

Wiener Library News

March 2004

Number 44

Losers, weepers

Each time the Library receives a new deposit for its document collection, we are filled with a sense of excitement and expectation, particularly when it arrives in its original case or folder, apparently undisturbed for the last 60 years. The feeling is all the more acute when the collection has been discovered, by chance, having been dumped in a skip, knowing that it could so easily have been lost forever.

Then the thought occurs ... how many other collections of original documents may have been thrown out? Documents are often discarded as a result of a house clearance when heirless owners have passed away, or because the descendants could neither understand nor appreciate the significance of the material. The following examples of recent acquisitions serve to remind us of what we might have missed.

In July 2003, someone came to the Wiener Library with two sets of pocket diaries, which he had found in a skip close to his home in Kentish Town, London, some five years previously. He had kept them because he had found them intriguing, and subsequently forgot about them only to re-discover them after a clear-out. One set of diaries chronicles the life of Adolf Neumann, former director and part-owner of the Frankfurt-based, German-Jewish literary publishing firm, Rütten & Loening, and covers the period 1928-1938. The other set belonged to Margot Cahn, his lover, whom he met in June 1933 and covers the period 1935-1949. Entries in the diaries include references to their meetings, literary and musical events, and numerous poems, cryptic notes, pressed flowers and photographs. We learn from the diaries that Margot was in Great Britain in 1949 and Adolf was in Norway in 1943, although nothing is known of their subsequent fates. The diaries provide us with a fascinating insight into almost 20 years of 'everyday' life during this extraordinary period historically, which would almost certainly have been lost had the new owner just thrown them away.

And, more recently, thanks to the inquisitive nature of Kat Hübschmann, our Senior Librarian, another collection of original documents comprising some 19 boxes was discovered languishing in a skip close to her home. They are the papers of a German-Jewish family who escaped to this country before the war. They consist of large amounts of family correspondence covering the period from the First



No. 4 Battery of the Bavarian Field Artillery, Erlangen, Bavaria, April 1914. Ernst Levy is standing second from the right. Nineteen boxes of his papers were recently retrieved from a skip.

World War to the late 1940s; hundreds of photographs, many from the 19th century; papers from the family business – a timber and veneer manufacturer in Berlin – and documents in relation to numerous restitution claims. The deceased, like his father who was responsible for most of the documents, had been a life-long hoarder, apparently with a keen interest in the family history. When he died no-one was left to take up the baton, and the collection was about to be lost forever – mere chance alerted us to its origins and whereabouts.

A number of other items have been found by chance during office clear-outs – resulting in jewels for the Wiener Library. For example, a register containing information about Kindertransport children who had been placed in the Bournemouth area, was recently discovered in the local Citizens Advice Bureau. Only because someone recognised the importance of the material did we receive this. So, if you are clearing out documents and papers, please think of the Wiener Library, and whether the papers you are finally about to get rid of may have historical importance and interest. We are always happy to come and have a look at papers you may be discarding – we don't want to hear about skips after they have been taken away!

All collections that have been rescued for posterity will be catalogued and made available to students of the period in due course.

Moving on

Georgia Vossou

Georgia Vossou who left at the end of January, took over from our first conservator in September 2001. During her time here she almost completed the work set out in the Heritage Lottery application. Georgia has overseen the re-boxing of most of the collection, including microfilms, and the installation of UV filters and blinds in the windows and light fittings. Georgia also undertook the first ever preservation survey of the book collection, using software from the National Preservation Office.

Georgia very much enjoyed working with the NADFAS volunteers who clean and repair pamphlets every Monday. We are glad that she will still be coming in to continue supervising preservation projects. Otherwise, she will be busy researching her PhD about the environmental conditions of paper collections in the Middle East. We wish her all the best ...

Wiener Library News

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Published by the Institute of
Contemporary history and the Wiener
Library Ltd (London). Registered with
the Charity Commissioners No 313015
ISSN 123 456 7890 X
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Periodical project

Five and a half years ago the Wiener Library began the retrospective cataloguing of books and pamphlets onto computer. Despite computer troubles this project has benefited the Library enormously. Not only has the electronic catalogue significantly enhanced the accessibility of our holdings, it has also been an opportunity to revise and update our classification, identify missing items, and improve storage of pamphlets. The project, financed by the Heritage Lottery Fund, is coming to a conclusion at the end of this year, and now we want to do the same for our periodical section.

The Wiener Library possesses one of the foremost collections of 20th century German-Jewish periodicals available anywhere in the world. The collection covers all subjects of interest to the Library, focusing on German-Jewish periodicals and Nazi periodicals. Unique to this collection is the number of Jewish exile publications from the Second World War and post-War years, as well as historic and modern antisemitic far-right titles. In total, the Library's periodical collection numbers approximately 3,000 titles, including 200 current subscriptions.

We propose to hire a librarian to catalogue retrospectively the whole collection onto the computer, indexing individual title runs as far as possible. This would greatly enhance the accessibility of our holdings which may currently only be searched by title. Eventually we would publish the catalogue on our website, as we intend to do with our book catalogue this year. The project proposal also includes a thorough preservation survey which would identify titles to be microfilmed and in need of conservation treatment. This is particularly important because many of the items we hold in paper form from the 1930s and 1940s are printed on inferior paper and deteriorating steadily.

Altogether the proposed costs amount to just over £43,000. We have started applying for money from various funds including the Claims Conference. Depending on the success of our applications we hope to start the project towards the end of this year.

Meanwhile Janek Peter, our Action Reconciliation Service for Peace volunteer has started to box up periodicals in acid-free boxes to protect them from further damage. Last year we also added to our holdings and bought 33 microfilm reels of Jewish Displaced Persons Camp periodicals which are held at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York.



Re-boxing of the periodicals in acid-free paper – before (left) and after ...

Library profile



In the first of a new series to introduce those who work at the Library professionally, we are profiling the Director, Ben Barkow.

Ben Barkow was born in Berlin but grew up for the most part in Britain, his family having moved here in the early 1960s. His parents had friends in the community of Jewish refugees from Germany and he had early contact with those who had suffered Nazi persecution.

In the school he attended in North London he found antisemitism prevalent among some groups of pupils – *Jew-boy* was a pretty standard school-boy insult which was applied to anyone thought to be mean, bookish or in any way an outsider. “Confronting this as a young German boy with a powerful sense of horror at what had been done by Germans in the war, made a deep and disturbing impact on me.”

Ben studied at Middlesex Polytechnic, where he took a degree in humanities, including the history of ideas. He went on to study the history and philosophy of science and medicine at University College London. After this he spent four years from 1983 at the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine. In particular he worked with the Institute's Director, Bill Bynum, and Roy Porter, a historian of remarkable range and output: “Working for Bill and Roy was a wonderful experience and taught me an enormous amount about the nature of historical thinking.” At around this time

he also became aware of the Library for the first time: “I was beginning to feel more and more interested in the whole question of Germany's history during the war and what my family experienced. As a result my interest in medical history faded rather and I began to look for a way to engage professionally with the history of the Holocaust.”

In 1987 Ben left the Wellcome Institute and combined freelance writing and editorial work with work at the Library. In 1996 he was asked by the Director, David Cesarani, to take responsibility for the photo archive, which meant becoming a full-time member of the staff. “I was really delighted with this – I had wanted to come on board fully for some time. That said, I found working with these images one of the most difficult things I have done, because they record such appalling and shocking acts.” At the same time he was closely involved with the introduction of automated cataloguing to the Library and the project to improve the conservation status of the collections and convert the card catalogue to computerised records.

When David Cesarani left the Library in 2000 Ben was asked to become Acting Director and a year later was confirmed in the post of Director.

As Director he has worked to increase the amount of intellectual collaboration with others. This has produced a close partnership with the Leo Baeck Institute, close relations with the Hamburg-based Institute for Social Research and the founding of a European Network for the Study of Historical and Present Day Antisemitism.

“For the future, I'd like to see more of this kind of co-operation and joint project work. And of course I never lose sight of the Library's overriding challenge – to find new permanent accommodation and increase its support-base. There is a great deal to do but I'm confident that I'll reach my goal and that the Library will be in a position to make an outstanding contribution to the scholarly life of this country.”

Visitors

Tours of the Library

At least once a month, special interest groups visit the Wiener Library to find out about our unique collection and the work and the history of the Library. We are always very pleased to show groups round, as this enables us to disseminate our work and activities to a much wider audience.

During the visit, we explain in detail the history of the Library, including problems and challenges we face, and then embark on a tour of the Reading Room, the Photo Archive and the basement. Groups are given the opportunity to view some of our most valuable and important books and documents, including the Nuremberg papers, early editions of *Der Stürmer*, *Kristallnacht* eyewitness testimonies, the Nazi Black Book and the *Juden raus* (Jews Out!) board game.

One of the most interesting aspects of the tours is the variety of groups we have visiting the Library. For example, since the beginning of this year we have had a large group of Information Studies students from Northumbria University; half a dozen members of Finchley Reform Synagogue visiting in the evening, undeterred by a flurry of snow that brought the rest of London to a standstill; and a group from the Jewish Genealogical Society. The basement, atmospherically crammed full of books, periodicals and boxes always impresses visitors, who generally leave determined to pass on information about the Library and our holdings. Sometimes, the tour inspires people to become involved in voluntary work at the Library, or results in us receiving books and documents that have been lying around, waiting for a good home.

The tours are free, although donations are always accepted, and we are especially keen to encourage groups from Jewish organisations and synagogues.

Research update

Dr. Peter Melichar is the first Wiener Library/Leo Baeck Institute Research Fellow, a position created to further the study of antisemitism in the 20th century. The Fellowship is supported by the Thank-Offering to Britain Fund of the British Academy. Peter's project is entitled *Anti-Semitism and Power: the political, economic and cultural elite in Austria 1933-1955 and its relation to Jewry*. After six months research, Peter writes:

My research focuses on a sample group of representatives of the Austrian cultural, political, administrative and economic elite in the 1920s and 1930s, highlighting their social positions and struggle for power.

An important aspect of the research is the question of the role of antisemitism (which, in Austria, has Catholic and German nationalist roots) within the framework of social practice in these groups. It is therefore not only a question of what they were writing or saying, but also what they were doing at the time.

The research is not confined to declared antisemites. It is also relevant to examine the friendships, social connections, participation in circles, organisations and associations (many of which excluded Jews by so-called 'Arierparagraphen'), as well as the employment of Jews by entrepreneurs and those who co-operated or had business relationships with Jewish companies.

My research takes place both in London and in Austrian archives and libraries. In London I am looking for published documents, such as diaries, correspondence, novels, essays and pamphlets, as well as non-fiction and scientific literature.

There are several fundamental questions to address, such as what function did antisemitism have within the establishment of social positions and social distinctions, or, more generally, in the struggle for power? And emerging from this question several other questions arise, most notably, what is antisemitism, how exactly does it work and what tools are used? The table illustrates examples of those studied.

Name	Position	Quotation
Othmar Spann	Sociologist, University of Vienna	Jews are a "spent nation" ("ausgelaugtes Volk")
Heimito v. Doderer	Journalist, writer	"All social communication has been, and continues to be, dominated by the Jewish element"
Robert Musil	Journalist, writer	"Of all the people closest to me more than half were Jewish"
Hans v. Hammerstein	Head of district administration	About Dr. Egon Wertheimer: "a Communist inspired literary Hebrew", "refugee Jews ... and all sorts of dubious elements" ("zweifelhafte Elemente")
Alois Hudal	Bishop in Rome	"The influence of the Jews, given the size of their population, was enormous and often truly disastrous"
Josef Nadler	German specialist, University of Vienna	"In the satirical magazine the Jews created their single most horrible tool with which to destroy the very fabric of the German people"

We publish an edited version of Professor Peter Homans' lecture delivered at the Wiener Library conference 'The Ability to Mourn' on 25 January 2004. The following ideas are drawn from the author's book, Symbolic Loss: The Ambiguity of Mourning and Memory at Century's End (University Press of Virginia, 2000).

Mourning and mourning practices have changed considerably over historical time. Most notably, there has been a progressive decline or "shrinking" of them, starting with the beginnings of modernity in the 16th century, and continuing up to the second half of the 20th century, using the Holocaust and the end of the Second World War as markers for the end of the modern era and the beginning of the post-modern period. It is this decline and its consequences that I wish to refer to.

Freud's writing on mourning has become the modern view of mourning. His psychological description of mourning is the one taken most for granted in every discussion of mourning. His view represents "the ability to mourn" and yet, by the same token, Freud does not, and cannot, speak of mourning before the modern period, and he cannot speak of it beyond his own time.

No life without loss

Freud also taught us to realise that loss – and for Freud loss and mourning are inseparable – was at the heart of all experience, all life; that there is no life without loss. So, loss is the very essence of a psychological view of the person. What we today call human development is built up around a series of losses and recoveries from loss.

Shortly after he finished his paper on mourning, he wrote a second paper, in which he pointed out that we mourn, not only the loss of other persons, but also the loss of ideas and ideals. If our country loses a war, then we are likely to mourn that loss; if we are religious, and we lose our faith, or ideals, if we become

The Ability to Mourn

A Short Historical Sketch of Mourning Practices

disillusioned or disappointed, we are likely to mourn this loss, which is not another person but, instead, an abstraction, a symbol of an attachment to a reality which no longer exists.

The tame death

As we look into the past, of the West, at least, we see what our historians call "the tame death". This is the long, sweeping past throughout which mourning practices do not change. What did the tame death look like?

The dying man knew he was dying because death was not an event at the end of life; rather, death was an essential part of life. Typically, the dying man was in charge, in the company of family, friends and clergy, and the ability to mourn was a very present and active shared reality. The community bore the burden of the loss as well as the emotional pain. Symbols and rituals served as a "container" for the loss. Most important of all, though, was the social structure of the community in which the death and mourning occurred. Sociologists have struggled to describe such communities, which I refer to as "a common culture".

The basic reference and source of support was not family, or class, or occupation, but the society as a whole, which in turn was grounded in the pervasive supporting presence and authority of religious faith and practices. In sum, the tame death "tamed", that is, "consoled", making loss and death not only bearable, but even meaningful, from what might otherwise have been intolerable chaos and agony.

What I refer to as "the decline of mourning practices" is, simply, the disintegration of the tame death over a period of several centuries and the resulting shrinking of community-wide

social attachments. This decline is one specific aspect of a far more general phenomenon usually referred to as "modernisation", or "development," or "secularisation". With historical changes, social experience once shared by everyone became split into public and private, and this removed mourning practices from the public sector, and gradually they became more private. The burden of mourning became more and more the responsibility of the individual.

Grief and mourning

Many thoughtful people use the terms "grief" and "mourning" interchangeably but, strictly speaking, they are not the same. Grief refers to "the feelings of sorrow, anger, guilt and confusion which occur when we experience the loss of an attachment to a loved other person". On the other hand, mourning refers to "the culturally constructed social response to the loss of an individual". Grief is a painful emotion that is, so to speak, looking for a "cure." Mourning is a ritual that, so to speak, "heals" the pain of grief.

Modern view

In conclusion, I think there are at least four ways in which the modern view is now undergoing change in relation to mourning.

Firstly, "the inability to mourn" – a term developed by the German psychoanalysts, Alexander and Margaret Mitscherlich, who argued that Germans idealised and loved their leaders; then, they had to confront and believe Hitler's crimes and their own complicity with them. The ensuing sense of loss was so great and the need to come to terms with the loss so painful, that they could not introspect, but instead turned outwards and became interested in manipulating the external world, thereby

creating, instead, the "German economic miracle".

The second contemporary theme is often called the "History/Memory" problem: the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs demonstrated that people wrote the history of the past from the point of view of their own living present. People do not write history "objectively", although we think we do. It "feels" objective to us. We "read" the past in the light of the present.

The third post-modern variation on the theme of loss and mourning is the tension or clash between the traditional monument and the very recent counter-monument. Whereas the traditional monument consoles or heals, and the modern monument remembers a loved and lost person, the post-modern counter-monument forces its viewers to take upon themselves the burden of remembering, that is, the burden of their own mourning and monuments.

Recovering the ability to mourn

The fourth change brings me to what I call "symbolic loss". This brings us closer than any of the other variations to the essence of loss and mourning. For our period, at least, I think the greatest loss is a symbolic one. It is the loss of the past, of a sense of attachment to the past, a sense of belonging to a tradition. This is what history has taken away from those who have become modern, this has been the price, so to speak, of modernity. Modernity is not the destruction of the past, rather it is "the inability to mourn" the loss of the past, of a tradition. It is the denial of an attachment to the past. And with the realisation that this is so, there is a recovery of the ability to mourn.

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Conference

The refugee problem and the problems of refugees

Historical and contemporary perspectives on refugee movements and the institutions that respond to them

22-23 MARCH 2004

The British Academy, London SW1

Co-sponsored by:

**The British Academy
Birkbeck, University of London
Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences, and Humanities and
The Wiener Library**

Speakers include:

**B. S. Chimni
Aristide Zolberg
Gil Loescher
Bernard Wasserstein
Graeme Rodgers
Liza Schuster and many others**

Refugees are a growing presence in the contemporary world. The number of refugees has almost tripled over less than two decades, from 8.5 million in 1985 to 21 million in 2000. As well as being an urgent contemporary concern, refugees and the agencies created to assist or control them have histories. In the 20th century, two world wars and the settlements that followed them have produced large refugee movements. Since 1945 decolonisation and nation

(continued on page 7)

Images from the Archives

Jewish religious life before, during and after the Holocaust

"When crises occur, one searches the depths of one's memory to discover some vestige of the past, not the past of the individual, faltering and ephemeral, but rather that of the community, which, though left behind, nonetheless represents that which is permanent and lasting."

Saul Friedländer recalling his first family celebration of Hanukkah, France 1941. Quoted in "Holocaust Memories, Historians' Memoirs" in *History and Memory*, Popkin, J. D. (2003).



Purim celebration in a synagogue in Berlin 1935.



Purim celebration, Leipzig 1930.



Seder in a Jewish family, Berlin 1937.



The Shofar is again heard in Berlin in the first Jewish religious service since 1938.



Father and child in JRU camp, Eschwege, postwar Germany.



After liberation in Warsaw 1946: Chief Rabbi J. Herzog is handed a blood soaked Torah.



Children's Seder in Salonika, April 1947.

Conference

(continued from page 6)

building, poverty, war and environmental crises have produced further massive refugee flows in the third world.

This conference will generate exchange between historical and contemporary perspectives on refugee movements and the institutions that responded to them. It will also bring together historians, social scientists and legal scholars and will encourage discussion across disciplinary boundaries.

Full conference programme, including registration details and booking form visit www.crassh.cam.ac.uk or telephone 01223 766886.

Book evening

The German Money

10 MARCH 2004 AT 7PM

In association with Jewish Book Week

The Wiener Library

LEV RAPHAEL

Introduced by Julia Pascal

US author Lev Raphael will be speaking about his most recent book *The German Money*, introduced by playwright and director Julia Pascal. The book has achieved critical acclaim since its publication, and is a true and powerful tale of money, sibling rivalry and guilt, based on a controversial inheritance of German reparation money by the son of a survivor.

For thcoming events

Leo Baeck Institute / Wiener Library Lectures 2004

9 MARCH 2004

CILLY KUGELMANN, Jewish Museum,
Berlin

LIKE A BRIDGE OVER TROUBLED WATER –
THE JEWISH MUSEUM, BERLIN, BETWEEN
TRADITIONAL AND COMMERCIAL
CHALLENGES

In the past decade, museums have been changing from highly academic research institutions with a permanent display of their collections to exhibition venues that try to attract a broader audience. History museums have moved from exhibiting objects of daily use in home and professional life, to interpreting the meaning of historical time. At the intersection of these developments, the newly founded Jewish museums in Germany are making an historical statement about post-war history, and at the same time trying to teach Judaism within a non-Jewish social environment.

27 APRIL 2004

PROFESSOR ALISTAIR DAVIDSON,
Swinburne University, Melbourne
HUMAN RIGHTS, HISTORY AND THE
"SPARROW'S EYE VIEW": IN HOMAGE TO
NOBERTO BOBBIO

Human rights had a history long before the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). Why and for what did human beings struggle in that history? What should we remember from that struggle and why does it matter? The lecture will suggest that it was always a struggle against the "memory of recent tyranny". Over time it became a fight to establish a "sparrow's eye" view of justice against rules of law that had become monstrous.

11 MAY 2004

DR. NICHOLAS BERG, Simon Dubnow
Institute, Leipzig
WEST GERMAN HISTORIANS AND THE
HOLOCAUST: RESEARCH AND MEMORY

29 JUNE 2004

PROFESSOR SIGRID WEIGEL,
Technical University and
Zentrum für Literaturforschung, Berlin
WALTER BENJAMIN'S CRITIQUE OF
POLITICAL THEOLOGY

7 DECEMBER 2004

PROFESSOR CARLO GINZBURG,
University of California, Los Angeles
NATURAL RIGHTS AND THEIR
AMBIGUITIES: AN HISTORICAL APPROACH

All lectures start at 7pm. Admission free.

Please telephone/email the Administrative Co-ordinator to register
The Wiener Library, 4 Devonshire Street, London W1W 5BH
Tel 020 7636 7247 Email: info@wienerlibrary.co.uk

Jewish Museum Berlin, Garden of Exile © Jewish Museum Berlin. Picture: Jens Ziehe.

