

'We became British aliens': Kindertransport refugees narrating the discovery of their parents' fates

Chad McDonald

To cite this article: Chad McDonald (2018) 'We became British aliens': Kindertransport refugees narrating the discovery of their parents' fates, *Holocaust Studies*, 24:4, 395-417, DOI: [10.1080/17504902.2018.1428784](https://doi.org/10.1080/17504902.2018.1428784)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17504902.2018.1428784>



© 2018 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 31 Jan 2018.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 2593



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

‘We became British aliens’: Kindertransport refugees narrating the discovery of their parents’ fates

Chad McDonald  ^{a,b}

^aDepartment of History, University of Bristol, Bristol, UK; ^bParkes Institute, University of Southampton, Southampton, UK

ABSTRACT

This article utilizes a thick description to explore the post-war lives of Kindertransport refugees. In particular, it examines the spatial dimension of discovery: how the Kinder learnt of their parents’ murders or were reunited with them following years of separation. The article argues that distance and proximity are key to how the Kinder frame these difficult memories. While the parents may be absent in the public memorials dedicated to a redemptive portrayal of the scheme, they are certainly present within the Kinder’s own narratives. And it is these narratives we need to be more attuned to.

KEYWORDS

Kindertransport; oral history; distance; proximity; difficult stories; families

Introduction

The Manchester Jewish Museum’s permanent exhibition explores the lives of the Jewish population in that city over time. On the upper balcony of what was a synagogue – to the left of the Holy Ark – is a small display case focusing on the lives of the city’s Jewish population during and after the Second World War. Within the display cabinet is a child passport issued to Gerd Breitbarth on 18 May 1939. The caption notes that:

Gerd was brought out of Germany a few days later through the sponsorship of the Spedding family, non-Jews living in Sheffield. For three years he was brought up a Christian in Sheffield, even singing in the church choir. At the age of 13, however, he was reunited with his mother, who had settled in Manchester, and returned to the Jewish faith.¹

This article is about children like Breitbarth. Children – mostly Jewish – who came to Britain on the Kindertransport following the *Kristallnacht* pogrom in November 1938 and before the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939.² This operation will be familiar to the readers of this journal. Indeed, the Kindertransport has become one of the most frequently remembered journeys of any migrant group in the twentieth century – memorably dubbed by the late Rabbi Hugo Gryn as the ‘century of refugees.’³

Breitbarth’s passport acts as the sole representation of the scheme on display within the museum.⁴ And, in one sense, the document is hardly an exceptional example of how the

CONTACT Chad McDonald  chad.mcdonald@bristol.ac.uk  Department of History, University of Bristol, 11 Woodland Road, Bristol BS8 1TB, UK

© 2018 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Kindertransport has come to be publicly remembered in Britain. The caption can feed into the redemptive narratives of the scheme, which emphasizes how the children were welcomed into the arms of strangers, successfully integrated into life in Britain and lived happily ever after. But, on the other hand, the caption also presents a striking departure from the various memorials to the Kindertransport that dot the British landscape: it hints at Breitbarth's forced conversion to Christianity and mentions his mother. Elsewhere in Britain, the parents are conspicuously absent in public memorials dedicated to remembering the scheme.⁵ For example, at the main entrance to London's Liverpool Street Station – perched on a raised dais – is an island of five Kindertransport children inquisitively taking in their surroundings. There is no mention of the parents on the accompanying plaque and the work's title – *The Arrival* – emphasizes the children's new life in Britain, rather than dwelling on those who had to stay behind. Flor Kent's precursor to Frank Meisler's work presented children with more forlorn expressions – perhaps hinting at their separation from their families – but again placed focus elsewhere by emphasizing in the accompanying description the efforts made to bring the children to Britain.⁶ Kent's title underscores the focus on the children through its name: *Für das Kind* (for the child).

Yet there is an irony that by focusing only on the child it is possible to forget what the Kindertransport caused them to lose. As Tony Kushner has argued, the Kindertransport gave the children 'back the fundamental human rights denied by the Nazis' so that they could live freely without persecution. But because the scheme was not available to adults the children were denied the opportunity to grow up with their parents. And, consequently, the Kinder were denied 'the rights of a child' and instead had adulthood thrust upon them too soon.⁷ For making this argument, Kushner has been unfairly criticized for equating British refugee policy with Nazi anti-Semitism – seemingly suggesting both were equally to blame for the Kinder's persecution.⁸ He was not making such a conflation, but was instead arguing for the need to adopt a more carefully nuanced approach towards the scheme's development.⁹ Indeed, contextualizing the Kindertransport within the wider nature of Britain's immigration policy at the time is vital to understand the complexities of the operation. As recent archival research has demonstrated, the Kinder's parents did not perceive of the children's emigration as an isolated journey, but rather part of a wider family effort to leave Nazi-occupied territories. Parents were attracted to the Kindertransport in an attempt 'to keep the family together' and held onto the possibility of a 'speedy reunion.'¹⁰ That these plans frequently failed was – in part – the fault of the way Britain's refugee policy worked.

Most of the children would never see their parents again. Precise statistics are unavailable on how many of the children were reunited with their families, but for a long time, it was assumed that only 1 in 10 children saw either of their parents again.¹¹ The 2008 Making News Lives in Britain survey organized by the Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR) called for a major re-adjustment to this figure. The responses to this survey questioned the assumed parental mortality rate and instead suggested that 40% of the Kinder were reunited with at least one of their parents.¹² Scholars have been quick to adopt the figures provided in this survey, with Andrea Hammel apologizing in her more recent work for utilizing the 90% mortality statistic without question.¹³ Yet the evidence basis of the AJR survey itself has been queried.

Jennifer Craig-Norton has provided a nuanced critique of the AJR survey's methodology and the data that can be extrapolated from it. She has emphasized that while the survey provided a large scale and admirable effort, it should not be assumed to be a microcosm of the wider operation. In particular, Craig-Norton notes that the survey was reliant on the small number of still living Kinder. What is more, respondents were individuals who had shared their contact details with Kinder associations and were willing to partake in the survey. Craig-Norton is therefore correct to argue that the survey is based on 'a uniquely self-selected group of participants.'¹⁴ In the end, all the survey can show is percentages based on its *own respondents* – rather than the entire scheme. Indeed, Craig-Norton's own research focusing on the *Polenaktion* Kinder has highlighted some of the difficulties with extrapolating from the AJR's survey. She notes that while the survey presents a parental mortality rate of 62% for its 13 *Polenaktion* Kinder respondents, for this subset of the Kindertransport as a whole the parent mortality rate was actually 90%. This difference is stark and supports Craig-Norton's suggestion 'that Kinder whose parents survived felt more positively about the Kindertransport and made themselves available to be surveyed.'¹⁵

Of course, Craig-Norton is correct to state that 'all statistics pale in comparison' to the individual experiences of the Kinder and their parents.¹⁶ What is perhaps striking is the continued hesitance to explore the post-war lives of Kindertransport refugees. Baumel-Schwartz, for example, acknowledged the importance of examining the post-war interactions between the Kinder and those whose parents survived, but concedes that 'this aspect is outside my scope of research.'¹⁷ But to understand the central heart of the Kindertransport – which is the forced separation of the children from their loved ones – it is necessary to explore their post-war lives as an integral part of the scheme. Separation did not end when the war was over, instead fundamental questions lingered. Would the Kinder ever see their parents again? How would they react to being reunited with their parents after a decade or more of separation? Or, alternatively, how did they discover they would never get this opportunity? It is these questions that form the central focus of this article.

It is appropriate that these questions highlight the profoundly spatial nature of the Kindertransport through their emphasis on the separation between the 'here' and 'there,' between 'presence' and 'absence.' This spatial dimension of the Kindertransport is foregrounded within this article through an examination of the spatial dimension of discovery: the moment when the Kinder were reunited with or learnt that their parents had been murdered. To examine these difficult experiences the article utilizes oral history interviews recorded with Kindertransport refugees. The important connection between the composition of an oral history account and the use of spatial strategies has been emphasized by scholars in recent years, particularly in relation to the retelling of difficult events. Graham Dawson, for example, has emphasized how the memory of such events are commonly centered on and return – in the interviewee's imagination – to the sites where they happened.¹⁸ Tim Cole has built on these foundations to argue that what is important is not just the places that interviewees discuss, but also the 'untellable places' which 'may be among the most difficult – and yet perhaps the most significant for the survivor.'¹⁹ As such, spatial strategies are not just used as part of the process of remembering, but also form an integral part of how interviewees share their experiences with others.

Spatial strategies of narration illuminate the personal dimension of oral histories, thus contributing to our understanding of how interviewees construct their life stories.²⁰ On one level, these strategies center on the concepts of 'space' and 'place.' Scholars define these terms differently, but common ground centers around linking the physical environment with the notion of value and human experience. In particular, place is considered as the identifiable material environment where an event happened – such as a country, city or family house – whereas space is a more abstract concept, ranging from containers of activity such as letters to emotional experiences including the dread of the unknown.²¹ The spatial strategies used by the Kinder, however, are not tied to static places and spaces, but instead focus on bridging the distance between different places and spaces. At the heart of the Kindertransport is the contradiction presented by that unbridgeable distance. In one way, this distance provided salvation for the Kinder, but at the same time, it acted to separate them from everything and everyone they had known.

A space that is worth scrutinizing further is that of the oral history interview. There is a long history of oral testimony collecting with Holocaust survivors. Such projects commenced during the immediate post-war period and included the efforts of the psychologist David Boder in DP camps, and the Wiener Library in London. These early projects were rather circumscribed, focusing almost entirely on the war, or even particular aspects within it. Tony Kushner has identified the early 1970s as a key turning point in the collection of interviews due to a revival in the attention given to life histories. The 1970s hailed two major interviewing projects focusing on refugees from Nazism: the Imperial War Museum's 'Britain and the Refugee Crisis, 1933–1947' project, and the work undertaken by the Manchester Studies unit at Manchester Polytechnic.²² Since then, a whole host of projects have been completed to document the experiences of Holocaust survivors and refugees. These schemes have been created for a plethora of reasons, including to support an increasing number of museum exhibitions, to produce educational resources, and for posterity's sake in recognition of the ever-decreasing number of survivors.

While there is not space here to provide a lengthy comparison of these different major audio–video collections, it is necessary to consider how the interview archive used in this particular article sits alongside other collections.²³ This article utilizes interviews conducted with Kindertransport refugees living in Britain for Refugee Voices: The AJR audio-visual Holocaust Testimony Archive (hereafter Refugee Voices). But before considering the uniqueness of Refugee Voices, it is important to note the obvious absence that this archive shares with other collections. The interviews in the archive only provide a one-sided viewpoint from the perspective of the Kinder; the parents' voices are absent. Every historian of the Holocaust has to deal with this fact – the voices of survival dominate those of the murdered.²⁴ Yet even for the parents who survived – and were reunited with the Kinder – there is a paucity of evidence available from the parents' perspective. The parents' generation passed away before the Kindertransport became a subject of academic or popular interest and so left behind few interviews about their experiences. Craig-Norton has been able to carefully unearth the experiences of the *Polenaktion* Kinder using the Polish Jewish Refugee Fund archive, a rich source of files that is sadly unmatched elsewhere for the Kindertransport.²⁵ While Craig-Norton has argued that lack of direct access to the parents' own voices means they are usually little more than 'a ghostly presence,'²⁶ this article suggests that delving below the surface level of the interviews demonstrates the parents' central and continuing importance in the lives of their children.

Whereas information from the parents' themselves is lacking, the Kinder have produced a mammoth amount of life history material – including published and unpublished biographies, alongside oral history interviews. In 2006, Tony Kushner suggested that these materials might account for up to 10% of those who came on the scheme,²⁷ and it is likely that this percentage has increased in the last decade or so. The Refugee Voices archive fits into this drive to record the experiences of the Kindertransport refugees. Like the Making News Lives in Britain survey and Meisler's Liverpool Street sculpture, the Refugee Voices archive was funded by considerable donations made to the Association of Jewish Refugees, mostly from its own members. Taken together these three projects formed part of the AJR's attempt in the early part of the twenty-first century 'to memorialize the experience and history of the refugee community for posterity.'²⁸ Anthony Grenville has suggested that this drive to promote awareness of the refugee experiences to the wider public marked a departure from the AJR's previous role as 'the best-kept secret in the Jewish community' in Britain.²⁹

Although it is not the intention here to provide a comprehensive account of the AJR, it is necessary to recognize the organization's unique context in order to understand why and how it came to develop the Refugee Voices archive. The AJR was formed in 1941 and, since its inception, has positioned itself as an organization 'of – rather than 'for' – refugees.³⁰ The origins of the AJR influenced the two overarching principles that guided the approach to collecting refugees' stories within Refugee Voices: an emphasis on the contribution the refugees from Germany and Austria have made to Britain and, secondly, the relevance of the Holocaust to Britain.³¹ The AJR's interest in the Kindertransport had grown out of the large Kindertransport reunions, first organized in 1989 by the Reunion of Kindertransports (RoK). Although many Kinder had been part of AJR during the preceding decades on an individual basis, following the success of the reunions RoK became a 'special interest group' under the AJR umbrella.³²

The community-driven approach of the AJR feeds into how the interviewers and Kinder participants were selected for Refugee Voices. There were eight interviewers in total. Each interviewer was assigned to a particular geographical area, except for co-director Anthony Grenville who conducted interviews stretching across Britain. All of the interviewers had a prior connection to the AJR or professional interest in the study of Jewish refugees. Grenville, for example, has had a long-running association with the AJR – including as editor of its monthly journal. Rosalyn Livshin conducted 15 of the 35 interviews used in this article. This number was greater than the other interviewers, who usually conducted a handful in their designated geographical area. At the time of the project, Livshin had already amassed decades of experience as an oral historian having been involved in pioneering oral history projects at Manchester Polytechnic and the Manchester Jewish Museum.³³ The interviewers selected then had a connection to the topics that would be discussed within the interviews. Oral historians have noted that the perception of the interviewer as being a part of a shared community means that interviewees may have been willing to speak more freely about their personal experiences.³⁴

The Refugee Voices archive contains 35 interviews undertaken with Kindertransport refugees who were living in Britain at the time of their interview. All of the interviews were conducted between 2003 and 2007. Of these interviewees, 60% were in their 70s at the time of their interview, while 40% were in their 80s. The number of women and men interviewed was roughly equal, accounting for 19 and 16 participants respectively.

The largest portion originally came from Vienna – forming a quarter of the sample – with a fifth having come from Berlin. One of the interviewees came from Czechoslovakia, and the rest came from German cities and towns, including Hamburg, Munich, and Cologne. At the time of their interviews, over half of the sample lived in Northern England, a fifth lived in London, 17% in the Midlands, two lived in Essex, and two lived in Glasgow.

The selection of this sample was not accidental. Instead, the care taken to select interviewees with a perceived stake in the project was mirrored in the way the interviewees were selected. Bea Lewkowicz – who co-directed the project with Grenville – has summarized that the overarching aim of Refugee Voices ‘was to capture the experiences of “ordinary” German and Austrian Jewish refugees who have settled across the UK.’³⁵ The project’s website again stressed the focus on ordinary refugees, emphasizing that the archive features interviewees ‘who have rarely spoken about their experiences’ before.³⁶ An indication of how far the project sought to avoid those who have previously been interviewed can be seen by cross-checking the names of the Kinder interviewed for Refugee Voices and USC Shoah Foundation collections – with only one of the Kinder, Bea Green, having been interviewed for both collections. By seeking out interviewees who have not previously shared their accounts publicly, Lewkowicz suggests that the archive was able to gather ‘evidence of historical experiences not widely recorded.’³⁷ Of the 35 interviews drawn on, 54% of the Kinder had not previously shared their experiences in public before being interviewed by Refugee Voices. Although care had been taken to select interviewees who had less experience with sharing their experiences, it must still be noted that issues of self-selection and limited representatives in terms of the Kindertransport as a whole – as with the AJR survey – must be borne in mind. It is striking, for instance, that the statistics in the AJR survey tally with those for the interviewees included in Refugee Voices.³⁸

The interviews themselves follow what Henry Greenspan has termed the ‘conventional mode’ of Holocaust testimony. Each interview was filmed using a static video camera on a single day over the course of a couple of hours.³⁹ The interview questions are chunked into four sections: specific biographical details, life before emigration, emigration, and life after emigration.⁴⁰ The use of this typical chronological approach to interviewing risks distorting the archive towards a more positive interpretation of the Kindertransport. Such a format can create ‘a simplistic idea of closure’ presented through the narrative of a beginning, middle and (redemptive) ending when the interviewee reflects on their post-war achievements.⁴¹ An example of the way this interview format risks imposing a redemptive narrative on the Kindertransport can be seen in the way each interview is introduced. Here the interviewer gives the interviewee’s name, the interviewer’s name, and the date and location of the interview. All of these locations are particular towns and cities in Britain, such as ‘London,’ ‘Manchester,’ and ‘Birmingham.’ The typed transcripts that accompany each interview include a summary section identifying the interview number, the interviewee’s name, the date, and location. Again, only a single location is mentioned: where the interviews were filmed. Of course, on a literal level, the interviews took place in a particular location within Britain. Yet focusing on a static location undermines the fundamentally spatial nature of the Kindertransport.⁴²

The importance of other locations has been physical marked by those who came on the Kindertransport. In recent decades, several Kinder have been involved in laying *Stolpersteine*, usually outside the addresses where murdered parents and other relatives once lived.⁴³ The *Stolpersteine* do not mark their presence in the way the memorials at Liverpool

Street Station and other sites do, instead one accidentally comes across them. If you do not know they are there, it would be easy to lose balance and briefly falter. In an analogous way, this article turns attention to the stumbling moments found within Kinder oral interviews as they return to discuss the discovery of their parents' post-war fate. This article argues that the suggestion that 'only a few interviewees' within Refugee Voices 'describe[d] anxiety and insecurities that affected them in their lives' sadly cannot be sustained.⁴⁴ Never getting to see one's parents again – or trying to pick up the pieces after a decade of separation – left a trace.

These traces are explored here through three case studies. The first examines how letters – often seen as spaces of comfort for the Kinder – could instead act as spaces of regret and grief. The uncertainty of the letters is contrasted in the second case study by examining the creation of surrogate sites of mourning. These sites are far removed from the places the parents were killed, but have come to embody that loss and are central to the Kinder's narrative strategy of that discovery. Finally, attention turns to Kinder who were reunited with either one or both of their parents. Here, it is shown that the precise moment of reunion is frequently avoided and focus is placed elsewhere. For one of the Kinder – Susan Einzig – this movement centers on the search for an alternative space of belonging. Taken together, these case studies show that the separation from their parents had an indelible influence on their later lives.

'That was the end of that': letters as spaces of grief and regret

Throughout the interviews, the use of Red Cross letters was recalled as the way short messages, of up to 25 words, could be communicated between the UK and continental Europe. Gerald Jayson – a Kinder from Berlin – recalled that in 1943, when he was aged 14, letters from his parents suddenly stopped.⁴⁵ Such an experience was familiar for many of those interviewed, with 71% of the interviewees recalling that there was a difficulty in receiving letters from their parents or that letters suddenly stopped during the 1940s. Following the discovery of what happened to their parents the letters took on a greater significance for several of the Kinder and came to occupy a central part of their post-war memories of their families.⁴⁶

For others, however, misplacing their parents' letters compounded their sense of loss, creating discomposure within their testimonies. Susan Einzig, whose father was murdered in the Holocaust, recalled that she destroyed his letters to avoid knowledge about her 'gloomy past,' but regretted doing so to her 'dying shame.'⁴⁷ Bernard Grunberg also did not keep any of his parents' letters.⁴⁸ At the time of his interview, Grunberg was particularly active in sharing his life story, having been interviewed by his local newspaper and the local BBC radio station for the opening of The Holocaust Centre in Nottinghamshire. In April 2004, the same month as his interview for Refugee Voices, Grunberg wrote a chapter for *Survival*, an anthology of Holocaust survivors' experiences. In the entry, he mentioned receiving letters from his parents, but does not say he had disposed of them.⁴⁹ In 2009, The Holocaust Centre commissioned a book called *Journeys* to go alongside their new exhibition of the same name about the Kindertransport. When referring to receiving letters from his parents in this later account Grunberg suggested that 'the letters would never have reached me because they were all censored.'⁵⁰ As such, Grunberg's discussion of the letters changed over time from actively disposing of them to suggesting they never

reached him in the first place. These discrepancies do not seem to have been accidental slips of memory. Rather, they appear to reflect subtle modifications to Grunberg's narrative to help him to compose an account where his sense of guilt for no longer having his parents' letters is downplayed. Mark Roseman suggests such responses are understandable because they allow individuals to 'bring the past under control' and cope with unbearable memories.⁵¹

The change in Grunberg's discussion of his letters runs in parallel to the increased cognizance given to letters in the wider public commemoration of the Holocaust. The Jewish Museum (Berlin) has utilized the Red Cross letters of another Kinder – Henry Wuga – within its permanent exhibition focusing on Jewish life during the Holocaust.⁵² It can be perceived that particular importance has been given to the letters due to their close proximity to the 'Holocaust Tower,' which acts as the museum's focal point of remembrance towards victims of the genocide.⁵³ The letters have been given additional prominence in other media, with several Kinder publishing their parental letters as books. Milena Roth, for example, published her letters under the title *Lifesaving Letters*, while Ruth David called her book *Life-Lines*.⁵⁴ These similar titles again emphasize the apparent importance of the letters to the Kinder by representing them as a safety net for the Kinder in a strange, foreign land. Therefore, as well as the changes in Grunberg's narrative acting as a coping strategy, the modifications in his account were influenced by the increased public importance given to letters in Holocaust commemoration. Such analysis is supported by the concept of discomposure, which suggests that interviewees struggle to share life stories that do not fit into wider cultural representations.⁵⁵

The above has looked at how letters from parents could act as spaces of guilt and regret due to the getting rid of objects which, in hindsight, provided one of the last tangible links the Kinder had to their parents. This realization became clear to the Kinder through letters from another source: the Red Cross. Indeed, it was through the Red Cross that Grunberg discovered the fate of his parents. When comparing the three accounts of his discovery of his parents and sister's murder it is striking that the structure employed in each is very similar, which contrasts to his changing narration of the loss of his parents' letters. In each account, he explained that he received a letter from the Red Cross informing him that his family had been deported to Riga, from where no further information had been found. Grunberg was clearly still upset when sharing this memory, as he cried while discussing it in his interview. His distress may have been compounded by the obscurity of the place of murder because in each of his accounts he recalled in similar language that he had never 'even heard of Riga ... I had no idea what Riga meant.'⁵⁶ The obscurity of the place allowed Grunberg to hold on to the possibility that his family was still alive; however, it also meant he did not have a physical site where he could mourn them. As Jay Winter has shown in relation to families of soldiers who died during the First World War, the availability of a physical site of mourning can help people 'to face together the emptiness' of death and destruction.⁵⁷ It is therefore hardly surprising that the nonexistence of a named grave was discussed by several Kinder as making it even harder to deal with the news of their families' murders.⁵⁸

The absence of a site of mourning meant that there was a lack of closure for the Kinder, meaning the awful experience of discovering their parents had died affected them into the present day. In her interview, Bessie Barnett recalled receiving a letter from her uncle, informing her that her parents had been deported to Poland. Throughout her recollection

of discovering her parents' fate, she emphasized the lack of details by hedging her utterances with the phrase 'I don't know.' Barnett concluded her narrative by stating that she gave up looking for her parents because 'it won't bring them back, and then you won't find a grave ... there is no grave, there is nothing; you don't know where they are.'⁵⁹ In the topics before and after the discussion of her parents, Barnett used the past tense to discuss events; however, in her remarks about her parents' fate she used both the present tense, 'don't know where they are,' and future tense 'you won't find a grave.' As such, although Barnett stopped looking for information about her parents, the lack of a physical site for mourning meant that there was a strong link between the past and present – for Barnett her parents were still 'on their train to nowhere.'⁶⁰

The above discussion has suggested that letters were important items within the Kinder's discussion of their parents' murders. The sparse details contained in the letters made it difficult for the Kinder to process their horrific contents and the difficulty was compounded further by the obscurity of the sites of death, meaning the Kinder had no access to sites for mourning. As such, the events of the Holocaust affected the Kinder 'into the present and' were 'current in every respect.'⁶¹

'There's nobody there': physical places as surrogate sites of mourning

The paucity and obscurity of information meant that Grunberg and Barnett were left wondering what had happened to their parents. And they were left without a physical place to mourn their parents. The next two examples contrast with those above by exploring how Kinder created surrogate sites of mourning in Britain to provide a space that symbolized to them the places where their parents had been killed.

When asked in his interview how he found out that his parents had been murdered, Fred Barschak started by discussing information he had received from the Red Cross in 1946. He quickly dismissed these events as providing him with 'the wrong information.'⁶² Rather than the letters confirming his parents' deaths, Barschak placed specific emphasis on an event a year or so later in the synagogue. He recalled that he used to leave the synagogue during the *Yizkor*, the Jewish memorial prayer used to remember the deceased. However, on Yom Kippur in either 1946 or 1947 his English foster father told him to stay in the synagogue during the prayer.⁶³ For Barschak, his inclusion in the *Yizkor* acted as 'the definitive moment' in his realization that his parents had been murdered and that he would never see them again.⁶⁴ As such, it was not receiving information from the Red Cross's tracing service that Barschak connected to his parents' deaths, but the physical act of moving from one place to another. The *Yizkor* acted to move Barschak away from the place for people who had living parents to a place for mourning. And through this movement he became – for the first time in his mind – an orphan.

Otto Deutsch also recalled separation between those with and without living parents. For him, however, the distinction was his own choice as he purposefully separated himself from cousins who had living parents. He recalled that the presence of his cousins' parents meant that he 'was the odd one out.'⁶⁵ Near the end of his interview, Deutsch returned to this thread of separation and loneliness remarking that:

There's only one thing that bothers me, I don't often think about it, I don't know why I'm thinking about it now, that there'll come a time when I might have to leave this place, 17

stairs, and I've got many friends ... but if, God forgive, I need somebody to look after me, there's nobody there.⁶⁶

Here Deutsch again narrated his separation from the outside world, emphasized through the '17 stairs' required to access his home. In this later account Deutsch is less stoic, instead of suggesting he 'fancied being on my own,' his current separation 'bothers' him and he feels that 'there's nobody there.'⁶⁷ Such changes in mood could be seen as part of the interplay between the past and present, as Weinstein emphasizes it is difficult for Holocaust survivors to engage in life reviews because they have 'already experienced losses and confrontation with death,' which affects how they see their lives and the coping processes they use.⁶⁸ Rather than living alone being connected to freedom – as it was in his youth – Deutsch's later discussion shows how his home came to symbolize what he had lost.

The idea of Deutsch's home acting as a surrogate site of mourning can be found elsewhere in his interview. Deutsch described how he visited Treblinka after attending a memorial service for the ghetto uprising in Warsaw. He stated that this visit:

gave me a feeling that, at least, I've made some sort of contact with my dear parents, for it is there that I have every reason to believe, that they had their final hour. And, as I say, both of them. As I was walking along Treblinka, mixed feelings, I kicked something. I looked down and I found a pair of shears, tailoring shears, I dare say. I've got them, all rusted and corroded. And I must imagine that some camp tailor, before he met his death – I've got them. I've made no effort to take the rust and corrosion away, that's my only memory. I've also got some books on it, which I was given at the time. And that brought it all home for me. And sometimes I think to myself how unjust it all was. What did they do to people? Their only crime of being Jews.⁶⁹

Deutsch's account of taking the shears was disjointed, with frequent pauses and he abruptly changed topic after discussing the tailor's death, returning to describe the corrosion on the shears. What is particularly striking is that while sharing this memory, Deutsch turned his head and motioned off camera to the place he kept the shears within his home. He was not alone in taking physical objects away from extermination camps, instead he forms part of a wider group of Holocaust survivors who took items away from the camps as a proxy objects to remember their loved ones.⁷⁰ Deutsch did not imagine the shears had belonged to his parents, but they still embodied the 'only memory' he had of them. Winter suggests that mourning of loved ones at the familial level is linked to 'personal signatures,' including photographs, clothing items, and other possessions of the deceased.⁷¹ Without the availability of such items relating to his own family, Deutsch took an object and created a backstory for how it came to be in the camp. While Deutsch clearly did not think that the shears had belonged to his parents, their presence within Treblinka provided a connection to his parents. These shears had been left by someone who had been where his parents had been and possibly when they had been there. Bringing the shears back with him therefore acted – in an analogous way – as if he was bringing Treblinka home.

Both of these case studies reveal how it was not particular dates that stood as markers of their parents' murders, but rather the retellings were centered on specific places. These were not the places that the parents' themselves had been killed; there was hesitancy within the accounts about where those sites actually were. But rather these were surrogate

sites of mourning, places that were known, and familiar to the Kinder and therefore where they could try and make sense of what they had discovered.

'Very odd situation': reuniting parents with (adult) children

For the Kinder whose parents had survived, reunions were affected by the vacuum of knowledge that had been created due to sporadic wartime communication. Some Kinder found it relatively straightforward to reconnect with their parents,⁷² whereas others found the spatial and chronological distance resultant from nearly a decade of separation a harder barrier to overcome. Ernst Flesch recalled 'waiting at the barrier in Victoria Station' when his mother 'came; we knew it was her.' After briefly mentioning her physical appearance, he quickly changed his narrative focus to discuss his mother's later career, love life, and death in 1986.⁷³ Other interviewees deployed similar strategies. Ruth Jackson interspersed her narrative of reunion by discussing the Persian rug her mother was wearing around her waist which contained her possessions because she 'was only allowed to bring what she could carry.' Jackson described the 'very odd situation' of trying to converse with her mother in German before breaking off her narrative: 'However. But we – so she lived with us in that other room and then we found – we got in touch with a distant cousin of hers ... she said she could live with her because it was a better situation.'⁷⁴ As in Flesch's account, Jackson employed a variety of places – the train station, her home in England, and her mother's move to Brighton – to place the reunion within the greater life story of her mother. It is striking that both Flesch and Jackson changed narrative focus at the precise moment of reunion, creating space within their narratives of a difficult memory by focusing on the wider life stories of their mothers and thus avoided discussing the reunions in depth.

Whereas both Flesch and Jackson focused on life events after the reunion, Bea Green connected her parental reunions with her departure on the Kindertransport. When collecting her father from his ship in the early 1950s, she recounted that he was detained in customs due to gifts he had brought over for Christmas. Green framed the encounter as a 'rescue,' but this time with the 'boot on the other foot, I was the parent.'⁷⁵ Green's narration of the post-war reunion can be contrasted with her discussion of her departure on the Kindertransport, which she described as marking the 'irredeemable loss' of her childhood. It is striking that she added a proviso to this loss by emphasizing that it was not 'entirely negative' because it helped her to cope with 'subsequent loss,' including the death of her husband.⁷⁶ Therefore, Green's descriptions of both journeys complement each other – the earliest looking forward, while the later reunion looks back to the day she left on the Kindertransport. The discussion of parental reunion by Flesch, Jackson, and Green all shift focus at the climax of the difficult events: the moment of reunion with parents. Tim Cole suggests that such re-focusing can help interviewees to achieve composure within their narratives, by allowing them to distance themselves away from the distressing apex of their accounts.⁷⁷

For those Kinder who were reunited with their parents after the war, the reunions were followed by an attempt to integrate their parents into their post-war lives. Some of the Kinder recalled such integration as a positive affair,⁷⁸ with Fanni Bogdanow sharing a particularly positive experience of her mother coming to live with her after the death of her father.⁷⁹ The arrangement lasted until the death of Bogdanow's mother approximately 20

years later. Bogdanow stated in her interview that her mother ‘chose this bungalow for me. So I shall stay here for evermore.’⁸⁰ The physical closeness was also maintained in her public life, as a leading academic at Manchester University, with Bogdanow stationing her mother at the back of her lectures and seminars.⁸¹

As was the case for Bogdanow, Green found reuniting with her parents a positive experience. After the breakdown of her first marriage in 1951, Green described going to live with her parents in Peru for two years between the ages of 27 and 29.⁸² Unlike Bogdanow, who focused on the integration of her mother within her everyday life, Green painted living with her parents as an adventure away from reality. She described feeling ‘liberated from my husband’ and recounted that she ‘played the field’ with different boy-friends.⁸³ For Green, living with her parents was perceived, ‘in a curious way,’ as an opportunity to ‘almost’ catch ‘up with my childhood.’ The use of ‘almost’ is particularly striking here. In each of her accounts of visiting Peru, Green balanced the joy of living with her parents again with the acknowledgement that she was getting older and could not ‘stay a child forever.’⁸⁴ Thus, for Green, there was an air of ephemerality surrounding her life in Peru, which she acknowledged by describing her decision to go back and ‘face reality’ in England.⁸⁵

Other interviewees acknowledged similar tensions in living with their parents after having not done so for nearly a decade. Harvey Ottman came to Manchester on the Kindertransport, along with his brothers, and was later joined by his father before the war. He recalled that the lessening of his adherence to Jewish religious customs was a shock for his mother – who was still strictly orthodox – when she came to Manchester after the war. To keep ‘a sort of harmony’ within the family home, Ottman remembered upholding customs ‘that we used to do rather than the things that we were doing today.’ Finally, a parallel space was agreed – Ottman’s parents maintained their ‘strictly orthodox’ lifestyle, while the brothers adapted to a more liberal Jewish lifestyle, which included observance of the key Jewish festivals.⁸⁶ The compromise between levels of religious observance allowed for the successful reunion of the family, which was maintained until the mother died in the late 1950s.

Henry Wuga’s mother, however, found the creation of a shared space more difficult to achieve. Before his mother came to Britain in 1947, Wuga had married a fellow Kind in Scotland. He felt that his mother could not come to terms with the fact that ‘the little boy she left is now a married man’ and so in 1949 she emigrated to the United States to live with her sister. Wuga felt that the re-creation of distance between himself and his mother worked for the best and he maintained ‘constant contact’ with her until she died.⁸⁷

Other Kinder did not find reintegrating with parents an easy affair,⁸⁸ with Susan Einzig describing her mother’s decision to come and live with her in 1949 as being:

absolutely a nightmare, she was a nightmare ... she thought that I would take over my father’s role and look after her and care for her, and I could barely keep afloat myself. And she wouldn’t let me work and, I mean she was ... I can’t describe it and I don’t want to describe it.⁸⁹

For Einzig, her mother’s decision to move in with her brought back memories of her childhood, which she similarly described as being ‘just a nightmare.’⁹⁰ Whereas Einzig had been willing to discuss her thoughts on aborting her first child, she dismissed the interviewer’s

attempts to discover more about her living arrangements with her mother by using short utterances in response to questions asked:

- Marian Malet [Interviewer]: Did she want to live with you?
 Einzig: Oh yes, yes.
 Malet: Did she live with you?
 Einzig: She did.
 Malet: So in fact there were [Einzig interrupts]
 Einzig: The whole thing was abs –

Einzig abandoned her own utterance to inform the interviewer that she eventually ‘ran away and hid with friends.’ She explained that her mother:

eventually went back to Berlin because, she was in such a state, and they were going to take her and put her in a home here. She had a flat of her own, by this time, eventually, she had somehow furniture left from the house, and brought it all over here and lived in St John’s Wood in a flat but she was, it was a very sad, the whole thing was tragic.⁹¹

Here Einzig’s narrative alternates between her mother’s life in England and return to Germany. The shift between the two countries creates a sense of disorientation within the interview and means Einzig avoided focusing in detail on any of the events that led to her mother’s repatriation to Germany. The account is further depersonalized by Einzig’s placement of her parents within the generation of ‘European Jewry of Central Europe’ who were ‘destroyed by the First World War.’⁹² By locating her parents’ suffering in the context of the First World War, Einzig removed their torment from her own lived experiences. Detachment methods like this are utilized by many survivors of awful events to help them cope with the memories they are recounting because it depersonalizes the events being described.⁹³

‘I needed an identity’: the search for alternative spaces of belonging

While Susan Einzig did not find comfort in her reunion with her mother, she did find support elsewhere. I want to turn briefly to explore her search for an alternative space of belonging and, by doing so, nuance the picture of the Kindertransport that I have painted so far.

Susan Einzig developed a close network of friends through John Minton, who was a fellow teacher at Camberwell School of Art. Minton was one of several homosexual artists working in Soho, London, who had turned away from wartime artwork that had been influenced by British nationalism in order to reflect the ‘appalling tragedies and anxieties of the age.’⁹⁴ It was through Minton that Einzig was introduced to the ‘whole bohemian scene in Soho’ in the late 1940s and early 1950s.⁹⁵ Einzig emphasized in her interview that the people she was socializing were ‘gay, it was a gay scene,’ which was a precarious place to be due to homosexuality being illegal at the time.⁹⁶ Indeed, the historian Matt Cook argues that after a period of increased liberalism during the war years, the early 1950s saw a surge in police crackdowns against homosexual men.⁹⁷ Alongside increased arrests, this was a period of amplified homophobic coverage within newspapers.⁹⁸ In 1952, the *Sunday Pictorial* described homosexual men as ‘evil’ and suggested that they ‘infested London,’⁹⁹ while in 1953 the *Daily Mail* reported that homosexuality

is 'not only bad for the individual but it is bad for the nation.'¹⁰⁰ Einzig reflects on the precarious space she was socializing, admitting:

I wasn't really a part of it, as a woman, and the wrong sort of woman very much I mean, but it was a social, as you know, it become quite a mythical era ... No, I didn't want to get away, I mean, I needed an identity and that had become my identity.¹⁰¹

In her narrative Einzig created a dichotomy: presenting herself as both an outsider, while also suggesting that she could pass within the male homosexual scene in Soho, so that became her identity. Her statement – unprompted by the interviewer – that she 'didn't want to get away' appears to provide a resolution to Einzig's difficulty in finding a space in Britain where she could belong. Einzig, however, returned later in her interview to the difficulty she felt with belonging, admitting she felt as if she 'was drowning.'¹⁰² It is perhaps appropriate that Einzig would become best known for illustrating the 1958 children's classic *Tom's Midnight Garden*. In that book, the main character is separated from the outside world and finds refuge in the dream world of a magical garden. Like Tom, Einzig was looking for somewhere to escape from reality. But this mythical world could not last forever. In Einzig's case, she decided she had to 'anchor' herself to 'some reality' and decided to have a child as a single parent. She felt this action saved her life.¹⁰³ Accounts like Einzig's are downplayed within the popular memory of the Kindertransport because they diverge from the redemptive notion of the scheme through their presentation of a lifetime of struggling to belong.¹⁰⁴

Conclusion

This article opened with Gerd Breitbarth's post-war reunion with his mother as the happy ending to a childhood of separation. But returning to the caption now, it is striking how the account leaves many questions unanswered. How did his mother get to Britain? Where was his father? And how did Breitbarth navigate the space between Christian and Jewish religious practices? Such questions speak to the profoundly spatial nature of the Kindertransport – as an operation that led to the separation and dispersal of families. But while the Kindertransport was unusual, the post-war experiences of the Kinder were not unique in the wider aftermath of the Holocaust. Family members who had managed to emigrate before the start of the Second World War were dispersed across the globe and underwent a kaleidoscope of experiences.¹⁰⁵ During the war, Jews living in Nazi-occupied countries were forced together 'into multilingual fluid prisoner communities that were moved around the expanding and then contracting network of camps.'¹⁰⁶ The shifting nature of the Holocaust during the war led to various selections – along age and gendered lines – which forced families apart. Finding other family members became a key priority for survivors, but they all too often searched in vain. In the 1990 documentary *Chasing Shadows*, Rabbi Hugo Gryn described his return to his former hometown (Berehovo) following his liberation from Auschwitz as something he had to do. His mother had already returned home and was waiting for him and his father to return. Sadly, Gryn's father had died a few days after liberation and Hugo Gryn described the difficulty of sharing this fact with his mother.¹⁰⁷ The Gryn family experience during the Holocaust underscores how 'the initial physical and spatial separation of Jewish men and women in the camp system was, in many cases, permanent.'¹⁰⁸

The distance provided by the Kindertransport had sheltered the children from experiencing the shifting Holocaust landscapes first-hand, but it did not mean they were totally removed from the events on the continent. They too were part of the post-war search for family members. Like refugees elsewhere in the world and survivors on the continent, sometimes these searches proved thankfully fruitful. As shown in the case of individuals such as Fanni Bogdanow, who bought her mother to live with her so that they could be together as a family once more. Distance would not come between them again. For others, however, an unbridgeable chasm meant that reunions were fought with pain and anguish. The tenderness of these moments meant the Kinder shaped their narratives to focus on more comfortable topics within their interviews.

For the majority of the Kinder – who lost at least one or both of their parents – separation from their parents became permanent. Some Kinder learnt of their parents' murder in letters. But the obscurity of the place names in these documents meant nothing to the Kinder and they held onto the possibility that maybe their parents might return one day. Elsewhere, the search for tangible markers of mourning was described in the interviews as ways the Kinder tried to process what had happened to their parents. Physical buildings in Britain were used to provide surrogate sites of mourning that were connected to the Kinder's own lives, rather than obscure Holocaust landscapes. And the collection of miscellaneous objects from death camps provided concrete evidence of their parents' murder. Such approaches were about reducing the distance between the Kinder and their parents, even if this situation was only possible in death.

Analyzing the spatial approaches adopted by the interviewees not only enhances our understanding of individual responses to the aftermath of the Kindertransport and the Holocaust, but instead also provides insights into how the Kinder utilized the wider representations of the scheme within their narratives. Anna Green warns that the cultural theorization of memory is problematic because it downplays individual responses to fit them into pre-existing cultural scripts.¹⁰⁹ Through analyzing the interviews presented here, however, it can be suggested that the relationship between public and private memories is not unidirectional. Certainly, there are examples of the interviewees modifying their testimonies in line with the wider public memory of the scheme, as seen, for example, in how Grunberg's narrative regarding his parents' letters changed over time as increased importance was placed on letters within wider public memory. Yet the testimonies also conflicted with the wider cultural framework surrounding the Kindertransport, suggesting that the redemptive story – in which the Kinder passed as respectful members of British society – is an incomplete narrative.

The legacy of their forced familial separation meant that many of the interviewees expressed a feeling of isolation. When asked in her interview if she had taken British citizenship, Hana Eardley replied, 'Yes, we became British aliens [*sic*].'¹¹⁰ The transcriber of the interview included '[*sic*]' presumably to highlight the use of 'aliens' as an apparent error. The phrase, however, provides a salient summary of how several of the Kinder reconstructed their post-war lives: their loss or long-term separation from parents could not be bridged and there was a feeling of never truly passing within society-at-large. Yet, by extenuating the redemptive narrative I do not want to suggest that the scheme should be seen in a purely negative light. Such an approach would be churlish. Instead, what should be emphasized is that by embedding the Kindertransport within the life stories of its participants a greater understanding of how the operation affected their later lives can be discovered, which helps to nuance our overall understanding of the

scheme. Over 30 years ago, Katz and Ringelheim emphasized that the Holocaust was ‘made up of individual experiences ... We need to be able to listen to those who experienced the Holocaust, to understand the differences in those experiences and to hear the silences.’¹¹¹ It is about time their words were heeded.

Notes

1. Permanent Exhibition at the Manchester Jewish Museum, transcribed by the author in May 2015.
2. Some of the children who came on the Kindertransport had grown up in Christian families, but were defined by the Nazi regime as being *Mischlinge* (non-Aryan Christians), due to the perceived religion of their ancestors. For more information, see Fast, *Children's Exodus*, 115–31. This article does not italicize the terms ‘Kindertransport,’ ‘Kinder’ or ‘Kind’ because these terms have become anglicized and have lost their original German pronunciations.
3. Gryn, *Moral and Spiritual Index*. The positive popular memory of the Kindertransport meant that the scheme was proposed as a humanitarian template during the Middle East refugee crisis in autumn 2015. For a discussion of the problematic parallels drawn, see Craig-Norton, “Contesting the Kindertransport,” 24–33.
4. The Manchester Jewish Museum holds a much more extensive collection of materials connected to the Kindertransport, including oral history recordings. The museum is currently planning for a major redevelopment of the site.
5. One exception to the absence of the parents in popular memory is Diane Samuel’s play *Kindertransport*, first performed in London in 1992. In the first scene of the second act, the play explores the tensions between a mother and daughter, when the former returns from a camp in the post-war period. Samuel’s play does not provide a rose-tinted gloss to the reunion, but rather explores the guilt borne by both parties due to their separation. Elsewhere, the parents are at last gaining recognition as part of public memorials. In May 2017, the ‘Farewell Memorial’ was unveiled in Prague train station featuring handprints of children and parents on opposite sides of a train door.
6. For a concise discussion of the controversy surrounding the construction defects that resulted in Flor Kent’s sculpture being replaced by Frank Meisler’s in 2006, see Pearce, *Holocaust Consciousness*, 216–17.
7. Kushner, *Remembering Refugees*, 171.
8. Grenville, “The Kindertransport: An Introduction,” 4–5.
9. Much recent scholarship has focused on exploring some of the limitations of the operation. Researchers have highlighted the preference for children with ‘certain character traits’ to take part in the scheme, which meant – for example – that children with disabilities were excluded. See Curio, “Invisible’ Children,” 41–56. Elsewhere, other scholars have focused on how class and religious orthodoxy influenced how the children adapted to life in Britain. See Kleinman and Moshenska. “Class as a Factor,” 28–40. Alongside these studies focusing on the logistics of the scheme, there have been various studies focusing on limits of its popular memory. Particularly see Sharples, “Reconstructing the Past,” 40–62; Sharples, “Kindertransport in British Historical Memory,” 15–28; and Kushner, *Battle of Britishness*, 119–38.
10. Hammel, “The Kinder’s Children,” 240–1. See also Hammel, “Future of Kindertransport Research,” 142–4. Equally, Jennifer Craig-Norton has demonstrated how parental letters present ‘sincere beliefs that those partings were not permanent,’ see Craig-Norton, “Contesting Memories,” chapter 4 (here 282) and also Craig-Norton, “Contesting the Kindertransport,” 26–30.
11. This often-repeated statistic can be found, for example, in Benz and Hammel, “Emigration as Rescue and Trauma,” 4.
12. For a discussion of the survey, see Hirschberger, “AJR Kindertransport Survey,” 247–53. Here 250.

13. The apology can be found in Hammel, “‘Liebe Eltern!’ – ‘Liebes Kind,’” 169. For emphasis on the AJR survey statistics, see Hammel, “Future of Kindertransport Research,” 149–50; Williams, *Forgotten Kindertransportees*, xv–xvi; and Grenville, “Home Office,” 1.
14. See Craig-Norton, “Contesting Memory,” 20–1.
15. *Ibid.*, 289.
16. *Ibid.*, 290.
17. Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 7. There has, however, been research focusing on the implications of parental separation for the Kindertransport children more generally, for example, see Benz, “Traumatization Through Separation,” 85–99.
18. Dawson, “Trauma, Place and Politics of Memory,” 156.
19. Cole, “(Re)Placing the Past,” 49.
20. The constructed nature of oral history interviews is well documented. For example, see Pat-
tinson, “Re-examining Gendered Intersubjectivities,” 247; Sheftel and Zembryzcki, “Only
Human,” 201.
21. Useful starting points on the discussion of space and place can be found in Knowles, Cole,
and Giordano, *Geographies of the Holocaust*, 4; Dawson, “Trauma, Place and Politics of
Memory”; and Stewart and Strathern, *Landscapes, Memory and History*, especially 3–6.
22. Kushner, “Holocaust Testimony,” 87. For further discussion on the Imperial War Museum’s
collection of oral history interviews, see Bardgett, “Depiction of the Holocaust,” 151.
23. While there is not space in this article to discuss how institutional practices influence how
different depositories have sought to collect interviews, this topic is certainly worthy of sus-
tained attention. The historian Noah Shenker has undertaken an incisive study of three major
American collections in Shenker, *Reframing Testimony*.
24. The reason for the absence of the parents has been succinctly articulated by London, *White-
hall and the Jews*, 13.
25. Craig-Norton, “Contesting Memory,” chapter 4. For further research exploring the ways
using available archival sources and oral history interviews together can enhance our under-
standing of family life after the Holocaust, see Clifford, “Families after the Holocaust,” here 5
(emphasis in the original). Clifford argues that archives generally ‘reveal the day-by-day
workings of family reunifications, but rarely help us to understand *why* reunification suc-
ceeded or failed.’ As oral histories are recorded years after the events, they allow for a
longer-term perspective on the process, successes, and failures of family reunification after
the end of the Second World War.
26. Craig-Norton, “Contesting Memory,” 237.
27. Kushner, *Remembering Refugees*, 141.
28. Grenville, “The Association of Jewish Refugees,” 108.
29. *Ibid.*, 90.
30. Wiener Library, London, S3B 003/00452, “Association of Jewish Refugees in Great Britain:
The Representative Organisation of the Jewish Refugees,” May 26, 1942, 11.
31. The desire to link the AJR with the Holocaust reflects a wider focus within British popular
memory, which has retrospectively suggested that the suffering of the Jews contributed to
Britain’s reasons for going to war in the first place. The particular focus on the Kindertran-
sport in Britain since the 1980s has further bolstered such a humanitarian narrative because
the scheme allows Britain to argue that it passed legislation to help refugees, an act not repli-
cated in other countries. Stories of the refugees being evacuated alongside British schoolchil-
dren in September 1939, volunteering for civil defense organizations, and knitting socks for
soldiers further help to bolster the idea of the ‘People’s War’ in Britain.
32. Channing, “Kinder Find a New Home,” 16.
33. Livshin’s professional biography is detailed in her Ph.D. thesis. See Livshin, “Nonconformity
in the Manchester Jewish Community,” 15.
34. In relation to the Kindertransport, particularly see Williams, *Forgotten Kindertransportees*,
xvii–xviii; more generally, see Ugolini, “The Internal Enemy,” 137–58.
35. Lewkowicz, “Refugee Voices,” 240.

36. "Refugee Voices Homepage," *Association of Jewish Refugees*, n.d. <http://www.refugeevoices.co.uk> [accessed 7 January 2018].
37. Lewkowicz, "Refugee Voices," 240.
38. Of the Kinder who stayed in Britain after the war, approximately 54% never saw either of their parents again. Out of the 16 Kinder reunited with their parents, 56% were reunited with both of their parents, while 44% were reunited with only one of their parents.
39. Greenspan, "Unsaid," 234–5.
40. See the similarity with the Shoah Foundation's approach to interview questioning, discussed in Shenker, *Reframing Holocaust Testimony*, 118–19.
41. See Kushner, "Holocaust Testimony" for a critique of the chronological methodology adopted in many Holocaust survivor interviews.
42. It is, of course, important to consider where the interviewee currently lives. But this place must be considered in relation to other places where the interviewee has lived. For an exploration of the relationship between these different places, see Pollin-Galay, "Holocaust Is a Foreign Country."
43. This article does not focus on return visits to towns and cities where Kinder once lived. It should be noted, however, that 77% of the Refugee Voices interviewees returned to such places. For the wider discussion of Holocaust survivors returning home, see Hirsch and Spitzer, "We Would Not Have Come Without You," 79–95.
44. Lewkowicz, "Refugee Voices," 243.
45. Jayson, AJR/RVP interview 26, 33.
46. For example, Rubinstein, AJR/RVP interview 34, 18; Subak-Sharpe, AJR/RVP interview 75, 25–6; also see memoirs, such as Brent, "Writing the Life of a Kindertransportee," 182. For a discussion of the contents of the letters the parents sent to their children, see Hammel, "'Liebe Eltern' – 'Liebes Kind,'" 155–72.
47. Einzig, AJR/RVP interview 120, 10.
48. Grunberg, AJR/RVP interview 57, 13.
49. Grunberg, "Lone Journey to Freedom," 2004, 147.
50. Grunberg, "Lone Journey to Freedom," 2009, 103.
51. Roseman, "Surviving Memory," 17.
52. Email correspondence with Maren Krüger, Permanent Exhibition Academic Leader, Jewish Museum, Berlin, May 8, 2015.
53. Holtschneider, *Holocaust and Representations of Jews*, 93–4.
54. Roth, *Lifesaving Letters*; David, *Life-Lines*. Ruth David's autobiography also uses extracts from her mother's letters. See David, *Child of Our Time*.
55. Summerfield, "Culture and Composure," 92; Pattinson, "Re-examining Gendered Intersubjectivities," 248.
56. Grunberg, AJR/RVP interview 57, 20–1; Grunberg, "Lone Journey to Freedom," 2004, 148; Grunberg, "Lone Journey to Freedom," 2009, 103–4.
57. Winter, *Sites of Memory*, 53.
58. Rednall, AJR/RVP interview 59, 24; Weinberg, AJR/RVP interview 61, 35; Murray, AJR/RVP interview 99, 33.
59. Barnett, AJR/RVP interview 45, 19.
60. *Ibid.*
61. Laub, "Bearing Witness," 69.
62. Barschak, AJR/RVP Interview 149, 47.
63. *Ibid.*
64. *Ibid.*, 48.
65. Deutsch, AJR/RVP interview 72, 33–4.
66. *Ibid.*, 39.
67. *Ibid.*, 33, 39.
68. Weinstein, "Holocaust Testimony," 30.
69. Deutsch, AJR/RVP interview 72, 29.
70. For example, see Cole, "Crematoria, Barracks, Gateway," 106–7.

71. Winter, *Sites of Mourning*, 51.
72. Sellers, AJR/RVP interview 13, 26.
73. Flesch, AJR/RVP interview 137, 24–5.
74. Jackson, AJR/RVP interview 69, 29–30.
75. Green, AJR/RVP interview 123, 36.
76. *Ibid.*, 18.
77. Cole, “(Re)Placing the Past,” 38–9.
78. For example, Cohen, AJR/RVP interview 11, 25.
79. Bogdanow, AJR/RVP interview 24, 29–30.
80. *Ibid.*, 30.
81. Taylor, “Fanni Bogdanow, 1927–2013.”
82. Green, AJR/RVP interview 123, 15.
83. *Ibid.*, 35.
84. *Ibid.*, 15.
85. *Ibid.*, 35.
86. Ottman, AJR/RVP interview 77, 35.
87. Wuga, AJR/RVP interview 74, 32.
88. For example, Ruff, AJR/RVP interview 50, 29; Weinberger, AJR/RVP interview 92, 20.
89. Einzig, AJR/RVP interview 120, 19.
90. *Ibid.*, 5–6.
91. *Ibid.*, 20.
92. *Ibid.*
93. Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, 94.
94. Cooper, *Sexual Perspective*, 214.
95. Einzig, AJR/RVP interview 120, 14.
96. *Ibid.*, 15.
97. Cook, “Queer Conflicts,” 153–4.
98. Cooper, *Sexual Perspective*, 216.
99. Douglas Warth, “Evil Men,” *Sunday Pictorial*, May 25, 1952, 52.
100. “Shocked Judge,” *Daily Mail*, October 30, 1953, 3.
101. Einzig, AJR/RVP interview 120, 15.
102. *Ibid.*, 16.
103. *Ibid.*
104. The lives of the ‘hard man’ Norbert Rondel and auto-destructive artist Gustav Metzger described in Kushner, *Battle of Britishness*, 134–6 are additional examples that nuance the squeaky clean popular image of the Kindertransport. Also see the harrowing case of Tilly Friedman – who committed suicide in 1954 at the age of 26 – eloquently discussed in Craig-Norton, “Contesting Memory,” 260–1. Friedman’s suicide forms part of a wider story of poor mental health and suicide cases among the Kinder. For more information, see Turner, *And the Policeman Smiled*, 216–34.
105. For an engaging summary of the different refugee experiences of Jews during and after the Third Reich, see Dwork and Van Pelt, *Flight from the Reich*.
106. For an insight into this chaos, see Cole, *Holocaust Landscapes*, 215–24.
107. *Chasing Shadows* (1990).
108. Cole, *Holocaust Landscapes*, 224.
109. Green, “Individual Remembering,” 41–3.
110. Eardley, AJR/RVP interview 48, 22. Though this article has focused specifically on the *Refugee Voices* archive, feelings of dislocation are apparent in other accounts from Kindertransport refugees. For example, see the discussion of the Kindertransport in Kushner and Knox, *Refugees in an Age of Genocide*, 154–7.
111. Katz and Ringelheim, *Women Surviving the Holocaust*, 24.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Juliette Pattinson, who supervised the MA dissertation that forms the basis of this article. Thanks also to Tim Cole and Tony Kushner for commenting on a draft version of this article, and to the two anonymous reviewers for their helpful suggestions.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Funding

The research for this article was based on Chad McDonald's MA in Modern History dissertation, which was funded by a generous School of History studentship at the University of Kent. The completion of the research for this article was supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council [grant number 1692324].

Notes on contributor

Chad McDonald is an SWWDTP-funded (AHRC) Ph.D. candidate, based at the Universities of Bristol and Southampton. His Ph.D. research explores how individuals have shaped Holocaust remembrance and commemoration in London.

ORCID

Chad McDonald  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-4779-2220>

Bibliography

Archival Material

AJR Refugee Voices Project (AJR/RVP)

- Barnett, Bessie. AJR/RVP interview 45, January 8, 2004.
Barschak, Fred. AJR/RVP Interview 149, February 28, 2007.
Bogdanow, Fanni. AJR/RVP interview 24, June 26, 2003.
Cohen, Hannelore. AJR/RVP interview 11, March 23, 2003.
Deutsch, Otto. AJR/RVP interview 72, September 22, 2004.
Eardley, Hana. AJR/RVP interview 48, February 8, 2004.
Einzig, Susan. AJR/RVP interview 120, March 23, 2006.
Flesch, Ernst. AJR/RVP interview 137, November 8, 2006.
Green, Bea. AJR/RVP interview 123, June 12, 2006.
Grunberg, Bernard. AJR/RVP interview 57, April 18, 2004.
Jackson, Ruth. AJR/RVP interview 69, August 5, 2004.
Jayson, Gerald. AJR/RVP interview 26, July 10, 2003.
Murray, Gertraud. AJR/RVP interview 99, April 11, 2005.
Ottman, Harvey. AJR/RVP interview 77, October 17, 2004.
Rednall, Henny. AJR/RVP interview 59, April 30, 2004.
Rubinstein, Alice. AJR/RVP interview 34, October 2, 2003.
Ruff, Stefan. AJR/RVP interview 50, March 8, 2004.
Sellers, Ruth. AJR/RVP interview 13, April 28, 2003.
Subak-Sharpe, John. AJR/RVP interview 75, October 5, 2004.
Weinberg, Arnold. AJR/RVP interview 61, May 20, 2004.
Weinberger, Harry. AJR/RVP interview 92, March 10, 2005.
Wuga, Henry. AJR/RVP interview 74, October 4, 2004.

Wiener Library, London

S3B 003/00452, "Association of Jewish Refugees in Great Britain: The Representative Organisation of the Jewish Refugees," May 26, 1942.

Autobiographies, Biographies, and Memoirs

Brent, Leslie. "Writing the Life of a Kindertransportee: Memories and Challenges." *The Yearbook of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies* 13 (2012): 173–183.

David, Ruth. *Child of Our Time: A Young Girl's Flight from the Holocaust*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2003.

David, Ruth. *Life-Lines*. Leicester: Christians Aware, 2011.

Grunberg, Bernard. "Lone Journey to Freedom." In *Journeys: Children of the Holocaust Tell Their Stories*, edited by Wendy Whitworth, 100–106. London: Quill Press/The Holocaust Centre, 2009.

Grunberg, Bernard. "Lone Journey to Freedom." In *Survival: Holocaust Survivors Tell Their Story*, edited by Wendy Whitworth, 144–149. Retford: Quill Press/The Holocaust Centre, 2004.

Roth, Milena. *Lifesaving Letters: A Child's Flight from the Holocaust*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004.

Taylor, Jane. "Fanni Bogdanow, 1927–2013." *International Arthurian Society*, September 2, 2013. Accessed August 8, 2017. http://www.internationalarthuriansociety.com/images/uploads/documents/Fanni_Bogdanow.pdf.

Turner, Barry. *And the Policeman Smiled: 10,000 Children Escape from Nazi Europe*. London: Bloomsbury, 1990.

Artistic representations

Chasing Shadows. DVD. Produced and Directed by Naomi Gryn. London: Channel 4, 1990.

Samuels, Diane. *Kindertransport*. London: Nick Hern Books, 2004.

Unpublished thesis

Craig-Norton, Jennifer. "Contesting Memory: New Perspectives on the Kindertransport." PhD. diss., University of Southampton, 2014.

Livshin, Rosalyn D. "Nonconformity in the Manchester Jewish Community: The Case of Political Radicalism, 1889-1939." PhD. diss., University of Manchester, 2015.

Secondary sources

Abrams, Lynn. *Oral History Theory*. London: Routledge, 2010.

Bardgett, Suzanne. "The Depiction of the Holocaust at the Imperial War Museum since 1961." *Journal of Israeli History* 23, no. 1 (2004): 146–156.

Baumel-Schwartz, Judith Tydor. *Never Look Back: The Jewish Refugee Children in Great Britain, 1938–1945*. West Lafayette: Purdue University, 2012.

Benz, Ute, and Toby Axelrod. "Traumatization Through Separation: Loss of Family and Home as Childhood Catastrophes." *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 23, no. 1 (2004): 85–99.

Benz, Wolfgang, and Andrea Hammel. "Emigration as Rescue and Trauma: The Historical Context of the Kindertransport." *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 23, no. 1 (2004): 2–7.

Channing, Ronald. "Kinder Find a New Home Within the AJR." *AJR Information* 55, no. 2 (2000): 16.

Clifford, Rebecca. "Families After the Holocaust: Between the Archives and Oral History." *Oral History* (forthcoming).

Cole, Tim. "Crematoria, Barracks, Gateway: Survivors' Return Visits to the Memory Landscapes of Auschwitz." *History and Memory* 25 (2013): 102–131.

Cole, Tim. *Holocaust Landscapes*. London: Bloomsbury, 2016.

Cole, Tim. "(Re)Placing the Past: Spatial Strategies of Retelling Difficult Stories." *Oral History Review* 42, no. 1 (2015): 30–49.

Cook, Matt. "Queer Conflicts: Love, Sex and War, 1914–1967." In *A Gay History of Britain: Love and Sex Between Men Since the Middle Ages*, edited by Matt Cook, 145–178. Oxford: Greenwood World Publishing, 2007.

Cooper, Emmanuel. *The Sexual Perspective: Homosexuality and Art in the Last 100 Years in the West*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 1994.

- Craig-Norton, Jennifer. "Contesting the Kindertransport as a 'Model' Refugee Response." *European Judaism* 50, no. 2 (2017): 23–33.
- Curio, Claudia, and Toby Axelrod. "'Invisible' Children: The Selection and Integration Strategies of Relief Organizations." *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 23, no. 1 (2004): 41–56.
- Dawson, Graham. "Trauma, Place and Politics of Memory: Bloody Sunday, Derry, 1972–2004." *History Workshop Journal* 59, no. 1 (2005): 151–178.
- Dwork, Debórah, and Robert Jan Van Pelt. *Flight from the Reich: Refugee Jews, 1933 to 1946*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2009.
- Fast, Vera. *Children's Exodus: A History of the Kindertransport*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2011.
- Green, Anna. "Individual Remembering and 'Collective Memory': Theoretical Presuppositions and Contemporary Debates." *Oral History* 32 (2004): 35–44.
- Greenspan, Henry. "The Unsaid, the Incommunicable, the Unbearable, and the Irrecoverable." *Oral History Review* 41, no. 1 (2014): 229–243.
- Grenville, Anthony. "The Association of Jewish Refugees." *The Yearbook of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies* 10 (2008): 89–111.
- Grenville, Anthony. "The Home Office and the Kindertransport Parents." *AJR Journal* 14, no. 1 (2014): 1–2.
- Grenville, Anthony. "The Kindertransport: An Introduction." *The Yearbook of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies* 13 (2012): 1–14.
- Gryn, Hugo. *A Moral and Spiritual Index*. London: Refugee Council, 1996.
- Hammel, Andrea. "Future of Kindertransport Research: Archives, Diaries, Databases, Fiction." *The Yearbook of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies* 13 (2012): 141–156.
- Hammel, Andrea. "The Kinder's Children: Second Generation and the Kindertransport." In *The Young Victims of the Nazi Regime: Migration, the Holocaust and Postwar Displacement*, edited by Simone Gigliotti and Monica Tempian, 239–256. London: Bloomsbury, 2016.
- Hammel, Andrea. "'Liebe Eltern!' – 'Liebes Kind': Letters Between Kindertransportees and Their Families as Everyday Life Documents." *The Yearbook of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies* 16 (2015): 155–172.
- Hirsch, Marianne, and Leo Spitzer. "We Would Not Have Come Without You: Generations of Nostalgia." In *Memory, History, Nation: Contested Pasts*, edited by Katherine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone, 79–95. London: Transaction, 2006.
- Hirschberger, Hermann. "The AJR Kindertransport Survey: Making New Lives in Britain." *The Yearbook of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies* 13 (2012): 247–253.
- Holtzschneider, K. Hannah. *The Holocaust and Representation of Jews: History and Identity in the Museum*. London: Routledge, 2011.
- Katz, Esther, and Joan Ringelheim, eds. *Proceedings of the Conference on Women Surviving the Holocaust*. New York: Institute for Research in History, 1983.
- Kleinman, Susan, and Chana Moshenska. "Class as a Factor in the Social Adaptation of the Kindertransport Kinder." *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 23, no. 1 (2004): 28–40.
- Knowles, Anne Kelly, Tim Cole, and Alberto Giordano, eds. *Geographies of the Holocaust*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014.
- Kushner, Tony. *The Battle of Britishness: Migrant Journeys, 1685 to the Present*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012.
- Kushner, Tony. "Holocaust Testimony, Ethics and the Problem of Representation." *Poetics Today* 27 (2006): 275–295.
- Kushner, Tony. *Remembering Refugees: Then and Now*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006.
- Kushner, Tony, and Katherine Knox. *Refugees in an Age of Genocide: Global, National, and Local Perspectives During the Twentieth Century*. London: Routledge, 1999.
- Laub, Dori. "Bearing Witness or the Vicissitudes of Listening." In *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History*, edited by Shoshana Feldman and Dori Laub, 57–74. New York: Routledge, 1992.

- Lewkowicz, Bea. "Refugee Voices: A New Resource for the Study of the Kindertransport." *The Yearbook of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies* 13 (2012): 239–246.
- London, Louise. *Whitehall and the Jews, 1933–1948: British Immigration Policy, Jewish Refugees and the Holocaust*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Pattinson, Juliette. "'The Thing That Made Me Hesitate ...': Re-examining Gendered Intersubjectivities in Interviews with British Secret War Veterans." *Women's History Review* 20, no. 2 (2011): 245–263.
- Pearce, Andy. *Holocaust Consciousness in Contemporary Britain*. London: Routledge, 2014.
- Pollin-Galay, Hannah. "The Holocaust Is a Foreign Country: Comparing Representations of Place in Lithuanian Jewish Testimony." *Dapim* 27, no. 1 (2013): 26–39.
- Roseman, Mark. "Surviving Memory: Truth and Inaccuracy in Holocaust Testimony." *Journal of Holocaust Education* 8 (1999): 1–20.
- Sharples, Caroline. "The Kindertransport in British Historical Memory." *The Yearbook of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies* 13 (2012): 15–27.
- Sharples, Caroline. "Reconstructing the Past: Refugee Writings on the Kindertransport." *Holocaust Studies* 12 (2006): 40–62.
- Sheftel, Anna, and Stacey Zembryzcki. "Only Human: A Reflection on the Ethical and Methodological Challenges of Working with 'Difficult Stories'." *Oral History Review* 37, no. 2 (2010): 191–214.
- Shenker, Noah. *Reframing Holocaust Testimony*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015.
- Stewart, Pamela J., and Andrew Strathern, eds. *Landscape, Memory and History: Anthropological Perspectives*. London: Pluto Press, 2003.
- Summerfield, Penny. "Culture and Composure: Creating Narratives of the Gendered Self in Oral History Interviews." *Cultural and Social History* 1, no. 1 (2004): 65–93.
- Ugolini, Wendy. "The Internal Enemy 'OTHER': Recovering the World War Two Narratives of Italian Scottish Women." *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies* 24, no. 2 (2004): 137–158.
- Weinstein, Lenore. "Holocaust Testimony: A Therapeutic Activity for Older Adult Holocaust Survivors." *Activities, Adaption and Aging* 27, no. 2 (2002): 27–37.
- Williams, Francis. *The Forgotten Kindertransportees: The Scottish Experience*. London: Bloomsbury, 2014.
- Winter, Jay. *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.