁸ The concrete results were the publication of *Di Naye Tsayt* and the creation of the People’s House. Investigation of this journal and this institution can contribute to our understanding of Jewish immigrant life at the turn of the century.

What was the meaning of the East End Jewish Branch’s affiliation to the Social Democratic Federation? The SDF was an organisation that bridged earlier British social movements such as Chartism and intervened with a strong sense of Marxism. The SDF has been criticised by historians for the authoritarianism and jingoism of its leader Henry Hyndman (1842-1921), and for its excessive dogmatism.¹⁰⁹ Often this is viewed through the prism of the conflicts within its leadership between Hyndman and William Morris (1834-1896), the latter leaving to found a dissident movement, the Socialist League (1885-1901). In fact the activities of the East End Branch of the SDF go some way to revising, or at least complicating, the picture of the SDF and its leader Hyndman as excluding Jewish workers or even being antisemitic.¹¹⁰

The key individuals behind the East End Jewish Branch came from diverse backgrounds – from those who had been living in England from a young age to those whose education and connection with the movement predated their arrival in England. It is difficult to fully reconstruct the workers and

¹⁰⁸ “Der firter yubileums,” 1. “Di gantse fizionomye fun dem Londoner ist end hot zikh ibergebitn.”

¹⁰⁹ Mark Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 106-107. Bevir pursues a revisionist exploration of this period of British socialism.

¹¹⁰ For an exploration of this very question, but that is perhaps hampered by an overreliance on Fishman’s history of the anarchists and thus does not consider the social democratic movement, see Satnam Virdee, “Socialist Antisemitism and Its Discontents in England, 1884-98,” *Patterns of Prejudice* 51:3-4 (2017): 356-73.

intellectuals who were behind this movement – often authors in *Di Naye Tsayt*, for example, used pseudonyms or initials. But a nexus of individuals and their biographies can be drawn together, although unfortunately the most important characters are sometimes those with the least available information (this is the case of comrade Bek, mentioned later). The first editor of *Di Naye Tsayt*, and an important writer within its columns, was Theodore Rothstein (1865-1953). Rothstein enjoyed a successful career in the communist movement – a close friend of Lenin's, he would later become the Soviet representative in Persia in the early 1920s.¹¹¹ He came to England at an early age in 1891 and became closely involved with the Social Democratic Federation. When Rothstein was editor, the manager of the enterprise was Saul (Simon) Ellstein (Saul Elshteyn, around 1875 - ?), a trade unionist who played a key role in the bakers strike (1904). After Rothstein stopped being editor, a pivotal figure in the milieu in this Social Democratic milieu, Bek, took on the role. A Russian non-Jew and in many respects a parallel figure to Rudolf Rocker (1873-1958), he learned Yiddish to make the case for social democracy to Jewish workers in the East End.¹¹²

Yehuda Fin (1866-1945) – an important trade unionist and another friend of the leader of the SDF, Henry Hyndman, was an important contributor.¹¹³ A young Morris Mayer (1879-1944), later perhaps Britain's most famous

¹¹¹ *LNYL* vol. 8 371-2, *LYLPF* vol. 4 199-201, David Burke, "Theodore Rothstein, Russian Emigré and British Socialist." *Immigrants & Minorities* 2:3 (1983): 80-99 and his doctoral dissertation, David Burke, "Theodore Rothstein and the Russian Political Emigre Influence on the British Labour Movement 1884-1920" (PhD Diss., University of Greenwich, 1997). This work does not consider Rothstein's important interventions in the Yiddish political sphere.

¹¹² The definitive account of Rudolf Rocker remains, Fishman, *East End Jewish Radicals*, 229-309.

¹¹³ *LNYL* vol. 7 368, *LYLPF* vol. 3 72-74.

Yiddish journalist and an important figure in British Jewish communal life, was also at this stage a contributor to *Di Naye Tsayt*.¹¹⁴ And there was also the involvement in the movement, and in the production of the journal, of the two Jewish immigrants who would arrive after 1903 and then later write memoirs about their experience of living in London and the movement: Shneur-Zalman Osipov (1883-?) and Aaron Gorelik (1880-1955).¹¹⁵ In addition the Hebrew modernist writer Yosef Haim Brenner (1881-1921) wrote and worked for the newspaper *Di Naye Tsayt*. Mani Leyb (1883-1953), the Yiddish poet, was also involved with the group in 1904-1905 before he emigrated to America. This group combined those who had been engaged in British and British Jewish left-wing politics for many years and those who had just arrived fleeing political persecution in Eastern Europe.

The politics of the East London Jewish Branch of the SDF was informed by a triple engagement – with the local politics of Britain and its left wing forces, with the new Jewish social democratic organisations in Eastern Europe, and with non-Jewish Russian, German and European social democratic parties. This tripartite influence is shown by the greetings that the journal received: from the foreign committee of the Bund (The General Union of Jewish Workers, a Jewish Social Democratic Organisation founded in 1897 in Vilna), the Bund members club the *Veker* (Awakener), from the London Jewish Section of the Polish socialists, from the London Coat Makers Union, and from prominent individuals in the movement such as Karl Marx's son-in-law

¹¹⁴ *LNYL* vol. 5 602-604, *LYLPF* vol. 2 388-394.

¹¹⁵ For Osipov: *LNYL* vol. 1 139, for Gorelik: *LNYL* vol. 2 161-2.

French revolutionary socialist Paul Lafargue (1842-1911) and most significantly from Marxist Karl Kautsky, whose journal *Neue Zeit* (Stuttgart, 1883-1923) *di Naye Tsayt* was named after.¹¹⁶ His significant intervention will be explored later.

These Jewish socialists had chosen to align themselves with the English Social Democratic Federation. In some respects, this is surprising. Historians have pointed to the reputed antisemitism of its leader, Henry Hyndman and pointed to this as a key difference between it and Morris' Socialist League. Hyndman was antisemitic both in his conception of Jewish capitalists, in sociologist Satnam Virdee's words, as the "capitalist exploiter *par excellence*" and of Jewish members of the socialist movement as possessing racial characteristics.¹¹⁷ Hyndman allegedly stated that Jewish socialist Eleanor Marx (1855-1898) had "inherited in her nose and mouth the Jewish type from Marx himself."¹¹⁸ But this antisemitism does not seem to have been an inhibiting factor for the Jewish Branch of the SDF. In part this might be because the journal itself resented Jewish capitalists, despite not attributing their negative qualities to their Jewishness – and so was not affronted by Hyndman's positions. It may also have been because of a change in Hyndman's position, as he tried to position himself in favour of Jewish, but not Chinese immigration.

¹¹⁶ *Di Naye Tsayt*, April 11, 1904, 5 and *Di Naye Tsayt*, April 18, 1904, 5. Jack Lester Jacobs, *On Socialists and "the Jewish Question" after Marx* (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 26.

¹¹⁷ Virdee, "Socialist antisemitism," 361.

¹¹⁸ Virdee, "Socialist antisemitism," 362.

Earlier Hyndman had been viewed by socialists such as Eleanor Marx as being opposed to an international movement: “one of our chief points of conflict with Hyndman,” she wrote in a letter to German socialist Wilhelm Liebknecht (1826-1900), “is that whereas we wish to make this a really international movement, Mr Hyndman whenever he could do so with impunity has endeavoured to set English workmen against foreigners.”¹¹⁹ *Di Naye Tsayt* complicates this picture. It was published much later (in 1904 and not in the 1880s) and Hyndman had changed position. By the time of the second published issue of the journal *Di Naye Tsayt* Hyndman’s position was clearly not antisemitic. The newspaper dedicated much of its space to the reports of a speech by Hyndman. The first issue had advertised a mass meeting, and it was the subject of a central article on the front page of the second issue: “The *Naye Tsayt* has come to life!’ those are the words which were on the lips of every speaker and in the hearts of thousands of listeners at the remarkable mass meeting in the Wonderland (a theatre and boxing hall in Whitechapel) last Friday.”¹²⁰ According to the journal the 3000 seater hall was packed. And at this meeting Hyndman was in the chair. Hyndman in his speech gave a stirring defence of Jewish immigrant workers, and said he was in favour of immigration (and so against the Aliens Act), with the exception of Chinese labour which he viewed as reducing workers wages.¹²¹ This shows there was active solidarity between the Jewish and English wings of the SDF. One such example of solidarity came from the East End Jewish

¹¹⁹ See Virdee, “Socialist antisemitism”, 363.

¹²⁰ “Es lebt di naye tsayt” [The “new times” has come to Life], *Di Naye Tsayt*, March 11, 1904, 1. ““Es lebt di naye tsayt” dos zaynen di verter vos zaynen geven oyf di lipn fun yeder redner un in di hertser fun di toyzender tsuherer oyf dem merkverdikn mass-miting in di vunderland.”

¹²¹ “Hayndman’s rede” [Hyndman’s speech], *Di Naye Tsayt*, March 11, 1904, 1.

Branch's participation in events to celebrate May Day – International Workers' Day. The East End Jewish Branch sent out delegates to different trade unions to celebrate May Day on the Monday and not the Sunday (ie when the other workers were also working) and the trade union representatives responded properly:

The Jewish worker has shown on this first of May that all the statements that are made against him are false, he has shown that he is the first to understand how deeply and fundamentally his interests are opposed to the interests of his masters and bosses.¹²²

The celebration started at the *Folkhoyz* (People's House – their club base) and then continued with revolutionary songs and flags to the Thames embankment, picking up other comrades on the way, and joining their English comrades at the river. They then proceeded to Hyde Park where they agreed a resolution committing to nationalising industry and demanding the same rights for everyone – an eight-hour day, better education and free education for children.¹²³

And yet it is important to return to the beginning of the celebratory quote above: "The Jewish worker has shown..." What was it that the authors of *Di Naye Tsayt* felt that the Jewish worker had to show? A crucial article in a later issue shows in more depth the argument that the authors were

¹²² "Fun ist end biz hayd park" [From East End to Hyde Park], *Di Naye Tsayt*, May 5, 1905, 4. "Der yidisher arbayer hot dizn ershtn may bavizn, dos di ale behoyptungen, velkhe men makht kegn im zaynen falsh, er hot bevizn dos er iz der ershter velkher farshteyt vi tif un grindlikh zayne interesn zaynen kegnzetslekh tsu di interesn fun zayne masters un boses."

¹²³ "Fun ist end biz hayd park," 4.

advancing. In “Passover”, an editorial argues that although Judaism is a deeply social religion – as opposed to the individualism embedded in Christianity – this is precisely its disadvantage.¹²⁴ Judaism has become a patriarchal tribal communism. As religion dies out, it has less to offer than Christianity which contributes to a sense of personal ethics – Judaism has become an “empty word without meaning or life.”¹²⁵ Religious ceremonies such as Passover are empty. At the Passover seder, the religious Jewish ceremony that commemorates the Jews being freed from slavery under the Egyptians, Jewish tradition dictates that participants say “we were slaves in Egypt”. Such an utterance was now empty, according to the editors, because Jewish workers in London or Lemberg are still slaves. Making specific reference to the bakers’ strike that was currently taking place in London, Jewish trade union activist Saul Ellstein wrote: “A lovely Peysakh – Exodus from Egypt – for the Jewish worker who puts his last piece of bread at risk – just a small portion of the bread which he himself makes – in order to receive a 12-hour working day.”¹²⁶ For *Di Naye Tsayt* the crucial rubric for interpreting contemporary Jewish life was class – not religion – and there could not be meaningful solidarity between different Jewish social groups. What it needed to prove was that its movement had more solidarity with other worker movements than with their coreligionists. Thus the *Naye Tsayt* trumpeted participation in the May Day demonstrations, and particularly the fact that the East End branch followed the SDF’s invitation to demonstrate on

¹²⁴ “Der Peysekh” [Passover], *Di Naye Tsayt*, April 1, 1904, 4.

¹²⁵ “Der Peysekh,” 4.

¹²⁶ “Der Peysekh,” 4. “a sheyner peysekh, - yetsiyes mitsraim - far dem yidishen arbayter vos shtelt in kon zayn letste shtikl broyt – bloyz a kleyn kheylek fun dem broyt vos er aleyk makht, um tsu bakumen a 12-shtundikn arbayts-tog!”.

Monday (and not on Sunday, which as it was a day of rest for non-Jews would not have been as meaningful).

The Jewish people, like all other peoples, consists of two nations, and while one, the ruling nation, can still recite the haggadah [The text read by Jews at the Passover Seder] (and not even thinking that the others, the oppressed, must, when saying it, feel the great contradiction which exists between its words and real life. Class struggle, that is the dominant factor in modern life, and it has rejected that haggadah with its entire redemption-plague.¹²⁷

Class struggle took priority over religious solidarity. A similar point is made in a later article about the *Yamim Noraim* – often now translated as “Days of Awe” but in the context of the piece better understood as the awful or terrible days:

It is difficult to believe that the Jewish worker from the East End who works under the most terrible sweating system which can exist, might think that by coming through Rosh Hashanah [The Jewish New Year], Yom Kippur [The Jewish day of atonement] and all the rest of the fuss that he has in this way quickly taken care of the terrible days [Yamim Noraim]. Does the Jewish worker then not understand that his terrible days (Yamim Noraim) only begin after Simchat Torah [the Jewish festival which marks the end of the annual Torah readings and is the end of the Yamim Noraim.]?¹²⁸

The Jewish Socialists of the Social Democratic movement rejected solidarity with their coreligionists who belonged to other classes. They thought class

¹²⁷ “Der Peysekh,” 4. “dos yidishe folk, vi ale andere felker, bashteyt fun tsvey natsyonen, un verend di eyne, di hershnde, ken nokh amol opzogn di hagode nit fartrakhtndik zikh afile, az di andere, di unterdrikte, baym zogn ir, filn dem gevaltikn vidershprukh vos eksistirt tsvishn ir vort un dem virklikhn lebn. Der klasenkampf dos iz der hershender faktor fun dem modernen lebn, un er hot dos faryleykent di hagode mit dem gantsn erleyzungspet.”

¹²⁸ “A groyzame frage” [A gruesome question], *Di Naye Tsayt*, 7.10.1904, 4.

identity was more important than religion in the struggle for Jewish liberation. But they were also deeply invested in the ceremonies and traditions of Jewish religion and tradition to make appeals to workers. In this mixture of class politics with the language of Judaism they were also affirming their politics, which did not aim to negate their Jewish identities but instead emphasised solidarity with those facing the same struggle over making cause with those with different class identities but the same religious identity.

The Jewish social democrats were not just active within the Jewish community but were tied by numerous links to the broader European social democrat community. Through this connection with European social democracy they were expected to fulfil a unique mission. This is most clear in Kautsky's interventions in the newspaper.¹²⁹ First the greeting and then the article from Kautsky were significant: here was a leader of international social democracy recognising and granting legitimacy to the relatively minor Jewish East End Branch of the English SDF. This may well have impressed readers of the paper. But Kautsky also expected much from the Jewish social democrats. In his article, entitled "The task of the Yiddish Jewish proletariat in England", Kautsky explained that in his view Jews were naturally inclined to abstraction; that was why they were famous for their thinkers Spinoza, Ricardo and Marx. Precisely this abstraction was what the English working movement needed. Hyndman, in his speech to the Jewish Social Democratic mass meeting, had earlier mentioned that he hoped the

¹²⁹ "Bagrisungen fun der internatsyonaler sotsyal-demokratsye" [Greetings from international social-democracy] *Di Naye Tsayt*, March 18, 1904, 5, Karl Kautsky, "Di oyfgabe fun dem yidishn proleteryat in England: a bagrisung artikel tsu di "naye tsayt"" [The task of the Jewish proletariat in England: a greeting article to the "New Times"] *Di Naye Tsayt*, April 1, 1904, 5.

Jewish workers would better support *Di Naye Tsayt* than the English workers supported their organ (*Justice*, 1884-1924).¹³⁰ This gives some hint of the dissatisfaction Hyndman felt with the English Social Democratic movement – and the hopes he was investing in the new Jewish branch. Kautsky thought that English workers lacked the powers of abstraction and deep critique that Jews possessed: if they mixed with Jewish workers there could be a powerful fusion:

The Jewish proletariat possesses the attributes which the English one lacks. Nothing could work more favourably than the mixing of both their attributes – the uniting of the Anglo-Saxon strength and love of freedom with the Jewish speculation and critique.¹³¹

Kautsky thought the intense socialist activity of the Jewish community would serve as an example to English workers and demonstrate to them that Jews were not putting pressure on their wages but instead would show the way that socialism could practically benefit them, via industrial action, by bringing higher wages. In an ill fated metaphor, which would be much criticised, Kautsky suggested the Jewish workers, if they developed a successful movement, would not just be profiting themselves, but would be helping the development of socialism in England as a type of “starter dough”.¹³² Kautsky also argued that all work undertaken by the Jewish movement would also

¹³⁰ “Hayndman’s rede” [Hyndman’s speech], *Di Naye Tsayt*, March 11, 1904, 1.

¹³¹ Kautsky, “Yidishen proleteryat in England,” 5. “Der yidisher proletariat bazist di eygnshaftn velkhe dem englishn feln. Keyn zakh ken nit virkn ginstiker vi di farmishung fun zeyere beydns eygenshaftn, - di fareynikung fun der anglo-zakhsisher kraft un frayhaytslibe mit der yidisher spekulatsyon un kritik.”

¹³² Kautsky, 5. “Dan veln zey [di yidishe proletaryer] arbetn nit bloyz far zikh, nor oykh far di gantse proletarishe bavegung england’s, in velkher zey kenen vern an art zoyerteyg.”

work against the force of Tsarism, a terrible international enemy of Social Democracy. For Kautsky the Jewishness of the movement was its strength.

That the Jewish Socialists should not serve themselves, but instead serve other movements, would be harshly criticised by the Socialist Zionists.¹³³ The Jewish Branch of the Social Democratic Federation ignored the criticism. It was no doubt to further this sense of the potential of helping the English movement, and for their broader ideological aims to support class solidarity over religious belonging, that the editors of *Di Naye Tsayt* firmly resisted the idea of starting a separate Jewish Social Democratic party and instead continued to remain as a branch of the SDF.¹³⁴

The political ambition of the Jewish Branch and its journal was impossibly great. It was meant to flourish as a Jewish Social Democratic movement which would lead to a transformation of English socialism. In fact, the greatest change that the movement brought about was not broadly political, but rather that it created a counterculture and a life for Jewish immigrants that was intensely rich. Two memoirs, by Arn Gorelik and Shneur-Zalman Osipov, give us a crucial insight into this world, as well as important references in *Di Naye Tsayt*.¹³⁵ Alongside the journal, the Social Democrats were able to obtain their own building, the *Folkhoyz* which, once they had set up a press there, was also used to publish *Di Naye Tsayt*.¹³⁶ This

¹³³ Kalman Marmor (pseud. Yekhi emes) "Tsaytungen un zhurnaln" [Newspapers and journals], *Der Londoner Yud* 11, May 6, 1904, 15.

¹³⁴ Teodor Rothsteyn, "Tsu der frage fun der yidisher s.d partay" [On the question of the Jewish S.D Party] *Di Naye Tsayt*, September 1, 1905, 4.

¹³⁵ Gorelik, *Shturemdike Yorn*, 103-134, Osipov, *Mayn Lebn*, 129-144.

¹³⁶ Osipov, 134.

establishment became a crucial part of Jewish Social Democratic life. The Jewish worker, “driven out and homeless”, needed a home – the People’s House fulfilled this and was soon “the brightest point on the grey banner of life here.”¹³⁷

This People’s House [folkhoysz] offered a significant range of activities. There was a kitchen, a library, and theatre classes too: “In the People’s House it was like being at a fair.”¹³⁸ The choir was particularly well regarded.¹³⁹ The venue could be a meeting place for future husbands and wives, it is there that Gorelik met his future wife who impressed him with her acting.¹⁴⁰ At this point, however, he felt that marriage was incompatible with being a revolutionary.¹⁴¹ Osipov became so deeply engaged with his revolutionary work that he almost lost the affection of his sweetheart in Eastern Europe.¹⁴² The People’s House offered an affordable place to eat after long working hours, there one could eat a snack for thruppence.¹⁴³ The charismatic leader and main presence in the People’s House was Bek, who though not Jewish learned Yiddish (like the anarchist Rudolf Rocker). Despite mastering the language well enough to give a long speech, Bek on one occasion accidentally made a comic mistake confusing trousers with houses.¹⁴⁴ The Social Democrats also had their renowned visitors from abroad: for Gorelik it

¹³⁷ “Der firter yubileums-fest,” 1. “di neytikeyt fun tsu gebn dem yidishn, fun der gantser velt fartribenem, haymatlozn arbeter, a heym...a folks-hoyz, velkhe iz haynt tsu tog gevorn der likhtigster punkt oyf dem groen fon fun dem hign leben.”

¹³⁸ Gorelik, *Shturemdike Yorn*, 127. “Flegt take in folks-hoyz zayn vi oyf a yarid.”¹³⁸

¹³⁹ Osipov, *Mayn Lebn*, 135, 141.

¹⁴⁰ Gorelik, *Shturemdike Yorn*, 128.

¹⁴¹ Gorelik, 128.

¹⁴² Osipov, *Mayn Lebn*, 136-7.

¹⁴³ Gorelik, *Shturemdike Yorn*, 95.

¹⁴⁴ Fishman, *East End Jewish Radicals*, 261.

was Lenin's visit which was to prove most meaningful. Gorelik studied with him intensely for many weeks and learned how to be a disciplined comrade. But the visit of the Russian actor Pavel Orlov's (1869-1932) troupe, who all went to see the workers perform in the *folk-hoyz* before they returned the favour, was also a great event.¹⁴⁵ Gorelik presents a picturesque image of the entire People's House regulars on a double decker bus heading to watch them perform. After the performance they heard the news of the start of the Russian Revolution of 1905. Gorelik was to return to Russia to try and participate in the revolution; Osipov, having organised a failed strike, which Mani Leyb advised him to abandon, emigrated to America. This intense collaboration, the richness of this counterculture - we might take this to be one of the most important legacies of the movement on all those who participated in it.

c) The Anarchists

The anarchist sub-culture that developed in Britain has been much better investigated than the Zionistic or Social Democratic versions that have been outlined above.¹⁴⁶ Part of this reflects the undeniable strength of the anarchist movement in Britain, a strength that it found on British shores but that was not necessarily mirrored in other diasporic centres. The other key element is that the anarchists had an institutional backing in London that predated the other movements. This can be seen in the Berners Street Club

¹⁴⁵ Gorelik, *Shturemdike Yorn*, 95, Nick Worrell, "Orlov, Pavel," *Oxford Encyclopedia of Theatre and Performance* ed. Dennis Kennedy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

¹⁴⁶ Fishman, *East End Jewish Radicals* gives a definitive account.

(1884-1892, a permanent base emerged again in 1906-1914 in Jubilee Street), whose physical presence no longer existed in the period that is being discussed here, but that had an institutional structure and its own newspaper, the *Arbayter Fraynd*.

The Berners Street Club, whose real name was *der Internatsyonaler Arbeter Klub* (The International Workers' Club), was to have an illustrious history in anarchist circles. It was funded by Simon Kahn, a radical who became a successful civil engineer. Thomas Eyges, one of two contemporary anarchists to have written memoirs, wrote that: "It would feel (sic) many volumes to narrate a detailed biographical history of these and many others - intellectuals that came frequently in Berner Street Club, taking an active part in spreading the gospel of revolutionary socialism."¹⁴⁷ [Nikolai] Tchaikovsky [1851-1926], [Feliks] Volchovksy [1846-1914], [Sergius] Stepniak [1851-1895], Winchevsky, [Konstantin] Gallop [1862-1892], Simon Kahn, [Phillip] Krantz [1858-1922], [Benjamin] Feigenbaum [1860-1932], [Saul] Yanovsky [1864-1939] and others were regulars at the club. As Eyges puts it: "It may be said that there, in Berner Street, was laid the foundation for true International Brotherhood of Mankind. The *Workers Friend* - a radical weekly in Yiddish - was started there, and for many years carried on an ethical cultural education of the working class. Like Faneuil Hall in Boston, Berner Street Club was the "Cradle of Liberty", for the workers' emancipation from economic slavery, in London."¹⁴⁸ *Arbayter Fraynd* meetings were run

¹⁴⁷ Eyges, *Beyond the Horizon*, 79.

¹⁴⁸ Eyges, 83.

democratically – without leaders.¹⁴⁹ The *Arbayter Fraynd* was always in financial difficulties – meetings often took place in an upper storey over a barn with the entry via a ladder through a trapdoor. Once a member went to retrieve a kerosene lamp leaving his family in the dark so that the editorial board could be in the light. Sometimes it was even funded by the direct action of appropriation: A German waiter would rob rich clients and give their money to the Anarchist club.¹⁵⁰ When the Berners Street building was given up for financial reasons, meetings for years were held at the Sugar Loaf, a hall at the rear of a public house on Hanbury street. Lectures were held on a variety of topics: Astronomy, Drama, a lecture on free love caused a scandal. The famous Russian anarchist Peter Kropotkin (1842-1921) was linked to this group. Eyges was tasked with asking him to come and give a speech to help their organisation, to which Eyges reports Kropotkin responding:

I'm sorry, but it cannot be done. First, because I'm not feeling very well, as I have already said, but that alone, perhaps would not be the obstacle. My coming to London to convert the Social Democrats into Anarchists does not seem to me the right step. Dear comrade we are not missionaries, we are idealists. Let them be Social Democrats if they so choose, that's their business.¹⁵¹

Kropotkin, unable to read the *Arbayter Fraynd*, but told that it was “a very good medium of enlightenment” nonetheless gave Eyges two sovereigns as a contribution to their organisation.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ Eyges, 84.

¹⁵⁰ Eyges, 86.

¹⁵¹ Eyges, 99-104,

¹⁵² Eyges, 103.

External events would prove momentous for the anarchist community in London. The International Socialist Worker and Trade Union Congress took place in the summer of 1896. It was to be a moment of deep excitement and significance for Avrom Frumkin, another contemporary anarchist. After the anarchists were expelled from the conference on ideological grounds, they organised a three day anarchist conference which Frumkin attended. The anarchists held their own talks in Holborn Town Hall and St Martin's Town Hall.¹⁵³ Frumkin reports that Bernard Lazare (1865-1903), the celebrated French critic and journalist, was very interested in the Jewish quarter, "in the Jewish workers and material and spiritual life."¹⁵⁴ Frumkin started a commune in Leyton where friends had left him a rented house. Unfortunately this did not work out (and women were expected to do all the housework).¹⁵⁵ Frumkin's circle was even infiltrated by a Russian spy.¹⁵⁶ Liverpool and Leeds were to prove locations full of fellow travellers, and Frumkin visited and engaged in radical politics in both destinations. He was particularly impressed that the social democrats and anarchists could argue with each other there without bitterness.¹⁵⁷

d) Encounters and Divergences

Reading memoirs from this period gives us a valuable insight into how Yiddish journalistic connections and networks formed. Marmor was able to

¹⁵³ Eyges, 93.

¹⁵⁴ Frumkin, *Friling*, 97. "mit di yidishe arbeter un zeyer materyeln un gaystikn lebn".

¹⁵⁵ Frumkin, 100.

¹⁵⁶ Frumkin, 110-118.

¹⁵⁷ Frumkin, 150.

rapidly meet radical London through a combination of family connections (his uncle Morris Sapirshtein), and through contacts from his earlier activism in Vilna. Existing radical institutions: the Berner Street Club, the *Veker* club (a Bundist club in London), proved the venue for talks which quickly put Marmor at the centre of public life. On a boat trip he met Israel Naroditsky (1874-1942), a local printer, who Marmor knew from a Khovevei Tsion pamphlet which Naroditsky had published ten years previously.¹⁵⁸ This was a highly fortuitous encounter: Naroditsky was undoubtedly the most important left wing Jewish publisher of the whole period (and would later publish *Mayrove*). Indeed Marmor already knew his name from a Khovevei Tsion Zamlbukh (Essay Collection) which he had published ten years previously in Zhitomir.¹⁵⁹ It would be Naroditsky who would invite Marmor to the Yom Kippur ball which he declined.¹⁶⁰ Through contacts he made on the boat trip he was then able to enter the press world and begin writing. As time went on there were other meeting places. As described in chapter 1, the Herzl Nordau reading room, a Zionist club, was one such place. Leyb-Sholem Kreditor (1875-1966), “the first professional Yiddish journalist in Britain”, whose daughter married British Labour Party Leader Hugh Gaitskell, received his first journalistic commission when he happened upon Marmor in the Herzl-Nordau reading room and gave him an article that he had written there and then.¹⁶¹ If it is difficult to trace the concrete impact of the political ideologies that many of these figures espoused, the networks that participation in these movements created is easier to trace. Marmor,

¹⁵⁸ Marmor, *Mayn Lebns-geshikhte*, 506.

¹⁵⁹ Marmor, 506.

¹⁶⁰ Marmor, 587.

¹⁶¹ Kreditor, “Mayn ershter redactor,” 383.

Vortsman, Aberson would all continue to be linked journalistically as they embarked on long careers in Yiddish journalism and activism in the United States.

But if Marmor's journey presents the space that there was for positive encounters, where activists from different backgrounds could mix, other stories show conflict and even aggression. At one meeting a group of Ugandists threw a large piece of wood at Marmor, which only slightly grazed him and mainly hit the wall behind him (Aberson, chair of the meeting, had just had time to warn him).¹⁶² This event echoes the assassination attempt Max Nordau narrowly survived.¹⁶³ In an extraordinary series of events, the *Folks-hoyz* was attacked by religious Jews and the police had to get involved. This became known as the Yom Kippur riot of 1904.¹⁶⁴ Anarchists also caused trouble at the *Folks-hoyz*, becoming violent when they were expelled for disruption.¹⁶⁵ All of the parties used their newspapers to attack each other's ideas. And in the case of the *Arbayter Fraynd*, they also had the interventions of traditional Anglo-Jewry to fear.¹⁶⁶

Particularly bitter in terms of ideological wrangling was the confrontation between the Socialist Zionists and the Social Democrats. The Socialist Zionists were wary of being excluded from labour activity. A letter written to

¹⁶² Marmor, *Mayn Lebns-geshikhte*, 676.

¹⁶³ Christoph Schulte, *Psychopathologie des Fin de siècle: Der Kulturkritiker, Arzt und Zionist Max Nordau* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1997), 335-336.

¹⁶⁴ Fishman, *East End Jewish Radicals*, 259-261. This story's other side is presented briefly in David Englander, "Policing the Ghetto Jewish East London, 1880-1920," *Crime, History & Societies*, 14:1 (2010), 33. There it is alleged that the socialist atheists drove a van full of meat past fasting Jews which caused the problem.

¹⁶⁵ Gorelik, *Shturemdike Yorn*, 127.

¹⁶⁶ Frumkin, *Friling*, 43.

Der Londoner Yud, explains how Avrom Eyzekovits, a Poale Tsion member, insisted on collecting for the Bakers Strike at his local Poale Tsion branch – only for the union not to mention it at all when small donations were recorded in *Di Naye Tsayt*.¹⁶⁷ In a longer series of polemical articles, Marmor repeatedly attacked Bek and the Social Democrats, referring to Bek not by his name but only as a *ger* (convert), also describing him as a demagogue and bluffer. In response to Bek’s accusation that the Zionist Socialists still support a society based on class, Marmor wrote:

The convert does not understand that we are not asking that the converts should come with us. The Russian converts have left their Russian fatherland and their Christian religion and have come into our colonies and work on our national soil and speak in our national language... we answer in short: if the black negroes in America were as low creatures as your Jewish gypsies! Then they would still be slaves now...¹⁶⁸

Marmor’s response to allegations that the Zionists were class traitors was to question the Jewishness of the Social Democratic movement. Criticising the Jewish Social democrats willingness to be exploited, to be Kautsky’s starter dough, Marmor returned to the gypsy theme:

Fools, one believes that you are international, that you have no national feeling, that you are a band of wandering gypsies who speak all languages and dance at other weddings. But one

¹⁶⁷ Avrom Eyzekovits, “Fragm tsu di beker yunyon” [Questions to the Bakers Union] *Der Londoner Yud* 10, April 29, 1904, 15.

¹⁶⁸ Kalman Marmor (pseud. yekhi emes), “In tsaytungen un zhurnaln,” [In newspapers and journals] *Der Londoner Yud* 10, April 29, 1904, 10. “Der ger farshteyt nit az mir betn zikh nit bay di gerim zey zoln geyen mit unz. Di rusishe gerim hobn vos farlozn zeyer katsapishe foterland un zeyer kristlikhe religion un zaynen gekumen in unzere kolonyen un bearbet unzer natsyonaln boden un redn in unzer natsyonaln shprakh...mir entfern im kurts: ven di shvartse neger in amerika voltn azelkhe niderike bruim geven vi dayn yudisher tsgayner! Dan voltn zey nokh biz haynt geven shkalfn.”

does not believe in your loyalty and one despises your low flattery.¹⁶⁹

Marmor also ridiculed the journalism of a young Morris Myer (1876-1944) – the future editor of *Di Tsayt* and later a towering figure in British Yiddish journalism. Calling him a “specialist in defamation”, Marmor made fun of an obituary Myer wrote about the anarchist Louise Michel (1830-1905) for the American Yiddish newspaper *Fraye Arbayter Shtime* (New York: 1890-1977) : “Poor good Louise, you endured so much for others and the others have no patience to wait for their eulogies and falsehoods.”¹⁷⁰ Marmor also hinted in the same article that Myer was having to write for the New York Yiddish press because he was at the bottom of the journalistic hierarchy of *Di Naye Tsayt*. London’s Yiddish journalistic sphere was a zone of fierce, and bitter, competition.

For the Social Democrats the Socialist Zionists were ignorant of the importance of class and were a negative force in immigrant Jewish politics, even going so far as to call the Zionists “reactionary dogs.”¹⁷¹ A Y. Krovtsov attended one of Dov-Ber Aberson’s talks in Leeds and was unimpressed by Kautsky’s “starter dough” rhetoric:

¹⁶⁹ Marmor, “In tsaytungen un zhurnaln,” 15. “Naronim, me gloybt aykh az ir zayt internatsyonal, az ir hot keyn natsyonal gefil, me gloybt aykh az ir zayt a bande vandernde tsigayner vos redn oyf ale shprakhn un tantsn oyf fremde khasenes. Me gloybt ober nit in ayer trayheyt un men farakhtet ayere niderike khanifes.”

¹⁷⁰ Marmor, “In tsaytungen un zhurnaln,” 10. “A spetsialist in zilzulim...oreme gute Louise du host azoy fil geduld et far andere un di andere hobn zogar keyn geduld nit tsu vartn mit zeyere hespedim un shekerim.”

¹⁷¹ There ensued a fierce letter exchange between Yekhezkel Vortzman and the editors of *Di Naye Tsayt*, Yekhezkel Vortzman, “Briv” [Letter], April 8, 1904, 5.

As it turns out Herr Aberson would be much more content if the Jewish member of the Proletariat was an unmoveable mass, and in order to awake him one would need another people, which would serve for the Jew as a starter dough. A dear Jewish patriot, there is nothing more to be said about that. Aberson wants Jewish politics to be gradually buying earth in Palestine, building factories and afterwards acquiring a finished well-worked country. And in the meantime? In the meantime, we build a state in the sky.¹⁷²

For the Social Democrats the Zionists lacked solidarity with other workers and devised completely impracticable schemes. A particularly eloquent article in *Di Naye Tsayt*, “The Zionists in Wonderland” made a similar point using a play on words.¹⁷³ The “Wonderland” was also a theatre and boxing venue where the Zionists and other radical groups held talks:

In English there is a little story, “Alice in Wonderland” which is told by a small girl who got lost in a wood and has seen different wonders, completely preposterous events. The Zionists, with a fitting irony, also got lost Sunday in a “Wonderland” and have also – if not seen, then spoke about wonderful and completely preposterous things. Zionism, probably, is falling into its second childhood, and its end is not far off.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷² Y. Krovtsov, “A briv fun Leeds: Leeds the 22nd of May” [A letter from Leeds: Leeds the 22nd of May], *Di Naye Tsayt*, June 3, 1904, 2. “Vi es vayst oys volt her aberson fil tsefridener geven, ven der idisher prolyetarier volt geven di unbaveglithe mase, un um tsu ervakhn im volt men gedarft hobn an ander folk, velkhe zol dinen far dem yidn als a zoyerteyg. A tayerer idisher patriot, nito vos tsu redn. Aberson vil unz aynredn, dos di yudishe politik darf zayn tsu koyfn bislekhvayz erd in palestina, boyen fabrikn un nakher az men vet krign dan zolen mir shoyn hobn a fartike oysgearbete land. Un dervayl? Dervayl boyt men a melukhe in der luftn.”

¹⁷³ “Di tsionistn in vunderland” [The zionists in wonderland], *Di Naye Tsayt*, December 9, 1904, 4.

¹⁷⁴ “Di tsionistn in vunderland”, 4. “Es iz do in an englishe maysele “Alice in Wonderland” vu es vert dersteylt fun a kleyn meydele vos hot zikh farblondzhet in a vald un ongezen farshidene vunder nit geshtoygn, nit gefloygn. Di tsionistn, mit a trefende ironye, hobn zikh oykh farblondzhet forige zuntog in a “Wonderland” un hobn oykh – oyb nit gezen, dokh geredt vunderbare zakhn nit geshtoygn, nit gefloygn. Der tsionizmus, mashmoes, falt arayn in zayn tsveyte kindheyt, un zayn sof iz nit vayt.”

The Zionists attacked the Jewishness of the Social Democrats and their illusions about solidarity between different peoples, the Social Democrats attacked the Zionists' working class credibility and their ambitious plans for settlement in Palestine. Their rhetoric, however, was very similar. They called each other childish and fantasists – one reader of *Di Naye Tsayt* even wrote in to plead that both groups might stop insulting each other.¹⁷⁵ Both groups' vitriol was no doubt the result of their fierce competition for followers.

There were far more similarities between these movements than differences. And sometimes they even worked together.¹⁷⁶ They theorised about utopian futures where Jews would be free, but also provided practical social and cultural activities to enrich the lives of immigrant workers. These movements were dealing with internal crises outside of their immediate organisation – for the Social Democrats it was the possibility that the broader Social Democratic movement in England was antisemitic or at least anti-alien, for the Socialist Zionists it was the support for the Uganda scheme by the English Zionists and much of the Western European Zionist movement. Even the impassioned articles that they wrote for their readers often were remarkably similar: religious holidays were the basis for recontextualizings of Jewish history. Passover, for instance, offered an annual opportunity to draw on Jewish religious tradition (even if in an antithetical manner) to make an appeal to the worker in the present day. The view of Yiddish as both an important instrument for appealing to new constituencies, but itself a

¹⁷⁵ A Blokh, "Briv" [Letter], *Di Naye Tsayt*, April 22, 1904, 3.

¹⁷⁶ Frumkin, *Friling*, 149. Frumkin reports that in Leeds the anarchists and socialists worked together.

treasured conduit for new artistic and political projects – was also broadly similar. It is perhaps true that Marmor and the Socialist Zionists placed more emphasis on a particularist reading of the importance of Yiddish (to return to Karlip’s distinction from the introduction), while the Social Democrats were more interested, as per Kautsky, in serving as a bridge. They both, however, were unquestionably Yiddishist movements. They propagated Yiddish culture and created flourishing Yiddish communal centres. In the end the most important legacy of these movements may not be the political changes they affected, but instead the lived experiences they provided for young men and women arriving with next to nothing in Britain – and the networks they created there would then have much greater consequences elsewhere.

Conclusion

Different Yiddish newspapers, the organs of different Jewish political movements, and Yiddish memoir from the period, give us a strong sense of how these organisations founded their own spaces, organised choirs and cultural events, and provided locations for joy as well as aggression. In these societies within societies, immigrant Jews could enjoy autonomous Jewish lives – they were doing so across North America and Eastern Europe. This does not mean that events in Britain were not idiosyncratic: a variety of factors, from the famous culture of political freedom to the influence of the existing Jewish community were unique, as were some of the ideas and approaches of the individuals discussed above.

Historical events brought an end to this. The Russian revolution of 1905, and its failures and the ensuing pogroms, ensured that many in London gave up on ever returning to Russia and so moved to America – which was able to exert a strong pull. Britain’s importance as a refuge that was nonetheless not so distant geographically from Russia was gone. Equally, the growth of local antisemitism, and the Aliens Act (1905) meant that Britain was a less welcoming destination. A convergence of these factors, as well as the ongoing difficulty in sustaining Jewish cultural activity in London, meant that from this period on London declined as a centre for Jewish politics and possible new formulations of Eastern European Jewish culture. Never again could London boast Lenin, Brenner, Kropotkin and others in such close contact with its Yiddish political and cultural activists.

In many respects the experiences of the immigrants who wrote memoirs or published in newspapers were perhaps not typical. Instead it is perhaps wiser to view them all as individually making appeals to immigrant Jewry, competing for a finite amount of enthusiasm and energy that was left after gruelling days in sweat shops or working as a peddler on the streets. Pivotal to this point is Hillel’s famous quote: “If I am not for myself, who will be for me?” This quote was at the centre of the frontispiece of the *Arbayter Fraynd* when it was launched. A decade and a half later, Marmor used the quote in the opening editorial of *Di Yudishe Frayhayt*.¹⁷⁷ The anarchists, the social democrats and the socialist Zionists were all trying to answer this question:

¹⁷⁷ Frumkin, 37 and Kalman Marmor, “Yudishe Frayhayt” [Jewish Freedom], *Di Yudishe Frayhayt*, July 1, 1904, 1.

to try and work out who they wanted to represent and how they might represent them. We might look to the second half of the quote too: "If I am only for myself, what am I?" These movements were also trying to define the scope of what Jewishness could mean in Britain, and what British Jews could be. They wanted to know what Jewish freedom could mean and they wanted to bring it about themselves. In many ways they first tread the ground that would define Jewish politics and culture for the next forty years.

Chapter 4: Building a new *Jewish World*: Yiddish Supplements and British Jewish Politics and Culture at a turning point

When Theodor Herzl addressed the Jewish masses of the East End for the first time, on the 12th of July 1896, to advocate for his new vision for a Jews' state, the stakes were understandably high.¹ The Jewish Working Men's Club was packed to the rafters:

It was a warm Sunday afternoon, and long before the hour fixed for the meeting the hall, which could hold only a few hundred people, was packed to suffocation and thousands were unable to gain admittance. The great majority of the audience were refugees from Russia, who had not been in England many years and who still had vivid memories of the Tsarist persecution from which they had fled. They were all keyed up to a high pitch of expectancy, longing to see the man who, they believed, would lead them back to the land of their forefathers, and their hopes were fired by the story (which was unfounded) that Herzl had already spoken to the Sultan of Turkey. There was therefore a storm of prolonged applause when they had their first glimpse of the imposing and majestic figure as he stepped on to the platform and bowed his acknowledgements.²

But Herzl, who spoke no Yiddish, was forced to speak in his courtly German. "It was doubtful whether many were able to understand the elegant German in which Herzl spoke", Israel Cohen (1879-1961), an English Jewish journalist who was there further recalled.³ The crowd was pleased enough to

¹ Vital, *Origins of Zionism*, 305-7.

² Israel Cohen, *A Jewish Pilgrimage: the Autobiography of Israel Cohen* (London: Vallentine, Mitchell, 1956), 28-29.

³ Cohen, *A Jewish Pilgrimage*, 28-29.

satisfy Herzl: "I talked for an hour in the frightful heat. Great success."⁴ But the loudest applause, at least according to Cohen, was solicited by a Hebrew teacher, Froyim Ish Kishor (1862-1945), who eulogised Herzl in Yiddish, and compared him to Moses and Columbus.⁵

Jewish nationalism and its apostles, as well as the older Socialist activists, led and accelerated the construction of a new Jewish political public sphere. Encounters, political and cultural, between different groups of Jews multiplied in Britain. As in the story above, language became crucial to the expression of culture. Herzl's message was received rapturously, but crucial too was the intermediary of a Yiddish speaker to give it its fullest expression and reception. The stakes of these encounters were significant. And they were not simply one directional: the influence of Western assimilated Jews being imposed via Yiddish translation onto an Eastern European Jewish mass audience. The influence was travelling in the other direction too. Herzl, for example, was prompted to reconsider his political approach when he was confronted by the enthusiasm and power of the East London masses. He had had similar thoughts earlier when he spoke to Eastern European Jews in Vilna. These encounters made Herzl wonder whether he should stick to trying to cut diplomatic deals with established communal leaders behind the scenes or instead go straight to the people. Herzl was reluctant to abandon the former approach completely, but he understood that one group could be

⁴ Theodor Herzl, *The Complete Diaries of Theodor Herzl*, vol1. 1895-1896, July 13, 1896 trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Herzl Press and Thomas Yoseloff, 1960), 418.

⁵ Cohen, *A Jewish Pilgrimage*, 28-29.

used to influence the other.⁶ Herzl wanted to “unite the poor in order to put pressure on the lukewarm and hesitant rich.”⁷

As Eastern European Jews mobilised and organised themselves with increasing confidence and as men of influence from Western European Jewish backgrounds sought to harness this “pressure”, the diversity of these kinds of meetings increased. They spread from the public meeting to the exhibition gallery to the press. What happens when a new generation of Jewish immigrants encounters an established Jewish community? Who influences who and to what extent? And in such meetings, who really has the power? If we persist in treating Eastern European immigrant Jewry as a group asunder, instead of analysing these encounters and interactions, “our interpretations of the history of Jewish migration run the danger of reproducing the past more than accounting for it.”⁸ If so far in this dissertation the focus has been more exclusively on the construction of the immigrant public sphere, predominantly through the lens of the Yiddish press and the new Yiddish language political movements, we must examine when the Yiddish language sphere itself became a place of encounter between Anglo-Jewry and Eastern European Jews.

A place to start is the historical record of the mass meetings where the fraught questions of language and politics were played out. Often all that remains from these encounters are the press reports. But the Yiddish press

⁶ Herzl, *Complete Diaries*, vol 1, July 13, 1896, 419.

⁷ Herzl, *Complete Diaries*, vol 1, July 15, 1896, 422.

⁸ David Feldman, “Mr. Lewinstein goes to parliament”, 138.

itself could be instrumentalised by Anglo-Jewry to present a message it wanted to express. This was the case with the earlier Zionist periodical *Dos Folk* (London, 1899-1900), produced by Anglo-Jewry, via an Eastern European immigrant intermediary, to promote its own vision of Zionism. For this reason an intervention from the more established Anglo-Jewish English speaking community should come as no surprise. It would want to make itself heard.

In a development that challenges any monolithic interpretation of anglicisation, in 1906, both the *Jewish Chronicle* and the *Jewish World* began to publish supplements in the Yiddish language (although the *Jewish Chronicle* also published Hebrew texts in its supplement, which it labelled as a “Languages Supplement”). This could still be interpreted as the long arm of an anglicisation policy. There is some evidence to suggest that some Yiddish publications were themselves anglicising (and the same is true of some immigrant Jewish organisations).⁹ But the historical rupture that occurred through the production of Yiddish language texts by these organs of Anglo-Jewry should not be underestimated. It was part of a process whereby Anglo-Jewry became increasingly interested in Eastern European culture, and where the new cultural confidence of immigrant Jewry asserted itself to make Yiddish a force that could not be ignored. This resulted in Yiddish, perhaps briefly being considered, in Tobias Metzler’s phrasing, itself taken

⁹ This argument has been advanced most notably by Anne Kershen, “Yiddish as a Vehicle for Anglicisation” 59-67, and Anne J Kershen, *Uniting the Tailors: Trade Unionism among the Tailoring Workers of London and Leeds, 1870-1939* (Ilford: Frank Cass & Co, 1995).

from a *Jewish Chronicle* article quoted earlier in the dissertation, as a new Jewish Lingua Franca.¹⁰

How did these supplements mediate the encounter between immigrant and English born Jews? An exploration of the concrete factors that led to the establishment of these supplements, and particularly that of the *Jewish World*, is crucial. The supplements were not just a gesture of fraternal goodwill. They were an effort to advance a cultural and political agenda, an opportunity to represent a different set of political priorities that their Anglo-Jewish backers presumed were not present in the Yiddish press. These supplements were an opportunity for Anglo-Jewry to contest the Yiddish press' influence on the Yiddish press' terms.

This chapter demonstrates that anglicisation was not linear, nor an all-powerful process. The growth of Jewish nationalism, for example, was neither an anglicising process nor strictly opposite to anglicisation. The formulation of new Jewish identities, national, religious and socialist, cannot necessarily be comprehended through the guise of one linear process. Anglicisation and its opposite processes, be they the construction of a Yiddish public sphere, or the development of Jewish nationalism, or transnational Jewish movements, are interconnected. On one hand the external pressures of the English environment and Anglo-Jewry coerced a linguistic and cultural conversion to a pre-established Anglo-Jewish norm.

¹⁰ Tobias Metzler, *Tales of Three Cities : Urban Jewish Cultures in London, Berlin, and Paris (c. 1880-1940)* (Wiesbaden: Harrowitz Verlag, 2014), 138-149. See also *Jewish Chronicle*, August 17, 1906, 9.

But on the other hand flourishing new Jewish national, cultural and religious movements and identities, expressed primarily in the transnational Yiddish press and the political and cultural agents that wrote within it, offered a different pathway. The analysis of the Yiddish supplements in the *Jewish Chronicle* (London, 1841-present day) and the *Jewish World* (1873-1934), the two prestige Anglo-Jewish English language publications, shows the complexity of when anglicisation was abandoned and a different political and cultural approach had to be adopted.

a) “Yiddish in the “Jewish Chronicle” is the fatal blow to the old outdated policy of anglicisation”

Attitudes within the Jewish community to Yiddish began to change as mass immigration continued into the new century. Yiddish, once scorned in the *Jewish Chronicle*, began to receive interest, mounting curiosity and even praise. This reversal has been described as a “startling turnabout.”¹¹ This change was also palpable on the public speaking scene. At a lecture given by Helena Frank on Sunday the 28th of October, 1906, with the title, “The Value of Yiddish”, she argued for the worth and literary merit of the Yiddish language in front of an audience of the East London Communal League.¹² Frank’s speech was evidently successful. Her listeners were reported within the *Jewish Chronicle* as remarking that:

The general view was expressed by other speakers that the conversance of the communal leaders with the Jargon would help to bring about a better understanding of the poor foreign

¹¹ Cesarani, *Jewish Chronicle*, 100.

¹² “The Value of Yiddish: Lecture by Miss Helena Frank”, *Jewish Chronicle*, November 2, 1906, 21.

class with which they came in contact. It would enable them to know more of the life, feelings and aspirations of those coreligionists who spoke the idiom.¹³

The chairman would go so far as stating that “the study of Yiddish should help to strengthen the bonds of friendship and good fellowship between the English and the foreign Jew.”¹⁴

Positive views of Yiddish were expressed in the national press. Israel Cohen, for example, could write a positive article called “The Romance of Yiddish” for the *Manchester Guardian* which carried many of the same arguments he would make in a similar article he wrote in the *Jewish World* shortly before the launch of its supplement.¹⁵ The British National press between 1900-1910 seems relatively fascinated by Yiddish and its culture, as discussed in chapter 1. British Jewish history has focused on the British Jewish abhorrence for Yiddish as a jargon or slang, but the broader birth of interest in Yiddish, for Jews and non-Jews alike, a foreign language with a fascinating culture that had hitherto gone beneath the radar, deserves attention too.

Nor would it be correct to just view this growing interest in terms of the press. There was a growing interest in Eastern European Jewish culture that reached beyond newspaper columns. In the art world this culminated in the celebrated *Jewish Art and Antiquities* (1906) exhibition. Although it might

¹³ “The Value of Yiddish,” 21.

¹⁴ “The Value of Yiddish,” 21.

¹⁵ Israel Cohen, “The Romance of Yiddish”, *Manchester Guardian*, Feb 20, 1905.

have aimed at encouraging anglicisation, it also contained vivid examples of Eastern European Jewish painting.¹⁶ The *Jewish Chronicle* even ran a piece praising the Yiddish theatre.¹⁷ This increased interest could be viewed as an obvious consequence of the growing population of Eastern European Jews in London. These English newspapers needed to respond to their new, and growing, market of Eastern European Jewish immigrants. In the established Anglo-Jewish community, where there was a new generation of British Jews who had one foot in both worlds, there was space for encounter and exchange.

A highlight, and perhaps the richest source of evidence for this encounter, is the development of the Yiddish supplements of the *Jewish Chronicle* and *Jewish World*. The importance of Yiddish language supplements in these stalwart publications of the Anglo-Jewish community was not lost on Yiddish journalists of the period: “Yiddish in the “Jewish Chronicle” is the fatal blow to the old outdated policy of anglicisation” was how the *Yiddisher Zhurnal* reported on it.¹⁸ The *Jewish Chronicle* began publishing a monthly “Languages Supplement” on June 29th 1906 – carrying texts in Hebrew and Yiddish with English translations – which would continue until November of that year. The *Jewish World* published its own exclusively Yiddish language supplement weekly from July 13th 1906 until May 15th 1908. What lay behind this change in policy? This can be traced in part to competition within the

¹⁶ Metzler, *Tales of Three Cities*, 147-8.

¹⁷ Metzler, 145.

¹⁸ “Iber di velt” [Around the World], *Der Idisher Zhurnal*, July 1, 1906, 2. “Yidish in di “dzhuish kronikl” iz der toyt klap tsu di alte opgelebte politik fun anglosisatsye.” Yekhezkel Vortsman echoed this judgement, see Vortsman, “Idishe prese in England,” July 12, 11.

British Jewish press environment. At the turn of the century an intense circulation war between *The Jewish Chronicle* and a relatively new rival commenced. For much of its existence *The Jewish Chronicle* experienced little or no competition for its position as the Jewish community's primary press representative and organ: "It may be said that it [*the Jewish Chronicle*] is the principal mourner at the funeral of its rivals."¹⁹ But this changed in the face of an increasingly successful upstart, the *Jewish World*. Founded in 1873 by George Lewis Lyon, an Anglo-Jewish journalist, but achieving its greatest success after Lucien Wolf became editor in 1900, its success was such that the syndicate that owned it came close to acquiring the *Jewish Chronicle* itself.²⁰ Indeed, prominent Zionist Nahum Sokolow (1859-1936) viewed the *Jewish Chronicle* as a spent force compared to the *Jewish World* when there was question of the World Zionist Organisation purchasing the *Jewish Chronicle* in December 1906 (although this was far from an unbiased opinion given that Sokolow was himself a writer for the *Jewish World*.)²¹ One element of this circulation war became the Yiddish supplements, an opportunity to win readers when so many new immigrants were primarily literate in Yiddish. David Cesarani has noted that the two newspapers were also trying to compete with the British Yiddish press.²² As Cesarani observes, the consequences of these new supplements had more significance than simply the ongoing circulation war: "Market forces had

¹⁹ Cecil Roth, *The Jewish Chronicle 1841-1941: A Century of Newspaper History* (London: The Jewish Chronicle, 1949), 156.

²⁰ Cesarani, *Jewish Chronicle*, 103.

²¹ Cesarani, 104.

²² Cesarani, 104

breached the policy of complete anglicisation advocated by the *Jewish Chronicle* for three decades.”²³

But it is unlikely that it was exclusively due to market forces that these supplements came into being. The supplements themselves were not to be long term successes in increasing readership. The *Jewish World's* supplement, *Di Yidische Velt*, which lasted longer, and at that only two years, did not permanently change the circulation of the newspaper or the type of its usual reader.²⁴ One key element which led to the supplement, and the encounters within it, was a new generation of immigrant and Anglo-Jewry whose journalistic activities, and reconfiguration of Anglo-Jewish identities, made such a supplement possible. It was the harnessing of their talents and perspectives that allowed for this new product: an Anglo-Jewish Yiddish sphere. But another motive was political. Part of the tussle which led to Leopold Greenberg's celebrated editorship of the *Jewish Chronicle* in 1907 was a move by him and other like minded Zionists to purchase the newspaper so as to save it from falling into the hands of the more Territorialist *Jewish World* syndicate.²⁵ This political focus was doubly magnified within the supplement, where it proved to be a relatively unique opportunity for Anglo-Jewry to try and influence and persuade immigrant Jewry, particularly around the Zionist-Territorialist split. The supplement was thus a political intervention to try and win support for different groups within the broader contemporary debate of Jewish nationalist and colonial projects

²³ Cesarani, 100.

²⁴ Cesarani, 102, and “Fun vokh tsu vokh” [From Week to Week], *Jewish World*, Yiddish Supplement, June 2nd (or May 15th) 1908, 1-2.

²⁵ Cesarani, 103-105.

which was heightened in the period after 1904 while Zangwill's territorialism was still a viable concern.²⁶ These explicit more short term political aims were accompanied by broader changes as new figures such as Leopold Greenberg (1861-1931) rose to positions of higher influence. Leopold Greenberg was the main proponent of the "new Jewish journalism" at the *Jewish Chronicle*. It flourished after he became editor in 1907. Greenberg promoted Eastern European culture and advocated for Jewish philanthropy (particularly the Jewish Hospital, long a *cause celebre* of the Yiddish press) and social movements. Perhaps most significantly he was a keen advocate for Zionism. The *Jewish World* and *Jewish Chronicle* supplements were the product of a changing of guard within the Anglo-Jewish press. And the new guard adopted much of what the Yiddish press had been campaigning for for years. This new Jewish journalism in English was in part a refashioning of older British Yiddish journalism.²⁷

These two elements that motivated the supplements - a new journalistic Anglo-Jewish generation of writers and thinkers, and a political intervention, meant that a Yiddish culture was curated in an Anglo-Jewish key. As Eastern European Jewish culture flourished, and an immigrant diaspora clamoured for access to the culture it had left behind and that was also growing in the diaspora, so Anglo-Jewry had to adapt to this new element. Visits by prominent Yiddish writers passing through Britain were gaining in importance.²⁸ This cultural element will be studied in greater depth in the

²⁶ Vital, *Zionism: Formative Years*, 435-7.

²⁷ Cesarani, *Jewish Chronicle*, 106.

²⁸ Hodess, "Geshikhte fun der english-yidisher prese," 40-71.

following chapter. The stewardship of *The Jewish World* of its Yiddish supplement (named *Di Yidishe Welt*) meant a much greater budget than was customary for the British Yiddish press. Israel Zangwill, for example, had once been paid £100 pounds for a story to be put in the *Jewish World*. While a payment of this size was no doubt not offered to every author, the economic capital that was put into the venture considerably aided its sheen and lustre: in the end the *Jewish World's* supplement was to prove to be one of the noted successes of Yiddish in Britain.²⁹

b) Different Formulations of British Jewish Biographical Identities

In an extensive article to accompany the publication of the first issue of the *Jewish World* with a Yiddish supplement, the Anglo-Jewish journalist Israel Cohen defended Yiddish:

And yet one would have thought that in this twentieth century, after the history of Yiddish literature had been written by a Harvard professor [Leo Wiener, 1862-1939] and its eminent author had been included in the Jewish Encyclopedia, after descriptive articles had appeared in reviews and newspapers and translations of Yiddish poems had been published in English, German and French, it would have been no longer necessary to vindicate the status of Yiddish. But prejudice dies hard, even when the ignorance from which it draws its strength has already been destroyed.³⁰

The timelessness of this argument is striking; in the 21st Century Yiddish is often faced with similar questions over its status. But what is more interesting is the provenance of the article. Israel Cohen (1879-1961), is now largely

²⁹ Roth, *Jewish Chronicle*, 159-160.

³⁰ Israel Cohen, "On Yiddish," *The Jewish World*, July 13, 1906, 197.

forgotten. Cohen was a prominent Anglo-Jewish journalist. Like Jacob Hodess (1885-1961), he belonged to a generation of Jewish British journalists who were at home in both Yiddish and English (Hodess more familiar with Yiddish and Cohen with English). Scrutinising these two pioneering journalists helps to contextualise the introduction of Yiddish supplements in the English Jewish press. The article Israel Cohen wrote for the *Jewish World*, quoted above, was a version of an earlier piece he wrote for the far larger *Manchester Guardian*, called 'The Romance of Yiddish.'³¹

Cohen brought ideas about Yiddish into not just the Jewish but national sphere. Cohen's English language journalism shows a full engagement with Yiddish at home and abroad. His memoirs offer fascinating insights into his generation of Eastern European British Jews. He was born to Eastern European immigrants and attended Manchester Grammar School, where he was classmates with the English diarist and theatre critic James Agate (1877-1947) and the painter T.C Dugdale (1880-1952).³² Cohen grew up in the midst of the famous circle of Manchester Zionists.³³ Cohen moved to London to attend Jews College and UCL at the same time. There he began a career in journalism. He started his career by writing Jewish tableaux in a style that owed much to Zangwill for British newspapers, feuilletonistic pieces with Jewish subjects, before he moved on to broader and more serious pieces on Jewish questions.³⁴ For Cohen meeting Queen Victoria was exhilarating, but more important still was hearing a speech by Herzl:

³¹ Cohen, "The Romance of Yiddish."

³² Cohen, *Jewish Pilgrimage*, 15.

³³ Cohen, 21.

³⁴ Cohen, 34.

During my stay in the East End I had some memorable experiences. By far the most important was my view of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee procession in June, 1897, which I saw at very close range at the corner of Lombard Street and the Mansion House.

But to me personally the most significant experience was my presence at the first public meeting addressed in London by Theodor Herzl.³⁵

Cohen was perhaps not typical. His passion as an English born Jew for Yiddish, and for Herzl, was perhaps unrepresentative. In fact, as in his attendance at a Hebrew language society, his familiarity with the culture of Eastern European Jewry could mark him out:

At one of these meetings in the King's Hall on January 2nd, 1898, the first Hebrew-speaking society in London was founded under the name of *Hevrath Sfath Zion* (Society of the Language of Zion). It was hailed as an immediate realisation of one of the ideals of Zionism. The inaugural address was given by Isaac Suvalski, a timid, bearded savant, who had already founded a Hebrew weekly, *Hayehudi*, for which he used to canvass subscriptions by occasional trips to the provinces. He spoke in Hebrew, as did those who followed him, but while their remarks met with general approval, there were mutterings here and there against their violating the holy tongue by speaking it bareheaded. These objections, however, were calmly ignored. At a lull in the discussion, when people looked round for the next speaker, I suddenly rose to make my maiden speech in the sacred tongue and suggested that a Hebrew library should be formed. My few remarks, coming trippingly from an English-born Jew, created a mild sensation, and in the following number of *Hayehudi* I read the editor's friendly comment: "Even in the wilderness there are grapes."³⁶

³⁵ Cohen, 28.

³⁶ Cohen, 30-31.

Shortly after Herzl died, Cohen received some surprise visitors:

Visited this afternoon by Dr. A. S. Rappoport, Dr. Weizmann, and H Snowman. Over tea Dr. Weizmann spoke on the Zionist crisis: the method of bluff and ostentation - the Viennese tone - must be dropped, and serious work started. Complained of incompetence of Herzl's colleagues on Small Actions Committee (Executive). He was surprised to find Peretz's portrait on my walls and that I read Yiddish.³⁷

It is interesting to speculate what constitutes Weizmann's surprise here.³⁸ It could be that as a Zionist he shared many of that movement's advocacy for Hebrew, and would not expect a fellow Zionist to have any allegiance to Yiddish culture (this seems very unlikely given Weizmann's commitment to East European Jewry - and evidence that he himself would use Yiddish if the occasion absolutely demanded it). It is more likely, that as above with the example of the Hebrew language club, Weizmann did not expect a British Jew who had grown up in England and attended English schools not only to read Yiddish, but also to show an affection for such an important Yiddish figure as Peretz. At the Hebrew club they were surprised an English-born Jew could speak Hebrew, amongst the Zionists they did not suspect that he might appreciate Eastern European Jewish culture. These details from Cohen's life show how a second-generation Eastern European Jewish immigrant could at once be part of many different contemporary currents. Cohen is excited to prove his Hebrew speaking prowess, but he is also a

³⁷ Cohen, 45.

³⁸ Weizmann himself was deeply engrained in Eastern European Jewish culture. Jehuda Reinharz, *Chaim Weizmann: The Making of a Zionist Leader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 9-10.

keen Yiddish reader and fan of Peretz, a committed Zionist as well, he is also an English language journalist for some of the most important English and Jewish newspapers in the country. In another remarkable moment in Cohen's life he also met and spoke on behalf of Winston Churchill at a political meeting where he was standing to be elected as an MP.³⁹ He also held a fundraiser for Sholem Aleichem at UCL.⁴⁰

A report from the annual conference of the *Union of Jewish Literary Societies* in 1906 gives some sense of the impact individuals such as Cohen, and others, were having in changing the communal attitude towards Yiddish.⁴¹ The *Union of Jewish Literary Societies* was a typical institution of Anglo-Jewry and its language was English. A delegate sent by the Glasgow Jewish Social and Literary Society, J Levine, moved: "that the council be instructed to take such steps as may seem desirable to encourage the study of Hebrew language and literature, and of Yiddish literature."⁴² Israel Cohen, himself already on the council of the whole organisation, seconded the motion, observing:

That it had long been a reproach that the best Hebrew scholars were Christians, and by adopting the motion they could do something to remove that reproach. The great mass of Jewish literature which had been produced, however, in the nineteenth century had been produced in Russia, and that was written in Yiddish. Yiddish has been called a language without literature, but that view had been taken because very few English people understood enough Yiddish to read anything of the vast

³⁹ Cohen, 66.

⁴⁰ Cohen, 67-68.

⁴¹ "Union of Jewish Literary Societies: Annual Conference", *Jewish Chronicle*, June 29, 1906, 18-22.

⁴² "Union of Jewish Literary Societies: Annual Conference," 19-20.

literature published in that language. He thought that the Union might very well undertake to manage the next reading of that distinguished Yiddish author who was now in England. He referred to Sholem Aleichem.⁴³

The motion did not go unopposed. An amendment suggested that all reference to Yiddish literature be removed. But this amendment lost and the whole motion with the original, pro-Yiddish wording, was passed.⁴⁴

Afterwards at the conference dinner the president Sir Phillip Magnus MP mentioned in his toast of “knowing how much the literary output of the Jewish mind has been enriched by the activity of our Russian and Polish co-religionists” – and this statement was cheered.⁴⁵ It was the work of the more well known, such as Israel Cohen, and those less well known by posterity, such as J Levine, who wanted to guarantee that acknowledgement of Eastern European Jewry’s intellectual capacities was also extended to an appreciation of the Yiddish language.

Later in his life Cohen would be overlooked in favour of Jacob Hodess (1885-1961) to be the editor of *New Judaea*, an important international Zionist journal.⁴⁶ This incident brings their lives together - although overlaps were numerous, for one they were both also writers for the *Jewish World*. Hodess was not born in the UK but came over as an adolescent from Vanuta in Lithuania. Perhaps it was this deeper familiarity with Yiddish and the Eastern European world, and consequently Zionism, that led to him winning the post

⁴³ “Union of Jewish Literary Societies: Annual Conference,” 20.

⁴⁴ “Union of Jewish Literary Societies: Annual Conference”, 20.

⁴⁵ “Union of Jewish Literary Societies: Annual Conference”, 21.

⁴⁶ Louis Lipsky, *Memoirs in Profile* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1975), 291.

at the *New Judaea*. Hodess describes his connection to Zionism not as the journalist he later became, but how it grabbed him even as a child. He tells two anecdotes from the child's point of view. The first describes how overcome Hodess was to meet Herzl in the flesh.⁴⁷ Hodess had been elected as a youth delegate from his Zionist youth organisation to the Fourth Zionist Congress (1900) that took place in London in the Queen's Hall. At the close of the conference Hodess found himself alone with Herzl, and much to his surprise Herzl knew Hodess' name. Hodess kissed his hand, prompting Herzl to beg him not to.⁴⁸ The story gives some hint of the important role Herzl played for (some) young immigrant Jews.

The second memory of Hodess' is defined by Herzl's absence and not his presence. In 1902, a crowd of Eastern European East End Jews, of which Hodess was the youngest, waited outside parliament for Herzl, as he was due to contribute to the Royal Committee on Immigration.⁴⁹ Unfortunately Herzl was not able to show up as his father passed away just before he was scheduled to arrive, but little knowing this Hodess continued to stand outside Parliament. At this moment, in Hodess' telling, Lord Rothschild arrived in a cab, and asked all the Jewish Eastenders what they were waiting for. Hodess, the youngest, piped up that they were waiting for Herzl. Lord Rothschild then asked if they were all Zionists. When they replied yes, he answered that the sultan would never give them the land. As Rothschild

⁴⁷ This anecdote is also told in Jacob Hodess, "London Associations with the Record," *Supplement to the Zionist Record*, November 21, 1958, 35.

⁴⁸ "Nein, nein Lieber Herr Hodess, das nicht," is the response Hodess claims Herzl made to him. Jacob Hodess, "London Associations with the Record," 35.

⁴⁹ Jacob Hodess, "Herzl in London," *Di goldene keyt* 19 (1953), 31.

walked away one of the party of East End Jews cried out that he might if Rothschild were to help, but they were not sure if Rothschild had heard.⁵⁰

Hodess would eventually develop into a beloved English language journalist, with a “Books and Bookmen” page reviewing Yiddish books and theatre for the *Jewish Chronicle*.⁵¹ Hodess, like Cohen, represents the kind of dual identity that could flourish in this period, which might even be said to constitute a new hybrid identity. Buoyed by excitement about Jewish nationalism, and capitalising on a new enthusiasm by institutions of mainstream Anglo-Jewry, Cohen and Hodess were leading journalists in the period that just precedes “The New Jewish Journalism.”⁵² The question was whether as young journalists they could seize this opportunity to deliver a new Anglo Yiddish platform and make it a success. The Yiddish supplement of the *Jewish World*, the *Yiddishe Velt*, was their opportunity.

c) A Cultural Encounter

Gradually those who read merely Yiddish will learn to read their English supplement, and if as many of your English readers are not likely to cross the bridge to the other side, they will at least be unable to escape the sense of a throbbing life as complex and as worthy as their own, just as in some foreign city whose tongue one does not understand, one is aware of much in common with one’s own town.⁵³

⁵⁰ Hodess, “Herzl in London”, 31-32.

⁵¹ Cesarani, *Jewish Chronicle*, 108.

⁵² Cesarani, 103-114. This new journalism, in Cesarani’s telling, was characterised by more attention to regional news, more writing on sports and the new feature of an interview with a leading personality accompanied by a photograph.

⁵³ Israel Zangwill, “Letter”, *Jewish World*, July 13, 1906, 193.

Israel Zangwill's letter introducing the new Yiddish supplement in the *Jewish World* makes no secret of its anglicising intention, but in its language also hints at its own curiosity, and discomfort. Talk of the "throbbing life" and comparison to the "foreign city", with a gesture towards rapprochement with "in common with one's own town" point to the difference and acts of voyeurism that the supplement promised. For once, Anglo-Jewry was acknowledging the important presence at its door. Reciprocity is emphasised, and so it was to be the case: English items were translated into Yiddish, particularly by Zangwill, and Yiddish items were translated into English and published in the main paper.⁵⁴ Previously, the *Jewish Chronicle* for example, was able to judge Eastern European Jewry as an important and interesting constituency of world Jewry, but not those Eastern European Jews who had recently migrated to England. As the *Chronicle* wrote when analysing the Eastern European third of the delegates at the First Zionist Congress:

Nearly all of them appeared to be men of high intellectual power, and not a few of them are of commanding presence. Among these cultured representative men was a *Chazan* [cantor], who is conversant with a number of Western languages, including English, in which he expresses himself with clearness. The splendid types of Russian and Polish Jews who attended the Congress in such large numbers would have been a revelation to many Londoners, apt to judge the standard of their brethren in those countries by the specimens they habitually see in the East End.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Jacob Hodess, "Geshikhte fun der english-yidisher prese," 66.

⁵⁵ *Jewish Chronicle*, September 3, 1897, 15, quoted in Michael Berkowitz, *Zionist Culture and West European Jewry, 1897-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 39.

The Yiddish supplement could deliver a Yiddish authenticity, a “throbbing life” to the Anglo-Jewish community who had long been curious about what Eastern European Jewish life in London consisted of and had finally grown tired of dismissing it.

The *Jewish Chronicle* seemed to almost begrudge the introduction of its new supplement. As it wrote in its foreword to the first edition of its language supplement, giving a text in English and Yiddish: “We still think that the use of Yiddish is but a transitional stage in that wonderful development of Russo-Jewish exile into a distinguished British subject which has so often been the admiration of the world. But it has become a stage of much greater importance owing to recent events.”⁵⁶ What were these events? In part they were Jewish political and communal issues, local to Britain, which the *Jewish Chronicle* wanted to intervene in – some of these will be investigated later in the chapter. But it was also a response to the growing importance and difficulty of ignoring Yiddish culture. The *Jewish Chronicle* pointed to the changing nature of Yiddish as one justification for its changed position:

For it must be admitted that important changes have been introduced. The attitude of the civilised world is tending to be decidedly friendly. Yiddish has become a written speech; it has been recognised as a language, while within a vast improvement is being effected. The spelling and the arrangement of sentences are more and more assuming a uniform character. A number of words derived from Latin and used in all the European languages have been incorporated, and have effected vast improvement. Yiddish has thus acquired

⁵⁶ “Foreword”, *Jewish Chronicle*, Yiddish Supplement, June 29, 1906, 1.

a power of expression which compares favourably with any living language.⁵⁷

The increasing standardisation of Yiddish, as well as its alleged increased use of latin loan words, is used as a part justification for the *Jewish Chronicle's* change of position. But the anonymous author of the foreword also points to the cultural status that Yiddish had acquired elsewhere in the diaspora:

In March last the Yiddish-reading public of Russia and the United States – the two countries where the language is chiefly cultivated – celebrated the jubilee of “Mendele Mocher Sepharim,” S.J Abramovitz, the grandfather of Yiddish literature. I. L. Peretz, M. Rosenfeld, and “Sholem Aleichem” have done a great deal to impart life and soul to it. As children of the Russian ghetto they have depicted the agonies of the “Judenschmertz”. Their hearts beat in unison with the hearts of the people whose sufferings and aspirations of two thousand years they knew and felt. Educated Jews, with a thorough knowledge of European literature, often turn to their writings for inspiration and amusement.

Readers of Yiddish will not, or cannot, abandon a language endeared to them by early associations and consecrated by the works of genius which have appeared in it.⁵⁸

The status of Yiddish had changed for the *Jewish Chronicle*. Now that “educated Jews, with a thorough knowledge of European literature” were reading Yiddish literature, the *Jewish Chronicle* was forced to beat a hasty retreat from its former hostile stance to Yiddish. The arguments of individuals such as Israel Cohen and Helena Frank were winning. Across Eastern

⁵⁷ “Foreword”, 1.

⁵⁸ “Foreword”, 2.

Europe and America Yiddish was no longer considered a despised jargon; in fact it had become a respected language with an important contribution to make to world literature. The *Jewish Chronicle* now adapted itself to this.

These supplements in turn lent a respectability to Yiddish within the Anglo-Jewish community that the visits of prominent Yiddish writers, such as Sholem Aleichem, and their elaborate receptions, also helped to bolster.⁵⁹ The Yiddish supplement is a particularly interesting cultural document because it shows how Yiddish, English Jewish and English Yiddish culture contested dominance within the realms of the same newspaper columns. It is no doubt too crude to separate the cultural from the political sections of these papers, not least when Israel Zangwill, political leader and leading Anglo-Jewish writer, straddled both and introduced the supplement. Zangwill, although an English language writer and born and raised in England, was known as “a warm friend of Yiddish... at every opportunity he defended the language.”⁶⁰ Just the presence of Yiddish script was intended to lure immigrant Jews into an Anglo-Jewish realm. The employment of Jacob Hodess, a younger Yiddish intellectual, alongside the more established Anglo-Jewish journalists of the rest of the paper, meant that culturally the result was immensely diverse and unpredictable. As mentioned earlier, Hodess was keen to assert editorial independence.

⁵⁹ “Union of Jewish Literary Societies: Annual Conference”, *Jewish Chronicle*, June 29, 1906, 18-22.

⁶⁰ Hodess, “Geshikhte fun der english-yidisher prese,” 67. “Varemer fraynd fun yidish. Er hot bay yeder gelegenhayt fartaydikt di shprakh.”

The *Jewish World* produced by far the superior supplement – it also lasted longer.⁶¹ The new budget of the supplement also meant that it was able to include and premiere writers for an English audience that had already made reputations for themselves in Eastern Europe and could submit their Yiddish language writing. English Jews, such as Israel Zangwill, who was published predominantly in English but also in Yiddish (see chapter 5) were also vying for influence. Whereas the Yiddish press in Britain had generally shied away from the more important names of Eastern European Jewish culture - Sholem Aleichem, Peretz, Mendele - the *Jewish World* and the supplement with its budget could afford to pay for them to feature prominently. And while the supplement looked in some respects similar to other Yiddish newspapers of the period - it still ran an English novel serialised in Yiddish translation, which took up a great deal of space - it was the only paper that could draw so centrally on English as well as English Yiddish and Eastern European writers. In the contestation of styles and space in the columns, we can also see the beginnings of a fleeting English Yiddish identity. But such was the ambition of the supplement that it aimed not just to please its audience, but also to engage with larger transnational Jewish questions about how the new Jewish national writing should be achieved.

A vibrant polemic authored by Sokolow, explains in part the *Yidishe Velt's* (the Yiddish supplement of the *Jewish World*) view of Jewish culture. Nahum Sokolow used the case of the Cairo Genizah (a collection of medieval Jewish

⁶¹ It did not please everyone. Vortsman could not believe that a journalist as distinguished as Lucien Woolf could employ someone that in his opinion was so unfamiliar with Yiddish literature and politics as Jacob Hodess. Vortsman, "Idishe prese in England," July 12, 11-12.

manuscripts found in the storeroom of the Ben Giza synagogue in Egypt), and the scholarly interest it aroused, to point to the fact that contemporary Jewish literature should also not be neglected.⁶² Sokolow defined Jewish literature by its capacity to encompass everything, ancient and modern. Jewish literature could draw Jews from different backgrounds together: “By Jewish literature one means *everything together*: through this in fact the West-Endler becomes a relative (*mekhutn*) of the East-Endler.” - but that unfortunately this opportunity is rejected.⁶³ Within Jewish literature, the Yiddish language had a special role as a vehicle of Jewishness, uniting all Jews:

To put it in simple Yiddish - a Jew is a Jew, and even if he does not truly understand Yiddish, if he is, for our sins, a true ignoramus, everyone speaks Yiddish from the rabbi to the coachman, from the silken young gentleman, to the intellectual, all the way down to the stable boy. Yiddish is *everything together*... In Yiddish wit at any rate there is ninety percent of Yiddishkeit's knowledge.⁶⁴

If the creative Jew behind the original lines of the Genizah were to come back to life, contemporary Jewry would have no interest in him: “There he stands, the Jew, in the flesh, back to life, resurrected from the Genizah, and he still writes kabbalistic formulae, and [god forbid you should] go and speak

⁶² Nahum Sokolow (1860-1936) was a prominent Hebrew and Yiddish journalist in the Zionist and broader Jewish world, *LNYL* vol 6. 318-325.

⁶³ Nahum Sokolow, “Literarische unterhaltungen: yidishe literatur un “yidishe literarische gezelschaften” [Literary conversations: jewish literature and “jewish literary societies”], *Jewish World*, Yiddish Supplement, July 27 1906, 4. “az yidishe literatur meynt men *ales tsuzamen* - vet dokh dadurkh der vest ender yid in london a mekhutn mit'n ist-ender.”

⁶⁴ Sokolow, “Literarische unterhaltungen,” August 3, 1906, 4. “ofy prost yidish - iz a yid a yid, un farshteyt afile rekht yidish nit, oyb er iz, bavoyneseynu harabim, gor eyn amorets, yidish redn ale fun reb biz tsum balegole, fun “zaydenem yungn-mantshik” dem intelektuellen biz tsum pferdsying. *Alts tsuzamen* iz yidish... in yidishn vits shtekt, al kol ponem nayntsik protsent fun yidishkeyt kentsnis.”

Hebrew with him, or “mutter” jargon [Yiddish] with him. Shocking!”⁶⁵ If Jewish intellectuals and readers ignore contemporary Jewish writing, it would be equivalent to treating English literature as if it had stopped in the 16th Century.⁶⁶ For Sokolow the Jewish Literary Societies, which had just permitted the consideration of Yiddish texts (as per Israel Cohen’s intervention described earlier), represented an important step in the right direction.⁶⁷ Jewish literature and Jewish Literary societies would represent a powerful Jewish uniting force: “In literature, in Jewish literature the east is united with the West, the past with the present. In Jewish literary societies everything must be united.”⁶⁸ This call to a new unity, between past and present and the different contemporary Jewish identities, was at home in a supplement that itself gestured, as per Zangwill’s metaphor of the bridge, to uniting Jews.

A key influence on the cultural nationalism that was being expounded in the supplement was Ahad Ha’am. Not one but two articles were dedicated to him.⁶⁹ *Di Yidische Velt* embraced him as “The greatest, no the only, national thinker.”⁷⁰ The bold and unapologetic nationalism of Ahad Ha’am is praised:

⁶⁵ Sokolow, “Literarische unterhaltungen,” July 27, 1906, 4. “ot shteyt er, der yid, vi er leybt un lebt, oyfgeshtanen tkhies hameysim fun der genize, un der makht nokh sheymes, er makht gor naye sheymes, un geh red mit im hebreish, oder “moyshl” mit im gor zhargon. shoking!”

⁶⁶ Sokolow, “Literarische unterhaltungen,” July 27, 1906, 4.

⁶⁷ Sokolow, “Literarische unterhaltungen,” July 27, 1906, 4.

⁶⁸ Sokolow, “Literarische unterhaltungen,” August 3, 1906, 4. “In literatur, in yidische literatur, fareynikt zikh der miLYLPFekh mitn mayrev, di fargangnheynt mit di yetstike tsayt. In yidische literarische gezelshaftn muz zikh ales fareynikn.

⁶⁹ “Ahad Ha’am”, *Jewish World*, Yiddish Supplement, September 7, 1906, 4; Ben Israel, “Ahad Ha’am”, *Jewish World*, Yiddish Supplement, February 2, 1908, 5-6. The latter calls on readers to ready themselves for a talk Ha’am is scheduled to give, which might explain the second (largely similar) article.

⁷⁰ “Ahad Ha’am,” September 7, 1906, 4. “Der grester, neyn, der eyntsiker natsyonaler denker.”

Jewish nationalism should be as self-evident as other nationalisms, Jews should unapologetically identify as nationalists like Englishmen would.⁷¹ But the abstraction of Ahad Ha'am's faith in spiritual revival, "only the spirit of Israel can save the people of Israel", marks a strong contrast with the practical territorial schemes the newspaper spent much of its time outlining.⁷² Cultural Zionism coexisted in a newspaper that was fronted by Zangwill's political Zionism and eventual Territorialism. Perhaps this was a marker of Hodess asserting his editorial independence (and including cultural Zionism alongside Territorialist and Political Zionist pieces). When it came to deciding what kind of writing was needed for Jewish national revival, the result was ambivalent, no doubt the result of the competing visions of what this should be for those who were sharing the columns. The newspaper was able to feature both writing about writing which explored this question, and creative writing itself. In a highly critical article about contemporary Jewish writing in New York, the critic N V Rivkes criticised the journal *Di Yugend* (New York, 1908) and particularly its writers Isaac Raboy (1882-1944), Yoyel Slonim (1884-1944) and Moyshe Yoyne Khaymovitsh (1881-1958).⁷³ According to Rivkes these writers had abandoned the admirable path of writers such as Sholem Aleichem and Peretz who had reliably portrayed the difficult and

⁷¹ "Ahad Ha'am," 4.

⁷² Ahad Ha'am," 4. "Nor der reyekh yisroel ken retn di ume ha-yisroelit."

⁷³ N. V Rivkes, "Di yidishe literatur in amerika" [The Yiddish literature in America], *Jewish World*, Yiddish Supplement, May 1, 1908, 4-6. Rivkes was reacting against developments in Yiddish poetry and prose where social realism was increasingly eschewed towards aestheticism and higher stylisation. This can be seen in poetic form in the critique of new "decadent" poetics that was criticised for being more concerned with impressionism and individualism than its predecessors. His criticism of this "decadent" literature anticipates the Milton brothers poetic critique explored in the next chapter. Rivkes attacks the prose writers of the movement "Di Yunge". Sol Liptzin, *A History of Yiddish Literature* (New York: Jonathan David, 1972), 101.

hard life of the shtetl. Instead they sunk into a European, and non-Jewish decadent writing.

Di Yidishe Velt's aesthetic position was in line with Rivkes' polemics. The classical work it published, from writers such as Peretz, adhered to the new "traditional" style of Yiddish literature. This writing pointed to the difficulty of life in Eastern European Jewish communities but did not suggest a solution. Nor did it turn its gaze towards the new lives being forged in diaspora. In a printed one act play, *Shampanyer* (Champagne), Peretz portrays the struggle of a poor widow to care for her daughters and marry them. In particular the difficulty of unreliable suitors, such as musicians, threatens the attempt to rebuild the family unit after the death of the father.⁷⁴ A moving piece by Moyshe Ben-Eliezer (1882-1944), "A bal melokhe" (A Tradesman), describes a young boy's sadness when his lack of talent in *kheder* means that he is apprenticed to a tailor.⁷⁵ By starting work and abandoning the path of Jewish scholarship, not through his choice, he loses his mother's support and his friends. He also realises that his childhood has come to an end. Both of these stories point to the difficulties of Jewish life in Eastern Europe, especially for those with little money. Paying due sensitivity to the emotions of individuals who are trying to find economic stability, the stories both illustrate the difficult role for mothers who had to try and steward the new generation. Adolescence becomes the focal point for a critique of unduly

⁷⁴ Yitzkhok Peretz, "Shampanyer: eyn akter" [Champagne: one act-er], *Jewish World*, Yiddish Supplement, February 2, 1907, 1.

⁷⁵ Moshe Ben Eliezer, "A bal-melokhe" [A Tradesman] *Jewish World*, Yiddish Supplement, May 3, 1907, 3.

hard and rigid Eastern European social structures, but in neither story are alternatives offered.

The importation of these narratives from Eastern Europe suggest a stasis to the supplement. *Di Yidishe Velt* was attuned to the priorities of traditional Eastern European Jewish life. The literary treatment of life in Eastern Europe was perhaps more familiar to readers, and its authors were easier to solicit for work. However, *Di Yidishe Velt* did also include work that was much more influenced by its English surroundings. A pioneering example in this respect is Yosef Dov Bandes short story “Yom kipur baym yam: vi a yidishe kehile vert geboyrn” (Yom Kippur at the seaside: how a Jewish community is born).⁷⁶ The author describes a trip to Bournemouth prescribed by his doctor.⁷⁷ His trip falls during Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement – an important yearly Jewish religious festival), and so he interrupts his pastoral vacation, where he admires the cliffs and the air, to go to a recently established synagogue. At first it does not seem at all Jewish to him. The Jews that make up the congregation are from all over the world: English Jews and immigrant Jews, Turkish Jews with fezs, Litvaks, Litvaks from South Africa, American Jews. And to hear waves near a synagogue strikes the writer as un-Jewish. But eventually, when they hear the *kol nidre* prayer (a declaration recited annually before the *Yom Kippur* service) the whole congregation comes together and feels Jewish. The author ends his account of the trip with the

⁷⁶ Yosef Dov Bandes, “Yom kipur baym yam: vi a yidishe kehile vet geboyrn’ (Yom Kippur at the seaside: how a Jewish community is born) *Jewish World*, Yiddish Supplement, October 5, 1906, 3-4.

⁷⁷ For more on the Bournemouth Jewish community see Tony Kushner, *Anglo-Jewry since 1066: Place, Loyalty and Memory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 189-190.

following observation: “Can a sick people not then also be cured? Can a scattered nation not then gather itself together again and be revived?”⁷⁸ This cautious optimism towards world Jewry coming together echoes Sokolow’s earlier polemic.

The other key contributor in this more British Yiddish tradition is Philip Max Raskin (1880-1944), a now almost completely overlooked poet, but who at the time exerted a considerable influence particularly for the Jewish national elements of his work – his work is analysed in depth in the next chapter. Playing on the motif of the Jew as wanderer, Raskin in his poem “Herbst” (Autumn) juxtaposes the seasonal changes with the restlessness of the Jewish “goles-kind” (exile child):

It might be raining, hailing,
And yet you, O exile child,
Must live from the wind, wandering
And wandering like a gust of wind...⁷⁹

In another poem Raskin rejects the gloom of those who feel that rulers only ever rob and plunder, in fact there is a chance of a new world ahead. Here the undercurrents of Jewish national liberation are elusive but clearly present:

⁷⁸ Bandes, “Yom kipur baym yam,” 4. “Tsi ken nit oykh a kranker folk vern geheylt? Tsi ken nit oykh a tseshpreyter natsyon zikh vider zamlen un oyflebn?”

⁷⁹ Philip Max Raskin, “Herbst,” [Autumn] *Jewish World*, Yiddish Supplement, November 2, 1906, 3.

“Meg regndik zayn, hoglendik,
Dokh du, oh goles kind,
Fun vint muzt leben, voglendik
Un voglen vi a vint...”

There will come a day, and a new one,
A happy world will understand
How great is free humanity –
How poor, how small, when enslaved.⁸⁰

For Raskin the trials of diaspora are also an opportunity to envision a new world. His work will be explored in greater depth in the next chapter.

With the exception of Israel Zangwill and the Zionist poet Phillip Raskin, Joseph Haim Brenner (1881-1921) is probably the most significant writer active in the Jewish East End throughout this period.⁸¹ The scale and importance of his contributions to the British Yiddish press has been underappreciated. The *Jewish World's* Yiddish supplement was to be one of the places that Brenner chose to publish. Brenner was scathing about life in London.⁸² Fog, a weather condition often commented on by Yiddish writers in the period, was a metaphor for the spiritual miasma that clouded Jewish life in Britain. Strikes could never work because other workers would undermine them, and the trade union leaders sold out the workers for pennies anyway. Poverty and homelessness are endemic. If art offers some way out, particularly national art, then the author Morris Rozenfeld (1862-1923) offers

⁸⁰ Philip Max Raskin, "Untitled", *Jewish World*, Yiddish Supplement, May 1, 1908, 6.
"S'vet kumen a tog, un a naye,
A gliklikhe velt vet fershteyn -
Vi groys iz a menshhayt a fraye -
Farknektet - vi orim, vi kleyn."

⁸¹ The next chapter includes more historical and biographical information about Brenner.

⁸² Joseph Chaim Brenner, "Londoner felyetonon," [London Feuilletons] *Jewish World*, Yiddish Supplement, February 7, 1908, 4.

a shining example.⁸³ But Brenner also feared too many young Jews were turning away from their Jewish identity towards an empty cosmopolitanism, and even despaired of whether you could call the Jews a nation. The absence of any optimism, or faith in artistic revival or Jewish rebirth within the diaspora, points to the fact that Brenner unlike Dov Bandes and Raskin could not see a Jewish future in Britain. To some degree Brenner's work reflected the pessimism about life in the diaspora that motivated Ahad Ha'am's philosophy. Brenner and Ha'am saw no positive role for artistic or spiritual life in the diaspora – instead they longed for that regeneration in Palestine. Brenner's critique of British Jewish life is an important correction to more triumphant accounts of Jewish possibilities in Britain.

There was less ambition on show in the *Jewish Chronicle's* supplement. Instead it focussed on exercises in mediation. An illustrative example was "A Dialogue on the "Three Weeks" Between Reb Zadok, a Russian-Jewish Rabbi, and his English wife Hannah" a didactic discussion of the different religious practices of Russian and English Jews, printed in English and Yiddish.⁸⁴ "In this column answers will be given to questions on any point of Jewish law" it explained.⁸⁵ But instead of explanations that might take a particular stance, both sides of the religious issues are presented. Reb Zadok insists on examples of religious strictness, while Hannah neutrally explains the "English" position:

⁸³ Joseph Chaim Brenner, "Moris Rozenfeld," *Jewish World*, Yiddish Supplement, May 3, 1908, 4.

⁸⁴ "A Dialogue on the "Three Weeks" Between Reb Zadok, a Russian-Jewish Rabbi, and his English wife Hannah,' *Jewish Chronicle*, Languages Supplement, July 27, 1906, 2-3.

⁸⁵ "A Dialogue on the "Three Weeks," 3.

“Are you aware, my dear,” said the rabbi anxiously, “that the three traditional weeks are fast approaching, and that it is an imperative duty to fast on the seventeenth of Tammuz and the ninth of Av?”

“The English rebitsin was amazed at the proposition. “What!” she exclaimed, “two fasts within three weeks! However much *you* may care to endure them, I and the children cannot possibly undertake so heavy a burden.”⁸⁶

This is a defense of the different religious practises of English Jews against the greater demands expected by more religious Jews – many of whom were immigrants. As the piece continues the difference in attitudes is magnified:

“In the Orach Chayim, section 571,” insisted the rabbi, “we are exhorted to fast whenever calamities befall the Jewish people. The recent revolting massacres of Jews in Russia give us cause for fasting and mourning, and we must pray for the Jews in other parts of the world to be preserved from persecution.”

“The destruction of the Temple,” said Hannah with conviction, “would scarcely appeal to our children. Living under the benign rule of England, where we enjoy liberty and equal rights, our children cannot be expected to fully realise the terrible experiences felt by the victims of a pogrom.”⁸⁷

Hannah, the rabbi’s wife, even rejects the idea of her sons attending synagogue on the Ninth of Ab:

⁸⁶ “A Dialogue on the “Three Weeks,” 2.

⁸⁷ “A Dialogue on the “Three Weeks,” 3.

As they are not proficient in the reading of Hebrew, they fear being called upon to read the prayers. If they should be compelled to attend synagogue, their imperfect knowledge of Hebrew might put them to shame. I prefer their saying Kinnoth [the elegies recited on Tisha B'Av] at home, like so many other people whose knowledge of Hebrew is not complete.⁸⁸

The article was meant to explain to immigrant Jews the reasons for the different religious practices of English Jews. Instead its complacency seems to confirm the worst views expressed in the Yiddish press about Anglo-Jewry – that Anglo-Jewry was indifferent to Jewish suffering across Eastern Europe and cared little for the education of its own children. The *Jewish Chronicle* repeated the column about a later festival.⁸⁹

The *Jewish Chronicle* used this same approach in an article authored by Joseph Finn on the contentious issue of Jewish dispersion, “Overcrowding and Dispersion.”⁹⁰ Again it was a dialogue between two stereotypical positions, “between Mr Isaacs, a West End Jew, and Naphtali, an East End grocer in a small way.” West End Jews favoured moving East End Jews out of the East End to avoid the social problems and growth of antisemitism that urban concentration was viewed as causing. But unlike in the dialogue on religious themes, Finn’s article manages to arrive at a compromise. Hannah, the wife of Naphtali, arrives and concludes:

I believe “you are both right,” as a certain Rabbi once said to two disputants. My husband is right in saying that the bitter

⁸⁸ “A Dialogue on the “Three Weeks,” 3.

⁸⁹ “A Dialogue on the 15th of Ab and the Month of Ellul,” *Jewish Chronicle*, Languages Supplement, August 31, 1906, 3.

⁹⁰ Joseph Finn, “Overcrowding and Dispersion,” *Jewish Chronicle*, Languages Supplement, August 31, 1906, 1.

necessity of gaining the means of life compels a large number of people to reside in Whitechapel. But you, Mr Isaacs, are also right in saying that some Jews are the cause of the prolongation of our exile. I happen to know many people who can easily afford to live at Manor Park, Ilford or Tottenham, yet persist in living in this district. They appear to have conceived a fondness for the unhealthy surroundings.⁹¹

The slightly long rearticulation of Isaac's points perhaps reveals the bias of the editors towards the Anglo-Jewish position of wanting dispersion. But both parties being allowed to be right shows the spirit of compromise and mediation that permeated the *Jewish Chronicle* supplement. Aside from these efforts in translation and explanation there were occasional efforts to stray into more explicitly cultural territory. The *Jewish Chronicle* published a history of Hebrew literature in English and Hebrew across the issues of the supplement.⁹² It also published a sketch piece by the Yiddish writer I D Berkowich, "Rebecca: A sketch of Russo-Jewish Life".⁹³ Sholem Aleichem railed in an introduction to it against writers of "shtimmung" (mood) who were ruining Yiddish literature in terms evocative of Rivkes' polemic in the *Jewish World*.⁹⁴

These two supplements were not just produced to entertain readers and to win greater audiences. They also held the opportunity to win readers over to different political positions.

⁹¹ Finn, "Overcrowding and Dispersion," 3.

⁹² "Notes on Hebrew Literature", *Jewish Chronicle*, Languages Supplement, June 29, 1906, 4.

⁹³ I. D. Berkowich, "Rebecca: A sketch of Russo-Jewish life," *Jewish Chronicle*, Languages Supplement, November 2, 1906, 1-3.

⁹⁴ Sholem Aleichem, "Introduction", *Jewish Chronicle*, Yiddish Supplement, November 2, 1906, 1-2.

d) A Political Encounter

A Yiddish supplement offered a valuable political opportunity. It could be a useful opportunity to criticise Zionism and to win its readers over to the growing Territorialist movement. Yiddish newspapers such as the *Ekspres* were extremely pro-Zionist and anti-Territorialist. The *Jewish World* had ambitious political plans for its Yiddish supplement. Jacob Hodess, who became its editor and was a keen Zionist himself, affirmed that the editors did not insist that he publish anti-Zionist or pro-Territorialist content.⁹⁵ But regardless of whether the supplement was produced under editorial pressure, it expressed views that were fiercely anti-Zionist and pro-Territorialist.⁹⁶ One key arm of this was the figure of Israel Zangwill. A hero in the immigrant community, he was also the leader of the Territorialists, who favoured an intermediary territorial solution over the uncertainty of an exclusive Palestine-focussed approach to an autonomous Jewish homeland. Zangwill may well have interceded with Anglo-Jewish leaders to suggest that they create the supplement in the first place.⁹⁷ He introduced the supplement with a letter, published in English in the English part of the paper and in Yiddish at the back, and an obvious effort was made to try and bring those who enjoyed his writing, but were Zionists, along with his new Territorialist

⁹⁵ Hodess, "Geshikhte fun der english-yidisher prese," 40-71.

⁹⁶ For criticism of the Zionists, see "Fun vokh tsu vokh" [From week to week], *Jewish World*, Yiddish Supplement, July 27 1906, 1, "Fun vokh tsu vokh," [From week to week] *Jewish World*, Yiddish Supplement, September 7 1906, 1, "Mantshester notitsn" [Manchester notices], *Jewish World*, Yiddish Supplement, December 21, 1906, 4, "Fun vokh tsu vokh" [From week to week], *Jewish World*, Yiddish Supplement, February 7 1908, 1. For praise of the Territorialists: "Mantshester notitsn" [Manchester notices], *Jewish World*, Yiddish Supplement, December 7, 1906, 4, "Fun vokh tsu vokh" [From week to week], *Jewish World*, Yiddish Supplement, January 4 1907, 1, "Fun vokh tsu vokh" [From week to week], *Jewish World*, Yiddish Supplement, March 6 1908, 1.

⁹⁷ Hodess, "Geshikhte fun der english-yidisher prese," 66.

politics. Whereas the *World* supplement was repeatedly critical of the failures of the Zionists to actually accomplish anything, it heaped praise on Zangwill and the schemes that the Territorialists were suggesting. In particular there was strong advocacy in its pages for the Galveston Plan - which aimed to regulate international emigration by diverting immigrants to Texas (while still pursuing the eventual establishment of an autonomous Jewish state).⁹⁸ The Galveston Plan was a great success for Zangwill, but did not help with the Territorialists' aim of procuring a "territory upon an autonomous basis for those Jews who cannot or will not remain in the land in which they at present live."⁹⁹

A central strength of the new supplement was the quality of the writers that it could draw upon. This was how it advertised itself, and much of its subsequent reputation was due to this. Given the turbulent situation for Eastern European Jewry, it is no surprise that Russian politics were key to its coverage. Dovid Frishman (1859-1922) was in many senses the perfect correspondent. Already possessing an international reputation, the *Jewish World* could sing his praises to try and lure in readers. "DAVID FRISCHMANN - The famous Yiddish Feuilletonist, and translator of "Daniel Deronda," will write a fortnightly causerie" went the advert that preceded the first issue.¹⁰⁰ After the Russo-Japanese war and the failed 1905 revolution, Frishman gave over his column to heart rending accounts of the failure of democracy and the *duma*, the rise of anti-Semitism, and the increasing

⁹⁸ "Fun vokh tsu vokh," [From week to week], *Jewish World*, Yiddish Supplement, January 4 1907, 1.

⁹⁹ Vital, *Zionism: Formative Years*, 437.

¹⁰⁰ "Advert", *Jewish World*, July 6, 1906, 170.

violence against Jews. The place and prominence of this column gestures to the transnational nature of the politics of the immigrant Jews: they needed and wanted information about Jewish life in Russia.

In Britain the situation, though far from as serious as in Russia, was also difficult. As has been described in chapter 2 of this dissertation, British Yiddish journalists were quick to see parallels between growing anti-Semitism abroad and the rise of anti-Alien sentiment in Britain. The Yiddish Supplement of the *Jewish World*, which began to be published after the introduction of the Aliens Act, focussed on criticism of the implementation of the act, which was at once inconsistent and often too harsh.¹⁰¹ Some immigrants were being let in with no money to their name and others were being turned down when they had the necessary five pounds. In particular it was disappointed in the failure of the Board of Guardians to campaign against excessive strictness in its application.¹⁰² Eventually the Board of Guardians did begin to act on this issue - but too slowly for the editors of *Di Yidische Velt*.¹⁰³ In the very last issue of the supplement the editor hoped that Winston Churchill, up to that moment a stalwart of defending Jewish aliens, would not forget the community that helped elect him (against a backdrop of hardening liberal opinion, with leader Gladstone no longer seeming so sympathetic about the issue).¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ "Fun vokh tsu vokh" [From week to week], *Jewish World*, Yiddish Supplement, September 7, 1906, 1.

¹⁰² "Fun vokh tsu vokh" [From week to week], *Jewish World*, Yiddish Supplement, August 3, 1906, 1.

¹⁰³ "Fun vokh tsu vokh" [From week to week], *Jewish World*, Yiddish Supplement, November 1, 1907, 1.

¹⁰⁴ "Fun vokh tsu vokh" [From week to week], *Jewish World*, Yiddish Supplement, June 2 (or May 15) 1908, 1.

Labour news was also a crucial part of its coverage. The *Jewish World* supplement initially supported the Jewish unions with some hesitancy, even appearing to support the master (i.e. the business owner and not the worker) in a dispute the Bakers' Union was involved in (or at least uncritically printing the master's accusations).¹⁰⁵ But eventually its coverage struck a more pro-worker tone: lamenting the loss of benefits to workers when the Cabinet Maker's Union lost a strike in Liverpool.¹⁰⁶ In Liverpool, as in later coverage, the most vexed question was whether the Jewish unions should only work with the English unions or amalgamate with them completely.¹⁰⁷ In very unusual fashion, given the general complete avoidance of the subject of women workers, *Di Yidishe Velt* also devoted an article to the issues of exclusion and derision that Jewish women's trade unionists and Poale Tzionists were having to contend with.¹⁰⁸

The *Jewish World* Yiddish supplement tried to convince its readers that Territorialism was the most viable expression of the Jewish nationalism that had rallied the political enthusiasms of many Jewish immigrants. It kept its readers abreast of the troubles in Russia – proving that there was a need for a territorial solution. This message was further emphasised by the anti Aliens agitation which suggested that immigration to Britain was also not a viable

¹⁰⁵ "Di yidishe arbeter velt" [The jewish workers world], *Jewish World*, Yiddish Supplement, December 7, 1906, 3.

¹⁰⁶ "Di yidishe arbeter velt" [The jewish workers world], *Jewish World*, Yiddish Supplement, December 21, 1906, 4.

¹⁰⁷ "Di yidishe arbeter velt," December 21, 1906, 4. and "Di yidishe arbeter velt" [The jewish workers world], *Jewish World*, Yiddish Supplement, December 28, 1906, 4.

¹⁰⁸ "Di yidishe arbeter velt" [The jewish workers world], *Jewish World*, Yiddish Supplement, January 4, 1907, 4.

solution for Jewish emigration. But given the amount of energy that was expended by the immigrant Jewish community on trade union activity, it was inevitable too that this would also receive coverage, even if it was not the focus of the whole supplement. This points to the limits of the influence of the newspaper: although it had its own aims, coming from its owners and editors who were in a very different position to immigrant Jewry, it also had to compromise in order to avoid irrelevance. It advanced Territorialism but also had to cover Jewish trade-unionism. It is this process of mediation that typified the Anglo-Yiddish sphere. More forceful communal techniques or coercion, such as stipulating how education should be carried out or under what conditions charity should be received, were now accompanied by attempts to win over immigrant hearts and minds in their own language. Jewish nationalism in particular, had been accepted by established Jewry as a necessary part of their political approach. In a survey of the year 5667 (1907), where most news was bleak, the *Yidische Velt* could write that “Some rays of light shine out from the deep pain of the Jews, the two national movements.”¹⁰⁹ The Yiddish Supplement proves that Anglo-Jewry itself entered the immigrant sphere for its older constituents to try and win political influence over the course of Jewish nationalism, but for its younger readers because they themselves increasingly sought connections to other parts of the amorphous Jewish nation, at least in so far as it was interconnected through Yiddish and Eastern European culture.

¹⁰⁹ “5667 - an iberblik iber dem avekgeyenden yor” [5667 – an overview of the past year], *Jewish World*, Yiddish Supplement, September 6, 1907, 2. “eynike shtraln fun hofnung shaynen aroys fun dem tifn yudenshmerts, di tsvey natsyonale bavegunen.”

The *Jewish Chronicle* supplement was less militant in its support of Territorialism, instead advocating for compromise between the Zionist and Territorialist camps:

The unpleasant impression which acrimonious controversies leave on the mind is the direct cause of pessimism and indifference, apart from the wrangles themselves representing energy wasted. A great many people find much good in the programmes of both Zionism and Territorialism.¹¹⁰

It was less neutral on the subject of unions and labour activism. Discussing the Tailor's Strike, the *Jewish Chronicle* began by professing that it was not "in the least desiring to take sides in this grievous dispute just ended".¹¹¹ In fact the piece argues strongly for the pointlessness of the strike, recommending arbitration instead and implicitly undermining the actions of the unions. One of the causes of the general strike, and which aggravated the dispute leading workers away from a more sensible course of resolution, was in the eyes of the *Jewish Chronicle* a sustained campaign of "agitation... carried on in a portion of the Yiddish press, for a period of nine months." The *Jewish Chronicle*, now publishing in Yiddish, was able to attack its Yiddish press rivals in their own language – and it could point to the negligible success of the strike to argue for arbitration. In doing so it was trying to argue against the divisions of class and language that many of the polemicists within the Yiddish press advanced – and to win immigrant Jewish readers over to its vision of consensus. The *Jewish Chronicle* also blamed the

¹¹⁰ "Concerted Action", *Jewish Chronicle*, Languages Supplement, June 29, 1906, 2.

¹¹¹ "The Tailor's Strike", *Jewish Chronicle*, Languages Supplement, June 29, 1906, 2-3.

“Freethinkers” in a warning article before Yom Kippur. Condemning the annual conflicts between religious and non-religious Jews on Yom Kippur that had taken place the two years previously– the *Jewish Chronicle* clearly sided with “pious Jews who respect the Jewish faith” against the Jewish socialists.¹¹² The languages supplement was an opportunity for the *Jewish Chronicle* to settle scores with its Yiddish language political and press opponents.

These supplements represent something far more complicated than an arm of an Anglicising enterprise. Instead they show the limits of anglicisation at this moment in the history of transnational Jewish nationalisms, and the necessity, even for the bastions of English Jewish culture, of using Yiddish. Yiddish became the conduit for old and new generations of British Jews who wanted to participate in a newly constituted Yiddish public sphere in which both immigrant and Anglo-Jew participated. These supplements did not last for a long time. But they show anglicisation was meaningfully interrupted. The *Jewish Chronicle* and the *Jewish World* would devote much more space to immigrant issues afterwards.¹¹³

Conclusion

Moderation is essential when concluding about the impact of the *Jewish Chronicle* and *Jewish World* Yiddish supplements. A supplement is not a whole newspaper, and within two years they had both been discontinued. If

¹¹² “Yom Kipur” [Yom Kippur], *Jewish Chronicle*, Languages Supplement, September 28, 3.

¹¹³ Cesarani, *Jewish Chronicle*, 108.

the supplements point to the limits of seeing the period through the lens of anglicisation, their quick demise does not push this point too strongly. Even if the two newspapers published these supplements, it is far from certain that their English language readers did not still harbour prejudicial or negative views about Yiddish and its speakers. The influence on the Yiddish reading public is even harder to ascertain: certainly the Yiddish press continued in great strength. The Yiddish press could boast a much broader array of publications than the Anglo-Jewish English language press until the 1920s. Their short runs suggest that they probably did not win over substantial numbers of readers.

And yet the supplements in their political and cultural intervention, illuminate a part of British Jewish history that it has always been hard to uncover. Often a central premise for study of this period is that British Jewry was made of two separate groups, Anglo-Jews and immigrant Eastern European Jews. The exploration of this supplement shows the depth and challenge of the overlap. And beyond interest, and mutual curiosity, there was a power dynamic, a question as to whether reciprocity was possible. Anglo-Jewry might offer capital, celebrities such as Israel Zangwill, but immigrant Jewry now had its own celebrities and famous writers, or at least contact with them, and a growing political constituency and organisation that was in demand. Close analysis of these supplements show not just that these different rivals competed shoulder to shoulder for influence, but that there was also a growing third constituency, of Yiddish literate intellectuals with English upbringings, or at the very least writing in England, who were able to see

Jewish unity in Bournemouth, and write songs to Zion in London and Leeds. And if the supplements did not last for a long time, many of their most salient elements, which they had inherited from the earlier British Yiddish press - their concern with immigrant welfare, their advocacy for a Jewish national politics, were to be continued by the new Jewish Journalism, by editors such as Leopold Greenberg, well after 1908.

There is, however, a broader possible point to be made about this period that goes beyond the limits of a strictly Jewish history. Many understandings of immigration history view the culture and politics of the immigrants as succumbing eventually to hegemonic English (and implicitly, for it often does not need to be said, English language) culture. In fact, viewed in the light of strong transnational networks, and the freedoms British political culture may have fleetingly offered, something resembling the opposite might be true. When there was an intensification of hostility, xenophobia, and the removal of earlier freedoms, immigrant culture nonetheless flourished more intensively than any rival process of assimilation or acculturation, at least temporarily. The rhetoric of anti-immigration revealed the difficulties of assimilation. In many respects it is not that Anglo-Jewish history is exceptional, where there was a period of relatively safe emancipation followed by the gradual disappearance of antisemitism. Rather in the period 1897-1908, British Jewish history followed an accelerated process of the developments which would mark out the rest of Jewish history in the century: a flourishing of Jewish nationalism coinciding with, or rather partially responding to, a rise in anti-Semitism and a trial, through the Aliens

Commission and Bill, of Jews in Britain, culminating in the introduction of discriminatory (if not completely exclusionary) laws. The novelty of the multilingual *Jewish Chronicle* and *Jewish World* in this period is that it is one intriguing satellite orbiting the planets of the contrarian and complex developments taking place in the British Jewish community during this period; studying their trajectory enables us to reconsider the gravity fields of immigrant and Anglo-Jewry.

Chapter 5: British Jewry's New Literary Culture: Yiddish Poems, novels and plays at the intersection of politics and aesthetics

In the meantime brother life is on tenterhooks,
There are naked poor people, without [even] soles [of shoes]
and without backs [of shoes],
It is the rich who eat the buns
And as for us, only through concentration, emancipation,
Conspiracy and exploitation,
Through literature and life,
Will we be able to weave,
A magnificent future, a new life,
With much singing and songs,
Be greeted dear brother!¹

This stanza from the poem “Tsum nakht” (To the Night), presented within Max and Yudi Milton’s play *Der Khaos* (1909), gestures with a flourish towards the hopes and dreams that some Eastern European Jewish immigrants invested in literature when they arrived in Britain. Literature, almost as much as life itself, would be able to weave “a magnificent future, a new life”. But this poem also shows some of the complexity and ambiguity

¹ Yudi Milton and Maks Milton, *Der Khaos oder di letste idische hofnung* [The chaos or the last jewish hope] (London: The London Hebrew Publishing Company, 1909), 59.

“Dervayl bruder iz a lebn oyf shpilkes,
Kaptsonim nakete, on zoyln on tilkes
S’zaynen di raykhe vos fresn di bulkes,
Un mir, nor durkh kontsentratsye, emantsipatsye,
Konspiratsye un eksploytatsye,
Durkh literatur un leben,
Veln mir oys vebn,
A herlikhe zukunft, a naves leben,
Mit fil gezang un lieder
Zay gegrist liber bruder.”

that confronts an investigation into Yiddish literature in Britain. The poem is itself a cheerful parody of the poet's naïve expectations about literature. The target may well have been the rival British Yiddish poet Phillip Max Raskin – discussed later in this chapter. Later in the same scene, this and other poems by the play's satirised poet Papyel will be dismissed by the play's hero as “blather.”² When reading the nascent Yiddish literature of Britain between 1896 and 1910 we also have to ask: who is making fun of whom and why? What interests, political and aesthetic, were at stake in Yiddish British literary production at the beginning of the 20th Century? These concerns were often very different to those we might expect: they certainly diverge from and complicate concerns around anglicisation and antisemitism.

Eastern European Jewish immigrants who migrated to Britain brought with them a diverse and newly fashioned set of cultural expectations and practices. The development of the modern Yiddish press in Eastern Europe was accompanied by the development of a modern Yiddish literature which was first printed within its pages.³ This was not limited to the Yiddish press: key Jewish intellectual and artistic figures such as Heinrich Heine (1797-1856) and Theodore Herzl (1860-1904) had been journalists as well as politicians and artists. The first modern Yiddish newspaper *Kol Mevasser* (The Herald Voice, 1862), was the venue for the first Yiddish novel of the “grandfather of Yiddish literature” S J Abramovitch, who wrote under the pseudonym Mendele Moykher Sforim, and also for the poems of Abraham

² Milton, *Der Khaos*, 64. The Yiddish term “geshraybekhts” is used where the suffix “ekhts” is pejorative.

³ David Fishman, *The Rise of Modern Yiddish Culture* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005), 7-8.

Goldfaden, "the father of Yiddish theatre".⁴ *Kol Mevaser* introduced its readers to serialised Yiddish novels and to the "feuilleton": a section of the newspaper reserved for sketches, poems and other creative literary undertakings. Keen readers would often purchase back issues to have access to the literary content in the newspaper - to some extent the most popular part.⁵ Yiddish fiction, poems and plays within Yiddish newspapers would remain a crucial part of the Yiddish press as it grew. The biweekly *Der Yud*, (The Jew, Cracow/Warsaw, 1899-1903) and later the first Yiddish daily *Der Fraynd* (The Friend; St Petersburg/Warsaw, 1903-1913) whose publication was a landmark stage in the growth of mass media in Eastern Europe, devoted significant space to Yiddish *belles-lettres* - in America the same was true.⁶ The press was where writers received their education in writing, but also their spiritual home.⁷ The link between the growth of the Yiddish press and the growth of Yiddish literature was not always directly in tandem - Jews within the Russian empire could flock to local book peddlers and bookshops to obtain Yiddish novels but often the newspapers faced Tsarist bans (the first daily Yiddish newspaper to legally be published in the Russian empire, was *Der Fraynd* in 1903).⁸ This meant that the growth of Yiddish literary culture from the 1860s to the beginning of the 20th Century outpaced the progress of other institutions of modern Yiddish culture in

⁴ Fishman, *Modern Yiddish Culture*, 7.

⁵ Nathan Cohen, "The Yiddish Press and Yiddish Literature: A Fertile but Complex Relationship," *Modern Judaism* 28, no. 2 (2008): 150, 155. This claim is difficult to substantiate, but Cohen quotes memoiristic writing by Reyzn and Isaac Bashevis Singer which support the claim.

⁶ Cohen, "The Yiddish Press and Yiddish Literature", 151-2, 157-162. Fishman, *Modern Yiddish Culture*, 12.

⁷ Shmuel Niger, "Vegn der alter un der nayer yidisher literatur" [On old and new yiddish literature] in *Bleter geshikhte fun der yidisher literatur* [Pages about the history of yiddish literature], (New York: Congress for Jewish Culture, 1959), 300-301.

⁸ Fishman, *Modern Yiddish Culture*, 10, 18-19, Shatsky, "Prese bay yidn", 226-228.

Eastern Europe, such as the press itself, the theatre, and Yiddish schooling.⁹ Within the newspapers themselves writers often wanted the publicity and payment that writing for the Yiddish press provided, but not the editorial constraints that writing for a mass audience might mean, or that the editors might demand.¹⁰ Editors may have wanted to educate their readers, or persuade them politically, more than to entertain them. The close relationship between the press and modern literature could be mutually rewarding but also led to difference and resentments. "All the newspapers, big and small, swallow the energy of our best word artists (which we do not have to spare). So there remains no possibility for serious and refined literary creation" wrote the Yiddish pedagogue Yisroel Rubin (1890-1954) in 1925.¹¹

Historians have characterised the development of Yiddish literature within the Yiddish press internationally as uneven. The Eastern European Yiddish press, is characterised by historian Nathan Cohen as pursuing the spread of knowledge from Alexander Tsederboym's (1816-1893) *Kol-mevaser* onwards, while the Yiddish press in the US "was established first and foremost as a business for profit."¹² Cohen argues that this meant sensational and melodramatic Yiddish fiction was published there earlier. This kind of serialised fiction was to remain enduringly popular, in the US and indeed everywhere: in 1932 the Yiddish editor Nakhmen Mayzil (1887-1966)

⁹ Fishman, 18.

¹⁰ Fishman, 7.

¹¹ Yisroel Rubin, "Tsifern-renesans - gaystiker renesans," [Numbers renaissance - Spiritual renaissance] *Literarische Bleter*, February 6, 1925, 1. "Di ale bleter un bletlakh shingn ayn azoy fil shafungs-energye fun unzere beste vort-kinstler (mir hobn zey dokh nisht iberiks-fil). Az es farblaybt nisht keyn meglekhkayt far ernster un gelayterter literarisher shafung."

¹² Cohen, "The Yiddish Press and Yiddish Literature," 157.

demonstrated that annually in the Yiddish daily press internationally more than 300 such novels were serialised.¹³ In Britain the very first sustained Yiddish newspaper, *Der Poylisher Yidl* (The Little Polish Jew, 1884) was written for socialist agitation purposes and not for profit, but nor were the “commercial” Yiddish newspapers unconcerned with conveying a political position.¹⁴ Yiddish literature within the Yiddish press in Britain, as this chapter will go on to argue, was both sensationalist and didactic, lowbrow and highbrow - and sometimes both at the same time - it also operated across the dichotomy of profit/knowledge dissemination that Cohen outlines.

In Britain, the Yiddish press only started to blossom to become a mixture of commercial and political publications after 1896. But even before this, when the Yiddish press was predominantly confined to socialist propagandistic activities, Yiddish literature played an important role. Numerous translations of world literature into Yiddish were published, alongside pamphlets such as Isaac Stone’s (1855-1916) “A Brief Account of the Life of a London Tailor” and Nathan Berlin’s “The True World or a Voyage in Hell for the General Welfare.”¹⁵ This chapter will investigate the period that followed what Leonard Prager has labelled “The Beginnings of Yiddish Fiction in England” - the period 1896-1910. Existing scholarship has at times underplayed both the amount and the quality of Yiddish literature written in England in this period. Gartner, for example, characterises Yiddish literature as declining

¹³ Cohen, “The Yiddish Press and Yiddish Literature”, 164.

¹⁴ See earlier in the dissertation for the history of the *Idisher Ekspres*.

¹⁵ Leonard Prager, “The Beginnings of Yiddish Fiction in England”, in *Studies in the Cultural Life of the Jews in England*, ed. Dov Noy and Issachar Ben-Ami (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1975), 245-310.

after the socialist leadership of the radicals left Britain in the 1890s, and after this consisting mainly of translation which “did not wish to make of Yiddish itself anything more than a vehicle”.¹⁶

This is a misrepresentation of the abundant Yiddish literary source material. In fact, the dynamism of this literary production confirms existing scholarship that has worked to displace a narrative where immigrant traditionalism meets western modernity.¹⁷ Instead these works are immigrant and modern: influenced by new cultural developments outside of Britain. The diversity and density of cultural output could even lead to a conclusion that far from all currents of immigrant life (be they connected to processes of integration or modernisation) being defined by an “attenuation of Jewish identity” there was in fact an acceleration in the other direction. Culture was just one part of this question - the political and sub- and countercultural institutions mentioned earlier in this dissertation are another. Attempts to reconstruct the world of British Yiddish fiction also work to undermine monolithic and chauvinistic claims about “the intellectual poverty of Anglo Jewry” or a “lack of brilliance” of Jewish culture in Britain, as well as an overreliance on the work of Israel Zangwill as a culture depiction of this period.¹⁸ English language literature is

¹⁶ Gartner, *Jewish Immigrant in England*, 255-7. Gartner concluded that “Like serious literature in Hebrew, that in Yiddish was also at sea in London”.

¹⁷ Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 347-352.

¹⁸ For the overestimation of Zangwill as literary and historical chronicler see, Lipman, *Social History*, 133. Lipman’s summary of the colossal importance of Zangwill - which inadvertently demonstrates the overdependence on his work as historical source - is illuminating: “For a vivid picture of the atmosphere of the social scene in East London, the reader must, of course, be referred, above all, to Zangwill. To attempt to compete with such a description would be useless and presumptuous. All that can be offered is a little of the statistical and chronological background.”

necessarily only one part of British Jewish creativity in this period - and its presentation of British Jewish life has perhaps been overly influential.¹⁹

Culture within the Jewish press in Britain overall has not been viewed as an important part of the community's self-fashioning in the period of mass immigration. In fact the figure of Israel Zangwill, as both writer and Jewish national politician, has at times been the beginning and end of this dialogue. This was true to some extent even at the time - at least from the Anglo-Jewish and English language perspective. The *Glasgow Evening News* wrote at the time that the "literary horizon of the *Jewish Chronicle* is rather limited, being bounded, as it were, by the Zangwills".²⁰ Zangwill has been described as "the first writer in England to represent the Jewish immigrants in fiction" which of course is to be read as "the first writer in English in England to represent the Jewish immigrants in fiction."²¹ Israel Zangwill's work, particularly the work on Britain's Jewish community, as it was written in the English language, needed at once to balance verisimilitude but also

¹⁹ For the sweeping claims about Anglo-Jewish intellectual mediocrity there is Todd Endelmann, *The Jews of Britain, 1656 to 2000* (London: University of California Press, 2002), 263-269, and Todd Endelmann, "Anglo-Jewish Historiography and the Jewish Historiographical Mainstream," *Jewish Culture and History*, 12, no. 1&2, (Summer/Autumn 2010): 39. Endelmann suggests that one reason Anglo-Jewish history has been skewed towards social and economic history is its lack of arresting intellectual and cultural figures, before concluding that in fact historians of other Jewish communities have overvalued these elements. "To be sure, cynics might say that what Anglo-Jewish historians have done is to make a virtue out of a necessity, given the relative impoverishment of Anglo-Jewish intellectual life and the relative calm of Anglo-Jewish political circumstances. But I would argue, on the contrary, that historians of other communities have overvalued the power and reach of formal politics, intellectual creativity and ideological ferment, assigning them a weight in human affairs that they do not warrant."

²⁰ Cesarani, *The Jewish Chronicle*, 94.

²¹ These statements are proof of the dominance of English language accounts of culture in this period - especially strange when Yiddish fiction treating the immigrant subject would seem to precede English language accounts. For the claim about Zangwill's see Bryan Cheyette, "Anglo-Jewish Fiction, 1875-1905," in *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry*, ed. David Cesarani (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 107. Two examples of earlier Yiddish fiction treating immigrant Jewish life in Britain are helpfully translated in Prager, "The Beginnings of Yiddish Fiction in England," 245-310.

consideration of non-Jewish perception of Jews.²² The Yiddish press and the fiction within it, while acutely aware of English writers such as Zangwill, had no expectation that non-Jews would read their writing in Yiddish. This, combined with the artistic and cultural connections with Eastern Europe, meant that Yiddish British writing in the period, offers important and different perspectives on the Jewish immigrant experience.

This chapter will first give a survey of the role of cultural offerings of the Yiddish press in the period 1896-1910, before analysing a selection of individual works across different genres and political positions written in or just after this period. These works represent a fusion of Eastern European Jewish literary norms with established Anglo-Jewish literary practices and traditions, they also depict the experience of immigration and the new Jewish politics. In some cases the Yiddish press is not just the vehicle for these pieces of writing, but also their subject. They build on the important literary and cultural production that preceded this period in Britain: the literary work of Morris Winchevsky (1856-1932), Isaac Stone (1855-1916) and the work of other predominantly socialist or anarchist radicals.²³ These pieces of British Yiddish writing show the sophistication and intellectual ambition of parts of immigrant Jewry in Britain, but their narratives also comment on the lack of viability of Britain as a modern Jewish centre. In doing so they evidence an openness to exchange across the immigrant/non-immigrant divide and the

²² The ideological underpinning of Zangwill's Jewish fiction and its role within English language Jewish fiction is explored in depth in Cheyette, "Anglo-Jewish Fiction," 97-111.

²³ The fullest treatment of Winchevsky's time in England is in Lachs, *Whitechapel Noise*, 91-132. For a more general and less explicitly cultural overview there is Fishman, *East End Jewish Radicals*.

dialogue with international Yiddish culture that recent research on non-literary forms of Yiddish or Eastern European Jewish culture in this period have also demonstrated.²⁴ This British Yiddish literature, itself an English literature spatially - but never considered as such in traditional accounts of English literature, details and critiques the transformation that British immigrant Jewry underwent during this period. It also helps to define the role Britain's Yiddish-speaking community played in a broader transnational cultural and political sphere.

This dissertation has thus far focussed on the editorials and news coverage of the Yiddish press. There the editors and writers of these newspapers exerted a role in providing information but also in attempting to steer the politics of the readers. These editorials only formed one facet of the diverse contents of these newspapers. Every British Yiddish newspaper also dedicated important space to different expressions of literary creativity. In a press that was ideologically divided, immense attention and care was given to literary writing, poetry and even to drama. This written production marks itself out by a different emphasis in its function: these pieces of work were meant to entertain as much as serving as a vehicle for political interventions. The Yiddish writers in Britain in this period were adapting Eastern European and Western literary norms to become the vehicles for accounts of immigrant life and to advocate for new politics. Much of this work is deeply inspired by past precedents - both in the immediate history of Yiddish writing in Britain

²⁴ Tobias Metzler demonstrates this with reference to Jewish visual culture and the 1906 exhibition. Vivi Lachs work on Yiddish folk song and music halls also shows the hybridity and interchange of British Jewish culture during this period. Metzler, *Tales of Three Cities*, 36-149 and Lachs, *Whitechapel Noise*.

but also from European and Eastern European Jewish writers. But it is not simply derivative. The result is important both as a historical source for syntheses of immigrant Jewish life - all the writers whose work is considered here, were themselves Eastern European Jewish immigrants - but also as a documentation of the evolution of writers who would go on to play important roles in other Yiddish-language centres.

British Yiddish literary culture evolved considerably between 1896 and 1910. This period marked the flourishing of what has been characterised earlier in this dissertation as a more mainstream and diverse Yiddish press: i.e. a press that had moved beyond predominantly anarchist or socialist short lived periodicals and had become broader in political and cultural outlook. As we might expect from the history of these newspapers themselves, their literary outputs varied in line with their own growth. As they grew and started to publish daily editions there was a greater demand and attention given over to culture. This was also part of what they could advertise to draw readers in: this development can be characterised by a growing adoption of forms that were becoming increasingly popular in Eastern Europe. This might have been expected from the beginning. But as the previous chapter on the *Idisher Ekspres* showed, there was a relative autonomy and isolation in its early development. Established by non-Jews, the progression of its cultural offering was initially relatively estranged from the well-known writers and proponents of Yiddish literary culture in Eastern Europe. The surprising conclusion from a survey of the early period of the *Idisher Ekspres* is the

degree to which the work of the famous writers in Yiddish is not present - this was to come later - even if they are written about.

The *Idisher Ekspres* instead offered a combination of serialised writing from local authors, such as Hyman Polski or M Ophaym (the former's work *Tsharli der unterpreser* will be analysed in depth later in the chapter).²⁵ Works composed by these writers, based in Britain, offered either sensational titles or themes that appealed to the immediate interests of recent immigrants to Britain. Polski was the author among other works of *Di Shtifmutter* (The Stepmother, 1897), *Miriam; oder eyn tokhters harts* (Miriam, or a daughter's heart, 1897), *Yudele; oder der originele tsionist* (Yudele; or the original Zionist, 1899), Ophaym authored *Der Vide fun a Meshumed* (The Confession of an Apostate, 1899). Their stories would be serialised over lengthy periods. Other work was translated from Russian, such as *Der Poimenik* (Young Jew forcibly drafted into the tsarist army, 1902), or loosely adapted from English such as *A mayse fun snobs (nit fun thakerey)* (A story about Snobs (not by Thackeray), 1899). This kind of work was proximate to the Yiddish phenomenon of *Shund* (lowbrow and/or populist literature).²⁶

Accompanying this local British Yiddish production was work translated from

²⁵ There is a very small entry on M Ophaym in Prager, *Yiddish Culture in Britain*, 497. There is no more information available about Ophaym and his work on the Glasgow Yiddish newspaper *Di Idische Tsaytung*. Jacob Hodess described him as a talented novelist and a colleague at the *Idisher Ekspres*. Hodess, "Tsu der geshikhte fun der english-yidisher prese," 69.

²⁶ Recent scholarship has argued for a move to reconsider *Shund*. *Shund* has been defined by literary critic Saul Zaritt as "a pejorative term that refers to Yiddish entertainment culture, most prominently the serialized pulp novel (*shund-roman*) and popular theatre (*shund-teater*)." For Zaritt, the study of *Shund* promises an approach to Jewish literature which embraces hybridity "not as defect but as its salient and critical feature." Saul Zaritt, "A *taytsh* Manifesto: Yiddish, Translation and the Making of Modern Jewish Culture", publication forthcoming (2021).

prominent European writers with a manifestly Eastern European Jewish theme. Karl Emil Franzos, for example, a German language writer whose short stories dealt in fetishistic fashion with traditional Eastern European Jewry, was translated into Yiddish.²⁷ In printing Franzos the *Idisher Ekspres* was following the example of the Yiddish newspaper *Yidishes folks-blatt* (The Jewish Folkspaper, St Petersburg, 1881-1890) - Avrom Reyzn (1876-1953), the celebrated Yiddish poet, writer and editor, wrote that getting hold of a chapter of Franzos' writing within it gave him and his father "great joy."²⁸ The irony of these choices is that the newspaper editors who chose these authors were giving their readers a stereotypical version of the worlds that they had just chosen to leave. It was into this void that local cultural production could flourish. As time went by more English language authors began to be included, such as George Eliot, but this work was still predominantly published on the grounds of it having a Jewish theme, in Eliot's case it was *Daniel Deronda* that was translated into Yiddish.²⁹

And yet as time progressed two key elements began to change. The first was a greater interest and exposure to the work of prominent Eastern European Jewish writers. Sholem Aleichem, for example, began to be serialised in the *Ekspres* in 1903.³⁰ Later the new newspaper, *Der Idisher Zhurnal*, would

²⁷ Karl Emil Franzos, "Shaylok fun barnove" [Shylock of Barnova], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, November 20 1896, 2 and Karl Emil Franzos, 'Esterke di malke' [Esther the queen], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, January 1 1897, 2,

²⁸ Cohen, "The Yiddish Press and Yiddish Literature", 151.

²⁹ George Eliot, "Daniel Dironda," *Der Idisher Ekspres*, February 3 1899, 2.

³⁰ Sholem Aleichem, "Keyn Amerike: tsvey letste briv fun menakhem mendl" [To America: two last letters from Menakhem Mendl], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, July 1, 1903, 2.

triumphantly announce on its front page that Sholem Aleichem was now working for them.

We are delighted to announced to our readers that we have succeeded in getting the permanent collaboration of the greatest Yiddish writer "Sholem Aleichem" for our newspaper, whose feuilletons will from this June appear regularly in the "Journal"...Mr Sholem Aleichem writes exclusively for the *Idisher Zhurnal* and for no other Yiddish newspaper in England.³¹

The only writer who could rival Sholem Aleichem in prestige was England's own Israel Zangwill. The *Idisher Ekspres* had been reporting on Zangwill from its very beginnings - rapturously reporting speeches he gave in Manchester and Leeds.³² Later the *Ekspres* would herald with great excitement the beginning of a serialisation of *The King of the Schnorrers* translated into Yiddish in its pages.³³ But the *Idisher Zhurnal*, not content with the considerable coup of signing Sholem Aleichem as an exclusive writer, also advertised to its readers that it was printing the first ever translation of Zangwill's *The Children of the Ghetto* in Yiddish: "A present for the readers!!! Of the *Idisher Zhurnal*...*The Children of the Ghetto* is the book which made Mr Zangwill his great reputation."³⁴ Sholem Aleichem and Zangwill

³¹ ""Sholem Aleichem" in "Idisher Zhurnal", *Der Idisher Zhurnal*, May 29, 1905, 1. "Unz freyt tsu meldn unzere lezer, dos unz hot gelungen tsu krign di shtendike mitwirkung fun grestrn yidishn shriftshteler "sholem aleichem" far unzere tsaytung, vemens felyetonen veln fun dizen dzhun on ershaynen shtendik in "zhurnal"...herr Sholem Aleichem shraybt oysshislekh farn "yidishn zhurnal" un far keyn andere yidishe tsaytung in england."

³² "Zangvil in Lidz" [Zangwill in Leeds] *Der Idisher Ekspres*, November 20 1896, 4 and "Zangvil in Mantshester" [Zangwill in Manchester] *Der Idisher Ekspres*, December 25 1896, 6.

³³ "Notits" (Notice) *Der Idisher Ekspres*, February 5 1897, 4.

³⁴ "A prezent far di lezer" [A present for the readers], *Der Idisher Zhurnal*, July 2, 1905, 2. "Tsum ershtn mol in yidisher ibersetzung...di *Children of the Ghetto* iz der bukh vos hot Mr. Zangvil'n zayn groysn nomen gemakht..."

represented the pinnacle of Yiddish literature for the editors of the British Yiddish press: advertising them was a way to win readers.

Yiddish literature also went beyond the pages of the press. There were general publishers who released different literary texts. Most well known is perhaps the anarchist and socialist publisher Israel Naroditsky (1874-1942), whose press published the *Arbayter Fraynd* and many other Hebrew and Yiddish texts.³⁵ Less well known, but perhaps equally influential, if more concerned with Hebrew literature, was the Manchester publisher and Hebrew poet and translator Joseph Massel (Yoysef Mazel, 1850-1912).³⁶ There were many other publishers based predominantly in the East End of London but also in Leeds and Manchester.³⁷ Naroditsky and Massel are examples of an intellectual and entrepreneurial class that ran printing businesses but also used the profits from those activities to pay for printed work by a poorer, and more recently arrived Yiddish literati, from whom they did not expect a profit. The interaction between these older more established immigrant printers, and the younger and poor journalists they employed, produced much of the Yiddish literature printed in Britain outside of the presses. Kalman Marmor's description of meeting Naroditsky on a boat trip of radicals is an evocative account of how networks could form linking these different groups.³⁸

³⁵ *YCiB*, 481.

³⁶ Joseph Massel was significant in the growth of Zionism in Manchester as well as fostering literature in Hebrew and Yiddish. *YCiB*, 448-449, Williams, *Making of Manchester Jewry*, 333. For an analysis of his translations see: Jeffrey Einboden, *Nineteenth-Century U.S. Literature in Middle Eastern Languages* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 13-44, and Jeffrey Einboden, "Towards a Judaic Milton: Translating *Samson Agonistes* into Hebrew", *Literature and Theology*, Vol 22 No. 2 (June 2008), 135-50.

³⁷ The most exhaustive list of these publishers is to be found in *YCiB*, 538, of related importance is also the list of printers, *YCiB*, 532-534.

³⁸ Marmor, *Mayn Lebns-geshikte*, 506-507.

Between the newspapers and the pamphlets of the independent presses there was opportunity for a Yiddish literature in England to develop. It is impossible to analyse the total variety of this substantial output. Instead the following section analyses a variety of writers in different forms (serialised novel, play, collection of poetry and novellas) and across Yiddish and Hebrew to analyse their attempts to synthesise immigrant experience, and their perspectives on the difficulties and limitations of British Yiddish political and artistic life. This selection has been based on a criteria of variety. Their selection aims to cover the main forms of Yiddish literature in this period (Serialised prose, poetry, feuilleton drama, published drama and published prose) and a variety of writers with different geographical and literary backgrounds – and subsequent trajectories. The writers considered are perhaps the most prominent Yiddish writers, but this work is only a beginning and of course there are important absences.³⁹ These texts are also chosen because of the historical insights they provide. They testify to the broad social and critical concerns that immigrants expressed and struggled with. In doing so they reconfigure our understanding of the key processes that Jewish immigrants lived through in this period.

³⁹ Aside from Prager's previously cited work on Yiddish literature in Britain, there is the pioneering work of Alex Grafen on the constellation of Jewish writers and artists sometimes labelled "the Whitechapel Boys": Grafen, "The Whitechapel Renaissance," Lachs, *Whitechapel Noise* and Vivi Lachs equally ground-breaking investigations into later Yiddish British writers. See Vivi Lachs, trans., *East End Jewish Life in Yiddish Sketch and Story, 1930–1950: Selected Works of Katie Brown, A. M. Kaizer, and I. A. Lisky* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2021).

a) *Tsharli der Unterpreser* (Charlie the Underpresser): Synthesising and Rejecting the British Immigrant Experience

Hayman Polski (1875-1944), already mentioned in his capacity as a polemic writer in the second chapter of this dissertation, was a significant figure in the early editions of the *Idisher Ekspres*. A tailor by day and a writer by night, he also worked as a photographer. He would eventually move to South Africa where he became a stalwart of South African Yiddish journalism.⁴⁰ His later Yiddish writing in South Africa treated the same themes as his writing in London but in the South African setting: the transformation of Jewish immigrants in a new environment.⁴¹ His serialised story, *Charlie the Underpresser: A tragi-comic story of the Jewish worker's life in London* (*Tsharli der unterpreser: eyn tragi-komishe dersteylung oys dem yidishn arbayter lebn in london*) was spread across eleven consecutive issues.⁴² The story was clearly meant to be a humorous satire of the difficulties of life for the newly-arrived immigrant - but it would be wrong to only analyse it at this level. Although its title signals the work as belonging to the sensationalist lowbrow tradition of *Shund* (serialized popular fiction often treated pejoratively), a deeper exploration shows that it is also a vivid mapping of what transformations could and could not take place within the Jewish East End.

⁴⁰ *LNYL* vol. 7, 94, *LYLPF* vol. 2, 863-865.

⁴¹ Liptzin, *History of Yiddish Literature*, 380-381. Liptzin writes that Polski "prefers the happy ending." This is certainly not the case in the narrative of *Tsharli*.

⁴² Published weekly: Hayman Polski, "Tsharli der unter-preser" (Charlie the Under-presser) *Der Idisher Ekspres*, March 5 1897, 3 - May 7 1897. Further reference will be given by the instalment of the serial.

Charlie the Underpresser begins not in London but in an Eastern European town where the hero is not yet Charlie but still Shaye. The story tells of the transformation of an impoverished Eastern European Jew, Shaye, into an equally unfortunate tailor with the name “Charlie”. An underpresser was a tailor at the bottom of the tailoring hierarchy.⁴³ Shaye, the hero, lives in abject poverty. His wife is about to die, leaving him to look after his two children. Shaye had formerly been very rich and successful as a fur merchant, but one day the household’s servant, whom he had hired so that his wife would not have to work, stole all of his savings and absconded. Shaye is then condemned to live in poverty, subsequently losing a child and eventually his wife as well to poverty and illness. Skipping entirely Shaye’s journey to London, the next stage of the narrative is set at a lodging house full of working Jews. Packed into a small property so as to maximise profit for the landlords, most of them share beds. The lodgers are described sitting together in the one living space, the kitchen, where they eat and argue, talking about anarchism and socialism and debating which newspaper is better (*Arbayter Fraynd* or *Idisher Ekspres*). This warm scene is interrupted by Shaye’s arrival. Shaye enters the lodging house and is promptly mocked as a “griner” - in fact they can even tell from his knocking that he is one

⁴³ “An UNDER-PRESSER is any person:—(a) who is employed in pressing processes other than pressing off;and (b) who has been employed not less than three years after the age of 19 as an under-presser or presser.” Tailoring Trade Board December 1919, “Minimum rates of wages for male workers in certain branches of the tailoring trade which are engaged in making garments to be worn by male persons,” 292C/239.35/8/5, *Trades Union Congress Collection*, Warwick Digital Collections, (<https://wdc.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p21047coll2/id/3276/rec/2>). The description’s position at the end of all the described trades demonstrates in addition to the description itself that this role was at the bottom of the tailoring hierarchy. Similarly the low wages paid to underpressers suggests its low status within tailoring. Robert Steven Wechsler, “The Jewish Garment Trade in East London 1875-1914: A study of conditions and responses” (PhD Diss., Columbia University, 1979), 139.

(greener: an immigrant who has only recently arrived).⁴⁴ In fact all the lodgers are described as “griners” - the narrator says that this is evident from how much rent they pay and the fact that they all sleep either two in a bed or one in a chair bed.

The lodging house is where Shaye begins to transform himself. At first none of the other lodgers want him as they say that as a “griner” he must be unclean - they also take the opportunity to make fun of him. Shaye responds in frustration and pain - listing the litany of his sufferings - and thereby wins the landlady over.⁴⁵ She decides to let him sleep in a chair because this will not bother the other lodgers as they can stay in their shared beds. It is these other lodgers who will further help Shaye to transform and to become more like them. One finds a hat that has been left outside and dries and brushes it and puts it on Charlie’s head. But there is a further step to go. An Austrian lodger advises:

There is still one thing...here in London you get called by different names, here for example: I am called Jacob, - he [is] Barnet - [he] Maurice and when you will speak with someone you have to know straight away to say their name in English.”

All the lodgers agreed and after a long time period contemplating and debating how they can translate Shaye it was decided that, may his name become famous throughout Israel, [it should be] “*Charlie*”.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ This emphasis on the “griner” is also present in Yiddish song in the period, see Lachs, *Whitechapel Noise*, 67.

⁴⁵ Contemporary accounts pay witness to the deep psychological pain that new immigrants felt being treated as a “griner”: see A Yeshive Bokher, “Mayn Ershter yor in England,” 9-10.

⁴⁶ Polski, *Tsharli*, 4th installment. “May his name become famous throughout Israel” is an ironic quotation from Ruth 4:14.

After Shaye becomes Charlie he has to find a job. This is where Petticoat Lane is introduced.⁴⁷ Petticoat lane was where new unemployed migrants looked for work.⁴⁸ A local women employer is shown trying to hire workers, but the tailors resent her attempt to hire on the cheap because it is slack time – when less business means many workers are laid off.⁴⁹ Charlie enters this scene taken along by the landlady to try and find work there. He is appalled by the spectacle of the market, the frenetic selling of both merchandise and labour:

“God my father” he thinks, [“] This is London and these are our Jews?! They live like this and about them one says at home that they are fortunate! Oh who could have imagined that? Should I also attempt to be like them? Selling onions...Or with a handcart of potatoes?!...”⁵⁰

His luck changes, however, when he makes a friend who describes what had happened to him before as a “griner” trying to make a living in the market. He had worked selling onions but then was attacked and lost everything. Now Charlie has a friend who understands what he is going through - and who

“Nokh eyn zakh... do in london ruft men zikh mit andere nemen, ot lemoshl: ikh heys dzheykob, er - barnet - morris un az ir vet mit imetsn redn darft ir bald visn tsu zogn ayer nomen oyf english.”

Ale lodzhers hobn maskim geven un nokh eyn lange tsayt klern un zikh shparn vi men ken iberleygn Shaye iz geshtimt gevorn az vayikro shemoy beyisroel “*tsharli*”.

⁴⁷ For a deep analysis of a similar song treatment of the lane, see Lachs, *Whitechapel Noise*, 70-77.

⁴⁸ Lachs, 72.

⁴⁹ Lachs, 26.

⁵⁰ Polski, *Tsharli*, 6th installment. “Got, mayn foter” trakht er ot dos iz london un doz zaynen unzere yidn?! Ot azoy lebn zey do un oyf zey zogt men dos in der heym dos zey zaynen gliklekh! Akh ver hot zikh dos gekent forshteln? Zol ikh oykh pruvn ton vi yene... handlen mit tsibele... oder mit eyn vegele bulbe?!...”

can prevent him from going down the wrong path - but most importantly who he can communicate with:

Charlie became more joyful in his heart, who can rate himself more fortunate than a lonely person in a foreign land, when he meets a friend who understands his feelings and befriends him, the other Jew was also a Litvak, he spoke exactly like Shaye and that pleased him even more.⁵¹

Litvak identity was based upon both a geographical heritage – Jews from the Lithuanian and Byelorussian provinces of the Russian empire – but also a more elaborate social and cultural identity. Litvaks were generally less inclined to be Hasidic, less likely to have abandoned their Jewish identities in favour of assimilation, and were stereotyped as sceptical, rational and scholastic.⁵² For Charlie to meet a fellow Litvak was an opportunity to share a deeper connection with this Eastern European Jewish sub-identity. For Yiddish London was a mix. Writing of the famous Petticoat Lane market in East London, the Yiddish journalist Leiserowitz could write:

In the “lane” little English is spoken: Here Yiddish is dominant, only not pure Vilna Yiddish, not Warsaw, or Odessa Yiddish, but a mix of all the languages of Yiddish: from Russia, Poland, Romania, Galizia and with the addition of English words.⁵³

⁵¹ Polski, 6th installment. “Tsharli’n iz freylekher gevorn oyf’n hartsn, ver nokh ken zikh azoy shetsn gliklikh, vi eyn elender in eyn fremde land, ven er treft eyn fraynd vos farshteyt zayn inhalt un iz zikh mekorev tsu im, der ander yid iz oykh geven a litvak, er hot geredt punkt vi shaya un dos iz im nokh mer gefeln gevorn.”

⁵² Kalman Weiser, *Jewish People, Yiddish Nation: Noah Prylucki and the Folkists in Poland* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 66-69.

⁵³ Elieser Leizerovitz (pseud. Bas Kol), “Briv fun London” [Letter from London], *Der Fraynd*, June 11, 1905, 1. “in der “leyen” vert veynik english geredt: do geveltigt yidish, nit nor rayn vilner, tsi varshoyer, tsi odeser yidish, ober a gemish fun ale lishoynes yidish: fun rusland, poyln, rumenyen, un galitsyen mit a tsugob fun english verter.”

Meeting a friend with a Litvak Yiddish offered a sense of belonging in a bewilderingly diverse linguistic and cultural environment. Charlie's friend encourages him to become an underpresser in a tailoring workshop. Charlie's time in London is beset by misunderstandings. The first is a difficult encounter with a policeman. Before his arrival in London Charlie had read that there were Jewish policemen in New York and so thinks that there must be Jewish policemen here in London as well. He then falsely assumes a policeman is his landsman and the policeman almost arrests him for the impudence.⁵⁴ Charlie also misunderstands the missionaries. He meets a missionary who tries to get him to come to a missionary meeting but does not understand that the man is a missionary - the missionary simply asks if he thinks Moses will come again. He even offers Charlie money (which Charlie refuses because he has enough for the moment). After that Charlie returns to the lodgers where they are all reading the *Ekspres* from the week before. Luckily the landlady intervenes to stop him from reading the books that the missionary gave him, causing much mirth from the other lodgers.

The last scene of Charlie's narrative takes place in a sweating workshop. The workshop, run by a Mr Pintel, works through the night - and after Charlie's friend is sacked, the other workers begin to make fun of Charlie. It is at this moment that Miss [sic] Pintel, Mr Pintel's wife, enters and Charlie realises that it is his servant from back before he emigrated to Britain. Charlie overcome with emotion attacks her, pushing her and rendering her

⁵⁴ There may well not have been Jewish policemen, but the British government eventually instructed a hundred policemen to learn Yiddish. "Yiddish-Speaking Policemen: Learning the Tongue of the Alien," *Daily Mail*, March 24, 1905, 3.

unconscious before then brawling with all the other workers - Charlie screams for revenge and repeatedly calls her a murderer. Eventually the police arrive to interrupt the brawl and arrest Charlie. Charlie is sentenced to hard labour and when he gets out from prison he learns that the workshop owner Mr Pintel has left his wife. Charlie's servant, latterly Miss Pintel, has died of heartbreak because her husband ran off with a shop girl. Charlie then decides to go to America, but when he approaches the Board of Guardians they refuse him permission. It is only after repeated offences that he succeeds in making enough of a nuisance of himself that they pay for him to emigrate to America, which he does: "The committee, seeing what a bad customer they have before them, decided to get him away! Send him off and be rid of him and of trouble. And with Charlie's travelling away to America our story ends."⁵⁵

The story is billed, like other of Polski's stories and novels published in the *Ekspres*, as being tragi-comic, and it alternates between the two. The tragedy lies in its depiction of the difficulties of Jewish life in the Pale of Settlement - the crushing poverty and health problems that face Charlie's family once he has lost his previously higher station in life. But even these scenes, not necessarily the most appropriate venue for comedy, are also opportunities for satire. When his wife is dying Charlie is also beset by two local do gooders "Tsipe-Rokhe" famous for her yellow moustache whiskers, and "Khane di zogerin" (Hannah the prayer-leader) who do nothing to help

⁵⁵ Polski, *Tsharli*, 11th installment. "Di komite zeendik vos far a shlekhtn kostimer zey hobn far zikh hobn zey zikh meyashev geven un im avek geshikt un zaynen poter gevorn fun eyn trouble. Un mit tsharli's avek forn nokh amerika endikt zikh oykh unzer dersteylung."

him but who are intent on extracting the maximum of entertainment from the spectacle. This interlinking of tragedy and comedy occurs throughout the story; events that leave Charlie miserable are more often than not accompanied by comedy. The difficulties of being a Jewish peddler or market seller are also played for laughs, as well as his difficult encounters with policemen and missionaries. This admixture of comedy and tragedy provides entertainment through laughter but the twists and turns of the plot are designed to keep the reader gripped. There is no doubt that resorting to humour might also partially represent an attempt to deal with the very real trauma that many of the events present.

Central to the whole story is the transformation of Shaya to Charlie, from Eastern European Jew to English immigrant Jew. This is a story about overcoming being a “griner”. Shaya is made fun of at every stage, by his lodgers, in the street, in the workshop. Charlie watches as labour is exploited and shows us that often missionaries were the only agents for help and support - Charlie’s journey demonstrates the helplessness and vulnerability of the new immigrant.⁵⁶ And yet his trajectory is also a revenge plot on behalf

⁵⁶ Missionary movements were very important in the Jewish areas in this period where they targeted the vulnerable, as historian Todd Endelman has observed: “The willingness of unbaptized Jews to seek aid from the missionary societies was largely a consequence of their inability to find help within the Jewish community.” Missionaries would offer shelter and food. Some missions would even go so far as offering the sort of facilities that Zionist and Socialist organisations offered, such as reading rooms. Todd M. Endelman, *Radical Assimilation in English Jewish history, 1656-1945* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 144-172, Mikhal Zilberberg, “Kristlikhe misyes un misyonern in England 1880-1914” [Christian missions and missionaries in England 1880-1914] in *Jews in England: Studies and Materials 1880-1914* (New York: YIVO, 1966), 249-272. Missionaries are present in autobiographical accounts, see Entry 2, “Mayn Ershter yor in England” [My first year in England], Folder 48, Box 71, England Collection (RG 116), YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, New York, 13. The author’s only encounter with non-Jews is with missionaries (this entry is set in Scotland despite the misleading title).

of the “griner” against those that have exploited him. Charlie is allowed to violently attack the author of his misfortunes - to turn the sweating workshop into a brawling chaos - and the Jewish world that Charlie inhabits can only be ordered again when the police arrive. In this sense the story parodies the naivety of the “griner” but also punishes those who wrong him. Charlie remains unbowed by hard labour, he refuses Britain as a place of settlement. Shaya and Charlie reject the process of compromise and transformation that the narrative suggests is compulsory.

The ending, like much of the culture and even the political destinies of the main Yiddish language writers and activists that worked in Yiddish London, ends with Charlie leaving for America. In this sense the paradoxical nature of Britain as an immigrant hub is demonstrated. In many ways there are parallels between the Eastern European immigrant experience in Britain and America - but the transmigrational nature of Britain means that it can be escaped and rejected. Britain serves as a sort of practice run for immigration to the US.

b) Phillip Max Raskin: Poems of the Ghetto or National Poet

Phillip Max Raskin (Fayvl-Mordkhe Raskin, 1880-1944) is a crucial figure for any understanding of the Yiddish literary culture of this period.⁵⁷ A published poet at first in Yiddish, and then later in English and Hebrew, he played an

⁵⁷ For biographical details: *LNYL* vol. 7, 388-389, *LYLPF* vol. 4, 218-220, “Phillip M Raskin, Poet and Zionist,” *New York Times*, February 8, 1944, 15, “Phillip M. Raskin, Noted Jewish Poet, Dies in New York”, *Jewish Telegraphic Agency Daily News Bulletin*, February 8, 1944, 5.

important journalistic and creative role within the Yiddish and English language press in England, then later in America, where he also produced an anthology of Jewish poetry translated from different languages into English. In this respect he foreshadowed the career of Joseph Leftwich (1892-1983) - a similarly miscellaneous intellectual figure in the English Yiddish world whose most important work may well not have been his own writing but instead the anthologies he published of others' work. Raskin was born into a wealthy family in Shklov, north of Mogilev within the Russian empire. After briefly studying in Zurich, Raskin came to England in 1899, graduating in 1905 from the Royal Institute for Literature and Science in Leeds and working as a sanitation officer there. He wrote on the subject of Zionism, and its insufficient treatment within the *Idisher Ekspres*, as early as 1898, suggesting that he may well have arrived earlier than 1899.⁵⁸ In 1915 he emigrated to the United States, continuing his Zionist activities and working for the Jewish National Fund. He published two collections in Yiddish: *Geto-lider* (Ghetto poems, Leeds: J Porton, 1910), and *Idishe lider* (Yiddish poems, New York: N. M. Mayzel, 1919) before later turning to English and Hebrew.⁵⁹ His poetry was clearly inspired by the Jewish Ghetto poets, and their "social lyric", Yiddish poets such as Morris Winchevsky (1856-1932) and in particular Morris Rosenfeld (1862-1923). Rosenfeld combined social poetry with incipient Jewish nationalism and a collection of

⁵⁸ Phillip Max Raskin, "Tzionismus un vosbod" [Zionism and Vosbod], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, April 1, 1898, 4.

⁵⁹ In English he published *Songs of a Jew* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1914), *Songs of a Wanderer* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1917) *Songs and Dreams* (Boston: The Stratford Co, 1920), *When a Soul Sings* (New York: Thomas Seltzer, 1922).

his poems were published as *Songs From the Ghetto* in English in 1898.⁶⁰

Raskin's poetry took much of its poetic style and subject - the difficulty of immigrant life in the new immigrant ghettos of North America - and adapted it to British Jewish immigrant life.

Raskin's success and importance after his time in England is hard to measure. Raskin himself boasted about selling enough copies of later work *Songs of a Wanderer* so that it "obtained admission to more than twenty-four thousand homes and libraries in the United States."⁶¹ Raskin received glowing forewords from both Sholem Aleichem and Israel Zangwill for his collections in Yiddish and English respectively - but these forewords were also intended to promote the work. Sholem Aleichem wrote in a letter to Raskin that his *Geto-lider* "will place you, Mr Raskin, in the row of our crowned folk poets. That is my inner conviction."⁶² Israel Zangwill's introduction to a book of English poems strikes a more complex and equivocal note. Although Zangwill opens with the promising observation that "Every ghetto is now a nest of singing birds" he goes on to remark that:

Mr Raskin has the unique distinction of expressing himself in English almost as trippingly as in Yiddish...there is an aroma in Mr Raskin's Yiddish poems which even he has not been able to preserve in its native freshness in his English verses, and one would rather send him back to his "mammy-language" than encourage him in his stepmother-tongue, were it not for the reflection that the latter enables him to reach a far wider audience.⁶³

⁶⁰ Liptzin, *A History of Yiddish Literature*, 96-98.

⁶¹ Raskin, *Songs and Dreams*, vi.

⁶² Phillip Max Raskin, *Geto Lider* [Ghetto poems], (Leeds: J Porton, 1910), 3-4.

⁶³ Raskin, *Songs of a Jew*, vii-viii.

Zangwill was damning Raskin with faint praise. Raskin nonetheless saw fit to publish the text as the foreword, replying in his author's note "My sincere thanks are due ... to one of the greatest literary men of our age, Mr Israel Zangwill, the value of whose sympathy and encouragement I can better feel than express."⁶⁴ Zangwill's foreword is perhaps of most use for the comparison it draws to the two Jewish poets whose work it most directly derives inspiration from, Morris Rosenfeld (1862-1923) and Heinrich Heine (1797-1856) - the former for the focus and orientation around the ghetto, the latter for the ambiguous and ironic narrative viewpoint.⁶⁵ Of course Zangwill himself, and his famous novels about British Jewish ghetto life, *Children of the Ghetto* (1892) and *Grandchildren of the Ghetto* (1892) - no doubt also influenced him.

Raskin's reception in the international Yiddish literary world is also difficult to pinpoint. Zalman Reyzn wrote of Raskin that "the majority of his poems both in Yiddish and in English, are on nationalist or Zionist motifs."⁶⁶ In fact such a simple characterisation remains unrepresentative of the diversity of his work. In his collection *Geto-Lider*, which will be analysed here, there are four main areas around which a strong creative cohesion can be found: the theme of the ghetto poet, lyrical poetry, Jewish national poems and poems dedicated

⁶⁴ Raskin, xi.

⁶⁵ The influence of Heine was very substantial on Yiddish poetry, as well as on early Zionism. See Sol Liptzin, "Heine and the Yiddish Poets" in *The Jewish Reception of Heinrich Heine* ed. Mark H. Gelber (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1992), 67-76, and Mark H. Gelber, "Heine, Herzl, and Nordau: Aspects of the Early Zionist Reception", in *The Jewish Reception of Heinrich Heine* ed. Mark H. Gelber (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1992), 139-152.

⁶⁶ *LYLPP* vol. 4, 218-220.

to religious festivals in the Jewish year. Raskin's division of the collection itself advances this kind of schematic division of his poems, even if many overlap such a division.

The collection *Geto-lider* begins with five poems dedicated to the theme of the Ghetto poet. Raskin never exactly specifies where this ghetto is – it seems to be both a description of the small Eastern European town Skhlov that Raskin left and the immigrant quarters in Leeds and London he later occupied – both these realms were spaces where Jewish life was segregated (if in different ways).⁶⁷ For the Yiddish journalist Dolidanski, ghetto life was an essential part of life in Britain: ““Crying out against the ghetto is exactly like protesting against London fogs or rain.”⁶⁸ Raskin's poems focus on the difficult and spiritually empty life of the Ghetto. In “A geto lid” (a Ghetto Song or Poem), Raskin intones:

I was born in the ghetto,
There my youth glided by,
I can never, never die -
I have never lived...⁶⁹

⁶⁷ The term ghetto is understandably difficult to define, with historians disputing whether voluntary or involuntary Jewish segregation of space is meant by the term. Historian Daniel B Schwartz has suggested that Israel Zangwill popularised the idea of “ghetto” as synonym for “Jewish quarter” - Zangwill's work to show the artistic fecundity of the ghetto as an aesthetic subject no doubt inspired Raskin – alongside the earlier work of Morris Rosenfeld. See Daniel B Schwartz, *Ghetto: The History of a Word* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019), 86-124.

⁶⁸ Leon J. Dolidanski, “Briv fun London” [Letter from London], *Der Yud*, October 24, 1901, 8. “Shrayen gegen di ghetto iz punkt vi protestiren gegen di londoner tumanen oder regens.”

⁶⁹ Raskin, “A geto lid” [A Ghetto Song] *Geto Lider*, 9. “Kh'bin geborn in der geto, Dort mayn yugnt hot farshvebt, Ikh ken keyn mol, keyn mol shtarbn, Ikh hob keyn mol nit gelebt...”

There is a palpable void in the life of the Ghetto poet, elaborated further in “Mayn geburtsort” (My Place of Birth) as he perceives the ghetto’s existence to be founded on emptiness and need:

Not in frolicking, joy and freedom,
Did my childhood pass by, friends;
There where I was born
Reigns only solitude, need and fear.⁷⁰

There is a paradox at the heart of these opening poems in the collection. Although the poet sings of the terrible and empty nature of his ghetto existence, he also cannot resist turning to it as his chief subject matter. This is most evident in the opening poem of the collection: “Mayn Muze” (My muse).⁷¹ Raskin voices the futility of poetry in the ghetto through the warning song of a Jewish daughter, the muse of the poem. She compares the Ghetto poet to a lark at a cemetery, whose invigorating and cheerful song is doomed to go unheeded, before singing:

Woe upon you, Yiddish poet, amongst Jews
You will remain alone, abandoned and poor,
You will talk to corpses, you will sing to graves,
Your fire will be extinguished in your heart
Burning all that you love and hold dear.⁷²

⁷⁰ Raskin, “Mayn geburtsort” (My place of birth) *Geto Lider*, 10. “Nit in shtifn, freyd un frayheynt

Iz mayn kindheynt avek;
Dortn vu ikh bin geboren
Hersht nor elnt, noyt un shrek.”

⁷¹ Raskin, “Mayn muze” [My muse] *Geto Lider*, 8.

⁷² Raskin, “Mayn muze”, 8. “Akh vey iz dir, idisher dikhter, bay yidn...
Vest elnt farblaybn farlozn un orem,

And yet for Raskin, the poet of the ghetto has no choice. When the poet's lover invites him to sing a song of summer, a joyful song, and not the mournful melodies of Jewish song, he can no longer feel nor paint "the springs, the fields, the mountains and the valleys/ of my old home", instead "my heart, it seems to me, is a cemetery of memories/ on which my song is an orphan's tear."⁷³

The opening "Ghetto Poems" explicitly reject traditional inspirations such as the beauty of nature because of the poetic narrator's identification with the role of "Ghetto poet". Elsewhere, however, in the section entitled "Lirishe lider" (Lyrical poems) a more traditional poetics of inspiration is allowed to flourish. In "Bay nakht" (At Night) Raskin depicts a walk in the evening where he is accompanied by the perpetual flame of the moon. Raskin uses the traditional Hebrew formulation "neyrtomed" - the flame in the synagogue - to describe this. Soon the whole of the natural scene also evokes religion:

The community prays with enthusiasm,
The woods, the fields, the streams;

Vest redn tsu meysim, vest zingn tsu kvorim,
Un oysleshn vet zikh in hartsn dayn fayer,
Farbrenendik alts vos iz lib dir un tayer."

⁷³ Raskin "A zumer lid" [A summer song] *Geto Lider*, 21-22. "Du betst mikh, gelibte, tsu zing a lid dir,
A zumer lid, vilstu, a freylekhes lid;
Di troyer-nigunim, di yidishe lider,
Zey makhn dikh, zogstu, farumert un mit...
Di kvaln, di felder, di berg un di toln
Fun mayn alter heym, o vu zaynen zey, vu?
Ikh ken zey nit filn...
Mayn harts, dukht mir,
Iz a zikhroynes-beys-oylem
Oyf velkhn mayn lid iz a yosem's a treer."

My heart murmurs a blessing -
All of nature answers "amen"...⁷⁴

It is possible that this overwrought poetry was the inspiration for the Milton brothers parody "To the Night", quoted at the beginning of this chapter. In "Tsu di Shtern" (To the Stars) his poetic narrator begs the stars to show him the way, while in "Tsum dikhter" (To the Poet) there is an impassioned call for the poet to do his "holy duty" and use his "holy power" to serenade nature with a poem.⁷⁵ These poems illustrate the eclecticism of Raskin's poetical output. At first the title of the collection and its opening poems might suggest a cohesion around the theme of the ghetto poet, but in reality Raskin was attempting several poetic modes within the collection. In many respects this diversity reflects the diverse publications of the English and Yiddish language press that Raskin first placed these poems in. This no doubt also explains the inclusion within the collection of the many poems which deal with specific times of the Jewish year - editors would want poems to commemorate different seasons of the year. These poems, grouped within the section "Season and Festival-poems" (Tsayt un fest-lider), were a creative accompaniment to the editorials that as previously remarked often also took inspiration from the Jewish religious year.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Raskin, "Bay nakht" [At Night] *Geto Lider*, 106-107. "Es davent mit kheyshek der klal, Di velder, di felder, di shtromn; Dos harts mayne murmlt a brokhe - Di gantse natur entfert omeyn."

⁷⁵ Raskin, "Tsu di shteren" [To the stars] *Geto Lider*, 107; "Tsum dikhter" (To the poet) *Geto Lider*, 119.

⁷⁶ For example: Raskin, "Leshone toyve" [To the new year] *Geto Lider*, 68; "Peysakh" [Passover], *Geto Lider*, 71.

It was not completely misleading, however, for Reyzn to characterise Raskin's work primarily through the lens of a national poetry. Several poems in the collection express a discontent with foreign themes - a gesturing towards the need for a home place. In "Fata Morgana" (Morgan the fairy) - the title, a way of describing a certain kind of mirage, signifies the illusory possibility of living outside the poetic narrator's own old home, outside of the ghetto:

I murmured peace... freedom...
And the world cruelly joked;
For my love, for my loyalty
People hated me.

I begged slavishly, disgracefully,
For every friendly word and look...

- -

Eventually I died ---
And now I go back home...⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Raskin, "Fata morgana" [Fata morgana] *Geto Lider*, 20-21.

"Kh'hob gemurmlt fridn... frayhayt...
Un di velt hot beyz geshpast;
Far mayn libe, far mayn trayhayt
Hobn mentshn mikh gehast.

Kh'hob gebetlt shklafish, shendlekh,
Yedn frayndlekh vort un blik...

- -

Umgekumen hob ikh mikh endlekh -
Un ikh gey aheym tsurik."

Although far from explicit, Raskin seems here to be arguing that all life outside of Zion is false and counterfeit, is not the home that only death can bring. The same is the case in the poem “Foreign gardens” (Fremde gertner). A quote from the Song of Songs introduces the poem: “they made me a keeper of the vineyards; my own vineyard I did not keep.”⁷⁸ The poetic narrator bemoans the woeful state of his own garden compared to the allure and sheen of foreign gardens:

Generations, long sequences of generations,
As an unpaid guard
It is my fate to watch over
Foreign gardens, foreign trees.⁷⁹

These particular lyrical poems are at the transition between Raskin’s lyrical work and the more explicitly Zionist poems.

Raskin, aside from painting the misery of life in the Jewish ghetto, also dedicates many of his poems to the theme of Jewish persecution in Eastern Europe. Raskin’s poem “Pogrom.” (Pogrom), narrates the tragic flowing of Jewish blood and Jewish tears, “again in a flood”, and dwells on a sense of Jewish disgrace:

And a question nags in one’s heart,

⁷⁸ The Song of Songs 1:6.

⁷⁹ Raskin, “In fremde gertner” [In foreign gardens] *Geto Lider*, 30-31.

“Doyres, lange reyen doyres,
Als an umbetsolter shomer
Iz bashert mir tsu bevakhn
Fremde gertner, fremde boymer.”

And torments one's reason:
God above! What is worse-
Our pain or our shame!...⁸⁰

“On the hunt” (Oyf Geyeg), based on an original Russian subject, depicts a gang of Russian noblemen setting their hunting dogs on a Jew - before it pivots to the desolation left at the Jewish wife's home when news of the death is discovered. A poem “Yehudah Maccabee's Spirit” (yehuda hamakabi's gayst) dedicated to the “brave children of the Jewish self-defence in Russia”, imagines Yehudah Maccabee coming back to life from his grave and confronted with the sight of young Jews resisting a pogrom in Russia:

Oh, children! I have recognised you just now
In you the old flame burns
Which I have lit...
You have not disgraced my name
Blessed the hearts and the hands.⁸¹

Some poems are far more explicit about the best path for the Jewish national cause. The poem “der Shekel” describes the joy of buying Shekels, the

⁸⁰ Raskin, “Pogrom,” *Geto Lider*, 38.

“Un a frage nogt in hartsn,
Un es matert dem farshtand:
Got in himel! Vos iz shverer –
Unzer veytog oder shand!...”

⁸¹ Raskin, “Yehuda hamakabi's gayst” [Yehuda Maccabee's Spirit] *Geto Lider*, 38-40.

“Oh, kinder! Kh'hob aykh yetst derkent:
In aykh der alter fayer brent
Vos ikh hob ongetsundn...
Ir hot mayn nomen nit geshendt
Gebentsht di hertser un di hent!”.

currency that was used to raise money for the Zionist cause and would become the eventual currency of Israel.⁸² “To the Bilu” (Tsu di Bil’u) praises the movement of agricultural pioneers in Palestine on their 25th jubilee of their founding Rishon l’Tzion, an agricultural collective south of Jaffa that was founded by Jewish immigrants in 1882.⁸³ “Where to.” (Vuhin), a poem dedicated to the memory of Dr Herzl, commemorates his leadership and heroism but also captures the confusion and despair at his loss.⁸⁴

Raskin’s poetry can be read teleologically as tending towards becoming a Jewish national poetry. According to this reading, Raskin is eventually able to abandon the Ghetto poet persona, and instead develop a new national poetry, at once expressing a poetic and spiritual need for a homeland with an open political support for the Zionist project. Indeed, the categorisation of the poems within the collection itself lends itself to this interpretation: the national and folk songs section follows the ghetto poems. In truth the poetry is not so simplistic or programmatic: Raskin tried, in the Yiddish press and in this collection to pursue a series of attitudes at the same time. This mirrored his own influences: part ghetto poetry from the Yiddish tradition of poets such as Morris Rosenfeld, but also the lyrical, if ironic poetry of Heine. These different attitudes did not find a particularly receptive audience in England: although Raskin’s strong presence in the press is one sign of critical success among his journalistic peers, any significant legacy within England is difficult to trace. Instead it is perhaps the case that Raskin’s creative work in Yiddish

⁸² Raskin, “Der shekel” [The Shekel] *Geto Lider*, 40, Vital, *Formative Years*, 17.

⁸³ Raskin, “Tsu di bil’u” [To the Bilu] *Geto Lider*, 46-47.

⁸⁴ Raskin, “Vuhin: a kholem” [Where to: a dream] *Geto Lider*, 36-37.

was an important stage in his development before he found greater success in America.

c) William Pozniak's *Aroysgevorfen* and Max and Yudl Milton's *Der Khaos*: Challenging the new Jewish Politics and Aesthetics

Yiddish creative expression also extended to plays - even if it is unclear whether there were ever feasible plans for their staging. Neither William Pozniak's *Aroysgevorfen* nor Max and Yudl Milton's *Der Khaos* are ever known to have been staged. Instead they had to suffice as plays to be read. Both deal with the contemporary world of Jewish politics - but they reach very different conclusions and use very different aesthetic methods. William Pozniak's biography has already been given in chapter 3. *Aroysgevorfen: a tragikomische tsene in eyn akt* (Thrown out: a tragicomic scene in one act), represents an early creative work. William Pozniak's one act play was published in Kalman Marmor's *Di Yudishe Frayhayt* and depicts a libel trial.⁸⁵ Mr Dzhozef Tsveyfakh (Joseph Double), the editor of a "political political" newspaper, the *Yehudi*, is in the dock of a fictional English courthouse on the charge of high treason. He is accused of attacking the Ugandist leader Israel Zangwill in a report Tsveyfakh had written about one of his speeches.⁸⁶ All

⁸⁵ V F Tsioni (William Pozniak), "Aroysgevorfen: a tragikomische tsene in eyn akt" [Thrown out: a tragicomic scene in one act], *Di Yudishe Frayhayt*, July 1, 1904, 4-6.

⁸⁶ Zangwill's status as the leader of the Territorialist breakaway may well be unfair. Historian Gur Alroey has argued that Zangwill was less than a fully enthusiastic participant in the establishment of the Jewish Territorial Organization (ITO), a movement dedicated to finding a Jewish national home but not only in Palestine: "Zangwill was actually dragged in by those who resigned [from the Zionist congress], was not in full accord with their resignation, and was undecided about accepting the role of president in the new organization." Gur Alroey, "'Zionism without Zion'? Territorialist Ideology and the Zionist Movement, 1882-1956", *Jewish Social Studies* 18:1 (Fall 2011): 7. See for later iterations of Territorialism: Laura Almagor, "Fitting the Zeitgeist: Jewish Territorialism and Geopolitics, 1934-1960," *Contemporary European History* 27:3 (August 2018): 351-369.

the participants in this trial are given satirical names: Dr Dzhon Kroytkop (John Cabbagehead), Chairman of the Sons of Uganda (Bney Uganda), represents the Ugandist position, Mr Dzhhek Shtaynharts (Jack Stoneheart) is the secretary of the same organisation, and of course Dzozeif Tsveyfakh's surname "double" is a humorous aspersion cast on his trustworthiness. The prosecution starts the trial by bringing witnesses against the unfortunate newspaper editor. One witness they call forward, an English Jewish witness named Lekish (simpleton), is a particular target for satire for speaking in a Yiddish which is basically English. "I have been since a long time a reader of the *HaYehudi* and I must say that in my opinion the attack of the *HaYehudi* is a treason against our party."⁸⁷ The words "long time", "reader", "opinion", "attack", "treason" are all simply the English words transliterated into English as if they were Yiddish words. It is eventually revealed that he did not even read the speech in question as he cannot read "funny hebrew...a friend translated it for me."⁸⁸

It is then the turn of the defence. Tsveyfakh argues that he was not attacking the Territorialist movement. He was simply calling for a Jewish homeland in Zion, a position which Zangwill himself had a year earlier argued for. Pozniak is here attacking a very recent change in Zangwill's own position away from an Erets Yisroel Zionism - where the Jewish homeland would have to be in Palestine - towards the Territorialist position he would go on to occupy. Zangwill's inconsistency is a target the play cannot resist attacking on

⁸⁷ Pozniak, *Aroysgevorfen*, 4. "Ikh bin geven zayt a long taym a rider fun di hayehudi un ikh muz zogen dos iz mayn opinyon iz der atak fun hayeudi a trizon gegen unzer partay."

⁸⁸ Pozniak, 4. "Ikh ken nit farshteyn azoy a fani hibryu...a fraynd hot es mir translated."

several occasions. In the end the jury find the *Yehudi* guilty on all counts. The judge remarks that in Uganda the newspaper would have been burned and the editor sent to prison for twenty years, but in England they will just throw the newspaper out of the movement's library - this is the "throwing out" of the title of the play - itself a Yiddish play on words as the word also means "in vain". Pozniak parodies Territorialism's rejection of the Zionist position on a national home in Palestine and hints that the whole thing is a waste of time. The play finishes with a song in favour of Zangwill and various hurrahs for the Territorialists.

In part this play reads as an extended satire of political Zionism and those political Zionists who were increasingly becoming the leaders of the Territorialist movement. In doing so it aligns itself with the editorial direction of the newspaper it was printed in, *Di Yudishe Frayhayt*, which, edited by Kalman Marmor, firmly opposed the pursuit of Jewish colonialism outside of Erets-Yisroel (Palestine). The Territorialists are shown to be excessive and violent in their pursuit of the sentence for high treason - itself a highly charged term - while on the other hand the desire for a Jewish national home in Israel is shown to be a logical and understated demand. Violence over this question was not entirely fictional – although in reality it was targeted not against the Erets Yisroel camp but against the political Zionists. Max Nordau (1849-1923), a prominent supporter of the Uganda scheme (1903), was almost assassinated by a Russian Zionist student for it.⁸⁹ The fixation within *Aroysgevorfen* on the need to avoid all criticism of Zangwill seems to point to

⁸⁹ Schulte, *Psychopathologie*, 335-336.

a view that the political Zionists were too preoccupied with personalities - personalities that in any case were changeable and unreliable. Whether this short play - itself almost more of a sketch than a fully realised dramatic work - was ever intended to be staged is doubtful. Instead it seems that the idea of publishing a one act play offered an opportunity of bringing into the feuilleton slot of the newspaper the theatrical setting of a courtroom. Here the encounter between English and Eastern European culture is being staged and burlesqued. English judicial norms meet the chaotic infighting Yiddish press and political world. Within this farce the English language itself is used within Yiddish to satirise the ineptness of the supporters of the Territorialists and thus the unseriousness of the movement. English, as transliterated and printed in Yiddish, becomes a metonym for the political unpopularity of Territorialism and its arrogant leaders.

Der Khaos, a four act play, is a much deeper exploration of the new Jewish politics. It sets political questions against the fates of two different families. It is authored by two brothers Yudl Milton (1866-1913) and Max Milton (1868-1948). Both were born in Warsaw and moved between South Africa, England and the United States.⁹⁰ They were both richly involved with Jewish politics: Yudl in both the Zionist movement and in Socialism, and Max primarily in Jewish socialist movements. Their collaboration *Der Khaos* was not published within the Yiddish press, instead it was published by an independent publishing house, The London Hebrew Publishing Company, in

⁹⁰ For more on the brothers Milton see, *LNYL* vol. 5, 618-619 and A Almi, *Momentn fun a Lebn* (Buenos Aires: Tsentral-farband fun poylishe yidn in argentina, 1948), 67-72.

1909.⁹¹ Their work undertakes a much deeper probing of the different possibilities for Jews after the Kishinev pogroms (1903 and 1905). Set in Eastern Europe, unlike the other pieces of work under analysis here, the subject matter does not explicitly have an English theme. Instead it is set within the turmoil of Jewish life in Warsaw. However, the play's dedication and foreword firmly ground it in a British Jewish context. The play carries a dedication to Sir Meyer Spielmann, a prominent and wealthy English Jewish philanthropist dedicated to helping Jewish and non-Jewish children and a Zionist.⁹² This dedication gives an opening hint at the politics of the authors.

The foreword by the Zionist A Val Finkenstein offers a strange introduction. Finkenstein speaks disapprovingly of the play's thematization of "decadent literature" - seemingly mistaking it for a decadent text when it clearly at times chooses to parody "decadent literature". But Finkenstein hints that he shared many of the experiences of the play's hero Mendl, including his flight from Russia to England via France, and resoundingly endorses Mendl's ideological transformation from socialism to Zionism:

After the well-known revolutionary who defended the pogroms had some years earlier awakened in me a sealed Jewish national feeling, the denationalisation of Jewish socialism convinced me of the necessity of a Jewish unification and of a Jewish friendly and not anti-Jewish direction. That explains my participation in *Kadima*, *Chovevei Tsion*, and in the *Zionist* party under Dr Herzl and in the current Territorialist movement.

⁹¹ The London Hebrew Publishing Company, also described as Mazin and Company within the play's notes, was the company of Refoel Mazin (?-1964), an important figure in East End Jewish and Yiddish publishing. *YCiB*, 447-448.

⁹² Ruth Sebag-Montefiore, "From Poland to Paddington: The Early History of the Spielmann Family, 1828-1948," *Jewish Historical Studies* 32 (1990-1992), 247-249.

The current “Mendls” are much more fortunate, because they are spared from wandering around lost for a long time and can immediately find a useful field for their activity and contribute to building for our people their own Jewish home.⁹³

For Finkenstein the play’s aesthetic form, which he categorises as “decadent”, is of little interest, but the political message carries an authentic and important message that tallied with his own experience.

A synopsis of the play is necessary to illustrate its argument. The Milton brothers’ play starts with the poorer of the two families it describes. Shloyme Shuster is the patriarch of the Shuster family and works as a cobbler. Shloyme complains to his wife Malke about his two children. One of them, Leybele Papyel, is a writer who has decided to give up his father Shloyme’s profession of shoemaking to try and become a writer. Unfortunately his career as a writer, which has lasted two years, has yet to bring critical acclaim or substantial earnings. Shloyme’s other child, his daughter Beylke, is not married yet and spends her time visiting Regina, the daughter of the rich merchant Berkovitsh. There are intergenerational woes amongst the Berkovitshs too - Berkovitsh’s other son Leon is a socialist organiser, while

⁹³ Maks Milton and Yudi Milton, *Der Khaos oder di letste idishe hofnung: drama fun’m rusish-idishn lebn in der gegenvertiger tsayt, in 4 akten* [The chaos or the last jewish hope: drama of the Russian-jewish life in the current time, in 4 acts], (London: Mazin and Company, 1909), iv.

“Nokh dem vi der bekanter revolutsyoner velkher hot ferthaydikt di pogromen hot shoyn mit eynike yor frier, bay mir ervekt dem ayngeshlosnem idishn natsyonaln gefil, hot mir di denatsyonalizirung fun di idishe sotsyalistn iberstaygt di noytvendikeyt fun an idishn feraynikung un a yudenfrayndlekhe anshtot a yudenfayntlekhe rikhtung. Dos erkleret mayn mitvirking in der “kadima”, “khovevey tsion” un in der tsionistisher partay under dr hertsln un in der yetsige teritorialistische bavegung.”

“Di yetstige “Mendls” zaynen fil gliklekher, vayl zey farshporen lang tsu blondzhen un kenen glaykh gefinen a nutslikhes feld far ire tetigkayt un mit helfn tsu boyen far unzer folk a yidishe eygene heym.”

his eldest son Herman is a Zionist. And while the Berkovitsh family is richer than the Shushters, they are nonetheless menaced by socialist bandits who have been robbing Berkovitsh and his merchant friend Rubin, endangering their livelihoods. The first act establishes one of the key themes of the play. A new generation of Jewish youth risks either not being able to survive in a difficult new world order - or are in fact actively undermining the old one. Much of the creative energy of *Der Khaos* is invested in asking what new political or aesthetic solutions might be able to deal with this moment of crisis in European Jewry. The play does not overly disguise its position: the first act ends with an argument between the Socialists and Zionists where Herman the Zionist, in particular, is given a long and convincing speech:

For us Jews there is only one task, and it is the most holy, not that which our fanatics, the frum (pious) just like the progressive, preach to us, that we Jews have a mission: to spread the light of our religion, or as the others want it, that we should be the bearers of culture, the pioneers of all revolutions, no!.... A thousand times no, our task, the holiest task of ours, is to be! To exist!⁹⁴

There are echoes of Hamlet here – Shakespeare was a great influence on the Yiddish stage.⁹⁵ Herman - although not explicitly at this early moment declaring his Zionism - rejects a Socialism that would involve subjugating Jewish needs to an international idealism - this is a well rehearsed element

⁹⁴ Milton, *Khaos*, 16.

“Far unz yidn ekzistirt bloyz eyn eyntsike oyfgabe, un zi iz di heylikste, nit di velkhe unzere fanatiker, frume azoy vi fortgeshritene, preygn tsu unz, dos mir yidn hobn a misyon: tsu farshpraytn dos likht fun unzer religion, oder vi di andere viln es, dos mir zoln zayn di kultur-treger, di pyoneren fun alle revolutsyones, neyn!... toyzend mol neyn, unzere oyfgabe, di heylikste oyfgabe unzere, iz tsu zayn! Tsu eksistirn!”

⁹⁵ Joel Berkowitz, *Shakespeare on the American Yiddish Stage* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2002), 73-112.

of the debate earlier recounted between Zionists and Social Democrats in Chapter 3 of the dissertation. The rest of the play elaborates what positive solution Herman believes in.

The first act ends with a cliffhanger: Berkovitsh, determined to put an end to the crime which has been costing him his business, is on the cusp of revealing where the Socialists are hiding to the police. His own son Leon instead pulls a revolver on him and says that he has guaranteed the other revolutionaries, on his honour, that his father Shmuel Berkovitsh will not expose them all. The conflict between generations which starts as rhetoric thus climaxes into violent confrontation by the end of the first act.

Parallel to the miseries of the older generation, who worry about their children dissipating their wealth and opportunities because of idealistic politics, the younger generation itself is far from content. Regina, Berkovitsh's daughter, is tragically in love with a socialist intellectual Zilbershteyn. Zilbershteyn claims that his passion for social causes forbids him from committing to a stable or reliable relationship with her. He views her desire for commitment and marriage as a bourgeois approach to love. It is in the midst of her turmoil about her feelings for Zilbershteyn that Regina receives a letter from her maid Pesa Leah's son Mendl, another Socialist within their circle. Mendl had earlier had to flee abroad and has written to announce his imminent return home. This triggers the bitter feeling in Regina's mind that she ought to have waited for Mendl and not engaged in a dalliance with Zilbershteyn. In the meantime, because of the socialist bandits

activities, the Berkovitshs have gone bankrupt. The play here expresses its anti-socialist argument, already well advertised by Finkenstein's introduction, to the point of crudeness. Socialism is the cause of bankruptcy for the Berkovitsh family. Meanwhile, perhaps again demonstrating the politics of the Milton brothers' approach - the maid of the Berkovitsh family, far from resenting her employment with them, in fact offers them her life savings to try and save them now that they are bankrupt. This is to little avail: the sum is so small it is rejected as making no difference. The play suggests that different classes are not in a position of antagonism; instead it advocates for a Jewish national unity across classes.

This unity is important because of the chaos of the title of the play.

Berkovitsh expresses doubt about the possibilities of Zionism: "smoke, no, not even that, it is only a shadow of smoke".⁹⁶ Using an extended metaphor of bricks and cement, Berkovitsh explains that Zionism is impossible because it is not strong enough to cement Jews together. While he had thought that the recent pogroms would have brought Jews together and served as cement, in fact it is not the cement but the bricks themselves, the Jews who are burned out:

No! The cement is good, it was the strongest which there can be.... It is the bricks, the bricks which are not suitable, they have become burned out... And can no longer take any cement. They are burned out and fall apart like ash. Ash with smoke a disarray, a chaos, an eternal cursed chaos.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Milton, *Khaos*, 32. "Roykh, neyn, afile dos oykh nisht, s'iz bloyz a shotn fun roykh."

⁹⁷ Milton, 32.

"Neyn! Der tsement iz gut, s'iz geven der shtarkster vos s'ken gebn.... S'zaynen di tsi gl, di tsi gl, vos toygn shoy n nisht, zey zaynen ibergebrent gevorn... un kenen mer keyn tsement

And yet for Herman, Berkovitsh's son, this chaos is too pessimistic a vision, or at least not helpful. "No, father, we have no right to despair completely", he responds.⁹⁸ For Herman Territorialism, and particularly the figure of Zangwill, offers hope and a way out of the chaos. The question is only whether they have left it too late:

It depends only on whether are already too late. If our great leaders is successful, if the greatest Jewish patriot that we have now, Zangwill, if he succeeds in getting a country with political rights, then I am certain that there will be thousands of Jews who will understand how to exploit the last psychological moment in our history.⁹⁹

Herman goes on to further justify a Territorialist approach by stating that it is more likely to win over rich Jews. If the authors' sympathies with this approach to the crises of contemporary Jewish life were not already evident, then the arrival of the maid Pesa Leah into the scene makes them even more clear. Lea Pesa reports that Socialists on the street tried to convince her to strike against her employers but that she laughed them off. Another cliffhanger occurs at the end of the second act - and again it is the fault of the socialists. The Shuster's daughter Beylke has been sent to prison and the Shusters arrive at the Berkovitsh's door blaming them for it as Beylke was

nisht onnemen. Zey zaynen iber gebrent un tsefalen vi ash. Ash mit roykh a tsetumlenish, a khaos, an eybiker farsholtener khaos."

⁹⁸ Milton, 32. "Neyn, tate, in gantsn tsu fartsveyflen hobn mir keyn rekht nit..."

⁹⁹ Milton, 33.

"Es vendt zikh nor oyb mir zaynen nit shoyn tsu shpet. Oyb es vet gelungen unzer groysn firer, dem gresten yudishn patryot vos mir hobn yetst, Zangvil, oyb es vet im gelingen tsu krign ergets vu a land mit politishe rekhte, dan bin ikh zikher az es veln zikh farginen toyzender yidn vos veln farshteyn vi oystsunitsn dem letstn psikhologishn moment in unzer geshikhte."

such good friends with the Berkovitsh daughter Regina, who has involved her in dangerous Socialist activities.

The return of Mendel in the third act provokes the climax of the play's argument. Mendl, who left Warsaw as a socialist, has now returned with a world view whose changed perspective slowly unravels over the course of the act. The growing importance of the figure of Regina begins to dominate the play's narrative. Marye, a socialist comrade midwife, criticises Regina's sentimentality to Mendl who defends her. Marye argues that Regina has stopped coming to the socialist meetings of their circle because her father has gone bankrupt and that this means that she was always bourgeois, while Mendl praises Regina, emphasising the importance of her work helping workers like himself learn, those who have not had the educational opportunities of the middle class. Mendl then inveighs against the new socialist woman. Mendl is also opposed to the socialist intellectual Zilbershteyn. In part, the text hints, this is because Mendl is in love with Regina and resents Zilbershteyn for courting her while he was away. But also Mendl identifies as one of the masses (unlike Zilbersteyn). This is another deft manoeuvre of the piece: class only matters when it concerns the authenticity of the hero who rejects Socialism. Mendel, who was arguing that it was fine to be sentimental when he thought he was defending Regina, now argues that all socialists must act completely morally because it is an opportunity to criticise Zilbershteyn - Marye correctly points out his hypocrisy. Mendl attacks Socialist morals for offering a false emancipation for women,

while the play's Socialist stooge Zilbersteyn acts in a personally reprehensible way to Regina, the woman he has had an affair with.

The third act also properly introduces Leybele Papyel, whose poems the main characters listen to. Papyel is an outlet for the Milton brothers' artistic and aesthetic criticism. Papyel has in the intervening time, since his father's complaints about him in the first act, won a reputation. His poems have been translated into German and some of his texts have been printed in America.¹⁰⁰ In response to a gentle tone of derision from Mendl, who had earlier been critical of Yiddish literature, Papyel defends the idea of literature in Yiddish:

Well what is wrong with jargon? It seems that you do not know that we have the best jewels of European literature translated into Yiddish such as Emil Zola, Guy de Maupassant, Boccaccio, Oscar Wilde and other realist and decadent pearls such as Przybyzowski, Artsybashev and others. In addition we have our own originals.¹⁰¹

And yet although we might expect the authors of a play in Yiddish to defend the artistic valency of the language, the actual poems that the Yiddish poet Papyel recites are clearly an exaggerated parody of "decadent" literature.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Here we see a useful indication of how success was measured in this period – by whether the author had been translated into German and whether their works had sold in the United States. This again emphasises the international nature of literary production in Yiddish in this period (a play set in Warsaw, written in London, views literary success as being dependent on sales in the U.S).

¹⁰¹ Milton, 57-58.

"Papyel: "nu vos iz az shargon? Vi es shaynt veyst ir nisht az mir hobn di beste brilyantn fun der eyropeishe literatur, iberzetzst in yudish vi emil zola, giy demapasant, bakatshya, oskar vild, un oykh andere realistische un dekadentische perl vi pzhivishevski, artsinbashev un andere. A khuts vos mir hobn eygene originele."

¹⁰² Liptzin, *A History of Yiddish Literature*, 100-111. Although this term, "decadent" has never become a popular term in scholarship about Yiddish literature, it was clearly important at the

His poem dedicated to the moon, “di levone” [The moon] self-referentially parodies its own foppish sentimentality:

The heavenly moon,
The magnificent widow,
With golden locks,
The glowing rays,
They shoot like arrows,
In the morning dew,
Which dampens the flowers,
With fragrant perfumes,
Dampening too the curls,
Of the silver moon,
Of the teasing widow,
The poet is in danger,
Of being caught,
In the sea of desiring,
In the sea of desiring,
Which carries us away together,
To powerful nature,
To powerful nature,

time to label a move away from social poetry and towards a more stylised “art for arts’ sake” poetics. Finkenstein’s comments above, and Rivkes’ in the last chapter, are testament to the broad use of the term “decadent”. Yiddish literary historian Sol Liptzkin chose to classify this literature not by the term “decadent” but by the name of the group of its most famous exponents, the poets of *Di Yunge* (The Young Ones). *Di Yunge* were New York lyrical poets writing after 1905, who “commanded most attention after the social lyric had passed its crest and when the tide was turning from naturalism and social protest to impressionism and individualism”, Liptzkin, *A History of Yiddish Literature*, 100-101. Ruth Wisse uses the term “Jewish aestheticism” to describe this movement, naming “Decadence” as just one of a coalition of influences: “The “Galicians” among the Yunge introduced the “Russians” to German modernism, and the Russian and Ukrainian Yiddish poets introduced the former subjects of Franz Joseph to Russian Symbolism and Decadence.” Ruth Wisse, “Di Yunge and the problem of Jewish Aestheticism,” *Jewish Social Studies* 38, no. 3-4 (Summer-Autumn 1976): 269. Mendl attacks a new trend in Jewish literary aesthetics in part because of its lack of social concern and perceived self-indulgence.

To powerful nature!¹⁰³

Excessive repetition and a semantic range that extends only to the most clichéd nouns shows the authors disdain for their own parodical poet. For Mendel, relatively silent until this point during Papyel's poetic performance, and the moral voice of the play, these poems are a blather, a "geshraybekhts".¹⁰⁴

Mendel's negative views about decadent literature serve as the springboard for much broader attacks. Once he has begun to disagree and attack his former comrades there is no holding him back. Mendel attacks the failures of intellectuals who do not enlighten or inspire the younger generation but instead corrupt them. Again the theme of chaos reappears. For Mendel this chaos is the failure of the Jewish intelligentsia, in the aesthetic as well as political realms, to respond to the challenges facing European Jewry: "How low we have sunk! For years the idealists have worked, sacrificing their young lives, and now *they* come and ruin everything, destroying everything, a chaos, in the minds and the hearts of all the youth!"¹⁰⁵ Mendel attacks socialism as a force for improvement in Russia, attacking Jewish

¹⁰³ Milton, *Der Khaos*, 62.

"Di Levone

Di himlishe levone,/ di prekhtike almone,/ mit di goldene lokn,/ di gliende shtraln,/ zey shishn vi fayln,/ in der morgen toy,/ vos banetst di blumen,/ mit shmekndike perfyumen,/ banetsn oykh di lokn,/ fun der zilberner levone,/ fun der raytsender almone,/ dem poet's sakone,/ tsu vern gefangen,/ in'm yam fun farlangen,/ in'm yam fun farlangen,/ vos rayst unz mittsuzamen,/ tsu der mekhtiker natur,/ tsu der mekhtike natur,/ tsu der mekhtike natur!"

¹⁰⁴ Milton, 64.

¹⁰⁵ Milton, 68.

"Vi tif mir zaynen gesunken! Yorn lang hobn idealistn gearbet, zaynen yunge lebens geopert, yetst kumen zey un ruiniern ales, makhn a tel fun ales, a khaos, in di moyekhs, un di hertser fun der gangster yugnt!."

internationalism and Esperanto before explicitly declaring himself a Zionist.¹⁰⁶ This damascene conversion to the cause of Zionism heavily emphasises the argument of Herman in the preceding act: again Zionism (in the Territorialist form) is shown to be the only viable political movement for the young intelligentsia. Those of other political and aesthetic persuasions are guilty of no lesser crime than corrupting the youth. The act ends with Berkovitsh père returning only to discover in horror that his daughter Regina is friendly with the revolutionaries. He forces her to swear that she will give them up and stay true to him - she duly renounces Mendl, Zilbershteyn and the others to return to her father's side. Two of socialisms' previous adherents have thereby dramatically renounced it.

The play's final act ends with a potent mixture of tragedy and melodrama. The Berkovitshs are now poor and their only hope is that another merchant, Grinshpan, will marry his daughter to their son. Zilbershteyn reluctantly offers to take Regina abroad with him, to solve the dilemma of her pregnancy, because he has been offered the post of editing a party journal abroad. Regina rejects his pity - and also rejects an offer from Mendel who also offers to care for her. The difficult situations and decisions that the young Jewish intelligentsia had to make with respect to these issues is evidenced by controversies in the lives of Kalman Marmor and Chaim Weizmann.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Esperanto, a new language devised by Ludwig Zamenhof (1859-1917), born in Bialystok, "hoped" (Esperanto means "hope") to stop interethnic strife by giving each people a common language that they would all have to learn. Zamenhof had been very active in the Chovevei Tzion movement before abandoning it to devote all his energies to Esperanto. Mendel here is attacking a variety of ideologies which he perceives to be assimilationist. Rebecca Kobrin, *Jewish Bialystok and its Diaspora* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 52-55.

¹⁰⁷ See Shapira, *Yosef Haim Brenner*, 53-133 and Reinharz, *Chaim Weizmann*, 67-68.

Herman's potential father-in-law Grinshpan is also a Territorialist, and Herman offers to bring him the latest speech by Zangwill. Leon, the Berkovitch's Socialist son, bids his mother farewell before he flees to America. Mendel and Zilbershteyn themselves are caught in a riot. The play ends with Regina, still suffering from terrible shame because of her conceiving outside of wedlock with Zilbershteyn, committing suicide. As she remarks at the beginning of her final speech in the play: "Now it has to come to an end."¹⁰⁸ For Regina the combination of radical politics and new attitudes to sex and marriage are a fatal chaos: "Chaos will never disappear, it will always reign, not only in the different parties, but also in the minds of every single individual. Such is the remorseless law of nature, I no longer have faith in humanity and without such faith it is so difficult to live!"¹⁰⁹ Her suicide ends the play.

It is possible that Regina's final words emphasise a general rejection of Jewish politics and aesthetics and their capacity to cope with the crises of pogroms and intergenerational misunderstanding. But in reality the long and sympathetic speeches given to the play's advocates of Territorialism show that this rejection is not general. Instead it is directed in particular to socialism. The Milton brothers' play pays little heed to deep characterisation and there is little interest in dramatic devices - although the character of Papyel provides a few moments of comic incision. Its priority is to diagnose a

¹⁰⁸ Milton, *Der Khaos*, 99.

¹⁰⁹ Milton, 100.

"Der khaos vet keyn mol nisht farshvindn, er vet imer hershn, nit nor in di farshidene partayen, nur in di moyekhs fun yedn ayntsiker individyum. Azoy iz dos umberimlikher gezets fun der natur, ikh gloyb nit mer in di mentshhayt, un on gloybn iz azoy shver tsu lebn!"

crisis in Jewish life and to offer its own solution - mainly by staging programmatic debates between its characters and heavily steering the plot to prove these points. In this sense it differs little from *Aroysgevorfn* - both plays foreground their political position over interest in drama as a form. They differ substantially in their political positions: the one the mirror of the other, both chiefly concerned with Territorialism or with its lack of viability. *Aroysgevorfn* chooses to emphasise the comedy inherent in the internecine conflicts of the new Jewish politics, particularly when they are staged in an English setting, here a courtroom, whereas *Der Khaos* focusses on the tragedy. Its potent endorsement of Territorialism and rejection of Socialism is perhaps in some part due to the author's participation in English Jewish political life where Zionism and Territorialism in particular were particularly strong. *Der Khaos* puts more emphasis on the dual nature of the crisis it diagnoses: not just a crisis of external events (revolutionary socialism, pogroms) but also of internal confusion and desperation as there is increasingly less hope in the Jewish political and aesthetic realm. In both cases a Jewish intelligentsia is unable to successfully transcend its environment: exile, chaos, hopelessness reign. In *Der Khaos* women are the sacrificial scapegoat, in Brenner's *Out of the Depths* the same is the case.

d) The Yiddish press becomes the subject: Joseph Chaim Brenner and Despair in London

Joseph Chaim Brenner, unlike the other writers discussed in depth in this chapter, wrote primarily in Hebrew and arrived in London already established

as a prominent writer of short stories and as a novelist.¹¹⁰ In fact his inclusion is essential because he is the only writer from the period whose work, although not written in Yiddish, is set in the world of a Yiddish newspaper. Elsewhere the Yiddish press could be self-referential. A satirical poem in the *Idisher Ekspres*, “Monolog, oder vide fun a tsaytungs shrayber” (Monologue, or the confession of a newspaper writer), written by an anonymous author with the pseudonym HaKhaye (The Beast) parodied the plagiarism, hackery and idiocy of the Yiddish journalist:

What I am considered as, what one takes me for, and what I am:

For the unknowledgeable reader a journalist,

For the hypocrites an atheist,

In society a patriot,

In reality - an idiot.¹¹¹

Brenner went much further than such surface satire and strove to add psychological depth and societal critique to his depiction of the British Yiddish press. *Out of the Depths*, a novella set in the London East End was published in the Hebrew periodical *Ha-Olam* in Vienna, 1908-1909.¹¹² It draws on elements of his experiences in London in the years 1904-1908.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Yosef Haim Brenner, *Out of the Depths*, trans. and ed. David Patterson and ELYLPFa Spicehandler (New Milford: The Toby Press, 2008), 6.

¹¹¹ HaKhaye [The Beast], “Monolog, oder vide fun a tsaytungsshrayber” [Monologue or confession of a newspaper writer], *Der Idisher Ekspres*, February 5 1902, 3.

“Far vos ikh gilt, far vos men halt mikh, un vos ikh bin,
Bay unvisndikn lezer a zhurnalst,
Bay hipokrits an ateist,
In gezelshaft a patryot,
In emesn a idyot.”

¹¹² Brenner, *Out of the Depths*, ix.

¹¹³ The fullest biographical information about Brenner’s life and particularly his short and tumultuous time in London is drawn from: Marmor, *Mayn Lebns-geshikte*, 707-720, Osher

Brenner was born in Novymilni in the Russian Pale of Settlement in 1881 and died in Jaffa in 1921. As a teenager he joined the Russian Bund, and even edited an illegal Bundist newspaper, *Der Kampf*, but eventually he became a Zionist. After being drafted into the Russian army he deserted at the beginning of the Russo-Japanese war and was subsequently arrested. Liberated by two Bund members - an experience that is described in *Out of the Depths* - and smuggled into Germany, he then fled to London. In London he would work at the East End Russian Library and as a typesetter for *Di Naye Tsayt*.¹¹⁴ The novella that Brenner wrote was drawn from these experiences, while also demonstrating the ideological preoccupations that would define his life's work: a despair about the prospects for Jewish life in diaspora, the need of the individual to stick to rigid principles of self-analysis and rigour, and the need for Jewish national life to be rebuilt on a platform of labour.¹¹⁵

The nameless narrator of Brenner's novella is a newspaper seller for the Crab Yiddish press. The story is told from a series of numbered scrolls - short and enigmatic chapters. In fact this narrator is almost completely

Beylin, "In londoner geto." [In the London Ghetto] In *Yoysef Khaym Brenner: fun zayn lebn un shafn* ed. Shloyme Grodzenski (New York: Jewish National Workers' Alliance, 1941), 61-82, Lamed Shapiro, *Der Shrayder geyt in Kheyder* (Los Angeles: Alien, 1945), 91-103, ELYLPFa Spicehandler, "Yosef Haim Brenner: A Biography." In Yosef Haim Brenner, *Out of the Depths*, trans. and ed. David Patterson and ELYLPFa Spicehandler (New Milford: The Toby Press, 2008), 15-79, Yitshak Bakon, *Brenner ha-tsa'ir: yayav vi-yetsirotav shel Brenner ad le-hofa'at ha-me'orer be-London* (Tel Aviv: Ha-kibuts ha-me'uhad, 1975), Anita Shapira, *Yosef Haim Brenner: A Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 53-133, Jonathan Frankel, *Crisis, Revolution, and Russian Jews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 98-130. Frankel confirms Bakon's analysis that Marmor misrepresents some of his dealings with Brenner.

¹¹⁴ Brenner, *Out of the Depths*, 7.

¹¹⁵ Brenner, 12-13.

absent from most of the story - he serves only as a neutral observer for descriptions of the other characters. The narrator and many of the characters he describes are recent immigrants:

I am twenty-five years old. I have taken myself into exile and come to a Jewish ghetto in a European capital... yes, yes... European. So what now? I am a stranger to the current speech, a stranger to the gentile population of the land, and far removed from my fellow Israelites, whose newspapers I sell them. Stripped of any material framework, of any trace of congenial company, of any spiritual satisfaction; tried and weary from a past of "*Heders*" and "Yeshivas," peripheral studenthood, a life of "organizations," prisons, military service, pogroms. and none of it sustains me, it gives me no fulfillment.¹¹⁶

There are a selection of well-drawn portraits of the workers occupying different positions within Crab's newspaper business and within its accompanying union. There is journalist Mr Shemaiah Taler, "a Europeanized Jewish gentleman in the prime of life, with a clever-sounding voice, a voice heavy with intonation and emphasis, a deliberate, resonant voice" with whom the narrator lodges - Taler is also the "paid president" of their union.¹¹⁷ His wife, Hayyah-Rachel, is a former bundist, "and even now an attractive woman, especially when from time to time, she presents a popular talk at the workers' club."¹¹⁸ Alongside the narrator there is also another lodger in the Taler's apartment, Shalom Lieberman, who is only a typesetter and who works as the secretary of their union. The most intriguing and complex character is Abraham Menuhin, a stranger who arrives

¹¹⁶ Brenner, 379.

¹¹⁷ Brenner, 381.

¹¹⁸ Brenner, 384.

mysteriously and embodies many of the traits that Brenner may indeed have tried to cultivate during his stay in London - the narrator repeatedly glimpses Menuhin and the novella is in great part an increasingly detailed depiction of his character.

Brenner's novella paints an extremely bleak picture of Jewish London's cultural opportunities. Part of this is Brenner's critique of the Yiddish press itself. Brenner describes at length the low quality of the newspaper: "The paper has four pages, The front and back contain big advertisements, those yellow tasteful advertisements. Inside: news from the English press, both this year's and last year's."¹¹⁹ Brenner satirises the emptiness of this daily newspaper, which only carries two pages of actual news and most of this is old and stolen. The only "original" content is itself at once provincial and heavily plagiarised:

Katlansky himself, the editor...writes almost every day, at Crab's direct instigation, a column entitled "Seen and Heard" devoted to parliamentary sessions, to matters of state in general, to public institutions in need of support, to local scandals, to the questions of ritual baths for Jewish women and to cantors who have gone off the rails. The rest is filled with snippets taken from the "Freynd" and other overseas papers, with romances and penny dreadfuls which are put in the paper lock, stock and barrel without acknowledgement.

Brenner criticises how the press advertises itself:

For the distributors and vendors there is an additional "poster" - an eye-catching announcement summarizing the main feature:

¹¹⁹ Brenner, 388.

“Eighty-year-old Jew weds fifteen-year-old girl; English woman strangles her three children and then kills herself; terrible new pogrom in a Jewish community... a hundred killed and three hundred wounded... Tomorrow’s edition will contain a detailed picture of the slain.”¹²⁰ The narrator, a newspaper seller, remarks that “I make my living out of pogroms.”¹²¹

For Brenner’s narrator the Yiddish newspaper is a shameless profiteer of the suffering of Eastern European Jews. In many respects these criticisms of the Yiddish press in Britain is reminiscent of Vortsman’s critique, and of Brenner’s friend Kalman Marmor’s words quoted earlier in the dissertation: “The “*Idisher Ekspres*” over here is a private business paper for publishing paid for advertisements, which it inserts between re-printed reading material from Europe. It is full of errors, printed on cheap, stained newspaper paper.”¹²²

Aside from the newspaper itself Brenner attacks the difficult conditions of the workers in the newspaper itself: The owner Crab tries to maximise the output from his workers: “Even the big clock, on the ground floor shared its master’s strange characteristics: every morning at eight o’clock when the men had to appear for work, it managed to be ten minutes fast; in the evening, on the other hand, when it was time to go home, it had for some reason become a quarter of an hour slow...”¹²³ Things get worse: “The working conditions in Crab’s place have deteriorated: instead of starting at eight, they now begin at

¹²⁰ Brenner, 389.

¹²¹ Brenner, 389.

¹²² Marmor, *Mayn Lebns-Geshikhte*, 586. ‘Der higer ‘Idisher Ekspres’, a privat ‘biznes-blat tsu farefntlekh’n far getsoltn ‘advertaizments’, velkhe er shtelt arayn tsvishn ibergedruktn fargreyztn leze-shtof fun eyrope, oyf bilike, farflekte tsaytung-papir.’

¹²³ Brenner, *Out of the Depths*, 386.

seven o'clock."¹²⁴ When Crab hires new workers he makes sure to question them about their politics: "And you won't organize strikes against me?" Crab asks Menuhin as he employs him as a typesetter. What existing rights the workers do have are increasingly threatened. The perfidy of the Yiddish press when it came to labour politics, as described by Brenner, also clearly had some truth in the real world. The disgraceful labour practices of the *Ekspres* were reported in a letter to the Social Democratic newspaper *Di Tsayt*, the newspaper Brenner worked for.¹²⁵

The fragile balance of the world of Crab's press is disrupted when suspicions arise that Crab, the mercenary owner of the newspaper, is planning on buying new machines that will remove the work of the typesetters. One of the two principle narrative arcs of the novella tells of the resulting struggle by the typesetters of this Yiddish press to organise and win a labour dispute against their exploitative boss Crab. In depicting this failed struggle Brenner satirises the limitations of the British Yiddish intelligentsia. Those already in positions higher up in the hierarchy - Taler, for example, who as a paid staff journalist and president of the union rents the flat where Lieberman is a mere lodger - do much better. Taler sells his union down the river and becomes the editor of Crab's new Yiddish weekly and promptly moves to Stoke Newington to live in relative luxury. Lieberman, who was only a typesetter, is meanwhile left unemployed and destitute, "eating "whatever comes to hand," sleeping at Menuhin's and wandering about all day from the Zionist reading-room to the

¹²⁴ Brenner, 391.

¹²⁵ M Lenovol, "A briv in redaktsyon" [A letter to the editors], *Di Naye Tsayt*, November 4, 1904, 7.

English reading-room, and from there to the two reading-rooms of the missionaries - then back to the Zionist reading room.”¹²⁶ For Brenner the posturing of the leading members of the Yiddish intelligentsia is punctured by their hypocrisy when it comes to action - the need to lead and win a strike is abandoned for the personal enrichment of its leaders.

In parallel to this economic and political struggle there is a personal plot that depicts an unhappy love triangle and links to a past story that comes to inform the present. The young worker Eve - Shemeiah Taler's younger sister - falls pregnant by the gentile Shtaktorov. Eve, as she becomes visibly pregnant, is banished from Crab's press, denying her a livelihood, while her brother's family also refuse to look after her. Brenner makes ample use of this device to underline the hypocrisy this time not of Taler but of his wife Hayyah-Rachel. While she is due to make "a public appearance in "Toynbee Hall" and will lecture on "The women's liberation movement in England" she refuses to look after her sister-in-law and leaves her to destitution.¹²⁷ It is left to Menuhin to try and deal with the consequences of her pregnancy outside of wedlock. After he fails to partner her with the enamoured but hopeless Shalom Lieberman she is forced to emigrate - the text seems to hint that part of her future possibilities might be linked to the Women's slave trade:

Eve, the mother, disappeared - without a trace. Where could she have gone? To her mother in Russia? - Where could she

¹²⁶ Brenner, *Out of the Depths*, 423.

¹²⁷ Brenner, 437. Toynbee Hall, a philanthropic effort to encourage middle class students to improve the lives of the local poor, inspired its own Jewish Toynbee Hall movement. David Rechter, "Improving the Volk: Leon Kellner and the Jewish Toynbee Hall Movement (1900–39)," *Jewish Social Studies: History, Culture, Society* n.s. 24, no. 3 (Spring/Summer 2019): 51–79.

have got the fare? No, a more likely guess is that some obliging folk arranged transport for her to the capital of the Argentine. There's a great demand there for women's flesh.¹²⁸

Brenner invests hope in the narrative that Menuhin, who it transpires had previously saved Shtaktorov's life many years before in Russia, might be able to reestablish order. Instead he is brutally assaulted by Shtaktorov and ends up dead holding Eve's abandoned child.

For Brenner London represents a situation of complete despair. The Yiddish journalists and trade union activists are completely unable to deal with the challenges they face: they cannot win stable or fulfilling employment, they cannot publish journalism which can stand up to serious intellectual or cultural scrutiny, and worst of all they cannot look after their own. The main characters end up either dead (Menuhin), disappeared (Eve) or they emigrate (Lieberman). And yet this indictment of the possibilities that London offered represents something of a paradox. The constellation of individuals, institutions and ideas produces a vivid novella. Yiddish cultural and political life did not stand up to Brenner's scrutiny, and yet the depth of his scrutiny perhaps suggests the depths of hope and ambition that Brenner still held out for Jewish life in Britain.

Conclusion: British Yiddish Literature as an Impossibility.

¹²⁸ Brenner, *Out of the Depths*, 446. For more on the sex trade see Edward J. Bristow, *Prostitution and Prejudice: the Jewish Fight against White Slavery, 1880-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).

Such diverse literary representations of Eastern European Jewish life and politics defy easy categorisation and summary. But this should not mean that no attempt is made to draw together some of the preoccupations that motivate all of the works that are analysed here in depth. If Yiddish literature culture in Britain was heavily influenced by work from other European centres, it also offered its own synthesis and contribution to the development of modern Yiddish literature. Britain may have been a place that was condemned in the writing of the writers above but it was also able to nurse their creativity and publish them in its Yiddish press or out of its Yiddish publishing houses.

All the texts analysed in greater detail above diagnose crisis for Eastern European Jewry - for Polski it is the brutal encounter of the new immigrant with life in London, for Raskin it is the soulless, unartistic life of the immigrant ghetto, for Pozniak and the Milton brothers it is the failure of modern Jewish political movements or their intolerance, and for Brenner it is a combination of all of these. All the texts, as much as the subsequent journeys made by their authors, suggest the unfeasibility of London as a permanent centre for Jewish creativity and political success. The texts attempt to provide solutions to the problems they think are facing Eastern European Jewry, and these lie outside of Britain. Emigration, a new national home, be it in Palestine or America or elsewhere, or simply death, serve as the endpoint for the British Yiddish text.

In some sense this damning of Jewish life in Britain seems to justify many scholars' critical interpretations of Yiddish literature in Britain. If the main concerns of the writers living in Britain and writing in Yiddish were its lack of viability as a creative centre, then it should be no surprise that later scholars decided that Britain's Yiddish literary production did not merit attention. But that would be to miss two key points. Britain, for better or worse, served as a crucial site of encounter for these different artists and intellectuals and influenced their later careers. A more inclusive definition of Yiddish life in Britain would draw attention to this positive contribution these encounters made to British Jewish life. But beyond this there also has to be a greater acceptance of the paradoxical nature of this literature: a withering critique of social and intellectual circumstances can also represent an achievement or contribution from those circumstances. If serious literature in Yiddish in Britain seems an impossibility, it was one that its best writers well realised.

This means that despite the difference and diversity of British Yiddish cultural creation, it seems appropriate to use the term "British Yiddish Literature", or even "English Yiddish Literature". These terms, justified by the literary culture that is epitomised but not confined to the texts analysed in detail above, draw necessary attention to the fact that British or English literature has not always been written in English. But they also contribute to broader histories of Yiddish literature. Of course, many of these writers would not have identified their writing as "British Yiddish" writing: their loyalties may well have lied with Jewish national projects that identified national identity with a burgeoning Jewish nation - in many cases their work is only more studied in the light of

their subsequent achievements - Polski becomes a South African Yiddish writer, Brenner is identified by the use of Hebrew in much of his writing as a proto-Israeli writer. But this chapter draws attention to their thematic interest in the conditions and limitations of Jewish life in Britain to argue that British and English literature should be more inclusive and far less monolingual: otherwise it misses the encounters and developments, cultural and political, of its subjects who are more polylingual and escape definition more than its well-defined pre-existing categories.

Many of the fixations of these texts would not be out of place in a conventional historiography: the attacks on a lack of communal support for poorer Jews, the contestations around different Jewish political opportunities, the competition between Anglo-Jewish and Eastern European Jewish models of arts and politics. And yet these texts, critiques of British Jewish life, perhaps go further than merely adjusting perceptions of a stable Anglo-Jewish identity, confined to the national borders of Britain or England. Instead their hybridity of form in part speaks to one defining characteristic of Britain as a Jewish centre in this period: its status as a centre for transmigration, for impermanence and fluctuation, and its permeation by international discourses and ideologies.

Conclusion

Why did Yiddish decline in Britain? By 1923 it was Yiddish journalists who were producing English-Yiddish publications, not the other way round - as encountered in Chapter 4.¹ As Gartner wrote: "The Anglicisation of the young was effective, as was probably inevitable with or without conscious effort by immigrant or native Jews. In fact, it was so successful that after 1918 the Jewish communal anxiety was to promote Judaization before its Anglicized generation drifted out of reach."² In part the decline in Yiddish was no doubt due to the successful campaigns waged by Anglo-Jewry to anglicise new immigrants through communal institutions. In addition there was the significant reduction in immigration that followed the Aliens Act in 1905 - and more conclusively during and after the First World War.³ Even without these efforts the economic and social structure of British life meant that the use of English offered too many advantages - especially in terms of education and business. Yiddish's consolidation as a crucial component on diasporist and non-Zionist political projects came after Britain had already begun to restrict immigration - and Yiddishist discourses did not flourish in an environment that overall increasingly welcomed English-speaking Jews professional and political settings. With the exception of the Ben Uri gallery, which in any case used much less Yiddish after the first decade of its existence, there were no substantial institutions outside of the press, be they in the fields of

¹ Morris Myer's *Jewish Life*, a short-lived illustrated monthly in Yiddish and English aimed to build bridges, but in a different direction, and from a different position, to those discussed in chapter 4.

² Gartner, *Jewish Immigrant*, 240.

³ This reduction was uneven however, by 1913 levels were similar to pre-1905 (although immigration was already increasing less rapidly than in the United States). Lipman, *Social History*, 141-3, Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 157.

education or community activism, that could sustain or serve as a base for future generations to speak Yiddish.⁴ In addition, the relative appeal of other Jewish centres, and the exceptional mobility offered by Britain, at once at the centre of its own empire and the transatlantic trade, meant that those attached to Yiddish and the social and cultural offerings it offered, could more easily move to other centres. This systematically weakened the strength of communal and institutional efforts to safeguard the future of Yiddish within Britain.

The decline of Yiddish in Britain must not be understood exclusively through the light of its failures but can also be seen through its successes. The use of the Yiddish language may have successively decreased - but the cultural and political priorities of those using the language won over the British Jewish community. British Jews became more interested in Yiddish culture - if in translation - and more connected with the new Jewish politics - integrated into international Zionist politics and continuing to possess an important non-Zionist left. The anglicising agenda of British Jewry may have been successful in perpetuating the use of the English language for its affairs, but the community had decisively changed its political and cultural priorities. Before too long Britain's Jewish community may even have regretted, as per the Gartner quotation above, the exuberance of its anglicisation drive. Perhaps this regret is itself revealing.

⁴ Yiddish has survived to the present day in Britain in the Haredi community. See Bruce Mitchell, *Language Politics and Language Survival: Yiddish among the Haredim in Post-War Britain*, (Leuven: Peeters, 2006).

The disappearance of Yiddish as a major language of Jews in Britain was relatively sudden in the years after 1910 – but its cultural importance remained. The decline can be overstated. Any account of Jewish life in Britain after 1910 needs to account for the importance of Yiddish dailies in Britain during the 1st World War and afterwards. There was also the “Whitechapel Renaissance,” the flourishing of Jewish artists such as David Bomberg (1890-1957), Mark Gertler (1891-1939) and artist and poet Isaac Rosenberg (1890-1918) where the Yiddish journal *Renesans* (London, 1920) played an intriguing role.⁵ Later there came the highbrow cultural and political weekly *Dos Fraye Wort* (The Free Word, London, 1933-35). There was a varied and successful literary scene in Britain in the 1930s and the Yiddish theatre continued throughout the 20th century in progressively diminishing scope.⁶ Perhaps most famous of all is the Whitechapel poet, “the uncrowned laureate of Yiddish London”, Avrom Nokhem-Stencl (1897-1983), who continued his literary and cultural activity into the 1980s with his journal *Loshn un Lebn* (London, 1945-83).⁷

The deeper legacy of the Yiddish political and cultural world in Britain - outside of Yiddish newspapers and publications - is harder to pinpoint. There is the appreciation of Eastern European culture that started to become visible in the non-Yiddish language Jewish press. There was also the activism

⁵ See Grafen, “Whitechapel Renaissance” and [Forthcoming] Alexander Grafen and William Pimlott, “Jewish Art and Yiddish Art History: Leo Koenig’s *Renesans*,” in *Shofar* (March, 2022).

⁶ Vivi Lachs, *East End Jewish Life*.

⁷ *YCiB*, 597-99.

between and within Jewish political worlds which in the years 1896-1910 was dominated by Yiddish. These movements remained influenced by the ethos of their development in these years. Marmor, Weizmann and Gaster's battle against the Uganda scheme was in a sense a trial run for the diplomacy of later Zionist actions such as the Balfour declaration; we might wonder if Theodor Rothstein would have become Soviet Ambassador to Iran if he had not been present in circles adjacent to Lenin in 1904. These movements also built links and groupings of individuals which would help in future struggles.⁸ Yiddish has also left a deep nostalgic trace of an otherness which an anglicised British Jewry now longs for.

And yet a key emphasis of this dissertation has been to try and refute the teleology of defining what Yiddish in Britain meant by how it was perceived afterwards, or on the basis of models imposed from abroad. In Israel Zangwill's work, and much Anglo-Jewish writing, Yiddish is represented as the symbol of a Jewish difference that is left behind or inaccessible. To return to Shandler's observation about Jewish difference, quoted in part in the introduction:

The varied esteem accorded to Yiddish corresponds to how both Jews and others conceptualize Jewish difference in diasporic settings and how the lives of *yidn fun a gants yor*—a Yiddish idiom meaning “ordinary Jews”—are understood in relation to elite populations, concepts, and mores, internal as well as external, traditional as well as modern. Over time, the

⁸ Jerry White gives a very useful demonstration of this when assessing the activist of Morris Mindl and the Workers' Circle – this organisation, active since at least the 1900s, may have been most important in the antifascist struggle of the 1930s. See Jerry White, *Rothschild Buildings: Life in an East End Tenement Block 1887-1920* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), 252-255.

relationship among Yiddish, its speakers, and their cultures has proved to be more unsettled, especially as Ashkenazim encounter modern ideas and practices that prompt new understandings of Jews as a people and how they might lead their lives, including their employment of language. These developments variously expand and contract Jews' use of Yiddish and alter their understanding of its significance.⁹

Yiddish in Britain in the years 1896-1910 represented an important expansion of Jews' use of Yiddish - and a crucial opening - not a closing off. This dissertation has been the story of encounters, transactions and exchanges, where Yiddish was the key conduit. The first chapter of this dissertation told the unlikely story of Gavazzi King, liberal agent and non-Jewish druid, founding what would become Britain's first sustained Yiddish commercial newspaper. This was a case of a non-Jew reaching to Yiddish to try and win votes for their cause. The evolution of this newspaper - its polemics under Leon Dolidanski, Elieser Leizerovitz and others, represented an encounter between an Eastern European intelligentsia and the difficulties of British Jewish immigrant life. Both chapters 2 and 3 explored the different ways the new Jewish politics - expanded to include Zionism and Jewish Social Democracy - presented itself – and fought each other - within the immigrant Jewish community. Chapter 3 showed the frustrations of a different, more radical set of Yiddish language journalists and writers with the limitations of Jewish life in Britain - and their attempts to offer another way of living. Chapter 4 showed that the Yiddish press, partly as a result of its success, also became a space that Anglo-Jewry wanted to intervene in - and traced individuals that moved between the two worlds. Lastly chapter 5

⁹ Shandler, *Yiddish*, 5.

showed how a variety of Eastern European Jewish immigrants used the apparatus of modern Yiddish and Hebrew literature to try and synthesise the complex experience of Jewish life in Britain.

These interactions reveal that Jewish immigrant life was at once a subculture and a counterculture. Anglo-Jewry had sought and succeeded, through emancipation, to reach a compromise between Jewish identity and English norms – to exist as a subculture. Elements of immigrant Jewry followed this subcultural path. The hostility of the journalists of the *Ekspres* and the *Zhurnal* to trade unionism and the younger generation of radicals is one expression of this moderate reformism. While Dolidanski, Leizerovitz et al might have debated the terms that Anglo-Jewry accepted for admission to and tolerance within British society - stressing a greater emphasis on the importance of Jewish languages, education and religious culture - they still accepted an emancipatory framework. It was the younger generation of radicals, Marmor, Vortsman, Rothsteyn et al who rejected anglicisation in favour of different modulations of more revolutionary socialism and Jewish nationalism. This meant that British Jewry was at once a subculture and a counterculture - the tension between these positions informed much of the conflict within the polemics of the Yiddish press in Britain.

Contradictory processes existing at the same time is also the story of this “dialectic of immigration”, to return to Bill Williams phrasing. The paradox that the flourishing of a modern Yiddish press and literary culture within Britain occurred at the same time as extensive anglicisation is not necessarily a

contradiction. In fact, these two processes in part mutually reinforced each other. This means that this dissertation in no sense denies the importance of anglicisation. It argues only that the countervailing process must be understood along with it.

Britain was a tolerant centre, a refuge, an *ir miklat*. Meetings between the different political and cultural strata of Eastern European Jewry flourished in this midpoint between Eastern Europe and the United States. And what was written and discussed served as an important precursor to the broader ideological conflicts that defined Jewish life in the early 20th Century: the disputes between Jewish nationalism and socialism, between emancipation and Jewish nationalism. At the peripheries of the Socialist Zionists and Social Democrats were Lenin, Weizmann, Mani Leyb, Ahad Ha'am. This happened in part because, as mentioned earlier, Yiddish cultural life in Britain was defined by an openness of exchange: between non-Jews and Jews, English Jews and immigrant Jews, and between different parts of the Jewish intelligentsia. The Aliens Act (1906) and the increasing strength of other Yiddish centres - as well as the failure of revolution in Russia in 1905 fragmented and scattered much of this generation of Yiddish intellectuals.

The Yiddish press in this period possessed formidable intellectual talents. Yiddish journalists tried to read and contextualise British Jewish life, especially with the growth of antisemitic agitation (1901-1906), within broader British Jewish histories that went back to Israel ben Menasseh (1604-1657) and even to expulsion (1290). Yiddish writers could fuse Eastern European

literary traditions with modern European aesthetics, producing varied artworks that satirised and lamented the difficulties of Eastern European Jewish life, particularly in Britain. And those histories were also put into the tortured narrative of Jewish life in Europe - the relative successes and failures of emancipation. By approaching the work of those living and writing in Britain in an inclusive way - defining their belonging to the British Jewish community not by their place of birth but where they wrote and what they chose to write about - this dissertation also tries to make a contribution to the intellectual and cultural history of British Jewry. Britain was not an intellectual backwater – and this was certainly not the case within Britain’s Yiddish press.

The introduction underlined the usefulness of comparison between London and New York, between Britain and the US. New York is often regarded as the quintessential site of modern Jewish politics outside of Eastern Europe and Palestine. In fact, it is possible that New York and the American Yiddish press were more of an exception within the global Yiddish public sphere than the norm.¹⁰ In Britain a Jewish national politics, often Zionist, occupied a much stronger position than the social democratic forces. It was strongly represented in a burgeoning commercial Yiddish press. In Britain the forces of exclusion impacted the possibilities of Jewish cultural activity much earlier

¹⁰ The following studies have been used as a point of comparison when characterising the history of Jewish life in the US: Hasia Diner, *The Jews of the United States: 1654 to 2000* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), Annie Polland and Daniel Soyer, *Emerging Metropolis: New York Jews in the Age of Immigration, 1840-1920* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), Howe, *World of our Fathers*. The most important work for direct comparison is: Selma Berrol, *East Side/ East End: Eastern European Jews in London and New York, 1870-1920* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1994).

than in the United States. A growth in local hostility in Britain was followed by restriction of immigration. Beyond these larger differences there are smaller ones that have some importance: in Britain the English language journalistic sphere overlapped more significantly with the Yiddish press through English newspapers publishing Yiddish supplements. In Britain the *Ekspres*, the leading newspaper of the period 1896-1910, was even founded by a non-Jew. These differences, when taken altogether, suggest that historians must exert caution when taking the American Jewish, or simply New York, experience as a blueprint for Jews in diaspora.

The significant influence of American Yiddish culture on Britain - and the reverse, at least in terms of the trajectories of individuals, means that any comparison also needs to underline that 20th century Jewish politics and culture was as much an exchange between different centres as the result of influence travelling from centres to margins. In this respect this dissertation argues for a conception of modern Jewish identities being created polycentrically across diaspora. Perhaps the metaphor of a relay race fits better than tired notions of centres and margins. Britain's Jewry's historiographical tradition has not sought to place such an importance on immigrant activity in this period as constituting British Jewish identity (as in the American case).¹¹ Instead it has focussed on the established Jewish community's influence and impact on immigrant Jews and their powers of direction. This no doubt reflects different conceptions of the role of

¹¹ The most important analysis of the difficulty in "recognising the Jewishness of Jews who figured in British history and assigning this Jewishness, however defined, an active or causative role" is to be found in Todd Endelman, "Writing English Jewish History," *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 27:4 (Winter 1995): 629-632.

immigrants in the respective societies. American ideologues have longer underscored immigration as constitutive of the nation, whereas Britain and England in particular has often laid more emphasis on constructions of indigeneity and precedence. Any comparison should also lead to serious reflection on why Britain has failed to sustain polylingual press communities - beyond mere demographic differences - and what the testimonies of those presses have to say about British intolerance and xenophobia.

The development of the Yiddish press in Britain – and the concomitant new mass politics and new Yiddish culture, did not go unnoticed in Eastern Europe. The Eastern European Yiddish press was interested in Jewish and immigrant Jewish life in Britain. This interest was sustained across several years, and articles written by some of the most prominent Yiddish journalists in Britain were published by Eastern European Yiddish newspapers such as *Der Yud* and *Der Fraynd*. To some extent the coverage no doubt reflected the priorities of these journalists, who often commented on the local issues that motivated them or their political movements.¹² The relative success of the *Arbayter Fraynd* in its intervention in this or that dispute, or the internecine conflict between Zionists and Territorialists were covered. Other articles were more clearly tailored towards the interests of those in Eastern Europe. A chief concern was the viability of Britain as a site of immigration. Yekhezkel Vortsman emphasised how difficult the economic situation was,

¹² See Avrom Frumkin (pseud. Aviv), "Briv fun london," [Letter from London] *Der Fraynd*, May 21, 1906, 4, Elieser Leizerovitz (pseud. Bas Kol), "Briv fun london," [Letter from London] *Der Fraynd*, January 19, 1905, 1.

especially for those without professions.¹³ The Yiddish press in Eastern Europe was one of the most important sources for information for prospective emigrants and for the families of those who had left already. The turn towards exclusion in the British context, be it the Aliens Act or other acts of antisemitism, clearly worried Eastern European readerships. The volume of articles on this subject is thus a sign both of its prominence within Britain and of its ramifications for Eastern European Jews.¹⁴ In this respect Britain, once synonymous with the United States for its tolerance and openness, was at risk of becoming a template for further restrictions. Special interest was paid to the role of economics in the ghetto: British debates held in Britain around the economic functions of immigrant Jews, and their success, were relayed to Eastern Europe.¹⁵ The British Yiddish community could even be a model for modernisation and reformation projects for the transformation of East European Jewry. Britain's tolerance, and its flourishing Jewish institutions, offered an example of what a reformed and liberal Russia might bring. Britain thus has to be understood both as a worrying omen for the future of transnational migration, and an example of what tolerance and freedom might be able to bring to Jewish projects of modernity. As an article quoted in the first chapter of this dissertation announced: "You see that we are no longer in Eysishok!" was one rallying cry announcing British Jewish

¹³ Yekhezkel Vortsman, "Yudishe parnosos in London," *Der Yud*, [Jewish livelihoods in London] December 4, 1902, 5-8.

¹⁴ See Elieser Leizerovitz (pseud. Bas Kol), "Briv fun london," [Letter from London] *Der Fraynd* March 10, 1903, 2-3, June 4, 1903, 1-2, June 17, 1904, 1, January 3, 1905, 1 and Avrom Frumkin (pseud. Aviv), "Briv fun london," [Letter from London] *Der Fraynd*, April 2, 1906, 1, June 10, 1906, 1, September 3, 1906, 1-2.

¹⁵ Yeshaye Rafalovitsh, "Dos leben fun di yudishe emigrantn in London" [The life of Jewish emigrants in London], *Der Yud*, May 3, 1900, 3-6. Rafalovitsh cites Beatrice Webb, Charles Booth and the *Select Committee on the Sweating System* to analyse Jewish economic success. This economic argument is explored in greater depth in Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, 187-190.

modernity.¹⁶ More research can help further define the exact influence of British Yiddish life on developments in Eastern Europe.

It is important too, as in the introduction, to look to compare the Jewish experience treated in this dissertation with that of other immigrant groups. There is a substantial and growing literature on other immigrant communities within Britain - but there is still a reticence to use source material that lies outside of the English language, especially when looking at how immigrants negotiated their new lives within Britain.¹⁷ Recent comparative work offers precious insights into how these groups might usefully be compared - and has emphasised similarities between waves of immigration across centuries.¹⁸ Different groups of immigrants have often immigrated to the same urban spaces (the East End in London for example), undergone the same processes (acculturation, anglicisation, social mobility) and made use of similar, if not the same, philanthropic services (temporary shelters).¹⁹ The continuity between different immigrant groups has been emphasised, and they have been fixed into a master-narrative of progress and success, where anglicisation is a necessary and important part of integration.

¹⁶ Yeshaye Rafalovitsh, "Dos leben fun di yudishe emigrantn in London" [The life of Jewish emigrants in London], *Der Yud*, May 10, 1900, 3-6. "

¹⁷ A notable exception is the recent edited volume edited by Constance Bantman and Ana Claudia Suriana da Silva, *The Foreign Political Press in Nineteenth-Century London: Politics from a distance* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017).

¹⁸ Anne Kershen's work has been pioneering in this respect. See Anne J. Kershen, *Strangers, Aliens, and Asians: Huguenots, Jews, and Bangladeshis in Spitalfields, 1660-2000* (London: Routledge, 2005) and a collected volume of essays on London she edited, *London: The Promised Land? The Migrant Experience in a Capital City* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1997). Kershen points to the same spaces, areas and challenges that these groups confront - across a broad historical period. On the labour movement and immigrant communities there is Renshaw's important work: *Socialism and the Diasporic Other*. In general this work has originated from historians of Britain's Jewish community.

¹⁹ Kershen, *Strangers, Aliens, and Asians*, Panikos Panayi, *Migrant City: A New History of London* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020), 34.

This dissertation has shown how Jewish immigrants c1900 often did not share this perspective - and this suggests that the same might well be true for other waves of immigration. In addition, the differences between the Jewish community and other subsequent communities are substantial. This should lead to some caution when making broader comparisons. Eastern European Jews were immigrating to a country with a Jewish community that had long been established in Britain and which was developing an increasingly sophisticated apparatus (if at times it was oppositional and even actively negative) to try and help them. Even in this partially exceptional circumstance many slipped through the safety net that was being fashioned. A key issue for the Yiddish press and the broader immigrant community was the indifference and inaction that it thought British Jews showed to their immigrant coreligionists, and the hostility the British state showed. Historians now turn to this period of Jewish immigration as if it offered exemplary opportunities and superior support. Historian of immigration, Panikos Panayi, comments, when discussing refugees in contemporary Britain who are left without no recourse to public funds (and are thus labelled “NRPF’s”):

It seems difficult to imagine how these ghosts [NRPF’s] at the bottom of the London housing market, who would face deportation if they came back to life again, could ever experience the type of social mobility which characterized the lives of Russian Jewish émigrés who moved to the East End in the late nineteenth century...²⁰

²⁰ Panayi, *Migrant City*, 35.

Panayi is no doubt correct to underline the considerable difference in access to philanthropic and social help that exists between the two groups.

However, even Eastern European Jewish immigration should not serve as a model for a painless or easier immigration.²¹ The words of Russian Jewish émigrés themselves paint a much more complex picture of the difficulties of immigration. Even amidst considerable opportunities for social mobility they criticised the political and cultural compromises they were expected to make to conform to an “English” norm. The Yiddish press may have been unique in the scope and varieties of expression it gave to sentiments of exclusion and disadvantage. However, it also represents a challenge moving onwards to find resonances in these stories for other immigrants who find themselves on the wrong side of political and linguistic barriers. It is not just the patterns of social mobility and anglicisation that merit attention, but also the echoes across British immigration history of narratives that might critique anglicisation and give a voice to those excluded and marginalised from economic or political enfranchisement.

It is important to again emphasise that much of the written record of this community is the product of a particular class and gender: a male intelligentsia of journalists and writers who made appeals to the everyman but remained themselves something of an elite. Often what they wrote was also an attempt to convert those who were reading them to their own political ends. The case of Yehudah Beskin is prescient. The *Ekspres*’ highly

²¹ Jewish immigration is repeatedly used as the key point of comparison by Panayi. Panayi, *Migrant City*, 36, 42, 48-49.

motivated campaign around his death in the workhouse was also an opportunity to attack the clergy and position itself as the main spokesperson for immigrant Jewry. Likewise, while a synthesis such as *Tsharli der unterpreser* remains an important insight into how immigrant Jewry narrated its immigration, we are still far from knowing completely how actual *Shayes* became *Charlies*.

This does not mean it is wrong to try. The richness of the Yiddish press as source material, but also as active agent and institution of immigrant Jewry, means that there is still much to explore. Likewise this dissertation hopefully demonstrates how important “foreign” languages are to the study of life in Britain. They too may evidence immigrant’s encounter with English culture as dialectic: of anglicisation meeting an opposite and prevailing force. There is an urgent need for an appreciation of the different British and English histories and literatures, and for them to be studied in their correct polylingual context, and not simply in English. These new press cultures and literatures will help to describe and imagine how different lives were led - they will also show a similar intensity of exchange and creation to that which Yiddish in Britain realised.

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