# Remembering, Representing, and Re-imagining the Kindertransport: an Analysis of Literary Genres

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# Declaration

It is hereby declared that this thesis has been researched and presented solely by:

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# Abstract

This research examines the representation of the Kindertransport in memoirs, autobiographical fiction, and recent fiction written by authors with no personal experience of the Kindertransport. With the dwindling numbers of Kindertransportees alive today, living memory is increasingly being transformed into cultural memory; a trend noticeable in the prolific publication of Kindertransport fiction since the beginning of the twenty-first century. This change in memory invites a critical investigation into the ways we will relate to and remember the Kindertransport in a post-survivor era. Accordingly, it is crucial to question how the child refugee's experience and its long-lasting psychological impact are being remembered, represented, and re-imagined in literature, and, consequently, what understanding of the Kindertransport experience is being transmitted to the following generations.

Drawing upon understandings of genre, narratology, and empathy, this study examines the characteristics and capabilities of three literary genres. Each genre is influenced by various generic norms and conventions that, in turn, influence the author's construction of the text, their choice of stylistic and narrative devices, and, consequently, the nature of the representation. This thesis investigates: how memoirists create a retrospective account of their lived experience whilst navigating both personal and collective trauma; the ways in which Kindertransportee authors of autobiographical fiction, who write with more creative freedom, represent the experience of the child refugee; and the opportunities made available to fiction writers, who are less restrained by conventions of historical accuracy and truth-telling. In this regard, the present research engages in debates at the heart of current discussions on Holocaust and Kindertransport memory: the limits of representability, the 'unspeakability' of trauma, and issues of ethics and aesthetics.

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# Chapter One

## Introduction: The Kindertransport and Literary Genres

The children's transport, or the Kindertransport as it later became known, is one of the most celebrated and remembered British humanitarian actions that took place in the years directly preceding the Second World War. Between December 1938 and September 1939, transports by trains, ships, and planes, carried close to 10,000 predominantly Jewish children (also known as 'Kinder'[1]) away from the perils they faced in Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Poland.[2] It was just one of several quickly implemented rescue operations. Amid the urgency to record the voices of the surviving Holocaust witnesses, there has been a lot of recent activity surrounding the Kindertransport as the historical event begins to slip from living memory into cultural memory, which will subsequently be left in the hands of future generations. The growing necessity to remember the Kindertransport is reflected in public discussions, the work of institutions such as The Kindertransport Association and The Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR), and the publication of literary works.[3]

Several public and academic events have marked the eightieth anniversary of the Kindertransport in 2018 and 2019 and have played a part in keeping the Kindertransport fresh in public consciousness. The Kindertransport commemoration event hosted by Kindertransportee Lord (Alf) Dubs and Barbara Winton[4] in November 2018 addressed the success of the Kindertransport alongside the current refugee crisis and the need to do more to help present day refugees; and the 'Kindertransport at 80' conference held at UCL in January 2019 offered academic papers from historical, social, and literary perspectives. Following this, in April 2019, the AJR hosted the event, 'Remembering & Rethinking: The international forum on the Kindertransport at 80', which brought together MPs, educators, film makers, academics, and refugee organisations.

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[1] The children who were rescued on a Kindertransport have collectively become known as 'Kinder' or 'Kindertransportees', and 'Kind' or 'Kindertransportee' in the singular and will be referred to as such throughout this thesis.

[2] The last transport carried children by ship from Holland in May 1940.

[3] *The Kindertransport Association*, <http://www.kindertransport.org/> [accessed 08 August 2018].

[4] Barbara Winton is the daughter of Nicolas Winton, who helped rescue children from Czechoslovakia.

These events raised concerns about how we are currently remembering and representing the Kindertransport and invited a reassessment of existing – mostly celebratory – narratives surrounding this chapter of history. Emerging questions from these events include: how do we commemorate the Kindertransport?; and how do we fit the Kindertransport into cultural memory in a post-survivor era? This thesis engages with these topical concerns and investigates the role and potential of literary genres in remembering, representing, preserving, and transforming memory.

In his study, *Remembering Refugees*, Tony Kushner argues, 'of all refugee movements in twentieth-century Britain, both large and small, it is the arrival of what turned out to be close to ten thousand children in the last ten months of peace that has produced the largest number of histories, memoirs, exhibitions, plays, documentaries, films […] and memorials'.[5] Whilst this is impressive, this statement begs the following questions: how does the narrative of the Kindertransport change depending on the form of representation?; and how is the representation of this historical period affected by a genre's capabilities, creative freedoms, and restrictions? This thesis responds to such questions.

Literary representation and memory – the two central concerns in this research – can be viewed as inseparable; processes of memory (individual, social, collective, and cultural memory) influence the creation of narratives, and, by extension, these forms of representation determine how the Kindertransport is remembered in the future. The first concern – an issue of representation – is how the Kindertransport experience is constructed and represented in memoirs, autobiographical fiction written by Kindertransportees, and fiction written by authors with no personal connection to the Kindertransport. The second concern – an issue of remembrance – relates to how these genre-mediated literary texts influence the reader's understanding or impression of the Kindertransport experience and its resulting memory in the public sphere.

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[5] Tony Kushner, *Remembering Refugees: Then and Now* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), p.141.

Indeed, cultural anthropologist Aleida Assmann acknowledges that memory does not 'simply [yield] to history' and that 'the question then becomes how this memory gets extended beyond the reach of lived memory and what changes it undergoes in the process'.[6] Literary representations are capable of transforming our understanding of an historical event and welcome acts of re-imagination and re-framing. These processes that are facilitated by literary genres – the *transition* away from lived memory, *transformation* of experience, and *transmission* to future generations – are aspects at the heart of this research.

Whilst the examination of genre is the overarching enquiry, this thesis will also investigate the extent to which texts interrogate processes of individual and cultural remembering. Additionally, the reaction of the reader and his or her position in relation to the text is key in understanding the way in which the Kindertransport is entering into the cultural sphere. The reader's engagement with literary representations is thus a vital aspect of this study. This research is guided by the following research questions:

a) How do the conventions of each genre influence the construction of the Kindertransport representation?

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[6] Aleida Assmann, *Shadows of Trauma: Memory and the Politics of Postwar Identity*, trans. by Sarah Clift (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), p.175.

b) What aspects of the Kindertransport experience are transformed, emphasised, or re-worked across literary genres?
c) What is the position of the reader across the different literary genres and to what extent are they encouraged to engage or empathise with the texts?

First, the existing body of research on Kindertransport narratives will be summarised in a literature review and the gap in which this research sits will be identified. Responding to this scholarship, this chapter will then clarify the scope of this study and introduce the primary texts. Following this, the conceptual framework of this research – the potential of literary representations and genres – will be addressed. As the reception of the text is as important as the representation itself – especially when the future of Kindertransport memory in the cultural sphere is in question – the reader's engagement and understandings of empathy will subsequently be considered at the end of this chapter.

## 1.1) Literature Review

This present study can be situated amongst existing research that investigates current transformations in memory and that interrogates various forms of representation. These existing studies are often specifically concerned with Holocaust memory. Nevertheless, this research will engage with these studies as prevailing concerns – such as issues of accessible memory, ethics, aesthetics, representation, the transmission of trauma, and the effectiveness of existing structures of remembrance – are likewise relevant in the Kindertransport context and hence this study.[7]

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[7] Although Holocaust and Kindertransport literary texts and scholarship are different bodies of work and differ significantly in content, in terms of the marketing of primary texts and school education the two are often brought side by side, due to the shared period of history.

The studies now mentioned address questions relevant to my study. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, writing in 1992, pose the question, '[w]hat is the relation between literature and testimony, between the writer and the witness?' and, by extension, the relationship between writing and reading with regards to the Holocaust.[8] The study of Kindertransport memoirs in this research seeks to discover in which position the reader is placed and what effect this has on the transmission of Kindertransport memory and trauma. Following Felman and Laub's work, Sara Horowitz also considers the transmission of memory and muteness in Holocaust representations. In *Voicing the Void* (1997), she examines 'the way Holocaust-centred literature functions as narrative – how the telling (writing) of the catastrophe shapes and informs subsequent knowing (reading) of the catastrophe'.[9] Although less concerned by tropes of silence, this thesis does also aim to examine how the construction – or shaping – of a text influences the resulting understanding of the Kindertransport.

Leigh Gilmore's study, *The Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony*, offers a particularly useful investigation into testimony and representation that acts as a foundation for the study of Kindertransport memoirs in Chapter Three. She examines the difficulty – or 'structural entanglement' – of representing the self and traumatic experience.[10] Her 'limit cases' are examples of life-writing in which 'self-representation operates at a distance from the conventions of autobiography' due to the constraints placed upon representation by trauma.[11]

The potential of other forms of representation is explored in *After Testimony: The Ethics and Aesthetics of Holocaust Narrative for the Future* (2012), edited by Jakob

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[8] Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (London: Routledge, 1992), p.xiii.
[9] Sara R. Horowitz, *Voicing the Void: Muteness and Memory in Holocaust Fiction* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1997), p.29.
[10] Leigh Gilmore, *The Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony* (London: Cornell University Press, 2001), p.7.
[11] *Ibid.*

Lothe, Susan Rubin Suleiman, and James Phelan. They question how writers and filmmakers 'who may have no personal connection to the event engage with that history: what kinds of stories will they tell, and will they succeed in their effort to keep the public memory of the event from being lost?'.[12] This question can likewise be posed when considering recent Kindertransport fiction written by authors with no personal experience of the Kindertransport.

Victoria Aarons and Jessica Lang also examine the role of third-generation writers, who approach the Holocaust from an indirect position.[13] The essays in Aaron's edited book 'address such issues of trauma, memory, representation, and transmission'; issues which are also central to my research.[14] Lang's significant study of *Textual Silence* (2017) focuses on the experience of reading Holocaust texts and the relationship between text and the reader across genres – from eyewitness testimony, second-generation memoir, third-generation memoir, to fiction. In Lang's study, second- and third-generation authors have a familial connection to the Holocaust survivor,[15] yet the subsequent chapter on fiction includes authors who have no family ties.

This thesis, in contrast to Lang's study, will not consider texts written by second- or third-generation biological descendants of the Kinder and instead compares the two genres used by Kindertransportees to convey the Kindertransport experience (memoir and autobiographical fiction) alongside fiction written by authors with no direct connection to this experience. The term 'third generation' in this research will be used to represent a temporal remove, rather than a direct biological connection.

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[12] Jakob Lothe, Susan Rubin Suleiman, and James Phelan, 'Introduction: "After" Testimony: Holocaust Representation and Narrative Theory', in *After Testimony: The Ethics and Aesthetics of Holocaust Narrative for the Future*, ed. by Jakob Lothe, Susan Rubin Suleiman, and James Phelan (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2012), pp.1–19 (p.1).

[13] Victoria Aarons, 'Introduction: Approaching the Third Generation', in *Third-Generation Holocaust Narratives: Memory in Memoir and Fiction*, ed. by Victoria Aarons (London: Lexington Books, 2016); Jessica Lang 'The History of Love, the Contemporary Reader, and the Transmission of Holocaust Memory', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 33:1 (2009), 43–56 (p.46).

[14] Aarons, 'Introduction', p.xv.

[15] Jessica Lang, *Textual Silence: Unreadability and the Holocaust* (London: Rutgers University Press, 2017), p.89.

Lang's conceptualisation of the 'unreadable' – textual gaps or absences which mark and preserve traumatic impact – encourages the reader to question the loss that occurs as memory is transmuted across genre and generation.[16] This research builds on Lang's understanding that later generations must approach trauma differently and that the degree of 'readability' alters as we move away from representations of lived experience.[17] She asserts that '[w]hereas first-generation eyewitness authors anticipate the unreadability of their text for their audience', third-generation authors, 'in an effort to construct a meaningful narrative [...], engage in a kind of recovery that attempts not only to capture a historical narrative but also to tie this narrative to the present'.[18] Influenced by Lang's study of genre, this thesis similarly investigates how fiction writers approach historical events and intends to show how a generational distance from the Kindertransport produces new opportunities to represent traumatic experience and account for losses or absences accommodated in forms of life-writing.

Over the last decade, Kindertransport life-writing has attracted increased scholarly interest. Studies are largely situated in the field of Exile Studies and aspects specific to the refugee experience have chiefly been the focus of Kindertransport literary analysis. Andrea Hammel has written extensively on literary representations of the Kindertransport and her work illustrates how memoirs offer a way of examining and learning about the refugee experience.[19] Many of Hammel's studies examine common themes in autobiographical texts written by child refugees such as acculturation and language acquisition, the experience of evacuation, the changing relationships with birth and host families, and perceived cultural differences in Britain.[20]

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[16] *Ibid.*, p.19.

[17] *Ibid.*, p.20.

[18] *Ibid.*, p.93.

[19] Andrea Hammel, '"Liebe Eltern! – Liebes Kind!": Letters Between Kindertransportees and their Families as Everyday Life Documents', *Exile and Everyday Life: Yearbook of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies*, 16 (2015), ed. by Andrea Hammel and Anthony Grenville, pp.155–172.

Hammel also investigates the memoir form and argues that the narration of experience can be understood as a way of completing the acculturation process.[21] Further investigating the memoir genre as a form of representation, Hammel shows how the portrayed experience of the Kindertransport is influenced by several factors: gender, issues regarding authorship and translation, and issues of narration and agency arising from memoirs' dual nature as being both 'social history sources as well as literary narratives'.[22] My thesis builds on these exposed tensions in the memoir genre and broadens Hammel's investigation by exploring the capabilities of, and tensions in, other literary genres and how this influences the resulting representations.

Representations by Kindertransportees have also already been the subject of various literary readings. In such studies, issues specific to the refugee experience once again appear to be the focus of investigation. The poetry of Karen Gershon, Lotte Kramer, and Gerda Mayer has been subjected to a comparative analysis by Peter Lawson, who explores 'the loss of parents, home and native country; the experience of exile and adoptive nation' and 'new identities as British citizens'.[23] Likewise, Alan L. Berger examines the representation of Jewish identity and refugee experience in the works of Lore Segal and Karen Gershon – two authors that are also discussed in this thesis.[24] Also focusing on Segal's work, Julia Baker examines literary depictions of relationships and childhood, and Lorena Silos Ribas investigates how the author's construction of space influences characterisation.[25]

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[20] Andrea Hammel, 'Why is your Czech so bad? Czech Child Refugees, Language and Identity', *Exile in and from Czechoslovakia During the 1930s and 1940s: Yearbook of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies*, 11 (2009), ed. by Charmian Brinson and Marian Malet, pp.215–228.

[21] Andrea Hammel, 'Representations of Family in Autobiographical Texts of Child Refugees', *Shofar*, 23:1 (2004), 121–132.

[22] Andrea Hammel, 'Gender and Kindertransport Memoirs', in *Exile and Gender 1: Literature and the Press: Yearbook of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies*, 17 (2016), ed. by Charmian Brinson and Andrea Hammel, pp.19–33 (p.19). See Andrea Hammel, 'Authenticity, Trauma and the Child's View: Martha Blend's *A Child Alone*, Vera Gissing's *Pearls of Childhood* and Ruth L. David's *Ein Kind unserer Zeit'*, *Forum for Modern Languages Studies*, 49:2 (2013), 201–212; Andrea Hammel, '"Whose text is it anyway?": Influences on a refugee memoir', in *New Literary and Linguistic Perspectives on the German Language: National Socialism and the Shoah: Edinburgh Yearbook of German Studies*, 8 (2015), ed. by Peter Davies and Andrea Hammel, pp.73–87.

[23] Peter Lawson, 'Broken Homes: Three "Kindertransport" Poets', *Critical Survey*, 20:2 (2008), 88–102 (p.100).

Here it is worth noting that W.G. Sebald's well-known novel *Austerlitz* – in which the protagonist arrived on a Kindertransport – has also been the subject of much analysis, however the studies normally concentrate on the author's use of language, distortion of time, and construction of the text, often alongside other works from Sebald's oeuvre. The confrontation with memory in his work is often the main subject of analysis, rather than an examination of the represented Kindertransport experience per se.[26]

Perhaps the most in-depth study of literary representations of the Kindertransport is Phyllis Lassner's work on the writings by Anglo-Jewish women, published in 2008. Three chapters of her analysis focus specifically on Kindertransport texts. This comprehensive literary reading, *Anglo-Jewish Women Writing the Holocaust: Displaced Witnesses*,[27] looks at both Kindertransportees and works written by the second-generation biological descendants of Holocaust survivors, and writers who had no connection to the Holocaust or Kindertransport. In her study of these diverse texts, Lassner touches on the growing significance of the second generation and the resultant 'transgenerational haunting' which occurs in many literary creations. The author focuses on the gendered experience of the refugee in Britain by exploring the representation of different aspects crucial to the refugee or exile experience, such as: their reception and view of Britain, personal development, loss, and social disorientation. The study achieves its aim of highlighting how the treatment of refugees, their irresolute integration, and the difficulties they faced challenge 'the nation's story of its wartime heroism and stoicism'.[28] This celebratory narrative will be addressed in the next chapter.

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[24] Alan L. Berger, 'Jewish Identity and Jewish Destiny, the Holocaust in Refugee Writing: Lore Segal and Karen Gershon', *Studies in American Jewish Literature*, 11:1 (1992), 83–95.

[25] Julia K. Baker, 'From *Other People's Houses* into *Shakespeare's Kitchen*: The Story of Lore Segal and How She Looked for Adventures and Where She Found Them', in *The Kindertransport to Britain 1938/39: New Perspectives: Yearbook of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies*, 13 (2012), ed. by Andrea Hammel and Bea Lewkowicz, pp.185–203; Lorena Silos Ribas, 'The Experience of Space in Lore Segal's *Other People's Houses*', in *The Kindertransport to Britain 1938/39: Yearbook*, ed. by Hammel and Lewkowicz, pp.205–217.

[26] Richard Crownshaw, 'Reconsidering Postmemory: Photography, the Archive, and Post-Holocaust Memory in W.G. Sebald's "Austerlitz"', *Mosaic: an Interdisciplinary Critical Journal*, 37:4 (2004), 215–236; Jessica Dubow and Richard Steadman-Jones, 'Mapping Babel: Language and Exile in W.G. Sebald's "Austerlitz"', *New German Critique*, 115 (2012), 3–26; Amir Eshel, 'Against the Power of Time: The Poetics of Suspension in W.G. Sebald's "Austerlitz"', *New German Critique*, 88 (2003), 71–96.

[27] Phyllis Lassner, *Anglo-Jewish Women Writing the Holocaust: Displaced Witnesses* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

Inspiring this current study, Lassner's text shows how the position and proximity of the author to the event may impact representation. Although Lassner explores various genres, including memoir, autobiographical novels, poetry, and dramas of the Kindertransport (Diane Samuels's *Kindertransport* and Charlotte Eilenberg's *The Lucky Ones*), her use of genre is mainly to organise her chosen texts and the study itself is not a comparison of genres, unlike this present thesis. Indeed, in the chapter discussing Lore Segal's autobiographical fiction novel, Lassner includes several references to individual memoirs. In contrast, my study clearly differentiates between these two genres and will focus to a considerably greater extent on the capability and limits of the individual genres and how this, in turn, shapes representation. Though also spanning genre and generation, this research will focus exclusively on Kindertransport representations a discrete group, separate from accounts by Holocaust survivors and their descendants.

This thesis aims to enrich existing literary scholarship by conducting an in-depth examination into three distinct literary genres: memoirs and autobiographical fiction written by Kindertransportees, and recent fiction written by authors who have chosen to re-imagine this chapter of history. This thesis goes beyond existing studies by offering not only a textual analysis, but by simultaneously focusing on the capabilities of different literary genres and their influence on the construction of Kindertransport representations – an area that has been under-researched so far. As illustrated above, existing studies are mainly of a comparative nature, examining a particular aspect of the refugee experience, such as relationships, acculturation, identity, or religion. My research steers the focus away from such self-contained themes and frameworks of experience, and, instead, adopts a wider perspective by investigating how the genre itself – the literary form which holds the narratives – influences the scope of the representation. My study takes understandings of genre as a starting point which will, in turn, aid the literary analysis.

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[28] *Ibid.*, p.6.

This research aims to show how different genres lend themselves to the representation of a particular aspect of the Kindertransport experience and intends to expose tensions that are inherent to the genres and that consequently affect representation. Ultimately, this research intends to reveal how the reader's understanding of the Kindertransport is influenced not only by the literary representation – content, themes, literary devices – but by the genre itself. By identifying differences in genre, the reader of this thesis will understand what each literary form is able to offer and where the limits of representation may lie. As access to living memory is declining and our dependence on literary constructions that yield an understanding of the Kindertransport grows, it becomes increasingly valuable to consider the capabilities of genre and its role in memory transformation as we enter a post-survivor era.

## 1.2) Thesis Scope: Primary Texts and Thesis Approach

The texts examined in this thesis are likely to appeal to a wide readership, aimed at audiences ranging from older children, teenagers and young adults to adults, and were published between 1958 and 2017. Young Adult (YA) fiction, although constituting a genre in its own right, can be understood to be novels that feature 'an adolescent protagonist through whom the narrative is then focalized, even when the narrator is 'sophisticated or unreliable'.[29] This thesis will not concern itself with books aimed at young children as the content is likely to be different in order to make it age-appropriate (especially with regards to the portrayal of traumatic episodes), which in turn affects the representation and resulting overall impression of the Kindertransport experience.[30] Texts aimed at older children, teenagers, and adults – as these chosen texts are – have more freedom to depict the negative aspects of the Kindertransport which are often present in first-hand Kindertransport testimony. By omitting texts aimed at young children, the impact of genre as an influencing factor becomes more transparent.

This thesis cannot offer a comprehensive survey of all texts, films, plays, memoirs, or artwork that engage with the Kindertransport, but it does provide an in-depth analysis of a small sample of literary texts. Kindertransport dramas and theatre productions will not be considered in this thesis as, even when working from an original script, the performances may vary greatly depending on the director's staging decisions and the actor's ability to engage the audience. A comparison of genre would, in this case, be inconclusive. Here, it is also important to acknowledge that, although all but two of these writers are female, the study of gender is not an aspect of this research; more female writers appear to have addressed their own experience in memoirs and re-imagined the Kindertransport in fiction.

This thesis is focused on the differing representations of the Kindertransport in literature. I will focus on three particular genres: memoir, autobiographical fiction, and fiction. For the purposes of this thesis, these genres will be defined and categorised as follows: memoirs are classed as texts written by a Kindertransportee (usually written many decades after their departure), in which the writer reflects on the Kindertransport experience; autobiographical fiction will be defined as novels that have been written by a Kindertransportee, involve a degree of creative re-imagination, and which are to some degree based on their own experience or impressions from this time period in which they lived; and, finally, fiction refers to novels about the Kindertransport, written by authors who did not experience it. Within these genres, there are, however, texts that span the genres or incorporate features from another genre; these texts will nevertheless be included in the chapter with which they are most compatible, and in which the comparison with the other texts in that chapter yields the most enlightening findings.

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[29] Johanna Risku, '"We Are All Adolescents Now": The Problematics of Categorizing Young Adult Fiction as a Genre' (unpublished master's thesis, University of Tampere, Faculty of Communication Sciences, 2017), p.18.

[30] Kindertransport texts aimed at younger children include: Olga Levy Drucker, *Kindertransport* (New York: Henry Holt, 1992); Dorrith M. Sim, *In My Pocket* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1996); Miriam Halahmy, *Saving Hanno* (New York: Holiday House, 2019).

This study embraces the changeable nature of representation across literary genre; no genre is less or more truthful or 'authentic' than another. Given that memoirists recount a period of their lives often for the first time and often bearing witness to Jewish persecution, this thesis draws on theoretical understandings of testimony when examining memoirs, whilst recognising that 'testimony' is often used in a more formal or legal contexts. Nevertheless, there are shared commonalities: '[l]ike testimony, memoir is generically disposed to the collective, and the historical, and to technologies of the self that resist the singular "I" of autobiography'.[31]

The following memoirs will be examined: Vera Gissing's *Pearls of Childhood* (1988), *A Child Alone* by Martha Blend (1995), *The Tiger in the Attic: Memories of the Kindertransport and Growing Up English* written by Edith Milton (2005), and Marion

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[31] Gillian Whitlock, *Postcolonial Life Narratives: Testimonial Transactions*, Oxford Studies in Postcolonial Literature (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p.97.

Charles's *Ich war ein Glückskind* (2013).[32] In contrast to collective memoirs with 'truncated stories',[33] these memoirs reveal the Kindertransportee's carefully considered representation of their own experience. These four memoirs have been chosen for the various ways the memoirists engage with or test understandings of the memoir genre, particularly with regards to self-representation.

Each memoirist demonstrates a different approach to representing their past experience, for example by using archival material, relying on the memories of other Kinder, or by exposing issues of individual and national memory. Furthermore, the Kindertransport experiences vary in these memoirs: Gissing and Blend lost both of their parents whereas Milton and Charles were reunited with their mothers. The relationships between the Kind and their guardian also vary. These Kindertransportees were of a similar age when arriving in Britain; the youngest, Milton, arrived aged seven, Blend at the age of nine, Gissing aged ten, and Charles aged eleven. Crucially, the presence of trauma is visible in all four memoirs and so it is intriguing to examine how these memoirists, in different ways, mediate the limitations that trauma places on representation.

The chosen texts explored in Chapter Four are also written by Kindertransportees yet have varying levels of fictionality and are not presented as exact accounts of personal experience. These three autobiographical fiction texts are amongst the few partially fictional novels created by an individual who personally experienced the Kindertransport. Lore Segal's *Other People's Houses* (1958) is perhaps the most well-known text in this chapter and Segal depicts her childhood growing up in various homes. Karen Gershon's *The Bread of Exile* (1985) offers an alternative piece of fiction with strong autobiographical influences, yet in which the author is distanced from her third-person protagonist. Irene N. Watts's trilogy *Escape from Berlin* (2013), is aimed at a slightly younger audience and diverges the most from the author's lived experience when compared to the other texts examined in this chapter.[34] The differing degree of invention in these texts and its influence on the representation of the Kindertransport and the Kindertransportee protagonist is particularly intriguing to consider.

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[32] Vera Gissing, *Pearls of Childhood* (London: Robson Books, 2003), originally published 1988; Martha Blend, *A Child Alone* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1995); Edith Milton, *The Tiger in the Attic: Memories of the Kindertransport and Growing Up English* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005); Marion Charles, *Ich war ein Glückskind: Mein Weg aus Nazideutschland mit dem Kindertransport* (Munich: cbj, 2013).

[33] Kushner, *Refugees*, p.163.

The fiction considered in Chapter Five has been recently published by authors who have no personal connection to the Kindertransport. The analysis of fiction has been motivated by the remarkable fact that, since the turn of the century, there has been a steady publication of fictional Kindertransport novels; this is a trend which deserves further contemplation and invites analysis.[35] The novels explored are: *The English German Girl* by Jake Wallis Simons (2011), Jana Zinser's *The Children's Train* (2015), Dutch author, Lody van de Kamp's novel *Sara, het meisje dat op transport ging* (2017), *Das gerettete Kind* by Renate Ahrens (2016), and Alison Pick's *Far to Go* (2010).[36] Pick's novel differs from the other chosen novels given that there is a familial connection to the refugee experience, although not to the Kindertransport. The author's grandparents emigrated from Czechoslovakia to Canada during the second world war and so it is likely that Pick was inspired by this historical period although her characters are given a different fate and do not escape continental Europe.

The fiction texts are diverse in their representations and were selected because each text places the Kindertransport in a new context. An analysis of each novel raises questions and concerns about representation and ethics. Moreover, these works of fiction were chosen to include a variety of languages and national perspectives. The examination of how the Kindertransport is being portrayed in Britain, the US, the Netherlands, Germany, and Canada, respectively, will shed light on cultural and national patterns of remembrance.

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[34] Lore Segal, *Other People's Houses* (New York: The New Press, 1994), first published in 1958; Karen Gershon, *The Bread of Exile: a Novel* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1985); Irene N. Watts, *Escape from Berlin* (Toronto: Tundra Books, 2013); the trilogy includes: *Good-bye Marianne* (1998), *Remember Me* (2000), *Finding Sophie* (2002).

[35] The Kindertransport Association lists twenty-two novels published after 2000 on their website.

[36] Jake Wallis Simons, *The English German Girl* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 2011); Jana Zinser, *The Children's Train* (Atlanta: BQB, 2015); Lody van de Kamp, *Sara, het meisje dat op transport ging* (Zoetermeer: Mozaïek, 2017); Renate Ahrens, *Das gerettete Kind* (Munich: Droemer HC, 2016); Alison Pick, *Far to Go* (London: Headline Review, 2012), first published in 2010.

I have made the decision to not include amongst my chosen texts exceptionally well-known fiction such as Sebald's *Austerlitz*, which, as aforementioned, has already received a lot of attention in the public sphere and in scholarship. Other recently published novels that incorporate the Kindertransport as either a secondary subplot or background context of the character include Eliza Graham's *The One I Was* (2015), Nicole Kraus's *Great House* (2010), and *The Fortunate Ones* by Ellen Umansky (2017). Whilst these texts are worth mentioning and can be praised for their creative fictionalisation of loss, desire, guilt and forgiveness, and the interpolation of histories, the texts perhaps warrant an independent study, and will not be examined here. The historical event of the Kindertransport in my chosen novels is more central to the plot.

This thesis engages with theories of genre and narratology, including: understandings of testimony and memoir, autofiction, and the theory of the novel. Additionally, alongside these genre-specific theories, this thesis will be illuminated by understandings of cultural and collective memory, theories of trauma (including unspeakable trauma and postmemory), and reader empathy. It will thus engage in debates at the heart of discussions on Holocaust and Kindertransport memory, such as the limits of representability and the ethical issues arising from the representation of the past.

This research will investigate three aspects affected by genre: the portrayal of the Kindertransport experience, the construction of the narrative, and the way in which the reader is invited to engage with the text. Approaching the literary texts in this way will expose how the genres influence the construction, transformation, transmission, and likely reception of the Kindertransport. These aspects central to this research and the three different genres will be elucidated below. Before this, however, this study's understanding of the Kindertransport experience and the Kindertransportee's identity in relation to the Holocaust must be clarified.

As a chapter of history, the Kindertransport is remembered in conjunction with National Socialism, and consequently the Holocaust. The extent to which the memory of the Kindertransport and the memory of the Holocaust can be compared is, however, problematic. The Kindertransportees' separation from their families was emotionally traumatic, yet the Kinder escaped the fate of those children who remained on the continent; many who stayed faced pogroms, massacres, flight, persecution, deportation to ghettos and concentration camps, and the physical danger of the war itself.[37] Jewish children living under the Nazi regime 'were not simply caught in the crossfire of war but were coldly targeted for destruction'.[38]

Despite their escape, Kindertransportees were still heavily impacted by the events of the Holocaust as friends and family were murdered. Additionally, many Kinder lived with survivor's guilt upon realising that they could have easily shared the fate of those children who perished. The Kindertransport and the Holocaust are not easily decoupled. Bertha Leverton for example, in her introduction to the collective autobiography *I Came Alone*, states that 'the children lost their parents in the Holocaust and thus became part of history'.[39] Thus, their identity and reason for writing is based on their escape from the Holocaust, as much as their parents' inability to escape. Hammel also notes how this remains a 'complicated issue because Holocaust and refugee experiences are almost always intertwined in a single family'.[40]

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[37] Inge Hansen-Schaberg, 'Kindheit und Jugend', in *Handbuch der deutschsprachigen Emigration*, ed. by Claus-Dieter Krohn (Darmstadt: Primas, 1998), pp.81–94 (p.81).

[38] Jewish Museum London, *The Last Goodbye: The Rescue of Children from Nazi Europe: an Educational Resource about the Kindertransport* (London: Jewish Museum London, 1996), p.57.

[39] *I Came Alone: The Stories of the Kindertransports*, ed. by Bertha Leverton and Shmuel Lowensohn (Lewes: The Book Guild, 1990), p.8.

This research does not attempt to, nor wish to, establish a hierarchy of suffering. The delicate question as to whether the Kinder can be considered 'Holocaust survivors' or even 'survivors' has been subject to discussion, both in Kindertransport research and by the Kinder themselves. Whilst the children who came on the Kindertransports are likely to have identified as child refugees from National Socialism, Caroline Sharples suggests that they have often been 'very reluctant to assume the mantle of "Holocaust survivor"'.[41] However, demographer Sergio Della Pergola defines 'Shoah survivors' as those who experienced: 'a regime of duress and/or limitation of their full civil rights in relation to their Jewish background [...] or had to flee elsewhere in order to avoid falling under the aforementioned situations'.[42]

The Holocaust is an undeniable presence in the primary material examined in this thesis and in Kindertransport memoirs especially. In fiction, the Kindertransport opens a channel to the past, through which the Holocaust can be viewed, contemplated, and represented from a position of safety. Whilst recognising and respecting the differences between Kindertransport and Holocaust experiences, this study, as aforementioned, simultaneously acknowledges that there are debates and anxieties present in discussions of Holocaust memory and representation that are also applicable to Kindertransport memory. In order to assist analysis, this thesis will, at times, draw on existing studies and theories that are predominantly concerned with Holocaust representation.

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[40] Andrea Hammel, '"I believe that my experience began in the womb and was later absorbed through my mother's milk": Second Generation Trauma Narratives', *Trauma Narratives and Theories: New Readings in Contemporary German, Austrian, and Transnational Contexts: German Life and Letters*, 72:4 (2019), 556–569 (p.564).

[41] Caroline Sharples, 'The Kindertransport in British Historical Memory', in *The Kindertransport to Britain 1938/39: Yearbook*, ed. by Hammel and Lewkowicz, pp.15–27 (p.19).

[42] Sergio Della Pergola, 'Review of Relevant Demographic Information on World Jewry. Jewish People Policy Institute (JPPI)', *Berman Jewish Policy Archive* (Jerusalem, November 2003), <https://www.bjpa.org/search-results/publication/907> [accessed 22 May 2019], p.3.

### 1.3) Theoretical Framework: Cultural Memory and Literary Genres

The Kindertransport has already entered the cultural sphere; individuals with no personal or familial connection to the event are engaging with the Kindertransport and are re-framing the past in literary works. Recent Kindertransport representations in the public domain – which are found in bookshops, on television, and in theatre – offer a way to access and understand this historical event.[43]

My study understands the cultural sphere to be the public space in which history and experience is viewed by members of a specific culture from a non-experiential perspective. In this public sphere, lived experience, narratives of the past, and existing archival material are liable to transformation and appropriation, which in turn creates a new cultural memory. An experience preserved in the cultural sphere is not limited to one individual's lifetime (as seen in individual memory) but, rather, the durability of this cultural memory depends on the extent to which individuals can relate to the information and situate it within present society and culture.[44] Alison Landsberg, building on the foundations of cultural memory laid out by Aleida Assmann, concurs that 'cultural memories no longer have exclusive owners'.[45] Her theory of *Prosthetic Memory*, for example, demonstrates how fiction writers can identify with a history which has entered the cultural sphere, despite having no personal connection to that particular culture or experience.[46]

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[43] See Mark Jonathan Harris, *Into the Arms of Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport* (Burbank: Warner Bros., 2000) [on DVD]. Broadcast on BBC in 2007.

[44] See Astrid Erll, 'Cultural Memory Studies: an Introduction', in *Cultural Memory Studies: an International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), pp.1–15 (p.2).

[45] Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), p.18.

The question of how the Kindertransport will be remembered by future generations is a concern often expressed by Kindertransportees in their memoirs and they often wonder whether, in years to come, people will be aware of what happened to them and their parents, many of whom were murdered in concentration camps. The examination of texts in this thesis will reveal how the concern about memory and forms of remembrance evolve across genre. With regard to the durability of memory, Assmann proposes three criteria which are essential for an historical event to be preserved in a culture's consciousness: the transference of memory into symbolic media (books, film, testimony); the repetition of social practices (such as annual memorial days); and an active, psychological identification with the Kindertransport story.[47]

Published Kindertransport memoirs and fiction ensure that memories remain stable and transmittable and can thus be viewed as durable carriers of cultural memory.[48] Assmann warns that if individual and social memories are 'not articulated and stabilized in external media', – such as in memoirs, testimony, books and other forms of media – they will become 'delicate and fragile'.[49] Rituals, practices, and memorials are also crucial as they constitute cultural memory's 'functional memory' and ensure an active repetition and a frequent and transgenerational engagement with the event.[50] Institutions and groups, such as The Kindertransport Association and the Reunion of the Kindertransporte (ROK),[51] have also helped to facilitate remembering on a collective level. Although highly important, the continuity of these institutions, memorials, and practices, along with the stability of storage media (books, images, films, archives), is not sufficient for an event to retain an indefinite place in cultural memory.

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[46] *Ibid.*, p.2.
[47] Assmann, *Shadows*, pp.179, 200.
[48] *Ibid.*, p.42.
[49] *Ibid.*, p.36f.
[50] *Ibid.*, pp.21, 42.
[51] Founded by Bertha Leverton. Papers published by ROK (1987–2002) are held at the Wiener Library, London.

Crucially, an active psychological identification with the Kindertransport is the third component required to preserve the Kindertransport's place in cultural memory.[52] An engagement with the symbolic media, such as literature, results in knowledge and, in order for this knowledge to become a durable cultural memory, it must become an object which invites psychological identification and intellectual engagement.[53] Failing this, Kindertransport memory will lose its relevance and be placed into a culture's storage memory, and will potentially be forgotten after several decades.[54] To cement the Kindertransport within cultural memory, the knowledge of the event must be absorbed as a part of one's own identity.[55] Assmann maintains: 'the disembodied and temporally indefinite content of cultural memory must always be brought together with living memories'.[56] This can be achieved if the reader critically engages and empathises with the situation presented to them.

The notion of identification – one of the prerequisites for durable memory – is fundamental to this research and will be investigated in the analysis of the three literary genres discussed in the following chapters. In this research, narrative devices that encourage empathy, and the relationship between author and reader – aspects that are likely to differ depending on genre – will be investigated in order to establish the extent to which literary texts entering the cultural sphere promote engagement and identification. Literature's potential as a vessel of cultural memory will now be discussed and the literary genres examined further.

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[52] Assmann, *Shadows*, p.20f.
[53] *Ibid.*, p.179.
[54] *Ibid.*
[55] *Ibid.*
[56] *Ibid.*, p.21.

Assmann, in her understanding of cultural memory, notes: 'the historian no longer has a monopoly on the reconstruction, representation, and interpretation of this past. […] we are witnessing a proliferation of the modes and shapes in which memory takes place'.[57] The proceedings of the conference 'Literature as Cultural Memory' clarify 'the role literature plays as a repository of culture' and works on the assumption that 'literature not only preserves culture, it also is itself part of culture, and even creates culture'.[58] Hence, where historical fact may aim to contain, simplify, and categorise information, literature has more flexibility in approaching and presenting the past. Not only does literature contain and preserve experience, but it is also a catalyst for its transformation.

Despite the essential role literature plays in stabilising and preserving memory and experience, the question of how an upsetting and traumatic historical event can be remembered and represented through media and imaginative creations has been a prevalent concern in Holocaust studies for decades. Assmann addresses the issue at the heart of the debate regarding literary representation when she succinctly states that 'representations are the very foundation of cultural memory', yet acknowledges that a 'fundamental problem' lies in the 'question of whether or not this historical trauma can even be represented'.[59]

Holocaust memory has always been clouded by questions of ethics and representability, particularly as human artistic forms struggle to capture the horror of concentration camps and the mass-murder witnessed there. The debate was ignited by Theodor Adorno in 1951, who argued that writing poetry after Auschwitz is

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[57] *Ibid.*, p.175.

[58] Hendrik van Gorp and Ulla Musarra-Schroeder, 'General Preface', in *Genres as Repositories of Cultural Memory*, vol. 5 of the Proceedings of the xvth Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association "Literature as Cultural Memory", Leiden 1997, ed. by Hendrik van Gorp and Ulla Musarra-Schroeder (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000).

[59] Assmann, *Shadows*, p.203.

'barbaric'.[60] Likewise, forty years later, Saul Friedlander noted how the Holocaust continues to haunt attempts at representation with questions of ethics and historical fidelity, and problematises 'our traditional conceptual and representational categories'.[61] In 2006, partaking in the debate, Assmann notes how Auschwitz has 'upset the balance of remembering and forgetting'.[62] It is important to note here that although the Kindertransport is distinct from the Holocaust in several fundamental ways, this debate about representation demonstrates the ethical issues associated with the re-creation of an upsetting experience.

Despite this persistent questioning of the ethics of literary, artistic, and aesthetic forms, creative work has the potential to offer an alternative access to the experience when compared to historical records. The relationship between history, memory, and representation has frequently been probed and even Aristotle, in his work *Poetics*, ascertained that 'the historian speaks of what has happened, the poet of the kind of thing that *can* happen',[63] or, perhaps, could have happened. Similarly, Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub suggest that, 'literature becomes a witness' and does what history cannot do in the age of post Holocaust trauma.[64] Literature – and, by extension, different literary genres – exceeds the realms of historical representation and offers an alternative access to the past whilst also remaining a 'prime site for testing aesthetic and ethical theories about mediation and representability'.[65]

Once living memory no longer exists – when questions cannot be asked and spontaneous answers cannot be given – individuals will turn to recorded testimony and literary texts to gain an understanding of the Kindertransport. Of central significance, Christopher Bigsby argues that '[a]n inevitable act of translation occurs in moving from experience to language, by way of memory, and in moving from actual to imagined experience'.[66]As mentioned earlier, the choice of genre is likely to influence the resulting representation of the Kindertransport, and consequently affects how the reader perceives and remembers this piece of history. As Daniel Chandler in his introduction to genre theory suggests, '[g]enres are not simply features of texts, but are mediating frameworks between texts, makers and interpreters' and, consequently, '[g]enre *constrains* the possible ways in which a text is interpreted, guiding readers of a text towards a *preferred reading* (which is normally in accordance with the dominant ideology)'.[67]

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[60] Theodor W. Adorno, *Prismen. Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft I/II* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), p. 22.

[61] Saul Friedlander, 'Introduction', in *Probing the Limits of Representation. Nazism and the 'Final Solution'*, ed. by Saul Friedlander (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp.1–21 (p.3).

[62] Assmann, *Shadows*, p.241.

[63] Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. by Gerald Else (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1967), p.32f.

[64] Felman and Laub, p.xviii.

[65] Marianne Hirsch and Irene Kacandes, 'Introduction: "Can the Story Be Told?": Generations of Memory', in *Teaching the Representation of the Holocaust*, ed. by Marianne Hirsch and Irene Kacandes (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2004), pp.1–33 (p.3).

All texts – even memoirs – are thus forms of creative representation, each adhering to a set of stylistic and textual conventions. Indeed, Hammel explains that a memoir is the product of an individual's story and is often a creative attempt to come to terms with a traumatic life-changing event and should 'not be read as a straightforward representation of life under certain historical circumstances'.[68] Supporting this view, Mark Freeman in his consideration of narrativisation and reconstruction of a personal past, argues '[t]he issue of genre will become more acute as well, and, to a greater or lesser extent, whether consciously or unconsciously, there will be contact with specific plotlines and modes of telling'.[69]

This research examines how genre influences the construction, narrative perspective, content, focus, and tone of the text. The conventions inherent to, and the reader's expectations of, the particular genre may result in textual omissions, an emphasis on a specific aspect of the Kindertransport experience, or a creative re-imagining of traumatic experience. These changes are not necessarily negative nor do they represent a loss; generational shifts also allow the previously ignored or unaddressed aspects of an event – for example, the less positive side of the Kindertransport story – to be confronted.[70] This research questions the effect of such changes and impact on the resulting representation of the Kindertransport.

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[66] Christopher Bigsby, *Remembering and Imagining the Holocaust: The Chain of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.12.

[67] Daniel Chandler, 'An Introduction to Genre Theory' (1997), p.8 <http://visual-memory.co.uk/daniel/Documents/intgenre/chandler_genre_theory.pdf?LMCL=NxU8Zt>, [accessed 29 November 2019].

[68] Hammel, 'Authenticity', p.202.

[69] Mark Freeman, 'Telling Stories: Memory and Narrative', in *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates*, ed. by Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz (New York: Fordham University, 2010), p.264.

Moreover, this thesis argues that different genres harbour tensions and that the mediation of these conflicting aspects of the genre likewise influences the construction of the text and the resulting representation of the Kindertransport. These inherent tensions are: in memoirs, the conflict between the representation of the self and representation of trauma; the creation of psychological intimacy and distance in autobiographical fiction; and the fiction writer's position between reconstructing the past and invoking the reader's present situation in the hope of stimulating engagement.

Despite inherent differences in genre, it is necessary to clarify that there is often some overlap and that distinctions between genres are not always clear-cut. As Stacie Friend explains: '[t]he linguistic structures of works of fiction and non-fiction may be indistinguishable. And just as works of fiction may refer to real individuals and events and contain true statements, works of non-fiction may contain non-referring expressions and make false claims'.[71] As the literary genres are not mutually exclusive, it is helpful to imagine the texts in this thesis as being located on a continuum. For example, Irene N. Watts's trilogy, though examined alongside Lore Segal's and Karen Gershon's autobiographical fiction, can be seen to represent the transition away from life-writing, as, despite being a Kindertransportee, her trilogy is also understood to be a piece of historical fiction. An analysis of Watts's trilogy then leads into the next chapter's analysis of historical fiction written by an author, Jake Wallis Simons, who has no personal experience of the Kindertransport.

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[70] Assmann, *Shadows*, p.15.

[71] Stacie Friend, 'Fiction as a Genre', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 112 (2012), 179–209 (p.182).

The examination of genre is particularly fascinating in the Kindertransport context as Kinder memoirs, autobiographical fiction, and novels written by the generations following the Kinder all appeared in close succession. Whilst it is difficult to determine whether this is a unique case, the almost coinciding publications do reflect some kind of rising cultural awareness. Generally speaking, most Kindertransport memoirs were written in the 1980s and 1990s, whilst the majority of fiction has been published since the year 2000. However, this distinction is by no means clear-cut, as many survivors were still writing memoirs in the late 1990s and early 2000s, whilst autobiographical fiction appeared as early as 1958.[72] The study of genre, then, as the main distinguishing factor, becomes even more revealing.

### Memoirs

In 1966, Karen Gershon published the first collection of personal experiences written by Kindertransportees. It has been noted in several places that Gershon's text, *We Came as Children: a Collective Autobiography of Refugees*, offers a significantly more critical understanding of the Kindertransport when compared to later collections of Kinder accounts. In her recent publication *The Kindertransport: Contesting Memory*, Jennifer Craig-Norton explains how these contributions to Gershon's volume present 'a counternarrative to the triumphal construction of rescue and salvation'.[73] The accounts belonging to this earlier volume were less influenced by feelings of gratitude (which was often socially forced upon them in later years) and less burdened by nostalgia when compared to testimonies gathered after 1989. This enabled them 'to recount with raw honesty the often-devastating consequences of separation from families, indifferent care, thwarted dreams, alienation from religion, and the loss of parents and siblings to the Holocaust'.[74]

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[72] For example Edith Milton, *The Tiger in the Attic* (2005); Lore Segal, *Other People's Houses* (first published 1958).

[73] Jennifer Craig-Norton, *The Kindertransport: Contesting Memory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019), p.21.

The post-1989 testimonies Craig-Norton refers to were mostly inspired by the reunion of Kinder on the fiftieth anniversary of the rescue in 1989, which resulted in the publication of 'a spate of Kindertransport accounts'.[75] Other collected volumes have been compiled over the years, often highlighting the shared experiences of this group of child refugees during their childhood on the continent, the journey to Britain, wartime Britain, and post-war adult experience.[76] These aspects of experience ultimately act as filters, by which other experiences uncommon to the majority are left unmentioned. Primarily for this reason, individual – and not collected editions of memoirs – will be examined in Chapter Three. Although individual memoirs published after 1989, on the whole, may not be as raw or critical as those found Gershon's collection which were written decades earlier, these later accounts still offer 'a corrective to overly simplistic interpretations of the Kindertransport'.[77]

The examination of memoirs is valuable for several reasons. As a mode of first-hand personal testimony which reflects on lived experience, memoirs offer a psychological insight into the world of the refugee from an adult's perspective. Alexander Stephan highlights the importance of life writing, stating: 'it is eminently desirable that migration research, in examining the subjective and psychological dimensions of displacement and exile, should draw on the literary testimonies and autobiographical confessions of exile writers'.[78] Similarly, Hammel suggests that personal texts are essential and should not be overlooked in the field of exile studies as '[d]as Ausmaß individueller Traumata konnte zum Beispiel Außenstehenden und Forschern erst durch das Lesen persönlicher Texte klar gemacht werden'.[79]

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[74] *Ibid.*

[75] J.M. Ritchie, 'Preface', in *German-speaking Exiles in Great Britain: Yearbook of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies*, 3 (2001), ed. by J.M. Ritchie, p.3.

[76] Collected memoirs include: *We Came as Children: a Collective Autobiography*, ed. by Karen Gershon (London: Papermac, 1986), first published by Gollancz in 1966; *I Came Alone: The Stories of the Kindertransports*, ed. by Bertha Leverton and Shmuel Lowensohn (Lewes: The Book Guild, 1990); Barry Turner, *...And the Policeman Smiled: 10,000 Children Escape from Nazi Europe* (London: Bloomsbury, 1990).

[77] Craig-Norton, *Contesting*, p.21f.

Many memoir writers, regardless of whether their accounts are published as individual memoirs or in a collected volume, feel it is their role or responsibility to recount their experiences and their work can often be considered the product of an historical or personal call. It is rather remarkable to note that the need for remembrance and testimony has largely been initiated by the former Kindertransportees themselves and the texts often reflect the author's urge to write. Given that the Kinder began publishing their memoirs during the 'memory boom' which occurred in the final decades of the twentieth century, it is fitting that their texts are infected with the concerns about remembering and memory processes.[80] An investigation into memoirs poses the question: how can one accurately remember one's past and find an appropriate way of presenting it?

The memoir genre is thought to serve several functions. The reader expects that, through the process of writing, the memoirist first comes to terms with the impact of their experience; memoirs reflect an advent of knowledge and an attempt at full cognition.[81] This expectation complements Assmann's claim that memories only take on a form and a structure after a 'belated recounting' which 'stabilizes' them.[82] Consequently, as Jūra Avižienis argues, '[m]emoirs offer an alternative access and a unique opportunity for coming to terms with the past, whether personal or public/collective'.[83]

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[78] Alexander Stephan, 'Introduction', in *Exile and Otherness: New Approaches to the Experience of the Nazi Refugees*, Exile Studies: an Interdisciplinary Series, 11, ed. by Alexander Stephan (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2005), pp.9–20 (p.14).

[79] Andrea Hammel, 'Online Database of British Archival Resources Relating to German-Speaking Refugees, 1933 bis 1950 (BARGE): Ein Projektbericht', in *Kindheit und Jugend im Exil – Ein Generationenthema*: *Exilforschung. Ein internationales Jahrbuch*, 24 (2006), ed. by Claus-Dieter Krohn, Erwin Rotermund, Lutz Winkler, and Wulf Koepke, pp.73–78 (p.73).

[80] David W. Blight, 'The Memory Boom: Why and Why Now?', in *Memory in Mind and Culture*, ed. by Pascal Boyer and James V. Wertsch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp.238–251 (p.241).

As memoirs can be understood as the memoirist's attempt to construct an account of her life, issues of individual memory (misremembering, selective memory, perspective of hindsight) are likely to influence representation and limit exactly what Kindertransportees are able to convey. Individual, personal memories fall prey to subjectivity as memories alter over time and, in addition, memoirists may filter out the undesirable parts of their memories.[84] Notably, Assmann voices a concern which is shared with many memory scholars: individual memory is perspectival, fragmentary, and fleeting.[85]

The memoirist's position of writing from the present about her past is likely to influence the way in which she is able to engage with and portray her childhood experiences and present the childhood 'self'. The extent to which the position of retrospect – a narrative stance that is expected from the genre – affects the construction, focus, and tone of the representation will be studied in Chapter Three. A delay in communicating these experiences may also make memories difficult to retrieve, especially due to the fact that this genre is traditionally written later in life.[86] This temporal delay between the event and the creation of the memoir means that memories are likely to have become tainted or distorted by the passing of time.

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[81] Felman and Laub, pp.57, 62.

[82] Assmann, *Shadows*, p.12f.

[83] Jūra Avižienis, 'Mediated and Unmediated Access to the Past: Assessing the Memoir as Literary Genre', *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 36:1 (2005), 39–50 (p.40).

[84] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed. by Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p.38.

[85] Assmann, *Shadows*, p.12f.

[86] Andrea Hammel, 'Familienbilder im Spannungsfeld: Autobiographische Texte ehemaliger Kindertransport-Teilnehmer', in *Die Kindertransporte 1938/1939: Rettung und Integration*, ed. by Wolfgang Benz, Claudia Curio, and Andrea Hammel (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 2003), pp.186–200 (p.187).

Crucially, memoirs are comprised of different approaches to recounting the past. As Chapter Three will demonstrate, the genre welcomes the inclusion of history and retrospect, personal and collective experience, a reflection or self-awareness with regards to remembering, and material such as letters and diary entries. Memoirists, who tend to write with an urge to recount their past and to convey the fate of loved ones who were killed in the Holocaust, are also faced with the additional expectations of veracity and authenticity, in addition to the reader's anticipation that the writing process will reveal something unknown or new to the memoirist, by which the memoirist can then affirm her identity in the light of past experience. The analysis of memoirs in this study will reveal the multiple ways in which memoirists mediate these various pressures and features of the genre in order to construct an account of their Kindertransport experience.

Many studies emphasise that the role of the reader is crucial in memoirs and testimony, suggesting that the listener – or reader – 'is a party to the creation of knowledge de novo'.[87] For this reason, the readability of the text and the way in which the reader is invited to connect with the memoir will also be inspected. Here, the representation of traumatic experience poses a threat to both the construction and portrayal of experience and the extent to which the reader can identify with the memoirist and comprehend her experience of the Kindertransport. In the analysis of memoirs, the notion of unspeakable trauma – as theorised in psychological and memory research – will be drawn upon.

Writing in 2001, Leigh Gilmore explains that '[m]emoir is thriving, energized in no small part by a surge in the publication of personal accounts of trauma' and that 'the age of memoir and the age of trauma have coincided and stimulated the aesthetic forms and cultural practices of self-representation that marks the turn of the millennium'.[88] In the memoirs examined in Chapter Three, it can be observed that attempts to recount traumatic experience problematise the act of narration and representation.[89] As Kinder attempt, through their writing, to address their experiences, they come into direct conflict with the question of what can be written and how; their narratives embody the initial challenge of accessing a traumatic past, processing, and narrating this experience.

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[87] Felman and Laub, p.57.

The Kindertransport experience relates closely to Benamer and White's definition of trauma: 'the exposure to life-threatening experiences (actual or perceived) where a person is faced with overwhelming feelings of helplessness and terror at the possibility of annihilation: life and death moments, accompanied by abandonment, isolation, hopelessness, shame, and invisibility'.[90] Moreover, the connection between the separation from a parental figure and consequential trauma has long been established in developmental psychology and in the work of John Bowlby, whose studies demonstrate that 'the heart of traumatic experience lay in parental loss and prolonged separation from care-givers'.[91]

The psychological trauma inherent to the Kindertransport has been illuminated by psychotherapist and Kindertransportee, Ruth Barnett, who powerfully summarises the Kindertransportee's trauma as the loss of parents, country, language, and everything familiar. This upset is then amplified when the refugees are given no choice but to acclimatise to completely new surroundings, which often resulted in confusion and fear.[92]

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[88] Gilmore, p.16.

[89] Although one aspect of this study is the examination of how trauma influences the construction of memoirs and how this is re-imagined in fictional forms, not all Kindertransportees found their experience as a child refugee traumatic. See accounts given by Mordechai Ron and Helga Samuel, in *I Came Alone*, pp.266, 286–289).

[90] Sarah Benamer and Kate White, 'Trauma and Attachment: Introduction to the monograph of The 13th John Bowlby Memorial Conference 2006', in *Trauma and Attachment*, ed. by Sarah Benamer and Kate White (London: Karnac Books, 2008), pp.1–3 (p.2).

[91] Bernice Laschinger, 'Attachment Theory and The John Bowlby Memorial Lecture 2006: a short history', in *Trauma and Attachment*, ed. by Benamer and White, pp.5–10 (p.5).

Trauma has been the focus of psychological research for over a century.[93] The neurologist Jean Martin Charcot diagnosed traumatised women as suffering from hysteria during the late 19th century. Pierre Janet, a student of Charcot, studied the connection between patients' traumatic experiences and the effect on personality and behaviour. Following this, Freud, in *Studies on Hysteria* (1893)[94] proposed a process of dissociation, where a traumatic event results in the splitting of consciousness; the traumatic experience returns through the 'recurrence of a physical state which the patient has experienced earlier'.[95] Understandings of trauma offered by Freud, and subsequently by Cathy Caruth, are based on a singular traumatic event: the train crash and the memory of this one pivotal moment of trauma.[96]

This being said, the distress experienced by Kindertransportees can actually be considered multidimensional, encompassing separation trauma, dislocation trauma, the trauma of persecution, trauma of helplessness, and grief, all at a fragile and impressionable age. The notion of trauma, it can be argued, is more complex in the case of the Kinder where their trauma cannot be pinpointed to one exact moment or one singular traumatic event. Crucially, it is additionally important to note that Kinder were also often traumatised by discrimination and persecution, including acts of violence inflicted upon their family even before their emigration.

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[92] Ruth Barnett, 'Familiengedächtnis: Erste und zweite Generation in der therapeutischen Praxis', in *Die Kindertransporte 1938/1939*, ed. by Benz, Curio, and Hammel, pp.156–170 (p.157). See also Iris Guske, *Trauma and Attachment in the Kindertransport Context: German-Jewish Child Refugees' Accounts of Displacement and Acculturation in Britain* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2009).

[93] Shoshana Ringel, 'Overview', in *Trauma: Contemporary Directions in Theory, Practice, and Research*, ed. by Shoshana Ringel and Jerrold R. Brandell (London: SAGE publications, 2012), pp.1–12 (p.1f).

[94] Sigmund Freud and Josef Breuer, *Studies on Hysteria* (1893–1895), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 2, ed. and trans. by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1961).

[95] Cited in Bessel A. van der Kolk, Lars Weisaeth, and Onno van der Hart, 'History of Trauma in Psychiatry', in *Traumatic Stress: The Effects of Overwhelming Experience on Mind, Body, and Society*, ed. by Bessel A. van der Kolk, Alexander C. McFarlane, and Lars Weisaeth (New York: The Guilford Press, 1996), p.54.

[96] Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p.6.

Kindertransport trauma, the discussion of which has been silenced in early historiography and in some collective memoirs, traverses both issues of individual memory and representation. In the scholarly realm of trauma studies, there has been an ongoing debate between the 'speakability' and 'unspeakability' of trauma.[97] This debate has stemmed from the belief that an experience such as the Holocaust extends beyond all mental and imaginative capabilities.

Cathy Caruth's study *Unclaimed Experience* (1996) has become well known and much referenced in research. Her understanding, which is positioned alongside other theories under the term 'classical trauma theory',[98] is that trauma is not fully experienced, lies outside of recall, and consequently cannot be owned or narrated.[99] Caruth, following on from Freud's contribution, also unites psychoanalysis with a neurobiological approach to trauma and suggests that the trauma is distinct from memory as it does not fit into existing mental schemas which are used to make sense of the world. Van der Kolk's theory of non-narrative traumatic memory suggests that because the traumatic event is so disruptive, 'traumatic memories may be encoded differently' by the brain.[100] The paradigm of unspeakability finds further support from scholars such as Marita Nadal and Mónica Calvo, who state 'trauma constitutes the realm of the unspeakable and the unrepresentable'.[101]

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[97] Ruth Leys, *Trauma: a Genealogy* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), p.298.

[98] Teresa Ludden, 'Introduction: On Creativity and Not-Knowing in Trauma Narratives and Theories', *Trauma Narratives and Theories: New Readings in Contemporary German, Austrian, and Transnational Contexts: German Life and Letters*, 72:4 (2019), 399–426 (p.411).

[99] Cathy Caruth, 'Introduction', in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. by Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), pp.151–157 (pp.151, 155).

[100] Bessel A. van der Kolk, 'Trauma and Memory', in *Traumatic Stress*, ed. by van der Kolk et al., pp.279–302 (p.282).

[101] Marita Nadal and Mónica Calvo, 'Trauma and Literary Representation: an Introduction', in *Trauma in Contemporary Literature. Narrative and Representation*, ed. by Marita Nadal and Mónica Calvo (New York and London: Routledge, 2014), pp.1–13 (p.5).

Trauma theory, although highly popular in Holocaust discourse, does not go uncontested. Van der Kolk's theory does, for example, show that over time victims are able to narrate their story – with the exception of child abuse victims.[102] The assumption that traumatic experience is inaccessible and unnarratable comes into conflict with the understanding that Kindertransport memoirs and literature are used as tools of expression and for recording and representing experience. The memoirists' desire to remember and to recount their stories is brought up against their own ability to access and engage with their trauma. This tension will be addressed in Chapter Three.

Van der Kolk and van der Hart explain how the impact of trauma may be so disruptive, that it cannot be remembered as a whole and so comes back in parts as fragmented images.[103] Remnants of the traumatic event may also be subjected to subconscious defence mechanisms, which keep dangerous or upsetting material repressed in the unconscious.[104] Attesting to the slippery nature of traumatic memory, it has been explored elsewhere how traumatic childhood experience can cause repression or dissociation, which initially prevents access to memories of trauma.[105] Nevertheless, the act of writing the memoir can be understood as the first acknowledgement of trauma; Kacandes argues that the reader 'must interpret the evidence in an act of cowitnessing that creates the story of the trauma for the first time'.[106]

With regards to the three literary genres explored in this research, this study aims to illustrate how traumatic experience is both constructed and mediated depending on the position of the writer vis-à-vis the text and their connection to the Kindertransport. This research will also pay particular attention to rhetorical tropes of trauma and how different literary genres take advantage of these. The examination of the construction of traumatic episodes across genre can thus be understood as providing one methodological lens through which the transformation of Kindertransport representation can be observed. The extent to which different genres render trauma narratable and representable – and ultimately readable – influences how the Kindertransport experience is being understood and received by the reader and what understanding of the Kindertransport is projected into the cultural sphere, preserved, and made available for future engagement by later generations.

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[102] Leys, p.251; van der Kolk, 'Trauma and Memory', pp.288–291.

[103] Bessel A. van der Kolk and Onno van der Hart, 'The Intrusive Past: The Flexibility of Memory and the Engraving of Trauma', in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. by Caruth, pp.158–182 (p.176).

[104] See Sigmund Freud, 'Repression' (1915), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 14, ed. and trans. by James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 2001), pp.146–158.

[105] See Richard J. McNally, *Remembering Trauma* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2005), p.183; and Ruth Barnett, 'Therapeutic Aspects of Working Through the Trauma of the Kindertransport Experience', in *The Kindertransport to Britain 1938/39: Yearbook*, ed. by Hammel and Lewkowicz, pp.157–171.

[106] Irene Kacandes, *Talk Fiction: Literature and the Talk Explosion* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), p.xvi.

### Autobiographical Fiction

Differing from the memoir, autobiographical fiction does not demand a straight-jacketed representation of authentic personal experience; the Kindertransportee authors separate themselves, to diverging extents, from their own experiences. A turn towards a more fictionalised portrayal of the Kindertransport offers the chance to step off the beaten track that guides the reader through many memoirs, and that covers the milestones of the Kindertransportee's childhood. The authors have the creative liberty to expand upon chosen episodes, in turn portraying the child refugee's daily life in Britain and not solely the key memorable events that are available to the memoirist.

The fiction written by Kindertransportees examined in Chapter Four will be located on a broad spectrum between the poles of autobiography and fiction. An attempt to define 'autobiographical fiction' can be problematic. It is near impossible to categorise a text as being completely fictional or completely autobiographical as the two forms of writing overlap and intersect; as aforementioned, there is always an element of creativity in autobiographical accounts and fictional portrayals are likely to be influenced by the author's own individual past, feelings experienced during the specific time period of being a child refugee, and collective history.

Indeed, this thesis takes a relaxed view on this spectrum as all authors' texts vary in their level of fictionality or adherence to lived events. Lore Segal playfully experiments with the interplay of fact and fiction, creatively re-imagining the child protagonist's perspective, and, whilst Karen Gershon's novel is fictionalised to a greater extent than Segal's, it is stated on the inside cover that her text is nevertheless influenced by 'strong autobiographical undertones'. Irene N. Watts's work is more tricky to define. In her trilogy *Escape from Berlin*, she states that her creation of characters is not based on her own life. Despite this, Watts's trilogy focuses on the fictional representation of the collective, historical Kindertransportee experience, which the author, too, experienced in some form. Given that Watts came to Britain on a Kindertransport and writes a creative account of a Kindertransport experience, this thesis examines her trilogy alongside Segal's and Gershon's more obvious works of autobiographical fiction (Chapter Four), rather than together with fiction written by authors with no personal connection to the Kindertransport (Chapter Five).

In this study, Watts's trilogy can be situated between two literary forms: autobiographical and historical fiction. Indeed, *Good-Bye Marianne*, the first of the trilogy, won the Geoffrey Bilson Award for Historical Fiction for Young People. It is important to note that there has been some debate surrounding the nebulous term 'historical fiction'. Grant Rodwell addresses the difficulties of arriving at a consensus; a simple definition defines the term as fiction with fictional characters set in the past, yet the Historical Novel Society argues that this type of novel 'must have been written at least fifty years after the events described, or have been written by someone who was not alive at the time of those events (who therefore approaches them only by research)'.[107] For this reason, Watts's trilogy is considered a form of autobiographical fiction, although it focuses on historical events and is marketed to the public as a work of historical fiction.

Whilst Watts's trilogy is considered here as a work of autobiographical fiction, this analysis will reveal several major differences between her trilogy and the novels written by the other two authors explored in Chapter Four. The trilogy, with its greater degree of fictionality, yet connection to Watts's own life, acts as a bridge between the fiction written by Kindertransportees in Chapter Four and the fiction written by non-Kinder in Chapter Five.

In order to illuminate the findings in Chapter Four, understandings of autofiction will be drawn upon.[108] Autofiction relies on 'the features of both autobiography (coincidence between author, narrator and character; use of real events and experiences) and fiction' including the 'invention of episodes'.[109] French essayist, Philippe Gasparini, compiled a list of characteristics: autofiction can also be identified by the onomastic identity of the author, narrator, and protagonist – in which they share the same name (as seen in Segal's text) –, the subtitle of 'novel', the 'primacy of the narrative' the use of the narrative present, and 'immediate verbalisation'.[110]

Although features of autofiction have been borrowed and applied to this research's understanding of autobiographical fiction to aid analysis – there are differences between the two terms. This research prefers the term 'autobiographical fiction' as French 'autofiction' functions on an experimental and critical level, on which scholars write to intentionally re-determine prescribed generic definitions of autobiography.[111] This is not the case in the Anglophone context.

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[107] Grant Rodwell, *Whose History? Engaging History Students through Historical Fiction* (Adelaide: University of Adelaide Press, 2013), p.47.

[108] Serge Doubrovsky coined the term 'autofiction' in the manuscript of his work *Fils* (1977).

[109] Elise Hugueny-Léger, 'Broadcasting the Self: Autofiction, Television and Representations of Authorship in Contemporary French Literature', *Life Writing*, 14:1 (2017), 5–18 (p.5f).

[110] Philippe Gasparini, *Autofiction: Une aventure du langage* (Paris: Seuil, 2008), p.209, cited in Karen Ferreira-Meyers, 'In Between the Collective and the Individual: African Autofiction', in *Autobiography as a Writing Strategy in Postcolonial Literature*, ed. by Benaouda Lebdai (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2015), pp.134–160 (p.143f).

Writers do, however, take advantage of the genre in a different way. In these fictionalisations written by the Kindertransportees, the authors may not simply seek cognition of their own story, but actively re-work and fictionalise aspects of experience that may resist narration in the memoir form – either due to the workings of traumatic memory or the fallibility of memory –, such as the immediate reaction to upsetting events or child's perception of situations. Indeed, Gilmore notes how the expectation of accurate and truthful representation may hinder the memoirist and so '[t]o navigate it, some writers move away from recognizably autobiographical forms'.[112] The text not only draws upon personal experience or feelings from this time period, but also incorporates the likely experiences of other Kindertransportees.

Autobiographical fiction, as will be illustrated in Chapter Four, places a greater focus on the experience of the child refugee at the time, rather than the adult memoirist who reflects upon his or her experience. The analysis of these texts will investigate the various literary ways in which these authors creatively address and re-imagine events, feelings, thoughts, emotions, and even traumatic episodes through the rendering of the child's consciousness. Often with meticulous attention to detail, the authors recreate the intricacies of the refugee's world and their surroundings, and the greater emphasis on narrative plot enables the authors to create a sense of immediacy.

The creative freedom permitted by the genre subsequently allows the author's exploration of the child 'self' and a re-imagination of traumatic impact. In the analysis of autobiographical fiction it is remarkable to examine how the psychological repercussions of the Kindertransport are implicit from the protagonists' behaviour and decisions, rather than overtly stated by the memoirist. This, as will be demonstrated, leaves room for the reader's own interpretation and critical reflection. As is the case throughout this thesis, the relationship between author, text, and reader will also be examined.

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[111] See Hywel Dix, 'Introduction: Autofiction in English: The Story so Far' in *Autofiction in English*, Palgrave Studies in Life Writing, ed. by Hywel Dix (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp.1–23 (p.1); Sarah Pitcher McDonough, 'How to Read Autofiction' (unpublished honours thesis, Wesleyan University, 2011), p.22.

[112] Gilmore, p.7.

### Fiction

The Kindertransport experience, having already entered the cultural sphere through published first-hand accounts and the media, attracts the attention of interested writers, who creatively engage with the story. Recently, there has been a clear growth of interest in the topic of the Kindertransport which has sparked the release of dozens of fictional re-imaginings.[113] Unlike Kindertransportee authors, fiction writers work with a mediated and non-experiential understanding of the Kindertransport; they write from the position of a 'non-witness', and must find new avenues to access the past and ways to relate to the Kindertransport experience from a position beyond 'living' memory.[114] Whilst they are less inhibited by expectations of historical accuracy and the burden of gratitude when compared to memoirists, fiction authors may still be influenced by national narratives, reader expectations, and the pressure to sell their work.

This research will show how fiction authors find themselves caught between the historical past and the reader's present. Aware of their temporal connection to the living Kindertransportees and that they are the last generation of writers to represent a history which is fading out of living memory, fiction writers hope that their work will engage the younger generation. This historical period, the experience of the Kindertransport, and Jewish persecution encouraged by the Nazi regime are frequently reconstructed, often in the hope of conveying the historical context and atmosphere to the reader. Fiction writers are thus pulled between the demands of representing a historical chapter with explanatory value whilst also fashioning an exciting plot and appealing characters that are in some way attractive and relatable. The authors' attempts to navigate this tension will be investigated in this study.

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[113] For examples see the list provided by *The Kindertransport Association*, <http://www.kindertransport.org/resources.aspx?cat=3> [accessed 08 August 2018].

[114] Gary Weissman, *Fantasies of Witnessing. Postwar Efforts to Experience the Holocaust* (London: Cornell University Press, 2004), p.5.

The fiction texts examined in this thesis are authored by current popular writers and are most likely to be read by millennial readers – children and young adults. The authors, who are aged between forty and sixty-five, signify a change of generation and, significantly, each new generation has a fresh way of accessing the past, according to Assmann.[115] For this reason, the study of texts written by both Kindertransportees and by fiction writers with no personal connection will be revealing. Indeed, the need to welcome a generational dialogue in *Exilforschung* has been acknowledged: '[a]uch nach 1945 bzw. in der Gegenwart entstandene Texte, deren Autoren/innen nicht notwendigerweise die bzw. eine Exilerfahrung teilen müssen, können und sollten im Kontext einer erweiterten Exilliteraturforschung berücksichtigt werden'.[116]

Studies on the fiction written by the third generation – often with regard to the Holocaust – are relevant here as, in most understandings, members of the third generation also have an indirect connection to the historical event they creatively represent.[117] Victoria Aarons highlights the potential of third-generation writing and her findings are valuable to consider in this study's examination of Kindertransport fiction. She claims, for example, that, '[u]ndeterred by silence and sanctions against such a pursuit, third-generation narratives reveal attempts to comprehend, give voice to, and demystify the "unimaginable," unrepresentable fracture of the Holocaust'.[118] Aarons's argument suggests that fiction offers the chance to counteract the unreadable aspects of eyewitness testimony.

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[115] Assmann, *Shadows*, p.14.

[116] Doerte Bischoff and Susanne Komfort-Hein, 'Einleitung: Literatur und Exil: Neue Perspektiven auf eine (historische und aktuelle) Konstellation', in *Literatur und Exil. Neue Perspektiven*, ed. by Doerte Bischoff and Susanne Komfort-Hein (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2013), pp.1–19 (p.6).

[117] Lang, 'The History of Love', p.46. Lang refers to the third generation of Holocaust writers as those mostly born in the 1960s or later and whose work is characterised by indirect rather than direct representation.

As with autobiographical fiction by Kindertransportees, the psychological impact of a situation can be explored further in fiction and the protagonist's emotions and psyche stripped bare for the reader to examine, identify or empathise with. Aarons continues to suggest that 'third-generation narratives reanimate the past as they reckon with recurring patterns of loss'.[119] Loss and absence – both in terms of grief and aspects of the unvoiced or unknown in memoirs – are re-imagined in Kindertransport fiction. This research will question how this is achieved and how this may be, in some cases, reductive, ethically problematic, and thus not wholly restorative.

The opportunities provided by fiction enable a diverse representation of the Kindertransport experience as observed in the five novels explored in this thesis. The texts differ significantly in terms of plot and subplots, characters, and focus. As a form of creative simulation, fiction also reflects the world in which we live and even engages with issues that are topical in current discussions on memory, such as understandings of inherited trauma and the role of the younger generation in the preservation of Kindertransport memory.

However, whilst fiction can be seen as a liberating mode of representation, the ethics of aesthetic choices – of representing an experience that was distressing for many Kindertransportees – will be scrutinised in this study. When considering recent fiction, the following questions will be addressed: in what new contexts is the Kindertransport situated and what is the consequence of this?; what can recent fiction capture or achieve compared to other genres?; and, lastly, with regard to plot, narrative and literary techniques, how do authors re-imagine the Kindertransport experience of loss whilst maintaining the reader's interest?

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[118] Aarons, 'Introduction', p.xiii.
[119] *Ibid.*, p.xv.

Due to different generic features, the established expectations the reader has of the genre, and the author's intention and position in relation to their text, each form of remediation will demonstrate different ways of accessing, constructing, and representing experience. Generic differences, in other words, which aspects of the narrative have been portrayed, omitted, and re-worked across the genres, will illustrate changes in how the Kindertransport is being remembered. The extent to which the reader is prompted to engage and empathise – the degree to which being influenced by the content and specific narrative devices encouraged by the genre – is also likely to strongly influence the emerging and evolving understanding of the Kindertransport in the public sphere.

### 1.4) Empathy and the Reader

As this research aims to uncover how the Kindertransport is being remembered across genre and how these representations influence the reader's understanding of and engagement with the past, the study of narrative empathy is an illuminating aspect of this research. As discussed in the beginning of this chapter, Assmann's conceptualisation of cultural memory suggests that in order for an event to gain a strong foothold in cultural memory – and assume a durable form – it must invite psychological identification and intellectual engagement.[120] Memory culture must take 'historical responsibility' and be 'borne on an empathy for and solidarity with the victims'.[121]

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[120] Assmann, *Shadows*, p.179.
[121] *Ibid.*, p.71.

Writing in 2011, Amy Coplan explains that '[o]ver the past few decades, there has been a surge of interest in the concept of empathy, which has come to occupy a central role in countless debates taking place in both public and academic discourse'.[122] Empathy can be understood in a variety of ways: it is a process of 'feeling into' or *Einfühlung*.[123] It is the ability to adopt someone else's perspective,[124] or 'feel the state of another through direct perception or imagination of their state'.[125] Suzanne Keen, a leading voice in discussions of empathy, defines it as 'a vicarious, spontaneous sharing of affect, [that] can be provoked by witnessing another's emotional state, by hearing about another's condition, or even by reading'.[126] Whilst sympathy can be understood as 'I feel pity for your pain', a reaction of empathy would result in the response: 'I feel your pain' or 'I feel what you feel'.[127]

The potential, value, and limits of empathy have been widely discussed. Martha Nussbaum argues for the moral value of empathy when claiming that '[h]abits of empathy and conjecture conduce to a certain type of citizenship and a certain form of community'.[128] In her groundbreaking study *Empathy and the Novel* Keen poses many questions about narrative empathy and the link between reader empathy and altruism. Instead of having a positive social effect, empathy has also been argued to be a dangerous tool which has the potential to perpetuate specific political or social ideologies.[129]

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[122] Amy Coplan, 'Will the Real Empathy Please Stand Up? A Case for a Narrow Conceptualisation', *Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 49 (2011), 40–65 (p.41).
[123] Meghan Marie Hammond, *Empathy and the Psychology of Literary Modernism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), p.1.
[124] Eva-Maria Engelen, and Birgitt Röttger-Rössler, 'Current Disciplinary and Interdisciplinary Debates on Empathy', *Emotion Review*, 4:1 (2012), 3–8 (p.5).
[125] Stephanie D. Preston, and Alicia J. Hofelich, 'The Many Faces of Empathy: Parsing Empathic Phenomena through a Proximate, Dynamic-Systems View of Representing the Other in the Self', *Emotion Review*, 4 (2012), 24–33 (p.25).
[126] Suzanne Keen, *Empathy and the Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p.4.
[127] *Ibid.*, p.5.
[128] Martha C. Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity: a Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997), p.90.

Rather than examining the workings of empathy in political or social domains, however, understandings of literary or narrative empathy are utilised in this thesis. Instead of simply assuming the link between the act of reading and empathic response – which is the foundation of Keen's text – this research examines to what extent different genres encourage empathy and identification with the Kindertransportee's experience.

A key aspect of empathy, which will be investigated throughout this analysis, is the understanding of distance and critical reflection. Crucially, Dominick LaCapra suggests that there should be a distinction made between 'identification', in which one's own sense of self becomes entangled with the subject, and empathy, which preserves a sense of distance.[130] Indeed, '[u]nchecked identification implies a confusion of self and other', which consequently leads to the reader being incapable of ethical reading.[131]

This understanding of 'outsideness' is central to Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin's idea of active empathy in which he promotes a distance to enable critical reflection. He rejects the passive co-experiencing of another's suffering. In his 'ethical theory of *outsideness* or *exotopy*', Bakhtin is critical of 'identifying empathically with others' and maintains one should retain a 'sense of difference' and place 'outside' the other.[132] Bakhtin, in 'Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity', explains: 'my projection of myself into him must be followed by a return into myself, a return to my own place outside the suffering person, for only from this place can the other be rendered meaningful ethically, cognitively or aesthetically'.[133]

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[129] Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014); Carolyn Pedwell, *Affective Relations: The Transnational Politics of Empathy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Amy Shuman, *Other People's Stories: Entitlement Claims and the Critique of Empathy* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2005), p.18.

[130] Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), pp.28–30, 47.

[131] *Ibid.*, p.28.

[132] Sophie Oliver, 'The Aesth-*ethics* of Empathy: Bakhtin and the *Return to Self* as Ethical Act', in *Empathy and its Limits*, ed. by Aleida Assmann and Ines Detmers (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp.166–186 (p.167).

Without this return to the self, one is at risk of 'an infection with the other's suffering, and nothing more'.[134] In this respect, the position of the reader vis-à-vis the text and the potential for critical reflection is crucial to investigate in memoirs, autobiographical fiction, and fiction. Elsewhere, Alison Landsberg argues that 'contemplation and distance' are 'two elements central to empathy' and are aspects which sets empathy apart from sympathy:

> [t]he experience of empathy requires an act of imagination – one must leave oneself and attempt to imagine what it was like for that other person given what he or she went through. Empathy, unlike sympathy, requires mental, cognitive activity, it entails an intellectual engagement with the plight of the other; when one talks about empathy one is not talking simply about emotion, but about contemplation as well.[135]

Empathy is often encouraged through the author's choice of literary devices and narrative form; literature has the potential to evoke empathy by creating 'complex narratives, which cultivate and shape responses of identification, of compassion, and of interest in other lives'.[136] According to Keen's study, readers report that 'novel reading opens their minds to experiences, dilemmas, time periods, places, and situations that would otherwise be closed to them'.[137] Specific literary techniques that are associated with 'empathetic narrative' include free indirect and direct discourse, and internal monologue.[138] Keen highlights the importance of *character identification* and *narrative situation* which includes point of view and perspective, the 'nature of the mediation between author and reader', 'the relation of the narrator to the characters, and the internal and external perspective on characters, including in some cases the style of representation of characters' consciousness'.[139]

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[133] Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin, 'Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity', in *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays*, ed. by Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov, trans. and notes by Vadim Liapunov (Austin: University of Texas Press 1990), p.26.

[134] *Ibid.*

[135] Alison Landsberg, 'Memory, Empathy, and the Politics of Identification', *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, 22:2 (2009), 221–229 (p.223).

[136] Aleida Assmann and Ines Detmers, 'Introduction', in *Empathy and its Limits*, ed. by Assmann and Detmers, pp.1–17 (p.2).

The predominant question concerning empathy in this thesis pertains to the capabilities and characteristics of the different genres; to what extent – and through what means – they encourage the reader's empathy and identification with the protagonist, and simultaneously, their critical reflection. The question of genre is important and Meghan Marie Hammond, for example, acknowledges that 'literary genres have convention, forms, histories, and audiences that variously impact how empathy functions (or does not function)'.[140] Different narrative forms – or genres – establish different relationships between author and reader.

In memoirs for example, there is a smaller degree of separation between author and reader, as the reader is aware that this is an authentic account of the author's life. In autobiographical fiction by Kindertransportees, the reader remains aware that the author lived through something similar, yet is distanced further from the author by her use of narrative voice and construction of plot. An analysis of Kindertransport fiction will also investigate Keen's claim that 'fictional worlds provide safe zones for readers'; they are more likely to experience empathy as they are freed from social responsibility and know that their empathy will not obligate them to partake in real-world action.[141] It will be illuminating to see whether this holds true for fiction that is both based on a real-life historical period and still present in current media and public conversations.

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[137] Keen, p.ix.

[138] Sylvia Adamson, 'The Rise and Fall of Empathetic Narrative: a Historical Perspective on Perspective', in *New Perspectives on Narrative Perspective*, ed. by Willie van Peer and Seymour Chatman (New York: State University of New York Press, 2001), pp.83–99 (p.83).

[139] Keen, p.93.

[140] Meghan Marie Hammond and Sue J. Kim, 'Introduction', in *Rethinking Empathy through Literature*, ed. by Meghan Marie Hammond and Sue J. Kim (New York: Routledge, 2014), pp.1–18 (p.11).

The next chapter will map out the history of the Kindertransport and describe the experience of the Kindertransportees. Following this, the way in which this chapter of history has been remembered thus far in British national and cultural memory will be summarised. Chapter Three investigates how the form of the memoir – which accommodates archival material, retrospection, and the voices of the narrating and narrated selves – is used to navigate the difficulties in narration caused by traumatic, inaccessible or unclear memory in order to enable a self-representation. Chapter Four will discuss autobiographical fiction written by Kindertransportees and how the image of the child and psychological distress are re-framed. Following this, in Chapter Five, novels written by authors who have no first-hand experience of the Kindertransport will be examined and the re-imagination of the Kindertransport through different plots, contexts, and literary strategies will be analysed. In the concluding chapter, the resulting transformations across the genres will be elucidated and the opportunities for reader empathy and critical reflection will be evaluated. This examination of different literary genres illuminates trends in memory and representation and will expose patterns in how today's society is encouraged to remember and contemplate the Kindertransport as we enter the post-survivor age.

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[141] Keen, p.4.

# Chapter Two

# Kindertransport History and Memory

The child refugees brought to safety by the Kindertransports have become, it has been suggested, 'the most famous and commemorated group of refugees coming to Britain, increasingly memorialised nationally and internationally'.[1] Aleida Assmann, in her highly influential text, *Shadows of Trauma: Memory and the Politics of Postwar Identity*, questions how events pertaining to the Holocaust 'are remembered individually, how they are passed on or silenced as collective experience, how they are publicly recognized, and in what forms of media and ritualized commemorations they are being continuously reconstructed'.[2] In line with the remit of Assmann's study, this chapter aims to reveal the different ways in which the Kindertransport has thus far been approached, studied, and perceived by the public.

As this thesis examines how the reader's understanding of the Kindertransport is transformed through literary representations, it is important to first consider how we regard and remember the Kindertransport today. The history of the Kindertransport operation, the general experience of the Kindertransportees, and developments in scholarship will be elucidated. Following this, the way in which the Kindertransport is remembered by the child refugees themselves, how it is presented in Britain's celebratory narrative, and how it remains present in public consciousness, and evoked in public discourse today will be addressed. This chapter, which reveals how the memory and legacy of the Kindertransport is manipulated, distorted, and selective will, in turn, provide fertile ground to examine the influence of literary genres on the way the Kindertransport is represented by authors, regarded by readers, and consequently remembered in the public sphere.

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[1] Tony Kushner, *Remembering Refugees: Then and Now* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), p.10.

[2] Aleida Assmann, *Shadows of Trauma: Memory and the Politics of Postwar Identity*, trans. by Sarah Clift (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), p.4.

## 2.1) Historical Background

Hitler's rise to power in 1933, shortly followed by the April boycott on Jews, marked the first small, pre-war phase of refugee emigration from Germany.[3] Individuals, who were undesired by the Third Reich (including Social Democrats, Communists, pacifists, democrats, Catholics, as well as liberals, Marxists, artists, journalists, writers and academics who had previously spoken out against National Socialism) found themselves in a dangerous position.[4] These categories of German citizens either could not imagine Germany under Hitler's rule, were in danger of imprisonment, or suffered sanctions being placed on their work, such as Alfred Kerr, Heinrich and Thomas Mann, Lion Feuchtwanger, and Bertolt Brecht. Many initially fled to neighbouring countries such as Austria, France, the Netherlands, and Czechoslovakia, hoping for a smooth return once Hitler's days in power – which they hoped would be short – were over.

These neighbouring European countries were preferred whilst, as Anthony Grenville explains, 'Britain was neither a favoured nor a particularly welcoming country of refuge'.[5] Britain was seen by many as a country separate from Europe and culturally dissimilar. Moreover, Britain was not particularly welcoming; the 1905 British Alien Act and further amendments to immigration policy in 1914 and 1919 allowed 'severe new restrictions' to be introduced.[6] Despite not being a first-choice destination, from January 1933 to September 1935, small numbers of well-off and well-connected refugees started to arrive at British ports.[7] Though Britain maintained that it was not a country of immigration during these early years, many of these well-educated and self-supportive exiles, who were considered of value to British society, were granted admission. British policy adhered to the view outlined by the Secretary of State for the Home Department, Sir John Gilmour, in 1933: although assisting those in need is a 'time-honoured tradition of this country', he remarked, 'the interests of this country must predominate over all other considerations'.[8]

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[3] A.J. Sherman, *Island Refuge: Britain and Refugees from the Third Reich 1933–1939* (London: Paul Elek Ltd., 1973), p.29.

[4] Charmian Brinson and Richard Dove, *A Matter of Intelligence: MI5 and the Surveillance of Anti-Nazi Refugees, 1933-50* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), p.24.

[5] Anthony Grenville, 'The Kindertransports: an Introduction', in *The Kindertransport to Britain 1938/39: New Perspectives: Yearbook of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies*, 13 (2012), ed. by Andrea Hammel and Bea Lewkowicz, pp.1–14 (p.4).

Although the government remained cautious, many aid organisations recognised the plight of the European Jewry. In early 1933, the Jewish community in Britain established a fundraising body: the Central British Fund for German Jewry (CBF) which later adopted the title 'Council for German Jewry' and is known today as World Jewish Relief.[9] Similarly in 1933, Otto Schiff set up the Jewish Refugees Committee (which later became the German Jewish Aid Committee), which asked for immigration policy to become more flexible and reassured the Home Office that any refugee admitted would not be a burden on the state.[10] The Society of Friends also attempted to negotiate with government departments with the hope of acquiring more flexibility and support.[11]

To gain entry, refugees required valid papers, had to register with the police, and provide evidence that they could be self-sufficient; the government was not to bear the economic burden. Support was provided to specific groups of refugees from 1933 onwards: the Academic Assistance Council assisted the immigration of renowned academics and talented students; politically minded refugees were supported by their respective groups in Britain and by the Trades Union Council. Church groups from all denominations, for example the Christian Council for Refugees from Germany and Central Europe, also endeavoured to help refugees.[12]

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[6] Louise London, *Whitehall and the Jews 1933–1948: British Immigration Policy, Jewish Refugees and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.17.
[7] Sherman, p.259.
[8] Sir John Gilmour, *Hansard*, 5th Series. Parliamentary Debates, House of Lords, House of Commons, vol. 276, col. 2557–2558 (12 April 1933).
[9] Sherman, p.25.
[10] David Cesarani, *Britain and the Holocaust* (London: Holocaust Educational Trust, 1998), p.7.
[11] Sherman, p.26.

Influenced by public opinion, the government relaxed its attitude to immigration following the implementation of the Nuremberg Laws in 1935 that placed further prohibitions on inferior 'non-Aryan' *Staatsbürger* (Jews and 'Mischlinge').[13] Any person who had one or more Jewish grandparent was considered Jewish under these race laws. The new policies gradually started to exclude 'non-Aryans' from society, state employment, and the economy – a process which began in 1933 with the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service.[14] During this period, the British Home Office maintained a policy of 'rigid but sympathetic control', carefully selecting several thousand 'desirable, industrious, intelligent and acceptable persons'.[15]

In early 1938, months before the arrival of the Kindertransportees, there were already an estimated 10,000 Jewish refugees from Europe living in Britain.[16] There was to be a significant increase in the intake of refugees following this, due to the British government responding to the Austrian *Anschluss* and the worsening condition of Jews in Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia. There is some inconsistency in the figures proposed by scholars with regard to exact numbers of refugees present in Britain at the outbreak of war in September 1939. This problem originates from the fact that the

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[12] *Ibid.*, p.27.

[13] *Antisemitism: a Historical Encyclopedia of Prejudice and Persecution*, vol. 2, ed. by Richard S. Levy (Oxford: ABC-CLIO, 2005), p.516.

[14] Roderick Stackelberg and Sally A. Winkle, *The Nazi Germany Sourcebook: an Anthology of Texts* (Oxford: Routledge, 2002), p.150.

[15] Sherman, p.260.

[16] London, p.59.

Home Office 'studiously avoided keeping its own statistics'.[17] In the absence of exact figures, numbers range from 56,000 as suggested by A.J. Sherman, to Louise London's perhaps more accurate suggestion of 78,000 refugees.[18]

There were several prevailing issues which haunted the immigration of European Jews between 1933 and 1939. The main difficulty was facilitating the movement of refugees, and the allocation of passports, papers, and visas. Additionally, there was an uninterrupted anxiety surrounding the immigration of Jewish refugees and Tony Kushner explains: 'the fear of domestic antisemitism was largely responsible for the government's feeble response to the desperate plight of European Jewry'.[19] Indeed, the influx of refugees did lead to an increased level of anti-Semitism and the initial reception of these refugees from Europe has been described as far from welcoming.[20]

The year 1938 proved to be particularly tumultuous, witnessing the Austrian *Anschluss*, the disappointing Evian Conference, the controversial Munich Agreement, the Nazi occupation of the Sudetenland, the deportation of thousands of Polish Jews from Germany, and the November pogrom. The *Anschluss* in March 1938 marked a turning point in Britain's immigration policy on the admission of Jewish refugees and swayed public opinion in favour of the European Jews, which, in turn, placed public pressure on the government to aid refugees. The pressure on Britain to offer aid intensified as other European countries implemented more restrictive policies by closing their borders.

Concerned about the ensuing number of refugees – who were soon likely to be made stateless by the Reich – arriving at the borders, Britain introduced a visa system in spring 1938, taking effect in May, by which a potential influx of refugees was 'checked at source'.[21] Individuals, including distinguished persons and students who had been guaranteed a place at a university, were pre-selected abroad according to strict criteria and only then could obtain a precious British visa which guaranteed their entry.[22] Several groups of refugees were issued visas between 1938 and 1939, including more than 10,000 mainly female refugees on domestic service visas, and approximately 5,000, mostly male transmigrants, whose admission allowed their release from concentration camps.[23] Whilst the implementation of a visa system could be viewed as yet another way to control immigration, statistics show that more refugees than in previous years, at least 50,000 in fact, were offered refuge between March 1938 and September 1939.[24] Indeed, 'the volume of admissions had increased from 200 per week in September [1938] to 100 per day in October'.[25]

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[17] *Ibid.*, p.9.
[18] *Ibid.*, p.11f.
[19] Tony Kushner, *The Persistence of Prejudice: Antisemitism in British Society during the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), p.201.
[20] *Ibid.*, p.12; Grenville, 'The Kindertransports: an Introduction', p.11.

Whilst Britain was making its immigration policies more flexible, Poland was trying to prevent the arrival of German-speaking Polish Jews. In early April 1938, Poland threatened to revoke the Polish citizenship of more than 50,000 Polish citizens, who had been living in Germany for more than five years.[26] Once made stateless, Germany's Polish Jews  could not simply be deported or forced to emigrate; Poland's actions thus threatened to sabotage Hitler's plan for his Third Reich. In response to this threat, Heinrich Himmler organised the mass expulsion of Polish Jews with valid passports at the end of October 1938, forcing them over the border into Poland. This 'Polenaktion' was the first co-ordinated mass deportation of Jews from the German Reich.

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[21] London, p.63; Sherman, p.87.
[22] Sherman, pp.87, 91.
[23] Grenville, 'The Kindertransports: an Introduction', p.7.
[24] *Ibid.*, p.6; London suggests a higher figure of refugees in this period as there were an estimated 10,000 refugees present in the UK in March 1938 and 78,000 by September 1939 (London, pp.12, 56, 59).
[25] T.W.E. Roche, *The Key in the Lock: a History of Immigration Control in England from 1066 to the Present Day* (London: John Murray, 1969), p.27, cited in London, p.82.
[26] Jennifer Craig-Norton, *The Kindertransport: Contesting Memory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019), p.3.

Whilst some were able to cross into Poland, others were refused entry, and five to eight thousand Jews were held between the two countries, in the town of Zbąszyń. Angered by the deportation of his parents, who were being held in no man's land, Herschel Grynszpan shot the diplomat Ernst vom Rath at the German Embassy in Paris a week later, sparking the night of state-organised terror and brutality against Jews in Germany and Austria. Jewish persecution reached a critical point on 9 November 1938; a date which was soon transcribed into history under the titles of the 'November pogroms', 'Kristallnacht', and 'The Night of Broken Glass'. Jewish businesses, homes, and synagogues were damaged or destroyed during this legalised pogrom. Jews were openly and legally attacked and arrested; approximately one hundred Jews were murdered, a significant number committed suicide, and around 30,000 male Jews were deported to concentration camps.[27] Roughly 60,000 to 70,000 children were orphaned or endangered after their parents were either murdered or disappeared for weeks.[28]

'Kristallnacht' ignited public horror and it became apparent that immediate humanitarian intervention was essential. On 15 November 1938, as the situation became increasingly desperate, a delegation of leading figures in British Jewry called on Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, and the Cabinet met on 16 November to discuss the situation of the Jews in Europe.[29] Home Secretary, Sir Samuel Hoare, proposed the admission of 10,000 children from the extended Reich to Palestine. Perhaps to compensate for Britain's unwillingness to relocate any more refugees in Palestine due to the tense relationship between Great Britain and the Jews of Palestine, the government of Great Britain permitted an unspecified number of children up to the age of seventeen to enter Britain instead. Although the government did not specify the number of unaccompanied minors, the Council for German Jewry first estimated for 5,000 and then increased this figure to 10,000.[30] Interestingly, it has been suggested by Rebekka Göpfert that a number of 50,000 child refugees was also considered.[31] This scheme later became known as the Kindertransport.

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[27] London, p.91.
[28] Vera K. Fast, *Children's Exodus: a History of the Kindertransport* (London: I.B. Taunus, 2011), p.18.
[29] Grenville, 'The Kindertransports: an Introduction', p.8.

The admission of children was less problematic than adults for several reasons: 'children evoked a humanitarian response faster than adults; they would not enter the already problematic job market during the economic depression; and they were considered more malleable' as they could 'learn to fit into their new society'.[32] Following the debate, it was announced that some immigration requirements would be waived and on 21 November Hoare announced that children up to the age of seventeen would be admitted without a visa and that the Anglo-Jewish community would bear the cost – which it did until 1939.[33] A guarantee of £50, paid by a guarantors who were often relatives of friends or individuals who responded to advertisements in British newspapers, would be needed to secure a place.[34] This deposit would cover the child's re-emigration; children were admitted as transmigrants, educated, and trained with the view that they would return to the continent or re-emigrate as soon as possible.

Although the Kindertransport operation of 1938 has been heralded as a compassionate offer of refuge, it has also been argued that British immigration policy was not always as accommodating and flexible as it could have been. Here it is important to note that the organisation and implementation of the Kindertransport has divided scholars in Britain; an almost unbridgeable rift has emerged between those who view the Kindertransport as a generous rescue operation (such as Anthony Grenville), and those who find it hard to ignore its selectivity (including Louise London, Tony Kushner, and David Cesarani).

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[30] Claudia Curio, 'Flucht, Fürsorge und Anpassungsdruck: Die Rettung von Kindern nach Großbritannien 1938/9', in *Kindheit und Jugend im Exil – Ein Generationenthema: Exilforschung. Ein internationales Jahrbuch*, 24 (2006), ed. by Claus-Dieter Krohn, Erwin Rotermund, Lutz Winkler, and Wulf Koepke, pp.62–72 (p.62).

[31] Rebekka Göpfert, 'Kindertransport: Geschichte und Erinnerung', in *Die Kindertransporte 1938/1939: Rettung und Integration*, ed. by Wolfgang Benz, Claudia Curio and Andrea Hammel (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 2003), pp.34–43 (p.35f).

[32] Judith Tydor Baumel-Schwartz*, Never Look Back: The Jewish Refugee Children in Great Britain, 1938–1945* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2012), p.51f.

[33] Grenville, 'The Kindertransports: an Introduction', p.8.

[34] Fast, p.21f.

On the one hand, this humanitarian act deserves recognition and praise given that, whilst other countries restricted immigration following 'Kristallnacht', Britain adopted 'progressively more flexible policies'.[35] On the other hand, it has been argued that the Kindertransport was restrictive as it facilitated the admission of minors only, and thus excluded their parents.[36] This is the main criticism of the Kindertransport rescue scheme. These two conflicting views on Britain's immigration policy will be illuminated throughout this chapter.

This rescue of children was hastily organised in a matter of weeks; an impressive achievement given the pressure already placed on aid organisations. Several organisations played a crucial role, including: the B'nai Brith Council for Refugee Children; the Women's Appeal Committee; the Chief Rabbi's Religious Emergency Council; and, the Quakers, who, both in Britain and on the continent, facilitated the children's safe passage.[37] The Children's Inter-Aid Committee – which later became known as the Refugee Children's Movement and which brought together Jewish and Christian organisations – played a particularly significant role in organising and issuing travel documents on behalf of the Home Office.

The Kindertransport operation was reliant on the funds collected by these organisations and the generosity and sympathy of the British public. For example, citizens donated £500,000 to the Baldwin Fund for Refugees, organised by former Prime Minister Lord Stanley Baldwin in December 1938.[38] Funds also came from the

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[35] Sherman, p.262.

[36] London, p.118.

[37] Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, p.73f.

[38] Andrea Hammel, 'Child Refugees Forever? The History of the Kindertransport to Britain 1938/39', *Diskurs Kindheits- und Jugendforschung*, 2 (2010), 131–143 (p.134).

Council for German Jewry, and the Christian Council.[39] The British Committee for Refugees from Czechoslovakia (BCRC) – set up after Chamberlain's 1938 appeasement of Hitler's territorial advancement and occupation of the Sudetenland – relied greatly on donations (such as £7000 from *The News Chronicle* fund) for the relief of Czech refugees, including the Kinder.[40]

With regards to the logistics, the Jewish communal organisations – the department for child emigration (a department of the *Reichsvertretung der Juden in Deutschland* based in Berlin) and the *Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Wien* (the official Jewish community in Vienna) – drew up lists of children who would travel by train to Britain. They pre-selected the most urgent applications and sent these to London, where they were received by the Refugee Children's Movement (RCM) – which was established under the larger organisation, the Central British Fund for World Jewish Relief. From the list of pre-selected children, the most suitable children were chosen and this information was communicated back to Berlin and Vienna.[41]

The children mostly fell into one of two main categories: those sponsored by members of the British public – either strangers or acquaintances, or often distant family members known to the child's family –, or those whose upkeep was guaranteed by refugee organisations. In the latter instance, the British organisations either found foster homes for the Kinder before their arrival or would endeavour to find a foster home for the children once they had arrived, whilst the children were housed in youth hostels or holiday camps.[42] As Andrea Hammel notes, until March 1939, an unspecified number of children made their way to Britain without an individual guarantor. Instead, they were 'supported by a pool of guarantees to be distributed by the RCM'.[43] Unsurprisingly, the demand for refuge in Britain was too high and this pool of available guarantees started to reduce rapidly. By March 1939, the RCM could offer only 200 more guarantees from the available funds and, consequently, only those children who had managed to arrange an individual guarantor were permitted entry to Britain.[44]

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[39] *I Came Alone: The Stories of the Kindertransports*, ed. by Bertha Leverton and Shmuel Lowensohn (Lewes: The Book Guild, 1990), p.405.
[40] William R. Chadwick, *The Rescue of the Prague Refugees 1938/39* (Leicester: Troubador, 2014), p.9.
[41] Hammel, 'Child Refugees Forever?', p.134.
[42] Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, p.2.

Between December 1938 and September 1939, trains departed from stations in main European cities such as Berlin, Vienna, and Prague, and on these station platforms approximately 10,000 children were separated from their families – some indefinitely. Some children, including children from East Germany or Poland, had to travel to a main European train station in order to depart on a Kindertransport, yet some trains picked up children on route.[45] On 2 December 1938, the first Kindertransport ferry arrived in Harwich, carrying eight teachers and 206 particularly vulnerable Jewish children.[46] Orphans, children whose parents had already been sent to concentration camps, and older boys who were in danger of being deported to concentration camps were the highest priority groups with regards to the selection process.[47]

Other refugee organisations worked alongside the organisers of the transports. For example, the branch of the Polish Jewish Refugee Fund (an Anglo-Jewish group) based in London were able to arrange three transports carrying a total of 154 doubly-displaced German-speaking Polish children, who had been evicted from Germany and held in the town Zbąszyń.[48] These Kindertransports departed from Danzig and Gdynia.

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[43] Hammel, 'Child Refugees Forever?', p.135.

[44] *Ibid.*

[45] Wolfgang Benz, 'Emigration als Rettung und Trauma: zum historschen Kontext der Kindertransporte nach England', in *Die Kindertransporte 1938/1939*, ed. by Benz, Curio, and Hammel, pp.9–16 (p.14); Hammel, 'Child Refugees Forever?', p.134.

[46] Fast, p.34.

[47] *Ibid.*

[48] Jennifer Craig-Norton, 'Polish *Kinder* and the Struggle for Identity', in *The Kindertransport to Britain 1938/39: Yearbook*, ed. by Hammel and Lewkowicz, pp.29–46 (pp.29–31); Craig-Norton, *Contesting*, p.6.

The transports from Austria were organised in greater haste than the transports from Germany. The first (and largest) transport from Vienna carried 500 unaccompanied minors in December 1938.[49] The pace at which the transports were organised is impressive: there were 'at least two children's transports a week, until the movement reached its peak in June and July 1939, with transports arriving daily'.[50]

The most common route taken by these transports was via the Netherlands and the Hook of Holland, and the majority of Kinder then continued onto Harwich, Liverpool Street station, or Victoria Station in London where they were met by members of the organisations such as the RCM or their new foster families.[51] Some Kindertransportees stayed in the Netherlands or were destined for imagined safety in Belgium or Sweden.[52] A small number of Kinder also arrived by ship from Hamburg to Southampton.[53]

Due to the magnitude of the operation and the dearth of financial support, the age limit for Kindertransportees was reduced to sixteen in 1939. Following Hitler's occupation of Czechoslovakia in March 1939, the final and largest influx of refugees came to a standstill in late summer 1939 when the aid organisations supporting the Kindertransport ran out of funding. The Kindertransports continued to arrive until Hitler's invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939, which resulted in the outbreak of the Second World War two days later. The last Kindertransport from Prague on 3 September did not leave the station. The final transport from IJmuiden, the Netherlands, to Britain departed on 14 May 1940 just as the Dutch army surrendered to German forces.

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[49] Hammel, 'Child Refugees Forever?', p.135.

[50] *We Came as Children: a Collective Autobiography*, ed. by Karen Gershon (London: Papermac, 1989), p.2, as quoted in Fast, p.35.

[51] Fast, p.36.

[52] *Ibid.*, p.33.

[53] Grenville, 'The Kindertransports: an Introduction', p.9.

The Kinder were not the only group of refugees to be rescued in the final nine months before the outbreak of war. The Home Office also took measures to 'streamline and accelerate its procedures' by introducing a simplified card system which 'enabled visas to be granted immediately to transmigrants, trainees, and elderly refugees over 60'.[54] Many refugees, predominantly women, gained access to Britain on a domestic working permit. Although controversy and criticism surrounds the issue of domestic permits, by which the refugee enters a position of servitude often beneath their class, the introduction of domestic block visas allowed the emigration of approximately 14,000 women in the year leading up to the outbreak of war in September 1939.[55]

Whilst the Kindertransport has been hailed as a successful and epic rescue operation organised by the British government[56] – despite it mainly being funded by charitable bodies and private individuals[57] –, the contributions of individual people, both inside and outside of Britain should be recognised. As the situation in Germany and Austria was becoming ever more perilous in 1938, pleas from Jewish leaders in Germany and Austria reached the Jewish authorities in Britain. In the highly selective process of drawing up lists for transports, it was perceived by Jewish leaders in Vienna that orthodox children were being intentionally excluded.[58]

The RCM's main aim was to select children who were considered assimilable and least likely to arouse anti-Semitic feelings in Britain. Orthodox Jews, with their traditional customs and dress, were more conspicuous than the more assimilated Jews and were thus disadvantaged by the *Kultusgemeinde's* selection of children – which abided by the criteria set by the German Jewish Aid Committee in the UK. It should also be noted, however, that some parents of Kindertransportees refused to sign a form allowing their children to be placed with non-Jewish families, which may also explain why fewer Orthodox children were placed with foster families.

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[54] Sherman, p.214.

[55] Marian Malet, 'Departure and Arrival', in *Changing Countries*, ed. by Marian Malet and Anthony Grenville (London: Libris, 2002), pp.45–89 (p.69).

[56] Discussed in Caroline Sharples, 'The Kindertransport in British Historical Memory', in *The Kindertransport to Britain 1938/39: Yearbook*, ed. by Hammel and Lewkowicz, pp.15–27.

[57] Hammel, 'Child Refugees Forever?', p.133.

[58] David Kranzler and Gertrude Hirschler, 'Rabbi Dr. Solomon Schonfeld: a Biographical Essay', in *Solomon Schonfeld, his Page in History: Recollections of Individuals Saved by an Extraordinary Orthodox Jewish Rescue Hero during the Holocaust Era*, ed. by David Kranzler and Gertrude Hirschler (New York: Judaica Press, 1982), pp.19–32 (p.22).

One particularly concerned individual was orthodox Rabbi Solomon Schonfeld, who subsequently requested that the Home Office issue permits for several hundred Jewish children from Austria.[59] He cleared out the two orthodox Jewish schools which his family had established and eventually his own house, accommodating 250 Jewish children.[60] His efforts enabled him to bring close to 1,000 children to Britain, including adolescent orthodox Jews who were over the age threshold for the Kindertransports. He worked intently to preserve the children's Jewishness.[61]

As the RCM focused on the rescue of endangered children in Germany and Austria, the fates of children from Czechoslovakia fell into the hands of other organisations and individuals. Nicholas Winton, whose name is often the first to spring to mind when one hears the term 'Kindertransport', has become almost synonymous with the rescue effort, particularly since his appearance on Esther Ranzen's TV show 'That's Life!' in 1988.[62] Nicholas Winton, a young London stockbroker, had been informed of the dire situation in Prague by his friend Martin Blake, who was involved with the humanitarian work headed by the British Committee for Refugees from Czechoslovakia (BCRC).[63]

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[59] *Ibid.*, p.23.

[60] *Ibid.*

[61] Joshua Olshin, 'He made me feel proud', in *Solomon Schonfeld*, ed. by Kranzler and Hirschler, pp.157–158 (p.158).

[62] BBC, *Sir Nicholas Winton – BBC Programme 'That's Life' aired in 1988*, YouTube, 01 September 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6_nFuJAF5F0> [accessed 15 January 2017]. Winton's fame has often eclipsed the efforts of other individuals who helped European Jews to reach safety, including Lola Hahn-Warburg, Rebecca Sieff, Sir Wyndham Deedes, Professor Bentwich, and the Quaker leaders Bertha Bracey and Jean Hoare.

[63] Barbara Winton, *If it's not impossible…: The life of Sir Nicholas Winton* (Kibworth Beauchamp: Matador, 2014), pp.12–15.

As part of this work, Czech children, who were in particular peril, were flown out of Czechoslovakia on planes organised by compassionate individuals such as Trevor Chadwick.[64] With impressive foresight, dedication, and compassion, Winton helped to organise eight transports from Prague, saving approximately 669 predominantly Jewish children in 1939.[65] Perhaps due to his longevity, Winton, towards the end of his life, acquired a sort of celebrity status, even though he was not the sole person involved in organising the rescue of children from Czechoslovakia.[66] Working in Britain alongside other essential figures such as Doreen Warriner (head of the Prague office of the BCRC) and Trevor Chadwick – who are arguably often not given their due credit – Winton drew up lists of the most desperate cases and painstakingly found homes for hundreds of children. With approval from the Home Office, the first group of children left on 14 March 1939, the day before the German occupation of Czechoslovakia.[67]

Britain, however, was not alone in taking trains full of refugee children; there were also transports to the Netherlands, France, Belgium, Sweden, and the USA. In fact, Winton's first rescue effort involved organising a small transport of twenty Czech children to Sweden.[68] An estimated 650 German-Jewish children, aged between two and fifteen, arrived in Sweden in late 1938 and into 1939. The new arrivals were adopted by Swedish families or accommodated in camps, and 150 children were taken care of by the Israel Mission and prepared for further emigration.[69] Thanks to the advantage of Swedish neutrality during the war, Jews residing in Sweden, including children, were not subjected to anti-Semitic policies.

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[64] Chadwick, p.73f.

[65] Jana Buresova, 'Nicholas Winton, Man and Myth: a Czech Perspective', in *The Kindertransport to Britain 1938/39: Yearbook*, ed. by Hammel and Lewkowicz, pp.47–58 (p.47).

[66] *Ibid.*, p.52.

[67] Muriel Emanuel and Vera Gissing, *Nicholas Winton and the Rescued Generation* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2001), p.77.

[68] *Ibid.*, p.70.

[69] Hedi Fried, 'Sweden and the Holocaust', in *Children Surviving Persecution: an International Study of Trauma and Healing*, ed. by Judith S. Kestenberg and Charlotte Kahn (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1998), pp.173–187 (p.175).

There were also several Kindertransports to Belgium. Unfortunately, as a consequence of Hitler's unappeased territorial ambition, these children had to flee yet again to France as a result of the German invasion in May 1940.[70] Some of these children were thought to have reached safety in Switzerland.[71] In 1942, Jews without Belgian citizenship were rounded up and deported by German authorities, and a year later, although originally promised their liberty, Belgian-Jewish citizens were also deported eastwards.[72] Against the odds, it has been noted that at least six children who arrived in Belgium on a Kindertransport survived whilst hiding in their Belgian orphanage.[73]

The Dutch humanitarian response is particularly impressive. Geertruida Wijsmuller-Meijer, an inspirational and courageous Dutch social worker and official representative of the Children's Committee in the Netherlands, was central to facilitating the Kindertransport rescue from Austria.[74] Undeterred by the risk to her own personal safety, she travelled directly to Vienna in December 1938 – working on behalf of Norman Bentwich (Council for German Jewry) – to confront Adolf Eichmann and persuade him to allow the transportation of children away from Austria, bringing them to the Netherlands and Britain.[75] Reluctantly, he gave her what he assumed to be a near impossible task: to transport 600 children out of Austria within a week.[76]

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[70] Suzanne Vromen, *Hidden Children of the Holocaust: Belgian Nuns and Their Daring Rescue of Young Jews from the Nazis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008) p.98f.

[71] *Ibid.*, p.99.

[72] *Ibid.*, p.98.

[73] Hilde Sheraga, 'My Red Chesterfield Coat', in *And Life is Changed Forever: Holocaust Childhoods Remembered*, ed. by Martin Ira Glassner and Robert Krell (Detroit: Wayre State University Press, 2006), pp.127–138.

[74] 'She rescued 10,000 children from the Nazis: honouring Tante Truus in Berlin', *International Auschwitz Committee*, 30 August 2013, <http://www.auschwitz.info/en/welcome/announcements/artikel/lesen/she-rescued-10000-children-from-the-nazis-honouring-tante-truus-in-berlin-180//zurueck/83.html> [accessed 29 July 2017].

[75] Amy Zahl Gottlieb, *Men of Vision: Anglo-Jewry's Aid to Victims of the Nazi Regime, 1933–1945* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson), p.114.

[76] '600 Child Refugees Taken from Vienna; 100 Jewish Youngsters Going to Netherlands, 500 to England', *The New York Times*, 6 December 1938, p.10 <https://www.nytimes.com/1938/12/06/archives/600-child-refugees-taken-from-vienna-100-jewish-youngsters-going-to.html> [accessed 29 July 2017].

Following this successful rescue, 'Tante Truus', as she was known by the Kinder she saved, repeatedly travelled to Germany to save more children who were suffering under Nazi persecution. With help from individuals in different countries[77] she organised a remarkable 74 transports in total from Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia.[78] Wijsmuller-Meijer accompanied Jewish children not only from Vienna and Berlin, but also collected children from Hamburg, Breslau, Prague, Danzig, and Königsberg.[79]

As Deborah Hodge notes, Wijsmuller-Meijer dealt with fierce border guards, arranged the children's accommodation and their further journey to England via ship. She played a crucial role in the most dramatic rescue from the Netherlands and, under intense time pressure, gathered as many children as she could and placed them on the last ship to England, just as enemy planes bombed Holland.[80] This rescue was not technically one of the organised transports falling under the Kindertransport scheme as it was arranged in great haste. It did, however, include some eighty Kinder, originally from Germany and Austria, who were being accommodated in an orphanage in Amsterdam, including Kindertransportee Ya'acov Friedler.[81] Working relentlessly, Wijsmuller-Meijer also organised the transportation of Jews originally from the Baltic region and Poland to Palestine.[82] Despite this, her actions, it appears, are not as well-recognised in Britain as they ought to be and her name is practically unknown – unlike Nicholas Winton's.[83]

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[77] Wijsmuller-Meijer worked with individuals such as the Jewish woman and rescuer Recha Freier in Berlin. See online source 'She rescued 10,000 children from the Nazis' (2013).

[78] 'She rescued 10,000 children from the Nazis'.

[79] 'The Righteous Among The Nations', *Yad Vashem*, <http://db.yadvashem.org/righteous/family.html?language=en&itemId=4018228> [accessed 29 July 2017].

[80] Deborah Hodge, *Rescuing the Children: The Story of the Kindertransport* (Toronto: Tundra Books, 2012), pp.33–34.

[81] *I Came Alone*, p.97.

[82] 'The Righteous Among The Nations', *Yad Vashem*.

In response to the events of 1938, the Wagner-Rogers Bill was put forward in the United States in early 1939, proposing the rescue of 20,000 unaccompanied refugee children from Germany, which exceeded the existing quota and failed to pass through Congress.[84] Feeling the pressure from these groups and lack of support for the bill, Wagner and Rogers withdrew their proposal '[i]n order to not discriminate against refugee adults who might be in more danger than children'.[85] Prior to this, in late 1933 and early 1934, the United States took in 250 German-Jewish children.[86] The American government did, however, later agree on a drastically smaller number of child refugees than proposed under the Wagner-Rogers Bill. The 'One Thousand Children Scheme', brought approximately 1,400 German-Jewish children to the United States. Despite the smaller percentage of rescued children when compared alongside Britain's 10,000, the United States, in total, admitted approximately 130,000 Jewish refugees to its shores, compared to Britain's estimated 70,000 who were present in Britain at the outbreak of war.[87]

It has been suggested that '[t]he United Kingdom was the country which played the greatest part in succouring unaccompanied young people from Germany'.[88] Although exact numbers of rescued children are difficult to determine, it has been noted that, following 'Kristallnacht' (and in addition to those who found safety in the US and Sweden), 10,000 children found refuge in the UK, 1,850 in Holland, 800 in Belgium,

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[83] Her actions have been recognised in the Netherlands and Berlin and she is recognised on the Yad Vashem website: 'The Righteous Among The Nations'. There is a growing interest in this figure and a documentary about her is currently being made: 'Truus' Children', *Stichting Ogen Open* (2017), <https://www.truus-children.com/> [accessed 07 April 2019].

[84] Judith Tydor Baumel-Schwartz, 'Introduction', in *Don't Wave Goodbye: The Children's Flight from Nazi Persecution to American Freedom*, ed. by Philip K. Jason and Iris Posner (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2004), pp.1–18 (p.5f).

[85] *Ibid.*, p.6.

[86] *Ibid.*, pp.2–4.

[87] Benz, 'Emigration als Rettung und Trauma', p.10; London, p.12.

[88] London, p.121.

700 in France, and Switzerland offered 300 orphans a home.[89] By November 1938, the Jugend-Alija had brought 4,800 children to Palestine.[90] The contributions of other countries and individuals deserves wider recognition as, in public consciousness, the Kindertransport is often considered a solely British initiative due to the celebratory attitude of self-praise that Britain has adopted. This view will be explored in more detail later in this chapter.

When Britain declared war following Hitler's invasion of Poland, of the estimated 78,000 refugees present in Britain, approximately 70,000 were Jewish.[91] Yet, when the borders went up all over Europe, an estimated 400,000 Jews were still trapped in the expanded Reich, and two million Jews in German-occupied Poland.[92] Whilst the British initiative has been given its due praise, despite the efforts of Britain and other nations, unfortunately '[t]he conclusion cannot be avoided: escape to Britain was an exception for the lucky few; exclusion was the fate of the majority'.[93] More sympathetic scholars, however, such as William D. Rubinstein, maintain that nothing more could have been done to save the Jews at the given time, and that all responsibility and guilt should lie with the Nazis and their allies.[94]

### 2.2) The Kindertransportees

The Kinder who were brought to safety on a Kindertransport all had different experiences in Great Britain although their reason for refuge and their train journeys are comparable. In Germany and Austria the majority of the Kinder grew up in middle-class, assimilated Jewish families. Some twenty percent of the children had parents of mixed Jewish background, but were in fact unaware of their Jewish background, were Christian, or not religious.[95] However, as anti-Semitism rose in Germany and Austria particularly from 1933, the children of school age faced exclusion and discrimination from their former 'Aryan' friends. Subsequent to the introduction of the *Gesetz gegen die Überfüllung der deutschen Schulen und Hochschulen* in April 1933 many children were forced to leave and attended Jewish schools instead.[96]

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[89] Inge Hansen-Schaberg, 'Kindheit und Jugend', in *Handbuch der deutschsprachigen Emigration*, ed. by Claus-Dieter Krohn (Darmstadt: Primas, 1998), pp.81–94 (p.83). There is a slight difference in figures offered by Louise London from July 1939: 7,700 had arrived in Britain, Netherlands: 1850, France: 800, Belgium: 700, and Sweden 250 (London, p.121).

[90] Hansen-Schaberg, 'Kindheit und Jugend', p.83.

[91] London, p.12.

[92] Sherman, p.258.

[93] London, p.12.

[94] William D. Rubinstein, *The Myth of Rescue: Why the Democracies could not have saved more Jews from the Nazis* (London: Routledge, 1997).

Anti-Semitic legislation implemented between 1933 and 1939 saw Jews banned firstly from public spaces such as parks and swimming pools, and, later, from cafés, cinemas, and theatres.[97] As the anti-Semitic regime intensified, many children witnessed the November pogroms and have had to live with the harrowing memories of 'Kristallnacht' – the worst attack on Jews since Hitler's rise to power.[98] Further decrees meant that the Jewish community were expropriated of their property and their businesses were 'aryanised'.[99] Although the children may have been oblivious to the politics surrounding the increasingly restrictive anti-Semitic policies and the specific events which precipitated the exile of Jews, they nevertheless could not escape the discrimination and ostracisation that they faced in their own playgrounds, schools, and community.

During this time, many Jewish families were exploring emigration opportunities, and applying for visas and permits. Fearful parents heard about the British and Dutch rescue intervention through the Jewish community. Recognising the danger and the suffocating threat of the Nazis, they went to great efforts to secure their children's names on the list guaranteeing a place on a transport. The demand was naturally high and the process extremely selective – and arguably exclusive. Applicants were judged according to specific criteria: 'Dringlichkeit', 'Zukunftspotenzial und die psychische und sozial Integrationsfähigkeit der Kinder' and Kinder who looked more 'Aryan' – or inconspicuously Jewish – were preferred.[100] Problematically, although older boys, aged between fifteen and seventeen, were in the greatest danger, younger girls between seven and ten years old were ideally preferred by potential foster parents in Britain.[101]

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[95] Hammel, 'Child Refugees Forever?', p.135.

[96] See Marion Kaplan, *Der Mut zum Überleben. Jüdische Frauen und ihre Familien in Nazideutschland* (Berlin: Aufbau, 2001), pp.140–156.

[97] Marion A. Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p.45.

[98] Fast, p.10.

[99] Sherman, p.168.

The trains full of the 'chosen' children, who had gained a place on the block visa list, departed most commonly at night. Parents often had to face their terrible, heart-breaking goodbyes away from the station platform and the children boarded the train with a tag displaying their identification number and a small suitcase packed with sentimental, not monetary, valuables.[102] The children, often depending on their age, were likely to have been daunted, and parents may have offered a final comfort by encouraging their children to think of it as an adventure, reassuring them that they would join them shortly in Britain. The journey, whilst perceived by some as an adventure, was a long and frightening experience for the majority – particularly when trains were halted at border stations by the SS who walked through the trains, asked questions, and searched through the children's possessions. A large number of first-hand accounts express the feeling of joy and relief upon leaving German territory and passing into the Netherlands, where the Kinder were handed hot drinks and food through the train windows.[103]

On arrival in England, children were subjected to medical examinations and their documents were validated by customs officials.[104] Children who were not greeted by a new guardian were collected by the RCM, supported by charitable funds, and either housed together in hostels such as in Willesden Lane or accommodated in holiday camps near Harwich, such as camps in Dovercourt, Broadstairs, and Lowestoft.[105] The Kinder were looked after in these communal camps and hostels until a foster family or a place in a boarding school or hostel had been arranged.

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[100] Curio, 'Flucht, Fürsorge und Anpassungsdruck', p.64f.
[101] Hammel, 'Child Refugees Forever', p.134f.
[102] *Ibid.*, p.134.
[103] Fast, p.33.
[104] *Ibid.*, p.35.

Although extremely lucky to have escaped the climate of terror on the continent, many Kinder suffered a difficult few months: the camp accommodation was not built for the bitter winter weather. This period was also emotionally tough; not only were a new country and language confusing, but prospective foster parents would also visit the camps and choose a child – an experience described by many as a 'cattle market' – which understandably placed the children under emotional stress.[106]

The age of the child was a key factor in how they adjusted to a new life in Britain. Children, it has been suggested, are easier to acculturate than adults and Ursula Seeber explains: '[j]e jünger das Kind bei seiner Emigration gewesen war, desto weniger wurde die Last der Doppelexistenz zur Kenntnis genommen, desto schneller glückte die Anglisierung'.[107] In contrast, adult refugees and exiles often found themselves torn between the country of safety and their *Heimatland*; a predicament poignantly illustrated by exiles such as Hilde Spiel and Alfred Kerr.[108] The older refugee was forced to watch as the perilous situation developed, accurately foreseeing the fate of their loved ones who had remained on mainland Europe. The Kinder, unaware at the time, often had to face this reality years later, when the horrors of the Holocaust came to light. The generation of Kindertransportees has consequently been referred to as the '1.5

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[105] *Ibid.*, p.36.

[106] Göpfert, 'Kindertransport: Geschichte und Erinnerung', p.36; Fast, p.41.

[107] Ursula Seeber, 'Wo andere Leute wohnen. Kinder- und Jugendliteratur des österreichischen Exils in Großbritannien', in *German-speaking Exiles in Great Britain: Yearbook of The Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies*, 1 (1999), ed. by Ian Wallace, pp.199–217 (p.204).

[108] Hilde Spiel, *Welche Welt ist meine Welt?: Erinnerungen 1946–1989* (Munich: List, 1990); Alfred Kerr, *Ich kam nach England. Ein Tagebuch aus dem Nachlass*, ed. by Walter Huder and Thomas Koebner (Bonn: Bouvier, 1979).

generation'.[109] First suggested by Susan Rubin Suleiman, this reflects their young age when moving to Britain.

The Kindertransportees, once allocated a foster family, were dispersed over Great Britain; it has been noted that '[t]he British public's generosity was overwhelming'.[110] Despite this generosity, a clash in culture and language was not uncommon, and some Kinder experienced extreme homesickness, which they were unable to express in a new language. Some of the placements with foster families were not always compatible, and foster parents may also have found it difficult to adjust to the new addition in the home.

In the years after the war, several criticisms emerged. One, for example, is that Jewish children were placed in non-Jewish families and were unable to practise their faith. There was simply a lack of Jewish families – especially Orthodox families – who volunteered to foster a child as there was only a relatively small Jewish community in 1930s Britain.[111] Yet, even placements with Jewish families were not unproblematic. New guardians may have been disillusioned at the arrival of their charge; expecting a lower-class child of dedicated Jewish faith, instead, many families received a well-dressed child from a middle-class, assimilated Jewish family, whose knowledge of Jewish traditions was patchy.

A second criticism is that some children, who had been accustomed to a middle-class lifestyle in Austria or Germany, were now treated as cheap labour and household help by their foster parents.[112] The Central Committee of the RCM, who were in charge of monitoring the well-being of the Kinder and expected to maintain a 'system of inspection' was, it appears, reluctant to address these issues. Their main priority was finding any family for the child refugee, which would free up space for new arrivals from the continent.

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[109] Susan Rubin Suleiman, 'The 1.5 Generation: George Perec's *W or the Memory of Childhood*', in *Teaching the Representation of the Holocaust*, ed. by Marianne Hirsch and Irene Kacandes (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2004), pp.372–385.

[110] Fast, p.45.

[111] *Ibid.*, p.43; Curio, 'Flucht, Fürsorge und Anpassungsdruck', p.67.

[112] Fast, p.50.

Third, in the few worst-case scenarios, the Kinder were subjected to emotional, physical, and sexual abuse at the hands of foster families.[113] Jennifer Craig-Norton's recent publication examines the role and actions of these carers and illuminates how these child refugees had diverging experiences when living with guardians.[114] She concludes that it is difficult to 'provide a critical evaluation of caretaking', and that issues of selective memory often affect how the Kindertransportees present their guardians in their accounts.[115]

Local committees, who reported regularly to the Central Office, were accountable for the maintenance and welfare of the children whether in hostels or homes, and communicated with local authorities to arrange education and training.[116] Attending a local school provided some normality and routine for the child refugees and simultaneously exposed them to the English language and culture. As Seeber notes, children adapted quickly to English, forgetting idiomatic German.[117] The normal school-leaving age was at fourteen or fifteen and the refugees were encouraged to attended vocational courses (nursing, tailoring, war work or skilled labour).[118]

Assimilation was of key importance to the refugee organisations, to the extent that it has been argued that the RCM aimed to make Kinder invisible by encouraging integration and dispersing them over Great Britain, so as to avoid arousing anti-Semitic attitudes in British society.[119] A positive perception of these child refugees by society would also further encourage more citizens to volunteer as hosts which would enable more transports of vulnerable children from the continent. The preservation of the child's language or culture was not of high priority to the British organisations. The focus on integration throws light on the paradox inherent to the immigration of child refugees as summarised by Claudia Curio: '[d]ie Kinder sollten so schnell wie möglich anglisiert werden, obwohl ihr Aufenthalt ja zunächst nur als vorübergehend gedacht war'.[120]

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[113] *Ibid.*, p.52.
[114] Craig-Norton, *Contesting*, pp.92–175.
[115] *Ibid.*, p.168.
[116] *I Came Alone*, p.405.
[117] Seeber, p.201.
[118] Craig-Norton, *Contesting*, p.159.
[119] Curio, 'Flucht, Fürsorge und Anpassungsdruck', p.70.

Feelings of pleasure in adjusting to life in Britain were often accompanied by feelings of guilt. This may hold true especially at moments when the fate of their loved ones slipped further away from the Kindertransportee's consciousness, as the children were preoccupied with their daily lives and social integration. Throughout the early stages of their new life in Britain, many Kinder were still in contact with their family and they were still able to gain comfort in letters delivered by the Red Cross after the outbreak of war. These letters provided an essential link to their Jewish identity. In some fortunate cases, parents made their way to Britain before the outbreak of war. The psychological impact of the Kindertransport, the separation from one's parents at such a crucial developmental stage, the lack of stability and certainty, and sense of alienation and confusion felt by many of the Kinder is hard to measure or generalise. As a result of the integration process, it is possible that many children had to mediate conflicting identities.

Wartime Britain also posed several additional difficulties for the Kinder. After the illusion of the Phoney War had passed and the air raids on Britain began, a number of Kindertransportees were evacuated from London, along with other British children who lived in large cities vulnerable to attack. Once again, the Kinder were uprooted and expected to settle into a new place with new carers. Not only was this an upsetting and often frightening experience, the Kinder were also troubled by an ongoing fear for their families who were still in Europe – a fear heightened by the sporadic arrival of letters, which eventually often ceased altogether.

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[120] *Ibid.*, p.66.

Unlike British children however, several male and a few female Kinder, who had reached the age of sixteen by 1940 faced a further difficulty: the British internment of 'enemy aliens'. Fear and suspicion about fifth column activity and espionage were heightened immediately following the fall of Norway in April 1940 and the identity and loyalty of continentals was called into question.[121] This internment represented another psychologically upsetting upheaval. Viewed as a misguided and embarrassing parliamentary decision, Richard Dove describes the internment of 'aliens' as 'a subject which remains largely hidden from history' and is often treated as 'a regrettable minor episode, a footnote to the main narrative of Britain at war'.[122]

Commencing during the first week of October 1939, 120 tribunals were held across Britain in which individuals were categorised according to the risk they posed.[123] Most refugees were placed into category C and remained initially at liberty as they were likely to be loyal to the British cause.[124] Following on from the earlier round up of 2,000 category A men (who were thought likely to support the German war efforts), a further 2,200 category B men and 3,000 women were interned in May 1940.[125] Male category C enemy aliens, including some Kindertransportees, were then subjected to mass arrests from 24 June 1940.[126] By the end of the rounding up of so-called 'enemy aliens', some 25,000 men and 4,000 women had been interned.[127]

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[121] See Peter Gillman and Leni Gillman, *"Collar the lot!": How Britain Interned and Expelled its Wartime Refugees* (London: Quartet Books, 1980), p.85f.
[122] Richard Dove, 'A matter which touches the good name of this country', in *'Totally Un-English'? Britain's Internment of 'Enemy Aliens' in Two World Wars*: *Yearbook of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies*, 7 (2005), ed. by Richard Dove, pp.11–15 (p.11).
[123] Gillman and Gillman, pp.42–44.
[124] *Ibid.*, p.43f.
[125] Francois Lafitte, *The Internment of Aliens* (London: Penguin Books, 1988), pp.70–73.

For many, internment was a short-lived experience, and the release of category C aliens began in early August 1940.[128] By 1941, the majority of internees had been released, thanks partly to a change in public opinion following the death of hundreds of deported internees and prisoners of war (POWs) when the *SS Arandora Star*, on route to Canada, was torpedoed.[129] For many internees, volunteering for the Pioneer Corps was often a prerequisite for release from the internment camp. As Kushner and Cesarani note, 'by August 1942 only about 5,000 persons were still in custody, of whom only a few hundred were refugees'.[130]

In 1945 roughly 60,000 refugee Jews remained in Britain.[131] The end of the war also posed additional challenges. New information on the Nazi atrocities, including the concentration camps, the scale of the Holocaust, and the fate of European Jewry, was revealed. As already noted, among the six million Jews who perished were many parents of Kindertransportees.[132] In the cases where parents had survived, the trauma of the Holocaust and the separation of the parent and child at such an early and formative age had irreversible effects: both the parents and children had become strangers to each other.[133] Reunions with the parents could therefore be both upsetting and unnerving, yet could also be joyful occasions. For others, whilst dealing with the realisation that their loved ones had died, the Kinder also had to consider their future options.

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[126] Gillman and Gillman, p.173.

[127] Charmian Brinson, '"In the Exile of Internment" or "Von Versuchen aus einer Not eine Tugend zu machen": German-speaking women interned by the British during the Second World War', in *Politics and Culture in Twentieth Century Germany*, ed. by William Niven and James Jordan (Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2003), pp.63–87 (p.63).

[128] Gillman and Gillman, p.231.

[129] London, p.170.

[130] Tony Kushner and David Cesarani, 'Alien Internment in Britain during the Twentieth Century: an Introduction', *The Internment of Aliens in Twentieth Century Britain*, ed. by David Cesarani and Tony Kushner (London: Frank Cass and Company, 1993), pp.1–24 (p.14).

[131] London, p.11.

[132] 54% of Kinder's parents are estimated to have been killed. 'Kindertransport Survey', *AJR* <http://www.ajr.org.uk/kindersurvey> [accessed 06 July 2017].

[133] Ruth Barnett, *Person of No Nationality: a Story of Childhood Separation, Loss and Recovery* (London: David Paul, 2010).

On 15 November 1945, the naturalisation of refugees was discussed in parliament, whereby it was communicated by the then Home Secretary, James Chuter Ede, that priority would be given to individuals who had served in the British forces and proved their loyalty, assimilability, and value to British society.[134] It came as a relief to many when British citizenship was offered from 1946.[135] Yet, once again, this offer of naturalisation came with the expectation that refugees, including the Kindertransportees, conform to and uphold British values. Estimated figures suggest that by 1950, 15% of Kinder had emigrated to the USA; 7% to Palestine or Israel; 4% to Australia and other countries; and 60% remained in the UK.[136] It is worth noting that, in several interviews, the Kinder who remained considered themselves to be British, yet struggled to identify as English.[137]

On the surface, the Kinder appeared to lead normal lives; the majority married and raised families. However, the former refugees often had to deal with haunting memories and feelings of guilt and grief. The extent of their loss and their disrupted childhoods often became clear only when raising their own children. Despite their troubled childhoods and disrupted education, Kindertransportees contributed to British society in notable ways – a topic which has been highly emphasised in recent years.[138] Amongst the Kinder rescued by British efforts include an MP, Lord Dubs, several Nobel Prize winners such as the chemist Walter Kohn, a number of authors and artists, and many 'normal' citizens who have contributed in smaller ways to society and to the healthcare sector in particular.[139]

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[134] London, p.258.
[135] Hodge, p.41.
[136] Curio, 'Flucht, Fürsorge und Anpassungsdruck', p.62.
[137] Marietta Bearman and Erna Woodgate, 'The Challenges of Settling Down', in *Changing Countries*, ed. by Malet and Grenville, pp.217–246 (p.244f).
[138] Curio, 'Flucht, Fürsorge und Anpassungsdruck', p.68.

## 2.3) Kindertransport Historiography

A brief review of the existing literature on the history of the Kindertransport will now be undertaken, and a summary of the scholarly developments will help to situate the Kindertransport in the wider field of *Exilforschung*. Scholarship on the Kindertransport has mainly grown out of Great Britain's (rather late) initial contribution to the field of Exile Studies in the 1980s, which was characterised by an interest in 'antifascism research followed by Holocaust research'.[140]

Many scholars, in their often chronologically organised reports, outline the history of the Kindertransport within a larger study of refugee immigration to Britain, focusing on the logistics and organisation of the rescue operation, and the reception and placement of the children. A. J. Sherman's comprehensive 1973 account of British immigration, *Island Refuge*, marks the lay of the land in British immigration policy and documents the British response to the Jewish plight.[141] Whilst Sherman effectively situates the immigration of refugees in its wider political, economic, and social context, he does not attempt to address the social or psychological adjustment of the refugees. Concerned with similar issues of immigration and life in Britain, Gerhard Hirschfeld's edited work, *Exile in Great Britain: Refugees from Hitler's Germany*,[142] and similarly Werner E. Mosse's *Second chance*: *two centuries of German-speaking Jews in the*

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[139] Fast, p.186; Craig-Norton, *Contesting*, p.13.

[140] Alexander Stephan, 'Introduction', in *Exile and Otherness: New Approaches to the Experience of the Nazi Refugees*, Exile Studies: an Interdisciplinary Series, 11, ed. by Alexander Stephan (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2005), pp.9–20 (p.9).

[141] Sherman, *Island Refuge* (London: Paul Elek Ltd., 1973).

[142] *Exile in Great Britain: Refugees from Hitler's Germany*, ed. by Gerhard Hirschfeld (Leamington Spa: Berg, 1984).

*United Kingdom*,[143] are comprised of chapters from various scholars who focus on Britain's historical attitude towards Jewish immigration, specific aspects of the refugee experience and their adaption to British society.

The founding of the Research Centre for Germans and Austrians in Exile in Aberdeen in 1988 reflected a growing interest in *Exilforschung*. This interest, however, was rather belated when compared with the earlier movements (from the early 1970s onwards) in Germany and Austria.[144] The Research Centre later merged with the London Research Group for German and Austrian Exile Studies in 1995 to become the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies. It has since facilitated the study of such areas of exile including: German, Austrian, and Czech refugees and their reception in Britain, their experiences, achievements and contribution to their academic disciplines, exile, politics, culture, literature, and the performing arts.[145]

Whilst such research areas offer a broad coverage of the exile experience, it has often been noted that these numerous subsections of *Exilforschung* – particularly on the continent – were originally dominated by studies on the famous, renowned, and celebrated exiles, or those who later contributed to their host country's society or culture. Consequently, Kushner recognises that 'until recently, what might loosely be termed the "ordinary refugee" from Nazism, representing in reality the large majority has been relatively neglected'.[146]

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[143] *Second* Chance: *Two* Centuries of German-speaking Jews in the United Kingdom, ed. by Werner E. Mosse, Julius Carlebach, Gerhard Hirschfeld, Aubrey Newman, Arnold Paucker, and Peter G. J. Pulzer (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1991).

[144] *Exilforschungen im historischen Prozess: Exilforschung. Ein internationales Jahrbuch*, 30 (2012), ed. by Claus-Dieter Krohn and Lutz Winckler. See in particular 'Vorwort', pp.vii–xiv; Manfred Briegel, 'Zur Rolle der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft', pp.114–130; Primus-Heinz Kucher, 'Exilforschung in Österrich', pp.146–165; Charmian Brinson and Anthony Grenville, 'Entwicklung der Exilforschung in Großbritannien', pp.210–222.

[145] See all volumes of *The Yearbook of The Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies*.

[146] Tony Kushner, 'Finding Refugee Voices', in *Political Exile and Exile Politics in Britain after 1933: The Yearbook of The Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies*, 12 (2011), ed. by Anthony Grenville and Andrea Reiter, pp.121–139 (p.121).

The experience of the Kindertransportees has often been examined alongside the earlier refugees who arrived in Britain as adults. Marion Berghahn's ground-breaking study, *Continental Britons: German-Jewish Refugees from Nazi Germany*, first published in 1984, was the first study to examine the assimilation of German-Jewish refugees across three generations.[147] Although published some years ago, this study nevertheless remains a very valuable project which highlights patterns and trends in how issues of national and ethnic identity are considered across three generations of Jewish refugees from Germany and Austria. This pioneering series of interviews was concerned with painting a more detailed picture of the lives of the refugees over the initial post-war years and the years following, examining the often complicated process of assimilation. As Berghahn's study observed the assimilation of earlier waves of refugees – those who arrived as adults prior to 1939 – the Kindertransportees are only briefly touched upon. Berghahn suggests that the majority of the sixteen interviewed Kindertransportees considered their initial years in Britain as miserable, with only two feeling happy in their new families.[148]

Marian Malet's and Anthony Grenville's edited book, *Changing Countries*, is a valuable contribution to the relatively few academic books about refugees from Hitler who fled Germany and Austria and arrived in Britain.[149] First-hand accounts offered by former 34 child refugees, including four Kindertransportees, depict the psychological, emotional, and social effects of the Kindertransport. Differing from contributions by Sherman and the later study by Louise London who look at the generalised experience from a socio-historical perspective, *Changing Countries* offers an academic analysis which reflects on the personal experiences and recollections of refugees.

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[147] Marion Berghahn, *Continental Britons: German-Jewish Refugees from Nazi Germany*, 4th edn (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2007).
[148] *Ibid.*, p.111.
[149] *Changing Countries*, ed. by Marian Malet and Anthony Grenville (London: Libris, 2002).

The Oral History Project, of which this book is a resulting product, commenced in 1994 and was conducted by the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies. Its aim was to preserve original reminiscences and enhance the understanding of the everyday lives of the refugee in their host country. The question of assimilation flows through the text and the way in which the refugees reflect on their childhood and their pre-war life, their journey to safety, and their lives in Britain during and after the war is examined.

A further project, which has collected a wealth of rich personal refugee experiences, is the filmed oral history resource 'The AJR Refugee Voices Audio-Visual Holocaust Testimony Archive', directed by Dr Anthony Grenville and Dr Bea Lewkowicz.[150] This digitised and accessible oral history archive consists of 244 filmed interviews with Jewish survivors and refugees from Germany and Austria who came to Britain – including 34 Kindertransportees. More recently, in 2019, the AJR has made use of this archive to create a public podcast series on the Kindertransport.[151]

This ongoing Refugee Voices project gives space for the former refugees to self-narrate their experiences, whilst their gestures, movements, and expressions are recorded. Analysis of these interviews and the accompanying comprehensive database reveals the long-term effects of the refugee experience on both the individual and their descendants. The use of oral testimony and interviews has allowed researchers to gain an insight into the hardships inherent to the more common refugee experience and illuminate everyday life in exile, the daily social and financial difficulties, and the social life and activities of the refugees. These contributions have enabled scholars to construct a delicate and rich tapestry of refugee voices.[152]

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[150] Bea Lewkowicz, 'Refugee Voices (The AJR Audio-Visual Testimony Archive): a New Resource for the Study of the Kindertransport', in *The Kindertransport to Britain 1938/39: Yearbook*, ed. by Hammel and Lewkowicz, pp.239–246; 'AJR Refugee Voices – The Testimony Archive of the Association of Jewish Refugees', *AJR*, <http://www.ajrrefugeevoices.org.uk> [accessed 15 December 2019].

[151] 'Podcasts', *AJR Refugee Voices* (2019), <https://www.ajrrefugeevoices.org.uk/podcast> [accessed 26 November 2019].

In 2007 a Kindertransport survey 'Making New Lives in Britain' was developed with the aim of creating an archive and database of the Kindertransportees' experience.[153] This ambitious project focused on collecting the experiences of the Kindertransportees as their own individual group of refugees. The extremely positive response rate of 70% – 1,025 main questionnaires and 343 supplementary questionnaires were returned – has allowed researchers to create a more detailed picture of the Kindertransportees' lives. As Hammel notes, this survey has provided a new understanding of the lives of Kinder and the conditions in which they arrived in Britain.[154] The study has also rectified previously held assumptions: it had been assumed that 90% of the rescued children never saw one of their parents again, however, according to the fairly representative sample, it is more likely that around 60% never saw one of their parents and 41% never saw both parents again. Further analysis reveals that 31% of Kinder arrived with siblings and 63% found relatives after the war.[155]

An earlier study by Rebekka Göpfert also concentrated on the group of Kindertransportees. Her study, *Der jüdische Kindertransport von Deutschland nach England 1938/39: Geschichte und Erinnerung* (1999),[156] looks at the Kindertransport in its political context, and presents the impact on the Kinder to this present day. Göpfert questions the subjectivity and reliability of interviews, memory work, and the human ability to remember, touching on the workings of psychoanalytic defence mechanisms. Her study also highlights a difference between how the Kindertransport has been dealt with in US and UK. Her critical questioning of the processes of national memory and national appropriation of the Kindertransport story is also present in more recent scholarship.

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[152] See Andrea Hammel, 'Online Database of British Archival Resources Relating to German-Speaking Refugees, 1933 bis 1950 (BARGE): Ein Projektbericht', in *Kindheit und Jugend im Exil*, ed. by Krohn, et al., pp.73–78. The database consists of manuscripts, letters, diaries, video and audio interviews, and autobiographical texts.

[153] Hermann Hirschberger, 'The AJR Kindertransport Survey: Making New Lives in Britain', in *The Kindertransport to Britain 1938/39: Yearbook*, ed. by Hammel and Lewkowicz, pp.247–253.

[154] Hammel, 'Child Refugees Forever?', p.139.

[155] 'Kindertransport Survey', *AJR* <http://www.ajr.org.uk/kindersurvey> [accessed 06 July 2017].

[156] Rebekka Göpfert, *Der jüdische Kindertransport von Deutschland nach England 1938/39: Geschichte und Erinnerung* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1999).

Over the past twenty years, the child's experience has been of great scholarly interest and the Kindertransport has grown to constitute its own research field, and consequently it has been examined through a variety of academic and theoretical lenses. In 2006, Kushner remarks on how Exile Studies has recently witnessed an intensity of memory work especially with a focus on child refugees.[157] The Kindertransportees now belong to the group which has attracted significant attention in recent Exile Studies, perhaps, as Deborah Hodge remarks, because refugee children 'often [contain] both the best and the worst of the refugee experience'.[158]

The Kindertransport is approached by a diverse range of scholars in the 2003 German publication, *Die Kindertransporte 1938/1939: Rettung und Integration*, edited by Wolfgang Benz, Claudia Curio and Andrea Hammel.[159] The 2006 publication of the *Exilforschung* Yearbook, titled *Kindheit und Jugend im Exil – Ein Generationenthema*,[160] addresses commonly recurring themes in exile such as refugee reception and integration. The Kindertransport frequently makes an appearance in the Yearbooks published by The Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies, in which both celebrated and 'normal' refugees, and various aspects of their lives in Britain, are explored.

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[157] Kushner, *Refugees*, p.10.
[158] Hodge, p.5.
[159] *Die Kindertransporte 1938/1939: Rettung und Integration*, ed. by Wolfgang Benz, Claudia Curio and Andrea Hammel (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 2003).
[160] *Kindheit und Jugend im Exil – Ein Generationenthema*: *Exilforschung. Ein internationales Jahrbuch*, 24 (2006), ed. by Claus-Dieter Krohn, Erwin Rotermund, Lutz Winkler, and Wulf Koepke.

Andrea Hammel and Bea Lewkowicz's co-edited Yearbook, *The Kindertransport to Britain 1938/39: New Perspectives* (2012), offers a prime example of how research on the Kindertransport has recently been approached from various angles.[161] This text illustrates how Kindertransport research now exists as an independent area of research in its own right, yet is not isolated from the greater context of Jewish refugees or British immigration, and is fertile ground for future research from different research approaches.

Hammel and Lewkowicz's diverse volume, consisting of seventeen articles, examines the Kindertransport from previously unexplored perspectives and introduces many debates and areas of uncertainty, such as: the complicated nature of memorialisation and myth especially surrounding public figures such as Nicholas Winton; the fate of the Kinder once in Britain; and the psychological process of remembering and forgetting.[162] Among these articles, are contributions from former Kindertransportees and several articles also focus on the fictional portrayal of the Kinder and which are mentioned in the introduction to this research.[163]

Alongside the deepening understanding of the Kindertransport experience – with the help of personal accounts – which has emerged over the last two decades, a more critical tone which challenges the often celebratory views of the Kindertransport has developed. Louise London offers one of the most comprehensive and critical assessments of this British operation and her text provides a convincing counterargument to Britain's previously hailed generosity. *Whitehall and the Jews*

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[161] *The Kindertransport to Britain 1938/39: New Perspectives: Yearbook of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies*, 13 (2012), ed. by Andrea Hammel and Bea Lewkowicz.

[162] Referenced chapters in the above Yearbook include Craig-Norton, 'Polish *Kinder* and the Struggle for Identity', pp.29–46; Buresova, 'Nicholas Winton, Man and Myth: a Czech Perspective', pp.47–58; Simone Gigliotti and Monica Tempian, 'From Europe to the Antipodes', pp. 103–124; Edward Timms, 'The Ordeals of *Kinder* and Evacuees in Comparative Perspective', pp.125–140.

[163] Ruth Barnett, 'Therapeutic Aspects of Working Through the Trauma of the Kindertransport Experience', pp.157–171; Lorena Silos Ribas, 'The Experience of Space in Lore Segal's *Other People's Houses*', pp.205–217.

(2000)[164] exposes the limitations tied to Britain's offer of rescue and refuge. Perhaps her most damning criticism – one which haunts the Kindertransport narrative – is: '[a]dmission saved the children's lives. Exclusion sealed the fate of many of their parents'.[165]

Equally critical of Britain's actions is Claudia Curio, whose research into the child selection process in the 2006 article 'Flucht, Fürsorge und Anpassungsdruck: Die Rettung von Kindern nach Großbritannien 1938/9', reveals how authorities discarded the applications belonging to children with scars and easily treatable chronic illnesses (asthma, for example) and that the British RCM was often unwilling to compromise.[166] Dampening her argument somewhat, Curio does recognise that no one could have predicted 'das Ausmaß der Vernichtung'.[167] Anthony Grenville's 2010 study, *Jewish Refugees from Germany and Austria in Britain 1933–1970: Their image in AJR Information*, represents a middle ground; Grenville is sympathetic to Britain's difficult position, yet admits that refugees were not always warmly received.[168]

Over the last few years, the critical tone has evolved into an interrogation of the memory and remembrance of the Kindertransport that characterises recent scholarly approaches. Caroline Sharples's article 'The Kindertransport in British Historical Memory' highlights the congratulatory self-constructed British narrative which will be discussed later in this chapter.[169] Similarly, Jennifer Craig-Norton's recent 2019 publication, *Kindertransport: Contesting Memory*, destabilises preconceptions and accepted narratives of the Kindertransport by questioning the success and intentions of the organisations, carers, and brings to light more atypical Kindertransport experiences.[170] Similarly, Andrea Hammel questions the extent to which the Kindertransport should be described as a 'success'.[171] This thesis can be situated amongst such interrogative studies as it aims to highlight how a representation and resulting understanding of the Kindertransport is constructed by the conventions of a specific literary genre and must therefore be read critically.

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[164] London, *Whitehall and the Jews 1933–1948: British Immigration Policy, Jewish Refugees and the Holocaust* (2000).
[165] *Ibid.*, p.118
[166] Curio, 'Flucht, Fürsorge und Anpassungsdruck', pp.62–72; see also Claudia Curio and Toby Axelrod, '"Invisible" Children: The Selection and Integration Strategies of Relief Organizations', *Shofar*, 23:1 (2004), 41–56.
[167] Curio, 'Flucht, Fürsorge und Anpassungsdruck', p.69f.
[168] Anthony Grenville, *Jewish Refugees from Germany and Austria in Britain 1933–1970: Their image in AJR Information* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2010).
[169] Sharples, 'The Kindertransport in British Historical Memory', pp.15–27.

This short review shows how scholarship looks towards the lived Kindertransport experience for an alternative to historical research which places the Kindertransport in the wider context of immigration to Britain. It also demonstrates a critical turn in research, which questions the processes of how we remember the Kindertransport today.

## 2.4) Individual, Collective, and National Memory

The question of how the Kindertransportees have come to remember and represent their own experience (as an individual and collective group) will now be summarised. Their self-representation is arguably affected by: the increased public interest, approaching the past from a later age, expectations of gratitude, and whether accounts were edited together into a collected volume or published independently. The way in which this self-representation is at odds with the self-congratulatory British narrative will then be explored.

In the decades directly following the Second World War, the child refugees – who had in the meantime become young adults – may have considered it unnecessary or too painful to recount all aspects of their experience. Kindertransportees only began to reflect on their experiences once having children of their own, and some only when the majority of the concentration camp survivors had passed away.[172] Karen Gershon's collective memoir, *We Came as Children* (1966), arguably marks the first record dedicated completely to the Kindertransport experience, in which 234 child refugees contributed their stories.[173] Especially when compared to later edited memoirs, this is a particularly critical account of the Kindertransport experience, which exposes raw emotions and suffering. Arguably, as the Kindertransport became a topic of public conversation twenty years later, this critical tone has been softened.

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[170] Craig-Norton, *Contesting*, p.14.

[171] Andrea Hammel, 'The 1938 Kindertransport saved 10,000 children but it's hard to describe it as purely a success', *The Conversation*, 22 November 2018, <http://theconversation.com/the-1938-kindertransport-saved-10-000-children-but-its-hard-to-describe-it-as-purely-a-success-107299?fbclid=IwAR2PjZ3bXuu8ju_6_saPvq5DdeFXiwdAj4r7UfmjdXIOroI43PM3GnsICe8> [accessed 28 October 2019].

Judith Tydor Baumel-Schwartz explains that, as the 1970s progressed, 'the Holocaust hierarchy broadened to include refugees from Hitler, many of the former child refugees began to experience a sense of belonging to a larger story'.[174] However, it took yet another two decades until those who arrived on the children's transports began to identify as 'Kinder'. Many Kindertransportees first realised their identity as a 'Kind' as a result of the 1989 Kindertransport reunion. For many years, their story of childhood separation and life as a refugee went untold, and in some cases even sons and daughters were not fully away of their parents' past.

Many reasons may have prevented the Kindertransportees from writing memoirs before 1989. Having arrived as child refugees, they spent their adult life putting down roots in Great Britain or other countries, and perhaps tried to detach themselves from their childhood on the continent. David Cesarani, in his introduction to the collective memoir, *Into the Arms of Strangers* (2000), explains:

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[172] Göpfert, 'Kindertransport: Geschichte und Erinnerung', p.39.

[173] *We Came as Children*, ed. by Karen Gershon (London: Papermac, 1989). First published by Gollancz in 1966.

[174] Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, p.229.

> [i]t took decades for the world to come to terms with the Holocaust, a delayed reaction that hardly helped the children of the Kindertransport to confront their past. Instead, they erected barriers against the pain of loss and separation and busied themselves building successful, prosperous and productive lives.[175]

This can be observed in the memoirs examined in Chapter Three, in which the Kinder explain how they often repressed their childhood pain and only reencountered this when searching for answers decades later. The fiftieth-year anniversary of the Kindertransport marked a turning point in the lives of many Kindertransportees and, after decades of near silence, the former child refugees realised they had all been a part of something bigger than they had previously comprehended and essentially realised they had a story to tell. This reunion attracted significant media attention and helped to '[launch] the story of the Kindertransports into the public consciousness on an international scale'.[176] It was an 'opportunity for the *Kinder* to legitimize their Holocaust-related experiences, an experience of collective identity [...] as a response to their feelings of dislocation, isolation, and atomization'.[177]

As a collective group, the Kindertransportees were often a huge support for each other and crucial in the process of coming to terms with their experiences. As Halbwachs proposes, collective memory is a socially constructed notion comprised of individual memories.[178] The Kindertransportees are likely to have shared their memories in the first instance, rather belatedly, with other child refugees at reunions such as the one held in 1989.

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[175] David Cesarani, 'Introduction', in Mark Jonathan Harris and Deborah Oppenheimer, *Into the Arms of Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport* (London: Bloomsbury, 2000), p.18.

[176] Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, p.230.

[177] *Ibid.*

[178] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed. by Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p.22.

In the case of the Kindertransportees, individual and collective memory are closely intertwined; the individual stories which lie within the collective story of the Kinder have revealed rich and diverse narratives. Collective identity – explained by Jan Assmann as the image that a group constructs of itself[179] – can be observed on a small scale in the group of Kinder. The first Kindertransport reunion in 1989, which was organised by former Kindertransportee Bertha Leverton, demonstrated 'an expression of the *Kinder's* need to understand their present and shape the place that the story of the Kindertransports would have in their future by connecting it with a larger body of former *Kinder* who had shared their past'.[180]

Having found a new identity and gained a greater understanding of their experiences, a significant number of Kindertransportees began to record their past in written or verbal form. In light of this, many Kinder accounts were collectively compiled during the 1980s and 1990s and published together in edited works such as *Into the Arms of Strangers* (2000) and *I Came Alone* (1990). The editor of the latter, Bertha Leverton, defends the repetition in the collected stories by clarifying 'our experiences were often identical'.[181]

Although revealing how the child refugees had comparable memories of their journey to Britain, collective memoirs should be examined critically as accounts are often subjected to an imposed editing process. Either due to the effects of time, which had caused more negative memories or feelings to be numbed, or because of the public interest in this unprecedented rescue, the accounts in these collected volumes are more positive than those found in Gershon's collection.

Kushner, who has criticised the memorialisation of the Kindertransport along with Curio and London, recognises the selectivity present in Kindertransport memory publications and suggests edited collections of memoirs 'have been shaped to meet expectations of conformity and assimilation, thereby presenting the migrant group as a success story'.[182] Kushner claims some collections have been strongly edited to remove any less favourable elements of the plot – such as abuse by guardians and the murder of the parents – which may upset or unsettle the British reader.[183]

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[179] Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1992), p.132.
[180] Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, p.229.
[181] *I Came Alone*, p.8.

Instead, these collected memoirs display feelings of gratitude and emphasise the success of the Kinder and their contribution to British society. For example, in the collective memoir, *I Came Alone*, Kindertransportee, George Bendori, remarks how he will be 'forever grateful' to a 'gallant and righteous people', and Ruth Kagan also expresses her 'profound gratitude'.[184] Gratitude, although a prevailing trope, is problematic. This is at odds with earlier personal accounts from the 1960s: disturbingly – as Kushner highlights – one contributor to Gershon's earlier and more condemning collection explains how gratitude was forced upon her: 'I shall always be grateful *now* for what was done for us then, although I wish it had not been rammed down my throat so much'.[185]

Individual memoirs, including the four explored in the next chapter, address both upsetting moments and feelings of gratitude; the memoirists endeavour to make their sense of loss and fortune compatible. Supporting this, Jennifer Craig-Norton in her recent publication, *The Kindertransport: Contesting Memory*, argues that the 'outpouring of memory' in the past twenty-five years 'testifies to the complex and varied experiences of the Kinder, and while it records expressions of gratitude and fulfillment, it also recounts hardships, shattered dreams, mistreatment, imposed silences, and lifelong trauma and loss'.[186]

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[182] Tony Kushner, *The Battle of Britishness: Migrant Journeys, 1685 to the present* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), p.4f.

[183] Kushner, *Refugees*, pp.163–165.

[184] *I Came Alone*, pp.33, 163.

[185] Kushner, *Refugees*, p.161.

Vera Gissing's *Pearls of Childhood* (1988) illustrates the inherent conflict of the Kindertransport: the gratitude of rescue mixed with the longing for a return home. In 1941 she writes: '[s]ometimes I think it is very wrong for us to be severed so young from our country and parents. It is lovely to get to know other people and another nation, but it would be so much better to do so knowing when we shall return home'.[187] Martha Blend, in her memoir *A Child Alone* (1995), also explains how all those who have been sent away from their home have been 'deeply scarred' by this experience, yet she also admits she would have chosen to live, and escape on the Kindertransport had she been given the choice.[188]

Likewise, Edith Milton's memoir, *The Tiger in the Attic* (2005), highlights the generosity shown by her British foster family, whilst also portraying identity issues and a fractured relationship with her mother.[189] Marion Charles's *Ich war ein Glückskind* (2013) brings together the joy of rescue and horror of the Holocaust: '[e]s stimmt, uns erwartete ein freies und sicheres Leben. Aber auch Unsicherheit, Angst und Einsamkeit'.[190] Although she was '[u]nendlich dankbar' to England for offering her refuge, her heart remained heavy with thoughts of the treatment of Jews in Europe.[191] It is also important to note that more critical personal accounts of the Kindertransport do exist.[192] It is also worth considering that, although most independent memoirs address issues of trauma, repression, and emotional neglect, and are less likely to be shaped by an editor, the expectations of the memoir genre are nevertheless likely to influence the representation of the Kindertransport experience, as will be illustrated in the next chapter.

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[186] Craig-Norton, *Contesting*, p.16.

[187] Vera Gissing, *Pearls of Childhood* (London: Robson Books, 2003), p.80. First published in 1988.

[188] Martha Blend, *A Child Alone* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1995), p.164.

[189] Edith Milton, *The Tiger in the Attic* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005).

[190] Marion Charles, *Ich war ein Glückskind: Mein Weg aus Nazideutschland mit dem Kindertransport* (Munich: cbj, 2013), p.77.

[191] *Ibid.*, p.196.

[192] Barnett, *Person of No Nationality* (2010); Ruth L. David, *Child of Our Time: a young girl's flight from the Holocaust* (London: Tauris, 2003).

Despite the publication of memoirs that attest to the difficulties the memoirists faced as Kindertransportees, the celebratory British national narrative of the Kindertransport remains prevalent in the public sphere. Kushner notes that, following 1945, there were 'several decades of silence, indifference and obscurity before the recent (largely) celebratory approach has emerged'.[193] This national narrative of the Kindertransport ignores issues already explored in this chapter, that have been illuminated through scholarship and individual accounts, such as: the selection and treatment of the children, the trauma of separation, and the fates of those, including the Kinder's parents, that Britain did not allow into Britain. This national narrative also ignores the contribution made by other countries.

The durable narrative of the Kindertransport as a success story, which London argues is 'central to British history',[194] has been fuelled by both Britain's victory in the war and the perceived British historical tradition of benevolence. The Kindertransport's comfortable position in the chapter of Britain's role in the Second World War can also be seen in museums and exhibitions, such as the Imperial War Museum, where the Kindertransport is enveloped into this historical period. As Sharples ascertains, the story of the Kindertransport 'fits very neatly into the popular mythology of Britain "standing alone" against the Nazi menace during the Second World War', and has thus become a 'source of great national pride within the British historical imagination'.[195]

The British press and parliament played a large role in this self-congratulatory British narrative ever since the arrival of the Kinder. Iconic photographs of the arrival of trains full of refugee children into Liverpool Street station have been etched into the minds of the British public and Hammel observes how images of Kinder being greeted kindly by British officials projected the image of 'Britain as rescuer'.[196] Likewise, in parliamentary discussions during the 1930s, Britain's generous and kind-hearted character was often implied. For example, Commander Sir Archibald Southby, on 21 November 1938, highlighted how Britain and its parliament have 'always been sympathetic to the sufferings of persecuted people, whatever their race or faith may be'.[197]

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[193] Kushner, *Refugees*, p.10.
[194] London, p.15.
[195] Sharples, 'The Kindertransport in British Historical Memory', p.21.

Characteristics including empathy, loyalty, tolerance, and a sense of fair play were alluded to, in accordance with British tradition. It is therefore understandable that the Kindertransport rescue has become a shining example of Britain's goodwill and unwavering generosity towards the vulnerable.[198] Even today, the Kindertransport story is used as a pedagogic tool in schools and as an example to British society, carrying the moral motto 'to do good'.[199] Worryingly, this use of the Kindertransport as a moral tale 'to do good' has made its way into the public sphere and is evident in Kindertransport fiction examined in Chapter Five.

Thanks to the workings of selective memory, positive aspects of the Kindertransport experience have been filtered out and emphasised, and the traumatic elements obscured. London notes how, a 'gulf exists between the memory and history of that record'. We may remember 'the touching photographs and newsreel footage of unaccompanied Jewish refugees arriving on the Kindertransports' yet '[t]here are no such photographs of the Jewish parents left behind in Nazi Europe, and their fate has made a minimal impact'.[200]

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[196] Hammel, 'Child Refugees Forever?', p.137.

[197] Commander Sir Archibald Southby, Hansard (HC) vol. 341, col. 1457 (21 November 1938). Despite championing Britain’s record of generosity to those seeking refuge, Commander Archibald Southby was almost the only MP to speak against the Kindertransport in the debate on 21 November 1938.

[198] As previously discussed, other countries and individuals also went to great lengths to rescue children.

[199] Hodge, p.44.

[200] London, p.13.

## 2.5) The Kindertransport in the Public Sphere

It cannot be denied that Holocaust memory has entered the mass-mediated and often sensationalised cultural domain, with frequently referenced works including Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*, Spielberg's *Schindler's List*, and the TV series *Holocaust*.[201] More recently, *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* and *The Book Thief*, both of which focus on the mass genocide from a child's perspective, have captured the attention of younger audiences.[202] The Kindertransport is also becoming increasingly present in public consciousness, thanks to the popularity of Kindertransport representations, its presence in the media, and the profile of individuals involved in the Kindertransport, who have become familiar names in recent years.

With regard to popular representations in the public sphere, Mona Golabek and Lee Cohen's book, *The Children Of Willesden Lane* (2002),[203] has been converted into a stage play and is currently in the hands of the BBC and is being transformed into a feature film, following its success at St James Theatre, London.[204] The story is based on Golabek's mother and talented pianist, Lisa Jura, who came to Britain from Vienna via a Kindertransport. Additionally, Dianne Samuels's drama, *Kindertransport*,[205] has been particularly well received and continues to attract audiences nationwide. Set in two different periods of time, Samuels's play follows the main character, Eva, who comes to Britain on a Kindertransport. Samuels portrays the difficult generational relationships between Eva and her guardian, her biological mother, and her own daughter.

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[201] Claude Lanzmann, *Shoah* (1985); Steven Spielberg, *Schindler's List* (1993), *Holocaust* (1978).

[202] John Boyne, *The Boy in Striped Pyjamas* (Oxford: David Fickling Books, 2006); Markus Zusak, *The Book Thief* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005).

[203] Mona Golabek and Lee Cohen, *Children of Willesden Lane: Beyond the Kindertransport: a Memoir of Music, Love, and Survival* (New York: Warner, 2002).

[204] Emma Williams, 'BBC Films plots "The Children of Willesden Lane" adaptation', *Screen Daily*, 30 March 2016, <https://www.screendaily.com/news/bbc-films-plots-the-children-of-willesden-lane-adaptation/5102040.article> [accessed 08 August 2018].

[205] Diane Samuels, *Kindertransport* (London: Nick Hern Books, 1995).

As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, perhaps the most researched and well-known fictional creation inspired by the Kindertransport is W.G. Sebald's *Austerlitz*, published in 2001.[206] Sebald, explores issues of remembering and forgetting in his text as his protagonist, Jacques Austerlitz, uncovers his past and learns of his escape on the Kindertransport. With regards to a very different portrayal, some people may be aware that the much-loved Paddington Bear was inspired by the arrival of the Kindertransportees.

Alternatively, upon hearing the word 'Kindertransport', Nicholas Winton's trains (mentioned earlier in this chapter) often spring to mind. Whilst it is a positive thing that the work of Winton is known in the public sphere, Craig-Norton suggests that the triumphant British narrative of the Kindertransport – in which it is viewed as an heroic rescue – is 'reinforced by celebratory and uplifting films about rescuers such as Nicholas Winton'.[207] Here arises the tension between wanting to avoid perpetuations of the self-congratulatory narrative and the wish for the public to engage, which often results in a representation that inspires the viewer, rather than presents the less heart-warming reality.

When reminded of the Kindertransport, some people may instead think of Frank Meisler's statues dotted around Europe. These memorials at European train stations facilitate the commemoration of the Kindertransport on a collective level. In October 2011, the former Kindertransportee, Frank Meisler, unveiled his fifth Kindertransport statue in a series of bronze memorial statues. This statue stands in the Hook of Holland, representing the 'Channel Crossing to Life' and the final journey away from Nazi oppression. Four other statues in Danzig, Berlin, Hamburg, and London Liverpool

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[206] W. G. Sebald, *Austerlitz* (Munich: Hanser, 2001). Also arguably based on the story of Susi Bechhöfer, as argued in: Martin Modlinger, '"You can't change names and feel the same": The Kindertransport Experience of Susi Bechhöfer in W.G. Sebald's *Austerlitz*', in *The Kindertransport to Britain 1938/39*, pp.219–232.

[207] Craig-Norton, *Contesting*, p.15.

Street station represent 'The Departure', 'Trains to Life – Trains to Death', 'The Final parting', and 'The Arrival' respectively.

The Kindertransport has been increasingly mentioned over the last few years, mostly because of an urgency to capture and record memories before they are lost forever with the passing of the generation of Kindertransportees, but also because of Lord (Alf) Dubs's efforts, which will be mentioned below. This coincides with a general increased interest in the Holocaust and Second World War. This awareness is also reflected in the recent establishment of Holocaust Memorial Day in 2001, which is 'symptomatic of the awakening of the British public and of British officialdom to a period in European history, which had hitherto been looked at mainly from the perspective of the British role in the defeat of National Socialism'.[208] The Kindertransport was a particular focus of National Holocaust Memorial Day in 2003.[209]

Recently, the Kindertransport has gained media attention for several reasons. Eighty years after the first Kindertransport departure, in 2018 the German government decided to offer compensation of approximately £2250 to the Kindertransportees and other unaccompanied Jewish children, who were forced to seek refuge in another country, as a recognition of their suffering. Whilst the gesture was appreciated, many believed it was too little, too late.[210]

The 'success' of the Kindertransport – upheld by the British narrative – has also been present in today's public discussions on refugees. Many current refugees find themselves attempting by perilous means to cross Europe, putting themselves at risk of trafficking, exploitation, and death. Some former Kinder have expressed their concern for the thousands of unaccompanied children who are travelling across Europe from the Middle East in search of refuge. Labour politician and former Kindertransportee, Lord (Alf) Dubs, has been particularly active in lobbying the government. Dubs set up the 'Alf Dubs Children's Fund', through which he aims to 'carry forward the legacy of efforts by the British public, when close to 10,000 children were brought to safety from Europe'.[211]

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[208] Andrea Hammel, '"Still on Edge?" Marginality and Centrality in Exile Autobiography: Silvia Rodgers' *Red Saint, Pink Daughter*', in *German-speaking Exiles in Great Britain: Yearbook of The Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies*, 3 (2001), ed. by J.M. Ritchie, pp.177–187 (p.177).
[209] Sharples, 'The Kindertransport in British Historical Memory', p.16.
[210] Jenni Frazer, 'Kinder compensation is "welcome news, but it's too late for many"', *Jewish News*, 21 December 2018, <https://jewishnews.timesofisrael.com/kinder-compensation-is-welcome-news-but-its-too-late-for-many/> [accessed 12 July 2019].

Moreover, Dubs continues to work with the charity Safe Passage, which facilitates safe and legal passage for refugees who have family members in European countries. The Kindertransport is being absorbed into today's discussions on the refugee crisis and the British narrative of heroism and generosity is being employed once again to inspire and encourage public and political aid. Emphasising this point, Kindertransportee Sir Eric Reich, speaking at the 2019 AJR 'Remembering and Rethinking' conference at Lancaster House, believes the Kindertransport should be used as a 'lighthouse' for today's refugee situation. However, although it may be assumed that the narrative of a successful rescue can be used to encourage the intake of refugees, Amy Williams and Bill Niven argue that the legacy of the Kindertransport does not seem to be influencing the Home Office's recent decisions.[212]

As this chapter has so far illustrated, the memory of the Kindertransport is evolving; it is susceptible to changes in public mood and subject to manipulation and distortion through editing processes and national narratives. For this reason, it becomes increasingly important to be conscious of and question the way we approach the

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[211] Rosa Doherty, 'Kindertransport peer launches fund for refugees after government U-turn', *Jewish Chronicle*, 16 February 2017, <https://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/kindertransport-peer-launches-fund-for-refugees-after-government-u-turn-1.432839> [accessed 03 April 2017].

[212] Amy Williams and William Niven, 'Britain remembers the Kindertransport but is in danger of forgetting its lessons', *The Conversation*, 10 September 2019, <https://theconversation.com/britain-remembers-the-kindertransport-but-is-in-danger-of-forgetting-its-lessons-123227> [accessed 28 October 2019].

Kindertransport, re-frame, or re-contextualise it. Such changes determine the resulting memory of the Kindertransport, with which we come to engage in the cultural sphere.

In light of this, the current generation of readers, writers, and scholars are in a unique position: they are able to bridge the gap between living and cultural memory. Daniel Mendelsohn succinctly summarises the nature of our generation:

> [w]e are just close enough to those who were there that we feel an obligation to the facts as we know them; but we are also just far enough away, at this point, to worry about our own role in the transmission of those facts, now that the people to whom those facts happened have mostly slipped away.[213]

Likewise, it has been suggested that today's young adults are the 'hinge generation in which received, transferred knowledge of events is being transmuted into history, or into myth'.[214] It is thus a crucial time to investigate how our engagement with the Kindertransport may affect the way it is perceived and received by others in the generations to come. Issues of representation and memorialisation are becoming increasingly relevant in current discussions on Holocaust testimony, and likewise, Kindertransport memory.[215] Amy Williams's doctoral thesis, for example, explores the workings of national and transnational Kindertransport memory in the host countries, focusing on literary genres, exhibitions, and museums.[216]

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[213] Daniel Mendelsohn, *The Lost: a Search for Six of Six Million* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006), p.433.

[214] Eva Hoffman, *After Such Knowledge: Memory, History, and the Legacy of the Holocaust* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), p.xv.

[215] Marianne Hirsch and Irene Kacandes, 'Introduction: "Can the Story Be Told?": Generations of Memory', in *Teaching the Representation of the Holocaust*, ed. by Hirsch and Kacandes, pp.1–33; *Witnessing the Disaster: Essays on Representation and the Holocaust*, ed. by Michael Bernard-Donals and Richard Glejzer (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003); *After Representation?: The Holocaust, Literature, and Culture*, ed. by R. Clifton Spargo and Robert Ehrenreich (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2010).

[216] Amy Williams, 'Memory of the Kindertransport in National and Transnational Perspective' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Nottingham Trent University, 2020).

Furthermore, the digitisation of oral testimony is being considered as well as technology such as chat-bots and 3D holograms of survivors in the hope that this will arouse the interest of children who are growing up in a digital age.[217] The National Holocaust Centre and Museum (NHCM), based in Nottinghamshire, is in the process of developing a new educational programme (called the 'Forever Project') which uses 'advanced digital technologies' such as virtual reality to enable interaction and seemingly organic conversation with a virtual survivor.[218] 'The Journey' Kindertransport exhibition, also based at the NHCM, is an age-appropriate immersive experience intended for school pupils, in which they can engage with artefacts.[219] An online version of this, 'The virtual journey', is also available.

My research complements these studies and projects that explore the capability of different genres and media with regard to the transmission, transformation, and reception of the Kindertransport experience. The way in which future generations will remember the Holocaust and the Kindertransport will undeniably change indefinitely once there is no one left alive to answer new and unscripted questions and when dialogic transmission of memory is no longer an option. A comparison of different literary genres will reveal the capabilities of each genre and the way in which they naturally enhance, emphasise, or re-work aspects of the Kindertransport experience. By drawing upon theories of empathy and its significance in cultural memory, this thesis also investigates how the Kindertransport representations are likely to be received by a reader and what understandings of the Kindertransport are entering the cultural sphere and public consciousness.

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[217] Elizabeth Kendrick, 'The Digitisation and Virtual Future of Holocaust Survivor Testimony at the National Holocaust Centre and Museum' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Nottingham Trent University, expected 2020).

[218] 'Forever Project', *The National Holocaust Centre and Museum*, <https://www.holocaust.org.uk/foreverproject1> [accessed 12 January 2018].

[219] 'The Journey', *National Holocaust Centre and Museum*, <https://journey.holocaust.org.uk/> [accessed 12 January 2018].

# Chapter Three

# Kindertransport Memoirs: Representing the Self and Representing Trauma

## 3.1) Introduction to the Kindertransport Memoirs

Commenting on the issue of Kindertransport representation, Tony Kushner argues that there have been 'interrelated, if not inversely proportioned processes of remembering and forgetting' and it is thus essential to question how the Kinder have been 'remembered and represented, including by themselves'.[1] The examination of memoirs in this chapter explores how, after years of silence following the end of the Second World War, Kindertransportees access and construct a past that they may not have reflected on for decades.

A memoir is understood to offer a faithful record of experience; the reader of the memoir expects that the author adheres to the conventions of truth-telling and abides by Phillippe Lejeune's 'Autobiographical Pact' (1977).[2] Biography, autobiography, and, therefore, arguably also memoirs are examples of what Lejeune refers to as '*referential* texts' because they 'claim to provide information about a "reality" exterior to the text'.[3] Zwerdling explains '[w]hat we are reading is not imagined or invented but recreates an actual life history, more or less congruent with the author's'.[4] Complying with the degree of veracity expected by the reader, memoirists rely on materials they have to hand and often focus on the key memorable events in their lives, such as recollections from their time at school, friendships, and life with their guardians.

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[1] Tony Kushner, *Remembering Refugees: Then and Now* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), p.142.

[2] Alex Zwerdling, *The Rise of the Memoir* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p.185; Phillippe Lejeune, On Autobiography, ed. by Paul John Eakin, trans. by Katherine Leary (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), pp.4f, 14.

[3] Lejeune, p.22.

[4] Zwerdling, p.185.

Whilst the terms 'autobiography' and 'memoir' are often used interchangeably, there are significant differences between the two. Autobiographies are often thought to be written by well-known people, whereas memoirs may be written by the ordinary citizen and are 'rooted in the accidental record-keeping of diaries and correspondence'.[5] Although both forms of life-writing are 'based on personal experience' and are 'chronological, and reflective', [6] memoirs focus on 'one moment or period of experience rather than an entire life span' and offer reflections on the significance of this experience, especially with regard to the memoirist's self-understanding.[7]

Another important distinction is that, in an autobiography, 'attention is focused on the self',[8] whereas the memoir is historically seen as 'a mode of life narrative that situated the subject in a social environment [...] the memoir directs attention more toward the lives and actions of others'.[9] Supporting this, it has been argued elsewhere that the memoir 'concerns itself with public events' and depicts the forces of the world or society surrounding the memoirist.[10] Indeed, Kindertransport memoirs are born out of the experience of forced flight from National Socialism and the child's fate once in Britain, over which the young individual had little control. In contrast, autobiographies are more likely to deal with the author's private, social, and personal life, their passions, beliefs, secrets, and regrets.[11] Highlighting this difference between these two forms of life-writing, the memoirists in this chapter even say that their marriages and personal lives are 'not the subject' of their memoirs.[12]

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[5] Zwerdling, p.5. Sidonie Smith discusses the emergence of the 'nobody memoir' which often addresses an ordinary (non-famous) person's childhood that has been marked by trauma or disadvantage in Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: a Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), p.275.
[6] Roy Pascal, *Design and Truth in Autobiography* (London: Routledge, 1960), p.5.
[7] Smith and Watson, p.3f.
[8] Pascal, p.5.
[9] Smith and Watson, p.274.
[10] Pascal, p.5f.
[11] *Ibid.*, p.1.

The memoir genre is deeply rooted in both memory and history,[13] and as Alex Zwerdling notes in his work, *The Rise of the Memoir*, this kind of writing is a personal version of 'an individual history, itself often inconsistent'.[14] The memoirists in this chapter frequently rely on historical fact to cement their memories and childhood impressions. These facts offer information on the organisation of the Kindertransport, the deportations, and the destruction of European Jewry. Jared Stark explains how, '[c]onventionally, memoirs seek to bridge the gap between history, which assigns itself the task of filtering out subjective impressions in order to reveal objective historical fact, and autobiography, which gives center stage to the author's individual story'.[15] The memoirists, then, as will be illustrated in this analysis, must navigate both a public history – genocide on a catastrophic scale – and their own personal experiences during this time period.

Moreover, as memoirists engage to a greater extent with their surrounding world, their texts are comprised not only of personal recollections but also include a 'reminiscence on others'.[16] By extension, Zwerdling claims that the memoir not only portrays the lives of others, but 'can record shared experience, with a different kind of authority and authenticity than other forms of life-writing'.[17] This observation is particularly applicable to the memoirs examined in this chapter. As addressed in the previous chapters, the reunion of Kinder inspired many to write down their experiences, and hence the process of remembering as part of a collective group is likely to have influenced how memoirists access and represent a past which was often shared with other Kindertransportees.

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[12] Vera Gissing, *Pearls of Childhood* (London: Robson Books, 2003), p.169. First published in 1988. Further references given in the text.
[13] Jūra Avižienis, 'Mediated and Unmediated Access to the Past: Assessing the Memoir as Literary Genre', *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 36:1 (2005), 39–50 (p.39).
[14] Zwerdling, p.2.
[15] Jared Stark, 'Broken Records: Holocaust Diaries, Memoirs, and Memorial Books', in *Teaching the Representation of the Holocaust*, ed. by Marianne Hirsch and Irene Kacandes (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2004), pp.191–204 (p.198).
[16] Pascal, p.5.
[17] Zwerdling, p.6.

There are several further features of the memoir genre that are particularly evident in Kindertransport memoirs. For example, Zwerdling suggests that the memoirist has 'unfinished business' and that writers have a story they 'urgently need to tell'.[18] It is impressive that the motivation to remember originates from the Kinder themselves; they realise the importance of their own story. Kindertransportees, writing later in their lives, are aware of their mortality and feel they have an obligation to tell their story to the next generation, often expressing the hope that their family's experience of Nazi persecution will not be forgotten.

The urgent need to remember is made clear in the collective memoir, *I Came Alone,* where one Kindertransportee states, '[t]he day will come when the voices of survivors will no longer be heard. It is important, therefore, for those who have witnessed the horrors of the Holocaust to convey this message to historians and future generations'.[19] Similarly, Bertha Leverton and Shmuel Lowensohn, in the postscript, suggest: '[i]t was the need to let future generations know the role which we, as children, played in history, which made us put pen to paper'.[20]

Kindertransport memoirs, in general, are aimed at adults or teenagers with an interest in this chapter of history or refugee experience – yet they are also used as historical sources and teaching material in schools.[21] Memoirists feel they have an important story to tell and hope that their experience will be received by younger readers. This is not unusual as Zwerdling explains how memoirists show 'determination to shape such stories in the hope that empathetic readers might emerge'.[22] The position of the reader, and the way they are encouraged to engage with these memoirs will be examined in this chapter.

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[18] *Ibid.*, p.7.

[19] *I Came Alone: The Stories of the Kindertransports*, ed. by Bertha Leverton and Shmuel Lowensohn (Lewes: The Book Guild, 1990), p.86

[20] *I Came Alone*, p.412.

[21] Ruth Barnett's and Vera Gissing's memoirs have been used as educational material in schools. See Gissing, *Pearls of Childhood*, p.6.

In creating a story that will appeal to the reader and logically convey their experience in a plausible way that is not characterised by gaps and inaccessible memory, memoirists may use their imagination to reconstruct the past. Memories from childhood can be scarce, indeed Hella Pick – the well-known journalist and Kindertransportee – clarified at the AJR *Remembering and Rethinking* conference in April 2019, that the writing of her autobiography was her attempt to 'reconstruct [...] very few personal memories'. Mark Freeman explains that:

> it has become commonplace to assume that the process of remembering the personal past is a reconstructive one mediated by a host of significant factors, ranging from prevailing conventions of remembering all the way to the inevitable impact of present experience on the rendering of the past.[23]

In fact, memoirists may alter or re-imagine remembered events by inventing or changing small details to make the account feel more complete and to more accurately reflect their lasting impression of the moment, even though this may be historically inexact.[24] Supporting this, Mimi Schwartz identifies some 'fictive leeway even in memoir' when contemplating the nebulous boundaries between memoir and fiction.[25]

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[22] Zwerdling, p.7.

[23] Mark Freeman, 'Telling Stories: Memory and Narrative', in *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates*, ed. by Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz (New York: Fordham University, 2010), pp.263–277 (p.263).

[24] Julene Bair, Mary Clearman Blew, Norma Elia Cantú, Patricia Hampl, John Price, and Kathleen Boardman, 'Western Autobiography and Memoir: a Panel of Writers', *Western American Literature*, 37:2 (2002), 150–169 (p.153).

[25] Mimi Schwartz, 'Memoir? Fiction? Where's the Line?', *Creative Nonfiction*, 10 (1998), 35–41 (p.39).

This type of re-imagination is evident in the memoirs by Vera Gissing and Edith Milton examined in this chapter.

A further characteristic of memoirs is that there is a larger degree of 'self-reflexivity about the writing process'.[26] Memoirs often openly wrestle with issues of memory and representation. There is a focus on memory processes in memoirs[27] and it has been observed elsewhere that even 'in the midst of narration [...], as if against his or her own will, the memoirist breaks off and starts talking about memory'.[28] Memoirs, it has been argued, thus relate the '*why* of memory' rather than exclusively the '*what* of history'.[29] This contemplation about memory can be found in the memoirs discussed here, especially those written by Martha Blend and Edith Milton.

The process of remembering is a primary element of the memoir; key memories and events are generally ordered chronologically in a sequential pattern of events. The writer's position in the present, from which she reaches into the past, results in a great deal of retrospection which governs the construction of experience. Yet, this logical construction is often disrupted by the workings of trauma and scarcity or inaccessibility of memories.

As mentioned in Chapter One, 'the age of memoir and the age of trauma have coincided' and, consequently, in memoirs, self-representation is challenged by the representation of traumatic episodes that may resist narration.[30] Gilmore's study of *The Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony*, explains 'trauma's centrality to contemporary self-representation' and the way in which a piece of life-writing 'is partially structured through the proscriptions [trauma] places on self-representation'.[31] Whilst there are several tensions found in memoirs – for example between history and personal memory, individual and collective experience – it is the tension between trauma and representation that will be the focus of analysis in this chapter. The memoirists' attempts to mediate the representation of trauma and the representation of the self will be investigated and the resulting impact on the representation of the Kindertransport experience will be examined.

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[26] Smith and Watson, p.4.

[27] Jocelyn Bartkevicius, '"The Person to Whom Things Happened": Meditations on the Tradition of Memoir', *Fourth Genre: Explorations in Nonfiction*, 1:1 (1999), 133–140 (p.137).

[28] Bair, et al., p.153.

[29] *Ibid.*

[30] Leigh Gilmore, *The Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony* (London: Cornell University Press, 2001), p.16.

Further complicating matters of representation, the memoirists not only face the challenge of narrating their own upsetting experiences, but they are also the carriers of their parents' experiences and the memory of those who died in the Holocaust. Jennifer Craig-Norton rightly observes that: '[t]he parents' absence in Kindertransport literature has left the children as the sole transmitters of their parents' stories'.[32] The way in which the legacy of the Holocaust and its resulting trans-generational trauma influences the representation of the Kindertransport will also be explored in these texts.

All four memoirs discussed in this chapter reveal how the representation of experience, memories, and upsetting moments must be navigated and mediated if the resulting memoir is to successfully offer a representation of experience in which the memoirist is at one with her past. Leigh Gilmore explains how, through writing, many writers hope to gain 'an opportunity to describe their lives and their thoughts about it; to offer, in some cases, corrective readings; and to emerge through writing as an agent of self-representation, a figure [...] who can claim "I was there" or "I am here"'.[33]

Trauma ultimately complicates the memoirists' ability to 'emerge' as 'an agent of self-representation' and arguably threatens the authenticity of the text if the author is unable to claim her presence as the active, feeling, and experiencing subject within her narrative. Moreover, the tension caused by the presence of traumatic memory also clashes with the reader's expectations of the genre: memoirs are expected to give an accurate account of the past, and are considered as an attempt at facing trauma and reaching full cognition of the past.[34] Accordingly, this chapter will illustrate Todorov's argument, that genres – in this case, the memoir genre – 'function as "horizons of expectation" for readers and as "models of writing" for authors'.[35]

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[31] *Ibid.*, pp.3, 6.

[32] Jennifer Craig-Norton, *The Kindertransport: Contesting Memory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019), p.240.

[33] Gilmore, p.9.

In order to construct a rounded and seemingly complete representation of their experience in the face of both personal and collective trauma, the memoirists must find a way to navigate unnarratable aspects of experience – to convey the impact of an event without accessing the exact moment in question. Each memoirist finds a different way – or indeed multiple ways – to convey their experience. This chapter illustrates that although the memoir genre hosts this tension between trauma and self-representation, it also provides the solution; features of the genre provide the memoirists with a way to reconcile this inherent conflict. As elucidated earlier, the memoir genre accepts the use of material such as diaries and letters, invites an element of imagination and reconstruction, and is positioned within a social setting that encourages an engagement with the experiences of those around them to help construct their own account. It is with the help of these generic features that the memoirist is able to transform or circumvent moments that compromise narration.

Considering these features, this chapter will examine the memoirists' construction and representation of their experiences, how traumatic memory causes conflict with self-representation, and how this is often side-stepped by the memoirist in the hope of creating a memoir that appears substantial and comprehensive. The consequence that this mediation has on the representation of the Kindertransport will be studied. Additionally, the question of whether the conflicting representation of trauma and the representation of the self can ever be wholly reconciled will be investigated.

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[34] Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp.57, 62.

[35] Tzvetan Todorov, 'The Origin of Genres', in *Modern Genre Theory*, ed. by David Duff (Oxford: Routledge, 2000), pp.193–209 (p.199).

### 3.2) Vera Gissing, *Pearls of Childhood*: Memoir as a Mode to Re-live the Past

*Pearls of Childhood* (1988) documents Vera Gissing's childhood in her beloved Czechoslovakia and in Britain as well as her post-war return to her home town. Aged ten, Gissing arrived in Britain with her sister. The school for Czech refugees, which was relocated to Wales, provided her with Czech culture and company and a sense of belonging. Gissing later discovered that her father had been tortured in Theresienstadt, deported to Auschwitz, and probably shot on a death march in December 1944. Her mother witnessed the liberation of Bergen-Belsen before dying two days later from typhus.

Concern for her family dominates the narrative, accompanied by reports on her schoolwork, social integration, and life with her guardians. In this memoir, the love she received from both her biological and foster parents and sense of belonging she found in Wales is pitted against her desperate longing for her parents and the tragedy of their death. Whilst her memoir can be read as an emotional elegy to her parents and a reminder of the genocide that killed millions, it is also a record of Gissing's encounter with her own past.

Gissing's longing and loss is recorded in the diary entries that were often addressed to her beloved 'Maminko' (mother) and that she began to write on her arrival in Britain. These diary entries are placed into the memoir and thus function not only as an emotional outlet and coping mechanism but also as a narrative support. Despite this, it should be noted that inserted diary entries and letters appear in English, even though some of the original material was most likely to have been written in her native Czech. They may also have been edited by the memoirist in other ways.

Her memoir not only describes her time in Britain, but also her bitter-sweet return to her hometown in Czechoslovakia. Here, Gissing must directly face the loss of her loved ones. During further study in Prague, Gissing experiences anti-Semitism and consequently returns to Britain in 1949. She reports how she put on the performance of being a British housewife and 'tried to forget that [she] was Czech' and to ignore her Jewish background (p.170). Yet, on a visit to a museum attached to a cemetery in Prague on a later trip to the continent, Gissing sees drawings made by the 15,000 children who passed through Terezin – children who did not escape to safety – and accepts her identity and Jewish roots that she had previously attempted to suppress.

Acknowledging her identity as one of the 'Winton Children', at the beginning of her memoir Gissing explains that a reunion of Czech Kinder in 1985 was instrumental in the creation of her text. The sharing of collective memory encouraged her to:

> find the strength to open and reread my diaries I had kept through the war, and my parents' letters which had been locked away for all the forty years and, through them, to relive the past. Suddenly I felt compelled to tell my story, which, to a great extent, is the story of all those who were torn away from their homes as children, and who found refuge, help and understanding here in Britain. (p.12)

Gissing – like many other memoirists – felt an urge to communicate her personal story to a public readership. This intention to transmit experience contributes to the way her account is constructed. As this analysis will show, Gissing relies on different features of the genre to facilitate the construction of an account in which she can claim her presence and agency as a self-representing memoirist, whilst also conveying her childhood trauma.

The various ways in which Gissing approaches and constructs her past, however, can either be understood as a way of mediating an unnarratable upsetting experience or as an intentional authenticating narrative device that gives the illusion of a thorough self-representation. This is often an expectation the reader has of the memoir genre and further complicates the prevalent tension between the representation of trauma and representation of the 'self'.

The sharing of memory during Kindertransport reunions not only motivated Gissing to write, but also filled in the gaps in her own recollections and enabled her to piece together her past. Gissing writes: '[t]he 1985 reunion and discussions with old friends and colleagues have done much to revive and refresh these memories' (p.85). The memoir illustrates that, where personal memory struggles, the collective experiences of the Kinder are drawn upon. Revealingly, the author notes, in italics, that some of her diaries were lost in the years following the war and so her reflections on the years 1941 to 1944 rely solely on memories. These memories, however, appear to be supplemented by the recollections of other Kinder. This is the first example of how memory is mediated in Gissing's memoir in order to allow her to overcome the lack in her own available memories.

This communicative memory is often necessary; Maurice Halbwachs, pioneer thinker of collective memory, maintains that individual memory always relies on social communication.[36] Similarly, Assmann explains how memories 'do not exist as a closed system; they are always already affected, strengthened, inflected, modified, and polarized by other memories'.[37] Individual memory is therefore both biologically and socially formed.[38] By situating her experience in accordance with others, Gissing increases the historical reliability of the memoir; her experience and memories are validated and confirmed by others.

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[36] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed. by Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp.49–51.

The mediation of memory and its representation can also be seen in the various ways Gissing unites past experience and present narration. The memoir is held together by the interplay of voices: those of the narrated self (the young Gissing who writes her experience in her diary) and the narrating self (the adult Gissing who is reflecting on her experience from a retrospective viewpoint whilst writing her memoir). As Nicola King argues, there is a 'complex and shifting relationship between past and present selves in first-person fictional and autobiographical narratives'.[39] The relationship between the two voices is constantly negotiated by the memoirist, enabling her to find a way to convey the reality of her experience, situate herself in her own narrative, and bypass the problematic active narration of past traumatic experience.

Gissing's memoir reveals how the writing of the child (or narrated) self requires imagination if the specific account has not been recorded in her diary. Perhaps concerned about the 'truth pact' with the reader and their expectation to learn about the Kindertransport experience, Gissing recreates the view of the narrated self – an act requiring some degree of imaginative investment – at the moment she found out about her departure on the Kindertransport. This key moment in her childhood is briefly re-imagined through the child's eyes: 'we all waited in silence. Then [her father] lifted his head, smiled at us with tears in his eyes, sighed and said, "All right, let them go." This decision was to save our lives' (p.32).  It is intriguing to consider why Gissing decides to recreate specific scenes from her childhood in this literary way. The representation of this experience is detailed in nature, and it is questionable whether the memoirist could remember specific details such as a sigh.

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[37] Aleida Assmann, *Shadows of Trauma: Memory and the Politics of Postwar Identity*, trans. by Sarah Clift (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), p.6.
[38] *Ibid.*, p.15.
[39] Nicola King, *Memory, Narrative, Identity: Remembering the Self* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p.3.

As a Kindertransport memoir, Gissing perhaps feels as though such a crucial moment in her life needs fleshing out to satisfy the reader's expectations and interest in the Kindertransport. Simply stating the facts of the episode from the perspective of the adult narrator is somehow not sufficient for Gissing as it prevents her from being an active participant in her own story. Hence, an element of imagination is inherent to memoirs, where memoirists reconstruct situations so that they better reflect their felt experience.[40] Moreover, this use of imagination allows Gissing, as the memoirist, to position herself beside her child self in this memory, and thus serves as an authenticating device.

The direct speech between her mother and father in this episode, in which they are making the decision to send their children away, is juxtaposed against Gissing's authorial declarative statement written with the clarity of hindsight. The mixture of past and present perspectives and voices illustrates the 'paradoxical "knowing" and "not knowing"' faced by 'any autobiographical narrator, who, in the present moment of the narration, possesses the knowledge that she did not have "then", in the moment of the experience'.[41] This combination enables both unity between past and present, whilst also encouraging a critical distance; the reader is swiftly brought back to the present day and the ongoing reflections of the memoirist, rather than being left in the re-imagined memory.

Nevertheless, at times where imagination is not as instrumental in the representation of experience, the narrating and narrated selves become almost inseparable, creating a seamless connection between the child self and the author. This is illustrated when Gissing, as the adult memoirist, writes about how she read the final letter from her father as a child whilst holding the same letter decades later: '[a]s I read the letter, I did not know that I would take it out and read it over and over again, until I knew it by heart. I look at it now: the writing has faded and it still bears the traces of my childhood tears. It was the last letter I received from my father' (p.59).

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[40] See Bair et al., p.153.

[41] King, p.2.

Poignantly, the letter holds the marks of her childhood suffering and thus becomes a lingering reminder and artefact of childhood pain that is still tangible today. The letter, in connecting the child Kindertransportee and the memoirist, acts as a marker of authenticity and reveals once again how Gissing repeatedly finds new ways to physically bind herself to the story she is telling. As a common characteristic of the memoir genre, the relationship between the narrated and narrating selves is often called upon to instigate the reader's critical reflection and engagement, as Avižienis asserts:

> [t]he memoirist [...] represents the events from both within and without, as lived by herself in the first person (this is *her* legitimization – she was there; she witnessed the events first-hand) but also outside of the action – in the subsequent moment of writing. By inviting the reader to experience the actions along with her, she asks the reader to identify with her – both as protagonist-witness living the events and as narrator-spectator recalling and narrating them.[42]

The inclusion of both perspectives, Avižienis maintains, increases the chance of identification and empathy with both the child refugee and the adult who is attempting to transmit her experience to the reader. This understanding of empathy and identification generated by memoirs will be examined in more detail later in this chapter.

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[42] Avižienis, p.46.

These complementary and harmonious voices, however, diverge when it comes to the narration of traumatic experience, suggesting that the representation of the self needs to be reconsidered when there is also an attempt to represent traumatic moments. Instead, the memoirist relies heavily on the perspective of the child self which has been preserved in the diary entries. The adult memoirist refrains from actively narrating these upsetting moments from her position as a reflecting adult, and thus the child's account becomes more dominant than the memoirist's adult voice. This is evident in a stream of diary entries that were written between May and July 1945 and are recorded in Gissing's memoir. The memoirist's dependence on this previous record of expression can either be understood as the only way of navigating unnarratable traumatic experience or as an intentional narrative device.

These diary entries document news of the German surrender and end of the war, shortly followed by news that fighting continues in Prague. A later entry reveals how she heard news via Stockholm that her parents are fine, yet in the following entry she writes about how the fate of her father is actually unknown. The rollercoaster of emotions continues; she receives news from her mother via Bloomsbury House, she writes a letter addressed to her mother in her diary, and then learns that her mother died of typhus in Belsen (pp.120–131). The traumatic nature of these events may have resulted in the initial reactions to the news not fully being encoded by the child refugee and, consequently, Gissing faces a difficulty in narrating these experiences as an adult. The diary entries portray explicit symptoms of trauma, such as numbness, emptiness, and speechlessness. It has been generally accepted that '[a]t the heart of the traumatic syndrome [...] is the diminished capacity to feel or *psychic numbing*'.[43] Supporting this, Cathy Caruth remarks how 'in trauma the greatest confrontation with reality may also occur as an absolute numbing to it'.[44]

On several occasions in 1945 the young Gissing attempted to put her confusion and dread into words yet struggles: it was a 'blow', she was 'numb with shock' and 'can't take it in' (p.124). As van der Kolk's theory of trauma suggests, the conveyed physicality of the trauma as a 'blow' indicates its inability to be expressed in narrative language, thus emphasising its impact as a moment of trauma.[45] Gissing repeatedly describes disturbing news as a 'blow' and the term becomes substitutive for the moment of trauma which did not completely enter narrative memory at the time of the ordeal.

On one hand, it can be argued that Gissing may be challenged by the process of narration; although the impact of trauma is conveyed, it cannot necessarily be translated into meaningful or spontaneous narration and the memoirist finds it difficult to linguistically expand any further on her younger self's understanding of the experience from the position of the adult writer. On the other hand, the reliance on diary entries can be seen as an intentional narrative decision and an authenticating strategy. Indeed, the use of diaries is just one of the 'ingenious approaches employed by writers to authenticate the ontology of the text as a written document or artefact recounting past events'.[46] Gissing, intending – or perhaps even feeling the expectation – to represent her childhood self, effectively limits the reader's viewpoint to the experience of the child refugee and conveys how these moments were experienced in 1945. Thus, it is not always easy to determine whether the subconscious workings of trauma or a preoccupation with authoritative self-representation has the greatest impact on the construction of a memoir and the representation of upsetting episodes.

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[43] Robert Jay Lifton, 'From Hiroshima to the Nazi Doctors: The Evolution of Psychoformative Approaches to Understanding Traumatic Stress Syndromes', in *International Handbook of Traumatic Stress Syndromes*, ed. by John P. Wilson and Beverley Raphael, vol. 2 (New York: Springer Science & Business Media, Plenum, 2013), pp.11–23 (p.18).

[44] Cathy Caruth, 'Trauma and Experience: Introduction', in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. by Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), pp.3–12 (p.6).

[45] Bessel A. van der Kolk, 'Trauma and Memory', in *Traumatic Stress: The Effects of Overwhelming Experience on Mind, Body, and Society*, ed. by Bessel A. van der Kolk, Alexander C. McFarlane, and Lars Weisaeth (New York: The Guildford Press, 1996), pp.279–302 (pp.280–282).

[46] Virginia Allen-Terry Sherman, Eléonore Cartellier-Veuillen, James Dalrymple, and Jonathan Fruoco, 'Introduction', in *(Re)writing and Remembering: Memory as Artefact and Artifice*, ed. by Virginia Allen-Terry Sherman, Eléonore Cartellier-Veuillen, James Dalrymple, and Jonathan Fruoco (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2016), pp.ix–xiii (p.ix).

Additionally, as a writer, Gissing may be aware that any attempt to convey upsetting moments through her own constructed narration may alter the impact of the experience. Gilmore clarifies this tension between trauma and representation:

> trauma cannot be spoken of or written about in any mode other than the literal. To do so risks negating it. In this construction, language may merely record trauma even as its figural properties and the speaker's imagination threaten to contaminate trauma's historical purity.[47]

The reliance on former diary entries would then serve another purpose: to preserve the impact of trauma, in the hope that the reader understands the gravity of the news as it was experienced by the child. The depiction of numbness in the diary entries may serve an additional purpose; instead of only indicating a traumatic episode, emotional numbing, Sara Horowitz suggests, connotes absence and arguably represents a gap in the text.[48] This, in turn, encourages the reader to critically consider the text instead of inducing instant feelings of sympathy or pity, which can often be detrimental to the message the memoirist is trying to communicate.

The second part of *Pearls of Childhood* can be understood as Gissing's search for her identity and a sense of belonging. In an attempt to create an account of her life which is rounded and whole with no loose ends, issues in her identity are seemingly resolved. As a memoir that depicts the process of coming to terms with the past, Gissing's memoir recounts the 'turning point' in her life. Faced with the drawings made by children who passed through Terezin and who did not escape continental Europe, Gissing faces her past, realises how fortunate she was, and embraces her identity. She realises 'by shutting out the past I had closed the door on my inner self – that I would never find peace and true happiness unless I accepted myself for what I was: Jewish by race, Czech by birth, and British by choice' (p.171).

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[47] Gilmore, p.6.

[48] Sara R. Horowitz, *Voicing the Void: Muteness and Memory in Holocaust Fiction* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1997), p.49.

Illustrating how memoirs are often considered a project of self-representation, in the process of writing, Gissing embodies the child self and relives past experience in order to create her representation: '[o]nce again, I became the little girl who cried real pearls, the fiercely patriotic homesick refugee, the hopeful, then devastated teenager, the disillusioned young woman' (p.175).

Thus, the child who experienced the traumatic and devastating loss of her parents is incorporated into the author's adult identity and, further, through her writing Gissing gives the impression of her adult self emerging from the figure of the child refugee. Gissing gives the impression of reliving her own past and demonstrates an understanding of and fusion with her past self by 'becoming' the child again and reliving her experiences. Marcus Billson's suggestion is particularly applicable to Gissing's text: the memoirist 'believes past time is lost, and [she] is anxious to regain, relive, and transmit it so that it will be preserved in all of its depth and wonder'.[49] This signifies a further transition in the aforementioned 'complex and shifting relationship between past and present selves' seen in Gissing's text.[50]

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[49] Marcus Billson, 'The Memoir: New Perspectives on a Forgotten Genre', *Genre*, 10 (1977), 259–81 (p.268).
[50] King, p.3.

Although this unison suggests an accord with the past, Gissing may also feel pressured by the conventions of the memoir genre: to write and represent the 'self' in a given historical period and reach a full cognition of experience.[51] Implying this unity, Gissing gives the impression of wholeness and of being healed: '[m]y task is completed; I seem to have travelled a full circle, reopening doors I had left locked for most of my life, reliving moments of beauty and happiness, sadness and pain' (p.175). The bridging between the narrating self and narrated self, between past and present – which is suggested by Gissing's act of 'reliving' – indicates a 'complete recovery'.[52] According to Sharples, this idea of recovery is not unusual: 'the majority of Kindertransport memoirs seek to provide some sort of happy or redemptive ending to their tales'.[53]

However, when considering the way in which Gissing depends on various approaches, viewpoints, and forms of memory to construct her account, it can be argued that the memoirist, in the process of writing, is continuously searching for a way to represent her child self and make it compatible with her adult self as a present-day memoirist. Moreover, it remains difficult to reconcile the unnarrated impact of initial trauma (of which the diary entries offer a filtered record) with the memoirist's adult narration that implies peace and wholeness.

To summarise, *Pearls of Childhood* is a memoir that illustrates the process of coming to terms with a turbulent past. Arguably a unique characteristic of the memoir genre, the reader is taken on a journey from traumatic to mediated and, finally, owned experience. The account of the past that the reader is presented with depends on how the memoirist decides to represent herself, traumatic experience, and to what extent she wishes to 'claim "I was there" or "I am here"'.[54]

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[51] Felman and Laub, pp.57, 62.

[52] Bessel A. van der Kolk and Onno van der Hart, 'The Intrusive Past: The Flexibility of Memory and the Engraving of Trauma', in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. by Caruth, pp.158–182 (p.176).

[53] Caroline Sharples, 'Reconstructing the Past: Refugee Writings on the Kindertransport', *Holocaust Studies*, 12 (2006), 40–62 (p.57).

This memoir thus epitomises and perpetuates the tension prevalent in the memoir genre: a memoir should provide the story of a person's past and ownership of experience, yet traumatic personal memory is not always fully retrieved, represented, or reflected upon by the adult memoirist. Trauma is either unnarratable or is not narrated because it serves as an authenticating power. Though depicting the uncertainty, longing, and grief faced by the child refugee, it is Gissing's constant effort to reconcile narrative voices, the past and present, and to validate her position as participant in and narrator of this account that governs this Kindertransport memoir.

### 3.3) Martha Blend, *A Child Alone*: Memoir as the Recovery of the Self

Martha Blend's memoir, *A Child Alone* (1995), documents how the memoirist embarks on a quest to stabilise her own identity and discover her family past. Comparable to Gissing's memoir, Blend's account begins with a recent experience in her adult life. When visiting her child's primary school she hears children's voices singing a familiar tune which takes her back to Vienna in the 1930s. This leads the reader into an account of her childhood memories. The memoir outlines Blend's childhood in Vienna and the increasing anti-Semitism following the *Anschluss*; a period she describes as 'living on a knife-edge of terror' (p.28).[55] Aged nine, she is sent to London to live with Yiddish-speaking foster parents. Her memoir is governed by alternating descriptions of the war and her achievements at school, London's East End and air-raids, and is interspersed with worries about her family. Final confirmation of their death reaches her near the end of the war.

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[54] Gilmore, p.9.

[55] Martha Blend, *A Child Alone* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1995). Further references given in the text.

It is important to consider that the memoir may have been written with two intentions in mind. First, Blend documents her childhood and repeatedly explains how her experiences left her with an unstable identity and ruptured sense of self. She describes that she was unable to deal with the turmoil around her and so repressed upsetting or overwhelming moments. Her memoir depicts her initial confrontation with the returning memories of the past, which enables the recovery of the repressed childhood self. Second, Blend researches and reconnects with her family past. After recording this personal journey, it is then slightly perplexing that at the end of her memoir her attention is focused outwards, towards the question of Holocaust memory.

This examination of Blend's memoir indicates that the process of constructing the memoir can represent 'first and foremost an opportunity to seek reconciliation with the past'.[56] King's suggestion that life-writing 'attempts to recover the self who existed "before"' is particularly apparent in Blend's memoir.[57] Indeed, there are several ways in which she demonstrates a recovery of the child or teenage self.

With the retrospective position of the memoirist, Blend provides an insight into her childhood attempts at repression. Throughout the memoir, the author refers to her fragile teenage identity and emphasises the impact that the separation caused by her departure on the Kindertransport had on her emotional wellbeing. Despite receiving care and love from her foster parents, Blend suggests that the separation from one's home and parents leads to an inevitable confusion in identity and delicate sense of oneself. Disrupted identities caused by dislocation are often recounted by Kindertransportees and, as Andrea Hammel suggests, Kindertransport memoirs 'are shaped by fragmented development and unstable identities and the tensions between birth families and foster families and between Continental Europe and Great Britain'.[58] This is particularly evident in Blend's text.

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[56] Maarja Hollo, 'Writing Childhood, Writing Lack', in *Haunted Narratives: Life Writing in an Age of Trauma*, ed. by Gabriele Rippl, Philipp Schweighauser, Tiina Kirrs, Margit Sutrop, and Therese Steffen (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), pp.101–106 (p.102).
[57] King, p.1.

Blend's disrupted identity is further explained by Susan Rubin Suleiman's understanding of the 1.5 generation. She argues that the trauma and displacement of the 1.5 generation – a term which distinguishes the experience of child refugees from those who were adults in 1938 and who consciously decided to flee Nazism – 'occurred (or at least began) before the formation of a stable identity'.[59] Quite disturbingly, Blend describes her former self as 'a young person putting up a tremendous fight for her sanity in a partly insane world' (p.92).

Blend is aware of how she actively suppressed upsetting moments or memories to maintain some sort of stability and sanity. She writes, 'memories of my early upbringing and of my parents were tightly locked away' (p.104) and 'my hold on reality was brittle [...] I managed to survive by concentrating on the present and shutting out painful topics, but they had a way of intruding disturbingly in unguarded moments' (p.143).

The memoir has the potential to become an antidote to this repression. Understandings of the genre suggest that memoirs capture spontaneously recalled memories and this genuine advent of knowledge.[60] This, Felman and Laub argue, is made possible by the presence of a reader, which is implied in the writing of the memoir itself as memoirs are often written with the desire to convey experience. The reader, or listener of testimony, 'is, so to speak, the blank screen on which the event comes to be inscribed for the first time'.[61] The memoir, as Blend's text demonstrates, enables an act of remembering, not just a recording of memories. Building on Geoffrey Hartman's work on Holocaust memory,[62] Jessica Lang writes:

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[58] Andrea Hammel, 'Representations of Family in Autobiographical Texts of Child Refugees', *Shofar*, 23:1 (2004), 121–132 (p.131).

[59] Susan Rubin Suleiman, '1.5 Generation: Thinking about Child Survivors and the Holocaust', *American Imago*, 59 (2002), 277–295 (p.277).

[60] Felman and Laub, p.62.

[61] *Ibid.*, p.57.

> the survivor generation of victims or eyewitnesses incorporate within their writing a return to the act of remembering in spite of the trauma they suffered. In effect, survivors call up events that they experienced first hand, events to which they have a direct relation and which retain the power of direct experience for them and their readers.[63]

The extent of Blend's repression is only realised whilst writing her memoir when a memory which had been repressed for decades resurfaces. Aged ten, Martha received news of her father's death via a Red Cross letter. She now recalls: '[i]n fact I had "forgotten" an incident which occurred in the early spring of 1940 [...], and even continued to do so while writing this account' (p.118). 'Sobbing hysterically' and deeply disturbed by the content of the letter, the young refugee decides not to believe, or process, her father's death and, instead, believes her foster mother's exclamation: '[n]o, it's not true!' (p.118). Understanding this now to have been 'a false and foolish reassurance', Blend admits '[she] did [her] best to bury the whole incident' (p.119).

It is important to note that it cannot be determined whether repressed memories actually returned to the writing memoirist in such a spontaneous way as is recorded or whether this revelation and recovery of knowledge is a narrative technique. Blend may take advantage of the expectation that the reader has of the memoir genre, namely that the writing process enables a confrontation with the past and cognition of experience.

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[62] Geoffrey Hartman, 'Introduction: Darkness Visible', in *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory*, ed. by Geoffrey Hartman (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1994), pp.1–22 (p.18).

[63] Jessica Lang, 'The History of Love, the Contemporary Reader, and the Transmission of Holocaust Memory', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 33 (2009), 43–56 (p.45).

Nevertheless, several studies suggest how the writing of the memoir may indeed allow a sudden confrontation with the past in the way that Blend suggests in her memoir. In their work on trauma narratives, Avigail Gordon and Kate Szymanski clarify this phenomenon by explaining how '[t]he traumatic event is so unimaginable that it is not fully processed as it happens, and often the effort of crafting a testimony is necessary to allow the integration of the experience into narrative memory'.[64] The creation of the memoir, as a literary text that welcomes self-reflection, allows the transformation of traumatic memory into narrative memory. This act of narration is explained further by Susan J. Brison:

> [n]arrative memory is not passively endured; rather it is an act on the part of the narrator, a speech act that defuses traumatic memory, giving shape and a temporal order to the events recalled, establishing more control over their recalling, and helping the survivor to remake a self.[65]

Yet, whilst this transformation of traumatic memory into narration can be observed in Blend's memoir, it is noticeable that this returning memory has not yet found its correct temporal position within the memoir. The temporal order and control Brison refers to cannot be confirmed in Blend's text, thus suggesting that the memory still retains a traumatic quality. As Hammel notes, Blend's returning memory of her father's death appears suddenly and out of chronological order, creating 'a rupture in the narration'.[66]

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[64] Avigail Gordon and Kate Szymanski, 'Breaking the Silence: Reevaluating What Makes an Experience of Trauma', in *The Unspeakable: Narratives of Trauma*, ed. by Magda Stroinska, Vikki Cecchetto, and Kate Szymanski (Oxford: PL Academic Research, 2014), pp.249–260 (p.252).

[65] Susan J. Brison, 'Trauma Narratives and the Remaking of the Self', in *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*, ed. by Meike Bal, Jonathan Crewe, and Leo Spitzer (London: University of New England Press, 1999), pp.39–54 (p.40).

[66] Andrea Hammel, 'Authenticity, Trauma and the Child's View: Martha Blend's *A Child Alone*, Vera Gissing's *Pearls of Childhood* and Ruth L. David's *Ein Kind unserer Zeit*', *Forum for Modern Languages Studies*, 49 (2013), 201–212 (p.210).

Consequently, traumatic impact is preserved in Blend's text as the reader is caught in the memoirist's unplanned act of processing the past and this distressing event is not yet fully embedded in the memoirist's life narrative. As this structural positioning indicates a trauma which has not been fully processed, Blend's memoir indicates the memoir genre's potential to provide not a '*statement of*' but 'mode of access to' the past.[67]

Blend's memoir shows how a reconciliation with the past is not wholly dependent on the acknowledgment of a personally traumatic episode. In order to stabilise her identity, which was fractured during childhood, Blend must also discover and process the fate of her family. She searches for the traces of her family past, 'attempting to become a person in [her] own right' after realising that the gaps that remained in her life were caused by not knowing her own family history (pp.153f, 156).

It is clear that, for Blend, it is the *not-knowing* that is traumatic – not the *knowing*. This chimes with Cathy Caruth's suggestion that trauma is 'a kind of not-knowing at the heart of catastrophic experience'.[68] With regard to the Kindertransport experience specifically, Jennifer Craig-Norton explains how 'for many of the Kinder, the parents' story is incomplete. [...] most remain unaware of the details of their parents' wartime lives, and many are uncertain about their parents' precise fates'.[69] Haunted by 'half-formulated' questions about the fate of her family – such as '[h]ow had my parents died and where? What horrors did they have to face before then?' (p.152) – Blend decides to learn more by reading material on the concentration camps, visiting Vienna and an aunt in Israel, and by making the journey to tour Auschwitz and Buchenwald camps after discovering that her father was killed in Buchenwald (pp.153,158).

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[67] Felman and Laub, p.16. Italics in original text.

[68] Afterword to the 20th Anniversary Edition of Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2016), p.117.

[69] Craig-Norton, *Contesting*, p.240.

Thirty-five years after leaving, Blend returns to Vienna and encounters her forgotten childhood when walking through a park in Vienna in which she recalls walking with her father. A pivotal moment in her self-identification process happens when she hears a little girl call out 'Papa!'. For the memoirist, 'the years rolled back as I heard that word used again' (p.158). In gaining knowledge of her family and rediscovering her childhood, Blend finds an antidote to the two factors which initially caused her childhood suffering: the separation from her home and not knowing the fate of her parents.

Like in Gissing's memoir, cultural memory in the form of public commemoration plays a significant role in Blend's *A Child Alone*. Blend's visit to Buchenwald camp stimulates an engagement with and questioning of present and future cultural modes of remembering. Her visit to the concentration camps enables her to piece together her parents' fate yet also appears to puzzle the memoirist.

She reveals how the museum at Buchenwald was established as a memorial mainly to Russians and Communists and to the six hundred Jews killed there after 'Kristallnacht', which Blend argues offers an 'incomplete and misleading picture of the scale of atrocities against Jews' (p.163). Although confusing to the memoirist, this can be explained by noting Buchenwald's location in the post-war GDR. Blend's text nevertheless brings this politicisation of history to light and reflects an anxiety about the effectiveness of memorials and sites of public memory as forms of commemoration. In addition, the memoirist is surprised by the groups of visitors at Buchenwald, and vicariously invites the reader to question why they would visit such a site of memory:

> I now noticed, to my surprise, that the camp site was thronged with visitors: families, student parties, groups of children. What, I wondered, had brought

> them there on a hot summer's day? I spoke to one family about this. The husband, startled by my interrogation, replied:
>
> 'Because it's part of our history. To make sure it doesn't happen again.'
>
> When people ask me: 'Why do you go to those gloomy places?' my answer is the opposite of Chekov's 'Not knowing is better'. For me there is strength in being in touch with reality, however grim. (p.163f)

Despite Blend's reservations about public memorials, this above conversation implies that there is a certain intended equivalence between memorials and the literary memoir. The reason people visit such memorials mirrors the message Blend wishes to convey through her memoir. She warns the reader about how history threatens to repeat itself: '[t]he lesson that needs to be learned from this period, which is now passing into history, is to tackle extremism before it gets too powerful' and she voices her concern about 'the rise of the new nationalism' and Holocaust denial (p.165).

This parallel suggests a future trend: when there is no longer access to living memory the following generations will rely on memorials, which Blend exposes as biased.[70] *A Child Alone* unites both forms of remembering and reveals how, as Gilmore proposes, '[p]lacing a personal history of trauma within a collective history compels one to consider that cultural memory, like personal memory, possesses "recovered" or "repressed" memories'.[71]

In this respect, it is also useful to consider the literary memoir as an alternative form of memorialisation – as 'a memorial to oneself'.[72] Gilmore suggests that the written text 'would perform the work of permanence that the person never can. A self-memorial says: "I remember, and now, so will you"'.[73] This capability of the memoir is reflected not only in Blend's account but also in the foreword to the memoir, provided by Martin Gilbert, who maintains that the publication of memoirs is 'an indispensible part of the extension of knowledge, and of public awareness of the crimes that had been committed against a whole people' (p.x). Blend's memoir illustrates how each personal account is important as the process of writing a memoir – spurred on by its inherent focus on self-representation – encourages the 'recounting' of 'aspects of the story that had not been told before' (p.ix).

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[70] It should be noted here that memoirs are not free from bias.
[71] Gilmore, p.31.
[72] *Ibid.*, p.13.

Blend's memoir is an act of remembering; through her text she provides a mode of access to the past and encourages a recovery of the childhood self who repressed upsetting episodes and intended to forget her family past. This provides support for Maarja Hollo's aforementioned claim that the writing of the memoir can represent 'first and foremost an opportunity to seek reconciliation with the past'.[74] Moreover, this rings true with Roberta Rubenstein's understanding that 'narratives that engage notions of home, loss, and / or nostalgia confront the past in order to "fix" it'. This, she explains, can be understood in two ways: '[t]o "fix" something is to secure it more firmly in the imagination and also to correct – as in *revise* or *repair* – it'.[75] Blend reconnects with her teenage self and repairs the gaps in her identity, compensating for the years of repression and of 'not knowing' by recounting and stabilising these memories and recently learned information about her family in the memoir, even though these may not have been fully absorbed or processed by Blend.

Blend's reconciliation relies on several factors: the recovery of her family history in the form of knowledge, the acknowledgment of personal traumatic experience, and a contemplation of her own trauma within collective, cultural processes of remembrance. Crucially, this text shows that the memoir genre encourages a recovery of the self and that this self-representation is essential for the preservation and enrichment of Kindertransport and Holocaust memory.

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[73] *Ibid.*
[74] Hollo, p.102.
[75] Roberta Rubenstein, *Home Matters: Longing and Belonging, Nostalgia and Mourning in Women's Fiction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), p.6.

### 3.4) Edith Milton, *The Tiger in the Attic*: the Limitations of Memory in the Memoir

Written with endearing charm and including humorous observations about British life, including the war-time ration of dried eggs and the 'conspicuous manifestations' of puberty, Edith Milton's *The Tiger in the Attic* (2005) maps out her childhood and adolescence in war-time Leeds. Milton's memoir depicts life with her loving foster family (the Harveys) and her attempts at becoming English, which she believed were 'doomed to failure'.[76] She does not remember parting from her mother at the young age of seven, nor her journey on the Kindertransport. Milton faces a further upheaval at the end of the war when her passage to America comes through (p.196). With her sister Ruth, she leaves the Harveys and they embark on a new journey away from their adoptive country towards their biological mother. The final chapter presents Milton in her later life; having lived in New Hampshire for thirty-five years, this chapter implies a sense of stability and home (p.226).

Probably due to her mother's escape to America, Milton's narrative is not dominated by worries about her family, as seen in the other memoirs explored in this chapter. Milton had a close relationship with her guardian family and her memoir gives tribute to them and to England. At the end of her memoir, she expresses how she is grateful for the 'extraordinary privilege' of living, and 'the marvel of being pulled away from a world drowning in chaos' (p.241).

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[76] Edith Milton, *The Tiger in the Attic*: *Memories of the Kindertransport and Growing Up English* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), pp.14, 52. Further references given in the text.

Milton's memoir demonstrates the difficulty of representing the self and representing trauma – a problem inherent to the memoir genre. Milton has even fewer memories of her childhood than Gissing and Blend, and unlike Gissing, she does not have a way to record and represent the child's voice and does not rely on diary entries or letters. Aware that her sparse recollections clash with the memoir genre's expectation of faithful self-representation, the memoirist attempts to represent the rupture in her childhood through both her particular use of language and her reflections on a later experience of separation. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the memoir genre often witnesses a reflection on processes of remembering. Constantly aware of the limits of her own memory, Milton exposes the unreliability and construction of memory, on individual and national levels.

In an attempt to convey the rupture in her identity caused by the separation from her mother, Milton depicts a split between her German self and her new life in England. She explains that her life begins at the age of 'seven going on eight' shortly after the separation from her mother and her subsequent arrival in Swansea (p.4). Impeded by her inability to access the memories of her German self, Milton demonstrates this disjunction by disrupting the use of narrative tense. In the opening chapter, Milton describes her first memory of England – the train ride with Aunt Helen from London to Swansea – in present-tense and foreign-sounding English: '[l]uckily, my sister Ruth is along. Ruth speaks English' (p.1). Her memories partly continue in the present tense even when arriving in Wales: '[t]hat fall I begin to forget my German' (p.11). Similarly, on hearing about the outbreak of war, Milton writes 'I am very alarmed. I stand by the windows for hours' (p.11). Soon after this, as she begins to settle into life in Britain, her reflections adopt the past tense: '[w]e had a picnic by the sea' (p.12).

The different tenses represent the rupture in her childhood and establish a distinction between the seven-year-old girl who arrived on the Kindertransport and the child who then grew up in Britain, who later rediscovered her mother in America and came to write her memoir. This shift suggests some discomfort when narrating her earlier memories, particularly on her arrival in Britain. Milton's use of the present tense indicates the difficulty of incorporating the past memories of her German speaking self into her personal autobiography of the past; the German child is neither absorbed into her present identity nor her past history, and instead remains frozen in time.

Supporting this, numerous understandings of trauma suggest how the tendency to 'split', or rupture, is a symptom of hysteria or trauma.[77] Van der Kolk and van der Hart claim that those who have lived through distressing events 'experience long periods of time in which they live, as it were, in two different worlds: the realm of the trauma and the realm of their current, ordinary life. Very often, it is impossible to bridge these worlds'.[78] Similarly, King argues that 'experiences such as war, migration, abuse, assault or serious accident may make the relationship between the self "before" and the self "after" much more problematic'.[79] Milton's memoir, which also exposes unreliable processes of remembering and a prolonged rupture in the memoirist's identity, contrasts with Gissing's and Blend's attempts to unite the narrating and narrated selves.

Whilst not necessarily wishing to unite these two parts of her identity, Milton does attempt to represent the trauma she finds difficult to access. As Milton is unable to unearth the initial memory of the separation from her mother, she attempts to represent it through the depiction of a later departure when leaving England to reunite with her mother in America. Milton understands the element of repression that worked upon her memory and notes how the journeys to and from England are accompanied by 'the same strange amnesia' which 'filled [her memory] with holes' (p.166). Milton's memoir supports Luckhurst's claim that the memoir must 'centre on precisely that moment which escapes self-apprehension' as the 'traumatic instant cannot be experienced as such, because trauma both distends the subject and bursts the bounds of what constitutes "experience"'.[80] Milton, however, finds a way to convey the impact of such a moment by controlling and mediating these two upsetting episodes of departure.

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[77] van der Kolk and van der Hart, 'The Intrusive Past', p.165.
[78] *Ibid.*, p.176.
[79] King, p.3.

Although she cannot recall or convey the moment of separation from her mother to the reader, she is able to comment and reflect on the impact of her experience with considerable psychological and philosophical insight, based on her later experience. This second dislocation brings to light the distress caused by the first separation from her mother and home. The author muses on how planes do not convey the emotion of a 'goodbye' (p.164f). A train, however, offers a 'powerful image of transience and tragedy. It connects motion and emotion. It moves through time and space with poignant effort, pulling away gently at first, slowly, and gathering speed with inexorable cruelty as it leaves the known world behind' (p.165).

Furthermore, at the end of her chapter – suggesting an afterthought induced by the writing process – Milton wonders 'why [she] never thought about [her] mother crying when [they] left Karlsruhe'. She continues: 'I know she did; I suspect that she wept passionately. But I buried that detail in a vague and generalized image of loudly wailing adults, an image that evokes no emotion, merely a slight sense of discomfort' (p.174).

Emphasising the disjunction between experience and its representation, Milton poignantly juxtaposes the 'inexorable cruelty' of train journeys with the image of her mother at the moment of separation which, in contrast, induces little emotion in the adult writer. Milton intentionally aims to show how, as Gilmore argues, 'conventions about truth telling, salutary as they are, can be inimical to the ways in which some writers bring trauma stories into language'.[81] By reflecting on her later departure from England, the memoirist conveys more about the upsetting impact of the separation when compared to any attempt to reconstruct and imagine her departure on the Kindertransport and her mother's likely reaction.

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[80] Roger Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question* (London: Routledge, 2008), p.118.

Milton is perhaps the most reflective and critical memoirist in terms of considering the processes of remembering and representation. From the beginning of her memoirs, she explains how, shortly before arriving in Swansea, her memory begins to:

> [decorate] itself with words and sounds and feelings; it attaches itself to things like regret and pleasure. None of this is entirely reliable, of course – over the years the landscape of memory shifts and details rearrange themselves; or it fails to shift and one knows that what is being remembered is not a memory anymore at all – that it has petrified into myth. (p.4)

She highlights not only the difficulty in accessing memories but also the unreliability of individual memory, impressing upon the reader how her memories are joined together by a patchwork of imagination (p.74). She wants the reader to critically reflect upon this whilst reading, and to realise that, as Geoffrey Hartman maintains, '[e]ach testimony is, in that respect, performative as well as informative'.[82]

Milton questions the structures – individual, national and cultural – that preserve memory: '[m]emory, as we all know, is a fickle tool – made even more unreliable by the very instruments we use to secure it, to hold the evidence in place for future use when we write the reports and histories and biographies that document the past' (p.167). She proceeds to question our reliance on historical records of the past, and realises during her childhood that '[h]istory is not what you thought [...] *It is what you can remember*. All other history defeats itself' (p.48). By exposing the limitations and unreliability of her own narration, Milton also encourages the reader to critically consider her text. In this respect, Jessica Lang suggests that texts written by eyewitnesses and survivors accommodate the 'unreadable' as they 'write not only with an audience in mind but often with a great deal of self-consciousness, admitting to themselves and their readers the inadequacy of language and ability in conveying memory and history'. Consequently, she claims 'these limits make a whole representation not possible'.[83]

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[81] Gilmore, p.3.

[82] Geoffrey Hartman, 'Audio and Visual Testimony and Holocaust Studies', in *Teaching the Representation of the Holocaust*, ed. by Hirsch and Kacandes, pp.205–219 (p.209).

After highlighting the limitations of individual memory, Milton also suggests that media such as photographs and film – which individuals rely on to cement memories and which future generations rely on to gain knowledge – can be unreliable, stating that even photos 'can betray you' (p.169). Milton further interrogates the way in which people are expected to remember the past (p.235). She reluctantly returns to visit Karlsruhe, where she lived as a young child, and to the cemetery in which her father (who died before the war) is buried (p.239). Once there, she feels impelled to take photograph after photograph, although admittedly she was 'not quite sure what it was, exactly, [she] had wanted to prove' (p.239).

Poignantly, in the Jewish cemetery she realises that there have been no recent interments because the Jewish population from the area had been deported and never returned. This site of memory is arguably marked by absence, rather than by any remarkable attempt at remembrance; the 'modest stone markers' were 'crowded together under the high hedges' and were 'easy to miss' (p.239f). Perhaps as a result, Milton admits at the end of her memoir that she is unable to find a way of 'remembering

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[83] Jessica Lang, *Textual Silence: Unreadability and the Holocaust* (London: Rutgers University Press, 2017), p.175f.

Karlsruhe reasonably' and '[i]n response to [her] recollection of the Jewish cemetery in Karlsruhe a blank seems to be all [she] can conjure up' (p.241). Milton thus emphasises the consequence of insufficient and unavailable structures of public cultural memory and an attempt at commemoration which is lacking sufficient upkeep, attention, and respect.

Milton's memoir also takes issue with national processes of remembering. She reflects on British narratives of the past and on the consequence of inadequately remembering a chapter of history: the history of Indian colonisation. Due to a lack of engagement and a national unwillingness to acknowledge some of the atrocities of colonisation, Milton suggests this chapter of history, both the success and the crimes, are passing out of British living memory, practically unnoticed. Milton's title choice is particularly revealing in this respect. The tiger in the attic refers to a real tiger skin rug, shot by Uncle Bourke, her foster parent, during his time in West Bengal during the colonial period. This tiger rug had once found its place in the living room, yet met an undignified end; it was 'banished' to the attic, where the dogs had their way with it (p.93) before being thrown out.

On a symbolic level, the fate of the rug could mirror the memory of the Jewish history of persecution, implied when Milton views the rug as a 'helpless victim' (p.92f). Milton may thus be confessing her concern for the future of Jewish and Holocaust remembrance, a reading of which underscores how the past we choose to remember is selective. She expresses the concern that the history of the Holocaust will one day be ignored in the attic – or metaphorically in the nation's subconscious – until it gets discarded, leaving nothing but 'the sense of an absence' (p.93).

This is a particularly intriguing allusion to include in the title of a Kindertransport memoir and Milton's title choice makes these two chapters of history inextricable. Daringly, she subverts the celebratory narrative of the Kindertransport (see

Chapter Two) by referring to the victims of British power and achievement, and thus the reader is led to reflect on how, similarly, the Kindertransport has been regarded as a heroic British achievement without acknowledging the trauma of the Kinder and the death of their parents. Supporting this, Milton comments on how England is a land of gentlemen and morals but also has 'general historical embarrassment' (p.208). Both the tiger and the Kindertransportees can be considered tokens of success from a historical period in which the British were a powerful force: they become the objects that were salvaged and brought back to Britain to be looked fondly upon for a few decades, until their historical significance fades.

Milton could also be suggesting how histories should be considered alongside each other to prevent the act of forgetting and in the hope of learning lessons for the future. This mirrors the contribution to cultural memory theory made by Michael Rothberg in his notion of multidirectional memory, in which he suggests different cultures' histories and traumas should be examined alongside each other. Indeed, Rothberg illustrates how 'coming to terms with the past always happens in comparative contexts and via the circulation of memories linked to what are only apparently separate histories and national or ethnic constituencies'.[84]

Milton's memoir may thus be read as a comment on man's destructive human nature and how nations consistently oppress a race for their own self gain. Revealingly, Milton comments on the mass graves all over the world which exist as a record of 'our murderous histories' (p.240). Crucially, as Rothberg argues that histories implicate other historical events of the future, Milton's example of multidirectional memory – this productive 'cross-referencing, and borrowing'[85] – is likely to speak to the reader and their generation, subtly suggesting that they should assess the current situation of displaced refugees or more recent genocides.

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[84] Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), p.272.
[85] *Ibid.*, p.2f.

Furthermore, the memoirist appears to infer that more investment in remembrance is necessary in Britain and in Germany; in Germany she is confronted by an absence, a lack of memory at the graveyard, and in Britain she witnesses the forgetting of a chapter of British history which inflicted upheaval and death on many people. In perhaps one of the most progressive memoirs in this way of thinking, the tiger's fate is the consequence of a culture failing to engage with a shameful part of its history.

Milton's account of her Kindertransport experience reveals both the complexities of accessing and representing the past and the challenge of remembering on cultural and national levels. Her memoir is a site of negotiation, exposing the problem of self-representation especially in the context of trauma – an issue at the centre of life writing.[86] To both facilitate her narration of the past and expose the unreliability of memory, Milton reveals how memory is often constructed through active imagination or manipulation. Witnessing her obvious struggle to accurately represent her past, the reader gains a better understanding of the difficulties memoirists face during their project of self-representation.

### 3.5) Marion Charles, *Ich war ein Glückskind*: Memoir and the Transmission of Experience

The construction of Marion Charles's memoir, *Ich war ein Glückskind*, is particularly important to examine. The narrative is structured around a conversation between Charles (the adult narrator) and Anna Kiefer, a local student who is writing an article for her school newspaper. Charles tailors their conversations around the material she has available, such as letters, diary entries written between 1938 and 1947, photographs, and telegrams, as well as material from an unpublished autobiography.[87] Edited versions of these are included in the memoir. Letters full of longing and desperation were sent to her parents and depict her time in Britain and her success at school. These letters failed to reflect her troubles, which are, instead, conveyed in her diary entries.

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[86] See Gilmore.

Naturally, there is an inevitable re-working of material in the writing of the memoir. Existing parts of a previously written autobiography act as a foundation but it is unclear whether this was written in English or German. The memoir then gained the interest of a German publisher and was consequently published in German, translated from English by Anne Braun. In the text, Charles fills in the gaps between these diary entries and letters with her reflections and extra historical information, which is conveyed through Charles's narrative voice and appears in italics in the text.

Marion Charles enjoyed a happy childhood before enduring anti-Semitic discrimination at school and living under the threat posed by the Gestapo. Her route to safety via the Kindertransport was recorded in her diary as a 'schrecklicher Albtraum, aus dem es kein Erwachen gibt' (p.70). In England, where she arrived aged eleven, Charles has to cope with the death of her father and life with unsuitable, unloving guardians which causes much upset. In her memoir she reflects on her situation as a child refugee: '[i]ch war elf Jahre alt, viele Meilen weit weg von meinen Eltern, meinem Heim, meinen Freunden, meinem Heimatland, und ganz allein und ohne Freunde' (p.99). She is reunited with her mother in England in 1947.

The issue of memory transmission is also important to examine in Charles's memoir. To enable the communication of her experience, Charles appears to overtly emphasise the role of the reader through the character of Anna and also situates her experience in historical events, adding historical significance to her personal experience. Despite the successful inclusion of this information and historical context, the unknown suffering of family members and the atrocities of the Holocaust continue to complicate the representation and transmission of her Kindertransport experience.

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[87] This autobiography was written in the 1960s, however remained unpublished at the request of a family member. Marion Charles, *Ich war ein Glückskind*: *Mein Weg aus Nazideutschland mit dem Kindertransport* (Munich: cbj, 2013), p.12. Further references given in the text.

Charles's memoir suggests that she and Anna met three times in total, and during these meetings, Charles talks Anna through the story of her life. In this respect, *Ich war ein Glückskind* can be considered the product of transferred experience. It remains unclear, however, whether Anna is a living person or a fictional character created by Charles. In an interview, it is implied that the memoir was written with the help of Charles's adult daughter and the editor, but there is no mention of an Anna Kiefer.[88] Consequently, the figure of Anna can be understood to be a narrative device Charles uses to structure her memoir and which invites a readership of a similar age to fourteen year-old Anna.

The relationship between Anna and Charles is an interesting dynamic to examine: ultimately, Anna – a symbol of future generations – enables Charles's story to be told. The text gives the impression of a spoken conversation and can be compared to Kacandes's notion of 'Talk as Witnessing'. Kacandes suggests that this 'talking' means 'readers must first recognize the text as a call to testify, and then they must interpret the evidence in an act of cowitnessing that creates the story of the trauma for the first time'.[89] The reader is likely to identify with Anna, and this figure becomes a representative physical figure of Charles's implied reader. 'Fictive' or 'implied' readers appear 'chiefly in those narratives which direct attention to the process of narration'.[90] Paul Goetsch explains how the text's 'language and style' and 'its literary and historical allusions, [...] indicate that the implied reader is being addressed by the writer' and, by extension, the reader is treated as 'the first-person narrator's companion and confidant'.[91]

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[88] LiteraturInitiative Berlin (2013), <http://www.literaturinitiative.de/fileadmin/web/images/Inhaltselemente/Glueckskind_-_Interview_Marion_Charles.pdf> [accessed 05 August 2019].

[89] Irene Kacandes, *Talk Fiction: Literature and the Talk Explosion* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), p.xvi.

[90] Paul Goetsch, 'Reader Figures in Narrative', *Style*, 38 (2004), 188–202 (p.190).

Yet, in establishing this dynamic, Charles not only engages the reader but also highlights the challenges associated with transmitting her past experiences as a Kindertransportee. Peter Brooks argues that 'dramatizing the relations of tellers and listeners, narrators and narratees [...] enacts the problematic of transmission' and, as Virginia Allen-Terry Sherman and others summarise, this 'reflects an "anxiety" about storytelling in narrative'.[92] Charles's memoir reveals several concerns about the transmission of memory; both the intergenerational transmission of Holocaust trauma and the effectiveness of attempts to convey her memory of the Kindertransport to a younger generation. These will be addressed shortly.

Perhaps the first obstacle memoirists face when conveying their story is his or her position writing as an adult with the privilege of retrospect. As James Young explains, 'unlike the diarist, the survivor-memoirist begins his [or her] testimony with full knowledge of the end, which inevitably contextualizes early experiences in terms of later ones'.[93] The memoirist must face the question of how to narrate 'what came before' the Holocaust – a question of how to accurately construct a period of time in which the atrocities of the Holocaust were unknown. In an attempt to convey the danger she was in before her departure on the Kindertransport and to emphasise the necessity of her escape to Britain, Charles unites past events and their later implication in her narration. This unison of personal upsetting experience and historical consequence is in an attempt to secure memory, as '[r]emembering trauma entails contextualizing it within history'.[94]

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[91] *Ibid.*

[92] Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1992), p.28; *(Re)writing and Remembering: Memory as Artefact and Artifice*, ed. by Allen-Terry Sherman et al., p.ix.

[93] James E. Young, *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust: Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), p.30.

[94] Gilmore, p.31.

In an effort to communicate her past, personal experience is placed in its wider historical context. This is different to Gissing's memoir, in which the reader mostly finds out information when the chronologically narrated self finds out and reveals this knowledge in her diary. In contrast, in Charles's memoir, on the occasion her mother was taken away by the Gestapo, Charles narrates '[z]um damaligen Zeitpunkt hatte ich keine Ahnung, Anna, dass in Deutschland im März 1933 das erste Konzentrationslager eröffnet worden war, das KZ Dachau. Und ich ahnte auch nicht, was das für mich, meine Familie und für uns alle bedeutete' (p.33). Charles foreshadows the fate of her family through her narration and reflects upon this time of not-knowing. As King argues, the writer's 'memory has been forced to assimilate later knowledge which now also belongs to the wider realm of "history": what [s]he can never recover is the "innocence" of the time when [she] "didn't know"'.[95]

Although Charles engages her reader and situates her own story within an historical context familiar to the reader, the horror of the Holocaust problematises Charles's construction and transmission of her past. At several points, the narration of her personal experience is interrupted by concerns about the suffering faced by her family and the European Jewry. The questions and musings on the nature of Jewish persecution asked by eleven-year-old Charles on board the Kindertransport train remain unanswerable throughout her text. During her journey, her thoughts dwell on her father and on the persecution of Jews: '[w]arum haben sie uns auseinandergerissen? Warum mussten wir uns trennen? Warum hassen sie uns so sehr und wollen uns so schrecklich wehtun?' (p.71). Charles's memoir clearly demonstrates that '[t]rauma is never exclusively personal; it always exists within complicated histories'.[96] This in turn presents a challenge in this project of self-representation.

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[95] King, p.1.
[96] Gilmore, p.31.

Though the chapter in her memoir, 'Die Wahrheit', offers clarity on the fates of her family members, it also raises further unanswerable questions. In this chapter which describes events on the continent spanning from January 1941 to May 1945, the reader learns about Charles's family members: her father died of natural causes (although her mother believes it was the pain of separation); her mother survived by changing her identity and hiding; but various family members perished in concentration camps. The disturbing details are not spared: her father's parents were taken away by the SS 'wie Vieh' to Theresienstadt, where they were gassed and burned only after their gold teeth had been pulled out (p.202). In this memoir, the Jewish genocide evades comprehension and resists resolution, remaining in the form of unanswered questions. When confronted with this knowledge of her family's fate she poignantly asks: 'wie kann ich damit leben?' (p.205). The memoir, which should be a record of an individual's past, gets caught up in unanswerable questions surrounding the Holocaust.

Significantly, the Holocaust proves to be a lexical obstacle in the narration of her experience to Anna. Charles struggles to find appropriate lexis that can encompass the horror of the extermination process and becomes frustrated by the term 'Deportation', exclaiming 'oh, wie ich diesen beschönigenden Ausdruck hasse! Deportiert, ins Lager transportiert, exterminiert – nichts davon kommt dem tatsächlichen Grauen nahe!' (p.205). Charles, like Adorno, suggests that language is an unsuitable way to entirely process and express the horror of the Holocaust.

Similarly, concerned about the poignancy and impact of her experience becoming lost in the process of transmission, Charles indicates the limitations placed upon her ability to convey her experience. For example, after describing the events of 'Kristallnacht', Charles directly addresses Anna: 'Anna, diese Worte klingen so unpersönlich, so allgemein, so vage' (p.49). Charles voices the concern that words, in the form of fact, may lose meaning over time and through transference. She urges that emotion should still be conveyed alongside transferred knowledge, suggesting that a personal connection to the atrocities is crucial. This, in turn, poses a greater question about the transference of experience once the generation of living Kindertransportees passes away.

Charles's memoir reveals several issues of memory transmission; the most concerning is the influence of Holocaust trauma on personal memory and representation. These crimes against humanity conducted on such an immense scale challenge Charles's ability to connect with and comment on her own experience. Wendy Leigh, Charles's daughter, explains in the introduction to the memoir that her mother refused to consider herself to be a victim of the Holocaust (p.14). Whilst this is not uncommon amongst the collective of Kinder (see Chapter One), it can be argued that Charles finds it especially challenging to comprehend her own suffering. Charles asserts at the beginning of her memoir that '[i]ch habe kein Problem damit, über meine Vergangenheit zu sprechen oder mich in allen Einzelheiten daran zu erinnern' (p.17), yet her unease when accepting her traumatic past suggests otherwise.

There is a conflict in how she views or wishes to present her experience. Despite being adamant that she was 'ein glückliches, zufriedenes Kind' (p.22), Charles acknowledges her own suffering on several occasions and her intentional repression: '[i]ch habe vermutlich auch gelitten, aber tapfer versucht, meine wahren Gefühle sogar vor mir selbst zu verbergen' (p.61). It is intriguing to observe how the memoirist's trauma is sometimes downplayed especially as memoirs are most commonly written to attest to personal suffering. Charles ignores this misery, implying that she did not suffer compared to others: 'was für ein relativ unbeschwertes Leben ich führte, während meine Mutter, meine Freunde, meine Familie und alle Juden so viel erleiden mussten' (p.175). Gissing's text demonstrates how collective Holocaust trauma clearly poses a challenge to the act of self-representation expected from the memoir genre.

Charles's memoir raises another concern about the transmission of memory. Holocaust suffering appears to be transmitted from her own mother, through Charles, to Charles's daughter. The memoirist explains how her mother 'lebte fortan mit diesem schmerzlichen Wissen, genau wie auch ich es bis heute tun muss' (p.202). Similarly, Wendy Leigh not only recognises her mother's anguish but is likewise haunted by the death of her ancestors; she is haunted by the persecution of Jews and the experience of the generations before her: '[e]ine Zeit lang litt *ich* wegen der Vergangenheit meiner Mutter unter Albträumen, sie nicht!' (p.14).

The act of imparting the Kindertransport experience to future generations has always been an inherent concern in Kindertransport memory. Charles's memoir not only addresses this familial intergenerational inheritance of trauma, but – through the presence of Anna – invites the reader to question the extent to which the memoirist's Kindertransport experience and Holocaust trauma will be transferred to the next generation, especially to individuals with no familial connection. Laub attests to the vital presence of the reader, claiming that '[f]or the testimonial process to take place, there needs to be a bonding, the intimate and total presence of an *other* – in the position of one who hears'.[97] Charles, actively speaking out to the next generation through Anna, demands interaction, response, and dialogue. She provokingly instructs Anna to look at a photo of her cousin:

> [h]ier, Anna, sieh dir das Foto von Kurt-Manfred an, schau dir seine Augen an, die Augen eines jungen Mannes voller Lebenslust unf Fröhlichkeit, und frage dich, ob er es verdient hat, mit nur zweiundzwanzig Jahren auf diese grauenhafte Weise zu sterben! Hatte es überhaupt irgendjemand verdient? (p.204).

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[97] Felman and Laub, p.70.

Charles's use of exclamatory and rhetorical question, impersonal address, imperatives, and emotive description of her cousin's character is an attempt to convey this grief, loss, and frustration to Anna. Most importantly, this is an instruction used to encourage critical reflection from the reader, as well as their imagination. Avižienis explains:

> [t]he intent of the memoirist to preserve a past is always directed outwards to a reader who will be encouraged to follow 'authorial instructions' and experience the events as if she were there. The reader for her part will heed the instructions, but all the while not forgetting herself [...]. Balancing between the witness and spectator positions will enable the reader to approach the events critically and thus to enter into a dialogue with the memoirist and with history.[98]

Powerfully, Charles's memoir highlights a main concern with regard to postmemorial engagement: the reader or listener should empathise and not sympathise, as to empathise is to retain a critical distance.[99] Identifying too closely with the experience, as her daughter arguably did, can induce a form of 'postmemory', whereby the recipient becomes re-traumatized.[100] As Alison Landsberg, in her conceptualisation of prosthetic memory, proposes, one's engagement should begin 'from a position of difference' and this is something Charles expects from her readers.[101]

The memoirist indicates that the interest of the reader is essential if the memory of the Kindertransport will remain durable. In her afterword, Charles potently asks: '[n]un, was kann ich dir und deinen Lesern noch erzählen, Anna?' (p.219). The dialogue and opportunity for trans-generational transmission rests in the hands of Anna and of the younger generation; it is now their responsibility to ask questions and engage before time runs out. This is suggestive of a change in Kindertransport memory in which the reader's chance to communicate and ask organic questions to survivors is limited as the generation passes out of living memory.

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[98] Avižienis, p.47.

[99] Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), p.149.

[100] Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), p.86.

[101] Landsberg, *Prosthetic,* p.9.

*Ich war ein Glückskind* reflects the complexity surrounding trauma and its narration and transmission in the memoir form. The memoir, as a genre of self-representation and record of lived experience, is challenged by Charles's unresolved and inherited Holocaust trauma, her changeable understanding of her own experience, and her concerns about the transference of experience to Anna, and, in turn, the reader. Charles's memoir reveals a preoccupation with the suffering of others and a resistance when representing her own personal distress.

## 3.6) Chapter Summary

The analysis of these four memoirs illustrates how the genre can be understood as a site of constant negotiation and self-editing that offers a crucial opportunity to investigate processes of remembering and narrative construction. This examination has inspected the ways in which the memoirists attempt to represent both the self and traumatic experience. In her edited volume of essays on trauma narratives, Teresa Ludden grapples with the relation between trauma and narrative. She writes:

> [i]f narrative implies construction, organisation, and ordering, conferring meaning and coherence on self and world, it seems at odds with ideas of

> traumatic experiences of pain, violence, shock, loss, and suffering which shatter the self and thus problematise the ability to comprehend and glean meaning.[102]

This examination of Kindertransport memoirs, however, reveals how it is this very construction and organising ability of memoir, along with its position between personal experience, history, and the public world, that allows Kindertransport trauma to be navigated, side-stepped, or represented in ways that avoid the direct narration of the initial moment of shock. For example, the memoir genre welcomes the use of diaries and letters, historical fact, a mixture of voices, the re-imagination or fleshing-out of episodes, and a contemplation of memory processes. These strategies enable the memoirists to create seemingly thorough accounts of their past which, as a result, allows them to claim their own experience as well as testify to this period of history.

With regard to the representation of the self, this analysis shows how the memoir is a particularly self-aware genre; the authors understand that the readers expect a working-through of the past, or indeed some sort of revelation or recovery instigated by some new personal understanding or knowledge. Consequently, memoirs may be constructed in a way that accommodates such expectations. Due to its multifarious nature, the memoir serves several purposes: for Gissing, the writing process enables her to relive and claim agency over her past and gain a sense of wholeness; for Blend, the memoir is written as a recovery of her roots and of a fractured identity; Milton's memoir is used as a tool to expose the limits of memory and processes of remembering; and Charles's memoir allows her to voice her concern about the transmission of experience, especially one that is overshadowed by Holocaust suffering.

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[102] Teresa Ludden, 'Introduction: On Creativity and Not-Knowing in Trauma Narratives and Theories', *Trauma Narratives and Theories: New Readings in Contemporary German, Austrian, and Transnational Contexts: German Life and Letters,* 72:4 (2019), 399–426 (p.406).

Generic features facilitate the construction of the accounts; the use of diary entries, shared Kindertransport memory, and the flexible relationship between the narrated and narrating voices, for example, enables the memoirist to build a bridge over unnarratable or upsetting experience and to present the reader with a view of traumatic moments but at a safe distance from the dangerous water – preventing a submersion into the unknown, murky depths of initial traumatic experience. The memoir thus provides a safe, accessible, public-friendly re-routing of the experience. However, during the construction of this bridge, the child refugee's personality, their immediate impressions and day-to-day life, and a large part of their adult lives that includes the process of dealing with grief falls between the cracks in the brickwork. Indeed, Felman suggests that testimony does not offer 'a completed statement, a totalizable account of those events' because 'language is in process and in trial, it does not possess itself as a conclusion, as the constatation of a verdict or the self-transparency of knowledge'.[103] Significantly, these four writers find it challenging to clearly and fully recount the Kindertransport journey to England either due to departing at such a young age or due to the trauma caused by the separation. It will be illuminating to investigate how these aspects are approached by different genres in the following two chapters.

With regard to the representation of trauma, the initial impact of an upsetting experience is preserved within the structure of the memoir, instead of being completely narrated or explained. Gissing continuously refers to her mediated understanding of trauma in the form of a 'blow', Blend preserves traumatic memory in the space between acknowledgement and a processed narrative, Milton is unable to directly access the traumatic separation from her mother but represents it with the help of later experience, and Charles continues to contemplate the awfulness of the Holocaust, struggling to reconcile this with her own personal suffering. Luckhurst explains this challenge of addressing trauma in memoirs, explaining that as '[t]he traumatic instant cannot be experienced as such' and defies our understanding of experience, 'the trauma memoir centres the life on what has been forgotten and only belatedly recovered: a life narrative in which the main interest lies in this very process of analeptic revision'.[104]

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[103] Felman and Laub, p.5.

Lang emphasises the significance of such 'unreadable' aspects, suggesting that 'eyewitness testimony recognizes the presence, role, and even importance of the unreadable; it, too, serves as a function of memory'.[105] Expanding on Lang's concept, Mandel concisely proposes that the following assumptions 'constitute *the unspeakable*: the rhetorical invocation of the limits of language, comprehension, representation, and thought on the one hand, and a deferential gesture toward atrocity, horror, trauma, and pain on the other'.[106] This combination can be found in the memoirs discussed in this chapter. These accounts are not only plagued by issues of trauma and representation; this analysis exposes how there are other issues or concerns raised by all four Kindertransport memoirs. The position of the reader, the critical questioning of memory, and the prevalence of the unknown all require further comment.

First, the presence and role of the reader varies between the texts. The unreadable gaps in memoirs coexist with the memoirists' desire for the reader's active engagement with their experience. As discussed in Chapter One, engagement and critical reflection – as opposed to feelings of pity and sympathy – are prerequisites for the stabilisation and durability of Kindertransport memory. The 'truth pact' – the transparent relationship between author and reader – in the memoir genre, and the unreadable gaps left in the text, encourage an 'empathic unsettlement' which maintains the 'distances between the self and other' and 'compels us to react empathically to "others" while being fully aware of their otherness'.[107]

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[104] Luckhurst, p.118.
[105] Lang, *Textual Silence*, p.92
[106] Naomi Mandel, *Against the Unspeakable: Complicity, the Holocaust, and Slavery in America* (London and Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006), p.4.

An examination of reader positionality is a revealing way to observe how the next generation is encouraged to engage with and respond to the Kindertransportee. Stark suggests that first person accounts, including diaries and memoirs, '[a]ttesting to their own fragility and insufficiency, […] seek also to involve the reader in the act of witnessing, to transform the reader into a co-witness'.[108] This is evident in Gissing's narrative; the reader becomes a co-witness, reading the letters from Gissing's parents along with the narrated self. As a co-witness, the reader can engage with the immediacy of Gissing's narrative, yet Gissing retains a critical distance as the reader does not assume the role of the addressee. The narration is instead addressed to her parents, not to the reader as seen in the other memoirs. Gissing writes: '[h]ome is love, and you, my dearest ones, are still home to me...' (p.176). To some extent, the reader can avoid the same ethical responsibility that is placed upon recipients such as Anna Kiefer in Charles's text.

In Blend's memoir, the presence of the reader and the act of narration allows Blend to uncover repressed memories. The reader not only performs a function through his or her implied presence, but Blend also encourages a questioning of memorials by leaving the reader at Buchenwald, the site of her parents' trauma. Here, she voices her concerns regarding public commemoration, thus situating the reader within the current tensions surrounding cultural memory and acts of remembrance.

Milton has a different approach to engaging her readership. Although she talks directly to her audience at times using the second person pronoun 'you' (p.4f), she also encourages her reader to maintain a critical distance. She gives a personal insight into the process of writing her experience, admitting: '[i]f fiction is, to a large degree, the art of lying cogently, autobiography is probably the art of lying cogently to yourself' (p.232). Milton's frequent reflections on the unreliability and creativity of individual memory ensure the reader's distance from her text and encourage the reader's contemplation.

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[107] Amos Goldberg, 'Empathy, Ethics, and Politics in Holocaust Historiography', in *Empathy and its Limits*, ed. by Aleida Assmann and Ines Detmers (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp.52–76 (p.61).
[108] Stark, p.193.

Employing a different strategy, Charles both relies on Anna's presence – their discussion is central to the construction of her memoir – yet she is also concerned about Anna's proximity to her narrative. She encourages a response from Anna, forcing her out of the role of a passive listener or co-witness. These Kindertransport memoirs, by and large, stimulate a critical response from the reader, who is encouraged to similarly question modes of remembrance, the fallibility of memory, and his or her own role in memory transmission and its preservation.

Second, the analysis of the memoirs in this chapter highlights the growing dependence on cultural memory in Kindertransport remembrance and a transition away from living memory. Indeed, forms of social, collective, and cultural memory are relied upon to enable the authors to confront their past. Written during and after the 'memory boom' of the 1980s, these four memoirs engage with concerns surrounding public and national memory, and the transmission of trauma. Revealingly, in their act of self-representation, Gissing and Charles both turn towards collective, social memory when their personal memory is no longer spontaneously stimulated by the material they have at hand. This suggests that, as scholars exhaust the archives of personal testimony, other forms of cultural memorialisation are necessary to ensure an individual's engagement in the future. Meanwhile, memoirs that do not rely as heavily on past repositories of memory, such as those written by Blend and Milton, in fact show a critical awareness of the limitations of individual memory and also expose national workings of memory.

Third, as the memoirist writes as a witness to a particular historical event and often feels an urgency to convey her – and her parents' – experience, the resulting memoir is permeated with loss and an incomplete knowledge of family members' fates. The loss of family and friends, and the acts of atrocity against the Jewish population in Europe and the unknown nature of their suffering poses an obstacle to the representation of the Kindertransportee and their own personal traumatic experience. This is particularly evident in Charles's text.

Personal and collective suffering merge and, as Craig-Norton explains, the parents' fate 'has been filtered through the memories of the former child refugees' and is 'inextricable from their own experiences of separation and loss'.[109] Indeed, this difficulty in narration has been succinctly argued by Horowitz, who writes that 'the Holocaust defies our best efforts to know – defies the survivor's best efforts to tell'.[110] Although the memoirists demonstrate a grappling with and gaining of knowledge, each text still displays a struggle with something that remains unknown or unresolvable.

In conclusion, whilst the memoir is an invaluable source that conveys the lingering confusion, loss, and longing caused by the Kindertransport, the memoir ultimately documents the adult's memoirist's mediation of key upsetting events and her process of recalling and shaping the past. The memoirists are determined to create authentic and accurate accounts, to reveal moments of understanding, and fulfil the expectations upheld by both the genre and the reader – all whilst wanting the story to be transmitted to and well-received by the next generation. Hermione Lee, on the topic of life-writing, suggests '[a]t the heart of these impure, multi-layered and multisourced narratives, is always the desire to get a vivid sense of the person, or people, who are the subject'.[111] Yet, an analysis of these texts reveals that it is difficult to extract a vivid, lingering image of the Kindertransportee amidst the longing for lost family and lost memories, and the suffering of the Holocaust.

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[109] Craig-Norton, *Contesting*, p.240f.
[110] Horowitz, p.33.

Although the memoirs often attempt to show a reliving of experience or a recovery of the child self, these texts essentially expose a lack of an organic connection to the past. Gissing relies on reconstructing the child's experience and replicating her diary entries, Blend attests to the fragility of her teenage self, Milton emphasises the rupture between the German child and her later self, and Charles is ultimately unable to relate to her distressing childhood experiences in the same way her younger self probably experienced them, at a time 'before' the Holocaust. As the authors of autobiographical fiction are no longer restrained by the expectation of truth-telling found in memoirs, the novels explored in the next chapter are, to some extent, able to rectify this unclear impression of the child by depicting a more detailed image of the young refugee's character during the wartime years.

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[111] Hermione Lee, '"From Memory": Literary Encounters and Life-Writing', in *On Life-Writing*, ed. by Zachary Leader (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp.124–141 (p.125).

# Chapter Four

# Autobiographical Fiction by Kindertransportees: Re-imagining the Refugee Experience

## 4.1) Between Autobiography and Fiction

The previous chapter demonstrates how the memoir genre, with its 'almost legalistic definition of truth telling, its anxiety about invention, and its preference for the literal and verifiable', attempts to present the facts as accurately as possible.[1] Rita Bouckaert-Ghesquiere explains that '[m]emoirs assume a strong and direct connection between the author, the related events and the evoked period'; however, in the autobiographical novel, the 'relation between what is told and the factual information is less sharp than in memoirs or diaries'.[2]

The way in which Kindertransportees choose to creatively represent lived experience or a lived time period, and the literary devices employed in these fictionalisations, will be the focus of this chapter. The representation of the Kindertransport experience in Lore Segal's *Other People's Houses* (1958), Karen Gershon's *The Bread of Exile* (1985), and Irene N. Watts's trilogy, *Escape from Berlin* (2013), will be analysed.[3] First, the characteristics of the genre and its overlap with historical fiction will be summarised.

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[1] Leigh Gilmore, *The Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony* (London: Cornell University Press, 2001), p.3.

[2] Rita Bouckaert-Ghesquiere, 'Looking Back. The Rise of the Autobiographical Novel in Children's Literature', in *Genres as Repositories of Cultural Memory*, vol. 5 of the Proceedings of the xvth Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association "Literature as Cultural Memory", Leiden 1997, ed. by Hendrik van Gorp and Ulla Musarra-Schroeder (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), pp.441–463 (p.442).

[3] Lore Segal, *Other People's Houses* (New York: The New Press, 1994). First published in 1958; Karen Gershon, *The Bread of Exile: a Novel* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1985); Irene N. Watts, *Escape from Berlin* (Toronto: Tundra Books, 2013).

As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, the texts explored in this chapter are all positioned on a spectrum; Segal's text is the most aligned with the author's real-life experiences, Gershon's text shows greater creative investment, whereas in Watts's trilogy the collective Kindertransport experience, rather than the individual, is largely re-imagined. As explained earlier, Watts's trilogy also falls into the category of historical fiction, which traverses both this chapter and the fictional texts written by non-Kindertransportees examined in the next chapter. *Escape from Berlin* is nevertheless considered in this chapter alongside Segal's and Gershon's autobiographical fiction as it is also a fictional representation of the Kindertransport produced by a Kindertransportee. Accordingly, Watts's trilogy can be loosely understood as a work of autobiographical fiction, which focuses on collective, historical experience rather than events personal to her own life.

There are many similarities between autobiographical fiction and historical fiction. Corresponding with Scott H. Dalton's conceptualisation of historical fiction, Segal and Gershon – in addition to Watts – create 'fictional characters in fictional situations, but in the context of a real historical period'.[4] A. Waller Hastings explains that writers of children's historical fiction 'tend to advocate a balance between historical accuracy and imaginative recreation of the past'[5] and Nishevita J. Murthy remarks that it is this combination of 'imagination and factualism' that results in the historical fiction's 'literary appeal'.[6] This recipe of a factual base with an imaginative dressing can likewise be found in understandings of autobiographical fiction.

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[4] Scott H. Dalton, 'What is Historical Fiction?', *Vision: a resource for writers* (2006) <http://fmwriters.com/Visionback/Issue34/historicalfic.htm> [accessed 21 May 2011].

[5] A. Waller Hastings, 'Toward a Theory of Historical Fiction for Children', *Third Biennial Conference on Modern Critical Approaches to Children's Literature* (1999), <https://www.academia.edu/2144562/Toward_a_Theory_of_Historical_Fiction_for_Children> [accessed 08 September 2019] (4).

[6] Nishevita J. Murthy, *Historicizing Fiction/Fictionalizing History: Representation in Select Novels of Umberto Eco and Orhan Pamuk* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2014), p.ix.

Although Watts's work is not based on events she was personally involved in, the feelings she experienced as a Kindertransportee are likely to have influenced her trilogy, and although Segal's and Gershon's novels are more autobiographically informed when compared to Watts's, the amount of fictionalisation also differs between the novels written by Segal and Gershon. Max Saunders, in his study of 'Autobiografiction' identifies ways in which writers combine life-writing with fiction, clarifying the different degrees to which fiction can be autobiographical. He explains that in its 'purest form […] only the names of the characters have been changed' and 'might include invented episodes and speeches'. He continues:

> So a novel might be auto/biographical in its characters, but not in its plot or dialogue. Or, vice-versa: it might tell a real story, but reinvent the characters involved. Or it might use some real people, events, or language, but combine any of these with invented material. It might be true to autobiographical feelings about real events, but not to the events themselves.[7]

The texts examined in this chapter demonstrate these various degrees of fictionalisation: Segal's protagonist (of the same name) merges with the author's narrating voice at the end of the text; Gershon changes the name of her characters yet there is a strong link to her own factual autobiography; and Watts imaginatively invents her characters and plot, yet focuses on the collective experience and shared feelings about the refugee condition, which she, too, can relate to.

Despite the differing degree of fictionality, there are several similarities between the texts which lead to a revealing comparison in this chapter. All three authors focus on the experience of the child refugee and the experience of growing up in Britain. Áine McGillicuddy explains how autobiographical fiction written *for* children is normally *about* children and their lived reality. The story is told through the child's eyes, with a focus on the 'domestic, personal, daily round of existence in exile rather than political details [...] as these were the central concerns' of a child.[8] Whilst it may seem an obvious characteristic of Kindertransport fiction, it is worth noting that the fiction examined in the next chapter expands this time frame and does not exclusively represent the refugee as a child.

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[7] Max Saunders, *Self Impression: Life-Writing, Autobiografiction, and the Forms of Modern Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p.8.

There are several advantages to this limited perspective. Fictionalisation of a time personally experienced by the author 'allows writers to focus on short sequences of their lives instead of trying to grasp existence in its entirety', which 'enables its users to create a real mise en scène of themselves, by editing, rewriting fragments of lived experience'.[9] Additionally, in representing this specific time period, the authors can re-imagine and depict the world around the protagonist, describing other refugees' experiences and lives in Britain.

Kindertransportees may choose to fictionalise the Kindertransport experience for several reasons, including to 'creatively revisit or alter one's past', as an attempt at 'overt self-fictionalisation' or a 'project of self-exploration, examining and experimenting with identity, and facilitating the writer's textual search for selfhood'.[10] In line with Hywel Dix's understanding of autofiction, the texts in this chapter, in their attempts to fictionalise the Kindertransport, can be understood as sharing two common aims: first, the texts can be read as 'a project of self-exploration and self-experimentation on the part of the author' – both in terms of individual and collective experience – and, second, a 'process of writing in response to trauma'.[11]

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[8] Áine McGillicuddy, 'From Germany to England: Girls in Exile in the Works of Judith Kerr and Irene N. Watts', in *Exile and Gender 1: Literature and the Press: Yearbook of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies*, 17 (2016), ed. by Charmian Brinson and Andrea Hammel, pp.188–206 (p.191f).

[9] Elise Hugueny-Léger, 'Broadcasting the Self: Autofiction, Television and Representations of Authorship in Contemporary French Literature', *Life Writing*, 14:1 (2017), 5–18 (p.6).

[10] Rosie MacLachlan, *Nina Bouraoui, Autofiction and the Search for Selfhood* (Berne: Peter Lang, 2016), p.159.

Whilst the representation of the self and representation of trauma were problematic in memoirs, the creativity permitted in fictionalisations means that Kindertransportees have an opportunity to creatively engage with these two aspects that often evade direct recall or exact representation in stricter forms of life-writing. Supporting this, Christa Schönfelder explains that novels 'which explore self-narration and self-representation in the face of trauma within fictional and literary structures, allow authors to experiment with self-reflexivity in ways that non-fictional trauma writing may not permit' which, in turn, '[enables] writers to explore different perspectives on writing trauma and writing the self'.[12] Supporting this, Gillian Lathey suggests that authors who arrived in Britain at a young age, such as Judith Kerr and Kindertransportee Charles Hannam, 'found themselves turning to literature, seeking to anchor and give meaning to the duality of their experience in accounts initially designed for the next generation'.[13] She continues to argue that, through writing autobiographical fiction, an author has the opportunity to '[re-establish] contact with his [or her] early life'.[14]

Primarily, this chapter will examine the ways in which the authors re-create the child's view and refugee experience during their formative years, which results in an alternative representation of the Kindertransport when compared to the adult's attempt at recollection and construction found in memoirs. This analysis will demonstrate how, through the use of various literary devices seen in fictional works, the authors reveal the reality and specificity of the child's Kindertransportee experience by consistently conveying the immediacy of occurring events, thoughts, and reactions. Moreover, all three authors, as this study will show, also write the anxiety and distress caused by separation, persecution, and alienation into their texts and respective narrative plots. The genre of autofiction, or autobiographical fiction, lends itself to such a project; this type of writing aims to immediately articulate and reveal one's 'self'.[15]

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[11] Hywel Dix, 'Introduction: Autofiction in English: The Story so Far' in *Autofiction in English*, Palgrave Studies in Life Writing, ed. by Hywel Dix (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp.1–23 (p.4).

[12] Christa Schönfelder, *Wounds and Words: Childhood and Family Trauma in Romantic and Postmodern Fiction* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2013), pp.29–30.

[13] Gillian Lathey, 'A Child's View of Exile: Language and Identity in the Autobiographical Writings of Judith Kerr and Charles Hannam', in *Keine Klage über England? Deutsche und österreichische Exilerfahrungen in Großbritannien 1933-1945*, ed. by Charmian Brinson, Richard Dove, Anthony Grenville, Marian Malet and Jennifer Taylor (Munich: iudicium, 1998), pp.190–199 (p.192).

[14] *Ibid.*, p.198.

Accordingly, this chapter will investigate how Segal attempts to 'deepen' and 'darken' her narrative, paying greater attention to the impressions and anxiety of her Kindertransportee 'self'. Following this, it will be revealed how Gershon highlights the distorted way in which her protagonist views the world, illustrating this through the teenager's actions in the narrative plot. This chapter will then examine how Watts expands the reader's understanding of the Kindertransportee in Britain and autobiographical fiction's exploration of the 'self' by creating two protagonists and representing collective experience. In keeping with the focus of historical fiction, Watts addresses the effect of distressing historical events on the child refugee and represents this in a highly literary manner.

Moreover, this chapter will reveal how, as the author is positioned between lived and fictionalised experience, there is an inherent negotiation of intimacy and distance on the part of the author. Meg Jensen, for example, argues that autofiction, as a genre, encourages 'moments of true intimacy between reader and subject matter' and engages the 'readers' curiosity and empathy, precisely because they proclaim their fictional status while simultaneously hinting (via paratexts, such as author biographies, prefaces, photographs and the like) that there may be truths hidden within'.[16] Crucially, the analysis of these texts will reveal how the re-imagination of the Kindertransportee's consciousness and a focus on their immediate experience encourages the reader's empathy, yet, at the same time, the re-working and representation of trauma occasionally disrupts this established connection between the reader and protagonist. This is particularly intriguing in the novels by Segal and Gershon.

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[15] Dix, p.3.

### 4.2) Lore Segal, *Other People's Houses*

Lore Segal (née Groszmann) was born in Vienna in 1928 and travelled to Britain on a Kindertransport train in December 1938 after her family had faced months of violence, ostracisation, and persecution. An account of her Kindertransport experience can be found in the collective memoir *Into the Arms of Strangers* (2000) and, before this account, she wrote the novels *Other People's Houses* (1958) and *Her First American* (1985).

*Other People's Houses* follows a protagonist of the same name as the author (Lore) during her years growing up with five different guardians. Her novel shows the expectations, pressures, and conflicts caused by this frequent upheaval and change. Although successful in bringing about the rescue of her parents who were offered employment as domestic servants, Segal was unable to live fulltime with her parents during the war years. Segal's text is structured in two parts: the first part focuses on Lore's childhood and the persecution she witnessed as a child, her journey to England, the relationship with her parents, and the various homes in which she lived. Segal's text reflects the daily experience of being 'human contraband' and the everyday 'disabilities of exile'.[17]

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[16] Meg Jensen, 'How Art Constitutes the Human: Aesthetics, Empathy and the Interesting in Autofiction', in *Autofiction in English*, ed. by Dix, pp.65–83 (p.76).

Part two describes the experience of Lore's uncle Paul and his girlfriend, Ilse, who work on a refugee farm in the Dominican Republic – a position for which they volunteer in order to escape internment in Britain (pp.189–217). The inclusion of this additional story widens the limited perspective found in memoirs and allows Segal to present the broader experience of exile within her text rather than solely focusing on Lore's Kindertransport experience. The second half of the text also depicts Lore's further experiences of emigration; she joins her family in the Dominican Republic in 1948 and later starts a new chapter of her life as a young adult in New York in 1951.

Segal clearly marks her text as a work of autobiographical fiction; Julia K. Baker notes that 'Segal invites her readers to watch out for where her autobiography stops and the fiction of her life story begins'.[18] In her foreword, Segal asks the reader to consider the boundaries between experience and its representation when explaining how a former friend told her a story from his childhood: '[w]hen he had finished, I said, "I knew just where your autobiography stopped and fiction began." He said, "Then you knew more than I"'.[19]

Indeed, this 'blend', in which it becomes 'impossible to decide what is fictional and what is autobiographical in a text' is one characteristic of autofiction.[20] Identifying the distinction is challenging particularly as, according to Gilmore, 'the autobiographical project may swerve from the form of autobiography even as it embraces the project of self-representation'.[21] Segal acknowledges that a degree of creativity is necessary in the creation of her story and representation of her past. She realised she had a story to tell in 1951 in New York and explains her reason for choosing to write a piece of autobiographical fiction in her foreword: 'I am at pains to draw no facile conclusions – and all conclusions seem facile to me. If I want to trace the present from the occurrences of the past I must do it in the manner of the novelist. I posit myself as protagonist in the autobiographical action' (p.xiii).

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[17] Cynthia Ozick, 'Foreword' (1965), in Lore Segal, *Other People's Houses* (New York: The New Press, 1994), p.vii.

[18] Julia K. Baker, 'From *Other People's Houses* into *Shakespeare's Kitchen*: The Story of Lore Segal and How She Looked for Adventures and Where She Found Them', in *The Kindertransport to Britain 1938/39: New Perspectives: Yearbook of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies*, 13 (2012), ed. by Andrea Hammel and Bea Lewkowicz, pp.185–203 (p.186).

[19] Segal, *Other People's Houses*, p.xiv. Further references given in text.

[20] Dix, p.30.

Segal recognises that a different narrative position is necessary in her endeavour to connect with her past and represent her experience. Her motivation for choosing this genre is hinted at in the text when, at a young age, Lore begins to write her autobiography '[b]ut when [she] came to write it down, [she] felt a certain flatness'. She realised that '[t]he events needed to be picked up, deepened, darkened' (p.62). The purely factual recounting of experience was not satisfying enough, even at a young age, and Segal's remark suggests that the reality of her upheaval was not conveyed in this first attempt at writing an autobiographical account. Deepening and darkening her experience through creative endeavours in her autobiographical fiction proves to be a more fulfilling enterprise for Segal and allows her to re-examine her childhood 'self' and reassess the distress she faced.

## Deepening Experience: Representing the Child's Consciousness

The predominant way in which the experience of the Kindertransportee is represented is through the use of the child's perspective and the rendering of the child's consciousness. Segal's aim of depicting and deepening the portrayal of the child refugee's experiences dictates her narrative choices: she writes in the first person and in the past tense, which is delivered mostly from the perspective of the child's present. Consequently, the reader witnesses the unfolding conversations and action as Lore experiences them. The dominance of the protagonist's viewpoint and the consequent 'shifting of the narrative's focus towards the experiencing self of the narrator' has been recognised as 'a tendency which may be observed in most fictional autobiographies, while factual autobiography tends to place the narrating self in the foreground'.[22] In memoirs, for example, the adult memoirist's voice is the most dominant and her reflections guide the reader through the text. Crucially, the portrayal of life through the child's eyes in autobiographical fiction gives the representation of experience more coherence and cadence; instead of the general depiction of singular key events and memories in memoirs, Segal's narrative voice links together episodes, creating a sense of temporal continuity that strengthens the plot.

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[21] Gilmore, p.3.

This narrative choice can be observed in the episode of the *Knackwurst*, which spans the time from before Lore's departure on the Kindertransport, her journey, her arrival in Britain, her time at Dovercourt Camp, and her journey further north. This period is often quickly recounted in memoirs as the memoirist's memory of the departure and journey is often not particularly clear. Segal, however, stretches this period over almost twenty pages, during which the hidden *Knackwurst* sausage given to her by her mother remains a constant anxiety.

After leaving her family and the familiarity of her home, the *Knackwurst* Lore receives upon her departure from Vienna comes to symbolise her mother's sacrifice; as a Jew, she had put herself in danger of being arrested when buying this sausage for her daughter late in the evening. Its emotional significance becomes apparent on Lore's arrival in Britain; she cannot bring herself to throw it away along with her sandwiches, which 'were so dry they curled' (p.35). Segal uses the *Knackwurst* not only to indicate the passing of time and the movement from one country to another but it also becomes a narrative device that conveys the distress caused by the separation, as Lore cannot bear to part from her last remaining connection to her mother and to Austria. Symbolising the harsh reality of her new refugee condition, when the decaying sausage smell is noticed by her roommates at Dovercourt camp, it becomes a manifestation of shame and guilt. Segal writes:

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[22] Martin Löschnigg, 'Narratological Perspectives on "Fiction and Autobiography"', in *Fiction and Autobiography: Modes and Models of Interaction*, ed. by Sabine Coelsch-Foisner and Wolfgang Görtschacher (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2006), pp.1–11 (p.5).

> 'Whew!' said all the little girls. 'What a horrible smell! What can it be?' I knew it was my sausage, and was badly frightened. Like a pickpocket whose escape has been cut off, I mingled with the crowd. I held my nose, looked ostentatiously in corners, and helped curse the dirty, idiotic, disgusting person who was responsible for stinking up the place. It felt so good to be mad at someone I almost forgot it was me we were yelling at. (p.37)

Segal's creation of believable dialogue and exclamations are particularly responsible for placing the reader into the fictionalised past – a liberating aspect of the genre which relies on creative imagination. Löschnigg, for example, suggests that the use of direct discourse is a way of expressing consciousness and that the combination of dialogue and narrative summary, as found in Segal's text, 'emphasises the temporal dimension' of the narrative.[23] The depth of experience this creates, also provides the reader with an insight into the psychological stress faced by Kindertransportees; Lore is relieved when she is allowed to be angry at someone, suggesting a brief escape from feelings of numbness or even gratitude that the Kinder were expected to show.

Yet, although this episode invites the reader's empathy due to the use of the narrative present, first person narration, and insight into Lore's thoughts and feelings,

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[23] Löschnigg, p.5.

Segal simultaneously prevents the reader's complete identification.[24] Casting herself in the role of a criminal, this droll episode is tainted with an uncomfortable and concerning self-loathing, which is suggestive of a disturbed psychological state. Accordingly, Segal both deepens and darkens the representation of the Kindertransportee and her first few days in England.

Moreover, this portrayal of the *Knackwurst* episode indicates the creativity permitted by the genre of autobiographical fiction; the sausage becomes the literary projection of trauma, emotional upheaval, and separation. The sausage is used by Segal to reflect the disabilities of exile, the confusion, dislocation, and sense of loss experienced by many Kindertransportees and becomes part of the readers' understanding of the child refugee's daily life upon her arrival in Britain. Full of worry about her sausage, Lore finds it difficult to concentrate on settling into the camp and, if on the occasions she joins in other activities with the other children, she feels guilty and remembers her hidden *Knackwurst*, which she needs to somehow dispose of. It remained 'a sore spot in [her] mind' (p.38).

Through the tale of the hidden, offensive, yet comforting, *Knackwurst*, the reader understands how these feelings of loss, regret, guilt, and separation were persistent, always nagging at the back of the Kindertransportee's consciousness. Lore's obsession with and anxiety about the sausage anchors these feelings within the text, making them visible to the reader. Segal consequently offers the reader a more intimate understanding of the physical and emotional upheaval, dislocation, and anxiety faced by the child refugee.

The experience of the Kindertransportee is further deepened by the detailed portrayal of everyday life and its surroundings. *Other People's Houses* has a particular domestic quality, especially in the first half of the novel, as the majority of the action happens within houses that never truly become a home. The domestic feel of the novel, which Áine McGillicuddy views as a characteristic of autobiographical fiction, is created not only by the settings, but also through Segal's attention to everyday items and actions which are indicative of daily routine.[25] Moreover, the depiction of Lore's personal thoughts and feelings permits an insight into the protagonist's consciousness, creating a sense of intimacy and enabling the reader to observe the ways in which the protagonist interacts with her new environment. By positing herself as the protagonist, as she had intended, Segal recreates her first impressions from a child's perspective, rather than reflecting upon her first morning in Liverpool from the position of an adult:

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[24] Suzanne Keen, *Empathy and the Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p.x.

> I wondered if I should get up. I lay looking around the big, light, chilly room. Someone had brought my suitcase and ruck-sack and set them on the chest of drawers. They looked oddly familiar in their strange new surroundings. Presently I got out of bed and dressed. I wondered if I was supposed to go downstairs. I thought I might look silly just to turn up down there among all those people I didn't know, [...] When I came out onto the landing, my heart was pounding. There was a door opposite. It stood slightly ajar. I could see, reflected in its own mirror, the top of a neat dressing table. There were photographs stuck all round the mirror, and on the table were a brush-and-comb set, and a pincushion in the shape of a heart. I held my breath. I gave the door a little push. I saw the corner of a bed with a green satin counterpane and wanted to look further in, but the quiet in the house frightened me and I backed away. I wondered where all the people might be and peered over the banisters to the floor below. I saw a green carpet and a number of doors, but they were all shut. (p.51)

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[25] McGillicuddy, p.191f.

The creative flexibility permitted by the genre allows Segal to embellish her description, creating a richly detailed image of the Kindertransportee's surroundings. Segal gives attention to everyday objects which are so familiar to the reader, including a pincushion and hairbrush, but also photographs which symbolise lived experience and sentimentality. These items of familiarity heighten Lore's feelings of non-belonging; her possessions are still fastened away in her suitcase. Segal depicts the everyday challenges faced by child refugees, who find themselves in new environments and strange cultures, and conveys the disorientation felt by the outsider who must step into the unknown British household.

This meticulous account, laden with objects, colours, textures, feelings, and thoughts contributes to the specificity of experience which, according to Martin Löschnigg, is a feature of fictionality in forms of life writing.[26] This attention to detail is often missing from memoirs as memoirists are no longer able to access such specific memories. A sense of immediacy is also created through the run of short sentences, all starting with 'I', which creates a sense that the reader is following Lore's every movement and this further reveals how the protagonist's experience is given priority in this text. Additionally, the sense of immediacy is enhanced through the adverb 'presently'; this is a further device that offers the reader an insight into the current action as it is being experienced, situating the reader within the protagonist's time and space.[27]

Segal not only deepens this experience of the Kindertransportee through her depiction of the child's consciousness and detailed domestic settings; the representation of this chapter of history is also widened to capture the experiences and perspectives of other characters. Demonstrating a fresh way of  'experimenting with' or 'representing the self',[28] Segal fleshes out her protagonist by imagining how she must have appeared from her guardian's perspective and writes: 'I think it frightened her that the refugee she had brought into her house to protect from persecution was talking back to her and watching her out of melancholic and conscious eyes' (p.53f).

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[26] Löschnigg, p.5.

[27] Gunnthórunn Gudmundsdóttir, *Borderlines: Autobiography and Fiction in Postmodern Life Writing* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003), p.6.

Similarly, through the inclusion of imagined dialogue, Segal is able to provide an alternative perspective: that of the guardian who is struggling with their new charge. The guardian of Lore's playmate Helene expresses the difficulty of taking in a child refugee, admitting: 'At home she never even opens her mouth. She gives me the creeps. I tell my husband if it wasn't for her parents coming in a month I wouldn't know what to do with her, she makes me so nervous' (p.56f). This re-imagined perspective of the guardian is a viewpoint which is largely absent in the memoir genre. Autobiographical fiction thus enables Segal to represent the Kindertransportee in various ways, creating a more well-rounded representation of both the refugee's experience and that of the guardians.

## Darkening Experience: Representing the Protagonist's Psychological State

Through her writing, Segal intends not only to deepen the Kindertransport experience but also to darken the image of the Kindertransport by addressing the psychological strain placed on the child refugee. There are several ways in which Segal achieves this. On one remarkable occasion in the text, the reader is left wondering whether Lore intends to hurt herself, or worse. During her stay at her third billet, Lore looks out of the window and thinks: '[i]f I let go my hands on the windowsill, my head will go through the glass, and I let go my hands and heard the crash and felt the outside breeze about my head, and saw the windowpane like a collar around my neck, and howled' (p.112).

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[28] Dix, p.3.

Segal once again presents the distressing episode through the protagonist's internal consciousness. The construction of the protagonist's internal thoughts elicits shock and concern from the reader, as Lore's fall appears to happen as we are reading. The repetition of the conjunction 'and' in this complex sentence mimics both the speech of a child when recounting a story and the speed at which this incident unfolds.

Whilst it may be unclear whether this was indeed an accident or a subconscious intention, it is worrying that this situation is mirrored in the suicide of another Kindertransportee, Herta, later in the text. Herta, unable to cope with her inner turmoil caused by a conflict between Judaism and Christianity – the latter was forced upon her by her guardian – jumps out of her third-floor bedroom window (p.168).

The mirroring of episodes allows Segal, in a creative way, to convey the similar dislocation and confusion Lore felt as a refugee. Dix notes how autofiction has often been written 'in the aftermath of some kind of traumatic experience – real or imagined – so that the process of writing in response to trauma can be seen as a means of situating the self in a new context'.[29] The parallel situations may be a way in which Segal reconnects with her own experience and acknowledges the distress she also felt, yet which was perhaps not recognised at the time.

It is particularly revealing to consider the reader's position during this episode. Although the reader gets a firsthand view of Lore's fall and an insight into the action, thoughts, and moment of time which should induce a connection with protagonist, the reader nevertheless may feel shut out or distanced. This episode is shocking; the reader had no forewarning of such an action, despite having a detailed insight into Lore's everyday life and thoughts, and, in addition, the reader is further disconcerted by the protagonist's lack of reflection on this episode. Such moments in the text encourage a critical questioning of the protagonist's state of mind, rather than a straight-forward empathic response.

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[29] Dix, p.3f.

A second way in which Segal's novel creatively re-imagines the psychological strain upon the child refugee, is by showing the ongoing effect of a defence mechanism employed from a young age. In her 1994 preface to *Other People's Houses*, Segal clarifies one aim of her writing: she intends to show how her 'survival trick' at the time of the Kindertransport resulted in decades of disassociation from her emotions. She explains: '[c]ut yourself off, at ten years, from feelings that can't otherwise be mastered, and it takes decades to become reattached' (p.xiii).[30] Autobiographical fiction provides Segal with the opportunity to re-imagine the workings of this defence mechanism. As Baker notes, Segal has 'continually devoted her work to addressing and fictionalizing the disasters and adventures of her childhood, and her adult life respectively'.[31]

Both an anxiety about her parents and an indifference towards their challenging situation as domestics is written into the text. Revealingly, Segal's narration, at times, is distanced or lacks the emotional tone expected by the reader, reflecting the detachment she experienced when she was younger. For example, Segal vividly shows the way in which the protagonist, after recognising her feelings of numbness and indifference towards her parents, attempts to resurrect her feelings. She tries to imagine her parents dead, 'but whenever [she] tried thinking about [her] father [she] would see him spread-eagled high above the ground comically wriggling his arms and legs, trying to get down from the thing like a telegraph pole on which he was trussed up' (p.72).

A consistent quality throughout *Other People's Houses* is Segal's ability to movingly combine pathos with humour, as seen earlier in the episode with the mouldy, half-nibbled *Knackwurst*. Although Lore also sees the humour in this image of her parents dangling from a pole, it remains a rather haunting and distressing picture for the reader. Segal conveys this intrusive image not only through narrative content (what is happening) but also in her narrative discourse (the way it is conveyed). Segal writes Lore's persistent anxiety and guilt into the sentence structure; Lore's consciousness is interrupted by the image she is unable to escape. Hoping to distract herself, Lore turns her attention away from her father 'and focused it on [her] mother, but whoops, there she went, too, right up the pole' (p.72).

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[30] Segal expands on this in the collective memoir: Mark Jonathan Harris and Deborah Oppenheimer, *Into the Arms of Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport* (London: Bloomsbury, 2000), p.101.
[31] Baker, p.186.

The reader is forced into viewing this unsettling daydream, too. Segal's tone and the peculiarity of these daydreams position this episode, once again, uncomfortably between repulsion and hilarity. The humour in the situation makes the looming tragedy of her parents' death more digestible to Lore – and arguably also to Segal – as the author creates an emotional distance from the constant dread and numbness that she faced as a child. This representation of Lore's anxiety – and its powerful visual and narrative intrusion into the text – 'corresponds to a need for each writer to find their own voice in order to re-write, or re-live, personal experience and share it with readers in an accessible language'.[32] Segal finds this accessible language through this act of fictionalisation and re-imagination.

Lore's lack of emotion continues to find its way into the narrative. The constant switching between droll, disturbing, and emotionless narration results in a rather uncomfortable reading experience as the reader, at times, does not know how he or she should react. For example, Segal conveys Lore's father's death through the simple, declarative sentence, with the detached understatement: '[t]hen one night my father died' (p.142). Although Segal frequently offers the reader an insight into Lore's thoughts and observations and hence creates an opportunity for the reader to empathise, the tone of the narration at times conflicts with the reader's expected reaction from the protagonist.

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[32] Hugueny-Léger, p.6.

The confusing mix of emotion in the narration forces the reader back into herself or himself in order to examine this disagreement with her or his own reaction, which consequently encourages the reader's critical reflection and active consideration of the Kindertransportee's mental state.

The conclusion to Segal's novel is also tainted by Lore's uncertainty and anxiety. As the protagonist's voice merges with that of the adult narrator, Segal concludes with a reflection on her present-day life in New York in the 1950s. Although settled with her husband and children she admits: 'I, now that I have children and am about the age my mother was when Hitler came, walk gingerly and in astonishment upon this island of my comforts, knowing that it is surrounded on all sides by calamity' (p.312). Remarkably different to the concluding tone in the memoirs in the previous chapter, Segal's conclusion can hardly be described as positive and nor does she offer a sense of completion.

Her reluctance to offer closure may, in part, be due to the partially autobiographical nature of the text and because, at the age of thirty-five when her novel was published, Segal's life is not at an end, whereas memoirists who offer these retrospective comments are often writing in their later years. Alternatively, the lack of closure may also be due to Segal's hesitation to draw conclusions, as stated in her foreword, or indeed because of her ongoing childhood anxiety that something bad and unexpected is awaiting her. Baker notes that 'the tone of anticipation of disasters, which can strike any minute, that characterizes the novel as a whole, pervades it through the end'.[33] Consequently, the reader is left sharing the author's anxiety and may reflect upon current social upheavals that might cause this dreaded 'calamity'.

To summarise, *Other People's Houses* provides an insight into the everyday life of a Kindertransportee by placing the reader into a fictionalised past, and by creating a richly detailed and literary account of Lore's everyday life through the rendering of the child's consciousness. In addition to this, by simultaneously maintaining the critical 'manner of the novelist' (p.xiii), Segal writes into her text a noticeable distance through the narration that allows not only the depiction of a nuanced and fleshed-out protagonist but also the representation of the deep-seated psychological impact of the Kindertransport on the child.

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[33] Baker, p.191.

### 4.3) Karen Gershon, *The Bread of Exile*

Karen Gershon, born Kaethe Löwenthal in 1923, left Bielefeld on the Kindertransport aged fifteen with her sister and became a well-published writer and poet.[34] Originally destined for Palestine and then Holland, she reached Britain in December 1938. After the war she worked as a housekeeper and emigrated to Israel in 1968 but then later returned to Britain. Following the publication of her work of autobiographical fiction, *The Bread of Exile* (1985), Gershon collected and edited the stories of many Kindertransportees, constructing a collective account from the memoirs, published under the title *We Came as Children* (1989). This was followed by her autobiography, *A Lesser Child* (1992), in which she frankly reflects on her childhood spent with her two older sisters, the increasing discrimination and family poverty, and her growing interest in the Zionist movement.[35]

*The Bread of Exile* demonstrates a noticeably different approach to fictionalising the past. Whilst Segal, in her foreword, explicitly states the onomastic relationship with her protagonist, Gershon makes no such comment. Her 'novel' (as indicated on the cover of the book) depicts the lives and life choices of three Kindertransportees as they navigate unknown social and cultural territory. As the inside cover of the book indicates, '[t]his novel, with its strong autobiographical undertones, is a fascinating portrayal of a teenager struggling to come to terms with a new and so different world'.[36] Gershon's text is written in the third person and, whilst this implies a distance between the author and her main protagonist, Inge, it is important to note that Gershon's autobiographical text, *A Lesser Child*, was also written in the third person as the author felt she 'was unable to write about [herself] in the first person'.[37]

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[34] Gershon's poetry includes *The Relentless Year* (1951); *Legacies and Encounters* (1972); *My Daughters, My Sisters* (1975); and, *Coming Back from Babylon* (1979). Fiction: *Burn Helen* (1980).

[35] Karen Gershon, *A Lesser Child: an Autobiography* (London: Peter Owen, 1994), first published in Germany as *Das Unterkind* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1992); See also *A Tempered Wind: an Autobiography*, ed. by Phyllis Lassner and Peter Lawson (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2009).

Although Gershon fashions a protagonist with a different name in *The Bread of Exile*, there are clear similarities between the presentation of Inge in this novel and Kate, her third-person 'self' in her autobiography. Snippets of real experience and the feelings of loneliness and isolation that are persistent in her autobiography are reflected in her more fictional text: the clear memory of the anti-Semitic propaganda paper, *Der Stürmer,* at tram stops, and the conversation with a man on the street as they head to the station before her departure on the Kindertransport is recounted in both texts and is almost identical (*BE*, p.10f, *LC* p.196).

In *The Bread of Exile*, Gershon writes with wry humour and reveals the loneliness and confusion of the refuge condition, illustrating the trials of a teenager who is struggling to navigate an unfamiliar world. Inge arrives in Britain with her brother Dolph, aged thirteen and fifteen respectively. Inge must face anti-Semitism in the UK during her position as a domestic servant. Due to her refugee status, she constantly feels inferior to those around her and is even denied marriage to the English squadron leader, Sebastian. Her brother, who has been interned, subsequently struggles to fit into British society, and her gay best friend, Rudi, must also face hardships in Britain.

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[36] Gershon, *The Bread of Exile*, inside cover. Further references given in text.
[37] Gershon, *A Lesser Child*, author's note.

Gershon's characterisation and representation of Inge's psychological state is particularly nuanced in this text. This analysis will examine the ways in which the genre of autobiographical fiction allows Gershon to portray the deep psychological complexities and confusion resulting from the protagonist's experience as a Jew and a refugee. Gershon achieves this in two notable ways. First, comparable to Segal's text, the reader is given an insight into the protagonist's thoughts and immediate observations. This is achieved through her choice of internal narrative focalisation. Second, the story bound, literary quality of the genre – in which events are placed into a developing plot – allows the psychological impact of life as a refugee to be played out within the storyline and relationships, rather than being represented through retrospective comments as seen in the memoir genre.

### Internal Narrative Focalisation

This flexible relationship between author, narrator, and protagonist elicits a specific narrative perspective in *The Bread of Exile*. The dismantling of Lejeune's autobiographical pact,[38] achieved through Gershon's choice of protagonist with a different name, creates a distance between author and protagonist. This equips the author with more flexibility in representing the refugee's life in Britain by widening the field of vision. Particularly noticeable in this text is Gershon's heterodiegetic (third-person) narration, through which the reader is also invited to share several fictional characters' thoughts, intentions, and perceptions, even though the narrative predominantly focuses on Inge's present actions and experiences.[39] For instance, when

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[38] Phillippe Lejeune, On Autobiography, ed. by Paul John Eakin, trans. by Katherine Leary (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), pp.4f, 14.

[39] The heterodiegetic narration comes from outside the fictional world (diegesis) and the omniscient, sophisticated narrative style is more aligned with the adult author's voice rather than the teenager's.

Inge is scared that she will be separated from her brother, Dolph, at Dovercourt camp, she searches for him in panic:

> Her eyes streaming with tears which froze on her cheeks, she ran to her chalet, and then to her brother's chalet and then up and down the identical rows lit by lamps at the corners, where the washrooms were. Once she slipped on some ice and tore her stockings, she would have welcomed a worse hurt. While she was at the bottom of the field she saw the sea with its house-high waves – the night itself was weeping salt spray here; she would have drowned herself, she thought, if it had not been so cold. Back she ran, needing to pee but unwilling to shut herself into a lavatory for fear of missing her brother – by now also looking for her; they must have passed and re-passed each other with a chalet or a row of chalets between them. When she wet her knickers they froze to her skin. (p.28)

Gershon's construction of this passage is particularly important to consider. The author's heterodiegetic narrative creates distance from the protagonist's perspective and allows the reader to know that Dolph, likewise, is looking for Inge. The removed perspective enables the reader to look down on the scene as if from above as the reader imagines the two siblings running down parallel rows of chalets. It is not only Inge's perceptions, but also her initial reactions and feelings that are also made clear to the reader. The combination of distanced perspective and internal focalisation, in conjunction with Gershon's literary description of the sea with 'house-high waves' and the personification of the night 'weeping', creates a richly detailed passage which conveys the protagonist's dislocation, fear, hopelessness, and panic. The reader is placed both in the position of the omniscient observer, and also has access to the inner experience of the Kindertransportee.

Gershon's construction of her text invites an intimate representation of the lives of the newly arrived Kindertransportees. The author's frequent internal focalisation is particularly successful in creating the specificity of experience and consciousness. Manfred Jahn, in his thorough clarification of narrative perspectives and types of focalisation, explains that '[o]ne of the main effects of internal focalization is to attract attention *to* the mind of the reflector-character and *away* from the narrator and the process of narratorial mediation'. He continues: '[t]he notable effect of this technique is that the reader is *sucked* into the story, invited to see the world just as the character sees it, and co-experience what it is like to be a participant in the events'.[40]

The author takes advantage of this narrative stance and dynamic internal focalisation to present the complications that occur in the everyday life of a Kindertransportee as a result of the challenges posed by a new language, culture, and people. This combination of narrative approaches – which creates both a distance that includes other characters' intentions and an intimate access to Inge's thoughts – is used to create several painful episodes of miscommunication. When Inge is taken from Dovercourt camp to her new home with new guardians, Gershon writes:

> She flinched from him when he laid the rug about her; he offered her the use of his handkerchief and the thought of it made her retch; she understood it when his wife told him to take the blanket away: not knowing that it belonged to his boss, Inge believed that she was being judged not worthy of it, it was soft and a green-blue plaid. If they didn't hold it against her that she was a Jew – and she half-believed that they didn't – they must hold it against her that she was a refugee. So what, she thought, was the point of her having left home? Under cover of the

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[40] Manfred Jahn, 'Narratology: a Guide to the Theory of Narrative', University of Cologne, 2017 <http://www.uni-koeln.de/~ame02/pppn.htm> [accessed 21 November 2019].

> rug, as they drove on, she tried to undo the string from the broken handle of her suitcase, with the thought of using it to strangle herself; she could not get it off. (p.40)

Here, Gershon reveals the worrying extent to which a kind gesture can be misinterpreted, highlighting the distorted way in which the protagonist interprets the behaviour of others. Disturbingly, this misunderstanding may not be entirely cultural or linguistic; Inge's anxiety, fear, and feeling of being unworthy of generosity or kindness are a likely result of the discrimination she faced as a Jew in Germany. Although clear to the reader, Inge does not know the intended meanings behind what she misinterpreted, and so her anxiety and self-depreciation is set to continue.

Gershon's heterodiegetic narration and focalisation illuminate tensions between guardians and their charges which are caused by the difficulties in communication and the child's previous upsetting experiences. Autobiographical fiction is thus successful in representing multiple perspectives and the social world surrounding the Kindertransportee, whereas a memoir's reliance on a first-person narrator 'limits the scope of autobiography as the narrator is restricted to his/her knowledge and experience' and 'has no direct access to other people's minds other than his/her own'.[41]

Furthermore, autobiographical fiction is effectively able to capture and represent various fleeting, yet powerful, emotions. *The Bread of Exile* is governed by an ambivalence caused by Inge's confusion about her own feelings and an inability to trust others. Inge desires a place where she belongs but rejects any offer of a stable and complete home, ensuring the denial of her own happiness: when she realises she must leave the Sparrows due to the threat of bombing, she attempts to convince herself that they are of no loss to her, although they offered her a happy, loving home. Gershon's fixed internalised focalisation here provides the reader with an insight into Inge's emotion-laden thought process:

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[41] Regine Hampel, *"I Write Therefore I Am?" Fictional Autobiography and the Idea of Selfhood in the Postmodern Age* (Berne: Peter Lang, 2000), p.104.

> did they think that after having had to leave her Mutti and Papa and being separated from her brother she would mind losing them, who less than a year ago as far as she was concerned had not even existed? Who did they think they were that they expected her to grieve for them? Now she saw everything they had done for her as a bribe to make her love them as if she had been their daughter [...]. Did they think that she had been desperate, or stupid, or young enough ever to have believed that they were going to provide her with a permanent home: do more for her than her own parents had done? She was willing to believe them when they said that they would miss her, she hoped that they would, she hoped that they would die of remorse at having got rid of her. As far as she was concerned, they had not been her idea and she did not need them. (p.63)

From this short passage, it is clear that Inge is hurt, she feels indignation and anger yet there is also a clear sense of loss. Inge appears dismissive of her guardians in an act of self-protection against the renewed pain of being unwanted. Agreeing with Jahn, Löschnigg concurs that narrative perspective and focalization are essential for 'the description of the linguistic renderings of consciousness', which, as a narrative technique, grants an insight into the world of the protagonist.[42] Such a nuanced insight into the consciousness of the protagonist – which Löschnigg defines as an element of fictionalisation found as autobiography and fiction begin to overlap – adds to the specificity of experience.[43] This instant reaction, complexity of feelings, and insight into the protagonist's psyche would not be reproduced to the same extent in a memoir which relies on access to and the capacity of individual memory. Clearly, the fictionalisation in Gershon's text presents an opportunity to re-imagine initial, detailed, and emotionally complex responses. Moreover, the depiction of the immediate impact of the unwelcome news can be understood as an empathic form of literary representation which '[strives] to provide an immediate sense of another's thought and feelings'.[44] This, according to Meghan Marie Hammond, invites the reader's empathy and is 'a way of bridging interpersonal distance'.[45]

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[42] Löschnigg, p.4.

### Representing the Refugee Condition through Narrative Plot

In Gershon's text, as with Segal's, the Kindertransportee's experience of life in Britain is a central focus. Instead of a limited collection of childhood memories or key historical events that are mainly pinned down by dates as seen in memoirs, Gershon places a greater emphasis on the novel's plot. This primacy of the narrative, as mentioned earlier, is a common feature of autobiographical fiction.[46] The fast-paced nature of the text creates a fictional feel comparable to a teenage adventure novel. Inge faces dilemma after dilemma (such as running away from her anti-Semitic guardian and being caught by a policeman) and the plot is enriched by unstable and unpredictable characters who attempt to navigate the expectations and limitations placed upon them as refugees in Britain.

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[43] *Ibid.*, p.5.

[44] Meghan Marie Hammond, *Empathy and the Psychology of Literary Modernism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), p.4.

[45] *Ibid.*, p.5.

[46] Philippe Gasparini, *Autofiction: Une aventure du langage* (Paris: Seuil, 2008), p.209, cited in Karen Ferreira-Meyers, 'In Between the Collective and the Individual: African Autofiction', in *Autobiography as a Writing Strategy in Postcolonial Literature*, ed. by Benaouda Lebdai (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2015), pp.134–160 (p.143f).

Gershon further increases the text's fictional quality and accessibility through the inclusion of familiar storylines such as fairy tales. This reference to other narratives can be seen as an obvious attempt on the part of the author to fictionalise her own past by placing her narrative alongside other fictional stories. Indeed, Stéphanie Panichelli-Batalla attests to how autofiction is 'a fictional metaphorical self-translation where the writer translates his/her own life experiences and memories into written language and, more specifically, into a literary text'.[47]

Feeling threatened by her guardian's attempt to convert her to Christianity, the narrator reflects upon her guardian's likeness to 'the witch in the gingerbread house in the forest' (p.77). Similarly, Inge and Dolph are immediately positioned as Hansel and Gretel by their friend, Rudi, upon their arrival in England (p.19). This is a particularly poignant allusion considering that, in this German fairy tale, one parent dies and the children are abandoned by the other. Gershon's intertextual reference is indicative of the feeling of abandonment possibly felt by children who were effectively orphaned by the Kindertransport upon the departure from Germany.

The fairytale genre – which can be understood as promoting heroic children, ingenuity, and bravery – is, in this text, distorted by Inge's suicidal thoughts which persist throughout the novel, adding a darkened twist to the fairy tale genre often enjoyed by children. From a reader's perspective, he or she is likely to be drawn into the text through such recognisable fairy tales, yet, due to Inge's woeful experience, the reader is also encouraged to question the darker subtexts of such fairy tales and, by extension, the 'happily ever after' narrative of the Kindertransport.

The challenges faced by Inge can be understood as a combination of common difficulties experienced by Kindertransportees: the sudden distancing from parents, tense relationships with guardians, life as a domestic servant, and feelings of non-belonging. In Gershon's fictionalisation, these challenges are brought alongside typical and relatable teenage drama concerning love, desire, frustration, and a wish for independence. The love triangle between Inge, Dolph, and Rudi provides a sense of drama from the beginning of the novel. Not only does this increase the pace of the text and provide an extra complication in addition to their refugee status, it also allows Gershon, through this relationship, to demonstrate issues of affection and belonging.

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[47] Stéphanie Panichelli-Batalla, 'Autofiction as a Fictional Metaphorical Self-translation: The case of Reinaldo Arenas's *El color del verano*', *The Journal of Romance Studies*, 15 (2015), 29–51 (p.32f).

Comparable to Segal's text, the content of the storyline is sometimes uncomfortable. Amidst the drama that Gershon creates and which gains the reader's invested attention, the author includes moments that are likely to distance the reader. For example, emphasising Inge's loneliness, exclusion and alienation from British society, and her desire to belong or have a sense of home, the protagonist sexually experiments with her brother, Dolph. Despite this uncomfortable episode, the relationships between the characters throughout the course of the novel effectively allows the reader to observe the implications of the refugee condition on the 'self' and the way the Kindertransportees come to view the world around them.

Particularly revealing is Inge's decision to marry Rudi, her gay best friend, instead of her Scottish friend Hamish, whom she also loves and considers as her intellectual equal. Although both options would permit her to stay in Britain (Rudi becomes a member of the forces), since arriving in Britain, fellow Kindertransportee Rudi has been the only constant and dependable figure in her life. She settles for stability and predictability, even though she understands that he will not be able to meet her sexual desires. More important to the protagonist is that they 'sustain' each other and Rudi matters to her because 'he stood for continuity, was a link with her brother and through him with home' (pp.67, 104).

This relationship, born out of homesickness, finds its parallel in Gershon's own life: she married and divorced her cousin during her time in Britain.[48] Autofiction then, as Hywel Dix explains, 'permits a degree of experimentation with the definition and limits of the self' and instead of 'the slavish recapitulation of known biographical facts',[49] Gershon's own lived experience of homesickness apparently inspires the novel's plot.

Essentially, Rudi also offers Inge agency, albeit limited agency, but in a relationship in which she feels she has a choice and not where her choice of home is determined by other people. Hamish, for example, had 'made plans for them both, had taken her agreement for granted as if she belonged to him' (p.182). After years of desiring independence but being hindered by the limitations placed upon her as a refugee, her marriage to Rudi appears one sure way of exerting her limited freedom. The flexibility in Gershon's narration, which is not limited to Inge's view, allows the reader to understand their relationship:

> He [Rudi] understood her better than she did herself: had taken great care to word his letter in such a way that instead of resenting that she was not getting what she wanted she was welcoming what she was getting, with the feeling that it was more than she had the right to expect. (p.184)

Gershon reveals how Rudi makes Inge feel grateful for what she has – the only thing that a refugee should feel entitled to feel in Britain. They must be happy to settle for the basics – the bread of exile – rather than asking for what they desire. Understandably, the protagonist does not consider how her decision is most likely to be a result of her early experiences of separation; such an attempt to put life into perspective is found rather in the memoir genre.

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[48] Phyllis Lassner and Peter Lawson, 'Introduction', in Gershon, *A Tempered Wind*, p.xi.

[49] Dix, p.3. For examinations of selfhood in autobiographical fiction see MacLachlan (2016) and Hampel (2000).

Through her interactions with Rudi and Dolph, Gershon depicts the psychological consequences of Inge's refugee condition – the lack of a home, stability, and familiarity – on her actions, life choices, and the way she views the world. In addition, by describing Inge's indecision about whom to marry in detail, the reader can, to some degree, also relate to being torn between the unknown and the security of a safer option, making Inge's situation more relatable to the reader. Attesting to the connection between identification and situation, Keen argues: 'character identification lies at the heart of readers' empathy' and this identification 'requires certain traits (such as a name, a recognizable situation, and at least implicit feelings)'.[50] Moreover, Keen suggests that '[e]mpathy with situations tends to zero in on episodes, circumstances, or states of relationship at points of irresolution'.[51] As Gershon situates this episode in a narrative plot – and because love dilemmas are not uncommon in teenage literature – the situation becomes recognisable to the reader. Löschnigg's suggestion that representation in autobiographical fiction is made both empathetic and dramatic is thus evident here.[52]

Despite conveying these implicit feelings and encouraging the reader's connection to the protagonist, Gershon establishes a distance between the reader and the protagonist at the very end of the text. Gershon's autobiographical fiction rarely includes moments of retrospection from the position of the narrator, and the narrative thus ends in the middle of a crucial choice in Inge's life. The reader does not find out her future, the fates of her friends, or how her decisions worked out. This heightens the element of the unknown and resists the closure associated with most popular fictional novels.

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[50] Keen, p.68.
[51] Keen, p.79.
[52] Löschnigg, p.7.

Gershon's Kindertransport representation focuses on the experience of the Kindertransportee as a refugee to Britain. Considering the novel in its entirety, Gershon's text overtly addresses the greater psychological impact of the protagonist's feelings of non-belonging, dislocation, and inferiority. With a distance from lived experience, Gershon takes advantage of the third-person narrative and focalisation to capture the experience, actions and reactions, and intentions of multiple characters, which in turn highlights how Inge's view of herself is shaped by her experience of being a Jew and a refugee. Gershon effectively condenses the refugee experience, psychological reaction, and teenage drama into the same narrative plot; the distress caused by the Kindertransport separation and her treatment in Britain is represented through her actions and decisions, rather than explicitly stated. This, in turn, drives the narrative forward, increasing the pace of the novel and creating opportunities for the reader's attention, engagement, but also, at times, a critical questioning of Inge's choices.

### 4.4) Irene N. Watts, *Escape from Berlin*

Irene N. Watts, who has lived for many years in Vancouver, was born in 1931 in Berlin and lived there until the age of seven when she departed on the Kindertransport to Britain. She was reunited with parents in England many years after her departure. Watts has written several novels and plays, which are particularly popular with children and often deal with the topic of immigration.[53] The author evidently enjoys experimenting with genre and finding new ways of re-framing a story or an experience, when explaining: 'I carry them with me: stories I make up, stories I've heard or read, stories that grow as I tell them or write them down. Each one may be told in a different way, as a poem or play, through song, movement, as a story or novels, or as non-fiction'.[54]

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[53] *Touched By Fire* (2013); *Flower* (2005); *When the Bough Breaks* (2007).

Her three Kindertransport novels: *Goodbye Marianne* (1998), *Remember Me* (2000), and *Finding Sophie* (2002) were published together in 2013, under the title *Escape from Berlin*. The 2013 edition marks the 75th anniversary of the Kindertransport. The first two novels focus on eleven-year-old Marianne and the last on seven-year-old Sophie, whom Marianne meets on the Kindertransport train.

*Goodbye Marianne* depicts the challenges Jews faced in Berlin and Marianne's subsequent departure on the first Kindertransport. *Remember Me* follows the protagonist through her first year in Britain where she is placed with unsuitable and unaffectionate guardians and evacuated to a small village in south Wales before she is reunited with her mother. In *Finding Sophie,* Sophie lives with Aunt Em, a family friend and, feeling strongly that she belongs in Britain, is horrified by the thought of a post-war return to Germany, yet feels her father expects this of her. The protagonist's thoughts voice the confusion and distress faced by many Kindertransportees following VE day and the liberation of the concentration camps.

Similar to how Segal and Gershon both establish a distance between themselves and their accounts – Segal retains the critical manner of the novelist and Gershon includes the perspective of other characters as well as her third-person narrator – Watts also requires a distance from her own Kindertransport experience in order to represent the life of a child refugee. Expanding the reader's understanding of the Kindertransportee experience and broadening the representation of the 'self' that is expected in forms of life-writing, Watts represents the collective Kindertransport experience by fictionalising the general milestones or momentous events witnessed by a significant number of Kindertransportees. Watts asserts in her preface: 'I was the same age as Sophie when I left for England. I am not Sophie or Marianne. They, their friends, and their neighbours are imaginary, though their experiences are similar to those of many young refugees of that time'.[55]

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[54] *About the Author* (2012), <http://www.irenenwatts.com/author.html> [accessed 19 November 2018].

Even though the author emphasises that neither of her protagonists are modelled on own her personality, she has admitted in correspondence with Áine McGillicuddy that: '*Remember Me* is close to my own experiences in South Wales as an evacuee, and much of Sophie is me too but fictionalised'.[56] The experiences of her protagonists link with both Watts's own life and are similarly familiar to the collective group of Kindertransportees. Watts explains that 'though [her] characters are imagined what happens around them is truth'.[57] In representing the collective and historical experience rather than her own life, Watts assumes a position between personal insight and narrative distance.

Whereas Segal and Gershon stray off the beaten track of the typical Kindertransport narrative when describing life in the Dominican Republic and New York, or by focusing on the atypical relationship between Inge, Dolph, and Rudi, Watts's trilogy appears to stick to the general landmarks found in Kindertransport memoirs and oral testimony. She fictionalises key moments such as the persecution faced on the continent, the decision to leave and the subsequent journey, the arrival in Britain, relationships with guardians, school and friendships, concerns about parents, evacuation, news of concentration camps and the end of the war. In taking these key moments and images from history and fictionalising them, Watts situates the Kindertransport further in its historical and social contexts, represents the general experience of the Kindertransportee, and conveys the historical importance of the Kindertransport to a younger reader.

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[55] Watts, *Escape from Berlin*, p.x. Further references given in text.
[56] Correspondence between Áine McGillicuddy and Irene N. Watts (20 January 2015), quoted in McGillicuddy, p.193.
[57] *Ibid.*, p.192.

Watts's fictionalised representation achieves several things that will now be examined: she broadens the experience of being a child refugee by creating two protagonists; she places a greater emphasis on representing the historical events by bringing these into the present action and by writing them into a narrative appropriate for children; and vividly re-frames distressing moments of history, illustrating the short-term impact of these events.

### Representing the Collective Experience

Expanding the limits of individual self-representation in forms of life-writing, Watts's trilogy accommodates two different Kindertransport experiences, enabling a rounded, multidimensional representation of the Kindertransport. These two diverging, yet interconnected, stories allow Watts to indicate the collective Kindertransport experience – moments and feelings often shared by the Kinder – whilst also respecting the differences between them by giving Marianne and Sophie their own individual narratives. Highlighting the distinction between the two protagonists and the individuality of their experiences, Watts employs a different narrative style: the first and second novels that describe Marianne's experience are written in third person, whereas *Finding Sophie* is written in first person.

The protagonists' lives in Britain are significantly different. Marianne struggles to navigate British social conventions and through the figure of her guardian, Mrs Abercrombie Jones, Watts emphasises the ignorance of many British people with regards to the persecution of Jews on the continent. After Marianne's evacuation to Wales and further unsuccessful billets there, she is reunited with her mother who succeeds in emigrating to Britain thanks to the endeavours of Marianne and her school friend, Brigit.

Sophie, in contrast, is placed with a loving family friend, Aunt Em, with whom she forms a strong bond. Unlike Marianne, she does not experience unloving and anti-Semitic homes, yet also unlike Marianne, she spends the war years without a biological parent. Sophie is convinced that her home is in England and that she belongs there. Upon learning that her mother died but her father survived the concentration camp and desires to see her again, Sophie is forced to consider the idea of uprooting her life and returning to a country, culture, language, and a father she does not remember well.

Despite the differences in Marianne's and Sophie's experiences, there is a creative linking and echoing of each other's stories. Watts establishes several parallels between the thoughts and reactions of these two Kindertransportees and also highlights the power of shared experience in forming relationships. In *Finding Sophie,* Sophie looks forward to meeting with Marianne, as 'she's the only person in England who remembers me from before' (p.350). When they meet volunteering at the same hospital, they are caught hugging and as they are being told off for their 'unseemly display', they 'freeze as though posing for a family portrait' (p.342). Watts's image of a 'family portrait' here is both poignant and ironic; it emphasises the strong relationships formed out of this uniquely historical experience of travelling to Britain on a Kindertransport, yet this relationship is formed precisely due to the absence of family after boarding the train.

As seen in Segal's and Gershon's work, the reader has direct access to the protagonist's thoughts, anxieties, and reflections; in Watts's text these are presented in italics, allowing a seamless transition between action and response. These thoughts are echoed in the two protagonists' experiences and these parallels are suggestive of the feelings common to the Kindertransportees as a collective group. In *Remember Me,* Marianne accidentally speaks aloud in German and then realises: '*I mustn't do that again. Do the other kids from the transport feel this mixed up?*' (p.136). Mirroring these feelings of confusion and displacement, Sophie questions: '[*d*]*oes Aunt Em realize how mixed up I feel? How can she? I can't even explain it to myself*' (p.294).

In a further example, both Kindertransportees express feelings of being a transportable object. Before departing on the Kindertransport, Marianne says to her mother: 'I feel like a piece of luggage. Let's hope I don't get lost' (p.88). Similarly, during her time in her third billet in Wales, Marianne affirms herself that she 'wasn't a parcel to be handed over' (p.233). Likewise, Watts creates a further echo between the two protagonists as Sophie also asserts to her Aunt Em that she is 'not a thing to be shuffled back and forth' (p.388). Whilst memoirs frequently refer to the Kindertransport reunions during which stories are shared and friendships formed, the merging and echoing of experience in Watts's trilogy more directly reflects this cohesiveness of collective Kindertransport memory whilst preserving the individual's unique story.

## The Literary Representation of Historical Moments

Not only does Watts portray the commonalities between individual Kindertransport experiences but, as a work of historical fiction, her text represents the historical situation and the necessity of the Kindertransport. Throughout her trilogy, Watts recreates events that are now firmly cemented in history and that the Kindertransportees frequently mention in their memoirs. These historical frames of reference assist in educating the young reader about the wider historical period and Watts's representation of such moments, through the eyes and thoughts of the child rather than the adult memoirist, adds colour and depth to these specific moments of history.

In an attempt to articulate and convey historical events to the young reader – which is a key aim of historical fiction – Watts pays particular attention to setting the scene of Jewish persecution in *Goodbye Marianne*. Watts uses children's rhymes throughout the three texts to create suspense in a playful way. She begins the trilogy with a rhyme that is a potential re-framing of the traditional and familiar English language nursery rhyme, *One, Two, Buckle my Shoe*:

> One, two, let me through
> Three, four, police at the door
> Five, six, fix the witch
> Seven, eight, it's getting late
> Nine, ten, begin again. (pp.3, 10)

Whilst cementing the text within the context of children's play and childish reasoning (Marianne believes that by repeating this rhyme to herself she will not fail her maths test), this rhyme serves a secondary function. It foreshadows Marianne's experience in the first two novels; 'let me through' expresses the urgency and difficulty of arranging emigration, and the following lines indicate the Gestapo's search of her Berlin home, and the time pressure to emigrate. With multiple meanings, 'begin again' could refer to Marianne's new start in England, but, at the same time, could reflect the trapped nature of life in Germany where those wishing to emigrate were caught in a cycle of applying for visas and permits, and when those attempts failed, having to start again at a new foreign consulate. Also, with multiple connotations, the reference to the 'witch' can be seen again when Marianne is described as a 'hook-nosed witch' by Aryan Inge in the park (p.11). In this respect, the 'witch', or the 'Jewish Problem' in the eyes of the Nazis, needed to be 'fixed'.

The unfolding of historical events is not only foreshadowed through playful rhyme, but it is also addressed in public spaces. Where Segal represented the violence against the Jewish population from inside the domestic setting of her grandparents' home and focused on the direct persecution endured by her family, Watts places Marianne in public places such as a park, market square, or near the Brandenburg Gate – a symbolic landmark of Berlin – in order to provide historical context and a wider perspective. Watts depicts the atmosphere of anti-Semitic discrimination in Berlin. She writes: 'Staring. Eyes. Berlin was full of eyes. Everyone was watching everyone else' (p.35). Her use of minor and simple sentences not only appeals to a younger reader but also indicates caution. Berlin's citizens are reduced, by synecdoche, to their eyes, emphasising how Marianne is no longer able to trust the identity or familiarity of her neighbours; whoever has eyes is potentially dangerous.

In choosing not to depict her own Kindertransport experience, it becomes clear that Watts has a preference for representing moments that the majority of Kindertransportees (herself included) are likely to have shared. Key moments of collective and national history, which the Kindertransportees often highlight as meaningful episodes in their memoirs, are re-imagined in Watts's text, such as the VE day celebrations outside of Buckingham Palace (pp.314–317).

As illustrated in Segal and Gershon's texts, experience is constantly brought into the present moment in these texts that aim to represent life of the Kindertransportee during the wartime years. Similarly, Watts's representation of upsetting moments is represented in present narrative time, creating a sense of immediacy. Yet, in contrast to Segal and Gershon, Watts concentrates on depicting the emotional reaction to historical rather than strictly personal events. Writing a well-known archival image into her text, Watts re-frames the moment in which images of the liberation of concentration camps are made public. Many people in 1940s Britain were confronted by this shocking image.

The author engages with these distressing images in a literary way and conveys this horror to the reader by adding physicality to the images. Sophie and her friend, Mandy, are confronted with the shocking footage on a visit to the cinema, where they see '[d]ead bodies in heaps. Living dead. Bones barely covered with bits of striped rags, or huddled under shreds of blankets. Eyes staring from skulls peering through tiers of bunks, or pressed against barbed wire fences' (p.292). These images, which are now well known, are vividly conveyed to the reader as Sophie views them and are thus captured in detail. Watts's use of minor sentences mimics the initial perception of the snapshot images and the repetition of the plosive 'b' sound ('bodies', 'bones', 'barely', 'bits', 'blankets', 'barbed', 'bunks') indicates the cruel harshness of the images and the shock felt by the protagonist.

Furthermore, through the literary use of synecdoche, Watts poignantly reduces the camp survivors to 'bones' and 'eyes', indicating not only their physical emaciation but also their lack of life and identity. This is Watts's second synecdochic depiction of eyes in the trilogy. These paralleled images, as addressed above, highlight the connection between the persecution witnessed by Marianne in the first novel – the hostile treatment of Jews which sparked the Kindertransport rescue operation – and the later atrocities of the Holocaust. Not only does this literary rendering of archival footage link the novels and narratives together, but it also reveals the shocking product of racial discrimination which accelerated over the seven years Marianne and Sophie have spent in Britain.

Crucially here, though the immediate moment of witnessing this distressing news is vividly fictionalised, the label of trauma is not attributed; instead Watts, in her representation, emphasises the shock-value of these images, rather than referring to them as overtly traumatic. This distinguishes Watts's fiction from the novels examined in the next chapter, in which the trauma is often made the focus of the texts and its hold over the protagonist is emphasised and dramatised. Instead, Watts displays a creative way of re-working the representation of trauma; she shows how the original images have affected Sophie and left a vivid imprint in her mind.

Emphasising this, every time Sophie closes her eyes, she imagines skeletons in her wardrobe: 'rows and rows of dead bodies stacked up – one on top of the other. Skeletons wearing striped jackets, with six-pointed stars sewn over their hearts' (p.298). In Watts's negotiation of the public history and the individual experience, it is revealing that this historical moment – one which showed the world the first images of the Holocaust – is translated into individual experience and assumes a position in the privacy of the Kindertransportee's bedroom wardrobe. Watts thus makes this historical footage relatable to the child reader and conveys the horror and fright felt by the protagonist; the notion of something hiding in the wardrobe is the object of many children's nightmares and a general childhood anxiety. Historical fiction's potential has been noted by Leland Jacobs who insists the genre 'can give children as no other kind of medium quite can, the intimate feel of living in another time. Through identification with appealing characters, the child not only views the happenings, he also sensitively vicariously experiences them'.[58] Whilst traumatic moments in memoirs are represented as life-changing events that cannot always be recalled, Watts, through fiction, shows the distressing moment itself in detail and its upsetting immediate aftermath.

Despite these upsetting images, Watts attempts to minimise the degree of distress felt by the reader and storylines are thus neatly tied up. Marianne's narrative ends when her mother collects her from a station in Wales, a surprise which Marianne was unaware of (p.272). Similarly, the author concludes her trilogy with a simplified ending where Sophie is no longer torn between wanting to live with Aunt Em and feeling as though she owes it to her father to return to Germany. Sophie reconnects with her father after they spend a few days together in London and he reveals that he is allowed to stay in Britain (pp.411, 416). The ending can even be argued to be idealised, as father and daughter spend time sketching together. Strengthening this sense of narrative satisfaction, Sophie begins to embrace her Jewish background, even though when she wore the star of David necklace a few months earlier she felt as though it was 'choking' her (pp.307, 417). This religious confusion is not explored any further.

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[58] Leland B. Jacobs, 'Historical Fiction for Children', *The Reading Teacher*, 14 (1961), 191–194 (p.191).

Here, a crucial difference between the texts examined earlier in this chapter and Watts's trilogy becomes apparent. In *Other People's Houses* and *The Bread of Exile*, the authors prevent a fully satisfying or resolved ending. Watts's trilogy, however, which is less autobiographically informed, aimed at a younger audience, and has a greater focus on re-framing historical context, conforms to the neat ending expected from children's fiction, instead of encouraging the reader to question the implications of the Kindertransport on the protagonist's future life.

As the trilogy heads into the realm of fiction and is less autobiographically informed, Watts aims for clarity rather than choosing to represent the ongoing impact of the Kindertransport and, instead, her work conveys a sense of closure that most Kindertransportees did not instantly achieve. This uncomplicated, comforting ending is characteristic of children's historical fiction, which, as Jacobs argues, is not the place to question or 'debunk' historical narratives and, consequently, specific problematical issues such as religion are simplified.[59]

Although Watts's trilogy, strictly speaking, cannot be considered 'a project of *self*-exploration and *self*-experimentation on the part of the author',[60] unlike Segal's and Gershon's novels, Watts does explore and experiment with the collective Kindertransport experience by constructing the internal consciousness of two Kindertransportees, and thus broadens understandings of the child and refugee condition. Moreover, in the 'process of writing in response to trauma',[61] Watts re-frames upsetting and iconic historical moments, making them personal to the Kindertransportee and relatable to the reader through her rich use of imagery.

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[59] *Ibid.*, p.192.

[60] Dix, p.4. Emphasis my own.

## 4.5) Chapter Summary

The Kindertransport novels considered in this chapter explore the boundaries between autobiography and fiction, lived experience and imagination, life and writing. These representations are both inward and outward-looking; they offer an insight into the child's experience and perceptions, their social environment, and also illustrate the Kindertransport's historical necessity in light of anti-Semitic persecution.

This analysis shows that the permitted degree of fictionality welcomed by the move away from the memoir genre provides a platform for the author to re-imagine and flesh out the character of the child Kindertransportee. Where the memoir genre 'draws on a collective and discontinuous sense of self',[62] Segal, Gershon, and Watts demonstrate an obvious attempt at creating a fluid protagonist, whose observations, thought processes, immediate reactions and impressions are the focus of the narratives.

This imaginative creativity is essential in allowing the author to depict both the every-day reality of the child's refugee life and the immediate impact and reaction to upsetting moments. Significantly, whereas memoirs offer retrospective reflections on the past by situating childhood experience often in connection to the memoirist's 'today', autobiographical fiction creatively represents the Kindertransportee's day-to-day life during the late 1930s and 1940s. Powerfully, Christine Wilkie-Stibbs, writing on the topic of Young Adult literature that is 'based on real and/or typical cases known to their authors', maintains that literature 'is what most convinces us of the realities of other peoples' identities and selfhoods'.[63] Although characters and plots are invented, these fictionalisations of lived experience can in fact 'act as powerful and memorable case histories which are as true as, or truer than, factually accurate ones'.[64]

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[61] *Ibid.*, p.4.

[62] Lee Quinby, 'The Subject of Memoirs: The Woman Warrior's Technology of Ideographic Selfhood', quoted in *De/Colonizing the Subject: The Politics of Gender in Women's Autobiography*, ed. by Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1992), p.301, in Gillian Whitlock, *Postcolonial Life Narratives: Testimonial Transactions*, Oxford Studies in Postcolonial Literature (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p.97.

The three authors explored in this chapter demonstrate a varied 'experimentation with the definition and limits of the self',[65] through the use of focalisation, the rendering of consciousness, creation of immediacy, and by translating internal anxiety into vivid imagery or questionable actions. In this respect, whilst the representation of the self conflicts with the representation of trauma in the memoir genre, the exploration of the child self and re-writing of trauma go hand in hand in these novels. It is through the construction of consciousness and the detail attributed to the Kindertransportee's everyday life and thoughts, that the psychological impact of the Kindertransport is represented. Whilst memoirs often reveal the impact traumatic experience has on the memoirist's ability to remember and access the past, these autobiographical fiction novels address the challenges, anxiety, and warped view of the world resulting from the child's dislocation, rather than overtly stating or testifying to trauma.

Considering the texts individually and together, various refugee and Kindertransportee experiences are represented, including Kinder who are interned (such as Dolph), join the British forces (like Rudi), or commit suicide. Memoirs most commonly focus on one person's account, whereas fictionalised representations include the experiences and sub-plots of several other characters which, in turn, broadens the reader's understanding of the life surrounding the Kindertransportee. This, however, is not an exclusive feature of autobiographical fiction; Kindertransport fiction – as the next chapter illuminates – is more creative with regards to the interweaving of trans-generational experiences and depicting the experience of the Kindertransportees' parents.

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[63] Christine Wilkie-Stibbs, *The Outside Child: In and Out of the Book* (New York: Routledge, 2011), p.26.
[64] *Ibid.*
[65] Dix, p.3.

Despite the shared literary techniques, which enable the representation of the child's daily life, the novels discussed in this chapter vary considerably in tone and approach. Segal produces a deeper and darker portrayal of the Kindertransportee. Gershon places greater emphasis on the difficulties her protagonist faces in British society and the consequence on the teenager's relationships. Watts's text, aimed at a younger audience, fictionalises key historical events and collective experience in a way suitable for a child reader, rather than detailing the more complex and long-term complications of refugee life.

These novels also provide a range of conclusions as the texts are suited to slightly different audiences. The concluding tone in Segal's novel is one of foreboding, as the narrator remains anxiously waiting for the world's next 'calamity'. Gershon's protagonist is caught in mid-action and the reader does not gain an insight into Inge's future. In keeping with her edited volume of Kinder accounts, Gershon's novel also resists the 'happily-ever-after' narrative of the Kindertransport, in which the Kinder are considered the 'lucky ones', were warmly received, and given a loving home in Britain.[66] Watts's trilogy does not possess the nuances of psychological strain or ambivalence that unnervingly surface in *Other People's Houses* and *The Bread of Exile*. Instead, directed at a younger reader, the trilogy depicts a simplified, idealised closure and the text exhibits more easily defined tensions between loss and survival, individual choice and the burden of expectation. The extent to which an intended younger audience influences the concluding tone of the text will also be examined in the recent Kindertransport fiction in the next chapter.

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[66] Jennifer Craig-Norton, *The Kindertransport: Contesting Memory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019), p.13.

This analysis also reveals a marked difference between autobiographical fiction by Segal and Gershon – which is more personally informed – and Watts's trilogy, which can be considered as both autobiographical and historical fiction. Whereas Watts's text depicts the protagonist's reactions to historical events, the novels written by Segal and Gershon step away from the historical framework in which the Kindertransport is situated and, in turn, represent the Kindertransport as a formative experience, rather than an historical one. *Other People's Houses* and *The Bread of Exile* focus on the protagonist's decisions and actions and the way in which they choose to navigate their world, resulting in more unique, atypical experiences and reactions that reveal the extent to which their childhood experiences influence their thought processes.

In contrast, the characters in historical fiction, Hastings argues, mainly exist to demonstrate 'the effect of social and historical forces'; they are 'ordinary heroes' that reflect the common life of the time.[67] Indeed, Marianne and Sophie in Watts's trilogy appear to be carried along by the tides of history and it is the historical developments that frame the narrative. Lore and Inge, however, are represented not simply as children to whom history happened; Segal and Gershon, in stepping away from the confines of historical events, create more active, engaging, and unpredictable protagonists. Whereas memoirs have been described as being about people 'to whom things happened'[68] – a phrase which may also be applicable to Watts's protagonists – Lore and Inge, in contrast, are portrayed as active agents of their own fates.

Moreover, unlike Watts, Segal and Gershon employ strategies to both draw the reader closer and also distance them; by creating uncomfortable moments in both plot and narration their novels prevent the reader's complete identification with the protagonist. This is arguably an intentional narrative strategy to promote the reader's critical engagement from a position outside the text.

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[67] Hastings, p.3.

[68] Jocelyn Bartkevicius, '"The Person to Whom Things Happened": Meditations on the Tradition of Memoir', *Fourth Genre: Explorations in Nonfiction*, 1:1 (1999), 133–140.

The fictionalisation of the Kindertransportee's world in all three texts leads to a higher level of narrativity and, in turn, a heightened degree of experientiality when compared to memoirs that rely on distanced retrospection and archival material produced decades earlier.[69] In turn, Keen argues that a high degree of narrativity – produced from techniques such as 'the use of first person narration and the interior representation of characters' consciousness and emotional states' leads to narrative transportation and reader engagement, resulting in 'empathetic experiences' and the 'opening [of] readers' minds to others'.[70] This encourages an intimate relationship between reader and protagonist.

Yet, it appears that Segal and Gershon are uncomfortable with this degree of readerly empathy. Their texts disrupt Jurecic's assumption that '[f]eeling an empathic connection with an autobiographer's narrative persona [...] is a whole lot easier than interacting with her in person' as '[l]istening in the social world entails understanding expectations and negotiating responsibilities, neither of which matters as one sits in a quiet corner with a book'.[71] Instead, by unsettling their texts through creating unpredictable or mentally unstable protagonists Segal and Gershon remind the reader that, despite the fictional feel of their texts, the upheaval they depict was possibly experienced by thousands of real-life child refugees.

Consequently, the reader is prevented from fully identifying or empathising, and, instead, is encouraged to critically engage and reflect on the Kindertransportee's situation and the way in which events before, during, and after the Kindertransport have disrupted the way the protagonist relates to the world around them. Supporting this, Jensen, in her study of aesthetics and empathy in autofiction, argues that 'when such texts deal with issues of identity politics, abuse, discrimination and other rights-related issues, autofictions enable an engagement that is a matter of ongoing thoughtful judgement and critique rather than mindless swallowing of yet another sad story'.[72]

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[69] Löschnigg, p.5.
[70] Keen, p.x.
[71] Ann Jurecic, 'Empathy and the Critic', *College English*, 74 (2011), 10–27 (p.15).

Moreover, there is an inherent mix of intimacy and distance in autobiographical fiction which stems from the author's own connection to her text. Segal's position in particular is intriguing to examine: she posits herself as both the protagonist within the action and also assumes the critical manner of the novelist, occupying both a position near to and removed from her protagonist and the represented Kindertransport experience. This appears to be beneficial in stimulating an active empathy and critical engagement, the latter which is often expected from the genre of autofiction.[73]

Ilya Kliger suggests that an active empathy, one including an element of distance as proposed by Bakhtin, can occur when the reader 'aligns herself with the "intentional" perspective of the hero and *simultaneously* recoils back into the totalizing outsideness of the author'.[74] This liminal space between intimacy and distance, lived experience and fictional representation, provides an opportunity for the reader to consider the relevance and reality of the text to their current society. Whilst Segal and Gershon appear to encourage this combination of readerly empathy and critical reflection, Watts's text is quickly resolved; the trilogy ends and the reader's identification with the protagonist ceases. Hence, although it is an effective learning tool, which educates the reader about historical happenings and the immediate aftermath, Watts does not encourage any input or questions from the younger reader.

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[72] Jensen, p.76.

[73] *Ibid.*

[74] Ilya Kliger, 'Heroic Aesthetics and Modernist Critique: Extrapolations from Bakhtin's Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity', *Slavic Review*, 67 (2008), 551–566 (p.556).

Although these texts all represent the daily life of the refugee, adding detail to their world and characters, and although they have the potential to invite empathy and critical reflection to differing degrees, the limits of these fictionalisations should be noted. These novels do not depict the later lives of the Kindertransportees; the Kindertransport experience is limited to the war years – or slightly later in Segal's text. The focus rests on the experience of being a teenage refugee in Britain rather than a witness to historical tragedy. Trauma, loss, grief, and the enduring pain of the Holocaust – which is inescapable in memoirs – assume a secondary position in these texts. Instead, the authors rely on representing the feelings and experiences resulting from upheaval and emigration, such as non-belonging, and confusion. This analysis thus demonstrates how genres are both capable of enabling and restricting meaning; the constraints of the genres 'shape and guide' the content and construction of a text.[75]

These varied examples of autobiographical fiction written by Kindertransportees provide, above all, a detailed representation of life as a child refugee during a specific historical period and focus on capturing the thoughts and reactions of the child in a new country. What is particularly remarkable is the understated way in which trauma is conveyed to the reader; it is not explicitly reflected on, rather depicted through the thoughts and actions of the Kindertransportee. The significance of trauma is often only attributed to an event in the years following or during attempts at putting one's past into a complete account.

The focus of this study now turns to investigate Kindertransport novels that are predominantly written to reconstruct a historical period and to excite the general public, rather than to re-imagine a 'self', or re-frame the events of a given chapter in the author's life. The novelists explored in the next chapter break free from the confines of the child refugee experience – a framework that is central to the texts written by Segal, Gershon, and Watts – and Kindertransport representation consequently becomes more diverse. The question of how the Kindertransportee is represented and situated in these new contexts and subplots, and how the reader's opportunity for empathy and critical reflection will be maintained in fiction are pressing questions as we turn our attention to the fictional representations, which have not been informed by the author's personal experience.

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[75] John Frow, *Genre* (Oxford: Routledge, 2005), p.10.

# Chapter Five

# Kindertransport Fiction: Negotiating History, Aesthetics, and the Reader

## 5.1) The Freedom of Fiction

In recent years, the Holocaust novel has become a literary genre in its own right.[1] Novels such as *The Book Thief*, *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, and more recently *The Tattooist of Auschwitz* have been particularly well received and have attracted the curiosity of readers of all ages.[2] Likewise, as we approached the eightieth anniversary of the Kindertransport, an increasing number of stories have reached the bookshelves. The examination of fiction reveals how a later generation with an indirect relationship to the Kindertransport chooses to represent this chapter of history; the aspects that authors choose to fictionalise, emphasise, re-work, or ignore will affect how today's generation of readers engages with the Kindertransport.

This increase in publication of Kindertransport narratives – a growing trend since the turn of the century – is a phenomenon observed not only in the English-speaking world; German and Dutch language fiction has also been published. The novels examined in this chapter were written in English (by British, American, and Canadian authors), Dutch, and German between the years of 2010 and 2017. These texts are: Jake Wallis Simons's *The English German Girl*, Jana Zinser's *The Children's Train*, Lody van de Kamp's novel, *Sara, het meisje dat op transport ging*, Renate Ahrens's *Das gerettete Kind*, and Alison Pick's *Far to Go*. Although the way in which national memory influences representation is not the focus of this thesis, it is nevertheless important to consider when exploring these texts. The first three texts considered in this chapter are likely to appeal to a younger reader or teenager (Simons, Zinser, van de Kamp), and the following two texts (Ahrens and Pick) are aimed at young adults and adults. The varied nature of the fiction novel, the position of the novelist, and the inherent challenges they face when writing fiction will now be addressed.

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[1] Efraim Sicher, *The Holocaust Novel* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

[2] Markus Zusak, *The Book Thief* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005); John Boyne, *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* (Oxford: David Fickling Books, 2006); Heather Morris, *The Tattooist of Auschwitz* (New York: HarperCollins, 2018).

The freedom permitted by the genre and the release from the expectation to convey true historical and personal events allows the Kindertransport to be situated in a variety of different fictional contexts. Whilst the representation of the child refugee and their engagement with the social world around them was the obvious focus of autobiographical fiction, the novels in this chapter break free from this limited framework and situate the Kindertransport in various new contexts. The creative freedom associated with this genre has been noted by Guido Mazzoni in his *Theory of the Novel*, who proposes this vague, yet apt, explanation: '*the novel became the genre in which one can tell absolutely any story in any way whatsoever*'.[3]

As these texts must appeal to the popular market and compete alongside other published Kindertransport and Holocaust literature – the corpus of which is rapidly growing –, authors must search for an original take on this historical period that promises excitement, adventure, drama, or that is likely to involve characters or storylines, with which the reader can identify. Accordingly, this chapter illustrates how the Kindertransport is placed alongside other subplots of love, adventure, and family relationships. The novels examined in this chapter range from coming-of-age novels, such as *The English German Girl*, to texts of a more postmodern character with unreliable, fragmented narration and the search missing memory traces, as seen in Pick's *Far to Go*.[4]

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[3] Guido Mazzoni, *Theory of the Novel*, trans. by Zakiya Hanafi (London: Harvard University Press, 2017), p.16. Italics in the original text.

It is not only important to consider issues of plot, but also the intriguing position of the novelist should be briefly clarified. Writing with no personal connection to the events, fiction writers, as this analysis reveals, may be pulled in several directions. Authors of fiction find themselves, temporally and existentially, in a position between history and the present day; several novelists in this chapter frequently have expressed in interviews how they feel it is their responsibility to represent to the general public a chapter of history that is currently fading from living memory, in order to 'keep the memory of the "Kindertransport" alive in the minds of future generations'.[5]

Novelists must then balance this responsibility with their attempts to stimulate the reader's engagement with this topic. Authors must be aware of the reader's own motive for reading – what type of reading experience they expect when picking up the book. A younger reader, for example, normally expects excitement, a gripping story line with relatable characters, and character development. The adult reader may be equally demanding and have numerous expectations, as Lisa Zunshine suggests: '[f]iction helps us to pattern in newly nuanced ways our emotions and perceptions; [6] it bestows "new knowledge or increased understanding" and gives "the chance for a sharpened ethical sense"[7]; and it creates new forms of meaning for our everyday existence'.[8]

Hence, there is an evident conflict between the author's urge to convey history on one hand, and, on the other hand, the possibility to take advantage of the almost limitless potential and liberties afforded by the fiction genre, which have the potential to satisfy the reader's desire for excitement, action, or deeper psychological stimulation. This chapter will investigate how authors mediate this tension, and to what extent the novels are oriented toward either reconstructing history, making the representation topical or relevant to the present day reader, or take advantage of the literary potential of the fiction genre by heading into the territory of adventure or fantasy.

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[4] Missing memory traces and disrupted narration can also be found in W. G. Sebald, *Austerlitz* (Munich: Hanser 2001).

[5] Dan Bloom, '"Kindertransport" novel deserves American readers, too', *JewishBoston*, 25 September 2012, <https://www.jewishboston.com/kindertransport-novel-deserves-american-readers-too/> [accessed 11 April 2019].

[6] Wayne C. Booth, 'The Ethics of Forms: Taking Flight with *The Wings of the Dove*', in *Understanding Narrative*, ed. by James Phelan and Peter J. Rabinowitz (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 1994), pp.99–135 (p.120).

[7] Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (London: Methuen,1983), p.117.

[8] Lisa Zunshine, *Why We Read Fiction: Theory of Mind and the Novel* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2006), p.164.

One remarkable feature that these texts nevertheless share, is that they all address, re-insert, or re-write issues of trauma, loss, and the events of the Holocaust. As the analysis in the previous chapters indicates, these aspects prove challenging to narrate or fully process in memoirs and are only hinted at or implied in autobiographical fiction. Indeed, whilst even the label of trauma is avoided in autobiographical fiction, in the novels written by non-Kindertransportees, it threatens to become a literary trope. Attesting to the prevalence of trauma in children's fiction, Kenneth Kidd claims that 'children's literature is the *most* rather than the *least* appropriate literary forum for trauma work'.[9]

Although fiction – which lacks the privilege, but also the limitations, of lived experience – allows this re-imagination and re-insertion of problematic topics that results in an increased awareness and understanding of the long-lasting impact of the experience, this re-working of trauma and the Holocaust raises several concerns. Accordingly, this analysis questions the way in which these aspects are re-inserted into the Kindertransport representation and the effect of these narrative decisions. This chapter is concerned with the content of the representation and the ethical issues this may raise, what aspects may be lost or distorted in this process, and the way the Kindertransport may consequently be received in the public domain. In addition, the analysis of each text will address the author's motivation to write, the novel's resulting impact on the reader, and to what extent he or she is encouraged to empathise and identify with the Kindertransportee's experience. Primarily, this analysis examines the various ways in which the representation of the Kindertransport is likely to change once this chapter of history is placed into more exciting and popular fictional frameworks that are tailored to wider readership.

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[9] Kenneth Kidd, '*A* is for Auschwitz: Psychoanalysis, Trauma Theory, and the "Children's Literature of Atrocity"', in *Under Fire: Childhood in the Shadow of War*, ed. by Elizabeth Goodenough and Andrea Immel (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2008), pp.161–185 (p.161).

### 5.2) Jake Wallis Simons, *The English German Girl* (2011): a Story of Hope and Despair

In many respects, Jake Wallis Simons's novel, *The English German Girl*, can be understood as a typical Kindertransport narrative as it relies on the same foundational building blocks observed in memoirs. His novel follows Rosa Klein's journey into adulthood; depicting her childhood with her family in Berlin, the terror of 'Kristallnacht', her parents' fruitless attempts to flee Germany, and her subsequent journey to England. Rosa must then adapt to life in Britain despite the lack of love provided by her Jewish foster family. Samuel, the son of her foster parents, befriends Rosa and soon their relationship develops. Rosa falls pregnant and, as this is viewed as sinful, her foster mother forces Rosa to have an abortion. Rosa, feeling betrayed by Samuel, flees her foster family and trains as a nurse in London. By chance, Samuel is admitted as an injured patient to the London hospital, and, during a bomb raid, they resume their relationship. At the end of the war, Rosa and Samuel marry shortly after Rosa learns of the death of her family. They then adopt a son, whom Rosa looked after as a baby on the Kindertransport train.

In Simons's novel there is a clear attempt to emphasise the grief and loss experienced by the Kindertransportee. This analysis will show how the return of trauma becomes a literary trope that Simons consistently relies upon to illustrate how Rosa cannot escape the upset caused by the loss of her parents and home. It can be argued that there is an inherent conflict in Simons's representation. On one hand, he wishes to accurately represent the Kindertransport as a period of history and accordingly researched the history of the Kindertransport extensively, in the hope of '[reconstructing] a bygone era'.[10] However, on the other hand, whilst Simons's background research into the Kindertransport is admirable, the author also admits to using the story of the Kindertransport to address the horror of the Holocaust that is more challenging to represent to a young reader; the Kindertransport, for Simons, 'seemed more accessible than the "core" of mass slaughter'.[11] This decision raises ethical concerns: the Kindertransportee's distress is represented as a way to indicate the fates of others who did not survive, rather than being respected as traumatic in its own right. Perhaps finding a middle ground between the Kindertransport experience and the awfulness of the Holocaust, Simons's novel focuses on the grief and loss felt by the Kindertransportee with regard to the separation from and subsequent death of the parents.

Simons represents in detail several moments of loss. For example, Rosa is distraught when war is declared. For many Kindertransportees, who look back at their past retrospectively, the outbreak of war was a definitive moment of loss; it was the moment in which hopes of being reunited with parents were dashed and the reality of a prolonged separation was made clear. Its implication at the time was not always fully realised; memoirists often only briefly recount this moment: Gissing expresses her worry for her relatives (*PC*, p.52), Milton was alarmed (*TA*, p.11), Blend found it

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[10] Fiction Uncovered, *Jake Wallis Simons Interview*, YouTube, 17 May 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tERusr9SXuA> [accessed 11 April 2019]. Informing his novel, Simons also read Edith Milton's *The Tiger in the Attic* and Lore Segal's *Other People's Houses*. See Jake Wallis Simons, *The English German Girl* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 2011), pp.368–369. Further references given in the text.

[11] Correspondence between Andrea Hammel and Simons (14 May 2011), in Andrea Hammel, 'The Future of Kindertransport Research', in *The Kindertransport to Britain 1938/39: New Perspectives: Yearbook of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies*, 13 (2012), ed. by Andrea Hammel and Bea Lewkowicz, pp.141–156 (p.152).

'devastating' as she could no longer write to her mother (*CA*, p.69), and Charles writes about her loss of hope (*G*, p.113). Simons, however, emphasises this anguish, representing it in detail and conveying Rosa's feelings of failure, guilt, and loss through fractured language:

> Could, would. Couldn't, wouldn't. She could have done more, she should have. She would have done more, but – she should have. Memories fading like an old photograph in the sun, like this old photograph from Wiesbaden, which she keeps out of the sun, which fades still. Have to, had to, she had to do more, she didn't. She had to do more, she couldn't. She would have done more, she couldn't. She had to do more. What's happening to them? To her? A steel shutter down, a family cut in two. It shouldn't be like this, didn't have to. She had to do more, she didn't. She could have done more, couldn't she? She could. She didn't. Memories are useless, they have ended, and she could have done more. (p.211)

Where memoirists struggle to narrate traumatic moments, Simons creatively re-imagines this difficulty through the language of Rosa's internal consciousness. The protagonist's sorrow and her difficulty of self-expression is poetically transformed through the merciless rhythm of self-reproach, which lifts and drops continuously, only to begin again. Simon's use of repetition, persistent questions, and similar sentence structures indicates a constant return and Rosa's lack of a way forward. Utter despair is conveyed as even memories, which are supposed to sustain an individual, are described as useless. Moreover, the family's separation is described through the verb choice of 'cut', which indicates the protagonist's physical pain caused by this separation.

Simons not only recaptures moments of initial despair through language but also through his construction of the plot, which is granted more freedom in fiction. When

Rosa is forced into having an abortion, the resulting grief and guilt she feels mirrors the loss, pain, sense of betrayal, powerlessness, and guilt experienced when she was separated from her own parents and brought to safety. These two episodes of loss and separation are coupled by Simons in the moments leading up to the medical procedure:

> Rosa turns to her parents, she can almost see them sitting beside her, [...] what are they saying, what are they saying? I cannot hear, thinks Rosa, your words are too faint, I cannot hear your advice. Speak louder, Papa, can you not? Mama, speak louder, I cannot hear. I need to know what you are saying, I need your advice. What should I do, Papa, Mama? (p.248)

The author's use of rhetorical questions and repetition of 'Papa' and 'Mama' highlight Rosa's longing for her parents and desperation to hear their advice. Once again, Simons conveys loss and separation through the failure of language, as her parents' voices cannot be heard and words appear to become lost between formation and reception. Fiction is able to create situations that mirror an initial moment of trauma and, in doing so, Rosa's grief and helplessness remain fresh for the reader to contemplate as the protagonist must face this new upsetting situation. In her study *Empathy and the Novel*, Suzanne Keen summarises the importance of character identification and narrative situation (which includes point of view and perspective) and how, as exhibited in Simon's novel, 'experiencing painful obstacles [makes] a reader's empathizing more likely'.[12]

Simons repeatedly unites key moments in Rosa's life – sometimes even happy moments – with the consequences of the Kindertransport, and especially within the novel's romantic subplot. Rosa's past and present lives unite during her marriage ceremony; the breaking of the glass in the Jewish wedding ceremony forces her to recall the events of the November Pogrom and the following months:

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[12] Suzanne Keen, *Empathy and the Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp.71, 93.

> the breaking of the glass symbolises that their happiness shall never be complete because their temple was destroyed and Jerusalem was sacked, the flames licking from the roof of the Rykestraße synagogue, the window breaking and the person tumbling through onto the street, the broken windows of their apartment in the Arbeiterviertel which Mama boarded up, looking out of the window of a train, seeing the closed door to the waiting room, wishing that Mama and Papa would open it and wave to her one last time, the door does not open and the train pulls away, and their letter, their last letter, now we must say a very painful goodbye [...]. (p.345f)

These moments in which the 'past reappears in the present'[13] – also understood as 'afterwardness' or, in the Freudian sense, *Nachträglichkeit* – is a common literary trope used to represent trauma.[14] Earlier significant episodes are recognised as traumatic, in light of a later traumatic event. In this respect, Rosa's own personal suffering appears to attest to the centuries of persecution faced by Jews. Individual and collective trauma are united; Simons superimposes Jewish tradition and shared history onto Rosa's personal Kindertransport narrative. The resulting palimpsestic memory merges past and present and recalls a sense of collective loss, simultaneously embedding the Kindertransport in its larger historical context.

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[13] Robert Eaglestone, 'Knowledge, "Afterwardsness" and the Future of Trauma Theory', in *The Future of Trauma Theory: Contemporary Literary and Cultural Criticism*, ed. by Gert Buelens, Sam Durrant, and Robert Eaglestone (Oxford: Routledge, 2014), pp.11–21 (p.16).

[14] Gregory Bistoen, Stijn Vanheule, and Stef Craps, 'Nachträglichkeit: a Freudian perspective on delayed traumatic reactions', *Theory & Psychology*, 24 (2014), 668–687 (p.673); Freud, Sigmund, 'Project for a scientific psychology' (1895), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 1, ed. and trans. by James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1975), pp.283–397 (p.356).

Simons presents the emergence of grief in a highly vivid, almost theatrical way, especially when compared to how upsetting moments are simply implied or understated in autobiographical fiction. For example, Rosa and Samuel rekindle their relationship whilst they are taking shelter in London's underground as the German bombs fall above them. Additionally, the pain of Rosa's loss is overwhelming and causes her to collapse during her wedding ceremony:

> she struggles against the unbearable pressure [...] she falls to her knees, her hands grasp at her veil as if tearing away cobwebs, and finally the pressure is released, it bursts out of her mouth, and from the depths of her soul a sound comes, a primordial, human sound; the sound – at last – of her grief. (p.346)

Simons makes this returning sorrow highly dramatic as Rosa appears to be suffocated and consumed by this unexpressed heartache. Grief is given a physical presence, permitting a clearer representation of trauma for the younger reader. The removal of her cobweb veil not only reveals how happier moments in her life are tainted by death, but in acknowledging her grief, Rosa is able to gain clarity. This, in turn, contributes to Rosa's character development and allows Simons to create a sense of resolution in his denouement.

Throughout the novel Simons represents both initial moments of distress and the return of a traumatic past, illustrating the instant reaction and long-term impact of the Kindertransport and Jewish persecution. The loss of the parents is consistently brought back into Rosa's consciousness. As illustrated, this is predominantly achieved through the author's detailed, emotive, and rhythmic internal monologues at key distressing moments in his protagonist's life, and the mirroring of past and present situations.

Yet, despite focusing his attention on the representation of trauma, loss, and inescapable grief, Simons also attempts to bring this despair alongside hope; both which he views as inherent to the Kindertransport experience.[15] Uniting despair and hope – evident in the way Simons depicts loss even during happier moments in Rosa's life – can be understood as an acceptable way to address trauma, disruption, and loss, and present it to a younger reader. Simply representing the negative feelings attached to Rosa's experience is likely to distance the reader and would not provide a redemptive ending expected from most children's novels. This is crucial for Simons, who, during a book festival in 2011, claimed that a key aim of his novel 'on an even more fundamental level' is to 'allow people to empathize with the persecuted and oppressed'.[16]

The ending of the novel captures this duality and arguably satisfies the reader; Rosa can look forward to a future with Samuel and their adopted son – whom Rosa looked after as an infant during the journey on the Kindertransport train and conveniently manages to find again. Happiness is not eclipsed but, as Simons shows, loss and absence will often accompany happier moments in the Kindertransportee's life as Rosa realises that, although her life is a 'wounded one [...] there is a future filled with promise that is there to be lived' (p.348).

Arguably to please the reader and create a feeling of cohesion within the novel, Simons concludes his novel with the image of Rosa, a successfully qualified nurse who is promoted to the position of 'sister', and who, despite the many challenges she has faced, is ready to plant roots in England. With this positive spin, Simons's novel appears to conform to the British narrative of the Kindertransport, in which the refugee is not only resilient, but also successful, having contributed to and become a 'valued [member] of British society'.[17]

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[15] Correspondence between Andrea Hammel and Simons (14 May 2011), in Hammel, 'The Future of Kindertransport Research', p.152.

[16] Dan Bloom, '"Kindertransport" novel deserves American readers, too', *JewishBoston*, 25 September 2012, <https://www.jewishboston.com/kindertransport-novel-deserves-american-readers-too/> [accessed 11 April 2019].

Although the unison of hope and despair and the dramatic representation of loss are likely to engage the reader to some extent, the convenient (yet unrealistic) conclusion, and the fact that his novel is structured around the dichotomies of desperation and hope, love and loss, means that the extent to which Simons reconstructs a 'bygone era', as he had intended to do, is questionable. In harnessing both the 'despair and hope' of the Kindertransport experience, Simons's ending is idealised and inconceivable. The author apparently feels the need to tie up the loose threads of Rosa's life and this contrasts significantly with the more open-ended conclusions found in Segal's and Gershon's autobiographical fiction. Sue Vice's understanding of Holocaust fiction highlights how attempting to achieve this neat ending is in fact a reductive process. She argues that 'Holocaust fiction which is unaccommodating to the reader may be more successful in conveying the disruption and unease that the subject demands than more seamless, aesthetically pleasing work'.[18]

### 5.3) Jana Zinser, *The Children's Train* (2015): the Kindertransportee as an Adventure Hero

In her novel *The Children's Train*, American novelist, Jana Zinser, constructs an unusual Kindertransport narrative both in terms of plot and perspective. Peter, the main protagonist, escapes Berlin on a Kindertransport, yet returns to the continent as part of the Jewish underground resistance. Zinser takes advantage of the widening of perspective fiction allows; her novel embraces the plurality of experience and the author suggests in her 'dedication' that the novel represents 'both the many children who rode the Kindertransport and those who were not lucky enough to get a seat on the train'.[19]

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[17] Stephanie Homer, 'The Resilience of the Refugee: how Kindertransport Memoirs Complicate Understandings of "Resilience"', *Transactions, Jewish Historical Studies*, 51 (forthcoming January 2020); Amy Williams, 'Kindertransports in National and Transnational Perspective', in *Monument Culture: International Perspectives on the Future of Monuments in a Changing World*, ed. by Laura A. Macaluso (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2019), p.132.

[18] Sue Vice, *Holocaust Fiction* (London: Routledge, 2000), p.161.

In Zinser's hard-hitting novel those who did not escape continental Europe must live in appalling conditions. Whilst Peter, his younger sister, and two of his friends arrive safely in England, those who remain must suffer at the hands of the Nazis. One friend's father is shot at the fictively named 'Sothausen' work camp after he was arrested on 'Kristallnacht' and Peter's father dies following his own release from the camp. Peter's mother, following the death of her baby and with nowhere to live, commits suicide on the grounds of the burnt-out synagogue only nine months after Peter escapes on the Kindertransport (p.182). Other characters face deportation to the Zbaszyn ghetto, and starvation, exhaustion, and death in concentration camps. Zinser repeatedly attempts to elicit shock from the reader by depicting the horror of the Holocaust. One child, Eva, for example, escapes extermination in the gas chamber in which another child dies, and Charlie stands by his pregnant mother as she is shot outside of a concentration camp, punished for praying (pp.251–254). Only one adult, Nora, from the friendship group of eight adults survives the Holocaust and returns, haggard, to her son Stephen who arrived on the Kindertransport in England.

This analysis will focus on how Zinser succeeds in placing the Kindertransport directly alongside the horrors of the Holocaust and the effect this has on the representation of the Kindertransportee and readerly empathy. At certain moments in the novel, events are paralleled to highlight the difference in fate between those Kindertransportees who escaped and those children who did not. For example, Eva and her family's arrival at the fictionally named 'Bockenburg' work camp near Munich is paralleled with the boys' arrival at Dovercourt Holiday Summer Camp, where cold cabins await them (p.122). Whilst, in this respect, fiction can offer a representation that the other genres cannot or choose not to depict, the representation of Holocaust suffering alongside the Kindertransport experience raises several ethical concerns which will be addressed in this analysis.

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[19] 'Dedication', in Jana Zinser, *The Children's Train* (Atlanta: BQB, 2015). Further references given in the text.

There are indeed several concerning aspects of Zinser's representation. In her effort to depict the Holocaust – a missing or problematic aspect of the other genres –, the representation of the Kindertransport is turned into an adventure novel. Zinser interpolates two different narratives into one and explains: 'I also read about the underground resistance and the resourceful rebels fighting for survival the best they could with the same bravery and determination. So, I decided I would write the story combining these two incredible storylines'.[20] Although Zinser raises awareness of both historical events, it raises questions about what has been lost or distorted as these two storylines merge.

Furthermore, like Simons, there appears to be a disjunction between what Zinser hoped to achieve with her novel and what is actually represented. According to Zinser, '*The Children's Train* is a historical novel based on real events,' which she wanted to tell, 'so that others could hopefully see and feel what these children went through'.[21] Yet, this analysis will show how, in turning the Kindertransport into an adventure story, her novel actually fails to reflect real events and the memory of the Kindertransport is consequently distorted.

An additional issue also becomes apparent here. In correspondence, Zinser explains: '[m]y goal was to create a story where the reader feels the pain, the horror, and the loneliness of the children'.[22] Although Zinser does address and convey this pain and horror, this is mainly when describing the children in the concentration camps rather than the Kindertransportees. Moreover, although attempting to stimulate an empathic response from the reader, her novel, as this analysis will show, in fact is not conducive to the production of empathic feeling.

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[20] Jana Zinser, email correspondence with me, 02 October 2019.
[21] *Ibid.*
[22] *Ibid.*

Written with the aim of conveying 'emotional impact',[23] Zinser's representation forces the reader to continuously confront horrifying and desperate situations as the fate of each character is revealed. These distressing images of brutality, starvation, betrayal, and systematic murder are clear and the author does not leave much to the imagination. Crucially, this frequently graphic representation is likely to induce pity or sympathy, rather than empathy from the reader; philosopher Ann Coplan argues that empathy without imaginative effort is simply a lower form of 'emotional contagion'.[24] The difference between these forms of engagement is vital: empathy 'takes work and is much harder to achieve than sympathy'.[25] The distance implied in forms of empathy, in contrast to sympathy, is essential for an ethical reading of a text, as Bakhtin argues.[26] Sympathy, in which one feels 'for' someone else, instead of 'with' them, [27] is more ethically problematic; the reader is perhaps more aware of their own feelings of pity or shock, instead of sharing the feelings of the character.

Although the extent to which empathy is generated is questionable, Zinser, through the creativity and widening of perspective allowed by the fiction genre, effectively imagines the lives of those who did not survive to tell their own story. Victoria Aarons acknowledges that this is common in recent fiction texts written by later generations. In her work on post-Holocaust and third-generation writing, her chosen authors 'invoke loss, all the while reimagining – reasserting, re-inserting – that which was eradicated'.[28] *The Children's Train* offers an imagined response to the prevalent and unanswered questions which surface in Kindertransport memoirs and which often hinder the Kindertransportee's narration of experience. For example, both Martha Blend and Marion Charles struggle with the lack of knowledge and the missing traces of loved ones and are plagued by unanswered questions pertaining to the Holocaust.

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[23] *Ibid.*

[24] Amy Coplan 'Understanding Empathy: its Features and Effects', in *Empathy: Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives*, ed. by Amy Coplan and Peter Goldie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp.3–18 (p.8f).

[25] Alison Landsberg, 'Memory, Empathy, and the Politics of Identification', *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, 22:2 (2009), 221–229, p.223.

[26] Alina Wyma, 'Bakhtin and Scheler: Toward a Theory of Active Understanding', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 86:1 (2008), 58–89 (p.65).

[27] Meghan Marie Hammond, *Empathy and the Psychology of Literary Modernism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), p.4; Keen, p.5.

The re-insertion of the parent's perspective is particularly noteworthy, as the parents have previously been excluded from the Kindertransport narrative in scholarship and the focus has instead rested on the success of the rescue operation.[29] Jennifer Craig-Norton notes how 'Kinder testimony is the primary means by which the parents have been incorporated into the narrative', however 'these narrations are not in the parents' own voices but are portraits of the parents distilled through their children's memories'.[30] Nevertheless, a trend can be observed in recently published Kindertransport fiction: the parent's experience is fictionalised alongside the lives of the Kindertransportee. An example of this is Linda Winterberg's novel *Solange die Hoffnung uns gehört* (2017) which is comprised of both Anni's experience hiding in an attic throughout the war and her daughter's experience in England.[31] Likewise, Ursula Krechel's novel, *Landgericht*, addresses the parents' difficulty in emigrating, their return to their Berlin apartment following the children's departure, and the broken relationship with their children after being reunited ten years later. This representation of the Kindertransport and Jewish persecution has reached a wide audience in Germany and in 2017 the novel was adapted into a two-part television series with the title *Landgericht – Geschichte einer Familie*.

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[28] Victoria Aarons, 'Memory's Afterimage: Post-Holocaust Writing and the Third Generation', in *Third-Generation Holocaust Narratives: Memory in Memoir and Fiction*, ed. by Victoria Aarons (London: Lexington Books, 2016), pp.17–38 (p.20).

[29] Tony Kushner, *Remembering Refugees: Then and now* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), p.151.

[30] Craig-Norton, Jennifer, *The Kindertransport: Contesting Memory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019), p.240.

[31] Linda Winterberg, *Solange die Hoffnung uns gehört* (Berlin: Aufbau, 2017).

Although including a missing perspective, Zinser's novel lacks historical credibility; it can be understood as a fantasy novel which lacks psychological depth. In creating a protagonist who, as a shy violin player, escapes on the Kindertransport and then decides to return to the continent to fight the Nazis, Zinser crafts a Kindertransport hero. From the first page of the novel, the author establishes an immediate conflict between good and evil; Hitler is described in fairy-tale language as '[t]he Nazi monster' (p.1) and '[t]he Bogeyman' (p.13), and is personified as 'evil in the flesh!' (p.39).[32] In Peter, Zinser creates a protector of children, he is characterised as fighting evil and is described as both 'a fearless German hero' (p.250) and 'the handsome rebel' (p.333). As the only male Kindertransportee protagonist in the texts studied in this chapter, it is worth reflecting on Andrea Hammel's observation regarding the gender aspect of Kindertransport narratives, in which girl refugees are often placed in 'a more vulnerable position than boy refugees'.[33]

The novel enters the realm of fantasy as it departs from reality; once joining the resistance aged fourteen, Peter sabotages Nazi plans, steals records from the Nazi Berlin headquarters (p.270), saves his comrades from being hanged (p.288), and infiltrates a concentration camp in Nazi uniform, sets off explosions and frees the prisoners from certain death in the gas chambers (p.238). In contrast to both memoirs and autobiographical fiction, the focus of this novel is one of action and adventure, an ultimate tale of good vs. evil, rather than the depiction of everyday life in England, the refugee's acculturation, and the personal challenges Kindertransportees faced within their foster families and host country.

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[32] The use of myth and fairytale is not uncommon in fictional representations of the Holocaust. See *The Fantastic in Holocaust Literature and Film: Critical Perspectives*, ed. by Judith B. Kerman and John Edgar Browning (North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 2015).

[33] Andrea Hammel, 'Gender and Kindertransport Memoirs', in *Exile and Gender 1: Yearbook of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies*, 17 (2016), ed. by Charmian Brinson and Andrea Hammel, pp.19–33 (p.30).

Perhaps due to the fast-paced narrative and focus on the events on the continent, the representation of the Kindertransportees is simplified and their experience is rather two-dimensional. For example, they are repeatedly praised by other characters for their '[b]oundless determination' (p.167). The depiction of this particularly positive characterisation of the Kindertransportees is one aim of Zinser's novel; at the beginning of the book she writes that '[i]t is with great passion that I tell the story of these children who lived in a time of tremendous evil and had to be bold just to stay alive' ('Dedication').

Whilst the human quality of bravery and goodness is something that the reader can comprehend, the presentation of the Kindertransportees as uncomplicated heroic figures in an action story – or figures that fight 'evil' through their bravery and determination – warps the reader's understanding of the their experience and eclipses the suffering of many child refugees. For example, rather than the feelings of helplessness and distress that can be observed in both memoirs and autobiographical fiction, Peter's forced labour on a farm in England results in physical and emotional empowerment and strengthening of character, which essentially enables him to join the resistance. The story Zinser tells is not representative of the majority of Kindertransportees; the most common – and likely – experience is one comparable to either Hans and Stephen's, who spend the war years in a hostel, or Peter's sister, who is placed in a foster family. Peter's heroic story is not just atypical, it is impossible.

With regards to empathy, it is thus questionable to what extent the reader can identify with the 'hero', Peter, and relate to the represented Kindertransport experience. Keen argues that 'purely externalized narration' – which can be seen in this novel's depiction of happenings and action rather than the consciousness of the characters –

'tends not to invite readers' empathy'.[34] Moreover, according to Preston and Hofelich, empathy cannot occur when there is a 'lack of shared experience'.[35] Supporting this, Aleida Assmann and Ines Detmers explain that a 'strong sense of difference and distance [...] precludes the possibility of spontaneous emotional ties, and blocks empathy'.[36] Hence, the highly dramatised, far-fetched, and inconceivable plot of the novel in which Peter becomes a rebel and almost single-handedly liberates a concentration camp limits the degree of identification the reader is able to feel.

Moreover, the long-lasting trauma caused by the separation and the death of loved ones is only hinted at in Zinser's novel, unlike in *The English German Girl* discussed above. The emotional distress caused by the Kindertransport appears to be easily solved as on VE day, Zinser writes '[t]he Kindertransport children's nightmares were finally over' (p.343). This is problematic as it gives a misleading impression of the Kindertransportees' experience and detracts from the challenges they faced, both during and after the war. Complex notions of suffering, although addressed, are quickly skirted around; the hierarchy of suffering – which is, in itself, a controversial and emotionally-fuelled topic – is simplified in a short conversation between Stephen and his mother, who is liberated from a concentration camp:

> 'I've been on my own for seven years,' Stephen said.
>
> 'You lived in England in safety, while we suffered.'
>
> 'Yes, but we suffered, too.'

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[34] Keen, p.97.

[35] Stephanie D. Preston and Alicia J. Hofelich, 'The Many Faces of Empathy: Parsing Empathic Phenomena through a Proximate, Dynamic-Systems View of Representing the Other in the Self', *Emotion Review*, 4 (2012), 24–33 (p.28).

[36] Aleida Assmann and Ines Detmers, 'Introduction', in *Empathy and its Limits*, ed. by Aleida Assmann and Ines Detmers (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp.1–17 (p.8).

> 'Shame on you. You should be grateful the Kindertransport took you out of Germany! You were the lucky ones,' Nora said. 'You have no right to compare your life to the horrors those other children suffered, like Eddie and Eva.' [...]
> 'Yes. I'm sorry. It's been so long.' (p.352f)

Zinser, though not addressing the emotional complexity of Kindertransport suffering, does touch upon the idea that the experience of the Kindertransportees cannot compare to that of camp survivors; this understanding appears to be ingrained in many Kindertransportee accounts (such as Marion Charles's memoir) and is arguably the reason why it has taken so long for the Kindertransportees to tell their stories.[37] There is, however an essential distinction between Kindertransportees who do not identify as Holocaust survivors as they did not witness first-hand the horror of the concentration camps, and implying that Kindertransportees did not suffer and thus negating their experience of separation and dislocation. Instead of showing the lasting effects on the child refugees – some of whom have been orphaned, the Kindertransport is described as a 'gift' for which the children will one day be 'thankful' (p.161).

Ironically then, it is questionable to what extent Zinser achieves the aim of her novel, which was to tell 'their story', and instead, her novel threatens to distort the memory of the Kindertransport in several ways. Here, it is also worth considering how, although the clichéd moral of good triumphing over evil makes the Kindertransport and Holocaust accessible and attractive to a reader with little historical knowledge of the period, in Holocaust education, the act of 'preach[ing] moral platitudes' and 'shout[ing] about evil' – as Zinser's novel does – has been argued to be counterproductive to the learning process as it does not allow the student to 'enter the world of atrocity and extreme suffering'.[38] Moreover, by sewing together the Kindertransport and the Holocaust without offering an in-depth depiction of the refugee experience, Zinser worryingly detaches the Kindertransport's relevance to contemporary refugee problems and the unaccompanied children fleeing throughout Europe today.

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[37] Andrea Hammel, 'Child Refugees Forever? The History of the Kindertransport to Britain 1938/39', *Diskurs Kindheits- und Jugendforschung*, 2 (2010), 131–143 (p.141).

### 5.4) Lody van de Kamp, *Sara, het meisje dat op transport ging* (2017): Experiences of Suffering and its Post-War Aftermath

Lody van de Kamp's Dutch novel, *Sara, het meisje dat op transport ging* [Sara, the girl who went on the transport], also widens the perspective of the Kindertransportee's experience. Whilst Zinser's novel does not explore the nuances of feelings and emotion, and focuses rather on adventure, drama, and character development, van de Kamp offers a rich insight into the thoughts, confusion, and haunting guilt experienced by his protagonist. He foregrounds the complex reality and repercussions of being a child refugee; the experience of escaping and surviving, but then the subsequent challenge of living with the suffering of family members and persistent survivor's guilt.

In this regard, this novel is not a straightforward narrative about the Kindertransportee as being one of the 'lucky ones'.[39] Instead, it presents a nuanced understanding of familial and personal suffering and complicates the British celebratory narrative of the Kindertransport; although Sara did escape continental Europe, the events of the Holocaust still have a considerable effect on her life. Van de Kamp's novel addresses topics that are not often mentioned and challenges our understandings of the Kindertransport in three ways that will now be discussed: he provides an alternative to the understanding that the Kindertransport was an heroic British rescue operation; he shows the impact on several members of one family (father, mother, sister, and cousin); and sheds light on the Kindertransportee's post-war attempts to cope with her experience. This analysis will also illustrate how van de Kamp primarily aims for clarity in his representation.

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[38] Thomas Klein and Jan Darsa, 'Holocaust Literature: The Perils of Breaking the Silence', *CEA Critic*, 56:2 (1994), 31–41 (p.31f).

[39] Ruth Barnett, 'Therapeutic Aspects of Working Through the Trauma of the Kindertransport Experience', in *The Kindertransport to Britain 1938/39: Yearbook*, ed. by Hammel and Lewkowicz, pp.157–171 (p.162).

The novel begins with the protagonist, Sara, who is watching her grandchildren play and thinks back on her childhood in Germany. Shifting time from 2013 to 1935, the narrative then adopts the first-person voice, replacing the third-person narration, as the reader is led into Sara Jacobson's childhood in Germany and her years in Britain. Sara grows up in Kleve, Germany, with her parents, younger sister Mirjam and baby brother Izaäk. As the discrimination against Jews becomes increasingly unbearable, Sara unwillingly leaves on the Kindertransport aged fourteen. Adding to the upheaval caused by this sudden departure, when the Kindertransport train stops in Nijmegen her sister, along with the other younger transportees, is taken off the train and is not allowed to continue her journey to England. Mirjam must stay at an orphanage with Dutch orphans and refugee children from Germany and eastern Europe.[40]

Whilst Mirjam remains in the Netherlands, Sara is collected by her aunt and uncle and settles relatively easily into their family. Although hoping that the rest of her family will soon join her in England, Sara is not prepared for the arrival of her traumatised and physically weakened father following his release from a labour camp. Shortly after this, Sara is evacuated to Shefford with her school, where she stays until 1945, helping her teacher look after a few of the younger students. On her return to London, aged twenty-one, she must navigate a new post-war world; she wants to move on with her life, yet is unable to escape the suffering of those around her, especially upon learning that her mother died in the Holocaust and that her baby brother is missing, presumed dead, and that her sister is extremely weak following her liberation from a camp.

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[40] The separation of the sisters on the grounds that Britain has not accepted one of them is historically inaccurate. Instead, this separation is a plot device which creates extra tension and allows the Holocaust to be represented through Mirjam's storyline.

Whilst van de Kamp's novel follows the typical pattern of a Kindertransport narrative – covering Sara's childhood in Germany, her departure on the train, her adolescence in Britain and experience of evacuation, and ends with the protagonist's adult life with a new family – this novel includes several new aspects. In an online interview with the author it becomes apparent that his intention was to bring the reality of the Kindertransport to light and address aspects of the Kindertransport story which are less well known. Rabbi Lody van de Kamp believes his book addresses this little piece of forgotten history ('stukje vergeten geschiedenis').[41]

One piece of history which van de Kamp writes into his novel, is the role of Geertruida Wijsmuller-Meijer (also known as 'Tante Truus'), whose contribution to the Kindertransport operation is not particularly well known in the public sphere.[42] A whole chapter is dedicated to her involvement in the Kindertransport rescue and she is characterised by the author as both caring and firm, bringing comfort to Sara after she has been separated from Mirjam.[43] By representing the figure of Tante Truus, van de Kamp expands the British narrative of the Kindertransport as being a British initiative led by the Government; he addresses the role of other countries and the individual people who helped with the rescue operation. The Dutch author also makes many references to the events and suffering on the continent, including hidden families in France and the murder of Jews living in Lithuania and Belgium. These countries are not often thought of when one thinks of Jewish persecution; the history and public memory tends to gravitate towards the suffering in Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, Poland, and Czechoslovakia, rather than the Baltic countries.

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[41] KokBoekencentrum TV, *Lody van de Kamp, 'Sara, het meisje dat op transport ging'* (2016), YouTube, 29 November 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sysHHKAi9S4> [accessed 29 April 2019].
[42] See thesis introduction.
[43] Lody van de Kamp, *Sara, het meisje dat op transport ging* (Zoetermeer: Mozaïek, 2017), pp.41–46. Further references given in the text. Another recently published fiction novel including the figure of Wijsmuller-Meijer: Meg Waite Clayton, *The Last Train to London* (New York: HarperCollins, 2019).

Significantly, the author creates Wijsmuller-Meijer as a human figure rather than a hero. He brings her loving nature and humanitarian actions to the reader's attention, yet she encourages the separation of the two sisters, which has terrible consequences for Mirjam. After the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands, the children are collected in wagons and transported to numerous camps. Mirjam ends up in Bergen Belsen and it takes her years to physically recover once the camp is liberated. Tracing her sister's suffering back to the moment of separation in Nijmegen, Sara firmly believes that '[i]k had nooit naar die vrouw met die paraplu mogen luisteren' ['I should never have allowed myself to listen to that woman with that umbrella'] (p.137). Van de Kamp, though depicting the Netherlands's contribution to the rescue operation, focuses on creating a three-dimensional character and rejects a wholly celebratory narrative of the Kindertransport.

Another aspect of the Kindertransport that is not often explored – yet which van de Kamp re-imagines in detail – is the Kindertransportee's post-war experience. Although memoirs describe the key events in post-war life (such as profession, marriage, children, return trips to continental Europe), an in-depth account of how Kindertransportees lived with and processed their childhood experience during these years is not given. Similarly, the autobiographical fiction examined in Chapter Four does not portray this period in the Kindertransportee's life as the texts conclude shortly after the end of the war; the focus remains on the child refugee's experience.

In portraying the process of coping with traumatic experience in the post-war period, van de Kamp adds a new dimension to the Kindertransport experience. Indeed, almost half of the novel is set in the years following the end of the war (from 1945 to 1978), and the chapter titles could be translated as 'Future', 'Onwards Together', and

'New Beginning'. In her post-war life, Sara must cope with daily feelings of guilt and uselessness, as well as face the aftermath of her father's experience in a work camp and her sister's experience in Bergen Belsen. On multiple occasions, Sara reflects on the emotional distance and silence between them as they are unable or unwilling to communicate their individual stories:

> [h]et is net als met papa: de oorlog is afgelopen, maar de muren van verdriet, angst, pijn, vernedering en ontmenselijking die tussen ons zijn opgetrokken, staan nog steeds recht overeind. We willen opnieuw een familie gaan vormen. Maar hoe komen wij in vredesnaam weer met ons allen in dezelfde wereld terecht?
> [[i]t is just like with papa: the war has ended, but the walls of sadness, fear, pain, humiliation and dehumanisation that have been erected between us are still upright. We want to form a family again. But how on earth are all of us supposed to come together in the same world again?] (p.146).

Through fiction, the author creates an imaginative representation of the notion of unspeakable trauma and, whilst memoirs often include silences, this novel shows how easily experience resists communication. The author's metaphorical re-imagination of this unspeakability of suffering through its description as a wall, allows the reader, who may not have personally experienced such intense feelings, to understand how ongoing grief and guilt impedes Sara's way forward and her connection to her father and sister.

Additionally, by bringing together Sara's, her father's, and her sister's personal suffering, van de Kamp engages with the troublesome notion of hierarchical suffering. As Hammel notes, there is an 'implicit hierarchy of suffering regarding different Holocaust experiences' and the 'Kindertransportees were often deemed to have suffered the least'.[44] Unlike Zinser's novel which quickly brushes over this highly emotive concern, Lody van de Kamp both validates Sara's suffering and also reveals how her Kindertransport experience may be interpreted – either by the protagonist or by others – as one of luck and safety in which her suffering cannot compare to the trauma of those who were forced into camps, like Mirjam. Sara's thoughts are clearly conveyed to the reader:

> [m]ij heeft ze niet nodig. Net zo min als mijn zwijgende vader me nodig heeft. Mijn oom en tante kunnen me ook al niet gebruiken; mijn moeder en broertje zijn dood. Ik sta alleen, en wat ik heb doorgemaakt, is totaal onbelangrijk.
> [[s]he doesn't need me. Just as little as my silent father needs me. I can't be of any use to my uncle and aunt either; my mother and brother are dead. I'm on my own, and what I have gone through is completely unimportant.] (p.150)

This novel demonstrates the struggle to negotiate individual trauma and feelings of distress and loneliness in the greater context of the Holocaust – a challenge also evident in Marion Charles's memoir examined in Chapter Three. Van de Kamp not only illustrates strained relationships during Sara's post-war years but also her attempts to come to terms with her own experience. Facing trauma is a lengthy process, and Sara oscillates constantly between not wanting to forget the past and her desire to put the past behind her. Van de Kamp conveys how moving on is not a straightforward, simple process and, consequently, his novel challenges the general British narrative which suggests how the Kindertransportees evolve from helpless child refugees into grateful adults who have enriched British society.[45] This novel reveals how this was not one direct and smooth trajectory, but actually involved much emotional strain. For instance, even when Sara consciously decides to move on with her life, she cannot escape her grief:

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[44] Andrea Hammel, 'The Kinder's Children: Second Generation and the Kindertransport', in *The Young Victims of the Nazi Regime: Migration, the Holocaust and Postwar* Displacement, ed. by Simone Gigliotti and Monica Tempian (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), pp.239–256 (p.249).

> [m]ijn neerslachtige buien worden afgewisseld met vlagen van diepe droefheid en felle woede. Soms kan ik mezelf wel wat aandoen. Hoe heb ik ooit kunnen toelaten dat Mirjam bij me weggehaald werd?
> [m]y depressive showers are interspersed with gusts of deep sadness and fierce anger. Sometimes I could just harm myself. How could I ever have allowed Mirjam to be taken away from me?] (p.137)

Comparable to how van de Kamp physically represents the obstruction caused by unspeakable trauma, the author once again conveys Sara's struggle in physical terms and in transparent language. By metaphorically likening Sara's depression, sadness, and anger to the weather, van de Kamp illustrates how her feelings are powerful, changeable, uncontrollable and unpredictable. Through this metaphor, van de Kamp emphasises how her ineluctable pain and guilt is something that needs to be monitored and navigated every day. Offering an alternative representation to Zinser, whose Kindertransportees' suffering ended on VE day, van de Kamp reveals the reality many child refugees faced at the end of the war.

Particularly noticeable throughout van de Kamp's novel is the extent to which emotions are clearly revealed to the reader; in fact, the feelings themselves are overtly named: depression, sadness, anger, fear, and pain. Where Gershon's autobiographical fiction illustrates the Kindertransportee's altered way of viewing the world resulting from feelings of alienation and inferiority, van de Kamp's fiction overtly expresses an array of feelings that the protagonist recognises to be a result of her situation.

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[45] The presence of gratitude in the British narrative of the Kindertransport and the refugees' contribution to British society has been investigated by Caroline Sharples in her chapter, 'The Kindertransport in British Historical Memory', in *The Kindertransport to Britain 1938/39: Yearbook*, ed. by Hammel and Lewkowicz, pp.15–27 (pp.21, 23).

Van de Kamp's novel thus enriches existing understandings of the Kindertransport experience by openly depicting both the temporary and enduring difficulties of being a Kindertransportee in psychological and emotional detail. The constant reflection on the Kindertransportee's emotions encourages an empathic response from the reader; Keen's study on empathy proposes, '[i]n particular, first-person fiction, in which the narrator self-narrates his or her own experiences and perceptions, is thought to invite an especially close relationship between reader and narrative voice'.[46] This 'interior representation of characters' consciousness and emotional states', she argues, '[supports] character identification, [contributes] to empathic experiences, [opens] readers' minds to others, and even [predisposes] readers to altruism'.[47]

Be that as it may, it is worth questioning the less productive consequences of these well-explained emotions. Although encouraging the reader's empathy – the reader is able to understand and experience the character's emotions –, the obvious nature of this depiction may actually hinder the reader's potential critical reflection and imaginative investment. These responses are arguably as important as readerly empathy in provoking the reader's consideration and long-term engagement with the topic of the Kindertransport.

Nevertheless, van de Kamp can be praised for sensitively dealing with different types of suffering and with ethical issues such as guilt, incommunicable experience, and the hierarchy of suffering. With this well-rounded portrayal of Sara's experience, van de Kamp widens the scope of the Kindertransport experience and provides an alternative picture to the more positive portrayal of the Kindertransportees as 'those to whom "nothing happened at all"'.[48] Instead, this novel suggests that survival does not necessarily result in a trouble-free existence. Indeed, as Craig-Norton suggests, '[t]he damage suffered by Kinder and their families – those who survived as well as those who did not – is a powerful corrective to shallow narratives of British heroism and the children's survival'.[49]

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[46] Keen, p.97.
[47] *Ibid.*, p.x.

Adding a new dimension to the fate of the Kindertransportee and challenging expected feelings of gratitude, Sara considers how her life would have been if she had not been placed on the train: '[z]ouden we de oorlog dan overleefd hebben? Dat had mij niet uitgemaakt; overleven is immers ook geen pretje gebleken' ['[w]ould we then have survived the war? That would not have mattered to me; after all surviving has not turned out to be a joy either'] (p.162).

Van de Kamp irritates preconceptions found in the celebratory narrative of the Kindertransport through his protagonist who openly questions how she should feel when seeing her emaciated sister: '[m]oet ik blij en dankbaar zijn of verdrietig en boos?' ['[s]hould I be happy and grateful or sad and angry?'] (p.141). These complex and conflicting emotions can be extended to Kindertransport experience as feelings of gratitude Kindertransportees were expected to show conflict with the suffering Sara experienced.[50]

Despite the trauma, suffering, and grief addressed in this novel, the end tone corresponds with the previous two novels and emphasises the importance of moving on. Sara repeatedly remembers the words she heard from her teacher and mentor '[d]e oorlog is een trauma. Het mag nooit een obsessie worden' ['[t]he war is a trauma. It should never become an obsession'] (p.212). Reaching a similar understanding as Rosa in *The English German Girl*, Sara realises that her upsetting experience will stay with her but that she should try to move on and take active steps to not search for what has been lost.

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[48] Doris Bader Whiteman, *The Uprooted: a Hitler Legacy* (New York and London: Plenum, 1993), p.2.
[49] Craig-Norton, *Contesting*, p.323.
[50] Kushner, *Refugees*, p.160.

Trauma and hope are united; a trend which can be observed in all three fiction novels explored so far in this chapter. Supporting this observation, with regard to Holocaust narratives, Aarons succinctly argues that the literature produced by members of the third-generation – who arguably write from a similarly removed position as the novelists in this chapter – 'is characterized by attempts to navigate the trauma of the past all the while looking toward the future'.[51] Van de Kamp's novel, however, suggests that maintaining these two distinctive positions of trauma and progression is an ongoing challenge, as Sara must remind herself to not let dwelling on her experience become an obsession. Thus, the concrete dichotomy of hope and despair played out in Simons's novel is complicated by the depths of personal suffering and guilt in this Dutch novel.

### 5.5) Renate Ahrens, *Das gerettete Kind* (2016): an Intergenerational Perspective

Set in 2013 in Ireland, the German novel, *Das gerettete Kind*, is a story of an unspoken Kindertransport experience. The trauma of the Kindertransportee's experience and her unwillingness to talk about it has led to a broken relationship between the three women in the family: the grandmother (and Kindertransportee), Irma, her daughter, Leah, and Leah's eighteen-year-old daughter, Rebecca. Fiction has the potential to approach the Kindertransport from multiple perspectives; this allows the novelist to not only show how the Kindertransport has affected the lives of the three women, but also allows

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[51] Victoria Aarons, 'Introduction: Approaching the Third Generation', in *Third-Generation Holocaust Narratives*, ed. by Aarons, pp.xi–xxii (p.xix).

Ahrens to bring the Kindertransport into the reader's present day, providing a current perspective on the Kindertransport. This analysis will focus on how Ahrens represents the intergenerational transmission of Kindertransport trauma and the unique challenges each generation faces today with regards to confronting the past. The potential for the reader's identification and critical reflection is thus intriguing to examine.

At the age of twelve, Irma reluctantly travels to England on a Kindertransport and is first placed in a hostel and then with a foster family in Belfast. When the relationship with her foster mother deteriorates, Irma is then sent to Millisle Farm in Northern Ireland. Irma does not speak about her experience to anyone, not even her husband, and she keeps the guilt she feels about leaving behind her best friend, Lea, a secret. The separation from her parents and Lea (after whom her daughter Leah is named) is immensely distressing; she does not have the chance to say goodbye to her best friend whom she promised never to leave.[52]

Ahrens's text demonstrates how the three generations are impacted by and confront the past in different ways, and the novel is driven by the difficult relationships between the generations. Irma's unspoken experience causes a rift between herself and her daughter, Leah, who she sees as being cold, hostile, and volatile and even admits she could not love her (pp.46, 314). Leah, who has felt unloved and unwanted since her childhood asks herself '[w]arum habe ich eine so unnahbare Mutter?' (p.24). Leah's relationship with her own eighteen-year-old daughter is similarly strained. Rebecca finds Leah 'schwierig', overprotective, selfish, and judgemental (p.16). Leah likewise recognises her own 'Härte, meine Unerbittlichkeit' towards Rebecca and admits '[e]ine Mutter darf sich nicht so verhalten' (p.73). She regrets the distance in their relationship and wonders why she never managed to get close to her daughter (p.135). Rebecca, aware that her mother resents anything to do with Germany or even any German product, is determined not to tell her mother about her German boyfriend, who she met during his exchange trip to Ireland. Yet, when Irma has a sudden heart attack and her memories begin to haunt her, and shortly afterwards Rebecca decides to visit her boyfriend in Hamburg, the three generations of women must open up a dialogue about the past and break a long-held taboo.

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[52] Renate Ahrens, *Das gerettete Kind* (Munich: Droemer HC, 2016), pp.240, 269. Further references given in the text.

Through Ahrens's use of the stream of consciousness technique and three narrators, the reader is able to understand their intergenerational conflict (tensions, misunderstandings, and feelings of hurt) from multiple perspectives. Intriguingly, Ahrens's use of multiple narrators, both induces as well as limits the reader's feelings of empathy. On one hand, the reader is given a direct insight into each woman's consciousness, their thoughts, and memories, yet the reader is prevented from empathising or identifying too deeply as they are forced to view the family quarrels from several justified perspectives. This requires a critical engagement from the reader, who must constantly attempt to see the situation from alternating perspectives, and, at times, even understands the situation in more detail than the individual narrator.

This novel fictionally depicts the issues highlighted in studies on the second generation, and supports, for example, Alan L. Berger and Naomi Berger's observation that '[t]he legacy of the Holocaust is present in a variety of ways for the Second Generation, issues of intergenerational communication, parental enmeshment, and separation concerns'.[53] Irma, having faced an upsetting upheaval and traumatic separation, never spoke of her past and family members, not wanting to upset her, also never asked about her past. Irma's past was unspoken and unresolved. The familial taboo that grew from this silence was established and encouraged by Leah's father

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[53] Alan L. Berger and Naomi Berger, 'Introduction', in *Second Generation Voices: Reflections by children of Holocaust Survivors and Perpetrators*, ed. by Alan L. Berger and Naomi Berger (New York: Syracuse, 2001), pp.1–12 (p.1).

(Irma's husband) who instructed his daughter: 'Leah, du musst Verständnis für deine Mutter haben. Sie hat so viel durchgemacht, das kannst du dir gar nicht vorstellen. Was denn? Frag sie nicht, frag sie nie' (p.25). Merilyn Moos's study, *Breaking the Silence* (2015), illuminates 'how deeply affected the second generation has been by parental silence about the past'.[54] This novel creatively focuses on how an unwillingness to speak and ask questions threatens to destroy the mother-daughter relationships across three generations. Worryingly, the answer to Leah's question, '[f]rag sie nicht, frag sie nie', generates a family taboo that is passed down to the next generation and becomes apparent in Rebecca's narration:

> Ich weiß fast nichts über Omas Leben damals. Einmal habe ich versucht, von Leah etwas zu erfahren. Drei oder vier Jahre muss das her sein. Ihr Blick wanderte in eine unbestimmte Ferne. Deine Großmutter hat als Einzige in der Familie den Holocaust überlebt, sagte sie mit monotoner Stimme. Frag sie nicht, frag sie nie. Dann ging sie aus dem Zimnmer. (p.77f)

Recent studies on the second generation reveal that some members 'report that their parents were unable or did not wish to speak about their experience to the children'.[55] Ahrens's novel suggests this is also the case one generation later. Ahrens's creative inclusion of alternating perspectives enables her to depict the extent to which a trauma ignited by the Kindertransport has entered the lives of the following generations by portraying an absence, avoidance, and miscommunication that spans the three women's narration.

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[54] Merilyn Moos, *Breaking the Silence: Voices of the British Children of Refugees from Nazism* (London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2015), p.xii**.**

[55] Andrea Hammel, '"I believe that my experience began in the womb and was later absorbed through my mother's milk": Second Generation Trauma Narratives', *Trauma Narratives and Theories: New Readings in Contemporary German, Austrian, and Transnational Contexts: German Life and Letters*, 72:4 (2019), 556–569.

The genre of fiction allows Ahrens to construct a creative mirroring between the narrators. Intriguingly, Ahrens gives this familial taboo a physical presence; all three narrators are affected on several occasions by a pain in or tightening of their throat. Restricting their ability to speak, this physical reaction is symptomatic of an unspoken trauma and occurs at the point when the characters are restricted in what they say because of the family taboo. For example, when Irma has a nightmare in which she has no choice but to send her two sons away, her 'Kehle schnürt zu' (p.39), and when thinking about her strained relationship with her mother, Leah realises: '[m]eine Kehle ist so trocken, dass es weh tut' (p.23). Likewise, when anticipating that her boyfriend will ask her to visit him in Germany, Rebecca is unable to explain the difficulty of the situation to him and notices, '[i]n meiner Kehle brennt es' (p.36) and when she asks for more time to consider, she notices '[i]n meiner Kehle wird es eng' (p.97).

The paralleled unspeakability of Irma's Kindertransport experience evolves into a transmissible intergenerational bodily memory of trauma and its physicality allows the reader to comprehend the discomfort caused by this restriction – a physical restriction of the throat and a restriction of verbal expression. This physical manifestation of trauma indicates a pathology; trauma becomes an illness or physical disability, which is either contagious or genetically inherited. The creative freedom permitted by the genre enables this fictionalisation of bodily trauma, which is indicative of Cathy Caruth's understanding of trauma as a physical wound.[56] This offers a stark contrast to the way trauma appears to resist representation in memoirs.

Further conveying the psychological impact on the succeeding generations, Ahrens cleverly addresses the notion of inherited trauma, a concept which has become increasingly topical as the focus in scholarly discussions begins to shift from Holocaust survivors to their descendants.[57] Although any mention of Irma's past, Germany, and the Holocaust were 'totgeschwiegen' (p.170) during Leah's childhood, Leah has nonetheless inherited anxieties from Irma which manifest as nightmares. This reflects recent observations by scholars that, even '[a]bsent memory nevertheless contains anxieties, neuroses, and other posttraumatic symptoms'.[58]

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[56] Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p.4.

Emphasising the persistence of the unresolved and uncommunicated past, Leah has a recurring nightmare in which she is surrounded by gunfire and bombs, walking through streets wearing the Jewish star on her coat which denies her entry to a shelter (p.34). In her narration, Leah realises: '[e]s ist, als ob ich den Krieg von Irma geerbt hätte' (p.35). This notion of inheriting and embodying an experience of another is often expressed in second generation narratives. For example, Susan Budnik, writing in the *Second Generation Voice* newsletter in 1996, expresses how her mother's experience of the Holocaust was 'absorbed through my mother's milk [...] passed down in diluted form to my innocent lips and through me to my children'.[59] Fiction allows Ahrens not only to creatively re-imagine traumatic transference but also similarly suggests its transmission down the female line. The trauma is continuously traced back to the female experience of carrying the next generation, growing and parting with a child.

At the same time, Ahrens also reveals the evolving nature and forms of memory that develop in the later generations. As a Kindertransportee, Irma did not experience the war in Germany and so it appears that Leah has formed her own memory of this period, perhaps influenced by pieces of publically available information she has come into contact with over the years. Landsberg's understanding of prosthetic memory examines how memories become culturally mediated for individual to then adopt: '[t]hey are privately felt public memories that develop after an encounter with a mass cultural representation of the past, when new images and ideas come into contact with a person's own archive of experience'.[60]

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[57] For example, one study that looks at the transfer of memory, trauma and history across generations: *In the Shadows of Memory: The Holocaust and the Third Generation*, ed. by Esther Jilovsky, Jordana Silverstein, and David Slucki (Portland: Vallentine Mitchell, 2016).
[58] Efraim Sicher, 'Postmemory, Backshadowing, Separation: Teaching Second-Generation Holocaust Fiction', in *Teaching the Representation of the Holocaust*, ed. by Marianne Hirsch and Irene Kacandes (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2004), pp.262–273 (p.263).
[59] Susan Budnik, 'The experience that began in the womb', in *Second Generation Voice* (January 1996), p.6.

Landsberg highlights the difficulty faced by later generations when attempting to access and comprehend the past: '[j]ust as prosthetic memories blur the boundary between individual and collective memory, they also complicate the distinction between memory and history'.[61] Leah's nightmare reflects this interpolation of individual and culturally mediated representations of history and exposes the potential distortion of family memory through culturally mediated images.

*Das gerettete Kind* also portrays a crucial turning-point in the Kindertransportee's adult life. Irma's near-death experience initially causes memories to return spontaneously and Ahrens's sensitive portrayal reveals that this process of facing the past after seventy years is by no means straightforward (p.19). Irma finds this upsetting: '[m]eine Wangen sind nass. Was ist bloß los mit mir? Ich will nicht an früher denken. Warum werde ich in den letzten Tagen von all diesen Erinnerungen heimgesucht?' (p.76). Not only is Irma upset, but she is also confused by the unpredictable return of her memories. In Irma's case, the initial return of her memories was not born out of an active decision to remember and the traumatic quality of the intrusive past is thus apparent.

When Rebecca confides in her grandmother and tells her that she is in love with a German boy from Hamburg, they speak about Irma's past and childhood on the continent. Yet, whilst some memories – often those which were recorded in her diary – are relatively easy to talk about, there is a limit to what Irma is prepared to discuss with

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[60] Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), p.19.
[61] *Ibid.*

Rebecca. The friend, to whom she never said goodbye, and the experience of the Kindertransport – of separation, departure, and guilt – remain distressing subjects that are too upsetting to discuss in detail (pp.272, 249). Consequently, she decides to put away her photo album and diary and closes the drawer, clarifying '[j]etzt ist Schluss mit den Geschichten von früher' (p.336).

Fiction, then, can imaginatively recreate how the adult Kindertransportee confronts a past which has been suppressed for decades.[62] Such a portrayal can enrich the reader's understanding of those who write memoirs and the struggle they may face in the process of constructing the past. Unlike the memoirist's constructed reflections, however, Irma's returning memories in this novel are often shocking, unexpected, and undesired, and the reader is placed in the moment of remembering – a moment that even memoirs can only attempt to recreate.

Moreover, the genre of fiction – which allows a distancing from the exclusive experience of the Kindertransportee – enables Ahrens to illustrate how the generational gap between Irma and Rebecca enables Rebecca to undertake research on the Holocaust and search for traces of her grandmother's past during her stay in Hamburg. Just as Rebecca is able to communicate with Irma about the past, 'weil sie als Enkelin eine größere Distanz hat' (p.302), recent studies also suggest that the third generation (the grandchildren) are more able to ask questions about the past than the generation before them.[63]

Through Rebecca, Ahrens demonstrates the cultural memory and archival material available to the public in Hamburg and demonstrates the current *Erinnerungskultur* in Germany: Rebecca stumbles across some Stolpersteine (p.206), she learns that there are seminars on '[die] Entstehung des Nationalsozialismus' at the university (p.258) and she is directed towards both *The Kindertransport Association* (p.318) and *die Werkstatt der Erinnerung* in Hamburg, which houses records and interviews with Kinder and Holocaust survivors. By delving into the transcripts of interviews conducted with Kindertransportees, Rebecca succeeds in filling in the gaps in her grandmother's past. It transpires that Lea, Irma's childhood friend, also came to England on the Kindertransport in June 1939, and she later married and emigrated to New York in 1947 (p.271f). Ahrens emphasises just how essential it is to gather and preserve material on the Kindertransportees; the archived records have the potential to bring peace to Irma and ease her guilt and regret.

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[62] This is also an aspect of Diane Samuels's successful play: Diane Samuels, *Kindertransport* (London: Nick Hern Books, 1995).

[63] Barnett, 'Therapeutic Aspects', p.165.

Yet, with a personal connection to her research, Rebecca must also negotiate public memory and private experience, as she critically reflects on the wording of 'Kindertransport-Teilnehmer': '[i]ch stolpere über das Wort *Teilnehmer*. Es klingt so neutral' (p.263). It becomes clear to both Rebecca and the reader that there is a disparity between an emotional and historical understanding of the Kindertransport. Fiction, then, mirrors Rebecca's position as a member of the third generation: she is able to approach the Kindertransport with more distance and with help of historical archives. Yet, from this position, one must also deal with the historicisation of memory and experience. Through fiction, Ahrens shows that there is a limit to how effectively cultural or public memory can capture the nuances of lived experience and there remains a loss in this transformation of memory from personal to public.

Although Rebecca reflects critically on this form of public memory, because of her interest in Irma's past and the archival discoveries which are brought to light, the family taboo is broken. As a result, the previously stilted and forced communication opens out into genuine, more meaningful conversations. Ahrens's novel shows how empathy is key in the transference of memory. Rebecca recognises the sensitivity of the topic but offers an opportunity for her grandmother to talk. She then actively engages with Irma's experience and places herself in her grandmother's shoes: '[w]enn ich mir vorstelle, ich wäre in der Schule von anderen Kindern beschimpft und geschlagen worden und die Lehrer hätten nur zugesehen und gegrinst. Das ist so brutal' (p.146). The author thus demonstrates the engagement required for the preservation of experience in memory according to Aleida Assmann: Rebecca is willing to engage with her grandmother's experience, exhibits 'psychological identification and intellectual engagement' and imagines its impact on herself, had she been there.[64] Ahrens's novel suggests how both familial and cultural engagement and research is necessary; an open and tactful dialogue with living Kindertransportees and the recording and preservation of these records are essential for the durability of Kindertransport memory.

The breaking of the taboo and opening of dialogue enabled by Rebecca's archival research represent a change in memory processes surrounding the Kindertransport. Fiction, with the potential to approach a historical event from a new perspective, illuminates not only the impact on the different generations, and its consequences that are visible today, but also addresses aspects – such as inherited trauma and cultural approaches to remembering – that are topical and increasingly vital to consider in discussions today. Ahrens's clever use of multiple narrators, stream of consciousness technique, and the inclusion of topical issues encourage both a degree of empathy and critical reflection from the reader. *Das gerettete Kind* is simultaneously thought-provoking, emotionally complex, and current.

### 5.6) Alison Pick, *Far to Go* (2010): Reconstructing and Re-imagining a Family Past[65]

Alison Pick's *Far to Go* (2010), like Ahrens's novel, underlines the necessity of both cultural and familial engagement. In this novel, the narrator – the daughter of parents who were trapped in Europe by the Nazi regime – must grapple with the remaining traces of lived experience in the form of archived letters and photographs. With access to her family's case file, the present-day narrator finds her half-brother (known to the reader as both the young Pepik and the adult Joseph) who escaped to Britain on a Kindertransport and tells him about his past that he is unable to fully remember.

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[64] Aleida Assmann, *Shadows of Trauma: Memory and the Politics of Postwar Identity*, trans. by Sarah Clift (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), p.179.

[65] Pick's novel is explored in less detail as the Kindertransport refugee experience is not the main focus of the text.

Similar to *Das gerettete Kind*, Pick's novel also emphasises the mortality of the Kindertransportee; the novel begins as the narrator sits with the Kindertransportee in his final moments in his battle with cancer. The connection between the narrator and her half-brother is only revealed near the end of the novel. The narrator's present day occasionally interrupts the main narrative: the story of their shared family, set in 1938. It transpires that this central story of the Bauer family is, however, imaginatively constructed; using the case files and archival material she has available, the narrator reconstructs the past. Its artificiality is only exposed at the end of the novel, as the narrator admits how she 'cobble[d] together a version of events, arranging disparate pieces into something that seemed whole'. She explains: '[t]he events I have put down here seem as likely as any others – that's all. It was my hope, in the last year of my half-brother's life, to construct some kind of narrative, a story for him to hang on to'.[66]

Pick's novel reveals a future in which imagination and historical records are interpolated. The creative liberty Pick's narrator takes corresponds with Jessica Lang's observation about third-generation writers: 'Holocaust literature that does not have its immediate origins in the author's memory must rely on other devices for representing the event' and this is 'increasingly a subject matter for the imagination'.[67] This is also the case for the novels examined in this chapter, yet the process of active reconstruction is emphasised in Pick's novel. *Far to Go* addresses the situation we will soon be faced with: a time in which lived memory no longer exists and there is no more organic material to engage with. The ethical challenge this poses is brought to light and the novel reacts to the question often raised in discussions surrounding the second generation: 'how can we imagine a traumatic past that we have no personal knowledge of but that affects our existence and daily lives?'.[68]

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[66] Alison Pick, *Far to Go* (London: Headline Review, 2012), p.306. First published in 2010. Further references given in the text.

[67] Jessica Lang, 'The History of Love, the Contemporary Reader, and the Transmission of Holocaust Memory', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 33:1 (2009), 43–56 (p.44).

The reader, having attentively followed the Bauer family's struggle against anti-Semitism, is likely to feel misled by the narrator. Yet, despite this, the novel actually exposes how an inaccessible past is approached by later generations and their inevitable and necessary dependence on creative expression, and need to fill in the gaps. The narrator admits: 'I've taken some leaps in writing this tale. I've been fanciful sure, as a writer is allowed to be. As she must be' (p.325). Whilst historical records provided a framework, the rest was constructed by the narrator, with the occasional help of her half-brother, in order to create a narrative from which they were able to take comfort. Their father, for example, ended up in a relationship with Marta – the narrator's mother and Pepik's nanny – who was loved and missed by both characters.

The active reconstruction can be understood as a way to assuage family loss and re-establish a connection with their family past. Marianne Hirsch's theory of postmemory illuminates such a process. Postmemory is described as 'the relationship that the "generation after" bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before' and explains how the lives of descendants are 'shaped, however indirectly, by traumatic fragments of events' which are then mediated by 'imaginative investment, projection, and creation'.[69] Hirsch goes as far as to suggest that it becomes the task of following generations to process and express this inherited trauma.[70]

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[68] Sicher, 'Postmemory, Backshadowing, Separation', p.264.

Pick's novel not only exposes the manipulation of memory, but also reveals how an intentional imaginative investment may encourage an ethical representation of loss. The narrator's portrayal of Pepik's Kindertransport journey is almost surreal, embroidered with metaphorical language and imagery as a way to depict a past which cannot be remembered by her half-brother. In her construction, the narrator decides to give the young Pepik a fever – although this is not confirmed by archival material – which adds to the surrealism of the experience and creatively accounts for the gaps in his memory of the past. The Kindertransport train, for example, is described as 'long and black, and entering it was like being swallowed by a snake. The snake had dislocated its jaw to take Pepik in, and now he was being worked down into its body' (p.261). Further conveying the danger and pain of this separation, once onboard the children 'were being pulled away from the window, peeled off like leeches from sunburned skin' (p.264).

Fiction then, as both Pick and her narrator show, can provide a distance from the Kindertransportee's perspective and lived experience, whilst still conveying the pain, heartache, and fear through literary images. The overt fictionalisation establishes a further remove from reality and allows the event to be represented without an appropriation and re-writing of one individual's traumatic experience, or a reliance on insufficient historical records. This sense of surrealism and highly metaphorical language is arguably more ethical than attempts to exactly reconstruct the first-hand experience of a Kindertransportee, who has few recollections of his own.

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[69] Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), p.5.

[70] Marianne Hirsch, 'Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory', *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, 14:1 (2001), 5–37 (p.12).

On one hand, Pick's novel shows the necessity of such imaginative responses to a previous generation's experience. *Far to Go* engages with Hirsch's suggestion that such imaginative investment should offer 'a means to uncover and restore experiences and life stories that might otherwise remain absent from the historical archive' and accounts for 'the power structures animating forgetting, oblivion and erasure'.[71] Also, with regards to the preservation of memory in the cultural sphere, the narrator demonstrates how storage media must always be translated into communication and experience, as Assmann proposes in her understanding of cultural memory (p.43). In doing so, experience – if not lived memory – is secured and preserved for future engagement by individuals in the public sphere.

However, on the other hand, the narrator also acknowledges the drawbacks of such a creative endeavour. Although she evidently finds more comfort in creative and artistic reflection when compared to a pure, factual record of the past (p.9), she maintains, 'there is healing in the telling, but there is also something that gets lost' (p.327). The reader is left with no easy resolution or effective way to approach the past or compensate for the inevitable failure of memory. A sense of loss prevails; at the end of the novel the narrator still appears lonely and drained.

Without a personal memory of her family, the narrator explains that she feels 'displaced and uprooted' with very little 'to cling on to' (p.292). The novel ends with the narrator's poignant reflection directed to the reader: '[s]oon there'll be nobody left to remember' (p.329). Pick's work of fiction, like Ahrens's novel, brings topical concerns about memory and the reality of a survivor-less era to the reader's attention. It is also self-critical, both displaying the comforting quality of fiction, but also the paradoxical loss resulting from the manipulation and representation of history and memory.

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[71] Hirsch, *Generation*, p.15f.

## 5.7) Chapter Summary

The analysis of fiction in this chapter has revealed the potential of the genre – its ability to offer a widened perspective, expand on the limited movement and narrative scope in autobiographical fiction, and address aspects of the Kindertransport that have not been represented in detail in the other genres. Yet this study also makes apparent the conflicts faced by authors in the process of writing fiction on the Kindertransport and the way these tensions surface in the texts.

In these representations, the Kindertransport is placed into diverse contexts and plots, which may be influenced by national perspectives. English author, Jake Wallis Simons, although addressing the trauma, death of parents, and problematic relationship with guardians, ends on a more positive note as Rosa starts a new family in Britain. This coincides with the general sense of acceptance and closure present in many British accounts of the Kindertransport. American author, Jana Zinser, writes in a sensationalised way, depicting the horror of war in conjunction with the joy of victory. This may mirror America's geographic distance from the Holocaust; her hero narrative matches America's entrance into the Second War and the role they played fighting the evil forces of Nazism.

The Dutch representation includes the rescue efforts made by Wijsmuller-Meijer and also homes in on horrors faced by those who remained on the continent. Ahrens's German novel, which examines the difficulty of confronting a painful unspoken experience, or taboo, illuminates the current movement in Germany of facing and coming to terms with the past (*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*) and how a nation's historical guilt must continuously be faced by each coming generation. In tune with this, the novel presents a reconciliation with the past and this confrontation with the past has a healing effect on the female relationships.

As narrative theory suggests, fiction is characterised by both its 'explanatory power and its flexibility'.[72] This flexibility can be observed in the range of plots, contexts, and time frames summarised above and is also supported by Lang, who reveals trends in third-generation Holocaust nonfiction narratives, identifying 'imagined endings, rewritten histories, emotionally laden textual interactions, verbal and physical interplay, interviews with relatives and strangers who are Holocaust survivors [...] historical and archival research, travel to distant places'.[73] These features, which are likewise found in recent Kindertransport fiction, indicate not only fiction's flexibility but also mark a generational shift with regards to approaching and reconstructing memory, experience, and history.

However, whilst fiction's flexibility may be clear, its 'explanatory power' is more complicated to assess. Although Sara Horowitz is convinced that fiction serves to access the past and is thus a 'serious vehicle for thinking about the Holocaust',[74] the questions of which version of the past is represented, and how, begs further examination and ethical consideration.

Novelists, writing with greater personal and historical distance, have the ability to re-insert previously unvoiced aspects of the past which have previously resisted representation or which have been absent from the selective, celebratory narrative of the Kindertransport. For example, the experience of the Kindertransportees' parents – the difficulties parents faced during the 1930s and 1940s, their death or post-war experience – is addressed in each novel explored in this chapter.

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[72] Jakob Lothe, Susan Rubin Suleiman, and James Phelan, 'Introduction "After" Testimony: Holocaust Representation and Narrative Theory', in *After Testimony: The Ethics and Aesthetics of Holocaust Narrative for the Future*, ed. by Jakob Lothe, Susan Rubin Suleiman, and James Phelan (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2012), pp.1–19 (p.9).

[73] Jessica Lang, *Textual Silence: Unreadability and the Holocaust* (London: Rutgers University Press, 2017), p.87.

[74] Sara R. Horowitz, *Voicing the Void: Muteness and Memory in Holocaust Fiction* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1997), p.1.

The explanatory ability of fiction is also evident in the way these novels, which have been published in the last ten years, bridge the gap between past and present. In fiction, the narrative voice is not governed by retrospection. Instead, these authors create impact by uniting an upsetting event immediately with its emotional significance. For example, Simons constantly forces together recent and past moments of loss, Zinser brings together the later-known facts of the Holocaust and various geographical locations through her multiple character perspectives, and van de Kamp's, Ahrens's, and Pick's novels offer a new perspective on the Kindertransport fictionalising topical concerns and by having protagonists who are grounded in today's space and time. This, in turn, generates a sense of immediacy and a connection to the reader as the novels' historical events are linked in with the reader's present day. By making the Kindertransport and its impact on later generations, current and by avoiding the retrospective stance found in memoirs, the novelists widen the scope for the reader's identification.[75] This sense of immediacy is central to fiction; a basic characteristic of the novel is its 'contact with the present (with contemporary reality)'.[76]

In other cases, however, fiction's explanatory power – and the opportunity for identification – is complicated by the author's aesthetic decisions which, in turn, raise questions of ethics. One concerning aspect, which can be observed in the novels *The Children's Train*, *The English German Girl*, and the television adaptation of Ursula Krechel's *Landgericht* (mentioned earlier in this chapter), is the over-portrayal of uncommon events. When looking at Kindertransport memoirs, only the occasional Kindertransportee will mention an infant being placed onto the train at the last minute, or a child being taken out. Yet, an examination of these novels reveals how these highly distressing events have been transformed into literary tropes; young babies are handed through the window of a train to the protagonist in Simons's novel, and in Zinser's novel a young baby is put on the transport and another child is pulled out by distraught parents.

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[75] Keen, p.68.

[76] Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin, 'Epic and Novel', in Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. by Michael Holquist, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p.11.

Hirsch's conceptualisation of postmemory indicates how authors or directors may rely on and re-frame 'archival images from a painful past' and 'rather than giving information about that past, archival images function as "points of memory" that tell us more about our own needs and desires, our own fantasies and fears, than about the past to which they supposedly bear witness'.[77] Whilst these episodes create impact and elicit a reaction from the reader (or viewer), they also hint at a worrying trend: such episodes and evocative images are exploited and rare events in the Kindertransport experience become normalised and standardised. As Moos clarifies, '[t]he Holocaust and its traumatic consequences now create certain set images that too often obscure the significant differences in experiences'.[78] With an over-portrayal or reliance on these images comes a distancing from historical reality and fiction's explanatory power is weakened.

Moreover, the explanatory capabilities of fiction are also complicated by the writer's awareness of his or her responsibility to transmit the story of the Kindertransport to the reader. Present-day writers – who are in a comparable position to the third-generation – must approach this historical period, as Aarons suggests, 'from a position that is precariously balanced between proximity and distance, a position that characterizes this generation, this literature, the discourse about this literature, and the disposition of our time'.[79]

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[77] Hirsch, *Generation*, p.22.
[78] Moos, p.xiv.
[79] Aarons, 'Introduction', p.xvii.

Illustrating this position between proximity and distance, Simons, for example, consulted several Kindertransport memoirs and interviews before writing, trying to maintain this proximity to existing material. However, he also aimed to engage the reader and make them understand the distress caused by the event. Consequently, his representation focuses on trauma and loss, which are conveyed through the disruption of language or through dramatic action. In hoping to show some character development and resolution, he then brings this despair alongside hope at the end of his novel, for a cleaner, more satisfying conclusion for the reader. The conveniently rounded ending complicates the historical plausibility of the text, which Simons had hoped to achieve through his historical research.

Zinser's text illustrates how too much historical distance raises questions of ethics. With historical distance, Zinser feels able to fictionally re-imagine the Holocaust – something which has always been controversial – yet the sensationalised depictions and fantastical re-imagination of this time period neglects the reality of lived Kindertransport experience. Despite being written with the intention to elicit an emotional response, this text encourages the less-productive reaction of pity and shock rather than the reader's empathy and identification.

Van de Kamp's novel demonstrates another approach an author may take to mediating historical distance and proximity. Unlike Simons and Zinser, van de Kamp creates a nuanced depiction of the complexity of post-war life and its psychological aftermath and successfully arouses the reader's empathy without a resorting to dramatic descriptions. However, in aiming to convey the reality of the Kindertransportee's experience to a child or teenage reader, the protagonist's emotions are perhaps too well explained. Assuming a position of narrative proximity inside Sara's consciousness, the author falls into the writer's trap of telling rather than showing Sara's emotions. Though encouraging empathy and a connection between the reader and protagonist, it may be counterproductive in terms of critical reflection and imaginative investment. By contrast, autobiographical fiction's less overt representation of emotions encourages the reader to fathom out the reasons behind the protagonist's actions.

*Das gerettete Kind* and *Far to Go* offer a different approach to the Kindertransport by accommodating this historical distance and striking a realistic balance between proximity (to living or familial memory) and temporal remove. The Kindertransport is re-contextualised, rather than being a reconstruction of the past from the child Kindertransportee's perspective. The experience of the Kindertransportee is no longer the central concern; instead, other issues are more dominant, such as transgenerational trauma, the loss of lived experience, the evolving relationship between history and memory, and the challenge of engaging with someone else's painful past as a member of the second or third generation.

As aforementioned, Ahrens hinders an exclusive empathy with one character as the reader has access to three, often clashing, perspectives and is sometimes in a position of knowing more than the characters themselves. This, Sophie Oliver suggests, constitutes Bakhtin's idea of 'return' in active empathy, in which the reader separates themselves from the characters' situation and has space to critically reflect.[80] Ahrens's text thus effectively situates the reader in a position between distance and proximity. With this in mind, Pick also manipulates the idea of reader empathy, as the narrator's fictive creation of her family's past only comes to light near the end of the novel. The reader is likely to empathise with the imagined figures of Marta and Pepik to a greater extent than the 'living' characters of the narrator and the adult Pepik – Joseph – who often seem fragmented and distant.

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[80] Sophie Oliver, 'The Aesth-*ethics* of Empathy: Bakhtin and the *Return to Self* as Ethical Act', in *Empathy and its Limits*, ed. by Assmann and Detmers, pp.166–186 (p.176).

Whilst the novels discussed in this chapter (excluding Zinser's novel) offer opportunities for empathy through the depiction of the Kindertransportee's inner feelings and thoughts, *Das gerettete Kind* and *Far to Go* offer greater scope for identification and critical engagement. The reader is encouraged to return to their own position as a member of a later generation with no personal connection to the Kindertransport and to consider a future in which the memory of the Kindertransport relies on their own engagement, archival research, and creative imagination.

The analysis of fiction novels in this chapter has also revealed how the age of the intended readership affects the nature of the representation and the position of the reader. Writing in 2012, Hammel comments on the interplay of hope and despair in Simons's Kindertransport novel, and proposes that '[t]he future of research on the Kindertransport is located in the tension between these two concepts'.[81] Whilst this tension rings true for Zinser and van de Kamp, this central opposition becomes increasingly blurred by workings of trauma, post-war impact, and the loss of memory in novels by Ahrens and Pick, which are aimed at an older reader.

It is valuable to consider that the way in which immediate and ongoing trauma is represented in these novels also depends on the age of the readership. Novels aimed at a slightly older audience have more potential with regard to representing trauma. Whilst literary tropes of trauma – such as the traumatic return of trauma and its unspeakability – are drawn upon in Simons's, van de Kamp's, and Ahrens's novels, there is a difference in the way they are represented. In Simons's and van de Kamp's novels, which are likely aimed at younger reader compared to Ahrens's, there is a noticeable disruption of language that indicates a return of traumatic distress and the protagonist also reflects clearly on the unspeakability of experience. However, in Ahrens's novel, the metaphorical representation of the trope of unspeakability (the tightening of the characters' throats) is casually referred to throughout the novel; it is left up to the reader to recognise these connecting images. This naturally encourages the reader's intellectual engagement with the text.

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[81] Hammel, 'The Future of Kindertransport Research', p.152.

It becomes apparent that novels that prioritise the experience of the Kind in a specific historical period are often aimed at a younger audience and revolve around such dichotomies of hope and despair, love and loss, good and evil. Conversely, fictional representations that do not seek a complete depiction of the historical Kindertransport experience – and consequently break free of the conventional narrative that maps out an early childhood, and the journey to and experience in Britain – are less reliant on such central tensions and, instead, engage with current concerns about Kindertransport memory. Avoiding these clear-cut dichotomies thus allows a more nuanced understanding of the Kindertransport experience. As seen in van de Kamp's novel, it has been argued that 'children's fiction has lagged behind and still "offers certainty" when it should be drawing attention to what is unknowable and "untellable" about the past'.[82] However, in *Das gerettete Kind* and *Far to Go*, aspects of the unknown are preserved; both Rebecca and Pick's narrator will never fully know what happened to their loved ones.

As living memory fades, contemporary Kindertransport literature not only re-imagines a historical period in new contexts, but also, as Lang suggests, the 'authors enable us as readers to design a new method of memorialization, one that looks forward, backward, and inward, and one that has taken root, appropriately, in a new generation'.[83] Fiction that illuminates the mortality of the Kindertransportee, the difficulties of remembrance, and engages with the historical chapter from today's position is tailored towards the reader's current situation and hence encourages his or her critical reflection as society enters a post-survivor era. The fine balance of historical distance and proximity, and of fiction's creative and explanatory powers, requires careful consideration if the resulting text is going to be ethically appropriate, shed light on a chapter of history, and create opportunities for the reader's identification, empathy, and critical reflection.

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[82] Deborah Stevenson, 'Historical Friction: Shifting Ideas of Objective Reality in History and Fiction', in *The Presence of the Past in Children's Literature*, ed. by Ann Lawson Lucas (London: Praeger, 2003), pp.22–30 (p.28).

[83] Lang, *Textual Silence*, p.31.

# Chapter Six

# Conclusion

## 6.1) Literary Genres as Ways of Reading Experience

James E. Young, in his study *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust*, asserts '[w]hat is remembered of the Holocaust depends on how it is remembered, and how events are remembered depends in turn on the texts now giving them form'.[1] As the analysis of literary texts in this thesis indicates, Young's comment can likewise be applied to Kindertransport representation. Responding to ongoing transformations in the way we relate to and remember the past, this thesis has demonstrated how the representation of the Kindertransport is affected by a genre's capabilities, creative freedoms, and restrictions.

In line with the research questions outlined in Chapter One, this thesis has examined the characteristics of each genre and how its narrative features influence the construction of the texts and facilitate a new way of representing and understanding the Kindertransport. Supporting Anne H. Stevens's belief that '[g]enres are, at their cores, ways of reading',[2] this thesis has argued that each genre homes in on a different aspect of the Kindertransport – depending on the generic 'sets of norms of which both readers and writers are aware'[3] – and consequently takes a different approach to representing the Kindertransport as an historical and fictional event. In addition, this study has revealed which aspects of the Kindertransport experience have been placed at the centre of the work or re-worked across the literary genres. The genres' inherent tensions have also been illuminated and evaluated with regard to the way such generic conflicts may determine the nature of the representation.

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[1] James E. Young, *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust: Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), p.1.

[2] Anne H. Stevens, 'Learning to Read the Past in the Early Historical Novel', in *Reading Historical Fiction: The Revenant and Remembered Past*, ed. by Kate Mitchell and Nicola Parsons (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp.19–32 (p.19).

[3] Elisabeth Wesseling, *Writing History as a Prophet: Postmodernist Innovations of the Historical Novel* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1991), p.18.

Given the position of the writer and the degree of creative freedom permitted, each genre has different capabilities and strengths in terms of what aspect of the Kindertransport is represented. Written from the adult Kindertransportee's perspective, memoirs document living memory and the memoirist's attempts to piece together, process, and construct the past. Unlike the other two genres, the memoir reveals the current perspective of the adult Kindertransportee and how she retrospectively relates to, reflects on, and reconstructs her life. Whilst this offers a personal insight, it also means that the text is often governed by tensions arising from the negotiation of lived experience, memory, and its linguistic representation.

Certain characteristics of the genre – such as the shifting relationship between past and present selves, and a reflection on the process of remembering – illuminate the challenge of uniting a traumatic experience with a representation of the self. It is this tension which characterises understandings of the memoir in scholarship.[4] This present analysis of memoirs has investigated this tension further and exposed how, on one hand, features of the memoir help the memoirist to mediate and find alternative ways to convey traumatic episodes that lie outside of accessible memory, recall, or narration. For example, the use of diary entries and the voice of the narrated self, the use of imagination and a reliance on existing tropes of trauma, and the assumed presence of the reader as a listener or co-witness allows the memoirist to represent a trauma that may resist complete narration. This re-routing of narration enables an account to be constructed and, in some cases, the memoirists view this as a way of presenting a whole, completed account. In this respect, memoirists draw upon the reader's expectation of the memoir as a medium that encourages some sort of revelation or realisation (often pertaining to issues of identity), or that facilitates the re-living of an experience, or the recovery of lost memory.

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[4] Leigh Gilmore, *The Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony* (London: Cornell University Press, 2001).

However, my analysis also shows that, on the other hand, it is this very diversity of narrative approaches accommodated by the genre (the inclusion of historical fact, individual and collective memory, and the memoirist's ability to reflect and engage with society and the world around her) that obscures the representation of the Kindertransportee's child 'self'. Similarly, these memoirists feel it is their duty – and the reader's expectation – to be a witness to history and a carrier and transmitter of their parents' fate. The Holocaust and the sense of the unknown that persist throughout these memoirs complicate the wholeness, completion, and peace that memoirists such as Gissing and Charles attempt to create in their texts.

With regard to the potential and capability of this genre, memoirs are a valuable source that reveal how one relates to the past and attempts to consolidate an identity, particularly in the face of personal and familial trauma and Holocaust suffering. The reader is able to understand what happened to the Kindertransportee, the disruption and dislocation, and how this is navigated by the reflecting memoirist. Yet, equally, readers learn just as much about the memoirist's current attitudes towards private, public, and national ways of remembering, particularly their concerns about the future of Holocaust memory. The memoirs are thus equally inward-looking and outward-looking, and there is a danger that the lived experience of being a child refugee gets lost amongst self-reflection about unreliable memory, persistent questions surrounding Jewish persecution, and the general description of guardians and school.

Autobiographical fiction by Segal, Gershon, and Watts offers, in comparison, a more introspective representation of the Kindertransport experience, enabling a distancing from fact and a re-imagination of a possible reality, a re-examination of the child self, and a re-working of trauma. As a way of creatively re-framing a historical period or section of life, all three authors considered here focus on the child refugee's experience in wartime Britain. These texts, though located at different points between the poles of fact and fiction, are placed into a fictional framework; there is a focus on the child as being set against the powers of the world around her and a concentration on her self-development during her formative years in a foreign country.

As the Kindertransportee author achieves a distance from lived experience through this genre and steps away from the expectation to tell historical truth in the form of an authentic account, there is no longer the retrospective voice which governs memoirs and the author focuses, instead, on the daily experience of the Kindertransportee in the specific time frame of the war years and a few years either side. This decision encourages a concentration – achieved through narrative focalisation – on the child's immediate perceptions, and internal thoughts and feelings, adding psychological depth to the presentation of the child refugee growing up in a foreign country.

This focus on the internal experience of the child is contemplated by Hermione Lee, who proposes: '[w]hatever form of "life-writing" we are drawn to, we always greedily want moments of intimacy, revelation, immediacy, and inwardness'.[5] Considering both forms of life-writing (memoirs and autobiographical fiction) examined in this thesis, it appears memoirs offer more moments of revelation when confronting the past and when representing the self, whereas there appears to be a great deal of inwardness, intimacy, and immediacy in autobiographical fiction. This can be traced back to the narrative perspective, focalisation, and the greater emphasis that is placed on the narrative plot in Segal and Gershon's texts.

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[5] Hermione Lee, '"From Memory": Literary Encounters and Life-Writing', in *On Life-Writing*, ed. by Zachary Leader (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp.124–141 (p.125).

Painting a more detailed picture of the wider historical period and experience of life in Britain when compared to memoirs, the wider exile experience is also represented in these fictionalisations, including the experience of other refugees, internees, and those involved in war-work. Watts's trilogy, which has qualities of historical fiction, similarly focuses on the years in which her two protagonists grow up in Britain, whilst re-imagining historical moments and depicting these in an appropriate and informative way for a younger reader to understand. In addition to depicting the social environment, the texts in this chapter all have the capability of indirectly addressing trauma by showing its daily impact on the child refugee and how it has affected their thought patterns, reactions, and decisions. This psychological insight creates a more vivid and detailed understanding of both trauma and the character of the young Kindertransportee.

Watts's fiction smoothly leads into an examination of fiction written by authors with no personal experience of the Kindertransport. The novels by Jake Wallis Simons, Jana Zinser, Lody van de Kamp, Renate Ahrens and Alison Pick place the Kindertransport into different time periods, subplots, and sub-genres of fiction, such as adventure and romance. In the hope of engaging their readers, fiction authors attempt to make their representations exciting and relevant. To bridge the gap between the historical event and today's reader – most likely a teenager or young adult – the impact of the Kindertransport and experience of separation is represented alongside its later consequence and impact on post-war life. Writing from a more removed, critical position, Renate Ahrens and Alison Pick engage with topical concerns regarding inherited trauma, the loss of memory, and the mortality of the Kindertransportee.

Situating the Kindertransport in the reader's actual world is thus a clear advantage of fiction.

This analysis also reveals the limitations of each genre. Memoirists are dependent on available access to memories and there are also gaps in the narration – products of trauma, in which only an echo of trauma's impact can be conveyed, rather than the initial reaction to the upsetting events. Autobiographical fiction seems to be chiefly concerned with the refugee experience during the wartime years and the enduring impact of the Kindertransport is only hinted at as the novels end shortly after the war. Fiction raises issues of its own kind – issues of ethics particularly when re-framing the Kindertransport and transposing it into adventure or fantasy narratives. This is especially problematic when combined with the author's aim of engaging and exciting the audience.

Intending to observe the transformations between the genres, this research also examined the concluding tone of the texts, which is, to some extent, influenced by the focus and characteristics of the genre. A sense of loss and longing is present in the memoir genre. However, as memoirs are often written with the aim of representing the self in the face of an upsetting past, the memoirists simultaneously appear to convey a feeling of peace and closure. Autobiographical fiction by Segal and Gershon is more open ended and their novels leave the reader with an underlying anxiety, sense of unshakable pathos, and the protagonist's irresolution.

Watts's trilogy marks the turn towards a greater degree of fictionalisation. As a text that can also be considered historical fiction for a young audience (inviting perhaps the youngest readership of these chosen texts), the end tone offers resolution, and a neatly tied up ending. In the same vein, Jake Wallis Simons's fiction – which can also be considered historical fiction as he tries to reconstruct a bygone era – also concludes with a simplified, convenient ending. This is common – even expected – in fiction aimed at children yet marks a cause for concern as we enter a time which witnesses the prolific publication of Kindertransport fiction. Nevertheless, the concluding tone of the fiction novels varies greatly given the inherent flexibility in plot permitted by this genre. For example, Zinser constructs a celebratory narrative heralding bravery and resilience, van de Kamp's protagonist, Sara, makes peace with the past, yet acknowledges how her experience is traumatic and will continue to impact her life.

Moreover, this thesis has illustrated how a remediation of the Kindertransport across different literary genres enables certain aspects of the experience to be reconsidered, re-addressed, and re-worked. Each genre provides a different understanding of the Kindertransportee. In memoirs the child's identity is often fragmented and unstable and the reader is faced with a retrospective view of the child from the position of the adult, in the texts considered in Chapter Four the child is at the centre of the texts, and in fiction the Kindertransportee is represented in a variety of ways: Rosa is caught between hope and despair, Peter is a hero, Sara is troubled by her post-war existence, and the Kindertransportees in both Ahrens's and Pick's novels are fragile and elderly.

Traumatic experience resulting from the Kindertransport is another aspect that is re-worked across genre. The construction of memoirs – and their resulting representation of the Kindertransport – is determined by the memoirists' attempts to circumvent inaccessible or unnarratable traumatic moments and find other ways to convey its impact. Although the memoirists acknowledge their fragile identities and reliance on repression as a defence mechanism, they struggle to reflect on and organically represent initial moments of upset in detail.

Achieving what memoirs cannot, raw longing, alienation, and loss are represented in depth through the initial impressions, actions, and decisions of the teenage protagonists in autobiographical fiction by Kindertransportees. Traumatic impact is demonstrated in the way the protagonists see the world, their suicidal thoughts, and self-deprecation, especially in the novels written by Segal and Gershon. The insight into the consciousness of the Kindertransportee allows a greater understanding of the 'fragile identity' which is frequently mentioned in memoirs.

Trauma is further transformed in fiction and is overtly re-inserted into the text, rather than being implicit in the protagonists' thought processes and daydreams in autobiographical fiction. In fiction, the psychological aftermath of the Kindertransport and the unspeakability of Holocaust trauma remain continually open to reconstruction. As a genre at a temporal and generational remove, fiction becomes a textual site to examine workings of transferable trans-generational trauma, as observed in Ahrens's text. Jessica Lang remarks on how later generations can re-address issues found in earlier representations. She proposes, '[p]erhaps the most notable quality of third-generation texts is the effort exhibited within them to render visible the unreadable narrative'.[6] Unreadable moments such as trauma and violence are moments 'most vulnerable to interception, translation, and modification'.[7] This re-imagination, however, is not necessarily wholly positive. A representation of such unresolvable or raw aspects may not only diminish its force on the reader, but as Zinser's novel shows, the outcome borders on being disrespectful or distasteful.

Whilst unnarratable experience (also understood as unspeakable trauma) influences the construction of memoirs and is preserved in these accounts, it is in danger of being turned into a literary trope in fiction, along with the dramatic return of repressed traumatic events. Thus, whilst fiction makes trauma more readable, its impact may be diminished through over-explanation. Lang, in her text *Textual Silence*, argues that elements of the unreadable should be left in the text – 'the inaccessible, the illegible, the silent, and the unreadable' – as intentional markers of trauma.[8] Yet, as many authors feel an urgency to convey the experience of the Kindertransport – especially those writing for a younger audience – they may instead opt for clarity and a completed narrative, rather than intentionally preserving traumatic gaps or absences.

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[6] Jessica Lang, *Textual Silence: Unreadability and the Holocaust* (London: Rutgers University Press, 2017), p.92.
[7] *Ibid.*, p.103.

## 6.2) Empathy, Identification, and Critical Reflection

This study confirms that not only is it important to look at changes in representation across the genres, but also to investigate how these representations are likely to be received by the reader, who will, in turn, carry the memory of the Kindertransport forward to subsequent generations. Addressing the third research question introduced in Chapter One, this research shows that each genre – whilst '[playing] an important role in activating cultural memory'[9] – has varied capabilities in engaging the reader, encouraging identification, inducing empathy, and stimulating critical reflection. To ensure the reader's active engagement, Kindertransport representations should possess the capability to invoke not only identification and empathy but also intellectual consideration.[10]

The analysis of memoirs suggests that, given the difficulty in representing key traumatic moments, the reader's opportunity to identify is limited as it is difficult for the reader to identify with the memoirist's childhood experiences, especially when the author herself struggles to fully access or connect to her past. Whilst feelings of loss can be felt strongly throughout the memoirs (especially Gissing's), these memoirs struggle to convey the experience of the Kindertransportee at the time and thus readers may find it difficult to emotionally engage with the Kindertransport experience itself, although its powerful effect on the adult memoirist is clear. In fact, at the memoirs' most emotive moments, the reader's attention is actually directed towards the loss of the parents and the events of the Holocaust.

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[8] *Ibid.*, p.19.

[9] Hendrik van Gorp and Ulla Musarra-Schroeder, 'Introduction: Literary Genres and Cultural Memory', in *Genres as Repositories of Cultural Memory*, vol. 5 of the Proceedings of the xvth Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association "Literature as Cultural Memory", Leiden 1997, ed. by Hendrik van Gorp and Ulla Musarra-Schroeder (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), pp.i–ix (p.i).

[10] Aleida Assmann, *Shadows of Trauma: Memory and the Politics of Postwar Identity*, trans. by Sarah Clift (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), pp.20f, 179.

Although a sense of identification may be lacking, an empathic response is nevertheless generated through the reader's critical questioning. As introduced at the beginning of this thesis, Landsberg maintains that empathy 'requires mental, cognitive activity, it entails an intellectual engagement with the plight of the other; when one talks about empathy one is not talking simply about emotion, but about contemplation as well'.[11] Memoirs employ various strategies to involve the reader; in placing the reader in the position of a listener or co-witness, memoirs encourage the reader to critically reflect on the account with which they are presented. Often, the memoirist calls on the reader to carry forward the memory of the Kindertransport – to not forget. This is particularly evident in Charles's creative inclusion of Anna Kiefer, and in Blend's and Milton's memoir, when they encourage the reader to question public or national forms of memory.

In contrast, autobiographical fiction – which offers an in-depth psychological account and access to the inner thoughts and intentions of a fleshed-out protagonist at a given time in history – presents the reader with a greater opportunity to identify and subsequently empathise.[12] However, Segal and Gershon also establish an essential distance between the reader and the protagonist and disrupt chances of identification. Drawing once again on Dominick LaCapra's understanding, a distinction should be made between 'identification' and 'empathy': '[u]nchecked identification implies a confusion of self and other', which compromises the reader's ability to read ethically.[13]

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[11] Alison Landsberg, 'Memory, Empathy, and the Politics of Identification', *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, 22:2 (2009), 221–229, p.223.

[12] Suzanne Keen, *Empathy and the Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p.96.

The reading of Segal's and Gershon's autobiographical fiction texts is at times uncomfortable for the reader, especially when confronted by a possible suicide attempt, and unexpected or questionable behaviour. Likewise, identification is hampered when distressing moments are conveyed in an amusing or emotionless way, as seen on multiple occasions in both of these texts. This combination of intimacy (through the rendering of consciousness) and distance generates an opportunity for critical reflection as the reader is encouraged to both empathise with the character but then to return to his or her own position as a reader and to reflect on the Kindertransportee's experience from a position outside the text. This is essential in Bakhtin's understanding of active empathy: one should retain a 'sense of difference' and place 'outside' the other.[14]

With regard to the fiction texts, it is important to consider Mazzoni's claim that '[t]oday the aesthetics of empathy strike us as an obvious presupposition of the novel' and 'the main task of a writer is to create empathy with the heroes'.[15] However, as this thesis shows, the difficulty of striking a balance between representing history and engaging the reader complicates Mazzoni's assumption. Zinser's text, for example, borders on sympathy or pity for the victims of the Holocaust, rather than empathy. Landsberg argues that sympathy is a 'simple identification' in which one '[wallows] in someone else's pain', unlike empathy which 'is not purely emotional, but also contains a cognitive component', an 'intellectual coming-to-terms with another person's circumstances'.[16] Instigating pity, sympathy or shock, on the other hand, is unproductive in terms of memory preservation.

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[13] Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), p.28.
[14] Sophie Oliver, 'The Aesth-*ethics* of Empathy: Bakhtin and the *Return to Self* as Ethical Act', in *Empathy and its Limits*, ed. by Aleida Assmann and Ines Detmers (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp.166–186 (p.167).
[15] Guido Mazzoni, *Theory of the Novel*, trans. by Zakiya Hanafi (London: Harvard University Press, 2017), p.192.

The construction of characters and plot are delicate determiners for reader empathy in fiction. Yet, – emphasising this fine line between successful empathy and reduced critical reflection – attempts to engage the reader and provide an opportunity for identification through clarifying the protagonist's feelings may result in an over-explanation of their emotional state (as seen in van de Kamp's novel) which obstructs opportunities for the reader's imaginative investment and critical thinking. Similarly, as Simons's text shows, upsetting episodes are at risk of over-dramatisation which, likewise, may hinder opportunities for the reader's identification.

Nevertheless, other works of fiction (such as Ahrens's novel) encourage a mixture of identification, empathy, and critical consideration. This is achieved through the first-person perspective of three disagreeing narrators, by showing the impact of the Kindertransport on the refugee's later years, and by situating the narrative within the reader's present. Although Keen argues that 'fictional worlds provide safe zones for readers' feeling empathy without experiencing a resultant demand on real-world action,'[17] the Kindertransport novels that confront the mortality of the Kindertransportee, the loss of memory, and the later generations' responsibility to engage with the Kindertransport at this crucial time (as seen in Ahrens's and Pick's novels) are likely to influence the reader and their actions in the real world and encourage them to consider their relationship with the past.

As this analysis suggests, if brought alongside the continuation of social practices (such as annual memorial days) and other forms of remembrance, literature can play an important role in preserving the Kindertransport in public consciousness.[18] Crucially, a mix of genre is the most effective in terms of generating identification, empathy, and critical reflection. For example: Charles's memoir includes the reader through the figure of the implied reader and encourages a *contemplation* of the difficulties of giving testimony and its transmission; Segal and Gershon reveal the refugee's unstable psychological state and encourage *empathy* and *critical reflection*; van de Kamp's novel provides clarity of emotions that makes *empathy* and *identification* easy for younger reader, whilst Ahrens's novel encourages *empathy* with three narrators as well as the reader's *identification* and *critical engagement* when situating the events and acts of remembering in the present day.

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[16] Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), p.149.

[17] Keen, p.4.

This discussion on empathy, however, has also revealed the difficulty posed by fictional works that are not connected to the present day and that attempt to reconstruct the child's past – and particularly the child's historical or social environment – without encouraging a distance from the reader (as achieved by Segal and Gershon). These texts include Watts's autobiographical fiction, *Escape from Berlin*, and Simons's *The English German Girl*. It appears that although an insight into the child's thoughts and feelings may enable the reader's identification and empathy to a certain degree, the relatively happy (or at least neatly concluded) endings associated with works of historical fiction such as these limit the reader's critical reflection. However, complicating this issue further, other works of fiction that veer away from history and turn the Kindertransport into an adventure story, such as Zinser's *The Children's Train*, are also not likely to generate an ethical or beneficial form of empathy or critical contemplation.

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[18] Assmann, *Shadows*, pp.179, 200.

### 6.3) Emerging Issues

This exploration of different literary forms enhances the discussion surrounding the likely transformations effected by the inevitable transition away from survivor testimony. Consequently, this research has identified specific issues that require our further attention: the decisions faced by fiction writers, and the value of reading literature from a mix of genres.

First, this thesis reveals that authors must make several formative decisions when constructing their works of fiction; their reason for writing, the age of the reader, and the perspective from which they write strongly influence their representations of the Kindertransport. With regard to Kindertransport fiction, texts aimed at a younger reader appear to reconstruct the historical period – by describing the Kindertransportee's childhood, departure, life growing up in Britain, guardians and homes, evacuation, school, the end of the war, and later marriage – whereas texts aimed at an older reader approach the representation of the Kindertransport in innovative ways in terms of narrative structure.

The main challenge facing fiction authors – as this analysis demonstrates – is the tension between historical knowledge and the construction of a popular novel. With regards to content and plot, Sue Vice acknowledges one challenge faced by novelists who are 'expected to keep to the facts, yet doing so too slavishly can be viewed as plagiarism; as novelists they are expected to invent material, yet doing so amounts to inaccuracy'.[19] The authors examined in Chapter Five appear to straddle the positions of proximity and distance, wishing to represent the experience of the Kindertransportee, whilst also wanting to make their representation relatable and appealing to the reader, which constitutes, in a way, a split loyalty. This is especially noticeable in Jake Wallis Simon's *The English German Girl*.

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[19] Sue Vice, *Holocaust Fiction* (London: Routledge, 2000), p.162.

In other fiction novels, the Kindertransport is placed within a multi-generational familial frame of communication or experience, revealing traumatic transference and the ongoing impact of the Kindertransport on the transportee, family members, and later generations as seen in van de Kamp's, Ahrens's, and Pick's novels. These texts have the potential to encourage a new approach; Beatrice Sandberg suggests new perspectives are achieved when different questions are asked. This, as evident in Ahrens's and Pick's texts, promotes a 'careful critical interpretation of the material from today's perspective' and has the potential, Sandberg maintains, to compensate for '[t]he loss of direct existential involvement' with which we will soon be faced.[20]

There appear to be two different directions made available to authors of Kindertransport fiction: either they re-create the world of the Kindertransportee (like Simons and van de Kamp) or, alternatively, home in on representing a situation that would be recognised by the reader by situating it in the reader's present day (Ahrens and Pick). The latter option – as the investigation into empathy in this thesis suggests – is likely to make the Kindertransport 'concrete and thinkable', making it 'meaningful locally', nourishing the grounds for 'political engagement in the present and the future'.[21]

Second, this research suggests that in order to gain a more complete understanding of an historical period, a mix of genres should be consulted and a reliance on any one genre alone should be avoided as this can give a skewed interpretation, or lack something essential that may indicate the complexity of Kindertransport experience. In contrast, reading texts from all three genres can: give an image of the Kindertransportee at the time of the events and the immediate impact in terms of traumatic effect (fiction); represent the refugee's everyday life and perceptions in Britain and how experience forms personality and world outlook (autobiographical fiction); situate the Kindertransport in its historical context of persecution and the Holocaust, and also reveals what – from this lived experience – is taken into old age, preserved in memory, distorted, mediated, or has been blocked from consciousness over the years (memoir).

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[20] Beatrice Sandberg, 'Challenges for the Successor Generations of German-Jewish Authors in Germany', in *After Testimony: The Ethics and Aesthetics of Holocaust Narrative for the Future*, ed. by Jakob Lothe, Susan Rubin Suleiman, and James Phelan (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2012), pp.52–76 (p.71).

[21] Landsberg, *Prosthetic*, p.139.

Lang suggests that readers primarily read 'in order to experience, to feel, to understand, to learn from, to empathize with, to imitate, to be inspired by text'.[22] In response to Lang's claim, this analysis suggests readers are more likely to draw an understanding of the historical experience and learn from memoirs, but experience with and empathise to a greater extent when reading texts that include a degree of fictionalisation. It has been suggested that successful narratives engage the reader in several ways: 'intellectually, emotionally, aesthetically'.[23] Reading Kindertransport texts from a variety of genres not only increases the opportunity for a mix of intellectual, emotional, and aesthetic stimulation – as this investigation into empathy has revealed–, but also makes a range of diverse Kindertransport experiences available to the reader. This plurality of experience, perspective, focus, and tone has been much sought after and recommended by scholars who are concerned by the generalised celebratory narrative of the Kindertransport which has been circulated widely in the public domain.[24]

In this respect, this understanding of genre is particularly relevant to discussions about education. There has been a call to include the teaching of the Kindertransport in pre-Holocaust education, as it is often accepted as an age-appropriate way to contemplate anti-Semitic persecution.[25] This research exposes how fictional representations, with the main aim of reconstructing the historical period, need to be taught alongside material that offers a greater opportunity for critical reflection, such as excerpts from memoirs or autobiographical fiction.

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[22] Jessica Lang, *Textual Silence*, p.175.

[23] Jakob Lothe, Susan Rubin Suleiman, and James Phelan, 'Introduction "After" Testimony: Holocaust Representation and Narrative Theory', in *After Testimony*, ed. by Lothe, Suleiman, and Phelan, pp.1–19 (p.8).

[24] Jennifer Craig-Norton, *The Kindertransport: Contesting Memory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019), p.14f.

## 6.4) The Future of Kindertransport Representation and Research

The Kindertransport remains a topic of public interest, particularly as eightieth anniversary events and the current refugee crisis continue to be covered by the media. For now, there remains an urgency to remember set against the rapidly declining number of Kindertransportees alive today. There continues to be a steady publication of novels as we reach the third decade of the twenty-first century.[26] In light of these new representations and the Kindertransport's current position in public consciousness, it is worthwhile considering possible trends in future fiction as well as further avenues of research.

Both memoirists and fiction writers feel compelled to tell an account or story that they feel people need to hear. Such a feeling of moral obligation leads to historical reconstructions as seen in Simon's and van de Kamp's novels. This trend is set to continue; authors appear to be exploring new ways into this period of history and are finding new topics around which they can structure their narratives. Published most recently in September 2019, Meg Waite Clayton's *The Last Train to London* is one example of how novelists are searching for new ways into the topic of the Kindertransport.[27] Clayton uses the story of Tante Truus (Geertruida Wijsmuller-Meijer), the Dutch aid worker who featured in van de Kamp's novel. By writing about

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[25] Several Kindertransportees, including Ruth Barnett and Marion Charles, have frequently visited schools to share their experience.

[26] Gill Thompson, *The Child on Platform One* (Sydney: Hachette, March 2020).

[27] Meg Waite Clayton, *The Last Train to London* (New York: HarperCollins, 2019).

Truus, Clayton finds a way to overcome her initial hesitancy and explains: '[w]hen I read that, I knew this was my story [...] Truus was Christian like me, someone I could inhabit as my way into the story', although she initially felt the story of the Kindertransport was not 'her story to tell'.[28] Yet, as this thesis shows, such an uncertainty does not necessarily lead to a tactful representation. Jana Zinser had similar reservations, revealing in correspondence with me in October 2019: 'I hesitated though because I felt their story wasn't mine to tell'.[29]

The two American novelists' aims are also comparable, with Clayton expressing how she intended to 'write a book that is fundamentally hopeful and inspiring, which is why it was important to have a rescuer character like Truus'.[30] With the knowledge that Zinser's representation is highly unrealistic and threatens to distort Kindertransport memory, it is worth critically considering approaches that first and foremost view the Kindertransport as a 'moral story' that 'needs to be told'. An emerging question, then, which can be examined in future studies on Kindertransport fiction, pertains to the extent to which a focus on historical acts or figures affects the representation of the Kindertransportee.

Literary representation is also likely to take a different route in the years to come. Sandberg reveals the likelihood of unlocking potential with the passing of living memory: '[l]ike all forms of transmission, the disappearance of personal experience will make it easier to see the world from a different angle than earlier generations did, knowing that memory is a fragile thing'.[31] With the disappearance of surviving the Kinder, writers may be less concerned about appropriating the story of elderly, frail

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[28] Ilana Debare, 'Bay Area novelist brings Kindertransports to life', *The Jewish News of Northern California*, 4 September 2019, <https://www.jweekly.com/2019/09/04/bay-area-novelist-brings-kindertransports-to-life/?fbclid=IwAR0HFMZ0ZJRJASBFy82pKprfsVJZx62dGD098XZMXlEy68UtHwKrfyLaKBg> [accessed 07 October 2019].

[29] Jana Zinser, email correspondence with me, 02 October 2019.

[30] Debare.

[31] Sandberg, p.70.

Kindertransportees. They will no longer be caught in the position between the survivors and their readership. Additionally, they may not feel the social responsibility to write with the aim of preserving and strengthening a story from history that is on the brink of fading from living memory. An author may no longer see it as imperative to be the one to translate lived experience into a narrative for future generations. Consequently, it is likely that the Kindertransport will be evoked in the storyline but will not be the main focus of representation. In a similar manner to Ahrens's novel, it is also likely that future representations will address the impact on following generations and focus on coming to terms with someone else's past as the direct descendants of Holocaust survivors and children of Kindertransportees are now at the forefront of commemoration events and discussions.[32]

Furthermore, as fiction is in the position to respond to a change in memory and society, future fictional representations of the Kindertransport are likely to bring the Kindertransport alongside other narratives or important historical or societal happenings. For example, the small stage production *The Central (Story) Line* – part of the Camden Fringe festival and performed in August 2018 – documents the lives of three Kindertransportees from their arrival on the Kindertransport through their adulthood into old age, showing how their shared Kindertransport past shaped their lives.[33] They live through political and social unrest seen in the time of Thatcher and Blair and characters respond to changing social values and the breaking of social taboos.

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[32] See Merilyn Moos, *Breaking the Silence: Voices of the British Children of Refugees from Nazism* (London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2015); Andrea Hammel, 'The Kinder's Children: Second Generation and the Kindertransport', in *The Young Victims of the Nazi Regime: Migration, the Holocaust and Postwar Displacement*, ed. by Simone Gigliotti and Monica Tempian (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), pp.239–256; Andrea Hammel, '"I believe that my experience began in the womb and was later absorbed through my mother's milk": Second Generation Trauma Narratives', *Trauma Narratives and Theories: New Readings in Contemporary German, Austrian, and Transnational Contexts: German Life and Letters*, 72:4 (2019), 556–569; Charmian Brinson and Anthony Grenville, 'Entwicklung der Exilforschung in Großbritannien', in *Exilforschungen im historischen Prozess: Exilforschung. Ein internationales Jahrbuch*, 30 (2012), ed. by Claus-Dieter Krohn and Lutz Winckler, pp.210–222 (p.220).

[33] 'Central (Story) Line', *Camden People's Theatre*, <https://www.cptheatre.co.uk/production/central-story-line/> [accessed 07 October 2019].

The Kindertransport is thus evoked as an initial disruptive shaping event, rather than being the main focus of the representation.

In addition, representations are likely to become more multidirectional with references to other cultures' histories.[34] The task of representation is no longer left in the hands of the Kindertransportees – who initially ignited the Kindertransport memory culture through reunions and the writing of memoirs, which in turn sparked public and scholarly interest – and thus expands beyond the English speaking world in which the majority of the Kinder settled. This creates space for other national perspectives and narratives – a trend which is touched upon in Chapter Five. Similarly, the examination of national narratives and their influence on representation warrants further study, as a growing number of texts are being published in different languages and more countries are beginning to critically engage with their national memory of the Kindertransport. Illustrating this multidirectionality, German writer Michael Göring's novel, *Hotel Dellbrück*, draws a parallel between the Kindertransport and the Syrian refugee crisis today.[35] Set in 2018, the novel also addresses the difficulties faced by the post-war generation and the children of the Kindertransportees. Adding a further dimension to this representation, characters question the accountability of individuals and the public memory of the Holocaust in Germany.[36]

As Göring's novel indicates, fictional portrayals of the Kindertransport are being increasingly used as a strategic tool to comment on today's refugee situation. This might mark a future trend in Kindertransport representation. Additional examples include Jonathan Dean's *I Must Belong Somewhere* and *No Ballet Shoes in Syria* by Catherine

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[34] Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

[35] Kultur MD, *Buchmesse 2019, Michael Göring, Hotel Dellbrück*, YouTube, 8 April 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fXuSzJxr70E> [accessed 01 October 2019].

[36] Michael Göring, *Hotel Dellbrück* (Hamburg: Osburg, 2018).

Bruton.[37] The former is about a family's experience of exile, in which the experience of the Kindertransport is coupled with current refugee movements, and the latter also addresses the current refugee crisis; the author was inspired by child refugees from Nazism after reading Judith Kerr's famous story, *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit*. Particularly in light of the parallels being drawn between the Kindertransport and current refugee movements, future literary studies on reader empathy are crucial, especially as empathy is about 'developing compassion' for 'others who have no relation to us, who resemble us not at all, whose circumstances lie far outside of our own experiences'.[38]

This study, which looks at how different genres represent a refugee experience, will, in this respect, contribute to future comparative studies on how historical refugee movements are remembered, represented, or re-imagined in literature. Future studies may adapt and expand this genre analysis and consider it in the context of other refugee groups, enriching our understanding of how literary genres can transform experience. In comparative studies it will be particularly illuminating to consider whether, if the Kindertransport is brought alongside other refugee movements and narratives, the Kindertransportees are portrayed as the 'lucky ones' compared to today's child refugees who have travelled often unaccompanied across Europe facing life-threatening situations on a daily basis. The character of the Kindertransportee would then be at risk of being simplified and generalised and there is a danger of witnessing a return to the 'happily-ever-after' narrative that Jennifer Craig-Norton contests at length in her recent work.[39]

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[37] Jonathan Dean, *I Must Belong Somewhere* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2017); Catherine Bruton, *No Ballet Shoes in Syria* (London: Nosy Crow, 2019).

[38] Landsberg, 'Memory, Empathy, and the Politics of Identification', p.223.

[39] Craig-Norton, *Contesting*, p.13.

Another possible area of future study is expanding the scope of this thesis to examine representations of the Kindertransport in more visual genres such as films, television depictions, and plays. Such studies would be illuminating, particularly when investigating reader reception and empathy. When considering avenues for future research, it should be recognised that our understanding of, and relationship to, different genres may change, especially in step with technological advancements as seen at The National Holocaust Centre and Museum, for example, and developments in social media.[40]

Instagram, which can also be understood as a form of representation, is a key part of life for many teenagers and young adults and is thus an ideal platform to engage the interest of younger generations. With over one million followers, an Instagram account of a young Hungarian Jewess (Eva.Stories) documents the persecution of Jews through Instagram stories, using emojis, music, hashtags, and boomerang features to engage today's viewer and make her experience immediate and relatable.[41] Its creator, Mati Kochavi and his daughter produced the series of videos in order to 'refresh what they see as fading memories of the genocide'.[42] They stated: '[i]f we want to bring the memory of the Holocaust to the young generation, we have to bring it to where they are [...] And they're on Instagram'.[43] In this respect, it should also be taken into account that genres may lose or gain the interest of upcoming generations, and future studies should respond to this by embracing new platforms of representation.

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[40] See chapter one. The NHCM has been developing an interactive exhibition called 'The Journey' and a virtual version of this that is accessible online. The 'Forever Project', also based at the NHCM makes the most of digital technologies with the aim of preserving the voices of Holocaust survivors, so that a virtual survivor can respond to spoken questions.

[41] 'Eva.Stories', Instagram (2019), <https://www.instagram.com/eva.stories/> [accessed 01 October 2019].

[42] Oliver Holmes, 'Instagram Holocaust diary Eva.Stories sparks debate in Israel', *The Guardian*, 8 May 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/may/08/instagram-holocaust-diary-evastories-sparks-debate-in-israel> [accessed 07 October 2019].

[43] *Ibid.*

The continuous and evolving study of how the Kindertransport experience is transformed and represented across a range of genres remains crucial in identifying what narratives of the Kindertransport are being made available for existing and future generations to engage with, learn from, and utilise in future representations as we head into a time of non-experiential representation. Whilst addressing the capabilities and limitations of these literary genres and arguing that a combination of genres provides a diverse understanding of the Kindertransport, this thesis also recognises that '[n]o one story can adequately recount the story of the Kindertransports and those whom they saved'.[44]

Instead, this thesis encourages a critical reading of both genre and individual texts and has illuminated the delicate nature of representation: how texts are consciously shaped according to the genre's expectations, constrictions, and allowances. Authors must constantly reconcile lived memory and traumatic experience, historical fact, the demands and limits of the genre, the reader's expectations, and their own writing intention – which is often to propel the Kindertransport into the consciousness of future generations. Achieving – or at least striving toward – a balance of intellectual, emotional, and aesthetic engagement from the reader during this process of representation or re-imagination can to some extent compensate for the shift in memory with which we will soon be confronted.

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[44] Vera K. Fast, *Children's Exodus: a History of the Kindertransport* (London: I.B. Taunus, 2011), p.vii.

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