MUSINGS

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Contents

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Ketubah belonging to Paul and Ditta Beran, Shanghai, 1946. Sydney Jewish Museum Collection, M2000/005:001.

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Editors

Professor Avril Alba
The University of Sydney

Dr Jonathan C. Kaplan
Sydney Jewish Museum

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Letter from the Editors

As the "People of the Book" Jews have always engaged with scholarship in different languages, from Hebrew and Aramaic of antiquity to later "hybrid" languages that developed as Jews were dispersed throughout the world as a result of exile, expulsion and migration. The SJM is dedicated to keeping alive the memory of the Holocaust and the rich Jewish life that existed in Europe before its destruction. Lives that played out in a multitude of languages that were at times responsible for the creation of diverse literature, scholarship and other cultural outputs. So too the rich but too often overlooked languages and cultures of Jews in the Middle East and North Africa whose lives were similarly derailed by the Holocaust, the Farhud (1941), and expulsions in the period after the 1948 establishment of the State of Israel. In all of these instances, language provides a prism through which the cultural production of these diverse communities is generated.

But what are "Jewish" languages? Are we speaking only of Hebrew and "hybrid" languages that developed over thousands of years of Jewish living among other peoples resulting in Ladino, Judeo-Arabic and Yiddish? Or might we also include the ways in which Jews (today and in times past) have spoken "non-Jewish" languages, such as the way an Australian Jew might speak English differently to other Australians?

This issue of Musings explores these questions and more under the theme of Jewish languages and cultural productions. Opening this issue is an article by Kip Green on the significance of theatre – written, staged and performed by Holocaust Survivors – as a tool for healing in Displaced Persons camps in post-war Allied-Occupied-Germany. In the wake of the Holocaust, the diverse experiences of the millennia-old Jewish communities of the Middle East and North Africa were often overshadowed. Eran Asoulin explores the double trauma of Jews from Arab states in North Africa and the Middle East, expelled from their countries of origins and discriminated against by the Israeli State in his article on the Black Panther Haggadah of 1971. Taking a more contemporary perspective, Rebecca Margolis highlights the continued importance of Yiddish in the cultural legacy of Melbourne Jewry, examining two recent English-language Australian texts that integrate the Yiddish language within as a central element of the (Ashkenazi) Australian Jewish experience. Annabel Noar's article addresses the function of Hebrew as a marker of Jewish culture and identity among New Zealand's Israeli expat community. Also included is a review of Ofer Idels's *Zionism: Emotions, Language and Experience* (Cambridge University Press, 2024) by Roni Cohen. Finally, David Horowitz and Kwok-Kam Yeung dive into the Sydney Jewish Museum collection and examine the language and historical context of a ketubah belonging to two Viennese Jewish refugees who spent the Second World War in the Shanghai Ghetto.

Professor Avril Alba
The University of Sydney

Dr Jonathan C. Kaplan,
The Sydney Jewish Museum

The Healing Act: Theatre in DP Camps
Kip Green

Abstract

This article considers theatre performances staged in Jewish DP camps after World War Two, and examines how participation in such performances aided in the recovery of Holocaust survivors.

Engaging in theatre was therapeutic for those on both sides of the curtain. It assisted in the processing of traumatic memories in a safe space. It helped creators and audiences find humour in their dire circumstances, and helped survivors to establish a new sense of personal and communal identity. Ultimately, theatre also became a place where Jews could envision a better future.

Considering the subject matter of theatre productions in DP camps, it is possible to identify three distinct foci. In the earliest performances, DP theatre troupes frequently enacted scenes from the Holocaust, using the opportunity to help process the immediate past. In this way, theatre acted as a kind of group therapy. Another common focus was the more distant past, reminding survivors of their pre-war lives, linking them with a long Jewish history, with their lost families, and with a collective identity. In the final phase of DP theatre, the subject matter of the plays changed. Instead of focusing on the past, either distant or more recent, performers began to engage with conceptions of the future. Plays focused on the potential of a Jewish homeland, adopting stronger Zionist themes. This evolution mirrored the transition being experienced by survivors, as they shifted their focus away from the past and towards building a future.

Introduction

As Jewish Holocaust survivors stumbled out of concentration camps, forests, ghettos and hiding places, many found themselves unable to return to their homes. They were given shelter in displaced persons camps and there, amidst the trauma and anxiety, they almost immediately began making theatre. Performance provided therapeutic support in several important ways. It allowed for the recreation of traumatic memories so those memories could be safely processed. It helped creators and audiences find humour in their dire circumstances. It assisted survivors to establish a new sense of personal and communal identity. Ultimately, theatre also became a place where Jews could imagine and promote a Jewish homeland, and with this, they were able to envision a better future.

Jewish DPs came to refer to themselves as *she'erit hapletah*, a term from the Torah meaning "the surviving remnant". This endonym acknowledges a tragic past, wherein survival was the exception rather than the rule. However, it was also adopted with a tone of defiance and a view towards the future.[1] Jewish DPs were identifying themselves as individuals who, against mountainous odds, had survived the horrors of the Shoah. There was strength in that survival. They were also giving notice that the Jewish community would continue to survive, in spite of the challenges presented to them. This notion of endurance is embedded in the biblical references to *she'erit hapletah*. *Jeremiah* (23:3) prophecies that the surviving remnant will "be fruitful and multiply". In other words, a multitudinous Jewish community will stem from those few remaining survivors. Hence the phrase connotes a hope, or even an intention, of reconstructing a Jewish people from the few who remained alive.[2]

For the DPs, survival meant more than simply being alive. It meant a renewed engagement with life and all its aspects. It meant a spiritual renewal, a commitment to building a future, and a revival of Jewish culture.[3]

By providing an avenue for such cultural revival, theatre helped survivors reclaim parts of their lives which were

1. Francoise Ouzan, "Rebuilding Jewish Identities in Displaced Persons Camps in Germany 1945–1957," *Bulletin Du Centre de Recherche Francais a Jerusalem* 14 (2004): 101. Although the term she'erit hapletah was applied broadly to Jewish survivors in DP camps, it is important to acknowledge that survivors were not a homogenous group. They differed in nationality, language, socio-economic status, education, level of religion, and belief in Zionism.
2. Ouzan, "Rebuilding Jewish Identities," 101.
3. Angelika Königseder and Juliane Wetzel, *Waiting for Hope – Jewish Displaced Persons in Post-World War II Germany*, trans. John A. Broadwin. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2001), 41.

nearly destroyed by the Holocaust. In the earliest performances, DP theatre troupes frequently enacted scenes from the Holocaust, using the opportunity to help process the immediate past. In Bergen-Belsen, Dolly Kotz performed "The Mother's Dance", depicting a mother in a concentration camp, grieving the loss of her daughter.[4] The same concert featured a scene where SS guards leave Jewish prisoners without food or light, and the prisoners respond by making music to comfort themselves.[5]

In this way, theatre acted as a kind of group therapy. Part of the healing resided with the fact that survivors cast themselves as heroes in these reenactments, turning their backs on the victim narrative, and identifying themselves as part of a resistance. They were able to take on more autonomous roles in their own stories. Further, by giving survivors a voice, theatre allowed for the decimated Jewish community to develop a new sense of identity, both personal and communal. Developing community was especially important, since the majority of survivors had lost some, if not all, of their family members, and were unable to return to their places of origin. For the actors and crew, the production of theatrical works gave them a purpose. It provided a vital focus while they were stuck in the liminal space of the DP camp without much meaningful work, and without much certainty about what would happen for them next. Performing plays in the Yiddish language established links between survivors and their pasts, which was psychologically beneficial.

In later DP theatrical works, the subject matter of the plays changed. Instead of focusing on the past, either distant or more recent, performers began to engage with conceptions of the future. Plays focused on the potential of a Jewish homeland, and adopted stronger Zionist themes. This evolution mirrored the transition being experienced by survivors, as they shifted their focus away from the past and towards building a future.

Jewish Displaced Persons, Camps and Theatres

When the Second World War finally came to an end in May

4. Muriel Knox Doherty, *Letters from Belsen 1945: An Australian Nurse's Experiences with the Survivors of War* (London: Unwin Hyman, 2000), 121, from a letter dated 18 September 1945.
5. Knox Doherty, "Letters from Belsen," 121.

1945, there were over 7 million displaced persons (DPs) in Europe, mostly located in the ruins of the Reich.[6] The great majority of DPs were repatriated to their home countries in the months between May and September 1945, and by early 1946 the total number of DPs was reduced to around 1 million. Joseph Berger, an American reporting on DPs in 1947, called these the "hard core" of "a great human problem".[7] Jewish DPs accounted for somewhere between 10 and 20 percent of this "hard core".[8] The number fluctuated significantly. Due to the confusion of the post war era, as well as the movements of DPs during those months, the quantification of displaced persons is difficult, and figures are unreliable.

The first DP camps, established in the immediate aftermath of German capitulation, were organized according to nationality. Polish Jews, for example, were housed behind barbed wire along with other displaced Poles, some of whom were deeply antisemitic, and many of whom had been Nazi collaborators.[9] DPs were, to use a phrase coined by the army chaplain Abraham Klausner at the time, "liberated but not yet free".[10] Although they were not prisoners, their movement was often curtailed. In August 1945, Earl Harrison, the US emissary to the camps, presented a report which harshly criticized conditions in the camps. He recommended that Jews be given special status and separated from other DP populations.[11] Harrison notes:

> As matters now stand, we appear to be treating the Jews as the Nazis treated them except that we do not exterminate them. They are in concentration camps in large numbers under our military guard instead of S.S. troops. One is led to wonder whether the German people, seeing this, are not supposing that we are following or at least condoning Nazi policy.[12]

As a result, DPs in the American zone were relocated. Jews were able to live in camps of their own. Feldafing, 32 kilometres southwest of Munich, was the first of the exclusively Jewish DP camps, and dozens quickly followed throughout Germany, Austria and Italy.[13] The largest of the Jewish DP camps was Bergen-Belsen. This was the sole

6. Katarzyna Nowak, "Recivilising Refugees: Material Culture and Displacement in Transitions from War to Peace in Displaced Persons Camps in Post-Second World War Europe," *S:I.M.O.N* 10, no. 1 (2023): 6. Nowak puts this number at closer to 11 million.
7. Joseph A. Berger, "Displaced Persons: A Human Tragedy of World War II," *Social Research* 14, no. 1 (March 1947): 45.
8. Boaz Cohen, "The Jewish DP Experience," in *The Routledge History of the Holocaust*, ed. Jonathan C. Friedman (New York: Routledge, 2011), 412.
9. Kurt R. Grossmann, *The Jewish DP Problem* (New York: Institute of Jewish Affairs, 1951), 11-12.
10. Avinoam Patt, "'Laughter through Tears': Jewish Humor in the Aftermath of the Holocaust," in A Club of Their Own: Jewish Humorists and the Contemporary World, ed. Eli Lederhendler and Gabriel N Finder (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 120.
11. Earl G. Harrison, "The Plight of the Displaced Jews in Europe", *PennCareyLaw* (Washington, DC: The White House, September 29, 1945), https://www.law.upenn.edu/live/files/4998-the-plight-of-the-displaced-jews-in-europepdfpdf: 6.
12. Harrison, "The Plight of the Displaced Jews in Europe", 12.
13. Tamar Lewinsky, "Jewish Culture in Germany's American Occupation Zone," in *Our Courage - Jews in Europe 1945-48*, ed. Kata Bohus et al. (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2020), 204.

Jewish-only camp in the British zone of Germany, and it housed over 11,000 Jewish survivors in 1946.[14] The most enduring Jewish DP camp was Föhrenwald, near Munich, which did not close until 1957.[15]

Jewish DPs also suffered from low morale, leading to a sense of emotional imprisonment. Francoise Ouzan explains "The soldiers' lack of sympathy for the displaced persons, the hostility of the German civilians, the absence of work, the loss of relatives and friends, the unsatisfactory allocating of food and an uncertain future had a demoralising effect on the survivors."[16] In May 1945, Salman Grinberg, the leader of the liberated Jews in Germany, made a speech at the St Ottilien rehabilitation centre and camp near Landsberg. "We are free now," he said, addressing the crowd of survivors, "but we do not know how to begin our free but unfortunate lives… We have forgotten how to laugh, we cannot cry any more, we do not comprehend our freedom yet, and this because we are still among our dead comrades".[17] The loneliness felt by survivors who had lost family and friends, the feelings of survivor guilt, and pervasive uncertainty about the future, combined to leave Jewish DPs confused and unhappy, even when they were newly "free".[18]

In spite of these challenges, or perhaps because of them, Jewish displaced persons began staging cultural performances within a matter of months, in some cases just weeks. The survivor Jacob Biber staged a talent show for children in Föhrenwald five weeks after his arrival there. In Bergen-Belsen, the first performance was held on September 15, 1945, for Rosh Hashanah, only two months after the camp had been established.[19] In all, there were more than 60 amateur theatre troupes performing in DP camps throughout the western zones of occupation.[20]

One of the most significant of these troupes was *Minchener Jidiszer Kleinkunst Teater* (MIKT, later known as MIT), a professional group performing in the American zone from 1946 to 1948. Another was the *Katzet Teater* of Bergen Belsen. *Katzet* was directed by Samy Feder, a Polish concentration camp survivor with professional theat-

14. Hagit Lavsky, *New Beginnings: Holocaust Survivors in Bergen-Belsen and the British Zone in Germany 1945-1950* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002), 227.

15. Francoise Ouzan, "Rebuilding Jewish Identities in Displaced Persons Camps in Germany 1945-1957," *Bulletin du Centre de Recherche Français à Jérusalem* 14 (2004): 99.

16. Ouzan, "Rebuilding Jewish Identities," 101.

17. Patt, "Laughter Through Tears," 113.

18. Z. Zamarion, "A Shaliach in Belsen," in Belsen, ed. Irgun Sheerit Hapleita Me'Haezor Habriti (Tel Aviv: Irgun Sheerit Hapleita Me'Haezor Habriti, 1957), 153.

19. Margarete Myers Feinstein, Holocaust Survivors in Postwar Germany, 1945-1957 (Cambridge: Cambridge Publishers, 2014), 228.

20. Lewinsky, "Jewish Culture," 204.

re experience. The performances had impressive reach. MIKT performed for 50,000 audience members during their tour of DP camps in 1946, and counted total attendance at 180,000 over their first two years of operation.[21] *Katzet* offered ten cabaret programs and 47 theatre performances between 1945 and 1947.[22] They regularly performed to full houses in the camp theatre, which seated 1000 people.[23] The widespread theatre activity throughout Jewish DP camps is recognized by Angelika Königseder and Juliane Wetzel, who write of the Holocaust survivors that "their single greatest achievement… was the revival of Jewish cultural life."[24]

Coping with DP Camp Conditions

Life in the DP camps was difficult and demoralising. Inhabitants suffered from food insufficiency, overcrowding, a stultifying lack of occupation, and a continuing lack of agency or control over their own lives. They had lost their homes and family members and were learning to live with their grief. Additionally, most were interned on German soil, surrounded by German populations. Writing in 1947 after viewing a number of camps first-hand, Joseph Berger recognized these circumstances and remarked:

> ...the average DP lives in a constant state of fear, anxiety, and uncertainty. He knows from bitter experience that most of the Germans regard Poles, Jews, and other displaced persons as inferior peoples; that the Germans try to use the DPs as a scapegoat for the consequences of their own defeat, untruthfully accusing them of being responsible for most of the crime, disorder, and black market operations which seem inevitable in a defeated county in modern warfare [...] and, in short, that it is only the manifest force of the armies of occupation that prevents the Germans from renewing their harsh and cruel treatment of these 'inferior' peoples from beyond the German border.[25]

Similarly, Norbert Horowitz referred to the camp existence

21. Myers Feinstein, "Holocaust Survivors," 236.
22. Werner Hanak, "The Katset-Teater: 'Concentration Camp Theater' in the Bergen Belsen DP Camp," in *Our Courage: Jews in Europe 1945-48*, ed. Kata Bohus et al. (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2020), 214.
23. Lavsky, "New Beginnings," 158.
24. Königseder and Wetzel, *Waiting for Hope*, 124.
25. Berger, "Displaced Persons," 49.

as "pitiful", and Biber described such conditions as "brutal", reflecting that the DPs were treated "like escaped criminals who had disobeyed Hitler's law to be exterminated".[26]

Adding to DPs' discomfort was their uncertainty about the future.[27] The DP camp was where survivors waited to find a new home, usually by being granted entry to another country. It was a liminal space: internees had survived the Holocaust, but were not yet able to start living. They could not put down permanent roots or make long term plans, particularly because very few states were willing or able to accept refugees.[28] They did not know where their futures might be lived, and all the waiting and uncertainty led to significant demoralisation among the *she'erit hapletah*.[29] The longer they remained in the camps, the worse the demoralisation became. Acknowledging this in himself and his wife, Biber says they "were like birds with clipped wings who still longed to fly".[30]

This being the case, theatre was a much-needed distraction, allowing DPs to focus on something other than their own dire situation for an hour or two.[31] It was a rare opportunity to find entertainment in the DP environment. Many DP productions directly represented life in the DP camps, often lampooning conditions and using satire to make light of internees' problems.[32] The humour of the plays, and their subversive observations about challenges in camps, helped audiences cope with the hardships of camp life.[33] There was also frequent humour within DP performances of Yiddish classics, such as the work of Sholem Aleichem and Avrom Goldfadn. Avinoam Patt writes that the prolific humour in the camps "functioned as one means by which people tried to process the recent traumas of the war, to cope with the enormity of the destruction, and to endure the seemingly endless and unnatural stay in Germany after the Holocaust. Humour helped [the DPs] to maintain a sense of psychological advantage..."[34] Patt traces this kind of "double-inflected wry comedy" to Sholem Aleichem, who termed it "holding back one's tears and laughing out of spite".[35] In other words, making light of camp conditions united Jews in "laughter through tears" and by so doing, assisted in their post-war recovery.[36]

26. Biber, "Risen from the Ashes," 80.
27. Ouzan, "Rebuilding Jewish Identities," 101.
28. Michael R. Marrus, *The Unwanted: European Refugees in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).
29. Ouzan, "Rebuilding Jewish Identities," 101.
30. Biber, "Risen from the Ashes," 87.
31. Myers Feinstein, "Re-Imagining the Unimaginable," 41.
32. Lewinsky, "On the Reconstruction of Jewish Culture," 204.
33. Patt, "Laughter Through Tears," 113-14.
34. Patt, "Laughter Through Tears," 113-14.
35. In *Yiddish: Aftselakhis nisht geveynt*. Aleichem, quoted in Patt, "Laughter Through Tears," 114.
36. Patt, "Laughter Through Tears," 128.

Theatre as Therapy

Contemporary psychotherapy has acknowledged an important role for creative play in aiding recovery from trauma. Imaginational therapy has been credited with reducing symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder such as intrusive memories and flashbacks.[37] Ella Florsheim explains how this type of therapy works:

> In the therapeutic process of psychodrama, the patient reconstructs on the stage… real experiences, past traumas, or unresolved issues. By dramatizing and re-enacting them, the viewer/patient may re-experience them from a different and emotionally more distant perspective. Performing difficult events on stage when in control of the situation enables them to process their experiences, liberate themselves from the state of the passive victim, and strive to heal the wounds that the experiences had left on their psyche.[38]

The Jewish DP camps were a relatively closed environment, with audiences and artists all sharing, in a general sense, a common traumatic past. Since all (or nearly all) the DPs in Jewish camps were Jewish, they were freed from the most frightening threat of the preceding decade: antisemitism. This made the DP stage a safe space in which to explore recent trauma.[39] Survivors were able to use performance to articulate their experiences, and thereby gain some control over that personal history.[40] It was particularly important in the DP camp context, because survivors had not had many opportunities to express or explore their emotions during the Holocaust. In general, the task of surviving had taken precedence over all else, leaving little opportunity to engage in emotional exploration. And in concentration camps, a range of factors conspired to preclude emotional expression. These factors included the defence mechanisms of negation, emotional isolation and learned indifference.[41] Additionally, the expression of emotion in camps could potentially be interpreted as weakness, risking the attention of a guard community trained to eliminate weak prisoners from the population.[42]

37. Daniel L. Schachter, *The Seven Sins of Memory: How the Mind Forgets and Remembers* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001), 177.
38. Ella Florsheim, "Yiddish Theatre in the DP Camps," *Yad Vashem Studies* 40, no. 2 (2012): 126–27.
39. Fetthauer & Hirsch, "The Katset-Teater", 115.
40. Margarete Myers Feinstein, "Re-Imagining the Unimaginable: Theatre, Memory and Rehabilitation in the Displaced Persons Camps," in *After the Holocaust: Challenging the Myth of Silence*, ed. David Cesarani and Eric J. Sundquist (London: Routledge, 2011), 52.
41. For a discussion of protective blocking mechanisms, see Hilda O. Bluhm, "How did they Survive? Mechanism of Defense in Nazi Concentration Camps," *American Journal of Psychotherapy*, 53 (1999): 96–122.
42. Jack Meister, survivor, interviewed in Sydney, July 24, 2024.

Thus, the DP camp stage presented a safe opportunity to express emotion after many years of emotional repression.

Of course, the DPs involved in theatre were not acting on the recommendation of psychologists, therapists or academics. Rather, they instinctively recognised the benefits of using performance to work through their trauma.[43] Acknowledging this instinct, Samy Feder, director of the Katzet Theater at Bergen-Belsen, recalls, "We had no book, no piano, no musical scores. But we could not wait for supplies from outside. There was a need to play..."[44] Horowitz was a DP actor and founding member of MIKT/MIT, who later moved to the United States and wrote a book about Yiddish theatre in the DP camps. Speaking of the inception of the Bergen-Belsen DP theatre, Horowitz remarks that "After the liberation, they come together, weak and suffering from typhus, barely alive, still they gravitate to the Yiddish theatre. Singing teachers, a dance master, amateur actors, amateur and professional musicians all assemble – and *as if by magic – a Yiddish theatre is created*."[45] This magic was born of an intrinsic need to deal with pain through performance.

In June 1946, one of Katzet's productions was reviewed for the New York Times by Joseph Wolhandler, who explicitly acknowledges the healing taking place.[46] Wolhandler notes the "stark realism" of the production, and details elements of the show such as scenes with "flames reaching out onto the stage depicting Jews being led to the crematoria, or showing Germans crushing the skull of a child." Then Wolhandler asks and answers his own question: "Why do people come to such a theater while their scars are still deep?" he begins. "One possible answer suggests itself. The Kazet Theater serves a therapeutic value in providing a great emotional release. [...] the Kazet Theater, in an abnormal situation, has assumed a unique role - the role of the healer, the physician."[47] This is confirmed by a former DP, interviewed by Jacqueline Dewell Giere. She states "Given our psychological and moral state, the theater was a prescription, a therapy, that soothed and gently touched our broken spirits.[48]

Additionally, audiences were learning (or re-learning) how

43. Königseder and Wetzel, "Waiting for Hope", 189–90.
44. Samy Feder, "The Yiddish Theatre of Belsen," in *Belsen*, ed. Irgun Sheerit Hapleita Me'Haezor Habriti (Tel Aviv: Irgun Sheerit Hapleita Me'Haezor Habriti, 1957): 137.
45. Horowitz, quoted in Florsheim, "Yiddish Theatre in the DP Camps," 107. Emphasis added.
46. Joseph Wolhandler, "On a Concentration Camp Stage: Bergen-Belsen Players Depict Horrors of Their Internment Stark Realism Audience Reaction Therapeutic Value," *New York Times*, June 30, 1946, https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1946/06/30/107143092. Samy Feder recalls Wolhandler's visit in his diary, mentioning that Wolhandler "brought us from somewhere real make-up". See Feder, "The Yiddish Theatre of Belsen," 139.
47. Wolhandler, "On a Concentration Camp Stage".
48. Jacqueline Dewell Giere, *Wir sind unterwegs, aber nicht in der Wüste* (Frankfurt am Main: Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität zu Frankfurt am Main, 1993), 232.

to behave in a civilised world.[49] After years spent in hiding or in camps, many survivors were unfamiliar with ordinary aspects of life like buying tickets and waiting politely to take their seats. Reflecting on this, Biber comments "The rapid return to normal behaviour by the DPs [in Föhrenwald] was remarkable. It was like waking suddenly from a nightmare into a fantasy world which had miraculously transformed chaos into order."[50] Sophie Fetthauer and Lily Hirsch claim that in Bergen-Belsen, Feder was also aware of this aspect of his productions, and was conscious of his role in providing his audience with "a space of normalcy and escape".[51] This is supported by Feder's own recollection of Katzet's first production, on 6 September 1945. His diary entry states: "I have never played to such a grateful audience. They clapped and laughed and cried. When we gave, as our last item, the famous song 'Think not you travel to despair again', the thousand people in the hall rose to their feet and sang with us. Then Hatikvah. Never was Hatikvah rendered with such verve..."[52] The verve Feder describes here is laden with a sense of emotional healing and hope for the future.

The therapeutic value for the theatrical artists, as opposed to audiences, is represented perfectly by Biber in his memoir *Risen from the Ashes*. Biber tells the story of his troupe's performance in Feldafing, and reflects on how important it was to his own healing. Feldafing camp had a tuberculosis ward, and any survivors with TB had been transferred there, so the front section of the audience was made up of patients in cots. Biber writes:

> When the show was running, I looked out from behind the curtains at the patients, and saw pleasant smiles on their skeletal faces. Some of them were still wearing their striped concentration camp clothes. Others were covered with white sheets, but their eyes peering out from the covers expressed their eternal gratitude and satisfaction once again to see Jewish children performing. I saw tears in their eyes rolling down the hollowed cheeks. Shedding a few tears myself, I brea-

49. Israel W. Charny, ed., *Holding on to Humanity – The Message of Holocaust Survivors: The Shamai Davidson Papers* (New York: NYU Press, 1992): 213.
50. Jacob Biber, *Risen from the Ashes* (1990; repr., San Bernadino: The Borgo Press, 1990), 34.
51. Fetthauer and Hirsch, "The Katset-Teater," 109.
52. Feder, "The Yiddish Theatre of Belsen," 139.

thed a silent prayer: 'Thank you, God, for giving me the strength to accomplish some good.' I suddenly felt a sensation of relief in my heart. The guilt that I had carried in me for the sin of surviving while so many of our loved ones had suffered and died, had somewhat diminished, I suddenly felt that my efforts were worthy, and that, perhaps, there was reason for all of us to hope again.[53]

When he got home to his sleeping wife after the Feldafing show, Biber whispered in her ear, "Our survival is worthy. Our purpose in living is justified."[54] His words remain a powerful reflection on the healing benefits that performance gave to those involved.

Resistance and Revenge

Some of the therapeutic value of DP theatre came from the players' ability to alter history through its telling. It was not uncommon for players to portray Jews during the Holocaust as resisters, partisans, and even heroes. One example of this phenomenon in action is the play "Partisans", written and directed by Samy Feder in Bergen-Belsen. The play depicts a cabaret singer who seduces German officers in order to steal their weapons and pass the weapons to the resistance.[55] In reality, those survivors who actually participated in resistance were a small minority of the *she'erit hapletah* community, and most had not actively engaged in armed resistance. But by including these stories as a part of the shared narrative, DPs were "rewriting the Holocaust experience from one of victimisation into one of heroic resistance".[56] Audiences could feel that they were part of a battle against the Nazis which, in truth, few had been able to actively engage in. The new narrative allowed all survivors to reconceptualize their role in the Holocaust, and thereby to redefine themselves as victors, not victims.[57]

Performances by Jewish DPs also gave many among the she'erit hapletah a therapeutic sense of revenge. The Nazi regime had attempted to eradicate not just Jews, but all aspects of Jewish culture. These performances defiantly

53. Biber, "Risen from the Ashes," 28.
54. Biber, "Risen from the Ashes," 28.
55. Myers Feinstein, "Re-Imagining the Unimaginable," 43.
56. Myers Feinstein, "Holocaust Survivors," 235.
57. Myers Feinstein, "Re-Imagining the Unimaginable," 47.

reengaged with Jewish culture, proclaiming as they did so that the Jews and their culture would endure. This was made clear in *In Gang*, the literary magazine directed by the Union of the Jewish Writers, Journalists and Artists in Italy. In March 1947 *In Gang* published an article under the heading "From the Editorial Board" which declared: "… Revenge! Revenge was demanded by the thousands of writings left on the walls of German prisons. [...] And revenge means that not only we live, but that we are creative. The Germans have not achieved their purpose. [...] We are creative, we create cultural works, even when we are on the move, even during a short stop, even in a cabin or in a shack on the way."[58] The fact that the performances were taking place largely on German soil, and sometimes even in former SS barracks, made the revenge feel even more poignant and healing. Kurt Grossmann posits that it was only in Germany and Austria that spiritual recovery could be achieved. It was only in these countries that events such as the dedication of a synagogue, or a bar mitzvah, or, by extension, the staging of a play, "were charged with profound emotion and, in the aggregate, constituted a chant of the DPs which they dinned into the ears of their recent oppressors, that the Jewish people and its institutions are imperishable."[59]

Identity, Continuity and Strength

Throughout the war years, Jews throughout Europe had been deprived of their identity. Under Nazi rule, propaganda consistently repeated that Jews were *Untermenschen*, or sub-human, and did not deserve the rights afforded to people who were valued by the state. Beginning with the Nuremberg Laws in 1935, Jews were progressively deprived of the elements which make up a life and contribute to a sense of self. They lost their access to education and to employment. They lost their property, both real and personal, and lost social connections. They lost any political, administrative or personal empowerment, and experienced the fracturing of their families. It was forbidden for Jews to pray together or practise any Jewish traditions, which meant that any sense of communal identi-

58. Achinoam Aldouby, Michal Peles-Almagor, and Chiara Renzo, "Theater in Jewish DPs Camps in Italy: A Stage for Political and Ideological Debate on Aliyah, Zionism and Jewish Identity," *Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History. Journal of the Fondazione SDEC* 21, no. 1 (2022): 120-21.
59. Grossmann, "The Jewish DP Problem," 8.

ty based on religious practice was abruptly severed.[60] Once Jews were deported into concentration camps, a complex methodology was employed to dehumanize prisoners, stripping them of individuality and denying them a personal identity. This methodology included the shaving of hair to make all people and all genders look alike, the use of numbers rather than names, and in many cases, the wearing of uniforms. Of course, the lack of respect for Jewish life, shown throughout the Nazi period, but especially in ghettos and camps, was the most chilling reminder that Jews were considered less than human.[61] The system as a whole had the global effect of leaving survivors without a clear sense of individual or collective identity. So once the war was over, DPs were faced with the task of rebuilding their identity, both individually and collectively, and theatre played a part in this.[62]

A useful case study here is the work of Zvi Aldouby in Italy. Born in Galicia, Aldouby grew up in a Chasidic Zionist family, and later moved to Palestine. Aldouby worked as a teacher in Tel Aviv until, in mid-1946, he was driven to go to Italy and contribute to the recovery of DPs. He was in charge of education and culture in Italian DP camps until February 1948. As part of his work, Aldouby assembled a group of Jewish DP intellectuals and artists, who toured refugee camps and presented artistic activities. These included about 70 concerts and theatrical performances in 1947.[63] According to Aldouby's own journals, he chose plays with the distinct purpose of addressing the need to rebuild Jewish DPs' sense of self.[64] He organized public events, not just for entertainment, but "as a medium to reach the camp population at large and revive their abruptly halted connection with Jewish culture and traditions, rekindling their sense of belonging to a specific 'ethnic and national group'".[65]

There were three important ways in which DP theatre helped survivors create a communal identity.

Firstly, the creation of theatre troupes helped performers establish (or reestablish) social connections. Troupes provided a group dynamic among survivors which in many cases substituted for the families and communities they

60. Marion A. Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).
61. Meister, interview.
62. Ouzan, "Rebuilding Jewish Identities," 110.
63. Aldouby et al, "Theater in Jewish DP Camps," 107.
64. Aldouby et al, "Theater in Jewish DP Camps," 130.
65. Aldouby et al, "Theater in Jewish DP Camps," 119–20.

had lost in the Holocaust. Debra Caplan outlines the communal aspect of such productions, noting that theatre cannot be done in isolation – it requires a communal collaboration between crew, cast and audience. Caplan confirms that participants in the DP theatre productions could feel that they were experiencing together with others.[66] This effect was visible among both amateur and professional troupes. For professionals, "the reunions of prewar colleagues took on tremendous significance".[67] Samy Feder took pains to contact surviving theatre professionals, and bring them to Bergen-Belsen. These included the stage designer Berl Friedler and his wife, choreographer and dancer Dolly Kotz. Feder was also reunited with the actress and singer Sonia (Boczkowska) Lizaron, with whom he had worked in the Będzin ghetto troupe, Muze. Lizaron co-founded Katzet with Feder, and ultimately the two were married, making a true family from the "theatre family" they created at Bergen-Belsen.

The second important way in which DP theatre performances created a communal identity was by connecting survivors with the past, enabling them to see themselves as part of a long Jewish history. Some of this history stretched back to biblical times. Survivors were able to associate their own struggles and resistance with Jewish heroism from the Tanakh and tales of Zionist pioneers. Aldouby was conscious of this when he wrote a script to help DPs in Italy celebrate the holiday of Hannukah. Aldouby (who had a Zionist mission in Italy), inspired the DPs with tales of Judah Maccabee and his army of rebels, who recaptured Jerusalem from Antiochus IV in 164 BCE. The DP children recited:

> From generation to generation, we commemorate our Maccabean ancestors who gave their lives in honor of Israel and its freedom. Few fought against many and won. May the Maccabean heroes be a model for us.[68]

This connection between the present and the past was described by a reviewer of the Bamberg Yidishe Drama Studio's performance of Sholem Asch's Kiddush Ha-Shem. The play presents the story of the Cossack pogroms in the

66. Debra Caplan, "Yiddish Theater as a Cultural Lifeline during the Holocaust" (Virtual Talk, December 16, 2023), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVsnSl0craY

67. Myers Feinstein, "Holocaust Survivors," 237.

68. Quoted in Aldouby et al, "Theater in Jewish DP Camps," 123. Italics added.

Ukraine in 1948, focusing on the unhappy fate of one Jewish family in particular.[69] The presentation of the play in the context of the DP camp allowed survivors to link their own suffering to the suffering of earlier Jewish martyrs.[70] The reviewer called this connection "the long, holy, golden chain, in which we are bound and put into the context of generations."[71] This contextualisation assisted in the development of a communal identity with deep roots in history.

There were also important connections being made to the more recent pre-war past. In early 1946, as conditions improved and scripts became available, DP theatre troupes began performing Yiddish classics.[72] Dramatic circles in Italy, for example, presented Sholem Aleichem's *Tevya the Milkman*, H.Leivick's *The Golem*, and S. Ansky's *The Dybbuk*.[73] These choices were characteristic of the plays being performed by DPs throughout Europe.[74] Yiddish plays were a bridge to the pre-war world and the theatre of survivors' parents, as well as survivors' own childhoods.[75] For non-urban survivors, these plays drew them back to a happier past; a time when they had homes and families. They created some connection with the old ways of life and with communities which were destroyed during the Holocaust.[76] The subject matter, such as a village milkman, or the folkloric Dybbuk, was familiar to DP audiences, and called up pre-war memories. The props, the costumes and the music of these performances were all reminiscent of the Jewish world of Eastern Europe prior to the war.[77] These connections, multi-faceted and rich, gave participants a sense of themselves as part of a continuum. They were thus encouraged to develop self-ideation as members of a longstanding Jewish community.

The Yiddish language, too, was an important element in this process. Yiddish was the mother tongue of the majority of survivors from Eastern Europe.[78] Hearing the Mame Loshn (Mother Tongue) on stage drew audiences back to the intimate environment of their homes and families.[79] It "served emotional ends as the language of lost parents and grandparents".[80] Since Yiddish was the most common linguistic denominator within the diverse community of refu-

69. Sholem Asch, *Kiddush Ha Shem* (New York: Arno Press 1975).

70. Myers Feinstein, "Holocaust Survivors," 235.

71. Quoted in Myers Feinstein, "Re-Imagining the Unimaginable," 48.

72. Myers Feinstein, "Re-Imagining the Unimaginable," 49.

73. Aldouby et al, "Theater in Jewish DP Camps," 123.

74. The Katzet Theatre performed two of Sholem Aleichem's plays (*Der farkishefter shnayder and Dos groyse gevins*); Deggendorfer DP camp presented Aleichem's *Shver tsu zayn a yid*; and MIKT adapted Aleichem's book *Der blutiker Szpas*, to name just a few.

75. Myers Feinstein, "Re-Imagining the Unimaginable," 48–49.

76. Myers Feinstein, "Holocaust Survivors," 226.

77. Fetthauer and Hirsch, "The Katset-Teater," 107.

78. Freda Hodge, "Using Yiddish Sources in Studying the Holocaust," in *Sources for Studying the Holocaust: A Guide*, ed. Paul P. Bartrop (New York: Routledge, 2023), 142.

79. Florsheim, "Yiddish Theatre in the DP Camps," 130.

80. Miriam Isaacs, "Yiddish in the Aftermath: Speech Community and Cultural Continuity in Displaced Persons Camps," in *Jewishness: Expression, Identity and Representation*, ed. Simon J. Bronner (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2023), 91.

gees, its use on stage positioned DPs as part of a shared cultural tradition, helping to create a linguistic community.[81] The use of Yiddish also assisted in establishing cultural continuity, which was helpful for survivors whose culture had been threatened along with their lives.[82] The Yiddish press in camps reflected the desire of many DPs to reject the languages of their European oppressors. In 1945, Wolf Kur wrote from Feldafing DP camp, asking "How long will we go on speaking Polish, Hungarian and other languages, the languages of our enemies?... If we were intelligent we would be ashamed to use the languages of those who made us suffer. There are those who speak miserable Polish. Is it not better to speak good Yiddish than bad Polish?"[83] Survivors like Kur saw Yiddish as an opportunity for Jews to unite as one community, united by language, rather than separated by their original national affiliations.

There were many Zionists who would have preferred the use of Hebrew in stage productions, believing that it was the language of the future; the language of the putative state of Israel.[84] However, since the displaced people came from throughout Europe, and very few spoke Hebrew, it would have been impractical and unhelpful to present productions in a language that few among the audience understood. Yiddish, on the other hand, was a transnational language that facilitated communication between a range of refugees with different language bases.[85] So, there was a dichotomy between Yiddish as the language of the past, and Hebrew as the language of the future. Another dichotomy was recognized by the Katzet troupe. In choosing to present their first two cabaret shows in Yiddish, they were choosing to prioritise the therapeutic function of their theatre over the function of Hebrew in promoting Zionism.[86]

Finally, survivors engaged in creating stories out of their shared memories. As we have seen, DPs re-enacted the recent past, and did so by representing ghettos, concentration camp life, the partisan experience, and instances of personal loss, drawing on the multiple experiences of various survivors. Such communal story-building not only helped to create a sense of community,

81. Lewinsky, "On the Reconstruction of Jewish Culture," 199.
82. Isaacs, "Yiddish in the Aftermath," 86.
83. Kur, quoted in Isaacs, "Yiddish in the Aftermath," 90.
84. Lewinsky, "On the Reconstruction of Jewish Culture," 199.
85. Isaacs, "Yiddish in the Aftermath," 91.
86. Fetthauer and Hirsch, "The Katset-Teater," 103.

but also allowed members of the *she'erit hapletah* to contribute to the creation of "a coherent master narrative".[87] Whether consciously or not, participants were building the history of the Holocaust, and they were doing it together, as a community. This provided a basis from which survivors could identify themselves as part of the shared story, and thereby part of the community of surviving Jews. The creation of their communal identity was intrinsic to their healing.

Imagining a Future

In its final stage, theatre in DP camps turned away from the past, and began to look forwards. One role of the theatre was to provide audiences with the hope that they may be able to leave the Holocaust behind and build a better future.[88] It did this, in part, by staging plays with happy endings, implicitly telling audiences that even if life is dark at times, it can get better. Samy Feder did this very deliberately with the Katzet Theater in their adaptation of Sholem Aleichem's *Der farkishefter shnayder* (The Bewitched Tailor). Aleichem originally wrote the play with a tragic ending: the title character goes mad, suffers a terminal illness, and leaves his widow to care for their starving children.[89] Rewriting the ending of the play for Bergen-Belsen, however, Feder gave the tailor a reprieve, and allowed the family to live together in peace.[90] The theatre thus became a place where audiences were encouraged to imagine a happy future for themselves.[91]

Many theatre groups saw Palestine as an important feature of this imagined happy future. Zionism was a pervasive concern for Jewish DPs at the time, and camps resounded with debates about the politics and ideology of building a Jewish state.[92] Speaking about survivors during this period, Yehuda Bauer confirms that "their ideological direction was clearly, overwhelmingly, and right from the beginning, Zionist."[93] The idea of Palestine became completely enmeshed with hopes of salvation, identifiable as a sort of "civil religion" in the camps.[94] Certainly Aldouby, in Italy, was using theatre explicitly to spread a Zionist message. He saw it as a channel through which he could

87. Myers Feinstein, "Holocaust Survivors," 237.

88. Fetthauer and Hirsch, "The Katset-Teater,"107.

89. Sholem Aleichem, *The Bewitched Tailor [and Other Stories]* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1958), 65ff.

90. Fetthauer and Hirsch, "The Katset-Teater,"106.

91. Myers Feinstein, "Holocaust Survivors," 233.

92. Koppel S. Pinson, "Jewish Life in Liberated Germany: A Study of the Jewish DP's," *Jewish Social Studies* 9, no. 2 (1947): 116.

93. Yehuda Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 247.

94. Pinson, "Jewish Life in Liberated Germany," 117; Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust.*

expose a wide audience to Zionist values, and he wrote plays which represented Eretz Israel as a place of promise; a place where all DPs could experience a sense of belonging.[95] When some actors quit pursuant to arguments about Zionism, Aldouby began a new troupe and all members had to confirm in writing their willingness to pursue a Zionist agenda.[96] This new troupe, Tkumah, staged a play called "This Land", which presented Eretz Israel as a place where settlers could be pioneers, working the land as an act of self-redemption.[97] Feder, too, embraced Zionist themes, as did MIKT/MIT.[98] In Feldafing, the Amcho troupe staged "Blood and Fire", with a plot moving from the Holocaust to Zionism. This production made a connection between "the suffering of the Shoah and the need for a home in Palestine".[99] In all such instances, survivors were being offered a way forward; a picture of a happy future beyond the trauma of the Holocaust and the misery of the DP environment. Such forward focus was another aspect of theatre which assisted survivors in their healing.

Conclusion

Theatre in DP camps was a great deal more than simply a couple of hours of entertainment. It was a powerful medium which played a significant role in the recovery of Jewish Holocaust survivors while they inhabited the liminal space of post-war DP camps. The therapeutic benefits of theatre, while not yet researched or scientifically analysed, were inherently understood by a community which found both solace and emotional release in the theatre.

Jewish DPs engaged with themes of resistance and revenge in DP theatres; they were able to reimagine a Jewish role in the Holocaust which transcended that of victimhood. Resistance thus became woven into the shared narrative of the Holocaust which was being created by the DP community through theatre. Additionally, the very act of participating in artistic endeavours, in defiance of Nazi efforts to eradicate them, and often on German soil, was a redemptive act for many survivors. It achieved, in some way, the revenge they desired.

95. Aldouby et al, "Theatre in Jewish DP Camps," 106, 108, 153.
96. Aldouby et al, "Theatre in Jewish DP Camps," 129.
97. Aldouby et al, "Theatre in Jewish DP Camps," 143–44.
98. Myers Feinstein, "Re-Imagining the Unimaginable," 44.
99. Myers Feinstein, "Re-Imagining the Unimaginable," 45.

These same performances were also fundamental in the development of a post-war Jewish identity. As the *she'erit hapletah* re-engaged with the culture and community of European Jewry, they found continuity with the stories of their own pre-war pasts, and their ancestral pasts. This occurred through the performance of traditional plays, the use of the Yiddish language, and the representation of pre-war life in cities, towns and shtetls. Identifying with a long history of Jewish suffering and resilience gave strength to those seeking to rebuild their lives after the Holocaust.

In the final stage of theatre production in DP camps, themes began to shift towards the future, and performances reflected a deliberate focus on the nascent state of Israel. This encouraged survivors to look forwards. It inspired movement, both physical and metaphorical, away from the horrors of the Holocaust, and the challenges of DP camp life, and into a new milieu filled with hope and promise. Zionist themes presented a version of existence wherein Jewish people were empowered to take control of their lives and be involved in a positive, shared mission to create something new. That the new state would be a place of sanctuary for Jews added to the psychological benefits of such representations within the theatre.

Through the work of companies like Katzet, MIKT/MIT, Tkumah and Amcho, the *she'erit hapletah* were offered therapy through theatre, slowly regaining their sense of self, their sense of community, and their hope for the future.

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Author Biography

Dr Kip Green is a senior educator and historian at the Sydney Jewish Museum. Their daily work involves teaching about the Holocaust as well as moderating Holocaust Survivor presentations. Kip has presented at national and international conferences on the topics of Holocaust education and theatre in Jewish Displaced Persons camps after World War Two. They are currently researching the shoes of Holocaust victims, as well the role of emotion in Holocaust education.

A Literary Act of Resistance: The Black Panthers Haggadah and the Mizrahi Struggle for Equal Rights in Israel

Eran Asoulin

מה נשתנה הלילה הזה, בשנת 2019, מכל הלילות? לא הרבה.
Reuven Abergel
Foreword to *The Black Panthers Haggadah (2nd ed.)*

Abstract

This article discusses the alternative Passover Haggadah written by a group of social justice activists in 1971 in the Musrara neighbourhood of Jerusalem. The group was called the Black Panthers and they used the story of the Haggadah – of the exodus from Egypt and the symbolism of slaves being released into freedom – to tell their own story of oppression, discrimination, and most importantly of the daily struggles and organising efforts aimed at improving their lives. The article considers the sociopolitical context in which this alternative Haggadah was written and explains how it and many other actions by the Black Panthers constituted a form of resistance to the oppression the Arab Jews suffered at the hands of the Jewish state.

"Every generation has its own Pharaoh."

In the foreword to the second edition of the Israeli Black Panthers Haggadah, Reuven Abergel, one of the authors of the Haggadah, wrote the following:

> How is this night different, in the year 2019, from all other nights? There is not a lot of difference, because on all nights and days Mizrahi men and Mizrahi women struggle for their rights in housing, for proper education, for the restoration of what of ours was

destroyed, for our mother tongue, for a place of respect in the history of this place, and for the future of our children in this country.[1]

This of course mirrors the beginning of *Ma Nishtana*,[2] the song in the beginning of the Jewish Haggadah. The Haggadah delineates the order of proceedings, the songs to be sung, and passages to be read during the Passover Seder, the ritual feast that marks the beginning of the Jewish holiday of Passover.

The Black Panthers were a group of social justice activists established in 1971 in the Musrara neighbourhood of Jerusalem. It was comprised of young Mizrahi Jews[3] who were born in Israel to parents who immigrated to Israel from the Arab world. They used the story of the Haggadah – of the exodus from Egypt and the symbolism of slaves being released into freedom – to tell their own story of oppression, discrimination, and most importantly of the daily struggles and organising efforts aimed at improving their lives.[4] As we'll see below, the Hebrew of the Black Panthers Haggadah magnificently follows the same pattern of the original Haggadah: the rhymes are often the same, the prosody of the sentences is similar and we are provided with a musical and poetic expression that to a non-Hebrew speaker would sound very similar if not identical to the original. But despite the similarities of rhythm and rhyme, the meaning of the songs in the Black Panthers Haggadah is different.

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1. This alternative Haggadah was written in Hebrew. Unless stated otherwise, all forthcoming translations are mine.

2. The original reads as follows: "What makes this night different from all other nights? […] On all nights we eat chametz or matzah, and on this night, only matzah! On all nights we eat any kind of vegetables, and on this night, maror!" *Haggadah for Passover*, trans. Jacob Immanuel Schochet (New York: Kehot Publication Society, 2009), 21.

3. Mizrahi Jews are Jews who immigrated to Israel from North Africa or the Near East. This is in contrast to Ashkenazi Jews, who are Jews of European descent. Another term used in this article is Arab Jew, which overlaps with the term Mizrahi. That is, Mizrahi refers to Israelis with Arab Jewish descent, whereas Arab Jew refers to Jews in the Arab world throughout history.

4. The use of the Haggadah as political literature did not originate with the Black Panthers. In 1921, for example, Soviet Jewish activists called on all members of the Bolshevik Party's Jewish Section to organise a "red Passover." They wrote several alternative Haggadot. In one version, the splitting of the matzah is interpreted in terms of the revolutionary proletariat splitting the control of the means of production away from the capitalist bourgeois; the wrapping of the matzah is interpreted in terms of the revolution that will end the oppression of the working class. See Anna Shternshis, "Passover in the Soviet Union, 1917–41," *East European Jewish Affairs* 31, no. 1 (2001): 61–76; Anna Shternshis, *Soviet and Kosher: Jewish Popular Culture in the Soviet Union*, 1923-1939. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006. The National Library of Israel website hosts a number of alternative Haggadot. See "These Passover Haggadot Will Leave You Speechless," The National Library of Israel, last modified March 21, 2018, https://blog.nli.org.il/en/pesach_haggadot/.

As Abergel put it, the Black Panthers Haggadah

> [...] was written in order to express the feelings that accompanied us from the day we arrived from Morocco in "The Democratic State of Israel". In this tale [of the Haggadah] we aimed to document the severity of the oppression [directed at us] by the authorities and the incredible will to break free from the chains of slavery and into freedom, here in the State of the Jews.[5]

The symbolism of breaking the chains of slavery and achieving freedom is of course also one of the main themes of the original Haggadah.

The five authors[6] of the Haggadah met just before Passover in April, 1971, in a dark and dilapidated tin shack on HaAyin Het Street in the Jerusalem suburb of Musrara. One of the authors sat on the floor with a typewriter and the others dictated. None of the authors had used a typewriter before, and since the letters on the typewriter keyboard are arranged in a haphazard manner, the first edition of the Haggadah had several typos. Abergel remarked that the typos were purposely left unchanged in the second edition. This was for two reasons: the first is that any Hebrew reader can easily tell what the correct spelling and meaning of the words are supposed to be. Secondly, and most importantly, the typos were left "because we do not apologise for what we were and so the text is authentic."[7]

The Black Panthers Haggadah was typed directly onto a stencil sheet so that copies could be made immediately. The stencil sheet needed to be fed into a machine called a stencil duplicator (also known as a mimeograph) in order to make the necessary copies. Abergel recounted that, presumably because they had little money and no access to such equipment, they were forced to steal the stencil duplicator (as well as the typewriter) from the office of the political party Liberalim Atzma'im in Hillel Street near Musrara. Liberalim Atzma'im, or The Independent Liberals,

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5. *Black Panther Haggadah*, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: The Civil Archive for Social Struggles, 2019).
6. The five authors are: Reuven Abergel, Rafi Marciano, Amram Butbul, David Levi, and Yacob Elbaz. The following account of the writing of the Haggadah is in part paraphrased from the foreword to the second edition.
7. *Black Panther Haggadah*, 2nd ed.

was a party that existed in Israel from 1965 to 1992. It was one of the wealthiest political parties at the time. Its first president was Pinchas Rosen, an Israeli statesman and the country's first Minister of Justice. The Black Panthers used the stencil duplicator to print many of their pamphlets and newspapers. Several hundred copies of the Haggadah were printed and the price of each was one Lira (this was the currency in Israel before the Shekel was introduced in 1980). This was almost double the price of an illustrated regular Passover Haggadah at the time. However, Abergel recounted that "When we walked around the shopkeepers and offered to sell them our Haggadah, they often gave us more than the price we asked, this was a donation to help with our struggle."

In 1972 there was an arson attack on Abergel's home, which also served as the headquarters of the Black Panthers: their entire archive of the previous two years was lost in the fire. Abergel said that for 40 years he believed that the Haggadah was lost, until one day in 2012 he was invited to give a talk at the Beit Daniel Centers for Progressive Judaism in Tel Aviv. After his talk, the head of the centre, Rabbi Meir Azari, told Abergel that he was a collector of alternative Haggadot from around the world and that he in fact had an original copy of the Black Panthers Haggadah. The Rabbi took the original copy out of a protective plastic sleeve and Abergel excitedly asked the Rabbi to photocopy the Haggadah so that he could make more copies of it. Once those new copies were made, said Abergel

I immediately gave away all the copies to my friends, fearing that it will once again be lost. I do this with all the materials that I have at my disposal. This is in contrast to those who appropriate and then make a great deal of money from the history of the oppressed – these people are mostly responsible for the oppression itself.[8]

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8. *Black Panther Haggadah*, 2nd ed., 7.

The rest of this article will be devoted to the Black Panthers Haggadah and the sociopolitical context in which it was written.[9] The written documents the Black Panthers produced are impressive in their scope and quantity, and of course are not restricted to the Haggadah they wrote. This alternative Haggadah is a fascinating act of literary resistance to the oppression the Arab Jews suffered at the hands of the Jewish state. The power structures of the latter were and continue to be overwhelmingly comprised of European, Ashkenazi, Jews who have almost complete control over the decision-making of every aspect of the state (see note 56 for examples). It should be stressed that the Black Panthers not only wrote about their miserable living conditions and oppression but rather took active steps to eliminate it. For example, they organised demonstrations (often violently broken up by police with scores badly wounded); they set up community centres, kindergartens, and schools when the Israeli government and the local council were unable or unwilling to do so; they organised support centres where drug addicts could go for help; they helped the poor source food when they could not afford it; and they published and distributed newspapers, pamphlets and posters that documented their difficult lives and reported on the oppression that was not reported in the mainstream media.[10]

"You try sleeping like that!"

The Musrara neighbourhood in Jerusalem, which borders the ultra-Orthodox neighbourhood of Mea Shearim in the north and the Christian Quarter and Muslim Quarter in the south, was founded in 1889 by wealthy Arab residents from

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9. The Black Panthers Haggadah is now published by Jewish Currents Press in a third bilingual edition with accompanying articles, expository footnotes, and photos of the Black Panthers from the early 1970s.

10. For details of the Israeli state's oppression of the Arab Jews and of the activities of the Black Panthers see, for example, Deborah Bernstein, "Conflict and Protest in Israeli Society: The Case of the Black Panthers of Israel," *Youth & Society* 16, no. 2 (1984): 129-152; Deborah Bernstein, "Oriental and Ashkenazi Jewish Women in the Labor Market: Calling the Equality Bluff," in *Women in Israel*, ed. Barbara Swirski & Marilyn P. Safir (New York: Pergamon, 1991), 192-96; Yehouda Shenhav, *The Arab-Jews: Nationalism, Religion and Ethnicity* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Am Oved Publishers, 2003); Rachel Shabi, *Not the Enemy: Israel's Jews from Arab Lands* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009); Sami Shalom Chetrit, *Intra-Jewish Conflict in Israel: White Jews, Black Jews* (New York: Routledge, 2010); Bryan K. Roby, *The Mizrahi Era of Rebellion: Israel's Forgotten Civil Rights Struggle*, 1948–1966 (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2015); Asaf Elia-Shalev, *Israel's Black Panthers: The Radicals Who Punctured a Nation's Founding Myth* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2024).

Jerusalem's Old City. They built private villas there just outside the Old City walls and shared the neighbourhood with a small number of Jews, one of which was the family of a young Ruth Dayan (née Schwartz) – later to become an activist, founder of the first fashion house in Israel, and wife of Israeli statesman and general Moshe Dayan. In 1948, following the war and the evacuation and expulsion of its Arab residents,[11] Musrara was split into two, with the western half on the Israeli side and the eastern side becoming part of Jordan.

By the end of May, 1948, an Israeli Interior Ministry official reported that Musrara was being settled with "*olim* from Muslim countries". This official stated that this must be done "if Israel wanted to hold on to it [Musrara]".[12] These *olim*[13] were almost entirely from North Africa or the Near East. Reuven Abergel described his experience living in Musrara as follows:

> We had no electricity, no water, ten people in a room sleeping on the floor. The Jordanians shut off the water and the electricity after the war. We couldn't light fires because the smoke would choke us. These were Arab houses [we lived in], so below each house there was a well. That made the floor freezing cold. Mum, dad, and ten brothers and sisters in a 20 metre apartment on the floor, you try sleeping like that! That's the way it was until the 1960s.[14]

> There were no toilet facilities. We went to the toilet [outside] in the fields of the neighbourhood. […] We ate what we stole and what we collected [in the streets]. Sometimes my mother cooked bread. Tell your wife to cook bread for you, to collect dry bread from the street, to put it in a pot and cook it, and to add a lot of hot chilli and salt so that you could eat it and not vomit.[15]

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11. See Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004)
12. Quoted in Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*, 393.
13. In Hebrew this literally means "the ascenders". The term refers to new immigrants to Israel.
14, Quoted in the online preview of the Jewish Currents Press edition of the Black Panthers Haggadah. Available here: https://he.panthershaggadah.com. Accessed September 10, 2024.
15. Quoted in Gil Plotkin, "All of a Sudden We Raised Our Heads [in Hebrew]," Davar Magazine, July 1, 2021. https://www.davar1.co.il/316996.

In 1961, a local Israeli newspaper, *Kol Haam,*[16] reported the state of Musrara as follows:

> The streets […] of Musrara [show their] poverty and pollution, overfilled with flies, the cries of toddlers, the hustle of teenagers, the shouts of women […] Musrara – a cesspit of waste and poverty.[17]

"The shame of poverty is the shame of the citizens [of Musrara]," the journalist continued, but those who should really be ashamed are "the authorities, which the citizens of Musrara want to denounce" for their role in making their life in Musrara so difficult. "The facts speak for themselves," the journalist added dryly.

The same local newspaper reported the story of a resident of Musrara called Yakov ben David, the father of a family of eight. In the house in which his family lives "there is no water and no electricity, there is no toilet and no sewage", and yet the family "continues to live there despite it all and every hour of its life there is a kind of defiant act against the authorities" who effectively tell the family that "as far as we're concerned you do not exist." The local doctor reported that the family is often being treated for diarrhoea and vomiting and that "it is necessary to replace their housing with one that is fit for humans", this is essential "for the health of the children and the parents". Ben David reported that every governmental agency he had approached for help blamed a different governmental agency and as a result their dire situation remained unchanged. The journalist remarked that "The Health Department and the Sanitation Department are 'not interested' if cockroaches, snakes, mice, and other

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16. *Kol Haam*, "The Voice of the People", was the daily newspaper of the Israeli Communist Party from 1937 to 1975. The article quoted in the text is indicative of the support and solidarity that the far Left provided the Arab Jews. This is in contrast to the social democratic Left, epitomised by Golda Meir. The establishment was very much opposed to *Kol Haam* and similar publications. For example, in a famous case in 1953, Ben Gurion threatened to put the members of the Israeli Communist Party (thousands of Israeli citizens) in internment camps and "if we need to shoot them, we will shoot them" after *Kol Haam* supported the Soviet Union in a show trial involving Jews (the so-called Doctors' Plot). Soon after Stalin died, the Soviet Jews in question were released, and the charges were seen as a fabrication. For details of the Doctors' Plot, see Jonathan Brent & Vladimir Pavlovich Naumov, *Stalin's Last Crime: The Plot Against the Jewish Doctors*, 1948–1953 (New York: HarperCollins, 2003). Ben Gurion's threats are quoted in Shlomo Nakdimon, "If there will be a need to shoot, we will shoot!" [in Hebrew], Haaretz, November 11, 2011, https://www.haaretz.co.il/magazine/2011-11-11/ty-article/0000017f-df9f-db22-a17f-ffbf74d10000.
17. Tzadik Kay, "Musrara: A Neighbourhood of Destitution and Poverty [in Hebrew]," *Kol Haam Daily*, July 13, 1961. Only the author's initials are given: these are the Hebrew letters Tzadik for the first name and Kay for the last name.

disease-carrying animals bite the growing children in the No Man's Land that belongs to the State of Israel."

The journalist then concluded the article by remarking that there were days "in which all his pleas went unanswered, in which ben David sunk into a pit of desperation", but then ben David discovered that it was only through struggle that "he will achieve his rights". Ben David trusts in the struggle entirely, the journalist continued, "as a man must when he suffers at the hands of the Israeli regime." "This trust, no doubt, has spread to all the citizens of the Musrara neighbourhood, who will continue to organise in the struggle that promises a better life." The Black Panthers movement was a crucial part of this struggle. It should be stressed that the Mizrahim were at the time and of course still are Jewish citizens of Israel; on paper they should have had the same rights as the Jews who immigrated from Europe, the Ashkenazim.

The Mizrahim living in Musrara, when they were employed, worked in "petty trade, seasonal- or day-jobs sponsored by the government (mostly in road-surfacing and reforestation)". For example, some were put to work "fixing roofs and being randomly hired in cement- and stone- factories".[18] In 2011, Claudia De Martino conducted a series of oral interviews with old Mizrahi residents of Musrara who had been living in the neighbourhood before and after the 1967 war – the interviews were conducted in French, Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic. These interviews, and other scholarship cited in this article, corroborate the descriptions of Abergel and the Black Panthers Haggadah. What is of interest in these oral interviews is what transpired after the 1967 war, when Jerusalem came under sole Israeli control. Overnight the marginal location of Musrara, on the border with Jordan, was given a new geographical centrality as new roads were opened up to

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18. The quotes until the end of this section are all from Claudia De Martino, "Mizrahi Voices in Musrara: An Inter-Jewish Discriminative Spatial Pattern," *EchoGéo* 25 (2013): 7-8. For more on the history of the Arab Jews in the first few decades of Israel's existence see: Shlomo Swirski, *Israel: The Oriental Majority* (London: Zed Books, 1989); Shenhav, *The Arab-Jews*; Yigal Bin-Nun, "Between Euphoria and Disappointment: The Jewish Community After Moroccan Independence [in Hebrew]," *Gesher: Journal of Jewish Affairs* 148 (2004): 45-59; Shabi, *Not the Enemy*; Yaron Tsur, "Moroccan Jewry and Decolonization: A Modern History of Collective Social Boundaries," in *Borders and Boundaries in and around Dutch Jewish History*, ed. Judith Frishman, David J. Wertheim, Ido de Haan & Joël J. Cahen (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2011), 193-200.

the Old City:

> The oral witnesses agreed on the fact that after 1967, more opportunities opened to all, and spread [to] all layers of society. […]   At the same time, those who were longing for radical changes brought by the victory but did not succeed in profiting from the "war chest", developed a strong feeling of frustration towards the political establishment and its refusal of redistributing state revenues among the poorer strata of the population.

While some Mizrahim found their situation improved after 1967, "many others found themselves abandoned by the State, even after having fulfilled their military duty service, [this was at a time when there was] a general increase of national wealth. Therefore, those left out from the 'war's dividends' radicalized in their opposition to the ruling class."Thus, the 1967 war "succeeded in releasing new forces by spreading euphoria and boosting welfare, but also in nurturing new social claims." Moreover, as a direct consequence of the 1967 war, "the newly-acquired centrality of Musrara turned the neighbourhood into an object of property speculation and increasingly stronger pressures were exerted on the old residents in order to push them to leave their houses and vacate an area with great potential [for] development."[19]

The older generations, the first residents of Musrara, did not speak Hebrew (at least not initially), but their children became perfectly fluent in both Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic. The first generation of Arab Jews to be born in Israel created a specific type of cultural output that reflected their cultural heritage, their lived experience, as well as the bilingual world in which they lived. One striking cultural product of this period is the alternative Haggadah that was

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19. For more on Musrara in regard to the topics discussed here see, for example, Paola Caridi, "Musrara, the Center of the World," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 62 (2015): 29-49; Michael Jacobson, "Musrara: Not What it Was [in Hebrew]," *Davar Magazine*, July 1, 2021, https://www.davar1.co.il/317089; Abigail Jacobson & Moshe Naor, "Between the Border of Despair and the 'Circle of Tears': Musrara on the Margins of Jewish-Arab Existence in Jerusalem, *Jewish Social Studies* 28, no. 2 (2023): 75-98; Moshe Naor & Abigail Jacobson, "Trapped Neighborhoods, Trapped Identities: Wadi Salib and Musrara Compared, 1949-1967," *Journal of Urban History* (2024), https://doi.org/10.1177/00961442241271092

written in 1971 by the Black Panthers.[20]

"Golda, teach us Yiddish."

There is a famous photograph[21] of a demonstration in Tel Aviv in the early 1970s by the Black Panthers. One of the placards, homemade and painted in black paint in large letters on white paper, reads in Hebrew "Golda, teach us Yiddish". The phrase, of course, alludes to Golda Meir (Israel's Prime Minister from 1969 to 1974) – it is sarcastic and refers to the oppression of the culture and language of the Arab Jews and concomitant celebration and support of a mainly European Jewish culture. An early publication of the Black Panthers explained their choice of name as follows:

> There is a not insignificant expression in the fact that we have to call ourselves Black Panthers. If we were to call ourselves The Organisation for Discriminated Youth from Arab Lands, you would have given us the proverbial middle finger – it would not have made an impression on anyone. It would have been yet another organisation among thousands.

> Compared to the latter, the name we chose is frightening and uncomfortable. But the truth is that we are not beasts but rather we are human beings. The truth is also that the vast majority of us are not black but rather white. And we are being screwed – immensely so.[22]

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20. Another example is the unique hybrid music that the Arab Jews created in Israel. Horowitz (1999; 2010) discusses how the relocation of North African and Middle Eastern Jews to Israel created a cultural melting pot that brought those communities together. Israeli Mediterranean music, as Horowitz terms it, or Mizrahi music, was initially rejected by the Eurocentric Israeli music industry in the 1970s because its Arabic sounds violated prevailing national and artistic categories, but from the 1990s Mizrahi music infiltrated the Israeli mainstream and helped in the process of reshaping the boundaries of Israeli national identity. See also Inbal Perelson, "Power Relations in the Israeli Popular Music System," *Popular Music* 17, no. 1 (1998): 113–28; Edwin Seroussi, "Yam Tikhoniyut: Transformations of Mediterraneanism in Israeli Music," in *Mediterranean Mosaic: Popular Music and Global Sounds*, ed. Goffredo Plastino (New York: Routledge, 2003), 179–97; Galit Saada-Ophir, "Borderland Pop: Arab Jewish Musicians and the Politics of Performance," *Cultural Anthropology* 21, no. 2 (2006): 205–33.

21. For more on the way in which the Arab Jews were portrayed in photography and film see Na'ama Klorman-Eraqi, "The Black Panthers of Israel and Ya'akov Shofar's Musrara Photographs: Taming and Politicisation (1978–83)," *History of Photography* 46, no. 4 (2022): 266–82; and Noa Hazan, *Visual Syntax of Race: Arab-Jews in Zionist Visual Culture* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2022).

22. This and the following quotes are all from *Davar HaPanterim HaShechorim* [The Black Panthers Times], June 1971.

The author goes on to remark that if the discrimination and oppression of the Arab Jews is not halted immediately, there is a danger that it will continue for generations "or until the state [of Israel] itself will cease to be":

> For will not the current situation [of the oppression of the Arab Jews] destroy the country? And then the problem will be no more. We will meet after another two thousand years [of exile] for another chance at it.

However, the Black Panthers "do not want to reach the point where the state is destroyed due to needless brotherly hatred. We want to save it as soon as possible." Therefore, they conclude, "we, and perhaps we alone, are a Zionist party. Today, we are small; tomorrow, we will be big."

It should be stressed that, contrary to a popular misunderstanding, the Black Panthers were never anti-State, anti-Jewish, or anti-Zionist. Throughout their publications, which are impressive, well-researched, and intellectual, one finds their commitment to Judaism, to traditional values, and their love for the country in which they were born (the Black Panthers, recall, were the first generation of Arab Jews to be born in Israel). Their aim was equality for all the *citizens* in the State of Israel, regardless of their background or country of origin. For example, in another of their early publications, the Black Panthers had a section titled "How does one become a member of the Black Panthers organisation?". There are ten core values listed: the first is "Promising to fight to eradicate the gap between communities [Mizrahi and Ashkenazi]". The third is "To distance oneself from any contact from the criminal world." The sixth is "To love the State of Israel with all our hearts and souls [...]"[23]

The Black Panthers movement is one of the most important and influential in Israel's history, and provides an inspiring example of a successful grassroots movement

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23. See *Phasish: A Publication of the Black Panthers Organisation and "The Second Israel" Movement* [in Hebrew]. Undated [presumably early 1970s], accessed October 16, 2024, https://www.marxists.org/hebrew/organizations/panterim/1971/panterim-bitaon.pdf.

and of the power of people organising for social change. As we shall see below, the Black Panthers Haggadah time and time again stresses that social and political change will only come from below: there is no use begging the oppressors to stop their oppression, for change cannot come from within the government. Rather, the people below must force the government to change. As the Black Panthers Haggadah puts it at the end of their version of *Echad Mi Yodea*: "Who knows fourteen? I know fourteen: the solution is in your hands."

The Black Panthers' version of *Echad Mi Yodea*, one of the most well known of the Passover Seder songs, is as follows:

Who knows one? I know one, One is the government.

Who knows two? I know two, Two "ethnic groups."

Who knows three? I know three, Three to a bed.

Who knows four? I know four, Four brothers locked up in prison.

Who knows five? I know five, Five people for every loaf of bread.

Who knows six? I know six, Six days in the bomb shelters.

Who knows seven? I know seven, Seven-day work week (including dreary nights).

Who knows eight? I know eight, Eight days to brit milah (every year a child or maybe two).

Who knows nine? I know nine, Nine city blocks for Black people (housing projects).

Who knows ten? I know ten, Ten income tax days a third of your paycheck (assuming that you have a job).

Who knows eleven? I know eleven, Eleven people from the same neighborhood kicked out of the army in one day.

Who knows twelve? I know twelve, Twelve people sleeping in one room.

Who knows thirteen? I know thirteen, Thirteen, we're sick of saying this over and over.

Who knows fourteen? I know fourteen, the solution is in your hands.[24]

Compare this to the original Haggadah: "Who knows one? I know one, One is our God in heaven and on earth. Who knows two? I know two, Two are the Tablets of the Ten Commandments. […] Three are the Fathers of the Jewish nation […] Four are the Mothers of the Jewish nation […] Five are the books of the Torah […]". This is of course not meant to be a literal modern-day rendering of the original text. It is not as if the Black Panthers are claiming that the five books of the Torah are to modern eyes five loaves of bread. Rather, the Black Panthers use the device of this cumulative song to tell their own story.

The success and influence of the Black Panthers movement is also the reason for the movement being dismissed and repudiated by the authorities at the time, as well as by the political and economic elite who controlled the country (as noted above, these were and still are, predominantly Ashkenazi). A revealing example of this is the famous (to many, infamous) meeting that the Black Panthers had with Prime Minister Golda Meir. In early 1971, Abergel suggested that the Black Panthers send a letter to Meir to ask to set up a meeting. The letter read, in part, "Dear Prime Minister, Golda Meir, we, the Black Panthers, would like to ask to meet with you. We ask that in the meeting the Education Minister and the Welfare Minister will also be present." The letter concluded with the following remark: "You're missing out that you're not meeting with us."[25] The request to meet with the Education Minister and the Welfare Minister reflects the priorities of the Black Panthers, the issues they wanted to fix most.

Abergel recounted in a recent interview what happened when Golda Meir did not reply to the Black Panthers' letter:

Of course she doesn't answer. What sort of idiot Prime Minister would answer a group of Panthers that does not pose any threat [to the establishment]. So then we

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24. *Black Panthers Haggadah*, Jewish Currents Press edition, 50.
25. See interview with Abergel in Plotkin, "All of a Sudden We Raised Our Heads."

said: 'Yallah, let's organise a hunger strike at the Kotel'[26]

The Black Panthers understood that the government – or, for that matter, any power structure – does not give anything away unless it is forced to do so. Power structures do not give up power, do not cease the oppression they benefit from, from the kindness of their hearts. There must be an unbearable cost that makes the power structure understand that continuing the oppression is detrimental even to their own ranks.

Correspondingly, the Black Panthers organised a hunger strike at the Kotel (the Western Wall in Jerusalem). There is a beautifully composed photograph of the hunger strike:[27] the members of the Black Panthers, both men and women,[28] sit on the ground near the Western Wall. They are dressed respectfully and the men are each wearing a kippah. There is a folded-up pram and a couple of children play. Two armed Israeli soldiers stand near the striking group speaking to a woman and a curious observer. The Western Wall is behind the strikers, with some people facing it and praying. In the middle of the group there are large signs put on the ground, some of which read in Hebrew: "We demand what we deserve as citizens", "Until when will 10 people live in a single room?", and "We are a fact. You are the solution". The Western Wall, the icon of the Israeli State, the symbol of the purported unity of the Jewish people, was turned in one action into a mirror showing the reality of the miserable daily life of the Arab Jews. It was a perfectly timed and excellently organised peaceful protest that worked superbly.

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26. Quoted in Plotkin, "All of a Sudden We Raised Our Heads."

27. See *Black Panthers Haggadah*, Jewish Currents Press edition, 50.

28. The involvement of women in the movement should be stressed. As Elia-Shalev (2024: 186) puts it: "the women of the Panthers participated in protests and planning meetings and carried out critical community organizing jobs from crafting protest banners to bringing meals and cigarettes to those jailed as a result of protests. In his story-telling decades later, Abergel would praise women like his then-wife, Rachelle, or Mazal Sa'il, Louise Cohen, Shulamit Tsuberi, and Aliza Marciano as heroes of the movement." See Elia-Shalev, *Israel's Black Panthers*, 186. The second edition of the Black Panthers Haggadah is dedicated to Louise Cohen, who passed away two years before its publication: "This edition is dedicated to the memory of Louise Cohen, a Panther and human rights activist, poet and beloved resident of Petah Tikva, who never ceased to encourage young people to excel and persevere until the day she died. Louise dedicated her life to promoting education and eliminating socioeconomic gaps between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim, participated in the activities of the Black Panthers, and was a member of the Mizrahi Democratic Rainbow Organization." See *Black Panthers Haggadah*, 2nd edition.

Abergel describes the choice to organise a hunger strike at the Western Wall as "winning at the casino." This is because:

> [...it] was the Achilles Heel of the government. There were many tourists there and foreign people who walked around and saw hungry adults with children who spoke Hebrew and English. They didn't believe that in the Jewish state there are hungry people.[29]

As a result of the press (both local and foreign press) and attention that the hunger strike brought the Black Panthers, "Golda relented and sent us a letter inviting us to a meeting."[30] "We knew that it was not the hunger strike itself that would move the establishment," said Abergel, "but rather the embarrassment that the tourists would see the strike."[31] In other words, the government cared more about its image in the eyes of the world than about the hungry Arab Jewish children living in slum conditions in Musrara.

As part of their preparation for the meeting with Meir, Abergel invited four fellow Black Panthers to his home and asked each one to bring a Passover Haggadah. He wanted to write an alternative version of the Haggadah according the ideals and aspirations of the Black Panthers. "We are all traditional people," said Abergel, "and we had at home Passover Haggadot from Morocco."[32] The group also did their research. "We have work to do until the meeting," Abergel told his compatriots at the time. "We need to go to

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29. Quoted in Plotkin, "All of a sudden We Raised Our Heads."
30. Plotkin, "All of a sudden We Raised Our Heads."
31. *Black Panthers Haggadah*, Jewish Currents Press edition, 51.
32. Quoted in Dudi Patimer, "The Haggadah of the Black Panthers: Reuven Abergel Recollects the Meeting with Golda Meir [in Hebrew]." *Maariv*, March 23, 2023. https://www.maariv.co.il/news/politics/Article-991065. Hebrew.

the universities and look for students who are studying their bachelor or doctorate in disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, and criminology." Abergel recounted that "We walked around Givat Ram [the area of Jerusalem that houses many of Israel's national institutions] and found people who helped us to collect statistics."[33]

In their Haggadah, the Black Panthers cast Golda Meir in the role of the Pharaoh. The Pharaoh was of course the villain of the tale of the Haggadah, the person who held the Israelites in slavery. We read the following in the original Haggadah:

> God took us out of Egypt [rescued us][34] with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, and with a great manifestation, and with signs and wonders. God took us out of Egypt [rescued us] – not through an angel, not through a seraph and not through a messenger. The Holy One, blessed be He, did it in His glory by Himself![35]

In the Black Panthers Haggadah, on the other hand, we read that

> The Black Panthers rescued us with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, and with a great reverence, and with protests and hunger strikes. The Black Panthers rescued us not through an angel, not through a seraph and not through a messenger. The Black Panthers did it in their Glory and by themselves![36]

This is a constant theme in the Black Panthers Haggadah: no one will help us if we don't help ourselves; we need to organise and work together in the present and sow the seeds for a better tomorrow. Abergel remarked that casting Meir as the Pharaoh was not simply poetic license but rather the hard truth of the matter. Meir acted towards them in the same way that the Pharaoh acted towards the

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33. Quoted in Plotkin, "All of a sudden We Raised Our Heads."

34. The verb in Hebrew here (ויוציאנו) literally means "took us out of" but a better translation would be "rescued us". This is the sense of the verb that the Black Panthers Haggadah uses.

35. This and other English translations of the original Haggadah are from the 2009 English translation published by Kehot Publication Society.

36. *Black Panthers Haggadah*, 2nd edition.

Israelites: with callousness and indifference. "It was in Golda's power to release us from the oppression," Abergel said recently, "but instead she tried to stifle our cries [for equality] already at the beginning of the struggle and all along the way."[37]

This was clearly evident at the infamous meeting between Meir and the Black Panthers, which took place on April 13, 1971, lasting three hours. The third edition of the Black Panthers Haggadah has an account of the meeting: it is worth quoting at length. This account is corroborated by recently declassified documents, including the full transcription of the meeting.

> Early that morning, we gathered at the Panthers' headquarters and took a taxi to the prime minister's office. She was seated at a table with five chairs around it.[38] To the side sat Yigal Allon, the education and culture minister and former Palmach commander, Michael Hazani, the minister of welfare, and a stenographer.
>
> We sat around the table with me on Meir's right. One by one, she went around asking our names. She already knew them, she just wanted to kill time. Then she asked, "What do you do?" When we answered that we don't have jobs, she asked, "Why don't you get a job?" Then, "What does your father do? Why doesn't he have a job?" "Because there's no work," we answered. She went on: "What do you study? Ah, why don't you study?"
>
> Finally, her questioning was too much for us to bear. She was implying that we were parasites. "We didn't come here to see a social worker," I said. "We came to see a prime minister." We handed her some papers detailing statistics about poverty and unemployment. She said that she had experts to give her statistics. We

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37. *Black Panthers Haggadah*, Jewish Currents Press edition.
38. The five Black Panthers who attended the meeting were: Yacob Elbaz, Rafi Marciano, Sa'adia Marciano, David Levi, and Reuven Abergel. When the internal government documents from this period were declassified, it was revealed that Yacob Elbaz was an informant and agent provocateur who worked for the Israeli police and internal security service as part of their surveillance and attempted subversion of the Black Panthers movement. Elbaz, for example, purposely escalated peaceful protests and reported to the authorities on even the most minute details of what the Black Panthers did.

told her that either her experts were misleading her or their statistics were wrong. She was beside herself: "Are you saying that I'm a liar?"

"No, only that your statistics are wrong."

"If you're calling me a liar then this meeting is over."

As we talked, she smoked one cigarette after another, lighting each cigarette from the end of the last. I've never seen someone smoke so much. Then she said, "Apologize for calling me a liar." I said, "I never called you that, I only said that you're getting wrong information." We were at an impasse. Neither of us said anything.

So I asked her if I could have a cigarette. She pointed to a wooden box on her desk filled with cigarettes. "Take, please," she said. They were good cigarettes. Chesterfields. I asked if she could give me a light and she lit one with hers, putting the end of her cigarette to the end of the one in my mouth, her hand shaking. We both blew smoke for a while. Then, I took the box of cigarettes and passed them to my friends, each one lighting his cigarette with the lit cigarette of the person next to him. No one said anything, we were all just smoking. Soon the room filled with so much smoke we could barely see Ministers Allon and Hazani – almost like we were on a plane looking down at the clouds below.

After a few puffs from the cigarette, I said, "You know what, I have no problem apologizing because I never meant to call you a liar, I was talking about the people who work for you." She answered, "I believe my people, I have the best people."

After a while she said, "Leave the general public's problems to the government. You know there's a cake, and I am responsible for dividing it up, and one can't give the cake to everybody." She started to explain how there are immigrants from Russia, and then a third goes to the defense budget, then there's this, and then there's that, and so on, and that they're doing the best they can. Sa'adia Marciano said something like "If this

is your cake, and you're dividing it so we get nothing,
then from our perspective there is no cake."[39]

The scene is surreal, and could be a scene from a movie. Moreover, given what we know about the daily struggles and horrible living conditions the members of the Black Panthers endured, one cannot avoid being struck by the government's complete indifference and unwillingness to even understand, let alone help, the Arab Jews.

"Every generation has its own Pharaoh," Abergel said in a recent interview, "and for us Golda was the Pharaoh of the times. At the meeting she mostly wanted to show us that she is the boss."[40] In a different interview Abergel remarked that

They [Meir and the two ministers] were used to people who wanted to please them. Exactly like it is today. The committees for the Moroccans, the Kurds, the Iraqis, they are like hands are to gloves. We'll help them release a prayer book here, to build a synagogue there. All of a sudden comes a group of kids that have no god. No hierarchy. We didn't arrive with a shopping list. We came with a list of grievances. She [Meir] was in shock and that's why she responded like she did.[41]

Then came the infamous remark that Golda Meir made in regard to the Black Panthers. Meir had a meeting with Shaul Ben-Simhon, one of the leaders of the Moroccan community, a founder of the city of Ashdod, a key politician in the Histadrut (Israel's national trade union), and the instigator for the national celebration of the Mimouna (the traditional celebration of Maghrebi Jews that takes place the day after the end of Passover). Ben-Simhon was a social activist who worked tirelessly for the Moroccan community, but he was also part of the establishment, holding positions of power in the Histadrut and other key organisations. As such, said Abergel, "Ben-Simhon was always sent by the establishment in order to pacify us."[42] After a particularly confrontational demonstration in which

39. *Black Panthers Haggadah*, Jewish Currents Press edition, 56-57. Translation from this edition. I have amended the last sentence to better reflect the meaning of the original Hebrew.
40. Quoted in Patimer, "The Haggadah of the Black Panthers."
41. Quoted in Plotkin, "All of a Sudden We Raised Our Heads."
42. Quoted in Plotkin, "All of a Sudden We Raised Our Heads."

several Black Panthers were violently handled by the police and put in gaol, Ben-Simhon was sent there at four in the morning in order to release them. In a subsequent meeting with Meir, Ben-Simhon told her that he saw the Black Panthers in gaol bruised and heavily injured from police harassment. Moreover, he told Meir that they actually seemed to him to be rather nice people. Meir rebuked him and answered: "No, they are not nice people." This was hardly the worse that was said of the Black Panthers: at around the same time Ben-Simhon organised a meeting with the Police Minister, Shlomo Hillel, in order to discuss the gaoled activists. Ben-Simhon began by explaining that the activists have grievances, that they are young and have serious problems in their communities. But the Police Minister was unmoved: "No!" he said. "They are criminals! It's not possible! It's not possible to change them."[43]

There are some misunderstandings, often mythologies, of the exact context in which Golda Meir said of the Black Panthers that "They are not nice people." But one does not need such a remark to know what the establishment thought of the Black Panthers. It is sufficient to look at what the establishment did to reach the same conclusions that the Black Panthers reached. One does not need these conclusions to be further reinforced by explicit statements from the oppressors. Nevertheless, in 2011, the Israeli State Archives declassified several documents relating to the meeting between Meir and the Black Panthers, amongst a trove of other documents depicting the way in which the establishment regarded the Arab Jewish communities and their social activists. These documents confirm all of the above. It is revealing to have a look at these documents, for they depict the fear, mistrust, indeed the panic that the establishment had in regard to the Black Panthers.

The Passover Haggadah has a section which discusses the ten plagues that struck Pharaoh's Egypt. This section links back to the aforementioned section that read "God took us out of Egypt [rescued us] with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, and with a great manifestation, and with signs and wonders." The original Haggadah explains that

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43. Yahel Farag, "The Man Who Turned the Mimouna from a Private Event to a National Holiday [in Hebrew]," *Davar Magazine*, April 2, 2021, https://www.davar1.co.il/294415/.

"Strong hand" indicates two [plagues]; "Outstretched arm," another two [plagues]; "Great manifestation," another two [plagues]; "Signs" another two; and "Wonders," another two.

These are the Ten Plagues which the Holy One, blessed be He, brought upon the Egyptians, namely as follows [...][44]

As each plague is read, it is traditional to dip one's finger in a cup of wine and spill a little of the wine. This is done ten times. The corresponding section in the Black Panthers Haggadah reads as follows:

"With a strong hand" means two [plagues]. "With an outstretched arm" means two [plagues]. And "with great awe" means two. And "with protests" means two. And "with carrying signs" means two, and "with hunger strikes" means two.

And these are the ten plagues that the Black Panthers of Musrara brought upon the government in Jerusalem, and they are:

1) Establishing the Jerusalem Black Panthers Organization.
2) Distributing flyers.
3) Protests where we try as best we can to make sure there's no violence.
4) Chaining ourselves to the Knesset building with iron chains.
5) A hunger strike at the Western Wall so that the eyes of every Jew in Zion might see.
6) Teddy Kollek [the mayor of Jerusalem at the time], we won't get off the grass that you supposedly planted "with your own two hands."[45]

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44. *Haggadah for Passover*, 33.
45. This refers to the protest that the Black Panthers organised in front of the Jerusalem municipality building in March, 1971. Mayor Teddy Kollek was in the building at the time and when he noticed the protesters he was incensed that they were standing on the newly mowed grass. Kollek opened his window and shouted "Get off the grass! Protest or no protest – just get off the grass." Kollek then walked out of the building in anger, called the Black Panthers "brats", and attempted to physically move the protesters from the lawn and onto the paved area. When that failed, Kollek quickly retreated inside the municipality building.

7) Protest and solidarity vigil in Wise Auditorium.[46]

8) You won't be able to buy off the leaders like you were able to in the past… Wadi Salib.[47]

9) They spent a few million to paper over the existing socioeconomic gap.

10) Nevertheless, and against all odds, the Black Panthers will exist until our goal itself is achieved.[48]

The original Haggadah then moves on to say that Rabbi Yehudah had an acronym for the ten plagues in order to facilitate remembering them: DeTzaCh (blood, frogs, lice); ADaSh (beasts, pestilence, boils); BeAChaV (hail, locust, darkness, firstborn). These correspond to the first Hebrew letters of the name of each plague. The original Haggadah continues:

> Rabbi Yosai the Gallilean said: "How do you know that the Egyptians were stricken by ten plagues in Egypt, and then were struck by fifty plagues at the sea? In Egypt it says of them, 'The magicians said to Pharaoh "This is the finger of God."' […] Now, how often were they smitten by 'the finger'? Ten plagues! Thus you must now say that in Egypt they were struck by ten plagues, and at the sea they were stricken by fifty plagues."[49]

The corresponding section in the Black Panthers Haggadah changes Rabbi Yehudah to Rabbi Porush. The latter was a Haredi politician, at the time one of Jerusalem's deputy mayors, and was in charge of the welfare services in the area. The third

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46. This refers to an event at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem organised by left wing Ashkenazi students. The students invited the Black Panthers to come speak with them. The university's largest hall, Wise Auditorium, was filled to capacity, with many people standing in the aisles and sitting on the floor.

47. This refers to the 1959 Wadi Salib uprising. Wadi Salib was a poor area of Haifa (in Israel's north) with mostly Mizrahi residents. The initial protest was triggered by the Israeli police shooting and badly wounding a Mizrahi man in a cafe in the neighbourhood. The protest of thousands of Mizrahi residents was violently broken up by the police. The protesters remained steadfast, however, and "erected barricades and fortified apartment buildings, fighting off the police for weeks. Despite an almost total media blackout and the suppression of information by the state, word of the uprising spread to other Mizrahi population centers, where solidarity actions were staged. Musrara was no exception. Many of those who would go on to be leaders in the Panthers were children at the time; Abergel was 16. […] This was a foundational experience for the future Panthers." However, the Black Panthers were critical of the way in which the Wadi Salib uprising transpired, and of their parents' generation in general. The Panthers felt that the older generation was going about their liberation the wrong way and that the latter were complicit in their own oppression. The quote is from p. 61 in Jewish Currents Press edition of the Black Panthers Haggadah. For more about the Wadi Salib uprising, see Yfaat Weiss, *A Confiscated Memory: Wadi Salib and Haifa's Lost Heritage* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

48. *Black Panthers Haggadah*, Jewish Current Press edition, 59-61.

49. *Haggadah for Passover*, 33.

edition of the Black Panthers Haggadah explains that Porush

> would constantly denigrate the Panthers. Serving under Porush was a crop of idealistic and incredibly innovative Mizrahi social workers working for community empowerment and structural change. They were, correctly, accused by Porush of nurturing the rebelliousness of the nascent Panthers.[50]

The Black Panthers Haggadah continues as follows (the acronym is changed here of course – each letter corresponds to the beginning of the name of the "plague" that the Black Panthers brought upon the government in Jerusalem):

> Rabbi Porush had an acronym for them [the plagues]: Ha'ChaH – KaShaT – ALaHV.

> And Golda answered, saying "This is the finger of the Black Panthers." Rabbi Kahane said that the government was struck by ten plagues, but in the eyes of the public it was as if it was struck by fifty plagues.

Rabbi Yosai the Gallilean is replaced by Rabbi Kahane. The latter was an extremist right-wing figure who founded the Jewish Defence League (JDL) in North America. This group and the political party Kahane founded in Israel, Kach, have been subsequently understood as far right terrorist groups in North America and elsewhere. In 1988, the Israeli Knesset barred Kach from participating in any election due to its extreme and racist politics. The third edition of the Black Panthers Haggadah explains that

> The Kahanists wore military berets and raised their fists in the gesture of Black militants, earning them the moniker "Panthers with Kippahs" in the Israeli press. In September 1971, about six months after the Panthers wrote the Haggadah, Kahane sought to escape the attention of US authorities who considered him a domestic terrorist by moving the JDL to Israel. From the very beginning, the JDL saw the Panthers as

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50. *Black Panthers Haggadah*, Jewish Current Press edition, 61.

antagonists and antisemitic because of their left-wing politics. […] On the streets of Jerusalem, encounters between the Kahanists and the Panthers were tense and sometimes led to scuffles. […] The Panthers recognized the racism of the Kahanists from the very beginning and organized against Kahane's recruitment appeals targeting Mizrahi communities.[51]

The Black Panthers Haggadah continues:

And the Knesset Members said to Golda "This is the finger of the Black Panthers." And the Government saw the great hand that the Black Panther raised in Israel, and the people were in awe of the Black Panthers and believed as one in their success and dedication.

And the Government rose and said: Blessed be the keeper of promises to its people, blessed be it, blessed be the citizen who does not rise up and does not become angry, blessed be he.

And the Government will make a promise to its people, as it has consistently done since the establishment of the state, and it will say: We will build you spacious housing projects as well as magnificent schools, and city parks so your children can play in them after school. Likewise, universities that the entire world will not only envy but also praise.

And here we are twenty-two years later [after the establishment of the state of Israel] and nothing has changed. And what's more? The existing schools are bare bones, children steal from their friends because they made us believe that we are an inferior Sephardic people![52]

All of the above is confirmed in the documentary record. As mentioned, in 2011, the Israeli State Archives released documents relating to the way in which the establishment regarded the Arab Jewish communities and their social activists. A journalist reporting on the release of these

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51. *Black Panthers Haggadah*, Jewish Current Press edition, 61.
52. *Black Panthers Haggadah*, Jewish Current Press edition, 63.

documents began his account as follows: "Panic. This is the impression from reading the documents published this week by the State Archives to mark 40 years since the establishment of the Black Panthers movement."[53] Panic is perhaps an understatement. The documents reveal that the Israeli government kept a very close watch on the Black Panthers: they spied on them and tried to subvert their initiatives, they had informants, they assiduously and meticulously documented everything the Black Panthers said and did (both in public and in private). Kohavi Shemesh, a lawyer and one of the leaders of the Black Panthers, said the following when interviewed about the release of the documents – his name is mentioned time and time again in the declassified documents.

> I always knew what they thought about us, but I didn't imagine the extent to which they were petrified of us. Secret discussions at the government level, secret discussions at the committees for foreign affairs and security, the establishment looking for a link to the communist Left, and the police downplaying the number of injured policemen at the protests so as not to increase our morale. The panic is the most amazing impression one gets from the documents; I read it and I laugh.[54]

Charlie Biton, another of the leaders of the Black Panthers and a Knesset member from 1977 to 1992, added that

> They treated us as if we were terrorists and enemies. I read the correspondences of the police and I couldn't believe that they were talking about us. The madness that overtook the establishment was just startling, there was a daily surveillance of us. When I went to sleep people sat downstairs at my house, when I went to places they followed me. Most of what is in these documents was not new to me, but they show the public the way in which the establishment treated us

53. Roy Mandel, "'A conference of Jews from the Middle East? I was shocked.' Golda and the Panthers," *Yediot Achronot*, November 11, 2011, https://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4146843,00.html.
54. Mandel, "'A conference of Jews from the Middle East? I was shocked.' Golda and the Panthers".

and especially the hysteria that surrounded us.[55]

Biton adds that he subsequently met senior officers who approached him and told him that they were given the task of spying on him. "The office of the prime minister put us in the crosshairs and the police and Shabak [Israeli Security Agency] followed," says Biton. Furthermore, he says that

> It is unbelievable that in a democratic state they will do something like this. Everyone knew that we were residents from the [poor] neighbourhoods, that social workers were involved with us and that nice Ashkenazim were supporting us, that was not a secret. But everyone also knew that many had enough of the establishment. It was a regime of oppression – a regime that followed every poster that was put up in the street, that arrested people who put up posters and one of my friends was even shot in the head whilst he put up a poster.

"Either the cake will be for everyone, or there will be no cake."

"As opposed to the story of the exodus from Egypt," said Abergel recently, "there did not arise a Moses [to save us], nor were there angels by our side. The Israelites were released from slavery to freedom, but the Jewish immigrants from Arab lands are mostly still in slavery, despite the achievements throughout the years. Our cries [from the past] still echo today.[56] The oppressed in Israel continue to raise the clenched fist of the Black Panthers in solidarity with that group of young people who dared to say 'enough!'"[57] This

55. Mandel, "'A conference of Jews from the Middle East? I was shocked.' Golda and the Panthers".

56. Examples of this are legion: at the time that Abergel wrote the foreword to the Black Panthers Haggadah, there were 61 previous university presidents, only one of which was an Arab Jew. In all the universities and colleges, less than 1 in 10 academics was an Arab Jew. In journalism, Israel's most popular newspaper, *Yediot Ahronot*, never had a head editor who was an Arab Jew. Even *Haaretz*, a left-wing newspaper, in its one hundred year history has had an Arab Jew head editor for barely three years. In the annual list of the 500 richest people in Israel, never has there been an Arab Jew on the list. There has never been an Arab Jew Prime Minister. All the heads of the Bank of Israel in its history have been European Jews. There have been eleven heads of the Mossad and eleven heads of the Shin-Bet, only one of the twenty-two was an Arab Jew. And the list goes on. For such figures, see, for example, the interview with Amnon Levy, a veteran Israeli journalist of 40 years experience in Jasmine & Nati Toker. "Israel is Racist: In Government, in the Media, in Law, in the Economy – the Majority are Ashkenazi [in Hebrew]." *The Marker*, August 1, 2013. http://www.themarker.com/news/1.2086691.

57. *Black Panthers Haggadah*, Jewish Current Press edition, 28.

closing remark from Abergel's foreword to the third edition reminds one of this section from the Black Panthers Haggadah (this again beautifully echos the rhythm and rhyme of the original Haggadah[58]):

Each and every day a person must see themselves as if they were saved from the socioeconomic gap, and you should tell your children on that day, saying: Because of what the Black Panther did for me, I was freed from the socioeconomic gap, who will not save us but rather our children and our children's children.

And if the Black Panthers of Musrara in Jerusalem had not done so? Then the socioeconomic and educational gap would have remained and continued to exist. That is why we must thank and bless those who have done all these good deeds for us and for our children: They have taken us from slavery to freedom, from sorrow to joy, from hunger to satiation, and from mourning to celebration, and from darkness to a great light, and from enslavement to redemption, and let us say before them, hallelujah.[59]

 Lastly, let us consider Abergel's recollection of what struck him most during the meeting with Golda Meir. He said that "Alongside the stick, the authorities also tried to tempt us with the carrot". That is:

[Golda Meir said:] "Tell me what your personal problems are and we will solve them. Leave the problems of the general public to the government." She was trying to get us to give up our universal demands in exchange for personal favors – to turn us into collaborators, depriving us of the moral authority to represent the oppressed population.

Abergel noted further that "This has been the Israeli government's dominant approach toward the Mizrahi

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58. "In every generation a person is obligated to regard himself as if he had come out of Egypt, as it is said: 'You shall tell your child on that day, "It is because of this that God acted for me when I left Egypt."' The Holy One, blessed be He, redeemed not only our fathers from Egypt, but He redeemed also us with them […]", *Haggadah for Passover*, 37.
59. *Black Panthers Haggadah*, Jewish Current Press edition, 83.

struggle since the state's founding. The cooperation they proposed would have significantly improved our personal situations and that of our families, but we understood that there are no shortcuts in the struggle for real social change. Like Sa'adia Marciano, one of the leaders of the Black Panthers, said, 'Either the cake will be for everyone, or there will be no cake.'"[60]

Apropos cake for everyone, let us end this article with a translation of Ha Lachma Anya and Ma Nishtana. We see in the latter the typical Black Panther approach to activism: an honest appraisal of the problems, a serious effort at understanding their root causes, and, most importantly, offering practical solutions, giving hope to the oppressed and hopeless, working toward their goals with an inspiring optimism and workable steps to a better tomorrow.

Ha Lachma Anya

This is the bread of affliction that our forefathers ate in Morocco and Egypt.

Little did we know that in Jerusalem we wouldn't even have that.

In Morocco, all who were hungry came and ate,

In Jerusalem, all this was forgotten.

In Morocco, they promised us that we'll be taken to freedom.

But it turned out that they pushed us into slavery.

Ma Nishtana

What makes this night different from all other nights?

That every night we barely eat bread and water,

And on this night we don't even eat matzah and water.

That every night we eat only vegetables.

And on this night the government treats us like animals.

That every night we all shiver from the cold.

And on this night most of us are bowed.

That every night we sleep on the floor.

And as far as the Israeli government is concerned we have such gall.

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60. *Black Panthers Haggadah*, Jewish Current Press edition, 31.

They want to make us slaves in Israel.

But the Black Panthers will rescue us out with God's help,

Whether with a mighty hand or with an outstretched arm.

We will no longer be ridiculed and mocked in every home.

And if the Black Panthers do not lead us from slavery to freedom,

We will remain as our forefathers and our children and our children's children,

Enslaved in Israel forever.

And even though we are all criminals through no fault of our own,

We are all being screwed, we are all being oppressed, we are all embittered,

Still it is a mitzvah to speak out in condemnation against the crooked establishment.

And if you speak out, that would certainly be the truth.[61]

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61. *Black Panthers Haggadah*, Jewish Current Press edition, 66-71. This is translated into English in the latter but I have amended it in parts in a way that I think better reflects the Hebrew.

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Author Biography

Eran Asoulin is a scholar, educator, writer, and musician. He was formerly a Visiting Fellow at the School of Humanities and Languages, University of New South Wales.

Yiddish on the Australian Page and Stage: New Linguistic Representations of Melbourne in the Aftermath of the Holocaust[1]

Rebecca Margolis

Abstract

2023 marked the release of two Australian works of heterolingual English-language fiction works that integrated significant Yiddish: Leah Kaminsky's novel, Doll's Eye *and Elise Esther Hearst's stage play,* A Very Jewish Christmas Carol*. Created and set in Melbourne, these cultural productions suggest ways in which the integration of Yiddish into new literary work index identities in relation to the Holocaust and its aftermath. These works provide examples of second- and third-generation Holocaust representation that draw on diverse strategies of intratextual translation to portray the Yiddish language and its resonances.*

Introduction

Anyone with an eye on Yiddish in Australia since 2020 will have observed a marked upturn in creativity in that language – musical albums and stage performances, original plays with Yiddish dialogue, and fiction writing that meshes that language into its narratives – accompanied by a clutch of media articles dedicated to the topic.[2]

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1. I'd like to thank the reviewers for their helpful comments. I'd also like to note that while Yiddish is predominantly written in Hebrew letters, I represent it throughout this article in Latin script in line with how it appears in both of the literary works I analyse. This transliteration draws on the system devised by the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. See Isaac L. Bleaman, "Guidelines for Yiddish in Bibliographies: A Supplement to YIVO Transliteration," In *geveb* (July 2019). https://ingeveb.org/pedagogy/guidelines-for-yiddish-in-bibliographies.

2. Natasha Frost, "A Yiddish Haven Thrives in Australia," *New York Times*, July 18, 2023, https://www.nytimes.com/2023/07/18/world/australia/yiddish-melbourne-australia.html; Mia Gardiner, "Young Yearn for Yiddish." *Australian Jewish News* February 2, 2023, https://www.australianjewishnews.com/young-yearn-for-yiddish/; Nomi Kaltmann, "Yiddish Thrives Down Under," *Tablet*, December 28, 2020, https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/community/articles/yiddish-thrives-in-melbourne; Tali Lavi, "The Dybbuk in the Room: Melbourne's Yiddish Art Scene," *Jewish Quarterly* 251 (2023), https://jewishquarterly.com/jq/community/214; Dashiel Lawrence, "Yiddish in Sydney," *The Jewish Independent* October 15, 2020, https://thejewishindependent.com.au/podcast-sydneys-yiddish-speakers-keep-beloved-language-alive.

A thousand-year-old linguistic carrier of a transnational Ashkenazi Jewish civilisation, Yiddish was the most widely spoken Jewish language until the mid-twentieth century. The number of Yiddish speakers has declined dramatically due to language shift in the wake of modernisation and migration, as well as persecution and repression culminating in the murder of most of its European speakers during the Nazi Holocaust. Even as the numbers of daily speakers continues to dwindle in the mainstream and the last generation of prewar European-born speakers is passing away, Yiddish is gaining traction within cultural production aimed at general audiences. Australia features prominently within this new transnational Yiddish creativity.

Yiddish in the global mainstream increasingly resides outside the purview of its daily or native-born speakers and their descendants. As a recent study by Jessica Kirzane finds, newcomers to the language bring learning goals that are motivated by interests other than everyday fluency, including academic research or the alignment of the language with leftist, queer or other identity politics.[3] Amelia Glaser posits that Yiddish in the mainstream has increasingly become a cultural symbol in a shift from a signifier (a mode of communication) to a signified (a subject unto itself), not only in North America but globally.[4] This echoes Jeffrey Shandler's influential study, *Adventures in Yiddishland*, which lays out the theory of postvernacular Yiddish as a mode where the language operates in symbolic or performative functions: simply put, the fact of using Yiddish is more important than what you say in it.[5] Netta Avineri's concept of "metalinguistic communities" frames Yiddish usage as a symbol or identity embedded within another dominant language such as English.[6] My recent study, *Yiddish Lives On: Strategies of*

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3. Jessica Kirzane, "Defining Graduate Academic Yiddish Proficiency: Results of an Evidence-Based Study," *L2 Journal: An Open Access Refereed Journal for World Language Educators* 16, no. 1 (2024). https://escholarship.org/uc/item/43z6x4cb/.
4. Amelia Glaser, "The Idea of Yiddish; Re-globalising North American Jewish Culture," in R*outledge Handbook of Contemporary Jewish Studies*, ed. Laurence Roth and Nadia Valman (New York: Routledge, 2017), 259–71.
5. Jeffrey Shandler, *Adventures in Yiddishland: Postvernacular Language and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005). See also Jeffrey Shandler, *Yiddish: Biography of a Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).
6. Netta Avineri and Jesse Harasta, "Introduction: Exploring Agency, Ideology, And Semiotics of Language Across Communities," in *Metalinguistic Communities*, ed. Netta Avineri and Jesse Harasta (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2021), 1–22.

Language Transmission, investigates what I term "created language spaces" where Yiddish is spoken, read, performed, sung, or mediated by digital technologies in meaningful and embodied ways, with or without daily usage or literacy in the language.[7] These Yiddish spaces stand outside the hundreds of thousands of Hasidic speakers who operate in the language daily within interconnected Jewish separatist communities as a means of maintaining boundaries.[8]

What interests me as an academic and a newcomer to Australia (I arrived from Canada in 2020) is how Yiddish today is bound up with heritage and building upon the legacies of the language's speakers, especially in my adopted home of Melbourne. After more than two centuries of continued Jewish settlement, the 2021 census reported an Australian Jewish population of 117,000 (out of a total of 25.4 million),[9] largely spread across the cities of Sydney and Melbourne. Almost all Australian Jews speak English, with over three-quarters speaking that language exclusively, and some 1,500 also speaking Yiddish (compared to 10,000 speaking Hebrew).[10] Melbourne remains home to most of the country's Yiddish speakers and over a century of artistic and organisational life in the language, including literary and stage production, education, and political activism. Yiddish is spoken among multiple generations by a small but active minority of descendants of European-born speakers, most of whom settled in Australia as survivors of the Holocaust. Yiddish is also a creative outlet for a growing pool of artists with non-Yiddish backgrounds who have studied the language or otherwise made it a focus of their creative work.

The scholarly and popular literature about Yiddish in the aftermath of the Holocaust is vast, including studies of its

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7. Rebecca Margolis, *Yiddish Lives On: Strategies for Language Transmission* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2023).

8. See Dovid Katz, "The Yiddish Conundrum: A Cautionary Tale for Language Revivalism," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Minority Languages and Communities*, ed. Gabrielle Hogan-Brun and Bernadette O'Rourke (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 553–87; Chaya R. Nove, "The Erasure of Hasidic Yiddish from Twentieth Century Yiddish Linguistics," *Journal of Jewish Languages* 6, no. 1 (2018): 109–41.

9. David Graham, *The Jewish Population of Australia: Key Findings from the 2021 Census* (Sydney: JCA, 2024), https://jca.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/The-Jewish-Population-of-Australia-Report_2021-Census-1.pdf, 6.

10. Graham, *The Jewish Population of Australia*, 35.

cultural legacies, digital afterlives, and linguistic transmission. Within a body of scholarly writing about the present and future of Yiddish in Australia, authored by observers and participants in the local Yiddish scene, the language is characterised as a conduit to a pre-Holocaust Jewish past, as well as an anchor for shared leftist or familial legacies and new creativity within those spaces.[11] Literary scholar Anita Norich, writing a generation ago, called Yiddish a metonymy for the victims of the Holocaust, ever heightened as the language has become less commonly spoken.[12] While this observation holds true in some instances in Melbourne, notably with the integration of Yiddish content in annual Holocaust commemoration events, the language is also associated with projects that deliberately showcase innovation and, in many cases, draw on the leftist legacies of the city's Yiddish speakers. A trio of organisations forms a hub for this activity: the Kadimah Cultural Centre and Library encompasses an operational library and archives as well as classes, cultural events and festivals, and a professionalised Yiddish theatre; the Jewish Labour Bund and its youth arm, SKIF (Sotsyalistisher kinder farband/Socialist Children's Union), coordinate events as well as weekly gatherings and camps for youth; Sholem Aleichem College offers Yiddish education to primary school children as well as classes for graduates and the community at large. The city is home to singers as well as bands that perform regularly in Yiddish, notably the Bashevis Singers, Chutney, and YID!. In addition, Melbourne's Yiddish literary history encompasses a cadre of local migrant writers as well as contemporary writers who draw on the language.

In this study, I consider two Australian fiction works published in 2023 that showcase Yiddish on the page and

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11. Rebecca Margolis, "Shabbes in Ek Velt: Yiddish Rap Music in Melbourne," *Australian Journal of Jewish Studies* 36 (2023): 31-56. http://www.aajs.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Margolis_AJJS_XXXVI_2023_31-56.pdf; Ena Burstin, "Yiddish in Oystralia," in *New Under the Sun: Jewish Australians on Religion, Politics & Culture*, ed. Michael Fagenblatt, Melanie Landau and Nathan Wolski (Melbourne: Black Inc, 2006), 76–86; Bronia Kornhauser, "Music and the Continuity of Yiddish Language and Culture in Melbourne," *Australian Journal of Jewish Studies* 27 (2013): 85–118, https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A373371539/LitRC?u=googlescholar&sid=sitemap&xid=e82adcef; Margaret Taft and Andrew Markus, *A Second Chance: The Making of Yiddish Melbourne* (Clayton, Vic: Monash University Publishing, 2018).
12. Anita Norich, "Yiddish Literary Studies," *Modern Judaism* 10, no. 3 (1990): 298, https://doi.org/10.1093/mj/10.3.297.

stage: Leah Kaminsky's novel, Doll's Eye, and Elise Hearst's stage play, *A Very Jewish Christmas Carol*.[13] These works embed Yiddish into English-language texts to represent two facets of the Australian Jewish experience: pre-Holocaust life in Europe, and encounters between Jewish and non-Jewish Australians by survivors and their descendants. Rather than address questions of linguistic continuity, I investigate the ways in which Yiddish is meshed into recent works of English-language Australian fiction writing to address broader questions relating to Jewish identity, memory, and belonging in relation to the Holocaust.

My analysis of Kaminsky's *Doll's Eye*, and Hearst's *A Very Jewish Christmas Carol* considers how second- and third-generation writers, born and raised in Melbourne, deploy Yiddish within fiction writing. Drawing on these two works, I investigate how Yiddish functions as a mimetic device to represent both the fictive world and memory of a vanished one. I consider how the meshing of Yiddish into English texts reconstructs and reimagines characters within narratives set in Australia during and in the aftermath of the Holocaust. I am interested in the production and functions of intratextual translation – mechanisms to decipher foreign language terms, phrases or other elements that are embedded within a text in a dominant language – as a representational strategy within literary projects that integrate Yiddish. I discuss how and why that language is intentionally blended into a predominantly English text, accompanied by translation for readers or audiences who are assumed not to speak the language. In addition to discussing Yiddish as a mimetic device within the works, I examine their authors' connections to Yiddish and their strategies for managing that language in English-language texts alongside other foreign languages such as textual Hebrew, German, Russian, or Polish. I posit the ways in

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13. Leah Kaminsky, *Doll's Eye* (Milsons Point, NSW: Vintage Books, 2023); Elise Esther Hearst with Philip Kavanagh, *A Very Jewish Christmas Carol*, dir. Sarah Giles, feat. Natalie Gamsu, Miriam Glaser, Emma Jevons, Evelyn Krape, Jude Perl, Louise Siversen, and Michael Whalley, Melbourne Theatre Company, Southbank Theatre, The Sumner, Melbourne, November 14 – December 16, 2023 (Melbourne: Currency Press), https://www.currency.com.au/books/adaptations/a-very-jewish-christmas-carol/.

which Kaminsky and Hearst foreground the Yiddish language in their works to theorise about the current place of Yiddish in Australian cultural production. Within this dynamic, I operate as both scholar and practitioner; I am a researcher of Yiddish and a contributor in Yiddish-based projects in Melbourne, including serving as Yiddish translator for *A Very Jewish Christmas Carol*. I was fortunate to be able to interview both authors for this study.

Yiddish in Multilingual Texts

As a Germanic language that originated among Jewish speakers, Yiddish from the outset integrated textual Hebrew and Aramaic, and subsequently evolved in Slavic lands in close contact with Polish, Ukrainian, and other languages. Yiddish speakers have historically been plurilingual speakers moving between, and drawing on, multiple languages, Jewish and non-Jewish. Scholars have pointed to the longstanding movement between Yiddish and other languages in creative work, as well as the profoundly translational character of the Yiddish language.[14] Within this multilingual dynamic, Jews have developed their own distinctive speech varieties to signal or express belonging or identity. These integrate borrowings of terms or phrases from Jewish languages, notably Yiddish or modern Hebrew and textual Hebrew/Aramaic, as well as grammatical structures, intonation and accent. Within the extensive sociolinguistic research on the practice of speakers moving between languages – alternately termed an ethnolect, codeswitching, translanguaging or code-meshing – Sarah Bunin Benor has proposed the concept of "linguistic repertoire" to characterise the range of Jewish language within a dominant tongue like English to serve as a means of indexing identity. For example, Yiddish words (Yiddishisms) such as "shlep" or "mentsh" within American English, in

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14. Naomi Brenner, *Lingering Bilingualism: Modern Hebrew & Yiddish Literatures in Contact* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2016); Saul Noam Zaritt, *A Taytsh Manifesto: Yiddish, Translation, and the Making of Modern Jewish Culture* (New York: Fordham UP, 2024).

what has been popularly termed "Yinglish",[15] can signify a connection to Ashkenazic Jewishness or other markers of group belonging.[16]

In contrast to an extensive body of research on the linguistic repertoires of Jews in the United States, notably their expression within American popular culture,[17] the linguistic repertoires of Australian Jewry have received far less attention. Twenty-five years ago, the work of Michael Clyne, Edina Eisikovits and Laura Tollfree compared ethnic varieties of Australian English (ethnolects). They found that the descendants of Greek and Jewish migrants in the second-generation and beyond respectively integrated Greek or Hebrew/Yiddish borrowings as well as other distinctive linguistic features in their English. They did so in marked situations to express or symbolise their dual ethnic identities, group solidarity, or recall the past.[18] What Clyne, Eisikovits and Tollfree term "Yiddish-based Australian English" encompasses pronunciation (phonology), grammatical structures (syntax), and vocabular (lexic). They observed, "for many Jewish Melbournians, Yiddish has become a symbol of their culture and history, a link with the religious and cultural traditions of their forebears".[19] Further, they predicted that Australian Jewish English would decline with language shift and would be "unlikely to exert influence on mainstream Australian English.[20] Some two decades later, Emma Breslow and Caroline Hardy returned to this topic in a sociolinguistic study of ethnoreligious identities that compared American and Australian familiarity with a list of Jewish lexical items. They found that knowledge of Jewish English is influenced by

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15. Leo Rosten, *The Joys of Yiddish: A Relaxed Lexicon of Yiddish, Hebrew and Yinglish Words Often Encountered in English ... from the Days of the Bible to Those of the Beatnik* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968).

16. Sarah Bunin Benor, "Mensch, Bentsh, and Balagan: Variation in the American Jewish Repertoire," *Language & Communication* 3, no 1–2 (2011): 141–54.

17. Sarah Bunin Benor, "Pastrami, Verklempt, and Tshootspa: Non-Jews' Use of Jewish Language in the United States," *American Jewish Year Book 2020*, ed. Arnold Dashefsky and Ira M. Sheskin (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2022), 3–69.

18. Michael Clyne, Edina Eisikovits and Laura Tollfree, "Ethnic Varieties of Australian English," in *English in Australia*, ed. David Blair and Peter Collins (Philadelphia and Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2000), 223–38; Michael Clyne, Edina Eisikovits and Laura Tollfree, "Ethnolects as In-group Varieties," in *Us and Others: Social Identities across Languages, Discourses and Cultures*, ed. Anna Duszak (Philadelphia and Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2002), 133–157.

19. Clyne, Eisikovits and Tollfree, "Ethnic Varieties of Australian English," 224.

20. Clyne, Eisikovits and Tollfree, "Ethnolects as In-group Varieties," 147.

both national and religious identity, and reported a repertoire of terms like "shemozzle" (to mean a confused state or mess) particular to Australia, used by both Jewish and non-Jewish speakers. Further, they observed that the practice of shortening words that is widespread in Australian English (hypocoristics, e.g. "brekkie" for breakfast or "arvo" for afternoon) has evolved in-group terms relating to Jewish religious practice, notably "yarmi" for "yalmulka" and "barmi" or "batmi" for "bar mitzvah" or "bat mitzvah" respectively.[21] My own informal study suggests a distinctive lexicon of Australian Jewish terms, especially stemming from Yiddish used among Jewish speakers, to include "shpats" (short for "shpatsir," a stroll) or "broygez" for holding a grudge; the term "motza" (from Matzah) to mean a large sum of money, appears within wider Australian popular culture.

My analysis draws on scholarship that builds upon Meir Sternberg's foundational study, "Polylingualism as Reality and Translation as Mimesis," which outlines strategies for mimetic representation and translation of foreign languages in literary works.[22] Sternberg suggests that whilst literature's fictive worlds offer opportunity for juxtaposing different kinds of speech, how to represent them within a medium of communication that is typically unilingual poses a challenge.[23] He proposes the term "heterolingualism" to refer to the use of foreign languages or dialects in a dominant language where its primary function is mimetic versus communicative. For Yiddish, this means that the language operates, in Glaser's terms, as *signified* rather than *signifier*. The effects of heterolingualism include creating realism, emphasising linguistic difference, or reflecting cultural plurality.

In Sternberg's schema of multilingual coexistence within a fiction text, the methods for managing literary

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21. Emma Breslow and Caroline Hardy, "The Macher Wears a Yarmi: A Comparative Study of Australian and American Familiarity With Jewish English Lexical Items" (poster, Linguistic Society of America Summer Institute, 2023); Emma Breslow and Caroline Hardy, "From Shpiel to Shemozzle: A Study of Familiarity with Jewish Lexical Items in Australia and the United States" (paper, 25th Sociolinguistics Symposium, Curtin University, Perth, Australia, June 24–27, 2024).

22. Meir Sternberg, "Polylingualism as Reality and Translation as Mimesis," *Poetics Today* 2, no. 4 (1981): 221–39. https://doi.org/10.2307/1772500.

23. Sternberg, "Polylingualism as Reality and Translation as Mimesis," 222.

heterolingualism as a discursive strategy exists within two extremes: unilingual representation within a text ("homogenizing convention"); and the portrayal of linguistic difference by verbatim reproduction of a foreign language ("vehicular matching"). Between these poles lie other methods of explicitly portraying as well as rendering intelligible a polylingual fictive world to audiences. These include: "selective reproduction" of foreign speech in occasional quotations, for example, the use of interjections such as the Yiddish "*oy vey*"; "verbal transposition," which underlines interlingual difference by marking a character through idiosyncratic usage in the dominant language, for example an accent or distinctive grammar, such as the Yiddish-inflected "I want you should go"; or "explicit attribution," where a text states that another language is being uttered.[24] Sternberg's model has been adapted by generations of scholars considering heterolingualism and intratextual translation in the representation of ethnic identities in fiction writing and film.[25] Nina Fang's study, "Shaping a New Voice: Blending Australian English and Heritage Languages in Second-Generation Migrant Writing," marks the beginnings of scholarly study of Australian heterolingualism through the lens of code-meshing as a creative practice where different languages combine in a text.[26]

Heterolingualism in fiction writing brings challenges as well as advantages. Sternberg discussed potential pitfalls with the extensive inclusion of foreign language in a text in relation to intelligibility: "so inconsistent with the norm conditions of communication, [vehicular matching] may in some periods and genres be thought to divert attention from more important matters and to require too much

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24. Sternberg, "Polylingualism as Reality and Translation as Mimesis," 225–31.

25. See for example Rebecca Margolis, "Melekh Ravitch as Yiddish Catalyst: Montreal, 1941–1954," *EEJA (East European Jewish Affairs)* 46, no. 2 (2016): 192-209, https://doi.org/10.1080/13501674.2016.1201640; Rebecca Margolis, *The Yiddish Supernatural on Screen: Dybbuks, Demons and Haunted Jewish Pasts* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2024); Rainier Grutman, "Refraction and Recognition: Literary Multilingualism in Translation," *Target: International Journal of Translation Studies* 18, no. 1 (2006): 17–47, https://doi.org/10.1075/target.18.1.03gru; Carol O'Sullivan, *Translating Popular Film* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Julie Primon, "'Italianness' in English-Language Novels: Intratextual Translation as a Representational Tool," *New Writing* 18, no. 1 (2020): 35–46, doi:10.1080/14790726.2020.1746351.

26. Nina Fang, "Shaping a New Voice: Blending Australian English and Heritage Languages in Second-Generation Migrant Writing," *Asian Englishes* 23, no. 2 (2021): 137–51, https://doi.org/10.1080/13488678.2020.1725728.

polyglot expertise on the part of the author and his [sic] reading-public".[27] This concern is addressed by Reed Dasenbrock in "Intelligibility and Meaningfulness in Multicultural Literature in English", which responds to a rise of Anglo-literature by authors from diverse linguistic backgrounds.[28] Rejecting intelligibility as the lone criterion, he suggests that writers can insert foreign languages as an artistic strategy and thereby "choose to make moments of their work more difficult to understand, less immediately intelligible, because they know that the reader will work for their meaning".[29] Further, the very same challenges to intelligibility can mirror the experiences of a text's characters and thereby embody them for audiences. As Juliette Taylor-Batty suggests, "The interlingual encounter – and its representation – always brings distortion, problems of interlingual and intercultural communication, and a foregrounding of difference".[30] Interlingual discourse can suggest stereotypes, interrogate the dominant culture, or signal ambivalence about one's own or another's identity. Building on this analysis, I posit that the work on the part of the audience in encountering Yiddish – whether via selective reproduction, verbal transposition, or vehicular matching – represents an essential function of the text in that language in both Kaminsky's and Hearst's works, even if translation is always provided. The engagement of the audience through the integration of strategically translated Yiddish embodies the ways in which the texts' fictional characters index their identities as Jewish Australians, especially in relation to the Holocaust and its aftermath.

I situate this study within a cycle of literary work by Australian second- and third-generation writers – the children and grandchildren of European-born Yiddish speaking survivors – that explores the Holocaust and its aftermath, much of which integrates Yiddish within the

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27. Sternberg, "Polylingualism as Reality and Translation as Mimesis," 225.

28. Reed Way Dasenbrock, "Intelligibility and Meaningfulness in Multicultural Literature in English," *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 102, no. 1 (1987): 10–19, https://doi.org/10.2307/462488.

29. Dasenbrock, "Intelligibility and Meaningfulness in Multicultural Literature in English," 14.

30. Juliette Taylor-Batty, *Multilingualism in Modernist Fiction* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 40.

contexts of their narratives.[31] These works sit within an international and multilingual corpus of cultural production that represents the Holocaust removed from the events, both in space and time. Marianne Hirsch's concept of "postmemory," introduced in the 1990s, characterises how a second-generation – the "generation after" – have inherited and internalised their parents' memories, and how these manifest in cultural production about the Holocaust: "Postmemory's connection to the past is thus actually mediated not by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation".[32] Alison Landsberg introduced the term "prosthetic memory" to interrogate how technologies of American mass culture such as film or television have facilitated collective experiences of memory for people who did not experience them.[33] Gerd Bayer's study of third-generation Holocaust cinema, or "after post-memory," finds an orientation towards addressing forward-looking ethical questions within the telling of Holocaust stories.[34] Victoria Aarons and Alan L. Berger further propose that one of the characteristics of third-generation narratives is the "imaginative return," which can "take the form of both literal and metaphorical journeys to reenact and reclaim the past".[35] Olga Gershenson terms the third-generation Holocaust memory on screen "meta-memory," where artists create works that represent memories of memories.[36]

As the vernacular of a majority of the victims of the Holocaust, Yiddish is prevalent in second- and third-generation Holocaust fiction as a mimetic device, as it is in portrayals of the migrant experience of Yiddish speakers more broadly. These works fall into under a sub-genre of Jewish literature in English that interweaves Yiddish into

31. Rebecca Margolis and David Slucki, "Second- and Third-Generation Holocaust Writing in Australia: Towards a Cultural History," *Journal of Jewish Identities* 16, no.1–2 (2023): 217–39. https://doi.org/10.1353/jji.2023.a898147.

32. Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 15.

33. Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

34. Gerd Bayer, "After Postmemory: Holocaust Cinema and the Third Generation," *Shofar* 28, no. 4 (2010): 116–32, https://doi.org/10.1353/sho.2010.0053.

35. Victoria Aarons and Alan L. Berger, *Third-Generation Holocaust Representation: Trauma, History and Memory* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2017), 64.

36. Olga Gershenson, "Meta-Memory: About the Holocaust in New Israeli Video Art," *Jewish Film & New Media: An International Journal* 6, no. 1 (2018): 86.

polylingual narratives.[37] A cycle of twenty-first century fiction works foreground Yiddish as a mimetic device within English-language narratives that creatively reimagine Jewish pasts. Perhaps the most renowned of these is Michael Chabon's 2007 bestselling American detective novel, *The Yiddish Policemen's Unit*, set in a fictive post-Holocaust Jewish homeland in Sitka, Alaska, where Yiddish is lingua franca.[38] Another example is Gary Barwin's historical drama, *Yiddish for Pirates*, which tells a story set during the Spanish Inquisition narrated by a 500-year-old Yiddish-speaking parrot named Aaron.[39] A more recent example, Moriel Rothman-Zecher's 2022 novel, *Before All the World*, intertwines Yiddish and English words and phrases in a narrative about an interracial friendship set in 1930s Philadelphia.[40] Each of these works intentionally embed Yiddish or Yiddishisms – both translated and untranslated – into their works to generate humour, interrogate intersections between Jewish and other identities, and enrich the narrative by immersing the reader in a reimagined Jewish cultural milieu.[41]

Australian fiction has evinced its own meshing of Yiddish within English cultural production to portray Australian Jewish worlds within narratives of migration. Arnold Zable, a Yiddish-speaking child of Holocaust survivors, embeds extensive translated Yiddish terms and short passages into his semi-autobiographical portrayals of Holocaust survivors in Melbourne.[42] The language occasionally appears spoken on Australian television to portray Jewish migrants: the family drama, *Palace of Dreams* set in Sydney,[43] and an episode of the crime fiction series set in Melbourne, *Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries*, titled, "Raisins and Almonds",[44]

37. Hana Wirth-Nesher, *Call It English: The Languages of Jewish American Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

38. Michael Chabon, *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* (London: Harper Perennial, 2007).

39. Gary Barwin, *Yiddish for Pirates* (Toronto: Random House Canada, 2016).

40. Moriel Rothman-Zecher, *Before All the World* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2022).

41. Margolis, *Yiddish Lives On*, 160-62.

42. Arnold Zable, *Café Scheherazade* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2001); Arnold Zable, *Scraps of Heaven* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2004).

43. *Palace of Dreams*, directed by Stephen Wallace (Sydney: Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 1985).

44. *Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries*, season 1, episode 6, "Raisins and Almonds," directed by Tony Tilse, aired March 9, 2012, on ABC, produced by Every Cloud Productions.

as well as the novel of the same name upon which it was based.[45] Whilst these works await fuller analysis (as part of a larger project I am currently working on), their use of Yiddish offers a mimetic device to represent the speechways of Jewish migrant characters from the past. In contrast with all of these works, Kaminsky and Hearst not only employ Yiddish to evoke migrant pasts but – in a feature of third-generation texts – explicitly align that language with contemporary issues such as language loss and the effects of intergenerational trauma. Both evince a meta-memory orientation that draws on wide-ranging Holocaust representation in the arts and in public memory, while also responding to discourse associated with the Yiddish language. This combined with the scope of Yiddish across Kaminsky and Hearst's works, and their multifaceted translation strategies, suggests a new stage in heterolingual Yiddish writing in Melbourne.

Leah Kaminsky's *Doll's Eye*

Leah Kaminsky is a Melbourne-based physician and award-winning author who was born in Melbourne to Polish Jewish survivors of the Holocaust. Her third novel, *Doll's Eye*, tells the story of Anna Winter, a German woman who flees to Australia with her doll collection after becoming inadvertently involved in a Nazi spy network, and finds herself managing a hotel in the remote outback town of Birdum. Winter encounters Yiddish poet Alter Mayseh, who has fled his native Poland to Australia in 1938 in search of a haven for persecuted European Jewry, only to find himself stranded in Birdum during his cross-country travels. The two fall in love until they are torn apart when the truth about Anna's past comes to light. Through interconnected narratives and flashbacks, the novel recounts the tales of these two refugees. Anna's dolls form a recurring motif throughout the book as carriers of her past. The "doll's eye" in the title further evokes a medical test for a reflex by that name (oculocephalica) used to assess brain function; in

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45. Kerry Greenwood, *Raisins and Almonds: A Phryne Fisher Mystery* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1997).

the book, the term refers to the ways in which the characters evade or face consciousness of the events that have shaped their lives, or those around them.

The Yiddish in the novel hinges on the character of Alter Mayseh, who is introduced as a Warsaw Yiddish poet within that city's lively literary scene. The polyglot Alter Mayseh finds himself a lone Yiddish poet displaced in the Australian Outback. Only later in the novel is he welcomed as a celebrity in the Melbourne Yiddish milieu after he and Anna relocate to the city. Alter Mayse is loosely based on Yiddish avant-garde poet and essayist Melekh Ravitch (pen name of Zechariah Choneh Bergner), a seminal figure in twentieth-century Yiddish literary life, first in Warsaw and subsequently in Melbourne and Montreal. Ravitch arrived in Australia in 1933 to investigate the possibility of establishing a Yiddish school in Melbourne, and traversed the Northwestern Australian outback in search of a potential site for large-scale migration of displaced European Jewry. An influential figure in Melbourne's Yiddish cultural life until his departure in 1937, Ravitch has recently emerged as an object of interest within creative representation of the Australian Jewish experience. For example, a recent lavishly illustrated book on Ravitch details his Australian voyage in an English translation of his travel memoirs, accompanied by photographs and paintings by Ravitch's son,[46] with plans for a stage adaptation in development.

Kaminsky had intended to write a book about Ravitch while a creative fellow of the State Library Victoria in 2010. Her project, titled The Fish Council, was slated as "a creative non-fiction narrative about Yiddish–Polish poet Melekh Ravitch who was sent to Melbourne in 1933 by the Jewish Agency to fundraise for Yiddish schools and went on to undertake an arduous trip across the Kimberley with an Italian postal truck driver and a young Aboriginal guide in an attempt to find a homeland for German Jewish

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46. Anna Epstein, Melekh Ravitsh: *The Eccentric Outback Quest of an Urbane Yiddish Poet from Poland* (Melbourne: Real Film and Publishing, 2019).

refugees".[47] Kaminsky's entry point into the project was Ravitch's son, painter Yosl Bergner, who settled in Melbourne in 1937 and joined the rebellious avant-garde group of writers and artists informally known as "the Angry Penguins." Kaminsky's father, who arrived from Poland in 1938, befriended Bergner when the two served together in the Australian Army. Kaminsky met Bergner on a trip to Israel at the age of fifteen at his Tel Aviv studio and he became a longtime friend and mentor with whom she conversed in Yiddish. Bergner repeatedly requested that Kaminsky write his father's story, detailed in Ravitch's memoir, *Iber Oystralye* (Across Australia).[48] Bergner provided her with access to Ravitch's diaries and a photographic account of Ravitch's journey to Melbourne and the Northern Territory in 1933. Kaminsky retraced Ravitch's journey to Birdum – now a ghost town – in 2020, accompanied by one of the last speakers of Yangman, the indigenous language of the region. Ultimately, Kaminsky made the decision to fictionalise Ravitch instead, which liberated her to create the character of Alter Mayseh.[49]

Figure 1: Leah Kaminsky (left) with Yosl Bergner (centre) in his studio on Bilu St., Tel Aviv, 2013 Image by Audrey Bergner.

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47. Victoria State Library, "Previous Creative Fellows: Dr. Leah Kaminsky," accessed October 30, 2024, https://www.slv.vic.gov.au/about-us/fellowships/creative-fellowships/previous-creative-fellows/2010/dr-leah-kaminsky#:~:text=Dr%20Leah%20Kaminsky's%20book%20manuscript,Italian%20postal%20truck%20driver%20and.

48. Melekh Ravitch, *Iber Oystralye* (Warsaw: Kinder Fraynd, 1937).

49. Leah Kaminsky, zoom interview with Rebecca Margolis, August 14, 2024.

Figure 2: Leah Kaminsky in Birdum, 2020
Image by Prof. Ghil'ad Zukermann.

Yosl Bergner formed one inspiration for the book; the second was visiting a French doll museum with a friend.[50]

Kaminsky's relationship to Ravitch's story evinces characteristics of second- and third-generation Holocaust writing. Her narrative and the novel's integration of Yiddish, bridges Hirsch's concepts of postmemory as well as Bayer's "after post-memory." Kaminsky drew on inherited Holocaust memory from her father's generation, mediated by her friendship with Bergner and the travel memoirs left by Ravitch. She undertook a journey of return to Birdum. However, rather than recounting Ravitch's story set during and after the Holocaust, she wrote a character based loosely on him with the additional intent of interrogating contemporary issues around the loss of language and culture in Australia. Given how profoundly Ravitch was enmeshed in forging Yiddish culture before, during and after the Holocaust, it is hardly surprising that a novel's fictionalised portrayal of him be steeped in Yiddish and that the language be enmeshed with broader themes of difference and belonging. However, the novel additionally draws on Kaminsky's own relationship with the language, with the Yiddish refracted through her own experiences. Born to Yiddish-speaking parents, Kaminsky

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50. Jessica Abelsohn, "What's Behind the Doll's Eyes?" *Australian Jewish News*, September 4, 2023, https://www.australianjewishnews.com/whats-behind-the-dolls-eyes/amp/.

spoke the language at home, attended a Yiddish school as a child and performed in the Yiddish theatre; as a teenager, she distanced herself from the language, only to return to it later in life.[51] The Yiddish in the novel thus marks its own journey of return.

Yiddish appears in three guises in *Doll's Eye*. In each case, the Yiddish appears transliterated into English letters followed by explanatory glosses in English, either on the page or intradiegetically (within the narrative). The Yiddish is thus explained within the text, as opposed to via an extradiegetic apparatus such as footnotes or a glossary, or left untranslated. In Sternberg's model of heterolingualism, Kaminsky does not employ vehicular matching by inserting long passages of Yiddish text into the narrative. Rather, the Yiddish punctuates the novel and is fluidly meshed into the English text. It is integrated using the strategies of selective reproduction, where isolated terms or phrases from the language appear in the English, as well as verbal transposition, where a character speaks in English with idiosyncratic usage that suggests that the character is actually speaking or thinking in Yiddish.

In the first category of Yiddish usage, proverbs in the language punctuate the book's sections: "*Di velt iz groys un s'iz nito vu ahintsuton*. The world is huge and there's nowhere to turn";[52] *Eyn oyg hot mer gloybn vi tsvey oyern*. Trust one eye more than two ears";[53] "*A tropn libe brengt a mol a yam trern*. A drop of love can bring an ocean of tears".[54] Having grown up hearing Yiddish proverbs from family members, curating these short texts marked a kind of reclamation. For Kaminsky, proverbs represent a form of folklore embedded in the language that recall a familial Yiddish milieu that has since vanished: "I find it tragic that I haven't got anyone to talk to like I did with my uncles and aunts, and my parents, with that beautiful *neshuma* [soul], and the songs, and the jokes, and the proverbs and the

51. Kaminsky, interview.
52. Kaminsky, *Doll's Eye*, part 1, 7.
53. Kaminsky, *Doll's Eye*, part 2, 150.
54. Kaminksy, *Doll's Eye*, part 3, 184.

laughter that I really miss".[55] The Yiddish proverbs appear separate from the text in a static and symbolic function, not spoken or interacting with the narrative but as a graphic iteration on the page that only allude to the content of each section.

The second usage of Yiddish occurs embedded throughout the narrative, in the experiences, literary creativity and activism of Alter Mayseh. Whilst this name literally means "Old Story" in Yiddish, Alter Mayse is portrayed as anything but; he is a lively and driven artist engaged with the latest trends of modernity. The Yiddish underpins his trajectory from belonging in a multifaceted European Yiddish world, which is lived in and through Yiddish; to estrangement in the Australian Outback; to a return to continuity and innovation within Melbourne's émigré Yiddish circles.

Yiddish appears as lingua franca of the vibrant Yiddish-speaking world that Alter Mayseh inhabits in pre-War Warsaw, which Kaminsky conjures at the start of the novel. A scene set at the revered 13 Tlumatzka Street (Tlomackie 13) – site of the Yiddish Writers Union where Alter Mayseh served as secretary (like Melekh Ravitch) – portrays the gathering of artists who eat, drink, argue and engage in furtive sexual acts. In a strategy of selective reproduction that suggests speech fully in that language, Yiddish words and short phrases pepper the scene, with descriptors such as "*tsedreyte* crazy white cat" embedded in the English.[56] Speech is reimagined in animated Yiddish, glossed in English for the non-Yiddish speaker: "*Ribono shel oylem*! God in heaven! What are you doing here?",[57] or "'Enough, Alter! There is no *gelt* left to throw away on any more of your *luftgesheft*. All your outlandish schemes are founded on air".[58] The Yiddish is meshed within a discourse comprised of witticisms and banter that are characteristic of Ashkenazic speechways. The scene feels like it took place in Yiddish and the reader is accessing it via translation.

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55. Kaminsky, interview.
56. Kaminsky, *Doll's Eye*, 19.
57. Kaminsky, *Doll's Eye*, 20.
58. Kaminsky, *Doll's Eye*, 21.

The use of Yiddish demarcates Jewish identity as difference when Alter Mayseh departs his Polish Yiddish world for Australia. In Birdum, where he finds himself the sole Jewish inhabitant in a hostile environment, Alter Mayseh's spoken English is peppered with Yiddish terms and phrases that explicitly underscore his Jewishness: "We say in Yiddish: *Khasene hobn zol er mit di malekh hamoves tokhter*. He should marry the daughter of the Angel of Death".[59] Within his internal monologue, the language underlines moments of profound turmoil as a newly arrived traveller in Australia, for example, in a key scene when a wounded albatross lands in front of him on a ship: "*Vos zol ikh ton*? What was he to do?".[60] Yiddish functions as an expression of deep-rooted ambivalence as he grapples with his intensifying relationship with the non-Jewish Anna, for example in a scene where he imagines the ghosts of his departed grandparents claiming that the union would kill them: "Akh, dead shmead. *Altsding lozt zikh oys mit a gevayn*." The Yiddish "shm-reduplication" – a linguistic strategy to mock or convey scepticism – in "dead shmead" is followed by a proverb, which is then translated intradiegetically in the next line: "No! Not everything has to end in tears, Frumaleh".[61] Alter Mayseh deploys Yiddish to connect with Anna by aligning his worldview, expressed in Yiddish, with hers. For example, after a spat, he remarks:

"*Der ershter broygez is der bester broygez*."
 "Which means?"
"The first quarrel is the best."[62]

Alter Mayseh draws on his Ashkenazic linguistic repertoire to explain Jewish practice to Anna, for example, the practice of *Tashlikh* (symbolic casting of crumbs for the Jewish New Year).[63] Anna reveals her entry into Alter Mayseh's cultural world by adopting and weaponising his Yiddish, for example, using a deprecating term for a

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59. Kaminsky, *Doll's Eye*, 48.
60. Kaminsky, *Doll's Eye*, 50.
61. Kaminsky, *Doll's Eye*, 67.
62. Kaminsky, *Doll's Eye*, 121.
63. Kaminsky, *Doll's Eye*, 177.

non-Jewish woman, she refers to herself as a "little *shikseh*" when she accuses him of treating her as a mere romantic dalliance.[64]

In a kind of return to Alter Mayseh's Warsaw, Kaminsky paints a vivid picture of his reception as newly arrived luminary within Melbourne's Yiddish milieu, comprised of migrants dedicated to the language and its continuity. His rousing inaugural lecture encapsulates the project of secular Yiddish: "I want to help recreate our vanished world – not to blend in, but to transplant an entire culture through theatre, education, literary works and a flourishing press. Let's make Yiddish the language of our everyday lives, alongside the King's English; a secular identity, divorced from rituals of prayer and devotion".[65] Within these scenes, the reader encounters local lynchpins of the Yiddish cultural world such as actor Yankev Waislitz and writer Pinchas Goldhar.

Whereas Yiddish is foregrounded within the novel's heterolingual landscape, German or Russian occasionally punctuate the text. When the text states that Anna and Alter Mayseh converse in their shared language of German, their dialogue is represented in English, with occasional German terms. Within the novel, German is largely associated with negative settings and signalling dislocation. More than simply appearing as the vernacular associated with Nazi Germany and the Holocaust, the German language is associated with profound unease. For example: German appears in the harsh commands that Birdum's most odious character, Max Schmidt, gives his dog[66] or his cursing of Alter Mayseh as "'Filthy Swine, *Jude*!'";[67] frightening tales told in Anna's childhood;[68] or the loss of love and home when Anna bakes *Frischer Apfelkuchen* (fresh applecake) for the first time in Melbourne, just before Alter Mayseh terminates their relationship.[69]

64. Kaminsky, *Doll's Eye*, 179.
65. Kaminsky, *Doll's Eye*, 190.
66. Kaminsky, *Doll's Eye*, 39.
67. Kaminsky, *Doll's Eye*, 61.
68. Kaminsky, *Doll's Eye*, 77–78.
69. Kaminsky, *Doll's Eye*, 195–97.

Russian appears in one scene featuring a sympathetic Soviet refugee.[70] In contrast, Yiddish underpins the novel on multiples levels extending into esoteric: Alter Mayseh points out that the secret name that Anna's mother gave her doll, Lalka – meaning "doll" in both Polish and Yiddish – suggests hidden Jewish ancestry.[71] A single word holds the key to the possible Jewishness of Anna's mother, and thus Anna herself. As Alter Mayseh's nephew, Yosl – modelled on Yosl Bergner – concludes during a visit to Anna's doll repair business at the end of the novel, "*Yede hartz hot soydes*. Every heart has its secrets".[72]

Kaminsky's Yiddish repertoire stems from her knowledge as a native speaker, rather than generated via translation or refracted via Yinglish in American popular culture. Kim Kelly's book review comments on the "earthy physicality to Kaminsky's broader cast of characters: … men finger their lovers under the table at Yiddish literary soirees. Her fictional people are fully alive. … We meet the boisterous and the boring among the Yiddish Writers Union … We hear the philosophy of Spinoza, and a great deal of Yiddish, far beyond the expected 'schleppings' and 'schmucks'".[73] Much of the liveliness of the characters and their fictional world is achieved via the book's portrayal of a multilingual world, with the heterolingual foregrounding of embedded terms or phrases in Yiddish, and to a lesser degree German, or Russian. Kaminsky manages the polylingualism of her storyworld so that the reader is a linguistic insider, privy to all of its languages.

A third function of the Yiddish in *Doll's Eye* is metalinguistic: discourse about Yiddish that speaks to the meanings attributed to the language. Yiddish is linked to Jewish resistance and resilience in the face of a long history of anti-Jewish hostility. For example, upon Alter Mayseh's arrival at the Birdum Hotel, he is approached by a resident who asks, "You're a four-by-two, right?"

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70. Kaminsky, *Doll's Eye*, 164.
71. Kaminsky, *Doll's Eye*, 144–45.
72. Kaminsky, *Doll's Eye*, 229.
73. Kim Kelly, "Leah Kaminsky Doll's Eye," *Newtown Review of Books*, September 12, 2023, https://newtownreviewofbooks.com.au/leah-kaminsky-dolls-eye-reviewed-by-kim-kelly/.

The text continues,

> Alter had heard the term before. Four-by-two. Rhyming slang for Jew. He'd been called worse. Kike. *Zhyd*. Sheeny. Smouch. Shyster. Shylock. Christ-killer. He was an instant curiosity wherever he went, a freak in some sideshow even though he had no belief in God. What still made him a Jew, aside from his *bris*, a ritual he had no say in as an eight-day-old baby? For Alter, it was language. Yiddish shaped his every thought, awake or asleep, wrapped in its silken veil around his heart, coursing through his blood. Even if he wanted to, how to exorcise an angel that lived in every nerve and muscle of your being? A language filled with sadness, love, humour and wisdom, like none other he knew; and he could speak more languages than most. But it was a language without a home.[74]

The passage prefigures the ways in which Melekh Ravitch and other surviving Yiddish writers – the last European-born generation to have experienced the full breadth of modern Yiddish culture – would frame the language as a linguistic carrier of Jewishness in the aftermath of the Holocaust.[75]

Like Chabon's *The Yiddish Policemen's Unit*, *Doll's Eye* sits within a subgenre of heterolingual fiction writing that portrays alternate Jewish historical trajectories. However, whereas Chabon portrays a Yiddish-speaking alternate future in a fictional post-Holocaust Jewish homeland in Alaska on the brink of collapse, Kaminsky's adaptation of Melekh Ravitch's sojourn in Australia transforms him into a prophetic harbinger of language loss within Australia. Yiddish is seminal to the book's interrogation of difficult pasts and language loss, specifically the annihilation of European Jewish civilisation in the Nazi Holocaust set against the destruction of Indigenous cultures and languages in Australia. Kaminsky superimposes these parallels into the thoughts of Alter Mayseh as he roams the

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74. Kaminsky, *Doll's Eye*, 45.
75. Margolis, "Melekh Ravitch as Yiddish Catalyst."

countryside with Anna:

> This country, he had been told, held so many languages. As he listened to the distant voices he feared these too, were doomed to disappear. Many beautiful languages around the world were being gradually cannibalised. An ancient tongue spoken for over five thousand years would have died, if it were not for those who clung to what they saw as the word of God. Since then, a pastiche passed through the lips of Jews wherever they roamed, a babel of dialects and utterances tacked together like barnacles. Worldly words, used for laughter, tears, arguments and making love. Ghost words scattered by stray winds, sinking into the quicksand of time. Lullabies sung by generations of mothers to their trembling infants – *Bey meyn kindeleh's vigele, shteyt a klor veys tsigele* – a child's wagon guarded by a small white goat.[76]

A media article cites Kaminsky: "I'm writing very much about the refugee experience and the loss of language. There's a lot of Yiddish peppered throughout the book. It's about the cannibalisation of smaller languages by an increasingly homogenised world, and how with the loss of those languages, is the death of culture and identity as well". [77] In interviews, as well as within the novel, Kaminsky aligns the cultural losses of Yiddish with those of the Indigenous Yangman language, which today has only a few remaining speakers.[78] In the musings of Alter Mayseh, she characterises Yiddish as "a *tsebrokhene* phoenix, hobbling on one leg",[79] a portable Jewish homeland. Yiddish offers an example of the essential place of language within cultural continuity, and how, as Kaminsky writes, "A culture lived and breathed and survived through its language".[80]

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76. Kaminsky, *Doll's Eye*, 101.
77. Abelsohn, "What's Behind the Doll's Eyes?"
78. "Author Leah Kaminsky on 'Doll's Eye'," *Good Reading Magazine*, September 2023,
https://goodreadingmagazine.com.au/article/author-leah-kaminsky-on-dolls-eye; Kaminsky, *Doll's Eye*; Kaminsky, interview**.**
79. Kaminsky, *Doll's Eye*, 102.
80. Kaminsky, *Doll's Eye*, 102.

In *Doll's Eye*, Yiddish appears as both *signifier* and *signified*, with Kaminsky writing both in and about Yiddish. As a media article suggests, the novel is, "a love story about a man and a woman, but it's also about a love of language, in particular Yiddish, and culture".[81] For Kaminsky, Yiddish emerged organically within the writing process as "the heart and soul of the book".[82] As a second-generation native Yiddish speaker who has returned to the language in later life, Kaminsky meshes Yiddish fluidly throughout the novel in both intra- and extra-diegetic ways: outside of the narrative in proverbs that demarcate the book's sections, and within the narrative in dialogue and inner monologues around the figure of Alter Mayseh. Kaminsky draws on the inherited Holocaust memories and the language transmitted by her parents' generation to index the Jewish identities of her characters, and to connect them with broader contemporary issues relating to language loss.

A Very Jewish Christmas Carol

Elise Esther Hearst is a playwright and novelist based in Melbourne. Born in the city, she was raised in a Jewish but not Yiddish-speaking family. She recently authored two plays that integrate Yiddish dialogue, both premiered in Melbourne: *Yentl* (with Gary Abrahams and Galit Klas), based on Isaac Bashevis Singer's short story by that name, set in a shtetl in the 1870s for the Kadimah Yiddish Theatre in 2022, and *A Very Jewish Christmas Carol*, which is set in contemporary Melbourne. Created as part of the Melbourne Theatre Company's NEXT STAGE writer's program by its resident writers Hearst and Philip Kavanagh, *A Very Jewish Christmas Carol* was commissioned in 2019 and performed at the end of 2023. During that period, the play underwent several iterations as a Jewish adaptation of Charles Dickens's oft-adapted tale, *A Christmas Carol*, with Hearst emerging as the main writer. Applying a distinctively Jewish mode of storytelling, the play drew on Hearst's family history as the granddaughter of a Holocaust survivor who escaped Nazi Europe with her family, although her own

grandmother did not speak Yiddish. The play also originated in Hearst's experiences of hosting her partner's non-Jewish family for Christmas for the first time, shortly before his brother passed away, and the grieving that followed.[83] Keenly aware of the play's iconic status within a Christian-dominant anglosphere that includes Australia, Hearst's adaptation ultimately developed Dickens's tale about the redemption of a miser into a narrative addressing Jewish intergenerational trauma in the aftermath of the Holocaust.[84] Dickens's own ambivalent attitude towards Jews lends a subversiveness to the foregrounding of Jewish voices and narratives in a Yiddishised adaptation of *A Christmas Carol*.[85]

The play offers a contemporary Jewish retelling of *A Christmas Carol* that centres on a Jewish Melbourne family as they grapple with loss and buried family legacies. The play's miserly Ebenezer Scrooge character, Elysheva (Ely) Scroogavitz (Miriam Glaser), struggles to salvage the now failing Ada's Bakery, which she inherited from her Jewish Holocaust-survivor grandmother, Bubi, three years earlier. She intends to stay up all Christmas eve night in hopes of uncovering the secret of her Bubi's famous gingerbread. Estranged from her family – well-intentioned mother, Fran (Natalie Gamsu); sister, Sarah (Emma Jevons); their Rabbi Rivka (Jude Perl); and devoutly Christian mother-in-law, Carol (Louise Siversen) – and heavily pregnant with her first child, she mourns the untimely accidental death of her fiancé, Ben (Michael Whalley) with whom she navigated an interfaith relationship by celebrating a blended Hannukah and Christmas they called "Chrismakkah." After rebuffing a family intervention, Ely is visited by the ghost of her deceased Bubi (Evelyn Krape) as well as three spectral apparitions of past, present, and future, each of them a blend of Christmas fare and Jewish mysticism: the Rein-dybbuk (a possessing Jewish spirit in the body of a reindeer, Louise Siversen), the Gingerbread Golem (an ani-

83. Elise Esther Hearst, zoom interview with Rebecca Margolis, September 5, 2024.
84. Hearst, interview.
85. See Deborah Epstein Nord,"Dickens's 'Jewish Question': Pariah Capitalism and The Way Out," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 39, no. 1 (2011): 27–45.

Figure 3: Happy Christmukkah
A Very Jewish Christmas Carol.
Melbourne Theatre Company 2023.
Image by Pia Johnson.

mated giant cookie, Evelyn Krape) and Lilith Claus (the demonic mythical first wife of Adam, Natalie Gamsu). As in Dickens's original morality tale, Ely's discoveries – which lead her to witness a scene of her grandmother's youth in pre-war Poland – compel her to confront her grief and her inherited Holocaust trauma, and begin to reconcile with her family. The play manages its serious subject matter with witty dialogue and physical comedy that is accessible to broad audiences; as one review remarks, "the predominantly non-Jewish audiences at *A Very Jewish Christmas Carol* opening night had no trouble appreciating the humour".[86]

Figure 4: In Ada's Bakery.
From left to right:
Rabbi Rivka (Jude Perl); Sarah (Emma Jevons); Fran (Natalie Gamsu); Ely Scroogavitz (Miriam Glaser); Carol (Louise Siversen).
A Very Jewish Christmas Carol.
Melbourne Theatre Company 2023.
Image by Pia Johnson.

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86. Danny Gocs, "A Merry Time at A Very Jewish Christmas Carol," *Australian Jewish News*, November 20, 2023, https://www.australianjewishnews.com/a-merry-time-at-a-very-jewish-christmas-carol/.

The fast-paced play is augmented by musical renditions of Christmas and Hannukah songs performed by the cast, each of whom play multiple roles in the production.

Hearst's *A Very Jewish Christmas Carol* operates in a wartime and post-war Jewish linguistic landscape that is similar to Kaminsky's *Doll's Eye*, blending Jewish and European languages into a predominantly English script. One review aligns the heterolingual script with the play's mode of representation: "Attention to detail was key in bringing authenticity to the production, with actors often expertly jumping between English, Hebrew, Yiddish and Polish".[87] Another review observes, "And *A Very Jewish Christmas Carol* wouldn't be the same without a sprinkling of Yiddish and a smattering of Polish for good measure".[88] The play deploys Yiddish in two main guises: first, to mark the Ashkenazic Jewishness of characters navigating their identities within non-Jewish Anglo-Australia; and second, to portray a multilingual pre-war Polish Jewish past that encompasses both Yiddish and Polish. In the first guise, Hearst inserts terms or phrases from the Yiddish as well as idiosyncratic Yiddish-inflected English in the heterolingual strategies of selective reproduction and verbal transposition. In the second guise, long passages of dialogue in the script are translated into Yiddish as well as Polish in a strategy of vehicular matching to demarcate the encounters between Jewish and non-Jewish characters and spaces.

The first category of Yiddish usage underscores Jewish difference as well as establishing humour in the play. It draws upon a repertoire of Yiddish borrowings, sentence constructions and accent commonly associated with that language to function as a signifier of Ashkenazic Jewishness. These Yiddishisms have been widely disseminated by American television, film, fiction, and popular culture, including their usage by non-Jewish

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87. Carissa Shale, "A Very Jewish Christmas Carol," *Theatre Matters*, November 21, 2023, https://theatrematters.com.au/Reviews/a-very-jewish-christmas-carol/.

88. Alex First, "A Very Jewish Christmas Carol (MTC) – Theatre Review." *Blurb: Australian Arts and Entertainment Reviews*, November 2023, https://theblurb.com.au/wp/a-very-jewish-christmas-carol-mtc-theatre-review/.

characters to portray or subvert Jewish stereotypes.[89] Within a strategy of verbal transposition, Ely's use of Yiddishism signals her identity in relation to both her Jewish family and her interfaith relationship with Ben. Her first utterance in the play, the hybridised interlingual exclamation, "Oy humbug" (Hearst 2023 1), is later explained: in a flashback, Ely and Ben announce the invention of Christmakkah; when they find out that the term had earlier appeared in the television dramedy, the OC, they spontaneously spawn a new coinage:

> Ely: Oy!
> Ben: Humbug!
> Ely/Ben: Oy humbug![90]

Whilst "oi" is a common Australian exclamation, here it additionally evokes the iconic Yiddish interjection "oy," which expresses a range of emotions including surprise, exasperation, dismay or anguish. With her family, Ely lapses into Yiddish-inflected English: "Mum! Bubi! Enough with the fighting".[91]

Throughout the play, the performance of untranslated Yiddish borrowings form part of a wider Jewish linguistic repertoire that also encompasses textual and modern Hebrew. As the sole non-Jewish character who is playfully censured for her love of Christmas and unenlightened ideas about Jews, Carol is the humorous foil for the characters' Jewishly inflected utterances. In the opening scene, an exasperated Fran says to her daughter, "God forbid I touch the sign. Hashem will punish us all!".[92] A nervous Rabbi Rivka extends greetings in both Hebrew and Yiddish when she enters the bakery for the family intervention:

89. Rebecca Margolis, "'Oy with the Poodles Already!': Yiddishisms and Non-Jewish Characters on American Sitcoms," *Journal of Jewish Languages* 11, no. 2 (2023): 1–36. https://doi.org/10.1163/22134638-bja10037.

90. Elise Esther Hearst, with Philip Kavanagh. *A Very Jewish Christmas Carol*, dir. Sarah Giles, feat. Natalie Gamsu, Miriam Glaser, Emma Jevons, Evelyn Krape, Jude Perl, Louise Siversen, and Michael Whalley. Melbourne Theatre Company, Southbank Theatre, The Sumner, Melbourne, November 14 – December 16, 2023. Melbourne: Currency Press, 2023, https://www.currency.com.au/books/adaptations/a-very-jewish-christmas-carol/.

91. Hearst, *A Very Jewish Christmas Carol*, 27.

92. Hearst, *A Very Jewish Christmas Carol*, 3.

Rivka: *Chag sameach*.

Fran and Sarah: *Chag sameach*, Rivka

Rivka: *Gut yontif*.

Fran/Sarah: *Gut yontif*.[93]

Fran appears as the superstitious grandmother-to-be, spitting as part of traditional Jewish apotropaic practices to ward off the evil-eye.[94] The Rein-dybbuk speaks in a stylised jocular, Jewish-accented English, sounding like an anachronistic composite of Yiddish-inflected characters from American television and film: "Oh geez. Okay. Here we go. You are (*consults a rolodex*) Elysheva Scroogavitz. And I am the Rein-dybbuk of Chrismakkah past, yada-yada-yada come on toots let's get this show on the road".[95] These examples of selective reproduction in linguistic tags serve to index the characters' identities in relation to Jewish practice or Jewish representation within popular culture.

Yiddish is most strongly aligned with the character of Bubi, an energetic ninety-nine-year-old European-born speaker who appears as Ely's spectral guide. Her first utterance, when spotted by a shocked Ely in the bakery, is the Yiddish, "Nu?".[96] Bubi's speech is peppered with Yiddish interjections such as "Oy" or "Oy vey".[97] Her use of untranslated Yiddishisms underscores her feisty character. For example, upon discovering that Ely is pregnant, this exchange ensues:

Ely: I thought you'd be happy to see me.

Bubi: Sure, sure darling. You tell yourself what you need to. But let's just say I was on a Mahjong winning streak and I need to kick Minnie Finklestein's *tuchus*, oy she thinks she's all that ...

Ely: Bubi!

Bubi: I knew that boy was no good for you. He knocks you up and this whole place turns to crap! Where is that *no-goodnik*?[98]

95. Hearst, *A Very Jewish Christmas Carol*, 24.
96. Hearst, *A Very Jewish Christmas Carol*, 19.
97. Hearst, *A Very Jewish Christmas Carol*, 20, 21.
98. Hearst, *A Very Jewish Christmas Carol*, 21.

Bubi weaponises Yiddish in her encounters with other characters in the play. Her English is replete with Yiddish proverbs, which are glossed intradiegetically by characters in the scene, or appear translated in textprojections (surtitles) for the audience to read. Bubi critiques Ely's slovenly appearance:

> Bubi: *Az di moyd iz mies zogt zi, der shpigl iz shuldik*.
> Ely: What?
> Bubi: If a girl is ugly, she blames it on the mirror. Would it kill you to make an effort? At least for your daughter's sake.[99]

Bubi aggressively deploys Yiddish proverbs against her daughter, Fran:

> Bubi: *Az got hot geteylt dem seykhl bistu geshlofn*. (When God was doling out brains, you were asleep).
> Fran: You know I can't speak Yiddish.
> Bubi: Pity.[100]

> Bubi: *Ale tseyn zoln dir aroysfaln, nor eyner zol dir blaybn af tsonveytik*.
> Rein-dybbuk: May all your teeth fall out, except one to give you a toothache. Savage.[101]

> Bubi: *A tropn libe brengt a mol a yam trern*.
> Fran: What, Mum?
> Rein-dybbuk: A drop of love can bring an ocean of tears. Brutal.[102]

Bubi's Yiddish mockery and insulting her daughter, to whom she never taught Yiddish or Polish, underscores the schism between them. According to Hearst, those incompletely transmitted languages form a hidden aspect of Bubi, and express her deepest pain (Hearst 2024). They mark an origin point for the intergenerational trauma that the characters carry into the present. At its most extreme,

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99. Hearst, *A Very Jewish Christmas Carol*, 23.
100. Hearst, *A Very Jewish Christmas Carol*, 26.
101. Hearst, *A Very Jewish Christmas Carol*, 29.
102. Hearst, *A Very Jewish Christmas Carol*, 38.

Bubi deploys Yiddish slurs and proverbs in a verbal sparring with her nemesis, Lilith, about who will guide Ely:

Bubi: Okay, you old witch, I'll take it from here.

Lilith: Go back to your little games. This is no place for an *alte kaker* like you.

Bubi: Who are you calling an *alte kaker*?! You're as old as time!

Lilith: *Fargelt un fargrint zolstu vern!* (May you turn yellow and green!)

Bubi: *Eyn imglik iz far im veynik.* (One misfortune is too few for him.)

Lilith: *Vern zol fun dir a blintshik, un di kats zol dikh khapn.* (May you turn into a blintz and be snatched by a cat.)

Bubi: *Dayn neshome zol arayngeyn in a kats un a hunt zol es a bis ton.* (May your soul enter a cat and may a dog bite it).[103]

The play's Jewish characters lapse into vulgar Yiddish-inflected English to manage uncomfortable moments of intimacy, which are revealed to Ely during her travels with the three ghosts. In a flashback to a tense scene between Bubi and Fran, Bubi announces that she is leaving, "*To pish!*"[104]. When Sarah and Rivka talk privately about whether to reveal their romantic relationship, Sarah scoffs, "Meanwhile I'm off having the time of my life, *shtupping* the rabbi." Rivka responds, "I thought this was more than *shtupping*."[105] The play extends a running gag about Bubi in the midst of a heated otherworldly game of Mahjong as a defeated Ely prepares to leave the bakery and her family:

Bubi: (offstage) *Oy vey iz mir* that noodle-head. She treating you okay?

Ely: Yeah fine.

Bubi: (*offstage*) Don't you dare, Minnie! It's my turn! Oy. Sorry. Finklestein's up my *tuchus* again. What were you saying, Elysheva?

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103. Hearst, *A Very Jewish Christmas Carol*, 58.
104. Hearst, *A Very Jewish Christmas Carol*, 30.
105. Hearst, *A Very Jewish Christmas Carol*, 47.

Ely: Lilith is showing me my future so I can get back and pack up my things.

Bubi: (*offstage*) Pack up? What's to pack up? Calm down, Finklestein, can't you see I'm talking to my granddaughter?

Ely: I'm no good to anyone, Bubi. I see it so clearly now. I don't want to be a burden any longer. And the only way to make things better is for me to get the hell out of here. Then everyone else can get on with their lives.

Bubi: (*offstage*) You're leaving? Oy. You haven't figured it out you *shmendrick*. Finklestein, play my hand, and I'll know if you cheated. Elysheva Scroogavitz, don't move a muscle. Bubi is coming![106]

In contrast to Kaminsky, a child of Holocaust survivors who grew up speaking Yiddish within a rich cultural environment, Hearst was exposed to Yiddish colloquialisms within her family but does not speak the language.[107] Hearst constructed the play's Yiddish dialogue in three ways. First, she drew on her own Jewish linguistic repertoire of Yiddishisms to embed in the play, which appear largely untranslated. Second, like Kaminsky, she searched up Yiddish proverbs to integrate into the script (using the Yiddishwit.com website), which appear translated. Third, for the longer sections of Yiddish dialogue that employ a strategy of vehicular matching, I was brought in as a consultant and translator, having previously worked in the same capacity on Hearst's earlier co-authored play, *Yentl*. The production also hired a dialect coach to work with the actors, Melbourne-based Yiddish singer and teacher, Freydi Mrocki. In my role, I was presented with the sections of the play in English to render into spoken Yiddish, which I also audio-recorded for the actors.

In my studies of new films and television with subtitled Yiddish dialogue, I termed this bidirectional mode of rendering Yiddish dialogue for performance on the stage or screen "transvernacular." In this mode, "Yiddish appears as

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106. Hearst, *A Very Jewish Christmas Carol*, 57.
107. Hearst, interview.

a fluently spoken language produced by, and for, non-fluent Yiddish speakers" who encompass creators, directors, actors and audiences.[108] Here an original script in the source language is rendered into the target language of Yiddish, and then glossed back into the original language for viewers in subtitles or surtitles. In Hearst's play, I translated sections of the original script in English into Yiddish, which the actors memorised, and the original English appeared as surtitles for the audience. In this mode, the Yiddish amounts to what scholars have termed "pseudo-subtitling"[109] or "back translation".[110] With no Yiddish source text and no target audience of Yiddish speakers, the Yiddish dialogue exists in a "closed loop" of translation. The Yiddish operates within a dramatic function of translation where the language is essential as a narrative strategy.[111]

The performance of *A Very Jewish Christmas Carol* draws on heterolingualism as a dramaturgical resource. In contrast to a novel, the multimodality of staged theatre – which, like cinema, draws on multiple senses at the same time – radically changes the audience experience of the Yiddish. Rather than an unfamiliar text that is encountered on a page, the extra-linguistic aspects of performance mediate the Yiddish that audiences encounter when viewing the play. Language exists as one among a suite of signifying resources: facial expression, gesture, costume, and the placement of characters on stage. The corporeal, embodied, plastic nature of performance offers a range of resources and affordances, which extend well beyond the linguistic. Through these, the play's heterolingualism and its foregrounding of Yiddish become embodied on stage. Further, the experience of viewing the play in a collective transforms its performed heterolingualism into a linguistic

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108. Margolis, "Melekh Ravitch as Yiddish Catalyst"; see also Margolis *Yiddish Lives On* and Margolis, *The Yiddish Supernatural on Screen*.

109. O'Sullivan, *Translating Popular Film*, 4.

110. Dror Abend-David, "The 'Non-Translation': Editor's Introductory Note," "Yiddish, Media and the Dramatic Function of Translation—or What Does It Take to Read Joel and Ethan Coen's film, A Serious Man?" In *Representing Translation: The Representation of Translation and Translators in Contemporary Media*, ed. Dror Abend-David (New York and London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 202.

111. O'Sullivan, *Translating Popular Film*, 120; Abend-David "The Non-Translation," 202.

strategy to forge human connection. Jill Dolan's foundational study, "Performance, Utopia, and the 'Utopian Performative'," posits that in addition to an aesthetic act, theatre performance can foster moments of community and shared experience that gesture toward the possibility of a better world, and thereby allow audiences to momentarily glimpse an imagined utopian future.[112] Drawing on Dolan, Yana Meerzon considers how a Canadian multilingual theatre performance navigates linguistic diversity and translation in a stage performance about the reassembling of shattered identities after migration, whereby the act of storytelling engenders a utopian community.[113] Likewise, the heretolingualism of *A Very Jewish Christmas Carol* is instrumental to its creation of a utopian performative meeting place of cultures. The audience experience of shared spectatorship and participatory Yiddish listening underpins the play's multilingual narrative. As a spectator at a performance of the play that had numerous Yiddish speakers in attendance, I experienced audience responses to the Yiddish dialogue in collective laughter or gasps that were sometimes out of sync, depending on whether a person knew Yiddish or not, and to what extent they relied on the mediation of surtitles to grasp the meaning of the spoken dialogue. In and through Yiddish, the audience collectively witnesses Bubi's submerged memory of the tragic loss of her family in the Holocaust and her subsequent dislocation, and the healing of intergenerational trauma prompted by its telling.

As the play's English to Yiddish translator, I considered the cadence of how extended passages of Yiddish would sounds in the mouths of the actors as well as how they might be heard by audiences. Of the group, only Evelyn Krape, who played Bubi/the Gingerbread Golem, had extensive experience acting in the Yiddish language (she had recently co-starred in the play, *Yentl*). Without the scaffolding of the English script, none of the actors

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112. Jill Dolan, "Performance, Utopia, and the 'Utopian Performative'," *Theatre Journal* 53, no. 3 (2001): 455–79, https://doi.org/10.1353/tj.2001.0045.

113. Yana Meerzon, "Between Je and Moi: Staging the Heteroglossia of Immigrant Autobiography," *Theatre Research in Canada* 36, no. 2 (2015): 1–22, https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/tric/article/view/24309/28125.

understood the Yiddish words that they were memorising and delivering on stage. The phonetics of Yiddish can pose challenges to non-speakers; for example, the voiceless velar fricative, represented by the symbol [x] in the International Phonetic Alphabet and transliterated as "kh," is a widespread phoneme in Yiddish. As I translated, I read each line aloud to ensure that the lines flowed and that their delivery would not be rendered unduly difficult. Freydi Mrocki and I worked together to rewrite some of the lines to make them as idiomatic as possible. Although Yiddish emerged from Middle-High German and is thus related to Modern German, I resisted using an overly Germanised Yiddish or turning to internationalisms that would be easily accessible to audiences. I was inspired by the scholarly studies of heterolingualism suggesting that the encounter with foreign languages as an artistic strategy can embody a character's experiences for audiences.

I offer here an early example of vehicular matching in the play to suggest how Hearst's script not only manages the intelligibility of longer passages of Yiddish, but facilitates an immersive audience experience through that language. This excerpt plays with the dynamics around intelligibility to generate humour as well as to wryly comment on dramaturgy as a mediator between languages. In the second scene, the text reads: "Bubbe's body is suddenly possessed by an ancient ancestor. The ancestor speaks the following in Yiddish in a deep and gravelly voice":

Bubi: Enough, Elysheva! You do not know what you cannot know! Do not presume to have all the answers. Instead, learn to ask the questions. Tonight, this Chrismakkah Eve, you'll be visited by three spirits, each one presenting you with a vision of your past, your present, and the future yet to come. Expect the first when the oven bell dings one. The second will come when the oven bell dings two, the third when the oven bell dings three. Remember this, and remember me, and please, sort yourself out so I never have to return to this godforsaken place.

The audience is presented with the above script to read as English surtitles while hearing the Yiddish:

Genug, Elysheva! Du veyst nisht vos du kenst nisht visn! Meyn nisht as du host ale entfers. Onshtot dem, lern zikh oys tsu fregn frages. Haynt, dem Erev Krismaka, veln dray rukhes dikh bazukhn. Yeder vet dir forshteln a vizye fun dayn over, funem haynt un fun der tsukunft. Rikht zikh oyf der ershter ven der oyvn zeyger klingt eyns. Der tsveyter vet kumen ven der oyvn zeyger klingt tsvey, der driter ven der oyvn zeyger klingt dray. Gedenk dos un gedenk mikh, un, zay azoy gut, plonter zikh oys az ikh zol keyn mol nisht muzn tsurik in dem hek.

Bubi comes back into her own voice and body.

Bubi: (*To Elysheva*) Did you understand any of that?
Ely: Strangely, I did.[114]

The humour in this passage hinges on the suspension of disbelief that underpins the play's vehicular matching: Ely is able to understand the Yiddish without speaking that language. This early encounter with Yiddish establishes a dynamic that carries through the play: Yiddish is spoken as a language that neither the audience nor Elisheva understand, but which is translated for both parties: via magical means for Elisheva, and surtitles for the audience. As a result, both Elisheva and the audience are privy to mediated secret information associated with the mystical or haunted realm inhabited by Bubi and the three ghosts who visit her. As I posit in *The Yiddish Supernatural on Screen: Dybbuks, Demons and Haunted Jewish Pasts*, the association of Yiddish with esoteric knowledge and resonances of memory forms a trope of an international corpus of twenty-first century multilingual film and television that foregrounds spoken Yiddish as a mimetic device.[115]

The play's third act – its climactic revelation – employs an extended dramatic function of translation using vehicular

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114. Hearst, *A Very Jewish Christmas Carol*, 23.
115. Margolis, *The Yiddish Supernatural on Screen*.

matching. The characters' speech reconstructs the multilingualism of a Polish Jewish family on the eve of the Second World War. In an interview Hearst recalls the impact of having recently completed the script for *Yentl*, which blends English and Yiddish dialogue: "I felt like the power of hearing language was a way of transporting the audience in time and place is really essential and amps up the unexpected nature of what is about to happen. It signifies to the audience that we are no longer in that familiar place".[116] The combined Polish and Yiddish dialogue additionally functions to underscore the multilingual and intercultural speechways destroyed during the Holocaust.

Set in a snowy forest in Poland, Christmas/Hannuka 1938, scene twelve portrays Bubi as a young woman named Misha (Emma Jevons) in a clandestine sylvan holiday gift exchange with her non-Jewish friend, Ada (Jude Perl). The scene opens in Polish (translated and coached by Krystyna Duszniak). It soon seamlessly switches to English when Ely, who is witnessing the scene together with Bubi's ghost, complains: "A little help Bubi? I can't speak Polish!" Bubi responds, "Oy. Here." The play's directions state, "Bubi magically makes them speak in English".[117] Hearst's fictional translation device was motivated in part because of the difficulties the actors encountered memorising the lines of Polish dialogue in addition to the Yiddish.[118] This translation strategy – an example of Sternberg's explicit attribution, where the audience is informed that a language is being spoken without hearing it – delimited the time-consuming and challenging process of memorizing large swathes of Polish-language dialogue for the stage, where, unlike in cinema, no retakes are possible. In the scene, Ada hands Misha an envelope containing the recipe for what would become Bubi's famous gingerbread. As Misha reads the Polish recipe, Ely attempts to glimpse it but is unable to read the

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116. Hearst, interview.
117. Hearst, *A Very Jewish Christmas Carol*, 59.
118. Hearst, interview.

Polish; Ada commands Misha to memorise the recipe before she tears it up. The two are shown coining the term Chrismakkah – much to Ely's chagrin – as they exchange holiday greetings and sing together. When Ely moans in protest and demands to know why Bubi never shared the recipe with her, Bubi responds that she promised never to reveal it. The scene underscrores the ruptured linguistic and cultural transmission in the wake of the Holocaust: because she does not speak Polish – one of the daily languages fluently spoken by her grandmother – Ely is unable to retrieve the coveted gingerbread recipe.

The next two scenes – the most emotionally charged in the play – appear predominantly in Yiddish. Scene thirteen portrays Ada visiting Misha's family in an interfaith encounter as they light the Hannukah candles. Misha, her mother, Renia (Natalie Gamsu), and her grandmother, Halina (Louise Siversen), recite the Hebrew blessing and banter comparing gingerbread with jam *ponchkes* (doughnuts). In the scene, spoken English stands in for the dominant language of Polish in a strategy of homogenizing convention. The family speaks in Yiddish when they don't want Ada to understand, with the translation projected in English surtitles behind the actors. Yiddish serves as a Jewish cipher within a multilingual household in a reversal of the common post-Holocaust memory of children of Yiddish-speaking parents recalling the language being used to conceal secrets from them.

> Misha: It's Chrismakkah, Bubbe!
> Ada: The best parts of Christmas and Chanukah combined!
> Halina: What is she talking about? *Az meh tut on sheyn a bezem, iz er oykh sheyn.* (Dress up a broom and it will look nice too.)
> Renia: Mum, be nice!
> *Mameh, zay a mentsh!*
> The girl is harmless!
> *Dos meydl volt nisht getshepet keyn flig oyf der vant.*

119. Calvin Trillin, "Of Yiddish, Litvaks, and the Evil Eye: A Smattering of Yiddish Happens to be all the Yiddish I have," *The New Yorker*, November 29, 2024, https://www.newyorker.com/culture/personal-history/of-yiddish-litvaks-and-the-evil-eye?

Halina: Suit yourself, but I'll be sleeping with one eye open.[120]

Tu vi du vilst, ober ikh shlof say vi mit an ofenem oyg.

Figure 5: The surtitles during scene 13
A Very Jewish Christmas Carol. Melbourne Theatre Company 2023. Image by Pia Johnson.

In scene fourteen, Misha says a tearful farewell to her family as she prepares to depart Poland in search of refuge. Her mother and grandmother hand her a rucksack with food, and Renia, says:

Gedenk dem plan. Du gey, lern zikh, un oyb es vert alts erger, gey vayter un vayter un vayter, un oyb du kumst on in ek velt, iz dos beseyder. Du geyst poshet vayter. Un demolt shikstu nokh undz.

Remember the plan. You go, study, and if things get worse, you keep going, and going, and going, and if you reach the end of the earth that's okay. You just keep going. And then you send for us.[121]

Bubi reveals to Ely in the next scene that she was the sole survivor in her family. She entreats Ely to connect with her own family rather than be consumed by grief after losing Ben. In the final two scenes, Ely is able to reconcile with Ben by encountering his ghost. She calls her mother on her mobile phone to invite her, along with her sister, Rivka, and Carol, to join her at the hospital for the birth.

Yiddish as a mimetic device is integral to the play's third-generation character. According to Hearst, the play

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121. Hearst, *A Very Jewish Christmas Carol*, 65.

explores, "the pressures placed upon the third generation as they attempt to emerge from their own parents' inability to connect with their parents because they are too close so that it falls upon the grandchildren to solve the mysteries and work through the trauma so that their own children don't have to bear the burden of that pain".[122] Within Hearst's dramaturgical redemptive journey of return to pre-War Poland, Polish and Yiddish in tandem offer a key to a vanished past, as represented by the elusive gingerbread recipe. Through multiple strategies of heterolingualism, the play reveals a family history that allows for the healing of intergenerational trauma to begin. The play suggests the ways that memory constitutes transformative stories that shape the present; as Bubi says at the end of their journey: "History repeats, and yet does not have to repeat itself. We need to see our ghosts. Speak their names. I know that now".[123] Hearst recalls how the global context impacted the use of Yiddish in the play, which entered production shortly after the events of October 7 and during the sharp upturn in antisemitism that followed.[124] Being able to rehearse in Yiddish and sing Hannuka songs offered a refuge and reclamation for the Jewish members of the cast and crew. Along with representing tradition and ritual, speaking Yiddish offered a way to honour the defiance of survival.[125] In connecting real and imagined speakers across generations, the Yiddish in the play helps to heal painful pasts that continue to affect the present. The Yiddish borrowings index Jewish identities in relation to the non-Jewish characters of Ben and Carol, and a dominant Australian culture more broadly. The Yiddish dialogue functions to bridge the worlds of the dead and the living as well as pre-Holocaust Jewish life in Poland and the contemporary Jewish experience in Australia.

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122. Hearst, interview.
123. Hearst, *A Very Jewish Christmas Carol*, 67.
124. Ruby Kraner-Tucci, "662 Antisemitic Incidents Recorded in Australia in the Wake of Gaza War," *The Jewish Independent*, December 20, 2023, https://thejewishindependent.com.au/662-antisemitic-incidents-in-australia-since-october-7.
125. Hearst, interview.

Conclusion

Kaminsky's *Doll's Eye* and Heart's *A Very Jewish Christmas Carol* suggest innovative uses of Yiddish as a mimetic device within heterolingual Jewish Australian fiction writing in 2023. Representing a native speaker and second-generation writer, and a non-speaker and third-generation writer respectively, Kaminsky and Hearst employ narrative and discursive strategies to integrate Yiddish into English-dominant texts. Within a heterolingual framework that foregrounds it, the Yiddish is managed with multiple intratextual strategies. Within a far larger corpus of heterolingual fiction writing that integrates Yiddish, these works point to diverse functions and strategies for foregrounding the language for writers and audiences for whom Yiddish does not function as daily language but remains essential to indexing Jewish identities in the aftermath of the Holocaust as well as addressing broader themes relating to memory and belonging. Their spotlighting of language offers rich possibilities for interlingual encounter and communication in relation to Holocaust memory and education. These texts also suggest productive mechanisms for non-fluent or non-Yiddish speakers to integrate that language into new creative work for the page or stage.

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Author Biography

Rebecca (Rivke) Margolis is Professor and Pratt Foundation Chair of Jewish Civilisation at Monash University, Australia. Her most recent books are *Yiddish Lives On: Strategies of Language Transmission* and *The Yiddish Supernatural on Screen: Dybbuks, Demons and a Haunted Jewish Past*.

Hebrew: the key to Judaism? Perspectives of Israeli immigrants in New Zealand

Annabel Noar

Abstract

The presence of Hebrew in Jewish religious and cultural practice across the ages is undeniable. However, whether it may be characterised as "the language of Judaism" is heavily debated. Throughout the diaspora, the position of Hebrew within diverse Jewish communities continues to vary. For many, it is still the language of prayer, religious study or cultural engagement, and Hebrew words and structures may appear interspersed with those of other languages. For others, the majority language may be used, even in religious domains, and Jewish identity may be indexed through other means. The position of Jewish-Israeli immigrants presents another layer of complexity since, for these families, Hebrew is not only a language used within the realm of Judaism, but also a first language, a family language, or a home language. How these roles which Hebrew performs are negotiated within the language planning efforts of Jewish-Israeli immigrants presents a unique opportunity to develop our understanding of the connection between Hebrew and Judaism. Situated within New Zealand's small Jewish and Israeli population and drawing upon data gathered during a broader mixed-methods study, this paper aims to use thematic analysis to address how Jewish-Israeli immigrants in New Zealand characterise the connection between Hebrew and Judaism and the extent to which this motivates their language planning. By answering these questions, this paper endeavours to contribute to the overarching discussion regarding the position of Hebrew within Judaism and the overall formation and performance of Jewish identity, with all of its diverse manifestations, within contemporary Jewish communities.

Introduction

People who identify as ethnically, culturally or religiously Jewish but do not use Hebrew as a first language present an interesting and unique context for the study of language learning, transmission and maintenance. Despite generally not using Hebrew for daily conversations either within the home or outside it, these individuals are likely to have an "ancestral, ethnic or nostalgic connection to the language".[1] A level of Hebrew proficiency can be considered central to Jewish identity and practice. However, this generally amounts to rudimentary literacy skills rather than conversational proficiency, even within the largest and most well-resourced diasporic Jewish communities.[2] This is reminiscent of the efforts of ancient Jewry to preserve, first and foremost, the written form of the language, for the purpose of religious practice and learning. This is evidenced by the lack of emphasis in the Talmud and Midrash regarding attempts to maintain spoken Hebrew.[3] During that period, so long as Hebrew was continually transmitted for the sake of religious study and rituals, the language of daily communication hardly mattered. In modern times, knowledge of the Hebrew used in religious texts and practices continues to afford one with access to Jewish textual tradition and perhaps the ability to participate in certain domains of Jewish religious and communal life.[4] The continuation of Hebrew's central position within Judaism seems to have been a defining factor for Jewish people's ability to maintain themselves as a distinctive cultural group, even during the years of exile from their homeland.[5] It seems to have replaced a state as a sort of transcendental link to a wider Jewish collective, a transcendental homeless nation until the recreation of the Jewish state.

What is meant by the term "Hebrew" must of course be defined. This term may be dissected into "Biblical," "Liturgical," "Literary," "Modern," "Mishnaic" Hebrew and more.[6] These classifications can be grouped together, such as beneath the label "Textual Hebrew" to refer to the Hebrew appearing in the Torah and traditional Leshon HaKoydesh as well as other liturgical and rabbinic literature.[7] However, use of these typologies often represen-

1. Avital Feuer, "Implications of Heritage Language Research for Hebrew Teaching and Learning," *Collaborative for Applied Jewish Studies in Education (CASJE)* (2016), https://www.casje.org/hebrew-language-education-lit-review-implications-heritage-language-research-hebrew-teaching-and.
2. Sharon Avni, "Hebrew as Heritage: The Work of Language in Religious and Communal Continuity," *Linguistics and Education* 23, no. 3 (2012), https://www.casje.org/hebrew-language-education-lit-review-contributions-secondforeign-language-learning-scholarship.
3. Lewis Glinert, *The Story of Hebrew* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017).
4. Avni, "Hebrew as Heritage".
5. Glinert, *The Story of Hebrew*.
6. Feuer, "Implications of Heritage Language Research"; Bernard Spolsky, *The Languages of the Jews: A Sociolinguistic History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
7. Anastasia Badder, "'I Just Want You to Get into the Flow of Reading': Reframing Hebrew Proficiency as an Enactment of Liberal Jewishness," *Language and Communication* 87 (2022): 221-230; Anastasia Badder and Sharon Avni, "The Sanctity of Decoding: Reframing Hebrew Literacy in the United States and Europe," *International Journal of Bilingualism* (February 2024), https://doi.org/10.1177/13670069241233389; Sarah Bunin Benor, "Hebrew and Jewish Diaspora Languages," in *The Routledge Handbook of Judaism in the 21st Century*, ed. Robert Brym and Randall F. Schnoor (New York: Routledge, 2023): 89-110; Sarah Bunin Benor, Jonathan Krasner, and Sharon Avni, *Hebrew Infusion: Language and Community at American Jewish Summer Camps* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2020).

ts a top-down, prescriptivist imposition of language forms that shift the emphasis away from the meaningful work done with language at the community and individual level. Additionally, participants in this research did not attribute any such labels to their Hebrew use and ideologies, rendering post-hoc fitting of labels artificial. Therefore, this paper applies Spolsky's recommendation of subsuming all forms of Hebrew beneath a single umbrella.[8] This acknowledges the important shift occurring within linguistics away from notions of language varieties as discrete, static entities, and towards a function-based viewpoint where linguistic resources are drawn for specific purposes. For these reasons, all known forms of Hebrew are referred to here simply as "Hebrew," which matches the conceptualisation which participants seemed to hold.[9]

Hebrew is by no means the only language related to or identified with Judaism. Indeed, many Jewish communities around the world experienced diglossia of Hebrew and the dominant language, with hybrid languages often emerging written in Hebrew characters or at least using a script that resembled this.[10] However, when it came to the re-establishment of the Jewish state, Hebrew was the language chosen to signify the reinvigorated Jewish nation.[11] The reinstatement of Hebrew as an official and all-purpose language of Israel was an act "without precedent in linguistic and sociopolitical history", spurred by a variety of social, cultural and political forces including the Jewish Enlightenment and the Jewish people's fight for sovereignty.[12] Ironically, the desire for a common, unifying language within the new state originated in nationalistic language ideology more akin to Russian or European principles than Jewish ideals.[13] Whilst often described as "miraculous," the success of this endeavour was actually the culmination of dedication and concerted effort across multiple domains, including the homes of particularly driven individuals and families.[14] For example, Eliezer Ben-Yehuda committed himself and his wife to communicating with their young son in Hebrew rather than their native Russian.[15] Their dedication and success proved that Hebrew was able to function as the language of daily life

8. Spolsky, *The Languages of the Jews*, 2.
9. Differentiation will be made, however, when discussing the results of others' research who did choose to segment the Hebrew they were looking at. To read more about my approach to the conceptualisation of Hebrew within participant-facing data collection procedures for studies on small Jewish communities, please visit www.hebrewinnewzealand.com/about/ or https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/17ndpj62Pii1xeF-bf9FlPHem51czP8XV?usp=sharing.
10. See, for example, discussion of Judeo-Italian in Spolsky, *The Languages of the Jews*, 170.
11. Jacob Neusner, "Judaism," in *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, ed. Keith Brown (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2006), 138–41.
12. Glinert, *The Story of Hebrew*, 2.
13. John Myhill, *Language in Jewish Society* (Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2004). Indeed, as pointed out by an anonymous reviewer, much motivation for the revernacularisation or at least modernisation of Hebrew can be traced to the Haskalah or Jewish Enlightenment movement and by writings from the likes of Johann Gottfried Herder. This movement resulted in the functional adaptation of Hebrew vocabulary to the domains of science and more advanced literature, where other classical languages such as Arabic had prevailed until that time. The Hasidic movement also contributed to the modernising process inadvertently, whilst simultaneously elevating the status of Yiddish. There is much more rich historical and cultural background regarding this process not covered here. The interested reader may find Chapter 8 of Glinert, *The Story of Hebrew* a useful introduction and overview.
14. Jonathan A. Fishman, *Reversing Language Shift: Theoretical and Empirical Foundations of Assistance to Threatened Languages* (Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 1991).
15. Glinert, *The Story of Hebrew*.

regardless of proficiency. It is these sorts of decisions that both sparked and emboldened the revernacularisation of Hebrew, increasing the expansion of the Hebrew lexicon started during the Enlightenment to become even more functional.[16] This largely bottom-up process resulted in the most successful language reclamation event in history, and, as Hebrew use and proficiency proliferated the developing and then established Jewish state, the association between the language and the newly-founded Israeli identity deepened. Not only was Hebrew an intrinsic part of Judaism, permitting participation in rituals and cultural practice as discussed above, but it eventually became the primary or at least one of the primary languages of childhood memories, familial connection and social mobility for Israeli citizens.

The successful revernacularisation of Hebrew as the spoken language of Israel means that, upon immigration to any other country, Jewish-Israelis are faced with the parallel tasks of acquiring the new majority language and maintaining Hebrew. These duties present even greater challenges when children are involved. Alongside negotiating the high levels of emotion which often accompany immigration, parents must plan for their family's integration into the new country, at the linguistic level and beyond.[17] This may involve careful, planned attention to language maintenance, or, as was observed by Anthonissen and Stroud, focus directed towards ensuring economic and social stability through other means, leaving the question of language maintenance more to chance.[18]

Maintaining one's home language, also known as heritage language and in this case referring to Hebrew with a conversational function, can aid the maintenance of one's ties to the home country, facilitating psychological adjustment by making cultural identity explicit.[19] It can also support socialisation into one's cultural group and the construction of personal identity.[20] Language maintenance has also been found to enhance children's feelings of belonging to their homeland throughout their lives.[21] As I outline elsewhere, language maintenance may also be a key component of the "imagined futures" parents construct

16. Fishman's term "revernacularisation" has been found preferable over "revitalisation" or "revival" as it acknowledges the fact that the language was continuously passed on, albeit outside of the conversational domain, and thus was never really "dead" or even "sleeping". Fishman, *Reversing Language Shift*, 289. For more, see Spolsky, *The Languages of the Jews*; Ben Judah, "Ivrit: The Language that Makes a People," *The Jewish Quarterly* 253 (August 2023): 1–59.

17. Michal Tannenbaum, "Family Language Policy as a Form of Coping or Defence Mechanism," *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 31, no. 1 (2017): 57-66.

18. Christine Anthonissen and Christopher Stroud, "Family Time(s): Migrant Temporalities in Family Language Planning in the Urban African South," in *Multilingualism Across the Lifespan*, ed. Unn Røyneland and Robert Blackwood, (New York: Routledge, 2022), 104–23.

19. Kutley Yağmur and Fons JR Van de Vijver, "Acculturation and Language Orientations of Turkish Immigrants in Australia, France, Germany, and the Netherlands," *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 43, no. 7 (2012): 1110–30.

20. Michal Tannenbaum and Hagit Cohen, "On Beauty, Usefulness, and Holiness: Attitudes Towards Languages in the Habad Community," *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 38, no. 2 (2017): 160–76.

21. Ahrum Jeon, "'I Had the Best of Both Worlds': Transnational Sense of Belonging-Second-Generation Korean Americans' Heritage Language Learning Journey," *Language and Education* 34, no.6 (2020): 553–65.

for their children, embedded amongst other parenting goals such as fostering creativity or encouraging academic success.[22] Language loss, on the other hand, may lead to a breakdown in familial communication, a resulting decrease in family closeness and can stunt identity formation.[23] Some immigrant parents may view these elements as necessary casualties of the pursuit to acquire proficiency in the dominant language, consciously permitting a process of language shift – away from their home language and towards the dominant language – to occur in their homes.[24] Others may approach linguistic outcomes of their immigration less consciously, without explicit planning, instead focusing on other aspects of their integration into their new home.[25] Others still may navigate the competing demands of language maintenance and language learning within their language planning efforts, aiming to hold onto their home language whilst simultaneously acquiring the new majority language.

Jewish-Israeli immigrant parents are thus faced with a complex task: not only may Hebrew proficiency be required for engagement with Judaism, however that looks for them, but it is likely also crucial for strong familial communication and development of personal identity, as is the case with all other immigrant languages. Those that emigrate to New Zealand are no exception, and significant additional challenges are experienced in this locale due to its small Jewish and Israeli population. Regardless, how language planning efforts are formulated by Israeli immigrant parents may reveal much about how the connection between Hebrew and individualised Jewish practice is constructed and perceived in contemporary times, and in the minds of contemporary Jewish community members. Observations in this regard may be particularly poignant for small Jewish communities, such as that of New Zealand, where families must conduct much of their Jewish and Hebrew education independently. In pursuit of engaging with this multifaceted discussion, this paper first provides a broad overview of other investigations into the positioning of Hebrew across the world. Here it will be shown how the presence of Israeli immigrants within diasporic Jewish communities may impa-

22. See Annabel Noar, "Language Maintenance, Emotional Investments, Family Values and Imagined Futures." *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* (2024): 1–15.

23. For an example of decreasing family closeness, see the tragic case described in Lily Wong Fillmore, "Loss of Family Language: Should Educators be Concerned?" *Theory into Practice* 39 (2000): 203–10. Kendall King and Elizabeth Lanza, "Ideology, Agency, and Imagination in Multilingual Families: An Introduction," *International Journal of Bilingualism* 23, no. 3 (2019): 717–23.

24. Gary Barkhuizen, "Immigrant Parents' Perceptions of Their Children's Language Practices: Afrikaans Speakers Living in New Zealand," *Language Awareness* 15, no. 2 (2006): 63-79; Kendall King, and Xiao Lan Curdt-Christiansen, "Language Development, Discourse, and Politics: Family Language Policy Foundations and Current Directions," in *Multilingualism Across the Lifespan*, ed. Unn Røyneland and Robert Blackwood, (New York: Routledge, 2022): 83-103.

25. E.g. Anthonissen and Stroud, "Family Time(s)".

ct broader attitudes and use of Hebrew, creating the need for their ideologies and language maintenance patterns to be understood. Next, the methods employed for this paper will be covered, followed by a discussion of the findings in the context of the performance and acquisition of Jewish identity through language. It will be shown how the importance of Hebrew for providing the potential for Jewish identity to develop, rather than as a means of ensuring it, may be a motivating factor for even less religiously oriented Jewish-Israeli immigrants. Through this, the potential connection between Hebrew and Judaism, at least in the minds of some, is made clearer, and how such ideologies may come to spread throughout smaller communities is considered. Finally, limitations of this research and possible implications for future studies will be explored.

Literature review

Hebrew occupies different positions within Jewish communities around the world. In Avni's study, students at an American Jewish school used Hebrew to make their Jewishness visible.[26] This was part of constructing and defining their in-group and their identity as Jewish-Americans. Surprisingly, when the students visited Israel, their Hebrew use decreased. This was perhaps because of the unmarked category Jewishness occupies there, or perhaps to define themselves as American-Jews in contrast with Israeli-Jews. Within this context, conversational Hebrew use is seen as part of students' individual and group identity construction. At a Hebrew school serving a liberal Jewish community in Luxembourg, parents and teachers valued a liturgical form of Hebrew, which the author characterises as "Textual Hebrew," for the access it provides to Jewish texts and, therefore, ritual participation.[27] Simultaneously, they feared that "too much" Hebrew, supposedly achieved by students studying the meaning of liturgical sources, may instigate a level of religiosity in children with which parents were uncomfortable. Students at this supplementary school thus learnt to decode Hebrew, rather than read for comprehension or with the goal of using Hebrew conversat-

26. Avni, "Hebrew as Heritage".
27. Badder, "I just want you to get into the Flow of Reading".

ionally. This initially frustrated students, due to the contrast it posed with their other language classes in which oral fluency and comprehension was a key goal. Overtime, however, the students came to realise that the decoding skills they were learning matched those of the adults in their community and permitted participation in rituals to the extent that they and their parents desired. This improved their satisfaction with the learning process. In Badder and Avni's discussion of the same community, it is revealed that acquiring conversational proficiency in Hebrew is not a goal towards which parents were interested in working, illustrated by their negative reception of the prospect of "Modern Hebrew" classes at the children's school.[28] The Hebrew recited during Jewish rituals, within the community domain, is the Hebrew that these parents saw as connecting Jewish people within their community as well as across time and space, and was therefore worthy of learning. In this way, context-specific Hebrew skills – in this case, decoding ability – can be seen as the "key" to Judaism as it is performed at the community level in this context.

The position which Hebrew occupies is largely dependent upon what being Jewish looks like within each group as well as broader locale-specific social, political and language ideologies. In 1987, McNamara[29] theorised that the (largely negative) language attitudes held by mainstream Australian Jewry in relation to acquisition of conversational Hebrew were symptomatic of a broader monolingual bias in Australian society, a phenomenon also observed by Clyne.[30] Hebrew, as a communicative code, occupied a lower status than English, yet it was still related to a form with important traditional and symbolic functions within Jewish communities.[31] Due to the different functions for which Hebrew is used between Israeli and non-Israeli members of Australia's Jewish community, Israeli families found themselves as somewhat of a double minority after immigration. Not only were they now identified as "Jews" in Australia, which is an unmarked category in Israel, but they were oftentimes also ethnically, culturally and linguistically different to the wider Jewish community.[32] This experience,

28. Badder and Avni, "The Sanctity of Decoding".

29. Tim F. McNamara, "Language and Social Identity: Israelis Abroad," *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 6, nos. 3-4 (1987): 226.

30. Michael Clyne, "The Monolingual Mindset as an Impediment to the Development of Plurilingual Potential in Australia," *Sociolinguistic Studies* 2, no.3 (2008): 347–66.

31. McNamara, "Language and Social Identity".

32. McNamara, "Language and Social Identity".

coupled with possible guilt Israeli immigrants may feel about leaving Israel, is theorised by McNamara to lead to negative attitudes towards maintaining Hebrew and a propensity to shift towards English, despite Hebrew being afforded a place within Australian Jewish practice. Perhaps the problem here is the dissonance between the functions Hebrew serves for Israeli and non-Israeli Jews: for the former, it is the language of their early memories, much of their culture and familial communication, as home languages are for all other immigrant groups. For the latter, however, the position of Hebrew is more complex to define and ultimately, according to McNamara, "being Jewish in Australia does not involve being able to communicate in Hebrew".[33] On the surface, this is remarkably similar to the situation described in Badder and Badder and Avni, but whether or not this sentiment has held over the last 37 years requires further consideration.[34]

In Gross and Rutland's study of the intergenerational changes that have occurred in Australian Jewish day schools, some students expressed disappointment that they and their classmates were unable to converse in Hebrew despite learning the language throughout their school careers.[35] This inferences that conversational Hebrew may be more connected to Australian Jewishness than McNamara thought, but, many other students viewed Hebrew learning as irrelevant to their current or future lives, in line with McNamara's predictions. Gross and Rutland later built upon this observation, claiming that, since the majority of Australian Jewry have resided in English-speaking Australia for multiple generations, Australia's monolingual bias and elevation of English throughout domains of society may have led to negative attitudes towards Hebrew.[36] In fact, in their (2020) study – which compared Hebrew learning in Jewish schools in China, Hong Kong, Singapore, New Zealand and Australia – Gross and Rutland found that Australian parents and students expressed the most negative attitudes towards Hebrew compared to the rest of the sample. This may be due to the fact that Jewish expatriates in the Asian regions were planning to return to their country of origin, whereas

33. McNamara, "Language and Social Identity," 226.
34. Badder, "I Just Want You to Get into the Flow of Reading"; Badder and Avni, "The Sanctity of Decoding".
35. Zehavit Gross and Suzanne D. Rutland, "Intergenerational Challenges in Australian Jewish School Education," *Religious Education* 109, no. 2 (2014): 143–61.
36. Zehavit Gross and Susan Rutland, "The Impact of Context on Attitudes Toward Heritage Languages: A Case Study of Jewish Schools in the Asia-Pacific Region," *Journal of Jewish Education* 86, no. 3 (2020): 241–70.

those in Australia and New Zealand possibly were not. It also correlates with McNamara's stating of Hebrew's irrelevance to Australian Jewry, yet possibly contrasts with those students in Gross and Rutland (2014) who expressed disappointment that their conversational Hebrew skills were not better developed.[37] Clearly, whilst conclusions may be made regarding the majority that are in line with McNamara's statement above, there is likely to be deep individual variation concerning attitudes towards Hebrew.[38] This is potentially exacerbated further in more geographically dispersed communities such as New Zealand, which has an even smaller Jewish population than Australia.

New Zealand's small Jewish population is remarkably under-researched, despite their interesting position as an under-resourced minority that still manages to maintain cultural distinctiveness. The New Zealand sample within Gross and Rutland's (2020) study revealed that, whilst parents were concerned about the school's ability to succeed on a secular, academic level, Hebrew was endowed with love and importance by parents, teachers and students alike. The authors theorised that the government-mandated position of te reo Māori, the language of New Zealand's Indigenous people, within the Jewish school also had an uplifting impact on people's attitudes towards Hebrew as their own heritage language. Gross and Rutland mention that the proportion of Israeli students within the Asian schools studied provided an advantage for non-Israeli children's acquisition of conversational Hebrew in these contexts, as they potentially provide more opportunities to practise speaking and listening.[39] This contrasts with McNamara's position that Israeli immigrants were a double minority within Australia's Jewish community, insinuating that they were undervalued or unable to fully integrate. Instead, Gross and Rutland's observation presents the idea that families and children from Israel may be assets for Hebrew transmission.[40] It is plausible that these families may have the potential to transform ideologies regarding Hebrew's position within diasporic Jewish communities (i.e., as either

37. Gross and Rutland "Intergenerational Challenges".
38. McNamara, "Language and Social Identity," 226.
39. Gross and Rutland, "The Impact of Context on Attitudes".
40. Gross and Rutland, "The Impact of Context on Attitudes".

a purely ritualistic language which one must be able to only decode, or a language with some communicative function which one should strive to comprehend). However, the proportion of Israeli families within Gross and Rutland's (2020) sample was very small, and, since the Jewish and Israeli population is so geographically dispersed in New Zealand, one cannot rely on investigations of the singular Jewish school in Auckland to provide a complete reflection of how Hebrew is viewed in relation to Judaism by Jewish-Israeli immigrants in New Zealand. Special effort must be expended to target the language ideologies of this group so that the way in which they may impact attitudes towards and positioning of Hebrew overall within New Zealand's Jewish community, and perhaps other small communities more generally, may be understood.

Present Study

The position of Hebrew within diasporic Jewish communities is clearly context-specific and impacted by locale-specific social and political circumstances. It is also possibly impacted by the presence or absence of Jewish-Israeli immigrants integrated within these communities, and these individuals and their integration are also likely to be impacted by the ideologies held towards Hebrew and other minority languages by the group. Further research is required here, and the first step is to begin delineating how Israeli immigrants themselves view the connection between Hebrew and Judaism. Most importantly, this begins a discussion of how the revernacularisation of Hebrew, which removed the language's "stateless" status, has impacted its original and longstanding connection to Judaism on both a practical and symbolic level. As resources are distributed for different areas of Jewish education throughout the diaspora, the possibly changing position or characteristics of Hebrew as a "Jewish language" and therefore the potentially fluid language proficiencies contemporary Jews may be striving to achieve must be considered. This is important for ensuring that Hebrew and Jewish education strikes an appropriate balance between traditional goals

and modern relevance. With these overarching goals in mind, this research aims to address the following questions:

1. How do Jewish-Israeli immigrants in New Zealand characterise the connection between Hebrew and Judaism?
2. To what extent do their ideologies in this area motivate or influence their language planning?

By answering these questions, this research expands knowledge of attitudes towards Hebrew throughout the diaspora to include the perspectives of Israeli immigrants. It will also extend understandings of Hebrew education from predominantly focussing on larger, well-resourced communities, where Israeli immigrants may have the choice to take advantage of formal Hebrew or Jewish education initiatives, to cover the situation of small, dispersed and under-resourced communities such as that of New Zealand, where the task of providing Jewish and Hebrew education mostly falls on parents themselves. Finally, this research will build upon discussions of what makes a language "Jewish" by bringing in the perspectives of contemporary language users and explicitly targeting their ideologies in this area.

The data discussed here originates from a broader investigation[41] into the family language policies of Jewish-Israeli immigrants in New Zealand.[42] This was a sequential explanatory mixed-methods study, incorporating a survey and interview phase. It investigated how Jewish-Israeli immigrants approached the maintenance of Hebrew, how this was impacted by how they viewed the connection between Hebrew and Judaism and how effective their language maintenance efforts were. This paper will expand on and contextualise what was found in relation to the second point, using the data obtained during the interview phase. Six semi-structured interviews between approximately 17 minutes and 1 hour in length were conducted and recorded over Zoom. Interviewees had lived in New Zealand for 2-16 years, and were 36-53 years old. They all identified themselves as Jewish, and all except

41. See Noar, "Heritage Language Maintenance in New Zealand".
42. For the purposes of this study, to be "Jewish" is to identify with Judaism in some way, whether that be ethnically, religiously, culturally or ancestrally. This broad conceptualisation recognises the myriad of ways in which one may engage with Judaism, as covered in the literature. See, for example, Benor, Krasner and Avni, "Hebrew Infusion"; Robert Brym and Feng Hou, "Twelve Degrees of Jewish Identity," in *The Ever-Dying People?: Canada's Jews in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Robert Brym and Randall F. Schnoor (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2023); Barry A. Kosmin, "Impermanent Boundaries and the Secularization of the Jews," *Contemporary Jewry* 42, no. 2 (2022): 215–20; Sergio DellaPergola, "World Jewish Population, 2021," in *American Jewish Year Book 2021: The Annual Record of the North American Jewish Communities Since 1899* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2022), 313–412.

one had children with another Jewish person.[43] They lived in regions around New Zealand of different sizes and with different access to organised communal events and institutions. Discussion points included participants' motivation for maintaining Hebrew, how their approach may have changed over time, and, most importantly, what they think about the connection between Hebrew and Judaism. Interviewees were encouraged to provide as much detail as they felt comfortable. The field notes made and audiovisual recordings of interview sessions were loaded into NVivo, transcribed verbatim and thematically analysed.[44] In the wider project, data was first coded by relevance to each research question at the phrasal level, allowing the possibility of a single segment of data being attributed to more than one research question. Within each research question, the data was then coded based on the themes or sentiments expressed in the segment, resulting in a large variety of separate codes that effectively summarised the content of the segment in short form. These first-level codes were then grouped together into second-level codes, which were finally grouped into three third-level codes for discussion. Those found in relation to the second research question, and discussed in depth in this paper, were: conversational Hebrew as a marker of Judaism, Hebrew as a marker of Israeli identity within which Jewish identity is contained, and Hebrew as the "key" to Jewish exploration.

Results and Discussion

Two participants, Maya and David, mentioned conversational Hebrew as a key component of Jewishness. Maya lives in a small Jewish community with her husband and their three sons. They encourage the boys to speak Hebrew at home as much as possible, although Maya feels they mostly use English between themselves when she and her husband are not around. The family actively and routinely observes the Sabbath and Jewish festivals, either with the local community, other Israeli friends or as a domestic unit. Maya describes Hebrew to be what represents someone as a Jew, saying "it's your culture, it's your language, it's your history." She also emphasised thro-

43. More specific information regarding participants' religious affiliation is not given here for the sake of protecting participants' privacy. Participant demographics are also not tabulated for the same reason, due to the extremely small size of New Zealand's Jewish community.
44. QSR International Pty Ltd, Released in March 2020, NVivo Version 12,https://www.qsrinternational.com/nvivo-qualitative-data-analysis-software/home.

ughout her interview the role of Hebrew in ensuring her sons know who they are and where they come from.

David, who lives near a much larger Jewish and Israeli community with his wife and two young children, provides a slight contrast. He identifies himself as an atheist when it comes to his religious orientation or lack thereof, something that he can integrate with Judaism because he characterises it as more of a nationality than a religion. Due to this characterisation, David feels someone cannot realistically be part of Judaism if they cannot speak Hebrew, claiming that anyone in this category would be missing a large part of the identity level. He even referenced family members of his who have not lived in Israel but are able to converse in Hebrew. It is unclear whether David is specifically referring to a need for conversational proficiency, a need for comprehension of whatever Hebrew is used in a religious capacity, or a combination of the two. As he chooses not to transmit what may typically be deemed the more religious component of Israeli-Jewish identity to his children, David sees Hebrew as a means through which his children may acquire their Jewish nationality and through which more liturgically-orientated people may effectively engage with Jewish religion. David's ideology is no doubt linked to the recent reconceptualisation of Hebrew as a unifying, official language of Israel, building on the nationalistic language ideology mentioned earlier.[45]

Participants Yosef and Aviram expressed the idea of Hebrew maintenance contributing to the transmission of Israeli identity, within which Jewish identity is contained. Yosef is originally from Canada and is married to an Israeli with whom he had three children in Israel before moving to New Zealand. He characterises Hebrew as the language of his family, saying "we just live our lives and we speak Hebrew." Whilst he feels the language is more easily linked to his children's Israeli identity, he feels this cannot be separated from their Jewish identity, viewing the two as nested within one cohesive whole. For him, Hebrew performs the role of displaying Israeliness and Jewishness simultaneously, but he did not mention the notion of Judai-

45. John Myhill, *Language in Jewish Society*.

sm as a unique nationality as David did.

Another participant, Aviram, expressed similar sentiments. Aviram was born in Argentina and made Aliyah[46] with his family as a child. He and his wife now live in New Zealand with their children, both of whom were born in Israel. Aviram and his wife pay special attention to the children's Hebrew literacy skills, saying these will be especially important if the family decide to move back to Israel. However, the reason Hebrew literacy is particularly important to Aviram is because he feels that losing literacy skills in his native Spanish led to his incomplete mastery over the language in adult life. Wishing to avoid this with his children, Aviram and his wife engage in explicit literacy teaching activities such as having the children match letters from Hebrew newspapers to printed letters of the aleph bet. In regards to transmitting Jewish identity, Aviram explains the difference, in his mind, between a diaspora Jewish family – who are likely to provide the Hebrew tools necessary for engagement with Judaism, and an Israeli-Jewish family – who transmit Hebrew for the sake of Israeliness. He feels that it is much easier to foster a Jewish identity in a Hebrew speaking child, as they are able to form an emotional link to Hebrew prayers and scriptures, than it is to foster this within a non-Hebrew speaking child. In his view, Jewish identity is situated within Israeli identity within Jewish-Israeli families, and Hebrew maintenance therefore supports the transmission of both of these elements from parent to child.

Another way in which Hebrew was characterised by participants was as a mode of providing children with the choice and ability to engage with Judaism however they pleased, regardless of their parents' level of religiosity. Noa, who lives in New Zealand with her non-Jewish, non-Israeli husband and two teenage children emphasised this indirectly. Having grown up in Israel as the child of English-speaking immigrants, Noa is accustomed to using Hebrew and English in separate domains of her life. She values familial cohesion highly, leading her to adopt a flexible language policy in her home so that her husband may be fully involved in all conversations. She explained how she

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46. "Aliyah" is the term used to describe Jewish immigration to Israel. Translated as "going up," the process is associated with spiritual and physical ascension through returning to the Jewish ancestral homeland.

feels the connection between Hebrew and Judaism is non-linear, with the language not the crux of religious transmission but rather the maternal hereditary line. Whilst she feels that not knowing Hebrew does not make you any less Jewish, she does believe that knowing it allows you to know more about Jewish culture. This is because, in her view, much knowledge and a proportion of the "vibe" of liturgical texts is lost through translation. To Noa, the most tenable link between Hebrew and Judaism is the positioning of the language as a tool for accessing Judaism in its entirety, with nothing omitted, rather than as a compulsory prerequisite.

Another participant, Tamar, whose international Jewish organisation has stationed her in New Zealand, expressed similar feelings. She and her husband moved to New Zealand relatively recently, where they welcomed their young daughter. As a secular person, Tamar is more driven to teach her daughter about the culture, literature, art and stories of her childhood than Jewish religious practices. However, one of the prime motivations for maintaining Hebrew with their daughter is to ensure that she is able to use the language to amend the gaps in her religious knowledge should she wish to. To Tamar, Hebrew holds the "keys" to Judaism, preserving the knowledge of the Jewish collective. Rather than a fear of "too much Hebrew" resulting in a level of religiosity deemed undesirable by parents, as was the case in Badder's study,[47] Noa and Tamar view broad Hebrew skills as providing their children with the choice to engage with Judaism to the extent to which they are interested and comfortable. In this way, Hebrew may serve as the "key" to Judaism, however that is placed within their children's developing self-concept.

One of the key points that becomes clear from the above is that the parents studied see Hebrew knowledge as necessary for ensuring their children can explore and acquire their Jewish identity, regardless of whether this is viewed as a segment of their Israeliness, a distinct nationality, or a separate "religious" identity. Interestingly, whilst this was referenced in some way by all participants, what was notably absent from the data was discussion of literacy skills as necessary for practising or exploring Judai-

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47. Badder, "I Just Want You to Get into the Flow of Reading".

sm, aside from Noa's brief mention of Hebrew's role in maintaining the "vibe" of liturgical texts. Even this emphasises the importance of comprehension rather than specifically literacy or decoding skills. This is in direct contrast with the historical position of Hebrew, observations in other locales and findings on non-Israeli Jewish participant groups discussed earlier, and more in line with findings of other immigrant, non-faith-based minority language users.[48] In fact, the interviewees who emphasised the acquisition of literacy skills most strongly, David and Aviram, did so in reference to the broadening of general linguistic capabilities outside of domains of religious practice rather than with the goal of supporting participation in Jewish rituals or religious learning. The purpose of reading, in the minds of David and Aviram, is to expand children's vocabulary, expose them to more domains of language use, and enhance their comprehension and production of Hebrew. By others, Hebrew literacy skills were approached haphazardly, with parents claiming to have read to their children in Hebrew when they were young or attempted to use literacy workbooks briefly, before they eventually became content using the language conversationally only. From this, it seems as though the position of Hebrew has evolved from its traditional position as a language that is primarily important for religious literacy capabilities. This may lead to a shift of Hebrew's position within diasporic Jewish practice, due to the presence of Jewish-Israeli immigrants within these communities. Whether or not the traditional position of Hebrew will hold within Jewish families (i.e. as a language one must learn to decode but not necessarily understand) as Jewish-Israeli families integrate with diasporic communities certainly deserves further attention.

Conclusion

What does this mean, then, for Hebrew's position as a "Jewish language"? It seems as though, for at least those studied, the linguistic resources beneath the label "Hebrew" construct an entity that occupies a double position. It is still a Jewish language that affords children access to Jewish

48. Louisa Buckingham, "Heritage Language Maintenance in New Zealand," in *Language Learning in Anglophone Countries* (New York: Springer, 2021), 289–307; Rekha M. Kuncha, and Hanoku Bathula, *The Role of Attitudes in Language Shift and Language Maintenance in a New Immigrant Community: A Case Study* (Auckland: AIS St Helens, Centre for Research in International Education, 2004); the implicational scale in Fishman, "Reversing Language Shift".

religious practice should they want it. However, it is also a family or immigrant language that supports familial cohesion and provides children with their Israeli identity, within which Jewish identity may be contained. As mentioned earlier, the Hebrew used conversationally may not be the same as the Hebrew used for specifically religious or liturgical functions. However, this difference was not mentioned by participants, and it indeed may not even be necessary to enforce top-down, form-based distinctions between varieties when the function of language use in each circumstance can be discussed instead.[49] It seems as though participants perceived enough similarities between the multiple forms, since revernacularised Hebrew took such great inspiration from its biblical counterparts, that an understanding of the Hebrew used conversationally would ensure some understanding of that which is used in religious domains. Whether or not this hypothesis holds true warrants further research. The positioning of Hebrew as a collective term for forms serving both religious and secular purposes, promoting access to religious learning and cultural or familial socialisation respectively, is unique within the context of language maintenance research, and a new position for Hebrew to occupy. It reflects the broader diversification of Jewish identity and what, including which linguistic resources, is used to portray this in contemporary Jewish communities. In the context of small communities, this increasing heterogeneity may lead to even greater difficulty accessing or designing Hebrew and Jewish education initiatives that suit the needs of individual families within a certain region. It is therefore crucial that these diversifications are monitored and documented, so that new ways of being Jewish Hebrew-users are accounted for within broader community planning.

Building on the limitations of this study, particularly its small sample size, further research may be able to shed light on how the sentiments expressed here directly relate to those of non-Israeli New Zealand Jews, as well as how these ideologies may develop over time in relation to international events. Future studies may also explore the

49. Spolsky, *The Languages of the Jews*.

ideologies of Israeli immigrants elsewhere, perhaps in locales that exhibit different attitudes to linguistic pluralism. This type of research is crucial to ensure education resources designed for Jewish communities with large proportions of Israeli immigrants are relevant, helpful and appropriate, based on the new positioning of Hebrew as a language that inferences more than Jewish textual study and ritual participation.

The events of the last century have led to the expansion of Hebrew beyond the realm of Jewish religious practice or authorship and into the sounds of childhood memories, conversations with loved ones, and conceptions of ethnic and national identity like never before. Already a language of firsts, seeing how Hebrew's positioning continues to transform may also provide important insights for our understanding of Jewish identity and the relationship between language and identity overall, that are yet to be fathomed.

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Author Biography

Annabel Noar is a PhD Student at the Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation, Monash University. Inspired by her small-town New Zealand upbringing, Annabel's research centres around the transmission and transformation of Jewish linguistic resources, in places where Jewish educational and community resources are limited. Along this vein, her Master's research explored family language policy within New Zealand's Jewish-Israeli immigrant population, leading to a broader investigation of how the transmission of Jewishness is negotiated amidst general linguistic challenges also observed in other immigrant populations. Her PhD research continues this line of inquiry, widening the scope to include the non-Israeli New Zealand Jewish population, too.

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Review of Ofer Idels, *Zionism: Emotions, Language and Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024)

Roni Cohen

Recently, there has been a new interest in the history of emotions in the field of Israel Studies. Derek Penslar's *Zionism: An Emotional State* (2023), Orit Rozin's *Emotions of Conflict: Israel 1949-1967* (2024) both appeared only in the last two years, and made an important contribution to thinking about Israel and modern Jewish history through the lens of emotions. In that context, it is also important to mention the latest volumes of the Israeli journal *Zion* (edited by Hadar Feldman, Orit Rozin, and Emma Zohar), which were also dedicated to the use of theories connected to the history of emotions in the context of Jewish history. In this context, Ofer Idels' new book *Zionism*, as a part of the *Cambridge Elements Histories of Emotions and the Senses* tries to suggest a new perspective towards the engagement of emotions in the study of Zionism. However, unlike other studies in the field, which mainly focus on specific emotions, emotional terminology, and emotional regimes, Idels aims to offer tools for engaging in a historical discussion on what people felt.

Typically to the *Cambridge Elements* series, Idels' book is based on a concise introductory discussion. You will not find in it an elaborated analysis of sources about emotions and feelings in the Zionist movement in the first half of the 20th century. Instead, Idels describes the main trends in the study of Zionism in the last decades, point to methodological problems, and shows how his own point of view, which emphasizes the importance of understanding not only how Zionists in Palestine behaved or what their daily lives looked like, but mainly how they themselves *experienced* their lives. According to Idels, living in Palestine, speaking Hebrew daily and consuming Hebrew culture constated, for those who chose to do it, a completely new and different living experience.

Idels points to a specific, recurring lacuna in current studies about the Jewish Zionist community in Palestine in the first half of the twentieth century (*Yishuv*). According to Idels, one of the main trends in the study of the *Yishuv* in the last decades is to undervalue the importance of the ideological factor in the lives of the Jewish communities in Palestine before 1948. Scholars such as Gur Alroey or Anat Helman focused on the "non ideologic" daily lives of such communities, highlighting their interest in wealth, leisure and well-being, and underplaying the relevance and influence of ideals regarding the importance of creating a new Jewish ethos or building a new state. According to Idels, while Post-Post-Zionist research has made a critical contribution to understanding the richness and complexity of the lives and daily existence of Palestine's Jewish residents beyond such ideological questions, their research tends to overlook the major differences in the role that ideology in the Modern period played in lived experience. Idels claims that such scholars imagine life in the *Yishuv* as similar to contemporary life in its suspicion towards ideologies. These sentiments, Idels claims, which may be typical of current global-neoliberal tendencies, but do not necessarily go hand in hand with perceptions of ideology in the first half of the twentieth century. Idels claims that shifting the scholarly focus towards studying the experience of living in the *Yishuv*, in a revolutionary atmosphere, allows us to provide a more sensitive and nuanced image of that past. Therefore, if previous scholars distinguished between "real life" and the ideological expressions that may today be perceived as propaganda or empty textual cliches and gestures, according to Idels, we should instead read such materials as an inseparable part of the emotional experience of Jewish life in Palestine.

The book contains five short chapters, all focusing on one specific case study. After a brief introduction that includes a historical survey on the history of Zionism and Jewish life in Palestine before 1948, Idels moves towards an explanation of the history of emotions and history of experience, and the importance of the concept of experience in studying Zionism. The third chapter of the book is dedicated to the

examination of one case study: the Hebrew Revival. One of the most prominent cultural expressions of the Zionist movement, and especially the Zionist activities in Palestine, was making Hebrew the main language for all kinds of communication. Although Hebrew was always an inseparable part of Jewish life and was part of religious rituals and curricula, it was not the spoken language of the majority of the Jews after the Second century. Idels begins by addressing the different scholarly perceptions regarding the new use of Hebrew during the 20th century, and the discussion regarding the extent to which it was a revival of an ancient Semitic language, or rather the creation of a language that was completely new. However, the main aim of this chapter is to move from these historical-linguistic discussions towards a focus on how the speakers themselves experienced the use of Hebrew. Idels highlights the fact that for the people in the *Yishuv*, being surrounded daily by a language that was previously used only for specific ritualistic purposes, and that was not any of the speakers' mother tongue, was a completely different and unique lived experience from of their previous life. Even if the Hebrew language was, for many, a struggle, the possibility of saying "I love you" in Hebrew for the first time created a human experience that cannot be summed up only through discussions about wealth or well-being.

The fourth chapter of the book focuses on the methodological potential of the history of experience. In this chapter, Idels challenges the tendency to "read against the grain" and highlights the dangers of being automatically suspicious when reading sources. Such a method, according to Idels, fails to understand major features when discussing the past. Focusing on the history of experience helps the scholar to be open not only to historical trends or forces, but also to the ways historical periods felt in real time. Such a reading also opens a window to a much more empathic understanding of the past.

While Idels brings a smart and clear analysis of major trends in the current historiography of Zionism, as well as bold methodological innovations to the field, it would have been great to have a more elaborate discussion on the

relationships between Idels' use of history of emotions and experience and the use of his peers in the field. It is clear that works like Rozin's latest book, or the double *Zion* issue are not mentioned due to the fact that they were published after Idels' book was already complete. However, reading Idels' analysis raises questions regarding the connections between the new interest in the history of Zionism and the history of emotions in Post-Post-Zionist historiography. Unfortunately, Idels leaves us to think about these connections by ourselves.

Nevertheless, Idels' short book makes an important contribution to the field of the history of Zionism and the study of the history of emotions and experience in the past. While leaving the reader looking for more, it opens a challenging conversation regarding the ways in which we historians need to think about the past, a conversation that should not be overlooked.

Author Biography

Dr Roni Cohen is a Minerva postdoctoral fellow at Goethe University. His book titled *Carnival and Canon: Medieval Parodies for Purim*, is soon to be published via Magnes Press. Roni's research focuses on European Jewish popular culture in the late Middle Ages and early modern period, as well as the relationships between textual pieces and communities.

Love and Hope in the Darkest of Times: SJM Collection Spotlight

David Horowitz and Kwok-Kam Yeung

Figure 1: Sydney Jewish Museum Collection: Object number M2000/005:001.

In the "Culture and Continuity" section of the Sydney Jewish Museum there hangs an unobtrusive framed document that might easily be overlooked. Upon closer inspection, one notices that it is somewhat out of place since it is written in Chinese. Indeed, the document commemorates a Jewish wedding held in Shanghai in 1946. It has a colorful border incorporating dragons, phoenixes and peonies. The Chinese text is surrounded by peach blossoms, swallows, butterflies, lotus flowers, and even a pair of mandarin ducks.[1] Nevertheless even with these additional symbols, it would be easy for a museum visitor to quickly move on. However, underlying this framed document is the tale of a Jewish couple and a community of people that is both inspiring and miraculous. This article will detail their story.[2]

Historical Background

In 1933 the Nazis were elected to power in Germany. From the outset, they urged all German and Austrian Jews to emigrate. However, only two regions were willing to accept them: the Dominican Republic and Shanghai. The latter had become the world's fifth largest city whose population included 70,000 foreigners. The Treaty of Nanjing (1842) established British, French and American concessions in Shanghai whose multiple governing authorities precipitated administrative gaps conducive to foreign immigration.[3] However, Shanghai's role as a refuge for European Jews became more crucial with the passage of the German Nuremberg Laws in 1935. Even with the Japanese occupation of Shanghai in 1937, Jews continued to flee to the city.

The first Austrian Jews arrived in Shanghai in 1938. Many of them were aided by Dr. Feng Shan Ho, the Chinese consul in Vienna, who issued thousands of visas allowing Austrian and German Jews to emigrate between 1938 and 1940.[4] In August 1941, the Japanese closed Shanghai to further Jewish immigration, and by 1943 the infamous Shanghai Ghetto (formally known as the Restricted Sector for Stateless Refugees) was established inside one square mile of the Hongkou district. There the city's 20,000 Jewish refugees were forced to live in squalid conditions.[5] The ghetto existed until 3 September 1945 (the day after Japan surrendered) when it was officially closed after a tour by the American Rescue and Goodwill Mission.[6] After that, its Jewish inhabitants slowly left for other parts of the world including Australia. When the Chinese Communists entered Shanghai in 1949, the Shanghai Ghetto had all but disappeared.[7]

The Bride and the Groom[8]

Edith Frischmann (nicknamed "Ditta") was the only child of Sigmund and Franzi Frischmann. Born on 19 March 1925, she and her family fled Vienna one week after Kristallnacht in November 1938. They arrived in Shanghai via Genoa on an Italian ocean liner with several suitcases containing their meagre belongings. It was there that Sigmund and Franzi,

3. Qingyang Zhou, "Interactions Between the Chinese and the Jewish Refugees in Shanghai During World War II," *Penn History Review* 25 (2019): 52.
4. Although these visas provided proof of Shanghai as a destination, the majority of those who received them eventually traveled elsewhere. Manli Ho, "Diplomatic Rescue: Shanghai as a Means of Escape and Refuge," in *A Century of Jewish Life in Shanghai*, ed. Steve Hochstadt (New York: Touro University Press, 2019), 117–26.
5. The exact number of Jews who occupied the Shanghai Ghetto has always been uncertain. Estimates number them between 17,000 and 25,000. Steve Hochstadt, "How many Shanghai Jews were there?" in *A Century of Jewish Life in Shanghai*, ed. Steve Hochstadt (New York: Touro University Press, 2019), 8-9.
6. David Kranzler, *Japanese, Nazis & Jews: The Jewish Refugee Community in Shanghai, 1938-1945* (New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1976), 566.
7. Cedric Devroye. "Jewish Presence in China and the Shanghai Ghetto," *Témoigner. Entre histoire et mémoire. Revue pluridisciplinaire de la Fondation Auschwitz* 131 (2020): 22–29, https://journals.openedition.org/temoigner/9334#:~:text=6Nearly%2020%2C000%20of%20the,financial%20assistance%20in%20some%20form.
8. Many of the details in this section are provided in a biography written by Dr. Danny Beran, the son of the groom and bride. That biography is in the wedding document's file at the Sydney Jewish Museum, https://sjm-web.adlibhosting.com/AIS/Details/museum/1091.

Figure 2: Ditta and Paul Beran at their wedding in Shanghai. Photo courtesy of Dr. Danny Beran, Sydney.

together with the Fried and Taussig families, established a Viennese coffee shop called "Barcelona" in the French Concession part of the city. However, in 1943 it was forced to relocate to the ghetto.

Paul Beran was born in Vienna on 18 April 1920, the younger of two sons of Richard and Alice Beran. He and his brother arrived in Shanghai in 1939 where Paul managed to find work as a police officer. One afternoon,

Paul was assigned to provide security at a local soccer game where one of the teams was comprised of patrons of the Barcelona coffee shop. It was there that he met Ditta who was in attendance along with her girlfriends. Their relationship blossomed, and a wedding date was set. The wedding ceremony was held on Sunday, 17 November 1946, and the reception immediately followed at the Barcelona coffee shop in the Shanghai Ghetto.

Participating in the Beran-Frischmann wedding was the renowned cantor Günther Gassenheimer (1913–1981) who had reached Shanghai by ship in 1939.[9] Gassenheimer (far left in the wedding photo) was a prominent figure in the Shanghai Ghetto: he led religious services, taught in local schools, and helped establish the Community of Jewish Cantors. After the war, Gassenheimer sailed to San Francisco arriving in 1947. There he established himself as a rabbi and educator.

Paul and Edith Beran remained in Shanghai only until 31 December 1946 when they boarded the ship Hwa Lien with over three hundred other Jewish passengers (of 523 total) bound for Australia.[10] The ship had been built in New Zealand in 1907 and did not have the standards necessary for transporting such a large number of people. Moreover upon their arrival in Sydney in January 1947, the passengers endured another four weeks aboard because of a strike at the dockyards. Finally they were able to disembark in Newcastle, after a long journey that had begun a decade earlier in Austria.[11] Paul and Edith Beran eventually settled in Sydney and bore two sons, Roger and Danny, who married, raised families, and reside there today.

Text, Transliteration and Translation of the Beran Wedding Document

Over half a century after it was signed, the Beran-Frischmann wedding document was donated by Ditta Beran to the Sydney Jewish Museum on 4 April 2000. It measures 518 mm (width) x 372 mm (height). The document is a secular one written in Chinese as opposed to a religious Jewish wedding contract (*ketubah*) which

9. Sophie Fetthauer, "Günther Gassenheimer," in *Lexicon of Persecuted Musicians of the Nazi Era*, ed. Claudia Maurer Zenck, Peter Petersen, and Sophie Fetthauer (Hamburg: Universität Hamburg, 2017), https://www.lexm.uni-hamburg.de/object/lexm_lexmperson_00006944.

10. Antonia Finnane, *Far from Where?: Jewish Journeys from Shanghai to Australia* (Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 1999), 187–90; Jayne Persian, "'The Dirty Vat': European Migration to Australia from Shanghai," *Australian Historical Studies* 50 (2019): 33.

11. "Hwa Lien Taking Back Hong Kong Evacuees," *The Townsville Daily Bulletin*, April 16, 1947, 2.

would have been written in Aramaic or Hebrew.

The Beran-Frischmann wedding document has a Chinese revenue stamp in the amount of fifty yuan affixed to it at the top left-hand corner.[12]

Figure 3: Chinese revenue stamp from the Beran-Frischmann *ketubah*. Sydney Jewish Museum Collection.

The presence of revenue stamps indicates that the government had a mechanism to certify weddings, and that Jewish couples were willing to pay for such recognition. From a religious perspective the *ketubah* would suffice to legitimize a marriage.

Appearing just below this stamp is a purple-inked imprint containing the words "Communal Association of Central European Jews – Shanghai" and "Juedische Gemeinde".

This organization (CACEJ) was founded in November 1939 by a more liberal faction of German and Austrian Jews who had emigrated to Shanghai to escape Nazi persecution. It was established to facilitate religious services, education, funeral arrangements and other social affairs inside the ghetto.[13] The Beran-Frischmann wedding was conducted at the CACEJ offices on Tong Shan Road.

12. The official Chinese revenue stamp contains the Chinese wording for "Republic of China Revenue Stamp" (across the top) along with the words "fifty yuan" and the number "50⁰⁰" (bottom right and left corners, respectively). It is one of the 1946 Transportation Series revenue stamps depicting various types of land, sea and air transport. By comparison, the identical Braginsky document dated only two months later has twelve revenue stamps totaling 360 yuan affixed to it. See China Stamp Society – Chang Qing Long Chapter, "Revenue Stamps of China 1896 to 1949," https://web.archive.org/web/2019080 4131248/https://www.chinastampsoc iety.org/files/Revenue_Stamps_Dan _Cordwell_OCR.pdf.

13. Guang Pan, *A Study of Jewish Refugees in China (1933–1945): History, Theories and the Chinese Pattern* (Singapore: Springer, 2019), 30–31.
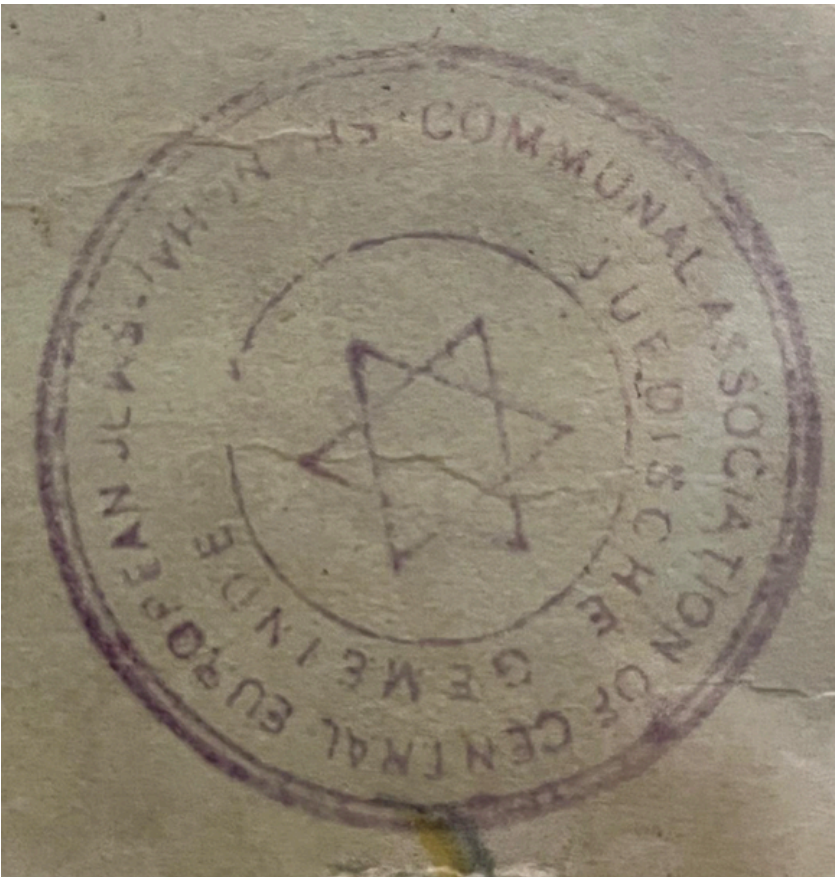
Figure 4: Close-up of imprint of the Communal Association of Central European Jews – Shanghai. Sydney Jewish Museum Collection.

The text of the Beran-Frischmann wedding document consists of eighteen vertical lines written in Chinese and laid out from right to left across the page. It is, in fact, a general template wherein the names and signatures (written in English) of the groom, bride, witness and matchmakers are entered along with the date and address of the ceremony.[14] Its colorful artwork has been commented upon as follows:

> The graceful shape of the document with its border of fantasy birds and dragons as well as the decor of the middle section made of branches, lotus flowers and mandarin ducks belies the harsh reality of the Jews who fled from the German sphere of influence to the "treaty port city" of Shanghai.[15]

The following is the Chinese text of the Beran-Frischmann wedding document accompanied by its transliteration and translation.[16]

14. The identical wedding template with different names inserted is in the Braginsky Collection in Zurich. This latter document was completed at the same street location in Shanghai but dated 12 January 1947, http://www.e-codices.ch/en/list/one/bc/k-0114.
15. Emile Schrijver and Falk Wiesemann, eds., *Schöne Seiten: Jüdische Schriftkultur aus der Braginsky Collection* (Zürich: Scheidegger & Spiess, 2011), 228–29. Translation by the authors.
16. To the authors' knowledge, this is the only complete translation ever written of a Chinese wedding document.

波而皮倫五 係 奧國 [空]省 [空] 縣 人

PAUL BERAN XI AO GUO　　[KONG] XING　　[KONG] XIAN REN

Paul Beran is from Austria, Province [blank], County [blank]

歲　一九二零年四月十八日　[空] 時生

SUI YI JIU ER LING NIAN SI YUE SHI BA RI [BLANK] SHI SHENG

Born 1920, fourth month, eighteenth day [blank] Time

愛迪脫狄太弗立許 門五 係 奧國 [空]省 [空]縣 人

EDITH DITTA BERAN XI AO GUO [KONG] XING [KONG]XIAN REN

Edith Ditta Beran née Frischmann is from Austria, Province [blank], County [blank]

歲　一九二五年三月十九日　[空] 時生

SUI YI JIU ER WU NIAN SAN YUE SHI JIU RI [BLANK] SHI SHENG

Born 1925, third month, nineteenth day [blank] Time

今由

JIN YOU

Today from

維克士套雪克

MR. VICTOR TAUSSIG

　　　　先生介紹 謹詹於

漢五子雪懷志　　*JIE ZHAO JIN ZHAN YU*

MR. HANS SCHWARZ

　　　　　　　　Sincerely on

中華民國三十五年十一月十七日上午九時三刻

ZHONG HUA MING GUO SAN SHI WU NIAN SHI YI YUE SHI QI RI SHANG WU JIU SHI SAN KE

The thirty-fifth year of the Republic of China, eleventh month, seventeenth day[17] at three quarters past 9 a.m.[18]

在上海唐山路 四一六弄 二十二號猶 太總會

ZAI SHANGHAI TANG SHAN LU SI SHI LIU NONG ER

17. This corresponds to Sunday, November 17, 1946 of the Gregorian calendar. Endymion Porter Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A Manual* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2000), 184–85.

18. The time of day is important here: the Jewish day begins at sundown, and there would be a potential for confusion about the precise date of the wedding in the Jewish calendar. The corresponding date in the Jewish calendar is 23 Cheshvan 5707; that is the date that would have been written in a traditional Jewish wedding contract (*ketubah*).

SHI ER HAO YOUTAI ZONG HUI

At Shanghai, Tong Shan Road, Lane 416, Number 22, in the Jewish quarter

舉行結婚典禮恭請

JU XING JIE HUN DIAN LI GONG QING

The wedding ceremony was held, respectfully inviting

龍石夫先弗先生證婚兩姓聯姻一堂締約良
緣永結

JOSEF SCHAEFER XIAN SHENG ZHENG HUN LIAN XING LIAN YIN YI TANG DI YUE LIANG YUAN YONG JIE

Josef Schaefer to witness the wedding ceremony. Two family names were joined, the marriage contract was signed in a grand room, a fine and predestined union to last forever

匹配同稱看此日桃花灼灼宜室宜家卜

PI PEI TONG CHENG KAN CI RI TAO HUA ZHUO ZHUO YI SHI YI JIA BU

Well-matched, looking today at peach blossoms, bright and luminous, building a harmonious family, predicting[19]

他年瓜瓞綿綿爾昌爾熾謹以白頭之約

TA NIAN GUA DIE MIAN MIAN ER CHANG ER CHI JIN YI BAI TOU ZHI YUE

Future years, like plentiful melons, there will be many children and grandchildren, becoming prosperous and successful, a solemn agreement to last until all hair turns grey

書向鴻箋好將紅葉之盟戴明駕譜此證

SHU XIANG HONG JIAN HAO JIANG HONG YE ZHI MENG DAI MING YUAN PU CI ZHENG

This document is written on grand, red marriage license paper like poems documented on mandarin duck records

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19. Portions of this and the following line can be found in the classic Shijing 诗經 book of poetry. See Jia Sheng Li, ed., 诗经: 全译全评 [*The Classic of Poetry: Complete Translation and Commentary*] (Beijing: Shang Wu Printing International Company Limited, 2019), 9–10, 411–13; Xiao Ou Yao, ed., 诗經: 必读，一百首 [*The Classic of Poetry: Must Read; One Hundred Poems*] (Hong Kong: Shang Wu Printing International Company Limited, 2016), 8.

Paul Beran + signature of Paul Beran

結婚人　　　　　　波而皮 倫五

JIE HUN REN 　/

People getting married

　　　　　　　　　\

愛迪脱狄太弗立許 門五

Edith (Ditta) Beran née

Frischmann + signature of
 Edith (Ditta) Beran née Frischmann

證婚人

ZHENG HUN REN　　　　龍石夫先弗律师

Witness[20]　　　　Dr. Joseph Schaefer + signature of
Josef Schaefer

Victor Taussig + signature of Victor Taussig

介紹人　　　　維克土套雪克

JIE SHAO REN

　　　　　　　　/

People who introduced them[21]

　　　　　　\

漢五子雪懷志

Hans Schwarz + signature of Hans Schwarz

主婚人

ZHU HUN REN

Officiator [blank]

中華民國三十五年十一月十七日 謹訂

ZHONG HUA MING GUO SAN SHI WU NIAN SHI YI YUE SHI QI RI JIN DING

In the thirty-fifth year of the Republic of China, eleventh month, seventeenth day, solemnly recorded[22]

Some Final Thoughts

The Shanghai Ghetto is arguably the most prosperous of any exilic period in Jewish history (cf. Assyria 722 BCE, Babylonia 538 BCE, England, 1290, France 1306, Spain 1492). Immigrants who had made the tortuous 10,000-kilometer journey from Europe to Shanghai with few

20. Josef Schaefer is designated as the "witness" for the wedding ceremony, and his signature appears here in attestation. A traditional Jewish wedding document (*ketubah*) would require the signatures of two witnesses. Dr. Schaefer may also have officiated at the ceremony. However, the entry (below) for "officiator" has been left blank.
21. It is noteworthy that the two men who introduced the groom and bride (along with their signatures) are recognized here. Such identifications would not be present in a traditional Jewish wedding document (*ketubah*).
22. See footnote 17 above.

personal resources were able to establish businesses, schools, hospitals and communal organizations while crowded into a tiny Chinese enclave. The Beran-Frischmann wedding document epitomizes this prosperity. Within the Shanghai Ghetto, the sombreness of Lamentations was replaced by the celebration of the groom and bride. This growth and success are reminders of the will of those Jews who struggled to escape Nazi tyranny and persecution.

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Author Biographies

David Horowitz holds a doctoral degree in mathematics and a master's degree in history of science. He taught mathematics at Golden West College in Huntington Beach, California for over thirty years. Since retiring, he has been studying the early work of eighteenth-century Scottish mathematician Colin MacLaurin. David and Kwok met each other and began working on this article while they were on a round-the-world cruise that visited Sydney. When David is not at sea, he resides in Las Vegas with his son and their three Japanese chin.

Kwok-Kam Yeung was born in Hong Kong in 1949. He attended colleges in the United States and earned a Ph.D. in biochemistry. Most of Dr. Yeung's career was with Bayer Corporation, where he retired as vice president of research and development and chief scientific officer. Dr. Yeung's expertise was in the development of diagnostic tests for cancer and diabetes. He also had a second career working at Idexx Laboratories, where he built diagnostic tests for food and animal safety. Dr. Yeung was responsible for several inventions that resulted in patents and has published many articles in scientific journals. He served as the president of the North America Chinese Clinical Chemists Association in 2002. In his retirement, Dr. Yeung resides in Maine, USA and volunteers tutoring students in mathematics and sciences at Portland Adult Education.

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