

**‘The Angel of Kings Cross’
The Life and Times of
Dr Fanny Reading**

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

I, Anne Sarzin, declare that this thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of PhD in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

This research is supported by the Australian Government Research Training Program.

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...to encourage a looking again at the past from the ever-changing context and knowledges of the present, to stimulate new knowledge and bring it into the intellectual thought arena of the present so that others can engage with it, celebrate it and challenge it. A thesis is a mission to inspire and propagate new ways of thinking, a deeper appreciation for what has been done as well as an enhanced hope for what can be done. (R. Johnston, correspondence with A. Sarzin, 16 March 2021)

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of good people who lived in ways that have informed my journey—my grandfather, Rev. Abraham Levy, who upheld Judaic values and traditions; my parents, Bartlett Arunicus (Ronnie) and Bertha Elizabeth (Betty), whose loving kindness shaped our lives; my gentle sister, Fanny Faye, who infused joy into the world; and my husband Dr Barney Sarzin, who lived his short life in the service of others.

Foreword

The foreword to this thesis comprises:

- (1) a selection of quotations that convey the thoughts of those who met and knew Dr Fanny Reading; and
- (2) honours and recognition accorded to her for her life of service.

Dr Fanny Reading—as others saw her

‘[A] woman of distinction in the Jewish community and a woman who has contributed much in time and money towards the social and patriotic causes of Australia’—**Justice Leslie Herron**

‘Her name is a household word for good work in the State of New South Wales. Wherever I go in Australia, I meet people who ask me about her. Work done by people like her, without great publicity, are the greatest deeds of all’—**Premier of New South Wales, James McGirr**

‘She [Dr Fanny] is a foremost contributor to all charities both within and beyond her community’—**Sir Jack Evelyn Cassidy KC**

‘When one has known the life and work of Dr. Fanny Reading, one never again doubts the power of the individual in creating peaceful change’—**Stella Cornelius**

‘She had the gift of persuasive leadership which could inspire thousands of women to follow her and to work with her in fellowship’—**Rabbi Dr I. Porush, OBE**

‘Our community may well be proud and thankful to Dr Fanny Reading — truly a leader and lover of mankind’—President of the Feminist Club, **Mrs Crawford Vaughan**

‘With her boundless enthusiasm, energy and idealism, she activated Jewish women in Sydney and throughout Australia for over half a century’—**Professor Emerita Suzanne Rutland**

‘A dreamer of great dreams with the courage to implement them even in the face of strong opposition’—**Council of Jewish Women’ Minutes**

‘A woman of great culture who has given her life to work for the welfare of every branch of humanity’—**Rev. Isack Morris**

Dr Fanny Reading: Recognition and Remembrance

Buildings

1. The NCJW War Memorial Fanny Reading Council House, in Queen Street, Woollahra, Sydney, opened in 1963
2. The Dr Fanny Reading Auditorium, in the National Jewish Memorial Centre, Canberra
3. Plaque in the NCJWA Lounge, Wolper Hospital, Woollahra, Sydney. The plaque states:

Dr Fanny Reading, MBE 1884-1974; Founder of the National Council of Jewish Women of Australia 1923; National President of NCJWA 1927-1955; Appointed Life President of NCJWA 1955. Dr Fanny Reading obtained her medical degree from Melbourne University in 1922. She worked simultaneously in practices in both Bondi and Kings Cross, was a consultant to a number of local hospitals and was actively involved in community affairs. She founded the National Council of Jewish Women in 1923 becoming its first President. The Wolper Convalescent House was established by the NCJW's Hospital Visiting Committee during the Presidency of Dr Fanny Reading and officially opened on 17th May 1953. In 1961 Dr Fanny Reading was involved in the amalgamation of the NSW Jewish Hospital and the Wolper Convalescent House which became the Wolper Jewish Hospital. Dr Fanny Reading's life and work is celebrated by the NCJWA on Founder's Day in December each year. This Lounge is dedicated to her memory.

Scholarships

1. National Council of Jewish Women of Australia_Fanny Reading Scholarship in Hebrew Language, Melbourne University
2. Fanny Reading Travelling Scholarships for attendance at NCJWA conferences

Events

1. Dr Fanny Reading Human Rights Lecture, NCJWA Vic
2. Dr Fanny Reading Founder's Day, NCJWA NSW Div. On 3 December 2018 in Sydney, Dr Anne Sarzin gave the Founder's Day lecture entitled 'Dr Fanny Reading: a visionary for all time
3. Fanny Reading Human Rights Lecture, Australian National University, Canberra.

Artefacts

Dr Fanny Reading MBE Honour Award (trophy) for contributions to NCJWA

Dr Fanny Reading DVD, launched 4 March 2019, NCJW Western Australia

Awards conferred on Dr Reading

Life Governor of the Benevolent Society of New South Wales

Life Governor of Crown Street Women's Hospital

Life Governor of Dalwood Children's Homes

Commonwealth citation for War Loans work

Commonwealth citation for provision of servicemen's canteen in Hyde Park

1935 King George V Silver Jubilee Medal

1937 King George VI Coronation Medal

1961 MBE

Positions

Honorary Medical Officer Rachel Forster Hospital

Honorary Medical Officer St George District and the Community Hospitals

Honorary Medical Officer Dalwood Homes

Honorary Medical Officer Crown Street Women's Hospital

Senior Vice-President Youth Aliyah (Australia)

Vice-President of the International Council of Jewish Women

1923-1929 President of the Council of Jewish Women, Sydney

1929-1955 National President of the National Council of Jewish Women

1955-1974 Life President of the National Council of Jewish Women

Journal articles on Dr Reading

1. 'Sailing from past memories towards safe harbours: Sea-change, healing and transformation', by Anne Sarzin, *Australian Journal of Jewish Studies*, Vol XXX1, 2018
2. 'The law of loving kindness', by Anne Andgel, *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal*, June 1998, Volume X1V, Part 2, pages 199-260
3. 'Dr Fanny Reading v Smith's Weekly', by Morris Ochert, *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal*, June 1996, Volume X111, Part 2

PhD thesis

Dr Fanny Reading, 'A clever little bird', by Jeanette Debney-Joyce, Federation University, Ballarat.

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Abstract

Dr Fanny Reading (1884–1974) was a medical doctor, a social activist, a feminist, a humanitarian, an educator and a Zionist. In 1923 in Sydney, she founded the Council of Jewish Women, which evolved in 1929 into the National Council of Jewish Women of Australia. This socio-cultural organisation addressed the isolation and marginalisation of women and empowered thousands of members to move from domesticity into the realms of public debate, policy and social justice. She helped the disadvantaged at home and welcomed refugees from abroad. On the national stage, she contributed to Australia's Second World War effort, providing amenities for military personnel throughout Australia and abroad. She contributed to the wellbeing and healthcare of mothers and babies in Mandatory Palestine and, post-1948, in Israel. Through Youth Aliyah, she supported child survivors of the Holocaust who migrated to Palestine.

This thesis explores Dr Reading's multi-faceted life and places her biography within a global context, interrogating the effects of historic events on her identity and her mission to change her world for the better. The thesis focuses on her work as a general practitioner caring for women and children in Sydney's Kings Cross and elsewhere; and on her national organisation dedicated to creating a tolerant and harmonious society. Her agenda—education, religion, philanthropy, social welfare and social justice—aimed to develop members' abilities, broaden their mental horizons, and provide an organisational framework within which they could realise their potential.

In 1949 in the Supreme Court in Sydney, Dr Reading appeared as plaintiff in a defamation case that became a cause célèbre around Australia. This core chapter casts new light on her ideals and ideology that emerged when subjected to cross-examination over three days by two leading barristers. Detailed textual analysis deconstructs the transcript—for the first time—in terms of Dr Reading's persona, character, mental acuity and ideological convictions. Anchored within national and international events, this chapter conveys the breadth of her connections at home and abroad and articulates her role as a champion of justice.

The research draws substantially on primary sources, mainly contemporary newspaper reports, interviews with surviving family and friends, and relevant archival resources and memorabilia. The thesis also relies on secondary sources of scholarship in the fields of sociology, culture, theology, history, psychology, politics and interdisciplinary studies.

Preface

This thesis traces the trajectory of Dr Fanny's Reading's life and thought, concerns and actions. Hers was a life celebrated in its day but eclipsed by time in the national consciousness. It seemed right and timely to re-examine and re-evaluate her role as a changemaker in the Jewish and general communities and as a former nationally significant figure in Australia. The narrative of her life followed an all-too-familiar Jewish trajectory of persecution, flight, adaptation, education, renewal and achievement. Yet there was so much in her life that differentiated her from her contemporaries, including her drive to emancipate the women in her community from age-old societal expectations and constraints. All this and more drew me to her.

While playing a leading role in the Jewish community in Australia, Dr Reading also belonged contextually to Australia and to the wider world, as events both at home and abroad shaped her life's mission and vision. This thesis demonstrates the many ways in which her life intersected with world affairs: the Russian pogroms of the late 19th century triggered the family's migration to Australia; and the Holocaust of the Second World War drove her to devise pragmatic solutions to problems encountered by refugees fleeing Nazi tyranny. I show how historic events influenced her socio-political agenda, leading her to lobby the Australian Government for an increased immigration quota prior to the Second World War. I demonstrate how her belief system, her ethics and philosophy—'The Law of Loving Kindness'—underpinned her humanitarian program that included personally meeting migrants arriving on ships in Sydney Harbour and welcoming Holocaust survivors and refugees to Australian shores.

I have included a Foreword in this thesis to provide proof of the esteem in which Dr Fanny Reading was held by influential personalities in Australia; and to validate her position within Australian history for those potentially encountering her life and times for the first time. As my research and writing progressed, research questions arose, which are embedded in the totality of the thesis. The answers to these questions emerge across multiple chapters. I have chosen to address these questions where they arise naturally in the biographical narrative rather than devoting specific chapters to particular research questions.

While the thesis explores background historic forces and events that impinged directly on her thoughts, decisions and actions, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to revisit millennia-old antecedents of antisemitism. Additionally, this thesis avoids speculation on Dr Reading's views

when there is no evidence in the historic record to support a speculative analysis. This is especially relevant when evaluating her failings as a leader, as society's perception of her was uniformly that of a 'saintly', gentle and kind person. Without adequate proof to the contrary, one cannot falsify the historic record. While I have documented a few instances of 'bullying' recalled by those who knew Dr Reading, Overall this thesis lays bare the bones of a life devoted exclusively to the wellbeing of others. There was nothing she asked of others that she was not prepared to do herself.

In evaluating Dr Reading's responses to national and international events, I have drawn on research within the academic discipline of interdisciplinarity, which interconnects and integrates findings from diverse areas of scholarship. Especially relevant to this thesis are the areas of sociology, culture, religion, psychology, politics, feminist studies, education, history and biography, all of which have contributed to the selection and presentation of research material in this thesis, and to the critical assessment of a multi-faceted life. This aspect of the thesis is discussed further in Chapter 2: Literature Review.

My thesis contains original material that appears for the first time in print. This original material constitutes a contribution to scholarship on Dr Reading, enhancing our understanding of who she was, what she set out to do, and how she achieved her goals. A core chapter breaks new ground—the deconstruction and analysis of the court transcript of the 1949 defamation trial, *Dr Fanny Reading v National Press Pty Ltd*, in which she was the plaintiff. The chapter is framed with retrospective material relating, in particular, to Dr Reading's attendance at the 14th Zionist Congress in 1925 in Vienna, which elucidates her early commitment to Zionism, as well as providing points of contrast with the evidence she gave in court almost three decades later.

The thesis also includes excerpts from rare interviews I conducted with surviving family members, friends and colleagues, who provide insights into her character and *modus vivendi*. These oral histories generated new information concerning Dr Reading's life and times. I was given access to her collection of musical scores, which is in private hands and which had never been examined or photographed before by any other academic researcher. This new material revealed the breadth of her musical knowledge, the depth of her passion for music, and the promise of an artistic life abandoned for a career in medicine.

Dr Reading was a changemaker within the Jewish community and a progressive thought leader seeking societal transformation. She created an innovative socio-cultural organisation, the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW), a public space within which she mentored

thousands of women as they journeyed from domesticity towards social activism. With her guidance, they became trailblazers for a new socio-political, cultural and educational dispensation that liberated Jewish women from many patriarchal constraints that had previously stifled their advancement in the wider world. Dr Reading accomplished these goals with her brand of idealism and pragmatism. She deserves to step out of the shadows of history.

We have a great cause to work for, a cause dedicated to service for humanity.

—Dr Fanny Reading

Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis examines the life and times of Dr Fanny Reading (1884–1974), a medical doctor, feminist and social activist, who changed the lives of thousands of women, men and children, at home and abroad. She ministered to the poor, the sick, the abused and the unemployed in Kings Cross, Sydney, where she lived and worked. She dedicated her life of service to the women and children living there, earning the soubriquet ‘The Angel of Kings Cross’. She counselled and assisted the destitute and alleviated their suffering.

[H]er practice, and even her little apartment, was a haven for the abused prostitutes, street kids, beaten wives and homeless dregs of humanity who haunted ‘The Cross’ as much then as they do today (Ochert 1996, p. 310).

Dr Fanny (as she is referred to in this thesis after her graduation with an MB BS in 1922) was a leading figure in the Jewish and general communities in Australia across four decades of the 20th century. As a member of the Racial Hygiene Association of New South Wales, she was an early advocate of family planning, and educating women on the prevention of venereal disease. She was active in promoting and improving maternal and child health at home and abroad. She was a member of the Feminist Society in Sydney, encouraging women to play a constructive role in society. In 1923 in Sydney, she established the Council of Jewish Women (CJW) of New South Wales, which evolved in 1929 into the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW).

When Dr Fanny founded the CJW in 1923, her agenda was predicated on philanthropy, education, religion and social welfare. Inaugurating the CJW changed the destiny of thousands of Jewish women throughout Australia who, then and in succeeding decades, took up her challenges to make a difference in the lives of others. How did she do this? What were her aims, her hopes for her projects, her dreams for the future? What force drove her to devote her life to these causes? What were the issues so important to her that she dedicated her energies, her creativity, her intellect and her life to addressing? Chapters Five, Six and Seven, in particular, explore these questions, although they are addressed throughout the thesis.

From the early 1920s to the late 1950s, Dr Fanny developed programs aimed at emancipating Jewish women from their conservative backgrounds and expectations, enabling them to participate in policy development and social welfare work, and to take on leadership roles. She led philanthropic programs during the Second World War for the Australian Imperial Force; and, in Australia and Palestine, she helped adult and child refugees fleeing Nazi persecution. As Vice-President of the Australian branch of Youth Aliyah, a global organisation that rescued Jewish children facing Nazi persecution, she supported child survivors of the Holocaust. She pioneered initiatives to improve healthcare services for mothers and babies in Mandatory Palestine.

Dr Fanny's life of service in Australia and abroad was informed by her Judaic heritage and its moral imperative *Tikkun Olam*—healing the world—towards which she directed her efforts, and her mission that enshrined humanitarian values of compassion, tolerance and justice for all. Her story is also that of a child migrant fleeing persecution, finding sanctuary in Australia and creating a new life in country Victoria. The loneliness she experienced as a child refugee influenced the agenda she enacted as a leader in the Jewish and wider Australian communities.

This thesis reveals elements of Dr Fanny's life and times not explored previously. By interrogating the known and unearthing the unknown, she is portrayed in new and comprehensive ways. Through a representation and analysis of her life's trajectory, insights can be gained about her as an individual and her connections to Jewish and Australian society and the wider world. By means of primary sources, such as Dr Fanny's recorded speeches and her published articles, one can drill down to her life's bedrock, examining her work as a physician in Kings Cross and as an honorary medical officer in Sydney hospitals, her creation of a feminist model for her followers, and the enactment of her humanitarian agenda. This thesis explores the impact of events in Russia, Australia, Europe, Palestine and post-1948 Israel on her identity and mission, contextualising her connections to international socio-political currents at that time. An assessment of these linkages reveals the influence on her life of antisemitism, childhood traumas, memories, Judaism, Zionism, patriotism and humanitarianism; and interrogates their role in her responses to contemporary challenges.

In particular, Chapters Five, Six and Seven trace the evolution and scope of the socio-cultural organisation she founded, the NCJW. It was Australia's first national women's organisation—established two years before the creation of the National Council of Women of Australia in 1931—with branches in towns in every state of the country. Rubinstein (1991) describes it as,

'A significant breakthrough for women in the communal structure [that] came after the First World War' (p. 11). Dr Fanny's objectives were inspired by her feminist agenda to transform women from spectators to participants in public life. She respected the Judaic emphasis on the role of women as wife and mother in the home, and her methodology never disrupted that prevailing narrative. She used these Judaic traditions as foundational values underpinning her philanthropic, educational, religious and social welfare initiatives. When she first articulated her organisational program in 1923, it was revolutionary, given the socio-cultural and political contexts of that time, when 'women were for all practical purposes totally excluded from the Jewish community's power structure, both clerical and lay, and had no specific community-wide body to represent particular interests of concern to Jewish women' (Rubinstein 1991, p. 262). NCJW's records note, however, that Dr Fanny was 'a dreamer of great dreams with the courage to implement them even in the face of strong opposition' (Rutland 1988, p. 158). This thesis examines what she achieved through her organisation, evaluating her programs in education, religion, philanthropy and social welfare aimed at educating her members, broadening their horizons and encouraging their transition from domesticity into realms of public policy and social justice. As National President of NCJW, Dr Fanny had a major impact on the Australian Jewish community, on Australians generally, on the wellbeing of migrants entering Australia, and on refugees in Palestine. While shaped by her times, she also shaped her times, leaving her mark on the history of the Jewish people in Australia and on Australian history generally.

In 1925 Dr Fanny and her brother, Dr Abraham Reading, established the Young Men's Hebrew Association. Blakeney (1985) notes: 'the Association strove to bridge the gap between the old and the new immigrants, although this was in the face of the chill wind of disapproval of the Jewish establishment' (p. 107). Dr Fanny created organisational and socio-cultural structures on a civic and national scale, within which she developed social policies and programs. She secured the participation of others to translate her ideas into actions for the wellbeing of Jews at home and abroad; and for improved social welfare measures for Australians. She urged her followers to engage with issues and challenges facing Jewish people, Australia and the world. To address these concerns and arrive at solutions, she connected individuals, faiths and communities. She strove for a harmonious society and immersed herself in the big issues of the day, such as the medical and educational fight against venereal disease, maternal and child welfare, the education of women and girls, the battle against antisemitism and racism, the welfare of migrants arriving in Australia, the plight of refugees abroad, Australia's war efforts and prospects for world peace. She became a household name:

With her boundless enthusiasm, energy and idealism she activated Jewish women in Sydney and throughout Australia for over half a century and demonstrated what could be achieved with good leadership. (Rubinstein 1987, p. 105)

Dr Fanny operated across local and international platforms, addressing concerns that arose in Australia, while networking with overseas stakeholders committed to agendas like hers. She attended conferences abroad as a delegate representing Jewish and gentile organisations. In 1925, she attended the International Council of Women's Conference in Washington DC, connecting with women from countries around the world, and was a member of the press corps at the 14th Zionist Congress held in Vienna, which strengthened her commitment to Zionism. She was mindful of escalating antisemitism and viewed Palestine as the salvation of oppressed Jewish masses in Europe. She visited Palestine for the first time in 1925 and saw the achievements of the early pioneers who had 'drained swamps, paved roads, founded kibbutzim. They revitalized old cities, especially Jerusalem, and established new cities, most famously Tel Aviv' (Troy 2018, p. xliii). Dora Abramovich said, 'After she visited Palestine she went to the United States ... and told them [the American NCJW] they had no soul if they didn't work also to help the Jews in Palestine' (cited in Cohen 1987, p. 74). Dr Fanny returned to Australia with new connections, ideas and plans for the benefit of Council members.

Summaries of chapters

This thesis comprises nine chapters: Chapter 1, The Introduction; Chapter 2, Literature Review; Chapter 3, Childhood and the Voyage to a New Land; Chapter 4, Music and Medicine; Chapter 5, The National Council of Jewish Women—The 1920s and 1930s; Chapter 6, The War Years 1939-1945; Chapter 7, An Era of Peace; Chapter 8, Dr Fanny Reading v National Press Pty Ltd; and Chapter 9, the Conclusion. The remaining chapters will now be summarised.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter Two commences with a review of the only thesis to date on Dr Fanny Reading in the public domain, written by Jeanette Debney-Joyce of Federation University; followed by an overview of my own thesis, highlighting points of difference between the two theses. The chapter then documents single chapters in books that focus on Dr Fanny, as well as three journal articles that deal with aspects of her life and work. I then trace the multiple sources on global scholarship in the areas of sociology, culture, politics, psychology, feminism, religion, history, education and literary biography that I consulted with a view to positioning my thesis

within the appropriate academic discipline/s and, consequently, defining the interdisciplinary methodology underpinning my research and writing.

Chapter 3: Childhood and the voyage to a new land

This chapter explores aspects of Russian history that shaped the world into which Fanny Rubinowich was born on 2 December 1884 in Karelitz in the Minsk Governorate in today's Belarus—a part of the area known as the Pale of Settlement in Russia, within which Jews were confined. The town is also spelt Karelitchy (Belarussian), Karelity (Russian), Korolieicai (Lithuanian), Korolicze (Polish) and Korelitz (Yiddish), although the Rubinowich family used the spelling 'Karelitz' in all their documentation. There, her family experienced poverty and persecution. This chapter outlines events in Russian history leading to the pogroms of the 1880s, and how these motivated her parents to emigrate to Australia. Mary Antin, Dr Fanny's contemporary, wrote:

Harassed on every side, thwarted in every normal effort, pent up within narrow limits, all but dehumanized, the Russian Jew fell back upon the only thing that never failed him—his hereditary faith in God. (Antin 2012, p. 26)

The Jewish population searched for ways of escaping the pressures and began emigrating began to the United States, England and South Africa, with a trickle of migrants settling in Australia. Fanny's parents, Nathan Jacob Rubinowich and his wife, Esther Rose (née Levinson), sought safety in Australia. It was a difficult decision and process. Nathan was born on 14 July 1861 in Grodno, Russia, and Esther on 9 August 1864 in Karelitz, so they were 23 and 20 respectively when Fanny was born on 2 December 1884. They were leaving family and friends to begin their perilous journey. Nathan left first, establishing himself in 1884 in the gold-mining environs of Ballarat, in country Victoria. Although he had been a cabinet maker in Karelitz, in Australia he worked as a hawker and removalist, before setting up a general dealer business. He faced social disapproval, as 'Australian Jewry did not approve of Jewish hawkers, who tended to debase the entire community in the eyes of non-Jews' (Rubinstein 1986, p. 87).

Five years later, the family reunited in Melbourne. In the intervening period, Esther had been responsible for supporting herself and Fanny in dangerous circumstances, including a sojourn in London. Jewish beliefs and traditions empowered Esther and gave her strength to surmount any hurdles. She lived her life according to Judaic laws and taught these to her daughter, at that time known by her Yiddish name 'Faiga' or the Hebrew version, 'Zipporah', which means a

bird. Their Judaic heritage contributed to Dr Fanny's sense of identity and lifelong adherence to Jewish orthodoxy and ethics.

In 1889, mother and child sailed from Antwerp to Melbourne. The voyage's potential to reduce the pain of personal, collective and transgenerational memories is evaluated. The thesis considers whether they spent time at sea mourning those left behind, or whether they embraced *ars oblivionis*, the art of forgetting. As Ricoeur (2004) noted:

History ... has the responsibility for the dead of the past, whose heirs we are. The historical operation in its entirety can then be considered an act of sepulchre. Not a place, a cemetery, a simple depository of bones, but an act of repeated entombment. This scriptural sepulchre extends the work of memory and the work of mourning on the plane of history. The work of mourning definitively separates the past from the present and makes way for the future. (p. 449)

By interrogating these issues, a portrait emerges of the little girl, Fanny, poised on the cusp of a new life in a new world.

Chapter 4: Music and Medicine

This chapter focuses on Fanny's childhood in Ballarat and environs; her life and career in Melbourne, where she studied music and medicine at the University of Melbourne; and her medical career in Sydney. In Melbourne, she was acknowledged as an accomplished musician, pianist and accompanist. Media reports commented on her pianistic brilliance and her grades. She supported herself teaching Hebrew and Jewish studies at the Hebrew Congregation's Hebrew School in suburban St Kilda and supplemented her income with music tuition in schools. In 1905, she enrolled at the University's Conservatorium and graduated in 1914 with a Diploma of Music, qualifying as a performer and teacher.

In 1916, profoundly affected by the outbreak of the First World War, Fanny enrolled in the University of Melbourne's Faculty of Medicine. She was influenced by the military participation of family and friends—her three brothers had enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force. She was caught up in family concerns for their safety and saddened by the injuries and deaths of friends and members of the Jewish community in Melbourne. She completed her medical studies in 1921 and graduated in 1922 with an MB BS, one of the university's early academically distinguished women graduates in medicine.

In March 1918, Nathan Jacob Rubinowich anglicised his surname ‘on behalf of myself and my heirs and issue’, not an unusual step at that time. He admired an English Jew, Rufus Daniel Isaacs, the first Marquess of Reading, so chose the name ‘Reading’ (Andgel 1998, p. 201). This accounts for the anomaly that his daughter graduated in 1914 as Fanny Rubinowich and six years later as Fanny Reading. After graduation, in 1922, she joined her brother’s medical practice in the Sydney suburbs of Kogarah and Bondi Junction, and five years later established her own medical practice in her Kings Cross apartment.

In tracing Dr Fanny’s transition from music to medicine, this chapter considers what it cost her to subjugate an artistic temperament to medicine. She used music as an educational tool to broaden the cultural horizons of the Council of Jewish Women’s members, and arranged concerts to promote refugee musicians, thus helping them find employment. Medical practice, however, encapsulated her ideal of ‘service above self’. She worked as a general practitioner, specialised in paediatric and maternal healthcare and anaesthetics. She was an honorary medical officer at several Sydney hospitals and was available to her patients day and night. ‘The moment that woman walks into my house I feel better,’ a patient said (Newton 2000, p. 9). In 1925, she undertook postgraduate medical studies in England, Ireland and Austria.

Chapter 5: The National Council of Jewish Women—The 1920s and 1930s

This chapter, the first of three on the NCJW, traces the beginnings of the organisation Dr Fanny founded, the NCJW, and presents a study of her leadership, projects and principles. In 1923 she established the CJW, which focused on ‘Service to our religion, to our people and to the country in which we live’ (Newton 2000, p. 6). Expansion was rapid and, in 1929, the CJW transformed officially into the NCJW, with branches in every state of Australia.

The chapter documents Dr Fanny’s role as a changemaker in Australian socio-cultural history. As a feminist, she imagined the new Jewish woman in Australia as a bulwark against religious assimilation and intermarriage. She brought Jewish women out of the kitchen and into the realm of public policy and decision-making. Her intention was ‘to induce every Jewess to render communal service on behalf of her people and the Empire’ (Andgel 1998, p. 206). She mentored thousands of women, whom she taught to stand up to antisemitism as she did. In the 1930s, she campaigned against antisemitism and anti-Zionism. She liaised with government representatives to secure a relaxation of stringent entry provisions prevailing in Australia. In 1928, when Australia introduced a strict quota system, Dr Fanny was ‘one of the

few communal leaders to criticise this approach' (Rutland 1988, p. 169). She reproached those who welcomed the new legislation and asked:

Who are we to say that we are pleased that certain immigration restrictions will be placed on the admittance of our brethren into our country? That we are glad that our task will be made lighter while our brethren languish for freedom and the right to live. (p. 169)

Dr Fanny interacted with people of every creed and profession, from feminists and doctors to politicians and artists. Across this spectrum of platforms and institutions, she seized opportunities to change perceptions and to speak up for Jewish people throughout the world. She envisaged a future for Jewish refugees in Australia. She never perceived them, as others did at that time, as a burden or embarrassment. They arrived crushed and needy, she reinforced their confidence, assured them they were welcome, identified their strengths and showed them what they could be. After meeting Dr Fanny, they walked taller and were hopeful. What she imagined—and achieved—was her agenda for a better world. She led by example and instilled in others her values of compassion, tolerance and service to humanity.

Chapter 6: NCJW—The war years 1939–1945

Chapter Six focuses on NCJW's programs during the Second World War, and how Dr Fanny established benchmarks for women's participation in Australia's war effort. During the war, Dr Fanny never rejected appeals to her or to NCJW for services, funds or supplies for the military and the home front. Her fundraising won commendations from the government and the military. NCJW led the Jewish community's efforts to construct and equip the Sir John Monash Recreation Hut at the Anzac Buffet in Hyde Park; and it established and ran, with 300 Council volunteers, the Lord Mayor's Fund Kiosk in Martin Place. She devised and developed socio-cultural and organisational structures in Australia to meet the challenges of the Second World War, steering her organisation and members towards new goals. NCJW was concerned with the welfare of Jewish internees at internment camps at Hay and Orange in New South Wales, and at Tatura in Victoria, where 'their main enemies were boredom and bitterness' (Inglis 2018, p. 109). The internees—especially the religiously orthodox—felt neglected by the main Jewish organisations, so they appreciated the gifts NCJW sent them. Agonising over the destruction of their communities in their countries of origin (Kwiet 1985, p. 63), the internees were grateful to be remembered.

Chapter 7: NCJW—An era of peace

Chapter Seven presents an overview of NCJW's work in the post-war years under Dr Fanny's direction, focusing mainly on her work among refugees in Australia and abroad. Blakeney (1985) notes:

One of the major aims of the Council was the assistance of immigrants and an Immigrant Welfare Committee was formed to provide people to meet all the boats containing Jewish immigrants and to give the inevitable assistance they would require. (p. 107)

Dr Fanny and NCJW were tireless in their efforts to welcome, feed, accommodate, and find employment for Jewish migrants arriving by ship in Sydney after the war. In Sydney, these migrants could attend NCJW's language classes, and in Fremantle, Perth's CJW was active in welcoming and assisting Jewish refugees.

This chapter documents how Dr Fanny instilled in NCJWs' members her ideal 'of service and humanity towards our Jewish people; towards our local communities; and towards the wider community of Australia' (Newton 2000, p. 21), values to which NCJW's leaders pledge themselves to this day.

Chapter 8: Dr Fanny Reading v National Press Pty Ltd

This chapter constitutes a pivotal core of this thesis. In 1949, Dr Fanny sued National Press for defamation on account of a libellous article published 31 May 1947 on the front page of *Smith's Weekly*. At that time, Dr Fanny was senior vice-president of Youth Aliyah in Australia, a global organisation that rescued Jewish children from Hitler's Europe and brought them to safety in Palestine. On 6 May 1947 in Sydney, Youth Aliyah held a meeting to raise funds for these children in Palestine. Grossly misrepresenting that meeting, *Smith's Weekly* headlined their article, 'Jews Raise Huge Funds to Fight the British—Heavy Levies on Hebrews in Australia' (Rubinstein 1991, p. 400). The newspaper's posters stated, 'Australian Jews Financing Terrorists in Palestine—Killing British Soldiers' (Rutland 1988, p. 301). The article alleged that proceeds from the Youth Aliyah event funded terrorism against the British in Palestine, provoking hysteria that 'also had an impact on the general public already opposed to Jewish refugee migration in Australia' (p. 302). The trial took place 26 to 28 April 1949 in the Supreme Court of New South Wales, in Sydney. Dr Fanny claimed £10,000 in damages to her

reputation. She had the moral support of the Jewish community, including the Jewish Council, 'which was instrumental at every stage in bringing the suit to fruition' (Rubinstein 1991, p. 401). As Youth Aliyah's representative, she stood alone in the witness box, enduring three days of questioning that taxed her physically and mentally.

Detailed textual analysis deconstructs the courtroom transcript—for the first time—in terms of Dr Fanny's persona, character, mental acuity and ideological convictions. While Wertheim has written an online article on the court case, and Ochert a journal article, this chapter extends knowledge of the trial by delineating the meaning of words spoken by the protagonists in the courtroom. An evaluation of the judgement delivered by Justice Leslie James Herron explores the implications and consequences of his view that Parliament address the absence of group-libel law in Australia.

The chapter examines her world view and the *Zeitgeist* of the day, and illuminates fundamental issues at stake for Dr Fanny, the Australian Jewish community and Youth Aliyah. An exploration of community attitudes germane to the trial includes the debate over Zionism between the former Governor General of Australia, Sir Isaac Isaacs (1931 to 1936), and Julius Stone, Challis Professor of International Law and Jurisprudence at The University of Sydney (1942 to 1972). This chapter also reviews the long-term impact the 14th Zionist Congress in 1925 had on Dr Fanny and interrogates its consequences in terms of issues germane to the court case—her allegiance to Zionism, her response to the fate of Jews in Europe under Nazi rule, and her championing of the Jewish people's return to their homeland.

This chapter interrogates Dr Fanny's beliefs and allegiances that emerged in the courtroom proceedings. It depicts her as an ambassador for her community, capable of taking up cudgels against purveyors of antisemitism. It documents examples of her mental strength and analytical ability. Justice Herron, in his judgement, called her 'a woman of distinction' (Herron 1949, p. 10). Despite losing the case because she was not personally identified in the article and because of the absence of group-libel law in Australia, the community believed she had won a moral victory. This chapter depicts her as a warrior for truth and justice, who emerged from this battle with an enhanced reputation.

Chapter 9: The Conclusion

The conclusion of this thesis presents a holistic overview, identifying Dr Fanny's strengths and contributions to the Jewish community in Australia, to the Australian nation, and to the

wellbeing of people at home and overseas. She responded to the suffering of others, whether victims of antisemitism and survivors of the Nazi genocide, or the residents of the Kings Cross area where she lived and worked. Born into a world of pogroms, a witness to the Holocaust, Dr Fanny knew the consequences of inhumane policies and actions. Despite these traumas, she demonstrated a capacity for renewal, for herself and others. She was a catalyst who changed lives for the better. Where there was prejudice, she sowed understanding; where there was pain, she brought healing. A contemporary described a scene, in the early 1940s at Sydney's docks, when the ship *Johan de Witt* brought newcomers to Australia: 'Through all the anxiety and uncertainty, one felt an air of happiness, of spontaneous and heartfelt welcome' (Rutland 1998, p. 40).

This thesis presents a portrait of a woman tethered to many worlds, while shaping her own. The social structures Dr Fanny established and the projects she initiated at home and abroad still serve as exemplars for future generations. Her humanitarian creed lives on and continues to motivate new generations. While today's challenges speak to different times, present members of NCJWA contribute to causes at home and abroad, as she did, highlighting her legacy that endures.

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Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter commences with a review of the only thesis to date on Dr Fanny Reading in the public domain, written by Jeanette Debney-Joyce of Federation University. This is followed by an overview of my own thesis and my treatment of Dr Fanny's life and times, highlighting the differences between the two theses; and enumerating original aspects of my research that represent a contribution to knowledge on the subject of Dr Fanny.

I then document single chapters in books that focus on Dr Fanny; and three journal articles that deal with aspects of her life and work.

I conclude the chapter by tracing multiple sources in the literature that I've researched and consulted in order to evaluate global scholarship in the area of biography generally, with a view to positioning and defining my biography of Dr Fanny within the appropriate academic discipline/s.

Jeanette Debney-Joyce's thesis—Dr Fanny Reading, 'A clever little bird', Federation University, Ballarat

While Jeanette Debney-Joyce's thesis was submitted on 3 November 2016, it was not in the public domain until 2019 when Federation University released the digitised version. I started my thesis on Dr Reading in 2017 and was therefore unable to read Debney-Joyce's thesis until two years later. Before I proceed to an evaluation of the thesis, at the outset, I will discuss errors that undermine the scholarship of an otherwise thoroughly researched and well-documented thesis on Dr Fanny Reading.

At the beginning of the thesis, there is an error in the 'List of Images' on p. 7. Debney-Joyce states a photograph on p. 96 depicts 'Golda Meir', when it is, in fact, a photograph of Henrietta Szold. In 1942, when the picture was taken, Golda Meir was 46 years of age, and Henrietta Szold was 82 years of age. Debney-Joyce writes, 'It is of Golda Meir and the inscription in one corner reads 'Jerusalem 1942.' Debney-Joyce accounts, erroneously, for the aged appearance of 'Meir', by stating 'Although only 44 years of age when this photograph was taken, her face is deeply lined and her hair white. She looks 10 years older than her age, which indicates the difficulties she faced in life.'

Debney-Joyce states, incorrectly, in her thesis that Lord Arthur Balfour was Jewish, describing him as an 'eminent Jewish member of the English establishment' (p. 198). This error has

serious implications for anyone concerned with the history of the Balfour Declaration (2 November 1917), as this statement alleging he was Jewish skews the motivation for his support of the Balfour Declaration at a time when he was Foreign Secretary in David Lloyd George's coalition government. Balfour was an evangelical Presbyterian and there were clear links between his Christian Zionism and Chaim Weizmann's Jewish Zionism. As Philip Alexander (2017) points out:

[Balfour's] religious formation was profoundly Christian, and the kind of Christianity that shaped him was the mainstay of Christian Zionism. He knew his Bible and, it is probably true to say, he was the most theologically literate prime minister this country has ever had, with the possible exception of Gladstone. (p. 10)

In 1922 in the House of Lords, Balfour stated:

[F]rom a purely material point of view the policy we initiated is likely to prove a successful policy. But we have never pretended – certainly I have never pretended – that it was purely from these materialistic considerations that the Declaration of November 1917 originally sprang. I regard this not as a solution, but as a partial solution, of the great and abiding Jewish problem ... Surely, it is in order that we may send a message to every land where the Jewish race has been scattered, a message that will tell them that Christendom is not oblivious of their faith, is not unmindful of the service they have rendered to the great religions of the world, and most of all to the religion that the majority of Your Lordships' house profess, and that we desire to the best of our ability to give them that opportunity of developing in peace and quietness under British rule, those great gifts which hitherto they have been compelled to bring to fruition in countries that know not their language and belong not to their race? That is the ideal which I desire to see accomplished, that is the aim which lay at the root of the policy I am trying to defend; and though it is defensible indeed on every ground, that is the ground which chiefly moves me. (Dugdale, *Arthur James Balfour*, 2: 216–17, quoting Hansard)

There are errors concerning Jewish practice, for example, on p. 104, Debney-Joyce writes that 'The Jewish marriage contract meant the wife was the husband's property.' The ketubah does not state or imply this view to a Jewish marriage; and is, in fact, a document that, mainly, protects the future pecuniary interests of the wife in case of divorce and outlines the

husband's responsibilities in that regard. It is a charter of a woman's rights in a marriage and a man's duties.

Debney-Joyce refers to 'Israel' at a time when it was 'Palestine' (p. 37).

There is a radical misconception about the meaning of 'political Zionism,' in its then-contemporary context, a concept that triggered a divisive debate in Dr Fanny's day. Debney-Joyce sees the publication of Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's speech posted in 2015 on a NCJWA website as an illustration that 'the NCJWA now has a preparedness to acknowledge political Zionism more than it did in the 1920s' (p. 71). This ignores Dr Reading's commitment to political Zionism in the 1920s, evidenced by her attendance at the Zionist Congress in 1925 in Vienna. This over-simplification ignores the historic context of the Zionism debate with which Dr Reading was familiar in her time. Political Zionism in Australia meant more than the act of publishing a political speech, either then or now. Political Zionism was interrogated within the context of the debate between separate ideological camps that represented the 'political Zionism', espoused by leaders such as Theodor Herzl and Chaim Weizmann, compared to the 'pragmatic Zionism' implemented by the Labour Zionists, the workers in agriculture, who created the kibbutzim and moshavim in Palestine. Additionally, 'political' Zionists networked with governments and people of influence to secure the legitimate return of the Jews to their ancestral homeland; and, for some political Zionists in the 1920s, such as Ze'ev Jabotinsky, even to fight militarily for recognition of a Jewish State.

Debney-Joyce speculates that, given that Esther stated in a naturalisation document that she arrived in Australia on 1 June 1889, she and Fanny would then have arrived on the RMSS *Carthage*, the only ship to dock in Melbourne on that day. However, my research shows the names of mother and daughter recorded on the passenger register of the *SS Nurnberg* that left Antwerp on 15 June 1889 bound for Australian ports, including Melbourne, where they disembarked on 2 August 1889. It is possible that, 15 years later filling in the naturalisation form, Esther made an error or chose to give an earlier date for reasons unknown.

In Chapter 4 there is speculation, rather than facts, on several topics. On p. 165, Debney-Joyce surmises that Dr Fanny's brother Hyman might have had 'learning difficulties' because he was in the same class at school as his brother Lewis, who was two years younger. As I mention in my thesis, members of the Rubinowich family told me that Hyman had been a sickly child with a heart complaint, a recollection confirmed in his attestation paper for military service in the Second World War, when the Australian Military Forces Medical Board found him 'unfit for

active service' due to his 'history of rheumatic fever'. Illness and the consequent absence from school, rather than 'learning difficulties', could have accounted for his being in his brother's class. Alternatively, it is possible a very bright younger brother Lewis could have 'skipped' a year or two, a not uncommon practice for gifted children.

On p. 197, Debney-Joyce writes that on 24 June 1923, a 'Union of Jewish Women was formed to support the Jewish National Fund'. There was no Union of Jewish Women in Australia in 1923. Dr Fanny proposed the creation of her 'Council of Jewish Women' on 26 June 1923.

Debney-Joyce asserts that, 'In 1938, Weizmann demanded the restoration of Jewish immigration into Palestine be regulated in accordance with the absorptive capacity of the country' (p.201). Weizmann did not attach this condition to his position on immigration. This is a misrepresentation of his position. In fact, he opposed the regulation of immigration imposed by the British. He travelled to Palestine in 1937 and, in 1938, delivered two speeches in Hebrew in Jerusalem on 23 January 1938 and at a mass meeting in Tel Aviv on 3 February 1938. He said (in translation):

Above all we need a return to the normal in the matter of immigration. This new Jewish society which is growing up in this country, and which is already an ineradicable part of it, cannot live without immigration. It is its lifeblood. It is an intolerable state of things that an arbitrary emergency measure like the imposition of the political high level should be introduced expressly in an emergency of temporary duration, and that then this emergency state should be kept in being for an indefinite period. We shall oppose any continuation of this arbitrary restriction of Jewish immigration with utmost force.

On p. 207, Debney-Joyce writes that 'Among Reading's papers ... is a typed message about the Jeanette L. Arons' scholarship; it is possible she modelled the future Dr Fanny Reading Scholarship on it.' The scholarship, in fact, was instituted not by Dr Fanny but by the Victorian branch of the NCJW, with an endowment in 1947 of £600, 'to perpetuate the name of Fanny Reading'. The Fanny Reading (Travelling) Scholarships to NCJWA conferences were created in 1974, the year of her death.

There is an error in Debney-Joyce's account of the biography of Henrietta Szold (p. 217). Szold was, in 1898, a member of the Federation of American Zionists. She founded Hadassah in 1912 in the United States. In 1925, when she attended the Zionist Congress in Vienna, she was President of Hadassah and resident mentor in Palestine to the new Hadassah Medical Organization. Two years later, in 1927, the World Zionist Congress appointed her to its three-

member Palestine executive. Debney-Joyce states, incorrectly, that at the Zionist Congress in Vienna in 1925 'Henrietta Szold sat on the main platform because of the important position she held as vice-president of the Zionist Organisation.'

Debney-Joyce states that in 1927, '1500' Jewish migrants arrived in Australia (p. 200), an erroneous number given the restrictions on migration at that time. Rutland points out that in the 1920s the total Jewish population increased only slightly, from 21,615 in 1921 to 23,553 in 1933 [an increase of 1,938, over 12 years] (*Edge of the Diaspora*, p. 142). Rubinstein states that Rabbi F.L. Cohen observed in 1926 that between 1921 and 1926 'Australia had admitted only an average of 150 per year' (*The Jews in Australia*, vol 1, p. 30). Therefore, a total of 1,038 Jewish migrants entered Australia between 1927 and 1933; and this number over a period of seven years is far less than the 1,500 Debney-Joyce attributes to Jewish migration in one year alone, 1927.

On p. 273, Debney-Joyce writes:

It was Reading's intention to attend the quinquennial meeting of the International Council of Jewish Women (ICJW) in Washington, U.S.A in May 1925. She knew it was important that the Council of Jewish Women (Australia) should become affiliated with the ICJW as soon as possible. The CJW had much to learn from the international organisation and its experienced delegates.

This is incorrect, as Dr Fanny attended the conference of the International Council of Women, held in May 1925 in Washington, which was not a conference of Jewish women.

There are errors in the Appendix 1 Chronology: It is wrong to state '1923 Dr Fanny Reading was a delegate to the International Council of Jewish Women Conference (USA).' She travelled overseas for the first time in 1925 when she attended the International Council of Women Conference in Washington DC. As already pointed out, this was not a Jewish conference (p. 311).

There are multiple errors in Appendix 3 Glossary (p. 316-18): 'Aliyah' does not mean 'a return', but 'going up'; therefore 'going up' to Palestine elevated one spiritually (p. 316); 'Kosher' not 'Koser'; 'mohel' is not 'circumcision' but the person who performs the circumcision; 'yishuv' is not the 'body of Jewish residents in Israel prior to 1917' (p. 318), but the Jewish residents of Palestine prior to the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948.

Debney-Joyce's thesis comprises ten chapters: (1) Reading's legacy; (2) The National Council of Jewish Women; (3) The decision to immigrate; (4) Ballarat—becoming established and making a living; (5) Melbourne and the getting of wisdom; (6) Sydney—The turning point—1923; (7) Letters Home; (8) Medical work; Anti-Semitism; (9) The Reading family; and (10) Dr Fanny Reading 'The Law of Loving Kindness'. There is a literature review, a chronology appendix, a census data appendix, a glossary, bibliography, and 63 photographs. She writes that the themes of the thesis are transnationalism, the new woman, and the Jewish Diaspora.

Debney-Joyce is a Ballarat resident, with knowledge of the city where Fanny Reading lived as a child and was educated. She acknowledges the problem of the 'paucity of primary sources'. She comments that the school registers from the Lake Bolac Primary School and the Humffray Street Primary School in Ballarat were missing. She concludes, 'Knowing so little about Reading's life, it has been deemed better to acknowledge the incompleteness of detail and give up the search for a complete narrative.' She states, 'The challenge was to write a biography from a very limited number of primary sources.' Thus, acknowledging this disadvantage, she states that her thesis is therefore not a biography with a narrative, but a 'heterography', that 'bears more resemblance to a cubist painting'. This new theory underpinning her thesis, in and of itself, is somewhat confusing; especially as heterography is conventionally viewed as a term in linguistics.

The strengths of Debney-Joyce's thesis are the meticulous attention to detail and the depth of research into local sources where available, providing reliable information about Nathan Rubinowich's work in Ballarat and environs (p. 129). She notes, for example, that after settling in Ballarat East, he was granted a Hawker's Licence in the Ballarat East Court of Petty Sessions on 9 December 1890, which cost £2. His hawker's licence for a horse and cart with a cover meant he had an all-weather vehicle, with his name painted on the sides of the canvas top, as regulations specified. She notes further that he obtained character references from well-known people of the district, which 'suggests he received support from two established members of the Ballarat Jewish community' (p. 130). Her description of Nathan's business dealings is well researched; for example, she notes:

As Nathan was not allowed to trade within the confines of the city limits, it was necessary for him to move out into the countryside to the west of Ballarat.... Nathan's route took him west across the plains to Lake Bolac and then north along the edge of the Grampian Ranges towards Ararat.... As he traversed around the base of Mt William in the Grampians, he noted a location where he could stop for a rest, or sleep the night in his wagon. (p. 131)

Nathan became a hotel licensee in 1900 at Mafeking, at the base of Mt William in the Grampians. The family lived initially in Ballarat, and the birth of Fanny's brother Abraham Solomon was registered at Ballarat East in 1891. However, by 1892 they were living in Lake Bolac, where Dr Fanny's sister Rachael's birth was registered that year. This wealth of local detail will prove advantageous to future researchers on this topic.

There is well-documented information about Nathan's activities in the Ballarat Court of Petty Sessions and the Ararat Court of Petty Sessions, where he claimed payment for goods sold and delivered (p. 133). Debney-Joyce states that Nathan established a hotel and general store in Mafeking, presumably having closed the Lake Bolac store (p. 134). She provides details of the Mafeking hotel licence (p. 134); information about hawking and hotel keeping (p. 143); details about Nathan's trading in Mafeking (pp. 145-146); and details of Esther 'making the application in the Licensing Court in Ararat for the renewal of the Mafeking Hotel licence in December (p. 146). She points out that Esther eventually took over the licence for the East Brunswick Hotel that she sold in July 1905. Debney-Joyce has conducted thorough research into conditions in Ballarat and district and the family's business dealings there. These are, however, mostly background to Fanny's early life and not about Fanny herself; although, she mentions the schools Fanny attended (p. 137), including evidence (pp. 138-140) that Fanny attended University College in Ballarat for her secondary education.

Debney-Joyce's fourth chapter on the family's situation in Melbourne is well researched, with rigorous attention to detail, including for example, the costs of a medical degree at Melbourne University in 1922. Debney-Joyce outlines the family's activities, achievements and participation in the Jewish community. She characterises Dr Fanny as 'a little Aussie battler' (p. 183), a descriptor based presumably on her 'strength in the face of difficulties, resilience and energy' (p. 182).

In Chapter Five, Debney-Joyce describes Dr Fanny's life in the Sydney suburb of Kogarah, providing useful statistics that include names, addresses and occupations of family members. She also provides a concise review of Zionist events at this time.

Chapter Six, Letters Home, is a survey of the travels Fanny undertook in 1925, accompanied by her mother. There is a reference to dinner at the home of the President of the English Zionist Federation Dr David Eder and his wife Edith. Debney-Joyce records multiple details obtained from Dr Fanny's correspondence to family in Australia; but these comments are generally prosaic and do not reveal the inner workings of Dr Fanny's mind. They are more in the nature

of a fascinating travelogue. Debney-Joyce's strength is her factual research, shown to advantage when detailing names of ships, dates of departure and arrival, places visited and hotels in which the family stayed. In her description of the Zionist Congress in Vienna, she documents the ideologies of the speakers and creates a positive and comprehensive picture of what Dr Fanny experienced there.

Chapter Seven, Medical Work, examines Dr Fanny's career in Sydney. Debney-Joyce concedes, 'When trying to write about Reading's medical career, the main problem is that she wrote very little about it.' She compensates by documenting the background to the medical milieu of the time. Of particular interest is the information concerning the three hospitals that conferred Life Governorships on Dr Fanny.

Chapter Eight focuses on anti-semitism, providing an introduction for those not familiar with this history. There also is a brief section about court cases involving Dr Fanny's younger brother Hyman that resonates with my own research based on interviews with Hyman's son Dr Leigh Reading. The appendix to my thesis has information about this difficult period in Dr Fanny's private life.

Chapter Nine focuses on the Reading family, with genealogical details of members of the Reading family, including Nathan's brother Wolf and his family.

The strength of this thesis is the impressive statistical research that underpins the narrative. However, the plethora of details frequently obscures the central narrative of Dr Fanny's life. The focus shifts from the central character to lengthy discussions that range through centuries of history. While context is vital and informative for positioning Dr Fanny in various spheres of interest, often she fades completely from view during these forays into tangential concerns. Nonetheless, this thesis constitutes the first on Dr Fanny Reading and will therefore prove invaluable for future researchers.

Anne Sarzin's thesis on Dr Fanny Reading

In the thesis I have written about Dr Fanny, I have attempted to shine a light primarily on her as the central character of a compelling narrative, while positioning her within a wider world. I have focused on the trajectory of her life and thought, emphasising her concerns and actions.

Two spheres of personal interest have coloured my perceptions and interpretation of biographical research related to Dr Fanny's life and times. First, I approached this task as a Jewish woman shaped by the culture, history and religion of the Jewish people, my heritage

enabling me to understand Dr Fanny's life experiences with what I believe to be a greater degree of empathy, sensitivity and inherent knowledge than would otherwise be the case. I am familiar with our shared traditions, our festivals, diverse community attitudes and policies, both conservative and progressive, all of which inform lives in Jewish homes, institutions and organisations. I understand the family social structures, parental motivations, expectations and concerns, and the real and psychological cost to the community experiencing and, importantly, remembering a traumatic history of persecution, societal constraints and prejudice over two millennia. My Judaic background provides an advantageous window into Dr Fanny's world on many levels: the religious, cultural, sociological, historical, feminist and psychological. Unlike Debney-Joyce, who defined Dr Fanny as a 'little Aussie battler' (p. 181), I see her feisty spirit and determination to succeed embodying instead Jewish resilience and ability to start life anew and to overcome adversity, despite past tragedies. I recognise, however, that responses to and analysis of Dr Fanny's life are in some measure subjective and that our different cultural and religious backgrounds—mine and Debney-Joyce's—shape our perceptions and judgements, which also need to be interrogated with intellectual rigour and academic objectivity.

As a doctoral student, I have subjected the many facets of Dr Fanny's character to close scrutiny and brought an academic objectivity to the evaluation of the vicissitudes of her life and times. Both identities, the Judaic and the academic, thus complemented, reinforced and enhanced each other in the researching for and the writing of this thesis.

For me, the story of Dr Fanny is primarily a Jewish one, her people's heritage, culture and history seeding her ideals and aspirations. Throughout her life she strove to enact *tikkun olam*, to repair the fractured world around her and to make it a better place for all Australians and for many communities further afield. Seen through this prism, her life and work have embodied the teachings and ethics that sustained her people and her own family through turbulent times.

My thesis contains original material that appears for the first time in print. There is a core chapter in my thesis that breaks new ground—the analysis of the defamation trial in 1949 in Sydney in which she appeared as the plaintiff in the case *Dr Fanny Reading v National Press Pty Ltd*. This chapter deconstructs the transcript of the trial for the first time and expands understanding of Dr Fanny's ideological convictions. It documents her participation in the 14th Zionist Congress in 1925, which strengthened her commitment to Zionism, ensured its

foundational role in her NCJW agenda, and shaped many of the views she expressed in 1949 in the Supreme Court.

My thesis also includes excerpts from interviews with surviving family members and friends, who provide insights into Dr Fanny's character and *modus vivendi*. Additionally, I was given exclusive access to Dr Fanny's collection of musical scores, which had not been examined or photographed by any other researcher. Importantly, this treasure trove of music manuscripts generated original responses and analysis. This music archive, with Dr Fanny's own scribbled comments in the margins of the music scores, is a direct link to her and casts light on aspects of her life as a musician, artist, pianist, singer and lover of classical music.

This wealth of original material constitutes a contribution to scholarship on Dr Fanny, enhancing in new ways our understanding of who she was, what she set out to do, and how she achieved her goals.

Book chapters, publications and journal articles on Dr Fanny Reading

To date, only two books have complete chapters devoted to Dr Fanny Reading. The first to focus a complete chapter (rather than page references) on her is Lysbeth Cohen's (1987) *Beginning with Esther: Jewish Women in New South Wales from 1788*. In chapter 12 (pp. 72-75), titled 'Dr Fanny and the National Council of Jewish Women', Cohen traces Dr Fanny's biography, 'her forlorn, lonely, friendless' experience arriving as a newcomer in Melbourne. Cohen points out that in 1927 Dr Fanny, looking back on the Council of Jewish Women she created in 1923, recalled advocating for voluntary work in its broadest sense and the creation of a movement

in which our women and girls could meet, discuss and attempt to solve our many problems; also that it was absolutely necessary that our Jewish women and girls begin to realise the supreme need of service to themselves, their race and to the country in which they live. (cited in Cohen, 1987)

The chapter contains a summary of her achievements, as well as quotations from those who knew her. 'To me she was a goddess,' said a woman who worked with her for 40 years.

In *Making a Difference: A history of the National Council of Jewish Women of Australia*, published in 2000, Marlo Newton devotes one chapter to Dr Fanny Reading (pp. 1-20). This represented a significant step forward in highlighting her position in the Jewish and general communities as an organisational leader of note. In this chapter titled 'The power of one—Dr

Fanny Reading', Newton outlines biographical details, supplies relevant quotations and enumerates the many connections Dr Fanny made at home and abroad, including affiliation with the International Council of Jewish Women. The rest of the book is concerned with the development and achievements of the National Council of Jewish Women of Australia.

In October 2003, the National Council of Jewish Women published the 36-page *Living History Project: Meeting new migrants on the wharves*, compiled by Sunny Gold, Jeannette Tsoulos, Dinah Danon, Liane Froneman, Beverley Nurick and Deidre Hart. The first four pages are devoted to Dr Fanny's biography and agenda; followed by contributions about three volunteers—Ernest Morris, Roma Baffsky and Amy Solomon—who met migrants at the Sydney wharves. Seven migrants—Fay Bernstein, Rebbetzin Jana Gottshall, Alex Odze, Minna Sapir, Dr Joachim Schneeweiss, Simon Sekel and Charlotte Zekel—relate their stories of arrival in Sydney, being met by Dr Fanny and NCJW volunteers and the help given to them subsequently. This publication is of value to researchers for the personal insights it provides into the connection of volunteers with Dr Fanny, while also defining the relationship between new migrants and Dr Fanny and documenting her unceasing efforts to assist them.

Three journal articles focusing exclusively on Dr Fanny have been published so far. In 1996, Morris Ochert's excellent and comprehensive article broke new ground. Titled 'Dr Fanny Reading v Smith's Weekly', it was published in the *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal* (pp. 308-343). At publication, it represented by far the most authoritative survey of her life and, in particular, the court case in which she appeared as the plaintiff in 1949. He notes other offensive articles published by *Smith's* and gives explanatory background material to the case. The article is enriched with Ochert's memories of Dr Fanny, whom he knew personally, and includes perceptive comments by others who knew her. There is information from multiple sources, including from his father. His outline of the trial and the well-presented explanatory material constitutes a valuable record of scholarship on this topic. The extensive endnotes are a substantial resource.

This article was followed two years later, in 1998 by Anne Andgel's article titled 'The law of loving kindness', published in the *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal* (pp. 199-260). This article, together with Ochert's, constitutes the true beginnings and foundation of scholarship concerning Dr Fanny's life and times. Andgel outlines the early life of Dr Fanny, her medical studies and her move to Sydney, the creation of the Council of Jewish Women, its publication known as *The Bulletin*, Dr Fanny's focus on welfare and the creation of the Jewish Men's Hostel, the expansion of Council nationwide, the national conferences and historical

developments, the war effort, the court case against *Smith's Weekly*, and a final section on Dr Fanny, the physician and woman. Appended to the article are excellent endnotes and a useful bibliography.

The third journal article and the most recent, written by Anne Sarzin, the writer of this thesis, is titled 'Sailing from past memories towards safe harbours: Sea-change, healing and transformation.' It was published in 2018 in the *Australian Journal of Jewish Studies*, vol. xxxi, pp. 129-151. The article commences with biographical details and proceeds to explore the paradigms of memory and forgetting in relation to the events that shaped Dr Fanny's early years and their potential effect on her identity and character, and on her mother's response to the challenges of their situation. It then looks at their voyage from Antwerp to Melbourne in 1889 to explore and evaluate whether any of its potential healing effects might have contributed to a positive psychological equilibrium in mother and child and diminished the anguish of personal, collective and intergenerational memories. Sarzin references multiple areas of scholarship, from literary sources to psychoanalytic thinking, including the works of Sean Field, Yosef Yerushalmi, Diane Samuels, Lisa Appignanesi, Paul Ricoeur, Dr Paul Valent and Diane Armstrong.

In 2002, Suzanne Rutland authored an article titled 'Perspectives from the Australian Jewish community', published in *Lilith: A Feminist History Journal*. This is a generalised survey of leading women in the Jewish community in Australia, with multiple references to Dr Fanny, who is featured prominently but not exclusively.

Use of primary and secondary sources

Research for this thesis drew extensively on primary and secondary sources. The thesis relies largely on the following primary sources: contemporary newspaper reports, editorials and opinion pieces; Dr Fanny's radio broadcasts, her published speeches and articles; archival NCJW records, including original documents (letters, citations, certificates and awards) and publications; the researcher's personal interviews with Dr Fanny's family members and friends, current NCJW members and office-bearers; family photograph albums; Dr Fanny's music scores and sheet music; government documents, including naturalisation certificates, military records and letters; the original court transcript of Dr Fanny's defamation trial in 1949; and the Mitchell Library's collection titled 'Dr Fanny Reading papers, photographs and realia, ca. 1890-1974', which comprises graphic materials, textual records and objects.

Secondary sources include journal articles; Australian dissertations; websites; and books and articles by authoritative scholars in the disciplines of culture, sociology, religion, history, philosophy, politics, psychology, biography, and feminist studies.

The genre of biography: Positioning this thesis within academic disciplines

Dr Fanny's life was profoundly rich and multi-dimensional; it warrants, and its impact is enlarged by, the application of various scholarly lenses. Each one helps to reveal the whole person that was Dr Fanny.

As the writer of a thesis on Dr Fanny, I gave thought to the varied personal and professional incarnations through which she transitioned, evaluating her aspirations and actions, as well as external events, all of which influenced and contributed to her development. Her life had many contexts that could dictate the genre of biographical scholarship within which to position her. In Marjorie Barnard's preface to her literary biography of the Australian writer Miles Franklin, she states: 'How angry Miles would have been if she had been chopped up and crammed into a series of academic pigeonholes!' (Barnard 1967, p. xv). Barnard's cautionary words are a timely reminder of the potential dangers of categorising a life whose multiple connections, concerns and circumstances defy conventional academic classification.

As noted earlier in the section titled 'Anne Sarzin's thesis on Dr Fanny Reading', my understanding and perceptions of Dr Fanny were predicated initially on our shared religious, historical and cultural heritage. It was from this point of departure that I started an exploration of her life and thought. Professor Brian Roberts (2002) states that there are writers who have 'called for researchers to indicate their own relationship to the study—their presence in the research and the influence of social background, for example gender, race, social class, or religion' (p. 13). Carolyn Heilbrun suggests that a biographer might even share some sense of family, or community, with her subject and 'beyond all else, the biographer must both deeply respect and simply like her subject' (cited in Wagner-Martin 1994, p. 134). According to Linda Wagner-Martin (1994), the biographer's ultimate goal is to understand the subject's motivation,

a task that rests to a great extent on some psychological compatibility ... there must be some inherent empathy within the biographer for the subject.... My relationship with each subject came close to what Phyllis Rose called 'appropriation,' and I felt

personally enriched as a result of my five years of immersion in the Steins' family story.
(p. 168)

In undertaking this doctoral thesis on Dr Fanny, I explored in depth the scholarship in the field of biography and the diverse disciplines that underpinned the genre, evaluating how they cast light on my subject. What follows is an outline and discussion of the relevance to my thesis of the following biographical disciplines: history, sociology, psychology, culture, feminism and gender studies, politics, religion, literary biography and interdisciplinarity.

History

Kiera Lindsey (2018) states:

It is precisely this process of dwelling with the sources that ensures that our imaginings are deeply embedded within and informed by the historical record. This is what historian Peter Cochrane calls 'the paradox of groundedness and transcendence', that imbues historical biography with both 'weight and wings'. For me, such respect for the record is how we earn the right to write our subject our way.

This view echoes the work of Selma Leydesdorff (2005), who writes that historians cannot be simple realists, they are also artists, even myth-makers who communicate their views through established cultural genres. In writing about Dr Fanny, I have rejected this latter view, as I have directed my research to the available facts and have avoided speculative theorising that could falsify the historic record.

By history, I am referring to those external events of magnitude that affected not only the Rubinowich family but also the millions of their co-religionists swept up in the cataclysmic waves of antisemitism and pogroms of the early 1880s in Russia. These tumultuous phenomena motivated the Rubinowich family to migrate and to seek safety in Australia. Their peregrinations serve as that 'prism of history' described by Barbara Tuchman, who observed, 'In so far as I have used biography in my work, it has been less for the sake of the individual subject than as a vehicle for exhibiting an age' (cited in Pachter 1979, p. 134). Lloyd Ambrosius (2004) corroborates this perspective: 'There is always the requirement that our subjects have historical significance and that they illuminate important things about the times in which they lived and the events in which they participated' (p. 81).

Dr Fanny's life provides a lens through which we can view the currents of history and vistas of the wider world. Barbara Caine (2010) draws attention to the change from biographies that paid attention to the role of the individual in history to 'a newer one concerning the capacity of an individual life to reflect broad historical change' (p. 5). In that sense, Dr Fanny's life mirrors the seismic historical changes that altered the world in her lifetime. It was the harsh realities of the Second World War that galvanised her to launch a series of initiatives aimed at contributing substantially to the national war effort both in Australia and abroad. It was the devastation wrought by the Shoah—Hitler's Holocaust that succeeded in murdering six million Jewish men, women and children, thereby annihilating Jewish communities throughout Europe—that drove her to campaign on behalf of refugees desperate to escape Nazi persecution and to devise programs to welcome and integrate those who entered Australia. It was the historically entrenched exclusionary practices of a male-dominated medical profession that motivated her to create professional opportunities for herself as a practising physician. Leydesdorff (2005) states: 'We are learning ... how the history of women can change our understanding of history as a whole. For every account from a female voice is potentially dissonant to existing histories' (pp. 12-13).

Caine (2010) draws attention to the biographical histories of marginal groups suffering oppression and discrimination and highlights the capacity of an individual to reveal the workings of a larger society: 'Historians have turned to particular individuals in their concern to explore the lives of marginal people who lived between cultures, or who transgressed the racial, ethnic and religious expectations of their societies' (p. 24). Dr Fanny's fragmented childhood was spent on the margins of several cultures—a Jewish childhood in the Pale, apart from the Russian mainstream; time in London's East End on the fringe of English society; and, initially, rejection from the Jewish and wider community in Ballarat in country Victoria—until, through education and renewal, she achieved acceptance in mainstream Australia. According to Charles Wright Mills (1973),

The biographies of men and women, the kinds of individuals they variously become, cannot be understood without reference to the historical structures in which the milieu of their everyday life are so organized. Historical transformations carry meanings not only for individual ways of life, but for the very character—the limits and possibilities of the human being. (p. 175)

History, with its actions and reactions, impacted on Dr Fanny's childhood, not least the sense of deprivation brought about by the rupture of family connections and friendship networks in

the old country, her extensive and supportive relationships shrinking to the isolation of a single-family unit adrift in a new world. As Gerda Lerner writes, 'In a world in which personal contact with different generations is often severed, history can link people to past generations and root them in the continuity of the human enterprise' (cited in Ambrosius 2004, p. 14). Documenting that continuity by means of oral histories, which I have done in this thesis by means of interviews with Dr Fanny's surviving family members, friends and followers, can compensate partially for the lack of personal papers. Seeking out living people and interviewing them, 'to get in just ahead of the grim reaper and talk to their subjects' surviving associates and family members' ensures the transmission of cherished memories and traditions, as well as constituting a valuable resource for the biographer (Ambrosius 2004, p. 82). Brian Roberts (2002) asserts that oral history, through recorded interviews, collects spoken memories and personal commentaries of historical significance. To that end, I have been fortunate to interview people with vivid recollections of Dr Fanny.

Sociology

Charles Wright Mills, an authority on the linkage between biography and history within the context of society, advocates placing the individual life in the broader public sphere, without subsuming individual characteristics and relational patterns:

We have come to know that every individual lives, from one generation to the next, in some society; that he lives out a biography, and that he lives it out within some historical sequence. By the fact of his living he contributes, however minutely, to the shaping of this society and to the course of its history, even as he is made by society and by its historical push and shove. The sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society. That is its task and its promise. To recognize this task and this promise is the mark of the classic social analyst. (Wright Mills 1973, p. 12)

Dr Fanny re-imagined the Jewish woman in Australia, transforming her from a spectator on the sidelines to an activist engaged in social welfare and social justice for the betterment of the Jewish community and Australian society generally. It was only through the creation of new organisational structures that she could promulgate her programs for societal change. The broadening of the historical basis of biography to encompass the sociological and political is viewed by Roberts (2002)

as part of a movement to reveal and understand the “personal” and its interlinking with the immediate and wider social context and political practices. Biographical research has been used to understand numerous fields and issues, for instance ... neglected aspects of social history, to give voice to those who are largely unheard; and to trace the effects of migration and other social upheavals. Biographical research is therefore used for a variety of empirical and theoretical purposes and applicable to both historical research and contemporary social issues. (p. 31)

Wright Mills (1973) labels history ‘as a discipline that does invite grubbing for history detail’, but concedes, ‘it also encourages a widening of one’s view to embrace epochal pivotal events in the development of social structures’ (p. 160). He also defines all sociology ‘worthy of the name’ as ‘historical sociology’ (p. 112), while Daniel Bertaux (1981) sees sociology in the broadest terms, contending that ‘it deals with institutions, cultures, forms of social life, social relations, in other words with the very texture of social life as people live it’ (p. 32). Peter France (2002), focusing on the role of women in society, draws attention to the spaces women inhabit and how they inhabit them:

How have public spaces and institutions been transformed by the increasing participation of women in public life, as workers, as citizens, as public intellectuals? How has 'biography', a cultural institution that documents public life and reputations, accommodated women? What has been made of the relation between the realm of private morality and the public domain of justice?’ (pp. 304-305)

Aside from France’s specific description of biography as a cultural institution, his remaining questions touch on issues with which Dr Fanny was preoccupied throughout her life, those of 'private morality and the public domain of justice'. Her personal philosophy, her 'Law of loving kindness', underpinned the ethical structures of her organisation, the National Council of Jewish Women. According to Wright Mills (1973),

Social scientists have paid most attention to political and economic institutions, but military and kinship, religious and educational institutions have also been much studied.... If we understand how these institutional orders are related to one another, we understand the social structure of a society. (p. 149)

Dr Fanny’s professional and educational efforts, as well as her social justice agenda, resulted in significant changes within the social institutions and organisations she was associated with. She launched pragmatic initiatives in maternal and paediatric healthcare in and around

Sydney, in Palestine, and in post-1948 Israel. Through her creation of the Council of Jewish Women in July 1923, which metamorphosed on 29 May 1929 into the National Council of Jewish Women, she raised the consciousness of women and brought them out of their homes into the public space of policy making and intellectual endeavour, with due emphasis on her four 'pillars' of religion, education, philanthropy and social justice goals. According to Wright Mills (1973), the life of an individual cannot be adequately understood without references to the institutions within which her biography is enacted, a contention especially relevant to Dr Fanny:

If the individual's very nature cannot be understood without close reference to social reality, then we must analyse it in such reference. Such analysis includes not only the locating of the individual, as a biographical entity, within various interpersonal milieux –but the locating of these milieux within the social structures which they form.... For this biography records the acquiring, dropping, modifying, and in a very intimate way, the moving from one role to another.... Much of human life consists of playing such roles within specific institutions. To understand the biography of an individual, we must understand the significance and meaning of the roles he has played and does play; to understand these roles we must understand the institutions of which they are a part. (pp. 178-179)

Dr Fanny's professional and educational experience, her status as a medical doctor, allied to her personal magnetism as a leader and innovator, enabled her to mentor the women from all walks of life who adopted her as their role model and worked with her to effect positive changes in their social environments. These women became experienced trailblazers for societal change. Dr Fanny harnessed the goodwill of large numbers of Jewish women throughout the country and ushered them effectively into the 'public space' through the medium of the NCJW. Virginia Woolf in her 1938 essay *Three Guineas* queried what women gained from their newly acquired freedom: 'On what terms have women been admitted to public life, how have they transformed institutions and how has their influence helped to shape public opinion?' (cited in France 2002, p. 313). Like Dr Fanny, who encouraged women to see beyond the constraints and trivia of domesticity and to assume societal responsibilities, to lobby for change, influence policy making and enact programs in the public arena,

Woolf wants to influence public decision-making, not by claiming an authority grounded in the values of the private house, but by finding a new common ground, a public space from which to speak of 'we'. She is making an identity claim, but one

which also requires a reassessment of class and gender differences and a reordering of the public sphere to accommodate those differences. (p. 314)

Wright Mills (1973) asserts: 'The traditional subject matter of both sociology and anthropology has been the total society; or, as it is called by anthropologists, "the culture". What is specifically "sociological" in the study of any particular feature of a total society is the continual effort to relate that feature to others, in order to gain a conception of the whole (p. 152).

Bertaux (1981) alludes to Nicole Gagnon's belief that those who would determine the laws of social change or elucidate the historical process of social-structural relations have to trace the lived experience or the life trajectory. Sociologist Norman Denzin states:

The life history may be the best available technique for studying such important social psychological processes as adult socialization, the emergence of group and organizational structure, the rise and decline of social relationships, and the situational response of the self to daily interactional contingencies. (cited in Roberts 2002, p. 3)

Dr Fanny's early life in Ballarat was one of loneliness and isolation. Her experiences and her concern for the wellbeing of others motivated her to create an organisation that would embrace women on the margins of society, both geographically and socially. She wanted to ensure that no country woman would experience the social rejection that characterised her own childhood and youth in Ballarat. Betty Friedan (2000) states:

[I]deology has to come from personal truth, has to test against real life. Personal life, personal truth is not an abstract concept; the life it comes from and feeds back into is real. So what, in my personal truth, made me—and gave me the power to—help bring about that wonderful massive change in society? That's really the question, isn't it? (p. 13)

Roberts (2002) states that individuals act according to the meanings through which they make sense of social existence, and that the study of biographical research rests on a view of individuals as creators of meanings, which form the basis of their everyday lives:

Women, communal and other groups with a feminist or radical view of research practice connect the notion of voice to the raising of consciousness or the reclaiming of history', allowing groups who are not usually heard to relate their experiences. (p. 21)

Dr Fanny possessed a strong moral compass. She reached out to others and gave them a voice and a platform within a social organisation, initiatives seeded in her lonely childhood. Friedan had similar experiences of isolation and exclusion throughout her childhood and adolescence. Both women restructured these negative beginnings into positive and socially transformative projects and lifetimes of social activism. Friedan (2000) writes:

So, wherever I have gone since my childhood in Peoria, I have exulted in the sense of warm community, especially a community that appreciated and welcomed difference. And if I didn't find such a community, I learned how to create one. (pp. 29-30)

I was beginning to understand that something would have to *change society* in order for women to be able to become all they could be. It wouldn't be enough just for the woman herself to break through the feminine mystique and want something more. (p. 137).

Thus, consciousness raising, understanding who one is, creating a structured self-image, exploring the road one hopes to travel, and formulating one's hopes and goals along the way, are intrinsic to evolving a sense of social identity, whether or not they coalesce within collectives such as kinship, religious, professional or socio-political groups. Roberts (2002) notes:

There are perhaps, overarching theoretical issues concerning the nature of 'individuality' and the formation of identity in contemporary society ... The analysis of life stories gives us powerful insights into how individuals reshape their sense of past, present and future and their social relations and thus respond to sociocultural and economic changes, changes—for instance, on the important question whether contemporary 'individual identity' is becoming more fragmented or has to be more consciously constructed. (pp. 21-22)

Dr Fanny's life presents a window into the world of a first-generation Australian encountering the social challenges associated with migration. Pauline Polkey (1999), a second-generation Pole in the United States, draws attention to the complexity of growing up in a Polish community that found migration a painful experience replete with loss. She notes that her experiences have differed from those of her parents because she grew up in a different country to theirs:

Recent academic literature on narrative has given me a way of tackling the issue of time and place in concepts of ethnicity,... For example, Margaret Somers incorporates

what she calls the 'categorically destabilising dimensions' of space, time and relationality. Social life, [Somers] argues, is storied, and narrative is a way of being in the social world. Identity and self are something one becomes. (p. 26)

The process of 'becoming', leading to the emergence of 'identity' and the consolidation of 'self' as a social entity, manifested itself in different ways throughout Dr Fanny's life. The trajectory of her medical career reveals her upward mobility through society, with an exponential increase in social status and public acknowledgement of her position and her moral authority. Hermione Lee (2009) writes:

Any life that is acted out through a profession ... requires the biographer to grasp the network of forces and the social assumptions which surround that profession at that time and in that place, to look at how attitudes to the subject, and their profession, may have shifted through time, and to work out the relationship between public performance and identity. (p. 105)

Questions of a sociological nature are central to an evaluation of the life of a prominent woman in the public space. Wright Mills (1973) asks:

What varieties of men and women now prevail in this society and in this period? And what varieties are coming to prevail? In what ways are they selected and formed, liberated and repressed, made sensitive and blunted? What kinds of 'human nature' are revealed in the conduct and character we observe in this society in this period? And what is the meaning for 'human nature' of each and every feature of the society we are examining? (p. 13)

Roberts (2002) points out that biographical sociology has once again been influenced by Wright Mills's idea of the 'sociological imagination', which enables us to understand the relationship between history and biography within society. Roberts defines biographical sociology as an attempt to understand the changing experiences and outlooks of individuals in their daily lives, what they see as important, and how to provide interpretations of the accounts they give of their past, present and future. Auto/biography, he says, tackles the individual-society connection in two ways: first, in situating the writing of autobiography within its socio-historical context and, second, relatedly, auto/biography reflexively examines its forms of practice. For Lee (2009), 'Biography is never just the personal story of one life. It always has political and social implications' (p. 63).

Sociological scholarship offers methodologies for identifying and interpreting Dr Fanny's experiences of migration, her encounters with and knowledge of the social constructs of antisemitism and institutional racism; her lifelong campaign on behalf of others to overcome gender bias and social discrimination; her commitment to the delivery of health care; and her positive belief in the capacity for personal transformation and societal change.

Feminist theory

Given Dr Fanny's lifelong focus on the wellbeing and needs of women and children, the area of feminist theory and gender studies is pertinent to her biography. She was a feminist before the word gained currency in Australia. Past president of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, the late Sydney Einfeld, said of her, 'Long before any talk of Women's Liberation she taught the women of our community in Australia that there was work to be done and goals to be reached and together they could achieve magnificent results' (cited in Newton 2000, p. 11). In the first issue of *The Bulletin*, the official newsletter of the Council of Jewish Women, Dr Fanny said, 'With the realisation of the responsibilities to Judaism and humanity that every Jewish woman and girl should feel, will come the awakening to duty and the spirit of service that should animate every Jewish heart' (cited in Newton 2000, p. 14). All elected leaders of the NCJW still avow the following:

[I pledge] to uphold the ideals as espoused by our Founder Dr Fanny Reading, and the values of the NCJW of Australia—SERVICE and HUMANITY towards our Jewish people; our local communities; and towards the wider community of Australia.... I pledge to aid and encourage other women to achieve positions of leadership within and outside NCJW. (p. 21)

Most of the women and girls she influenced came from homes where patriarchal structures, whether benevolent or authoritarian, were entrenched. There were defined roles to which women in traditional Jewish homes were expected to conform. When Dr Fanny shepherded her flock of women and girls towards the goals to which both she and they aspired, she was effectively modifying and refashioning their cultural belief system by encouraging them to look further afield and to fulfil their potential in ways that were new and radical for that generation. They set aside what Judith Butler terms

the gender scripts which women are expected to learn ... gender performances [that] usually involve the enactment or restatement of dominant or hegemonic practices and

hence serve to demonstrate the extent to which women accept and acknowledge the assumptions of their society. (cited in Caine 2010, p. 100)

From a contemporary feminist perspective, Dr Fanny's quiet revolution conforms to Butler's contention that there are 'deliberate acts which challenge dominant ideologies' (p. 100). In effect, Dr Fanny shook Jewish domestic life to its foundations, yet she understood that many of her members had cherished ideals of home and hearth that compelled their love and loyalty. This *modus operandi* may be likened to that of Karen Blixen (Isak Dinesen), of whom her biographer Judith Thurman wrote in 1983 that she 'drew upon a new feminist consciousness that saw a woman's identity as being shaped more by her own control' (cited in Wagner-Martin 1994, p. 138). Through strength of character and commitment to a socio-cultural, political and humanitarian agenda, Dr Fanny effected major changes in the lives of the women who joined her organisation.

According to Friedan (2001), the early feminists had to prove

[a woman was] not a passive, empty mirror, not a frilly, useless decoration, not a mindless animal, not a thing to be disposed of by others, incapable of a voice in her own existence.... Changeless woman, childish woman, a woman's place is in the home, they were told ... women were not trained to understand and live in the world. (pp. 115-116)

She describes how breaking through 'the feminine mystique' was a true paradigm shift:

Women no longer being defined, defining themselves, solely in relation to men, as wives, mothers, sex objects, housewives, but defining themselves instead as people in society.... I did understand that what I had figured out—that the feminine mystique was no longer a valid guide to women's lives, that it was *obsolete*—implied monumental social change, and that my text would be very threatening to those who couldn't deal with that change, men and women. (pp. 134-135)

Dr Fanny dedicated herself to achieve this outcome in her own way; thus, her actions and agenda constituted her feminist manifesto. She emancipated thousands of women and challenged them to participate more fully, both intellectually and sociologically, in the world around them. Rabbi Israel Porush said of her, 'She had the gift of persuasive leadership which could inspire thousands of women to follow her and to work with her in fellowship' (cited in Andgel 1998, p. 247).

Dr Fanny engaged actively in the politics of gender, without being able to reference it with the feminist terminology now available. It is important to acknowledge her contribution to the emergence of women from one segment of Australian society into a public space where formerly women were seen but rarely heard. Selma Leydesdorff (2005) states: 'We cannot afford to abandon our aim to "give voice" to women's past experience... because to do so would be to accept an existing framework of scientific knowledge whose epistemologies systematically marginalize or exclude women' (p. 6). The thoughts and actions of Dr Fanny's members mattered. This was an act of liberation, as well as a shift in the public demographic.

Dr Fanny, as mentioned earlier, established the Council of Jewish Women in 1923. Whether the winds of change set in motion by the publication in 1926 of Virginia Woolf's diaries blew through Sydney is open to question. France (2002) states that Woolf's works

supported a narrative of gendered identity that appealed to a feminist public interested in psychology, sexual identity, and the construction of the self. Her work can be used to support a thesis about the social construction of gendered identities and the production of sexual difference through the separation of public and private domains. (p. 311)

He asks whether Woolf's professional life tells us about the presence of women in the public sphere and about the institutional transformations that presence secured, adding that Woolf considered the workings of influence—how individuals reproduce and transform public culture.

Feminist scholarship is one of the central pillars supporting this thesis's evaluation of the importance of Dr Fanny's life, career trajectory and achievements. Feminism, writes Paula Backscheider (2001), is usually recognised as a political interpretation of experience,

a struggle aimed at raising cultural awareness of the impact and implications of conceptions of gender and the treatment of women and at improving the situation of women. It engenders new ways of thinking about the family, culture, language, art, experience, and social institutions. (p. 129)

It is also a useful methodology with which to scrutinise Dr Fanny's professional work and innovations in the medical field. Susan Bell (2009) comments: 'The narratives of feminist health scholarship ... launch a new kind of women's health movement seeking to unseat sovereign physicians' (p. 3). As one of Melbourne University's earliest female medical graduates (1922), Dr Fanny later worked in Sydney as a general practitioner, with specialties in

midwifery, paediatrics, obstetrics, gynaecology, and anaesthetics at a time when hospitals were dominated by male practitioners. The question arises whether male exclusionary practices in general hospitals irked Dr Fanny, who firmly subscribed to what Polkey (1999) has termed 'a belief in the dynamics of female agency' (p. xviii).

When Elisabeth Israels Perry researched the life of 19th-century social reformer Belle Moskowitz, she first viewed Belle as an 'honorary man' effecting social and political change, until it dawned on her that Belle was part of a larger tradition of female activism. It was then that Israels Perry placed her subject's accomplishments within a female-centred context (Alpern 1992, p. 88). Israels Perry's evolving ideas about Belle speak to a feminist-inspired reading of Dr Fanny's life story, addressing her campaign to educate and empower women to take on leadership roles in social institutions and organisations, thus enabling them to bring about positive changes in society. Dr Fanny was in the vanguard of contemporary social activism, a tradition within which women were beginning to engage and distinguish themselves in Australia.

France (2002) writes that the recovery of women's lives raises public consciousness of women's history and constructed political interests. He comments that feminist historian Maria Pia Lara,

has argued that biography and autobiography have been critical to the feminist project of transforming the public sphere because these narratives connect the moral and aesthetic spheres with the spheres of justice and solidarity. The liberal separation of private morality and public justice has been challenged by such narratives. Identity claims have been crucial to feminist politics and women's narratives [and] 'have reordered understandings of what the public sphere is'. This reordered understanding has accommodated a multiplicity of voices. (p. 317)

France maintains that feminist life-writers have stressed the self as a product of history, class and gender, 'making explicit the implicit epistemological and ontological assumptions of biography (and contrasting these with women's ways of knowing) ... and focusing on the micropolitics of subjectivity, identity, and the body' (p. 329).

The impact of feminist research on biographical study has been significant across a range of social science disciplines. According to Roberts (2002), 'The emphases on giving a voice, consciousness raising, empowerment, collaboration and attention to meaning and experience

have had widespread influence while also being subject to much debate within qualitative methods and much further afield.' (p. 28). He cites Liz Stanley:

Feminism has had a considerable influence on auto/biographical research, for instance in an emphasis on relating individual experience and the cross-disciplinary approach to ideas and practice. At a general level, in auto/biographical research, there is the attempt to transcend established academic boundaries—to see the points of connection and interrogate traditional demarcations. In order to avoid the separation of the 'personal' from the 'socio-political' and uncover the hidden lives of women, a guiding principle from feminist research is the use of an historical perspective in which to place the research activity and the previous influences on the researched ... Feminist perspectives have given auto/biography the notion of the 'personal is political' which, in feminist research, begins research from the standpoint of women's experiences. (p. 77)

Gerda Lerner affirmed that using the new feminist scholarship in literature, psychology and anthropology has allowed biographers to use 'life-cycle analysis or to address topics most biographies seldom touch on, such as how women's private and public lives intersect, the impact of mother-daughter relationships, or the "familial and female friendship support networks that sustained women's public activities"' (cited in Alpern 1992, p. 5). An important consideration is the feminist biographer's consciousness of gender, shifting attention 'away from the "marriage plot" to a consideration of all stages of the life cycle, including mature adulthood and old age' (p. 9). Given that Dr Fanny never married and lived to the age of 90, considerations such as these carry weight in the evaluation of her life and potentially lead to a more comprehensive biographical portrayal. The mother-daughter relationship was a primary part of Dr Fanny's life story, as her mother, Esther Rose, served as her role model for orthodox piety and she lived with Fanny for 12 years, from the death of her husband Jacob Nathan in 1934 in Melbourne until her own death in 1946 in Sydney. As to the friendship support networks to which Lerner alludes, the NCJW was predicated on the bonds between women that approximated to a sisterhood in terms of shared interests, goals, ideals and mutual support.

Shulamit Reinharz argues, 'Feminist researchers seem especially attracted to writing across disciplinary boundaries and broadening methodological conventions' (cited in Roberts 2002, p. 77). Sara Alpern (1992) attributes this trend in biographical research to sorting out 'the

connection between their lives and the personal, political, or ideological issues of our own epoch' (p. 3).

Literary biography

The genre of literary biography, with its reliance on speculative and fictional devices and the workings of literary imagination, is of little relevance to this thesis. I have based Dr Fanny's life story on facts and well-documented sources. Richard Ellman (1971) reminds us that posthumous diagnosis by biographers is as hazardous as diagnosis by doctors when the patient is alive: 'Biographies will continue to be archival, but the best ones will deliver speculation, conjectures, hypotheses ... we cannot know completely the intricacies with which any mind negotiates with its surroundings to produce literature' (pp. 18-19). And for Erik Erikson,

[T]he making of legend is as much part of the scholarly rewriting of history as it is part of the original facts used in the work of scholars. We are thus obliged to accept half-legend as half-history, provided only that a reported episode does not contradict other well-established facts; persists in having a ring of truth; and yields a meaning consistent with psychological theory. (cited in Ellmann 1971, p. 10)

Politics

Hermione Lee (2009) advocates:

Biographies of leaders or activists must set the central performance of their subjects in the context of the political conditions that produce them, the society in and on which they operate, their race, class, nationality, and gender, and the many other figures who surround them. (p. 104)

Dr Fanny encountered a world of standards that, as Polkey (1999) points out, are generally defined by men: 'Such exclusionary practices hide the premises upon which they are built: they privilege a particular group (men) who define women as solely mothers and wives' (p. 30). Dr Fanny consistently fought such constraints on the potential development of members. As Australia entered war in 1939 and fascist sentiments erupted, she confronted the reactionary views that surfaced at that time. In navigated those dangerous political currents, relying on her moral compass to secure the best outcomes for her community, her patients, as well as the sisterhood of women emulating her ideals. When she learnt of the slaughter of Jews in Europe during the Second World War, she negotiated with government representatives to increase

the quota of refugees and, although not always successful, she persevered. In 1949, she appeared as the plaintiff in a landmark libel case that contested the defamatory political statements published in *Smith's Weekly*, a case that constitutes Chapter 8 in this thesis.

Religion

Dr Fanny was brought up in an orthodox Jewish home where the children had a private Hebrew tutor. In Sydney, she attended synagogue and generally hosted Sabbath dinners on alternate Friday nights (sharing this task with her brother Dr Abe Reading and his family) and had Saturday lunches at her apartment in Kings Cross, to which she invited dignitaries, visitors to the city, artists, recent migrants and anyone needing hospitality. She was driven by the ethics of Judaism, especially the Judaic concept of *Tikkun Olam*, 'repairing the world'. Betty Friedan (2000), in an attempt to understand her own original embrace of Marxism, wrote:

I think, looking back, it [Judaism] gave first shape to my superego, my Jewish existential conscience, that sense which always seems to drive me, though I dread its appearance, that I have to use my life to make the world better, have to protest, step off that sidewalk and march against injustice. I wouldn't be the first Jewish thinker...to have applied that existential imperative, which may or may not stem from those tablets Moses brought down from the mountain or our personal experience of injustice as Jews, to the widest possible class of humanity of which we are part. (p. 71)

In a chapter titled 'Travelling towards selfhood: Victorian religion and the process of female identity', Joss West-Burnham (1999) analyses the religious values of three 19th-century women from different denominations: Grace Aguilar (1816-47) who was Jewish, Harriet Martineau (1802-76) who was Unitarian, and George Eliot (1819-90) a religious dissenter from the Anglican faith. West-Burnham investigates the similarities and differences in issues of selfhood, Victorian religion and female identity. Of relevance to this thesis, is her exploration of issues of creativity and publication and how these were enabled or disempowered by religion:

The writings of these women can be seen as the beginnings of a wider field of research that embraces the continued need for cross-disciplinary scholarship ... these writers can be seen to have adopted a model/form of representation which both transgresses and challenges the 'perceived' or 'received' versions of them, their lives and their

works. This trope of new territories—of crossing borders—thus becomes a point of intersection, a participatory hermeneutic. (p. 92)

West-Burnham demonstrates that a key element in the plots of all three writers is

the desire to reach some spiritual resolution and understanding of the individual and her place/role within the wider social and cultural context.... In some cases, this spiritual resolution leads to religious conversion or confirmation within a wider exploration of religiosity via practical acts of human sympathy and goodness. (p. 91)

She writes of Aguilar, in her time a popular novelist and a recognised Jewish historian:

She maintains in her first published works, *The Spirit of Judaism*, *The Women of Israel*, and elsewhere, that Jewish women have a station to uphold and a "mission" to perform not merely as daughters, wives and mothers, but also as witnesses of that faith which first raised, cherished and defended them. (p. 81)

West-Burnham's analysis of the central character of George Eliot's novel *The Spanish Gypsy* in some respects mirrors the life story and career trajectory of Dr Fanny:

George Eliot depicts a heroine who foregoes a life of personal happiness and love in favour of "mothering" her tribe and working for the greater good of others. Eliot thus begins to subscribe to many of the social and political challenges taking place in the nineteenth century, using religion as one of the key areas of growth, development and 'home' for women's self-identification. Indeed, Eliot is using religion as a discursive framework: its legitimate status is primary, but she is also subversively deploying it in relation to women's autonomy and their public role (p. 92).

Culture

Lloyd Ambrosius (2004) has declared that historians and biographers-as-historians are rooted in their particular cultures and contexts: 'Their created histories—in subject matter, approach, interpretation, methods, nuance—will reflect to some degree or other the culture and context that constitute their 'special history' (p. 27).

Cultural traditions and values, rituals and belief systems were central to Dr Fanny's life, dovetailing with the religious traditions passed down from generation to generation. She grew up in a religiously observant home where the children participated fully in family observance of the sabbath and the festivals. The religious and the cultural were closely intertwined. There

was the annual Passover service, the 'seder' held in the home when family and friends gathered to read from the Haggadah, which recorded in song and verse and prose the story of the Exodus, with accompanying hermeneutical explanations. There were the barmitzvah services in Sydney for her nephews, which marked their passage from boyhood to manhood: Hyman and Enid's son, Leigh Nathan Reading; and Dr Abe and Esma's sons, Anthony and Bruce David Reading. Dr Fanny's sister Rachael and brother-in-law Benjamin Burman's son, Dr Ian Burman, told me that Dr Fanny did not attend his Melbourne barmitzvah or that of his brothers Alan and Lloyd John, due to the distance from Sydney. The New Year, Rosh Hashanah (meaning 'the head of the year') when everyone ate apples and honey to symbolise the coming of a fruitful and sweet year, were family celebrations. And then the day of solemnity and awe, Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, when people first ask forgiveness of their fellows for any transgressions before they ask forgiveness of the Almighty, so that their names might be entered in the Book of Life.

There are the minor festivals, of lesser religious significance, but cultural celebrations nonetheless: Succoth, when Jews construct temporary booths adjacent to their residences, sometimes with palm-leaf roofs through which one might see the stars by night and the sun by day, a reminder of the impermanent dwellings in which the Children of Israel lived in the desert for forty years. Shavuot, the harvest festival and one that also commemorated the giving of the law to Moses on Mount Sinai, a festival of freedom and of joy. There is the minor festival of Purim, when children in fancy dress parade through the synagogue, probably the happiest festival as it marks a rare event in Jewish history, redemption from potential genocide through the courageous intervention of Queen Esther, the Jewish consort of the Persian king Ahasuerus. Tisha B'Av, a day of fasting and mourning on the ninth day of the Jewish month of Av, marks the destruction on that day, several centuries apart, of the first and second temples in Jerusalem. On that day in 586 BC, the Babylonians destroyed Solomon's temple; and on that same ill-fated day in 70 AD, the Romans' burned and destroyed Herod's temple. Two thousand years have not diminished the sense of foreboding and pain that this day still brings.

Dr Fanny knew and observed all the festivals, certainly throughout her childhood and adolescence. In adulthood she attended Sydney's Great Synagogue regularly, was well acquainted with biblical and Jewish scholarship, knew Hebrew well, and kept a kosher home, observing the traditional dietary laws of kashrut. The cultural and religious values that dictated her life and work were found in Jewish ethics transmitted through the generations. Wagner-Martin (1994) states:

The biographer, sorting through the events of the subject's life and creating explanations for the subject's choices, also becomes a cultural historian'. She draws attention to the cross-cultural influences in biography, 'the dimensions of networks, kinship as a basis of organisation, poverty and welfare, prejudice, discrimination and institutional racism, race, ethnicity and life chances. (p. 9)

Susan Friedman highlights 'the importance of a culturally imposed group identity for women and minorities' and argues, 'individualistic paradigms of the self ignore the role of collective and relational identities in the individuation process of women and minorities' (cited in Backscheider 2001, p. 142). A focus on intergenerational cultural transmission and stories across the life cycle 'can reveal ... how individuals "theorize" about the changes in their lives' (Roberts 2002, p. 28). Roberts states that the study of life history and life courses 'is concerned with the hermeneutical investigation of the narrative accounts of lives and selves ... and hermeneutical investigation is a method of analysis applicable to all forms of cultural life' (p. 80).

On a personal level, in researching and writing this thesis about Dr Fanny's life, I became aware of my responsibilities in creating yet another link in the chain of cultural transmission and belief. Backscheider (2001) states:

Certain stories and plot lines become a culture's myths and its ways of understanding the way society and the world are. These cultural stories teach people how to regard themselves, how to make themselves intelligible to each other, and how to conduct themselves; they affect relationships and a people's perceptions of themselves and their destiny....They recognize that more than any string of "facts", the narratives create nationhood and historical consciousness. (p. 229)

The cultural significance of biography will grow. With the infusion of methods and issues from cultural studies, feminism, social anthropology, and other disciplines in the human sciences ... biographers will be able to explain the greater importance of subjects' lives and the reciprocal significances of historical processes and individuals. (p. 230)

Psychology

In Chapter 3, I explore the terrain of the human psyche, especially in regard to the survivors of trauma, whose experiences of fear, pain, loss and dislocation have shaped their characters and

destinies. Modern Western biographers, writes Ambrosius (2004), often probe for explanations for life decisions and developments in the individual by exploring the subject's psyche: 'Indeed, based upon the centrality of the individual and the importance of such concepts as individual fulfillment and self-realization, it can be said that psychology is the social/behavioural science *par excellence* in the modern West' (p. 28). Edel argues, 'Psychological awareness solved the problem of getting inside another skin' (cited in France 2002, p. 324). The performative self, says Wagner-Martin (1994), is often the external self, and describing it may be the easiest phase in writing the biography: 'Good biography also attempts to unearth the hidden, more interior self. As it does this, it creates a somewhat different narrative' (p. 8). Jacques Derrida writes about the 'psychic archive', which comprises 'the layers of memories and associations in a person's mind, which psychoanalysis seeks to excavate' (cited in Cline 2010, p. 114).

Virginia Woolf (2008) writes, 'the true life of your subject shows itself in action which is evident rather than in that inner life of thought and emotion which meanders darkly and obscurely through the hidden channels of the soul' (p. 95). It is far easier to observe and document external actions than to fathom the seeming mysteries of an inner life to which, many agree, the discipline of psychology provides a key. Most biographers, writes Caine (2010),

now generally recognise the existence and importance of the unconscious and, with that, the need to gain access to intentions and meanings which are not easily evident. This has led to a particular interest in family dynamics, in repetitive patterns of behaviour set up in childhood and often evident in adult life. (p. 41)

Ira Bruce Nadel (1984) states:

The biographer obtains a certain power over his subject in understanding the psychological and moral forces that shape his subject's life. This knowledge gives him a certain verbal and moral authority as he recharts the life of the subject under his direction. (pp. 207-208)

David Hoddeson writes:

Parallels between psychoanalysis and biography as our two most prominent ways of constituting life histories make close relations inevitable. Psychoanalysts are always doing biography as they reconstruct and record their patients' case histories and

contemporary biographers are virtually obligated to anatomize the psychic lives of their subjects. (cited in Caine 2010, p. 91)

Psychobiography or psychohistory, according to Nadel (1984), is

the most captivating experimental and yet controversial approach to biographical writing.... The emphasis in this approach is ... interpretative moments that define the psychological truth of the subject.... Motivation and inner strength, as contributors to achievement, become the psychobiographer's concern ... psychobiography has turned to examine inner conflict but placed within a historical context, enlarging the Freudian method of analysis by adding social and cultural detail. (pp. 186-187).

Caine (2010) points out that Erik Erikson moved away from Freud's emphasis on both childhood and sexuality, insisting rather on the importance of psychic development beyond the childhood years:

In his view, adolescence was the most significant phase. It was then that issues of identity came to the fore, with the possibility of an identity crisis as a young person sought to establish a sense of direction and purpose which also allowed for a sense of unity between their childhood and their anticipated adulthood. (p. 93)

Importantly, Erikson substituted ideals and identity for Freudian drive and sexuality, an ideological perspective pertinent to an overview of Dr Fanny's life, which was fuelled by her idealism and sense of Jewish identity. Nadel (1984) points out that not only did Erikson stress the need to examine the interaction between the individual and her age, but also the correspondence between individual life and the collective life. According to Caine (2020), Erikson's approach,

involved an analysis of society as well as of individuals. He argued that different social institutions, familial arrangements and customs would have an impact on the ways in which individuals experienced and dealt with the crucial stages of development. Erikson's concern to encompass individuals, groups and whole societies in his analysis was made very clear in his use of the term "psychohistory" to describe his project, which was "to understand the social conditions shaping the development of the individual (and group) psyche, and then the psychological factors forming the social conditions." (p. 94)

Psychoanalysis can be said to have influenced the relationship between biographer and subject. Caine points out, 'Freud himself had suggested ... that the emotional investment that biographers often had in their subjects limited their capacities to write critically about them,' (p. 71). Edel argues that in order to write a successful biography, it is necessary for biographers to disengage themselves from their subjects and to write about them in 'a dispassionate and detached way' (cited in Caine 2010, p. 72). William McFeely asks:

What is the biographer's job ... is the task, instead of being a straight road of explanation, one that branches into a fundamentally different creative act: the construction, from a myriad of sources, of the rich complexity of a human life?' (cited in Rhiel 1996, p. 58)

McFeely's question leads to the final section of this chapter, Interdisciplinarity.

Interdisciplinarity

'The complexity of a human life' is a phrase evocative of Dr Fanny's multi-faceted life. After exploring the multiple academic fields listed in this chapter, I concluded that the research methodology underpinning this thesis brought these areas of scholarly enquiry together into the realm known as interdisciplinarity, positioning this work in an area enriched by and with access to multiple sources of scholarship.

Julie Thompson Klein and William Newell defined interdisciplinary studies research as

a process of answering a question, solving a problem, or addressing a topic that is too broad or complex to be dealt with adequately by a single discipline or profession ... and draws on disciplinary perspectives and integrates their insights through construction of a more comprehensive perspective.... [A] two-part process: it draws critically on disciplinary perspectives, and it integrates their insights into a more comprehensive understanding ... of an existing complex phenomenon [into] the creation of a new complex phenomenon. (cited in Repko 2016, p. 15)

For Repko (2016), the result of integration constitutes a cognitive advance, a more comprehensive understanding (p. 8), an outcome echoed by Veronica Boix Mansilla, who defines interdisciplinarity as, 'the capacity to integrate knowledge and modes of thinking drawn from two or more disciplines to produce a cognitive advancement ... in ways that would have been unlikely through single disciplinary means' (cited in Repko 2016, p. 15).

This integrationist approach differs markedly from a generalist interdisciplinarity, which loosely means “any form of dialog or interaction between two or more disciplines” while minimising, obscuring, or rejecting altogether the role of integration’ (p. 15). Repko highlights the contextual and contingent elements of knowledge and problems, clarifying the differences between interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinary:

Merely bringing insights from different disciplines together in some way but failing to engage in the hard work of integration is multidisciplinary studies, not interdisciplinary studies. Multidisciplinary research involves more than a single discipline in which each discipline makes a separate contribution. (p. 17)

Caine (2010) writes that in the 1970s,

A number of historians began to insist on the capacity of individual lives to illuminate larger historical patterns and developments. Historians interested in this approach sought to bring individual lives and the wider historical context together by showing the impact of legal and social institutions and large-scale social, economic and political developments on the lives of particular individuals and groups.... For many historians ... biography was increasingly seen to provide 'a unique lens through which one can access the relative power of political, economic, cultural, social and generational processes on the life changes of individuals', or to provide a prism which enabled later historians to see how particular individuals understood and constructed themselves and made sense of their lives and their society. (p. 23)

The insights and perspectives of interdisciplinary biographical scholarship have enabled me to present and evaluate Dr Fanny’s life with greater contextual breadth and analytical depth. Leon Edel emphasises biography’s important links with other disciplines: ‘The research methods of the biographer were the same as those of the historian.... But biography also shared much with both anthropology and the social sciences which were concerned with the study of the individual psyche’ (cited in Caine 2010, pp. 86-87). Caine elucidates the extended disciplinary scope of historical research:

Many historians insist that they are interested in events which extend beyond the individual, in examining lives “in dialectical relationship to the multiple social, political, and cultural worlds they inhabit and give meaning to”, and in exploring the ways in which, or the points at which, an individual and a society intersect. (p. 116)

Susan Bell (2009), who has written about the effects of DES on babies born to mothers whose physicians in 1938 and onwards prescribed this synthetic hormone to prevent miscarriages, refers to the new pathways through old narratives and the emergence of new cultural scripts resulting from the affected women creatively reworking and reconfiguring their choices and decisions. Bell writes:

There are multiple truths, constructed by knowers who are socially and historically located, about a world that is neither fixed nor independent of knowers' (p. 8). She concludes, 'Illness, suffering, and uncertainty can become opportunities for producing embodied knowledge and making social change.' (p. 14)

Publicly telling their stories has allied them with other women's environmental and health embodied movements. They have become important sources of change in health care and beyond health care in their challenges to medical policy and to political beliefs. (p. 174)

Life course analysis, connecting social and life histories, calls forth fresh thinking about the relation between social structure and personality. Bertaux (1981) writes:

On the macro level as well as in the lives of individuals, the analysis of life patterns should bring us closer to an intelligible map and explanation of the interrelations between historical change, childhood experience, and psychological functioning in the adult years. (p. 96)

Linking social history and historical change, Bertaux describes, 'a life course perspective which is based on the premise that aging entails interacting processes (social, psychological, and biological) from birth to death....' (p. 108). For Aspasia de Camargo, the life history approach 'emphasizes ... the relation between the individual and the system, and the relation between the individual and history' (cited in Bertaux 1981, p. 199).

Sally Cline (2010) suggests that biographers should ask whether the life of their chosen subject is a window on the times or whether the times are a window into the life of that person: 'Life writers must ask how much is someone a product of their times, their period, the knowledge, scientific, medical, psychoanalytic, literary of that particular society' (p. 25). Nadel (1984) contends that contextual biography integrates the person with their time, their art, society or age; it is an attempt to see the central figure in their world and the interaction of the two:

Social relations control the significance of circumstantial detail. These lives do not result in voluminous sociological tracts but carefully focused books that link biography to sociology, anthropology, history or politics (p. 196).

In examining the life with the work in its social/historical context, the biography provides a broader vision and greater breadth to the subject while expanding the nature of the genre. Contextual biography incorporates the concern of group biography with the social aspects of psychobiography creating a form that enlarges the foundations of biographical writing. (p. 200)

This enlargement of the foundations of biography coincides with Roberts's (2002) contention that it is increasingly difficult to keep to a simple disciplinary format,

since there is a growing recognition that methodological and theoretical issues have cross-disciplinary ramifications and common lines of influence (e.g., from feminist research). Writers and researchers are more and more aware of developments in other disciplines [and] are keen to apply knowledge from numerous sources. Indeed, biographical researchers often actively seek to move over disciplinary boundaries. (p. 2)

Roberts adds, 'What is fascinating and exciting about the growth of biographical research is the cross-fertilization of ideas, methodological issues and perspectives within various types of study' (p. 22). Addressing the emergence of a general biographical approach spanning a wide range of humanistic disciplines, Roberts states:

Biographical research is therefore taking place in disciplines or sub-disciplines across a wide span – with sociology, psychology, history, literary and cultural studies and substantive areas concerned with migration, the family, ageing, education, health, work, political change and others.... What is certainly apparent is the increasing cross-fertilization in many of these areas from discipline to discipline.... In fact, one of the features of current biographical research is a pragmatism and eclecticism...in pursuing the collection, interpretation and presentation of lives ... biographical research cannot be fully united under one methodology or one theoretical approach but its practitioners will be aware of other ways of doing research and writing and should continue to be open to previous contributions and other possibilities. (p. 169)

Wright Mills (1973), with his pioneering grasp of the social imagination, states: 'Intellectually, the central fact today is an increasing fluidity of boundary lines; conceptions move with increasing ease from one discipline to another' (p. 155).

In the final analysis, the biographer remains alone with her subject, hoping that the created 'narrative of the life of a person told with honesty and interpreted with integrity and imagination will always speak to the human soul' (Backscheider 2001, p. 227) and reflect 'the passion of personal truth' (Friedan 2001, p. 143). Richard Holmes argues that biographical writing is a connection across time, 'an exercise in human solidarity and love, and finding a self in the other' (cited in Roberts 2002, p. 54). Doris Kearns suggests:

In the end, if we are honest with ourselves, the best we can offer is a partial rendering, a subjective portrait of the subject from a particular angle of vision shaped as much by our own biography—our attitudes, perceptions, and feelings toward the subject—as by the raw materials themselves. (cited in Pachter 1979, p. 91)

Nelly Sachs, in her poem, *Chorus of the Rescued* (cited in Kremer 1999, p. 159), envisions the process through the eyes of the biographical subject:

Lead us from star to star, step by step.
Be gentle when you teach us to live again....

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‘Always in her mind was the memory of a child’s loneliness on arriving in a strange country—a memory which crystallised into determination that one day she would do something to help new arrivals through friendship in its fullest meaning.’

—Council Bulletin article on Dr Fanny

Chapter 3: Childhood and the voyage to a new land

Fanny was born on 2 December 1884 in Karelitz—her birthplace is spelt in five different ways: Karelitchy (Belarussian), Karelicy (Russian), Korolieicai (Lithuanian), Korolicze (Polish), Korelitz (Yiddish) and ‘Karelitz’, the latter spelling used by the Rubinowich family—a shtetl (small town) in the Minsk Governorate (province) in the north-western part of the Pale of Settlement, the area within which Jews were confined in Russia. In the family’s own documents, they spelt the town ‘Karelitz’, which I use in this thesis. Three years before her birth, the situation for Jews deteriorated. On 1 March 1881, revolutionaries assassinated the Russian tsar Alexander II, and his son Alexander III succeeded to the throne. Alexander III was known as a repressive tsar with an intense dislike of the Jews and he reversed many concessions made by his father. Polonsky (2013a), writing about pogroms in the Ukraine, states:

Within six weeks of the assassination of his father ... a pogrom broke out in Elizavetgrad, in the southern province of Kherson. It was followed by others in Kiev and Odessa, where many of the rioters were displaced peasants. Soon, however, the unrest spread to the countryside. Of 259 pogroms, 219 took place in villages, four in Jewish agricultural colonies, and only thirty-six in cities and small towns.... It was certainly the worst outbreak of anti-Jewish violence in Europe since the Haydamak revolts in Polish Ukraine in the late 1760s. (p. 96)

The Russian word ‘pogrom’ means ‘massacre’ or ‘devastation’ and, as Aronson points out, it came to be commonly used ‘to designate mob violence against Jews, no matter where it occurred’ (Aronson 1990, pp. 31-32). These destabilising events fractured the world of Fanny’s early childhood.

The transmission of traumatic memories

In Fanny’s family, traumatic memories of experiencing and surviving pogroms were passed down from generation to generation. In an interview I conducted in 2018 in Sydney, retired psychiatrist Dr Ian Burman, the son of Fanny’s sister Rae (Rachael) Burman, stated,

My maternal great-grandfather [David (Dov Ber) Rubinowich, Dr Fanny's paternal grandfather] hid in a trench to avoid the troops of the Czar, to avoid being speared to death by the Cossacks during a pogrom. And my grandfather [Dr Fanny's father, Nathan Jacob Rubinowich (Nahum Yakov)], when a baby, was hidden in an oven when the Cossacks came to kill the Jews. (Burman 2018)

Fanny's family felt the Judeo-phobia raging through the Pale of Settlement. A contagion of fear afflicted the Jewish population. Although the destruction of property, assaults and murders took place mainly in the south-western areas of the Pale of Settlement, the Jewish population throughout the Pale felt threatened. It was known that the slightest argument or disagreement, provoked or not, in any public space such as a tavern or marketplace, could spark an outbreak of escalating antisemitic violence.

Polonsky (2013b) writes that violence continued intermittently until March 1882, with outbreaks in Balta and Podolia. Conditions for the Jewish population deteriorated further when the Minister of Internal Affairs, Nikolai Ignatyev, proposed the harsh and discriminatory May Laws that Alexander III enacted on 3 May 1882. Historian Simon Dubnow termed these laws 'a legislative pogrom' (p. 98). Six months before Fanny's birth, the final pogrom of the 1880s took place in Nizhny Novgorod on 7 June 1884, when ten Jews were hacked to death with axes, the community's fear compounded by an accusation of ritual murder.

Given the upheavals these Jews experienced routinely, and their powerlessness within the political and social landscape, prospective parents such as Fanny's father Nathan Jacob Rubinowich and her mother Esther Rose (née Levinson) could not ensure the safety of their family or guarantee life's basic necessities. The pogroms generated an atmosphere of terror, exacerbating the prevailing insecurity. Rape was a particular feature of the 1881–1884 pogroms and the birth of a female child increased parental concern for the child's wellbeing. Klier (2011) notes that rape, more than murder and looting, generated outrage abroad, yet was treated dismissively by local authorities,

It is also possible, as suggested by a feminist analysis of rape, that officials considered it a minor detail amidst the general pogrom violence. The reported involvement of policemen suggests that it might have been viewed as a sort of '*droit de seigneur*' of a local authority figure. One Balta rapist, brought to trial, expressed his chagrin that he might be exiled to Siberia 'for this trifle'. (pp. 11-12)

Life in Karelitz

For Nathan and Esther, as for their fellow townsfolk, life in Karelitz was harsh, subject to the restrictive conditions imposed on Jews residing within the Pale of Settlement. Nathan worked as a cabinet maker, but they struggled to earn sufficient for basic needs. The Karelitz Jewish community was poor and most earned their livelihood from small trades and crafts, such as peddling and leasing taverns and inns; and depended on customers who were mostly farmers and who came to town on weekly market days and for annual fairs (Turtel-Oberzhanski 1973).

While Nathan and Esther's everyday life in Karelitz was challenging, nonetheless they were embedded in a religious and cultural life. Their traditionally observant community was literate and versed in orthodox Jewish scholarship. Hassa Turtel-Oberzhanski, whose observations are recorded in a Yizkor (Memorial) Book on Karelitz, states:

The Karelitz community was famed as a Torah-abiding [the Hebrew Bible] community, religious and with a high public-moral level and many well-known rabbis and illustrious scholars considered it a privilege to serve as rabbi or judge in the town. (Turtel-Oberzhanski 1973)

The community instituted social welfare measures for the poor, such as the *Kupa Tzedaka*, a charity fund to support the needy, and *Hakhnasat Kala*, a bridal fund for poor girls; but there were no resources to further the dreams of would-be migrants planning lives in faraway lands where Jews could live without regulations that crippled existence in the Pale. If Jacob and Esther wanted to give their unborn child the chance of a better life in another country, they understood they had to do it with their own resources, however meagre.

For Fanny's parents, as for others desperate to escape harsh conditions imposed on the Jewish population, there were four major options: Russification, Zionism, Socialism and Emigration. There were those who believed in the presumed benefits of an integrationist Russification policy for Jews, working towards their own acceptance within the secular world beyond the shtetls, an intellectual movement strongly influenced by the Jewish intellectual enlightenment, the *haskalah*, which flourished in Europe at that time. Others disparaged this belief as untenable, surmising that acceptance would not eventuate or, at best, would be transitory until such time as dominant powers needed scapegoats to divert attention from socio-economic and political failures. Instead, they advocated for commitment to the Zionist movement that proposed ending the 2000-year exile of the Jewish people with their return to their ancient homeland of Palestine, where groups of Russian Jews had already settled after an

emigration wave known as the first *aliyah*, the Hebrew word denoting ascendancy, hence a 'going up' to the Holy Land. These early pioneers were dedicated to translating the Zionist dream into reality. There were also those who believed that the new socialist ideology surging through Russia represented the real future for Jews, firmly believing that Jews would find equality within a new egalitarian world order. Finally, an ever-increasing number put their faith in emigration to the United States of America and Great Britain, followed by smaller contingents heading for other parts of the world, including South Africa, with a trickle finding their way to Australia.

The family's migration

Fanny's birth marked the commencement of the family's emigration. Nathan embarked for Melbourne, Australia, from where he planned to travel to the goldmining town of Ballarat in country Victoria, a train journey of about 100 km from Melbourne. As Newman Rosenthal (1979) notes, in 1851 gold was found in Ballarat and the stories of 'great gold discoveries' lured adventurers from all parts of the world, including Nathan and his brother Wolf Rubinowich. Ballarat held many attractions for orthodox Jewish migrants, including a thriving Jewish community and an established synagogue and congregation. The consecration of Ballarat's first synagogue in Ballarat East took place on 12 November 1855 (p. 7); and in 1856 the Ballarat Jewish Philanthropic Society was established to provide assistance for poor Jews, a welcome resource for indigent migrants settling in Ballarat (p. 17). The fine synagogue that still exists today, at the end of Barkley Street, was consecrated on 17 March 1861; and in 1886, Newman Friedel Spielvogel presented a mikveh (ritual bath) to the congregation, which would have been a significant facility for Esther, enabling her to enact Judaism's purity rituals for married women. The congregation held Hebrew and religious classes after school hours on weekdays and Sunday mornings (p. 49).

Nathan Spielvogel, a member of the Ballarat Jewish community with literary ability had contributed articles to a weekly Hebrew journal, *HaMagid*, first published in 1856 in East Prussia near the Polish border. It is highly probable that issues were circulated widely and news of Ballarat reached as far afield as Karelitz, where Nathan and Esther resided.

Over the years, through Spielvogel's writings in *HaMagid*, Ballarat was given a rather unique place in the map of world Jewry and beyond ... Those items which Spielvogel contributed to the paper must have convinced many of its readers of the importance of the city in which he lived ... His voice reached out to the leaders and the learned of

his people ... telling them of Jewish settlement in a new land some ten thousand miles away.... This warm acknowledgement that, whatever their circumstances, *kol yisrael chaverim* [all Israelites are comrades] must have carried with it a message of hope in quarters and centres of European Jewry where it was so desperately needed.... Spielvogel helped to keep clear the lines of communication with Jewry's great cultural centres and religious institutions. (Rosenthal 1979, pp. 26-28)

At the Ballarat congregation's general meeting in 1894, a decade after Nathan's arrival in Ballarat and five years after the arrival of Fanny and her mother, it was noted, 'There was a large number of seat-holders rather than members of the congregation, the result of an influx of Russian Jews with little capital' (Rosenthal 1979, p. 58). Rosenthal comments that they were not welcomed by a section of the community and were called 'foreigners' by those who themselves had arrived 30 years earlier as refugees, which confirms Fanny's sense of being rejected when she arrived as a child in Ballarat: 'When we came to Ballarat—no one wanted to know us,' she said (Newton 2000, p.7). Nonetheless, newcomers like Nathan were industrious and successful; 'They began hawking fruit and other goods. By hard work and thrifty living nearly all of them managed, ultimately, to make good.... In Ballarat they soon were found actively involved in Jewish community activities' (Rosenthal 1979, p.58). Nathan's initial work as a hawker and general dealer funded the steamship tickets he needed to bring out his wife and daughter. Sometime after his family's arrival, he and Esther expanded their business activities and became hoteliers, running the Mafeking Hotel in Mount William in the Grampians.

Nathan's brother, Wolf Rubinowich and his wife Yetty (née Flacheur) also settled in Ballarat. According to information I received from Lynne Reading, Fanny's niece by marriage to her nephew Leigh Reading, family records relating to Wolf Rubinowich (who later changed his name to Rubin) are scant, and it is not known whether the brothers established themselves in Ballarat at the same time, possibly travelling there together, or whether either Wolf or Nathan arrived there first. Their growing families would undoubtedly have provided mutual emotional warmth and possibly financial support in stressful times. Wolf and Yetty had seven children—Peggy, Joseph, Sarah, David (who died aged 12 and was buried in Ballarat), Samuel, Rachael and Abraham. Nathan and Esther had six children—Fanny, Abraham, Hyman, Lewis, Rachael and baby Minnie (who died aged 6 months and was buried in Ballarat).

In 1884, with Nathan 16,000 km away, Esther faced a lengthy separation and a distressing situation. Her challenges as the sole breadwinner for herself and Fanny would test her

resourcefulness and courage. Although there is no evidence to pinpoint where Esther and Fanny lived in those intervening years, or how she supported herself and her child, one can evaluate the options and resources available at that time. As many women remained with their families, one possibility is that she chose to stay in Karelitz, relying on any remission of funds from Jacob in Ballarat, who had found work as a peddler hawking merchandise to miners in the environs. She could exploit the domestic, childcare or dressmaking skills she possessed to supplement her income.

Memories of a Russian childhood

The possibility that Esther worked for an aristocratic family in Russia emerged during a Sydney phone interview conducted in 2018 with Warren Baffsky, the son of Dr Fanny's close friends Leah and Harry Baffsky. The Baffsky's immediate and extended family's association with Dr Fanny was a close one, their circle including Warren's aunt by marriage, Roma Baffsky (née Lang), who worked for many years as Dr Fanny's medical receptionist and secretary in her Kings Cross practice (Baffsky 2018) and also at the Bondi Junction practice Dr Fanny shared with her brother, Dr Abraham Reading. Dr Fanny had attended Warren's barmitzvah (ritual passage from boyhood to manhood) and he forged a friendship with her, independent of his parents' relationship with Dr Fanny. Throughout his teenage years until he turned 21, he visited her regularly. In her old age, he was a welcome visitor and a trusted confidante, seeing her twice every week at the Wolper Hospital in Woollahra, where she spent the last twelve years of her life, until her death in 1974. They would sit in her room or in the garden and she would tell him stories of her childhood. She said that sometime after Nathan's departure, Esther had worked for a noble family in Russia. Baffsky remembers Dr Fanny speaking appreciatively of this family's parting gift to Esther, a brass samovar embossed with gold medallions, which Esther cherished, later entrusting it to her daughter. When Dr Fanny moved to the Wolper Hospital, she gave the samovar to Warren's parents (see Figure 1).



Figure 1: Warren Baffsky with the samovar given to Esther Rose

Photo by Anne Sarzin

In a second interview with Baffsky, conducted in person in 2018 in Melbourne, he confirmed the story of Esther's employment with Russian aristocrats:

Dr Fanny told me that in the late 1880s, when she was a little girl under the age of five at that time, her mother worked for a Russian royal family in some medical capacity, either as a midwife or nurse or nanny, as she had medical skills and was good with children. If she were only a domestic servant, this nobleman might not have helped her as he did. He advised her to take her child and hide in the forests nearby. 'Things will get dangerous for you, as they will for me,' he told her. Dr Fanny's mother told her little daughter, 'You have to be a big girl, if mummy says keep quiet, you have to keep quiet.' They hid in the forest in a safe place; and from the forest they made their way out of Russia to London. (Baffsky 2018)

Emigration from Russia was unlawful and obtaining a Russian passport involved dealing with complicated bureaucracy, an expensive and time-consuming application process that could take up to six months. The majority of emigrants preferred to cross the border illegally. In a discussion of exit routes and migratory networks shared by Jewish and Lithuanian groups,

Balkelis points out that these routes followed major railway and river transportation lines. Migrants from the Minsk and Vitebsk provinces—Karelitz was near Minsk in the Minsk Governorate—used two southern routes that started in Alytus and Grodno (where Nathan was born) and converged in the German town Eydtkuhnen, from where they would travel to Tilsit. Balkelis adds that the last stage of the migrants' continental travel was by rail or steamer to the northern German ports of Hamburg and Bremen or the Dutch ports of Amsterdam and Rotterdam, while a minority, mainly from the Belarusian and Ukrainian provinces, left from the Latvian port Libau (Latvian Lipaja) (Balkelis 2010). There were weekly steamers from Rotterdam, Libau, Hamburg and Bremen heading to the English ports of Hull, Grimsby and London (O'Day, online).

Perils in London's East End

References in the research literature support the idea that Esther and Fanny travelled to London, where they remained for a substantial period. A biographical sketch of Dr Fanny in the University of Sydney's Rare Books' Archive of Australian Judaica, states, 'Dr Fanny Reading (1884-1974) was born near Minsk in Russia, her father fleeing to Ballarat shortly after she was born. His wife and children [sic] joined him later, having taken refuge in London' (Judaica 2011).

An article on the NCJW website comments, 'Reading's father fled Russia for Ballarat soon after her birth. Fanny and her mother spent some time in London before they were able to join him' (NCJWA). Newton (2000) comments, 'Fanny Reading, despite being born overseas, was not perceived as a migrant woman. This may be because she lived in London as a baby, and her English would have sounded natural and unaccented' (p. 13). It is possible the family travelled together to London, from where Jacob embarked alone for Australia. Jacob could protect them *en route* to London, a hazardous journey for an unaccompanied mother and child, with the added danger of highway robbers. Due to the prohibition on emigration from Russia, the family probably left under cover of darkness.

Esther and Fanny left Russia a year after Nathan Jacob's departure in 1884 and 'after some time in London' reunited with Nathan in Ballarat (Radi 1989). If, at a later stage, Esther travelled alone with Fanny to London, she chose to do so to prolong access to family in Karelitz. It would have been traumatic parting from parents, siblings and extended family and friends, knowing they might never be seen again. Mary Antin (2012), a few years older than

Fanny, faced similar experiences at that time. She describes her departure from the shtetl Polotzk in the Minsk Governorate,

The women wept over us, reminding us eloquently of the perils of the sea, of the bewilderment of a foreign land, of the torments of homesickness that awaited us. They bewailed my mother's lot, who had to tear herself away from blood relations to go among strangers; who had to face gendarmes, ticket agents, and sailors, unprotected by a masculine escort. (p. 133)

Whether Esther and Fanny travelled to London with Jacob or remained in Karelitz, they spent time in London before their embarkation for Australia five years later in 1889. The influx of indigent Eastern European Jews fleeing pogroms in the 1880s encountered harsh conditions in London's East End. Arriving without resources or connections, Jewish refugees settled either in the Wentworth Street district of Spitalfields or in Whitechapel or in St George's, all in London's East End, notorious for slums that were overcrowded, dilapidated and unsanitary. In Zangwill's (1892/2017) novel *Children of the Ghetto*, he describes a typical street in Victorian Spitalfields but also hints at the human capacity to triumph over adversity,

Imprisoned in the area of a few narrow streets, unlovely and sombre, muddy and ill-smelling, immured in dreary houses and surrounded by mean and depressing sights and sounds, the spirit of childhood took radiance and color from its own inner light and the alchemy of youth could still transmute its lead to gold. (Zangwill 2017, p. 104)

Valman (2015) describes Zangwill's novel as a springboard for reflections on the questions that animated Victorian Londoners, including philanthropy, the acculturation of new immigrants, labour exploitation, housing, the politics of religion, and consumer culture.

There were charitable organisations in London that helped newly arrived migrants, but several imposed stringent conditions. Esther could seek help from the Jewish Board of Guardians of the Jewish Poor, but only residents in London for at least six months were eligible for assistance, thereby excluding newcomers. There were the Board's Russo-Jewish committee and the Free Medical Missions, although the latter, as conversionist societies, were less appealing to orthodox Jews. The Four Per Cent Industrial Dwellings Co Ltd, established in 1885 by Jewish philanthropists, relieved overcrowding in homes in Church Lane, Whitechapel, in the East End. The Poor Jews' Temporary Centre, established by F.D. Mocatta and others, provided a bed for the homeless, jobless and immigrants arriving straight from the docks, and guided

them towards employment. O'Day (online) points out that 'newly arrived members of the Jewish community stayed in lodges dedicated to Jewish immigrants'.

Esther needed intelligence and skills to survive the 'indignities of poverty' (Valman 2015). Her efforts to find and fund lodgings and basic necessities were crucial to survival. Women in her position had few employment opportunities and there was competition for jobs that paid a pittance. Work involved long hours and minimum pay. She spoke only Yiddish and kept the sabbath, which ruled out a gentile workplace where instructions were given in English and employees worked on Saturdays. O'Day, who based much in her paper on research conducted by British socialist Beatrice Webb, comments (possibly erroneously),

They [Yiddish-speaking immigrants] had no alternative but to turn to Jewish 'sweaters', small masters (often tailors) who shared the immigrants' language, culture and religion, but who could and did impose any conditions they wished on their workers. (O'Day, online)

While there were diverse Leftist attitudes and approaches to Jewish migrants and refugees arriving in England, Blakeney (1985) cautions that Webb's British left-wing antisemitism coloured her research and may have derived intellectually from a tradition of left-wing antipathy towards Jews:

A Board of Trade Report of 1894 had exonerated the immigrants from this charge but Webb was invited by her cousin Charles Booth, the noted sociologist, to test some of the Report's findings. She studied the tailoring trade and the Jewish community in the East End of London.... Anti-Semitism seems to have become a pronounced feature of Webb's writing after those studies. (pp. 2-3)

Esther and Fanny probably found compatriots from Karelitz who extended a helping hand to newcomers, despite their own poverty. As noted in a contemporary account:

The 'greener', just arrived in London with scanty resources, will be sure to meet with hospitality from some 'landsmann' [compatriot]. If a poor family loses all its belongings in a fire, some kind friend will often make a collection amongst the neighbours to supply what has been lost. In times of sickness and death one sees most touching examples amongst the foreign Jews of unselfish help, of sacrifices freely given both of time and money. (Russell & Lewis 1900, pp. 170-171)

While Esther could manage their physical privations, she could not avoid neighbours' gossip that intensified the insecurities of women without husbands, who were stigmatised as single mothers. Esther waited five years before reuniting with Jacob, years of socio-economic disadvantage experienced in that interregnum between being a mutually supportive family and being an indigent single parent. In that time, with desertion common, how certain could one be certain of the loyalty of one's spouse and his commitment to the family unit? '[W]ife-desertion is one of their common offences and gives rise to a difficult type of case with which the Jewish Board of Guardians has constantly to deal' (Russell & Lewis 1900, p. 170). O'Day (online) points out, 'emigration allowed some men to escape domestic difficulties, and the women they left behind were anxious that temporary separation did not turn into permanent desertion'.

Judaic heritage and childhood trauma

In transmitting and preserving shtetl (small towns and villages in the Pale) traditions, Esther's major focus was her child's wellbeing. Fanny and her mother were close throughout Esther's lifetime, a bond predicated on the foundation laid in Fanny's infancy. For Fanny's first five years, Esther created a safe space for her in challenging circumstances, giving her sustenance and security. Esther's religious creed and cultural background empowered and sustained her, enabling her to nurture Fanny in a caring and practical manner despite stress, financial hardship and difficulties she encountered in Russia and England.

Esther's Jewish faith, precise and pragmatic, defined the moral parameters of their lives. She structured their days according to customs seminal to a traditional Jewish life. Orthodox Jews, such as Esther and Nathan, aspired to keeping many of the positive 613 *mitzvot*, biblical commandments or rules—there were also negative commandments—that governed interactions with family, friends, neighbours and society, and played a central part in Jewish identity. Philosophically, Judaism elevates to a moral imperative those acts of kindness, *mitzvot*, which define the good and compassionate human being, the '*mensch*', a Yiddish word denoting someone who exemplifies the best moral traits of humanity. Judaism views life joyously rather than as a vale of tears. The sanctity of life is a paramount value that transcends other considerations. There is a commitment to living and to providing for the wellbeing of children, who represent the continuity of the Jewish people. No matter how dark the day or meagre one's resources, one says '*L'Chaim*' ('to life'). This reverence for life constituted the bedrock of Esther and Jacob's existence, shaping their responses and actions.

As an observant Jewess, Esther accepted traditions and rituals central to Jewish life. She respected laws governing daily life that provided structure for herself and boundaries for Fanny. As a Jewish wife and mother, she perpetuated traditions upheld by generations of her family. Despite poverty and persecution, there were joyous life events, sabbaths and festivals. The Jewish community in the shtetl celebrated life.

She had to be resourceful in surviving day-to-day, drawing support from her faith, traditions and compatriots in the East End. She never shirked hard work and did all she could to earn a livelihood in difficult circumstances to support herself and her child. As Mendelsohn and Shain (2008) attest:

The shtetl valued hard work as well as diligence, self-control and sobriety. It prized learning, charity and devotion to family. Beyond the family, the shtetl placed a premium on mutual support. Tsedokeh (charity) was seen as a prime virtue. These intangibles accompanied the emigrants and would be of inestimable importance in re-establishing a communal life in the new country. (p. 33)

Dr Fanny knew first-hand the history and suffering of her people. Did those memories fuel her sense of responsibility, her vigilance against racism and her lifelong agenda of humanitarian service to all, irrespective of religion or creed? According to Freud, memories of traumatic events do not disappear but lurk in the subconscious, and surface in unguarded moments. Neither Esther nor Dr Fanny recorded their memories or wrote them down, and there are no family diaries that document these events. According to Dr Paul Valent, retired Melbourne psychiatrist who studied the impact of trauma on child survivors of the Holocaust, 'because of their keen sense of political and social injustice ... [they] are particularly aware of injustices to vulnerable groups, especially children, and they try to protect them in the social sphere' (Valent 2002, p. 284).

Dr Fanny never acknowledged publicly her family's past suffering or insecurities. As Yehuda Amichai (2015) wrote: 'Not for the sake of remembering/ do you live, but to complete the work/ that you (despite it all, you) must complete'. She was a pragmatic woman, who focused on meeting the needs of others. In 1929 in Adelaide, she said,

We Jews have a double duty always to the country we live in and our own people. We can never forget our race. There is too much suffering in it. While there is a persecuted Jew in the world, we have work to do. ('To organise Jewish women: Arrival of Dr. Fanny Reading' 1929, p. 28)

Sailing towards safe harbours



Figure 2: Archival photo of SS Nurnberg on which Esther and Fanny sailed to Australia in 1889

Esther Rose and Fanny left London and travelled to Antwerp, Belgium, where they embarked on 15 June 1889 on the SS *Nürnberg*, a Norddeutscher Lloyd passenger steamer, which lists Esther Rose Rabbinoitz [sic], age 26, and Fanny Rabbinoitz, age 3 [sic], as ‘unassisted inward passengers’ bound for Melbourne, Victoria (Fiche 252, page 4, port F). In her thesis, Debney-Joyce, citing Esther’s 1904 application for naturalisation, writes that they arrived in Australia on 1 June 1889: ‘Since the RMSS *Carthage* of the P&O Steam Navigation Company was the only vessel to dock in Melbourne on that date, it is assumed that Esther and Fanny sailed on her to Australia’ (Debney-Joyce 2019, p. 108). Despite Debney-Joyce’s speculation, both Esther and Fanny’s names appear on the SS *Nürnberg*’s passenger register, which is definitive evidence of their passage to Melbourne on that boat. Filling in a naturalisation form 15 years later, Esther could err in recalling the day and month of their arrival. *En route* to Australia, the ship docked in Southampton, Genoa, Naples, Port Said, Suez, Aden, Colombo and Adelaide before arriving in Melbourne on 2 August 1889.

Esther and Fanny had been in a state of transition for five years. Aged 26, Esther had demonstrated strength, courage and optimism. Given the Jewish emphasis on nurturing the

next generation, one presumes her devotion to Fanny's wellbeing distracted her from memories of separation from family and friends, or nostalgia for familiar people and places. The prospect of reuniting with Jacob and safety in a new country would also contribute to their peace of mind.

Free at last from persecution and penury, released from former tensions and insecurities, and stimulated by life at sea, Esther and Fanny entered this new phase, one that potentially fostered a positive outlook. The impact of the voyage on Fanny could restore confidence and optimism in the child. While their ship hugged the coastline, they could enjoy the scenery. There were foreign ports with strange scents, sights and sounds. There was the drama of storms at sea when giant waves broke over the decks. Edith Gedge, who sailed on the *Sobraon* from London to Melbourne less than a year before Esther and Fanny's voyage, wrote in her journal, 'The seas was very high all day & a grand sight from the poop. I had never seen such waves before, it seemed as if they must break over' (Russell 2016, p. 167).

There was the novelty of associating with fellow passengers. Dividing lines between first class and steerage passengers could exacerbate insecurities, as could differences in the way people of different religions were treated. The literature refers to hostility between Catholic and Protestant migrants, which leaves one wondering how Jewish migrants were viewed and whether Esther encountered any racial prejudice that had plagued her life previously. A Sydney paper noted on 6 August 1889 that the Nurnberg's passengers had commended Captain H. Engelbart and the Purser, Mr O. Trott, 'They have received great thanks from the passengers for their kindness en route' (1889).

When the ship sailed into Melbourne's Port Philip, Esther and Fanny's journey was over and they could reunite with Nathan. The scenes that greeted them were described by Marchamp Longway, who also sailed from London to Melbourne in 1889:

We ... are making our way towards Williamstown, where the steamers of the company have a landing place, from whence Melbourne passengers are conveyed by special train to the city. Everyone is busy with his or her affairs. Some faces are beaming with joy at the near prospect of seeing their friends and relations.... From an artist's point of view the approaches to Williamstown are not lovely. A swampy-looking flat which manual labour has contributed to render in places habitable, and a wretched, muddy little river.... The buildings of the city are discernible in the distance, situated on higher ground, and far as the eye can reach from north to south, from east to west, are

houses, townships, and villages extending in all directions. (Longway 1889, pp. 189-190)

From Melbourne, the family made their way to Ballarat in country Victoria, where their new life in Australia began.



Figure 3: Photo from the private collection of Dr Fanny's nephew Leigh Reading and his wife, Lynne: Fanny and Esther reunited with Nathan

Photo taken in Ballarat circa 1889

In 1925, Dr Fanny and her mother returned to Europe for the first time, visiting many of the ports they had glimpsed on their first voyage to Australia. By that time, Dr Fanny was a medical

doctor and a leader in the Jewish and general communities. The roles of mother and child were reversed and Dr Fanny was the nurturer and protector. The path she travelled to arrive at that point in her life is the subject of the next chapter.

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I owe a debt of gratitude to Australia, the land of freedom and liberty which has given me everything.

—Dr Fanny Reading

Chapter 4: Music and Medicine

Dr Fanny's decision to study medicine was not taken lightly. That decision was influenced by reports of suffering and slaughter on the battlefields of the First World War; and by the concerns of families whose members served in the Australian Imperial Force. Her three brothers enlisted in the volunteer army for overseas war service— Hyman Samuel Rubinowich in 1915, Dr Abraham Stanley Rubinowich in 1916, and Lewis Judah Rubinowich in 1917. The death in infancy of Fanny's sister, Miriam, who was born on 11 January 1898 in Ballarat and who died six months later on 5 July 1898—Fanny was thirteen years old at that time—potentially contributed to her decision to specialise in paediatrics and maternal healthcare. She was determined to dedicate her abilities to the wellbeing of fellow Australians. Enrolling in Melbourne University's Faculty of Medicine was a pragmatic choice that defined the future direction of her professional life as a physician in private practice—in Kogarah, Darlinghurst, Bondi Junction and Kings Cross—and as an honorary medical officer at several Sydney hospitals and institutions—the St George District Hospital in Kogarah, the Rachel Forster Hospital in Surry Hills and Redfern, Crown Street Women's Hospital in Surry Hills, the Royal Hospital for Women in Paddington and the Dalwood Children's Homes in Seaforth.

One of Melbourne University's early women medical students, Dr Fanny committed herself to the rigours of a scientific discipline. She committed to medicine, devoting herself to her patients, specialising in childcare and maternal services, and fostering initiatives in these areas at home and abroad. In so doing, she diverged from the path she had chosen previously—to work as a music teacher and performer. Both disciplines, music and medicine, the artistic and the scientific, shaped the person she became. Her studies in music in the earlier part of her life constituted a foundation for a lifelong appreciation of classical music. Music added an aesthetic dimension to her life of service as a doctor. It also served a sociological purpose central to her humanitarian agenda for assisting refugees and newcomers to Australia. She highlighted the abilities of musicians, inviting them to perform in public. In 1939, preoccupied with the fate of Jews fleeing Nazi tyranny in Europe, she told a Brisbane journalist:

Many of the refugees from Europe ... possess exceptional musical talent, and to encourage them, cultural evenings are held each month, at which they perform, and

often these performances lead to professional engagements. ('Dr Fanny Reading in Brisbane' 1939, p. 3)

Music in Ballarat and Melbourne

Fanny's musical ability was first nurtured during her school years in Ballarat. She attended the Bakery Hill Primary School at 34 Humffray Street, in the Bakery Hill precinct of Ballarat East (Debney-Joyce 2016, p. 137); and the family lived at number 129, some distance away in the same street. The opportunities for musical education at this public school were limited. Stevens (2003) highlights the difference in amenities at public and private primary schools at that time:

Music in primary schools during the nineteenth century was confined to 'vocal music' or 'class singing' ... there were few if any pianos available to accompany class singing in government schools. In private schools later in the period, pianos were usually available to accompany both solo and choral singing as well as solo instrumental performances, and students learnt instruments such as the piano, violin and flute from visiting instrumental teachers.

It is therefore likely that Fanny's parents paid for private piano lessons. In 1897, aged 13, Fanny transferred to University College in Camp Street, Ballarat East, established five years earlier to cater for day-students and boarders. The school held concerts at which students performed piano solos. There she developed knowledge of music theory, and technical and interpretative abilities as a classical pianist. She showed great promise, coming first in the piano solo under 14 years section in the competition held on 5 September 1898 in the Academy of Music, which was conducted under the auspices of the Royal South Street Society in Ballarat (*Music* 1898). Debney-Joyce states: 'The introduction of the Royal South Street Competitions in 1891 made music an integral part of community life in Ballarat' (Debney-Joyce 2016, p. 140). By the time Fanny and her family moved to Melbourne, she had acquired sufficient expertise to teach music on a sessional basis at Wesley college and the Methodist Ladies College, where several of her students won prizes (p. 168).

In Melbourne, the Rubinowich family encountered a section of the well-established Jewish community that took pride in Yiddish culture. In 1911, 14 newly arrived migrants from Eastern Europe and Russia established a Jewish library in central Melbourne that they called Kadimah (Hebrew for 'forward'). 'What began as a relatively modest pursuit started by a handful of

cultural enthusiasts attracted 200 ... to its first annual meeting in the following year' (Taft & Markus, 2018, p. 46). Nathan and Esther felt at home in this Yiddish milieu.

Eastern European Yiddishists found in the Kadimah an organisation that addressed their many needs ... it did provide a secular oasis for the culturally starved immigrant; it offered the familiar, a home, a part of der alter heym [the old home].... It provided the gateway to the type of institution that could be shaped and moulded to represent them—an institution that was relevant to their lives, that was for them and by them. (p. 46)

Shmuel Bennett recalled: 'The old and the new immigrants came to the Kadimah for a serving of Yiddish culture in the form of a lecture or a play, or to sit in the library over a Yiddish book or Yiddish newspapers and magazines from overseas' (p. 46). In 1915 the Kadimah relocated to Carlton; and in 1917, the Kadimah president was Samuel Wynn, who had been in Australia for four years. He would testify in 1949 as a witness in the defamation court case *Dr Fanny Reading v National Press Pty Ltd.* (see Chapter 8).

Although Fanny cherished and respected the Yiddish culture that represented the world of her parents, her mother tongue and cultural background, her focus was on Melbourne's sophisticated musical scene. The University of Melbourne's Conservatorium of Music had opened in 1894, with Professor G.W.L. Marshall-Hall in charge (Barrett 1935, p. 2). The city, however, had conservative musical values.

As the wealthiest and fastest growing city of the Australian colonies—and from 1901 to 1927 its federal as well as its mercantile capital—Marvellous Melbourne was bound to attract entertainers going the rounds of the Empire circuit.... The aim was to duplicate the English version of European musical life as soon and as handsomely as possible. Imitation, not invention, was the order of the day. (Radic 1994, p. 5)

In 1905, Fanny enrolled as a student in Melbourne University's Conservatorium of Music. Her gifts as a pianist, accompanist, singer and music teacher earned her a reputation for musical excellence and mastery of the conventional classical repertoire prized at that time. She integrated within the musical life of the Jewish and general communities. The Jewish press reported regularly on her piano renditions at community meetings, concerts and social events. She was a frequent performer at the monthly social organised by Rev. Danglow's Post-Biblical Class. The *Hebrew Standard of Australasia* (*Hebrew Standard*) mentioned Fanny's performance on 29 June 1907 in St Kilda: 'The following items were contributed ... piano solos by Miss

Rubinovich [sic] and Mr Smith, who also acted as accompanists' (correspondent 1907, p. 7). A report mentioned her performance on 29 July 1907: 'Piano solos were rendered by Misses Harris and Rubinovich' ('Victoria' 1907a, p. 10). Reporters recorded her academic progress at the Conservatorium, the *Hebrew Standard* noting on 4 June 1907, 'At the Ormond Exhibition in Music at the University, honors in History, Form and Analysis, second class honors in Pianoforte and third class honors in Class Lists has been obtained by Miss Fanny Rubinovich of Carlton' ('Victoria' 1907b, p. 6).

Internationally famous identities played a role in Melbourne's musical world. As a Conservatorium student, it is likely that Fanny attended the ceremony on 26 November 1909 at which 'Dame Nellie Melba laid the foundation stone for a permanent conservatorium on the University's Parkville campus' (*University of Melbourne: Faculty of Fine Arts and Music* 2019). Fanny probably attended Premier John Murray's official opening of the finished building on 16 April 1910 (Barrett 1935, p. 3). It is likely that Fanny met her contemporary Mary Hannah Brahe, who was the same age and also a piano teacher. In 1910, Mary joined a trio organised by Marshall-Hall and accompanied singers at recitals of her own songs (Colligan 1979). In 1913, Fanny accompanied singers and instrumentalists at concerts, and an article in the *Hebrew Standard* drew attention to her contribution on one such occasion: 'Miss F. Rubinovich acted as hon. pianiste and accompaniste during the whole evening, and gave every satisfaction in that capacity' (Hatchia 1913, p. 6).

There was support for the Conservatorium within Melbourne society, and efforts made to improve facilities for music students. When Fanny first studied for the Diploma of Music at the University's Conservatorium, there were insufficient teaching rooms; several teachers, working to a roster, used the same room. The library was not properly organised, there was no dedicated rehearsal room and no cafeteria. For the students, what mattered was the quality of tuition and the interaction with musicians and musicologists. Artists contributed to musical traditions in the city and throughout Victoria. Barrett notes: 'Madame Melba arranged a performance of opera ... £1000 was raised towards the building of the beautiful Melba Hall ... opened by the Governor-General, Lord Denman, on October 19th, 1913' (Barrett 1935, p. 3).

In 1914, Fanny's final year at the Conservatorium, Marshall-Hall returned to take up his previous position as Ormond Chair of Music, which he had vacated in 1900. Through tuition and orchestral concerts, he shaped students' perception of what constituted great music and performance. Barrett (1935) conveys the quality of Marshall-Hall's teaching techniques, to

which Fanny was exposed: 'He began at once to teach music as it should be taught—as a natural and beautiful form of expressing human emotions and ideas' (p. 5).

In 1914, Fanny graduated with a Diploma in Music from the University's Conservatorium. Aside from an initial scholarship, she had supported herself, working to cover academic fees and associated costs, which were considerable. Newton (2000) comments: 'It must have taken enormous intelligence and perseverance for a migrant woman of non-English-speaking background to earn a living and get herself an education' (p. 8). She immersed herself in Melbourne's musical culture, hearing Australian musicians and overseas artists perform orchestral and operatic offerings. Brentnall (1938) states there were two major orchestras in Melbourne, the University Symphony conducted by Marshall-Hall, and the Alberto Zelman Memorial Orchestra. In reflecting on the calibre of the symphony concerts Marshall-Hall presented from 1892 to 1912 in Melbourne, which spanned most of the years Fanny studied music, Brentnall writes: 'We heard for the first time in Melbourne orchestral works of Beethoven, Brahms, Mozart, Schumann and Schubert' (p. 116).

Fanny was acquainted with the conductor Zelman. There is evidence she participated in Melbourne's annual Christmas production of Handel's oratorio, *Messiah*, which Zelman conducted to critical acclaim. Held in the Royal Exhibition Building in Carlton, the performance attracted almost 6,000 music lovers, who filled the auditorium to hear principal singers of the first rank, such as tenor John McCormack, the Royal Melbourne Philharmonic Choir and the Victorian Festival Choir. Fanny's personal copy of the *Messiah* has pencilled notations indicating tempi, technique and interpretation, comments that point to her research and scholarship and the directives of her teachers (see Figure 4). Possibly, they include those Zelman gave to choristers at rehearsals. Fanny's comments in her copy of the *Messiah* include the following:

The greatest masterpiece differs from the oratorios in its abstract nature. More of an act of worship or a glorified anthem, than a dramatic orat [sic]. Mozart added accompaniment to boring score. Grandeur the distinct character of all Handel's compositions, divides into three parts: 1. Devotes chiefly to prophecy. 2. Relates to his suffering and death and universal prayer. 3. Resurrection and triumphant song of the redeemer [Her note on the first recitative 'Comfort ye, comfort ye my people]. Touch of tenderness but authority.... Deeper note of feeling for the Chorus 'And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed'.

Fanny pasted a music review headlined 'The Messiah: Philharmonic Society. A memorable occasion' in her copy of the *Messiah* that indicates her pride as a chorister in being part of a celebrated annual performance:

It has often been pointed out that it is impossible to do justice to Handel without adequate orchestral study and rehearsal, and Mr. Zelman has been wise enough to attend to this, with the most happy result. The chorus, which included also the Victorian Festival Choir, was excellent.... The 'Hallelujah' and the final choruses were splendidly sung; so was 'Glory to God'. ('The Messiah: Philharmonic Society. A memorable occasion' 1905)

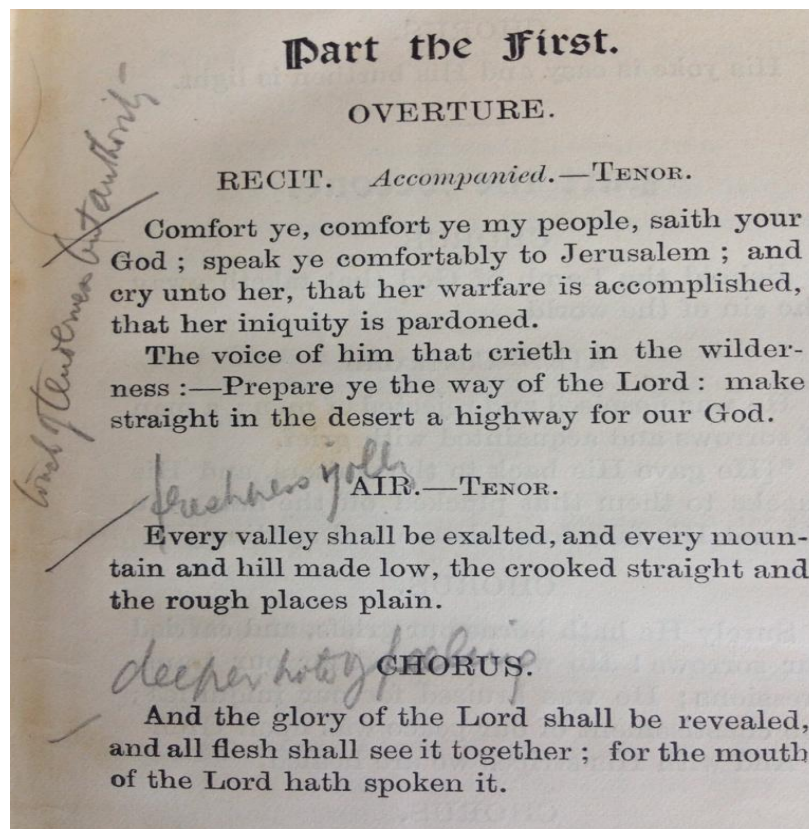


Figure 4: An example of Dr Fanny's notes in her copy of Handel's *Messiah*, while a student at Melbourne University's Conservatorium of Music

Photo by Anne Sarzin, courtesy of Carole Singer

Fanny eventually abandoned music as a career but retained her love of music. It remained a part of who she was and the person she became. Throughout her life, she attended concerts whenever her schedule allowed and she valued this art form, to which she had dedicated years of study and practice. She invited musicians to her home in Sydney's Kings Cross, for Friday night dinner or Saturday lunch, and there is a reference to Yehudi Menuhin dining there on a

Friday evening, the eve of the sabbath (Newton 2000, p. 10). One can presume she knew Menuhin's sister, Hepzibah, a gifted pianist who lived in Sydney from 1954 to 1957. While in Palestine in 1925, Dr Fanny and her mother had attended a concert by the renowned violinist Jascha Heifitz and were enthralled with the performance. In 1927, Heifitz, then 26 years of age, toured Australia. While in Sydney, he gave Dr Fanny a signed photograph of himself (Burman 2018), inscribed 'To Dr Reading, Jascha Heifitz 1927', probably in appreciation of her hospitality (see Figure 5). It is likely he too joined her guests for a Friday night dinner or Saturday lunch (Maltese 2010). After establishing the CJW in 1923, Dr Fanny often asked migrant musicians to perform at Council meetings, a multi-pronged strategy that strengthened their reputations, opened doors to engagements and provided entertainment for members.

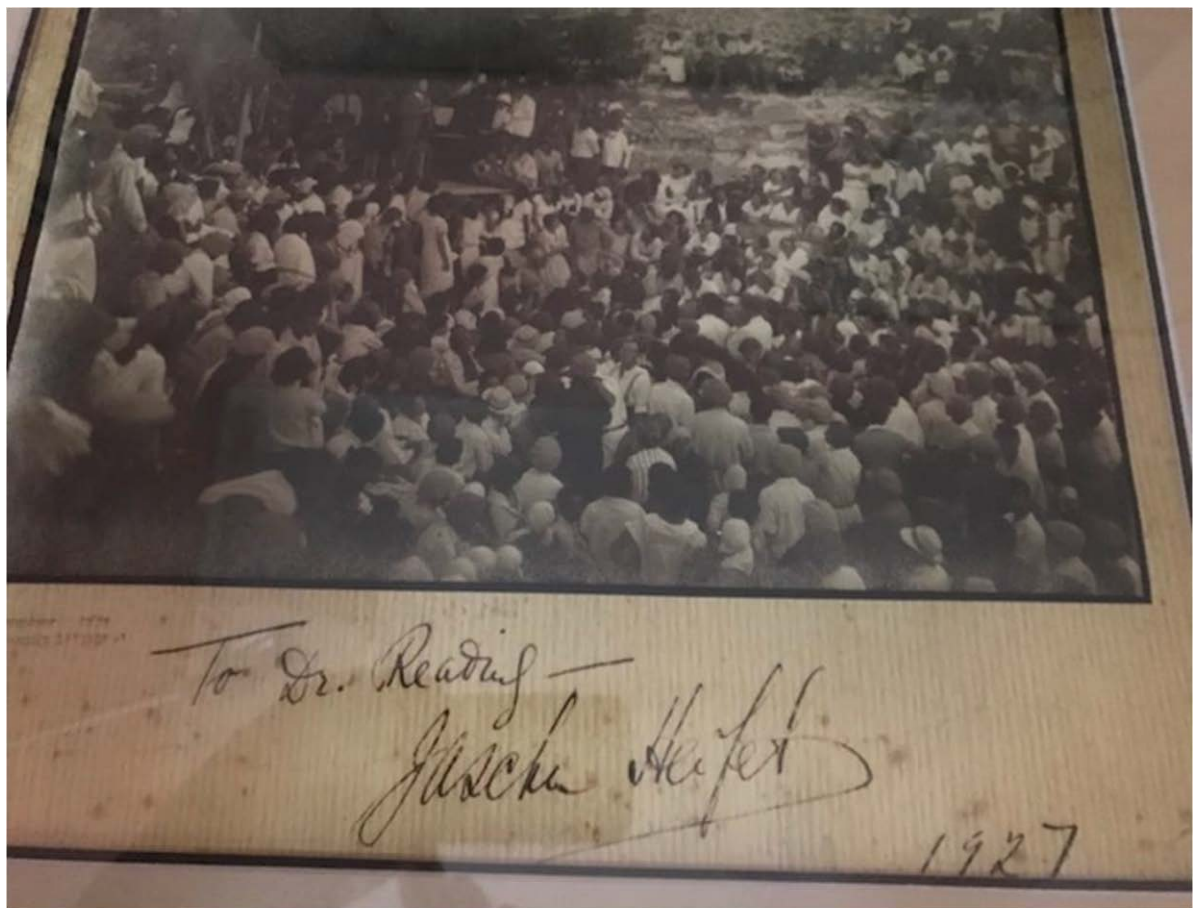


Figure 5: Jascha Heifitz's autographed photograph given to Dr Fanny in 1927

Photo by Anne Sarzin, courtesy of Dr Ian Burman

This photo records the concert given by Heifitz on 17 April 1926, on an improvised stage in the stone quarry used as an amphitheatre in the Valley of Harod in Palestine. Thousands packed the quarry, seated on stone boulders, to hear the violin maestro (Shavit 2014, pp. 44-46).

Dr Fanny mentors Sydney schoolgirl

Carole Singer (née Goodman) was a 10-year-old Sydney schoolgirl and pianist when she started playing for Dr Fanny in 1949 at NCJW's meetings. Singer recalls being asked to play at these meetings and privately for Dr Fanny in her apartment on the corner of Macleay Street in Kings Cross, the apartment to which she moved from her first residence in Kings Cross. In a Sydney interview I conducted in 2017, Singer said Dr Fanny nurtured her gifts and provided opportunities for her to perform:

Dr Fanny and I immediately just got on. I was only 10 and full of my own importance. I didn't really appreciate her attention. For years after that, she asked me to play for the National Council of Jewish Women at their various meetings, until I was about 16. I played Chopin, mostly Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms came later. I'll never forget an AGM in Young Street, a well-attended meeting. Dr Fanny announced that 'we have little Carole Goodman here to play for us.' I knew she was formidable because of her standing in the community, and I knew how everyone looked up to her and were hugely respectful of her. But she didn't frighten me at all, I warmed to her because she had this lovely softness, and this connection, and she liked me and treated me so beautifully and encouraged me. She encouraged me to come and visit her, which I did. (Singer 2017)

Singer recalls that a large dark piano, laden with books and scores, dominated the cluttered interior of Dr Fanny's apartment. Contrary to the Reading family's view that Dr Fanny never played the piano for them or in public, Singer remains convinced she played when alone:

She must have played because the music [scores] she had is indicative of the highest diploma [standard]; and she played concerti, *Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto No 1*, which is very difficult.... Someone who went so far would have needed an outlet. She would have had limitations because she didn't practise, she wouldn't sit down and play that *Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto*, but she would have played some Chopin. Don't forget she was living on her own, it would have been a source of comfort. (Singer 2017)

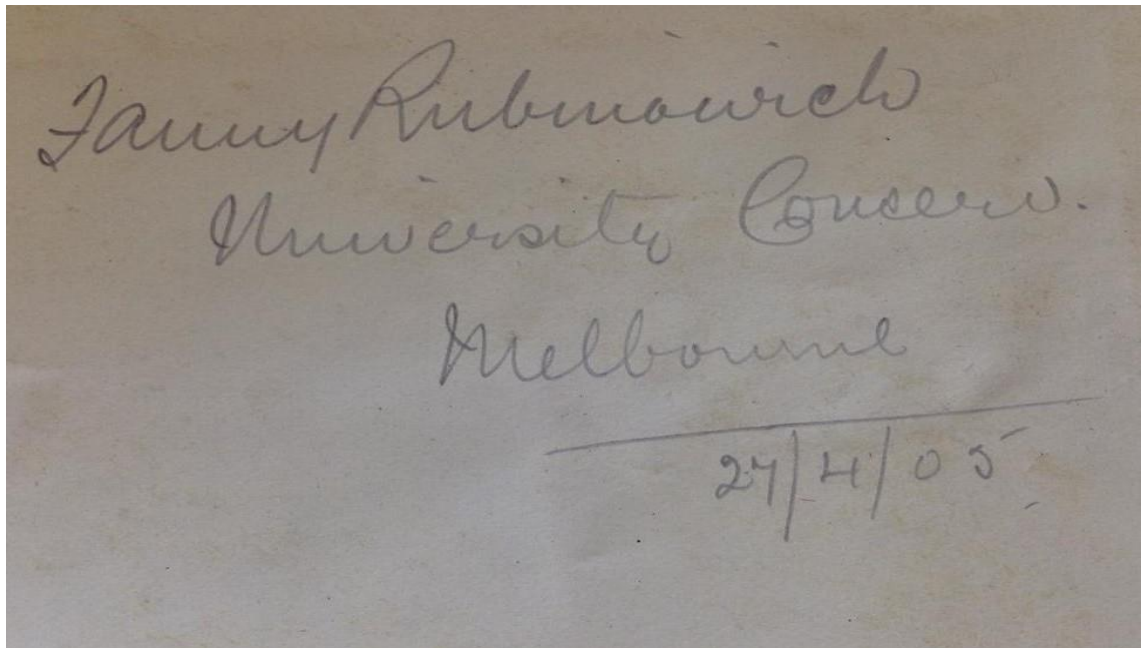
Singer's contention that Dr Fanny continued to play the piano at home is confirmed in a news item titled 'Jewish leader' published 19 November 1933 in the Sydney newspaper *The Sun*,

Dr Reading graduated in medicine at the Melbourne University. She is honorary physician at the Rachel Forster Hospital for Women and the Langton clinic. She is also

a brilliant musician, a pianist of remarkable talent, only, unfortunately, her profession and council duties prevent her from devoting much time to her music (*The Sun*, 19 November 1933, p. 35).

The musical bond between the 10-year-old schoolgirl and the 65-year-old community leader flourished. Years later, in 1962, when Dr Fanny's health deteriorated—she had Parkinson's disease—she left her Kings Cross apartment and moved to the Wolper Hospital in Woollahra, where she stayed for the remaining 12 years of her life. Packing up, Dr Fanny contacted Singer and offered her a selection of her music books. Singer (2017) stated: 'I said I would love some of her music. I must have gone with one of my parents to collect it in the Cross.'

This trove of musical scores, cherished throughout her lifetime by Dr Fanny and now in Singer's care, reveals Dr Fanny's pianistic range and depth of musical knowledge. It charts her lifelong passion for music and her attachment to music she studied as a young girl. It confirms that she bought sheet music and scores in later years, which strengthens Singer's assertion that Dr Fanny never ceased playing the piano. Some of these works bear the signature 'Fanny Rubinowich', whereas other scores are inscribed with the name 'Fanny Reading', testifying to their acquisition post-1918, the year her father changed the family name from Rubinowich to Reading (see Figure 6). Dr Fanny's copy of *The Jews in Egypt*, with libretto by Samuel S. Grossman and music by Samuel E. Goldfarb, was printed and copyrighted in 1926, and purchased at least 12 years after her graduation from the Conservatorium. She kept these scores for decades—including Augener's Edition No 8897 of *Rubinstein Songs Complete*, with the inscription 'F. Reading 40, 43s' on the cover—only parting with them when she found the right recipient to whom she could entrust her music books. Her faith in Singer was justified, as she preserved this collection intact. They provide an entry point for further research into Dr Fanny's early career as a musician and her lifelong love of this artform.



Fanny Rubinstein
University Conserv.
Melbourne
27/4/05

Figure 6: Dr Fanny's signature in 1905 at Melbourne University's Conservatorium of Music

Photo by Anne Sarzin, courtesy of Carole Singer

Newspaper reports confirm that Dr Fanny continued to play and to perform frequently in public. They also prove she was confident in her pianistic technique and interpretive ability. She would not have played before an audience had she not conformed to her own high standards of performance. At a meeting on 4 February 1929 in the Maccabean Hall in Sydney, Dr Fanny gave a 'lecturette' on Jewish composers and pianists. 'The lecturette was illustrated by songs, rendered with unusual proficiency by Miss Hilda Levy, accompanied by Dr. Fanny Reading herself' ('Women's Page: Council of Jewish Women' 1929, p. 8). Further evidence of her readiness to play the piano in public emerges in a news article covering a general meeting held 2 May 1932 in Sydney, stating that she delighted members with her artistic pianoforte solos ('Council of Jewish Women: General meeting' 1932, p. 6).

Benno Moseiwitsch (1890–1963), one of the great pianists of his time, returned to Australia in 1932 and Dr Fanny arranged a reception for him in Sydney. By then he was 42, at the height of his artistic powers, renowned for his interpretation of the late Romantic repertoire, and acclaimed for poetic phrasing, technique and rhythmic freedom. On 21 July 1932, *The Sydney Morning Herald* reported that the previous evening Dr Fanny hosted a reception for Mr and Mrs Moseiwitsch at Council rooms, 175 Pitt Street, at which she played the piano. Unless she was at concert pitch, she would not have performed for Moseiwitsch.

During the evening a musical programme was contributed by Miss Dagmar Roberts, Mr. Leo Packer. Mrs. Horace Sheller, Mr. Montgomery Stuart, Mr. Lance Jeffree, Mrs. Julius Rosenfeld, Miss Mary Charlton, and Dr. Reading. ('Council of Jewish Women' 1932, p. 4)

Dr Fanny's passion for music never diminished, and it was a resource that sustained her throughout her life. She hosted musicians and showcased their gifts. A year previously, in October 1931, Dr Fanny shared with Council members her knowledge and love of opera:

After the business of the meeting, a wonderful treat was given in the form of a grand opera night by Dr Fanny Reading, who related the stories of Faust, *Cavalliera Rusticana*, and *La Tosca*, excerpts from which were rendered by Mrs. Sam Shaw, Misses F. and B. Kivovich and Mr. Barend Harris. ('Council of Jewish Women' 1931, p. 6)

On 25 April 1933, in Council Rooms in Sydney, she hosted a reception in honour of Jascha and Tossy Spivakovsky and Edmund Kurtz, a classical trio touring Australia. The Spivakovsky brothers came from a dynasty of musicians, their father was a celebrated cantor in Berlin. Dr Fanny—aware of anxiety prevailing among the Jewish community in Germany in the 1930s—welcomed the trio warmly:

Speeches of welcome to the guests of honour were made by Dr Fanny Reading, national president, who said that the members of the Jewish community delighted to honour their distinguished co-religionists. ('Council of Jewish Women' 1933, p. 4)

From Sydney, the Spivakovskys proceeded to Melbourne, where they took up teaching positions at Melbourne University's Conservatorium of Music. As a Conservatorium graduate, Dr Fanny had contacts in Melbourne's music world. By 1933, she was influential across a spectrum of organisations nationally. It is likely she did whatever she could to ease their integration into Australia's musical, academic and community life.

On 27 August 1933, Dr Fanny played before a large audience of 100 Council members and friends in the Council Rooms in Sydney. After a poetry recital by Melech Ravitsch, Dr Fanny accompanied the cellist David Sisserman, a member of the Sisserman Quartet in Melbourne. Together, they presented several items: *Prayer* (From Jewish Life) by Ernest Bloch, *Oriental*, by the Russian composer César Cui, and *Romance sans Paroles* by Karl Davidoff. A review termed their performance 'a musical treat' ('NCJW Sydney Section: Melech Ravitsch evening ' 1933, p. 6). Dr Fanny's reputation as an accomplished musician had spread beyond the Jewish community.

The First World War influences Dr Fanny's career choice

As noted earlier, the intellectual and emotional arc of Fanny's transition from a career in music to one in medicine was shaped mainly by the First World War, 1914-1918. The Jewish community in Melbourne was small and everyone felt the impact of the death toll and casualties during the war. Thirteen percent of the eligible male Jewish population in Australia enlisted—there was no conscription—compared to nine percent of the total population. Fifteen percent of Jewish soldiers lost their lives, so many families were affected (Taft 2018, p. 26). As Vice-President of the Jewish Young People's Association (JYPA) in Melbourne, Fanny was affected by the death in 1917 of Sergeant F. M. Michaelis, who had served as JYPA President. A report published on 13 July 1917 in the *Jewish Herald* (Victoria) quoted Rev. J. Danglow: 'We must deplore the loss of Sergeant F. M. Michaelis... not only to ourselves, but to the community generally, and our heartfelt sympathy went out to his bereaved relatives' (p. 13). In the family home in St Kilda, Melbourne, Fanny, her sister Rae and her parents, focused on the wellbeing of those fighting for king and country. Both Nathan and Esther had been naturalised in 1897 (Department of External Affairs 1897) and 1904 respectively (Department of External Affairs 1904), and were classified as British nationals of Russian origin. As patriotic Australians, they supported their three sons' enlistment.

The enlistment of Fanny's three brothers in the Australian Imperial Force influenced her greatly. All three gave their address as 23 Charnwood Street, St Kilda, Victoria, the family home they shared with Fanny, sister Rae and their parents. The oldest of the three, and younger than Fanny by six years, was Abraham Stanley Solomon, who volunteered on 24 January 1916 (National Archives of Australia n.d.). By then, he had already graduated from the University of Melbourne with an MB ChB and had worked as a Medical Officer at the Flinders Naval Base. Fanny's youngest brother, 21-year-old Lewis Judah, a medical student at Melbourne University, enlisted on 25 April 1917; and 22-year-old Hyman Samuel, designated in army documentation as a mechanical engineer, joined the 6th Reinforcements of the 8th Battalion on 20 April 1915.

Hyman, the first to enlist, presented himself for a medical examination on 19 April 1915 in Melbourne (Australian Imperial Force 1914-1920a). The examining medical officer considered him fit for active service and on 22 May 1915 the Commanding Officer appointed Hyman to the '6 Reinf 8 Bat' [6th Reinforcements for the 8th Australian Infantry Battalion] at Broadmeadows. Almost three years later, aged 24, he applied for service abroad. His

'Attestation Paper of Persons enlisted for Service Abroad', completed on 24 January 1918 in Sydney, states that he had served in the senior cadets at Wesley College in Melbourne for eight years, and served in the Australian Imperial Force for 84 days (see Figure 7). He expressed a preference to serve in either the Field Artillery or the Light Horse, and signed the oath taken by persons being enlisted:

I Hyman Samuel Rubinowich swear that I will well and truly serve our Sovereign Lord the King in the Australian Imperial Force from 24/1/18 until the end of the War, and a further period of four months thereafter unless sooner lawfully discharged, dismissed, or removed therefrom; and that I will resist His Majesty's enemies and cause His Majesty's peace to be kept and maintained; and that I will in all matters appertaining to my service, faithfully discharge my duty according to law. So Help Me God.

(RUBINOWICH Hyman Samuel : Service Number - 2128 1914-1920)

34
18

When preferred FIELD ARTILLERY or Light Horse

AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE

Attestation Paper of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad.

No. _____ Name (Surname) RUBINOWICH
in full (Christian Name) HYMAN SAMUEL
Unit _____
Joined on _____

Questions to be put to the Person Enlisting before Attestation.
You are hereby warned that if after enlistment it is found that you have given a wilfully false answer to any question set forth in this Attestation Paper, you will be liable to be tried for the offence.

1. What is your Name? ... 1. RUBINOWICH
2. In or near what Town were you born? ... 2. HYMAN SAMUEL
In or near the Town of ...
In the State or Country of ...
3. Are you a natural born British Subject or a Naturalized British Subject? (N.B.—If the latter, please to be shown.) ... 3. B.S.
4. What is your Age? (Date of birth to be stated) ... 4. 24 years
24 January 1894
5. Are you, or have you been, an Apprentice? If so, where to whom, and for what period? ... 5. Peter Dunbar
6. Are you married, single, or widower? ... 6. single
7. Who is your next of kin? (Address and relationship to be stated) ... 7. Mother Mrs. L. B. Rubinowich
23 Charnwood Rd. St. Kilda
Melbourne Victoria
8. What is your permanent address in Australia? ... 8. 23 Charnwood Rd. St. Kilda
Melbourne Victoria
9. Do you now belong to, or have you ever served in, His Majesty's Army, the Marines, the Militia, the Militia Reserve, the Territorial Force, Royal Navy, or Colonial Forces? If so, state which, and if not now serving, state name of discharge ... 9. No
10. Have you stated the whole, if any, of your previous service? ... 10. No
11. Have you ever been rejected as unfit for His Majesty's Service? If so, on what grounds? ... 11. No
12. (For married men, widowers with children, and widows who are the sole support of widowed mothers—Do you understand that no separation allowance will be issued in respect of your service beyond an amount which together with pay would reach ten shillings per day?) ... 12. No
13. Are you prepared to undergo inoculation against small pox and enteric fever? ... 13. No
14. I, Hyman Samuel Rubinowich, do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions are true, and I am willing and hereby voluntarily agree to serve in the Military Forces of the Commonwealth of Australia within or beyond the limits of the Commonwealth.

And I further agree to accept not less than two-fifths of the pay payable to me from time to time during my service for the support of my wife and children.

Date 24-1-18

Signature of Person Enlisted.

Hyman Samuel Rubinowich

* This clause should be struck out in the case of unmarried men or widowers without children under 16 years of age.
† Two-fifths must be added to the wage, and if there are children three-fifths must be added.

Figure 7: Hyman Samuel Rubinowich's attestation paper for military service in the Second World War (RUBINOWICH Hyman Samuel: Service Number - 2128 1914-1920)

National Archives of Australia

When he applied to serve overseas, his military plans unravelled. On 30 January 1918, the Australian Military Forces Medical Board in Sydney found him 'unfit for active service' due to

his 'history of rheumatic fever'. Fanny and the family knew that Hyman had been sickly as a child, with a history of rheumatic fever, which exacerbated their fears for his welfare.

Fanny's youngest brother, Lewis Judah, served as a Private in the Army Medical Corps of the Australian Imperial Force from 25 April 1917 to 1919 (Australian Imperial Force 1914-1920b). The examining medical officer wrote on 24 April 1917 in Melbourne: 'I consider him fit for active service for AMC only' (see Figure 8). Initially, he was assigned to the Army Medical Corps at Broadmeadows General Hospital, and then to hospitals in Bendigo and Seymour, before embarking on 15 December 1917 on H.M.A.T. *Nestor* bound for the Australian camp in Suez, followed by embarkation on 31 December 1917 on H.M.A.T. *Maple* for the camp in Alexandria. His nephew, psychiatrist Dr Ian Burman, said in a Sydney interview that the family believed 'Lew' was mentally affected by the war: 'There was some mention that he had been gassed, although he never showed problems with his chest to my knowledge, so probably he was not gassed. In DSM IV criteria I think he probably had a post-traumatic stress disorder' (Burman 2019). After the war, Lewis never resumed his medical studies at the University of Melbourne.

(3)

Description of ROBINOWICH Lewis Judah on enlistment.

Age <u>21</u> years <u>4</u> months.	DISTINCTIVE MARKS. <u>Tam 2 Lamps</u> <u>Scars on chest</u> <u>Arise back of neck</u>
Height <u>5</u> feet <u>9 1/2</u> inches.	
Weight <u>149</u> lbs.	
Chest Measurement <u>32.36</u> inches.	
Complexion <u>Rubrum</u>	
Eyes <u>Blue</u>	
Hair <u>Black</u>	
Religious Denomination <u>Jewish</u>	

CERTIFICATE OF MEDICAL EXAMINATION.

I HAVE examined the above-named person, and find that he does not present any of the following conditions, viz.:-

Scrofula; phthisis; syphilis; impaired constitution; defective intelligence; defects of vision, voice, or hearing; hernia; haemorrhoids; varicose veins, beyond a limited extent; marked varicocele with unusually pendulous testicle; inveterate cutaneous disease; chronic ulcers; traces of corporal punishment; contracted or deformed chest; abnormal curvature of spine; or any other disease or physical defect calculated to unfit him for the duties of a soldier.

He can see the required distance with either eye; his heart and lungs are healthy; he has the free use of his joints and limbs; and he declares he is not subject to fits of any description.

I consider him fit for active service. for AMC only

Date 24-4-17

Place Melbourne

Asker
Signature of Examining Medical Officer. a.m.c.

CERTIFICATE OF COMMANDING OFFICER.

I CERTIFY that this Attestation of the above-named person is correct, and that the required forms have been complied with. I accordingly approve, and appoint him to ARMY MEDICAL CORPS, REINFORCEMENTS

Date 20-10-17

Place Bendigo

J. C. Martin
Commanding a.m.c.

Figure 8: Lewis Judah Rubinowich's military medical certificate

National Archives of Australia

When Abraham Solomon Stanley presented for a medical examination on 24 January 1916, Major H. Grover AAMC MD signed his medical certificate; and the Commanding Officer recommended that he be appointed a Captain in the corps under his command and that he be posted to AAMC squadron, battery or Coy. The recommendation was endorsed by Brigadier-General R.E. Williams, Commandant of the 3rd Military District (National Archives of Australia 1916.).

In a Sydney interview, Fanny's niece, Jennifer Burman (née Reading), maintained that Fanny's parents wanted her to study medicine in order to keep an eye on her eldest brother, Abraham (Jennifer's father), who was not applying himself to his medical studies. In a Sydney interview with Fanny's nephew Dr Ian Burman, he supported Jennifer's view. Both Abraham and Lewis studied medicine at different times and both were said to be distracted by busy social lives. Contrary to the accepted family view, documentation confirms Lewis as the brother in need of academic supervision. Newton (2000) states:

It is generally believed that Fanny Rubinowich returned to university to study medicine with her more volatile brother, Lew. Her stability was meant to encourage him to complete his studies, but although Fanny won the University Medal in 1916, Lew did not finish his medical degree. (p. 8)

The military medical documentation resolves the argument, as it proves that by the time Abraham enlisted in 1916—Fanny's first year of medical studies—he was already a qualified medical doctor. In that year, his Application for a Commission and the accompanying Medical Certificate (NAA: MT1486/1) state that he had a MB ChB degree. When Lewis enlisted in 1917, however, he was still enrolled as a medical student at the University of Melbourne. This is definitive evidence that Lewis and Fanny studied medicine together until Lewis volunteered for military service.

Fanny believed she could make a more significant contribution to society through medicine rather than music. She had a serious attitude to duty in life: 'Service means the rent we pay for the space we occupy' ('To form Council of Jewish Women' 1929, p. 52). In 1928, a Sydney paper noted: 'Dr Fanny's degrees and diplomas are not limited to medicine. She has a number of music diplomas, but during the war her thoughts turned to medicine' ('The Woman of the Day: Dr Fanny Reading' 1928, p. 20).

Awarded the University Medal in 1916

Fanny enrolled as a medical student at Melbourne University in 1916—having complied with the prerequisites of Greek and Latin for entry into the medical course (Pensabene 1980, p. 70). She thrived academically and won the University Medal that year. Through the years, numerous certificates confirmed her attendance, at lectures and success in examinations in natural philosophy, chemistry, biology, anatomy, histology, botany, laboratory work, physiology, public health and therapeutics. In 1918, she completed three months' instruction in the preparation of medicines. She attended tutorial classes in surgery and medicine; in 1919 obtained a certificate in post-mortem demonstrations; and in 1920 a certificate for 'in patient surgical practice with junior dressership'. With a clinical assistantship at Melbourne Hospital, she completed out-patient medical practice. Additional certificates testified to her knowledge and proficiency in medical and surgical practice, diseases of children, diseases of the skin, mental diseases [sic] and venereal disease (University of Melbourne 1916-1922).



Figure 9: Fifth year medical class, University of Melbourne (Fifth year Medical students of 1920 1920). Fanny is seated second from left in front row.

Photograph from website of the University of Melbourne's Medical History Museum

In 2013, the Medical History Museum of the University of Melbourne published a commemorative book entitled *Strength of Mind: 125 Years of Women in Medicine*, marking 126 years since the admission of women to the University's Medical Faculty. In a foreword, University Chancellor Elizabeth Alexander stated that the book,

celebrates the contribution of women in the field of medicine. More than 50 individuals and events have been selected to illustrate the achievements, significant changes and diverse experiences of women in the medical profession. (*Strength of Mind: 125 years of women in medicine* 2013, p. 5)

Dr Fanny is not featured in this book, despite her achievements in medicine and across a broad spectrum of humanitarian, educational and sociological endeavours. Nobody forwarded her name for inclusion, an omission that exposes her anonymity in the history of early women graduates of the University of Melbourne's Medical Faculty. Her story and achievements merited inclusion in this book. That she was overlooked in such a significant commemorative publication points to the need for and importance of shining a light on her career as a physician and as a transformative changemaker whose impact on others should be reaffirmed and acknowledged beyond the confines of the Jewish community, where she is still remembered by NCJWA members. Dr Fanny's medical career and socio-cultural agenda exemplify the ideals that characterised many of Melbourne Medical School's early women graduates. She was a competent physician, effecting improvements in maternal and child health, working in an honorary capacity in several Sydney hospitals and institutions associated with the healthcare of mothers and children and, at the same time, looking after her patients in private practice. She received the MBE in 1961 for social welfare services in New South Wales (Newton 2000, p. 11). She was a Life Governor of the Benevolent Society of New South Wales, the Crown Street Women's Hospital in Surry Hills, and the Dalwood Homes (Cohen 1987, pp. 72-3). Dr Heather Sheard notes:

Although the gender of Victoria's early women doctors meant that their professional paths did not always lead in the direction they had hoped, they nevertheless explored and developed new professional authority and competencies. The joy they found in their work is patent in the extensive list of their achievements and their legacy—all is evidence of their strength of mind. (*Strength of Mind: 125 years of women in medicine* 2013, p. 32)

‘The Angel of Kings Cross’

Shortly after Dr Fanny’s graduation with an MB BS in 1922 from the University of Melbourne’s Medical Faculty, she moved to Sydney, at first working with her brother Dr Abraham Reading in the Sydney suburb of Kogarah and at hospitals in the area before moving to Darlinghurst and, finally, Kings Cross, where she practised as a general practitioner in her apartment on the corner of Springfield Avenue and Darlinghurst Road. She also helped Dr ‘Abe’ in his practice at 253 Oxford Street, Bondi Junction. She decided to live and to practise medicine in Kings Cross and stayed there for the duration of her active medical career until she moved in 1962, due to sickness and old age, to the Wolper Hospital in Woollahra. Kings Cross was an economically depressed area, which reduced her earning capacity and, in conjunction with her honorary hospital work, made her reliant on revenue from her work in the Bondi Junction practice and her brother’s generosity. According to interviews with family members, she gave her money away—including that given to her by her brother—to those in need and to charities. Her nephew Dr Ian Burman said ‘Dr Abe’ knew she did that but did not mind, ‘He gave her money with one hand and she gave it away with the other’ (Burman 2018).

In 1922, when Dr Fanny began to practise in Sydney, it was a time of change in the medical profession in Australia. Prior to the 1920s, almost all doctors were general practitioners, who treated general medical and surgical complaints; and specialties were associated less with qualifications and more with experience. While considered a general practitioner, in 1925 Dr Fanny furthered her studies abroad in several medical disciplines. In October 1925, she enrolled as a ‘Resident Student’ at the Rotunda Hospital in Dublin, Ireland, and attended their course ‘Clinical Instruction in Midwifery’ (Hospital 1925). She studied in a number of clinics in Vienna; at the Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children, in London; and in the United States, where she attended the Quinquennial Conference of the International Council of Women, which had as its theme child welfare (‘For women. Dr Fanny Reading. Child Welfare Abroad’ 1926, p. 5). Therefore, one can view her as a specialist in maternal health, paediatrics, obstetrics, gynaecology and anaesthetics. Pensabene (1980) states:

Practitioners who described themselves as specialists or consultants did not possess formal post-graduate training, but usually had extensive experience in a particular area of medical practice. These consultants combined hospital work with general practice.

As a career, medicine aligned with Dr Fanny’s principles of service to and upliftment of the community, providing avenues for humanitarian ideals aimed at improving the health and

wellbeing of others. By all accounts, she practised medicine with compassion and caring that earned her the respect and affection of those among whom she chose to live and work. She looked after maternity cases, delivered babies, treated patients in her practice and in their homes, cared for the sick in hospitals, performed anaesthetics and did honorary work at several hospitals in the city and further afield.

Medicine conferred on Dr Fanny a social status in the community. In 1949, when she sued *Smith's Weekly* for defamation, her medical qualifications established her professional standing and her credentials in society. Pensabene (1980) notes: 'By 1933 over 80 per cent of qualified doctors were Australian-trained.... The close association between medical progress and the emergence of an Australian-based medical profession may have raised the community's pride in local doctors' (p. 59).

Dr Fanny's achievement in winning community regard was greater than that of other women doctors, given that she surmounted what society perceived at that time as a social disadvantage, her refugee status and that of her migrant parents. Her background was compared unfavourably to those of medical contemporaries from rural areas, most of whom commanded respect as the daughters of doctors, lawyers, teachers and clergymen.

The high professional status of doctors after 1900 made medicine a highly desirable occupation and many sons and daughters of the upper middle class enrolled in medicine. The majority of practitioners listed in obituary notices between 1920 and 1930 (about one-third of these being born in the 1880s), had parents with professional and commercial backgrounds. (Pensabene 1980, p. 68)

McCarthy (2001) states that almost 30 per cent of women doctors in New South Wales had a parent who was also a doctor and that practising with one's medical father was a common first step for the newly fledged woman medical graduate, although she points out that Dr Fanny had the advantage of joining her brother's medical practice. In relation to Dr Fanny's social standing, McCarthy notes:

Of two other well-known rural-born women doctors, Constance D'Arcy was born in Mudgee, the daughter of a police sergeant (or perhaps a constable), and Fanny Reading (who, although born in Russia, was raised in Australia from the age of two) had a father who was described as a 'hawker' in Ballarat. (p. 42)

It is doubtful that social or academic snobbery troubled Dr Fanny, as her values were different. She took pride in Jewish scholarship and education that characterised her own background

and Jewish life generally, where learning was revered. She was never influenced by social background or status. She appreciated the complexity of her parents' situation as migrants building a new life in Australia and the difficulties they surmounted. The regard in which she was held as a doctor is impressive when measured against the societal prejudice that McCarthy documents. Her disregard of monetary rewards, her modest practice arrangements and the working-class environment in Kings Cross contrasted with practice settings in suburban Sydney calculated to attract prosperous middleclass patients, as advocated in the article 'Medical Practice' in the *Medical Journal of Australia*,

It is usual for the practitioner to set aside a portion of his house for his professional work. A separate entrance, a suitable waiting room for patients, and a consulting room with an ante-chamber adjoining for the examination of blood, urine and other excretions, are essential. A separate room for the performance of minor surgical operations will be found very convenient. (McCarthy 2001, p. 309)

Dr Fanny's Kings Cross surgery was small, as was her whole apartment. She made a conscious choice to work in a deprived socio-economic context. Medically, she made a difference in the lives of local residents. Advances in scientific medicine enabled her to treat patients effectively and to reduce mortality in the community—insulin was introduced in 1921 to manage diabetes; pneumonia and streptococcal diseases could be controlled with a sulphuramide drug discovered in 1935; and penicillin emerged as a wonder drug in 1941 (Pensabene 1980, p. 49).

Kings Cross, with its prostitutes and pimps, was a world away from the leafy suburbs of Sydney's North Shore.

[T]he 'Montmartre' of Sydney, people called it, with flattery and nostalgia. Actually, it was fairly hideous; like all of urban Sydney being a dusty hodgepodge of low-built buildings, all in need of a coat of paint—the upper halves flats and residential rooms and the lower halves shops, offices and cinemas. Between the two, cutting off the dirty stucco and dingy brickwork from the glaring neon signs, were the ubiquitous iron or concrete awnings, the most characteristic features of Sydney's dim architecture. (Dalton 1996, p. 28)

Dr Fanny's nephew Dr Ian Burman has vivid memories of her Kings Cross home, her surgery and her pressured lifestyle, as he stayed with her for two months when an 18-year-old medical student at the University of Sydney. He recalled that the apartment was 'right in the heart of Kings Cross', and that he slept on a mattress on the floor of the back verandah, while his older

brother Lloyd slept in an adjacent bedroom. Dr Burman cast light on Dr Fanny's nature—recalling a younger woman whose sense of family duty was so strong that she forfeited the prospect of marriage to an American who might have taken her away from ageing and needy parents. She was dutiful, committed to family and community—an aunt who perpetuated her family's tradition of hospitality, and a doctor dedicated to her practice and civic activities. 'When I stayed there, I had more knowledge of what she did, she worked in the surgery morning and afternoon; and in the evenings she worked [on Council of Jewish Women projects] with her secretary Roma Lang' (Burman 2018).



Figure 10: Dr Fanny as a young woman

Photo courtesy of National Council of Jewish Women NSW

Dr Fanny worked extremely hard, never turning anyone away despite the hour, fatigue or a waiting room full of patients. Her patients belonged to a lower socio-economic demographic characterised by poverty, degradation and disease. This was the very reason she had decided to be a medical doctor—to ameliorate in every way she could the lives of those needing her help. She responded as a humanitarian to those around her. This was a world away from the

tranquil North Shore where doctors could rely on their affluent patients to guarantee lucrative incomes. Morris Ochert, a young student whom Dr Fanny befriended, asked her once: 'Must you live and work here, in the very centre of this unsavoury area of King's Cross?' She replied,

Where else will I find such need, such human tragedies? No-one wants to know that, below its glossy exterior, there is so much heartbreak, suffering, sickness and degradation in The Cross. I *must* live and work here.' I can attest that her practice, and even her little apartment, was a haven for the abused prostitutes, street kids, beaten wives and homeless dregs of humanity who haunted 'The Cross' She was highly regarded as a philanthropist and known as one who constantly sought to right the many wrongs of life. There was no limit to the compassion she constantly showed. (Ochert 1996, p. 310)

Dr Fanny's reputation as the 'Angel of Kings Cross' was well entrenched. Ochert (cited in Andgel 1998) describes an incident that curtailed a meeting he and youth leaders attended in Dr Fanny's apartment in King's Cross, when 'a badly injured young woman fell through the door':

She had been badly beaten up by her lover who was also her pimp and she was terrified that he may have followed her. An even greater concern was for her baby whom she boarded with a neighbour nearby. Dr Fanny sent Ochert and one of the girls at the meeting to fetch the baby while she attended to the medical needs of the mother. She made up a crib for the baby and settled the mother in a makeshift bed. At midnight the meeting resumed and when it was finished at about 2 am she made omelettes and black coffee and drove the participants home. She told them that first thing in the morning she would drive the girl to have her jaw X-rayed and would then take mother and child to the Salvation Army shelter—after that it was back to the surgery where she had a full appointment book for the day. (Andgel 1998, p. 251)

The 'Angel of Kings Cross' legend around Dr Fanny grew with similar stories related by patients, family members, friends and strangers. When Dr Fanny's niece Jennifer Burman (née Reading) was hospitalised as a little girl, Dr Fanny moved a cot into the child's hospital room and slept there overnight, monitoring her progress and reassuring her. 'My parents didn't do that for me, it was Aunt Fanny,' Jennifer recalled. Dr Fanny did the same for her nephew Leigh Reading when, as a child, he had a tonsillectomy and was hospitalised at the Buenavista private hospital in Kings Cross (Reading, 2019). Ray Ginsburg, a close associate of Dr Fanny's,

described her as, 'The kindest person imaginable.' Dr Fanny attended Ray's daughter, who was an asthma sufferer and would stay with her until all hours of the morning until she came out of an attack (Andgel 1998, p. 251).

Dr Fanny empathised with her patients and personified the family doctor of yesteryear. She was a woman of faith with an appreciation of health, strength and longevity. In 1936, aged 52, she fell gravely ill—all reports are in general terms and do not identify the condition—but, over several months, she recovered her health and returned to her practice. She stated:

It is with a deep sense of gratitude and thankfulness to the Almighty that I have been spared.... [And] to all who sent her get-well cards ... she quoted from the Psalms, 'Be strong and of good courage and walk humbly with me in the way of the Lord' (cited in Andgel 1998, p. 247).

Family Planning and the Racial Hygiene Association

Dr Fanny was active in the area of family planning. The Rachel Forster Hospital in Surry Hills opened in January 1922, the year she commenced medical practice in Sydney. Later she worked there as an honorary medical officer. The Hospital enabled younger women doctors to gain vital medical experience, including training in its Venereal Disease Clinic, which treated patients in a family context. Lysbeth Cohen (1984) notes: 'This clinic was unique for the combination of treatment and counselling it offered and over the years has helped an impressive number of unfortunate women' (p. 21).

In the 1920s, several women's organisations in Australia promoted sex education and family planning, mainly in an effort to stem the tide of venereal disease. Social activist Jessie Street proposed compulsory medical examination before marriage, which proved an unpopular view. That view received support, however, from the Racial Hygiene Association of New South Wales, a body promoting conservative views on human sexuality that aroused both opposition and support in the popular press. Concerned with enabling women to control their fertility, the Racial Hygiene Association attracted sufficient support to survive and, from 1934, ran a free clinic for contraceptive advice.

The Racial Improvement Association was established on 27 April 1926, co-founded by Lillie Goodisson and Ruby Rich (later Ruby Rich-Schalit), both members of the Women's Reform League. Ruby Rich and Dr Lindel Worrall were the inaugural co-Presidents and Jessie Street the foundation Vice-President (*Jessie Street: Documents and Essays* 1990, p. 113). In 1927, the

organisation changed its name to the Racial Hygiene Centre; and in 1928, the name changed again to the Racial Hygiene Association of New South Wales. Street was a close associate of three leading Jewish feminists: the barrister Nerida Goodman (née Cohen), Dr Fanny and Ruby Rich, the latter two involved actively in the Racial Hygiene Association (*Jessie Street: Documents and Essays* 1990, p. 149). In 1926, Rich headed the Society's committee to educate women in sex matters and the prevention of venereal disease. At that time, like Dr Fanny, she was unmarried, but unlike Dr Fanny, she had no medical or nursing experience, so she had reservations about taking on this role: 'I thought it was a job for an older woman. But when I read the literature and realised that gonorrhoea could cause babies to be born blind or deaf, I was moved and agreed' (Cohen 1987, p. 222).

There was a darker ideology associated with the Racial Hygiene Association. While family planning was a core program of the Society's work, providing medical advice to women of all ages—the sphere of the Society's activities that attracted Dr Fanny's participation—a number of its spokespersons, including Rich, articulated and propagated the eugenicist ideals of racial stock.

The Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Racial Hygiene Association, published on 18 August 1932, stated that it was founded to 'collect provide and circulate accurate and enlightened information as to the prevalence of venereal diseases and as to the necessity for early treatment' (Memorandum and articles of association of the Racial Hygiene Association of New South Wales p. 5). It aimed to conduct throughout New South Wales a campaign 'for the prevention and eradication of venereal diseases and to encourage and assist the dissemination of a sound knowledge of the physiological laws of life in order to raise the standard both of health and conduct'. It stated further that the Association would 'establish, undertake, superintend, administer and contribute to any public charitable or benevolent fund for the medical, surgical or other relief, maintenance, support and assistance of any persons suffering from venereal disease.' In 1933, the Association established Sydney's first birth control clinic. These aims and activities were in line with Dr Fanny's medical ethics, given her work as an Honorary Medical Officer at the Rachel Forster Hospital for Women and Children. The Hospital's Venereal Disease Clinic operated from the very beginning and rapidly developed into the largest of its type in Australia (Puckey 1950, p. 294). The Racial Hygiene Association was the precursor of the Family Planning Association (Cohen 1987, p. 222). Clearly, Dr Fanny valued the Association because it offered her a safe space within which to conduct family planning, to

initiate birth control measures and to counsel and educate women and young girls, all valuable measures to stem the flood of venereal disease and to mitigate the effects of poverty.

The medical battle against venereal disease escalated during the Second World War, when Kings Cross became a centre for American servicemen on recreational leave, mainly from Brisbane where they were stationed under the command of General Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers. This 'invasion' had sexual, social and political consequences for Australia. Grimshaw (1994) writes:

National security regulations passed in 1942 empowered police to detain persons suspected of carrying venereal disease, and invariably many more women were targeted than men.... Regulations banned the advertising of contraceptives, even as army authorities promoted prophylaxis among the troops. Schemes were devised to deny women access to alcohol and to promote healthy recreation and feminists joined church leaders in promoting early marriage. (pp. 262-263)

The Association's 1932 Memorandum (p. 13, Item 15) states: 'Groups of experts shall be formed to deal with the various sections of Hygiene such as Sex Education, Venereal Disease and Mental Hygiene'. It states a further aim: 'The education of the community on eugenic lines'. The Association's General Secretary, Lillie Goodisson, was committed to 'the selective breeding of future generations for the elimination of hereditary disease and defects'. She campaigned unsuccessfully for the 'segregation and sterilization of the mentally deficient and for the introduction of pre-marital health examinations' (Foley 1983). For the first five years, eugenics was at the forefront of the Association's agenda. Addressing the Racial Hygiene Association in 1933, clergyman Canon B.S. Hammond advocated for sterilisation:

In his opinion there were five classes from which the community might 'rightly' protect itself. They were: (1) The mentally diseased, who numbered about three times as many as 60 years ago; (2) mental defectives; (3) the mentally unstable; (4) those physically unfit, or those with transmissible diseases; and (5) sexual perverts. He added that sterilisation...had no effect except to prevent parenthood. It was a protection of society, not a penalty on the individual. ('Racial Hygiene: Canon Hammond urges sterilisation' 1933, p. 2)

Viewed now from a post-Holocaust perspective and with knowledge of atrocities perpetrated less than a decade later in the name of eugenics, and cognisant of the excesses of the Nazis in murdering 'sub-humans' as a way of ensuring genetic dominance of a 'master Aryan' race, it is

puzzling that these women failed to perceive the Association's potential dangers. They failed to understand that their patronage of and connection with the Association lent it credibility and, however unintentionally, endorsed the more extreme aspects championed by some of its spokespersons. The question has to be asked, how could Dr Fanny fail to see in those early years the potential trajectory of the Society's eugenics agenda, especially when its spokespersons advocated openly for eugenics. There was considerable support for its program and unqualified acquiescence from an educated elite:

The surprisingly unanimous support given in Sydney by delegates to the [Racial Hygiene] Congress suggestion that sterilisation, voluntary or obligatory, should be the lot of low human types menacing the physical and mental standard of Australians ... the conviction ... that definite action is necessary if this nation is to attain the standard of excellence each one of us desires for it.... But there was not a word of dissent, a significant indication of the attitude of the experts towards the question of coping with the mentally sub-normal. ('Racial problems sterilisation of low types' 1929, p. 10)

It is unlikely that anyone in 1930s Australia could envisage the horrors Nazism would unleash in the years ahead. The very word 'racial' in the name of the organisation did not yet have the connotations for Australians that were implicit in Hitler's racist ideology and his Nazi propaganda. Words evolve over time and take on new meanings. The concept of 'racial' denoting a poison in the blood and therefore ineradicable except by death was an ideology remote from the sphere in which these women operated.

In an article titled, 'The quality and not only the quantity of Australia's people', Rees (2012) notes that, in September 1938, Ruby Rich led a deputation to the NSW government, voicing support for the principles of eugenics and calling for the establishment of segregation colonies for the 'Mentally Unfit'. Speaking on behalf of the Racial Hygiene Association, 'she argued that the unconstrained breeding of the "feeble-minded" was causing 'a rapid increase in mental deficiency, undermining the racial fitness of Australia, and causing a rise in crime, poverty and sexual deviance'. Although the Racial Hygiene Association is now remembered as a pioneer of birth control and the precursor of Family Planning Australia, 'in the interwar decades it was concerned primarily with fostering improvements in racial fitness. Following the principles of selective breeding, the RHA attempted to limit reproduction among the "unfit", encourage childbearing among the healthy, and curtail the spread of hereditary diseases' (Rees 2012).

Rich was an unashamed proponent of eugenics and she was not alone. Rees cautions, however, that involvement with racial hygiene is less anomalous than it may appear initially:

In recent decades, there have been several attempts to dispel the derogatory stereotypes that dog eugenicists, producing a more sophisticated understanding of eugenic thought in Australia. By tracing the pervasive influence of eugenics within medicine, psychiatry, social work and government policy, numerous historians have demonstrated that support for eugenic ideas was widespread amongst Australian progressives from the late nineteenth until the mid-twentieth centuries. (Rees 2012)

Rees argues that Rich, as a feminist, believed eugenics provided direct benefits for women. But she also notes that these benefits ‘wandered perilously close to the territory of class control’; and ‘previous research on the RHA has been polarised by debate regarding its attitude towards eugenics.’

Was Dr Fanny tainted by association with these outspoken proponents of eugenics? Dr Fanny and Ruby Rich enjoyed a close friendship. Both were accomplished pianists, Australian feminists and committed Zionists. Their shared interests brought them together and Rich was an invited speaker at Council of Jewish Women functions. At Council gatherings, however, while she addressed issues of sexual health, there are no references to Dr Fanny speaking on eugenics. Perhaps this indicates the unspoken dividing line between Dr Fanny and Ruby Rich. As a doctor concerned with the health of women and children, Dr Fanny valued the safe places provided by the Association and the Rachel Forster Hospital, within which she could treat and advise women suffering the devastating effects of syphilis and gonorrhoea, the two dominant strains of venereal disease at that time; and provide sex education to women and girls. Eugenics, however, in its pre-war manifestations in Australia would not have accorded with her medical values nor with her deeply observed Judaic value of honouring and preserving life, all life. Furthermore, there are no records of Dr Fanny’s involvement in the eugenicist discourse at any time. She never, at any time, put forward any suggestions or measures that discriminated against those with either mental or physical disabilities.

Wyndham (1996) has emphasised the Racial Hygiene Association’s pioneering work in the provision of birth control and sex education. She argues that, seen from a wider perspective, eugenicists made a significant contribution to public health in Australia:

Eugenics attracted and influenced the thinking of many prominent people who carried this ideology into policy formulation in many of the health and education services

which these experts helped to establish. Eugenists' efforts to improve national fitness encompassed maternal and child health, fighting VD and TB, and the provision of sex education and birth control. (p. 178)

Wyndham insists that 'eugenics was only marginally relevant' to the Racial Hygiene Association, while for Rees eugenics was central to the work of the Racial Hygiene Association in the interwar decades. Both Wyndham and Rees, however, identify certain positive aspects of eugenics as practised in New South Wales and Australia generally. Wyndham states: 'A more accurate view of the pioneers' aims was obtained by examining the humanitarian work of their clinics than by considering their eugenic rhetoric' (p. 351). And Rees (2012) writes: 'It does not necessarily follow that the organisation and its members were elitist reactionaries who advocated intolerance and discrimination.' She acknowledges that while the Association employed a morally dubious theoretical framework, in practice its activities had 'important and historically significant feminist ramifications' and that the principles of racial hygiene for Rich aligned with feminist principles:

[Rich] believed that eugenics provided direct benefits for women, allowing her work with the RHA to become a crucial part of her identity as a feminist. In retrospect, this faith in the munificence of eugenics can appear somewhat naïve.... Certainly, in some cases, the benefits that racial hygiene brought to women [in Australia] came at the cost of limitations on individual freedom, and wandered perilously close to the territory of class control.

Few foresaw the extremist Nazi ideology that would propel the science of eugenics to its genocidal conclusion. According to Rees,

In the post-Holocaust era, eugenics has acquired decidedly pejorative connotations, evoking images of sinister medical experiments and crude attempts at social engineering. Eugenics, it is often assumed, is conservative and reactionary, a xenophobic response to the degeneration anxieties which emerged in the wake of urban modernity. To a contemporary audience, therefore, Rich's interest in eugenics sits rather uneasily alongside her much-lauded commitment to progressive causes.

Eugenics was one of the pillars of Nazism. Ideologues manipulated eugenics to their own ends, reinforcing the concept of an Aryan master race and arbitrarily categorising others, especially the Jews, as 'sub-human'. The swift leap from theory to genocide demonstrated conclusively the dangers of eugenics and delegitimised this science. Dr Fanny learnt of the wholesale

slaughter of Jewish populations perpetrated by the Nazis in the Second World War. She was devastated by reports of their annihilation and mourned those communities. Did the presence of some extremists within the ranks of the Association cause her to re-think her ongoing participation in the Association's activities, given her understanding of the slippery slope to madness that extremist views could trigger? Before coming to a conclusion, it is salutary to remember, as Nina Lemieux (2017) suggests, that the Association's goals were not strictly eugenic:

Marion Piddington [one of the Association's founders] was a eugenicist who supported mainline eugenic practices such as sterilization, the other founders were more interested in using 'eugenics' as an umbrella to advocate a wide-variety of peripherally related issues like teaching sex education, eradicating venereal disease, and providing birth control.

It is probable Dr Fanny continued to see the Association as an appropriate forum for enacting her humanitarian agenda in the areas of sex education, venereal disease and birth control. As a doctor, medical ethics informed her actions. There are no records of Dr Fanny objecting publicly to the eugenics agenda of the Association, although she might well have done so in private conversations with Ruby Rich, Lillie Goodisson and other proponents of this ideology. Neither is there any record of her withdrawal from the Association. Lemieux (2017) states: 'When eugenic ideology declined in the wake of World War II ... the attitudes and policies of countries like Australia were forgotten or even actively buried.' Uncovering these 'buried' archival records represents an important area for future research that is beyond the scope of this thesis.

There are several postscripts to the history of eugenics in Australia, including the forced removal of Aboriginal children—the 'stolen generations'—from their families that aimed at reshaping society into a homogenous 'white' race. These measures were justified on the basis of assimilationist policies and, by some, on the basis of eugenics. Wyndham (1996) has warned against the emergence of 'born-again eugenics'. She cautions: 'New technologies—advances in genetic screening, prenatal testing, gene therapy and allied treatment—should be informed by history' (p. 356).

In November 1943, Dr Fanny presented a paper at the Australian Woman's Charter Conference for Victory in War and Victory in Peace, held in Sydney, which she attended together with representatives of 91 women's organisations (*Jessie Street: Documents and Essays* 1990, p.

150). The conference developed the Australian Women's Charter of rights for women in the post-war world, a feminist manifesto that 'represents a moment in time when Australian women prioritised the single category of gender over other political categories' (Register 1943). Grimshaw (1994) notes:

Their agenda was to formulate a charter for a new postwar social order for women that would secure their economic and political equality. Most of the guiding voices in this movement came from older women, like Jessie Street, who had worked for improvements in women's status for years and who, by the 1940s, were in their fifties. They believed that women's degradation stemmed from their social constitution as 'creatures of sex'. Prostitution they saw as paradigmatic of the female condition. Advancement for women, they believed, meant advancement beyond their condition as creatures of sex into the full citizenship of public life. (p. 263)

Conference President Jessie Street canvassed a broad range of issues but highlighted the need for a publicity campaign to promote early treatment of venereal disease, and knowledge about the causes of venereal disease, such as promiscuous sex relations and ignorance about sex matters. She suggested

sufferers from venereal disease be under the supervision of officers of the Health Department, assisted by social workers and almoners, instead of the Police department; [and] the provision of adequate facilities for the free and secret treatment of venereal disease. (*Jessie Street: Documents and Essays* 1990, p. 39)

At the conclusion of the conference, an event occurred that testified to the courage of Jessie Street and her commitment to helping Jewish people who were, by then, the victims of an unprecedented industrialised genocide. The conference passed a special resolution urging immediate action 'to rescue the Jewish race from the systematic massacre being perpetrated by the Nazis in Europe....' Such activities, aimed at the safety and wellbeing of the Australian nation, as well as initiatives to aid Jewish children and adults fleeing persecution and death in Europe to reach Palestine and to assist refugees arriving in Australia, were part of Dr Fanny's work in the 1930s and 1940s and were conducted through the organisation she founded, the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW), which is the subject of the next chapter.

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To embrace the problems, not only of our people, both here and abroad, but of common humanity.

—Dr Fanny Reading, 1927

Chapter 5: The National Council of Jewish Women—the 1920s and 1930s

The 1920s and 1930s were decades of civic involvement on a national scale for Dr Fanny. This chapter, based on research into primary and secondary sources documenting Dr Fanny's activities as a public figure, examines the evolution of her sociocultural agenda and how it shaped the achievements of the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW). It explores NCJW's philanthropic, educational and social welfare initiatives, which she launched to address issues in the Jewish community, Australia's changing needs, and global events. This chapter focuses on the development, outreach and achievements of NCJW, at home and abroad by examining its evolution from its beginning in 1923 in Sydney as the Council of Jewish Women (CJW) of New South Wales, its transformation in 1929 into the national body, and its growth up to 1938. Chapter 6 deals with Dr Fanny's leadership from 1939 to 1945, the years of the Second World War. Chapter 7 examines the NCJW in the subsequent decades until Dr Fanny's retirement as National President in 1955, aged 71.

As stated previously, 1922 was a year of major change in Dr Fanny's professional and personal life. She graduated from the University of Melbourne's Medical Faculty and established herself as a physician in a hospital and private practice. She moved from her parents' family home in Melbourne to 19 Belgrave St, Kogarah, 14 kilometres south of Sydney (Reading 1923), a residence shared with her brother, Dr Abraham Reading. These years had both challenges and opportunities, affording Dr Fanny the chance to explore new feminist goals for herself and for those she guided.

As noted in the previous chapter, Dr Fanny also joined her brother in his medical practice in Kogarah and Darlinghurst, and worked as an honorary medical officer at the Rachel Forster Hospital, St George District and Community Hospitals ('Jewish Council: An important movement' 1932; see Rutland, 2002). She lived in Kogarah for five years, participating in community projects aimed at the improvement of health services. The local community perceived her as a volunteer worker contributing to their society. On 3 August 1922, the *Daily Telegraph* published an article headlined 'Hospital Benefit Ball':

A successful ball was held on Tuesday evening at the Kogarah Masonic Hall, in aid of the St. George's District Hospital and the District Ambulance.... Among the most prominent and enthusiastic workers in this effort were, Mrs. Bison (president) ... and Dr. Fanny Reading. ('Hospital benefit ball' 1922, p. 3)

The *Evening News* of 4 February 1924 mentions Dr Fanny's involvement as honorary secretary of a women's committee that raised money to purchase an ambulance for the St George Hospital, which the Minister for Justice, Thomas Ley, 'dedicated and presented' to the St George Ambulance Brigade:

The Minister paid a tribute to the work of the women who raised £800 for the purchase of the car.... The women's committee ... was managed by Mrs. H. Patrick (president) ... Mrs. H. B. Primrose and Dr. Fanny Reading (hon. secretaries). ('New ambulance: St George acquisition' 1924, p. 9)

In 1927, Dr Fanny moved to 'Claremont' at 33 Darlinghurst Rd in the heart of Kings Cross ('Social and General: Weekly news' 1927, p. 8), where she ran a general practice in her apartment. She also saw patients at her brother's surgery in Oxford Street, Bondi Junction.

The Council of Jewish Women New South Wales

In June 1923 in Sydney, Dr Fanny met Bella Pevsner, an American representative of the Jewish National Fund (JNF) or, as it is known in Hebrew, Keren Kayemeth LeIsrael (JNF-KKL), an organisation responsible for land acquisition and reclamation in Palestine. At the Fifth Zionist Congress held in 1901 in Basel, Switzerland, Theodor Herzl had pleaded for a national fund with which to build the foundations of a Jewish state. The motion passed and the JNF-KKL came into being with headquarters in Jerusalem. In the first decade of its existence, JNF-KKL helped to establish Tel Aviv; acquired land for the first collective communities (later known as kibbutzim); set up and administered farms; initiated afforestation programs; pioneered higher education; and set up an agricultural station at Ben Shemen that specialised in crop diversification. By 1921, JNF-KKL had quadrupled its land holdings, totalling 25,000 acres. In the 1920s, JNF-KKL reached out to communities throughout the world with a two-pronged program—fundraising and Zionist education—'both connecting Jewish communities to the homeland' (Jewish National Fund). While in Sydney, Pevsner used public platforms to dispel misconceptions about Palestine and to educate the community about Zionism. In her interactions with Dr Fanny, however, she focused primarily on the National Council of Jewish Women in America that was founded in 1893 by Hannah Solomon (Newton, 2000, p. 4), who

dedicated the organisation to religion, philanthropy and education. Nonetheless, in promoting the idea of a comparable Council in Australia, Pevsner made Dr Fanny promise to make the restoration of Palestine one of her Council's foremost aims (Rubinstein, W.D, 1987, p. 107). Newton (2000) notes that Pevsner's, 'most enduring contribution to the development of Australian Zionism was her role in the establishment of the Council of Jewish Women in New South Wales' (p. 4).

Inspired by Pevsner, on 26 June 1923 in Sydney, Dr Fanny proposed a council in Australia comparable to the National Council of Jewish Women in America. What she envisaged from the beginning was an organisation that differed radically from the fundraising charities with which women had been traditionally associated. Hers would be a trans-national body encompassing Jewish communities beyond Australia's borders, and with a local, national and international agenda:

I put forward a scheme, namely, that the Jewish women of Sydney, Australia and New Zealand, might unite as one large body and form a Council of Jewish Women of Australasia. Such a Council should be thoroughly representative, with active centres in every city, where representative women from each State might meet periodically and deal with the serious problems of Jewry. ('Council of Jewish Women of N.S.W. First Annual Meeting and Report' 1924, p. 8)

On 8 July 1923, at Celia Symonds' home in Sydney, Dr Fanny convened a meeting of Jewish women and outlined what she had in mind: a voluntary organisation for women whose members would work together for the greater good in a spirit of friendship (Cohen 1987, p. 74). On 15 July 1923, at a second meeting held at Symonds' home, all 25 women present agreed there was an urgent need for the organisation to combat the problem of intermarriage. They formed a provisional committee known as 'The Council of Jewish Women'. On 30 July 1923, they met and agreed to call their organisation the Council of Jewish Women of New South Wales (CJW). In the year ahead, they held 23 committee meetings, seven general meetings, nine social functions and four special meetings.

Dr Fanny defined the CJW's aims under four headings: educational, social, philanthropic, and world problems of Jewry. She focused immediately on expanding the intellectual horizons of members. All monthly and general meetings included discussions of Jewish interest, as well as 'lecturettes' on topical subjects, many given by men from the Jewish community. In Council's first year, these lecturettes covered topics that ranged from 'The Status of Jewish Women of

Ancient Israel', delivered by Rev. Leib Falk, to a lecture on four operas—*Carmen*, *La Boheme*, *Faust* and *Il Travatore*, given by Cecilia Goldberg and illustrated with operatic excerpts performed by pupils of Louis Zucker and Signor Cacialli. These events proved popular, especially when advertised in advance, and attendance often exceeded 200. They attracted different societal constituencies and enabled Dr Fanny to establish contacts and consolidate networks that would prove invaluable to her when launching Council initiatives predicated on support from both the Jewish and the wider community. For example, visiting violinist Leo Cherniavsky's concert, in aid of a charity nominated by Council, was attended by many graduates of Sydney University. Her commitment to Zionism and the impoverished *Yishuv* in Palestine was already evident. Social evenings held that first year included a Purim Fancy Dress Ball for adults in aid of the Palestine Maternity and District Nursing Fund, and a Purim Ball for children in aid of the Palestine Infant Welfare Fund. Newton (2000) notes: 'As a result of Reading's interest in and commitment to Palestine, the Council of Jewish Women in Australia raised money for *Eretz Israel* [the land of Israel] from its first year' (p. 5).

The CJW came into being at the same time as amenities for the Jewish community burgeoned in Sydney. On Armistice Day, 11 November 1923—four months after Dr Fanny convened the CJW's inaugural meeting—Sir John Monash opened the NSW Jewish War Memorial Building in Darlinghurst, consisting of the Maccabean Hall with seating for 500 and adjacent rooms for social, literary, educational and communal purposes ('NSW Jewish War Memorial official opening' 1923, p. 13). This complex served for many years as a venue for Council functions, including banquets and dinners.

1st AGM 1924: CJW's 'powerful influence for good'

A year later, on 4 August 1924 in the Maccabean Hall, Dr Fanny delivered her first annual report as CJW President before an audience of 200 members and a considerable number of well-wishers. The local Jewish press hailed it as, 'the culmination of a wonderful year's work' ('Council of Jewish Women of N.S.W. First Annual Meeting and Report' 1924, p. 8). She expressed gratitude for the good work done that included support for communities abroad:

At the conclusion of its first year's work, your Council by its efforts in the Educational, Social and Philanthropic sphere of communal activities has provided the justification for its existence. It has brought together in more intimate association, fellowship and understanding the women and girls of our community, resulting in pleasure to themselves, benefit to the community, encouragement to the deserving, and

assistance to the oppressed and needy of our brethren in foreign lands. ('Council of Jewish Women of N.S.W. First Annual Meeting and Report' 1924, p. 8)

Dr Fanny hoped every woman in the Jewish community would become a member and take an active part in their work. She revealed her vision for expansion into a national organisation, so that their movement would spread to all Australian cities where there were Jewish women. She emphasised Council's unity with Jewish women around the world, the ripple effect of what they had achieved locally—members' husbands and children had shown interest in Council's work—and was proud of the first year's 'wonderful result':

She hoped in the coming year to have classes of instruction for Jewish girls over fourteen and she was sure if the Council began these classes, the members would see that their daughters attended ... they were holding their great fair this month to help to save the lives of the infants in Palestine. In philanthropy ... no deserving case had come under their notice that they had not helped and they could assure the community that they were always eager and willing to help those in need of help.... Dr. Reading ... expressed her confidence in the much greater good they would do in the future. ('Council of Jewish Women of N.S.W. First Annual Meeting and Report' 1924, p. 8)

Significantly, the men present endorsed the value of Dr Fanny's report. Dr Fanny's Council agenda represented a progression for her members from the subservient position women had occupied previously in the Australian Jewish community:

This was because of strong male opposition to any possible interference by women in the running of the community. The Jewish woman's role was seen as wife and mother and where she did venture outside the home and hearth it was mainly in the field of philanthropic endeavours or as 'ladies auxiliaries', assisting but subordinate to the male efforts. The formation of the National Council of Jewish Women by Dr Fanny Reading was the first effort made by Jewish women to raise their status within Australian Jewry. (Rutland 1987, p. 101)

This emergence of a potent women's voice was doubly threatening to entrenched male leadership, as it occurred at a time when the communal leadership role exercised traditionally by synagogues was being challenged by secular organisations. In Melbourne,

an ongoing struggle for community leadership emerged in the 1920s. It centred on the issue of authority to represent the community. At first it was a battle between an

exclusive synagogue-based hegemony of established Jews and an inclusive, broad-based secular authority.... Before 1920 there was neither an umbrella community body to provide a united Jewish voice in dealings with government nor a forum for debate among organisations serving the established community. (Taft and Markus 2018, p. 85)

Rabbi Francis Lyon Cohen, who arrived in Sydney from London in 1905 to take up an appointment as Chief Minister of the Great Synagogue, had opposed the formation of the CJW in 1923. Dr Fanny was a member of his congregation and when she suggested special Council Sabbaths should be held, in the first instance, at the Great Synagogue, Rabbi Cohen rejected the idea, as he was personally opposed to 'American innovations'. He was a notable figure in Sydney and his sermons were published regularly on the front page of the *Hebrew Standard*, so his views filtered through to the wider Jewish community and influenced his own congregation:

Other [Great Synagogue] leaders feared that the movement [the CJW] would interfere with congregational activities and lead to the abandonment of such traditions as the segregation of the sexes in the synagogue, as they believed had occurred in the USA. Many claimed the scheme was too ambitious and would merely create another philanthropic organisation, resulting in unnecessary overlapping. The [synagogue] Council was also opposed because it was feared that its sectarian nature would foster anti-Semitism. (Rutland 1988, pp. 158-159)

Therefore, when Aaron Blashki paid tribute to her leadership and Council's work 'for their suffering sisters in less fortunate lands', and Sydney solicitor Percy Marks stated, 'They had kept in mind their brethren in other countries whose cry for help was more urgent than our own', these men were acknowledging Dr Fanny's innovative leadership, as well as the broader scope of Council's activities and reach internationally. Seemingly overnight, with Dr Fanny's guidance, women were becoming politically aware; they had tuned in to contemporary events abroad affecting their co-religionists and were devising pragmatic ways of supporting them through their traumas, when and where possible.

Percy Marks championed their work warmly, alluding to a controversy in the community among those who feared an openly Jewish organisation might provoke antisemitism: 'They should not dream of restricting their good work for fear of becoming conspicuous and thus engendering antisemitism' ('Council of Jewish Women of N.S.W. First Annual Meeting and Report' 1924, p. 8). His comments were an open acknowledgement of the opposition Dr Fanny

encountered. At first, her Council was not universally approved by the Jewish community and there were dissenters with concerns about it. Dr Fanny confirmed this and recalled that at their first general meeting attended by 40 women at the Great Synagogue Chambers:

[O]pinions were voiced that a suggested body of Jewish women might give rise to anti-Semitism, a feature practically absent in Australia, also that local interests only should concern the Association, and that the Council's efforts would result in overlapping on the work of other societies. ('Council of Jewish Women of N.S.W. First Annual Meeting and Report' 1924, p. 8)

Dr Fanny demonstrated her ability to defuse negative perceptions by focusing on positive outcomes: 'After being constantly in the communal limelight, your Council closed the first year of its existence with firm confidence that Australian and New South Wales Jewry remains as free from anti-Semitism as at any time in its existence' (p. 8).

Despite the controversy dogging Council's early beginnings, the inaugural AGM's mood was congratulatory and praise for Dr Fanny fulsome. According to solicitor Sydney B. Glass, honorary treasurer of the N.S.W Jewish War Memorial, 'They had sown a harvest where before the ground was barren. They had proved they were loyal Jewesses—loyal to their King and their country—loyal to the cry of distress' (p. 8).

Dr Fanny's report did more than reiterate achievements of the past year. She emphasised her reasons for creating the Council:

It occurred to me ... that there existed in this city so much apathy and indifference regarding the affairs of our people, that there was room for a movement in which our women and girls could meet, discuss and attempt to solve our many problems. I realised ... the great and powerful influence for good, the Jewish women could yield, and felt that by appealing to the latter, we could overcome the apparent lack of responsibility, provided every Jewish women and girl played her part. (p. 8)

Dr Fanny did not allow opposition from the Great Synagogue or communal criticism levelled at her organisation to impede progress in the four spheres—education, religion, culture, politics, philanthropy and social welfare—within which she launched Council initiatives. By 1929, however, when Dr Fanny organised and held the First Jewish Women's Conference of Australasia, 'its transcripts reveal the intense concern and the thorough comprehension of relevant issues exhibited by delegates, **who yet lacked a voice on the councils of the Jewish community at large**' [my emphasis] (Rubinstein, H.L., 1991, p. 295). By now, the Council had

transformed into a national body representative of Jewish women throughout Australia, the NCJW was well respected in its own right and Dr Fanny, as President, had the necessary gravitas to access leaders at grassroots and governmental levels. It had evolved swiftly into an independent organisation with its own identity, moral compass, agenda and spheres of influence. Nonetheless, Dr Fanny subscribed to collaborative efforts across a broad spectrum of community projects, linking her members with other organisations. Over many decades she networked effectively to build these relationships, as evidenced in her contribution towards the establishment of the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies in 1945, in which she played a significant role as a founder member.

Council's immigration sub-committee

Dr Fanny's 1924 report highlighted one of her important priorities for Council—the formation of an immigration sub-committee empowered to assist Jewish immigrants,

[to] meet them on their arrival and, in conjunction with the Montefiore Home, house them if necessary—advise them as to place of residence and extend to them the hand of friendship, so that they shall not feel strangers in a strange land. Eight Italian Jewish boys who had no friends in this country were found employment. ('Council of Jewish Women of N.S.W. First Annual Meeting and Report' 1924, p. 8)

With Dr Fanny's own family origins mired in Russian antisemitism, she empathised with communities abroad experiencing pogroms and persecution. She knew the biblical command to care for the stranger 'because you were strangers in the land of Egypt'. She focused Council's efforts on ameliorating the worsening situation of Jews in European countries, and she aimed to assist the Jewish *Yishuv* (Jewish residents in Palestine prior to 1948):

Our world problems have received special attention during the year. For the special appeal for the oppressed Jews in the Ukraine the handsome donation of 25 guineas was contributed. For the Palestine Maternity and District Nursing Fund £62 has been forwarded towards the £100 promised by the Council to train Maternity Nurses. To help the women and girls in agricultural pursuits in Palestine an Autograph Book was instituted for which we have £40 3s. in hand. For the Palestine Infant Welfare Fund, your Council promised to do its share in establishing Infant Welfare Centres. (p. 8)

Within the first year of Council's existence, with 377 members implementing its programs, Dr Fanny succeeded in creating an extensive local agenda focused on social, religious, educational

and philanthropic projects. Council responded to global events, thereby enlarging its members' worldview, elevating their vision beyond the parochial to include the disadvantaged and marginalised in overseas communities. In so doing, members transformed into social activists, many of whom asserted themselves and raised their voices for the first time.

The Council was the first Jewish women's organisation in Australia to combine an increasing feminist-inspired awareness and promotion of the rights and status of Jewish women both as individuals in their own right and possessing legitimate and exclusivist group interests with the traditional idea that good and charitable works constituted for women the sole appropriate communal activity outside the home. (Rubinstein, H.L. 1991, p. 12)

Council established a reputation for good works nationally and internationally, and won the goodwill of many prominent Australians, who were happy to be associated with its endeavours, and to be seen doing so. In Sydney, the Governor of New South Wales, Admiral Sir Dudley de Chair, agreed to be patron of a Council Fair held in 1925 in the Sydney Town Hall to raise funds for disadvantaged children in Palestine; and Sydney's Lord Mayor, Alderman David Gilpin, opened the Fair. At the opening, Dr Fanny's speech on conditions overseas and Council's humanitarian mission informed and educated the general public. She described the 'sad and helpless condition of the little babes in Palestine', and stressed the multicultural and interdenominational aspect of Council's work, pointing out that money raised would support children 'of all denominations in Palestine, be they Christian, Jew or Turk' ('Council of Jewish Women of N.S.W.: Pageant of Fairyland ' 1924, p. 8). Her words prompted a response from Thomas Ley, NSW Minister for Justice in the cabinet of Premier Sir George Fuller:

No children shall ever go hungry in this fair land...and I know that God will bless you in your wonderful work. I am a Gentile...and when I see around me such glorious efforts to help the hungry and unhappy babes on the other side of the world, I feel that humanity owes a great debt to you Jewesses. ('Council of Jewish Women of N.S.W.: Pageant of Fairyland ' 1924, p. 8)

The Council received recognition from overseas organisations such as the NCJW of America, the Bureau of Jewish Research, and the Women's International Zionist Organisation (WIZO). Dr Fanny consolidated these contacts in 1925, when she spent a year abroad in the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe, Egypt and Palestine.

Dr Fanny's year overseas in 1925, in particular her association with women leaders and representatives of national and international women's organisations, would prove of benefit to her CJW. She left Australia on 26 March 1925 on board the *Tahiti*, which sailed via New Zealand to San Francisco. In the United States, she attended the Sixth Quinquennial Conference of the International Council of Women held in Washington DC, from 4 May to 14 May 1925, as an alternate delegate of the ten-person Australian delegation headed by Ruby Board, vice-president of the National Council of Women of New South Wales. Several historians have mistakenly stated that this was a conference of the International Council of Jewish Women, which it was not. All members of the National Council of Women were entitled to be present at the conference as visitors, though only delegates or 'alternates', such as Dr Fanny, could vote or speak at meetings ('Women's column' 1925, p. 5). Dr Fanny had close contact with Australian delegates from Western Australia, Tasmania, Queensland, South Australia, and New South Wales ('Women's column' 1925, p. 5). The Commonwealth patroness of the National Council of Women in Australia, Lady Rachel Forster, profiled the Australian representatives:

The question arises, how can Australia be fittingly represented at this conference? It possesses many women remarkable for their fine public spirit and keen intelligent interest in public affairs...unsurpassed, I believe, by any nation in the world.

('International Council of Women: Quinquennial Conference: Lady Forster writes from Federal Government House, Melbourne' 1925, p. 9)

About 300 delegates from 43 countries attended the Quinquennial Conference, representing more than three million women ('Council of Jewish Women of N.S.W.: The June general meeting' 1926, p. 12). The Conference agenda, which aligned closely with Dr Fanny's mission for CJW, dealt with 'matters pertaining to the health and happiness, moral and physical, of the nations, for the purpose of promoting co-operation in their efforts for the welfare of the family, the community, and the race' (p. 9).

CJW's collegial harmony fractures

Despite Dr Fanny's vote of confidence in the women deputising for her in 1925 when she travelled abroad, the unity of purpose she fostered among Council members appears to have fragmented to some degree in her absence. This disunity highlights the strength of her personal command of the organisation in shaping cohesion and outcomes. It contrasted with Dr Fanny's optimistic tone at a farewell held a few weeks prior to her embarkation for the

United States. When Celia Symonds spoke of her qualms at taking on Dr Fanny's role, Dr Fanny expressed confidence in Symonds' ability 'to fill her shoes well' while she was away. She told members she would bring back to Sydney the benefits of her experience. She said much had been accomplished in raising the status of Jewish women to a position not previously held. They could be proud of work done in saving babies' lives in Palestine. On her trip abroad, *en route*, she said she would visit Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth to organise Jewish women in those centres ('Council of Jewish Women of N.S.W.: Reception of visiting artistes presentation to Dr. Fanny Reading ' 1925, p. 5).

Without Dr Fanny's guidance, however, Council's course seemed imperilled. A schism threatened the harmony between Council and community bodies, possibly among Council members as well. An article in the *Hebrew Standard* referred to destructive criticism aimed at Council by unnamed sources. In a plea for unity and goodwill, Celia Symonds stated:

The object with which the Council was formed was to make the Jewish women think and work as a body.... Its objective is to arouse in every Jewess in the community a consciousness of what the fact of their being Jewesses imposes upon them and of the need to band together as a united body to fulfil such obligations. The Council at all times welcomes criticism even though it is adverse, provided it comes from persons who follow its activities and wish to help by their criticism. These critics are welcomed but the Council has no time for the other kind who have plenty of avenues in which to employ themselves elsewhere without attempting to mislead others and cause communal dissension. ('Council of Jewish Women of N.S.W. Attendance at AGM' 1925, p. 5)

Council confronted the criticism levelled against it and continued with its work, which included endowing a bed in the Women's Hospital in Crown Street, Sydney, formulating plans for beds in other hospitals, and welcoming immigrants and taking them to Council homes. They raised funds to alleviate suffering, famine and epidemics in Ukraine, where sixty percent of the Jewish population lived in 'damp, congested hovels' and where 'the plight of thousands of orphan children who wandered about by day and settled on doorsteps at night in the cold and famine stricken streets, was too awful to dwell upon' (p. 5). At the 1925 annual general meeting, Dr Fanny was re-elected President of Council *in absentia*.

Media interest in Dr Fanny

Throughout Dr Fanny's year abroad, local press in Sydney and national papers in Australia reported on her activities. On 4 December 1925, the London *Jewish Chronicle* published an interview in which she explained the purpose of the CJW. The article reveals that, in response to experiences and ideas to which she was exposed in the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe and Palestine, she had re-conceptualised foundational values of Council. A marked shift in her orientation is apparent, with her focus now almost exclusively on the young and their future. She expressed concern regarding perils adolescents faced, and the increasing problems of intermarriage and assimilation that threatened Jewish continuity. She stressed the need for education to address ignorance of Judaism, its rituals and traditions:

We are particularly interested in the problem of the adolescent girl, and we aim at continuing the education of Jewish girls after the age of fourteen in the knowledge of their race and religion. We seek also to stimulate among Jewish women a greater Interest in Jewish observances, both at home and in the synagogue by means of simple addresses which will assist them in the education of their children. ('Dr. Fanny Reading' 1926, p. 12)

Dr Fanny's first visit to Palestine reinforced her commitment to the Jewish homeland. The knowledge she gained had an impact on future programs for Council. These aimed at ensuring the well-being of mothers and children by improving medical and healthcare amenities. Interviewed in February 1926 in Perth after her return to Australia on board the *Esperance* and, she spoke of the re-building of Palestine:

Well educated people were to be found working on the roads, and in the marshes, helping to restore their country.... Dr. Reading instanced Tel Aviv, which four years ago had a population of 5,000, and to-day is a flourishing modern city with 40,000 inhabitants, mainly Jewish. Haifa, a city possessing a natural harbor ... was also expanding at a marvellous rate. Intense interest was being taken in agricultural development, which is being fostered under both the co-operative system and by small holdings. During the prior regime, Palestine was full of malaria, but the new arrivals combated this by planting thousands of eucalyptus trees and cleaning the town. ('Palestine: Under British rule woman doctor's views' 1926, p. 5)

Dr Fanny witnessed Jews creating a viable Jewish homeland; and she had faith in the harmonious interaction of Arabs and Jews. Her optimism resulted from her observation that

Arabs recognised 'the wonderful work they [the Jews] have done in introducing agriculture and establishing factories'. Additionally, a power station to be erected near the Jordan River would supply current to surrounding districts, clearly of benefit to all. She told a Perth reporter that Jerusalem would always be venerated by the Christians, Jews and Moslems (p. 5).

Dr Fanny disembarked from the *Esperance* in Melbourne and travelled by train to Sydney, arriving on 4 March 1926 at Central Station to a welcome from Council members. Her return provoked media interest and she gave several interviews, an indication of her standing in the general community. These articles reflected her buoyant mood and delight in being home. 'Give me Australia to work and live in and all the rest of the world in which to holiday,' she told *The Sun*, Sydney's afternoon paper. She said her attendance at the 14th Zionist Congress in Vienna had inspired her, as did her stay in Palestine, where she gained understanding of the situation in the Jewish homeland and what had been achieved. She was impressed with the world-class hospitals Jews had established, the pre-natal clinics and those devoted to child welfare (for further discussion of Dr Fanny's impressions of Palestine in 1925, see Chapter Eight). She gave her impressions of women's clinics in New York, Baltimore and Vienna; and her visits to children's hospitals in Berlin, London and Dublin ('Dr Fanny Reading arrived this morning, enthusiastic welcome' 1926, p. 15).

The *Sydney Morning Herald* interviewed Dr Fanny the day she returned, publishing their article the next day. It focused on her views of medical standards abroad and child welfare. She commented on her time in the United States:

I toured from the west to the east and found everywhere the same thorough methods in operation. Schemes for sight preservation, for a defence against possible tuberculosis, and other diseases, are in general operation. In the worst slums of New York I saw supplies of pure food being given to poor children—all this to help build up their resistance against disease. ('For Women. Dr. Fanny Reading. Child Welfare Abroad.' 1926, p. 5)

Australian newspapers reflected a wider world for their readers, most of whom rarely travelled overseas at that time. Dr Fanny's review of hospitals and institutions abroad enhanced her reputation in the general and Jewish communities. She mentioned that she studied at the Great Ormond Street Hospital in England; at the Rotunda Women's Hospital in Dublin; and at the Emperor and Empress Frederick Children's Hospital in Berlin, working with the Hospital's renowned Medical Director, Professor Heinrich Finkelstein.

Even the suburban paper the *Propeller*, published in Hurstville, close to where she lived, commented on her travels through America, Europe, Egypt and Palestine. Describing Dr Fanny as 'a well-known resident of Kogarah', their reporter highlighted Council's welcome-home reception for Dr Fanny at the Maccabean Hall ('Dr. Fanny Reading', p. 2). Given that this venue seated several hundred, the capacity attendance reflected public interest in her report. According to the *Hebrew Standard*, the reception drew a crowd of 250, including her parents and brother, Dr Abraham Reading. Vice-President of Council, Mrs John Marks, welcomed Dr Fanny home:

[T]hey were glad to have the opportunity of welcoming her, that they might get the benefit of her travels. She had been the founder of the Council and the inspiration of its good work in the past, and with the knowledge and experience gained abroad the work of the Council would be greater than ever. ('Council of Jewish Women: 250 at Maccabean Hall' 1926, p. 6)

There were no hints of disharmony in Council ranks in these press reports in 1925. Mrs Marks emphasised that they had worked amicably together in Dr Fanny's absence, and that they were financially and numerically in a strong position. Mrs Victor Cornfield, Council's honorary treasurer, reviewed recent achievements, including a £100 donation to the Ukrainian Fund, a contribution to Jewish education and work achieved by the girls' section.

When Dr Fanny rose to speak, the audience responded with applause before she had uttered a single word. Her address was more than an administrative report to followers. She conveyed her thoughts and emotions in a way calculated to awaken enthusiasm and commitment in her listeners and to motivate her members to greater efforts. She established the groundwork for future Council programs, addressing issues important to her. She reinforced pride in their organisation, speaking of Council's status that ensured that she, as CJW President, was well received and given opportunities not otherwise possible. She attributed the universal respect accorded her—in America, England, Ireland and Palestine—as homage to their organisation. She described the CJW as her first-born child and said that, while away, she had acquired a second child—Palestine, the National Home.

In glowing terms, Dr Fanny described her first encounter with the ancient homeland of the Jewish people, conveying her elation at being on holy ground:

They were making roads and were changing barren soil to Paradise.... The schools and the University and the revival of Hebrew were a wonder and surprise to her. It was a

country in which the Jew is free—freer than anywhere else in the world and where no apology is needed for being a Jew or excuse for the practice of his religious rites and traditional customs. ('Dr. Fanny Reading' 1926, p. 6)

Dr Fanny said that Hadassah's baby clinics had inspired her, and she hoped Council would undertake maternity projects along those lines. She intended to increase Council membership to 1000, so that she could put into practice 'the big ideas' she had after visiting various parts of the world.

Letters from Palestine

Dr Fanny's letters from Palestine to her family reveal her shifting perspectives and record her vivid impressions while there in December 1925. They document experiences that seeded potential initiatives and refer to personalities she had met with whom she established ongoing connections. In her first letter from Jerusalem, written on Sunday 13 December 1925, she described their long journey from Cairo to Jerusalem, a ferry ride across the Suez Canal to East Kantara, thence to Lydda (Lod), where they had changed trains, and three hours later she and her mother saw Jerusalem for the first time. She noted sights *en route* that included Samuel's tomb, the Mountains of Judea, 'an Arab boy with a flock of sheep [who] might have been David', and the Jewish settlements easily identifiable by their green trees. In Jerusalem, they stayed at the kosher Central Hotel run by the Amdursky family, just inside Jaffa Gate, within the walls of the Old City. Their first negative impressions—dirty streets, white sandy roads and 'crude methods of everything here', as well as the widespread incidence of conjunctivitis in the children—faded quickly and Dr Fanny commented:

This is a city the like of which there has been nothing in all our travels ... the view of the city from any high point is beautiful. Taken as a whole it is a wonderful city and we are both enraptured with it.

Their first Sabbath eve was musically rewarding for both Fanny and her mother, both of whom enjoyed the singing that accompanied traditional Friday night blessings and prayers. In a letter to the family in Sydney and Melbourne, she described the Amdursky children, who possessed beautiful singing voices:

A tiny girl has the sweetest of voices and a son has a magnificent tenor—they are most musical and it is a vocal treat, their benching [sic, the grace after the sabbath meal], well your mother just swallows it all in.

After this spiritually elevating Friday night in the Old City, they visited the Hadassah Infant Welfare Centre the next day, which Dr Fanny reported on when she returned to Sydney. She admired their 'pre-maternity' work and commented, 'I was amazed to see the thorough efficiency of their work.'

Dr Fanny and her mother were mentally and emotionally exhilarated, seeing and experiencing their Zionist dream translated into reality:

We are most happy to be here, I can't express my feelings and mother's to you. It is as if you had lost something so dear to you and now had found it again. The atmosphere of purity, wholesomeness of the Jewish spirit pervades all things. At midnight a perfect peace hangs over the city—what a contrast to Cairo with its night life, gaiety and laxity—here is all seriousness and the harmony of its diverse inhabitants to me is marvellous.... Everything is of interest here, fancy having Jewish carriages, Jewish bus drivers, Jewish police (also Arabic and a few English officials) Jewish everything and Hebrew spoken by the children is a real live language. (Family letter 13 December 1925, Jerusalem)

Although conscious of the primitive nature of the infrastructure and public services, she made allowances. Two weeks later, with Jerusalem deluged with rain, Dr Fanny wrote, 'You ought to see the streets and pavements full of white mud but no one minds. They all look forward to the day not far distant when their streets will be clean like ours' (Family letter, 28 December 1925, Jerusalem).

In December 1925, Dr Fanny and her mother visited Balfouriya, a moshav in northern Palestine named in honour of Lord Arthur James Balfour, who signed the Balfour Declaration on 2 November 1917. Established in 1922 by 18 Jewish pioneers, Balfouriya was the first village founded in Palestine after the Balfour Declaration. Lord Balfour, who attended the opening of the Hebrew University on 1 April 1925 on Mount Scopus, visited Balfouriya a few days later, on 6 April 1925, and gave it his blessing, only eight months before Dr Fanny visited the moshav that same year. Balfouriya was near Afula in the Jezreel Valley, which Dr Fanny and her mother also visited. Their tour included Ein Kerem, an ancient village south-west of Jerusalem; Ein Harod, a kibbutz founded in 1921 that became the centre of the kibbutz movement in Mandatory Palestine; and Tel Joseph (originally part of Ein Harod), where they slept one night in the barracks; Tiberius on Lake Galilee, where Esther Rose bathed in the hot springs, and where they visited the tomb of Rabbi Meir Baal-HaNess (Rabbi Meir the miracle worker); and

Safed. They spent the sabbath in Haifa and from Mount Carmel admired the view of the port that Fanny predicted 'would be a great harbour'. They visited Migdal (Magdala in Aramaic, the ancient settlement where Mary Magdalene had lived) near the Sea of Galilee, and the old colony of Rosh Pina, the first supported by Baron Edmond de Rothschild, which in 1922 had a population of 468, of whom 460 were Jews. From there they travelled to Rehovot and on to Tel Aviv, where they spent a full week. Tel Aviv captivated Dr Fanny, who described it in glowing terms to her brother Dr Abe Reading:

Tel Aviv is a 100 percent Jewish city. It is such a peculiar sensation to see everything here built, made and traded by Jews. Only Jews parade the streets and it is a busy, noisy place. Yesterday Shabbos not a shop open, everyone going to shool [shul] or promenading the beautiful streets. On Friday night through every window one saw the Shabos candles. (Family letter, 10 January 1926, Tel Aviv)

In Palestine, Dr Fanny met a number of dignitaries, including the Russian-born Zionist leader and President of the Jewish National Fund, Menachem Ussishkin, whom she had met for the first time in August 1925 in Vienna at the Zionist Congress, only four months previously. Ussishkin played a role in the establishment of the Hebrew University and had attended the University's official opening by Lord Arthur Balfour, only a few months before Dr Fanny met him again in Jerusalem. Ussishkin was a Labour Zionist, who advocated for the establishment of agricultural settlements, some of which Dr Fanny had visited. It is likely she discussed with Ussishkin the future of these kibbutzim and moshavim and their role in the revival of the Jewish homeland, and what her Council could do for their social welfare services and for the JNF generally. The meeting would clarify the scope of JNF activities and the potential contributions of the Jewish diaspora to their work in Palestine, which focused mainly on the redemption of land, the acquisition of land being so crucial to the development of agricultural initiatives.

Dr Fanny also met the distinguished British army officer, Sir George Stewart Symes, who was ending his term as Governor of the Palestine North District (1920-1925). Subsequently, he was Chief Secretary to the Government of Palestine (1925-1928). He and his wife invited Dr Fanny and her mother to their 'At Home'. When they met him, Symes was also (Acting) High Commissioner for Palestine, in Lord Herbert Plumer's absence. In 1925, Dr Fanny believed that the British Mandatory power would honour the Balfour Declaration and promote the development of a Jewish national home. She respected British institutions, and her family had demonstrated their loyalty to the British Empire during the First World War, when her three

brothers enlisted to serve 'King and Country'. While Symes' hospitality was a social highlight of Dr Fanny's stay in Jerusalem, later an ideological chasm would divide Dr Fanny from the views of the Mandatory Administration Symes represented, when Britain reduced Jewish immigration to Palestine to a trickle. Two years after their meeting, in November 1927, Symes told the League of Nations, 'in present circumstances, the Administration ... realised the necessity for restriction on the number of Jews entering Palestine immediately (Mandate for Palestine – League of Nations, online)

The first Attorney-General of Mandatory Palestine (appointed by Britain), Norman Bentwich and his wife invited Dr Fanny and her mother to a luncheon at their Jerusalem home, which offered an opportunity for an exchange of ideas in a private setting. This gathering was a success and Dr Fanny wrote:

Very fine English people, would have seen more of them but they went last week for a trip to Mount Sinai (you have no idea how interesting they make their lives here, going on journeys here and there, in company with celebrated archaeologists, heads of other works etc.).

This friendship was revived in September 1938 in Sydney, when Professor Bentwich arrived in the city to secure support for the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

The head of the American Jewish JOINT distribution relief work in Palestine, Miss Berger, took Dr Fanny and her mother to visit the 'orphans and baby home' in Jerusalem and invited them afterwards to her home, where Dr Fanny met 'interesting women, including Mrs Magnes, wife of the First Chancellor of the Hebrew University, Dr Magnes'. That same week, they visited a Hebrew kindergarten:

So beautifully arranged and lovely children all speaking Hebrew—their ages from three to six, and even have an orchestra of 20 themselves conducted by each one in turn. You would have loved to have seen them. We gave some sweets to be distributed ... and the thanks in Hebrew gave us so much pleasure. (Family letters, 28 December 1925)

It is evident from Dr Fanny's letters, that she met influential people who knew of her reputation and achievements, and who thought she should stay and work in Palestine and urged her to do so. Dr Fanny had toured the country and seen the *chalutzim*, the pioneers, and the progress made in diverse fields that compelled her admiration. It had been an emotional journey for her, seeing already the partial fulfillment of the Zionist vision. She also knew that

much remained to be done in the challenging times ahead, as she was a pragmatist, aware always of the realities of a situation. Whether she could be tempted to throw in her lot with the *Yishuv* was a proposal made and discussed seriously at that time by her admirers in Palestine, who knew of her many capabilities in both medical and public spheres. If she had taken such a step, it would have had dire consequences for her organisation in Australia, which already showed signs of stress and a potential rift developing in her absence. In December 1925 in Jerusalem, Dr Fanny addressed a gathering of 100 women in the home of her friend Rose Slutzkin:

I was asked to tell them what I thought of their work and to tell them about the C.J.W., which I did. They all enjoyed what I said and many of them have tried to prevail on me to stay here and organise some unity between them. There are so many factions, cliques, institutions here that they need some sort of federation and they think such a leader and outside force as I would be, is needed here. But my home ties and dear ones are more to me and there is plenty to do in our part of the world and I told them I could do more for them in Australia perhaps. (Family letters, 28 December 1925)

They returned briefly to Jerusalem and left there on 19 January 1926 to board the *Esperance Bay* two days later in Port Said, bound for 'home sweet home' (Family letter, January 1926), and scheduled to arrive on 17 February 1926 in Melbourne.

Family relationships

While media interviews, in Australia and abroad, focused on Dr Fanny's observations of the Jewish world and society generally and how her experiences overseas in 1925 shaped her future goals and strategies, her personal letters to her family at home during this extended period apart tell a different, more intimate story and provide evidence of a close-knit and mutually supportive family. These letters, now in the Dr Fanny Reading realia archive at the State Library of New South Wales, show that after several months of travelling, both she and her mother Esther Rose were homesick and yearned to see and be with their family again in Melbourne and Sydney. They had left Dr Fanny's father, Nathan, alone in the family home in Melbourne, with his daughter 'Ray' and her husband Benjamin as Nathan's sole support in his wife's lengthy absence. Dr Fanny's brothers 'Abe' (Abraham) and 'Lew' (Lewis) were in Sydney. Hyman, who spent some time with them in the USA, returned to Melbourne for a period of time. Dr Fanny's letters shuttled back and forth between the families in the two cities. In her letters, Dr Fanny addressed them collectively as 'Dear People'.

On Dr Fanny and her mother's arrival at the Regent Palace Hotel in Piccadilly Circus, she wrote to the family on 16 July 1925, revealing that, whether near or far, her concern for the family was uppermost on her mind. It is clear that Dr Fanny took great interest in the health of every member of the family, assuming responsibility for their wellbeing. Both Fanny and her mother, she wrote, were 'delighted' to receive letters from home but distressed by news of her father's health concerns. Her letter conveyed an explicit reproach to the family members who failed to act in his best interests, her response exacerbated by her realisation that, had she been there, she would have acted differently, 'he should have gone to Sydney where Abe could have looked after him ... instead of Dad suffering at home'. She expressed relief that Ray's baby boy 'is getting on better now'. She reassured the family that their mother was fully recovered from the flu she contracted in the United States: 'She picked up so wonderfully on the boat and she is now very well too.' She commented that they were both 'glad to hear from Abe that he too is better and not so troubled with indigestion,' adding thankfully and somewhat tongue-in-cheek, 'Lew I imagine is always very well.'

Dr Fanny missed especially her brother Dr Abraham Reading, with whom she had a close personal and professional relationship. While spending one month in Dublin studying obstetrics and midwifery at the Rotunda Hospital, he was in her thoughts constantly. She wrote several lengthy letters to Abe, all of which were filled with medical news concerning new surgical instruments, advances in surgical procedures and different ways of treating complicated obstetrical cases. In passing, she mentioned that she has not been sightseeing at all. Clearly, she had no time to explore the world around her in Ireland, either ideologically, historically or scenically. She was focused exclusively on the work in hand and wished that her brother could have benefited from the introduction to new surgical methodologies, which she promised to talk about on her return. It is clear that in Ireland, professional work was her priority, and she seized this rare opportunity to advance her qualifications. While these letters from Dublin to her brother are medical in content, Dr Fanny's terms of endearment indicate the strength of their sibling relationship. Writing from Dublin's Rotunda Hospital on 13 October 1925, she asks him to 'Apply for extension of leave of absence from Kog. [Kogarah] Hosp. [Hospital]. Please dear boy for me' (Family letters, State Library of NSW). Abe was ever present in her thoughts, especially when she watched an operation conducted by the brilliant surgeon Dr Solomon, who kept up a commentary and gave 'tips'. She wrote, 'I will endeavour to explain these to you. Wish you could have seen him at work—you could have learned a lot. A new edition of his book will be out next week and I'll bring it back home'. Dr Fanny ends her letter affectionately with her loving phrase for Abe, 'dear boy':

Well, dear boy, I feel so selfish being away so long and I can assure you Mum and I are most anxious to get back and be with you all again—we are counting the weeks and hope to return as soon as ever we can. Our best love to you and all in Melb [Melbourne] Yours ever, Fanny. (State Library of NSW, Series O3: Fanny Reading realia)

Aside from Dr Fanny's emotional closeness to Abe, she was indebted to him for his support in financing their trip abroad. On 16 July 1925, she wrote from London, expressing her thanks for the money he sent to them:

On Friday we went to our Bank to fix things up and they later let me know that the money you cabled had arrived, for which you have our most heartfelt and grateful thanks. We do appreciate all you are doing for us and you can depend on us we will do our best to make it go as far as possible. (Family letter, 16 July 1925)

Throughout their travels, she and her mother were disciplined in their spending, despite the attractive goods available. From Venice, in a letter dated 13 August 1925, she wrote that the shops in St Mark's Square were so tempting: 'The beads that only Venice makes, the glassware, the lace, the shawls, leather goods etc. If only one had tons of money what beautiful things there are to buy.' On a strict budget and despite economising on desirable consumer goods, Dr Fanny splurged on medical instruments bought especially for her 'dear boy' Abe. She reported frequently on their 'cheap' accommodation and also on unexpected expenses, such as the cost of soap and bathing in Lucerne: 'On the continent, you have to pay for soap and baths—so you can't have a bath every day.... Also the beer in Switzerland is wonderfully good, v.light [sic] and so cheap' (Family letter 13 August 1925). On 18 September 1925, in a letter to both Abe and Lewis, she acknowledges that Lewis has also contributed financially to their trip. Dr Fanny, once again reveals her weakness for buying Abe the latest medical instruments, this time in Vienna:

I hate to worry you dear boys ... but I think for our fares home and stay in Palestine we will have to have £120 to £150, that will be the end of our requirements. If we have more than we require, you can depend on it, we shall bring it back. Vienna cost us a great deal, we were there three weeks and five days, and money went there on Clinics and a Zeiss cystoscope, which I hope you will be pleased with. I couldn't resist buying these for you. I got some Wertheim and Weibl forceps for hysterectomy etc. and other uterine op instruments. (Family letters, 18 September 1925, p.3)

The letter ends affectionately: 'Our best love to you both and our best wishes to you all for a happy and prosperous new year, Yours ever, Fanny.'

On 23 November 1925, writing from the British Medical Association House in Tavistock Square, Dr Fanny penned a loving letter to her father, addressing him affectionately as 'My dear Dad'. They were so glad to hear he was well, adding, 'Sorry you miss us so much, we miss you and will be glad to be back home again—we didn't imagine we would be away so long.' She told him that she had been busy in London attending hospitals and completing a course in anaesthetics. The next letter, written from Jerusalem on 28 December 1925, once again highlights the warmth of family bonds. Abe remembered Dr Fanny's 41st birthday on 2 December 1925 and sent her a cable, which reminded her, in turn, that she had neglected to send 'best wishes to Lew, Abe and Hyam for their respective birthdays and this is somewhat late, all the same we wish you all very many happy returns of the day and trust you will all be spared to us for 120 years (as your mother would say)'.

In one of Dr Fanny's last letters from Jerusalem, she wrote that they would leave Palestine on either the 19th or 20th January 1926 to board the *Esperance Bay* in Port Said on 21 January, bound for Melbourne. She made clear their longing for a reunion with loved ones:

We shall soon be with you again and you can have no idea how anxious we are to be with you all—as the time draws nearer we are more and more homesick—don't know how the time has gone and we have been away so long away. Keep well all you dear people, the best of all love from all of us to you all. Until we see you, Yours ever, Fanny. (family letter, undated, from Central Hotel, Jerusalem)

Centrality of youth in Council's future

Dr Fanny's hopes for the future of the CJW were predicated on educating the youth to play their part in Council affairs. Their participation was vital to ensure Council's leadership succession, to guarantee a viable and enduring organisation, and to create linkages between diaspora Jewry and the *Yishuv* in Palestine. She created structures within her organisation to foster their absorption in age-appropriate sections and challenged them to implement social justice programs. Ten days after her return, more than 200 young boys and girls organised a welcome-home party in her honour on 15 March 1926 in the Maccabean Hall.

[T]his gathering of young people compared most favourably with all the institutions and associations of Jewish young people that she had come into intimate contact

[with] during her visit abroad. She had been proud to be able to tell others what a fine body of young people Australian Jewry possessed. ('Council of Jewish Women', p. 7)

In addressing her young audience, Dr Fanny revealed the depth of her research into Jewish youth and youth groups abroad. She admired Junior Hadassah, an organisation with 5,000 members in 106 centres in the United States that supported the Girls' Village for orphans in Palestine, where the children worked domestically and in agriculture. She investigated the Inter-University Jewish Federation in London, which contributed to the Hebrew Library in Jerusalem and raised funds for a student hostel at the Hebrew University. She spoke of the youth in Palestine:

In the fields, in the cities, schools, industries etc., these young pioneers were seriously shouldering the responsibilities of our people and were working wholeheartedly with mind and body to show the world that the Jew can once again be a tiller of the soil and produce from these tracts of country which had lain idle for centuries, the richest of grain and cereals. Their enthusiasm for the Hebrew language was as great as their love for the Holy Land. ('A welcome home party' 1926, p. 7)

Dr Fanny's emphasis on the recruitment and education of young people reflected the centrality of youth—their education, participation and social options—in her worldview and plans for future programs. She told her young audience she was pleased a Jewish Boy Scout movement had started in Sydney and hoped they would inaugurate a girl guide movement. She suggested they focus on increasing membership, reducing the annual subscription, and activating to a greater extent the choir, and dramatic and sewing circles. She suggested a first-aid class, a Hebrew-speaking class and a Council Juniors section. Her approach was inclusive, as evident in the girls' sub-committee report of the meeting:

We are asked to say every Jewish girl, whether a member or not, will be welcome, as it is desired in the interests of young Jewish womanhood of this State, that every girl lend her aid and co-operation in the work to be undertaken. ('A welcome home party' 1926, p. 7)

Dr Fanny's emphasis on youth participation in community affairs for the betterment of humanity was a major theme to which she referred on her return to Sydney. In the light of Australian conditions, she evaluated youth projects she had observed overseas. Five weeks after her return, at Council's general meeting on 12 April 1926, she impressed upon 120 members present that American Jewish women encouraged the involvement of younger

women, exemplified in the Young Women's Hebrew Associations in New York and Philadelphia, and the Crippled Children's Organisation in New York. Younger married women 'realised their responsibilities and devoted much time to the work of these various organisations—many of them had most prominent positions and were excellent public speakers' ('Council of Jewish Women of NSW: The April general meeting', p. 4). In England, women and girls did excellent work among the poorer Jews in the East End of London. In particular, 'The youth of Palestine, especially the girls, were working on the land with an idealism that did not find its equal in the world. The conditions prevailing and the increasing immigration need our sympathy which should be practical' (p. 4).

New projects and initiatives

Dr Fanny returned to Australia with new ideas for fundraising. She suggested a 'Happy Day Fund', enabling members to mark any occasion with contributions to the fund. Eager to consolidate links made with overseas organisations, she planned and introduced Council's monthly bulletin for members, with educational articles and reports reflecting their projects, which could be circulated at home and abroad.

Along with Dr Fanny's emphasis on youth, she focused on Council's role in welcoming new arrivals to Australia. Immigration and the need to find employment for migrants occupied her mind and she determined that Council should assist newcomers in a pragmatic way. She organised an employment bureau 'to assist the immigrants who will surely come to these shores in the next few years'. In May 1926, disturbed by news in London's *Jewish Chronicle* describing the dire situation of Polish Jews, Dr Fanny rallied members to help their brethren. Council's Immigration Welfare Committee met and welcomed new arrivals in Sydney, and a welcome association was formed in Fremantle to assist immigrants. Dr Fanny encouraged members to liaise with organisations aligned with their own ideals. Consequently, the New Settlers' League invited Council to arrange a reception for all immigrants arriving on the *Baradine*. The chairman of Council's Immigration Welfare Committee, Mrs Cohen, saw this invitation as an opportunity to create inter-faith harmony and goodwill 'to educate newcomers to Australia in ideas of religious toleration. By showing what Jewish hospitality means and by judicious words of welcome much good could be effected' ('Council of Jewish Women of N.S.W., 'The June general meeting' 1926, p. 12).

While abroad, Dr Fanny had observed Americanisation classes, 'where young and old "foreign Jews" were being taught English' and she introduced the concept in Sydney, under the aegis of

Dora Abramovitch, who also edited the newly instituted *Council Bulletin* ('Council of Jewish Women: The Girls' Committee' 1926, p. 5).

Dr Fanny activated new projects inspired by her travels abroad. She reconnected with metropolitan and national organisations beyond the orbit of the Jewish community. She showed interest in their programs, attended their gatherings and supported their initiatives, nurturing her connection with the National Council of Women and her friendships with their leaders, such as Jessie Street and the delegates with whom she had attended the International Quinquennial Conference in Washington. In a demonstration of support for the National Council of Women, on 29 April 1926 she headed a contingent of 40 members from her Council attending a National Council of Women luncheon at the Wentworth Hotel in the city, in honour of Lady Stonehaven ('The May general meeting' 1926, p. 13). Dr Fanny's interest and participation in National Council of Women's programs and initiatives continued through the years, as many of them mirrored her stand on socio-political issues. On 18 April 1929 in the Royal Empire Society Hall, she attended a general meeting of the National Council of Women, at which discussions took place on 'sex prejudice' that denied competent career women positions they deserved; the nomination of women to serve as representatives on standing committees of the League of Nations and the International Labour Office; the increasing number of assaults on women and children; and the potential amendment of the Crimes Act ('National Council of Women' 1929, p. 5).

Under Dr Fanny's presidency, Council expanded nationally. At the fifth AGM held on 6 August 1928 in Sydney, Dr Fanny reviewed Council's progress and its expansion into Victoria and Queensland, bringing closer her vision of a national organisation. She emphasised issues strategically significant for her: the role of youth, helping immigrants, education, philanthropy at home and abroad, and Zionism. In regard to youth, she spoke of the work achieved by Council Juniors. With her passion for capturing a youth constituency, she had created Council Sub-Juniors whom she congratulated on their 'wonderful work' ('Council of Jewish Women: AGM [6 August]', p. 11). She reflected on the achievements of the Immigrant Welfare section:

The Immigrant Welfare section's work during the year has been a boon to Sydney Jewry. The Jewish Men's Hostel during the four months of its existence has provided nearly 15,000 beds. Assistance of all kinds in all problems is given to immigrants and they are made to feel welcome in the land of their adoption. The Gentlemen's committee in connection with this section gives very valuable assistance. ('Council of Jewish Women: The AGM [6 August]' 1928, p. 11)



Figure 11: The Misgav Ladach Hospital, Jerusalem

In regard to philanthropy, Dr Fanny said the biggest activities had been payment of £2,000 towards the Maternity Ward in the Misgav Ladach Hospital in Jerusalem (see Figure 11) and Council's gift of a bed to the Crown Street Women's Hospital in Sydney. She outlined four objectives for the year ahead: the organisation of Council in every state of the Commonwealth; the construction of Council House, which she considered constructing in the near future; the development of her Big Sister mentoring movement; and the endowment of additional beds in the Misgav Ladach Hospital. She concluded with the hope 'that all their efforts in the years to come would be crowned with success for their work in the ranks of Judaism and humanity' ('Council of Jewish Women: The AGM [6 August] 1928, p. 11). Two weeks later, she told a *Daily Telegraph* reporter in Sydney that she was most interested in the construction of a hostel for Jewish immigrants: 'Ground has been bought in Francis Street, and Dr. Reading is pushing ahead the work of raising funds that will make it possible to begin building operations' ('Social gossip: The woman of the day Dr Fanny Reading' 1928, p. 20).

While fundraising for major projects in Sydney, Dr Fanny guided and supported activities in other states. On 16 April 1929 in Brisbane, she met Council Juniors and suggested they form lecture and study circles. She endorsed their '10,000 shillings appeal' to maintain a cot in the maternity ward of a hospital in Palestine, which 'would provide comfort for at least 50 mothers in that country' ('Council of Jewish Women: An enjoyable and interesting evening' 1929, p. 29). Three weeks later, on 6 May 1929, she addressed a large Sydney gathering on her visit to Brisbane.

First Jewish Women's Conference of Australasia

Dr Fanny initiated Council's first conference, held 17–25 May 1929 in Sydney. Attended by 115 delegates, it drew inter-state representatives, demonstrated the organisation's increased membership nationally and their range of projects at home and overseas. It revealed the regard in which Council was held: the NSW Attorney-General attended a Conference luncheon in Council Rooms in Castlereagh Street, and the Acting Premier provided two launches to transport delegates on a trip around Sydney Harbour. Dr Fanny took pride in these marks of Council's standing in the wider community. The important issue, however, was recognition of Council's transition to national status, with the establishment of the National Council of Jewish Women of Australia. Dr Fanny envisaged that this national sisterhood would achieve great things:

Such a united Jewish womanhood will work with a oneness of purpose to give service to themselves, their race, and humanity. It will be an inspiration and force in the lives of all Jewish women. It will bring to them a broader vision, a better understanding, and keener appreciation and knowledge of Jewish women's work. This unity will wipe out distances and will bring perpetual love and affection to the various states.... By such a united sisterhood working together, bigger things will be accomplished, no energy will be wasted or dissipated, and the sum total of all efforts will be far greater than hitherto. The work of such an organisation will know no limitations, all manner of human service will come under its Programme. ('Council of Jewish Women [Brisbane report]' 1929, p. 2)

Dr Fanny defined the major issues: secular and religious education of Jewish women and girls; hygiene; child welfare; contact with Jewish women in the 'outback'; the education of children and youth; the promotion of Hebrew and training of Hebrew teachers; representation on Jewish education boards; and combatting intermarriage. On the agenda were immigration and associated social work, helping Jewish people in Eastern Europe and Palestine, and planning Council Houses in every state. Dr Fanny issued a call to action:

Such problems concern all Jewish women and only by meeting in such conferences can the best results accrue. These conferences will arouse the Jewish consciousness in our women and girls, making those interested still more keen, and those not so interested will be awakened to a sense of their responsibilities. It is hoped that ... the Council spirit of love, understanding and service, [will] be infused throughout the land. (p. 2)

Dr Fanny was delighted that Council Juniors played an important part, with junior delegates from other states attending their own sessions and receiving messages of support from as far afield as Berlin, Germany. She participated in their proceedings, urging ongoing Judaic and Hebrew studies beyond the age of 13 for boys and girls, as she maintained that speaking Hebrew was a bond between Jewish youth around the world. With a view to empowering women to participate in public affairs and forums, she suggested public-speaking classes for girls to promote the art of debating ('Junior session: Jewish women's meeting', p. 15).

At the conclusion of conference, Dr Fanny and several Council members, representing Tasmania, New Zealand and Queensland, attended a National Council of Women luncheon, at which the President of the Federal Council of the National Councils of Women of Australia, Mildred Muscio, welcomed conference delegates. In reply, Dr Fanny said the Jewish women's conference, the first of its kind to be held in Australia, had been most successful, 'and all States in Australia and New Zealand would now be linked up into one Council of Jewish women' ('National Council of Women' 1929, p. 6).

Councils in Perth, Kalgoorlie and Adelaide

Less than four months after conference, Dr Fanny travelled by train to Perth, arriving there on 16 September 1929, where a delegation headed by Rev. D.I. Freedman met her at the station. Dr Fanny planned to create the first Council of Jewish Women in Western Australia, and her arrival prompted press interviews in which she outlined Council's aims. These articles reveal that her priorities were shaped by events abroad and increasing antisemitism in Europe. Her comments confirm the international reach of her diplomatic efforts on behalf of those subjected to persecution and desirous of migrating to safer shores. Her activism on their behalf extended well beyond Australia's borders. She told the *Daily News* reporter that Council objectives included,

educating its members by lectures and linking their interest to important civic and national movements, subsidising Jewish education, lending financial support to the cause of the brethren in Eastern Europe, and to the restoration of Palestine, meeting Jewish immigrants and advising them on their arrival, supplying information on all immigration problems, co-operating with the States of Australia, Europe and America in immigration problems and aiding Jewish men and women who had become stranded in returning to their relatives overseas. ('Jewish women: Proposed Council' 1929, p. 6)

The *West Australian* reported that Dr Fanny intended creating a national body to embrace all states. Western Australia and South Australia were the only two states without Councils of Jewish Women, and she spoke of visiting South Australia on her way home to start a Council there. She said the movement was flourishing in the Eastern states, with two Councils in Brisbane, one in Sydney and one in Melbourne. She envisioned a unified organisation nationally. By banding together, 'it was possible to give assistance to Jewish women who had problems of their own which were not common to the rest of the community' ('Jewish Women council to be formed: Aims explained' 1929, p. 16). She added that aside from important work in helping immigrants, Council members visited the sick, endowed cots, aided the poor and helped to raise the standard of living for Jewish people. For the first time, she mentioned a scheme for £100 three-month-long tours to Palestine, enabling Jews to learn more about their homeland ('Jewish Women council to be formed: Aims explained' 1929, p. 16).

After forming a Council of Jewish Women in Perth and spending ten days there, Dr Fanny boarded the train for the journey home to Sydney, via Kalgoorlie and Adelaide. Seven hours later and 550 kilometres further, on 5 September 1929, the train pulled into Kalgoorlie station, where members of the Jewish community entertained her in the Railway Refreshment Rooms. They knew of her organisation and achievements. On behalf of the Kalgoorlie Hebrew Congregation, I. Masel spoke of Council's power as an organised body to work for the good of humanity. In that brief whistlestop, defying fatigue and eager to profit from her brief encounter with potential members, Dr Fanny succeeded in forming a Council in Kalgoorlie. She presented an overview of Council's two-pronged approach that addressed problems in the Jewish community and that showcased its humanitarian agenda for 'mankind in general'. Her comments reveal her belief in the strength of Jewish women to combat antisemitism and alleviate the suffering of their co-religionists:

The Council has set before its members the brightest and noblest of Jewish ideals and has proved quite practically that all these ideals can be carried out and used for the benefits of humanity. Only knowledge can break down the ignorance and prejudices of the ages, and Jewish women are equipping themselves with that knowledge of their own people, which alone can make possible a right pride of race and stem the tide of religious intolerance. The Council of Jewish Women is always glad to participate in any movement that is intended to benefit the community and mankind in general.

('Council of Jewish Women: Visit of Dr Fanny Reading. Welcome in Kalgoorlie' 1929, p. 2)

Dr Fanny was determined to achieve her goal of a South Australian branch that would make NCJW representative of all the states, 'She would certainly not leave Adelaide until one was formed' (Leigh 1929, p. 24). On 29 September 1929, Dr Fanny addressed an evening meeting of the Jewish community in Synagogue Chambers in Adelaide. By now she had honed her marketing and communication skills and was able to condense her agenda into targeted messages that progressed from the personal contribution of every member to the united efforts of the organisation as a whole. She conceptualised her ideas in both philosophical and pragmatic terms. It was a motivational speech calculated to energise new recruits. It encapsulated her mission of ensuring the future of the Jewish people and the viability of Judaism:

Service means the rent we pay for the space we occupy, and some of us do not pay our rent. We ask all our members to give personal service—labour and effort mean so much. More than just money, because they involve sacrifice. Our chief aim is to make Judaism a living force, we want to do away with the present apathy and indifference to Jewish ideals. And, if we can do this by bringing women and girls together, and carrying our influence into their homes, then the future of the race is assured. We want to educate our young girls to knowledge and love for everything Jewish, and to this end we give lectures and arrange study classes for religious and secular subjects. (cited in Leigh 1929, p. 24)

Dr Fanny's preoccupation with the rate of assimilation and intermarriage was a response to these trends in the 1920s threatening the continuity of the Australian Jewish community:

Assimilation, meaning both acculturation to Australian ways and the disintegration of ethnic distinctiveness, was one of the dominant features of Australian Jewry before 1933. ... the community risked the loss of structural separateness in its primary relationships, which included family, friends and social clubs. ...this tends to lead to marriage outside the community, resulting in the eventual disappearance of the ethnic group. (Rutland 1988, p. 141)

Dr Fanny spoke of her anxiety concerning intermarriage and her plan to organise clubs for young people where they could meet and 'find more happiness among themselves'. On an international level, she shared her distress at witnessing the devastation of post-war conditions in Eastern Europe and the unhappy lives of many Jewish girls in Vienna and Berlin, who had no freedom or employment and faced 'the menace of the streets' ('Tragedy in Europe

' 1929, p. 23). It is not clear whether this phrase, 'the menace of the streets,' implied rape or prostitution. Her pragmatic solution was the creation of a Jewish 'Big Sister' movement, 'to bring girls out as children and give them a chance to grow up as daughters of Israel' ('Daughters of Israel: Jewish girls organise' 1929, p. 23), and she hoped to bring 30 young girls every year to Australia where they could start their lives in a new country. The Big Sisters would guide and support the Little Sisters from unhappy Eastern Europe ('For Women: Jewish Women, Formation of National Council.' 1930, p. 12). Assisting their brethren in Eastern Europe and helping in the upbuilding of Palestine were foundational objectives in Council's work.

Dr Fanny's commitment to Zionism was evident in the passion with which she spoke of young Jews in Palestine and their transformation of the land:

We have to show the world that Jews can go back to the land, and only the young people can do that. In Palestine we are going to raise...a peasantry that is intellectual, and that brings all the wealth of science to bear on the problems of the land, and all the beauty of Jewish art to make the life splendid. ('Daughters of Israel: Jewish girls organise' 1929, p. 23)

Dr Fanny encouraged the youth in Adelaide to form a Junior Council. On her return to Sydney, at a general meeting on 4 November 1929, she brought greetings from five newly formed Councils, including recent additions in Perth, Kalgoorlie and Adelaide, making a total of nine Councils nationally, comprising 1,500 members.

Newcastle Council of Jewish Women

Accompanied by 30 members from Sydney's CJW, Dr Fanny travelled to Newcastle in New South Wales on 8 December 1929. The following evening, she inaugurated the Newcastle Council, and addressed the community on Council objectives ('Formation of Council of Jewish Women in Newcastle' 1929, p. 10).

1929 had been a year of progress and triumph for Dr Fanny. On 11 December 1929, she heard the first performance by the Council Juniors' newly-created orchestra, comprising 14 instrumental players conducted by the President of Council Juniors, Mattie Adams ('Council of Jewish Women (contributed)', p. 9). This was the realisation of Dr Fanny's dream—young people committed to social programs and cultural development. The orchestra reinforced her

objective of bringing together Jewish youth who shared their passion for music in a social setting that fostered friendships between the sexes.

By the end of 1929, Dr Fanny was recognised nationally for the Council's work and humanitarian agenda. A Newcastle newspaper emphasised her role as a national changemaker and conveyed the esteem in which she was held generally:

Dr. Reading, who possesses a charming and magnetic personality, has travelled extensively, and is a woman of the highest endeavours and ideals. By her untiring zeal and devotion on behalf of humanity in general, she has won admiration of every Jewish community in Australia. Through her efforts, branches of the Council of Jewish Women have been formed in every State throughout the Commonwealth. Her career has been one full of public-spirited acts, the result of wisdom and devotion. Her paramount ideals being philanthropy and education. ('Visit of Dr Fanny Reading', p. 2)

Dr Fanny could look back on substantial achievements, with national press coverage of the emergence and consolidation of NCJW throughout Australia consistently positive. The *Sydney Morning Herald* described it as 'an organisation to unite all Jewish women and girls with the ties of love, goodwill, and sisterhood', recalling its genesis in July 1923 when Dr Fanny broached the topic of the first CJW to 60 potential members ('For Women: Jewish Women, Formation of National Council.' 1930, p. 12). In the preceding seven years—years in which 'the highest ideals of sisterhood, co-operation and peace had been promoted' ('Council of Jewish Women of NSW: Eighth annual meeting' 1931, p. 5)—Dr Fanny established 10 Councils around Australia, with headquarters in Sydney, Newcastle, Brisbane, South Brisbane, Melbourne, Ballarat, Geelong, Adelaide, Perth and Kalgoorlie; to which were added five Junior Sections in the various states; and, for the first time, the establishment of Sub-Juniors in Sydney, which catered for girls aged 9 to 16. She said it marked a new era for womanhood and that NCJW was the conduit through which Jewish women could work for the benefit of mankind. Importantly, her words hinted at her lifelong re-imagining of the Jewish woman, a transformative process she led and achieved over many years by means of religious and secular education; cultural initiatives; social activism; increased political awareness; networking with other faiths, ethnicities and organisations; feminist goals enabling members to fulfill socio-political roles in public affairs; participation in creating and strengthening organisational structures; and participation in personal and intensive mentoring at all levels of the NCJW.

The lofty ideals of such a national body will enrich the lives of Jewish womanhood, will banish misunderstanding, and will inculcate a greater expression of Jewish life, religion, and culture. By building up a superior character of fine Jewish womanhood, the council hoped to have a permanent influence for good in Australia. In addition to this, their status would be raised, and they would be able to participate in world conferences of women. ('For Women: Jewish Women, Formation of National Council', p. 12)

Challenges of the 1930s

A new decade that lay ahead that would test Dr Fanny's resources and resilience. The 1930s presented challenges for her and the newly constituted NCJW. The Wall Street crash in 1929 in the United States led to a worldwide depression, bringing about the collapse of the Australian economy. Unemployment peaked at 32 percent in 1932, and it took almost the whole decade for Australia to recover from the 'Great Depression' (*Defining Moments: Great Depression*). The depression affected NCJW, as it did all Australian institutions with philanthropic roles. John Goulston said of Dr Fanny that 'whilst some were thinking of the depression, she accomplished things by hard work' ('Council of Jewish Women of N.S.W. New club rooms opened' 1931, p. 7).

Dr Fanny reported on 10 August 1931 that, despite unprecedented difficulties, the Council succeeded in balancing its budget. The Council's Thrift Shop served as a depot for garments collected by the Jewish Clothing Guild and distributed to the poor. Council assisted the Montefiore Home and ran the Employment Bureau ('Council of Jewish Women of NSW: Eighth annual meeting' 1931, p. 5). Rubinstein notes that the Great Depression virtually halted immigration to Australia and few non-British Jews arrived in Australia in the period 1930-1935; the British preference for British migrants remained; and only aliens with £500 landing money or with close relatives in Australia to support them were granted landing permits or government authorisation to enter the country (Rubinstein, H.L., 1991, p. 163). The Government estimated the total number of Jewish migrants to Australia during 1935 at less than 100 (p. 165). In this restrictive immigration era, Dr Fanny never ceased representations to Government to secure a relaxation of stringent immigration requirements.

In August 1931, Dr Fanny relinquished the position of Council President that she had held for eight years to take on the role of National President, as work in Councils throughout Australia had increased and required a director devoted exclusively to the national portfolio. Her

successor in Sydney, Mrs Harris Cohen, conferred Life Presidency of CJW NSW on Dr Fanny. She responded that what she had done for this Council and the women of Australia was only her duty and that she would continue the work she loved 'for as many years as strength would be given her' ('Council of Jewish Women of NSW: Eighth annual meeting' 1931, p. 5). Two months later, at a meeting to mark the opening of Council's new rooms at 175 Pitt Street, Mrs Harris Cohen presented a formal portrait of Dr Fanny to her, expressing the hope that she would consent to it being hung in Council rooms; and she gave her a roll-top writing desk, with a plaque affixed, which read:

Presented by the members of the Council of Jewish Women of N.S.W. to their Life President, Dr. Fanny Reading, as an expression of love and admiration for her successful and tireless efforts for the benefit of Judaism and humanity. 1923-1931. ('Presentation to Dr. Fanny Reading', p. 7)



Figure 12: Council's portrait presented to Dr Fanny in August 1931

Courtesy of NCJWA NSW

This portrait of Dr Fanny taken a few months before her 47th birthday reveals the self-assurance of a mature woman with a confident and unflinching gaze. There was no attempt at the simpering smiles of fashion portraiture of the day. It is the face of a woman who inspires confidence in others, with a serious expression befitting a leader of a national organisation. If one can discern shadows of fatigue under her eyes, it speaks to her arduous hours, her dedication to her medical profession by day and her work for the Council by night. This is clearly a portrait of an individual who has shed girlish frills and frippery and has emerged as a woman of substance in the community.

At the presentation, Dr Fanny deflected attention from herself to the role of Council in making her who she was; and urged members to accept opportunities and not hide their qualities. Referring to recently opened Council rooms, she wanted them all to love the establishment. She articulated her democratic ideology that all would be welcome, there would be no question of rich or poor—no differences would be made—members would not be asked to show their bank balances. There would be no restriction and no prohibitions, but she relied on them to uphold ‘the dignity of the rooms’, which would be open at all times. She appealed for funds for furnishing, and said they had a lease for three years but she hoped later ‘to even buy the building’ (*'Council of Jewish Women of N.S.W. New club rooms opened'* 1931, p. 7). Dr Fanny’s focus on securing a building to serve as a permanent home and centre for the Jewish community, bringing them together synergistically for the greater good, was her lifelong aspiration. A year later, addressing the Victorian Council in Melbourne, she lamented that ‘our forefathers eighty years ago, when ... land was cheap, did not establish a centre for Jews in the city’ (*'A plea for Judaism: Address to Jewish Women'*, p. 7). Her dream of Sydney Council vacating rented premises and moving to their own Council House would be realised only in 1963 when the Fanny Reading Council House opened in Woollahra, where it continues to serve the NCJWA NSW.

Antisemitism threatens Jewish communities in Europe

1930 started auspiciously for Dr Fanny, who played the piano at a Chanukah celebration and concert in the Maccabean Hall in Sydney, accompanying a gifted violinist (*'Chanukah Entertainment'* 1930, p. 4). However, this musical performance proved a deceptive start to the decade. In the years ahead, Dr Fanny confronted her worst nightmare—the resurgence of antisemitism that threatened Jewish safety and continuity throughout Europe, beginning in Germany and Austria. Hitler and his Nazi Party’s accession to power in 1933 in Germany

unleashed antisemitism, rallying militaristic Brownshirts, who persecuted Jewish communities. Hitler's antisemitic ideology and the Brownshirts' reign of terror spread rapidly and was taken up around the world in countries that developed local versions of the Nazi 'shirt' movement. With conditions deteriorating for Jews in Europe, Council's philanthropic work increased, attempting (not always succeeding) to help those fleeing Nazi tyranny, sustaining the few arriving in Australia and assisting those eager to find refuge in and entry to Palestine. Dr Fanny told a *Sydney Morning Herald* reporter that Council's program included immigrant welfare, such as meeting boats to assist Jewish passengers, supporting their stay in temporary hostels, running an employment and labour department, conducting educational classes, and establishing Council houses for immigrants and homeless boys and girls ('For Women: Jewish Women, Formation of National Council' 1930, p. 12).

In the early years of the 1930s, Dr Fanny was preoccupied with Jewish survival but, at that time, the genocidal horrors ahead were still unimaginable. On 4 January 1932, addressing the Victorian Council in Melbourne, she surmised that,

should the Hitler faction gain control of the Government ... the Jews would certainly be expelled from the country.... We are trying to make a national Jewish womanhood of Australia, and then link up with other Jewish women of the world, to help those who are dear to us and are suffering in other lands. ('A plea for Judaism: Address to Jewish Women' 1932, p. 7)

The Argus reported on the meeting:

Dr Reading appealed for sympathy for those members of the race who were suffering desperate hardships in European countries, especially in Russia and Turkey, and also in Germany.... The councils stood...for the survival of the ideals of Judaism and the removal of the evils and problems that beset the Jewish race at present. ('Jewish Women's Council: Reception to Dr Reading' 1932, p. 9)

Dr Fanny's concern for her co-religionists abroad intensified with the introduction of the Nuremberg Laws on 15 September 1935 in Germany, depriving Jews of citizenship, curtailing their civil rights, imposing a Jewish identity on people of partial Jewish extraction and on Jewish converts to Christianity (Rubinstein, H.L., 1991, p. 165). It was a pattern that would take hold progressively, marginalising, disenfranchising, dispossessing and, finally, dehumanising and murdering the Jews. The plight of European Jewry featured in the proceedings of the 2nd Jewish Women's Conference of Australasia held in 1932 in Sydney, attended by delegates from

around Australia and New Zealand. Held three years after the first conference and 11 days before the opening of the city's Harbour Bridge, Sir Daniel Levy opened the conference on 8 March. He referred to 'Council's interest in the condition of Jewish people in Europe' and warned that 'the days of Jewish persecution were not yet over' ('Crowd Clamored For Admission' 1932, p. 4) and that 'They are still feeling an undeserved antagonism' ('For Women: Jewish Women Opening of Conference' 1932, p. 6). Representing the National Council of Women, Mrs Edmond Gates declared: 'Hitler's invidious anti-Jewish plans would be met with the greatest opposition from the women of Germany' ('Crowd Clamored For Admission' 1932, p. 4). While history proved Gates wrong, her comments reveal that the National Council of Women at that time knew of the suffering of Jewish people and were prepared to speak up on their behalf.

Dr Fanny encapsulated her philosophy in the address she gave to delegates on the first morning of the conference, articulating her belief in the 'Law of loving kindness'. It resonated with delegates, setting the tone for conference and for the work of the NCJW. She said, 'The best of all impressions to take back from this conference to your States, your cities, and your homes is, that the Council of Jewish Women stands, above all things, for the law of loving kindness' ('Jewish women: annual conference' 1932, p. 4). Rabbi Kirsner's toast and tribute to NCJW touched Dr Fanny so deeply that, as the *Daily Telegraph* noted, she 'was unable to reply for several minutes, so great was her emotion' ('Jewish women down to business' 1932, p. 4). On 10 March 1932, at a conference luncheon attended by the wife of NSW's Governor Sir Phillip Game, Lady Gwendoline Game, and the Lady Mayoress, Mrs. S. Walder, Dr Fanny said that Jewish women could be relied on to help any cause of benefit to mankind ('For women: Jewish women conference activities' 1932, p. 4). Lady Game validated this sentiment, 'Your race has a reputation for philanthropy, wit, and brains, and any movement in which you are engaged must be a progressive one' (p. 4). The conference demonstrated Dr Fanny's ecumenical approach, with speakers of diverse faiths and perspectives represented, including Mrs A. H. Austin from the Young Women's Christian Association, who spoke on 'National Ideals', and Professor Francis Anderson from Sydney University, whose subject was 'The League of Nations', emphasizing that the world required a 'creative and dynamic peace'.

Dr Fanny stated that NCJW would take a prominent part in the movement for peace (p. 4), foreshadowing her participation in Jessie Street's Australian Woman's Charter Conference, held 19-22 November 1943. Dr Fanny told *The Sun* that the NCJW conference would consider the position of Jews in Eastern Europe, especially in Poland, Germany and Rumania. With

global events and their consequences uppermost on her mind, she focused on what Australian women could do and, in particular, how the country's Jewish women could unite with their compatriots to meet these challenges within an Australian context:

Jewish women, too, must make their voices heard, together with the other women of Australia, on such vital questions as the peace of the world and disarmament and it is these questions which have been brought forward for discussion at this conference.
('Council of Jewish Women's Big Conference' 1932, p. 24)

Despite Dr Fanny alluding to the 'movement for peace,' there is no evidence linking her to the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Australia (WILPF), which was active in Australia. Nonetheless, Dr Fanny kept her finger on the pulse of feminist-inspired movements in Australia and it was well known that, in 1931, the WILPF collected 117,740 signatures in Australia for a worldwide disarmament declaration initiated by WILPF International. Among the signatories was General Sir John Monash, widely respected in the Jewish community (*The Mercury*, 'Working for peace', p.11, 6 June 1931). In 1932, the year of Dr Fanny's national conference, the Geneva Conference on Reduction and Limitation of Armaments (1932-1934) failed WILPF expectations.

Dr Fanny invested thought, time and energy in conference preparations, proceedings and analysis. In the midst of these intensive efforts, cultural events sustained her and afforded her a measure of relief and relaxation. Reporting on a CJW meeting on 2 May 1932, the *Hebrew Standard* wrote, 'Dr Fanny Reading delighted members with her artistic pianoforte solos' ('Council of Jewish Women: General meeting' 1932, p. 6); as she did two months later at a reception for Benno Moiseiwitsch and his wife ('Council of Jewish Women [Benno Moseiweitch reception]' 1932, p. 4).

In 1932, Dr Fanny was 48 years old, in the prime of her life. Yet there seems an increasing appreciation in the community of the toll the volume of medical and Council work had on her health. Mrs Harris Cohen, CJW President in Sydney, paid tribute to Dr Fanny as 'a super-optimist, a leader among women and a great Jewess' who led Jewish women in Australia 'along a road which will have no ending'. She added:

I am sure that I voice the sentiments of all present and of hundreds of Jews absent, when I pray the Almighty to bless her with good health and fullness of years, that we and the community in general will benefit through her leadership. ('Council of Jewish women: Council Seniors annual meeting' 1932, p. 6)

The depression curtailed the development of many NCJW initiatives, in particular, projects to aid new immigrants faced financial difficulties. The future of Council's Jewish Men's Hostel in Sydney was uncertain. Opened by Aaron Blashki in 1928 (Rubinstein 1991, p. 160), in 1932 there were plans to close it down:

[T]he Hostel has been doing good work in sheltering Jewish men who are unemployed, but owing to the falling off in contributions towards its upkeep, would have to stop functioning except for the munificent bequest left by Miss Elizabeth Foil in Tasmania. ('Council of Jewish women: Council Seniors annual meeting' 1932, p. 6)

At this time of financial hardship for so many Australians, Dr Fanny managed an equitable distribution of the proceeds of fundraising to Jewish and gentile causes, supporting a range of projects, including the Bush Nursing Fete held in September 1932 at Government House:

The objects of the fete are so urgent and vital, viz. the saving of human lives in far out Bush centres, by having a bush nurse stationed in these country districts, that we Jewish women feel that we should assist this very necessary movement in N.S.W. by giving it our support. ('Council of Jewish Women: Council Seniors New Year Communal Goodwill Social' 1932, p. 9)

In November 1932, Dr Fanny travelled to Hobart, Tasmania, to create a branch of the NCJW. She told Hobart's *Mercury* that NCJW in Australia consisted of 22 sections in all the big cities of the mainland. She spoke of NCJW's objectives and its commitment to work with other organisations 'for the good of the community' and its 'service' in useful directions ('Jewish Council: An important movement' 1932, p. 6). She hoped to establish a strong branch in Hobart, which she did. On 9 December 1932 in Sydney, she described her visit to Tasmania and the formation of a Council there, as well as a Young Men's Hebrew Association (YMHA), a comparable but smaller organisation. Dr Fanny and her brother, Dr Abraham Reading, were jointly responsible for establishing the YMHA in 1930 in Sydney. She urged members to assist the Jewish community in Hobart that until now had been isolated from Jewish interests, 'but now being a part of the National Council of Jewish Women and the Y.M.H.A. they would feel even so far south as Tasmania is, they could be an important and integral part of the Australian Jewish community' ('Council Seniors general meeting; [The December general meeting]' 1932, p. 6).

Outreach and philanthropy

Dr Fanny's outreach to remote parts of Australia, travelling across vast tracts of the continent, represented a radically different and innovative approach. The outreach that existed in Australia was conducted mainly by Christian churches as part of missionary and conversion programs. Dr Fanny's outreach was aimed at her own community, embedding Jewish women within ethical structures of their ancient faith, yet moving them towards personal growth and community development. As her outreach penetrated urban and country areas across the continent, radio broadcasts and newspaper articles informed Australians about her work for Jewish women, Judaism, the Jewish homeland and the many causes her organisation supported in Australia. Her national profile grew and she earned respect as a woman who worked across ethnicities and faiths, supporting the work of other organisations that improved societal standards and structures.

Recognition came from diverse sources. Already in 1933 there was acknowledgement in the wider community of her leadership and the impact on Australia of her philanthropic initiatives and, concurrently, her contributions to medicine. The Feminist Club invited to its reception on 30 March 1933 at the Wentworth Hotel in Sydney 100 women who were the 'most distinguished and fully representative in their own field' ('100 Women: List of Feminist Club Guests' 1933, p. 12). The invitees in medicine were Dr Fanny Reading, Dr Constance d'Arcy, Dr Margaret Harper, Dr Lucy Gullett, Dr Grace Boelke, Dr Elma Sandford Morgan and Dr Kate Ardill-Brice. Two years later, in 1935, Dr Fanny received the King George V Jubilee Medal, in 1937 the King George VI Coronation Medal and, in 1961, the Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) for social welfare services in New South Wales (Newton 2000, p. 11).

Three weeks before the Feminist Club luncheon, Dr Fanny addressed congregants on Saturday 11 March 1933 at CJW's annual Sabbath Service held at Central Synagogue, Bondi Junction. A feminist tradition maintained by Councils to the present day, it is held the sabbath before Purim, the festival that honours the courage of the Jewish Queen Esther of Persia, who saved Persian Jews from genocide. After the service, Dr Fanny spoke of the antisemitism threatening Jewish people throughout Europe: 'Would that an Esther would rise up today and save our people in Eastern Europe and Germany,' she said ('Council of Jewish Women of NSW: Council Sabbath' 1933, p. 6). She urged Council members to attend Sabbath and Festival services regularly with their children, for on the Jewish woman rested the responsibility of perpetuating Judaism. 'All need religion, it gives life a purpose, gives us a greater spiritual outlook and

broader vision,' she said, adding that a Jewish home should become a temple in the service of God. They were responsible for educating their children in Hebrew, religion, Jewish ideals and their responsibilities,

when countries in Europe were lifting up their hands and swords against the innocent of our people only because they are Jews; was it not for Jewish women to cling together and do all in their power to help those who are unjustly victimised. This, the Council of Jewish Women has always done, by establishing bonds of mutual love and sympathy with our sisters in far distant lands and by encouraging our Australian Jewish women to unite together in one big body, in order to be ready to protect our brethren when oppressed. (p. 6)

Dr Fanny appealed to those present at the service to preserve Jewish 'distinctiveness' by maintaining kashrut (Judaic dietary laws) and 'by upholding the customs and ceremonials of our creed and not casting them away' (p. 6).

Despite troubling times, Dr Fanny celebrated the tenth anniversary of CJW, founded in July 1923 in Sydney. At a dinner/dance at Council's club rooms on 30 August 1933, she reflected on their 'noble endeavour for the uplift of humanity generally' ('Tenth birthday celebration' 1933, p. 7). At 10 pm, via broadcasting station 2FC, Dr Fanny spoke to the women of Australia in 11 cities. She said that, since 1923, 22 sections were created with centres in Sydney, Brisbane, Newcastle, Melbourne, Geelong, Adelaide, Kalgoorlie, Perth and Hobart. She stated that approximately 2,000 Jewish women were united in one sisterhood for the higher interests of humanity:

The work of this organisation embraces every phase of human activity. This organisation was established to give service (a) to our God, (b) to our race, (c) to the country in which we live. These aims are based on humanitarian principles and can be well illustrated by what we may call our motto 'Service to God and humanity'. The fields of our work comprise religion, education, philanthropy and social activities. (p. 7)

Dr Fanny's broadcast to the nation's women constituted a pivotal juncture in her life, in which she reviewed the past and envisioned the future. Her emphasis was on the civic and religious duty of Council members. She stated that religion's high ideals could inspire members to greater efforts and deeds on behalf of humanity, and make the world a better place:

We teach that religion lies in what we do each minute of the day, living the lives as behoves a civilised race and remembering the duty of each to her fellowmen. In

education, we have given the Jewish women of Australia a newer outlook and a broader vision.... We have discovered potential power amongst them which they have been able to use for individual development and self-improvement and for unselfish service for the country in which they live. We have educated Jewish women to a better understanding of their duties as citizens and to take part in big national movements, for example: Peace and Disarmament, Public Health, Maternal and Child Welfare, Racial Hygiene [Family Planning], and other universal problems. (p. 7)

Dr Fanny spoke of NCJW's philanthropy, which included supporting cancer research, general welfare, and monetary support, food and clothes for the unemployed. A central pillar of NCJW's mission was their work on behalf of immigrants to Australia:

We are the friends of the immigrant and established a Jewish Men's Hostel in Sydney. Immigrants without knowledge of the language, were met, on arrival, were housed, taught the language and customs, found employment and made worthy and respected Australian citizens. For this work alone the Hon. F. S. Boyce, Attorney General of N.S.W., speaking in 1929, called us 'Empire Builders' because of our interest in the new citizens of this mighty continent. (p. 7)

Dr Fanny's broadcast constituted a review of NCJW's achievements and a manifesto of future policies. She mentioned that their Hospital Committee's visits to hospitals, charitable institutions and asylums brought 'comfort and cheer to the sick and weary'. NCJW endowed beds in hospitals in Melbourne, Perth and Sydney; assisted kindergartens, bush nursing, blind institutes, the Salvation Army, orphanages, and crippled children's funds: and materially assisted Jews in Europe and Palestine.

Dr Fanny touched on her dream of a Council House of their own. She envisaged the impact Council House would have on the community:

Here the stranger and newcomer, the homeless and friendless man or woman, the student away from home will find a home in this city, a roof over their heads and food for their bodies.... [I]t is my idea to establish a Big Jewish-sister movement in connection with this Council House when each occupant will be under the immediate care of a 'Big Sister' whose responsibility will be for one individual. In this manner we shall be rendering a great service to those who for no fault of their own cannot help themselves. (p. 7)

Dr Fanny encouraged Councils in all capital cities to plan Council Houses. Visiting Melbourne in February 1934 to spend time with her ailing father, she was gratified to learn that Melbourne's CJW, with the help of the YMHA, had secured a building at 289 Collins Street, which opened on 14 April 1934. Dr Fanny said the building constituted a heritage for their children ('Council of Jewish Women: Building Acquired' 1934, p. 10). In Dr Fanny's broadcast, she had referred to her cherished goal, the establishment of a hospital and Jewish community centre in the old Montefiore Home in Sydney, which she hoped to purchase sometime in the future ('Congratulations: 10th Birthday Dinner Jewish Council ' 1933, p. 39).

Since founding the first CJW, Dr Fanny had embraced younger members—the Junior Council and the Sub-Junior Council—whom she trained as future leaders. She complimented the National Junior Council on their philanthropic and recreational work. In the presence of the President of the National Council of Women, Mildred Muscio, Dr Fanny spoke of Council's affiliation with other national and local bodies, such as the National Council of Women, the League of Nations, New Settlers' League, and Travellers' Aid Society. She spoke of Council's willingness to work with them, in words that foreshadowed Council's engagement with the challenges of the next decade:

I want the women leaders in Australia who are vitally interested in the development of this vast Commonwealth of ours, to know that their Jewish sisters of the National Council are ever ready to cooperate and assist worthy national and local causes, that in us they have an organised band of trained workers who are able and willing to render service. To-night... I appeal to all our members throughout Australia to carry on the good work which we have so ably achieved in the first ten years of our existence. I appeal to them to begin our second decade with renewed courage, perseverance and understanding. ('Tenth birthday celebration' 1933, p. 7)

The playwright and director

One month after the anniversary celebration dinner, Dr Fanny was actively engaged in writing and directing a theatrical presentation staged on 26, 27 and 28 September 1933 in the Sydney Town Hall in aid of the United Charities Fund. It formed part of the British Empire Pageant, which brought together 650 participants from all sectors of society in Sydney. In Dr Fanny's first and only foray into playwriting, she wrote and directed the Jewish community's cultural contribution titled 'Palestine: The Seventh Dominion', which was a central feature of the pageant. *The Sydney Morning Herald* stated:

This pageant within a pageant will begin with Isaiah, the Hebrew prophet, and will follow the epic of Jewish history throughout the ages, and particularly within the British Empire, ending with the handing of the Charter of Palestine to the Jewish race. This unique episode will be greatly enriched by the chanting of Jewish laments, and is under the direction of Dr. Fanny Reading (president of the National Council of Jewish Women) and Mrs. Victor Cornfield (president of the Sydney section). ('British Empire Pageant' 1933, p. 4)

The Sydney Mail commented that the entire Pageant comprised 14 episodes, and drew attention to 'Palestine: The Seventh Dominion', their caption: 'This set was arranged by Dr. Fanny Reading under the auspices of the National Council of Jewish Women' ('British Empire Pageant' 1933, p. 17). The *Hebrew Standard* reported that the YMHA collaborated with Council and that several of their members took leading roles. The *Hebrew Standard's* detailed report conveys the ideas Dr Fanny's script encapsulated. Aside from biblical characters, she introduced luminaries associated with the history of Zionism and the Jewish homeland:

Miss Sylvia Hertzberg was the able chronicler who unfolded from a scroll, written by Dr. Fanny Reading, the history of our race, what they have suffered and what they have given to the world from the time of Moses up to the present day. As Miss Hertzberg read, the various great men who have played a part in our history, were portrayed on the stage. Messrs. Robert Solomon appeared as the prophet Isaiah, Archie Blondin as Moses, Jim Davis as Disraeli, J. Kresner and Sol Einfeld as Lord Rothschild, H. Guss as Theodor Herzl, T. Joseph as Captain Trumpeldor, J. Dix as Chaim Weizmann, C. Milligen as Earl Balfour, Mrs. Herford as Queen Victoria and ... Council Juniors and friends who formed the tableaux: Amidst great applause the episode closed with the unfurling of the Union Jack to the stirring sound of the trumpet. ('National Council of Jewish Women [British Empire Pageant]' 1933, p. 7)

It is interesting to note that Dr Fanny omitted the commanding figure of Ze'ev Jabotinsky from her play. When she attended the 14th Zionist Congress in 1925 in Vienna, she heard both Chaim Weizmann and Jabotinsky deliver their addresses and she was impressed with their oratorical substance and style. Was her omission of Jabotinsky a subliminal indication of her preference for the ideology expounded by Weizmann, and condemnation of that proposed by Jabotinsky? Both, as noted in Chapter Eight of this thesis, were political Zionists, but Weizmann was the consummate diplomat who believed that diplomacy with power brokers could achieve Zionism's objective of a return to the ancestral land of the Jews. Jabotinsky's militaristic

stance—his proclaimed readiness to fight the Mandatory authority in order to achieve his Revisionist Party’s aims—if incorporated in the pageant, could potentially have alienated the substantial number of the Jewish and general public who were confirmed British loyalists. Dr Fanny clearly weighed up these competing claims and sought to portray Weizmann’s more moderate Zionism. He was a universally admired figure, accepted and esteemed within the British establishment. Her decision was well considered in the context of world events in 1933.

Dr Fanny’s views on Zionism, however, ripened with the decades. The views she held in the 1930s differed from those she would express during her defamation trial in 1949, *Dr Fanny Reading v. National Press Pty Ltd.*, when her responses were based on the new historical dispensation for the Jewish people pertaining at that time (see Chapter 8). These were diametrically different stages in her life and in the history of the Jewish people.

Josiah Wedgwood’s *The Seventh Dominion*

The title of Dr Fanny’s drama was inspired by the book, *The Seventh Dominion*, written by Colonel Josiah Wedgwood. Her appropriation of Wedgwood’s title in its entirety was not an act of plagiarism but an acknowledgement and validation of his political views on the future of the Jewish people and their ineradicable connection to their homeland Palestine—views that mirrored her own convictions. Dr Fanny enjoyed a close friendship in Sydney with Josiah Wedgwood’s daughter, Camilla Hildegard Wedgewood (1901–1955), an anthropologist and educator who was a firm proponent of her father’s views. She and Dr Fanny would surely have discussed his book, published in February 1928, five years before Dr Fanny wrote and directed her own production of her play ‘The Seventh Dominion’. It is likely that Camilla either lent or gave a copy to Dr Fanny sometime after Camilla’s arrival in Australia in 1928 to take up a temporary lectureship in anthropology at the University of Sydney. She left in 1930 to lecture at the University of Cape Town and returned to Sydney in June 1935 to take up an appointment as Principal of Women’s College at the University of Sydney. A member of the Australian Student Christian Movement, she was also involved with the Rachel Forster Hospital for Women and Children, where Dr Fanny worked as an honorary Medical Officer of Health. She was a member of the Australian Federation of University Women, and the Australian Institute of International Affairs (Wedgewood, online). Camilla Wedgwood’s Fabian and Quaker social conscience led her to accept many responsibilities:

From 1937 she was secretary of the German Emergency Fellowship Committee, which included Max Lemberg and Sydney Morris. She pleaded the cause of Jewish and non-

Aryan Christian victims of Nazi persecution before (Sir) John McEwen, minister for the interior. In close contact with her father, she raised money for refugee passages to Australia.... She publicly protested against the treatment of the internees in the *Dunera* and the refugees in the *Strouma* which sank in the Black Sea. (Wetherell 2002)

Her father, Josiah Wedgwood, a member of the British House of Commons, visited Palestine in October 1926. Appalled by the antisemitism he observed among the British officials tasked with the administration of the Mandatory government, he wrote his book in protest against their obstruction of Jewish social and economic advancement, westernisation, and their constraints on immigration and Jewish land purchase in Palestine. Wedgwood noted that before 1920, British officials had previously served in the military or the diplomatic corps in Egypt and those who had served in Egypt resented the Balfour Declaration. British administrators saw the Jewish vision of a prosperous country teeming with factories as a vulgarisation of the Holy Land. Stein (1990) points out:

Wedgwood argued that since the British Commonwealth was already multinational—French Canadians and Dutch South Africans were loyal subjects of the Crown—admitting Jews into the Commonwealth would not be a radical policy move. Moreover, Britain would benefit from the arrangement. Palestine ... was the universal link to Africa and Asia: all air, land and sea routes crossed between Suez and Haifa. With a pipeline and railway terminus in Haifa, the British navy could safely and comfortably attend to the Near East. Since the Jews of Palestine depended on British protection, Britain could rely on them. The two peoples also had a common foe: Mussolini and his expansionist tendencies. (p. 141)

Wedgwood highlighted the benefits of an expanded Jewish presence, including imported agricultural methods, new markets in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, the draining of malarial swamps, an increase in physicians and veterinarians, and new roads. He referred to the two documents responsible for the British Mandate—the Balfour Declaration and the League of Nations Mandate for Palestine—the latter transforming ‘the intent of the Balfour Declaration into the reality of internationally accepted policy. Article II stated that: The Mandatory shall be responsible for placing the country under such political, administrative and economic conditions as will secure the establishment of the Jewish National Home’ (pp. 142-143).

Wedgwood concluded, ‘London...ought to convert Palestine from a Mandate into a Crown Colony, encourage Jewish immigration for a generation, and then grant the colony

independence as the Seventh Dominion within the British Commonwealth of Nations' (p. 143). The response to Wedgwood's book was mixed. Stein states the British Government paid scant attention to the idea, and the President of the World Zionist Organization, Dr Chaim Weizmann, 'in 1928...did not feel that a Jewish state was politically, diplomatically, or even demographically possible' (p. 146). However, Ze'ev Jabotinsky, the leader of the Revisionist Zionists, supported the idea of the Seventh Dominion, and the All-Palestine Zionist Revisionist Conference in Jerusalem 'endorsed and welcomed' a formal resolution in support of creating Palestine as the Seventh Dominion within the British Commonwealth. On 24 January 1929, with Jabotinsky's support, Wedgwood inaugurated the Seventh Dominion (Palestine) League. The League's objective was to promote Palestine as the national home of the Jewish people in cooperation with the British Administration in the hope that when independence came the inhabitants of Palestine would choose the status of a self-governing Dominion. The League also hoped 'to further the friendship between the British and Jewish people, based on Justice, on common interests and common ideals' (p. 148).

In 1929, Dr Fanny's friend, Henrietta Szold, the founder of the women's Zionist organisation Hadassah, saw the League as a repudiation of the Mandate: 'To Szold, the movement was premature and excited difficulties between Arabs and Jews and between Zionists and friendly non-Zionists' (p. 151). The 1929 Arab riots in Palestine ended Wedgwood's hopes of the Seventh Dominion. After the findings of the Shaw Commission, Lord Passfield (Sidney Webb) suspended new immigration and, in October 1930, released his own report. Its conclusions were devastating to the Zionists: 'In effect, it called for a cessation of Jewish immigration and land purchase. The Seventh Dominion idea collapsed under this prevailing atmosphere of distrust and mutual recrimination' (p. 153). In an article published on 30 October 1930 in *The Times*, Wedgwood stated:

About two years ago I helped to found a Seventh Dominion League of Englishmen and Jews ... to develop a friendly Palestine and a sound prop to the Empire. We had fair success in the House of Commons and outside; but the business was not quite approved by the Zionist Organization. They thought that the Jews in Germany and America...distrusted England and would suspect the cloven hoof of imperialism. (cited in Stein 1990, p. 153)

The question arises as to whether, in 1933, Dr Fanny's title of her play endorsed Josiah Wedgwood's view that at the end of the British Mandate, Palestine should be granted a status similar to Australia, Canada, South Africa, Newfoundland, Irish Free Republic and New Zealand

and become a Jewish state within the British Empire, the 'Seventh Dominion'. Eight years later, she answered that question when she addressed CJW's Newcastle Section on 7 May 1941: 'The hope that Palestine would become a Jewish country and be included in the British Commonwealth of Nations was already an ideal with much foundation' ('Jews look to Britain' 1941, p. 2). Dr Fanny's title for her play affirmed unambiguously Wedgwood's political world view. She had a reverence for Zionism and its aim of restoring the national homeland, and she dedicated her organisation to the humanitarian needs of the *Yishuv*. She also affirmed her own loyalty to Britain and, equally, the loyalty of her organisation, the NCJW. She told Lady Wakehurst, 'they were proud to be a part of the great British Commonwealth of Nations, which stood for the highest principles of humanity, truth, justice, freedom and liberty' ('NCJW Sydney Section: Lady Wakehurst's Reception' 1939, p.7).

As news of rampant antisemitism in Europe reached Australia, Dr Fanny understood this threat was existential for the Jewish people. She focused on the role of women in the creation of the Jewish homeland, which represented for her the fulfillment of biblical prophecy concerning the return of the Jewish people to their ancient land. For her, Palestine offered safety for the persecuted Jewish masses in Europe. On 1st November 1933, at a dinner in Sydney, Dr Fanny proposed a toast to Jewish women in Palestine:

[W]hen the history of the redemption of women is studied it is found that the women of Israel have done the greatest part. They work hard—not merely as idealists, but with practical enthusiasm.... university girls gave up careers, to till the soil and work in fields. They worked in unison with the men. The Hadassah medical work staffed and run entirely by women in Palestine stood to their greatest credit. Orphanages and other institutions had been likewise established by women. ('Big Zionist gathering' 1933, p. 6)

Dr Fanny never relaxed the tempo of voluntary work. Less than three weeks later, Sydney Council announced the inauguration of their first suburban branch in the Eastern Suburbs. *The Sun* of 19 November 1933 noted: 'Few women in Sydney have greater organising ability than Dr Fanny Reading' and that she was working on the third Jewish Women's Conference to be held in Melbourne 7–19 November 1934 during the city's centenary celebrations.

Dr. Reading has sent invitations to delegates in Canada, Palestine, England, South Africa, and the East, and she hopes that most of these countries will be able to send representatives. At the present time the Council of Jewish Women is making a drive to

raise funds to assist the Jews in Germany, and already they have succeeded in collecting over £1200. ('Jewish Leader' 1933, p. 35)

Death of Nathan Jacob Reading

Dr Fanny's father, Nathan Jacob Reading, died on 19 February 1934, aged 73, in Richmond, Victoria, and was buried in Caulfield South Cemetery in Melbourne. He was well regarded in the Melbourne community as a charitable and hospitable man. It was known that the door to his home was open and the needy were never turned away. He had been sick for some time before his death and Dr Fanny was able to visit him. She was deeply attached to her father, as her letters written in 1925 from abroad to the family in Melbourne and Sydney attest. In those letters, she expressed concerns for his health and regretted that, in her absence, he suffered unnecessarily. 'My dear Dad' was the salutation with which she began letters to her father. She wrote that both she and her mother missed and loved him and were looking forward to returning home and their reunion with him and all the family. After his death, his widow Esther Rose left Melbourne for Sydney, where she spent the remaining 12 years of her life living with Dr Fanny. Dr Fanny's mother now accompanied her to meetings, visits and social functions. The new domestic arrangements were already apparent at a Council Senior Card Party held on 7 May 1934 in Sydney, approximately three months after their bereavement, when the Council President welcomed Dr Fanny and her mother. It was clear that bereavement prompted her to reflect philosophically on what was important in life and society:

Dr Reading ... exhorted them to carry out in greater extent the ideals of Council by including the word Tolerance with that of Service for all. She felt that in every phase of human activity, more tolerance should be shown, not only in Council's sphere but in our relations with all Jewish organisations and to those of non-Jewish origin also. Only in this way could happiness result. ('NCJW Sydney Section: Council Seniors Card Party 9th June' 1934, p. 6)

Three days later, on 10 May 1934, at an 'At Home' in Council Rooms, Council members again welcomed Dr Fanny. She spoke in the same vein as she had done earlier, this time urging members to rid themselves of trivia, and then reiterating her message of 'service, tolerance and goodwill':

With these as their watch words, this band of wonderful women would become a great blessing to humanity in general. They would rise above the small and petty jealousies so often present in women's organisations and become better and superior

types of Jewish womanhood.... In conclusion, Dr Reading reminded members of the obligations to the rooms, to their German brethren and to local urgent needs.

('National Council of Jewish Women: Sydney Section, Seniors' 1934, p. 6)

As the year progressed, Dr Fanny's thoughts turned to prevention of war and to peace. At Council's 11th birthday dinner on 18 August 1934 in Sydney, she pleaded that 'the affairs of our country, of our race, are the affairs of every man and woman'; and emphasised that 'not only money was used, but the giving of self' in services rendered to others ('Eleventh annual dinner' 1934, p. 7). Two months later, on 25 October 1934, accompanied by her mother and the Secretary, Miss E. Lenzer, Dr Fanny left Sydney for Melbourne to finalise arrangements for NCJW's conference to be held 7-19 November 1934 ('Jewish Women's Conference' 1934, p. 13).

Third Jewish Women's Conference of Australasia

In 1934, the Third Jewish Women's Conference represented a triumph for Dr Fanny, as it drew interstate and international delegates such as the distinguished lawyer and parliamentarian from South Africa, Morris Alexander, as well as State Government and City Council representatives. It showcased NCJW's achievements, which were acknowledged by civic leaders. Held in the iconic Melbourne venue Ormond Hall on St Kilda Road, Harold Cohen MLC opened the conference. Melbourne's Lord Mayor, Sir Alexander George Wales, said the Empire offered opportunities to the Jewish race and that Jews

recognised and appreciated the British policy to the Jews and had given in return to England and her Dominions the very best of her race. Men who had held the highest positions in almost every walk of life had been Jews, showing loyalty and courage which, in itself, was proof of their gratitude. ('Jewish Women's Conference: Tribute to British Empire.' 1934, p. 6)

Almost concurrent with NCJW's conference in Melbourne, the National Council of Women held their own Women's International Congress, in which Dr Fanny participated. In Melbourne Town Hall's City Council Chamber, she spoke on Jewish women and citizenship and NCJW's aims and ideals. With rising antisemitism abroad, she never shrank from publicly identifying herself with the Jewish people and their destiny, positioning herself as spokeswoman for her disadvantaged sisters abroad. She spoke of challenges faced by Jewish women who migrated to Australia, and of Council's efforts to assist them in adapting to new conditions in a strange land, as well as helping them to develop a civic conscience:

We Jewish women realise as others have done, that a country or a nation will be as strong as its women, so in the countries in which we reside we try to make that country strong by supplementing the education of Jewish women, so that they may understand better the responsibilities and duties which they owe to that country. ('Woman's realm and social news: Lady Huntingfield attends congress' 1934, p. 5)

When Dr Fanny welcomed Lady Isaacs, wife of the Governor-General of Australia, Sir Isaac Isaacs, at a reception held in March 1935 in Sydney, she spoke of Council's social and charitable activities. She emphasised that the most valuable aspect of Council work was 'to bridge the gap between their own land and their new home for foreigners who came to Australia to settle' ('Jewish women welcome Lady Isaacs' 1935, p. 4). Council made every effort to support those fleeing terror in Europe and hoping to start new lives in Palestine.

Two months later, on 26 May 1935 at CJW's 12th annual banquet celebrating the King's Silver Jubilee year, Dr Fanny emphasised the allegiance of Jews to the British throne, 'which granted them the liberty and tolerance of citizenship'. She addressed 200 people, including the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of Sydney, Alderman and Mrs A.L. Parker, and the Minister for Education, D.H. Drummond. Describing her speech as 'a mixture of joy and sorrow', Dr Fanny said they had to remember the duty due to their own race and to combine these two duties in work in the community in which they lived:

We feel gratitude to the British Empire. We have felt the tolerance that is accorded all of her citizens.... I must speak of our sadness, for the fate of Jews in far countries, and the lack of peace in the world. ('Jewish Council's Banquet' 1935, p. 10)

She summed up her work philosophy when she thanked those who applauded her efforts on behalf of the Council, stating that she preferred 'the hand that helps to the hand that claps' (p. 10).

Troubled by the growing threats to Jewish people in Europe, Dr Fanny supported the formation of a body to unify and represent the Australian Jewish community in the interests of peace. She had long been troubled by the proliferation of splinter bodies representing different aspects of communal endeavour and political thought in Jewish communities in the Australia's major cities. This preoccupation with the fragmented distribution of communal bodies would culminate in her support for the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies, created in 1945, which would represent the Jewish community in the State 'With one voice'. In

the meantime, on 18 November 1935, she urged the community to forget their own interests and focus on the common good of Jewry:

More so than ever did the urgency of the critical crisis in world Jewry make it necessary that a centralised unified body in our community be established to represent us. It was a duty of the Council to assist in creating a strong unity and a solid community representing Jewish life in its manifold features. At present there were too many units and groups, each working independently of each other and often in opposition, resulting in waste of energy, effort and money. By more complete understanding a unified community would be able to promote Jewish life in its truest and best aspects. ('NCJW Sydney Section: Special unity meeting' 1935, p. 7)

Dr Fanny's illness

There is a significant gap in media coverage of Dr Fanny's activities from the end of November 1935 to the beginning of May 1936. It is clear from newspaper records that in September 1935, accompanied by her mother, she attended the British Medical Association Conference in Melbourne and met Council representatives at a gathering in the C and Y Centre, where she enjoyed a musical program arranged by Jessie Smith. Records (quoted above) show her active participation in the 18 November 1935 meeting called to promote peace and unity in Sydney Jewish organisations. The gap begins at that point, indicating the start of an illness that prevented her taking part in activities for a lengthy period of time, certainly from early December 1935 to the beginning of May 1936.

While there are no medical records extant identifying Dr Fanny's illness, it was serious enough to distance her from all Council activities, as it spanned a period of escalating antisemitism abroad that otherwise would have prompted her to renewed representations on behalf of her people. Instead, there was silence. A Sub-Juniors Council meeting, on 27 February 1936, expressed regret at the illness of 'our National President, Dr Fanny Reading', and stated that the Hospital Committee had sent a letter of sympathy and floral gifts to her, with their loving wishes ('NCJW: Sub-Juniors' 1936, p. 7). This lingering illness curtailed Dr Fanny's participation in Council affairs. More than five months after the onset of her illness and still far from well, on 4 May 1936 she attended a Sub-Seniors Council meeting and gave 'an interesting and informative address on the ideals and aims to be striven for by such a band of young Jewish women' (p. 6). An article notes 'Dr Fanny Reading, in spite of ill health, kindly attended the meeting,' which confirms that she had not, as yet, recovered fully. Her attendance

demonstrated how impossible it was for her to resist partial involvement with her Council, despite her frailty at that time.

Renewal of efforts for refugees

Rubinstein notes that the Great Depression virtually halted immigration to Australia, and that assisted passages, available only to British citizens, were suspended from 1930 until 1938:

[T]he economy had begun to recover sufficiently in 1934 and 1935 for the Federal Government to begin issuing landing permits to non-guaranteed migrants, providing [sic] they possessed £500, and [were] experts required for certain industries. However, selection would be based upon 'general assimilability', which meant that people of Northern European stock would be given preference and the possible establishment of 'alien communities' avoided. (Rubinstein, H.L. 1991, p. 165)

On 1 June 1936, Dr Fanny chaired the general meeting of NCJW. By then, she had been ill for at least five or six months, probably longer. Presumably she felt strong enough to take up the reins again. This meeting documented important changes in Australian immigration procedures. She noted that the Federal Minister of the Interior had informed them that stringent immigration restrictions were relaxed and that entrance to Australia would be easier ('Council of Jewish Women: Sydney section' 1936, p. 7). This news propelled her and Council into action. In previous years, she had longed for just such a development. 'It would now be imperative for the Council to continue immigration work,' she said (p. 7). Dr Fanny's sense of urgency was evident in her immediate request that members donate a guinea (£1/1/-) or more to the German Relief Fund, irrespective of any amount given by their husbands, which implies that some chose to justify not giving on these grounds. Immigration was once again a central pillar of Council policy and efforts.

Those at the meeting marked the death of Dr Nahum Sokolow on 17 May 1936 in England. They stood in silence in memory of a Zionist who had been with Herzl from the beginning. For Dr Fanny, Sokolow's death revived memories of her attendance in 1925 in Vienna at the 14th Zionist Congress, where she had been impressed by his oratory. On her return home in 1926, she had recorded her impressions of this leader of the Jewish people (see Chapter 8).

Three weeks later, on 6 July 1936, Dr Fanny chaired Council's general meeting. The agenda highlighted a community health issue with which she was associated as a medical doctor. She had invited her friend Ruby Rich, President of the Racial Hygiene Society, to speak on venereal

disease and related topics. The Society was known later as the Family Planning Association (see Chapter Four). Dr Fanny and Ruby Rich shared interests—Rich was a concert pianist, community leader and Dr Fanny's longstanding (non-medical) colleague. The Council constituted a valuable forum for Rich, who sought support among women's organisations for the Society's agenda. Although she titled her talk 'Women's Problems', it was more than a speech on the prevalence and attempts to curb venereal disease. She described the trafficking of women in various parts of the world and urged that women's organisations co-operate to help those involved. She linked her exposition with world peace, with which both she and Dr Fanny were preoccupied, and said a committee representing these interests was recently formed with the aim of sending a representative to the Peace Conference in Geneva in September 1936 ('NCJW Sydney Section: General Meeting ' 1936, p. 2).

Fourth Jewish Women's Conference of Australasia

On 10 November 1936 in Adelaide, when Dr Fanny presided at the opening of the 4th Jewish Women's Conference of Australasia, the city was alert to ominous signs of war and fading prospects for peace. The day after Conference opened was Armistice Day, 11 November, and at 11 am dignitaries including Chief Justice Sir George Murray observed a two-minute silence while assembled at the Adelaide War Memorial. The crowd included representatives of the Australian Newspapers Conference and delegates to several other conferences being held in the city. *The Advertiser* carried a report on the ceremony, and in the same edition of the paper, the 'Foreign Editor' quoted Hitler on National Socialism: 'The movement will never perish. It will lead Germany for ever' (*The Advertiser*, 'Goering as Hitler's crown prince', 12 November 1936, p. 18). That weekend, on Saturday 14 November, *The Advertiser* reported that Ruby Rich delivered a paper on 'Women's cooperation for world peace' at the 4th Jewish Women's Conference of Australasia (*The Advertiser*, 'Papers by distinguished women at Jewish Congress', 14 November 1936, p. 14). Rich said that women could contribute through special channels, through 'ardent pacifism', through support of the League of Nations' Union, the cultivation of international friendships linking mothers of the world, and by studying world problems intensively. She said the major issue was moral disarmament: 'Disarming the mind of war tendencies, banning war toys, and eliminating from school text-books all references likely to instil animosity to other nations were suggestions offered towards the cause of peace' (p. 14).

At a mayoral reception in Adelaide's Town Hall on 10 November 1936 to mark the official opening of NCJW's 4th Jewish Women's Conference of Australasia, Dr Fanny revealed the depth of her pain at events abroad that threatened her people. She alluded to their deteriorating situation when she thanked Adelaide's Lord Mayor, Jonathan Cain, 'for having given the delegates a reception without regard to race or creed, adding that their reception in Germany would have been very different' ('Reception to Jewish Women Lord Mayor Welcome' 1936, p. 3). The conference ran from 10 to 18 November 1936, attended by delegates from five states and New Zealand. Dr Fanny had established the Adelaide CJW seven years previously, so it was satisfying to return and be part of the civic fanfare greeting delegates. The Lord Mayor emphasised the importance of the gathering, commenting that he considered it a compliment to Adelaide that they were holding their conference in the city's centenary year.

The official opening took place that evening in the Adelaide Synagogue in Rundle Street, with Adelaide's daily paper, *The News*, noting, 'Dr Fanny Reading, who presided, was called "Dr Fanny" in a friendly fashion by everybody' ('Religious air at conference: Jewish women meet' 1936, p. 10). NCJW had won recognition for achievements at home and abroad, and greetings arrived from Jewish women's organisations in Jerusalem, Chicago, South Africa, England, the United States, New Zealand and all the Australian States. On behalf of the Government, E. Anthoney MP welcomed delegates and praised 'the ideals of the Women's Council—service to God, race, and the country in which its members lived' ('Conference Proceedings' 1936, p. 11). The presence of government and civic representatives at the opening added gravitas, and they conveyed understanding of the crisis confronting the Jewish people, support that meant much to Dr Fanny and NCJW. National Council of Women's Federal and State President, Adelaide Miethke, said that conference contributed to better understanding of each other's problems: 'With understanding came truth, and where truth was there tolerance was also. The sympathy of all women in Australia goes out to your race, a race which has contributed so much of art and culture to civilisation' (p. 11).

Dr Fanny highlighted the devotion of Jewish citizens to Australia, as well as their love of the Jewish homeland:

Australia has no more loyal citizens than the Jew and while we have a duty to and love for the country and people from which we have sprung, it is an entirely separate devotion from that to the country of our habitation. I hope that what we shall achieve at this conference will be of great service to humanity and to the Jewish race in general. (p. 11)

On 11 November 1936, 120 guests attended the conference dinner. The 'Jewish blue and white flag', adopted 12 years later as the flag of the State of Israel, was displayed between the Union Jack and the Australian flag ('Jewish Women Entertained' 1936, p. 19), possibly the first occasion that the flag of the Zionist movement flew alongside the Australian flag on Australian soil. It says much for Dr Fanny's health that, despite the demanding conference schedule and the plethora of papers, she also managed to address a Sunday afternoon service on 15 November 1936 at Maughan Church. She seized the opportunity to speak to the gentile community on 'Palestine of Today', an event publicised in the *Adelaide News* ('Address by Jewish Women's President' 1936, p. 8). Dr Fanny was satisfied with conference and believed it achieved its purpose: 'We shall all go away from Adelaide better than when we came, and stimulated to greater effort,' she said ('Jewish Women's President Outlines Benefits from Conference' 1936, p. 5). She said the greatest value of conference was the gathering together of Jewish women, the social contacts, the friendships made, and the experience of 'a united sisterhood'. She also focused their attention on the plight of Jewish people in Europe:

By hearing papers read on modern problems, delegates learned more of the world they were living in, and had their outlook broadened by contact with women from different parts. They also gained spiritually by the conference, for in no other city had such a religious atmosphere been present throughout the proceedings, which took place in the Synagogue building. The conference was important at present to bring before their people and the general public the serious state of the Jewish people in Europe and the persecution they were suffering there. The final days of the conference...would be devoted to drawing up a plan of action for the help of persecuted Jew. (p. 5)

On 16 November 1936, Dr Fanny attended a luncheon in honour of the delegates. The guest list spoke to the recognition and support of Council by women's organisations, including the National Council of Women, the Women's Non-Party Association, the Country Women's Association, and the Housewives' Association. Gratified by evidence of Council's broad affiliations and seeing it as a conduit for united efforts, she issued a call to all representatives present to work together for the common good and to prepare for the challenges ahead:

We are in sympathy with all work that is for the good of the community, and welcome this opportunity of meeting leaders of many good movements. My message to you all is—Let us work together, for who knows what fate tomorrow will bring. ('Jewish Women's Work for Social Welfare' 1936, p. 8)

For Dr Fanny, the social contacts with women leaders, the depth of conference papers and the bonds forged with organisations were valuable. Nonetheless, sentiments of support could only partially assuage the anxiety she felt as the situation of Jewry abroad worsened daily. For a woman who had fled persecution, this suffering came close to the bone. She drew on the unity of her organisation, on her faith and the comfort of Jewish prayers and traditions. On 8 March 1937 at 4.15 pm, broadcasting from 2UE, she spoke on 'Guarding Great Traditions' ('Broadcast by Dr. Fanny Reading' 1937, p. 2). By July 1937, as the situation in Europe deteriorated, she focused on the transfer of Polish and German children to safety in Palestine; and supported an appeal made by Ida Bension, a visiting representative of the Women's International Zionist Organisation (WIZO), who addressed Council ('NCJW Sydney Section: Mrs Bension's reception' 1937, p. 7). Dr Fanny also attended a reception for Bension in Bellevue Hill, Sydney ('Afternoon Party' 1937, p. 5).

In line with Council policy, Dr Fanny supported the needs of local charities and, in July 1937, together with a large group of Council members and friends, she visited Dalwood Children's Home for mothers and babies in Seaforth. While there, she undertook to collect £100 before the end of August 1937, and the suggestion of Council member Mrs Lou Zions that 100 Jewish women each donate £1 per year for the fund was adopted ('Causes of declining birthrate: Existing Economic Environment Blamed' 1937, p. 6). Dr Fanny served as Honorary Medical Officer of the Home for many years (Cohen 1987, p. 73). On 22 November 1937 in Sydney, Mr G. Fitzpatrick presented certificates for Life Governorship of the Dalwood Home to Dr Fanny and Mrs Roseberry, for their 'splendid work on behalf of the Dalwood Home' ('NCJW Change of Council Rooms' 1937, p. 7).

Visit to Newcastle: 'Service and sacrifice'

Throughout Dr Fanny's life, she led by example. She shared with members her views on the real work of women's organisations and promoted the values by which she lived. Her deeds reinforced her words, encapsulating ethics to which she subscribed in her life as NCJW President and as a medical doctor. At the beginning of August 1937, Dr Fanny visited Newcastle, a short car journey north of Sydney. It was easy for her to get there and she could advise Newcastle's CJW, with whom she had maintained close contact since its inauguration in 1929. Her visits sprang from interest in their programs and progress and she never missed their AGM. In addressing their members, Dr Fanny acknowledged that Jewish women were

fond of the kitchen and loved to give their husbands and children good food, but she urged that this should not be a woman's entire world:

It was an easy matter to give money when it meant only writing a cheque, but to give personal help with kindness was a far greater gift. All successful nations had women to thank for their success. By virtue, goodness and wisdom women could help a nation to great heights. The Council of Jewish Women ... was organised to help Jewish women to take a place on the big things of life.... The Council needed Jewish women to learn the meaning of service and sacrifice, and to know the past and future of their religion and their country. ('Work of Jewish Women: Story of modern Palestine' 1937, p. 5)

The phrase 'service and sacrifice' encapsulated Dr Fanny's core belief that she communicated to Council members. She never spared herself and most of her Council work was conducted in the evenings after a day's work seeing patients in her surgery and in hospitals. There were no boundaries between Council work and her medical career, and she was constantly 'on call' for both, completing multiple tasks in medical and Council spheres. She expanded on the theme of Council's ethos of service, at home and abroad, when she welcomed Lady Wakehurst to a Council tea on 22 November 1937 in Sydney:

We Jewish women formed this organisation 14 years ago, primarily to teach our young women to take up responsibilities and to be good citizens in the country in which they live We must also help our own people, who are being so persecuted in some parts of the world to-day. ('Jewish women: Reception for Lady Wakehurst' 1937, p. 4)

Dr Fanny's onerous duties tended to obscure her *joie de vivre*. She had a ready laugh, enjoyed her brother's (Dr Abe) earthy jokes and could move around a dance floor. At a CJW Juniors' farewell dance at the end of 1937, she taught the young girls a 'Palestine folk dance, which many of us joined in and which will be a feature of all our coming dances' ('NCJW Change of Council Rooms' 1937, p. 7). Dr Fanny's dance demonstration conjured up an image of youth and vitality. It is not clear whether this gathering was held in the old or new Council premises, as by the end of 1937, after seven years in their previous rooms at 175 Pitt Street, the Sydney CJW moved to 374 George Street, formerly the Waldorf Café.

At the last meeting of the year, on 29 December 1937, Council celebrated Chanukah, the festival of lights. Given the gloom that enshrouded Jewish people in Europe, this festival brought hope to celebrants. Dr Fanny read articles relating to Chanukah, and Rev. Fraeser of

Ashfield delivered an address that lifted their spirits. Recently returned from a trip to Palestine,

he expressed regret at the suffering that the Jews are bearing in both Palestine the seat of their good work and Germany. He expressed his assurance that the Jews would overcome all this ill feeling, the Jews, Rev. Fraeser exclaimed, 'Have stood at the gravestone of all nations who have persecuted Jewry'. (p. 7)

The new year, 1938, started auspiciously for Council when Dr Fanny brought into the Council fold 60 children, potential members of a new section called Sub-Juniors. It was also gratifying that international visitors attended Council meetings. At a Council meeting held on 8 February 1938, visitors came from South Africa, Germany, Poland, China, England, New Zealand, as well as from Melbourne and Wentworth Falls in Australia ('National Council of Jewish Women ' 1938, p. 6).

Fifth Jewish Women's Conference of Australasia

Dr Fanny guided planning for the 5th Jewish Women's Conference of Australasia, held 9-20 March 1938 in Sydney. Conference subjects mirrored her concerns. At previous conferences she had articulated two major themes: gratitude for the safety and prosperity of Australia as a British Dominion that ensured the wellbeing of its people; and sorrow at the situation of Jews in Europe. These re-emerged at the 5th Conference, a barometer of anxiety felt by Jews at home and abroad. Papers explored future options and policies that could lead to constructive actions, including women's responsibility in world affairs, Jewish contributions to civilisation, Australia's immigration policy, the role of social agencies in meeting the difficulties of refugees, and the position of Jews in Germany. There was a panel discussion on 'Jewish people and the Future' (Newton 2000, p. 254).

The names of presenters convey the breadth of Dr Fanny's friendships with leading women in the public, academic, professional and social spheres. They included Ruby Rich, feminist, Life-Vice-President of the Racial Hygiene Society, and the first Federal President of WIZO; WIZO activist Rose Mandelbaum; Dora Abramovitch, National Secretary of Council and Editor of *Council Bulletin*, who, together with her sister Anne, had started English classes for new arrivals in Australia; Nerida Cohen BA LLB, specialist in industrial and family law, the only woman barrister in New South Wales, who was admitted to the Bar in 1935; Linda Littlejohn, President of the Women Voters' Association and keynote speaker at the conference luncheon;

and Camilla Wedgwood, Principal of Women's College at Sydney University, who addressed delegates on 'Our responsibilities to youth', a topic suggested by Dr Fanny.

The social events of conference highlighted Council's prestige among the wider community and their appreciation of Council's social welfare and social justice agenda. The Premier of New South Wales, Bertram Stevens, provided a launch to take delegates around Sydney Harbour. There was a fundraising garden party in the grounds of Ruth Fairfax's home, 'Elaine', in Double Bay, in aid of the Royal Alexandra Hospital for Children, the South Sydney Hospital, the Picton Lakes Settlement, and the Montefiore Home. Guests of honour at the Conference luncheon were the Governor's wife, Lady Wakehurst, and Lady Mayoress Mrs Norman Nock. At the mayoral reception for delegates on 9 March 1938 in Sydney's Town Hall, Dr Fanny broached her themes of gratitude for present blessings and distress at the rising tide of Jew-hatred abroad:

In Germany we would not be honoured guests, but we are proud to live in a country over which the British flag so gloriously flies. Our organisation tries to inculcate into women's minds the fact that they have some responsibility to the community in which they live. We would be happy to devote our interests only to the country in which we live and of which we are loyal citizens, but our people in other countries are oppressed, and we have to work for them. ('At Jewish Women's garden party' 1938, p. 22)

Due to illness, Bertram Stevens could not attend the official opening of conference on 9 March 1938. The Assistant Minister, J.H. Ryan MLC, extended a welcome to delegates on behalf of the State Government ('NCJW Sydney Section: Fifth Jewish Women's Conference' 1938, p. 7). Local and national press covered the 10-day conference and the *Hebrew Standard* featured Dr Fanny's presidential address on its front page. She remarked that it had been a privilege to organise a conference that coincided with the 150th anniversary celebrations of Australia. She reiterated her gratitude for living conditions in Australia, while deploring their absence in the lives of her people overseas:

Jewish women realised the indomitable courage of the early Australian pioneers and it was with gratitude in our hearts that we fully appreciated what they had done in founding a country over which flies the British flag of freedom, liberty and justice. We gain inspiration and courage because we live in a dominion which is a part of the British Empire that makes its inhabitants happy and blessed. But because we are so

happy and free, we must think of our oppressed race in non-democratic countries who are suffering because of racial discrimination. (p. 1)

Dr Fanny summarised NCJW's ethos and work, conveying its ideals and actions. She emphasised service above self and envisaged a world devoid of prejudice and hatred:

The chief theme of this Conference will be how best to serve our people and their future, as well as making the Jewish women of Australia alive to their responsibilities in the service of humanity. In our 15 years of existence we have given every human service and it is my desire and that of every member throughout Australia to continue in greater measure this work so that we shall build up a force that will shower love and peace upon its fellow men no matter what race, creed or colour. (p. 1)

Mrs Edmond Gates, representing the National Council of Women of New South Wales—an organisation with 75 affiliated bodies, including the NCJW—told conference:

[W]omen who wanted this world to be a fit place for their children to live, had to organise, in order to realise their ideals. The National Council was very proud of the Council of Jewish Women and felt sure that the injustices of the world today must die and the world be encircled by a Golden Chain of love. (p. 1)

Despite Mrs Edmond Gates's optimism, the situation for Jews in Europe overshadowed conference deliberations, as the weekend brought bad news from abroad. Dr Fanny said, 'We are terribly troubled to think that half the Jews in the world will now have no home in Central Europe' ('For Women: Children's need: 'world fit to live in' 1938, p. 9). In words calculated to support and encourage Dr Fanny and NCJW in a time of crisis, Lady Wakehurst told delegates, 'We are living in very troubled times, and I feel very deeply for your people in Austria and Poland and other countries where they have not a happy home' (p. 9).

Almost two months later, Council received a letter from Mrs G.A. Wood, representing the National Council of Women's Peace and Arbitration Committee, sympathising with the situation of Jewry in central Europe. Alarm bells were ringing in Australia, as emboldened Nazi sympathisers gathered support. In May 1938, Sydney barrister, J. McClemens, addressed Council members on 'Respect for the Law', outlining the danger of setting aside laws, as Hitler had done in 1933. He warned: 'New South Wales had allowed the organisation of the New Guard, which was an unofficial arm against a Government ruling by constitutional authority' and he pointed out its similarity to the Brown Shirts, the Nazi Party's paramilitary' ('A large

gathering of members attended the Fifteenth annual meeting of the Sydney Section. Dr Fanny Reading presided' 1938, p. 7).

The New Guard, founded in 1931 by a group of Sydney businessmen led by Colonel Eric Campbell, was a 'militaristic quasi-Fascist movement which soon claimed over 85,000 members' (Rubinstein, H. 1991, p. 489). Despite Campbell's claim decades later that he deplored Nazi antisemitism, Rubinstein notes that he visited Hitler in 1933 and expressed admiration for the 'orderly, patriotic and determined' Nazi regime and voiced concern about what he perceived to be the Jews' stranglehold on Russia. The New Guard's publication, *Liberty*, disseminated antisemitic tropes such as Jewish control of the world's press. Notwithstanding the decline of the New Guard in 1932 and the strong British democratic tradition in Australia, the fact that an organisation in Australia could spew antisemitism caused unease in the Jewish community. It 'undoubtedly reinforced the cult of group invisibility foreshadowed in the 1890s and reaffirmed by communal leaders including Rabbi Cohen: "A minority is always wiser to be careful"' (Rubinstein, H. 1991, pp. 489-490).

Rubinstein points out that there were several antisemitic organisations in interwar Australia, such as the Unity League, and the Guild of Watchmen of Australia, the latter publishing in 1933 the notorious antisemitic fabrication known as the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Dr Fanny responded to these antisemitic manifestations in ways she knew best. First, her organisation was predicated on good citizenship, being a responsible and helpful neighbour by means of pragmatic humanitarian programs and a social justice agenda. This was not a propagandistic strategy but a product of the Judaic ethics to which Dr Fanny subscribed, especially her belief in *Tikkun Olam*, repairing the world. Second, she networked extensively across organisations and communities, speaking about the deteriorating situation for Jews abroad and, in response, eliciting much goodwill and support from community leaders and government representatives, and obtaining generous press and radio coverage both locally and nationally. When antisemitic smears in Australia threatened to bring the community into disrepute, she never hesitated to speak up and, in one celebrated instance, took legal action as the plaintiff in a defamation case that rocked the country (see Chapter 8).

NCJW peace initiatives

Within Australia at this time, NCJW accomplished a great deal in the areas of philanthropy, hospital visits, immigrant welfare, support for local charities, public health and social welfare generally. With their focus on Jewish communities in Palestine and Central and Eastern

Europe, NCJW undertook fundraising to sponsor institutions in Palestine. In Sydney, CJW's card parties raised funds for the Girls' Orphanage in Jerusalem; and the tree drive—in May 1938 Dr Fanny appealed to members to buy tree certificates as Mother's Day gifts—contributed to the greening of Palestine. The CJW supported the Ort-Oz Appeal, which funded education and skills training for young refugees fleeing oppression and settling in Palestine and other countries ('National Council of Jewish Women: Sydney Section' 1938, p. 7). On 19 September 1938, Council hosted a card party to raise money for a Polish Appeal, 'as the plight of our people is so desperate' ('NCJW Sydney section: card party, Polish relief' 1938, p. 7); and, in October 1938, Council supported the General Refugees' Fund, described as 'the very deserving cause ... which in the present crisis is more urgent than ever' ('Sherry Party and High Tea in aid of General Refugees' Fund' 1938, p. 7).

The ferment around events abroad lent urgency to CJW's peace initiatives. Dr Fanny's friend Ruby Rich, who chaired meetings of CJW's Sydney Section at this time, promoted participation in Peace Week. Council members placed a wreath at the Cenotaph at the Peace Dedication Ceremony held on 21 August 1938 in Sydney's Martin Place. Rich's play entitled *Every Woman's Peace Play*, was staged at Grace Brothers Auditorium in the city. Dr Fanny presided at a Special Peace Luncheon at the C and Y Centre, and introduced guest speaker Linda Littlejohn, President of the United Associations and a friend of Council ('NCJW Sydney section: card party, Polish relief' 1938, p. 7).

On 29 November 1938, Council held a 15th Anniversary Banquet, attended by more than 200 guests—including the Editor of the *Sunday Sun*, F.E. Baume—to mark Dr Fanny's establishment of the first CJW on 3 July 1923 in Sydney, which had grown into the representative national body. It was time to celebrate this achievement and, with the co-operation of the Australian Broadcasting Commission, Dr Fanny and National Junior President, Kae Israel, broadcast to the nation at 10.40 pm from the dinner venue. Dr Fanny presented 'Foundation Honor Certificates' to foundation members, noting the role of Celia Symonds, who assisted in the formation of Council. Foundation member Mrs S Goldman, on behalf of Council, presented to Dr Fanny a cheque for a symbolic £15 to commemorate the occasion. Dr Fanny was deeply moved:

The Council was proud to know that they had gained the respect and esteem not only of the Jewish Community of Australia but of the non-Jewish also. Every women's organisation in Australia recognised the N.C.J.W. as the representative body of Jewish women. A call had now come to the N.C.J.W. to mobilise its members for service to King and Country. The National President was happy that she had created such an

organisation which, everywhere in Australia, was and is a power and an influence for good in every branch of endeavour. ('NCJW Sydney Section: 15th anniversary dinner brilliant celebration' 1938, p. 7)

It was a fitting note on which to end the year, as Dr Fanny's phrase 'service to King and Country' foreshadowed NCJW priorities in 1939 that led to the suspension of their regular agenda and their dedication to war work. From 1939 to 1945, Dr Fanny emerged as a different leader, playing a significant role in Australia's war effort. Dr Fanny's response to Australia's participation in the Second World War and her attempts to aid co-religionists in Europe constitute the substance of the next chapter.

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Women working together can achieve anything

—Dr Fanny Reading

Chapter 6: NCJW—The war years 1939–1945

1939 brought challenges to the NCJW: abroad, peace prospects diminished and persecution of Jews in Europe escalated, especially in Germany and Austria. Dr Fanny knew about the delegitimisation and disenfranchisement of Jews under the German Reich, the terror attacks, arbitrary arrests and incarceration in concentration camps. Her friend, Jessie Street, had visited Vienna in August 1938 after Germany had annexed Austria on 13 March 1938. Street witnessed and recorded the despair of the Jewish community:

Their whole status was changed in one night. They are now dismissed without notice or compensation; their businesses are confiscated or closed; they are forbidden to employ or be employed by Aryans; their money and property is taken from them, they are driven out of their homes; they are arrested and imprisoned without any charge being brought against them, without any trial.... The witnessing of this application of every possible means of terrorising, humiliating, and insulting people who have been rendered helpless by the deprivation of all legal means of protection or redress, arouses in one a feeling of anger and repugnance coupled with sadness and pity that is indescribable. (Radi 1989, p. 155)

Australia was not immune to Nazi influences—antisemitic movements were active in Australia. Attacks on Jewish communities in Australia, however, were ideological, reflecting Nazi propaganda. From 1935, the Nazi regime fostered contacts with German minority groups in foreign countries, including Australia. However, only German citizens, not Australians of German descent, were permitted to join the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (NSDAP), the National Socialist Workers' Party. Australia's Minister for External Affairs, Sir Henry Gullett, rejected the claim that by 1939, 60,000 Australians of German descent had joined the Nazi Party, but admitted that 'certain Nazi elements were undesirably active within the Commonwealth' (Rubinstein, H.L. 1991, p. 491). Among homegrown Nazis by the late 1930s, conspiracy theorist Eric Butler was 'an established activist on behalf of antisemitic and extreme right-wing causes ... [who] 'regularly unleashed anti-Jewish tirades in the *New Times*' (p. 494). The manifestations of antisemitism in Australia created unease in the Jewish community: 'The growth of indigenous anti-Semitic political groups such as the Australia First

Movement, a new phenomenon in Australian political life, was very disturbing for Australian Jews' (Rutland 1988, p. 202).

For Dr Fanny, who had resumed the Presidency of NCJW's Sydney section in 1936, it was a worrying time, seeing the situation of Jews worsen under Hitler. In Australia, there were austerity measures and challenges to health and welfare. Towards the end of this decade, the prospect of war changed NCJW's agenda, with Dr Fanny's watchwords of 'Service and Sacrifice' reflecting the organisation's ethos. With new national priorities, NCJW focused on defence—the needs of Australian and Allied Forces—and the wellbeing of the country's population. She urged members to sign the National Service Register issued by the Commonwealth Government.

At Council's 16th annual meeting on 25 May 1939 in Sydney, Dr Fanny said they had shown unity of purpose in attempting to overcome problems facing Jewry. 'Our work among refugees here and abroad has been magnificent,' she said. 'Nearly every refugee knows of the hospitality, help and encouragement each receives from the NCJW' ('NCJW Sydney Section:16th Annual Meeting' 1939, p. 7). She highlighted the work of Dora Abramovitch and the honorary teachers, who conducted English classes for 200 every week. When classes grew to 400 participants weekly, the NSW Education Department ran these in three schools with paid teachers. Refugees paid 1/6d per week for a two-hour lesson twice weekly ('Jewish Women's President' 1939a, p. 8).

For Dr Fanny, 'constant and beneficial' religious work among children and adults was a pillar of Council's agenda. Rabbi Rev. Leib Falk gave 'inspiring lectures', members observed Council's Sabbath, kept Pesach (Passover) and Seder (the Passover service) 'in true traditional fashion', and Chanukah and Purim parties were held for the children ('NCJW Sydney Section:16th Annual Meeting' 1939, p. 7). Dr Fanny recalled that in the past year the Hospital Committee had made more than 2000 visits to hospitals and institutions; the *Council Bulletin* had appeared continuously for 14 years; and her two broadcasts from Sydney had been heard throughout Australia. Council's philanthropy included contributions to the Dunningham Memorial Fund, Peace Week, the Bushfire Appeal, the Immigrant Welfare Fund, German Relief, the Happy Day Fund, and several health, maternal and childcare initiatives in Palestine. She encouraged members and 'hoped that they would be granted the vision, understanding, courage, and determination, to help them carry out the work of the world today' (p. 7).

Dr Fanny attended the 12th annual meeting of Melbourne's CJW, a nostalgic trip, as she had established Melbourne's CJW on 28 November 1927 at a meeting in her parents' home in St Kilda. On this visit, she met Ida Bension, who headed a Women's International Zionist Organization (WIZO) appeal to feed 15,00 schoolchildren in Palestine. At a meeting in Monash House, Dr Fanny spoke in support of this cause. She expressed satisfaction that Melbourne's Section had agreed to contribute to maintaining a bed in NCJW's maternity ward in the Rothschild Hadassah University Hospital, Jerusalem ('Dr Fanny Reading's Council Tour' 1939, p. 7).

Almost a month later, on 20 June 1939, Dr Fanny addressed the 10th AGM and three committee meetings of the Adelaide section in South Australia. At the AGM, she told of a Viennese family called Borer, who, eager to find relatives in Australia, had sent a letter to an address with that name in the Melbourne telephone directory, requesting help in obtaining permits to emigrate. On arrival in Australia, they discovered they had written to an anti-borer extermination company, where the employees felt sympathetic enough to help them by providing guarantees for permits and preparing a home for them in Melbourne. 'We realise there is some hope for humanity when a case of this type is brought to notice,' Dr Fanny said ('Jewish Women's President' 1939b, p. 8).

In Adelaide, Dr Fanny met representatives of women's organisations, Jewish and non-Jewish. She expressed satisfaction that during her stay there Adelaide Council had established a Combined Council Junior Group for young men and women and young married couples ('Dr F. Reading's Council Tour ' 1939, p. 7). She addressed the need for increased philanthropy to alleviate distress overseas and at home, noting that Council co-operated with any movement that benefited public welfare. She shared with them recent efforts of Sydney's Council: 'The young matrons in Sydney raised more than £300 each year, and of this one third was given to a Jewish charity and the other two-thirds to two non-Jewish charities' ('Jewish Women's President' 1939b, p. 8).

NCJW's plans for Jewish refugees

Perturbed by dangers facing Jewish children in Europe, Dr Fanny told Adelaide's Council about WIZO's representative Ida Bension, who would launch an appeal for Youth Aliyah, which brought children from Central Europe to Palestine at the cost of £100 per child (for more on Youth Aliyah, see Chapter 8). Committed to the wellbeing of migrant Jewish children in Australia, Dr Fanny visited Kiotpo Farm, 35 miles from Adelaide, an agricultural training centre

attended by eight Jewish boys, and supported by the Australian Jewish Welfare Society ('Dr F. Reading's Council Tour ' 1939, p. 7).

Dr Fanny's critical appraisal of local conditions and her ability to modify Council's paradigm accordingly in original ways was evident five days later, when she travelled to Kalgoorlie, visited the homes of every member there and attended their CJW's 10th AGM. Cognisant of their challenges and their small pool of women workers, she widened their constituency by asking 'the Jewish men to participate in local Jewish work ... and refugee work' (p. 7).

This adaptability demonstrated that she was not wedded to an exclusively female membership and welcomed men if their participation helped to bring initiatives to fruition, in this instance extending help to refugees living in the city. This flexibility characterised her approach throughout her working life and was again evident when, at a later stage, she encouraged the male sporting body Maccabi to join the NCJW. She suggested that the Kalgoorlie CJW contribute to the Scholarship Fund, Youth Aliyah Fund, Palestine Fund and Jewish National Fund. Dr Fanny addressed a mayoral reception held in her honour, at which she met representatives from all the women's organisations in the city (p. 7).

Dr Fanny planned to visit and re-energise all Western Australian branches formed 10 years previously. Travelling with her mother, she spent 10 days in Perth as the guest of CJW President Fanny Breckler. Dr Fanny wanted Jewish women to co-operate for the benefit of the State. She cited the support Sydney Section gave to social services provided by local police clubs, which kept boys off the streets. These facilities, where police met the boys 'as friends', included club rooms, games, gymnasiums and libraries. The first club opened in 1937, and juvenile delinquency declined where clubs were established ('Woman 's Realm Helping Refugees. Work of Jewish Women' 1939, p. 5). She was impressed with 'the wonderful work' carried out by Perth Council's Seniors, Juniors and Sub-Juniors. Perth Council agreed to assist 100 German and Polish girls, a project thwarted by the outbreak of war.

Unaware that within two months the Second World War would commence—Germany invaded Poland on 1 September 1939—Dr Fanny continued to make representations on behalf of refugees. She spoke of NCJW's plans to bring to Australia every year 100 Jewish refugee girls aged 14-16 from Central Europe to be trained as domestic workers and educated in Australian ways. She outlined a resolution NCJW intended submitting to the Minister of State for the Interior, Senator Hattil Spencer Foll. She envisaged a scheme similar to the Barnardo plan, with girls staying in private homes that could be inspected:

There have been many requests from Europe and there are homes ready to take the girls.... The fares will be paid by the employers or by the Jewish Welfare Society. We have ten sections in Australia which could easily assimilate 100 girls a year, and we also have people in Europe to select the girls. ('Jewish Girls Coming as Domestic' 1939, p. 3)

She stated that NCJW was especially concerned with the welfare of women and children aged 12-16 years of age, 'who needed careful handling'. By meeting and mixing with Australian children of the same age, 'they would be educated in Australian ways and customs' ('Woman 's Realm Helping Refugees. Work of Jewish Women' 1939, p. 5). Many of the women had professions, such as nursing and dentistry, but were turning to domestic work in Australia. She said NCJW was anxious 'to secure the absorption of refugees into the community and to that end arranged classes in English and other subjects' ('Jewish Women's Council', p. 11). Dr Fanny told a reporter, 'other methods of assimilation include giving advice to the refugees in the matter of customs to be lost—such as kissing hands ... and talking German in the streets' ('Jewish Girls Coming as Domestic' 1939, p. 3).

Dr Fanny was delighted that the Breckler family in Perth established a scholarship in their mother's name. There were now two Council scholarships—the Fanny Reading and the Fanny Breckler scholarships—to be awarded to an Australian Jewish boy or girl on the basis of financial need. Perth Council committed to contributing to the Fanny Reading Scholarship Fund and Youth Aliyah. Perth Sub Juniors, who also undertook to support the scholarships and Youth Aliyah, impressed Dr Fanny with 'their earnestness to help their young co-religionists in Europe and Palestine and to maintain personal connections with them' ('Dr F. Reading's Council Tour ' 1939, p. 7). Dr Fanny, with an eye to Council's viable future, reported, 'With Junior and Sub-Junior material such as Council has in Perth, the work of the N.C.J.W. must remain permanently' (p. 7).

Dr Fanny also discussed arrangements for the 6th National Conference planned for Perth in 1940 (p. 7). Due to the outbreak of war, this conference was cancelled and held instead in Sydney in 1943, when it focused on war work, the alleviation of the position of European Jewry, Palestine, and post-war reconstruction (Newton 2000, p. 255).

While in Perth, Dr Fanny met a woman whom she called 'the guardian angel of refugees in Perth who come to this great Commonwealth'. She praised Mrs. N. Rosenwax, honorary secretary of Senior Council, 'who gives personal service to every refugee entering Australia in

Fremantle' ('Dr F. Reading's Council Tour ' 1939, p. 7). Dr Fanny said that most states handled the refugee problem commendably. She told members to re-double their efforts because of the tragedy in Jewish history and present tension in the world. She urged that they support Palestine and 'our people there', saying there was a great need

to counteract that challenge to democracy and freedom by giving our loyalty to the Empire, that has protected the persecuted and given all liberty, Great Britain, and to retain our courage and strength in face of the crisis due to countries overrun with hatred and intolerance. (p. 7)

Dr Fanny broadened her base beyond the Jewish community, disseminating her message to a wider audience. State leaders of women's organisations promised practical assistance in their areas. She addressed gentile women's organisations on the same issue she canvassed with NCJW—duty to their country. In Perth, these organisations included the Women's Service Guild and the National Council of Women, whose President and conveners hosted her at a luncheon. At these non-Jewish gatherings, she pleaded for practical sympathy, fair play, and more tolerance in helping refugees assimilate and adapt to the customs and life of Australia:

She pointed out to them the great asset the refugees themselves have, not only by creating employment for Australians, but for the loyalty to this country that they and their children would show, for they have no loyalties to those countries, who had driven them out. She appealed to the representatives of the bodies of women in each State, to help the Council in making the lot of the children coming here, who had suffered deep humiliation, a happier one, for they would later become the most desirable of Australian citizens. (p. 7)

Dr Fanny's stay in Perth completed her sweep of the states that started in May 1938 with Brisbane, followed by Melbourne, Adelaide and Kalgoorlie. Her successful tour received press coverage that addressed NCJW's services to Australia and humanity. Her main aim was to unify Councils for the tasks ahead in response to the impact of the international situation on Jews and to local defence problems in Australia. She said Council members throughout Australia should give serious and united thought to the work the NCJW urged them to do: 'For this reason, Dr Reading thought it imperative to visit all the States to inculcate into the minds and hearts of Jewish and non-Jewish women, their duty to their country, their race and humanity in general' (p. 7). By August 1939, Dr Fanny and her mother were back in Sydney, where Dr Fanny reported on her tour.

Dr Steinberg and the Freeland League

In July 1938, the Evian Conference was held in France to discuss the plight of Jews subjected to Nazi persecution and the resulting Jewish refugee crisis. President Franklin Roosevelt stipulated in his invitation to nations attending, including Australia, that no country would be required to admit more persons than allowed by their existing legislation. Australia's delegate, Colonel T.W. White, stated that Australia had always preferred British migration:

It will no doubt be appreciated also that, as we have no real racial problem, we are not desirous of importing one by encouraging any scheme of large-scale foreign migration.... The Evian Conference had been doomed to failure by the assumption that the refugee crisis of 1938 could be solved within the confines of traditional attitudes toward immigration. (cited in Blakeney 1984, pp. 278-279)

The following year, at a Junior Section's meeting during her Perth visit, Dr Fanny met for the first time Dr Isaac Steinberg (1888–1957), the Secretary of the Freeland League for Jewish Territorial Colonization, on whose behalf in May 1939 he launched his one-man mission to obtain the Australian Government's permission to settle a limited number of Jewish refugees in the Kimberley region of Western Australia. Many believed—including the well-known pastoralist Durack family, on whose leased land of seven million acres the projected Jewish colony would be situated—that this sparsely populated region would benefit from agricultural and pastoral development. The Freeland League scheme prompted antisemitic and philosemitic responses, and 'Many who objected to the scheme did so in the traditional language of antisemitism' (Rubinstein, H.L., 1991, p. 507). Steinberg, however, discounted the strength of antisemitism in Australia, as he received support from both leading and grassroots, Australians across the country, 'including trade union representatives, Church leaders, university men, and leading businessmen' (Steinberg 1948, p. 161). He wrote, 'It was obvious from the start that the Jewish character of the proposed colonization was in no way a hindrance. Rather the reverse' (p. 13). He acknowledged the existence of antisemitism in Australia but differentiated it from the violent racism abroad, 'it possesses neither the passionate force nor the deep roots that it does in Europe' (p. 102). On 25 May 1939 in Perth, the Labor Premier of Western Australia, John Willcock, told Dr Steinberg, 'We have no prejudice against Jewish colonization' (p. 14).

During Dr Fanny's 10-day stay in Perth in 1939, she was struck by Dr Steinberg's passion for helping Jewish refugees. At this particular juncture in history, her principles aligned with his

values. They were both dedicated to saving Jewish communities threatened with and experiencing destruction and death in Europe. While both Dr Fanny and Dr Steinberg were driven by their humanitarian zeal, they differed markedly in another major respect. Dr Fanny, unlike Dr Steinberg, was a committed Zionist and believed first and foremost in the Jewish people's return to their ancient homeland. Her dream was to see the persecuted masses of Europe find sanctuary in Palestine. However, in 1939, Britain's Mandatory authority in Palestine virtually closed the doors to Jewish migration at a time when entry permits were needed desperately, thus obstructing the fulfillment of the Zionist dream. With entry to Palestine denied to those most in need of refuge, Dr Fanny explored every other avenue that promised some measure of relief and safety for Jewish refugees anxious to escape Hitler's Nazi regime. Given the constraints on Jewish migration to Palestine, her support of Dr Steinberg's Kimberley scheme for large-scale Jewish migration to Australia was therefore not a betrayal of her primary commitment to Zionism.

Dr Steinberg's ideological position differed markedly from Dr Fanny's. As already stated, he was not Zionist, although he expressed admiration for those Jews drawn from professional and urban backgrounds, who had adapted to agrarian life in Palestine, creating thriving agricultural settlements and developing an attachment to the land, 'which proved conclusively what the average Jew could achieve' (Steinberg 1948, p. 110). He was essentially a pragmatist, ready to explore the potential for large-scale settlements whether in the Kimberley or, alternatively, in Tasmania, an area where he travelled extensively with the help of Critchley Parker Jr, an idealistic Christian who devised an ambitious Jewish settlement scheme in Tasmania. Parker wrote: 'I am so glad that you think our trip in Tasmania will help the many oppressed people in Europe, a cause for which I shall always be happy to work' (p. 140).

Dr Fanny's meeting with Dr Steinberg in Perth had a sequel in Sydney on 31 March 1940, when he addressed a capacity audience on the proposed settlement of refugees in the Kimberley region. Dr. Fanny—seated on the platform with Rabbi Max Schenk and Julius Karpin—openly and publicly supported Steinberg's work. Dr. Steinberg emphasised he had not come to Australia to ask for money, but to confront Jews of this continent with a problem that Jews in Europe had to grapple with since the advent of Nazism in 1933.

Rabbi Leib Falk then appealed for support for Dr. Steinberg's mission. Rabbi Falk had acted as chaplain in Egypt and Palestine during the First World War and was chaplain to the Australian Military Forces and to Jewish internees in Australia during the Second World War. While accused of a lack of sympathy for the internees, he had worked hard to secure their release

(Rutland 1981). He served as Assistant Minister of Sydney's Great, where Dr Fanny attended services regularly, so she was familiar with his outspoken views. His sermons advocating a militant Zionism, however, alienated many in his congregation. Rabbi Falk had served as chaplain from 1918 to 1921 to the First Judeans, the 38th, 39th and 40th Royal Fusiliers in Egypt and Palestine, and Judean battalions formed following representations made to the British Government by Ze'ev Jabotinsky, aided by Chaim Weizmann (as noted in Chapter 8). He enjoyed a close friendship with Jabotinsky, shared his views, and was honorary president of the Sydney Revisionist movement (Rutland 1981). Jabotinsky had opposed Theodor Herzl's plan to colonise Uganda, a proposal put forward by the British Government at a time when the world was shocked by the brutality of the Kishinev pogrom in 1903 in Bessarabia. At the Sixth Zionist Congress, the first following Herzl's death, 'a majority rejected Uganda and regarded Palestine once again as the sole end-goal of the movement' (Horowitz 2017).

Despite Jabotinsky's opposition to the concept of Territorialism and Rabbi Falk's political loyalty to both Jabotinsky and his Revisionist Party, in this singular instance Rabbi Falk had the courage of his convictions to run counter to the Revisionist party line in support of Dr Steinberg and alongside Dr Fanny. Sydney Jewry was thus witnessing a novel spectacle, two committed Zionists—Dr Fanny and Rabbi Falk—supporting the Freeland League's settlement scheme in the Kimberley. Rabbi Schenk moved and Dr. Fanny Reading seconded a resolution in support of Dr. Steinberg's mission ('NCJW Sydney Section: Palestine Fete' 1940, p. 7).

Australian Zionists divided over the Kimberley Scheme

Steinberg understood but deplored the opposition to the Kimberley plan launched by Australian Zionists, who feared 'the idea of Jewish colonisation outside Palestine may be harmful in two ways: in relation to the world at large, and within the ranks of the Jews themselves' (Steinberg 1943, p. 19). He countered these fears by affirming that a strong Jewish community in Australia and a worldwide Jewish diaspora could support materially the Zionist vision of a Jewish homeland. 'There can be no Zionism in Australia without Jewish people in Australia,' he wrote (p. 26). He returned to his theme of preparing a home in Australia 'for a part of our homeless people', who would need security at the end of the war:

This is the way Jews should feel in Canada, South Africa and Argentine. The same applies to Jews in Australia. Our reply to the Jewish catastrophe in Europe must also be the reconstruction of Jewish life in Australia.... A nation that does a big and generous thing for people in dire need will never regret it.... God will see to that. (pp. 9-10)

Dr Fanny's unqualified support of the Kimberley Scheme put her at odds with many of her fellow Zionists in Australia, who adhered rigidly to party ideology. As mentioned already, in early 1939 her humanitarian priority and that of the NCJW was saving Jewish lives during the period of Nazi persecution of Jews that preceded the annihilation of Jewish communities in the Holocaust. Dr Fanny was aware of the immigration barriers facing Jews desperate to escape Nazi brutality and widespread European antisemitism. As Chaim Weizmann noted, 'The world seemed to be divided into two parts—those places where Jews could not live and those where they could not enter' (Weizmann 1936). Pragmatic in nature, more concerned with the value of human life than ideological exactitude, Dr Fanny endorsed the Kimberley Scheme for its potential to save Jewish lives when few, if any, alternative options were available.

Alan Crown (1977) noted that early Australian Zionism was hampered by the territorialist movement in European Zionism:

When the Seventh Zionist Congress in 1905 rejected all plans for settlement outside Palestine and when Israel Zangwill founded the Jewish Territorial Organization, a number of Australian Zionists, especially in New South Wales, espoused Zangwill's plan and split the Australian movement. (p. 305)

In 1906, Dr Richard Arthur, President of the Immigration League of Australia, wrote to Zangwill advocating that a Jewish colony be established in the Northern Territory or Queensland. The scheme collapsed when Prime Minister Alfred Deakin opposed the idea. In 1920, Zangwill revived the scheme but the Premier of Western Australia, Sir Newton Moore, also rejected the proposal. Crown contends, 'the struggle of Australian Zionism between the Territorialists and their opponents, the antipathy of the Great Synagogue in Sydney and the hostility of the *Hebrew Standard* shattered Australian Zionism' (p. 307). Later, however, 'the fate of European Jewry and the wrath of the community inspired by the MacDonald White Paper of 1939, which further restricted Jewish immigration into Palestine, gave cohesion to most of the disparate elements of the community' (p. 314). With Dr Steinberg's arrival in Australia as emissary of the Freeland League for Jewish Territorial Colonization, 'the Zionist movement was ... forced to divert some of its efforts to combat a resurgence of the Freeland League and the territorial movement' (p. 314).

Dr Steinberg's response to Jewish and Zionist opposition in Australia

The Freeland League for Jewish Territorial Colonization, established on 26 July 1935, was a revival of Zangwill's Jewish Territorial Organisation, which had disbanded in 1925 (Almagor 2018). As Gettler (1993) noted, 'the League eschewed any call for political independence, aiming instead for culturally distinct settlement flourishing within the political and economic framework of an established country, and for the settlers to become citizens of that host nation' (p. 46). The League had four criteria: a large area for economic expansion and the absorption of refugees; good climatic and soil conditions; a free and democratic host country; and, importantly, 'the area was to be sparsely populated to avoid any friction between the Jewish settlers and the established inhabitants'. In 1938, the League responded positively to a pamphlet, published on 6 January 1938, written by Australian journalist C.H. Chomley, who envisioned a settlement scheme in north-west Australia for Europe's persecuted Jews.

As one of the League's founders and its official emissary, Dr Steinberg spent three weeks inspecting part of the East Kimberley owned by lease-holders Connor, Doherty and Durack Ltd, who were prepared to sell to the League an area of 10,600 square miles (27,454 square kilometres) extending across the border between Western Australia and the Northern Territory (Wimborne, 2014). Dr Steinberg toured the country, speaking to community leaders of all faiths. Stranded in Australia at the outbreak of the Second World War, he used his time to secure support for the Kimberley Scheme. In June 1943, he published a brochure, *Plain Words to Australian Jews* (translated from the Yiddish version published in 1939), in which he outlined the Kimberley plan: 'A place ...where Jewish colonists will work on a large scale, where they will develop agriculture and cattle raising, as well as industry and handicrafts, where they will engage in building houses and roads, bridges and ports' (Steinberg 1943, p. 17).

Although the Western Australian Government applauded the scheme, as did advocates in the gentile and Jewish communities, Steinberg was disappointed by the negativity among sections of the Jewish and Zionist community. As Gettler (1993) noted:

The most vehement critics were the local Jews.... Only a fraction of the Jews supported it. The established Anglo-Australian community, fearing that a sudden influx of migrants arriving *en masse* could unsettle the racial balance, were generally ... opposed to the scheme.

As mentioned earlier, Dr Fanny was one of the few Zionists in Australia to support the scheme, which many believed undermined the Zionist dream of a national homeland in Palestine. In Dr

Steinberg's (1948) book, he makes special mention of 'Dr Fanny Reading and Mrs Jessie Street [who] spoke for the women of N.S.W.' (p. 154). Did Dr Fanny's support of Dr Steinberg alienate her from mainstream Zionists in Australia? Her public endorsement of the Kimberley Scheme did not affect in any way her friendship with Max Freilich, President of the NSW Zionist Council. Aside from Dr Fanny's open demonstration of support for Dr Steinberg at the Sydney meeting in 1940, she—together with 54 eminent citizens of the State—signed Dr Steinberg's published manifesto:

If Australia is to lay claim to being a democratic and humane nation, she cannot neglect her duties towards the victims of oppression in Europe. To offer them ... a home in Australia would raise our moral status throughout the world.... We urge the citizens of Australia and the Commonwealth Government to give these people the right to work alongside us in the task of upbuilding this country. (p. 153)

Dr Steinberg was disappointed that after his four-year campaign, some members of the Jewish community still had doubts about his plan (Steinberg 1943, p. 3). He ascribed their opposition to ignorance of the magnitude of the disaster in Europe and their failure to understand 'how great could be his own help for his tortured brethren.... We now face the immediate danger of annihilation and of physical disappearance that threatens our people: to be destroyed, to be slain and to perish' (p. 5). On 17 December 1942, he noted:

The German authorities are now carrying into effect Hitler's oft-repeated intentions to exterminate the Jewish people in Europe. From all occupied countries Jews are being transported in conditions of appalling horror and brutality to Eastern Europe. In Poland, which has been made the principal Nazi slaughter-house, the Ghettos established by the German invader are being systematically emptied.... None of those taken away are ever heard of again. The able-bodied are slowly worked to death in labor camps. The infirm are left to die of exposure and starvation or are deliberately massacred in mass executions. (p. 7)

Dr Steinberg reproached those who thought that, by opposing the Kimberley plan, they were defending the interests of Australia. This touched on an issue central to the objections of assimilated Jews in Australia, their dread that an influx of Eastern European Jewish people might provoke antisemitism; and he referred to the 'let-me-alone' Jews, the majority of the 30,000 Jews in Australia who felt anxiety for their relatives but not for the Jewish people as a whole.

Defence of the Kimberley Scheme

While Dr Fanny's support for the Kimberley Scheme was not representative of the Jewish community as a whole, she was in good company among the Christian community, from whom Dr Steinberg received stalwart support. He praised the Christian 'died [sic]-in-the-wool Australians' who supported the scheme. 'Besides,' he noted, 'not only material interests, but also purely humanitarian ideals move them to stretch out a helping hand to the persecuted' (Steinberg 1943, p. 12). Among the many in the Christian community in Australia who supported the Kimberley plan was the Chancellor of the University of Western Australia, Walter Murdoch. In an article 'Our Opportunity: A Home for Refugees', he wrote that supporting the scheme enabled Australians to do their duty and to serve Australia's economic interests (Murdoch 1939, p. 5). According to George Melville, an employee of the Pastoral Research Trust, who accompanied Dr Steinberg to East Kimberley,

the proposed colony in the north would have in it nothing of nationalism, it would be a settlement of homeless human beings who seek a place on the earth on which to live at peace, who would be Jews by blood, but who would adopt the nationality of the land in which they found that place and give it loyalty and love. (Melville 1939, p. 7)

In an article, 'Commendable Jewish Settlement Scheme,' Henry Boote (1940) wrote that the scheme was non-political and loyal to Australia: 'Australian habits and customs are to be followed closely and the English language introduced right from the outset' (p. 15). He emphasised that the proposed scheme had been endorsed by the Australian Council of Trade Unions, Tasmania, South Australia, and the Western Australian Labor Government, and 'It remains only for the Federal Government to give its permission for the launching of the scheme' (p. 16).

The Synod of the Anglican diocese of Perth also supported the proposal, as did the primate of the Church of England in Australia, Sir Frank Gibson. In Melbourne, 46 leading citizens signed a public appeal, including historian Sir Ernest Scott and zoologist Georgina Sweet. Dr Daniel Mannix, Melbourne's Catholic archbishop, gave his support. In Sydney, 55 eminent citizens signed a public manifesto, including Lord Mayor Stanley Crick; the Chancellor of Sydney University, Sir Percival Rogers; Supreme Court Justice, Sir Thomas Bavin; and scholar Sir Mungo MacCallum (Wimborne, 2014).

In Sydney, a group of Steinberg's supporters started the 'Sydney Group of Friends of Jewish Settlement in the Kimberleys'. Among them was Jewish historian Solomon Stedman, who

wrote a brochure about the Kimberley Scheme titled *A Jewish Settlement in Australia: On behalf of the Friends of a Jewish Settlement in Kimberley*. Acknowledging leading politicians' preference for British stock, he quoted British Colonial Secretary Malcolm McDonald: 'The British Government has made up its mind that the Commonwealth must, if it wants migrants in large numbers, seek them outside Britain' (Stedman 1940, p. 3). Stedman outlined the desperate situation of Jews under Nazi domination:

Robbed of all their possessions and deprived of the means of earning a livelihood, the Jewish masses find themselves in a position so tragic and hopeless that, unless countries could be found to admit them, they must perish.... AUSTRALIA IS ONE OF THESE COUNTRIES [sic]. The Freeland League for Jewish Territorial Colonisation ... proposes to settle Jews in the Kimberley districts (W.A.) ... at its own expense and to develop the land at no cost to Australia.... Quite apart from any humanitarian considerations, it is a good business proposition. (p. 5)

Countering the objection that Jews should go to Palestine instead of Australia, Stedman (1940) described the reality in 1940, 'Unfortunately the gates of Palestine were never opened sufficiently wide to admit even a fraction of the numbers that wished to go there. Now the gates are almost completely shut' (p. 8). Predicting the transformation that Jewish migrants could effect in the Kimberley, he described how Jews returning to Palestine had transformed barren land, drained malarial swamps and built Tel Aviv 'on the hot sands of Palestine', which was 'a monument to Jewish labour'.

Stedman expressed views that Dr Fanny also espoused:

The Jew, when he arrives in a new land, does not owe any allegiance to the country which expelled him.... The country of his adoption will become his country and the country of his children.... Was not Sir John Monash a good Australian? (p. 9)

Stedman also answered critics of the Kimberley Scheme who predicted Jewish migrants would drift to the cities: 'Throughout the world, the trend of population is from the country to the city. In Palestine the reverse is taking place.... 90 per cent of those who settle on the soil become deeply and permanently attached to it' (pp. 9-10). He paid tribute to the Government of Western Australia that approved the scheme; and the Australasian Council of Trades Union's resolution in support of the Kimberley settlement, a resolution confirmed by the Trades and Labor Councils of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania. He concluded: 'By granting the necessary permission, the Commonwealth Government would

reveal to the world its broadminded outlook and the humanitarian qualities of the people of this beautiful land' (p. 12).

Despite the best efforts of Dr Steinberg, Solomon Stedman, Dr Fanny and other supporters—Jewish and Christian—from all walks of life, in July 1944 the Australian government rejected the Kimberley plan:

Well aware that the sparse population in the country's north made it vulnerable to invasion, Prime Minister John Curtin advised the Freeland League that the Australian Constitution would not allow group settlement on this scale, and so the Kimberley Scheme did not proceed. (State Library of New South Wales, n.d.)

NCJW's response to Declaration of War

Australia entered the Second World War on 3 September 1939, shortly after Britain declared war when its ultimatum for Germany to withdraw from Poland expired. The Declaration of War instantly transformed NCJW's agenda. Ten days later, Sydney Section's Sewing and Knitting Group met in Council Rooms and, from noon until 6 pm and from 8 pm onwards, completed 100 pairs of flannelette pyjamas. This seemingly small contribution to the war effort would escalate to a quarter of a million garments by the end of the war. On 19 September 1939 in Sydney, Council instituted Air Raid Precaution Classes in Council Rooms, followed by First Aid and Home Nursing classes. As NCJW President, Dr Fanny was elected to the General Committee of the Lord Mayor's Patriotic War Fund, the first of her many civic and national appointments linked to the war effort. She became identified with every organisation ensuring the safety and welfare of the home population and providing resources for the Second Australian Imperial Force (Second AIF, the volunteers) in its fight, from 1939 to 1945, against Nazi Germany, Vichy France, Italy and Japan. Dr Fanny stated that Council members

have thrown themselves wholeheartedly and enthusiastically into the defence work of this country. It was decided that the members would offer their services through the Council in addition to the work they intended to do in their municipalities and thus render extra cooperation in the present trying times of war. ('Council Defence Work.' 1939, p. 7)

In November 1939, at a Council reception in Sydney, Dr Fanny assured Lady Wakehurst, wife of the Governor of New South Wales, that Council members were committed to co-operating in emergency services for which she (Lady Wakehurst) might need them:

[T]hey were proud to be a part of the great British Commonwealth of Nations, which stood for the highest principles of humanity, truth, justice, freedom and liberty. The Jewish women wished to play their part in saving humanity and civilisation. Their organisation endeavours to teach Jewish women what they owe to themselves, to the country in which they live and to their race. ('NCJW Sydney Section: Lady Wakehurst's Reception' 1939, p. 7)

Lady Wakehurst acknowledged Council's loyalty to the British flag: 'I realise what wonderful citizens of the British Empire you are. More than ever in this crisis we must all stick together for the ideals we believe in (p. 7). She inspected Council's garments made for the soldiers and commented on their quality and quantity. The reception featured Council's charity work, including a donation towards an x-ray machine for the Royal South Sydney Hospital, and contributions to the Australian Jewish Welfare Society and NCJW's Immigrant Welfare Work.

Sydney Council's efforts intensified and their contribution to the Lord Mayor's Appeal Day totalled £180/3/8, the results of 'untiring efforts' of their stall-workers in Martin Place and contributions from Council button-sellers, 'who worked unceasingly for us in the city' ('NCJW Sydney Section: Save a Child Fund Cabaret' 1939, p. 3). On 20 December 1939, Council presented 'several hundreds of garments made by the N.C.J.W. for the Lord Mayor's Comfort Fund for the soldiers in camp', which were handed over to Lady Nock, Chairman of the Women's Comforts' Branch of the Fund. Dr Fanny told Lady Nock, 'the N.C.J.W. would assist her in the future in the big work of helping our country win the war' ('NCJW Sydney Section: Save a child appeal' 1940a, p. 6). Lady Nock praised the 'magnificent contribution from the National Council of Jewish Women', as it was the largest single donation of garments she had received, and they were especially welcome as the depot had nothing. She also requested that Council supply socks for the soldiers leaving for overseas. 'The wonderful array of Council sewing that she had seen that afternoon would be an inspiration for others and she most wholeheartedly thanked the President and every worker for their marvellous assistance (p. 6).

The War Emergency Board

Dr Fanny announced a 4-point program for NCJW, designating 'war work' their priority, followed by Palestine, Jewish education and local charities ('National Council of Jewish Women: Sydney Section General Meeting' 1940, p. 8). She created a War Emergency Board comprising 30 members, each of whom pledged to contact a further 20 women 'in an endeavour to carry this urgent work into as vast a channel as possible' and to raise funds 'for

all war contingencies' ('NCJW Sydney Section: War Emergency Board' 1940, p. 7). The Board met weekly.

Realising the urgency of the present world situation and that of the British Empire in particular, the members of this Board have wasted no time in putting forward two very important projects to do their share in this crisis. As soon as these projects are in full working order, the Board has some more plans to place before its workers. ('NCJW Sydney Section: Cultural Groups' 1940, p. 6)

Sydney's CJW obtained rent-free an Angus & Coote store from the Coote Estate, initially for six months, which they converted into their 'Community War Chest Shop'. For this enterprise, Dr Fanny relied on Council workers and financial and material contributions from diverse sources. In a prime position in Her Majesty's Arcade—opposite the department store David Jones in Castlereagh Street—the shop contributed substantially to the Lord Mayor's Patriotic Appeal and other charities. Opened on 18 June 1940, Council sold Jewish delicacies, cakes, preserves and gifts ('NCJW Sydney Section: War Emergency Board' 1940, p. 7), with proceeds donated to St Anne's, a military hospital in Waverley, for the construction of a ward. Dr Fanny requested

[donations] of all kinds of foodstuffs, fancy work and knitted goods, and by purchasing these products help us to raise a considerable sum each week to hand to the Lord Mayor's Fund for which very worthy cause this shop has been organised.... This venture of the Council is being run wholly by voluntary effort. ('NCJW Sydney Section: Cultural Groups' 1940, p. 6)

Midway through 1940, Dr Fanny issued a call to members 'to render immediate service to the British Empire in the present National crisis'. Speaking at Council's 17th AGM on 3 June 1940 in Sydney, she said in view of the danger facing Great Britain, she deemed it imperative 'to temporarily suspend the many projects and causes to which Council has given generous support, and that all future activities should be directed to the nation's effort to "Win the War"'. The CJW pledged 'to give every ounce of strength and support it could muster from the Jewish Community for the salvation of our country and the salvation of Judaism' (p. 6).

News and press censorship

Many members were concerned for the safety and survival of relatives living under Hitler's rule. On 20 August 1940, three months after Holland surrendered to Germany (the Dutch capitulated on 14 May 1940), the President of the Joodsche Vrouwenraad (the Jewish

Women's Council) in the Netherlands, Adolphine Schwimmer-Vigevano, spoke to Council's Mosman committee in Sydney and gave many migrants news about their families in Amsterdam. She related the very sad experiences of their country and her gratefulness to be in this free British land' ('NCJW Sydney Section: WIZO, Youth Aliyah Bazaar' 1940, p. 7). It was talks such as this, under the aegis of the NCJW, that brought eye-witness accounts from abroad directly to the Sydney Jewish community. This was a valuable NCJW initiative in the context of the strict press censorship enforced during the war in Australia to ensure military security, prevent a deterioration in public morale or patriotism, prevent obstruction of the war effort, and protect the political interests of Government. Press censorship, for example, also forbade discussion of the Australia First Movement, a fascist antisemitic organisation. The constraints of press censorship were crippling for media companies:

Many American correspondents and newspaper proprietors expressed their hostility to censorship and the manipulation of information by both Canberra and [General] MacArthur's Headquarters in Melbourne [and later Brisbane], by withdrawing completely from Australia and expressing their displeasure from the U.S. (Bell 1977)

On 20 January 1942, 15 Nazi Party and German Government officials met in the Berlin Suburb of Wannsee to co-ordinate the implementation of the 'Final Solution of the Jewish Question'. The SS envisioned the annihilation of some 11 million Jews as part of the Nazi program. In Australia, news of mass murder filtered through by several means, including an article on 'the greatest massacre in the world's history', based on a report smuggled out of Poland. On 26 June 1942, the *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate* ran the news story headlined, 'Polish Jews slaughtered: Nazis exposed in smuggled report', a story London's *Daily Telegraph* had sent via the wire service:

A report smuggled from Poland to the Jewish representative on the Polish National Council says that more than 700,000 Polish Jews have been slaughtered by the Germans.... The Germans are also reported to be carrying out a system of starvation, deaths from which are expected to be nearly as high as when their extermination began in Eastern Galicia last year. The procedure everywhere is similar—men and boys aged from 14 to 60 are assembled, usually in a public square or cemetery, where they are knifed, machine-gunned or killed by grenades, after digging their own graves (*Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, 26 June 1942, 'Polish Jews slaughtered: Nazis exposed in smuggled report', p. 3).

Readers learned that deaths in Vilno and Koko (Lithuania) districts totalled 300,000, and at Rowne (Poland), 15,000 over three nights. In Chelmno (Poland) 5,000 people from four towns were killed from November to March, and 35,000 from Lodz ghetto were killed in vans fitted as gas chambers, 'Into each of these 90 Jews were crowded at a time'. The article included death totals of 30,000 in Lwow, 15,000 in Stanislawow, 9000 in Slonim, 5,000 in Tarnopol, and 4,000 in Brezezany. In March, 25,000 Jews were taken from Lublin in sealed wagons 'and all trace of them was lost'. Furthermore, the article stated that 600,000 Jews were in the Warsaw ghetto, averaging 19 to a room. 'There was minimum aid to combat the ravages of typhus and other epidemics.' This report published in June 1942 left all Australians in no doubt that the Nazis were annihilating the Jews throughout Europe.

Dr Fanny, as head of the NCJW, also received cables from abroad with the latest news, ahead of its dissemination to the wider community. In their search for information about Jewish life abroad at this time, the Jewish community looked to newspapers, particularly Jewish publications such as the *Hebrew Standard*, established in 1895, which enjoyed a wide readership. The *Jewish Weekly News* began publication in 1934, changing its name in 1935 to *The Australian Jewish News*; and in 1939, a Sydney edition, *The Sydney Jewish News*, appeared. Both papers were printed in Melbourne and had a wide circulation in both cities. Newman Rosenthal edited the weekly *Jewish Herald* (Stedman 1943).

In 1944, Dutch migrants in Australia read in the *Hebrew Standard*:

German authorities had issued a decree ordering the registration of all children under 15 years of age.... The Dutch people who have learned to their cost to read between the lines ... have every reason to suspect that the new decree is directed mainly at the comparatively large number of Jewish children who have been hidden these past years by courageous Dutch Christians. (*Hebrew Standard of Australasia*, 21 September 1944, 'Dutch Help', p. 8)

A month later, the *Hebrew Standard* reported 'grim eye-witness accounts of Nazi brutality towards the Jewish community of the Netherlands'. The article recounted events that had taken place two years previously, in 1942. For Dutch readers in Australia, it was painful to learn,

the ghastly features of the deportation of thousands of Jews to Poland in sealed cattle trucks in which most of the travellers, owing to crowding and lack of food and water, succumbed, so that only a fraction reached Poland, the remainder having died or

become insane. (*Hebrew Standard of Australasia*, 26 October 1944, 'Dutch Refugees Tales', p.2)

The fate of the world and the Jewish people also featured in Rabbi Falk's lectures delivered at NCJW meetings:

We Jews in Australia, have a sacred duty in the larger vision for we must extend our activities.... The day of reckoning is coming and the women will have to shoulder the burden and come to the fore for the defence of the Empire. Women have the strength to endure great suffering and sacrifices. ('NCJW Sydney Section: War Emergency Board' 1940, p. 7)

Sir John Monash Recreation Hut

Dr Fanny was at the centre of the Jewish community's war efforts. In Melbourne, Dr Fanny convened a NCJW interstate conference 'to discuss war work of the Council, and the best way in which members can assist the Government in its war effort' ('Jewish women to confer' 1940, p. 12). She entertained Jewish members of the fighting forces and other guests at Council's fourth annual Springtime Ball, on 21 August 1940, at the Wentworth Hotel in Sydney. Eight days later, at a luncheon on 29 August 1940 at the Carlton Hotel, NCJW presented cheques totalling £448 to representatives of the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund, the Food for Babies' Fund, and the Isabella Lazarus Children's Home, the latter offering Federal authorities its facilities for housing and caring for evacuated children. Council's guest, Lady Wakehurst, stated:

It is not the first time I have received cheques from the National Council of Jewish Women, so I know how continuous your efforts are.... I know that we are all together in spirit behind the great war effort of our Empire because we all know how little life is worth living under the Nazi regime, I am glad that you are not supporting only the Patriotic Fund, but also some of our civil good works which need so much help just now. ('NCJW Sydney Section: WIZO, Youth Aliyah Bazaar' 1940, p. 7)

The Lord Mayor, Alderman Stanley Crick, who received a NCJW' cheque of £241 for the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund, expressed gratitude for the patriotic efforts of the Jewish community. 'War had only just been declared when you started work within twenty-four hours. Your efforts are received with gratification at the Comforts' Depot,' he said (p. 7).

Co-ordinating NCJW's war effort, Dr Fanny headed a program of service initiatives that won acclaim from Government, the military and the Australian public. These enterprises included the erection of the Sir John Monash Recreation Hut for the free use of His Majesty's forces, next to the Anzac Buffet in Sydney's Hyde Park, the result of co-operation with several of the city's Jewish community organisations. The New South Wales Jewish Congregation Advisory Board and Auxiliary's executive committee—comprising Dr Fanny Reading, Saul Symonds, Rabbi Dr. Israel Porush and Rabbi Max Schenk—organised the project; and this committee was then constituted as the Council of the NSW Jewish Citizens' War Effort, with the same executive. The NSW Jewish Citizens' War Effort co-ordinated activities for assisting 'patriotic funds and to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort', ensuring that 'every encouragement will be given to new workers to join existing groups doing war work and efforts will be made by the Council to avoid overlapping of functions to be arranged in the future' ('NSW Jewish Citizens' War Effort: War activities to be co-ordinated' 1940, p. 4). The Sir John Monash Recreation Hut was a major project with a floor space equal to the main hall of Sydney Town Hall. Equipped with hot showers, it had rooms for reading, recreation and writing. The Governor, Lord Wakehurst, opened the Sir John Monash Recreation Hut and its Anzac Buffet Building on 19 September 1940. The Lord Mayor of Sydney, Alderman Stanley Crick's official invitation to the opening stated that these buildings were 'gifts of the Jewish Citizens of Sydney' (Crick 1940).

The scale of NCJW's work under Dr Fanny's presidency and the efforts of the Jewish community in Sydney captured the public imagination. NCJW supported and managed three major projects—the Martin Place Kiosk on the corner of Martin Place and Phillip Street in the city, the Anzac Buffet Building in Hyde Park with the adjoining Sir John Monash Recreation Hut, and the War Chest Shop in Her Majesty's Arcade, all of which were successful initiatives. The War Chest Shop brought in an average of £20 per week—over 12 weeks, proceeds totalled £242/19/1 for the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund ('NCJW Sydney Section: Community, War Chest Shop Appeal' 1940, p. 7). The community-sponsored Kiosk raised £100 per week. Council's volunteers donated food for the Kiosk and served 'al fresco' teas. Proceeds from the Kiosk also went to the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund. *The Sun* wrote that these projects were

controlled by the Women's Emergency Board of the National Council of Jewish Women, of which Dr Fanny Reading is president. Since the outbreak of war the Jewish women have given more than 3000 garments to the Lord Mayor's Fund, and every Monday between 60 and 80 women meet at the clubrooms ... to do knitting and

machining. In addition they have equipped and furnished a ward containing 12 beds at St. Anne's Convalescent Home for Soldiers in Waverley. ('Splendid War Effort of Jewish Women' 1940, p. 23)

Dr Fanny's initiatives boosted fundraising for the war effort. She appealed for valuables for an auction on 8 October 1940 in aid of the Anzac Buffet Building. Max Lawson prepared a catalogue for art buyers, and Richardson & Wrench conducted the auction immediately after the Lord Mayor, Alderman Crick, opened Council's second War Chest Shop in Martin Place ('NCJW Sydney Section: Opening New Shop—Martin Place' 1940, p. 14). NCJW also donated to the 'London Air Victims' appeal (p. 6). At a September meeting, Council's War Emergency Board decided all proceeds, as well as income from the second War Chest Shop, would fund the Anzac Buffet Building until the full sum required had been raised ('NCJW Sydney Section: Community, War Chest Shop Appeal' 1940, p. 7).

Troubled by the fate of Jewish youth in Europe, Dr Fanny revived CJW's Zionist program—to a lesser degree than before—focusing on Youth Aliyah, the organisation responsible for Jewish children fleeing Europe for Palestine. Council participated in a 'WIZO Aliyah Bazaar' held on 4 and 5 December 1940 in the Maccabean Hall in aid of Youth Aliyah ('NCJW Sydney Section: WIZO, Youth Aliyah Bazaar' 1940, p. 7).

International Women's Day

Despite the pressure of multiple projects and her own medical duties, Dr Fanny hosted a fundraising card party on 16 November 1940 in her home ('NCJW Sydney Section: General Meeting ' 1940, p. 2). On 7 March 1941, as National President, she delivered an address in Sydney to mark International Women's Day. She shared the Feminist Society platform with Jessie Street, President of the United Association of Women; Laura Gapp, President of the Women's Union Service; Lucy Woodcock, President of the New Educational Fellowship; and other distinguished speakers whom she knew. This occasion confirmed her solidarity with leaders of women's organisations and fostered these strong connections in constructive ways. In the midst of war, these women leaders were looking ahead to the much-desired dawn of peace that would need their concerted efforts to address national priority areas. With their menfolk fighting overseas, women had stepped up to fill positions they foresaw they might be called upon to relinquish, which they would be reluctant to do.

International Women's Day is important, because women's organisations must keep together during wartime. If they do not, when the war is finished, and the time comes

for social reconstruction, women will not have the unity they will need to carry on their fight for recognition of women's rights in this new order. ('Women Honor Feminist Leaders' 1941, p. 8)

Dr Fanny and NCJW's war efforts won plaudits from a broad range of people. As Guest of honour at a Council luncheon held on 19 March 1941 at the Carlton Hotel in Sydney, Lady Wakehurst commended Council on the welcome they gave Jewish women refugees. She commented on the committee these newcomers formed to work at night in the 'restaurant kiosk' in Martin Place, with proceeds contributed to the Lord Mayor's Fund. Dr Fanny presented a cheque for £350 to Lady Wakehurst to equip and furnish a ward of 14 beds in the Lady Wakehurst Red Cross Home in Waverley. 'We have particular pleasure in marking this money for the home, which is called after Lady Wakehurst, who has always shown sympathy with Jewish women,' she said, adding that Council's Hospital Committee had offered 'to visit and provide comfort for the men who will occupy the beds in the ward' ('Jewish women's work: Cheque for hospital ward' 1941, p. 14).

Dr Fanny guided NCJW through the early months of 1941, undertaking several war projects. It was a team effort, but it was the team leader who encouraged members to achieve their goals, and who monitored the complex operations. Her report, delivered at Sydney Council's 18th AGM on 5 May 1941 in Sydney, gave an overview of contacts, plans, projects and achievements. Her review of the immediate past week enumerated Council's efforts in the Community War Chest Shop and the Martin Place Kiosk; and donations to the Sir John Monash Recreation Hut, the Anzac Buffet, the Red Cross, the Lady Wakehurst Red Cross Home, the Polish Appeal, the British Civilian Bomb Victims' Fund, the Rothschild Appeal for Jewish Bomb Victims, the Jewish Education Board, the Shanghai Appeal, local immigrant welfare, the internees at Hay in regional NSW, and other beneficiaries of Council's efforts. She reviewed the work of the sewing and knitting group, which completed 5000 garments for the Lord Mayor's Comfort Fund. Zionist work, suspended because of urgent war priorities, now resumed with donations to WIZO, the JNF, the Hebrew University and the Jewish Blind Institution. She commended Council's 770 members, the Hospital Visiting Committee, the Local Charities' Committee, the War Emergency Younger Set and the work among internees ('NCJW New war effort launched for a mobile canteen. 18th annual meeting' 1941, p. 7). She spoke of future projects, including their New War Effort Appeal to supply a mobile canteen for British air-raid victims. At the meeting, Council presented a filing cabinet to Dr Fanny in

appreciation of her work. Visitors to her apartment often commented on the chaos of files and documents, so this was a functional gift.

Addressing CJW's Newcastle Section on 7 May 1941—as yet, ignorant of Hitler's genocidal solution for 'the Jewish problem'—Dr Fanny envisaged a redemptive Jewish destiny:

'[A]lthough the world was passing through dark days and the Jews, especially, were under heavy clouds, there was every hope that at the end of the conflict the Jewish problem would be solved ('Jews look to Britain' 1941, p. 2). Dr Fanny congratulated Newcastle Council and retiring president, Mrs D. Sussman, on their work in the past year—Council assisted Jewish appeals in Australia and abroad, and worked for 'patriotic appeals' in Newcastle—saying, 'they, as others throughout Australia, had endeavoured to put their shoulder to the many war efforts, and so were helping to maintain the prestige of Jewish women' (p. 2). A Newcastle journalist met Dr Fanny and described her as 'one of the most capable women in public life today':

Her broad vision and keen sense of duty have made it possible for her to understand the problems, not only of her own people, but of the world in general.... Of special interest was the story of the work being done among the newcomers to this land. Refugees is a word we don't like using as a rule in this country. I am sure that the setting up of local committees in various suburbs by the National Council in Sydney has stopped many of these people from being lonely and isolated. Banded together with members of the Council to lead them, they are not only being given comradeship in a strange land, but also being shown the way to put their shoulder to the very big war effort being made by the Council. ('Diana's Notes: By the way' 1941, p. 4)

A month later, on 11 June 1941 at the Toorak Synagogue in Melbourne, Dr Fanny presided at the AGM of the Victorian NCJW's War Emergency Board. Guests included Melbourne's Lady Mayoress, Mrs F. Beaurepaire; philanthropist and charity worker Lady Jacobena Anglis; and Lady Bruche. The Board's charity shop in the Midway Arcade raised £570 for 38 beds in the Kurneh Red Cross Convalescent Hospital in South Yarra, provided a transport truck to the Red Cross for use in Malaya, and sent £300 to the Lord Mayor's appeal for bomb victims. Dr Fanny urged members not to relax their efforts and outlined a scheme for raising £500 for a mobile canteen for bomb victims in England, asking members in Victoria to contribute to the £300 already raised in Sydney ('War work by Jewish women' 1941, p. 6).

NCJW acquired a reputation for patriotism, hard work, generosity and commitment to worthy causes. In a letter dated 21 August 1941, addressed to NCJW President Dr Fanny Reading, the Honorary Director of the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund in Sydney stated:

During the past eighteen months we have received very generous support from the National Council of Jewish Women in direct donations, and in the proceeds of various activities which it has undertaken. For all this we feel warmly grateful and, at the present moment, I think that a special expression of appreciation is due to you as President of the Council. We have fully realised the great organising ability and patriotic feeling which have been attended by the highly successful results to the benefit of all Australian Servicemen, and I warmly thank you and all members of your Association for their magnificent co-operation. ('National Council of Jewish Women: Special Reception' 1941, p. 7)

On 31 August 1941 in Sydney, CJW hosted 67 members of the Palestine Jewish Military Police. For Dr Fanny, it was a special occasion in the history of Sydney Jewry, 'as these young men are representative of what the youth are doing for the prestige of Jewry all over the world' ('National Council of Jewish Women: Special Reception' 1941, p. 7). Dr Fanny never rejected an Australian or overseas appeal for help, including a cabled request from Chief Rabbi Dr Joseph Hertz of London, asking for funds for refugee rabbis, teachers, scholars and children 'freed from concentration camps with all its terrors' and presently in England. Dr Fanny asked NCJW sections throughout Australia to assist. At the same time, Sydney's CJW gave financial support to the Kindergarten Union's Home at Thirroul; and endowed two beds at the Isabella Lazarus Home.

Jewish internees in Hay and Tatura camps

In 1940, the British press was outspoken about the risk of harbouring enemy agents posing as victims of the Nazi regime: 'After spending time in police stations or collecting points scattered throughout Britain, German- or Italian-born internees were sent to internment camps.... Many camps were located on the Isle of Man' (Dunera Lives, 2018, p. 43). On 8 July 1940, however, a group of 2,500 men and boys, ranging in age from 16 to 66, boarded the *Dunera* bound for incarceration camps in Australia. As well as genuine refugees from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia, of whom approximately 80 percent were Jews, there were also Nazi sympathisers among this contingent. On board, the British tormented the Jewish internees,

who endured physical and mental cruelty at their hands. A court martial in May 1941 recorded the abuse of internees on the *Dunera*:

This degree of official recognition of the injustice done to these men was hardly commensurate with what they had experienced. But by May 1941, everybody concerned—from Churchill down—recognised the story of indiscriminate civilian internment and deportation of German-and Italian-born refugees as a regrettable consequence of official panic in the darkest days of the war. ('Dunera Lives', 2018, p. 71)

As a result of the soldiers' court martial, Lieutenant Colonel William Scott and Sergeant Helliwell were severely reprimanded; and Regimental Sergeant Major Bowles was discharged from the British Army.

In July 1940, German and Italian 'enemy aliens' resident in Singapore were told they were to be expelled. On 17 September 1940, the *Queen Mary* sailed from Singapore, with 295 internees on board, including 232 Jewish refugees and 63 Italian or German nationals. Their experience on board for the relatively short voyage to Australia was very different from the cruelty meted out to Jewish passengers on the *Dunera*. There were several families on board. According to Dr Moya McFadzean, Senior Curator of Migration and Cultural Diversity at Museums in Victoria, some women and children were also interned in Australian camps (McFadzean 2008). On arrival in Sydney on 25 September 1940, they travelled by train and bus to Internment Camp 3 at Tatura in northern Victoria. The Singapore internee families were housed in D compound and the single men in C. While children over the age of 12 were sent to the Larino Children's Home in Melbourne, which was run by the Australian Jewish Welfare Society, 25 younger children remained in the camp; and two internee kindergarten teachers set up a kindergarten for these children (Dunera Association: Singapore Internees). Among these children was 2-year-old Eva Duldig, whose Austrian parents, Karl and Slawa, were established artists. A Jewish couple, they fled to Singapore following the Anschluss, Germany's annexation of Austria in 1938. According to Melinda Mockridge (2014), curator of the exhibition, 'Art behind the Wire: The Duldig Studio', held in 2014 at the Duldig Studio in East Malvern, Melbourne, the internees appealed for release to Prime Minister Robert Menzies without success. However, 'The inappropriateness of children confined was also a consideration,' she states, adding that after release in 1942, 'the family were still considered enemy aliens and subject to strict parole conditions' (p. 4). Figure 13 shows 2-year-old Eva Duldig with the kindergarten children at Tatura in 1941.



Figure 13: Tatura Children, Compound 3D Tatura, c. 1941; Photo: Sister Burns; Inv. No. 6351

© Duldig Studio.

Two-year-old Eva Duldig is the little blonde girl in the centre of the front row, holding an orange that each child received on 'Orange Day'. Eva states: 'Nearly all the children in the group photo were Jewish – we had maybe one or two Italian families in our compound. The non-Jewish German families were accommodated elsewhere' (Eva Duldig's email to Anne Sarzin 21 February 2021). Figure 14 shows Eva with her parents.



Figure 14: Karl, Slawa and Eva Duldig, Compound 3D Tatura, 1941; Photo: Sister Burns; Inv. No.

6053

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The NCJW launched an appeal for toys for internee children at Tatura camp in Victoria ('NCJW: Council W.I.Z.O.' 1941, p. 8). An article published in the *Hebrew Standard of Australasia* stated, 'Mrs Elsa Raymond of the Bellevue Hill Committee, who has interested herself in the welfare of internees in Tatura, especially the women and children, makes the appeal' (*Hebrew Standard*, 2 October 1941, p.8). Eva Duldig does not remember receiving toys from NCJW; 'I was too young to recall receiving any toys.... I have not heard about this, though I did receive a doll from a friend in Singapore' (Eva Duldig's email to Anne Sarzin 16 February 2021). In 1990, Eva

visited the camp again for the first time since leaving it in 1942. Revisiting the 'cradle of her memories', she recalled, 'This was where I and my toddler mates ... squabbled over the meagre toys at our disposal' (Duldig, E. 2017, p. 172).

On 29 September 1941, only four days before NCJW launched their appeal for toys, the Jewish families in Camp 3, D compound, were subjected to activities such as Nazi taunts and 'Heil Hitler' salutes by German families interned in the same compound. This resulted in a 'riot' that was quelled when the Australian Camp Command fired gunshots into the air. Although categorised officially as a 'disturbance,' 'it involved people fighting each other with brooms, spades, pieces of wood and stones' (Koehne, 2006, pp. 71-86). Gerhard Seefeld, the leader of the Jewish families in D Compound, had complained previously to Official Visitors that the presence and actions of German Nazis and Italian fascists in their family camp led to tensions. Nothing was done, as 'the Army countered with the fact that D compound was the only family compound available' (Koehne 2006). Did any hint of this riot leak out to the Australian Jewish community at that time or were reports suppressed while the riot was investigated officially? Dr Fanny was dedicated to the wellbeing of mothers and children. Had she heard about this, it is likely she would, at the very least, have registered a protest, of which there is no record, or made representations to relevant authorities on behalf of minors exposed to these events in order to secure for them a more favourable outcome.

As mentioned earlier, Eva Duldig was a small child at the time of the riot. Now living in Melbourne, she has only positive memories of her time in Compound D, which she viewed as an adventure. She had lots of playmates and was happy there, cared for by her parents, Slawa and Karl Duldig (Eva Duldig's email to Anne Sarzin, 14 February 2021). In 2020, survivors and descendants of the internees brought from Singapore to Australia on the *Queen Mary* organised an 80th anniversary webinar. None of the participants referred to the 'riot'. Clearly, adults had shielded their children from these events. Overall, however, the loss of freedom weighed heavily on Karl and Slawa Duldig and, in April 1942, Karl volunteered for the Eighth Australian Employment Company and was sent to Melbourne. Shortly thereafter, Eva and her mother were permitted to leave the camp, although they were kept under surveillance and had to report weekly to the police in Melbourne.

President of the Zionist Federation, Dr Leon Jona, visited Tatura and 'suggested that Australian Jewry might not be doing enough to assist Jewish internees there and this was certainly the view of some of the internees' (Rubinstein 1991, p. 200). Certainly, there was a lack of empathy in the attitude of Sydney representatives of the Australian Jewish Welfare Society.

Newman Rosenthal stated in the *Australian Jewish Herald* in mid-1941, 'it was altogether undesirable that private people, however well-meaning, should start making collections for the internees' (cited in Rubinstein 1991, p. 201). NCJW's support was therefore significant and a welcome departure from prejudicial attitudes prevailing in the community. Despite this communal bias, NCJW maintained its ongoing connection with the internees, responding to their needs. Adult camp internees acknowledged with gratitude even relatively small gifts from NCJW. In July 1942, NCJW launched an independent appeal for warm clothes for men internees in the camp, including coats, underwear and boots, because 'They are badly in need of these garments as the winter is very severe' ('NCJW: An appeal' 1942, p. 6). The internees expressed their gratitude to NCJW. An internee wrote to the Chairman of Council's Internees' Section, Mrs O. Angel, thanking them for their gift of cigarettes, 'your present was all the more appreciated, as it arrived for Channukah and helped to please quite a lot of our people' ('NCJW: First Aid Classes.' 1942, p. 7).

NCJW's tributes and contributions

Towards the end of 1941, the deaths occurred of three eminent Zionist leaders Dr Fanny had met and known personally: Russian-born Jewish leader Menachem Ussishkin, head of the JNF; Louis Brandeis, Associate Justice on the American Supreme Court; and Bella Pevsner, JNF representative. Dr Fanny and Pevsner met for the first time in 1923 in Sydney and again at the Zionist Congress in Vienna in 1925. During Pevsner's stay in Australia, she told Dr Fanny about the work of the American NCJW founded in 1893 by Hannah Solomon 'to unite in closer relation women interested in the work of Religion, Philanthropy and Education'. Inspired by Pevsner and already 'involved in fundraising for Jews in the Ukraine', Dr Fanny started CJW in Sydney that year (Newton 2000, p. 4). Dr Fanny delivered a eulogy for Pevsner at Council's general meeting on 3 November 1941 ('NCJW: General Meeting' 1941, p. 8).

Commensurate with NCJW's work and reputation, tributes testified to NCJW's contributions. Rear Admiral Muirhead-Gould, Commodore-in-Charge, Sydney, and chairman of the Sydney Royal Australian Naval Relief Fund, wrote to Dr Fanny on 9 January 1942 from his base on Garden Island, Sydney:

The Honorary Organising Secretary (Mr. A. A. Joel), has advised me of the personal and valuable help given by the members of the National Council of Jewish Women to the Royal Australian Naval Relief Fund 'Jack's Day N.S.W. Appeal,' on December 19th last. This practical sympathy has been very greatly appreciated; and on behalf of my

Committee and of the personnel of Australia's Navy, I thank warmly all who helped and thereby contributed in no small measure to the success of the Appeal. ('National Council of Jewish Women: Jack's Day— N.S.W. Appeal' 1942, p. 6)

The honorary administrator of the Lord Mayor's Comforts' Fund, Mr Docker, appealed for additional support for the provision of comforts for the fighting forces. In the past few months, Council's sewing circle had handed 3203 garments to the Fund, and Council encouraged members to increase production. In response to Docker's request, Council's Australia War Emergency Board contributed a further £104/9/1, proceeds from the Martin Place Kiosk during January 1942. Docker's letter of appreciation to Dr Fanny includes an explicit request for ongoing support:

I desire to convey my grateful thanks to you and the members of your Council. I know the members of your Council are fully conscious of the vastly increased demand for comforts for all services and will do their utmost to assist us in the future provision of these, as they have in the past. ('NCJW Martin Place Kiosk' 1942, p. 7)

In early 1942, demands on CJW and Dr Fanny increased, and media reports document their expanding range of initiatives. In February 1942, Dr Fanny assisted Teachers' Federation staff in delivering first-aid classes in Sydney, describing her own contribution as 'hints from the medical aspect'. Viewed as 'urgently necessary for all to have first aid knowledge in case of an emergency' ('NCJW: First Aid Classes' 1942, p. 7), Council's participants obtained permits for these classes, and the local registration officer granted newcomers permission to attend. Council's EZRA Sewing group, which assisted mothers and babies in Palestine, dispatched 150 baby garments to Palestine 'where warm clothing is so greatly needed' (p. 7). As part of defence work, Council conducted an Aluminium Drive, appealing to members to donate all 'unneeded aluminium for building of fighter planes' (p. 7).

The same 1942 press article revealed Dr Fanny and NCJW's awareness of the destruction of Jewish communities in Europe:

Appalling and tragic though it is there are now no Jewish communities left in Europe because of Nazi rule, and European Jews after the war will have to again migrate, this time migration being to the English-speaking countries of the world. The seats of Jewish life will now have to be transferred and developed in the Jewish communities of Great Britain and America, and it behoves those who are at present in these countries, to keep the flame of Judaism ever alight. (p. 7)

Dr Fanny wanted to bring Jewish youth into the community's work for refugees in Palestine. On 21 June 1942, she conducted a meeting in her home for Council's Younger Set. Dr Shlomo Lowy, who arrived in Australia in 1939 to establish a branch of the JNF, spoke of 'the necessity of active work for Palestine on behalf of Jewish youth'. Twelve members formed a JNF youth group, adopting as their first project tree-planting in Palestine ('NCJW: An appeal' 1942, p. 6).

Dr Fanny focused consistently on Palestine as a sanctuary for survivors of Nazism. In March 1942, at a Sydney farewell hosted by the Zionist State Council for Dr Michael Traub, an emissary of the Jewish Agency and Keren Hayesod (the fundraising arm of the Zionist movement), Dr Fanny pledged support for his humanitarian mission that aided Jews fleeing Europe for Palestine, assisted in their absorption and 'provided the newcomers with homes and jobs, and developed the economic, educational, and cultural framework of the Yishuv' (*Who Are We* 2019). Her support was important, given the apathy he encountered among sections of the Jewish community. Dr Fanny expressed regret at his departure, and appreciation of his work and commitment to Zionism:

We knew of the heavy burden he had to carry on his arrival here and we were impressed with the vigour and courage with which he conducted his campaign. Our organisation was very happy to help him in his appeal as we had helped every appeal from Zionist headquarters over a period of twenty years. We ask Dr. Traub to take back a message to the people of Palestine—that our members are deeply conscious of the responsibility we have towards Palestine and we shall continue supporting Zionist efforts, especially in these crucial times. ('Farewell to Dr. Michael Traub' 1942, p. 2)

The urgency of Dr Fanny's support for Keren Hayesod and Zionist institutions assisting Jewish survivors was apparent in July 1942, when the Australian Jewish community received cables reporting the German slaughter of 700,000 Jews in Poland and Lithuania, at that time 'the greatest massacre in the world's history' ('NCJW: An appeal' 1942, p. 2).

Twenty years after the founding of Sydney's CJW in 1923, Dr Fanny announced that NCJW would commemorate the 20th anniversary at an inter-state conference to be held in July (1943) in Sydney and it would be marked with a £20,000 contribution to the Third Liberty Loan. The *Daily Telegraph* noted that Council members in NSW 'are engaged in many wartime activities, including the kiosk in Martin Place ... and the proceeds given to the Australian Comforts Fund' and that there were two Council branches in NSW, two in Queensland, three in Victoria, two in Western Australia, and one in South Australia ('Women's News: Aid for Loan on Birthday' 1943,

p. 12). The article quoted Dr Fanny, 'The council, which has given 20 years of service to the community, thought it a fitting gesture at this time to make a contribution to the Liberty Loan, instead of spending money on a birthday celebration' (p. 12).

Battle against entrenched resistance to migration

The news from abroad in 1943 was deeply disturbing for Dr Fanny and the Jewish community in Australia. There were reports of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising that began on 19 April 1943 when German troops entered to deport the ghetto's remaining Jews to death camps. The Jews held the might of the German army at bay until 16 May 1943, when the Nazis reduced the ghetto to rubble. These and subsequent reports lent urgency to Dr Fanny's campaign to find a refuge for Jews fleeing the devastation of their communities in Europe or facing extermination at the hands of Nazis and their collaborators. She worked principally through her organisation, in her official capacity as National President of the NCJW. She networked effectively and built diplomatic alliances with a broad range of organisations and, in so doing, she spoke out directly and fearlessly on behalf of Jewish people suffering under Nazi domination.

Dr Fanny's efforts to secure entry for Jews to Palestine and to Australia had a long history of representations to the Australian Government. Andgel (1998) observed:

There was a decrease in Jewish immigration to Australia in 1928, when the Australian Government refused to set up a special quota for East European Jews as it had done for several other nationalities. Dr Fanny Reading was one of the few community leaders to criticise this decision—her attitude was contrary to the complacent Australian Jewish leadership of the time which opted mainly for preserving the status quo of restricted Jewish immigration. (p. 211)

Dr Fanny was not intimidated by members of the Jewish community who welcomed immigration restrictions. The dominant voice in the Jewish community was that of the culturally assimilated Anglo-Jewish constituency, many of whom shared the Government view that Jews from Poland were poor and uneducated, would form clusters in city slums and be a burden to the Jewish community as a whole. In 1927, Rabbi Francis Lyon Cohen of Sydney's Great Synagogue wrote to the Government:

We must guide and control our own immigration [or] we shall in the next generation find the present amicable relations between Jew and gentile undermined and our

children painfully faced with all those present costly anxieties of American Jewry.
(cited in Rutland 1988, p. 169)

Dr Fanny was appalled by the lack of compassion among the Jewish community and their degree of self-interest and desire to preserve the status quo:

Who are we to say that we are pleased that certain immigration restrictions will be placed on the admittance of our brethren into our country? That we are glad that our task will be made lighter while our brethren languish for freedom and the right to live?
(*Council Bulletin*, November 1928)

At NCJW's birthday conference, held 4–6 July 1943 in Sydney, Dr Fanny rallied support from organisations that shared her concerns about the fate of the Jewish people and the welfare of Jewish refugees. At a luncheon on 6 July 1943 in Federation Hall in the city, she asked members of these organisations to sign a resolution referring to the refugee problem in Europe. Principal of Women's College at the University of Sydney, Camilla Wedgwood, the main speaker at the luncheon, moved the resolution. Dr Fanny intended to send the signed resolution to the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, and President Franklin Delano Roosevelt of the United States. The resolution read:

The undersigned express the deepest anxiety at the threat of murder by the Nazis of the surviving four million European Jews, including 600,000 children, and dismay at the negligible results of the Bermuda Conference, since delay involves annihilation. In the name of justice and mercy we ask that immediate measures of rescue and asylum be taken, including opening the door of Jewish national home. ('Concern for Jewish Refugees' 1943, p. 5)

1943 Australian Women's Conference

On 21 November 1943, amid reports of the slaughter of Jewish men, women and children, Dr Fanny addressed delegates to the Australian Women's Conference for Victory in War and Victory in Peace, held 19–22 November in Sydney. She described the plight of Jews in Europe as 'a challenge to the world for action in the name of humanity' ('Plight of Jews in Europe' 1943, p. 2). She suggested that an Anglo-American agency should be created, with authority to act immediately and on a large scale to facilitate the immigration and rehabilitation of refugee Jews from Europe. She said:

[O]ur minds were too blunt to realise that four million Jews in Europe had been cruelly done to death in most fiendish ways. That was a world catastrophe unprecedented in history.... We have been asked to wait for impending victory, but, unless something is done speedily, there may not be a single Jew left in Europe to enjoy the benefits of victory. (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 'Plea for aid to Jews: Woman suggests Allied Action', 22 November 1943, p. 7)

Dr Fanny's audience represented diverse constituencies. Jessie Street (2004) and her organising committee invited 'not only the women's organisations but also factory workers, housewives, trade unions with women members and all political parties to send delegates to the Charter Conference' (p. 172). Delegates representing 91 women's organisations heard Dr Fanny's plea, her words filtering through at grassroots and leadership levels. The emphasis was on eliminating 'social evils of poverty, disease and crime to achieve peace at home and to establish and maintain international peace' (p. 173). A document incorporating their 28 resolutions was distributed to Federal and State parliamentarians, municipal councillors, trade unionists and representatives of political and economic organisations.

At the conclusion of conference, in Dr Fanny's presence, Street affirmed her commitment to helping Jewish people. Street and the delegates recognised that Jews were victims of an unprecedented and industrialised genocide. Conference passed a special resolution urging immediate action 'to rescue the Jewish race from the systematic massacre being perpetrated by the Nazis in Europe':

Realising that the Jewish people were the first victims of Hitler's barbarism; that already over 4,000,000 Jewish men, women and children have been massacred; and that the Jewish people alone have been selected by the Nazis for complete annihilation.

We Australian women, in conference assembled, urge that in accordance with uprooted European Jewry's desperate need, relief and rehabilitation be provided, and equal status restored to them by the United Nations at the earliest moment possible.

Further. We urge, in the name of justice and mercy, that those who can escape shall be provided with opportunity for migration and settlement in Palestine and elsewhere, and that the Australian Government be asked to approach the authorities concerned to further these purposes. (*A war to win a world to gain. Australian Woman's Charter, 1943: which comprises the resolutions adopted by the Australian Women's Conference*

for victory in war and victory in peace, November 19-22, 1943, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia. 1943, p. 20)

How much was due to Dr Fanny's influence and the power of her appeal to women delegates at the Charter Women's Conference cannot be evaluated. What is clear is Jessie Street's determination to intercede on behalf of the Jewish people. She was a humanitarian and proponent for peace. Dr Fanny's advocacy for oppressed Jews found in Street a vigorous campaigner. As President of the United Associations of Women, Street emerged in 1944 as an articulate friend of the Jewish people. Street had support from the British Empire Union, the Christian Social Order Movement, the Australian United Nations Assembly, the World Jewish Congress, the New Education Fellowship, the State Labor Party and Communist Party of Australia, the Fellowship of Australian Writers and the Council for Women in War Work. With that support behind her, Street's United Associations of Women put forward to the Australian Government the following recommendations, among others:

1. In view of the process of extermination of the Jewish population of Europe, which is being carried out systematically by the Nazis, we urge the Commonwealth Government without further delay to resume the implementation of their undertaking made at the Evian Conference in 1938 to give asylum to 15,000 Jewish refugees, the implementation of which was interrupted by the war, and whereas 7,000 of this quota has already been admitted to Australia, we ask that immediate arrangements be made for the admission of the balance of 8,000 Jewish refugees so that they may escape slaughter.
2. In view of the great volume of transport which is now available, we urge Commonwealth Government to make representations to the British and United States Governments to make available the maximum shipping space possible.
3. In view of the proximity to Europe, we request the Commonwealth Government to make urgent representations to the British Government to open immediately the doors of Palestine to as many European Jewish refugees as are able to escape to that country. (Street 1990, p. 156)

Nothing touched Dr Fanny as keenly as the fate of Jewish children in Europe. She redoubled efforts for Youth Aliyah that brought surviving Jewish children to Palestine. In 1943, at the start of the new year, she issued a plea to support these children. She felt compelled to answer the children's 'call of anguish' in the best way she knew, motivating others to stand up and be counted in this crisis, and initiating an appeal for financial aid. She couched her appeal in

straightforward and simple words—such as ‘cry’, ‘pitiable’, ‘desperate’, and ‘anguish’—that reflected her own perturbation:

The cry of 1800 Jewish boys and girls from Europe has reached our shores to rescue them from their pitiable and desperate plight. I know that every member of the National Council of Jewish Women throughout Australia will answer this call of anguish and save them from the clutches of Hitler.

The appeal of the Youth Aliyah goes forth now for each of us in Australia to do our utmost and save 500 of these children if possible. Children should have a life of happiness. Let us therefore, to the task of making them happy by sending them to Palestine. Eretz Israel is the only land of their hopes. They are waiting for us to help them. I beg of all, help us to bring them out before it is too late. ('Message from Dr Fanny Reading, President National Council of Jewish Women of Australia' 1943, p. 6)

1943 Sixth NCJWA Conference in Sydney

The 6th National Council of Jewish Women of Australia Conference opened 4 July 1943 in the Maccabean Hall in Sydney, marking the 20th anniversary of the Sydney Section. Interstate delegates representing their Councils came from Brisbane, South Brisbane, Melbourne, Ballarat, Kalgoorlie, Perth, Geelong, Adelaide and Newcastle. Dr Fanny expressed satisfaction that NCJW—now with more than 900 members—had not deviated from its original objective of service to all. Major resolutions were framed around consolidation of future war work, the alleviation of the position of European Jewry, Palestine, and post-war reconstruction (Newton 2000, p. 255). Congratulatory messages from abroad added to NCJW's prestige, including from counterparts in the United States, from Lady Zara Gowrie, wife of the former Governor of New South Wales, and from the Premier of New South Wales, William McKell, represented by Abram Landa MLA ('NCJW 20th birthday celebration—6th NCJW conference' 1943, p. 7).

There were tributes to Dr Fanny's leadership. Her friend, Council colleague and Editor of *Council Bulletin*, Dora Abramovich, wrote that Dr Fanny

has been responsible for the part that Jewish women in Australia have taken in public affairs.... Dr Reading was the first to encourage the modest and humble to feel that they had within them the power to do great things both for their own community and the country in which they lived. The N.C.J.W. of Australia is strong because every

member feels she is important. This feeling of equality in our organisation is due more than anything to the personality of our founder and President. (p. 7)

Media reports described NCJW from Dr Fanny's perspective and captured her authentic tone at that time. Her presidential address covered the two decades since she founded CJW on 8 July 1923 in Sydney, assisted by Celia Symonds, in response to the suggestion of JNF emissary Bella Pevsner:

The reasons for the formation of the N.C.J.W. were the urgent need of a Jewish movement as compared with American N.C.J.W., from whom inspiration was gained, where problems could be discussed, local and abroad, and the value of an organised body of Jewish women could work bringing young and old women together. In short, to render service for our people and the Empire. The Council had never intended to be a charity organisation giving individual relief. Its philanthropy rather was on a large scale, dealing with the welfare of people as a whole, and for the larger education of its members. (p. 7)

As the 6th Conference commemorated Council's achievements over 20 years, this was a time for accounting and reflection, taking stock of Council's progress and enumerating Council's many 'firsts'. With eloquent vocabulary and poetic phrases Dr Fanny conveyed her depth of emotion and her pride in the innovative programs initiated over two decades. She said Council was the first organisation in Australia to organise women on a broad platform and to train younger girls as future leaders. It was the first to form a national organisation in Australia with sections in every State; to form suburban sections, and, in 1929, to organise interstate conferences. It was also the first to arrange special educational programs for women and girls with lectures and study groups; to subsidise Jewish education boards because so many members had children at schools; and to organise scholarships in Australia for Jewish boys and girls. It was the first Jewish organisation to consecrate their work with an Annual Council Sabbath, symbolising the inspiration of Judaism and the synagogue. It was the first to establish a monthly periodical, *the Council Bulletin*, which had never missed a publication date in 18 years. Council was the first to begin immigration and refugee work by meeting the boats, welcoming newcomers, finding them homes and assisting them to adjust to their new country. It was also the first to establish under its aegis a Jewish Men's Hostel in Sydney, an Employment Bureau, and English classes. Another first was Council's Queen Competition, the first in 1927, raising £1,135. Finally, she mentioned that Council was the first to organise Zionist work among Jewish women and girls in Australia. This had been difficult in 1928 but,

she added with bitter irony, in 1933 Hitler had made the task easier ('NCJW 20th birthday celebration—6th NCJW conference' 1943, p. 7). She added:

[P]ractically every society and organisation which has sprung up since then [1923], has come from our organisation. The leaders and background have been provided by us. Therefore, after 20 years, the N.C.J.W. takes credit of so much the Jewish women have done in Australia. (p. 7)

Reviewing their philanthropic achievements, she recalled that Council maintained a district maternity nurse in 1923 in Palestine; in 1924 donated towards the creation of a WIZO Infant Welfare Centre in Tel Aviv; contributed through the EZRA Association towards the Maternity Hospital in Jerusalem; and donated to the JNF, Keren Hayesod, WIZO, Youth Aliyah, the Hebrew University and EZRA. Council supported appeals for Ukraine Ort-Oze, and Polish and Central Europe Appeals. Local philanthropy focused on hospital visiting sustained for 20 years, Council endowment of beds in hospitals, and donations to hospitals, institutions and national appeals, such as cancer research. Council established their own rooms in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth (p. 7).

In relation to war work, Dr Fanny recalled the magnitude of Council's sewing, knitting and netting (camouflage nets) for the Australian Comforts Fund and Red Cross. She mentioned proceeds from the War Shops in Sydney and Melbourne, the Kiosk in Martin Place; and the financial and volunteering services for the Sir John Monash Recreation Hut in Hyde Park, Sydney. Council had financed and handed over three canteens (mobile trucks) operating in London, Sydney and Palestine. It had established wards in convalescent soldiers' hospitals in Sydney and Melbourne; and supported Button Days, the Bomb Victims' Appeal (London), the Y.W.C.A., and Merchant Marine. In honour of Council's 20th birthday, Council contributed £20,000 to the 3rd Liberty War Loan. Dr Fanny also mentioned material and financial aid given to internees in Hay and Tatura (p. 7).

Dr Fanny expressed gratitude to NCJW pioneers, many of whom were still active and paid tribute to those in office. She thanked members throughout Australia for devoted service, loyalty, perseverance and enthusiasm in the work done for the benefit of humanity:

The N.C.J.W. feels that after 20 years it has gained the confidence of Jewish and non-Jewish Committees in Australia and with true prophetic vision has carried out the objectives formed at its formation.... We stand to-day convinced of the righteousness of our cause and realise the great work confronting us in the future, but with God's

help we shall go ahead in our noble endeavours to help to bring happiness to this sorely tried world. (p. 7)

The conference luncheon, on 6 July 1943, demonstrated Dr Fanny's ability to build bridges of understanding with a broad range of constituencies. Those attending represented 36 women's organisations—30 gentile and six Jewish—and the focus was on their commonalities and the goals that united them. Among these representatives were some of Australia's prominent personalities, such as Jessie Street, who had campaigned recently for election to Parliament. Guest speaker, Camilla Wedgwood, spoke on 'The Injustice to the Jew' and moved the following resolution:

The undersigned express their deepest anxiety at the threat by the Nazis to destroy the surviving four million European Jews including six hundred thousand children. We are dismayed at the negligible results of the Bermuda Refugee Conference since delay involves their annihilation. In the name of Justice and Mercy we ask that immediate measures of rescue and asylum be taken including opening the door of the Jewish National Home. ('National Council of Jewish Women: Council Luncheon' 1943, p. 7)

All 490 women present signed Wedgwood's resolution, which they undertook to submit to their own organisations. This and similar socio-political resolutions aligned with Dr Fanny's priorities. She devoted years to assisting young refugees fleeing persecution to find a home in Palestine. The White Paper of 1939, which restricted Jewish immigration to Palestine, blocked the path of those attempting to escape Nazi tyranny. Conference considered a resolution 'concerning the immediate abrogation of the White Paper of 1939 and that the gates of Palestine be opened for unrestricted immigration' (p. 7). They resolved that Conference ask Commonwealth authorities to increase immigration to Australia.

Four months later, on 19 November 1943 at the National Women's Conference in Sydney, Dr Fanny spoke on 'Racial Persecution'. This was an important platform from which to disseminate her views to 250 NSW delegates and 30 interstate delegates. These were women connected to the political sphere. The conference was opened by Mary Evatt, wife of the Attorney General and Minister of External Affairs in the Curtin Government, Herbert Evatt ('National Women's Conference Sydney' 1943, p. 3).

The New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies

On 29 July 1943 in Sydney, three weeks after the conclusion of NCJW's birthday conference, Dr Fanny attended a meeting convened to ratify the formation of a new democratically representative body of Jewry, the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies, created to oversee matters affecting the welfare of the Jewish community in the NSW. The *Hebrew Standard* reported that 72 representatives of 19 Jewish organisations and synagogue bodies attended this meeting. Dr Fanny was already a member of the Public Relations Sub-Committee (PRC) of the Jewish Advisory Board set up in February 1942 (Rutland states May 1942), and also a member of the Provisional Committee set up a year later, in March 1943, to consider and finalise a constitution for the Board of Deputies. Max Freilich, who served with her on the Provisional Committee, noted that it was not until 1944 that the final form of the constitution was drafted (Freilich 1967, p. 102).

Dr Fanny was involved from the beginning in community discussions pertaining to the establishment of the new organisation. Those present at the 29 July 1943 meeting passed the following resolution:

That this convention of Jewish organisations and synagogal bodies recognises the principle of a unified Jewish community and a single controlling, directing and representing authority as fundamental to the welfare of New South Wales Jewry, and to this end endorses the establishment of a New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies. (Rutland 1998, p. 17)

The Board was established to monitor the concerns of the Jewish community, and its formation changed the previous structure of the community:

It provided an organisation which could act as the official representative for Jewish interests and as a forum for discussion.... and its creation emphasised the synagogues were no longer the only focal point of Jewish life, since, as a result of the secularisation of society, there were different ways in which members of the community identified as Jews. (p. 23)

The committee chairman convening this meeting, Harold Bloom, captured the sentiments on that night. Addressing problems confronting the Jewish community, he outlined views that coincided with past observations made by Dr Fanny:

[T]he most urgent, surely, is the salvation, resettlement and rehabilitation of our devastated European Brethren. Some of them may come to this country and we shall need all our wisdom to assimilate them happily into our communities, to heal their broken bodies and spirits, and to receive them as members of a family rather than as strangers. The maximum effort of which we are capable will hardly suffice if we are to play our part with the other free communities of the world. This can only be attained if we can achieve a unity of purpose and of action as envisaged in the creation of a Board of Deputies. All the circumstances of the present time demand this of us. Our Brothers and Sisters and their little children in their torture and in the dawning new hope demand it of us. We cannot do less. ('Proposed Board Jewish Deputies: Provisional committees hold first meeting' 1943, p. 2)

These events triggered discussions in the Jewish community and not all critiques endorsed PRC's actions. The *Hebrew Standard* published the PRC's response to a letter written by Lieutenant Sulman that cast 'unwarranted aspersions on the character and honour of the members of the Public Relations Committee of the New South Wales Jewish Advisory Board', among whom were communal luminaries such as Chairman Sydney Einfeld; Harold Bloom from the Great Synagogue; Gerald de Vahl Davis, Vice-President of Temple Emanuel; Rabbi L. A. Falk, Chaplain to A.M.F.; Max Freilich, President of the Zionist State Council; Dr Fanny Reading, President of the NCJW; Abram Landa, MLA; Saul Symonds, President of the Great Synagogue; as well as several prominent Committee members ('Public Relations Committee replies' 1943, p. 6). While the PRC acted quickly to defuse negativity directed towards their efforts to create this roof body for the community, there was consensus in the community that it was time to create a democratically representative body to oversee concerns of NSW Jewry in troubling times. Dr Fanny's participation ensured that NCJW had voting rights from the beginning of the Board's existence.

While Dr Fanny acted with others in the formation of the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies, she made an individual contribution. She brought tolerance and understanding to debates, hallmarks of her *modus operandi*. These traits were of value in times of controversy. It was another string to her bow. However, involvement eroded any leisure time she might have had, as she attended weekly meetings connected with Board matters, in addition to NCJW commitments and her medical work.

Five weeks after Dr Fanny attended the meeting to ratify the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies, Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of the President of the United States, flew into Sydney on 7 September

1943. She addressed the women of Sydney that afternoon in the Town Hall. The invitation was open to all Sydney women and 3,000 packed the Town Hall and 12,000 listened outside to her amplified address. There is no documentation confirming that Dr Fanny met Roosevelt.

However, the National Council of Women and the United Associations of Women has selected 200 representatives of women's organisations to meet her ('To speak today in Sydney ' 1943, p. 4). Given Dr Fanny's close liaison and connections with both organisations, it is unlikely her name was omitted.

Individual and collaborative war efforts

Dr Fanny continued her direction of NCJW's war work and at Council's annual meeting on 27 October 1943 she reported that NCJW had raised more than £6,253 in the past 15 months; and that the shop in the Midway Arcade (Melbourne) generated £987 for the Australian Comforts Fund. At the meeting, Rabbi Friedman stated that when peace came, 'we would have to restore rights to and find homes for two or three million Jewish people, Palestine was of vital importance to the solution of this problem' ('Jewish women's war work' 1943, p. 6).

As a member of the NSW Jewish War Services Committee from its inception on 14 May 1942, Dr Fanny agreed that the Committee could use Council's Kiosk in Martin Place as an office for their Jewish Information and Hospitality Bureau. The Kiosk was a popular centre for military personnel. The Bureau, manned throughout the day for many months, provided servicemen with information about home hospitality, religious worship and entertainment, as well as a list of hosts and hostesses willing to entertain servicemen in their homes. The Bureau distributed gifts of chocolates and cigarettes to servicemen at High Holyday services at the synagogues; and wine and cakes for those attending the Great Synagogue's Soldiers' Service. As the number of troops in this area declined, calls on the Bureau decreased.

As a constituent member of the NSW Jewish War Services Committee, NCJW organised entertainment for the troops, in conjunction with Maccabi, the Young Men's Hebrew Association, and Temple Emanuel, holding an open night for servicemen every Monday. NCJW participated in the Committee's tasks, distributing information cards and copies of Australian Jewish weeklies, and sending magazines and books to country towns, such as Darwin, Cowra, Bathurst, Tamworth and Liverpool. The Great Synagogue and the Committee defrayed the cost of prayer books for servicemen and the Chaplain's expenses. For Passover, 354 invitations to home seders (Passover services) were sent to Australian soldiers and many stayed in private homes. This enterprise offered a home away from home for these servicemen:

The Information and Hospitality Bureau's list of homes was largely called upon, and Mrs. J. B. Saulwick, the Hon. Secretary of the Bureau, and others, were kept busy arranging hospitality for both Australian and U.S. personnel. In all the foregoing activities of entertainment, welfare and arrangements for religious services, etc., provision for U.S. personnel was always made. ('NSW Jewish War Services Committee: Chairman's report' 1943, p. 1)

NCJW joined the Committee's collaboration with the Jewish War Effort Circle of Melbourne, distributing Passover parcels to Jewish soldiers in the Australian Force, and providing equipment for football and cricket. NCJW members visited Jewish soldiers in the Yaralla Soldiers' Hospital in Concord West, distributing home-made cakes, books and fruit ('National Council of Jewish Women--To purchase comforts ' 1944, p. 8).

All NCJW members contributed to fundraising—Dr Fanny hosted a High Tea and Card Party at the YMHA and a card party at the Pickwick Club in the city. Bazaars were held in private homes, and there were market days with stalls of groceries, jams, vegetables and flowers. Dr Fanny's sister-in-law, Esmé Reading (Dr Abraham Reading's wife), organised a dance. The Sewing Circle obtained lists of items needed for the Red Cross Store and requested members to join them in the Maccabean Hall to fulfil these requisitions:

Whatever time be spared is valued and if helpers cannot come each Tuesday, part-time assistance is appreciated, because, whatever is made by the Red Cross workers goes to alleviate suffering, and is used for the sick, wounded and convalescent members of the Forces, and for the relief of those who are Prisoners of War in enemy lands. ('National Council of Jewish Women: Council Sabbath' 1944, p. 8)

The *Hebrew Standard* reported in November 1944 that NCJW members, attending sewing and knitting evenings at Mrs Gardiner's home in Centennial Park, made more than 200 garments for 'European Relief' victims. These items were sent for distribution to Lady Edith Muriel Anderson, widow of the former Governor of New South Wales, Sir David Anderson ('National Council of Jewish Women--To purchase comforts' 1944, p. 8).

The success of NCJW's sustained fundraising efforts was acknowledged nationally. In February 1944, in the Quota competition of the 4th Liberty Loan, NCJW came first in the number of subscribers, and second in the amount subscribed, raising 'the splendid sum of £51,455' ('National Council of Jewish Women: 1st Victory Loan Objective £100,000' 1944, p. 8).

Australians believed they were investing in victory and ensuring the continued freedom of the country:

While the loans offered favourable terms, they were promoted using the rhetoric of nationalism and civic duty rather than individual gain.

In government publicity, equal emphasis was given to the total number of subscribers to each loan and the total amount subscribed. This emphasised the point that whilst individual Australians may have different financial means, everyone had a responsibility to 'back the attack'. The relative contributions made by each suburb were publicised, with the intention of shaming those which were not 'doing their part'. Individual subscribers to these loans could wear specially minted badges to identify themselves as those who had paid their share. (Reserve Bank of Australia Museum 2019)

In April 1945, NCJW encouraged members and supporters to invest in the Third Victory Loan and to make their contributions on NCJW slips obtainable from the Kiosk in Martin Place or the Council Rooms in Young Street, Sydney ('NCJW: Future functions' 1945, p. 8).

NCJW's 21st AGM

Dr Fanny revealed the scope of Council's work when she chaired the 21st AGM of National Council, held 8 August 1944 in Sydney's History House. She discussed plans to aid service war funds and to raise money for the rescue and rehabilitation of European Jews. She said members had raised the 'magnificent sum of £134,455' for the 3rd and 4th Liberty and 1st Victory Loans. NCJW gained second and first places respectively in the last two loans. Martin Place Kiosk had raised—since its inception seven years previously—£7,000 for the Lord Mayor's Comforts Fund ('Splendid Year of Service-Annual Meeting of the N.C.J.W.' 1944, p. 8).

Cheques for more than £3,700 were handed to 11 charities. The country was aware of NCJW's efforts on behalf of war causes:

In four years and a half of war, the council has helped support the Anzac Buffet, built by Sydney's Jewish Community, the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund, Red Cross POW Fund, the Far West Children's Home, Sydney Day Nurseries' Association, the Deaf, Dumb and Blind Institution, and many other non-Jewish charities. (*The Sun*, 'Jewish Aid For Charities' 1944, p. 7)

Additional beneficiaries were the Montefiore and Isabella Lazarus Homes, the Crippled Children's Fund, and Redfern Day Nursery. CJW's Local Charities Committee reported that more than £800 had been distributed to these organisations. The War Emergency Board report showed a total of £2,642 donated to the Comforts Fund.

The attendance of eminent men at Council's AGM was a tribute to Dr Fanny's leadership and her contribution to the war effort. They included Challis Professor of Law at Sydney University, Professor Julius Stone; the President of the Great Synagogue, Saul Symonds; President of the Zionist State Council, Max Freilich; and JNF President, Horace Newman ('Splendid Year of Service-Annual Meeting of the N.C.J.W.' 1944, p. 8).

Sydney's Lord Mayor, Alderman Bartley and the Lady Mayoress recognised CJW's service to the community and to the war effort at a special reception—attended by 200 Council volunteers—to mark the completion of four years' work at the Kiosk in Martin Place. The Mayor thanked NCJW and all workers for proceeds from the Kiosk and for assistance in building the Anzac Buffet. He said the Kiosk had become 'an institution in this city' and he and his colleagues visited it frequently. He received letters of protest when the Kiosk closed for Jewish holidays, 'thus proving its popularity'. He paid personal tribute to the work of its 300 volunteers, to whom the Mayoress presented certificates of appreciation signed by the Lord Mayor ('NCJW—Red Cross Stall' 1944, p. 8). At this reception, Dr Fanny reported:

[T]he grand total of £8,441/11/10 had been sent to the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund to supply comforts and necessities for the men and women of the fighting forces. This magnificent result was due entirely to the continuous and loyal service given by the 300 voluntary workers and supporters who had made such unselfish efforts during four years for this wonderful cause. (p. 8)

Roma Lang: Dr Fanny's leadership style

Every year, CJW sponsored an entrant in the annual Queen Competition that raised funds for JNF in Palestine. In 1944, Council's entrant, Roma Lang, won the competition at an event attended by 700 members of the community. The *Hebrew Standard* wrote that 'Sydney Jewry reaffirmed how wide awake it is to the problems and needs of the day and every Jew feels it to be his duty to respond to the call of the upbuilding of Eretz Israel' and complimented Dr Fanny on her leadership of this event:

The energetic chairmanship of Dr. Fanny Reading and her appeal to her innumerable friends and supporters resulted in the record amount of £2,643/8/8 being collected on behalf of Miss Roma Lang. Dr. Reading and the National Council of Jewish Women are to be congratulated on the energy and enthusiasm which they put into that work and which brought them the happy satisfaction of once again being the first in the competition. ('Jewish National Fund – Sydney JNF's great success' 1944, p. 7)

Dr Fanny was fond of Lang, whom she first engaged in 1940 as her secretary when Lang was 16 years old. She remained with Dr Fanny for 17 years, 'followed by four years as a companion to the ageing matriarch' (Newton 2000, p. 9). By that time (1961), Dr Fanny was suffering from Parkinson's disease and relied on Lang to accompany her to conferences interstate. At the time of Lang's entry in the JNF Queen Competition, she had been Dr Fanny's secretary for four years. Lang acted as secretary/receptionist at both the Kings Cross surgery and the Bondi Junction surgery. She cooked many of the Friday night Sabbath dinners as 'Dr Fanny couldn't manage it, because she had patients' (p. 10). In 1998, in an interview, Lang commented on Dr Fanny's workload—and her own—saying there were no set hours of employment and that Dr Fanny would 'cajole' her into staying:

Would you be able to stay and work with me for a little while tonight? Well, you couldn't say no. She'd say 'Call your mum. You mightn't get home tonight.' We'd finish about four in the morning. I'd sleep there and be up at five to meet the refugees at Circular Quay. (cited in Newton 2000, p. 10)

When Dr Fanny expected Roma Lang to accompany her to the docks after she had worked day and night (as noted above), and slept for only one hour—did this constitute abuse of an employee? Was this an extreme example of an imbalance in the power structure between employer and employee? Roma was sleep deprived and in a state of exhaustion, yet she still complied with Dr Fanny's demands and the inference is clear that this was not an exception to the rule but a routine expectation. Were Dr Fanny's expectations of others similarly unrealistic when she delegated challenging tasks? Did she take advantage of their good nature and desire to help? By today's standards, 75 years later, such actions would be deemed, at best, inconsiderate and, at worst, abusive. By any measure, Dr Fanny exerted undue pressure on her followers to maintain her own high ideal of service above self and to do all that was humanly possible to enact Council's humanitarian and social justice agenda. According to her *modus vivendi*, the wellbeing of the wider community was more important than the individual needs of members and employees.

Lynne Reading, Dr Fanny's niece by marriage to Leigh Reading, her brother Hyman's son, knew Dr Fanny well. Both Lynne's grandmother, Sarah Shaw, and her mother, Ailsa Shaw, were active members of the NCJW in Sydney. Lynne observed: 'Dr Fanny was hideously demanding. After the Second World War, she would phone my grandmother and demand a pot of soup or blankets for a newly arrived family' (Reading, Lynne, 27 November 2020 interview with Anne Sarzin, Sydney). Ailsa Shaw was treasurer of the NCJW in Sydney in the 1950s, and Lynne recalls accompanying her mother to meetings at Dr Fanny's apartment in Kings Cross: 'Aunt Fanny was softly spoken but very determined. It was a case of "Be reasonable, do things my way." When she made up her mind about something, that was it. I felt like Fanny's slave.' Lynne balances these memories with her appreciation of Dr Fanny's generosity to others:

She really had nothing. Her apartment was basic, her teapot had a broken spout and she threw nothing away. She was always extremely busy, we all were. She held all these meetings and was always surrounded by lovely women seated in a circle in her apartment, with their big handbags on their laps.

Many of those who recorded memories of Dr Fanny—including family, friends and Council members I interviewed—spoke of her in superlatives, describing her as gentle, softly spoken, polite and persuasive. Her drive for perfection, undoubtedly a strength in pursuing Council programs and goals, often imposed unrealistic burdens on those with whom she worked. In their recollections, there was often a sub-text that conveyed their acknowledgement of Dr Fanny's subliminal ruthlessness in her dealings with others in order to achieve her goals. Sometimes the pressure she exerted on others was deemed heavy handed, and at other times it was more subtle. Dr Ian Burman, Dr Fanny's nephew (her sister Rachael's son), who admired his aunt and spoke of her affectionately, nonetheless alluded to her insistence on subjugating your own requirements selflessly to the needs of others, always working towards the greater good of the community. He remembered attending functions at her Kings Cross apartment that were advertised as 'free'. 'You entered without charge, but you never left without paying, in one way or another. That was characteristic of Aunt Fanny,' he said (Burman, I. 2020. Second interview with Anne Sarzin, Sydney). Former President of NCJWA NSW (1976–1979), Zara Young, was a shy 15-year-old when she attended a meeting of Council Juniors in Dr Fanny's Kings Cross apartment and met her for the first time. On that occasion, in the absence of any volunteers, Dr Fanny pointed at Zara, handed her a pen and said, 'You are the secretary.' 'I found this very intimidating,' Young said.

Were Dr Fanny's aspirations for others unrealistic at times; and was the 'gentle' persuasiveness praised by some the undoing of others? There is no record of anyone refusing to contribute their efforts when she asked, no matter the personal cost. They did what she requested of them, pushing themselves, as Roma Lang had done on so many occasions, to their human limits. Softly spoken, polite and gentle, for many she was nonetheless an iron hand in a velvet glove. Those who worked with Dr Fanny understood and accepted her leadership style. Everyone knew there was nothing she asked of others that she was not prepared to do herself—she worked side-by-side with Roma at the wharves. She ruled by example and set benchmarks of excellence for all, herself included. Her followers saw a woman at the helm who personified the values she upheld and the mission for which she advocated. When Dr Fanny died on 19 December 1974, the next month the *Council Bulletin* noted in a memorial issue: 'Her devotion was of such character and nature that no one could refuse her request, or having come into contact with her, exclude her influence or sense of commitment' (cited in Newton 2000, p. 10).

Nahlat Dr Fanny Reading and Neve Zippora

In November 1944, NCJW's Melbourne Section bestowed on Dr Fanny an honour that moved her deeply. In 1943, they had raised £4,171 for the JNF and redeemed a portion (a *Nahlah*) of land in Palestine to be called 'Nahlat Dr Fanny Reading', in recognition of Dr Fanny's work for Australian Jewry ('National Council of Jewish Women—To purchase comforts' 1944, p. 8). JNF President in Australia, Dr Leon Jona, made the presentation, the first of its kind to a woman and the second *Nahlah* established by Australian JNF. Mrs Archibald Silverman said the honour conferred on Dr Fanny 'will link her name with the redemption of the soil of Eretz Israel' ('National Council of Jewish Women—To purchase comforts ' 1944, p. 8).

In 1947, two-and-a-half years after the presentation, JNF Head Office in Jerusalem sent to Australia 'a beautiful testimonial', written on parchment and bound in a wooden cover carved by Jewish craftsmen in Palestine, giving a history of 'Nahlat Dr Fanny Reading'. The JNF sent a photograph of the land and a certificate signed by Dr Abraham Granovsky testifying to the establishment of the land in Dr Fanny's name. At NCJW's annual meeting in 1947 in Melbourne, Federal President of JNF of Australia and New Zealand, Alec Breckler, presented these artefacts to Dr Fanny,

enumerating the circumstances which led to the establishment of the Nahlah in Dr. Reading's name and quoted instances of Dr. Reading's self-sacrificing efforts in all

States of Australia for the good of the Jewish people and the community in general. The General Secretary of the Federal JNF (Dr. K. Fraenkel) then spoke on the significance of a Nahlah which consisted of a part of the most precious possession of the Jewish people, namely its soil in Eretz Israel and was therefore a most outstanding national honor ... the President (Mrs. R. Simons) solemnly handed the testimonial to Dr. Reading, who was deeply moved by the occasion. ('Unique honour for Dr. Fanny Reading' 1947, p. 4)

The JNF-KKL paid tribute to Dr Fanny: 'In the course of all these years she has instilled in thousands of Jewish women and girls a high sense of service for the Jewish people of Palestine and for the task of national land redemption.' The certificate stated that Nahlat Dr Fanny Reading comprised 300 dunams (equivalent to 75 acres) in the Negev, in the sub-district of Gaza, about 45 kilometres south of Tel Aviv, 12 kilometres east of the seashore and seven kilometres east of the Kantara–Haifa railway line. It formed part of lands leased for cultivation to the communal settlement Negba. Neighbouring Jewish settlements were Gath, 11 kilometres to the south-east; and Nitzanim, nine kilometres to the north-west. The land was located in a part of Palestine that had opened up in the past decade to Jewish settlement. Dr Fanny said she hoped to visit *Eretz Israel* soon 'to spend many happy days with the settlers of the village of Negba established on the land of 'Nahlat Dr Fanny Reading', in the south of Palestine' (p. 4).

Dr Fanny could not have envisaged this honour. She always sought the empowerment of others, acknowledging members' efforts and achievements. She deflected attention from herself, focusing the spotlight on her organisation. On another occasion, when Rabbi Schenk of Temple Emanuel praised Dr Fanny, she replied:

[T]he Rabbi had paid a magnificent but well-merited tribute to the great band of loyal Council workers, but when he referred to her own influence, he was unduly generous. She felt that her greatest success lay in the fact that the Council provided common ground in which Jewish women of Orthodox, Liberal and even non-religious background could meet and work for the common cause. (*Temple Emanuel Weekly Bulletin*: 'Council Sabbath' 1946, p. 8)

The announcement of 'Nahlat Dr Fanny Reading'—the homage it conveyed, and the magnitude of this project—touched her. For a Zionist who witnessed the emergence of a viable Jewish homeland after her people's exile of 2,000 years, there could be no greater

honour than having her name associated with that biblical landscape. This honour came at the height of the Nazi Holocaust, when Jewish communities were being transported to death camps. Dr Fanny dedicated herself and NCJW to Youth Aliyah's integration of Jewish children in Palestine. As Vice-President of Youth Aliyah in Australia, she focused on giving a chance of life, where and when possible, to children whose situation she found heartbreaking. She committed to giving children opportunities for new and better lives. Youth Aliyah ensured their future and thereby the continuity of the Jewish people. This was the context within which she received her honour. It was a gift that wove her name into the fabric of Zionist history.

One day after the State of Israel was proclaimed on 14 May 1948, the Arab States of Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Egypt and Iraq crossed the border with their regular armies. On 21 May 1948, the Negba kibbutz suffered an aerial bombardment; followed by attacks on 2 June 1948 and 12 July 1948 from the Egyptian army. Despite these battles, the kibbutz survived in Israeli hands and became a symbol of an independent Israel (Isseroff 2008, online).

Dr Fanny never visited Nahlat Dr Fanny Reading. She did, however, visit another settlement named in her honour in Israel. In 1953, the NCJW in New South Wales sent £36,000 to inaugurate a town in Israel to be known as Neve Zipporah, in honour of Dr Fanny, whose Hebrew name was Zipporah. Situated 20 miles from Tel Aviv, Dr Fanny visited Neve Zipporah on 7 April 1957 for the official dedication ceremony, attended by almost all of the 400 inhabitants, who were living in 120 houses, many with their own farms. 'It's one of Israel's refugee settlements, and when its finished there will be 1,500 people living there. Most of them are Jews from North Africa, with quite low standards of living and it'll take a couple of generations for them to be integrated,' Dr Fanny said on her return to Sydney a month later (*Sun-Herald*, 5 May 1957, p.99). At the same ceremony in Neve Zipporah, the NCJWA National President Vera Cohen laid the foundation stone of a £6,000 community centre that was named in her own honour, which incorporated the Gladys Slutzkin Library.

Death of Henrietta Szold

Henrietta Szold, who in 1912 founded Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organisation of America, achieved international recognition for her work as Director of Youth Aliyah, a global organisation with headquarters in Jerusalem. Under her aegis, from 1934 to the end of the Second World War, Youth Aliyah brought 16,179 Jewish children to Palestine (5,012 before the war, and 11,167 during the war). Szold died on 13 February 1945 aged 85. From July 1945 to October 1948, Youth Aliyah brought a further 14,805 to Israel (David Ben Gurion declared

Israel a Jewish State on 14 May 1948). Szold was buried on the Mount of Olives, Jerusalem. Szold and Dr Fanny had enjoyed a close professional association and personal friendship over two decades. A month later, on 14 March 1945, Dr Fanny spoke at a memorial service for Szold held at the Maccabean Hall, Sydney. She recalled meeting Szold in 1925 in New York, describing 'the insight she was able to gain into the life and character of this great woman and of the inspiration the meeting gave to her' ('Children and Youth Aliyah: Henrietta Szold Memorial Meeting' 1945, p. 2).

The lives of Dr Fanny and Szold were similar in many ways. Although Dr Fanny was 24 years younger than Szold, there were commonalities that united them empathically and intellectually. Dr Fanny's escape as a 5-year-old child from tsarist Russia in the 1880s could resonate with Szold, whose parents migrated from Hungary the year prior to Szold's birth in 1860 in Baltimore, USA. Both women were teachers in their youth—Dr Fanny taught music, Hebrew and Jewish studies in Melbourne; and Szold established America's first night school for immigrants, teaching English to refugees to aid their integration and employment. Szold met Russian migrants arriving in the 1880s in America; and in the 1930s and 1940s, Dr Fanny pioneered programs in Australia to assist refugees fleeing Nazi persecution.

Szold and her mother visited Palestine for the first time in 1909, at that time a 'backwater of the Ottoman Empire' (Simmons 2006, p. 4). Both women were appalled by what Szold described as the 'misery, poverty, filth, [and] disease' they saw among the Jewish communities (p. 13). In 1913, her newly formed Zionist organisation Hadassah sent nurses to Palestine to improve living conditions for women, children and families in the *Yishuv*. In line with Hadassah's principles and policies, their clinical facilities and educational services were also available to the Arab community. These nurses imported projects into Palestine that reflected Szold's advocacy of American progressive maternalism, a form of social welfare practised in settlement houses established by Lillian Wald in New York and by Jane Addams in Chicago, the latter having visited and inspected the Hadassah clinic in Jerusalem.

Like Szold, Dr Fanny's mother also accompanied her when she visited Palestine for the first time in December 1925. While there, Dr Fanny reunited with Szold, whom she had met earlier that same year in the United States and again at the 14th Zionist Congress held in August 1925 in Vienna. Importantly, both Szold and Dr Fanny were committed Zionists who believed in the viability of the Jewish homeland and the return of the Jewish people to their ancestral land. Both were especially passionate about child welfare and the work of Youth Aliyah, to which Szold devoted the latter part of her life. Dr Fanny served as Senior Vice-President of Youth

Aliyah in Australia, which brought the women closer together in terms of their common goals and aspirations.

Before the Youth Aliyah fundraising held in July 1945, Dr Fanny requested members and friends to support the organisation. The *Hebrew Standard* published her appeal on their front page:

The National Council of Jewish Women whole-heartedly endorses the 1945 Youth Aliyah Appeal and pledges its utmost support. No greater privilege or Mitzvah [a good deed] could any Jew or Jewess have than the rescue and future rehabilitation of our orphaned children in Europe. This has an overwhelming claim to our sympathy and support on humanitarian and Zionist grounds alike, and is the proper solution for the thousands and thousands of homeless children wanting a 'home'. The name of Henrietta Szold should be for ever immortalised for her vision and practical work in saving 13,000 children from Nazi brutality and absorbing them in the productive life of the Yishuv. Therefore, it is our solemn privilege in gratitude for the security of our own children, to see that the means are forthcoming through this 1945 Campaign, to give sanctuary and new life for the wandering children of Europe. ('Youth Aliyah Campaign: Appeal opens next Tuesday night' 1945, p. 1)

NCJW's efforts on behalf of Youth Aliyah were commensurate with their needs in Palestine. Labor Party politician and barrister, Clive Evatt MLA, representing the State Government, was the main speaker at the Youth Aliyah dinner in 1945. In November 1945, the CJW's Bankstown and Illawarra committees handed over £200 raised at a garden party in Hurstville. A press report stated: 'Each committee has the proud satisfaction of knowing it has saved one child each from the European tragedy' ('NCJW Council luncheon: TB Director guest speaker' 1945, p. 8). The Bondi and Centennial Park committees combined their efforts with the aim of increasing their 'quota' for the Youth Aliyah Appeal. On 30 October 1945, Dr Fanny hosted a meeting of the Elizabeth Bay committee, when it joined forces with the Rose Bay committee for a garden party on 9 December 1945 in aid of Youth Aliyah and the United Jewish Overseas Relief Fund (UJORF). The Bankstown-Canterbury committee also raised £200, which 'saved one child for Youth Aliyah' (p. 8). On 24 March 1946, Dr Fanny presented a cheque for £500 to the President of Youth Aliyah in Australia, Rabbi Schenk, who said 'Palestine was the only hope of the surviving Jews of Europe' ('NCJW: [£500 for Youth Aliyah]' 1946, p. 10).

Dr Fanny's efforts and those of NCJW won praise from the community and beyond. The UJORF in New South Wales acknowledged NCJW's contribution of £1,383, the proceeds from weekly collections at suburban, household and Council functions. The UJORF stated: 'This is one of the finest organisational efforts, and the President of the National Council of Jewish Women, Dr Fanny Reading, and her team of collectors are to be highly congratulated' ('United Jewish Overseas Relief Fund in N.S.W.' 1945, p. 3).

Fundraising focused on Youth Aliyah and the UJORF, indicating NCJW's changing focus. While NCJW continued efforts throughout 1945 for local charities and those associated with the war—for example, endowing a bed and presenting a mobile library to the Lady Wakehurst Soldiers' Hospital—the emphasis shifted towards the plight of Jewish refugees in Australia and in Palestine.

War officially ends on 2 September 1945

At a time when racial prejudice was rampant globally, Dr Fanny was an ambassador for tolerance, peace and a more harmonious society. Racist ideology had led to the destruction and death of her people. She disseminated her message wherever she could. On 8 March 1945, at the International Women's Day celebrations in the City Hall in Newcastle, she spoke on 'Racial prejudice'. She shared the platform with Indian feminist Miss Paranjpye and Australian author Katharine Susannah Pritchard ('Three Noted Speakers for International Day' 1945, p. 6).

On 7 May 1945, the German High Command authorised the signing of an unconditional surrender on all fronts, so war ended in Europe on 8 May 1945. Japan's surrender on 14 August 1945 brought the Second World War to a close. When war ended officially on 2 September 1945, victory crowds erupted; but Jews had little to celebrate. The liberation of the concentration camps revealed the full horror of Hitler's genocide of the Jewish people.

Days after the Second World War ended, Dr Fanny welcomed representatives of 64 organisations—Jewish and gentile—to an NCJW luncheon held in September 1945 in Sydney. So many at this moment in history were evaluating successes and failures, taking stock of the past. After the unremitting pace of Dr Fanny's contributions and that of the NCJW to Australia's war effort, a respite was in order. But this was not her *modus operandi*. She focused anew on the immediate future and the many challenges ahead for herself and the NCJW, hoping to engage collaboratively with others committed to the same agenda. She articulated her priorities and that of her organisation:

[T]he NCJW looked to women's organisations which stood for liberty, justice and freedom, to help Jewish women in the big work they had to do in fighting for a lasting peace and a better world. The NCJW was the platform on which women's organisations could hear and study world affairs. (*Hebrew Standard of Australasia*, 27 September 1945, p. 8)

Dr Fanny and NCJW immediately turned their attention and efforts to post-war immigration, the rehabilitation of Holocaust survivors and a range of social welfare measures at home and abroad.

Dr Fanny outlined in greater detail NCJW's post-war agenda at the 8th National Council of Jewish Women of Australia (NCJWA) Conference, held 15–23 June 1946 in Brisbane. The Conference commemorated the 23rd anniversary of Dr Fanny's establishment of the first Council of Jewish Women. She arrived in Brisbane on 11 June 1946 and, in an article published in *The Telegraph*, she foreshadowed NCJW's post-war priorities: 'Peace, post-war relief, migration, rehabilitation of service men and women, and the formation of an International Council of Jewish Women'. She highlighted especially education and migration, and the challenge of 'getting 600, 000 Jewish people out of Europe, preferably to Palestine' ('Jewish Women's Plans for Peace, Migration' 1946, p. 3). NCJW's program included the relief and rehabilitation of European Jewry, Zionism and social and welfare services ('Jewish Women Meeting Here this morning' 1946, p. 3). A ball in aid of UJORF was held during Conference, on 19 June 1946 in the City Hall ('Jewish Women's Conference' 1946, p. 4). NCJW's future directions are outlined in Chapter 7.

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To bring Jewish women to a loftier consciousness of the meaning of public spiritedness

—Dr Fanny Reading

Chapter 7: An era of peace

Dr Fanny's achievements nationally in the area of social welfare for all Australians were already recognised in the 1930s—on 15 May 1935, she received the King George V Jubilee Medal; and on 15 May 1937, the King George VI Coronation Medal. ('Truly a leader and lover of mankind': Dr. Fanny Reading' 1953, p. 2). Her leadership of the NCJW during the Second World War was the subject of several Government and military citations. The end of her war-time leadership of her organisation (1939-1945) coincided with the closure of the Sir John Monash Recreation Hut and the Anzac Buffet in Hyde Park (see Figure 15), on Sunday night 3 March 1946. This marked the end of NCJW's efforts in Sydney to establish and maintain the precinct for the Australian Imperial Force. Together with other Jewish organisations, Dr Fanny and NCJW had committed to paying the costs of restructuring and refurbishing the old First World War Anzac Building, so that it could serve as a community centre for troops in Sydney. Operated by the Australian Comforts Fund, in its six years of existence, the voluntary staff served 4 million meals to servicemen ('Anzac Buffet Closing' 1946, p. 4).



Figure 15: Anzac Buffet and Sir John Monash Recreation Hut, Sydney 18 April 1945

As documented in Chapter 6, Dr Fanny led NCJW's efforts for Australia's war requirements. They raised £300,000 for the Commonwealth War Loans, £18,000 for the Australian Comforts Fund, and made a quarter of a million garments for the soldiers ('National Council of Jewish Women Celebrates Silver Jubilee' 1948, p. 4). In the last year of war, NCJW assisted with Button Days, donated to the Red Cross, UNRRA, the Food for Britain Appeal, packed 12 cases of warm clothing and shoes for UJORF, and raised nearly £5,000 for Palestine (supporting JNF, Keren Hayesod, the Hebrew University, Youth Aliyah, MDA. and Ezra) ('NCJW Record achievements of NCJW committees' 1946, p. 11).

Did these war years constitute the peak of Dr Fanny's community leadership at home and abroad, with achievements that were unsurpassed in future years? In this final chapter on the NCJW, an evaluation of Dr Fanny's post-war contributions as National President of her organisation reveals that she continued to improve the quality of life for many at home and overseas. Through contributions to Youth Aliyah, NCJW supported the education, training and welfare of child Holocaust survivors in Palestine, and contributed to a range of humanitarian initiatives in the Jewish homeland. In Australia, Dr Fanny remained a player on the national stage, focusing her energies on programs to help newcomers, the majority of whom were Holocaust survivors. Much later, Hungarian Jews migrated to Australia after the 1956 uprising in Hungary; and Egyptian Jews, fleeing the aftermath of the 1956 Suez crisis, also came to Australia, infusing strength and numbers into the country's Sephardic community.

Rutland points out, 'from 1933 to 1939 Australia absorbed between 7,000 and 8,000 Jewish refugees from Nazism, many from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia. Over 5,000 arrived in 1939 – they became known as 'the thirty-niners' (Rutland n.d.). In 1940, the British Government sent 1780 Jewish refugees, mainly from Germany and Austria, to Australia on board the *Dunera* (see Chapter 4). After the Second World War, approximately 31,000 Holocaust survivors came to Australia.

In 1945, Arthur Calwell was appointed Australia's first Minister of Immigration. That year, according to his daughter Mary Elizabeth Calwell, 'Calwell invited close relatives of Holocaust survivors to apply to come to Australia and for Jewish Welfare Societies to process these applications. The Jewish Community found ships and Australia has the largest proportion of survivors and descendants outside Israel' (Calwell, M., 'Arthur Calwell and the gift of immigration', MOAD, 2017). On 2 August 1945, Arthur Calwell stated in Parliament,

We have been too prone in the past to ostracise those of alien birth and then blame them for segregating themselves and forming foreign communities. ...If we really want more people, we must change our attitude towards immigrants from foreign countries. ...Unfortunately, campaigns are fostered in this country from time to time on racial and religious grounds by persons who have ulterior motives to serve. The activities of such people cannot be too strongly condemned. They are anti-Australian and anti-Christian (*Hebrew Standard of Australasia*, 'Realism in immigration', 16 August 1945, p. 9).

Calwell's positive sentiments contrasted with the reality facing Jews hoping to enter Australia. There were challenges, given the imposition of restrictions in line with the Government's White Australia policy:

Calwell's fear of the negative effect of Jewish migration on his overall migration policy was most clearly evidenced in regard to the International Refugee Organisation (IRO). Under the IRO agreement of July 1947, he agreed to admit workers on a two-year work contract from the Displaced Persons (DP) camps in Europe.... Jews were virtually excluded from the program.... They had to sign an extra clause agreeing only to work in "remote areas of Australia". The definition of being a Jew was based on racial not religious grounds. (Rutland n.d.)

Nonetheless, some managed to surmount these hurdles. According to Konrad Kwiet,

The first Holocaust survivors came to Australia from the Displaced Person Camps set up in Germany, Austria and Italy.... Altogether more than 31,000 Holocaust survivors rebuilt their shattered lives in Australia. In proportional terms, Australia welcomed one of the largest numbers of Holocaust victims. (Kwiet, K. 'International Migrants Day: Waves of Jewish migration to Australia', Sydney Jewish Museum, 17 December 2020)

Initially, Calwell had limited the number of people admitted to 2000 close relatives of Jewish residents in Australia. In October 1945, however, the scheme was extended to include Jewish refugees from Shanghai, Manila and places of refuge in the Far East, formerly from Poland, Germany, Austria, and Russia (Balint, R. p.3, 2019). As early as mid-1946, 'following the outcry against Jewish refugee migration from Shanghai', Calwell introduced restrictions, limiting the quota of Jews on any ship to 25 percent of the total number of passengers (Rutland, *Edge of the Diaspora*, p.233). NCJW formed special committees in every State to meet and welcome migrants, to show them hospitality and to assist them with services ('NCJW: Service to new

arrivals committee' 1946, p. 8). In New South Wales, for example, the Newcastle CJW hosted a luncheon for 37 refugees from Shanghai, who arrived on board the *Javanese Prince* ('Jewish Women Members of Newcastle Section' 1946, p. 8). In September 1946, NCJW members met and welcomed 27 migrants who arrived from Shanghai and Hongkong on the *Fochow*, driving them around Sydney and hosting a Council luncheon, high tea and party at Council rooms. The visitors 'were highly gratified with the hospitality extended to them by Council and Council supporters' ('National Council of Jewish Women: Council luncheon' 1946, p. 8). Dr Fanny encouraged and thanked those 'who co-operated in making their arrival so happy by taking the visitors into their homes' (p. 8).

At that September 1946 Council luncheon, guest speaker Jessie Street presented a positive picture of migration to Australia with benefits for the nation. President of the Jewish Rights Committee, Street was a member of the Aliens Administrative Board, which assisted newcomers. As a young woman, she had travelled the world, gaining an understanding of the problems of newcomers. She stated: 'It was the intention of the Labor Government to allow 70,000 immigrants into the country. With everybody employed ... the wealth of the country would be assured (p. 8).

NCJW continued its policy of welcoming newcomers on arrival in Sydney, including those only temporarily in the city before proceeding to Melbourne and other destinations. On 20 November 1946, Council hosted 20 newcomers from Shanghai at a luncheon; and the following day welcomed 20 more from Hong Kong, whom the Transport Committee took on a tour of Sydney. These were heart-warming gatherings of co-religionists. A member of the Hongkong party sang the grace after meals and

thanked Dr Fanny Reading ... and all the voluntary workers for the fine manner in which they had been received and the wholehearted and Jewish way in which all the new arrivals had been made to feel that they were among friends. (p. 8)

These receptions continued into the new year. The *Hebrew Standard* reported that NCJW's Reception and Transport Committees were busy on 28 and 29 January 1947. They met new arrivals on board the *Hwa Lien*, and took them to Council Rooms where the Catering Committee had prepared 'a running buffet' and where they spent the day. That evening members invited newcomers to their homes for meals, and more than 100 were guests of B'nai B'rith at the Savarin restaurant. At a luncheon for newcomers and their friends, Dr Fanny addressed more than 200 guests:

[She] welcomed the newcomers, among whom were many beautiful children. She wished them all health and happiness in this new country and expressed the fervent hope that all those weary travellers still in Shanghai and Europe would join their relatives here and make a new and happy life for themselves ('National Council of Jewish Women: Reception to new arrivals' 1947, p. 6).

Two newcomers thanked NCJW and other organisations; 'They were overwhelmed by the kindness shown to them and hoped to be able to show their appreciation by helping those who were still to arrive here' (p. 6).

At a 'Special Reception' on 1 February 1947 in Council Rooms, members and friends met new arrivals, and hoped 'to help them to forget the past and to meet and mix with their new countrymen' ('NCJW: Reception to new arrivals' 1947, p. 10). This injunction to 'forget the past'—interpreted by many survivors as a blanket ban of silence on talking about their nightmarish experiences—touches on an issue now acknowledged by Jewish communities worldwide, reluctance after the war to listen to the memories of newcomers, who were never given the opportunity to debrief, to unburden themselves of their torturous past. Instead, they were expected to get on with their lives by burying the past irrevocably and immersing themselves in the present, but psychological wounds and scars were testimony to hidden sorrows. Melbourne psychologist and child survivor of the Holocaust, Dr Paul Valent, worked with survivors to open 'cocoons' of suffering. He said there were problems with repressing trauma, 'you keep living it and you can't put the events in a proper historical perspective' (cited in Szego, J., *The Age*, 'Sentimental journey from war's scars', 3 August 2002). In focusing on child survivors and the children of survivors, Valent (2002) comments:

[C]hildren are highly vulnerable to events and absorb them deeply into their beings. They are not inanimate appendages of adults even if they seem to adapt silently to the adult world. Sooner or later children need to know the meaning of what happened, why, and who was to blame. Children tend not to question their parents and adults, and often assume guilt. Thus they become morally traumatised as well. Without retrieving meaning and a sense of goodness, they become alienated from themselves and the world. (p. 287)

Council gatherings were *ad hoc* attempts to assist newcomers. From time to time, there were more concerted efforts, but there was no overall policy framework. Dr Fanny wanted structured protocols for welcoming, advising and integrating newcomers; and set about doing

so methodically. Before she could create these organisational structures, however, she suffered a bereavement that affected her profoundly. It was some time before she could recommence work in earnest and devote herself to the tasks she had in mind.

Death of Esther Rose Reading

On Thursday 26 September 1946, Dr Fanny's mother, Esther Rose, died aged 84. Dr Fanny had spent the first five years of her life in the sole care of her mother, who nurtured and supported her in the absence of Dr Fanny's father, who migrated to Australia at the time of her birth. This period together established the lifelong bond between mother and daughter. Importantly, in 1925, Dr Fanny and her mother spent a year together overseas, travelling to the United States, England, Ireland, Europe, Egypt and Palestine (as noted in Chapter 3), which consolidated their bond even further.

There was an unspoken but nonetheless real family expectation that Dr Fanny would support her mother emotionally and nurture her in old age. When Nathan died in 1934, Esther moved to Sydney and lived with Dr Fanny for the final 12 years of her life. While she was well and active, she accompanied her daughter to conferences and inter-state meetings.

The public perception of Esther was of a devoted wife and mother, whose family values and orthodox lifestyle were widely respected in the Jewish community, both in Ballarat and Melbourne. Esther ran her home according to Jewish laws and worked hard to provide her children with a secure and traditional environment, and educational opportunities, such as home tutoring in Hebrew. She struggled for many years alongside Nathan, supporting him through their intermittent financial crises and those stressful periods of litigation when he attempted, through the courts, to secure payments due to him. Undeniably, Esther was the stable mainstay of the family in the years when their five children were still dependent on their parents. When the family moved from Ballarat to Melbourne in the first decade of the 20th century, she acquired a reputation for hospitality and acts of charity, assisting Jews in need both at home and abroad. While Esther was highly regarded as the mother of Dr Fanny—a case of reflected glory—she achieved recognition in her own right for her charitable deeds. Dora Abramovitch (1946) wrote:

Her teaching and her example were the inspiration of the life and work of her daughter, Dr. Fanny Reading, who founded the National Council of Jewish Women of Australia, in order to teach other Jewish women the lessons of piety and Jewish practice that her mother had taught her. (p. 8)

Esther Rose Reading, whose Hebrew name was Esther Raizel bat Aharon Moshe (Esther Raizel daughter of Aaron Moses), was buried on 27 September 1946 in Rookwood Cemetery, Sydney. The epitaph on her tombstone reads:

In loving memory of Esther Rose, Beloved wife of Nathan Jacob Reading. Devoted mother of Fanny, Abe, Ray, Hyman and Lewis. Passed away 26th September 1946. 1st Tishri 5707. Forever with us.

New procedures for arrivals

In the new year, Dr Fanny resumed her portfolios. On 20 January 1947 at the Maccabean Hall in Darlinghurst, she attended the first of three conferences 'concerning welcome procedures for new arrivals' convened to discuss and put in place procedures for meeting and assisting new arrivals at the wharves. Community representation at the first conference comprised 13 major bodies: NCJW, Association of New Citizens, Australian Federation for Polish Jews, Australian Jewish Welfare Society, B'nai B'rith, Central Synagogue, Central Synagogue Women's Auxiliary, Central Zionist Committee, Great Synagogue, Great Synagogue Women's Auxiliary, Jewish Folk Centre, Mizrahi Congregation, and NSW Jewish War Memorial. The conference set up a steering committee to devise a work-plan for the newly formed Migrants Reception Committee. A week later, on 28 January 1947 in Darlinghurst, Dr Fanny attended a second conference to consider the Steering Committee's report.

Dr Fanny's goal to streamline integration procedures for migrants was now within reach. Welcoming and processing new arrivals was placed on an official footing, according to recommendations in a report co-written by Jewish community leader Sydney Einfeld and Walter Brand, Executive Officer of the Australian Jewish Welfare Society. They conferred with a representative of the Customs Department and complied with its stringent regulations. No persons other than Walter Brand and possibly an interpreter would be permitted on board a vessel at Watsons Bay or prior to clearance at the wharf. At the third conference on 20 February 1947, they submitted their report to delegates. Their document stipulated precise arrangements for arriving ships. Passengers should be met early on the day of arrival, so they could travel immediately to destinations in various states. They proposed establishing an office on the wharf for issuing rail tickets. They suggested forming a House Committee, under the auspices of the Jewish Welfare Society, to handle immigrants arriving too late for transportation elsewhere. No matter how well intentioned, unauthorised persons would not

be permitted access to the wharves. Those on the wharf had to abide by instructions. Those approved for assistance should form a permanent committee, as their experience would make them experts in this area. They recommended printing a leaflet in English, German, Polish, Dutch, French and Yiddish, setting out passengers' obligations and what had to be declared. They addressed the work of NCJW:

While the wonderful work of reception and feeding by the National Council of Jewish Women is fully appreciated, it is recommended that in future when a ship arrives carrying a large number of people, and they have to remain on the wharf until four or five o' clock, that [a] canteen be made available on the wharf, staffed voluntarily, to provide light refreshments for the passengers and milk for the children.

It is recommended that besides the canteen available on the wharf, the Council of Jewish Women might still continue their very good work in entertaining the new arrivals in their rooms, at lunch or dinner, after interstate passengers have been cleared through the Customs. (Einfeld 1947)

Dr Fanny submitted names of NCJW members able to serve at the Port and Dock on the arrival of boats from overseas. She listed her own name among the eight members she proposed. For Dr Fanny, it was always a case of leading by example.

NSW Jewish Board of Deputies' tribute

Despite Dr Fanny's self-deprecating style—deflecting tributes from herself to her organisation—she was gratified when others recognised the work of NCJW. At a meeting of the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies in 1947, Saul Symonds congratulated NCJW on its work in welcoming and receiving migrants, his praise testifying to Dr Fanny and NCJW's prestige in the community. In outlining facets of NCJW's work, however, Symonds shifted the focus to Dr Fanny's qualities of leadership:

It goes without saying that all of this tremendous volume of work calls for the whole-hearted support of a large number of tireless workers, but it must be equally clear that, both as inspiration and coordinating force, it calls for leadership of the highest order. Such leadership it has, in the person of 'Dr. Fanny'. It is an open secret that, high up on the list of those recommended for Empire Honors ... stands the name of Dr. Fanny Reading.... What can be said here and now is that, in the minds and in the hearts of the hundreds, Jews and Christians, who know her and love her, Dr. Fanny Reading

holds and will ever hold one of the greatest of all honors, the title of 'Proud and worthy Jewess'. ('Proud Jewesses, outstanding record of Council of Jewish Women' 1947, p. 10)

Symonds' reference in 1947 to a community expectation of 'Empire Honours' for Dr Fanny implied that such an imperial honour for her was in the pipeline. If so, they were disappointed. The previous year, in January 1946, three women in South Australia—Florence Mack, Mary Showell, Annie Whittle—received the British Empire Medal (civil division) for services to the Forces in South Australia (Gazette 1946, p. 167). Given that there were precedents for awarding this honour to women who contributed to the war effort, Dr Fanny's supporters clearly thought her worthy of such recognition. In 1948, Dr Fanny commented: 'We do not work for honours. During the war we worked because we, with others, had to right the great injustices that existed in the world, and to make humanity safe for the future' ('Jewish Women Visit Newcastle' 1948, p. 4).

Symonds stated that ever since the first small parties of migrants arrived from the East, Council had thrown its resources 'unstintingly into the task of assisting the Welfare Society in the many "personal" directions possible only for a women's organisation' ('Proud Jewesses, outstanding record of Council of Jewish Women' 1947, p. 10). The aged, nursing mothers and babies received free medical care, and Council found homes and hospitality for 'transients' in Sydney overnight.

On 29 September 1947, Dr Fanny welcomed 100 migrants, mostly Polish Jews, who arrived in Sydney on the French liner *Saggitaire*, on their way to Melbourne. They had travelled for several months and the *Hebrew Standard* noted:

The hand of friendship which was extended to them by Council was more than they had even hoped for, and they expressed the hope that the welcome given to them by Council was a foretaste of the happy days in store for them. ('NCJW New section formed at Wollongong: Welcome to new arrivals' 1947, p. 8)

Dr Fanny's guidance encouraged newcomers. When displaced persons from the camps in Europe came to Australia, they spoke of her reputation among the 'bewildered and unhappy' at the reception centre in Vienna. One man was told, 'Don't worry. There's a woman in Sydney ... her name's Dr Fanny Reading. She'll help you' (Cohen 1987, p. 75). Dr Fanny's warmth and welcome encouraged them. Rabbi Benjamin Gottshall recalled meeting Dr Fanny as he left the ship *Surriento*:

I will always cherish the very first meeting with her...she had a kind word for everyone, shaking hands, making notes, speaking that sweet Yiddish of hers (as we did not speak English), assuring everyone that one is wanted and welcome here, making a somebody out of you, when one felt so small, unwanted and unimportant. (cited in Newton 2000, p. 82)

On 31 May 1947, Dr Fanny hosted a luncheon for Enid Alexander from South Africa. Enid, who grew up in Sydney and had married South African parliamentarian Morris Alexander, gave them news of Jewish affairs in South Africa ('Jewish women: High tea and card party' 1947, p. 8). Dr Fanny networked across national and international spheres, and visits of this nature consolidated connections and brought home to members the collaborative sisterhood of Jewish women, their shared values and the solutions they found for mutual problems.

Silver Jubilee celebrations

Towards the end of 1947, NCJW inaugurated Silver Jubilee celebrations, with two dinners held in November. Dr Fanny had founded the Council of Jewish Women on 15 July 1923, so the correct date of the Silver Jubilee was 15 July 1948. The date of the first celebratory dinner, Sunday 9 November 1947, 8 months prior to the Silver Jubilee, was not chosen arbitrarily. Dr Fanny chose this date because it was the anniversary of Kristallnacht (the Night of Broken Glass), which took place 9 years earlier to the day. Clearly, it was a conscious choice to memorialise the suffering endured by Jews during the pogroms on 9–10 November 1938, throughout Germany, Austria and the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia. Synagogues were burned, Jewish shops smashed and looted, Jews murdered, assaulted, arrested and 30,000 Jewish men sent to concentration camps. It presaged the horrors the Nazi Reich had in store for Jews and marked the beginning of a murderous trajectory that escalated rapidly into the unimaginable evil of the Holocaust. Almost 5 years later, delegates to the Sixth NCJWA Conference, held in August 1943 in Sydney, expressed their anxiety at the continuing threat to Jewish lives in Europe. Delegates were,

dismayed at the negligible results of the Bermuda Conference since delay involves annihilation' and asked 'in the name of justice and mercy' that immediate measures of rescue and asylum be taken: namely the 'unrestricted Jewish migration to Palestine' and an 'increase of immigration to Australia'. (Kwiet, 1987, p. 211)

The question thus arises as to whether Dr Fanny's agenda at the 1943 conference and this conference resolution, in particular, achieved its desired outcome. It certainly propelled the

issue to the forefront of debate in delegates' homes, potentially helping to influence and to unite the disparate voices of the Jewish community in Australia in making urgent representations to the Australian Government. Subsequently, the Victorian Advisory Board, the NSW Jewish Advisory Board, and the Hebrew congregations of Adelaide, Perth, Brisbane and Hobart united in a fresh approach to the Australian Government to secure a more liberal immigration policy and to renounce the MacDonald White Paper that limited Jewish migration to Palestine. On 18 November 1943, the President of the Zionist Federation of Australia, Alec Masel, delivered their resolution to Prime Minister John Curtin. According to Kwiet (1987),

[N]ot a single concession was granted: the Australian government remained unmoved.... The gates remained closed, and only a handful of Jews were granted a landing permit after the outbreak of war. (p.212)

The barriers lay not only in the ongoing hostilities in Europe or the limited shipping transport but also in the decision of Australia to follow the example of the allies and afford the rescue of the Jews only a marginal significance.... Only after the Holocaust, after the extinction of the centres of Jewish life, was Australia prepared to support the creation of a Jewish state as well as to offer ... a refuge to survivors of the Holocaust. (p. 213)

At the Silver Jubilee dinner on 9 November 1947, Dr Fanny reviewed Council's work over the past 25 years and commended the 'loyal co-operation of Council members throughout Australia'. The guest speaker was Sydney feminist Ruby Rich, with whom Dr Fanny had worked in the Racial Hygiene Association in the 1920s in Sydney. Rich referred to the genocide of the war: 'We have a special responsibility ... towards the pitiful remnants of our people who remain in the Displaced Persons Camps'; and expressed the hope 'that a haven would be found for them in this wonderful country of ours' ('NCJW: Silver Jubilee inauguration celebration' 1947, p. 10). Federal parliamentarian, Leslie Haylen, congratulated Council on their work in meeting ships and rehabilitating newcomers. He had visited Displaced Persons camps abroad and was horrified at what he saw. He expressed sympathy for newcomers and 'hoped that with the aid of Council they would be imbued with the spirit of the Australian way of life and would find peace and happiness here' (p. 10). The second Silver Jubilee dinner, on 16 November 1947 in Council Rooms, was addressed by Clive Evatt MLA, the Minister for Housing; Abram Landa, MLA, recently returned from the United Nations Organisation; Rabbi Max Schenk, President of Youth Aliyah Australia; and Hans Vidor, representing the Young Men's Hebrew Association and the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies.

The following week, on 23 November 1947, Dr Fanny and 29 Sydney members and friends visited Newcastle for their Silver Jubilee festivities. Dr Fanny was proud of Newcastle Council's record in the area of migration. It was the first Council to welcome war arrivals from Shanghai, assisting migrants in every way they could. She focused on her cherished project, the building of Council House, which would serve 'as a clearing house for new arrivals', and appealed for assistance in realising her goal ('NCJW: Philip Myerson Memorial handed over, Visit to Newcastle' 1947, p. 10).

UN General Assembly in favour of Resolution 181

Six days later, on 29 November 1947, the United Nations General Assembly voted in favour of Resolution 181, which called for the partition of Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab state. The plan called for an economic union between the proposed states and for the protection of religious and minority rights. It was approved with 33 votes in favour, 13 against, 10 abstentions and one absent. The resolution was accepted by the Jews in Palestine but rejected by the Arabs in Palestine and by the Arab states. Britain, the mandatory power for Palestine, declared it planned to complete its evacuation of Palestine by 1 August 1948. Australia's Minister for External Affairs, Dr Herbert Vere Evatt, as Australia's representative at the UNO and Chairman of a senior UNO Committee, played a vital role in discussions leading to the decisive vote:

The devastation caused to world Jewry by the Holocaust offended his sense of justice and democracy and convinced him that the Jews had a right to a sanctuary in Palestine, and his background as a criminal lawyer and judge indicated that he always showed profound sympathy with the underdog and usually sided with those he saw as victims of oppression. He was also seen as the champion of the rights of small nations, and for this reason he became a strong advocate of the importance of the United Nations. His policy in regard to Palestine was influenced by his belief that Australian foreign policy must be formulated independently of Britain. (Rutland, 1988, p. 311)

As Australia's Minister of External Affairs and Attorney-General in John Curtin's Labor Government, Dr Evatt believed that participation in the debate on Palestine's future furthered the interests of Australia. 'He felt the Middle East was important for Australian foreign policy, especially as the region was a bridge between Africa and Asia' (p. 311). He received a deputation led by the President of the NSW Jewish Advisory Board, Saul Symonds, who put forward the Zionist case and the tragedy of European Jewry.

In 1944, Dr Evatt had met Max Freilich, President of the Zionist State Council in New South Wales, with whom he forged a personal friendship. Several members of the Zionist Executive, possibly envious of Freilich's connection with Dr Evatt, were openly hostile, 'because they considered me a Zionist fanatic and irresponsible ... hence they tried to stop me' (Freilich, 1967, p. 115). In April 1945, Dr Evatt led the Australian delegation to the San Francisco Conference convened to draft a charter for the United Nations. The Australian-Palestine Committee presented a petition to Prime Minister John Curtin and Dr Evatt, 'urging the support of the Australian Government for the establishment of a Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine' (p. 124). Dr Evatt promised his Government's full support.

Although Dr Evatt was not elected President of the General Assembly, he was elected unanimously to the chairmanship of its *Ad hoc* Committee on Palestine, comprising representatives of all 57 member nations of the United Nations. The partition plan came up for the historic vote by the *Ad hoc* Committee on 25 November 1947, with Dr Evatt voting 'yes' from the chair (p. 195). On 29 November 1947 at Lake Success, the second General Assembly of the United Nations voted for the partition of Palestine into Jewish and Arab States. Freilich (1967) wrote: 'A cable conveying our congratulations and grateful thanks was despatched to Dr Evatt who was returning on the *S.S. Matsonia* from the United States' (p. 198). A special plenary meeting of the Zionist Federation in Melbourne decided to plant a JNF forest in Palestine in honour of Dr. Evatt for the 'skilful way in which he had conducted the meetings of the *Ad hoc* committee on Palestine so that it was made possible for the United Nations Assembly to arrive at the decision for the partitioning of Palestine into Jewish and Arab States' (p. 199). At a dinner in his honour on his return, Dr Evatt stated:

What I did to bring about the decision for setting up a Jewish State in a part of Palestine was not an act of favour to the Jews but because I firmly believe in the justice of the Jewish case. (cited in Freilich, 1967, p. 199)

After 2,000 years, the 'Children of Israel' could envisage the rebirth of a Jewish State in their ancestral homeland. For Dr Fanny and NCJW this day in history changed their lives and those of Jewish people everywhere. Hope was reborn after the destruction and death of the Shoah (Holocaust). Conscious of this new chapter in the history of the Jews, Dr Fanny proclaimed, 'Our martyrdom is at an end' ('Dr. Fanny Reading: President, National Council of Jewish Women of Australia' 1947, p. 2).



Map of the partition of Palestine, 1947

from The Learning Network, *New York Times*, published 29 November 2011

Resolution 181 was the realisation of a dream for Dr Fanny and NCJW. She had seen the homelessness of the Jewish people during the Second World War and the prohibition on entry into Palestine as tragedies; and she had committed herself to ameliorating the circumstances as best she could. Suddenly, there was the prospect of peace for those survivors stranded in Europe's displaced persons camps, waiting for the doors of Palestine to open. Moved by this change in the circumstances of the Jewish nation, she wrote:

The conscience of the United Nations of the world has been awakened to the call of Theodor Herzl that we are a nation, not a nation only for persecution, but a nation whose demand for nationhood and the restoration of its national Home has been right and just. We Jewish women of Australia, who 25 years ago took up the banner of Zionism for the redemption, of Palestine, see our prayers, our hopes and longings answered, and we go forward with renewed courage, faith and inspiration, to meet the bigger tasks that await us in the building of our National Home.

We present-day Jews are deeply conscious that we have had the sacred privilege, to witness this epoch-making event in Jewish history. At this time our hearts and minds are filled with intense gratitude for the supreme sacrifices made by our early Chalutzim [male pioneers] and chalutzot for the establishment of a Home for Israel.

We also remember that Britain was the first in modern times to undertake the restoration of Palestine for the Jewish people. All the members of the National Council of Jewish Women throughout Australia rejoice with heart and soul with the Yishuv [the Jews in Palestine], and send a message of loyalty and devotion and greetings and good wishes for the complete fulfilment of all our hopes and aspirations. We pledge our fullest support for the further upbuilding of Eretz Israel [the land of Israel] which will become a home of security for our people in Palestine and abroad. Shalom. (*Hebrew Standard*, 'Dr. Fanny Reading: President, National Council of Jewish Women of Australia' 1947, p. 2)

Dr Fanny's message ended with the word 'Shalom', 'Peace'. That conveyed the crux of the matter for Dr Fanny. After the excesses of hatred, inhumanity and genocide experienced by Jews, suddenly there was peace, the watchword of Dr Chaim Weizmann. Destined to be the first President of the State of Israel, in December 1947 he declared that the most important task ahead was to seek peace with the Arabs ('Palestine Jewry ready to meet any attack' 1947, p. 1). He added that Jews were prepared to assume governmental function, while Palestine Jewry was ready to meet any possible attacks.

Joy erupted wherever Jewish communities existed. The 'DPs', displaced persons in European camps, felt a sense of relief. Thirty thousand Jewish refugees in Vienna celebrated and 'Depression among the DPs gave way to joy and confidence' ('Joy among DP's: Illegal immigration to stop' 1947, p. 1). In all the camps, there were religious services, concerts and theatrical performances, through which they expressed their sense of renewal. At long last, they knew they were going, sooner or later, to Palestine. Jewish Agency officials planned a systematised immigration to Palestine, and camp inmates applied for certificates and urged the establishment of training courses (p. 1).

Playgrounds for children memorialise Jewish pilot

The day after the historic vote at the United Nations, on Sunday 30 November 1947, NCJW's Local Charities Committee dedicated the Philip Myerson Playground in Sydney to the memory of the 20-year-old Jewish pilot killed in action on 29 January 1945. The playground in the grounds of the Montefiore Home would recall to mind this Jewish soldier who 'laid down his life for King and Empire at the very early age of 20' (*Hebrew Standard*, 'NCJW: Philip Myerson Memorial handed over, Visit to Newcastle' 1947, p. 10). Philip was the youngest son of Mrs Emanuel Myerson, honorary organiser for 14 years of NCJW's Charities Committee.

Playgrounds dedicated to his memory were also built at the Isabella Lazarus Home, Scarba Welfare House for Women and Children in Bondi, and Furlough House in Narrabeen, the latter offering respite to ex-servicemen and their families. In dedicating the playground, Rabbi Leib Falk said he had known Philip Myerson from early childhood and 'no better tribute could be paid to his memory than something which made for a happy and healthy childhood'. The inscription on the plaque read: 'This playground was equipped by the National Council of Jewish Women, Local Charities Committee, in memory of Pilot-Officer Philip Myerson, who was killed in action on January 29, 1945' (p. 10). For Dr Fanny, children represented the future and her efforts on their behalf were unremitting. The playgrounds represented Council's commitment to the wellbeing and happiness of children.

Early in 1948 at a Council luncheon, she welcomed young migrants, brought to Sydney by the Welfare Guardianship scheme and Save the Children Fund. A press article noted: 'These young boys and two girls looked the ideal types that this country is looking for. Their enthusiasm and curiosity about everything appertaining to the new land of their adoption augurs well for their future' ('NCJW: Young member to leave for study in Palestine' 1948, p. 10). One young migrant, on behalf of the group, expressed their determination 'to be a credit to their guardians and to the Jewish community in general'. Dr Fanny and NCJW had prepared accommodation for them at the Isabella Lazarus Home. The children 'were delighted with the spaciousness of their new home and the brightness of their surroundings' (p. 10).

Dr Fanny supported the United Nations Appeal for children launched in Sydney in July 1948. Youth Aliyah was represented on the Australian National Committee for the United Nations and, as Dr Fanny was Vice-President of Youth Aliyah, she threw the weight of NCJW behind the appeal. Council members volunteered to staff a section of the city for the street collection held on 30 July 1948 to raise money towards NSW's target of £400,000 ('United Nations appeal for children ' 1948, p. 8). Jewish religious leaders opened the appeal on 24 July 1948, the sabbath that coincided with NCJW's Silver Jubilee celebrations.

State of Israel established 14 May 1948

While Dr Fanny travelled to Newcastle, Brisbane and Adelaide, conferring with NCJW's members about the forthcoming Silver Jubilee Conference and celebrations to be held in July 1948 in Sydney, a new page was being written in the history of the Jewish people. In calling for the establishment of a Jewish State, the United Nations General Assembly required the inhabitants of the Jewish homeland to take necessary steps for the implementation of

Resolution 181. Dr Fanny's dream of a Jewish State—for which she worked all her adult life—became a reality on 14 May 1948, when David Ben-Gurion, head of the Jewish People's Council, proclaimed the establishment of the State of Israel. That night, the United States was the first to recognise the State of Israel *de facto*, followed three days later by Russia, the first to give *de jure* recognition to the Jewish State. The Australian Government led by Ben Chifley recognised Israel on 28 January 1949 and established diplomatic relations with the Jewish State.

The Declaration of the Jewish People's Council stated that the land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people where their spiritual, religious and political identity was shaped. There they first attained statehood, created cultural values of national and universal significance and gave the Hebrew Bible to the world. After being forcibly exiled from their land, the people kept faith with it throughout their dispersion and never ceased to pray and hope for their return to it and for the restoration in it of their political freedom. The Declaration stated:

Impelled by this historic and traditional attachment, Jews strove in every successive generation to re-establish themselves in their ancient homeland. In recent decades they returned in their masses ... they made deserts bloom, revived the Hebrew language, built villages and towns, and created a thriving community controlling its own economy and culture, loving peace but knowing how to defend itself, bringing the blessings of progress to all the country's inhabitants, and aspiring towards independent nationhood.

In the year 5657 (1897) ... the First Zionist Congress convened and proclaimed the right of the Jewish people to national rebirth in its own country. This right was recognized in the Balfour Declaration of the 2nd November, 1917, and re-affirmed in the Mandate of the League of Nations which, in particular, gave international sanction to the historic connection between the Jewish people and Eretz-Israel and to the right of the Jewish people to rebuild its National Home.... On the 29th November, 1947, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution calling for the establishment of a Jewish State in Eretz-Israel.... This recognition by the United Nations of the right of the Jewish people to establish their State is irrevocable. This right is the natural right of the Jewish people to be masters of their own fate, like all other nations, in their own sovereign State.... The State of Israel ... will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture; it will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions; and it will be faithful to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

We appeal—in the very midst of the onslaught launched against us now for months—to the Arab inhabitants of the State of Israel to preserve peace and participate in the upbuilding of the State on the basis of full and equal citizenship and due representation in all its provisional and permanent institutions. We extend our hand to all neighbouring states and their peoples in an offer of peace and good neighbourliness, and appeal to them to establish bonds of cooperation and mutual help with the sovereign Jewish people settled in its own land. The State of Israel is prepared to do its share in a common effort for the advancement of the entire Middle East. (Ben-Gurion 1948)

When Dr Fanny created the first CJW in 1923, she promised Pevsner ‘to make the restoration of Palestine one of the Council’s foremost aims’ (Rubinstein 1987, p. 107). Openly supporting Zionism in the 1920s was a brave position, as Dr Fanny ‘was one of a tiny group of communal activists who believed in the acquisition of the Jewish homeland as a political state’ (Newton 2000, p. 95). From the 1920s, NCJW committed to supporting the Jewish homeland. In 1923, Dr Fanny and her Council, ‘sent the first monies ever raised by Australian Jewish women to Palestine—£100—to found a district nursing service in Tel Aviv’ (p. 96). Dr Fanny’s humanitarian response to the needs of the population in Palestine shaped NCJW policies from the organisation’s inception and through succeeding decades. In 1926, she appealed to members:

They are human, as we are human; they have feelings as we have. By what right are we entitled to benefits more than they? The innocent babes—those little beings created in the divine image—why shouldn’t they be given the same chance to begin life under the best possible conditions as our own babes. (Reading 1926)

Dr Fanny never relaxed her efforts to aid the reconstruction of the Jewish homeland and to alleviate deprivation and hardships endured by all its people. NCJW assisted in Palestine’s reconstruction—in areas of social welfare for mothers and babies, Youth Aliyah and JNF tree-planting programs. In 1948, Dr Fanny was elected to the NSW State Zionist Council, and her main concern—and NCJW’s priority at that time—was Israel’s responsibilities in feeding, clothing and housing new immigrants, who streamed in now the doors were open. David Ben-Gurion’s Declaration of Statehood brought challenges for Dr Fanny and NCJW. According to Mina Fink, former national president of NCJW:

With the State of Israel reborn, Dr Fanny, a Zionist of long standing, directed all sections to intensify their commitment to Israel. She taught us that we have a moral obligation to care for the baby we helped to bring into this world. We must help it to crawl, to walk, to reach maturity and economic independence. (Fink 1974)

In 1948, Dr Fanny alerted members throughout Australia to the Silver Jubilee Conference scheduled for 25 June 1948 in Sydney. With a view to securing national participation in the celebrations, she visited other states. Brisbane's CJW welcomed her warmly. She attended an official dinner, two luncheons, two drawing room meetings and a party in the Botanic Gardens—hosted by Brisbane, South Brisbane and Young Matrons' Councils ('National Council of Jewish Women: Future April Functions' 1948, p. 9).

On Dr Fanny's return to Sydney, she celebrated the annual Council Sabbath, attending a Friday evening service on 26 March 1948 at Temple Emanuel in Woollahra and a Saturday morning service at the Great Synagogue in the city, of which she was a member. By attending both temple and synagogue, she demonstrated that NCJW welcomed Jewish women from all Judaic religious streams, a tradition of religious tolerance NCJW has upheld. After the Great Synagogue service, Dr Fanny recalled with pride that Council's first meetings in 1923 took place in the Great Synagogue's lounge (p. 9).

Dr Fanny stayed in Sydney briefly before flying to Adelaide (arriving there on either 13 April or 14 April 1948) to discuss the Silver Jubilee Conference and celebrations. She gave press interviews explaining NCJW's main tasks, in particular, meeting Jewish migrants at Australian ports and helping them 'to become good Australian citizens' ('To Discuss Jewish Jubilee Conference' 1948, p. 11).

9th NCJWA Conference in Sydney

Dr Fanny and 500 people attended the opening on 25 June 1948 of the 9th National Council of Jewish Women of Australia Conference in Sydney. 'We never thought 25 years ago, we would live to see this day,' she said. 'Over the years a bond of sisterhood has united us' (*Hebrew Standard*, 'National Council of Jewish Women Celebrates Silver Jubilee: Official Opening of Ninth Conference' 1948, p. 4). The Premier of New South Wales, James McGirr, paid tribute to Dr Fanny:

It is most fitting to hear this gathering pay tribute to Dr. Fanny Reading.... Her name is a household word for good work in the State of New South Wales. Wherever I go in

Australia, I meet people who ask me about her. Work done by people like her, without great publicity, are the greatest deeds of all. (p. 4)

Member of the NSW Legislative Assembly, Abram Landa, endorsed this view: 'This great personality has engraved her name in the hearts and minds of the Jewish people'. Dr Fanny's response was consistent with her attitude throughout her Presidency—she focused on challenges that lay ahead. She never rested on her laurels and, under her stewardship, neither did the NCJW. She could have reminisced about past achievements, of which there were many. Instead, she spoke of what needed to be done and what was required of them to do it:

We will do what we can, in future, to prove ourselves truly worthy of the great honours you have showered upon us.... Council has never appealed for funds to meet its own needs ... but now we feel we must do so. To carry on our work in the proper manner we must have the facilities with which to do it. It is our aim to establish a Council headquarters in Australia, which can be used as a hostel, as a rallying point from which Jewish women can go about their charitable work. To do this we must, of course, have funds, and so we are appealing to the Jewish community. (p. 4)

Dr Fanny highlighted the contributions of members, co-founders and co-workers, commenting that for 25 years they had 'slaved' together. Now, they asked for financial help to carry on their valuable services to the community.

Dr Fanny, accompanied by 100 conference delegates, attended a civic reception on 7 July 1948 in Newcastle. In response to the welcome from Newcastle's Mayor, Alderman Quinlan, Dr Fanny recalled NCJW's many initiatives throughout the war years and voiced her appreciation of her fellow citizens' moral support:

When we Jewish women think of the great tragedy of six million of our people who were slaughtered in cold blood, we feel we have a great debt to our people. We appreciate your outlook and feel our tragedy has been very considerably lessened by people who are as broadminded as you. (*Hebrew Standard*, 'Jewish Women Visit Newcastle' 1948, p. 4)

At that reception, Rev. Isack Morris described Dr Fanny as 'a woman of great culture who has given her life to work for the welfare of every branch of humanity' (p. 4).

A Jewish hospital for Sydney

In 1947, Dr Fanny and NCJW collaborated with stakeholders to establish a Jewish hospital in Sydney. Dr Abraham Reading recalled that NCJW was ‘the first body to advocate the establishment of a Jewish hospital’ (‘Council Celebrates 27th Anniversary’ 1950, p. 3). This project was close to Dr Fanny’s heart. A Jewish hospital’s kosher kitchen would cater for dietary requirements of the orthodox Jewish community. Dr Fanny had worked in many hospitals across Sydney, so her skills and knowledge were crucial to this project. She brought in Sam Karpin, President of the Young Men’s Hebrew Association (YMHA) and held discussions with Jewish doctors in Sydney who supported the scheme—including her brother, Dr Abraham Reading, Dr Joseph Steigrad, Dr H. Landecker and Dr A. Owen. They planned a hospital in Wentworth Street, Point Piper (Newton states Wunalla Road) (Newton 2000, p. 217).

In addition to Dr Fanny’s multiple portfolios in medicine, her general practices in Kings Cross and Bondi Junction, her National Presidency of NCJW, and participation in numerous civic bodies, she also took on the role of honorary secretary of the new Hospital Board, which was tasked with creating and financing the Jewish Hospital in Sydney. NCJW was the first body in the community ‘to organise a public function for the N.S.W. Jewish Hospital, from which effort the sum of £1000 was raised to endow a bed in the hospital in the name of Dr. Fanny Reading’ (‘New drive planned for Jewish Hospital’ 1948, p. 5). A hospital spokesman commented:

We are not surprised at the active role being taken by the N.C.J.W. and other women's organisations. After all, Dr. Fanny Reading was one of the first to support the idea of a Jewish hospital, and was always expected to carry a major share of the burden. I feel that in the meeting held at her headquarters, Dr. Fanny and her ladies redemonstrated their unequivocal support of this lofty cause. (‘Hospital dinner plans’ 1948, p. 5)

Despite Dr Fanny’s best efforts and those of NCJW, the project failed, the property sold, and the funds kept in trust. Concurrent with this attempt to establish a Jewish hospital in Sydney, another healthcare initiative took shape, resulting from a bequest to NCJW. Council member Gertrude Stone appreciated the kindness of CJW’s Hospital Visiting Committee and, in April 1949, bequeathed her house in Coogee to NCJW. She suggested it be used as a convalescent home and that it be called the Aaron and Gertie Wolper Convalescent Home or Hospital, memorialising the name of her first husband. The house proved unsuitable and NCJW sold it. With the proceeds, they bought a property at 8 Trelawney St, Woollahra, where the Wolper Convalescent Home opened in 1953. Dr Fanny, with 120 members of the Jewish community,

attended the opening by NSW Prices Minister, Abram Landa, and the dedication by Rabbi Leib Falk. The home had 18 beds, including a free one for needy cases, and one endowed by NCJW in the name of Becky Lake, who had canvassed support for the project ('Wolper Home Opened' 1953, p. 6). Stone 'decreed in her will that the convalescent hospital be non-denominational' (p. 2).

This enterprise also ran into financial difficulties, and in 1959, the Wolper was amalgamated with the defunct NSW Jewish Hospital. The Wolper's executive comprised three trustees from NCJW's Hospital Visiting Committee—Dr Fanny, Becky Lake and Ethel Zion—as well as Sam Karpin of the YMHA and Maurice Allen, the latter two representing the old NSW Jewish Hospital. With the merger complete, the Wolper could use the Jewish Hospital's funds to extend and improve its amenities. On 20 August 1961, the NSW Minister for Health, William Francis Sheahan, opened the renovated Wolper Jewish Hospital. On 14 May 1982, almost 8 years after Dr Fanny's death, NCJW's three trustees serving on the executive handed over the title of the land to the Wolper Jewish Hospital (Hospital 2018). Today, the building has a NCJW lounge in which hangs a portrait of Dr Fanny with a memorial plaque that outlines her role in the establishment of this Eastern Suburbs institution.

Maccabi affiliates with NCJW

Dr Fanny dedicated herself and NCJW to educating Jewish youth about their history and traditions, and to promoting the social interaction of Jewish young men and women. Concerned about the increasing rate of intermarriage, she devised social programs that brought young people together. On 28 August 1948, at a Maccabi function in Sydney, she welcomed an announcement that this Jewish sports organisation wished to join NCJW. When the President of Maccabi, Ron Newman, confirmed that Maccabi 'had joined the ranks of the National Council of Jewish Women', Dr Fanny responded that NCJW was 'delighted to welcome Maccabi, who would fill the position of a youth section to the National Council of Jewish Women' ('Maccabi affiliates with N.C.J.W.' 1948, p. 3).

This development was consistent with Dr Fanny's lifelong policy of combatting intermarriage. As early as 19 July 1923 in Sydney, she stated: 'The foremost need was to educate young Jewish women in their tradition, as assimilation and intermarriage were the most vexing problems of the day' (Andgel 1998, p. 206). A quarter-century later, she articulated the same belief, adding that much could be done to address a deteriorating situation. The *Hebrew Standard* referred to her 'sincere frankness' when she told more than 150 people:

[O]ne of the main objects in embracing the Maccabi to the N.C.J.W. was to afford opportunities to young Jews and Jewesses to meet and eventually marry. One of the most heartbreaking experiences for parents today ... was to see their children marry out of the Faith. ('Maccabi affiliates with N.C.J.W.' 1948, p. 3)

Services to migrants acknowledged

In January 1949, the Migrants Reception Committee of the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies expressed gratitude to Dr Fanny and NCJW for their services in welcoming arrivals at the wharf in Sydney and for providing food and accommodation for passengers bound for Melbourne. Committee chairman, Sydney Einfeld, commended the large number of women and men who spent the whole day, on 12 January 1949, meeting new arrivals on the *SS Partizanka*. He singled out Dr Fanny: 'One couple, with two children, missed the train and Dr. Fanny Reading was kind enough to offer them accommodation for the night in her home' (Einfeld 1949).

The Inspector in Charge of Customs Officials, Mr Latter, requested the Committee's services in an official capacity. Einfeld stated that the Committee would operate again on 19 January 1949, when the *SS Eridan* was due 'with more than 200 of our people' (Einfeld 1949). This promising start to 1949 would unravel and Dr Fanny would face challenges ahead that she could not have envisaged. In 1949, she was the plaintiff in a court case that taxed her strength, concentration and endurance. It affected her health, her practice and her income (see Chapter 6).

Immediately after the trial, despite her exhaustion, she was elected to the Sydney committee of Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants (OSE), a philanthropic venture based in Geneva, Switzerland, and operating in Israel, various European countries and North Africa. It directed its efforts 'towards the rehabilitation and the protection of health of the Jewish population in those countries' ('O.S.E. Committee in Sydney' 1949, p. 11). Dr I.J. Weyman chaired the inaugural OSE meeting on 9 May 1949 in Council rooms in Sydney. Three doctors, who brought groups of Jewish children to Australia, attended the meeting. Aside from Dr Fanny, the committee of 19 members also included Ruby Rich, Dr Henry Frant, Dr I.M. Friedman and Dr Frieda Laserson. They devised a social welfare program for babies, young children and their mothers, and resolved:

1. To create a Ladies Auxiliary, which would take care that domestic help be provided for sick mothers who cannot look after their children and housework, or who have to

be brought to hospital, thus leaving the children without any care or under the inadequate care of a husband at work.

2. To study the question of establishing creches (day nurseries) for babies whose mothers have to go to work, as well as of kindergartens in various districts of Sydney, and endeavour to find the financial basis for the realisation of this important task.
3. To endeavour to render assistance to Jewish doctors arriving from overseas and to help them in adapting themselves to the new conditions. (p. 11)

The committee resolved 'to carry out the above activities in harmonious co-operation with the United Jewish Overseas Relief Fund and with other Jewish organisations in Sydney doing welfare work' (p. 11). This resolution reflected Dr Fanny's lifelong advocacy of working collaboratively with organisations to achieve the best results.

Two weeks later, on 24 May 1949, Dr Fanny attended Newcastle Section's 20th AGM, a branch she had nurtured from its inauguration in 1929. Her remarks revealed her priorities as the tide of Jewish history turned, and her phraseology—she used 'wonderful' repetitively—conveyed her emotion. She spoke of

the wonderful spirit of the Jewish people during the struggle for the new State.... We had passed through the most wonderful period of Jewish history—the declaration of the Jewish State, and Israel's admittance to the United Nations. (*Hebrew Standard*, 'NCJW Newcastle section: Twentieth annual meeting' 1949, p. 12)

She appealed to members 'to support our people who have suffered, and to help those still in need in Europe to be rehabilitated and cured both in mind and body' (p. 12). Newcastle's President, Mrs Goldring, presented Dr Fanny with 'a tribute of six trees' planted in her name in Israel. Dr Fanny told Newcastle members: 'For 20 years ... you have stuck to the original ideals formed during the inauguration' (p. 12). She focused on tasks ahead, asking members to support NCJW's bazaar to be held during Israel Week, 5–7 July 1949 in Sydney, with proceeds going to the 1949 Israel Appeal. Echoing Dr Fanny's sentiments, Mrs Goldring said, 'The efforts of our kin in Israel should act as an incentive to members here'.

Dr Fanny had played a seminal and consistent role in the creation and evolution of Newcastle's CJW. On 12 May 1954 at the Great Northern Hotel in Newcastle, accompanied by 35 members from Sydney, she was guest speaker at a luncheon celebrating the section's 25th anniversary. About 100 representatives of charitable organisations in the city were present. She drew their

attention to CJW's help given to immigrants, one of the platforms of her organisation: 'As so many of our people have been forced to leave the land of their birth, it is our duty to do all we can to help them' ('Helping migrants major aim of Jewish women' 1954, p. 5).

International Council of Jewish Women

On 3 June 1949 in Paris, in Dr Fanny's absence, she received an honour that propelled her into the limelight: her election as one of five Vice-Presidents of the newly formed International Council of Jewish Women. Representatives from about 40 countries attended the conference held 29 May to 3 June 1949 in Paris. This honour was widely reported in the Australian press:

Dr. Reading is president and founder of the National Council of Jewish Women of Australia, and this most recent honour to be conferred upon her is richly deserved both by herself and the many thousands of women she has represented for the past 25 years. From her early efforts the organisation has grown until now there are 12 sections of the N.C.J.W. spread throughout the Commonwealth of Australia. ('Dr. Reading Elected to International Post' 1949, p. 3)

It is not clear whether Dr Fanny's elevation to the Vice Presidency of the International Council of Jewish Women (ICJW) motivated her decision to retire from active management of Sydney Council's affairs. The appointment brought added responsibilities, as well as the potential for collaborative efforts internationally. Dr Fanny had been a conscientious participant in Council's Sydney section, while monitoring and encouraging the work of Council sections nationally. Her exhaustion following the *Smith's Weekly* court case in 1949 surely played a role. On 19 September 1949, she announced her departure from Council's Sydney section, saying that she and her co-executors felt, 'they ought to give the younger women a chance to let them try their hand at managing the various activities of the Council' (*Hebrew Standard*, 'Dr Fanny Reading to retire' 1949, p. 3). She added that she and her associates would be in the background to guide and advise. Dr Fanny thanked standing and suburban committees for the work they had done, especially welcoming and looking after new arrivals:

Their only reward was a smile of thanks on the faces of these migrants. This was considered as the richest reward a Jewish woman could wish for. But ... although we have done good work in the past, we have many responsibilities for the future. Israel and our community will require all we can give them in many ways (p. 3).

News of Dr Fanny's retirement spread quickly, and members and their husbands gathered 'to pay tribute to a great woman who has done much for Jewry' (p. 3). Gerald de Vahl Davis reminded the community of 'the magnificent stand Dr. Reading took in the witness box in the *Smith's Weekly* case', and other speakers voiced their tributes. Dr Fanny's major contributions to Jewish and gentile charities, organisations and causes, at home and abroad were acknowledged then and in the years that followed:

With that broad-mindedness and human understanding which characterises all truly great social workers, she has been, and still is, very active in all fields of social welfare in Australia. Thus, she is an executive member of the National Council of Women (N.S.W.), past member of the Honorary Medical Staff of the Rachel Forster Hospital, St. George's District Hospital, and the Community Hospital. She is also a Life Governor of the Crown Street Women's Hospital, the Dalwood Health Homes, the Benevolent Society of N.S.W., and the NCJW Jewish Hospital ... our community may well be proud and thankful to Dr Fanny Reading—truly a leader and lover of mankind. ('Truly a leader and lover of mankind': Dr. Fanny Reading' 1953, p. 2)

Dr Fanny's role transformed into that of NCJW's elder stateswoman. She remained active in Council affairs, but the intensity of her participation declined. On 12 October 1950, she hosted a meeting at her home to plan a High Tea and Card Party, to be held 29 October 1950, in honour of Council's JNF Queen candidate, Marian Salmon. Her main focus, however, was the State of Israel. In May 1951, she attended a reception given by the Minister for Israel, Joseph Linton, to mark Israel's third Independence Day. Flowers in blue and white, Israel's colours, decorated the reception rooms of the Minister's Point Piper home, where 150 guests gathered to celebrate, including the Premier of New South Wales, James McGirr; the Italian Minister, Dr Giulio del Balzo; the American Consul-General, Donald Smith; and Dr Fanny (*Hebrew Standard*, 'Israel's Independence Day celebrated at reception ' 1951, p. 10). Also present was Dr Herbert Vere Evatt, Labor MP for Barton, who had facilitated the partition of Palestine. He had represented Australia on the United Nations Security Council and, in September 1948, served as President of the United Nations General Assembly.

'The courage of the women ... leading the way'

The courage of women and their unceasing efforts to ameliorate harsh conditions, to alleviate poverty and suffering, and to care for the needy at home and abroad was a theme to which Dr Fanny returned consistently throughout her lengthy tenure of office in the NCJW and in her

many roles within the public realm. This belief powered her philosophy, her organisation and, indeed, the way she conducted her life in the service of others. She personified this in her medical career and her presidency of the NCJW. In particular, when it came to the wellbeing of children, no issue was too minor to warrant attention and no challenge was too great. As Vice-President of Youth Aliyah, Dr Fanny was aware that many thousands of children still suffered the consequences of the war years. On 27 November 1951, at a Sydney luncheon, she pledged NCJW's support to Jewish Child's Day. According to Friedl Levi, several organisations had co-operated to rescue thousands of children in unfortunate circumstances, among them the UJORF, the NSW Board of Jewish Education, Youth Aliyah and local women's organisations ('Jewish Child's Day' 1951, p. 2).

At a mayoral reception, held on 3 June 1952 in Brisbane, Queensland, to mark the Silver Jubilee of the Brisbane Council of Jewish Women, Dr Fanny spoke on the topic 'Women lead the way' ('Women never cease to work' 1952, p. 14). While rejoicing that 'The gates of Israel are now open. It does not matter how many hundred thousand desire to enter' (p. 19). She understood that immense resources were needed by migrants requiring food, clothes and accommodation. She commended the bravery of Israel's women:

The State of Israel ... had proved the great compensation for the Jewish race after the persecutions suffered through Hitler. It was the courage of the women that had enabled them to carry on and which was leading the way despite economic depression ('Jewish women entertained' 1952, p. 19).

WIZO emissary, Malcah Weinberg, reinforced this theme when she spoke at a Council lunch in History House to celebrate Sydney Section's 30th anniversary. She highlighted the role of women in Israel:

[W]omen were playing a major part in the development of social and child welfare, and were active in education and politics in Israel. One woman is Minister for Labour, another was our Minister to Russia, and a third a consul in Brazil ('Anniversary of Jewish Women's Group' 1953, p. 11).

Four years later, in April 1957 in Jerusalem, Golda Meir delivered a keynote address at an international conference Dr Fanny attended, accompanied by NCJWA National President Vera Cohen. By then, Golda Meir was no longer Israel's Ambassador to the Soviet Union (as referenced by Malcah Weinberg, above), but had been appointed, on 1 January 1956, Israel's

Minister of Foreign Affairs. On her return to Sydney in May 1957, Dr Fanny spoke of Golda Meir:

She's a very plain woman, but she gave a most stirring speech on the dignity of Israel. She reminded me of a prophetess—Deborah, perhaps—rallying her people for battle. [Israel's] a land of opportunity for women. There are five women judges.... In the Knesset of 120 members there are 11 women. And in a population of almost two million, Israel has 21,000 women in the professions, 30,000 in teaching, health and social welfare, 17,000 in industry and the trades, and 45,000 doing agricultural work. (*Sun-Herald*, 5 May 1957, p. 99)

After decades in public life, Dr Fanny noted and deplored an emerging apathy and indifference to 'new ventures and big endeavours'. She led the way in conceptualising initiatives for NCJW and in securing support for new projects. She still had big dreams for big ventures. She prepared an ambitious 3-year plan, requiring £10,000 per year for about 80 farms on land 50 miles from Tel Aviv. On 28 May 1953, in Newcastle, she 'expressed the hope that streets and houses would be named after each section of Council' ('NCJW in Newcastle ' 1953, p. 7).

A home of their own

Dr Fanny cherished her dream of a Council House in Sydney, but it proved elusive. She urged Councils to achieve this for members in their respective cities. In September 1949, Sydney's CJW announced it had acquired a property at 263 Elizabeth Street in the city, between Liverpool and Bathurst Streets (*Hebrew Standard*, 'NCJW Council House' 1949, p. 12). They envisaged that this three-storey building, facing Hyde Park, would serve as Council's future headquarters. One year later, at Council's 27th anniversary dinner on 8 August 1950, it transpired there had been little or no progress, either in reconstructing or refurbishing the building. At the dinner, the president of Sydney's CJW launched an appeal to members to support the Council House project. When Dr Fanny spoke, there was a note of exasperation in the manner in which she admonished her listeners:

[D]uring the 27 years of the Council's existence it had always raised money for others, now it wanted to raise £9500 to establish a headquarters in which it could conduct all its important work. After all the Council had done, it had the right to expect some practical recognition by the community. This Anniversary Celebration was being held in the hope that such a House would soon become a reality. ('Council Celebrates 27th Anniversary' 1950, p. 3)

Dr Fanny said the upper floor would house Council offices, and the Israel Legation would possibly take one floor (p. 3).

At this stage in Dr Fanny's National Presidency, some believed she was taken for granted by her organisation, possibly a consequence of relinquishing leadership of the Sydney section, as well as the passage of time. President of the Feminist Club in Sydney, Mrs Crawford Vaughan, raised this matter. At a dinner in August 1952 to mark the 29th anniversary celebrations of Sydney Council, she 'stressed the value of a woman like Dr. Fanny Reading in the community and believed that she was taken too much for granted by Jews and non-Jews alike' ('National Council of Jewish Women: The official dinner' 1952, p. 7).

Crawford Vaughan also spoke about Dr Fanny's vision of a Council House. She stated: '[A]fter all these years the Council should have a home of its own' ('National Council of Jewish Women: The official dinner' 1952, p. 7). Dr Fanny always thought so; and at this stage, the project revived. The community's appreciation of Dr Fanny manifested in an effort to bring her dream of a Council House to fruition and to name it the Dr Fanny Reading Council House. In February 1953 in Sydney, NCJW launched the Fanny Reading Council House Appeal, the first such appeal on behalf of their own organisation in 30 years. At a dinner at History House, 100 guests donated a total of more than £1000. A member of the Appeal Committee stated that the Appeal was gaining momentum but they needed to increase their exertions and tempo to reach their goal:

The object of the Appeal ... must attract every Jew and Jewess interested in the preservation of Jewish life and Jewish values in N.S.W. It is the duty of everyone in this community ... to see that this progressive communal plan shall succeed and thus strengthen and enrich our Jewish life here. Every member of this community should and must be 100 percent behind this drive (Fanny Reading Council House Appeal Launched' 1953, p. 3).

Dr Fanny added her voice to the Appeal, addressing the audience that included the Chargé d'Affaires of Israel, the President of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, and the President of the JNF. Later that month, at the 24th AGM of NCJW's Newcastle section, Dr Fanny said she hoped the Newcastle section would endow a room in Council House ('NCJW in Newcastle ' 1953, p. 7). The issue took on urgency when, at the 11th NCJWA Conference, in March 1955 in Sydney, she relinquished the National Presidency, commending Vera Cohen as the new National President:

I pray that in eighteen years' time we shall celebrate the golden jubilee of our beloved organisation, the organisation which has meant so much to me personally and which is founded upon the permanent foundations of service and devotion. (Andgel 1998, p. 236)

The NCJW War Memorial Fanny Reading Council House in Queen Street, Woollahra, opened its doors in December 1963. Dr Fanny, then 79 years of age, saw her dream realised. It was dedicated 'to the servicemen and women of Australia as well as to Dr Fanny Reading MBE' (Newton 2000, p. 219). Newton states, 'It was a building funded by women for women.' It marked a turning point in the fortunes of NCJW in Sydney. Dr Fanny always expressed the hope NCJW's golden jubilee would be celebrated in their own home. In 1973, a frail Dr Fanny, aged 89, attended the Golden Jubilee Morning Tea held in Council House in Woollahra. She received a standing ovation from 400 guests, and responded simply, 'I made it' (Andgel 1998, p. 237).

On 12 December 1971, three years before Dr Fanny died, Prime Minister William McMahon opened the National Jewish Memorial Centre in Canberra, which featured 'The Fanny Reading Auditorium' with seating for 300, an honour that commemorated NCJW support for this project ('A national centre for Jews ' 1971, p. 14). Mrs McMahon unveiled the plaque in the Fanny Reading Auditorium ('Jewish centre opened' 1971, p. 3). Dr Fanny—suffering from Parkinson's Disease—was too unwell to attend at that time.

The next chapter documents Dr Fanny's role in the 1949 defamation case that thrust her into press headlines around Australia.

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Nothing had prepared me for that trauma

—Dr Fanny, commenting on the court case

Chapter 8: Dr Fanny Reading v National Press Pty Ltd

In 1947 Dr Fanny was Senior Vice-President of the Australian branch of Youth Aliyah, an international organisation dedicated to bringing Jewish child survivors from Nazi Europe to safety in Palestine, which was administered by the British Mandatory Authority. After a Youth Aliyah fundraising event held on 6 May 1947 in Sydney, addressed by the visiting speaker Major Michael Comay, the national newspaper *Smith's Weekly* published on 31 May 1947 a front-page article headlined, 'Jews raise huge sums to fight British—Heavy levies on Jews in Australia'. Posters outside newsagencies throughout Australia carried the banner headline, 'Australian Jews financing terrorists in Palestine—killing British soldiers.' Appalled and aggrieved, Dr Fanny maintained she had been defamed by this libellous article that alleged the funds she and others had collected to save and nurture Jewish children were being used instead to support terrorism in Palestine. She sued National Press for libel and claimed £10,000 in damages to her reputation.

Rabbi Max Schenk, a Sydney member of the Executive Committee of the Zionist Federation of Australia and New Zealand, in a letter dated 9 September 1947 to Major Michael Comay in Jerusalem, stated that the Executive Council of Australian Jewry had approved the action on behalf of the Jewish community and that the Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism of Melbourne backed the action financially and guaranteed the cost. According to Morris Ochert (1996), organisational support for litigation also included the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies and the Victorian Jewish Board of Deputies. Sam Wynn, a leading Zionist, philanthropist and pioneer vintner, offered to meet the costs of the Victorian action. With support thus assured from several organisations and individuals, the quest began to find a plaintiff in Victoria and in New South Wales. Rabbi Schenk stated that in the first week of September 1947, Ida Wynn in Melbourne and Dr Fanny in New South Wales gave their permission to appear as plaintiffs in the court proceedings in their respective states. Almost a year later, in August 1948, Ida Wynn died before the case came to court and Ochert records that no suitable substitute could be found in Victoria. In Sydney they decided to go ahead without a Victorian plaintiff. Shortly thereafter, notice was served on *Smith's Weekly*. In Rabbi Schenk's letter to Comay, he stated that the paper's response was 'extremely dangerous to our work and must be fought' (Letter from NCJW NSW Dr Fanny Reading Archive). He added:

I have never for a moment hesitated in regard to the urgent necessity of taking such action as would prevent similar journals from continuing their usual broadcasts against us. We have the finest legal talent in the country pressing our case, and from all indications we should have a very strong one. (Rabbi Max Schenk 1947)

Two years later, the case *Dr Fanny Reading v National Press Pty Ltd.* was heard before Justice Leslie James Herron over three days, from Tuesday 26 April 1949 to Thursday 28 April 1949, with judgement delivered on the third day of the trial; and a discussion of costs heard on 29 June 1949. The trial was held in the Supreme Court of New South Wales, in Sydney. Solicitors Messrs Abram Landa, Barton & Co. and barrister Jack Evelyn Cassidy KC represented Dr Fanny; and solicitors Keith W. Gunn & Co. and barrister John Wentworth (Jack) Shand KC represented the defendant, *Smith's Weekly* (National Press Pty. Ltd).

On the first morning of the trial, Dr Fanny stepped into the witness box and prepared for the ordeal she would endure as the plaintiff in this widely publicised defamation trial, which rocked the Australian Jewish community at that time and propelled this 65-year-old medical practitioner into the glare of public scrutiny. Examined by Cassidy, she immediately established her professional credentials and her reputation for humanitarian service:

My full name is Fanny Reading. I am a highly qualified medical practitioner carrying on my practice at 38 Darlinghurst Rd, Darlinghurst, in partnership with my brother. I am a British subject, having come to Australia when I was two years of age, and having lived here ever since, except for a period when I visited England when I was about a year away from Australia. During that time I visited America, England, Europe, Palestine and Egypt. I spent about six weeks in Palestine and that is the only occasion that I have been there, and other than that period of a year I have been here all my life. I am still in active practice. I have been an honorary physician at various hospitals. For some years I was in the St. George District before I went to Darlinghurst. (Herron 1949c, p. 1)

In that courtroom—subjected to questions from her barrister, Jack Evelyn Cassidy KC, as well as undergoing a cross-examination by John Wentworth Shand KC, the defendant's barrister—a multifaceted portrait emerges of Dr Fanny and her worldview framed by political and ideological parameters prevailing at that time. The trial revealed the strength of her commitment to the children saved by Youth Aliyah and highlighted her efforts to raise funds for their reception, accommodation, education and training in Palestine. It also showed the strength of her commitment to Zionism and her belief in the rebirth of her people in their

homeland, where they might live not on sufferance but as an historic right, in accordance with the promise enshrined in the Balfour Declaration of 2 November 1917 that stated 'His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object (Schneer 2010, p. 341).

According to Sydney lawyer Peter Wertheim, former President of the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies and, at the time of writing this chapter (2019), co-Chief Executive Officer of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry:

[M]ore than 90% of the people in Australia at that time were of Anglo-Celtic heritage, and many of them were staunchly pro-British. *Smith's Weekly* was an extreme right wing, xenophobic, jingoistic Anglophile newspaper which railed against Jewish refugees from Europe who were then arriving in Australia ... and against Jewish boat people arriving in Palestine.... Fanny Reading's case against *Smith's Weekly* resonated with many of the kinds of issues that provoke debate in contemporary Australia—refugee children, terrorism, conflicts in the Middle East. Yet Fanny Reading was steadfast throughout. She said that no levy was imposed on Jews and no compulsion or duress were applied, nor could they be. 'Those who contributed did so out of sympathy and love for Jewish children, many of them orphans, homeless and unwell (Wertheim 2013a).

Wertheim adds that Dr Fanny had a distinguished reputation and that much was at stake, and concludes that she demonstrated 'remarkable humanity and courage' (Wertheim 2013a).

The Sydney courtroom became the place and provocation for an in-depth portrayal of Dr Fanny and amplifies our understanding of who she was at that time, what she stood for, what she believed in, and what character traits prompted her to act when her integrity and that of the Jewish supporters of Youth Aliyah were impugned. Despite her reluctance to take centre stage in a defamation drama of national interest, she stood her ground and articulated her firm convictions, pre-eminently her belief in the justice of her cause, the humanitarian mission of Youth Aliyah, and in the right of Jewish people to migrate to Palestine.

She quoted, as examples of the many promises of the Almighty in that regard, in Genesis and elsewhere, that the 'Promised Land' was to be the eternal possession of the Jewish people... 'And I will plant thee...in this, my sacred soil, and none shall pluck thee out.' (Ochert 1996, p. 317)

The trial was firmly anchored within an historic context shaped by the emergence of Youth Aliyah in 1933, and by Dr Fanny's personal encounter with Zionist leaders in 1925. Both barristers in the trial interrogated these background influences, thus shifting them from the margins to the ideological foreground of the trial. Consequently, Youth Aliyah and Zionism became central issues in the trial.

Youth Aliyah's archives of tragedy and hope

Youth Aliyah, which featured prominently in newspapers throughout Australia in 1949, had its genesis in Germany in 1933 when Recha Freier witnessed storm-troopers in Berlin celebrating Hitler's electoral victory. The wife of a Berlin rabbi, she was concerned by the escalation of antisemitism and the exclusion of Jewish children and youth from educational institutions and employment. Bentwich (1944) described her as a woman with 'a prophetic vision and a fiery temperament ... an enthusiastic worker for Palestine, a friend of the young, and an invincible fighter for any cause which she espoused' (p. 35). In 1932 and in 1933 in Germany, she met with a small group of Zionist youth leaders to discuss sending Jewish teenagers to kibbutzim (communal farms) in Palestine, where they could complete their education, work on the land and help in the upbuilding of the Jewish homeland. Initially, she met with resistance from Henrietta Szold, an American living in Palestine, the founder in 1912 of Hadassah Women's Zionist Organization of America, whom Freier approached for help in realising her project. At that time, Szold was hampered by inadequate funds and resources to meet the basic needs of children in Palestine.

Freier hoped to leverage Szold's track record of pragmatic ventures that had ameliorated primitive conditions in the *Yishuv*. Undeterred by Szold's initial rejection, Freier persevered. Szold relented and accepted the proposal of the World Zionist Congress that, based in Jerusalem, she should direct the initiative aimed at integrating Jewish children brought from Europe to Palestine, overseeing their social welfare, medical, educational and training needs. The first group of 34 boys and girls from Hitler's Germany arrived on 19 February 1934 in Haifa, where Szold met them, accompanied by Aharon Zisling, a member of Kibbutz Ein Harod, which was to be their new home (Pincus 1970, p. 17). Thus began the saga of Youth Aliyah:

[T]he story of the march ... in war and in peace, of ten thousand boys and girls from the lands of Nazi oppression to Palestine, the land of promise, to be apprenticed there for agricultural and industrial life in collective and co-operative villages, and then

themselves to form fresh collective and co-operative groups, planting the soil.

(Bentwich 1944, p. 9)

When Germany invaded Poland on 1 September 1939, Great Britain and France declared war on Germany on 3 September 1939. Thousands of Jewish youngsters, finding themselves in a life-and-death situation, turned to Youth Aliyah, hoping to reach Palestine. The head of Youth Aliyah's London office, Eva Michaelis-Stern, suggested to her Board that they should adopt a flexible rescue policy to deal with the new situation: 'Let us not forget, she pointed out, that no other organization in the Jewish world is as well equipped to contribute to the rescue of Jewish young people' (Ofer 1996, p. 122). Szold, who had appealed to the High Commissioner in Palestine for 1000 immigration certificates for children, which was over and above the usual quota, and had been turned down, was in a difficult position. While accepting that Youth Aliyah was a rescue operation, she insisted that children be processed according to pre-war criteria, including a medical examination and bureaucratic requirements that were difficult to fulfil: 'We have to consider besides the individual also the country for the building of which we are responsible' (p. 122). This rigidity, which meant delays and might have cost lives, provoked enduring controversy. In mitigation, Youth Aliyah leaders feared 'that any activity which did not follow clear, accepted policy might lead to chaos and endanger the whole program' (p. 123).

According to Dr Lawrence Geller, 'The archives of Youth Aliyah ... are in the widest, most descriptive sense, the archives of tragedy and hope' (cited in Glowinski 2015). Those words—tragedy and hope—encapsulate the polarities of Youth Aliyah's struggles throughout the war years. Geller comments that those years,

were fraught with the unrelenting political and administrative processes necessary to secure the release of Jewish children from detention, death and displaced person camps throughout Europe. The obstacles were not only related to the impact of the War in Europe but also to the British Mandate Government's limitation on immigration to Palestine. The efforts to maintain the process of rescue required an international collaboration between multiple agencies throughout Continental Europe, the United Kingdom, Palestine and the United States. (cited in Glowinski 2015)

While Hadassah in America supported Youth Aliyah, fundraising also involved volunteers and communal leaders in Australia, such as Dr Fanny. Dr Georg Landauer worked closely with Szold in Palestine, administering and overseeing Youth Aliyah processes. A former secretary of the

German Zionist Federation, he was Treasurer of the Jewish Agency's Youth Aliyah Department (Bentwich 1944). With intimate knowledge of the personalities and processes of Youth Aliyah, Dr Landauer flew to Sydney in 1949 to testify on behalf of Youth Aliyah at the trial *Dr Fanny Reading v National Press Ltd*.

Youth Aliyah encountered challenges with the arrival of the 'Teheran' and 'Trans-Dniestria' children, who reached Palestine in 1942 and 1943 after enduring extreme hardships. According to Kahanoff (1960), the 'Teheran' children were Polish Jewish children, who fled with their parents to the Russian-occupied zone when the Nazis overran Poland: 'As relations between Russia and Poland took a turn for the worse, these families were deported to Siberia ... [where they] wandered, starving, without means of subsistence, from the Siberian North to Southern Russia' (p. 19).

Hundreds died and surviving orphans found refuge with families, orphanages and hospitals. Some continued in their own groups. Great numbers of children travelled to Teheran with the Polish army mobilised by General Anders. Randy Grigsby (2020) documented the journey of a thousand Jewish children originally from Poland and Germany: '[T]he story of the Tehran [sic] Children is one of those remarkable tales of the human struggle to survive' (p. 243).

The Jewish Agency and Szold negotiated with the British High Commissioner for Palestine, who provided entry visas for the children and, on their arrival in Palestine, Youth Aliyah assumed responsibility for them. Kahanoff (1960) states:

About a year later, two convoys of children were collected in Trans-Dniestria, orphans from all parts of Rumania whose parents had met their end in death camps. These children had spent some time in German slave-labour camps before the International Red Cross and the Joint Distribution Committee arranged for their transport to a special camp, from where they were to be taken to Palestine. Here again visas were secured only after difficult negotiations with the British Mandatory authorities. (p. 20)

Yosef Rappaport points out,

It was the task of the project [Youth Aliyah] to provide positive solutions to the deficiencies arising from the Holocaust, to the questions of physical survival, clothing and nutrition as well as of social and spiritual survival, progress and development. It had to ensure the greatest chances for integration which was to take place at the greatest possible speed—in other words, for absorption. ('Group care: An Israeli approach, the educational path of Youth Aliyah' 1971, p. 32).

Rappaport concludes that it was not easy to rehabilitate thousands of orphaned Jewish children, many of whom had been left to wander and 'whose development and growth had been disturbed, twisted and delayed' (p. 32). Psychotherapist Viktor Frankl (1962), however, advocated for a positive response to trauma and survival, and wrote that mental health reflects the tension between what one is and what one should become:

We should not, then, be hesitant about challenging man with a potential meaning for him to fulfil. It is only thus that we evoke his will to meaning from its state of latency.... What man actually needs is ... the striving and struggling for some goal worthy of him ... the call of a potential meaning waiting to be fulfilled by him. (pp. 106-107)

Dr Fanny meets Henrietta Szold

Dr Fanny and Henrietta Szold met three times in 1925, the first time in New York and the second in Vienna, when Dr Fanny represented Australia as an official member of the press corps accredited to the 14th Zionist Congress held in Vienna, which Szold attended. They met again when Dr Fanny and her mother visited Palestine. Their meetings in New York, Vienna and Jerusalem cemented a friendship that only ended with Szold's death in 1945 ('Our living legend: a woman of vision' 1964, p. 7). Andgel (1998) notes: 'The year 1925 was a highlight in her [Dr Fanny's] life as she strengthened her ideas and personal ties on the international scene' (p. 210).

When Dr Fanny and Szold first met, they were acknowledged founders of women's organisations. In Australia, Dr Fanny formalised the Council of Jewish Women of New South Wales on 19 July 1923, at the third of a series of preliminary meetings held to discuss the proposed organisation. She dedicated the Council to 'Service to our religion, to our people and to the country in which we live' (cited in Newton 2000, p. 6). Eleven years earlier, Szold had established Hadassah, the American Women's Zionist Organization, which contributed to pioneering and medical services in Palestine. When she met Dr Fanny, she was serving a second term as Hadassah's National President (from 1923 to 1926).

Both women broke the mould of the Jewish woman's traditional role and challenged their society's conservative expectations of Jewish women. Both were passionate Zionists, who believed in the viability of a national Jewish home in Palestine. In the 1930s and 1940s, Szold submitted to British Mandatory officials her requests for additional entry permits for Jewish migrants to Palestine. Dr Fanny wrote to and spoke with Australian ministers in the hope of securing entry permits for those wishing to come to Australia. In concert with Australian

women's organisations, she also made representations to leaders abroad to open the gates of Palestine to Jews fleeing Nazi persecution (see Chapter 6).

Szold's humanitarian agenda mirrored the concerns that engaged Dr Fanny throughout her life. According to Kahanoff (1960), Szold focused on social welfare measures; 'in the fields of health, social work and education, she gave expression to her abiding interest in children, in those deprived of a home or of physical and mental health, in those in need of a helping hand' (pp. 7-8). Before Szold settled in Jerusalem in 1921, she confided to a friend: '[A]t the bottom of my heart I have always held that I should have had children, many children' (Bentwich 1944, p. 45). Neither Szold nor Dr Fanny married, yet their professions focused substantially on children.

Dr Fanny attended the 14th Zionist Congress, from 18 to 31 August 1925 in Vienna, where she renewed her connection with Szold. In an article Dr Fanny wrote on her return to Australia, she commented:

The outstanding woman was Miss Henrietta Szold of New York, a Vice-President of the Zionist organisation [sic], President and founder of the American Women's Zionist Organisation, the Hadassah. She was the only one of her sex who had a seat on the platform—[and] is a woman of tremendous achievements, personality, influence, and intellect. (Reading 1925, p. 3)

Szold was not a Vice-President on the Executive of the World Zionist Organisation (WZO) in 1925 and it is likely that the reporter who wrote the story made this error, which has misled writers in the past to make that assumption. Two years later, however, in 1927, she was appointed WZO's Education Director in Palestine. It is probable that owing to her widely respected position as founder and President of Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organisation of America, she was given a seat on the platform, alongside the WZO Executive at the 1925 Zionist Congress in Vienna. Dr Fanny's admiration for Szold endured through the decades. Their liaison strengthened during the Second World War, when the rescue of Jewish children in Nazi Europe was one of Dr Fanny's pre-eminent concerns. In 1945—two years before the defamatory allegations about Youth Aliyah were published by National Press in *Smith's Weekly*—Dr Fanny stated:

The National Council of Jewish Women whole-heartedly endorses the 1945 Youth Aliyah Appeal and pledges its utmost support. No greater privilege or Mitzvah [good deed] could any Jew or Jewess have than the rescue and future rehabilitation of our

orphaned children in Europe. This has an overwhelming claim to our sympathy and support on humanitarian and Zionist grounds alike, and is the proper solution for the thousands and thousands of homeless children wanting a 'home'. The name of Henrietta Szold should be for ever immortalised for her vision and practical work in saving 13,000 children from Nazi brutality and absorbing them in the productive life of the Yishuv. Therefore, it is our solemn privilege in gratitude for the security of our own children, to see that the means are forthcoming through this 1945 Campaign, to give sanctuary and new life for the wandering children of Europe. ('Youth Aliyah Campaign: Appeal opens next Tuesday night' 1945, p. 1)

Dr Fanny's first meeting with Szold was a seminal event in her life that fuelled her dedication to Youth Aliyah. When Szold died, Dr Fanny spoke at a memorial meeting, on 14 March 1945 in Sydney, acknowledging the impact that first meeting had on her own life and work:

Dr. Fanny Reading, President of the National Council of Jewish Women, told of her meeting with Miss Szold in 1925 in New York and the insight she was able to gain then into the life and character of this great woman and of the inspiration the meeting gave to her. ('Children and Youth Aliyah: Henrietta Szold Memorial Meeting' 1945, p. 2)

Zionist Congress in 1925 in Vienna

As Dr Fanny's defamation action in 1949 in Sydney revealed, she was a Zionist dedicated to the return of the Jewish people to the biblical land of their ancestors after an exile of 2000 years. It was her attendance at the 14th Zionist Congress, in 1925 in Vienna, that strengthened her commitment to Zionism. Australian Zionists had appointed her as their representative, but accreditation failed to come through in time, so she obtained a press pass and sat with the press corps on the platform, a position from which she obtained a view of speakers and proceedings.

The 14th Zionist Congress was an island of hope in a sea of antisemitism that raged through Vienna before and during the Congress. Dr Fanny witnessed these antisemitic demonstrations. In Australia, newspapers throughout the country covered the riots with headlines focusing on the violence. On 19 August 1925, for example, *The Argus* in Melbourne stated that 6,000 police 'mustered for the occasion' (*Argus* 1925, p. 19). *The Daily Examiner* in Grafton in New South Wales headlined their story, 'Zionist Congress serious riots in Vienna August 18' (*Serious riots in Vienna* 1925, p. 5). *The Advertiser* in Adelaide, in its edition of 19 August 1925, headlined its story, 'Fight in Vienna'. On 20 August 1925 in Hobart, *The Mercury* reported that police were

injured and 106 demonstrators arrested for rioting: 'Many of the men arrested were found to be armed with revolvers, knives, and other weapons' (*Mercury* 1925, p. 7). It is likely that articles such as these alarmed Dr Fanny's family, friends and followers, who knew she had travelled from Venice to Vienna for the Congress (*The Advertiser* 1925, p. 14). International coverage included an article in the *New York Times* on 19 August 1925, stating that the majority of those arrested were intellectuals and State officials ('Antisemitic and anti-government demonstrations against holding of 14th international zionist congress in Vienna' 1925).

Dr Fanny recorded her observations of Congress. She noticed detectives and police guarding all entrances, and police cordons surrounding streets leading to the Congress venue. She wrote that the Zionist flag, together with the Austrian flag, 'flew boldly in front of the hall in defiance of all political demonstrations' (Reading 1925, p. 3). She wrote that when she entered the hall on the first day, 'it seemed to me as if our people had joined together in solemn celebration of some holy festival of our liturgy so imbued were they with the gravity of the situation and of the tremendous task ahead' (p. 3). She noted: 'The crucial moment was the entrance of the President Dr Chaim Weizmann and Mr Nahum Sokolov [sic] to the two seats of honour. A tremendous ovation greeted them, the outburst lasting ten minutes and was joined by all present' (p. 3).

Chaim Weizmann outlines principles of Zionism

Weizmann stated in his opening address: 'Many leading personalities of the political world who, three years ago, treated our work in Palestine as a romantic dream, now reckon with it as a real fact' ('Chaim Weizmann: A tribute on his seventieth birthday' 1945, p. 183). In evaluating relations between Jews and Arabs—a theme that would be pursued by the barrister for the defendant in Dr Fanny's defamation action in Sydney's Supreme Court in 1949—Weizmann emphasised:

Two things are necessary in order to establish normal relations between the two peoples: our Arab neighbours must be convinced that we are in earnest about the establishment of our Home, that no boat shall arrive in Palestine without putting down immigrants. On the other hand, they must be equally convinced that the spirit in which we build our Home is that of freedom, tolerance and fraternity towards all elements of the population in Palestine. (p. 185)

Weizmann stated that the fundamental principles of Zionist work in Palestine were national soil, national work, national language and culture. He concluded, '[I]t is our duty to make the best use of our energy for the work of reconstruction' (p. 185). Dr Fanny was impressed by his facility with languages, as he spoke perfect English, German and Hebrew. She commented in her article, published in 1926 on her return to Sydney, that his Hebrew 'became a language so eloquent, emphatic, expressive, so full of charm and poetry'. She marvelled at how he showed

the whole world through the heroism of devoted labour that the rebuilding of Palestine is an accomplished fact and a progressive process. Through this process will come the revival and renewal of the Jewish Nation—the spirit of Israel will live again. He concluded with the desire that all present work with unabated enthusiasm for the salvation of Israel and the Homeland. He ended with the blessing of peace for all.

(Reading 1925, p. 3)

Delegates applauded Weizmann's efforts to create a Hebrew University on Mount Scopus in Jerusalem, which had opened earlier that year. It was tangible evidence of a Zionist program in action. Lord Arthur Balfour, who attended the opening of the University, said:

[T]his occasion marks a great epoch in the history of a people who have made this little land of Palestine a seed-ground of great religion, and whose intellectual and moral destiny is again, from a national point of view, reviving. ('Speeches on Zionism by the Right Hon. The Earl of Balfour' 1928, p. 75).

Weizmann hoped the University would foster a cultural and scientific renaissance in the Middle East: 'Our University would not be true to itself or to Jewish traditions if it were not a house of study for all peoples and more especially for all the peoples of Palestine' ('Chaim Weizmann: A tribute on his seventieth birthday' 1945, p. 89).

Revisionist leader Ze'ev Jabotinsky

On the third day of Congress, Dr Fanny heard Ze'ev (Vladimir) Jabotinsky, founder of the Revisionist Movement, to whom the barrister Shand would refer in the Sydney defamation trial 24 years later. Only four years younger than Dr Fanny, he was born in Odessa, where he organised a Jewish self-defence corps to counter the pogroms. He was a political Zionist, who advocated for a 'Herzlian political struggle for a state' (Troy 2018).

This was not Jabotinsky's first congress but his first as leader of the new Union of Zionist Revisionists, and he called for an activist policy for the Zionist movement, writing earlier that same year in *Rasswyet*, the Russian-language publication he edited from Paris: 'It is time to proclaim loud and clear that the aim of Zionism is the establishment of a Jewish State' (cited in Mehlman 2010, p. 7). Mehlman states in his pamphlet on Jabotinsky:

To appreciate the dimensions of this 'heresy,' it must be borne in mind that even Jabotinsky's closest collaborators in 1925, men of the stature of Meir Grossman, editor of the *London Jewish Tribune* [sic, *Di Tribune*], shrank from the term 'Jewish State.' It was treated like a high explosive that might go off at the slightest jolt, gutting the Zionist relationship with the British Mandatory power in Palestine, inciting the Arabs to riot and murder and as one contemporary Revisionist put it, 'frightening away even our friends'. (pp. 7-8)

Jabotinsky stated unequivocally:

The aim of Zionism is the gradual transformation of Palestine (Trans Jordan included) into a Jewish Commonwealth, that is into a self-governing Commonwealth under the auspices of an established Jewish majority. Any other interpretation of Zionism, especially the White Paper of 1922, must be considered invalid. (cited in Schechtman 1961, p. 38)

Jabotinsky had served on the Zionist Executive in 1921 but had clashed ideologically with Weizmann, as their individual methodologies for fulfilling the Zionist aim of a Jewish homeland differed radically:

Jabotinsky believed in rapid mass immigration to Palestine and in mobilizing Jewish military and police units. Weizmann called for careful colonization and trusted the British. Within two years Jabotinsky resigned, charging that his colleagues' policies would result in the loss of Palestine. (Troy 2018, p. 68)

In 1923, Jabotinsky published his article 'On the Iron Wall', which was, effectively, his political manifesto. It outlined his thoughts on the Arab question in Palestine. It highlighted, '[his] belief that force and military power should be at the core of the Zionist movement's policies, and it revealed his aversion to any sort of ideological or political compromise' (Sorkin 2011, p. 257). Jabotinsky stated that Zionism was 'moral and just' and predicted that there would always be two nations in Palestine—Jews and Arabs—with the Jews in the majority. He wrote in *The Iron Wall*:

We will never attempt to expel or oppress the Arabs ... it is absolutely another matter if it will be possible to achieve our peaceful aims through peaceful means. This depends, not on our relationship with the Arabs, but exclusively on the Arabs' relationship to Zionism. (cited in Troy 2018, p. 73)

Jabotinsky concluded: 'A living people yields in such enormous, fatal issues only when no single loophole is visible in the iron wall. It is only then that the radical groups ... lose their charm and influence passes over to moderate groups' (cited in Sorkin 2011, p. 263).

According to Jabotinsky's close associate Joseph Schechtman, Jabotinsky was reluctant to go to the 1925 Zionist Congress, as it meant rejoining the Zionist Organization. By doing so, he thought it would constrain his independence: 'Should our Union develop well, I would be able to do things which a member of the Zionist Organization ... has no right to do (cited in Schechtman 1961, p. 39).

Thus, Jabotinsky came to the Congress in 1925 not only with a history of conflict between himself and Weizmann but also with an increasingly hard and unyielding ideological position. At Congress, they again engaged in a bitterly fought contest of ideas, with Jabotinsky demanding a more activist policy for the Zionist movement. In particular, he was opposed to Weizmann's negotiations with wealthy and influential non-Zionists to secure their participation in the Jewish Agency in order to fund the nascent building industry in Palestine.

To him it was tantamount to giving up the sovereignty of the democratically elected Zionist Congress, making its decision in all matters of Zionist policy and work dependent on the approval of a self-appointed group of non-Zionist financial potentates. He deemed it the elementary duty of every Zionist patriot not to let such a scheme pass. (Schechtman 1961, p. 39)

Although it was with some reluctance that Jabotinsky attended the Zionist Congress, he knew it was the only forum where he could effectively combat the scheme. His speech to delegates caused a stir, which Dr Fanny noted. Firstly, he defined and developed his program; then he attacked. The President of the Zionist Organization of America, Louis Lipsky, noted: 'When he ... launched into a grand criticism of Zionist policy—satiric, courteous, denunciatory—he was like the Angry Conscience of the movement. He poured acid on open wounds. He reminded us of the goal and made us ashamed of the results' (p. 41). The ovation Jabotinsky received demonstrated the dissatisfaction of Congress with England, 'perhaps with the Weizmann policies which lately brought about some appreciable setbacks' (p. 41). Jabotinsky challenged

Weizmann directly: 'If not my program, what have you to offer?' (p. 41). Jabotinsky urged the Zionist Executive and Congress to prepare world public opinion:

[T]he world can be convinced if we demand logical things from it.... [W]e need demonstrations, we need what we call a political offensive in order to instill our demands, until they are accepted.... Either it is possible to convince the world to accept the truth, or it is not. If not, then we are finished, because we want something impossible. But if it is possible, then let's make the effort to convince it. (cited in Natanyahu 2012, p. 217)

This generated a heated response from Weizmann, to whom it seemed incomprehensible that Jabotinsky was insisting on a confrontation between the Zionist movement and the British Government:

The starting point of our diplomatic work in the future must be...maintaining our friendly relations with the Mandatory authority and with its emissaries in Palestine. This is a truth that should not be refuted.... We must not allow any part of the [Zionist] Organization, or any individual Zionist, to place obstacles in our way by means of irresponsible demonstrations in Jerusalem, in London, or anywhere else. (p. 217)

The acrimony between them came to a head at the 13th meeting of Congress when chairman Leo Motzkin called on Jabotinsky, on behalf of the Revisionist Union, to state their attitude toward the new Zionist Executive:

The statement read by Jabotinsky ... sharply criticized the political passivity of the Zionist Executive and its lack of program in the economic field coupled with the neglect of the security of Palestinian Jewry; it maintained that the Executive's tactics were 'gravely endangering the sovereignty of the Zionist Organization'. Therefore, the Revisionist delegates 'will vote against the motion of confidence for the Executive.' (Schechtman 1961, p. 43)

Dr Fanny was impressed with Jabotinsky's reputation as an orator and soldier, and noted: [He] outspokenly and freely condemned the administration of the Zionist organisation'; and when Weizmann replied to these charges, 'He was listened to by an enraptured audience who didn't miss a word—every argument was met in so clever and scientific a manner' (Reading 1925, p. 3).

When Dr Fanny witnessed their verbal duelling, it was clear these were not mere oratorical flourishes by accomplished masters of rhetoric and eloquence, which both undoubtedly were, but a battle for the minds and hearts of the Zionist delegates. Jabotinsky was not without his critics, who were vocal in response to his address. Dr Shmaryahu Levin, whom Dr Fanny had already met in the United States, accused him of sending 'soldiers to Palestine before we have Jews there' (Schechtman 1961, p. 42). Weizmann stated that Jabotinsky's demand for a Jewish Legion was 'not only useless but even harmful' at the present time; 'The key to the situation is to be found on a different level: we have to open up the Near East to Jewish initiative, in genuine friendship and cooperation with the Arabs' (p. 43).

The relationship between Jabotinsky and Weizmann had not always been this fractious and unyielding. There had been earlier periods of cooperation. In 1916, with the help of Weizmann and the consent of the British Government, Jabotinsky had realised his aim of creating an official Jewish fighting force—the Jewish Legion under the command of British Colonel John H. Patterson, comprising three battalions of British, American, Canadian and Palestinian Jews—the first in 1300 years. Known as the Judeans, they saw active service. The first of these battalions, the 38th Fusiliers, fought with General Edmund Allenby in the 1918 Palestinian campaign, thus participating in the liberation of Palestine from Turkish forces. Benzion Netanyahu, Jabotinsky's executive assistant, stated that the Jewish Legion was a great achievement because it was established by Jabotinsky 'as a private person without any support from the Jewish leadership' (Netanyahu 2012, p. 192). In 1919, those still serving in the battalions were given a regimental cap badge depicting a Menorah (a seven-branched candelabrum) engraved with the word Kadima (forward and/or eastward). The battalions—the 38th, 39th and 40th—were disbanded between 1919 and 1921. In 1920, during the Arab riots in Palestine, Jabotinsky organised a self-defence corps in Jerusalem.

Four months after the conclusion of the 14th Zionist Congress in August 1925, with Jabotinsky's words and presence still fresh on her mind, Dr Fanny and her mother attended a special synagogue service at Jerusalem's oldest synagogue. In a letter to family in Australia, she described the unique ceremony that took place there on the 6th day of Chanukah (17 December 1925), a ceremony that recalled a signal triumph of Jabotinsky's militarism:

It was the occasion of depositing the colors [sic] of the 40th Palestine Battalion Royal Fusiliers.... It was brought by a special messenger from London and is given a home in this shool [sic]. Police band soldiers and servicemen met the flag at the station, then marched through the streets with music and singing, through the old city to the

school. Lord Plumer, consuls and high officials attended and the ceremony was solemnly conducted, Rabbi Kook delivering a fine address in Hebrew. (Reading, F. Family letters, 1925)

When Dr Fanny and her mother heard Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, the first Chief Rabbi of British Mandatory Palestine, deliver that 'fine address', he was already 60 years of age and a revered figure, with a reputation for being open to new ideas, and for supporting Zionism despite the secularism of many of its leaders. There were strong connections between Rabbi Kook and Jabotinsky, which made it singularly appropriate that he delivered the sermon at the service Dr Fanny attended. In 1920, Jabotinsky and selected members of the Jewish Legion had defended the Jewish population of Jerusalem against Arab attacks and, shortly thereafter, the British Mandatory Authority imprisoned them in Acre, where they commenced a life-threatening hunger strike. It was Rabbi Kook who prevailed on Jabotinsky and his followers to end their hunger strike. 'Stay strong dear brothers and wait for salvation to come,' he wrote (Melamed 2019, online).

It is likely that Dr Fanny's views on Rabbi Kook were somewhat conflicted. As a feminist with progressive ideas, she would have opposed his view, expressed in the 1920s, that women should not be given the vote. Despite his conservative views on women's suffrage, Dr Fanny respected his contribution as the father of religious Zionism and admired his moral stature as an orthodox mystic. He held advanced political views and, while in London, participated in behind-the-scenes activities leading to the Balfour Declaration. Only two months prior to Herzl's death on 3 July 1904, when Rabbi Kook arrived in Jaffa, he scandalised many rabbis by eulogising Herzl as 'the suffering harbinger of the Davidic redeemer' (Schoffman 2018, p. 47).

Jabotinsky revived his quest for a Jewish army during the Second World War, hoping to reinstate the Legion. He noted that when war broke out he had hoped that the Jewish people would be recognised and treated as one of the allied peoples, and he offered Jewish troops and other important forms of collaboration. All that was rejected, he said; the Jewish ally was not wanted and his problems were rigorously excluded from the list of war aims.

'If you will it, it is no dream'—Herzl

The late Dr Theodor Herzl's legacy still had power to bring delegates together to fulfil a common aim, as he had attempted to do in his lifetime, of uniting 'in the ranks of the Zionist Organisation all forces in Jewry without any regard to their religious, social and other differences' (Rabinowicz 1950, p. 24). With Herzl's portrait above the delegates' heads, his

‘presence’ was inescapable at the Congress, as was his mantra: ‘If you will it, it is no dream.’ Dr Fanny would have known of his attempt to rescue Russian Jewry, after the brutal 1903 Kishinev pogrom, when he requested assistance from the Russian Government to facilitate the exodus of Russian Jews to Palestine. When he convened the first Zionist Congress, held 29–31 August 1897 in Basle, Switzerland,

the delegates adopted the Basle Programme, the programme of the Zionist movement, and declared, ‘Zionism seeks to establish a home for the Jewish people in Palestine secured under public law.’ At the Congress the World Zionist Organisation was established as the political arm of the Jewish people, and Herzl was elected its first president (Jewish Virtual Library(a) 2018, online).

Retrospectively, Weizmann accused Herzl of emphasising political rather than practical Zionism: ‘For them it was always political Zionism first and practical work nowhere’ (Rabinowicz 1950, p. 23), and this political-versus-practical controversy would echo in the court during Dr Fanny’s defamation case in 1949 in Sydney. However, Herzl and his colleagues were aware of the necessity for practical work as demonstrated by Article iii of the Basle Programme, which recommended, ‘the organisation and binding together of the whole of Jewry by means of appropriate institutions, local and international, in accordance with the laws of each country’ (p. 30). It was Herzl who founded the Jewish National Fund (JNF) in 1901 for the purpose of acquiring land in Palestine. Although Herzl died in 1904 aged 44, he left an enduring manifesto in his writings.

Dr Fanny, who was 40 at the time she attended 14th Zionist Congress in August 1925, seized the opportunity to meet delegates from all over the world, among whom were a number of well-educated, politically influential German delegates:

German Zionism was always the cultural and political expression of a tiny minority.... Largely estranged from Jewish tradition and deeply sceptical about a Jewish future in Germany, Zionism was a means for them to achieve Jewish self-respect and foster ties to their people. (Berkowitz 2004, p. 195)

Delegates expressed divergent views, from the secular to the religious, all cogently argued. Exposed to this range of opinions, Dr Fanny wrote:

At this conference criticisms were freely made on various important matters and appeared wholly sound—then in Dr Weizmann’s reply to these, he answered each critic sanely, clearly, and most satisfactorily, that one wondered who then could be

right.... All the speakers had put forth sound arguments for their respective parties.

(Reading 1925, p. 3)

Dr Fanny immersed herself in Congress proceedings and broadened her understanding of the Zionist movement and its personalities. She renewed her friendship with Pevsner, Australia's official representative, who two years earlier in Sydney had encouraged Dr Fanny to start an organisation for Jewish women. Together in Vienna, they attended meetings of separate Commissions. Dr Fanny was impressed by the brilliance of Congress participants, who in their urgency to complete two years' work in 10 days ignored meals and sleep, walking back to their hotels in the early hours of the morning, as she did.

The Congress was punctuated by historic moments that electrified Dr Fanny, who documented the voting process that led to Weizmann's resignation as President:

The vote of confidence was the most dramatic thrill of all.... The voting resulted in 136 for and 17 against. Considering the number of delegates was more than 300, this spoke tragedy—a large number would not vote against Dr Weizmann and his Executive, and [yet] would not cast a vote of confidence in his leadership and policy. Then Dr Weizmann very pale ascended the speaker's place, said he had observed the vote and understood its significance. (p. 3)

This event was widely reported in Australian papers, such as the *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, which stated: 'A telegram from Vienna reports that ... 156 Socialists abstained from voting, and therefore Dr. Weizmann resigned the presidency' (*Herald* 1925, p. 5). On the second last night of Congress, a vote of confidence was taken again, resulting in 217 for and 15 against, which was greeted by a storm of cheers. 'I trudged home to our hotel at 2 am,' Dr Fanny wrote. But that late hour paled beside the session of the final night. With her knowledge of Yiddish, the '*mamaloshen*' that was her 'mother tongue' and that of the Eastern European Jewish communities, she praised the farewell address given in Yiddish by Congress Chairman, Leo Motzkin, whose speech was 'full of humour, chastising the various factions for their petulance and transgressions of law and order. He hoped that the future would be one of unceasing prosperity for Eretz Yisroel.' Then came Nahum Sokolov's address which lasted almost an hour: 'We followed every word he uttered, priceless pearls, and left enthused and full of admiration for the man and the cause.' Dr Fanny stayed throughout the night and only left at 6 am the next day, 'somewhat weary but still appreciative of the spirit and sincerity of

the masses of our people who had come from the four corners of the earth to forward this grand project' (Reading 1925, p. 3).

During the 10 days of Congress, Dr Fanny was concerned for the safety of the Jewish community in Vienna once the police force withdrew. She hoped common sense would prevail. She derived comfort from an incident she witnessed:

About the end of the first week after a lengthy evening meeting, scores of delegates and friends assembled in a large café nearby and enjoyed lovely Viennese coffee to well-known Jewish strains by the café orchestra which happened to be under Jewish leadership. On their playing the *Hatikvah* [the unofficial national anthem of the Jewish people] at which all of us stood, the non-Jewish habitués made no visible comment, showing that the general Viennese public were not hostile to the Congress being held there. (p. 3).

Dr Fanny left Vienna conscious of responsibilities to be faced 'with heart and soul'. Reflecting on her experiences, she recalled her impressions of the delegates: '[T]he wildly enthusiastic, the ordinary curious, the intellectual (both men and women), the extremely orthodox, the idealistic, the politic, the socialist, the materialistic, the scientific—but all united by one common cause of kinship' (p. 3). Of the American delegation, she mentioned several delegates whom she had met previously in New York, including Judge Bernard Rosenblatt, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, Rabbi A. Hillel Silver, the poet and Hebraist Re'uven Brainin, and Schmarya Levin, a writer living in Palestine.

While Congress was a hotbed of dissent, delegates were determined to translate theory into reality. Dr Fanny stated: '[T]here were great varieties and shades of opinions, and conflicts between parties, but in the end one saw that above all this was the big ideal, the unity of the cause pervaded the factions' (p. 3). She returned to Australia with faith in the future of a Jewish National Home:

The Fourteenth Congress was to my mind a most important milestone in the history of the Jews of the Diaspora.... We have now before us the transit of the ideal to the practical, a dream becomes a reality, in which we Jews must shoulder the burden to carry out this reality. Now we have to face facts, complications and difficulties—the rebirth of a nation brings with it social, economic and national problems which must be adjusted. (p. 3)

Dr Fanny's participation in the 1925 Congress ensured that Zionism became a foundational value of the Council of Jewish Women's (CJW) agenda (as the organisation was called in 1925). With the years, her knowledge of Zionism deepened and she acquired a nuanced understanding and knowledge of the ideological, political and pragmatic Zionist issues that would be crucial to her role as plaintiff in the 1949 court case. As National President of NCJW, she was well placed to interact with Zionist leaders in Australia and those visiting from abroad, thereby gaining a better grasp than afforded to others of the impact of political and historic events on the Zionist enterprise. The views she expressed in 1925 when exposed for the first time to the ideological platforms of Weizmann, Jabotinsky and Sokolow, all of whom she found equally appealing, were light years away from the insightful, analytical and measured responses on Jewish and Zionist history she gave during the Trial in 1949. Whereas in 1925 she had vacillated in equal admiration between Weizmann and Jabotinsky, in the courtroom she displayed a political maturity and decisiveness that enabled her to be categoric and clear in her exposition of events and appraisal of Zionist leaders. Seminal historical events, such as the rise of Nazism and the industrialised genocide of the Jews had compelled her to recalibrate her position and strategies. In 1949, she was at a diametrically different stage in her life to that of the younger Dr Fanny, who 24 years earlier was exposed for the first time to the charismatic Zionist leaders of the day and their competing ideologies. As the world changed so radically around her, so did she; and the tragic events of the intervening decades accelerated her process of political maturation. The woman who entered the courtroom in 1949 was composed, calm and in possession of knowledge that would enable her to respond effectively to the interrogation to which she was subjected by one of the most brutal barristers of the day, Jack Shand KC.

The trial: Dr Reading v National Press Pty Ltd

By 1949, Dr Fanny was a prominent public figure nationally. For the past 20 years (1929-1949), she had served as National President of her organisation, the NCJW, a body esteemed for philanthropy and social welfare programs at home and abroad. The eyes of the nation were on these courtroom proceedings, as widespread media coverage would prove. The trial in the Supreme Court of New South Wales (NSW) in Sydney's central business district, before Justice Herron and a jury of four, started on Tuesday 26 April 1949. Dr Fanny's barrister, Jack Evelyn Cassidy KC, questioned her throughout the morning of the first day, crafting a portrait of a selfless and caring doctor, a humanitarian well known in the Jewish and gentile communities

throughout Australia. He established her national reputation and prestige as President of NCJW:

Cassidy: And in capacity as President of the NCJW, did you meet Committees and Presidents and Vice-Presidents of other charitable organizations from time to time?

Dr Fanny: Yes.

Cassidy: And did you become well known as the President over that long period of years?

Dr Fanny: Yes. We [NCJW] were the representative of the Jewish Women of Australia, and I, as National President of the whole of Australia, must be known (Herron 1949c, pp. 2-3)

Cassidy documented her service and tenure as honorary physician for 5 years at St George Hospital, where she raised £1,000 for an ambulance in the Illawarra District; also spending 5 years at the NSW Community Hospital and the same period of time at the Rachel Forster Hospital, her services rendered in an honorary capacity. He traced her fundraising for the Jewish and general communities, her commitment to social welfare projects at home and abroad, as well as community initiatives she launched through NCJW. He focused on her service to the nation during the war years, noting the projects she initiated in Australia from 1939 to 1945:

Cassidy: What class of work has it [NCJW] been engaged in?

Dr Fanny: Every class of work: humanitarian, philanthropic, social welfare, and for our people wherever they are—Jewish and non-Jewish work.

Cassidy: You might tell me what are some of the works you have done, say, within recent years: say, during the war?

Dr Fanny: Well, we played our part and I was one of the principals, in the war efforts.... We enlisted the women straight away at the outbreak of war in September, 1939, and from that time until the finish of the war we did all we could to help the war effort in every way possible: Soldiers' Comfort Fund, Red Cross, and in other fields they helped—Button Days, etc. Before the war we did philanthropic work. We assisted all the hospitals, practically, in the city with large sums of money. We visited the hospitals. We did a very wide Australian-wide work, making migrants Australian

citizens and we were commended by high officials from the Government for that, and I was instrumental in doing that work with our organisation. (Herron 1949c, pp. 2-3)

As President of NCJW, she and her volunteers raised £300,000 for the Commonwealth War Loan; members of her Council made a quarter-million garments for the Lord Mayor's Appeal, which were distributed to the needy during those years; they financed three mobile canteens; and for five-and-a-half years, Council volunteers ran the Martin Place Kiosk, providing meals and refreshments. When Cassidy asked her what other class of work she did, she replied:

In this city I think we were very well known for that kiosk [for] which the Municipal Council of Sydney gave us the land right at the top of Martin Place. We carried on there with three hundred volunteer workers a month, and we raised £11,500 for the Australian Soldiers' Comforts Fund and the Lord Mayor's Comforts Fund. We carried that on for five and a half years. We gave mobile canteens, one in the city of Sydney, which you see running around the city, one for the bombed areas of London, and one for Palestine.

I was on all these committees, the Voluntary Women's Organisations which enlisted the women of N.S.W. to give voluntary service, and I was on the Lord Mayor's Comforts Fund Committee. I was on practically every war committee. (p. 3)

Cassidy also focused on Dr Fanny's position as Vice-President of Youth Aliyah in Australia. With her participation in their fundraising in 1939, her involvement had deepened. This fundraising grew exponentially from 1943 onwards, when a special committee was formed and Youth Aliyah was registered under the Charitable Collections Act. Cassidy's questions revealed her commitment to saving Jewish children threatened with murder:

Dr Fanny: We were raising funds to rescue the children from Nazi Germany, and other satellite countries—Nazi satellite countries—and bringing them to safety in Palestine where they could live a normal life. These children were hunted and driven to concentration camps, and we were endeavouring to get them out before Hitler got them. That started in 1933 and went on.

Cassidy: And by 1938 and 1939 what had become the position in Germany as regards getting children out of there? Do you know?

Dr Fanny: It became more difficult, but still funds were needed to help these children when we got them away. (p. 4)

Youth Aliyah meeting in Sydney

Cassidy focused on the Youth Aliyah biennial fundraising event held in Sydney on 6 May 1947, at which Major Michael Comay was the principal speaker and which Dr Fanny attended in her capacity as Senior Vice-President of Youth Aliyah in Australia. At that time, Comay was the official envoy of the Jewish Agency for Palestine and the executive of the World Zionist Organisation; and he was sent to meet the Prime Minister of New Zealand, Peter Fraser, and the Prime Minister of Australia, Ben Chifley (Freilich 1967, p. 169). As a distinguished visitor, he was asked to address the Youth Aliyah fundraising meeting in Sydney, deputising for the speaker Ilse Radday of Haifa, who was delayed. Radday's arrival almost 5 weeks later in Sydney was reported in the *Hebrew Standard* of 5 June 1947, which carried a news item of a NCJW reception on 14 June 1947 'to welcome Mrs Ilse Warburg-Radday, emissary for Youth Aliyah, who had just arrived from Palestine' ('Jewish women: Council Reception' 1947 p. 8). As Dr Fanny remarked, 'he [Comay] was just a stop-gap but he was not there to launch the appeal' (Herron 1949c, p. 8), which was launched that night by Ida Wynn of Melbourne, President of the Women's International Zionist Organisation in Australia. It was Comay's address that featured in the defamatory article published by *Smith's Weekly* on 31st May 1947.

In Dr Fanny's responses to Cassidy's questions, she emphasised that funds were raised '[b]y voluntary effort. Nobody is forced to give anything. It is just raised by appeals, functions, different kinds of entertainments, and voluntary contributions,' with the last general appeal taking place on 6 May 1947 and all funds transmitted directly to Youth Aliyah (p. 5). Dr Fanny recalled precise details relating to balance sheets for the past 3 years, from 1946 to 1948. She denied that anything was said at the meeting about Jews raising funds to fight the British, and stated that nobody suggested levies on Hebrews in Australia (p. 7). She added that there were still 54,000 Jewish children waiting in Europe [for immigration certificates to Palestine at that time].

Dr Fanny remained outwardly calm when Cassidy posed a question concerning the controversial phrase 'Zionist Commando Group' reported in the article in *Smith's Weekly*, which provoked a flurry of questions by Shand and an interjection by Judge Herron:

Cassidy: Did a Zionist Commando Group go into action to boost the appeal, that you know of?

Dr Fanny: There was no such group. It was just a figure of speech by the correspondent [of the *Hebrew Standard*] who wrote that report.

Shand: I did not catch that.

His Honor: She means the reporter.

Dr Fanny: The reporter.

Shand: But which reporter?

Dr Fanny: Her name is appended to the report in the *Hebrew Standard*, and she coined that phrase.

Shand: You do not mean the defendant? The reporter?

Dr Fanny: Did I remember the name of the reporter?

Shand: No, do you mean the reporter from the *Jewish Standard*—the *Hebrew Standard*?

Dr Fanny: *Hebrew Standard*, but this was given by a specific person, this report. Her name is appended to the report.

Cassidy: Was there any Zionist Commando Group that you know of?

Dr Fanny: No, she just meant an enthusiastic body of the committee were prepared to launch this movement.

Cassidy: Was that the committee of which you were [a member]?

Dr Fanny: Yes. I do not think I was a commando. (Herron 1949c, p. 8)

Dr Fanny's explicit answer defused any ideas that the phrase 'Zionist commando group' had sinister or militaristic connotations. It was therefore important that she clarified the reporter's use of these words as a figure of speech to describe 'an enthusiastic body of the committee'.

Zionist history, British legislation and Comay's talk

Standing in the witness box and interrogated by Cassidy, Dr Fanny revealed a detailed knowledge of the evolution of Zionism, its achievements and setbacks. This included the stringent immigration controls contained in the 1922 White Paper, which led to Winston Churchill's demand that the Jewish immigration quota to Palestine be relaxed. She had in-depth knowledge of the provisions of the 1939 White Paper, which limited immigration into Palestine, with tragic consequences for Jews trapped in Europe under Nazi domination.

Nonetheless, the British Government had co-operated with all Youth Aliyah's appeals. 'They promised us certificates for children to go to Palestine,' she said.

Dr Fanny stressed that Comay did not appeal for funds for Youth Aliyah and that he gave his personal view of the situation in Palestine. Asked by Cassidy to recall what Comay said at the fundraising event, she replied:

Well, he told us among other things, that the Jews in Palestine were carrying on their work in spite of the trouble there, and he compared them with the London people who had the same courage during the Blitz.... He also said that because of the British Administration so much was disastrous to our people.... I take it at present to mean in Europe. As we know, we had lost 6 million dead in Europe, and now there were about a million and a half people waiting to come to some place in the world, and the only gates that were open to them were Palestine's, and these were closed to them.... He also spoke of there being a clique in Whitehall who controlled the affairs of Palestine, but I did not agree with what he said there. I did not know of a clique, but I do know that members of the House of Commons and even Churchill, Winston Churchill, asked for a relaxation of the British Administration laws as far as immigration went. He also said—I remember this distinctly, that the British people ... probably did not understand the policy of the Administration in Palestine, and, if they did, things might have been better—the position of the British in Palestine might have been better.

I do remember that he said that the Jewish Agency and the people of Palestine were totally against the acts of terrorism that had taken place. (Herron 1949c, p. 10)

Towards the conclusion of Cassidy's questioning that first morning, he asked Dr Fanny about the Jewish community's response to news of 'terrorist' activities in Palestine and for her personal views on the matter:

Cassidy: Have you ever taken part in any anti-British movement in the whole of your career?

Dr Fanny: No.

Cassidy: And have you ever been associated, at all in the last war, of this war, with disloyalists?

Dr Fanny: No. (p. 11)

Cassidy focused on the public response to the articles in *Smith's Weekly* and asked whether people mentioned it to her. She replied that many people had seen the article and spoken to her in connection with it. Justice Herron intervened on a point of law:

I can imagine a case happening that some person, a candidate for Parliament, was being introduced at a meeting and somebody got up in the audience and used defamatory words and everybody walked out. You could prove that fact because it was immediate then and there with what was said, and you may also show it as action such as this, in my opinion, by evidence of persons, that have thought less of the plaintiff, or that they withdrew from her society, provided you can show that that was due to the reading of the article. But, to merely ask her whether or not, in general terms, a lot of people took less notice of her, or mentioned the article to her, is merely to make an allegation that you are quite capable of making from the floor of the Court, Mr Cassidy. In other words, this is a presumption that it does harm but that is no more than a general allegation of it. (p. 11)

Shand's harsh interrogations

Dr Fanny endured 'sleepless nights' and 'anguish' when subjected to harsh interrogations in court by Jack Shand KC, barrister for the defendant. There was also 'the angst of long consultations with the Committee and their legal advisers' (Ochert 1996, p. 332).

Shand bullied and intimidated Dr Fanny, strategies for which he was well known. She needed all her intellectual resources to withstand his aggression. Familiar with Zionist history, she responded with clarity and logic to his cross-examination conducted in the afternoon of the first day of the trial. He dealt in detail with a letter sent on 1 September 1947—three months after the publication of the article—by her solicitor to the editor of *Smith's Weekly*; and the editor's reply sent two days after that, on 3 September 1947, to her solicitor. He focused on the proceedings of the Youth Aliyah meeting on 6 May 1947 in Sydney, in particular, her response and that of the audience to Comay's address, hammering on details that taxed her concentration and mental acuity:

Shand: It is correct that his speech received great applause, did it not, at that meeting.

Dr Fanny: I cannot remember whether it received great applause.

Shand: Well, you yourself, I suppose, clapped, did you not?

Dr Fanny: I do not remember.

Shand: Well, you agreed with it, did you not?

Dr Fanny: I was interested to hear what he had to say, but I did not say I agreed with the speech.

Shand: Well, did you disagree with it?

Dr Fanny: In some parts.

Shand: What parts did you disagree with?

Dr Fanny: Well, about the clique he talked about at Whitehall. I know nothing about that.

Shand: The clique at Whitehall?

Dr Fanny: Yes.

Shand: You know nothing about it, but did you disagree with it?

Dr Fanny: Well, I listened, I could hear it.

Shand: You did not know anything about it, and you did not disagree, or agree, with that part?

Dr Fanny: I would not worry about it very much.

Shand: Is that the position—you either agreed or did not agree?

Dr Fanny: As far as I knew, I did not know anything about the clique.

Shand: I suppose you were not in a position to do either?

Dr Fanny: So I would not agree with that statement.

Shand: But you will not deny that you personally clapped his speech, would you?

Dr Fanny: I do not know what I did. I am generally busy at those appeal meetings.

Shand: But you were up on the platform?

Dr Fanny: There was no platform. It was a dinner.

Shand: In that part where the official party was?

Dr Fanny: I might have clapped out of courtesy to a visiting speaker. (Herron 1949c, pp. 14-15)

With Shand's structured cross-examination, he established and advanced his hypothesis and argument that the Jewish community in Palestine felt betrayed by the British, resented their anti-immigration policies in Palestine, and therefore used funds to support 'terrorist' activities against the British. He posed his questions within parameters that offered no tolerance at all for nuanced replies, constraining Dr Fanny to monosyllabic responses, as seen in the following exchange

Shand: Do you remember him [Comay] saying this? 'British policy in Palestine is a disastrous one, and the Jewish community there feels bitter about it.' This is correct, is it not?

Dr Fanny: Yes, but there was an interpretation that I could give you.

Shand. Never mind about the interpretation. (p. 15)

Shand questioned Dr Fanny at length on the substance of Comay's address, quoting from his speech delivered at the May meeting, covering a range of topics, including the Colonial Office's anxiety about immigration, which continued despite obstacles, discomfort, trans-shipment and re-internment: '[The Colonial office] had taken to pleading with European governments, with governments bordering the Mediterranean to cooperate in preventing and forbidding the movement of Jewish masses towards the coast' (p. 16).

Shand's attempts to elicit from Dr Fanny a condemnation of the British Mandatory government in Palestine were doubly barbed. Knowing how passionate she was about the fate of Jewish children in Europe, he aimed for an emotional and unguarded response to bolster his contention that the Jews supported sabotaging the British Administration in Palestine, as alleged in the *Smith's Weekly* article. Dr Fanny, however, responded in measured tones and with well-considered words, while giving due weight to her own conviction that the British had not lived up to their promise in the Balfour Declaration. She avoided Shand's trap in attempting to elicit from her a condemnation of the British. She responded by differentiating between the British generally and the particular British administration and Mandatory Authority in Palestine:

Shand: I want to ask you this—is it your view that the British through the years ... have they in your opinion spared no pains whatever to try and solve the problem that exists between the Arabs and Jews with regard to Palestine?

Dr Fanny: Well, I would not say they have spared no pains. They probably tried, but I say...

Shand: And in your opinion have done their very utmost?

Dr Fanny: I would not say they have done their very utmost, otherwise things would have probably been done in Palestine.

Shand: You would not think that?

Dr Fanny: No, I would think they could have done more.

Shand: We will deal with that presently?

Dr Fanny: Because I mean by their promise in the Balfour Declaration—I was in Palestine in 1925 and they had not fulfilled their promises then, and they did not after.

Shand: You put a good deal of the trouble down to that?

Dr Fanny: But that is the Administration in Palestine that I am criticizing.

Shand: Broken promises by the British?

Dr Fanny: By the British Administration and the Mandatory power (p. 18).

Shand covered a broad spectrum of Zionist history, questioning Dr Fanny on the Balfour Declaration, the 1922 White Paper, and the 1939 White Paper, the latter widely viewed by Zionists as a potent threat to, if not a negation of, the Balfour Declaration. Dr Fanny remained steadfast in her beliefs, reiterating her convictions concerning the Balfour Declaration, stating, 'I think we should have the country in face of all we have gone through, and Great Britain offered it to us in 1917' (p. 20). Later, she commented, '[The Balfour Declaration] said it would give them their national home. It said it would give them a national home in Palestine ... after the first war' (p. 21).

'I can still be a Jew and still be an Australian citizen'

Throughout Shand's cross-examination, Dr Fanny maintained her composure and stated unambiguously her opinions, despite his barrage of questions designed to confuse her. At

great length, Shand pursued the bogey of dual loyalties, relying for validation on the words of 90-year-old Sir Isaac Isaacs, former Governor General of Australia and Chief Justice of the Commonwealth, who alleged that Zionism fostered allegiances to two countries, Australia and the Jewish National Home, an accusation supported by an elite of assimilated and well-established Jews, such as himself in Australia and Sir Claude Montagu in England. Shand, quoting Isaacs, stated: 'To demand at the same time two homelands for the same person is as if a demand were for two religions or two wives,' to which Dr Fanny responded succinctly, 'I can still be a Jew and still be an Australian citizen' (Herron 1949c, p. 20). The exchange that followed alluded to the controversy that the conservative Sir Isaac unleashed in the Jewish community:

Shand: I only want your views?

Dr Fanny: My views? I said he was rather old when he wrote that. I think he was 90 when he wrote those views.

Shand: You think he was failing?

Dr Fanny: He had never visited Palestine, otherwise he would have known the state of affairs there.

Shand: And you had visited there for six weeks?

Dr Fanny: I was there, but I knew a great deal about it.

Shand: He was a very learned man?

Dr Fanny: I know he was, but I just want to say that he looked at it purely from a theoretical legal mind, as he had—a marvellous mind I will say—and we looked at it from the humanitarian point of view. There were so many million Jews murdered—as I said, six million—and we needed a home for them, and I said before that the country shut its doors. We only had the home, and that was Palestine, and you know the result of the Lake Success meeting of the U.N.O of November 1947, which gave us Palestine. So, I say, Sir Isaac Isaacs, had he lived to hear that, might have changed his views.

Shand It partitioned the country, did it not?

Dr Fanny: Partitioned it.

Shand: It gave you Palestine?

Dr Fanny: Well, gave us only Palestine?

Shand: It gave you part?

Dr Fanny: But we would like the whole. (p. 22)

Stone's rebuttal of Isaacs' views

In focusing on Isaacs' views, Shand referenced a controversy that provoked bitterness in the Jewish community at that time. Isaacs' opposition to Zionism had prompted a divisive debate. Professor Julius Stone, Challis Professor of Jurisprudence and International Law at the University of Sydney from 1942 to 1972, in his book *Stand Up and Be Counted!*, had written:

There have been two distinct objects of Sir Isaac's attacks.... One of these objects is the exercise by his fellow-Jews of their right as citizens to criticise, as unjust, unwise and, amidst the present sufferings of European Jewry even inhumane, the prohibition of immigration of Jews into Palestine under the Chamberlain White Paper of 1939.... The other is the propriety of Australian Jews participating in the Zionist movement. I am satisfied, with respect, that Sir Isaac is in grave error as to both. (Stone 1944, p. 5)

[T]he central and the desperately urgent issue is immigration, both from the viewpoint of Palestinian Jews, condemned by the White Paper of 1939 to permanent minority status, and from that of the survivors of Hitler's Europe, disinherited by that same White Paper. Whether they refer to a Jewish commonwealth or not, the gist of all Zionist proposals is immigration. They insist that immigration shall proceed on the objective tests of human needs in Europe, and the demonstrable welfare of all inhabitants of Palestine. They insist, in short, upon a dynamic test of economic absorptive capacity and the abolition of the 'political' tests applied by the 1939 White Paper. (p. 6).

Stone highlighted the contradiction between the refuge Australia offered Isaacs' parents when they fled antisemitic persecution and Isaacs' denial of that right to others suffering under Nazi tyranny:

For us to deny the right of European Jews to flee persecution as Sir Isaac's father and my own dear parents fled it, because he and I are more than content with our lot, is neither noble, nor patriotic, nor heroic. If they are justified in seeking a new home, then we have a duty to help them, and to see that their suffering hands do not beat in

vain on doors illegally and immorally locked against them. No Zionist proposes that Sir Isaac and I and other happy Jews should change our present allegiance. But we must not deny our persecuted brethren their solution to their problems, merely because we may not share those problems. (p. 16)

Does Sir Isaac regard Czechs or Poles who are citizens of the United States as bad Americans because they feel a special bond with their fellows in Europe and a duty to aid them in their struggle for liberty and justice? Or did he so regard Irish Americans or Irish Australians who felt up to a generation ago a special interest in the fate of the Irish people of Ireland? (p. 17)

Dr Fanny stands her ground

Despite being subjected to Shand's bombardment of historic facts, figures and theories, Dr Fanny never yielded ground on the facts she knew or compromised her stand ideologically. She responded now and then with a retort that betrayed her impatience with the questioning. She even echoed satirically his insistent phrase, 'is it not?':

Shand: We have not come to Lord Balfour yet, he was in 1917, was he not?

Dr Fanny: Yes. What dates are you talking about?

Shand: I am talking about a little earlier, about 1914/1915. You remember, or you read, did you not...

Dr Fanny: 35 years ago?

Shand: Yes? You can still read things?

Dr Fanny: But do I remember?

Shand: Do you remember having read?

Dr Fanny: I do not think I do.

Shand: Have you read the literature on the subject?

Dr Fanny: I have read a good bit of this literature.

Shand: You have read, have you not, that at the time of the first war the security of the Arabs in Palestine was promised by His Majesty's Government?

Dr Fanny: I date my knowledge from the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate given to Great Britain, is that before that?

Shand: We will come to the Balfour Declaration, if you like, that was in 1917, was it not?

Dr Fanny: Yes. In 1918 the Mandate was given, was it not?

Shand: Go slowly. Do not rush ahead. The effect of the Balfour Declaration was that the Jews in Palestine—it was promised that they could establish in Palestine a national home?

Dr Fanny: Yes.

Shand: There was no promise to give them the whole of Palestine. You understand that?

Dr Fanny: That was understood to be the whole of Palestine.

Shand: But they were not the words of the Declaration, were they?

Dr Fanny: I think you ought to have an expert to explain that to you. (Herron 1949c, p. 23)

In articulating her views, Dr Fanny denied any subordination of Arabs in a future Jewish national homeland, as that would contradict the tenets of Zionism as expounded by its leaders. She demonstrated a grasp of realpolitik of the time and revealed her knowledge of history, including familiarity with the Biltmore Program that called for unlimited immigration into Palestine, the Peel Report, the Woodhead Report and a number of other Commissions. She never faltered when responding to Shand's questions on Zionist history or his repeated attempts to trap her into condemning the British Mandatory administration in Palestine or sympathising with those engaged in sabotaging British interests. In an earlier exchange, she contended there had been, 'Great restraint, yes, on the part of the British and on the part of the Jews there' (p. 28). On several occasions in her testimony, she disavowed and deplored any acts of terror:

I deprecate the loss of life of any one individual, but in considering all this, there was great restraint in Palestine during the last few years ... it would be worse in India. It was worse in India. Look at the massacres there. Hell was let loose. (p. 28)

Dr Fanny maintained that the British in Palestine could have done much more to foster the emergence and consolidation of a Jewish homeland by relaxing the stringent immigration quota, especially that imposed in 1939 at a critical time for European Jewry. In words that showed her concern for Holocaust victims denied entry to Palestine, she stated: 'I remember that they restricted immigration to 1500 per month for five years, which was a terrible blow to me at that time' (p. 27).

While consistently demonstrating loyalty to the British Crown, she defended her right to criticise the Mandatory administration in Palestine for not doing more; and she was forthright in her criticism:

Shand: I suppose you do appreciate, or do you remember, that it was pointed out that if the British allowed unlimited immigration it would mean a rule of force, because the Arabs would fight?

Dr Fanny: Might I say something here?

Shand: Yes?

Dr Fanny: The same thing happened last year, or the year before. There was going to be a big uprising of Arabs if we were given the country. If there was a great uprising, the whole Moslem world would have come in. We were not afraid, and the British should not have been scared of an uprising of Arabs, if they had given us the right of unlimited immigration. History proves it. (p. 27)

In a later exchange with Shand, when asked whether she agreed that the British policy in Palestine had been a disastrous one, she replied: 'Disastrous to the Jews who are in Europe, disastrous to our people in Europe who could not come to Palestine.... We think the Administration could have relaxed its immigration laws. That was the basis of it all' (p. 32). Dr Fanny revealed an understanding of global interests in the Middle East, stating: 'The British Administration had interests with Arabs outside' (p. 33).

Whether due to the tension of the proceedings or the effort involved in concentrating on details, each of which could have legal implications, Dr Fanny's patience wore thin at times, as the following exchange with Shand demonstrates:

Shand: Do you know anything about the history of Palestine?

Dr Fanny: Yes, but I need not know all these details.

Shand: But you have read a copy [In July 1922, the League of Nations gave the Mandate for Palestine to Great Britain], have you not?

Dr Fanny: I cannot remember.

Shand: Have not you debated it? Have you not debated the Mandate with other leading Jews here?

Dr Fanny: There was no need to debate something which took place in 1922. We have more modern things to debate about the Jewish movement.

Shand: What about at the time?

Dr Fanny: I was not in debating classes at the time.

Shand. I was not asking you about debating classes?

Dr Fanny: I was not debating those problems in 1922, I was a Doctor of Medicine; doing Medicine. (pp. 24-25)

Dr Fanny refused to be browbeaten or to allow Shand to diminish her standing as a competent witness:

Shand: Perhaps you do not know very much about the history, do you?

Dr Fanny: Well, I know a good bit, but I might not remember every detail. (p. 26)

Dr Fanny's responses revealed her determination to stand up to Shand's badgering:

Shand: I suppose you appreciate that in 1942, during this war, things looked very bad, did they not?

Dr Fanny: In 1942, thousands of our Jews...

Shand: I am leaving Palestine now?

Dr Fanny: I thought you wanted to know about Palestine. (p. 28)

Shand returned repeatedly to the topic of immigration, suggesting that unlimited immigration of Jews into Palestine might have resulted in 'considerable loss of life'. Dr Fanny attempted to reply, 'I was there in 1925...', only to be cut off abruptly by Shand, who commanded her peremptorily to 'Just answer my question?' Displaying presence of mind, Dr Fanny continued calmly:

I want to tell you that if there is authority, yes, the Arabs would not have resorted to violence. I was in Palestine in 1925 when such an uprising could have happened. If stern measures were not taken, as it was taken then by Lord Plumer, the High Commissioner, the Arabs could not do anything, or very little. (p. 28)

Dr Fanny's ordeal in the witness box during her cross-examination by Shand prompted Justice Herron to intervene shortly after the above exchange: 'It would not be any injustice to you if you said you had a general or vague notion it was true, without knowing the details'; to which Dr Fanny replied simply, 'Yes' (p. 29).

Although Cassidy had warned Dr Fanny that Shand would not permit her to ask questions, he also advised her, 'If you do not know, say so' (p. 29). By all accounts, Dr Fanny projected an image of dignity and quiet reserve throughout the proceedings, but she was never passive or meek in the witness box. She showed no hesitation in asserting her right to clarification before answering and succeeded in conveying her ideological and practical commitment to saving as many surviving children as she could. It was apparent that the facts weighed heavily on her. When Shand asked her whether boys of all ages were eligible for entry through Youth Aliyah, she replied, 'No, from about eight years to sixteen, whatever children could be found,' adding a moment later, '...but there were not many children left of younger ages. Hitler had destroyed them all you know' (p. 31).

The issues of legal and illegal immigration

The subject of immigration, both legal and illegal, was a dominant and recurring theme of the trial, with Shand approaching it from diverse perspectives, homing in always on the diverging views on immigration policy held by the Jews and the British Mandatory Authority respectively:

Shand: I think you have already indicated...that you thought that unrestricted immigration into Palestine of Jews was proper in your view. That is all I want to know.

Dr Fanny: If it were legal, it would have been proper.

Shand: Did you think it was legal? That was your own view?

Dr Fanny: Legal immigration of great numbers would have been proper because we had not so many in Europe.

Shand: You know the British Government took the opposite view do you not?

Dr Fanny: Yes

Shand: You thought there should be unrestricted immigration?

Dr Fanny: Yes.

Shand: I am not saying that is right or wrong. You know that they took that view?

Dr Fanny: Yes.

Shand: You took the view that there should be room, they should be accommodated there, as many as you could get across and settle?

Dr Fanny: Yes, they would have been absorbed.

Shand: That is your view of it? I think you did say that you have always been in favour of unlimited immigration because you could absorb them there. That is your view of that?

Dr Fanny: Because we have had professional advice on that, that they should be absorbed.

Shand: And in fact that is what you set out in this pamphlet, that was the aim, was it not, of this Youth Aliyah? That was the aim of it?

Dr Fanny: To bring as many children as possible, to save as many.

Shand: To bring all children into Palestine?

Dr Fanny: Yes, over time, over a period of years.... You could not leave them in camps in Europe. (Herron 1949c, pp. 30-31)

Despite being in the witness box almost the whole day and immersed in the vortex of Shand's questions that whirled around the same subjects, Dr Fanny gave due consideration to her responses, which emphasised the legality of all policies enacted by Youth Aliyah:

Shand: I want to know whether you agree that the British policy in Palestine has been a disastrous one?

Dr Fanny: Disastrous to the Jews who are in Europe, disastrous to our people in Europe who could not come to Palestine.

Shand: And disastrous even for, generally speaking, the Jews as to their right in Palestine?

Dr Fanny: Yes.

Shand: And is it correct that there is, in your view, a bitter feeling in that connection?

Dr Fanny: I think there is a great deal of restraint about that feeling.

Shand: There may be, but underneath is there some bitter feeling?

Dr Fanny: That the promises were not kept.

Shand: That may be the reason, but there may be some bitter feeling?

Dr Fanny: Yes. We think the Administration could have relaxed its immigration laws. That was the basis of it all.

Shand: And is it correct that you yourself put that down to the fact that the Government administration has favoured the Arabs?

Dr Fanny: I would say that it did not favour the Jews as far as the immigration was concerned. If we could have got more people there... (p. 32)

When Shand asked Dr Fanny about 'The Terror' in Palestine, she said it was carried out by 'A small body of lawless people', groups with 'relatives in Europe wanting to come to join them, and they were forbidden' (p. 33). Shand then conflated these groups with the Haganah, which he termed an 'underground' army that 'organised immigration', the implication being that the Haganah contravened British Mandatory laws. Dr Fanny pointed out that the British Government recognised Haganah as a 'self-defence army', 'as the army which was defending the colonies' (p. 34), a few of whose members 'went to Europe to rescue probably relatives from concentration camps' (pp. 35-36). When Shand questioned her on Comay's view that the 1939 White Paper's restriction of immigration was illegal under the Mandate, Dr Fanny concurred: 'If the international authorities say it is illegal I would agree with them.... Yes, under the Mandate it is illegal. Under the Mandate it did not restrict' (pp. 35-36).

As the afternoon wore on, the court transcript reflects Dr Fanny's increasing fatigue. There was a note of exasperation in her responses, and occasional lapses in concentration:

Shand: I am asking you – is it your view that it is illegal [the 1939 White Paper's restriction of immigration]?

Dr Fanny: Does my view matter?

Shand: Well, it does in this Court.

Dr Fanny: What was the question again? (p. 36)

Towards the end of the first day of the trial, Shand concluded his cross-examination of Dr Fanny by focusing his questions on the structure and program of Youth Aliyah in Australia. Dr Fanny displayed detailed knowledge of the Australian Jewish community, noting in her evidence that there were between 5,000 and 6,000 subscribers to Youth Aliyah in Australia—in contradistinction to 20,000 suggested by Shand—out of a total Jewish population of 40,000 in Australia at that time. Once again, Shand interrogated Dr Fanny on Comay's criticism of the British administration in Palestine. She qualified Shand's statement, exploring alternative meanings:

Shand: You will agree that a man who suggested that England was being unjust would be deserving of criticism from Australians?

Dr Fanny: It depends on how he said it.

Shand: If he said it publicly?

Dr Fanny: He might have prefixed it or affixed it with some other sentiments.

Shand: If he had just said that he would have been deserving of censure?

Dr Fanny: If he only said that. (pp. 38-39)

Shand probed the reasons Dr Fanny took on the role of plaintiff in this case, to which she replied comprehensively, referring to her national prestige, her personal response to the issue, her position as an office bearer of Youth Aliyah, and her sense of personal injury: 'As I was the best known probably, I offered to.... [I]t affected me personally too.... I was the Vice President ... it affected me too' (p. 39). It had been a gruelling day for Dr Fanny, but her ordeal was not over, as she would be recalled twice on the following two days.

The second day of the trial

On Wednesday 27 April 1949, the second day of the trial, at 10 am precisely, Dr Fanny was again summoned to the witness box for further cross-examination by Shand, who questioned her about the financial resources for her legal action. With her responses, she widened the legal lens considerably, creating a picture of support, both moral and financial, from two national bodies, Youth Aliyah and the NCJW, her own organisation. She told Shand that friends were helping to finance the case, including Max Freilich and Horace Newman, the latter being

the campaign director of Youth Aliyah. Dr Fanny's costs came to several thousand pounds and, in court, she made it clear that she was willing and able to meet all costs herself. A letter in the NCJW NSW archives, however, casts further light on the question of financial support. The letter, dated 9 September 1947, was written to Major Michael Comay by Rabbi Max Schenk, a member of the executive committee of the Zionist Federation of Australia and New Zealand. He states: '[T]he Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism of Melbourne is backing the action financially, they have guaranteed the cost' (Schenk 1947). Ochert (1996) confirms this, expanding the support base even further:

A group of leaders of the Zionist Movement in Sydney and Melbourne, the Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism, the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies, the Victorian Jewish Board of Deputies and the Executive Council of Australian Jewry... made a commitment to support the suggested litigation.... The costs of the action were to be borne from their own pockets. (p. 331)

In court, Dr Fanny also mentioned support from specific members of her own organisation, whose names she gave reluctantly—Sasha Freilich and Mrs Whitefield—clearly wishing to spare them embarrassment at being named and identified in court proceedings:

My own members are helping me, should I need them.... There are so many.... They would stand behind me ...they know I was taking this action ... we discussed it at an informal meeting.... I had a few friends in my own home one evening, and we just discussed it, and they said they would stand behind me ... I would say about eight...they promised if I needed them ... but I could probably meet it myself if I had to. (Herron 1949c, pp. 43-44)

Dr Fanny's mental acuity was evident when she corrected an error Shand made in the exchange that followed. He said a cable about a quota of 4,000 children was received in 1949. Dr Fanny pointed out the correct date was 1947, prompting an apology from Shand for his error. Shand appeared even further confused—or perhaps biased—concerning a member of the Youth Aliyah executive, Dora Abramovitch, conflating foreign names and identities, a contrast to Dr Fanny's precise and accurate answers:

Shand: The members of the executive, Miss D Abramovitch. Do you say that she is not a relation of yours?

Dr Fanny: No relation.

Shand: That was your name?

Dr Fanny: Never.

Shand. Abramovitch?

Dr Fanny: My name, my father's name, was Rubinovitch [sic].

His Honor: She is a lady doctor, Dr Abramovitch?

Dr Fanny: She is a doctor.

Shand: I think you, at some stage, changed your name to your present name, did you not, at some stage?

Dr Fanny: In 1918. Could I correct that? I did not change my name, my father did. (p. 45)

Shand's questions on Ernest Bevin

Dr Fanny's response to the shifting political currents in Palestine and her grasp of contemporary events and policies in the Middle East came into focus again when Shand questioned her on her views concerning Ernest Bevin. Dr Fanny's answers referenced a time when Ernest Bevin was a member of the British War Cabinet (1941-45) during the Second World War, serving as Minister of Labour and National Service; and serving as foreign secretary in the post-war Labour government, from 1945 to 1951, when Palestine was transferred from the control of the Colonial Office to the Foreign Office. While some commentators concluded: 'In spite of his controversial handling of the Palestine situation, he is generally regarded as a great foreign secretary' (Jewish Virtual Library (b) 2018), others believed that Bevin applied severely repressive measures against the *Yishuv*, the Jewish community in Palestine. This latter perspective reflected Dr Fanny's view, which she expressed with the forethought that characterised her responses in the courtroom. She was also forthright, as seen in the following exchange with Shand:

Shand: I take it that while Mr Bevin was in charge of affairs he was doing his best, did you think, in the situation?

Dr Fanny: I thought they had a very difficult job in Palestine.

Shand: And that he was doing his best?

Dr Fanny: To his way of thinking

Shand: But, to your way of thinking?

Dr Fanny: Well, I think he had a difficult problem, because...

Shand: I do not want to stop you?

Dr Fanny: He had a difficult problem in Palestine.

Shand: I am still asking you the question—to your mind was he doing his best with the difficult problem?

Dr Fanny: He did not do his best in this way, that promises of the Labour Government to the Jewry had not been carried out. They said, after the Anglo-American Commission, whatever it decided, that they would carry it out, and one hundred thousand Jews were to be taken from Europe to Palestine. That was under the Bevin Government. Had that happened there probably would not have been the difficulties in Palestine.

Shand: That is your criticism of the position?

Dr Fanny: Yes.

Shand: So in your opinion the British authorities, from the time of the Balfour Declaration, following the Balfour Declaration right up to the present time, when I say the present time I do not mean when the United Nations took over, it continued to break promises?

Dr Fanny: Not continued. They gave a promise in the Balfour Declaration. (Herron 1949c, p. 47)

Bevin's Palestine policy was based on two premises: he felt that since the majority of the Middle East population was Arab, nothing should be done against their will, in case it set the Arab world against Great Britain and the West; and he desired some type of settlement between Jews and Arabs:

In an attempt to obtain U.S. government approval for his Palestine policy, Bevin proposed appointing an Anglo-American commission whose task would be to plan a solution to the Palestine question. In the summer of 1946 he rejected the committee's proposals for the immediate admission of 100,000 Jewish refugees from Europe [to

which Dr Fanny referred in her testimony] and the annulment of the provisos in the Macdonald White Paper restricting the acquisition of land by Jews. As a result, the situation in Palestine deteriorated, and Bevin began applying severe repressive measures against the yishuv. Leading members of the Jewish Agency and the Va'ad Le'umi were arrested, 'illegal' immigrants were deported to detention camps in Cyprus, and the Exodus, bearing 4,500 such immigrants, was shipped back to Germany.... On Feb. 15, 1947 ... Bevin announced that he was referring the entire matter to the United Nations. As a result, the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) was appointed and, on Nov. 29, 1947, the UN voted to divide Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab State. Bevin gradually became reconciled to the idea of a Jewish state; in January 1949, eight months after the proclamation of the State of Israel, he granted it de facto recognition (Jewish Virtual Library (b) 2018).

Taxed with questions relating to personalities, policies and events in Zionist, British and world history, Dr Fanny was under mounting pressure. She made an effort, in difficult circumstances, to answer Shand accurately and, at the same time, advantageously. When Shand suggested that she had implied earlier that trouble ceased after Palestine was partitioned, her plea for a moment to review and order her thoughts revealed her desperation, and even confusion, under his cross-examination. Her words betrayed her state of mind: 'Just let me think a minute, what did I say? I am trying to think what I did say' (Herron 1949c, p. 48). Regaining her composure and marshalling her thoughts with clarity once more, she told Shand that partition was the best solution under the circumstances: 'That we should have something in Palestine.... We were satisfied to have that' (p. 48).

Cassidy's re-examination of Dr Fanny

After a morning of Shand's cross-examination, Cassidy commenced his re-examination, his tone courteous and respectful. He established that Dr Fanny had contributed substantially to non-Jewish enterprises; and that immediately after the war started she was responsible for issuing a bulletin in which she stated:

The War Emergency Board of the National Council of Jewish Women notifies members that all activities other than war work should be temporarily suspended.... It is our duty to help the British and the Allied Armies who are fighting desperately with sublime courage and heroic fortitude with every sacrifice in our power. (Herron 1949c, pp. 48-49)

Cassidy documented, in a strategic way, Dr Fanny's loyalty and commitment to the British Empire and the war effort, highlighting her dedication, philosophy and initiatives that he reinforced with her own published words: 'We have not done all we ought till we have done all we can' (p. 49). 'Yes, during the war our main work was war work, throughout Australia that was,' she told Cassidy. Through questioning, Cassidy succeeded in portraying Dr Fanny as a woman of distinction in the wider community, who personally received acknowledgment from authoritative sources of her efforts for and philanthropy to a range of beneficiaries in Australia. In her responses, she confirmed that she had been awarded the King George VI Coronation Medal in 1937 and the King George V Jubilee Medal in 1935, and that she received many citations for war work and contributions to the War Loans, and acknowledgments of donations to a range of Australian charities, including the H.M.A.S. Sydney Fund, Great Britain's Civilians War Relief Victims Fund, the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund, the Australian Red Cross and the Catholic organisation Boys Town. 'Our work made no discrimination of race or creed, we work for everything,' Dr Fanny explained (p. 50).

Cassidy questioned Dr Fanny about the former President of Youth Aliyah in Australia, Rabbi Max Schenk. He came to Australia in 1939 to serve as minister of Temple Emanuel congregation in Sydney; and returned 10 years later to the United States ('Max Schenk dies led Rabbis Board' 1974, p. 45). His wife, Faye, served as a past president of Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organisation of America that was a major fundraiser for Youth Aliyah in Palestine. 'He [Schenk] always stressed the humanitarian part of Youth Aliyah and said it was a non-political work,' Dr Fanny told Cassidy (p. 50).

Cassidy addressed the negative implications of questions posed by Shand, who had quoted at length from Comay's speech delivered at the Youth Aliyah fundraising meeting in Sydney. Cassidy asked Dr Fanny to whom Comay referred when he said that members of the Army 'are organizing the underground exodus of Jews from Europe to Palestine, and the story of these Jewish Scarlet Pimpernels, when it is told, will be spectacular'. She responded:

It refers, I think to some individuals of the Haganah probably who went to Europe to endeavour to get people ... out of concentration camps and organise them to several ports, Genoa or Trieste, where they waited to get certificates for permission [to enter Palestine]. (p. 50)

Her response, though brief, shone a light on the conditions in Europe for persecuted Jews and the courage of those risking their own lives to rescue children from concentration camps, labour camps and ghettos.

Did Cassidy provide his services pro bono?

In relation to the payment of legal fees associated with the case, Cassidy questioned Dr Fanny at some length about the financial support offered to her, and whether it was binding. 'All that we discussed was that they would help me if it was necessary,' Dr Fanny stated (p. 51). It is not improbable that Cassidy provided his services pro bono, given that he posed this question: 'You might have got a barrister for nothing, I suppose?' Dr Fanny replied somewhat mysteriously, 'I may have' (Herron 1949c, p. 51).

Nothing more was said about this intriguing exchange, as it was at this juncture that Shand questioned Dr Fanny again about the frequency of Youth Aliyah meetings: 'We met when there were appeals, very often, but when there were no appeals just spasmodically,' she replied (p. 51). Her choice of the word 'spasmodically' hints at her mental state at that moment, especially when one recalls that it was her second lengthy day in the witness box, resulting in considerable inner tension, despite her efforts to remain calm and focused. Most people would use the word 'infrequently' or 'now and again' or 'seldom' or 'only occasionally'. The word 'spasmodically' has a medical connotation that conveys an impression of extreme nervousness.

Landauer testifies on behalf of Youth Aliyah

At this point in the legal proceedings, Dr Fanny retired and Cassidy began his examination of Georg Landauer. He was Director and Treasurer of the Jewish Agency's Youth Aliyah Department, from 1933 to October 1948, and had come from Palestine to Sydney to give evidence as a witness in the case. He spoke with authority on matters pertaining to Youth Aliyah, as he was on personal terms with Youth Aliyah personnel, their field workers and British administrators in the Department of Migration:

I had to contact the various governmental agencies in connection with my work, sometimes the Department of Migration, sometimes the Chief Secretary of the Government, and sometimes other officials, and I maintained, I must say, very cordial relations. (Herron 1949c, p. 69)

He testified that Youth Aliyah had no political policies but was exclusively dedicated to saving Jewish children trapped in Nazi Europe and further afield.

First, Landauer established his credentials, 'I am a Doctor of Laws and I live in Jerusalem' (p. 51), and second, he vouched for the integrity of Youth Aliyah. He stated that General Jan Christiaan Smuts of South Africa—former Prime Minister in 1919 and 1939, statesman, soldier and scholar—was the patron of Youth Aliyah. This fact carried weight, as General Smuts served in the Imperial War Cabinet during World War I, and in 1941 was Field Marshal of the British Army. He played an important role in drafting the constitution of the League of Nations, the forerunner of the United Nations ('General Jan Christiaan Smuts' 2018). His name guaranteed the probity and transparency of Youth Aliyah. Landauer confirmed to Cassidy that he himself had close contact with the British Administration and British officials in connection with Youth Aliyah work. He was, therefore, an authoritative source for establishing that Youth Aliyah was not anti-British in any way and never supported illegal immigration (Herron 1949, p. 53). He confirmed the object of Youth Aliyah was 'to rescue as many children from Germany as possible who were threatened by the Nazi persecutions.... We followed the path of Hitler, first through Germany, and then through Austria and then through Czechoslovakia and slowly through other countries' (p. 53).

In response to Cassidy's questions concerning the financial responsibilities of Youth Aliyah, Landauer said:

The practice was to have regular payments made to educational institutions or settlements, payment for the maintenance and education of the children ... sometimes for accommodation, for housing, or clothing and medical and social care of the children according to fixed rates.... Fifty per cent of the absorption places were settlements and fifty per cent were educational institutions.... We took only either orphans or children who had been sent by their parents and their parents stayed behind. (pp. 56-57)

Landauer, who negotiated with the British Administration's Migration Department as to numbers of children permitted to enter Palestine, stated that their immigration was restricted according to the economic absorptive capacity of the country. 'That is the difference,' he said, explaining that this rule for immigration into Palestine was fixed by the British White Paper of 1922 and that he thought it was unjust (p. 65). A discussion ensued regarding the British

implementation of the terms of the Balfour Declaration, the Arab uprisings and Arab attempts to forestall further Jewish immigration.

In reply to Shand's questions, Landauer emphasised that there was never any question of illegal immigration:

We applied to the Mandatory Government and asked for the immigration certificates. Abroad in the countries of origin our affiliated offices assisted the children, and according to the number of certificates allocated to us it was applied to the British Passport Control Office to get the entry permits, and then they were sent to Palestine. (p. 57)

He explained that after the war in 1945, the Jewish Agency subdivided the total monthly allocation of 1,500 certificates, giving a share of that to Youth Aliyah, a process also followed in 1946. In this way, children from France, Holland and Belgium entered Palestine. In 1947, however, with a large number of Jewish children detained in Cyprus, he asked the government for an additional 3,000 certificates, which were granted. Altogether Youth Aliyah obtained immigration certificates for all the children arriving before, during and after the war under the Youth Aliyah scheme: 5,012 before the war; 11,167 during the war; and 14,805 from July 1945 to October 1948 (p. 58). Once again, he confirmed that Youth Aliyah funds were never spent in support of 'terrorists', or the Irgun Zvai Leumi; and, importantly, he stated that he thought the terrorists were 'dirty murderers' (p. 59).

Shand's attempts to discredit Landauer

In Landauer's testimony, he denied the existence of any anti-British hostility that could serve Shand's aim of validating defamatory statements published in *Smith's Weekly*. In Shand's cross-examination of Landauer, he attempted to create a picture of a German citizen who fought against the British in the First World War. Landauer pointed out that he had no choice in the matter, as military service was compulsory and he was conscripted. Shand then attempted to obtain from him an admission that there had been attempts at illegal immigration, which Landauer described as 'very inconsiderable. Very small numbers perhaps arrived at the country, not any sizeable number' (Herron 1949c, p. 60). He also tried to discredit Landauer's evidence, accusing him of making a 'gross mistake within five minutes', to which Landauer, after some clarification, responded 'surely not. I would not make deliberate mistakes' (p. 62). Landauer emphasised also that Youth Aliyah paid 'not a penny', for the

children's transport, which was funded partly by the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees, the International Refugee Organization, the United Nations, and by some Jewish organisations. Shand endeavoured to elicit from him an admission that Youth Aliyah viewed the British policy in Palestine as a disastrous one, to which Landauer responded adamantly, 'Youth Aliyah has no political views on policy, neither British or other policies' (p. 64). When he failed to obtain from Landauer any denunciation of the British and their policies, Shand re-framed the question: 'Will you agree then that in Palestine, in your view, the British have done all that could be expected of them in their treatment of the Jews?' Landauer, speaking personally, stated that he would not say 'all that could be expected,' but much (p. 65).

Shand, continuing with his harsh phraseology and intimidatory tone (e.g. 'Just answer my question, will you.') asked Landauer whether he thought that under the mandate the British had the right to restrict immigration to 1,500 per month for a period of 5 years. Landauer's response widened the legal lens considerably, as he positioned and evaluated the British action within an ethical context, drawing a distinction between what constitutes a legal right compared to the broader concept of justice:

Shand: They had the right, that is your view?

Landauer: They had a right. I would not acknowledge that this is just, but they had a right. A government has the right, any government has a right to restrict.

Shand: But you think it was unjust, do you?

Landauer: I think it was unjust. (p. 65)

Shand interrogated Landauer concerning many of the subjects he had also covered in his cross-examination of Dr Fanny, attempting to paint a picture of their extreme dissatisfaction with the British that he implied might veer easily into supporting 'terrorists'. Landauer's responses were carefully calibrated, highlighting subtle distinctions in language. He never allowed Shand to rush him into ill-considered replies but, in response, gave due weight to every word and their implications. His testimony confirmed Dr Fanny's in many instances, for example, their shared view of the British Mandatory Authority's interpretation of the Balfour Declaration and implementation of the Mandate:

Shand: And I suppose you know Article 6 of the Mandate, do you?

Landauer: Yes, I know that.

Shand: And this is it, is it not, I will just read it. I will just ask you if this is it—'The administration of Palestine, while ensuring that the rights and positions of other sections of the population are not prejudiced, shall facilitate Jewish immigration under suitable conditions and shall encourage in co-operation with the Jewish Agency referred to in Article 4, closer settlement of the Jews on the land.' So that is what you understand. That is your understanding of Article 6 of the Mandate?

Landauer; Yes.

Shand: And you understand, do you, it is your understanding, that under that, of course, other peoples, including Arabs, had to be considered, the claims of other people, including the Arabs had to be considered?

Landauer: Had to be considered.

Shan:. Of course, you are aware of the wording of the Balfour Declaration?

Landauer: I am

Shand: And do you agree that the British followed, in their conduct of Palestinian affairs, what was laid down in that Declaration?

Landauer; That may be debatable.

Shand: Well, I am asking you your opinion?

Landauer: It is debatable, I say.

Shand: Will you agree with me that in your opinion the British followed the terms of the Balfour Declaration?

Landauer: Not always, not always.

Shand: Your view is that they did not?

Landauer: No, I said 'not always'. Sometimes they did, sometimes they did not.

Shand: And I suppose your claim is that when they did not do it they were unjust to the Jews?

Landauer: It depends on the occasion. They may have been forced by circumstances, which should be acknowledged.

Shand: On any occasion, do you think they were unjust to the Jews?

Landauer: Not on any occasion.

Shand: Not on any occasion?

Landauer: Not on any occasion, on certain occasion[s] sometimes. (pp. 65-66)

Re-examined by Cassidy, Landauer stated that Comay was not connected with Youth Aliyah. He answered questions concerning the source of funds for transporting the children to Palestine, which Shand had wrongly presumed was supplied by Youth Aliyah. Landauer stated that funds arose from recommendations made by Sir Herbert Emerson's Inter-Governmental Committee of Refugees, which met in London in 1945. Formed by about 20 governments, the Committee was an initiative of the League of Nations; and was succeeded by the International Refugee Organisation, which also disbursed funds solely for this purpose, a total of £1 million. He added that Youth Aliyah needed £3 million 'this year alone' for the maintenance of the children, representing a monthly expenditure of £250,000. He said he was a member of a committee that encouraged volunteering among Palestinian Jews and about 2,000 graduates of Youth Aliyah's training courses had volunteered for the [British] army. He had contact with various government agencies in connection with his work, including the Department of Migration, the Chief Secretary of the Government and other officials. 'I maintained, I must say, very cordial relations,' he said (p. 69).

Dr Fanny recalled to the witness box

At this stage in the trial, Dr Fanny was recalled and, once again, submitted to Shand's questioning aimed at establishing a connection between Youth Aliyah and payment for transporting the children to Palestine. Familiar with Shand's badgering, she was steadfast in countering his allegations:

Shand: But you will not deny, will you, that your association was paying for the transport of the children?

Dr Fanny: No, we knew we did not pay the transport. (Herron 1949c, pp. 69-70)

Shand questioned her about Mrs [Ida] Wynn's reference to the high cost of 'transporting and tending' the children in the first few years of their life in Palestine, which he asked Dr Fanny to confirm. 'I cannot remember that she said that,' she replied (p. 70). When she stepped out of the witness box, any relief she felt was short-lived, as she was recalled a short while later that same morning. This time, Cassidy questioned her about the late 'Mrs Wein' [sic, Ida Wynn],

whom Dr Fanny confirmed had been the Youth Aliyah campaign director in Victoria, and that Wynn had issued a writ against the paper. In a pivotal moment of the trial, Cassidy asked Dr Fanny about the letter Wynn wrote to *Smith's Weekly*. Dr Fanny announced that a copy of Wynn's letter sent to the editor of *Smith's Weekly* was available in court, the letter Shand alleged *Smith's Weekly* had never received:

Cassidy: Have you got the copy with the solicitors here?

Dr Fanny: Yes I have it.

Cassidy: Is it in your bag?

Dr Fanny: No, it is in that black bag (indicating bag handed to witness). (p. 72)

Judge comments on Cassidy's revelation

After Dr Fanny retired from the witness stand, Cassidy announced he would call for the letter to be produced, to which Shand irritably and angrily retorted: 'I have given an answer. I do not want to repeat it. We have no such letter and never had such a letter' (Herron 1949c, p. 73). At this point of acrimony and disputation between the two barristers, Cassidy applied for an adjournment, which Justice Herron granted, in order that a Melbourne witness with knowledge of the letter could travel to Sydney to testify to its existence and that it had been received by the defendant. Justice Herron, having directed the jury to leave the court, was critical of these developments:

I will tell you now that I propose to grant this adjournment ... the interests of justice are to be served here, and although we are faced with procedural upsets such as this is, if it is in the interest of justice that the plaintiff should have time to procure evidence about this matter, then it is my duty to see that she has reasonable time to do so. Mr Cassidy has shown me his brief, which contains a statement by a now deceased person ... where that person says ... that that letter, after it was sent to *Smith's Weekly*, later was discussed with the then managing director of the company, and reference was made to it.... I propose to resolve the matter slightly more in his favour than otherwise, and I propose to allow him an adjournment until 10 o' clock in the morning. (p. 74)

Recalling the jury, Justice Herron told them:

At some earlier stage in this case a reference was made to a letter said to have been sent to the defendant company, and at the present time there is no evidence that that letter was in fact sent, and there is no admission by the defendant that it was received.... Now it appears that Mr Cassidy has requested me to adjourn the case in order for him to bring a witness from Melbourne, so that he may prove something in connection with the letter ... he has satisfied me that the request is not unreasonable and I feel that the interruption in the case, whilst it is a nuisance to us all, is a matter of justice prevailing over our personal inconvenience, and therefore I propose to grant it. (p. 75)

Ida Wynn's honest error in dating her letter

The court adjourned and reconvened at 10 am the following morning, the third day of the trial, Thursday 28th April 1949, to hear the testimony of Samuel Wein [sic, Wynn] of Toorak, Melbourne, whose late wife, Ida, the President of Youth Aliyah in Victoria, died on 1st August 1948. Questioned by Cassidy, Wynn said his wife issued a writ in respect of the article in *Smith's Weekly* and that she had attended the fundraising meeting in Sydney. He confirmed that the letter shown to him by Cassidy was typed on their typewriter on **May 29th 1947** [my emphasis] at their home and that it was addressed to the Editor of *Smith's Weekly*, Sydney NSW, and that he had posted it at the Toorak Post Office. He stated that, after posting the letter, he had a conversation with Mr W.J. Smith [William John Smith, the paper's owner, (Rimmer 1988)]. He and his wife came to Sydney and saw Smith on a Saturday morning and left Sydney the following Tuesday.

In the official transcript of the trial, the date of the letter is recorded as May 29th 1947, which in my opinion reflects an honest mistake made by Ida Wynn when she dated the letter '1947' instead of '1948'. However, if the copy of the letter produced in court was not the original carbon copy, the error could be attributed to whomever re-typed the copy. The letter could not have been penned on May 29th 1947 as that date precedes publication of the articles in *Smith's Weekly* on 31st May 1947. From the transcript, it is apparent Shand was aware of the discrepancy in the date and had begun to interrogate Wynn on the subject, when the judge intervened and curtailed his cross-examination:

Shand: When you participated in the construction of this document did you have the paper in front of you, the paper that you are complaining about?

Wynn: Yes

Shand: And I suppose you were not in doubt as to what date you wrote, when you wrote the letter?

Wynn: No, I did not have any doubts about that.

Shand: Approaching witness: I want to show you first of all the date.

His Honour: it would be just as convenient if this question of law was dealt with in the meantime. If there is any occasion for you to re-open the cross examination (Witness retired). (Herron 1949c, p. 76)

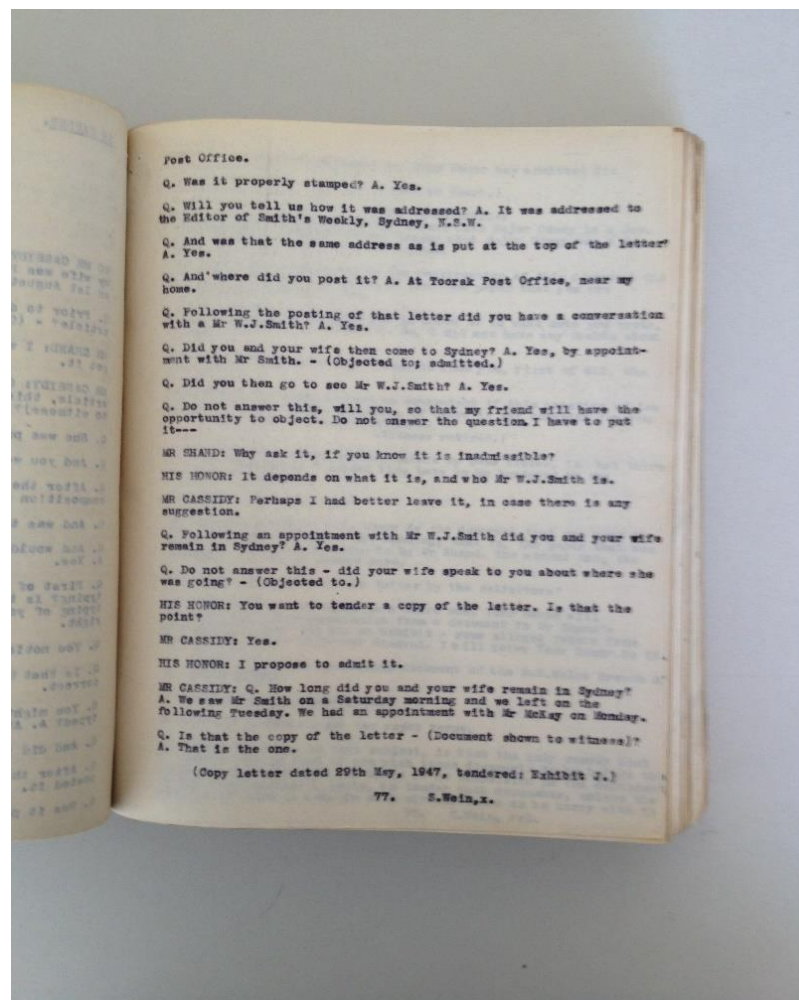


Figure 16: Page 77 of the court transcript of the trial, showing the date of the letter in the final line of the transcript

Photo courtesy of Peter Wertheim

The barristers concluding summations

The opposing barristers then addressed the court:

[Shand] restated Smith's argument that Major Comay had come to Australia to raise money for buying armaments to harass the British in Palestine; that the Major, and the Jewish Agency, of which he was an official, had a reputation for anti-British activity ... that reference to the 'alleged missions of mercy of Youth Aliyah were merely a cover for the sinister, undercover intrigues of the murderous Zionist underground'; that 'the Jews were ungrateful to the British who had undertaken the thankless task of policing the land [Palestine] and protecting it at a time of unrest'. (Ochert 1996, p. 318)

According to Ochert (1996), Cassidy followed with a brilliant summation, in which he referred to Hitler's plans to exterminate the Jewish people; how Hitler had written about it in *Mein Kampf*, and had implemented those plans when he achieved power in 1933, and how the horrors and cruelties became worse after war started in 1939,

how babies and little infants were torn from their mothers' arms and children were separated from their families, never to see them again; how youngsters were improperly fed and denied necessary medical attention and some were put to arduous work in factories; how millions went to their death, including over a million children, in circumstances of great cruelty. (p. 319)

Cassidy explained that Youth Aliyah was founded in Germany in the year the Nazi Party took office, to rescue children, taking them to Palestine, housing, settling and educating them in an atmosphere of loving-kindness, surrounded by Jewish carers and foster parents. He referred to the activity of young Jewish men and women who penetrated Germany and embattled Europe, seeking Jewish children and rescuing them. Their efforts were not always successful, and many lost their lives. He stated: 'The British Mandatory Authority impeded these rescue attempts as well, and children were turned back from Palestine into lands in which they had no hope of surviving' (p. 319). He explained that the work of Youth Aliyah was ongoing, as many Jewish children were now homeless in Europe living in displaced persons camps, or unsatisfactorily accommodated. He stressed that *Smith's Weekly* had done a grave disservice to the cause of justice, 'for it had blatantly condemned this fine organisation on the basis of circumstantial evidence' (p. 320). He outlined the grievances of the Jewish community in Palestine that believed the administration was tainted by British self-interest, a lack of altruism and that British officials favoured the Arabs. In particular, 'great ill-will resulted when boatloads of

“illegal” immigrants were turned back from the beaches, preventing reunions of family members who had been cruelly separated by the events of World War II’ (p. 320). He asked the jury:

How would any of you react ... if you were in their position? If you could see your mother and your son had disembarked on a beach, but they were being forced back onto the flimsy boats on which they had arrived, and that British naval cutters were towing them back out to sea! And you were prevented from going to them by British Tommys with fixed bayonets! History has recorded that there was great ill-will, due to these and other heartless policies.... Now I ask you, how could *Smith’s* equate the compassionate rescue of those children by Youth Aliyah with the efforts of a minority to end what they regarded as an unjust administration?... And that violence is completely irrelevant to the rescue of the children, those most innocent and helpless victims of war. We of the Christian persuasion will recall that one of the most touching and compelling of our Saviour’s requests was ‘Suffer (allow) the little children to come unto me’ (Matthew 19:14). Shall we concur with that goodly injunction when it concerns ourselves but deny it to those of the Jewish Faith? (pp. 320-321)

Cassidy concluded with the following plea that focused particularly on Dr Fanny:

We are told that Dr Reading was not libelled because she was not specifically named. I say she was libelled just as clearly as she would have been, had her name been shouted from the roof-tops! Not only was she libelled but the entire Jewish Community was libelled! A generation of Jewish folk was libelled! The brave pioneers in the Holy Land were libelled! The victims of the Holocaust were libelled! The Youth Aliyah—that kindly body of goodly men and women, with its programme of compassion for, and rescue of Jewish children was libelled! The alleged inadequacy of the law of Libel must not be allowed to stand in the way of Justice. Not only was Dr Reading chosen as the plaintiff because she is the leader of Australian Youth Aliyah; she was chosen because she stands high in the ranks of the goodly leaders of Australian Jewry; she is the fearless lady who volunteered to bring this injustice before the court; she is a foremost contributor to all charities both within and beyond her community. If not Dr Reading, then WHO, pray tell me, was libelled? Blatant naked libel has been committed! Will you allow it to go unpunished? (p. 321)

When Cassidy referred to 'the genocide of the infants', his voice was choked with emotion and many in the court, including officials, were visibly affected. Justice Herron adjourned the court until 2 pm that afternoon, 'to enable us to regain our composure' (p. 321). It is worth noting that Cassidy had visited Germany at the end of the Second World War to observe the International Military Tribunal's prosecution of Nazi war criminals held in Nuremberg (McLaughlin 2018 online).

Justice Herron delivers his judgement

On Thursday 28 April 1949, on the afternoon of the third day of the trial, Justice Herron delivered his judgement. In preliminary comments, he stated:

In this case the plaintiff, who is a Doctor of Medicine, Dr Reading, is suing National Press Pty. Ltd., publishers of a paper known as *Smith's Weekly*, for damages for defamation. The libel in question arises out of the publication in this paper called *Smith's Weekly*, dated the 31st May, 1947. The article to which I will refer contained defamatory statements in that it criticized in no uncertain way the activities connected with certain Jewish organizations, with relation to their loyalty to Britain. (Herron 1949b, pp. 1-2)

Justice Herron outlined the major considerations of the case:

1. Can the article, having regard to the language, and read in light of relevant circumstances, be regarded as capable of referring to the plaintiff? And 2. If it can be regarded in law as capable of referring to the plaintiff, does the article in fact lead reasonable people who know the plaintiff to the conclusion that it does refer to her? That is a question of fact. Those are, in my view, the proper headings under which to approach this, this not easy question of law. It is essential in law that the words be published of the plaintiff. (p. 2)

Justice Herron presented his perspective on the legal task before him, as well as the central issue of the case, concerning whether it was an attack of a personal or general nature:

It is my duty, sitting as a Judge, to decide the law of the case to read this article, reading it as a newspaper article. I do not consider that I should subject it to an analysis as a legal document would be subjected, nor construe it. I assume that my task is to read it as an ordinary reader would read it, as a member of the jury would be

expected to read it, read it straight through as an item in a newspaper, in order to see what it means. I do not hesitate, however, to analyse it if analysis is needed, and what does it mean? In the first place, in my opinion, quite clearly and contrary to Mr Cassidy's view of it, it is an attack of a general character on the policy of Jews in this country subscribing to Palestine troubles. The paper apparently took the view, I think as I say hereafter, quite wrongly in the case of the Youth Aliyah movement, that it was a matter of condemnation that Jews in Australia should subscribe any money which would go to the maintenance or continuance of the troubles that were being experienced in Palestine at that particular time, between the Arabs and the Jews and the British Administration there. (p. 7)

Justice Herron outlined various legal cases pertinent to these legal issues and commented:

In short, where the plaintiff is not actually named, there must be something in the defamatory matter, or in the circumstances in which it is published, which indicates and enables a jury to find that the plaintiff is defamed, although she is not named. (pp. 3-4)

Justice Herron stated that the article was a most clear—the clearest possible—libel on the work of the Youth Aliyah movement; and that it clearly criticised and condemned that Youth Aliyah movement. He concluded:

Any fair-minded reading of this article will, I think, show that no mention is made of the plaintiff. She is not referred to in any way. There is no reference to her.... It might have described her as a prominent woman in the Jewish community, as a Doctor of Medicine, as a Vice President of the Youth Aliyah movement in this State.... The article, however, attacks all Jews who support this illegal purpose. It possibly embraces the members generally of Youth Aliyah, but no mention of the plaintiff is made in particular in it.... Mr Cassidy contends that this defames all at the meeting. I cannot agree with that.... Even if one assumes that it did, it still does not designate the plaintiff as a person defamed. For instance, it does not even suggest that she was present at it.... I cannot agree, in spite of Mr Cassidy's obvious sincerity in pressing the contrary upon me, that this article is capable of referring to the plaintiff. (pp. 8-9)

Finally, Justice Herron declared:

The result is that in my view the plaintiff has no right of action in law for libel against the defendant newspaper. I have given this decision after what little time I had at my

disposal to consider the matter, and I may also say that I give it with some regret. The plaintiff appears on the evidence to be a woman of distinction in the Jewish community and a woman who has contributed much in time and money towards the social and patriotic causes of Australia. The article, as the evidence stands, at any rate, casts an unwarranted aspersion on this Youth Aliyah movement, an organization of which the plaintiff was a supporter. I believe that the article must have wounded her feelings and filled her with a sense of injustice, not only against the Jews, but also against those who supported this Youth Aliyah movement. However it is, I suppose, cold comfort for her to know that as the law stands no such attack on a class or sect or congregation of people, however unwarranted, can be the subject of a libel action in this court, and this court cannot assist the plaintiff to condemn the paper. It is for Parliament to re-shape the law if any redress is thought to be necessary in such a case as this, but hard cases make bad law, and I have to give to the law the effect as I see it, although, as I say, it brings about a regrettable decision so far as the plaintiff is concerned. (pp. 10-11)

In Justice Herron's judgement, he commented on Dr Fanny's character, compassion, philanthropy, social activism and humanitarian agenda, characterising her as 'a woman of distinction'. Although the judgement was not in her favour, he expressed regret at having to administer the law as it then stood, stating that 'hard cases make bad law'. This led the Jewish community to believe that, although the judgement was in favour of the defendant, Dr Fanny as the plaintiff in this case had won a moral victory. Dr Fanny was a respected figure in both the Jewish and general communities, and her role in this case added to her stature as a leader, a view confirmed by Max Freilich (1967), who described her participation as follows:

The statutes of Australia did not provide for group libel and an individual had to be found on whose behalf Court action could be taken. The courageous and gracious woman leader Dr. Fanny Reading, in her capacity of Youth Aliyah Vice-President, volunteered to be the plaintiff and proceedings were instituted against the publishers and editor of *Smith's Weekly*'. (p. 170)

Dr Fanny, who stated she had 'no skills in the parry and thrust of legal debate' (Ochert 1996, p. 331), had entered this legal arena reluctantly. She was determined, however, to redress the defamatory lies *Smith's Weekly* had published nationwide. In this, she succeeded. Justice Herron's references to Dr Fanny's character, standing and achievements were widely reported in media throughout Australia, as were her responses during the three days of the trial. She

compelled admiration for her rebuttal of the lies published by *Smith's Weekly*. Despite the inadequacy of libel laws at that time preventing Justice Herron from delivering a judgement in her favour, many of her goals were accomplished, in particular, disseminating her truth and those of Youth Aliyah and Zionism to the wider Australian world.

For Dr Fanny, it had been an ordeal. Reflecting on the process in subsequent years, she commented: 'I was questioned by Mr Shand QC for three days, he was so aggressive, but the judge was a very kind person, it is a pity he died recently' (cited in Symon 1973). Dr Fanny was determined to stand up and be counted in things big and small; and in that way she wrote her own history. She was insistent on her right to her untarnished reputation. As a high-profile individual in the Jewish and general communities who represented Jewish values and principles, she had much to lose from mudslingers, of whom there were many. She was firm in her resolve to restore her good name and that of Youth Aliyah and the Jewish community in Australia. As the plaintiff, she was the central protagonist in a highly politicised case that became a national *cause celebre*, one that aroused strong responses in several constituencies throughout Australia. She hoped the broader narrative and themes of the court proceedings would serve a valuable public information purpose. She aimed to ventilate the issues and to convey her position to a broader audience and thereby negate the toxic effects of the paper's defamatory claims against Youth Aliyah, Zionism, and the Jewish people.

When Justice Herron directed his verdict for the defendant on the ground that the libellous article sued upon was not capable of referring to the plaintiff, he pointedly referred to the issue of costs:

I thereupon took it upon myself to decide this question as a matter of law and no question of fact was left to the jury. Under Section 265 of the Common Law Procedure Act, it is quite clear that the costs of the finding or judgment for the defendant must follow the event and therefore I enter a formal verdict and judgment for the defendant with costs according to Section 265. (Herron 1949a, p. 1)

In response to Cassidy's request that Justice Herron refuse costs in this case, Justice Herron took the unusual step of deferring the question of costs. He replied that he was not ready for that question, which could be conveniently stood over: 'I will reserve the question of costs. There may be some law on the subject, I do not know' (p. 1).

On 29th June 1949, Justice Herron heard the action for costs. He raised significant issues in relation to the costs:

I have at the moment not stopped to consider what the effect on the Taxing Master's mind may be, if any, relating to other issues of the case which were not dealt with. There was a plea of truth and public benefit filed by the defendant upon which the plaintiff joined issue and indeed the plaintiff called certain evidence in her own case dealing with that particular subject. I think it is a matter entirely for the Taxing Officer to say what the effect of the judgment for costs which I have just pronounced. (pp. 1-2)

One of the most significant long-term consequences of this landmark case concerned Justice Herron's admonition that Australian defamation law at that time made no provision for group libel. Justice Herron's comments in his judgement paved the way for future parliamentary discussion and reform of the laws of libel: 'It is for Parliament to re-shape the law if any redress is thought to be necessary in such a case as this (Herron 1949b, pp. 10-11).

Co-CEO of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, Peter Wertheim (2013) states:

Those who would dismiss Australia's laws prohibiting racial vilification as a mere concession to latter-day political correctness and the 'culture of complaint' should remember that such laws were called for by a distinguished Supreme Court judge [Judge Herron] as far back as 1949.

Australia's first laws against racial vilification were only introduced in 1989 in New South Wales. The Australian Human Rights Commission states:

In 1989, New South Wales became the first state [in Australia] to make it unlawful for a person, by a public act, to incite hatred towards, serious contempt for, or severe ridicule of a person or groups on the grounds of race. The 1989 amendment to the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977* also created a criminal offence for inciting hatred, contempt or severe ridicule towards a person or group on the grounds of race by threatening physical harm (towards people or their property) or inciting others to threaten such harm. (Australian Human Rights Commission 2002, online)

Six years later, in 1995, the Australian Parliament enacted such laws for the whole country. While tracing the link between Justice Herron's judgement and the multiple iterations of group libel laws in Australia is beyond the scope of this dissertation, there remains the question as to why it took 40 years, until 1989, for these laws to be enacted in Australia. In an interview conducted on 24 December 2020, Wertheim said:

Justice Herron's statement that 'It is for Parliament to re-shape the law if any redress is thought to be necessary in such a case as this' was probably about as far as a Judge in the process of delivering a judgment could go at that time in suggesting possible law reform. Justice Herron was not necessarily suggesting that any reform should take the form of a law prohibiting 'group libel'. I would argue that by using the word 're-shape' Justice Herron envisaged the possibility that any new law might not necessarily fit within the 'libel' paradigm. (Wertheim interview with Anne Sarzin, 24 December 2020)

Focusing specifically on why it took 40 years to effect these legal changes, Wertheim suggests that ordinarily the law in Australia has followed, not created, social changes and changes in attitudes. He stated that by the end of World War II, the White Australia Policy had been in force for more than 40 years. About 95 percent of the Australian population was of British or Irish ancestry, and English was the language spoken at home, and everywhere else, for virtually the entire population. After the War, the Australian Government commenced a large-scale immigration program in order to meet labour shortages, protect Australia from external threats and stimulate economic growth. From 1945 to 1975 about three million migrants and refugees arrived in Australia, including many from Italy, Germany, the Netherlands and Greece. Wertheim also stated that from 1975, following the dismantling of the White Australia policy, new groups of migrants arrived in Australia from all parts of the world, increasing the diversity of Australia's population. In 1988, permanent settler arrivals in Australia numbered about 150,000. Approximately 45 percent of them were from Asia, Africa or the Middle East (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1989, p. 15). Wertheim concludes:

It took, in effect, two generations of large-scale migration to Australia and broad social acceptance of the benefits it brought, for social attitudes to change, and to break down the cultural expectation of migrants to assimilate and downplay their cultural differences from the Anglo-Celtic majority. Australia began to pride itself on its diversity. Racial *discrimination* was widely seen as a barrier against migrants becoming equal citizens, and as offending against Australia's egalitarian ethos. The law followed this change in public attitudes, and racial discrimination was legally prohibited by the Racial Discrimination Act in 1975. Racial *vilification*, although widely seen as bad form, seemed to many people at first not to warrant legal prohibition, because freedom of expression is considered sacrosanct in Australia, and rightly so. As Australia's population continued to diversify, it became more widely understood that racial vilification causes real and measurable harm to people and communities, and

therefore exceeds the proper limits of individual freedom. Once again, the law followed changes in public attitudes, and the first legal prohibitions against racial vilification began to be introduced from 1989 onwards. (Wertheim interview, 24 December 2020)

In late 2014 the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies came into possession of a 'Youtube' video of a speech delivered on the streets of Sydney by an extremist religious leader, inciting violence against, and death of, Jews. The Board lodged a complaint with the NSW Anti-Discrimination Board in early 2015, which agreed that there had been a breach of S20d of the NSW Anti-Discrimination Act. Under the law as it stood, there was a 6-month window in which legal action could be taken. The 6-month window closed with no action being taken. The NSW Jewish Board of Deputies reached two conclusions: that if it was possible to publicly threaten violence against any group of Australians, with the law taking no action, it placed everyone at risk; and that this was a whole-of-society issue. The NSW Jewish Board of Deputies CEO, Vic Alhadeff, told the writer of this thesis:

The problem was that under S20d of the NSW Anti-Discrimination Act, there had not been a single prosecution since the Act was introduced in 1989. We formed an alliance of, eventually, 34 community organisations under the banner Keep NSW Safe and launched the Keep NSW Safe campaign, with myself as its spokesperson (www.keeptnswsafe.com). The launch took place at a press conference at NSW Parliament House (with 21 community organisations involved at the time). Over the next three years, I held approximately 150 meetings with politicians and media interviews, accompanied to a handful of the meetings by members of the coalition. Our objective was to lobby the NSW Government to introduce a law which outlawed incitement to violence on the basis of race, religion, gender, sexual preference and a number of other categories.

In late 2017, NSW Attorney-General Mark Speakman took the proposed law to the government; it was thrown out, with free-speech champions speaking against it. I recalibrated the campaign and narrowed the focus so that it no longer sought to outlaw hate speech; but focused specifically on incitement to violence in the categories mentioned above. Six months later, the identical bill was passed unanimously—by the NSW Government, NSW Legislative Assembly and NSW Legislative Council. It became law on June 27, 2018. (Vic Alhadeff, 2020, Sydney)

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The day after our arrival, an angel appeared to us. That angel was Dr. Fanny Reading, and the minute we met her, everything changed for us for the better.... We could not believe that such a person existed.

—Jana Gottshall 2003

Chapter 9: Conclusion

Summary of the thesis chapters

This thesis, comprising nine chapters, forms a biographical totality that examines the multi-faceted life of Dr Fanny Reading. The first chapter outlines the scope and salient arguments of the thesis. Chapter 2 surveys the published material on Dr Fanny that currently exists and identifies gaps in current research and documentation of her life and times. Chapter 3, which focuses on Fanny's childhood in Russia and depicts the challenges of displacement and migration, argues that these foundational experiences contributed to Dr Fanny's lifelong concern with victims of persecution and her dedication to alleviating their disadvantageous situations. This chapter also highlights the bond between Fanny and her mother, Esther, who assumed responsibility for her child's welfare while her husband, Nathan Rubinowich, was establishing himself in country Victoria, Australia. This relationship between sole parent and child prefigured Esther's lifelong mentoring role and inspired Dr Fanny to conduct her life in accordance with the ethics of orthodox Judaism. This was of particular significance in Fanny's development, as she shared these beliefs with thousands of her followers, principles that also fuelled the programs and policies of her organisation, the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW).

Chapter 4 traces the development of Fanny's musical and medical careers, demonstrating the complexity at the heart of her career choices, the competing claims of the artist and the scientist. The chapter elucidates this conflict within the context of the First World War, the active military service of her three brothers, and the need to make a pragmatic choice to study medicine, thus enabling her to contribute to the wellbeing of others. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 describe the emergence, development and contributions of the NCJW, with an emphasis on its role in the socio-cultural life of Australia; the NCJW's contributions to the nation's war effort between 1939 and 1945, and its peace-time agenda that focused on assisting migrants and dedication to the humanitarian needs of Australians and communities abroad. These three

chapters constitute a definitive portrait of Dr Fanny as a pre-eminent leader who demonstrated an acute sense of the socio-political structures operating within Australian government and civic institutions; a feminist emancipating her followers from patriarchal constraints and ushering them into the public domain; and a visionary devising educational programs, organisational platforms, and philanthropic policies that underpinned her NCJW agenda.

Chapter 8 discusses Zionism and Youth Aliyah, which were central features of a defamation action in the NSW Supreme Court in 1949, in which Dr Fanny was the plaintiff. The chapter deconstructs for the first time the court transcript and Justice Herron's landmark judgement that called for Parliament to address the absence of group libel laws in Australia. This penultimate chapter helps to define Dr Fanny in terms of her heritage, identity and mission. In all these chapters, her national agendas are seen within the wider historical and international contexts.

Dr Fanny's contribution

The larger narrative of Dr Fanny's life addressed universal themes, such as loneliness, racism, antisemitism, women's rights, justice, social disadvantage and marginalisation, education, displacement and rehabilitation. Her lifelong vision of a world informed by empathy and compassion shaped her humanitarian mission through many decades of public life. As a doctor, social activist, feminist, community leader, educator and humanitarian, she dedicated herself to creating a more tolerant and harmonious society.

As founder of the NCJW and designer of its programs and policies, she established a sisterhood predicated on 'the law of loving kindness' (Andgel 1998, p. 233). This organisation became a conduit for sociological change, improving the lives of many thousands in Australia and, where possible, addressing the ill effects of persecution, poverty and disease in several other countries. The support given to refugees fleeing the Nazi genocide of Jews during the Second World War ranks as one of NCJW's greatest achievements. Dr Fanny and her NCJW members provided guidance, transport, food, accommodation, medical services, language tuition and employment options for those who sought sanctuary in Australia.

For Dr Fanny, education was the engine of enlightenment that would enable women to transform their lives. Her sisterhood of Jewish women, her 'beloved organisation' (p. 236) spoke with an authoritative voice on a range of local and global issues, engaging successfully in social welfare, philanthropic, religious and educational enterprises, both nationally and

internationally. Dr Fanny coaxed and guided her members along an upward trajectory that took them from their world of domesticity into a wider sphere of interest, encompassing national and global events and issues. As a social activist, she envisaged goals for women that they had never considered before, and she mapped pathways they never knew they were capable of traversing. She expanded their intellectual horizons, deepened their knowledge and observance of Judaism, and created an ethos of service-above-self that underscored their sense of duty as Australian citizens.

Dr Fanny was revolutionary for her time, a changemaker bringing about socio-cultural and organisational reform of women's lives in spheres within and beyond the Jewish community. It was a challenging undertaking, but she was undaunted by obstacles that included the conservative nature of the Australian Jewish community, their limited socio-political perspectives and the narrow aspirations of Jewish women whose homes and families constituted their entire world. As founder of an organisation advocating for the agency and creativity of women, she mentored members so that they could fulfil the roles in society she envisioned for them.

Creating the new Jewish woman

Dr Fanny cared about her patients, her people and humanity. She forged connections with the greater community, addressing preconceptions and prejudices about the Jewish people. Throughout her life, she spoke up and stood up for her people in particular and for humanity in general. She was generous in helping others, whether friends or total strangers. She stated:

The Council has set before its members the brightest and noblest of Jewish ideals and has proved quite practically that all these ideals can be carried out and used for the benefits of humanity. Only knowledge can break down the ignorance and prejudices of the ages, and Jewish women are equipping themselves with that knowledge of their own people, which alone can make possible a right pride of race and stem the tide of religious intolerance. ('Council of Jewish Women: Visit of Dr. Fanny Reading. Welcome in Kalgoorlie' 1929, p. 2)

She dedicated herself and her organisation to counteracting apathy and indifference among Jewish women in the community. As a woman of faith, she derived strength from an identity rooted in Judaism. Judaism's ethical values and humanistic principles drove her actions and organisational programs. She reached out to the wider community among whom she

promoted her values of caring and sharing, ensuring an equitable society for all. She changed attitudes incrementally by creating an ethos of communal service and goals, inspired by her mantra of 'service above self'. In so doing, she changed the role of women in Australian society. By communal service, she meant more than charitable work and monetary donations, although she never disparaged these measures for rendering assistance to others. She broadened the base of women's societal obligations, advocating for 'a fuller sense of the greater responsibility that should rest on the shoulders of the Jewish women, viz., in the study of educational, domestic, personal, charitable and national movements both at home and abroad' (Andgel 1998, p. 205).

In creating an ideological framework for NCJW, Dr Fanny incorporated the values by which she lived and the ideals towards which she aspired. She stated that Council's ideal was 'a linking together of all Jewish women for the betterment of themselves.' She decried superficial and trivial issues that potentially caused division: 'No one is so perfect they cannot be better.... We want to educate you to get rid of all pettiness' ('Council of Jewish Women: Dr Reading urges broad outlook' 1929, p. 54). In outlining her agenda, she set benchmarks of excellence, and embraced the disadvantaged and marginalised:

This is not a charity organisation. There are organisations here to do that work, and we will help them. But our work is bigger—to make Jewish women bigger in mind, heart, and outlook. Give them the broad view. And to preserve Judaism among the children. To help the lonely newcomer to be less lonely, to help the woman outback who has not the advantages that we have. (p. 54)

Dr Fanny succeeded in her mission. She welded together disparate elements—women from different social strata, rich and poor, gifted and uneducated, leaders and followers, the religiously orthodox and the progressive and secular—and embraced them all. In so doing, she harnessed their diverse talents and created an organisation that earned a reputation for good works and responsible citizenship. In 1933, she urged members to begin NCJW's second decade with 'renewed courage, perseverance and understanding' ('Tenth birthday celebrations' 1933, p. 7). In challenging times, these were the attributes she strove to inculcate in NCJW members. Without her passion, sustained over decades, for the expansion and development of NCJW, it could not have flourished as it did. She was NCJW's driving force, giving speeches, presiding at countless meetings, travelling endlessly around the country, energising members to participate in and support Council's many spheres of interest at home and abroad.

A leader on the national stage in Australia

Dr Fanny was a pragmatist who sought viable solutions to problems small and large. With a childhood embedded in memories and experiences of Russian pogroms, she was alert to the dangers of antisemitism threatening Jewish communities abroad. She channelled both her disquiet and her empathy into actions aimed at alleviating the misery of the impecunious, the unemployed, the disenfranchised, the marginalised and the persecuted. In her they found a motivated, articulate and committed advocate. During the Second World War, she did all in her power to assist Jewish refugees fleeing countries where they were delegitimised and facing annihilation. As a medical doctor who specialised in maternal and child health, she was concerned about the safety and welfare of children and saddened by the genocide that engulfed Jewish children in Europe. When child migrants arrived in Australia, she welcomed them and expressed gratitude for ‘beautiful and sturdy children’ (‘NCJW New section formed at Wollongong: Welcome to new arrivals’ 1947, p. 8). She saw in them the remnants—and the hope—of her people.

During the Second World War, Dr Fanny stepped onto the national stage. She embarked on major projects aimed at the welfare and support of the Australian Imperial Force and the country’s war effort. She suspended all regular NCJW activities and dedicated herself and her organisation to war work, her priority at that time. This was her finest hour, rising to the challenges of war, both material and spiritual. She taught members that they should give service ‘to the country in which we live’ (‘Tenth birthday celebrations’ 1933, p. 7) and they responded with hard work and united efforts. She and NCJW earned the respect and gratitude of Australian authorities and military personnel for their support, including her leadership in fundraising, the endowment of hospital beds, a quarter of a million garments made by members for the military, and three mobile canteens that operated in Sydney, London and Palestine.

She also oversaw the construction of the Sir John Monash Recreation Hut, the Anzac Buffet in Hyde Park, and the construction and running of the Kiosk in Sydney’s Martin Place—staffed by 300 NCJW volunteers—that became a popular venue for tea and meals. At the Kiosk, visiting military personnel could also access information and offers of hospitality. NCJW donated all proceeds from the Kiosk and NCJW’s two gift shops to the Australian Comforts Fund. These undertakings benefited the country as a whole, as official correspondence testified.

NCJW conducted comparable programs in every state in Australia, and it was acknowledged that no other women's organisation rivalled the magnitude of NCJW's contributions to the country's war effort. Dr Fanny deflected the focus of personal tributes from herself to her organisation. She never courted the limelight unless it illuminated the achievements of the women and girls of her organisation. Her leadership during the war years, her name and good works were known and acknowledged throughout the country. On 25 June 1948, at the opening of the 9th NCJWA Conference, the Premier of New South Wales, James McGirr, stated:

It is most fitting to hear this gathering pay tribute to Dr. Fanny Reading.... Her name is a household word for good work in the State of New South Wales. Wherever I go in Australia, I meet people who ask me about her. Work done by people like her, without great publicity, are the greatest deeds of all. ('National Council of Jewish Women Celebrates Silver Jubilee' 1948, p. 4)

Dr Fanny forged ties with women leaders of organisations in the general community, and NCJW contributed to their work among the underprivileged and those with disabilities. Through NCJW, she launched initiatives to assist a broad range of charities, institutions and organisations in the wider community. In Sydney, she extended the concept of 'sisterhood' to bodies such as the National Council of Women, the Racial Hygiene Society, the Dalwood Children's Home, the Rachel Forster Hospital, and the Isabella Lazerus Home. Enacting her program in other cities and towns throughout Australia, she achieved a multiplying effect, with constructive outcomes for the health and wellbeing of thousands of individuals of all faiths and ethnicities. This was a major part of her non-denominational outreach program that consolidated goodwill among people from different backgrounds.

In all Dr Fanny's connections with non-Jewish groups, she never hesitated to speak with conviction about her own faith, its values, ethics, biblical messages, and importance to her and her members. She derived comfort from her Judaic heritage and with the rise of antisemitism both in Australia and overseas, she demonstrated courage in proclaiming her Judaism openly. Despite criticism from those who thought an overtly Jewish organisation might trigger antisemitism, from the very beginning she insisted that the new body be called the National Council of Jewish Women. This confidence in her heritage and faith never diminished. She remained a spokeswoman for her people, encouraging members to take pride in their traditions and history, inspiring them with confidence:

The Catholics, the Protestants and the French hold meetings in our midst and are not ashamed of the fact. Why should we be? Can we not have racial pride and yet be sound citizens of the country we live in? ('Tenth birthday celebrations' 1933, p. 7)

This strong sense of identity underpinned Dr Fanny's actions and words, her vision and mission; and never more so than when she stood for three days in the witness box as the plaintiff in a defamation case that reverberated around the country. According to contemporary reports—and the testimony of surviving relatives, friends and colleagues interviewed for this thesis—Dr Fanny had a gentle and kindly disposition. However, she transformed into a warrior for justice when she appeared as the plaintiff in a defamation case that alleged a front-page article in *Smith's Weekly* had brought her and the Jewish people into disrepute (see Chapter 8). She believed in prosecuting the evil she discerned in society and found resources within herself to call wrongdoers to account. In 1949, in the NSW Supreme Court in Sydney, she revealed courage and tenacity, qualities that empowered her through an ordeal that taxed her mental and physical strength. She was determined to address calumny *Smith's Weekly* had heaped on Youth Aliyah, the organisation of which she was Senior Vice-President. This action was consistent with her philosophy of standing up and speaking up wherever and whenever she perceived injustice, whether to a reputation, a person or a people. Despite losing the case, Justice Herron, in his judgement, praised her contribution to society and to Australia, including her efforts for the nation during the Second World War.

Dr Fanny's 'second child'—Palestine

In 1926, on Dr Fanny's return to Sydney from travels abroad, she said that the Council of Jewish Women (CJW) was her 'first born', but that she had acquired 'a second child' and that was Palestine, the National Home ('Council of Jewish Women' 1926, p. 6). She was enthralled to hear the salutation '*Shalom*'—Peace:

The hills attracted her, and she felt that they were issuing a call to the Nation to come back to the soil. The schools and the University and the revival of Hebrew were a wonder and surprise to her. It was a country in which the Jew is free — freer than anywhere else in the world and where no apology is needed for being a Jew or excuse for the practice of his religious rites and traditional customs. ('Council of Jewish Women' 1926, p. 6)

Dr Fanny was moved by the return of a dispersed people to their ancestral homeland after 2000 years' exile. She supported people and institutions in Palestine and, after 1948, in the State of Israel. She was concerned with maternal and child welfare and she improved facilities there for mothers, babies and children. She initiated projects for healthcare amenities that would be open to all sections of the population, whether Jewish, Christian or Muslim. This was her 'undenominational' humanitarian agenda in action.

When Dr Fanny created the CJW in 1923, she promised Bella Pevsner 'to make the restoration of Palestine one of the Council's foremost aims' (Rubinstein 1987, p. 107). Openly supporting Zionism in the 1920s was a brave stance, as Dr Fanny 'was one of a tiny group of communal activists who believed in the acquisition of the Jewish homeland as a political state' (Newton 2000, p. 95). In Australia, from the 1920s onwards, her organisation supported the Jewish homeland. Dr Fanny and CJW in 1923 'sent the first monies ever raised by Australian Jewish women to Palestine—£100—to found a district nursing service in Tel Aviv' (p. 96).

From 1923, Dr Fanny's humanitarian response to the needs of the population in Palestine foreshadowed her future policies for her organisation. In 1926, she wrote:

Here in this prosperous sunny land [Australia], the poorest mother can obtain the best treatment throughout Public Hospitals; but in Palestine ... the people cannot have the necessities they should have, then WE must come forward and help them to have what they have a right to have. They are human, as we are human; they have feelings as we have. By what right are we entitled to benefits more than they? (Reading 1926)

Dr Fanny was an astute observer of global politics and was familiar with the provisions of the United Nations General Assembly's resolution passed on 29 November 1947. In calling for the establishment of a Jewish State, the General Assembly required the inhabitants of the Jewish homeland to take necessary steps to implement that resolution. Dr Fanny's dream of a Jewish State in the ancestral homeland—for which she worked most of her adult life—became a reality on 14 May 1948, when David Ben-Gurion, head of the Jewish People's Council (JPC), declared the establishment of the State of Israel. On that day, a new page was written in the history of the Jewish people.

The JPC Declaration referred to pivotal events in recent Jewish history, which also featured in Dr Fanny's defamation trial—the First Zionist Congress in 1897; the Balfour Declaration of 2 November 1917; and its reaffirmation in the Mandate of the League of Nations. It promised

that the State of Israel would 'guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture'. It ended with an appeal to Arab inhabitants of Israel

to preserve peace and participate in the upbuilding of the State on the basis of full and equal citizenship and due representation in all its provisional and permanent institutions. We extend our hand to all neighbouring states and their peoples in an offer of peace and good neighbourliness, and appeal to them to establish bonds of cooperation and mutual help with the sovereign Jewish people settled in its own land. The State of Israel is prepared to do its share in a common effort for the advancement of the entire Middle East. (Ben-Gurion 1948)

Dr Fanny conceptualised, in nurturing and maternal terms, NCJW's role in relation to the State of Israel: it was an infant in need of protection and care. Mina Fink, a former national president of NCJW, stated:

With the State of Israel reborn, Dr Fanny, a Zionist of long standing, directed all sections to intensify their commitment to Israel. She taught us that we have a moral obligation to care for the baby we helped to bring into this world. We must help it to crawl, to walk, to reach maturity and economic independence. (Fink 1974)

After Dr Fanny started a conversation about Zionism among her members In 1923, NCJW went on to alleviate hardships endured by the people in Palestine, whether Jew or Arab, Muslim or Christian. In Israel, NCJW continued its social welfare programs, healthcare initiatives for mothers and babies, work and contributions to Youth Aliyah and JNF, the latter concerned with land reclamation. In 1948, she was elected to the NSW State Zionist Council, and her main concern—and NCJW's priority—was Israel's challenges in feeding, clothing and housing the new immigrants who were streaming in now that the doors were open.

NCJW's legacy of 'service and devotion'

In 1955, aged 71, Dr Fanny resigned as National President of NCJW, having held the position for 26 years. Overnight, she transformed from NCJW's aspirational visionary into its elder stateswoman. No longer centre stage, she was still available to guide and advise. She commended Vera Cohen as the new National President. At the 11th NCJWA Conference, in Sydney, she said: 'I pray that in 18 years' time we shall celebrate the Golden Jubilee of our beloved organisation, the organisation which has meant so much to me personally and which

is founded upon the permanent foundations of service and devotion' (cited in Andgel 1998, p. 236).

In 1973, when NCJW's 50th anniversary Jubilee celebrations commenced, Gertie Bartak wrote:

We all had a sense of joy and thanksgiving that our 'living legend' Dr Fanny Reading, MBE, was present: that she who had founded NCJW in Australia should see its 50th Anniversary. Dr Fan's personal delight and satisfaction in attending both functions were expertly expressed in her own words—'I made it.' She received a standing ovation from 400 guests when she arrived. (p. 237)

As Dr Fanny travelled that long road from 1923 to 1973, there were many landmark achievements. What emerges from this overview of her life is her ideological consistency and loyalty to the agenda she envisioned at the formation of CJW in 1923 in Sydney. Primarily but not exclusively, these were initiatives for the religious education of Jewish women and girls; communal service 'on behalf of her people and the Empire' ('Proposed new Jewish women's movement: Council of Jewish Women of New South Wales' 1923, p. 8); philanthropy and social welfare at home and abroad; Zionism 'aimed at the restoration of Palestine' (p. 8); charitable work throughout Australia; and the understanding of and involvement in the wider world of public policy and politics.

Throughout Dr Fanny's life, she was a teacher, in a pedagogic sense instructing her members, and as a role model embodying values to which her members aspired. She led by example, enabling her followers to model her conduct and uphold her standards. These values were aligned with her actions. She articulated her vision for her organisation, defining goals for their collaborative mission. She introduced 'lecturettes' at meetings that educated members. She refined their taste with cultural evenings that brought people together socially. She held that all members were equal, irrespective of their levels of education, wealth or poverty, or their specific Judaic affiliations that ranged from orthodoxy to progressive Judaism, or no faith at all. She said, 'We all have the same problems and interests at heart, and it is our duty to meet freely and promote open discussion of them' ('Dr Reading's Broadcast Address' 1933, p. 7). She taught members how to speak in public, how to conduct meetings and, importantly, how to debate amicably. All were asked to subscribe to NCJW's ideals and agenda, which reflected her core values. Through Dr Fanny's moral teachings, she embedded NCJW's programs within Jewish ethics, traditions and observance, celebrating festivals and encouraging members to

transmit knowledge of their heritage to their families and children. She closed the gap between her ideals and social realities.

By speaking openly about her Jewish identity and the ideals of her organisation, Dr Fanny influenced and taught the wider community about the complexity of Jewish history and the values of Judaism. Media articles testify to her role as unofficial ambassador for the Jewish people in Australia. She created connections between faiths that contributed to harmony and tolerance in Australian society. Speaking of those who inspire others to explore new directions, Lord Jonathan Sacks stated: '[T]hose who teach people to see, feel, and act differently, who enlarge the moral horizons of humankind, are rare indeed' (Sacks, 2019). She transformed the lives of those fellow travellers who accompanied her on her life's journey.

Dr Fanny's story enables us to understand her times, her challenges and how she met them. Despite a childhood fractured by pogroms, she remained positive throughout her life and engaged in constructive programs to improve the quality of life for thousands at home and abroad. She never lost hope for a new dawn and she imagined a different future for Jewish women and girls and for the Jewish people. Her humanitarian agenda was non-sectarian. As a child of refugee parents fleeing violent antisemitism in Russia, she could speak with compassion and empathy for the voiceless in society, the orphan, the refugee, the marginalised in Kings Cross where she lived and worked as a medical doctor, and for the isolated and lonely women in country towns throughout Australia, with whom she identified. All were her constituency and the beneficiaries of her medical skills, organisational ability and social welfare agenda. She emphasised leading a purposeful life, being part of a meaningful whole and contributing to society.

After the genocide of the Jewish people in the Second World War, she was part of 'a generation haunted by ghosts' (Burger 2018, p. 20). As Elie Wiesel noted:

The challenge of our generation of survivors was, what would we do with our memories? Would we allow them to drown us in despair, or would they somehow give us the strength to respond to other people's suffering? (cited in Burger 2018, p. 20)

Dr Fanny's view of suffering was redemptive. Devastated by the Holocaust, she found strength to move forward towards socio-cultural and political goals. She had hope. She created new and complex organisational structures in society—the multi-layered NCJW that comprised sections for Seniors, Young Marrieds, Juniors and Sub-Juniors—that enabled thousands of her followers to work towards a safer, healthier and more harmonious world.

Dr Fanny's enduring legacy

The NCJW has perpetuated Dr Fanny's legacy—her beliefs and teachings—in their 21st-century agenda. Rubinstein (1991) points out that Dr Fanny attempted to fuse the traditional feminine ideal of the 'ministering angel' with increased representation of women in public life; but queries 'Whether her National Council of Jewish Women satisfactorily achieved this goal, indeed whether this goal was a legitimate one, is to some contemporary feminists debateable' (p. 294). NCJW is Dr Fanny's bequest to the Jewish women of Australia who continue to channel energies into programs that benefit all Australians, the Jewish community and the people of Israel. Through NCJW, her efforts and their transformative impact on others continues. NCJW, now called the National Council of Jewish Women of Australia (NCJWA), has continued to evolve, while still honouring Dr Fanny's original mission. According to former Co-National President Sylvia Deutsch, '[T]his organisation can be a thought leader and an activist organisation for Jewish women in Australia' (Brender 2017). Former President of NCJWA's NSW division and former Co-National President, Victoria Nadel, joined in 2007. In an interview, she said she wanted to be involved in volunteer communal work within an organisation that 'encompassed many fields of endeavour':

I'm aware of being in a diaspora community and aware of the attitude that many have to our community, which is negative. This incredible organisation allows me to be involved in social justice issues in the Jewish community and the wider Australian community. It is an organisation that—because of its outreach and approach to the transcultural community—is building a harmonious multicultural society and also supporting Israel. NCJWA does it all and that's why I joined. When I look at what Dr Fanny did, I think she found a balance between responsibilities to our own Jewish community and our responsibilities to the wider Australian community in which we live. (Nadel 2018)

NCJWA continues to re-invent itself as it deals with contemporary challenges. Future researchers might care to investigate whether current its initiatives reflect the teachings and values of Dr Fanny, especially her commitment to the healthcare and wellbeing of mothers, babies and children. Certainly, there has been an expansion of its programs, both nationally and internationally. Today NCJWA's activities in Sydney alone include packing and sending transcultural birthing kits to Africa; the 'Mum for Mum' program to counteract loneliness and depression among young mothers; 'Cuddle Bundles' providing gifts for babies to mums with

limited means; the 'Gene Circle' supporting women carrying the BRCA gene fault; and the NCJWA Cancer Support Network assisting women diagnosed with cancer, cancer survivors and female carers.

In the advocacy area, NCJWA has links with the International Council of Jewish Women and, through them, subscribes to the United Nations' sustainable development goals, including that no human being should be marginalised or discriminated against. NCJWA also has a portfolio dedicated to interfaith and multicultural connections. Projects in Israel include the Ilan Foundation providing wheelchairs and computers to disabled children; university scholarships for Ethiopian Jewish women; the establishment and support of the Haifa Rape Crisis Centre; and JNF projects, such as a children's playground in Shlomit (*NCJWA NSW Past, Present and Future* 2019).

On 26 August 2019 in Sydney, I attended the 96th AGM of the New South Wales branch of NCJWA, held in the Dr Fanny Reading Council House in Woollahra, Sydney. Co-President Miri Orden told those present: 'We think of our wonderful founder Dr Fanny Reading MBE and we often wonder how she would have approached a problem. She is my hero, a woman ahead of her time.' As in Dr Fanny's day, cheques were presented to charities, both Jewish and gentile: Jewish House, Bondi, which gives accommodation to the homeless and their pets; and 'Dress for Success', which provides smart clothes for job interviews to women of limited means seeking employment. The 'Dr Fanny Reading MBE Honour Award' was presented to a young member—reflecting the need to engage with a younger demographic of women members—for her contributions to National Council in the past year. While the vocabulary has changed, the manifesto on the inside cover of their 2019 AGM report still reflects Dr Fanny's values: 'Responding to community needs. Empowering women. Working for Israel. Promoting social justice. Strengthening transcultural interaction.' The following words could have been written by Dr Fanny in 1923: 'Our commitment to *tikkun olam* [repairing the world] remains ever strong. Our core belief in the importance of community service and advocacy for the dignity of women and girls continues to drive us' (National Council of Jewish Women 2019, p. 7).

All states run their own programs, so the collective good accomplished by NCJWA has grown exponentially since the time when Dr Fanny led the organisation. The National President for 2019, Negba Weiss-Dolev, stated in words that echo Dr Fanny's mission: 'NCJWA continues to be an inspiring avenue for Jewish women to make a difference' (p. 40). The organisation Dr Fanny established almost a century ago still perpetuates the values for which she advocated and remains a force within the Jewish and wider communities in Australia and abroad. It has

not only outlived her, it has strengthened and expanded through the years, as she would have wished. Its viability and its advocacy of her values validate Dr Fanny's life of 'service and sacrifice'. As Sylvia Gelman (1974) noted, Dr Fanny was 'the quiet revolutionary of her time.'

Dr Fanny moved well beyond her initial aims of counteracting intermarriage and assimilation. And she ensured far more than a line of leadership succession. She reinforced the agency of the individual, while empowering the community. At a time when female figures were mostly silent, she taught generations of women to be social activists and to cultivate a deeper connection to life. She gave Jewish women a collective voice and focused their energies on humanitarian programs that changed lives and destinies. Through her actions, she showed others how to live a meaningful life. She equipped women and girls with the skills needed to play a constructive role in society. She encouraged her followers to find solutions to seemingly intractable problems. She and her members worked co-operatively, laying the foundation for comparable work by future generations. She dared to dream and transformed that dream into reality.

Dr Fanny was a trailblazer who believed in human rights and civil liberties for all and who never wavered from the standards she upheld. She was a witness to the perturbations of history, including the resurgence of antisemitism and the Holocaust of the Second World War, yet she never despaired, and she continued to inspire hope in others. She demonstrated conclusively that, with effort and dedication, one can change the trajectory of one's own life, improve the lives of others, and heal schisms in society. Above all, she cared—for family, friends and total strangers. Her generosity was legendary. As a leader she healed the wounds of war and laid foundations for peace at home and abroad.

On 19 November 1974 in Sydney, Dr Fanny died at the Wolper Hospital in Woollahra, and was interred two days later, on 21 November, in Rookwood Cemetery. Ninety years of age, she was acknowledged for her lifelong adherence to her own 'law of loving-kindness' and her belief in the transformative power of *tikkun olam*, healing the world. She had faced tragedy and loss with fortitude, resilience and hope. She was, however, never captive to the past. She crafted the person she became and lived constructively in the present. A pioneer in socio-cultural and political fields, she was aspirational for herself and for others, encouraging her members to fulfil their potential and to use their abilities and gifts in the service of their own and the wider community. She bequeathed NCJW—her sisterhood with a humanitarian philosophy—to the Jewish community. To the nation, she left a legacy of service and dedication to all, irrespective

of race, colour or creed. With her open mind, open heart and open hand, she conducted a lifelong dialogue with her community and the wider world both at home and abroad.

According to Yerushalmi (1989), in an imperative that has resounded with enduring effect among Jews since biblical times, the Hebrew bible commands that we 'remember' (*Zakhor*) (p. 5). Remembering Dr Fanny can foreground for future generations the core values by which she lived and which she entrusted to others so that they, in turn, might transform lives as she did and make the world better, more tolerant and more harmonious.

Time has effaced many of Dr Fanny's achievements and, for most Australians, she has receded into the shadows of the past. Hers, however, is a life worth examining, so that her contributions to the Jewish and Australian communities and her place in Australian history can be re-evaluated and acknowledged. This biographical thesis attempts to do this by moving Dr Fanny from the footnotes of history to the main text.

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Appendix

Hyman Reading in court

In 2017, I interviewed Leigh and Lynne Reading in their Woollahra apartment in Sydney, within walking distance of the headquarters of the National Council of Jewish Women in New South Wales, known as the Dr Fanny Reading War Memorial Council House. Leigh is Dr Fanny's nephew, the son of her brother, Hyman 'Red' Reading, and his second wife Enid Esther (née Herman). During the interview, Leigh shared with me the story of a scandal involving his father Hyman and his marriage to his first wife, Elma May (also called Mary) Dickinson of Newcastle. At the time of their marriage in 1920, Hyman was 25 and Elma May 21 years of age. Their daughter, June Reading, was born on 25 July 1921. In 1922, the parents separated and Hyman moved to Dr Fanny's residence at 19 Belgrave Street, Kogarah. In 1925, June's mother died, aged 26, allegedly from an abortion. Together with Dr James Kingpatrick and Nurse Esma Dihms, Hyman was charged with conspiring to procure 'an illegal operation' for Elma. The coroner found there was insufficient evidence and all three were discharged. Two years later, in April 1927, Hyman sought custody of his six-year-old daughter, who had been living with her maternal grandmother Alice and uncle George Dickinson. Lionel Dare represented Hyman in court and the case was heard by Justice Davidson. George Dickinson contested Hyman's application for custody of June.

Leigh Reading stated that this court case was a challenging chapter in his father's personal life. Both Dr Fanny and her brother, Dr Abe Reading, supported Hyman through this crisis. Although this case was not part of the narrative of Dr Fanny's professional life, she was involved briefly in the proceedings, as she offered to bring up her niece or to support her brother in doing so. However, Justice Davidson awarded custody of June to Elma's brother, George Dickinson ('Robinovitch Reading fights for the custody of baby June', *Truth*, 10 April 1927, p. 15), who stated she would live with their married relatives.

The case was sensationalised, with lurid details published in newspapers of the day. Photographs of Dr Fanny and her brother appeared in papers throughout the country. It was with a certain degree of reluctance that Leigh and his wife, Lynne, spoke of these events. It was clear that the family had buried this episode and, in fact, their genealogy records fail to mention Hyman's first marriage to Elma May.

On 16 January 1936, Hyman married for the second time, to Enid Esther Herman. Leigh was their only child. Leigh added that his father, Hyman, established contact with his daughter June and visited her as often as he could. Hyman died on 2 August 1956. In succeeding years, Leigh befriended June's two sons, his nephews, of whom he is most fond; and the circle finally closed.

Bibliography

As mentioned in Chapter 2, research for this thesis drew extensively on primary and secondary sources. The thesis relies largely on the following primary sources: contemporary newspaper reports, editorials and opinion pieces; Dr Fanny's radio broadcasts, her published speeches and articles; archival NCJW records, including original documents (letters, citations, certificates and awards) and publications; the researcher's personal interviews with Dr Fanny's family members and friends, current NCJW members and office-bearers; family photograph albums; Dr Fanny's music scores and sheet music; government documents, including naturalisation certificates, military records and letters; the original court transcript of Dr Fanny's defamation trial in 1949; and the Mitchell Library's collection titled 'Dr Fanny Reading papers, photographs and realia, ca. 1890-1974', which comprises graphic materials, textual records and objects.

Secondary sources include journal articles; Australian dissertations; websites; and books and articles by authoritative scholars in the disciplines of culture, sociology, religion, history, philosophy, politics, psychology, biography, and feminist studies.

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