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Faculty of Arts and Humanities

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German-Jewish Letters and the Holocaust, 1933-45

by

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Thesis for the degree of PhD in History

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University of Southampton

Abstract

Faculty of Arts and Humanities
History
Doctor of Philosophy

German-Jewish Letters and the Holocaust, 1933-45

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Charles Ronald Stanley Knight

This thesis is an exploration of the letter collections of five German-Jewish families during the period 1933-45. It uses private family collections, alongside those in public archives, to explore the uses, importance, and conceptualisation of the letter in German-Jewish migration during the Holocaust. The thesis centres on the Amberg family from Aachen, the Hirschberg family from Berlin, Eberswalde, and Brieg (Brzeg), the Goldberg family from Plauen, the Licht family from Berlin, and the Rothschild family from Bad Cannstatt and Heilbronn.

Between 1933 and 1941, approximately 276,000 Jews left Nazi Germany out of a population of roughly 500,000 in 1933; in total 80,000 German speaking Jews came to Britain during this period, including members of all five families discussed here. The onset of Nazi rule in 1933 marked the beginning of the gradual state sponsored degradation and impoverishment of Germany's Jewish population, with the rise of violent antisemitism massively contributing to major peaks in emigration in 1933 and 1938. During this pre-war decade, Jewish communities and Jewish spaces were systematically targeted, ensuring those within them left the Reich, and the spaces themselves often destroyed, reappropriated or relocated. Many German-Jewish families, whose members were separated, sometimes by colossal distances, turned to the letter as a means of attempted connection in an era defined by separation.

Whilst scholarship on German-Jewish migration during the Holocaust is vast, much less has been done to ameliorate the gulf between studies of those that left and those that remained. Although letters have been widely used within scholarship pertaining to German-Jewish migration and the Holocaust more broadly, their critical analysis has not been forthcoming. In studying the individual histories of the five families mentioned above, this thesis centres the letter as a legitimate, and indeed needed, object of study. It argues that the letter played a central role in the lives of German-Jewish families separated during the Holocaust, and makes the case that in using it as a historical source, the scholar can more easily connect the histories of the Holocaust and of refugees, as well as connect histories of the individual, with histories of the Holocaust more broadly. The thesis is divided into seven chapters spread over three parts. Part I centres on how the letter can be, and has been, conceived by different readers ranging from contemporaries to the scholar today. Part II focusses on how the letters in the five collections speak to migratory processes and concerns, and their role in facilitating this. Finally, part III spotlights the letter as a site of knowledge transfer and production, emphasising how correspondence during the period contained both discussion of the everyday, alongside dialogue on the growing persecution of Jews and the course of the war. The thesis ends with a call for scholars to embrace the growing awareness of collections still in private hands globally.

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Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

Print name: **CHARLES RONALD STANLEY KNIGHT**

Title of thesis: **German-Jewish Letters and the Holocaust, 1933-45**

I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. None of this work has been published before submission

Signature: .... Date: **10 June 2025**

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For Anna Amberg,

Gertrud Goldberg, Julia Ringer,

Max Pincus, Rosa Pincus,

Ernst Böhm, Elise Böhm, Siegfried Böhm,

Ernst Licht, Ilse Licht,

and all of the victims for whom these letters are perhaps the last material witness

INTRODUCTION:

'To sit here quietly and imagine it all'

> I have to read [the letters] again and again. Sometimes it is really difficult for me to sit here quietly and imagine it all, rather than seeing the possibility of looking at and getting to know it at one's own observation. I must not and will not complain, as long as I can live quietly in my beautiful although lonesome home [...] and I have dear friends and acquaintances. I hope it will remain like that.
>
> *Anna Amberg to Emil Amberg, 19 October 1940*[1]

For Anna Amberg, a widowed mother of four separated from her family who had all fled to England before 1939, the words on the page which she read and re-read were more than just text. Despite the difficulties of imagination, these words instead acted as a departure point for envisaging and indeed feeling her children once more, and to overcome the physical barrier separating them. In 1940, Anna Amberg lived in a beautiful house on *Salierallee* in Aachen on the outskirts of the city, a house she had shared with her family since the late 1920s before they managed to flee to England in 1938-39. She would often marvel at the beauty of her surroundings 'in the open country on the terrace, all green around me, grass and forest in view'.[2] Through the intermediary of her late husband's cousin Dr Emil Amberg, a prominent physician in Detroit, Anna was able to learn about her children in England, and they about her.[3] When Anna's youngest, Carl Helmut was interned as an enemy alien from his school in Winchester, Anna wrote blisteringly to Emil arguing that he should have done more to get Carl

---

Note on translation: Translated letters are labelled in the footnotes; unless otherwise stated, translations are from German to English. Where there is no translator listed, the original was written in English.

[1] Anna Amberg to Emil Amberg, 19 October 1940, Private Collection of A. Reynolds (herafter PC-AR). Translated by Carl Amberg from the German (unless otherwise stated, translations are from German to English).
[2] Anna Amberg to Emil Amberg, 31 July 1939, PC-AR. Trans. C. Amberg.
[3] For more on Dr Emil Amberg see Irving I. Edgar, 'Early Jewish Physicians in Michigan', *Michigan Jewish History,* 3/2 (1962), pp.6-11 (pp.9-10).

to the USA. A day later, Anna wrote again, apologising for her outburst. Whilst Anna cherished every letter she received, reading and re-rereading, she was also acutely aware of the imaginative qualities of such information. Anna had not seen England; she had not walked the halls of Winchester College as Carl did, nor down the streets of Manchester as her daughters were doing. She did not know what internment meant, only that she no longer knew where on the shared map of their existence Carl now existed. The letters between Anna and Emil, and the information on Carl and the other siblings contained within, provided Anna with the connection she craved beyond her 'friends and acquaintances' in Aachen. But words on a page equally symbolised separation, the knowledge that she could not see Carl with 'one's own observation' anymore. For Anna, her children had become letters, words on a page, pieces of paper to be received through the mail, and memories in her mind.

Between 1933 and 1941, approximately 276,000 Jews left Nazi Germany out of a population of roughly 500,000 in 1933. Following an initial peak after Adolf Hitler's rise to power, when 37,000 fled, the rate of emigration slowed until 1938-39 when 124,000 left in those two years alone including the four children of Anna Amberg.[4] Of those that fled, by September 1939 there were approximately 70,000 German, Austrian and Czech Jewish refugees in Britain (not including children who emigrated with their parents) a figure that rises to 80,000 when one considers those that entered then re-emigrated shortly after.[5] It is difficult to be sure of the true number of those that arrived and stayed in Britain especially those specifically of German nationality. The onset of Nazi rule in 1933 marked the beginning of the gradual state sponsored degradation and impoverishment of Germany's Jewish population, with the rise of violent antisemitism massively contributing to major peaks in emigration in 1933 and 1938. During this pre-war decade, Jewish communities and Jewish spaces were systematically targeted ensuring those within them left the Reich and the spaces themselves often destroyed, reappropriated or relocated.[6]

The notion of a 'shared world' inhabited by family units was fractured, sections of families dissipated around the globe, with many refugees running the fine line between belonging and unbelonging, attachment and separation. In his 1938 work *Mr Emmanuel,* Ukrainian-Jewish author Louis Golding paid credence to the feelings of in-betweenness felt by those forced to flee – through his character Rose Cooper, Golding laments 'they're neither in Germany nor

[4] Christian Gerlach, *The Extermination of the European Jews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p.53.
[5] Louise London, *Whitehall and the Jews, 1933-1948: British Immigration Policy, Jewish Refugees and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.12.
[6] For more on the spatial destruction of the German-Jewish community see Chapter 2.

England. They're floundering in the North Sea!'.[7] Whilst many wished to become engaged in the society, customs and culture of their host nation, the feelings of separation and a yearning for their homeland remained. The actor Ilse Stanley later described the difficultly of leaving in her memoir *The Unforgotten*:

> I faced greater loss. I was so rooted in German art, language, thinking; I was as German as the oak. And one cannot just tell the oak: "From today on you are no longer a German oak. You will have to pick up your roots and go somewhere else." My roots were so deep in the German soil that it was unthinkable to tear them out[8]

Letters therefore became the thing that individuals could no longer do. Letters could cross borders and act transnationally in a world where borders represented life and/or death.

It is abundantly clear that despite numerous other forced migrations in the twentieth century, the emigration of Jews from Germany in the years preceding the Second World War, has accumulated by far the greatest level of scholarship.[9] Frank Caestecker and Bob Moore have suggested that such an imbalance is 'not difficult to ascertain' as 'the movement of people from Nazi Germany prior to 1939 are seen as an essential pre-history' to the Holocaust.[10] It is perhaps noteworthy therefore that despite this specific migration garnering a wealth of scholarly and public interest, studies of the Holocaust and studies of these prior migrations remain separate fields of enquiry in many cases. It is also pertinent to note that pre-war migrations appear front and centre in usable memory of the Holocaust in the United Kingdom. The 2015 report *Britain's Promise to Remember*, uses the Kindertransport for example, to orientate the Holocaust in British history more widely writing that:

> Britain's relationship with the Holocaust is seen through the eyes of survivors, refugees or children who arrived on the 'Kindertransport', those who have rebuilt their lives in the UK. It is largely a positive story of resilience and rebuilding[11]

[7] Louis Golding, *Mr Emmanuel* (London: The Book Club, 1939), pp.60-61.
[8] Ilse Stanley, *The Unforgotten* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), p.61. See also for the use of nature in feelings of separation/belonging: Doerte Bischoff, '"Sprachwurzellos": Reflections on Exile and Rootedness' in *Language as Bridge and Border. Linguistic, Cultural, and Political Constellations in 18th to 20th Century German-Jewish Thought*, ed. by Sabine Sander (Berlin: Hentrich & Hentrich, 2015), pp.195-213.
[9] See Tony Kushner, *Journeys from the Abyss. The Holocaust and Forced Migration from the 1880s to the Present* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017).
[10] Frank Caestecker and Bob Moore, 'Introduction' in *Refugees from Nazi Germany and the Liberal Democracies* ed. by idem (New York: Berghahn, 2014), pp.1-14 (p.1).
[11] 'Britain's Promise to Remember. The Prime Minister's Holocaust Commission Report', January 2015, p.21, Accessed via: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/398645/Holocaust_Commission_Report_Britains_promise_to_remember.pdf, Last accessed: 20 April 2023.

As the report notes, in the case of the UK, the Holocaust is largely understood through the lens of refugee narratives, and yet, the connections between 'those that fled' and 'those that remained' persist as unstudied and underappreciated fields. According to Debórah Dwork 'all [Jews] were potential victims of the Holocaust', and thus if asylum elsewhere was not sought 'they too would have been caught in the murder network'. She continues: 'fleeing does not write refugees out of the story; it simply takes the story elsewhere'.[12] For many family networks, fractured by forced migration to presumed safe countries, letters therefore often became the sole means of connection between isolated relatives.

Based on the letter collections of five families, this thesis will explore the significance, roles, and contents of letters send before and during the Second World War between members of German-Jewish families forcibly separated during the late 1930s. Through conceptualising the German-Jewish letter as a new, enforced 'epistolary space' of familial connection and relationships, this study will seek to highlight the letter as a point of connection for separated families, as well as a symbol of separation. This thesis will ask questions surrounding the nature of the letter - how significant was it to those family members separated by war? How can the researcher today critically utilise this source? Whilst also asking questions about letters' contents – what did families discuss? What practical functions did the letter serve? and, What knowledge was transferred across borders through these letters?

Aimed as an *exploration* of the German-Jewish letter before and during the Second World War, this thesis traces the lives and narratives of the individuals whose letters survive, with the aim of better understanding this everyday item, one which is crucially overlooked. It is first important to provide some contextual detail to the families being studied alongside the methods of access to their collection.

The Families

The Amberg Family

Whilst conducting contextual research on Louis Golding's 1938 novel *Mr Emmanuel* for my MA thesis, I began tracing the life of one of the character's inspirations, Kaspar David Naegele, a German-Jewish *Kind* taken in by Golding's friend, the actor Colin Keith-Johnston and later the poet Richard Blaker. Golding took a fond interest in Kaspar who was later interned in Canada as an enemy alien, a period in which I also learnt he had kept a diary. Quoted in Erich Koch's

[12] Debórah Dwork, 'Refugee Jews and the Holocaust: Luck, Fortuitous Circumstances and Timing' in *"Wer bleibt, opfert seine Jahre, vielleicht sein Leben" Deutsche Juden 1938-1941* ed. by Susanne Heim, Beate Meyer and Francis R. Nicosia (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2010), pp.281-98 (p.282).

Deemed Suspect, Kaspar's diary was cited as in the possession of Carl Helmut Amberg, a friend of Kaspar's, and fellow former internee at Camp B - Fredericton.[13] Naturally I attempted to find Carl and his descendants, eventually locating his children in Canada and nieces and nephews in the UK and Greece. Carl's son assured me that Carl no longer possessed Kaspar's diary although did note that the family were in possession of a series of letters sent/received by Carl and his family during the war years. I subsequently travelled to Carl's niece's house in Banbury, near Oxford, to view the family collection of letters and photographs.

The letters as they currently stand, were collated, transcribed and translated by Carl in the early 2000s and were briefly used by historian Bill Williams on his work on Jewish refugees in Manchester: *'Jews and other Foreigners'*.[14] Carl had reached out to members of his extended family as well as friends and associates to collate a more complete record of the family narrative as he saw it. The bulk of this involved acquiring the letters sent to Dr Emil Amberg, the cousin of Carl's deceased father Richard. Today, the descendants of Emil, whilst having an extensive family archive, no longer possess his wartime correspondence.[15] Three typed booklets were created by Carl by the beginning of 2000, in one, *Some letters of Aennchen & Richard Amberg 1909 – 1942,* Carl describes the booklet thus:

> Here are some letters, largely written to Emil Amberg by our father and mother, from 1909 – 1941 [/] Sam Amberg acquired them in 1948, shortly after Emil's death, and forwarded them to me. They were translated into English by me. [/] There are also the letters which mother wrote to me in the Internment Camp, 1941/42. [/] These were translated into English by Irmgard, with the occasional correction by me (I hope, Irmgard, you don't mind ...).[16]

My access to the Amberg letters is through these booklets and largely not through the original letters themselves, whose whereabouts are unknown. In 2001, Carl distributed these transcribed booklets to his own children as well as his nieces and nephews around the world in the hope that these would be used to remember the life of his mother Anna. On receiving the booklets, Carl's niece wrote to him:

> What a wonderful collection – they provide a fantastic snapshot of what your life was like. It must have been a very difficult emotional time for you, but you seem to have got through it with great cheerfulness [...] And I am very grateful that you have taken the trouble to translate everything. About a year ago I picked up from Wembley a box full of old letters, which I had

[13] Eric Koch, *Deemed Suspect. A Wartime Blunder* (Toronto: Methuen, 1980), p.47, 101.
[14] Bill Williams, *'Jews and Other Foreigners': Manchester and the Rescue of the Victims of European Fascism, 1933-1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011).
[15] Email from N. Graham, February 2022.
[16] 'Some letters of Aennchen & Richard Amberg 1909 – 1942', p.1, PC-AR.

looked through briefly but not very thoroughly. Your collection has prompted me to look more closely.[17]

These additional letters collected by Carl's niece were predominantly those sent from Carl to his sister Marie-Luise in Britain, and provide the other half of the letters contained in one of the booklets. Coeval to Carl's creation of the booklets, his nephew Julian privately published a memoir of his parent's (Werner Treuherz and Irmgard Amberg) lives entitled *True Hearts*. Together, the booklets, original letters, photographs, and memoir constitute a vibrant network of correspondences across the globe with the accompanying contextual background.

Fig. 1 Anna and Richard Amberg (1929), Private Collection of A. Reynolds, Banbury, UK.

Fig. 2 Berta 'Neme' Phillip (1915), Private Collection of A. Reynolds, Banbury, UK.

Anna 'Aennchen' Charlotte Phillip was born on the 9 September 1886 at 94 *Lothringerstraße* in Aachen, the daughter of Carl Phillip (1828–1909) and Bertha 'Neme' Heinemann (1860-1934). Bertha came from a notable family in Essen, the sister of Saloman Heinemann who had been awarded the honorary title of *Justizrat* in 1913 and was a major supporter of the Folkwang

[17] Anne Reynolds to Carl Amberg, 2 December 2001, PC-AR.

Museum Association.[18] Bertha's granddaughter Irmgard described the life of her grandmother and grandfather thus:

> Neme had a tremendous singing voice that could bring the house down, and when she was eighteen she had gone on her knees to her parents begging them to let her become a singer. They refused. She fell in love and was married at nineteen to her young cousin Carl Philip, who must have been a charming and artistic man with a gift for poetry and a great sense of humour. He was found a position in the Heinemann family worsted mill and she became a wonderful housewife and mother, always good-humoured and full of fun and laughter.[19]

Carl Philip developed tuberculosis in the early years of the 1900s and Bertha nursed him faithfully for many years until his death in 1909. In her own life, Bertha was heavily involved in the running of the Mariannen Institute, a 'lying-in' asylum founded by Veit Jakob Metz in 1830, described by Irmgard as a maternity home for single mothers.[20] During the First World War Bertha took in numerous lodgers and refugees into her home at *Lousbergstrasse* 40, a house which would become a haven for young members of the Phillip/Amberg family. Anna went on to marry Richard Amberg (1881-1929), an electrical engineer, in 1911 – their wedding party was held at *'Drei Türmchen'*, a restaurant on *Lousbergstrasse* and was attended by ninety-five cousins and their spouses. Richard and Anna quickly relocated to New Jersey in the USA for Richard to work, but Anna soon fell pregnant and moved back to Aachen, giving birth to her daughter Irmgard (1912-2001) at Neme's house on *Lousbergstrasse* in 1912. Although Anna and Irmgard returned to the USA to Pittsburgh where Richard was working, their stay was short-lived due to the advent of the First World War. Richard's 'patriotic heart drew him back to Germany again to do his military duty', to serve in the Bavarian Army. Anna and her young daughter travelled in between her parents' house in Aachen, and Richard's parents in Duisburg. Richard's brother, Carl Amberg was killed in action in 1915, devastating the family, indeed their mother Ottilie wore black for the rest of her life, and Richard suffered a breakdown exempting him from military service. Post-war, Anna and Richard went on to have three more children: Margaret (1916-93), Marie-Luise (1920-99) and Carl Helmut (1924-). Just after Marie-Luise was born, the Ambergs moved from Düsseldorf to Nuremburg so Richard could begin his new job at a factory making dynamo brushes for the electrical industry. In 1928, on a visit to Leipzig for an industrial fair, Richard caught Dukes disease, similar to scarlet fever which was rampant in the

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[18] For more on Saloman Heinemann (1865-1938) see *Kanzleihaus Salomon Heinemann. Ein Haus und seine Geschichte* (Düsseldorf: Albert Sevinc Planen & Bauen GmbH, [2016]). Uri Kaufmann, the director of the Alte Synagogue in Essen, has also produced research on Saloman Heinemann.

[19] Julian Treuherz (ed.), *True Hearts: The Memoirs of Werner and Irmgard Treuherz* (private publication: 2000), p.62.

[20] See G. A. Petroianu, 'The pharmacy in Gersfeld/Rhoen and Veit Jakob Metz (1792–1866)', *Pharmazie*, 71 (2016), 292–96.

city, and shortly passed away. The newly widowed Anna and her children, relocated back to Aachen to be closer to Neme and her friends. Neme's brother Salomon Heinemann bought Anna a house at *Salierallee* 7 where she remained until the early 1940s.

Fig. 3 (L-R) Margaret, Irmgard, Neme, Carl, Marlies, and Anna [c.1926/7?] Private Collection of A. Reynolds, Banbury, UK.

As the 1930s progressed, the children sought asylum in England in a variety of ways. Irmgard had been in Holland in 1939 with Margaret under the care of Pieter van der Brugge and had managed to acquire exit visas for them both. Marie-Luise was able to get to England through a friend from the girl guides, Hildegund Bohn, who wrote to an acquaintance of hers, Morris Feinemann, head of the Manchester Jewish Refugee Committee, who took her in in 1938 as a

companion for his daughter. Carl was granted a visa through Lord Baldwin's fund and was taken in by Stanley J. Benham of *Benham and Son's,* an Ironmonger's Merchant in London and his family (Irmgard was also friends with the daughter, Hester Benham). Carl subsequently gained a scholarship to Winchester College in September 1939, alongside three other refugees: George Grun, Edgar Feuchtwanger (nephew of the famous novelist Lion Feuchtwanger), and Boris Reubner. By 1939, the children were safe in Britain whilst Anna remained trapped in Aachen. Previously believing her Protestant faith would spare her, by the summer of 1939 Anna began to recognise the need for escape, lamenting the potential loss of her *Salierallee* haven:

> the effort of dissolving a gigantic household [...] And who can say what else can happen here - and for that reason it is very hard for me to dispose of anything. [...] When I sit here, as I do at the moment, in the open country on the terrace, all green around me, grass and forest in view, then I can't imagine that soon all this will disappear from my orbit.[21]

The Hirschberg Family

On beginning the research for this thesis, I arranged a meeting with the archivist of the special collections at the Hartley Library at the University of Southampton, Karen Robson, who pointed me in the direction of a number of potentially useful collections. Bought by the archive at auction in the early 2000s, one collection contained a series of over 120 letters written by or to Theodor Hirschberg in the period 1938-1941. The deposit also contains a handful of notebooks containing chemical formulae and other notations, presumably the previous possessions of Theodor's wife. Whilst we cannot be certain how Theodor's letters ended up at an auction house in Chichester, it was most likely the result of a house clearance or spring clean on the part of Therese Hirschberg (formerly Kronau) who married Theodor in 1952.[22] An introductory note of unknown authorship explains the collection (with numerous inaccuracies) additionally stating that: 'It is a privilege to read the letters from Theodor's relatives and friends whom he probably never saw again'.[23] With no children, no will, no death record for Theodor, and no indication of their later life, the true provenance of why the letters were kept and how they ended up at auction will likely never be known.

Theodor Moritz Wilhelm Hirschberg was born in Eberswalde, Brandenburg on the 18 November 1903 to Martin Hirschberg (1856–1935) the *Amtsgerichtsrat* of Eberswalde, and Margareta Dresdner (1868–1911). Margareta came from a large family with a further eight siblings, the majority from Brieg (now Brzeg) – one such sibling being the noted disabled disability

[21] Anna Amberg to Emil Amberg, 31 July 1939, PC-AR. Trans. C. Amberg

[22] Stride and Son Auctioneers in Chichester possessed no records of sales from the early 2000s to check the provenance.

[23] Introductory note (undated), University of Southampton Special Collections, Hartley Library (hereafter UoS) MS 314/1/1.

campaigner, author and educator Irma Dresdner, who taught at the *Philanthropin*, the school of the Israelite Community (*Israelitische Gemeinde*) in Frankfurt.[24] The death of Margareta in 1911 was followed by the remarriage of their father to Paula Frieda Cohn (1876–1942) in 1914 when the family were living in a large house on *Kaiser Friedrich Straße*, expanded the family network greatly. After leaving school aged nineteen, Theodor began a two year course in banking at the Eberswalde branch of *Commerz und Privatbank* located at *Eisenbahnstraße* 92/93, managed by the directors Erich Graßmann and Otto Mattheus until 1939.[25] Theodor continued at the bank until 1933 when he was forced to leave on account of being Jewish. From May-July 1933, Theodor relocated to Britain and attempted to find work in London beginning as a trainee for the shipping company Harper Copeman & Co., but by September was back in Berlin returning to the city via Belgium. In Berlin he worked as an accountant for various businesses until he finally left Germany for Britain in May 1939 – at first attempting to flee to Cuba.

Fig. 4 Theodor Hirschberg (second from right) at the 1917 Lutheran Festival in Eberswalde. P.01.01.01.00759, Kreisarchiv Barnim, Eberswalde, Germany.

[24] See Petra Fuchs, 'Irma Dresdners Untersuchung 'Über Körperbehinderung und seelische Entwicklung,' Leipzig 1933', *Die neue Sonderschule*, 46/2 (2001), pp.84–95; and Carol Poore, *Disability in Twentieth-Century German Culture* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), pp.62-63.

[25] Email from Y. Liu (Historisches Archiv, Commerzbank AG), 1 September 2022.

Theodor's elder brother Hans Walter Hirschberg (1893–1950) was born in Wittenberge and went on to become a well-respected lawyer in Berlin, later becoming a prosecutor at the Auschwitz Trial according to his descendants. He married Iwanka Ladislawowa (1898-?) from Pleven in Bulgaria in 1929, and together they had a son – Hans Wladislaw. Hans chose to stay in Germany to be with the their stepmother Paula, and was potentially involved in underground activity in the city led by Franz Kauffmann, who Hans Walter had met in 1940.[26] He was deported to Theresienstadt in 1944 where he rekindled a friendship with Salomon Goldschmidt, a merchant from Eberswalde, Martin Ephraim, and the musician Hans Neumeyer.[27] Although he survived the war, and wrote and received letters from Theodor at least until 1941, there is no record of this – Theodor did not keep them and Hans Walter's house was destroyed in the final stages of the war.[28]

Theodor's younger brother, Rudolf 'Rudi' Rembrandt Hirschberg (1906-68) was only five years old when their mother Margareta passed away. In his memoir of the period, the screenwriter and author, Hans Borgelt described Rudi thus:

> there was no more ardent advocate of everything German; German culture, German art, German literature and philosophy than him. He studied law like his brothers, and his father was a justice in Eberswalde. They belonged to the society of this town, the Hirschbergs were an old Eberswalde family. Nothing, they believed, distinguished them as German citizens from other German citizens. After 30 January 1933, Rudolf's behaviour and eloquent speech did not change immediately. His idealism bubbled uninhibitedly. The "*deutschen Jüngling*" was still on his lips. He remained the romantic, unworldly dreamer he was known as and had already been teased at school. "It won't be so bad!" was his optimistic formula. When he finally had to realise that the brown regime did not value a German like him, he withdrew from public life, mortally offended, a deeply wounded man, doubly hurt in his disappointed love and his unaccepted commitment to the German fatherland. Fortunately, he and his brothers were able to leave the country in time.[29]

Rudi is also briefly mentioned in the diaries of the German historian Willy Cohn in relation to his interests in Jewish history. In January 1934, Cohn was giving a lecture on Silesian Jewish history

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[26] Tim Locke, 'Love in 1937: an astonishing hoard found in a Swedish basement', *The Ephraims and Neumeyers,* 17 July 2022, Accessed via: https://ephraimneumeyer.wordpress.com/2022/07/17/love-in-1937-an-astonishing-hoard-found-in-a-swedish-basement/, Last accessed: 5 April 2023.
[27] Tim Locke, 'Martin Ephraim's last days in Theresienstadt', *The Ephraims and Neumeyers,* 17 April 2015, Accessed via: https://ephraimneumeyer.wordpress.com/2015/04/17/martin-ephraims-last-days-in-theresienstadt/, Last accessed: 5 April 2023.
[28] Email from M. Smorra, 17 March 2022.
[29] Hans Borgelt, *Der lange Weg nach Berlin. Eine Jugend in schwieriger Zeit* (Berlin: edition q, 1991), pp.227-28. Trans. Joachim Schlör.

as a 'signpost for the future' in Brieg, the home of Theodor and Rudi's cousin Dr Ernst Böhm and a number of their Dresdner aunts, and noted that:

> Afterwards I talked to a young man, Rudolf Hirschberg from Eberswalde [...] formerly a trainee teacher, baptised in the cradle, now, like so many, on his way back. He stenographed the whole lecture and afterwards asked me in detail for bibliographical information on Jewish history![30]

Rudi, Theodor, and presumably Hans Walter, were all baptised at birth, indeed the only photograph we have of Theodor **(Fig.4)** shows him dressed as the son of Martin Luther in the 1917 *Luther-Festspiele* in Eberswalde.[31] In Theresienstadt, Hans Walter continued to play a key part in Christian activities in the ghetto, giving lectures and sermons.[32] As Cohn alludes to Rudi attempting to rekindle his Jewish faith, Borgelt also highlights his 'mortal [offence]' at the growing antisemitism in the town. In 1935 Rudi left London for Cape Town where he later adopted a keen interest in astronomy, lecturing at the Planetarium in the city.[33]

The collection of letters at the University of Southampton are largely centred on Theodor's correspondence with three individuals: his girlfriend at the time Gertrud Lehmann (1904-43), his cousin Ursula Maria Gottschalk (1914-2007) the niece of Theodor's stepmother Paula, and his paternal cousin Dr Ernst Böhm (1899-1940), the only child of Theodor's aunt Rosalie (1859-1941) and her husband Siegfried Böhm (1845-?). Ernst's relationship with Theodor seemed to be one they both cherished; in a letter to his maternal aunt Else Kunz, Theodor wrote that he 'feel[s] such strong affection for my cousin and his children that his fate is at least as important to me [as Hans Walter Hirschberg's]'.[34] Ernst was married to Elise Heppner (1897-1942), the daughter of the noted Rabbi and historian Aron Heppner (1865-1938) and together they had two children Ilse (1928-) and Siegfried (1930-42).[35] The Böhms were a religious family despite Brieg having no Rabbi and no Jewish school; whilst the majority of the small 255 Jewish community was secular.[36] Ernst's father Siegfried had run a private bank at their home in *Langestrasse* which Ernst sold to a larger bank, receiving both a large inheritance as the only heir, and the sale amount from the bank. In 1938, Ernst was arrested in the November Pogroms and sent to

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[30] Willy Cohn, ed. by Norbert Conrads, *Kein Recht, nirgends: Tagebuch vom Untergang des Breslauer Judentums, 1933-1941*, Vol.1 (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2006), pp.124-25.
[31] Photograph of Theodor Hirschberg at the Luther-Festspielen in Eberswalde, July 1917, Kreisarchiv Barnim P.01.01.01.00759.
[32] Eyewitness account by Hans Walter Hirschberg in Theresienstadt, The Wiener Holocaust Library (hereafter WHL) 1656/3/8/712.
[33] Email from G. Amstutz, 14 November 2022.
[34] Theodor Hirschberg to Else Kunz, 21 April 1939, UoS MS 314/1/4. Trans. Kristin Baumgartner.
[35] Email from M. Heppner, 30 January 2023. The author would like to thank Michael Heppner for his detailed history of Rabbi Aron Heppner.
[36] 'Brzeg, Poland', *Jewish Virtual Library,* Accessed via: https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/brzeg, Last accessed: 12 April 2023.

Buchenwald. When he was eventually released on 5 January 1939, Ernst was ordered by the Breslau Gestapo to leave Germany as soon as possible or risk being reimprisoned.

Fig. 5 Elise, Ilse and Ernst Böhm (middle row) [c.1930/31?]. Private Collection of S. Zamir, Haifa, Israel.

On 21 May 1939, Theodor arrived in Britain and in a letter to his brother Rudi, described the process of leaving Germany, highlighting his initial plan to leave for Cuba:

> My onwards travel to Cuba is impossible now, after they have introduced an entry ban for Jews. [...] Immediately after my arrival in London, the [ban] became known. In Berlin there had been rumours since the 9th May. [...] So, now I have been here for three weeks and have applied for a residence permit at the Home Office.[37]

The letters from then on detail the emigration efforts, connections and networks of the large family, predominantly through Theodor's correspondence with Gertrud, Ursula and Ernst.

Research into the Jewish community of Eberswalde outside the Hirschberg family continues within the town. Since the 1950s Ludwig Arendt had been collecting material pertaining to the community, culminating in the 1988 exhibition *Weil sie Juden waren* shown in St. George's Chapel on the occasion of the commemoration of the November Pogroms. Following this landmark, various citizens began to donate material to further enhance the research, an effort

[37] Theodor Hirschberg to Rudolf Hirschberg, 8 July 1939, UoS MS 314/1/24. Trans. K. Baumgartner.

coeval with the relocation of the district archive to new premises with greater accessibility to the collections. The publication of the *Eberswalder Gedenkbuch für die jüdischen Opfer des Nationalsozialismus* in 2008 crystallized the town's commitment to commemorating it's past. Today, the site of the former Synagogue on *Goethestrasse* is now the location of Horst Hoheisel and Andrea Knitz's memorial *Wachsen mit Erinnerung* a memorial to the former Jewish community of Eberswalde. Equally, in 2019 the foundation of the *Spuren jüdischen Lebens in Eberswalde* initiative, and in 2020 the *Jüdisches Bürgerverzeichnis* database of Eberswalde in the Barnim District Archive has safeguarded Jewish history in Eberswalde for future researchers.[38]

The Goldberg Family

The papers of Marion Charlotte Ferguson are held at the Manchester Central Library after being moved from the Manchester Jewish Museum in 2002. The papers arrived at the museum in February 1992 following Marion's death in 1988 after bequeathing the file of her parents' letters and family photographs to the museum in her will.[39] According to Marion in an audio recording made towards the end of her life (the deposit also contains 3 cassette tapes of unknown provenance):

> They're very moving letters, both from my mother and from my father, trying I think to educate me or to help me to come to terms with human beings in a different country and I think that's how they have to be seen. And I had always planned to translate them, and bring them out, but I left it I think too late – which is a pity.[40]

Towards the end of her life, Marion began to feel closer to her mother, and stated that 'in the imminence of death I feel now quite close to her', indeed her friend Bernice Martin remarked that 'you always needed your mother but you never admitted it'.[41] In 1986, Marion reached out to the Red Cross amongst other organisations in an attempt to find out what happened to her mother, and the same year became heavily involved with Hannes Schmidt's work on the Jewish community of Plauen.[42] In a letter to Mr Wieland, a public prosecutor in Berlin, written in 1986, Marion stated: 'I suppose in order to calm myself down I try to find out details. So it is a very

[38] The database can be accessed via: https://kreisarchiv.barnim.de/projekte/juedische-forschungen-im-barnim-1, Last accessed: 5 April 2023. The author would like to thank Brigitta Heine, Ellen Grünwald and Lucas Lebrenz for their assistance on the history of the Jewish community in Eberswalde.

[39] The Last Will and Testament of Marion Charlotte Ferguson, 8 July 1988, The National Archives, Kew.

[40] Marion Goldberg Oral History Casette 1 (unknown date), Manchester Central Library (hereafter MCL), Papers of Marion Charlotte Ferguson, GB127.M756.

[41] Ibid., casette 3, MCL. Bernice Martin was a colleague of Marion's at Bedford College, University of London.

[42] Hannes Schmidt, *Zur Geschichte der Israelitischen Religionsgemeinde Plauen i. V.* (Plauen: Vogtlandmuseum Plauen, 1988).

personal matter'.[43] Bernice later recalled that conversation with Marion after her terminal diagnosis was often wholly centred around her childhood, her parents and the Holocaust. Indeed, on a final trip to Cornwall in July 1988, Marion brought *If this is a man*, Primo Levi's primary testimony, as holiday reading.

The deposit as it stands was therefore presumably curated by Marion prior to her death; the letters are organised in files, with her father's letters bound and her mother's loose. Some of Marion's mother's letters had already been translated – possibly by Marion herself - and have a number of handwritten emendations. The items themselves remain loosely catalogued – the work of either Manchester Central Library or Manchester Jewish Museum prior to the move – but on the whole there is only a cursory indication as to the true worth of the contents. With its origins in the Jewish History Unit as part of the Manchester Studies department in Manchester Polytechnic in the 1970s, Manchester Jewish Museum was opened in 1984 in the site of a former Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue in the Cheetham Hill area of the city. In the 1980s when Marion decided to donate her collection, the museum had an extensive oral history collection but had a less strong archival and printed archive. A working agreement with the Manchester Central Library meant that they had a small but important collection, of which Marion's papers became a part.[44] Marion's deposit is perhaps the most diverse of the family archives used in this thesis and is the only one to contain letters continuing to the end of the war.

[43] Marion Ferguson to Mr Wieland, 13 January 1986, MCL.

[44] Tony Kushner, 'Looking back with nostalgia? The Jewish museums of England', *Immigrants and Minorities,* 6/2 (1987), pp.200-11 (p.201-204).

Fig. 6 Marion Goldberg's identification card photograph (1938). Manchester Central Library GB127.M756.

Marion Charlotte Goldberg was born on 26 June 1924 in Munich although soon moved to Plauen, the birthplace of her mother Rosa Gertrud (born Präger, 1898-1942) affectionally known as 'Trudl' in the correspondence. In her diary Marion later noted that 'it was a difficult decision' to move away from Munich 'away from all the good friends – into the unknown'.[45] Gertrud's parents David (1865-1942) and Julia (born Ringer, 1865-1943) had emigrated from Krakow in the 1880s and lived an affluent lifestyle in Plauen, running a homeware shop in the town. Marion recalled that life in Plauen 'turned inwards very much – not outwards' and was dominated by her maternal grandmother Julia – a powerful woman by all accounts. Indeed Marion's father described Julia in a letter to Marion in 1943 as 'one of the smartest women I have met in my life; not educate[d], no, but worldly-wise to a high degree [...] I always think that you inherited some of her qualities – for example her sense of humour'.[46] Marion had two maternal Aunts: Felicia (1892-1939) who moved to Frankfurt with her husband Joseph (1879-1942) a Pharmacist with their practice at *Brückenstraße* 21, but died in 1939 from multiple sclerosis, and Lotte (1895-1969) who moved to the USA with her husband Georg Kariel (1884-1951) and sons Herbert and Hans in 1938. In her oral history tape, Marion noted that the family relied heavily on Lotte 'which my father didn't like'. Lotte's new location in the USA became of vital importance for the family,

[45] Marion Goldberg diary entry, 25 May 1941, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[46] Walter Goldberg to Marion Goldberg, [September 1943], MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.

often acting a go-between for Marion and her parents in the years prior to Pearl Harbor and the American entry into the war.

Marion and her family enjoyed a privileged position in the Jewish community in Plauen as Marion's paternal uncle Dr Isidor Goldberg (1881-1943) became head of the Jewish community in 1927, and chairman of the city's B'nai Brith Lodge by 1930. Isidor was one of four siblings born to Nathan Goldberg (1857-1929) a Kantor from Chemnitz and his wife Charlotte Friedland. Isidor, Heinrich (1882-1943) and Hulda (1884-1967) all received extensive education and spent the bulk of their childhood in Bromberg, where their father worked. Nathan Goldberg had inaugurated the Synagogue in Chemnitz at *Stephanplatz* in 1899, and helped his son Isidor do the same for the Synagogue in Plauen in 1905. With his first wife, Gertrude (?-1921), Isidor had three sons: Eric, Herbert and Rolf, and lived at a large house at *Krausenstraße* 2 where he was able to set up his legal and notary practice on the ground floor. Isidor remarried to the widowed Dora Peim (born Cohn, 1883-1960) who brought with her two daughters – Ruth and Ingeborg. Aligned to the German Democratic Party (DDP) and acting as a representative for them on the Plauen City Parliament, Isidor opposed the rise of the Nazi party on democratic grounds and was later forced to flee to France with his brother Heinrich and his children. Their sister Hulda was already in Paris with her husband, the diamond merchant Myer Cohen Quadratstein (1884-1944).[47]

[47] Myer Cohen Quadratstein was involved in a major jewellery theft in 1913 in London and posed to buy the stolen Pearl necklace from the thieves. See Molly Caldwell Crosby, *The Great Pearl Heist: London's Greatest Thief and Scotland Yard's Hunt for the World's Most Valuable Necklace* (New York: Berkley Books, 2012).

Fig. 7 (L-R) Nathan, Heinrich, Walter (front), Isidor, Charlotte, and Hulda Goldberg (1902). Manchester Central Library GB127.M756.

Marion's father Walter (1898-1955) was significantly younger than the rest of his siblings and worked as an insurance agent in the city, earning a small income, with Marion later describing her family as 'very restricted' members of Plauen's 'middle class'. Walter was the secretary to the leader of the community and the librarian at the Eugen Fuchs B'nai Brith Lodge in the city. Founded in 1925, the lodge emerged from the Plauen Brethren Association of the Saxonia Lodge in Chemnitz, but was established in association with the international B'nai Brith Order, formed in 1843 in New York. After the November 1938 pogroms, Walter fled to Nice to be with his brothers. Following his lengthy internment in France as an 'alien', Walter was released and made it to Cuba where he remained for the rest of the war.

In May 1939, Marion was sent on *Hakhshara* at Gut Winkel near Berlin to prepare for migration to Mandate Palestine; unbeknownst to her, Marion's name was also put on *Kindertransport* lists to Britain. In July 1939, Marion arrived in Suffolk to live with Drs Nora and Robin Acheson, separated from her parents. On this distance, Marion later wrote in her diary in 1940:

> Next Tuesday I will be sixteen. Only the Gods know what will be. I must get away from here but don't know where to go. It is exasperating. I feel like being yanked around; fate is so difficult.

France has more or less surrendered and Daddy is again in the hands of our enemies; Mummy is somewhere in Germany. Can I be sure that she is still alive?'[48]

The Licht Family

Recent debates surrounding the digitisation and digital engagement with archival collections further posit the question over the physicality of the archive and what constitutes such a space in the twenty-first century. Access to the Licht family papers has emerged from engagement with a new type of digital archive, the Facebook group *JEWS: Jekkes Engaged in Worldwide Social Networking,* the brainchild of Vera Meyer, a descendant of German emigrants from Bielefeld. Questions surrounding this group as an 'archive' have been asked by Joachim Schlör, himself a member of the group:

> I have used the site as an archive. And this, of course, leads to a number of questions. Is this an archive? Not in the classical sense – access is limited and restricted to members. The documents, photographs, and memoirs have not (yet) been donated to an institution, they have not (yet) been registered or properly described. But they are "there", in this multidimensional "space" of the internet, more than 2.100 people do have access and use them for different purposes, from genealogy to research.[49]

The group itself constitutes a wide array of members from across the world including archivists and academics, although predominantly descendants of German Jewish '*Jekkes*'. In its own description, Meyer labels the group as 'a safe place to share our stories, as well as our thoughts and feelings about our common background, and to explore how our pasts may have affected our lives'.[50] Not only is this a rationale concerning the discussion of the past, but also an invitation to communally engage with the past's influence on the present - personally and archivally. Members take this as an opportunity to share glances into innumerable private collections held all over the world concerning the history of German-speaking-Jewry. This transnational endeavour ergo asks questions on this new type of 'archive' as well as the place of private collections in the history, memory, and conservation of German-Jewish histories categorised by migration.

It is through the *Jekkes* group that I came to know the Licht/Königsberger family history. Through social media, my supervisor Joachim Schlör reached out to Bridget King, an active member of the group, concerning interviewing her father, the late Dr Peter King, at his home in St. Andrews,

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[48]Marion Goldberg diary entry, 20 June 1940, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.

[49] Joachim Schlör, 'German-Jewish Family Archives in the (Virtual) Diaspora: Questions of Storage, Ownership and Belonging', *Tsafon. Revue d'études juives du Nord*, hors-série 11 (2023), 141–160.

[50] 'About' Section, Facebook Group 'JEWS: Jekkes Engaged in Worldwide Social Networking', Accessed via: https://www.facebook.com/groups/1556357284602836, Last accessed: 3 April 2023.

Scotland. After visiting Dr King in 2019, Joachim utilised much of this material in his monograph *Im Herzen immer ein Berliner* although did not consult any of Peter's private papers, kept since the death of his grandparents and parents. On suggesting to me that Dr King may have useful material for this project, I travelled to St Andrews to meet Bridget (who flew over from her home in Düsseldorf) and her father. Amongst various letters and photographs, concerning Peter's parents and grandparents, were a number of intriguing documents and ephemera namely a '*Kontobuch'* acting as a notepad-cum-shopping list-cum-language practice-cum-diary for Peter's grandmother Clara. The *Kontobuch* also contains records of letters Clara sent and received during the war years, many of which were missing from Peter's collection.

Peter King was born in 1929 as Heinz Peter Königsberger in Berlin, but was brought to England aged four in 1933 after his father, Ludwig 'Lutz' (later Leslie King, 1898-1976) was forced to leave his legal practice. Together, Peter and his parents, Ludwig and Alice (born Licht, 1903-2000), left their home on *Augsburgerstraße*, Berlin and began renting in Shirehall Lane, Hendon whilst the rest of their family remained in Germany. Alice's brother Ernst Licht (1900-40), also a lawyer, chose to remain in the city in their home on *Martin Luther Straße* and instead began legal consultancy for a business there. Ernst's wife Ilse (born Krämer, 1903-42) and his son Klaus (later Kenneth 'Ken' Light, 1927-2018) stayed together in Berlin throughout the 1930s, with Klaus later recalling Jesse Owens' victory at the 1936 Olympics amongst other memories. In an interview with historian Helen Fry for her work on Jewish communities in Devon, Klaus later stated 'my father did not think the Nazis would last long while mother wanted to leave'.[51] In 1937, Klaus was forced to leave his school and instead enrolled in the Leonore Goldschmidt Schule in the Grunewald district of Berlin (a school also attended by Carl H. Amberg in the late 1930s, possibly at the same time as Klaus). After the November pogroms of 1938 (*Kristallnacht*), it was decided by Ernst, Ilse, and Ernst's parents that Klaus should try to leave Germany. Klaus arrived in Southampton on 30 December 1938 and boarded a train to London Waterloo station where he was met by his Aunt, Alice Königsberger.

Saly 'Sem' (1869-1950) and his wife Clara Licht (born Fuchs, 1877-1953), Ernst and Alice's parents, equally decided to leave post-November 1938, eventually making it to England on the 'Bremen' arriving in Harwich in 1939. Sem had been a prominent eye surgeon in Berlin with his surgery at their home on *Brückenstrasse* near *Jannowitzbrücke* and had been allowed to maintain his practice after 1933 due to his status as a decorated WWI veteran. When Sem and

[51] Helen Fry, *Jews in North Devon during the Second World War. The Escape from Nazi Germany and the Establishment of the Pioneer Corps* (Devon: Halsgrove, 2005), p.129.

Clara arrived at Shirehall Lane in 1939, the three bedroom house was occupied by Alice, Ludwig and Peter Königsberger, Peter's cousin Klaus, and the grandparents Sem and Clara. During the War, Ludwig, after internment, joined the Pioneer Corps, whilst Sem, Clara, and Klaus moved to Bideford following repeated bombing in the Blitz. Peter had already been evacuated to Devon (to Westward Ho!) with his school although returned to London to be with his mother in 1942.

Fig. 8 Peter King and Klaus Licht (Ken Light) [undated]. Private Collection of B. King, Dusseldorf, Germany

Fig. 9 Ludwig and Alice Königsberger [undated]. Private Collection of B. King, Dusseldorf, Germany

After the end of the war, the majority of documents pertaining to Klaus's parents, Ernst and Ilse, were given to their son in memory. Indeed, even as late as November 2000, Peter sent a series of letters he found to Ken, writing 'You should have these letters addressed to your parents. I wonder whether they ever reached their destination'.[52] In fact these letters were never sent – letters addressed to Ernst and Ilse when none of the family knew where to write to, or how to reach them. The material given to Klaus post-war was kept in a suitcase in the loft, which Ken in later life would periodically disappear to go and read. In May 2022, Bridget King and I travelled to Essex to meet Ken's son at his mother Daphne's house – together we opened this suitcase and reviewed the material inside. We hoped to find many of the letters referenced in Clara's

[52] Peter King to Kenneth Light, 21 November 2000. The vast majority of items from the private collections of the King and Light families have now been donated to the archives of the Jüdisches Museum Berlin with the temporary box codes 2023/13 and 2024/59. Jewish Museum Berlin, Königsberger / Licht Collection, Gift of the King (Königsberger) and Light (Licht) families in memory of Ernst and Ilse Licht. Items from this collection (although originally accessed privately will be cited as 'JMB' throughout.

Kontobuch. Whilst none of these were present there were numerous items pertaining to Ernst and Ilse's life and death. Most notably perhaps was Clara's 'diary' pages, kept in a battered envelope dedicated solely to her thoughts and feelings pertaining to Ernst and Ilse's fate. Years later Peter wrote about his grandmother and paid credence to her internal strife, describing her thus:

> Herself a sensitive person, she had an instinctive understanding of other people's feelings, an innate tact, and a ready sympathy. She had an iron sense of duty, and was unshakeably loyal to family and friends. The friendships of her youth survived emigration and war. I knew most of her friends when they were old ladies. In the 1940's, with the experience of being driven from her home and the cruel murder of her beloved son, she confided to her Prayer Book thoughts so painful that they do not bear repetition. To the outside world however, the inner turmoil was invisible. To all who had dealings with her, her manner continued to be calm and benign. By then she and Sem were living in abject poverty. Kläre had nothing to give except a wisdom refined by suffering, which was beyond all price.[53]

As of 2023 much of the collection has been donated to the care of Aubrey Pomerance at the Jüdisches Museum Berlin and returned to the family's home city.

Fig. 10 Clara Licht [undated]. Private Collection of B. King, Dusseldorf, Germany

[53] Peter King, 'My Grandmother's Stories (and some others)', September 2007, Private Collection of Bridget King (hereafter PC-BK)

The Rothschild Family

After the publication of Joachim Schlör's *Escaping Nazi Germany* based on the letter collection of Baroness Julia Neuberger's mother, he was contacted by Jacqueline Baer Gellert concerning an equally interesting set of letters. Jacqueline's mother Annelore Henriette Baer (born Rothschild, 1922-2004) was the second cousin of Liesel Schwab – the protagonist of Schlör's monograph. Here Jacqueline describes the process of discovering her own set of letters:

> A few years ago I asked my sister if she had any photos of our mother, her parents, and other relatives who were living in a suburb of Stuttgart, Bad Cannstatt as the husband of our mother's late cousin asked to see what photographs we had. My sister gave me a crate that contained some photos but also in the crate was a very old & crumpled but well-padded large Jiffy envelope. I carefully opened the Jiffy bag only to find a hardbacked Leitz ring binder file totally filled with letters, all written in German. Some of the letters were on wafer thin paper making them almost too fragile to handle. The letters ranged from 1 to 5 pages in length. Some of them were handwritten in Gothic German but the majority were typewritten. The remarkable thing about the letters in the file was that they were all carefully filed in chronological date order – in total there were 364 letters and they were all from our grandparents to our mother together with her replies to them.[54]

These letters had been curated by Jacqueline's grandfather Siegfried 'Fritz' Rothschild (1884-1952) at some point after their arrival in Britain in 1939, days before the declaration of war. Due to meningitis Siegfried was profoundly deaf since the age of thirteen, and thus the only means of communicating with his family when separated was through the letter. On the advice of Joachim Schlör, the letters were translated; a number of friends, graduate students, and associates contributed to this effort, and the end result was a complete ordered series of letters between Siegfried and his daughter Annelore.[55] In July 2021, I travelled to Finchley, North London to meet Jacqueline and her sister to discuss the letters and the prospect of their use in this thesis alongside an external project. The sisters had already completed a lot of work on the collection, beginning to trace familial details and documents. Jacqueline continued on the importance and relevance of the collection:

> The letters depicted how they as a family, including our mother's younger brother, were separated due to the rise of the Nazis and the incredible fortitude, particularly on the part of our teenage mother, who was tasked by her father to get him and his wife out of Germany bearing in mind that he, due to his disability was not easily employable in England as he was unable to

[54] Email from J. Gellert, 4 April 2023.

[55] The translations of the Rothschild family letters vary in accuracy due to the amount of people completing the translations as well as their proficiency in doing so – due to this, translations will be listed as: Trans. unknown.

speak or lipread English. Despite her young age and inexperience, our mother, through meetings with the Jewish Agency and other contacts, obtained the necessary documentation enabling her parents to leave Germany to come to England in 1939, literally the day before Germany invaded Poland.[56]

Annelore was born on 19 January 1922 in the city of Heilbronn in Baden-Württemberg to Siegfried 'Fritz' Rothschild of Bad Cannstatt in Stuttgart, and Margaretha Pincus (1896-1968) born in Saarbrucken in the Saarland.[57] Siegfried had three brothers Julius (1880-1949), Hugo (1882-1958) and Ferdinand (1888-1958) and together lived in *Hallstrasse* 6 in Canstatt. Before the start of the First World War, Siegfried and his older brother Julius founded S. Rothschild and Son on *Schellingstrasse* in Stuttgart – a wholesaler for mattress coverings. When war broke out in 1914, Siegfried, unable to enlist due to his deafness, began teaching soldiers injured on the front how to lipread if their hearing was impaired. The relationship between Siegfried and Julius, as well as the relationship between their wives Margaretha and Claire (1883-?), soured and the brothers never regained their familiarity.

Fig. 11 Margaretha Rothschild (Pincus) [undated]. Private Collection of J. Baer Gellert and M. Tarsh, London, UK,

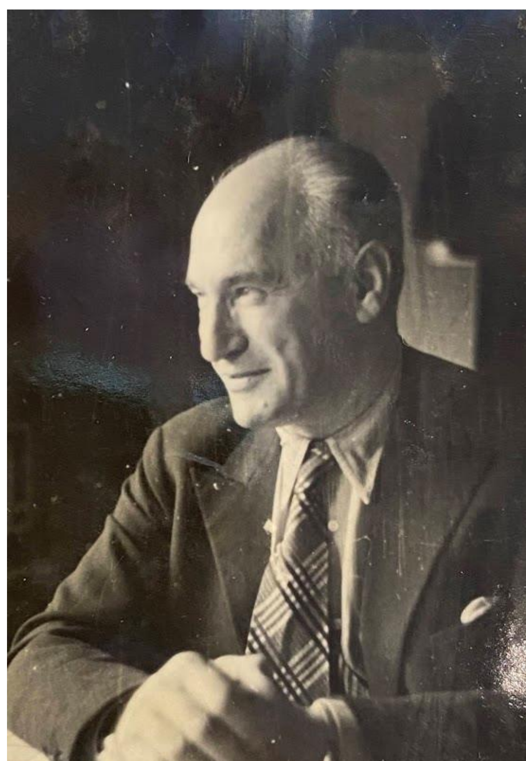

Fig. 12 Siegfried 'Fritz' Rothschild [undated]. Private Collection of J. Baer Gellert and M. Tarsh, London, UK.

[56] Email from J. Gellert, 4 April 2023.

[57] For more on the history of the Jews of Heilbronn see Hans Franke, trans. Tom Bonsett, *The History and Fate of the Jews in Heilbronn. From the Middle Ages until the Time of the National Socialist Persecution (1050 – 1945)* (Heilbronn: Heilbronn City Archives Publications, 1963 [online expanded version 2009/2011 – translated 2013]).

Annelore's mother Margaretha was the daughter of Max (1869-1942), an insurance broker and Rosa Pincus (born Eichenberger, 1868-1942). Max was the son of a successful merchant, Ludwig Pincus and was the brother of Friedrich 'Fritz', the noted ophthalmologist and eye surgeon at the *Israelitisches Krankenhaus* in Köln, who published numerous academic articles as well as the research monograph *Über Sehstörungen nach Blutverlust* still in use today. Fritz and his wife Eugenie eventually died in Theresienstadt; their daughter Lotte was murdered in Sobibor whilst their son Ludwig took his own life in 1940 in Nieuwpoort, The Netherlands. Margaretha's older brother Ludwig (b.1895) died in 1917 in the First World War, and it was around this time that the family moved to Heilbronn from Saarbrücken. Max Pincus ran his insurance office in the house at *Friedensstraße* 31 – today *Gymnasiumstraße* – which his youngest son Walter later joined. Walter married Edith Julia Oppemheimer, the niece of the world famous Diamond trader and philanthropist Sir Ernst Oppemheimer who was chair of De Beers Diamonds from 1929 and founded the Anglo American Corporation of South Africa, funded by J. P. Morgan, in 1917. Walter and Edith relocated to Africa in 1939.

From April 1937, Annelore was enrolled in Madamme Anderfuhren's Ecole Nouvelle Menagerie in Jogney-sur-Vevey in Switzerland, having left her family in Stuttgart. Here she learned cookery, gardening, etiquette, couture, tailoring and garment making amongst other regular subjects such as English and French languages. In her reports from there she was described as a 'hardworking student, serious and very helpful' although often 'lacking precision' in areas a topic often a point of contention with her father.[58] Whilst in Jogney-sur-Vevey, Annelore also wrote numerous times to her brother –Gerhard (later Gerald) Leonard Solomon Rothschild (1925-2011) whom she calls a plethora of different, albeit jovial, names, her 'little snail' being one.[59] Gerhard was already in Britain, enrolled at the Saugeen School in Bournemouth, which later moved to Wimborne, Dorset.

In a letter from Annelore to the British Consulate in Frankfurt dated September 1938, Annelore explained her upon leaving Mme. Anderfuhren's:

> Since April 1937 I have been at a finishing school in Jongny by Vevey, directed by Madame Anderfuhren, near Lake Leman. In April 1938 when my parents happened to be on holiday in Switzerland, we heard rumour that for Jewish German children abroad, new rules would be invoked. My mother took me and a Swiss gentleman to the Germany consulate in Berne where we were told that nothing of the sort was known about and I could continue at Madame

[58] Report July 1937 and report December 1937, Private Collection of J. Baer Gellert and Michele Tarsh (hereafter PC-JBG/MT). Trans. unknown.
[59] Annelore Rothschild to Gerald Rothschild, 26 May 1937, PC-JBG/MT. Trans. unknown.

> Anderfuhren's school. At the end of April, however, my father was told that he would not be given permission for more money to be sent to Switzerland whereupon my parents took me home and I learnt to sew. On the 8th August I was told that I needed to leave Germany within one week. As at the age of 16 I was abroad, on request of my father, the stay was extended but hardly past the 15th September 1938. We have not had definite news about it so far.[60]

Annelore arrived in Britain in September 1938 by plane: 'It was wonderful and I feel terribly happy. I wasn't sick once on the flight. I cannot believe it'. Annelore arrived in London and took a taxi to Aberdare Gardens in Maida Vale where relatives, the Wassermans, lived. Siegfried (1880-1943) and Selma (Schnuhr, 1890-?) Wasserman had arrived in London at some point in the 1930s, Siegfried was a successful importer and exporter of timber before his migration. With the help of Jeanette Franklin-Kohn (1888-1974), a member of several noted Anglo-Jewish families and celebrated patron of the arts, Annelore secured a place at a school in Lacock, Wiltshire.

Fig. 13 Gerhard Rothschild and Annelore Rothschild [undated]. Private Collection of J. Baer Gellert and M. Tarsh, London, UK.

[60] Annelore Rothschild to British Consulate, 2 September 1938, PC-JBG/MT. Trans. unknown.

Reflections of a Researcher

Perhaps not so curiously at all, as the research on the families continued, as a historian I found myself ever more engaged and ever more embedded within the narratives I was attempted to research and construct.[61] The question of positionality in regards to one's research is not specific to this thesis nor the Holocaust more broadly, although such a topic does perhaps imbue the scholar with a set of questions and assumptions different from a less violent history, or one less present in the global cultural and social fabric.[62] In her reflexive piece on the role of theoretical and researcher positionality in reference to black feminist history and art education, Debra A. Hardy notes that whilst some scholars in her field had noted their positionality when dealing with living subjects and/or conducting oral histories, substantially less do so when using exclusively archival sources.[63] Often at odds with 'established' methods, autoethnography views research as a political, subjective, and socially-conscious act, something that many historians have thus far been uncomfortable to explicitly acknowledge.[64] Dani Kranz, in her work on the genealogy of Jewish studies and Israeli studies, argues that the researcher should adopt a 'wider approach [that] would lift hidden discourses and make use of the very valuable resource of the ethnographic "I," as any scholar is intimately linked to their field of research'.[65] Similarly, Joachim Schlör has continuously advocated for a historical discipline that brings 'history and memory, past and present, fact and fantasy into a fruitful dialogue', and highlights scholars such as the ethnologist Franziska Becker, who in her work on Russian-Jewish immigrants in Berlin, centres herself as an individual who researches, inquires and sometimes understands, in relation to her subjects.[66]

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[61] Extracts of this section are taken from my chapter 'Reading the letter: Reflections on the researcher's journey' soon to be published in *Holocaust Letters: Methodologies, Cases, and Reflections,* ed. by Clara Dijkstra, Charlie Knight, Sandra Lipner, and Christine Schmidt (London: Bloomsbury, 2026).

[62] Originally the purview of anthropologists and ethnographers, the consideration of positionality alongside statements of reflexivity is increasingly growing in a variety of qualitative and quantitative fields. Whilst welcomed by many, some scholars in the sciences have rejected this reflexive turn, see J. Savolainen, P. J. Casey, J. P. McBrayer, P. N. Schwerdtle, 'Positionality and Its Problems: Questioning the Value of Reflexivity Statements in Research', *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 18/6 (2023), 1331-1338.

[63] Debra M. Hardy, 'Using Positionality and Theory in Historical Research: A Personal Journey', *Journal of Cultural Research in Art Education* 38/1 (2021), 81.

[64] See for example: Tony E. Adams and Stacy Holman Jones, 'Autoethnography is queer', in *Handbook of critical and indigenous methodologies*, ed. by Norman K. Denzin, Yvonna S. Lincoln and Linda T. Smith (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2008) 373-390. For more on the autoethnographic method see: Carolyn Ellis, Tony E. Adams and Arthur P. Bochner, 'Autoethnography: An Overview', *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung,* 36/4 (2011), 273-90; Carolyn Ellis, *The ethnographic I: A methodological novel about autoethnography* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2004).

[65] Dani Kranz, 'Thinking Big Connecting Classical Jewish Studies, Jewish Studies Past, Present, Presence, and Israel Studies', in *Jewish Studies and Israel Studies in the Twenty-First Century Intersections and Prospects*, ed. by Carsten Schapkow and Klaus Hödl (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2019) pp.217-46 (p.231).

[66] Joachim Schlör, *Jüdische Migration und Mobilität. Kulturwissenschaftliche Perspektiven* (Berlin: Neofelis Verlag, 2024), p.294; Franziska Becker, *Ankommen in Deutschland. Einwanderungspolitik als biografische Erfahrung im Migrationsprozeß russischer Juden* (Berlin: Reimer 2001). See also Utz Jeggle, *Feldforschung. Qualitative Methoden in der Kulturanalyse* (Tübingen: Tübinger Vereinigung für Volkskunde, 1984).

The inclusion of the self, in only a small way, thus acts as a marker of the researcher's affirmation that historical narratives are a subjective responsibility, and reminds all those involved that historians do not have authority to voice for others.[67] This does not mean in the case of the Holocaust, that the centrality of the persecuted voice should be taken uncritically or without due diligence, but instead that the historian's voice should be recognised as such. Subsequently, the assumed Rankean responsibility of the historian to be objective feels incongruent with a history so evidently emotional and arguably moral.[68] Scholars of the Holocaust are not, and should not, pretend to be separate, above, or outside of a history often so intertwined with their own. Although reflexive discussions of the relationship of the researcher to their work are prevalent in women's studies and feminist literature more broadly, Pascale Bos writes that such discussions related to scholarship on and teaching of the Holocaust remain a desideratum, specifically considerations on the positionality of those without an immediate personal or familial connection to the topic.[69]

In many cases, family historians, both amateur and academic, have published works based on their own discoveries, often beginning with the autoethnographic recollection of pulling a dusty 'memory container' from a loft or cupboard.[70] Further to this it is not uncommon for scholars within the field to note their 'insider' status with regards to collections not linked to their own family.[71] In her study *From Things Lost* on the Schwab family in South Africa, Shirli Gilbert linked her interest in the collection with her own desire to confront her past, in an attempt to 'have the conversation I never had' with her grandmother.[72] Within my own research on the collections within my doctoral study, my relationship with the material is perhaps not as personal or

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[67] Susan A. Crane, 'Writing the individual back into collective memory', *American Historical Review* 102/5 (1997) 1372-1385.

[68] Tracey Loughran and Dawn Mannay's edited collection *Emotion and the Researcher: Sites Subjectivities, and Relationships* (Bingley: Emerald, 2018) explores some of these questions.

[69] Pascale Bos, 'Positionality and Postmemory in Scholarship on the Holocaust', *Women in German Yearbook*, 19 (2003), 53.

[70] See *inter alia* Ariana Neumann, *When Time Stopped: A Memoir of my Father's War and What Remains* (London: Scribner, 2020); Jackie Kohnstamm, *The Memory Keeper. A Journey into the Holocaust to Find my Family* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2023); Esther Saraga, *Berlin to London: An Emotional History of Two Refugees* (London: Valentine Mitchell, 2019); Nancy K. Miller, *What They Saved. Pieces of a Jewish Past* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2011); Anne Berest, *The Postcard* (New York: Europa Editions, 2023).

The recent volume *Scholars and Their Kin: Historical Explorations, Literary Experiments*, ed. by Stéphane Gerson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2025) tackles the phenomenon of descendant-academics.

Fictionalised accounts of these discoveries are also worth mentioning, such as Billy O'Callaghan, *The Paper Man* (London: Random House UK, 2023); Jillian Cantor, *The Lost Letter* (London: Penguin, 2018); Hannah Reynolds, *The Summer of Lost Letters* (London: Penguin, 2021). Many thanks to Professor Sue Vice at the University of Sheffield for recommending these to me.

[71] At the University of Manchester in January 2024, Lindsey Taylor-Guthartz and Katja Stuerzenhofecker organised a workshop on reflexivity and Jewish studies researcher aimed at focussing on questions of ethics, tensions and practicalities arising from insider-outsider positions. For more on the non-Jewish Jewish studies researcher see Joachim Schlör, 'What am I doing here? Erkundungen im deutsch-jüdischen Feld' in *Poesie des Feldes. Beiträge zur ethnographischen Kulturanalyse. Für Utz Jeggle zum 60.,* ed. by Katharina Eisch and Marion Hamm (Tübingen: Tübinger Vereinigung für Volkskunde, 2001), pp.89-109.

[72] Shirli Gilbert, *From Things Lost: Forgotten Letters and the Legacy of the Holocaust* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2017), p.5.

autobiographically engaged as those with a familial relation, or those culturally and historically embedded, and yet I found myself evermore immersed and indeed rooted within the narratives I was attempting to construct.

For historical actor's descendants, the prospect of someone external delving into the personal lives and private correspondences of departed loved ones, whether known personally or not, can be a difficult topic to engage with when contemplating the prospect of donation or indeed private research. Atina Grossman, in the discussion over the archiving of her own family's collection, wrote:

> Only in the past couple of years, since the papers literally fell out of the closets, have I had to think from the combined perspective of the donor as well as of the historian user ... I want to read everything myself before I give it away. But I don't have time to read it all, or even part of it, so maybe it would be better off in my attic, waiting for me to have the time. And maybe I don't really want to read it all anyway; there are plenty of things about my family I'd rather not know or have confirmed, nor am I sure that I want (or can afford) to expend the emotional energy required to confront all this material with an insider's eye. But then, why should anyone else know those things? Do I really want to let some young German graduate student who has decided to become an expert on Jews to interpret my family papers - however he or she sees fit [?][73]

As far as I am aware I am not expecting to find a suitcase of such letters in my grandmother's loft. I am not Jewish and I am not German, nor am I in any way related to the families focussed upon in my research nor this chapter, but despite this potential cultural and collective memory disengagement from the history, one cannot help but feel, and indeed become, part of the narrative and part of the collections' journeys.

When reading the hundreds of letters in this thesis, feelings of connection and empathy prevail. How exactly such feelings of jubilance, fear, anger, sadness, and sometimes humour impact upon on my reading and writing on the subject is difficult to say, but their presence is always felt. Engagement and sometimes identification with the past through objects such as letters is equally key for writing engaging, and accurate, histories. Eminent historians such as E. H. Carr have insisted that some kind of contact with the historical actor is necessary to ensure the

[73] Atina Grossman, 'Versions of Home: German Jewish Refugee Papers out of the Closet and into the Archives', *New German Critique*, 90 (2003), 102. On this topic see also Julius H. Schoeps, 'Das Stigma der Heimatlosigkeit Vom Umgang mit dem deutsch-jüdischen Erbe' in *Das Kulturerbe deutschsprachiger Juden. Eine Spurensuche in den Ursprungs-, Transit- und Emigrationsländern,* ed. by Elke-Vera Kotowski (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), pp.489-99.

history written is not ‘dry as dust’, whilst Ludmilla Jordanova has written of an ‘identification’ with the past in order to emotionally engage with the material.[74]

As a method, autoethnography recognises, accommodates, and arguably centres emotionality, subjectivity, and research influence, allowing for a more whole account of the history one purports to tell, whilst also recognising the artificialness of constructing narrative through a forever tangled web of people, places, relationships and emotions. The Polish writer Adam Zagajewski’s call for utilising oral culture and human tradition and an emphasis on empathetic retellings is particularly relevant in studies of the Holocaust.[75] In my case, the letters used in this thesis, have led me to meet family members, visit small Jewish community remnants globally, and recover lost objects from private collections. Far from being an exercise of self-indulgence or vanity then, it feels ever more relevant to recognise my own role within the research process, and to attempt to understand my own reasons for researching and writing. Research and writing does not occur in a vacuum – I am centring the words and phraseology of the individual but through a myriad of interlocking and overlapping layers. The process of locating, access, selection, translation, narrativisation all contribute to our understanding of the stories told forthwith.

Whilst a strong academic rationale exists for this project, a personal and emotional one is equally vital when dealing with sources so peculiar – and perhaps then, these can overlap. Within this thesis I have attempted to trace every individual whose name appears within the letters; although not always successful, such an endeavour speaks to the rigour I have applied to this research in an attempt to accurately and honestly represent people, for whom this may be their only personal, material remnant. After a meeting with Marion Goldberg’s friend and former colleague at Bedford College, Bernice Martin in 2023, I was assured of the importance of reconstructing her life:

> I am so glad you are making good use of her papers. The more I have thought about it the more sure I am that she wanted someone to really know her and use those diaries and letters for a greater good[76]

[74] Edward H. Carr, *What is History?* (London: Penguin, 1987), p.15; Ludmilla Jordanova, *History in Practice* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), p.45.
[75] Adam Zagajewski, *Ich schwebe über Krakau. Erinnerungsbilder* (Munich: Hanser Verlag, 2000), p.58, quoted in Joachim Schlör, ‘Transit Berlin. A Memory Void in the Metropolis of Exile’, in *Studien zur deutschsprachig-jüdischen Literatur und Kultur. Standortbestimmungen eines transdisziplinären Forschungsfeldes*, ed. by Hans-Joachim Hahn, Gerald Lamprecht und Olaf Terpitz (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2020), p.295.
[76] Email from B. Martin, 28 March 2023. I am indebted to Bernice Martin, Jane Lewis, Barbara Adam, and Celia Davies for their memories and recollections of Marion in later life.

It was clear to Bernice that, at least in terms of Marion's papers, to tell her story in some way was to fulfil her life. Indeed in her oral history, Marion lamented the 'pity' of not 'bringing out' her parents' letters sooner. Perhaps therefore this thesis can, in this one case at least, provide what Primo Levi called his 'interior liberation', something which Marion read days before she passed away.[77] I am motivated therefore to produce a study not 'written about' but 'written by', centring the narratives, the writings and the lives of those who would have perhaps otherwise faded into obscurity. My own preexisting inquisitive nature, combined with an academic want to better understand something so evidently central to historical actors' lives, has resulted in a thesis that is *exploratory*, one which seeks to recognise the research process, the research subject, and the individuals who are integral to both.

Literature Review

Letters are one of those private ego-documents which have for some time informed narratives of the Holocaust and more broadly remain a vital source for cultural and historical research. The study of ego documents has, as a result, led to methodological and theoretical discussions on the 'personal' and the 'self' within historical study and historical narrative more broadly.[78] Most prominent within the study of letters are those 'migrant letters' sent between people separated by geography, indeed such letters remain the largest historical source on the personal lives of individuals throughout history.[79] The focus on the expansion of epistolary culture and letter writing as a social cultural practice, especially in the nineteenth century in Europe and the Americas, has further led to expansive literature on the nature and significance of the letter.[80] A number of international conferences and workshops in recent years have contributed greatly to scholarly understanding of the letter and its methodological underpinnings. Marie Isabel Matthews-Schlinzig and Caroline Socha for example, noted that despite mass increase in studies of the epistolary 'our concept of the letter has become less well defined, as theoretical aspects of the epistolary form have not received comparable attention'.[81] In 2014 the Institute for Historical Research hosted the workshop 'Letters: Making

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[77] Primo Levi, *If this is a Man. The Truce,* trans. Stuart Woolf (London: Abacus, 1987), p.10.
[78] Mary Fulbrook and Ulinka Rublack, 'In Relation: The "Social Self" and Ego-Documents', *German History*, 28/3 (2010), 263–72.
[79] David Gerber, *Authors of their lives: The personal correspondence of British immigrants to North America in the nineteenth century* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2006), p.5.
[80] See for example, Marina Dossena, *Letter Writing in Late Modern Europe* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2012); Eve Tavor Bannet, *Empire of Letters: Letter Manuals and Transatlantic Correspondence, 1680–1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Roger Chartier, Alain Boureau and Cécile Dauphin, *Correspondence: Models of Letter-Writing from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Christopher Woodall (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).
[81] Marie Isabel Matthews-Schlinzig and Caroline Socha, CFP: What is a letter? An interdisciplinary approach, Oxford 2014, Accessed via: https://whatisaletter.wordpress.com/2014/02/14/cfp-what-is-a-letter-an-interdisciplinary-approach-oxford-uk-2-4-july-2014/, Last accessed: 12 February 2023. The results of this conference were published in the edited collection *What is a Letter?*

and Meaning' focussing on the 'semiotic significance of the physical and material presence of letters', paying credence to the materiality of correspondence.[82] Within Holocaust studies, the materiality of various possessions and documents has been noted but has largely escaped the study of letters.[83]

Within studies of migration, the letter has, for over a hundred years, been the staple for historians seeking to understand the migrant experience. Often viewed as the first study to meaningfully use migrant correspondence to effect, the publication of *The Polish Peasant In Europe And America* in 1920 by Florian Znaniecki and William Thomas moved the narrative away from discussing the desirability of migrants, to instead show the impact of modernisation and the breakdown on family solidarity and organisation in the US.[84] In his analysis of the Chicago School of Sociology, Martin Bulmer stated that 'the reliance on personal documents marked out *The Polish Peasant* as a new departure', indeed from then on sociological thinking, and indeed the first wave of American social historians, discussed the lives of everyday people through personal documents, especially migrant correspondence.[85] The use of the letter as a means of access to broader topics of analysis gradually evolved into examination of the letter itself - largely due to increasing publication of edited collections of letters surrounding the 'great men' of history.

Within studies of the Holocaust, letters have been seen as capable of constructing narrative largely independent of the historian, often with an introductory contextualisation section followed by an edited collection of the sources.[86] Published collections of letters sent between

- *Essays on epistolary theory and culture*, ed. by Marie Isabel Matthews-Schlinzig and Caroline Socha (Würzberg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2018).

[82] Charlotte Brown and Zoe Thomas, CFP: Letters: Making and Meanings, Institute for Historical Research, London 2014, Accessed via: https://whatisaletter.wordpress.com/2014/04/08/cfp-letters-making-and-meanings/, Last accessed: 12 February 2023.

[83] Studies on materiality of objects in the Holocaust is largely centred on memory although not exclusively. See for example: Oren Baruch Stier, *Holocaust Icons: Symbolizing the Shoah in History and Memory* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2015); Magdalena Waligorska and Ina Sorkina. 'The second life of Jewish belongings–Jewish personal objects and their afterlives in the Polish and Belarusian post-Holocaust shtetls', *Holocaust Studies*, 29/3 (2023), 341-62; Jeffrey Wallen and Aubrey Pomerance, 'Circuitous Journeys: The Migration of Objects and the Trusteeship of Memory', in *The Material Culture of Conflict and Displacement,* ed. by Leora Auslander and Tara Zahra (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018), pp. 248–76; Joachim Schlör, 'Means of transport and storage: suitcases and other containers for the memory of migration and displacement', *Jewish Culture and History*, 15/1-2 (2014), 76-92; Doer Bischoff and Joachim Schlör (eds.), *Exilforschung. Ein internationales Jahrbuch. Band 31: Dinge des Exils* (Munich: Text & Kritik, 2013).

[84] Florian Znaniecki and William Thomas, *The Polish peasant in Europe and America* (Boston: Richard G. Badger, 1918-20).

[85] Martin Bulmer, *The Chicago School of Sociology: Institutionalization, Diversity, and the Rise of Sociological Research* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1986), p.54. Marcus Lee Hansen, George Stephenson, Theodore Blegen, and Karl Wittke all began their careers in the 1920s/30s and many focussed on Scandinavian immigrants to America.

[86] Miriam Bolle, *Letters Never Sent: Amsterdam, Westerbork, Bergen-Belsen* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2014); Marie Bader, *Life and Love in Nazi Prague: Letters from an Occupied City* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019); Leon Saltiel, *Do Not Forget Me: Three Jewish Mothers Write to Their Sons from the Thessaloniki Ghetto* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2021); Jo Bondy and Jennifer Taylor (eds.), *Escaping the Crooked Cross* (Peterborough: Fastprint Publishing, 2014); Milena Roth, *Lifesaving Letters: A Child's Flight from the Holocaust* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004); Raya Czerner Schapiro and Helga Czerner Weinberg, *Letters from*

separated parties in a variety of contexts during the Holocaust, whether through forced migration, imprisonment, internment or ghettoization, have demonstrated how the letter is often seen as a verifiable and direct link to the past. In his work on the use of personal correspondence of immigrants to the USA in the twentieth century, American historian David Gerber notes that such published anthologies of letters however, are subject to the whims of the editor and publisher and that 'it is responsible to make letters comprehensible to the reader' but as a result 'language and form need to be changed'.[87] The popularisation of these anthologies however necessitates the question of whether such letters can 'speak for themselves' – do letters need the input of the researcher to deconstruct and subsequently rebuild narrative in a more historically accurate manner?[88] More commonly perhaps are those narratives by historians and family descendants alike that utilise large letter collections in the process of writing a more holistic narrative –usually pertaining to families separated due to forced migration.[89] Similarly, in recent years the field has seen an arguable explosion of 'family histories' of the Holocaust. Indeed, the genre boasts its own dedicated publishing house and whilst 'written from the margins', Sandra Lipner argues that such works have 'the potential to yield insights that cut to the very core'.[90]

Prague, 1939-1941 (Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 2006); Anne Joseph (ed.), *From the Edge of the World: The Jewish Refugee Experience Through Letters and Stories* (London: Valentine Mitchell, 2003). Kees W. Bolle (ed.), *Ben's Story: Holocaust Letters with Selections from the Dutch Underground Press* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2001); Richard S. Geehr (ed.), *Letters from the Doomed: Concentration Camp Correspondence 1940–1945* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1991); Gertrud Kolmar, *My Gaze Is Turned Inward: Letters 1934–1943* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2004); Renata Polt (ed.), *A Thousand Kisses: A Grandmother's Holocaust Letters* (Tuscaloosa and London: University of Alabama Press, 1999); H. Pierre Secher, *Left Behind in Nazi Vienna: Letters of a Jewish Family Caught in the Holocaust, 1939–1941* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2004); Krystyna Wituska, tr. by Irene Tomaszewski, *Inside a Gestapo Prison: The Letters of Krystyna Wituska 1942–1944* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2006).

[87] David A. Gerber, 'The Immigrant Letter between Positivism and Populism: The Uses of Immigrant Personal Correspondence in Twentieth-Century American Scholarship', *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 16/4 (1997), 3–34 (p.18). For further issues of such anthologies see William D. Jones, '"Going into Print": Published Immigrant Letters, Webs of Personal Relations, and the Emergence of the Welsh Public Sphere', in *Letters across Borders The Epistolary Practices of International Migrants*, ed. by Bruce S. Elliott, David A. Gerber and Suzanne M. Sinke (Palgrave: New York, 2006), pp.175-99.

[88] Marcelo J. Borges and Sonia Cancian, 'Reconsidering the migrant letter: from the experience of migrants to the language of migrants', *The History of the Family*, 21/3 (2016), 281-90 (p.284).

[89] See *inter alia* Esther Saraga, *Berlin to London: An Emotional History of Two Refugees* (London: Valentine Mitchell, 2019); Andrea Sinn, *'Und ich lebe wieder an der Isar:' Exil und Rückkehr des Münchner Juden Hans Lamm* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2008); Joachim Schlör, *Escaping Nazi Germany: One Woman's Emigration from Heilbronn to England* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020); Shirli Gilbert, *From Things Lost: Forgotten Letters and the Legacy of the Holocaust* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2017); Rebecca Boehling and Uta Larkey, *Life and Loss in the Shadow of the Holocaust. A Jewish Family's Untold Story* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Charlotte R. Bonelli, *Exit Berlin: How One Woman Saved Her Family from Nazi Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014); Martin Doerry, *My Wounded Heart: The Life of Lilli Jahn, 1900–1944* (London: Bloomsbury, 2004).

[90] Sandra Lipner, 'Family History: German(-Jewish) History from the Margins', *Historylab – The Institute of Historical Research* (2021), Accessed via: https://ihrhistorylab.wordpress.com/2021/12/08/family-history-german-jewish-history-from-the-margins/, Last accessed: 13 February 2023. Founded by Liesbeth Heenk in 2012, 'Amsterdam Publishers' specialises in the publication of Holocaust memoirs written by survivors, 2G and 3G and publishes on average twenty seven books a year. See https://amsterdampublishers.com/, Last accessed: 23 March 2023. See also Sandra Lipner, 'Holocaust family memoirs – Yes, another one!', *The Wiener Holocaust Library* (15 March 2023), Accessed via: https://wienerholocaustlibrary.org/2023/03/15/holocaust-family-memoirs-yes-another-one/, Last accessed: 23 March 2023.

Since the earliest scholarship on the Holocaust, historians have recognised the importance of personal stories and individual narratives. Even in the 1930s before the beginning of the Second World War, this importance was recognised. The diarist Victor Klemperer, noted in November 1933 of his intention to 'collect these émigré and ghetto letters [...] strange moods of waiting, hoping, resignation'.[91] A few years later in 1938, Dr Alfred Wiener and his colleagues at the JCIO in Amsterdam, collected hundreds of testimonies in the aftermath of the November Pogroms.[92] Early post-1945 Yiddish and Hebrew language scholarship similarly centred the individual narrative and promoted the primacy of testimony.[93] Whilst an extensive literature on a variety of first-hand account sources exists, letters have yet to fully gain the attention critically from historians of the Holocaust.[94] Analytical engagement with the function of the letter in a variety of situations is acutely needed to match the rapidly expanding interest and usage of letters within Holocaust studies, an interest largely due to the mass expansion of collections moving from the attic to the archive as families relinquish 'the last physical reminder of long-departed loved ones'.[95] Besides personal correspondences, the growing literature on petitions, entreaties to varying levels of aid organisations, and correspondences to heritage groups and tracing services during and after the war, remain a key part of the literature.[96] Letters during the

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[91] Victor Klemperer, trans. Martin Chalmers, *I Shall Bear Witness: The Diaries of Victor Klemperer 1933-41* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1998), p.40.

[92] These testimonies can be viewed at the Wiener Holocaust Library, London, or virtually at https://www.pogromnovember1938.co.uk/viewer/, Last Accessed: 10 February 2023.

[93] Boaz Cohen, *Israeli Holocaust Research: Birth and Evolution* (London: Routledge, 2012); Mark L. Smith, *The Yiddish Historians and the Struggle for a Jewish History of the Holocaust* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2019). For other studies on early scholarship see Hans-Christian Jasch and Stephan Lehnstaedt (eds.), *Crimes Uncovered. The First Generation of Holocaust Researchers* (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2019).

[94] The vastness of this literature is hard to accurately represent; see for example: Alexandra Garbarini, *Numbered Days: Diaries and the Holocaust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); Amos Goldberg, tr. by Shmuel Sermoneta-Gertel and Avner Greenberg, *Trauma in First Person: Diary Writing During the Holocaust* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2017); Annette Wieviorka, *The Era of the Witness* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006); Noah Shenker, *Reframing Holocaust Testimony* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015); Lawrence L. Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory* (London: Yale University Press, 1991); Andrea Reiter, *Narrating the Holocaust* (London: Continuum, 2005); Zoë Waxman, *Writing the Holocaust: Identity, Testimony, Representation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).
Recent works on letter writing include Shirli Gilbert, 'A Cache of Family Letters and the Historiography of the Holocaust: Interpretive Reflections', *The Journal of Holocaust Research*, 36/4 (2022), 281-298; Charlie Knight, 'Constructing narratives: considerations in the letters of Theodor M. W. Hirschberg and his family', *Jewish Culture and History*, 23/4 (2022), 384-402.

[95] Howard Falksohn, 'The Wiener Library: A Repository of Schicksale', in *Refugee Archive: Theory and Practice*, ed. by Andrea Hammel and Anthony Grenville, Yearbook of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies Vol.9 (Leiden/Boston: Brill Rodopi, 2007), pp.27-40 (p.28). The upcoming conference: 'From Suitcase to Archive: Refugee Archives and German-Jewish Memory Between Britain and Israel, University of Sussex (15-16 September 2025), seeks to comment on this phenomenon further.

[96] See for example, *inter alia,* Stefanie Fischer, 'Jewish Mourning in the Aftermath of the Holocaust: Tending Individual Graves in Occupied Germany, 1945–1949', in *German Jewish Studies. Next Generations*, ed. by Aya Elyadad and Kerry Wallach (New York: Berghahn Books, 2022), pp.213-230; Wolf Gruner and Thomas Pegelow Kaplan (eds.), *Resisting Persecution: Jews and Their Petitions during the Holocaust* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2020); Madeline Vadkerty, "We spend our lives in darkness, cold and often in hunger' – Jewish entreaties to Slovak President Jozef Tiso during the Holocaust', *EHRI Document Blog*, 27 January 2022, Accessed via: https://blog.ehri-project.eu/2022/01/27/jewish-entreaties/; Charlie Knight, '"I beg you again from my heart to help me find my sister": The Red Cross, RELICO and the Need for Knowledge', *Migrant Knowledge Network Blog*, 9 December 2022, Accessed via: https://migrantknowledge.org/2022/12/08/relico-and-the-need-for-knowledge/; Joachim Schlör, *Im Herzen immer ein Berliner. Jüdische Emigranten im Dialog mit ihrer Heimatstadt* (Berlin: Verlag für Berlin-Brandenburg, 2021); Susanne Urban,

Holocaust have equally been recognised for their coded qualities by historians such as Barnabas Balint in regards to the French Scouting movement, and by Ann Goldberg in reference to emigrant correspondence across fascist Europe.[97] Within Jewish Studies more specifically a series of workshops organised by scholars at Western Galilee College in Akko, have focussed on the usage of ego documents, and letters specifically.[98]

In her recent work on refugees in Portugal, Marion Kaplan examined the role of letters and epistolary spaces in connecting families as these 'fragile threads [...] stirred private and intimate emotions, longing and love'.[99] Kaplan writes that the 'deeper bonds' with family members, missing from illusory physical interactions in the cafes and meeting places of Lisbon, can be found in the correspondence to those loved ones remaining in occupied territories. Within this it became evident that these letters could not provide the 'safety or relief' necessary to begin a new life as they gradually learnt of the forced labour and starvation of their family members.[100] Equally, in her work on the collection of Dorrith Sim, née Oppenheim, at the Scottish Jewish Archives Centre, Hannah Holtschneider has shown the emotional dialogues apparent in the letters between Dorrith's mother and the Scottish couple who took in Dorrith.[101] The emotions of Holocaust correspondences has had interest from literary scholars as well as those historians such as Kaplan and Holtschneider. Els Andringa, notes that her corpus of letters (the published correspondence of various professional writers such as Walter Benjamin, Stefan Zweig and Thomas Mann) utilise the 'poetics of emotion' at various levels and are 'expressed in numerous ways on practically any linguistic, paralinguistic, and textual level,

"'Ich bitte innigst um Nachricht von meinem Kinde...' Korrespondenzen von Jüdinnen und Juden mit dem Roten Kreuz zwischen circa 1938 und 1942," *Medaon*, 15/29 (2021), 1–14; Borbála Klacsmann, 'Abandoned, Confiscated, and Stolen Property: Jewish–Gentile Relations in Hungary as Reflected in Restitution Letters', *Holocaust Studies*, 23/1-2 (2017), 133–48.

[97] Barnabas Balint, '"I am now their father too": The multi-layered meanings of family letters from the Jewish Maquis in France during the Second World War', *Jewish Culture and History,* 24/2 (2023), 193-215; Ann Goldberg, 'Reading and Writing across the Borders of Dictatorship: Self-Censorship and Emigrant Experience in Nazi and Stalinist Europe', in *Letters across Borders The Epistolary Practices of International Migrants*, ed. by Bruce S. Elliott, David A. Gerber and Suzanne M. Sinke (Palgrave: New York, 2006), pp.158-72.

[98] Haim Sperber, Boaz Cohen and Daniela Ozacky-Stern have thus far organised three workshops on 'The Usage of Ego-documents in Jewish Historical research' in May 2019, May 2021, and June 2023 at the Western Galilee College, Akko. A selection of contributions from the second workshop will be published *in Jewish Culture and History*, 24/2-3 (May 2023). The third workshop focussed exclusively on letters and more specifically the methodological issues concerning them.
See also: Asher Salah, "Correspondence and Letters," in Dean Phillip Bell, (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Jewish History and Historiography* (Routledge Handbooks Online, 2018); Elisheva Carlebach, 'Letter into Text: Epistolarity, History, Literature', in Eliyana R. Adler and Sheila E. Jelen (eds.), *Jewish Literature and History: An Interdisciplinary Conversation* (Bethesda, MD: University Press of Maryland, 2008), pp. 113–34.

[99] Marion Kaplan, *Hitler's Jewish Refugees. Hope and Anxiety in Portugal* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020), p.182, see pp.182-210.

[100] Ibid. Also Marion Kaplan, The Emotional Dissonance of Spaces: German Jewish Refugees in Portugal, at Workshop: Space and Place in the German-Jewish Experience of the 1930s, University of Rostock (12 May 2022).

[101] Hannah Holtschneider, Entrusting One's Child to the Care of Others: Emotions in the Correspondence between a German Jewish Family and a Scottish Couple 1939-1940. Paper given at the conference 'Emotions in Holocaust Studies' organised by Stefanie Fischer and Kobi Kabalek, 13-14 September 2022 (online).

from the graphemic and punctuational to the lexical, stylistic, and syntactic level, and from the level of speech acts to narrative composition'.[102] Andringa's use of literary analysis of professional writers' correspondence, whilst in many ways different to the study at hand, highlights the further potential of emotional analysis of letters, echoed by historians in addition to Kaplan and Holtschneider, such as Isa Schikorsky on WWI *Feldpostbriefe*, Oliver Doetzer on German-Jewish correspondence, and Sonia Cancian on Italian migration to Canada.[103]

Despite the migrant letter remaining a staple in the historical literature, its analysis and applicability to studies on knowledge transfer, transculturation, and experiences of continuity or upheaval remain a desideratum.[104] The 'epistemological turn' comes after decades of the history of knowledge being viewed as 'an exotic or even eccentric topic' according to Peter Burke and is still criticised for its paucity and shortcomings by some.[105] Recently growth in the German speaking world and centres such as the Lund Centre for the History of Knowledge (LUCK) in Sweden, highlight its growing dynamism and productiveness as a field.[106] Pioneered by Simone Lässig and Swen Steinberg in their special issue of *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* the emerging field of 'migrant knowledge' seeks to highlight the role of the individual or group in the process of knowledge production within the context of migration. Lässig and Steinberg highlighted the need to study actors who 'carried or abandoned, translated and transformed, [and] validated or delegitimized concrete bodies and figurations of knowledge during and after the process of migration'.[107] The result has been the 'Migrant Knowledge' network, created and maintained by staff at the German Historical Institute Washington and its Pacific Office at Berkeley, working at the nexus of migratory studies and the history of knowledge. Comprised of a network and blog, numerous scholars on aspects of the Holocaust have begun to touch upon

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[102] Els Andringa, 'Poetics of Emotion in Times of Agony: Letters from Exile, 1933-1940', *Poetics Today*, 32/1 (2011), 129–69 (p.152).
[103] See Sonia Cancian, '"My dearest love…": Love, longing, and desire in international migration', in *Migrations: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. by Michi Messer, Renee Schroeder and Ruth Wodak (Vienna: Springer-Verlag Wien, 2012), pp. 175–186; Isa Schikorsky, 'Kommunikation über das Unbeschreibbare—Beobachtungen zum Sprachstil von Kriegsbriefen', *Wirkendes Wort*, 42/2 (1993), 295–315; Oliver Doetzer, *'Aus Menschen werden Briefe': Die Korrespondenz einer jüdischen Familie zwischen Verfolgung und Emigration 1933-1947* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2002).
See also Kathleen A. Dehaan, '"Wooden shoes and mantle clocks": Letter writing as rhetorical forum for the transforming immigrant identity', in *Alternative Rhetorics: Challenges to the Rhetorical Tradition*, ed. by Laura Gray-Rosendale and Sibylle Gruber (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2001), pp. 53–72; Elizabeth Jane Errington, 'Webs of affection and obligation: Glimpse into families and nineteenth century transatlantic communities', *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association,* 19/1 (2008), 1–26.
[104] See this discussed in relation to the collections at Forschungsbibliothek Gotha, Die Nordamerika-Briefsammlung; Ursula Lehmkuhl, 'Heirat und Migration in Auswandererbriefen. Die Bestände der Nordamerika-Briefsammlung', *L'Homme*, 25 (2014), 123 –128 (pp.126-27).
[105] Peter Burke, *What is the History of Knowledge?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016), p.2. Jakob Vogel, 'Von der Wissenschaft s- zur Wissensgeschichte. Für eine Historisierung der "Wissensgesellschaft"', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* , 30 (2004), 639-60.
[106] For more on LUCK, see https://newhistoryofknowledge.com/, Last accessed: 23rd March 2023.
[107] Simone Lässig and Swen Steinberg, 'Knowledge on the Move: New Approaches toward a History of Migrant Knowledge', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 43/3 (2017), 313-46 (p.313). See also Simone Lässig, 'The History of Knowledge and the Expansion of the Historical Research Agenda', *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute*, 59 (2016), 29-58.

the intersection between knowledge and the Holocaust on a local level within this arena.[108] Of course however, such a topic is not new, albeit one almost exclusively focussed on the institutional/governmental level.[109] In his seminal 1980 work *The Terrible Secret,* Walter Laqueur noted that 'the history of the two most important channels of information will never be written', referring firstly to the network of smugglers within ghetto communities, and more importantly for this study, the series of individual correspondents within Nazi-occupied Europe and to other countries.[110] Whilst it may still be impossible to collate an authoritative collection of individual epistolary channels, it is certainly more possible now to access the types of material Laqueur refers to, through greater digitisation, indexing, donation, and the increasing discovery of collections in the garages and attics of descendants. Michael Fleming has highlighted the nuanced nature of information arrival in Britain, writing that 'it is important therefore to recognise that different groups had different access to information about atrocities against Jews' – although as of yet the information acquired by refugees has received little scholarly attention.[111]

More recently, a handful of texts are analysing microlevel knowledge of the Holocaust through the prism of letters. With a focus on correspondence within camps and ghettos, Maria von der Heydt's work on Johanna Larché-Levy's correspondence in Theresienstadt, Heinz Wewer's on postcards and letters within various camp systems, Maria Ferenc's on the Warsaw Ghetto, and various chapters in Jan Lánícek and Jan Lambertz's edited collection *More than Parcels,* all begin to personalise knowledge of the Holocaust for various individuals and groups.[112] Such

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[108] See *inter alia* Anne-Christin Klotz, 'More than Tourism: Re-reading Yiddish Travelogues as Sources of Migrant Knowledge', *Migrant Knowledge*, 5 October 2022, Accessed via: https://migrantknowledge.org/2022/10/05/re-reading-yiddish-travelogues/, Last accessed: 13 March 2023; Charlie Knight, ''I beg you again from my heart to help me find my sister': RELICO and the Need for Knowledge', *Migrant Knowledge*, 8 December 2022, Accessed via: https://migrantknowledge.org/2022/12/08/relico-and-the-need-for-knowledge/, Last accessed: 13 March 2023; Kimberly Cheng, 'The Power of Play: Jewish Refugee Children in World War II Shanghai', *Migrant Knowledge*, 18 March 2020, Accessed via: https://migrantknowledge.org/2020/03/18/power-of-play/, Last accessed: 13 March 2023.

[109] See Richard Breitman, *Official Secrets. What the Nazis Planned and What the British and Americans Knew* (London: Penguin/Allen Lane, 1998); Michael Fleming, *Auschwitz, the Allies and Censorship of the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Walter Laqueur, *The Terrible Secret: Suppression of the Truth of Hitler's "Final Solution"* (New York: Penguin Books, 1980); Martin Gilbert, *Auschwitz and the Allies* (London: Michael Joseph, 1981); Jürgen Matthäus, 'Introduction', in Jürgen Matthäus, *Predicting the Holocaust: Organizations Report from Geneva on the Emergence of the "Final Solution," 1939-1942* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019), pp.1-66.

[110] Laqueur, *The Terrible Secret,* p.4.

[111] Michael Fleming, 'Knowledge in Britain of the Holocaust During the Second World War', in *The Palgrave Handbook of Britain and the Holocaust,* ed. by Tom Lawson and Andy Pearce (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), pp.115-33 (p.115).

[112] Maria von der Heydt, "Sobald ich schreiben kann, wirst du von mir hören' Johanna LarchéLevy', in *Theresienstädter Studien und Dokumente*, ed. by Jaroslava Miotová, Anna Hájková and Michael Wögerbauer (Prague: Institut Terezinské iniciativy, 2007), pp.163 – 203; Heinz Wewer, *"Abgereist, ohne Angabe der Adresse": Postalische Zeugnisse zu Verfolgung und Terror im Nationalsozialismus* (Leipzig: Hentrich & Hentrich, 2017); Maria Ferenc, *"Każdy pyta, co z nami będzie". Mieszkańcy getta warszawskiego wobec wiadomości o wojnie i Zagładzie* (Warsaw: Jewish Historical Institute, 2021); Jan Lánícek and Jan Lambertz (eds.), *More Than Parcels: Wartime Aid for Jews in Nazi-Era Camps and Ghettos* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2022).

works ergo exemplify the attempt to highlight Fleming's call to recognise specificity and nuance in the monolith of 'knowledge of the Holocaust'.

The opening of the 'Holocaust Letters' exhibition at the Wiener Holocaust Library in London in 2023, marked a scholarship beginning to highlight the emotionality of Holocaust knowledge, whilst also drawing attention to the letter as a legitimate field of study independent of wider histories. Curated by Christine Schmidt and Sandra Lipner, the exhibition drew upon both archival deposits and private collections to explore letters' roles in the lives of their sender and recipients, examining the intersection between knowledge of the Holocaust and the emotional dimension of letters. In regards to this growing knowledge of the Holocaust, Schmidt and Lipner wrote:

> Terminology used in the letters points to the hypothetical nature of early Holocaust knowledge as people expressed their grasp of the unthinkable [...] Euphemisms helped express a reality for which many correspondents had no words [...] Early Holocaust knowledge was about both small details and the big picture. It was local as well as transnational. To write about their experiences, correspondents had to make sense of them. Letters became sites of knowledge production because, in writing, people articulated their experiences and expressed what they knew'[113]

The forthcoming publication *Holocaust Letters: Methodologies, Cases, and Reflections,* which I have co-edited and contributed to, will be the first collection to systematically examine various letter writing practices across Europe, and globally, during the Holocaust and after. The volume establishes private letters as vital sources of historical relevance where bonds were formed, maintained and negotiated. In whatever form they survive in, letters played witness not only to what happened and to whom, but in some cases offer the scholar evidence of how and why the events that came to be known as the Holocaust occurred. My thesis 'German-Jewish Letters and the Holocaust', sits amid these growing discussions of letter writing as an exploratory process into what the letter meant for its contemporaries, and how it operated.

The Holocaust, migration, and translation

Despite arguing for the distinctiveness of the term 'refugee' in contrast to 'forced migrant' or 'asylum seeker', Oliver Bakewell notes that often 'the circumstances facing both refugees and other forced migrants are almost indistinguishable [...] the cause of their flight may be irrelevant

[113] Extracts from the exhibition 'Holocaust Letters' curated by Christine Schmidt and Sandra Lipner, at The Wiener Holocaust Library, London, 22 February – 16 June 2023. The exhibition catalogue contains much of this text - Christine Schmidt and Sandra Lipner, *Holocaust Letters* (London: Wiener Library, 2023).

when they all find themselves living in the same conditions'.[114] If Bakewell is correct, could one complete this study of communication with refugees from a natural disaster, or alternate conflict? Would the same principles apply for modern day communication amongst migrants such as text and social media or 'letters 2.0' as termed by Alan Scott?[115] Whilst there is evident relevance between this study and other migrant crises categorised by enforced communication due to separation, the nature of the Holocaust has resulted in specificity in terms of its content, categorisation, memory culture, and archiving.

As various scholars have described the Holocaust as a 'rupture' in twentieth century history, this equally fractured our understanding of people, events, archives and their relative importance. The Holocaust underpins the geography, context, and existence of sources of this period, and ascribes them differential places within the archive. Leora Auslander has written that 'being the victim, or survivor, of a world-historical cataclysm changed that relation to history [as] it both generated far more detailed documentary traces than would otherwise have existed and made people, who would otherwise have gone unnoticed, noticeable'.[116] This cataclysm has altered the histories and the archives of all the collections used in this study. The letters between Theodor Hirschberg and his cousin Ernst Böhm would likely not have been kept over others he sent, had there not been legal issues over his escape from Brieg, mandated by the Gestapo. Furthermore these would have unlikely been bought by the University of Southampton had they not pertained to the Holocaust and supplemented the Anglo-Jewish archive there.[117] Marion Ferguson in the last stages of her life, felt a renewed affinity to her mother who had been murdered in the Holocaust, and began to research her life, amassing swathes of material and clearly organising her personal archive ready for depositing in the Manchester Jewish Museum upon her death, to 'contribute to the German Jewish collections there'. Additionally, access to the original letters of the Amberg collection is largely impossible

[114] Oliver Bakewell, 'Conceptualising Displacement and Migration: Processes, Conditions, and Categories' in *The Migration-Displacement Nexus: Patterns, Processes, and Policies,* ed. by Khalid Koser and Susan Martin (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011), pp. 14-28 (p.19). For more on the debates surrounding terminology see Roger Zetter, 'More Labels, Fewer Refugees: Remaking the Refugee Label in an Era of Globalization', *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 20/2 (2007), 172-92; Stephen Castles, 'Towards a Sociology of Forced Migration and Social Transformation', *Sociology,* 37/1 (2003), 13–34; James Hathaway, 'Forced Migration Studies: Could we agree just to "date?', *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 20/3 (2007), 349-69; Josh DeWind, 'Response to Hathaway', *Journal of Refugee Studies* 20/3 (2007), 381–385; Katy Long, 'When refugees stopped being migrants: Movement, labour and humanitarian protection', *Migration Studies,* 1/1 (2013), 4-26.
[115] Alan Scott, 'Letters 2.0? Linguistic insights into the extent to which social media are a substitute for personal letters' in *Was ist ein Brief? – Aufsätze zu epistolarer Theorie und Kultur*. *What is a letter? – Essays on epistolary theory and culture,* ed. by Marie Isabel Matthews-Schlinzig and Caroline Socha (Würzberg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2018), pp.141-58. See also Elisabeth Eide, 'Mobile Flight: Refugees and the Importance of Cell Phones', *Nordic Journal of Migration Studies,* 10/2 (2020), 67-81.
[116] Leora Auslander, 'Archiving a Life: Post-Shoah Paradoxes of Memory Legacies', in *Unsettling History: Archiving and Narrating in Historiography*, ed. by Sebastian Jobs and Alf Lüdtke (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2010), pp.129-30.
[117] For more on the Anglo-Jewish Archive at Southampton see Karen Robson, 'The Anglo-Jewish Community and Its Archives', *Jewish Culture and History*, 12/1-2 (2010), 337-44.

as they are spread over the globe – a direct result of the forced migration caused by the Holocaust. James Jordan, Lisa Leff, and Joachim Schlör in their special issue 'Jewish Migration and the Archive' write that 'it has become nearly impossible to write the history [...] of any Jewish community or institution by simply 'going there' and working one's way through the archive', predominantly the result of forced migration such as that of the Amberg's.[118] Judith Szapor elucidates on this point where she writes that the archive 'became a refugee itself'. Archives are, in many ways, reflective of the narrative of the individuals they purport to represent – thus the existence of letters between separated parties becomes part of the biography.[119] In the private collections of the Licht and Rothschild family, the existence of files, folders and suitcases hidden for decades denotes a history that cannot be thrown away, a past that whilst personal, connects much more broadly to the cataclysm Auslander speaks of. The removal of these memory containers from the cupboard, the unwrapping of sealed envelopes, and the viewing and remembering of these liminal objects within a context of extreme violence and dispossession, results in letters from the Holocaust becoming arguably unique in their analysis.[120] Through researching such collections, saved by chance and moral duty amongst other reasons, we give them life beyond the confines of the archive or attic, and perhaps save them for another generation to see.

For families, the discovery of documents: often letters, but also photographs, diaries, official certificates and forms, notes, scribbles on the backs of train tickets, and more, present an array of possibilities. Some reflections on similar discoveries to those by the families of the Lichts and Rothschilds for example, are featured in the exhibition *Holocaust Letters* at the Wiener Holocaust Library. For the children's author Michael Rosen, on discovering photographs of people only referred to by name in family legends, he stated 'There are times when I look across the photos and documents and tell myself that at least one part of [the Nazis intention to removed Jewish from history] failed'.[121] For others, the realisation was perhaps less all-encompassing but equally emotive. After discovering seventy six letters written in Czech in his

[118] James Jordan, Lisa Leff, and Joachim Schlör, 'Jewish Migration and the Archive: Introduction', *Jewish Culture and History*, 15/1–2 (2014), 1-5 (pp.1–2).
[119] Judith Szapor, 'Private archives and public lives: the migrations of Alexander Weissberg and the Polanyi archives', *Jewish Culture and History*, 15/1-2 (2014), 93-109 (p.93). See also various chapters in *Archive Stories; Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History*, ed. by Antoinette Burton (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2005).
[120] Studies of 'Migration and Memory' have grown in recent years examining the effect of migration on the archive and the memory of this. See for example: Joachim Baur, *Die Musealisierung der Migration. Einwanderungsmuseen und die Inszenierung der multikulturellen Nation* (Bielefeld: transcript verlag, 2009); Julia Creet and Andreas Kitzmann (eds.), *Memory and Migration. Multidisciplinary approaches to Memory Studies* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011); Cornelia Wilhelm (ed.), *Migration, Memory, and Diversity. Germany from 1945 to the Present* (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2016).
[121] Michael Rosen, 'Introduction', in Christine Schmidt and Sandra Lipner, *Holocaust Letters* (London: Wiener Library, 2023), pp.7-9 (p.9).

loft, and subsequently having them translated, Vic Eckstein noted that 'I feel for the first time as an adult that I heard my father's voice again'.[122] For many descendants, the discovery of documents pertaining to those generations who perhaps perished in the Holocaust, or to those who survived but remained silent for the entirety of their lives, provide a temporal bridge across an often impenetrable divide, to a place where one can again be in dialogue with those ancestors. In the afterword for the edited collection of her grandmother's letters, Kate Ottevanger wrote that 'reading these letters has brought her alive for me' and that meeting the elderly granddaughter of her grandmother's lover Ernst 'completed the circle'.[123] Conversely, some descendants have discussed the emotional difficulties of reaching into the past, such as Ariana Neuman in regard to her work *When Time Stopped,* who experienced extreme nightmares during the research process.[124]

In some cases however, papers never make it to the mouldy suitcase in the loft, or the box in the archive. In the research for this study for example I came across the story of Hans Loewenthal (1899-1986) formerly of the Robert Koch Institute in Berlin, who was removed from his position in 1933 and emigrated to England where he later had two daughters, with his wife Ilse.[125] Of the few heirlooms held by the family today is a scratchy photograph showing an older Hans standing on front of a metal bin, flames licking the air, with cigarette in hand. Dated July 1953, penned on the back of the photograph in blue ink is the line 'Burning his past, present & future before morning!'.[126] Here Hans Loewenthal is burning his paper possessions - correspondence with his family during the war and other documentation regarding his Holocaust experience. The captioner of the photograph evidently believed there to be some life in the documents yet, beyond the metallic walls of a burning bin.

Translating Past Lives

When beginning this research what was clear from the outset was the need to either find already translated documents, or to find a translator who was willing to work with me extensively to make use of otherwise inaccessible collections. My own linguistic inabilities aside, translation studies and Holocaust studies necessarily go hand in hand, and yet the

[122] Vic Eckstein, 'Hearing my father's voice again', in Christine Schmidt and Sandra Lipner, *Holocaust Letters* (London: Wiener Library, 2023), pp.64-65.
[123] Kate Ottevanger in Bader, *Life and Love,* p.274.
[124] Ariana Neuman, Peter Bradley and Sandra Lipner, 'Hybrid Event: Holocaust Letters and Family Histories – Ariana Neumann, Peter Bradley', 22 March 2023, The Wiener Holocaust Library, London, Recording accessed via: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t2kjPA6DjR0, Last accessed: 24 March 2023.
[125] Museum at the Robert Koch Institute (ed.), *Remembering: In memory of the twelve Jewish employees who were forced to leave the Robert Koch Institute in 1933* (Berlin: RKI, 2022), pp.81-85.
[126] Photograph, Private Collection of S. Lourenço.

recognition of the role of the translator is often conspicuously absent from most academic output, with translation seen as a problem as opposed to an achievement. Too often, texts that have undergone a multitude of transformations are treated as unmediated expressions of author's experiences and words without the due diligence of recognising the place of third parties in presenting this.[127] The transnationality of the history of the Holocaust and even more so in regards to its memory cultures, ensures it is a 'multilingual experience' in the terminology of David Bellos.[128] Indeed, one cannot properly conceptualise the Holocaust in modern academia or public discourse without translation – many of the most famous works by Elie Wiesel, Primo Levi, Anne Frank and host of other less well known autobiographical writings, are read through translation.[129]

On meeting the head archivist at the University of Southampton Special Collections, Karen Robson, she lamented the lack of use of some of the primarily non-English letter collections such as those of Theodor Hirschberg. After a short flick through the English letters in the Hirschberg collection, I decided it was worth the gamble in having them all translated. After reaching out to a number of translators recommended to me through friends and connections, I came across Kristin Baumgartner who had previously worked with the AJR Refugee Voices Project. Kristin, initially began as an editor for interview transcripts, but later branched out to become an archival researcher and database manager for the project. In 2023 I asked Kristin to write down her thoughts on the translations she had done for me, reflecting on her role in this thesis in a hope to better recognise the role of the translator in this work and others.[130] Kristin has translated the entirety of the Theodor Hirschberg letters as well as large sections of Marion Ferguson's archive in Manchester, including her mother's letters, her father's letters until 1945, and Marion's diaries from the wartime period.

Commonly translators conduct research on their subjects whilst reading, in an attempt to better understand the writers themselves, and context in which they write. Bettina Brandt noted that sometimes such research snowballs into translators writing a book about the letter writer's lives themselves.[131] Kristin often provided useful notes on cultural and historical aspects that

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[127] Peter Davies, 'Introduction', Holocaust Testimony and Translation, *Translation and Literature,* 23 (2014), 161-69.
[128] David Bellos, 'Translating Holocaust testimony. A translator's perspective', in *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Memory,* ed. by Sharon Deane-Cox and Anneleen Spiessens (London and New York: Routledge, 2022), pp.13-21.
[129] For further works on translation and Holocaust studies see Jean Boase-Beier et al. (eds.), *Translating Holocaust Lives* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017); Peter Davies, *Witness Between Languages. The Translation of Holocaust Testimonies in Context* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2018); Bettina Hofmann and Ursula Reuter (eds.), *Translated Memories. Transgenerational Perspectives on the Holocaust* (London: Lexington Books, 2020).
[130] Unless otherwise stated, extracts in this section are from an email interview with Kristin (17 April 2023).
[131] Bettina Brandt, 'Nelly and Trudie: Deciphering a Transatlantic Family Holocaust Correspondence' in *On being adjacent to historical violence*, ed. by Irene Kacandes (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), pp.315-22.

may be lost on me as a non-German reader, as well as linguistic traits or phrasings that don't necessarily translate, something particularly relevant to Marion's archive:

> Walter was a well-read man with an interest in music, politics and what it meant to be Jewish. In regards of Walter Goldberg in particular, there were many cultural aspects I wanted Charlie to understand. Walter plays on words and has a sense of humour. He is often very direct. He tells his daughter that she has to lose weight or that some of the photos are pretty bad – but he isn't rude, just what Germans would like to call honest

Reading the original German, more so maybe than reading a translation (no matter how authentic) can also provoke emotional responses for the translator. Kristin is keen to note however, the importance of maintaining a professional distance stressing that 'the farthest I go is to explain why the author writes certain things or uses a certain language'. She goes on to state that 'time and distance [away from] the writers are a barrier' to feeling like an intruder, 'I remain detached like an observer'. In an earlier interview reflecting on her experience of working for AJR, Kristin explained the story of listening to an emotionally difficult testimony in the evening and how this altered her work schedule and approach to such topics:

> it changed the way I work now, [...] I check the biographical details and if I see this is something that will make me think more about a person then I do it the next morning and lets say work on the glossary or something a bit more easy going[132]

Such emotional difficulties ergo tie in to how the translator can effectively work via-a-vis the limits of representation when one becomes a 'second witness' writing a new text which attempts to characterise and represent the original.[133] There is often a perhaps unfair ethical imperative on the translator of Holocaust victim/survivor documents to *"do right by the writer"* and to represent them loyally, without paying attention to realities of such work – time constraints, limited budgets, and the readability of new text.[134] Balancing such practical considerations with ethical motivations is difficult. For Kristin here in the case of Marion, the feeling of working towards her was clear for us both:

> I also feel that in a sense the researcher Charlie and I are paying tribute to Marion Ferguson [...] One can only wonder what her life would have been if she hadn't had to leave Germany. Charlie found out in his research that Marion's later life wasn't always easy [...] She shares an

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[132] 'STAFF REFLECTIONS: Kristin Baumgartner', *AJR Refugee Voices* [online video recording], YouTube (11 November 2019), Accessed via: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kvAMI4UM3pI&t=271s, Last accessed: 18 April 2023.

[133] See Sharon Dean-Cox, 'The translator as secondary witness: Mediating memory in Antelme's *L'espèce humaine*', *Translation Studies*, 6/3 (2013), 309-23.

[134] Peter Davies, 'Ethics and the Translation of Holocaust Lives' in *Translating Holocaust Lives*, ed. by Jean Boase-Beier et al. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), pp.23-43.

> experience of flight and uprooting, trauma and loss with many others. But this research tells her unique and individual story and by thinking of her we are honouring her life. We aren't intruding in a sensational way.

Together, Kristin and I have, I believe, faithfully reconstructed the two collections we have worked on and made them accessible for future scholars beyond this thesis. Kristin's translations, along with both of our contextualising footnotes, are being placed back in the archive with the original letters.

Structure

This thesis will follow the narratives of the five families introduced previously through thematically organised chapters, covering the families' migration, everyday life, and wider place in the war and Holocaust. Consisting of seven chapters split into three parts, this thesis will examine the letter as an object of study, with its opportunities and pitfalls, through to how it was used and understood by its contemporaries.

Part 1 will examine the role and significance of the letter for those correspondents and contemporaries as well as for the historian now. The letter continues to intrigue historians, non-academic researchers, and members of the public alike acting as a temporal bridge between past and present as well as offering a physical reminder of said past for future generations. It is thus worthy of analysis in its own right. The opportunities, issues, and narrative silences of the five collections will be discussed vis-à-vis how contextualisation becomes a necessity to better understand the letters and how we use them. For the contemporaries however, these pieces of paper acted as a new 'epistolary space' regardless of the issues historians now have to contend with. This part will thus apply a spatial analysis to the letters of the families, suggesting that the destruction of physical spaces led to increased importance being placed on those metaphysical ones. Within this – letters became people – the connection to loved ones and the world they represent.

The subsequent chapters will in parts 2 and 3 examine how this new epistolary space was utilised by the members of the families studied. The German author and playwright Carl Zuckmayer remarked that letters between refugees and those remaining in Germany are 'always concerned [with] the rescue of friends and colleagues who had not yet escaped mortal danger' and thus remain a staple in collections across the globe.[135] As a result the structure, content, and style of such letters are already established through their aim, giving the historian

[135] Carl Zuckmayer, *Aufruf zum Leben: Porträts und Zeugnisse aus bewegten Zeiten* (Frankfurt a/M: S. Fischer, 1976), p.15.

the ability to learn about the letter writers' networks, social standing and connections, both personal and institutional.[136] **Part 2** will highlight how conversations pertaining to migration and the movement out of Germany were discussed and organised through the epistolary. Correspondents sought to organise the escape of friends and relatives through networks across the globe and often describe the processes, places, and individuals contacted in a vast interconnected chain of letters. The chapters in part 2 will highlight these networks and the various individuals mentioned in them as well as how the letters were used to practically reunite families and ameliorate their situation with food, money, and sustenance.

Conversations pertaining to the potential saviour of family, or equally the realisation of the inability to rescue loved ones were all had within a continuously evolving and gradually growing field of knowledge which the letters became active participants within. **Part 3** of this thesis examines 'migrant knowledge' in regards to the 'everyday' and more broadly asks the question: can (and if so, how) letters sent during the war be considered Holocaust knowledge? Broadly, part 3 takes the analysis of the networks constructed during part 2 and applies these to practically consider *how* discussions of family members' fates spread and how information spread during the war. In their edited collection *Was ist ein Brief?* the editors note that since the 'reading process - which begins anew and differently with each new reader' changes, the 'contexts of transmission must be taken into account'.[137] Part 3 will examine these contexts and also point to at least in one case, how letters continued to play a role in the immediate post-war period.

[136] Szapor, 'Private archives and public lives', 94.

[137] Marie Isabel Matthews-Schlinzig & Caroline Socha, 'Von einfachen Fragen, oder: Ein Brief zur Einführung', in *What is a letter? - Essays on epistolary theory and culture*, ed. by Marie Isabel Matthews-Schlinzig and Caroline Socha (Würzberg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2018), pp. 9-17 (p.9).

PART I

THE LETTER IN HISTORY AND MEMORY

> If you do not understand, how your Mutsch and Paps hunger for letters from their children, specifically letters with content, not trivial drivel, then I cannot help you; you are no longer a child; I cannot and do not want to nag you, that is long gone; however, if you catch your father or your mother leaving you or your brother without news , while they are healthy and can still move their fingers, then I give you permission, to talk to me in a way in which a daughter would never dare to do to her father, if she really is his daughter! – Why do the letters from Gerhart arrive as punctually as souls to church? [...] why does he answer all of the questions we ask in every letter, while you nonchalantly disregard our queries in silence and never tell us anything about the important things that happen to you

Siegfried Rothschild to Annelore Rothschild, 10 June 1939

In the summer of 1939, Siegfried Rothschild wrote angrily to his daughter Annelore – questioning why it was that her brother's letters 'arrive as punctually as souls to church' whilst hers were mere 'trivial drivel' not answering one of their queries and never arriving promptly. To Siegfried and Margaretha Rothschild stuck in Bad Cannstatt near Stuttgart, letters from their children in England were of vital importance, indeed they were hungered for. Even when Annelore was in Switzerland at the Ecole Nouvelle Menagerie finishing school in Jogney-sur-Vevey, she often set aside specific times to write and specific times to read, saving her letter writing for Sundays. Evidently Annelore felt a duty to write to her parents in Stuttgart despite her hectic schedule – 'until now every minute was taken or I would have written to you before and in more detail'.[138] The passage above is not an isolated request, and it is clear that there was a disparity between the messages Annelore wished to send and those messages Siegfried and Margaretha wished to receive. For Annelore's parents stuck in Germany, the letters were both the means by which they could receive updates on their escape but also feel connected to their children Annelore and Gerhard in Britain. In Part 1, I will examine how the letter is used and understood by scholars and descendants today, alongside how it was used and understood by historical actors eighty years ago such as the Rothschilds. In recognising the place and role of the historian in utilising the letter as a historical source I will highlight how the letter can and should be used. The letter can further be viewed through a range of different lenses – as a source and repository for biographical and historical data, as a material object and marker of memory, or as a space.

Part 1 of this thesis will explore the significance and roles of the letter in three different ways each in turn exploring the subsequent individuals to have held, examined, and used the letter

[138] Annelore Rothschild to Siegfried and Margaretha Rothschild, 28 January 1938, PC-JBG/MT.

since it was written. Firstly, chapter 1 will examine the letter as a **source** for the historian to use, detailing the specific considerations the epistolary requires. As an ego-document often assumed as self-explanatory, this chapter will demonstrate the need for contextualisation through corresponding documents and institutional archives, the necessity of recognising letters' places in historical narrative both modern and contemporaneous, and some of the practical considerations needed when opting to utilise these sources for historical research. The letter will then be examined as a **space**, predominantly in the view of the contemporaneous historical actors. In this chapter I will introduce the concept of an 'epistolary space' with which to understand the letter and how a spatial analysis of the epistolary can enhance our insights into their place in the German-Jewish experience of the 1930s and 40s. Chapter 3 will subsequently discuss letters as material **objects** focussing on how letters' materiality was reflected upon and conceived by historical actors contemporaneously. I will examine how letters' physical movement between spaces aided in refugees' conception of their exile before moving on to examine how letters' material memory manifests in descendants' lives and archive discoveries decades later.

CHAPTER 1

The Letter as a Source

All studies of communication in whatever form, according to Peter Burke, are largely influenced by the American political scientist Harold Laswell, in his well-known aphorism *"Who?", "Says What?", "In What Channel?", "To Whom?", and "With What Effect?"*.[139] In which, the 'who' refers to the writer or communicator; the 'what' refers to the content of the message or the written words on the page; the 'channel' indicates the means of transmission, in this case a letter or postcard for example; and the 'whom' is the individual or group of recipients, or in the case of mass communication the audience more broadly. Perhaps more complicated, the 'effect' is the outcome of a particular communication which according to Laswell must influence the recipient in some way. In her work on Communication Studies, Sheila Steinberg highlights that Laswell's model falsely suggests that 'communication is a one-way process' whereby the communicator influences the recipient in some way, therefore assuming that they are the only active participant in the communicatory process.[140] The model thus does not involve feedback loops or the notion of reciprocal communication, in other words recipients who respond to the communicator and therefore become a communicator themselves.

As a historian analysing the letter as a means of enforced communication during a specific time, there are certain aspects of Laswell's construct which are self-explanatory and others which are more complex when one begins to consider writers' intentions. The 'who', the 'channel', and the 'whom' in the case of Siegfried Rothschild's diatribe at the start of this part for example, are clear through historical research. The difficulty comes however when one encounters the 'what' and the 'effect'. How can the historian, decades later interpret the writings of authors writing to fellow contemporaries? Indeed, the wider debate surrounding the ability of readers to interpret meaning from text is worth noting. Hermeneutical debates on the interpretative ability of the scholar to discern the original meaning, or what E. D. Hirsch has

[139] Quoted in Peter Burke, 'Communication', in *A Concise Companion to History,* ed. by Ulinka Rublack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp.157-76.

[140] Sheila Steinberg, *An Introduction to Communication Studies* (Cape Town: Juta, 2007), pp.52-53.

labelled the 'best meaning' as 'the most legitimate norm for interpretation', are not uniform.[141] Perhaps most famously in opposition, sits the French literary critic Roland Barthes. In his short essay 'The Death of the Author' published in 1967, Barthes argues that the writer's biography combined with their intentions are inaccessible to the reader, positing that a 'disconnection occurs' once writing begins and 'the voice loses its origin, the author enters into his own death'.[142] Whilst Barthes's influence is notable and his focus on the 'effect' of the words as opposed to their intention is important, one must also be wary of removing authorial intent completely.[143] In the case of the letter, the writer's background and the context in which they write are just as important as how the letter is received and understood by the recipient, whether that be intended (in the case of the contemporary addressee) or unintended (in the case of the later historian). What Siegfried Rothschild hoped to achieve in this letter is debatable, and equally how Annelore understood it is equally questionable. That does not mean however, that one should resign to the metaphorical 'death' of the author.

The letter has not solely been the study ground of literary theorists, but also sociologists and anthropologists alike. Janet Altman most importantly, has written on the importance and role of letters within the lives of those separated arguing that:

> To write a letter is to map one's coordinates - temporal, spatial, emotional, intellectual - in order to tell someone else where one is located at a particular time and how far one has travelled since last writing. Reference points on that map are particular to the shared world of the writer and the addressee[144]

The specific 'shared world' of families and the emotional constraints migration puts upon this thus place greater emphasis on the importance of letters for those forcibly separated. One can argue that pre-existing emotions of the 'shared world' Altman speaks of, such as the affection between a couple, the joviality between siblings, or the arguable generational tensions such as those between Annelore and Siegfried in the introduction to this part, were transformed by the pressures of migration. Through mining letters for the traces of coordinates whether those be emotional, spatial, temporal or otherwise, not only highlights the letter as a space in itself

[141] E. D. Hirsch, 'Three Dimensions of Hermeneutics', *New Literary History*, 3/2 (1972), 245-261. See also Quentin Skinner, 'Motives, Intentions and the Interpretation of Texts', *New Literary History*, 3/2 (1972), 393-408.
[142] Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author' in idem., trans. S. Heath, *Image, Music, Text* (London: Fontana, 1977), pp.142-48 (p.142).
[143] For more critiques/analyses of Barthes see John Farrell, *The Varieties of Authorial Intention: Literary Theory Beyond the Intentional Fallacy* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).
[144] Janet G. Altman, *Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1982), p.119.

through which relationships can continue but also shows how refugees understood their family's plight.

The following chapter will discuss how the letter, and in some cases specifically the German-Jewish refugee letter, can be understood by historians and contemporary actors alike. I will firstly examine the **nature of the source,** specifically how the historian should conceptualise this ego-document in the context in which it was written. Focussing on examples predominantly from the Hirschberg collection, this section highlights the gulf between how historical actors and modern scholars viewed, and should view, letters. This chapter will then go on to highlight the value of **institutional and contextualising** documents in reading letters. In response to Jelena Subotić's question 'what can one piece of paper tell us without a story around it?', this section uses the varied archival and genealogical sources necessary to understand the Hirschberg collection, to argue that these types of sources are vital to understand these objects.[145] Thirdly I will discuss **silences** within the letters studied in relation to Haitian-American anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot's argument that silences are embedded within historical narratives. Using a variety of examples from the Hirschberg, Licht, and Amberg family papers, this section posits the opportunities and challenges that silences offer the scholar. Finally, I will detail some of the **considerations** necessary when using historical letters as a source, specifically the role of absences in the Licht and Amberg family correspondences and how as scholars we can work with and ameliorate these.

1.1 The Nature of the Letter: What it is and what it is not

A week after the declaration of war, Clara Licht put pen to paper in two ways, once on a letter, designed to reach her son Ernst and his wife Ilse, and once on pages for herself. Clara kept a quasi-diary for a few months in 1939/40 which concerned solely her thoughts on Ernst and Ilse – compartmentalising them. Stuffed inside a creased yellowing envelope with additional diary entries scrawled on the outside of the encasing, the two pages detail Clara's feelings on her separation from her son and daughter-in-law. On 10 September 1939, Clara wrote: 'I was very restless and said in the evening while writing the usual Sunday card: "I am writing this into a void. It is rubbish writing when they will never receive it." And, so it was'.[146] Despite her certainty of not receiving a letter back, Clara continued to pen letters, which although they no longer exist, tell us much about the role and nature of letters for those sending a receiving them. Although Clara rarely received a letter in return from Ernst and Ilse, often only through the Red

[145] Jelena Subotić, 'Ethics of Archival Research on Political Violence', *Journal of Peace Research*, 58/3 (2021), 342–54 (p.347).
[146] Clara envelope diary entry, 10 September 1939, JMB. Trans. K. Baumgartner.

Cross: 'We are breathing a tentative breath of relief. I can't believe it yet!', she continued to write in an attempt to feel close to her family. For Clara, writing letters into a 'void' as she termed it, where the possibility of her son reading them was almost certainly non-existent, did not mean she did not continue to write. Sending a letter to someone irrespective of an expected reply, was a practice that confirmed in the letter writer's own mind, the existence of the other party. When war began in September 1939, letters sent into enemy occupied countries became illegal at fear of individuals communicating with Britain's newly founded foes. As a result, a cruel paradox emerged for many like Clara – that when one most wanted to write a letter, one could not.

A disconnect exists between the way in which historical actors, such as Clara, viewed the letter in relation to its writer, and how historians today should equally view this relationship. In February 1943, Walter Goldberg wrote from Cuba to his daughter Marion lamenting his separation from her:

> Can you remember the title of an article in a Jewish newspaper "*aus Kindern werden Briefe"*? I would never have imagined that I would experience the bitter truth of that title at first hand. But I hope that the title will also be true in reverse and that letters will turn back into children[147]

For Walter, the letter was not a representation of Marion or even her words, but was the embodiment of his daughter physically; the letter *was* her.[148] For Walter in an earlier letter, correspondence from Marion 'let me so kindly be part of your life', an admission that for him, the letter became vital in understanding Marion's existence in Britain, and indeed understanding her.[149] For the scholar today however, the nature of the letter is something they must be acutely aware of, as not to over emphasise its importance, its role as a potential repository of biographical or historical detail, as well as its status as a representation of the individual themselves. Letters are vestiges of the past, and not the people they represent.

In 1941 a group of psychologists at Harvard University, analysed the coping strategies of a group of ninety, predominantly male, middle class and religiously Jewish emigres and noted a marked increase in 'in-group feelings' – that being the retreat into (often) the family unit. Allport and the other scholars wrote how possibly as a 'substitute satisfaction for thwarted desires' the alternate result was 'the strengthening of ties within already established groups' such as

[147] Walter Goldberg to Marion Goldberg, 23 February 1943, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[148] See Gudrun Maierhof, Chana Schütz, Hermann Simon (eds.), *Aus Kindern wurden Briefe. Die Rettung jüdischer Kinder aus Nazi-Deutschland* (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2004).
[149] Walter Goldberg to Marion Goldberg, 3 December 1941, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.

families.[150] Such findings however are complicated when one notes the physical separation between family units, despite the family becoming a refuge.[151] For Walter in the extracts above, the retreat is into the letter which itself is a replacement for Marion, whilst they cannot be together physically.

Similarly, for letters sent and received by Theodor Hirschberg, which were regularly the product of, as well as seen by, multiple people in a variety of ways, this created a network which acted as an equal retreat (see Chapter 5). As Christine Schmidt and Sandra Lipner remind us 'letter writing and reading were often social activities' and thus were the product of a host of individuals contributing and often a host more listening in to 'personal, often visceral messages'.[152] Trapped in Belgium after their failed attempt to leave the continent, Ernst Böhm and his family often penned letters collectively and made reference to this. In a letter from their new abode in *van Schoonhovenstraat* 41, Antwerp, Ernst wrote a detailed letter to his cousin Theodor concerning their onward emigration from Belgium as well as their living situation:

> As the new room wasn't just small and dark but also damp, we moved a floor up a week ago where we don't have these problems. And in ten days we want to move up another floor to a bigger, slightly more expensive room. We also attend English and French language lessons organised by the Comité[153]

Since it was soon to be Theodor's birthday, many other members of the family in Antwerp contributed to the letter. Ernst's wife Elise wrote that 'as Ernst has written very detailed today, I can be brief' and agreed with her husband regarding his wish for Theodor to not 'have an inferior complex'. This was echoed by Theodor's Aunt Rosalie Hirschberg (Ernst's mother), who wished him a happy birthday and 'success in everything you do and that you are always healthy'. Rosalie goes on to note how 'you should have more confidence – you are better than the image you have of yourself'. The Böhm children, Ilse and Siegfried, wrote simple birthday wishes. Although fairly conventional, such a letter does allow us to see the communal nature of letters passing between families and individuals. Often letters between separated parts of a family

[150] G. W. Allport, J. S. Bruner, and E. M. Jandorf, 'Personality under social catastrophe: Ninety life-histories of the Nazi revolution', *Journal of Personality*, 10 (1941), 1-22 (pp.14-15).
[151] See also Marion Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp.50-54.
[152] Sandra Lipner and Christine Schmidt, 'The Exhibition Holocaust Letters at The Wiener Holocaust Library' in *Holocaust Letters: Methodologies, Cases, and Reflections*, ed. by Clara Dijkstra, Charlie Knight, Sandra Lipner, and Christine Schmidt (London: Bloomsbury, 2025 [forthcoming]).
[153] Ernst Böhm and others to Theodor Hirschberg, 11 November 1939. UoS MS314/1/77. Trans. K. Baumgartner.

were not private and were never intended to be, the comfort being in that utterances could be shared *as a family*.

Just as letters were read and sent often in collaboration with, or at least with the knowledge of, those around them, letters could also be quoted or forwarded if they had important information, further complicating their role. In reference to the passing of Theodor Hirschberg's step-maternal Aunt, Edna Gottschalk (born Cohn, 1884-1940) and her husband Martin (1881-1939) a few months earlier, letters were forwarded and quoted between Britain, Belgium, and Bulgaria creating a transnational epistolary space whereby grief was shared, and information exchanged hinging on the role of the mediator. In September 1939, Theodor received a letter from Ernst in Antwerp telling him that Martin Gottschalk had passed away. Theodor soon after, wrote to Martin's daughter Ursula in Yorkshire to break the news to her:

> I have to tell you the most shattering [news]: your esteemed and beloved father passed away on the 20th September in the morning unexpectedly [in his sleep.] I received a card from my cousin in Antwerp telling me the sad news and asking me to inform you. My mother and my older brother and the Boehm family express their condolences. If you like, I will send you the card.[154]

Since this particular postcard does not appear in the archive we can presume that Theodor did indeed forward this letter to Ursula to read for herself the news of her father's death. Although this is complicated by the fact that a passage, appearing to be the extract from Ernst's letter is typed on the back of Ursula's reply to Theodor suggesting he copied it out instead. In Theodor's response to Ernst he wrote that a 'heavy blow has fallen on us, particularly in these times' and wrote how 'Ursel had just started her new employment at the Ackworth School near Pontefract/ Yorkshire' and that on receiving 'her first message from there I had to reply to with the news of her father's death'. He surmised that Ursula 'cannot fathom her father's death' and that 'I feel the same way' going to request on behalf of Ursula that Ernst sent news about her mother Edna, owing to the fact that 'she is very worried about her mother's wellbeing'.[155] Theodor wrote to Ursula confirming he had asked this of Ernst, requesting him to act as the mediator in the exchange. Indeed, in an earlier letter in references to connection to Hans Walter Hirschberg in Berlin, Theodor's Aunt Rosalie wrote that 'the fact that we are able to forward mail makes our stay here worthwhile'.[156] In the wake of her father's death however, Ursula's attempt at direct correspondence with her mother failed:

[154] Theodor Hirschberg to Ursula Gottschalk, 28 September 1939. UoS MS 314/1/61. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[155] Theodor Hirschberg to Ernst Böhm, 6 October 1939. UoS MS 314/1/64. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[156] Rosalie Hirschberg and Ernst Böhm to Theodor Hirschberg, 11 September 1939. UoS MS 314/1/55. Trans. K. Baumgartner.

> I had a letter returned (via Switserland [sic]) that I sent to my mother on the occasion of my father's death! The English censor returned it stating that letters of such character (!) could not be sent at present so I don't quite know what to do.[157]

In a matter of days Theodor had received news from Ernst regarding Ursula's mother and her emotional state upon the death of Martin:

> This is what we know so far thanks to a letter from your mother which we received the day before yesterday: [Edna] has found calm and composure after the first days and that [your mother, Paula Frieda], H.W. [Hans Walter Hirschberg], Herr [Hugo] Tarrasch [and] the deceased's sisters try everything for her to not to feel the loneliness. Your mother considered to take her in. But in her opinion, it wouldn't be very comfortable. But they visit each other often. The memorial service took place in the crematorium Baumschulenweg (the only one allowed) and the burial of the urn took place on the 8.10. in Weißensee in the family grave of the old Cohns. Both times the mourners came for lunch to your mother. Frau I's [Irma's?] former maid proved to be very devoted and slept at her place for a whole week. You can pass on all this to Miss U[rsula].[158]

Even if letters were not forwarded, passages like the one above were directly informed by letters received from those in occupied territory. Ernst's explicit statement that 'you can pass on all this' shows a knowing on the part of the correspondents that the writer's words are meant for more than the addressee.

Ursula's issues with direct correspondence with her mother continued into 1940 writing to Theodor in March that:

> Today I received a letter from Dr. Cohn in Copenhagen in which he tells me that my mother broke her ankle. And the day before yesterday a letter was returned to me which I had written to Mum via Denmark. The censor remarked that from now on only the Red Cross or *Thos. Cook Korrespondenz* can coordinate with enemy territory. Do you know if there are other ways? My mother's injury must have happened about the same time I hurt myself while ice skating for the first time after twelve years.[159]

Although the mediator in Denmark, and indeed why the letter was returned considering Denmark was not invaded until 9 April, are both unknown, Ursula managed to gain further information on her mother's physical health albeit bad news. Shortly after, Theodor received a letter from Ursula in which she quoted, in English, a letter informing her of her mother's death.

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[157] Ursula Gottschalk to Theodor Hirschberg, 10 October 1939. UoS MS 314/1/66.
[158] Ernst Böhm and others to Theodor Hirschberg, 13 October 1939. UoS MS 314/1/68. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[159] Ursula Gottschalk to Theodor Hirschberg, 28 March 1940. UoS MS 314/1/99. Trans. K. Baumgartner.

> I received the news from Dr. Littaur that my beloved mother passed away on the 18th March due to cardiac insufficiency and sepsis. He wrote: [extract in "" in English, sic] "I received a letter that the hurt is very complicated with a very serious infection so that the worst is to be feared as the heart is not strong enough. Be courageous my dear Miss Ursula, I must inform you that your mother could not sustain the illness; she passed away 6 days ago, the tidings reached me today, the 23rd March, with a letter dated 18th March".[160]

Although who Dr Littaur is as of yet unknown, his quoted words allowed Ursula to inform her relatives of the loss without having to formulate the context herself. Shortly afterwards, Theodor wrote to Ernst in Antwerp stating that 'the message of Aunt Eddy's passing – which I had received from Iwanka a day before your card dated 22 March arrived– left me devastated'. Theodor had received the news both via Iwanka Hirschberg, the wife of Hans Walter Hirschberg, who was at that time in Bulgaria, and presumably in a letter from Ernst also. In Theodor's reply to Ernst he too quotes the letter from Dr Littaur adding additional information for his cousin.[161] The deaths of Theodor's uncle Martin and aunt Edna Gottschalk, highlights how letters were shared, quoted, forwarded, and mined for details and context to better inform family networks, all within the knowledge of those doing it. Letters were not always solely designed for the writer and addressee and often form part of a wider transnational space of connection.

In numerous cases throughout the letters of the five families, references are culturally, linguistically, and sometimes even temporally specific. On 7 April 1942 Irmgard Treuherz in Manchester wrote to her mother Anna Amberg in Aachen via the Red Cross shortly after Easter Sunday two days earlier where she spent time with her husband Werner and son Francis. In her limited 25 word message Irmgard wrote:

> *Ruhige Ostertage zusammen. Irmgard sehr beschaeftigt, Baby Haushalt. Francis gross 15 Pfund, rosig gesund, lacht immer, schreit selten. Bleib gesund. Gruesse alle. Denken Dein. Innigst*
> [Quiet Easter days together. Irmgard very busy, baby household. Francis big 15 pounds, rosy healthy, always laughing, rarely cries. Stay healthy. Greetings to all. Think yours. Most Sincerely]

The response from her mother, dated 26 May, read as follows:

> *Wiederum beglückt durch Osternachricht am Pfingsten. Innigste Segenswünsche Irmchens ersten Geburtstag als Mütterchen. Wär ich ein Vöglein! Bin stets wohlauf. - Küsschen für Francis! Allen Grüße!*
> [Again delighted by Easter news on Pentecost. Heartfelt blessings to Irmchen on her first

[160] Ursula Gottschalk to Theodor Hirschberg, 1 April 1940. UoS MS 314/1/100. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[161] Theodor Hirschberg to Ernst Böhm, 10 April 1940. UoS MS 314/1/102. Trans. K. Baumgartner.

birthday as a mother. If I were a little bird! I am always well. - Kisses for Francis! Greetings to all!][162]

Anna's reply utilised traditional German cultural references to express more than what was typed in the short message. Anna's sentence 'Wär ich ein Vöglein!', is a modification of the title of a popular *Lied*: *Wenn ich ein Vöglein wär.* The words, often attributed to the poet and enlightenment thinker Johann Gottfried Herder, with arrangements later created by composers such as Carl Maria von Weber and Robert Schumann, detail the feelings over separation between two parties. The following translation by Richard Stokes, highlights to the English reader how deeply Anna understood the meaning of the words she typed:

If I were a little bird,
And had two little wings,
I'd fly to you!
But since it cannot be,

I shall stay right here.
Though I am far from you,
I'm with you as I sleep,
And I speak with you!
On awakening
I am alone.

Not an hour of night goes by
Without my heart awakening
And thinking how you
A thousand times
Have given me your heart.[163]

The pathos of Anna's words can only be understood in a German cultural context, and would perhaps be missed in translation alone. The references are specific to the 'shared world' of Anna and Irmgard to borrow Altman's phrase, in this singular message exchange. The weight of Anna's cultural reference can only be fully grasped when the context is appreciated. Some scholars of the epistolary, such as Sonia Cancian in her work on Italian migration to Canada,

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[162] Red Cross Message Slip, April/May 1942. Private Collection of F. Treuherz.

[163] Wenn ich ein Vöglein wär (1840) Op. 43 no.1, *Oxford Lieder Songs,* Accessed via: https://www.oxfordlieder.co.uk/song/535, Last accessed: 27th April 2023. [Original: Wenn ich ein Vöglein wär' / Und auch zwei Flüglein hätt', / Flög' ich zu dir! / Weil's aber nicht kann sein, / Bleib' ich allhier. // Bin ich gleich weit von dir, / Bin ich doch im Schlaf bei dir, / Und red' mit dir! / Wenn ich erwachen thu / Bin ich allein. // Es vergeht kein' Stund' in der Nacht, / Da mein Herze nicht erwacht, / Und an dich gedenkt, / Dass du mir viel tausendmal / Dein Herz geschenkt.]

have highlighted that the migrant letter can be considered a 'time capsule' as it allows one to interpret the specific environment of writing and receiving letters.[164] The specificity of the environment in which a writer writes can therefore change the way in which one interprets the correspondence.

1.2 Activating the Institutional: Contextualising Documents

In a letter 2 dated May 1940 addressed to his cousin Theodor Hirschberg, Dr Ernst Böhm expressed the perennial gripe of the historian: 'you never write a lot about yourself, not even about your current occupation. This is your usual inferiority complex which we haven't been able to fight successfully'.[165] Theodor is constantly inquisitive over the life and situation of Ernst and his family in Antwerp, asking Ernst 'to respond soon':

> Particularly in regards of my questions concerning your situation and the support offered by the committee, as I would like to do something. – I haven't had any news about your life. Are the children in school and have you made friends?[166]

And yet Theodor rarely discusses himself. The letters from Theodor, as Ernst states, do not express many details about himself at all, thus leaving us with the paradox that whilst these are the 'Papers of Theodor Hirschberg' as labelled by the archive – there is little to no detail we learn about Theodor from *his* papers. In a previous publication on this collection, I have therefore asked:

> [if] individuals, collectives, environments and emotions are discussed relationally, and the letters of Theodor [...] are no exception - is this truly *his* collection then? And thus if we attempt to view such a collection as a *biography* – whose biography is it?[167]

Theodor provides limited details on his life – from the letters we get an allusion to a previous career in a bank when he refers to an 'old acquaintance of mine' from there.[168] Similarly in a passage from an earlier letter from November 1939 Theodor gives a number of clues as to his life once arrived in Britain:

> A little time ago I gave up my work as a filler of sandbags because of the bad weather conditions; like many people here I caught a cold and of course I know that I must take care of my health; but I feel much better again, so you can write please to mother and Hans Walter that I am well. – I

[164] Sonia Cancian, *Families, Lovers, and their Letters. Italian Postwar Migration to Canada* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2010), p.10.
[165] Ernst Böhm and others to Theodor Hirschberg, 2 May 1940, UoS MS 314/1/104. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[166] Theodor Hirschberg to Ernst Böhm, 6 October 1939, UoS MS 314/1/64. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[167] Knight, 'Constructing Narratives', p.385.
[168] Theodor Hirschberg to Ernst Böhm, 20 February 1940, UoS MS 314/1/92. Trans. K. Baumgartner.

still hope to find employment in the "National Service", as I am very anxious to help this country by all means in my power. But it will still take a certain time. In the meantime I do a little work for a Refugee Committee and besides this I hope to get the permission to use the world-famed library of the British Museum, in order to improve my theoretical knowledge of Sociology etc. I am very glad to be in touch here with great experts who encourage me and think that I am quite capable of scientific work; I, however, remain humble.[169]

In absence of any personal documentation to inform us, there remains a paucity of information surrounding Theodor's life. One such document that does illuminate both details surrounding Theodor's biography and his post-migration existence, is a Metropolitan Police Report from 1951 held in the National Archives.[170] Whilst living at 54 Adelaide Road in London, and working for the Somers Town Goods Depot near London St Pancras in the accounts department, Theodor applied for naturalisation.[171] The accompanying Special Branch report on his life, with supplementary references from his friends, colleagues, and associates, allows us to better understand Theodor's life other than through his *supposedly* personal correspondences. Unlike other family collections in archives such as the Leo Baeck Institute or the Wiener Holocaust Library, Theodor's is not contextualised by the family, nor does it contain institutional documents with which to place the letters in a broader biographical landscape.[172] In the cases of Theodor Hirschberg and Marion Goldberg then (the two archival collections used in this thesis) much of the work in understanding the nuances of the letters comes from knowing who is talking, who they are talking to, and who they are talking about; where they are writing from, where they are writing to, and where they are writing about. As Jelena Subotić asks 'what can one piece of paper tell us without a story around it?', points to the heart of the difficulty of appreciating and utilising the epistolary in the absence of accompanying contextual documentation.[173] The activation of external institutional documents in the case of the 1951 Metropolitan Police Report can yield insight into personal experiences and relationships and also ameliorate the paucity of concrete details on the individual, as Ernst lamented in 1940.[174] To contextualise Theodor's existence properly we must utilise and in some ways rely upon both sides of the supposed binary between 'personal' and 'institutional' documents in an 'archival

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[169] Theodor Hirschberg to Elise Böhm and Ernst Böhm, 3 November 1939, UoS MS 314/1/73.
[170] Theodor Hirschberg's naturalisation papers, The National Archives HO 405/21263.
[171] On the Somers Town Goods Depot see Matthew Symonds, 'Shadow of St Pancras. Excavating the Age of Steam', *Current Archaeology,* 256 (2011), 12-19; Hana Lewis, 'Somers Town Goods Yard: excavations at Brill Place, Camden NW1', *London Archaeologist,* 13/11 (2014), 287-93.
[172] See Frank Mecklenburg, 'Family history and the Leo Baeck Institute', in *Jewish Families and Kinship in the Early Modern and Modern Eras,* ed. by Mirjam Thulin, Markus Krah and Bianca Pick (Potsdam: Universitätsverlag Potsdam, 2020), pp.51–57.
[173] Subotić, 'Ethics of Archival Research', 347.
[174] For more on 'activating' the institutional see Jennifer Douglas and Allison Mills, 'From the sidelines to the center: reconsidering the potential of the personal in archives', *Archival Science*, 18 (2018), 257-77.

multiverse' and to use what some have labelled a 'personal-in-the-institutional approach'.[175] In the case of Theodor, such sources are (in the absence of further discoveries) the only records in existence that speak to the personal and formative periods of aspects of his life in Eberswalde, Berlin, and London and therefore function as a personal record in some way. Genealogical sources such as births, marriages and deaths, whilst useful in connecting names and locations within the correspondences of the five families studied, are equally imbued with a level of often gendered silence. Very rarely are women's occupations or daily roles listed in such documentation, giving us little information on key females within the correspondences.

The case of Ilse Böhm in the Hirschberg archive, was, however, unable to be contextualised purely through genealogical documentation alone. In 1940, Ernst wrote to Theodor thanking him for his 'birthday wishes arriving with fabulous punctuality' alongside his thanks for 'agreeing to help us again' noting that he would be 'extremely grateful if [Theodor could] write to the relevant gentleman to explain our situation'.[176] The following letter included the birthdates of Ernst, his wife Elise, his mother Rosalie, his sister-in-law Edith, his son Siegfried, and his daughter Ilse. Whilst the majority of these could not be confirmed with genealogical sources due to a paucity of records in Brieg, finding the fates of many of the Böhms on the other hand was straightforward. Ilse however disappeared after the letters finish in 1941 with no mention of her on transport lists or in memorial books and databases. One archive increasingly being used by historians of the Holocaust is that of the International Tracing Service (or ITS) now known as the Arolsen Archive, and I am no different, utilising the mass of papers to contextualise the lives of those narrated in the letters after the period of correspondence ends, including for Ilse. Over a decade ago, the late eminent Holocaust historian David Cesarani remarked that 'It will take decades and many PhD theses to even scrape the surface of this treasure trove'.[177] Any historian of the Holocaust can now not avoid using Arolsen as a major tool in contextualising the lives and fates of individuals studied.[178]

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[175] Sue McKemmish and Michael Piggott, 'Toward the Archival Multiverse: Challenging the Binary Opposition of the Personal and Corporate Archive in Modern Archival Theory and Practice', *Archivaria*, 76 (2013), 111-14. See also Jacqueline Z. Wilson and Frank Golding F, 'Latent scrutiny: personal archives as perpetual mementos of the official gaze', *Arch Sci,* 16/1 (2016), 93–109.

[176] Ernst Böhm to Theodor Hirschberg, 30 January 1940, UoS MS 314/1/91. Trans. K. Baumgartner.

[177] David Cesarani, 'New slants on surviving Nazi persecution', *IWM Blog* (23 January 2012), Accessed via: https://www.iwm.org.uk/blog/research/2012/01/new-slants-on-surviving-nazi-persecution, Last accessed: 17 April 2023. Niamh Hanrahan at the University of Manchester for example is completing her thesis 'An Asian refugee crisis? Humanitarian relief of Jewish refugees in Hong Kong, Kobe, Manila and Surabaya (1931-1953)', which aims in part to trace the migrations of European Jews in Asia using the ITS.

[178] See Dan Stone, *Fate Unknown: Tracing the Missing after World War II and the Holocaust* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023); *Tracing and Documenting Nazi Victims Past and Present*, ed. by Henning Borggräfe , Christian Höschler and Isabel Panek (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020).

On 13 June 1997, a letter was sent to the International Tracing Service from Hans Wladyslaw Hirschberg (1930-?), the son of Theodor's brother, Hans Walter, asking for information on some of his relatives – Ursula Gottschalk (Theodor's cousin), Steffi Tarrasch (Theodor's cousin), and Ilse Böhm. In the letter, Hans references the fact that Ilse spent the war in hiding with a couple and their family in Belgium. Based on a new assumption that Ilse may have survived the war, I began researching the family more. On finding a Yad Vashem page of testimony for Elise Böhm, submitted in April 1999 handwritten in Hebrew, I asked my supervisor if he could translate it, since I was unsure who would have written it for her so long after the war. He wrote back 'the name is Sarah (Elsa [or Else]) Samir, née Böhm. The name could be anglicized to "Zamir". The place is Kiriyat Shmuel near Haifa'. It took a quick google search to uncover that Sara Zamir was indeed the missing daughter, Ilse Böhm from the MS314 deposit.[179]

1.3 Silences and Historical Narrative

Activating institutional archives, genealogical records and database searches such as Arolsen, all seek to ameliorate the silences apparent in the historical record. Far from silences solely emerging through the creation of the archive alone, the historical actors at the time contributed to this creation of silence. In a letter to her cousin, Ursula Gottschalk, begged Theodor 'for the time being to keep strictest silence and not tell your mother and relatives' about the loss of her job from Maltman's Green School in Buckinghamshire.[180] Self-censored silences such as Ursula's often emerged through relatively banal familial situations such as the wish to not worry or concern family with job, personal or relationship worries. Besides the wish not to worry relatives, silences also emerged through a perceived futility of discussion. Further in the Hirschberg collection, in a September 1939 letter to his friend Hans Adolf Friedländer in Amsterdam, Theodor wrote that 'it is useless to discuss the great problems facing us, as we have no influence at all'. Hans and his wife Elinor had fled to the Netherlands in 1937 and Theodor had evidently not written to the couple recently: 'after a long time, in which we have been witnesses of very many great and almost unbelievable events involving terrible fate and often death to many of our people, I like to get in touch with you again'.[181] Theodor admits that such events had led him to write, but that he equally could not verbalise them, or alternatively did not see value in this. Letters between refugees and those left behind were often burdened

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Various works on the ITS are also utilising this 'personal-in-the-institutional' framework, see for example, Susanne Urban, *„Mein einziges Dokument ist die Nummer auf der Hand ..." Aussagen Überlebender der NS-Verfolgung im International Tracing Service* (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2018).

[179] For more on the life of Sara Zamir and the process of finding her, see Knight, 'Reading the letter: Reflections on the researcher's journey'.

[180] Ursula Gottschalk to Theodor Hirschberg, 26 June 1939, UoS MS 314/1/17. Trans. K. Baumgartner.

[181] Theodor Hirschberg to [Hans Adolf Friedländer], 29 September 1939, UoS MS/314/1/62. Trans. K. Baumgartner.

with the ineffability of their situation and the context of their separation. The power of words resulted in the desire often not to write them.[182] Both parties, in geographies of relative safety and those in Nazi occupied (or soon to be occupied) territories, often wished to avoid worrying the other, hiding the reality of their situation.

Perhaps the most obvious force silencing letters during the period, however, was the ever presence of the censor's eye.[183] Identified in the archive through thick black marker ink, or in some cases sections physically cut out, state imposed censorship had the effect of inducing self-censorship due to fear of repercussion. World War Two marked the largest censorship operation in global history – at its peak in September 1942 nearly ten thousand censors in the USA were examining one million items of international correspondence every week.[184] On fear of the censor in 1944, Walter Goldberg wrote to his daughter Marion explaining why she needed to be more careful with her language:

> My dear child, please consider this one fact and try to follow my train of thought. Letters nowadays don't belong to the sender and recipient alone. They pass through the hands of people who don't know either [sender or recipient] on a personal level. In the exchange of letters between father and daughter not every single word needs to be chosen carefully; I for example know often what you mean without you having to express it absolutely precisely and I am sure it is the same in reverse. We know each other, we know the nuances of spoken conversation and we know how to transfer that to our written correspondence. In a sense we feel the inflexion of a word which is put down in writing. There is an old French proverb: "c'est le ton qui fait la musique" – it's not what you say but how you say it. But this doesn't apply to this particular reader [censor]. His conclusion might differ from the actual meaning and that might lead to unpleasant consequences. Therefore, I think it is advisable to restrain yourself writing about your opinions and plans; except when you write about family and mental health matters. I understand you anyway. I remember that Vera's father gave you similar advice recently. Believe me, dear Marion, we don't try to educate your or show a "know-it-all-attitude", we just think these are facts. If you like, talk to Mrs. Ilse about it, she will be able to explain this better to you[185]

Walter had previously, at numerous times, noted Marion's opinionated tone. In relation to her political beliefs and her opinions of her stay in England, Walter wrote in 1939:

[182] Dwork and van Pelt, *Flight from the Reich,* p.257.
[183] For more on the censorship of letters in Europe during the Holocaust see Garbarini, *Numbered Days,* pp.66-70.
[184] Louis Fiset, *Imprisoned Apart: The World War II Correspondence of an Issei Couple* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1997), p.103.
[185] Walter Goldberg to Marion Goldberg, 1 June 1944, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.

> Don't worry, I never expected you to change your opinion from one day to the other- nothing was further from my mind than wishing this. You correctly say that neither Mutti nor I forced you and if you felt forced then it was by your own conscience! One of our great poets rightly states: "To defeat oneself is the best victory." I don't want to take away your ideological orientation or any other opinion, I only want you learn to examine it by way of putting it to the test![186]

Clearly by the mid-1940s, Walter was more concerned about censorship and thus warned Marion of her use of language, as not to arouse the suspicion of the censor. Indeed, even when mail was not intercepted, the idea of it being read and the potential ramifications of this, seemed pervasive – if only referred to jovially. In 1941, Klaus Licht, whilst living in Bideford with his grandparents, received a letter out of the blue from a friend, and former classmate at the Leonore Goldschmidt Schule, Werner Pless, who met Klaus when he 'was only 3-4 weeks in London' when he 'tried to teach him to play cricket and [he] did not like it'.[187] In a subsequent letter from Werner he berates Klaus for his use of expletives in their correspondence:

> I am glad you are well and that you answered so promptly. But please do not use such bad language. You may be prosecuted. Write it – if you absolutely have to – like this. B.--- or F.---; please, it is only for your own good.[188]

Whilst Klaus's full range of obscenities may have been silenced by Werner's warning, more serious omittances occurred as a result of similar fears of repercussions in international correspondences.

In cases where letters were sent via third parties across borders, silences emerged from the go-between not forwarding information received from one party at fear of punishment. Since communication between Britain and Germany was halted on the outbreak of war, mediators became vital in connecting families across hostile borders. Little work has been done on the role of these conduits, most notable however is the work by Deborah Dwork on Elisabeth Luz, also known as 'Tante Elisabeth', in Zurich.[189] For the Amberg family, their deceased father's cousin in the US, Dr Emil Amberg, served this role throughout the war, connecting Anna with her children in England, and from 1940 onwards to her son Carl in Canada. From 1939-40, Carl was enrolled in Winchester College, one of four refugees taken in by the school during the Second

[186] Walter Goldberg to Marion Goldberg, 3 August 1939, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[187] Werner Pless to Klaus Licht, 19 May 1941, JMB.
[188] Ibid., 27 May 1941, JMB.
[189] Dwork and van Pelt, *Flight from the Reich,* pp.246-47. See also Debórah Dwork, 'Holding on Through Letters', Virtual talk at the Wiener Holocaust Library, 2 March 2023, Recording accessed via: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QJuwqVVl6kE, Last accessed: 13 April 2023. The conference, 'Exil. Asyl. Diaspora. Zur Rolle der Schweiz im 20. Jahrhundert', organised by Joachim Schlör and Kristina Schulz at the University of Bern in 2015, touched upon the role of Switzerland in regards to migration and exile in the Twentieth Century.

World War.[190] After initially being classed as a category 'C' genuine refugee from Nazi oppression, Carl and thousands of other men in coastal areas and inland settlements such as Winchester were interned as 'enemy aliens' by the British government. In December 1940 Carl penned a 'little story' written in the third person detailing his experience of being arrested and interned.

> On the 12th of May, it was Whitsunday, a boy of 16 started dressing shortly before nine o'clock. The bell rang and a few minutes afterwards his hostess rushed into the room, very excited. Something was wrong, and indeed, the police had come to fetch him, all male aliens from 16 - 60 had to be fetched . The boy was a refugee from Germany who went to school at Winchester. Within 5 or 10 minutes he had to be ready; it would take him not more than 2 or 3 days he was told, perhaps he would be back for supper even. He packed a few things, assisted by Mrs. Wethered, said good-bye to her and her old mother[191] and was put into a car driven by two bobbies.[192]

Carl was interned in Southampton at the former Taunton's School site, before being moved to Huyton Camp in Liverpool, and finally in Central Promenade Camp on the Isle of Man. He later boarded the *SS Sobieski* from Greenock in Scotland with his new 'gang of four' friends as they labelled themselves: Kaspar Naegele, Georg Grün and Tommy Cassirer.[193] Kaspar recalled in his diary that he had the opportunity to stay on the Isle of Man as the *Sobieski* was full and he had been funnelled into another line. Kaspar instead asked a guard to be reunited with his friends and, as fate would have it, those that did remain were ferried to Australia on the

[190] 'European Refugees at Winchester in World War Two', [undated], Winchester College Archive, Winchester (hereafter WCA), F19/208.
[191] Vera F. Wethered (1883-1972) and her mother Mary Cremer (1856-1959) lived in Compton Down, Shawford in Winchester. Vera took in Carl when he began studying at Winchester College.
[192] Carl Amberg, A Little Story, 8 December 1940, PC-AR. See Charlie Knight, 'From Aachen through Avenue Campus: Carl Amberg's 'Little Story' in Southampton', *The Parkes Institute Blog* (20 June 2023), accessed via: https://parkesinstituteblog.wordpress.com/2023/06/20/refugee-week-blog-from-aachen-through-avenue-campus-carl-ambergs-little-story-in-southampton-by-charlie-knight/, last accessed: 12 April 2024.
[193] Taunton School was the internment site for a number of Jewish refugees in the surrounding areas. The school, under the new name of Taunton College, relocated to Hill Lane on the opposite side of Southampton Common in 1993 and was bought by the University of Southampton, becoming what is now Avenue Campus. For more on the experience of refugees in Taunton School see Tony Kushner and Katharine Knox, *Refugees in an Age of Genocide. Global, National and Local Perspectives during the Twentieth Century* (London: Frank Cass, 1999), pp.173-79.
Much has been written more generally on the experience of internment in Britain during the Second World War. See *inter alia*: Rachel Pistol and Gilly Carr (eds.), *British Internment and the Internment of Britons: Second World War Camps, History and Heritage* (London: Bloomsbury, 2023); Rachel Pistol, *Internment during the Second World War: A Comparative Study of Great Britain and the USA* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017); David Cesarani and Tony Kushner (eds.), *The Internment of Aliens in Twentieth Century Britain* (London: Frank Cass, 1993); Richard Dove (ed.), *"Totally Un-English"?: Britain's Internment of "enemy Aliens" in Two World Wars* (New York: Rodopi, 2005); Miriam Kochan, *Britain's Internees in the Second World War* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1983); Alexander Ramah, *Barbed Wire on the Isle of Man* (London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980); Austin Stevens, *The Dispossessed: German Refugees in Britain* (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1975).

infamous *HMT Dunera*.[194] Like the Dunera 'there were Nazis on board of the [sic] "Sobiesky" too, but they were separated, luckily, so that we saw there green uniforms only from the distance'.[195] On Carl's arrival in Canada, his mother Anna wrote to him via Emil:

> You remember your last words here leaving the station - oh mother, you'll soon follow! We have to have patience until our day we'll find a reward! I wonder whether you could take your instrument with you! Here we are living as always, we had not very much of a summer, and now winter is coming already- it is dull and cold today. I feel very well though, Steffi and Mrs. Fr. are still here, the neighbours and friends are all the same, and that will do[196]

Presumably because it contained information on conditions within Germany and details of individual's locations, Emil did not forward Anna's letter to Carl and instead wrote on the front: 'Not sent, fear of censor'. Indeed, Emil was warned in November 1940 of the dangers of sending direct letters to the Amberg children in England by Stanley J. Benham (1875-1940). Whilst Stanley and Emil did not know each other, they both shared connections to the Amberg children. Prior to their immigration to Britain, Carl's sisters Irmgard and Margaret had fled to Holland, staying with the Vanderbrugge family, whom Margaret had previously worked for. From Holland, the sisters organised passage to Britain under the guarantee of Stanley Benham, the managing director of 'Benham & Sons'.[197] Stanley's daughter Edith Hester Benham (later Boothroyd, 1915-83), had worked as an au pair in Aachen before the war where she had befriended Irmgard and another local Jewish boy, Georg Haas, who was also taken in by the Benhams.[198] In her memoir, Irmgard recalled the traditional set-up of the Benham business and family:

> His offices were in Wigmore Street and the set-up was quite Dickensian. He and his manager sat in a little windowed cubicle, seemingly suspended above the work floor. [...] They were a very Christian family, and I was one of 'their' refugees. The other refugee they had helped was Georg Haas from Aachen. When Mr. Benham thought Georg was flirting with Hester he immediately

[194] Koch, *Deemed Suspect,* p.47. The author would like to thank Barbara Naegele for her information and documents pertaining to her father Kaspar, as well as the staff at the Churcher's College Archive for access to material on Kaspar.
For further literature on the HMT Dunera see Benzion Patkin, *The Dunera Internees* (Stanmore NSW: Cassell Australia, 1979); Carol Bunyan et al., *Dunera Lives* (Melbourne: Monash University Publishing, 2020); Seumas Spark and Jacquie Houlden (eds.), *Shadowline: The Dunera Diaries of Uwe Radok* (Melbourne: Monash University Publishing, 2022).
On 2-3 March 2023 the international symposium 'Legacies of the Dunera: Internment, Art and International Heritage' was held at the National Justice Museum in Nottingham (UK), organised by the Centre for Public History, Heritage and Memory, Nottingham Trent University (UK) and Monash University (Australia). The symposium covered artistic responses to the problematic voyage.
[195] Carl Amberg, A Little Story, 8 December 1940, PC-AR.
[196] Anna Amberg to Carl Amberg, [1940], PC-AR. Trans. C. Amberg.
[197] On the history of the company see Stanley J. Benham, *Under Five Generations: The Story of Benham & Sons Ltd* (The author: [n.p.], 1937).
[198] Edith Hester Boothroyd became an Under-Secretary in the Treasury after working in the Ministry of Economic Warfare during the Second World War. She was married to Francis Boothroyd and had two daughters.

> conceived a plan. Georg might find it good to improve his skills in South Africa, where he had business connections and he was duly shipped there, from where he escaped just in time to Canada.[199]

In a letter praising Emil's recent article in *The Rainbow* - the journal for the Detroit League for the Hard of Hearing, of which Emil was editor – Stanley reminded him that direct messages had the potential to endanger the Amberg children.

> P.S. Do not send any letters you receive from enemy countries to your cousins in this country - they are frightened lest It should be thought they were communicating with the enemy which would of course be a serious offence. For the time being their mother ranks as an enemy - poor soul![200]

The result was that Emil did not forward letters but instead copied information to the separated parties, or provided them with the information they required. By a quirk of organisation and categorisation however silence for the contemporaries was overcome when Carl arrived in Canada. Despite his categorisation as 'a fearfully dangerous war prisoner', Carl's status as a Prisoner of War and not a refugee, afforded him with some benefits – namely the ability to write directly back to his mother. In a letter to Marie-Luise and his family in Britain, written in August 1942, Carl explained the situation:

> When we were first real prisoners of war, it was easy to send things from the camp. Later, when we were officially declared "refugees", we couldn't continue to write in this way, of course, although I did receive a few things from mother. There was then, until the US went to war, a possibility through Cook's Travel, which charged almost a whole dollar for a letter. After that, as soon as it was possible from the camp, I sent several R.C. [Red Cross] messages, which seemed to take 6-7 months from here.[201]

Whilst we do not have the letters sent to Anna, we do have those Carl received directly from her. Such quirks of the postal regulations allowed the correspondents to reduce the distance between them and thus the potential silences created when having to pass through multiple censors and a mediator in the form of Emil.[202]

Whilst the examples previously have highlighted silences manifested in the creation of the source itself, this is not the only method in which silences impact narrative, indeed they are exhibited in a variety of ways, as identified by Haitian-American anthropologist Michel-Rolph

[199] Treuherz, *True Hearts,* pp.88-89.
[200] Stanley Benham to Emil Amberg, 5 November 1940, PC-AR.
[201] Carl Amberg to Marie-Luise and others, 16 August 1942, PC-AR. Trans. Anne Reynolds.
[202] Carl and Anna's correspondence was still censored but it did not have to go through multiple.

Trouillot. Trouillot notes that 'narratives are made of silences, not all of which are deliberate or even perceptible as such within the time of their production' and notes ways in which silences are embedded within narratives.[203] In addition to silences contemporaneous to events, Trouillot further points to silences emerging through the assembly of the archive and the choices of the historian. It is clear that all of the collections used in this thesis contain silences through the creation of the archive itself, whether through deliberate non-inclusion, or merely through the passage of time. Hypothetically, one could therefore conceive of an 'epistolarium' as termed by Liz Stanley – the entire epistolary output and input of an individual. One must counterfactually consider however whether this would be useful. Do I really require thousands upon thousands of letters of non-importance? Similarly, what about accompanying documents and ephemera: postcards, booklets, train tickets, forms, official documentation, shopping lists etc. all under the (false) allusion of creating a 'whole picture' – whatever that may be. Not being content with silences created by the formation of the archive but wishing for the existence of an 'epistolarium' or even a complete archive of someone's life, is reminiscent of Nietzsche's 'antiquarian historian' - they who cherish, 'the trivial, circumscribed, decaying and obsolete' which later 'acquire their own dignity' in the mind of the collector who cherishes everything and cannot be critical. Whilst there is definite allure for the historian being surrounded by old letters and diaries, one must be careful not to wish to be 'encased in the stench of must and mould' in the search of filling silences.[204] Nevertheless, some silences in the assembly of the archive, mandate greater interest than others. Some objects act as 'signposts to a journey I cannot completely describe' but are sources which inform narrative structure to '[conjure] stories from my objects about the people to whom they once belonged'.[205]

In the collections of the Amberg family and the Goldberg family, both Carl Amberg and Marion Goldberg write short narratives to contextualise their experience contemporaneously. They take on the role of the historian in many regards. Indeed, in relation to narratives surrounding the Holocaust, Dan Stone has written that 'the historian is not a conduit but someone who shapes what the past looks like in the present'.[206] In the examples of Carl and Marion's 'stories' they have *pre-shaped* these pasts. Within her diary in May 1941, Marion writes an extensive self-titled 'story' detailing her life up until then:

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[203] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past. Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), pp.153-53.
[204] Friedrich Nietzsche, 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life', in *Untimely Meditations*, ed. by R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp.59-123 (pp.71-5).
[205] Miller, *What They Saved,* p.5.
[206] Dan Stone, 'Excommunicating the past? Narrativism and rational constructivism in the historiography of the Holocaust', *Rethinking History*, 21/4 (2017), 549-66 (p.552).

> A little blond girl with huge dark eyes was born on the 25th of June 1924 in München. What joy it was for the parents, in particular for the mother, finally being rid of this big dumpling. Immediately, telegrams were sent to the whole family in Plauen and Chemnitz and congratulations were gathered in abundance at Elisabethstraße 20, München, Schwabing. Immediately, the proud father [?] all kinds of things and dreamt that his little girls might one day have a doctorate. What name should the new-born have? Hannelore and Marion were the choices and the decision was made to call her Marion. When she was still very little, lying in the pram, she knew how to snap her fingers and to roll her big eyes. That's how she grew up, she was walked in her pram in the *Englischer Garten* [in Munich], went to the Augustusplatz to feed the pigeons [...][207]

Similarly, as quoted previously, Carl penned a similar 'little story' which was sent back from Canada to his sister Marie-Luise in Manchester. Marie-Luise forwarded the pages to Stanley Benham who later responded 'I am writing to thank you for the interesting letter & story written by Carl which we were very glad to have. Are we meant to keep them or shall I send them back?'.[208] Whilst Marion's autobiographical narrative remained secret within her diary, Carl's matching third-person account was passed around family members. Carl was curating his own story, and narrating his experiences for those contemporaries and as a result, for the historian today. There are therefore versions of the past we could possibly plot: the versions written by Carl and Marion, and the version written by the historian. Both need not be mutually exclusive but nonetheless should be highlighted as what they are and where they emerge from. The historical record is all we have, and thus whilst it is important to recognise the creation of narratives by the historian and be mindful of the fact that a singular narrative from any source base is questionable, this does not mean said narratives are fictional.[209] One does not *find* narratives in the archive but creates them from the archive.

Even if letters or diary entries were not explicitly labelled as 'stories', passages within them still acted in the same way. On 21 May 1939, Theodor arrived in Britain and in a letter to his brother Rudi Hirschberg in South Africa, described the process of leaving Germany, highlighting his initial plan to leave for Cuba:

> My onwards travel to Cuba is impossible now, after they have introduced an entry ban for Jews. [...] I travelled via Bentheim/Harwich by train and had no problems at the border control. Much better than other emigrants who had to suffer from awful harassment, in particular in Bentheim. -

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[207] Marion Goldberg diary entry, 25 May 1941, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner. Interestingly the first few sentences of Marion's 'story' were written in *Sütterlinschrift* before returning to *deutsche Normalschrift*.
[208] Stanley Benham to Marie-Luise Amberg, 1 July 1941, PC-AR.
[209] Kalle Pihlainen, 'Rereading narrative constructivism', *Rethinking History*, 17/4 (2013), 509-527 (p.510).

If the clerk in Harwich had known about the entry ban in Cuba, I would have been in a very unpleasant situation. Immediately after my arrival in London, the fact became known. In Berlin there had been rumours since the 9th May. That day I wanted to collect my ticket [to travel by ship] from Palestine & Orient Lloyd in Meinekestraße and was told that they couldn't give it to me as some difficulties had arisen. But I had the passage order from the English shipping company which was considered as sufficient documentation by the English consulate. So, now I have been here for three weeks and have applied for a residence permit at the Home Office. The Society of Friends, Bloomsbury House, arranged for an additional guarantee for all emigrations costs by Mr. Harold G. Cohen, Otto [Dresdner]'s friend.'[210]

Theodor's emigratory narrative, whilst detailed in its content and wholly verifiable, is necessarily a story – written to his brother at a particular point in time. In writing such a letter, similar to Marion's and Carl's 'stories', Theodor is both participant in, and creator of, his own narrative. Extracts such as these represent both Theodor's, Carl's, and Marion's own pasts, and the conveyance of these pasts, whether that be a contemporary, or modern reader. The text is constructed for an intended reader to invoke two worlds: 'the here and now of the writer and the here and now of the reader'.[211]

1.4 Considerations of the Epistolary as a Source

Whilst the letter provides the historian with a multitude of opportunities to interpret past lives, it also comes with a host of arguably source specific considerations for the historian. In a letter to his girlfriend Gertrud Lehmann on 9 June 1939, Theodor detailed his activities that week writing:

> Please give my regards to Mr. Glassmann and Mr. Samuel and also in particular my friend Cohn [...] How did Mr. S's daughter get the fabulous employment? [...] Now don't fall over: Monday evening, just a couple of minutes away from my flat, I met Dr. J. He was very happy [to see me] and gave me his business card. He lives very far south west. – Coincidentally, I was very near his flat last Sunday as I had an appointment with my relative, the opera singer Dresdner. I met him [Dr. J] in the same spot in the street where I was supposed to meet my relative.[212]

As a third party reader to these letters, references are often incomprehensible and would only be known to the intended recipient or recipients, those specific to the 'shared world' as termed by Altman.[213] The use of only first names or the use of abbreviations, whilst understood by the correspondents, are often not by me. Out of the individuals mentioned here, only one is

[210] Theodor Hirschberg to Rudolf Hirschberg, 8 July 1939, UoS MS 314/1/24. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[211] David Barton and Nigel Hall, 'Introduction', in *Letter Writing as a Social Practice* Vol.9, ed. by David Barton and Nigel Hall (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2000), pp.1-14 (p.6).
[212] Theodor Hirschberg to Gertrud Lehmann, 9 June 1939, UoS MS314/1/9. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[213] Altman, *Epistolarity*, p.119.

traceable. Richard Dresdner (1891-1975) was Theodor's second cousin and from 1928–31 performed as a lyric tenor at the Jewish Theatre Prague and was at the Jewish Cultural Association of Berlin from 1935. Like the researching of friendships or acquaintances, familial genealogies necessarily involve the forgetting of individuals – those that did not ascribe to official documentation or for those whom finding such records is next to impossible. Often they necessitate the rearrangement of the social relations in which a given historical actor actually existed in and ergo require the 'dredging up' or even invention of relatives in the lives of the individual.[214] Although Theodor and Richard Dresdner met at least once whilst in London, he is ascribed perhaps greater importance in the life and narrative of Theodor than he would otherwise receive were he not traceable from the letters. Mr Glassmann, Mr Samuel, Mr S's daughter, and Dr J in contrast, may have held a more prominent place in Theodor's life but are perhaps lost to history with no indication as to the context in which he knew them.

The letters sent between Carl Amberg in Canada and his sister Marie-Luise in Britain, still exist although there was a delay in discovering those letters received by Marie-Luise in contrast to those received by Carl Amberg. By their very nature, letters are sent to another geography – they cross space when people perhaps cannot, but as a by-product are often lost to the sender. Theoretically these letters can be collated by the recipient(/s) and would therefore be possible to reunite the two (or more) parts of a correspondence at a later date – as has been done with the papers of the Amberg family. Occasionally letters sent into or within occupied Europe were saved through a variety of avenues, although many as difficult and as unlikely as the next. In the private collections of the Licht family there are a large number of postcards addressed to Ernst and Ilse Licht whilst they were imprisoned in Gelsenkirchen. After saying goodbye to their son Klaus in December 1938, who was to travel to England to be with his Auntie's family and his grandparents, Ernst and Ilse began their plans to escape. The couple made preparations to escape via Holland which were rendered obsolete by the declaration of war in September 1939. On the recommendation of an acquaintance of his, Ernst contacted a retired lawyer Karl Höppe, who assured Ernst of his ability to procure his and Ilse's stay in Holland; for this Ernst paid Höppe the total of 3,800 Reichsmark. Arriving in the northern Ruhr city of Hamm on the 19 September 1939, the couple had planned to be driven by Höppe's son to Holland via the city of Gelsenkirchen. At about 3:20pm on the same day, the car was stopped by police in the suburb of Buer. The occupants are arrested on suspicion of 'capital flight' and 'illegal border crossing'. Ernst and Ilse were not the only Jewish refugees arrested in Buer, a cohort that also included:

[214] For arguments like this see Caroline Humphrey, 'The uses of genealogy, a historical study of the nomadic and sedentarised Buryat', in *Pastoral production and society* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp.235-260.

Dr. Jacques Abraham and his wife Rosa (Kosterlitz), Emma Ochs and her daughter Anita Kaufmann, Arthur Behrendt and his wife Henriette (Silberstein), Paul Fuß and his wife Meta (Opet) and daughter Irmgard, Ludwig Opet, Kurt Kirstein, Heinrich Pringsheim, Alfred Hirsekorn, Dr. Ignaz Lippmann and his wife Ilse (Pinoff) and his daughter Anneliese, and Dr. Egon Landsberger and wife Jenny (Weichert).[215] Some of those were later transferred to Recklinghausen Court Prison whilst the trial of Karl Höppe was taking place.

Whilst in prison, Ernst and Ilse received a number of postcards from a variety of individuals. Their lawyer Dr. Günther Loebinger regularly wrote to them regarding their health and hopeful release. Other correspondents included Dr Gerti Rubensohn (born Will, 1902-42), a good school friend of Ilse's from their time at the *Städtische Luisen Schule* in Berlin. Gerti was later educated at the Friedrich-Wilhelm University and in the late 1920s gained her PhD in Chemistry and took a post on the editorial team of *Beilstein* the Journal of Organic Chemistry.[216] In 1932 she married Eric Rubensohn a decorated First World War soldier and later teacher of German and Romance Languages in the Prussian School system. After both Gerti and Erich were dismissed from their positions, Erich found a position at the Leonore Goldschmidt Schule (previously attended by Carl Amberg and Klaus Licht) and subsequently the *Reichsvereinigung der Juden*. After she was arrested in Gelsenkirchen, Ilse received numerous letters from Gerti regarding emigration. Gerti and Erich later took their own lives in August 1942 on fear of deportation.[217]

Other letters include those from Paula Kronheimer (born Reis, 1882-?), the mother of Grete Kronheimer (1903-92), the wife of Ludwig 'Lutz' Königsberger's brother Hans (1895-1934). Indeed Grete, who emigrated to Britain also, was able to provide Clara Licht and the rest of the Licht/Königsberger family with updates on Ernst and Ilse via their correspondence with Paula. In her quasi-diary pages, Clara wrote: 'Gretl just rang that there was again news from her parents, dated 29.12. They are in touch with the children and they are well!!! Thank God.'[218] Letters were also sent by Erwin Goldmann and Lucie Haß, both friends of Ernst's; Edward Krämer, Ilse's uncle; and most importantly perhaps for the fate of the letters themselves, Alice Zielenziger.

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[215] Andreas Jordan, ‚NS-Unrechtsorte: Gerichtsgefängnis Gelsenkirchen-Buer', *Gelsenzentrum* (12 January 2021), Accessed via: http://www.gelsenzentrum.de/veranstaltungen_termine_gelsenzentrum.htm, Last accessed: 24 April 2023. Credit for the research on this list must go to Bridget King – Ernst and Ilse's great-niece.

[216] *Beilstein* still publishes today. See https://www.beilstein-journals.org/bjoc/home.

[217] I am extremely grateful to Bridget King for her work on Ernst and Ilse's imprisonment and their relationship with the Rubensohns. Together with Dr Rolf Hensel, a work on this relationship and the correspondence during this imprisonment will be published by Bridget soon. See also: Rolf Hensel, *Erich Rubensohn und Carl-Albert Brüll. Ein jüdischer Lehrer und ein christlicher Anwalt in dunklen Welten des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Hentrich und Hentrich Verlag, 2021).

[218] Clara diary page entry, 9 January [1940], JMB. Trans. K. Baumgartner.

Alice was Clara Licht's cousin and the two were very close by all accounts. She married a non-Jew and survived the war in various safe houses in Berlin before emigrating to the USA. In her *Kontobuch* Clara records receiving letters from 'A.Z.' and even refers to her in relation to her worry for her daughter-in-law Ilse:

> On Saturday, 12th December 42 I felt so bad inside. How is Ilse [Licht], where can she be, or - - - If I could ever see her again, or at least know whether or how she is living. She is a strong nature but tender. How is she supposed to bear this misfortune? The war is going on too long. And Alice Z[ielenziger]? Poor poor "Mensch"[219]

After his imprisonment in Gelsenkirchen, Ernst was transferred to Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp in Oranienburg, north of Berlin. Shortly after his arrival Ernst took his own life on 15 August 1940. It is highly likely that the prison correspondence was with Ernst when he arrived at Sachsenhausen – the only other option being it was somehow given to someone prior to his transferal. Upon his suicide, Ernst's belongings would have been passed to his next of kin, in this case Alice Zielenziger who also organised Ernst's funeral and burial in Berlin. Alice was also the individual who gave these letters (amongst other items) to the remaining family in Britain in 1947 after the war. The saving of such rare prison correspondence however is not the norm and the existence of large parts of the Licht family archive was saved due to chance. Often letters sent into occupied Europe were lost alongside their addressees, as was the case with those letters sent to Anna Amberg in Aachen, or to Gertrud Goldberg in Plauen. Less often as above, are the original letters saved.

Where such absences occur the level of representativeness of the archived letters vis-à-vis the amount sent and received in total must be considered. There will forever be an unknown quantity of the letters which were lost, forgotten or destroyed, as was the case with Hans Loewenthal's letters referred to previously.[220] Equally, those that were selected by the recipient, collector or donor to appear in a sequence presented as supposedly complete, elicit issues when attempting to construct narratives or gain hermeneutical insight from collections such as those used here. The scholar can no longer be sure of the scope, temporal range and spatial range of a correspondence and whether this series of letters was envisaged by the writers as

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[219] Clara Licht *Kontobuch* diary entry [undated], JMB. Trans. Bridget King.

[220] Liz Stanley has also discussed this in relation to the archive of South African writer and intellectual Olive Schriener for whom many letters were purposefully destroyed en masse by her, even requesting the return from the recipient of the copy. See Liz Stanley, 'The Epistolarium: On Theorizing Letters and Correspondences', *Auto/Biography,* 12/3 (2004), 201-35 (p.204).

such.[221] Even with the context of knowing *how* Ernst and Ilse's letters were saved, there is no indication as to whether more postcards, or documentation existed and this was lost during the course of the war considering they were kept by Alice Zielenziger from 1940-45 in occupied territory often moving between residences.

Summary

As Shirli Gilbert notes, letters provide 'distinct interpretive challenges for scholars', their elusiveness, mundanity, and diversity indeed, have all been given as reasons for non-inclusion in the canon of 'personal' documents included in historical enquiry.[222] Whilst this is evidently changing, it still remains vital to recognise and study these considerations of the epistolary as a source, as not to paper over their evident methodological challenges. This chapter has made clear that what the letter is, what it is not, and what it means, changes based on the *reader,* and the context of *reading.* As scholars, how we interpret letters varies greatly in many cases, in contrast to descendants or contemporaries. As time elapses, silences in the understanding of the letter become far greater, only exacerbating the (self-)censorship often apparent in letters of this period, as was here exemplified through the Goldberg and Hirschberg papers. In the forthcoming chapters, this thesis constructs narratives from these incomplete sources, often relying on a host of contextual institutional archives to make sense of them. In understanding what the letter meant to the five families studied here, this chapter allows us to further delve into how these items can be understood in a broader sense as both spaces and objects.

[221] Wolfgang Helbich and Walter D. Kamphoefner, 'How Representative are Emigrant Letters? An Exploration of the German Case', in *Letters across Borders The Epistolary Practices of International Migrants*, ed. by Bruce S. Elliott, David A. Gerber and Suzanne M. Sinke (Palgrave: New York, 2006), pp. 29-55.

[222] Gilbert, 'A Cache of Family Letters', 283. See also Margaretta Jolly and Liz Stanley, 'Letters as/Not a Genre', *Life Writing*, 2/2 (2005), 91–118.

CHAPTER 2

Space and the Letter

During the 1930s, Jewish communities, families, individuals and spaces were systematically targeted ensuring those within them left the Reich, with specifically *Jewish* places often destroyed, reappropriated or relocated. This decade saw the 'shrinking' of German-Jewish spaces, both metaphorically and physically – in direct contrast to the experiences of those German Jews during the emancipation a century previous, which Robert Liberles has categorised as a corporeal struggle for access to physical spaces.[223] In Jewish studies, the 'Spatial Turn' has seen numerous historians analyse the public, private, sacred, and metaphysical spaces of Jewish existence prior to and during the Nazi period.[224] In 2001, the research group *Makom* was set up at the University of Potsdam, and laid the foundation for 'space' as a useful analytical tool with which to research Jewish history and culture across time. Various projects and international workshops since, have aimed at enriching our understanding of Jewish attitudes and reactions to their spatial confinement in the 1930s, building upon the social historical and cultural analyses from previous years.[225] For Jews, space was not only found in the places of their homes, markets, streets, synagogues and cemeteries, but also in their heritage, texts, prayers, and memories, as Amir Eshel has noted, a tension 'between cosmos and makom'.[226] In contrast, the production of a Nazi space in a *Volksgemeinschaft* designed to exclude Jews was characterised by the erection of antisemitic

[223] Robert Liberles, *Jews Welcome Coffee: Tradition and Innovation in Early Modern Germany* (Waltham, Massachusetts: Brandeis University Press, 2012), pp.115–32.

[224] Julia Brauch, Anna Lipphardt, and Alexandra Nocke (eds.), *Jewish Topographies: Visions of Space, Traditions of Place* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008); Alina Gromova, Felix Heinert, and Sebastian Voigt (eds.), *Jewish and Non-Jewish Spaces in the Urban Context* (Berlin: Neofelis Verlag, 2015); Simone Lässig and Miriam Rürup (eds.), *Space and Spatiality in Modern German Jewish History* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2017); Guy Miron, *Space and Time Under Persecution: The German-Jewish Experience in the Third Reich* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2023).

[225] More recently in May 2022 the international workshop 'Space and Place in the German-Jewish Experience of the 1930s' was held at the University of Rostock. The workshop focussed on spatial interplay with histories of emotions, thoughts and culture. More details can be found here: https://www.eurojewishstudies.org/conference-grant-programme-reports/space-and-place-in-the-german-jewish-experience-of-the-1930s/ Last accessed: 9 April 2024. As a result, see the special issue: Space and Place in the German-Jewish Experience of the 1930s, *Jewish Culture and History,* 25/2 (2024), ed. by Ofer Ashkenazi, David Jünger, and Björn Siegel.

[226] Amir Eshel, 'Cosmopolitanism and Searching for the Sacred Space in Jewish Literature', *Jewish Social Studies,* 9/3 (2003), 121-38 (p.124).

signs in the street or in a festival which as a result ensured Jews were forced to navigate 'increasingly menacing public spaces', creating a space without Jews long before 'a world without Jews' in the language of Alon Confino.[227]

In her reflections from the period, Irmgard Treuherz (formerly Amberg) recalled that after 1933 '[t]he atmosphere in Germany was very claustrophobic' in reference to the gradual limiting of space throughout the Reich - it is thus unsurprising the Ambergs found solace within the four walls of *Salierallee* 7 – their home from 1928 onwards.[228] As Guy Miron has written on the concept of the home, it was a 'private space, a family unit and a reservoir of material objects as well as cognitive, emotional 'things' and memories'.[229] The initial retreat to the home, followed by the destruction of this familial space through forced migration, followed soon after by the concentration of those Jewish individuals who remained into *Judenhäuser*, led to the retreat to paper – to the diary and to the letter.[230]

For many of the individuals discussed in this thesis – migration was the only option remaining when German-Jewish public and private spaces were attacked physically and legally. Once separated, letters became people, and thus produced a new epistolary space of connection, testing the limits of familial unity. This desire for continued communication has resulted in a surfeit of available collections of which this thesis details five. In all of them, space becomes the ultimate differentiating parameter by which families conceptualise their lives. A separating geography is often ever present and thus the challenge is to maintain and perhaps build upon relations into an unknown future. In his work on the Lövinson family, Asher Biemann writes that familial intimacy requires 'conscious agency' and does not require 'a physical "kitchen table"' a long serving symbol of everydayness, the home, as well as the domestic role of woman within the household.[231] Letter writing is thus consciously active – one has to *want* to connect, and conjure these imaginary spaces in lieu of physical ones.

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[227] Marion Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair. Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p.21; Alon Confino, *A World Without Jews. The Nazi Imagination from Persecution to Genocide* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014), p.84.

[228] Treuherz, *True Hearts*, p.73.

[229] Guy Miron, 'The Home Experience of German Jews under the Nazi Regime', *Past & Present*, 243/1 (2019), 175–212 (p.176).

[230] Konrad Kwiet, 'Without Neighbors: Daily Living in Judenhäuser' in *Jewish Life in Nazi Germany: Dilemmas and Responses*, ed. by Francis R. Nicosia and David Scrase (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), pp.117–48; Guy Miron, "Lately, almost constantly, everything seems small to me': The Lived Space of German Jews under the Nazi Regime', *Jewish Social* Studies, 20/1 (2013), pp.121–49; Guy Miron, 'From "Public Space" to "Space of Writing": Jewish Diarists in Nazi Germany', *Yearbook for European Jewish Literature Studies*, 6/1 (2019), pp. 90-107.

[231] Asher D. Biemann, 'Archives of Imagination. Johanna and Ermano Loevinson as Cultural Translators', in *Cultural Translation and Knowledge Transfer on Alternative Routes of Escape from Nazi Terror*. *Mediations Through Migrations*, ed. by Susanne Korbel and Philipp Strobl, Studies for the International Society for Cultural History (London/New York: Routledge, 2022), pp.83-114 (pp.87-88). The Loevinson family are also incidentally relatives of the Hirschbergs.

The chapter will examine letters within the context of the spatial destruction of German-Jewish life and argue that the letter constituted a new 'epistolary space' in which families could maintain the connections of previous 'in-person' relationships. Firstly, I will demonstrate how the concept of **home** held an important place in the letters studied and highlight the links between the concept as a physical place prior to migration and latterly as a point of memory in the correspondence. David Cesarani, Milton Shain and Tony Kushner have previously highlighted a need to examine the interrelation and influence between 'real' and 'imagined' spaces within Jewish history, something this section will do in detail.[232] This section will study the importance of *Sailerallee* 7 in the letters of the Amberg family, before moving on to discuss the 'narrating spaces' of the home in the Licht family correspondence. I will then move on to introduce the concept of an **epistolary space** to better aid in our understanding on how letters were conceived and understood. This section will examine the limits, construction, and conceptualisation of this for the individuals studied, specifically focussing on the Rothschild family amongst others. Finally, this chapter will argue that the German-Jewish refugee letter is inherently paradoxical, symbolising both **connection and separation** simultaneously. Using examples from all five collections, I highlight examples of how letters' construction and their reference to spaces and places often had the effect of both highlighting distance and closeness.

2.1 The familial home in migration

After the death of her husband from Dukes Disease in 1928, Anna Amberg relocated to Aachen to be closer to her mother and friendship group from her youth. Anna and her family left the confines of their beloved Nuremberg house to gain, as Anna's daughter Irmgard termed it, 'a home of our own' when her 'Uncle Seli' purchased a house on the *Salierallee* for them.[233] Neme's brother Salomon Heinemann 'Uncle Seli', later took his own life shortly after the November pogroms in 1938 along with his wife after their house and substantial art collection was destroyed.[234] *Salieralle* 7 became the Amberg family's haven as Aachen descended into Nazism – 'I had some happy years in Aachen, but suddenly everything changed [...] It was a strange time in Germany after 1933 when all these regulations came, one after another'.[235] In her recollections, Irmgard describes a situation of eternal waiting until a point where only her

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[232] David Cesarani, Milton Shain and Tony Kushner, 'Introduction', in *Place and Displacement in Jewish History and Memory: Zakor v'Makor*, ed. by David Cesarani, Milton Shain and Tony Kushner (London/Portland, Oregon: Vallentine Mitchell, 2009), pp.1–14 (p.1).
[233] Treuherz, *True Hearts*, p.69.
[234] For more on Saloman Heinemann (1865-1938) see *Kanzleihaus Salomon Heinemann. Ein Haus und seine Geschichte* (Düsseldorf: Albert Sevinc Planen & Bauen GmbH, [2016]). Uri Kaufmann, the director of the Alte Synagogue in Essen, has also produced research on Saloman Heinemann.
[235] Treuherz, *True Hearts*, pp.68-70.

mother remained. With the promise of emigration looming, in a letter to Emil, Anna described her and her family's situation:

> Marielies's Mr. Feinmann in Manchester as well as Mr. and Mrs. Benham in Croydon are bringing it about to get me there very quickly. First of all the effort of dissolving a gigantic household - you know, dear Frieda, what we are talking of - calls for lots of time and thought, for I don' t take my baggage and furniture to England, because I have no money to pay for my own residence nor for the placement of a lift. Thus I am setting up only the placement of my furniture in the harbour of Bremen, because Hamburg is already overly congested; it might possibly be that one could pay for the placement of furniture, or of the lift, in either the Dutch, Belgian or even in the English harbour, until we succeed with our number 32,000, or Carl's 27,000 or something like that, to get over to the U.S.A .. One speaks here of 1944! And who can say what else can happen here - and for that reason it is very hard for me to dispose of anything.[236]

For many German-Jews presented with the prospect of leaving a space so central to familial and indeed individual identity, the process was only made worse by the decisions of what to keep, what to save, and what to leave.[237] Assuring her that the Feinemanns and the Benhams were doing their best for her, Anna appealed to Frieda's common memory of the difficulties of 'dissolving a gigantic household' as each decision of what to take required 'time and thought'. Frieda and her husband Oscar Amberg had left their home in Duisburg via Rotterdam for New York in December 1938 later settling in Detroit nearer Oscar's brother Emil. The affinity with Frieda not only highlights the gendered notion of migration, and shared feelings of attachment to a space, but also the importance of items and objects within this. The anthropologist Mary Douglas has written that 'a home is not only a space, it also has some structure in time' predominantly through the everyday material which provide memory triggers to periods passed. Douglas notes that the home is 'characterized by massive redundancies' – that being the 'stuff' that lacks definable use of value and yet becomes of vital importance when faced with the prospect of leaving it.[238] The 'time and thought' Anna takes in starting to dismantle her home speaks to this affinity to both the physical structure of the house but also its contents and these items' meanings. The German-Jewish émigré writer Walter Benjamin famously wrote in 1931 of his feelings towards his library and the 'objects' within it, reflections that seem pertinent when discussing Anna's potential emigration. According to Benjamin, there is a 'relationship to objects that does not emphasize their utilitarian value, but studies and loves them as a scene,

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[236] Anna Amberg to Emil Amberg, 31 July 1939, PC-AR. Trans. C. Amberg.

[237] See Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair,* pp.129-44. Kaplan writes that "packing reduced a lifetime of possessions into three suitcases".

[238] Mary Douglas, 'The Idea of a Home: A Kind of Space', *Social Research,* 58/1 (1991), 287-307 (pp. 289, 298)

the stage of their fate'.[239] There are no sources to speak to the specific contents of the Amberg family home on the Salierallee, but regardless we see its importance to Anna and her family.

Fig. 14 The Amberg family home, Salierallee 7 (c. 1930s). Private Collection of A. Reynolds, Banbury, UK.

Anna's uncertainty over her future both in terms of location and fate speaks further to an unwillingness to let go of the Salierallee when it is so tied to her family. Anna asks 'who can say what else can happen here' – either hoping for a future in the place she called home with her children, or fearing the future this home would find itself in. Within this setting of limited travel and a lack of freedom of movement, Anna centred her home and the natural spaces it offered:

> It'll be hard enough, but I shall gladly take the trouble to adapt myself. Someone wrote to me that if I could get some reserve fund from the Americans, that would be highly desirable - well, I wrote that to you already at the very beginning. - Now you have been informed about us. When I sit here, as I do at the moment, in the open country on the terrace, all green around me, grass and forest in view, then I can't imagine that soon all this will disappear from my orbit.[240]

[239] Walter Benjamin, 'Unpacking my library: A talk about book collecting', in *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), p.60.
[240] Anna Amberg to Emil Amberg, 31 July 1939, PC-AR. Trans. C. Amberg.

For Anna the centrality of the 'open' country and outdoor space was paramount. Indeed in a description by Erika Hessberg of Anna's eventual forced removal from the Salierallee into a *Judenhäuser* on *Frankenbergerstraße* she notes that 'her only words to [the Gestapo] were, 'You will permit me to pick a bunch of violets from my garden".[241] Despite having moved numerous times over the course of her children's upbringing, the Salierallee specifically became Anna's refuge as well as the centre of her family memory as the last site they were all together. During the nineteenth century, the German landscape became central to ideas of German nationalism and German-Jewish conceptions of *Heimat* despite most Jews being predominantly urban dwellers.[242] After 1933, nature was prevalent in discussions of *Volksgemeinschaft* and a 'clean' natural landscape, as well as in doctrines of *lebensraum* and even the building of autobahns throughout Germany.[243] The German forest in particular was pivotal to Nazi policy pertaining to the environment and perceptions of *heimat,* building on the previous Wilhelmine centrality of the forest.[244] As part of a wider exclusion from public spaces, Jews were increasingly unable to access green areas. In minutes from a meeting between Joseph Goebbels and Hermann Göring, the pair jovially discuss the exclusion of Jews from forest spaces in Berlin Grunewald:

> **[Goebbels:]** It should be considered whether it is necessary to forbid the Jews to enter the German forest. Today Jews walk around in packs in the Grunewald. It's a constant provocation, we have incidents all the time. What the Jews are doing is so inflammatory and provocative that there are constant fights.
> **Göring:** So we will make a certain part of the forest available to the Jews, and [Friedrich] Alpers[245]

[241] Treuherz, *True Hearts*, p.95.
[242] See Alon Confino, The Nation as a Local Metaphor: Wurttemberg, Imperial Germany, and National Memory, 1871-1918 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).
Despite the predominant urbanity of the German-Jewish community, there exited a substantial rural community also – *Landjuden*. For more on the *Landjuden* see Monika Richarz, "Landjuden - ein bürgerliches Element im Dorf?" in *Idylle oder Aufbruch?: Das Dorf im bürgerlichen 19. Jahrhundert. Ein europäischer Vergleich*, ed. by Wolfgang Jacobeit, Josef Mooser and Bo Stråth (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1990), pp. 181-90.
[243] See Thomas M. Lekan, *Imagining the Nation in Nature: Landscape Preservation and German Identity, 1885–1945* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), pp.153-203.
[244] See Michael Imort, "'Eternal Forest—Eternal Volk': Rhetoric and Reality of National Socialist Forest Policy," in *How Green were the Nazis? Nature, Environment, and Nation in the Third Reich*, ed. by F. J. Brüggemeier, Mark Cioc, and Thomas Zeller (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005), pp.43-72; Michael Imort, 'A Sylvan People: Wilhelmine Forestry and the Forest as a Symbol of Germandom' in *Germany's Nature: Cultural Landscapes and Environmental History* ed. by Thomas Lekan and Thomas Zeller (Ithaca, NY: Rutgers University Press, 2005), pp. 55-80. For more on the forest and the Holocaust see Heléna Huhák, 'Emotions and Natural Environment in Bergen-Belsen: The Role of the Forest in the Diary of Margit Holländer' in *New Microhistorical Approaches to an Integrated History of the Holocaust*, ed. by Frédéric Bonnesoeur, Hannah Wilson and Christin Zühlke (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2023), pp.125-46.
[245] Friedrich Alpers (1901-44) was State Secretary and *Generalforstmeister* in the Reich Forestry Office.

> will see to it that the various animals, which look a hell of a lot like the Jews - the elk has such a curved nose - come there and naturalise themselves.[246]

For Anna Amberg in the Salieralle, she took pride not only in the safety of her garden, a liminal space in between the harsh outside reality and the enclosed safety of her interior home, but as a view to the 'open country' around her, giving reference to a *Heimat* now exclusionary for her.[247] Salierallee 7, its terrace, and violet flowers, gave Anna both a touchpoint to her past as well as a view to a wider Germany she no longer had access to. As Michel Foucault has written: 'The garden is the smallest parcel of the world and then it is the totality of the world'.[248]

The Bodenhof estate directly opposite Anna's Salierallee haven, provided that green view and access to a wider Germany. With earliest records dating back to the mid fifteenth century, the *Gut Bodenhof* passed through various hands until it was sold by Heinrich Nütten (1854-1930) in the late 1920s to the Jewish industrialist Felix Meyer (1875-1950) on the condition Meyer's family would move in upon Nütten's death. In 1939 Felix fled to Belgium where thanks to his contacts in the German military administration, he managed to save hundreds of Jewish refugees from deportation.[249] The Bodenhof estate was later destroyed in 1943 during the war. For German-Jews trapped in their supposed 'home'-land, the nature of the Salieralle and the Bodenhof acted as both a sanctuary for the increasingly heavy pressures on the individual, and as a symbol for the *heimat* they yearned to access.[250]

For those having migrated already, physical spaces prior to migration equally acted as memory trigger for connections to a shared past and a shared world in letters after migration. Shortly after her emigration to Britain in 1938, Marion Goldberg's father wrote to her expressing his belief that such memories will keep her going when times are difficult:

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[246] Excerpt from the transcript of a meeting between Joseph Goebbels and Hermann Göring on 12 November 1938 (Document PS-1816), reprinted in *Das Dritte Reich und die juden. Dokumente und Aufsätze*, ed. Leon Poliakov and Joseph Wulf (Berlin Grunewald: arani Verlags-GmbH, 1955), pp.347-48.

[247] On the concept of the garden as a liminal space see Catherine Alexander, 'The Garden as Occasional Domestic Space', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 27/3 (2002) 857-71.

[248] Michel Foucault, 'Of other spaces', *Diacritics*, 16/1 (1986), 22-27 (p.26).

[249] See Amelis von Mettenheim, *Felix Meyer, 1875-1950: Erfinder und Menschenretter: ein Jude rettet Juden im besetzten Belgien: sein Leben dargestellt an Hand von Briefen* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1998); Jakob Reuster '„…nehmt euch mehr von diesem Leben"', *DNB Blog* (11 October 2022), accessed via: https://blog.dnb.de/nehmt-euch-mehr-von-diesem-leben/, last accessed: 6 August 2024. On the rescue of Jews during the war see 'Documentation regarding the activity of Felix Meyer for the rescue of the Jews in Belgium, 1943-1956', YVA O.29.3/3727421. See also Deutsches Exil Archiv DEA-B-3-1-0144.- Nachlass Felix Meyer.

[250] See Katharina Seehuber, "Ihr Berge, adieu' – Nature as a Sanctuary for a persecuted Munich Jew', *Jewish Culture and History*, 21/1 (2020), 66-83.

> Being in a foreign country now, without family, the memories of your childhood home and the families you originate from might help you when you feel down – and who doesn't sometimes [feel down]?[251]

In her work on the postcard, Rosslyn Prosser has noted that such documents 'serve as memory triggers, and activate fragments of stories and allow reflection on the places they refer to' in other words references to physical places in correspondences speak to a shared past and shared memories of said place.[252] In his seminal work *Civilization and its Discontents,* Sigmund Freud described dwellings as 'a substitute for the mother's womb, that first abode, [one] which he probably yearns ever after' such a yearning for the former familial dwelling was evident in the Goldberg family.[253] Two years later on Marion's seventeenth birthday, Walter again references home:

> I hope you remain healthy and happy - that is my wish on this day, the third time I don't celebrate together with you. How I would have loved to prepare a table with gifts and candles and flowers – like we used to do at home. It will happen again one day, hopefully![254]

As Marion continued to grow up in absence of her father and mother, the former often hoped for a return to the past in the future. Specifically the return to localities which for him symbolised familial union in a space of connection. In the context of an uneven migration, where some members of the family have emigrated and some have not, this former unified family home maintained a connection, albeit no longer a personal one, but one tied to the space itself. After her son's emigration in 1938, Ilse Licht wrote regularly to Klaus, and often from his old room:

> With the morning mail I just received your lovely letter dated yesterday. I would never have expected a letter from you so soon. Therefore, my joy was even greater and of course, my first impulse is to respond to you. I am sitting in your room by the window while I am writing. You know that is my favourite room.[255]

The Licht's family home at Martin-Lutherstraße 90 was a reminder to Ilse of her life prior to her son's emigration and the family separation. In the case of writing letters, Ilse felt connected to her son physically within a place he had once inhabited. Even in times of distress, Ilse used the family home as a coping mechanism and space for reflection on her newly altered relationships due to the family's fracturing. In her forthcoming work on the correspondence of Ernst and

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[251] Walter Goldberg to Marion Goldberg, 3 August 1939, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[252] Rosslyn Prosser, 'The Postcard: The Fragment', *Life Writing*, 8/2 (2011), 219-225 (p.221).
[253] Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Trans. by Joan Riviere (London: Leonard & Virginia Woolf at the Hogarth Press and the Institute for Psycho-analysis, 1930), p.52.
[254] Walter Goldberg to Marion Goldberg, 25 June 1941, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[255] Ilse Licht to Klaus Licht, 3 January 1939, JMB. Trans. K. Baumgartner.

Anicuta Levin, Sophie Bayer Blears writes of a 'narrating space' - that being the 'space within which the letter writer exists, while writing the letter' and one that also has the potential to evoke memories of places and events in the present.[256] In one of her final letters to her son, sent from her prison cell in Gelsenkirchen, Ilse reminded Klaus of a time before their separation:

> Even as I wasn't able to send you messages in these past months, I was always with you. I sat at the table with you, I poured my heart out to you [...] and in the evening, I sat at your little bed and gave you cuddles [...] These past months I followed your example – dear Oma – I mainly lived in the past as I am not able to imagine the future.[257]

Ilse again writes of the centrality of Klaus's bedroom for her but also explains why such *narrating spaces* in the first instance, but after her imprisonment - spaces of familial memory, hold such importance in her new situation. Ilse notes how her focus on such memories tied to the family home, were due to a lack of ability to see oneself in the future, where the past becomes central to her ability to cope in the present. Such a space however also invoked feelings of separation and melancholy, with Ilse writing that she often went to Klaus's grandparents' house as it was so lonely at home.[258]

Even for Anna Amberg in Aachen in the 'open country on the terrace', feelings of solitude pervade her often upbeat and optimistic letters to her relatives in America. In October 1940 in a letter predominantly apologetic in tone after a previous letter two weeks prior left her feeling 'ashamed like a child' due to her terse language, Anna laments how she wishes she could see them in person but that 'I must not and will not complain, as long as I can live quietly in my beautiful although lonesome home; I have nothing to fear as far as money is concerned, and I have dear friends and acquaintances'.[259] In increasingly nazified public spaces, home became a refuge for German-Jews, in spite of its lonesome qualities post the migration of loved ones.

For many, the concept of a broader 'home' or *Heimat* outside of the confines of a specific place permeated conversations of familial unity and familial space.[260] Not easily translatable, *Heimat* refers to a home or homeland and the feelings attached to them. The Austrian essayist and Auschwitz survivor, Jean Améry, later referred to *heimat* as 'security'

[256] Sophie Bayer Blears, 'Analysing the role of the narrator in private correspondences: the Third Reich narrated as an experience of war spaces' in *Holocaust Letters: Methodologies, Cases, and Reflections,* ed. by Clara Dijkstra, Charlie Knight, Sandra Lipner, and Christine Schmidt (London: Bloomsbury; 2026 [forthcoming]).
[257] Ilse Licht to Klaus Licht, 14 January 1940, JMB. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[258] Ibid., 5 April 1939, JMB. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[259] Anna Amberg to Emil Amberg, 19 October 1940, PC-AR. Trans. C. Amberg.
[260] The concept of 'Heimat' in the context of German-Jewish migration has been discussed in depth by Katharina Hoba, *Generation im Übergang: Beheimatungsprozesse deutscher Juden in Israel* (Köln: Böhlau, 2017).

going on to note that an 'entire field of the related words loyal, familiar, confidence, to trust, to entrust, trusting, belongs in the broader psychological area of feeling secure'. For Améry, *heimat* in the context of exile, was intimately tied to selfhood, where the concept of an "I" no longer existed in the same way without a "we".[261] In October 1938, Annelore Rothschild, then at school in Lacock, Wiltshire, wrote to her father Siegfried in Stuttgart about the difficulties of life in Britain, noting that '[y]ou probably think that there is something like harmony here'.[262] Siegfried interpreted this, not as an admonition of the reality of life in refuge but instead a yearning for her former life in Germany, and responds thus:

> Now about homesickness. We also understand that only too well, but, Annebutz, if you know, like you and Gerhard, that you no longer have a *Heimat* in your country, without your, his or our fault, then you must also be able to tear out your feelings, which were otherwise more than justified; you never force yourself into a society in which you are not welcome! They only deprive you and him of the strength to adjust with all your soul to the new things that you experience every day and that will and must later be your *Heimat*; believe me, it's better this way.[263]

Siegfried Rothschild's perception of Heimat seems to be similar here to Améry's, a change of tone from his usual discussions of the physical *haus* or *heim*. Where Améry goes further than Siegfried, is his assertion that once a *heimat* is lost – there is no regaining one elsewhere, and thus homesickness persists.[264] Siegfried on the contrary implores his daughter to find this new space, new security, and new self in Britain, even if it is without her family around her. In his work *Space and Time Under Persecution,* Guy Miron writes that 'the dissolution of many Jewish families, largely as the result of emigration, challenged the unquestioned link between family and home'.[265] Forced migration compelled families to seek union in the remaining means of contact: correspondence and occasionally phone calls, although this was not available to most. The epistolary thus took on spatial parameters, replacing those physical connections within the home and the garden, with metaphysical ones on paper and card.

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[261] Jean Améry, trans. by Sidney Rosenfeld and Stella P. Rosenfeld, *At the Mind's Limits: Contemplations by a Survivor on Auschwitz and Its Realities* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), pp.44, 47. For more see Jacqueline Vansant, *Reclaiming Heimat: Trauma and Mourning in Memoirs by Jewish Austrian Reémigrés* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2001).

[262] Annelore Rothschild to Siegfried Rothschild, 26 October 1938, PC-JBG/MT. Trans. unknown.

[263] Siegfried Rothschild to Annelore Rothschild, 28 October 1938, PC-JBG/MT. Trans. unknown.

[264] On Améry and homesickness see Martin Shuster, 'A Phenomenology of Home: Jean Améry on Homesickness', *Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy - Revue de la philosophie française et de langue française*, 24/3 (2016), 117-27.

[265] Miron, *Space and Time,* p.109. See also Carlos Sluzki, 'Migration and family conflict', *Family Process*, 18/4 (1979), 379-90, accessed via: https://sluzki.com/publications/articles/44/migration-and-family-conflict, last accessed: 5 May 2025.

2.2 An epistolary space

Scholars of the epistolary have applied a myriad of spatialised vocabulary to the letter in order to understand its role in the connections of separated individuals. Bruce Elliott, David Gerber and Suzanne Sinke have categorised the letter as a 'third place' for example, where one exists neither 'here' nor 'there', whilst Hannah Holtschneider has utilised Christian de Vito's 'micro-spatial' analysis on her letters of the Oppenheim family from Kassel attempting to reconcile the perceived binary between macro and micro studies of the past, arguing that the refugee letter allows access to both.[266] Other scholars such as Marion Kaplan on Jewish refugees in Portugal, and Oliver Wilkinson on POWs during the First World War, have both utilised the phrase 'epistolary space' when examining their respective letter collections.[267] The most detailed work on the concept of an 'epistolary space' thus far however is James How's work on English letter writing and the formation of the Post Office in the seventeenth century, in which How defines them as:

> [...] spaces of connection, providing permanent and seemingly unbreakable links between people and places. They are common spaces other people are also always using, and in which there is a sense for the letter writers and readers [...] that their letters are jostling and bumping up against multitudes of other letters sent by a variety of different and unfamiliar people.[268]

According to How, letters 'produce' space in the Lefebvrian sense allowing letter writers who already know each other to conjure spaces where their 'already known 'selves' can speak and act'.[269] How frames this in opposition to those scholars that have highlighted the performative aspects of letters aiding in the 'construction' of the self.[270] These positions however need not be mutually exclusive, indeed epistolary spaces in the collections of the five families discussed here, evolve over time as the letter writers themselves do. As such, if spaces are constructed or imagined by writers and/or addressees, then the aging, changing, and moving of these individuals will impact upon whether the selves acting within this space are 'alternate' or 'already known'. How's definition, whilst useful as a starting point is knowingly specific to the

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[266] Bruce S. Elliott, David A. Gerber and Suzanne M. Sinke, 'Introduction' in *Letters across Borders The Epistolary Practices of International Migrants,* ed. by Bruce S. Elliott, David A. Gerber and Suzanne M. Sinke (Palgrave: New York, 2006), pp. 1-25; Hannah Holtschneider, 'Refugee letters: Methodological considerations' in *Holocaust Letters: Methodologies, Cases, and Reflections*, ed. by Clara Dijkstra, Charlie Knight, Sandra Lipner, and Christine Schmidt (London: Bloomsbury, 2025 [forthcoming]).

[267] See Kaplan, *Hitler's Jewish Refugees*; and Oliver Wilkinson, *British Prisoners of War in First World War Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp.226-58.

[268] James How, *Epistolary spaces. English letter writing from the foundation of the Post Office to Richardson's Clarissa* (London: Routledge, 2018), p.4.

[269] Ibid, p.3. See Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974).

[270] See William Merrill Decker, *Epistolary Practices. Letter Writing in America before Telecommunications* (Chapel Hill/London: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), p.4.

letter writers he focusses on, highly literate individuals in times of relative peace and un-enforced separation. Letters sent in times of forced migration, parallel with epistolary spaces tainted with the trauma of their separation, and thus should be caveated slightly.

In their introduction to *Space and Spatiality in Modern German-Jewish History*, Simone Lässig and Miriam Rürup argue that '[n]o space, material or otherwise, is an island' noting that meaning is acquired subjectively, often through experience and history but also through any 'symbols and rituals associated with them'.[271] In the case of letters, such subjectivity remains heavily apparent, indeed, epistolary spaces are specific to the writers and addressees and are constructed thus. They are even imagined in ways differential to both readers and writers, and the tangible environments they find themselves in. This is perhaps demonstrated most clearly in the differential expectations of what letters *should* be for within set correspondents. The hundreds of letters between Siegfried Rothschild and his daughter Annelore for example, are continuously tinged with an expectation of ceaselessness on the part of Siegfried whereas Annelore has to contend with the realities of living, working, and attempting to secure the emigration of her parents. Shortly after the November pogroms in 1938, where he equally noted his lack of correspondence from his daughter ('I will not wait'), Siegfried juxtaposes his 'burden' of helping people within Stuttgart with the lack of letters from Annelore, writing:

> I will not write a lot today because the burden on me is too great. I have to help whenever possible people who are worse off than us. The reason I am writing today, why have we not had any letters from you? You can imagine that we look forward to hearing from you as it will explain what we have talked about. We hoped ideally to hear from you by Wednesday when that didn't happen we counted on Thursday, that also didn't materialise so we are hoping for today but nothing. Gerhard told us already yesterday about his stay in London, etc. But nothing from you. I cannot understand this and please let us know immediately. Did you get our airmail letter and the parcel? [...] However, so far nothing happened for how long I do not know; wait and help meanwhile.[272]

Within the Rothschild correspondence there is a disparity between the ways in which this new epistolary space was navigated by the parties involved, often a result of Siegfried's 'emigration fever' coupled with the tedium of waiting. The spatial persecution of German-Jews in the 1930s drastically altered their perceptions of the flow of time ranging from halting to a standstill, to

[271] Simone Lässig and Miriam Rürup, 'Introduction: What Made a Space "Jewish"?', in *Space and Spatiality,* ed. by *idem,* pp.1-20 (pp.5-6).

[272] Siegfried Rothschild to Annelore Rothschild, 18 November 1938, PC-JBG/MT. Trans. unknown.

moving uncontrollably forward.[273] The physical act of writing, specifically ego-documents such as letters and diaries, filled time otherwise devoted to anxiety inducing waiting and anguish, and thus imbued it with meaning.[274] It is perhaps unsurprising therefore that Siegfried's letters to his daughter evolve progressively throughout the period of their separation, characterised by longer letters filled with more erratic prose. After November 1938, the scales tipped towards emigration for many German-Jews, and thus a period of rapid facilitation of migration, coupled with an inordinately slow flow of time commenced: Siegfried notes that 'so far nothing [has] happened for how long I do not know'. For Annelore in comparison, the letters to her father were part of a much larger effort of attempting to procure his emigration, filled often with the physical act of waiting in queues and offices for updates, a similar feeling for many others in the five collections. In a letter to his girlfriend Gertrud in June 1939 for example, shortly after his arrival in Britain, Theodor Hirschberg noted that 'I don't want to get on their nerves at Bloomsbury House tomorrow. At the moment nothing else but waiting'.[275] It would be false to characterise Siegfried's writing as demonstrably altered between those letters sent during the 'voluntary' separation of his daughter's placement at the Ecole Nouvelle Menagerie in Jogney-sur-Vevey, versus her 'enforced' refuge in Britain in 1938. Although his letters are always characterised by bullishness, and a strict or intrusive character however, the need to learn information rapidly and with a sense of clarity is only increased by the pressures of the period.[276] As Lässig and Rürup remind us '[o]ne and the same space may be the object of a range of highly divergent perceptions'.[277] In the case of epistolary spaces, these cannot be homogeneous and are conceptualised specifically to conjure connections with most commonly individuals, but also their 'home worlds', and are imagined specifically.

In the absence of these physical spaces, epistolary ones are not so much the letter themselves, but a metaphysical area in which these pieces of paper and the words they hold exist, creating this *prima facie* space of connection. In accordance with How, epistolary spaces are produced to allow the self to act unhampered despite the spatial separation. Many therefore are characterised by a proclivity for the everyday regardless of historical context; in other words a wish for normativity in times of upheaval. In the words of Miriam Dobson: 'Private letters are

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[273] Miron, *Space and Time,* pp.153-82.
[274] Ibid, p.207.
[275] Theodor Hirschberg [after 15 June 1939], UoS MS314/1/11. Trans. K. Baumgartner. Bloomsbury House was the headquarters of many of the main refugee agencies dealing with Jewish migration to Britain during the 1930s and 40s. The German Jewish Aid Committee (later the Jewish Refugee Committee), the German Emergency Committee (Quakers), the Church of England Committee for Non-Aryan Christians and many others, were based here.
[276] On discipline within German-Jewish families see Marion Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class. Women, Family, and Identity, in Imperial Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp.61-63.
[277] Lässig and Rürup, 'Introduction', p.6.

often full of 'nothingness".[278] Within the long passages of Siegfried Rothschild's letters to his daughter, he often favours extended paragraphs detailing his and his wife Margarethe's travels and daily chores

> [...] we left at about 4pm for Rothenburg [ob der Tauber]; looked around and also at the pictures at the entrance. We stayed about one hour in Rothenburg and then drove via a long diversion because roads were partly cordoned off via Crailsheim-Geildorf-Backnang-Winnenden back home. In Winnenden we ate for the evening. This morning Mutsch has started a migraine but it has improved and she was able to work in the laundry. The pile of washing was huge and she hopes that the weather will stay for 2-3 days in order to get it all dry.[279]

Epistolary spaces ergo often mimic the physical ones they act in replacement of. It maintains specific connections and memories, previously centred around the home and around the unit of the family although not exclusively. Asher D. Biemann reminds us that a 'family's collective self does not solely depend on place' but that it instead requires 'cohesion forged by experience'.[280] The trips taken as a family, the realities of their mother's health issues, and the daily rhythms of chores and housework, all act as reminders that such tasks continue despite separation. Although correctly questioned by Marion Kaplan, the mundanity of the 'everydayness' of the domestic was often something utilised by the Rothschilds in their correspondence as a means of centring their connection in continuity – that being a period whereby the 'collective self' of the family was centred around a unified place and the actions that take place within it.

Epistolary spaces are subject to, and ergo responsive to, the flow of time insofar as a letter is subject to the practicalities of the medium. The passage of time inevitably invokes anticipation and longing for the letter to arrive, ascribing it a differential level of importance than perhaps modern *cyberspace* messaging or instantaneous in-person conversations. Frank and Anita Kermode have commented on this quality noting that although 'seemingly minor', delay is 'an essential part of the pleasures and the related pains of traditional correspondence'.[281] In a letter to her boyfriend Theodor in London a few months after he had left, Gertrud Lehmann wrote to him from Berlin, predominantly to discuss her own attempted emigration, but ended the letter confirming 'I am always waiting for your mail and it makes me so happy'.[282] Such reliance on accessing this epistolary space to connect across physical boundaries, is equally

[278] Dobson, 'Letters', p.64.
[279] Siegfried Rothschild to Annelore Rothschild and Gerhard Rothschild, 19 September 1938, PC-JBG/MT. Trans. unknown.
[280] Biemann, 'Archives of Imagination', pp.87-88.
[281] Frank Kermode and Anita Kermode (eds.), *The Oxford Book of Letters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p.xix.
[282] Gertrud Lehmann to Theodor Hirschberg, 13 July 1939. UoS MS 314/1/25. Trans. K. Baumgartner.

echoed by Clara Licht, who in her diary pages shortly after the start of the war writes that 'In the beginning we waited from one mail delivery to the next: nothing, nothing! Then we resigned ourselves to not hearing from them for a long time'.[283] Indeed this theme of "living until the next letter" is a consistent one throughout all five families studied here, and in the correspondences of other similar collections. The consistency of both writing and receiving letter after letter after letter, speaks to what literary and art history scholar Bruce Redford labelled a 'campaign for intimacy' within the sheer copiousness of letters.[284] In cases however where the sending and receiving of letters was pivotal to organising the escape of family remaining in Germany, waiting was irritating, painful, and dramatically slowed progress. Siegfried Rothschild expressed this annoyance in a letter to Annelore in November 1938: 'You must take the time [to write] immediately and if there is no time during the day, the night or the morning, will have to do. I can no longer wait and need information at once'.[285] The start of the war and the postal conditions that came with that however, slowed this copiousness, often to a halt.

To fill this delay between receiving letters, addressees continuously accessed this epistolary space, reading and re-reading correspondences. This process not only attempted to regain the intimacy initially of in-person relationships and later regular epistolary ones, but reduced the time until the next opportunity to access the epistolary. As Marion Kaplan wrote 'reading and rereading letters helped [them] reimagine [their] family, feel close to them, and reduce the time separating them, not just the space'.[286] From their separation in 1939 Marion Goldberg received twenty two letters from her mother Gertrud in Plauen and presumably sent a similar amount. In a letter from the summer of 1939, Gertrud highlights this repetitive process:

> You wrote at the time to Ruth Cohn, whose address I now have, about your work. She wrote this to her father so he would forward it to me. I thank you so much, my dear Marion for this information. It is a sign from you – even if it doesn't come directly from you. I always read your mail again and again for me not to miss anything, right? Here nothing has changed.[287]

Indeed the process, whilst practical (to 'not miss anything, right?') was also therapeutic and emotionally laden. Rereading letters allowed continual access to a shared world in which both parties are present and able to connect. Any 'space', but especially those metaphysical ones imagined or constructed such as the epistolary, acquire meaning through ritualisation, as is the

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[283] Clara Licht envelope diary entry, 10 September 1939, JMB. Trans. K. Baumgartner.

[284] Bruce Redford, *The Converse of the Pen: Acts of Intimacy in the Eighteenth-century Familiar Letter* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), p.10.

[285] Siegfried Rothschild to Annelore Rothschild, 20 November 1938, PC-JBG/MT. Trans. unknown.

[286] Kaplan, *Hitler's Jewish Refugees,* p.184.

[287] R. Gertrud Goldberg to Marion Goldberg, 31 August 1939, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.

case of reading and rereading the letter here.[288] Gertrud Goldberg writes she 'always' reads Marion's mail multiple times and suggests she has done so every time a letter is received. Such continual activities and latter reliance on receipt of these letters helps create the epistolary space as a tangible connection for families.

Epistolary spaces, and ergo continual access to them, often emerge from a dissatisfaction with the physical places one finds oneself in. The wish to exist in a space connected to another when it is physically impossible, means that correspondence can 'open up spaces within which their desires can be satisfied'.[289] In this case a wish for '*Lebenszeichen*'. Far from being banal, the consistency of reading and rereading, even the *uninteresting,* was incredibly affecting in the case of Anna Amberg. After her son's internment in Canada, Anna was able to receive direct correspondence from her youngest which held a differential place for her beyond merely hearing about him second- or third-hand. In May 1941, following the realisation that direct communication was now possible, and the failed attempt at writing opening via Emil in Detroit, Anna wrote:

> My darling boy, today I shall write you a proper letter. My last one, written in the first flush of excitement with the arrival of your own, was more to try whether we can now reach each other. Once I wrote to you via Emil.[290]

Separation is *prima facie* a spatial phenomenon and thus an object such as a letter which purports to overcome such geographical divides has been seen as a replacement for in person interactions and indeed creates new space. Although we do not have any of the letters Carl wrote to his mother, her emotional response is evident and the necessity of a direct epistolary space of connection was key.

2.3 Paradoxes of connection and separation

The letters of separated German-Jewish families are concerned with both epistemological and physical distances severing members of the family from each other. Anna Amberg's references to a six month journey of Carl's letter above, is both demonstrative of the physical distance needed to travel as well as the unreliability of the epistolary space in which they connect. The mere existence of a letter denotes a physical and metaphysical barrier between the closeness of familial bonds, and simultaneously the very real existence of the other writer. In other words

[288] Lässig and Rürup, 'Introduction', p.6.
[289] How, *Epistolary Spaces*, p.3.
[290] Anna Amberg to Carl Amberg, 9 May 1941, PC-AR. Trans. C. Amberg.

letters become symbols of separation between families – their existence and indeed the specificity of the epistolary space they help create, denote absence.

Simultaneously, however, the letter was a direct attempt to overcome such a divide, and aimed at ameliorating a separation of deep concern to all of the five families discussed here.[291] When letter writers' penned detailed correspondence, a sense of closeness became commonplace indeed something that aided in healing a geographic divide. In one of her first letters to her daughter after Marion's emigration, Gertrud Goldberg wrote that she was pleased with a letter, but that such detailed letters are even more welcome.

> My very dear child, my very good Marion, it is always a particular joy when I receive mail from my dear child. One could either say that I don't have high standards or one could say that I am more sensitive because we are separated. And both is true or not. Be that as it may – thank you so much for your detailed letter and your description of your environment. It is good that you write everything down. This way everything seems closer to me and I can think of you, my Marion, with more peace of mind.[292]

For Gertrud, the absence of letters invoked feelings of distance whilst their presence created connection, as knowledge of Marion and her 'environment', helped Gertrud overcome the distance separating them. Sometimes writers would note that receiving a letter gave them a sense of being physically present with the correspondent, not just *close* to them. In one of the few letters to her son in Canada, after her removal to a *Judenhaus* on *Frankenbergerstraße*, Anna Amberg wrote that:

> Your second letter arrived, dated April 20th. I hope my various letters reached you as well. Yes, naturally I feel like you concerning the last two years. Our lives are practically living together, almost physically, even though one's fate is putting our patience to the test still longer.[293]

Through a quirk of the organisation of internment camps in Canada, Carl's ability to have direct correspondence with his mother allowed a sense of physical closeness not possible without correspondence (see chapter 1). By 1941 when Anna Amberg was writing, and after a period of many months without hearing directly from her son, a letter of any content was of great comfort to reunite their shared worlds. It was not a letter of content, but a letter alone that helped her feel connected 'almost physically'. With Gertrud and Marion in 1939 shortly after their separation however, Gertrud was especially happy with detailed letters but happy with any

[291] Knight, 'Constructing Narratives', 389.
[292] R. Gertrud Goldberg to Marion Goldberg, 15 August 1939, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[293] Anna Amberg to Carl Amberg, 18 June 1941, PC-AR. Trans. C. Amberg.

because of her lowered 'standards'. By 1941 however, when direct correspondence with Marion had ground to a halt, and she was forced to resort to indirect correspondence through her sister Lotte in the USA. Gertrud presented her sister with the reality of their separation vis-à-vis her want for detailed contents:

> I admire you when you keep writing about a reunion with the parents in your letters. Let me tell you – the parents and sadly me too, we cannot imagine this ever happening [...] But as my heart gets heavy and heavier writing about it, I will stop and start another [point] [...] I don't know what's going on, Lotte, usually you are so good in detailed descriptions. But believe me, compared to others, you never really write about all of you and so we cannot tell details about you [your life].[294]

It is likely that these detailed letters Gertrud needed to feel close therefore weren't maintained something she needed in the face of the reality that a reunion was not to occur. In an oral history interview conducted in the 1980s, Marion talked of her inability to write extensively to her mother regardless of time period:

> I didn't write about everything that happened, I only wrote some things because I found it very difficult at the time, I hadn't got the words to describe and I was homesick. And I know I was homesick as I was very unhappy with the Achesons.[295]

Later in the testimony, Marion stated that Dr Nora and Dr Robin Acheson had no idea how to take care of a German-Jewish refugee child and that she was 'totally controlled by them'. Similarly, in a singular passage from Marion's diary she writes both of her dissatisfaction with the care of the Achesons in contrast to the renewed difficulty of hearing from her mother:

> I feel so superfluous. Dr. Nora doesn't really know what to do with me. I would like to leave. I would give anything to get away. Erez, Erez, Erez. Tonight, the Germans invaded Belgium and Holland! My only connection with Mummy is now disrupted. I will never hear anything from her again. Everything, everything is taken away [from me].[296]

Where Marion's unhappiness had previously disrupted her ability to write to her mother, and thus their ability to feel close, her diary entry reveals a very real awareness and ability to link these feelings of homesickness with connection with her mother. Marion recognises the series of letters received from her mother had been her only point of connection and thus their absence was devastating.

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[294] R. Gertrud Goldberg to Lotte Kariel and others, 5 [February] 1940, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[295] Marion Fegruson, oral history, cassette 1 [undated], MCL.
[296] Marion Goldberg diary entry, 10 May 1940, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.

Fig. 15 Dr Nora Acheson (Cheney, 1900-81) Aldeburgh (1939) with her dog 'Snooks'. Manchester Central Library, GB127.M756.

A sense of simultaneous melancholy and jubilation was equally felt by Marion's father Walter Goldberg at Camp de Tiscornia in Cuba after his release from Les Milles near Marseille. During the Second World War around 12,000 refugees found their way to Cuba, with around half of these arriving directly from Germany and Austria between June 1938 and May 1939, and the rest arriving between 1940-42, including mainly Polish Jews in Belgium, as well as those others released from French internment camps like Walter.[297] For many months Walter hadn't been receiving letters from his daughter Marion in Britain despite writing to her often, and noting that he had received 'detailed letters you sent me [whilst in Les] Milles'.[298] After receiving a small telegram from Marion he attempts to cajole her to write again:

> My dear little Marion,
> two days ago, I received your telegram by way of telephone. I do not want to wait for the written copy to respond to you because that can take a while. I am very happy to read that you are well and healthy and I thank you very much for your news. I have no explanation where your letters

[297] Jacqueline Adams, 'Jewish Refugees' Lives in Latin America after Persecution and Impoverishment in Europe', *Comparative Cultural Studies: European and Latin American Perspectives*, 11 (2021), 5-17 (pp.12-13). See also Margalit Bejarano, *The Jewish community of Cuba: Memory and history* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2014); R. M. Levine, *Tropical diaspora: The Jewish experience in Cuba* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993). For an account of one person's experience of refuge in Cuba see Judith Krieth, 'Polishing Diamonds in Havana: A Personal Account of the Flight of a Jewish Refugee to Cuba, 1938-46', *Comparative Cultural Studies: European and Latin American Perspectives,* 11 (2021), 61-74.
[298] Walter Goldberg to Marion Goldberg, 9 September 1942, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.

might be. Other people here – as I wrote you before – regularly receive mail from there [London] on a regular basis and it doesn't take longer than 17-20 days. As happy as I am, to have at least news from you [telegram], I miss your written reports as I do not know anything about your life and details about your well-being anymore. It is tedious to ask the same questions again until I have an answer to at least one of my letters. And there is no doubt for me that you have sent letters. [...] Tell me: don't you write or is the mail lost? On the other hand, it looks like you receive my letters, as I see that Misses E. answers her mail which is enclosed in your letters. [...] Please tell me everything about you, little Marion, and I would love a photo of you. I sent Kariels a photo of me, which is meant for you and I hope you will receive it one day. I hope you are healthy and get everything you need for your healthy growth. Have you grown? How tall are you and what do you weigh? Do you read a lot and what do you read? I am eagerly waiting for mail from you![299]

As with his wife's experience of receiving letters above, the previous presence of correspondence followed by prolonged absence had a colossal effect on the isolated Walter in Cuba. Epistolary spaces, whilst often understood as constructs of connection, often have the result of producing separation anxiety when such spaces are no longer accessible. To add further to these emotions, Walter suggests that Marion just hasn't been writing to him as opposed to the letters getting lost and in many letters references 'other people' who have received numerous letters and parcels from their families.

Whilst the changing reality of periods of receiving letters followed by periods not, even when correspondence was flowing, emotions of longing and separation still loomed. On the 14th November 1941 the Licht/Königsberger family in Britain received the news that Ernst Licht had died in Germany. His sister, Alice in London, travelled down on the Friday to be with the rest of the family and to break the news to Ernst's son Klaus. Alice's husband Lutz (and Klaus's adoptive father figure) could not be there but wrote to him just over a week later expressing his sorrow 'not [to] be with you when you heard the bad tidings from Auntie Alice'.[300] After her return to London on Sunday evening, by Wednesday Alice had penned a letter in English to her nephew further expressing her 'heavy heart' at relaying the news to him. She instructed Klaus to look after his grandparents as 'they have lost a child' and that 'we still have hope that your dear Mutti may stand the ordeal, if she does, certainly only to see you again'.[301] Presumably on receiving this letter the following day, Klaus was prompted to write to his mother remaining in Germany:

[299] Walter Goldberg to Marion Goldberg, 12 October 1942, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[300] Ludwig Königsberger to Klaus Licht, 25 November 1941, JMB.
[301] Alice Königsberger to Klaus Licht, 19 November 1941, JMB.

> My dear mum,
> I hope that you are doing well and that you are healthy. I would like to see you again soon. I am doing wonderfully. [...] The teachers are also happy with me. Stay healthy mum, and don't tell me any stories. Many greetings and kisses[302]

With no address, no envelope, and no possible means of contacting her, the letter was never sent and later found its way to the family collection at Peter King's house in St Andrews, before being returned to Klaus (by then Ken) in November 2000 – 'You should have these letters' Peter wrote.[303] Whether the fourteen year old Klaus knew of the impossibility of this connection with his mother or not, the letter and specifically its unsent state, demonstrates the absence of his mother through a form *prima facie* centred around connection. Alexandra Gabarini amongst others has highlighted the porousness of the borders between types of ego-documents writing extensively on 'letter-diaries' where individuals put pen to paper in a mock correspondence designed as an act to feel as if they are communicating when they are in fact writing 'into the void' in the language of Clara Licht.[304] Whilst Klaus' unsent letter is perhaps an extreme example of letters symbolising separation, the vast majority of the letters in the five collections, combine presence with absence and thus construct epistolary spaces accordingly.

Until 1939, when Klaus and Ilse were able to write to one another regularly, the wish to end this absence was ever-present. On the occasion of his late grandfather Fritz Efraim Krämer's (1880-1929) birthday Klaus was 'sure up there where he is in heaven, he will help for you to soon come here' whilst on his mother's birthday, Klaus equally requested a reunion writing in a multitude of colours: 'All the best wishes for your birthday and remain healthy – do you hear me? How are Papps and you in general? Come as soon as possible'.[305] The last letters from Ernst and Ilse to Klaus before the start of the war primarily centred around the merits and dangers of swimming in the Thames in London:

> Dear Klausi!
> Your letter about the [excursion to the] Thames was highly interesting. But you shouldn't challenge yourself too much. If you would not have been able to keep swimming, and there would not have been immediate help, then you would have drowned miserably. You have to be careful! Aunt Alice is way too nice to you and lets you have your own will. Just imagine you had an

[302] Klaus Licht [to Ilse Licht], 20 November 1941, JMB. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[303] Peter King to Kenneth Light, 21 November 2000, JMB.
[304] Gabarini, *Numbered Days,* p.95.
[305] Klaus Licht to Ilse Licht, 29 April 1939 and 10 May 1939, JMB. Trans. K. Baumgartner.

> accident, then she would have blamed herself. No! You have to be very careful and considerate of the people who surround you with their love.[306]

From then the letters stopped, and those that did make it through prompted uneasy feelings of separation in Ernst's mother Clara – writing in her diary 'Oh, the happiness [to see] Ilse's handwriting but everything is still so unsettled'.[307] The simultaneity of connection and separation, presence and absence was acutely felt by Clara who often trod this fine line between feeling linked and unduly distant when receiving piecemeal information from her daughter-in-law.

> Where might the children be trapped – I am asking every day, every hour? – I am listening for hours, [I] talk to them, [I] see them – but I don't know their abode. [...] [I] have the second answer from the Red Cross – they are alive – [...] One is happy about every word we hear from them, but? – apart from we don't know anything.[308]

For Clara it was the nexus of an increased time between receiving letters – or indeed the possibility of this time now being infinite - alongside the unknown element of their whereabouts which created this sense of desiderium even when letters arrived.

Summary

The spatial degradation and eventual collapse of German-Jewish public life in the 1930s and 40s, produced new spaces - especially within the context of migration. For the Licht and Amberg families, the memories of former homes and public life found new repositories and means of connection in the private ego-documents of many German Jews. This chapter demonstrated that letters, and the epistolary spaces they conjure and operate within, were vital for individuals and networks to understand the relationships fracturing across vast distances. Whilst these epistolary spaces symbolised connection in a variety of ways, their very existence, as items in place of loved ones, often resulted in their simultaneous role as emblems of separation as is evident within the correspondence between Walter and Marion Goldberg. A spatial analysis of the letter, alongside a consideration of the spaces and places referred to within, not only points to a much broader understanding of how the letter operated and in what

[306] Ernst Licht to Klaus Licht, 20 August 1939, JMB. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[307] Clara Licht envelope diary entry, 12 April [1940], JMB. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[308] Clara Licht envelope diary entry, 25 January [1940], JMB. Trans. K. Baumgartner.

contexts, but also how isolated microhistorical examples can link to wider macrohistories of the spatial exclusion of German Jews in the 1930s and 40s.

CHAPTER 3

Letters as Objects

After years in her Salierallee haven, on 23 March 1941, Anna Amberg was forcibly removed from her home into a *Judenhäuser* on Frankenbergerstraße with Dr Adolf Rosenthal and his wife Gertrud. Adolf Rosenthal was born in 1873 in Mayen and studied law in Cologne, becoming district judge from 1908 and a regional court director in Aachen from 1927. In 1913 he married Gertrud Heilbrunn, and the couple moved to Kaiserallee, moving to Frankenbergerstraße in 1932. In her letter to Anna's children in 1946, Erika Hessberg described Gertrud as 'such an infinitely kind woman' and Adolf 'despite his many difficulties' as 'nevertheless such a fine and inspiring man'. The couple were deported to Theresienstadt in 1943, and were subsequently murdered in Auschwitz Birkenau in 1944. In her memoir *True Hearts*, Irmgard Treuherz described visiting Frankenbergerstraße with her sister on a return to the city in 1999, and noted the Rosenthal's fate:

> On Saturday morning, Margret and I decided that we wanted to see the house where the Dr. Rosenthal had lived and to whose flat mother was banished. We expected a drab district with poor housing but were amazed to see huge early 20th century flat houses in purest art nouveau style in excellent condition, now listed buildings. Mother, in her letters to Carl, mentioned her tiny room at the back of the house and that she lived among wonderful people, also described by Erika in her letter. I read in one of the publications that Dr. Rosenthal was the last Jew to be deported to Theresienstadt. There is now no trace of his family.[309]

It was only because of the letters of the Amberg family that two *Stolpersteiene* were laid on Frankenbergerstraße in 2020 on the initiative of Waltrauf Felsch and students of the Einhardt-Gymnasium.[310] It is through Anna's letters to her son Carl in Canada, that the children learned of their mother's forced removal from the Salierallee, something that would have felt very different had the news come from elsewhere. In one of the first letters to her son, Anna explains this departure:

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[309] Treuherz, *True Hearts*, p.110.

[310] See http://www.wgdv.de/stolpersteine/personenverzeichnis/206-rosenthal,-adolf, last accessed: 12 August 2024.

> My 'Carlemann', today your quite splendid letter of March 16th arrived after a 6-months journey. There must be some telepathy. The 16th of March is not only the anniversary of father's death, but on that day also I learned that Salierallee 7 would be a closed chapter for me!! Since March 23rd I am now here with Dr. R. (Rosenthal), a former judge and his wife, parents of Marianne who'd had a fatal motor accident prematurely. The reason I bore all this so well was, I am sure, because you over there thought of writing to me with all the concentrated news. My little man, I must confess to you that I read it at least ten times over and that I shed copious tears of happiness - not often at my disposal these days. Although I did hear about you from Wilhelm (Aschaffenburg) and Emil, the personal touch is so different! - I knew you would always feel my love and hear my prayers.[311]

It is in this description of the removal from Salierallee 7 that Anna highlights the importance for her receiving direct correspondence from her son. That Anna believed Carl could 'feel' her through the correspondence was vital to their newly defined relationship through the epistolary. For all of the families within this study, letters are more than the words on the page, but are instead tangible, physical markers of individuals, families, and the separated spheres of existence. Hiltrud Häntzschel reminds us of this fact, noting that: '[t]he letter is the only material, haptically tangible thing that often remains, especially since the beginning of the war, between relatives, between lovers after a sudden involuntary separation. It stands for the virtual maintenance of closeness.'[312] The place of objects and material culture in the study of the Holocaust is well established, from archaeology, to studies of the dispossession of goods, as well as examining objects' iconography and material value in the lives of historical actors.[313] A growing number of works however, are examining objects within the context of the afterlives in reference to local communities, the heritage and museum sector, and more recently familial memory.[314] This section will borrow from this memory based literature to better inform our understanding of contemporary attitudes to receiving these epistolary objects.

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[311] Anna Amberg to Carl Amberg, 2 May 1941, PC-AR. Trans. C. Amberg.

[312] Hiltrud Häntzschel, 'Der Brief – Lebenszeichen, Liebespfand, Medium und Kassiber', in *Auf unsicherem Terrain. Briefeschreiben im Exil*, ed. by Hiltrud Häntzschel and Silvia Asmus et al. (Munich: edition text+kritik, 2013), pp.19-32 (pp.21-22)

[313] See *inter alia*: Oren Baruch Stier, *Holocaust Icons: Symbolizing the Shoah in History and Memory* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2015); Bozena Shallcross, *The Holocaust Object in Polish and Polish-Jewish Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011); Caroline Sturdy Colls, *Holocaust Archaeologies: Approaches and Future Directions* (London: Springer, 2015).

[314] For a very helpful overview of the subject area see Anna-Carolin Augustin and Carolin Liebisch-Gümüş, 'Transit Materialities: Following Objects and Infrastructures', *The Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 69/1 (2024), 133–41.
See for example Anna Wylegała 'About 'Jewish Things': Jewish Property in Eastern Galicia During World War II', *Yad Vashem Studies*, 44 (2016), 83-143; Magdalena Waligorska and Ina Sorkina, 'The second life of Jewish belongings–Jewish personal objects and their afterlives in the Polish and Belarusian post-Holocaust shtetls', *Holocaust Studies*, 29/3 (2023), 341-62; Louisa Horman, 'An uncertain future: Jewish refugee artefacts in New Zealand and their 'return' to Germany', *Tuhinga*, 28 (2017), 49–61; Mona Körte and Toby Axelrod, 'Bracelet, Hand Towel, Pocket Watch: Objects of the Last Moment in Memory and Narration', *Shofar*, 23/1 (2004), 109–20; Elisabeth Gallas, 'Capsules of Time, Tradition, and Memory: Salvaging Jewish Books after 1945', in *Contested Heritage:*

It is within the context of migration, forced or otherwise, that objects and specifically human-object relations become more pronounced especially in the absence of human connection. In their seminal work on 'things' in relation to exile, Doerte Bischoff and Joachim Schlör note that 'it is only in the process of dislocation that human-thing relationships become particularly apparent'. They continue, that objects formerly conceived as belonging to the home can, as a result of separation, be experienced in a way previously unappreciated. They conclude that: '[i]f exile can thus be described as a condition that forces or enables a special perception of things, then things often become central objects of reflection for the exile'. [315] Viewing objects as markers of the experience and process of forced migration as well as acting as tangible 'things' within individuals' narratives, is central to understanding letters' role in German-Jewish familial relations and their enforced epistolary spaces post-migration.

Many types of objects, letters included, are often valued for reasons beyond their intrinsic qualities.[316] Letters for example provided vital emotional support not only through their content but also through their physical presence. They do not hold absolute value, nor monetary price, but instead denote the distant other. Letters are often referred to as *Lebenszeichen* or 'signs of life', not just because of the words of the page but because the physical act of sending a letter to another suggests they are indeed alive. Such a paradoxical relationship between absence and presence, connection and separation discussed previously is equally repeated in reference to letter's materiality. In reference to material 'things' taken and left behind, Bischoff and Schlör note that 'While, on the one hand, the things rescued into exile certainly materialise home [...] things torn from their contexts are always also witnesses of alienation and loss'[317]. Receiving a letter in place of a person, especially within a new place of exile, when that letter had travelled from one's former home, added value beyond the written.

This chapter will firstly examine the experience of receiving a letter through the lens of its **materiality**, both in terms of the letter itself and those objects often attached with it. Whether a

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Jewish Cultural Property after 1945, ed. by Elisabeth Gallas, Anna Holzer-Kawalko, Caroline Jessen, and Yfaat Weiss (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2020); Zuzanna Dziuban and Ewa Stańczyk, 'Introduction: The Surviving Thing: Personal Objects in the Aftermath of Violence', *Journal of Material Culture,* 24/4 (2020), 381-90'; Hannah Wilson, 'Fragmented Families and Material Memory: The Striped Trousers of Juda van der Velde and an Excavated Nametag from Sobibór Death Camp', in *New Microhistorical Approaches to an Integrated History of the Holocaust*, ed. by Frédéric Bonnesoeur , Hannah Wilson and Christin Zühlke (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg), p.65-82; Lea David, 'A Shoe, a Broken Watch and Marbles: How Objects Shape Our Memory and Our Future', *S:I.M.O.N. Shoah: Intervention. Methods. Documentation.,* 9/2 (2022) 90-114; Emily-Jayne Stiles, *Holocaust Memory and National Museums in Britain* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), pp. 103-36.

[315] Doerte Bischoff and Joachim Schlör, 'Dinge des Exils: Zur Einleitung' in *Dinge des Exils*, ed. by Doerte Bischoff, Joachim Schlör, Claus-Dieter Krohn and Lutz Winckler (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2013) pp. 9-20 (p.15)

[316] See for example Eugene Halton and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012 [1981]), p.175.

[317] Bischoff and Schlör, 'Dinge des Exils', p.15.

letter was handwritten or typed was always a point of note between correspondents, often parallelling (as with the Amberg family above) with whether a letter was direct or indirectly sent. This section will further analyse the materiality of a letter in regard to those items sometimes attached, using the example of Siegfried Rothschild's stamp collection. Secondly I will examine the concept of a letter **moving through space**. In the collections of the five families examined here, the letter is often understood as an object which moves over and through impassable barriers for the letter writers and readers. Letters thus do what humans cannot and traverse impenetrable topographies. This section will examine the place of the physical letter in the minds of the writers and readers as an item superior to their own abilities. Finally, I will reflect upon letters' material **memory** in the archives and familial narratives on the five families discussed in this thesis. In researching this thesis I have worked with descendants from the vast majority of the research figures present in the text. As a result my conception of these families and objects as 'historical' is often blurred. Joachim Schlör has continuously called for a literature that encompasses 'history and memory, past and present' to allow for a fuller understanding of the cultural history and impact of forced migration. This final section will therefore examine the role of the letter and the wider German-Jewish refugee collections they exist in, in the context of their materiality and memory value.[318]

3.1 Letters' materiality: handwriting and *der Briefmarkensammler*

Receiving a letter directly from the individual it was written by was a transformative experience for those separated family members living from letter to letter. Although much rarer than receiving information through an intermediary, or typed response through shorter Red Cross slips, the thrill of direct communication was often expressed in terms of the letter's physicality with particular attention given to the handwriting if it were handwritten. Shirli Gilbert has written that handwriting functioned as a form of presence 'preserving material bonds between family members separated by distance'.[319] Indeed the uniqueness of a loved one's script allowed for greater connectedness to the object than say a phone call or hearing information through a third party. Leora Auslander further suggests that the physical form the written word takes, changes its meaning for the reader:

> The experience of reading a book that one knows to be identical to hundreds or thousands of others is not the same as holding a manuscript in your hands in which the individuality of the

[318] Joachim Schlör, *Jüdische Migration und Mobilität. Kulturwissenschaftliche Perspektiven* (Berlin: Neofelis Verlag, 2024), p.294.
[319] Gilbert, 'A Cache of Family Letters', 293.

> scribe is present in every letter. The possibility of imagining universal knowledge is augmented by the likeness of the physical form by which it is transmitted.[320]

Handwriting thus becomes a topic of repeated discussion in the letters, from feelings of joy when seeing it, to annoyance if it is hurried or untidy. After a year in Les Milles Camp in France, Walter Goldberg upon receiving a letter from his daughter Marion opened his reply noting he was 'again ever so happy with your news and to see your handwriting, my darling' a joy Walter often returned to.[321] For Anna Amberg, seeing her son's handwriting was not only emotional due to its symbolic connection to him, but also acted as a memory trigger to that of her late husband Richard Amberg.

> My only sorrow is that father's joy was so shortlived and that he could not follow your growing up. I see and read from your letters a miracle of nature. It shows how your character, your handwriting, temperament, gifts and inclinations are so close to your father's, without his presence ever having been an influence on you, needless to say. With God willing, I shall see you again very soon and I shall find re born in you many of the traits I so loved in your father.[322]

Through Carl's handwritten letter, Anna connects past, present, and future, alongside the mixed feeling that Carl continues to grow in her absence, albeit into something she hopefully recognises. Ala Rekrut notes that humans possess a 'material literacy' in regards to 'flat objects' defining it as 'our ability to understand and interpret how meaning can be manifested in materials'.[323] A letter's physicality, most notably its handwriting is often noted by the recipient, demonstrating this material literacy, altering the way in which the reader understands the document they hold in their hands. Furthermore, this evidently impacts upon a letter's ability to create emotions in the reader, as Els Andringa reminds us that paralinguistic features manifest what she labels the 'poetics of emotion'.[324] Indeed such was the importance of a handwritten element to letter as a method of physical and emotional connection, that often letter writers felt the need to note if a letter was typed, alongside apologising and explaining their reasoning. Shortly after his arrival in Nice in the summer of 1939 for example, Walter Goldberg in his letters to his daughter Marion, explains his typed response:

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[320] Leora Auslander, 'Beyond Words', *The American Historical Review*, 110/4 (2005), 1015–45 (p.1018)
[321] Walter Goldberg to Marion Goldberg, 8 October 1940, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[322] Anna Amberg to Carl Amberg, 11 November 1941, PC-AR. Trans. C. Amberg.
[323] Ala Rekrut, 'Material Literacy: Reading Records As Material Culture', *Archivaria,* 60 (2006), 11-37 (p.13).
[324] Andringa, 'Poetics of Emotion', 152.

> I spent most of the day in the office to help the poor who come here without any means and are very desperate. At noon, I use the time to type my correspondence on the typewriter because I can hardly write letters by hand.[325]

Although we cannot be sure as to why Walter could 'hardly write letters by hand', he evidently felt the need to highlight this feature of his correspondence with his daughter. In a later letter that same month, Walter requested that his daughter apologise to her guardian in England, Dr Nora Acheson, on his behalf.

> Please explain to her that we [here] have developed the habit to type even private mail with the machine and as I type it myself, it doesn't really matter. You know how I hold a pen and therefore using the machine is easier than a handwritten letter and also faster.[326]

In fields such as screenwriting and creative writing, the allure of the handwritten first draft remains central amongst those communities. The slower pace of one's hand as opposed to the instancy of pressing keys often manifested itself, at least in the eyes of authors, as a pathway to greater creativity, and in the case of private correspondence – intimacy. Rapidity, as the primary quality that first distinguished the typewriter, was thus the precise reason why many creatives bypassed it. In his cultural history of writing practices in the twentieth century, Martyn Lyons argues therefore that the typewriter 'distanced the author from the text in a new way, breaking the organic tie that some writers felt existed between themselves, their hand, their writing implement, and their paper'. Whilst Lyons notes that many found new relationships with their writing artifacts, the handwritten word remained dominant for personal correspondence as 'the hand itself was the expression of the self in action'.[327]

The rapidity in contrast to the lack of connection a typewriter produced was a juxtaposition not only experienced by Walter Goldberg in Nice, but was intimately felt by Anna Amberg in letters to her son Carl in Canada, noting in the opening lines of one from 1941:

> My darling boy, this should really be handwritten, because it is so much more personal, but you have seen that in previous letters; by typing I get more on one sheet - which doesn't mean that I have that much to tell.[328]

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[325] Walter Goldberg to Marion Goldberg, 3 August 1939, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[326] Ibid., 29 August 1939, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[327] Martyn Lyons, *The Typewriter Century: A Cultural History of Writing Practices* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021), pp.91, 87. For more on associated 'writing artifacts' see Cydney Alexis and Hannah Rule (eds.), *The Material Culture of Writing* (Denver: University Press of Colorado, 2022) and the volume *Writing Artifacts* also edited by Cydney Alexis and Hannah Rule (forthcoming).
[328] Anna Amberg to Carl Amberg, 23 July 1941, PC-AR. Trans. C. Amberg.

Indeed the typewriter was a pivotal part of Anna's ability to communicate with her son in a means she saw fitting. Despite (or indeed due to), the increasing monotonousness of her days, Anna's letters were long, sprawling and detailed, a reason she gives for her use of a typewriter. Since the originals of the letters sent by Anna to Carl are currently inaccessible, we cannot be sure whether all are typed or some handwritten, nevertheless the typewriter as an object of writing was important for Anna to be with. In a letter dated the 29-30 August 1939, a few days before the outbreak of war, Anna described a frantic effort to steer clear of areas of the city:

> On Saturday I departed very quickly with Erika; naturally I took everything with me that was ever so unsuitable, but that was better than nothing at all. For instance I wrapped up the typewriter and also your confirmation present from Opaul, but I couldn't carry your suitcase which was in Irmgard's room?![329]

Fig. 16 Anna Amberg (1939), Private Collection of A. Reynolds, Banbury, UK.

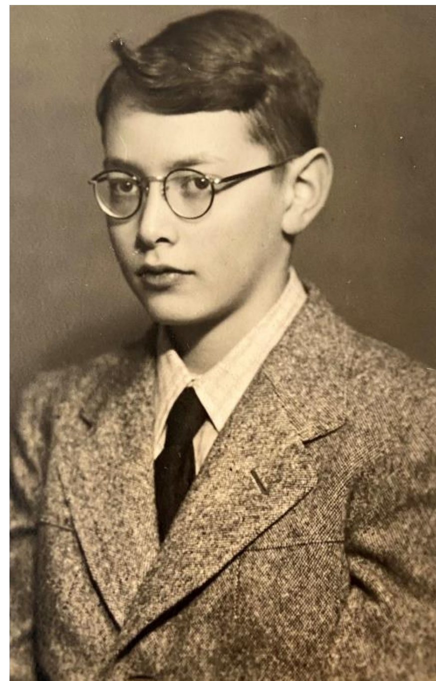

Fig. 17 Carl Amberg (undated, late 1930s), Private Collection of A. Reynolds, Banbury, UK.

The typewriter was evidently something Anna prized and would clearly become something later on in the war, that was pivotal for both speed and connection. By 1941 when Anna was able to directly correspond with Carl again, she detailed the purpose of typing letters beyond the 'personal' nature explained above:

[329] Anna Amberg to Carl Amberg, 29-30 August 1939, PC-AR. Trans. C. Amberg.

> My dear ' Manneken', I received your very dear and nice letter, and I am hurrying to reply, this time by typewriter, so that you may always be provided with motherly greetings as long as they can possibly last, God willing. One can never know what the next morning will bring.[330]

Just as reading and re-reading letters reduced the time and space between their connections, sending as many letters as one could would have the same effect. Whilst Anna noted these letters were only ever 'small talk' this did not matter to her. We cannot be sure whether Anna knew that Carl could receive an unlimited quantity of letters whilst interned in Canada, although it is likely he would have told her. What is certain however, is that both parties were acutely aware of the fluctuation and inconsistency of sending times. The typewriter allowed Anna to quickly write and therefore quickly send as often as she could, in a concerted effort to always provide her son 'with motherly greetings'.

The conception of a letter as a material object tasks the historian to look beyond the written word to understand the process of sending, opening, reading, and noticing the letter in new ways in a wider context of a postal history of the Holocaust, both legal and illegal. That letters had the potential to carry material goods alongside their sought-after handwritten words, has yet to be properly examined by scholars. Sonia Cancian and Simone Wegge have written on the monetary aspects of letter writing, whilst Jan Lánícek and Jan Lambertz's detailed edited volume focusses on the wide array of objects moved within the postal system.[331] Whilst moving money physically in letters was risky and thus rare, financially, Jewish families could move assets through other physical goods such as jewellery or more discreetly, stamps.[332] Philatelic material continues to drive the collection of Holocaust era mail such as those of Henry F. Kahn at USHMM, or the Spungen Holocaust Postal Collection, originally collated by Ken Lawrence. Indeed in some cases, stamps have been used as markers of the murdered in Holocaust heritage settings, utilised as a 'symbol for something of value being discarded, as millions of people's lives were thrown away by the Nazis'.[333]

The sending and collecting of stamps occupies a significant part of the Rothschild family correspondence from its start in 1937 through to the end of 1938, and less so afterwards. In the

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[330] Ibid., 12 July 1941, PC-AR. Trans. C. Amberg.

[331] Sonia Cancian and Simone A. Wegge. "If It Is Not Too Expensive, Then You Can Send Me Sugar': Money Matters among Migrants and Their Families', *The History of the Family*, 21/3 (2016), 350; Jan Lánícek and Jan Lambertz (eds.) *More than Parcels: Wartime Aid for Jews in Nazi-Era Camps and Ghettos* (Detriot: Wayne State University Press, 2022).

[332] Stephen Ward and Ian Locke, "Ex-Enemy Jews': the Fate of the Assets of Holocaust Victims and Survivors in Britain', in *The Plunder of Jewish Property during the Holocaust*, ed. by Avi Becker (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), pp. 209-26.

[333] Susanna Mills, 'A Walk-through of 'A Philatelic Memorial of the Holocaust' Exhibit', *American Philatelic Society* (27 January 2023), accessed via: https://stamps.org/news/c/news/cat/aps-news/post/aps-holocaust-exhibit-updates, last accessed: 16 August 2024.

early part of his correspondence with his daughter Annelore, Siegfried often reminded her of the value of some of the stamps he was sending her noting that 'I only buy special editions'.[334] In the summer of 1937, Annelore paid credence to her father's collecting in reference to a request from Madame Anderfuhren:

> Madame has also asked me if I could give her the stamps that were on your last letter. I replied (as an obedient daughter) I had to ask you first because you were a stamp collector. On the other hand, I would be pleased if you would agree that I give them to her.[335]

In Siegfried's reply, with his usual terse tone, he suggests that, at least initially in 1937 when Annelore was in Switzerland, his sending of 'special stamps' was a means of ensuring response from his daughter:

> As for the stamps on my letters to you, I always use my special stamps, then I know that you will return them. I am very willing to do Madame a favour but need to know what stamps we are talking about, Olympic, Emergency Relief (Nothilfe), or winter help or World Congress for leisure and recovery. If so, then I can unfortunately not spare them as I do not have any surplus ones but I could help her with Daimler Benz. The simplest would be that you return all the stamps to me and mark the ones that Madame would like and I will do my best but please return all the stamps.[336]

In the following series of letters, what Siegfried later called 'the story of the stamps' unfolded, where several misunderstandings and terse exchanges occurred over which stamps were meant for Madame Anderfuhren and which were to be returned to Siegfried. By the end of July the saga was over and the father and daughter understood each other's confusion, although the exchange did lead Siegfried to clarify *why* he had been particularly passionate about controlling the whereabouts of his collection:

> You know your old man's passion for stamps; it's a welcome distraction for me after the agitation and aggravation of the day, when I can pass the time with my stamps, particularly as I'm deprived and must stay deprived of lots of other things that people enjoy.[337]

In the context of increasing spatial dislocation and potentially dangerous public spaces, individuals such as Siegfried looked inwards, often opting to experience (now) inaccessible travel from the relative safety of their home. The precarity of the situation outside his home was not lost on Siegfried writing in the same letter that '[I] naturally don't yet know whether my

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[334] Siegfried Rothschild to Annelore Rothschild, 1 July 1937, PC-JBG/MT. Trans. unknown.
[335] Ibid., 2 June 1937, PC-JBG/MT. Trans. unknown.
[336] Ibid., 8 July 1937, PC-JBG/MT. Trans. unknown.
[337] Ibid., 28 July 1937, PC-JBG/MT. Trans. unknown.

dreams in that regard will become reality' in regard to a planned skiing holiday near Annelore. In the context of the increasingly limited spatial freedoms of German-Jewry, Guy Miron notes that stamp collecting appeared to become a popular activity amongst the adult population, indeed the Jewish newspaper *C.V. Zeitung* began a dedicated section "Der Briefmarkensammler" in the mid-1930s.[338] Authored by Paul P. Lindenberg, the son of the famed philatelist Carl Lindenberg and expert in his own right on the postal systems of Palestine and Thailand, the section detailed upcoming limited stamp collections, and sections on translating key vocabulary related to the field.[339]

Indeed so precious was his collection, Siegfried began the process of smuggling his stamps out of Stuttgart via his letters with his daughter. In the aftermath of the November pogroms, Siegfried was lamenting their emigration options and the possibility of taking goods with them: 'We will have to see where we will go, what furniture or household goods we might be able to take. Whether we can store things somewhere in England before transporting them onto the USA'.[340] A few days later, Siegfried ended his letter with the p.s 'Please do not send any more stamps but collect them and keep them for me over there'.[341] From this point onwards in the correspondence, the discussion of stamps ceases, evidently a (literal) unwritten rule between the two.

3.2 Moving between spaces as *Lebenszeichen*

For Siegfried above – knowing his stamps had moved from his home in Stuttgart to Annelore in Switzerland (and back again) was key in him dealing with his isolation. It was thus not always the words of the letter which comforted him, but the objects' permanence in an era of increasing impermanence. Increasingly, scholars are recognising the role of objects in wartime as we wrestle with the question of what it means to be human in this period. Leora Auslander and Tara Zahra for example have called upon scholars to study objects that move and those that stay as 'people and things moving together, and moving apart, have shaped the experience of war in the modern world.'[342] Auslander has further reminded us that objects such as letters have importance to the individual as they often mimic the characteristics of human existence. As such their embodiment 'means that objects occupy space and cannot be in two places at

[338] Miron, 'The Lived Space of German Jews under the Nazi Regime', 139.
[339] See *Central Verein Zeitung,* 28 February 1935, 24 April 1935, 20 June 1935, 14 November 1935 as examples.
[340] Siegfried Rothschild to Annelore Rothschild, 20 November 1938, PC-JBG/MT. Trans. unknown.
[341] Ibid., 23 November 1938, PC-JBG/MT. Trans. unknown.
[342] Leora Auslander and Tara Zahra, 'The Things They Carried: War, Mobility, and Material Culture', in *Objects of War: The Material Culture of Conflict and Displacement*, ed. by Leora Auslander and Tara Zahra, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018), pp. 1–22 (pp.17-18).

once'.[343] Whilst perhaps complicated by the existence of typed carbon copies in the twentieth century, the sending of objects and their specific uniqueness of permanence and often singularity in space and time, gives the letter meaning, or in Siegfried's case – his stamp collection.

In the case of letters as objects, they are given haptic meaning because of their contact with the human body. Often letter writers refer to letters reaching the recipient's hands as opposed to the information reaching them alone, or explicitly stating that the pages had travelled. In a letter from Les Milles, Walter Goldberg paid credence to the fact that 'both [Marion's] postcards [...] came to land'.[344] In letters from her mother in Plauen, similar ideas are present:

> And my dear Marion, as I don't know if this letter will even reach your hands because of the unclear return address, I will finish it now [...] You have all the addresses, right, and so I hope that you next letter will bring a good report.[345]

It is also clear from Gertrud's letter above that she viewed Marion's letters as something separate from the information they held. The letter brought the report, it was not therefore *only* the report. That the letter would reach the other's hands was always of vital concern to letter writers. In a period of increasing postal instability, that a letter arrived at all was often the overwhelming focus. Albeit relatively soon into the war, Clara Licht, waiting to hear news from her son and daughter-in-law in Berlin, penned in her diary her wish for even the smallest slither of connection:

> Another Sunday gone by. I want to spur on time, because every day brings us closer to peace. Oh, if it only came very soon, then I would get news from the children – only the smallest sign of life – how happy I would be.[346]

What Debórah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt described as letters' 'final and most essential function', here Clara makes it clear that the value of correspondence is not what is said but that the letter arrives at all – *Lebenszeichen* from inaccessible places.[347] As the war went on, signs of life became all families could hope for. Often however, these never arrived. Even if individuals were physically able to write letters, sometimes the ever diminishing light at the end of the tunnel for German-Jewish families remaining in occupied Europe, meant letter writing was too much of an ordeal. In a letter from the village of Kermt, to her former teacher at the *Lagere*

[343] Auslander, 'Beyond Words', 1016.
[344] Walter Goldberg to Marion Goldberg, 8 October 1940, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[345] R. Gertrud Goldberg to Marion Goldberg, [undated, 1939], MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[346] Clara Licht envelope diary entry, 29 October [1939], JMB. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[347] Dwork and van Pelt, *Flight from the Reich,* p.259-60.

Meisjesschool in Antwerp, G. Janssens, Ilse Böhm discussed with her educator the death of her father and how this affected her mother's ability to write. Due to population pressures in the Jewish quarter of Antwerp, Elise, Ilse and Siegfried Böhm were amongst the 3000 'non-residential' Jews deported to provinces such as Limburg between December 1940 and February 1941 (the Böhms were sent in January). Since organisation of the Jewish refugees in these small rural villages was the responsibility of the local community, the Böhms were resident in the *Gemeentehuis* also known as the 'Castle of Kermt'.[348] One of the few letters to Janssens read:

> Today I have some say news to share. Last week we received the sad news that my father died two months ago. He was the victim of flu raging in the camp; he was only ill for four days. We don't know where he died or where he has been buried. But unfortunately there is no doubt about this and we have to take comfort that God alone can change this. My mother is very distraught and nervous and is scarcely in a state to write a letter.[349]

For separated families in both occupied and unoccupied countries, waiting to receive a letter from family members and their unawareness of an individual's reason for not writing, did not assuage their need for a 'sign of life'. In one of the first letters after their separation between Gertrud Lehmann in Berlin and her boyfriend Theodor Hirschberg in London, Gertrud makes it clear what she expected from correspondence.

> That's all the news from my side. I had a couple of stressful days when your mail was late. If it is possible, then please send me news once a week. I am overjoyed about long letters but if your time doesn't allow for that, then I am happy about a short "sign of life" from you. But please, don't leave me without mail – I beg of you strongly. I wrote this fleetingly as I am in the office and had to take the letter out of the typewriter a couple of times.[350]

What is further notable about Gertrud's humble request to Theodor in his new life in Britain, is her interruption of the letter's flow to recognise the process of writing and to essentially break the fourth wall. In paying credence to the letters' 'narrating space' as termed by Blears, letter writers highlight the point of writing and thus the conception of a letter as a tangible thing that is created and constructed as opposed to narrative independent of source.[351] Through referencing the process of writing, the letter writer not only breaks the artifice of a narrated tale often apparent in literary analyses of letter writing, but also ensures the recipient is aware that the thing they have received has indeed traversed space and reached them. Often as previously

[348] For more on this see Lieven Saerens, *Vreemdelingen in een wereldstad. Een geschiedenis van Antwerpen en zijn joodse bevolking (1880–1944)* (Tielt: Lannoo, 2000), pp.557-67.
[349] Ilse Böhm to G. Janssens, March 1941, Kazerne Dossin, A 000 901.01. Trans. Alisdair and Rosemary Duke
[350] Gertrud Lehmann to Theodor Hirschberg, 28 May 1939, UoS MS 314/1/6. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[351] Blears, 'Analysing the role of the narrator in private correspondences', n.p.

aforementioned, Anna Amberg in Aachen regularly referenced her position at the point of writing: ‘on the eve of the 9th of September I sit at my typewriter, which rests on my chest of drawers now instead of the wobbly little table on which the machine used to [sic] danse about too much’.[352] Shortly after her placement in nursing school in Bath, Annelore Rothschild wrote to her parents in Stuttgart similarly as Anna above, referencing the perceived impracticality of her narrating space.

> Please forgive my writing, but I am sitting in a small corner where it is warm. At the moment everybody here seems to be suffering from some kind of severe chill. There are also no tables here so I am writing with the paper on my knees and that is pretty uncomfortable [...] You write that my letters lack substance, but there is nothing of great substance here for me to write about.[353]

In discussing her ‘narrating space’ Annelore gives detail to the reasons behind her letters’ lack of content, something which her father often reproved. It is not only the writing nor the arrival of the letter that is discussed kinaesthetically, but the knowledge that the letter has traversed space due to the time it has taken. Time is a ubiquitous marker of distance. More specifically the time it takes to traverse spaces are often more important than the distance itself. Numerous factors can inhibit movement across space, especially within the context of war, ergo it is not the distance alone, but the context it sits in that determines how an individual understands the flow of time. It is the sad irony that correspondence between belligerent nations halted exactly when loved ones’ wish to write was only increasing.[354] That an object has travelled between seemingly impassable barriers, and through inaccessible places ensured the letter accumulated greater value than it would have done had individuals been able to freely move to each other. The time taken for a letter to reach its destination and the route it took, symbolised the impassable distance covered. Whilst perhaps some letter writers and readers were unaware of the scale of these journeys, some were acutely aware, even if through the postage stamps alone. At the beginning of 1941, Anna Amberg wrote to her late husband’s cousin Emil in the USA, explaining that the distance had impacted her reception of the letter:

> Dear Emil, as I haven' t much news to tell you since my letter of last week I yet wish to confirm today that I have received your 2 letters of November 21st and 26th. In spite of their long journey,

[352] Anna Amberg to Carl Amberg, 8 September 1941, PC-AR. Trans. C. Amberg.
[353] Annelore Rothschild to Siegfried and Margaretha Rothschild, [undated], PC-JBG/MT. Trans. unknown.
[354] Dwork and van Pelt, *Flight from the Reich,* p.246.

> or rather because of it, I was very, very glad to have received your excellent reports, especially the one that Frieda was quite restored to health again.[355]

Here, Anna eloquently describes the relationship between space, time, distance, and the letter itself. Because of the long journey the letters from Emil had been on, Anna was evidently overjoyed that the reports had made it. The distance symbolised separation and yet receiving something across this distance only increased connection.

3.3 Familial memory and object afterlives

Just as letters had haptic meaning and acted as a 'material witness' for the writers and readers contemporaneously, today letters are understood perhaps more so as sites of memory and as object touchpoints to departed loved ones. Letters have both lives and afterlives continuing to impact upon the present, and they are often understood in terms of their relationship to others through their touch memory. The kinetic quality of Holocaust objects is well noted in the literature pertaining to memory. For those descendants discovering German-Jewish refugee archives decades after their creation, the objects contained within hold value not merely as historical data, but as 'embodied mementoes' in the language of the anthropologist Carol Kidron. She continues that 'these objects function to make the absent past present for the family' in a way that imagines the 'kinetics of everyday material' – in other words how an object was used by those in the past.[356] Indeed it is the letters' and other objects in these collections physicality: the creases on the corners of pages, the smudges and ink blots in amongst the handwriting, or the scraps of papers tucked within the thin pages of diaries - that denote the presence of an individual other than myself.[357] What is perhaps unique about the letter is that the means of accessing such an object now is remarkably similar to those of the time; the process of opening the envelope, unfolding the pages, and reading the words inscribed upon, all mirror the process decades earlier. For descendants of German-Jewish families ripped apart during the 1930s it is perhaps this kinetic quality that best describes their relationships to the objects now. As Schlör and Bischoff argue, objects are imbued with further value 'by creating relationships between people, which they pass on to each other and which leave human traces on them that can be perceived as familiar by later owners'.[358]

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[355] Anna Amberg to Emil Amberg, 21 January 1941, PC-AR. Trans. C. Amberg.

[356] Carol A. Kidron, 'Breaching the Wall of Traumatic Silence: Holocaust Survivor and Descendant Person–Object Relations and the Material Transmission of the Genocidal Past', *Journal of Material Culture*, 17/1 (2012), 3–21 (p.11).

[357] See Rebecca Steinitz, 'Writing Diaries, Reading Diaries: The Mechanics of Memory', *The Communication Review*, 2/1 (1997), 43–58 (p.49); Katherine Roseau. 'The Diary as Witness to the Holocaust: Materiality, Immediacy, and Mediated Memory', *Holocaust Studies: A Journal of Culture and History*, 25/4 (2019) 492-513.

[358] Bischoff and Schlör, 'Dinge des Exils: Zur Einleitung', p.13.

Whilst not documentarily referred to in my interactions with the families of the collections studied here, informally such admissions of material connection were common place in our discussions. In the wider literature on the subject such passages are abundant. A clear example of this kinetic connection appears in Adam Ganz's reflection of his great grandfather Felix Ganz's chest of drawers in Mainz. Used as the centrepiece of the digital hybrid theatre production *Felix's Room* which premiered at the Berliner Ensemble in June 2023, in a reflective piece for the journal *Jewish Culture and History,* Adam noted this kinetic quality to the recently discovered chest, writing:

> when I open the drawer I think the daily openings and closings of the chest of drawers [...] I see Felix [...] reaching in for fresh underwear, hand-stitched shirts and handkerchiefs with his initials FG embroidered on every sheet and pillowcase.[359]

Similarly in her work narrating her own familial correspondence, former *Kindertransportee* Milena Roth reflected on owning her mother's writing desk years later and it's role in linking her to the correspondence:

> I use this furniture every day and feel a satisfying sense of connection with her. The desk in particular is in front of me now, filled with the files and papers of everyday life. The lower section, behind the famous walnut-veneer doors, is filled with sewing equipment. The drop-down shelf, on which people used to write their letters, is stained with old ink. [...] it might be my mothers, since some of these letters were handwritten. That gives me a comforting feeling.[360]

Whilst the correspondents within the letters used here refer to similar writing adjacent objects, none survive the war as far as we are aware. Anna Amberg for example often referenced her own 'narrating space' and the objects on which she wrote. We can only assume that had such objects survived, similar feelings of connection as those described by Milena, would be present.

In working with many of the descendants of the families discussed in this thesis, I asked some of them to reflect upon the process of finding items from the archive. The inclusion, in part, of some of these reflections in this thesis, pays credence to the continued presence of histories of enforced migration in the present, especially within familial narratives and self-constructed self-identities. The discovery of what Joachim Schlör has termed 'memory containers' from places of often forgotten storage features prominently in the narratives of both the families in

[359] Adam Ganz, 'Chest of Drawers', *Jewish Culture and History,* 24/3 (2023), 376-81.
[360] Milena Roth, *Lifesaving letters. A child's flight from the Holocaust* (Seattle/London: University of Washington Press, 2004), p.84.

this thesis, and the published works of family stories more widely both factual and fictitious.[361] In a short description of the re-discovery of her mother's letters, Jackie Baer Gellert describes the process:

> My sister gave me a crate that contained some photos but also in the crate was a very old & crumpled but well-padded large Jiffy envelope. I carefully opened the Jiffy bag only to find a hardbacked Leitz ring binder file totally filled with letters, all written in German. Some of the letters were on wafer thin paper making them almost too fragile to handle. [...] The remarkable thing about the letters in the file was that they were all carefully filed in chronological date order – in total there were 364 letters [...][362]

Whilst Jackie very much describes a discovery of items previously unbeknownst to her, in some cases elements of a material migratory past are ever-present in later generation's home. In an extended piece reflecting on the discovery of her great-grandmother's *Kontobuch* diary, Bridget King makes reference to the wealth of material possessions present in her youth of her matriarchal forebear.

> I never met my Great Grandmother Clara Licht. She died in 1953, fourteen years before I was born, but I grew up very much aware of her saintly ghost. At my Grandmother's house, the cutlery and serviettes were embossed with Clara's initials, "C.L". Tablecloths she'd embroidered graced the furniture, and her photograph gazed down from a gilt frame on the ornate sideboard, also hers.[363]

On a meeting with the late Dr Peter King, Bridget's father, in 2019, Joachim Schlör described the meeting in Peter's front room in St Andrews 'furnished with heavy dark furniture that didn't come from here' as they flipped between places and languages occasionally picking 'out the pictures from the shelves' to show his family past and present.[364] On my own meeting with Peter in January 2022, this observation of a home not 'from here' was not lost on me. Peter's apartment arguably constituted what Aleida Assman has termed a *Gedächtniskiste* or 'memory

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[361] Joachim Schlör, 'Means of transport and storage: suitcases and other containers for the memory of migration and displacement', *Jewish Culture and History*, 15/1–2 (2014), 76–92. See also David Parkin, 'Mementoes as Transitional Objects in Human Displacement', *Journal of Material Culture*, 4/3 (1999) 303–320; Baur, *Die Musealisierung der Migration*; Creet and Kitzmann (eds.), *Memory and Migration;* Cornelia Wilhelm (ed.), *Migration, Memory, and Diversity. Germany from 1945 to the Present* (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2016).
Examples of fictionalised accounts of archive discoveries include: Billy O'Callaghan, *The Paper Man* (London: Random House UK, 2023); Jillian Cantor, *The Lost Letter* (London: Penguin, 2018); Hannah Reynolds, *The Summer of Lost Letters* (London: Penguin, 2021). Many thanks to Professor Sue Vice at the University of Sheffield for recommending these to me.
[362] Email from J. Gellert, 4 April 2023.
[363] Email from B. King, 18 July 2023. For more on the material memory of Clara Licht's diaries see Charlie Knight, '(Private) Archival Lives and Afterlives: Clara Licht's Diaries in History and Memory', *History and Memory,* 38/1 (forthcoming 2026).
[364] Schlör, *Im Herzen immer ein Berliner*, pp.187-88. See in English translation Joachim Schlör, *Always and Berliner at Heart. Jewish Emigrants in Dialogue with their Home Town* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2024).

box' to describe the interlinking material memories across generations in a singular space – pictures of family past and present, piles of books from his later career, and old oak furniture from Berlin properties no longer there.[365] Bridget's memories of Clara's 'saintly ghost' existing through the means of embroidered objects and faint black and white images looming over the space, speak to a material presence of the past increasingly prevalent in some families. Dieter J. Hecht and Marianne Hirsch have both written on the role of the family photograph as a postmemory object ensuring a continuum between family members across both time and space.[366] Whilst more imposing material mementoes of the past such as Milena Roth's writing desk, Adam Ganz's chest of drawers, or Peter King's Berlin furniture, were to be found more obviously in the home of later generations, often flat objects remained hidden in their 'memory containers' waiting to be rediscovered; more easily stuffed away, and less likely to be front and centre in modern domestic existence.

Letters and their surrounding material do not just act as touchpoints to pasts for the writer's descendants and their families; those of the same generation often feel equally physically connected years later, as they did contemporaneously to receiving them. In a letter from 1987 to the East German journalist Hannes Schmidt, who was in contact with her regarding his forthcoming publication on the Jewish community of Plauen, Marion Ferguson linked the physical letters to her own understanding of herself decades later:

> You are right, on the one hand these letters can only be used in the context of the actual events of those years. On the other hand, they are of course also part of my own development. My mother's moral position is strongly expressed in these letters and so these letters, this fragment, have become a guide for me.[367]

In a section of the letter dedicated to Marion's relief that 'you, like me, are endeavouring to preserve the dignity of the individual' alongside her belief that her mother's letters should be used 'in the context' of the Nazi period, Marion's admission to Hannes demonstrates that such letters were key to her creation of self, alongside her understanding of the Nazi period and its impact upon her family. The sociologist Lea David has argued that objects are instrumental 'in bridging the gap between individual and collective grievances as they can point to what transpired during an atrocity'.[368] David's suggestion is echoed by Laura Levitt, who eloquently

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[365] Aleida Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume. Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2010), pp.114-29.
[366] Dieter J. Hecht, 'The Mapping Wall Jewish Family Portraits as a Memory Box', *Judaica Olomucensia*, 3/2 (2015), 69-87; Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames. Photography, Narrative and Postmemory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).
[367] Marion Ferguson to Hannes Schmidt, 26 November 1987, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[368] David, 'A shoe, a broken watch', 110.

writes of the importance of objects in tying histories of the individual, and histories of the wider world together:

> Our tongues falter to explain how an event so expansive in scope as the genocide of the Holocaust shares features with an intimate and personal assault upon a single individual. The two things do not correlate. And yet these crimes stand next to each other; they touch precisely where the material artifacts mark us and enable us to retell these narratives.[369]

The material memory of Marion's mother's letters specifically ties Marion between her own past, her migratory journey, and the wider history of the Holocaust, through which she sees these objects. Evidently Marion saw value in these and the rest of her archive to leave them, as noted, to the Manchester Jewish Museum in her will. In a memorial article published by the now defunct magazine *Pflegegeschichte Online,* Marion's colleague Horst-Peter Wolff similarly noted that 'she guarded [the letters] like a precious treasure until the end and which also proves that she was never able to get over the misfortune inflicted on her family by the National Socialists'.[370] As part of the research into Marion I met her friend and former colleague Bernice Martin, who said that Marion never let go of her past, and for the majority of her life lived from suitcases, never wanting to settle or unpack as she may have to leave again. It is noteworthy then perhaps that through the near fifty years between receiving these letters from her mother and her death in 1988, Marion, despite living all over the world, kept these for herself as a connection to her sense of self and to her mother, and for posterity as a look to the future.

Summary

Beyond the obvious methodological challenges of letters' materiality (or lack thereof in the case of the Amberg family), the consideration of the letter as an object is not just the purview of scholars decades later, but was of intimate interest to historical actors, and is of perhaps matched interest to descendants discovering them now. In conceiving of a letter as something *being in the world*, to borrow Boaz Neumann's phrase, its movement and materiality once arrived, often meant just as much as the words it contained. As such, arrivals, regardless of information written within, constituted *Lebenszeichen* - a sign of life in a period defined by silence for Annelore Rothschild and Theodor Hirschberg in Britain. In recognising letters as

[369] Laura Levitt, *The Objects That Remain* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2020), p.6.
[370] Horst-Peter Wolff, 'In Memoriam Marion Ferguson', *Pflegegeschichte Online,* 3 (2001), 14-16, accessed via: https://web.archive.org/web/20040728175314/http://www.pflegegeschichte.de/pgonl_6_01.pdf, last accessed: 8 August 2024. Trans. Deepl.

objects, this chapter makes it clear that letters' materiality was of concern to its contemporaries, and was indeed central to how they understood correspondence during the war. In noting the attention paid to the distinction between handwritten and typed correspondence and the process of constructing either, this chapter implores the historian to note letters' materiality as much as their contents.

PART II

THE HOPE OF EMIGRATION

> You have written to me three times in short succession. This makes me happy on the one side, but on the other side it makes me aware of your depressed mood. I am very sorry about this and I hope that will soon find the strength to look more confidently into the future. I do everything in my power to find opportunities and follow up on them. – you don't have to worry about passing on my address; I consider it my duty to help everyone in these times, although I am fully aware that there isn't much I can do sometimes.
>
> *Theodor Hirschberg to Gertrud Lehman, 21 June 1939*

Having received letters from Gertrud Lehmann, written on the 14th, 15th, and 18th June 1939 as well as numerous times since his arrival in Britain in late May the same year, Theodor Hirschberg was evidently concerned for his partner's welfare and her need for consistent correspondence. With a wish to view the future with greater clarity and optimism, Theodor reminded Gertrud of his new role in London, namely to 'find opportunities and follow up on them', indeed for Theodor this was not an option, but an obligation. As the months rolled on, Theodor became more and more active in his attempts to help not just Gertrud but 'everyone in these times'. Although we cannot be sure that more letters were not sent and received, indeed they most certainly were, fifteen letters exist between the couple from when Theodor first arrived in Britain and the beginning of the war. The last letter Theodor wrote was sent on 1 September 1939 – 'In this grave hour I want to send you my warmest regards'.[371]

Gertrud Lehmann was born in Bütow, what is now Bytów in Pomerania, Poland, to Samuel Lehmann (1867-1952), a retired railway official and Hanne Abraham (1867-1942) in August 1904. She attended various schools in Bütow before her parents sent her to Frankfurt a/Main to the *Jüdische Haushaltungsschule* at Königswarterstraße 20. Gertrud returned to Bütow in the early 1920s and worked in the city in various roles, at some point in the 1920s she moved to Berlin with her parents and sister Johanna (1894-1943) living at Neumannstraße 129 II in Pankow whilst she corresponded with Theodor. At some point after the start of the war, Gertrud married Michael Früh (1894–1943) and the couple moved to Parkstraße 20. In March 1943 Gertrud, Michael, her sister Johanna, her brother Leo and his young family were all deported to Auschwitz Birkenau. All bar Leo (who was transferred to Monowitz and survived the war, passing away in 1973), were gassed upon arrival.

[371] Theodor Hirschberg to Gertrud Lehmann, 1 September 1939, UoS MS 314/1/51. Trans. K. Baumgartner.

Even after correspondence with Gertrud stopped in 1939, Theodor had continued to seek routes out for her as well as Leo and his family. A few letters between Theodor and one of Leo's business associates, M. S. Frolic in Canada, exist in the archive through to Spring 1940, although Theodor admitted by April that: 'all the immense efforts I have made in the last weeks before the outbreak of war, were to no avail'.[372] The Hirschberg correspondence, like the majority of letters written between refugees and their families remaining in Germany during the 1930s and the early war years, was overwhelmingly concerned with migration. Practically, the letter became a vessel for improved chances to facilitate outwards migration, or onwards migration if one had already started a journey, such as the Böhm family in the Hirschberg letters.

Part 2 – 'The Hope of Emigration' – will examine how epistolary spaces became requisitioned by the writers as a new space of connection, with their primary goal being dedicated to reunification in some form. The first section will argue that letters acted as a **vehicle for unification** when considering that migration had to be the sole purpose. In their seminal text on refugee Jews during the Nazi era, Deborah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt write that the 'goal of family unification occupied all parties, and letters were key to their efforts'.[373] As such this section will examine some of the strategies adopted by correspondents to organise their migration through the epistolary. I will examine how letter writers juggled the personal and organisational simultaneously, often within the same letter, alongside how often these objects prompted action through discussions of the ordinary. Epistolary spaces were designed to be temporary with their contents aiming to deliver a physical unison, not just a metaphysical one through the epistolary. The second chapter in part 2 will explore how **epistolary networks** massively contributed to these activities. Using a variety of examples from across the five families, I will highlight how both kith and kin networks were either created or reappropriated to centre on migratory concerns. The variety of relationships which became vital links in often global chains, had to be nurtured and fostered in ways that would best aid the movement of loved ones from Germany. Utilising the work of Eliyana Adler, Natalia Aleksiun, and Marten Düring amongst others, this section goes on to further discuss how when migration was feared impossible these same networks were repurposed for sending money, supplies, and resources especially within the context of internment and imprisonment.

[372] Theodor Hirschberg to M. S. Frolic, 24 April 1940. UoS MS 314/1/103. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[373] Dwork and van Pelt, *Flight from the Reich,* p.254.

CHAPTER 4

Vehicles to Unification

As the only means of re-igniting old networks, and re-establishing former connections fractured and mutilated by the enforced displacement of millions around the world, the letter was conceptualised as not only a conduit for personal relationships to continue, but as a vehicle for unification. Part 1 demonstrated that the metaphysical nature of the letter ensured it as a unifying force symbolically and physically for those sending and receiving them. As letters became pivotal to individuals' understanding of their own new familial dynamic, they equally became imbued with a practical manifestation that not only could these pieces of paper symbolically unify families, but also act as logistical routes to an actual physical union. In other words, a practical tool by which families could organise, discuss, and calculate the nuts and bolts of a very difficult future emigration. Often these forms of communication thus had to navigate how best to transmit warmth and familiarity alongside the very bureaucratic nature of tickets, visas, passports and queues.

In his work on the emigration of Liesel Schwab, Joachim Schlör reminds us that 'emigration is no abstract process' and has many elements of the everyday about it, but equally does not appear from nowhere.[374] This prehistory of migration can be felt in the vast accumulation of documents saved in German-Jewish archives all over the world, where letters, forms, visa applications, and other ephemera mingle together in this nebulous afterlife. The psychiatrist and psychotherapist Carlos Sluzki has convincingly highlighted that amongst these various phases and pre-processes to the physical migration, familial dynamics, shift, wax, and wane often producing a 'unique drama that characterizes migration in each case'.[375] As these family dynamics shifted and morphed according to the pressures and new roles individuals were forced to take, the letter too took on purpose often overlooked. In her insightful piece 'Writing through Bureaucracy' in regards to more recent refugee diaspora, Rebecca Lorimer Leonard

[374] Schlör, *Escaping Nazi Germany,* p.42.
[375] Sluzki, 'Migration and family conflict'.

argues that whilst traditional studies have examined migrant letters' role in maintaining lost connections and diasporic communities, they have often missed the bureaucratic dimension of migrants' writing habits, where collectives have agency in managing their own and others' mobility: geographically and economically.[376] As I sifted through the hundreds of letters and other documentation in the five family archives, one cannot but help notice the blurring of boundaries, between intimate correspondences designed to symbolically, if nothing else, unify disparate parties, and the fervent need to organise, discuss, and plan against a clock continuously ticking down. As a reader decades after the fact, one can never be sure how to react and to read such letters, an amalgamation of the loving and the logistical.

The following chapter will track how these altering familial dynamics mingle with the need to practically facilitate the emigration of loved ones. Inspired by Leonard's concept of a 'managed mobility' for the refugee self and relations, I will first explore how German-Jewish letter writers flicked between the **personal and the organisational** to achieve their intended goal. In exploring examples from predominantly the Hirschberg archive, it becomes clear that letter writers reserved space for both in their writing; in the case of multiple-writer letters, different individuals adopted differing roles in regard to the letter overall. In many cases, receiving letters from kith, kin, or previously unknown individuals **prompted action** on behalf of the writer or receiver. The second section will highlight examples of letters functioning as action triggers, or at least intending to do so. Focussing on the considerations made for Siegfried Rothschild's 'deafhood' in regard to migration, alongside examples of Theodor Hirschberg's numerous attempts to act with associates around him in London, this section notes that often discussions of the 'everyday' could prompt equal action to more urgent appeals. Finally, this chapter will discuss the **realities of refuge** as attempted to be conveyed through correspondence and how many of the families discussed a range of further afield destinations of flight. In discussing the strained correspondence of the Rothschild family, I show how these letters acted as a form of 'migrant knowledge' for Siegfried and Margaretha in Germany. Following this, using Korbel and Strobl's term of 'alternative routes' to describe the wider range of Jewish migratory destinations beyond the US, Palestine, and Britain, this section looks at how the Rothschilds, Ambergs, and Goldbergs considered a range of emigration destinations including the Philippines, Cuba, Ecuador, and Kenya.

[376] Rebecca Lorimer Leonard, 'Writing Through Bureaucracy: Migrant Correspondence and Managed Mobility', *Written Communication*, 32/1 (2015), 87-113.

4.1 Mixing the personal and organisational in epistolary spaces

Migration during this period, indeed during any period of upheaval, was categorised by two intertwining concerns, in regard to both the decision, and whether they even have the ability to do so. First, is the practical bureaucracy of having one's visas, permits, forms etc all in order at a correct point in time; second, being the emotional dilemma of leaving behind one's community, family, friends, and wider country. Nazi authorities created a plethora of bureaucratic requirements, something Anthony Grenville described as 'a[n] obstacle course of barriers [...] to surmount' often prohibiting desperate individuals the opportunity to emigrate. In addition to documents necessary for arrival abroad, German-Jews required exit permits, a certificate of good conduct (*Führungszeugnis*), a document certifying that all tax payments had been made (*steuerliche Unbedenklichkeitsbescheinigung*), as well as a certificate of good health.[377] Having all the above documents at the right time in the right order was paramount in facilitating their own and their loved ones' movement. Secondly however, even if one did have these practical matters in order, the decision to leave was filled with uncertainties, and emotional considerations both for the self and for the family. In many cases, letters centred around the 'nothingness' as is described by Miriam Dobson, the everyday, and the relative mundanity that encompassed it.[378] It is this nothingness which arguably kept families connected, and thus often prompted a desire to persevere through the organisational – a vehicle through which unification could be achieved.

One of the first letters in the Hirschberg archive, written by Theodor's maternal aunt Else Kunz (Dresdner, 1871-1944) to him shortly before his departure in the spring of 1939 when it was assumed he was still going to Cuba, tackles these twin organisational and familial considerations:

> Our farewell reaches you in the very last hour. This is due to the unrestful times we are living in – in particular these last weeks. At first the happy news which Leo cabled us: Our entry to Cuba is guaranteed. Finally, a fixed goal – after we were disappointed that England despite initial confirmation put up difficulties which Otto couldn't remedy. Our last idea which we cabled Otto, was to try to get entry to Chile. But he answered to this negatively because of insecure investments and because of investments in England. There are still three letters from Otto on their way to us which will bring further clarification. It seems that Otto himself has dealt with the matter in Cuba after he had acclimatised to the hot summery weather and the [doctors] Curt F[alkenheim] and Kunz had agreed. But the ships are booked out for a long time and in an enquiry

[377] Anthony Grenville, 'The Home Office and the Kindertransport parents', *AJR Journal,* 14/1 (2014), pp.1-2 (p.1).

[378] Dobson, 'Letters', p.64.

from Carl to Otto's solicitor the latter told him that because of a "Cuba pass" nothing stands in the way of our stay in England.

After detailing to her nephew her reliance on her brother Otto, and the various processes he was undertaking on her behalf, Else continued to divulge the explanations behind her delay:

> The main reason for our being in limbo is Irma's sickness. She has been in hospital for a couple of days. Fortunately, her fever is going down but she has no appetite and is always tired. But alas – it seems the diagnosis is getting clearer and the hope of recovery is growing! So, you depart happily and have a good time in London! Oh, how we would love to see you again in Cuba and live there together with you, dear Theo![379]

From her home at Feldbergstraße 35, Else wrote in a state of flux, describing the various attempts at facilitation in these 'unrestful' times. For Else and many other German Jews wishing to flee, the promise of a guarantee provided structure to an unstructured existence, a time bound goal with which to measure their seemingly unending search. Else confirmed that her brother's letters 'which will bring further clarification' were a source of comfort as well as action for Else. Her's and Otto's correspondence, although it no longer exists, was evidently one Else relied upon for her onward travel. Despite her discussion around her brother Otto's role in their migration, the relevant investments, and visas they must contend with, Else's description of her own migration hinged on the personal decision to not leave without her sister Irma.

Irma Marie Dresdner was born in 1880 in Brieg (Brzeg) along with the rest of her siblings, but lived the majority of her life in Frankfurt am Main. From the Hirschberg letters it is clear that Irma lived with a host of physical impairments and disabilities, including polio in her younger years. In a letter to his girlfriend Gertrud, Theodor described his maternal aunt as an 'active person who tried to always work in spite of her illness and achieved a lot'.[380] Whilst more archival work is necessary to fully delve into Irma's fascinating life, as a disabled Jewish woman she became a teacher at the *Philanthropin*, the school of the Jewish Community in Frankfurt, as well as being involved in various bourgeois women's movements.[381] Alongside Oscar Perl and others, Irma was an early member of the *Selbsthilfebund der Körperbehinderten* (SBK) one of the earliest disability rights groups in the world, but was later expelled from its successor (RBK)

[379] Else Kunz to Theodor Hirschberg, 18 May 1939, UoS MS 314/1/7. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[380] Theodor Hirschberg to Gertrud Lehmann, 20 July 1939, UoS MS 314/1/33. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[381] A more full biography was written by Anja Heuß of the Freies Deutsches Hochstift – Goethemuseum in Frankfurt for the provenance of a typescript of *Dr Faust* adapted for Marionette Theatre by Agnes Richter, see: https://hessen.museum-digital.de/data/hessen/documents/1/202407/provenienzbericht_zu_handschriften_des_freien_deutschen_hochstifts-5.pdf, last accessed: 9 May 2025.

along with all the organisation's Jewish members. A few months after the rise of Nazism, Irma published the article "Über Körperbehinderung und seelische Entwicklung" (On Physical Handicap and Emotional Development) where she heavily criticised existing academic and rehabilitation concepts of the "cripple soul".[382] Carol Poore, in her landmark work on disability in twentieth century German culture, categorised Irma Dresdner's early 1930s work as 'one of the first instances in which physically disabled Germans tried in a coherent way to define their own identities and present themselves as human beings rather than as institutionalized cases'.[383] By the late 1930s Irma was working at the *Israelitischer Kinderhort* at Bleichstraße 8, an output of the *Stiftung zur Erziehung geistig oder körperlich gefährdeter israelitischer Kinder* (Foundation for the Education of Mentally or Physically Endangered Israelite Children). In a circular letter written after her sister's death in July 1939, Else noted that:

> In her last days she was of a calm mind and hopeful. We spoke about our emigration. She explained to me why she had been so upset before. I understood that she found it her responsibility to fight for her recovery[384]

Despite her letter to Theodor in no way suggesting bitterness or reproach for their delayed emigration or 'limbo' due to her sister's illness and disabilities, Irma herself evidently believed it was her duty to recover as quickly as possible, as not to delay her family's flight. After Irma's death from sepsis, Else and her sister Clara, emigrated to Cuba as planned, arriving in Miami, Florida in 1943 before moving on to New Jersey where Else died aged 73 in November 1944. The integrated news of the Dresdner family emigration alongside Irma's passing was a blurring equally undertaken by Theodor in a letter to his girlfriend Gertrud. After in detail discussing her migration to Britain with the help of new acquaintances in London, Theodor moved on to update his partner on family news:

> My aunt Irma Dresdner in Frankfurt/ Main was delivered from her suffering last Monday. A week before her passing, she wrote to me. She had to dictate the letter to another aunt. I sent my condolences to Otto in America. He was very close to her; as I wanted to wish him a happy birthday for the 6th of August in the same latter, it was not easy to put in words. I think I managed

[382] Irma Dresdner, 'Über Körperbehinderung und seelische Entwicklung', *Zeitschrift für angewandte Psychologie*, 44/5-6 (1933), 399–437. On the influence of this work see Petra Fuchs 'Irma Dresdners Untersuchung „Über Körperbehinderung und seelische Entwicklung", Leipzig 1933', *Die Neue Sonderschule*, 46/2 (2001), 84–95. Id., ,,Behinderung' – eine bewegte Geschichte' in *Handbuch Disability Studies*, ed. by Anne Waldschmidt (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2022), pp.35-53.
[383] Carol Poore, *Disability in Twentieth-Century German Culture* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), p.62.
[384] Else Kunz, 25 July 1939, UoS MS 314/1/30. Trans. K. Baumgartner.

> somehow. A couple of weeks ago, he started working on a new plan for the family in Frankfurt [to emigrate]. –[385]

Aside from examples within the same correspondent's writing, this mixing of bureaucratic and personal elements of letters was perhaps most prominent when multiple individuals contributed to the same letter. Just as individuals built communities through having multiple correspondences in singular letters, different individuals also assumed different roles in the migration process and thus within the correspondences themselves. Marion Kaplan has written extensively on the gender dynamics of the German-Jewish migratory experience, arguing that there were distinct differences in the way in which men and women assessed, approached, and dealt with the emigration quandary within Germany. Gender was a substantive factor determining the decision between flight and fight, just as it was in the organisation of migration, with women generally leading on this – one of a number of gender role reversals during the period.[386] Other categories such as age, generation, and class have also been briefly touched upon in regards to migration but remains a topic scant in the existing literature.[387] It is clear thus on a microhistorical level within the correspondence of the Böhm family, that different individuals within all of the above categories, opted for different roles within the correspondence in relation to their migration.

In the summer of 1939 when the Böhm family in Antwerp were regularly corresponding with Theodor in London, often multiple members of the family contributed to the letter, all with slightly differing tone and purpose. From their apartment at van Schoonhovenstraat 30, close to Antwerp's grand Central Station, and in the heart of the once thriving Jewish community of the city, all the members of the Böhm family wrote to Theodor on 24 August 1939, a few days before the war broke out. Whilst all thanked Theodor for his well wishes for the youngest Siegfried's birthday, it is apparent that, at least within the Böhm family each member had their specific purposes for writing, mingling the organisational, the emotional, and the personal. In a previous letter Theodor had written to his cousin Ernst to request he visit the offices of FF Eiffe & Co., an import/export company founded by Franz Ferdinand Eiffe in the late nineteenth century. Theodor's maternal uncle Otto Dresdner, who had emigrated to the USA in 1927, had placed £20 with Eiffe & Co., the HAPAG representative in Belgium, in late March 1939 'to expedite [his]

[385] Theodor Hirschberg to Gertrud Lehmann, 20 July 1939, UoS MS 314/1/33. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[386] See Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair,* pp.57-73.
[387] See for example Melissa Jane Taylor, 'Family Matters: The Emigration of Elderly Jews from Vienna to the United States, 1938-1941', *Journal of Social History*, 45/1 (2011), 238–60; Rhonda Levine, *Class, Networks, and Identity: Replanting Jewish Lives from Nazi Germany to Rural New York* (Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001); Walter Laqueur, *Generation Exodus: The Fate of Young Jewish Refugees from Nazi Germany* (London: Brandeis University Press, 2001).

departure from Germany'. HAPAG (*Hamburg-Amerikanische Packetfahrt-Actien-Gesellschaft*) has become known since as the liner for the ill-fated St Louis voyage which Theodor rescinded his passage with: 'Because I received – immediately after it was billed with Eiffe – a passage with an English liner to Cuba'. Since Theodor's passage on the St Louis never took place, Otto Dresdner's funds were never used and thus Theodor requested Ernst to visit Eiffe and Co. to ascertain whether the funds had been returned. Ernst's response blended this context with more personal tones.

> Dear Theo! First of all, thank you for remembering Siegfried's birthday and wishing him well. Your letter and ours – which you have hopefully received in the meantime – must have crossed each other. We heard the sensational news about Rudi straight from Berlin; we hope it is for his best and wish him the best of luck.
> I am writing today to report about my visit with Eiffe & Co. At their headquarters, Longue Rue Neuve 43, a very big office, I was sent to the department for passages, Meir 24 a. The people there were rather unfriendly and told me finally, that they were still waiting for more instructions from Mr. Dresdner but that [HW] would have to transfer [it] to the Brussel account. When I mentioned that O. Dr. had requested this already more than four months ago, they made some lame excuses.

This composite letter continued with sections handwritten by Elise who equally thanked Theodor for his birthday wishes to her 'little man' continuing with a touching note about the children's modesty in regards to the food situation in Antwerp: 'I found it adorable when I bought cake for the birthday yesterday and he said: "Mum, we aren't going to eat butter all week to make up for buying the cake. And anyway, jam tastes good, too!"'. This was followed by short lines from Siegfried and Ilse and a longer section from Ernst's mother, Theodor's Aunt, Rosalie:

> As I love to use any opportunity to send you best wishes, and this is particularly good, I add my congratulations on Rudi's wedding. I hope and I am also sure that according to your mother's and H.W.'s description he has made a good choice. And that a young woman will have a positive influence on him, also in regards of more frequent correspondence. Anyway, it was a glimmer of hope which was good for all of us. Look after yourself. Love Aunt Rose.[388]

By her own admission, Rosalie seized upon the chance to write to her nephew underneath Theodor and Ernst's more organisational correspondence about money and Otto Dresdner's finances. Rosalie opted to focus more on the wider family news vis-à-vis the difficult situation they all found themselves in. In a singular letter, multiple members of the Böhm family respond

[388] Ernst, Elise, Rosalie, Siegfried, and Ilse Böhm to Theodor Hirschberg, 24 August 1939, UoS MS 314/1/45-46. Trans. K. Baumgartner.

to Theodor in a variety of ways, mixing between discussions of finance, migration, marriage, and birthdays, with the occasional reference to the wider world. Ernst's role was one of bureaucracy and practical discussion – indeed the vast majority of the letters saved in the collection show these types of correspondences between the pair. Elise's section instead focussed predominantly on the young family in exile and their coping in a new location, whereas Rosalie perhaps provided more overarching musings on the future and the family unit.

4.2 '[I]t must work out, because it has to work out': Letters prompting action

Migration is not a singular *act* or indeed singular journey. It is instead a process, one with definitive opening chapters, a prologue beginning with the debates on the pros and cons of the movement, but starting in earnest with a concrete commitment to leave and thus to arrive elsewhere. This commitment manifests itself in various ways, such as the sending and receiving of communication to various locales and official bodies, the request for bureaucratic processes and checks to begin, or any action which tangibly acts as a motion of intent. This opening chapter however varies temporally, as Carlos Sluzki describes, such a process is dependent on family style 'from an explosive decision to a lengthy rumination'.[389] Such intent to migrate - or in this case, more accurately described as a realisation of the need to flee - can all occur in a matter of days if not through the prescribed state channels. After the turbulence and violence of the November pogroms, Walter Goldberg had relocated to San Remo in Italy where he was awaiting a visa, it was however a letter from his daughter Marion which inadvertently prompted rapid action:

> Due to a clumsy letter from my daughter which she had not sent with bad intentions, I got into trouble with the Sicurezza[390] (Italian Gestapo) who thought I was committing foreign currency fraud. Although my residence permit for Italy only expired on 25 March, I did not feel safe anymore. I got in touch with my brother-in-law and we decided that like many other fellow-Jews – whose residence permit expired on the 12 March- I would leave Italy and enter France illegally.

After his initial route hampered due to snowfall, Walter was advised to go to Grimaldi where he encountered a group of people in the same situation. Although groups were previously

[389] Sluzki, 'Migration and Family Conflict'.
[390] The National Police Force, known as *Pubblica Sicurezza* (PS) was 'reorganised' in the mid 1920s in Fascist Italy later becoming known as OVRA (*Opera Vigilanza Repressione Antifascismo*) or the Organization for Vigilance and Repression of Anti-Fascism, the secret police under Benito Mussolini.

smuggled over the border by the Italian police, the increasing number of Jews wishing to flee Italy resulted in increasing patrols on the French side. Walter continued:

> We left Grimaldi guarded by Italian militia and rested until 21.30 in the first picket of the Italian militia. Then we were sorted into smaller groups of eight and an Italian soldier brought us in pitch black night – there was no source of light – across slopes, rubble and prickly plants to the French border.

For Walter the hike was 'strenuous and exhausting' as they 'weren't prepared for this climbing tour and therefore, weren't dressed for it'. Despite the awful conditions: '[w]ith bruised hands and faces and torn clothes, we arrived at 4am marching without a break in Menton'[391]

Fig. 18 Walter Goldberg in Nice, France (c.1939/40). Manchester Central Library, GB127.M756.

Fig. 19 Dr Isidor Goldberg, Walter's brother (1930). Manchester Central Library, GB127.M756.

Whilst according to Walter it was a 'clumsy' letter from Marion which brought his attention to the secret police, his flight to France specifically was informed by his brothers' prior migration westwards to Nice. Isidor and his family, and Heinrich and his family, could not however guarantee their brother for his emigration to the city, hence his dramatic moonlight escape from

[391] Walter Goldberg: Personal account re Novemberpogrom, WL 2041/6. Trans. K. Baumgartner.

Italy. In his same testimony written sometime after 1939, Walter explained why such an explosive escape was necessary:

> My wife went in my stead on 24 December to the police station and was asked how long my emigration would last. My wife responded that I did not have the means to emigrate [for a longer period] and they replied that I have two brothers abroad who could provide for me. My wife informed them that one of the brothers himself is without financial means and that we have not had any news for a year from the second brother. The "official" told her that "German authorities were not able to show more goodwill towards me than my closest relatives". If my relatives weren't interested in enabling my emigration then I would after the expiry of 3 months be given the opportunity to carry out useful work for the German Reich in a camp.[392]

The threat of imprisonment, and the knowledge that his safest option was to reunite with his brothers, ran concurrently however with the reality that neither Heinrich nor Isidor had the ability to support him. It is likely that communication between Walter and his brothers allowed him to imagine a form for relative safety in a different country. For those with the means to leave through governmental prescribed routes, letters and communication in general provided individuals yet to emigrate with the geographical and cartographic imagination, and the practical means by which to leave. The 'everyday' content of letters worked as a prompt towards their own migration – the relative banality symbolising a union once again. Swen Steinberg for example has highlighted the role of emigrant letters in facilitating information from, and thus encouraging flight to, various destinations around the globe.[393] The publication *Emigranten-Briefe aus fünf Erdteilen* edited by Wilhelm Sander for German socialist refugees around the world collated myriad of such letters from 'alternative' routes of escape including those in the global south. Shared and mediated amongst various refugee communities the published work acted as a point of reference through which those yet-to-migrate could realise a latter destination.[394]

Although the vast majority of letters were not collated into publications like Steinberg's study, they still served the same purpose in many regards, indeed Steinberg notes that communication concerning destinations beyond Europe 'shifted more and more into the field of private correspondence' noting that such 'epistolary practices' were not limited to specific

[392] Ibid.

[393] Swen Steinberg, 'Knowledge from Five Continents. Escape Destinations in Publications of German-Speaking Political Refugees, 1933-1940' in *Cultural Translation and Knowledge Transfer on Alternative Routes of Escape from Nazi Terror. Mediations through Migrations,* ed. by Susanne Korbel and Philipp Strobl (London: Routledge, 2022), pp.49-65.

[394] Wilhelm Sander (ed.), *Emigranten-Briefe aus fünf Erdteilen* (Prague: Sozialdemokratische Flüchtlingshilfe, 1938) discussed in Steinberg, 'Knowledge from Five Continents'.

types of refugees nor bound by age or gender.[395] In his article with Simone Lässig, Steinberg equally highlighted that this communication existed in a variety of contexts: 'between generations; between and within ethnic or religious communities; between migrant groups and the state or receiving society; [and] between migrants and their former compatriots'.[396]

In acting as a bridge between separated parties, the letter became a tool with which to unify, but more specifically for this example, an information repository on who to contact, where to go, and what to do. Although none of his letters to Theodor and other members of the extended family survive, it is clear that after his emigration in the 1920s to the USA, Otto Dresdner was vital in securing or at least attempting to secure, the flight of members of his close and extended family. In a letter to his brother Rudi in South Africa, Theodor implored him to write to his uncle:

> You really have to take the time and write to everyone; he mentioned you in a letter which I received yesterday and I am sure he would like a proper letter from you. He helps me a lot and wants to give an affidavit for me in the US and organise additional ones there. At the moment he supports me entirely. Also, he makes huge efforts for his four siblings and spends a lot of money to be successful [in this endeavour]. He has just been to Ottawa and Montreal to get them potentially there, because England is not an option at the moment; also, he doesn't consider England safe enough in case of war.[397]

Whilst we have very little information on Otto's life in Germany or in America, it is clear from the correspondence that his letters and connections prompted a range of meetings for Theodor in regard to his own transmigration and the emigration of his family and loved ones. Otto placed Theodor in contact with the insurance broker Hans Emil Sachs (1885-1944), a distant relative whose cousin Fritz (1885-1945) lived in Sydney, Australia – 'maybe that is an option' Theodor pondered.[398] Shortly after his letter to Rudi, Theodor wrote to Gertrud that he was 'very busy following up all kinds of possibilities for domestic servants and for a couple of days now, I have found new hope' in a distant relative in the form of Sachs. The letter continued explaining how Otto Dresdner's correspondences had the potential to help Gertrud:

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[395] Ibid., p.59. See also Jacqueline Vansant, 'Cohesive Epistolary Networks in Exile', in *Networks of Refugees from Nazi Germany: Continuities, Reorientations, and Collaborations in Exile,* ed. by Helga Schreckenberger (Amsterdam: Brill, 2016), pp.247-61.

[396] Simone Lässig and Swen Steinberg, 'Knowledge on the Move: New Approaches toward a History of Migrant Knowledge', *Geschichte Und Gesellschaft*, 43/3 (2017), pp. 313–46 (p.330).

[397] Theodor Hirschberg to Rudolf Hirschberg, 8 July 1939, UoS MS314/1/24. Trans. K. Baumgartner.

[398] Ibid. Hans Emil Sachs's son Andreas (Andrew) Sachs (1930-2016) later became famous as an actor in Britain most noted for his role as Manuel in *Fawlty Towers*.

> This gentleman [Sachs] is co-owner of an insurance bureau and his partners as well are supposed to be well-known and popular members of society. One of them [Carl Flesch] is the son of the famous violin virtuoso Professor Flesch. The wife of the other [Bruno Leroi] who has helped many people is good friends with the couple and a friend of my cousin. She will also keep looking for opportunities for you. Unfortunately, she wasn't there when I visited the firm where she also works. But Otto's relative has promised to commend you to her.[399]

The insurance company *Messrs. Leroi, Flesch & Co.* was founded in London by Bruno Leroi (1899-1988) and Carl Flesch (1910-2008) alongside a handful of Jewish refugees including Sachs. After the war, Flesch became the sole partner, later recalling '[Bruno's] wife went to America and after the war she came back and hated it here and persuaded him to emigrate to America and I as a junior partner was suddenly landed with a firm [of] my own'; the company became notable in offering insurance against musicians' cancellation of concerts during the period.[400] According to Theodor, Bruno's wife Johanna Liebmann (1903-1990) 'helped many people' before her emigration to the USA in 1941, and thus was worth him contacting to aid Gertrud in her plight. In July 1939, Theodor gave Hans Sachs Gertrud's CV and accompanying documents to give to Hanna Leroi. By August as war was looming, Theodor followed up with Hanna to see what progress had been made:

> I'd be much obliged if you could guarantee a place as domestic help for her. It would be sufficient if she was employed provisionally or even on pro forma basis as the placement agency of Bloomsbury House provides placements constantly. But she needs a request [...][401]

Otto Dresdner's lost correspondence to Theodor was evidently one which Theodor relied upon to provide him with the names, contacts, details, and processes necessary to aid in Gertrud and others' migration from Germany. Indeed, in a letter to his cousin Ursula Gottschalk in Yorkshire, Theodor described his guilt at not doing more to help her parents in Berlin in relation to his contact with Otto in the USA: 'To do at least something, I wrote to Otto Dresdner [...] we are regular correspondents again [...] [My] mother wrote lately that she thinks Otto should prioritise helping your parents and me in Milwaukee. She thinks she can wait'.[402]

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[399] Theodor Hirschberg to Gertrud Lehmann, 13 July 1939, UoS MS 314/1/26. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[400] Interview with Carl Flesch by Anthony Grenville, 30 October 2006, AJR Refugee Voices R134, Courtesy of the private archive of Carl Flesch/AJR; Martin Anderson, 'Carl F. Flesch: Writer and son of the violinist', *Independent* (27 May 2008), accessed via: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/carl-f-flesch-writer-and-son-of-the-violinist-834612.html, last accessed: 1 November 2024.
[401] Theodor Hirschberg to Johanna Leroi, 29 August 1939, UoS MS 314/1/49. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[402] Theodor Hirschberg to Ursula Gottschalk, 25 June 1939, UoS MS 314/1/16. Trans. K. Baumgartner.

In the case of letters send by Siegfried Rothschild to his son and daughter in Britain, the businessman, in his often extensive letters, detailed in great depth the practicalities and physicality of organising migration from Stuttgart. As Angela McCarthy concludes in her piece on Irish migration to New Zealand, personal correspondence played a vital role in organising migration, in the vein that they contained 'advice, encouragement, assistance with the fare, recommendations for the voyage, and requests'.[403] For a panicked Siegfried however writing to his daughter, this advice and recommendation came from the individual hoping to flee as opposed to the one already a refugee. In one particular letter from January 1939, Siegfried summarised the monumental effort he and Margaretha were undertaking to facilitate their departure from Germany:

> the man should come tomorrow to do the inventory, we were both working last night, Mutsch until half 12 and I until 2 o'clock this morning, to get everything ready: but who cancelled, this morning, but the man who does the inventory; and we have to submit the inventory, so the list of things, that we hope to be allowed to take, before we go! – But, there is still time, because then, once we have submitted it, weeks and months go by, before we will receive permission to pack and obtain our passports! – Yesterday, we had things to do at the tax office, I received my fiscal declaration of clearance there, then we spent hours at the welfare office, to obtain a clearance certificate from there (Sontheim!); we did not finish due to long negotiations, we hope however to get that done in around 10 days and receive our clearance certificates; then we were at the police station, again for hours, because of our identity cards: that will also now go smoothly, but will also last around 10 days; alongside that we still have things to do at the registry office for citizenship cards, certificates of nationality, furthermore at the committee in Stuttgart for our character references

After he listed the variety of tasks and extensive bureaucracy involved in his and Margaretha's migration, Siegfried implored his daughter to see 'that our days are amply occupied', concluding with the fated line 'it must work out, because it has to work out'.[404]

The majority of men such as Siegfried, experienced extensive damage to their daily routines in the initial years of Nazi rule. Experiencing expulsion from public and professional spaces often rendered many men idle, whilst many women in contrast, continued the maintenance of their daily routines. In the case of migration, different genders took on different roles and often altered status within the relationship.[405] As is sometimes the case with microhistorical

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[403] Angela McCarthy, 'Personal Letters and the Organisation of Irish Migration to and from New Zealand, 1848-1925', *Irish Historical Studies,* 33/131 (2003), 297–319 (p.318).

[404] Siegfried Rothschild to Annelore and Gerhard Rothschild, 13 January 1939, PC-JBG/MT. Trans. unknown.

[405] See Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair,* pp.53-73.

examples, the Rothschilds do not perhaps fit this analysis in full. Whilst Siegfried's life was definitely disrupted by Nazism, as the above letter demonstrates he was in no way idle. Siegfried's perhaps overwhelming list of processes, documentation, forms and meetings, for himself codified the experience, with the letter acting as almost a therapeutic record of tasks when written down; for Annelore however, this gave her a sense of her father's desperation, alongside a sense of his determination. It was hoped therefore by Siegfried, that such a vast description would not only convince Annelore that they 'are doing everything, to be as far along as possible' but reminded her 'when you are able to send us good news from over there'. Letters such as this existed to demonstrate the overwhelming bureaucracy Siegfried, and others like him faced, with the added suggestion that it was Annelore's role to ameliorate this.

For Siegfried, as a deaf Jewish man during this migratory process, the experience of the bureaucracy, meetings, and processes were altered in contrast to 'hearing' Jews. The literature on Jewish and non-Jewish deaf experiences during the Holocaust is scant, and in many areas such as migration, is non-existent. Whilst an array of literature exists on the auditory or sonic experiences of the Holocaust, and despite Peter Black's call in 2002 for further research into the experiences of deaf individuals – this has not occurred in earnest.[406] In his powerful and polemic anthology of poetic works, Ukrainian writer Ilya Kominsky reminds the reader that 'the deaf don't believe in silence. Silence is the invention of the hearing'.[407] Kominsky posits therefore that being deaf is an experience not defined by absence of something, but as something that experiences the world in another way. Deaf individuals experience the world visually, but a variety of scholars are keen to point out that deafness is a medical term, and does not consider the socio-cultural reality of an individual's lived experience, a term coined as 'deafhood' by Paddy Ladd in 2003.[408]

Counting Siegfried's deafhood then, we must consider what impact if any this had upon his imagining of migration whilst simultaneously, and indeed relatedly, consider how this impacted his writing. In his immense contributions to the field and the discourse surrounding a 'Deaf Holokaust', Mark Zaurov has argued strongly against the audism apparent in oral and video testimonies and the difficulties of using deaf survivor's oral testimony.[409] Whilst Siegfried was

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[406] See Peter Black, 'A call for more research', in *Deaf People in Hitler's Europe,* ed. by Donna F. Ryan and John S. Schuchman (Washington DC: Gallaudet University Press, 2002), pp.215-23.
In regards to refugee children, Amy William's similarly called for a study of the Kindertransport which includes the narratives of deaf, mute, and blind children amongst other categories of analysis.
[407] Ilya Kominsky, *Deaf Republic: Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 2019), p.79.
[408] Paddy Ladd, *Understanding Deaf Culture. In Search of Deafhood* (Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2003).
[409] Mark Zaurov, 'Against Audism in Interviews with Deaf Holocaust Survivors', *EHRI* (2012), Accessed via: https://www.ehri-project.eu/against-audism/, Last accessed: 8 January 2025. See also *idem.,* „Deaf Holokaust" in *Overcoming the Past, Determining*

never interviewed as far as we are aware, a similar warning against reading letters through an auditory-bias lens is necessary. Whilst we learn about Siegfried's conceptualisations of migration vis-à-vis his deafhood through the correspondence, we must not forget that such letters are in themselves affected by Siegfried's inability to communicate with Annelore and Gerhard in any other way beyond the written word, perhaps accounting for their astounding length and pedantry in many cases.

Only a handful of times in the Rothschild correspondence does anyone else other than Siegfried mention his deafness. In an early undated letter, presumably written whilst Annelore was in Jogney-sur-Vevey, she uses her father's deafness as a means of dealing with and conceptualising her own separation from her family

> Now I want to write something else. Perhaps you will find it silly that I write it but I could never say it to you. Sometimes when I despair I always think of you. Without hearing your voice I am assured of your support. I tell myself that no one managed life despite a great hardship as you did. It hurts me just to think that when others were going to concerts you did not go. I am so proud that you and Mummy brought us up as individuals that will fulfil a place in life.[410]

Whilst Annelore herself was not deaf, she evidently had experience of growing up within the context of her father's condition - conceptualising her own feelings often within the imagined context of how he would, or did. More often in the letters however, deafhood was discussed and understood within the context of Siegfried's own migration. Within disability studies more generally there is a growing push towards intersectionality in terms of race, class, gender, sexuality and their relationship to disability. The intersection between disability studies and studies of migration however remains at the margins - despite observations by disability scholars such as Bill Hughes that 'both disabled people and immigrants are subjected to similar scripts or repertoires of invalidation'.[411] Siegfried evidently saw his deafness not as something that threatened him within Germany,[412] certainly not over his Jewishness anyway, but as an obstacle to immigration and acclimatisation within another society. In comparison to other nation states in the 1920s and 30s the provision for deaf communities and specifically

its Consequences and Finding Solutions for the Present. A contribution for Deaf Studies and Sign Language Education. Proceedings of the 6th Deaf History International Conference July 31 – August 04, 2006 at the Humbold University, Berlin, ed. by Mark Zaurov and Klaus B., Günther (Seedorf: Signum, 2009).

[410] Annelore Rothschild to Siegfried Rothschild [undated], PC-JBG/MT. Trans. unknown.

[411] Bill Hughes, 'Impairment on the move: the disabled incomer and other invalidating intersections', *Disability & Society,* 32/4 (2017), 467-482 (p.478).

[412] Whilst he could not be sure of this, non-hereditary and 'accidental' deafness was generally exempt from sterilisation and euthanasia programmes during the Third Reich.

deaf Jewish communities in Germany far surpassed its neighbours.[413] Whilst isolated examples of deaf migration to Britain through the *Kindertransport*, indeed in some cases whole organisations, the general picture appears to be one of ostracization and an increasingly difficult migratory process.[414] In a letter from April 1939, Siegfried initially berates his daughter for not better explaining her current illness before moving on to discuss his migration in relation to his deafness.

> When you are physically recovered and meet your acquaintances, Mrs Ure, Mr and Mr Jeeves, Miss Harvey, could you ask them whether they could help your parents, particularly me, so that maybe I could find somewhere where I could be helpful in a school for the deaf and the most important, to learn to lip-read. As I have realised that learning to lip-read English language is even more difficult than German as I have noticed that lots of letters and pronunciation do not leave the mouth, or the lips or the teeth but are formed at the back of the throat. The English language as such is not that difficult as far as reading, translating and writing is concerned but speaking and lip-reading is much more difficult.[415]

Siegfried however was often under the assumption that emigration was a false goal for him due to his disability. On the advice of 'Frau Dr. Vogelstein'[416] he wrote to Woburn House in London and Cecilia Razovsky at the National Council of Jewish Women in New York[417] to whom he wrote that 'because of my physical disability (I am completely deaf) I cannot emigrate due to laws abroad. I cannot assist my child [...]'.[418] Siegfried not only believed his deafness was a barrier to his emigration but that his lack of physical presence meant he was unable to help his daughter in material terms. In many cases, Siegfried wrote to his daughter that such a quality would be an annoyance to anyone they stayed with: 'I doubt if Mr and Mrs Hirsch will find it pleasing to have to listen to my utterly bad English pronunciation 4-6 hours a day', believing instead that 'it would be best if I could enter into a deaf and dumb institution so that I can learn to lip read'.

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[413] See Poore, *Disability in Twentieth-Century German Culture,* p.57. See also John S. Schuchman, 'Misjudged people: The German deaf community in 1932', in *Deaf People in Hitler's Europe,* ed. by Donna F. Ryan and John S. Schuchman (Washington DC: Gallaudet University Press, 2002), pp.98-113.

[414] As part of the *Kindertransport* scheme, in 1939 eight children from the *Israelitische Taubstummen-Anstalt* (The Jewish School for the Deaf and Dumb) in Berlin-Weißensee at *Parkstraße* 22 travelled to the school for the Jewish Deaf in London. In 1940 in Berlin the school was still catering for twenty-two students, but by 1941 this was only eleven. In 1942 the school was forcibly closed and the children and teachers were deported to *Thereseinstadt*. See Vera Bendt and Nicola Galliner, trans. Trixi Fluegel, *Open your hand to the dumb. The history of the Israelite School for the Deaf and Dumb in Berlin Weissensee 1873-1942* (Hamburg: Adult Education Department of the Jewish Community Berlin and the Jewish Department of the Berlin Museum, 1994).

[415] Siegfried Rothschild to Annelore Rothschild, 5 April 1939, PC-JBG/MT. Trans. unknown.

[416] There is no other mention to Dr Vogelstein in the correspondence and it is thus impossible to tell who she is.

[417] Faith Rogow, 'National Council of Jewish Women', The Shalvi/Hyman Encyclopedia of Jewish Women, *Jewish Women's Archive,* accessed via: https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/national-council-of-jewish-women, last accessed: 22 November 2024.

[418] Siegfried Rothschild to Cecilia Razovsky, 23 July 1938, PC-JBG/MT. Trans. unknown.

Unable to use the phone, Siegfried often informed Annelore that he was constantly writing to friends and associates in Germany and abroad. Whilst is it difficult to ascertain exactly the nature of each individual's relationship with the Rothschilds, we can assume a certain amount of familiarity with Siegfried always referring to them as 'Tante' and 'Onkel'. In February 1939, Siegfried wrote to his daughter from their home in Stuttgart noting just the above, that he 'will write to Hans [Mayer] today to request his help (he has connections) so that possibly we get a type of job that he found for Louisa. To enable us to work and earn until something better turns up'.[419] Hans (1897-1980) and his wife Mathilde Louise 'Louisa' (1898-1975) arrived in Britain in the late 1930s, working as a gardener and domestic servant respectively for the retired auctioneer William Reed in Margate. A textile merchant, and most likely colleague of Siegfried's, Hans, as the first of their business circle to emigrate, initially attempted to aid his associates' flight in a handful of ways. Despite his deafhood, Siegfried hoped that letters to his friends would prompt action. This however was often more difficult than Siegfried had previously assumed.

4.3 Alternative Destinations and the Realities of Refuge

In a letter to his daughter Annelore on 22 February 1939, Siegfried quoted in full the reply from Hans and Louisa Mayer:

> we have talked to everybody we know and have heard the same everywhere, England has more than 2 million unemployed and that no permission to stay and work in England will be given to domestic servants. Most people who might be willing to apply firstly wish to see their applicants personally which is understandable. One has to be clear that these jobs cannot possibly be pleasant otherwise they would be taken by one of the unemployed. They are asking for a great deal and nobody is giving you an easy present. Without exaggeration, I can say that especially Louisa would be first class and everything would be immaculate.

For Hans and Louisa, detailing the role of the domestic servant was vital in Siegfried and Margaretha's migration. The couple's suggestion that female roles were easier to fill, albeit the standard was higher, is made much clearer when they discuss Siegfried (Fritz)'s migration:

> In your letter dear Fritz you write about being a butler or a gardener which we do not have here because people ask that a man does everything and no other help is needed. [...] So to sum up, I want to repeat, be patient, something will turn up and the main thing being you should hear from your relatives what they have done to get your permits. You can imagine that we would love to have you all here but it is very difficult [...] In plain German, for Victor and Marianna we can and

[419] Siegfried Rothschild to Annelore Rothschild, 9 February 1939, PC-JBG/MT. Trans. unknown.

> will help, also for others but for you it will unfortunately not be possible. Margarethe cannot possibly do what Louisa is capable of and you Fritz because of your deafness are handicapped.[420]

The reality of refuge combined with the unending pressure to aid those remaining in Germany, often created fallible individuals, those simultaneously attempting to secure an anchor in an ever increasing hostile society were often lacking funds, contacts, confidence, and the experience necessary to make onward emigration feasible for their loved ones.[421] The fear of rising antisemitism due to increasing refugee numbers among both British Jewry and emigrant Jewry, often manifested itself in an unwillingness to help the elderly, those with no profession, or those sick and/or disabled.[422] Such characteristics ran the risk of making new arrivals 'stand out' in a British society which praised camouflage. Indeed, the German Jewish Aid Committee, one of a number of organisations based at Bloomsbury House, in conjunction with the Board of Deputies of British Jews (Woburn House), in their widely circulated pamphlet *While you are in England: Helpful Information and Guidance for Every Refugee,* listed the *proper* way to conduct oneself as a refugee, arguing that 'the Englishman greatly dislikes ostentation'.[423] Indeed the famed Berlin-born writer Gabriel Tergit, who after fleeing to Palestine in 1935, settled in London in 1938, wryly noted after the war that 'it is not by chance that "outsider" is an English word in many languages'.[424] Whilst we cannot say for certain this is specifically happening here, regardless, Hans and Louisa felt unable to recommend Siegfried and Margarethe for similar domestic servitude positions, but did for 'Victor and Marianna'.

Victor Strauss (1894-1966) was born in Prague where he later married Marianne (Melzer; 1899-1987); the couple later moved to Stuttgart in Germany. Victor was representative of the weaving company Baumann & Lederer, responsible for the manufacture and wholesale distribution of sailcloth, ticking, linen and similar textile goods. It is likely therefore that Victor, like the Mayer's, knew the Rothschilds through their business connections. In 1938, Marianne and her son Kurt moved back to Czechoslovakia, whilst Victor stayed behind to look after his mother Regina. On *Kristallnacht*, Victor was arrested and imprisoned in Dachau, although he was later rescued by the British Quaker relief worker Kathleen Brookhouse and managed to get to Britain. Perhaps through Hans and Louisa's connections, Marianne and Kurt emigrated to Britain where

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[420] Siegfried Rothschild to Annelore Rothschild, 22 February 1939, PC-JBG/MT. Trans. unknown.
[421] Williams, *Jews and other Foreigners,* p.356.
[422] For more on the perception of refugee Jews see Tony Kushner, *The Persistence of Prejudice* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), pp.117-119.
[423] *While you are in England: Helpful Information and Guidance for Every Refugee* (1940[?]), USHMM 1991.164.118.1.26.
[424] Gabriele Tergit, 'How They Resettled', in *Britain's New Citizens* (London: The Association of Jewish Refugees, 1951), pp.61-69 (p.63)

she became a domestic servant also. The family (including their other son Helmut, who had emigrated in 1937) initially lived at a Quaker hostel for refugees but were later evacuated with other families to Andridge Farm, Radnage, near High Wycombe in Buckinghamshire.[425]

Fig. 20 Marianne Strauss (Melzer), undated, Wiener Holocaust Library Archive, 1697.

Fig. 21 Victor Strauss, undated, Wiener Holocaust Library Archive, 1697.

Despite Annelore's attempts to pacify her father's anger at Hans Mayer's letter, refusing him help but offering it to Victor, this topic became one never spoke of again. In earlier letters, Annelore had equally tried to explain to her father that 'safety' in Britain was not always so easy.

> It is easy to say that it is better to sleep than to listen to the radio. However, do not forget that even here not everything is as it seems and that one prefers to retire to bed to sleep. You probably think that there is something like harmony here. I did not want to write to you about this, but now you know and can believe me when I say it is not at all easy here.[426]

A similar attempt to deal with parents' frustration abroad was highlighted by Dan Stone and Christine Schmidt in their forthcoming article on letters as a form of Holocaust knowledge, looking in part at the collection of Peter Hartmann held at the Wiener Holocaust Library.[427] Stone and Schmidt highlight that Peter's new 'local and practical knowledge gleaned from his

[425] See Kurt Strauss collection, WHL 1697.
[426] Annelore Rothschild to Siegfried Rothschild, 26 October 1938, PC-JBG/MT. Trans. unknown
[427] See Peter Hartmann collection, WHL 1951/2-3.

migration and adaptation experiences' contrasted greatly with 'his parents' failure to understand his new reality'. Whilst Peter Hartmann wrote with 'palpable impatience' to his parents, Annelore's writing was much more subdued, never once phrasing a letter to her father in anything other than an apologetic tone.[428]

Such domestic service visas as those Hans and Louisa had taken, constituted over one third of Jewish refugees in Britain. Despite this number, their experiences have remained on the margins of scholarly discourse.[429] In 1937, 14,000 foreign domestic servants arrived in Britain, with the vast majority of these being non-refugee and non-Jewish. Within this longer term trend of female domestic service migration, by the end of 1938, 7000 Jewish women had managed to escape as *au pairs* or through the Labour permit scheme.[430] Under the assumption that no Briton would be displaced due to refugee admittance, coeval with an overwhelming demand and lack of an inter-war British population willing to fill vacancies, ensured domestic service became a good option for facilitating escape. Tony Kushner has highlighted that within both kith and kin networks, word of mouth alongside information from Jewish aid organisations and publications, ensured a general awareness of the possibility of domestic servitude in Britain.[431] Such awareness also grew within epistolary spaces and letter-based communities split between Britain and the continent mainland. As Hans Mayer noted however, such positions were not coveted and were demanding in a myriad of different ways. Jennifer Craig Norton for example has highlighted the torrent of sexual abuse faced by many female domestic servants during the period.[432] In the Hirschberg correspondence, in a letter to his girlfriend Gertrud Lehman after spending the day acquiring information at Bloomsbury House in London, Theodor Hirschberg paid credence to the dire experiences many domestic servants faced, writing that 'many exploit the girls' desperate situation; these people should be publicly denounced'.[433] Whilst Siegfried and Margaretha Rothschild would likely have never been aware of such abuses, indeed in much of society such experiences were minimized and made light of in contrast to Theodor's indictment, they seemed to disbelieve Hans on the less than desirable nature of such positions.

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[428] Dan Stone and Christine Schmidt, 'What was Known? Holocaust-era Letters as Sources of Knowledge Production', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* (forthcoming), p.17

[429] See Tony Kushner, 'Asylum or Servitude? Refugee Domestics in Britain, 1933-1945', *BSSLH*, 53/3 (1988), 19-27. More recently see Jennifer Craig-Norton, 'Refugees at the Margins: Jewish Domestics in Britain 1938-1945', *Shofar,* 37/3 (2019), 295–330.

[430] Kushner, 'Asylum or Servitude?', 20.

[431] Kusher, *Journeys from the Abyss,* p.73.

[432] Craig-Norton, 'Refugees at the Margins', 319-20.

[433] Theodor Hirschberg to Gertrud Lehmann, 28 June 1939. UoS MS 314/1/18. Trans. K. Baumgartner.

In general throughout the Rothschild correspondence, Annelore in a handful of instances does pay credence to the difficulties she and other like her faced in Britain, writing in February 1939 that 'I sometimes think that you don't see or want to see what I and many others in my position are going through, being dependent on strange people'.[434] In a latter response directly to Siegfried aghast at Hans Mayer's refusal to help, Annelore attempted to explain the situation in Britain:

> Regarding Hans Meyer[sic]. He is not wrong in what he writes. I don't think it refers to you, so it would be foolish to be angry with him only because he states clearly what it is all about. I don't think he could have found anything for you, because I know only too well how difficult it is to find something for a couple. I don't know what Dora's duties are in the household. I am not defending Hans, but only saying that I agree with most of it. There is no reason whatsoever to doubt his friendship only because he wrote what he thought. You will understand it better when you are here and gained an insight of English life.[435]

Siegfried however had the last word on the subject, diminishing Annelore's lived experience and new acquired knowledge on the subject of migration, citing the activeness of Victor and Marianne Strauss in helping them.

> Even with your wisdom I have seen how Vic despite his own huge worries, concerns himself about us and others whilst Hans and Louisa do not lift a finger for anybody. Enough said.[436]

Without the help of Hans and Louisa, and with the limited assistance Annelore could provide amid her own anxieties, Siegfried continued to search himself for an institution that would support his migration and the specific needs it required. Annelore responded:

> You must also consider that wherever you end up you may encounter problems with the language. I may be able to be with you twice a week but that would not help much. So far I have not heard anything about a deafness institution, but will enquire about that.[437]

Wendy Sims-Schouten and Paul Weindling have written on the exclusion of disabled children, including those deaf and blind, from migration schemes such as the British Home Child scheme (1869–1930) and the *Kindertransport* later in the 1930s often informed by eugenics philosophy and the perceived unwillingness of guarantors.[438] As an adult, Siegfried wasn't

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[434] Annelore Rothschild to Siegfried Rothschild, [February 1939], PC-JBG/MT. Trans. unknown.
[435] Ibid., 12 March 1939, PC-JBG/MT. Trans. unknown.
[436] Siegfried Rothschild to Annelore Rothschild, 11 April 1939, PC-JBG/MT. Trans. unknown.
[437] Annelore Rothschild to Siegfried Rothschild, 26 April 1939, PC-JBG/MT. Trans. unknown.
[438] Wendy Sims-Schouten and Paul Weindling, '"All emigrants are up to the physical, mental, and moral standards required": A tale of two child rescue schemes', *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, 58 (2022), 302–18.

prescript to these organised schemes, but nevertheless assumed that many individuals would be unable or reluctant to help him, unless they themselves were connected to a deaf institution. Siegfried recognised therefore that the migratory options for himself and for his wife Margarethe were very different:

> I would love to live with Family Halevy but do not know what Family Halevy or Mutsch would think about that and my first aim must be to learn the language and lip-read. Mutsch can learn anywhere but I cannot. When together with Family Halevy we could speak German or English which will not be useful for anybody.[439]

Whilst the realities of being a refugee and the practicalities of migrating became vital parts of familial correspondence, Britain was not the only destination considered by refugees. Throughout the five family collections studied here, there are numerous examples of what Susanne Korbel and Philipp Strobl have termed 'alternative routes' and destinations from Nazi oppression.[440] Whilst the majority of Germany's Jewish refugees relocated to Britain, the USA, and Mandate Palestine, a large minority also found themselves in relatively unknown destinations including parts of Africa, South America, and Australia where they encountered wholly distinct environments to that of central Europe. Initially, those fleeing Germany sought temporary refuge in neighbouring countries such as Czechoslovakia, France, Belgium and others, hoping for the possibility of a return after the anticipated collapse of the Nazi regime. By 1938 however, such hopes were dwindling fast, as Nazi expansionism in Europe rapidly increased. A growing number of families had to consider a more permanent exile, in regions further afield. The bureaucracy and unwillingness of the majority of countries to take German-Jewish refugees only compounded this, with many individuals considering destinations wholly alien to them, but where it was possible to go. After their protracted flight from their home in Brieg, the Böhm family's residence in Belgium was one Ernst Böhm rapidly sought to end. In November 1939, Theodor wrote to his cousin offering a hearsay lifeline:

> I will try my hardest to get you out of Belgium but I cannot promise anything. Did you hear of a new plan concerning the Philippines? Until now the details are not to hand, but I will write you re: this, as soon as I hear something.[441]

Whilst a handful of Jewish refugees had been admitted to the Philippines pre-1939, which itself had a small Jewish community after limited American migration there following the Treaty of

[439] Siegfried Rothschild to Annelore Rothschild, 11 April 1939, PC-JBG/MT. Trans. unknown.
[440] See Korbel and Strobl, *Cultural Translation and Knowledge Transfer*.
[441] Theodor Hirschberg to Ernst Böhm, 3 November 1939, MS 314/1/73. Trans. K. Baumgartner.

Paris (1898), the promise of thousands more places was on the horizon.[442] Following Evian, the Philippine government proposed a plan to allow ten thousand Jewish refugees to immigrate as agricultural settlers. Over the next three years, negotiations on the settlement of Jewish refugees on the island of Mindanao progressed, but the so-called "Mindanao Plan" ultimately failed due to the underestimation of local opposition, and the complexities of land acquisition.[443] Despite this, the Philippines became home to over 1200 Jewish refugees from Europe with historian Ria Sunga arguing that 'outside the 'Mindanao Plan', the Philippines became a haven for Jews when many countries rejected them'.[444] Whilst the Philippines never occurs in the existing correspondence again, Ernst responded to Theodor's suggestion affirming they knew of this plan:

> We know about the Philippines project only through press reports. Of course, we would go there, too, or Haiti.
> As the new room wasn't just small and dark but also damp, we moved a floor up a week ago where we don't have these problems. And in ten days we want to move up another floor to a bigger, slightly more expensive room. [445]

Ernst not only impressed upon Theodor the impoverishment of the conditions in the Jewish quarter in Antwerp at this time, but continued to provide his cousin with options which they would be willing to consider. In addition to the Dominican Republic, Haiti was the only country at the Evian conference which expressed mild willingness to take Jewish refugees from Europe, much to the annoyance of the US government. Almost without exception, Haiti was considered as a temporary transit destination, a middle ground whereby refugees could move on to the USA or to other countries in South America. From 1939, Haiti offered naturalization *in absentia* on the condition that they invest capital in the country's agricultural or industrial development, but by 1941 the country's newly elected president Élie Lescot halted this, effectively ending Jewish migration to the island.[446]

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[442] For more on this early Jewish community see Jonathan Goldstein, 'Shaping Zionist Identity: The Jews of Manila as a Case Study', *Israel Affairs*, 15/3 (2009), 296–304.
[443] See Frank Ephraim, 'The Mindanao Plan: Political Obstacles to Jewish Refugee Settlement', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 20/3 (2006), 410-36.
[444] Ria Sunga, 'The Philippines: A haven for Jewish refugees, 1937 to 1941?', *Refugee History,* 20 November 2018, accessed via: https://refugeehistory.org/blog/2018/11/20/the-philippines-a-haven-for-jewish-refugees-1937-to-1941, last accessed: 9 January 2025.
[445] Ernst Böhm to Theodor Hirschberg, 11 November 1939, MS 314/1/77. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[446] There is limited literature on the Jewish refugees in Haiti, see however Nadège Veldwachter, 'Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and "Failed" Nations: Haiti and Jewish Refugees in the 1930s', *Small Axe*, 25/2 (2021) 1-15; Sarah Phillips Casteel, 'Telling the Untold Story: Jewish Wartime Refuge in Haiti in Louis-Philippe Dalembert's *Avant que les ombres s'effacent'*, *American Literary History*, 33/4 (2021), 756–76.

Few individuals within the five correspondences actually travelled to the destinations they considered in letters. These locales, whilst conceptually expanding their geographic imagination, rarely materialised beyond the cartographic. The Amberg family perhaps considered the most options of the five families studied here, with various allusions to travel to South America, presumably as a transitory destination to join Emil and the other cousins in the USA. In her panic to leave Aachen, Anna's correspondence to her children and late-husband's cousin Emil, became filled with processes and discussions over *where* to go, and *how* to get there. Even with regular allusions to an almost physical connection to her disparate children, Anna regularly wrote to Emil with attempts to flee to South America:

> I live together with all of you, so that it doesn't feel quite as hard even if it isn't all that easy, especially which what the future has in store for us. For this reason I have cabled to uncle Emil once more, and written two letters for him to try whether one can go to Cuba or Ecuador or whatever else one can attempt.[447]

Both Cuba and Ecuador fit this transmigratory emigration profile, with the majority of refugees passing through these destinations moving on to the USA.[448] With Carl receiving direct communication from his mother from 1940, albeit only a very small number, these letters provided substance to the presumably more vague letters from Emil. Jointly, these different sources allowed Carl to piece together his mother's migratory intentions and write immediately to his sisters about it: 'as to mother, I found some hopeful notes in uncle Emil's as well as her own letters. She seems to be trying via Cuba. Let us hope for the best'.[449]

A few days after Carl wrote this to his sisters in Britain, Anna penned another letter to Carl apologising for not writing sooner:

> During the last two weeks I was too preoccupied with my own anxieties and worries about my own little self, and thus I missed writing to you sooner. It is still not certain if and when I can get away from here. This hanging on and waiting is a real test of my nerves. I would almost now be 'swimming' to Cuba, but then a new boulder came rolling across my way. I am still hoping to reach a boat on December 12th, and about 3 weeks later I would land in Cuba, just as our Neme did on March 1913.[450]

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[447] Anna Amberg to Marie Luise Amberg, 14 September 1941, PC-AR. Trans. C. Amberg.
[448] See Irene Münster, 'Jewish German Immigrant Booksellers in Twentieth Century Ecuador', *Judaica Librarianship*, 22 (2022), 57–72
[449] Carl Amberg to various, 5 November 1941, PC-AR.
[450] Anna Amberg to Carl Amberg, 11 November 1941, PC-AR. Trans. C. Amberg.

From this we learn not only that Anna was experiencing delays with her documentation but that she was in some way relying on a conception of migration to the small island founded decades previous. No other details exist in the letters about Neme's travels to Cuba, but we can assume she travelled via the island to visit Anna when she and her husband lived in Pittsburgh. Carl received this letter by the middle of January, evidently aware by then that the likelihood of his mother having boarded a boat on the 12 December was very slim vis-à-vis events unfolding in the USA.

> I even heard from uncle Emil, that mother might possibly be on her way already; unfortunately today these dark clouds appeared on the horizon, which make success difficult if not doubtful. Should she manage to reach this continent, I would the more try to obtain my release here.

Following the attack on Pearl Harbor and subsequent U.S. entry into the war, American vessels refused to take civilians. Even if Anna had managed to in some way get to Portugal by December 1941, the number of ships was dwindling rapidly. Whilst some ships sailed with Portuguese identification, many Spanish lines equally suspended trips from Spain to the US, sending refugees waiting to leave for Cuba into a frenzy.[451] It wasn't until August 1942 that Carl, Marie Luise and their siblings could be sure their mother was not able to escape to Cuba, when they received news of her deportation *east*.

For many of the more well connected members of German-Jewish families seeking exit from the country, places of migration were in some cases beneficial to individuals' careers and goals. Margaretha Rothschild's brother, Walter Pincus (1901-60) and his wife Edith J. Oppenheimer (1906-73) for example, became much more involved in the business of the Oppenheimers as a result of migration, something which Walter's brother-in-law Siegfried was a curious blend of happy and jealous about in a letter to his daughter Annelore.

> As for Walter and Edith: it is still not finished, Edith still does not have a visa for Kenya, Walter, Ruth etc. also do not; contrastingly Walter already has permission to pack and Edith was, through a present from her uncle in South Africa, in the position to equip them both very well; your Uncle Walter is now in a better position than your Paps; he also does not have his parents on his plate, the much loved son-in-law is there for that! – Wait, I do not want to become bitter, although it would take a separate chapter to write about the *gratitude* of House P., including your uncle

[451] Kaplan, *Hitler's Jewish Refugees,* p.214. In her letter to Carl from January 1942, Anna writes that 'There is not much to explain about why and wherefore my plan for departure in December misfired. You will have noticed it yourself!' alluding to the attack on Pearl Harbour as the reason for the lack of travel.

Siegfried and Margaretha took responsibility for the latter's parents Max Pincus (1869-1942) and Rosa Eichenberger (1868-1942) in Stuttgart, who by 1939 were in their 70s. Little scholarship exists on age in relation to migratory considerations of older people in Germany, indeed there is very little reference to such discussions beyond Siegfried's annoyance at the lack of support from other members of the 'House of Pincus' as he terms them.[452] In prior letters, Siegfried updated his daughter on the discourse surrounding the care for Max and Rosa:

> Your grandparents [Max and Rosa Pincus] no longer interest me. There was a very sharp argument between your mother and your uncle [Walter] because although I am good enough for his parents whilst he and Edith are playing saying do not touch me! Mutsch has told him plainly, should we not be able to leave because of his parents, she will make sure that he will be equally affected. He has not ever dreamt of paying even a penny to the Benefits Office [...] that is my job, he expects me to pay! [...] I do not wish to say any more, just leave me out of it – it is too much for me to bear.[453]

Walter and Edith Pincus became two of approximately 800 German-Jewish refugees who arrived in Kenya during the 1930s.[454] Whilst the majority of those that arrived in the African country worked on farms, we can assume that due to their relation to and support from the Oppenheimers, Walter and Edith lived a more comfortable lifestyle in the colony, becoming one of a number of European settlers in Nairobi. In a letter to Annelore, Siegfried described the journey the Pincus's took, and how he hoped his efforts to support Max and Rosa will be remembered by Walter in the years to come. In such correspondence, where Siegfried wrote openly about both the practicalities of migration and his own thoughts and feelings about his in-laws, it is clear that at least in some specifics, he viewed his daughter as an adult.

> Yesterday your Mutsch went to Mannheim in order to accompany your lovely Uncle Walter and his wife from Heilbronn to Mannheim. They are on their way to Kenya. By the time you receive this letter they will have crossed the border. Have a few days in Belgium and Holland. As far as I know they are boarding in Rotterdam for Nairobi and we hope that luck will await them. Their situation outside is certainly better than ours seeing that they will be helped by relatives of Edith's. [...]

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[452] Examples of existing literature include Melissa Jane Taylor, 'Family Matters: The Emigration of Elderly Jews from Vienna to the United States, 1938–1941', *Journal of Social History*, 45/1 (2011), 238-60. The forthcoming volume *Older Jews and the Holocaust,* ed. by Joanna Sliwa, Christine Schmidt, and Elizabeth Anthony (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2026) includes various chapters pertaining to older Jews and migration.

[453] Siegfried Rothschild to Annelore Rothschild, 11 April 1939, PC-JBG/MT. Trans. unknown.

[454] See for example Natalie Eppelsheimer, *Roads less travelled. German-Jewish exile experiences in Kenya, 1933-1947* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2019); Cilli Kasper-Holtkotte, trans. Alexandra Berliner, *"They called us Bloody Foreigners". Jewish Refugees in Kenya. 1933 until the 1950s* (Leipzig: Hentrich & Hentrich, 2019). On African responses to Jewish refugees and the Holocaust see Edward Kissi, *Africans and the Holocaust. Perceptions and responses of colonised and sovereign peoples* (Oxford: Routledge, 2020).

Hopefully they won't forget what their lovely brother-in-law did for the family. I am extremely sceptical.[455]

Edith's uncle was Sir Ernest Oppenheimer (1880-1957) the diamond and gold mining entrepreneur who from 1927 controlled De Beers Diamonds and founded the Anglo American Corporation of South Africa a decade earlier.[456] Max and Rosa Pincus had planned to leave Stuttgart for Africa once the war was over – this never occurred. Max was deported to Theresienstadt in August 1942 where he died in the December, whilst Rosa was deported to Zwiefalten and was euthanised in the T4 centre there. Whilst the imagined experience of the Oppenheimers and by extension the Pincus' was certainly not what Wolfgang Benz termed *das Exil der kleinen Leute*, it nevertheless shows the variety of destinations, and experiences had by a small selection of German-Jewish families.[457]

Fig. 22 Rosa Pincus (seated) with Margaretha Rothschild, holding Annelore (c.1923). Private Collection of J. Baer Gellert and Michele Tarsh, London, UK.

Fig. 23 Annelore Rothschild (in the pram) with (L-R) Margaretha Rothschild, Siegfried Rothschild, Walter Pincus, and Max Pincus. Private Collection of J. Baer Gellert and Michele Tarsh, London, UK.

[455] Siegfried Rothschild to Annelore Rothschild, 11 May 1939, PC-JBG/MT. Trans. unknown.

[456] For more on Oppenheimer see Colin Newbury, 'South Africa and the international diamond trade Part One: Sir Ernest Oppenheimer, De Beers and the evolution of central selling, 1920–1950', *South African Journal of Economic History*, 10/2 (1995), 1–22.

[457] Wolfgang Benz (ed.), *Das Exil der kleinen Leute: Alltagserfahrung deutscher Juden in der Emigration* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1991).

Even if individuals did not end up in these ‘alternate destinations’ but in the USA or Britain, there sometimes still existed a sense of wonder at the natural landscape around them – one free of the claustrophobia and persecution of the Third Reich. In February 1940, Marion Goldberg penned the poem *Geliebte Landschaft* about her new life in Aldeburgh in Suffolk, quoted here in full:

> <u>Beloved Landscape</u>
>
> Landscape dawning in the distance, the soul’s dream landscape, you turn [?] and lighter and hotter beats my heart, when an image of your beauty brushes past me,
> Or when I, Behind closed eyes see you brighter lit through the sound of memory.
>
> You combine gentleness and greatness. For a long way, for a long way roams the view, the mountains round domes don’t hinder it, the distance carries it further up and further up into the endless blue turns the searching view. And nearby, how lovely breathe the villages protected by the wooded mountains, resting peacefully, quietly under the great, the immeasurable sky. And the clouds – how beautiful! In the evening when the sun leans behind the mountains and the white, shiny clouds clothed in red [colour] and fire, so they turn into castles and islands and aiming ships and for a long [time] the dreams is able to make them exist. –
> Oh, my landscape, how delicious are you written into my heart! And the questioning ways- they all long to be walked on lovingly,
> Oh, and the pub on the wayside, with the sound of travelling minstrels-
> Once I saw you like this, the landscape of the innermost soul.
> Once I saw you like this, but you live [on] in my heart, forever you [will] live in my innermost heart.
> Longing, still and deep, after your blessed days you call me and call –
> Will you be the same to me when you lift yourself from the dream image of my return into reality?
> Or are you elevated now, Deeply remembered, onto unreachable height, that we – both of us- won’t persist anymore in the real contemplation?[458]

Even for Marion however, this captivation with her new and free surroundings did not last. Despite the love with which Marion diarised about the beautiful landscape around her, by the summer of 1940, her jubilance had gone: ‘Miserable life. Desperation. Nature looks so peaceful but everything around [us] is burning’.[459]

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[458] Marion Goldberg diary entry, 5 February 1940, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[459] Marion Goldberg diary entry, 20 June 1940, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.

Summary

The realities of refuge in a previously unknown country, combined with a new *raison d'etre* being the saviour of loved ones left behind, imbued both the context and the purpose of letter writing during the Holocaust with a greater sense of urgency. This chapter demonstrates how letter writers had to balance the personal and *everyday* conversations that brought familiarity and safety, with the bureaucratic and organisational which could practically ameliorate their loved ones' situation in occupied Europe. A letter balancing this line had the ability to prompt action in the reader, or in the case of Siegfried Rothschild's appeal to the Mayers, the realisation that refuge in Britain was not perhaps what he hoped for, despite his daughter's warnings. In cases where migration to Britain, the US, or Mandate Palestine wasn't an option, this chapter explains how many letter writers considered alternate destinations in the global south, and in the case of Anna Amberg, increasingly remote ones. As studies on Jewish migration globally continue to proliferate, the letter offers an increasing number of historians a multitude of ways to access these experiences, as a space that attempted to unify no matter the distance.

CHAPTER 5
Epistolary Networks

> Dear Theo,
> I have to add a couple of words before I mail the letter. Even if it looks like many ties are torn – that is not the case. Everything that used to be "in the past" weighs twice or three times! "In the past" is far away and a long time ago. And that is alright, because "now" is so strong and demands so much [of us] that one would collapse trying to make a connection. I am doing fine. And surely, I haven't fully grasped what an undeserved gift all of this is. Even if only some of my high hopes come true. But it is very hard. Sometimes I wake up in the morning and think everything is fine. And then the telephone rings and a new difficulty or complication comes up. But nevertheless of course, the gratitude to be here and be able to sleep peacefully and eat. Unfortunately, my beautiful German songs – for which I find weirdly enough time to contemplate despite Broadway and sub - are vanishing more and more.[460]

On 12 October 1939, following a section written by her brother Hermann (1917-2016), Susanne Löwenstein (1908-1995) wrote to Theodor Hirschberg from New York for the first time since fleeing Germany that same year. Hermann and Susanne's father Leo (1869-1922) ran a linoleum, paint and wallpaper business at Jägerstraße 2 (today Puschkinstraße) in Eberswalde, a company taken over by his wife Fanny (1878-1959) upon Leo's death. After graduating from the *Eberswalde Oberlyzeum*, Susanne pursued her musical talents and attended the private *Stern'sches Konservatorium* (Julius Stern Conservatory) in Berlin. Immediately after graduating, the mezzosoprano debuted in Saarbrücken before choosing a position at the City Theatre in Breslau. Exactly when and where Theodor and Susanne became friends is unclear although we can assume their shared hometown of Eberswalde is most likely. Despite her great successes, in 1933 Susanne was no longer able to perform on Germany's opera stages under new National Socialist laws. In July 1933, in response to the mass dismissals of Jewish artists, the *Kulturbund Deutscher Juden* (from 1939 *Jüdischer Kulturbund in Deutschland e. V.*) was created in which

[460] Hermann Löwenstein and Susanne Löwenstein to Theodor Hirschberg, 12 October 1939, UoS MS 314/1/67. Trans. K. Baumgartner.

Susanne found opportunities to perform.[461] In 1939 she fled to the USA and continued a successful operatic career throughout the 1940s and 50s.[462]

Despite her deep grounding in the songs of her home and indeed her surprise at having 'enough time to contemplate' them, Susanne (or Suzy Sten as she became known on stage in the USA) feared that the music of her home was gradually fading. Whilst the musical culture of segments of German Jewry continued in various forms with much existing scholarship attesting to this fact, Susanne's lamentation is perhaps more emblematic of an individual losing her contact with her homeland now it has expelled her, even as she wishes to maintain such connection.[463] The in-betweenness experienced by many refugees such as Susanne, and the difficulties of positioning oneself in a new 'median state' as the philosopher Edward Said termed it, was not an easy plain to navigate.[464]

Fig. 24 Suzanne Sten (undated). Ludwig Arendt Collection O.II.Arendt 17380, Kreisarchiv Barnim, Eberswalde, Germany.

[461] On music life in the Kulturbund see Bernd Sponheuer, 'Musik auf einer 'kulturellen und physischen Insel': Musik als überlebensmittel im Jüdischen Kulturbund 1933–1941' in *Musik in der Emigration 1933–1945. Verfolgung, Vertreibung, Rückwirkung*, ed. by Horst Weber (Stuttgart/Weimar: Metzler, 1993), pp.108-35. See more generally *Geschlossene Vorstellung: Der Jüdische Kulturbund in Deutschland 1933–1941*, ed. by Akademie der Künste (Berlin: Akademie der Künste, 1992).

[462] Ellen Behring, Ingrid Fischer, Brigitta Heine, and Arnold Kuchenbecker, *Eberswalder Gedenkbuch für die jüdischen Opfer des Nationalsozialismus* (Eberswalde: Veröffentlichung des Vereins für Heimatkunde zu Eberswalde e.V., 2008), pp.103-5.

[463] See Michael Haas, *Music of Exile. The Untold Story of the Composers who Fled Hitler* (London: Yale University Press, 2023). See also various publications from the AHRC funded (2019-23), Royal College of Music project – 'Music, Migration, and Mobility: The Legacy of Migrant Musicians from Nazi-Europe in Britain' - https://www.musicmigrationmobility.com/

[464] Edward Said, 'Intellectual Exile: Expatriates and Marginals', *Grand Street*, 47 (1993), 112-124 (p.114).

In an attempt to deal with the expanding difficulties they faced – as Hermann Löwenstein wrote in the same letter: 'at the beginning of a crisis nothing makes much sense' – Susanne implored Theodor to continue connections '[e]ven if it looks like many ties are torn' as one would 'collapse' in an attempt to make new ones. Whilst we cannot be sure for exactly how long Theodor maintained his connection with the Löwensteins (for the aforementioned reasons in the difficulties in understanding the genealogy of the archive) he evidently took her words to heart, and wrote almost identical segments to both his cousin Ursula Gottschalk and cousin Ernst Böhm soon after, cementing his relationship with his cousins through regular contact:

> Yesterday I had a long letter from Suzanne Sten-Loewenstein and her younger brother Hermann from New York. She is getting on very well and has very much to do; she is busy with the great Columbia-Company with broadcasting and concerts over the whole country, especially in January and the following months. Hermann has a job as a knitter and seems to be satisfied

Whilst Susanne suggested a reliance on pre-existing networks for greater support in times of upheaval, these similar networks could be used extensively within the context of immigration. Equally, in contrast to Susanne's assertion of the difficulty in creating new ones, the need for these often outweighed the fear of difficulty or rejection.

Whilst various scholarship on the networks of Holocaust survivors, has begun to explore this through digital visualisation, epistolary networks of Jewish families *during* the Holocaust has not yet fully taken stock of the interconnectedness of letter writers and other historical actors within the *epistolarium,* or outside of it.[465] As Laura Martinez Martin reminds us in her study of letter writing amongst Asturian migrants to the Americas, whilst 'epistolary exchanges are commonly understood as experiences shared by two or more people, [...] social structures also interacted with the practices of letter writing and letter reading'. In other words the role of the network impacted on how letters were written, how they were read and understood, and (in the context of this section) how emigration was discussed and organised.[466] Understanding that refugees did not exist in a vacuum, as neither did their letters, allows us to better conceptualise the collections we have as snapshots into a much wider social space where numerous individuals interact and impact upon each other.

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[465] See for example Paris Papamichos Chronakis and Giorgios Antoniou, 'From Individual Survival to Social Networks of Survivors: Rethinking the Digital Archive of the Greek Holocaust', *Umanistica Digitale*, 4 (2019) 73-87; Paris Papamichos Chronakis, 'From the Lone Survivor to the Networked Self. Social Networks Meet the Digital Holocaust Archive', *Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History*, 13 (2018), 52-84.

[466] Martinez Martin, 'Shared Letters', 434. In her PhD thesis examining the letters of the Brenzinger and Ganz families, Sandra Lipner examines various kinship networks which the families existed in as a way of understanding subjectivities and a wider cultural history of the Third Reich.

Although the familial life of Jews in the early-mid twentieth century remains a topic of concerted study, with some even hailing a 'familial turn' in scholarship, both friendship and kinship are gradually emerging as categories of analysis in Jewish studies, queer studies and many others.[467] Within the concept of enforced migration however, such networked analysis remains few and far between. Jacqueline Vansant has written extensively on the correspondence between teenage classmates of the *Franz-Joseph Gymnasium* in Vienna in which detailed *Rundbriefe* or 'round-robin' newsletter type correspondence, were sent across three continents over a period of fifteen years, actively seeking connection despite enforced separation.[468] Similarly Eliyana Adler argued that a study of familial networks through the epistolary has the opportunity of recentring the victim at the nucleus of the narrative, and also demonstrates the centrality of the family unit in the lives of refugees.[469] The issue however remains that friendship and kinship as categories of connection remain infinitely more difficult to trace their origin and *raison d'etre* than the familial or even the professional.[470]

Within sets of family, friends, neighbours, and colleagues, these intertwining networks worked together, albeit often unbeknownst to many within them, to facilitate emigration – the primary medium of which was the letter. The following chapter will highlight some of these networks, several of which existed already, and many of which were created as a byproduct of refuge, or through the necessity of emigration. Firstly, I will discuss the **expansion of networks** within the context of migration and how these sometimes led to community building. How families used letters to contact previously unknown individuals, helps us understand the further bureaucratic use of the letter as a vehicle of navigating networks. In some cases correspondents never actually met, and had to put faith in the letter even more so than usual. This section examines the vast and varied preestablished networks in the Amberg family correspondence centring around Emil Amberg in Detroit, before moving on to discuss newer ones created by Marion Goldberg and Annelore Rothschild under pressure from their parents. The chapter will secondly

[467] On the 'familial turn' see Natalia Aleksiun, 'A Familial Turn in Holocaust Scholarship?', in *If This Is a Woman: Studies on Women and Gender in the Holocaust*, ed. by Denisa Nešťáková, Katja Grosse-Sommer, Borbála Klacsmann and Jakub Drábik (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2021), pp. 20-42. On friendship see Lawrence Fine (ed.), *Friendship in Jewish History, Religion, and Culture* (Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 2021). On kinship see Jennifer Evans, *The Queer Art of History. Queer Kinship after Fascism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2023); David L. Eng, *The Feeling of Kinship: Queer Liberalism and the Racialization of Intimacy* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

[468] See Vansant, 'Cohesive Epistolary Networks in Exile'

[469] Eliyana Adler, 'Maintaining family networks via post during the Holocaust', in *Entanglements of War. Social Networks during the Holocaust*, ed. by Eliyana Adler and Natalia Aleksiun (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2022), pp.77-101.
See also Eliyana R. Adler and Katerina Capková (eds.), *Jewish and Romani Families in the Holocaust and its Aftermath* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2020)

[470] See for example Trisha Oakley Kessler, 'Letters of loss and urgency: Jewish refugee industrialists, business networks and pathways of rescue', *Jewish Culture and History*, 24/1 (2022), 28–49.

study how **relief efforts** and financial aid were organised through these networks, demonstrating how letters were vital in families securing safe transit and facilitating financial and humanitarian relief in dire situations. Focussing entirely on the experience of Walter Goldberg whilst he was interned in camps in France, this sub-section suggests that increasingly, separated families relied heavily on epistolary spaces for maintaining not only their social and emotional wellbeing, but also their physical wellbeing and migratory ability.

5.1 Expanding the network

Survival after emigration, as well as the desire to facilitate the migration of loved ones coevally, depended heavily on both the ability to repurpose existing pre-separation networks, as well as the ability to establish trusted connections with relative strangers. The expansion of existing networks and the creation of new ones allowed individuals to not feel so 'individual' in an era categorised by exclusion and enforced disengagement with society. Eliyana Adler and Natalia Aleksiun in their introduction to the volume *Entanglements of War,* write that examining the Holocaust from the perspective of networks 'emphasizes continuity over rupture [which] in no way diminishes the devastation [but] does highlight the many ways in which prewar patterns and relationships guided decisions and actions'.[471] Whilst the focus on existing pre-separation connections is key in understanding how refugees navigated their situation, in highlighting how these networks expanded with previously unknown actors and networks, a certain degree of agency in their own situation is granted to the individual. The expansion of these new social networks: through recommendation, shared plights, or sometimes even out of the blue, created what Marten Düring has labelled 'contact brokerage chains', which granted individuals contact with strangers willing to aid them, a precious and sometimes rare resource during the period.[472] Constellations of ties knitted together individuals previously unknown to one another under the assumption that the majority would do their best given the turbulence of the situation. This hopeful trust in the stranger generated thousands upon thousands of pieces of paper all travelling in different directions to different people, and yet all with the same orientation. As Dwork and van Pelt write on affidavits to the USA 'Jews in Europe sifted through old letters and scrutinised telephone directories in search of family in America'.[473] The creation of new

[471] Eliyana Adler and Natalia Aleksiun, 'Introduction: Conceptualizing Networks and the Holocaust', in idem., *Entanglements of War. Social Networks during the Holocaust* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2022), pp.7-20 (p.12).
[472] Marten Düring, 'The Dynamics of Helping Behaviour for Jewish Refugees during the Second World War. The Importance of Brokerage', in *Knoten Und Kanten: Soziale Netzwerkanalyse in Geschichts- Und Politikwissenschaften*, ed. by Markus Gamper, Linda Reschke, and Marten Düring (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2015), pp.321–38.
[473] Dwork and van Pelt, *Flight from the Reich*, p.146.

networks was thus pivotal in linking these disparate vectors together into a chain that would facilitate meaningful results for the writers.

In the case of transmigrancy, building new networks and writing to new individuals was of vital importance. Letters of recommendation were commonly sent worldwide for those attempting to procure onward migration, whilst equally unknown individuals connected by a third party, would write to each other to facilitate onward movement.[474] In April 1940, shortly before Churchill's infamous order to 'collar the lot', Stanley J. Benham wrote to Emil Amberg in the US regarding Carl Amberg's onward migration and his believed necessity for this in regards to Carl's education

> Dear Sir, I am writing you with regard to Carl Amberg, who is under my care while he is in England. I understand that you are related to him and are likely to help him if and when he comes to America. - As you probably know, he came to England last July and my wife and I paid the necessary deposit for his fare to America and signed the necessary guarantee. We were able to secure for him a free place at Winchester College, which is generally considered about the best public school in this country [...] It is a very fine education but of a classical character.[475]

As an aside, the observation of Winchester's 'classical' tuition was shared by another of the four refugee students there in 1939/40. In a letter to his mother George Grün wrote that 'The standards here vary. The level in maths and Physics is significantly lower [...] But in Latin the level is much higher'.[476] As Emil Amberg and Stanley Benham did not know each other and indeed never met as far we are aware, their relationship was one entirely bound to the letter, and to the aim of facilitating and organising their friends' and family's emigration. Such a triangular constellation between these two objective strangers relied on the shared figure of Carl. Düring notes that in the case of Jewish fugitives as he terms them, 'a mutually trusted third party [...] would allow strangers to develop trusted ties [...] and was the basis for [...] brokerage chains'.[477] Benham and Amberg continued a correspondence, throughout the war and continued to keep each other up to date with news, and new opportunities for the Amberg children and most important perhaps, their mother Anna.

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[474] Lisa Gerlach and David Blumenthal, 'On the role of network topology in German-Jewish recommendation letter networks in the early twentieth century', *Appl Netw Sci*, 24/8 (2023). See also Lisa Gerlach, '"I know few people who seem so qualified to do so..." A Letter of Recommendation for Siegfried Landshut (translated by Insa Kummer)', in *Key Documents of German-Jewish History* (29 July 2019), Accessed via: https://dx.doi.org/10.23691/jgo:article-257.en.v1, last accessed: 25 October 2024.
[475] Stanley J Benham to Emil Amberg, 16 April 1940, PC-AR.
[476] George Grün to Esther and Maurycy Grün, 10 May 1939. Private Collection of L. Grun (PC-LG). Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[477] Düring, 'The Dynamics of Helping Behaviour', p.326.

The pair were, however, not alone in their network, with Carl's translated booklets demonstrating a large amount of formerly unknown individuals they corresponded with to aid in Anna's plight in Germany, and Carl's in Canada. Charles J Thal (Karl Josephthal, 1899-1963) wrote to Emil at the end of 1940 that 'I am personally not known to you, so may I introduce myself' and noted that he had received letters from Anna in Aachen. The pair continued a correspondence (mostly not present in the booklets) and shared letters from other new unknown correspondents with each other. In November 1941 for example, Thal apologised for his tardiness in 'returning Rev. Russell's letter with some delay. I gave it to Mr. Weil who kept it for some time'.[478]

The Reverend G. Stanley Russell emigrated to Canada in 1929 and later became Minister of Deer Park United Church in Toronto and a popular columnist in the *Toronto Star.* Exactly how Russell came to know specifically of Carl Amberg is unclear – he was involved in various pacifist movements in the company and later became known for campaigning for the rights and improved quality of life for immigrants to Canada writing that increasing 'human misery [...] is much more menacing than anything Karl Marx ever wrote or Stalin ever said'.[479] In a long letter to his family in England, delivered to them by hand by his cello teacher Wolfgang Bretschneider who had been released from internment, Carl told his sisters to expect a letter from Russell:

> Today came a touching letter from Mr. Russell, the clergyman from Toronto: " ... I'd be glad if you'd mentally adopt me as a sort of 'uncle' over here and feel, that you had somebody who really cared what happened and was anxious to do whatever possible to make the rest of your life take the pleasanter road ... " Doesn't that belong to the realm of fairy-tales? Besides, there are hopes ... but one mustn't speak of them as yet. Perhaps you will suddenly get a letter from Toronto or somewhere else, written by a boy who was once interned[480]

Russell wrote to Emil Amberg, Stanley Benham and to Carl's sister Irmgard in Manchester discussing his attempts to help Carl even though he was unknown to them all. The letter thus became a vehicle of trust, something the three individuals above had to rely on to know what Russell's intentions were and how he could realistically help someone they all cared for. In a letter to Stanley Benham, Russell explained that he could not finance the £200 guarantee himself to support Carl but was asking various members of his congregation. He further noted that his first port of call had been to write to Emil –

[478] Charles J. Thal to Emil Amberg, 2 November 1941, PC-AR. Trans. C. Amberg.
[479] 'A clergyman looks at the world', *Toronto Star* (9 April 1949), p.22.
[480] Carl Amberg to various family members, 1-15 June 1940 (5 June 1940), PC-AR. Trans. C. Amberg

> The natural person to whom to apply, in the first instance at any rate, was his uncle, Dr. Emil Amberg of Detroit. Both Carl and I wrote him, but his reply was that other relatives were making frantic demands and that Carl's mother is in a very dangerous situation, and that these must take priority to Carl at present, whatever he may be able to do in the future.[481]

For the Amberg's (and presumably many other distant relatives), Emil was their primary means of connection, support, and solace and was hence being pulled in a multitude of different directions. Even as Russell was attempting to facilitate Carl's release, Emil's concern had to be for Anna's welfare in Aachen.

By 1942, the connections created with Russell fell through, as was apparent to Carl in a letter from the Canadian National Committee on Refugees whilst he was still interned in Camp N (42) in Sherbrooke:

> Dear Carl, I was glad to have your letter of December 21st and am sorry that I was not able to answer sooner. - You have probably been disappointed not to hear from Dr. Russell but he is not well and will not be able to sponsor you (I wonder whether that was really so ...). However, there is no need for you to be discouraged because I hope to find another sponsor for you before long.[482]

The bracketed aside present in Carl's booklets shows his older self's uncertainty whether Russell's inability to help his younger self was due to illness, the difficulty in finding people, or waning interest.

Creating such connections however was difficult. Especially if the individual required to create and maintain them, either through letters or through personal contact, was a child. In his work on the Holocaust in Hungary, specifically the experiences of Jewish youth in camps, Barnabas Balint has argued repeatedly that children's 'roles and responsibilities developed far beyond the normative', in other words an accelerated development into adulthood that, whilst not perhaps obvious to those at the time, can be noted afterwards.[483] Such analyses are perhaps replicable in contexts of enforced migration and refuge, with many *Kindertransportees* for example, acting as contact brokers in the language of Düring above. Whilst trapped in Nice shortly before his internment in various camps in France, Walter Goldberg suggested that his

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[481] G. Stanley Russell to Stanley J. Benham, 6 November 1941, PC-AR.
[482] Constance Hayward to Carl Amberg, 30 January 1942, PC-AR.
[483] Barnabas Balint 'Coming of Age During the Holocaust: The Adult Roles and Responsibilities of Young Hungarian Jews in Auschwitz-Birkenau', *The Journal of Holocaust Research*, 35/1 (2021), 20-40. See also idem. Generation and the Holocaust in Hungary: Jewish experience and discourse (unpublished PhD thesis: University of Oxford, 2025). The author would like to thank Barnabas Balint for advance access to their thesis.

daughter Marion utilise her time with the Achesons in Suffolk to the best effect, and create new links where possible:

> Please don't think that your stay in England is useless because you can't help us. That is not the case and I was told by well-informed sources that you will be able to help us later. But it is necessary that you establish good connections. You will ask: how? I don't know about the children you meet in school. But maybe they are the children of influential people. Befriend them. That can lead to relationships which might one day – one never knows – be useful. I heard that a boy helped his five siblings and parents to find a guarantor this way [by making the acquaintance]. Coincidence can be life changing![484]

For Marion at the same time however, feelings of lonesomeness and uselessness prevailed. In the paragraph just above the one quoted here, Walter refused Marion's request to attempt to travel to Palestine, a refusal which made her feel even more isolated and thus perhaps unable to act in the way her father hoped.

> Dear Lord, will I never have peace? Nobody asks or cares about my mental state. Yes, my physical well-being is taken care of – and very well, actually. But isn't my mental state important, too? Maybe just as important. And I am sooo lonely. I have so many good, trusted friends. What good are they when they aren't here? To end my life would be the smartest thing [to do]. But even to do that, I am too coward. Is there anything, that I am good for? To do small tasks. And every day goes on as if nothing had happened.[485]

Sections like the one above, make Marion's diaries during this period difficult to read, as it is clear her mental health plummeted due to her self-perceived isolation, her inability to travel to 'Erez', and the realities of the continuing progress of the war in Europe. Scholars researching the triggers of mental health crises amongst more recent refugee diaspora have equally noted causes such as news of the death of family in their homeland, isolation, as well as linguistic and social barriers.[486] Creating networks which would potentially in the future yield results was an active pursuit, one that evidently didn't always coalesce with the realities and difficulties of

[484] Walter Goldberg to Marion Goldberg, 9 Feb 1940. MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[485] Marion Goldberg diary entry, 9 March 1940, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[486] G. Becker et al., 'Health, welfare reform and narratives of uncertainty among Cambodian refugees', *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry*, 24/2 (2000), 139-63; B. Rosenbaum and S. Varvin, 'The influence of extreme traumatization on body, mind and social relations', *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis,* 88/6 (2007) 1527-42; W. Wojcik and D. Bhugra, 'Loss and cultural bereavement', in *Mental health of refugees and asylum seekers,* ed. by D. Bhugra, T. Craig and K. Bhui (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp.211-23; D. Summerfield, 'War, exile, moral knowledge and the limits of psychiatric understanding: a clinical case study of a Bosnian refugee in London', *International Journal of Social Psychiatry,* 49/4 (2003), 264-8; G. C. Medeiros et al., 'Mental health of refugees: report of a successful case in Brazil', *Revista Brasileira de Psiquiatria,* 36/3 (2014), 274-5.

childhood in exile – as Marion later wrote: 'As a refugee there is nothing one can do – just be miserable [...] I am supposed to trust [people] Why?'.[487]

Feelings of uncomfortableness on the reliance on the unknown was felt acutely by parents trapped in Germany when their children had already reached safety. As Walter requested his daughter's help in building bridges with her classmates, Annelore Rothschild's parents in Stuttgart equally needed their daughter's assistance in facilitating their own emigration, something they instructed her often in their correspondence:

> Mother and I are now trying in the same way as Uncle Hans and Aunt Louisa to possibly get permission to go to England which we will only find out about in a few weeks' time. [...] I now blame myself that I did not stress to you how important it is for you and us all to make a good impression with Family A and W. I considered it obvious. Now apparently any help from them has to be buried which means that I am forced to look at our life in a strange country on a completely [different] basis without any help from our nearest relatives. I cannot say whether I will succeed without a miracle.[488]

The Rothschild letters are often long and extensive, filled with abbreviations such as above. Whilst we cannot be sure who 'Family A and W' are, the necessity of Annelore facilitating this connection was clear. Annelore thus became responsible for maintaining in person relationships in England and fostering the expansion of their trusted network. Near the end of 1938, Annelore began meeting individuals who had helped her brother Gerhard gain his place at the Saugeen School in Bournemouth, and later in Wimborne, Dorset, in the hope this connection would be positive for both herself and her parents. Siegfried reminded her 'try and make a good impression in Bournemouth'.[489]

Jeanette Franklin-Kohn was born in December 1888 to a well-established upper middle class Anglo-Jewish family, one of three children of Sir Leonard Benjamin Franklin and his wife Laura Agnes Ladenburg. A successful sculptor in her own right, and noted patron of the arts, during the mid-1930s Jeanette became involved in various committees as well as privately facilitating the movement of over 100 children out of Germany. In her handwritten recollections penned in the 1960s, Jeanette explained how these activities began once her and her husband Fritz returned from Germany:

[487] Marion Goldberg diary entry, 20 June 1940, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[488] Siegfried Rothschild to Annelore Rothschild, 9 February 1939, PC-JBG/MT. Trans. unknown.
[489] Ibid., 24 October 1938, PC-JBG/MT. Trans. unknown.

Children were allowed to come to England if they had homes or schools to go to.
We recommended our friends who had relations outside Germany who could pay reduced fees to send their children over & we would get them into schools or families.
We took the (Schools Register) & got free or cheap places & arranged uniform, holidays etc. We then felt that it wasn't fair that children should have these advantages just because we knew their parents & we arranged with the Jewish Congregational Committees of the States of Baden & Wurttemberg to send us particulars of boys and girls with photographs & drew up a questionnaire for the purpose. We then wrote round to a large no of schools saying that there were especially gifted children & if helped would do them credit & had a kind & generous number of acceptances.[490]

Whilst it is unclear exactly how the Rothschild's found Jeanette or indeed how she found them, the maintenance of this vital chain in their support network was key.[491] Jeanette introduced Gerhard and Annelore to the Halevy family in Bournemouth (the reference Siegfried made above) something that Gerhard would cherish for the rest of their lives.

Fig. 25 Jeanette Franklin-Kohn passport photograph [undated]. Private Collection of M. Bromnick, London, UK.

[490] Copies of Jeanette Franklin Kohn memoir [undated]. Private Collection of M. Bromnick (PC-MB).
[491] Both the Rothschild family archive and the family archive of Jeanette Franklin-Kohn contain correspondence with the Jewish Community of Baden-Württemberg so it is perhaps likely that this was the connecting bridge.

5.2 'Everything is about money and I despair to think that a human life depends on it': Relief Efforts and Financial Aid

Facilitating emigration through networks was often the primary goal of these connections. However, as the war progressed, or even as the specific situations of loved ones was made clear – such plans sometimes had to be altered or dropped entirely. If facilitating a loved one's onward migration was not possible due to incarceration – relief packages were equally something to be organised through correspondence. The course of the war disrupted even the most determined individuals' ability to provide their loved ones with news, goods, or support. As the war advanced, increasing bombing and battlefield combat physically disrupted trade routes and housing, as well as the communicative infrastructure which in turn meant letters and parcels were delayed for often months at a time. In her 2019 thesis, Jan Lambertz highlighted that despite the course of the war having major implications for even the most well placed aid and tracing agencies in Europe, for the multitude of displaced people around the world, such realities were inconsequential when the desire to help lost family was so high. Even amongst officials in New York and London, this disparity between the wish to deliver aid and the inability to facilitate it was felt. Lambertz quotes a letter from 1944 written by the World Jewish Congress (WJC) Geneva office to their colleagues Aryeh Tartakower and Chaim Finkelstein in New York in which they write 'It seems to me that you do not realize the impossibility to make any inquiries in nearly all European countries occupied by the Germans'.[492]

Whilst direct correspondence into camps and ghettos later in the war was virtually impossible, indeed the fervent desire for such often played to the camp authorities' benefit, letters were allowed to be sent and received by those individuals who had fled west but were subsequently imprisoned in French internment camps.[493] Prior to the French surrender and armistice in June 1940, there were approximately 2,450,000 foreign nationals in France, a total Jewish population of 330,000 – 40% of whom were immigrants, many of which were refugees having fled westwards. In the southern Vichy government, Marshall Petain inherited a network of camps which held thousands of foreign nationals including some 40,000 Austrians and Germans labelled politically dissident, or at least suspicious. Whilst some were freed, the new regime

[492] World Jewish Congress-Geneva office to Tartakower and Finkelstein, 16 October 1944, USHMM, RG-68.045, reel 71, quoted in Jan Lambertz, 'Early Postwar Holocaust Knowledge and Jewish Missing Persons' (unpublished PhD thesis, Royal Holloway University of London, 2018), p.27.

[493] Nazi officials utilised separated families' wishes for correspondence to their own advantage employing what later became known as Operation Mail or *Briefaktion.* See Jennifer Putnam, 'Briefaktion Postcards from the Theresienstadt Family Camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau' in *Holocaust Letters: Methodologies, Cases, and Reflections,* ed. by Clara Dijkstra, Charlie Knight, Sandra Lipner and Christine Schmidt (London: Bloomsbury, 2026 [forthcoming]).

enacted a series of laws which allowed for the internment of many more, mainly Jews. Between the summers of 1940 and 1942 therefore, many French camps almost exclusively became sites of Jewish internment.[494]

Many such as Walter Goldberg (we presume), who had been residing in Nice, were imprisoned due to improper papers or incorrect citizenship documentation. Walter had fled to France illegally in 1938, moving across the border from San Remo in Italy to Mento in France in the dead of night 'across slopes, rubble and prickly plants to the French border'.[495] Walter was initially interned in Les Milles Camp near Marseille but was quickly sent to Camp de Gurs in the Pyrenees. In a letter to his sister-in-law Lotte in America, Walter noted that '[t]he new camp is in a beautiful location and has the altitude of Plauen and a similar climate' but was less willing to discuss his quality of life there: 'There is no need to go into the details of our living conditions'.[496] Via the small camp of St Antoine in Albi, Walter returned to Les Milles by May 1941 alongside other refugees who had the required documentation to eventually leave for Portugal. Conditions in the Vichy camps, including Les Milles, were dire. Many did not survive the poor hygienic conditions, severe undernourishment (internees consumed between 950 and 1,200 calories per day), and lack of drinkable water, indeed Theodor Hirschberg's cousin Ernst Böhm died in Gurs from frostbite. In a report forwarded to Walter once he reached Cuba, written by Raymond Raoul Lambert of the General Union of French Jews, the diplomat wrote that 'the impression made by the refugees on a visitor is one of unutterable misery, of physical degeneration and even of moral despair'.[497]

Communication in and out of Vichy government internment camps was allowed as well as the sending of food and further relief parcels.[498] Poor conditions and the lack of food occupied an interesting place within such correspondence with many of those imprisoned running the fine line between being honest with their correspondents as a result hopefully prompting action in them, and opting to hide the reality to spare them the worry. In the summer of 1941 whilst he

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[494] Pedro Correa Martín-Arroyo, 'Europe's Bottleneck: The Iberian Peninsula and the Jewish Refugee Crisis, 1933-1944' (unpublished PhD thesis, London School of Economics, 2018), pp.78-79.

[495] Walter Goldberg: Personal account re Novemberpogrom, WL 2041/6. Trans. K. Baumgartner.

[496] Walter Goldberg to Lotte Kariel, 5 November 1940, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner. On other letters sent to and from Gurs during the war see *Die bittere Not begreifen Deutsch-jüdische Deportiertenpost aus südfranzösischen Internierungslagern im Kontext der Hilfsaktion der Jüdischen Gemeinde Kreuzlingen Thurgau/Schweiz rund 75 Jahre danach zur Erinnerung 1940 – 1945*, ed. by Erhard Roy Wiehn (Konstanz: artung-Gorre Verlag, 2016).

[497] Report on Jewish Internment Camp at Gurs [undated], p.14, TNA CO 137/854/8.

[498] A large section of the Wiener Holocaust Library's groundbreaking exhibition 'Holocaust Letters' was dedicated to letters in the French internment camp Gurs. See https://exhibitions.wienerholocaustlibrary.org/holocaust-letters/german-jews-gurs/, last accessed: 3 October 2024. For more the relief networks to these camps see Martín-Arroyo, 'Europe's Bottleneck', pp.79-86.

was interned in Les Milles, Walter Goldberg wrote to his daughter reassuring her of his situation:

> I am counting the days until we will see each other again [...] I am touched that you want to help me; I thank you so much. But please don't limit yourself in any way on my behalf. At your age one has to eat well and have enough healthy nutrition. Please spend your money on this. You are right: at the moment, you can't send me neither money nor parcels. Only from Portugal one can send small parcels, which is what Aunt Carrie does sometimes. And via the Committee for Relief of the War-Stricken Jewish Population (short "Relico") one can do that. But that would have to be arranged by Woburn House and only if it covers the cost. I do not want you to spend money![499]

The Committee for Relief of the War-Stricken Jewish Population more commonly known as RELICO was set up, according to historian Anne Lepper, 'to provide quick and direct support to all Jews forced into desperate straits by the war, no matter where they were located'. Upon the realization by the WJC that there was a realistic and tremendous danger to many European Jews, the decision was made to combine the relief efforts of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) with the political channels of the WJC with under a new subdivision: RELICO led by Abraham Silberschein and Gerhart Riegner. Initially providing relief through large collective shipments organised by Riegner to Poland, as the situation in France worsened and individuals from all over the world began writing to Geneva asking for information, Silberschein began work on a private parcel scheme which aimed to ameliorate this mass increase in concerned individuals.[500]

Despite both Marion and Walter's knowledge that he *could* be sent parcels through Silberschein's scheme, Walter requested Marion not do so if it was a financial choice between her eating and him eating. This heartbreaking paragraph speaks to summarise the vast majority of correspondence between Walter and Marion during this period, where Walter at all costs sought to ameliorate his daughter's situation and save her from the realities of the horror he faced. In his first letter to Lotte in America after being interned, Walter reminded her that '[m]ost important are Trude and Marion. Please look after them'.[501] In his monograph *Aus Menschen werden Briefe,* Oliver Doetzer, building on the work of Isa Schikorsky, noted indeed

[499] Walter Goldberg to Marion Goldberg, 31 August 1941. MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[500] For more on the RELICO postal scheme see Anne Lepper, "'Because I know what that means to you': The RELICO Parcel Scheme Organised in Geneva during World War II," in *More Than Parcels: Wartime Aid for Jews in Nazi-Era Camps and Ghettos*, ed. Jan Lambertz and Jan Láníček (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2022), 49–77 (p.54). Vichy camps were also involved in large aid networks as well as the individual parcel schemes; see Laure A Drake, 'Jewish Food Aid in Vichy's Internment Camps, June 1940 - November 1942' in the same volume. For more on the letters sent to RELICO during this period see Charlie Knight, ''I beg you again from my heart to help me find my sister': RELICO and the Need for Knowledge', *Migrant Knowledge Blog,* 8 December 2022, accessed via: https://migrantknowledge.org/2022/12/08/relico-and-the-need-for-knowledge/, last accessed: 3 October 2024.
[501] Walter Goldberg to Lotte Kariel, 19 September 1940, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.

that one of the four defining corresponding strategies of those in Germany writing to those displaced, was a fervent desire to downplay one's own difficulties.[502] This tactic was often equally employed by those displaced writing to those in Germany – for example Marion was never honest with her parents over the level of her mental health crises at the time. Such obfuscation of the truth however, could not always be maintained in the face of increasingly difficult situations. Whilst the majority of requests for parcels were sent directly from Walter in France to his sister-in-law Lotte in the USA, after over a year of internment in France in different camps, Walter was open with his daughter over his hunger writing: 'The food situation is very, very bad – I can't remember how it feels to be full'.[503]

It appears however that Walter's familial network was not the only vehicle through which he requested financial aid and food parcels. In various letters to Marion and Lotte, he reassures them of the value of his relationship with 'Tante Carrie'[504] and how vital she is, as 'without [her] help I would perish'.[505] Only a few months after this affirmation was sent, in his first letter from Camp de Gurs to the Kariels in the USA, Walter perhaps realised that such a reliance was not sustainable when the post was so irregular:

> Unfortunately, I haven't had a parcel from Carry since the beginning of September and therefore I am in great distress. You cannot imagine the bare minimum I need to maintain my health. [...] We live a very simple life but we could improve our existence if we had a small amount of money. My health is inconsistent, some days are good and some days I have awful kidney pain. But please don't say anything to Trudel. I received a letter from Marion on the 6th September, already two months ago. I worry about her constantly and would be happy if you could report something positive about her. Please also inform Carry whose new address I don't know, unfortunately. Other people's parcels here arrive regularly. Would you be so nice to send me some soap and shaving creme? Food won't get through, not even at Christmas. I would never have thought food would be so important one day.[506]

Carrie Stern (1898-1994, born Gerst, later Kroff) was the wife of Karl Stern (1890-1934) a doctor from Munich who according to Walter's letters treated various members of the family including himself and Marion. It's probable then that this was the connection. Karl died in 1934 and Carrie left Munich for San Francisco in 1938 where she remained for the rest of her life.[507] Carrie

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[502] Doetzer, *Aus Menschen werden Briefe,* p.224.
[503] Walter Goldberg to Marion Goldberg, 28 December 1941. MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[504] Sometimes spelt *Carry* in the correspondence.
[505] Walter Goldberg to Lotte Kariel, 19 September 1940, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[506] Walter Goldberg to Lotte Kariel, 5 November 1940, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[507] Carrie Kroff oral history interview, Leo Baeck Institute AR 25385 ROS_IE3889136.

became Walter's lifeline – he would often thank her for sending small parcels, food, and money. Indeed, Walter later asked Marion in a letter once he was freed:

> Did you know that Carrie assumed almost complete responsibility for the financial guarantee to get me here? We have to thank her so much – she is a real friend![508]

For those who found themselves in situations to help those either trapped in Germany or interned elsewhere, money became a central factor which consumed their networks. Before his internment, when many - but not all - of his requests turned to relief for his own situation, Walter Goldberg's two primary concerns whilst in Nice, was the condition of his daughter in Britain, and the rescue of his wife in Plauen. In March 1940, Walter requested in a letter to his daughter that she try and network with an unknown individual to aid her mother's plight:

> If you can get in touch with the well-known and helpful lady, then please talk with her about Mutti. She wrote that she would be able to get to Brazil if she had 500 Dollars in exchange. This is an amount which is considered by itself fairly small but in our situation unaffordable. Everything is about money and I despair to think that a human life depends on it. I try to do whatever I can but I just don't get anywhere. Maybe you have more luck.[509]

Although we cannot be sure who this individual is, it is clear Walter believed she was able to aid their situation. Walter's despair at the thought of money being the root of his wife's failed emigration was also evident. Despite this need to financial help, Walter later made it very clear to his daughter that this help needed to come from specific places:

> I am not happy about the conversation you had with Dr. Nora about Mutti. I didn't think that you would ask her about the money, as you wrote me that a friend introduced you to a charitable lady and you wanted to talk to her. I don't think it was diplomatic to ask Dr. Nora who does so much for you and who is therefore already financially challenged. I am sure she will not hold it against you but understand it as a child's love [for her mother]. She might however be upset if she thinks that I made you ask her. Therefore, I beg you to find an opportunity to tell her that this was your idea and that I do not approve. People will otherwise think that we try to exploit them and that must be avoided under any circumstances. I am sure you understand what I mean, don't you? I count on you. – I thought you had met people you could turn to.[510]

As networks expanded and communities emerged within the epistolary spaces formed through necessity, these relationships and bonds of trust manifested themselves through the pieces of

[508] Walter Goldberg to Marion Goldberg, 29 June 1942, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[509] Ibid., 26 March 1940. MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[510] Ibid., 16 April 1940, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.

paper sent around the world. When one side of a separated relationship found themselves in difficult situations, letters became the primary way of organising aid, expressing thanks for said relief, and even convincing others that such efforts were welcome but should not come at the expense of their own health and wellbeing. The correspondence between Walter, his daughter Marion and his sister-in-law Lotte speaks to a reliance on an epistolary network when individuals' lives heavily depended on these metaphysical and yet wholly tangible and consequential forms of contact.

Summary

It is difficult to fully grasp the interconnectedness of historical actors' lives, even more so to accurately depict this literarily or otherwise. The notion of a *single* figure's testimony, or an *individual's* letter collection, presents the experience as something isolated, and indeed, survival and refuge more broadly, as equally detached. In highlighting the kith and kin networks apparent in survivor testimony, Paris Papamichos Chronakis suggested that the concept of the survivor as a 'networked self' provided greater utility and accuracy.[511] The same here can be said for individuals referenced within letters. Whilst often penned between two sole figures, letters' contents offer insight into a far greater breadth than the name addressed to, and the name signed from. In understanding the letter as an epistolary space, this chapter considers letters as part of a wider postal storm occurring during the Holocaust, where separated individuals created webs of connection through the sending and receiving of news, details, messages globally. In the case of facilitating migration as this chapter has shown, the letter acted as a vehicle for unification when other means failed. Whilst some reconnected with friends and family in order to secure their own safety and sustenance, others widened their horizons, prompting the birth of new epistolary networks, and the expansion of existing ones. It is these same networks alongside other institutional ones, which also facilitated a growing knowledge production through correspondence in the course of the war.

[511] Chronakis, 'From the Lone Survivor to the Networked Self', 83.

PART III

KEEPING INFORMED

> I admire you when you keep writing about a reunion with the parents in your letters. Let me tell you – the parents and sadly me too, we cannot imagine this ever happening; the events [here] are not as bright as they might look from your perspective! But as my heart gets heavy and heavier writing about it, I will stop and start another
>
> *Rosa Gertrud Goldberg to Lotte Kariel, 5 February 1941*

Unwilling to leave her parents David and Julia behind in Plauen, Gertrud Goldberg had stayed in the city after sending her daughter Marion to Britain on the *Kindertransport*. Despite hearing from Gertrud via third party correspondence in addition to receiving information from friends and relatives in neutral countries, the specifics of her situation prior to deportation was unknown to her husband, daughter, and sister Lotte, despite cryptic allusions to a world 'not as bright' anymore. On 10 January 1941, Gertrud's home at Karlstraße 10 was searched by Leipzig customs officials who uncovered 1,700 RM of Gertrud's as well as 300RM she was keeping for her boarder Mirla Kuczynski (Steinberg, 1883-1942) far beyond the amount allowed under the *Kriegswirtschaftsverordnung* (war economy laws). Merely three days after, Gertrud wrote to her sister Lotte in the USA and by proxy to Marion, not mentioning the search at all. Indeed in a letter from 16 June 1941, three days before her hearing in Leipzig, any mention of her legal woes were entirely absent - the only allusion being from February that year and the extract above.[512]

Gertrud's boarder Mirla Steinberg was born in 1883 in the city of Tomaszów then in the Russian Empire. In 1908 she married the merchant Salomon Kuczynski and the couple moved to Plauen where Salomon ran a clothing store. After his death in 1939, Mirla sublet a room from Hedwig Lay (born Heinemann, 1890-1942) at Pestalozzistraße 67, and later with Gertrud Goldberg on Karlstraße.[513] After her six week imprisonment in Leipzig following the hearing, Mirla presumably returned to Plauen but in January 1942 was deported to Ravensbrück Concentration Camp where she was murdered on 9 June the same year. Gertrud was sentenced to four months and one week in prison and was due to be released on 4 January 1942 but was instead transferred to the custody of the Plauen Gestapo. It is unclear if or when she was released before her deportation on 10 May 1942 to the Bełżyce Ghetto.

Beginning in Weimar, the train picked up 287 more people from Leipzig and surrounding areas, and in the evening reached Chemnitz, where another 199 people from Chemnitz, Plauen, and Zwickau were forced to board. In a letter to his Marion, Walter referred to a number of friends,

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[512] 20034 Strafanstalt Leipzig-Kleinmeusdorf, no. 372, Sächsisches Staatsarchiv, Staatsarchiv Leipzig.

[513] Mirla had three sons Chaskiel (1908-44), Jacob (1911-43), and Max (1921-43). Chaskiel was later deported to the Lodz ghetto where he was murdered in 1944. Max and Jacob had emigrated to Belgium in 1939; they were deported from Mechelen in 1943 to Auschwitz where they were also murdered.

neighbours, and acquaintances who has also ‘gone east’: Gertrud Gassenheimer (born Cohn, 1884-1942) who lived downstairs at Karlstrasse 10 with the Goldbergs, Pragers and Pelzs (also mentioned in the correspondence), and Gertrud Steinberg (born Coblenzer, 1883-1942) who lived at Pestalozzistraße alongside the Lay’s and others. In February 1942, Gertrud’s father David died in Plauen, aged 76; her mother, Julia, was deported to the *Hellerberg Judenlager* near Dresden in circa February 1943. The camp was cleared on 2 March, with only 32 Jews remaining, all over the age of 65. Julia died on the 8 March 1943.

Fig. 26 David Prager (undated). Manchester Central Library GB127.M756.

Fig. 27 Julia Prager (Ringer) (undated). Manchester Central Library GB127.M756.

Peter Fritzsche has written how the Holocaust acted as a ‘far-reaching detonation that impaired the ability to transmit knowledge’, referring to the difficulty of information passing through the continent during wartime.[514] Perhaps more accurately though, one could write that the war itself had far reaching *detonations* – ones which prohibited familial communication in the usual channels and ones which forced relatives to self-censor, write via long extended chains, and formulate intricate codes and ciphers. Whilst it is unsurprising that the Goldbergs’ communication above only references in passing a perceived darkening of the situation

[514] Peter Fritzsche, ‘The Holocaust and the Knowledge of Murder’, *The Journal of Modern History*, 80/3 (2008), 594–613 (p.596).

surrounding them, letters that were sent during the war offer a range of insights into wider macro-histories of the spread of information during the Holocaust, and smaller histories of the 'everyday' knowledge transferred via epistolary spaces.

Part 3 – 'Keeping Informed' – examines the various ways in which a host of different information traversed boundaries during the 1930s and 1940s. Split into two chapters, part 3 analyses how epistolary spaces emerged as sites of knowledge production and knowledge transfer, where correspondents sought to better understand the lives of each other, and to educate each other on the reality (or indeed a faux reality) of their lived experiences. Chapter 6 - **Communicating the everyday** – suggests that discussions of seeming banality often acted as routes to continued presence in loved one's lives through education, as well as 'migrant knowledge' where letters acted as repositories of migratory experiences. Utilising the Licht and Goldberg family papers predominantly, I argue that letters were both a means of parenting and a route to understanding what the everyday life of exile and their loved one's continued presence in it, consisted of. The final chapter - **On war and persecution** - instead examines how the letters of the Amberg, Licht, Rothschild, Hirschberg, and Goldberg families provided a means through which the correspondents could mediate, understand, and internalise growing awareness of and responses to, what became known as the Holocaust. Focussing on awareness of the wider course of the war alongside the more narrow plight of European Jewry, this section demonstrates how many of the networks discussed in Part 2 acted as vehicles for knowledge production as writers sought to understand the growing calamity around them. German-Jews cross referenced letters with public knowledge of the Holocaust to build a more whole and indeed personalised body of understanding. In the months immediately following the end of the war in Europe, letter writing continued to provide loved one's with a route to seeking information, and a way of coping with the realisation that many of their families had been murdered.

CHAPTER 6

Communicating the Everyday

Since the 1980s Hans Medick's and Alf Lüdtke's *Alltagsgeschichte*, or the history of everyday life, has transformed how many German historians, and indeed historians of Germany, interact with the past – none so much as with the histories of the Third Reich.[515] In a forum piece in *German History* from 2009, a number of scholars reflected on *Alltagsgeschichte* and the Nazi past, including the level of 'everyday knowledge' of the Holocaust.[516] More pertinently here, *Alltagsgeschichte* has revealed the colossal impact on the lives of 'everyday' members of society; Guy Miron and others have for example noted the reality and responses found in 'lived' experiences of the Reich.[517] In relation to broader knowledge of the Holocaust then to be found in Holocaust-era correspondence, Christine Schmidt and Dan Stone note that discussions of the 'everyday' under specific circumstances reveal much about the experiences of migration and indeed experiences of the Holocaust. The authors write that '"Everyday" knowledge is also evidence of adaptation to changing circumstances and systems of oppression' and highlight the work of Andrea Westermann, who has argued that increasingly the lives and experiences of 'ordinary' migrants can be viewed as knowledge in its own right.[518]

German-Jewish letters during the Holocaust not only speak to a history of wider communication networks, knowledge of genocide, or wider geopolitical concerns (albeit on a microlevel), but equally to a history of everyday life under these extreme circumstances. In some cases these examples speak to said circumstances, in the majority of cases however, discussions of love, loss, friendship, career and many others, allow insight into the lived experience of individuals in exile and those they left behind. As Andrea Hammel in her work on *Kindertransport* correspondence notes, 'everyday life does not just foreground how individuals' lives were

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[515] See Alf Lüdtke (ed.), *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995).
[516] 'Everyday life in Nazi Germany', *German History*, 27/4 (2009), 560–79.
[517] See Miron, 'The Lived Space of German Jews', and 'The "lived time" of German Jews'.
[518] See Christine Schmidt and Dan Stone, 'What was Known? Holocaust-era Letters as Sources of Knowledge Production', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* (forthcoming); Andrea Westermann, 'Migrant Knowledge: An Entangled Object of Research', *Migrant Knowledge* (14 March 2019), accessed via: https://migrantknowledge.org/2019/03/14/migrant-knowledge/, last accessed: 16 April 2025.

impacted and determined by the repressive social forces of the time, but it also reveals the agency and imagination of individuals in resisting those forces of everydayness'.[519] Although under extreme circumstances (their own forced migration and the impending war in Europe) the five families in this thesis continued to share information across borders as a means of updating family and friends and communicating the 'everyday'. In the context of migration and separation, epistolary spaces are evidently educational in many regards. The sharing, mediating, and manufacturing of information through correspondence created knowledge for both the writer and addressee, with both the sending and receiving of details pertaining to everyday life forming part of a splintered but growing education on what migration entailed, and what familial life was like in exile. The following section will as a result, examine examples of 'everydayness' within the correspondences studied in this thesis

Firstly, I will examine how the letters from **parents** to their children attempt to educate and raise their offspring from afar, specifically in contexts where the children are encountering romantic and sexual feelings and experiences away from their family. Using examples from Marion Goldberg's diary, letters, and post-war testimony, as well as smaller examples from the Rothschild papers, this subsection argues that epistolary spaces became ground for renewed parenting efforts once families were separated. Secondly, this section will examine **migrant knowledge** apparent in the letters studied, specifically how seemingly banal or 'everyday' discussions of sporting fixtures acted as knowledge producers for the readers. Using Lässig and Steinberg's discussions of 'resilience' in the study of migrant knowledge, this subsection utilises the Licht family's interest in their son's new involvement with the cricket team coupled with his assimilation into English life and culture, to reveal a joyousness on the part of his parents in a world where they cannot be united.

6.1 Parenting from afar: Relationships, Sex, and Knowledge

For many of the child refugees in the correspondence of the five families this thesis examines, letters were a means through which their parents could - *parent*. Where children experienced puberty whilst abroad and away from their parents, some felt the need to educate their children and provide them with the everyday knowledge needed to continue their lives in exile. Furthering her point on letters demonstrating an individual agency within the everyday, Andrea Hammel writes that instances of parenting within German-Jewish refugee correspondence reflect a 'relationship in less traumatic circumstances', in other words one not overtly shadowed by the

[519] Andrea Hammel, "Liebe Eltern!' ? 'Liebes Kind': Letters between Kindertransportees and their Families as Everyday Life Documents', in *Exile and Everyday Life*, ed. by Andrea Hammel and Anthony Grenville (Leiden: Brill, 2015) pp.155-72 (p.160).

spectre of Nazism.[520] The Goldbergs' and Rothschilds' attempts to educate their children in regard to sex, relationships, and emotional lives through the epistolary is notable, if albeit evidently uncomfortable on their parts.

At the start of 1940, Marion confided to her diary her confusion over her growing dreams of Rolf, a friend from her childhood in Plauen who had emigrated to Palestine sometime in the 1930s, whom she evidently missed dearly. Marion wrote that 'I think "I" do not belong to myself anymore; I belong to Rolf. What's more: I don't know if Rolf ever thinks of me? I feel so close to him'.[521] Evidently puzzled by her dreams, a sixteen year old Marion wrote to her mother in Plauen. Gertrud's reply encouraged her daughter to continue to ask questions:

> I want to write about the sexual problem which you brought up. You would be right if you could remember one of our last conversations and the reason is that you, my little Marion, didn't ask further questions. In general, I am of the opinion – and if we still lived together – to only explain things to a child as far as the questions go. But now because of your question, I can see that there was a lot more I should have talked about. And as you are able to write freely in your letters, please try to talk about things without inhibitions. And I think that this will make you feel better and you will feel freer. I will leave up to you what you ask me but please know that your mother is always there to listen to you!![522]

Since the letters were being sent via friends and relatives in neutral countries, Gertrud insisted her daughter was able to 'write freely [...] without inhibitions'. Gertrud aimed to continue her parenting style through correspondence, only answering questions as far as her daughter asked. In the oral history tapes found in her collection at Manchester Central Library, Marion in later life recalled that 'at home our life was very prudish, and no one discussed sex. I was so bad'.[523] As a well-established, and respected sexual health nurse in later life, Marion perhaps applied her later, more liberal view of sex onto her former self and her life. Nevertheless, Marion's confusion continued when her friend Ruth wrote of her sexual relations with a boy, leading Marion to confide in her diary:

> [...] why have I not been informed about this before? Why was I never told, about these things? Why is Ruth already so far [advanced]? Shouldn't one do these things only when one feels mature

[520] Ibid., p.164.
[521] Marion Goldberg diary entry, 6 January 1940, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[522] R. Gertrud Goldberg to Marion Goldberg, February 1940, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[523] Marion Goldberg Oral History Tape, MCL.

> enough? I don't know. In this field there are so many unbelievable things I need to learn about. But who will tell me about them?[524]

In response to a presumably subsequent letter Marion had penned to her mother about 'ambiguous conversations', Gertrud replied as fully as she perhaps felt able to:

> And now you want me to explain "ambiguous conversations". That is not easy. But I'd like to anticipate that until this day I have never liked any kind of this conversation and it is one that is promoted by people who talk themselves into this kind of erotic emotions without actually feeling them. But I like to hear that you don't like them either – quite the opposite, you abhor this kind of conversation. I have to tell you that this often disgusts me in particular when it is done in a bigger group. These are things which shouldn't be discussed in a bigger group, right? But what surprises me in particular is that you understand that kind of conversation already in [English] slang- that can't be easy?[525]

Encouraging her daughter to disregard such 'erotic emotions', Gertrud seemingly validated her daughter's uncomfortableness with group discussions of sex. She continued to discuss her daughter's previous interest in a boy, Jack, advising her daughter to 'never attach yourself too much to a man even if you love him with all your soul. Try to hold a certain distance if you don't want to be his slave'.[526] Her mother's best attempts to educate her daughter through the limited correspondence available, was not supported by Marion's own lack of connection with the Acheson's and any other parental figure for that matter. In her reflections towards the end of her life, Marion noted that she 'was quite promiscuous' but continued that her 'promiscuity was always [aimed at] finding someone who would love me, and I had no way of knowing how this worked'. Towards the end of the war, Marion reached out to her father in Cuba about her sexual education, no longer able to confide in her mother. Whilst Walter noted that it was 'beyond [his] sphere of influence' he conceded that 'one needs all the information. I just hope and wish that the possible lack of this knowledge didn't get you into situations which I don't know about but which I would regret very much'.[527]

Similar questions on their own maturing and evolving relationships in England were evidently posed to Annelore and Gerhard Rothschild's parents as well, albeit to a lesser percentage vis-à-vis the letters as a whole. Siegfried's reply demonstrates a similar discomfort with larger

[524] Marion Goldberg diary entry, 15 September 1940, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[525] R. Gertrud Goldberg to Marion Goldberg, March 1940, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[526] Ibid.
[527] Walter Goldberg to Marrion Goldberg, 12 May 1944, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.

discussions with his children's peer group, as well as his wish to ensure his children are informed on what is 'appropriate':

> As for the English boys: you do not need to worry about what they do, you are only responsible for yourself, not for them; do not forget, they are in their homeland, but you are not and you must stand out from them in a good way, not in a bad way; you do not need to be a spoilsport or a prig, but there is always a middle ground, where you can be calm and sensible. – And as for girls: that is a joke, a normal 14 year old boy has nothing to do with girls; they are no different, girls, to lads, only nature has made them differently and with a different purpose to us; always think, that your Mutsch was also a girl and then you will be able to keep within the correct boundaries; [...] there are as many fine, decent folks amongst them, as amongst boys; but it is silly, to mess about with them at 14 or even younger; and so, the city boys act, just as the country boys act; it is a shame that I cannot speak to you, it is harder to put things in writing and explain them; perhaps Mutsch knows something more she can write[528]

Siegfried's attempt to educate his son on how to deal with presumably 'ambiguous conversations' in a group setting, is framed under the wish for his son to 'stand out from them in a good way'. Indeed, in the same letter Siegfried advised his children similarly in regards to antisemitism in Britain: 'it is your job, each to his side, to show the decent people that it is not justified'. In her work on Jewish Youth Clubs in London in the Interwar period, Sally Smith tracks the sexual understanding of both Jewish and gentile adolescent communities and argues that 'it was clear that adolescents were not ignorant of sex' noting that 'leisure had allowed them to interact and experiment with each other more than ever before'.[529] Indeed Anglo-Jewish communities severely disapproved of the growing sexual liberation of younger members of the community, fearful that any deviance would tarnish them more widely, clearly akin with how Siegfried also saw the situation.[530] The concern, and indeed disdain, which both Gertrud Goldberg, and Siegfried and Margarethe Rothschild display for *public* discussions of a sexual nature is clear.

There is further something particularly gendered about *who* is the primary driver in monitoring, commenting on, and educating their adolescent children's emotional and sexual lives, even when separated. Indeed in his brief discussion of his daughter's sexual life, Walter Goldberg was 'surprised that Mutti supposedly didn't do that'.[531] Marion Kaplan has highlighted that the range of advice literature available to the middle class Jewish mother, assured them of their own

[528] Siegfried Rothschild to Annelore and Gerhard Rothschild, 20 January 1939, PC-JBG/MT. Trans. unknown.
[529] Sally Smith, 'Sex, Leisure and Jewish Youth Clubs in Inter-War London', *Jewish Culture and History*, 9/1 (2007), 1–26 (p.11).
[530] Ibid.
[531] Walter Goldberg to Marrion Goldberg, 12 May 1944, MCL. Trans. unknown.

primacy in the sexual and relational lives of their children – that nothing was off limits.[532] Indeed, according to Jonas Frykman's historical anthropological analysis of middle-class life, 'the more strict the social order, the more repressed the sexuality', and as Kaplan notes – there is little surprise in the strictness and intrusiveness of *Fin de siècle* Jewish parenting.[533] In a letter penned a day after her husband's, Margarethe Rothschild wrote to her two children in one of the rare letters directly from her in the collection, perhaps demonstrative of the gendered notion of such education. Siegfried had admitted that letter writing was not the best medium for him to have these conversations with his children (although one must be incredibly doubtful whether in person would have been any more open), and suggested his wife would have more wisdom to add. Margarethe followed, writing that:

> You are now at a certain stage in your life, you are a boy, not yet a man, and the boys at your school believe they are older and wiser, but they are not. They are still young lads, who believe to be grown up, running after young girls. But there are also decent girls and boys around who think seriously about their future rather than waste time on useless stuff or flirting.

After making it clear that the fourteen year old was not as old as he believed himself to be, Margaretha continued in regards to something Gerhard had clearly brought up with his parents previously:

> Then there's the other thing you mentioned – I suspected as much, especially after you bought the Irrigator back in the autumn, I guessed as much and this made me pretty anxious, but I knew at the time that you were not ready to talk, but today I am reassured and glad that you mentioned it as we can now talk to you about it and I believe that you have now reached a point in which you see things clearer and differently. It's not natural and you want to be able to look people in the eye and prove that you are decent and go your way with you head held high. It would never have entered your father's head to get involved with that kind of stuff. Look – even Gutmann and Cave don't do it. [...] If you have respect towards your mother and father then you cannot do such things. You will want to one day marry and be able to tell your wife that you were clean all your life, just like our daughter will also hopefully be able to look her husband in the face and openly say the same, just like I did with your father.[534]

Whilst we cannot be one hundred percent sure of what exactly is being discussed in her letter, it is evident that Margarethe was attempting to forcefully inform her son of the 'correct' manner with which to conduct oneself in regards to relationships. Such conversations as those had by

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[532] Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class,* pp.60-61.

[533] Jonas Frykman and Orvar Löfgren, trans. by Alan Crozier, *Culture builders: a historical anthropology of middle-class life* (London : Rutgers University Press, 1987), p.244.

[534] Margarethe Rothschild to Annelore Rothschild, 21 January 1939, PC-JBG/MT. Trans. unknown.

the Goldbergs and Rothschilds through correspondence demonstrate a wish to continue educating their children from afar. Discussions of an everyday nature, those that if together would have been had inside the family home, now had to occur within epistolary spaces. Whilst many correspondents lamented this fact and the inadequacy of the letter's ability to convey any meaningful sentiment, they had to nevertheless try.

6.2 *Land und Leute in England*?: Migrant Knowledge, Language, and Cricket

Whilst Carl Zuckmeyer's assertion that the vast majority of migrant correspondence centres on discussions of migration, this can perhaps be extended slightly to encompass more than the journey itself, but in addition discussions of what migration means culturally, and what future migrants seek to understand in writing profusely to those that have gone ahead. In other words, a focus on the post-journey discussions, life in exile, and the desire to understand linguistically and culturally what this new reality entailed. In their foundational article in *Geschichte und Gesellschaft,* introducing the concept on 'migrant knowledge', Simone Lässig and Swen Steinberg note that the microhistorical in studies on migrant knowledge, remind us that said knowledge is not transmitted by boats or planes, but by people. It is thus the personal and the 'everyday' which often come to the fore.

Lässig and Steinberg argued in 2017 that knowledge can act as a form of 'resilience' in cases of migration that are uncertain, unpredictable or indeed, forced, as is the case with the five families discussed here. The authors questioned what skills, cultural codes, and knowledge, migrants draw upon as they 'try to come to terms with contexts for which they do not yet possess a frame of reference'.[535] In the cases presented here, epistolary space provided a plain on which information could traverse, and a vehicle through which families could be united if only imaginatively. I interpret 'resilience' then as those discussions which whilst seemingly banal or unimportant in nature, fostered an atmosphere within the correspondences that reassured those forced to remain in Germany, that those that had left were safe, secure, and in some cases assimilating. Whilst a range of literature is moving on to discuss instances of transculturation and cultural exchange in migrant histories, acculturation or assimilation continue to occupy space within the source bases themselves.[536] In the five families studied in

[535] Lässig and Steinberg, 'Knowledge on the Move', 340.
[536] See Korbel and Strobl (eds.), *Cultural Translation and Knowledge Transfer*. See further, Peter Burke, *Exiles and Expatriates in the History of Knowledge* (Massachusetts: Brandeis University Press, 2017).

this thesis, various ‘English’ cultural practices for example are discussed as a demonstrative case on how the refugees were integrating into ‘English’ culture.

In the Licht family correspondence, specifically those letters between Ernst and Ilse in Berlin, and Klaus in London from 1938-39, speak to how the parents sought to learn more about their son’s new environment (and indeed prepare for their own hoped flight there), and equally be reassured by his acculturation, specifically through the lens of sport. Unlike perhaps the Rothschild family correspondence where Siegfried relied heavily on his daughter Annelore for specific arrangements and organisations, the Licht family correspondence (perhaps because of Klaus’s younger age than Annelore) centres much more on the parents’ attempt to learn, and to be educated about their son’s new life as a way of building resilience to the unknown qualities of their own migration. A keen sportsman, (indeed Klaus/Ken later went on to become a PE teacher) Klaus integrated into school life through various sports teams, the intricate nature of which were often the focus of the letters. When the football season ended, Klaus began a new unknown sport – cricket - much to the surprise of his parents in Berlin. After initially asking what cricket was and if it was similar to golf, Ilse was overjoyed at her son’s involvement in the school’s sports day:

> We are over the moon that you can participate in the great sports gala. You must be so happy that you are allowed to participate in every event. It must be amazing to be treated like everyone else. Please be modest and grateful for everything! Tell me, do you have problems writing with the new fountain pen? To me it seems like your handwriting is deteriorating continuously. Sorry![537]

Followed by an increasingly regular observation of Klaus’s declining handwritten legibility, the extract demonstrates Ilse’s joy at her son’s inclusion in *anything* let alone something so alien to them in Berlin. A range of scholars have historicised the link between the sport of cricket, conceptions of ‘Englishness’, and masculinity and manners in relation to continental Europe. Whilst the game was truly global in nature, matching the breadth of the British Empire where players made the game their own in many ways, cricket was still understood as a ‘generator’ of Englishness in the colonies as well as closer to home in Europe.[538] David Dee has noted however, that for many upper, and upper-middle class Anglo-Jews, the end of the long nineteenth-century and the period to the beginning of the Second World War, was marked by

[537] Ilse Licht to Klaus Licht, 9 June 1939, JMB. Trans. K. Baumgartner.

[538] Dominic Malcolm, *Globalizing Cricket: Englishness, Empire and Identity* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

the desire to and indeed successful inclusion of, many Jews in the outdoor recreational games of their gentile peers such as cricket.[539]

Despite his son's new love for cricket, Ernst continued to write to his son only to impart the latest football scores from Berlin:

> Dear Klausi!
> *Hertha [BSC]* played *Wacker 04* and it ended in a tie 1:1. Same with *Minerva* against *Bervag* 2:2. *Blauweiß [90]* won against *Braundenburg* 4:0 and *[1. FC] Union [Berlin]* [beat] the *Cottbus Friesen* 5:0.
> Now Blau-Weiss is heading the table which I will attach. How is the English national league playing? People say that Arsenal is the best.[540]

Written in *Sütterlin*, and in keeping with the theme of the slim number of letters not written by his wife Ilse, Ernst's letter to his son speaks to both a desire to retain Klaus's previous interests prior to migration, and also to learn more about his new home. In contrast, Klaus continued to write profusely about his new interests:

> [...] in the afternoon Max, Klaus and Peter came with me into the park and we played first football and then cricket. If you come here you must watch us four when we play. You play cricket also in Holland. The best cricket – team in the world is Australia or sometimes England. The girls play here Hockey and net-ball but we boys like football and cricket best. Soon after the big holidays the football season begins again; and I am glad of it because I like football a little bit better than Cricket, but not much. The most difficult thing in Cricket is the bowling. A good bowler is [sic] much worth in his team. Our school won once the cricket shield of Hendon, but now our team is not very good. [...] We were not very much astonished when we heard of the high loss against Saint Mary's Church of England because this school has the best cricket team in Hendon. I have two friends who are in this team and one ~~teached~~ taught me how to bowl. So that I am now the best bowler of my other friends.[541]

Presumably to the relief of his father at his son's continued love of football, Klaus's letter nevertheless confirmed to his parents his continued acceptance in the team. In detailing the successes and the defeats alongside his growing friendships in the team, Klaus likely unknowingly created an atmosphere of relief and indeed resilience for his parents. For Klaus, his new love of cricket and the associated 'team sport' bonding which occurred as a result,

[539] David Dee, ''Wandering Jews'? British Jewry, outdoor recreation and the far-left, 1900–1939', *Labour History,* 55/5 (2014), 563–79 (p.566).
[540] Ernst Licht to Klaus Licht, 16 January 1939, JMB. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[541] Klaus Licht to Ernst and Ilse Licht, 7 August 1939, JMB.

especially within a game considered the height of 'Englishness', contributed greatly to his assimilation. In a letter to his mother from the summer of 1939, Klaus wrote that 'I mostly play with English boys in the park [...] I have loads of friends. English and German boys are playing together and we aren't called "the Germans" anymore', the young boy continued that 'that makes me really happy'.[542]

However, even within the detailed discussions of the rules of cricket, the knowledge of the impending reality of their separation continued. In a letter to her son, Ilse remarked on their migration in reference to the football/cricket timetable:

> I was interested in your report about Cricket. Is the bowler the one who rolls a ball in contrast to the batman who parries it with his stick. Or did I get that wrong? When the football season starts again, after the holidays, then I will presumably have to wait until next year to see you, Peter, Max and Klaus play Cricket. Because unfortunately, our voyage [to London] won't happen any time soon. Shame!! Do you think you will be able to jump into my arms still or do you think that you are now too big and heavy?[543]

In the letter, Ilse tactfully latches the sadness of their failed migration thus far onto a regular part of their written conversation, sport, as a means of perhaps softening the blow amongst more benign discussion.

Beyond discussions of alien sporting cultures to that of a central European milieu, the correspondence of the Rothschild family make it clear that epistolary spaces became a way of understanding what was *necessary* for migration and indeed some things that would be *useful*. In one of the last letters written to his daughter Annelore before they left Germany for the relative safety of Britain, Siegfried Rothschild began to summarise the knowledge he already had on his forthcoming place of refuge, as well as enquire with his daughter about things he still needed.

> That one needs to be well dressed in England when visiting, I do know and nobody has told me that I am badly dressed and am wearing the wonderful lilac shirts, they are useful for working in the garden. Mutsch is out trying to buy the case for your violin and is also enquiring about the dictionary. I also ordered a book, *Land und Leute in England*, the publisher is Toussaint-Langenscheidt but it is no longer in print. Perhaps you know of a book but in German that describes life in England which one could learn from. I have a book of land and people in England

[542] Ibid., 1 June 1939, JMB. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[543] Ilse Licht to Klaus Licht, 10 August 1939, JMB. Trans. K. Baumgartner.

> but it is 35 years old and therefore useless for today. Mutsch has bought to my horror a mouth-rattle for you – it is fortunate that I do not hear such things.[544]

Carl Naubert's study of the English people aside, the need for up to date information is further clear through the father and daughter's discussion of language learning. Even as early as July 1937, whilst Annelore was still in Jogney-sur-Vevey, Siegfried impressed upon his daughter the need for languages in the hoped for event of her migration: 'I hear again and again from every side that languages, languages, and again languages, are the most important thing that our children must have and must learn'.[545] This impression evidently worked with Annelore regularly requesting new resources to better help her chances:

> I have made great progress in English and am obviously very proud about it [...] I urgently need an English, French Poem dictionary that is absolutely essential to learn a language. Obviously it is necessary to be up to date because of technology etc. there are always new words. I hope that you are not angry with me that I always have new requests, but this is absolutely necessary.[546]

The seemingly practical and everyday conversations surrounding the need for English as a second language continued through to 1938 and beyond, although increasingly tinged with an unpleasant awareness of gradually darkening surroundings. On the morning of 12 March 1938, the *8 Armee* of the Wehrmacht crossed the border into Austria with Adolf Hitler arriving in an open top car to ride through the streets by the afternoon. The territorial expansion two days prior evidently worried Siegfried who wrote to his daughter:

> For you, apart from bad news, it may be just as well to familiarise yourself with the thought that everything you believed in has become useless. You as well as your brother will no doubt have a future in a foreign country. You will not have any connection to the country in which you were born and whose language you speak will no longer be yours. That may be painful. Maybe the most difficult thing in your young life because you as well as I are attached to this country. But we have not been asked. The country is evicting us. It does not wish to have anything to do with us.[547]

Suddenly conversations on language books and lilac shirts became all the more real for the Rothschilds, and the information exchanged within the letters now became useful knowledge of the reality of refuge and the practicalities of migration.

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[544] Siegfried Rothschild to Annelore Rothschild, 19 June 1939, PC-JBG/MT. Trans. unknown.
[545] Siegfried Rothschild to Annelore Rothschild, 17 July 1937, PC-JBG/MT. Trans. unknown.
[546] Annelore Rothschild to Siegfried Rothschild, 11 October 1937, PC-JBG/MT. Trans. unknown.
[547] Siegfried Rothschild to Annelore Rothschild, 15 March 1938, PC-JBG/MT. Trans. unknown.

Summary

Previous chapters have demonstrated how letters often acted in place of in-person relationships and discussions had in the safety and indeed sometimes joviality of the home. Discussions of sporting activities, the practicalities and emotions of growing up, and education more broadly, all point to the ‘everyday’ continuing amid a slow-boiling extraordinariness around them. This chapter has evidenced the hypothetical metastasising into the real, where the evolving context around the Rothschilds changed conversations from ponderings to action, and the need for information. Intergenerational relationships within correspondence remain a desideratum in scholarship. Whilst this chapter has tackled on a small scale the epistolary relationship between parents and children, specifically through the Goldbergs and Rothschilds, a further exploration into the different approaches adopted by older people, alongside a deeper analysis of changing relationships alongside ageing and growing-up in exile would enhance the discussion greatly.

CHAPTER 7

On war and persecution

When I originally approached Bridget King, the daughter of the late Peter King about the use of her family archive in this research, she replied affirmatively but that I was unlikely to find anything of relevance to my interests. Much of the material the family had already discovered, contained references to the family's move to Devon, the internment of Peter's father Lutz, and only the occasional reference to those remaining in Germany. Bridget posed therefore that the fates of Ernst and Ilse Licht didn't necessarily occupy the minds of the rest of the family, as much as the day to day existence in exile and the terror of the Blitz. Whilst the course of the war and realities of refuge permeated their life more than the often hazed musings on the remnants of life in Berlin, this is not to say that their families trapped abroad fell from their conscious.

Whilst the latter discovery of Clara's diary complicated this assessment massively, Bridget's point on the centrality of the course of the war in the minds of her ancestors, over the continuing persecution abroad, remained somewhat true. In the minds of refugees from Nazi Germany, concern for oneself and family in exile, and concern for those remaining abroad, became twin foci, often informing on one another and their relation to the course of the war overall. The relationship between the war and the Holocaust in scholarship remains an uneasy one. In the early 2000s the American political scientist Christopher J. Fettweis noted that for too long the course of the war remained on the outskirts of historiography of Holocaust and its enaction. Whilst noted works by Omer Bartov and others have explicitly tied these coeval phenomena, Fettweis argued for a combined history on the basis of individual histories as 'for the victims, the perpetrators and the bystanders, [the war and the Holocaust] were never separate'.[548] If the course of the war and indeed the knowledge of these events, impacted the realities and lived experiences of those on the continent as Fettweis argues, the same must therefore be said for those that fled to Britain and elsewhere. The events of the Second World War impacted colossally upon the lives of German-Jewish refugees in Britain, most notably for this thesis the

[548] Christopher J. Fettweis, 'War as catalyst: Moving World War II to the center of Holocaust scholarship', *Journal of Genocide Research*, 5/2 (2003), 225-36, (p.225). See *inter alia*: Omer Bartov, *Germany's War and the Holocaust: Disputed Histories* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003).

halting of correspondence to the continent. For many refugees however, the war was not only something that halted any possible reunion with their family in Germany, but was also something that threatened their own lives especially for those in major cities. Most importantly however, the periods leading to 1939, and those turning points within the war, often resulted in individuals reflecting upon their own place within this nexus, and also how they viewed their family's plight vis-à-vis the destruction of war and growing persecution around them. How individuals navigated this ever evolving and metastasising violence, disappearances, and departures, is evident through Holocaust era correspondence and individuals' attempts to find their relatives, to gain information on their whereabouts, and therefore build this into their new everyday life.

The following section will examine the place of the war and the growing persecution of European Jews, yet to be termed the 'Holocaust', within the correspondence of the five German-Jewish families in this thesis. Firstly, we will examine how the **course of the war** and early persecution of Germany's Jews was discussed and imagined within the emerging epistolary spaces. Focussing on how the Rothschild family dealt with the policy of appeasement through to the violence of the November 1938 pogroms, alongside how Theodor Hirschberg and Marion Goldberg both reflected on the Nazi invasion of Belgium and the Netherlands in 1940, the section will demonstrate how letters became sites of accumulating knowledge of their families' specific circumstances. Secondly, the **networks of knowledge** established through neutral counties such as Switzerland before and during the war will be reconstructed, looking at both the private and institutional communications which occurred. Examining the private communication of the Goldberg family through their family friends in Basel alongside the Amberg family's use of Red Cross Message slips sent via Geneva, I highlight the importance of Switzerland as a centre for knowledge transfer. Alongside this correspondence via neutral countries, many letter writers **cross referenced** piecemeal fragments of information from their private mail with public sources such as newspaper and newsreels to formulate their growing knowledge on the wider persecution of European Jews. Focussing on the Clara Licht's *Kontobuch* diary and the references to wider awareness in Walter Goldberg's correspondence to his daughter, this section demonstrates the interconnectedness of private and public spaces of knowledge production. Finally, focussing on the Goldberg family as the only one of the five collections to in detail discuss the **end of the war**, the final sub-section examines how letters became vital in understanding and emotionally dealing with the growing reality faced by the surviving Jewish remnants globally spread. Tracking Walter Goldberg's feelings on VE Day and

his later attempts to trace the whereabouts of his wife and brothers, it becomes clear that even more so after the end of the war, letters were vital in formulating knowledge of the Holocaust.

7.1 'What will happen next? I don't know, definitely nothing good': Early persecution and the course of the war

As the 1930s seemingly progressed uncontrollably towards war, for separated families anything which seemed to provide a respite to this ostensibly unyielding advancement was welcomed, as vis-à-vis their own persecution – war, they knew would only make things worse. Following families' separation from each other, letters traversing boundaries initially contained reflections and musings on global affairs often in relation to how these affected reunion, or their own safety going forward. For the Rothschilds separated between Stuttgart in Germany, and Bath in Britain, any news the other could offer was vital. Siegfried's domineering letter writing however, often meant that this 'exchange' was one-sided, with Siegfried dictating their opinion and Annelore very scarcely offering hers. With the shadow of the bloodshed of the First World War still looming over the continent in the 1930s, 'appeasement', broadly conceived, emerged as the dominant, although not uncontested, policy of the British Government as a means of curtailing Hitler's imperialist ambitions. On the date of the signing of the Munich Agreement, ceding the Sudetenland to Germany, Siegfried wrote gleefully to his daughter:

> We believe at the moment that world politics are improving in Europe but whether our life will be affected it is hard to say. We are just glad that the wait of a possible war has been lifted and we only have the usual worries which we hope with ours and our childrens' help will be able to cope with.[549]

Embodying Chamberlain's oft misquoted assertion of 'peace for our time' stated outside 10 Downing Street following his return from Germany, Siegfried believed that war was far away. Whilst initially supported in Britain, as 1938 progressed, the policy, and Chamberlain's unyielding support for it, began to suffer morally as persecution against Germany's Jews massively intensified by November.[550] On the 10 November 1938, Siegfried wrote abruptly to Annelore. Ordered differently from his usual familial remarks and emigration concerns first, followed by worries and concerns embedded deep within the letter's text, his letter on the November Pogroms was much more forthright.

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[549] Siegfried Rothschild to Annelore Rothschild, 30 September 1938, PC-JBG/MT. Trans. unknown.

[550] See Daniel Hucker, *Public Opinion and the End of Appeasement in Britain and France* (London: Routledge, 2011).

> Dear Annebutz,
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> The events of the last few days caused me to tell you, without having a letter from you which we hope to receive this afternoon or tomorrow morning, which I will not wait for. First of all we are both well. [...]

Siegfried's immediate reassurance that he and Margarethe were safe, in a break from his usual verbose openings, speaks to the worry he and many other German Jews faced after the night of violence. His letter continued with details of the events from their perspective:

> The news here you will know more about it abroad than we do here. In our small circle I can only let you know what I know positively. The house in which your brother about 2 months ago with you, Mutsch, me and all our friends were, has been flattened. Equally, the one where I used to go every Monday evening for gymnastics, the same has happened. I have not actually seen it with my own eyes but I believe this is correct. We have been advised to stay at home and therefore did not step out into the street and will not do so in the next days either. Whether that will prove to be the end of the events I don't know and we must therefore make every effort to keep our heads up high. Now you will understand why I was happy to know that you and your brother are abroad. The deed of a 17 year old Galician brat nobody under any circumstances can possibly understand nor excuse but innocent people have to suffer because of the plebs from Galicia. I do not wish to comment any further. What will happen next? I don't know, definitely nothing good.[551]

Although there is no reference to the events of the 9/10 November 1938 in subsequent letters from Annelore (however we cannot be sure there are not letters missing), we can assume that her father was right that 'you will know more about it abroad than we do here'. Whilst the reaction of the British government to the pogrom was delayed and arguably subdued, and the coverage in newsreels limited at best, the response in the press was extensive with a range of British newspapers covering the events in depth.[552] Many indeed publicly rebuked the Nazi line that the violence was a spontaneous eruption of public anger, instead suggesting that the murder of Ernst vom Rath was but a pretext for Nazi anti-Jewish persecution.[553] As is well documented, the pogrom and international reaction to it prompted a renewed interest in the fates of German-Jewish refugees fleeing Central Europe, with the *Kindertransport* scheme beginning shortly afterwards, and yet the violence itself remained at the margins. After the initial

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[551] Siegfried Rothschild to Annelore Rothschild, 10 November 1938, PC-JBG/MT. Trans. unknown.

[552] On newsreel coverage see Susan H. Szczetnikowicz, British newsreels and the plight of European Jews, 1933-1945 (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Hertfordshire, 2006); and John A. S. Grenville, 'British Propaganda, the Newsreels and Germany 1933 to 1939', in *Studien zur Geschichte Englands und der deutsch-britischen Beziehungen. Festschrift für Paul Kluke*, ed. by Lothar Kettenacker et al. (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1981), pp.281–293.

[553] Stephanie Seul, 'The absence of "Kristallnacht" and its aftermath in BBC German-language broadcasts during 1938-1939', in *New Perspectives on Kristallnacht: After 80 Years, the Nazi Pogrom in Global Comparison,* ed. by Wolf Gruner and Steven J. Ross (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2019), pp.171-93 (pp.173-76).

flurry of coverage, the pogrom quickly receded to memory. Tony Kushner, in his monumental work *The Holocaust in the Liberal Imagination* argues that *Kristallnacht* dimmed in the democratic world due to a multitude of factors, but primarily a 'failure of the liberal imagination to acknowledge the unthinkable' as November 1938 briefly challenged the widespread belief that "the Jews really bring it all on themselves" – and thus the easiest solution to such a questioning was to simply forget it.[554] In the minds of refugees with family remaining in Germany however, it is hard to imagine that their fears faded as easily as that of the liberal state.

It is interesting however, that to some degree Siegfried believed the notion that the pogrom emerged from Jewish action, angrily blaming the 'Galician brat' Herschel Grynszpan and expanding this to the wider 'plebs from Galicia'. Siegfried as a German-Jew evidently saw himself as separate and indeed better than the Jewish communities to the East. Through extensive work by Steven Aschheim, it is clear that as a minority within Germany, German Jews 'fashioned their attitudes and actions [towards Eastern Jews] in response to perceived signals from the wider society'.[555] Aschheim highlights a 1918 article by the Jewish journalist Ben Nathan for example emphasising that the post-war image of the 'Galician Jew' was one dejudaized, and only interested in self-enrichment. It is clear from his response to the November Pogrom then, that Siegfried Rothschild clearly internalised and exercised wider attitudes of his milieu.[556] Whilst it is difficult to fully gauge German-Jewish reaction to the origins of the Pogrom, other writers had a more nuanced approach than Siegfried.[557] The Sephardi Jewish writer Ovadia Camhy based in Paris where vom Rath was assassinated for example, echoed Siegfried's anger at Grynszpan but was certainly more lenient:

> [...] Grynszpan's crime was not a villainous one [...] It was an act of despair. When one is 17 and overwhelmed by the horror of persecutions inflicted on one's own race and one's own parents, one quickly loses one's balance [...] Despite that, we condemned as strongly as possible the ill-considered act of Grynszpan.[558]

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[554] Tony Kushner, *The Holocaust in the Liberal Imagination* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), p.55.

[555] Steven Aschheim, *Brothers and strangers: the east European Jew in German and German Jewish consciousness, 1800-1923* (Madison : University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), p.xvi.

[556] Ibid., p.246. On this topic see also Jack Wertheimer, *Unwelcome Strangers. East European Jews in Imperial Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

[557] For reaction in the Jewish press to Grynszpan see Katarzyna Christianus-Gileta, 'Victim or Terrorist? The Case of Herschel Grynszpan in Light of the Chosen Press Releases from November 1938', *Prace Literaturoznawcze*, 5 (2018), 19-31. Contemporary accounts of Kristallnacht can also be found on the Wiener Holocaust Library's online database here: https://www.pogromnovember1938.co.uk/viewer/, last accessed: 5 May 2025.

[558] Document 1-7: Ovadia Camhy, 'Under the Sign of Satan', *Le Judaïsme Séphardi* (Paris) 7/66 (December 1938), 135-140, in *Jewish Responses to Persecution: 1938–1940,* Vol.2, ed. by Alexandra Garbarini (Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2011), p.19.

Siegfried's assertion that 'nothing good' will happen next, in direct contrast to his former jubilance at the Munich Agreement, was reflected back in letters from his daughter in Britain. In a direct response to her father's letter dated 10 November (where earlier he implored her to eat the 'odd sausage' to abate her feared hunger), Annelore responded worryingly:

> To begin with, I could do well with some sausage, etc as I have lost quite a bit of weight [...] I think it is mainly due to the amount of stress I have had to cope with recently. Firstly, the fear or war.[559]

War was evidently something which Annelore feared for the sake of her family if nothing else, and wrote just as much. Her father equally penned such worries; in the face of an unclear German foreign policy but a violently apparent domestic one following *Kristallnacht*, Siegfried evidently feared war more so than ever. In an attempt to cajole his daughter into action and to keep the spirits of his separated family alive, Siegfried invoked his memory of World War I, and how war, albeit something destructive, bolstered people's resolve:

> We just have to persevere. During the war and after I have seen what willpower can achieve. I still have the same willpower and your Mutsch, you, your brother and me to reach a simple free life if we can stay healthy and stay alive. That Mutsch can manage to get through this I will try as long as I can, and that I remain healthy is my great hope and I ask you as your father, besides work, to make sure that you stay healthy knowing that a difficult life is ahead and only then will you manage to cope.[560]

The memory of the First World War held strong in the minds of other writers in the five collections.[561] In one of her direct letters to Carl in Canada, Anna Amberg lamented that although the war robbed years from her and her husband Richard, the strength with which all the children emerged from that turbulence kept her strong:

> The 1st World War robbed me of him for all those years. Only the first years, 1911-14, in the USA and after that the years 1920-28 were beautiful. I am very fortunate that all of you four were given to me, healthy in body and soul, and richly provided with fathers great gifts of mind and spirit. This gives me great confidence - however hard that fate will deal with us five - now six - you will make your way honourably, and remain clean and upright Like your parents and everyone of your ancestors.[562]

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[559] Annelore Rothschild to Siegfried Rothschild, 22 November 1938, PC-JBG/MT. Trans. unknown.
[560] Siegfried Rothschild to Annelore Rothschild, 10 November 1938, PC-JBG/MT. Trans. unknown.
[561] On the memory of German-Jewish soldiers in relation to the First World War see Tim Grady, *The German-Jewish Soldiers of the First World War in History and Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).
[562] Anna Amberg to Carl Amberg, 9 May 1941, PC-AR. Trans. C. Amberg.

Carl's father Richard served on the Western Front during the war in the Bavarian Army. According to his daughter Irmgard's memoir Richard's 'patriotic heart' led him and his family back to Germany even though as a Jew he wasn't allowed to serve in the Prussian army. Irmgard recalled that upon his brother Carl's death on the Eastern Front in 1915, Richard 'suffered from nervous shock and was invalided out of the army'.[563] Anna's remembrance of this period of upheaval speaks equally to Siegfried's belief that the war gave many 'willpower'. For Anna and Siegfried, even in the darkest of times, memories of previous wars shared via correspondence sought to assuage fears.

As the war in Europe began, a number of turning points prompted reflection and reassessment from German-Jewish refugees who had fled prior. The invasion of Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg in May 1940, as well as being a major event in the war itself, had colossal impact upon Jews within those states, specifically the refugees residing there having fled westwards in the 1930s. In a letter to General Manager of the General Post Office Money Order Department in Manor Gardens, Holloway, asking the official to approve a transfer to Portugal, Theodor Hirschberg describes the fate of his cousin following the Nazi invasion of Belgium:

> He had been living in Antwerp up to the invasion of the Low Countries, when he was arrested by the Belgian Police and later was sent with many other people to the Camp de St. Cyprien in unoccupied France. He is there in great distress and is lacking in the utmost necessary things of living. As first remittance I would like to send sh 10/- er, if you cannot agree, please allow me to send sh 11/- (Eleven shillings) to Professor Wohlwill, 463 Estrada de Bemfica, Lisbon, Portugal who should be prepared to forward the amount of sh 10/- to Dr. Boehm.[564]

For Theodor and his relatives in Britain, the invasion prompted a renewed fear for the Böhms in Antwerp but also action to aid those in the Low Countries, although how exactly Theodor knew of the activities of the Wohlwill's is unclear. Emma Wohlwill (Schwartz; 1891-1980) and her husband Prof. Joachim Friedrich Wohlwill (1881-1958), the noted pathologist and serologist from Hamburg, had left Germany in 1933 for Lisbon. Whilst Theodor requested the money go to Friedrich Wohlwill, the majority of the refugee support was organised by Emma, who supported the rescue efforts of the noted triangle of Wilfred Israel, Hubert Pollack and Frank Foley from the continent. Perez Leshem (Fritz Lichtenstein), who met the Wohlwill's in Lisbon in 1943, after arriving to replace Wilfred Israel following his death, later wrote of his meeting with the couple:

[563] Treuherz, *True Hearts,* p.58.
[564] Theodor Hirschberg to 'The Manager Money Order Department', 14 December 1940, UoS MS 314/1/113

> [Emma Wohlwill] was familiar with the problem of the refugees as well as with local conditions in general, having lived in Portugal since Hitler's ascent to power. Her husband, who was Professor at Lisbon University and working as a neuropathologist, had wide connections and was greatly respected in the whole community. Through Mrs. Wohlwill's help the technical foundations of my work were quickly laid.[565]

Regardless of the connection with the Wohlwills, Theodor's letters speak to a wider concern of the rapidly metastasising Nazi war machine in the Spring of 1940. The advancements of the Wehrmacht in these early years of the war often occupied the mind of Marion Goldberg as well, equally concerned for both her friends and family within this context. In her diary from May 1940, Marion penned one of the few passages related to a world outside of her own concerns in Britain.

> Tonight, the Germans invaded Belgium and Holland! My only connection with Mummy is now disrupted. I will never hear anything from her again. Everything, everything is taken away [from me]. How to trust in fate, people say: "it's going to be alright!" How am I supposed to believe that. Worlds are changing – everything is changing for the worse.[566]

Whilst Marion did indeed have other ways of connecting with her mother (the Kariels in the USA and family friends, the Treichners in Basel for example), the invasion nevertheless clearly impacted her in the moment. In the first letter sent following the start of the war in September 1939, Gertrud began writing that 'I try to send this correspondence via our relatives in Antwerp; Weinberger: Antwerp, rue Marée 29'. Gertrud's maternal cousin, Chana Ringer (1888-1943) and her husband Eliezer Weinberger (1886-1943) had moved to Antwerp before the start of the First World War, presumably due to Eliezer's profession as a diamond merchant. They had at least one child, Salomon (1912-1943) who followed his father into the diamond business. The Weinbergers do not appear in the Goldberg correspondence beyond writing their 'best wishes' on the side of postcards presumably sent within an envelope to Antwerp from Gertrud in Plauen. On the 20 September 1943, Eliezer, Chana, Salomon, and Salomon's wife and two young children were all deported from Mechelen to Auschwitz-Birkenau where they were presumably gassed upon arrival. For Marion, the invasion of Belgium, far from being something abstract or far away, intimately affected her remaining family ties, as only a few months earlier she had written jubilantly that 'the written exchange with Mummy is now wonderful and we are getting on better in writing than speaking'.[567]

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[565] Perez Leshem, 'Rescue Efforts in the Iberian Peninsula', *The Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 14/1 (1969), 231–256, (p.236).
[566] Marion Goldberg diary entry, 3 May 1940, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[567] Marion Goldberg diary entry, 14 March 1940, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.

Whilst the middling phases of the war were often marked by limited or completely absent news from occupied Europe, it was not until the tide of the war changed that hopes were renewed. In 1943 Stalin began a counter offensive which would eventually see the Red Army march through Eastern Europe pushing the German Army back to the metropole; by the end of the year, the Soviets occupied around half of the territory taken by the Nazis in 1941-1942 and neared the Polish border. In November, Walter Goldberg wrote to Marion from Cuba lamenting his displacement but rejoicing at the advances of the war:

> When you look at this letter's date and remember the day five years ago, then you will be shocked that it was the last day I ever spent in our flat. For five years I have been walking these countries – like the Eternal Jew – and the end of the spectre isn't in sight and when these villains will get their punishment. The Russians are approaching the Polish border with rapid strides and with all my heart I hope that they will occupy Poland completely. Maybe then we will find out what happened to Mutti and all the other miserable people – if they are alive and how they are.[568]

Walter's hope of news of his wife as a result of the advances of the Soviets would not yield any results. Like many German-Jewish refugees however, Walter had not waited for the events of the war to reveal the reality but had instead been attempting to acquire knowledge throughout in a variety of means.

7.2 '*Bin gesund!*': Switzerland and Networks of Knowledge

From the late 1930s, a large number of transnational organisations at local, national, and international levels were initiated, or redesignated, with apparatus designed to aid in communication across borders and the acquisition of information. During the Second World War, Switzerland was one of the few places where exchanges between opposing nations could occur, whether that be with people, goods, or information. In his analysis of the Red Cross and the Holocaust, Jean-Claude Favez highlighted the multitude of organizations which based themselves in Geneva and commented on the close links between them, 'ranging from the occasional exchange of correspondence to regular face-to-face meetings'.[569] In addition to the organisations such as the ICRC based in Geneva specifically, a number of refugees made their migration to the country and subsequently acted as intermediary correspondents, even with the government actively disabling refugee movement into the country.

Whilst Switzerland had previously been a perceived destination for Marion Goldberg's mother Gertrud to flee to in the event of war, Swiss unwillingness to actively aid refugees speaks to the

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[568] Walter Goldberg to Marion Goldberg, 11 November 1943, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.

[569] Jean Claude Favez, *The Red Cross and the Holocaust* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 24–25.

country's wider yielding to Nazi Germany's policies upon fear of invasion.[570] On 3 September 1939, Walter Goldberg wrote that his 'efforts in regards of Switzerland have failed so far but I will not give up. Mr. Teichner, who is at Alice's at the moment, sent me a letter from Basel and he writes that nobody gets in or out'.[571] Alice Neudegg (nee Treichner, 1905-93) was the oldest of four children born to Leopold Treichner (1871-1942) and Marta Lissman (1880-1937) in Plauen. Her brother Hans (1908-57) was a member of the German national ski team for eight years and later fled Germany with the rise of Nazism and coached the Spanish National and Olympic ski teams until the onset of the Spanish Civil War in 1936. During the civil war he helped to smuggle refugees out of Spain on skis resulting in a large bounty for his capture. Alice fled to Basel and married her husband Egon Neudegg (born Otto Bickl, 1891-1957) the director of the *Basler Stadttheater*; Alice's father Leopold joined them in August 1939.[572]

On 8 September 1940, Marion wrote in her diary of her connection with the Teichners, reflecting on the necessity of them in facilitating connection between her and her mother.

> Yesterday, I had mail from Aunt Lotte, she heard from Aunt Hilde that Daddy would get holidays soon and that I can write to a former address. What does that mean: holidays?! I had mail from the Teichners that Mummy is worried about me; so, I immediately wrote back to her. I am listening to the news alongside. They say, that bombs are falling all over the place – serious damage and so on. I can't express my hatred for the Germans properly anymore.[573]

In addition to the correspondence with her mother, Marion simultaneously noted the beginning of the Blitz in Britain. The previous evening, 318 bombers from the *Kampfgeschwader* 53 'Legion Condor' supported by eight other *Kampfgruppen*, targeted London's docks which was already in flames from earlier daylight attacks, signalling the onset of the repeated bombing of Britain. In her diary, Marion connected the indirect communication with her mother and 'listening to the news alongside' demonstrating aptly the coevality of the issues in her mind. Marion was perhaps also aware that she existed in a web of information circling between the countries specifically the Teichners in Basel, Gertrud's sister Lotte in the USA, Marion herself in Britain, and Gertrud in Plauen. It appears from Gertrud's letters however that she wasn't immediately aware that Lotte Kariel in the USA was forwarding letters to Marion writing to her in November

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[570] See Gerald Steinacher, *Humanitarians at War. The Red Cross in the Shadow of the Holocaust* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp.31-37.
[571] Walter Goldberg to Marion Goldberg, 3 September 1939, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[572] For more on the Teichner's see Helmut Teichner, interview 11278, Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation, Chicago Illinois, 23 January 1996.
[573] Marion Goldberg diary entry, 8 September 1940, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.

1940 that: 'I assume that you give Marion my letter to read it, as I know from Mr. Teichner that she loves getting mail from us'.[574]

As the war continued however, and more countries became involved, Switzerland (and organisations based there) became one of the last routes through which any information could conceivably make it into Nazi occupied Europe, and out. At the start of the war, the International Committee of the Red Cross, received assurance from Britain, France, Germany and later other nations, that the ability to send messages via their established postal communication forms would not be interrupted.[575] In contrast to the First World War, the ICRC allowed messages to be sent between un-interned civilians during the conflict, meaning refugees could communicate with their families separated by migration. Often housed within Citizens' Advise Bureaus in towns and cities around the UK, the messages were limited in length but provided correspondents the opportunity to maintain some semblance of connection during wartime. Unlike letters sent via third parties prior to 1941/2, Red Cross messages constituted a different epistolary space, one much less private and much more protracted. In Manchester, the three Amberg sisters, Irmgard, Marlies, and Margaret, were reliant on four sources for information on their mother's fate: their uncle Emil in the USA (until December 1941), their uncle Paul in the Netherlands (until May 1940), latterly their brother Carl interned in Canada (until December 1941), and finally a handful of Red Cross messages sent between 1941-42. Despite having a large refugee population during the war, new Mancunians did not, it seems, immediately take up the offer of letters sent through the ICRC - presumably as many used the kith and kin networks established prior to 1939. In an article published by the *Manchester Evening News* in February 1940, the newspaper commented on the paucity of interested correspondents:

> Surprise has been caused at the Citizens' Advice Bureau in Manchester by the small number of people who are taking advantage of the facilities for sending 20-word messages to relatives in Germany. They receive only about ten a day. The majority are from British citizens. [...] few of the considerable number of refugees in the area seem to wish to write to their relatives. Perhaps they feel it is not advisable from the point of view of the relatives. The brief messages have a tortuous passage before they reach their destination. First there is the British Censorship. Then the International Red Cross Committee at Geneva. Then, presumably, the German censorship. It appears, however that they arrive in the end.[576]

[574] R. Gertrud Goldberg to Lotte Kariel, 10 November 1940, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[575] For more on Red Cross Messages during the war see Anthony Grenville, 'Red Cross Messages from Nazi Germany', Hybrid Exhibition Talk, The Wiener Holocaust Library, 28 June 2023, accessed via YouTube: https://youtu.be/cUCOyOe5g8Y?si=CNqKJoJNmfAKh7zA, last accessed: 20 February 2025.
[576] *Manchester Evening News,* 8 February 1940, p.4.

This ‘tortuous passage’, whilst long in duration – indeed often many months – massively enhanced the importance of such messages between individuals. The limited number of messages sent as well as the limited number of words allowed, minimalised and thus essentialised the messages to *Lebenszeichen* and the bare minimum of information transfer. Other newspaper articles from the time give more detail on the types of material allowed in the limited communication. In an interview with the *Liverpool Evening Express,* one advice bureau official commented that:

> “Although twenty words does not seem much, quite lot can be conveyed in message of this length,” the official added. For example, many will send messages like this: ‘We are quite well, safe and happy. Mother has completely recovered We have plenty to eat. Write if you can.’ They must not, of course, mention anything about the war, but must keep strictly to family matters.[577]

Although more have likely been lost over time, the Amberg archive contains five examples of these Red Cross messages, three from Irmgard in Manchester, and two from Carl interned at Sherbrooke (Camp N/Camp 42) in Canada (presumably once direct communication was no longer possible, or at least when he was waiting so long for a response). With physical copies of the Red Cross messages, such as those sent by Irmgard, it is possible to track the ‘tortuous passage’ of the messages through the stamps delineating when the messages were written and indeed received at each end via Geneva. The two messages sent by Carl however appear in the transcribed booklets and thus do not contain such stamps, only the date of writing. The first evidenced Red Cross message sent by Irmgard for example followed the similar structure as exampled in the *Liverpool Evening Express*: ‘*Wir sind so zufrieden und gluecklich wie moeglich, restlos waerst Du dabei, besonders in dieser schoenen Zeit bis November’*.[578] Despite her mother having already learnt of Irmgard’s pregnancy from a letter from Marlies which arrived mid-September 1941: ‘She just had vacations and wanted to visit Irmgard and Werner in the end - they expect their first baby in November already. God grant that everything goes well’, a direct message albeit one short in length kept her mother in the family fold.

The length of time Red Cross Messages took to arrive was often noted by the Ambergs in Britain and Canada. In July 1942 after his release from internment, Carl wrote an extensive letter to his sisters in Britain explaining the postal system in the camp, noting that once direct messaging came to a halt ‘as soon as this was possible in the camp - I sent several R.C. messages which

[577] *Liverpool Evening Express,* 1 January 1940, p.6.

[578] [We are as happy and content as we can be, {we would be} completely content if you were here, especially in this beautiful time until November], Irmgard Treuherz to Anna Amberg, 1 August 1941.

seemed to take from here six-seven months'.[579] Since the original versions of the Red Cross messages Carl sent and received are currently lost, we can't tell exactly how long the messages took, but can assume he is generally correct. On 12 February 1942 shortly after his arrival in Sherbrooke camp from Farnham (Camp A/Camp 40) where he had been for over a year, Carl wrote to his mother: 'Thanks for letters, hugely happy. Will soon be free for studies. Health first-class. Patience, courage, hope, see you shortly. Kisses Carl'.[580] Not only does Carl confirm for his mother that he had received at least some of her direct letters to him, but he also manages to succinctly convey his wishes for her under the circumstances. In absence of the physical copies, we can assume the latest the message reached Anna in Aachen was 15 May 1942, when she penned her reply, three months after Carl had initially written to her: 'Overjoyed long-desired news. Very dear thanks. Success and blessing for the study pursuit! Hope keeps me upright. I am well. Loving kisses. Mutti'.[581] Before Anna had even received his message, Carl wrote again confirming his release from internment, the reply however only briefly referred to his release and was far removed from her previous assertion that '*bin gesund*'. An undated reply, presumably written a few days before her deportation, was as follows:

> Before departure with Wally [Hirtz]; Happy over good news. Don't loose hope of meeting again. Information through Aunt Marga. Heartfelt kisses Mutti[582]

Anna's sister-in-law Marga, the widow of her recently deceased husband Paul Phillip, had just returned to Germany, to Cologne by the end of May 1942, and was evidently informed of her sister-in-law's fate through Marga's own sister Erika who was in Aachen on the day of the deportation. Marga, was born in 1900 in Cologne to Ludger Nockher (1865-1938) a medical doctor and researcher, and Maria Kreuzberg (1874-1950). From the mid-1920s, she was involved in social issues in Cologne and in 1928, was one of the initiators of a joint petition of various Cologne women's associations to the mayor Konrad Adenauer and the city council, against the reduction of social spending. After the war, Marga held numerous positions in various activist groups including the executive chairwoman of the Association of Cologne Women's Associations and vice president of the German Women's Ring.[583]

Carl's booklets suggest that the children received some sort of confirmation from the Nockher sister's during the war about their mother's departure. By mid-August 1942, Carl had either

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[579] Carl Amberg to his sisters, 16 July 1942, PC-AR. Trans. A. Reynolds.
[580] Carl Amberg to Anna Amberg, 12 February 1942, PC-AR. Trans. C. Amberg.
[581] Anna Amberg to Carl Amberg, 15 May 1942, PC-AR. Trans. C. Amberg.
[582] Anna Amberg, [13/14 June 1942], PC-AR. Trans. C. Amberg.
[583] For more on Marga Nocker see https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marga_Philip, last accessed: 25 February 2025.

received the Red Cross message reply above, or a follow up letter from the Nockhers confirming his mother's departure, writing in a letter to his sisters that:

> I was deeply affected by mother's news. But we have to be strong and help her through with our courage. This is the only thing we can do. Who knows, maybe she is in greater safety now than where she was before. Soon there will be nothing but a big pile of rubble and ashes![584]

For the Ambergs and the vast majority of families separated during the war, Red Cross messages sent via Geneva were the last vestiges of contact between members. Often overlapping and containing no real information until euphemised phrases of 'going away', or talking of a 'departure', these messages nevertheless constituted an epistolary space and immense pressure to succinctly convey information whether that be truthful or not.

For those without a contact based in a neutral country, Red Cross letters continued to be the only way with which to correspond after the start of the war. By 1942/3, however those with access to private postage via Switzerland also began to inform relatives of their family's deportation eastward. For the Goldbergs, Walter and Marion's reliance on Alice Neudegg in Basel continued for example, with the first information on Gertrud's fate coming through such channels:

> I don't know if you have heard anything from our loved ones. It is a very heavy burden – but it can't be avoided – to tell you that Mutti is not at home anymore. What we feared, has happened. She had to depart to the East with Mrs. Steinberg, Trude Gassenheimer and Trude Hirschberg[585] – whereas Grandmother stayed behind because of her age. Also, Seppl and Perls. For obvious reasons I have no news and only heard from Alice that they are supposed to be in the Lublin area. The only consolation is, that Mutti is together with Mrs. Steinberg.[586]

In this letter dated 23 August 1942, Walter informed his daughter of her mother's deportation 'east'. Since the Enlightenment, German-Jewish imaginations of the 'east' and subsequently *Ostjuden*, had played a crucial role in German-Jews' own self-image. Viewed formerly as a space of backwardness and in some quarters as a space for potential Jewish colonisation, by the summer of 1942 however, 'Poland' and 'the east' had become bywords for Jewish death.[587] Expansive public knowledge of mass shootings in the land newly occupied by the Wehrmacht after the invasion of the Soviet Union, led to gradual public association of movement East as

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[584] Carl Amberg to his sisters, 16 August 1942, PC-AR. Trans. A. Reynolds.
[585] The exact identity of Trude Hirschberg is presently unclear.
[586] Walter Goldberg to Marion Goldberg, 23 August 1942, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[587] See Steven E. Aschheim, 'Reflection, Projection, Distortion: The 'Eastern Jew' in German-Jewish Culture', *Osteuropa*, 58/8-10 (2008), 61–74; Yaniv Feller, *The Jewish Imperial Imagination. Leo Baeck and German-Jewish Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023).

code for murder.[588] Walter, a keen reader of *Aufbau* would have been very aware of this in Cuba, with the magazine chronicling Nazi atrocities in detail since the 1930s. Indeed the magazine based much of its reporting on personal correspondences in dialogue with other sources:

> Our news in 'Aufbau' is based on personal information, reports from our special correspondents and friends [...] and numerous other sources. [...] On the whole, we believe that Aufbau is now the only Jewish magazine in German that has a fairly comprehensive news service for the interests of German-speaking Jews [...][589]

Whilst Switzerland acted as a through passage for messages and information transfer throughout the war, knowledge of the Holocaust and the realities of Jewish persecution remained largely undescribed in the correspondence that did seep through. Gertrud's lack of reference to her run in with the Gestapo discussed at the beginning of Part 3 as likely not to worry her family abroad, is a perfect example of this. In his work on the letters of the Rosenberg family, Oliver Doetzer in his monograph *"Aus Menschen werden Briefe"* highlights the downplaying of one's own difficulties as one of the characteristics of 'emotive *Sprachhandlungsstrategien'*.[590] In the absence of truthful retellings via neutral countries and transnational humanitarian organisations such as the Red Cross, many refugees in Britain and elsewhere then, often relied on contextual evidence and piecing together disparate strands of public information, and protracted private family matters, in order to understand their families' fate.

7.3 Cross referencing: Public and Private

In his work on the gradual collection of information of what would later be known as the Holocaust, Peter Fritzsche has noted that victims within Germany acquired a 'fractured but accumulating body of knowledge about the catastrophe engulfing them' noting that in real time, individuals had to 'figure out what was going on and struggled to learn and translate the terrifying vocabulary of Nazi intentions'.[591] For refugees outside of occupied Europe a similar phenomenon occurred, whereby despite the decisions of various 'information gatekeepers' in the language of Michael Fleming, refugees were able to construct a personalised knowledge of

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[588] See Peter Fritzsche, 'Babi Yar but not Auschwitz: What Did Germans Know about the Final Solution?', in *The Germans and the Holocaust: Popular Responses to the Persecution and Murder of the Jews*, ed. by Susanna Schrafstetter and Alan E. Steinweis (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2015), pp. 85-106.

[589] 'Unsere Nachrichten im "Aufbau"', *Aufbau* 19, 15 October 1939, p.20. The author would like to thank Marie Ch. Behrendt for highlighting this to me. For more on Aufbau and the Holocaust see Peter Schrag, *The World of Aufbau: Hitler's Refugees in America* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2019).

[590] Doetzer, *Aus Menschen werden Briefe,* p.224. See also Isa Schikorsky, 'Kommunikation Über Das Unbeschreibbare - Beobachtungen Zum Sprachstil von Kriegsbriefen', *Wirkendes Wort,* 42/2 (1992): 295–315.

[591] Fritzsche, 'The Holocaust and the Knowledge of Murder', 596.

the tragedy swamping the continent.[592] Such a 'fractured' body of knowledge, was not specific nor detailed in the majority of cases, but the cross referencing between publicly available news, community rumour, private correspondence, and engagement with humanitarian tracing agencies during the war, constituted such a dossier. To suggest that families separated from their loved ones were able to accurately or wholly recreate familial fates during the war, or indeed after it, and to this day, is fallacious. However, it is evident that at least in some cases, individuals reflected on the wider fate of European Jewry, the course of the war, and the fates of their specific relatives in their correspondence to each other, often though informed by a lack of correspondence – the fear and worry when they stopped writing.

The diaries of Clara Licht exemplify this well – whilst also reflecting on the varying routes of correspondence with which information reached her. At the beginning of the Second World War, shortly after Clara and her husband had left Berlin, leaving behind her son Ernst and daughter-in-law Ilse, Clara wrote on the 10 September 1939 of her thoughts on the previous 'exciting week'. This feeling of momentousness, was however also coupled with an astute recognition of the incapability to connect with Ernst and Ilse, and the lack of knowledge of their whereabouts, writing '"It is rubbish writing when they will never receive it." And, so it was'.[593] Despite Clara's despair at the new inability of direct contact, her diaries elucidate ways in which Clara, coalesced a variety of private and public sources to better perceive her children's fate (although in reality she never accurately understood what had happened to them).

Shortly after the beginning of the war, in her envelope diary dedicated to her thoughts and feelings on Ernst and Ilse, Clara noted that 'On the 15.09.[39] Walter Sch. called that his sister Alice had news about them via Alice Schw. dated 08.09. They are healthy. Thank God!'.[594] Having fled to Britain in the 1930s, and by 1939 living with Clara's cousin Ernst Moser in Hazelwell Road, London, Walter Schück (1883-1960) was the brother of Clara's good friend Alice Zielenziger. Evidently Alice Zielenziger, then in Berlin, had received word from their other friend Alice Schwab in Basel, Switzerland. Alice Schwab (born Rappaport, 1876-1970) along with her son Fritz Ewald and his wife Margarete, had left her home at Freisingerstraße 8, Berlin prior to 1936, for Arlesheim in Basel – her new address noted in Clara's *Kontobuch*.[595] Alice Schwab appears numerous times in Clara's list of letters sent and received, often in relation to

[592] Fleming, 'Knowledge in Britain of the Holocaust During the Second World War', pp.124-29.
[593] Clara Licht envelope diary entry, 10 September 1939, JMB. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[594] Ibid. [15 September 1939], JMB. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[595] For more information see Klaus Flick, 'Adolf und Margarethe Levy, geborene Rappaport', *Judenhäuser in Wiesbaden 1939 – 1942* (3 May 2021), Accessed via: https://moebus-flick.de/die-judenhaeuser-wiesbadens/herrngartenstr-11/adolf-und-margarethe-levy-geborene-rappaport/, Last accessed: 12 June 2024.

correspondence via her in Basel. In the opening months of 1942 for example, Clara wrote to Walter Schlesinger and others via *Lufftpost* to Alice. On 23 April however she wrote to Alice directly, penning after her name in brackets '*(Lufftpost, Ilse)*'. What exactly Clara wrote to her friend in Switzerland will never be known, indeed over the remainder of 1942, Clara sent and received numerous letters to, from, and via Alice Schwab, perhaps also in reference to her lost daughter-in-law.

Fig. 28 (L-R) Gerti Rubensohn, Eric Rubensohn, Ilse Licht, Ernst Licht (undated). Private Collection of G. Light, Essex, UK.

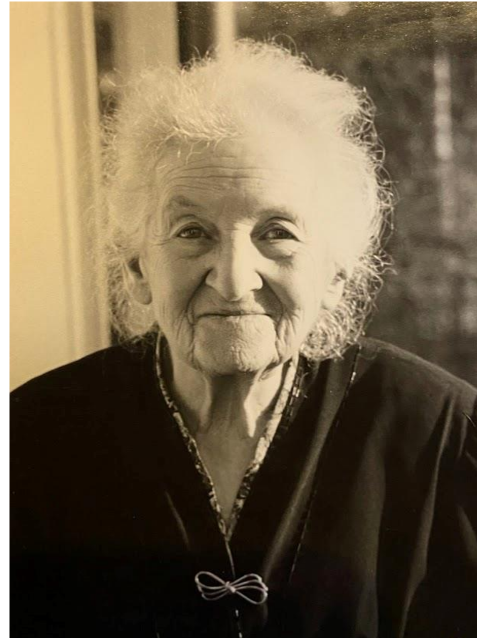

Fig. 29 Alice Schwab (Rappaport) (1962). Private Collection of B. King, Dusseldorf, Germany.

Fig. 30 Alice Zielenziger (Schück) with Ludwig Königsberger (King) (c.1947). Private Collection of B. King, Dusseldorf, Germany.

Earlier in the war and after her arrest in Gelsenkirchen, Ilse herself had curated a multitude of ways through which she could get news to Clara and by extension her son Klaus in Britain. On 14 January 1940 from her prison cell, Ilse wrote to Klaus and the extended family, omitting any mention of the difficulties she and Ernst were facing, whether through enforced or self-censorship. The letter was sent to Ilse's close friend, the noted chemist, Gerti Rubensohn (formerly Will, 1902-42) at her home on Vinetastraße. One of a number of Berlin friends corresponding with the Lichts, Gerti received the letter on the 20 January writing back to Ilse 'I am going to call Aunt Alice immediately. Everything will be handled. Your words radiate so much love'.[596] Gerti forwarded this letter to 'Tante' Alice Zielenziger, however from here it is unclear exactly how or when the letter reached Clara and the family in Britain, as it's arrival is not mentioned in the diaries. It is potentially likely then, that it remained with Alice Zielenziger until the end of the war when she returned many of Ernst and Ilse's possessions in 1947. Despite this letter perhaps not reaching them, Clara was hearing piecemeal information via her friends and relatives in Berlin, although it is unclear how they correspond directly between Berlin and London:

> [...] for the first time since late August, I have a little bit of hope; for the first time! Gretl's parents write that they had news from Ernst, that the children are healthy and that they are in touch with Alice Z. Where Alice cares for us, there is hope. I know that she will do anything for us.

Grete (Gretl) Königsberger (1903-92), the widow of Lutz's brother Hans, received news via her mother Paula Kronheimer (1882-) who would later emigrate to Sao Paulo but in 1940 was one of the Licht's correspondents, constantly reassuring them of their family's health and wellbeing in Britain. In one of the final letters sent to Ernst in prison, Paula assured him: 'Lutz recently wrote to his mum [Emma] that all his loved ones are healthy, so your Klaus is doing very well, you can be calm about that'.[597]

By the end of March 1940, perhaps an attempt at quicker communication, a different method of communication is evidenced from Clara's diary, using friends with connections in other neutral countries.

> 23.03. telephone call from Miss B, to give us regards from the children. We asked her to come to us on the 25.03. (Easter Sunday). We liked her very much and she gave us courage when she said

[596] Gerti Rubensohn to Ilse Licht, 20 January 1940, JMB. Trans. K. Baumgartner.

[597] Paula Kronheimer to Ernst Licht, 28 April 1940, JMB. Trans. K. Baumgartner. Lutz's mother Emma Königsberger (formerly Brock, 1865-1942) was living in the Jewish retirement home on Große Hamburger Straße. She was later deported to Treblinka.

> that she and her parents are also on their way to B. Now at least we know that the treatment is good and the food as well and most importantly, that they are healthy.[598]

Lilli Behrendt (1921-2004) or 'Miss B.' as Clara called her, was the daughter of Arthur (1888-1941) and Henrietta Behrendt (formerly Silberstein, 1892-1942) and emigrated to Britain in 1938 on a Domestic Service visa.[599] Her parents, like Ernst and Ilse, had remained in Berlin, and were amongst the group of individuals equally supposed to be taken across the border by the Höppe's on 19 September 1939. Arthur and Henrietta were also imprisoned in Gelsenkirchen and developed a close bond with the couple there, evidently enough to send letters via an unknown associate in Sweden to their daughter in Maida Vale, London. On 12 April 1940, Lilli forwarded Clara a letter from Ilse to her, Klaus, and the family:

> All my dear ones – my beloved Klaus,
> It makes me so sad that you have only confirmed receipt of my first letter to Aunt Alice [Zielenziger]. Therefore, I will find another way [to send letters] and hope you will get our messages sooner. Unfortunately, we still have not managed to get to/arrive at our new home [...] I am very happy to hear about you via Gretl's mother [Paula Kronheimer]. To be reunited with you seems to me like an unattainable dream slipping into the distance. With a grateful heart I would consider it to be a miracle if it comes true one day. Aunt Alice also selflessly cares about us [...][600]

Clearly in Ilse's mind, the previous means of communication via their friends in Berlin had not worked, but whilst her words suggested a reunion was unlikely, Clara nevertheless noted in her diary on receipt of the letter of a 'happiness [to see] Ilse's handwriting'.

It was not purely private correspondence however which formed Clara's fractured image of her family's fate in Germany. Whilst Clara and the rest of the family in Britain had heard the news of Ernst's death in Sachsenhausen (although they may not have known the specific details), information on Ilse was not forthcoming, hence perhaps Clara's letters to Alice Schwab in Basel referred to previously. On a page in the middle of the *Kontobuch*, Clara firstly wrote the dates of the Jewish holidays in 1942, beginning with Pesach and ending with Chanukah. This was followed by a list of books she was presumably planning to read: Vicki Baum's *Shanghai '37* (1937), Edna Ferber's autobiography *A Peculiar Treasure* (1938), and James Truslow Adams's *The Epic of America* (1931), each perhaps an attempt to understand the new expanded

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[598] Clara Licht envelope diary entry, 23 March 1940, JMB. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[599] Lilli Behrendt later married the journalist Karl Marx (1897-1966) in 1947 and became noted for her communal activism after the war. She co-founded the newspaper *Jüdische Allgemeine,* and in 1951 she created the *Gesellschaft für christlich-jüdische Zusammenarbeit* (Society for Christian-Jewish Cooperation), More information on Lilli Marx can be found here: https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/marx-lilli, Last accessed: 11 June 2024.
[600] Ilse Licht to Klaus Licht and others, 25 March 1940, JMB. Trans. K. Baumgartner.

geography of her familial and amical diaspora. The bottom of the page however contains one of the few passages within the diary relating specifically to Ilse's fate.

> On Saturday, 12th December 42 I felt so bad inside. How is Ilse [Licht], **where can she be**, or - - - If I could ever see her again, or at least know whether or how she is living. She is a strong nature but tender. How is she supposed to bear this misfortune? The war is going on too long.
> And Alice Z[ielenziger]? Poor poor "Mensch".[601]

Clara questioned how Ilse and Alice - the latter of whom had sent Clara a Red Cross message in September 1942 which arrived on the 25 November, a few weeks before Clara's diary entry - could survive the onslaught facing German Jewry by the end of the year. Clara wrote in her *Kontobuch* sporadically, and indeed seemed to reserve it in the most part for domestic diaristic passages. The date of writing then, seemingly has wider relevance with which this pattern is broken. In the days surrounding Clara's writing, public discourse on the fate of the European Jews was coming to the fore. Following the publication on 1 December of *The Polish Fortnightly Review* in Britain, focussing on the extermination of Polish Jewry, by the 10th the now famous 'Raczyński's Note', signed by Minister of Foreign Affairs Count Edward Raczyński, was sent to foreign ministers of the allied powers, and became the first official report on the Holocaust aimed at detailing these crimes to the public. From the 11th onwards newspapers began to report on the mass murder of the European Jews, indeed the headline of *The Jewish Chronicle* on Friday 11 December, the day before Clara's diary entry, was 'Two Million Jews Slaughtered' subtitled the 'Most Terrible Massacre of All Time'.[602] A week after Raczyński's note and the subsequent press coverage, the Joint Declaration by Members of the United Nations was issued, and read aloud in the House of Commons by Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, condemning 'in the strongest possible terms this bestial policy of cold-blooded extermination'. Such open publication of evidence of mass murder on the continent, evidently prompted Clara to write in a place she had formerly preserved for recollections of family visits and knitting patterns. Ilse, alongside Henrietta Behrendt and the other female inmates arrested in Gelsenkirchen, had been sent to Ravensbrück on 1 June 1940. In March 1942, after two years in the camp, Ilse was forced onto a *Sondertransport* to Bernburg an der Saale, a T4 killing centre where she was gassed on arrival. By the time Clara had penned these worries in the *Kontobuch*, Ilse was already dead.

[601] Clara Licht *Kontobuch* diary entry (undated), JMB. Emphasis in the original. Trans. B. King.
[602] *The Jewish Chronicle,* 11 December 1942, p.1. For more on British knowledge of the Holocaust see Fleming, 'Knowledge in Britain of the Holocaust During the Second World War', pp.115-33. See also Michael Fleming, *Auschwitz, the Allies and Censorship of the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

Clara Licht's composition of private familial correspondences navigated through friends and connections in neutral countries, Red Cross messages sent via Geneva, and her engagement with published knowledge of the Holocaust ensured her limited correspondence tallied with the specific realities formed by individual letters. Such cross referencing was equally seen in the correspondence between Walter Goldberg and his daughter Marion, whilst the former was in Cuba. In a letter dated January 1943 primarily discussing his new life in the country, Walter wrote to Marion of his understanding of what was happening to his wife Gertrud after reading the newspapers:

> The hot and unfamiliar climate brings new health issues. But that is meaningless compared to the burdens fate imposed on Mutti. With the help of the Red Cross, I wrote to her in summer but I have not heard back. What I read about the treatment of Jews in Poland makes my blood freeze. I hope for a miracle that will lead Mutti out of there! Since the occupation of the formerly unoccupied part of France, I have not had news from my siblings and I just hope that they manage to reach safety.[603]

Walter eschewed any comparison between his climatic uncomfortableness and the prevailing persecution faced by his wife in Plauen. Whilst his immediate correspondence with the Red Cross failed, Walter presumably refers to similar publications on the fate of Jewish deportees to Poland as Clara evidently read above. Knowing that Gertrud had already been deported there, Walter's reading enabled him to thus hypothetically contextualise his wife's situation. Importantly however, Walter rejects such publications, opting instead for hope that his wife's 'will' will save her instead.

For Walter in 1943, is was not only private correspondence or published news with which he attempted to source information on his family's condition and whereabouts. In latter letters, Walter appears to have written to the ICRC directly to enquire about his wife's location after her deportation to Lublin. During the war, many organisations in Geneva such as the ICRC, but also the lesser studied Committee for Relief of the War-Stricken Jewish Population (RELICO), acted as tracing services for refugees separated from their families. Again coupled with his own dismissal of the details of his new life in Cuba, Walter sought to update his daughter on his tracing efforts.

> [...] the landlady is very nice to us [...] She just told me to tell you that she is looking after me well and that you shouldn't worry about your father's culinary well-being. Vedado is a suburb with villas and beautiful and broad but sunny streets. It reminds me a lot of the area around the big

[603] Walter Goldberg to Marion Goldberg, 26 January 1943, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.

> garden[604] but exotic. Most of my acquaintances live out here. However, I don't take advantage of that. But that isn't big news about me, as you know. – I haven't heard anything from our loved ones. Nothing about Mutti from the Red Cross either. According to the latest news from the Red Cross we shouldn't count on them answering our enquiries. And so, we have to keep living in uncertainty…[605]

Whist the exact process of tracing individuals from Cuba is unclear in scholarship, in Britain by 1943 Marion would have in theory had access to emerging organised tracing efforts in addition to the isolated correspondence with the ICRC. The United Kingdom Search Bureau (after 1944, formerly the Central Search Bureau) was formed in 1943 in an effort to coordinate the efforts of several refugee organisations who were regularly receiving search requests for lost family members.[606] Whilst the vast majority of tracing efforts were conducted in the immediate and to a lesser extent later post-war years, these early requests for information, albeit often unsuccessful and limited, did give refugees some form of understanding of what was happening to their relatives.

Although we do not have any of the letters sent by Walter to the ICRC or indeed to other tracing organisations such as RELICO, which Walter was clearly aware of having received parcels through this channel whilst he was interned in France, Susanne Urban has written that 'it was not unusual for the senders to openly express their despair and write of their fear for their loved ones'.[607] Walter's statement that 'we shouldn't count on [the Red Cross] answering our enquiries' speaks to both the difficulty of tracing individuals who had been deported, and perhaps equally (albeit unknown to him), the unwillingness of the DRK vis-à-vis the attempts of the ICRC. Urban continues that: 'While the ICRC was still trying to fulfil its mandate, the letters from the DRK testify to an increasing refusal to deal with these correspondences, insofar as they concerned Jewish applicants and the search for deported relatives'.[608]

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[604] [Potentially a place in Plauen]
[605] Walter Goldberg to Marion Goldberg, 16 June 1943, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[606] See Christine Schmidt, 'Those Left Behind: Early Search Efforts in Wartime and Postwar Britain', in *Tracing and Documenting Victims of Nazi Persecution: History of the International Tracing Service (ITS) in Context*, ed. by Henning Borggräfe, Christian Hoeschler and Isabel Panek (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), pp.95-115.
[607] Susanne Urban, "Ich bitte innigst um Nachricht von meinem Kinde…' Korrespondenzen von Jüdinnen und Juden mit dem Roten Kreuz zwischen circa 1938 und 1942', *Medaon,* 15/29 (2021), 1–14 (p.5). For more on letters sent to tracing organisations such as RELICO see Charlie Knight, ''I beg you again from my heart to help me find my sister': RELICO and the Need for Knowledge', *Migrant Knowledge Blog,* 8 December 2022, accessed via: https://migrantknowledge.org/2022/12/08/relico-and-the-need-for-knowledge/, last accessed: 26 February 2025.
[608] Urban, 'Korrespondenzen von Jüdinnen und Juden', 5.

7.4 The Goldbergs and the End of the War

On 24 May 1945, Walter Goldberg, now living on the 3rd Floor of No.560 on Calle 8 in the Vedado neighbourhood of Havana, wrote to his daughter Marion in Britain. Marion had just started work at a day nursery in Hampstead in London after suffering with her health for a number of months. Walter wrote bittersweetly about the recent end of the war in Europe and was updating his daughter on the various people he was now in contact with. Walter, who had at this point not seen his daughter in nearly seven years, reflected on the future:

> The question now looms large what will happen now? And who can give an answer? We have all seen the joyful images from New York and London's Trafalgar Square. But despite all the satisfaction about the victory I can't join in the jubilations like so many others. We Jews in particular have suffered too much and the mourning is too enormous. The cinema newsreels show images of the camps Buchenwald, Dachau, Bergen-Belsen and so on. We have known that for 12 years. But when we spoke about it, others labelled it propaganda. [...] One could hear it clearly in the cinema. But these images were even more horrible than what we had imagined. And our hope to see our loved ones who had been deported ever again, vanished.[609]

With the end of the war, surviving Jews all over the world sought to take stock and began to ask questions just like Walter: Where were their families and what happened to them? What did their former homes now look like? And what will happen now? Whilst none of these questions could be answered straight away in May 1945, and indeed for some families the first question still cannot be answered, these enquiries shaped the vast majority of the correspondence in the days, months, and years that followed.[610]

For many like the Goldberg's, the end of the war was a stark realisation of the extent of the mass violence and mass killing across Europe, and was therefore a realisation of the growing impossibility of their own loved ones' survival. Even for those that had been aware of their relatives' deportation 'east' and had lost hope during the war itself, 1945 and the truth of the genocide was still stark. The Korean-American philosopher Cecilea Mun has argued that 'emotions are vehicles of knowledge', that being that they act as the mediator, or *baker* to more closely follow Claude Levi-Strauss's summation of knowledge as 'cooked' and information as 'raw'.[611] Victoria Van Orden Martínez in her work on Polish refugee interviewers in Sweden, has utilised Mun's argument to suggest that in their interviews with camp survivors, emotions

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[609] Walter Goldberg to Marion Goldberg, 24 May 1945, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.

[610] Schlör, *Escaping Nazi Germany,* p.163.

[611] Cecilea Mun, 'How Emotions Know: Naturalizing Epistemology via Emotions', in *The Value of Emotions for Knowledge*, ed. by Laura Candiotto (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), pp.27–50 (p.29).

‘became a vehicle of knowledge about the suffering caused by the Nazi atrocities during the Second World War and the Holocaust’ as well as linking to their own suffering caused by displacement.[612] Walter’s own reaction to the film reels and his subsequent decision to write about it to his daughter Marion, demonstrate him beginning to understand and internalise what perhaps he had previously believed through his own written emotions. In their 2023 exhibition, Christine Schmidt and Sandra Lipner remind us that ‘to write about their experiences, correspondents had to make sense of them [...] Letters became sites of knowledge production because, in writing, people articulated their experiences and expressed what they knew’.[613]

Despite knowledge mediated through his conflicting emotions on the end of the war, Walter, like so many, attempted to find his wife and brothers. Now living at Apt.6 No.162 on Calle H a few roads over from his last address, having been forced to move because of the landlord’s mother’s antisemitism, Walter continued to doubt the post-war bliss, and asked for his daughter’s help:

> Certainly, the fighting and killing in Europe is over. But that means the dawn of a golden era, is doubtful. The news reaching us here from liberated Europe about campaigns against Jews, drive us to sheer despair. This cursed Hitler didn’t succeed in anything; but this one thing he succeeded in: and that is spreading the hatred against us. And not in this intensity, but definitely notable, is it [Anti-Semitism] also in this part of the world [Cuba]. The question arises, where this will lead to, what will be and there is no answer. Lists appeared [with names] of people who were found and came back. So far, I haven’t found the names of relatives on any list. I assume it as a fact that you, just like me here, have started searching [for relatives] and I would love to hear from you what you find out.[614]

The desperation with which Walter wrote to his daughter is tied with a defiance that ‘Hitler didn’t succeed’. Later in the letter, Walter reminded his daughter ‘you went to the Soviet embassy last year [...] and you were told to come back after the war’, and that since now the war was over she should return as ‘maybe by now they know something about Mutti’s whereabouts’. The subject of Gertrud Goldberg returned a number of times in the months that followed alongside tense discussions on Marion’s wish to return to Germany. It is likely that Walter never truly found out what happened to his wife, although a more thorough reading of the letters between him and his

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[612] Victoria Van Orden Martínez, ‘Suffering, Displacement, and the Circulation of Knowledge about Nazi Atrocities’, *Migrant Knowledge*, 27 August 2024, accessed via: https://migrantknowledge.org/2024/08/27/suffering-displacement-and-knowledge/, last accessed: 18 April 2025.
[613] Extracts from the exhibition ‘Holocaust Letters’ curated by Christine Schmidt and Sandra Lipner, at The Wiener Holocaust Library, London, 22 February – 16 June 2023.
[614] Walter Goldberg to Marion Goldberg, 27 June 1945, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.

daughter between 1945 and his death in 1955 is needed for that. Marion searched with the ITS and Red Cross for the rest of her life with sporadic enquiries in the 1950s, 60s, 70s, and 80s in the months preceding her own death in 1988.

Summary

In addition to the discussions of the everyday, German-Jewish letters during the Holocaust equally speak to ongoing war and persecution surrounding the epistolary spaces. That the persecution of European Jewry is not more prominent in the correspondence is unsurprising. Whether through fear of the censor or one's own self-censorship for a variety of reasons, letters such as Gertrud Goldberg's at the start of this chapter, make little allusion to the world around them. This chapter evidences however, that whilst not possessing the ability to honestly describe nor indeed understand the persecution around them, the letters studied within the thesis do demonstrate an international network of knowledge transfer, whereby letter writers could formulate a nebulous but indeed emergent sense of the persecutory framework around them. In understanding the developing course of the war through both private and public avenues, letter writers further grasped the plight of their families in occupied Europe and how these changes altered their communication channels. With such channels further impaired the longer the war lasted, engagement with growing institutional-personal networks in a host of neutral countries became a piecemeal lifeline - which too, would later fade. As the war ended and surviving German-Jews across the world began to take stock of their community's destruction, letters once again became a possible vehicle for reunification and the search for information on the fate of loved ones.

CONCLUSION:

German-Jewish Letters and the Holocaust

Over six years after the beginning of the Second World War, its culmination brought with it questions of: what next? and crucially for Marion Goldberg: where next? In a letter to her father from August 1945, Walter rebuked his daughter's wish to return to Germany:

> Because I cannot believe that anyone [of these young people] would consider living there – considering all the facts which were unearthed – the murder of 80% of the European Jews. I understand that the separation from your friends worries you but it shouldn't make you feel remorse; you should feel remorse if you joined them – as we most likely have to fear that your mother and both your uncles – maybe even your cousin Peter - are the victims of the [campaign of] extinction of the Jews tolerated by the German people in their entirety. Please include this fact into your announced deliberations.[615]

In the summer months of 1945, Walter and Marion continued to debate the prospect of a return to their former home, and the ethics and considerations that entailed. Marion had joined the *Freie Deutsche Jugend* during the war, and became part of a larger group of friends who all spoke of returning, to help move Germany's future forward in a socialist vision. In a typical literary, engaged retort from Walter in a later letter, the father appeals to his daughter's immutable characteristics in an attempt to halt her onward migration.

> Have you read Goethe's Faust? In the scene that takes place in the [Faust's] study, Mephisto says: "In the end- you are what you are. Put on a wig with a million curls, put your feet in high socks, you will always be what you are." Over 100 years ago he spoke the truth which I had to learn painfully. That I am what I always was and that I will never be anything else: a Jew.[616]

It is difficult to know what to make of Walter's Faustian allusion beyond a belief in both permanency of Jewishness, and an impermanency of place, and thus in Walter's mind the impossibility of return.[617] On the 19 May 1947 however, Marion did in the end leave Britain for Germany with the *FDJ,* although there is little about this in the material I have seen. The remaining letters from 1947-1955 from her father which I have yet to read, will evidently shed

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[615] Walter Goldberg to Marion Goldberg, 30 August 1945, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[616] Ibid., 30 September 1945, MCL. Trans. K. Baumgartner.
[617] Whilst there is a fairly developed literature on 'Goethe and the Jews', the scholarship on Jewish attitudes to Goethe is far less developed. For a good example see Willi Jasper, 'Deutsche Juden als Goethe-Verehrer - eine "faustische" Beziehungsgeschichte?', in *Goethe in Gesellschaft. Zur Geschichte einer literarischen Vereinigung vom Kaiserreich bis zum geteilten Deutschland*, ed. by Jochen Golz and Justus H. Ulbricht (Köln: Böhlau, 2005), pp.113-123.

more light on the subject. As part of my search for more colour to Marion's later life, I contacted Celia Davies, the executrix of Marion's will, and former professor of nursing at Kings College London and the Open University. Prof. Davies had kept some of Marion's possessions after her passing in 1986, and kindly sent me one of interest – the songbook *Leben, Singen, Kämpfen* of the *FDJ*.

The discovery of this little book, albeit perhaps not pivotal to the thesis, nonetheless symbolises a process of continued return to the private archive on my part, and the continued presence of personal items to be found, with the *potential* at least, to yield further insight. Private archives, which this thesis has made abundant use of in the form of the Lichts, Ambergs, and Rothschilds amongst many others, play a vital role in the future of *how* we study German-Jewish history, as well as *what* remains to be studied. The search for these, in itself creates theoretical and practical challenges, all of which I would argue however, are ameliorated by their promise of genuinely novel research, as well as an opportunity to highlight the longer cultural history of the archive - one embedded in the histories these collections seek to tell. In not seeking out the private archive, the individual's story, and the memories they both store, we, as scholars, run the risk of leaving their fate to chance. I am often drawn back to the route of the papers of Theodor Hirschberg to Southampton's archive, which arrived through purchase at an auction, presumably as an individual believed there was some financial worth to be gained from them.[618] In a counterfactual reality, such letters would have been lost to the rubbish tip, and the Hirschberg and Böhm family history would've remained untold. In dealing with letters pertaining to families and their individual migrations, *contingency* becomes a methodologically uncomfortable, but abundantly rewarding bedfellow. A chance of meeting descendants and their archives in the present, combining with a quirk of organisation in the past, coalesce to make the letter a unique object of study. It is this contingency that makes the letter a simultaneously frustrating and inspiring document to work with.

Not only do private archives offer interpretive opportunities beyond the confines of an archival search (at least in the first instance), but their discovery and use is vital beyond a singular thesis. These photographs, diaries, documents, and of course letters, are still to be found inside cupboards, under beds, and in attics globally. In seeking them out for the purpose of research we have the chance to recover such papers and the stories they contain. Whilst every

[618] A similar route was taken by the Nadia Taussig Collection at the National Library of Israel (ARC. 4* 2035) which was purchased at auction by the Library in 2018 but which had originally been pulled from the rubbish over thirty years previous. See 'Hybrid Panel: Letter Writing in Holocaust Studies – Shirli Gilbert, Joachim Schlör', *The Wiener Holocaust Library,* recording accessed via: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A4cS9g2UF-s, Last accessed: 2 June 2025.

collection may not have historical scholarly value, and the question of what exactly can, or should, be done with them remains, the process and indeed the exploration itself allows a more connected, and intertwined history of German-Jewish life and flight.

This thesis demonstrates a research process that centres the individual, gives primary recourse to the family archive, and attempts to uncover as many webs of relation as possible. I do not attempt to argue in this thesis that letters are *always* conceived in the ways laid out in the preceding pages, more so that the letters I have studied show these things in part. It is thus by no means exhaustive, partly as no study of correspondence during the Holocaust could be, but the interpretive judgements made throughout, on letters' contents, purpose, categorisation, and *raison d'être,* remain. Part I established multiple lenses through which letters have been, can be, and perhaps should be viewed by a range of different onlookers: as a historical source with its methodological challenges, as a space with which contemporaries could connect once separated, and as an object so key to how scholars, historical actors, and descendants understand its place in relation to their interactions with the wider world, and indeed the past.

In a thesis so defined by the specifics, and one very much determined by the nuances of the collections themselves, how can one reconcile this detail, with the general, the micro with the macro? I would argue this question, however, is built on a false premise. In truth, letters themselves walk this supposed binary in their creation, in their survival, and now in their scholarly use. In his work on the letters of Liesel Schwab, Joachim Schlör dichotomises the 'traditional historian': interested in structure, events, and the *bigger picture,* with the 'ethnographer or cultural historian' who focusses on the minute details of individual experiences, and the seeming banality of everyday life. Schlör continues that:

> These letters, however disordered and chaotic they may seem to us at times, represent a challenge for both approaches. On the one hand they show us how 'world history' interferes with the lives of individuals, and how individuals and groups process such major events [...] on the other hand it is precisely these everyday [discussions and objects] with which people can concern themselves even in the most extreme situations, and which allow life to go on.[619]

Letters mandate and equally offer such a synthesis of approaches, as they too are not bound by such demarcations. They mingle between the fabric of everyday life, with the coarse reality of a wider context impinging on the micro. In Parts II and III of this thesis, I walk this line within the correspondences and my work on them, exploring how the lives and the intricacies of the five

[619] Schlör, *Escaping Nazi Germany,* p.171.

families, and specifically the contents, in some cases speak to wider histories of persecution, migration, aid networks, and knowledge transfer. Whilst specific (and perhaps niche) passages on philately, precise familial relationships, sex education, and cricket belong to the everydayness of the five families, how these intermingle with the *bigger picture* within the thesis, reflects the letter more broadly. Both parts also attempt to do this by highlighting the networks apparent within the letters to broaden it beyond a singular collection and an isolated story. Within this thesis, I began *inside* the collection and formed my research based on what I read, in many cases then moving out into the contextual, the institutional, and the *bigger* picture, before returning to private collections to continue the story, and the analysis therein.

This thesis has been an exploration of an object and act so prolific during the Holocaust, and yet so often disregarded or undervalued. The weight which separated families gave to the letter for its materiality, often as much as its contents, commands study. Is it possible to write a history of Jewish life under such impactful settings, *without* using ego-documents such as letters? - I would suggest certainly not, for both their importance in the lives of historical actors, and the research avenues they unlock. There are of course innumerable topics touched upon within the correspondence of the Hirschberg, Amberg, Goldberg, Licht, and Rothschild families, that are intriguing to the scholar; this however is testament to the interpretative possibilities of letters as objects of study. Whilst theoretical considerations and challenges should remain, letters' critical usage is needed, and saving them is vital.

Appendix 1: Key People

Note:
The names used in this list are the ones used in the letters. Some are married names and some are birth names, whilst others changed both their first name and surname post-migration.

Hirschberg Family Collection

Theodor Moritz Wilhelm Hirschberg (1903-82) was one of six sons born in Eberswalde to Martin Hirschberg and Margaretha Dresdner. After his mother's death in 1911, his father married Paula Frieda Cohn (1876–1942) in 1914. Theodor left school aged nineteen, and began a course in banking at the Eberswalde branch of *Commerz und Privatbank* and worked there until 1933. After attempting to emigrate to Britain, Theodor instead moved to Berlin where he worked as an accountant. He left Germany for Britain in May 1939 and later began work at Somers Town Goods Depot near London St Pancras in the accounts department and in the 1950s married Therese Kronau. His papers were bought at auction in 2001 nearly twenty years after his death.

Hans Walter Hirschberg (1893-1950) was the brother of Theodor and the son of Martin and Margaretha. Hans Walter was a well-respected lawyer in Berlin, and later became a prosecutor at the Auschwitz Trial according to his descendants. He married Iwanka Ladislawowa (1898-?) in 1929 and together they had a son – Hans Wladislaw. During the war, Hans was potentially involved in underground activity in Berlin led by Franz Kauffmann who Hans Walter had met in 1940. He was deported to Theresienstadt in 1944 but survived the war.

Paula Frieda Hirschberg (Cohn, 1876-1942) was born in Berlin, to Moritz Cohn and Amalie Asch, the oldest of her siblings. Paula married Martin Hirschberg in 1914 and built a close relationship with his children. Paula stayed in Berlin during the war with Hans Walter Hirschberg. She died 24 November 1942 in Berlin.

Rudolf 'Rudi' Hirschberg (1906-68) was born in Eberswalde to Martin and Margaretha Hirchberg, the youngest of their six sons. Rudi trained as a teacher in Eberswalde. In 1935 he left London for Cape Town on the Gloucester Castle where he later adopted a keen interest is astronomy. In 1939 he married Ursula Dorothea Jaroczynski but they subsequently divorced

and he married June Edna Austin/Hogg in 1953. For many years Rudi was the director of what is now the Iziko Planetarium in Cape Town.

Gertrud Lehmann (1904-43) was born in Bütow, what is now Bytów in Pomerania, Poland, to Samuel Lehmann, a retired railway official and Hanne Abraham. She attended various schools in Bütow before her parents sent her to Frankfurt a/Main to the Jüdische Haushaltungsschule. In the 1920s she moved to Berlin with her parents and sister Johanna. At some point after the start of the war in September 1939, Gertrud married Michael Früh (1894–1943) and the couple moved to *Parkstraße* 20. In March 1943 Gertrud, Michael, her sister Johanna, her brother Leo and his young family were all deported to Auschwitz Birkenau. Gertrud was likely gassed upon arrival.

Ursula Maria Gottschalk (1914-2007) was born in Kaltennordheim in the Rhön Mountains to Martin Gottschalk and Edna Cohn, the sister of Theodor's stepmother Paula. Her father Martin was a highly regarded lawyer and according to the letters, was head of the legal department at the *Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden.* After Martin's practice collapsed in 1933, in May 1933 Ursula moved to England and later worked as a teacher. By the 1950s Ursula had emigrated to Australia where she taught languages at the Methodist Ladies College in Camberwell, NSW. She died in 2007.

Ernst Böhm (1899-1940) was the only child of Theodor Hirschberg's aunt Rosalie (1859-1941) and her husband Siegfried Böhm. Ernst was married to Elise Heppner (1897-1942) and together they had two children Ilse (1928-) and Siegfried living in Brieg (now Brzeg). Ernst's father Siegfried had run a private bank at their home in *Langestrasse* which Ernst sold to a larger bank at some point in the 1930s. In 1938, Ernst was arrested in the November Pogroms and sent to Buchenwald; he was released on 5 January 1939. Ernst and his young family managed to reach as far as Antwerp where they lived in the city until the Nazi invasion in 1940. Ernst was imprisoned in St Cyprien and later Gurs in the Pyrenees where he died in December 1940.

Rosalie Böhm (Hirschberg,1859-1941), was the sister of Theodor's father Martin, the youngest child of Hermann Hirschberg and Fanny Böhm. Not much is known of Roaslie's life prior to her migration. In 1939 she left Germany with her son Ernst and his family for Antwerp. Rosalie died in the city in December 1941.

Elise Böhm (Heppner, 1897-1942) was one of a number of children born in Kozmin to the noted historian and Rabbi, Aron Heppner and his wife Selma. Elise worked as a Pharmacist. She was married to Ernst Böhm and together they had two children, Ilse and Siegfried. With her

husband, children, sister Edith, and mother-in-law, she fled to Antwerp in 1939 living at various addresses in the city before her deportation to Auschwitz Birkenau in October 1942.

Ilse Böhm (1928 -) now Sara Zamir, is the oldest child of Ernst and Elise Böhm, born in Brieg (Brzeg) in 1928. Ilse left Germany for Belgium with her parents, aunt, brother, and grandmother in 1939 and attended the local school in Antwerp and Kermt during their brief stay in the town. Ilse was hidden in the town of Vilvoorde from the summer of 1942 until 1945 by Raymond and Laure Vander Burght. In 1945 she migrated to Mandate Palestine and today lives in Haifa.

Suzanne Löwenstein 'Sten' (1908-95) was born in Eberswalde to Leo (1869-1922) and Fanny (1878-1959) Löwenstein. Leo ran a linoleum, paint and wallpaper business at *Jägerstraße* 2 (today *Puschkinstraße*) in Eberswalde, a company taken over by Fanny upon Leo's death. Suzanne studied at the *Eberswalde Oberlyzeum* and pursued her musical talents at the private *Stern'sches Konservatorium* (Julius Stern Conservatory) in Berlin. Immediately after graduating, the mezzosoprano debuted in Saarbrücken before choosing a position at the City Theatre in Breslau. In 1939 she fled to the USA and continued a successful operatic career as 'Suzy Sten' throughout the 1940s and 50s.

Goldberg Family Collection

Marion Charlotte Goldberg (later Ferguson, 1924-88) was born in Munich, the only child to Walter Goldberg (1898-1955) and Rosa Gertrud Prager (1898-1942). In 1927 the family moved to Plauen where Marion's mother's family was from. From 1930-38 she attended schools in Plauen but was forced to leave following the November pogrom. In May 1939, Marion was sent on Hakhshara at Gut Winkel near Berlin and her name was also put on Kindertransport lists to Britain. She arrived in England in July 1939. In 1940 Marion moved to London and spent the war working in factories and began her nursing training. From 1947-48 Marion worked as a translator and secretary at the 200 War Crimes Trial in Hamburg, returning to London in 1951. Marion later has a very successful Nursing career globally, pioneering academic nursing as a discipline. She died from cancer in 1988 in Cardiff.

Walter Goldberg (1898-1955) was the youngest child of Nathan Goldberg (1857-1929) a Kantor from Chemnitz and his wife Charlotte Friedland. Walter was significantly younger than his siblings: Isidor Goldberg (1881-1943), Heinrich (1882-1943) and Hulda (1884-1967) who all received extensive education and spent the bulk of their childhood in Bromberg, where their father worked. Walter worked as an insurance agent in Plauen and was the secretary to leader

of the Jewish community, as well the librarian at the Eugen Fuchs B'nai Brith Lodge. After the November 1938 pogroms, Walter fled to Nice to be with his brothers. Following his lengthy internment in France as an 'alien', Walter was released and made it to Cuba where he remained for the rest of the war. Walter later moved to New York and shortly before his death married Else Möderl (1920-?).

Rosa Gertrud Goldberg (Prager, 1898-1942) was born in Plauen to David Prager (1865-1942) and Julia Prager (Ringer, 1865-1943). Gertrud was the youngest of three children: Felicia (1892-1939) and Charlotte (18995-1969). It is unclear what Gertrud's early life was like. Gertrud chose to stay in Plauen to look after her parents following her husband and daughter's flight from Germany. Gertrud was deported to the Belzyce Ghetto in May 1942.

David Prager (1865-1942) was the father of Gertrud, Felicia and Charlotte, and was married to Julia. Originally from Krakow, David and Julia moved to Plauen in the 1880s. The couple ran a successful Household Wares shop which they retired from in 1933. David died on 4 February 1942 in Plauen.

Julia Prager (Ringer, 1865-1943) was the mother of Gertrud, Felicia and Charlotte, and was married to David. Originally from Krakow, David and Julia moved to Plauen in the 1880s. The couple ran a successful Household Wares shop which they retired from in 1933. Julia was deported to the Hellerberg Judenlager near Dresden in circa February 1943. The camp was cleared on 2 March, with only 32 Jews remaining, all over the age of 65. Julia died on the 8 March 1943.

Charlotte 'Lotte' Kariel (Prager, 1895-1969) was the sister of Marion's mother Gertrud and the daughter of David and Julia. Lotte moved to the USA with her husband Georg Kariel (1884-1951), a businessman, and sons Herbert and Hans in 1938, settling in Portland, Oregon.

Licht/Königsberger Family Collection

Clara Licht (Fuchs, 1877-1953) was born in 1877 in the town of Reichenbach, the oldest child of Mathilde (Moser, 1855-1922) and Adolf Fuchs (1848-1915). Clara's parents quickly had another child Arthur who died at a young age, after which two more children were born - Lise (1881-1946) and Johanna (1883-1973). The family moved to Berlin in the late nineteenth century. Clara married her husband Saly 'Sem' Licht (1869-1950) in 1899 in Berlin and went on to have two children, Ernst (1900-40) and Alice (1903-2000). The young family lived a

comfortable life in Berlin at their home on *BrückenStraße*. Following the November pogrom, Clara and Sem decided to leave and arrived in Britain in May 1939 to join their daughter Alice and her family who had left in 1933. Clara lived with her daughter in Shirehall Lane in London before moving to Devon following the destruction if their house during the Blitz. Clara died in Willesden in 1953.

Saly 'Sem' Licht (1869-1950) was born in Poznan to Isidor (1833-1919) a corn merchant and Amelie (Markussohn, 1847–87), a well-educated woman with a love of music. Sem was the youngest of four children and rarely got on with his siblings. Sem studied medicine at Strasburg, Posen, and Berlin where he was awarded the degree of doctor of Medicine in 1891. He later specialised in Opthamology and rose to the rank of *'Sanitätsrat'* (consultant). Sem married Clara Licht in 1899 and had two children Ernst (1900-40) and Alice (1903-2000). Sem and his wife Clara lived in Berlin for the next forty years before he left for England in 1939.

Alice Königsberger (Licht, 1903-2000) was born to Saly (1869-1950) and Clara Licht (1877-1953) in Berlin in 1903, the younger sister of Ernst Licht (1900-40). She married the lawyer, Ludwig Königsberger (1898-1976) in 1925 aged 21 and a few years later gave birth to her son Heinz-Peter. Following the appointment of Adolf Hitler as chancellor and the immediate disbarring of Jewish lawyers, the young family left for Britain and moved in to a house in Shirehall Lane. Following her husband's internment in 1940, and the destruction of their home during the blitz, Alice decided to stay in London whilst the rest of the family fled to Devon. During the war Alice worked in munitions factories. She died aged 96 in St Andrews.

Ludwig 'Lutz' Königsberger (1898-1976) was the son of Max (1860-1926) and Emma Königsberger (Brock, 1865-1942) and the younger brother of Hans. Lutz trained as a lawyer and worked in Berlin. In 1933, Lutz, his wife Alice, and their son Peter emigrated to Britain after Lutz was barred from legal practice. In 1940, alongside thousands of other refugees, Lutz was interned, primarily at Prees Heath Camp near Whitchurch in the north of Shropshire where conditions were notably dire. In July 1940 the Government white paper allowed those to be released who would join the Pioneer Corps; Lutz joined 249 Company, trained in Ilfracombe, before moving around the country, being for some time stationed in Kirkcudbright. On being demobbed, Lutz took up work as an import-export agent. When the possibility of compensation began for German-Jewish refugees, Lutz began working from London as a restitution lawyer. He died aged 77 in 1976.

Peter King (Heinz Königsberger, 1929-2024) was born in Berlin, the only child of Ludwig (1898-1976) and Alice Königsberger (1903-2000). Aged four, Peter arrived in Britain with his parents after his father was barred from his legal practice. The family moved to Hendon with Peter later enrolling at Highgate School. Following the destruction of their home in the Blitz, and the evacuation of the school to Westward Ho!, the family relocated to Devon. Peter went on to study medieval history at the London School of Economics, graduating in 1954 with a master's degree. He later went on to work at the Institute of Historical Research and University College Dublin before taking up a post as senior lecturer in medieval history at the University of St Andrews, where he taught until retirement in 1986. Peter gained his PhD in 2018 at the age of 89. He passed away aged 94 in 2024.

Klaus Licht (later Kenneth Light, 1927-2018) was born in 1927 in Berlin to Ernst (1900-40) and Ilse Licht (Krämer, 1903-42). After attending German state school initially from 1937 Klaus was educated at the Leonore Goldschmidt Schule in Berlin. Following the November 1938 pogrom, Klaus left for Britain to live with his paternal aunt and uncle, Alice and Lutz in London. He left London for Devon with the rest of his family in 1940/41 and enrolled at Bideford Grammar School. A keen sportsman, Klaus was a talented cricketer and rugby player. Following his National Service postwar, Klaus joined the Territorial Army but from 1953 began a career in teaching. Throughout the 60s and 70s he taught PE and later became head of lower school at Wickford Comprehensive. Ken passed away in 2018 in Essex.

Ernst Licht (1900-40) was the son of Sem and Clara, and the brother of Alice. Ernst married Ilse Krämer in 1926, and together they had a son, Klaus, a year later. In 1933, Ernst and Ilse chose to remain in Berlin in their home on *Martin Luther Straße*, despite the migration of Ernst's sister Alice and her family; Ernst began legal consultancy for a business. In 1938 following the November progrom, Ernst and Ilse decided to send Klaus to Britain on the Kindertransport. The couple made preparations to escape via Holland, and were to be smuggled over the border in taxis via the city of Gelsenkirchen. Ernst, Ilse and the other occupants are arrested on suspicion of 'capital flight' and 'illegal border crossing'. Ernst was imprisoned in Gelsenkirchen before being transported to Sachsenhausen concentration camp where he possibly took his own life in 1940.

Ilse Licht (Krämer, 1903-42) was born in Berlin in 1903 to Fritz and Martha – her older brother Arnold, had died in the First World War. Ilse attended the Sophium-Lyzeum in Berlin and worked as a language assistant and clerk before her marriage to Ernst Licht in 1926; together they had a son, Klaus, a year later. In 1933, the couple chose to remain in Berlin in their home on *Martin*

Luther Straße, despite the migration of Ernst's sister Alice and her family to Britain. In 1939 the couple planned their escape to Holland, via the city of Gelsenkirchen. Ernst and Ilse were arrested on suspicion of 'capital flight' and 'illegal border crossing'. Ilse and the other female inmates arrested in Gelsenkirchen, were deported to Ravensbruck on 1 June 1940. In March 1942, after two years in the camp, Ilse was forced onto a *Sondertransport* to Bernburg an der Saale, a T4 killing centre where she was likely killed upon arrival.

Rothschild Family Collection

Siegfried 'Fritz' Rothschild (1884-1952) was born in Bad Cannstatt, Stuttgart to Salomon (d.1905) and Henriette Rothschild (d.1911, Haenle) and had three brothers: Julius (1880-1949), Hugo (1882-1958) and Ferdinand (1888-1958) and together lived in *Hallstrasse 6* in Canstatt. Before the start of the First World War, Siegfried and his older brother Julius founded 'S. Rothschild and Son' in *Schellingstrasse* in Stuttgart – a wholesaler for mattress coverings. When war broke out in 1914, Siegfried, unable to enlist due to his deafness, began teaching soldiers injured on the front how to lipread if their hearing was impaired. The relationship between Siegfried and Julius, as well as the relationship between their wives Margaretha and Claire (1883-?), soured and the brothers never regained their familiarity. Siegfried was married to Margaretha Paula Pincus (1896-1968) and together they had two children, Annelore (1922-2004) and Gerhard (1925-2011). Following his children's emigration to England, Siegfried and Margaretha followed in the summer of 1939. After the war Siegfried lived in Fulham where he died in 1952.

Margaretha Paula Rothschild (Pincus, 1896-1968) was born in Saarbrucken to Max (1869-1942) and Rosa Pincus (Eichenberger, 1868-1942) and had two brothers Ludwig (1895-1917) who died in the First World War, and Walter (1901-1960). Margaretha married Siegfried Rothschild and together they had two children, Annelore (1922-2004) and Gerhard (1925-2011). Following her children's emigration to England, Siegfried and Margaretha followed in the summer of 1939. After the war Margaretha lived in Fulham, London, and passed away in 1968.

Annelore Henriette Rothschild (later Baer, 1922-2004) was born in the city of Heilbronn in Baden-Württemberg to Siegfried 'Fritz' Rothschild (1884-1952) and Margaretha Paula Rothschild (Pincus, 1896-1968). Educated initially in Bad Cannstatt and Heilbronn, from April 1937, Annelore was enrolled in Madamme Anderfuhren's *Ecole Nouvelle Menagerie* in Jogney-sur-Vevey in Switzerland, having left her family in Stuttgart. Annelore arrived in Britain in

September 1938 by plane and took a taxi to Aberdare Gardens in Maida Vale where relatives, the Wassermans, lived. With the help of Jeanette Franklin-Kohn (1888-1974), a member of several noted Anglo-Jewish families and celebrated patron of the arts, Annelore secured a place at a school in Lacock, Wiltshire. Annelore lived in Bath during the war and began training as a nurse before moving to London where she completed her training at Queen Mary's Hospital for Children in Carshalton, becoming a registered nurse in 1945.[620] In 1946 Annelore married Walter Baer and together they had two children. In 1984 Anne pioneered the erection of a monument to the murdered Jews of her hometown of Heilbronn. She passed away in London, aged 82, in 2004

Gerhard Rothschild (1925-2011) was born in Bad Canstatt to Siegfried 'Fritz' Rothschild (1884-1952) and Margaretha Paula Rothschild (Pincus, 1896-1968), the younger brother of Annelore Rothschild (1922-2004). Gerhard moved to Britain in 1937 with the assistance of Jeanette Franklin-Kohn (1888-1974) and enrolled at the Saugeen School in Bournemouth, which later moved to Wimborne, Dorset. Jeanette later introduced Gerhard to the Halevy family in Bournemouth, who all but adopted him, gaining him a scholarship to St Pauls in London. After the war Gerhard (now Gerald) started work at the diamond brokers 'I. Hennig'. Gerald would later go on to form his own company and established diamond cutting centres in Israel, India, and China. For unknown reasons, Gerald returned to Germany just before his death in 2011.

Jeanette Laura Franklin Kohn (1888-1974) was born in London into a well-established upper middle class Anglo-Jewish family, one of three children of Sir Leonard Benjamin Franklin MP and his wife Laura Agnes Ladenburg. A successful sculptor in her own right, and noted patron of the arts, during the mid-1930s Jeanette became involved in various committees as well as privately facilitating the movement of over one hundred children out of Germany.

<u>Amberg Family Collection</u>

Anna Charlotte Amberg (Phillip,1886-1942) was born in Aachen, the daughter of Carl Phillip (1828–1909) and Bertha 'Neme' Heinemann (1860-1934). In 1911 Anna married Richard Amberg (1881-1929) and the couple quickly relocated to New Jersey in the USA for work. When Anna fell pregnant with her daughter Irmgard (1912-2001) she moved back to Aachen but returned for a

[620] For more on refugee Jews and the nursing profession see Jane Brooks, *Jewish Refugees and the British Nursing Profession. A gendered opportunity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2024).

short lived stay before the start of the First World War when the whole family returned to Aachen. Post-war Anna and Richard went on to have three more children Margaret (1916-93), Marie-Luise (1920-99) and Carl Helmut (1923-2024). In 1928, Richard caught Dukes disease and passed away. Anna and her three children moved to back to Aachen again, having been living the law few years in Nuremburg. After her children left for England in the mid-late 1930s, Anna remained and began work in the Jewish Old Age Home in the city. She was later deported to Sobibor in 1942.

Irmgard Amberg (later Treuherz, 1921-2001) was born in Aachen to Anna Amberg (Phillip,1886-1942) and Richard Amberg (1881-1929) the oldest of four children. Anna was educated in schools in Nuremberg and elsewhere before moving to England and then France to train as a typist. By the 1930s Irmgard was doing voluntary work for the poor in the city and also working for the architect Hans Schwippert. On a trip to Switzerland, Anna decided to stay and study at the Art School in Basel. Irmgard later lived in Italy and Holland before obtaining a domestic service visa to come to Britain. Irmgard lived in Surrey and Exeter before moving to Manchester when she married her husband Werner Treuherz in 1940. In 1992, Irmgard and her siblings returned to Aachen to lay a *Stolperstein* for their mother.

Marie-Luise 'Marlies' Amberg (later Hermann, 1920-99) was born to Anna Amberg (Phillip,1886-1942) and Richard Amberg (1881-1929) and was educated in Aachen. Marlies emigrated to Manchester as an *au pair* for Morris Feinmann. Marlies later trained at the Royal Manchester College of Music. She married Rudolf 'Rudi' Hermann in 1947.

Margret Amberg (later Gardikas, 1916-1993) was born to Anna Amberg (Phillip,1886-1942) and Richard Amberg (1881-1929) and was educated in Aachen. She worked in Holland and later gained a degree in Chemistry. Margret worked at the Manchester Royal Infirmary where she met a Greek doctor Costas Gardikas. The couple lived in Didsbury before moving to Athens with their twin daughters.

Carl Helmut Amberg (1923-2024) was born in Nuremberg to Anna Amberg (Phillip,1886-1942) and Richard Amberg (1881-1929), named after his maternal grandfather and his father's brother who died in the First World War. Carl was educated in Aachen before moving to the Leonore Goldschmidt Schule in Berlin. He was granted a visa through the Lord Baldwin's fund and was taken in by Stanley J. Benham of Benham and Son's, an Ironmonger's Merchant in London and his family. Carl subsequently gained a scholarship to Winchester College in September 1939. In May 1940 Carl was arrested for internment and was later sent to Canada, and was not released

until April 1942. Following his release Carl earned a BA and MA from Queen's University, and received his Ph.D. in chemistry from the University of Toronto. He led a distinguished career as a scientist, lastly as Professor of Chemistry and Dean of Graduate Studies & Research at Carleton University. Carl passed away in Ottawa, aged 100, in 2024.

Emil Amberg (1868-1948) was born in Santa Fe, New Mexico the son of Jakab Amberg and Minna Löwenbein, both born in Germany. Jakab was the brother of Richard Amberg's (1881-1929) father Sigmund making Emil and Richard cousins. His family emigrated to Germany when he was five, and Emil was educated in Prussia and Westphalia, and received his medical degree from the University of Heidelberg in 1894. He trained further in Vienna and Berlin before moving permanently to Detroit in 1898. Dr. Amberg was a prolific contributor to medical journals, and a member of multiple professional societies.

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