

Citizenship and Belonging:
East London Jewish Radicals 1903-1918

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Abstract

This thesis is about citizenship and belonging: how citizenship has articulated with or against different forms, practices and spaces of belonging. It examines Jewish East London in the period from 1903 to the end of the First World War and is based on original archival research. It argues that this period saw the emergence of a new form of racialized biopolitical citizenship, which was normalized in the “state of emergency” that was the war. This citizenship was framed by the imperial context, was based on singular “either/or” identities and was defined against the figure of alien. The thesis also argues that, in the same period, an alternative space of political belonging existed in East London, based on different forms of political rationality and threaded through with multiple loyalties and identifications, that challenged the either/or logic of the nation-state. Consequently, Jewish radicals who operated in this alternative public sphere developed understandings of political belonging which cut against the grain of the nation-state, and thus offer resources for thinking about citizenship today.

The thesis seeks to unsettle some of the conventional languages of citizenship and political belonging by historicizing them: by concentrating on the specific way in which modern citizenship emerged in imperial Britain, and on the material processes by which this citizenship was policed and mapped. The thesis examines a series of different spaces and scales of political belonging. It attempts to keep in focus regimes of visibility, subjectification and governmentality that produce these spaces *and* the practices of belonging and cultural traditions that wove through them.

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A Note on Language, Transcription and Pronunciation

A fundamental feature of the Jewish diaspora has been its polyglot nature. Jews have traditionally lived at the interstices of nations and empires, in the space of translation between languages. In addition to the languages of the states in which they have lived, they have maintained a number of Jewish languages. The most important of these in relation to this thesis is Yiddish, the vernacular language of the Ashkenazi stream of the Jewish diaspora – the population that dispersed through Germany, which is called *Ashkenaz* in Hebrew.

Like English, Yiddish is a hybrid, mongrel language. The original elements were the bundle of ancient Semitic languages known as *loshn-koydesh*, “holy tongue”, and an ancient Judeo-Romance language which linguistic historians call Loez.¹ (These *loshn-koydesh* elements are pronounced very differently in Yiddish than they are in modern Israeli Hebrew, whose pronunciation is based more on Sephardic patterns of speech.) Through the migrations of the Ashkenazi people, through Germany and into Eastern Europe, medieval German and then Slavic vocabulary entered Yiddish.

Historically, there have been a number of regional variants on Yiddish – *Litvak* or “Lithuanian” Yiddish from the north-eastern part of Jewish Eastern Europe, “Ukrainian” or south-eastern, “Polish” or central, and Western. From the late nineteenth century, with the emergence of modern Yiddish literature and a transnational Yiddish public sphere, there was an effort to develop a standard Yiddish. Out of this movement, a standard way of writing Yiddish emerged, which – with the exception of the *loshn-koydesh* lexicon, which are written in their original Hebrew or Aramaic form – is rigorously phonetic.² Consequently, a standard set of rules for transliteration into Latin letters has been codified (see Weinreich 1953:19-24, 1977:xx-xxv), which I set out below.

In using Yiddish words, I have always followed this standard code, but, following Leonard Prager (1990), when quoting from texts, I have transcribed these texts as they are written, even when this departs from standard Yiddish orthography. I have done this because I believe the spelling itself is an example of the ways in which identities were constructed within the text. Left-wing Yiddish of this period was full of “New High Germanisms” (derogatively referred to as *daytmerish*), such as silent Hs and Es that are not used in standard modern Yiddish; rather than force their texts to conform to standard Yiddish, I have retained their spelling. Hence, for example, I have spelled the name of the main anarchist publication of this period *Der Arbayer Fraynd*, following *their* Yiddish spelling, rather than *Der Arbeter Fraynt*, which would be standard Yiddish today.

Pronunciation

Most consonants are pronounced in Yiddish as in English and there are also three additional consonants:

KH pronounced like the CH in Scottish LOCH. Example: KHEVRE

ZH pronounced like the Z in SEIZURE or the J in French JAMAIS. Example: ZHITLOVSKI

¹ Weinreich (1980).

² In the Soviet Union, during the brief period when Yiddish scholarship flourished there, this logic was taken further into the phonetic spelling of all Yiddish words, including *loshn-koydesh* ones.

TS pronounced like the TS in English PARTS, in Yiddish it constitutes a letter in itself and can occur at the start of the word, as in TSU (to)

Vowels and diphthongs are pronounced as followed:

- A** as A in FATHER: LAND (land)
E as E in BET: LENDER (lands), FELKER (people), BESER (better)
I between the EE in FEET and the I in FIT: SHTIBL (informal congregation), YIDISH (Yiddish/Jewish)
O between the O in DONE and the AW in DAWN: MONTIK (Monday)
U similar to OO in BOOK or LOOK: UNDZER (our)
- AY** similar to IGH in HIGH or I in MINE: MAYN (mine), FAYN (fine)
EY similar to EI in VEIN or WEIGH, or A in PLANE: SHEYN (nice), MEYDL (girl)
OY similar to OY in BOY: GROYS (big)

Every letter is pronounced in Yiddish. So, for example:

- when two vowels are together apart from these three diphthongs, each is pronounced separately: GEENTFERT (answered, pronounced GE-ENTFERT).
- when an E is found at the end of a word it is pronounced and it does not affect any preceding vowels: AMERIKE (America, pronounced almost as in English), ALE (all, pronounced a bit like Allah).

Other Points:

- Occasionally, I have cited Russian or Hebrew words. These are always cited from secondary sources, so I have simply used the transliteration employed by the source I am citing.
- In all quotations, whether from primary documents or theoretic texts, all emphases are as in the original, unless otherwise stated.
- I have tended to use the proper names people are most well-known by in English, especially if that is a name they published under in English, even if this differs from whatever Russian or Yiddish name they might have had before they arrived in England. Thus, for example, I have used the name Morris Winchevsky, not Morits Vintshevski, as his name is written in Yiddish. I have decided to use the spelling Milly Witkop rather than Millie Witcop, as that is the more common spelling and the one she used in the last period of her life in America, but for her sister used Rose Witcop, as that was the spelling she published in English under.

I have included, as Appendix II, a glossary of some of the Yiddish and other terms used in this thesis.

Introduction

This thesis is about East London Jewish radicals in the early twentieth century, focusing on their practices of belonging in the face of assimilation and exclusion. It looks at the period from 1903, the year of the Kishinev pogrom in Russia and the Royal Commission on Alien Immigration in England, until 1918, the end of the First World War. The thesis places original archival research next to contemporary debates about the politics of citizenship, showing how these theoretical debates upset and reconfigure conventional histories of the period *and* how the unruly histories I have traced in the archive destabilize and reconfigure the theoretical debates.

Citizenship and Belonging

Britain in the years up to and including the First World War saw a proliferation of discourses and images of citizenship, some overlapping and some contradictory; citizenship was constantly re-defined. For example, there were: classical liberal discourses of “English liberty”, contrasted to the perceived despotism of “the Continent”; discourses of purity and hygiene influenced by eugenics and degeneration theories and framed by empire; increasingly militarized and racialized versions of national citizenship articulated in particular during the Boer War and especially the World War; assimilationist discourses associated with Anglo-Jewry stressing the importance of *becoming* English or *learning* citizenship; and conceptions of “active” and “social” citizenship associated with the Settlement House movement and Toynbee Hall. Many of these discourses and images of citizenship were developed in the encounter with the East End, and especially the Jewish East End – and sometimes specifically Jewish radicals or “alien sedition”. What all of these images and discourses stressed was citizenship as *singular identity*, a singular identity which was racialized – and increasingly so in the period covered by this thesis – and into which the Jewish migrants fitted uneasily. Citizenship, that is, was “predicated on the (usually unspoken) assumption of cultural homogeneity” (Hall 2000:210). Citizenship, announcing itself as emancipation, was also the demand for cultural conformity to an increasingly racialized nation.¹

¹ Bauman (1991), Goldberg (1994, 2001), Silverman (1991, 1992).

A century later, the intensity of what Papastergiadis (1999) terms the “turbulence of migration” has led to a re-thinking of the nation-state and its citizens. While some commentators have suggested that we are already living the end of the nation-state and national identity,² others have been interested in the possibility of a renewed and perhaps more cosmopolitan version of citizenship. Giddens, for example, has spoken of “cosmopolitan democracy” as part of a new politics of citizenship, while David Held has spoken explicitly of “cosmopolitan citizenship”.³

In Britain, this theoretical interest has run parallel to (and informed) a debate about new forms of citizenship within public policy – from Douglas Hurd’s espousal of “active citizenship” and John Major’s “Citizen’s Charter”, intensifying since 1997 under New Labour, partly due to the influence of some of the “cosmopolitan democracy” thinkers on the Blair project. This public policy discourse is played out at a variety of scales, from the incitement of younger and younger school students to become “active citizens”, through to the veritable proliferation of citizenship talk in the wake of the riots in Northern England in Summer 2001.⁴

My aim in this thesis is to *historicize* some of the conventional grammars we use for thinking political belonging (citizenship, nationality, Englishness), and to juxtapose this history to a counter-history, the story of a *dissident public sphere* outside the official space of citizenship. My research emphasizes the fact that today’s common sense understandings of British citizenship and political participation are a distinctly modern phenomenon; they came into being at a particular historical moment and are inscribed with the ideological imperatives of that moment. Above all, they are marked by the traces of the encounter between Englishness and its various others – both in Britain (the seditious alien) and abroad (the colonial native). For this reason, we need a *genealogy of citizenship from the perspective of its others*, its excluded, its edges and limits: on one hand, how race has been inscribed within citizenship; on the other hand, alternative grammars of political belonging.

² e.g. Andrew Marr *The Day That Britain Died* (2000), Tom Nairn *After Britain* (2000), whose hyperbolic announcements are encapsulated in the titles of their books.

³ See, e.g., Archibugi and Held (1995), Archibugi et al (1998), Giddens (1985, 1993, 1998a, 1998b), Held (1995, 1999), Held and McGrew (1999), Kohler et al (1999).

⁴ The Home Secretary David Blunkett and the Denham report and the Cattle report investigating the disturbances called for a stronger concept of citizenship based on a stronger sense of national civic identity and shared values (see *The Guardian* 11.12.2001 as well as the more thorough discussion in the Conclusion below).

The political practices and languages generated by the East End Jews themselves, and particularly by their radical movements, jarred against the dominant forms of citizenship being articulated at that time. Although some immigrants and their children were willing to pay the price of assimilation, others were not. On a local level, a dense network of spaces and media was created, which formed an alternative or dissident ghetto public sphere of active political participation outside the formal space of citizenship. This sphere was polyglot, but mainly Yiddish; was conducted along different lines of political rationality; and was threaded through with loyalties that cut against the singular identities of citizenship discourse.

On a wider level, the East End Jews saw themselves as part of trans-local political spaces, many of which looked East rather than West. As I will discuss here, belonging to these wider spaces was sometimes articulated in terms borrowed from – but significantly enlarging – citizenship vocabulary (e.g. in the language of the Foreign Jews Protection Committee or Israel Zangwill, which gestured toward the possibility of both local and trans-national forms of citizenship); sometimes it was articulated in terms which flatly contradicted this vocabulary (e.g. in the Workers' War Emergency Relief Fund, which elaborated political loyalties based on kinship and neighbourliness).

What these ghetto radicals articulated, I will argue, was a rejection of any notion of singular identity, of the idea of pinned down, absolute identities: English *or* Jewish, loyalty to this country *or* that one, to Israel *or* the United Kingdom, the place of birth *or* the place of settlement. The Jewish radicals of the East End did not accept these either/or choices; instead, I will argue, they practised an identity that was open and questioning rather than closed and final.

Thinking Belonging

Thinking in terms of belonging runs against the grain of some postmodern and poststructuralist thought, which has often either seen Jewishness as a paradigmatic form of *non*-belonging or been suspicious of belonging in itself. In this view, belonging is seen as opening a space for ethnic absolutism, essentialism or even (for Bauman (1997)) “tribalism”.

Zygmunt Bauman's *Modernity and Ambivalence* (1991) remains one of the most insightful accounts of assimilation and the emergence of modern citizenship. While I have drawn heavily on his account here (see especially chapter 3), I am unhappy

with the version of anti-essentialism through which Bauman understands Jewish belonging. Following Fredrik Barth's famous statement that the "critical focus of investigation.... becomes the ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff it encloses" (1969:15), Bauman argues that

It is not ethnic, cultural or religious peculiarity that divides people into ethnic categories. Rather, it is *social segregation*... Ethnicity does not explain the perpetuation of differentiated patterns of intercourse. It is, rather, the social distance and mutual autonomy created and sustained by the persistence of such patterns that leads to differentiation of cultural perspectives... the relation between ethnic identities and social intercourse can be seen as the priority of ethnic boundaries over ethnic content (1988a:66).

Barth's (and Bauman's) analysis has an important strength in turning attention to segregatory practices, both spatial and cultural. In their model, racialized others (in this case, the Eastern Jews) have certain stigmata (Goffman's word) or *diacritica* (Barth's word) attached to them to differentiate them from the majority (in this case, the Westerners) (Bauman 1991:67). For instance, Bauman identifies public propriety and language as two of the key domains where the stigmata of the Eastern Jews were produced. However, in Bauman's rendering of this story, the stigmata of the Eastern Jews are purely products of the logic of modernity or of the process of assimilation. There is no sense of a possibility that shtetl Jews might actually have had different codes of public conduct or enjoyed linguistic dexterity in their vernacular tongues.⁵

In a lengthy footnote in *Modernity and Ambivalence*, Bauman takes time out to polemicize against John Murray Cuddihy, who suggested that

the torments of assimilation were the outcome of a 'culture shock' with which the successive generations of educated Jews, burdened with an 'uncanny pre-modern nexus', could not cope; they were unable to really embrace the 'Gentile culture' in which they felt 'ill at ease' because of its

⁵ In Bauman's case, I think this relates to his own experience of Jewish identity. In an interview, he has said that "On the whole, for most of my life... Jewishness played a very small role, if at all." He identifies three moments when it did play some role in his life. The first was the irruption in the late 1960s of anti-semitism in Poland that partly inspired his move to England. The second was the impact of his wife Janina Bauman's book about her Holocaust experience, published in 1986. The third was his ensuing engagement with the Holocaust and Jewishness as a "window, through which you can see other things": his engagement with the conditions of estrangement which have provided an insight, from Marx to Derrida, into modernity. Being everywhere out of place, one's typewriter as one's homeland: this is Jewishness for Bauman. He admits that "all this is rather intellectual and unemotional" (1992:226-7). But these are also all *negative* experiences of Jewishness: anti-semitism, extermination, estrangement. In other words, Bauman has no engagement with what Barth calls the "cultural stuff", the positive content, of Jewish culture, whether with *yidishkayt* or with the cultural practices of any of the other diverse trajectories within the wider Jewish diaspora.

depersonalized courtesy replacing the truly Jewish warm and utterly personal togetherness: 'The differentiations most foreign to the *shtetl* subculture of *Yiddishkeit* were those of public from private behaviour and of manners from morals' (1991:135, n.40).

Thus, for Cuddihy, the Jews were intrinsically subversive of modernity. Bauman sees Cuddihy's view as an updated version of the anti-semitic notion that Jews really – essentially – *couldn't* assimilate.

In Cuddihy's essentialist view, *everything* is down to intrinsic pre-modern characteristics of the Jews. In Bauman's anti-essentialist view, there is *nothing* intrinsic to the Jews, nothing that they carry with them from their pre-modern *shtetlekh*; everything is down to the dominant culture. In offering us the stark choice between his view and Cuddihy's essentialism, Bauman makes it hard to see that we have other choices.

Bauman insists that it is always difference, and never any internal traditions, internal resources, which give meaning to cultural identities. However, I am not sure that going to pray twice every day in an attic room, going to see a Yiddish play set in Lithuania or a Yiddish film made in Poland are simply stigmata or diacritics. They are better understood, I think, as *practices of belonging*.

Other poststructuralist and postmodern thinkers are suspicious of a language of belonging. Derrida, for example, has said in an interview that "each time some belonging circumscribes me, if I may put it this way, someone or something cries out: Watch out, there's a trap, you're caught" (Ewald 1995:n.p.). "I have a taste for the secret," he writes, "it clearly has to do with not belonging... Belonging – the fact of avowing one's belonging, of putting in common – be it family, nation, tongue – spells the loss of the secret" (2001a:59). At the same time, he associates Jewishness with *non*-belonging. Of his expulsion from school in Algeria under anti-semitic laws, he has said: "thus expelled, I became the outside" (1978:289) and elsewhere that this moment led him to "cultivate a sort of not-belonging to French culture and to France in general, but also, in some way, to reject my belonging to Judaism... [This is the basis of my attempt to] rationalize and transform not-belonging into an ethico-political duty, saying that belonging is a non-belonging, and

saying that is on the basis of non-belonging that faithfulness is constructed” (2001a:39).⁶

Ammiel Alcalay, Victor Seidler, Max Silverman, Jonathan Boyarin and others have developed critiques of the way that postmodern and poststructuralist thought, in its suspicion of belonging, has often erased the “cultural stuff” carried by Jewish traditions and practices. Alcalay criticizes the “ethnocentric and simplistic ideology of equivalence (that of Jew=Writing=Book)” found in literary critical and philosophical work on figures like Edmond Jabès or Kafka, “without being attentive enough to the actual linguistic and cultural ‘collective duration’ from which the work emerges” (1993:64). Similarly, Seidler has criticized the “attenuated thinness” of the postmodern self and postmodern “free-floating” identities, which can erase the way the histories of oppressed groups produce forms of belonging that carry a certain moral weight (1986:176). “With postmodernism there is a greater theoretical space for the exploration of diverse identities and the creation of new hybrid identities, but often we identify with freedom before we have really understood the complex attachments to culture and tradition” (2000:15).

Silverman has criticized the way that some anti-essentialist post-modern thinkers have “refigured ‘the Jew’”; Lyotard, Nancy, Lacoue-Labarthe and others, for example, have replaced real Jews with imaginary ‘Jews’ or even ‘jews’. One way of doing this is through the image of the ‘Jew’ or ‘jew’ as nomad. For Silverman, among the problems with this tendency is the notion of Jews as essentially passive: the other “as simply an object of an originary gaze, simply someone else’s representation rather than having any active subject-status, mediatory power or history of its own”. Second, this perspective implies a tyrannical closing and univocalizing of otherness – a denial, in other words, of the dirty multiplicity of the Occident’s others. These, he argues, lead to an “evacuation of history” (1998:200-1). Boyarin has similarly warned of the post-modern or anti-essentialist reduction of flesh and blood Jews to philosophical metaphors into which thinkers such as Nancy and Blanchot occasionally lapse:

⁶ In Derrida’s work, belonging is often tied to nationality, and to a particular version of nationalized citizenship that Jews stand outside of. For instance, in “On Forgiveness”, Derrida speaks of an insistence on not being “defined through and through by citizenship, by the statutory belonging to a Nation-State”, and defines that part of us which “exceeds” this statutory belonging as “the secret” (2001a:54-5). Elsewhere, he discusses the secret through the figure of the Marrano, who we can also think of in terms of a Jewishness as non-belonging (e.g. 1992, 1999).

If we continue to insist on the rhetorical *figure* of the Jew, and refuse to complicate philosophical discourse with the recognition that Jews always have existed in history, whatever secrets of singularity Jews have kept will remain locked between matching gates: on one side ethnic rhetorics of statist self-determination, on the other nostalgic views of the crumbling shreds of vanishing primitive community (1996b:85-6).

As an alternative to postmodern positions which erase Jewish and other cultural specificities out of a suspicion of belonging, Silverman suggests that there is a pressing need

to think between, or rather beyond, the extremes of total reinforcement or total abolition of community, beyond the extremes of an essentialist specificity... and no specificity whatsoever... to a site for negotiation beyond the dichotomies of sameness and difference, universalism and particularism, reason and anti-reason, essentialism and relativism (ibid:204-5).

Other writers have suggested a similar project, such as Jean-Luc Nancy, who has written: “The whole task, here, is to do right by identities, but without ceding anything to their frenzy, to their presuming to be substantial identities” (2000:147). In relation to Jewishness in particular, Daniel Boyarin describes a project of “commitment to radical reclamation of traditional Jewish cultural life/practice/study... generated out of a sense of cultural/religious continuity, as a value in itself and [to] Judaism as a rich, sustaining, and fulfilling way of life” (1997:xiv). He positions himself in relation to Jewish tradition in a similar way to many other minority radicals: a “dual aspect of resistance to pressure from without and critique from within” (1997:xvii).

In my research, I too have positioned myself in this space: refusing a too quick anti-essentialism which is indifferent to “cultural stuff” – in this case to the rich, diverse traditions and expressive culture of Yiddish migrants; refusing an essentialist ontologizing of identity, a final fixing of belonging. In this, the early twentieth century Jewish radicals who I encountered in the archive have been a resource: keeping their multiple identifications, their multiple loyalties, their complex positionality in play, they negotiated versions of English citizenship which attempted to deny or dissolve their specificity, their “cultural stuff” *and* ethnic absolutist conceptions of Jewish belonging tied to Zionism.

Having located my work in terms of its key concerns, citizenship and belonging, I will move on now to introduce the empirical setting of my research: the space of the East End and the moment of the Great War.

The Space of the Jewish East End

Thomas Cook & Son, pathfinders and trail clearers, living signposts to all the world, and bestowers of first aid to bewildered travellers – unhesitatingly and instantly, with ease and celebrity, could send me to Darkest Africa or innermost Thibet [sic], but to the East End of London, barely a stone's throw distant from Ludgate Circus, you know not the way (Jack London 1903, quoted Steyn 1999:82).

The modern period of Jewish presence in London begins with resettlement in the seventeenth century. The first re-settlers were Sephardic Jews (that is, expelled from Spain and Portugal) who came to England via the Netherlands. This population was supplemented by other Western European Jews, such as Ashkenazim from the Rhineland. By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, a large proportion of British Jews had to a great extent assimilated into English public life, though, crucially, continuing to follow Jewish religious law. This assimilated community was dominated by a handful of wealthy Sephardic and Ashkenazi families (including the Rothschilds, Montefiores and Montagues) who were known as “the Cousinhood”.⁷ Through the nineteenth century, wealthier Jews began to shift westward to places such as Bayswater and the West End.⁸ This westward shift signalled the upward social mobility of the established families. It indicated a new-found confidence, coinciding with the slow process of Emancipation – the attainment of citizenship – in which members of the Cousinhood, such as Nathan Rothschild, played a major part. Political emancipation and the westward move – and the formation at the same moment of new communal institutions such as the United Synagogue and the Board of Deputies – were the foundations of the Anglo-Jewish community.

This Anglo-Jewish community was not monolithic: it included both Ashkenazi and Sephardic congregations and a growing number of Reform ones, there was a degree of political pluralism, with a growing number sympathetic to Zionist politics, and, although associated with the West End, the Great Synagogue and the Chief Rabbi remained located in the City of London. What united Anglo-Jewry in this post-Emancipation moment, though, was a self-conception as “English citizens of the Jewish faith”; that is, they identified as a *community of faith*, not as an ethnic or cultural collectivity. This notion was already embedded in the terms of resettlement: Jews had petitioned Cromwell that they “may therewith meete at our said *private*

⁷ Cf Chaim Bermant (1971).

⁸ Bloch (1997:2), Newman (1971), Newman and Massil, eds. (1996). This shift can be seen as part of a wider shift of those attaining respectability to the West, which Peter Ackroyd traces back at least as far as the sixteenth century (2001:676-7).

devotions in our Particular houses without fear of molestation either to our persons families or estates” (quoted Ackroyd 2001:706, emphasis added). Mark Levene and others have described this conception of citizenship, this notion of “English citizens of the Jewish faith”, as “the Jewish liberal compromise”, which

upheld the view that the English Jew should have the same status in society as a Congregationalist or Quaker. One’s Jewishness was henceforth not a collective interest... but purely a matter of individual religious choice.... [T]his view argued that being Jewish in no way cut across one’s identification with the British nation, nor could it be deemed to cut across one’s loyalty to or ability to serve the British state (Levene 1992:4).⁹

Israel Finestein has called this a “behaviourist acculturation, largely concerned with a search for indistinguishability out of doors and in club and market-place” (1992:43).

Examples of this faith can be seen in the quotations below, one from the dawn of Yiddish immigration and the other from the end of the World War:

We are Englishmen and the thoughts and feelings of Englishmen are our thoughts and feelings (*Jewish Chronicle* 25 June 1886).

Emancipated Jews in this country regard themselves primarily as a religious community... As citizens of the countries in which they live, they are fully and securely identified with the national spirit and interests of those countries (Anglo-Jewish Association 1917).¹⁰

But as well as an understanding of citizenship as loyalty and cultural conformity, the idea of Anglo-Jewry as a community of faith, also has another dimension: the notion of community or the communal. The modern forms of citizenship involved in assimilation are often seen as a direct attack on communal authority by nation-states striving for a pure sovereignty grounded in cultural homogeneity. For example, Zygmunt Bauman has written:

The modern state meant the disempowerment of communal self-management and the dismantling of local or corporative mechanisms of self-perpetuation (1991:104).

Jewish communal autonomy was an abomination from the point of view of the absolutist, all-penetrating and monopolistic tendencies of high-handed and valiantly nationalist state power. It had to be crushed, or reduced to the few traits viewed as irrelevant and innocuous thanks to

⁹ On the “Jewish liberal compromise”, see Kadish (1992, e.g. pp.55-60, 132); Hyman (2001, e.g. p.11). The phrase was coined by Steven Bayme. This sort of thinking is continued in certain liberal versions of “multiculturalism” today, such as that of John Rex (1991, 1994). Rex writes that ethnic “forms of diversity can be tolerated and even encouraged so long as they do not impinge on the public sphere” (1991:9). Difference, that is, is relegated to the private sphere, while the public sphere is the domain of an ethnicity-neutral equal individual “citizenship”; the “immigrant” is exhorted to be “ethnic” at home and a citizen on the street (see discussion by Clive Harris 2001).

¹⁰ Minutes of the Anglo-Jewish Association (AJA), 17.05.1917 (quoted Hyman 2001:23).

the unconcern or indifference of the state... Equality before the law meant, first of all, the sapping of communal authority, undermining the centrifugal influences of communal and corporative elites; it was an indispensable part of the process which led to the institution of modern state power with its monopoly of law-making and coercion (1991:111).

Certainly, the assimilationist logic, in which Jewish difference is dissolved at the level of the individual, has a tense relationship with the logic of the communal. However, under the logic of the communal, Jewish difference is re-inscribed at the level of “the community”, in order to serve as the basis for the political legitimacy of the communal leadership, despite its adherence to the politics of assimilation. The two logics were combined in the concept of a “community of faith” and of Jews as “co-religionists” rather than members of a common ethnicity. This can be seen, for example, in historian Israel Finestein’s description of Anglo-Jewish leaders in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods. He writes:

There was a strong attachment among Jewish emancipationists to the institutions which embodied Jewish separateness – the synagogue, the schools, the welfare agencies and family cohesion. It went beyond nostalgia. They were eager to sustain, and to be seen to sustain, the nature of the Jewish community as a community of faith. It was axiomatic that it was as a religious community that the Jews were presented as worthy of the full rights of citizenship. The pervasiveness of religion in the public life of Victorian England gave Jewish (whether in its Orthodox, that is normative, style, or in its Reformist model) the character of an emblem of self-conscious patriotism and normality (Finestein 1992:39).

The institutions of Anglo-Jewish communal life mimicked the institutions of British citizenship. The Board of Deputies mimicked the style of the Houses of Parliament, their formal deliberative language, their rules and customs, their spatiality and bodily arrangements.¹¹ The United Synagogue mimicked the Church of England, with the Chief Rabbi taking the role of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the clerical hierarchy robing itself in the vestments of Christian priests.

It is worth pausing for a moment to reflect on how the communal works, not least because – as Brian Alleyne (2000) and Clive Harris (2001) argue – the concept of “community” has been normalized as *the* primary common sense and sociological framework for thinking ethnicity – as evidenced by Parekh’s concept of “a community of communities”.¹² As both Alleyne and Harris note, the centrality of

¹¹ This is echoed today in the Islamic Parliament and more recently the Muslim Council of Britain.

¹² The careful formulations in the text of the “Parekh report” on the future of multi-ethnic Britain avoid any ontologizing of “community” (see, for example Parekh 2000:10, 37, 51).

“community” reinforces the notion of unalterable difference *between* and sameness *within* “ethnic communities”. For Harris, this model cannot always accommodate the notion that differences *within* may be of greater significance than differences *between*; the notion of “ethnic community” can obscure the complex social networks or webs of social relations, and conjunctures of the local and global, which make up diasporic peoples. And it can obscure the fact that “ethnic identity” itself is contingent and relational, continuously undergoing processes of translation, creolization, syncretization and hybridization: culture as “invariably promiscuous and chronically impure” (Gilroy 2000:129).

These sorts of critiques can be related to critiques developed within feminism by Uma Narayan, Iris Marion Young and Southall Black Sisters, amongst others. For Narayan, the notion of community imposes on members of a culture the “values and practices [of] specific *privileged* groups within the community as values of the ‘culture’ as a whole” (1997:15). Similarly, Cynthia Cockburn and Lynette Hunter have written that “The art of transversal politics is a perennial scepticism about ‘community’. It means knowing that when community is invoked it is often to plaster over cracks and deny differences within” (1999:91). The communal institutions of Anglo-Jewry, following this logic, were always premised on unanimity, on the repression or disavowal of internal differences. The aim of the formation of the United Synagogue, for example, was “to unite the members of the Synagogues generally into one great Congregation, having one common interest, governed by one fundamental code of laws, and capable of embracing every kindred Metropolitan Congregation in one bond of membership” (quoted Roth 1950:254). For Cecil Roth, celebratory historian of Anglo-Jewry, the foundation of the United Synagogue was “in fact the reconstitution of the ‘Holy Community of Ashkenazi Jews in London’, established in or about 1690... The Great Synagogue and its errant daughters were now one again, in a greater institution which reverted (though hardly aware of the fact) to the traditions of London Jewry at the time of the Glorious Revolution” (ibid).¹³

However, the take-up of the language of the report in wider policy arenas does not always make these distinctions.

¹³ My intention is not to dismiss the concept of community *per se*, but to problematize both any understanding of community as pure and homogenous and the invocation of community to legitimate particular forms of authority: what I am calling the logic of the communal. Indeed, a body of thought associated with concepts like “iterative community”, “inoperative community” or “coming community”, developed by thinkers like Agamben and Nancy, might provide a way of thinking the radical space of the East End, as will be tentatively suggested in chapter four.

The “liberal Jewish compromise”, the notion of “English citizens of the Jewish faith”, shaped the Anglo-Jewish establishment’s conception of its history. In 1980, the late Raphael Samuel wrote that “Jewish history in Britain in so far as it exists, is heavily institutional in bias, and entirely celebratory in tone, recording the progress of the ‘community’ in terms of political status and professional and commercial success” (in White 1980:x). The dominant model within Anglo-Jewish historiography up until that point – epitomized by the historians associated with the Anglo-Jewish institution, the Jewish Historical Society of England, founded in 1893, such as Lucien Wolf, Cecil Roth, VD Lipman and Aubrey Newman¹⁴ – had taken the nation-state framework for granted, seen Jewish immigration to England as a one-way once-and-for-all prelude to assimilation or integration into the nation-state and largely celebrated this assimilation.¹⁵

From the 1970s, following the pioneering work of William Fishman (1975), a handful of historians, including Jerry White, Bill Williams, Geoffrey Alderman and David Cesarani, and more recently Anne Kershen,¹⁶ have tried to tell this history in a different way: in terms of the everyday struggles of the people of the ghetto,

¹⁴ See, for example, Roth (1941, 1950), Lipman (1954, 1970) and Newman (1970). More recently, Rubenstein (1996) has sought to revive this school, arguing that there has been a “unique symbiosis of Britain and Jewry” (172) and minimized both the story of anti-semitism in Britain and that of class domination within Anglo-Jewry.

¹⁵ This conception of migration is mirrored in some sociological accounts as well, particularly those working under the rubric of “race relations”. As Westwood and Phizacklea comment, in these sorts of account,

issues of time and space are central to their construction but become invisible. The models of migration built upon under-theorised notions of the spatial in sociology, historically constructed around a set of binaries – rural/urban, *Gemeinschaft/Gesellschaft*, traditional/modern and in relation to migration ‘overthere and overhere’ (2000:5).

These binaries have structured a sociology which has emphasized the opposition between “hosts” and “strangers” and constructed place in terms of territory – national space and alien ghettos or colonies. A good example of this “invisible” spatial in the conventional sociology of migration is the idea of “between two cultures”, in which different cultures are reified as discrete, incommensurable, unitary places – see e.g. the collection of that name edited by JL Watson, ed. (1977).

¹⁶ See, for example, Alderman (1983, 1992), Cesarani, ed. (1990), Fishman (1975, 1988), Kershen (1995), White (1980) and Williams (1976). These writers, although described as the “new school” of English Jewish history by William Rubenstein (1996:33) do not constitute a unitary group, but vary in their perspectives, from the Marxist work of Williams, the History Workshop oral history of White and the “history from below” perspective of Fishman, through Kershen who has moved from labour history to more social theory-informed work, to Alderman’s more conventional historical work. While most of these writers focus on London, Williams’ work has focused on Manchester. Closely related to this body of work, and included by Rubenstein in the “new school”, has been the work of Tony Kushner and Colin Holmes which has investigated the persistence of anti-semitism in British society – e.g. Holmes (1979), Kushner (1989).

focusing on *differences within* the Jewish community (particularly class differences), as well as highlighting the mechanisms of exclusion which the Jewish immigrants faced within the wider society. These historians have shown that the path to citizenship was uneven and that belonging in England was always problematic. However, this body of work has, on the whole, continued both to accept the framework of the nation-state as the appropriate unit of narrating history and to see Jewish migration as a unilinear flow of “immigrants” to a “host” country (albeit seeing a much less hospitable host than the earlier Anglo-Jewish historiography did). Often, too, these historians have not recognized the importance of Britain’s *imperial* context.

Although I am extremely sympathetic to the project of these post-1970s historians, my research is situated within a different terrain of debate. Rather than accepting the nation-state as the appropriate space of political belonging and rather than accepting the idea of any singular identity, I have tried through my research to bring out some of the *practices of belonging* (from sacred textual and ritual practices, to the practices of everyday life such as *shpatsirn* (strolling) on the pavement of Whitechapel High Street, to material solidarity with the victims of pogroms in Russia) and *spaces and places of belonging* (local/metropolitan, national and trans-national/diasporic). Nonetheless, my account has been shaped by the work of these historians, and here, in setting out the context of my research – the Jewish East End – I will draw on their analysis.

From the late nineteenth century, a new group of Jews started arriving: Yiddish-speaking Eastern Europeans, mainly from the small communities (*shtetlekh*) and towns of the Jewish “Pale of Settlement” in the Western parts of the Russian empire. In the wake of the 1881 assassination of Tsar Alexander II by a terrorist group, waves of pogroms (violent anti-Jewish riots) swept across Russia. That year, a quarter of a million Jews left the Pale; this marks the start of mass Jewish migration from Eastern Europe to the West. It also, therefore, marks the start of the expansion of the Jewish ghetto in East London. From this time, Jewish population in Britain rose from around 50,000 to nearly 200,000 (the majority in London, but with sizeable communities in Leeds, Manchester, Glasgow and elsewhere). These immigrants, often arriving at the docks of the East End, settled in precisely the areas

that the wealthier Jews were beginning to vacate. It was in this period that the phrase “the East End” entered English,¹⁷ swiftly passing into Yiddish.¹⁸

Many histories of the East End and of Anglo-Jewry suggest a sort of narrative of ethnic succession, an ecological determinism that represents the East End as somehow *naturally* a place of migration, *naturally* a place of the rag trade. The Jews, in this narrative, are seen as one in a series of migrant communities who have entered British society and become successful through their entrepreneurial activity before moving on.¹⁹ This narrative is often tied to certain essentializing culturalist explanations for immigrant entrepreneurship, which suggest that particular ethnic groups – Jews or Asians, for example – are especially suited to industries such as the garment trade because of ethnic or racial traits.²⁰ Here, in contrast, I want to show that the story is more complex, structured by particular material forces, particular geographies of inclusion and exclusion, particular patterns of racialized division of labour.

Already, before the arrival of the Yiddish immigrants, Jewish Londoners were concentrated on the Eastern edge of the City of London, alongside other earlier immigrant populations such as the Huguenots. This concentration was structured by geographies of exclusion which prevented Jews from being free men of the City until 1832; poorer Jews often worked City limits trades – such as the second hand garment (“ol’ clo’s”) business, which was closely connected with the emergence of the early sweated clothing industries, known as the “slop trades” – in places such as Aldgate, the Minories and Houndsditch.²¹

Coming from diverse economic and social locations in the Pale, the post-1881 Jewish migrants were threaded into a specific location in a labour market

¹⁷ Ackroyd (2001:675).

¹⁸ I have found numerous Yiddish pamphlets with the phrases *יסט ענד* (“ist end”) and *וועסט ענד* (“vest end”) from the 1880s onwards.

¹⁹ This narrative is often exemplified through images like the Brick Lane Jamme Masjid, a mosque that was previously a synagogue and before that a Huguenot chapel, or the Princelet Street Synagogue, a former Huguenot house now used as a “Museum of Immigration” symbolized by the Huguenot spindle hanging from the building’s front.

²⁰ Versions of this can be found in Victorian and Edwardian anti-sweating literature, which constantly associated sweating with aliens in general and Jews in particular. But the discourse reappears in some Anglo-Jewish historiography, which often narrates a natural-historical story of Jewish success, as well as in the sociological literature, from Werner Sombart to Nathan Glazer, for whom the “experience of being a ‘stranger’ combined with the tradition of ‘Jewish Puritanism’ to give Jewish immigrants a strong entrepreneurial bent” (Waldinger 1986:6).

²¹ Phizacklea (1990:25); Ackroyd (2001:125).

characterized by an ethnic and gendered division of labour. They found an easy entry into industries such as furniture making, boot- and shoe-making and above all the needle trades. These trades were divided between “manufacturers”, who performed the design and marketing, and “contractors”, who supplied the labour of production, initially employing the wives and children of migrants to riverine East London from Ireland and rural England. The new immigrants after 1881 found a ready niche in these industries; this labour market was already gendered,²² and, with the arrival of immigrants from Eastern Europe, gendered divisions were overlaid by racialized divisions.

The immigrants fitted into the sweating system, as this economy was known by the 1840s, for a number of reasons: family and *landslayt*²³ networks were easily exploited in the proliferation of contracting, sub-contracting and task subdivision; the linguistic barriers preventing migrants from finding jobs in the wider labour market facilitated the role of “sweaters”, the entrepreneurial intermediaries between the English-speaking West End manufacturers and Yiddish-speaking East End workers.

The economy of London has always been characterized by high levels of subdivision and specialization, leading frequently to tightly scripted ethnic and geographical divisions of labour.²⁴ A number of reasons made the East End the site of the immigrant garment trade. The migrants’ arrival in London coincided with the rise of the West End department stores, the main customers of the sweated garment sector, and with the wide diffusion of the sewing machine. The department stores and manufacturers in the West End were able to turn fixed costs into variable costs by displacing the risk of investing in fixed capital such as sewing machines and rent to the immigrants, who often worked at home and bought sewing machines on credit.²⁵ London rents, always high, encouraged this, while the relatively cheaper rents of the East End, still close enough to the sites of consumption in the West End, made it a convenient location for the contractors. Some more radical anti-

²² Coffin (1996), Alexander (1994), Phizacklea (1990).

²³ *Landslayt* = people from the same hometown or region in Europe, organized into *landsmanshaftn*, friendly societies for people from the same area.

²⁴ Stedman Jones (1971); Ackroyd (2001:125-6).

²⁵ See Morokvasic et al (1997:196-7), Piore (1997:136-7) and Coffin (1996:81). The Singer company introduced a hire purchase system in 1856, and by 1888 had mapped East London into sales districts, with thirty instalment collectors in the East End alone (Schmiechen 1984:26-7). The system is described in Beatrice Potter’s “The Tailoring Trade” in Booth’s *Life and Labour* (1889, series 1, volume 4, p.45), in testimony to the Parliamentary Select Committee on Sweating (1st report, 1888, vol.XX, p.3 and Q1676), and in adverts like Isaac

sweating campaigners recognized the intimacy between West End consumption and East End exploitation; Clementina Black, for instance, wrote that sweating's

spectre haunted not only the fever dens of the slums, but was present in the most costly garments of the fashionable West-End shops, in the rich embroideries of the wealthy as well as the household matchbox.²⁶

The proximity of the docks was also crucial, first as the place of employment for the husbands and fathers of the women and children homeworkers of the 1840s,²⁷ then as the place of arrival of the Russian immigrants from the 1880s, and thirdly as the link between the sweated rag trade and the circuits of empire.²⁸

The presence of the docks reminds us of the fact that the London in which the Yiddish migrants arrived was an *imperial city*. As Peter Ackroyd puts it, in the last decades of the nineteenth century London was “the engine of imperial power” (2001:717). The diverse work of scholars such as Catherine Hall, Anne McClintock, David Gilbert, Felix Driver, Jonathan Schneer, MH Port and others has attended to the way that the very *space* of the metropolis was fundamentally shaped (at a whole series of scales: from the bodies of its denizens, through its architecture, to its governance) by the circuits of empire which passed through it.²⁹ From Nelson's Column in Trafalgar Square to West India Docks on the Isle of Dogs, from the designs on matchboxes to the friezes on the new department stores, London was reconfigured to reflect this imperial power.

Through the Victorian and Edwardian period, imperialism came to provide observers with an epistemological framework through which to understand London. The colonies, and the orient, were mapped onto the space of the city. Images drawn from empire (jungle, dark continent, etc) were used to think about, to make visible,

Pickard of Leeds' 1892 *How to Overcome the Difficulty of Selecting a Sewing Machine* [BL/A.11306(16:7943.a.45/8)].

²⁶ Clementina Black *Sweated Industry and the Minimum Wage* 1907, London: Duckworth [BL/08275.A.41], p.x.

²⁷ Primarily the docks, but also the heavy industry sited in the East End to be close to the docks: dye and chemical works, sugar refineries, and so on (cf Ackroyd 2001:677).

²⁸ We can read examples of the industry's connection to circuits of empire in the findings of anti-sweating investigators. For instance, Maurice Adams recorded the 1896 story of a manufacturer employing outworkers to produce a large order of “kharkee” coats for South Africa, while Clementina Black visited some East End homeworkers in the 1900s, including a toy-maker producing wooden hoops with handles and beaded spokes also for export to South Africa (Maurice Adams *The Sweating System* The Humanitarian League's Publications No.22, 1896, London: William Reeves [BL/8425.AA.73/22], pp.5-6; Clementina Black *Sweated Industry and the Minimum Wage* 1907, London: Duckworth [BL/08275.A.41], p.13). Also, many of the textiles used in the garment trade were manufactured in the colonies, particularly India.

the denizens of London. This example comes from a Christian anti-sweating pamphlet of 1888:

Some three years ago, being at a Home-Missionary Meeting in London, I heard one of the speakers say that, after being engaged as a Missionary in Africa for thirty-two years, on returning to England, nine months previously, he undertook home-missionary work in London, and he declared, that he had witnessed fifty-fold more demoralizing wickedness in London, during the nine months he had been engaged, than he saw in Africa, during the whole of the thirty-two years he was there.³⁰

Specifically, Oriental and colonial otherness was mapped on to one part of London: the East End. The East End, that is, was produced in part through the imperial imagination; it was a colonial artefact. In Walkowitz's apt phrase, empire and East End "imaginatively doubled" for each other (1992:35, cf Marriot 1996, 1999). Images drawn from empire were applied to the Jewish, Irish and other natives of East London. For example, TH Huxley wrote that "the Polynesian savage in his most primitive condition [was] not so savage, so unclean, so irreclaimable as the tenant of a tenement in an East London slum" (quoted Steyn 1999:83). Peter Ackroyd suggests the name given to the street children of East London, "street-Arabs", as another example of this Orientalization of the East End (2001:679).

The presence of aliens in general – Jews, but also the multiracial (primarily Malay, Chinese, Yemeni and Somali) maritime proletariat – served to further render the East End as an alien zone. Ben Looker gives several examples of the imagining of the East End in Victorian and Edwardian travel guidebooks which dwell on the presence of foreigners: one from 1902 informs us that "The bulk of the East End population may be divided into workers, casual workers, criminals, and the large poverty-stricken foreign element" and that the area "is essentially the most struggling district, mainly owing to the enormous population of foreigners"; another, from 1903, that these foreigners "come to England to get work, and... earn very little money, and are rough and rude, and all live together in one place" (quoted 2001:16). Baedeker added that at East End's river banks one might see a "large and motley crowd of labourers, to which numerous dusky visages and foreign costumes imparts a curious and picturesque air" (quoted *ibid*:18).

²⁹ See, for example, Hall (1994), McClintock (1995), Gilbert and Driver (1999), Schneer (1999), Port (1995).

³⁰ George Fellows Harrington (1888) *The Sweating Problem and Its Solution* London: Ridgeway [BL/8276.D.57/8].

In this sense, the East End became what Mary Louise Pratt has called “the contact zone”:

the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict (Pratt 1992:6-7).

The riverine East End “represented an insertion of [the] colonial other into the very heart of empire, a tangible intrusion of far-flung territories that were normally inaccessible to the eyes of Londoners” (Looker 2001:14). It was “‘an internal Orient’ to be discovered and tamed” (Back 1996:18).

The presence of the Eastern European Jewish aliens in particular intensified this Orientalization of East London. To give just one example, an article in the *Evening Standard* entitled: “LONDON OVERRUN BY UNDESIRABLES. VAST FOREIGN AREAS. A GROWING MENACE” claimed that you can walk the East End “without knowing you are in England at all... The whole atmosphere is unmistakably foreign... The alien Jew is really an Eastern.”³¹

Jewish East End and Jewish West End

The Oriental Jew [became] the inner demon in the assimilationist soul (Zygmunt Bauman 1988a:57-8).

As Geoffrey Alderman has written, the post-Emancipation generations of assimilated Jews

felt that they were on trial, that they had to prove, and continue to prove, that they were worthy of the rights and freedoms Anglo-Christian society had extended to them, and they must somehow conform to what they felt were Gentile expectations of acceptable Jewish behavior... In the cultural sphere, this preoccupation – almost obsession – had a stultifying dehumanizing influence (1995:138-9).³²

The arrival in large numbers of Jews from the East threatened native Anglo-Jewry’s sense of itself as English, threatened the “Jewish liberal compromise” whereby they had become “English citizens of Jewish faith”. As Fishman writes, “the socially eminent... feared social retrogression through being identified with such unpalatable co-religionists” (1975:65). Consequently, they made every effort to re-make their arriving co-religionists into English citizens as swiftly as possible; the immigrants had to be “quickly indoctrinated with the English language and way of life. The

³¹*Evening Standard* 25-7.1.1911, in HO 45/24610. I will discuss this article more fully in chapter six below.

³² Cf Finestein (1962, 2002), Endelman (1985).

modes of the *s[h]tetl* were discouraged, Yiddish was to be eradicated” (ibid:65). The Anglo-Jewish leaders consistently made efforts to get the ghetto to dissolve itself into English society at large and throw off its old-fashioned, particularistic and peculiar rituals, its debased jargon, and, above all, its radical politics. To this end, the Cousinhood pursued a variety of strategies: coercion, bribery, charity, repatriation, missionary work to civilize the foreign Jews, anti-emigration propaganda in Russian papers, and even support for anti-immigration and pro-deportation policies.³³

In reading the words of Anglo-Jewry, we can see the contours of the assimilation project, structured by shame at and disavowal of the Eastern Jews: an equation between citizenship and (Western) civilization, a conflation between “anglicization” (cultural conformity) and “humanization” as the measure and precondition of the right to citizenship, a conflation between Englishness and universalism (and, opposed to this, a conflation between Jewishness and particularism or peculiarity), a discourse of English “hospitality”. Fishman quotes at length from the pages of the *Jewish Chronicle*, the voice of assimilated Anglo-Jews, and we can see this shame and disavowal at work there.

On 10 June 1881 – in the midst of the bloody pogroms being visited upon the Jews of Russia – the *Chronicle* suggested the solution to the Russian Jews’ problem: “*The pressing need for Russian Jews at the present moment is the renunciation of their exclusive attitude and their assimilation to their fellow citizens.*” Some weeks later, on 29 July, the same theme was also elaborated in a context closer to home: the immigrants in London.

Our fair fame is bound up with theirs; the outside world is not capable of making minute distinction between Jew and Jew, and forms its opinion of Jews in general as much, *if not more*, from them than from the Anglicised portion of the Community. They retain all the habits of their former home and display no desire to assimilate with the people among whom they dwell. They appear altogether to forget that in accepting the hospitality of England, they owe a reciprocal duty of becoming Englishmen. As it is, they join a *Hebra*³⁴, mix only with their fellow countrymen, and do in England as the Poles do.

On 12 August of the same year, the *Chronicle* again returned to the subject of “the process of transformation from Poles to Englishmen”:

³³ Fishman (1975:64-8, 90); Kadish (1992:chs.2-3). Fishman tells us that Rothschild actually sponsored Evans-Gordon, the proto-fascist Unionist candidate in Stepney.

³⁴ Friendly society or informal prayer community. In standard Yiddish transcription, it is written *khevre* (plural *khevres*).

Let us aid by all the means in our power to hasten this consummation. By improving their dwellings, attracting them to our synagogues, breaking down their isolation in all directions and educating their children in an English fashion, we can do much to change our foreign poor into brethren, who shall not only be Jews but English Jews.

And this was indeed the policy continued for the next few decades: as Fishman puts it, “tortuously pursued during the long years of immigrant intervention” (1975:67-8). For example, two decades later, on the eve of the period this thesis focuses on, Anglo-Jewish leader Lucien Wolf could still write, in an article on “The Jews of London” in *The Graphic*, that:

While the wealthier Jews of the North, West, and South of London are but little distinguishable from the Gentiles with whom they consort, the large body in the East End form a compact and characteristic community. The predominance of the Hebrew type is very noticeable, and the alien character of the population is accentuated by the peculiarities of the large foreign element...

Still they need many of the graces of civilisation, and the necessity of anglicising them has been readily acknowledged by their richer co-religionists... special services are held in the Great Synagogue with a view to impressing upon them from the pulpit an enlightened conception of their duty as English citizens. They prove a very ductile material to work upon (in Cowen and Cowen 1986:93-5).

The “tortuousness” of this task, I will argue in this thesis, stems from the fact that, despite the “ductile” nature its assimilated “betters” imagined for it, not all the denizens of the East End were prepared to pay the price of assimilation.

The Great War

at the end of the war... men returned from the battlefield grown silent – not richer, but poorer in communicable experience... A generation that had gone to school on a horse-drawn streetcar now stood under the open sky in a countryside in which nothing remained unchanged but the clouds, and beneath these clouds, in a field of force of destructive torrents and explosions, was the tiny, fragile human body (Walter Benjamin 1992:84).

The 1914-18 war represented a scar across the twentieth century, a scar through modernity’s fragile body. The historian EJ Hobsbawm, born in the closing years of that war, in the capital of an Austro-Hungarian Empire that would not exist within a couple of years, begins his account of the “short twentieth century”, *The Age of Extremes*, with Earl Grey, the Foreign Secretary, looking out of his Whitehall window into the dark night of 31 August 1914: “The lamps are going out all over Europe. We shall not see them lit again in our lifetime.” The Great War, Hobsbawm writes,

was not the end of humanity, although there were moments... when the end of a considerable proportion of the human race did not look far off...

Mankind survived. Nevertheless, the great edifices of nineteenth-century civilization crumpled in the flames of world war, as its pillars collapsed (1994:22).

Although the first chapters of this thesis look at the years leading up to the war, I will argue that forms of thought about citizenship emerging in those years were naturalized as a result of the war; the war traumatized not just those who fought in it, but also the conceptual categories through which political belonging was thought.

While many histories of British immigration and asylum law emphasize late Victorian and Edwardian “anti-alienism” (and the 1905 Aliens Act that emerged from that context), this thesis will stress instead the massive reconfiguration of the categories of political belonging and national identity which took place in the *state of emergency*, the catastrophic state of exception which was the 1914-18 war. My emphasis on World War I means that the 1881-1914 wave of mass migration from Eastern Europe is *not* seen as the key moment in the elaboration of the modern “foreigner”. To be sure, the years leading up to the war saw an increasingly racialised form of British citizenship, framed by colonial racism, anti-semitism and xenophobia. But borders remained fundamentally open; residence was relatively easy to establish, and once established fairly stable. Even the 1905 legislation, which differentiated between immigrants and refugees (the latter being politically active individuals), as Saskia Sassen puts it in *Guests and Aliens*, was “only sporadically enforced and did not make much difference. Jews were still free to come in, and did” (1999:79).³⁵ It was war that made the difference.

³⁵ The 1905 Act (a) legally enshrined the difference between alien and national, (b) legally defined the types of undesirable alien, and (c) created practical mechanisms for regulating entry to the UK. For these reasons – and despite the fact that it reaffirmed the right of asylum – it has been seen by many historians and activists as *the* foundation-stone of the UK’s modern exclusive immigration laws. The significance of the 1914 Aliens Restriction Act, meanwhile, has not been emphasized. David Cesarani, for example, has written:

The 1905 Aliens Act established an immigration control bureaucracy with powers of exclusion and enabled courts to recommend ‘undesirable aliens’ for deportation. It provided a model that was to be elaborated by subsequent Aliens Acts. The 1914 Act created controls over the movement of aliens and obliged them to register with police (1996:62).

I do not wish to downplay the significance of the 1905 Act for the configuration of modern racism – and not least for establishing an “immigration control bureaucracy”. However, I want to stress the crucial role WWI alien policy played in defining an exclusive, colour-coded British citizenship and nationality, a role that went far beyond simply creating controls over alien movement. As I will argue, the 1914 Act, and WWI legislation as a whole, meant that

During the war, some 8,500,000 soldiers died, including around a million from the UK and nearly two million from the Russian empire. At least the same number of civilians died due to the war (and possibly as many as thirteen million), including between 1,500,000 and three million in the Russian empire.³⁶ The numbers of civilian dead in Britain were relatively low: about 1400 in direct enemy attacks, concentrated in London and the Southeast. One civilian population that was severely affected was the Jewish population in Eastern Europe.

Systematic persecution of Jews on the western borderlands of Russia, battles over the Pale..., and pogroms in Russia, Poland, Hungary, and Ukraine created the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Jews. The Russian army began to deport Jews in 1914 and soon a policy of widespread eviction was implemented... About 600,000 Jews were thus uprooted, with thousands kept as hostages by the army and many others attacked by rampaging troops. Jews in Austria also fled westward driven by the fear of falling under Russian control as its army advanced into Austria. As they advanced eastward German troops raided Jewish population centers in Lodz, Vilna, Warsaw for laborers, and forced loans. About 35,000 Jewish farm and factory workers were deported to Germany from Poland and western Russia (Sassen 1999:86-7).

The Russian army “carried out brutal pogroms each time it advanced or retreated over enemy terrain.” The Jewish population “was caught between the hatred of local Poles or Ukrainians and the vengeance of the conqueror [and] Jewish soldiers were treated with cruelty and suspicion even in their own ranks” (Roskies 1988:203).³⁷

As well as the direct effect on people’s lives, the war wrought massive changes in the *political* life of Europe. Hobsbawm identifies some of the massive shifts brought about through the period. First, there was a “re-ordering [of] the map [of Europe] to create ethnic-linguistic nation-states, according to the belief that nations had the ‘right to self-determination’... [a belief which] was (and is) more easily held by those far from the ethnic and linguistic realities of the regions which were to be divided into neat nation-states. The attempt was a disaster, as can still be seen in the Europe of the 1990s”, which is still living that disaster in places such as the Slovak Republic and Kosovo (1994:31). Secondly,

Of all the developments in the Age of Catastrophe, survivors of the nineteenth century were perhaps most shocked by the collapse of the value and institutions of the liberal civilization whose progress their century had taken for granted, at any rate in ‘advanced’ and ‘advancing’ parts of the world (ibid:109).

discourses around “the undesirable alien” were now overcoded by racialized discourses around nationality, citizenship and Britishness.

³⁶ Different sources give different figures. I have relied mainly on Martin Gilbert (1997).

³⁷ See also Levene (1992:48-51), where he describes some of the anti-semitic practices of the Russian army as documented by Anglo-Jewish activist Lucien Wolf.

As Saskia Sassen writes,

With World War I the modern European state strengthens its border-enforcement functions and sovereign control over its territories; passports are suddenly checked. The changes after World War I regarding both refugees and immigrants stand out sharply. We can see to what extent the contemporary debate about immigration and refugee control is a response to a rather new history for Europe, a history that began with World War I... It is only with World War I and the formation of the inter-state system that large refugee flows would bring about a fundamental change in the notion of the 'foreigner. It would signal the beginning of the modern notion of the refugee 'crisis' as we have come to understand the term today...The fact itself of classification and identification of refugees in the context of the centrality of border controls forced states to deal with one another on the refugee question (ibid:77-8).

The prosecution of the war itself meant massive displacement. On the Eastern Front, there were 2.7 million refugees in Russia at the end of 1915; six months later, there were five million (ibid:85). The phenomenon of the cattle-truck full of "aliens" appeared: ethnic Germans were transported from the front to Central Asia and Siberia, many arriving dead of starvation, thirst, diseases and freezing (ibid:97). But Sassen makes it clear that the production of displaced people by the fortunes of war was less significant than war-time changes to the political structure of Europe (the state-building process and the interstate system) in creating the juridical category of stateless persons.

Sassen refers to Arendt in arguing that refugees moved from being *outsiders* (in the way that vagabonds and vagrants were) to being a distinctive *juridical category* who could be excluded from civil law and the rights of citizens (ibid:78). Unlike Arendt, Sassen identifies the "internment of large numbers of civilians in refugee camps" as a *consequence* of the refugee "crisis"; Arendt (and Agamben following her) identify *both* the camp *and* the production of the stateless refugee as emerging together from the state of emergency declared as a result of the war.

Following this line of analysis, one of the central arguments of this thesis will be that, in Britain, the late Victorian and Edwardian period, *but above all the Great War*, saw a re-configuration of citizenship, of asylum rights and of policing, in a way that was a catastrophe for those who sought refuge in Britain. The thesis will describe the workings of the dream of the ethnically and linguistically homogenous nation-state alongside new techniques and technologies of policing and surveillance: already in play from the 1880s but exponentially intensified and normalized in the

state of emergency declared in 1914-1918. These included an increasingly racialized and exclusive conception of British citizenship, increasing restrictions to the right of asylum and increasing powers for the state to deal with both asylum-seekers and sedition.

Modernity's Alternative Genealogies and Alternative Futures

These counterhistorical narratives disturb the sediment over which the streams of modernity have flowed. What is transparent becomes murky. Previously unseen patterns of motion are revealed (Gilroy 2000:79).

Having set out the space and time on which my research focuses, I want to conclude this introduction by pointing towards the contemporary political relevance of my work, to which I will return again in the Conclusion.

As I argued above, a key aspect of Anglo-Jewish historiography is the assumption that the nation-state is the appropriate unit for examining Jewish history in England. Likewise, liberal conceptions of citizenship – to which assimilationist Anglo-Jewry has been tied – have assumed that the nation-state is the appropriate unit for political belonging. In an era seen in terms of “globalization”, the emergence of new regions and new regionalisms, and proliferating sub- and supra-national polities, the nation-state has lost some of its theoretical allure. In cultural studies, we can see an explosion of celebrations of migrancy, nomadism and diaspora; in political science, we can see a groping towards conceptions of “cosmopolitan” and “trans-national” citizenship. Yet this is also an era of harsh and exclusive border controls, in which “citizenship tests” are proposed for asylum seekers, in which particularly fundamentalist nationalist movements are displaying a resurgent confidence electorally and in the streets. In this context, it is instructive – perhaps even urgent – to turn to earlier generations of migrant and cosmopolitan critics of the nation-state.

The diverse Jewish radical movements which flourished in East London in the early twentieth century did not always accept the assumption that the nation-state is a suitable unit for imagining our identities or for political belonging. Crucially, as we will see, they explored new ways of thinking citizenship and political belonging outside, below or across the nation-state.

In seeking to investigate the stories of these earlier diaspora radicals, I am encouraged by the work of CLR James. As Brian Alleyne has written, James' revisionist history of the Haitian revolution “exploded the colonialist idea of New

World slave communities as enclaves of racial otherness outside the mainstream of modernity” (2001:n.p.). As Alleyne points out, the very title of James’ *Black Jacobins* links one of modernity’s (and, we can add, citizenship’s) defining events – the French Revolution – to “one of its most marginalised products – the New World slave population” (ibid). In other words, James moved the slaves of the Caribbean from the margins to the heart of a transatlantic modernity, and thus helped us re-imagine modernity itself. James narrated citizenship’s history *through its countercultures*, through formations that were simultaneously marginal to the space of citizenship *and* constitutive of it. Paul Gilroy similarly re-figures modernity’s genealogy through a narrative of its edges, borders and countercultures. He argues that getting beyond nationalized perspectives has become essential and calls for an “outer-national, transcultural reconceptualisation” of political and cultural histories. He asks us to consider, for example, the American abolitionist Frederick Douglass’s relationship to English and Scottish radicalisms, or the black nationalist Martin Delany’s participation in a Statistical Congress in Victorian London, or black American anarchist Lucy Parsons’ encounter with London radical leaders such as William Morris, Annie Besant and Peter Kropotkin (1993:17-8). These sorts of narratives, at the margins of official accounts, provide a resource for thinking our current globalized world. As Appadurai writes, “the materials for a post-national imaginary must be around us already” and to find them “we need to look closely at the variety of what have emerged as *diasporic public spheres*” (1996:21).

In this spirit, then, this thesis will excavate the stories of people such as Rudolf Rocker, the Catholic German bookbinder who became a leader of the East End’s Yiddish anarchists. It will excavate the stories of marginal Jewish figures like Israel Zangwill, a maverick figure on the fringes of the Jewish nationalist movement who popularized the term “melting pot”. It will excavate stories from figures well-known in radical history, whose connections to the Yiddish East End have often been forgotten, such as Sylvia Pankhurst, the suffragette turned East End communist turned Pan-Africanist, who corresponded with Gramsci, argued with Lenin and employed Jamaican poet Claude McKay to write about East London’s Chinese community. It will commemorate moments like the Universal Races Congress at the University of London in 1911, which Zangwill helped organize, bringing together pan-Africanists such as DuBois, alongside sociologists and anthropologists like Franz Boas, as well as socialist leaders such as Annie Besant and Edward Carpenter and Zionists like Moses Gaster and Ignaz Zollschan. It will recall spaces such as the Workers’ Friend Club in Jubilee Street in Stepney, where Kropotkin,

Lucy Parsons and Lenin were among those who passed through. But this thesis will also excavate the memories of more obscure people, such as the Jewish bakers who kept striking Catholic dockers fed or the Jewish tailors who took in the dockers' children during the dock strike of 1912, or the British wives of German men who protested outside Alexandra Palace where their husbands were interned during the First World War.

These figures and moments point to an alternative to the singular identity of nation-state citizenship. The Workers' Friend Club or the tailors who fed striking dockers represent an alternative, local form of civic activity outside the space of national citizenship. Rucker, twice exiled from his native Germany and interned in Alexandra Palace during the war, represents a mode of political activity that does not stop at the borders of the nation-state. Zangwill, moving between Englishness and Jewishness, Zionism and anti-Zionism, recognized the complex multiple identities that explode the category of citizenship. "The human heart is large enough," he said, "to hold many loyalties" (quoted Leftwich 1957:147).

Zygmunt Bauman's suggestive notion of a "counter-culture of modernity"³⁸ might provide a way of thinking about how these marginal narratives can provide a resource for a post-national imaginary. This notion is a central motif of Paul Gilroy's *Black Atlantic* (1991). Whereas Bauman proposes the idea of a counter-culture of modernity normatively, as a future programme for "the Left", Gilroy uses it descriptively, to suggest that modernity has *always* had its counter-cultures. These disrupt, for Gilroy, any "tidy, holistic conception of modernity" (1991:45). He argues that black Atlantic political formations and intellectual culture have stood "partly inside and not always against", "simultaneously both inside and outside" the grand narratives of "the western culture which has been their peculiar step-parent" (ibid:48-9). This inside-outside counterculture of modernity, he adds, has been "an ungentle modernity, de-centred from the closed worlds of metropolitan Europe that have claimed the attention of theorists so far" (ibid:58). We can see here how the inside-outside location of the black Atlantic counterculture of modernity forces us to rethink political categories like "citizenship", but also both spatial categories ("the West", "Europe") *and* temporal ones ("modernity", "progress").

³⁸ See Bauman (1986 and also 1992:221-2).

For Gilroy, the black Atlantic tradition “had developed its own translocal and cosmopolitan conversations about the value of modernity and progress before equivalent patterns of disaffection were consolidated in Europe in the aftermath of the 1914-1918 war in a process to which Jewish writers and artists made such notable contributions” (ibid). Here Gilroy footnotes Michael Löwy’s *Redemption and Utopia* (1992), which discusses the work of Rudolf Rocker’s friend Gustav Landauer, Landauer’s friend Martin Buber, Gershom Scholem, Walter Benjamin and Franz Kafka. Significantly for my work, all of these figures started their reflections on modernity *before* the 1914-1918 war, though the war itself had a profound impact on their critiques of modernity. This thesis, focusing on Jewish responses to the catastrophe of the 1914-1918 war and on the lead-up to this moment, will describe one moment in the story of this subterranean counterculture of modernity.

The labour of excavating such stories has important political implications today. On one hand, I believe that the sort of public culture that flourished in the East End is a resource for hope for a different sort of Jewish belonging, a possible Jewish community, both internally diverse and in dialogue with others. It helps us with the effort, as Jonathan Boyarin describes it, “to imagine a future for Jewish communities beyond the vision of a closed world of contiguous monocultural nations” (1996a:160). Elsewhere, the Boyarins have written of a Jewish cultural studies that will generate “critical resources for the necessary refashioning of Jewishness in the present”, that will try to “enhance Jewish possibilities for living richly”, and contribute to *tikkun olam*, the repair of the world (1997:vii-viii).

On the other hand, to historicize our conventional grammars of citizenship, to set them against the alternative political rationalities that dwelt in citizenship’s shadows in the past, can help us to re-think citizenship today. Perhaps, for example, the complex understandings of citizenship and belonging developed by East End radicals (such as those involved in the Foreign Jews Protection Society, discussed below in the final chapter) point to

a new citizenship based on residence rather than nationality and allowing for a pluralism of identifications rather than symbolic allegiance to a monolithic national identity [which today constitutes] the basis for a re-definition of the social contract for the [contemporary] era (Silverman 1991:333-4).

My research, that is, points towards ways of thinking a political belonging beyond the singular identity of the nation-state and its presumed cultural homogeneity.

The Shape of this Thesis

The next chapter, “Researching East End Radicals”, will examine some of the ethical and methodological issues around my research. We have already seen how notions of progress have been inscribed in the modern concept of citizenship and into Anglo-Jewish historiography. The first part of “Researching East End Radicals” explores the way that this has created a natural-historical narrative of *inevitability* about assimilation and about the move out of the ghetto, often leading to a nostalgia which is also an erasure of the lived diversity of the Yiddish East End. How can we attend to the traces of the radical East End without falling into this fatal and melancholy logic? In the second part of the chapter, I move on to more concrete questions about attending to these traces: how can we *read* the East End radicals in archived documents, given that archived sources do not present a transparent window on to some past reality but rather sites of the *production* of social truths?

Chapter two, “Geographies of Belonging: Jubilee Street”, sets the scene for the thesis in providing a thick description of one part of the East End radical movement. Examining the figure of Rudolf Rocker and the space of the Workers’ Friend Club at Jubilee Street, the chapter will argue that they were embedded in the “cultural stuff” of the Yiddish vernacular *and* tied to cosmopolitan networks of belonging which could not be contained by the shape of the nation-state.

In chapter three, “Citizenship, Modernity, Empire”, drawing on the work of thinkers such as Zygmunt Bauman, I will develop the idea that the emergence of modern citizenship, welcomed as emancipation by many Jews, contained too the command of conformity to the singular, racialized identity of the nation-state. However, pushing beyond Bauman’s version of this argument, I will argue that it is vital to attend both to the specific traditions of citizenship in each European country and to the material processes, the mundane techniques and technologies, the border patrols of citizenship, which marked citizenship’s emergence. In particular, I will highlight modern citizenship’s imperial context.

Following that stress on specific locations and particular practices, the subsequent chapters explore a series of moments, spaces or figures, which each provide different lenses through which we can see the elaboration of new forms of citizenship, tied to particular ways of thinking the nation-state, and also the articulation of counter-discourses of belonging in the margins of the space of citizenship. These chapters do not constitute a historical narrative of East London

from 1903 to 1918; rather, particular moments, spaces and figures emerged through my archival research that seemed to bring into focus key aspects both new forms of citizenship and counter-discourses of citizenship.

In chapter four, “Becoming Citizens”, I will shift the focus back to the East End of London, exploring the way in which the Anglo-Jewish leadership – following the line of the “liberal Jewish compromise” that the Jew could be a Jew in the home, but a citizen in public – paid the price of modern citizenship and sought to assimilate the arriving Eastern European Jews into Englishness. The focus will be on particular spaces, such as the Jews’ Free School or Toynbee Hall, where foreign Jews were to be turned into English citizens.

Chapter five, “Geographies of Belonging: Kishinev 1903”, explores one particular moment in that story, the response to the Kishinev pogrom in Russia in 1903. The Anglo-Jewish leaders, chained to the idea that the nation-state was the only appropriate unit of political belonging, were able to relate to the pogrom victims only as “co-religionists”; they sought to play down the call to Jewish identity that the trauma of Kishinev represented and stress instead their loyalty to the English nation. The East End Jews, in contrast, responded in ways that stressed the ties that bound them to the Eastern European Jews. Recognizing both *differences within* (such as class antagonisms) and *samenesses across* Jewishness, Kishinev led Jewish radicals to articulate forms of belonging and citizenship which can operate both below and across the nation-state. In particular, the chapter will examine Israel Zangwill’s complex understanding of citizenship and the idea of “doykayt” (here-ness) developed by the Bund (the Jewish labour movement) in the wake of Kishinev.

Chapters six and seven will return to the theme of citizenship, examining the increasing racialization of citizenship in the years before and during the 1914-18 war. Chapter six, “Policing Aliens”, takes up chapter three’s concern with citizenship’s mundane techniques and technologies, its border patrols, its policing and mapping, focusing on the policing of “alien sedition” in the period of terrorist scares such as the 1911 Siege of Sidney Street.

Chapter seven, “Soldiers, Citizens and Aliens”, continues this discussion into the period of the war itself. It examines the intensification of the racialization of citizenship and of citizenship’s others – through the categorization of “friendly

aliens” and “enemy aliens” and then “enemy aliens of friendly race” and through internment – in the context of the state of exception and emergency that was the war.

Chapter eight, “The War in the East End”, examines responses to the war in the East End, showing that conscription and deportation were negotiated, resisted and sometimes refused. It looks at different sorts of radical responses to the war, from groups such as the anarchist *Workers’ Friend* group, the *Workers’ War Emergency Relief Fund* which provided aid to Jewish victims of the war, the Marxist Russian exile organization the *Committee of Delegates of the Russian Socialist Groups in London*, and the refugee campaigners of the *Foreign Jews Protection Society*. But it also looks at more everyday forms of resistance practised in the East End, from feigning illness to religious ordination as a way of avoiding conscription. My main argument, returning to themes developed in chapters three and five, will be that the various East End radicals were characterized by their *multiple identities*: by their embeddedness in both diasporic and local Jewish worlds *and* in broader London radical contexts.

Finally, chapter nine, “Discourses of Resistance”, examines some of the languages of citizenship and belonging which circulated among these East End radicals – and especially *spatialized* languages, different *geographies* of belonging and citizenship. The chapter will identify four counter-discourses of belonging. Each refused and subverted both Anglo-Jewish assimilationist understandings of citizenship and emergent militarized versions of citizenship. They were: *critiques of Anglo-Jewish communal authority* articulated both by leftist organizations such as the *Workers’ Fund* and among religious Jews, critiques which drew on both Yiddish traditions from the *Pale and Marxist class analysis*; *diasporic geographies of belonging*, which cut against the grain of the nation-state and of ideas of citizenship bounded by the borders of the nation-state; the idea of *the International* as the proper space of political belonging, an idea which was a resource for challenging the militarized logic of the nation-state but, in dissolving ethnic difference and specificity, sometimes ended up mirroring assimilationism; and, finally, a discourse organized around *the figure of the refugee*, a figure who radically challenges the conventional political grammar of citizenship.

In the conclusion, I will draw out some of the political significance of this material, asking, for example, if this politics of the refugee might provide a resource for

thinking citizenship and belonging today. I will conclude that among the traces of the East End radical space, we can find important materials for building a post-national political imaginary.

Chapter 2

Researching East London Radicals

This chapter will discuss some of the key methodological problems that have framed my research. In the course of this discussion, my own theoretical perspective will also be made clear. This discussion will have two parts. The first, “Traces, Ghosts, Fragments”, will look at ethical problems; the second, “In the Archive”, will look at epistemological and historiographical problems.

Traces, Ghosts, Fragments

an underground tradition says that our lives depend on hearing the voices of the dead (Boyarin 1992:8 2).

Only that historian will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the past who is firmly convinced that *even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he wins. And this enemy has not ceased to be victorious (Walter Benjamin, VIth Thesis on the Philosophy of History, 1992:247).

...to rescue the poor stockinger, the Luddite cropper, the ‘obsolete’ hand-loom weaver, the ‘utopian’ artisan, and even the deluded follower of Joanna Southcott, from the enormous condescension of posterity (EP Thompson 1966:12).

This section discusses the “research ethics” of approaching political traditions and spaces without being able to attend aurally to the voices of the participants in those traditions and spaces. In a sense, then, it begins to address, from a different angle, questions of methodology which will be taken up more practically in the next section: How can an argument be made about a spatially and orally based culture – the Yiddish East End in the early twentieth century – without the possibility of ethnographically experiencing the spaces and voices of that culture?

This section is also quite personal. Among my motives in my research has been a sense of loss about the Yiddish culture that my maternal grandparents were born into as I have watched the East End changing in my own life-time – that is, my archival research has been partly about an excavation of my own belonging. Linked to this was a *political* issue: sense of loss born from the abeyance, perhaps terminal, of a particular political tradition that was the subject of the research, and my resulting desire to tend to its dead, to its ghosts. As I will argue throughout this thesis, and particularly in the conclusion, Jewish East End’s radicals offer us important resources for thinking and acting politically today.

Hauntings

Shallow-breathed whispers from ancient relatives... death certificates. Numerous fragments that compressed an unreliable biography. The man became intimately associated with the place, the dissolution of the Jewish ghetto... Files that had long since been destroyed. Rodinsky's life was pressed into legend. It belonged at the end of an era, before memories became memorial plaques (Iain Sinclair 2000:4).

Walking along the streets of the East End today, very little visibly remains of the ghetto I have researched: the shadows where the mezzuzot were fastened by the doors of Bengali shops, the memories of a few old-timers, ghosts from a departed world. As I was conducting my research, my grandfather died. He had been a Communist activist in New York, the child of a Lithuanian rabbinical family whose mother had worked in a garment factory after her husband's business collapsed in the 1929 Crash. My grandfather was the last in our family to speak Yiddish. His Marxist commitment to (a particular image of) the international working class had meant that he had, as a Communist, disavowed Jewish identity: nation, race and religion would have no meaning in the proletarian dawn.¹ It was only decades later that he would return to a conception of Jewish belonging, when he found himself transplanted to a white suburban town in California, away from the smells, tastes and accents of New York's urban world.

My other grandfather, who was not Jewish, was born in Whitechapel, the son of a pawnbroker. Pawnbroking was a not uncommon Jewish trade and in some ways – such as the figure of the ragpicker in Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project* – it exemplifies a certain approach to history that has informed this thesis. Iain Sinclair, talking about the artist Rachel Lichtenstein and her hunt for the disappeared East End Jew David Rodinsky, writes:

Lichtenstein would have filled albums from corners of curtains, cabinets of splinters. She had grown up among antique dealers, shuffling through boxes of depersonalised stuff, optional histories, invented pedigrees. Pawnbrokers, jewellers, gold merchants: they are the true custodians of heritage, knowing both the price *and* the value of everything.

¹ Audrey Goodfriend, who I met at the *Anarchists and Jews: Story of an Encounter* conference in Venice in 2000, was born in 1920 and brought up with Yiddish as her first language in the Yiddish-language Shalom Aleichem House community. Her parents were active in the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime*, the New York Yiddish anarchist paper. She tells Yiddish jokes and dances to klezmer. Yet she categorically denies any Jewish identity. As with my grandfather's Communism, her "anarchism without adjectives" refuses any ethnic, national, religious or racial forms of belonging.

Lichtenstein's art was inspired by a love of these indestructibles, residual whispers...

Whitechapel had to be read like a scriptural roll, an album of unknown relatives (Sinclair 1997:239-40).

In 1900, when my grandfather was born, Whitechapel was teaming with Jewish businesses; by the time I began my research there were very few. Barry Rogg retired from his delicatessen on Cannon Street Road (in the heart of what had been the anarchist East End) after half a century in the trade. Mr Katz and his string and paper bag business on Brick Lane² moved out of his shopfront to an attic room a few doors away. Not counting the London institutions of the bagel bakeries, the only Jewish business left on Brick Lane is, fittingly, a mortuary stone masons, Elfes.

In this context, what we can call a *methodology of traces* threatens to become more a methodology of ghosts. Analogous perhaps to my archival search for the Jewish radicals of a vanished East End or Rachel Lichtenstein's search for David Rodinsky is Gayatri Spivak's search for an eighteenth century Indian woman named the Rani of Sirmur,³ who is mentioned fleetingly in some archival sources. In her discussion of this, Spivak introduces the figure of the ghost:

I pray instead to be haunted by her slight ghost, bypassing the arrogance of the cure. There is not much text in her name in the archives. And of course there is no pretense of continuity of cultural description between her soul and the mental theater of archivists (1999:207).

In these conditions, there is a huge temptation to nostalgia. As Spivak realizes, her Indian example, like my Jewish example, could

be seen as a nostalgic investigation of the lost roots of my own identity. Yet... I would maintain that my chief project is to be wary of such nostalgia entertained by academics in the self-imposed exile of eurocentric economic migration; for I feel it myself (1999:209).

Elsewhere, she argues that "all such clear-cut nostalgias for lost origins are suspect, especially as grounds for counterhegemonic ideological production" (ibid:306).

Similarly, Lisa Jardine and Steve Cross have both sharply criticized Rachel Lichtenstein for what we can think of as the glamour of ethnic absolutism behind her nostalgia. Jardine asks,

² Movingly described by Rachel Lichtenstein in "The Princelet Street Synagogue" in Lichtenstein and Sinclair (2000:51).

³ Originally in "Can the Subaltern Speak" (1988) and "The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives" (1985), and re-visited in the chapter entitled "History" in *A Critique of*

Is she simply siphoning Rodinsky and his memories into the empty carpet-bag of her lost ancestry? Many of the moves she makes, including the marking of Rodinsky's grave, and the request for prayers to be said for him, suggest her personal atonement for the appropriations she has made in the name of art (1999:12).

Steve Cross, more seriously, describes Lichtenstein's "appropriatory identification" with Rodinsky,

imbricated with a proprietorial relationship with the locality of Whitechapel itself... [Her] narrative is infused with a form of territorial nostalgia which generates a genuine hostility to later communities of 'usurpers' who are characterised as careless or threatening invaders, trampling on tradition and desecrating sacred space (2000:2).

It is important, too, that nostalgia's rose-tinted glasses do not obscure the fact that the ghetto was a space of exploitation, oppression, suffering, hardship. As Iain Sinclair writes,

Immigration is a blowtorch held against an anthill. It can be sentimentalized, but never re-created. It is as persistent and irreversible as the passage of glaciers and cannot – without dimming its courage – be codified, and trapped in cases of nostalgia (2000:67).⁴

A Storm Called Progress: Moving Up, Moving Out

Teleological logic – what Zygmunt Bauman, in *Modernity and Ambivalence*, calls "straight line" logic or "the unambiguous unidirectionality of the process" (1991:103) – was built into a notion of *progress* at the heart of assimilationism:

They were 'progressive' if they strove to imitate the dominant patterns and to erase all signs of the original ones. They were labeled 'backward' as long as they retained loyalty to the traditional patterns, or were not apt or fast enough in ridding themselves of their residual traces.

What made the standing invitation particularly alluring and morally disarming was the fact that it came in the disguise of benevolence and tolerance; indeed the assimilatory project went down in history as part of

Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present (1999:198-311) which I am citing here.

⁴ Lisa Jardine accuses Sinclair of perpetrating a "nostalgia-fest": Sinclair, she writes, "has a track record of nostalgically reconstructing 'worlds we have lost' out of the detritus of city life. The hallmark of these is a fully formed, knowing, authorial identity, which guides the unsuspecting reader. His own voice imposes an order on the fragments, steers the landscape into meaning, tells the reader what to think and feel. For Sinclair, Rodinsky is just one more empty box to fill with regret for a largely unrecoverable British past. For Sinclair, Lichtenstein, too, is simply one more stop on an autobiographical walk around Whitechapel" (1999:12). To me, Sinclair's work is far from order-imposing, fully-formed and knowing; rather, it is wilfully fragmentary, interrupting and deconstructing the narrative order of Lichtenstein's text through its constant digressions, alternative versions and contradictions. Although Sinclair's project *is* to reconstruct lost worlds, he does this in a sharply anti-nostalgic way, pouring scorn on any cosy versions of these lost worlds.

the *liberal* political programme, of the tolerant and enlightened stance that exemplified the most endearing traits of a 'civilized state' (ibid:107).

The narrative of progress embedded in assimilationism and in nostalgia is also shared by orthodox Zionism and orthodox Marxism. These view history as a linearity, with a point of origin and a final destination, as "the swift and imperceptible flowing of time" in Ralph Ellison's words (quoted Gilroy 1992:202). I would argue that this sort of linear temporality is alien to the Yiddish life-worlds in which the East Enders were immersed.⁵

David Roskies, in *The Jewish Search for a Usable Past*, describes the way in which Enlightenment thinking positioned vibrant Yiddish culture as belonging to a vanishing era. The "politics of emancipation", he writes, turned

the living present into a thing of the past. This is how the shtetl, where the majority of Yiddish-speaking Jews still struggled, studied and sang, became the subject of quaint and sentimental ghetto stories... Whether the shtetl was represented as a paradise lost or as a true species of the medieval ghetto, now being consigned to the dustbin of history, lox, stock and bagel, the emancipatory message came through loud and clear: there was no stopping the March of Time (1999:4).

This story of onward upward movement is inscribed too in conventional Anglo-Jewish historiography.⁶

As the Subaltern Studies historians have suggested, narratives of history as progress employ a "mimetic mode of self-representation": a mimicry of the subject of the history of "Europe" (Bhabha 1984, Chakrabarty 1995). Chakrabarty, in "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History", speaks of a "deep collusion between 'history' and the modernizing narrative(s) of citizenship, bourgeois public and private, and the nation state. 'History' as a knowledge system is firmly embedded in institutional practices that invoke the nation state at every step" (1995:384). The "critical historian", then, must seek "to understand the state on its own terms, i.e., in terms of its self-justificatory narratives of citizenship and modernity" (ibid:385). Doing this, Chakrabarty argues, can open up "the possibility of a politics and project

⁵ The idea of different temporalities is, of course, an old one in anthropology. A classic statement is EP Thompson's "Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism" (1967). Max Weinreich's concept of "panchronism" (1980:209-10) and Yerushalmi's reflections on Jewish history and memory (1989) are important attempts to think through Jewish time. A very different approach is taken by Michael Walzer in his *Exodus and Revolution* (1985), which contrasts a "linear" temporality *within* Judaism (epitomized by the "progressive" Exodus text) and a "reactionary", "fanatical" or "fundamentalist" messianic temporality (epitomized by right-wing Zionism) – see Edward Said's (1985/6) and Jonathan Boyarin's (1996b:ch2) critiques.

of alliance between the dominant metropolitan histories and the subaltern peripheral pasts. Let us call this the project of provincializing 'Europe', the 'Europe' that modern imperialism and (third-world) nationalism have... made universal" (ibid).

Further:

I ask for a history that deliberately makes visible, within the very structure of its narrative forms, its own repressive strategies and practices, the part it plays in collusion with the narratives of citizenships in assimilating to the projects of the modern state all other possibilities of human solidarity... This is a history that will attempt the impossible: to look toward its own death by tracing that which resists and escapes the best human effort at translation..., so that the world may once again be imagined as radically heterogeneous... To attempt to provincialize this 'Europe' is to see the modern as inevitably contested, to write over the given and privileged narratives of citizenship other narratives of human connections that draw sustenance from dreamed-up pasts and futures where collectivities are defined neither by the rituals of citizenship nor the nightmares of 'tradition' that 'modernity' creates (ibid:388).

Or, as Walter Benjamin puts it,

Overcoming the concept of 'progress' and overcoming the concept of 'period of decline' are two sides of the same thing (N2,5 1999:460).

The Enlightenment's linear history has been inscribed in a common sense sociology of assimilation and social mobility: a natural evolution from immigrant poverty toward integration and success, with a spatial corollary, the move out of the ghetto.⁷ This story of upward mobility in turn requires the disavowal of contemporary working-class Jewish life, as Jewish proletarian-ness is placed in the past. In an article in the *Jewish Chronicle* about Jewish taxi-drivers, one American cabbie was quoted as saying "A working-class Jew is an oddity. To a lot of mainstream Jews, it's like you're verging on homelessness or something." Another said, "You feel unworthy, like you're in a different league. As a Jew, I end up feeling alien to my supposed culture."⁸

These stories are the other side of assimilationism's mythic narrative of progress. Assimilationism narrates regrettable but necessary loss; this narration is a form of forgetting because it masks other histories, like those of these Jewish cabbies or of those left behind or refused to pay the price of assimilation. Boyarin argues that this forgetting is not the opposite of nostalgia. What has been lost is rendered in

⁶ See, for example, Roth (1941), Lipman (1954, 1970) and Newman (1970) and the more recent revival of this perspective by William Rubinstein (1996).

⁷ The narrative of the inevitable move out of the ghetto can be found in standard works of Anglo-Jewish history (e.g. Lipman 1970) and has been contested by Carrier (1967).

⁸ J. Goldberg "We're being driven away, say American cabbies" *Jewish Chronicle* (henceforth *JC*) 26.5.2000.

nostalgia as something that had to go sooner or later, an evolutionary end-point; “nostalgia fills, in a crude and opportunistic way, a need for an image of the past that can no longer be satisfied by older techniques of memory and transmission” (1992:49).⁹

Survival

Cultivating the traces of the ghetto’s yesterdays, struggling against the disavowal of present working class Jewish life and against the forgetting of alternative Jewish pasts and futures, it is easy to slip into the language of “survival”. But this trope also shares nostalgia’s linear temporality. Ethnography frequently rehearses this trope, often assuming, as Johannes Fabian puts it in *Time and the Other*, “a scheme in terms of which not only past cultures, but all living societies [are] irrevocably placed on a temporal slope, a stream of Time” (1983:17). Fabian argues that this leads to an implicit “denial of coevalness” whereby the object of ethnography is constructed as a survival from a previous era (ibid:31). Ethnographic writing about marginal communities, then, often implicitly recreates the conventions of what Jonathan Boyarin calls (referring to his own writing on a Lower East Side shul) “a professional genre of salvage ethnography” (1996a:65).

In the context of Jewish communities, the trope of survival is over-determined by the Holocaust, of which there were so few survivors. Of Rachel Lichtenstein’s mourning for the absence of Jewish East London, Steve Cross writes that “she seems unable to disassociate this de-population and re-settlement of Whitechapel with the fate of the Jews in Poland and Eastern Europe. However, this is not Lodz or Lublin and the absence of the Jewish population ultimately connotes nothing more nightmarish than a move to Hendon or beyond” (2000:2). In a sense, Cross is right about this. In some ways, the “move to Hendon” allowed the perpetuation of Stepney’s Jewish community, not frozen in time but dynamic, evolving, adapting. The institutional landscape of the East End (for example, the Jews’ Free School, moving from Bell Lane to Camden Town in 1945 and to Kenton, North of Wembley, in 2002), as well as family stories set in Whitechapel’s cramped tenements, have been kept alive, in a new setting. It is important to remember, too, that the migration from the East End was no more unilinear than that from Eastern Europe to London: as well as “the move to Hendon”, there were journeys East, to places like Ilford, one of Western

⁹ Similar points are made by Finkelkraut (1994:40-2), Yerushalmi (1989) and Gilroy (1992).

Europe's largest concentrations of Jews, including many Jewish taxi drivers;¹⁰ and there was the emergence of the Haredi ("ultra-orthodox") communities in places such as Stamford Hill, where the move out of the old East End had no relationship to assimilation.¹¹ So, although there are few visible traces in the streets of today's East End of the world this thesis describes, there are other places where one could find traces of memory of that world: the photo album of a family in Barnet, a Torah scroll passed from an East London shul to a North London synagogue, the jokes told in a Golders Green nursing home.

But while the community has survived, other things have been lost: secular Yiddish popular culture, its radical politics and the proletarian public sphere in which these flourished. Thus, although the Holocaust was of course the defining moment of twentieth century Jewish existence, it is important to remember that assimilation, Zionism, social mobility and many other processes also played a part in the loss, forgetting and marginalization of Yiddish culture and the ghetto lifeworld. The leadership of the Jewish community – as will be discussed in this thesis, and especially chapter four – was actively pursuing, in the name of progress, the annihilation of Yiddish language and the "peculiar" habits of the Eastern Jews many decades before the Holocaust. The "move to Hendon", then, is of course not comparable to the Shoah, yet it too marks a loss.

Against the Storm

Jonathan Boyarin, developing ideas taken from Walter Benjamin, counterposes progress's linear narrative to the idea of *tradition* embedded in Judaism, an idea that pre-supposes generations, and hence breaks rather than a straight line. Tradition "takes the memory of the vanquished into account" (1992:135n5). The idea of tradition implies the possibility of re-emergence, in a different time or place (just as my learning some Yiddish as part of this research means that my grandfather was not the last Yiddish speaker in our family).¹² Thus loss itself becomes a resource for hope. What Benjamin's understanding of tradition calls for is the centrality of an *ethical* perspective to historical work, thinking history in terms of loss and hope. It is

¹⁰ See Hansard 6 June 1997: Column 757-8,

¹¹ Some 25,000 haredi Jews live in Stamford Hill (Holman 2001).

¹² See Jonathan Boyarin's "Death and the Minyan" in which a yeshiva teacher relates a joke about a Jew who has left the Lower East Side whose rosy reminiscences of his parents are betrayed by his loss of Yiddish. The very telling of this joke (which assumes the listener understands the real Yiddish that the puns revolve around) "suggests a community

precisely such an ethical commitment which retrieves Lichtenstein's work from the proprietorial and nostalgic tendencies which Jardine and Cross attack; Lichtenstein's passionate commitment to the memory of the dead demands of the reader an ethical response, however uneasily this fits with any anti-humanist intellectual commitments. Where Jardine complains that there was nothing special about Rodinsky apart from his disappearance, Lichtenstein refuses to leave him nameless, mute, buried beneath the debris left by progress. As Walter Benjamin wrote – and these are the words engraved on Dani Karavan's monument at his place of death in Catalunya – "It is more arduous to honour the memory of the nameless than that of the renowned."

Benjamin tried to develop a historical method that resisted the idea of progress out of just such an ethical commitment, as the following passages from the Arcades Project's Convolute N suggest:

It may be considered one of the methodological objectives of this work to demonstrate a historical materialism which has annihilated within itself the idea of progress. Just here, historical materialism has every reason to distinguish itself from bourgeois habits of thought. Its founding concept is not progress but actualization (N2,2, 1999:460).

At any given time, the living see themselves in the midday of history. They are obliged to prepare a banquet for the past. The historian is the herald who invites the dead to the table (N15,2, 1999:481).

It may be that the continuity of tradition is mere semblance. But then precisely the persistence of this semblance of persistence provides it with continuity (N19,1, 1999:486).

In my research, then, I have attempted to honour the nameless and the obscure activists of the Jewish East End, trying to avoid a nostalgia that would erase their particularity, while attending to the political lessons they offer us. However, this project had a particular practical and methodological shape, as the next section explores.

In the Archive

From Oral History and Ethnography to the Archive

In the preface to his monumental directory of Yiddish culture in Britain, Leonard Prager acknowledges the difficulties of his project, which – like mine – deals only with

watching, aware of its own death and still *resisting* its banalization into the Being of nostalgia" (1996a:80-81).

the recoverable – and actually slight – printed evidence of a subculture which was essentially oral and ephemeral. Yiddish is the language in which hundreds of thousands of Jews in (or passing through) Britain have thought and felt, conversed, contemplated, cursed and complained for three centuries, but the speech of a community... leaves few records... a family's or a community's life is as unrecoverable as time itself, but a certain part, at least, is documentable (1990:vii).

My academic background was in the broadly ethnographic tradition, and, in approaching a historical topic, my initial inclination was towards oral history.¹³ As I began my doctoral research, however, my empirical focus narrowed to an earlier period, up to the First World War, and I realized that interview-based research had become practically untenable. Consequently, my empirical work has been archive-based. This proceeded in two main phases. The first phase was at the Public Record Office (PRO) in Kew; the second phase was at archives such as the British Library, University College London's Mocatta Library and the Tower Hamlets Local History Library at Bancroft Road. In the first phase, I was working with government files, while in the second I was looking at various ephemeral publications of Jewish and radical London.¹⁴

There is a large epistemological gap between oral history and archival history. This is evoked in Gayatri Spivak's discussion of arriving in Sirmur itself after working with archival sources about its history:

Unlike the archives, where the past is already digested as the raw material for history writing, the past here is a past of memory, which constitutes itself differently in different subjects interconnecting (1999:239).

Here, Spivak contrasts the archived past with the social as a space in which the iterative practices of memory live. But the social, in its contrast with the archive, is not just a place of memory; it can also be a space of forgetting, as evoked in Iain Sinclair's description of the Tower Hamlets Local History Library at Bancroft Road:

The library with its local history bias, its dusty files and boxes of documentation, is an obvious substitute for the script that has been eradicated from the streets (1997:39-40).

These two passages capture something of the sense of disruption I experienced as I moved from the noisy streets of Stepney to the shiny tranquillity of the PRO in Kew. The rest of this chapter will explore some of the methodological and ethical issues arising from this disruption: how to approach archival material with an

¹³ In this, I was inspired in part by the oral histories of the East End like White (1980) and Fishman (1975), oral histories of the left like Bloom and Buhle (1984), Mari Jo Buhle et al (1998) or Paul Buhle (1989), feminist oral histories like The Jewish Women in London Group (1989), and the work of the History Workshop.

ethnographic frame of mind, and how to remain attentive to the ethical imperatives, in terms of respect for the dead, described above.

Sources: The views from above and below

At the PRO, I worked mainly with Home Office files, but also some other departments' files, including those of the Metropolitan Police, Foreign Office and Admiralty. These have proved a very rich source. They contain official, semi-official and unofficial correspondence and memoranda to, from and within government departments. They also contain: newspaper cuttings from both mainstream and less mainstream papers; police reports of public meetings (often including verbatim transcripts of the proceedings) and of investigations into subversive groups; literature (and typed copies of literature) produced by the subversive groups; intercepted telegrams; diplomatic exchanges; petitions from and reports of deputations from pressure groups (some reports written by civil servants, some reports sent in by the group in question); and all sorts of other miscellaneous documents.¹⁵

Initially, I had imagined that the files would give me a glimpse into the genealogy of policing techniques, immigration control mechanisms, policy changes and so on. I had not imagined, however, that they would give me any sense of the obscure and underground world of East End radicalism itself, not least because the latter largely conducted itself in Yiddish. However, the files contain several radical leaflets and pamphlets in English and in other languages, often with police translations. They contain details of halls and clubs used by different groups, their membership cards and constitutions, and very detailed descriptions of meetings. They have, therefore, been more useful than I had anticipated for researching radicalism and its spaces.

In the second phase of my research, I worked in the British Library and the Tower Hamlets Local History Library at Bancroft Road, looking at the published output of the anarchist *Workers' Friend* group, the labour Zionist *Poale Zion*, the *Workers' War Emergency Relief Fund* which provided aid to Jewish victims of the First World

¹⁴ I give a full list in Appendix I.

¹⁵ Discussions of grappling with the Public Record Office, the Official Secrets Act and government documents in general can be found in the introductions to Colin Rogers (1981 – on the siege of Sidney Street), Peter and Leni Gillman (1980 – on refugees from Nazi Europe to Britain, with disturbing echoes in today's refugee crisis), Bernard Porter (1987 – on political policing prior to World War I) and Andreas Fahrmeir (2000 – on nineteenth century conceptions of nationality and citizenship).

War, the Marxist *British Socialist Party*, the Russian exile organization the *Committee of Delegates of the Russian Socialist Groups in London*, and the Jewish friendly society the *Workers' Circle*.

In addition to these primary materials, I have looked at several memoirs, autobiographies, reminiscences, memorial publications and oral histories. These included Rudolf Rocker's autobiography, Joseph Leftwich's unpublished diary, Paul Avrich's interviews with ageing anarchists, anniversary publications of the Workers' Circle, and the large amount of oral history that makes up Bill Fishman's *East End Jewish Radicals*. Finally, I should also mention that among the secondary material I worked with have been texts from what we could term the Yiddish historiographical tradition.¹⁶ This tradition has always been intimately connected with sociology, ethnography, the study of folklore and debates around social science methodology; it has generally been politically committed, often linked to socialist, labour movement, left Zionist or folkist activism; and it has been very attentive to oral history.¹⁷ David Roskies evokes this tradition well: "In Eastern Europe, Jewish historians themselves, not just their subjects, were in the direct line of fire." He gives examples such as "S. Ansky crisscrossing the Eastern war zone in World War I" and "Eliyohu Tcherikower in a Kiev torn by civil war" as well as the historians who worked in the Nazi ghettos, sifting through the surviving fragments of Jewish life, labouring to preserve scraps of evidence of this world on the brink of extinction (1999:14). My exposure to this material, like my reading of autobiographical and diary texts, has enriched my understanding of the Yiddish East End.

In working with these different sources, I found myself being pulled in different theoretical directions. During the first phase of my archival research, at the PRO, I experienced a pull towards a focus on governmentality, on how citizenship was policed and legislated and how identities were ascribed by power, on the actions of those with power such as policemen, politicians, bureaucrats or urban investigators: a view from above. In the second phase of my archival research, working with the more underground products of the East End, as well as looking at memoirs and oral history, the pull was more towards the resistant and creative self-fashioning of

¹⁶ Frankel uses the terms "the Russian" or "the nationalist" school of Jewish history to describe essentially the same type of texts, but these terms obscure important aspects of the tradition (1992).

¹⁷ Examples of this tradition include Simon Dubnov (1961, 1967), Melech Epstein (1965, 1969), JS Hertz (1954), Nora Levin (1978), Raphael Mahler (1942, 1985), Jacob Shatsky

subaltern cultures, that is, towards the agency of East End activists: a view from below. The view from above seemed easier to think through using an anti-humanist theoretical repertoire: Foucauldian languages of governmentality, subjectification and ascription. The view from below, on the other hand, seemed easier to think through using a humanist theoretical repertoire: the language of resistance, proletarian agency and subaltern subjectivity which we might associate with writers like EP Thompson or CLR James.

This tension, between humanism and anti-humanism, is illustrated in Iain Sinclair and Rachel Lichtenstein's co-authorship of *Rodinsky's Room*. Les Back writes:

The thing I have noted is that those readers who favour the currents of sceptical anti-humanism seem to place greater weight on Sinclair's constant questioning of identity, community and place, while those readers who favour humanistic impulse – reconstructed or otherwise – are more compelled by Rachel's voice.

I think it is a mistake to place uneven weight on one or other of the authors. What I think is fascinating is how the interplay between the two produces something that is more than the product of what either one of them could have produced alone. Sinclair's intuitive anti-humanism forces Lichtenstein's humanistic, and some would say proprietorial, claims to community, identity and belonging into question, while Lichtenstein's vigilant recovery of the consequences of letting the past disappear in the ether pricks the conscience of those who seem content to applaud and stand back as those traces of a Jewish and migrant past liquefy and are flushed by the storm of change into the train of progress (2000:3-4).

Taussig, in his archival work on Putamayo recorded in *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man*, similarly holds humanism and anti-humanism in balance. He speaks of

the need... to follow Michel Foucault in 'seeing historically how effects of truth are produced within discourses which are themselves neither true nor false.'

But surely at the same time, through 'seeing historically,' we strive to see *anew* – through the act of creating counter-discourse? (1987:8).

In other words, Taussig articulates a commitment *both* to the Foucauldian project of attending to power's production of "effects of truth" *and* to the emancipatory project of striving to see anew, striving to hear the small narratives and quiet counter-discourses in the margins of power. I too have tried in writing my research to keep both elements in play, to attend to the voices of the East End radicals, their counter-

(1948, 1958), Elias Tcherikower (1961) and Max Weinreich (1980). I am indebted to my Yiddish teachers, and especially Helen Beer, for helping to introduce me to this literature.

discourses and their agency – *and* to examine the effects of power and governmentality, how citizenship was policed and legislated and how identities were ascribed by power.

The Archive: This Trick of Truth

As the backdrop to all scholarly work stands the archive. Appeals to ultimate truth, adequacy and plausibility rest on archival presuppositions (Velody 1998:1).

In my research, I have attempted to avoid seeing archived material as “evidence” or “resource”, as a simple window into a past social world. As David Silverman has written,

people who generate and use such documents are concerned with how accurately they represent reality. Conversely, ethnographers are concerned with the social organisation of documents, irrespective of whether they are accurate or inaccurate, true or biased (1993:61).

Atkinson and Coffey make a similar point when they describe documents as “social facts”: produced, shared and used in socially organized ways, not transparent representations of realities (1997:47). The implication is that we should not be concerned with the accuracy of the descriptions given in the documents, but in their social organisation. That is, how are different discourses (and the different identities which emerge from them) produced socially?

This conviction to “read” the archive as “topic” (i.e. as a site for the construction of social reality) rather than simply as a “resource” (i.e. as the location of “facts” *about* social reality) is shared by Subaltern Studies historians. Spivak’s work on the Rani of Sirmur is an example. She writes that:

a hegemonic nineteenth-century European historiography had designated the archives as repositories of ‘facts,’ and I proposed that they should be ‘read’... The records I read showed the soldiers and administrators of the East India Company constructing the object of representations that becomes a reality of India (1999:203).

In Spivak’s archival investigations, the Rani of Sirmur appeared only briefly, her presence surrounded by a “pattern of exclusions”. This leads Spivak to ask, “As the historical record is made up, who is dropped out, when and why?... The Rani emerges only when she is needed in the space of imperial production” (ibid:237-8). Thus, instead of “quarrying for facts” (Dominick LaCapra’s phrase, quoted by Spivak 1999:205), Subaltern Studies seeks to uncover subterranean stories of exploitation, domination and resistance, and thus disturb the ideological constructions which we use as if they have the status of natural history.

Another example of such an approach to archival research is the work of Michael Taussig. Taussig has worked from various archival sources on the rubber terror in the Putamayo in the early twentieth century – including the reports of Roger Casement, the British Consul-General in the Putamayo, there investigating atrocities committed in the rubber trade, as well as the edited versions of those reports produced by Casement's superior, the Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey. He describes the way in which the publication of stories in print and their repetition in judicial spaces “facilitated shifts in reality involved in the metamorphosis of gossip into fact and of story into truth” (1987:33). He describes the shift in the mode of description between Casement's informants in the Putamayo, Casement's writing up of their stories and finally the editing of Casement's report by bureaucrats back in Whitehall; to attend to these shifts, he says, “is to begin to appreciate the power of epistemic murk in the politics of representation” (ibid:36). Casement's report (in contrast to his diary) and Grey's editing exemplify “what we could call the ‘objectivist fiction,’ namely, the contrived manner by which objectivity is created, and its profound dependence on the magic of style to make this trick of truth work” (ibid:37).¹⁸

What these writers are pointing towards is the social production of identities in the archive, and in the social production of the archives themselves. First, the archive is intimately connected to the *law*, to the state and its power. Derrida, in *Mal d'Archive*, excavates the etymology of the word “archive”, tracing its Greek roots in the *arkheion*, the domicile of the archons, the magistrates, those who commanded (*arkhē* meaning “commandment”). Official documents were stored in the home of the archons, who had the right to make law to act as the guardians of the law, to interpret the keep and interpret the archive. “Entrusted to the archons, the documents in effect speak the law” (1996:2).

Second, the archive is intimately connected with the *modern nation-state* and its monopoly on law and the violence of law: “archives, libraries and museums help to store and create modern ‘imagined communities’... archives construct the narratives of nationality” (Brown and Davis-Brown 1998:20). John Scott has described the way in which official archives have been produced within a specific social context:

¹⁸ The Parliamentary Select Committee which deliberated on Casement's report included radical MP Joseph King, whom we will encounter later in this thesis for his defence of

Public and private administrative records are shaped by the structure and activities of the particular national state within which they arise, but behind this diversity are certain features common to all nation states. All modern nation states exhibit enlarged systems of surveillance, first established in the Europe of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as states adopted more bureaucratic forms of administration. Central to such systems were practices of 'moral accounting', whereby a state initiated a system for monitoring the activities of its members through the policing of the population... Administrative records therefore are not, and never were, merely neutral reports of events, They are shaped by the political context in which they are produced and by the cultural and ideological assumptions that lie behind it (Scott 1990:60).

It is within the State itself... that categories and concepts are evolved for measuring and monitoring the actions of those who are the objects of surveillance. The relevant authorities must in addition devise methods for collecting and analysing the information they seek. These concepts and methods reflect the cultural underpinnings of state and private action, but they must be translated into specific administrative procedures before they can be applied. Information collection must become built into the regular routines of official action, and these administrative routines reflect the particular patterns taken by state and private activities (ibid:62).

Similarly, John Tagg writes:

The very notion of documentation was locked into a history of disciplinary practice and knowledge that emerged, piecemeal, from across the workings of [apparatuses like the police, schools, hospitals, prisons and immigration departments]... Surveillance was its apparatus of restraint; the record, its cell; the index, its carceral architecture (1992:140-1).

Third, the archive is intimately connected with the development of capitalist forms of power. In *Capital*, Marx used government archives to find a wealth of detail on the life and work of the proletariat – but he recognized that the production of these documents, this detail, was tied to administrative practices such as the Factory Acts, which were passed between 1831 and 1853, that is, contemporary with the Public Record Office, which was inaugurated in 1838.¹⁹ In other words, the production of the documents Marx read was intimately tied to the political will and class interests of the British capitalist state. At the level of the specific workplace, production of knowledge was tied to workplace discipline, to the practice of supervision. “The supervisor thus embodied the authority of capital, and documents representing

refugee rights during the First World War. See *Report and Special Report from the Select Committee on Putamayo 1913* London: HMSO, Cd.148.

¹⁹ The Acts made equal what Marx called “the conditions of competition” between factories and, by reducing labour time, forced the self-expansion of capital to proceed through increased productivity (through the development of workplace technology and discipline), and thus served capital in general, even though resisted by particular capitalists and partly

factory rules and regulations, such as attendance registers and time sheets, became both symbols and instruments of his authority. Supervision, so crucial to the working of capitalist authority, was thus based on documents and produced documents in turn” (Chakrabarty 1989:68).

In drawing our attention to supervision and inspection, on which the government archives he drew on were based, Marx points us towards the importance of regimes of *visibility* in generating archived material. Following on from this, I want to examine more closely the specific social context, the specific regimes of visibility, in which the Edwardian archival texts I worked with were produced.

Regimes of Visibility

For the newly dominant middle classes, the system of the eye offered control of the Other, a defence against the urban proletariat and the mysterious customs of immigrants (Borden 2000:35).

In the Victorian and Edwardian period, the metropolitan spaces in which Jewish immigrants moved, such as London’s East End, became sources for concern that required new forms of policing. As I will describe in chapter three, new border patrols were developed to map and police the alien zones (the Special Branch, MI5), and new techniques and technologies were developed to facilitate this process (fingerprinting, undercover surveillance, police photography, alien registers). Crucially, as I argued in the introduction, all of this took place in the context of empire and colonialism, which provided an epistemological framework by which the metropolis, and especially the East End, could be known and tamed. Thus this imperial dimension had practical consequences, as techniques such as fingerprinting and anthropometry were imported from the colonies, along with key figures in the policing of alien subversion. This section will describe these processes.

In this period, as Tony Bunyan has written, there was a general shift towards *detection* in policing. This meant an increase in plainclothes or undercover policing in general, epitomised by the formation of the Criminal Investigation Department of the Met (the CID) in 1878, to which the Special Branch was attached. The shift to a focus on detection in policing meant the introduction of practices of *patrolling* – that is, new practices of making the metropolis (and its working class and “dangerous”

resulting from working-class self-activity (Marx *Capital* volume 1, part III, chapter

areas) visible and knowable to the law. As Bunyan writes, "Because the 'criminal class' came predominantly from the proletariat, detection was only possible through a first-hand knowledge of the matrix of working-class life. To apprehend these criminals meant that communities had to be patrolled, bringing a very real intrusion into everyday life" (1976:66). Police spatial practices developed in the period were designed to make the space of the Metropolis visible. For instance, walking the beat gave the police a particular form of knowledge about space. The Metropolis was mapped into Districts and then into

carefully delineated divisions, subdivisions, sections and numbered beats. Constables walked their beats in a fixed time according to an appointed route night and day, and were engaged in the disciplinary ordering of time and space. If he deemed an individual to be 'out of place' s/he would be stopped, questioned and searched. If people did not 'move on' when they were told to, they ran the risk of being arrested for being suspicious persons (McLaughlin 2000:187).

The Metropolitan Police's first rulebook told the constable that it was "indispensably necessary" to "make himself perfectly acquainted with all parts of his beat... He will be expected to possess such knowledge of the inhabitants of each house, as will enable him to recognize their persons".²⁰ As Moran and McGhee comment, "The 'beat' as an institution of space is a practice of examination by and a requirement of incessant and regular observation. Here, space is a technology of domination"; through surveillance, the body of the alien becomes an object of law (1998:215).²¹

The knowledge gained this way allowed the police to have a privileged, authoritative voice in the public sphere, supplementing the voices of Jewish communal "representatives" and of social investigators. For example, the Chief Inspector of the Met's H Division (a Division seen as coincident with the Jewish East End) was called before the Royal Commission on Alien Immigration in 1902. He spoke of exactly 101 streets "wholly colonized now, if I may use the word, by foreigners." Of these streets, he said, 84 were occupied by people of good character and seventeen by people of bad character (quoted Steyn 1999:68-9).

These sorts of police knowledges were formed in the context of a colonial geographical and epistemological structure. As I suggested in the introduction, how the colonies, and the orient, were mapped onto the space of the city. Englishness

10,1954:474-90, especially 480-4).

²⁰ MEPO 8/2

²¹ For more on this regime of visibility, see Sekula (1982) and Tagg (1988:60-102, 1992:97-114, 134-56).

was increasingly understood in opposition to its colonial and Eastern others; images drawn from empire (jungle, dark continent, etc) were used to think about, to make visible, the denizens of London; empire and East End “imaginatively doubled” for each other; East London was “‘an internal Orient’ to be discovered and tamed”.²² This mapping of the East and empire onto the colonies produced a particular East End – an East End, for example, that should be policed in the way the colonies were policed, that should be penetrated and explored as the Dark Continent was to be.

Discovering and taming, making its dark corners accessible to the eyes of Londoners: the imagining of the East End was closely bound up with making it *knowable and visible*.

When Jack London first wished to visit the East End in 1902 he was told by the manager of Thomas Cook’s Cheapside branch that ‘We are not accustomed to taking travellers to the East End... we know nothing whatsoever about the place at all.’... In *Tales of the Mean Streets* (1894), Arthur Morrison declared ‘There is no need to say in the East End of what. The East End is a vast city, as famous in its own way as any man has made. But who knows the East End?’ (Ackroyd 2001:679).

Knowing the East End, I am arguing, was a colonial project. “Colonial power reproduces the colonized as a fixed reality which is at once an ‘other’ and yet entirely knowable and visible” (Bhabha 1986:156).

Colonial epistemology marked particular zones of the city as alien, but also as *criminal*. In the 1911 edition of his guide to London, Baedeker informed his readers that at the “Jews’ market” at Petticoat Lane they should beware of pickpockets (quoted Looker 2001:18-9). The new forms of policing being developed in this period were intricately tied up with this double racialization/criminalization process. With the shift to detection and surveillance in policing, plainclothes detectives were incited to become ethnographers, decoding the mysterious signs in the East End streets. In 1904, a superintendent at the Leman Street police station in H Division sent the following memo to the Commissioner of the Met:

I beg to bring under the Commissioner’s notice the fact that in consequence of the settlement of Aliens in this Division, the resident population consists chiefly of Russians and Poles who speak the Yiddish language.

Bills and circulations in this language are distributed and posted all over the Division but police know nothing of their purport unless the interpreter is employed to translate them. As it is known that a number of these people are members of Continental Revolutionary Societies it

²² Walkowitz (1992:35), Back (1996:18).

would be very desirable to have members of the Service who speak this language.

If authority were given I should have no difficulty in forming a class of Police for this purpose. A gentleman has volunteered to teach the class without charge.²³

New forms of knowledge (often constructed as “evidence”) about the East End proliferated in this high imperial period: from fictional detectives such as Conan Doyle’s Holmes or Dickens’ Inspector Bucket to tourists and travellers and the guidebook writers who charted their paths, from the street-by-street urban investigators sent out by Charles Booth to the Yiddish-learning police officers of H Division, from the aristocratic men who flocked to Shoreditch’s mean streets in the wake of Jack the Ripper to the aristocratic women who collected rent in the new model housing. In the shadow of the city walls, in the contact zone at the edge of imperial citizenship, new methodologies for rendering the East End visible and knowable emerged.²⁴

Mark Seltzer describes this methodology as “a police work not confined to the institutions of the law... but enacted also through an ‘unofficial’ literature of detection: by the reports of tourists from the ‘upper world’ and by the investigations of an exploratory urban sociology” (quoted Looker 2001:22). Looker cites one 1895 guide-book which recommends tourists find a “friendly detective” with whom to see the “merry little nests”, “thieves’ kitchens and pickpockets’ haunts” of the East End, and a 1902 guide that reassures the anxious travellers about the Met’s surveillance powers (ibid). Booth’s social investigators found just such “friendly detectives” with whom to do their ethnographic work. Met Commissioner Sir Edward Bradford assigned beat coppers with local knowledge to accompany George Duckworth and Booth’s other workers on their street-by-street surveys of London. The beat coppers’ intimacy with the streets they patrolled was invoked as they were asked to identify the social class of each street’s residents, reducing the illegibility of the city to a neat colour-coded taxonomy. Rosemary O’Day and David Englander locate the police support for the Booth project in the context of a broadening of the police’s “expert” status, noting that police evidence was also given in every major parliamentary inquiry of the period, including the ones on sweating and immigration (1993:7-8).

²³ MEPO 2/733, 17.02.1904

²⁴ On middle class flâneurs in Jack the Ripper’s Shoreditch, see Walkowitz (1992:212-3); on other forms of pedestrian surveillance in the same period, see Pollack (1993); on Holmes and Bucket, see Donald (2000); on Booth’s policemen, see Steele (1997); on the suffragette as flâneuse and social investigator, see Green (1994).

By the end of the Victorian period, as James Donald writes,

the city had become a new problem: the problem of visibility. Too big to encompass in a single glance, populated by illegible strangers rather than familiar neighbours, the city threatened to exceed the capacity to envisage, represent or – key point – govern it. To get around or behind this opacity required a new way of relating to the city: investigation. Hence... a new breed of anthropologist-explorer-detective deploying new methods for getting the measure of the city: statistics, environmental health, physical and moral taxonomies, photography... Walter Benjamin noted the historical link between new techniques for fixing identity, and so creating records as a feature of urban surveillance, and the enigmatic city of the detective story... This will to knowledge and a rationality capable of penetrating the fog of social relations is figured in the Victorian detective (2000:57).

This, then, was the social context in which the archival data on which I have drawn was produced.

Intertextuality, Genre, Fragmentation and Serialization

In the rest of this section, I want to examine some of the features of archival documents which are revealed by seeing the historical and cultural circumstances of archival textual production, such as genre, intertextuality, fragmentation, serialization.

Attention to the social production of archival material, as Atkinson and Coffey note, is to be attentive to issues such as *genre*: each genre has its own distinctive linguistic register (1997:48-9). Atkinson and Coffey also make the point that researchers must keep in mind the *intertextuality* of documents, the relations between documents (ibid:55). Mariam Fraser (2002) has spoken of “swinging wildly between different registers” as a defining experience of doing archival research. For example, a normal Home Office file from the early twentieth century might include minutes and memoranda, summaries of legal cases, police reports, intra- and inter-departmental letters, written questions from MPs and draft replies for politicians to give, newspaper cuttings, each with its own specific genre conventions and traditions.

Ranjit Guha talks of the two opposing tendencies faced by those working in the archive: *fragmentation* and *serialization*. Fragmentation – “that maverick which breaks into Clio’s estate from time to time, stalls a plot in its drive to dénouement, and scatters its parts” (1997:37) – is the entropic process that *both* interrupts the

(bureaucratic illusion of) coherence that is central to the archive's existence *and* makes it harder for the historian to produce a coherent narrative of the past.

Serialization, on the other hand, is one of the ways in which the archive brings off its appearance of coherence. "Historians know all too well how the contents of a series in an official archive or a company's record room derive much of their meaning from the intentions and interests of the government or firm concerned" (ibid). Richard Harvey Brown and Beth Davis-Brown also underline the political structures underlying the way that archives are serialized or classified:

classifications never emerge solely from the material to be classified since our ways of defining the material itself are shaped by the dominant intellectual or political paradigms through which we view it... Insofar as categorical systems appear to organize their relevant material 'correctly', all their ideological functions are thereby more disguised and, hence, all the more powerful (1998:25).

Despite these two dangers (the poacher and the game-keeper in Clio's estate?), Guha finds it politically important to consider the fragments and traces of subaltern life-stories – in his case the fragmented documentary remains of testimonies of villagers concerning the death of a pregnant woman from the village – as *part of an archive*: "to read these statements as an archive is to dignify them as the textual site for struggle to reclaim for history an experience buried in a forgotten crevice of our past" (ibid:39-40).

As Guha suggests, serialization and fragmentation are closely related, a point that Carolyn Steedman also makes:

The Archive is made from selected and consciously chosen documentation from the past *and* the mad fragmentations that no one intended to preserve and just ended up there... In the Archive, you cannot be shocked at its exclusions, its emptiness, at what is *not* catalogued, at what was 'destroyed by enemy action during the Second World War', nor that it tells of the gentry and not of the poor stockinger. Its condition of being deflects outrage: in its quiet folders and bundles is the neatest demonstration of how state power has operated, through ledgers and lists and indictments, and through what is missing from them (1998:67).

The Home Office file on the wife of Bolshevik Jacob Peters,²⁵ who may or may not have been involved in the Siege of Sidney Street, a 1911 gun battle between police and foreign revolutionaries, is an example of the role of serialization and fragmentation in the archive's construction of truth. The file is ordered chronologically in reverse, so that the civil servant consulting it only needs to read

²⁵ HO 45/24700

the top document in the file, the most recent, and summarize that. With each successive summary, the stories deposited in the earlier layers – allegations, rumours and hearsay – gain the status of facts. In the bottom, earliest, file, from 1918, a right-wing MP, Sir Henry Page-Croft, passes on an anonymous note about May Peters to the Home Office:

Mrs. Peters... born an Englishwoman, married a Russian whom she states is Peter the Painter of Sidney Street fame. She says this man is now in Russia holding a high position in the Bolshevist Government and that he signs the death warrants of the capitalist classes. She admits that she receives money, with which she is well-provided from an anonymous source and that it was sent to her from Norway.

Her method has been and still is to get employment in factories and large business concerns where she generally promotes a strike and when she has succeeded on one place goes on to another. By this means she has gathered together a band of thirty women who distribute the literature she provides them with.

She is a loose woman openly advocating Bolshevist principles including free love, to which, unfortunately the daughter of my informant has fallen a victim. Next door to this woman lives a police inspector.²⁶

The MP's letter, passing on "confidential" information that was already second-hand (from an "informant"), was then passed to the CID, who found absolutely no evidence for the allegations whatsoever. Nonetheless, the Home Office kept the file, and added press cuttings about the husband, Jake Peters, which support the myth that he (who was an active Bolshevik in London who returned to lead the Cheka) was "Peter the Painter", a Lithuanian terrorist whose body was never found after the Siege of Sidney Street. When, a couple of years later, Mrs Peters found herself in Russia, divorced by her husband under Bolshevik marriage law, she applied to return to Britain, and the file was again consulted. A typed minute from a civil servant this time mentions that she was

a member of the IWW and of the notorious International Socialist Club, from which she was threatened for expulsion for immorality. While she was resident in this country she associated entirely with extremists and is alleged to have been concerned in the Sydney Street affair. There is no proof or even hint in our records that her interest in politics has abated and her sending her daughter to Isadora Duncan's school can scarcely be taken as proof she has renounced her ways.²⁷

Although this bureaucrat's statement gives no indication of the sources of these allegations, a more senior civil servant, who does take the time to read the earlier documents in the file, who also underlines "Isadora Duncan's school", writes in pen that "The 1918 report in /2 conveyed a different impression of M^{rs} Peters; but on the

²⁶ HO 45/24700/2

²⁷ HO 45/24700

above she had better stay in Russia.” The next statement, from Special Branch, mentions the 1918 report, but agrees to accept the 1921 version instead, because the “information... was so precise that it was thought that the earlier minute could be held to have lapsed”.²⁸ In other words, *sounding like* truth is enough for them. Subsequent civil servants clearly do not read the 1918 report, but rely on the 1921 minute. May Peters continued to apply for re-entry to Britain through the 1920s, with no success. The last document in the file is dated 1930, when the story stalls abruptly, and the file was placed in the Public Record Office, closed to public access until 1971. In the fragments of this story, we can see what Taussig calls the archive’s “trick of truth” at work: hearsay and rumours acquiring the status of fact through sounding like truth, through the use of specific modes of writing and filing.

Serialization and fragmentation, as this example shows, mean that what we find in the archive is the *traces* of various past events. In the Prison Notebooks, in “History of the Subaltern Classes: Methodological Criteria”, Gramsci writes that

The history of subaltern groups is necessarily fragmented and episodic. [Any possibility of unification in the history of these groups] is continually disrupted by the activity of the ruling groups... Every trace of independent initiative on the part of the subaltern groups should therefore be of incalculable value for the integral historian (1971:54-5).

Here, Gramsci links his conceptual argument about the composition and decomposition of the proletariat to a methodological argument about the “integral” (i.e. materialist) historian’s need to orient herself to the *traces* of working class self-activity. A materialist methodology, attending to the voices of modernity’s subalterns, is inevitably a methodology of traces, as the voices of these subalterns are archived only unevenly. In another prison text by Gramsci, “Note I” of “Some Preliminary Points of Reference for the Study of Philosophy”, he develops the possibility of a methodology oriented to traces. He suggests an archaeology of popular or subaltern thought, an excavation of the “stratified deposits” of previous philosophies. This involves the consciousness that we are each “a product of the historical process to date which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory” (1971:324). The subaltern studies historians have taken up Gramsci’s notion here, articulating the need for a “critical historiography”, as one which works by “bending closer to the ground in order to pick up the traces of a subaltern life in its passage through time” (Guha 1997:36). Similarly, Dinesh Chakrabarty speaks of reading sources for their “silences”, “their gaps and omissions” (1989:65, cf 70-81).

²⁸ Ibid.

We can only guess, for example, what stories lie behind an 1896 court case when a clothing manufacturer sued a Jewish tailoress who was withholding nineteen khaki coats she was meant to finish for him, sewing buttonholes and buttons for a pittance. He had taken the order from a wholesaler to fill a South African order, and had distributed the work to various East End outworkers.²⁹ The fragmentary story hints at patterns of exploitation, links between the East End garment trade and the circuitry of empire, but perhaps also hidden, subterranean forms of resistance, such as the withholding of work by this anonymous woman. Similarly, we can only guess what lies behind the cases of H Fineberg, a 47-year-old machinist, or E Joseph, an eighteen-year-old tailor's cutter, who both applied for and were refused exemption from military service by the Poplar Military Service Tribunal. Their names appear, as #1010 and #1418, two among many in the Tribunal's Case Register, now in the Tower Hamlets Local History archive, but their stories continue to elude us.

Despite the fragmentary nature of the archive, we can use it to examine how identities, such as "undesirable aliens" and "alien subversion", or, later, "enemy aliens" and "enemy aliens of friendly race", were called into being. One final example is a Home Office file on the post-war "Hands Off Russia!" movement, based on practical solidarity with Bolshevik Russia. The proto-fascist British Empire Union (whose slogan was "Britain for the British") wrote to the Home Office calling attention to a forthcoming Hands Off Russia! conference. The letter starts by mentioning the association of Lenin, Trotsky and Luxemburg with the organizers. It then particularly notes the advertized presence there of Luhani (an Indian IWW activist – "see the Chicago trials"), William Paul (a member of the ultra-left Socialist Labour Party), Sylvia Pankhurst (a militant Marxist suffragette), David Ramsey (a trade union militant), and WF Watson (a syndicalist-influenced engineering worker active in the movement for a British soviet). The Empire Union urged the Home Office to ban it, saying "Freedom of speech is all very well, but it can be overdone. We all know what the Bolsheviks and the IWW are out for, and by what means they propose to achieve their objects. I do not suppose Bolshevism will ever gain much foothold in this country, but it is very infectious and can do much harm here."³⁰ Here, communism ("Bolshevism") is constructed as alien (and thus unable to gain a foothold in Britain), but at the same time as a dangerous contagion ("very

²⁹ Maurice Adams *The Sweating System* The Humanitarian League's Publications No.22, 1896, London: William Reeves [BL/8425.AA.73/22], pp.5-6.

³⁰ Letter 15.1.1919 in HO 45/10744/263275/447

infectious"). This is amplified too by the highlighting of the presence of foreign agitators (Luhani, an Indian but also connected to the dangers of American influence through the image of "the Chicago trials") and of connections to continental (mainly Jewish and/or Russian) Marxists such as Trotsky. Finally, the letter concludes by saying that "Surely such men as Luhani can be deported. we [sic] do not want the scum of the earth in this country."³¹

Basil Thomson, head of Special Branch, wrote the following letter to the Home Office shortly after Litvinov's departure to Russia about the same upcoming Hands Off Russia public meeting, probably as a result of the British Empire Union letter:

The British Socialist Party Leaders are in active touch with Litvinoff. Fairchild, the Secretary, is believed to have received money from him before he left. The object of the meeting in the Albert Hall is to show the 'classes' the strength of the revolutionary movement. The Hall will be largely packed with members of the Herald League and Russian Jews. There will be contemptuous allusions to the King and much waving of red flags, but the whole business will be rather hollow. The point of choosing the Albert Hall is that a 'Royal' Hall is a better factor for advertisement than the usual place where the steam is let off. It would not, in my opinion, be wise for the Government to take any responsibility in advising the Directors, for if the Hall be refused Ramsey, of the Electrical Trades Union, will have the cable cut as on a former occasion.³²

This letter reveals a lot about the attitudes of the political police in this period: an awareness of real working class power (in this case embodied in the Albert Hall electricians), combined with a contemptuous dismissal of the "hollow" ideas of the left, which are reduced to "letting off steam". The mention of the Herald League (identified with the white East End) and Russian Jews (also identified with the East End), along with the mention of "*the usual place* where steam is let off", is significant. It reveals a complex relationship between a particular *mapping* of the city, a racialization of the urban space of London, and a racialization of the left. The Royal Hall in Kensington is clearly, for both the police and the revolutionary movement, at the symbolic heart of the British bourgeois public sphere in a way that the halls and clubrooms of the East End are not. The revolutionary movement, then, is placed by the police outside the public sphere through its identification with the East End, but also as foreign and alien by reference to Litvinov and the Russian Jews. Taking the two texts together (Thomson's letter and the one from the British Empire Union), we can see how a knowledge or truth about the East End and about the left was built up in the files of the Home Office. The fears, rumours and gossip

³¹ Ibid

generated by the “moral entrepreneurs”³³ at the Empire Union are passed on by the bureaucrats of the Home Office to the Special Branch as a specific policing problem, and the repetition of these stories by the police gives them the status within the file of truth.

In approaching documents such as this – both archived material on the technologies of governance *and* archived material on the radical groups themselves – I have used two different ways of working. First, I have tried to *map* the East End radicals through space and time. That is, I have tried to trace the various personal names, organizational names and place names as they move in relation to each other. For instance, I have been able to trace the links between organizations that appear to promote very different discourses or ideologies through the overlap in the personnel associated with them. I have also been able to start to map the geography of the alternative public sphere in which they articulated their ideologies and discourses, through the addresses that crop up again and again as significant. In the Home Office file on Hands Off Russia!, for example, alongside these letters is an undercover police report on the conference itself and copies of leaflets picked up there. This file, then, can be used as a “resource”, in that it reveals Italian anarchists, Russian Jews and British Bolsheviks sharing space. But it can also be used as “topic”, as a site where identities are produced. Therefore, as well as using such documents to map the spaces of East End radicalism, I have selected a few key texts – texts which seemed to do more work in addressing issues of citizenship and belonging – and worked much more closely with them, trying to draw out more carefully the ways in which different identities have been assembled, negotiated, refused and re-assembled.

The two approaches enable me to try to answer two different sorts of questions. The first approach helps us address “what” questions, questions about what happened when and where. It is essential for gaining some sense of the material and social context in which the archived texts were produced, specifically around the spaces of discourse in which the identity work actually took place. The closer textual work (using text as topic), in contrast, addresses “how” questions: how particular identities were produced in the texts.

³² Letter 8.1.1919 in HO 45/10744/263275/447

³³ Becker (1963).

Using Archival Sources

Before moving on to the body of my thesis, I want to set out here the way I have used different sorts of archival sources in the specific parts of this thesis to make the different parts of my argument. The next chapter, “Geographies of Belonging: Jubilee Street”, draws mainly on memoirs and oral history, in order to build towards a thick description of the East End anarchist scene: memoirs by Rocker and Joseph Leftwich, Leftwich’s 1911 diary, oral history interviews with ageing activists conducted by Paul Avrich, John Pether and Bill Fishman.

Chapter three, “Citizenship, Empire, Modernity”, is primarily a theoretical chapter, drawing on the work of thinkers such as Zygmunt Bauman. However, in arguing that it is vital to attend to the material processes, the mundane techniques and technologies, the border patrols of citizenship, which marked citizenship’s emergence, I will be looking at some of the documents I worked with in the Public Record Office (PRO), such as Home Office files which discuss alien registration or Foreign Office files which discuss joint European initiatives to control the movement of “terrorists”.

In chapter four, “Becoming Citizens”, where the focus shifts back to the Jewish East End, I will draw on a different sort of archive: pages from the main Anglo-Jewish paper of the time, the *Jewish Chronicle*, and in particular issues from 1903, the year of the Royal Commission on Alien Immigration and the Kishinev massacre. The *Jewish Chronicle*, as the English-language mouthpiece of Anglo-Jewry, was a space in which assimilated Jews articulated their identification as “English citizens of the Jewish faith” and where they expressed their ambivalent relationship to the arriving Eastern Europeans who they saw as their “co-religionists”. This same archive is also my main source for chapter five, “Geographies of Belonging: Kishinev”. Reading the pages of the *Chronicle* in the months after the pogrom, we can see the official slow official response of Anglo-Jewry, who played down the call to Jewish identity that the trauma of Kishinev represented and stressed instead their loyalty to the English nation. However, we can also see traces of a different response in the East End, from the landsmanshaftn (organizations of people from the same places in Eastern Europe) and from Jewish trade unions. I have also turned to other primary sources and memoirs to give a greater insight into these East End responses, such as Israel Zangwill’s published writings and Rudolf Rocker’s memoirs.

Chapters six and seven return to the theme of citizenship and its policing, before and during the 1914-18 war. The main sources I have drawn on here are government records from the PRO, mainly Home Office and Metropolitan Police files.

Chapters eight and nine examine the response to the war in the East End. I look at a number of radical groups: the *Foreign Jews Protection Society* and the anarchist *Workers' Friend* group, whose activities were tracked by the police and who therefore have left traces in the Home Office and police archives; and the *Workers' War Emergency Relief Fund* and the *Committee of Delegates of the Russian Socialist Groups in London*, whose publications are in the British Library. These chapters also look at more everyday forms of resistance which were practised in the East End, and again I have traced some of these narratives in the margins of government records, as well as in the oral history interviews of Sharman Kadish.

Chapter 2

Geographies of Belonging: Jubilee Street

Following on from the discussion of the ethics of memory and tradition in the introduction and in the first half of the last chapter, this chapter will seek to rescue the memories and stories of forgotten people who, despite their obscurity then and oblivion now, have important lessons for us. The chapter will draw out some of the hidden traditions and subterranean connections that traversed their world. In an effort to redeem their narratives, time will be spent discussing the lives of some of the individuals who helped make up the ghetto public sphere, building a thick description of London's Jewish radical world. Drawing primarily on memoirs and diaries but also on archival sources and some secondary works, it will describe one important space of ghetto radicalism in the East End – the anarchist Workers' Friend Club at Jubilee Street – and the most important figures who moved within such spaces – especially Rudolf Rocker.

The chapter will argue that the East End public sphere, as epitomized by spaces such as the Jubilee Street Club, was characterized by certain alternative forms of political rationality, civility, civic participation, belonging and solidarity – and in arguing that the radical East End (exemplified here by the Jubilee Street Club) was both *trans-national* and *rooted* in the Yiddish popular culture of the East End. This has two implications.

First, the Jewish radicals, such as the anarchists, cannot be understood fully if *either* their specifically Jewish contexts *or* their broader radical contexts are ignored, nor if *either* their local, East End contexts *or* their trans-national (by which I mean both diasporic Jewish and world radical) contexts are ignored. The East End radicals, like East End immigrants more generally, practised *multiple identities*, tied to multiple locations.

Second, the Jewish radicals of the Western ghetto, such as London's Yiddish anarchists, must be seen as deeply imbued with what Barth called the “cultural stuff”, the traditions, language, idioms and everyday practices of their ethnic group. They cannot be seen as radicals who “just happened” to be Jewish; nor can some essential feature of Jewishness (such as wandering or questioning) be said to somehow “explain” their radicalism. Rather, they were both radical *and* Jewish,

intimately connected to the community in which they lived even as they sought out wider utopian horizons.

In moving between multiple locations and multiple identifications, between a rooting in the East End and a routing in trans-national Yiddish traditions, the ghetto radicals were *diverse and plural*, both politically and culturally; they were *multi-lingual*; they operated at the interstices of communities, translating between them. Stuart Hall uses the figure of translation to describe diasporic “cultures of hybridity”: “They are irrevocably translated.... They must learn to inhabit at least two identities, to speak [at least!] two cultural languages, to translate and negotiate between them” (1992:310). This chapter will draw out this notion, showing how this was realized in spaces like the Jubilee Street Club.

In the chapter, I will first introduce the web of alternative micro-public spaces which I am calling the East End’s counter-public, before more closely examining the *Arbayter Fraynd* group and their Jubilee Street Club. This examination will focus on Rudolf Rocker, the central figure in that movement, and on the forms of belonging which Rocker’s life and the space of the Jubilee Street Club exemplify: its simultaneous openness and diversity and deep rooting in the cultural practices of the immigrant Jews and the way it functioned as a culture of translation.

The East End Counter-Public

In focusing on the anarchists, I do not mean to suggest anarchism was the dominant doctrine in the East End of 1903. Indeed, Jewish London was a space of great political diversity. As Alain Finkielkraut writes of the Yiddish-speaking world,

their culture was that diversified space in which there coexisted, and sometimes conflicted, groups of believers and laymen, Zionists and Bundists, Orthodox and Reform Jews, cosmopolitan townspeople and inhabitants of the shtetls. It was possible to respect the *shabbat* without wearing the prophets’ beard, to enjoy both the Yiddish theatre and Bizet’s *Carmen*, to study the Torah and play Ping-Pong or volleyball... Modernity and Judaism were not two incompatible options which are retrospectively set in opposition to each other.

...For the small craftsmen of the Belleville, République and Marais neighborhoods of Paris took great liberties with the synagogue: neither assimilated nor traditional, they are therefore absent from our reconstructions (1994:87-8).

Before focusing on Jubilee Street itself, I want to spend a little time describing the dense network of micro-public spaces of which it was part. Jubilee Street was just one of the more important radical clubs in the East End. Some trade unions had

union halls or clubs, which were important spaces in the radical scene. For instance, there was a Capmakers Hall off Commercial Road, where the Communist League's Stepney branch met every Friday night in the spring and summer of 1919.¹ A Labour Institute was formed in Autumn 1902 by the Independent Furniture Carvers Association and some political discussion groups, modelled on the Maison du Peuple in Brussels.² In 1908, journalist Peter Latouche wrote that there were five anarchist clubs in the East End, the largest being Kingsland Road, with over 1000 members.³ Other clubs included the Hebrew Workers Club and Institute in Houndsditch and the Mantle-Makers' Club on Whitechapel Road in the 1880s/1890s⁴ and the East London Social Democratic Club at St Thomas St in Whitechapel in the 1900s.⁵

One of the most important spaces of this radical East End was the Workers Circle. The Circle combined political, cultural and educational activities with benefits, and had a strong working class perspective. In 1909, there were two Workers' Circles in the East End. A Free Workers' Circle was formed in 1902, with (unusually for the benefit societies) men and women able to join on equal terms.⁶ As Mick Mindel recalled, the brochure containing its rules and regulations "caused quite a stir among bourgeois friendly societies, especially the declaration that we welcomed women to free membership" (1959:8). Among its founders, according to Rucker, were *Arbayter Fraynd* activists Arthur Hillman and Nathan Wiener.⁷ According to Meir Barnett, one of its activists, it was started by five cabinet-makers meeting in Nathan Wiener's home.⁸ There were fifty members at the end of 1909, a year later there were 220 members, and by 1920 it had nearly a thousand members.⁹ Mick Mindel recalled its pioneers as including Morris Myer, a socialist and Zionist-leaning Yiddish journalist from Romania, Stolboff, a Russian who returned in 1917, the Hollander brothers, Barnett Weinberg, Halperin, Isenstone, Borovick, Birnbaum,

¹ *Workers Dreadnought* 17.5.1919 and other issues

² Black (1988:214). Cf *JC* 17.10.1902, 17.7.1903. The Maison du Peuple was built for the Parti Ouvrier Belge (P.O.B.) by art nouveau architect Victor Horta in the late 1890s. The French anarchist geographer Elisée Reclus lectured there to workers. In 1903, the RSDLP Congress opened there before moving to London.

³ Cardwell (1988:45).

⁴ Prager (1990:417).

⁵ Prager (1990:211).

⁶ Rucker (1956:28), Rosenbury (1984:82).

⁷ Rucker (1956:28). Hillman was a trade union activist, a secretary of the Jewish Tailors and Tailoresses Union (FS/11/154).

⁸ Barnett (1934:2).

⁹ Rucker (1956:218), *Workers' Circle* (1959:33).

Glogovsky, Pilchick, Balkin and Meir Barnet.¹⁰ Although I do not have any information on most of these people, following the discussion in chapter one, I thought it important to give their names, to commemorate the fact that this world was composed by and large of the anonymous, forgotten people, rather than the famous and well-remembered.

On 8 June 1908, an Arbayer Ring Fareyn (Workers' Circle Association)¹¹ was formed in Woolf Krasner's kitchen in Umberton Street, off Commercial Road. It enrolled eighteen members, including chairman I Cohen, secretary E Portnoy and treasurer Krasner. It was to have three functions: as a friendly society, for education and for socialist propaganda. A month later it started a library of books contributed by readers, and at the end of the year there were 200 registered readers.¹²

In 1910 or 1911, the two circles amalgamated.¹³ The Free Circle became Division I, its West End branch became Division II, and the Fareyn became Division III. When it held its first all-London conference in May 1912, it had 814 members.¹⁴ The Workers' Circle performed a number of functions. First, it actively supported workers' trade union activity. For instance, it was active in supporting the 1912 tailors' and bakers' strikes, helping to manage the latter's co-operative, boycotting non-union bread, lending money to the bakers' and tailors' unions (and later to the miners' and other non-East End unions).¹⁵ Second, it involved itself in relief activities, playing a major role in the Workers' War Emergency Relief Fund, the Arbayer Fond, during WWI, which raised funds for new refugees and other victims of the war in Eastern Europe.¹⁶ Third, it involved itself in cultural activities. As Naomi Dale writes, "Distinct from other British labour organisations of the time, the society linked celebration and assertion of cultural heritage with the collective unity and

¹⁰ Mindel (1959:8).

¹¹ Fareyn: Written "verein" (the German word it comes from) in the recollections of its officer AL Cohen and translated into English by him as "association" (1959:8). Translated as "relief association" by Mick Mindel, who was in the rival Free Ring (1959:8), and as "mutual aid society" by another officer, Woolf Krasner, in his 1935 recollections (1959:8). I believe the AL Cohen cited here is the same man as the I Cohen mentioned as the secretary by Krasner (1959:8).

¹² Krasner (1959:8). Krasner claims to have been unaware of an already existing Free Workers' Circle, saying that around this time, the *Arbayer Fraynd* advertized its formation. The appearance of the Free Workers' Circle in the *Jewish Chronicle's* list of friendly societies in 1905 (Rosenbury 1984:82), along with Rocker's date of 1902 (1956:28), however, makes it pretty clear that the Free Workers' Circle pre-dated its rival by six years.

¹³ Cohen gives 1911 (1959:9), Krasner gives 1910 (1959:8).

¹⁴ Rocker (1956:28).

¹⁵ Mindel (1959:7), Barnett (1934:2).

¹⁶ Podolsky (1959:24). The Fund will be discussed in detail in chapters eight and nine.

aspirations for justice and equality of an oppressed minority” (1985:14). This was particularly true of Division III, which had a strong ideological orientation to Yiddishism.¹⁷ It also hosted debates, such as one between Morris Myer, representing “Socialism, pure and simple”, against the theorist of socialist Zionism, Ber Borokhov, in 1913 or 1914.¹⁸ Often cultural activities and day-to-day political concerns were interlinked, such as during the war when the Cigarette Workers’ Union went on strike and the Workers’ Circle Dramatic League put on a gala benefit featuring a Yiddish play *Der gonif* (The Thief).¹⁹

As well as these more formal micro-public spaces, each street or block of buildings constituted an *informal* one. Jerry White’s account of Rothschild Buildings underlines this point. “At Rothschild we were like one family,” says one of his informants. White uses phrases like “a protective society”, “a complex support system of mutual aid... deepened and perpetuated by kinship”, yet open, able to take new people in at times of crisis. The struggle over housing drew upon and strengthened this mutualism: “eviction was thwarted by solidarity among neighbours” (1980: 81-83).²⁰ The street itself was another focus for this culture of mutualism, a place where men and women, Jews and non-Jews, could come together.

Besides its economic importance, [Brick] Lane was in many ways the social nucleus of the wider Jewish community. ‘The beloved Lane,’ as Zangwill called it, had wonderful charisma, with its colour, bustle, laughter, the voices of dispute and greeting, all in the universal language of the Jewish working class. It helped unite the Jewish East End, for in the Lane shopped women from Cable Street, as well as Spitalfields and Whitechapel... The Lane, the Flower and Dean Street neighbourhood... produced a unifying adhesive, built of and for the community, drawing people ever closer to it (White 1980:119).

The wide pavement of Whitechapel High Street’s North side, around the tube station entrances and the Library and Gallery, was known as the Haymarket, after its previous usage. This was a space in which the Jewish young would be seen *shpatsirn* (strolling or promenading) in the evenings and weekends. Groups of

¹⁷ Cf “Circle Personalities #2: N Kramer” in *The Circle* Vol. 1 No.3 August 1934 and Podolsky (1959).

¹⁸ Barnett (1934:2).

¹⁹ Prager (1990:207).

²⁰ On the struggle for housing in the later (Communist) period, see the excellent accounts by Piratin (1978:33-50) and Srebrnik (1995:38-52). The squatting movement, started by mainly Jewish ex-servicemen after WWII, arose from this tradition.

friends would come together, often loosely organized along political lines, blurring the distinction between the spheres of affect and political rationality.²¹

Particular street corners, as well as parks, were places of debate, interaction and oratory. Victoria Park on a Sunday or Bank Holiday and the Mile End Waste on a Saturday night were transformed into a vast open air debating society, where a babble of raucous voices competed for attention: secularists, socialists, Primitive Methodists, birth control advocates, anarchists. These discursive spaces were free from the respectable proprieties of the bourgeois public sphere.²² Emma Goldman, frequently in London and a highly regarded orator, wrote that, in England,

the right to assemble constantly in the open is an institution... The most opposing ideas and creeds find expression in the parks and squares of English cities... The social centre of the masses is the out-of-door meeting in the park. On Sundays they flock there as they do to music-halls on weekdays. They cost nothing and they are much more entertaining. Crowds, often numbering thousands, drift from platform to platform as they would at a country fair (1931:163).

Joseph Leftwich wrote in his diary in Spring 1911 of “the Mile End Waste with its balloons and cheap-jacks, its socialist orators and open-air discussion groups, the Assembly Hall Brass Band, the Salvation Army meetings, Old Clark, the Bible preacher and the handful of atheists religiously attacking Christianity night after night.”²³

As well as the East End public sphere, the East Enders would periodically enter the spaces of the bourgeois public sphere, asserting their proletarian presence in the space of the West End, symbolically claiming these spaces as their own. For example, Jewish trade unions marched alongside English trade unions at TUC processions to Hyde Park, symbolically insisting through their presence and visibility that the Jewish workers were part of the wider working class. In September 1902, “in spite of the drenching rain”, many Jewish trade unions (the Independent Cabinet Makers, the Ladies’ Tailors and Mantle Makers, the Independent Tailors and the Military and Uniform Tailors) participated in a march to celebrate the TUC congress

²¹ Lichtenstein (1999:18); see also Joseph Leftwich’s Diary (1911) and Joe Jacobs’ memoirs (1978). On the line between reason and affect in liberal theory, see Hall (2000), Seidler (1986, 1994).

²² For descriptions of Victoria Park on a May Sunday, see Coleman (1997:58-9, 74-5) and Webb (1982:206-8). Booth wrote that “the exercise in which the people [of the East End] most delight is discussion [which] flourishes yet more freely in the open air” (*Life and Labour* 1st edn, Vol. 1, pp94-124, in Fried and Elman 1969:228).

²³ 27.4.1911

being held in London.²⁴ In 1906, for Mayday, the Yiddish anarchists and Yiddish unions organized an East London May Day Committee (*Ist london ershtn may fayre komite*) to put on speeches in Yiddish at Hyde Park.²⁵ It was at Mayday rallies where Yiddish anarchist Rose Witcop and Clerkenwell orator Guy Aldred fell in love in 1907²⁶ and where Yiddish anarchist Nellie Ploschansky and Liverpool libertarian educationalist Jim Dick fell in love in 1913.²⁷

Jewish radical groups sometimes also entered the West End to gain public visibility for political issues in the old country, as in June 1902 when the London Bund organized a protest in Trafalgar Square against Russian repression of a strike in Vilna,²⁸ or in 1903 after the Kishinev massacres, as we shall see in chapter five.

Streetcorner meetings, promenading the Haymarket and marches to Hyde Park were among the distinct territorial or spatial practices of the ghetto radicals. These sorts of examples illustrate the very different political rationality at work in the East End public sphere compared to that which motivated the communal leadership: an impolite politics of bodily presence and mass participation rather than quiet diplomacy and behind-the-scenes intercession.

Having introduced the web of alternative micro-public spaces that I am calling the ghetto's counter-public, I will now move on to more closely examine the *Arbayter Fraynd* group and their Jubilee Street Club, focusing on Rudolf Rocker, the central figure in that movement.

The Arbayer Fraynd Group

The focus of this chapter is an anarchist group based in Stepney called the Arbayer Fraynd (Workers' Friend) group, who published a newspaper and ran a club, both with that name. The literature produced by the Arbayer Fraynd group rarely indicated any sense of Jewish belonging whatsoever; they reprinted texts by figures like Kropotkin, Bakunin, Elisée Reclus and Jean Grave – figures from an international canon that was seen as beyond national or ethnic identifications – and published their own articles extolling human brotherhood and proletarian solidarity much as would any English language anarchist periodical of the period. This

²⁴ JC 5.9.1902.

²⁵ Prager (1990:535).

²⁶ Cardwell (1988:54).

²⁷ See her oral testimony in Avrich (1995:284-5).

intransigent internationalism – called “cosmopolitan” in the political language of that milieu – has been taken at face value by many conventional Anglo-Jewish historians,²⁹ who tend to reduce the anarchists to marginal oddballs who had nothing to do with the Jewish community. On the other hand, in sharp contrast to this apparent refusal of Jewish difference and particularity, many historical accounts have stressed the exotic otherness of the group. John Pether, in the introduction to his oral history interview with Nellie Ploschansky-Dick, a young militant in the Arbajter Fraynd group of the 1910s, writes that:

The Jewish movement was for a time considerably larger than the native British movement, and this was the only time that anarchism has ever come near to being the dominant ideology of any sizeable community in Britain. Yet this episode in the history of British radicalism... is neglected in most accounts of anarchism in this country. Even John Quail's effervescent history – *The Slow-Burning Fuse* (1978) – makes no more than a passing reference to the Jewish movement in the East End. This neglect is partly the result of seeing their movement as alien. The general (though not exclusive) use of Yiddish prompted the false view that the Jewish anarchists were isolationist and inward-looking. And the orthodox labour historians have tended to suggest that the impoverished migrants turned to anarchism with some kind of messianic fervour – that their movement was more for ‘primitive rebels’ (to use Eric Hobsbawm's patronising term) than for true ‘labouring men’.

The main published accounts of the Jewish movement – the section of Rucker's autobiography published in English as *The London Years* (1956), and William J Fishman's prize-winning history, *East End Jewish Radicals* (1975) – have emphasised the richness and diversity of the milieu. But they too have tended to present it as a world apart. [In contrast,] Nellie Dick talks of the awareness of the outside movement, the use of English, the involvement of Gentiles, the endeavours to establish links with the local non-Jewish labour movement. There is of course no questioning the fact that the Jewish movement was a product of a distinct cultural environment and that integration and assimilation weakened the bonds of solidarity and shared adversity on which the movement was founded. But it was not hermetically sealed from the outside world (1989:155).

I will take up here Pether's analysis, and focus on the features he has identified: on one hand, the Yiddish anarchists' openness to the non-Jewish world, on the other its embeddedness in a distinct Yiddish cultural environment.

I will not dwell here on the story of the Arbajter Fraynd movement before 1903. This story has been described well elsewhere, most importantly in Elias Tcherikower's magisterial two-volume Yiddish history of the workers' movement in America and Britain (1943-5, 1961), Fishman's *East End Jewish Radicals* (1975) and Norah

²⁸ “Jewish Labour News” *JC* 13.6.1902.

²⁹ e.g. Eugene Black (1988:199-212).

Levin's *While Messiah Tarried* (1978).³⁰ Here, I simply want to draw out one point which emerges from this story: that the Arbayer Fraynd movement was profoundly rooted in the local urban space of Stepney *and at the same time* intimately connected to a series of transnational spaces.

To give just one example of the movement's rooting in the local, the Arbayer Fraynders played a key role in the "new unionism" of 1889. In that year, East End Jews fought – and won – a strike for a 12-hour day in the garment industry.³¹ The year before had seen the Matchgirls Strike, a strike by the female workforce of the Bryant and May match factory in Bow. The gasworkers, led by Will Thorne and Eleanor Marx, organized themselves, and there were also dock strikes. The new unionism was important and novel because of the way in which previously marginalized sections of the proletariat – casual and seasonal workers, the unemployed and irregularly employed, women, home-workers, ethnically marginal workers – now took centre-stage in the class struggle. This meant a reconfiguration of radicals' understandings of the proletariat; it meant that the Marx-era figure of the "advanced", white, male, skilled factory worker was no longer the only figure for the proletariat. Labour's subalterns began to speak. Furthermore, as an example of the openness of the ghetto radical public sphere and its location at the interstices between cultures, the dockers' leader, Ben Tillett, the matchgirls' leader, Annie Besant, and the tailors' leader, Lewis Lyons, all spoke at each other's meetings.³² There were also links to the socialist parties; the tailors' leaders (both Jewish and non-Jewish) were socialists, James MacDonald and Lyons in Henry Hyndman's Social Democratic Federation, Charles Mowbray and Wolf Wess in William Morris' Socialist League.³³ "These men provided the links that ensured that, at such an important juncture of labour history, the alien tailors of London did not operate in a vacuum" (Kershen 1995:138).

Secondly, the trans-national networks to which the pre-1903 Arbayer Fraynd belonged included the Russian narodnik (populist) movement, the lines of migration of the Yiddish working class, and the repeated exiles of political radicals. For example, early Arbayer Fraynd leaders such as Aaron Lieberman, Morris

³⁰ Other less well-known sources include Hertz (1954), Sapir (1938) and Epstein (1965 and 1969). See also my "Ghetto Radicalism: The Jewish East End" (1999).

³¹ Fishman (1975:ch6); also Alderman (1992:182-3, 186); Kershen (nd:20-34).

³² Fishman (1988:270-93).

³³ Morris and Hyndman both spoke at the Berner St Club, see Alderman (1992:178-9); Searle (1980:241,236); Oliver (1983:21).

Winchevsky and Lazar Goldenberg were part of the narodnik group around philosopher Peter Lavrov; early Arbayter Fraynders like Winchevsky, Goldenberg, Saul Yanovsky and Philip Krantz moved on from London to New York, following the tides of Jewish mass migration; and Lieberman and Winchevsky were in Britain fleeing the Tsar's police. This trans-nationalism is conveyed in a phrase of the Bundist poet Kadya Molodovsky, who spoke of being "saturated with different exiles" (quoted Hellerstein 1995:105).

Rudolf Rucker and Milly Witkop

From the turn of the century, the most important figure in the Arbayter Franyt movement was Rudolf Rucker, a non-Jew. Rucker's hometown, Mainz, in the German Rhineland, was the city of Gutenberg: the cradle of bookprinting. His father was a music printer, his stepfather, uncle and older brother bookbinders. Rucker himself was apprenticed as a bookbinder, and followed that trade for many years. A socialist and then anarchist from a young age, he joined the SPD as a teenager, supporting the left-wing group within it, *Die Jungen* (The Young). He observed the second congress of the Second International in Brussels in 1891. He was expelled from the Party that year for his dissident views and forced to leave Germany because of police attention.

He travelled widely in Western Europe (Austria, Switzerland, Italy, France and Spain) as a young man, following his trade and soaking up the radical ideas then circulating.³⁴ It was in Paris, in 1893, that he first came into contact with the Jewish workers' movement. At first, as he later recorded, he was incredulous at the idea of a Jewish workers' movement. "Jewish anarchists?' I said. 'Are there such?'" He was told: "These are not religious Jews; these are Jews who have as little to do with religion as we have.' 'Then they are no longer Jews,' I answered, 'just as we are no longer Christians.'" Finally, he came to understand that "these were Jews from eastern Europe, Russia, Poland, Rumania, belonging to a distinct ethnic group and speaking a language which is similar to German [i.e. Yiddish]" (Rucker 1956:59). He was initially attracted to the Yiddish scene because of its warmth and hospitality, and also because of what he saw as the equal relationships between the sexes; the Jewish anarchist women, he later wrote, were "conscious of their own equality and of their human self-respect" (ibid:61).

³⁴ This was the practice of the "*handswerkburcher*" or journeyman of the time (Fishman 1975:230).

In these circles, he met Sh. Ansky, now known for his play *The Dybbuk*, then involved in Paris' Russian émigré politics (as the secretary of Peter Lavrov, who had presided over the 1870s formation of Jewish workers' groups in London). Rocker did not have a place to practise his craft at the time, and Ansky, also a bookbinder, offered to share his workshop. It turned out that Ansky's bookbinding skills were limited, but Rocker was deeply inspired by Ansky's tales of revolutionary struggle and peasant life in Russia.

In 1895, Rocker's wandering took him to London. This initially meant immersion in the West End émigré scene. He became the librarian of the Communist Workers Education Union in Grafton Street and moved in a bohemian world of exiled European radicals, including some who became his life-long friends, such as Errico Malatesta from Italy and Louise Michel from France. The Soho they moved in was an outpost of a trans-European network of artisan radicals: itinerant skilled craftspeople who tramped around the cities of Europe carrying their tools – but also carrying new ideas, new demands, new forms of proletarian organization. Some of them left their home countries out of wanderlust or curiosity. Many more had no choice: they were fleeing police and prison.

However, Rocker soon came into contact with the Jewish movement again through a chance encounter with L Baron, a libertarian who moved between the East End Jewish scene (based around the Sugar Loaf pub in Hanbury Street) and the West End émigré scene. His experience of the East End profoundly marked Rocker. He described expeditions to places such as Bethnal Green, Hackney, Shoreditch, Whitechapel and Shadwell: "It was worse than my reading and what I had been told. I came back from our excursions physically and spiritually exhausted. It was an abyss of human suffering, an inferno of misery" (1956:78).

Rocker began to attend the meetings of the Yiddish anarchists in Stepney. Before long, he moved to Shoreditch and learnt Yiddish. The next two decades of his life he dedicated to the Yiddish movement, motivated by what his friend Herbert Read called Rocker's "sympathetic identification" with the Yiddish working class (1956:14).

He met and fell in love with Milly Witcop, an anarchist from a very frum (pious) Ukrainian family. They became permanent "comrades-in-life". When they made an

early visit to the US in 1897, they were refused entrance by immigration officials as they were not legally married. If they would marry, they could have entered, but their libertarian principles wouldn't allow this. It was Milly's garment industry wages, rather than Rudolf's, which were the couple's main source of income through most of their London years.

Rocker took up the editorship of *Der Arbayer Fraynd* and, in 1900, he also started the journal *Germinal*, a monthly, theoretical, literary and cultural sibling of the *Arbayer Fraynd*. The rest of this chapter will look, from a number of different angles, at the world that was built up around these periodicals, and around the Jubilee Street Club, focusing on the forms of belonging which Rocker's life and the space of the Jubilee Street Club exemplify: a simultaneous openness and diversity and deep rooting in the cultural practices of the immigrant Jews and finally the way the movement functioned as a culture of translation.

Syndicalism and Gefilte Fish: The 1906 and 1912 Strikes

Previous Jewish radicals in the East End, including both the socialists and anarchists had been opposed to trade union activity. Influenced by socialist theorist Lasalle and anarchist theorist Johan Most, they thought that trade unionism was a detour away from the coming revolution. The Rocker circle, in contrast, had a very different outlook. Under the influence of the new unionism and of the emerging syndicalist movement in France, they envisaged a rank-and-file non-bureaucratic form of union activity that both addressed workers' needs in the here and now and (as a model of voluntary co-operation and free, de-centralized mutuality) foreshadowed a post-revolutionary world.

In particular, Rocker rejected the belief (shared by orthodox Marxism and classical anarchism) that jam tomorrow is more important than bread today. He later pinpointed the moment in his life when he came to this position: his expeditions to the East End when he first came to London in the 1890s. "I saw with my own eyes thousands of human beings who could hardly be still considered such", he wrote, and his faith that the worse things got the nearer revolution would be was shattered (1956:79). Rocker's predecessors' attitude of "the worse, the better" implied that the autonomous Yiddish industrial and cultural combinations of the ghetto were simply means to an end. Rocker argued instead for a real engagement with the ghetto's social needs and desires, including a commitment to trade union activity.

1906 and 1912 saw strike waves in the East End. Like 1889, both were based on the coalition between the (mostly Jewish) tailors and the (mostly Catholic) dockworkers of the East End. The Arbayter Fraynd's Jubilee Street Club was the nerve centre of the Jewish side of these struggles, and Rocker was the ideological guru of them. In 1906, the strike was headquartered at the Tailors and Garment Workers' Union office in Old Montague Street, with anarchists Wolf Wess, Simon Freeman and Rocker on the committee. According to Fishman, there was a "continuous flow of donors, mostly shawled housewives, bringing *bagels*, brown herring, fruits and home-made *gefilte* and fried fish to feed the strikers" (1975:280-6).

These food references start to show how syndicalism as a theory took root in the East End because they had some local resonance – or how the Arbayter Fraynd group occupied a space of translation between syndicalist political theory and the cultural specificity (exemplified by the gefilte fish) of the Yiddish East End. In Alderman's words, for the East End workers "there was not merely no conflict between praying in a synagogue and then sitting in the same room to discuss socialist principles and organize industrial stoppages" (1992:176). Similarly, Leftwich recalls that "Zangwill was right when in *Children of the Ghetto* he pictured a Whitechapel strike meeting where 'the bulk of the audience was orthodox', and they went home after the meeting 'to their backrooms and garrets to recite the Song of Solomon'" (1956:21). These claims are supported by Rocker's recollection of the 1912 garment strike. In its aftermath, he recalled, on a Whitechapel street, "an old Jew, with a long white beard, came up and shook his hand and said: 'May God give you another hundred years. You helped my children in their worst need. *Take a goy, but a man*'" (Leftwich 1987:33).³⁵ Rocker's son Fermin tells a similar story: "Many a time on our walks through the East End, we were accosted by complete strangers who, having heard of my father's role in the great strike, wanted to express their gratitude and admiration. Even religious Jews would approach him and give him their benediction, a most unusual distinction for an anarchist and a 'goy'" (1998:96). These multiple identifications, these complex practices of belonging, wove through

³⁵ *Take a goy*: "to be sure a gentile", with a somewhat derogatory edge. This quote is from an article written by Joseph Leftwich in 1953, when he was working on a translation into English of Rocker's memoirs *In Shturem*. In his published translation, Leftwich puts: "Not a Jew, but a man". The Yiddish version was "*Take a goy, ober a mentsh*", in which "mentsh" conveys a lot more and little less than "man": a very different model of masculinity, with a stress on humanity, humility and ethical integrity (see D Boyarin 1998).

the East End radical movement: the political theories of the anarchists and the cultural practices of the migrant Jews reconfigured each other. The space of the Jubilee Street Club, which the rest of this chapter will describe, exemplifies such multiple positionalities: a space rooted in the immigrants' cultural traditions but also open and diverse.

Jubilee Street

Joseph Leftwich was a young man when World War I broke out. Looking back in the 1950s, as an established poet and translator, he described some of the influences that formed him:

All kinds of East End Jews went to [Rocker's] lectures, used the reading rooms at the Jubilee Street Club, and attended its fine amateur theatrical performances. I was never in his movement. But I enjoyed many of its benefits. Much of my Yiddish knowledge comes from it as well as from my Shul and Chedar. We East Enders were avid for culture, and we took the facilities offered by the Jubilee Street Club as we took those of Toynbee Hall and the People's Palace and the South Place Institute. I saw my first Ibsen plays at Jubilee Street. Many influences moulded us. The Clarion Van preaching Merrie England Socialism was on my doorstep... If I went over the road I was in the thick of the battle of the causes on Mile End Waste... We went to the discussions at the Social Democratic Club, the I.L.P. Club and the Liberal Club as well as the Jubilee Street Club. At the end of my street was the Talmud Torah and Synagogue I attended, with which I managed to reconcile my other interests.

As Rocker says, the Jubilee Street Club played a great part in East End Jewish life because it was open to everyone. Anyone could use its library and reading room or join the adult education classes without being asked for a membership card (1956:26-7).

The first Workers' Friend Club had been at 40 Berner Street, South of Commercial Road; its full name was the International Workingmen's Educational Club. It was started in 1885 by Simon Kahn, a civil engineer and merchant, and housed the Cigarette Workers' and Tobacco Cutters' Union, as well as the Workers' Friend group.³⁶ It was a meeting place for every shade of radical Jewish immigrant, as well as some like-minded gentiles.³⁷ Because the yard outside the Club was the site of the finding of one of the Ripper victims' bodies in 1888 (that of Elizabeth Stride), police files contain a very detailed description of it. It was an old wooden house converted for use as a social club capable of holding over two hundred people. A stone office, consisting of two rooms, was added onto the rear of the club. One of

³⁶ Prager (1990:152); Fishman (1975:153).

³⁷ Fishman (1975:153-6); also Alderman (1992:178).

those rooms was used by the editor of *Der Arbayer Fraynd* (then Phillip Krantz, who called the police that night), and the other was used as a composing room. The first floor contained a room used for entertainment, such as Russian plays and folk songs. The front of the room held a small stage. The room was decorated with plain benches, and several portraits hung on the walls.³⁸

The Berner Street Club closed down in 1892, but a new one was opened a few streets to the east at 165 Jubilee Street, in February 1906. Cultural activities were a major part of the Club's appeal, in a world where there was a thirst for modern culture alongside a deep attachment to tradition. Joseph Leftwich's memories (he was nearly twenty when the Club closed down) convey the way in which Rudolf Rocker, as the charismatic figure who presided over it, was able to translate between modernity and the traditional idioms of Yiddishkayt:

Rocker was to all the Yiddish-speaking workers of that time... the symbol of culture. They flocked to his lectures on literature and art. He was their guide and teacher. They drank in his words. To the official Anglo-Jewish community, he was an agitator, a preacher of revolt and of atheism and free-thought. But to the Jewish workers, he was a man who spoke to them, in their own Yiddish, of things of the spirit and the mind about which they wanted to hear (1987:30).

Descriptions of the Jubilee Street Club can also be found in police records, this time because suspects and witnesses of the 1911 Sidney Street gunfight frequented the club. Nicolai Tockmacoff was a seam-presser born in Moscow who was interviewed by the police. He was not a member of the club, but he played the balalaika there.

I used to go to the [Workers' Friend] Club for entertainment and theatrical performances... There is a hall there and refreshment room for tea and coffee. Anyone can go in. There are all sorts of people there, English and Russian... There is a library which anyone can go into... There was a Lettish [Lithuanian] Concert on one occasion... Men and women go to the Club to borrow books.³⁹

Fishman's oral history interviews give us other glimpses of the Club. Millie Sabel recalled her kitchen duties, preparing gefilte fish, chopped liver and pickled herring, and that Lenin would drink Russian tea when he came by. Rose Robins recalled synagogue-going Jews on days of fasting sneaking into the Club to eat the extra food the Club had to prepare on holy days.⁴⁰

³⁸ HO 144/221/A49301C/8a.

³⁹ CRIM/1/22.

⁴⁰ Fishman (1975:264-5).

Belonging

Three of the Witcop sisters, brought up in a religious Ukrainian Jewish household, chose to live in “gemisht” (mixed) free companionship with non-Jewish radicals: Milly with the German Rudolf Rocker, the middle sister Polly with another German, Ernst Simmerling, a veteran of the German radical movement who had known Rocker before they came to London, and the youngest sister Rose (who had been just five when she came to England, so was the most anglicized of her sisters) with Clerkenwell libertarian Guy Aldred, who she first met at Jubilee St, against the anti-semitic opposition of Guy's mother.⁴¹ Polly, a dressmaker like Milly, worked in a tailor's workshop until she was eighty and Ernst, an expert cabinet maker, worked in a furniture factory. Their comrade, the younger anarchist militant, Nellie Ploschansky, similarly lived in an unmarried relationship with an English non-Jew, Jim Dick.

The ethnic and linguistic diversity of this world was connected to the complex of identities of its inhabitants. Rudolf and Milly's son Fermin Rocker wrote of his family:

We were four and each of us was a native of a different country: my father German, my mother Russian, my brother [Rudolph Jr] French and I British. My father and brother were Gentiles, my mother Jewish. The language used at home was German, which both Rudolph and I spoke as fluently as English (1998:14).

However, Fermin writes, after a brief rupture the frum Witcop parents reconciled themselves to the new gentile family-members; he describes the annual Passover seder, at which the staunchly secular and atheist daughters and their partners followed the rituals:

The fact that not one of the guests was religious, that not one of the three couples was legally married, that not one of the spouses was a Jew, seemed to matter not at all. We were simply members of the family and that was all that counted (ibid).

Fermin also describes Rudolf Rocker's particular closeness to Milly's family: “Not only could he speak their language, but he also had a rather extensive knowledge of the Jewish mores and customs, gained in the course of his activities in the East End” (ibid). And he describes his ultra-Orthodox grandfather's pleasure at sitting on the speakers' platform during the 1911-2 strikes (ibid:95-6). These stories show how the ghetto radicals, while often critical of religion, were deeply rooted in Jewish religious tradition and idiom. It also shows something of the role that kinship had in

⁴¹ “Fanny, alone among the four sisters, married a Jew, the one ray of cheer in an otherwise dismal picture” for their parents (Fermin Rocker 1998:65).

cementing political solidarity in the ghetto, so that lines of solidarity crossed formal ideological divides. In other words, we can discern a sense in which the ghetto acted as a moral community in a way that complicates the notion that these were radicals who simply happened to be Jewish.

Polly and Ernst lived close by the Rucker home, in the Cressy Place wing of Dunstan Houses.⁴² In fact, many of the Rucker circle lived nearby. As Fermin writes,

Our friends in the East End were nearly all members of the 'Arbaiter Fraind' group. A number of them lived in the neighbourhood and a few of them were even fellow-tenants of ours in Dunstan Houses. Among those in the building were the Linders and the Schapiros, while others such as the Lenobles, Tapler, and the Ploschanskys lived close by. The Linders were across the yard from us in the wing where Polly and Ernst lived (1998:45).

The emphasis on communal living and on free relationships rather than marriage, as well as the way that the movement seems to have often functioned as a family, testify to a blurring of the strict line between affect and political rationality, a line on which liberal conceptions of citizenship and the public sphere are predicated. At the same time, these ethnographic details show us how the ghetto radicals were simultaneously creating a new radical culture (signified by the movement as a family and by inter-ethnic free love) *and* embedded in the cultural stuff of the wider Yiddish community (signified by the participation in the Witcop family Passover seder).

All accounts portray Rucker as a very charismatic figure, and it was partly this that seems to have drawn a variety of people from outside the ghetto into the activities of the Yiddish anarchists. Emma Goldman, for instance, would frequently speak at its events after meeting Rucker at an anti-militarist meeting at the South Place Institute (now Conway Hall). Kropotkin and the Italian anarchist Malatesta were also very important figures for the movement. The Jubilee Street Club epitomized this diversity and openness. Kropotkin spoke at its opening night. Among those who frequented the Club were Tsarist secret agents, future Soviet ministers (such as Chicherin) and terrorists (including the Latvian revolutionaries involved in the Siege of Sidney Street). A non-Jewish anarchist close to Rucker, John Turner, took the young Guy Aldred (who was then writing for *The Voice of Labour*, Freedom's syndicalist arm, which Turner edited) to the Jubilee Street Club, where Rucker asked him to speak one night when Kropotkin couldn't make it. Aldred used the occasion to criticize Kropotkin. As his close comrade and biographer, John Cardwell

⁴² Fermin Rucker (1998:41-2).

writes, “he felt that Kropotkin had abandoned revolutionary Bakuninism and had adopted the position of a respectable suburban intellectual, propounding bland theories and becoming the patron of drawing-room anarchism” (1988:52) – which didn’t go down well with the Club regulars.

The Club was also a centre of Yiddish culture: the Yiddishists and cultural nationalists Chaim Zhitlovsky and Ber Borokhov both spoke there; many of the great Yiddish poets read there. Fishman records that there was a great deal of interaction between the Jubilee Streeters and Poale Zionists (labour Zionists) in the years after the 1906 strike: people like radical Zionist journalists Kalman Marmor and Dr Wortsman. Rocker recalled that the groups who met there regularly included trade unions, the Workers’ Circle, a Russian Social Revolutionary party branch and English anarchist groups.⁴³

The interactions between the anarchists and the Yiddishists and Zionists illustrates the *ideological* diversity within the ghetto’s public sphere. The presence of people like Kropotkin and Aldred illustrates its *ethnic* diversity. Jews and non-Jews lived side by side in the East End and historians and memoirists are divided as to the extent of antagonism or friendliness between them.⁴⁴ Joseph Leftwich and Rudolf Rocker, in their accounts of the scene, stress the East End’s diversity and tolerance. Leftwich remembers: “The East End was not solely Jewish... We lived next door to each other and on the same side, often in the same house. We knew the dockers and the railway workers and the gas workers” (1956:39-40). He notes the cockney syndicalists who used Rocker’s Jubilee Street Club. Of these, he recalls Ted Leggatt orating at the Mile End Waste. Leggatt “liked to tell us that his nephew was Bombardier Wells, the boxing champion” (ibid). Rocker describes Leggatt as

a big, burly Cockney carman, who played a big part in the Transport Workers’ Union. He was a man of the people, racy of speech, with a rich Cockney humour, and a stentorian voice, which he used to good advantage to proclaim his ideas. He would start his speeches with: ‘I am Ted Leggatt, the Anarchist’. He was a good fellow, and a good comrade, a frequent visitor among the Jewish comrades, who were always glad to see him (1956:181).

Rocker lists several other non-Jewish comrades active in the Jewish movement as well as the wider movement. They included: Sam Mainwaring, an older Welshman

⁴³ Fishman (1975:286), Marmor (1959), Rocker (1956).

⁴⁴ See Kushner (1993), Jacobs (1978:205-7, 257), Fishman (1985, 2000) and Kaye (1997), who emphasize relatively good Jewish/non-Jewish relations in the East End, and Srebrnik (1995) and Lipman (1970:48-9), who emphasize Jewish/Irish antagonism.

and veteran of William Morris' Socialist League; Frank Kitz, a Londoner and Socialist Leaguer; another Socialist Leaguer, John Turner, an East London shop worker; Harry Kelly and Voltarine de Cleyre, Americans frequently in London, close friends of the Turners and Kropotkins; the South London syndicalist Walter Ponder; George Barret, editor of the syndicalist *Voice of Labour*, and less well-known figures like S Carter, M Bentham, A Ray and S Presburg.⁴⁵ And by the same token, many Jewish activists were also involved in the non-Jewish movement, such as William Wolf Wess and his sister, Doris Zhook, who were active in the Socialist League and in the 1889 tailors' strike, and helped found the *Freedom* group,⁴⁶ or Alexander Schapiro, a prominent figure in the syndicalist movement in London and internationally, serving as secretary of the International Anarchist Bureau.

Consequently, non-Jewish speakers featured prominently at "Jewish" events in this period. In chapter five, we will see many non-Jews speaking at a Kishinev pogrom rally in Hyde Park: Russian leaders (Kropotkin, Nikolai Tchaikovsky and Varlaam Cherkesov), Herbert Burrows (an English Social Democrat), the "cockney anarchists" (Leggatt and Turner) and Harry Kelly, the American anarchist then living in South-East London.⁴⁷ An anti-sweating pro-General Strike mass meeting at the Wonderland the following April had similar speakers, including European anarchist leaders (the Italian Malatesta, Spaniard Tarrida del Marmol and Russians Cherkesov and Tchaikovsky) and UK anarchists (Mainwaring, Leggatt, Kelly, Turner, Kitz and Mowbray).⁴⁸ At the opening of the Jubilee Street Club in February 1906, Turner, Leggatt and Kropotkin spoke, and Malatesta, Tarrida del Marmol and Louise Michel all sent messages of support.⁴⁹

This testifies to the fact that the Jewish radical movement, though deeply rooted in the expressive culture of the Jewish immigrants, was open to people from outside. For Fishman, the 1912 strikes represented a highpoint for this cross-ethnic solidarity. In 1912, both non-Jewish dockers and Jewish tailors went on strike in East London, while in the West End both Jewish and non-Jewish tailors went out.⁵⁰ Pastor Leighton, Shadwell resident and priest at the Wesleyan East End Mission in

⁴⁵ Rocker (1956:181-3).

⁴⁶ Rocker (1956:184).

⁴⁷ Rocker (1956:162-4); *JC* 26.6.1903.

⁴⁸ Rocker (1956:170).

⁴⁹ *Ibid*:178.

⁵⁰ Cf J Blythe and C Collcut (1912) *An Appeal to Trade Unionists and Friends of Labour*, a leaflet put out by the (West End) London Society of Tailors and Tailoresses, BL/8275.g.54(2).

Limehouse (a church used socially by seaman), was interviewed in June 1912. He mentioned the “marvellous kindness” of local Jews and said that a firm sent a vanload of bread one day, that on another day Jewish bakers sent 600 loaves and that a Jewish hairdresser brought the names of 75 families who would give three meals a day to dockers for a week each.⁵¹ Rudolf Rocker, in a small book he published privately to commemorate the death of Milly Witkop, recalled that

During the great strike of the London dock laborers in 1912 she played a prominent part in helping to place hundreds of children from the families involved in the homes of Jewish comrades. This was a splendid demonstration of international solidarity made even more conspicuous by the fact that the Jewish workers had themselves barely come through one of the greatest strikes ever fought in the East End (1956b:12).⁵²

As well as these interconnections with the “indigenous” radical scene in the East End, there were strong interconnections with other refugee radical worlds: Russian, Italian, Spanish, American and Lettish (Lithuanian) in particular.⁵³ All in all, the scene was profoundly multi-lingual, a public sphere in which translation was an everyday part of political rationality. To give just one example, a meeting of the Military and Uniform Tailors’ Union at the Lecture Room of Toynbee Hall in 1902 was addressed in several languages: Jewish trade unionists spoke in English and in Yiddish; guest speakers from the Labour Association spoke in English and German; and a guest speaker from the Amalgamated Society of Tailors spoke in English.⁵⁴

This illuminates Stuart Hall’s point, cited above, that diasporic “cultures of hybridity” are “irrevocably translated” (1992:310). Similarly, Gilroy writes of Frantz Fanon that he spoke

from a position inside and against the larger cultural structures that had shaped his consciousness... His words articulate a reminder that between the fortified encampments of the colonizers and the quarters of the colonized there were other locations. These in-between locations represent, not disability and inertia, but opportunities for greater insight into the opposed worlds that enclosed them. There, the double-consciousness required by the everyday work of translation offered a prototype for the ethically charged role of the interpreter with which our most imaginative intellectuals have answered the challenge of postmodern society (2000:70-1).

⁵¹ *JC* 26.7.1912.

⁵² Fermin Rocker in his East End memoirs (1998:93-4) and Nellie Dick in a 1980s oral history interview (Pether 1989:162) both also recall and describe these events.

⁵³ See e.g. Rocker (1956:193-201).

⁵⁴ “Jewish Labour News” *JC* 13.6.1902.

Here, translation stands as a figure of the in-between, the interstitial or intercultural, of double consciousness. The *culture of translation*⁵⁵ that was the Yiddish East End perhaps anticipated what Gilroy describes as “a distinctive understanding of identity” which emerges “from serious consideration of the dense, hybrid, and multiple formations of postcolonial culture in which translation is simultaneously both unremarkably routine and charged with an essential ethical significance” (2000:77).

A Culture of Translation

No literature in the world can count as many autodidacts and manual laborers among its authors, major figures included, as can Yiddish literature. No literature in the world has been so closely tied to the labor movement (Prager 1975:248).

Rudolf Rocker was not a native Yiddish speaker. He first heard Yiddish at an anarchist meeting in Paris and found he could understand most of it. John Pether notes that “Rocker’s German could be understood by Yiddish speakers, and in time he came to master the Hebrew script; but he always spoke the language with a strong German accent” (1989:156).⁵⁶ Despite this, Rocker and his *Arbayter Fraynd* group were very important in the history of Yiddish language and literature. The anarchists, as Paul Avrich writes, “retain[ed] a devotion to the secular aspects of Yiddish culture” (1988:180). So far in this chapter, we have seen some of the central features of the practices of belonging that flourished in the Jubilee Street Club, as a space of encounter across ethnic and political lines, as a space that was both open to modern culture and deeply rooted in Eastern European Jewish cultural practices. The rest of the chapter will focus on one particular element of this: the role of Yiddish language and of translation.

In its pre-Rocker period, the *Arbayter Fraynd* had published a great deal of Yiddish poetry: Morris Rosenfeld (one of the four “sweatshop poets”, along with Edelshtat, Winchevsky and Joseph Bovshover) contributed during his time in London in the 1880s; Russian-born Yiddish poet and early Zionist Leon Zolotkoff printed the paper

⁵⁵ The concept of a culture of translation has been used, for example, by the Portuguese historian and translator Luís Filipe Barreto in relation to the cosmopolitan colony Macau (1996), by Croatian writer Andrea Zlatar in relation to the anti-nationalist counter-culture in the Balkans (2001), and by the Islamist and culinary scholar, Sami Zubaida (e.g. 1998), who has used the term to describe the interstitial cosmopolitan worlds of the Ottoman empire, which he argues still survive in some crevices of the Islamic world. See also the work of Anthony Pym (e.g. 1992, 1996, 1999) and Bhabha (1994:18-28) on “the space of translation”.

and co-wrote one of its carnivalesque workers' Passover Haggadahs; another proletarian poet, David Goldstein, was an active anarchist member of the group before moving on to America.⁵⁷

During the Rucker period this tradition was continued and renewed. The *Arbayter Fraynd* group published Yiddish translations of modern world literature – Moliere, Ibsen, Herbert Spencer, Gorki – as well as modern Yiddish literature – Sholem Aleichem, Perets, Sholem Asch – in the weekly paper, in the monthly journal *Germinal* and in books. Yiddish poet Joseph Rolnik was associated with the journal during his time in London at the start of the twentieth century.⁵⁸ Abraham Reisen (1876-1953), a poet associated with the “sweatshop poets” but more stylistically complex, read at the Jubilee Street Club shortly before World War One.⁵⁹ Another important Yiddish poet, Anna Margolin, was in London for a period in 1910-11; she had worked as Yiddishist Chaim Zhitlovsky's secretary and he provided her with a letter of introduction to Kropotkin, with whom she became friendly.⁶⁰ The Club was a centre too of Yiddish drama, with Yiddish productions of Ibsen's *Ghosts*, and future Yiddish theatre stars like Sam Goldenberg and Abraham Teitelbaum cutting their teeth on Sholem Aleichem sketches.⁶¹ Harry Lang, a journalist with the leading New York Yiddish paper, the *Forward*, wrote that “Rucker was one of those who stood at the beginnings of our modern Yiddish literature” (quoted Leftwich 1956:20).

The Yiddishist world in London was part of a *trans-national* community of Yiddish writers and readers, a community suspended between several important Yiddish centres, of which London in this period was one. The memoirs of Aaron Glants-Leyeles (1889-1966), who became an important Yiddish poet in America, give some impression of the trans-national nature of this scene:

I went to London at the beginning of 1906 [at the age of sixteen]... I lived four years in London, learned English quite well, and drank thirstily at the great fountain of English poetry. I had written my first Yiddish poems in London, and in London I had decided to become a Yiddish poet. My early literary aspirations had brought me in touch with [Yosef Haim] Brenner, who was then living and starving in London.

⁵⁶ He adds that “His English remained less fluent, and his son Fermin says that it was not until he settled in the United States in the 1930s that he felt confident enough to address a public meeting in English” (ibid).

⁵⁷ Kramer (1986), Bar-Yitzchak (1994).

⁵⁸ Kramer (1989:109).

⁵⁹ Fishman (1975:300), Kramer (1989:93), Prager (1990:549).

⁶⁰ Kramer (1989:135).

⁶¹ Fishman (1975:265).

Brenner was at that time just out of his Bundist period. He was a Yiddishist in sentiment, and was inclined to Territorialism. That drew me closer to him... But of course Brenner was important to me mainly from the point of view of literature. It was with him a time of inner crisis. He kept talking enthusiastically about Dostoevsky, infecting everybody with the desire to plunge into the depths, to achieve something great for our people, for our oppressed and hunted people, out in the surrounding world...

[When I left for New York in 1910,] I had brought with me a letter of introduction from Abraham Frumkin in London to Joel Entin in New York. Frumkin was very well known at that time in Jewish literary circles; he was a prominent man in the Kropotkin school in the anarchist movement, and though he was born in Palestine he was a Yiddishist, and had translated a number of European literary masterpieces into Yiddish. He had read some of my poems in London [and had sent an encouraging message to Glants-Leyeles].

That message transported me into the seventh heaven. And my joy knew no bounds when Frumkin sent some of my poems to Abraham Reisen, who was then in Cracow, and Reisen wrote me a very friendly card (Glanz-Leyeless 1969:606-7).⁶²

A number of things stand out about this passage. First, the Yiddish poets were not operating in a purely Jewish vacuum: they were open to influences from Russian, English and other world literatures. Second, therefore, this was a culture in which translation played an immense role. Third, there was a movement back and forth between Yiddishism and Hebraism: Brenner would mainly be known as a Hebrew writer and Zionist. Fourth, there was a trans-national network of authors, editors, publishers and readers: Frumkin in London had connections with Entin in New York (the dean of the modernist school in Yiddish poetry there) and Reisen in Cracow (Reisen moved to America around the same time as Glants-Leyeles and became associated with the Yiddish modernist scene there).⁶³ Fifth, the political and literary worlds were deeply interconnected: Glants-Leyeles operated in a scene that included Brenner, moving from Bundism to Zionism, and Frumkin, an anarchist. This also demonstrates the political diversity of the radical scene.

Rocker's circle was intensely active in the Yiddishist movement and Yiddish print culture in London. The series of thumbnail biographies I will present over the next few paragraphs illustrate the way that the East End's Jewish public sphere was profoundly polyglot, a space that existed in the margins and interstices between cultures and languages, a space of translation.

⁶² See also Leftwich (1956:20). According to Aaron Kramer, Glants-Leyeles was taking classes at the University of London (1989:150).

The story of the printer Israel Narodiczky illustrates this space of translation. Narodiczky was born in 1874 in Zhitomir in the Ukraine. He was a schoolfriend of Chaim Nachman Bialik, the pioneering Hebrew poet. He arrived in London in 1896. He was a lover of Zion and of Hebrew language; these were his life's passions. Yet he chose not to make aliyah (emigrate to Palestine): he stayed rooted in the East End until his death in 1942. His home and shop at 48 Mile End Road, and Isaac's Fish Restaurant next door, were at the heart of the vibrant world of London's Hebrew writers. Yet their language of conversation was Yiddish not Hebrew, and Narodiczky lovingly printed many important Yiddish works. Although he was deeply religious, it was him who suggested the idea of *Germinal* to Rocker (in fact, he taught Rocker typesetting), and he printed the series "Biblyotek Arbayer Fraynd" (Worker's Friend Library), which included works by Kropotkin and the French anarchist terrorist and typographer George Etievant.⁶⁴

Yosef Haim Brenner was also from the Ukraine and he was seven years younger than Narodiczky. He lived in London from 1904, above Narodiczky's printshop (Narodiczky taught him to typeset). Like Narodiczky, he was a great lover of Hebrew and is central to the canon of twentieth century Hebrew literature. His journal, *Hamoever*, and his play, *Meever Lagvulin*, were written in London. But in order to survive in London, he worked for the Yiddish press, including for decidedly non-Zionist periodicals like the Social Revolutionary *Kampf un Kempfer* (which he co-edited with the Yiddish writer Ansky⁶⁵) and the Social Democratic *Di Naye Tsayt*.

Morris Mindel was a bookbinder who worked for Narodiczky. He was born in 1885 in Vilna and arriving in England in 1906, living in Rothschild Buildings. He had been a Bundist in Lithuania⁶⁶ and was active in the Free Workers' Circle, formed in 1902 by *Arbayer Fraynd* supporters Arthur Hillman and Nathan Wiener.⁶⁷ Expanding from this core of anarchist cabinet-makers, it became Division I of the united Workers' Circle. The Division was joined by many people who shared Mindel's ideological

⁶³ Reisen, born in 1876, was well-known among Yiddish readers in London from around 1900. His work was published by the *Arbayer Fraynd* in a literary anthology in 1904, and spent some time in London in 1913 (Prager 1990:549).

⁶⁴ See Aptoot (1991), Prager (1990:171), Leftwich (1956:29-33), Rocker (1956:144-7).

⁶⁵ Ansky himself can be seen in terms of this same ambiguous bilingual culture of translation: his play the *Dybbuk* was written in Yiddish and translated into Hebrew for the stage by Bialik. During the upheavals of World War, he lost the Yiddish manuscript and re-wrote it in translation from Bialik's version.

⁶⁶ Kadish (1992:207).

⁶⁷ Rocker (1956:28), Barnett (1934:2).

Yiddishism, such as Romanian journalist Morris Myer, who himself translated many works of world literature into Yiddish (e.g. Maeterlinck's *L'oiseau blue* in 1910),⁶⁸ as well as writing about Yiddish literature (e.g. his history of Yiddish theatre in London) and English literature (e.g. a Zionist-inflected book on George Eliot). The Circle would, shortly after the war, open London's first Yiddish secular school, the Natsyonal Radikale Shule Far Lernen Kinder Hebreysch Un Idish, in Bethnal Green.⁶⁹

Rueben Cohen was another person who worked for Narodiczky. He was a young radical who returned to Russia in 1917 to fight in the revolution. He was a friend of English-language poet Isaac Rosenberg. Cohen showed Narodiczky Rosenberg's poetry and Narodiczky agreed to publish, and Cohen set the types for, a 24-page pamphlet, *Night and Day*, which was Rosenberg's first publication, and Narodiczky's first English-language publication. Rosenberg tried to sell copies outside Toynbee Hall, but with little success. Later, in 1914, Narodiczky also published Rosenberg's *Youth*. Among the other very few English language texts he published was DH Lawrence's anti-war magazine *The Signature*, typeset by Cohen, which the police banned while the fourth issue was in print.⁷⁰ Again, Cohen – his relationship with Rosenberg, his acquaintance with the English avant-garde, his return to Russia – illustrates the way the East End's print culture operated at the interstices of different geographies, both local and transnational.

Avrom or Abraham Frumkin was another printer. Born in 1873 and dying in 1940, he was almost an exact contemporary of Narodiczky. In contrast to Narodiczky, his bibliophilia expressed itself largely in translation, and his output in his London years (he was here 1895-9 and 1904-14) was immense. This was especially so given that, like so many of his comrades, he also put in long hours at his job. Prager writes that "His Yiddish style marked a great advance over the modish aping of New High German by most of his contemporaries" (1990:256). He translated anarchist texts from French and English, by authors such as George Etievant, Stepniak, Louise Michel and Elisée Reclus. He also translated literature, such as Oscar Wilde's *The Rose and the Nightingale* (1907 with a Foreword by Rocker) and *Salome* (1909),

⁶⁸ The translations mentioned in the following paragraphs are all in UCL's Yiddish library and/or the British Library.

⁶⁹ As Leonard Prager points out, it is significant that they taught Hebrew as well as Yiddish, just as Morris Myer's history of Yiddish theatre in London also covered Hebrew theatre (Prager 1990:17, 20).

⁷⁰ Joseph Cohen (1975:116-7).

Gerhardt Hauptman's play *Lonely People* (1908), Octave Mirbeau's *Les affaires sont les affaires* (1908), Ibsen's *When We Dead Awaken* (1908, 1910), Multatuli's *Love Letters* (1911, with a Foreword by Rucker, for the Anarchist Literary Union), Knut Hamsun's *Mysteries* (1911) and several works by Gorki. Frumkin translated and Narodiczky published a section of Israel Zangwill's *Dreamers of the Ghetto – The Lonely Philosopher: Baruch Spinoza* (1909) – which reflected the anarchists' inheritance of the admiration of this heretical Jewish philosopher who was a great maskilic hero.

Rucker was a great lover of literature, but his translating output, mostly from German, tended to centre on political texts (perhaps reflecting his weaker Yiddish). One exception is Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, printed by Narodiczky in 1904. His political translations include texts by Elisée Reclus, Arnold Roller (pen-name of Galician-born syndicalist Siegfried Nacht), Victor Dave, Max Nordau, Jean Grave and Kropotkin. Moses Schapiro, another printer active in the *Arbayter Fraynd* group, translated collected tales by Gorki (1903).

Side by side with this extraordinary outpouring of world literature in Yiddish in the East End, the same printers and publishers issued large numbers of texts that would become classics of Yiddish literature itself. The *Arbayter Fraynd* itself or its supporters Barukh Ruderman and L Fridman published books by Morris Rosenfeld (1888), Joseph Bovshover (1903, 1907) and Dovid Edelshtat (in several editions from 1894 to 1911).

I have listed these texts (just a fraction of the *Arbayter Fraynd's* immense output) and described these figures at such length because I believe they illustrate crucial facts about the Rucker group. In particular, they show that the group was far from marginal within the East End immigrant world. They exemplify the location of the group at the nexus of Hebrew, Yiddish, English and world literature, and as a node on a trans-national literary network.

They exemplify, too, the sense in which the Yiddish anarchists were located on the borderline between a universalist, modernist, secular world culture which they promoted, and a set of traditional specifically Jewish idioms through which they articulated this advocacy. That is, they exemplify the way in which this was a space of *dialogue*, a transversal space defined by the coming together of differences.

Difference and particularity were not melted away, as in the Kantian universalism of the bourgeois public sphere, but respected and nurtured.

This body of translated work can be seen as the attempt to establish a relationship between the Yiddish East End and an imagined cosmopolitan tradition at the margins of European culture, a sense of a counterculture of modernity. Hannah Arendt conducted what Seyla Benhabib has called “an alternative genealogy of modernity”, to recover the traces and fragments of spaces where this sort of coming together of differences took place, where people created the spaces “within which new forms of sociability and intimacy could develop among members of an emergent civil society” (Benhabib 1996:15-16) For Arendt, the recovery of traces like these in the past can be a resource basis for the renewal of politics – understood as the coming together of differences in agonal dialogue – in today’s dark times.

It can also be taken as a textual record of the East End radical scene as a culture of translation. As is well known, in Anderson’s *Imagined Communities*, he discusses print culture’s ability to “synchronize” people’s experiences across space into the nation. Ferdinand Tönnies – and this is less well-known – observed that the rise of the press represented a “universal power” that “is not confined to national borders” and thus points towards a (dystopian for Tönnies) “world-republic” (quoted Robbins 1998:6-7). That is, print culture could also synchronize people’s experience across the borders of nations. The print culture of the East End did just this, translating between Yiddish specificity and cosmopolitan modernism, between the locality of the East End and trans-national cultural formations, between local alternative civic activity and world-citizenship.

In this chapter, I have given a picture of the most important spaces in the proletarian public sphere that was the Jewish East End on the eve of World War I. This space was profoundly multi-lingual, a culture of translation. It was trans-national: part of a wider culture of circulation which criss-crossed the Atlantic and traversed Europe. It was fundamentally open, operating at the interstices of communities, drawing in people from different ethnic groups. It was diverse and plural, both politically and culturally, engaging both Yiddishists and Hebraists, both anarchists and Zionists, workers and intellectuals. It was rooted in the Yiddish popular culture of the East End. Finally, it represented a cosmopolitan form of civic activity, a cosmopolitan counterculture at the margins of European modernity.

The alternative forms of political rationality and civic participation which we have seen characterizing the East End ghetto can be seen in stark relief against dominant conceptions of citizenship of the time. The next chapter will examine those dominant conceptions, showing how, in the period when the *Arbayter Fraynd* group was active, a modern form of citizenship was emerging, which sought to dissolve differences within the nation-state while imposing cultural conformity on its members.

Chapter 3

Citizenship, Modernity, Empire

In this chapter, I will set out one of the two main themes of this thesis, citizenship. In the first part, I will draw on Zygmunt Bauman's account of the emergence of modern citizenship, developed in particular in his *Modernity and Ambivalence* (1991). In Bauman's account, the emergence of citizenship was a key element in the formation of modernity. Modern citizenship, tied to a concept of universality, called for a dissolving of all particularities. In practice, this meant a demand for cultural conformity to an imagined singular, racialized national identity: citizenship was an emancipatory promise, but also the standard to measure readiness to enter the public sphere, the prize to be won but also the hoop to jump through to win it.

However, pushing beyond Bauman's version of this argument, which is based primarily on the German experience, I will argue in the second half of the chapter that it is vital to attend both to the specific national traditions of citizenship in each European country and to the material processes, the mundane techniques and technologies, the border patrols of citizenship, which marked citizenship's emergence. In particular, I will highlight modern citizenship's imperial context. In moving to this second half of the chapter, I will move from secondary and theoretical literature to primary sources, particularly the Home Office and police files where we can see these mundane techniques and technologies being produced.

Modernity and Citizenship

Zygmunt Bauman locates Jewish emancipation and assimilation as part of the process of modern *state-formation*.¹ In the pre-modern order, he argues, "the Jews were just one estate or caste among many." The law had been "a network of privileges and dispossessions" (1989:35-7). "All this changed with the advent of modernity, with its dismantling of legislated differences, its slogans of legal equality and the strangest of its novelties; citizenship" (1989:56).

The modern doctrine of juridical universality, which gave citizenship its meaning, was based on the Enlightenment notion of moral universality. However, the content of this new universality was the specific culture of the occident, or, rather, of the occidental

¹ See "State and Nation" in *Thinking Sociologically* (1990) for a fuller picture of Bauman's theory of state-formation.

nation-states: modern state-formation is, of course, tied up with the project of *nation-building*, or what Bauman calls “the modern ‘nationalization’ of the state” and simultaneous “*etatization of the nation*” (1991:141). As George Mosse puts it, “while it was the state, then in formation, that emancipated [the Jews], it was the nation they faced once they were emancipated” (1993:121). In Bauman’s German example, this meant that:

What in practice expressed itself in an exchange of one, the orthodox Jewish, peculiarity for another, the German one, could be only accomplished with the help of an ideology of annihilation of all particularity in the name of the universal human values of science, rationality, truth which, as Immanuel Wolffe put it, will embrace all humanity (1990a:76).²

The new universality of citizenship, then, was always shadowed by a denied particularity: the cultural specificity of the nation-state.

Habermas, in an essay entitled “The European Nation-State”, makes similar points, arguing that “national self-consciousness provided the cultural background against which ‘subjects’ could become politically active ‘citizens’” (1998:111-2). Thus, there was a blurring between “the legal-political and the properly cultural aspects of the new meaning that membership acquired with the shift from the status of a subject to that of a *citizen*” (ibid). That is, the republican legal-political conception of citizenship was yoked to an assumption of national community. “This leads to a double coding of citizenship, with the result that the legal status defined in terms of civil rights also implies membership in a culturally defined community” (ibid:113). This double coding means that a tension – “between the universalism of an egalitarian legal community and the particularism of a community united by historical destiny” – is built into the very concept of the national state (ibid:115). In a plural society (whether the Edwardian imperial metropolis or the twenty-first century multicultural city), the idea of homogeneous national community serves as “a façade for a hegemonic national culture” (ibid:117).

Similarly, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri describe the transition from a “patrimonial and absolutist state... defined as the property of the monarch” to a new form of state, which was underpinned by “the national identity: a cultural, integrating identity, founded on a biological continuity of blood relations, a spatial continuity of territory, and linguistic commonality.” As “the patrimonial horizon was transformed into the national horizon, the feudal order of the subject (*subjectus*) yielded to the disciplinary

² Cf Bauman (1991:124), Keane (1998:86-91).

order of the citizen (*cives*). The shift of the population from subjects to citizens was an index of the shift from a passive to an active role” (2000:93-95). Hardt and Negri trace their position to Rosa Luxemburg. For them, she

recognized that national sovereignty and national mythologies effectively usurp the terrain of democratic organization by renewing the powers of territorial sovereignty and modernizing its project through the mobilization of an active community (ibid:97).

Hardt and Negri name this process the nation-state’s “biopolitical displacement of sovereignty” (ibid:109).³

The Jews had a difficult relationship to the figure of the citizen in this biopolitical regime. Bauman quotes Hannah Arendt, who described the Jews as a “non-national element in a world of growing or existing nations.” He adds

By the very fact of their territorial dispersion and ubiquity, the Jews were an inter-national nation... The boundaries of the nation were too narrow to define them; the horizons of national tradition were too short to see through their identity... *The world tightly packed with nations and nation-states abhorred the non-national void* (1989:52-3).

Unlike the membership of those ‘born into’ a national community, for the Jews the membership was a matter of choice, and hence in principle revocable, ‘until further notice’. Boundaries of national communities (even more so of their territorial holdings) were still uncertain, complacency was impermissible, vigilance was the order of the day. The barricades are erected to divide, and woe unto those who use them as passageways. The sight of a large group of people free to flip at will from one national fortress to another must have aroused deep anxiety. It defied the very truth on which all nations, old and new alike, rested their claims; the ascribed character of nationhood, heredity and naturalness of national entities (1989:55).

The nation-state was a bid for “legal, linguistic, cultural and ideological unification”: “the project of homogeneity [was] inherent in the idea of the nation”, and it led to a “cultural crusade against difference” (1991:141; cf 1998:153).

The figure of the citizen, then, became the embodiment of this cultural homogeneity. “The prospect of full citizenship rights”, Bauman says, “was the main source of the seductive power of the acculturation programme.” He argues that the nationalization of the state blended “political loyalty and trustworthiness (seen as conditions for the granting of citizenship rights)” with cultural conformity:

On the one hand, the postulated national model served as the ideal objective of cultural crusade, but on the other it was deployed in advance

³ This *biopolitical* dimension of the modern state, exemplified in the notion of consanguinity, of “biological continuity of blood relations” (which is enshrined in *jus sanguinis*, the law of blood), is not sufficiently highlighted in Bauman’s or Habermas’ accounts.

as the standard by which membership of the body politic was tested, and the practices of exclusion and discrimination, applied to those that could be disqualified for failing the test, were explained and legitimated. In the result, citizenship and cultural conformity seemed to merge; the second was seen as the condition, but also as a means to attain the first (1991:141-2).

These analyses draw our attention to the dual nature of Jewish Emancipation. What appears at first glance to be the *specific* emancipation of Jews is really about the introduction of *universal* legal codes. Emancipation (as the universality of law) was incompatible with what were seen as any particularities or particularism (including Jewish particularity). As such, it pointed towards the next stage in the abolition of particularities: assimilation. The emancipation of the Jews, then, meant the opening up of opportunities for mobility, but at a price. The conventional Whig history of Europe's Jews (adopted by Anglo-Jewish historians, as we saw in the introduction) views assimilation as *opportunity*: emancipation (legal exit visas from the ghetto) made assimilation (cultural entry tickets into occidental society) possible. In Bauman's account, we see assimilation as opportunity and *command*. In this version, the edicts of Emancipation and the command to assimilate emerge as two results of the same modern campaign against particularities. Emancipation and assimilation, then, can be seen as simultaneously excluding and including, simultaneously an invitation and a ban. In other words, exit visas and entry tickets are not two distinct stages but two effects of one process. The emergence of new democratic forms of sovereignty in the Enlightenment, Bauman is arguing, was accompanied by the emergence of new exclusions.

The figure of the citizen is central to this narrative. This figure, Bauman suggests, was both held out as the object of the assimilation process and used as the standard to measure readiness to enter the public sphere. In other words, the seductive promise of citizenship was held out but always deferred. The mechanisms of exclusion, the hoops through which the assimilating had to jump to become full citizens, were built into the (already racialized) figure of citizenship itself.

From Protestantism, Enlightenment thought inherited the dichotomy between *faith*, which is an internal, personal, intellectual matter, and *practice*, deed, ritual or culture, which is collective and tangible. This binary meant that Jews who accepted the promise of citizenship had to conceive of their religion as an "ism", an abstract religion or "confession" like Protestantism. Such a dichotomy was unthinkable to the mass of ghetto Jews, for whom their Jewishness was not an ism, but a dense fabric

of everyday practices, mitzvot, traditions; not something one could retire to one's home to do in private, but a whole way of life. The separation of Church and State and the evacuation of the religious from the public sphere are the very conditions of possibility for civic life in Enlightenment political theory (and thus for modern conceptions of citizenship). In Enlightenment political theory, the public sphere is constructed on the one hand as "universal" and on the other as "national", while the Jews are associated with "particularism".⁴ Moreover, if the public sphere was associated with national space, then Jews or other ethnic others only find room within it if they demonstrate total allegiance to the nation. Jewishness as ethnic identity must, then, be disavowed and reduced entirely to personal faith, which is allowed to flourish in the private sphere, totally disassociated from the space of citizenship. In assimilationist thought, Jews were expected to be "Englishmen (or Germans, or Frenchmen, etc) of Mosaic faith", to be, in the phrase of the Russian maskil Judah Leib Gordon, Jews in the home and men in the street.

This process was played out at different speeds in different places. Where Bauman describes a sort of "ideal type", using mainly German examples, it is important to examine the specificities of the emergence of racialized citizenship in imperial Britain. In describing the process, Bauman often returns to images of border crossing, passport controls, exit visas and entry tickets. These are perfect images for the mechanisms of the citizenship/exclusion process. It is undeniable that this process had a cultural dimension and a psychological structure (shame, disavowal, etc) that Bauman analyzes brilliantly. But it is important to take note of the *real* border crossing, real passport controls and real exit visas and entry tickets that the Eastern Jews actually experienced. The citizenship/exclusion process, in fact, involved a whole series of mundane technologies: identity cards for aliens; registering with the police; Home Office files and dossiers; mugshot and fingerprint archives; internment camps for "enemy aliens"; police mapping exercises; endless census-taking; deportations. These material processes were central both to the production of identities like alien and citizen and to the lives of Europe's (and East London's) Jews. It is these mundane processes that we turn to now.

⁴ E.g. in the writings of Voltaire, Diderot, Kant and Hegel (see Poliakov 1975:88, 93, 108-13, 178-80, 511-3).

The Emergence of Racialized Citizenship in Britain

In this section, we will see how a new racialized form of citizenship was superimposed on older conceptions of subjecthood in Britain. We will then look at the material processes involved in this, linking both to the imperial context in which this unfolded.

Aliens and Britons

Traditionally, Britishness in the law was defined around the two poles of sovereignty and subjecthood. An important Victorian treatise by Alexander Cockburn in 1869 explained:

By the Common Law of England, every person born within the dominions of the Crown, no matter whether of English or foreign parents, and, in the latter case, whether the parents were settled, or merely temporarily sojourning, was an English subject (quoted Fahrmeir 2000:43).

This is the doctrine of *jus soli*, the law of birth. Andreas Fahrmeir, a historian of nationality law, comments in his book *Citizens and Aliens* that:

British nationality was not understood as membership of the state, but as a consequence of the allegiance the king's or queen's subjects owed to the monarch's natural person from the moment of their birth in the monarch's territory. This view of nationality is reflected by the use of the word 'subject' rather than the word 'citizen' (ibid:43).

Through the nineteenth century, the strict principle of *jus soli* had been increasingly qualified with a series of exclusions and exceptions which defined British nationality in a narrower and more racialized way. As with other European countries, the principle of *jus sanguinis* was increasingly introduced to allow the foreign-born children of British subjects to become British subjects, inscribing Britishness in genealogy, in blood. Along with this, a number of mechanisms were used – which we can call technologies of citizenship – to police the edges of this increasingly racialized Britishness: passports, limits to naturalization, and deportation.

Passports

The overlaying of this nationalized or biopolitical form of citizenship over older versions of subjecthood can be seen in the slow and resisted introduction of the modern-style passport. The history of the modern passport is tied closely to that of the modern nation-state and modern citizenship. As Fahrmeir has noted, *ancien régime* passports differed from modern passports in that they were compulsory only in times of crisis, and even then were not enforced; they were not about the bearer's nationality, but about their rank or station; and they were rarely issued by governments, but more often by towns, guilds, universities, military commanders and

other *ancien régime* corporate bodies.⁵ Dummett and Nicol make similar points about pre-modern passports:

Before the twentieth century, the term 'passport' had no settled meaning. It could mean an exit permit, or a safe conduct pass issued to aliens by their host state, or a prototype of the modern version. Passports were not universally necessary for travellers before the First World War... In former times, passports were issued selectively to perform different functions" (1990:78).

Modern passports were generally introduced across Europe first during the Napoleonic Wars – in other words, at a moment of emergency – ostensibly for use against foreign agents.

Passports and the alien registration that was introduced at the same time were resisted in Britain. These innovations were seen as an infringement of "English liberty", as an abrogation of the Magna Carta, as essentially foreign. The Alien Act that legislated them was described by one parliamentary opponent as "a bill for introducing alien law into England, and foreign ministers into the administration of justice" (quoted Fahrmeir 2000:105). The opposition to passports and alien registration was, then, tied to a particularistic understanding of England's uniqueness. Oppositional discourses positioned England as the binary opposite of "the Continent" or "the East", and "English liberty" as the opposite of Continental or Eastern "tyranny" and "despotism".

After the end of the Napoleonic Wars, the government attempted to renew the Alien Act annually, but in peace-time parliamentary support dropped rapidly. In post-Napoleonic Europe, and especially Britain, the passport system dwindled. Although the revolutionary crisis of 1848 led to a slight revival of the system, as governments sought to regulate the flow of sedition across Europe, the system was still seen as alien. For example, in 1859 the Law Officers told the Foreign Secretary that "the whole system of passports, with its inconvenient and absurd consequences, is not a British but a foreign institution" (quoted Fahrmeir 2000:130).⁶ The introduction of the passport, then, demonstrates the emergence of a racialized form of citizenship, overlaid on older conceptions of nationality as subjecthood; the resistance to the introduction, in the name of an English exceptionalism, demonstrates that this new form of citizenship was far from normalized in the nineteenth century.

⁵ Fahrmeir (2000:101-2).

⁶ On some uses of the passport in the 1900s, see HO 62/3/1 and /36.

Naturalization

Naturalization was another area that exemplified the increasing racialization of British political belonging. Here, the British path towards modern citizenship was very specific; in most other European countries, naturalization (though often hard to obtain) conferred a full and equal citizenship. In Britain, after 1844 the naturalized could not sit in Parliament or the Privy Council without a special parliamentary bill. Naturalization was only extended to those who intended to reside permanently in Britain; it was not even valid in British colonies. In 1849, the Law Officers ruled that naturalized British subjects would cease to be British subjects when they returned to their native countries; their passports described them as “a naturalized British subject” not as “a British subject”. The protection of the Crown while abroad was gradually removed from the naturalized from 1850 when it was dictated that the naturalized only had “the rights and capacities” of the native-born while on British territory, and therefore could no longer apply for a British passport. Although this restriction was abandoned four years later, the validity of a naturalized subject’s passport was limited to one year, and later to just six months, while the right to hold a passport was solely at the Home Secretary’s discretion. At the same time, naturalization would be voided if the beneficiary left the country for over six months. Meanwhile, a residency requirement of three years was introduced for those applying for naturalization.⁷ All this meant that, in effect, there were two tiers of Britishness: full subjecthood for the native-born and a partial subjecthood for the immigrant.

There are two further important aspects of nineteenth century naturalization. First, it concentrated power in the hands of the executive (the Home Secretary). Secondly, it began to involve the police in regulating the affairs of foreigners. Naturalization was only open to those who were deemed “respectable”, and the Home Office turned to the police to verify the applicants’ respectability. Fahrmeir gives some examples of applicants who were turned down as not sufficiently respectable: a Cracow magician, whose business was not seen as legitimate by the Home Office bureaucrat; one Ignatius Pollaky, considered by the same official to be of “indifferent character”; Karl Marx, who lacked sufficient property; and a Russian merchant named Bär Rosenblatt and a Jerusalem rabbi named Salomen Mendilowitz, whose applications were made by a convicted forger whose profession was handling the applications of “Jews and Turks”.⁸ These examples suggest that, before mass immigration from Eastern

⁷ Fahrmeir (2000:48-9, 53). See also HO 73/103.

⁸ Fahrmeir (ibid:74-5).

Europe, discourses of respectability, civility and propriety bound up in the definition of citizenship were already being racialized; the figure of the law-abiding and reputable British citizen was being defined by its other, the seditious or criminal alien; the East End could not be respectable.

The conditionality of nineteenth century British naturalization was a key step in the erosion of *jus soli* and in the racialization of British citizenship, its inscription in genealogy, in blood. The conditionality of nineteenth century British naturalization rested on a specifically British juridical doctrine called “indelible allegiance”. This doctrine ruled that subject status was permanent and irrevocable; any naturalization did not negate a subject’s allegiance in their place of birth. Under the rule of indelible allegiance, for example, (sufficiently respectable) Russian refugees fleeing conscription could become naturalized British subjects yet still under obligations (such as military service) to the government of their native country.⁹ This doctrine was closely tied up with the British concept of nationality as subjecthood rather than citizenship, and represented a block to the development of a republican form of citizenship in Britain. Although Britain abandoned indelible allegiance by the end of the 1860s,¹⁰ we can perhaps see its legacy living on during World War I, when Britain demanded that refugees from Russia either serve in the British army or return to Russia and serve there.

The doctrine of indelible allegiance represented an older conception of nationality as subject allegiance to a monarch. But, because it supported the unequal access to citizenship of native-born and naturalized subjects, it was overcoded by newer, racialized discourses of belonging: British citizenship carried in the blood.¹¹

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ The UK was forced to by the United States, which made it a condition to the settlement of various disputes after Irish-American citizens were arrested during the suspension of Habeas Corpus in Ireland during the Fenian campaign of 1866 (Fahrmeir *ibid*:59-60).

¹¹ These biopolitical or sanguinary forms of British citizenship would of course reach their apotheosis in the juridical concept of “patriality” (see Gilroy 1987:45). These conceptions, crucially, circulate back and forth between popular and juridical discursive spaces. Les Back writes: “In 1941 George Orwell commented that: ‘A family with the wrong members in control – that, perhaps, is as near as one can come to describing England in a phrase’ (Orwell 1957: 78). In this sense the monarchy serves the idea that nation is kinship, even amongst its critics... If the royal family is viewed as at the top of the tree of national genealogy, then citizenship becomes a matter of blood line. This ethos of consanguinity feeds racial discourse and reproduces a heterosocial definition of who belongs to England i.e. the heterosexual family becomes the primary measure of societal norms and affinities. [The Royal Family] articulate a racist construction of national community and kinship in which the true English are necessarily white. In this sense, the Queen and the royal family provide a palpable barrier to the emergence of a more heteroglot sense of nationhood. The future of multicultural Englishness is blocked because ‘non-white’ residents are always cast as friends - at best -

Deportation

As an internal government memorandum of 1850 noted,

Before the French revolution there does not appear to have been any legislative restriction upon the arrival and continuance of Foreigners in England; a matter was therefore regulated by the Sovereign Authority or the Law of Nations.¹²

In 1793, however, aliens were forced to register on arrival in England, with the possibility of deporting those considered dangerous in the war and revolutionary emergency of the moment. This provision, as an emergency provision, was renewed annually, until 1798 when it was amended so as to distinguish between legitimate arrivers (refugees and economic migrant) and illegitimate ones (agents of enemy states or seditious aliens). All of these provisions, however, were repealed or fell into disuse after the war was over and replaced with legislation which solely required aliens to register on arrival at a port, legislation which was not widely enacted.¹³ In 1848, another moment of revolutionary crisis, another temporary emergency act was passed enabling the removal of aliens, with the focus on aliens who might take part in “internal dissensions”.¹⁴ However, the act was *never* used and, as temporary legislation, again fell into disuse. In the 1890s, though, there was a considerable debate within the Home Office and Foreign Office about a renewal of these sorts of powers, against the backdrop of anarchist scares, such as the departure from Barcelona in 1897 of a boatload of anarchist refugees from repression in Spain.¹⁵ This debate was fuelled by discussion in Parliament of the anarchist threat, such as an 1894 parliamentary question which claimed that “considerable numbers of dangerous characters” were arriving in England and asking if the government proposed to “place any limit upon Foreign immigration or the reception in the overcrowded centres of the United Kingdom of the refuse population of Europe.”¹⁶

From the 1900s, considerable numbers of aliens *were* deported. A whole class of stateless aliens were created, earmarked for deportation by Britain, but no longer recognized as nationals by their home countries: 360 in 1906 alone, of whom 74

and certainly not family. The royal family provides the vehicle to articulate the limits of belonging to England for black and brown citizens” (2002:n.p., cf Billig 1991:106-7).

¹² in HO 144/587/B2840C/68.

¹³ Ibid. and HO 45/106291/99699/6.

¹⁴ Home Office memo of 1895 in HO 144/587/B2840C/68.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ See HO144/545/A55176/18.

were Russian.¹⁷ As with the introduction of passports and the erosion of naturalization, the increasing acceptance of deportation spelled an end to the classical liberal order of *jus soli*.

What this examination of passports, deportation and naturalization, we have seen how a new, racialized model of citizenship, tied to *jus sanguinis*, did not simply replace the old model of subjecthood, but was laid over it. The old importance of *jus soli* was maintained as an anchor for British identity. But it was increasingly subject to qualifications that excluded those who failed to measure up to that (increasingly racialized) identity. For instance, a 1910 Home Office note on alien legislation stated that: “the census takes no account of the children of aliens who, being born in England, are British subjects, but who in parentage, training, and sympathies remain aliens.”¹⁸ In this sentence, the older, legalistic concept of nationality was being undermined by an idea of Britishness versus foreignness that was simultaneously *racial* (“alien by parentage”) and *cultural* (“alien by training and sympathies”).

Although ostensibly the aliens under consideration were those of possible enemy nationality (in the context of increased war-mongering between Britain and Germany), a note added by ER Henry, the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, gives an idea of what they may have had in mind: “Quite a proportion of Jews who are registered as British citizens may not be of British nationality. Indeed, any foreigner giving an English name could, in the census returns, get himself registered as a Britisher.”¹⁹ *The Alien Immigrant*, a far right periodical, made similar points in 1911: “the first generation of Russian Jews in the East End are only English by legal fiction” (quoted Cohen 1994:43). In other words, the two conceptions of political belonging co-existed in an ambivalent relationship: the culturally empty concept of British subject, relegated to the status of a legal fiction, as opposed to the “fact” of race or nationality – the fact of Britishness and of foreignness.²⁰ As I will argue in the

¹⁷ HO 63/3/36 and /126. Examples include a number of people with Jewish names, such as “vagabond and rogue” Isaac Garbus.

¹⁸ HO 45/10629/199699/6.

¹⁹ HO 45/10629/199699.

²⁰ This same opposition – between the “fact” of race and the “fiction” of law – has been seen more recently in Enoch Powell, who declared that “the West Indian does not by being born in England, become an Englishman. In law, he becomes a United Kingdom citizen by birth; in fact he is a West Indian or an Asian still” (quoted Gilroy 1987:46). The opposition Powell highlights – “between (legal) citizenship and the substantive cultural which defines genuine membership of the British nation” as Gilroy puts it (ibid:49) – can now be seen as the continuation of a discourse already elaborated in the period of Jewish immigration.

second half of this thesis, these emerging ways of thinking political belonging would be naturalized in the state of emergency that was WWI.

The interventions from the Home Office and the Metropolitan Police cited here alert us to a key dimension of the period's biopolitical forms of citizenship, the policing of the borders of citizenship, and it is to this theme which we now turn.

Policing Citizenship

early and classic modernity was a time of *les classes dangereuses*, *mobile vulgus*, mean streets and rough districts, panics; the time of revulsion against the *parvenu*, and the pariah masquerading as the *parvenu*; the time of crowd scare. The anonymous stranger in the street was modernity's invention, and also its most horrifying bane (Bauman 1998:149).

The politician's fear of "dangerous characters" and Europe's "refuse population" connects the changes in juridical citizenship (from subjecthood to racialized citizenship) to changing methods of policing the edges of citizenship. The figure of the alien, and especially the figure of the alien revolutionary, was mobilized both to weaken the legitimacy of the right of asylum and the support for open policing. The metropolitan spaces in which this figure moved, such as London's East End, became sources for concern that required new forms of policing. New border patrols were developed to map and police the alien zones (the Special Branch, MI5), and new techniques and technologies were developed to facilitate this process (fingerprinting, undercover surveillance, police photography, alien registers). Crucially, all of this took place in the context of empire and colonialism, which provided an epistemological framework by which the metropolis, and especially the East End, could be known and tamed. Thus this imperial dimension had practical consequences, as techniques like fingerprinting and anthropometry were imported from the colonies, along with key figures in the policing of alien subversion. This section will discuss these processes.

Techniques of Policing

The Special Branch was formed in the early 1880s, as the Special Irish Branch, to deal with Fenian terror – that is, as a *colonial* police force. It rapidly went through several incarnations through the 1880s, a period of intense moral panic around anarchist terror and alien sedition, before it stabilized in February 1887 as the Special Branch under the control of the Met's Assistant Commissioner in charge of the CID. Bernard Porter, in his critical history of the Branch, *The Origins of the Vigilant State*, identifies two of its distinctive features. First, "from the beginning it was

briefed to take care of ‘the observation of anarchists’ as well as of Fenians”; and, second, it “was directly answerable to the Home Secretary rather than the Police Commissioner” (1987:86). In other words, it had a distinctly political remit, and it was under the political control of the executive branch of government.

This period was marked by the perceived rise of anarchism in England which, in the recollections of Special Branch officer John Sweeney, “had been comparatively quiescent; but now they began to grow restless. They held frequent meetings; there was quite a small boom in the circulation of revolutionary publications.” Sweeney attributed this boom to Britain’s overly liberal asylum policies: “Then, as now, England was a dumping-ground for bad characters, and London thus received several rascals who had been expelled from the Continent as being prominent propagandists... Scotland Yard had an anxious time keeping every movement of theirs under surveillance” (quoted Porter 1987:91).²¹ In other words, the development of new techniques of policing was intimately tied up with a pressure to curtail the right of asylum; the good citizen who was to be protected by the police was defined against a foreign threat embodied by the (often but not necessarily Jewish) alien radical.

Other countries in Europe saw Britain as relatively weak in its control over alien sedition. In 1904, The Spanish Minister of the Interior said that England gave immunity to anarchists and therefore “has become the general refuge of the anarchist class, the headquarters of the anarchist propaganda, and the centre from which anarchist propaganda radiated.” The Foreign Office assured him, on the contrary, “that nowhere are the proceedings of the anarchists so closely and efficaciously watched as in England; that nowhere else would the concoction of an anarchist plot be more surely noticed and exposed.”²² In other words, the price of open doors to aliens was vigilance.

In Britain, the problem of the seditious alien was very much tied to specific spaces in the city. Parts of the Metropolitan area – particularly the Jewish East End and Fitzrovia, and to a lesser extent Clerkenwell – were considered to be foreign

²¹ Porter notes the surveillance operations in this period of which records have survived, including on foreign socialists in England in August 1886, Russian nihilists in 1887, exiled German terrorists in 1888, and Italian anarchist Errico Malatesta in 1890 and 1891 (1987:92). He also mentions the less secretive “domiciliary visit” to Lewis Lyons, the Jewish tailors’ leader; Porter identifies Lyons as a domestic socialist rather than an alien one (ibid:93).

²² HO 144/757/118516/53.

colonies. While England's liberal hospitality to strangers in need was celebrated, the way its guests clustered in such colonies, speaking foreign tongues and carrying on their plotting, was a cause for concern. The Foreign Office, however, insisted that

the great majority of persons with Anarchist tendencies reside in the Metropolitan area, and consequently come under the observation of the Metropolitan Police, whose methods of supervision and control, the outcome of many years' working experience, in view of the limitations of their powers imposed by the laws of this country, are as effective as possible. One reason why Anarchists congregate exclusively in London is that, with few exceptions they are aliens, and they find in the Metropolis facilities as regards their native language and communication with friends and countrymen which are not available elsewhere.²³

Porter discusses a number of techniques developed by the Special Branch to deal with foreign anarchists. Foreign governments sometimes gave the British police notice of anarchists they knew were entering Britain. These would be escorted or trailed from the sea until a residence could be established for them – notably this practice was common before the 1905 Aliens Act, i.e. when Britain had no official immigration control mechanisms.²⁴ The anarchists' own press was scoured for information (as attested to by the surprising amount of it which survives in the Home Office files). The landladies and neighbours of the anarchists were interviewed. Officers would “shadow” (or “house”) anarchists, a technique then still in its infancy. They would also infiltrate subversive meetings, such as the 1907 London congress of the Russian Social Democrats, where they were spotted, leading to formal complaints by Labour MPs.²⁵

Undercover work was considered risky because anarchists were “possibly half-demented, and therefore more dangerous than anyone save a New Guinea head-hunter” – a recollection of Special Branch officer W.H. Thompson that encapsulates both the *medicalization* of the metropolitan radicals (“half-demented”) and the way in which they “imaginatively doubled” for the colonial other (“a new Guinea head-hunter”). However, disguise was considered easy: “all one had to do was grow stubble, dirty the hands and face, rumple the hair and [again these are Thompson's words] smoke ‘offensive foul foreign cigarettes’” (Porter 1987:123). Herbert Fitch, another Special Branch Detective Constable of this time,

preferred to hide in cupboards, from which [in an Islington pub] in 1905 he heard Lenin - ‘a smooth-haired, oval-faced, narrow-eyed, typical Jew’ - preaching ‘bloodshed on a colossal scale’. A little later he adopted the

²³ HO 144/757/118516/13. This theme of the *alien metropolis* emerges again and again.

²⁴ Porter (1987:122); HO 144/688/X84164.

²⁵ Porter (ibid:157).

more daring ruse of dressing as a waiter at a restaurant where Lenin was dining with a secret society called the 'Foreign Barbers of London'... Other Special Branch men disguised themselves as sanitary inspectors, rate collectors, motor mechanics, house painters and...free lovers (Porter 1987:123-4).²⁶

As a result of all of this, Porter writes, "The Branch clearly had a very full dossier on foreign anarchists in the 1890s" (ibid:124). The Special Branch drew on the knowledges they produced, on their role as experts, to intervene in debates about the borders of citizenship: it was instrumental in promoting anti-immigration policies, preparing a report for the Home Office in 1905 that helped the passing of the Aliens Act of that year. The report stated that "these immigrants, particularly from Poland and Russia, had bad habits which demoralised those living in already crowded conditions. Moreover most of them were settling in the working-class areas of London" (quoted Bunyan 1976:110).

Technologies of Policing

As well as these new techniques of policing, new technologies were recruited, such as fingerprinting and photography. Fingerprinting had colonial origins: it was first developed in the late 1850s by the Chief Magistrate of the jute-producing Hooghly district in Bengal, Sir William Herschel. An early method of classification was developed by Dr Henry Faulds, a British surgeon based in Japan, in the late 1870s. In 1880, he sent his findings to an elderly Charles Darwin, who passed them to his cousin Francis Galton, a leading eugenicist. In 1892, Galton published his book *Fingerprints*, with a comprehensive classification system.²⁷ Meanwhile, Edward

²⁶ However, Porter notes that Lenin was in Britain in April 1902-May 1903, August 1903 and May 1907 – but that there are no references to him (or any of his known aliases) in any Home Office documents or letter registers, suggesting there was never a Home Office file on him; this causes Porter to doubt Colin Holmes' suggestion that it was destroyed (Porter 1987:233n65). Rupert Allason's celebratory account of the Special branch reports Fitch's recollections more uncritically, noting that at the restaurant meeting Lenin was accompanied "by a Jew, named Leib Bronstein, who adopted the *nom-de-guerre* of 'Lev Trotsky'" and that these two men proposed the motion at a meeting in Great Portland Street (again Fitch was there in disguise) that planned the Revolution of 1905 (1983:18). If the "Foreign Barbers of London" were Fitch's invention (he wrote his recollections after World War I and the Russian Revolution), it is interesting because foreign barbers, like foreign waiters, were a source of great concern during World War I precisely because workers in these racialized occupations were in a position to hear people's secrets. Foreign waiters and barbers featured heavily in the (relatively new) popular WWI genre of spy fiction, and they were the subject of a great many policy initiatives through the war (registration drives, periodic internment campaigns).

²⁷ On the Galton system, see Radzinowicz (1990:263-4), Sekula (1982). Galton himself had colonial connections, having time spent in South West Africa in his younger years. His autobiography recalls: "I soon saw some of the horrors of savagedom... I had to hold a little court of justice on most days, usually followed by corporal punishment, deftly administered... The Damaras were for the most part thieving and murderous, dirty, and of a low type" (1908:121-51).

Henry was using fingerprints in Bengal when he was the Inspector General of Police there and had corresponded with Galton on this subject. He developed a numerical system that produced 1,024 primary classifications, which was instituted in Bengal in 1897. Henry formally requested that the Government of India consider the possibility of replacing Bertillonage (the anthropometric method developed in France in the 1870s) with fingerprinting as the primary means of identification.²⁸ Back in London, in 1900, the Home Office set up the Belper Committee on "Identification of Criminals by Measurement and Fingerprints". This recommended Henry's revised version of the Galton system. In 1901, Henry was transferred to England, where he established Scotland Yard's Central Fingerprint Bureau and began training investigators in the use of his system.²⁹

Having been developed on colonial natives, fingerprinting was then used in the imperial metropolis on foreigners within. In 1905 John Pedder, then the Principle Clerk at the Home Office, wrote: "It is desired to keep fingerprints etc. of all aliens against whom [expulsion certificates are issued]." Regulations of 1896 made by the Secretary of State under the 1891 Penal Servitude Act allowed the fingerprinting, measuring and photographing of prisoners; the current Home Secretary (H.J. Gladstone) extended this to aliens being expelled. Following this ruling, Scotland Yard made preparations for "the reception and classification of the fingerprints and records of expelled Aliens", to be kept separately from the existing criminal records.³⁰ Fingerprints and photographs were also central to the data the Home Office wanted to collect on aliens in the 1910s.³¹ Fingerprints were also used to apprehend "dangerous" aliens, such as David Katz, alias Davis Rosenbaum, in 1906.³² In the bodies of such dangerous aliens, the police made visible the figure of the alien as such: the constitutive other of the citizen.

²⁸ The Bertillon system (devised by Alphonse Bertillon) classified criminals by body measurements, using new technologies of measurement, such as special calipers. See "Anthropometric System" HO 144/530-532/A46508; "Report of a Committee appointed by the Secretary of State to inquire into the best means available for identifying Habitual Criminals" (C.7263), 1894, *Parliamentary Papers* 1893-4, vol. 72, p.209ff; "Report of Committee on Method of Identification of Criminals, 1900" HO 144/566/A62042/3; Habitual Criminals Register, HO 144/191/A46508D. The technology of the Bertillon system is close kin of the anthropometric technologies used in the colonies and by race science. For example, it involves a complex typography of nose shapes, such as the "convex horizontal" nose or the "humped depressed" nose.

²⁹ Radzinowicz (1990:264).

³⁰ HO 45/10516/135164, Letter 12.12.05. Cf Sekula (1988:36).

³¹ HO 45/10629/199699/6. In early 1920, a vigorous debate between senior police officers and Home Office officials would eventually decide not to fingerprint all aliens applying for naturalization (HO 45/24722).

³² HO 62/3/24.

These techniques and technologies of policing – surveillance, infiltration, undercover detection, fingerprinting, anthropometry, photography – where the material processes whereby the shift to modern citizenship that Bauman describes was enacted. That is, the emergence in the cultural field of an increasingly racialized citizenship not only unfolded in specific ways in different nation-states, but was also accompanied by a set of specific mundane practices. Policing in this period, then, was partly the policing of the borders and limits of citizenship. The knowledges the police produced through their new techniques and technologies made knowable the figure of the alien; this figure brought into relief the figure of the citizen. The “entry tickets and exit visas” of citizenship, then, were not mere metaphors, but material realities in the alien quarters.

Modernity, Empire and Citizenship

We have already noted that the Special Branch was formed initially as a colonial police force (to deal with Fenian rebels) and that fingerprinting developed in a colonial setting, but the colonial context was deeply embedded in policing practices in the imperial metropolis. When urban unrest reached its high point in the riots in the wake of the 1886 Trafalgar Square demonstration of the unemployed, General Sir Charles Warren was summoned from the imperial army in Africa to take charge of the Metropolitan Police. Many of the lower ranking officers in the Victorian and Edwardian Special Branch were Irish, often Protestant Ulstermen. Higher up, one senior officer was Anglo-Irish, but the others were overwhelmingly of military and colonial background. Brackenbury and Gosselin, senior figures in the Special Branch of the 1880s, were ex-soldiers, and Brackenbury had been private secretary to the Indian Viceroy. Their contemporary Jenkinson had been in the Indian Civil Service. James Munro, head of the CID from 1884 and later a key Special Branch officer, was an ex-Inspector General of the Bengal Police (“no doubt the peoples of Bengal and Stepney had certain experiences in common” is Bunyan’s comment on this). Munro appointed as an officer Melville McNaghten (later the Assistant Commissioner in charge of CID from 1903 to 1913) as head of the Special Branch in 1888. McNaghten had been a planter in India, and was admired for his firmness with natives: “I saw his way of managing men when I was an Official in India,” wrote Munro in recommending him, “and was struck by it, for he had a most turbulent set of natives to deal with, and he dealt with them firmly and justly”. Sir Edward Bradford, Chief Commissioner in the 1890s, had been in the Indian army and the Political and Secret Department of the

India Office. Edward Henry, Bradford's head of CID and successor as Commissioner, had run the Bengal police. Basil Thomson, MacNaghten's successor as head of CID and Special Branch, had been a colonial administrator in Fiji, New Guinea and Tonga, where he had "put down" native uprisings.³³

But the embedding of metropolitan policing in imperial ideology went far deeper than these biographical continuities. Rather, a whole colonialist geographical and epistemological structure was brought to bear on the problem of policing the metropolis, which I described in the introduction as a regime of visibility whereby colonial otherness was mapped on to the space of the city and the East End became "the contact zone... the space of colonial encounters" (Pratt 1992:6), "'an internal Orient' to be discovered and tamed" (Back 1996:18).

Attention to these colonial methodologies, to these border patrols of citizenship, significantly modifies Bauman's account of the emergence of modern citizenship with which we began this chapter. Modernity's cultural crusade against alternative sources of authority outside the nation-state was clearly all the more urgent in the militarized space of the colonies. This is one way in which the assimilation of the East End Jews was related to the assimilation of other natives of the East End (including those originating in Britain's oldest colony, Ireland) and to that of the natives and forced migrants of Britain's colonies overseas. In Catherine Hall's terms, the "colonies provided the many benchmarks which allowed the English to determine what they did not want to be and who they thought they were. Through the construction of imagined others [in the colonies], the English reached a settlement as to who was to belong to the new nation" (1994:10).

Hardt and Negri's account of the emergence of modern citizenship emphasizes this colonial dimension in a way that Bauman's doesn't. For them,

Although modern sovereignty emanated from Europe..., it was born and developed in large parts through Europe's relationship with its outside, and particularly through its colonial project and the resistance of the colonized (ibid:70).

Whereas within its domain the nation-state and its attendant ideological structures work tirelessly to create and reproduce the purity of the people, on the outside the nation-state is a machine that produces Others, creates racial difference, and raises boundaries that delimit and support the modern subject of sovereignty. These boundaries and barriers, however, are not impermeable but rather serve to regulate two-way flows

³³ Porter (1987:72, 83, 167), Bunyan (1976:68, 111).

between Europe and its outside. The Oriental, the African, the Amerindian are all necessary components for the negative foundation of European identity and modern sovereignty as such. The dark Other of European Enlightenment stands as its very foundation just as the productive relationship with the 'dark continents' serves as the economic foundation of the European nation-states (ibid:115).³⁴

I have emphasized here the borders to citizenship, the way in which citizenship was defined through its outside, its excluded others. The next chapter turns to the other side of this coin: the (conditional) inclusion of Jewish migrants in the space of citizenship, through processes of assimilation sponsored by the Anglo-Jewish leadership. We shall see that the "inclusive" forms of citizenship promoted by Anglo-Jewry shared key features with the "exclusive" forms of citizenship discussed above. They drew on an Enlightenment language of universalism, which had no space for difference, for the "particularity" of Jewish identity. They were organized around a linear and teleological chronology (so that citizenship's others were figured as primitive, barbaric or anachronistic). They were organized through a particular eurocentric geography in which citizenship was located in the West and its others (and the past) were associated with the East and/or with the colonies. And they were not just abstract or theoretical discourses, but were enacted on the body and in spaces. These features can be seen as marking the limit to the possibility of learning citizenship. Citizenship was about both inclusion *and* exclusion, assimilation *and* regulation.

³⁴ Similarly, Hannah Arendt emphasizes these dimensions of the emergence of modern citizenship, for instance in the "Imperialism" section of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1968a).

Chapter 4

Becoming Citizens

This chapter will introduce some of the ways Jewish immigrants were initiated into citizenship. The focus will be on assimilationist discourses associated with West End Anglo-Jewry, which stressed the importance of becoming English or learning citizenship. For the Anglo-Jewish leaders who ran the Jews' Free School – like the “social liberals” associated with the Settlement House movement and Toynbee Hall, who articulated conceptions of “active” and “social” citizenship – citizenship was something that could be *taught*. Both Anglo-Jewry and social liberalism, then, created heterosocial spaces concerned with the teaching and learning of citizenship. On one level, these social liberal discourses and images of citizenship can seem inclusive and open to immigrants. However, as I will argue, the content of the citizenship into which the immigrants and their children were inducted was profoundly culturally specific: becoming a citizen, learning citizenship, meant assimilation to particular norms of Englishness, already coded white.

As discussed in the last chapter, entry into the public sphere, into the space of citizenship, required particular forms of cultural conformity, including the correct way of speaking and of deporting the body. This was true for the working class as a whole. Catherine Hall has shown how the inclusion in the space of citizenship for working class men under the 1867 Reform Act was policed along (racialized and gendered) lines of respectability: “The consensual lines of inclusion were drawn around those who had demonstrated ‘regularity of life and general trustworthiness of conduct’, men who were ‘worthy of it’, not ‘migratory paupers (who undoubtedly included many of the Irish) or ‘the wandering and passing population’” (1994:18). The 1867 Act, she argues, created a new political subjectivity, that of the respectable worker, against whom the rest of the working class was measured. And so it was for Jews too.

Assimilated Jews – “guinea pigs of modernity”, as Roskies calls them (1984:62) – internalized these positions. As Bauman argues,

the emancipated Jew who could afford the price of entry into the new, and hopefully universalistic, human race defined the state of emancipation as that of... refined and respectable manners like

cleanliness, closely observed sexual etiquette, unobtrusive conduct in public places (1988a:52; cf 1991:129).¹

Anglo-Jewry was not homogenous, containing various shades of religious orthodoxy and varying opinions on political issues. But what was shared was a common commitment to the assimilatory principle that required Jews to be inconspicuous in the public sphere. Bauman quotes Theodore Reinach, a turn of the century French assimilationist, to exemplify this way of thinking:

The Jews, since they have ceased to be treated as pariahs, must identify themselves, in heart and in fact, with the nations which have accepted them, renounce their practices, the aspirations, the peculiarities of costume and language which tended to isolate them from their fellow citizens, in a word cease to be a despised nation, and henceforth be considered only a religious denomination (quoted 1988a:57).

Judah Leib Gordon's injunction 'Be a Jew at home, a man in the street' meant 'Be invisible in public places' (1991:152).²

With difference confined to the private space of the home, the public sphere was constructed as cultural conformity. This meant, crucially, linguistic conformity; the nineteenth century saw the crystallization of the notion of a national language: "one, pure language for one people in one state" as linguist Benjamin Harshav puts it (1990:74). Hence, in Germany, *mauscheln* or Yiddish were absolutely intolerable corruptions of German; in England, the East Enders' inability to speak the Queen's and then King's English disqualified them from citizenship. Linguistic incompetence in the indigenous language of the state was "one of the most salient markers of difference" of the Jew from the native and of the assimilated from the unassimilated (Gilman 1993:13).³ In other words, citizenship was, for Anglo-Jewry, as much a cultural as a political category. Or, rather, in order to be entitled to the *political* status of citizenship, immigrant Jews had to show they were able to conform to the *cultural* standards of Englishness, terms of exclusion which were always already racialized.

The other dimension to the Anglo-Jewish doctrine of "Be a Jew at home, a man in the street" was the notion of a *community of faith*, in which was inscribed what I called in

¹ This sort of analysis is developed in the work of Sander Gilman (e.g. 1991, 1995), George Mosse (e.g. 1993) and others.

² As I noted in the introduction, this sort of thinking is continued in certain liberal versions of "multiculturalism" today, such as that of John Rex (1991, 1994).

³ We can identify the start of the assimilationists' campaign in the terrain of language to the Jewish Enlightenment or Haskalah, which began in Berlin in the late eighteenth century. As Daniel Boyarin writes, "the insistence of the Jewish Enlightenment that only an eradication of

the introduction the *logic of the communal*. The Anglo-Jewish leadership presumed to have superior knowledge of, to speak for, to *represent* the East End immigrants. The assimilatory imperative was always accompanied by the imperative to keep the immigrants within the authority and patronage of the already assimilated; communal authority required a separate Jewish institutional landscape, even as Jewish particularity was supposed to be dissolved in English citizenship. As Israel Finestein puts it, “Anglo-Jewish leadership had evolved out of a group of families with a highly cultivated sense of responsibility for a community whose members they had initially tended to regard in the last resort as dependents. It retained the psychology of patron and retainer, and owed much to English class-consciousness” (1992:48).

We can see precisely these processes – citizenship as cultural conformity and the logic of the communal whereby Anglo-Jewry sought to impose its authority over immigrant Jews – at work in the East End, where the Anglo-Jewish leadership made practical efforts to turn the immigrants into English citizens. These practical efforts took place in particular spaces – and in turn shaped those spaces. This chapter will examine four such spaces, drawing largely on archival sources (in particular, 1903 issues of the *Jewish Chronicle*, the mouthpiece of assimilated Jewry), but also on a critical reading of some of the secondary literature on Jewish London.

The first space under examination will be the Jews’ Free School (JFS), seen by one contemporary as “a huge factory for the production of English citizens from foreign material” (quoted Steyn 1999:29).⁴ In the early twentieth century, the JFS sought to simultaneously “humanize” and “anglicize” the children of immigrants by teaching them terms of cultural conformity (particularly English language) by which their right to citizenship would be measured. The second space is the Settlement House, exemplified by Toynbee Hall on Commercial Street. The doctrine of “social citizenship” on which the Settlement Houses were based affirmed the Anglo-Jewish belief that citizenship could be taught and learnt, again through the creation of culturally English people out of immigrants. I will next examine the non-urban spaces to which Anglo-Jewry attempted to “disperse” the ghetto Jews: new suburbs,

the ‘talmudic spirit’ could fit the Jews for civilization is an unremittingly colonialist project” (Daniel Boyarin 1997:xvii-xviii n.6).

⁴ The image of a factory for producing Englishness was echoed by Israel Zangwill, who attended the JFS. In *Children of the Ghetto*, he described its pupils “hastening at the inexorable clang of the big school bell to be ground in the same great, blind, inexorable Governmental machine” (quoted Davin 1998:51-2). In the next chapter, we will see Zangwill’s critique of assimilation as grinding down difference (in favour of the notion of a pluralism which “melted up” difference); perhaps his experience at JFS informed this.

provincial towns, rural campsites. In these non-urban spaces, Anglo-Jewry could work directly on the body of the aliens and their children, in order to produce the ideal body of the citizen: productive, healthy, manly. In the final section of the chapter, we will return to the city, to examine the new places of worship created under the new Federation of Synagogues. In this institution, Anglo-Jewry sought to bring the immigrant Jews within the space of the communal, the Anglo-Jewish community of faith. While the East End's unruly informal places of worship suggested a different form of belonging, the new Federation synagogues, by their very architecture, were designed to inscribe the correct mode of being an Englishman onto the body of the aliens. The chapter will conclude by pointing to the way that these unruly micro-public spaces, outside the space of the communal and the space of formal citizenship, suggest an alternative model of political belonging and participation, following a different form of political rationality.

Learning Citizenship: the Jews' Free School

“the Jews' Free School,... like all schools, played an exemplary role as transmitter of... values – in this particular case of Anglo-Jewry... The activities of the Jews' Free School were entirely consistent with English secondary education of the time. The curriculum aimed to produce people with ‘sound bodies’ and ‘agile minds’ (Steyn 1999:27-8).

The Anglo-Jewish leadership, such as Samuel Montagu, were opposed to Jewish day schools for the children of middle class Jews, but they approved of them for the children of the immigrant poor. As Israel Finestein writes, Montagu believed that “For the latter they would be a valuable Anglicizing factor. For the children of the Jewish middles classes, Jewish schools would, he stated, cause narrow-mindedness and foster inhibitions in the relationships between Jews and their fellow-citizens of the Christian faith” (1992:53). In other words, the West Enders saw themselves as full citizens (albeit of the Jewish faith), as already belonging. But they saw the working class Jews as having to be culturally anglicized before they could belong in English society, before they would be eligible for political participation. Jewish day schools, like the Jews' Free School (JFS), were a method for anglicizing them. We can see here, alongside the assimilatory imperative, the imperative to keep the immigrants and their children within the authority and patronage of the already assimilated: communal authority required a separate Jewish institutional landscape, even as Jewish particularity was dissolved in English citizenship.

This way of thinking was clearly expressed by the headmaster of JFS in the late nineteenth century, Moses Angel. In 1871, he told the London School Board that the parents of the children at the JFS were “the refuse population of Europe... until the children [were] Anglicised or humanised it was difficult to tell what was their moral condition... [They] knew neither English nor any intelligible language” (quoted Alderman 1995:144). The *Jewish Chronicle* in 1888 wrote that “the great majority enter [the JFS] practically foreigners; leave it potential Englishmen and women, prepared to take their part in the struggle of life in the spirit of English citizens” (ibid). A Board of Trade report in 1894 was hopeful about the progress of that Anglicisation/humanisation process: “They enter the school Russians and Poles and emerge almost indistinguishable from English children” (ibid). Not completely indistinguishable, but almost; not yet actual Englishmen, but potential.

In 1903, the headteacher at the JFS was Louis Abrahams; his attitudes remained similar to his predecessor's. He gave a speech to parents, exhorting them:

Strengthen the effort of the teachers to wipe away all evidences of foreign birth and foreign proclivities, so that [your] children shall be identified with everything that is English in thought and deed... that [your] boys and girls may grow up to the flag which they are learning within these walls to love and honour, that they may take a worthy part in the growth of this great Empire, whose shelter and protection... will never be denied them (quoted Steyn 1999:29-30).

In his speech, Abrahams also called for the throwing off of Yiddish, “that miserable jargon which is not a language at all” in order to “become English – truly English” (quoted ibid:36). Anglo-Jewish communal leader Samuel Montagu, speaking to the Royal Commission on Alien Immigration in 1903, described a visit to the JFS, where he

had the greatest difficulty in finding one child (although they held up their hands that they were the children of foreign parents) who knew the Polish or Yiddish language... They had become so thoroughly English from the tuition of the free schools that they had lost all their foreign characteristics except, probably in their own homes, where they would be teaching their parents English (quoted ibid:35-6).

As Juliet Steyn comments:

Language was seen as the key to successful assimilation. In the Jews' Free School, children were forbidden to speak any other language but English. An article in the *Daily Graphic*, in 1895, praised the school for its achievements:

‘It is essentially a foreign school and the immense majority of the children on entering the school cannot speak a word of English. When they leave, after passing the successive standards, they all speak English with a high regard for grammar and a purity of accent far above

the average of the neighbourhood... The school, supported by Jewish subscriptions and Jewish endowments, is in effect *a huge factory for the production of English citizens from foreign material*' (Steyn 1999:29, my emphasis).

There are three themes that I want to draw out from these texts. First, the comments of the Board of Trade or *Daily Graphic* are almost the same as those of the *Jewish Chronicle* or the school's Jewish headmasters. If there is a difference, it lies between the "almost indistinguishable" of the Board of Trade and the "potential Englishmen" of the *Chronicle*. For the former, it seems as if the foreign Jews, despite the huge efforts of the JFS, can never really become Englishmen; the best they can do is become almost indistinguishable from them. In other words, there is some irreducible, unassimilable core, some essential, ontological Jewishness that can never be English. For the assimilators, on the other hand, the immigrants *are* potentially English. In other words, the assimilators took up anti-semitic images and discourses, but with one key difference: they denied the racial essentialism that said assimilation was ultimately impossible.

The second theme in these texts, one already noted by Geoffrey Alderman and Juliet Steyn, is that of language. As Steyn notes,

The success of the school was... measured in terms of the language accomplishments of the pupils, and it was emphasized that the pupils did not just speak English but a particular kind of English: one which was pure, devoid of nuance or local accent (1999:29).

This found its most extreme form in Moses Angel's speech, where Yiddish was not even considered an "intelligible language". Linguistic conformity was the ultimate test of worthiness to citizenship.

The third theme is that of the borders between home and school, public and private. The headteachers were very keen to indicate the difference between the children and their parents, "the refuse of Europe". In school, only English could be spoken; home was beyond the power of the Anglo-Jewish leadership. However, it was hoped that in the home "they would be teaching their parents English". The private space of home, then, was positioned outside the public space of citizenship, with the school on the borderline between them. This fits in with the liberal conception of citizenship which the Anglo-Jewish community subscribed to: Jews could be Jewish in the home, but men or citizens on the streets.

Learning Citizenship: Toynbee Hall

The shift from political belonging as subjecthood to political belonging as citizenship, discussed in the last chapter, meant that political belonging was increasingly seen as something active. One key articulation of this conception of citizenship in Britain was that associated with emerging “social liberal” thinking.

For mid-nineteenth century liberals active citizenship was seen as a form of civic and moral education. The state was considered to have a duty to confer this benefit on its members. The idea of citizenship as a device for improvement was, however, threatened by the impoverished and ignorant condition of the potential active citizenry. Hence it led shortly to the elaboration of social citizenship according to which the state was obliged to enable all its members to participate effectively in the civic and political sphere... However, large-scale immigration would expose the question of who had access to this form of citizenship (Cesarani 1996:59).

This new conception of citizenship was originated by the Christian Socialist movement and the philosopher TH Green and his circle at Oxford University (which included economic historian Arnold Toynbee), who were in turn influenced by German Idealist philosophy (especially Hegel) and by the Evangelical movement. Green’s political philosophy was based on a particular conception of the state, which he described in terms of Aristotle’s philosophy:

[Aristotle] regards the state [*polis*] as a society of which the life is maintained by what its members do for the sake of maintaining it, by functions consciously fulfilled with reference to that end, and which in that sense impose duties; and at the same time as a society from which its members derive the ability... to fulfil their several functions and which in that sense confers rights (Green quoted in Richter 1964:221).

Citizenship, in Green’s understanding, had a moral rather than purely political dimension. In a public speech, Green said that “citizenship makes the moral man; ... citizenship only gives that self-respect which is the true basis of respect for others, and without which there is no lasting social or real morality” (quoted *ibid*:364).⁵

From this followed an educational imperative: duties could be *taught*. For Green and Toynbee, “the notion of citizenship included teaching persons newly admitted to political rights what were their corresponding duties” (*ibid*:344). Toynbee, in an 1882 speech to the Co-operative Congress held in Oxford, declared that education should deal with the student as a citizen,

with a view to showing what are his duties to his fellow-man and in what way union with them is possible. The mere vague impulse in man to do his duty is barren without the knowledge which enables him to perceive

⁵ Note the importance of “self-respect”, tied to respectability, as a standard of citizenship.

what his duties are, and how to perform them (quoted Briggs and Macartney 1984:4).

Partly as a result of this educational imperative, the philosophy of TH Green had practical results in the East End of London, and at the same time these conceptions of citizenship were honed through contact with an empirical East End. Green's followers formed the Settlement House movement. In 1884, under the leadership of Samuel Barnett, Vicar of St. Jude's in Whitechapel since 1871, a group of Oxford undergraduates founded a settlement house in East London named Toynbee Hall after the recently deceased Arnold Toynbee. These institutions intended to bring culture and education to the people of the East End; university-educated young men ("settlers") lived in them and were supposed to form bonds with the working men of the slums that would civilize the latter. Male settlement workers entered the formerly closed spaces of the working class.⁶

By the 1890s, as Gareth Stedman Jones has written, the Settlement Houses were "seen as informal social laboratories where future civil servants, social investigators, and established politicians could informally work out new principles of social politics" (1971:328). Social workers and educationalists at Toynbee Hall were deeply bound up with the project of mapping and representing the Jewish East End, discussed in chapter one. The East End in general, and the Jewish poor in particular, stood for the social for these emergent sociologists. The settlers' task was to investigate the social, to render it visible, to represent it. Spaces of encounter like Toynbee and the JFS were used as sites of statistical, biometric and anthropological studies which guided new knowledges of the social. Harry Lewis, a Jewish worker at Toynbee Hall mapped the street-by-street growth of the Jewish community since 1880, and also mapped the epidemiology of a smallpox outbreak in Stepney. He worked with Cyril Russell, a Christian Toynbee worker, on the report *The Jew in London: A study of racial character and present-day conditions* (1900), with a preface by Canon Barnett and maps by George Arkell, who also produced the maps for Booth's *Life and Labour*.

But at the same time as rendering the social visible, the settlers were expected to work *on* it, to civilize the East Enders and make them fit for citizenship (a task analogous to the colonial project). Harry Lewis was called before the Royal Commission on Alien Immigration in 1903. After describing his mapping and statistical exercises, he proceeded to describe to the Commissioners the good

qualities and “chief defects” of the “foreign Jews”. Among their good qualities were their thirst for education and ability to assimilate:

Nothing was more pathetic than to see the children of the Jews’ Free School, under the most hopeless surroundings, reading the books from the public libraries... The charge of anti-patriotism brought against them was unfounded, and their children, who were brought up in England, soon assimilated English ideas.⁷

For Lewis, the Jews’ Free School and the public libraries, like Toynbee Hall itself, were essential instruments of assimilation, which was seen as the path to, and prerequisite for, citizenship. “There was a desire,” he said, “on the part of a good many aliens to obtain naturalisation,” and he thought “it should be made easier – not by shortening the period, but by reducing the fees. It would be better to have an educational test than a money test.”⁸

Canon Samuel Barnett, the warden of Toynbee, similarly stressed the possibility of learning to belong, of learning citizenship, in his testimony to the Commission. The alien Jews, he said, “became good citizens, and took a good deal of interest in public affairs.”

I am impressed by the rapidity with which aliens become Britons, i.e., hard workers, good members of society and concerned for the health and wealth of the country. I do not think it wise that they should be massed together as they are, but as immigrants I believe they, like other immigrants, give something of value to English life, and that exclusion would be a blow not only to English character, but to English wealth.⁹

The *Jew in London* study, closely associated with Toynbee, also argued for Jewish assimilability. James Bryce MP¹⁰ in his Preface wrote: “the Jewish race... will dissolve like a lump of salt in water” (in Russell and Lewis 1900:xvii), while Russell spoke of the younger generation of Whitechapel Jews undergoing a “transformation... astonishing in its completeness. All the children who pass through

⁶ Cf Simey and Simey (1960:101), Walkowitz (1992:59-61).

⁷ *JC* Supplement on the Commission 3.5.1903, p.i.

⁸ *Ibid.* A demand for a lowering of the naturalization fee had been made at the previous year’s Trade Union Congress, the resolution using phrases like “rights of citizenship” and “Anglicisation”. Interestingly, Canon Barnett had hosted a reception for the Congress at Toynbee, where Sidney Webb had addressed them (*JC* 5.9.1902). In moments like this, we can see a consensus taking shape around new “social liberal” conceptions of citizenship, shared by the Fabians, the Christian socialists and increasing numbers of trade unionists, which stressed active participation in civic life and the value of learning citizenship, with Toynbee Hall as a key space for its dissemination. The post-1997 discourse of “citizenship tests” for asylum seekers and “citizenship lessons” for schoolchildren can be traced to this Edwardian political formation.

⁹ *Ibid.*:ii

¹⁰ Bryce, an academic, who had travelled widely in Russia and Central Asia, was the MP for Tower Hamlets, and apparently addressed his Jewish constituents in German (see *The Century* Volume 39, Issue 3, January 1890, pp.470-2).

an elementary school may be said to grow into 'English Jews'... The newly arrived Russo-Jewish immigrant is in all essentials a medieval product, but his children grow up into something like the type of modern Englishman" (ibid:24).

The positioning of these men as experts gave their voices authority in the public sphere, which they bolstered by the language of science – and props like statistics and maps – to give their opinions the status of truth. Lewis, moreover, as a Jew, also had the position of some sort of native informant; like Lord Rothschild who sat on the Royal Commission, he was seen as *representing* the East End Jews. Here we can see how discourses of citizenship were interwoven with the discourse of *community*, the logic of the communal. The Anglo-Jewish leadership presumed to have superior knowledge of, to speak for, to represent the East End immigrants. Despite their disdain for the newcomers, Anglo-Jewry felt themselves bound to them, and saw themselves as the legitimate leadership of the East End as well as the West End.

The spaces and embodiments of citizenship developed by these movements were profoundly gendered. The Settlement Houses were male spaces, and the settler was expected to represent a paradigmatic form of male citizenship. As Sara Burke (1997) argues, the settler was expected to fulfil the responsibility of their class and their gender to lead societal regeneration through its evolutionary course of progress. The young graduates were expected to pursue their own careers in London but to spend their leisure hours serving the East End community. Barnett said:

A settlement is... a club-house in an industrial district, where the condition of membership is the performance of a citizen's duty; a house among the poor, where residents may make friends with the poor (Barnett 1898:26).

For Barnett, the settlement project, and the brotherly bonds established through it, were moral ends in themselves, above and beyond any utilitarian benefits the experiment might bring. Burke argues that Idealism's notion of public service and active citizenship were themselves bound up with prevailing notions of masculinity: "moral certitude, male purity, self-negation" (1997:14). For her, this earnest call to service re-configured "perception[s] of masculinity" previously exemplified through competitive sport and public school rituals (ibid).

These sorts of micro-spaces played a part in a reconfiguration, on a larger scale, of the public sphere, as it expanded to include more and more members of the population. Through the reconfiguration and expansion of citizenship, increasing numbers of people were addressed as a part of the nation. A singular national

identity, Englishness, was used to elide class, cultural and other differences, which were dissolved within a unitary national belonging.

These understandings of Englishness and citizenship linked the assimilatory project of the (largely Christian) Settlement movement, whose primary object was the white (English and Irish) working class, to the assimilatory project of Anglo-Jewry, whose primary object was the immigrant Jewish working class. An example of this is the 1906 exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery (founded by Toynbee Hall's Canon Barnett and his wife Henrietta) called *Jewish Art and Antiquities*, with a catalogue written by Lucien Wolf and Joseph Jacobs. It had one room of paintings from the Cromwell era, i.e. that of Resettlement, depicting various moments in the political history of the Jewish community, and another of nineteenth century Jewish paintings of historical topics such as a meeting between Cromwell and Jewish communal leaders.¹¹ These rooms sought to establish a lineage for Jewish presence in London (focusing on the presence of the Sephardic communal leadership) and an association between this Jewish presence and an English democratic tradition, between Jewishness and citizenship. As Juliet Steyn writes, the exhibition can be seen as

a symptom of a struggle on the cultural plane over the matrix of Jewish identity in England. In the context of the debates of the time, it was an exhibition with a message. Through its address to East End Jews, recent arrivals or 'greeners', it spoke of Jewishness in a way which urged them to assimilate. It proposed a version of Jewishness purged of its own languages, of its Yiddish cultures and also of its potential class radicalism. Its aim was to encourage the so-called uncivilized, foreign-looking poor, uneducated peoples to accept the standards set by the English middle class and to make a version of *Jewishness* which would be compatible with *Englishness*.

... The Jews of Whitechapel, with all their diverse cultural identities, were invited to become spectators of a culture already complete, presented and represented to them and for them by their trustees. They were given their place in the national culture. [The] invitation to assimilate... came in the form of a contract which had a pre-determined form.

... Thus, the exhibition offered as truth the pretence that what was (and is) in reality an unceasing struggle over identity had already been settle" (1999:93-5).

As well as anglicization through refinement of the mind, exemplified by these exhibitions, the new forms of citizenship promoted refinement of the body and the cleansing of spaces.

¹¹ Cf Steyn (1999:88, 90).

The Space of Citizenship and the Body of the Citizen

Healthy bodies were perceived as a contribution to the well-being of the nation and a sign of patriotism (Steyn 1999:27-8).

The spatial concentration of the Yiddish immigrants was seen as an obstacle to their anglicization; the breaking up of the old East End was a prerequisite for dissolving Jewish particularity in English citizenship. Consequently, Anglo-Jewry sought to “disperse” the immigrants in order to ease their belonging, to facilitate their assimilation, either to suburbs of London (such as New Cross, Woolwich or Forest Gate), to the provinces, or even to other parts of the Empire – or even back to Eastern Europe¹² – in a striking foreshadowing of more recent asylum policies.

The United Synagogue sought to encourage the formation of synagogues in new districts through their Associate Synagogue Scheme which was set up in 1899, and the Jewish Dispersion Committee was established in 1902 with the object of dispersing Jews from crowded districts to the suburbs or provincial towns (Bloch 1997:5).

In an interview with Charles Booth, the Chief Rabbi explained the policy:

The only place where there is congestion is East London, the only class congested is the foreigner... Reasons for wishing diffusion [include] the permanency of the vernacular [i.e. Yiddish]... In the country, foreign Jews become anglicized much more rapidly than in London, and it is desired to make London approximate to country conditions as soon as possible.¹³

At one of the Jewish Dispersion Committee’s meetings, in June 1903 at the Jewish Working Men’s Club with Samuel Montagu in the chair, the speeches made clearly articulated many of the assimilationists’ concerns. Mr Henry Harris “did not see why immigrants in this country who understood a trade should be kept in London when they could be sent to the Provinces to exercise their trade if their brethren would give assistance to the movement by teaching them English.” Mr A Englander thought that the 4% Dwellings Company (ran by the Rothschilds) should build model factories in the Provinces (much as they built model housing in the capital) to encourage poor Jews out.¹⁴ Just in these two short statements, we can see several themes: a desire

¹² Feldman says that during 1881-1906, the Jewish Board of Guardians helped send 31,000 Jews back to Eastern Europe (1989:63), while Sassen gives the figure of 50,000 for 1881-1914 (1999:97). On the Anglo-Jewish overseas dispersal policy, see Norman (1985), who describes the work of the Jewish Colonization Association’s settlement of Yiddish-speaking Jews in Palestine, Argentina, Brazil, Canada and elsewhere. See Black (1988:254-67) on the work of the Russo-Jewish Committee, who moved immigrants on, sent many back, advertized against emigration in Eastern Europe, paid immigrants’ fares to the provinces, and set up settlements for poor Jews in South Africa, Canada and Brazil and a Garden City in Reading.

¹³ Booth (Notebook 27, pp.9-11).

¹⁴ *JC* 13.6.1902.

for the Jews to perform respectable, productive, industrial trades in factories like English working men (rather than conforming to anti-semitic stereotypes about the sweated industries); a stress on teaching English language as a step towards the integration of the immigrants as citizens; and a desire for the spatial deconcentration of the immigrants.

Among the supporters of dispersal were Canon Barnett of Toynbee Hall. In his testimony to the Royal Commission on Alien Immigration, he said that “The remedies for the existing overcrowding lay in getting the people to live out of London.” He also “thoroughly approved of dispersion.”¹⁵ C Russell, another Toynbee worker, also welcomed the efforts of “the Anglo-Jewish community” to “relieve the strain upon the ‘congested’ industries and districts” (1900:22). The Jewish Chronicle strongly supported the policy. In a 1903 editorial entitled “Breaking up the Ghettos”, it spoke of the efforts of the Jewish Colonization Association (JCA) and Jewish Dispersion Committee to break up Jewish “colonies” in places like the East End by building “colonies” in places like Argentina and Canada. It particularly favoured Canada, “the Granary of Empire”: “Its phenomenal richness, and the fact that over it waves the Union Jack, render it, in our eyes, a far more attractive area of settlement than the Argentine.”¹⁶ On the facing page of the paper, there was an article about Jewish Lads’ Brigade “encampments” at the seaside and in the North of England, illustrated with pictures of the Lads, healthy and smiling in the bracing outdoors in their military (colonial?) style uniforms.

The editorial on dispersal and colonies, especially when placed next to the Lads’ Brigade article, makes several arguments about space, about bodies and about the nation. In terms of space, there is the interesting (and seemingly unconscious) use of the word “colonies” in three strikingly different senses: the Jewish colonies in the East End (figured as alien encampments in British space), the JCA colonies in Argentina and Canada (similar to the Lads’ encampments in that they are purely Jewish spaces, but somehow healthy by virtue of their dispersed nature) and the British colonies in other continents. In terms of bodies, the editorial implicitly sets up a series of binary oppositions: between the unhealthy bodies of the ghetto’s men of air or “coffee-house Jews” and the healthy bodies of the “muscle-Jew” colonists,¹⁷

¹⁵ *JC* Supplement on the Commission 3.5.1903, p.i.

¹⁶ *JC* 7.8.1903.

¹⁷ These phrases were popularized by Max Nordau, then an influential human biologist and Zionist leader.

between dirty urban air and clean fresh air, between the ghetto's unproductive sweated industries and the productive agricultural pursuits of the Granary of Empire. In terms of the nation, the references to camps, flags and uniforms suggests that these things have some sort of sacramental power, binding descendants of immigrants to the nation, erasing the differences between them in a common imperial Englishness, a common belonging. As another example, the Anglo-Jewish Association (AJA), one of the central institutions of communal authority, established schools "in the East" (e.g. in Bombay, Damascus, Tetuan, Jerusalem, Smyrna and Alexandria); these taught English language – and also "English field games", like rounders and cricket – as a step towards bringing civilization to the Jews of the East. There was a parallel between their attempt to bring civilization to the Jews of the Mediterranean East and their attempt to bring civilization to the Jews of the internal Orient. Anglo-Jewry saw the East End as an internal colony.

Healthy bodies, and especially healthy male bodies, were a recurrent theme in Anglo-Jewish discourse in the Edwardian period.¹⁸ For example, the Lads' Brigade had been formed a few years earlier, in 1895, "To instil into the rising generation... habits of orderliness, cleanliness, and honour, so that in learning to respect themselves, they will do credit to their community" (the Brigade Pocket Book, quoted Kadish 1998:79). As the *Chronicle* commented, "The narrow-chested, round-shouldered, slouching son of the Ghetto becomes converted with extraordinary rapidity into an erect and self-respecting man, a living negation of the physical stigma which has so long disfigured our race" (quoted *ibid*).

Similarly, Dr E Bernard Myers gave a paper to the Maccabæans in 1903 entitled "The Effect of Physical Culture on the Destiny of Nations". He called for a greater dedication among Jews – and especially East End Jews – to the culture of the body. His speech was reported by the *Jewish Chronicle*:

in the East of London there were a number of Jews suffering from consumption... The great need among Jews to improve their physique was to make sport popular and fashionable... Physical fitness induced manliness among other virtues... there was a great future for the race,

"Max Nordau's famous speech at the Second Zionist Congress of 1898 [inaugurated the] distinction between 'muscle' and 'coffeehouse Jews,' the latter pale and stunted, the former deep-chested, sturdy and sharp-eyed... this was an effort to shake off the stereotype of the ghetto Jew and to normalize Jewish men, to construct them in contrast to those rootless intellectuals who fill Nordau's famous book *Degeneration*" (Mosse 1993:127, cf *ibid*:164-7).

¹⁸ Cf Bermant (1969:88).

but to reach it it was a *sine qua non* that the masses should be made to educate their bodies.¹⁹

In the subsequent discussion, Harry Lewis of Toynbee Hall said that “Jews had survived by force of will both as a nation and as individuals. The force of will acted no longer and there was need of another to take its place. As such a force he suggested athleticism.”²⁰

This sort of language represented a consensus across the Anglo-Jewish community. The Maccabæans were inclined towards Zionism, but the same discourse came from religious sources. For example, Rev Singer of the New West End Synagogue gave a sermon the same month as Myers’ lecture, which explored similar themes. He said that

a healthy national and individual life [is] marked by... such qualities as manliness, physical courage, a virile assertion of the will and the right to live... It was one of the most lamentable results of centuries of oppression and persecution that the manly spirit had been beaten down and cowed in many members of the race of Israel... It was wonderful to note the change that a few generations, sometimes only a few years, effected in the physique of the Jews here and in other countries. It was seen how they could again rear strong men and brave, mighty men of valour. Every effort, therefore, to promote the physical culture of Jews, so that they might recover something of their pristine vigour, ought to [be supported].

He went on to praise the efforts of organizations like the Jewish Lads’ Brigade and Jewish Industrial School to develop “many qualities, both physical and moral”, and to call for more effort to get Jews to join the armed forces. “The great aim in all of these efforts should be to get rid of the ‘Ghetto bend’.”²¹

These technologies of the citizens’ body drew on emerging knowledges of the social developed in spaces like Toynbee Hall. The Jewish Lads’ Brigade, training boys in drill, discipline, shooting and leadership, can be located in a wider national cultural space of obsession with “national efficiency, racial deterioration and imperial defence” (Kadish 1998:82).²²

Spaces of Citizenship: Synagogue Space

It was indeed in the ghettos created by the immigrant generations that the assimilationist view of emancipation met its greatest and, in fact, its only

¹⁹ *JC* 15.5.1903.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *JC* 29.5.1903.

²² And as Kadish notes, this cultural space was partly informed by debates within the Jewish public sphere around degeneration theorist Max Nordau’s masculinist version of Zionism.

credible challenge. [Their cultural difference] seemed to the ghetto dwellers a source of pride rather than of embarrassment. A culture – and a newspaper press – flourished behind linguistic barriers... The immigrants sought to participate in the life of the adopted country in a way (they hoped) that would enable them to preserve their distinctiveness rather than to smother it (Alderman 1995:149).

The manners and lifestyle no less than the language and politics of the newcomers emphasized and reinforced their determination to seek an accommodation with British society that differed fundamentally from that of the established community; for theirs would be a coexistence based upon the mutual recognition of differences rather than of similarities (ibid:154).

At the heart of the communal infrastructure into which Anglo-Jewry sought to conscript the Eastern Jews were the office of the Chief Rabbinate, created in the mid-eighteenth century, and the United Synagogue, formed by Act of Parliament in 1870. The “democratic tradition” of Jewish life in the Pale (Carlebach 1978:18) immediately set the immigrants against the idea of a “Chief Rabbinate”. As Geoffrey Alderman writes, the immigrants doubted the orthodoxy of the Chief Rabbi and felt alienated from “the cold formalism and cathedral-like structures” of the United Synagogue.

On strictly religious grounds, these immigrants rejected United Synagogue orthodoxy and its chief proponent, Hermann Adler; on class grounds they were minded to condemn the United Synagogue and the Board of Guardians as institutions fashioned by Jewish capitalists and exploiters for whom Adler appeared to act as chief spokesman and apologist (Alderman 1983:51-2, 1992:176).

East London was filled with places where very small, relatively informal, intimate groups of people, mostly men, organized to pursue some combination of prayer and mutual aid: *khevres*, *shtiblekh*, *landsmanshaftn* and friendly societies. There were a number of different types, with vastly varying degrees of formality, religiosity, ideological commitment and benefit system. *Shtiblekh* were the noisy, informal, Yiddish-speaking attic congregations of the East End, often involving a dimension of study, often organized around a more learned individual who led the study and prayer. *Khevres* were similar, but less likely to have this study element, and not infrequently involving some form of benefit system, such as sick benefit or a burial society. A *shtibl* or a *khevre* would often have been composed of either people from the same place in Eastern Europe (*landslayt*) or people in the same trade. Some *khevres* would form the basis for more formalized organization, such as a benefit society or a trade union.

Responding to this proliferation of self-governing micro-spaces in the East End, in 1887, the Anglo-Jewish oligarchs, under the leadership of Samuel Montagu,

organized the Federation of Synagogues to bring some of these small autonomous congregations under their tutelage.²³ The core of the Federation was made up of larger East End synagogues, such as Sandy's Row in Bishopsgate, with 318 members in 1896. It also incorporated newer synagogues on the edges of the old East End, such as the Mile End New Town synagogue or the New Dalston synagogue; Jewish settlement in such areas, as part as the dispersion policy described above, was seen as a small move out – and up – from the East End ghetto, and therefore the new synagogues there embodied a culture of respectability in which assimilation and social mobility were one and the same thing. Other members were smaller *khevres* brought under the paternalist wing of the Federation; some of these were (or originated as) *landsmanshaftn*; others were also friendly societies.²⁴ The Federation can be seen as a space of *mediation*, in which the demands of the subaltern East Enders were allowed a degree of expression if they would conform to the modes of behaviour demanded of them by the communal leadership. One of the terrains of this effort was space itself.

Synagogue architecture became a key battleground over assimilation; it “existed within a complex forcefield of ideological and material pressures” (Glasman 1987:16). In what Judy Glasman calls “a kind of architectural colonization” (ibid:20), Anglo-Jewish religious spaces were designed to incite the correct modes of behaviour among the immigrants. For example, Forest Gate's synagogue, at Earlham Grove (designed 1902, built 1911-2), was designed by architect Bertie Crewe. Interestingly, Crewe was primarily a designer of theatres. Though not Jewish, he was connected to the community through one of its prominent members, Abram Emanuel Abrahams, who was related by marriage to the family who owned many of Newham's theatres. The building was described by the *Jewish Chronicle* and *Jewish World* of 14 April 1914 as a spacious and graceful Romanesque building “equipped in every detail with due regard to the most modern of requirements” (Bloch 1997:17). That a theatre architect should have built a synagogue is a striking image of the different form of religious practice the Anglo-Jewish leadership hoped their buildings would foster; they wanted a hushed audience-like congregation, with its attention focused on the rabbi, who stood at the front facing forward, like a Christian priest or an actor on a stage. This sort of spatiality contrasted sharply to the old *shtiblekh*, where members of a *minyan* (prayer quorum) would be positioned in a rainbow configuration facing

²³ Alderman (1995:145-7).

²⁴ Booth (Notebook B197, folio 33, in Englander 1994:200-2); also *The Jewish Year Book* 5675 (1915:45).

the Ark (where the Torah scroll is kept), around the bima (the platform where the Torah scroll is read), to which members of the minyan would be called one by one. As architectural historian Judy Glasman writes,

Design was intended as a weapon of change, encouraging more decorous forms of worship... The orderly, centrally-led, anglicized and standardized services needed appropriately ordered, centrally-focused and standardized architectural accommodation (1987:17).

As Glasman documents, the very space of the “model synagogues” built by the Federation – formal, decorous, clean – was tied to a discourse of “anglicization”. On the opening of the New Road Synagogue in 1892, formed of two chevres (Beth David and Khevre Cracow) the Federation had persuaded to amalgamate, the *Chronicle* wrote:

It was a happy thought to have fixed the consecration of the [Synagogue] on the Queen’s birthday; a still happier thought to have made reference to that auspicious anniversary... The members of the *chevra* are all foreigners, mostly Poles, and it was touching to hear ‘God save the Queen’ heartily sung in Hebrew by the Congregation. Fittingly, the Chief Rabbi has made loyalty the subject of his impressive discourse on the occasion.²⁵

In contrast to the Federation Synagogue shuls’ partial accommodation with the Anglo-Jewish oligarchs was the existence of the Machzikei Hadas on the corner of Brick Lane and Fournier Street, now the home of the Jamme Masjid Mosque. The Machzikei Hadas was a schismatic institution, set up in explicit opposition to and rebellion against the official Orthodoxy of the United Synagogue. The original schism was over the United Synagogue’s right to authorize kosher butchers. This was a theological issue – contrasting standards of kashrut were at stake – and also an economic issue – the (East End) consumers of kosher meat effectively subsidized the (West End) Board of Shechitah as the validation of kosher butchers was paid for by the butchers themselves. These issues opened up wider issues of legitimacy, patronage, enforced dependence and communal democracy, which were in turn entwined with class and cultural antagonisms.²⁶

The rules of the Makhzike Hadass, set out in its minute book, give some indication of its radical refusal of assimilationism. They included: I(a) to keep it open all day for prayers, I(b) to be a place of learning, II(b) that the bima be in the centre of the space, not at the front by the Ark, and II(c) that “the Rav, Preacher, reader or Shammas may not wear such Canonicals which may appear as if in imitation of non-

²⁵ *JC* 27.05.1892.

²⁶ Glasman (1987:19), Black (1988:217-20), Russell and Lewis (1900:101-6).

Jewish Clergy” (quoted Englander 1994:203-4). The first two rules establish that the Machzikei Hadas was a *shul*, a space for learning and discourse which anyone could enter at any time to pray or study – unlike the larger synagogues and temples of the West End, which were seen as imitative of churches in their greater formality and more rigid time-table. In the synagogues being built by the Westernized, the rabbi would stand with his back to the Ark in order to face the congregation, who were positioned as an audience to his performance; the new style bima thus mimicked the Christian pulpit. Traditionally, in contrast, nobody would ever stand with their back to the Ark; this was seen as disrespectful. Instead, the bima would be positioned in the centre of the room with the reader facing the Ark and the other people attending positioned around him. The final rule, on wearing “Canonicals”, refers to the way the clerical hierarchy of the United Synagogue mimicked the visual trappings of the Anglican Church in order to mark their assimilation to Englishness. Traditional Judaism, in contrast, has no special vestments for rabbis or other officers. The rulebook of the Makhzike Hadass, then, epitomized the East End’s culture of refusal, its striving for autonomy against the mediation of the West End leadership.²⁷

If there was a contrast between the United and Federation synagogues and the Makhzike Hadass, there was an even greater contrast between the former and the shtiblekh and chevres, the informal prayer groups and friendly societies, of Stepney. With their roots in the self-governing communities of the old country, which Julius Carlebach describes as a manifestation of the “democratic tradition” of Jewish life, as was “the use of the synagogue service as a forum for complaints and protests” (1978:18), the chevres and shtiblekh represent a very different use of space from that found in the official synagogues of Anglo-Jewry.²⁸

Conventional Anglo-Jewish historians have often seen the chevres in rather disparaging terms. For example, V.D. Lipman describes them as “worshipping in makeshift, sometimes unhygienic premises; they prayed with an informality and enthusiasm, unlike the more formal services of the established community, which

²⁷ Toynebee worker C Russell recognized the schism as a refusal of assimilation and Anglo-Jewish authority, writing that it “testifies to a deep-seated spirit of revolt. The same spirit is shown in the constant suspicion and jealousy of West End interference... The secession of the *Mahazike Haddath* has important bearings on the question of assimilation” (1900:103-4).

²⁸ On the role of chevres in the Pale, see the third chapter of the Bobruisk Yizkor (Memorial) Book (Slutski 1967:146-9), and on the adaptation of these chevres by Bobruiskers in America, see the fifteenth chapter (ibid:835-9) both by Yehuda Slutsky.

aimed at decorum and dignity” (1990:95).²⁹ In *Children of the Ghetto*, the novelist Israel Zangwill described the East End Jews attending a shtibl: they came

two and often three times a day to batter the gates of heaven and listen to sermons more exegetical than ethical. They dropped in, mostly in their workaday garments and grime, and rumbled and roared and chorused prayers with a zeal that shook the window-panes, and there was never a lack of a minyan – the congregational quorum of ten.

... [The shtibl] was their salon and their lecture hall. It supplied them not only with their religion, but their art and letters, their politics and their public amusements. It was their home as well as the Almighty’s, and on occasion they were familiar, and even a little vulgar with him (1909:255-6).

Some shtiblekh met in people’s homes; others met in workshops; some, like the United Workmen’s Congregation, made up of cabinet-makers, were trade-based.³⁰

Where the Kantian and Habermasian versions of liberal political theory see the separation of the secular from the religious, of the rational from the affective, as constitutive of the public sphere as a space of citizenship,³¹ the civic activity centred on the *khevres*, as we have seen, did not make such distinctions. As William Taylor writes,

Their faith was simple, affective, parochial. It was concerned with the details of the festivals and the fulfilment of devotional obligations. It was social. They prayed for each other while alive, visited one another when sick and buried one another when dead. Organising the *shabes goyim* to stoke the fire on the sabbath, they would also buy kindling for the poor families. To mitigate their nostalgia for the past they had lost and their longing for a future Messianic age to come, they told each other stories (2000:260).

Like Yiddish language, spaces like the clubs, *khevres* and shtiblekh of the East End were rooted in tradition, yet changing, adapting to new circumstances. In the face of Anglo-Jewish attempts to eradicate Yiddish from immigrant life, the clubs, *khevres* and shtiblekh were the discursive spaces where Yiddish vernacular culture flourished. These spaces were where an alternative sphere of active citizenship came into being. The *khevres* were alternative sources of political authority, challenging the Anglo-Jewish communal institutions.

The clubs, *khevres* and shtiblekh of the East End were spaces which privileged affect, face to face relations, mutual aid and moral responsibility. At the heart of this web of spaces was the minyan, the quorum of ten men whose co-presence is

²⁹ See also Black (1988:217-20).

³⁰ Glasman (1987:19).

³¹ Hall (2000), Seidler (1986, 1994), Silverman (1992, 1999).

required to say the Jewish prayer for the dead. Jonathan Boyarin draws on Jean-Luc Nancy's ideas of an "inoperable community" and *comparution* (co-appearance)³² in his description of the minyan:

As a chronotopic specification of the situation of worship – these people at this time, in this place – [the minyan] takes the place of the destroyed Temple, a more overtly spatial specification. Thus if the minyan is a kind of provisional Jewish center, it is one founded on the loss of the Temple as foundational center (1996b:68-9).

As such, it is an appropriate motif for the Jewish diasporic spatiality that my research suggests: for the provisional rooting in ghetto space and for distinctive Jewish forms of trans-national belonging. It is also a motif for the version of Jewish identity practised in the East End ghetto: neither rooted in some essential or foundational truth, nor empty of meaning, but rather anchored in everyday practices. Significantly, coming together in the minyan is not a commandment (*mitzvah*) in itself, but is necessary for the recitation of Kaddish, the mourner's prayer. Thus is also an appropriate motif for a certain insistence on anamnestic or commemorative practices that were discussed in chapter one. The minyan also offers an appropriate motif for the way in which Jewish belonging is predicated on practices – ritual practices, practices of remembering, oral and textual practices – and not on faith as such. Central to such practices is repetition and the bond established by such repetition between the living and the dead. It is this iterative community, rather than a community of "co-religionists", which characterizes the practices of belonging which flourished in the *khevres* of the East End.

This chapter has discussed a number of forms of political belonging promoted by Anglo-Jewry around 1903: the anglicization practised by the JFS, the active citizenship promoted in Toynbee Hall, the dispersal of immigrants to ease their path to belonging in England, the production of the proper body of the immigrant through healthy outdoor pursuits, and the decorous religious behaviour promoted through the Federation synagogues. The immigrants' practices of belonging, exemplified by the *khevre*, went against the grain of the assimilationist politics of citizenship. In the next chapter, I will examine how both the East End *khevres* and the West End's communal institutions were mobilized in the face of one particular moment of crisis in 1903, the Kishinev pogrom. Official Anglo-Jewry responded to the victims of this crisis as "co-religionists", affirming the notion of a "community of faith" compatible with loyalty to the nation-state. In contrast, the iterative community of the East End, linked to the victims by a web of affective ties, responded in a way that, like the

³² Nancy (1993:66-95), cf Dallmayr (1997:177-82).

schismatic Machzikei Hadas, questioned the communal authority of the Anglo-Jewish leaders.

Chapter 5

Geographies of Belonging: Kishinev 1903

brider, shvester,
hot rakhmones!
groys un shreklekh iz di noyt,
git di toyte oyf takhrikhim,
git di leybedike broyt

Brothers, sisters,
please have mercy!
Great and awful is the need –
Bread is needed for the living,
Shrouds are needed for the dead.

Simon Frug, "Hot rakhmones"
Written to raise funds for the victims of Kishinev pogrom

This chapter focuses on the Kishinev pogrom of 1903, and how it reverberated in Jewish London's political culture, in order to explore the complex geographies of belonging by which East End Jewish radicals lived their lives. In exploring these complex geographies of identity which constituted the limits to liberal citizenship, I will draw critically on some recent writing on diaspora. The importance of diaspora theory is that it offers a way out of various territorialized and "encamped" conceptions of identity.¹ For example, it challenges subaltern ethnic absolutisms (including certain forms of Zionism); it challenges race relations sociology's language of "hosts", "minorities" and "integration"; and it challenges conventional Anglo-Jewish historiography, which often over-emphasizes the "Anglo-" part of its object of study. In turn, detailed historical and ethnographic study of the Jewish community has something to offer diaspora theory. Diaspora, the Boyarins write,

has lately become a pivotal concept in certain parts of cultural studies, especially those involved in the study of postcoloniality. Cultures of peoples in diaspora, their cultural preservation, and the doubled consciousness of such peoples – as well as the ways that diaspora becomes paradigmatic of a certain cultural condition in the postcolonial era *tout court* – are increasingly vivid areas of thought within the paradigm. The Jewish diaspora, for which the term was invented, provides the longest history of diasporic cultural survival and production. Thus both its details and its theorization have much to offer to scholar-critics whose primary areas of focus are the black Atlantic or the Indian diaspora, for example (Boyarin and Boyarin 1997:x).

A central theme of my research has been the ways in which we can learn from the histories of the Jewish diaspora by looking at some of the many creative (if not always successful) ways in which organic intellectuals of the diaspora – ghetto radicals – understood their "doubled consciousnesses", their multiple identities, their sense of diasporic belonging, and visions of citizenship which would be able to

¹ Gilroy (2000).

respect these. In this chapter, then, we will see how concepts like “doykayt” (here-ness), articulated by the Yiddish labour movement, the Bund, offer both new ways of thinking diaspora and new ways of thinking political belonging. Among the other organic intellectuals of the diaspora this chapter will examine are more well-known people like Israel Zangwill, Simon Dubnov, David Edelshtat and Rudolf Rocker. But – following the discussion in chapter one – it will also recall the obscure and nameless many who joined landsmanshaftn and went on solidarity marches.

The first part of the chapter will explore how Kishinev reverberated in Jewish London, how its call was heard in different ways by the Anglo-Jewish leadership – identifying, as we saw in the last chapter, only as a community of faith and therefore only able to see the victims of the pogrom as “co-religionists” – and the immigrant Jews of the East End – who responded to the victims as kith and kin. As the last chapter argued, West London’s assimilationist Anglo-Jewry were tied to particular liberal conceptions of citizenship which viewed the nation-state as the sole appropriate unit for political belonging; the trans-national Jewish allegiances articulated by immigrant Jews in the East End jarred with this commitment. The diverse radical movements which flourished in Jewish East London at the time of Kishinev could not accept the assumption that the nation-state is the proper space for thinking political belonging. Crucially, they explored new ways of thinking citizenship and political belonging *outside, below* or *across* the nation-state. Although the binary opposition between the West End and the East End was not necessarily always so stark – indeed, in this chapter I will discuss some West End figures who departed somewhat from the official Anglo-Jewish position – the opposition between the two spaces was used by both native and immigrant Jews in 1903 to think through different forms of political belonging.

The second half of the chapter focuses in on some of the different ways of thinking citizenship and political belonging outside, below and across the nation-state, ways of thinking which separated citizenship from nationality. It will focus on two in particular: the multi-ethnic citizenship which the novelist and activist Israel Zangwill pointed towards and the Bund’s development of a politics of rooting. The Bund articulated the multiple loyalties of the Yiddish working class and insisted on the right of Jews to remain wherever they found themselves in the diaspora, while Zangwill called for plural forms of political belonging. These two diasporic ways of thinking political belonging stressed *both* samenesses across Jewishness *and* differences and inequalities within.

The Kishinev Pogrom and Communal Authority

In the last chapter, we saw how the public sphere of the ghetto, exemplified in the form of the minyan, strained the border between the realms of affect and reason which has shaped liberal conceptions of the public sphere from Kant to Habermas. Here, we will re-visit that point from a slightly different angle. Here it will be the landsmanshaft rather than the khevre through which we will examine the ghetto public sphere.

In this section, the Kishinev pogrom will be analyzed as a moment of crisis for communal authority, a moment in which the legitimacy of Anglo-Jewish leadership was challenged and refused by the East End landsmanshaftn, while the West End-based leadership sought to re-impose their communal authority, through a politics of mediation and representation. The landsmanshaftn will be conceptualized as spaces of a trans-national or diasporic identification. This identification was based on both affect and reason. Exemplified by the Simon Frug poem which serves as the epigraph to this chapter, it was articulated in images of *blood*, *kinship* (the figure of the siblings and parents left behind, and *fictive kinship* in the institution of landslayt), and *home* (the parental or matrilocal hearth and the Eastern European place of origin, both signalled in the Yiddish noun *heym* and its adjectival form *heymish*). The political rationality bound up with these spaces had a tense relationship to liberal and assimilationist forms of belonging and to their political theory of citizenship based on the nation-state. The “fact” of Jewishness, palpable in the call to identity issued by traumatic events “*inderheym*” (i.e. in the Pale), constituted the limits of liberal ideas of an inclusive citizenship. This tension – between belonging organized around (in Sollors’ terms) “consent” (liberal citizenship) and “descent” (Jewish identity, figured in terms of blood, kinship and home) – was one of the central problematics of ghetto radicalism.

The First Communal Responses

In the weeks before Easter 1903, there was a violently anti-semitic press campaign in the regional newspaper in Bessarabia, where the town of Kishinev lay, including an inflammatory article by the local police chief.² On the eve of the Easter weekend, the

² JC 8.05.1903. For material on the Kishinev pogrom, see Chapter 9, “Oracles of Kishinev” in Roskies (1988) for some other responses to Kishinev, including folk songs, Simon Frug’s poem “Have Pity” which would achieve the status of a folk song, the Proclamations of the Bund and the Hebrew Writers’ Union, and Bialik’s epic poems “Upon the Slaughter” and “In

body of a Christian child was found and a Christian young woman patient committed suicide in the Jewish hospital. A blood libel was circulated by the regional press and others. (The Easter weekend was traditionally a focus of blood libels, with anti-semitic images of Jews as Christkillers coinciding with the Jewish festival of Passover, associated in the anti-semitic imagination with sacrifices and other bloody rituals.) There followed, over 19-20 April, a weekend of violence: according to official statistics, 49 Jews lost their lives and more than 500 were injured, some of them seriously; 700 houses were looted and destroyed and 600 businesses and shops were looted. About 2000 families were left homeless. One feature of the pogrom seemed to be official collusion, with the police playing a part, a garrison of 5000 soldiers taking no action to quell the violence, and local theological seminary students taking a leading role. Kishinev was neither the first nor the worst pogrom of the era:

The timing of the violence remained unchanged from generations past. April and May would continue to be the cruelest months for the Jews of eastern Europe... by virtue of the Easter festival and its proximity to Passover... The springtime of ritual murder would blossom again in 1881, 1903, and 1943 (Roskies 1984:62).

Kishinev, though, marked a new level of violence: "In all the pogroms of 1881-1883, fewer Jews were killed than in Kishinev during the Passover of 1903" – but the death toll of Kishinev would soon be dwarfed by the 800 dead of the 1905/6 pogroms, or the thousands murdered in the Ukrainian pogroms of 1919 (ibid:82).

The response in London to the pogrom was relatively slow in starting, considering the emblematic role it has subsequently taken. The first reports of Kishinev in the British press came nearly two weeks later, in early May. The Society of Friends of Russian Freedom was one of the first organizations to respond, in the first week of May. It held its annual meeting at Clifford's Inn and Nikolai Tchaikovsky, a veteran Narodnik, spoke about the pogrom. The same week, the two main bodies of Anglo-Jewish communal leadership, the Anglo-Jewish Association (AJA) and Board of Deputies (BoD), both met; the AJA discussed Kishinev but couldn't decide on a course of action, while the BoD didn't mention it at all.³

the City of Slaughter". For early Western accounts of Kishinev, see two books published by American Jewish leaders: *The Voice of America on Kishineff*, edited by community leader Cyrus Adler (1904, New York) and *Russia at the Bar of the American People: A Memorial Book of Kishineff, Records and Documents* (1904, London and New York: Singer), both in the Mocatta Library at UCL.

³ JC 8.05.1903.

The first official statement from Anglo-Jewry came only on May 18, when the BoD and AJA sent a joint letter to the *Times*. The letter, in classic assimilationist style, does its best not to show the Jewish community making too much of a fuss:

Sir – On behalf of the Jewish communities of Great Britain we crave the hospitality of your columns for a formal protest against the horrors perpetrated on our co-religionists of Kischineff... Until two days ago we cherished the hope that an appeal to public opinion outside Russia would not be necessary, but on the fifth inst.,⁴ we received from St Petersburg the full text of [the Russian government's official statement on the pogrom] and we feel that [as the document is inaccurate and expresses indifference] we should be neglecting our duty were we to remain silent any longer.⁵

The letter epitomizes the style of the Anglo-Jewish communal leadership in the English public sphere: a tone of almost craven respectfulness, subjection and self-effacement (“we *crave* the *hospitality* of your columns”), combined with an insistence on the sole right to represent and speak for the Jews of England.

The Anglo-Jewish leadership, as we have seen, were bound to an assimilationist form of universalism which was unable to articulate the ways in which the Jews of London were *similar to as well as different from* the Jews of Kishinev, except through the language of “co-religionists”. The use by the AJA and BoD of the phrase “co-religionists” suggests that their solidarity with the Jews of Russia was purely religious, that there were no ethnic or cultural ties.

A subtext beneath Anglo-Jewish quiescence (sometimes hinted at in meetings of the BoD and AJA during the period) was the on-going debates on immigration restriction. The Royal Commission on Alien Immigration was meeting, and the Anglo-Jewish leadership felt that too much attention on Eastern European Jews – and any perception of trans-national Jewish loyalty taking precedence over loyalty to England – would strengthen the anti-alien position. Above all, the Anglo-Jewish leadership feared the visibility of alien radicals. Communal leader Samuel Montagu, at a meeting of the BoD, opposed a public meeting on the grounds that “Unfortunately, [the Jewish community was] cursed with Nihilists in this country and some of them would undoubtedly attend any meeting that might be held and utter seditious cries. Such a meeting would probably undo all the good that had hitherto been done.”⁶ Community leaders like Montagu wanted the Jewish community to appear to English

⁴ i.e. thirteen days previously.

⁵ *JC* 22.05.1903.

⁶ *JC* 29.05.1903.

public opinion and the British state as homogenous, as subscribing to one set of values: English values.

East End Responses

This position sharply contrasts to that of East End organizations. Within the Jewish community, it was East Enders rather than the communal leadership who first started to get active in relation to the pogroms. For example, Joseph Finn, a trade union leader, wrote to the *Jewish Chronicle* urging action, while smaller friendly societies in the East End, like the Plotsker Relief and Sick Benefit Society and the Hebrew New Year Benefit and Divisional Society were among the first to pledge money. Larger Orders, which had more assimilationist agendas, like the Achei Brith, Achei Ameth and Ancient Order of Foresters, didn't respond in these early weeks.⁷ The fictive kinship of the landslayt relation was being mobilized; members of the Plotsker Relief and Sick Benefit Society, a landsmanshaft, were swift to respond because, for them, the local cartography of London was threaded through with other transnational or diasporic spaces, in which Kishinev and Plotsk had a reality they simply didn't have for the Anglo-Jewish leadership. The landsmanshaftn – as spaces of a trans-national or diasporic identification, articulated in images of blood, kinship and home – sharply diverged from the liberal forms of political belonging practised by the West End-based leadership.

Landsmanshaftn were organizations of landslayt, that is, of people who migrated from the same place. They ranged from extremely informal groupings through to highly structured benefit societies. People newly arrived in England would often use the landsmanshaft to get themselves a job or a home, as well as find fraternity with people that shared memories and traditions. Although the landslayt relation was a form of fictive kinship, it operated as an ethical imperative for immigrant Jews. For Fishman, the landsmanshaft sustained Jewish migrants' "ambiguous response to their new environment. It was a confirmation of their identity in *goles* (exile), yet reflected a poignant attachment to the *heim* which had dealt with them so harshly" (1975:55).

Often landsmanshaftn would meet in synagogues; there was no neat opposition between religious spaces and secular spaces. In 1912, for example, the Sons of

⁷ *JC* 15.05.1903.

Dobrin Benefit and Tontine Society was meeting at the Fieldgate Street shul.⁸ Others would meet in pub function rooms, working men's clubs, workplaces, or even in people's private homes. The landsmanshaftn helped make up an alternative public sphere, an alternative space of civic activity. This alternative public sphere was shaped by an alternative form of political rationality and very different notions of political belonging, authority and legitimacy.

Landslayt organization had a crucially important role in East End radicalism. Political mobilization took place through these societies at particular moments of local crisis, for instance in strikes, where strike organization would be organized on landslayt lines. And at particular moments of crisis in the Pale, such as Kishinev, landsmanshaftn were mobilized in solidarity with sufferers back home. Thus the homogenizing, centripetal logic of the communal was disrupted by the centrifugal lines of transnational belonging which connected working class Jews across space.

Meanwhile, slightly more radical figures on the edges of the Anglo-Jewish leadership, people who were more attentive to public opinion in the East End and whose political legitimacy was reliant on their ability to articulate East End concerns in the West End Jewish public sphere (including many Zionists, such as Moses Gaster and Joseph Cowen), decided that they had to act. Fearing autonomous and left-led East End action, they formed a Kischineff Atrocities Relief Committee. Their first meeting, the same night as the AJA/BoD letter appeared in the *Times*, was held in East London (at the Three Nuns Hotel, Aldgate) and attracted a large East End crowd, but remained under the patronage of West Enders, who took the chair and committee seats. The meeting was mainly conducted in English (the chair, H Comor, did, however, appeal for funds in Yiddish). Although several speakers from the floor talked in terms of an East/West antagonism within London Jewry, this was explicitly rejected by Anglo-Jewish leader Dr Gollancz: "He had heard, he remarked, of the strong line of demarcation between the East and the West, which had been so frequently referred to that evening. He thought they were acting contrary to the spirit of [their aims] in making any such distinction." The main upshot of the meeting was to form a delegation, composed largely of West Enders, to "wait upon various representative Jewish bodies respecting the Kischineff outrages" – i.e. to maintain the East End in a subordinate position in relation to communal leadership.⁹ We can see these sorts of events as attempts at *mediation*: the East Enders were not to

⁸ JC 16.08.1912.

represent themselves in the official public sphere but be represented by their betters. Internal difference within the community was simultaneously recognized and repressed in these sorts of efforts.

The delegation's attempts at influencing the West End oligarchs, however, had limited success. The AJA and BoD refused to think outside the rigid categories of the nation-state and feared to publicly articulate Jewish difference. The AJA, and particularly Lucien Wolf, continued to oppose holding a public meeting, with Moses Gaster (the spiritual leader of the Sephardic community) acting as a lone voice of dissent. By mid-June, Gaster had succeeded in converting a majority of AJA members, but the BoD refused to participate and the AJA didn't have the courage to take independent action.¹⁰

The East End Radicals

Despite the Kischineff Atrocities Relief Committee's attempt at containment and mediation, the immigrant Jews continued to speak out autonomously. The United Garment Workers' Union, assisted by the West End Tailors' Union Benefit Society, called a protest meeting, which raised money toward the relief fund which its (non-Jewish) president, Social Democrat Herbert Burrows, sent on to the *Jewish Chronicle*.¹¹ The Social Democrats held a protest meeting at the Great Assembly Hall in Mile End. The meeting was organized by Jewish social democrats: the East London Branch of the SDF, the Russian Social Democratic Circle and the *Veker* group.¹² Interestingly, there were almost no Jewish speakers. The meeting was chaired by someone from the International Peace and Arbitration Association. The ILP's Keir Hardie sent a letter of support and Mrs Despard of the ILP spoke. Ben Tillett, the trade union leader, spoke, as did TH Griffin from the Bakers Union. The SDF had a major presence, with a letter from Hyndman and speeches by Harry Quelch and two others. Felix Volkhovsky, a veteran non-Jewish Russian revolutionary, spoke in English and Russian. G Beck, the non-Jewish Russian leader

⁹ *JC* 22.05.1903.

¹⁰ *JC* 19.06.1903, 16.06.1903. Gaster, from Romania, was Yiddish-speaking and an anthropologist specializing in Eastern European (Jewish and non-Jewish) folk traditions. He empathized with the Yiddish masses in a way the Anglo-Jewish leadership didn't.

¹¹ *JC* 5.06.1903.

¹² The *Veker* group had, the previous summer, invited "advanced" political organizations to a Trafalgar Square demo in June 1902 to protest at the brutal repression of the Bundists in Vilna (*JC* 13.6.1902, cf Black 1988:213). This had led to the formation, under the Bund's leadership, of an International Labour Federation ("modelled on the Parisian organisation of that name", according to Eugene Black), one of the main elements in the new Massacre

of the East End Social Democrats, was the only speaker in Yiddish. The only Jewish speaker was I Ellstein, a trade unionist speaking in English. But it seems that the audience, in contrast to the platform, was overwhelmingly Jewish, and Quelch's speech drew attention to this, in very ambivalent terms. He

regretted that the meeting was not composed more largely of Englishmen. He would much rather see an overwhelming meeting of the latter to protest against the outrages committed against a common humanity, particularly because the victims were a race having no recognised nationality or country and rightly belonged to those countries where they dwelt.¹³

This meeting, then, expresses the tension between Kishinev's call to Jewish identity and a proletarian universalism which spoke in terms of "a common humanity". "The spacious hall was filled in every nook and corner with an eager and enthusiastic audience, evidently glad of this opportunity to give vent to their outraged feelings."¹⁴ The organizers, as "internationalists", explicitly disavowed the particular Jewish dimension of the protest, but the East End masses who attended were motivated by more complex loyalties and identifications.

A Yiddish trade union, the Independent Cabinet Makers' Association set up an International Kischineff Massacres Protest Committee to organize a public protest.¹⁵ Several Jewish unions were involved in this, along with the Lecture Association, the West End Committee of Progressive Jewish Workers and the Polish Socialist Club. The new Committee decided their task was not fund-raising but political work: "steer clear of philanthropy and leave it to others. [Confine ourselves] to the work of organising an effective protest", as one participant said.¹⁶

The Committee organized a mass meeting at Hyde Park in mid-June. A procession began on the Mile End Waste, led by the banners of the Jewish trade unions and the anarchist Workers' Friend group. Although many Jewish leaders were present (Zangwill, Harry Lewis of Toynbee Hall and Zionists Herbert Bentwich and Joseph

Protest Committee (Black 1988:213-4, cf *JC* 1.9.1902, 31.7.1903, 7.8.1903, 22.1.1904). The full Yiddish name of the Veker group was *Bunds Mitglider Fareyn Veker* (Prager 1990:180).

¹³ *JC* 26.06.1903.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ The Independent Cabinet Makers' Union, particularly its main activist Nathan Wiener, was very important in the Yiddish radical scene. The previous year, Wiener and fellow cabinet-makers had started the Free Workers' Circle at Wiener's house (Rocker 1956:28; Barnett 1934:2) and the union had been one of the Yiddish unions to march in support of the TUC congress in London (*JC* 5.9.1902). In 1906, Wiener would represent his union at the National Anti-Sweating League's conference (*Report of a Conference on a Minimum Wage* 1907, London: Co-operative Printing Society [BL/08276.bb.47/2]).

¹⁶ *JC* 5.06.1903

Cowen), almost all of the speakers, as at the Great Assembly Hall meeting, were non-Jews. Speakers included English Social Democrats like Hunter Watts and Houghton Fisher, and Russian revolutionaries like Volkhovsky (speaking in both English and Russian) and Tchaikovsky, the latter reading a text written by Kropotkin who was too ill to attend. However, many of the speakers alluded to the composition of the crowd: Volkhovsky said “the faces before him reminded him of his country”, implying a Russian audience; Kropotkin spoke of addressing “the Jewish workers”; Hunter Watts “paid a tribute to the services rendered by the Jewish workers to the cause of Social Democracy”. Houghton Fisher said “You remember your Kischineff... We remember our Featherstone and our Peterloo”; his use of “you” implies a Russian Jewish rather than English audience. But many of these allusions are not just to a Jewish crowd but to a *proletarian* Jewish crowd: Kropotkin and Hunter Watts alluded to “the Jewish *workers*”, while Houghton Fisher’s reference is to Peterloo, a moment in English *labour* history. Herman Cohen, the only Jewish speaker, “wished that there were more Hebrews there from more parts of London than one”, implying that the East End had come while the West End stayed away.¹⁷

Even though most of the speakers were not Jewish, for the immigrant workers of the East End there must have been a great symbolic significance in their presence en masse in Hyde Park, in passing through the City, the West End and the heart of imperial London to get there.¹⁸ In Rudolf Rocker’s memoirs, he describes the June Hyde Park demo, a “mammoth protest demonstration” of “thousands of Jewish workers”. He writes: “As we marched through the City streets, thousands gazed in mute surprise on the strange procession... When the mass singing of Edelstadt’s *In Kamf* was heard, the onlookers became very solemn and took off their hats to the marchers” (from *In shturem*, quoted Mlotek 1982:80).

This song, “In kamf” (In Struggle), was written as a poem in 1889, a year of particularly intense class conflict in both England and America, and, set to music, swiftly became associated with May Day.¹⁹ As an articulation of political belonging, the song is revealing. Here are the first two stanzas:

¹⁷ 26.06.1903

¹⁸ The City of London that they marched through was changing year by year in that period, with the expansion of the commercial sector and new building technologies meaning that large office blocks being built for the first time; the journey from the mean streets of Stepney was through a very particular landscape, which would have evoked a sense of the power of capital.

¹⁹ Edelstat’s own life (his personal experiences of the pogroms of the early 1880s, his diasporic wanderings) and the life of his literary works (his poems published by anarchists in

*Mir vern gehast un getribn,/ Mir vern geplogt un farfolgt;/ In alts nor derfar
vayl mir libn/ Dos oreme shmakhnde folk. (We are driven and despised,
we are tortured and persecuted, and all because we love the poor down-
trodden people.)*

*Mir vern dershosn, gehangen,/ Men roybt undz dos lebn un rekht;/ Derfar
vayl mir emes farlangen/ Un frayheyt far oreme knekht. (We are shot,
hanged, robbed of our lives and our rights, for we demand truth and
freedom for poor slaves.)²⁰*

The “mir”, the “we”, of the text is ambiguous. Is it the Jewish people, is it radicals and revolutionaries (of whatever ethnicity of nationality), or is it the Russian people (including Jews)? The word “folk” at the end of the first stanza is especially ambiguous. The Yiddish word “folk”, like the German “Volk” and Russian “narod”, has both a strong *ethnic* connotation (a folk – the Jewish folk or the Russian folk) and a strong *democratic* connotation (*the* folk – the plebeiat).²¹ In the context of a demonstration about Kishinev, the images in the poem might evoke a pogrom: a crime against Jews specifically. In the context of opposition to Tsarism, however, they might evoke Tsarist terror in general. In these different contexts, then, the “we” and the “folk” would have different inflections, different resonances. The song, then, like the speeches from the platform, exemplify the tensions between the call to particularist Jewish identification in the response to the trauma of Kishinev and universalizing trans-ethnic solidarities, such as the world-citizenship of the working class.

The radical tone of the Hyde Park meeting distressed West End Anglo-Jewry. Joseph Prag, at a meeting of the AJA, said “it was a calamity that the meeting... was presided over by a member of the Social Democratic Federation [and] attended by Socialists and Anarchists to plead on behalf of the Jews.” He spoke of “people who preyed upon the feelings of their Russian and Polish brethren”, like Prince Kropotkin “who condemned Jewish capitalists as well as the Russian Government.”²² As exemplified by Prag’s comments, Anglo-Jewish assimilationism was unable to

London when he lived in America and their passing into folk song repertoire in the US, Western Europe and the Pale, partly through the publication of radical songbooks) themselves encapsulate some of the features of what Paul Gilroy has called “a dialectics of diaspora identification” (1993).

²⁰ Mlotek (1982:80)

²¹ This ambiguity, between folk as *ethnos* and as *demos*, was a resource for Simon Dubnov, who was a key figure in the formation of the Folkist movement, which simultaneously articulated a demotic, plebeian form of Yiddishkayt against official communal definitions and emphasized the unity of the Jewish folk across its differences. The Folkists, like the Bundists who we will encounter later in this chapter, stressed a Jewish politics in whatever country they happened to find themselves, against Zionist and territorialist notions of the need for a Jewish homeland.

²² JC 26.06.1903

respect the specificities which bound East End Jews to Jews “*inderheym*” *and* it was also unable to respect the internal *differences* (such as those between Jewish workers and Jewish capitalists) which striated Jewish communities in both London and the Pale.

So far in this chapter, I have argued that the complex geographies of belonging of the East End immigrants – belonging understood in terms of blood, kinship and home – stretched the liberal political theories which underwrote the Anglo-Jewish leadership’s assimilationist politics. This tension was played out in response to Kishinev through the Anglo-Jewish attempt to re-impose their communal authority, through a politics of mediation and representation, and the East End struggle for autonomy.²³ In the next sections, we will look at some of the creative responses to the tension between affect and reason, between descent and consent, between citizenship and belonging, between the nation-state and diaspora. In particular, we will look at Israel Zangwill’s complex understandings of political belonging and the Bund’s concept of “*doykayt*”, here-ness. Both the Bund and Zangwill developed critiques of assimilationism, which Zangwill saw as an undignified form of mimicry and the Bundists saw as a “nationalism of appropriation”. Both sought to articulate the multiple identifications of the Yiddish working class – in the Bund’s case, being both Jewish *and* working class; in Zangwill’s case being both Jewish *and* English – stressing what Jews had in common across the borders of the nation-state *and* what the differences within Jewishness. While Zangwill pushed towards a notion of poly-ethnic citizenship in a plural democracy, the Bund articulated the diasporic rootings of the Jewish people, their right to be wherever they found themselves. Crucially, both separated citizenship from ethnicity and nationality.

²³ These issues have been echoed in Britain since September 11 2001, with Islamic communal bodies modelled on the Board of Deputies (such as the Muslim Council of Britain, MCB) being called upon by the New Labour government to provide a singular respectable voice for British Muslims (defined in this agenda as a faith community, as British citizens of the Islamic faith) denouncing Muslim “extremism”, while grassroots Muslim community groups, for instance in the Bengali East End, hear the traumatic events in the Middle East as a trans-diasporic call to identity. It is, of course, the liberal British state who define the “zone of moderation” in which the communal authorities may display their legitimacy: the “injunction to be moderate is ultimately the terms of inclusion... offered to minority communities” (Back et al 2002:5).

Alternative Grammars of Citizenship and Belonging

Between Brotherhood and Citizenship

The Zionists pursued a slightly different policy from the mainstream Anglo-Jewish leaders, anxious to consolidate their position within the communal leadership, but also keen to show that they were more in touch with East End opinion. They held a large meeting at Shoreditch Town Hall in mid-May to protest against some political manoeuvres made by the Jewish Colonization Association. Israel Zangwill, who would shortly break with the Zionists to lead the Territorialist movement, was the main speaker, and his presence attracted a large audience from the East End. He spoke at great length and on many topics, including Kishinev, the aliens issue and Zionism. Zangwill described the Kishinev pogrom in lurid terms, concluding with

the dragging out of men's entrails and stuffing their stomachs with feathers, after the fashion of the Apache Indians. As for the Jack-the-Ripper atrocities committed on Jewesses I dare not describe them. No, while the bulk of the world's Jews live in Russia, they actually live in the Middle Ages. Even literally, Russia counts time by the Old Calendar, and this bloody Easter Sunday fell upon the same day and the same souls as in the Dark Ages. It is because the rest of Europe also tends to slide back into the Dark Ages, that we more fortunate English Jews watch with such experienced anxiety the ALIEN ENQUIRY COMMISSION... such of us as are English-born and English-bred believe freedom to be England's grandest tradition. We are so often more English than the English in a ridiculous manner; let us for once be more English than the English in a noble manner, and save England from being false to herself. Secondly, as Jews we remember the teaching of Moses 'Thou shalt not oppress a stranger; for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.' It has been painful to see how new-comers who could scarcely talk English have turned against newer-comers. I was myself invited to join a Committee of Dukes, Earls and M.P's, for the Reform of Immigration. I replied that MY OWN FATHER WAS AN ALIEN IMMIGRANT and I dared not shut out others. And thirdly, we Zionists object to anything that lowers the status of our people and restricts its freedom of domicile. Desirous as we are of establishing our people in a home, we cannot give up the right of individual Jews to live where they please, just as individuals of other nationalities would be free to settle among us.

After briefly describing the history of "the English Jews, I beg pardon, the Jewish Englishmen" and their medieval banishment, he continued: "I believe England – the mother of liberty and free parliaments – is incapable of sinking so low again... I believe the heart of England is sound, and she will not turn away the outcast and the refugee without helping to find him a home." However, he added, they thought that in France, and the Dreyfus affair disproved it.²⁴ Where the Anglo-Jewish leadership refrained from making the connection between Kishinev and the Alien Commission,

²⁴ *JC* 22.05.1903

Zangwill made the link explicit, framing his discussion of the latter in terms of the former.

His description of Kishinev is interesting in the metaphors he employs: Apache Indians, Jack the Ripper and the Dark Ages. With the Apache metaphor, he uses racist images of Indians to express the primitive-ness, savagery and barbarism of the Russians. With the Jack the Ripper metaphor, he uses an image more frequently deployed to racialize and criminalize the Jews and the East End.²⁵ With the Dark Ages metaphor, he associates Russia with a primitive past, implicitly juxtaposed against Western modernity. These sorts of appeals – to a liberal eurocentric conception of progress located in the West, and darkness and pastness located in the East and the colonies – are familiar rhetorical devices used by Anglo-Jewry to get English sympathy for the victims of Russian terror, as is the appeal to English traditions of liberty and tolerance.²⁶ But Zangwill's use of this has a less familiar twist. He subverts the linear, teleological chronology usually associated with this language: England, like Dreyfus-era France, can easily *return* – “slide back” – into the Dark Ages. Further, by shifting so quickly from Kishinev to the Alien Enquiry, he seems to equate the two, subverting the particularist English sense of its superiority over the dark East. And he puts specifically Jewish traditions of empathy for the refugee on an equal footing with (much younger) English traditions of liberty and hospitality.

When Zangwill evokes specifically Jewish traditions of empathy for the refugee, his reference point is the Passover story, to which he is alluding in these words: “as Jews we remember the teaching of Moses ‘Thou shalt not oppress a stranger; for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.’”²⁷ Here,

²⁵ Cf Steyn (1999:15); Gilman (1991:13, 127); Walkowitz (1992:191-228).

²⁶ See, e.g., Feldman's discussion of the 1881 pogroms (1994: chapter 4) or the Foreign Jews Protection Committee's use of this rhetoric (below, chapter nine).

²⁷ The words Zangwill quotes are from the Exodus text read at Passover: “You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt” (Exodus 22:20), “You shall not oppress a stranger, *v' atem yedahtem et nefesh hagehr* -- for you know the soul of the stranger, having yourselves been strangers in the land of Egypt” (Exodus 23:9). They appear elsewhere in the Torah too: “You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt” (Deuteronomy 10:19). Cf “The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt” (Leviticus 19:34), “You shall not subvert the rights of the alien or the fatherless; you shall not take a widow's garment in pawn. Remember that you were a slave in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you from there; therefore do I enjoin you to observe this commandment” (Deuteronomy 24:17), “When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not pick it over again; that shall go to the alien, the fatherless, and the widow. Always remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore do I enjoin you to observe this commandment” (Deuteronomy 24:21), “You shall not abhor an Egyptian, because you were a stranger in his land” (Deuteronomy 23:8).

he is paraphrasing the words Jews all over the world say on Passover – which coincides with Russian Orthodox Easter, and hence would have been the words both English and Russian Jews were saying at the time of the Kishinev pogrom. Zangwill's iteration of this phrase indicates his sensitivity to the cultural and ritual practices of the Jewish folk, even though he himself was secular. For him, Yiddish folk practices were a resource for building a new politics of hospitality to the refugee.

Given that Zangwill himself was assimilated but also sensitive to the cultural world of the East End (he came from a poor Whitechapel Russian/Polish immigrant family, was schooled at the assimilationist Jews' Free School in Bell Lane in Spitalfields, and entered English and Anglo-Jewish high society through his literary success), his comments on Englishness and assimilation are interesting. Zangwill is frequently read by contemporary readers, particularly in America, as an assimilationist. He is more well-known to cultural theorists today for authoring *The Melting Pot* (whose title evokes for those who have not read it assimilation: a melting down of identities) rather than his radical politics and maverick engagement with Zionism. However, in this text, he scorns the assimilationist attempt to be “more English than the English in a ridiculous manner”, attacks the disavowal of a refugee background by Anglicized Jews, and mocks the pretension of English Jews to be “Jewish Englishmen”. That is, he rejects an assimilation which mimics the manners and habits of the dominant ethnicity.²⁸ He asserts the possibility of multiple loyalties and multiple identities: he is English *and* Jewish *and* Zionist, and these complement not contradict each other. (Elsewhere he wrote that “The human heart is large enough to hold many loyalties”, quoted Leftwich 1957:147.) Following from this is a demand for a form of pluralism: every individual should have freedom of domicile; any Jewish home will not be a pure Jewish space, but people of other nationalities shall settle amongst them without assimilating, just as people of other nationalities should have the right to settle amongst the English. This belief starts to uncouple citizenship from nationality, and thus starts to point to an alternative way of thinking citizenship.

²⁸ He made the same point in an 1893 speech, “The Maccabean”: “The ‘mimicry’ by which insects assimilate in hue to the environment has made backboneless Jews indistinguishable from ‘the heathen’” (1893:44). He called Disraeli a “Ghetto parvenu” and those who hid their Jewishness guilty of “Marranoism”: formerly “sailing under false religious colours”, now “sailing under false racial colours [which is] still more vulgar and degrading” (quoted Leftwich 1957:162).

Zangwill's *Melting Pot* (conceived in 1905, first performed in 1908, and published in 1909²⁹) is an attempt to work out how hyphenated or multiple identities can be articulated within citizenship, set against the backdrop of the Kishinev pogrom. Its main character, David Quixano, and his mother have made a home in America after fleeing the massacre in which his father and brother were slaughtered. He falls in love with Vera Ravendal, whose father, a Russian baron, was present at and responsible for the massacre. This history of tragedy is one of the obstacles the couple must overcome. In a speech in the final scene, David says to her "cling to me till all these ghosts [of Kishinev] are exorcised, cling to me till our love triumphs over death" (1914:197). The metaphor of kinship is used here too, but in a slightly different way. Kinship is signified in the play primarily by the figure of David's mother, who staunchly clings to her old Yiddish ways and opposes David's exogamous relationship, and by the "ghosts" of Kishinev, his slaughtered father and brother.

Werner Sollors, in *Beyond Ethnicity* (1986), analyzes the play in terms of "consent" (the melting pot, love, citizenship) triumphing over "descent" (the old world, death, kinship, blood). The motif of kinship (blood and brotherhood) used here by Zangwill was employed again and again to call for aid for Jewish sufferers. One example is the appeal (widely circulated in the diaspora) of the group of Jewish intellectuals in Russia of which historian Simon Dubnov was part: "Brothers – the blood of our Kishinever brothers cries out to us: rise up from the dust, cease pleading for mercy, stretch out your hand no more to your enemy! You must help yourself, by your own hand!" (quoted Dubnov 1961:378, my translation).³⁰ Zangwill's play recognizes the power of these motifs, but gestures towards their transcendence (or exorcising) in a sort of cosmopolitan democracy. In Zangwill's melting pot, citizenship becomes a *project*, which celebrates differences – instead of seeking to dissolve them through the undignified miming of the dominant ethnicity which we saw him scorning in his 1903 Kishinev speech. His image is of *melting up*, a process in which the best of every culture will be preserved in a higher unity – in contrast, for example, to Lenin, who called for a "*grinding down*" of difference.³¹ Kishinev called Zangwill – who was

²⁹ Also performed in a Yiddish version in 1912. For the English text of the play, and Zangwill's war-time "Afterword", see Zangwill (1914).

³⁰ The word "brother" appears seven times in this short text, from the first word to the penultimate one. Bialik, one of the co-writers of this text with Dubnov, also wrote his epic poem, "The City of Slaughter" in response to the pogrom, which is filled with images of blood, and of mothers, daughters, sisters, fathers and brothers (see full text in Roskies 1988:162-7).

³¹ "New York... grinds down national distinctions. And what is taking place on a grand, international scale in New York is also to be seen in every big city and industrial township" (1951:18).

both highly assimilated into English society and married to a non-Jewish woman – to a sense of Jewish identity seen in terms of kinship, but also inspired him to grope towards a form of poly-ethnic citizenship (the melting pot) that transcended blood ties.

Zangwill found creative ways of walking a (sometimes narrow and difficult) line between essentialist and anti-essentialist thought. One example of this is his troubled involvement with the Zionist movement. Zangwill split with the Zionist Organisation after it rejected the 1905 “Uganda offer”, the British offer of a small area in British East Africa to be a Jewish home.³² Zangwill formed ITO, the Jewish Territorialist Organisation. ITO rejected the Zionist ideology of return to an originary homeland in that they campaigned for a place – any place, not necessarily Palestine – where Jews would be in a majority and therefore be able to develop their culture freely. Where the forms of Zionism which were becoming dominant at this time often stressed the essential organic unity of the Jewish nation, the Territorialists were more concerned with the here and now problem of a haven from anti-semitism.

However, when Zangwill did discuss the Palestine option, he made it very clear that he thought a Palestine with an Arab majority was untenable as a Jewish national home. Thus if it was to be used as such then the Arabs would have to be induced, with or without their consent, to make a “trek” to some other part of the Arab national home in Mesopotamia or Arabia.³³ In his restatement of the issue at the time of the Paris Peace Conference, he said that the Jews must possess Palestine in the way that the Poles would possess Poland, i.e. not with exclusive rights to it, but as a majority who would develop culturally free from the domination of a larger imperial culture.³⁴ This position echoes the central argument of *The Melting Pot*, for a weak sort of cultural pluralism in which different cultures can come together and preserve what is best in them, but only within the framework of American culture and values,

³² Various labour Zionist currents, such as the “SZ” (Zionist Socialist Party), also split with the mainstream Zionist movement over Uganda.

³³ This view was set out in a speech made in New York in 1904 and Manchester in 1905 entitled “Zionism and England’s Offer” (*JC* 14.4.1905 p.24, cf version in 1920:88), a lecture to the Fabian Society in December 1915 (Zangwill 1920:108), a conversation with Jabotinsky in summer 1916 (quoted Simons 1998: chapter 11), a 1917 article entitled “The Fate of Palestine” (Zangwill 1920:92-3) and an article entitled “Before the Peace Conference” (*JC* 13.12.1918). The phrase “trek” is taken from the Boers’ “Great Trek” whereby they removed themselves from British-dominated parts of South Africa in order to develop their own culture freely. Later, however, Zangwill spoke positively of the “long cultural conjunction of life currents” between Jews and Arabs (1922:113) and even in the 1919 version he calls for a “cultivat[ion of] the closest friendship and co-operation” between Arabs and Jews (1919:341).

³⁴ “Before the Peace Conference” (*JC* 13.12.1918)

which are figured in the play by the Statue of Liberty. In Palestine, he wanted a “Jewish majority” and not a “Jewish totality”; differences were permissible, but not if they undermined Jewish culture and values.³⁵

In other contexts, however, Zangwill articulated a radical critique of ethnic absolutism. His participation at the Universal Races Congress at the University of London in 1911 exemplifies this. The disagreements between Zangwill and human biologist Ignaz Zollschan, an Austrian delegate from the Zionist Organisation, illustrate the differences between radically different conceptions of Jewish nationalism as well as fundamentally different approaches to race. Zangwill, like Franz Boas, who also spoke at the Congress, denied the reality of “races”. Zollschan, at the opening session, took a position directly against theirs. Zollschan

maintained that considerable differences between races did exist, and said that he doesn't agree with those who asserted they were in reality equal... Each race had thus its own particular genius, and this we should endeavour to preserve. While, therefore, encouraging every form of friendly intercourse between races, we should preserve the distinctive character of each by discouraging race-fusion (Universal Races Congress Committee 1911:28).

Zollschan spoke too of the need to ward off assimilation and intermarriage, as these would lead to the loss of “race-consciousness”. He also spoke of the Jews as a “highly developed race” (ibid:53-4).³⁶

Zangwill rejected these positions. He said,

the Jew demonstrates the comparative superficiality of race... all these people are the same under their skins.... Not only is a race akin to every other, but every people is a hotch-potch of races. The Jews, though mainly a white people, are not devoid of a coloured fringe, black, brown or yellow (1911:93).

Later he wrote that

nationality has no real meaning outside consciousness... So far from nationalities being fixed, the operation of natural law in the political world is ever creating, hybridising or eliminating them. And all the three processes are at work simultaneously upon the scatterings of the *vile corpus* of unhappy Israel (1920:100).

Change the two children at nurse, and one will grow up a Cockney and the other a Young Turk... The leopard cannot change his spots, but man can change his places... [Races'] common humanity exceeds their differences... Humanity, like children's toy bricks..., can be built into any structure (1917:58-9).

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ On Zollschan, see Efron (1994).

As well as the tension between essentialism and anti-essentialism in Zangwill's thought we can see a tension in his identifications within Anglo-Jewry. Zangwill can be seen as a sort of mediator between the Anglo-Jewish establishment and the Yiddish-speaking Jews of East London – as Sharman Kadish puts it, “it could be said that Zangwill stood astride the ‘East End’ and the ‘West End’” (1992:62). He presented the East Enders' lives, almost ethnographically but in fictionalized form, to the middle class reading public in his novels, sketches and plays,³⁷ and spoke politically in the name of the poor Jews in the public sphere. His politics, too, reveal a similar ambivalence: between the Victorian liberalism of the West End, tied to the nation-state, and the concerns of the East End, which stressed other forms of identification, including class solidarities and trans-national Jewish kinship. William Taylor has also described Zangwill as a “mediator of Jewish identity”, who needed to be loyal to his immigrant constituency, yet also agreeable to the “host” community to which he was assimilated: the dilemma of “how to articulate difference without threatening the stability of consensus” (2000:251). The tensions in his thought – between assimilation and anti-assimilation, between essentialism and anti-essentialism, between Zionism and anti-Zionism – enabled him to grope for new conceptions of citizenship which could accommodate Jewish belonging.

Where Anglo-Jewish assimilationism and Zionism presented the East Enders with an either/or choice – the Jewish nation *or* the English nation, dissolving Jewish particularity in Western universality *or* elevating Jewish particularity to a first principle – Zangwill stressed instead multiple identity, multiple loyalty, multiple belonging. By speaking his own multiplicity of identification, Zangwill was able to articulate the multiple identities of the Jewish immigrants, and thus provides us resources for thinking against the singular identities of the nation-state.

The Bund: Extra-Territorial Nationality

Kishinev's call to Jewish identity reconfigured Jewish diasporic geographies of belonging. This reconfiguration can be seen in Zangwill's shift to Territorialism – the advocacy of a *homeland* (rather than a state) for the Jews which could be *anywhere* in the world, not necessarily Palestine – and his attempt to articulate a vision of citizenship that could encompass Jewish trans-nationality. Just as Zangwill tried to

³⁷ Zangwill had a strong sense of common Jewish cultural content, of the cultural stuff of the Yiddish diaspora, its practices of belonging, everyday life and vernacular expressive culture.

elaborate a form of citizenship that recognized Jewish difference, the Yiddish labour movement began at this time to bend their previously colour-blind socialist universalism (which they called “cosmopolitanism”) in a way that also allowed for the elaboration of more Jewish-specific themes. Norah Levin describes this post-Kishinev move:

even the anarchists were affected. Hillel Zolotarov, the [American] Jewish anarchist leader, wrote his ‘Serious Problems’ soon after the Kishinev pogrom and sounded the new theme of national and cultural regeneration. I Kopelov, another leading anarchist wrote: ‘The Kishinev pogrom upset me to some degree... My previous cosmopolitanism, internationalism and similar views diminished at one blow, like the contents of a barrel with the bottom knocked out’ (1978:172).³⁸

In London, the International Kischineff Massacres Protest Committee which had been formed in the wake of the pogroms decided by the summer to set up a permanent structure, a General Jewish Workers’ Organisation Committee, to co-ordinate Jewish working class activity in London. Its committee was diverse, composed of members of the Bund and several Jewish trade unionists like Joseph Finn and Sam Ellstein, but also anarchist leader Rudolf Rocker.³⁹

The Bund was particularly important in this conjunction, and had an increased profile in the London scene in the wake of Kishinev. The Bund – its full name was the General Union of Jewish Workers in Poland, Russia and Lithuania – was a mass socialist movement of the Jewish workers and had a semi-autonomous relationship with the RSDLP, the Russian social democratic party. The Bund moved from an initial stance as pure Russian social democrats using the Yiddish language to a much stronger conception of Jewish identity. The Bundist theory of the nation was first articulated as early as 1899 in response to the Austro-Marxists’ Brünn congress, which defined nations in terms of *cultures* rather than territories, and allowed, therefore, for the possibility of non-territorial nationalities. For the main theorist of this position, Vladimir Medem, a nation was

not abstract, suspended in a vacuum and superstructurally self-sufficient, but anchored in a historically given society and, to a lesser extent, modelled by social conflicts. The nation was, for the Bund leader, above

He loved Yiddish language and his observations of ghetto life have a highly empathetic quality.

³⁸ Zolotarov’s “Serious Problems” (*Ernste fragen*) piece was originally published in the New York *Fraye Arbayer Shtime*, an anarchist paper with a wide London circulation. It was reprinted as a pamphlet in London, but this reprinting was sponsored by Zionists, the Tsienistisher Arbayer Fareyn “Forverts” (the Zionist Workers’ Society “Forward” in which Kalman Marmor was active) and printed by a religious Zionist, Narodiczky (Prager 1990:22).

³⁹ “Jewish Labour News”, *JC* 7.8.1903.

all national culture, perceived as a connected category and not mechanically subordinated, according to the vulgar Marxist vision, to the economic structure. He formulated the problem thus: 'A national culture as an independent entity, as a closed circle with its own content, has never existed. The nation is the particular form in which the universal human content expresses itself [*der algemayner mentshleker hinalf*]... social relations - the context in which class conflicts are born and intellectual and spiritual currents develop - confer on the culture a national character [*a natsional shtempl oyf der kultur*]' (Traverso 1994:101-2, the quote is from Medem's *Di sotsial-demokratie un di natsionale frage*).

Central to Medem's understanding of a culture's *natsional shtempl* was language. Medem criticized the attitude that Yiddish was *shmutstikn gas-zhargon*, a dirty street jargon,⁴⁰ arguing that it was a *folk-shprak*, the language of a people.

If language and culture played the crucial roles for Medem in defining a nation, territory did not. Instead of territorial autonomy, the Bund advocated national-cultural (*natsional-kultureler*) or national-personal autonomy. *Territorial* autonomy was irrelevant to diasporic nations like the Jews which "form islands in a foreign territory" (*bildn hinzlen oyf a fremder teritorie*). Instead, in a plural, multi-national state, there should be protection of "personal autonomy": for example, the right to receive a school education in one's mother tongue or to use one's language in a court of law. Enzo Traverso, in *Marxists and the Jewish Question* (1994), stresses the Bundists' rejection of classical Marxism's refusal to see the significance of what he calls "national interiority" among oppressed peoples. Of the Bund, he says:

The richness and topicality of their discourse resides in their attempt to theorize the nation differently by detaching it from territory, to dialectically conceive internationalism as a synthesis of universalism and of national liberation, of cosmopolitanism and of respect for the cultural specificities of national minorities. Fundamentally, the Bundist project of cultural national autonomy already included the principle of a disassociation between citizenship and nationality (ibid:235).

The Bundists, then, provide resources for a post-national political imaginary, for a form of citizenship beyond the compulsory homogeneity of the nation-state. In exploring ideas of national personal autonomy and the multi-national state, they exploded the idea of the ethnically-defined citizenship.

The theory of "neutralism" was a key theoretical stepping stone in this development. The theory was put to the Bund by Medem in the wake of the Kishinev pogrom, at

⁴⁰ "Gas" in this formulation has a somewhat different connotation from the English "street". *Gas* (rather than *ghetto*) was often the term for the Yiddish quarter of a town; so the connotation is not just the disreputableness of the street, but also the narrowness of the Jewish quarter.

their fifth Congress in Zurich in 1903. Neutralism, as outlined at Zurich, had three components: defending all nationalities against forced assimilation; Jewish national identity (*angeherikayt*) and national culture as a fact but not a goal; and cultural autonomy for all nationalities.⁴¹ They moved beyond the triumphalist teleology of assimilationism and Second International Marxism to a different sense of temporality. Rejecting the idea of inevitable progress, they refused to predict the course of the development of culture and would not intervene in favour of assimilation or preservation of national identity. “We are not against assimilation, we are against assimilationism (*strebung tsu asimilatsie*), against assimilation as a goal” (Medem’s *Di sotsial-demokratie un di natsionale frage* quoted Traverso *ibid*:104).

Similarly, they were not against nations, but against nationalism, of every variety. They characterized assimilationism as a “nationalism of appropriation” (quoted *ibid*:105). Medem argued that there was an essential symmetry between nationalism and assimilationism: “The ideology of assimilation is the same as that of nationalism, only the other side of it. The assimilationist strives for a stranger’s nationality and tries to make it his own... While the nationalist tries to put his nationalist stamp on everything possible” (quoted Levin 1978:337).

The trauma of Kishinev acted as a call to Jewish identity for the Bund, as it did for Zangwill, but they insisted on limit to the solidarity and kinship Kishinev invoked. For example, in *Di Sotsial-Demokratie un di Natsionale Frage* (1904), Medem wrote: “Solidarity of the entire nation means giving up the class struggle, means peace between proletariat and bourgeoisie, means spiritual and material enslavement of the proletariat” (quoted Levin 1978:336). That is, even as they stressed *similarities across* the Jewish diaspora, they insisted on keeping an eye on *differences* (and oppressions) *within*. In “neutralism”, they had formulated a politics of location that moved them away from the “cosmopolitanism” which had characterized classical socialism. Medem wrote: “we have long since become alien to the mood of cosmopolitanism... but we are also not idolatrous worshippers of the national idea” (quoted Levin 1978:336).

Medem’s theoretical development was influenced by the Austro-Marxists and by cultural-autonomist Jewish thinkers like Zhitlovsky and Simon Dubnov. Dubnov was developing concepts like “folkism” and “diaspora nationalism”, emphasizing the

⁴¹ Tobias (1972:167-8).

simultaneous unity and diversity of the Jewish people (or “folk”) in the diaspora, the vital contributions that every different branch of this people make both to the whole folk and to the local lands in which they settled and rooted. However, Medem criticized the “mysticism” of Dubnov’s diaspora nationalism – Dubnov saw the Jewish nation as based on a *Kulturgemeinschaft* (integral organic culture community). For Dubnov, the Jews were a unitary spiritual community to which all Jews belonged by birth regardless of any other consideration.

Medem stressed more strongly than Dubnov the *diversity* of the Jews: “Our common heritage evolves and takes different forms, among its different heirs... in the context of different cultures.” For example, the assimilated Western Jew has little in common with a proletarian Polish Jew. Like Zhitlovsky, he oriented to a Jewish nation defined by Yiddishkayt, excluding the Jews of the West – for which Dubnov accused them of “linguistic chauvinism” (quoted Traverso 1994:106-7, from Medem’s “Di altveltlikhe yidishe natsie” and Dubnov’s *Essays on the Old and New Judaism*). For Traverso, in contrast to Dubnov’s more monolithic thinking,

Medem’s conception of Jewish history was... essentially pluralist and nonlinear. He deduced the national character of the Jews of Eastern Europe only on the basis of a definition of the Diaspora as the source of a multiplicity of different trajectories (ibid:107).

When Medem said that Jewish communities “form islands in a foreign territory” (*bildn hinzlen oyf a fremder teritotorie*), it was this multiplicity he was stressing.

Central to the Bund’s politics was the concept of “doykayt”, “here-ness” or “here-ism”, which rejected the Zionist idea that the Jews would never be safe until they had their own homeland, and called instead for a commitment to wherever the Jews found themselves in diaspora, a commitment to staying put and fighting. This had a number of meanings: prioritization of local class struggle in the here and now rather than utopian ideas of building socialist society elsewhere, belief in the diaspora rather than return, but also, in a sense, a statement of the *right to be here*.⁴² The right to be here: this aspect of doykayt echoes the points that Zangwill made in his Kishinev response:

[We] object to anything that... restricts [our people’s] freedom of domicile... we cannot give up the right of individual Jews to live where

⁴² Swiss refugee rights activists Karl Grünberg and Jean-Michel Dolivo have drawn on the Bundist concept of “doykayt”, understood as “having the right to be there and to come and to go” (*avoir le droit d’être là, d’aller et de venir*), as a resource for the struggle of the *sans papiers* in Switzerland (Grünberg and Dolivo 2002).

they please, just as individuals of other nationalities would be free to settle among us.⁴³

So, despite the pogrom in Kishinev, the Dreyfus affair or the anti-semitism articulated in the Royal Commission on Alien Immigration in Britain, both the Bund and Zangwill insisted on a politics of staying put and fighting. Called to a sense of Jewishness by the trauma of Kishinev, they remained committed to building multi-ethnic democracy in the here and now.

Doykayt: Routes and Rootings

In London, the Bund came into its own in the wake of Kishinev. Early reports of the pogrom in the press came about largely due to the efforts of the Bund. For example, Joseph Finn's letter to the *Jewish Chronicle*, one of the first UK printed responses to the pogrom, quoted information from Bund sources, and the *Chronicle* itself drew on Bund material in their subsequent reports, including letters written by Bundists to mainstream British papers like the *Daily News* and *Times*. The Bund's London branch, Veker, had been involved in the organization of the mass meetings in Mile End and Hyde Park.

In the wake of Kishinev, the Bund was able to open a club on Settle Street; like the many other radical clubs of the ghetto, this was a space of dialogue and debate in which very different senses of Jewish identity and belonging were expressed. For example, Kalman Marmor, a pioneer of Poale Zion, the Marxist-inflected labour Zionist movement, went there, and Nachman Syrkin, leading non-Marxist theoretician in the socialist Zionist movement, spoke there while in England.⁴⁴ Similarly, the three-point programme of the club illustrates a very particular sort of Jewish spatiality: (1) to help the Bund in Russia and Poland; (2) to help Bundists in London; (3) to join the local struggle of labour against capital.⁴⁵ These concerns articulate a strongly local, rooted sense of class struggle: doykayt. And they simultaneously articulate a trans-national sense of belonging, in which the politics of the Pale remained crucial even as the Bundists rooted themselves in the local soil of London. We saw above how Kishinev called Zangwill to a sense of Jewish identity seen in terms of kinship, but also inspired him to grope towards a form of poly-ethnic citizenship that transcended blood ties. This creative tension also ran through the London Bundists' politics, as

⁴³ *JC* 22.05.1903.

⁴⁴ Marmor (1959).

⁴⁵ Prager (1990:180).

they fought for the rights of all workers *and* organized solidarity for their specifically Jewish brethren afflicted in the pogroms.

The Bund's concept of "doykayt", Zangwill's shift from Zionism to Territorialism and Dubnov's folkism all suggest a way of thinking about diaspora that is instructive for us today. Although diaspora theorizing has importantly helped us think in terms of "routes" as well as "roots", we still need a richer understanding of journeying, one that avoids the postmodern image of endlessly deferred free-floating motion, that enables us to conceptualize not just diaspora's routes, but also its ever renewed *rootings*.

Paradoxically, diasporic journeys are essentially about settling down, putting roots 'elsewhere'... If the circumstances of leaving are important, so, too, are those of arrival and settling down. How and in what ways do these journeys conclude, and intersect in specific places, specific spaces, and specific historical conjunctures? How and in what ways is a group inserted within the social relations of class, gender, racism, sexuality, or other axes of differentiation in the country to which it migrates? The manner in which a group comes to be 'situated' in and through a wide variety of discourses, economic processes, state policies and institutional practices is critical (Brah 1996:182).

As well as "routes" and "roots", then, we need a third term: *rooting*. The notion of rooting – like the Bund's concept of doykayt – highlights the way in which diasporic peoples root themselves in new spaces, weaving themselves into the urban fabric. The Bund, Dubnov and Zangwill offer us a version of diaspora that allows for similarity *and* difference across the diaspora, that allows for local rooting as well as trans-national routes: important conceptions for diaspora theory today. This has a political dimension, too, as so often diasporic peoples' struggles are precisely the struggle for rooting, for here-ness.

In conclusion, this chapter has attempted to chart a local experience of diasporic geography, in which different spaces of belonging were superimposed one on the other as in a palimpsest – in contrast to the nation-state logic of citizenship and of assimilationist Anglo-Jewry. In the first part of the chapter, I argued that the forms of political belonging which flourished in the East End were able to think *both* the specificities of Jewish life, which bound East End Jews to Eastern Europe Jews, *and* the differences within Jewishness. The communal was a space where the differences within, the internal antagonisms – particularly the objective antagonism of class that opposed the Jewish proletariat (mainly located in the East End) to the Jewish bourgeoisie (mainly located in the West End) – were suppressed. The pogroms threw the legitimacy of the West End leadership into crisis, opening to question the

representational role of the Anglo-Jewish institutions and opening to question the logic of the communal.

At the same time, ghetto geographies of belonging – the things which bound the East Enders to Yiddish-speakers in Eastern Europe – cut across the nation-state loyalties of Anglo-Jewry, leading the East Enders to refuse the representation of the communal leadership. As we saw in the second half of the chapter, the theories which the ghetto radicals were groping towards were theories which negotiated between the presumed unanimity and compulsory belonging of ethnic absolutist forms of Jewish nationalism *and* the liberal politics of Anglo-Jewish assimilationists, in a way which would honour the practices of belonging of the East End immigrants: their multiplicity of identification and loyalty, their roots, routes *and* rootings, their collective memories which bound them to other nodes in the diaspora web *and* the specificities which made them different from these other nodes.

In the first half of this thesis, we have seen the emergence of a racialized biopolitical form of citizenship, premised on singular identities, and, along side this, an alternative public sphere in the East End, in which new ways of thinking citizenship and belonging emerged, ways of thinking that were able to articulate the immigration Jews' multiple identities, such as the Bund's *doykayt* or Zangwill's multiethnic citizenship. In the next half of this thesis, we will see the coming of the "state of emergency" which was WWI. The policing of citizenship, the theme of the next chapter, became increasingly tightened, and the multiple identities of the East End came into sharper tension with the racial conception of citizenship that was becoming normalized.

Chapter 6

Policing Aliens

Having, in the last chapter, looked at the alternative public sphere which thrived in the Yiddish East End between 1903 and 1914, this and the following chapter will return to the theme of citizenship and its limits. While the Yiddish radicals were developing ideas and forms of organization which articulated geographies of belonging across national borders, they had to contend with ever more tightly policed and ever more racialized forms of citizenship. This chapter focuses on the final years before the First World War, the peak years of the *Arbayter Fraynd* movement, a moment defined by the Siege of Sidney Street and the image of violent alien sedition. It will start with the story of Sidney Street, a moment of panic around terrorism, then look at how Sidney Street played a role in the reconfiguration of the limits of inclusion into the space of citizenship. The second half of the chapter looks at the medicalization, racialization and policing of the space of the East End and the body of the alien in the Sidney Street period. These practices, I will argue, were framed in terms of the scientific languages of raciology, eugenics and degeneration. In emphasizing the specific figures of racialization in this period – the sweater, the seditious alien, the white slaver – and in emphasizing the cultural space of the eugenic imagination, I move away from any sense of the persistence of timeless, enduring anti-semitism, for which anti-alienism was merely a euphemism. I emphasize instead the emergence, through this period, of new ways of thinking political belonging through an increasingly racialized citizenship, which required the figures of alien sedition, white slaving and so on as its constitutive other. The next chapter will then take the story up through WWI, arguing that the racialized forms of citizenship, whose emergence we saw in chapter three and intensification I will narrate in this chapter, were normalized as a result of the state of emergency that was the war.

1911: The Siege of Sidney Street

Although Rucker, Kropotkin and the *Arbayter Fraynd* were opposed to political terror, there was still a current within the East End radical world that espoused revolutionary violence. The period of 1909-1911 saw a wave of anarchist scares. In January 1909, a policeman was murdered by Lettish (Lithuanian) socialist bankrobbers near Tottenham Marshes. In December 1910, there was the Houndsditch Affair, in which

Lettish burglars fought a gun battle with police. This was followed shortly by the (probably related) siege of Sidney Street the next week, again involving Letts. January 1911 also saw the murder of Russian Jew Louis Beron, found on Clapham Common with an "S" carved into his face, thought to indicate him being a police spy. All this was followed by the 1911-2 East End strike wave.

The Siege of Sidney Street was the most dramatic of these incidents. Lettish revolutionaries who had possibly been involved in the Houndsditch robbery were holed up in a house on Sidney Street, not far from the anarchist club at Jubilee St (which some of them had frequented). Through a Yiddish interpreter, the police brought out the other families in the building and 200 armed H Division policemen laid siege. The police small arms – bulldog revolvers, shotguns and rifles fitted with .22 Morris-tube barrels – turned out to be inadequate against the revolutionaries' Mauser pistols, and the police were joined by Scots Guards marksmen from the Tower of London and the Home Secretary, Winston Churchill. When the building caught alight from its bombardment, Churchill forbade the Fire Brigade from stemming the blaze.¹

Both the display of armed force by the domestic forces of law and order *and* the spectacle of armed resistance by foreign nationals on an ordinary terraced city street were unprecedented. The 1909-1911 wave of anarchist outrages, and especially the Sidney Street affair, were seen as a problem of alien invasion. Home Secretary Winston Churchill, when visiting Sidney Street, was greeted with cries of "Oo let 'em in?", a reference to the liberal refusal of successive governments to weaken the right of asylum by treating refugees more firmly.² The *Jewish Chronicle* perceived that the Sidney Street siege marked a change in the nature of policing and, closely bound up with this, the nature of citizenship, which is the key theme of this chapter:

That a responsible Minister of the Crown should find it necessary to preside over the bombardment of a house in a normally peaceful street; that artillery should be requisitioned for the purpose; and that the flames should be allowed to complete the whole scene of horror, is surely a matter that should provoke reflection among thoughtful men. That the whole of the deadly machinery should have been brought into operation against a couple of men presumed, but not proved, to be guilty of a certain crime, marks a grave departure, however necessary, from English methods, which the citizens of this great country rightly prize as among their choicest possessions. We assert, confidently, that no Englishman,

¹ Rogers (1981).

² Porter (1987:162). Churchill had opposed immigration restrictions in 1905.

whatever his creed or political predilections, can contemplate these proceedings without a feeling of profound misgiving.³

The *Chronicle's* optimism proved misplaced. As we will see in this chapter, the figure of alien sedition associated with Sidney Street made possible a tightening of policing and increased racialization of citizenship; the state of emergency that was war, as we will see in the next chapter, normalized these processes.

After Sidney Street: Inclusion and its Limits

In the weeks immediately after the Sidney Street affair, the *Evening Standard* serialized an article with the title: "LONDON OVERRUN BY UNDESIRABLES. VAST FOREIGN AREAS. A GROWING MENACE" (by "a Special Correspondent"). Here are some passages from it:

According to a member of Stepney Borough Council, 'if you start at London Bridge you can go to Stoke Newington and Hackney, and round by Stratford back to London Bridge without knowing you are in England at all.'... The whole atmosphere is unmistakably foreign - one feels it as one walks along; the people in the streets look at a Christian stranger out of the corners of the eyes with suspicious curiosity, and the stranger notices how un-English they are... Some shops have [signs saying] 'English spoken here.' (25.1.1911)

The truth is that the Ghetto is a modern Alsatia, where all those who claim the freedom of it may take refuge and be certain that none will betray them; it is a human warren full of holes in which fugitives may hide and baffle all pursuit; it is a place where our police are powerless, where the law becomes a dead letter. (26.1.1911)

The alien Jew is really an Eastern and that is one of the strongest objections that can be urged against his admission to this country; he can never really become an Englishman, or, indeed, a good English citizen, because he will never be able to share our ideals, to adopt our code of morals, or our standard of honour. (27.1.1911)

Several of the key issues of this thesis are crystallized in these passages: the politics of space and of language, the freedom of the city and the right of asylum, and tensions over citizenship. In terms of space, the text suggests a clearly defined and "unmistakably foreign" East End. The ghetto is "a modern Alsatia": this space within the city, with identifiable borders, is not of England. It is *visibly* not of England: "the people in the streets look at a Christian stranger out of the corners of the eyes with suspicious curiosity, and the stranger notices how un-English they are". And it is *tangibly* not of England: "one *feels* it as one walks along". The foreignness of the ghetto is *audible* too: in the foreign languages spoken by the people there. In specifying its foreignness, the writer superimposes other geographies onto London:

³ *JC* 6.01.1911. Reverend Barnett, who had been the Warden of Toynbee Hall, made similar points, quoted in *JC* 13.06.1911.

the East End and its “alien” Jewish denizen are figured in the text as “really... Eastern”: the ghetto becomes the metropolis’ internal orient.

Crucially, this is a space of exception, outside the law: “a place where our police are powerless, where the law becomes a dead letter”. Instead of the law, there is a different “code of morals” or “standard of honour”: a criminal one. A particular zoning of the metropolis emerges here, in the idea of “the ghetto as a modern Alsatia”: the lawless spaces of the city are somehow foreign and not of England and are therefore designated as spaces of exception outside the normal rule of law. Power mapped and named the zones of the city; proper names for districts were colour-coded as spaces of the city were racialized and criminalized.

Equally, the related notions of the right of asylum and of the freedom of the city are inverted in the text. The liberal idea of the right of asylum becomes connected discursively to criminality: refugees are constructed as fugitives; the place of asylum becomes “a modern Alsatia”; the meaning of refuge shifts from haven to lair. In this inverted world, the hospitality of Britain is abused so that the (Christian) hosts become the strangers.⁴

In this passage, assimilation is seen as something of which the Jew, as “really an Eastern”, is incapable: “he can never really become an Englishman, or, indeed, a good English citizen”. Furthermore, the Orientalness of the Jew is given a deep, ontological, essential status: he is *really* an Eastern. In other words, the Jews’ essential Easternness marks the limits of the assimilation project: the Oriental is figured as radically, essentially unassimilable.

The official Jewish leadership contested these racialized understandings of citizenship, and reaffirmed the possibility of the assimilation project by challenging the ethnic absolutism of such claims. In a letter to the Home Secretary, Winston Churchill, in February 1911, the Board of Deputies (BoD) responded to the *Standard’s* article:

⁴ This sort of discourse is common again today, when “terrorism” and “asylum” are often linked together so that the former is seen as an abuse of the latter, of hospitality. For example, Home Secretary David Blunkett has stated “I am determined to protect this country from anyone who is prepared to abuse our hospitality and welcome in order to plan or promote terrorism here or abroad” (“Blunkett defends emergency powers” ITV.com 11.11.2001). This sort of discourse emphasizes the limits, the conditionality, of liberal asylum rights, as will be discussed in the final chapters.

I beg to assure you that the Jewish Community have always been, and still are, quite as anxious as their Christian fellow-citizens to exclude from this Country the real undesirable aliens, by which I mean the criminal, the prostitute, the insane, the White-Slave trafficker, the bully, and those suffering from incurable or infectious disease. Our sympathy and efforts have always been on behalf of the Industrial Immigrant seeking a refuge from the cruel restrictions and persecutions which, as a Jew, he is subjected in less enlightened countries.⁵

Similarly, the warden of Toynbee Hall, T. Edmund Harvey MP, supported them in their refutation of the *Standard* article: “Your representative says that the alien Jew ‘can never become an Englishman’ or share our ideals. At the very least, his children may, and our history is evidence of it.”⁶

In both letters, there is an appeal to the myth of Britain as an “enlightened” place of refuge: citizenship is disaggregated from ethnic Englishness and associated instead with a sort of constitutional patriotism. Jews can *become* English; the assimilation principle is reaffirmed. At the same time, the Board subverts the exclusionist agenda by conflating “refugees” and “Industrial Immigrants”. This implicitly extends the right of asylum beyond the political exile. Jews in general, it is implied, have the right of asylum because they are persecuted as *Jews* – that is, as a collective – which radically extends the liberal conception of asylum. But the use of the term “Industrial Immigrants” goes even further: it collapses the distinction between those now called “genuine refugees” and those now called “economic migrants”. Arguably, however, the use of “Industrial”, rather than “economic”, does more complicated work. It attempts to disassociate Jews from their stereotype as parasites who live from profits rather than production, and associate them instead with productive industry.

This is one example of the BoD, while rejecting ethnic citizenship, accepting a cultural standard of citizenship, of assimilation to culturally English culture and values as the test of the right to citizenship. The idea of a cultural standard of citizenship is implicit in two further ways. First, it comes across in the use of the phrase “their Christian fellow-citizens”. In this phrase, Jewishness is figured not as a culture but as a religion, parallel with Christianity. Judaism, like Christianity, is relegated to the *private* sphere, perfectly compatible with a *public* assimilation to English values and citizenship. Secondly, the idea of a cultural standard of citizenship is implicit in the acceptance of the idea of “undesirable aliens” as those who fail to meet the standards of citizenship; citizenship is defined by its others, its constitutive outside,

⁵ HO 45/24610.

⁶ HO 45/24610.

the criminal, the prostitute, the insane, the White-Slave trafficker, the bully and the contagious. In other words, the Board of Deputies has taken on much of the exclusionists' framing of the debate.

We can see a similar pattern in other Anglo-Jewish texts of the time. At the consecration of the Forest Gate synagogue, in April 1911, the Chief Rabbi made a sermon alluding to recent events in Stepney and Houndsditch and urged the Jews of Forest Gate to assimilate as the remedy to unwelcome attention. His sermon responds to the claims such as those made in the *Standard* article and draws out themes developed in the Board of Deputies' letter to the Home Secretary:

And with the language of the land you must adopt its manners. You must be on your guard against making yourself conspicuous in the public streets, at places of entertainment, or at the open window by a loud tone of voice, by showiness of dress, by violent gesticulation, and the absence of quiet and reserve. It is true that these matters are externals, yet they should on no account be deemed trifles... [We must, however] prove ourselves consistent Jews and Jewesses in the sanctity of our homes.⁷

The *Standard* journalist described the East End Jews as visibly, tangibly and audibly foreign; this is precisely the terrain on which the Chief Rabbi sought to intervene. He essentially asks the Jews to be less visible and less audible. Crucially, he makes explicit the public/private distinction implicit in the phrasing "Christian fellow-citizen". Jewishness – or, rather, *Judaism* – is relegated to a religion, not a culture or ethnicity, and it is to be practised "internally", in the sanctity of the home.⁸ If, as I argued in the early chapters of this thesis, in the modern period the figure of the citizen was simultaneously held out as the object of the assimilation process *and* used as the standard to measure readiness to enter the public sphere, then in the years after Sidney Street this standard was increasingly harder for immigrants to measure up to. The figure of the seditious alien, of the really Oriental Jew, marked the limits of inclusion, the constitutive outside of citizenship.

⁷ *JC* 14.04.1911.

⁸ All of these versions, whether assimilationist or exclusionist, share one thing: claims of expert knowledge about and the right to represent the Jews of the East End. Various forms of insiderism are embodied by the Stepney councillor, the Warden of Toynbee Hall, or the Board of Deputies: the BoD posing as native informants, despite the cultural and class differences between them and the immigrants; the councillor and Warden privileging different forms of local knowledge. These claims, then, represent versions of the colonialist epistemologies discussed above, in chapter one.

After Sidney Street: Knowing the Body of the Alien

The panic around the terrorist outrages of 1911 resonated with a general panic around the figure of the seditious alien. The events intensified the interwoven medicalization and racialization of the East End and of its radicals. Two *Jewish Chronicle* editorials illustrate this nicely. One, displaying the medicalizing discourse that informed anti-alien legislation, spoke of the Houndsditch criminals as exhibiting “a disposition crazed and maddened by false and pernicious doctrine”.⁹ In another, Leo Greenberg, the editor of the *Jewish Chronicle*, writing as “Mentor”, described the process whereby the “East End” became a mythical space of alien sedition:

The pistol-flash of a few desperadoes has kindled the limelight of a sensational Press, and directed it, with its remarkable power of distorted exaggeration, to the East End. Every man, woman and child in the street knows by heart at least two thoroughfares which they believe are in the East End – Houndsditch and Sidney Street. Houndsditch, being within the City boundary, cannot correctly be said to be in the East End. But it doesn't matter to the man, woman or child in the street. A murder by aliens took place in Houndsditch – aliens and East End are in the street-minds one and indivisible.¹⁰

In turn, these fears resonated with a wider discourse around the health of the body politic: a concern about the fitness of the race, informed by the epistemic frame of eugenics, degeneration, criminology and anthropometry. In London, Darwin's cousin Francis Galton called for “stern compulsion” to “check the birth rate of the unfit”; the Italian Jewish criminologist Cesar Lombroso argued that different forms of criminality constituted different diseases and could thus be read off the body; in Vienna, Max Nordau provided a theory of degeneration and a gallery of degenerates; Home Secretary Winston Churchill warned the Prime Minister of degeneration's “very terrible danger to the race”.¹¹

The space of the city and the figure of the seditious alien were central to the fearful fantasies of the eugenics movement. Nordau associated the city with degeneration and the Jews with the city; there they had lost their roots in the land and taste for productive labour.¹² His typology of degenerates included the “excited orators... preaching the gospels of Communism and violence on every street corner in the large cities” (quoted Pick 1993:25), while Lombroso claimed that “anarchists like other criminals suffered from hereditary bodily anomalies” (ibid:131).

⁹ *JC* 6.01.1911.

¹⁰ *JC* 13.06.1911.

¹¹ Pick (1993), Mazower (1998:94-99).

¹² Mosse (1993:162-3).

The space of the city was constructed as the site of degeneration, of all the social diseases eugenics sought to ward off. Inquiries into the city were launched, informed by the eugenic imagination. There had already been an Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration in 1904 and a Royal Commission on the Poor Law in 1909, both of which established the city as a space of particular degeneration, a position supported by articles in *The Lancet* throughout the period.¹³

One key area of enquiry for the new urban sciences was the sweated industries: the casualized manufacture of clothing, footwear, furniture and other products, characterized by subcontracting and subdivision of tasks. East London was constructed in the investigations conducted by the anti-sweating movement and new urban sociologists as the site of sweating *par excellence*. In this literature, the figure of “the sweater” was racialized as an “alien” and set against a fantasy of pure white Englishness.¹⁴ The urban investigators strained at the limits of their scientific worldview when representing the sweater: Booth described the greed of the sweater as “a natural ambition, and one which appeals with peculiar force to the Jews. The evils which follow are patent” (volume V, 1896:35).

Anti-sweaters represented themselves as urban investigators, penetrating the sweating dens of the dark East End, while many of the new sociologists, like Beatrice Webb, became active in the anti-sweating movement. Despite the involvement in the movement of Jewish trade unionists like Lewis Lyons and Jewish philanthropists like Lily Montague, its publications constantly contrast “alien” sweating to gendered images of healthy imperial whiteness and Englishness. One 1914 anti-sweating tract, *White Slaves of Toil*, gives examples of Jewish victims of sweating, blames the West End retail market rather than Jews themselves for the system, does not call for alien restriction but rather for a minimum wage, stronger wages boards and votes for women. Nevertheless, it contains pages of racial scare stories like these:

The other day, a Russian Jew was summoned before the magistrate for paying a workwoman twopence per hour for blouse-making when the Government regulation price was threepence. The accused pleaded ignorance of the law and that he did not understand English. On that account he was dealt with leniently, and now boasts in Russian that he pays the princely sum of threepence per hour demanded by a parental Government as fair and reasonable wage for an Englishwoman... Not a

¹³ Pick (1993:184-191).

¹⁴ Judith Coffin’s study of Paris needle trades in the same period shows that a similar association of sweating with Jews and Turks, and therefore construction of sweating as “foreign”, took place there (1996:136-9).

very delightful prospect for a the women of the nation to enthuse or salute the flag and exclaim, 'God bless our native land'!¹⁵

A few pages later, he tells the story of a woman, whose "people, a good yeoman family, lived for more than 300 years in Kent" and fought for Britain in every war; she now works for low pay making blouses for "a Russian Jew who can't speak a word of English."¹⁶

The Britishness evoked here – and defined against an alien other – was framed in eugenic terms:

Nothing is done to save that splendid branch of the British family from whose future generations should spring to claim and protect the heritage of the greatest empire the world has ever known... All thinkers agree that strong, healthy, well-nourished women are the best assets of any nation.¹⁷

We can clearly see the role of gender in these writings. Immigration was associated with human trafficking, "white slavery" and thus prostitution, while the exploitation of female labour was also connected to sexual slavery.¹⁸ In the eugenic imagination, white bodies, white women and white families metonymically stood for the body politic of the nation, to be rigorously controlled and protected from alien contamination.

Anti-sweating tracts, locked in this racializing discourse, might insist that alien immigration was not responsible for sweating, while still associating the two phenomena. For instance, one pamphlet by two officers of the National Anti-Sweating League argues that the "evidence shows that while the evil effect of alien competition in clothing, shoemaking, cabinet making, etc., particularly in the East End of London, is undoubted, yet sweating would exist if alien immigration was prevented altogether."¹⁹ Similarly, a National Anti-Sweating League pamphlet by Constance Smith argues that

it would be idle to deny that, in certain localities and in certain branches of trade, the cheap labour of the Russian or Polish Jew has helped lower

¹⁵ WN Willis *White Slaves of Toil: How Women and Children are Sweated* 1915, London: C Arthur Pearson [BL/08248.a.4], p:35.

¹⁶ *Ibid*:38-9.

¹⁷ *Ibid*:17.

¹⁸ Other examples of the association of sweating with prostitution include James Samuelson *The Lament of the Sweated* 1908, London: PS King [BL/0827.aa.34], pp.19-21, and *Humanity*, the magazine of the British Federation for the Emancipation of Sweated Women, e.g. "Don'ts for Girls" (vol.1, no.1, May 1913, p.3) or "Tragic Tales of Women in the Abyss: Pathetic Letter from a Magdelane (vol.1, no.2, June 1913, p.11).

¹⁹ Edward Cadbury and George Shann (1907) *Sweating Social Service Handbooks No.V*, London: Headley Bros, p.86.

the wage of the English boot closer and the English tailoress. But... the alien immigrant, while he complicates our problem, has in no sense created it.²⁰

Likewise, a Fabian anti-sweating pamphlet from 1907 opposes restrictionism and says that sweating is rampant in totally non-Jewish sectors, but admits that “The evil effect of the Jew’s competition lies in the characteristics which render him a fit subject for the pestilential conditions of home work: he overcrowds whole districts; his standard of comfort is low; and his ingenuity has created or organized new industries to suit his circumstances.”²¹

Eugenic discourses were common currency in the anti-sweating literature. The Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration of 1904 the work of Francis Galton is quoted in a number of tracts on the sweated industry.²² Sweating was seen in terms of the moral and physical degeneration of the nation. The use of phrases like “fever dens” or calling sweating an “illness” and sweaters “parasites” served to medicalize the needle trades.²³ Charles Booth, for example, calls sweating “a disease”, “connected with the multiplication of small masters” (volume V, 1896:35). Maurice Adams of the Humanitarian League wrote that “Sweating is a disease of the body politic, arising from arrested development, both economical and moral.”²⁴ Constance Smith, in a National Anti-Sweating League pamphlet, has a section entitled “Indirect Effects of Sweating on the Future of the Race”, concluding:

The moral wrecks to be found among the children of the sweated are frequently as much the products of the sweating system as their sickly, feeble-minded and defective brothers and sisters. Together they help to furnish recruits to the growing army of the unemployed and unemployable, to fill our workhouses, hospitals, asylums and prisons.²⁵

The socialist anti-sweating campaigner and social investigator, Sidney Webb, strongly advocated eugenics, arguing that the decline in the English birth rate, at a time when the Catholic and Jewish birth rate was increasing, would lead, if

²⁰ Constance Smith (1912) *The Case for Wages Boards* London: National Anti-Sweating League [BL/08282.ff.31], pp.8-9.

²¹ Miss BL Hutchins *Home Work and Sweating: The Causes and Remedies* Fabian Tract No.130, London: Fabian Society [BL/8275.dd.7(130)], p.10.

²² See, e.g., Edward Cadbury and George Shann (1907) *Sweating* Social Service Handbooks No.V, London: Headley Bros, pp.53-61.

²³ An extreme version comes from the anti-alienist Arnold White, who spoke to the Royal Commission on Alien Immigration of an “alien invasion” of Jews from the East “feeding off” and “poisoning” the blood of the Londoner (quoted Pick 1993:173).

²⁴ Maurice Adams *The Sweating System* The Humanitarian League’s Publications No.22, 1896, London: William Reeves [BL/8425.AA.73/22], p.32.

²⁵ Constance Smith (1912) *The Case for Wages Boards* London: National Anti-Sweating League [BL/08282.ff.31], p.36.

unchecked, “to this country gradually falling to the Irish and the Jews.”²⁶ The Irish, the Jews, the sweater, the white slaver, the seditious alien: eugenics and degeneration theory provided a gallery of others against whom to measure the figure of the citizen.

While it is easy to think the anti-alienism of the period as a manifestation of a timeless anti-semitism, I have tried here to locate the figures of alien sedition and the sweater in their cultural field, as part of a wider discourse about national citizenship, informed by the scientific knowledges produced by eugenics, degeneration theory, criminology and urban investigation. As Daniel Pick writes,

the Royal Commission on Alien Immigration in 1903, and the ensuing Act in 1905, should not be seen as a mere anomaly, nor, exclusively, as part of some timeless, centuries-old phenomenon of anti-semitism, but in relation to that wider contemporary attempt to construct a racial-imperial identity, excluding all ‘bad blood’ and ‘pathological elements’, literally expelling anarchists, criminals, prostitutes, the diseased and the hopelessly poor – all those now declared ‘undesirable aliens’ (1993:215-6).²⁷

The next section will explore how the line between the citizen and these others was policed. The policing of aliens in this period emerged from the same cultural field and drew on the languages of eugenics and urban sociology in justifying its practices, but also contributed to this field in providing expertise and evidence to confirm the theories of degeneration and eugenics.

After Sidney Street: Policing Alien Sedition

The events of 1911 resulted in an immediate move towards immigration policies and policing practices whose aim was to map and police the activities of alien radicals in the East End. In terms of immigration policy, Churchill’s predecessor Herbert Gladstone drafted a law making it easier to deport criminal aliens straight after the Tottenham murder, and Churchill drafted legislation to expel aliens for possessing guns or consorting with known criminals. However, neither measure passed into law.²⁸

²⁶ Sidney Webb *The Decline in the Birth-Rate* Fabian Tract No.131, 1907, London: Fabian Society [BL/8275.dd.7(131)] p.17.

²⁷ The body of work associated with Tony Kushner, Colin Holmes and David Cesarani has been extremely important in excavating the persistence anti-semitic prejudices in liberal England, but has often over-emphasized both anti-semitism as an explanation for anti-alienism *and* the 1905 legislation in the constitution of British immigration history. See, for example, Cesarani (1990, 1993, 1994), Holmes (1979), Tony Kushner (1989, 1990, 1999).

²⁸ Porter (1987:162).

In terms of policing, at least two Special Branch officers (Quinn and McCarthy) were in the front line at Sidney Street; the Special Branch probably also took on some of the case (such as investigating Errico Malatesta, the Italian anarchist comrade of Rudolf Rocker and tangentially connected to one of the Sidney Street bandits). The Branch also had an increase in staff, Quinn giving as a reason for the request “The large number of Russian, Polish, Yiddish and Anarchists of other nationalities, resident in London.”²⁹

As well as the growth of the Special Branch, this period saw the emergence of what was to become MI5. In 1909, the head of the Army’s secret service was asked by the Foreign Espionage Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence (in which the Metropolitan police were represented) to form a Secret Service Bureau. The same year, an Interdepartmental Conference was held on “the Prevention of Civil Trouble in the Metropolis in Time of War”. There was also an Imperial Defence sub-committee on the “Treatment of Aliens in Time of War”. In these various committees, the notion of alien sedition was elaborated, and Special Branch and MI5’s expert knowledge of the urban spaces of alien sedition was drawn on to articulate a need to develop new tools to exclude foreign radicals. For example, a report of the sub-committee on the “Treatment of Aliens in Time of War” noted the fact that the 1905 Aliens Act was aimed at lunatics, sick people, paupers and criminals and *not* at seditious aliens, creating the need for further restriction. The same report also quoted the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, who felt that “a city like London with so vast an alien population” required particularly stringent police powers to regulate.³⁰

“It was in these various sub-committees and conferences,” argues Porter, “that most of the new weapons against subversion were formed” (1987:167). Porter identifies three such new weapons. They were: a register of aliens, the authorization of general warrants for intercepting mail, and the new Official Secrets Act. The register of aliens was proposed by the Foreign Espionage Sub-Committee in 1910. Post-Sidney Street, Churchill drafted aliens legislation which included the registration of aliens in “designated areas” (as well as wartime detention, expulsion and exclusion measures). However, it was decided to drop the bill due to anticipated parliamentary opposition and an unofficial, *secret* register was undertaken instead, beginning outside London.³¹

²⁹ *ibid*:165. Note that “Yiddish” here is described as a “nationality”.

³⁰ in HO 45/196291/99699/6

³¹ Porter (1987:169).

The interception of letters and telegrams became far more frequent from around 1909. It was in October 1911, after Sidney Street, that Churchill authorized general warrants, rather than specific warrants, for intercepting mail, on the request of Vernon Kell, the head of the embryonic MI5.³² At the same time, Kell played a part in the drafting of the 1911 Official Secrets Act. As Tony Bunyan writes, this Act “is the central law governing this field today, yet it passed through parliament [in August 1911] in a mere thirty minutes” (1976:7) – with very few MPs noticing that it covered British subjects as much as the foreign spies who were advertized as its targets. Bunyan argues that the Act’s “central purpose should be seen primarily as a means of *internal* rather than external restraint” (ibid:11). While scarcely deterring foreign agents, the Act protects the secret workings of the state and provides a “formidable weapon should internal conflict arise within Britain, and for the laws to be used most effectively against political opponents of all kinds” (ibid).

For our purposes, the first interesting thing about the 1911 Act, contained in the very first Section of it, is the spatial dimension of its provisions. It criminalizes “any person [who] for any purpose prejudicial to the safety or interests of the State... approaches or is in the neighbourhood of, or enters any prohibited place” (quoted ibid). A prohibited place is defined in Section 3 as every building that the State defines as such. After prohibiting other related activities (sketches, communicating sketches, passing notes to the enemy), Section 1’s second paragraph gets to the Act’s second crucial aspect: “it shall not be necessary to show that the accused person was guilty of any particular act... he may be convicted if, from the circumstances of the case, or his conduct, or his known character as proved, it appears that his purpose was a purpose prejudicial to safety or interests of the State” (ibid:12). In other words, the *emergency* nature of the matters at hand, in the wake of the panic around alien sedition, justified a state of *exception* to the normal rule of law. Moreover, as Bunyan indicates, the stipulation about “known character” implicitly gives agency to the mixture of rumour, hearsay and investigation recorded in the secret files of the political police – of Kell’s MI5 and Thomson’s Special Branch.³³

³² Porter (ibid:169-76), Bunyan (1976:212).

³³ The Law Commission’s Consultation Paper *Evidence in Criminal Proceedings: Previous Misconduct of a Defendant* (Law Commission Consultation Paper No 141, 10.07.1996) comments on this in Part 3, paragraphs 3.4-3.7: “This constitutes an exception to the general exclusionary rule at common law that evidence of a defendant’s character may not be adduced as part of the prosecution case... such a provision runs contrary to the usual principles of justice.” The document notes the Attorney-General’s (Rufus Isaacs, who was

There were three other crucial provisions. Section 4 gives “incitement” to Official Secrets crimes equal weight as committing them (ibid:12-3); this criminalizes political expression as well as action and made possible a broader policy of police harassment of radicals. Section 7 makes it an offence to “harbour” someone who has committed an Official Secrets crime (ibid); this deepens the spatial dimensions of the act which we have already examined, giving the agents of the law greater access to the public and private spaces of the alien “colonies”. Finally, Section 9 makes it much easier for search warrants to be granted in Official Secrets crimes (in the case of “great emergency”, the warrant can be granted by a police superintendent alone) (ibid); this was another spatial technology which could be used against alien radicals. These wider-reaching spatial technologies enabled the state to deal with its alien “colony” as a whole as well as individual subversive aliens.

As well as these actually used “new weapons”, other strategies were prepared as contingency measures. For instance, in June 1909 the Prevention of Civil Trouble in the Metropolis Conference agreed that

the police should be armed with carbines and assisted by two army battalions to put down disorder in London after hostilities had commenced. Later on the Army took this to mean that it should take the capital over completely, with soldiers empowered to shoot malefactors on sight, and its own network of ‘intelligence officers’ reporting back to ‘Area Commandants’ from likely ‘centres of discontent’ (Porter 1987:169).

Again, this concern with the zoning of the metropolis, the spatial dimension of the provision – the identification of (zones within) the metropolis as a space of danger and disorder – is a thread which connects the idea of “the ghetto as a modern Alsatia”, to Churchill’s “designated areas” and to the Army’s “Area Commandants” and “likely centres of discontent”: the lawless spaces of the city are somehow foreign and not of England and are therefore designated as spaces of exception outside the normal rule of law.³⁴

Porter argues that around this time, the two political police forces (Special Branch and MI5) began to extend their interest in subversion from the Fenians and foreign anarchists to domestic radicals: suffragettes, syndicalists and socialists.³⁵ This was a period of immense working-class unrest: there were over 3000 strikes in the three

Jewish) defence at the time: “The sense of justice in this country is perfectly fair to all persons, and there would be no danger to anyone engaged in something perfectly innocent.”

³⁴ On the city as a space of concern in this period, see Tagg (1992:134-56).

years leading up to World War I.³⁶ The model drawn up and perfected against alien sedition was now used against domestic sedition. For example, in East London, the Bow and Bromley branch of the ILP (a group that had links with both East End suffragettes and the Jewish socialists) protested in October 1910 against “the action of the Police authorities in the Boro of Poplar in sending reporters to the Public meetings of the Labour & Socialist Parties... we believe this system of Police espionage to be dangerous to the best traditions of British freedom” (quoted Porter 1987:176). Examples of the targeting of radical suffragettes, especially in the East End, include the Women’s May Day event in Victoria Park in 1914, organized by the East London Federation of Suffragettes (led by Sylvia Pankhurst). This was attacked by police officers dressed as costermongers.³⁷ More seriously, in 1912, five trade unionists, including Tom Mann, were prosecuted for their paper *The Syndicalist* which reprinted a leaflet “Open Letter to British Soldiers”. The Open Letter called upon soldiers not to act against striking workers (“YOU, like US, are of the Slave CLASS” etc). The prosecution was under the 1797 Incitement to Mutiny Act, originally passed as a temporary measure in the context of Napoleonic War emergency (but also, therefore, the context of a revolutionary historical period) and not used for a century before 1912. The law would be used during the war against anarchist papers and in 1918 against Scottish bolshevik John Mclean (Bunyan 1976:28-9).

Towards War

The new weapons developed in the period from 1905, and especially after 1911, were to be applied more fully during World War I – while other weapons, only *proposed* before the war, were fully implemented from 1914. If the ghetto was already seen as a space of exception, outside the normal rule of law, the war, as national emergency, was seen as a *time* of exception outside the normal rule of law. Basil Thomson became head of the Special Branch as Assistant Commissioner of the Met in June 1913. He already felt that Britain was in a state of emergency – he felt “subversives” held Britain “*in terrorem*” – and his experience as a colonial administrator and prison governor equipped him to deal with the task of policing this emergency.³⁸

³⁵ It is possible that the links these movements had with Irish and continental radicals in London were instrumental in allowing the police to see them as legitimate targets.

³⁶ Bunyan (1976:111).

³⁷ Taylor (1993:31).

³⁸ Porter (1987:177).

The war meant a huge expansion in secret policing. MI5 grew from fourteen officers and staff in July 1914 to 844 at the end of the war. Special Branch went from 114 in November 1914 to 700. Their combined budgets went from £25,000 to £200,000. There was a new department for censoring mail and another for telegrams (the former had a staff of 1,453 in 1915 and stopped 356,000 letters from reaching their addressees). The aliens register was made official.³⁹ The 1914 legislation and subsequent war-time practice, I will argue in the next chapter, more strongly inscribed the cultural and racial versions of British citizenship (that is, Britishness as ethnic Englishness) on to the older legal versions, further normalizing the new ways of thinking political belonging. As the then Permanent Under-Secretary at the Home Office would later write, no longer was it difficult “to exclude persons who had not identified themselves with English life and remained in sentiment really foreigners” (quoted Cohen 1994:44).

I will stress in the next chapter the crucial role WWI alien policy played in defining an exclusive, colour-coded British citizenship and nationality, a role that went far beyond simply creating controls over alien movement. As I will argue, the 1914 Act, and WWI legislation as a whole, meant that discourses around “the undesirable alien” were now overcoded by racialized discourses around nationality, citizenship and Britishness. That is, the ways of thinking which emerged in the sub-committees and conferences discussed in this chapter were realized and normalized in the war-time state of emergency; it was war that made the difference.

³⁹ Porter (1987:180).

Chapter 7

Soldiers, Citizens And Aliens

Droll rat, they would shoot you if they knew
Your cosmopolitan sympathies.

(Isaac Rosenberg "Day Break in the Trenches")

The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the 'state of
emergency' in which we live is not the exception but the rule.

(Walter Benjamin)

This chapter is about the mapping and policing of aliens during the First World War. It has four themes. One, continuing the discussion in the last chapter, is the over-laying of a new or modern notion of nationality as *citizenship* of an ethnically homogenous nation-state over the older notion of nationality as a personal relationship (as a *subject*) to the sovereign. This theme is closely connected to the second theme of sovereign power and the *state of emergency*. Although the old conception of nationality as subject of the sovereign was being supplanted by the new notion of citizenship, this did not mean that sovereign power diminished. In fact, the state of emergency that became the norm during World War I – a state of emergency in which executive power was reaffirmed and extended – was the context in which the new ordering of citizens was enacted. Although I draw on Hannah Arendt and Walter Benjamin (as well as on Giorgio Agamben, who has developed their insights) in thinking this state of emergency, I want to suggest that the theoretical trajectory they work within was already glimpsed, as a result of their experience of the war-time state of emergency, by some of the radical figures who have been characters in this thesis, in particular Rudolf Rocker and Emma Goldman.

A third theme is that of *visibility and indecipherability*. For those who sought to carry out this new ordering of citizens, the bodies of aliens and the zones in which they dwelt were *indecipherable*. The strategies used to order them first had to render them visible. A fourth theme is the *casual heterogeneity* of alien communities, of the urban spaces in which they dwelt; this was one of the factors that made them indecipherable to the ordering process.

Bauman has suggested that World War I and the Europe that emerged from it was the zenith of the modern formation of the nation-state:

The world tightly packed with nations and nation-states abhorred the non-national void... Suspicion that their own Jews lacked patriotism and enthusiasm for slaughtering the nation's enemies, was well-nigh the only point of agreement between the warring camps in the Great War... Unlike the membership of those 'born into' a national community, for the Jews the membership was a matter of choice, and hence in principle revocable, 'until further notice'. Boundaries of national communities (even more so of their territorial holdings) were still uncertain, complacency was impermissible, vigilance was the order of the day. The barricades are erected to divide, and woe unto those who use them as passageways. The sight of a large group of people free to flip at will from one national fortress to another must have aroused deep anxiety. It defied the very truth on which all nations, old and new alike, rested their claims; the ascribed character of nationhood, heredity and naturalness of national entities (1989:53-5).

Bauman's picture, of a Europe tightly packed with nations, closely mirrors the view (as I will try and document in this chapter) that was spreading from the European nationalist movements to policy-makers during that time. However, the dirty heterogeneity on the ground should undermine any analysis which takes this view for granted. In other words, Bauman's picture, of an emerging Europe tightly packed with nations and nation-states, is only half the story. As the nation-states were dreamed into existence, they remained unstable. The non-national and boundary-crossing Jews were one cause of instability, but not the only one.

What I will attempt to describe in this chapter, then, is a sort of categorization machine – organized around the notion of a Europe of discrete, integral, ethnically and linguistically homogeneous nation-states – a machine with a certain legal agency, a certain reality at the level of international and domestic state-craft – and a certain reality in the minds of the assorted nationalists of Europe who were exiled in London. However, as I shall argue, this map emphatically did not fit the territory in the real places where 'aliens' lived, worked and struggled – the urban spaces of England and Scotland, and above all London's East End. Here, as we have seen throughout the thesis, there was a sort of casual mixing, a variety of mundane practices of identity and resistance, an almost endless proliferation of (sometimes overlapping, sometimes contradictory) identifications, and a series of transversal networks and movements forming an alternative public sphere with its own alternative versions of belonging and citizenship. These disturbed and complicated the

official picture, both splitting open and moving across its neat categorizations. The official need, then, to map and police these categories grew more and more intense and violent, even as that mapping and policing became operationally more and more untenable.

The first half of the chapter, then, will spell out some of the changing ways citizens and aliens were policed in the war, looking at the categorization of the alien population into friendly and alien, then at the process of registering aliens and imposing identity cards and passports, before focusing on internment, while the second half will examine some of the conceptual fuzziness in which these technologies were implicated, and how these were negotiated and resisted by the aliens themselves.

The 1914 Legislation and the State of Emergency

The alien legislation introduced in 1914 had been planned before the war; it had been prepared by a “Treatment of Aliens During War” sub-committee of the Imperial Defence Committee. The sub-committee was assembled in 1910 under the Chairmanship of Winston Churchill and reconstituted under the Chairmanship of Reginald McKenna in October 1912.

The General Staff explicitly noted the nexus between the state of emergency or exception and sovereign power in a 1910 document reproduced as Appendix III (“The Powers that we possess of dealing with aliens”) of the Sub-Committee’s 1910 Report that served to define the parameters of the Sub-Committee. This was a six-page document specifically concerned with the history and precedents of the *executive* branch of government exercising powers over aliens without the mediation of the due course of law. It quotes at length from the judgement in the Ship Money Case:¹

Royal power... is to be used in cases of necessity and imminent danger, when ordinary courses will not avail, for it is a rule *Non occurrendum est ad extrordinaria quando fieri potest per ordinaria*, as in cases of rebellion, sudden invasion, and in other cases

¹ The “Ship Money Case” was the refusal of a parliamentarian to pay a royal tax levied on ports, an incident which helped spark off the English Revolution. The statement by the Solicitor General, Oliver St. John (1904), is a foundational text of English constitutionalism.

where martial law may be used, and may not stay for legal proceedings.²

The document made three recommendations:

- (1.) The amendment of the 'Official Secrets Act, 1889,' so as to give power of arrest without previous reference to the Attorney-General, and power of search.
- (2.) The registration at all times of all aliens arriving in this country.
- (3.) The enactment of a measure conferring upon the Executive in time of war powers similar to those provided under 'The Aliens Act, 1803'.³

Recommendation (1) was realized in the 1911 Official Secrets Act. Recommendation (2) was considered by the Home Office impracticable. However, "it was suggested that it would be sufficient if the Government were given power at any time to order the registration of aliens, or all aliens of a particular nationality, and either throughout the country, or in a particular area." When the Sub-Committee first met, under Churchill, it too drew back from the full force of Recommendation (2), on grounds of practicability. However, an informal register was already in progress, carried out by the War Office (by the branch led by Vernon Kell that would become MI5).⁴

On Recommendation (3), the Home Office suggested an act could be passed in peace-time that would come into force by Order in Council if war broke out, but also that some of its provisions might become permanent. In 1911, legislation was drafted, using some of the wording from the Ship Money Case precedent, as "a Bill Enabling His Majesty in Time of War or Imminent National Danger or Great Emergency by Order in Council to impose restrictions on Aliens." Powers given to the monarch included deportation, prohibition of entry, prevention of departure, exclusion zones, powers to require "any aliens to reside within a certain area", registration, temporary detention, and any other measures necessary for the safety of the realm.⁵

The Aliens Restriction Act was rushed through Parliament on the very first day of war, August 5; it was introduced in the House of Commons at 3.30 p.m. and

² *Report of the Sub-Committee on the Treatment of Aliens in Time of War* HO 45/10629/199699/6.

³ HO 45/10629/199699/6. The 1803 Act had been a very stringent Napoleonic War ruling that enabled all aliens to be forced to leave the country, all aliens' houses to be searched, and suspicious aliens to be detained. Cf Cohen (1994:40-1) on the 1793 and 1803 Acts.

⁴ HO 45/10629/199699.

received Royal Assent at 7 p.m. Its novel structure created a framework whereby the monarch (in reality the Home Secretary) could extend the state's powers over aliens at will, through Orders in Council, without the legislature's endorsement. It was, quite explicitly, an emergency measure. However, its powers were renewed annually, and most of its mechanisms were kept in place after war's end. The 1919 Aliens Act, passed initially for one year only, retained many of the war-time measures; it was renewed annually until 1971. Among the powers reserved by the executive was that to determine an alien's nationality.⁶

At the end of this chapter, I will return to this notion of the state of emergency which became permanent, arguing that although the new techniques and technologies of citizenship had been developed before the war in various sub-committees and conferences, it was the war-time state of emergency that naturalized the new ways of thinking citizenship, reconfiguring and racializing conventional understandings of political belonging. I will argue that the experience of the catastrophe – the experience of internment, deportation and statelessness – already enabled people like Rudolf Rocker (interned for the duration of the war and deported to Germany towards the end of it) and his comrade Emma Goldman (deported from the US at the end of the war and subsequently exiled to Britain) to see that, as Walter Benjamin later wrote, “the ‘state of emergency’ in which we live is not the exception but the rule” (1992:248). Here, though, in order to make that argument, I will describe the workings of these new technologies of citizenship: categorization, registration, counting, carding and finally internment.

Categorizing Aliens

After the initial fundamental division between nationals and aliens, aliens were themselves split into “friendly” and “enemy” on the basis of the war. Subjects of any “enemy” state (Germany, the Austro-Hungarian empire, Bulgaria and the Ottoman empire) were classed as “enemy aliens”. Subjects of any allied state (France, Italy, the Russian empire) were classed as “friendly aliens”. Subjects of neutral states (such as Belgium) were classed as “neutral aliens”. In the East End, what this meant is that the Yiddish-speaking Polish Jews were divided up into these categories. Those born in Bohemia, Moravia,

⁵ HO 45/10629/199699/2, 6.

⁶ Dummett and Nichol (1990:107-8).

Cracow, Galicia, Bukovina, Ruthenia, Transylvania or Hungary were classed as “Austrians” and treated as enemy aliens. Likewise, those born in Silesia, Danzig, East Prussia and substantial parts of Poland were designated “Germans” and thus enemies. On the other hand, those born in Lithuania, White Russia, Estonia, Bessarabia, Odessa or the Ukraine were considered “Russians” and treated as friendly aliens. Meanwhile, the substantial Russian Jewish population of Belgium (many of whom were associated with the diamond trade and moved to the diamond district of Hatton Gardens) were treated as neutral refugees.

In other words, one community – sharing a common language culture, living in close proximity in the same part of London, often linked by kinship ties – was officially divided overnight. Once the initial categorizations had been set up, the next step was counting aliens, card indexing them and issuing them identity cards.

Registration: An Orgy of Statistics

Like the Aliens Restriction Act itself, the war-time registration of aliens, ostensibly introduced as an emergency measure, had been put into effect informally before war began. In October 1910, the Imperial Defence Committee’s Sub-Committee on the treatment of aliens during war had asked the War Office to draw up a form of return for resident aliens. This task was carried out by Vernon Kell.⁷ He then began to collaborate with the county constabularies on compiling an unofficial list of aliens. Within a year, he was ready to shift his attention from the counties to the (more populous) boroughs. On his behalf, the Home Office issued a circular to chief constables introducing Kell as being “charged with the investigation of confidential matters on behalf of the War Office and Admiralty. He is authorized to discuss with you certain questions regarding undesirable aliens and persons suspected of sabotage.”⁸ Early in 1913, the administration in Australia asked the Foreign Office if Britain kept a list of aliens. The Foreign Office asked the Home Office to answer this question informally, who in turn passed the query on to Kell who stressed they must be made aware that the process was secret.⁹ By the end of 1913, the compilation of the registers was substantially complete – with the

⁷ HO 45/10629/199699/1.

⁸ HO 45/10629/199699/3.

⁹ HO 45/10629/199699/4.

major exception of the Metropolitan Police district, where around half Britain's resident aliens were living.¹⁰

The minutes of the first meeting of the Aliens Sub-Committee of the Imperial Defence Committee record that Lieut.-Col. MacDonagh of the General Staff felt that the resident alien is a real danger and forcing him to register would be a more powerful deterrent than any police secret register.¹¹ No doubt, his views were shared by many of his colleagues and when war began and the Aliens Restriction Act was passed, this process could now be carried out openly.

From this point onwards, several strategies were pursued to register, list, index and statistically analyze the number of alien males in the country; as soon as one register was completed a new registration initiative was started. The main burden of the tasks fell on the shoulders of the Metropolitan Police.¹² Even the Home Office found the whole thing a bit much at times. John Pedder's April 1917 minutes: "The [National Service] Ministry seem to be going in for an orgy of statistics and compilation of lists." (The Ministry suggested that the listing of aliens was the first step in card indexing the whole population!)¹³

Identity Cards and Passports

The Napoleonic War alien legislation (the 1803 Act, clauses 14-17) had set a precedent for requiring aliens to carry identity cards. These were described as "passports" in the legislation, but more resembled identity cards than what we think of now as passports. They were issued by a magistrate at an alien's place of entry into the kingdom, and declared the alien's proposed place of abode. "A fresh passport had to be obtained at every change of residence, and magistrates were empowered to compel aliens to exhibit their passports, and to commit them if the latter were not in order."¹⁴ Like the WWI legislation, the 1803 legislation was explicitly an emergency measure, drafted in the face of French invasion. The practice had lapsed in peacetime, but now again,

¹⁰ HO 45/10629/199699/5.

¹¹ HO 45/10629/199699/6.

¹² The findings of these initiatives are compiled in the three huge bound volumes of HO 45/11522/287235.

¹³ HO 45/10839/333052/19.

¹⁴ HO 45/10629/199699/6.

under the Aliens Restriction Act, all aliens were required to carry identity cards.

As well as identity cards that fixed the identity of aliens as they moved within Britain, passports began to fix the identity of those who moved across borders.

The introduction of passports... served to control exit since the warring states had no desire to lose soldiers or skills. Passports, which were introduced in spite of resistance in Britain and other European countries, as a wartime necessity, became an important part of the state's armoury in the battle to control its borders (Schuster and Solomos 1999:55, 70).

The introduction of the modern passport mechanisms illustrate two of the points I have been developing in this chapter. First, they were introduced as an *emergency measure*. Domestically, MCOs (Military Control Officers, who were MI5 agents – i.e. part of the military not the immigration service) were placed at ports around Britain shortly after the beginning of war to oversee a regularized passport control process. The ports where they were initially placed reflect a racialized sense of danger to Britain's borders: ports used by the "rough type" of alien seamen ("of a more than usually mixed nationality including Greeks, Spaniards, Portuguese and men of the black and yellow races") and ports used by "that most dangerous class of traffic, the short voyage vessel sailing between the U.K. and the Northern European Countries" (i.e. vessels carrying a large number of refugees from Eastern Europe).¹⁵ Overseas, advance passport control and the granting of visas was developed at the same time by MCOs – in other words again by *military* not consular authorities.¹⁶ Emergency Defence Regulations 51, 54 and 55 gave the MCOs in England extensive powers to search, interrogate and arrest passengers and to prevent conveyance of letters and printed matter into the country – powers that went far beyond the powers the police had at that time.

Secondly, the modern mechanisms also reveal the shift from nationality as an individual relationship to the sovereign to a universalized citizenship involving rights and duties. As late as April 1921, a letter from the Foreign Office to the Home Office reveals the novelty of the new machinery, but also the way in which it was being normalized: "it is the policy of His Majesty's Government that British Subjects travelling or residing abroad should be provided with a

¹⁵ KV 1/22 1919 Report of MI5 "E" Branch.

¹⁶ KV 1/21.

single uniform type of document definitely establishing the identity and nationality of the holder, and for this purpose a passport is the most efficacious... It is therefore of increasing importance that British passports shall be issued only to persons having a proper claim to them and consequently that powers be obtained to take action against offenders, whether in the United Kingdom or abroad, who by false statements or otherwise obtain passports to which they are not entitled.”¹⁷

Internment

The 1803 legislation that we have already looked at also contained precedent for the internment of aliens in Clause 33 under which “Certain authorities were authorised to take into custody any suspicious alien, and to detain him during His Majesty’s pleasure”;¹⁸ in 1914, in the new state of emergency, these powers were invoked again. The official policy on internment fluctuated rapidly through the war and can be separated into seven distinct phases.

i. August 1914: Emergency Detention

On 4 August, before Britain was officially at war, the police arrested “known spies” – Germans who had been under surveillance by Vernon Kell’s Special Intelligence Department. On 8 August 1914 (three days after Britain entered the War) a conference of senior government officials was held at the War Office. The decision made was to intern “only those aliens who were regarded by the Police as dangerous.” The police proceeded to round up 200 other people who had been “noted as under suspicion or to be kept under special observation”. At the same time, the Aliens Restriction Act had come into force (on 5 August, the first day of war) which forced aliens to register with the police so that non-dangerous enemy aliens could be monitored without being interned. The first months of war also saw 120,000 enquiries into suspicious aliens made, and 6000 house searches.¹⁹

ii. September 1914: General Detention

On 4 September, the Home Office and War Office decided that all male Germans of military age should be interned, to stop them being used by the German war machine. The Home Office then sent a circular (on 7 September)

¹⁷ HO 45/12034.

¹⁸ HO 45/10629/199699/6.

¹⁹ Gillman and Gillman (1980:8-9).

to all chief constables. The War Office had the task of guarding them once arrested, and on 13 September it had run out of space to keep all the aliens arrested by the police. By October, 15,600 prisoners had been interned.²⁰

iii. October 1914: Relaxation

This problem with space led to the third phase: the suspension of action on the 7 September circular – in other words, a de facto return to the original policy. However, on the ninth of November, the government's legal receivers decided that registered aliens – whose entitlement to the legal rights of subjects had previously been upheld by a court decision of 24 October (*Princess of Thurn and Taxis v. Moffit*) – would lose those rights if they were “removed to a concentration camp”.²¹ A 15 November Home Office circular to the police, stipulating that anyone interned after finishing a prison sentence was to remain interned, used the same words. These are the first official usages I have found of the term “concentration camps” for these internment camps. By this time, 5500 were interned in London – many in Olympia Exhibition Hall, including, briefly, Solo Linder, the editor of the *Arbayter Fraynd* – and 6900 in the provinces. Two camps were opened on the Isle of Man. Some time at the end of the year, a camp was established in the East End itself, at Ritchie's Works, a disused jute factory on Carpenters Road in Stratford.²²

iv. Early November 1914: General Internment Again

However, this “liberal” policy was immediately under threat from the rising tide of anti-German hysteria. The internment drive began again. London's internees were generally taken to Olympia (with space for 1200) for distribution to other camps. By early November, there were 1500 men held there, and a total of 10,000 detained men across the country. There was a camp for destitute German sailors in an abbey in Hampshire. As well as the camps, three boats full of Germans were moored in the Thames estuary near Southend: the *Royal Edward* and *Saxonia*, holding internees, and the *Ivernia*, holding actual prisoners of war. Many more were housed “under canvas” – getting colder as winter set in.

²⁰ HO 45/10760/269116; Gillman and Gillman (1980:9). It was at this stage that the émigré national committees of the various would-be nation-states of Eastern Europe approached the government for exemption from internment, as will be discussed below.

²¹ HO 45/10944/257142/22.

²² HO 45/10760/269116; Rucker (1956:246-8).

On the Isle of Man, there was a camp privately run by a farmer named Cunningham at a profit (his costs were low as the men slept in tents). A Home Office team visited the island in late October and identified a Territorial Army camp near the village of Knockaloe. The clay soil required the building of elevated huts and the laying of cindered paths and the government of the island undertook to do the work, hoping to make a profit. They offered to take 5000 internees by 11 November and the War Office began shipping them there. However, accommodation was ready for only 750 men by the date agreed with 1300 men interned there. The surplus were put into the tents of Cunningham's camp, exceeding its (theoretical) capacity of 2400 by 700. Conditions were terrible, and on 19 November the internees staged a protest; the military guard opened fire on the protesters killing five.²³

v. Winter 1914/15: Release Again

The official investigation of this led to the next change of policy. The War Office, under Lord Kitchener, demanded that the Home Office should start releasing internees. The police and War Office began identifying people to set free so room could be made for those considered more dangerous still at large. Nearly 3000 men were released. However, the Home Office continued with preparations: by the end of February 1915 there was room for 2000 men at Knockaloe with expansion work still underway.²⁴ While many were being released, however, the state took the opportunity to intern anti-war enemy aliens: Rudolf Rocker was taken to Leman Street police station one night in December and then to Olympia the next morning, where he met up with other German anarchists being rounded up, such as Karl Meuel of the Communist Workers' Education Union. Rocker and Meuel were transported to the *Royal Edward* in the Thames, where they met other interned comrades, such as Ernst Simmerling, Polly Witkop's partner, and Charlie Lahr, also married to a Jewish woman named Esther Argeband, and Rocker's older son Rudolph.²⁵ Albert Meltzer describes Lahr:

a German anarchist who had come to London to avoid military service and stayed forty years. At first there was a suspicion by the police that he had come to shoot the Kaiser, who had unwittingly decided to pay England a visit at the same time, though he did not stay so long. Charlie was shadowed by Special Branch until one cold night he took pity on the detective staying outside the bakery

²³ HO 45/10760/269116; Gillman and Gillman (1980:10-4).

²⁴ HO 45/10760/269116; Gillman and Gillman (1980:14-6).

²⁵ Fermin Rocker (1998:119-23), Rudolf Rocker (1956:251-67).

where he worked, and came out to explain to him that the baker himself took sufficient precautions to see none of his nightworkers got away before time either to go playing cards or shoot visiting potentates according to their taste. A few years later the war broke out and he was interned in Alexandra Palace as an enemy alien and was interviewed by the same detective. 'You thought I'd come to shoot the Kaiser,' chuckled Charlie. 'Pity you didn't,' said the detective in a decided change of position (1996:57).

vi. 1915-1918: General Internment Again

On 7 May 1915, the *Lusitania* was sunk by German torpedoes and anti-German feeling reached a new peak. On 13 May, Prime Minister Herbert Asquith announced that "all alien enemies of fighting age" should be locked up. The Home Office commenced plans to expand Knockaloe to house a 20,000 capacity; this capacity was reached at the end of the year, and was soon passed. It housed an array of prisoners: Turks and Bulgars; Boers from South Africa; and Duala tribesmen from the German Cameroons. There were also pro-British Dualans who had volunteered in Africa to fight in France but were considered too short to deal with the mud and transferred to Knockaloe to guard internees. They downed arms when they discovered that fellow tribesmen were among those they were to guard.²⁶

With a new sense of permanence about the internment, Rucker and others were taken off the boats and moved to permanent camps: in his case, the converted Alexandra Palace, others to the Isle of Man.²⁷ This sixth and longest phase of the internment policy fluctuations was punctuated by diplomatic pressure from America and other countries to relax the stringent regime and improve conditions in the camps. American complaints about the flooded compounds of Knockaloe were met with a Home Office response that demonstrated a version of the environmental racism that saved the Dualans from the fields of France and sent West Indian soldiers to North Africa:

The complaints as to the climate of the Isle of Man are based no doubt on unfamiliarity of the conditions there to persons acquainted only with a Continental climate or accustomed to a tropical climate... it is by no means unhealthy and the Island is, in normal times, the favourite health and pleasure resort of great

²⁶ Gillman and Gillman (1980:16-9).

²⁷ Rucker (1956:285). See also his essay "An Insight into Civilian Internment in Britain During WWI" (1998).

numbers of English people (quoted Gillman and Gillman (1980:18)).²⁸

It was during the cold winter of 1917 that Otto Schreiber, the German anarchist with whom Rocker had explored the East End on his arrival in London two decades ago, died.²⁹

vii. 1918-1920: Slow Release

From November 1918, when war ended, there was a very slow release of internees. In May 1919, there were still 1400 men at Knockaloe. The last 278 Knockaloe internees were transferred to a camp in Islington in September 1919.³⁰

Who Was Interned?

It is hard to know exactly how many people were interned altogether. The internment process repeatedly started up and then stopped, with men being interned, released and later interned again. Sometimes professional groups (such as bakers) were released en bloc; other times ethnic groups were given de facto friendly alien status (the issue of the "friendly races" will be discussed later in this chapter); sometimes the lack of beds or new beds becoming available dictated the patterns of internment and release. Dummett and Nichol give the figure of 29,000; Holmes gives the figure of 32,000.³¹ Government documents seem to support figures close to this.³² These numbers represent nearly half of the 66,000 "enemy aliens" actually resident in Britain at the start of war. By the end of the war, the enemy alien population was only 45,400.³³ Part of the reduction was due to expulsion: Holmes gives the figures for 1914-1919 of 34,744 aliens repatriated of whom 28,774 were German. Cesarani gives the figure for 1914-18 as 30,700 enemy aliens and 7,000 Russians (probably all of the latter Jews).³⁴

It is also hard to say how many of those interned were Jewish. Galician Jews, for instance, were technically enemy aliens as nationals of the Austrian

²⁸This passage is interesting in the way it emphasises the particularity of the English as a healthy island race defined against a conflation of the (colonized) tropics with an orientalised continental Europe. On similar arguments used in relation to African soldiers, see Page (1987:13).

²⁹Rocker (1956:343-4).

³⁰Gillman and Gillman (1980:20).

³¹Dummett and Nichol (1990:107), Holmes (1988:96).

³²HO 45/11522/287235.

³³HO 45/11522/287235/125.

³⁴Holmes (1991:25), Cesarani (1987:5).

empire. However, they might easily have passed as Russian Jews (and thus friendly aliens) in a way that assimilated German or Viennese Jews could not. Polish Jews, moreover, would have been given de facto friendly status – not as Jews but as Poles. It is impossible to distinguish by surnames who is Jewish from a list of interned men, not least because so many Jewish names are also German or Polish, but of a September 1916 list of 1554 older interned men, 5% have clearly Jewish names.³⁵

The Impact of Internment on the East End Public Sphere

The war was experienced as a catastrophe by the aliens who were interned and also, as I will argue in the second half of this chapter, traumatized conceptual categories of political belonging. It was also a crisis for the alternative public sphere of the East End.

The internment of Rocker, Simmerling, Lahr and others meant that the anarchist movement had to make changes in the way it organized. Fermin Rocker describes

the heavy work-load my mother carried in those days, what with taking over many of my father's functions at the *Arbaiter Fraind*, organising soup kitchens for the relief of the unemployed, making up and sending parcels to the various internees, and the visits to the internment camps. My father and uncle were not the only ones that had to be cared for. A number of our friends had no family in England and would have fared very badly if the food doled out to them in the camps had not been supplemented by parcels from the outside (1998:132).

The camps, in fact, became a focus of organization, starting with these food parcels and with a Workers' Friend Relief Committee to aid the interned anarchists, of which Milly Witkop was secretary. Later, on the efforts of the anarchist John Turner, a radical MP James O'Grady and William Appleton of the TUC, a "Rocker Release Committee" was formed, with Alexander Schapiro as the secretary, and twentyfour East End trade unions, the Workers' Circle and the Bund all supporting it.³⁶ A Special Branch officer made the following report in 1918 about the wife of Solo Linder, *Arbayter Fraynd* editor, and Joseph Fine, Yiddishist and trade union activist, visiting one camp:

Mrs Linder, accompanied by Mr Fine, visited the Alexandra Palace recently and saw a Mr Calenbach, an interned alien, who is a great friend of Rocker. The conversation was directed to the positions of Russians in this country, and Calenbach advised them to approach

³⁵ HO 45/11522/287235/68.

³⁶ Rocker (1956:246-50).

Rose Witcop, Guy Aldred's mistress, for advice and help in organising opposition to the compulsion of Russians serving in the British Army.³⁷

Rocker, meanwhile, within the camps, led his (often right-wing and pro-Kaiser) fellow internees in adopting the methods of industrial unionism to fight for better treatment, as well as giving extremely popular lectures on European literature.³⁸

The Indeterminacy of Categories

The government allotted the population into discrete categories – citizen and alien, friend and enemy – and developed material strategies for this – “an orgy of statistics” and the internment camps – but the reality in the immigrant quarters did not work so neatly. First, there were a number of indeterminate individuals, who, for a variety of reasons, did not fit into the official categories. But there were also whole classes of people, from specific ethnicities, who collectively did not fit either, because, though technically from “enemy” states, they felt they belonged to nations friendly to the Allies. These people were dubbed “enemy aliens of friendly race”, and the racialized languages used about them, though saving them from internment, helped to strengthen the ordering principle of *jus sanguinis*, to further racialize British citizenship, to further distinguish between the “technicality” of subjecthood and the “fact” of race and blood.

Uncategorizable Individuals

A list supplied in October 1916 by Alexandra Palace POW camp of internees who wanted to serve in the British army demonstrates the problems practitioners had in allotting individuals to nationalities. The nationalities of those listed included: “British (Heligoland)”; “Galician Pole”; “Austrian Pole”; “German Pole”; “Ruthenian?”; “German? Claims to be Russian”; “German – Claims to be Spanish”; “Interned as a Turk but claims to be British”; “Claims to be Argentinian” and “German, King's Col. Cambridge”.³⁹ There are a number of reasons for cases of fuzziness like these. War was changing the political

³⁷ Report by Inspector Thomas MacNamara and Superintendent Quinn, Special Branch, September 1916, in HO /45/10822/318095/529.

³⁸ His lecture to fellow prisoners, “The Six Great Characters” was later published in book form by the Rocker Publications Committee in New York, introduced by Ray E. Chase (see advert on inside back cover of Oppenheimer et al 1942).

³⁹ HO 45/10818/317810/4.

geography of Europe in ways that neither immigration officials nor refugees would necessarily have been able to keep a handle on (and this was particularly so for those parts of Eastern and Central Europe where most Jews came from). Many immigrants had an extremely trans-national frame of reference, perhaps because there were many temporary homes between their place of birth and their arrival in England, or because they belonged to families or communities or language groups that were scattered across official borders (and, again, this would have been especially true of the Jews). The communities in England (such as London's East End) where the aliens lived were also places where cross-national households were not uncommon. There were also linguistic problems, making communication between the aliens and practitioners difficult. Finally, there weren't yet the type of internationally standardized forms of identification (e.g. passports) that we have become used to since.⁴⁰

Enemy Aliens Of Friendly Race

Apart from the individual cases of indecipherable nationality, there were whole classes of aliens who seemed to fall through the gaps. The Poles, for instance, did not have a nation of their own; those from the Russian empire were classed as friendly aliens, those from the Austrian or German empires as enemy aliens. Moreover, it was in these types of national categories (especially Polish) that most East End Jews belonged.

In some ways, the fuzziness of the new categories became a source of resistance to the new system. Immediately after the outbreak of war, the Polish Society, based in Hoxton, passed a resolution – “mindful of the help which the right of asylum existing in Great Britain is, and has been, to political refugees from German and Russian Poland” – in favour of petitioning the government for the right to form a Polish Legion. The same letter also protested at the treating of German and Austrian Poles as enemy aliens.⁴¹

Joseph King – a Liberal MP who was more or less a lone voice of opposition in the mainstream public sphere to the way aliens were treated⁴² – took up the

⁴⁰ Indeed, as discussed above, such technologies were in part an *outcome* of this problem.

⁴¹ HO 45/10740/262173/2.

⁴² Lord Sheffield, another Liberal, played a comparable role in the Lords.

Poles' case in Parliament. The Home Secretary, Reginald McKenna, responded, saying: "It is not possible in law to recognise 'Polish nationality' as distinct from the nationality of the Sovereign State of which residents in various parts of Poland are subjects." This clearly encapsulates the older conception of nationality as subjecthood. However, he then went on to concede that the Aliens Restriction Order (ARO) should be administered in a considerate manner towards "those persons of Polish race who, though technically 'alien enemies,' are in fact friendly to this country."⁴³ The Home Office here is starting to formulate the idea of "enemy aliens of friendly race", a notion that expresses the transition to a new conception of nationality as citizenship of an ethnically homogeneous nation-state. In drawing out the tension between the "technical" nationality of the old system and the "fact" of race, they were drawing on the idea of an emerging Europe "tightly packed with nations". However, when in November Joseph King tried to extend this ruling to Alsaticans, Holsteiners and Trentine Italians, the Home Office was uneasy. McKenna replied: "It is a matter of great difficulty to discriminate between the races and to ascertain whether the sentiments of individuals are friendly or otherwise."⁴⁴

In October, nevertheless, they had decided to issue de facto exemption to Austrian subjects "who belong to races hostile to the Austrian rule." By the end of the month, the list of "friendly races" included Czechs, Bohemians, Poles and Alsaticans. Croats and Ruthenians were added thereafter.⁴⁵ By June 1918, exemption had been extended to all Turkish subjects who were considered anti-Ottoman, including Salonika's Portuguese and Spanish Jewish community and the Jews and Arabs of Syria and Mesopotamia.⁴⁶ The most extreme example of the displacing of technical nationality by ethnic nation-state belonging was the January 1918 decision to omit altogether the words

⁴³ HO 45/10740/262173/3. A similar formula was used in World War Two for refugee enemy aliens: "subject to oppression by the Nazi regime upon racial, religious or political grounds... They will be hostile to the Nazi regime and ready to assist this country rather than to assist the enemy" (quoted Gillman and Gillman 1980:42). As the Gillmans' account details, these "Category C" aliens were to be removed out of the country or placed in refugee camps which were nominally different but substantively similar to the internment camps.

⁴⁴ HO 45/10740/262173/22.

⁴⁵ HO 45/10760/269116/14-15.

⁴⁶ HO 45/10832/326555/67.

“German” and “Austrian” from the identity books of Alsations and of Czechs, Bohemians and Trentine Italians.⁴⁷

In order to facilitate the discrimination and ascertaining McKenna spoke of in Parliament, a system of “vouching” was introduced, whereby committees representing the exiled communities of “friendly races” were asked to vouch for their compatriots. The committees varied from group to group, but on the whole were composed of the “respectable” nationalist elements of the communities, and it was these elements whose exemption was most effectively secured by the vouching system.⁴⁸ In fact, bourgeois aliens in general received similar de facto exemptions to those of the “friendly races”. A Home Office telegram to the authorities in Jersey shortly after the outbreak of war said “Be careful not to arrest persons whose known character precludes suspicion or who are personally vouched for by British residents of standing.”⁴⁹ In November 1914, the Police were asked to provide reports on the “social standing” of internees to secure better treatment for those of higher standing.⁵⁰

The vouching system and the power of the “racial committees” followed the logic of the communal discussed earlier in this thesis. The reification of differences *between* “racial” communities, and the obscuring of differences *within*, legitimates and perpetuates internal patterns of domination, including class and patriarchal authority. This communal logic, however, was subverted by messy realities of the alien quarters.

Sometimes, too, the (class-related) unevenness of vouching contributed to the indeterminacy of nationality in numerous specific cases. An investigation into un-interned enemy alien hairdressers and waiters threw up the following examples: “Austrian: vouched Polish Jew”; “claims to be a Pole but does not appear to be vouched”; “Ottoman Jew from Palestine... Russian Jewish wife”; “Ottoman Jew from Salonika... Turkish wife... [formerly] registered as Greek”.⁵¹

⁴⁷ HO 45/10800/307293.

⁴⁸ The 1905 Act’s introduction of the category of “undesirable alien” had a class dimension: poor aliens were not to be allowed in if it was felt they would become reliant on welfare. The 1914 Act, however, weakened the desirable/undesirable distinction, putting all aliens at risk, whatever their class status. In practice, though, poorer aliens were much more vulnerable to the new powers.

⁴⁹ ADM 1/8389/241.

⁵⁰ HO 45/10760/269116/26.

⁵¹ HO 45/10832/326555/69.

The casual heterogeneity of London's immigrant areas, then, defied the neat nation-state ordering of the exile committees and their Home Office patrons.

Of course, the government had a strong motivation for identifying the "friendly races": once so designated, they could not refuse to participate in the Allied war effort, either through fighting, or through National Service (essential non-military work). By 1917, "friendly race" males were issued with national service cards. "The man's nationality (German, Austrian, Bulgarian, or Turk) is also marked at the top of each form. Where a man belongs to one of the races professing friendship with the Allies the name of the race is placed in brackets after the nationality – e.g. 'Austrian (Pole)'."⁵²

The "racial committees" – the London Czech Committee, the Information Committee for Polish Jews (ICPJ), Polish Exiles Protection – were persuaded to participate in a recruitment drive amongst their constituencies.⁵³ On the whole, they showed willing, but not without some efforts at stretching the limits of the loyalty expected of them. The ICPJ, for instance, requested "That Polish Jews enrolled for National Service should not be used to fill the places of those who are on strike or locked out. There can be no doubt that the intervention of such people in the dispute between English people and their masters would arouse ill-feeling the result of which might be very serious and far-reaching."⁵⁴ It is hard to tell, however, whether this reflects a solidarity with the rising tide of wildcat militancy, a well-founded fear of anti-semitism, a sensitivity to the ambivalent attitude of the English labour movement to the Jewish workers, or a simple desire to avoid national service.

As well as the desire for men to do work of national importance, there was also the insatiable desire for men to fight in the battlefields of Europe; the "friendly races" were targeted for this purpose. The fear (or reality) of internment facilitated their voluntary recruitment: of 224 "friendly race" internees at a POW camp in Feltham ("Czechs, Poles and odds and ends"),

⁵² HO 45/10831/362555/19.

⁵³ HO 45/10831/362555/18. Parallel to the role of the "racial committees" was that of the Jewish Recruitment Committee, on which served Anglo-Jewish leaders like Edmund Sebag-Montefiore and Major Lionel de Rothschild MP. The committee "vouched" for Jews whose nationality was doubtful, especially those with German-sounding names (*JC* 24.12.1915, p 14, cf Pollins 1999).

⁵⁴ HO 45/10831/362555/30.

158 wanted to join Labour Battalions.⁵⁵ In June 1916, the 30th (Works) Battalion of the Middlesex Regiment was created and based at an internment camp in Crawley for soldiers with German, Austrian, Hungarian, Turkish or Bulgarian fathers. The London Czech Committee informed the Home Office that there were 350-400 un-interned Czechs who wanted to serve and the Polish Exiles Protection came up with 79 Poles. However, both specified that they wanted to be kept distinct from the 30th Middlesex “where there is a large German element”.⁵⁶

There was a strong desire on the part of the military authorities to organize alien recruits into ethnically homogenous units. A War Office official wondered “Would formation of a unit consisting of allied and alien enemies of the same nationality e.g. Poles from Russia and Prussian Poland... and other Slavs be considered, seeing that thereby the objection to these being scattered and possibly lost from view would be removed?”⁵⁷ An Army Council Instruction specified that “the Russians will be dealt with as if they formed *one group* which may conveniently be termed ‘Group Russia’.” Their cards could be kept separately from others because “the names are not likely to be confused with British names”.⁵⁸

The War Office desire that specific groups of foreigners should not be “lost from view” suggests that the desire for ethnically homogenous military units responded to a concern the authorities had about the *visibility* of foreigners. The constant categorization of aliens was simultaneously the production of knowledge about the different categories; the existence of the new national groups was dependent on the ability of the authorities to see them as visibly different, to identify them by nation. The use in the Home Office documentation of phrasing like the *fact* of their racial opposition to the enemy cause or *ascertaining* their friendly race status demonstrates a concern to establish their facticity; the concern to make them *visible* is part of this.

The authorities’ concerns also resonated with the interests of the “racial committees” in their nationalist concern to conjure up identifiable ethnically homogenous nation-states. “Racial” legions (including the Zionist-proposed

⁵⁵ HO 45/10818/317810/4.

⁵⁶ HO 45/10818/317810/5.

⁵⁷ 09.09.16 HO 45/10818/317810/4.

Jewish Legion) would provide an opportunity to demonstrate the capacity of its exiled members for citizenship.⁵⁹ As James Renton argues, based on a close reading of diplomatic and governmental documents of the time, the British state was prepared to support the nationalist movements, such as the Zionists, because they had come to share the same fundamental understanding of political belonging, which Renton describes as “racial nationalism”: their “imagining of Jewry as a singular entity, driven by an essentialist national identity, emerged out of a wider epistemological prism within British intellectual culture: the discourse of race nationalism” (2002:3). Thus, “the power of national thinking was so strong within the minds of the chief protagonists behind a pro-Zionist policy in the British Government that time and again [non-Zionist Jewish] voices were marginalized or dismissed altogether” (ibid:11-2).

However, the new concept of nationality as “race” (as citizenship of an ethnically homogenous nation-state) did not yet fully displace the older notion of subjecthood among practitioners. On a concrete level, the exemptions took a while to trickle through the system. As late as March 1917, seventeen of the 823 Czechs in London were still interned in “concentration camps”.⁶⁰

On a discursive level, there was also some lag. That same March, Kell worded a circular to the police about enemy aliens exempted from the ARO “because, although subjects of an alien power, they are assumed on racial or political grounds to be friendly.” Troup, at the Home Office, amended this to read “because, although technically subjects of an alien power, they have been ascertained to be on racial grounds friendly to the allies and hostile to the enemy.”⁶¹ Kell’s phrasing (the use of the word “assumption” rather than “ascertained”, the qualification of “racial” with “or political”) can be read as an expression of doubt at the “fact” of a straight fit between “race” and national loyalty (a fact implicit in the concept of the “friendly race”). However, it can also be read as suspicious of the de facto exemptions, and a suggestion that the exemptions could be revoked if the “assumption” turned out to be wrong. in

⁵⁸ 03.09.1916 HO 45/10818/317810/4.

⁵⁹ This nationalist strategy was not restricted to Eastern Europeans, but also to Caribbean black nationalists such as Marcus Garvey and African black nationalists such as the SANNC (the forerunner of the ANC). See Grundlingh (1987), Page (1987) and Gleeson (1994) on South Africa. On Garvey and the West India Regiment, see Howe (1994).

⁶⁰ HO 45/10831/362555/19.

⁶¹ HO 45/19881/338498/2.

other words, the exemptions become *conditional*; the friendly aliens have to *prove* themselves friendly. Troup's phrasing, however, re-asserts the new official formula that distinguishes between "technical" subjects and the "certainty" of "racial" loyalty.

One twist on the "friendly race" issue perhaps suggests that, for ordinary immigrants on the ground, national status was a matter of *pragmatism* as much as nationalist principle. When the Russian government signed the Military Convention, many people who had formerly argued that they were Russian subjects, in order to protect their "friendly" status, now decided to tell the authorities that they were "in fact" Poles or Lithuanians.⁶²

After the war, the emergence of new nations that had been implicit in the "friendly race" phenomenon was realized in the actual emergence of new nation-states in Central and Eastern Europe. As Mark Mazower writes, "Before the First World War there had been just three republics in Europe; by the end of 1918 there were thirteen" (1998:2). The annual census of foreigners in Britain made at the end of 1918 notes significant changes since the last census, such as: 899 less Belgians "Probably due to the departure of the last refugees"; 880 less Germans "Due to recognition of former enemy aliens as Czecho Slovaks"; 1856 more Poles "Due to recognition of Russians, Germans and Austrians by Polish Government"; 3204 less Russians "Due to recognition as Poles, Finns, Letts, &c".⁶³ The nationalists of the "racial committees" had succeeded in their aims. What this meant in the East End, however, is less clear. The former "Russians" who were now "Poles" continued to live in the same parts of London, doing the same jobs and participating in the same sorts of politics.

What we have seen in this chapter so far, exemplified in the emergence of the "friendly race" category, is a complex process in which citizenship was increasingly racialized, but in an unstable way. The multi-national empires of Europe were crumbling to reveal what appeared to the Home Office and to the middle-class nationalists as, in Bauman's words, "a Europe tightly packed with nations". Because of this, the British government's initial primary war-time categorization ("enemy alien" vs "friendly alien") started to collapse. However,

⁶² HO 45/10820/318095/219.

on the ground in the urban immigrant communities, the nation-state categories themselves became fuzzy around the edges and unstable – undermining the ontological security of any putative national identities, but also undermining Bauman’s characterization of the new Europe tightly packed with nations. In the next section, we will examine a further dimension of this, the increased racialization of the foreigner, as the other of the citizen, before examining the state of emergency under which these processes unfolded.

All Foreigners Are Suspicious

De-Naturalization

From 1915 to 1918, the demand to de-naturalize British subjects of enemy alien origin was brought up in Parliament over a dozen times.⁶⁴ Once again, it was the state of emergency that was used to justify this. Giorgio Agamben, in his work on the state of emergency, emphasizes the kinship between the camps and citizenship (or, rather, the loss of citizenship):

It is significant that the camps appear together with new laws on citizenship and the denationalization of citizens – not only the Nuremberg laws on citizenship in the Reich but also the laws on denationalization promulgated by almost all European states, including France, between 1915 and 1933 (ibid:175).

The significance of this to the context under discussion here is clear, firstly from the fact that the emergency laws making the camps possible (the 1914 Aliens Restriction Act) was followed within days by the law on nationality (the British Nationality Act), and secondly from the enormous pressure to introduce de-naturalization after the 1915 French example, which bore fruit in the 1919 Aliens Restriction Act.

An extreme example of the pressure to de-naturalize is Horatio Bottomley’s editorial in *John Bull*:

I call for a Vendetta, a vendetta against every German in Britain whether ‘naturalised’ or not... you cannot naturalise an unnatural beast – a human abortion – a hellish freak. But you can exterminate it (quoted Holmes 1988:97).

Two things stand out about this passage. First, Bottomley makes explicit the relationships between “naturalization”, “nature” and “natality”. “Naturalization” is making someone equal to a “natural-born” (“native”) Briton. By describing

⁶³ HO 45/11522/287235/156.

⁶⁴ HO 45/10839/333491.

foreigners as “unnatural beasts”, “human abortions”⁶⁵, Bottomley denies the possibility of naturalizing them. They may have been *legally* (technically) naturalized, but in *nature* – in *fact* – this is impossible.

Second, *John Bull* was primarily an *imperialist* periodical. Sven Lindqvist has traced the genealogy of Conrad’s “exterminate all the brutes” back through imperialist racial thinking and forward to the Nazi extermination camps.⁶⁶ Bottomley’s call here for the “extermination” of the German “beasts” is an example of how that colonial methodology was brought into the heart of Europe. Once the foreigner has been placed outside the space of citizenship and of law, reduced, in Agamben’s terms, to bare life, he can be exterminated.⁶⁷

“Foreigners”

As late as March 1917, when a *Times* article referred to “foreigners, naturalized or not” and the National Service Department set up a “Foreigners’ Committee” which included naturalized foreign-born people, J.F. Henderson of the Home Office objected to the idea that naturalized British subjects could be “foreigners” as they are legally identical to the native-born.⁶⁸ In a *Times* interview a month later with the secretary of the Foreigners’ Committee, he said that one of the “innovations” of the committee was to use the term “foreigner” rather than “alien”.⁶⁹ The notion of the “foreigner” (someone not British *whether naturalized or not*) as opposed to the “alien”, and the Home Office’s weak attempt to maintain the distinction, show how naturalization became less thinkable, another indication of the shift from a legalistic idea of nationality as subjecthood to a racialized idea of the citizen.

⁶⁵ Abortion here is the negation of natality.

⁶⁶ Lindqvist (1996).

⁶⁷ We can also connect de-naturalization to a strengthening of *jus sanguinis* over *jus soli*. The WWI period saw *jus sanguinis* getting the upper hand over *jus soli* across Europe. For example, Germany passed a law in 1913 which allows Germans residing abroad (*Auslandsdeutsche*) to retain their citizenship and pass it on to their descendants, a specific negation of *jus soli* and assertion of *jus sanguinis* (Sassen 1999:61-2).

⁶⁸ *Times* 17.03.1917, HO 45/10839/33052.

⁶⁹ *Times* 19.04.1917, HO 45/10839/33052. The dissemination of the neutral term “foreigner” rather than the charged term “alien” might also have been what the FJPC had in mind when naming themselves.

“Anti-Foreign” Violence

Meanwhile, periodic outbreaks of “anti-German” violence were directed at friendly aliens as well as enemy aliens, at the naturalized as well as the un-naturalized, at people with foreign names as well as the actually foreign-born – but, above all, at the Jews. Violence accompanied the outbreak of war in August 1914, including serious riots in Poplar targeted at German and naturalized bakers.⁷⁰ In May 1915, there were the so-called Lusitania riots, sparked off by the German sinking of the passenger ship of that name, but also by tabloid stories about the burning of 40 British soldiers and crucifixion of a Canadian by German troops in Holland. This wave included serious violence in Liverpool; here the conflation between anti-Germanism and a generalized anti-foreignism reached its apogee in the attack on the Chinese community. There were minor incidents throughout London, where the targets were mostly bakers, and in Southend. In the East End itself, there was violence in Clerkenwell, Hoxton, Smithfield, Shadwell, Dalston, Cambridge Heath, Bethnal Green, Walthamstow and Ilford. The worst violence was in Poplar, Bow, Canning Town, Plaistow and North Woolwich. The Smithfield and Aldgate riots targeted German butchers; the other incidents targeted bakers. The London Flour Trade Association noted that 60% of bakers in London were German and the Met counted 350 German master bakers and 930 German journeyman bakers in the capital. The civil servants were not keen on interning them because of the importance of bread during war; this led to resentment from their English customers whose menfolk were conscripted out of their jobs while the foreigners were seen to be profiteering.⁷¹ The third wave came in July 1917, when there was violence in several London locations, often outside perceived “German shops”.⁷²

The geography of this violence is interesting. The main waves of violence were concentrated in that part of the East End (police division K – the area

⁷⁰ HO 45/10944/251742/1-6, /12-29. The dock unions condemned the violence (the acts of “holligans [sic] and children”), while the Commissioner of the Met thought the bakers had brought it upon themselves through “insulting remarks regarding the British people”.

⁷¹ HO 45/10944/251742/36-97, *Times* 13.05.1915, *Bakers Record* 14.05.1915.

⁷² Incidents included Holloway (around perceived alien shops and around the Cornwallis Road interment camp), Old Street (where there had been an air raid), Hackney Road (three alien shops), Hoxton (where the victim, according to the police report was “a supposed German tailor”), Marylebone (a German man walking on the street), Tottenham, Lambeth and Highgate Hill (again, all “German” shops), and

roughly equivalent to today's borough of Newham) that neighbored the Jewish ghetto of the inner East End but was overwhelmingly non-Jewish,⁷³ and that had a large and relatively dispersed German population (concentrated in the baking trade) that included both Jews and non-Jews. As with the internees, it is difficult to know exactly what proportion of the attacked Germans were Jewish and what proportion was not. There were also specifically anti-semitic riots as well: in June 1917 in Leeds and in September in Bethnal Green.

All three of these examples – the use of the word “foreigner” for the naturalized foreign-born, the pressure to de-naturalize these “foreigners”, and the popular violence against them – demonstrate a further instability to the new, neat European order that Bauman characterizes as “a world tightly packed with nations”. The Home Office was gradually accepting a racialized British citizenship as *one ethnically homogenous nationality in a Europe of ethnically homogenous nationalities*; popular racism, on the other hand, seems to have seen racialized British citizenship as defined against an *undifferentiated foreignness* that was perhaps epitomized by the Eastern Jew.

A State of Emergency and the Catastrophe of WWI

In this final section, I want to shift tone and bring out some of the issues, running through this chapter, around *the state of emergency*. As Derrida writes, Walter Benjamin, who experienced the catastrophe of the Great War, noted in *Critique of Violence* that the War marked the start of

the profound problem of the role of the police, of, in the first instance, border police, but also of a police without borders, without determinable limit, who from then on become all-pervasive and elusive... [For Benjamin,] police violence is both ‘faceless’ and ‘formless,’ and is thus beyond all accountability (2001b:14).

As Derrida also notes, Arendt (“in the spirit of Benjamin”) identified that it was above all *the refugee* who experienced this new power of the police:

The nation-state, incapable of providing a law for those who had lost the protection of a national government, transferred the whole matter to the police. This was the first time the police in Western

Hackney and Holloway, apparently sparked by the release of German bakers from internment (HO 45/10944/251742/186-7, *Morning Post* 11.07.1917).

⁷³ Cf Kershen's point that anti-alienism “was strongest in the peripheral areas of Jewish settlement around Bethnal Green and in essentially non-Jewish areas such as Poplar and Hoxton” (1993:143).

Europe had received authority to act on its own, to rule directly over people (1967:287).

Arendt, then, (and Derrida after her) separates the police from the state, as if they are separate bodies. Giorgio Agamben's analysis of these passages, in contrast, thinks the new police violence in terms of a state of emergency and a space of exception: the creation by the sovereign state of a zone or time outside the rule of law. We have noted that the 1914 legislation and the modern machinery of passport control appeared as *emergency* measures. The internment camp was, of course, the ultimate emergency measure.

Drawing on Benjamin, Agamben argues that in modern times the state of emergency has become the rule – and hence the camp has become the “nomos” of modern politics.

Historians debate whether the first camps to appear were the *campos de concentraciones* created by the Spanish in Cuba in 1896 to suppress the popular insurrections of the colony, or the ‘concentration camps’ into which the English herded the Boers towards the start of the century. What matters here is that in both cases, a state of emergency linked to a colonial war is extended to an entire civil population. The camps are thus born not out of ordinary law (even less, as one might have supposed, from a transformation and development of criminal law) but out of a state of exception and martial law. This is even clearer in the Nazi *Lager* [where] the juridical basis for internment was not common law but *Schutzhaft* (literally, protective custody), a juridical institution [whose origin] lies in the Prussian law of 1851, on the state of emergency... It is important not to forget that the first concentration camps in Germany were not the work of the Nazi regime but of the Social-Democratic governments, which interned thousands of communist militants on the basis of *Schutzhaft* and also created the *Konzentrationslager für Ausländer* at Cottbus-Sielow, which housed mainly Eastern European refugees and which may, therefore, be considered the first camp for Jews in this century (even if it was, obviously, not an extermination camp). (Agamben 1998:166-7)

The importance of the constitutive nexus between the state of exception and the concentration camp cannot be overestimated for a correct understanding of the nature of the camp... *The camp is the space that is opened when the state of exception begins to become the rule* (ibid:168-9).⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Paul Gilroy has taken up this theme in his *Between Camps*, locating Agamben's points in a context which foregrounds imperialism and the camp's origins in the slave plantation:

Both constituted exceptional spaces where normal juridical rules and procedures had been deliberately set aside. In both, the profit motive and its economic rationalities were practically qualified by the geopolitical imperatives of racialized hierarchy. It is easy to overlook how colonial societies and conflicts provided the

Also significant, as his reference to Cottbus-Sielow indicates, Agamben highlights the kinship between the camps set up for the internment or “concentration” of aliens and the camps set up for the reception of refugees. That kinship was embodied in WWI Britain by the fact that many of the camps were actually the same places, so that Alexandra Palace was used for the reception of Belgian refugees before it was used for the internment of enemy aliens.⁷⁵ Agamben writes:

The stadium in Bari into which the Italian police in 1991 provisionally herded all illegal Albanian immigrants before sending them back to their country, the winter cycle-racing track in which the Vichy authorities gathered the Jews before consigning them to the Germans, the *Konzentrationslager für Ausländer* in Cottbus-Sielow in which the Weimar government gathered Jewish refugees from the East, or the *zones d’attentes* in French international airports in which foreigners asking for refugee status are detained will then all equally be camps... a space in which the normal order is de facto suspended and in which whether or not atrocities are committed depends not on civil law but on the civility and ethical sense of the police who temporarily act as sovereign (ibid:174).

In war-time Britain, there was great variety in the conditions in the camps. Rudolf Rucker’s account of his internment in Alexandra Palace (1998) describes rapid improvements and deteriorations of the camp regime as the commanding officers changed; the Gillmans’ oral history informants describe relatively luxurious conditions on the Royal Edward internment ship and truly horrific conditions on the camps of the Isle of Man; and regular American diplomatic reports on the conditions in the camps describe these sorts of extremes.⁷⁶ Whether conditions were good or not does seem, in Agamben’s phrase, to have depended on “the civility and ethical sense” of those charged with guarding them; internees were exposed to the naked power of the state as embodied in the individual civil or military officers posted to the camps, outside the rule of civil law.

context in which concentration camps emerged as a novel form of political administration, population management, warfare and coerced labor. (2000:60)

Gilroy’s footnote references here, like Agamben’s text, draw attention to the camps of the Boer War (which Emily Hobhouse, an English suffragette and pacifist, brought to the awareness of the British public) and those in Cuba (2000:363n.20).

⁷⁵ Other camps for Belgians were at Earls Court, Edmonton Refuge and Milfield House (Holmes 1988:101). According to Keith Sword, Alexandra Palace and Feltham were also used for interning Polish POWs who were captured while serving in the German army (1993:156).

⁷⁶ Various visitors’ reports, particularly those of American diplomats (who took an active role in attempting to protect the rights of the internees), are in HO 45/10946-7/266042 and HO 45/11522/287235.

Rocker's experience of internment, his experience as an enemy alien stripped of human rights by virtue of being stripped of statehood, was to illuminate his understanding of the reconfiguration of citizenship in the war, so that he was able to anticipate some of the theoretical insights, of people like Arendt and Agamben, that we have been discussing.

Legislation, army, public education, press, clubs, assemblies – all must serve to perfect the spiritual drill of the citizens... The absolutism of royalty had fallen; but only to give place to a new absolutism even more implacable than the 'divine right' of monarchy. The absolute principle of monarchy lay outside the citizen's sphere of activity, and was supported solely by the 'grace of God,' to whose will it allegedly gave expression. The absolute principle of the nation, however, made the least of mortals a co-bearer of the common will, even while it denied him the right to interpret this according to his own understanding. Imbued by this thought every citizen from now on forged his own link in the chain of dependence which formerly some other had forged for him. The sovereignty of the nation steered everyone into the same path, absorbed every individual consideration, and replaced personal freedom by equality before the law... Thus was the man sacrificed to the citizen, individual reason to the alleged will of the nation... *And the more deeply the citizen venerated his own nation, the wider became the abyss which separated it from all other nations, the more contemptuously he looked upon all who were not so fortunate as to be of the elect* (Rocker 1937:177-9, emphasis added).

Similarly, Rocker's friend Emma Goldman, also stripped of her statehood and civil rights in this period, came to similar conclusions. Goldman and her partner Alexander Berkman, both Russian-born, were arrested in the US in 1917 for their anti-war activities.⁷⁷ When their sentences were served in 1919, due to the efforts of J Edgar Hoover, then head of the Justice Department's General Intelligence Division, they were deported as aliens (despite the fact that Goldman claimed US citizenship by virtue of the naturalization of both her husband and father). The pair were shipped to Russia, along with 247 other seditious aliens (including a large number of Russian Jews). Their subsequent exile as political dissidents from Lenin's Russia meant that they had become legally stateless. Living in London, Goldman wrote an article entitled "A Woman Without a Country":

To have a country implies, first of all, the possession of a certain guarantee of security... That is the essential significance of the

⁷⁷ See Berkman and Goldman (1917).

idea of country, of citizenship. Divested of that, it becomes sheer mockery.

Up to the World War citizenship actually did stand for such a guarantee... the native or naturalized citizen had the certainty that somewhere on this globe he was at home, in his own country...

But the war has entirely changed the situation... Every government now arrogates to itself the power to determine what person may or may not continue to live within its boundaries, with the result that thousands, even hundreds of thousands, are literally expatriated. Compelled to leave the country in which they happen to live at the time, they are set adrift in the world, their fate at the mercy of some bureaucrat invested with authority to decide whether they may enter 'his' land...

Citizenship has now become bankrupt: it has lost its essential meaning... Today the citizen is no more safe in 'his own' country than the citizen by adoption. Deprivation of citizenship, exile and deportation are practised by every government; they have become established and accepted methods (1933:121-3).

What Rucker and Goldman are identifying here is that the war-time state of emergency – becoming the norm after the war – enabled a suspension of the rule of law. This state of emergency meant, on one hand, as Goldman saw, that people could be deprived of their citizenship, and thus civil rights. It also meant, as Rucker saw, that people were increasingly divided into citizen and alien, into friend and enemy. The war, as Rucker and Goldman help us to understand, was a key moment in the emergence of a racialized citizenship, defined both *by* the “fact” of blood (*jus sanguinis*) and *against* its constitutive outside, its others (enemy aliens).

At the same time, as the next chapters will show, these categories (alien, enemy alien, foreigner) were negotiated, resisted, contested and even refused by the East End Jews themselves, and particularly by the ghetto radicals.

Chapter 8

The War in the East End

No, it is not easy, it is very difficult to set yourself (even if you have to slide out) against the will of a nation, of a camp (John Rodker, *Memoirs of Other Fronts*, 1932:120).

In the previous two chapters, we saw how the lines of citizenship were drawn ever more tightly – and were more tightly policed – in the Edwardian period and especially during WWI. In the last chapter, we examined some of the changes brought about by World War I, which impacted brutally on the lives of aliens – particularly internment. These changes were not simply enacted on a passive alien population, but negotiated, resisted and at times refused. The remaining chapters of this thesis will discuss just some of the forms of negotiation, resistance and refusal practised in the East End.

This chapter will narrate the story of a mass anti-war movement which flourished from 1914 to 1918 in East London. I will draw partly on fragments of this history which exist in the secondary literature. For example, Sharman Kadish's *Bolsheviks and British Jews* (1992:197-244) tells the story of the Foreign Jews Protection Society (FJPC); and part of the story of the Russian émigré radicals in the Committee of Delegates of the Russian Socialist Groups in London (CoDoRSGiL) has been told by Marxist historians like Walter Kendall (1969), Raymond Challinor (1977) and David Burke (1999). However, these accounts have often been one-sided. Kadish, for example, working within Anglo-Jewish history, sees the radicals of the FJPC as peripheral to the Jewish community proper: she talks about “marginal elements on the far left” and “the presence of a small, unrepresentative, but vociferous radical element in the East End” (1992:196-7).¹

Marxist historians, on the other hand, have tended to ignore the Jewish contexts (Jewish cultural traditions, Yiddish political spaces) in which the main activists of CoDoRSGiL were embedded. Walter Kendall (1969), David Burke (1999) and John

¹ Similarly, Jonathan Hyman's generally very perceptive discussion of war resistance reproduces the marginality of the FJPC in saying that “many of the member organisations were of extreme politics” who campaigned “in a subversive way by disrupting Jewish recruiting meetings” (2001:27). Meanwhile, of the CoDoRSGiL and its close relative the Russian Anti-Conscription League, whose memberships were heavily Jewish, he writes “the shared opposition to the war was greater than the hostility some harboured towards Jews” (ibid:28), reproducing the notion of these groups as utterly unrelated to Jewish cultural space.

Slatter (1984), among others, have argued that the presence of Eastern European émigrés in London had a major impact on the development of British Marxism. However, their accounts – like the official Communist Party histories by people like Noreen Branson (e.g. 1979) and James Klugmann (e.g. 1980) – have tended to downplay the question of the extent to which these figures had any connection to the Jewish world. Paradoxically, these writers have often taken at face value the radicals' profession of an internationalism that disavows any possibility of ethnic belonging, while at the same time they have been keen to portray the radicalism that they cherish as indigenous to English soil and not transplanted from foreign lands. Kendall's work, for example, is important in rescuing from oblivion (to which it has been consigned by the CP accounts) the narrative of an indigenous Bolshevik tradition in England and Scotland, represented by figures like EC Fairchild and John Mclean. In his account, however, Russians like Theodore Rothstein are seen as malevolent alien influences at odds with this native British radicalism. In the work of Klugmann or Branson, ethnicity is simply not an issue, and the involvement of Jewish activists in the nascent CP like Joe Fineberg in a Yiddish socialist scene is completely ignored.

The blind spots of Anglo-Jewish and Marxist historiography can be traced back to two of the main ideological projects which the Jewish immigrant workers of East London had to negotiate in the early twentieth century: Anglo-Jewish assimilationism and orthodox Marxist internationalism. For Anglo-Jewish assimilationists, the war provided the ultimate test of loyalty and cultural conformity to the British nation; good citizens were expected to make good soldiers. At the same time, the logic of the communal repressed dissident voices, attempting to provide a unified voice for Britain's Jewish community; class differences *within* Jewishness were dissolved in the communal.² Within the anti-war movement, on the other hand, orthodox Marxist understandings of internationalism dissolved ethnic and cultural differences within the proletariat, and couldn't see the samenesses which connected Jews across class lines. This internationalism, then, could not give voice to the immigrants' war-time experience of oppression as *Jews*.

In chapters one and five, I showed that the ghetto radicals were *both* deeply rooted in what Bauman and Barth call the "cultural stuff" of the Yiddish migrant working class *and* distinctly open and heterogeneous. Following that line of argument, this

chapter will (a) show that opposition to war drew on specifically Jewish sources – on religiously infused Yiddish popular culture with deep roots in Eastern Europe – and (b) show that the forms which opposition took (alliances across ethnic lines) reflect the openness and diversity that characterized ghetto radicalism. In other words, I will argue that the various East End radicals were characterized by their *multiple identities*: by their embeddedness in both diasporic and local Jewish worlds *and* in broader London radical contexts.

In order to make that argument, I will draw on primary material – particularly Home Office files on anti-war activists – to portray the East End radicals in a way that obscures neither their radicalism nor the specificity of their Jewishness. Drawing on government files, I will narrate the story of East End anti-militarism *alongside* the story of its policing, thus continuing themes developed in chapters three and six around the policing of citizenship. However, my focus will not be on the workings of governmentality or policing, but on the East End people (some more obscure, some more well-known) who experienced the brutality of the war’s “state of emergency” on the ground.

In particular, I will look at some of the individuals who epitomize the connections between the different movements, including Jewish figures (like Theodore Rothstein, Zelda Kahan, Israel Zangwill and Rose and Milly Witkop) and non-Jewish figures (like Joseph King, Sylvia Pankhurst, Rudolf Rocker and Guy Aldred). Many of the non-Jewish individuals have been completely left out of Anglo-Jewish history, while their contributions to wider historical contexts have been pigeon-holed into particular restrictive categories. Thus, for example, Sylvia Pankhurst’s significance in the suffragette movement has been recorded, but her involvement with Jewish causes, her radical communism and her later anti-colonial and Pan-African involvements have all but been forgotten.³ Secondly, the lives of the individuals discussed here took place in multiple contexts, multiple locations. Their trajectories – for instance Israel Zangwill’s movements between Jewish, liberal and socialist scenes – exemplify the way in which borders between these different worlds were often more porous, more fluid than we imagine. The radicals

² In chapter five, we saw this at work in responses to Kishinev. The challenge that moment offered to communal authority was renewed in WWI.

³ David Widgery describes Pankhurst as “a link between the British revolutionary movement of the nineteenth century, the world of Engels, Eleanor Marx, Louise Michel and William Morris, and the era of briefly triumphant Bolshevism and the Third International of Lenin, Gramsci and Bordiga” (1989:54).

of the ghetto were not isolated from the religious, and their radicalism nourished and was nourished by contact with other political traditions (e.g. with radical liberalism or with a native left). The third reason for the focusing on the biographical is to give an indication of the way in which biographical realities were so often in tension with theoretical principles: it was Sylvia Pankhurst's empirical experience of the East End (its white working class and its Jewish radicals) which enabled her to identify the limits of her earlier radical liberalism; it was the East End's Yiddish culture and radical politics which pulled Zangwill away from the certainties of Emancipation-era liberalism. Finally, I am concerned with the politics of memory discussed in chapter one: to rescue the forgotten and marginalized from the condescension of posterity, to name and credit those figures overlooked by conventional histories.

In a sense, this chapter takes up the themes of the Kishinev chapter, in that, like Kishinev, the trauma of war served as a call to Jewish identification. This was a call which transgressed the borders of the nation-state, while affirming a Jewish commonality that was more than simply religious; it was a call that was heeded across the East End: "Whatever his cosmopolitan illusions, the café radical, like the synagogue Jew, saw the shtetl aflame" (Roskies 1984:93). The Yiddish working class *translated* the war into a Jewish idiom, calling it a *khurbn*, genocide, and evoking memories of previous moments of violence, like Kishinev, as this Yiddish First World War folk tale illustrates:

When the first shots were fired in the Great War, the Heavenly Tribunal convened to decide [who had right on their side]. The angel for Russia placed all of Krupp's military arsenal on the scale to show what Germany was about to let loose upon innocent people. The angel for Germany calmly placed no more than two Russian nails on the other end of the scale. The nails tipped the balance. It turned out they had been used in the Kishinev pogrom (quoted *ibid*:79).

The start of this chapter will focus on the first two years of war, looking at the Anglo-Jewish response and that of the East End anarchists, Marxists and Yiddish trade unionists. The second half takes the story through to Armistice, while the next chapter takes a step back, looking more carefully at some of the texts produced by the different anti-war groups, to examine some of the different discourses of citizenship and belonging produced in them.

The War: A Test of Loyalty

For many Jews the First World War seemed to present the perfect opportunity for a more perfect integration into the nation at the precise time that the civic religion of nationalism became ever more menacing through its cultural imperatives, which tended to homogenize its members (Mosse 1993:124).

The Anglo-Jewish leadership were distressed at Britain's alliance with Russia, the traditional persecutor of their "co-religionists". But their distress was pushed aside in their desire to show their loyalty to Britain, to demonstrate their right to citizenship. In the East End, in contrast, a strong anti-war movement developed from the beginning of the war. From the very start of the war, official Anglo-Jewish leaders had taken the war as an opportunity to demonstrate the extent of their assimilation into and loyalty to the British nation. Basil Henriques, Anglo-Jewish oligarch, said:

Tell the boys to be proud of their country, to rejoice in the name of Englishmen, to feel that no sacrifice they can make can be worthy of the great tradition of our history...worthy of the glorious name you bear – an English Jew (quoted Loewe 1976:50).

The *Jewish Chronicle* welcomed the war with this statement: "England has been all she could be to the Jews; the Jews will be all they can to England", repeated three times in the *Chronicle* of 7 August 1914 and displayed outside their offices on a giant placard throughout the war.⁴

The sons of Anglo-Jewry joined up in disproportionate numbers, celebrated in the "Honour Record" in the *Chronicle* every week.⁵ As Michael Adler, the British Army Jewish chaplain, wrote:

when the call came to the young men of the British Empire to give up all that they held most dear and go forth in the battle for right against might... among the first who responded were men of the Jewish faith (Adler 1922:1).

Demonstration of loyalty to Britain meant an absolute repression of any dissent within the Jewish population, of any hint of disloyalty. Sir Francis Montefiore made this explicit when he said that war is no time for "small questions of sect...the so-called Jewish questions... At the present time, the thoughts of all patriotic Englishmen should turn only to national questions" (*Jewish Chronicle*, 24 December 1915). Similarly, the Anglo-Jewish Association (AJA), whose annual report published shortly after the start of the war, insisted that "All painful subjects

⁴ Cesarani (1994:115).

⁵ Cf Kosmin et al (1986), Hyman (2001), Cesarani (1994:117).

of difference and dissent must for the time being be overlooked” (quoted in Levene 1992:39). As Mark Levene comments,

Almost overnight, trumpeting one’s Britishness whilst belittling one’s ethnicity or religiosity became both for the voice of the community and for most established British Jews as individuals, *de rigueur* (1999:72).

These sorts of positions affirmed what Levene and others have described as the “Jewish liberal compromise”, discussed here in previous chapters: the Anglo-Jewish idea that they were “English citizens of Jewish faith”. However, as we saw in the last chapter, the war intensified a racialized form of citizenship, and the contradictions in the Anglo-Jewish position began to emerge. The Anglo-Jewish leadership were caught between this increasingly racialized conception of citizenship, which meant that the test of citizenship and loyalty became ever more severe, and an immigrant Jewish population who showed little interest in demonstrating their loyalty through war service.

In the ghetto public sphere, “subjects of difference and dissent” were openly debated. In the immigrant East End, the rate of enlistment was extremely low, despite the efforts of the Jewish War Services Committee, set up by Lord Rothschild and others in 1915 to increase the voluntary recruitment of Jewish immigrants. Instead, the East End saw the emergence of a powerful anti-war movement. The remainder of this chapter will examine this movement, emphasizing the movement’s alliances beyond the Jewish ghetto, built on the radical openness of the ghetto’s public sphere, its ability to speak and *translate* across ethnic borders – demonstrated, as we saw in chapter two, in earlier cycles of struggle, such as the garment strike waves of 1889 and 1912.

a. The Russian Émigré Left

When the war began, the Marxist left, like the anarchist movement, was split into pro- and anti-war camps. The main party of the left, the British Socialist Party (BSP), under HM Hyndman’s leadership, initially supported the war effort, and formed a Socialist National Defence Committee (SNDC). The “internationalist” wing of the party opposed this, led by EC Fairchild. Anti-war activists in the BSP were harassed, both by party loyalists and by the police to whom Hyndman passed their details.⁶ Peter Petroff, a Russian émigré member of the BSP, was smeared as a German spy in the party’s paper *Justice* at the end of 1915 and was arrested within

⁶ Challinor (1977:162), HO 45/10819/318095/128.

hours. His German-born wife was arrested too and sent to Aylesbury jail, where she was apparently treated very badly.⁷

The split in the BSP had deep roots. Despite its formal adherence to internationalism, its leadership, and especially Hyndman, frequently expressed xenophobic and nationalist sentiments. In 1885, Eleanor Marx wrote to Liebknecht that: “whereas we [the Socialist League] work to make this a really international movement..., Mr Hyndman, whenever he could so with impunity, has endeavoured to set English workmen against ‘foreigners’” (quoted Layburn and Murphy 1999:10).

At the 1900 party conference, an East London delegate made a formal complaint at the leadership’s anti-semitism, which was rebuffed by the leadership and *Justice*. The party leadership’s position on the Boer War was shot through with xenophobia and anti-semitism. James Connolly clearly identified this in *The Socialist* of May 1903:

Justice, instead of grasping the opportunity to demonstrate the unscrupulous and bloodthirsty methods of the capitalist class, strove to divert the wrath of the advanced workers from the capitalists to the Jews; how its readers were nauseated by denunciations of ‘Jewish millionaires’ and ‘Jewish plots’, ‘Jewish-controlled newspapers’, ‘German Jews’, ‘Israeilitish schemes’, and all the stock phrases of the lowest anti-semitic papers... (quoted Challinor 1977:15).⁸

At a Trafalgar Square meeting just before the war, Hyndman himself laid the blame on “the scoundrelly adventurers [with] good old British names like Eckstein, Beit, Solomon, Rothschild and Joel”, which provoked censure from Jewish members like Theodore Rothstein and Percy Friedberg, of Stepney and Finsbury Park respectively (quoted Kendall 1969:32). In 1901, the party called off its already lukewarm opposition to the war. Belfort Bax wrote that “I am not alone... in regretting that Comrade Hyndman... should allow the ‘weak and beggarly’ elements of British chauvinism within him to run away with his feelings”. Around the same time, the party leadership sent a letter of loyalty to the newly crowned king (“That you are very popular, Sir, there can be no doubt” and so on). This raised the ire of the leftists, not least those in the East End (quoted Kendall 1969:48).

⁷ Lord Sheffield took up her case in the House of Lords (Challinor 1977:163). Examples like these, according to Challinor, point to links between the official leadership of the BSP and the police.

⁸ Perhaps there is something about Connolly’s Irish-ness, his support for Irish nationalism, that allowed him to experience a concrete solidarity with the Jews that Hyndman couldn’t.

The party left were further racialized through their ideological support for the American ultra-left Marxist theoretician, Daniel De Leon, who happened to be Jewish. After the 1903 conference in Shoreditch, *Justice* described them as “those malcontents who are bent upon following the lead of German-Venezuelan Jew Loeb (or de Leon) to the pit of infamy and disgrace” – reportage that Connolly felt continued their Boer War anti-semitism and bigotry (quoted Challinor 1977:24).⁹

As late as 1911, *Justice* would refer to the Liberal candidate at North West Ham as ‘a billionaire Austrian Jew’, and term the Under Secretary of State for the colonies as ‘an impertinent and arrogant young Jew’, who ‘owes his position wholly and solely to the weight of the money bags behind him’. Joe Fineberg, secretary of the Stepney and Whitechapel branch, protested at this bigotry and prejudice, ‘which was an expression of Anti-Semitism that does unfortunately exist in the party’. Quelch [part of the leadership], under pressure, replied ‘that no offence was intended to the Jewish race’, and made his position plain by a further reference to ‘wealthy Jewish princes’ in the course of his remarks (Kendall 1969:32).

At this time, Hyndman was writing to the right-wing press, calling for a stronger navy and warning of the German danger. Many London branches, especially in the East End – Central Hackney, Whitechapel, Bethnal Green, St George’s – called on the Executive to disassociate itself from Hyndman’s statement. East End Russian Jewish activist Zelda Kahan was the spokesperson for this movement (the party, she said, must “repudiate such bourgeois imperialist views”), supported by her brother Boris and her (non-Jewish) partner, WP Coates, as well as Rothstein and EC Fairchild.¹⁰

Russian Jewish revolutionaries like Rothstein, the siblings Anna, Boris and Zelda Kahan, Peter Petroff, Alexander Sirnis, Maxim Litvinov and Joe Fineberg played a unique role in the Party, which we could call *translational*. Their opposition to the jingoism of the Hyndman circle was linked to their ties to the Continental and particularly Russian revolutionary movement. Rothstein, for example, worked for Russian Free Press Fund as translator in the 1890s and, after joining the Social Democrats, attended congresses of the Socialist International across Europe - in Paris in 1900, Amsterdam in 1904 and Stuttgart in 1907.¹¹ Rothstein was an extremely prolific writer, moving between journalistic hackwork, political economy

⁹ In fact, “De Leon was born in the Dutch West Indies of a wealthy Sephardic Jewish family. After studying in Germany, he came to New York in 1872” (Levin 1978:149). “De Leon was born Dec. 14, 1852, on Curacao, a Dutch-owned island off the coast of Venezuela” (SLP website http://www.socialists.net/De_Leon.htm).

¹⁰ Kendall (1969:49-54). On this occasion Lenin expressed his support for Kahan’s position.

¹¹ Burke and Lindop (1999:47-8), Kendall (1969:78), Saville (1983:vii). Litvinov was also at Stuttgart for the RSDLP, along with Martov and Plekhanov (Pope 1943:93).

and Marxist polemic, and between English, Russian, German and Yiddish, as well as translating a considerable amount of foreign-language material into English.¹² Similarly, Alexander Sirnis seems to have played an important role in linking the indigenous left with the émigré left and the international revolutionary movement. He was a BSP member who contributed to the SLP's *The Socialist* on international issues, translating important German and Russian texts into English for them.¹³ Likewise, Litvinov was the official Bolshevik representative to the International Socialist Bureau, which was based in London.¹⁴

The long-term presence of these people was crucial in facilitating the short-term presence in London of key Russian socialist leaders like Lenin, Martov and Trotsky. For example, in 1902, Rothstein introduced the Russian Marxist Martov to the SDF's Harry Quelch to negotiate the SDF's Twentieth Century Press publishing the RSDLP's *Iskra*.¹⁵ In 1902-3, Lenin and his wife were in London. Lenin produced numbers 22 to 38 of *Iskra* from the SDF offices in Clerkenwell Green.¹⁶ Lenin is known to have addressed at least two meetings in Whitechapel, the second one in March 1903 at the New Alexander Hall in Jubilee Street.¹⁷ Trotsky arrived later in the year and spent time with other Russians in London, like (Bolshevik) Vera Zasulich and (Bundist/Menshevik) Martov and the veteran Russian Marxist Plekhanov. He also lectured in Whitechapel.¹⁸ In May 1907, the 5th Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party took place in the Social Democratic Club in Fulbourne Street, opposite the London Hospital. Rothstein played a significant role at the congress.¹⁹

¹² Examples of his copious output are collected at the British Library in BL/X.802/4418, BL/08286.cc.76, BL/08286.cc.76, BL/P.P.2502.nb, BL/X.802/4418, and BL/8286.e.74. This includes articles in the SDF's monthly *The Social Democrat* from at least 1898, on topics including municipal socialism, Marxist philosophy and Russian politics; a booklet on the fortunes of British industry for the SDF in 1903; articles in the SDF's weekly *Justice* from at least 1903, mostly on economics; editing the Twentieth Century Press' *Socialist Annual* for 1907; three books on German economics for the Cobden Club in 1910; well over thirty articles in the German SPD's *Die Neue Zeit* from 1910 to 1919 (peaking around 1911-3) on topics such as the Balkan crisis, Chinese politics, British politics and Baghdad; articles for the (American) Socialist party's *International Socialist Review* around the same time; and a translation, with Max Beer, of Joseph Dietzgen's *Philosophical Essays* in 1917.

¹³ Challinor (1977:167).

¹⁴ Pope (1943:95-103).

¹⁵ Saville (1983:vii).

¹⁶ Challinor (1977:215-6).

¹⁷ Lavender (1999). He was the main speaker at a meeting celebrating the 32nd anniversary of the Paris Commune.

¹⁸ Kendall (1969:78-9).

¹⁹ Saville (1983:vii), Challinor (1977:225-6), Fishman (1975:124).

At the same time, although they continued to identify with the Russian movement (and many of them returned after the 1917 revolutions), these Russian Jewish Marxists came to be deeply rooted in the East London branches of the SDF, and the Yiddish popular culture that soaked through the East End radical world. London Yiddish journalist Morris Myer, loosely associated with BSP politics, was at the 1907 Congress too.²⁰ Myer was a Yiddishist, involved in the London Yiddish theatre movement and Yiddish press, as well as in specifically Jewish organizations like the Workers' Circle. That he was present at this congress is one hint at the way in which the Social Democrats, despite their formal articulation of an absolute identity-denying internationalism, were deeply embedded in an East End Yiddish-speaking scene. Likewise, the Social Democratic Club where the congress took place was a Yiddish club, used by the Jewish Social Democratic Organization and the Yiddish branch of the SDF. Rothstein wrote for Yiddish publications as well as Russian ones – *Di naye velt*, *Di naye tsayt* and *Der sotsyal-demokrat*.²¹ Similarly, Joe Fineberg was one of the main activists in the Yiddish branch of the BSP.²² So, these Marxists thought in terms of universal humanity or what we would now call colour-blind citizenship, but these values sometimes jarred against their biographies, in their relationship to their Yiddish-speaking constituencies in the East End, and in their relationship to a trans-national Jewish collectivity.

The organization of the internationalists in the party from the time of the Boer War laid the groundwork for the self-organization of the émigrés in the World War. 1915 saw the formation of the Political Prisoners and Exiles Relief Committee: representing the Russian Social Democratic Party, the Bund, the Polish Socialist Party and the Lithuanian Socialist Federation. Its secretaries were Mrs Bridges Adams and George Chicherin, a non-Jewish Russian and Social Democratic activist. Bridges Adams was a Marxist, a member of the Plebs League, a teacher of English to foreigners, and a feminist and education campaigner. The police raided her house in Earls Court a number of times during the war.

The émigrés' involvement in the Committee illustrates the complex positionality of the Russian Jewish Marxists: their intimate ties to a British Marxist scene in which

²⁰ Kadish (1992:188).

²¹ Prager (1990:559).

²² See Leftwich's 1911 diary, which mentions Fineberg week after week trying to persuade Leftwich to turn up at meetings (e.g. 20.01.1911, 8.04.1911, 26.05.1911, 8.10.1911). He also mentions Fineberg at a Yiddish production of Gorky's *Lower Depths* (3.12.1911) and was familiar with Rothstein (12.08.1912).

they had the special role of translating European Marxist thought into English idioms, but also their embedding in an immigrant radical world that was just one part of the Yiddish East End. These multiple identities or multiple locations meant that they moved between orienting themselves to a colour-blind conception of the English labour movement and orienting themselves to the Yiddish ghetto public sphere. We can see these tensions in the Political Prisoners and Exiles Relief Committee. On one hand, its aim was to gain support for their cause in the English labour movement: “all those who have taken part in the work of our Committee,” their pamphlet said, “have endeavoured to conduct on such lines as to emphasise the spirit of international solidarity of labour.” Accordingly, its chairman, ILP MP Phillip Snowden, and the treasurers, transport union leader Robert Williams, were labour movement sympathizers with the plight of the Russian exiles.²³ On the other hand, it was an example of the autonomous self-organization of the refugees themselves, speaking in their own languages.

b. Sylvia Pankhurst and Israel Zangwill

Just as the East End rank and file internationalists had to shrug off their West End leadership in order to fight against the war, the East End suffragettes had to confront *their* West End patriotic leaderships. Most of the suffragette leaders agreed to put their campaigning on hold for the duration of the war and threw their weight behind the national effort.²⁴ In contrast, Sylvia Pankhurst and her working class comrades in the East London Federation of Suffragettes (ELF, later renamed the Workers Suffrage Federation) used their paper, *Women's Dreadnought* to pursue anti-militarist activities.²⁵

The Dreadnought was strongly supportive of refugees and asylum-seekers in Britain. In August 1914, when war was breaking out, the *Woman's Dreadnought* wrote on

the unfortunate plight of Germans and other foreigners who are in England at this time. We in East London know that many of these people have lived with us as friendly neighbours for years. Some of them are political refugees, who, because they have dared to try to get reforms in their own autocratically governed countries, have been obliged to fly here for safety. Let us preserve our self-control at this

²³ HO 45/10819-21/318095/128 and /368.

²⁴ In October 1915, The Women's Social and Political Union, led by Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst, changed its newspaper's name from *The Suffragette* to *Britannia*. Emmeline's patriotic view of the war was reflected in the paper's new slogan: "For King, For Country, for Freedom" – mirroring the politics of the *Jewish Chronicle* during the period.

²⁵ Cf HO 45/10801/307402/5, Bush (1984:28-9, 72-4).

trying time, and endeavour to see that these people are not to bear the blame of the wrongs which are being done in this war.²⁶

This passage is very characteristic of the politics of the *Dreadnought*. A humanist politics of neighbourliness, empathy and everyday life and a down to earth appeal to an East End “neighbourhood nationalism” or “militant particularism”²⁷ are placed side by side with an appeal to the right of asylum. The casual heterogeneity of the local and mundane is drawn on as a resource for resistance. Identities like “German”, “foreign”, “enemy” or “alien” were replaced with identities like “neighbour” and “refugee”.

Pankhurst, like Joseph King, emerged from that strand within British radical liberalism that was extremely hostile to Tsarism and supportive of Russian dissenters. When the British authorities acted in a heavy-handed manner, the *Dreadnought* described them as using “RUSSIAN METHODS”²⁸, saying “THE POLICE ARE COWARDS AND COSSACKS”.²⁹ The *Dreadnought* group developed practical as well as symbolic links with Russian émigrés. For example, the ELF hosted talks by Russian Marxist Peter Petroff in 1915, speaking on “The Progress of Freedom in Russia” and “Russian Women in the Fight for Freedom”.³⁰ It was this concrete solidarity with Russian dissenters that would lead to links during the war with groups like the Russian Seamen’s Union and the Russian Political Prisoners and Relief Committee. Other examples of the *Dreadnought’s* support for refugees include regular articles on interned aliens during the war.³¹

Pankhurst’s support for asylum rights took on a new place in her political thought as she rapidly shifted towards a communist position. This shift can be narrated through her immersion in the East End, both in the world of white working class women in areas like Bow (where she lived) and Hoxton, and in the world of the Jewish community. She lived with a shoe-making family named the Paynes in Bow from 1909; her circle of close friends were working class women like Charlotte Drake, ex-barmaid, labourer’s wife and mother of five, Melvina Walker, ex-ladies’

²⁶ *Woman’s Dreadnought* 15.8.1914, p.85.

²⁷ On “neighbourhood nationalism”: Phil Cohen (1988, 1993), Les Back (1996); on “militant particularism”: David Harvey (1996), Raymond Williams (1989).

²⁸ *Woman’s Dreadnought* 30.05.1914.

²⁹ *Woman’s Dreadnought* 21.02.1914

³⁰ *Woman’s Dreadnought* 8.05.1915, 15.05.1915. His talks were at the Bow Women’s Hall and the Poplar Women’s Hall. The veteran campaigner for British support for Russian freedom Jacob Prelooker also lectured for the Federation, in May 1916 (22.04.1916).

³¹ e.g. “WHERE ALIENS ARE INTERNED”, on Alexander Palace and Knockaloe, 22.4.1916, “THE TRIAL OF THE WAR”, on Knockaloe, 7.10.1916.

maid and docker's wife, and Mrs Cresswell, mother of six and wife of a paint factory worker.³² Her day to day engagement with the life-struggles of working class people reconfigured her politics from a liberal grammar of rights to an orientation to material needs: housing issues, food supply issues, workplace issues. The ELF's opposition to the war was focused on the politics of everyday life, not on abstract pacifist principles. They campaigned against food rationing, organized rent strikes and called for the commandeering of empty homes for the newly homeless. As the ELF transformed itself into first the Workers' Suffrage Federation and then the Workers' Socialist Federation (WSF) and its paper the *Woman's Dreadnought* became the *Workers' Dreadnought*, these considerations came further to the fore.

Pankhurst also became personally close to members of the Jewish community. Her bodyguard, "Kosher" Hunt, was a Jewish prize-fighter.³³ She was friendly with Israel Zangwill, who lived for a time in Old Ford Road, where the WSF was based;³⁴ Zangwill frequently spoke at their meetings and they published some of his speeches. One of Pankhurst's closest friends was Minnie Lansbury, the wife of George Lansbury's son Edgar. Minnie's parents, the Glassmans, were Stepney Jews; her father, Isaac, was a coal dealer in Chicksand Street. Minnie was a teacher in the East End until her marriage to Edgar in 1914. Both her and Edgar were activists in Pankhurst's organization, the WSF, during the war, and later became Communists and councillors in Poplar.³⁵ Although most histories of "Poplarism" (the grassroots-driven left-wing movement and tax revolt around the Poplar councillors) don't mention Minnie Lansbury's Jewish background, she was buried in a Jewish cemetery in East Ham when she died of pneumonia in 1922 after her spell in prison for refusing to pay rates.³⁶ George Lansbury, Pankhurst and Zangwill were all supportive of the Foreign Jews Protection Committee, Pankhurst telling one of its mass meetings that "the fight of the Jewish Protection Committee on behalf of their compatriots [was] a fight for the freedom of every section of the British people" (quoted Bush 1985:23).

³² Widgery (1989:56).

³³ Widgery (1989:58).

³⁴ Taylor (1993:33). There is a blue plaque at the site.

³⁵ Taylor (1993:11-2).

³⁶ Crucially, Minnie's family roots in the local Jewish community interconnected with the routes of the émigré radicals: when the Bolsheviks smuggled the Russian crown jewels to Britain to fund leftists here, her father hid them amongst his coal and set up a connection with Jewish jewellers in Hatton Gardens to sell them. The money raised was given to George Lansbury's *Herald*, but it refused the money on principle and a minor "Moscow jewels" scandal ensued. Histories of Poplarism that ignore these Jewish stories include

Zangwill, despite his belief that “Prussianism” constituted a danger to civilization, was vociferous in his opposition to war. His initial response – like that of many Russian immigrants – focused on Britain’s alliance with the Tsarist regime. His strongly anti-Russian *Melting Pot* (which had recently been performed in Yiddish in East London in 1912 and in film form at the Brick Lane Picture Palace in February 1914) was banned in Britain by the Foreign Office at the request of the Russian government right at the beginning of the war. Zangwill urged the Western Allies to use their influence to secure rights for minorities and dissenters in Russia and Roumania (Jews, but also Finns, Armenians, Poles, Ukrainians, socialists and liberals) – right from September 1914.³⁷ He campaigned against the pro-Russian polemics of right-wing journalist Stephen Graham in articles in *The Nation* and in his book *The War for the World*, and went head to head with Graham at the National Liberal Club. Stephen Graham had been ideologically bolstering the Alliance with Russia on the basis of a cult of “Holy Russia” articulated around images of Russian Orthodox mysticism and Tsarist royalism.³⁸

Zangwill was heavily involved in the peace movement during the war. He spoke, for example, at a London Conference on the “Pacifist Philosophy of Life” organized by the National Peace Council in July 1915. Other speakers there included E Behrens of the Jewish Peace Society, Herbert Burrows (BSP member and former Theosophist), Rabbi Israel Mattuck, radical geographer Patrick Geddes, socialist and gay rights campaigner Edward Carpenter and philosopher Bertrand Russell.³⁹ Of imprisoned Conscientious Objectors, he said “They are equally with our first volunteers the flower of our manhood, but while our fighting heroes are part of the old barbarous order, our prisoners are our pioneers, and these convicts will be the cornerstone of the coming civilization” (quoted Szajkowski 1972:358).

Zangwill also spoke on WSF platforms at various points, for instance at the WSF exhibition at Caxton Hall in December 1916, which was organized to raise awareness of the sweated industries of the East End, both the (mainly Jewish)

Branson (1979). More recent accounts, from non-Stalinist socialists, continue these silences, such as Booth (2000).

³⁷ Levene(1992:40), Leftwich (1957:165-6).

³⁸ See Zangwill’s critiques of this in *The War for the World* (1916), e.g. the essay “Rosy Russia” (cf Leftwich 1957:80).

³⁹ *National Peace Council Monthly Circular* volume II #47 (May 1915) and #48 (June 1915) at BL/P.P.1126.caa, pp.297, 304.

garment industry and the (mainly white and Catholic) matchbox industry.⁴⁰ Unlike Pankhurst, he was never a socialist. But his orientation to the immigrant Jews of the East End – like Pankhurst's orientation to the white working class of East London – placed him in a close relationship to the socialist movement.

c. The Workers' Fund

As well as resisting the threat of their own internment and deportation and the pressure to join up and fight, East End Jews were concerned about the plight of Jews in Eastern Europe, just as they had been after Kishinev. The Workers' Fund – to give it its full name, the Workers' War Emergency Relief Fund or *Arbayter Melkhome Hilfs Fond* – was set up by East End immigrants to practically express their solidarity with Jews in Eastern Europe. The Fund is more or less ignored in most histories of Anglo-Jewry.⁴¹ It is mentioned in the commemorative publications of the Workers' Circle.⁴² Most of the information I am drawing on here, however, comes from a "Bulletin" it published in Spring 1917.⁴³ In the next chapter, I will return to that Bulletin, examining some of the discourses of citizenship and belonging emerging in it: critiques of the communal that draw on both Eastern European folk traditions and Marxist class analysis, critiques of the nation-state logic of citizenship that draw on the diasporic geographies of belonging through which the Fund was routed, and the ways in which the Fund negotiated between class and ethnic identifications.

The Fund was formed early in 1915 by Jewish trade unionists who were unhappy with the way that official Jewish war relief efforts were not getting through to those who the trade unionists felt were in most need of relief. The trade unionists had withdrawn from Anglo-Jewry's official Central Relief Fund, which had been formed in December 1914 at the Spanish and Portugese Synagogue. Yiddish trade unionists, in particular the Mantle Makers' Union, collected for a fund and summoned a conference, which met in March 1915. Various *landsmanshaftn*

⁴⁰ Special Branch report by PC Jane and Superintendent Quinn, 8.12.1916, in HO 45/10742/263275.

⁴¹ Fishman, Kadish and Stuart Cohen do not even mention it. Eugene Black gives it a small amount of space (1988:324-5).

⁴² e.g. in the record of Sam Dreen's speech at the Circle Jubilee Meeting in Workers Circle (1959:5) and EW Podolsky's "The Cultural Activities" (ibid:24).

⁴³ This Bulletin had an English and a Yiddish section; in quoting from it, citations from the English section are referenced here by page numbers E1 etc, the Yiddish section by Y1 etc. The fact that it had these two sections, each subtly different, itself says something about the multiple identifications of the Fund, suggesting it was a space of translation, as I will discuss at the end of this chapter.

supported the new initiative: according to the 1959 reminiscences of a Workers' Circle activist, the Piotrkower, the Skerniewics and Rawa, the Warsaw and Lodz, and the Baltic landsmanshaftn were involved,⁴⁴ while the 1917 Bulletin mentions the Zhitomirer Hilfs Fereyn (Zhitomir Relief Association) and the Radomer landsmanshaft.⁴⁵

The Workers' Circle played a big role in the Fund. Sam Dreen recalled that the Circle provided a secretary for the Fund.⁴⁶ The list of Fund collectors at the back of the Bulletin also features some names that could be people associated with the Circle: Kremer collecting on Jubilee Street (possibly the Kramer or Kremer who was a founder-member of Circle Division III), Vayner collecting on Commercial Road (possibly the N Weiner active in Division I and long-serving General Secretary of the Circle), and Hilman collecting at Hawking Street Buildings (possibly Arthur Hillman, anarchist founder-member of Division I, *Di Tsayt* contributor and secretary of the Jewish Tailors and Tailoresses Trade Union in 1912).⁴⁷

As well as the Mantle Makers (i.e. the International Mantle Makers branch of the AST), other unions were involved, mainly from the garment industry, but also from boot and shoe-makers, furniture-makers, cigarette-makers, bakers, barbers and waiters.⁴⁸ Before long, various political parties became involved as well, notably the Jewish Social Democratic Organisation and the labour Zionist Poale Zion Association, as well as the Socialist Territorialists and the *Veker* (Awakener) group – the London Bund branch.⁴⁹ Although the Jewish Anarchist Federation (the *Arbayter Fraynd* group) pulled out of the Fund because they felt it was too exclusively Jewish, the list of Fund collectors at the back of the Bulletin features some names associated with the group: Vayner and Hilman, mentioned above,

⁴⁴ Podolsky (1959:24).

⁴⁵ See the Report of Israel Rosenberg of Richmond Buildings Dean Street in the Bulletin. He names the Radomer society's treasurer as Mr Quinter. The *Jewish Yearbook* for all the war years lists a West End Radom Hebrew Benefit Society, whose secretary was an S Goldstein, living in Soho.

⁴⁶ This is presumably A Kantor who took over from Bezalel as General Secretary, although I have found no references to Kantor in Workers' Circle literature I've seen ("The Jubilee Meeting" in Workers Circle (1959:5)).

⁴⁷ On Kremer see (AL Cohen 1959:8-9) and "Circle Personalities #2 in *The Circle* volume I #3 (August 1934). His branch of the Circle, Division III, was more Bundist and Yiddishist. On Hillman and Weiner see Rucker (1956:28) and Barnett (1934:2). Their branch, Division I, was anarchist-inspired.

⁴⁸ Kantor (1917b:Y20).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

Plotshanski collecting in Stepney Green (certainly Nellie Ploschanksy's family, active *Arbayter Fraynd* workers), Linder collecting in Dunstan Houses (presumably Solo Linder, the *Arbayter Fraynd* editor after Rucker's interment), and Shapiros collecting in Dunstan Houses and Vine Street (conceivably either Moses and Nastia Shapiro or their son Alexander, who lived in Dunstan Houses and were all members of the Rucker circle).

Among its more well-known activists were Abraham Bezalel, the Romanian Jew who was the main leader of the Foreign Jews Protection Committee, and Morris Myer, a Romanian journalist who came to England in 1902 and founded the important Yiddish leftist newspaper *Di Tsayt* in 1913. Myer was associated with the Social Democrats, although with strong links to the labour Zionist movement. Zionist leader Moses Gaster – another Romanian and the Haham (chief rabbi) of Britain's Sephardic community – also lent his support. Other activists were Joseph Kruk, a Doctor of Law and Yiddish journalist from Poland who settled in England at the start of World War I,⁵⁰ and J Pomeranz, secretary of the Poale Zion.⁵¹

The Fund provided material support to Jewish victims of war in many places.⁵² In the East End itself, it supported Jewish internees and their families; this work was co-ordinated by AH Romanovsky. In Eastern Europe, it distributed money in Poland and Galicia via the Dutch-based Poale Zion Farband and the American Folks Hilf Komitet⁵³ and in Russia via the ORT.⁵⁴ In the Middle East, specifically Palestine and Egypt, it distributed aid via Moses Gaster. And in Bulgaria, it distributed money through the Berne-based International Peace Bureau. Thus it worked through trans-national networks: both political networks (links between the Jewish Social Democrats of London and the Jewish Social Democrats of Poland, or through the

⁵⁰ See Kadish (1992:187, 201). Kruk was also Chairman in the FJPC in 1916, according to a local police report (HO 45/10819/318095/91) and was active in the Workers' League for Jewish Emancipation along with other FJPCers Morris Myer, Isaac Sharp and Salve Joseph (see his pamphlet *Great Russians on the Jewish Question* 1916, BL/ 8095.ff.25).

⁵¹ Kadish says Pomeranz was also active with Bezalel in the FJPC (1992:201). See Gorny (1983:8) on Pomeranz.

⁵² In its first year, the Fund raised nearly £1500. In its second year it raised nearly £6000. In the first quarter of 1917 it raised £450 (Kantor 1917b:Y20).

⁵³ The American-based Jewish People's Relief Committee, chaired by the Yiddish writer Sholem Asch, was an autonomous working class relief organization. It represented a diverse cross-section of the America Jewish labour movement, and in particular the labour Zionists, whose most prominent leaders were then in the US. Its story, in many ways, parallels that of the Workers' Fund in the UK.

⁵⁴ The ORT (Obshestvo Remeslennogo Truda: Society of Handicrafts and Agricultural Work among Jews of Russia) is a large Russian Jewish charity which was active in war and refugee relief work during WWI.

Poale Zion International for example) and more personal networks (links between immigrants and those who they had left behind).⁵⁵

At various points in the life of the Fund, it introduced the principle of “self-taxation” – both at the beginning of the war, when the United Furnishing Trade Union used the principle to support the Fund, and at the end, when A Kantor proposed that the Fund’s members copy the Belgian Refugee Section of the Diamond Workers’ Union which used the principle to support relief work among Belgian refugees.⁵⁶ The relief efforts can therefore be linked to a tradition of practical solidarity for the sufferings of Jews in “the old country”.

The Workers’ Fund, emerging from the same Yiddish radical world as the Political Prisoners and Exiles Relief Committee (and overlapping in membership with it), represented a very different type of response to the war. While the Fund constantly stressed its working class orientation (thus emphasizing differences within Jewishness), it also emphasized specifically Jewish sufferings (and thus differences within the global proletariat). Although connected with trade unions, it drew on Jewish self-help and mutual aid traditions, and was connected to the specifically Jewish (rather than radical) trans-national networks embodied in the *landsmanshaftn*.

So far in this chapter, we have seen that, in the first eighteen months of war, the Anglo-Jewish leadership, following its ideology of citizenship, worked hard to demonstrate their loyalty to the British nation. In the East End, in contrast, a number of different groups, from the internationalists of the *Arbayter Fraynd* and the BSP, to the Yiddishist trade unionists of the Workers’ Fund, rejected the call to loyal service. In the following years, as the rest of this chapter will examine, opposition to the war became more and more difficult as the government introduced conscription and intensified their policing of anti-military activity.

⁵⁵ Up to Spring 1917, it had distributed nearly £1700 to Poland and Lithuania, over £1400 in Russia, £760 in Galicia, £560 in Palestine, £20 in Egypt, £8 in Bulgaria, £1500 among the families of the interned (sixty families) and £322 among the interned themselves (120 internees) (Kantor 1917b:E13).

⁵⁶ Kantor (1917a:E7).

Conscription

As the war went on, despite the mass nature of the opposition, it became harder and harder to resist the war machine. In January 1916, the Military Service Act was passed, introducing conscription for all unmarried men between the ages of 18 and 41. In May, a second Act was passed, widening this to include married men, and empowering the War Office to extend the service of time-expired men and to re-examine men previously rejected as physically unfit. Tribunals were formed to rule on men calling for exemption. Sylvia Pankhurst, who attended meetings of the Bethnal Green tribunal, described its proceedings:

Among the appellants was a small greengrocer and furniture remover, who pleaded for total exemption to carry on his business, as the sole support of his aged father and his two widowed sisters and their children. He was brusquely allowed a month's exemption to wind up his affairs before joining his regiment. Jews were treated even more relentlessly than other applicants; the destruction of their small businesses seemed to give real satisfaction to the Tribunal (1987:291).

At first, friendly aliens were expected to serve either in the British army or return to the country of their birth and serve there. Initially, however, due to behind-the-scenes action by Herbert Samuel, the (Jewish) Home Secretary, Russians were not included in this ruling; Samuel was mindful that most Russians were in fact Jews, with a grievance against Tsarism and often fleeing conscription. This exemption extended to the British-born sons of non-naturalized Russians (perhaps another, albeit benign, case of blood becoming more significant than birth in defining Britishness). For the East End Jews, the government adopted a policy of "voluntarism": voluntary recruitment schemes and pressure from the Anglo-Jewish grandees of the West End. However, these brought forth very few Russian Jews (less than 400 by October 1916).⁵⁷ Pressure mounted to get them "into khaki" and accusations of Jewish "slackness" and "avoidance" became wide-spread, often leading to violence and Herbert Samuel mooted the threat of deportation for those not enlisting.

a. The Anarchists

As a result of the introduction of conscription, the situation in the anarchist scene – as with the suffragettes and Marxists – became tense. War had already created divisions within the movement: when war broke out, Kropotkin, surprising his

⁵⁷ Kadish (1992:46, 253-4).

comrades, had supported the Allied war effort.⁵⁸ Like Zangwill, he identified “Prussianism” or “Prussian militarism” as a threat to freedom and democracy. A popular edition of his *Mutual Aid: A Factor in Evolution* was published in Britain in November 1914, sold at a shilling per copy; according to Joseph Ishill, this was to refute the social Darwinism being used by Germany and its supporters to justify their militarism.⁵⁹ Kropotkin’s stance on the war intensified and brought into clearer light his human geographer’s cultural relativist critique of abstract internationalism. In a letter of February 1916, he wrote “The first, true International did not declare itself cosmopolitan. It claimed the rights of every nationality to develop freely as was intended.”⁶⁰

Kropotkin’s pro-war stance isolated him from many of his former comrades, but he still continued to be respected. Paul Rose, a Russian Jewish anarchist born in 1890 who had fled to America after the 1905 revolution and become a Wobbly, recalled this: “On a trip to London in 1914 or 1915 I visited Peter Kropotkin. He served us tea, which he made himself, and though I called him a chauvinist because he wanted to kill Germans, he was very hospitable and friendly.”⁶¹ If Kropotkin was the main voice of the pro-war anarchists, Rudolf Rocker was the main voice of the anti-war anarchists. He opened the pages of the *Arbayter Fraynd* to criticisms of the war.⁶²

When conscription was introduced, these tensions increased. In February 1916, Kropotkin was one of the signatories of the “Manifesto of the Sixteen”, along with Varlaam Cherkosov, Jean Grave and others, which set out the anarchist pro-war position.⁶³ The International Anarchist Bureau in London immediately responded with a statement that anarchism and support for war are incompatible. The statement was signed by Leonard Abbot, Alexander Berkman, Joseph Cohen, Fred

⁵⁸ White (1990:115).

⁵⁹ Joseph Ishill “Peter Kropotkin, Evolutionist” p.10, in Oppenheimer et al 1942.

⁶⁰ quoted Marc Pierrot “Kropotkin and the First World War” p.21 in Oppenheimer et al (1942). Note the use of the word “cosmopolitan” in the way that it was used in the debate within the Yiddish left at that time, signalling an abstract internationalism that renounced any national “particularities”.

⁶¹ Oral testimony in Avrich (1995:338). Whether Rose’s contacts in London had anything to do with the Wobbly branches that started in London during the war is a matter for speculation. Certainly, these types of personal trans-Atlantic relationships made a crucial difference to the circulation of struggle in the scene.

⁶² Rocker (1956:246-50).

⁶³ reproduced in *Le Monde Libertaire* Paris September 1964.

Dunn, Emma Goldman, TH Keel, Harry Kelly, Malatesta, Alexander Schapiro, Bill Shatoff, Saul Yanovsky and others.⁶⁴

The anti-war Jewish anarchists, meanwhile, maintained their links with the wider movement, as instances recorded in police files indicate. For instance, young Arbayer Fraynd activist, Nellie Ploschansky, and her partner, Jim Dick, along with their friend Fred Dunn, lived in Marsh House, the Freedom Group's commune on Mecklenburgh Street Bloomsbury, established in 1915.⁶⁵ These sorts of stories testify to the continuing vitality of the networks of mutual aid established in the East End, and also to the links that connected the East End Yiddish activists to wider circuits of resistance. One police file notes an anarchist anti-war conference at Marsh House in Easter 1916 at which Alexander Schapiro spoke, and a Mrs Goldberg, whose husband was in Wormwood Scrubs as a CO, who was active in both the Jewish Anarchists' Federation and the No-Conscription Fellowship in late 1917.⁶⁶ What we can see here, then, is a complex web of relationships between different milieux in the East End – Yiddishists, activists in the Yiddish- and English-language libertarian movements, interned Germans – even as the British state sought to regulate these connections through their policing.⁶⁷

b. The Foreign Jews Protection Committee

The summer of 1916 saw grave worry in the East End about deportation back to Russia of those who refused to serve. The Liberal ally of the East End radicals, Joseph King MP, asked a question in the House about the “alarm felt by the Yiddish population of East London, who dread deportation to Russia”, adding that “the Yiddish protection societies are endeavouring to calm excitement, to disseminate correct information, and otherwise to assist in the maintenance of order and good feeling.”⁶⁸ It was around this time that the East End saw the formation of the Foreign Jews Protection Committee (FJPC – or the *fertheydingungs komitet fun di oyslendishe iden gegen tsurikshikung keyn rusland*

⁶⁴ reproduced *ibid.*

⁶⁵ Pether (1989:159).

⁶⁶ HO 45/10822/318095/525.

⁶⁷ TH Keel of *Freedom*, Schapiro, Linder and Lenoble (the published and compositor of the *Arbayer Fraynd*) and Milly Witkop were all arrested under the Defence of the Realm Act and imprisoned for various periods of time (Rocker 1956:318-22).

⁶⁸ HO 45/10818/318095/14, cf Hansard 7.08.1916. Note that King speaks of “Yiddish” as an ethnicity rather than as just a language (“the Yiddish in East London”), a usage then kept by the Home Office civil servant who started the file on this (“I am aware that there has been some uneasiness among the Yiddish in East London and that this has been taken

un getsvungene militer-dienst to give it its full, rather wordy Yiddish title). In the next chapter, we will return to the FJPC, identifying in their texts an appeal to a liberal cosmopolitanism articulated in terms of the right of asylum, but also a pushing at the limits of this liberal cosmopolitanism through a humanist appeal to the figure of the refugee, drawing on particular cultural traditions (Yiddish language and Biblical textual practices) as resources for this politics of the refugee. Here, however, I will simply sketch out something of their story, drawing out the complex cultural field in which they emerged.

The main force behind the FJPC seems to have been its secretary, Abraham Bezalel, born Solly Abrahams in Dobrecjia, Romania, in 1885. He came to Britain via France very early in the War, around August 1914, spending some time in Glasgow before winding up in Stepney Green in early 1916.⁶⁹ He was also the secretary for some time of the Workers' War Emergency Relief Fund. The FJPC's treasurer was Jacob Meir Salkind, a religious anarchist and scholar from Kobrin.⁷⁰ The third officer of the FJPC on its formation was Joseph Kruk, its Chairman, a Doctor of Law and Yiddish journalist from Poland who settled in England at the start of World War I.⁷¹

Other figures associated with the FJCP include Abraham Vieviorka, co-editor of its short-lived mouthpiece, *Di Idische Shtime* (The Jewish Voice). Vieviorka was a Yiddish poet and journalist. Born in Kalish in Poland, he started writing in 1906. Arriving in London from Berlin around 1912, he edited *Dos Yudishe Vort* (1912-3 literary weekly), *Farn Folk* and *Shvues Blat*, and wrote for Morris Myer's *Di Tsayt*. In 1916, he was also one of the contributors to the literary magazine *Dos Naye Leben*, along with Dovid Pliskin and Leo Kenig.⁷² He helped Ber Borokhov and Harvard professor Leo Wiener when they were in London doing Yiddish philological

advantage of by certain persons to foment ill feeling and action contrary to the interests of this country").

⁶⁹ HO 45/10818-21/318095, especially /367. This latter file contains a police report stating that he might be a deserter from the French Foreign Legion.

⁷⁰ Goldvaser (1975).

⁷¹ See Kadish (1992:187, 201), HO 45/10819/318095/91. Kruk was also active in the Workers' Fund (see his article on self-help in Russia in its Bulletin).

⁷² See copies in British Library and UCL Yiddish Library. Pliskin (1889-1942) was born in Russia, came to London in 1910, worked as a tailor and was an active Poale Zionist, contributed poetry to *Di Tsayt*, returned to Russia in 1917, fought in the Civil War in the Ukraine, was exiled to Paris in 1924, but was deported to the camps and died in Auschwitz (Prager 1990:523). Kenig was an important Yiddish poet, painter and art critic, associated with the Ben Uri Art Gallery in London and the Bezalel Institute in Israel. He was also a friend of Marc Chagalle's and a Poale Zionist (Wine 2001).

research.⁷³ Vieviorka's co-editor of *Di Idische Shtime* was A Margolin: according to Leonard Prager, this was Avrom Margolin, a Russian-born journalist, correspondent for the New York *Forverts* and member of the Army Medical Corps in Britain. Margolin and AM Kaiser edited *Der Milkhome Telegraf*, another, even more short-lived anti-war magazine, in August 1914. This came out on the Sabbath: its masthead said "The only Jewish Saturday paper in London".⁷⁴

The FJPC was closely connected too with the Jewish labour movement. The officers of the FJPC in July 1916 included several Jewish trade union activists.⁷⁵ A police report from the early period of their activity also describes them as being rooted in the trade union world:

Periodically they announce meetings to be held at various Halls in this District, great care always being taken to prevent anyone other than foreign Jews, chiefly delegates from various Trade Unions who are usually called upon to show their card, from entering, and all speeches are in Yiddish.⁷⁶

Another list of committee members Sharman Kadish cites, from around the same time, has a slightly different list of names, which emphasizes links to political radicalism and especially anarchism (1992:200-1). The list includes Jacob Capitanshchik, another trade unionist, close to the Rucker circle but also a contributor (as "A Vogler", which means "A Wanderer") to Morris Myer's *Di Tsayt*.⁷⁷ Also on the list were Z Rafkin of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW)⁷⁸ and Sam Dreen, a member of the Rucker circle and a militant in the Amalgamated Society of Tailors. During the war, Dreen moved to a Poale Zion position, although he retained a libertarian worldview and reverence for Rucker.⁷⁹ Other links to the Rucker circle emerge in the police files: the local IWW distributed FJPC literature;⁸⁰ a police report from July 1917 mentions the involvement of one Faivel Alexandrovitch "an ardent anarchist";⁸¹ the Communist Club in Soho sent delegates

⁷³ Prager (1990:679, 714), Leftwich (1939:673).

⁷⁴ Prager (1990:437-8, 464).

⁷⁵ HO 45/10818/318095/2.

⁷⁶ HO 45/10819/318095/110.

⁷⁷ According to Prager, Capitanschik (Yankev-Yitsokh Kapitantschik in Yiddish) arrived in London in 1910, hoping to travel on to Buenos Aires (1990:392).

⁷⁸ Kadish (1992:203). She adds that the IWW met at Great Tongue Yard, 76 Whitechapel Road. This Rafkin is probably a parent of Misha Rafkin, Fermin Rucker's childhood friend, (Fermin Rucker 1998:120).

⁷⁹ On Dreen, see interview in Paul Avrich (1995:321-3), lengthy quotations from interviews in Fishman (1975) and speech at Workers' Circle Jubilee Meeting (Workers' Circle 1959:5).

⁸⁰ War Office intelligence report, July 1917, HO 45/10821/318095/367.

⁸¹ HO 45/10821/318095/367.

to the FJPC.⁸² Links to the Social Democrats are suggested by a brief period in 1916 when the FJPC shared offices with *Dos Arbayer Vort*, a Social Democratic newspaper.⁸³

As well as these groups within the Jewish radical world, the FJPC had links to non-Jewish groups. This included the peace movement. For example, Bezalel had contact with the National Council for Civil Liberties;⁸⁴ and radical Liberal MP Joseph King was a consistent supporter. Along with Liberal peer Lord Sheffield, King regularly asked questions in Parliament on topics of concern to them and chairing or speaking at their public meetings.⁸⁵ As well as the peace movement, the FJPC had links with the non-Jewish left. For example, Bezalel, as one of two delegates from the FJPC, attended the conference in Leeds in June 1917 that aimed to set up a British Soviet of Workers and Soldiers.⁸⁶

From the wide base of the FJPC's affiliate organizations and supporters (from anarchists to liberals, from Zionists to Marxists) and from the huge numbers that turned out at its public meetings, it is possible to conclude, as Sharman Kadish does, that

the overwhelming impression is that the FJPC had accurately captured the mood of the Russian Jews in the East End during the First World War (1992:206).

c. The Marxist Left

After conscription was introduced, British anti-war BSPers like Fairchild, Fineberg and Alexander were increasingly targets of police harassment; they laid the blame for this on the party leadership who, they felt, had passed information on them to the police. At the 1916 party conference, Alexander accused them: "Colleagues of these men are responsible for Scotland Yard dogging the footsteps of men like myself" (quoted Challinor 1977:165-6). When the conference turned against the

⁸² report in HO 45/10821/318095/368. The report lists the committee members of the Communist Club: Sandelevitch, Jorgensen, Zimmerman, Mervos, Runge, Pilgard and Sario. Sandelevitch, mentioned in various reports, is probably Zundeleitch, the veteran Narodnik with ties to the Social Revolutionary party.

⁸³ For the *Arbayter Vort* office, see *The Jewish Yearbook* (1916:246 and 1917:253). For the FJPC office, see HO 45/10819/318095/110, 128.

⁸⁴ War Office intelligence report, July 1917, HO 45/10821/318095/367.

⁸⁵ In Volumes 90 to 96 of Hansard, covering the first half of 1917, King raised issues around refugee rights some twenty times.

⁸⁶ War Office intelligence report, July 1917, and Special Branch report, July 1917, both in HO 45/10821/318095/367.

leadership, the latter withdrew to form the National Socialist Party, and the “internationalist” faction, led by Fairchild, took over the party leadership.

With the departure of the Hyndmanites, the BSP was free to pursue a stronger anti-war policy. This often meant collaboration with “cross-class” peace groups. For instance, the Central Committee of the BSP was represented at the National Peace Congress in May 1918; rank and file BSPers were involved in No Conscription Fellowship branches in East London (Forest Gate, Hackney, Poplar and Stepney, Walthamstow and Leyton); and BSP leader Fairchild was on committees of groups like the National Peace Council.⁸⁷

The Hyndmanites kept up their tactics of disrupting the work of the anti-war socialists. Often their actions hinted at anti-semitic and xenophobic views. For example, when Rothstein was working for the government, as a translator and editor on the *Daily Review of the Foreign Press*, Hyndman publicly denounced him as a “German agent” and got him dismissed.⁸⁸

Meanwhile, the émigrés continued to organize themselves outside the BSP. In March 1916, the Russian Anti-Conscription League was set up, based at the offices of the Mantle-Makers branch of the Amalgamated Society of Tailors and Tailoresses. The League was much more militant than the FJPC and hostile to Jewish nationalism of even the mildest sort. It always spoke for its constituency as *Russian* exiles and never as Jews. A Special Branch report of September 1916, by Inspector Thomas MacNamara and Superintendent Quinn, described an inquiry made into the Russian Anti-Conscription League. It met regularly, the meetings being well attended, and had “considerable moral, if not financial backing” in the East End. Although the police report indicates there was some anarchist involvement in the League, it was clearly led by Social Democrats. The secretary was Comrade Himmelfarb, a Social Democrat.⁸⁹ A Yiddish speaking policeman

⁸⁷ *National Peace Council Monthly Circular* volume II #47 (May 1915) and #48 (June 1915) at BL/P.P.1126.caa, pp.297, 304; *National Peace Council Supplementary Annual Report for 1917-18* BL/AR.600(3).

⁸⁸ Saville (1983:xii-xiii). Saville claims that John Mclean believed these allegations, and this contributed to his antagonism towards Rothstein, which in turn was one of the reasons for Rothstein’s villainous role in the historical accounts of Mclean’s admirers Challinor and Kendall, the two accounts which remain the key non-Stalinist histories of the British Marxist scene in the period.

⁸⁹ The police report names I Himmelfarb of 122 Brick Lane (HO 45/10819/318095/110). Kadish names the secretary as a P Himmelfarb who was the editor of *Dos Arbayter Vort* in 1915-7, a Bundist and a BSP member (1992:201-2). Prager describes a *Hersh* Himmelfarb,

from Leman Street station, PC Greenblatt, went undercover to one of their meetings in September 1916 and reported that all the proceedings took place in Russian, not Yiddish, although he was approached by someone there and encouraged to join in Yiddish.⁹⁰ The Special Branch investigation was triggered off by a letter in July 1916 from the far right British Empire Union, enclosing a “Russian pamphlet” (actually a Yiddish leaflet) of the League, with a plea that these men be called up.⁹¹ The leaflet calls upon “comrades and citizens” (*khaverim un birger*) to unite against compulsion.⁹²

There was apparently also a West End branch of the League, based at the Communist Club at Charlotte Street.⁹³ The Communist Club in Soho was raided without a warrant in December 1916, property of both the Club and the Union of Garment Workers being destroyed. In *The Socialist*, the Club’s secretary described the officers helping themselves to the contents of the wine cellar. “They also appeared to be badly in need of playing cards, fountain pens, walking sticks, watches, etc” (quoted Challinor 1977:186).

The Committee of Delegates of Russian Socialist Groups in London

The most important organization of the émigrés on the left was the Committee of Delegates, known as CoDoRSGiL. In the next chapter, we will return to the CoDoRSGiL, drawing out the way their proletarian internationalism was used to subvert the logic of the nation-state – but also how, in orienting to the *national* proletariat, they sometimes re-affirmed this very logic. Here, however, I will simply describe something of their story, which demonstrates a web of connections between different spaces, East End and West End, English and Russian, local and trans-national.

The CoD was made up of the London sections of the various Russian socialist parties (the RSDLP, the SRs, the Bund and the Polish, Lithuanian and Latvian Social Democratic parties), as well as London’s Jewish Social Democratic

born in 1899, lived in London 1907 to 1917 (the date 1907 indicating he was perhaps part of the influx of Bundist refugees post-1905). This Himmelfarb, he says, served as Secretary of the Jewish section of the BSP and wrote for the Bundist *Dos Arbayer Vort* 1916-7 (1990:316). There was a Social Democrat named S Himmelfarb active in the Workers’ Fund (see its Bulletin 1917). I am not sure if these are all the same person or not.

⁹⁰ HO 45/10819/318095/110.

⁹¹ The leaflet is printed by Israel Narodiczky, the Russian Jewish printer based at 48 Mile End Road, discussed above in chapter two.

⁹² HO 45/10819/318095/110.

Organization and Polish Social Democratic Club. It was formed, according to its own literature, on 13 March 1916. A Home Office report mentions it in September 1916, attributing to it responsibility for several articles in the *Manchester Guardian* and a flurry of parliamentary questions on conscription of aliens.⁹⁴ A Special Branch report of February 1917 gives the two organizers as Chicherin and Bridges Adams. The report gives a list of delegates including Vera Volkovsky (a Russian literary figure and translator, married to veteran Narodnik Felix Volkovsky, who was associated with Stepniak, Kropoktin and the Society of Friends of Russian Freedom, for which Rothstein had worked), “Jacob Pitters” (Jacob Peters, commonly thought of as Peter the Painter of Sidney Street fame, who returned to Russia in 1917 and had a high rank in the Cheka)⁹⁵ and “Sunderlevitch”.⁹⁶ The report states that the Committee held a meeting at Commercial Road in January 1917 at which Chicherin and “Pitters” spoke.⁹⁷ Another document in the same file has only partially been preserved so its provenance is unclear. This gives another list of CoDoRSGiL activists: “Alexander”, a Social Democrat and member of the Military Revolutionary Organization and former Russian army soldier, now a tailor or bootmaker in Whitechapel “in partnership with another man, living with him, who is suffering from consumption”;⁹⁸ Vladimir Makushin, who had served time in a Tsarist prison and was now secretary of the CoD and an SR; Ivan Liahovetzky, ex-student and Social Democrat; Alexander (alias Alexis, alias Alter) Rothstein, a locksmith; George Chicherin, secretary of the “Committee in Aid of Political Exiles”; and “Alter, a Jew, and a member of ‘The General Workmen’s Union of Russia, Poland and Lithuania’ [i.e. the Bund], at present living at 7, Pond Street, Hampstead, and described as being thirty years of age, of medium height, dark,

⁹³This was organized by the “Nosere” group of Russian émigrés, including three men described in the report as Jews: Apsit, Ewald and Grandin (ibid).

⁹⁴ HO 45/10819/318095/110.

⁹⁵ See Louise Bryant “Jacob Peters, Fedore S. Dzerzhinsky and the Extraordinary Commission” chapter two in *Mirrors of Moscow*, 1923, New York: Thomas Seltzer; and HO 45/24700, file on the immigration status of May Peters, his English wife who went to Russia with him, then divorced him but was not allowed back into Britain. An article in the *Daily Chronicle* of 1 October 1918 said that Peters had been sent to Russia by the CoD in May 1917.

⁹⁶ Above “Sunderlevitch” is hand-written “SANDELEVITCH”. Is this Zundelevich, the veteran populist who had been associated with Aaron Leiberman back in the 1870s? See Fishman (1975:307) where he speaks of Zundelevich heading up a “Kerensky Commission” in 1917, credentializing people for return to Russia.

⁹⁷ HO 45/10820/318095/198.

⁹⁸ This might be the same person as the Alexander Johnson/Braun mentioned in earlier Special Branch reports.

clean-shaven, with long black bushy hair. He lived formerly at Liège.”⁹⁹ The document also notes the connections between the Committee and the BSP.¹⁰⁰

In June 1916, CoDoRSGiL produced a leaflet, “The Right to Asylum”. When Bridges Adams distributed this at the trade union congress, she was arrested and the leaflet confiscated.¹⁰¹ In September, acting on instructions from Vernon Kell, the head of MI5, Birmingham police raided the home of a pastor, Rev John Morgan Whiteman, and seized 1000 copies of the leaflet, which Bridges Adams had sent to Mrs Madge Whiteman. Bridges Adams was staying with the Whitemans, whose son Duncan was a draft dodger. The police also found literature of the Committee of Delegates and the Russian Political Prisoners and Exiles’ Relief Committee in Bridges Adams’ room. The police arrested Duncan and seized the NCF literature in his bedroom. According to the police report, Rev Whiteman “has been identified with all the societies in connection with anti-war propaganda in Birmingham. He also uses his position as a pastor to visit conscientious objectors in H M Prisons. He is a most objectionable individual and it would be a good thing if a prosecution could be taken against him.”¹⁰² Bridges Adams’ association with these people gives a sense of the way in which the Committee of Delegates was able to work with a broad range of people far beyond its own ideological perspectives. Another example of this is the list of speakers at a CoD/Jewish Social Democratic Organization public meeting at Premierland in Back Church Lane Whitechapel on in October 1916. They included ILP leader Alex Gossip (an activist in the Socialist Sunday School movement and later in the National Unemployed Workers Movement), who read out letters from other ILP and union leaders as well as Fairchild of the BSP, Bridges Adams, Mrs Bouvier of the WSF and D Petrovsky, a Russian Social Democrat.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ This is Isaac Alter, later one of the main Bundist leaders in Poland, secretly murdered by the Soviet state during the Second World War. Prager notes that Izak and Viktor Alter were in London 1915-17 and wrote for the Bundist *Dos Arbayer Vort* and active in Bundist politics, and that Izak was active in the Anti-Conscription League (1990:111).

¹⁰⁰ HO 45/10820/318095/198.

¹⁰¹ *Brief Summary of the activities of the Committee of Delegates of the Russian Socialist Groups in London* 16.09.1916, in HO 45/10819/318095/110.

¹⁰² HO 45/10819/318095/128

¹⁰³ HO 45/10819/318095/132. Petrovsky is mentioned by Challinor as a Russian who had spent his exile in America who became an official Bolshevik representative in Britain after 1917, citing without any context a statement by Trotsky that he was “a Bundist-Menshevik of the American, i.e. the worst, school” (Challinor 1977:225). Challinor’s project is to discredit the formation of the Communist Party in Britain by showing that the Russian émigrés who had some power over it had Menshevik not Bolshevik backgrounds.

The police also kept surveillance on smaller émigré groups in London. In late 1916 there also seems to have been a Committee of the Group of Russian Political Refugees, whose secretary was Andrew Chekin of Muswell Hill. From the resolution the Committee of the Group of Russian Political Refugees passed and sent to the Home Office, the Social Democratic influence is clear, and the writing is in a style close to that which Chicherin used in CoDoRSGiL literature.¹⁰⁴ Similarly, there was a Lithuanian Society based in Dalston, in close contact with women active in the Lithuanian workers movement in Scotland. The police “regarded [the society] as being of a revolutionary nature” – and kept it under close observation.¹⁰⁵

These examples point to a web of connections between the milieux in which émigrés from the Russian empire moved in the East End, West End and other cities, and between émigré Marxists and British Marxists. Russian Jewish activists moved between Yiddish contexts, Russian contexts and English contexts, and to privilege any one of these contexts would obscure the multiple identities which animated their struggles.

d. Popular Anti-Militarism

Opposition to conscription in the East End was not confined to activist circles. It also connected with a deep well of anti-militarism among the wider immigrant population. In London, the East End immigrants were angered by Britain’s alliance with Russia, the land most of them had fled, a land associated in their minds with anti-semitism, intolerance, violence, bloodshed – and military conscription. Many of the Jewish immigrants in the East End had left Russia precisely to avoid the draft. In 1827, there had been an edict in Russia that each community had to provide a certain quota of soldiers to serve twentyfive years. Although “cantonism”, as the system was known, had been replaced with universal military service in 1874, there were strong folk memories of the “*khapers*” or “*khaperlekh*” (“snatchers” who kidnapped men and boys to fill the quotas, also known as “*lovchiki*” in Russian – according to Roskies, these words became the name of the wicked witch in children’s stories and were the worst of insults among adults (1984:57)) and of the divisions caused in communities. These memories were inscribed in folk songs, in the works of late nineteenth century popular folk-poets like Velvl Zbazher, Berl

¹⁰⁴ HO 45/10819/318095/136.

¹⁰⁵ HO 45/10820/318095/43. Joseph King was very supportive of these Lithuanian women activists.

Broder and Elyokum Zunsler who were the precursors of Yiddish modernism, and in the popular plays of authors like Abramovitch (known as Mendele).¹⁰⁶

When the Eastern Europeans arrived in East London, they brought these memories and traditions with them. Resistance to conscription in Russia became an important source of Jewish anti-militarism in England. One story which illustrates the depth of feeling on this topic – as well as generational divides within the East End – is that of war poet Isaac Rosenberg. His father was a refugee from military service in Russia. Rosenberg signed up in October 1915. Too short for the medical corps he (with his pacifist background) wanted to be in, he was placed in the new “Bantam” battalion of the 40th Division. His family, deeply opposed to armies, were very distressed. In a letter to RC Trevelyan in May or early June 1916, he wrote: “write to my people for me... but don’t say anything of my being away as my people are Tolstoyans and object to my being in khaki” (Rosenberg in Bottomley and Harding 1937:349).¹⁰⁷

There is evidence that Rosenberg’s parents were far from unique. George Prince, a Jewish minister in the East End, led a recruitment campaign among Galician Jews in the winter of 1916/17. A report to the Home Secretary said “He is making good progress, in spite of a considerable organized opposition which he and Sir Robert Younger believe to be worked by British anti-conscriptionists.”¹⁰⁸ A Home Office official noted in July 1917 that “The Russians in the East End have been attending meetings during working hours [at] the instigation of Mr. King’s friend Bezalel. [A]part from this, the Police say, there has been no stoppage of work.”¹⁰⁹

There is plenty of evidence too that avoidance of conscription was extremely widespread in the East End. As Kadish writes, “The methods employed to evade service or gain exemption were manifold and inventive” (1992:206). Her oral interviews, conducted in the 1980s, gave her examples like the following. Louis Wallis (born in 1900 in Cracow and brought up in Stepney Green) recalled his friends making themselves ill, e.g. by eating a massive number of apples, to be listed as unfit for service. Jack Miller (born 1912) recalled stories of people eating toxic ingredients. Israel Renson (born in East London in 1906 and trained as a

¹⁰⁶ See Roskies (1984:57-8, 1989:115-21), Berkowitz (2001).

¹⁰⁷ Cf Joseph Cohen (1975:125).

¹⁰⁸ HO 45/10818/317810.

¹⁰⁹ HO 45/10821/318095/347. The references are to anti-conscription campaigners Joseph King MP and Abraham Bezalel, on whom see below.

pharmacist) told her of two doctors, one Jewish (Dr Sammy Sacks) and one not (Dr Bishop) who generously certified young men as unfit – Dr Bishop actually being struck off for this. Others, such as Mr Renson’s older brother and the trade union militant Sam Elsbury, then living in Leeds, fled to Ireland.¹¹⁰ Another strategy after the February Revolution was to get exemption certificates from the Russian consulate, as bookbinder, Bundist and Workers’ Circle activist Morris Mindel did, along with some 2500 others.¹¹¹ Jonathan Hyman gives other examples, such as 2nd Airman A Blaskey, who “feigned both physical and mental illness, despite being certified as healthy by six doctors” (2001:37).

Another way of gaining exemption from service was ordination. For example, Rav Kook, head of the Orthodox Machzikei Hadas Synagogue on Brick Lane (which was discussed above in chapter four) ordained a high number of his yeshiva students.¹¹² The Chief Rabbi, Dr Hertz, complained to the Home Office in Autumn 1917 about the high number of bogus rabbis emerging. The Home Office notes on their meeting, at which Anglo-Jewish dignitaries Claude Montefiore and Lionel Rothschild were present, are quite revealing:

Broadly speaking there are four distinct Jewish religious bodies in this country:- (a) The ~~Spanish~~ Portuguese Community,¹¹³ (b) the Liberal Synagogue, (c) the Reformed Synagogues (or the Synagogue of British Jews) and (d) the remainder of the Jewish Community under the Chief Rabbi [i.e. the United and Federation synagogues, the latter being small East End shuls].

No cases of disputed military liability are likely to arise in regard to persons belonging to the first three of these communities...¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ Kadish (1992:206-7). Elsbury purchased discharge papers from an Irish ex-soldier. He came to London and joined the Yiddish-speaking branch of the Union of Garment Workers as “John Dillon’, the Irish tailor with a Yorkshire accent.” Dr Sacks was the Honourary Vice President of the Russian Women’s Protection Committee, formed in November 1918 (HO 45/10823/31089/661a).

¹¹¹ Kadish (1992:207).

¹¹² Ibid:207-8. Kook, later the first Chief Rabbi of Palestine, was stranded in London during the War. He was the leader of the Mizrahi (religious Zionist) movement and one of the most important twentieth century Jewish spiritual leaders. During the war, the cellar of the Machzikei Hadas was used as an air-raid shelter, and reminiscences describe the emotional succour he gave to East End Jews during the aerial attacks – e.g. the memoirs of Shimon Glitzenstein, Rav Kook’s personal secretary during his years in London (2001). Arguably, in terms of Judaic knowledge and learning, Kook was far more authoritative than the Chief Rabbi.

¹¹³ This erasure was in the Home Office minutes. The reference here is to the Sephardic community, known generally as “Spanish and Portuguese”. The erasure presumably expresses an uncertainty stemming from ignorance or sense of alienness.

¹¹⁴ HO 45/10822/318095/497.

Another official (J Peddar) adds: "There is no doubt of a wide-spread attempt – including ad hoc creations of ministers – among Russian Jews to obtain exemption from the Convention." A third adds:

Many applicants to such certificates... are not full-time ministers, but only lay readers who are, or have been until quite recently, actively engaged in another occupation. A goodly number are theological students between the ages of 17 and 21; or even men who till [sic] a few months ago, were never engaged in any religious work... As their one object is the evasion of military service, they persist in their claim that they are ministers... they produce documents from 'foreign' rabbis; or legal Agreements entered into with so-called congregations, which are mere Prayer Meetings; or certificates from Theological colleges which have no right to issue such certificates...

All those who are familiar with the conditions of the problem are agreed that the Chief Rabbi is the one authority that can be safely appealed to for this expert advice.¹¹⁵

In this anecdote, we can see how the immigrants' practices of belonging, their refusal to assimilate, their refusal of communal authority and their refusal of military service were all intertwined.

The resistance by the *khevres* of the East End and the exemptions provided by the East End rabbis might also testify to the presence of Jewish religious pacifism, which resonated with the politically motivated opposition of secular radicals. This religious pacifism, and its intimacy with the secular radicalism of ghetto leftists, is exemplified by Jacob Meir Salkind (Yankev Meyer Zalkind in Yiddish). Salkind was a trained rabbi and active Zionist before the war. At the start of the War, he became active in East End politics. He was a founder member of the Foreign Jews Protection Committee (FJPC) and began to shift away from Zionism, especially when Jabotinsky was proposing the formation of a Jewish army. After the war, he was the editor of the revived *Arbayter Fraynd* but nonetheless remained very devout. As Morris Goldwasser writes,

The most unusual aspect of Zalkind's multifaceted personality was the combination of anarchism with traditional Rabbinical scholarship and piety which he embodied. He hoped to create a truly 'free society' in which the Talmudic ethic would form the basis of the political philosophy (1975:404).

Indeed, his main activity in the inter-war years was the huge project of translating the Talmud into Yiddish. Salkind's position, between Jewish nationalism and

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

libertarianism, between modernist humanism and religious faith, captures nicely the ambivalent position of ghetto radicalism in general.¹¹⁶

1917: Year of Revolutions

In April 1917, a third Military Service Act was introduced, further empowering the War Office to examine men who had been rejected for service for any reason, and reducing the occupations protected from conscription. At the same time, the two revolutions in Russia in 1917 gave this mass movement huge impetus, tightening the connections between its different components.

For 'East End' Jews, the majority of whom originated in eastern Europe, news of the Russian Revolution had an immediacy which was inevitably lacking in the response of their counterparts in the 'West End'. Political developments in the 'Old Country', to which ties of kinship were in many cases still strong, were of direct consequence to the immigrant community (Kadish 1992:184-5).

The Eastern European émigrés were particularly euphoric at the fall of the Tsar. The Bolsheviks' decision to leave the war deepened their reluctance to participate in the militarist mood and strengthened their will to resist. However, British state persecution stepped up a notch. Abraham Bezalel, the leader of the FJPC, was interned and deported to Rumania. Many Russian Jews who refused to serve in the British army were deported too, and others went home to participate in the Russian Revolution.

a. The February revolution

The February revolution was greeted by a mass meeting at the Great Assembly Halls in Mile End on the 24th of March 1917, organized by the CoDoRSGiL. There were 7000 people there, with thousands outside unable to get in. Telegrams of support were sent by the London Jewish trade unions, Nathan Weiner the

¹¹⁶ For helpful discussions of religious pacifism in other parts of Britain, see Hyman (2001), who gives examples such as the material support by the Manchester Sephardic synagogue for atheist trade unionist Conscientious Objector Emmanuel Ribeiro and the defiance by the Leeds Beth Din of the Chief Rabbi's ruling that Kohanim (the priestly caste) must serve; and Wilcock (1989), which discusses the case of John Harris, a Liverpool pacifist rabbi who vouched for Conscientious Objectors in defiance of the Chief Rabbi. There's a different twist on religious pacifism in this anti-militarist folk song from the Russian shtetlekh, quoted by Roskies (1984:59):

*Beser tsu lernen khumesh mit rashe
Eyde tsu esn di soldatske kashe.
Better [even] to study Bible and Rashi
Than [to eat] the soldiers' mush.*

secretary of the Workers' Circle, Morris Myer from *Di Tsayt* and London Poale Zion. There were speeches by Robert Williams of the Transport Workers' Federation,¹¹⁷ EC Fairchild and Joe Fineberg for the BSP, Mrs Bridges Adams, various Russian socialist delegates and delegates of Jewish sailors. There were calls for the release of the various Russian revolutionaries locked up in Britain. On the 26th, the BSP organized another celebration meeting, at Memorial Hall.¹¹⁸

On the 24th, the FJPC also held a mass meeting "to protect the right of asylum and cheer the Russian Revolution" at Camperdown House in Half Moon Passage, Aldgate, with Lord Sheffield presiding. Joseph King MP was the headline speaker. Other speakers included local Councillor Deighton, Dr Walter Walsh,¹¹⁹ FJPC activists Salkind and Margolin, a Mrs Ewer and Sylvia Pankhurst.¹²⁰ As Kadish writes,

Handbills in English and Yiddish were posted around the East End and advertisements were placed in the Yiddish and local press. The second public meeting was scheduled for 2 June at the Great Assembly Hall [in Mile End] – except that the proprietor was issued with a police order to withdraw permission for the use of his premises. The FJPC meeting was hastily shifted to the Old King's Hall in Commercial Road, while the anti-alien British Workers' League was given free run of the original venue. According to a police report, the final meeting of the FJPC at 'Wonderland' in Whitechapel attracted some 6000 people, despite the fact that it had not been advertised. In itself this demonstrates that the committee's cause enjoyed considerable sympathy amongst the Jews of East London (Kadish 1992:197-8).¹²¹

Roskies comments: "Jewish parents reaffirmed the traditional value of learning *khumesh mit rashe* by intensifying the religious education of their sons... in the hope that the kahal might spare the better students" (ibid).

¹¹⁷ Williams was also associated with the Political Prisoners and Exiles Relief Committee.

¹¹⁸ *Daily Herald* 31.03.1917, reproduced in Englander (1994:331-2).

¹¹⁹ Walsh founded the Free Religious Movement, was active in the European World Conscience Society, was associated with Patrick Geddes, with the Ba'hai and Ahmadiyya movements, and with the peace, ethical, humanist and vegetarian movements generally.

¹²⁰ Kadish reproduces the poster, printed by Narodiczky, the friend of Rocker and Salkind, in her book. There was a Yiddish and an English poster. The Yiddish one described the purpose as "*tsu fertheydingen dos azil-rekht un feyeren di rusishe revolutsion.*" Pankhurst's contacts with Russian émigrés and her rapidly developing communist politics led her to welcome the Bolshevik revolution, and to make contact with Lenin. However, her conception of communism was quite at odds with his, as rapidly became clear from 1919 under an increasingly authoritarian Soviet regime (Shipway 1988). Although she never relinquished her Marxism, she became marginalized in a Moscow-oriented British left, and her own focus of engagement shifted. Along with her Italian partner, Silvio Corio, she became more and more involved in anti-fascist and anti-colonial struggles. They were active in the movement against Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia, and Ethiopia's independence and the Pan-African movement became her life's main cause. After World War Two, Pankhurst and Corio moved to Ethiopia; on her death there in 1960 she received a full state funeral.

¹²¹ Cf HO 45/10819/318020.

At another mass meeting, at the Royal Albert Hall on 31 March 1917, Zangwill spoke of the triumph of the “real Holy Russia”: “not the Russia of church candles and ikons, but the Holy Russia of the struggle for liberty” (quoted Kadish 1992:62).¹²²

The revolution increased the prestige of the (mainly Jewish) Russians in the British socialist movement. Theodore Rothstein contributed a large number of articles to the BSP’s *The Call* and many of these were published by the BSP in a booklet, *Essays in Socialism and War*, in 1917, under the pseudonyms John Bryan and WAMM. They published Zelda Kahan’s short biography of Marx, *Karl Marx: His Life and Teaching*, around the same time. Many key texts by Bolshevik leaders (particularly Lenin and Trotsky) were published by the BSP around the same time, some translated by Rothstein, Kahan and Joe Fineberg.¹²³ A little later, in 1918, they also published the first of many editions of Maxim Litvinoff’s *The Bolshevik Revolution: Its Rise and Meaning*.¹²⁴

But as well as the increased prestige of émigré radicals after the revolution, there was an increase in the British government’s sense of anxiety about them, in a period when there were wildcat strikes throughout Britain, mutinies in the forces, and a need for more cannon-fodder (including from among Allied subjects). In this context, Special Branch observed a meeting of the Committee of the Group of Russian Political Refugees at the Communist Club in Charlotte Street. Basil Thomson, the head of Special Branch, urged the Home Office to get its Secretary, Chekin, deported. The Home Office minutes note: “He is stated to be an anarchist and is a prominent member of Russian Socialist bodies. We can do well without him. Strongly opposed to the Convention. Make D.O. [Deportation Order] and send to Mj. Thomson.”¹²⁵ The report also prompted Vernon Kell, of MI5, to get the Communist Club closed down.¹²⁶ Kell’s MI5 were also investigating Chicherin in

¹²² Kadish quotes large sections of his Albert Hall speech, which was reproduced in Lansbury’s *Herald* (1992:62-4). See also report in *National Peace Council Monthly Circular* volume IV #69/70 (March/April 1917) at BL/P.P.1126.caa, p.408.

¹²³ BL/WP.6395, BL/08285.aa.107. Fineberg would later be one of the official translators of Lenin’s collected works into English. Zelda Kahan’s biography interestingly mentions Marx’s Jewishness twice in the first paragraph (“His father was a prominent Jewish lawyer and notary public at the County Court... [His] mother was a Dutch Jewess of Hungarian descent, whose ancestors were Rabbis”) but then never again.

¹²⁴ Various versions are in the British Library under the classmarks X.708/18090, X.708/18091 and 8095.de.43. Some of them contain a hand-written note by Theodor Rothstein claiming to be the real author.

¹²⁵ HO 45/10820/318095/236.

¹²⁶ HO 45/10820/318095/238.

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made at the various meetings to further the objects of the committee” and a telegram was sent to the Russian Provisional Government against the Convention and resolutions attacking it were sent to newspapers.¹³⁴ The Wonderland meeting was reported on in depth in a Special Branch Report by Yiddish-speaking Sergeant Albers. Bezalel addressed the meeting at length, in Yiddish, stressing the refugee rights of the exiles and the illegitimacy of the Provisional Government. Then Dr Margolin addressed the meeting stressing that “the Jews had nothing to fight for; that they are a peace-loving race and that the only war they could wage was to earn their living.” Finally, a Mr Sugar, a British subject who refused to serve, made a speech calling on other drafted men to refuse the call to arms.¹³⁵ By this time, according to a FJPC leaflet, the Committee had branches in Manchester, Leeds, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Birmingham, Cardiff and Blackpool.¹³⁶

In July 1917, the police raided the FJPC and arrested the secretary, Bezalel, under the Defence of the Realm Act, because the police believed that the society “was acting in a manner prejudicial to the public safety and the defence of the realm, by conspiring so to defeat the operation of the recently passed Military Service Act and the Convention made with the Russian government.”¹³⁷ Zangwill wrote to Colonel Patterson, who was in charge of the Jewish Legion, complaining of the “martyrising” of Bezalel.¹³⁸

Articles in the mainstream press, often with an anti-semitic tone, described the opposition of ordinary East End Jews to the Convention. For example, the *Daily Mail's* “Special Correspondent” wrote:

There was excited gesticulatory talk in a strange language yesterday about Whitechapel, when the new law requiring the young Russians in this country either to return to their own country to fight or to join the British Army was discussed.

...In several little markets in Stepney and Whitechapel men left their stalls and barrows to gather in knots and talk with the ceaseless volubility of Petrograd revolutionary politics. In the dinner hour, when tailors, cabinet-makers, and slipper-workers came out of the factories, the little side streets of Whitechapel became discussion forums. If there had been any expectation that the new order would be received with enthusiasm, it would have been disappointed, for the bulk of the young

¹³⁴ *The Times* 25.7.1917.

¹³⁵ HO 45/10821/318095/367.

¹³⁶ HO 45/10821/318095/367.

¹³⁷ HO 45/10821/318095/361.

¹³⁸ Kadish (1992:270 n41).

Russian population of the East End is frankly and whole-heartedly undesirous of accepting either of the two alternatives offered to it.

...They are very strong in their views, which are hostile to all governmental authority, and are extraordinarily clever and resourceful; and it is certain that every possible device of evasion will be brought into play (*Daily Mail* 21 July 1917).

This article is notable for the way it racializes the “Russians” without reference to their Jewishness, through images of “gesticulatory talk in a strange language”, Jewish-identified jobs like market-trading and tailoring, “cleverness”, and the place-names of Stepney and Whitechapel. Nonetheless, I think this article does also illustrate that there was a depth of feeling in the East End against conscription, which was harnessed by the Foreign Jews Committee, by the Anti-Conscription League, by the anarchists, and by a wealth of other Jewish organizations and by the wider anti-war movement.

After Bezalel’s arrest, a new, more moderate committee was formed. Moses Margolin, an FJPC activist, was arrested shortly after Bezalel, on the 1st August, for offences against the Registration Order, but he told Special Branch that “the new Committee... was in favour of carrying out the Convention, and if they could obtain a meeting place, they would prove by their speeches to their co-religionists that they were in earnest.”¹³⁹ This was the Russian Jews Protection Committee. The chair was the Jewish trade unionist Salve Joseph (secretary of the London Ladies Tailors), the secretary was Louis L Katzel.¹⁴⁰ This was strongly opposed to Jabotinsky’s Jewish Legion, but not to the Convention.¹⁴¹ Joseph spoke at the send-off of the Conventioneers held at the Monnickendam Rooms in Great Alie Street in mid-August 1917, along with David Jochelman, the Ukrainian ITO activist who was by then the chairman of the United General Committee of all Russian Citizens of Military Age.¹⁴²

As a consequence of this, the Home Office asked for an investigation of both Joseph and Jochelman. According to a Special Branch report, Joseph had “held aloof from the organisation fostered by Bezalel”, as he was part of the “minority” faction supporting dialogue with the government. However, after the arrest of Bezalel “he and others have taken up a more advanced attitude, and at a gathering recently at 10 Great Garden Street E, the headquarters’ of Joseph’s union:

¹³⁹ HO 45/10820/318095/395.

¹⁴⁰ According to Prager, Joseph was a Bundist (1990:180).

¹⁴¹ August 1917 HO 45/10821/318095/442.

¹⁴² *Morning Post* 16.08.1917, HO 45/10821/318095/448.

Joseph... acted as Chairman. He then said the arrest of Bezael was unjustified and scandalous and that the work of the Foreign Jews Protection Committee must be proceeded with most energetically." The report also noted Jochelman's friendship with Zangwill and stated that he was part of the section of the Russian Jewish population that was least antagonistic to military service, and in favour of some sort of compromise (e.g. non-combatant service).¹⁴³ However, a petition to the Home Secretary made by Salve Joseph and I Lush on behalf of the Conference of all Jewish Trade Union Committees in London as far back as early September 1916 reveals themes very close to the FJPC's. It (a) opposed the idea of deportation back to Russia of Jewish refugees who wouldn't serve, (b) stressed that Jews were deprived of citizenship rights in Russia and that nor did Jewish refugees in Britain have full citizenship rights here, (c) drew attention to the "mongers of race-hatred" in Britain, and (d) asserted the importance of the Right of Asylum in Britain's heritage.¹⁴⁴

That Autumn, the state increased its repression of the peace and civil rights movements, robbing the FJPC of many of its key non-Jewish supporters. The Women's International League was raided on the 7th November. The following week, on the 15th, there were several co-ordinated raids, including on *Freedom* printer TH Keel in Hackney, and on the private address of peace activist Benjamin Zusman in Holland Park. The following week, on the 21st, the National Council for Civil Liberties was raided.¹⁴⁵

c. The October revolution

The October revolution was greeted joyfully by the Marxists and (initially at least) anarchists of the East End. A new branch of the Workers' Circle was formed, Division IX, to organize the supporters of the revolution in Russia. This was set up by nine Bolshevik members of Division I and rapidly recruited young members.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ report by Inspector McNamara of the Special Branch, in HO 45/10821/318095/448.

¹⁴⁴ HO 45/10818/318095/59. Lush and Joseph were both officers of the London Ladies Tailors Machinists and Pressers Trade Union (*Jewish Yearbook* 1916:82).

¹⁴⁵ *National Peace Council Monthly Circular* volume IV #77/8 (November/December 1917) at BL/P.P.1126.caa.

¹⁴⁶ Zaidman (1959:11). He lists BA Bagnari, S Alexander, I Pushkin, Harry Frankel, David Goldinger and Max Lemberg as among its activists.

October increased the prominence of the Russian émigrés and Bolshevik politics on the British left.¹⁴⁷ A Whitechapel branch of the WSF was formed by a Mr Moscovitch, which perhaps reflects tighter links between the Jewish community in the inner East End and the white far left in the outer East End which seem to have developed as a result of excitement over the events in Russia.¹⁴⁸ Litvinov, in his capacity as the official Bolshevik representative in Britain, spoke at many WSF meetings.¹⁴⁹ Bouvier, a WSF leader, met with Bolshevik leader Kamenev in London in February.¹⁵⁰

As both *The Socialist* and *The Dreadnought* reported, Litvinov was arrested, along with his staff, in September 1918, soon after a CoDoRSGiL general meeting which resolved against British intervention in Russia.¹⁵¹ He was deported shortly afterwards.¹⁵² In the November, the Political Emigrants Group, closely associated with the CoD and based at the Communist Club in Charlotte Street, was raided. Several of its members were deported under what the *Workers' Dreadnought* described as "particularly harsh circumstances".¹⁵³ Nonetheless, the Group continued to meet, for example on 16 December, under the chair of Dr Margolin.¹⁵⁴ After the departure of Litvinov, Theodore Rothstein became the Bolsheviks' official representative in Britain. He played a key role in the formation of the Communist Party. Rothstein returned to Russia in 1920, and was refused re-entry to Britain.¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁷ The WSF heavily promoted Russian Bolshevism after the revolution (e.g. publishing works by Lenin, Lunacharsky and Bukharin) which often meant translating work for the Russian émigrés in Britain (see BL/8286.f.17). They also published Israel Zangwill's "Hands Off Russia!" speech and Sylvia Pankhurst's *Housing and the Workers' Revolution*, which juxtaposes thick description of the housing situation in Stepney, Poplar and South Wales with descriptions of Bolshevik housing policy. The BSP's *The Call* of January 1918 carried a statement by Litvinov on Russia. The SLP's *The Socialist* offered the use of their press. The Socialist Labour Party's *The Socialist* in February and March carried a life of Lenin by Litvinoff, an article by Lenin, and a Sirnis translation of some Soviet documents and an article by Chicherin on Bolshevism (Challinor 1977:168, 187-9; *Workers' Dreadnought* 1.1.1918).

¹⁴⁸ *Workers' Dreadnought*, 9.02.1918, and several subsequent issues. Among the names of donors to the *Dreadnought's* funds around this time there seem to be a number of Jewish women, e.g. a Mrs Zitnik (February 16), a Mr and a Miss Glikstein and a Mrs Carnenstein, as well as Israel Zangwill (April 6), an LS Skidensky and a Mr Stiebel (April 14).

¹⁴⁹ See e.g. *Workers' Dreadnought* 16.2.1918.

¹⁵⁰ *Workers' Dreadnought* 2.3.1918.

¹⁵¹ *Workers' Dreadnought* v, 14.9.1918; Challinor (1977:168, 187-9).

¹⁵² *Workers' Dreadnought* 7.12.1918.

¹⁵³ For instance, T Goldervitch, of Cannon Place in East London, was arrested at 7:30 a.m. and told to leave that day for Russia; his wife, who was awaiting an operation, was given an hour to decide whether to join him or remain in the country (*Workers' Dreadnought* 30.11.1918).

¹⁵⁴ Special Branch Report, HO 45/10822/318095/525.

The “Hands Off Russia!” movement was one of the spaces in which the various left groups and émigrés continued to work together.¹⁵⁶ Its activists included Joseph King, Sylvia Pankhurst and Zangwill. King wrote pamphlets like *Why Does the Killing Go On in Russia? A Scathing Exposure of the Allies’ Efforts to Crush New Russia in the Interests of Capitalists and Financiers*,¹⁵⁷ *The Russian Revolution: The First Year*¹⁵⁸ and *Our Policy Toward Russia*.¹⁵⁹

Hands Off Russia! held a major public meeting at the Memorial Hall in Farringdon in January 1919.¹⁶⁰ The Special Branch report, by Superintendent Quinn, reveals a quite heterogeneous occasion. The meeting began with a violin selection by Edward Soermus, an Estonian socialist musician then in exile in England and working with Pankhurst and the WSF. The meeting’s chair was WF Watson, a syndicalist-influenced London engineering worker. There were speeches by Harry Pollitt (then a young activist in the boilermakers’ union who played a key role in workers’ direct action against shipments of arms to counter-revolutionary groups in Russia); Arthur McManus of the Socialist Labour Party; Fairchild of the BSP; Sylvia Pankhurst and Melvina Walker of the WSF; a speaker from the London Cabs’ Union (who said that “in London alone over 40,000 vehicle workers were ready to answer the call of ‘Down Tools’” against intervention in Russia); “WILSON, an Anarchist belonging to the Freedom League, [who] expressed many ideas which had clearly emanated from MABEL HOPE, who is returning to active propaganda”;¹⁶¹ and Jack Tanner, then a syndicalist transport union militant. At the end of the meeting, a committee was elected, which included Watson, Inkpin of the BSP, Pankhurst and Norah Smythe of the WSF, and Malatesta. The Report says that, “Regarding the inclusion of MALATESTA in the Committee, it is interesting to note that he had a large number of supporters, chiefly of course members of the Freedom League.” Elsewhere it mentions “a knot of Italians with MALATESTA in their midst.” This testifies to an anarchist involvement in the Hands Off Russia! movement, largely written out of CP histories, and also to the continuing multiethnic nature of the London left at that time – as does the presence of GAK Luhani, an Indian IWW activist.¹⁶² Finally, the report notes that “Since the signing of the

¹⁵⁵ Saville (1983:xvii).

¹⁵⁶ See Layburn and Murphy (1999:41-2).

¹⁵⁷ 1918 or 1919, Glasgow: The Reformers’ Bookstall (BL/8094.dd.45).

¹⁵⁸ April 1918, London: Union of Democratic Control pamphlet #26a (BL/08008.bb.51).

¹⁵⁹ March 1919, London: Union of Democratic Control pamphlet #33a (BL/08008.bb.51).

¹⁶⁰ The police file on this conference was discussed in chapter one.

¹⁶¹ Hope was part of the Freedom group.

¹⁶² Articles in the *Times* 18.01.1919, 20.01.1919, in HO 45/10744/263275/447.

Armistice the sales of the 'Dreadnought' have greatly increased. Miss O'CALLAGHAN attributes this to the Russian news, which is a feature of the paper." This testifies to the excitement generated in East London by the Russian revolution.¹⁶³

For Marxists and anarchists, the Bolshevik revolution appeared to be a fulfilment of their revolutionary values. For the immigrant communities, the final overthrow of the Tsarist order they had fled was a moment of great joy. As Russia shifted from "friend" to "enemy" for Britain, the East End Jews' multiple loyalties and identifications were pushed into starker relief.

d. Return to Russia

The Anglo-Russian Military Convention and the general euphoria around the two revolutions in Russia meant that a number of key activists were lost to the East End movement. At least 2000 men sailed for Russia under the Convention.¹⁶⁴ The Workers' Circle lost members who returned to Russia under the Military Convention between the British and Provisional Governments – as many as 300.¹⁶⁵

Among those who returned to Russia after the revolution were: the poet Abraham Vieviorka, editor of the FJPC's *Di Idishe Shtime*;¹⁶⁶ Theodore Rothstein, who went back in 1920, and was refused re-entry to Britain;¹⁶⁷ Joe Fineberg, who went to participate in the founding of the Comintern and later became a major translator of Russian Marxist material into English; the Rafkin and Schapiro families, who had been involved in the Arbayer Fraynd circle and went on to play key roles in Russian syndicalism; young Arbayer Fraynder Leah Feldman, who served in Makhno's revolutionary peasant army in the Ukraine until its defeat by Trotsky's Red Army;¹⁶⁸ and Kropotkin, who returned in glory at the first possible opportunity and whose funeral in 1921 was the last legal appearance of anarchists in public in the Soviet Union.

¹⁶³ Special Branch Report, 20/1/1919, in HO 45/10744/263275/447

¹⁶⁴ See Kadish (1992:208-16) and Rodgers (1984) for a more detailed account of the Conventioneers.

¹⁶⁵ This figure was given by J Pearce of Division I at his speech to the fiftieth anniversary meeting of the Circle (Editors 1959:6) and by Nathan Wiener in his 1935 proposals to change the rules (1935:10). However, it is clear from the Workers' Circle membership tables, which record and 106 lapsed members in 1917 (less than usual) and 231 lapsed members in 1918 (only slightly more than usual).

¹⁶⁶ Prager (1990:679, 714); Leftwich (1939:673). Prager gives contradictory dates for his return to Russia: 1916 and "after the revolution", while Leftwich gives "mid-1919".

¹⁶⁷ Saville (1983:xvii).

Many of these returnees, however, would later fall foul of the new regime, often going into yet another exile, continuing the circulation of struggle – for instance, Joe Jacobs' half-brother Dave, exiled due to his involvement with the Workers' Opposition,¹⁶⁹ Alexander Schapiro, who lived in exile in Paris, or Leah Feldman, who married a German national in order to get out of Russia after Kropotkin's death.¹⁷⁰ Others, however, were killed – like Proof, the anarchist leader of the militant Jewish Bakers' Union in the East End.¹⁷¹ Others again disappeared into the gulags, such as Abraham Baron, a Workers' Circle and Jubilee St activist who returned to join the Red Army and was locked up by 1927 as an anarchist.¹⁷²

In this chapter, I have attempted to illustrate the rapidly changing boundaries of a particular collective political subject during the great War, looking at solidarities and empathies across Jewish/non-Jewish boundaries *and* at the deep roots of anti-war resistance in Eastern European Yiddish traditions. The divisions in the Jewish community and the suffragette, Marxist and anarchist movements demonstrated the conflicts within the East End's practices of identity and belonging. The Anglo-Jewish oligarchs, West End suffragette hierarchy and the BSP leaders all chose to close down some of their identifications in the face of the war-time state of emergency's test of loyalty. The East Enders active in groups like the Arbayer Fraynd, Workers' Fund, FJPC, CoD, WSF and Hands Off Russia!, in contrast, kept open their both/and identifications – identifications that connected them to trans-national radical and Jewish networks – rather than accepting the either/or logic of the nation-state's singular identity.

The Workers' Fund challenged Anglo-Jewish communal authority, drawing on Jewish traditions of mutuality and self-help and on Jewish trans-national geographies of belonging to provide material solidarity with Jewish victims of war on both sides of the nation-state's friend/enemy line, and even into the internment camps. The Marxist left – the CoD, BSP, WSF and SLP – also refused the nation-state's test of loyalty. Rooted in the Yiddish East End and routed through trans-national radical circuits, they resisted the war-time state of emergency. The FJPC,

¹⁶⁸ Meltzer (1993).

¹⁶⁹ Jacobs (1978:13).

¹⁷⁰ Meltzer (1993).

¹⁷¹ Jacobs (1978:24).

¹⁷² Kadish (1992:212).

too, in challenging *both* the communal authority of the Anglo-Jewish leadership who attempted to make the Jews sign up *and* the British state's own conscription policies, offer another example of resistance. Their connections to radical activists (anarchists and trade unionists) *and* to religious immigrants point to the way they drew on their multiple identities in sustaining their resistance. And we have also seen quieter, less spectacular forms of resistance, from feigning illness to ordaining rabbis, practised outside and alongside the radical movements and drawing on popular anti-militarist traditions brought from the Pale.

The next chapter focuses in a little on some of these spaces of resistance, examining the texts produced by these groups to tease out the senses of belonging and citizenship which emerged from this situation. Many of the texts we will look at in the next chapter were written in *both Yiddish and English*, and all of the groups discussed in this chapter published propaganda in both languages (and sometimes in other languages as well!). This point exemplifies what has been the central argument of this chapter: that the East End Jewish radicals were rooted in both Jewish and English contexts, that they existed in a space of translation between multiple cultural spaces. The apparently mundane practice of printing a bulletin in two different languages, as the Workers' Fund did, demonstrates the multiple positionality of the movement, which informed the complex geographies of citizenship and belonging which we will encounter in the next chapter.

Chapter 9

Discourses of Resistance

The last chapter narrated the story of resistance to the war in the East End, focusing on some of the key figures and spaces of the movement, showing how their resistance was informed by their multiple positionalities and the complex geographies of belonging which tied the Yiddish East End to other spaces and places. This chapter will have a different focus: it will look at the texts produced by some of the organizations discussed in the last chapter (specifically the Foreign Jews Protection Committee, Workers' Fund and Committee of Delegates), and trace some of the discourses of resistance which were evoked by them. In particular, the stress will be on discourses of belonging and citizenship, and especially *spatialized* discourses, different *geographies* of belonging and citizenship which are articulated in the movements' texts.

This chapter will identify four counter-discourses of belonging circulating in the East End during the war. Each refused and subverted both Anglo-Jewish assimilationist understandings of citizenship and emergent militarized versions of citizenship. First we will look at critiques of the communal which circulated in the East End, both in leftist organizations like the Workers' Fund and among religious Jews: critiques which drew on both Yiddish traditions from the Pale *and* Marxist class analysis. Second, we will look at diasporic geographies of belonging, which cut against the grain of the nation-state and of ideas of citizenship bounded by the borders of the nation-state. Third, we will look at the idea of the International as the proper space of political belonging, an idea which was a resource for challenging the militarized logic of the nation-state but, in dissolving ethnic difference and specificity, sometimes ended up mirroring assimilationism. Finally, we will examine a discourse organized around the figure of the refugee, a figure who radically challenges the conventional political grammar of citizenship.

Against the Communal

In late July 1917, shortly after the passage of the Military Convention with Russia, giving Russian subjects a choice between returning to Russia and fighting there or joining the British Army, Sir Stuart Samuel, of the Board of

Deputies, wrote to the Home Office that a general strike was being threatened in the East End and suggesting ways of averting it. By doing so, Samuel was asserting the responsibility of communal institutions for the immigrants, their privileged knowledge of them, their right to represent, and their role in delivering their loyalty. The minutes of the Home Office official diagnosed the situation thus: “The East-end Jews are reputed to be inimical to the West-End Jews who are thought to be ready to sacrifice them, so long as the ferment about Jewish slackness is abated”¹ – a diagnosis which captures the ambivalent logic of the communal.

As we saw in previous chapters, in Bauman’s analysis, the “avant-garde of assimilation” – the likes of the Board of Deputies and the Chief rabbi – was given the responsibility for those Jews who “lagged behind the elites”. The stigma of backwardness was “assigned collectively, to the community as a whole”. Whether or not they *assumed* responsibility for the enlightenment of the backward, the assimilated were *burdened* with it. “It was because of the commonality of fate, not of the spirit, that responsibility and solidarity became as unavoidable as they were unwelcome and resented” (1991:131-2). The logic of the communal meant that West End Anglo-Jewry sought to *represent* their “co-religionist” to the authorities and to police their dissent.

In chapter five, we saw how this was played out at the moment of Kishinev; in this section we will see the same antagonisms emerging during the 1914-18 war. We already saw another example of this in the previous chapter, when we looked at the East End chevres’ ordination of yeshiva boys to avoid conscription. The issue came to light for the Home Office when the Chief Rabbi, Dr Hertz, complained to them. The Home Office was persuaded by Claude Montefiore and Lionel Rothschild that “All those who are familiar with the conditions of the problem are agreed that the Chief Rabbi is the one authority that can be safely appealed to for this expert advice.”² Thus, the authority of the assimilated Anglo-Jewish leadership (embodied here by the Chief Rabbi and Montefiore and Rothschild) resonates with state authority. The Anglo-Jewish leaders act as Court translators, native informants or experts on the “foreign” East Enders, placing their ethnographic knowledge at the hands of the Home Office.

¹ HO 45/10821/318095/356.

The Workers' Fund, which we encountered in the last chapter, is another example of the tension between the ghetto and the communal authorities. It is worth looking in some detail at its 1917 Bulletin, which had articles representing many of the different perspectives involved in the Fund.³ There, Himmelfarb, a Social Democrat, describes the necessity of the autonomy of the Workers' Fund from the relief efforts set up by the Anglo-Jewish community leadership.

The Workers' Fund does not owe its origin to the desire of the Jewish workers in this country to furnish particular and separate aid for the Jewish victims of war. To so dizzy an eminence of class-consciousness (*"klasen-bevustzayn"*), as to demonstrate that even in relief work, the workers' interests are different from the interests of the class-conscious bourgeoisie and small trader class (*"birgerlikhe un kleyn birgerlikhe interesen"*), the Jewish workers in England have not yet soared!... Rather, it was due to the inability of the workers to work in harmony with the originators of such relief (E4/Y5).

Himmelfarb continues: the "shopkeeper and small trader class" (*"di idishe burzhuoze un kleyn burzhuoze elementen"*) acted first to aid the victims of war, but refused to act for the working class victims. Describing the December 1914 meeting of the "philanthropists" (*"filantropen"*) of the Central Fund, he writes:

a very small working class representation was indeed accorded (*"zehr a kleyne tsohl arbayer iz gevezen fertroten"*)... but it soon became apparent that our 'great ones' (*"unzere parneysim"*) would on no account sway their privileges (ibid).

However, the initiative was taken by the Mantle Makers Union to start an independent fund. According to Himmelfarb, this met the opposition of groups like Poale Zion, who thought that the purpose of the Workers' Fund should be to demonstrate the strength of the workers' interests to the Central Fund, so as to secure a position within that, rather than to act autonomously. "To the dignity (*"tsum shtolts"*) of the Jewish workers" they went ahead independently (E4/Y6).

For Himmelfarb, then, the Anglo-Jewish leadership (the Central Relief Fund) represents *"birgerlikhe un kleyn birgerlikhe interesen"* – bourgeois and petit bourgeois interests; real material antagonisms within the Jewish community

² HO 45/10822/318095/497.

³ English section referenced here by page numbers E1 etc, Yiddish section by Y1 etc. On transliteration, see Note On Pronunciation above.

drove the proletariat towards articulating an autonomous position: the workers were unable to work with the Anglo-Jewish leadership. In other words, for Himmelfarb, the Workers' Fund challenged the communal stress on unanimity; where the Anglo-Jewish leaders saw a single Jewish community, he saw it striated by class antagonisms.

Similarly, Yiddish journalist, Morris Myer, in his contribution to the Bulletin, writes that, when war began, the Jewish working class desired to participate in relief activity, but on a democratic basis. "The self-appointed directors" of the existing relief committees desired absolute power:

They had been accustomed to rule the masses without considering their wishes (*Zey zaynen gevohnt di masen tsu befehlen un nit bey zey tsu gregen*) (Y4/E3).

Here, then, the masses, *di masen* (or elsewhere, in Himmelfarb's contribution, as "the workers and general public" in English and "*di folks masen*" in Yiddish (E5/Y6) are defined against the "self-appointed directors" of the community. Myer, though, in articulating the opposition in terms of *democracy* (participating in relief "on a democratic basis"), is marking democracy as a source of authority and legitimacy *alternative to the communal*.

While Anglo-Jewry called for unanimity – as in the AJA report quoted above, which said that "All painful subjects of difference and dissent must for the time being be overlooked" (quoted in Levene 1992:39) – the Workers' Fund represented itself as exemplifying a contentious and agonistic public sphere. The "Foreword" to the English part of its Bulletin states: "The attention of the reader will no doubt be arrested by the various and [c]onflicting views espoused in the following articles." The Workers' Fund is "almost unique" for its ability to work together despite the plurality of "differing political opinions... In this record of the Fund's activity it is essential, however, for all shades of opinion to have free expression for their views, thereby emphasising the sterling democratic worth of the work achieved" (E2). For the Fund's activists, then, the democratic (the Fund's "sterling democratic worth") implies a space in which differences come together in dissent and dialogue, in contrast to the communal political logic on which the authority of the Anglo-Jewish community leaders rested, and which the Workers' Fund resists. Whereas the democratic here implies a plural space, the communal implies instead a tendency to unanimity that the Fund rejects.

Thus the dichotomy described by the activists of the Workers' Fund between the undignified "philanthropy" of the Central Fund versus the "dignity" of the workers is tied to that between the privileges and prejudices of the "great ones" versus the "democratic" initiative of the unions. These are in turn tied to real class antagonisms within the community.⁴ Interestingly, although Himmelfarb's and Myer's Marxist framework is of key importance, the antagonism is also rendered within a traditional Jewish framework too. This is signalled by Himmelfarb's ironic use of the phrase *undzere parneysim*, which he renders in English as "our great ones" but which literally means the elders of a community, the officers of the *kehillah* or *kahal*, the Jewish community council.

That is, Himmelfarb is using a vocabulary with roots in the Pale. There, as in Britain, the communal authorities had been harnessed by modernizing state power to pursue its own centripetal purposes, and even to pursue an assimilationist project. Raphael Mahler's histories of Galician Jewry under the Austro-Hungarian empire, for example, make this clear. Writing about the nineteenth century, he writes:

The institution of the *kehillah*, the autonomous administration of the Jewish community, was deeply demoralized by its being in effect handed over arbitrarily to the lessees of the candle tax. The *kehillah* became a private domain of the Jewish plutocracy... the candle tax lessee often issued false tax receipts for those men, including himself, whom he wanted appointed trustees [*vos er hot gevolt makhn far parneysim*] (1985:5, translated from 1942:11).

Similarly, in the Russian empire, the *kehillah* was discredited by being given the task of organizing military service from Jewish communities, particularly during the harsh years of the "cantonist" period of the nineteenth century, when each community had to supply a quota of young men for extremely long periods of military service (25 years and more). The *parneysim* were frequently corrupt and nepotistic in their prosecution of this task: getting their own sons exempt and sending the sons of the poor in disproportionate numbers. Roskies comments:

The community was torn apart: khapers preyed on the populace; the community railed against its leaders; the rich exploited the poor... Even those exempted by law were not safe, since the communal lists were doctored in such a way that the only sons of

⁴ Further, arguably, these dichotomies were imagined through the West End/East End dichotomy (see chapter five above).

the poor were drafted in lieu of the several sons of the well-to-do... All this served effectively to undermine the authority of the kahal, which was soundly attacked... by the common folk, who sometimes rioted... In Cantonist times, the practice called *ikuv hakriye* – in which anyone, rich or poor, man or woman, could interrupt the reading of the Torah to demand redress for a wrongdoing – was put to dramatic if ineffectual use (Roskies 1984:58-60).⁵

This folk song evokes these intra-communal divisions:

*Undzere parneysim, undzere rabonim,
Hefn nokh optsugebn zey [kleyne oyfelekh] far yevonim.*

Our bigshots, our rabbis
Have given up our little children to be soldiers.⁶

This legacy leaves a weight of meaning in the Yiddish text under discussion here. When Himmelfarb describes the Anglo-Jewish leadership as “undzere parneysim”, he uses an ancient *loshn-koydesh* (Hebrew-Aramaic) term. The *loshn-koydesh* (literally, holy tongue) lexicon within Yiddish is the oldest part of the language, usually tied to sacred practices; its use by a modern, secular, probably atheist East End socialist, to describe the bigwigs of the Anglo-Jewish community, disturbs simplistic notions of “tradition” versus “modernity”. Here, a specific experience of “tradition” – of class struggle in the Pale – is drawn on as a resource for a new type of class struggle in the Western city, in the changing same of the diaspora.

In this sense, despite the massive political gap between Himmelfarb’s Social Democrats and the ultra-Orthodox Rav Kook who ordained his yeshiva students, they share a certain critique of communalism.⁷

⁵ Examples like these complicate Bauman’s account of modernity’s war against communal authority. They show that communal authority could be used precisely to further the power of the centralizing and modernizing state in a period of transition from feudalism.

⁶ Roskies 1984:59, my translation. Roskies’ translation reads:

Our rabbis, our bigshots are in cahoots,
teaching our kids to be recruits.

The word “*yevonim*”, literally meaning Ionians or Greeks, was a Yiddish code word for soldiers, evoking the forced assimilation that recruits had to undergo, and the strangeness of martial culture.

⁷ Himmelfarb’s language also echoes ultra-Orthodox critiques of assimilation and of communal authorities, e.g. Yaakov Halevi Lifschitz: “In the most recent past, ever since there arose among our people *the great ones* and the Enlightened ones, the people have begun to say: ‘No we have brothers in the palace’... so that only they are deemed fit for public activity” (quoted Lederhandler 1992:330, emphasis added).

Just as the actions of the East End radicals in response to Kishinev (described in chapter five) disrupted the logic of the communal, then, so to did the work of the Workers' Fund and of the East End chevres during the war. Similarly, just as the echoes of Kishinev exemplify trans-national geographies of belonging which challenged the nation-state geographies to which Anglo-Jewish assimilationism was tied, so too do East End responses to the war.

Assimilationist Geography and Diaspora Geography

Assimilationist geography follows the cartographic logic of the nation-state, as Arendt suggests when she writes that

the assimilated Jewries of the Western world had pretended to ignore the strong ties which had always connected Leningrad with Warsaw, and Warsaw with Berlin, and both with Paris and London, and all together with New York, and had presumed unique unrelated conditions country by country (1978:150).

A diasporic geography, in contrast, is precisely about these "strong ties" which link the scattered settlements in the East and West. As we saw in the Kishinev example, traumatic events in the Pale disrupted the nation-state "country by country" logic of assimilationism. Kin ties, and kin-like ties to landslayt, were extremely important for the East End immigrants. Landslayt ties, such as being a "Belostoker", "Lodzer", "Kutner", "Plotsker" or "Varshaver", meant a whole web of trans-national communities. Someone arriving in London from Kutno would be welcomed at one of the Kutner landsmanshaftn, might be helped to find work or accommodation by Kutner landslayt, may pray with a Kutner minyan, and, if he moved on, could join the Kutner landsmanshaft in Buenos Aires, New York, Paris or Philadelphia. Kin ties often overlapped with and strengthened landslayt ties, but often they linked people across different lands ("*Iender*").⁸ These trans-national communities constituted an alternative de-centred and de-territorialized diasporic geography super-imposed on or cutting against the grain of the emerging nation-state mosaic of Europe.

It was this geography from which the Workers' Fund emerged. As we saw in the last chapter, its activists included many landsmanshaft activists (especially from places in the Eastern European war zone) and several of the better organized landsmanshaftn were affiliated to it: the Piotrkower, the Skerniewics and Rawa, the Warsaw and Lodz, and the Baltic landsmanshaftn,⁹ the

⁸ See Weisser (1985).

⁹ Podolsky (1959:24).

Zhitomirer Hilfs Fereyn (Zhitomir Relief Association),¹⁰ and, in the West End, the Radomer landsmanshaft.¹¹

Anglo-Jewry was shocked into a sense of kinship with its “co-religionists” across national borders – but within certain limits. During World War I, official British Jewish relief efforts were confined to Jews who were subjects of Allied nations; the Jews of Austrian Galicia or Prussian Poland were not included. To reach out to “enemy” Jews would be to fail the test of loyalty to the British nation-state, would disqualify them from the precious prize of citizenship.

The East Enders, on the other hand, transgressed the borders of the nation-state in their acts of solidarity. The Workers’ Fund, from its inception, provided relief for the shtetlekh on the Austrian and Prussian side of the pre-war border or under German or Austro-Hungarian occupation. Even more radically, perhaps, they provided relief for the families of interned “enemy aliens” in London and for the interned themselves.¹² Interestingly, in the Yiddish text of Fund’s bulletin, “alien enemies” is written phonetically and placed in quotation marks, as “*alien enemis*” (E5/Y6). This serves as an ironic gesture which implicitly subverts the distinctions between subject and alien and between friendly and enemy. Unlike the West Enders, then, they refused to think on a “country by country” basis; they refused to accept the difference between a suffering Jew in Galicia, a suffering Jew in Lithuania and a suffering Jew in East London.

When Himmelfarb describes the relief efforts aimed at “enemy” subjects (those in Eastern Europe, in Palestine and in British internment camps) he writes that this demonstrated that the Fund was

no charitable institution. Rather it was an instrument whereby the Jewish worker fulfilled the *duty* incumbent on him towards his less fortunate brothers and sisters, his own flesh and blood. Thus was the corner-stone of the movement lodged and charity replaced by brotherly duty [*nisht keyn ‘filantropishe institusion’, dos di geld vos di arbayter un folks masen giben tsu helfen zeyere leydende brider in di melkhome lender darf nisht zayn un iz nisht keyn tsdoke, keyn geshank, nor khoyv a flikht vos liegt oyf yeder fun undz avek*

¹⁰ Kantor 1917b:Y20

¹¹ See the Report of Israel Rosenberg in the Bulletin.

¹² The contributions of Himmelfarb and Romanovsky in the Bulletin describe these efforts.

tsugeben a teyl fun di ferdiensten tsu di vos zaynen undzer eygen flaysh un bluf] (E5/Y6).¹³

Thus in his critique of bourgeois relief efforts, even the Marxist Himmelfarb uses the images of kinship to describe the East Enders' relationship with the sufferers: flesh and blood, brothers and sisters, brotherly duty.

These sorts of images of trans-national kinship are plentiful in the literature of the anti-war movement. Two further examples can be seen in a 1916 Manchester labour Zionist pamphlet and in the contribution by Morris Myer, another Social Democrat, to the Workers' Fund Bulletin. The former text argues that:

We can forgive [mistreatment in Britain], but to participate in a war in which one of your Allies is bathing in the blood of our brethren is unnatural and inhuman.¹⁴

Myer's text notes that, when war began, the Jewish working class told the Anglo-Jewish leaders who ran the existing relief organizations that:

"We feel even more keenly than you do the sufferings and the sorrows ("di leyden un di tsures") of those who have been affected by this war. They are for us not only our co-religionists and allies ("undzere gloybens genosen, undzere 'alays"), they are our relatives and friends, our brothers and sisters, our fathers and mothers, our own flesh and blood" ("undzere kroyvim, undzere fraynt un bekanter, undzere foters un mumers, undzere zaydes un bobes, undzer eygen flaysh un bluf") (Y4/E3).

This is a very important passage. It sets up a very strong critique of the West End Anglo-Jewish conception of Jewish identity.

The words Myer uses about Anglo-Jewry's attitudes – the English phrase "co-religionist" and its *daytmerish*¹⁵ Yiddish cognate "*gloybens genosen*" – evoke a whole tradition of assimilationist thought.¹⁶ These phrases are drawn from the

¹³ The Yiddish speaks of a self-taxation process (*avek tsugeben a teyl fun di ferdiensten* – giving up a portion of earnings) and of "our own" (*undzer eygen*) flesh and blood, rather than "his own".

¹⁴ Isaiah Wassilevsky *Jewish Refugees and Military Service: The Ethical Aspect of Compulsion Under Threat of Deportation*, The National Labour Press Ltd., 1916(?), p.3. PML, MS 185/AJ 320/2/1 (quoted Hyman 2001:27). The author was a Poale Zionist Hebrew teacher (see oral recollections of Saul Reece and Saul Rosenberg in the Manchester Jewish Museum, reproduced at the Centre for Jewish Studies at the University of Manchester on-line exhibition, *Manchester and Zionism*, <http://www.mucjs.org/EXHIBITION/INDEXPAGE.HTML>).

¹⁵ "*Daytmerish*" = Yiddish term for something that is a pale imitation of German (*daytsh*), i.e. connoting pretentiousness, obscure highbrowism and often Jewish self-hatred.

¹⁶ "*Gloybens genosen*" is what is called a "new High Germanism" in Yiddish, of the type associated with the Enlightenment. It is a Yiddishization of the German phrase

lexicon of “the liberal Jewish compromise” (the notion of the English citizen of Jewish faith”, of the “Jew in the home and man in the street”), which were discussed above in chapter four. The notion of the “co-religionist” reduces Jewishness to religion or faith and Jewish commonality to the purely confessional, as a community of faith. For the East Enders, the Jews of Eastern Europe were not “co-religionists”, but kith and kin.

In Myer’s text, moreover, as well as co-religionists, the West Enders see (some) Ostjuden as “allies”. The Yiddish word here, “*alays*”, placed in quotation marks in the text for ironic distance, is a direct phonetic transcription of the English word.¹⁷ The use of the English word and the quote marks around it imply that the word is alien to the Yiddish lifeways of the East Enders; it is a word from the lexicon of the First World War, of nation-state logic. Like “co-religionists”, “allies” is an abstract identification. In contrast, the East Enders see the Eastern Europeans as kin, “flesh and blood” – “brothers and sisters [and] fathers and mothers” in the English text, “fathers and mothers, grandfathers and grandmothers” in the Yiddish text. These are very corporeal, concrete identifications, so unlike the abstract identifications associated with the West Enders. It should be stressed that they are not metaphors: the Jews of Galicia being made homeless by the war *were* in many cases direct relations of the Jews in East London. In this sense, the East Enders and the Galicians formed one trans-national community that transcended the dividing up of Europe that gave meaning to word like “allies”, “enemies” and “aliens”. This trans-national diaspora geography of belonging subverted the nation-state logic which was the foundations for both Anglo-Jewish and government conceptions of citizenship.

Jewish National Space and Proletarian Internationalism

As argued through this thesis, the assimilationism of the Anglo-Jewish leadership tried to trim political belonging to fit the shape of the nation-state. Here we have seen that the ghetto radicalism of the Workers’ Fund

“*Glaubens Genossen*” (*Glauben* means “faith” in the sense of a religious faith *and* in good faith, “*in gutem Glauben*”). “*Glaubens Genossen*” was the phrase which assimilationist German Jews used to describe the arriving Ostjuden. It signalled an uneasy acknowledgement of some connection to the Easterners, but a connection purely of faith (as a Bavarian Catholic could speak of a Brazilian Catholic as her co-religionist without acknowledging an ethnic connection).

¹⁷ The “ay” sound in Yiddish has the same pronunciation as the “ie” in “allies” or the “i” in “size”.

transgressed these borders. However, both the cartography of the nation-state and the diaspora's geography of belonging had a tense relationship with a third geography, that of the proletarian international. Here, I will discuss this as exemplified by the Committee of Delegates of the Russian Socialist Groups in London (CoDoRSGiL or CoD).

Like other Jewish radicals of the East End – from the anarchists in Rocker's circle to the trade unionists in the Workers' Circle – and like the non-Jewish radicals with whom they fraternized in the Marxist parties like the BSP, the Jewish activists in CoDoRSGiL professed a commitment to proletarian internationalism. However, behind this shared commitment, we can perceive a variety of perspectives. On one hand, internationalism for those activists who I am calling "ghetto radicals" (such as those organized in the FJPC and the Workers' Fund) was a concrete experience of dispersion and practical solidarity across borders (exemplified by the Fund's relief distribution through political, communal and kin networks), and it was also a project which could be lived in countless different culturally specific ways. However, I will argue here that, for many of the radicals in the CoD, internationalism was an abstract, absolute and categorical imperative, and it required the transcending of any non-"international" (i.e. culturally specific) forms of belonging or identification. In practice, this meant orientation (even assimilation) to the local "national" proletariat – that is, the attempted reproduction of a version of Englishness. This assimilatory tendency was underpinned by orthodox Marxist conceptions of progress. At times, though, this tendency was destabilized or disrupted by a sense of Jewish belonging that did not fit into this Second International worldview, and, as we will see, groups like the CoD had to carefully ward off the politics of groups like the FJPC who expressed this sense of Jewish belonging. This was done by describing them as "chauvinist" or "reactionary", as Jewish nationalists.

The version of internationalism articulated by the CoD has been described by writers like Robert Wistrich and Enzo Traverso. Wistrich, for example, describes the insistent disavowal of Jewish belonging by revolutionary Marxists like Rosa Luxemburg. Luxemburg spoke of the proletariat as an identity which dissolves and supersedes all other identities or particularities.

What other fatherland is there for the great mass of working men and women? What other fatherland is there than the improvement

of life, the improvement of morality, the improvement of the intellectual strength of the great mass which constitutes a people? (quoted 1976:18-9).

Wistrich notes that she “clung with... fervour to the mystical ideal of a proletarian fatherland beyond the concrete boundaries of geographical space, national government and cultural differences” (ibid).¹⁸ Of the revolutionary socialists in general, he writes: “As *citizens of the world*, they no longer regarded themselves as Jews, and any reminder of their origins seemed to disturb, irritate, even exasperate them. They were – or so they appeared to believe – a post-Jewish phenomenon” (ibid:20, my emphasis).

What Wistrich is describing is a particular orthodox Marxist conception of national space and citizenship: the proletariat’s space of belonging is seen as beyond borders and nations; the proper unit of belonging is “the world” - but the proletarian world is refigured as a sort of nation-state, a “fatherland”. This notion of world-citizenship was captured by the words “kosmopolitan” and “veltberger” in the Yiddish of the early twentieth century, most frequently invoked with ironic scorn to criticize the revolutionary socialists’ self-disavowing pretensions to being “post-Jewish”. When ghetto radicals used these phrases scornfully, they were highlighting the assimilationist reality at the heart of this internationalism, the fact that the proletarian fatherland was in fact closely modelled on the nation-states of the West.

Similarly, Enzo Traverso has analyzed the assimilationist impulses within late nineteenth and early twentieth century Marxism. He looks at the cult within the Marxism of the period for “positivist evolutionism. History was seen as a linear process of development of the productive forces, as a society’s unending march toward ‘progress,’ which inevitably implied Jewish assimilation” (1994:37). Traverso argues that the Russian and Polish Marxists – from the anti-semitic Stalin to the anti-racist Lenin to the assimilated Jews Luxemburg and Trotsky – shared a conception of assimilation structured by a teleological vision of the West (“the direction of Paris and New York”) as the future and the East (“Russia and Galicia”) as the past. Thus a commitment to proletarian internationalism within the space of orthodox Marxism was tied to a rejection

¹⁸ Arguably, Luxemburg’s own relation to Jewishness is more complex than Wistrich suggests, but certainly one of its elements was a disavowal of Jewish particularity encouraged by her commitment to a version of Marxist universalism. For other views

of Jewish or Yiddish culture as of the past, as unable to “transcend the confining horizon of the feudal ghetto”, as “an aspect of the backwardness of the ‘Asiatic barbarism’ of Russian absolutism. Within this framework, the perspective of assimilation took on a... normative character, being the inevitable product of the social and industrial development of the country” (ibid:146). In other words, the orthodox Marxists had a teleological view of history which mirrored that of Anglo-Jewish assimilationism.

In order to show how this was played out in East London during the war, I am going to turn to some examples of texts produced during the war in which these understandings of identity are articulated.

Worker’s Dreadnought: The workers have no homeland

My first example is an article from September 1917 by the Russian Jewish Marxist John Lizerovitch in the *Worker's Dreadnought*:

You say that we as foreigners should be serving in the British army. I would say to you that we as a community have no cause to be indebted to you. We foreign Jews have simply added to the number of wage slaves, thereby increasing the profits of the master class. We stand as exploited, not exploiters. Your capitalist class makes no distinction between robbing Jews and Gentiles. Jewish workers resident here, in common with those of British extraction, have no quarrel with the German people, neither of us have property to protect or interests to safeguard...

Yes, these fugitives are many – life is sweet, so in their desperation they hide from the military persecution. Foul lodging houses and mean restaurants offer them some shelter. Some are hard pressed to live their miserable existence, so in desperation they turn to an occupation which you call nefarious. They are victims of the criminal circumstances under which they exist...

The so-called problem of the Russian Jews to which you allude can be solved in a moment. Let us live our own lives without interference, or give us the means of departing peacefully with our families.¹⁹

The notion that the refugees have a debt of gratitude to their host country was brought up a lot during WWI (summed up in the war-time *Jewish Chronicle* slogan “England has been all that it could be to the Jews; Jews will be all they can be to England”²⁰). This notion is completely rejected by Lizerovitch. Where

of her relation to Jewishness, see Arendt (1968b), Jack Jacobs (1993) or Traverso (1994:136-146).

¹⁹ *Worker's Dreadnought* September 8 1917

²⁰ *JC* 7/8/1914

anti-semites doubted the loyalty of Jews to England, suspecting them of loyalty to the enemy, here a third option is introduced: loyalty to the planetary proletariat. For Marxists like Lizerovitch, the identity of “proletarian” dissolved all other identities; it was the identity to end all others. By striating the identity “Jew” into “worker” and “capitalist”, the legitimacy of the West End Jewish leadership – and the communal as a source of authority – is collapsed.

This text sets up a relation between a “we” and a “you”. The identity of “we” shifts in the first sentence, from “we as foreigners” to “we as a community”. There is also a “you”, an audience, present in the text: the official public sphere. That this is a bourgeois public sphere, in an antagonistic relationship with the proletariat, is clear too, for example in the phrase “*your* capitalist class”. “As foreigners”, then, is how that “you” identifies the immigrants; “as a community” is how they identify themselves. In other words, an external ascription of identity (“foreigners”, “foreign Jews”, “nefarious”) is rejected: the text resists ontologizing ethnic identity. The identification “Jewish” is ironized, associated with a hostile “you”, with external ascription: “the so-called problem of the Russian Jews to which you allude”.

Instead, the text proposes an internal self-identification: “wage slave”, “exploited”, “worker”. This self-identification is, however, culturally empty, meaningful only relationally or negatively in terms of the binary categories of Marxism: “wage slave” not “master class”, “exploited” not “exploiter”, “worker” not “capitalist”. That is, the identity which is meaningful to Lizerovitch is negative; there is no sense of positive cultural content; “cultural stuff” becomes false consciousness, becomes an acceptance of external ascriptions of identity. Just as the capitalist class “makes no distinction between robbing Jews and Gentiles”, so the class conscious worker must become colour-blind.

The Committee of Delegates: Proletarian internationalism

The CoD provides a rich source for this sort of dissolving of identity in the figure of the proletariat. For example, a resolution jointly adopted by the Committee of Delegates and the Executive of the Jewish Social Democratic Organisations in Great Britain in protest at the suggestion that friendly aliens should be conscripted into non-military labour (dubbed “civilian compulsion” by the FJPC and CoDoRSGiL) stated that:

The International Socialist proletarian movement, which is struggling against all war itself, against all the imperialist tendencies of the present capitalist regime and thereby against the foundations of that regime, is alone capable of fully disclosing the real significance and meaning of the plan of civilian compulsion, and of a completely consequent and thorough-going struggle against this danger.²¹

Like Lizerovitch's text, this resolution rejects the logic of the nation-state. It makes no gestures towards loyalty to the host country. Its authors are unashamed at being at war with the very foundations of the country where they have taken refuge.

But at the same time, there is a teleological view of history that, as already suggested, mirrors the assimilationist view of history. In this view, the proletarian revolution represents the end-point of history towards which every moment is leading. The "International Socialist proletarian movement" is the *only* agent of change: it is the universal in which all particularities are dissolved. It *alone* is capable of understanding the meaning of a policy change, because of its universal perspective (the merely particular perspectives of, say, conscripted East Enders are not capable of this). However, the international proletariat was embodied, for the orthodox Marxists, in a very particular way. Later in the same resolution, we find this passage:

[It is] the duty of the workers of alien origin to take up, together in full unity with the conscious proletariat of the Country, the struggle which menaces the whole working class, and, addressing themselves to the class organisations of the British proletari[a]t, they emphasise the necessity for us, alien workers, of common action with them in this struggle, at the same time pointing out that the extension to foreigners of universal civilian mobilisation... would be an infringement of the rights of foreigners which are a necessary part of the principles of democracy, according to which their duties [d]o not extend further than participating in the ordinary civil functions of the community among which they live.²²

This suggests an orientation to the *native* workers: it is "the duty of the workers of alien origin to... address themselves to the class organisations of the British proletariat". the orientation is to "the conscious proletariat of the Country", "the *British* proletariat"; alien difference from them should be dissolved in "common action", "together and in full unity".²³ These sorts of slogans²⁴ begin to suggest

²¹ Resolution adopted 18.12.1916, in HO 45/10820/31805/198.

²² Ibid.

²³ In another instance, they passed a resolution which "calls upon the British organised workers to use every effort" to defend the emigrants (Draft Resolution for Workers'

an oppressive side to the universalism of this discourse. The specificities of the alien worker are to be shaken off, dissolved in a universalism which turns out to be an orientation towards whiteness. This apparent lack of a patriotic discourse masked a “red assimilationist” desire to remodel the alien worker after the indigenous worker – the international proletarian, like the British citizen, was always already colour-coded white.²⁵

The Workers’ Fund: Between class and race

As well as in the CoD, the Social Democrats articulated these sorts of views within wider, more politically pluralist, spaces in the East End, such as the Workers’ Fund, where they entered into debate with Yiddish trade unionists and labour Zionists, who understood class as a category marked by internal ethnic and cultural differences. In his contribution to the Workers’ Fund bulletin, Poale Zionist I Pomeranz articulated a critique of internationalism. His article was entitled “The Workers’ Fund and Its National Significance” – “national” in this context meaning the Jewish nation. Pomeranz writes:

The Workers’ Fund had at the outset to cope with the same difficulties which confronted all the workers’ organisations founded in the last few years to deal with specifically Jewish activities [*spetsiale idishe oyfgaben*]. Specifically Jewish, it must be emphasized, because it was the Jewish aspect of the work contemplated which gave rise to the difficulty in sustaining for it the cordial and hearty co-operation of the many Jewish workers’ organisations. For that section of the Jewish working class in this country which for the last few decades has been nurtured in a ‘Jewish-speaking’ spirit [*a ‘idishe shprekhenden’ gayst*], meaning that it was Jewish in character to the extent only of its use of the Jewish language, it was indeed difficult to get used even to the thought of participating in relief work of a specifically Jewish kind [*in hilf’s arbayt, spetsiel far di idishe melkhome leydende*]. Huge amounts of time were spent in discussion and theoretic quibble [*theoretishe hekires*], where it was sought to give the work an ‘international’ colour glossed over with a Jewish-speaking veneer

Meetings, 4 August 1916 [BL/8093.h.11(4)]. We can find the same language in a speech by Joe Fineberg to a BSP conference at the time: “Though both suffer oppression, there is no unity between the Jewish capitalist and the Jewish worker. The latter must ally himself with the workers in the country in which he lives” (quoted Bush 1985:24).

²⁴ Like more recent leftist slogans, such as “black and white unite and fight”.

²⁵ The figure of the worker was also gendered in the texts of the CoD, as in this 1916 leaflet, “To the Emigrants from Russia”:

“BE MANFUL... And may those, who after us will carry on the struggle against brutality and oppression, remember you as manly fighters, who at a critical moment were able to stand for yourselves.”²⁵

[an 'internatsionalen' kolier mit a 'idish shprekhenden untershlag]
(E6/Y7, emphases in original).

The Arbayer Fraynd Group, the Jewish Anarchist Federation, for example, delivered, according to Pomeranz, an “ultimatum” that the Fund must help war victims “of every race and of every land” (“*fun ale felker in ale lender*”) but “such ‘internationalism’ could not be accepted” and the anarchists withdrew. Many Jewish workers’ organisations, he writes, believed that

to engage in particular Jewish work was Chauvinistic and reactionary, and that thereby the Jewish working movement might lose its international character [*reaktioner-shovinst, un az durkh dem ken nokh helile di idishe arbayer bevegung ferlieren ihr internationalen kharakter*].

[The Fund evoked a huge volume of] national will and energy from every stratum of Jewish population in this country [*di idishe folks masen*]... To this national power of the Jewish folk-masses, those elements which saw before in the Workers’ Fund a Chauvinistic, all-Jewish undertaking [*di elementen, vos hoben in onhoyb gezehn in dem Arbayer fond a min shovinstishe ‘khal isroel’ unterehtung*] were obliged to give way (E6/Y7).

Here, Pomeranz is rejecting the understanding of Jewish identity which characterized the Social Democrats. For the “internationalists”, the only reality was class. Not only did their loyalty to that collectivity not stop at the borders of the nation-state to encompass people of every ethnicity and every land (“*fun ale felker in ale lender*”), but those lines were fundamentally illusory. For the internationalists, ethnic difference had no positive cultural content (no “cultural stuff”) but was simply a “veneer”. They were consequently not Jews but just “Jewish-speaking” (“*idish shprekhenden*”).²⁶ Pomeranz and the Poale Zionists, in contrast, rejected this, seeing instead Jewish “national will and energy”. Crucially, this “national will” was not limited to the proletariat, but came “from every stratum of Jewish population in this country”.

However, it would be wrong to think of two camps within the Fund, one “internationalist” and represented by the Social Democrats and one “nationalist” and represented by Poale Zion. Individual activists in the Fund held both positions simultaneously, *refusing to choose* between loyalty to ethnicity or loyalty to class, neither denying difference (as the “internationalists” did) nor ontologizing it (as the Zionists did). Morris Myer, for example, writes:

²⁶ Yiddish does not have different words for “Yiddish” and “Jewish”, so *idish shprekhenden* here means both Yiddish- and Jewish-speaking.

The Workers' Fund is a monument to the independence, to the democratic spirit, and to the strong national feeling of the Jewish masses. It is... to be hoped that its existence will encourage the Jewish working class to undertake still greater and more important social activities (E4).

Yo, der 'arbayer fond' iz a munument fun der zeltshtendigkayt, demokratie, un natsionalen gayst in brayten zikh fun vort, fun di idishe arbayer masen... s'iz tsu hofen, as zayn ekzistens vet erveken bay di idishe arbayer masen nayem vilen tsu a braytere un greserer gezelshaftlikher thetigkayt (Y5).

Here, Myer links the national spirit of the Jews with the Jewish working class. The Yiddish version has a slightly more nationalist inflection, speaking of national *spirit* ("gayst") rather than "feeling"; the English version a more Marxist inflection, referring to the Jewish *working class* rather than the Jewish worker masses ("*Idishe arbayer masen*"). But both equate Jewish belonging with the Jewish plebeiat rather than the Jewish people as a whole. The "democratic spirit" of the Jewish masses is made to seem synonymous with its "national spirit" (*natsionalen gayst*). The Anglo-Jewish communal leaders are set outside the Jewish nation by their denial of Jewish ethnic belonging, by their seeing Jews in other countries just as "co-religionists". It is interesting, too, that once again we encounter the notion of the democratic. The West Enders are excluded from the Jewish national collective, the ethnos, it seems, precisely by virtue of their being outside the democratic, outside the demos. Myer's text, then, holds in play two different types of identity politics: an "internationalist" orientation to the working class *and* a "nationalist" notion of Jewish belonging.

We find this tension even in the arch-internationalist Himmelfarb's contribution to the Workers' Fund Bulletin, in the English phrase "workers and general public", which in Yiddish is rendered "*di folks masen*", the folk masses. The two versions, Yiddish and English, have quite different inflections. The English indicates a cross-class support for the Fund, while the Yiddish phrase indicates support that is not purely proletarian but nonetheless plebeian. Likewise, Pomeranz, when writing in Yiddish, speaks not of "every stratum of Jewish population" but of "*di idishe folks masen*". "*Folk*" in both texts has an ambiguity, suggesting both ethnos (*natsionalen gayst*) *and* demos (democratic spirit), designating the people as an ethnic collective *and* the popular classes. In Himmelfarb's text, the Yiddish phrase indicates a concession to the

importance of ethnic identity that he elsewhere refuses; in Pomeranz's text, it indicates an assertion of plebeian belonging striating the Jewish nation.

The Figure of the Refugee

In this final section of this chapter, I will closely examine some of the war-time literature of the Foreign Jews Protection Committee (FJPC). I argue that this literature began to articulate new conceptions of nationhood and citizenship that directly contradicted the ethnically exclusive conceptions of citizenship and nationhood that were emerging in state policy at that time, while presenting a discourse of belonging that was very different from the diasporic discourse of the Workers' Fund and the proletarian internationalist discourse of the CoD.

One of the first public statements of the FJPC, in August 1916, shortly after its formation was a petition published in the extremely patriotic and pro-war *East London Observer*. The *Observer*, although it had a small but significant Jewish readership, was read mostly by non-Jewish East Enders, and was prone to the occasional anti-semitic and anti-alien article. The petition describes the government proposals to force friendly aliens to either fight for Britain or return to their places of origin. It continues:

However this may operate with regard to Italians, Frenchmen or men of other nationalities domiciled in this country, in the case of Jews born in Russia, who have taken refuge in this country from the unspeakable persecutions and hardships inflicted on them by the Russian government, the result can only be a violation of the right of asylum which has made Great Britain a nation honoured above all others... We cannot do otherwise than place before you, Sir, the tragic impossibility of our position under the new proposals, and to ask that, if it is no longer possible for the British government to regard us, as heretofore, as refugees and exiles, then to let us go forth to some other land where conditions so repugnant to humanity and justice will not be imposed upon us, and where we may be sorrowfully at peace.²⁷

This is quite a subtle position and three points in particular stand out. First, the language of *rights* (the right of asylum), validated by loyalty to supra-national or universal values (humanity and justice), is invoked against the language of patriotic *duty*, loyalty to a nation. The (universalist) identity of "refugee" or "exile" is counter-posed to the (nationally-specific) identity of "alien" or even "friendly alien". In addition, refugees are singled out among foreigners: while

²⁷ FJPC petition August 1916, in HO 45/10818/318095/14

other foreigners are simply "*domiciled* in this country", the Jews born in Russia have "*taken refuge* in this country".

Second, the identity of "Jews born in Russia" is evoked, not that of "Russian Jews". This means that a mechanical correspondence between nationality and natality is questioned. In other words, loyalty to Russia is annulled by "the unspeakable persecutions" inflicted by the Russian *government* on its subjects. The implication of this is that no government can expect automatic loyalty from those living under its flag. The significance of this is two-fold. The loyalty expected of the refugees from the British crown (the option of military service in the British army) is called into doubt. (The first time Britain is mentioned (positively and deserving of loyalty), it is mentioned as "Great Britain a nation"; the next time (now negatively and not deserving loyalty) it is mentioned as "the British *government*".) But at the same time, the loyalty they are expected to have for the land of their birth (the option of repatriation) is called into grave doubt. This in turn upsets the very notion of "friendly alien"/"enemy alien" – an imagined correspondence between support for a government and having been born in its realm – which rests on that tight natality-nationality-allegiance fit rejected here.

Third, this subversion of the official identifications of Jews is couched within the language of patriotism, the language of the loyal subject: "Great Britain a nation honoured above all others... We cannot do otherwise than place before you, Sir..." Indeed, the very form of a petition, the very act of petitioning, the subject position of a petitioner, implies the position of loyal subject, of subjection. At the same time, however, the conditionality of this subjection is gently stressed; the position is described as "tragically impossible". Ultimately, the exiles will again "go forth to some other land".

In February 1917 there was a Conference on "Male Enemy and Allied Aliens" at Bethnal Green Town Hall involving representatives from the East End borough councils, the East End military tribunals and right-wing members of Parliament and the County Council. The FJPC sent a telegram to it, which was not read out, but which was reprinted by the FJPC as a leaflet entitled "Suppressed Telegram":

The Jews have come to this country not to steal the living of other people, but to escape from political, religious and national

persecution of a kind hated by all lovers of freedom. They are in this country through the traditional generosity of the British Nation. [They] are doing all they can to show their appreciation of the Freedom they now enjoy. They regard this freedom not as a boon for which they must bow down as slaves but as a right freely and generously accorded by a free and generous people... To-day there is threatened the abrogation of the Right of Asylum... We... appeal to the chivalry of the English to defend them against insidious attacks. We are asking that the right of asylum shall be preserved as one of the most vital principles of civilisation... We do not ask for clemency, but for simple human justice.²⁸

Here we see a language of rights and freedoms designed to appeal to “lovers of freedom”. Indeed, that these are often reified is suggested by the occasional capitalization of “Freedom” and “the Right of Asylum”. There is an appeal to a sort of cosmopolitan patriotism: a sense of “the traditional generosity of the British Nation”, the British as “a free and generous people”, “the chivalry of the English”. There is an appeal to a hostly ethic of generosity and hospitality – and a corresponding proper appreciativeness on the asylum-seeker’s part. The guest’s appreciation is dignified, and carefully distinguished from a slavish bowing down.

When they focused on the right of asylum, couched within a liberal theory of rights, the FJPC were affirming the nation-state system which gives these rights validity – just as the CoD’s orientation to the British proletariat undermined their anti-nationalism. The stress on hospitality points to the limits of the right of asylum, to its *conditionality*. We can think about this in terms of Kant’s careful distinction between the (legitimate but conditional) right of asylum or resort (*Besuchsrecht*) and the (unconditional but illegitimate) right of residence (*Gastrecht*)²⁹ – a distinction which underpins the asylum laws of the liberal nation-state.³⁰ Ultimately, within the framework of the nation-state, the right of asylum is dependent on the “chivalry” of a “generous” host.

Furthermore, as well as affirming the nation-state system, the cosmopolitan patriotism to which the FJPC appealed was profoundly ethnocentric. When

²⁸ “Suppressed Telegram” 27.2.1917, in HO 45/10820/31805/219

²⁹ “Third Definitive Article of A Perpetual Peace”, *Perpetual Peace* (Kant 1972: 137-8, cf Derrida 2001b:21).

³⁰ Proponents today of the sort of “cosmopolitan patriotism” or “civic nationalism” to which the FJPC were making their appeal often draw on Kant’s articulation of cosmopolitanism; only some draw attention to the limit of his position, that “Cosmopolitan Right shall be limited to Conditions of Universal Hospitality” (ibid).

they talk a language of rights, they consistently locate rights in the West. Often this West is defined sharply against an East seen as “retrograde”.

[The Jews] have not enjoyed the full rights in this country but time can make them and their children devoted citizens and this compulsion can never do... We are asking that the right of asylum be preserved as one of the most vital principles of civilisation. Its suspension is... a menace... to the great mass of our race who are now being persecuted in the retrograde countries: Russia and Romania.³¹

Here we see a linkage between citizenship and civilization: a contrast between a retrograde, barbaric East (Russia and Romania) without rights and a decent, civilized and ethical West (Britain and France) with rights. Moreover, the statement that “time can make them and their children devoted citizens” refuses the racialized conception of citizenship which the war reinforced, but it buys into assimilationist teleology, much as the CoD’s internationalism does. At times, FJPC rhetoric moved even closer to an espousal of assimilationism. In an open letter of March 1917, they stated:

The Right of Asylum in the Western democratic countries has been in the past the salvation of thousands of the oppressed, as well as the *most powerful factor for the penetration of Western ideas into the retrograde countries of Eastern Europe.*

It is therefore the Right of Asylum as *a civilising principle* that those who have to decide this question should think of, rather than of the small military value of the insignificant number involved.³²

There is no doubt that this was a partly rhetorical flourish designed to appeal to those in power. Nonetheless, this opposition between the civilized West and the retrograde East appears to be a recurrent feature of their propaganda. For them, the “Right of Asylum” was an essential part of European civilisation”, “an ancient and noble principle”, “one of England’s greatest services in the cause of humanity”, “a point of honour with the British nation”, and a defining feature of “the civilised world” – in contrast to “savage” and “ferocious” Russia, land of “tyranny and oppression”.³³ “The honour of England is at stake!”³⁴

Like orthodox Marxism, then, the FJPC’s discourse links together a linear narrative of time (the advanced and the retrograde) and space (West and East) – so that the East is the past and the West is the future – in exactly the

³¹ *Suppressed Telegram*, FJPC leaflet, February 1917, in HO 45/10820/318095/219

³² in HO 45/10820/318095/216, emphasis added.

³³ *The Case of the Arrested Russian Jews*, February 1917, FJPC leaflet in HO 45/10820/318095/216

way that assimilationist language does. In other words, the FJPC's discourse around the asylum-seeker can be seen as, in many significant ways, buying into dominant ideas of race, ethnicity and citizenship.

However, there are features of the FJPC's discourse that spill over beyond these ideas, as when it orientates to the figure of the refugee (rather than the right of asylum) and when it affirms notions of race, community, language and tradition and its radical anti-racism.

For example, there are texts by the FJPC where we can see, not a Kantian political theory of rights (the right of asylum) connected to the nation-state, but a humanist orientation to the suffering of the refugee, an appeal to an ethical sensitivity on the part of the audience through images of suffering:

The cruelty of deportation with its inevitable consequences of ruin, misery, persecution, imprisonment and even death, has already aroused the indignation of eminent citizens of this country.³⁵

The figure of the refugee appears in another 1916 pamphlet of the FJPC, which describes the committee's object: "to befriend those refugees who, often ignorant of the language and customs of the Country to which they have fled from injustice and persecution, were bewildered and helpless before this new threat [of conscription or deportation]." ³⁶

A sort of politics of the refugee can also be found in some of the literature of the rest of the East End anti-war movement. We can see it, for example, in Pankhurst, when she writes about

the unfortunate plight of Germans and other foreigners who are in England at this time. We in East London know that many of these people have lived with us as friendly neighbours for years. Some of them are political refugees, who, because they have dared to try to get reforms in their own autocratically governed countries, have been obliged to fly here for safety.³⁷

We can see it too in the names of some of the left groups, like the 1916 Committee of the Group of Russian Political Refugees.³⁸ And we can see it in Zelda Kahan's biography of Marx, where she writes: "In London, leading the life of a poor political refugee, worried by grave bread-and-butter problems for

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Suppressed Telegram*, *op. cit.*

³⁶ *The Case of the Arrested Russian Jews*, *op. cit.*

³⁷ *Woman's Dreadnought* volume I #22 15/8/1914, p.85

³⁸ HO 45/10819/318095/136

his family, Marx nevertheless managed to get through a tremendous amount of work” (Kahan-Coates 1918:16).

In these examples, however, the Marxists speak of *political* refugees – whose rights were upheld in the 1905 Aliens Act, which stated:

An emigrant who proves that he is seeking admission to this country solely to avoid persecution or punishment on religious or political grounds, or for an offence of a political character or persecution involving danger of prison or danger to life and limb on account of religious belief, leave to land shall not be refused on ground merely of want of means, or a probability of his becoming a charge on the rates.³⁹

The 1905 Act (whose terms the Marxists accept when always describing themselves as *political* refugees) defends the rights of *private conscience*: religious or political *belief*.⁴⁰ The FJPC, in contrast, also showed a concern for the *specific* sufferings of Jews alongside the universalism of these sorts of appeals to the figure of the refugee. Just as the Workers’ Fund rejected the idea of Jewishness as an ism, as a private faith like Protestantism, the FJPC rejected the idea that their refugee status rested solely on grounds of their beliefs. They speak of “*national* persecution”, as well as “political [and] religious” persecution.⁴¹ Thus, they assert the *collective* rights of an ethnicity: racism was legitimate grounds for refugee status. The idea that “the great mass of [a] race”⁴² (rather than individual dissenters) could claim asylum was not a widely recognized view at that time, when right of asylum was linked to “freedom of conscience” (and indeed is not fully recognized today).⁴³

Where ultra-internationalists like the Committee of Delegates almost never mentioned the Jewishness of the East End aliens, the FJPC always did.

Most of them [“the Jews”] live in colonies among their own people, speaking their own language, and maintaining their own traditions... [The suspension of the right of asylum] is not only a

³⁹ Quoted in *The Case of the Arrested Russian Jews*, op. cit.

⁴⁰ The CoD did, however, challenge the British state’s decisions about who fitted into this category: “every attempt at definition of Political Refugeeism by the representatives of the British Government, or, even more so, by the Russian Consulate, will of necessity be absolutely arbitrary” (Resolution of the CoD, 3 August 1916 [BL/8093.h.11(3)]).

⁴¹ *Suppressed Telegram*, op. cit.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ The political consequences of this were realized by the Jewish refugees from Nazism who were all too often denied refugee status, and by post-war refugees including victims of ethnic cleansing.

menace to the individuals immediately oppressed but to the great mass of our race...⁴⁴

This stress on *race* sets the refugee discourse of the FJPC apart from conventional liberal rights language. But, crucially, they do not use “race” in a biological sense, but in terms of language, community and traditions: the Jewish refugees speak their own language and maintain their own traditions. Further, the FJPC add,

[Our] object was to befriend those refugees who, often ignorant of the language and customs of the Country to which they have fled from injustice and persecution, were bewildered and helpless before this new threat [of conscription or deportation].⁴⁵

On the Committee [the FJPC] they [refugees] found people who spoke their own language, who sympathised with their position. Thus the whole foreign element in the East End became as it were organised, not in any sense an aggressive force, but rather for mutual aid and co-operation in their distress and bewilderment.⁴⁶

In these texts, Jewish difference is described in terms of the location of the ghetto (as ethnic “colony” and as a space of mutual aid and co-operation), and in terms of traditions, customs and above all Yiddish language. This points towards a discourse of ghetto radicalism beyond a concern for asylum rights. That is, side by side with the *universalist* language of rights that grounds the right of asylum, we can see an attentiveness to Jewishness as difference, to the *particularities* of Jewish experience, to the “cultural stuff” of Jewish belonging carried in traditions, customs and Yiddish language.

Another closely related feature of the FJPC’s discourse is anti-racism:

To-day there is threatened an abrogation of the Right of Asylum. Their fears are intensified by petty persecutions which seem to them to prelude to an outbreak of Anti-Semitism.⁴⁷

Liberal policy-makers and West End Jews (e.g. Herbert Samuel, the Home Secretary for much of this period) linked a “firm” immigration policy to an official liberal discourse of anti-racism and good race relations;⁴⁸ the FJPC, in contrast, linked racist immigration policies to “petty” racism on the ground.

⁴⁴ *Suppressed Telegram*, op. cit.

⁴⁵ *The Case of the Arrested Russian Jews*, op. cit.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*:6.

⁴⁷ *Suppressed Telegram*, op. cit.

⁴⁸ This has strong parallels to more recent debates: Herbert Samuel’s line has been echoed by many post-war British politicians, such as Roy Hattersley, and has emerged again in the wake of the disturbances in Northern England in the summer of 2001, both from politicians like David Blunkett, but also their academic allies, such as Giddens.

That is, they linked the struggle against racist violence to the struggle against racist law.

In the FJPC's politics of the refugee, then, the refugee is not an abstract figure of abjection, but concrete and particular, carrying specific cultural traditions and tied to particular geographies of belonging. In this sense, the FJPC, in orienting to this figure, transcend the limits of a liberal commitment to the right of asylum. Their literature in Yiddish develops this side of their politics further. This is from a leaflet addressed "To all Jewish organisations in general and all Jews in particular":

Fresh rumours are going about in the Jewish quarters to the effect that all Russian Jews in this country will have to chose between the trenches and Siberia. These plans are not new and we have heard them before. 'Work of national importance' is now their cry, but we thought that these bargain-hunters had taken their ideas to Jacob's Sepulchre without even a tear by the Jewish masses who knew what value to attach to their words. Now they have again been brought to light and once again the bargaining spirit of the Jews has come to the front, and the Jews are booked to pay half the price.

Our fundamental principle is – We are not citizens of this country, and neither Russia nor Roumania is our home. No one has the right to demand payment of a debt we do not owe... We say quite simply that we regard any form of compulsion put upon us as an injustice and such tyranny we will fight against as only Jews can.

... Let them recognise our freedom and treat us with the goodwill of guests who have come to this country in order to escape persecution, and then only will there be a possibility to consider the duties we owe to country.... After the Jews had once shut up the Bargainers and Advisers, these heroes have again found a suitable moment to raise their voices. The means are old acquaintances – first to frighten, then to administer the physic. We trust the Jewish masses will not allow themselves to be confused and will maintain the attitude they have exhibited before...

We hereby decide not to withdraw from our standpoint of Cosmopolitanism...

Let ----- be afraid for their own skins, but let them leave the Jewish masses alone with their unasked-for advice. The Jewish masses still occupy a sufficiently high position to keep them from condescending to barter in sacred things. We will stand up for our freedom, for our Jewish honour, and the principles of justice.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ HO 45/10820/318095/229. This leaflet was translated and forwarded by the Special Branch to the Home Office as "freely distributed in the Whitechapel district" in mid-March 1917. The Yiddish original is not unfortunately in the file, so it is impossible to comment on the accuracy of the translation. This is frustrating and raises plenty of questions. For instance, was the Yiddish word is translated as "cosmopolitanism"

Although some of the themes of the English-language FJPC literature are here (especially in the passage about “the goodwill of guests who have come to this country in order to escape persecution”), there are slightly different things going on.

For example, there are the Biblical references (Jacob’s Sepulchre) which reflect ghetto radicalism’s ambivalent attitude towards religion and towards Jewish tradition. While many FJPC activists may have been anti-religious,⁵⁰ they draw on religious images and idioms to express their radical politics. Earlier, in an English text, we saw a more striking example of the FJPC’s use of Biblical language:

if it is no longer possible for [us to be regarded] as refugees and exiles, then to let us go forth to some other land where... we may be sorrowfully at peace.⁵¹

Here, a Biblical language of exile and diaspora is not just an idiom in which the FJPC expressed radical politics; it is a resource which they drew on. To me, the tone of this passage brings to mind

He said unto Abram: Go forth from your land, from your birthplace and from your father's home (Genesis 12:1).⁵²

This verse is shortly followed by a verse which is usually read as part of the Passover liturgy, which is also echoed in this FJPC text:

He said unto Abram: Know for certain that your offspring shall be strangers in a strange land, and shall be enslaved and afflicted for four hundred years (Genesis 15:13-14).

In using this language, the FJPC is evoking the iterative community of the Passover seder, as Zangwill did in response to Kishinev when he said “as Jews we remember the teaching of Moses ‘Thou shalt not oppress a stranger; for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of

actually “kosmopolitish” or was it a different word? Was the word indicated by “-----” a word they didn’t know the meaning of, an obscenity, or rendered like that in the original?

⁵⁰ And not all were, as the example of Salkind – a Rabbi – demonstrates.

⁵¹ FJPC petition August 1916, in HO 45/10818/318095/14. This use of Biblical language sharply contrasts to that in Zionist and Jewish Legion propaganda of the period. In the latter, Biblical military heroes (Judas Maccabeus, the Judeans) are used to validate the British patriotic project. Here, though, the language of exile is used to undercut this very project. This contrast is between a centrifugal diasporic geography characteristic of East End radicals and the centripetal or Zion-centric geography of Jewish nationalists like Jabotinsky.

⁵² In Hebrew, this verse is called the *lekh-lekha* (go forth), which are also the opening words of Bialik’s poem about the Kishinev pogrom, “The City of Slaughter”, the text of which circulated widely in the Jewish world after 1903. The opening line is usually

Egypt.”⁵³ In both instances, the Biblical texts, repeated annually as part of the Passover seder, provide a resource for a politics of the refugee that has no connection to a liberal grammar of rights – or possibly we can think of Zangwill’s and the FJPC’s politics as opening a *space of translation* between liberal political theory and the specific cultural traditions of the Yiddish folk, a space of translation in which both are reconfigured so both can be a resource for an irrevocably plural polity.

Alongside this Biblical language, there is a very Yiddish use of irony and sarcasm (“these heroes” etc) and a rich colloquial rather than ideological language (“Jews are booked to pay half the price”, etc), indicating a grounding in Yiddish vernacular culture. And there is also a somewhat essentializing view of Jewish identity: “We will fight as only Jews can”, “our Jewish honour...” However, the essentialism is resisted by differentiating between the East End Jews (“the Jewish masses”) and the West End Jews (“the Bargainers and Advisors”) who are perceived as having sold out this Jewishness. In fact, at one point, these West End Jews are explicitly contrasted to “the Jews” (“the Jews had once shut up these Bargainers and Advisors”) implying that Jewishness is only found in the Jewish masses, the East End Jews. So whereas the assimilated Jews internalized anti-semitic stereotypes and then projected them onto the Eastern Jews, here that shame is replaced by pride, and those anti-semitic stereotypes are thrown back at the West Enders (“once again the bargaining spirit of the Jews has come to the front”). In other words, an essentialist pride in Jewishness sits together in tension with an implicit refusal of the notion of *a* or *the* “Jewish community” – a tension between Jewishness as essential unity and Jewishness as multiplicity. This tension between an essentializing and an anti-essentializing version of Jewishness is the same tension as the tension already noted in the Yiddish word “folk”.

Finally, the West End/East End opposition in the FJPC text (like that found in the Workers’ Fund texts) hints at a particular sense of place or of the local: a rooting ghetto-centric geography of London. But at the same time, the references to “home” and “citizenship” (“We are not citizens of this country, and neither Russia nor Roumania is our home”) suggest a different, trans-

translated “Arise and go now to the city of slaughter” (see full text in Roskies 1988:162).

⁵³ See chapter five above.

national geography of belonging. In this geography, national categories (English citizenship, Russian or Roumanian nationality) are refused – just as the passage, “if it is no longer possible for [us to be regarded] as refugees and exiles, then to let us go forth to some other land where... we may be sorrowfully at peace”,⁵⁴ points towards a routed, diasporic or exilic positionality. In this sense, the FJPC articulated a diasporist sense of place similar to that found in the Workers’ Fund texts: a refusal of national categories of belonging through a simultaneous ghetto-centric localism and ec-centric or centrifugal trans-nationalism.

In all this, and especially in the tensions in the Jewish word “*folk*” and in the tension between an essentializing and an anti-essentializing version of Jewishness, I think we can see a groping for a language to talk about ethnicity. We have seen how the Edwardian period and especially the WWI moment thought belonging in terms of racial nationalism, in terms of a racialized form of citizenship and in terms of singular identities (enemy alien *or* friendly race, the Jewish nation *or* the British nation). The FJPC and Workers’ Fund, in contrast, seem to strain against this, suggesting more complex, hybrid forms of identification and belonging.

We can see an example of this in the afterlife of the FJPC and Workers’ Fund, in the formation of a Jewish National Labour Council on 9 June 1918, involving ex-FJPC and Fund activists. Among the resolutions it passed was one calling for rights for Jews in Rumania:

the only solution of the Jewish problem in Roumania, should be FULL, UNCONDITIONAL, and GENERAL EQUAL RIGHTS WITH PERSONAL NATIONAL AUTONOMY.⁵⁵

Just as the FJPC’s conception of asylum argued that whole ethnic groups could be entitled to asylum rights (not just individuals as in liberal discourse), this resolution calls for political rights on a group basis. The doctrine of personal national autonomy, developed in the multiethnic empires of Central and Eastern Europe,⁵⁶ circulated in the East End in this period. The Poale

⁵⁴ FJPC petition August 1916, in HO 45/10818/318095/14.

⁵⁵ HO 45/10822/318095/619

⁵⁶ This doctrine originated within the jurisprudence of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the concept of a multi-national state (“Nationalitätenstaat”) developed by Adolf Fischhof. It was adopted by the Austro-Marxists like Karl Renner, and enshrined within the 1899 Brunn Programme of the Austro-Hungarian Social Democrats, and by Austrian Jewish nationalists, most importantly Nathan Birnbaum (cf Wistrich 1982:175-187, 299-348; Levene 1992:109-12, 166-8, 175-89, 204-6). In turn, the idea was

Zion, for example, one of the groups active in the Workers' Fund, supported this idea, as we can see from this August 1917 statement of the Poale Zion international, written by their theoretician Ber Borokhov:

In territories of mixed nationalities [the national] question will arise again in another form and will become even more acute, unless provision is made for the *protection of minority nationalities*... For the minority nationality, the principle of personal autonomy, i.e. of extraterritoriality, is essential...

In accord with the entire Jewish proletariat, we demand a *personal autonomy* for our people in all countries where they are settled in masses, and particularly in states of mixed nationalities...

Applying the above principles to the Jewish people, we demand:

1. Full civil equality for the Jews of all countries. Equal treatment of the Jewish population in the restoration of the districts affected by the war.
2. Free immigration and settlement of Jews in all countries.
3. National self-administration on the basis of personal autonomy and national equality within the state, province, and community, in countries where the Jews are settled in masses.⁵⁷

Similar positions were adopted by another war-time group, the National Union for Jewish Rights.⁵⁸

These sorts of positions stress extra-territorial and trans-national forms of citizenship, and as such offer resources for thinking citizenship in the increasingly plural world of the twenty-first century, taking account of cultural differences and multiple identities in a way which disturbs the nation-state logic which we inherit from their age.

In this chapter, we have seen in the FJPC's discourse an appeal to a liberal cosmopolitanism articulated in terms of the right of asylum, but also a pushing at the limits of this liberal cosmopolitanism through a humanist appeal to the figure of the refugee. However, that refugee is not an abstract figure of abjection, but carries particular cultural traditions (in this case, for example, Yiddish language and Biblical textual practices) and particular geographies of

picked up by various Jewish groups in Russia who espoused forms of diaspora or ex-territorial nationalism: the Bund, Dubnov's Folkspartey and Zhitlovsky's SERP.

⁵⁷ Ber Borokhov "Declaration to the Hollando-Scandanavian Socialist Committee Submitted by the Jewish Socialist Labour Confederation Poale Zion", Stockholm, August 6, 1917.

belonging. These cultural traditions provided a resource for thinking forms of political belonging, while these geographies – like the Workers' Fund's diasporism or the CoD's internationalism – subvert the nation-state framework which gives liberal asylum rights their meaning. Although at other times, the ghetto radicals re-affirmed the nation-state – the CoD in orienting to the national proletariat, the FJPC in appealing to a cosmopolitan patriotism and the Workers' Fund and FJPC in articulating a (Zionist) sense of the Jewish nation – the ways in which they groped for a language to think belonging beyond the nation-state (informed by their multiple positionality and multiple identifications) potentially provides a resource for us today, a possibility which I will discuss further in the conclusion.

⁵⁸ Levene (1992).

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have sought to unsettle some of the conventional languages of political belonging by historicizing them. I have narrated one crucial moment in the genealogy of citizenship through the story of its others and its excluded, and juxtaposed that to an account of forms of political belonging outside the space of citizenship. Diasporic political collectivities, such as the migrant Jews who rooted themselves in London's East End, disturb the logic of the nation-state: their routes and rootings thread complex geographies of belonging through the space of the nation; their multiple identifications and loyalties cannot be fitted into the singular either/or identities of modern nation-state citizenship.

In chapters three, four, six and seven, I described the emergence of a racialized, biopolitical form of citizenship, which was normalized in the state of emergency that was World War I. In chapters two, five and eight, where I discussed Jubilee Street, Kishinev and the war-time movement against conscription and deportation, I have given a glimpse of a space sharply at odds with this new form of citizenship. While modern citizenship divided the world into racial nations, into friend and enemy, citizen and alien, the East London radicals habitually moved across these lines. Relief for the Jewish victims of Kishinev and then of the war, seen as kith and kin, friends and neighbours – and not as allies or co-religionists – was one expression of this. At the same time as they lived these trans-national networks, they rooted themselves in local space – and hence their material solidarity with the non-Jewish proletariat of the East End, as evidenced by their strong support for the dockers during their strikes in 1889 and 1912 or by their close connections to the working class women around Sylvia Pankhurst.

I want to end this thesis by reaffirming the three central points of this thesis, and tentatively suggesting ways in which they might help us think about the political world we live in today. These three central points are: that the racialized citizenship of the Edwardian period to which the East End Jews were asked to assimilate could not speak to their multiple identifications, both local and trans-national; that the East End Jews, and particularly the East London radical movements, created alternative spaces of political participation, based on neither the compulsory belonging of the nation-state nor on the logic of the communal and its representational politics; and, finally, that the racialization of citizenship unfolded alongside the racialization of the

alien, which was experienced as a catastrophe by the East End Jews, culminating in the state of emergency that was WWI in the internment camps.

Citizenship and Assimilation

The central theme of this thesis has been citizenship and the way it has articulated with or against different forms, practices and spaces of belonging. In chapter four, for example, we looked at some of the spaces of citizenship created by the Anglo-Jewish leadership. The Jews' Free School (JFS) and Toynbee Hall and the other settlement houses were seen as exemplary spaces where the children of immigrants could *become English*. They affirmed for Anglo-Jewry that citizenship, Englishness, belonging in Britain, could be *taught*, could be *learnt*. By learning proper English language, by learning proper English values, the students of the JFS and Toynbee would emerge fit for citizenship. In the same chapter, we saw the efforts of the Anglo-Jewish leaders to "disperse" the immigrant Jews so as to ease their belonging in English society. When clustered in colonies, it was thought that the immigrants were less likely to adopt the language and values of Englishmen; the dispersion of immigrant Jews was seen as remedy for the "congestion" of the alien "colonies".

These spaces and places have an extraordinary resonance today. "Dispersal" has returned today as a policy for dealing with asylum seekers. While there is an economic rationale for asylum seeker dispersal, it is also justified on the basis of an assimilationist agenda: dispersal is a remedy for "swamping" in the inner cities and as a route to migrant "integration", as is signalled in the subtitle of the 2002 White Paper which affirmed the dispersal policy: *Secure Borders, Safe Haven: Integration with Diversity in Modern Britain*.

At the same time, the stress on learning Englishness, and particularly on language as a key to reaching full citizenship, has returned in what Ali Rattansi calls New Labour's "new assimilationism".¹ As noted in the Introduction, there has been a proliferation of debates around citizenship, starting under the Conservatives with Hurd's espousal of "active citizenship" and John Major's "Citizen's Charter", intensifying since 1997 under New Labour. This has been amplified since the violence in Northern England in the summer of 2001 and the attack on the World Trade Centre on 11 September of that year. The Home Office's Denham report into the riots spoke of the need to identify "shared values and common citizenship" to help bind Britain as a community,

while the Home Office-commissioned Cattle report called for the establishment and championing of a meaningful concept of citizenship that “establishes a clear, primary loyalty to this nation.” Such a loyalty, it stated, is “the responsibility of citizenship and a clearer statement of allegiance, perhaps along the lines of the Canadian model, should be considered.” Finally, Home Secretary David Blunkett said that Britain’s urban areas “lack any sense of civic identity or shared values” and urged “wide public debate” on “the meaning of citizenship”.² Connected to this agenda is a powerful articulation of the notion of “active citizenship”, a concept strongly associated with Toynbee Hall and the settlement houses more generally. Blunkett’s essay “What does citizenship mean today?” spoke of “a politics of mutualism and civil renewal that places a premium on active self-government within communities... the good society is one in which people are active as citizens in shaping what happens in their communities.”³

This citizenship agenda emerged out of the politics associated with Charter 88 in the late 1980s: a sense of constitutional crisis and a desire to re-animate the concept of citizenship as an alternative to the status of *subject* by which passivity was inscribed in British political belonging.⁴ Further, it is often articulated as a response to the pluralization of British society; as Blunkett has also said, “An active concept of citizenship can articulate shared ground between diverse communities.”⁵ In this sense, the citizenship agenda in public policy is connected to a more academic literature that calls for “cosmopolitan citizenship” or “constitutional patriotism”, associated with thinkers such as Habermas or Giddens. These writers point to a renewal of the nation-state through forms of active citizenship which would bind together citizens across differences.⁶ These forms of cosmopolitanism offer an important development beyond the militarized vision of the nation-state which was normalized during World War I. However, the experience of the East End Jewish radicals suggests a limit to these sorts of theories, in at least two ways.

First, in chapter nine, I examined the politics of the Foreign Jews Protection Committee (the FJPC). As I argued there, the FJPC often couched their propaganda

¹ Quoted Back et al (2002)

² See *The Guardian* 11.12.2001

³ David Blunkett “What does citizenship mean today?” *Observer* 15.09.2002. See also his book *Progress and Politics* (2001).

⁴ See, for example, Geoff Andrews et al (1991).

⁵ David Blunkett “What does citizenship mean today?” *Observer* 15.09.2002.

as an appeal to a sort of cosmopolitan patriotism. They spoke of “the traditional generosity of the British Nation”, the British as “a free and generous people”, “the chivalry of the English”. They appealed to a hostly ethic of generosity and hospitality – and a corresponding proper appreciativeness on the asylum-seeker’s part. I argued that when they focused on the right of asylum, couched within a liberal theory of rights, the FJPC were affirming the nation-state system which gives these rights validity. The stress on hospitality points to the limits of the right of asylum, to its *conditionality*. As I noted in chapter nine, we can think about this in terms of Kant’s careful distinction between the (legitimate but conditional) right of asylum or resort and the (unconditional but illegitimate) right of residence (Kant 1972:137-8) – a distinction which underpins the asylum laws of the liberal nation-state. Ultimately, within the framework of the nation-state, the right of asylum is dependent on the “chivalry” of a “generous” host.

Proponents today of the sort of “cosmopolitan patriotism” or “civic nationalism” to which the FJPC were making their appeal often draw explicitly on this Kantian version of cosmopolitanism;⁷ but only some draw attention to the limit of his position, that “Cosmopolitan Right shall be limited to Conditions of Universal Hospitality” (ibid). However, we can see this conditionality being made explicit in Anthony Giddens’ statement that Britain should be “tough on immigration, but tough on the causes of hostility to immigrants.”⁸ Liberal theories of cosmopolitanism, then, are locked into the logic of the nation-state, leaving asylum conditional on the nation-state’s hospitality. Always seeing from the perspective of the “host”, of the nation-state’s *inside*, liberal theories of cosmopolitanism leave the alien, the refugee, in the position of the citizen’s constitutive outside.

At the centre of this thesis was the argument that modern citizenship was racialized in a particular way in Britain, in a form that was normalized under the state of emergency that was WWI. These liberal theories of a new citizenship fail to come to a reckoning with the intimacy between the modern form of citizenship and the racialized nation – in Max Silverman’s words, with the fact that: “Nationality and citizenship have become systematically institutionalised in the formation of the

⁶ See, e.g., Archibugi and Held (1995), Archibugi et al (1998), Giddens (1985, 1993, 1998a, 1998b), Held (1995, 1999), Held et al (1999), Held and McGrew (1999), Kohler et al (1999), Habermas (1998).

⁷ e.g. Held (2001), Habermas (1998).

⁸ *Guardian* 3.05.2002

nation-state, whilst juridical definitions of both have become tightly articulated with the concept of cultural conformity" (1992:127).

If the politics of the FJPC point to one of the limits of liberal theories of cosmopolitan citizenship, its failure to reckon with the nation, then the experience of East Enders' experience of assimilation point to another, the need to attend to the particularities, the complex practices of belonging, the multiple identifications, of different political subjects. We can see this in Blunkett's call for Asian Britons to speak English:

I have never said, or implied, that lack of fluency in English was in any way directly responsible for the disturbances in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham in the summer of 2001. However, speaking English enables parents to... participate in wider modern culture. It helps overcome the schizophrenia which bedevils generational relationship.⁹

The key term here is *schizophrenia*. For the new assimilationism, two languages, suggesting multiple identifications and loyalties, is seen as schizophrenic. In chapter two, in examining the *Arbayter Fraynd* group, we saw the routine culture of translation that diasporic people live, not as schizophrenia, but as a creative, productive form of belonging: in Gilroy's words "both unremarkably routine and charged with an essential ethical significance" (2000:77). The new assimilationism, like the assimilatory forms of citizenship the immigrant Jews faced, allows only for singular identities, the logic of either/or rather than both/and. Both/and identification is seen as schizophrenia.

What the *Arbayter Fraynders* and the other ghetto radicals offer us, against the singular identities of assimilationism, is, on the one hand, a rooting in the local and its particularities and, on the other hand, trans-national forms of solidarity that cut against the grain of the nation-state, both of which have a tense relation to the conventional space of citizenship.

⁹ *Observer* 15.09.2002. Following the logic of the communal, a number of Asian "community leaders", such as Keith Vaz and Shahid Malik, immediately spoke out against Blunkett's call, saying that he had no right to dictate what language they spoke in the home, in private (see "Anger at New Advice to Asians" and "Vaz Attacks Blunkett in Language Row", both in *The Guardian* 16.09.2002). This response reaffirms the strong public/private distinction – the idea of a Jew in the home and a citizen in the street – which underwrote the "Anglo-Jewish liberal compromise" and continues to underwrite liberal forms of multiculturalism which relegate difference to the private sphere and thus construct the public sphere as the space of conformity (see Harris 2001).

The Communal and a Dissident Public Sphere

Through this thesis, I have argued that the Anglo-Jewish leadership in the period of immigration adhered to what I have called *the logic of the communal*. This was based on Anglo-Jewish communal institutions playing the role of *representing* all Jews to the British state. I argued that this logic rested on an erasure of *differences within* Jewishness: differences of class, generation, gender, language and so on. As these differences often reflect inequalities, the logic of the communal can hide the workings of power within a population.

In this thesis, we saw the way that the East End immigrants, especially their radical movements, often challenged the communal authority of the Anglo-Jewish institutions. In chapter four, for example, we saw how the *khevres* of the East End and the schismatic *Machzikei Hadas* challenged the authority of the Chief Rabbi and official synagogue; in chapter five and eight, we saw how East End recognition of both samenesses across and differences within Jewishness in their responses to Kishinev and war suffering led to autonomous activity outside the tutelage of the Anglo-Jewish leadership. As I argued in chapter eight and nine, this stemmed partly from a political understanding of class conflict within the Jewish community, but also from traditions with deep roots in the Pale.

In chapter nine, we saw how the Workers' Fund contrasted the communal logic of unanimity to a democratic logic of difference and dialogue. Demonstration of loyalty to Britain meant an absolute repression of any dissent, of any hint of disloyalty, for Anglo-Jewry – as epitomized by Montefiore's comment that war is no time for "small questions of sect... the so-called Jewish questions... At the present time, the thoughts of all patriotic Englishmen should turn only to national questions" (*Jewish Chronicle*, 24 December 1915), and the Anglo-Jewish Association's insistence that "All painful subjects of difference and dissention must for the time being be overlooked" (quoted in Levene 1992:39). In the East End, in contrast, "subjects of difference and dissention" were openly debated. The Workers' Fund, as we saw, insisted on democracy, even in a time of war, celebrating their plurality of "differing political opinions... emphasising the sterling democratic worth of the work achieved" (*Bulletin* E2). For the Fund's activists, then, the democratic implied a space in which differences come together in dissent and dialogue.

This coming together of differences was exemplified in what I have called through this thesis the alternative or dissident public sphere of the ghetto: the web of micro-public spaces such as the Jubilee Street Club where activists from different political perspectives came together in debate; the informal public spaces of the street corner or the Whitechapel Haymarket; the iterative community of the minyan or the Passover seder. The Jubilee Street Club, for example, as we saw in chapter two, was a space in which different political perspectives – anarchists, Marxists, Lithuanian nationalists, labour Zionists – came together in debate, and where different ethnicities – Jews, but also non-Jewish Eastern Europeans, white working class East Enders, and others – came together in dialogue.

I want to suggest that these arguments are important today. The logic of the communal has become increasingly normalized through its articulation with particular forms of multicultural policy, as Pragna Patel of Southall Black Sisters argues:

Gender, class, and caste differences are obscured... homogenising constructions of minority communities are born out of the state's endorsements of community leaders. These leaders are un-elected, usually religious and often conservative males, with little if any interest in social justice and equality. Yet they claim to be the 'authentic' spokespersons for the community and are the main power-brokers, regularly consulted (often informally) by the police and other state institutions. [The] contract between state and community leaders amounts to the former granting the latter a degree of communal autonomy (usually over the family and women) in return for acquiescence and preservation of the status quo (1999:121).¹⁰

Southall Black Sisters have identified a number of examples of this, such as the role of community leaders in the Home Office's Forced Marriage Working Party,¹¹ and we can add the way that people described in the media as "Asian community leaders" or "Muslim leaders" came forward, in the wake of the violence in Oldham, Bradford and Burnley in the summer of 2001 and the attack on the World Trade Centre that September, to affirm the loyalty to Britain of the communities they "represent".¹² These sorts of statements so clearly echo the statements of Anglo-Jewish communal leaders such as Sir Francis Montefiore and Lord Rothschild, quoted in chapter eight, who came forward during the First World War to confirm the loyalty of the English Jewish population. Indeed, organizations such as the Islamic Parliament and more

¹⁰ Homi Bhabha makes similar points (1997:5-7).

¹¹ See Siddiqui (2000), Patel (2000).

¹² See reports like "Survey Confirms The Loyalty Of British Asians" *Eastern Eye* 22.11.2001 or "Help us to fit in: Asian leaders back Blunkett" *This is Bradford and District* 10.12.2001. See also Back et al (2002).

recently the Muslim Council of Britain were set up on the model of Anglo-Jewish communal bodies like the Board of Deputies.

The spaces of the dissident public sphere of the radical East End offer an alternative form of civic activity, an alternative form of political rationality, not based on the representational politics of an Islamic Parliament or a Board of Deputies, but on participation and a coming together of individuals in dialogue. I would suggest that today, when our plural population is conceptualized as a “community of communities” and when the war on terrorism requires “community leaders” to deliver the loyalty of their ethnic constituencies to the nation-state, this web of alternative public spaces offers an alternative way of thinking political belonging. While this has implications for Islamic and other populations, it also has implications for Jewish politics. It suggests the possibility of a Jewish community not based on unanimity, but on the coming together of differences: religious and secular, Orthodox and Reform, Sephardic and Ashkenazi, Zionist and anti-Zionist, engaging in dialogue in safe and open spaces. Perhaps it also suggests a different sort of active citizenship: not necessarily based on shared values but maybe simply on the willingness to come together in dialogue, to translate across lines of difference and dissent, and to create spaces in which this can be done.

Aliens and Refugees

The third key point argued through this thesis is that early twentieth century Britain saw a racialization of the figure of the alien, a process which culminated in the internment camps of the First World War. This process was the corollary of the racialization of British citizenship, in that the alien increasingly came to define the citizen. Historians of anti-semitism and immigration policy are divided on whether or not the “anti-alien” racism of the late Victorian and Edwardian period was “actually” anti-semitic, i.e. whether the term “alien” was “really” a euphemism for Jew.¹³ What I have emphasized here is not the issue of anti-semitism as such, but rather (and this

¹³ For Robin Cohen, straightforwardly, “The term ‘alien’ was the turn-of-the-century newspeak for ‘Jew’” (1994:43). As noted earlier, the body of work associated with Tony Kushner, Colin Holmes and David Cesarani has been extremely important in excavating the persistence anti-semitic prejudices in liberal England, but has often over-emphasized anti-semitism as an *explanation* for anti-alienism or has seen anti-alienism as a *euphemism* for anti-semitism. See, for example, Cesarani (1990, 1993, 1994), Holmes (1979), Tony Kushner (1989, 1990, 1999). William Rubinstein has criticized their work, arguing that there has in fact been a “unique synthesis of Britain and Jewry” (1996:172), a strong philo-semitic tradition in Britain, and far less anti-semitism than either anti-Catholicism or anti-Quakerism. A more nuanced

was my central argument throughout the thesis, but especially in chapters three and six) that the period saw a re-configuration of national identity and national political belonging, so that the figure of the citizen was increasingly defined against its alien other. This reconfiguration took place in a cultural landscape that included raciology, eugenics and degeneration theory, a colonial enterprise which helped map the empire onto the space of the city, orientalist discourses and new forms of criminology. The result was that *the figure of the alien as such* was racialized in that period.

Here, I want to argue further that that moment is worth a closer examination today, because the Edwardian racialization of the alien is echoed today in the racialization of the figure of the refugee. Many of today's migrants come from the same parts of Eastern Europe, of the old Russian, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires, from whence Victorian and Edwardian London's Jews came: lands at the edges of Europe.¹⁴ Similarly, many of today's migrants occupy the same blurred space between the "refugee" and the "economic migrant" as did Jews arriving then: like migrants from Russia in 1903, many asylum seekers today are not escaping personal repression as individual political dissenters, but rather a situation of generalized fear, warfare and violence that makes migration a desirable option.¹⁵

As we saw in chapter six, the Jewish East End and the figure of the alien were racialized through discourses of certain forms of criminality (particularly prostitution and "white slavery"); similar criminalizing tropes (especially around human trafficking and prostitution) are employed today around the figure of the refugee. For example,

revision of the Kushner/Holmes/Cesarani outlook is offered by David Feldman (1994), who locates anti-alienism in relation to ideas of Englishness rather than to anti-semitism as such.

¹⁴ The top 40 languages across London include Polish at 24, Albanian at 29, Serbian/Croatian at 34 (Baker and Eversley 2000). In East London, in the 2000/2001 financial year, Tower Hamlets local authority's Language Line dealt with more requests for Eastern European languages (8784 for Albanian, Polish, Russian and Romanian) than Bengali/Sylheti (6549) or any other languages. A recent call for interpreters for Barking and Dagenham's Translation and Interpreting Service also included Albanian, Lithuanian, Polish, Romanian, Russian and Serbian as growing community languages there (*COF News* April 2002, p.2). Tower Hamlets had 525 refugees in Spring 1999, including 103 families, of whom the largest elements are Somali and Algerian, but also Kosovan, Lithuanian and Ukrainian (*Report of the Joint Review of Social Services in Tower Hamlets Borough Council* March 2000, p.5).

¹⁵ See the UNHCR's *The State of the World's Refugees* reports (1993:35-6, 83-6; 1997-8:16). This point is not to deny their right to claim asylum, but to suggest the limits of the classical liberal definition of refugee status. Of so-called economic migrants, "those who come to foreign continents seeking their well-being, that is, an existence worthy of human beings, rather than protection from political persecution", Habermas writes: "Anyone who dissolves the connection between the question of political asylum and the question of immigration to escape poverty is implicitly declaring that he or she wants to evade Europe's moral responsibility to refugees from the impoverished regions of the world" (1998:230-2).

former Home Secretary Jack Straw claimed that trafficking is carried out on such a huge scale that it threatens national sovereignty,¹⁶ while a *Daily Express* headline claimed “Our town's too nice for refugees... they will try to escape, rapists and thieves will terrorise us.”¹⁷ Similarly, we can see a striking re-deployment of many of the same Orientalist images that we encountered in chapters one and six. From the late 1990s, the media has increasingly portrayed refugees through images of “women in headscarves and men with Islamic beards”,¹⁸ “wiry, raven women, small children tucked efficiently under their arms or clinging to their long skirts”,¹⁹ “swarthy, olive-skinned young men with gold teeth in designer clothes, women in shawls and headscarves with babies in arms”²⁰ and “baby-toting Romanian beggars” in “colourful ethnic dress”: “a floral headscarf, a sob story and an unwashed baby”.²¹ These images closely resemble images from the Edwardian anti-alien discourse we encountered here, such as the passage about “really Eastern” alien Jew from the *Standard* quoted in chapter six.²²

Just as the figure of the Kosovan trafficker in prostitutes echoes the Edwardian figure of the alien white slaver, so today's figure of the terrorist echoes the Edwardian figure of the seditious alien, discussed here in chapter six. Then, as now, sedition (terrorism) is linked to asylum, so that the former is seen as an abuse of the latter, of hospitality. For example, Home Secretary David Blunkett has stated “I am determined to protect this country from anyone who is prepared to abuse our hospitality and welcome in order to plan or promote terrorism here or abroad.”²³ Or more recently: “There is no place in the UK for those who abuse our hospitality and sanctuary by committing crimes. I intend to send a tough message that anyone who is a danger to the British public will not be eligible for protection under the 1951 Refugee Convention... From now on that will not be the case. We have all had enough of those who come to seek refuge and protection abusing our hospitality.”²⁴

¹⁶ Fekete (2001:27)

¹⁷ 23.03.2002, quoted in the Refugee Council's *Nailing press myths about refugees* (May 2002), pp.1-3.

¹⁸ Gerard Seenan and Kirsty Scott “A Dream Turned Sour” *The Guardian* 9.08.2001

¹⁹ Allison Pearson *Evening Standard* 15.03.2000, quoted *Roma Rights* No.1, p.1, April 2000

²⁰ *Sun* columnist Richard Littlejohn's 2001 novel, *To Hell In A Handcart*, quoted Stephen Moss “Poisoned pen” *The Guardian* 14.06. 2001

²¹ *Mirror* columnist Tony Parsons, quoted Ryan Dilley “Street of shame” BBC News 13.03.2000 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/676053.stm>

²² More recently, in the wake of the terrorist attacks on New York in September 2001, these sorts of Orientalist images, applied to Islam in particular, have intensified, becoming intertwined with the figure of the terrorist.

²³ “Blunkett defends emergency powers” *ITV.com* 11.11.2001

²⁴ Home Office Press Release, 24.04.2002

This sort of discourse emphasizes the limits, the conditionality, of liberal asylum rights.

In today's figure of the refugee, we can discern a sort of conceptual fuzziness, an uncertainty about how to place these new off-white migrants. On a popular level, for example, this epistemological blur has led to the proliferation of new and revived racialized categories – “Kosovans”, “Romanians”, “Albanians”, “gypsies”, “pikeys”, any one of which can apparently be used to refer to terms which seem to blur into each other.²⁵ Above all, though, this epistemological blur has led to, or at least intensified, the racialization of *juridical* categories like “asylum-seeker”, “bogus asylum-seeker” and “refugee”. The conceptual fuzziness surrounding these new migrants echoes the conceptual fuzziness described in chapter seven, where we saw such categories “Galician Pole”, “Ruthenian?”, “German? Claims to be Russian”, “German - Claims to be Spanish”, and “Interned as a Turk but claims to be British”,²⁶ or “Austrian: vouched Polish Jew”, and “Ottoman Jew from Salonika... Turkish wife... [formerly] registered as Greek”.²⁷

As Ann Karpf puts it, “The asylum seeker has become an abstract, composite, almost mythical figure. Despite the allegedly vast numbers of them now in the country, most British people have never actually met one, making it all the easier to dehumanise them.”²⁸ What Karpf is identifying here is precisely a process of the racialization of the figure of the *refugee as such*.

I think we can argue further that this figure of the racist imagination, which so strikingly echoes the Edwardian figure of the alien, cannot be conceptualized with the tools with which both sociology and anti-racist activism has approached migration in the period after Jewish migration and before this contemporary refugee crisis. In much of the twentieth century, in north-western Europe and certainly Britain, migration was largely thought in terms of labour migration from the colonial or postcolonial South: the Windrush era. As Paul Gilroy and others have argued, this historical moment coincided with an “epidermalizing” raciology, whose Manichean delirium allotted migrants to the space of blackness (1995). As Silverman and Yuval-

²⁵ On a purely anecdotal level, I have heard these terms used apparently interchangeably to refer to women begging in Whitechapel and on trains, while a refugee worker in a Southeastern English town has told a colleague that refugees of several origins are commonly called “Slovaks” or “illegals” by officials who deal with them.

²⁶ HO 45/10818/317810/4

²⁷ HO 45/10832/326555/69

Davis note, "Racialised discourses in Britain developed around notions of 'race' and 'colour' and were closely connected with its historical experience as an empire" (1999:26).

Although in this thesis I have argued that the imperial context is crucial for understanding the racialization of Jewish migrants in Britain, the imperial framework for understanding race has often meant, as Silverman and Yuval-Davis also note, that Jews, like Irish, Roma, Chinese and others, have been invisible in the British sociology of race (ibid). Likewise, in this period the anti-racist movement used the floating signifier of blackness as a resource for resistance – so that the struggles of East End Bengalis, for instance, could be animated by the heterogeneous movements of resistance and transcendence which operated under the sign of blackness. Although the emancipatory potential of a politics articulated around blackness is not exhausted, I would argue that the post-Manichean racism faced by today's refugees – who often as not don't come from the "black" South, but from places previously thought of as within or at the edges of "white" Europe – cannot be so easily responded to with these resources.

The Institute of Race Relations, in one rare example of the anti-racist movement seeking to develop the conceptual resources for this new anti-refugee racism, has developed the idea of "xeno-racism". Sivanandan has described this as

a racism that is not just directed at those with darker skins, from the former colonial territories, but at the newer categories of the displaced, the dispossessed and the uprooted, who are beating at Western Europe's doors, the Europe that has helped displace them in the first place. It is a racism, that is, that cannot be colour-coded, directed as it is at poor whites as well, and is therefore passed off as xenophobia, a 'natural' fear of strangers. But in the way it denigrates and reifies people before segregating them and/or expelling them, it is a xenophobia that bears all the marks of the old racism. It is racism in substance, but 'xeno' in form. It is a racism that is meted out to impoverished strangers even if they are white. It is xeno-racism (quoted Fekete 2001:23-4).

Although the concept of xeno-racism might be too quickly assimilated to "the old racism", which might obscure what is novel about it, it constitutes an important step in the anti-racist movement starting to think the reconfiguration of race today, to which I believe researching earlier examples of the racialization of refugees can contribute.

²⁸ "We've Been Here Before" *The Guardian* 8.06.2002

The Camp

Another striking contemporary echo of the period this thesis discussed is the return of the camp as a technology for dealing with this racialized figure of the alien/refugee. Today's equivalents of Knockaloe (which was originally privately run) and Alexandra Palace include: Oakington, a former military barracks with capacity for 400 asylum seekers, run privately by Group 4; Aldington, a former prison in Kent; dedicated wings in Lindholme prison in Yorkshire and Haslar prison near Portsmouth; Harmondsworth, run privately by UK Detention Services and the place of death of asylum seekers such as Siho Iyugiven, a Kurd, in 1989, Kimpua Nsimba, from Zaire, in 1990 and Robertas Grabys, from Lithuania, in 2000; and Campsfield near Oxford, which holds 200; as well as Yarl's Wood, built to hold 900 but closed after a fire which partially destroyed it. This new landscape resembles the war-time archipelago of internment camps, in that it combines ad hoc adaptations of existing penal spaces with purpose-built "state of the art" facilities.

Like the WWI camps, these are not prisons, but *spaces outside the law*. Liz Fekete writes:

These so-called guests are not prisoners under domestic UK law, for then a court would have to detain them for a specific criminal offence. The unpalatable truth... is that detained asylum seekers are internees – and internment is a wartime measure usually invoked against 'enemy aliens'... Internees are separate from other prisoners in that, historically, they have usually been committed to detention by 'emergency powers' such as those that obtained during the first and second world wars (2001:38).

This is the paradox Giorgio Agamben notes when he discusses the camp as a space of exception (outside the law) nonetheless not exterior to but at the heart of the nation-state (1998:170).

As Agamben argues – following the insights of Rudolf Rocker, Emma Goldman, Walter Benjamin and Hannah Arendt – we can see in the camps the war-time state of emergency made permanent. I argued in this thesis that new biopolitical forms of citizenship emerging in the modern period were normalized as a result of the state of emergency that was the 1914-1918 war. If Agamben is correct that the camp is at the heart of modern politics – "not as a historical fact and an anomaly belonging to the past... but in some way as the hidden matrix and *nomos* of the political space in which we are living (1998:166) – then WWI played a crucial role in its genealogy.

That war also saw the emergence of a new politics of the refugee in response to the camp as the *nomos* of modern politics. While theorists of liberal cosmopolitanism take the figure of the citizen as their starting point, this tradition takes as its starting point the figure who is excluded from citizenship, the refugee or stateless person. For Arendt, drawing on her own experience as a refugee, to be a stateless person means that one is “unprotected by any specific law or political convention” (1968a:280). “Denationalization became a powerful weapon of totalitarian politics, and the constitutional inability of European nation-states to guarantee human rights, to those who had lost nationally guaranteed rights, made it possible for the persecuting governments to impose their standard of values even upon their opponents (ibid:269). The stateless live “outside the pale of law” (ibid:277).

Giorgio Agamben, in his articulation of a politics of the refugee, takes his inspiration from Arendt, who turned

the condition of countryless refugee – which she herself was living – upside down in order to present it as a paradigm of a new historical consciousness. The refugees who have lost all rights and who, however, no longer want to be assimilated at all costs in a new national identity... the refugee is perhaps the only thinkable figure for the people of our time and the only category in which one may see today... the forms and limits of a coming political community... If the refugee represents such a disquieting element in the order of the Nation-State, that is primarily because, by breaking the identity between the human being and the citizen and that between nativity and nationality, it brings the originary of sovereignty to crisis... Inasmuch as the refugee, an apparently marginal figure, unhinges the old trinity of State-nation-territory, it deserves to be recognized as the central figure of our political history... The refugee should be considered for what it is, namely nothing less than a limit-concept that at once brings a radical crisis to the principles of the Nation-State and clears the way for a renewal of categories that can no longer be delayed (ibid: 159-2).

Although Agamben does not specify what this coming politics of the refugee might be like, we can perhaps discern some of the characteristics of such a politics.

Firstly, a politics of the refugee might take as its starting point the *suffering*, the bare life, of the refugee, the experience of the camp, *rather than a political theory of rights or responsibilities*. Thus, for example, we saw in chapter nine how the FJPC moved beyond a Kantian political theory of rights (the right of asylum) connected to the nation-state, to a humanist orientation to the suffering of the refugee, an appeal to an ethical response to human suffering: images of the “cruelty of deportation with its inevitable consequences of ruin, misery, persecution, imprisonment and even

death”,²⁹ a call to “befriend those refugees who, often ignorant of the language and customs of the Country to which they have fled from injustice and persecution, were bewildered and helpless before this new threat [of conscription or deportation].”³⁰ In practical terms, we also saw the material solidarity the *Arbayter Fraynders* and the Workers’ Fund took into the camps themselves, or the work of Pankhurst and the WSF in organizing the wives of the interned.

Something of this taking the experience of the camp and of statelessness as a starting point for a politics can be seen today in certain political formations. Groups such as No Borders or Persona Es Illegal follow Sylvia Pankhurst, the *Arbayter Fraynd* group and the Workers’ Fund in taking their solidarity into the camp. In Berlin in 2001, for example, German citizens burned their passports in solidarity with immigrants whose freedom of movement within Germany was curtailed by the “Residenzpflicht” laws,³¹ and in Spain, under the slogan “papeles para todos”, activists voluntarily gave up their identity cards in solidarity with the “sin papeles”.³² Since 1998, a new form of action in solidarity with refugees has emerged: the No Borders camps at the edges of “Fortress Europe”, in places such as Wizajny (close to the Polish border with Russia and Lithuania), Bialystok/Krynki (near the Polish/Belorussian border) and Tarifa (at the Southern-most point in Spain). By adopting the form of the camp, these actions create a space of exception, outside the nation-state but within its territory, which mirrors but seeks to negate the space of exception that is Sangatte or Margate.

To think in terms of a politics of the refugee – to think in terms of No Borders, freedom of movement, *doykayt* understood as *the right to be here* – is to question the distinction between a legitimate right of visitation or asylum (*Besuchsrecht*) and an illegitimate right of residence (*gastrecht*), and thus the distinction between the asylum-seeker and the refugee or between the refugee and other migrants. That is, a politics of the refugee goes beyond the conditionality of the liberal theories of cosmopolitanism discussed above.

The refugee, then, points to a form of post-national political belonging, breaking the links between the nation-state and its territory, between nationality or nativity and citizenship, between the nation-state and citizenship.

²⁹ *Suppressed Telegram*, op. cit.

³⁰ *The Case of the Arrested Russian Jews*, op. cit.

³¹ *Schnews* 306, 25.05.2001

A Jewish tradition of a politics of the refugee?

When the FJPC articulated a politics of the refugee, they drew on resources provided by the Jewish tradition. In chapter nine, we saw examples of the FJPC's use of Biblical language: "if it is no longer possible for [us to be regarded] as refugees and exiles, then to let us go forth to some other land where... we may be sorrowfully at peace."³³ I suggested that this Biblical language of exile and diaspora was not just an idiom in which the FJPC expressed radical politics; it was a resource which they drew on. As we saw, the FJPC's language echoes the language of the Exodus, and of the Passover Haggadah, which narrates the Exodus story, which Israel Zangwill also cited in response to Kishinev when he said: "as Jews we remember the teaching of Moses 'Thou shalt not oppress a stranger; for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt'", as discussed in chapter five.

Likewise, in chapter two, we heard Fermin Rocker describing sitting with his parents (Rudolf Rocker and Milly Witkop) and uncle and aunt (Guy Aldred and Rose Witkop) at his grandparents' table reciting the Passover Haggadah. This image resonates with the image of the Passover seder that appears in Zangwill's story "Chad Gadya", in his *Dreamers of the Ghetto* (1898), the story of an assimilated Jew returning home on Passover and experiencing the disjunction between his new life as a citizen of the world and the call to Jewish belonging in the seder. There, the song "Chad Gadya" ("Just One Kid"), traditionally sung as part of the Passover seder, serves as motif for the practices of belonging that constitute Yiddish culture. At the same time, the story also draws on the image of the open door: the Passover seder is traditionally conducted with the door open, signifying an openness to strangers, any one of whom may turn out to be the Prophet Elijah. The image of the open door, as part of a Jewish tradition of unconditional hospitality to strangers, offered Zangwill a resource for thinking a Jewish ethics of the refugee.

I suggested in chapter nine that the Exodus text, repeated annually as part of the Passover seder, provided for Zangwill and the FJPC a resource for a politics of the refugee that is not based on a liberal grammar of rights, or that we can think of Zangwill's and the FJPC's politics as opening a *space of translation* between asylum rights theory and the specific cultural traditions of the Yiddish folk, a space of

³² Quim Gil, personal communication, 2001

³³ FJPC petition August 1916, in HO 45/10818/318095/14

indeterminate translation in which both are reconfigured so both can be a resource for an irrevocably plural polity.

Mentioning a Jewish tradition of a politics of the refugee, with all its cultural specificity, alerts us to the importance of seeing, not just the refugee's exclusion from the order of the nation-state, but also the weight of particular traditions and the complex geographies of belonging that tie the refugee to other places. In the stream of thought that runs from Emma Goldman to Agamben, the refugee is often seen, first, as an *abstract* figure (*The* refugee) and, second, as a *lack* (a woman *without* a country, *sans papiers*, *displaced* person). The example of the FJPC or Zangwill rooting their response in a particular tradition, in what Bauman or Barth would call the "cultural stuff" of yidishkayt, reminds us that a politics of the refugee must attend to these complex geographies and practices of belonging that the refugee carries.

In attempting to think *a genealogy of citizenship from the perspective of its others*, which has been the central task of this thesis, we must attend to these particularities and specificities, rather than replacing the abstract figure of the citizen with an abstract figure of the refugee. If the ghetto radicals point to the possibility of a post-national citizenship, it is a post-national citizenship that attends to the multiplicity of practices of belonging co-present in our plural world.

In conclusion, I have aimed through this thesis to hold in tension such particularities and specificities – the positive cultural content carried by diasporic peoples, their practices and geographies of belonging – with the regimes of visibility, subjectification and governmentality which these peoples encountered. A sociological tradition that runs through Barth to Bauman focuses on negative designation, on the sociological production of "boundaries rather than the cultural stuff they enclose"; similarly, many poststructuralists are suspicious of belonging per se. While these traditions are right to reject any essentializing or ontologizing of this cultural stuff, I have tried, in contrast, to give some sense of the richness and the texture of a community's life, in its full plurality. Although many immigrants were willing to pay the price of assimilation, others were not. The complex ways in which they identified exceeded the juridical and racial categories ascribed to them. The ghetto radicals operated in that space of translation which unsettles both the cultural traditions of the diaspora and conventional languages of citizenship and rights, which points to the ways in which different communities, different political traditions, might learn from each other.

Thus, they suggest a way of belonging otherwise. This is not the compulsory belonging of the nation-state or ethnic absolutism, but belonging thought in terms of a diasporic changing same, in terms of the iterative community of the minyan or the Passover seder. They are, therefore, a resource for thinking a “community of communities” based not on discrete, pure, homogeneous communities – as in the logic of the communal – but on active recognition of samenesses across differences and of differences within samenesses.

Appendix I: Glossary

I have set out here some of the Yiddish, Hebrew and other terms used in this thesis. For Yiddish words, a guide to pronunciation is included at the beginning of the thesis.

- aliyah** Immigration to the Land of Israel. Literally, "going up" or "ascent", from the name for the honour of being called up to the *bima* for the weekly reading of the Torah.
- ark/bima** At the front of a synagogue is the Holy Ark, *aron koydesh*, where the hand-written Torah scrolls (the scrolls containing the five books of Moses). Traditionally, the *bima* (dais) where portions of these scrolls are read each week, stands in the centre of a synagogue, facing the ark.
- frum** Very pious, religious, devout. ("A *frume yid*" = a religious Jew.)
- gefilte fish** *Gefilte* literally means "stuffed". A dish made from ground freshwater fish (carp, whitefish, pike), mixed with other ingredients such as chopped carrots and onions. Originally the ground fish mixture was actually put back into the skin of the fish for cooking, giving rise to the name "filled" or gefilte fish. In Britain, saltwater fish has often been used instead of freshwater and often the fish mixture is fried, a practice English Ashkenazi Jews took from the Sephardic population. Yiddish scholars have identified a "gefilte fish line" dividing the speakers of *galitzianer* and *litvak* versions of Yiddish (see Note on Language above): the former prefer gefilte fish peppery, the latter sweet.
- goy (pl. goyim)** Non-Jew, derogatory. *Goyim* literally means "nations" and occurs in the Bible in the plural to refer to the nations amongst whom the Jews lived. In the Latin bible, it was translated as *gentes*, "peoples", and hence "gentile".
- haggadah** The word *Haggadah* or *Agadah*, from the Hebrew verb *l'haggid*, "to tell", literally means an utterance. It is applied specifically to the nonlegal portion of rabbinic literature: the parables and excurses the rabbis wove in the margins of the Torah. The verb *l'haggid* appears in Shemot/Exodus 13:8: "**V'higadita l'vincha ba'yom ha'hu leimor, ba'avur zeh asah Hashem li b'tzeisi m'Mitzrayim.**" "And you shall relate to your child on that day, saying: 'It is because of this that Hashem acted for me when I came forth out of Egypt.'" Thus the word *Haggadah* has come to refer to the collection of parables and meditations read as part of the Passover.
- halakha** Jewish law. Literally "going" or "walking". *Halakhah* is contrasted to *agadah*, which deals with non-legal ideas such as history, ethics, popular proverbs and folklore (see *haggadah*).
- Haskalah** The Jewish Enlightenment, spreading from Germany from the eighteenth century. In Yiddish: *haskole*. A devotee of the *Haskalah* is called a *maskil* (pl. *maskilim*, adj. *maskilic*).
- heyim** Home. *Inderheyim* means "at home", but also refers to "back home", i.e. Eastern Europe. *Heymish* is the adjectival form, equivalent to "homely", but again with connotations of "back home".

<i>kosher</i>	<i>Kosher</i> refers to something ritually clean to eat according to Jewish dietary laws (which are called <i>kashres</i> in Yiddish pronunciation or <i>kashrut</i> in modern Hebrew).
<i>khevre</i>	Friendly society or informal prayer community, plural <i>khevres</i> . Words related to <i>khevre</i> include <i>khaver</i> (friend or comrade), <i>khevrutdikeyt</i> (sociability), <i>khavershaft</i> (friendship or comradeship), <i>khaverish</i> (friendly).
<i>landslayt</i>	Collective noun for those from the same <i>land</i> , the same place in Eastern Europe. A form of fictive kinship. Singular: <i>landsman</i> .
<i>loshn-koydesh</i>	Hebrew-Aramaic. Literally: sacred tongue. (As opposed to <i>mame-loshn</i> : mother-tongue, Yiddish.)
<i>mentsh</i>	Man, but implying a certain type of man, one who is particularly humane and decent. <i>Mentshlekhkayt</i> : humanism, humaneness.
<i>minyan</i>	Quorum of ten males over thirteen necessary for reciting the prayer for the dead.
<i>Pale</i>	In the Russian Empire in 1791 Catherine II established a "Pale of Settlement" to which Jewish residence was restricted. It was composed of the territories annexed from Poland along the western border and to the territories taken from the Turks along the shores of the Black Sea. Later, other annexed territories were added to the Pale and Jews permitted to settle there, creating a band stretching from Lithuania in the Northwest to the Crimea in the Southeast.
<i>Passover</i>	The annual springtime celebration of the Exodus of the Jewish people from servitude in Egypt. <i>Pesakh</i> in Yiddish. See also <i>sedar</i> .
<i>parneysim</i>	The officers of the Jewish communal authority, the <i>kehillah</i> or <i>kahal</i> .
<i>sedar</i>	The first two nights of Passover are commonly celebrated with a family service in the home, revolving around a meal and the telling of the Exodus story.
<i>shabes/shabbat</i>	Sabbath, in Yiddish and modern Hebrew pronunciation respectively.
<i>shtibl</i>	A small informal congregation or house of study. Plural <i>shtiblekh</i> .
<i>shtetl</i>	A small town (the diminutive of <i>shtot</i> , town). Plural <i>shtetlekh</i> . A <i>shtetl</i> is <i>not</i> a village, which is a <i>dorf</i> .
<i>shul</i>	Literally school, refers to a place of worship such as a synagogue, but retaining an emphasis on this as also a place of learning and study.
<i>tzedakah</i>	Literally righteousness, often translated as charity. In Yiddish: <i>tsdoke</i> .
<i>yeshiva</i>	Jewish traditional higher school, talmudic academy.
<i>yidishkayt</i>	Jewishness, Judaism, Yiddishness

Appendix II: Archival Sources

Public Record Office [PRO]

Every document held by the PRO has a unique reference made up of a minimum of three elements: Lettercode, Class number, and Piece number. These three elements are three of the seven levels in the cataloguing hierarchy, for example, in HO 405/27, HO = Lettercode, 405 = Class number and 27 = Piece number.

ADM	Admiralty, Naval Forces, Royal Marines, Coastguard, and related bodies
CAB	Cabinet Office, Committee of Imperial Defence, Central Statistical Office, and related bodies
CRIM	Central Criminal Court
FO	Foreign Office, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and related bodies
FS	Registry of Friendly Societies
HO	Home Office, Ministry of Home Security, and related bodies
KV	Records of the Security Service
LC	Lord Chamberlain and other officers of the Royal Household, and the Clerk of the Recognizances
LCO	Lord Chancellor's Office and various legal commissions and committees
LO	Law Officers' Department
MEPO	Metropolitan Police Office
WO	War Office, Armed Forces, Judge Advocate General, and related bodies

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