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Second Chance

Two Centuries of German-speaking Jews
in the United Kingdom

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JILLIAN DAVIDSON

German-Jewish Women in England

The intransparency of women, through the lens of traditional historiography, has created manifold problems of concept and methodology for historians focusing on the female experience. From this kind of distortion through neglect, the portrayal of German Jewry has not been free.¹ To take a rather extreme and individual case of this unfortunate misrepresentation, the family tree which features at the beginning of a recent biography of Sir Siegmund Warburg, "shows Siegmund as an only child whereas he had three sisters".² For the historian of German-Jewish emigration, whose intent it is, however, to move beyond the realm of compensatory history, into the field of comparative, critical and analytical collective biography, the task of rescuing women from the fate of oblivion is all the more complicated.

By way of introduction to, and illumination of the issues involved, author Patrick White provides us with pertinent and graphic illustration. German Jewesses figure prominently and symbolically in White's novel, *The Living and the Dead*, which is significantly set in London in the 1930s, and concerns the story of a middle-class family caught in the desperation and despair of a world engulfed by two catastrophic and cataclysmic wars.

The book's opening sequence pictures protagonist Elyot Standish reflecting upon the sight of a German Jewess, as he leaves Victoria Station, alone and withdrawn. Quoting from the text,

"Outside the station, people settled down again to being emotionally commonplace. There was very little to distinguish the individual feature in the flow of faces... It was better like this, he felt... It was better to swim in the confused sea that was anybody's London..."

Elyot Standish bumped his way through the crowd outside Victoria... He remembered the face of the German woman, moments earlier on the platform, resting on her husband's shoulder in a last unseeing embrace. Or rather, you were drawn beyond the eyes of the little German Jewess into a region where the present dissolved, its forms and purpose, became a shapeless directionless well of fear...

The little Jewess [had] stood with a purposeless handkerchief. She held it crumpled against her cheek. With the train, the man turned back into Europe on what errand?... The whole

¹ This paper was inspired by the memory of Ilse Windmueller, who came on one of the last children's transports to England. From December 1938 to September 1942, she stayed at the home of my grandparents in Edinburgh. Thereafter, she went to Glasgow to learn the millinery trade. Three weeks later, she died from diphtheria, aged seventeen.

² This quote was taken from a review by Fred S. Worms of Jacques Attali's biography of, *A Man of Influence. Sir Siegmund Warburg 1902-1982*, London 1986: "A Puritan and Romantic Prince", in *The Jewish Quarterly*, 125 (1987), p. 58. According to Dr. A.J. Sherman, however, even this is not correct. It was, rather, Max Warburg who had the three sisters. In any case, this correction perhaps strengthens, rather than undermines, my point, that German-Jewish women have suffered from the fate of historiographical obscurity.

business was either a mystery or else meaningless, and of the two, the meaningless is the more difficult to take."³

What this description shares, in common with those other descriptions of German Jewesses in *The Living and the Dead*, are the qualities of irrelevant anonymity combined with a conspicuous, and, at the same time rather puzzling, if not indeed disquieting, feeling of personal and individual enigma. There is also a sense of fragile and fragmentary transience which weighs upon each episode. Questions of context, background, continuity, direction, consequence, meaning and ultimate significance all arise from the detailed pieces of the images; questions such as must be addressed here in this paper.

Daunting indeed is the task of the historian who must grapple to find an authentic perspective when seeking to select examples from, or to impose some kind of order onto, a panorama of such immense scope – which spans almost two hundred years and involves many thousands of women, whose geography, occupational profile, religious commitment, and family life differed so vastly. In addition, there is, for instance, the overwhelming presence of the Second World War in our story, which threatens to distract the more discerning eye and to cloud one's overall vision. The Nazi's Final Solution was, after all, ultimately insensitive to such considerations as gender, Orthodoxy, wealth, social status and profession.⁴

Skillful and agile, therefore, are the acrobatics needed to attend to, and balance the tensions between, heterogeneity and uniformity; between the outstanding and exceptional individual, and the more typical or average immigrant; between the interacting determinants of gender, ethnicity and class. The demand to integrate the "Anna Freuds" amongst the immigrants into an overall picture, and to place the public figures alongside the more private lives poses, potentially, a very real problem.

The pitfalls of isolationism, which emphasises the uniqueness of women's experience and examines that experience in a vacuum, need also to be avoided. No less searching is the subsequent question of what is the underlying purpose behind, and overall significance in drawing distinctions between the activities, responses and roles of these German-Jewish women and their male counterparts. Considering too, the mythical image of women, their symbolic differentiation, the ancient tendency to clothe women in propagandist purposes, status does not necessarily correspond to a fixed position, grounded in social reality: how, then, is identity designated?

Conversely, there is the question of, why rescue from oblivion those women whose collective character has yet to be defined? What does one expect their story to represent or reflect? This after all was exactly the issue raised by the lack of interest accorded to the play *Dark Summer*, performed on the London stage, as soon after the

³ Patrick White, *The Living and the Dead* (first publ. 1941), Harmondsworth 1987, pp. 7–9. Also, for Elyot's visit to Frau Dr. Rosenheim, in Germany itself, see pp. 133–135: "... Through the living-room door Frau Rosenheim was telling of a walk they had gone near Goslar. It was a story of no particular point. But it disturbed him. More likely than not, he would never see the Rosenheims again."

⁴ However, Sybil Milton's essay on 'Women and the Holocaust. The case of German and German-Jewish Women', in *When Biology Became Destiny. Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany*, ed. by Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossmann and Marion Kaplan, New York 1984, shows how women's experiences differed in some ways from men's.

war as 1947. This drama depicted a Viennese Jewess, Gisela Waldstein, once a successful chemist, then a cook in an English household, *déclassé*, lonely and much older-looking than her thirty-five years.

There were many Gisela Waldsteins in England in the first years of the war, but this one met with a special fate: she fell in love with the son of the house, a young flyer who had been blinded. He subsequently broke with his young and beautiful fiancée whom he could no longer see, and promised to marry Gisela whom he had never seen; but a last-minute operation restored his eyesight and what he saw was an ageing Jewess and a young English girl. As the cultural correspondent of the *AJR Information* commented, with more than a touch of cynicism: "If the heroine had been a negress who had feared ever to be seen by the blind lover, I am sure the play would have been destined to be a great success in the West End. But here was a story only of a Jewess, and that one from Vienna..."⁵

I

A substantial body of literature has, however, already appeared, which clearly recognises the quite considerable influence exercised by women in German-Jewish modern history. In fact, more than a touch of singularity and fame has been accorded to them, and their role has been emphatically referred to as both "central" and "vital", in two important respects. Both concern the dynamics of emancipation and assimilation, and, as will be suggested here, point towards a better understanding of the intricate workings in the process of immigration and integration of German-Jewish women into England.

According to Jacob Katz, German-Jewish women played an informative role in distinguishing Jewish emancipation in Germany as a "social revolution – with a difference". Ashkenazi women apparently found it easier to adopt the cultural values of their Gentile neighbours, whereas for men enlightenment and secular education still had to compete with Torah learning.⁶ As Deborah Herz has stated; "What impressed gentile observers so greatly was that this social integration was engineered by several of Berlin's most special women... their salons constituted a miniature social utopia where noble commoner, Jew and gentile seemed to leave their ascribed status outside the door".⁷

In her biography of one such prominent salon lady, Hannah Arendt did, however, discern that Rahel Varnhagen's life story not only mirrored the strivings and achievements of the Enlightenment, but equally, its limitations and failures. Varnhagen was herself to lament the abrupt dispersion of her salon circle once French troops occupied Berlin in 1806. Thereafter, the representatives of the romantic movement, whose inner struggles she had shared became increasingly

⁵ *AJR Information*, December 1947.

⁶ Jacob Katz, *Out of the Ghetto. The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation, 1770–1870*, Cambridge, Mass. 1973, see especially pp. 83–84, 86.

⁷ Deborah Herz, 'Intermarriage in the Berlin Salons', in *Central European History*, vol. XVI, no. 4 (December 1983), p. 307.

reactionary and antisemitic. "As the salons gradually disappeared from the Berlin scene, so too a stage for wealthy cultivated Jewish women vanished."⁸

This precedent of female cultural pursuits and prominence found a new platform in England. Jewesses from Central Europe, like the brilliantly gifted Helen Lichtenstadt, who married the painter Solomon J. Solomon, brought with them a high standard of general and Viennese/German culture, into their English homes.⁹ So impressive was Josef Neuberg's sister that Thomas Carlyle's wife Jane Welsh was eager to have Miss Neuberg as her sister-in-law. Although Mrs. Carlyle was subsequently to be disappointed, she had enthusiastically encouraged John Carlyle, pressing upon him that, "You must marry her – she will make you an excellent wife."¹⁰

Perhaps the "most peculiar characteristic" of German-Jewish immigration in the nineteenth century was, however, as C. C. Aronsfeld has said, that in England, "wherever they went they joined commerce with culture as well as philanthropy". In forging this special combination, what is more, German Jewesses were often invaluable partners and promoters. The conductor Sir Henry Wood was, accordingly, most appreciative of Lady Speyer's support as well as that of banker Sir Edgar Speyer: "The kindness of the Speyers", said Wood, "I cannot recall without a lump in my throat". The composer, Chopin, too, had cause to acknowledge the benevolence of another artistically-minded German-Jewish merchant, together with his wife.

Although numerous other celebrities stayed at the Schwabes, including John Bright, Mrs. Gaskell and Mrs. Carlyle, it is Aronsfeld's considered opinion that, "perhaps one of the most remarkable of them all was the hostess herself, Mrs. Schwabe, a fervent champion of education, of liberalism and, inspired by her friendship with Garibaldi and Mazzini, of the cause of a united Italy".¹¹

Another German-Jewish cultural hostess who, like Mrs. Schwabe, supported the progressive educational ideas of Froebel was the outstanding Frida Mond, wife of the great industrial chemist, Ludwig. Upon arriving in England, Frida found that with her high intellectual standards, and passion for Goethe, Rousseau and Jean Paul, she had very little in common with the other mothers from Liverpool or Manchester. To escape the dullness of her uneducated female neighbours, and by way of solution to her loneliness, Frida invited her girlhood friend, Henriette Herz, to come and live more or less permanently as her companion. Beneficiaries of Frida and Miss Herz's joint hospitality and patronage were the composer Max Bruch, art historian Professor Jean Paul Richter, dramatist Alfred Sutro, novelist Maurice Hewlett, poet Arthur Symons and the young Shakespearian scholar, Israel Gol-

⁸ Hannah Arendt, *Rahel Varnhagen. The Life of a Jewess*, London 1958, publication of the Leo Baeck Institute; quoted in Herz, *loc. cit.*, p. 308.

⁹ Olga Somech Phillips, 'The Painter Solomon J. Solomon', in *AJR Information*, November 1951, p. 4.

¹⁰ C. C. Aronsfeld, 'German Jews in Nottingham', in *AJR Information*, December 1955, p. 8.

¹¹ C. C. Aronsfeld, 'German Jews in Victorian England', in *Year Book VII of the Leo Baeck Institute*, London 1962, pp. 319–320. See also, Rosemary Ashton, *Little Germany. Exile and Asylum in Victorian England*, Oxford 1986, chap. 5 is on 'The Women of the Exile'. For mention of Mrs. Salis-Schwabe, see p. 207.

lancz. One of Frida's particular interests was, in fact, the founding of the British Academy.¹²

II

Partly in response and partly in contradistinction to the attention accorded to these philanthropic ladies of the salon, comes the second corpus of literature: Marion Kaplan's writings on the German feminist movement. Kaplan sees, in the position of the *Jüdischer Frauenbund* (JFB), founded in 1904, a microcosm of the dilemmas confronting modern minorities which seek assimilation.

According to Kaplan's perception, "the images of the apostate Salon Jewess and the newly rich, bourgeois woman who neglected her religion in the pursuit of material pleasures was dramatic, but exceptional".¹³ Secularisation affected women later than men. As many as twenty per cent of German-Jewish women over the age of thirty joined the JFB. Many considered themselves "culture bearers" responsible for the preservation and furtherance of the Jewish religion, and remained more traditional than their husbands. At the same time, German-Jewish feminists challenged and attacked the genteel cult of "the lady", which put women on a pedestal where they were protected "angels of the home", respected as moral superiors and guardians of religion, but which kept them as powerless wives who were treated more like children. They demanded their own independence.

Ambivalence certainly lies at the heart of Kaplan's analysis. It is the ambivalent nature of the JFB's programme which epitomises the ambivalent position of Jews in German society. Endeavours to preserve their own minority distinctiveness conflicted with the JFB's desire to be acceptable in the eyes of the *Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine*, the German feminist movement. At the root of this ambivalence lay a further ambivalence. The JFB's efforts to become more acceptable contradicted socio-economic patterns beyond its control. It was the fact that they were mainly middle-class which enabled these leisurely women to participate so actively in the movement. As with Jewish men, although admittedly to a lesser extent, the job distribution profile of Jewish women was quite different from that of their German counterparts. This helps to explain the tenacity and popularity of the cult of "the Jewish lady". Only because German-Jewish women had long been further emancipated from the kitchen and domesticity than most women, did German-Jewish men nostalgically try so hard to cling to symbols of traditional female practice and virtue.

There was another reason for this, though, which caused alarm amongst women as well as men. There was widespread concern for those women who represented not only the loss of traditional virtue, but its most radical inversion: the Jewish prostitutes. Migration, it has been well noted, was a factory of prostitution and, as

¹² John Michael Cohen, *The Life of Ludwig Mond*, London 1956, pp. 13, 77, 123-124, 148, 170, 183-184, 234.

¹³ Marion A. Kaplan, *The Jewish Feminist Movement in Germany. The Campaigns of the Jüdischer Frauenbund, 1904-1938*, Westport, Conn. 1979, pp. 19-20. See also Kaplan's 'Sisterhood under Siege. Feminism and Antisemitism in Germany, 1904-1938', in Bridenthal *et al.* (eds.), *op. cit.*

Bertha Pappenheim, the JFB's leader, rightly recognised, white slavery amongst Eastern European immigrants in Germany was the most effective issue around which to mobilise her generation of Jewish women. By comparison, when the problem of Jewish immigrant prostitution had first materialised amongst, principally German, although also other Ashkenazi female immigrants in London, around the turn of the nineteenth century, it remained largely a problem with which Anglo-Jewry's male population had to deal.¹⁴ English Jews had then sought to rescue and remould the lower-class German female immigrants by teaching them housework and especially by training them for domestic service.¹⁵ German-Jewish feminists acted likewise: they concentrated their communal efforts on helping immigrant and German-Jewish working-class girls to find jobs in homes. Coincidentally, of course, they thus served their own middle-class interests in a period in which a servant shortage preoccupied most bourgeois housewives. Not surprisingly, the drive to turn their own "höhere Töchter" (fine ladies) into "Haustöchter" (domesticated girls) proved more or less ineffectual, emphasising only further how far removed the majority of the middle-class German-Jewish women were from the kitchen and world of domesticity.

In certain, major respects then, the similarities between the salon Jewesses and the feminist Jewesses are of equal importance with their declared differences. In fact, for our purposes, a more useful way of viewing these two trends in German-Jewish emancipation would perhaps be not as in opposition to each other, but in progression and succession. In both instances, German-Jewish women stood at the forefront and excelled publicly and prominently. By the close of the nineteenth century, the voluntary, more leisurely promoters of art, philanthropy and education had, however, been superseded by a pioneering generation of professional practitioners. Significantly, though, they remained devoted to, and pivotal in, the same spheres of action. The special triangular combination of culture, education and philanthropy was renewed, although with different emphases and with related new fields such as fashion, the media, educational psychology and politics. It is to the implications which all this had upon their immigration to Great Britain and integration into its society which I would now like to turn. And it is hoped, that a pattern might here emerge which will offer meaning where at the present there is still much chaos.¹⁶

¹⁴ Edward J. Bristow, *Prostitution and Prejudice. The Jewish Fight Against White Slavery 1870–1939*, Oxford 1982, p. 248 and *passim*.

¹⁵ Todd M. Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England 1714–1830. Tradition and Change in a Liberal Society*, Philadelphia 1979, p. 237.

¹⁶ In microcosm, Mrs. Hannah Norbert-Miller raised this question of meaning in an interview with me. Mrs. Miller was one of the leading artists of the *Laternrdl* cabaret in exile, and was married to the famous cabaret actor, Martin Miller, whose photographs figure prominently in Lisa Appignanesi's chapter on 'Cabaret in Exile' in her book, *Cabaret. The First Hundred Years*, London 1984, pp. 165–167, by courtesy of Hannah Norbert-Miller herself.

Interestingly enough, Appignanesi describes the cabaret as a novel and "flexible medium". Similarly, Eva Figs in her *Patriarchal Attitudes. Women in Society*, agrees with Virginia Woolf who "thought that one of the reasons why women had been so successful at writing novels was that this was a relatively new art form where all the rules had not been laid down", London 1970, p. 19.

The question which Mrs. Miller asked was then as follows: "Although it is true that German Jewish Women were greatly involved in freelance translation for the B. B. C., and I can think of over twenty-two such women off-hand, it is just silly to separate off women. That's just feminist nonsense... But it is necessary to redress the balance because there is already an imbalance. As for having a 'theory' about the impact of actresses, no, I have no such theory. To me it remains a mystery why refugee actresses were so

III

For the refugees fleeing from Nazi Germany and Nazi-occupied Austria, domestic service offered virtually the only available opening into England. Women were thus more likely to receive work permits, and indeed women with domestic permits, whose destination was an English kitchen, did represent the majority of the refugees. One in three, or 20,000 of the refugees who came to Britain before the war came to join the ranks of what was the most common form of employment for women until the Second World War.¹⁷ Seen within this context, it must be stated that Jewish refugees constituted approximately no more than one per cent of the total army of domestic servants, and that by 1941 domestic service had been marginalised and become very much a minority experience not only for Jewish refugees but also for British citizens. This view of the reality of the whole does little, however, to diminish the dramatic irony which was inherent in transplanting these women from their "upstairs" life in Central Europe to their "downstairs" life in England. Of the five hundred women saved, for instance, by the Cambridge Refugee Committee on domestic permits, only two had any appropriate training, which again points to the lack of any significant success in the German feminists' bid to restructure their career profile, and again emphasises their strong middle-class background. Only too often, what is more, this dramatic irony expressed itself in terms of extreme tragedy.

The tragi-comic quality of this rather incongruous set-up is perhaps best captured and brought out by Lore Segal's description of her mother being shown around the Willoughby's house, which she was expected to clean.

successful in England but not in France, nor even in America where even the most famous ones had difficulties; only here did it become even fashionable. But an explanation?..." (Some obvious examples are Elisabeth Bergner, Lilli Palmer, Marianne Kupfer, Lucie Mannheim etc.)

Nonetheless, one cannot but be impressed by the sheer number of talented German-Jewish women, whose biographies appeared, for instance, in *Art in Exile in Great Britain, 1933-45*, a catalogue written to accompany an exhibition at the Camden Arts Centre, Arkwright Rd., 20th August to 5th October 1986.

As for those German-Jewish women who "stood at the forefront and excelled publicly and prominently" in cultural activities in a manner so like their nineteenth-century predecessors, we must include, Elisabeth Jungmann (see *The Second Lady Beerbohm* by Corry Nethery, London 1987, which was presented to Dr. Eva Reichmann, the sister of Elisabeth, and herself an eminent historian and sociologist, on the occasion of her ninetieth birthday); art historian Professor Helen Rosenau, who, significantly, contributed enormously to the *AJR Information*; Gertrud Bing, who, as a true daughter of the German Enlightenment (she was a pupil of Ernst Cassirer in Hamburg and wrote her doctoral thesis on Lessing) was largely responsible for bringing over to England, the Warburg Institute/Library for the History of Art, which, under her directorship, was incorporated into the University of London (*AJR Information*, August 1964, p. 9) and Hilde Spiel, described by *The Times Literary Supplement* as "a Vienna female Proust" who, significantly, wrote *Fanny von Arnstein oder Die Emanzipation*, the biography of the Viennese Jewish *salonnière*, and *Vienna's Golden Autumn 1866-1938*, London 1987.

As a final mention in this sprinkling of a survey, there is Professor Marie Jahoda who has continued, at the University of Sussex, the pioneering work which she began, in Vienna, in the field of modern social psychology. Co-author of *Die Arbeitslosen von Marienthal* (1933), she has also written *The Psychology of Social Issues. Employment and Unemployment. A Social-Psychological Analysis, inter al.* For an interesting, but quite different, perspective of part of Marie Jahoda's career, see Isabelle Simone Lucille Tombs, *Socialist Politics and the Future of Europe. The Continental Socialists in London, 1939-45*, Ph. D. diss., Cambridge University 1988.

¹⁷ For this whole discussion see Tony Kushner's 'Asylum or Servitude? Refugee Domesticity in Britain, 1933-1945', in *Bulletin of the Society for Labour History*, vol. LIII, pt. 3 (1988).

“And this is our drawing room.’ ‘Ah,’ my mother cried, ‘a piano! It is a Bechstein, no?’ and she told Mrs. Willoughby that she had had a Blüthner, which the Nazis had taken, and that she had studied music at the Vienna Academy. ‘Oh really?’ said Mrs. Willoughby. ‘In that case you must come in and play sometime when everyone is out.’”

Lore’s mother continued to experience further humiliation:

“And so the Willoughbys had put my parents in their place; the refugees belonged to the class of people who eat in the kitchen, sleep on cheap mattresses, and throw their wives down the stairs in an argument – which goes to show that people have, after all, an innate sense of justice and cannot with equanimity be served by their fellows when these too closely resemble themselves.”¹⁸

The juxtaposition between the old “matriarchal” style of the German-Jewish community, and the new meaning given to the status of the independent woman in the exiled German-Jewish community in England is also curiously illuminating.¹⁹ In writer Gabriele Tergit’s phraseology, the woman now became “the breadwinner”. But, as Tergit is quick to say, this new situation did not come without its own problems. Family life was one of the first victims: “Looking for a job in middle age is never easy, but looking for a job when one does not even know exactly how to write a letter and is dependent on one’s wife’s work or charity plays havoc with the personality of all but the most insensitive.”²⁰ In many cases, though, husbands, of course, found great comfort and inspiration in their wives’ indomitable physical and spiritual fortitude.²¹

This last point only goes to show how extremely difficult it is to make any generalisations here. To take another example: for one domestic worker, the only alternative, that of nursing, might have seemed preferable; whereas for one who was already a nurse, she might have felt that domestic service held the better opportunity.²²

Contained within the story of their plight it has been suggested, however, that there lies one crucial answer to the question of what kind of reception was given to the refugees. Tony Kushner has recently posed and probed this question in the following way: “As refugee domestic service was so short-lived, and given the economic problems of Britain in the 1930s, is it not possible to maintain the analysis that this country’s refugee policy was ‘compassionate, even generous?’” As Kushner argues, it is not possible.

¹⁸ Lore Segal, *Other People’s Houses*, London 1965, pp. 78, 85.

¹⁹ Eg., it has been suggested that “... the German Jewish community was in many ways matriarchal...” Cohen, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

²⁰ Gabriele Tergit, ‘How They Resettled’, in *Britain’s New Citizens. The Story of the Refugees from Germany and Austria*, Tenth Anniversary Publication of the Association of Jewish Refugees in Great Britain, London 1951, p. 62.

²¹ George Clare, whose parents left Ireland for France in the hope of improving their situation describes in his book, *Last Waltz in Vienna. The Destruction of a Family, 1842–1942*, London 1982, p. 182, how his father grew increasingly to depend on his mother. As he quotes from a letter his father wrote him, “‘She is a great and true human being. Had she had the good fortune of meeting Goethe, or rather, had he had the good fortune of meeting her, he would most certainly have said, and with greater justification: ‘voilà une femme’. This ‘Voilà une femme’,” Clare then comments, “‘There is a true woman, not as Father would have called her in Vienna, ‘a good wife and mother’ seems to me to show how much more clearly he now recognised her qualities”.

²² Zoë Josephs, *Survivors. Jewish Refugees in Birmingham, 1933–1945*, Birmingham 1988, pp. 124–132 on nursing and pp. 137–143 on domestics.

Although the British government expressly chose to ignore trade union demands to impose restrictions on the number of domestics allowed to enter, it did so for exactly the same middle-class reasons which prevented it from resisting the strict exclusiveness of the professional associations of doctors, lawyers and, to some extent, dentists.²³ In other words, class prejudices were more decisive here than any gender or ethnic considerations. A sense of *déjà vu* cannot but be discerned as the tables were turned, and German-Jewish women became the victims of middle-class interests, in a way in which they had once been the practitioners. And, as Kushner concludes, the refugees were given asylum, but at the price of servitude. Thus, "If in the 1930s and 40s the Nazis succeeded in dehumanizing the Jewish people, Britain, through its use of refugee domestic servants, continued this process of humiliation and destruction of dignity."

Although there is, no doubt, much truth in what Kushner says, not many of the ex-domestic servants themselves would probably agree. Accepting that it is difficult to disentangle the retroactive from the contemporaneous thoughts, the overwhelming realisation among the refugee domestics, as amongst the refugees in general, was that "we were the lucky ones". The most important point for them was that they had been "saved" from the camps; thoughts regarding their being "stuck" in the kitchen were entirely secondary. Desire to please and show their gratitude prevailed. As one woman now recalls, her mother spent almost three hours trying to make English toast, back in Vienna, when two Quaker ladies came to interview her as their prospective employee.²⁴ Surely this is a blatant exaggeration, but that does not detract from the underlying message. And, as Hildegard Forres spelt out that message in an article for the *AJR Information*, entitled, 'The Limits of Integration': "And, after all, have we not been spared torture and murder? The concentration camps set the standard by which we, the survivors, should measure our frustrations to the end of our lives."²⁵

IV

Even when one takes into consideration the humiliation inflicted upon the Jewish refugees by way of the tribunals, followed often by that of internment, this judgement, I think, still holds true. As with the treatment of domestics, this policy of internment showed rather a complete lack of understanding on the part of the British authorities, with regard to who the refugees were, and what was their situation.

Suspicion of them was due more to a fear of foreigners than an actual animosity towards Jews. Thus Patrick White recalled in his autobiography his fellow tenants in London, at the beginning of the war, which was also exactly the same time that he was working on *The Living and the Dead*: there were "a couple of intellectual Viennese sisters with wheedling ways [who] had come to roost, adding to my still limited experience of the Central European Jew. The full horror of persecution and

²³ See, for instance, the contributions by Kurt Lipstein and Paul Weindling in this volume.

²⁴ In interview with Mrs. Johanna Braithwaite, to whom many thanks are due.

²⁵ *AJR Information*, December 1960, p. 9.

genocide had not yet torn our complacency apart. We still flickered with irritation meeting refugees on the landing; our buried anti-Semitism flared over some drama of the dust-bins."²⁶ A lack of familiarity thus governed attitudes towards these Jewesses at all levels.

Certainly, many recall the episode of internment with more than a touch of bitterness. At the same time, however, it must be added that conditions were good, if not enviable, on the Isle of Man. Nowhere else, in fact, were food provisions more plentiful and if anyone was safe, then it was those on the Isle of Man.²⁷ Since considerably less women were affected, this meant that many of them fared worse than the men. Often they suffered much more from the loneliness and also from worrying about how to secure a living on their own. I think that it is exactly this which makes White's image of the German Jewess at Victoria Station so powerful and real. There could be no better way of epitomising his own protagonist's extreme sense of loneliness in the changing world of the late 1930s.

For many women, then, these years were ones of a great struggle, especially since, simultaneous to the internment of men, women were, for the same reason, sacked from their domestic positions – 8,000 in all – often without anywhere to go.²⁸ During internment itself though, gender hardly played a role. Both the men's and the women's sections were centres of great cultural and educational activity. This need only be stated because, that this is true of the women's section on the Isle of Man is not so well known. At the same time, interned men, just like interned women, had to go through the same routine of daily chores. Gender barriers were broken down, even if somewhat playfully, as interned men sang in 'A Song of Internment', "We jolly Viennese washerwomen we're proud of our white linen!"²⁹ Class, however, again proved the more important variable, as Margot Pottlitzer has emphasised: "Look, there wasn't all that much difference [between the men and women]. The only thing is, I suppose, housewives were much better able to cope because they could do lots of things which we couldn't do. But, as I explained before, there weren't all that many ordinary housewives, at least not in the group which came from Germany. Among the Austrians, yes. And they were utterly housewifely... But, you know, the people from Germany who came to England and who, apart

²⁶ Patrick White, *Flaws in the Glass. A Self-portrait*, Harmondsworth 1983, p. 77.

²⁷ Imperial War Museum (hereafter IWM), refugee tape 004494/04 (Friedel Hallgarten).

²⁸ Tony Kushner, 'Asylum or Servitude?', *loc. cit.*, p. 12. Here too, the concept of the German Jewess's "independence" took on a new connotation. And yet, certain activities had to come to a halt once the male participants had been interned – for example, the "Black Sheep" cabaret ('London's Refugee Theatres', in *AJR Information*, August 1957, p. 9). On the other hand, internment when it did affect women, came, at least initially, as a greater shock. Women never imagined that they would be interned, and as Margot Pottlitzer has explained, this prevented them from taking the precautionary measure of not being in at around 6 a. m., the notorious time of arrival for the police. Thus, several men would escape, while many women became "fair game" (IWM, refugee tape 003816/05). Such a situation was almost an exact repeat of what had happened back in Central Europe. Many women had believed that only men would be marked out for the Nazi camps, and so showed less readiness to emigrate. (They were also unable to emigrate and obtain visas in the same numbers as single Jewish men. See, Milton, *loc. cit.*) The fact that the men were the first to be sent before and during the war lent credence to their presupposition, but did not assuage the reality of their vulnerability.

²⁹ Josephs, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

from that easily defined group of Austrians, formed the bulk of the women internees, had come from certain circles – not necessarily intellectual but at least educated.”³⁰

V

Substantial recent scholarship has explored war “as a gendering activity”, which acts as a “clarifying moment”, either altering or reinforcing existing notions of gender, the nation and the family.³¹ Since these ideas are not created afresh, but rooted in previous social and cultural developments, a study of them is all the more worthwhile for a longer-term appreciation. With German-Jewish women living in war-time England the issues are, however, quite different. Gender was a less central variable than race, ethnicity, or class, as the story of internment and even of domestic employment has already indicated, in the initial construction, reconstruction or deconstruction of personal, and collective identity and experience. Indeed, for many refugees, war-time opportunities and frustrations offered their sole means of entry via which they could begin their new life in this country. What avenues were open to women and their path along them, therefore, fills an important part of the story of absorption.

The war period for the refugees divides itself best into two phases. The first is mostly covered by domestics and came to a close with the demise of internment. In the second phase, gender actually became a more influential variable. This is because, as they returned from internment, the male refugees “did what from the beginning they had so earnestly wished to do, namely to play their part in the war effort. By January 1941, 4,610 had been enrolled in the Pioneer Corps” from which they were often transferred to other services and fighting units in Britain and abroad.³² Back at home, however, dull jobs remained the lot for most German-Jewish women, even if they were accepted into the Women’s Voluntary Service (WVS). As Friedel Hallgarten, who had been one of five women in a class of five hundred to qualify in law, back in Germany, recalled: “I applied to the WVS and after some consideration they took me in, but not as a full member. . . . They ran a canteen for bombed out Londoners, women and children, who were living in the village. And once a week I went there cleaning vegetables, washing up and at the end I was made permanent cashier because I never lost the money.”³³

Now the world’s leading ceramic artist, Lucie Rie’s war experience was also fairly representative of, if not more exciting than, that of the majority of German-Jewish female refugees. She, too, was grateful, and so anxious to show her loyalty to her adoptive country. When she tried to join a local course to train officers in how to deal with the population in the event of a poison gas attack, she was, however,

³⁰ IWM, refugee tape 003816/05. With regard to this, Marion Kaplan is, however, sceptical. She has written, in correspondence with me, that “an ‘ordinary housewife’ had only one servant and so *could* still do everything that needed doing; she could be educated and still do housework”.

³¹ *Behind the Lines. Gender and the Two World Wars*, edited by Margaret Randolph Higonnet, Jane Jensen, Sonya Michel and Margaret Collins Weitz, New Haven–London 1987, p. 4 and *passim*.

³² Josephs, *op. cit.* p. 105.

³³ IWM, refugee tape 004494/04.

turned away because she was foreign. Distressed, she became a fire-watcher instead, and was issued with an axe and stirrup-pump, but remembers that she was not actually sure how to use it. Lucie later worked in a button factory in Soho, but one day, after German bombers had produced a direct hit, all she found left of the Bimini factory was her apron, on its peg, on a solitary wall. After that, Lucie played her part in the war effort at the optical industries' factory of Hilger and Watts in Camden Town, waiting for the day when the government would let her reopen her ceramics "factory" in Albion Mews. This did not happen, though, until the end of 1945.³⁴

For so many German-Jewish women, then, their contribution to the English war effort consisted mainly of knitting: often on behalf of the Red Cross, especially for the Air Force. Eva Figes remembers how the local women tried to copy her mother's continental style of knitting, adding that: "There is no doubt about it, had the outcome of the war depended primarily on the nation's knitting effort, Germany would certainly have won."³⁵ More seriously, though, the image from 1943 onwards, of her mother working hard and her father away in the Army, made a lasting impression on Figes. "Only now, looking back, I can begin to think what that lonely war, with the whole family gone, must have been like for her. She had begun to adapt to our new circumstances. Trained as a dressmaker because her family considered commercial art too risky a profession without something practical to fall back on, she fell back on it now." Still, "It must have been a hard year for her, quite alone in that small flat, husband and children away [at school], the strain of heavy bombing at nights."³⁶

Here, I feel sure, Eva Figes is speaking on behalf of many, if not most, of the German-Jewish women in war-time England. Although she has subsequently experienced motherhood herself, coping alone, and knows how easily unhappiness and anxiety can build up to the point of explosion; "I also know that during those six years, my mother was coping alone, with stresses which my generation has not had to face."³⁷

Since, furthermore, so many German-Jewish women were only able to find jobs in war-time England because English women had been mobilised elsewhere for the war effort, peace offered for only too many no solution, but rather more acute problems. This point indeed forms one of the main themes in the second and third parts of Judith Kerr's semi-autobiographical trilogy. In *The Other Way Round*, the reversal of dependency, with the increasingly evident vulnerability of the mother, is brought out most fully by the news that Anna's mother will lose even her third-rate secretarial job to someone coming out of the Women's Land Army: "once everyone comes out of the Forces it'll be even more difficult for her to find a job than before... It doesn't sound as though the peace would be much help to them."³⁸

On the contrary, with peace, middle-aged parents, both mothers and fathers, never lost their strong sense of being refugees. Many women had, however, to

³⁴ Tony Birks, *Lucie Rie*, London 1987, *passim*.

³⁵ Eva Figes, *Little Eden. A Child at War*, London-Boston 1978, p. 32.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 129-130.

³⁸ Judith Kerr, *The Other Way Round*, London 1977, p. 218.

carry on alone, for the strains of looking for work took their toll. Many husbands, who were in any case some years older than their wives, died soon after the war. Judith Kerr's mother was one such widow. In *A Small Person Far Away*, the children have grown up. They belong in England, whereas their mother has returned to Germany, to work with the Americans there. Memories of war-time hardships coalesce with post-war feelings of impotency and a personal crisis, together provoking Anna's mother to try and commit suicide. Anna's mother's overriding complaint is that even though she had such a dreadful war experience; "It was the most awful time of my life", at least then she was needed; whereas now she is no longer needed by anyone. Judith Kerr does not, however, allow her fictional mother to win the reader's unadulterated sympathy. She has one other German-Jewish female refugee, who has also returned to work with the Americans in Germany, say: "I know what happened to the Jews who stayed behind. They had a bad time . . . [and] it seems to me your mother is lucky because at least she can choose for herself if she wants to live or die."³⁹

VI

The Holocaust does, therefore, cast its hideous shadow, infusing the story of German-Jewish (female) refugees with an overhanging sense of tragedy as well as a sense of perspective, which encourages more positive thinking. It is interesting, though, how it is this negative push that has proved so decisive in shaping the work of so many German-Jewish female artists, rather than the more positive pull of their German-Jewish cultural heritage.

In common parlance, this negative force might be referred to as "survivor guilt". Eva Figes is certainly affected by this: "I am rather like a war veteran with a piece of shrapnel buried in my flesh." It is, moreover, this which separates Figes from other English writers. For the English, so Figes feels, did not have the same Second World War experience as the rest of Europe: "they do not see the brute which lurks beneath the human skin", and this is strongly reflected in the English novel. Whereas English authors believe that the post-Second World War world is no different from the pre-war world, Figes considers herself "a European survivor, wrestling with a different reality". And, it is this past reality which stimulates Figes to write: "I used to think that one could outgrow the past, exorcise it through art, but some spectres can and perhaps should never be laid for good."⁴⁰

Perhaps the spokeswoman for all German-Jewish female refugees and their experiences in England is, however, Karen Gershon. Unfortunately, for want of more space, it is not possible to give here an overview which might do justice to the vast mesh of complicated emotions expressed in her poetry and prose. It would, however, be most worthwhile to highlight her major concerns, and they are exile, bereavement, guilt, atonement and renewal. The need and search for a home, and a feeling of belonging, is indeed a constant throughout her writings. She has even adopted her father's Hebrew name "Gershon" which she herself has emphasised:

³⁹ Judith Kerr, *A Small Person Far Away*, Glasgow 1978, pp. 132 and 179.

⁴⁰ Eva Figes, 'The Long Passage to Little England', in *Observer*, 11th June 1978, p. 29.

"I should not wish there to be any doubt that I am a Jew and... I was not born in this country. My parents were liberal, assimilated Jews; as a child I saw my grandfather keeping orthodox observances and the memory of them means much to me. My parents died during the war in concentration camps... Here are my emotional roots, out of which my writing grows in justification of my survival. I must commemorate my parents and all Jews and all refugees because I believe that life has conditioned me to this purpose."⁴¹

Perhaps not surprisingly, much of Gershon's literary commemoration strongly accords with Jewish conventional forms. A strong sense of historical precedent, set against a sense of having surpassed that historical reality, disturbs her poetry. This placing of events on a Jewish continuum whilst, at the same time, destroying that Jewish continuum lies at the heart of traditional responses to catastrophe in Jewish liturgy and literature.⁴² This is strongly brought out in her *Haggadah* poem, 'The Children's Exodus':

"When we went out of Germany
carrying six million lives
that was Jewish history
but each child was one refugee
we unlike the Egyptian slaves
were exiled individually
and each in desolation
created his own wilderness",

but,

"the exiled Jew in me was old
and thoughts of death appalled me less
than knowledge of my loneliness".⁴³

Significantly too, Gershon identifies, on a more personal level, with the female figures of Jewish biblical history. Since almost all Jewish writers of the "Hebraic tradition" have been male – most renowned among the moderns is, probably, Elie Wiesel – Karen Gershon's poetry is particularly special. Rather than comparing and contrasting herself to Isaac, offered up for sacrifice, Gershon sees herself as an Esther or a Ruth, since:

"I too have chosen to belong
where people see me as a stranger;
I think of Ruth in Bethlehem".⁴⁴

Perhaps even more expressly Jewish is Karen Gershon's determined effort to fight against hatred, so as not to let herself surrender to hopeless despair. In her poem, 'Kaddish', this resoluteness comes across most decisively:

"I will not curse mankind because
men have made concentration camps

⁴¹ Karen Gershon, 'A Stranger in a Strange Land', in *The Jewish Quarterly* (Winter 1959/1960), pp. 11–11.

⁴² See, especially, David G. Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse. Responses to Catastrophe in Modern Jewish Culture*, Cambridge, Mass. 1984.

⁴³ Karen Gershon, *Selected Poems*, London 1966, p. 26.

⁴⁴ Karen Gershon, *Coming from Babylon. 24 Poems*, London 1979, p. 19.

a grief like mine is only stilled
by the inborn need to celebrate".⁴⁵

VII

Refugee status and the presence, if not burden, of the Holocaust not only shaped the life and work of German-Jewish female cultural figures in England but had a similarly potent effect on German-Jewish female educators and psychoanalysts. Expediency certainly played its part here: the more fortunate amongst these women émigrés, probably those who arrived before 1938, seized the opportunity to become teachers of the German language. This was an obvious answer to one very practical problem of their employment predicament; a solution often resorted to during both centuries by German women and, of course, by other minority groups.

But there was far more to this. One could even claim that a sense of special mission inspired German-Jewish women into the areas of education and psychology. As Judith Grunfeld recognised when documenting her Shefford epic in *The Story of a Jewish School Community in Evacuation, 1939–1945*: "Every child released from the inferno and saved for the future was a kind of miracle of destiny."⁴⁶

Perhaps, however, there can be no better example of how the danger of Hitler informed an education project in England with the urgency of a rescue mission than the case of the Bunce Court School, with its organising leaders, the three sisters, Anna, Paula and Bertha Essinger. No doubt about it, the primary concern at Bunce Court, a school literally transplanted from Germany to England, was the necessity to save lives.⁴⁷

Dr. Hilde Lion was another German Jew who, after losing her position, in 1934, as principal of the *Akademie für soziale Frauenarbeit* in Berlin, came to England, where she founded the Stootley Rough School, which catered mainly for refugee children. Hundreds of boys and girls from Germany, Austria, and some from Poland, not only received a well-rounded education, but, more importantly, they found a place of refuge and even a home.⁴⁸

Alice Goldberger, with her team of German-Jewish women, and aided by Anna Freud, was, similarly, to continue her work in special education after the war, when she helped child survivors from the concentration camps learn what it meant to live in a free world, and what it meant to be really and constantly loved.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Gershon, *Selected Poems*, *op. cit.*, p. 20. See also, Karen Gershon, *The Bread of Exile*, London 1985; *The Fifth Generation*, London 1987; and *We Came as Children. A Collective Autobiography of Refugees*, edited by Karen Gershon, London 1966.

⁴⁶ Judith Grunfeld, *Shefford. The Story of a Jewish School Community in Evacuation, 1939–1945*, London 1980, p. 6.

⁴⁷ An obituary of Anna Essinger appeared in *AJR Information*, July 1960, p. 10. See also an 80th birthday tribute to her in *AJR Information*, September 1959, p. 7. For reference to the Bunce Court School, see chap. 6 of Josephs, *op. cit.*

⁴⁸ *AJR Information*, March 1955, p. 5; and May 1963, p. 13; see also, "Since Then..." *Letters from Former Stootley Roughians*, Boston 1971.

⁴⁹ "Like a life-sustaining river, Alice courses through these lives, here a fundamental source, powerful and wide, there a narrow contributor stream deep underground, a constant presence through which to strengthen or against which to define." Sarah Moskovitz, *Love despite Hate. Child Survivors of the Holocaust and their Adult Lives*, New York 1983, p. 223; see also, 'An Appreciation of Alice Goldberger', in *The Path. The United Synagogue Magazine* (Rosh Hashanah 1986), p. 33.

VIII

Closely connected to all this, is the area of social and communal work, where one finds developed the most striking display of a parallel structure, through which endeavours pursued prior to emigration were continued and maintained, and yet, which, at the same time, represented a response to a new and emerging exigency. Although, of the organisations to evolve, the Association of Jewish Refugees provided an apparatus most fully and obviously designed to mirror and absorb previous activities, as well as being equipped to cater for the new demands of changing circumstances, there were others. Some women could, without too much difficulty, just transfer their involvement from, for example, the Youth *Aliyah* Movement or from the Women's *Mizrachi* Association in Germany to their British equivalents. Allegiance to such a movement did not, of course, preclude an involvement in the AJR.

Some communal activists did, of course, work on a more personal level, from their homes, in addition to, or instead of, from within an organisation. This is especially true of German-Jewish women who had emigrated to England before 1933; after all, very few others would have been in the position to offer their home to refugees. Mrs. Hedwig Ettinghausen, who came to this country in 1919, was thus able to save many lives by securing visas for people and by making her house a kind of temporary shelter.⁵⁰

Another German-Jewish woman whose hospitality in England became legendary was Mrs. Anna Schwab. From as early as the outbreak of the First World War, when a swarm of refugees came from Belgium and other countries invaded by the German army, Mrs. Schwab gave her best bed away to a newly arrived Belgian family in grave distress. Continuing throughout the Second World War, her son, Walter, has recalled how, "she *still* provided a home and meeting-place for hundreds of those who were seeking to build a new life on England's hospitable shores". In addition to this, Mrs. Schwab gave active support to the rescue endeavours of the Central British Fund and the Jewish Refugees Committee.⁵¹

In the case of Mrs. Johanna Selig-Simmons, her club activities grew directly out of her domestic hospitality. Being in a more privileged position than most, by virtue of the fact that she had moved to Birmingham before the First World War, Mrs. Simmons, after 1933, was determined to devote the rest of her life to saving others, by making her home open to refugees. As the number of refugees needing help rapidly increased, however, Hanna Simmons had to find a centre where they could all meet and discuss in comfort their situation and receive sympathetic aid to meet their problems. The result was a Birmingham Jewish Refugee Club and it was only appropriate that Simmons should become the Club's chairwoman.⁵²

Even more direct and frequent was the path which led from involvement in the Jewish feminist movement, back in Germany, to social work under the umbrella of the Association of Jewish Refugees, in Britain. This was, indeed, a logical develop-

⁵⁰ *AJR Information*, March 1966, p. 15.

⁵¹ 'In Memoriam - Mrs. Anna Schwab', in *AJR Information*, May 1963, p. 9; 'Tribute to Anna Schwab', in *AJR Information*, September 1955, p. 9; November 1957, p. 8.

⁵² Josephs, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-8, 43.

ment. From having focused their attention outside the sphere of their own community in Germany, where Eastern European immigrants had attracted their services, to looking inward and caring for themselves, as immigrants, was not a radical step to take. It was, however, imperative. As Kushner has pointed out, it was because the National Union of Domestic Workers refused from the beginning to accept foreign domestic workers as members that it was left to the refugees, through their own clubs, to organise resistance to their conditions of work.⁵³ However, perhaps the most important condition for which the AJR catered was that of loneliness. For so many domestic workers, the AJR especially with its artistic programmes and friendly atmosphere provided a welcome change and chance to make contact with fellow refugees and their shared cultural past.

At least one instance is even recorded in the *AJR Information* of an attempt made to revive the *Frauenbund* in England. In July 1947, the death of Paula Massauer was reported. She had come from Frankfurt a. Main where she had been one of the leading figures of the *Jüdischer Frauenbund* (JFB) and a true follower of Bertha Pappenheim whose great work she continued. "In London, after the war, she had just begun to rebuild the *Frauenbund*, when her death intervened."⁵⁴

Far more uniformly common as a way of helping refugees was the direct path from JFB to AJR. Countless women took this path, including even the last chairwoman of the *Jüdischer Frauenbund*, Ottilie Schoenewald. During the war years, Mrs. Schoenewald was active in the AJR in Cambridge, where she then lived.⁵⁵ There can, however, be no better way of demonstrating the close links between the German-Jewish feminist movement and the AJR than by re-living the opening, in 1966, of the communal centre at the AJR which was fittingly called "Hannah Karminski House". Hannah Karminski was the National Secretary of the *Jüdischer Frauenbund* before its dissolution and a leading Jewish social worker who voluntarily stayed in Germany and perished at the hands of the Nazis.

At the opening meeting, Mrs. Margaret Jacoby, the then co-chair of the AJR club, who had, together with Hannah Karminski, been responsible for organising the immigration of Jewish women and girls as domestics into this country, said;

"We who were fortunate enough to work with Hannah Karminski knew her greatness of mind and her deep devotion to the Jewish cause, which led to the bitter end. I hope and wish with all my heart that in this house there will always prevail the spirit and spell of Hannah Karminski."⁵⁶

IX

Alongside the forward-marching, progressive and often assertive side of so many of these German-Jewish women, conventional and hierarchical gender relations were maintained, if not reinforced. German-Jewish women, on the whole, expanded rather than challenged the female, and in particular, the "mother's" role.

⁵³ Kushner, 'Asylum or Servitude?', *loc. cit.*, p. 14.

⁵⁴ *AJR Information*, July 1947, p. 54.

⁵⁵ "Birthday Tributes. Ottilie Schoenewald 75', in *AJR Information*, February 1959, p. 11; obituary, July 1961, p. 14.

⁵⁶ *AJR Information*, January 1966, p. 8.

As Marion Kaplan has written of the Jewish feminist movement in Germany: "Women simply stepped from their role as housewife and mother to that of social housewife (household manager, administrator of rest homes, social worker) and social mother (kindergarten teacher, nursery school director)."⁵⁷ This could serve as an equally fitting comment on German-Jewish women in England.

This double helix is reflected in the outlook and priorities of the "big" personalities. Bertha Pappenheim, in Germany, pressed, on the one hand, for equal educational, social and career opportunities, whilst on the other hand, she believed in the sacredness of the family and insisted that every women should fulfil her obligations as a wife and mother.⁵⁸ Frida Mond, a more practical example in England (Pappenheim did not marry), never allowed her intellectual interests to deflect her from the duties of a housewife and mother. The former always remained secondary.⁵⁹

It has already been hinted how, in the literary consciousness of German-Jewish female artists, particular attention has been accorded to the maternal figure. This is certainly true of artist Else Meidner. Especially in her early work she shows a pre-occupation with death which is symbolised as a skeleton snatching a child from the arms of a mother.⁶⁰ The mother is indeed the term of reference *par excellence* around which Karen Gershon too draws her definitions. "Mankind is like a comet with a tail of ruined mothers with accusing eyes", is from her poem, 'Moses' Mother' and, arguably, presents her most powerfully poignant and memorable image.⁶¹ Similarly, violinist Ilse Joseph has emphasised that she tells her own story in *Playing for Peace. A Survivor's Mission*, "out of a conviction that if one Jewish mother who mourns her children can clearly speak forgiveness, and work for [that] reconciliation, so can others..."⁶²

On another level, perhaps more practical, marital status often proved the decisive factor in typical German-Jewish female experiences in this country. For the wife whose husband was interned, whether or not she would visit him often depended on whether there were children for her to look after.⁶³ Similarly, the ability to go out and earn a living was restricted for those who had children in need of care and attention. "I remember that cry of a mother", at Bloomsbury House, Gabriele Tergit recalls, "'For God's sake, hurry. I have a small boy at home. I don't know what will happen to him.'"⁶⁴

The quite remarkable commitment shown to family problems and children by so many German-Jewish educators, social workers and psychiatrists often, in part, took the form of surrogate motherhood. Mrs. Lily Pincus, co-founder of the Family

⁵⁷ Kaplan, *op. cit.*, p. 188.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁵⁹ Cohen, *op. cit.*, pp. 166, 234.

⁶⁰ 'Else Meidner. An Appreciation', by Judith Japha, in *Jewish Chronicle*, 4th December 1953, p. 22; see also, 'Portrait of a Painter - Else Meidner', in *AJR Information*, November 1953, p. 6, and also *AJR Information*, November 1947, p. 7; *AJR Information*, February 1953, p. 6; *AJR Information*, February 1956, p. 5; *AJR Information*, December 1959, p. 9; *AJR Information*, February 1962, p. 10.

⁶¹ Gershon, *Coming from Babylon*, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

⁶² Ilse Joseph, *Playing for Peace. A Survivor's Mission*, Lewes 1986, p. 81.

⁶³ IWM, refugee tape 004494/04: "No, I never tried [to visit him in internment]. My place was with the children and he wouldn't have liked me to do anything about this."

⁶⁴ Tergit, 'How they resettled', *loc. cit.*, p. 63.

Discussion Bureau in 1948 (which later became known as the Institute of Marital Studies), "quickly made a great impact on the social work profession in this country" by her "use of a psychodynamic understanding of interactive processes".⁶⁵

Even more renowned was, of course, Anna Freud as the creator of psychoanalysis for children. In this and other respects, Freud only superficially stands apart from, and is difficult to integrate amongst, the rest of German-Jewish women. (Her name does after all "bring to mind Anna O., pseudonym for Bertha Pappenheim, who is considered the actual inventor of the talking cure", and thus neatly completes our circle.)⁶⁶ And one can but agree with Freud's most recent biographer's concluding remark: "Although Anna Freud was honoured like no other emigrant she remains a symbol of a hard fate that is at once Austrian, German, psychoanalytic, and Jewish."⁶⁷

Perhaps, however, there can be no better testament to the power of motherhood than that given by Judith Grunfeld in her recounting of the Shefford educational epic. "The great power of motherhood", so she wrote, "which is international and knows of no race or boundaries started to work. The mothers who kept their homes bright and cheerful throughout the grim days of peril, who had their sons and husbands fighting in the war, extended their motherly love and care to these little evacuees who had lost the security of their homes."⁶⁸ Whilst the experiences and achievements of these women speak, therefore, of a certain universality which goes beyond religion, nationality and culture, they also point towards the ways in which women's experiences, style, and points of reference differ from those of men.

⁶⁵ From an obituary in *The Times*, 22nd October 1981.

⁶⁶ Uwe Henrik Peters, *Anna Freud. A Life Dedicated to Children*, London 1985, p. 4.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 249.

⁶⁸ Grunfeld, *Shefford*, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

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