Talking with Images: Using Private Photographs from The Imperial War Museums’ Photograph Archive to Explore the Experiences and Intergenerational Memories of Holocaust Victims, Survivors and Their Families

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Author's Declaration

I declare that the research contained within this thesis, unless otherwise formally indicated within the text, is the original work of the author. The thesis has not been previously submitted to this or any other university for a degree, and does not incorporate any material already submitted for a degree.

Alice Tofts, 2 November 2022

Transcription and Notation

Wherever possible I have retained the original ordering and style of the speaker, which extends to an attempt to render informal language precisely ('kinda' for 'kind of', for instance). An ellipsis in the transcript signifies a brief pause in the formulation of a sentence. An ellipsis in square brackets signifies an excision made by me after transcription, generally for reasons of clarity. Occasionally, brackets will be used within transcripts to include non-verbal cues (such as laughter) or contextual information.

Abstract

This thesis examines photographs from private collections of Holocaust survivors which were copied and displayed by Imperial War Museums (IWM) in the period from the mid-1990s to 2021. It explores the collections within, and between the families of Holocaust survivors, IWM's Photograph Archive and IWM's two permanent exhibitions: The Holocaust Exhibition and The Holocaust Galleries, which opened in 2000 and 2021 respectively. It responds to growing interest in pertinent fields of academic research in studying private collections of photographs to further understand Jewish experiences and memories of life prior to, during and following the Holocaust. It responds to three main concerns related to the study and use of private photographs. The first is that private photographs are a problematic source in historical and biographical research, the second that they appear as 'banal' and stylised reflections on the world and the third, how do private photographs help connect or engender empathy in those who did not experience the Holocaust with those who did.

The first four chapters each focus on one Holocaust survivor and their private collection. Each chapter examines individual and familial memory and, the family's public engagement with memorial cultures and IWM. They employ a transgenerational approach to understand how different generations understand, construct, and then communicate the past through private photographs, testimony, photo narratives and testimony. The first chapter focuses on the collection of Ruth Locke's childhood in Dachau, Germany. The second chapter examines the collection of Esther Brunstein who grew up in Łódź, Poland. The third focuses on that of Lea Goodman from Kraków, Poland. The fourth chapter examines Jan Imich's collection who also grew up in Kraków. Although these four chapters highlight very different experiences and memories, they all emphasise that private photographs' meanings can be fluid, opaque, surprising and sometimes paradoxical. The fifth chapter focuses on IWM's Holocaust Galleries and the ways that curators have collected and

displayed private photographs and testimonies. By doing so it highlights the opportunities, challenges and limitations of transforming familial memory into a museum archive and exhibition. This thesis emphasises the complexity of using private photographs as historical sources and museum objects and, in doing so, encourages rather than deters, others from investigating this rich and under-studied visual source.

Keywords: Imperial War Museums; Holocaust; private photographs; communicative memory; cultural memory; transgenerational memory; museum studies

Acknowledgements

A reflection on a piece of work that has spanned five years is an interesting endeavour, no less so because what once seemed an insurmountable task is now something that is now drifting into the past. As I gaze back, the entire endeavour becomes a detached curiosity but always a witness to the fact that the greatest challenges can produce the greatest of rewards. The feelings of pride, relief and even loathing are all compounded by what Lea Goodman warned me against, the 'attraction of the morbid', in the sense that a feeling of self-satisfaction is only acquired through personal pain.

Working on a PhD has been at times a lonely experience but in no way does that mean it was a solitary enterprise. It is fundamentally a collaborative doctoral programme, but the collaborative nature far exceeds that of the relationship between researcher, cultural institution, and university. What this PhD process has taught me, and it is definitely more a process than an output, is the necessity of reaching out for and then accepting help and guidance. This process of learning and subsequent completion of this phd would not have been possible without a mighty team of individuals who I would now like to thank.

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My research has focused on familial networks, and this research certainly owes itself to my family. I feel privileged to be able to draw on your support whenever I need. Mum and Dad, thank you for your unconditional love and support. Having three older brothers used to feel like a curse but it seems they aren't so bad after all. Ed and Emma, thank you for letting me 'hang' around at yours. Ed our lunches in the 'big boy city' offered a fun break from the dark corners of libraries. Alex and Steph, thanks for looking after me when I felt I had nowhere else to go. Your hospitality will always be appreciated. Will, thank you for always being at the other end of the phone, and for being my biggest cheerleader. I am really glad that Granny's remark that 'you will love each other one day' came

true. And not to forget my nephew Laurie and nieces Lucy and Hannah, whose little smiles, cuteness and unique characters have been a source of light and have often brought me out of dark slumbers.

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Abbreviations and Definitions

Content Team	The team of curators who developed the 2021 The Holocaust Galleries
HEPO	Holocaust Exhibition Project Office (the team who developed IWMs 2000 Holocaust Exhibition)
HET	Holocaust Education Trust
PEL	Public Engagement and Learning at IWM
The (2000) Exhibition	The Holocaust Exhibition which opened in 2000
The (2021) Galleries	The Holocaust Galleries which opened in 2021
USHMM	United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Introduction

This thesis focuses on photographs from private collections of Holocaust survivors which were copied and displayed by Imperial War Museums (IWM) in the period from the mid-1990s to 2021. I examine these photographs in three areas of enquiry. Firstly, through oral history interviews with family members, I focus on the relationship between private photographs and testimony in the way that survivors, their children and grandchildren make sense of the past. Secondly, I explore how Holocaust survivors and their families have produced, preserved and arranged collections of private photographs from the period spanning the pre-Second World War years to the post-war era. Thirdly, I examine how IWM curators have worked with survivors, their families and their personal photographs to represent Jewish experiences in The Holocaust Exhibition and later in The Holocaust Galleries.

The archival dimension of my research is a core element in the collaborative doctoral programme (CDP) in which I am enrolled. In 2017, IWM initiated this research project as part of an AHRC-funded CDP with the University of Nottingham. IWM’s intention was for a PhD student to investigate their collection of private photographs copied or loaned from Holocaust survivors, and to broaden our understanding of these photographs within the context of the Holocaust, Jewish history and IWM. It is important to note that the terms ‘collection’ and ‘collecting’ do not necessarily relate to a formal body of objects or a process of object acquisition into IWM's Photograph Archive, but to a fluid and informal accumulation of photographs. I will specify the changing meanings of these two terms throughout this thesis.

Private photographs in IWM’s Photograph Archive and exhibitions have been accumulated over the past twenty years during two distinct periods relating to the development of The Holocaust Exhibition and The Holocaust Galleries. These opened in 2000 and 2021 respectively. In the mid-1990s, the team

developing The Holocaust Exhibition (hereafter the 2000 Exhibition/the Exhibition), the Holocaust Exhibition Project Office (hereafter HEPO), began collecting survivors' testimonies and artefacts to exhibit in the Exhibition. The first concerted effort to collect survivors' photographs began in the late 1990s. This involved members of HEPO meeting with the survivors with whom the team had already established a relationship, with the intention of borrowing their photographs to make copies to display, a process which has come to be known as 'loan-to-copy'. Only a small proportion of these photographs were displayed in the 2000 Exhibition, others were used in the museum's Holocaust Education Programme. The second iteration of collecting began in 2016 in the development of The Holocaust Galleries (hereafter the 2021 Galleries or the Galleries). The Content Team, who developed the 2021 Galleries, had a different approach to photographs from that of HEPO. They loaned significantly more photographs from private collections or museum/memorial archives with the intention of displaying them in the Galleries, but without adding copies to the Photograph Archive. This process has been called 'loan-to-display'.

Integrating Testimonies and Private Photographs into Holocaust Scholarship and Museums

IWM's growing interest in the use of survivors' voices and private photographs to represent the Holocaust is part of a wider trend in Holocaust historiography and museology to integrate and (even sometimes prioritise) the experiences of victims within the larger narrative of the Holocaust.[1] The Israeli historian Saul

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[1] The Holocaust and survivor testimonies made a slow arrival into the broad academic canon in the 1990s, before which German and Anglo-Saxon historians of the Final Solution had focused above all on what happened and why. The historian Raul Hilberg dismissed victims' personal narratives as irrelevant and unreliable while the English historian Gerald Reitlinger avoided them on the basis of his view that survivors were 'seldom educated men': Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1961); Gerald Reitlinger, *The Final Solution: The Attempt to Exterminate the Jews of Europe 1939–1945* (London: Vallentine Mitchell,

Friedländer's seminal two-volume history of *Nazi Germany and the Jews* published in 1997 and 1998 has been identified as a turning point in Holocaust historiography.[2] He included anecdotes, details and quotations pulled from diaries and letters, to shift between victim and perpetrator perspectives within a broadly chronological structure. Juxtaposing different levels of reality, he argued, created 'a sense of estrangement counteracting our tendency to "domesticate" that particular past and blunt its impact by means of seamless explanations and standardized renditions'.[3] That sense of estrangement, he argues, was essential in reflecting the 'perception of the hapless victims of the (Nazi) regime' during the 1930s 'of a reality both absurd and ominous'.[4] This juxtaposition of different levels of reality through looking at different sources is particularly useful here. An examining of different realities gained from photographs, testimonies and other ego-documents is key to this research.

Friedlander's work has encouraged scholars to seek an integrated and nuanced exploration of how European Jews experienced the Holocaust and how those who survived it made sense of and remembered these events.[5] Friedländer

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1953), 531. The new variety of perspectives including Jewish testimonies came about partly as a consequence of the end of the Cold War in 1991 and the opening of Polish and USSR archives together with an interest in new themes explored in the Claude Lanzmann's 1985 film *Shoah* and the erection of museum and commemoration sites such as Yad Vashem museum, the Berlin memorial and the regeneration of the Bergen-Belsen site: Christian Wiese and Paul Betts eds*, Years of Persecution, Years of Extermination: Saul Friedlander and the Future of Holocaust Studies* (London: Continuum Books, 2010).

[2] Saul Friedländer*, Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Persecution 1933-1939* (London: Harper Collins 1997); Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Extermination 1939-1945* (London: Harper Collins 1998).

[3] Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Persecution 1933-1939,* 6.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Alon Confino praised Friedländer's work for having the 'right balance of tone, narrative, and interpretation': 'Narrative Form and Historical Sensation: On Saul Friedländer's The Years of Extermination', *History and Theory* 48, no.3 (2009): 200; Amos Goldberg referred to Friedländer's volumes as the 'ultimate scholarly Holocaust textbook': 'The Victim's Voice and Melodramatic Aesthetics in History,' *History and Theory* 48 (2009): 221; Dominick LaCapra, 'Historical and Literary

integrated voices from 'below' into his macro-historical account. Others have applied this multi-perspective approach to write a micro-history of the Holocaust.[6] By doing so, they point to more localised or individualised experiences of Nazi rule and occupation, while maintaining the balance between analysis and detail. I shall build on these two approaches with the intention of balancing different perspectives from different generations to shed light on individual and familial Jewish experiences of Nazi rule and occupation and war-time or early post-war emigration to the UK.

Recording, sharing and examining survivors' testimonies has been revered for understanding Jewish experiences.[7] The proliferation of archives and memorials recording testimonies in the 1990s resulted in what Annette Wieviorka refers to as 'The Era of Witness'.[8] This refers to a new memorial

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Approaches to The 'Final Solution': Saul Friedländer And Jonathan Littell', *History And Theory* 50, no. 1 (2011): 71–97. See also Jeffrey Herf, 'The Whole Horror', *New Republic* (October 9, 2007); Karl Schleunes, 'The Years of Extermination: Book Review', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 22 (2008): 340-342.

[6] Jan Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001); Christopher Browning, *Remembering Survival: Inside a Nazi Slave-Labor Camp* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2011); Omer Bartov, *Anatomy of a Genocide: The Life and Death of a Town Called Buczacz* (New York, Simon and Shuster, 2018); Jan Grabowski's study of Dąbrowa Tarnowska county: *Hunt for the Jews: Betrayal and Murder in German- Occupied Poland* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013); for a reflection on the use of micro-history of the Holocaust in east Europe see Tomasz Frydel, 'The Ongoing Challenge of Producing an Integrated Microhistory of the Holocaust in East Central Europe', *Journal of Genocide Research* 20, no.4 (2018): 624-631.

[7] Tony Kushner, 'Oral History at the Extremes of Human Experience: Holocaust Testimony in a Museum Setting', *Oral History* 29, no.2 (2001): 83-94; Andrew Hoskins, 'Signs of the Holocaust: Exhibiting Memory in a Mediated Age', *Media Culture and Society* 25, no.1 (2003): 7-22.

[8] Annette Wieviorka explains that although testimonies can be found dating from the war years, it was firstly the trial and execution in Israel of the high-ranking Nazi official of Adolf Eichmann in 1961 and then the dramatic increase in numbers of publications, films and exhibitions which changed the nature of Holocaust pedagogy and transmission through testimonies, *The Era of Witness* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006); Noah Shenker provides an examination of the following archives of testimony: Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, the United States

culture, where special faculties of witnessing are ascribed to survivors, transforming – as Wieworka sees it -- the witness into an apostle.[9] In this process, the *Zeitzeugen* (the 'living witnesses') are thought to facilitate empathetic memory through their authenticity.[10] A case in point was the 'Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation' set up in 1994 by Steven Spielberg in order 'to conserve history as it is transmitted to us by those who lived through it and who managed to survive'. Spielberg added: 'it is essential that we see their faces, hear their voices, and understand that they are ordinary people.'[11] By 1995, it had collected 20,000 testimonies.[12] Testimonies from this archive and others were exposed to larger audiences through documentaries and films such as *Shoah* (1985) by Claude Lanzmann, *The Last Days* (1998) and *Schindler's List* by Steven Spielberg, and *Auschwitz* (2005) by Lawrence Rees.

Photographs have been treated differently in the quest to understand Jewish experiences. The use of photographs as cultural, historical and museological tools to represent the Holocaust has its own history depending on the four broad categories into which they fit. The first category is that of official and unofficial photographs taken by Nazis, their collaborators and by German soldiers. Included in this category is what some may call collectively 'atrocity photographs'.[13] The second category comprises photographs taken by Allied

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Holocaust Memorial Museum and the USC Shoah Foundation: *Reframing Holocaust Testimony* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2015).

[9] Wieviorka, *The Era of Witness,* 136; Steffi De Jong, *The Witness as Object: Video Testimony in Memorial Museums* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2018), 9-10.

[10] Bettina Hoffman and Ursula Reuter ed. *Translated Memories: Transgenerational Perspectives on the Holocaust* (London: Lexington Books, 2020), 2.

[11] Steven Spielberg, in *Liberation* April 20, 1995 cited in Wieviorka, *The Era of Witness*, 110.

[12] Wieviorka, *The Era of Witness,* 110-112.

[13] Carol Zemel describes images of atrocity as 'pictures that show humiliation, suffering, torture, and death': 'Holocaust Photography and the Challenge of the Visual', in *A Companion to the Holocaust*, eds., Simone Gigliotti and Hilary Earl, 503-19 (Chichester, John Wiley and Sons, 2020), 504.

soldiers during the liberation of the camps. The third category contains photographs taken by Jews with the intention of creating a record of life in the ghettos and camps. The final category, which the historian of photography Janina Struk describes as the 'surviving collection', comprises photographs from Jews' private collections including studio portraiture, photomontage, social documentary and family photographs.[14] Repeated use in books, exhibitions and films has given iconic status to a small number of images, primarily those capturing life in the ghettos, camps or liberation. In some cases, their availability in the public domain online has led to their commodification.[15] Sybil Milton, writing in the 1990s, commented that historians frequently use photographs as 'decorative embellishments to the printed page.'[16] Bryan Lewis suggests that behind hesitations about the use of photographs as historical sources lies a deeply entrenched anxiety surrounding photographs' reliability, authenticity, their provenance and the denigration of victims. However, Lewis highlights the inconsistency of such concerns. He points out that 'historians accept the many problems and limitations of textual documents and urge in wide-ranging rhetoric the use of every available additional resource yet consistently reject the potential information in historical photographs.'[17]

Displaying photographs of persecution and humiliation is a debated topic. Struk claims that images create a dual response, in that they prompt us to recoil and express disgust while exerting a profound and absorbing fascination.[18] She

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[14] Janina Struk, *Photographing the Holocaust, Interpretations of the Evidence* (London: Routledge, 2004), 8.
[15] Ibid, 205-209.
[16] Sybil Milton, 'Images of the Holocaust, Part II', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 1, no.2 (1986): 194.
[17] Bryan B. Lewis, 'Documentation or Decoration? Uses and Misuses of Photographs in the Historiography of the Holocaust', in *Remembering for the Future: The Holocaust in the Age of Genocide*, Vol 3, eds. John K. Roth, Elisabeth Maxwell, Margot Levy and Wendy Whitworth (New York: Palgrave, 2001): 343.
[18] Struk, *Photographing the Holocaust*, 205, 214.

ponders whether by looking at barbarity we are simply colluding with the perpetrators by memorialising the attempted annihilation of European Jewry.[19] Criticism has penetrated even further to exhibitions displaying images of liberation that are described as being aggressively nationalistic.[20] Visitors to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) enter the exhibition space and are immediately confronted by a blow-up photograph of a heap of corpses at Ohrdruf labour and concentration subcamp of Buchenwald concentration camp in Germany, with American servicemen who had liberated it on 4 April 1945 standing tall over the victims. The British historian Tim Cole argues that these images invite and even demand that visitors share the perspective of American servicemen rather than Jewish victims, thus joining the servicemen as liberators.[21] Other displays move away from these quasi-voyeuristic and nationalistic tendencies by using 'surviving collections' to represent Jewish communities. The 'Tower of Faces' at USHMM is a prime, but not unique exemplar of a museum using significant quantities of photographs taken by and of Jews to illustrate the cultural life of pre-war European Jewry and lament what has been lost.[22]

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[19] Ibid, 215.

[20] Andrea Liss, *Trespassing Through Shadows: Memory, Photography and the Holocaust* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 18; Richard Crownshaw, 'Performing Memory in Holocaust Museums', *Performance Research* 5, no.3 (2000): 18-27; Tim Cole, 'Nativization and Nationalization: A Comparative Landscape Study of Holocaust Museums in Israel, the US and the UK', *Journal of Israeli History* 23, no.1 (2004): 138-141.

[21] Cole, 'Nativization and Nationalization,' 140.

[22] USHMM's Tower of Faces comprises 1032 photographs donated to the museum by Yaffa Eliach, one of the few survivors who came from *Eishishok,* a 900-year-old Shtetl then part of Lithuania, destroyed by the Nazis: Jennifer Hansen-Glucklich 'Poetics of Memory: Aesthetics and Experience of Holocaust Remembrance in Museums', in *Dapim: Studies on the Holocaust*, 30, no.3 (2016): 315-334; Richard Crownshaw, 'Photography and Memory in Holocaust Museums', *Mortality* 12, no.2 (2007): 176-192.

Survivors' testimonies and photographs from private collections are both called upon by historians and museums to represent the Holocaust; the way they are drawn upon however differs considerably. This thesis examines how using testimony and private photographs in conjunction in both research and museum practices can further our understanding of individual and familial Jewish experiences and memories of the Holocaust.

John Berger sees photographs as having two uses: an ideological one 'which treats the positivist evidence of a photograph as if it represented the ultimate and only truth.' And contrastingly, 'a popular but private use, which cherishes a photograph to substantiate a subjective feeling.'[23] These two uses are key to how I approach photographs. Indeed, photographs may evoke subjective and private responses, but they do not exist in a vacuum. Their meanings are constructed through various social, cultural and political networks.[24] Photographic meaning is tied to understanding these networks and how they interact. I borrow the term 'meaning-making' from the social sciences. The term refers to a mental process which makes sense out of the senses or what we might term cognitive vision out of physical vision. This meaning-making is specific to each person and to each moment whilst also maintaining some similarities amongst communities and cultures.[25] Networks and storytelling are also essential components for how individuals and groups create meaning.[26]

The aim here is to critically examine the networks of 'meaning-making' which entwine, enhance and undermine each other. With such insight I hope to better understand the enthusiasm, reservations and limitations that historians,

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[23] John Berger, *Understanding a Photograph* (London: Penguin, 2013), 82.
[24] Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and* Postmemory (London: Harvard University Press, 1997), xvi.
[25] Charles Kurzman, 'Meaning Making', *Anthropological Quarterly* 81, no.1 (2008): 6.
[26] Stefan Bernhard, 'Analysing Meaning-Making in Network Ties – A Qualitative Approach', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 17, no.1 (2018).

educators and curators bring to their engagement with these meanings. My three research questions are as follows:

1. How does photo-elicitation oral history methods complicate how testimony and private photographs are used as biographical and evidential sources in Holocaust scholarship?
2. How does examining the social and material nature of private photographs contribute to the understanding of how Jewish children and their families have made sense of and remembered their lives prior to, during and after the Second World War?
3. What role do photographs play in the transformation of individual, communicative and cultural memory (particularly in relation to IWM) of Jewish life before, during and post Holocaust?

I shall firstly examine some of the theoretical and methodological challenges faced by scholars when dealing with photographs as both positivist evidence and as private objects. I shall then explore the opportunities that these methods present and explain how I expanded upon them to create a fuller account of the role that images play in Jewish experiences and memories of life prior to, during and following the Holocaust.

Private Photographs as a Problematic Source in Historical and Biographical Evidence

Placing victim testimony centre stage in any historical enquiry is to embrace what Tony Kushner calls 'the inherent messiness and almost untameable nature of individual testimony.'[27] As those who have used Holocaust survivors' testimony have shown, it is possible both to acknowledge the sometimes 'unreliable' quality of such accounts and to make fruitful use of them through

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[27] Tony Kushner, 'Saul Friedländer, Holocaust Historiography and the Use of Testimony', in *Years of Persecutions* eds., Wiese and Betts, 67-81, 76.

careful and critical readings underpinned by other forms of evidence.[28] It is certainly the case that cross-referencing testimony with other sources is a tried-and-tested methodology in research, which points to the complexities of memory formation. This research takes such methodology one step further by seeking to understand how integrating photographs into the process of recording testimony further adds to Kushner's 'messiness.'

The integration of photographs in collecting survivors' testimony has developed over time. Early endeavours used photographs as evidence or illustration. For example, the Shoah Foundation tagged photographs and personal artefacts at the end of video testimonies. Commentaries by survivors added little more than cursory statements of the name, place and provenance of each item by the survivor. Noah Shenker argues that such a divorcing of a survivor's narrative from their photographs is symptomatic of the 'assumed evidentiary qualities' of the photographic material.[29] Indeed, the narrative potential of integrating photographs into testimonies is hinted at in The Fortunoff Archive, where witnesses showed documents and photographs during their interview. Such an approach, as Shenker acknowledges, creates opportunities for 'more impromptu moments' to arise within the narrative.[30]

Oral history's use of photographs as subsidiary memory tools was itself reflective of wider oral history practices that tended towards using

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[28] Mark Roseman highlights how the shaping of memory influences the testimony of Marianne Ellenbogen (née Strauss), a German Jew who survived the war in hiding in Nazi Germany: *The Past in Hiding* (London: Allen Lane, 2000); Christopher Browning, reconstructs the experiences of Jewish inmates in Starachowice labour camp through survivors' testimonies whilst identifying the methodological challenges of using testimonies as sources: *Remembering Survival: Inside a Nazi Slave-Labor Camp* (London: W.W Norton & Company, 2010).

[29] Shenker, *Reframing Holocaust Testimony*, 140.

[30] Ibid, 166.

photographs as documents of social history[31] or later as mnemonic devices.[32] Other scholars have pointed to the methodological challenges of looking at photographs in the context of oral history interviews. Marjorie McLellan, the American oral historian, has highlighted the subjective nature of photographs. Her study on Wisconsin rural immigrant life makes it very clear that meaning is to a considerable extent generated by the use that images have in the lives of families.[33]

Despite these sporadic interjections, the lack of reflection and discussion on the systemic use of photographs in oral history has recently motivated some practitioners to tackle more systematically the challenges involved. Alexander Freund and Alistair Thomson's *Oral History and Photography* brings together practitioners who explore alternative uses of photographs within interviews to stimulate different memories.[34] Their approach to photographs as a reflective medium rather than a mere object of investigation has been critical to my research. Their approaches to using photographs as memory triggers informed my research. I have followed the various methods used by these practitioners, such as visual life-story telling, thematic photo review, photo-album review, and anthropological photo-elicitation. My research will also show a sensitivity

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[31] Paul Thompson advised practitioners to look at photographs after the interview took place to discover new traces of material that would not normally be made available in an interview: *Voice of the Past: Oral History (*Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 17. Donald Ritchie advised taking a camera along to oral history interviews to document the interviewee in their living surroundings; *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 100.

[32] Practitioners such as Donald Ritchie and Valerie Yow recommended using photos as memory triggers: Ritchie, *Doing Oral History,* 99; Valerie Raleigh Yow, *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Science* (Walnut Creek: Altamara Press, 2005), 264-265.

[33] Marjorie L McLellan, *Six Generations Here: A Farm Family Remembers*. (Madison State: Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1997).

[34] Alexander Freund and Alistair Thomson, eds. *Oral History and Photography* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

to the way that images can enhance, nuance, distort or mute memories and thus complicate previously recorded testimonies.

More recently, scholars have pointed to the tensions between researchers' expectations upon seeing an image and a closer examination. Alexander Freund and Angela Thiessen found that a photograph of an interviewee on her wedding day was in fact deeply coded, and that the memories that emerged during the interview were not as pleasant as the interviewers had anticipated.[35] The photograph gave the participant an opportunity to share stories of fear on the wedding day and the hardships of married life. It is evident that photographs can be more than mnemonic devices. They can trigger emotional memories far from those anticipated by researchers. It is exactly this unpredictable indexicality of photographs that is most pertinent to my research.

Some researchers have begun exploring incongruities between image and spoken/written text. Marianne Hirsch, a literary scholar, and her husband, Leo Spitzer, a cultural historian, have reflected on the process of Hirsch's mother (Lottie) and father (Carl) donating their family photographs to USHMM.[36] Hirsch and Spitzer comment that a detailed examination of vernacular photos 'can supplement and at times even challenge the written and oral accounts of witnesses and the interpretation of historians and of descendants.'[37] Similar discrepancies were found in Oksana Sarkisova and Olga Shevchenko's research into post-Soviet family photographic archives. They identify different generations within a single family giving a range of meanings to single photographs. Inevitably such variations are explained by the distinct memory

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[35] Freund, Alexander and Angela Thiessen, 'Mary Brockmeyer's Wedding Picture: Exploring the Intersection of Photographs and Oral History Interviews', in *Oral History and Photography,* 27-45.
[36] Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer, 'Incongruous Images: Before, During, and After the Holocaust', *History and Theory* 48, no.4 (2009): 13.
[37] Ibid.

cultures that generations may bring to images. The authors then concluded that such variations 'raise fruitful questions about the entanglement of oral testimonies with visual evidence.'[38] The older generation emphasises the family's Soviet military identity while the younger generation is more attentive to the family's Jewish links to the Holocaust. The potential of a single photograph to evoke a range of emotional responses, different reflections on what it *felt* like, and an assortment of life narratives across a range of subjects is important here. It creates a degree of unpredictability and the need to ask carefully formulated questions about the complex role that photographs have in creating life narratives.

Today, most historians who integrate photographs into oral history acknowledge the subjective nature of photographs and the fluidity of memory that shapes narratives. My thesis seeks systematically to investigate how exactly placing photographs at the centre of oral history interviews can complicate narratives of life prior to, during, and following Nazi rule or occupation. Key here is the ability to compare the survivor testimonies recorded in the late 1990s and early 2000s in the absence of photographs with the content of interviews that I conducted in the early 2020s. I will be asking if the availability of photographs within interviews evokes alternative or even new memories from those shared in the earlier testimonies. I shall also consider how new expressions of feeling or experience compare with what has been said previously.

[38] Oksana Sarkisova and Olga Shevchenko, 'Soviet Heroes and Jewish Victims: One Family's Memories of the Second World war', in *Picturing the Family, Media, Narrative, Memory,* eds. Silke Arnold-de Simine and Joanne Leal, 67-89 (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 82.

Finding Meaning in 'Banal' Snapshots: Looks, Gestures, Performance

Looking closely at private photographs allows us to examine how people in the past performed for the camera. This question is aligned with what W. J. T. Mitchell terms the 'rhetoric of image'. What he means by this was firstly a study of 'what to say about images' should be complemented by a study of 'what images say.'[39] Elizabeth Edwards is correct when she comments that the 'immediacy and intimacy [...] (of photographs) offers truth' and that we are often lured in by this power with an 'expectancy inappropriate to the true nature of the medium'.[40] It is certainly the case that private photographs of victims are widely used to tell the story of the Holocaust. In most instances the aim is to 'humanise' the victims. In this way, photographs are given a power that is often difficult to articulate or challenge. What may be more pressing here is to ask not what makes the people in the photographs 'human' but how the act of photography communicates the particularities of human mentalities, behaviours and practices. Photographs' contribution in doing this, Elizabeth Harvey and Maiken Umbach argue, is more important than 'clarifying facts'.[41] This thesis responds to the suggestions made by the historian Sarah Farmer that 'historians have a role to play in how we understand the "power of images" by showing how historically the visual was made, deployed and received.'[42] What I understand by this is that historians must seek to look beyond what is shown in the image to the behaviours and mentalities which show how the practice of photography functioned in society and culture.

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[39] W. J. T. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 1.

[40] Edwards, *Raw Histories*, 9.

[41] Elizabeth Harvey and Maiken Umbach, 'Introduction: Photography and Twentieth-Century German History', *Central European History* 48 (2015): 287-299.

[42] Sarah Farmer, 'Going Visual: Holocaust Representation and Historical Method'. *American Historical Review* 115, no.1 (2010): 117.

A cursory glance at private photographs, however, might suggest that they are invariably banal in their composition, lacking in visual innovation and populated by individuals adopting stale and predictable poses.[43] These features, as Geoffrey Batchen points out, prevent private photographs from being organised by the principles of photographic history which include innovation, biography, and nationalism.[44] Yet, as Silke Arnold-de Simine points out,

> The deeply personal subject matter and naïve, informal, unstudied aesthetics of snapshots seem to guarantee authenticity and belie the fact that in their conventionality they are conspiring with hegemonic forces in (re)-producing normative (familial) conventions, performed for the camera, in the ritualistic viewing of albums and in the decoration of the home itself.[45]

Others have noticed how visual tropes and pictorial conventions can be drawn upon to 'explore how people imagined themselves and interpreted the world around them'.[46] My research takes its cue from scholars such as Hirsch, Spitzer, Leona Auslander, Geoffrey Batchen, Maiken Umbach, Ofer Ashkenazi who have all turned towards vernacular German-Jewish photos to understand Jewish subjectivities and identities in pre-war Europe. Particularly important here has

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[43] Pierre Bourdieu, Luc Boltanski, Robert Castel, Jean-Claude Chamboredon and Dominique Schnapper, *Photography: A Middle-Brow Art,* trans. Shaun Whiteside (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1990); Deborah Chambers, *Representing the Family* (London: Sage, 2001); Jo Spence, *Beyond the Family Album* (London: Virago, 1986).
[44] Geoffrey Batchen, 'Seeing and Saying – A Response to "Incongruous Images"', *Photography and Historical Interpretation* 48, no.4 (2009): 28.
[45] Arnold-de Simine et al, *Picturing the Family*, 3.
[46] Harvey and et al., 'Introduction'.

been the attempt to understand how Jews responded to growing antisemitism, migration and displacement.[47]

Auslander, Umbach and Ashkenazi all use German Jewish photo albums as their source of enquiry. Their intention is to analyse the burgeoning practice which led pre-Second World War assimilated Jews to meticulously document their experience through the camera.[48] These authors aim is not to 'tell the story' of Jewish individuals, but rather to understand their aspirations and fears under National Socialism, and how they attempted to make sense of their experience in face of rising antisemitism and persecution.

In Auslander's analysis of the Wassermann family albums from three different time periods (1912, 1929, and the early 1930s), she looks at photograph albums in conjunction with written records. She points out the increasing tension in photographic representation of Jewish acculturation in what was fast becoming an aggressively hegemonic national culture.[49] Her intention was to move away from the current orthodoxy of understanding German Jewish life within debates around 'assimilation, acculturation, integration, subcultures, and symbiosis'. It might however be noted that her essay concludes with a modest nod towards Jewish acculturation into modern society, the very terms her analysis had aimed to avoid.[50]

The same anxiety about assimilation and belonging was noticed by Umbach and Sulzener's examination of the German-Jewish Salzmann family's photographic records. They claim that, under the threat of exclusion, the family

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[47] Leora Auslander, 'Reading German Jewry through Vernacular Photography: From the Kaiserreich to the Third Reich', *Central European History* 48, no.3 (2015): 300–34.
[48] Michael Berkowitz, 'Photography as a Jewish Business: From High Theory, to Studio, to Snapshot', *East European Jewish Affairs* 39, no.3 (2009): 389–400.
[49] Auslander, 'Reading German Jewry.'
[50] Ibid, 302.

increasingly asserted its sense of belonging to German culture through the photograph albums.[51] Ashkenazi likewise examined the photo albums of two families created in the late 1930s, decoding a subversive visual language common amongst Jews at the time in response to the undermining of their place in German society.[52] Ashkenazi concludes that the 'private photography of the Jewish home in late 1930s Germany presents an astounding discrepancy between the ordinariness of the images and the exceptional conditions in which they were recorded.'[53]

Umbach and Harvey have further claimed that 'incorporating these widely dispersed private archives more fully into the evidentiary database of Holocaust research therefore allows historians to consider, beyond oral testimony and visual culture, the conscious construction, both in the moment and subsequently, of a collective response to the traumas of persecution and flight.'[54]

The family is a key category of organisation of Jewish private photographs in both public and private archives and in museum displays.[55] I shall therefore draw on some of the key works which examine the role of photographs taken within the family. Hirsch's seminal study of family photographs and memory is key for understanding the meaning-making processes of families. She argues that the function of family photographs is 'integrally tied to the ideology of the

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[51] Maiken Umbach and Scott Sulzener, *Photography, Migration and Identity: A German- Jewish-American Story* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).
[52] Ofer Ashkenazi, 'Ordinary Moments of Demise: Photographs of the Jewish Home in Late 1930s Germany', *Jewish Social Studies* 26, no.3 (2021).
[53] Ibid, 150.
[54] Harvey and Umbach, 'Introduction,' 7.
[55] The 'Room of Families' in the Information Centre at the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, Berlin and many of the displays in IWM's Holocaust Exhibition focused on family case studies.

modern family.'[56] This ideology consists of a cohesive unit held together by family rituals. This 'myth of the family', Hirsch argues, 'dominates lived reality, even though it can exist in conflict with it and can be ruled by different interests. The survival of this myth depends on its narrative and imaginary powers, a power that photographs have a particular capacity to tap'.[57] My thesis examines the meaning of 'family' by considering how oral testimony complicates the ability of photographs to idealise the family. This offers some insight into a wider sense of belonging to those who provide refuge from persecution and to a wider community. On close inspection, photographs have the capacity to disrupt an ideology of a cohesive family unit by exposing domestic fissures, silences, and tension.

Scholarly attention to date has primarily focused on photo albums of German-Jewish individuals and families who emigrated in the late 1930s. My research brings together case studies of both German-Jewish and Polish-Jewish families whose stories of persecution were marked by varied political, social and cultural circumstances. The benefits of this are twofold. Firstly, it broadens the geographical lens through which Jewish family life has been examined. Secondly, the close examination of photographs from four families whose circumstances and responses were quite dissimilar, has given me the opportunity to consider how such a range of experience and background alters how people performed in front of a camera. I will examine if the same concepts of belonging, the home, family, leisure and assimilation to bourgeois culture are captured by the camera by Polish Jews from socio-economic milieus in Kraków and Łódź and ask what these similarities and differences can tell us. By doing so I shall demonstrate the historical value of using private photographs

[56] Hirsch, *Family Frames,* 7.
[57] Ibid, 8.

as visual sources to understand how Jewish children and their parents anticipated and made sense of the extraordinary events around them.

Practices of Private Photographs and Why They Matter

Central to these concerns surrounding the subjective nature of photographs is the treatment of photographs as material and social objects, particularly within the context of the family. Rose's concept of the 'practice' of family photographs is particularly pertinent here. She argues that there are 'specific practices of production, circulation, display and viewing which constitute family photographs'.[58] The anthropologist Elizabeth Edwards's socio-material approach is also useful in drawing attention to photographs as material objects.[59] She employs post-structuralist theory to argue that photographs are active in the creation of meaning in that they inscribe, constitute and suggest pasts.[60] Photographs, she argues, 'have a performativity, an affective tone, a relationship with the viewer [...] As active social agents'.[61] By this she means that photographs' power lie in moments of encounter across systems of power and value. These social interactions involving people and objects are key to structuring visual knowledge. This is particularly important when considering how private photographs 'perform' in moments of encounter between the interviewee and myself, between survivors and their children, between survivors and curators and between IWM and visitors.

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[58] Gillian Rose, *Doing Family Photographs: The Domestic, the Public and the Politics of Sentiment* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 201; Other works I draw on include: Jo Spence and Patricia Holland, *Family Snaps: The Meaning of Domestic Photography* (London: Virago, 1991); Martha Langford, *Suspended Conversations: The Afterlife of Memory in Photographic Albums* (Quebec, Canada: McQuill University Press, 1995).
[59] Elizabeth Edwards, *Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology and Museums* (Oxford: Berg, 2001).
[60] Ibid, 5.
[61] Ibid, 18.

Edwards draws on the anthropologist Daniel Miller's argument to consider both 'how things matter' and 'how things signify'. The former is more concerned with the sentimental associations and the latter a more intellectualised response.[62] Thinking about how photographs *matter* allows us to understand how people have come to relate to photographs, and what they imagine and value about the past. As Rose argues, 'an image has a specific range of qualities as an object, but it is only when someone uses the image in some way that certain of those qualities becomes activated, as it were, and significant.'[63] In a similar vein the Dutch cultural theorist Mieke Bal claims that every object is invested with a specific way of seeing and that we should be asking less 'what does this image show and mean?', and more 'what happens when people look, and what emerges from that act?'[64]

This thesis explores the multiple meanings contained in photographs both as social and material objects. Firstly, I shall note and discuss the social practices in which photos are embedded within a family and community as well as the practices for dissemination, and storytelling that they so frequently kindle. This is what Rose refers to as 'doing photos.'[65] Secondly, I shall consider the material language of photos as they are positioned on an album page or around a room; indeed the practice of creating a photograph album or of decorating a home with family images can itself offer an insight into the historical use where even the size and condition of pictures has the potential to provide some understanding of provenance, history and the value and meaning that they have had for a family. Thirdly, I shall consider the participant's gestures and style

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[62] Daniel Miller, ed., *Material Cultures: Why Some Things Matter* (London: UCL Press, 1998), 3, 11, cited in Elizabeth Edwards, 'Photography and the Material Performance of the Past', *History and Theory* 48, no.4 (2009): 137.
[63] Rose, *Doing Family Photographs*, 20.
[64] Mieke Bal, 'Visual Essentialism and the Object of Visual Culture', *Journal of Visual Culture* 2 (2003): 5-32.
[65] Rose, *Doing Family Photographs.*

of speaking during an interview, most particularly how photos are presented during the interview process. Important here will be the ways that the participants' revealed or narrated sentiments offer clues as to how the meaning and significance of an image has or is being constructed.

Photographs as Vessels for Memory: Individual, Collective, Postmemory and Cultural Memory

Studies of the Holocaust have become preoccupied with memory.[66] Particularly pertinent to this study are the distinctions made in memory studies between individual, collective and cultural memory. The French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs was the first to distinguish between individual memory and collective memory.[67] The two are interrelated but the latter is important for a group identity and is not necessarily dependent on the experience of members of that group, an important point when discussing the majority of visitors to the 2000 Exhibition and 2021 Galleries. The prototype of Halbwachs' theory of collective memory was the family. Halbwachs' work lay the foundation for modern-day cultural-memory studies that began in 1982 with Pierre Nora's 'Lieux de Mémoire'[68] and then with Jan Assmann's distinction between 'communicative memory' and 'cultural memory'.[69]

Communicative memory is more or less based on Halbwachs' collective memory in that both involve members of a group who converse about the past and who then form an identity as part of that group.[70] Jan Assmann adds that

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[66] Hofmann et al., *Translated Memories,* 3.
[67] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans Lewis Coser (London: Chicago University Press, 1992).
[68] Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire', *Representations,* no.26 (1989).
[69] Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, 'Collective Memory and Cultural Identity', *New German Critique*, no.65 (1995): 125-33.
[70] De Jong, *The Witness as Object*, 13.

a society remembers through mnemonic carriers such as texts, dances, pictures and rituals to affirm its collective identity.[71] With this in mind, how can private photographs act as mnemonic carriers to affirm a collective identity? Barbie Zelizer notes how collective memories 'allow for the fabrication, rearrangement, elaboration, and omission of details about the past'.[72] Similar to Mark Roseman's observation about individual memory, Zelizer notes this is precisely the reason for studying it. Stone makes an important distinction between collective memory and history that I am careful not to blur in thinking about private photographs. Building on Zelizer's argument, Stone asserts the usefulness of studying collective memory. Studying the selective and ideological drives of collective memory, Stone argues, provides an opportunity to discover how society operates, and how 'narratives and stories about the past structure societies in the present'.[73] Stone builds on Alon Confino and Peter Fritzsche to argue that a methodology is needed which conceptualises collective memory and its processes as 'embedded in social networks.'[74]

Cultural memory denotes ways in which human relationships with the past are actively constructed by social institutions.[75] I approach museums as one of cultural memory's most important institutions,[76] to ask how individual and familial communicative memory is used and mediated by social institutions to construct cultural memory. Since individual memory takes on form within social

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[71] Jan Assmann et al., 'Collective Memory and Cultural Identity,' 129.
[72] Barbie Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget*: *Holocaust Memory Through the Camera's Eye* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 3.
[73] Dan Stone, 'Beyond the Mnemosyne Institute: The Future of Memory after the Age of Commemoration', in *The Future of Memory*, ed. Richard Crownshaw, 17-37. (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2010), 25.
[74] Alon Confino and Peter Fritzsche, *The Work of Memory: New Directions in the Study of German Society and Culture (Chicago: University of Illinois Press*, 2002), 5, in Stone, 'Beyond the Mnemosyne,' 26.
[75] Aleida Assmann, 'Transformations between History and Memory', *Social Research* 75, no.1 (2008): 55-56.
[76] De Jong, *The Witness as Object,* 14-15.

and cultural frameworks,[77] I shall also highlight in each case study how cultural memory influences individual and familial memory.

Another key concept to memory studies and one that straddles the spaces between individual and collective memory and also individual and cultural memory is that of ‘postmemory.’ That Hirsch’s term ‘postmemory’ appears throughout this thesis is explained by its relevance to private photographs and intergenerational memory transmission. She argues that ‘photographs in their enduring “umbilical” connection to life are precisely the medium connecting first-and-second generation remembrance, memory and postmemory.’[78] Building on her personal experience as a child of two Holocaust survivors, Hirsch coined the term 'postmemory' to identify her thoughts that possessed a texture and quality peculiar to her own recollections but were untraceable to any event in her past. I draw upon this contradictory sense of the familiar and unfamiliar to consider how photographs might stretch, limit, and confirm a second generation's imagination about their parental's memories. I shall also engage with the question as to whether children of survivors differentiate between their own and their parents' recollections and what such a distinction might mean for the transmission of memory when these children act as gate-keepers to the past between families and IWM.

Nina Fischer’s work complements Hirsch’s theory on postmemory but illuminates the limits of both imagination and the inter-generational transmission of memory implicit in Hirsch’s work. Fischer’s use of the term ‘memory work’ is important here for highlighting the *active* creation of the past. For her, memory work is an ‘individual’s conscious, voluntary and methodical

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[77] Harald Welzer, ‘Communicative Memory’, in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, eds. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, 285-300 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 286**.**
[78] Hirsch, *Family Frames*, 23.

interrogation of the past within collective frameworks, predominantly the familial one'.[79] Fischer studies a range of memory nodes such as objects, the body and language that all have mnemonic value, thus creating a link between an earlier familial past. These scholars' treatment of photographs as metaphoric memory 'objects' or 'nodes' is pertinent. I borrow the term 'vessels for our memories' from the historians Thomas Aller and Petra Bopp who used it to describe the private war photographs of a Second World War soldier.[80] Fischer's work is pertinent here to what I shall say about the role of photographs in memory studies. I argue that private photographs are important for conducting memory work and thus the transformation of individual, communicative, and cultural memory due to their potential to both hold and evoke memories. In turn, I argue that memories often differ between generations, evoking and symbolising different meanings depending on an individual or groups connection to events to which the photographs pertain.

Furthermore, this thesis examines how IWM engages with survivors, their family, and their photographs, and hence the role of photographs and testimony in the transformation of individual and collective memory into cultural memory. It questions the fact that IWM does not treat photographs as memory objects despite the evidence and indeed curatorial belief that photographs hold the potential to evoke memories that are culturally valuable. In doing so, it encourages museum practitioners to place private photographs and testimony into an active dialogue with each other as evident of the complexities of witnessing, remembering, and representing the Holocaust.

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[79] Nina Fischer, *Memory Work: The Second Generation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

[80] Thomas Eller, 'Introduction' in Thomas Eller, Petra Bopp, and Willi Rose, eds. *Shadows of War: A German Soldier's Lost Photographs of World War II* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2004).

Situating IWM's Holocaust Exhibition and Collecting of Private Photographs

The 2000 Exhibition marked a sea change in the way IWM represented the past. Prior to 2000, IWM had represented the Holocaust in several smaller-scale exhibitions, notably a special exhibition in 1991 on the liberation of Bergen Belsen and a small photographic exhibition in 1993 on the Warsaw Ghetto.[81] The 2000 Exhibition Project Director, Suzanne Bardgett, described how by creating a 'major permanent narrative historical exhibition on the Holocaust', it aimed to create an 'objective' and 'truthful' exhibition to educate the public rather than simply commemorate the Holocaust.[82] The role that private photographs and survivors' testimony played in achieving this mission differed considerably. In the late 1990s HEPO dedicated two years to collecting objects to display in the Exhibition. A part of this included the HEPO team making contact with Holocaust survivors to learn more about them and look at their artefacts and photographs. From the outset, the team realised the potency of their photographs. Bardgett recalled:

> The first time I saw a group photograph of a family that had been largely wiped out and realising that family photographs were really important. [...] All of us were very aware of the potency of photographs. So, we got used to them [photograph albums) documenting you know the nature of

[81] Suzanne Bardgett, 'The Depiction of the Holocaust at the Imperial War Museum since 1961', in *After Eichmann: Collective Memory and the Holocaust since 1961*, ed. David Cesarani, 146-156 (Oxford: Routledge, 2005), 152-53.
[82] Suzanne Bardgett, 'The Genesis and Development of the Imperial War Museum's Holocaust Exhibition Project, *The Journal of Holocaust Education* 7, no.3 (1998): 28, 36.

> the families, life at that time, interesting insights into the social life at that time.[83]

During these visits, the HEPO curators took photographs of the photographs and made notes of survivors' photographs.

The second strand of collecting for display purposes was related to the production of video testimonies. From the early stages of the design process, video testimonies formed a substantial and integrated element of developing the Exhibition.[84] The team decided early on that 'we were going to have this strand of storytelling that would be led by a series of monitors where survivors would be talking about their life under Nazi oppression.'[85] In the 1990s IWM had already begun interviewing Holocaust survivors to add testimonies to the Sound Archive as part of the museum's mission to collect more Holocaust-related material.[86] One of the curators, Alison Murchi, listened to the audio testimonies already made by IWM's Sound Archive to select eighteen individuals whose stories well well-told or 'special for some historical reason'.[87] Drawing on this foundational work, October Films went on to produce films of eighteen survivors talking about their experiences. There was some initial hesitation on the part of the curatorial team on the inclusion of filmed testimony, as the exhibition had a rule of showing only material belonging to

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[83] Ibid.
[84] Bardgett, 'The use of Oral History in the Imperial War Museum's Holocaust Exhibition', *Preserving Survivors' Memories: Digital testimony Collections about Nazi Persecution: History, Education and Media,* ed. Nicolas Apostolopoulos, Michelle Baricelli and Gertrud Koch (Berlin: Stiftung, Erinnerung, Verantwortund und Zukunft, 2016): 141.
[85] Interview with Suzanne Bardgett, Head of Research and Academic Partnerships, IWM, 15 October 2020, London.
[86] Madeline White, 'A Museological Approach to Collecting Oral Histories: A Case Study of the Holocaust Collections at the Imperial War Museum', in *The Holocaust Research Journal* (2019): 146.
[87] Bardgett, 'The Use of Oral History in the Imperial War Museum's Holocaust Exhibition,' 141.

the time – but the producers of the films, Annie Dodds and James Barker, persuaded the team to have monitors *throughout* the exhibition. Moreover, 'it meant an enormous amount to not only the survivors that spoke but to the wider survivor community that their story was told in the exhibition by themselves.'[88] The film producers copied survivors' photographs to appear and disappear on the screen while survivors talked. These testimonies were the first video testimonies to be used in IWM, a reflection of the Exhibition's status as a turning point for the museum.

The second strand of collecting private photographs was conducted by the Holocaust Education Coordinator, Paul Salmons for use as pedagogical/didactic resources for IWM's Education Department. The third strand related to the copying of photographs to be displayed in the Exhibition. Lucy Davies, the personal assistant to Bardgett, was responsible for visiting survivors who were already in contact with the museum, borrowing their photographs to bring to the museum to be scanned. Technological advances later in the development of the Exhibition made it possible to scan photographs. The museum acquired a Picturescanner which enabled the team to loan and copy survivors' photographs more efficiently. The treatment of the photographs from Holocaust survivors' collections was also distinct in the way they retained their private status. At the time, IWM only wanted to acquire photographs which might be sold as images, for example in books. However, this was viewed as an inappropriate request for survivors at the time.[89] Katherine Brady, one of the curators of IWM's Exhibition, explained

> These images were just being given for the museum's use and wouldn't be going into the general collection. Because the

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[88] Interview with Bardgett, 15 October 2020.
[89] Ibid.

> Holocaust Exhibition generally was quite different for the museum. I think it was unusual for the photographic department to have these family photographs as opposed to the sorts of images of people in uniform or going off to war.[90]

Private photographs presented a novel challenge for HEPO since they saw survivors' photographs as different from those donated previously, most notably by war veterans. For the first time, images did not overtly link to war and were rarer remnants of pre-war life. The museum had to change their regular consent forms since private photographs would not always be subject to the same treatment as IWM's other photographs. For example, they were excluded from joining the Photograph Archive and were not sold as images. This ensured that private photographs were not commodified or over circulated, thereby reserving for survivors more control over the use and dissemination of their images.

The limitations on formally collecting photographs into the Photograph Archive meant that they did not go through the usual processes of accessioning and becoming visible on the IWM website. Instead, they occupied a liminal space in the museum, used for display and education purposes but not accessioned as museum objects. Survivors' testimonies on the other hand are catalogued in the Sound Archive and most are available to the public on IWMs online catalogue.

In 2018, during the development of the new Galleries, a curator from the Photograph Department added the original collection of HEPO photographs to the museum's internal collections management software and gave each

[90] Interview with Katherine Brady and Lucy Davies, HEPO team members, Holocaust Exhibition, IWM, 15 April 2021, online.

photograph an individual object number.[91] This was intended to turn the private photographs into a cohesive collection of copies of photographs.[92] During early stage developments for the 2021 Holocaust Galleries, Bardgett was keen to emphasise to James Bulgin, the Content Lead of the new Galleries, that the private photograph collection was, in her words, 'unfinished business'.

Encountering the Photographs, Testimonies and Survivors

In 2017, I began my research in IWM's Photograph Archive to examine the private photographs from Holocaust survivors. From this, I became aware of the repetitive, unique or surprising motifs, content or stylistic features in the photographs. Curatorial notes containing dates and names inscribed on sheets of photocopied photographs gave me hints of how previous curators approached the photographs. However, there was a marked absence of any systematic collection of information or interpretation of the photographs. This gave rise to my initial questions about the provenance and content of these photographs. I then listened to survivors' oral testimonies recorded by IWM. I also consulted other media documenting certain survivors' lives, such as (auto)biographies, blogs and media interviews to situate the photographs in the wider context of someone's life. Through this, I began to interpret the photographs, noting questions that arose, while recognising that any meaning attributed to the photographs might need to be reviewed following oral history interviews. I then selected four individuals on whom to focus my research (for details, see 'structure' section below). I obtained contact details for the interviewees from my IWM supervisor, Rachel Donnelly, or from Bardgett. I either phoned or emailed them to explain my research and arrange the interviews. I gained ethics approval from the University of Nottingham to

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[91] Interview with Helen Mavin, Head of Photograph Archive, IWM, 23 September 2022, online.
[92] Interview with Bardgett, 12 October 2022.

conduct interviews. All interviewees were provided with an information sheet stipulating mine and their requirements and the processes involved in collecting and disseminating the data. Before conducting the interviews, all participants provided written consent to the use of their photographs and data in my research. In addition to the four survivors discussed in this thesis, I interviewed two others: Anita Lasker-Wallfisch and Bea Green. Unfortunately, I did not gain as much information on their photographs as from the other four individuals, and so decided to omit them from my thesis.

Approaching Oral History Interviews

This research has required a multidisciplinary approach. The methodological frameworks employed depends on the area of enquiry and if I am examining photographs as a historical, biographical, memory, or material or memory object. When I conducted oral history interviews with survivors and their families, I used a range of techniques such as photo-elicitation and semi-structured interviews. I drew on feminist methodologies to conduct and analyse these interviews. Kathryn Anderson and Dana Jack's analysis of interview techniques was particularly useful on how to understand language.[93] Following their recommendation, I employed three models of listening. These included attending to participants' *moral language* and their *logic of narrative* and listening 'in stereo.' I have also taken cues from anthropology and sociology that treat the interview as a haptic encounter through which the body can support or challenge the verbal narration. Edwards highlights the performative nature of memories elicited by photographs.[94] By this she means photographs

[93] Kathryn Anderson and Dana C. Jack, 'Learning to Listen: Interview Techniques and Analyses', in *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History, eds.* Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai, 11-26 (London: Routledge, 1991).
[94] Elizabeth Edwards, 'Photographs and the Sound of History', *Visual Anthropology Review* 21 (2008): 27-46.

can evoke memories that elicit a sensory or bodily response, such as tensing, or facial expressions that accompany a memory of a physical sensation. During my interviews, I observed how the interviewee touched and held photographs, which provided clues to the level of intimacy between participant and photograph, the value they placed on photographs, as well as their levels of comfort in navigating the albums and the photographs.

I used qualitative research methods when interviewing professionals who have worked on IWM's two exhibitions. I used structured interviews to investigate curatorial rhetoric and practice of using photographs. My questions were informed by museological research, which explores the numerous factors that contribute to a museum's epistemological and experiential function. Each case study demanded a slightly different methodological approach: the details of these nuances are described in the 'Methodology' subsection of each chapter. For all interviews, I was sensitive to emotions raised during the interviews. Even if these emotions were not present during the event, they are still important in the meaning-making process, and experiencing them can be both affirmative and positive for the narrator.[95] I was mindful that a reflection on the past could be challenging and exploring the emotional significance can be even more so. I therefore asked open questions such as 'how did you feel...?' and 'how did you find...?' rather than pointed questions such as "did you find it difficult?". Gluck suggests that conversations should reflect the 'chaotic and problematic process of two humans' thinking and communicating', producing a richer dialogue. Pauses, stumbling, back-tracking, and other signs of an unordered conversation are a natural part of dialogue. To impede this would be in contradiction to my ambition to understand an individual's ordering and constructing of the past.

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[95] Joanna Bornat, 'Remembering and Reworking Emotions: The Reanalysis of Emotion in an Interview', in *The Oral History Reader*, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, 434-35 (London: Routledge, 2016), 441.

Positionality

My research process was inspired by feminist social sciences methodologies that centralise embodied intersubjectivity and reflectivity.[96] Throughout, I tried to accommodate the participants' emotional and sensory responses during the interview as well as my own embodied reactions. I have attempted to create a reciprocal research alliance between myself and my participants by staying in contact, sharing research, inviting them to talks where I speak and attending presentations that they have given.[97] Since I am an active agent in the meaning-making, I retain the first-person pronoun throughout this thesis.

I recognised the privilege and responsibility of being welcomed into my participants' homes and shown their photographs. As Dori Laub highlights,

> 'as one comes to know the survivor, one really comes to know oneself; and that is no simple task.[98]

Laub's words reverberate with my experience of getting to know survivors and their families. Working intimately with themes of trauma has been challenging and I often felt overwhelmed by the emotions raised within the interview. I was therefore careful to acknowledge and take care of my own emotional responses in the interviews.

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[96] Linda Finlay, '"Reflexive Embodied Empathy": A Phenomenology of Participant-Researcher Intersubjectivity', *The Humanistic Psychologist* 33, no.4 (2005): 271-92.
[97] Kim England, 'Getting Personal : Reflexivity, Positionality, and Feminist Research', *The Professional Geographer* 46, no.1 (1994): 81.
[98] Dori Laub, 'Bearing Witness, Or the Vicissitudes of Witnessing', in *Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature Psychoanalysis, and History,* eds. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub*,* 57-74 (London: Routledge, 1992), 71.

Thesis Structure

This thesis follows a case study design, with four chapters dedicated to four different Holocaust survivors and their collection of photographs. The fifth chapter focuses on the 2021 Galleries. The four individuals are Ruth Locke, Esther Brunstein, Lea Goodman and Jan Imich. The first two had already died at the time of conducting research, so their children became the main point of contact for engaging with the family's collection. This is one reason why I am applying a transgenerational approach. The second motivation arises from my interest in how memory is (going to be) transferred from those of the *Zeitzeugen* to those who were not direct 'living witnesses'. Implicit in this is a focus on the inter-relational as well as the individual, the intersubjective as well as the subjective. Examining the intergenerational transmission of memory and meaning is essential for understanding how individual memory transforms into cultural memory.

I selected these four case studies for several reasons. First, IWM had already established longstanding relationships with these individuals and their families. This provided a foundation from which I established a connection with the families. Second, through their involvement with IWM, they had demonstrated an interest in public engagement, suggesting that they would be more likely to be involved with my project. Third, the variety in these four individuals' stories and their photographs was another factor in selecting them. They investigate different geographical areas, social milieus, and different ages at which the survivor experienced the events in question. I hope that together, these case studies emphasise the heterogeneity of Jewish experiences, and form a vantage point from which I can explore the similarities and specificities of their photographs.

My first case study is Ruth Locke (née Neumeyer), who was born in 1923 and grew up in Dachau, Germany. Ruth and her brother Raimund left Germany for

the UK between December 1938 and early 1940 as part of the Kindertransport. Ruth died in 2012. I interviewed Ruth’s two sons, Tim and Stephen, and studied the blog they produce on their family history. The vastness of their family’s photograph collection and the extensive research two of her sons had conducted were key reasons to study Ruth. As important is the fact that Ruth's story enables me to challenge positivist views of both private photographs and testimony. The levels of dissonance and contradiction across sources highlights the limitations of using one medium alone as both a source and a method for understanding Jewish responses to the Holocaust.

The second chapter takes Esther Brunstein (née Zylberberg) as its case study. Born in 1928, she grew up in Łódź, Poland in what was a tight-knit Jewish socialist environment. Esther died in 2017. I spoke to her daughter Lorna Brunstein, who has undertaken a lot of memory work through her artwork. My concern here is to demonstrate the value of photo-ellicitation methods, particularly for challenging traditional narratives of post-liberation silence and gratitude. I furthermore draw attention to the capacity of private photographs to evoke affiliations beyond the immediate family, in this case to the Bund movement. What appear to be domestic images can be significant attempts to reach out to a wider cultural phenomena beyond the familial.

The third case study focuses on Lea Goodman (Apelzon, formal name Roza Lea), born in 1935 in Kraków, Poland. Lea and her mother escaped to Kežmarok, a town in eastern Slovakia where they were hosted by an ethnic German family with whom they lived until 1946. The youngest of the subjects of the four case studies, Lea’s story provides a unique insight into the way that Jewish children understood and remembered their life in camouflage and the adjustment to post-liberation life. I also interviewed her daughter, Naomi Levy, to investigate how Naomi relates to and memorialises the past using various sources including photographs. Lea and Naomi's varied emotional responses to photographs support the argument that photographs are key sources to

understand the myriad and fluid meanings survivors and their families have ascribed to their past. Photo-elicitation methods across two generations demonstrates the different ways child survivors and their children use photographs to confirm and then communicate their fractured sense of the past. Their varied emotional responses to photographs draws attentions to the complex nature of any photograph both as a witness to historical events and as a tool for making sense of one's past and therefore one's self.

Jan Imich is the focus of the fourth chapter. Born in 1930 in Kraków, Jan was an only child, brought up in an upper-middle class assimilated Jewish family. He was imprisoned in various prisons and concentration camps in Poland before being liberated from Dora subcamp by the US army on 11 April 1945. Jan died in September 2022. I interviewed Jan, his two children and grandchild. Particularly pertinent here was the way that a transgenerational approach reveales the act of sharing and reperforming photographs within a family has a powerful effect of communicating memories that can, and often do differ across generations. This chapter also highlights the potential of photo-elicitation to allow participants to narrate their own distinctive life-stories independently from those revealed purely in photo-albums or oral testimony.

The final chapter focuses on IWM's The Holocaust Galleries. It examines how the curators approached the collection of private photographs as it was in 2017, and applied new ways of working with survivors, their families, and their photographs. It examines how the curators responded to criticism of the previous Exhibition in the treatment of private photographs and testimony. I draw particular attention to the improved status of photographs as objects representing Jewish life whist being mindful that the treatment of photographs as simply historical objects limits the potential to convey the complicated meanings and memories that lurk within them. In this respect Jews, like so many others, use photographs to weave a web of meanings around the past that is by no means straightforward to unravel.

Definitions and Terms

Two terminologies used throughout are worth discussing here: use of the term 'private photographs' and the boundaries of 'Jewishness' as an analytical category. Firstly, I deploy the term 'private photographs' to describe photographs that are part of a family's private collection, regardless of whether they were taken by a family member or capture family members. Freund and Thomson argue, 'it is tricky business to define a photograph as a personal or family photo'. [99] As Freund, Thomson and others show, it is not uncommon for families to reframe other types of photos such as press or propaganda photos as their own. Scholars such as Ashkenazi prefer to use the term 'private' as a subcategory of 'vernacular' photography.[100] He relies on the definition provided by the historian of photography, Clément Chéroux, of vernacular photography as that which is 'utilitarian, domestic or popular'. Chéroux argues that 'private photography' presents scenes that are 'ordinary or mundane, tied to everyday life,' but, unlike other types of 'vernacular, it was not conceived for commercial use.'[101] Taking this into account, the term 'private photographs' will be used throughout the thesis to refer to photographs held in private collections of photographs which may or may not include photographs taken by or for family members but have found their way into family collections.

Secondly, there is an analytical challenge when thinking about the boundaries of Jewishness as an analytical category. Here, I draw on the essay by Auslander who asks what it means to apply German-Jewish categories of analysis to a

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[99] Freund et al, *Oral History and Photography*, 7.
[100] Ashkenazi, 'Ordinary Moments of Demise,' 178.
[101] Clément Chéroux, 'Introducing Werner Kühler', in *Imagining Everyday Life: Engagements with Vernacular Photography*, eds. Brian Wallis, Tina Campt, Marianne Hirsch and Gil Hochberg, 22-32 (Göttingen: The Walther Collection, 2020), 24-25.

family who did not identify as Jewish.[102] This is particularly pertinent to the study of Ruth Locke, who experienced persecution as a Jew based on Nazi definition. In that sense she shared the experiences of other Jews while not herself marked by the cultural practices of Judaism. All four individuals under study had different experiences of cultural and religious Judaism. Indeed, their sense of belonging or identity was also defined by other categories such as political organisations, cultural reform movements and social milieus. By employing a wider definition, I attempted to investigate the experiences and memories of people persecuted by the Nazi regime and its collaborators for their Jewishness, regardless of the relative importance this had played on their self-identity prior to Nazi rule.

[102] Leora Auslander, 'The Boundaries of Jewishness, or When is A Cultural Practice Jewish?', *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 8, no.1 (2009): 47-64.

Chapter One: Ruth Locke's Childhood in Dachau: A Family Photograph Album

Figure 1. First page of Ruth's photograph album. The caption on the left side reads: 'This album was packed in our trunk when we were sent to England in 1939,' IWM 2018-01-03/B.

Introduction

> In the hallway stood a beautiful old peasant cupboard, greeny blue with sheep scenes. Opposite the stairs a door lead (sic) to the large studio with a grand piano and a balcony on the street side of the house. In this room a lot of family life took place. My mother's music and dance classes also took place there, as well as the all-year theatre performances to which about 40 spectators were invited.

The children’s room was in front of you as seen from the hallway entrance, next to the studio, reached through a doorway from there, or through a door from the hallway. From the studio there was access to a darkroom, under the sloping roof of the balcony below, in which my mother developed her photos herself. Then came the garden bedroom from which there was a door, leading out to the veranda. [103]

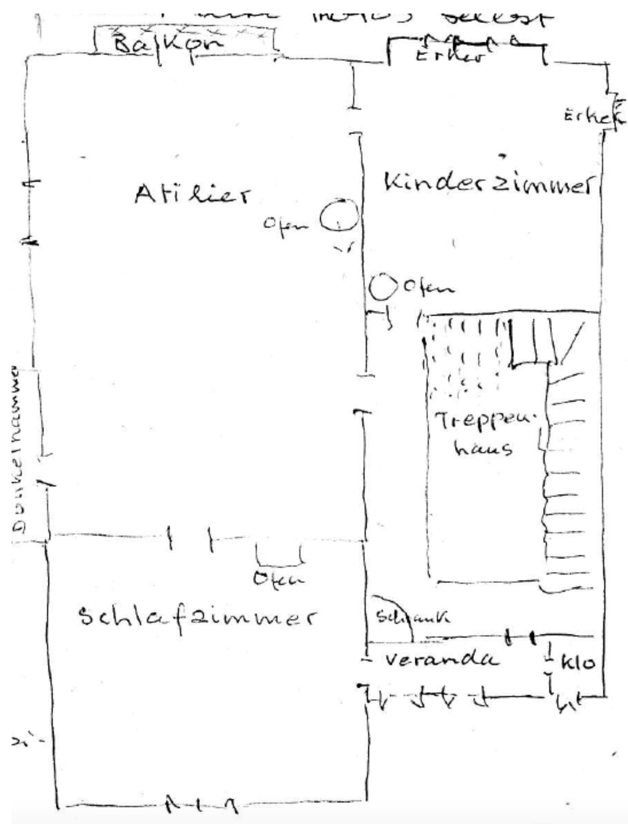

Figure 2. Ruth’s sketched floor plan of one floor of her childhood home in Dachau, 1989, Tim Locke’s blog.

[103] An excerpt of a translated letter written by Ruth in German: Tim Locke, ‘What the Neumeyers' House was like’, *The Ephraims and the Neumeyers* (blog), 17 February 2020, accessed 20 February 2021, https://ephraimneumeyer.wordpress.com/2020/02/17/what-the-neumeyers-house-was-like/.

Above is an extract of a letter written by Ruth to Niels-Rüdiger Schwarz in 1989, the then-current owner of her childhood home in Dachau. In the letter she describes the house as she once knew it. Fifty years later, Ruth could still recall the colours of the rooms and furniture, the shape of the lights and the spider filled bathroom. It is evident that not only was this a house of sophisticated aesthetic taste but also the home of a closely-knit family that was highly cultured and creative.

This rich symbiosis of the arts, creativity, the home, and nature found in the letter was a key theme of the conversations that I had with Ruth's two sons, Tim and Stephen, about their mother's life. The years following the death of their mother in 2012 have been dedicated to their researching and sharing the substantial family archive through a blog and donations to IWM. The brothers have conducted extensive historical research. They have translated and interpreted documents, filled in gaps in the record, traced people and places to create a rich tapestry of the life that Ruth left behind in Germany and the new one she made in England.

I begin this chapter in this way to draw attention to the importance of material and visual culture so evident in the memory work of Ruth's family.[104] The family home and the private space it represents has been used by a number of historians as a frame of analysis to study Jewishness[105] as well as Jewish relations to time and space, particularly within the context of anti-Jewish legislation.[106] The home for Judaism is a private place where orthodoxy or

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[104] For a discussion on the affective work done by material and visual culture by German Jews in the Weimar period see Auslander, 'The Boundaries of Jewishness.'
[105] Auslander, 'The Boundaries of Jewishness'; Auslander, 'Reading German Jewry.'
[106] Guy Miron. '"Lately, Almost Constantly Everything Seems Small to Me": The Lived Space of German Jews under the Nazi Regime', *Jewish Social Studies* 20, no.1 (2013):

modernism/assimilation are asserted and performed. Home, as was the case for Ruth Locke, is also a place of profound belonging and traumatic exclusion from which individuals have been so frequently expelled never to return. Included in their introduction of anthology of essays about Holocaust survivors and their children returning to their ancestral homes, David Clark and Tereaa von Sommaruga Howard draw on the anthropologist Mary Douglas's description of the meaning of home. For these scholars, home goes beyond the mere materiality of the physical space but extends to the people who 'provide its structured domesticity, allocate the resources and give care and attention within those spaces.'[107] With this in mind, the Jewish home is a key concept in my discussion, marking, as it does, the material, symbolic and ideological frame through which Jewish refugees and their children think about and remember the past.

Although Ruth left a large archive of photographs, diaries and documents, the main focus of analysis is the photograph albums that her mother compiled for Ruth and her brother Raimund just before they came to England in 1938 on the Kindertransport.   This chapter examines the material and visual culture of the Neumeyer and Locke's relation to time and space as key categories of recall: particularly the moments and places of home, holidays, and migration. I argue that the act of making the photograph albums, particularly within the context of flight and refuge, illuminates the family negotiating their sense of belonging to a modernist culture both at home and abroad.

121-149. For a cultural spatial history of the Jews under the National Socialism see Alberto Giordano, Anne Kelly Knowles and Tim Cole eds., *Geographies of the Holocaust* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2014); Simone Lässig and Miriam Rürup, eds., *Space and Spatiality in Modern German Jewish History* (New York and Oxford, 2017); Paulo Giaccaria and Claudio Minca, *Hitler's Geographies: The Spatialities of the Third Reich* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

[107] David Clark and Teresa von Sommaruga Howard, eds., *The Journey Home: Emerging out of the Shadow of the Past* (Peter Lang UK, 2021), 13.

This chapter will start with a brief background to the family story. I shall then examine the family's photograph albums as a source of enquiry and ask what the aesthetics, style and performance of the photographs tell us about the Neumeyers' aspirations and responses to living under National Socialism. The second subjection addresses Ruth's own reflections on the past. I do so by drawing firstly on her oral testimony recorded by IWM in 2006, secondly with my conversations with her two sons and an interview that I conducted with Hans Holzhaider, a German journalist who had already interviewed and wrote about Ruth, and thirdly Ruth's captions on the photograph albums. These oral and written sources call into question the visual narratives by offering an alternative and in instances contradictory relationship story. I then turn to the second half of Ruth's life and er relationship with her photos. I examine Ruth's civic activism and engagement with IWM events where it becomes evident that Ruth was positioning her own story into a wider cultural memory concerning the persecution of Dachau Jews. Lastly, I shall turn to Stephen and Tim Locke and the interviews that I conducted with them. I shall examine the memory work they have conducted through both their commemoration engagement and their blog, arguing that they use visual records and written documents in different ways to understand their family's past.

Family Background

Ruth Neumeyer was born in 1923 and grew up in Dachau, Germany, with her younger brother Raimund (born in 1924) and her mother Vera (née Ephraim) and father Hans. Dachau, a small market town 15 miles north-west of Munich, later became notorious as the site of the first Nazi concentration camp. During the 1920s it was electorally dominated by German left-wing parties.[108] Vera was

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[108] Christopher Dillon, *Dachau and the SS: A Schooling in Violence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

born in 1893 in Görlitz, the youngest of four children to the Jewish industrialist and magnate, Martin Ephraim and her Protestant mother Hildegarde Rauthe. A patriotic German, Ephraim's contributions to the town, including a railway station, synagogue and museum, are today celebrated in the town's museum.[109] All four children were baptised Protestant Christians.

The Neumeyers, a Jewish family, had a longstanding and acclaimed presence in Munich. Hans' parents Ethan and Frieda owned a large gentlemen's outfitters in Sendlinger-Tor-Platz, in the historic centre of Munich. Hans was the eldest of four children. As a child, Hans suffered from an eye complaint, leaving him blind in one eye. By the age of 14, he became totally blind when his other eye was struck by another child's elbow during a scuffle. He studied at the Academy of Music in Munich between 1911-1913 and thereafter dedicated his career to music, teaching and composition. In 1915 he co-founded with Valeria Cratina the Jacques-Dalcroze School in Hellerau, near Dresden, where he also taught acoustics and improvisation. He also lectured at the Academy of Music, Munich. In 1925 he stopped both these activities with the stated intention to focus his energies on private tutoring.[110] It was whilst teaching that he met Vera, who was then a student of eurythmics. They married in 1920 and moved to Dachau where they lived in 10 Hindenburgstrasse (now Hermann Stockmann-Strasse); the house where Ruth grew up. After 1925 Hans gave private lessons.

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[109] See more on Martin Ephraim in Tim's blog, 'Category Archives: Martin Ephraim', *The Ephraims and The* Neumeyers (blog), accessed 26 April 2022, https://ephraimneumeyer.wordpress.com/category/martin-ephraim/. For the history of Jewish cultural life in Germany see Amos Elon, *The Pity of it All: A Portrait of Jews in Germany 1743-1933* (London: Penguin Books, 2003).

[110] Tim Locke, 'Tributes to Hans Neumeyer', *The Ephraims and The* Neumeyers (blog), accessed 29 April 2022, https://ephraimneumeyer.wordpress.com/2019/03/15/tributes-to-hans-neumeyer/.

The Neumeyers were secular Jews. Hans was Jewish while Vera was half Jewish making Ruth and Raimund non-Jewish because of matrilineal descent in Judaism. However, under the 1935 Nuremberg Laws, Ruth and Raimund were classified as Jewish since they had three grandparents who belonged to the Jewish religious community.[111] Ruth and Raimund were raised as Lutherans although they attended the Catholic Convent School in Dachau until 1934 after which they were placed in a Protestant school under regulations to segregate them from Roman Catholic children. From 1936-37 they attended the Thoma-Schule before returning to the Convent school. Ruth was confirmed in Easter 1938, perhaps a premeditated attempt to distance her from persecution as a Jew.

Hans' career was cut short in 1933 when the Nazis prevented him from taking his second post lecturing in acoustics at the Munich Academy of Music due to his Jewish background.[112] Vera secured enough money to support the family through earnings from private language lessons. On 8 November 1938, the night before 'Kristallnacht', Jewish families in Dachau were ordered to leave town.[113] After storming into the family home, two SS men told the Jewish occupants that they would be imprisoned if they did not follow orders to leave

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[111] Only Ruth and Raimund's maternal grandmother was not Jewish but was Protestant Christian. According to the Nuremberg Laws, a person with three or four Jewish grandparents was a Jew. For details of the Nazi definition of Jewishness, see Friedlander, *Nazi Germany and the Jews; The Years of Persecution: 1933-1939,* 374.
[112] For details of anti-Jewish legislation in Germany see Lucy S Dawidowicz, *A Holocaust Reader*, chapter two. For an examination of daily life in Nazi Germany see Marion Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish life in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).
[113] Anti-Jewish riots across Nazi Germany had broken out in the late evening of 7 November 1938 as part of a crescendo of violence against Jews and their property, resulting in the phenomenon of the so-called 'Night of the Broken Glass' or '*Kristallnacht'*. A discussion of the origins of the word Kristallnacht can be found in Alan Steinweis, *Kristallnacht 1938* (London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009); Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Persecution: 1933-1939.*

Dachau before sunrise.[114] Hans was at the time in Berlin attempting to gain a visa to emigrate. Vera and the children packed a small suitcase of belongings. They left the house at 5 a.m. and travelled to Munich later that morning to stay in a friend's attic with Hans joining them shortly after. Hans wrote to the Gestapo and was subsequently granted permission to return to the sequestrated house to collect certificates, documents, and more belongings, to which they agreed. The family initially stayed with one of Vera's pupils and then moved between friends' attics for the next six months to avoid capture. During this time the Gestapo took control of their house in Dachau.[115]

In May 1939, Ruth and Raimund were among the 9,000-10,000 children from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland who travelled to the UK between December 1938 and early 1940 while entry was denied to their parents.[116] Vera's friend Beatrice Paish had agreed to sponsor both children. Beatrice had studied eurythmics at Hellerau with Vera. The Paishes were unable to accommodate the children themselves and so in July Ruth and Raimund went to live with the Paishes' relatives: Bea Paish's sister Doris and husband Oscar Eckhard.[117] Ruth initially attended the Hall School in Weybridge, a town 17 miles south west of London, but was home tutored after being evacuated to Cambridge, a city north east of London, at the outbreak of war. During this time

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[114] Hans Holzhaider, *Before Sunrise: The Fate of the Jewish Citizens of Dachau*, trans, Johanna Jaffé (Hans Holzhaider: Gloucester: 1984), *4.*

[115] Herbert A. Strauss, 'Jews in German History: Persecution, Emigration, Acculturation', in *International Biographical Dictionary of Central European Emigres 1933–1945*, vol. 2, part 1, ed. Herbert A. Strauss and Werner Röder (New York: K.G. Saur, 1983), xi–xxvi.

[116] Andrea Hammel, '"I remember their Labels Round their Necks": Britain and The Kindertransport', in *The Palgrave Handbook of Britain and the Holocaust*, eds., Tom Lawson and Andy Pearce, 93-111 (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

[117] Tim Locke, 'Summer 1939: All Change in England After Arrival on the Kindertransport', *The Ephraims and The* Neumeyers (blog), 17 October 2017, accessed 22 April 2022, https://ephraimneumeyer.wordpress.com/2017/10/16/summer-1939-all-change-in-england-after-arrival-on-the-kindertransport/.

Ruth remained with the Eckhard family, making good friends with their two daughters Annie and Josie. In 1941 the Eckhard family moved to Scotland because the school at which Oskar was teaching was evacuated to Pitlochry, a town 69 miles north of Edinburgh. Ruth remained in Cambridge where she worked as a housekeeper for Professor Alan Ginsburg and Ethel Ginsburg before undertaking nursery nurse training at Wellgarth Nursing Training College in Hampstead, London.

Raimund's education continued at Strodes School in Egham for a few months after which he moved to live with a different family in Hanger Hill. He then moved to Hambleton in Buckinghamshire as part of a scheme called 'British Boys for British Farms', where he worked on a farm with other children who were, despite the name, also mostly from abroad. Rural life did not suit Raimund, who quickly ran away from the farm, returning to Weybridge where between 1940-1941 he worked in a radio shop. In May 1941, the Refugee Committee required him to move to Birmingham to work in the machine shop of the Birmingham Bicycle Company. Eventually, at the end of 1943, having turned 18, he joined the British army as a volunteer, a placement that required him to anglicise his name to Raymond Newham. In February 1945 he transferred to the Intelligence Corps in Brussels and Paris and became a German interpreter for the British intelligence corps and military police and assisted in the de-Nazification process in Germany.

During the war years, both Ruth and Raimund believed that their parents would be joining them in England, a belief based on the claim that their parents were first sorting out their affairs. Hans and Vera's frequent correspondence with the children did little to undermine this belief. Between 1939 and 1940 Vera and Hans sent them 57 letters, mostly handwritten by Vera while eight were typed

by Hans.[118] They expressed their hope to see them in the near future. By 1940, the messages were limited to short monthly notes of no more than 25 words delivered by the Red Cross. However, in the spring of 1942, Vera's circumstances changed significantly. She was informed that she was to be deported in April, but this was eventually delayed until July. During this period, Dora, Vera’s sister made several attempts to repeal the deportation order. Dora appealed to the Minister of the Interior arguing Vera should be exempt since she was in fact only half Jewish. Despite this, Article 5 of the Nuremberg Laws stated that she was legally classified as a Jew and was subject to the same treatment as full Jews. Vera was put on a transport to Poland on 13 July 1942. It is possible that she arrived in Auschwitz where she was murdered.[119] The last message sent by Vera, dated 17 June 1942, stamped 31 July 1942, reads:

> Going on a journey, but cheerful and happy, healthy. Father same.
> Keep in touch with aunt Dora Böse, Dresden, Leipzeigerstrasse 149.
> Keep happy!
> Mother

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[118] Tim Locke, ‘Wartime Red Cross Messages: Fragments of News Filter Through from Germany’ (blog), 14 November 2017, https://ephraimneumeyer.wordpress.com/2017/11/.

119 Tim Locke has conducted extensive research on Vera’s deportation and where the train ended. He has ruled out that it went to Theresienstadt and concluded Auschwitz or Warsaw ghetto ‘seem very possible’ destinations: ‘Piaski, Auschwitz, Warsaw… Where did Vera Neumeyer die?’, *The Ephraims and the Neumeyers (blog), 5 September 2019,* accessed 10 April 2022, https://ephraimneumeyer.wordpress.com/2019/09/20/piaski-auschwitz-warsaw-where-did-vera-neumeyer-die/.

Here, due to censorship, Vera wrote 'going on a journey' as a euphemism for 'deportation', and possibly to reassure her children. Hans had already been deported to Theresienstadt ghetto on 4 June 1942 on transport (no. II.76) which consisted of sick and disabled people.[120] Hans' experience in Theresienstadt has been described by various witness accounts of survivors who knew him in the ghetto. Their accounts help to build up a picture of Hans' last months and of his disposition. For instance, Thomas Mandl, in some recollections of Hans recorded in the newspaper *Landkreis Dachau* (21-22 July 1984) mentions that Mandl and his friend Hans Ries paid Hans for violin lessons with much valued soup or bread. Hans was affectionately known to his pupils as 'The Professor,' and gave 'an impression of sharp wit and intelligence, and was a very good listener, asking questions that were concise and to the point.'[121] He died there of lung disease on 18 May 1944. Ruth and Raimund learnt in September 1945 that their parents had been murdered.[122]

Both Raimund and Ruth acquired naturalisation certificates for British nationality, Ruth on 5 May 1949 and Raimund 25 August 1947. Raimund was demobbed from the army in 1947, after which he studied at the London School of Economics before becoming a geography teacher at a sixth form college in Barnet, a north London borough. Ruth met her future husband, Ronald Locke,

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[120] Theresienstadt was a transit ghetto operated in Central and Western Europe between 1941 and 1945: Anna Hájková, *The Last Ghetto: An Everyday History of Theresienstadt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

[121] Tim Locke, 'Hans Neumeyer', online, accessed 23 February 2021, www. holocaustmusic.ort.org. On cultural activity in Theresienstadt see Anna Catherine Greer, 'Music in Theresienstadt: Holocaust Memory and Representation", (unpublished dissertation) (University of Tennessee, 2021), accessed 7 June 2020, https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_graddiss/7016 [unpublished thesis].

[122] Raimund wrote to Ruth to inform her about what had happened to their parents. Ruth wrote in her diary on 17 September 1945 how she heard the news, '*She was deported to Poland in 1942 and is at a place from where there is little news (Lublin). 99% of* hope dead': Tim Locke,'Piaski, Auschwitz, Warsaw… where did Vera Neumeyer die?'

in 1949/1950 while attending Leavesden Green Emergency Teacher Training College near Watford, northwest of London. She then went to art college in Canterbury, a city south-east of London. Ruth and Ronald were married within a year and went on to have three sons: Stephen (b. 1952), Nicolas (b.1955) and Tim (b. 1959). Ruth and Ronald raised their three sons in Sydenham, south London. Raimund married Ingrid Netzbandt in 1963 with whom he had two sons: Tobias (born 1966) and Oliver (1969-88). Raimund died in 2011.

Following Ruth's death in 2012, the three sons cleared out the family home in Sydenham. After an initial period of storage, the documents have recently been examined by Tim and Stephen. Tim explained:

> We knew there was a big collection of photos, documents and letters relating to Ruth's family's life in Germany before the war, but we had never been through it. And we had heard so much about her parents' tragic deaths in Nazi camps and her journey with her brother to safety in England through the Kindertransport. But there were, and are, so many loose ends. And though I've filed it and sorted the letters into date order, I'm not anywhere near finishing yet.[123]

Since 2014, Tim and Stephen have tied up many 'loose ends', making new connections and networks. As a result, they have created an extensive biography of the people, places and objects in the form of a blog that form a rich record of the Neumeyer and Ephraim family and the diverse people with whom they came into contact.[124] This chapter, therefore, draws upon this

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[123] Interview with Tim Locke.

[124] At the beginning of the blog, Tim advises the reader to either view the blog by theme, browse through the complete list of articles or read it from the beginning when he started it in May 2014. By February 2021, he had written 41 blog entries. He

wealth of research as a source to understand the way in which three generations – Vera and Hans, Ruth, and Tim and Stephen Locke experienced and imagined the past. I shall try to explain how a careful examination of the production, display, captioning, circulation, and digital publishing of photographs is able to reveal something of German-Jewish responses to and memories of life under National Socialism.

Part One – The Family Photograph Albums

> Photographic practice only exists and subsists for most of the time by virtue of its family function or rather by the function conferred upon it by the family group, namely that of solemnizing and immortalizing the high points of family life, ...of reinforcing the integration of the family group by reasserting the sense that it has both of itself and of its unity.[125]

During the last twenty years, family historians and anthropologists have turned avidly towards family photograph albums as objects of enquiry. In doing so they have expected to discover something about family life in the modern era particularly in relation to themes such as gender, class, race, leisure, work and domestic life. [126] Many albums found in archives are often anonymous and lack context.[127] The Locke's family photograph album therefore offers an interesting and rare opportunity to examine how a German-Jewish bourgeois family in the

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writes monthly until the end of 2014, then continues to write about four to six times every year from there on.

[125] Bourdieu et al., *Photography: A Middle-Brow Art,* 19.

[126] Edwards, *Raw Histories*; Jo Spence et al., *Family Snaps*; Hirsch, *Family Frames*, Langford, *Suspended Conversations;* Christopher Pinney and Nicolas Peterson, eds*., Photography's Other Histories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); Rose, *Doing Family Photographs.*

[127] Auslander, 'Reading German Jewry,' 300.

pre-war years constructed a visual narrative of family life under National Socialism with its looming threat of persecution and in the knowledge of their familial separation.[128] The album spans fifteen years starting with photographs of Ruth as a baby and ending in 1938 with image of Vera, Ruth and Raimund in Bavaria. The album records the children growing up in a traditional middle-class family where they are immersed in such innocent activities such as spending time in nature, dressing up and holidaying These three activities form the basis of what follows. I have taken the *Lebensreform* movement, Heimat imagery and German bourgeois values to focus my discussion understanding that they were three key markers by which the Neumeyers and other similar families understood themselves.

Historicising the Jewish home or domestic space has been a useful way to examine German-Jewish experience of Nazi persecution.[129] A reason for this, Auslander explains, is that 'the home occupied a particular place for Jews, both because of its privacy and because within Judaism the home is, along with the synagogue, a central site of religious ritual practice.'[130] Furthermore, the home is the place where identity, and in our case, Jewishness, is articulated, experienced and represented. The growing interest and access to cameras in the period immediately prior to the Second World War meant that it was

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[128] Umbach et al., *Photography, Migration and Identity*, 7.

[129] Jacob Boas, 'The Shrinking World of German Jewry, 1933-1938', LBIYB 31 (1986): 241-66; Marion Kaplan, 'As Germans and as Jews in Imperial Germany', in *Jewish Daily Life in Germany, 1618–1945* ed. Marion Kaplan, 173–269 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Kerry Wallach, *Passing Illusions: Jewish Visibility in Weimar Germany* (University of Michigan Press, 2017); Guy Miron, 'The Home Experience of German Jews under the Nazi Regime', *Past & Present* 243, no. 1 (2019): 175-212; Jacob Borut, 'Struggles for Spaces: Where Could Jews Spend Free Time in Nazi Germany?', *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, lvi (2011): 307-50.

[130] Auslander, 'The Boundaries of Jewishness.' See also Marion Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class: Women, Family and Identity in Imperial Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); Paula Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History: The Roles and Representations of Women* (Washington: Washington University Press, 2017).

‘hardly surprising’ as Ashkenazi claims, for the growing Jewish middle class, to include the home in Jewish private photographs. He explains, ‘Jewish acculturation was often experienced, and culturally represented, through convoluted spatial divisions in which the home, and the notion of being at home, became pivotal.’[131] It is true that in the case of the Neumeyer family, the home is not just a site of Jewishness to be historicised but also represents a site of memory. This important addition is examined in the second and third subsection when I turn to Ruth and her sons’ ‘return’ to Ruth’s childhood home and how they captured this by the camera. In the following section, I argue that a close examination of photographs suggests that the Neumeyers' home was a site in which the family expressed affiliation to a particular style of bourgeois modernism: *Lebensreform.*

Compared to other German-Jewish photograph albums recently studied, the Neumeyers' photographic record shows few traces of popular bourgeois aspirations linked to technology and speed. The temptation to pose alongside symbols of modernity such as cars or the newly constructed *autobahn*, Umbach argues, were a way to make sense of the German landscape.[132] Instead, the inclusion of the family surrounded by nature both at home and beyond can be seen as a rejection of urban modernism. We see instead a family performing and maintaining German bourgeois identity aligned with the *Lebensreform* or Life Reform Movement. Although the *Lebensreform* movement is never explicitly mentioned in written documents within the family archive, the aesthetics, style, and content of the photographic record is clearly of a family fashioning themselves according to the ideals of the *Lebensreform* movement. It is thus worth pointing out that in this case and possibly elsewhere, examining

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[131] Ofer Ashkenazi, ‘Reading Private Photography: Pathos, Irony and Jewish Experience in the Face of Nazism’, *American Historical Review* (forthcoming).
[132] These themes are all identified in the Salzmann photograph album, Umbach et al. *Photography, Migration and Identity*.

private photographs has the potential to enrich, confirm and contest the understandings of Jewish identity gained from examining written documents.[133]

Lebensreform had gained popularity among the German bourgeoisie in the late 19th and early 20th century. The social movement emphasised physical fitness and natural health as an attempt to escape what were seen as the excesses of modernity.[134] It saw people going back to nature in the form of both physical exercise such as hiking and alternative practices and products such as homeopathy, herbalism and natural foods. Conformers embraced nudism and forms of movement such as gymnastics and eurhythmics where creative self-expression was celebrated. The family's affiliation to the movement is evident in multiple and interconnected ways. Firstly Hans and Vera met and lived in Hellerau, the first German garden city, a world centre for the arts and a place to experiment with new ways of living and learning.[135] Hellerau was a 19th Century modernist project aiming to integrate nature into urban spaces.[136] This integration was symptomatic of the movement's attempt to organise space and the urban everyday.[137] Integral to the Hellerau project was the Jacques Dalcroze School, where Hans taught and Vera studied.[138] Eurythmics,

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[133] Auslander, 'Reading German Jewry.'
[134] Anton Kaes, Martin Jay and Edward Dimendberg eds., *The Weimer Republic Sourcebook* (London: University of California Press, 1994), 673; George Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (London: University of Winconsin Press, 1998); Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961).
[135] Michael Mann, ed., *Shantiniketan—Hellerau: New Education in the 'Pedagogic Provinces' of India and Germany* (Heidelberg: Draupadi, 2005).
[136] Umbach, *German Cities and Bourgeois Modernism, 1890-1924* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
[137] Avi Sharma. 'Wilhelmine Nature: Natural Lifestyle and Practical Politics in the German Life-Reform Movement (1890—1914)', *Social History* 37, no. 1 (2012): 36–54.
[138] The school was founded in 1910 by two Dhorn brothers and inspired by the ideals and methods of Jacques Dalacroze: Virginia Hoge Mead, 'More than Mere Movement Dalcroze Eurhythmics', *Music Educators Journal* 4(1996): 38-41.

developed by the Swiss musician, Émilie Jacques-Dalcroze in the early 20th Century, was one of these new forms of pedagogical learning and one of which Vera was a student and then teacher in Dachau. Eurythmics encouraged students to acquire musical sensibilities through engaging all of the senses to the rhythm, structure and form of music. Such a background points to the way in which Hans and Vera valued the creative arts, self-expression and nature: all of which they found in their professions and cultural surroundings.

Secondly, the family's affiliation to the movement is reflected, perhaps more subtly, in the style and aesthetics of their photographs. The wealth of photographs in the albums which capture the family in nature is hardly surprising. The children playing in gardens, swimming in rivers and the sea and walking in the Alps or through fields reflects the movement's emphasis on returning to nature (figs. 3 and 4). Indeed, bathing naked at the bottom of the garden and lounging on rocks is reminiscent of the open-air baths that were lauded for their therapeutic and healing benefits during the Wilhelmine years. Nudity and the wearing of minimal clothing were considered virtuous being the necessary accoutrements for their healthy, back to nature lifestyle.[139]

The *Lebensreform* aesthetic comes through vividly in the photograph of the family sat having tea in the garden (fig. 5). The image is certainly posed. The family manage to look relaxed in what is a carefully choreographed teatime montage. The family is tightly packed within the scene emphasising their proximity and affection towards the surrounding untamed nature. Untamed nature was characteristic of the trend in German garden design during the late 19th and early 20th Century which favoured wilderness over a manicured appearance and sought the mutual interaction between gardens and houses.[140]

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[139] Sharma, 'Wilhelmine Nature.'

[140] Christof Mauch ed., *Nature in German History* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2004).

Indeed, the creation of a wilderness was itself a rejection of the industrial and urban world in which mankind's hand could be seen everywhere at play.[141] Co-existing with untamed nature was not something to be dreamed of, but rather to be enacted and experienced in their garden in Dachau. Photographs set in the garden witness the family's intimate interaction with each other and a similar degree of intimacy with the natural world around them.

Hans and Vera had been involved in obvious ways in the life reform movement. Hans was himself responsible for spreading the ideas of new pedagogies when he co-created the Jacques-Dalcroze school in Munich. While the surviving written records do not feature either Hans or Vera commenting on their relationship to the movement, *Lebensreform* with its distinctive ideology is certainly present in the photographic record where it gently choreographs and informs rather than heralds its presence in written documents. This suggestion supports Umbach's assertion that the intentions of those who made use of the objects, houses, and cities that bourgeois modernists created are difficult to ascertain since they are rarely recorded.[142] It is this lack of comment within the written records which may to some extent be addressed by the photographic record. If sensitively handled this can shine light on Hans and Vera's aspirations to be part of this particular aesthetics and ideology.

[141] Umbach, *German Cities,* 107.
[142] Ibid, 194.

Figure 3. A page of the Neumeyer family photograph album, IWM 2018-01-03/B

Figure 4: A page of the Neumeyers' family photograph album, IWM 2018-01-03/B.

Figure 5. Hans and Vera (top left and top right) and Ruth and Raimund (bottom left and right) in the garden, courtesy of Tim Locke.

The home was also an important space for acts of performance and creativity to be captured by the camera and then displayed in the album. Several pages of the album are devoted to photographs of the children performing plays at different stages of childhood (figs. 6 and 7). The period covered by these images suggests that these were not just occasional events but rather that this activity was an integral aspect of family subjectivity and identity where children were free to express themselves. The photographs capture an impression of these plays yet Ruth's testimony focuses not on the enjoyment of performance but of the Nazi officials' intrusion into the house during a performance.[143]

[143] In the IWM interview with Ruth in 2005, she focuses on the story of the SS guards intruding on the Nativity play: Ruth Locke, Interview with Lyn Smith, IWM, 1 April 2005, ©IWM 27752.

Comparing these creative domestic scene with the story of the two SS men who entered their house and broke up a nativity play, highlights the violent intrusion into the domestic sphere which Ruth felt was for so long protected from the persecution enacted by the Nazi regime.

Figure 6. A page of the Neumeyer family photograph album. Photographs of the children performing Christmas plays 1935, IWM 2018-01-03/B

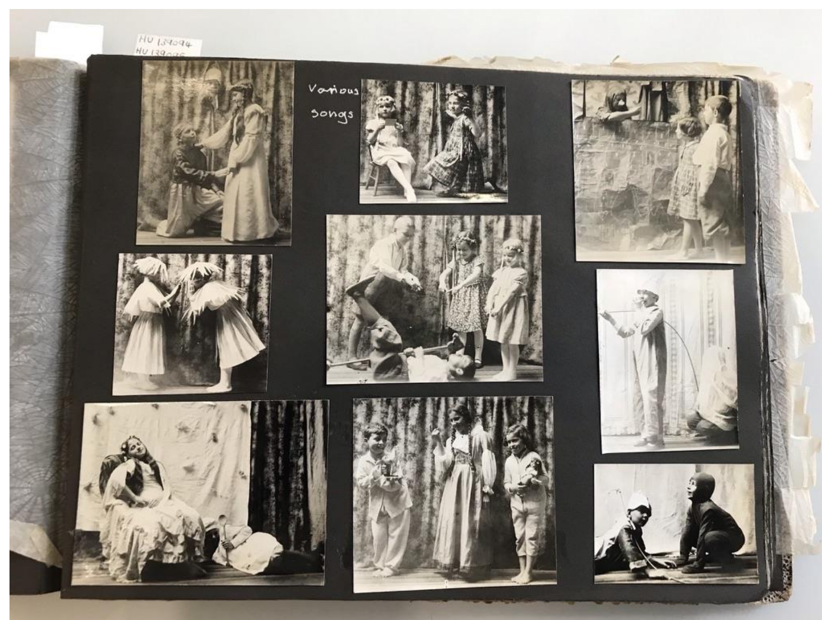

Figure 7. A page of the Neumeyer family photograph album: photographs of the children performing 'various songs', IWM 2018-01-03/B.

Photographs of the home point to the way that the Neumeyers organised their domestic space intimately with nature and through an expression of the arts. Photographs of the family in public spaces and on holiday, meanwhile, offer an opportunity to examine how the family's photographs transcended the boundaries of the private and public sphere. Holidays were a common practice among the German-Jewish bourgeoisie.[144] How holidays were photographed, particularly during the years of heightened restrictions on Jewish mobility, has recently gained scholarly attention. As holidaying in Nazi Germany was increasingly difficult for German Jews,[145] they can be seen, Ashkenazi argues, as an act of defiance in which Jews could preserve their bourgeois aspirations.[146] Certainly, the Neumeyers continued to photograph themselves on holiday throughout the 1930s. Figures 8 and 9 are a case in point. These photographs capture the family near the Austrian border (fig. 8) and in Rome (fig. 9). The photographs are not dated but it can be assumed by comparing to other dated photographs that they are taken circa 1935.

It is clear that the Neumeyers drew upon pictorial conventions for performing their belonging to the German nation both at home and in public throughout the children's childhood. *Mise en scenes* of the family on Alpine summit, either

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[144] Miron, 'The Home Experience', 242; Borut, 'Struggles for Spaces.'
[145] Borut, 'Antisemitism in Tourist Facilities in Weimar Germany', in *Yad Vashem Studies* 28 (2000): 7-50; Jacob Borut, 'Struggles for Spaces'.
[146] Ashkenazi and Guy Miron, 'Jewish Vacations in Nazi Germany: Reflections on Time and Space amid an Unlikely Respite', *Jewish Quarterly Review 110,* no.3 (2020): 536.

skiing or hiking or on farms were all typical of Heimat imagery.[147] Although continuing these conventions throughout the period of Nazi rule, there is a notable change in the year 1938 in the way the family posed for the camera as well as how the photographs were ordered in the album. At the end of the album are five pages of photographs which capture the family in 1938 visiting various places in Austria and Italy.

Figure 8. A page from the Neumeyer photograph album: photographs on holiday on the Austrian border including a salt mine visit, circa 1935, IWM 2018-01-03/B.

[147] Heimat imagery in German-Jewish photographs is discussed in Ofer Ashkenazi, ‘Exile at Home: Jewish Amateur Photography under National Socialism, 1933–1939’. *The Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 64, no.1 (2019): 115-40.; Ashkenazi et al., ‘Jewish Vacations in Nazi Germany’; Umbach et al., *Photography, Migration and Identity*,

Figure 9. A page from the Neumeyer photograph album: photographs of Raimund in Rome circa 1935, IWM 2018-01-03/B.

Similar to the Salzmanns' photographic archive, there is little sense of anxiety or persecution felt by those in the Neumeyers' photographs.[148] They do not show what one might expect of a family whose world was about to change forever. Since there are few clues in how the family was internally responding to the seismic changes, the aesthetics and composition of the photographs can offer clues to the family's response. The most evident change in how the family represented themselves was in the 1938 summer trip to Italy where the family were photographed in cities, amongst people and identifiable architecture. The family were diversely invested in arts and culture but their cultured life within the domestic sphere had been violently infringed upon. Their photographs suggest how they turned away from the private towards the public sphere in

[148] Umbach et al., *Photography, Migration and Identity*, 31.

1938 to perform and capture their family's bourgeois cultural identity abroad rather than at home. Earlier photographs capturing the children's plays and playing in the garden were generally close-up snapshots creating an intimate connection between the photographer (presumably Vera) and the subjects (normally the children).

The photographs taken in Florence and Siena with a wide lens capture the grandeur of the architecture of the cities, with a particular focus on the Roman arches and aqueducts and Renaissance architecture. This pattern of photographing Italian architecture was not unique to the Neumeyers. Indeed, their photographs show many parallels with Umbach's exploration of the Salzmann family's collection of photographs from their 1936 Italian tour. Indeed, if the photographs were taken after the ones in Austria, the family's itinerary would have followed the *bildungsbürgerlich* tradition, which originated in the 18th Century with the 'Grand Tour.'[149] The Bildungsreise involved young German, English and French aristocratic men travelling around Europe as a coming-of-age ritual. The trip usually concluded in Italy in order to soak up the classical culture and history of the cities. Indeed, Umbach argues that throughout the nineteenth century, this tradition became a 'cornerstone of bourgeois cultural habitus' especially in Germany. The Neumeyers' photographs appear to be following this tradition of touring European countries including Austria before visiting Italy to immerse themselves within classical culture as depicted in the photographs. Ruth even goes so far to caption the Austrian photographs in the album as the 'Austria tour' adding to the sense of the *bildungsbürgerlich* tradition.

Photographs taken in Italian cities, on the other hand, were framed by the built environment. As a result, the family members become small pinpoints in the

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[149] Ibid, 26.

photographs. They appear connected with and immersed within the historical cityscape of a foreign country: a country, however, which was at the time less radicalised than their home. These photographs point to the family's mobility and modernity in being able to travel and consume culture. Yet their stylistic break with the familial traditions of photography and the distance between the photographer and the subject moves away from the intimacy, knowledge, and subjectivity that the domestic photographs hold. Photographs had always been part of Vera's self-fashioning as the family posed while looking candid in homely scenes. Taking in mind the encroachment of Nazi legislation on their family life these holiday snapshots can be seen as a final attempt to frame themselves within their familial values. Photographs were a means to state the mobility of not only the family, but their values, and therefore stating the continuity and survival of a family identity.

On the other hand, travelling to Italy for German Jews held a dual meaning: linked to both the differences and similarities between Nazi Germany and the Fascist State. Travelling to Italy, Sarah Wobick-Segev argues, provided a space where German Jews could 'relax and recover a sense of normalcy that included outings at cafes, restaurants, historic sites and spas that were devoid of threatening signs declaring that Jews were unwanted.'[150] Fascist Italy shared many of the fascist ideologies and aesthetics espoused by Nazi Germany such as the participation of the 'masses'.[151] It was these similarities in their fascist politics yet differences in policies towards Jews which, Wobick-Segev argues,

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[150] Sarah Wobick-Segev, 'A Jewish Italienische Reise during the Nazi Period', *Journal of Contemporary History* 56, no.3 (July 2021): 728. On the historical context of Jews in Italy see Renzo De Felice, *The Jews in Fascist Italy: A History*, trans. Robert Miller (Littlehampton: Enigma Books, 2001); Shira Klein, *Italy's Jews from Emancipation to Fascism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Joshua Zimmerman, *The Jews in Italy Under Fascist and Nazi Rule, 1922-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
[151] Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, F*ascist Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini's Italy* (London: University of California Press, 2019): 38-41.

attracted German Jews to visit Italy. German Jews travelling to Italy could examine fascism as 'outsiders, not as victims, maintaining a sense of detachment all the while participating in events.'[152] Her argument is based on an examination of a particular German-Jewish family album. Drawing parallels with it and the one made by Vera is helpful for interpreting the way that the family presented and remembered their time abroad.

Figure 10. A double page of the Neumeyer photograph album: Italy 1938, IWM 2018-01-03/B.

[152] Wobick-Segev, 'A Jewish Italienische Reise,' 729.

Figure 11. Two photographs taken in San Marino, Italy, 1938, IWM 2018-01-03/B.

The majority of the album's photographs appear apolitical except from two taken as part of the 1938 trip to Italy (fig. 11). These two photographs were taken in San Marino, a Republic which remained neutral throughout the war until 1944. The photograph to the right show what appears to be a member of the carabinieri (the national gendarmerie of Italy) while the photograph to the left appears like a religious procession. San Marino was ruled by the Sammarinese Fascist Party from 1923 to 1943. Although modelled on the National Fascist Party of Italy, it had different policies towards Italian Jews including their non-participation in deportation. It is unusual therefore that an Italian Fascist flag hangs from one of the windows in the images of San Marino and even more so that the Neumeyers would have wanted it captured in a photograph and then in a photograph album. Vera and the children, as Wobick-Segev's argues, could be examining Fascism as 'outsiders' not victims and gaining proximity yet distance from a form of fascism which although threatening did not pose an existential threat.

The photographs are interesting for the presence of the Italian Fascist flag but photographs are as interesting for what is absent. In her analysis of a collection of family photographs held by the McCord Museum of Canadian History, Martha Langford argues that ‘we are accustomed in conversation to weighing both words and silences. The same factors are at play with an album that silently submits itself to verbal translation.’[153] The Neumeyers' album can be seen as a ‘family album’ – as a way to confirm the identity of the family, yet the very absence of Hans in these last photographs was not remarked upon during interviews with Stephen nor Tim. In fact, Hans was not on the Austria and Italy trip but was in Berlin with his secretary Dela attempting to obtain a visa for his emigration to New York with Dela, a fact of which Ruth was unaware: she was told that her father was in Berlin making flutes. Scholars of family photographs all point to the way in which family photographs legitimise the institution of the family, suppressing any images of divorce or death.[154] The Neumeyers’ family album is not an exception. Tim only discovered the truth about Hans' whereabouts by coming across a reference on the internet to a German book which contains a letter from Hans to a Herbert Fromm in which he attempts to gain a visa to emigrate to New York.[155]

According to Hirsch, photographs display the cohesion of the family, instrumentalising its togetherness. This sustained imaginary cohesion can reduce the strains of family life, at least within the visual record.[156] The organisation of the photographs in the album helps us to see how the family made sense of space and time. For example, the photographs of the tour are positioned in an orderly way and are framed by a white border, features which

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[153] Langford, *Suspended Conversations*, 19.
[154] Ibid, 34; Rose, *Doing Family Photographs*.
[155] Horst Weber and Stefan Drees, eds., *Quellen zur Geschichte emigrierter Musiker. Sources Relating to the History of Émigré Musicians 1933-1950* (Munich, K.G. Saur Verlag GmbH, 2005). Email correspondence with Tim Locke, 25 May 2021.
[156] Hirsch, *Family Frames*, 7.

are both absent from the rest of the album. Although suggestive of the photographs printed from the same reel, this orderly organisation could be indicative of the Neumeyers' attempts to make sense of and stabilise the external instability. The organisation of space and time is also seen through the oscillating pattern between photographing at home and abroad, in the domestic and the public spheres. This complicates the idea of a rupture between home and abroad as explored through the theme of exile.[157] With Hans away attempting to emigrate and the impending possibility of the children emigrating themselves, it is possible that Vera was highlighting simultaneously the family's mobility and German identity through an overt expression of the German identity enacted abroad. The album can be read, therefore, not as a story of frozen time but of transcending time and creating an important connection between past and present, home and away. As such, the Neumeyers' album chimes with those of the Salzmann family whom Umbach and Sulzener position within a long history of Jewish migration. Creating the archive, Umbach and Sulzener argue, was a way for the family of 'both asserting and defending a German identity and the "connecting thread" that tied the family to it - whilst also celebrating international mobility and transnational networks.'[158]

The album's final page ends however with a subtle reminder of the severity of the Nazi state. Below two neatly aligned rows of photographs of the family in Bad Tölz, a town in Bavaria, in 1938, is a photograph of Julius Kohn, their former lodger (fig. 12). Referred to as Onki (Uncle) by the family, he was clearly a good friend of the family. He is also in the photograph of the front page of the album where Ruth is a baby (fig. 13).[159] Kohn was arrested by the Nazi officials who

[157] Ashkenazi, 'Exile at Home.'
[158] Umbach et al., *Photography, Migration, Identity*, 7.
[159] Tim Locke, 'Julius Kohn – 'Onki': the lodger who perished in Auschwitz', The Ephraims and The Neumeyers (blog), 26 July 2019, accessed 24 May 2022,

stormed into their house in 1938 and interrupting their play: he was interned in Dachau concentration camp for two weeks. After the November pogrom, he separated from the family, turning himself into the police who imprisoned him again for a month in a concentration camp. He then stayed at various Jewish lodgings but remained in touch with the family via letters. Placed at the end of the album suggests a belated consideration of the photograph and indeed of remembering their friend: a gesture of memory preservation for a man they feared they would not see again. The photograph of Kohn could be seen as symbolic of the physical separation between close friends and a reminder of the anti-Jewish measures which were tearing people apart. Seen in this light, the album does more than project ideals of family togetherness: it hints at family absences and emphasised the separations that had already affected the family when the children were sent to England. Tim describes how

> By 22 January 1942 he (Kohn) was staying in the Jewish Community Hospital, and then in an internment camp at Clemens-Auguststrasse from 29 June that year [...] Like millions of others, Julius Kohn disappeared into oblivion.[160]

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https://ephraimneumeyer.wordpress.com/2019/07/26/julius-kohn-onki-the-lodger-who-perished-in-auschwitz/.

[160] Ibid.

Figure 12. The last page of the Neumeyer Family Album, IWM 2018-01-03/B.

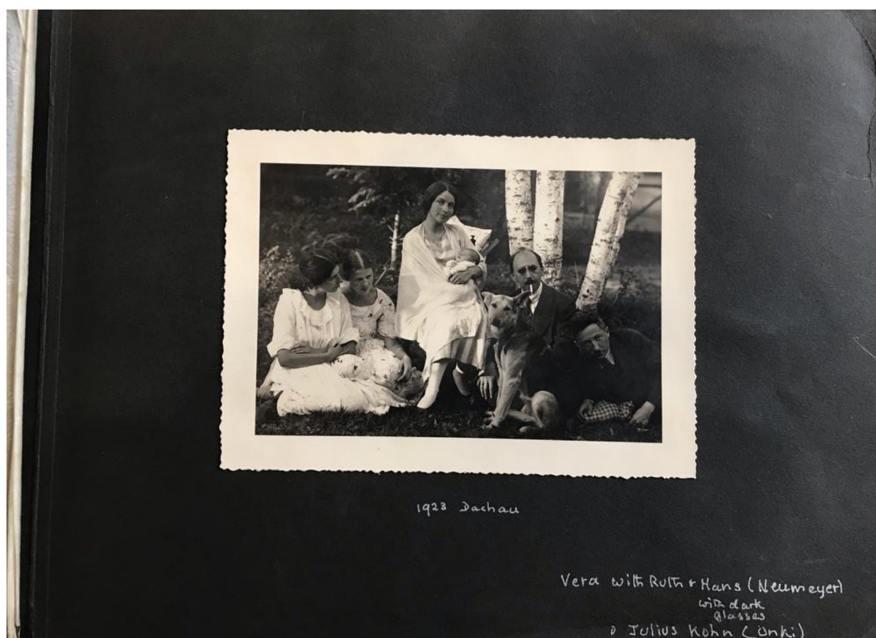

Figure 13. The first page of the Neumeyer photograph album, IWM 2018-01-03/B.

This leads to a further reflection not only on the photographs but also on the album making practice. Vera created the album just before the children were sent to England on the Kindertransport. The album can therefore be seen as a conscious meaning-making practice in which Vera, and perhaps also the children, created a tangible reminder of the life from which they were forced and one that was going to be forever stolen from them. Furthermore, the album represents a faith in the future, and in this case, sending this album with Ruth and Raimund was a way for Vera to assert her faith in her children's future and a continuation of their lifestyle, culture and values in which the family was grounded. The album-making and the fact Vera encouraged Ruth to write a diary to document their new life in England demonstrates Vera's desire for the children to make sense of what was happening to them. It also reflects the family's bourgeois sensibilities and cultural capital they retained despite the denial of so many other things by the Nazi state.[161] Whereas scholars such as Ashkenazi emphasis German-Jewish émigrés' longing for their homeland and their sense of exile, I suggest that the Neumeyers' album - the production of the photographs and the album – can be seen as part of a modern cosmopolitan experience, which in Atina Grossmann's words was 'although quite involuntary and certainly shadowed by terror and tragedy was also often zestfully taken "on the road," frequently leading the refuges to the most unlikely places.'[162]

Part Two - Ruth's Encounter with the Past

Diary writing and album curating, as demonstrated was a way for Vera and the children to make sense of their experience, confirm their German identity and

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[161] Miron, 'The Home Experience of German Jews,' 211.
[162] Atina Grossmann, 'German Jews as Provincial Cosmopolitans: Reflections from the Upper West Side', *The Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 53, no.1 (2008): 157.

affirm the belonging to and continuation of their bourgeois modernist values and habitus both at ‘home’ and ‘away’. This subsection will examine how Ruth and Raimund as adults, particularly in their late adult life, made sense of their past through photographs, the photograph album and civic commemoration acts. Indeed, the visual narratives of private photographs prove to be at odds with Ruth's recollections, encouraging her, as we shall see, to highlight in the photo captions, the irony of her parents' aspirations'.

Looking at photographs as social objects helps to understand their significance through time and space since as Edwards argues, ‘photographs not only hold time and space, but extend time and space through sets of multiple relationships, their piled-up significances, an aggregate of relationships.’[66] The album was not only significant as one of the limited number of objects to accompany them on the Kindertransport but also remained so throughout Ruth and Raimund’s lifetimes. As Tim explained, ‘the most cherished photograph thing was a big book which is now in the IWM’.[163] He continued, ‘so those pictures were always a bit sacred. But what they (Ruth and Raimund) would do is: she would share the photo album, there were two photo albums [...] And they would swap them with her brother so one would have one album and one would have the other.’ The albums mattered to both Ruth and Raimund to such an extent that they each had to have one on their possession at one time. Their material proximity to Ruth continued into her final years: a frame holding a montage of photographs was placed on her bedroom bureau. ‘It was incredibly important for her to have them (the photographs). They had incredible emotional significance, as albums, that sat in her desk in that bureau. I have them now’ (fig. 13).

[163] Interview with Tim Locke.

Although bearing social significance, it is important to investigate further to understand what meaning Ruth may have gained from them. Her oral history interview recorded in 2005, although not directly discussing the photographs, is helpful here. Ruth's memories of her childhood and her thoughts on Germany as expressed in the 2005 oral history interview provide clues to the way in which Ruth relates to her past. It also points to the disparities between her oral recollections and the visual representations of her childhood. During the interview, she reflects how their childhood was protected yet also she was honest about the difficulties experienced in their home life. She recalls how 'we were rather sheltered, and our mother always tried to do beautiful things with us like play and dances and outings to the mountains, and long walks and that kind of thing.' Here, her oral recollections mirror her childhood photographs. On the other hand, more negative memories also expressed in her testimony do not appear in the albums.

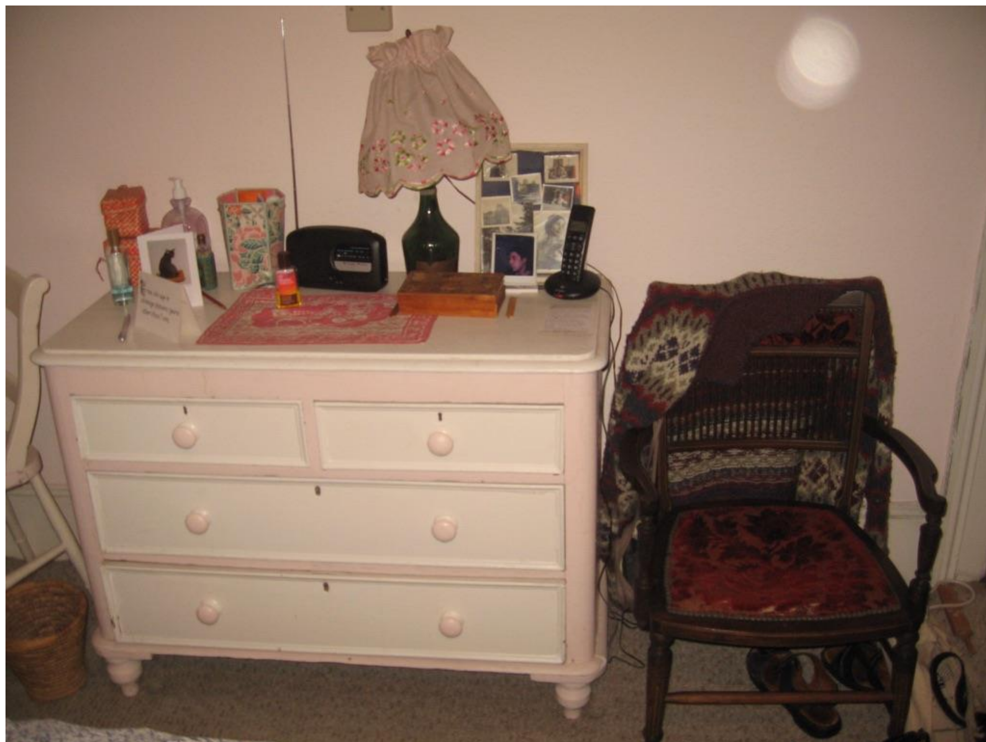

Figure 13: Photograph of Ruth's bureau in her bedroom, upon which is a framed collage of photographs, courtesy of Tim Locke.

One recollection of overt antisemitism was striking. She recalled when the SS officers stormed into their house while performing a play. She remembered how 'we didn't quite understand it, but we thought it was a silly play, anyway. And that was it. It is extraordinary how children really are very resilient.' Here she almost undermines the play but ends on a more positive note: one which captures the children's resilience. Indeed, Ruth's positive reflections and outlook are remembered by her two sons and is captured in her oral history interview where she talked positively about her emigration to England and settling into English life.

The theme of resilience appears again when she expressed little loss or sadness upon leaving Germany: 'I wasn't feeling homesick at all because I must have felt the oppression in Germany and I also found that there was tension between my parents at that time. And I felt so relieved to leave everything behind. That seems quite awful.' She recalled that when war broke out, 'we were comforted and we were at a time when lots of new impressions come into your life. Everything was very positive.' Ruth's memory of emigration is surprising and one that does not fit within the hegemonic narrative of Jewish emigration which privileges themes such as nostalgia and homesickness. Whereas Ashkenazi builds on exile literature to frame German-Jewish photographs as an identification with and alienation from 'then' and 'now', Ruth's relationship to her photographs can be seen more of an identification with and liberation from her past. Despite her photographs presenting an idyllic childhood, Ruth's lasting memories where of tension and oppression. I am not here suggesting that the whole of Ruth's childhood was oppressed and tense but to acknowledge the fact Ruth recognised that the nice things her mother organised - the things pictured in the photographs - were remembered as attempts to shelter the children. As such, this complicates the visual narrative of the photograph from

memories of idyllic childhood to those which depict more nuanced elements of fissures, silences, and facades.

The act of captioning a family photograph album, Leora Auslander argues, signified a desire to create an 'intelligible record for posterity'.[164] They were a record only added by Ruth within the last ten years before she passed away. They offer, therefore, further insight into the way that Ruth, rather than Vera, reflected on life in Dachau and wanted to communicate it to others: others I suggest here primarily refer to her brother Raimund. The use of the plural possessive pronoun 'our' while referring to herself in the third person as 'Ruth' is at first confusing. In his blog, Tim describes how Ruth handed letters to Raimund during his final years, 'as his dementia took a grip he seems to have wanted to think about earlier stages of his life – these letters evidently helped the process of revisiting the past.'[165] Auslander also notes how captions 'acknowledge the reality of the passage of time, with the sense of loss that might entail: loss of memory first of all.'[166] Indeed, with Raimund's dementia, it is possible that Ruth's use of 'our' was likely to have referred to Ruth and Raimund's childhood things as a way to remind Raimund of aspects of their childhood. The captions were perhaps added as an *aide-memoire* for Raimund.

Furthermore, it is poignant that Ruth chose to confirm a shared ownership of material traces of their past life. The captions 'on our round-a-bout' and 'our heirloom', the latter referring to a rocking horse, suggest a strong sense of ownership of these playthings. Julia Hirsch argues that shared possessions are

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[164] Auslander, 'Reading German Jewry,' 304.
[165] Tim Locke, 'Letters from War Torn Germany', *The Ephraims and The Neumeyers* (blog), March 2022, accessed 26 April 2022, https://ephraimneumeyer.wordpress.com/2022/03/30/letters-from-war-torn-germany/.
[166] Auslander, 'Reading Germany Jewry,' 304

an essential basis for a family, stating their survival and integrity as a clan.[167] The poignancy of the rocking horse is enforced by the knowledge that the horse was cut up and used as fuel later in the war to evade the cold.[168] Once used innocently by the children as a toy, then used as a survival tool, and then visually represented here in the family album to assert the family's heritage, the rocking horse is a powerful symbol of survival and loss. This caption suggests Ruth's attempt to re-engage with and reassert their family integrity and survival, at least within the pages of the family album.

Figure 14. Photograph of Ruth on a rocking horse, captioned 'On the family heirloom', IWM 2018-01-03/A.

[167] Julia Hirsch, *Family Photographs: Content, Meaning and Effects* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 26.
[168] This piece of information was gained from the curator's notes on the photocopy of the photograph held in IWM's Photography Archive.

Ruth's captioning also points to an expression of irony and humour on the way her family performed in front of the camera. The photograph of 'tea by the "Springbrunnen" pond' exemplifies the common effort to appear relaxed yet civilised (fig. 15). The silverware on the table projects an image of civility and formality, whilst the overgrown scenery and the awkwardly leaning back poses suggest a paradox between relaxation, candidness and imposed formality. Moreover, the captioning of a pond as '"Springbrunnen"' (translated as 'fountain' in German) imposes a sense of light-hearted humour as it suggests decadence when in fact there was only a small pond. The word '*springbrunnen*' in inverted commas suggests that the album compiler was aware of the grandeur and decadence that they were perhaps hoping to but knowingly failing to encapsulate through their teatime scene. The captions suggest Ruth was keen to reengage with her family heritage by projecting a sense of togetherness and communality, but also the irony points to a rejection of the family's bourgeoisie aesthetics that were projected by her parents.

Figure 15. A page of the Neumeyer photograph album, top left, Ruth has captioned the photograph 'Tea by the 'Springbrunnen' pond Dachau. IWM 2018-01-03/B.

I will now turn to tracing Ruth's increasing engagement with Holocaust remembrance through the years, in particular with IWM, the historian Hans Holzhaider and the Dachau community. By doing so I suggest that Ruth's personal story has always been set within the wider history of either her German family or Dachau Jews, the former I shall discuss first.

What is unusual about Ruth's representation in IWM's Holocaust Exhibition is that it is not of primarily Ruth's story, but that of her father. This is despite the fact Ruth was the one to donate objects and record her testimony. At the beginning of Ruth's oral history testimony recorded by IWM in 2005, she is asked 'what sort of family were you born into?' She replied:

> That's very complicated. My mother came from Silesia and she was born in Görlitz. My father was from Munich where his parents had a factory for clothes in Munich and my father became blind when he was 14 and then studied music. He went to Hellerau which is a school for Dalcroze with eurythmics and music and he was a teacher there in harmony training and ear training. My mother went to the same school later on and that's where she met him.[169]

Her parents' backgrounds, particularly their creative careers were central to the telling of her family story. As well as providing her testimony, Ruth donated several documents to IWM which were catalogued in 2005, these consisted of Red Cross messages, letters, Ruth's schoolbooks, her father's sheet music and a photo of Hans sat at the piano (fig. 16).

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[169] Ruth Locke, Interview by Smith.

Figure 16: Photograph of Hans Neumeyer playing the piano, ©IWM HU 104333.

Ruth's involvement with IWM was relatively late in the Exhibition's development. However, much of the collection was built after the Exhibition had opened, especially objects related to stories of the Kindertransport. IWM's publication 'The Holocaust Exhibition, Ten Years on' notes how the nature of donations changed over the years.[170] It reads:

[170] Imperial War Museum London, *The Holocaust Exhibition: Ten Years On* (London: Imperial War Museum, 2010), 8.

> Where in the late 1990s we were dealing mainly with camp survivors, today our donors tend to be the children of survivors or former refugees to this country.

It continues:

> A peculiarly British story – that of the Kindertransport – is now extremely well documented with numerous examples of possessions brought by the child refugees when they arrived in this country just before war broke out: prayer books, embroidered pillowcases, rucksacks, suitcases, dolls and magazines of the time. There is a wealth of social history to be uncovered in this collection, but the strongest message to emerge is the foreboding felt by the parents as they sent their children to safety overseas.

This emerging message of parental 'foreboding' is reflected in the privileging of her parents' story over her own. The caption in the display case in which her family is represented resonates with this point. Entitled 'Hans Neumeyer', it reads:

> Hans Neumeyer was born in Munich in 1887. Despite having been blind since the age of 14 he became a distinguished pianist, teacher and composer of music. He lived with his wife Vera – a teacher of improvised dance – and their daughter Ruth and son Raimund in the town of Dachau. They were forced to flee from Dachau following Kristallnacht in 1938. The two children were sent to Britain on Kindertransports, but Hans and Vera had to remain in Germany, eventually living under false identities in a doctor's flat in Germany. Hans Neumeyer continued to work and was able to send two

compositions for two recorders for his daughter to play in her foster-home in Cambridge. He was deported to Terezin where he died of neglect and starvation in May 1944. His half-Jewish wife is thought to have perished in Majdanek.[171]

Figure 17: Photograph of an exhibition display of the Neumeyer family, IWM Holocaust Exhibition, author's own

Next to the text is an enlarged photograph of Hans sat at the piano, beneath which is the original sheet of music with the drawing of Ruth and her friend Jane sat together in a hammock playing recorders. Below lie two original music

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[171] Tim Locke informed me that Hans and Vera did not live under false identities during the war unlike what is written in the exhibition text.

sheets composed by Hans with a propped up, cropped photograph of Ruth sat on the grass in Cambridge, 1939. The original photograph had Elizabeth Paish sat to her right with a clearer view of a large house behind them. By removing Elizabeth and the house from the photograph and hence the representation, Ruth’s story is solely visually contextualised within a narrative of music, particularly that of her father’s. Furthermore, the position of the display within the Exhibition subsection ‘Hiding’ privileges Hans and Vera’s story as it was them, rather than their children, who spent more time in Munich in hiding.

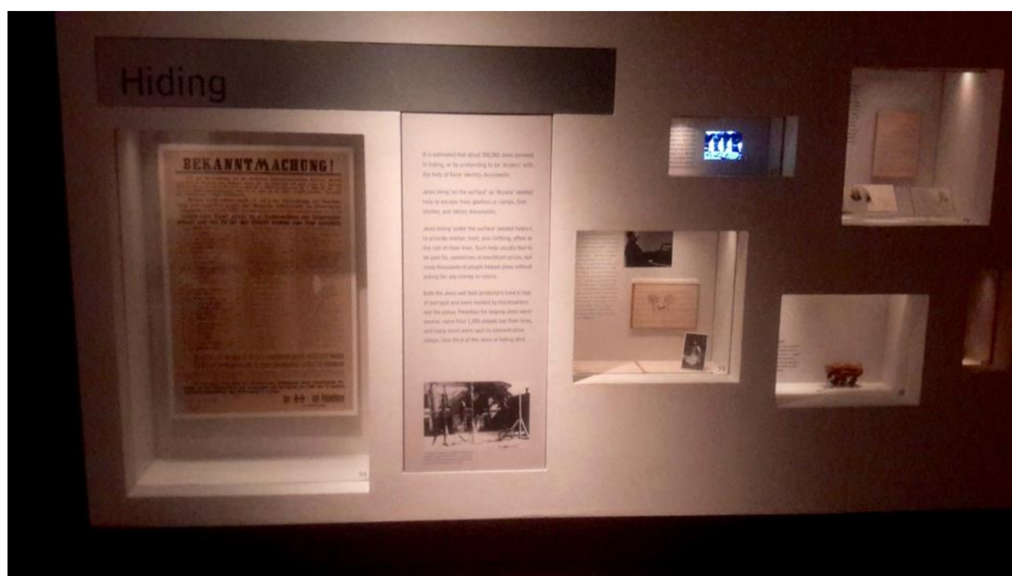

Figure 18: Photograph of the exhibition display of the Neumeyer family within the section entitled ‘Hiding’, IWM Holocaust Exhibition, author's own photo.

It is important to note that Ruth is not written out of the story, but her particular experiences of emigration and life in England are here not the foci of attention. Taking into account the objects that she donated, the note she wrote to IWM about her father and the way in which she introduced her story in her oral testimony, it is possible that IWM may have followed Ruth’s lead in privileging her parents', in particularly her father's, stories.

Sharing her story with IWM was not the first time that Ruth had shared her war time experiences. Ruth had already shared her story with Hans Holzhaider, a journalist based in Munich. He had tracked her down after finding a document in the Munich public archives containing a list of 12 names under the title "In der Stadt Dachau wohnhafte Juden" or 'Jews resident in the town of Dachau.' The fourth name on that list was Hans Neumeyer. He spent an afternoon talking with Ruth along with other refugees in Britain from Dachau, a result of which was a newspaper article and a booklet entitled 'Before Sunrise: The Fate of the Jewish Citizens of Dachau' published in 1985. Holzhaider also exhibited her photographs and Red Cross letters in Dachau in 1988.[172]

I interviewed Holzhaider via video call during which he described that although eager to talk, Ruth was hesitant to reflect upon her past during these earlier encounters. He described writing to Ruth who:

> Was surprised and she immediately consented that I came to see her. But she was a bit, maybe, reserved... The words didn't pour from her and she wasn't too enthusiastic about searching in her old belongings to find old documents.

The only documents that Ruth did show Holzhaider were the Red Cross letters and the photographs that are in the booklet. Holzhaider 'learnt from the blog of her sons that there were much much more of her belongings which she didn't show me.' He wondered if 'she picked out things, that she knew where to find them, but I think there were many other things deep down in old boxes which she didn't mention to me.' Holzhaider's recollections of Ruth suggest that it was returning to Dachau and feeling connected to a place through a memorial

[172] Holzhaider, *Before Sunrise*.

that was the catalyst for her renewed engagement with her family history. Ruth had recalled in a letter she sent to Holzhaider of an experience that took place in an inn in Dachau that particularly stood out to her:

> A man came to her table and said, 'I am St Joseph', she wrote, 'we looked at him to see if he was a little gaga, but he said, "yes, I was St Joseph and you were Mary."' And it was from a Christmas play they had at the Neumeyers' house and Ruth was Holy Mary and this fellow was St Joseph. And she looked at him and remembered, and she wrote it was like awakening from a deep slumber. So many things came up when she was present in Dachau. People that she knew in Dachau came and talked to her. I think she was very much impressed.

The 'deep slumber' from which Ruth awoke was not defined by Holzhaider nor Ruth, but Holzhaider made a clear connection between Ruth returning to Dachau with her 'awakening.' Indeed, returning to the specific place from which she was separated, connecting to people from whom she had been separated, Ruth was able to reconnect to aspects of her past she had dissociated herself from. Additionally, Tim and Stephen recognise the influence Holzhaider had on Ruth gaining a public facing commemorative and activist voice. Stephen recalls,

> I think suddenly from then onwards, mid 1980s Ruth woke up to the fact her story was quite important and quite interesting. It wasn't just a piece of uncomfortable family history but was something that needed to be told. She opened up very extensively then for example in going to the commemoration of Kristallnacht in the local schools in Dachau.

One could add that Ruth did not just ‘wake up’ to the fact her story was important, but to the fact the story of Dachau’s Jews was important. Her desire to fit her own story within a collective public history could also be seen to reflect her modest self-reflection with which she ended her oral history interview, ‘I don’t suppose that is very useful to you as I can’t really say very much.’ [173]

Ruth did not perhaps see her own story as important, but her civic activism suggested that she felt it important to tell the story of Dachau’s lost Jewish community. Ruth persistently lobbied to install a plaque outside Dachau town hall to remember the names of Dachau Jews for the 40th anniversary of Kristallnacht. She also leveraged her own status as a refugee to influence Dachau councillors. Tim told me how Ruth,

> Insisted they put this plaque up otherwise she wouldn’t come for the 40th anniversary. At first, they refused in Dachau. She said I want to do that and talk to school children the age I was when I left, I was 15. They wouldn’t do it at first. They said there weren’t any pogroms in Dachau but they were rooted out.

As Werner Bohleber explains, ‘it is beyond an individual’s capacities to integrate such traumatic experiences onto (sic) a narrative context that is purely personal; a social discourse is also required concerning the historical truth of

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[173] Vansant describes the way refugees may have to ‘gain a sense that their stories are worth telling’, since ‘nothing exceptional has happened to them in comparison to the pain and suffering of those in concentration camps’. Jacqueline Vansant, *Reclaiming Heimat: Trauma and Mourning in Memoirs by Jewish Austrian Reémigrés* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2001), 31.

the traumatic events, as well as their denial and defence repudiation.'[174] Indeed, Ruth required a wider social discourse provided by IWM, Hans Holzhaider and Dachau, to tell her own story.

Returning to Dachau, and commemorating Dachau Jews was integral to Ruth connecting to her past. Another part of her reconnection to her Dachau was the laying of three *Stolpersteine* (stumbling stones) outside the Neumeyer family home in Dachau to commemorate Hans, Vera and Julius Kohn, their lodger. This took place in November 2005, the same year that she recorded her testimony at IWM. Examining one photograph of Ruth during this event helps to illustrate how Ruth's reconnection with the past was set within a collective memory of Dachau's Jews. From examining her photographs of this return, I suggest that Ruth recognised her leading role in transforming her familial memory into a collective memory.

In the photograph, Ruth is standing outside the house while a small crowd of people gather behind her, presumably looking at the *Stolpersteine*. In Matthew Cook and Micheline van Riemsdijk's historical geographic study of *Stolpersteine*, they argue that the stones allow individuals to shape the cultural landscape.[175] These commemorative stones turn life history into material history but are also symbolic of the recent struggle to commemorate those who are lost.[176] Paul Stangl makes a distinction between grand memorials and vernacular ones in

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[174] Werner Bohleber, *Destructiveness, Intersubjectivity and Trauma: The Identity crisis of Modern Psychoanalysis* (London: karnac, 2010), 121, referenced in Clark et al., *The Journey Home*, 1.
[175] Paul Stangl, 'The Vernacular and the Monumental: Memory and Landscape in Post-War Berlin', *GeoJourna*l 73 (2008): 245-253.
[176] Matthew Cook and Micheline van Riemsdijk, 'Agents of memorialization: Gunter Demnig's Stolpersteine and the Individual (re-)creation of a Holocaust Landscape in Berlin,' *Journal of Historical Geography,* 43 (2014), 138-147; Paul Adams, 'Peripatetic Imagery and Peripatetic Sense of Place', in, Paul Adams, Steven Hoelscher, and Karen Till (eds.), *Textures of Place: Exploring Humanist Geographies* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 186-206.

Berlin such as renaming streets and *Stolpersteine* with the latter giving testimony to everyday life in the past. The installation of *Stolpersteine* by the family home represents a restoration of name and memory to the place that seems central to the family identity and narrative. With this in mind, Ruth pictured standing in front of her house with other people looking down at the *Stolpersteine* becomes symbolic in itself of the spatial way in which Ruth had encountered the memories of her parents and their home in Dachau. Rather than passers by stepping on them unnoticed, these 'random' people are looking at and engaged with the material memorial of her parents.

Ruth stands in the foreground, slightly removed from the precise *Stolpersteine* spot and the public 'encounters', perhaps a technique to include both herself and the house in the picture's frame. This formation creates, however, a sense of Ruth's distance from the hustle around the public's involvement in what is a central place in Ruth's formative memories. Her soft smile and slight lean towards the house imbue a sense of private pride and connection between her and the house. This may be reflected of a silent pride she feels of the efforts to reinstate her parents' rightful place in the house in the form of the *Stolpersteine* and thus providing testimony to the everyday stories of her childhood home. Keeping in mind Holzhaider's account of the way in which Ruth's story was pivotal in how Dachau has turned towards its darker history, this photograph embodies Ruth being proudly at the forefront of a more collective memorial to those who perished. At the same time, this closeness to yet distance from both the house and group suggest recognition of a shared space in which herself and others who desire civic commemoration have a shared ownership of memories that the house bears and represents. The home, once a site of familial belonging, has been transformed, into the guardian of a collective memory of the Holocaust.

Figure 19. Photograph of Ruth stood outside her childhood home in Dachau, 2005, courtesy of Tim Locke.

Figure 20: Photograph of ‘Flowers placed for the Kristallnacht anniversary on the freshly polished Stolpersteine outside the Neumeyer house in Dachau’, *The Ephraims and Neumeyers* (blog).

Part Three - "Just being nosy really": Tim and Stephen's Encounter with the family's past

Upon discovering their mother's collection of documents and photographs after her death in 2012, Tim and Stephen began writing a blog to document their findings, a reason for which Tim explained:

> The only way I could begin to understand it (the collection) was to do a blog, discussing things I knew about and understood [...] The first thing I found was a ferry ticket from 1939 which came on the Kindertransport. I'd never seen it before, that would make a good story.[177]

The discovery of this archive and the research they have conducted has, I suggest, involved a process of acquiring consciousness because of memory work. This process is defined by Kuhn as an 'awakening of critical consciousness, through their own activities of reflection and learning, among those who lack power; and the development of a critical and questioning attitude towards their own lives and the lives of those around them.' The practice of memory work begins with the practitioner's own material – memories, photographs, documents – and is an emotional, rational, creative process.[178] For Tim and Stephen's memory work, there is a distinction between the role that photographs, and that of written documents have played in this acquisition of consciousness. These distinctions are what I shall focus on in this subsection and hopefully add to the understanding of the complex relationship between memory, storytelling and photographs among second-generation

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[177] Interview with Tim.
[178] Kuhn, *Family Secrets*, 9.

Jewish refugees. It is evident that while photographs can enrich written documents, this subsection demonstrates the opposite, that is the tension between the image and written record, especially when family myths are at risk of being challenged or undermined.

The role of photographs compared to other documents and artefacts for making sense of their past is best understood through looking at how these objects sat within their childhood home and therefore how they helped influence their sense of place, self and family. Stephen described how, as children, the photographs were 'around the house but we didn't spend any time looking at them, they were just there.'[179] Artefacts and written documents on the other hand had been stored away. Tim remembered how, upon clearing out their parents' home after Ruth's death:

> We found she kept everything, kept all these letters from her mother and so on and from lots of people I didn't know about and, she never told me about. And lots of things tied up into tight bundles in a trunk on the landing and when I was clearing the house, I found another big box.[180]

It is evident that the role of photographs in the sons' memory work has not been as straightforward as written documents. They have not been 'read' and decoded as other documents are. This subsection attempts to understand the alternative ways in which the two sons have used photographs, whether consciously or unconsciously, to connect to and understand that past. I shall do so by demonstrating the sons' paradoxical distance from yet familiarity with the photographs that simultaneously confound and confirm their sense of self and

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[179] Interview with Stephen Locke, 25 August 2020, London.
[180] Interview with Tim.

the past. I do this by making three assertions about the family photographs: firstly that they created an air of mystery and subsequently an idealisation of the past; secondly, they created a common thread between their mother's childhood and their own; lastly that the photographs continue to baffle them concerning their mother's emotional responses, but help confirm their belief in the ordinariness yet significance of their family's history.

Tim grew up recognising the value ascribed to photographs, particularly the albums, by his mother. During the interview, Tim also reflected on the impressions he gained from certain photographs being displayed around his childhood house. He described how 'in another room, a tiny room called the sewing room there was a man in dark glasses, Hans. I was always slightly in awe of those people in the house, they were always there.'[181] The past was always present in their lives visually, yet it was rarely a topic of discussion: 'there was this sort of murky sinister story in the background. She never really hid that, but she didn't talk about it very openly at least not until the 1980s.' Connecting the photograph with an impression of awe suggests the power of images to evoke emotional connections to the past. Helen Epstein, a child of a Holocaust survivor, also wrote about the iconic role photographs held: 'from the time I was a little girl, that sepia-toned photograph that hung on the wall like an icon.'[182] The awe, and even the high esteem in which Tim held his grandfather was also indicated in Tim's memory. He recalled: 'I remember playing the piano once and she (Ruth) said: "my father used to play that." "Oh dear, I won't play that again,"' Tim recalled whilst gently laughing. Although never meeting Hans, Tim was still in awe of his grandfather. It appeared that Hans held a presence in Tim's life, especially in musical practice, which left Tim wanting to avoid any

[181] Interview with Stephen.
[182] Helen Epstein, *Where She Came From: A Daughter's Search for her Mother's History* (New Jersey: Holmes and Meier, 2005), 7.

intrusion onto his mother's memory of her father. Indeed, it raises the question of whether photographs, rather than stories (of which there were reportedly few), were more important in shaping these connections.

Tim recognised how certain scenes and imagery in these photographs shaped who he has become. The album contains numerous photographs of Ruth and Raimund dressed up performing plays. Tim described how the plays were paralleled in their childhood:

> There are many more in the albums of the plays. I must say that sort of came part of our childhood as well because we sort of enjoyed dressing up and doing plays in our house as well, so I guess it kind of rubbed off.

Another example he provides of the photographs which 'rubbed' off on him suggests how photographs provoked a postmemory connected to nuns. When he passed me a school photograph of Ruth, he added, 'I don't know if this instilled a fear of nuns as a child. I was scared of nuns when I was a child' He went on to explain:

> She told us in one of her classes...on St Nicholas day, instead of Santa Claus, these terrifying looking men came in black and a sack and sticking out of the sacks was not toys but legs. He said, 'I've come to take all the bad children away and I'm going to read out a list of the good children. I was really terrified of this character.

Incidentally, Tim demonstrates how Ruth's school photographs facilitated stories about 'terrifying looking nuns,' and how presumably the fear that Ruth had felt was transmitted to Tim. A photograph that once evoked stories of fear has come to evoke stories of his own fear related to that photograph.

Figure 21. Photograph of Tim and Stephen in 2008 in front of the Neumeyers' house*, The Ephraims and Neumeyers* (blog).

As another example, Tim and Stephen are active in connecting to their heritage, reperforming photographs to create visual links between past and present. The post 'What the Neumeyers' house was like' contains a 'carousel' of four photographs of the exterior of the house in Dachau taken from two different angles at two different times (fig. 22).[183] The first and third photographs are in black and white taken in the 1920s and the second and third in colour taken in 2018 during the sons' visit to polish the Stolpersteine. Returning to the

[183] The blog displays one photograph at a time with arrows on the side to move to the next photographs. Tim Locke, 'What the Neumeyer's House was Like', *The Ephraims and Neumeyers* (blog), February 2020, accessed May 2022, https://ephraimneumeyer.wordpress.com/2020/02/17/what-the-neumeyers-house-was-like/.

ancestral home is a common trip for descendants of Holocaust survivors, often to piece together fragments of the imagination into a physical reality.[184] One piece of this fragmented reality was in the form of their childhood home, which shared many similar exterior features to that of their mother's. In his blog, Tim captioned a photograph: 'Our house in Sydenham "I think I've found our house" Ruth said to her husband Ronald when she spotted it in 1956. It certainly reminded her of the Neumeyer home in Dachau' (fig. 23). It was important for Tim to assert the physical similarities between London, Dachau, his childhood and his mother's in order to piece together these visual fragments between the present and past.

It was clear that photographs gave Tim and Stephen an impression of Ruth's idyllic and happy childhood. However, Tim could sense that the emotional significance ascribed to the photographs by his mother was testament to a story that he was unaware of. Knowing that there were things unsaid, emotions unexpressed and people and places unclarified, Tim was driven to discover more:

> I thought that, it would be really nice to go through these and find out what my mother was really about. I didn't really understand what she went through. Everything was all a bit positive and it wouldn't be wrong to suffer for anything if you've been through so much. She had her big photo album, it was all sort of sunny pictures, there was nothing malicious.

Here, Tim acknowledges the complexity of using photographs to tell stories.[185] Throughout the interview Tim lamented the fact Ruth rarely spoke about her

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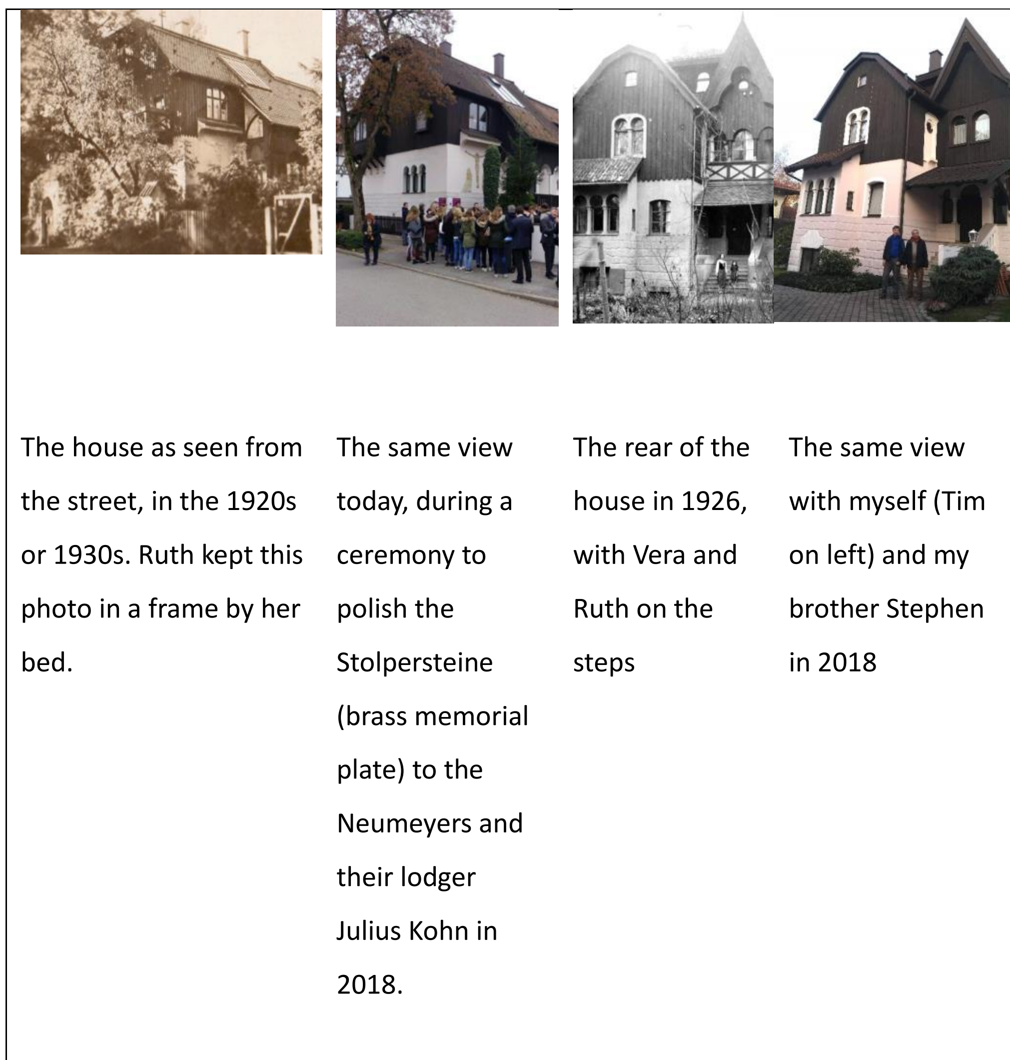
[184] Clark et al., *The Journey Home*, 13.

[185] Other second-generation writers have grappled with the counter-intuitive nature of family photographs including the disparity between the smiling and relaxed poses

emotions. Despite appreciating Ruth captioning the photographs with dates etc, he expressed frustration that:

> She didn't really give the game away about how she felt, how angry she must have felt about it. So that drove me onto looking further into letters, and anything else I could find out.



The house as seen from the street, in the 1920s or 1930s. Ruth kept this photo in a frame by her bed.	The same view today, during a ceremony to polish the Stolpersteine (brass memorial plate) to the Neumeyers and their lodger Julius Kohn in 2018.	The rear of the house in 1926, with Vera and Ruth on the steps	The same view with myself (Tim on left) and my brother Stephen in 2018

Figure 22. Photographs of the Neumeyers's house in the 1920s and 2018, courtesy of Tim Locke.

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in photographs and the harsh reality of the family's plight in Nazi Germany. See Hirsch et al., 'Incongruous Images'; Leo Spitzer, 'The Album and the Crossing', in *The Familial Gaze*, ed. Marianne Hirsch, 208–22 (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1999).

Figure 23: Photograph of the exterior of the Lockes' family home in Sydenham, courtesy of Tim Locke.

Integral to Tim's attempt to understand his mother's emotional responses to her experience of emigration and loss, he looks to photographs. However, due to the confusing nature of these 'sunny pictures' he then turns to letters, diaries and oral testimony for other clues; a search that both Stephen and Tim acknowledge was again fruitless. Regarding the IWM testimony, Tim admitted that 'one or two things annoy me about it. She doesn't ever go beneath the surface, kind of playing it safe all the time.' In the same respect, Stephen noted that Ruth's diary also provides few clues to her emotional responses and instead described a lot of it as 'quite dull. "Sun shone today; bit snowy in the afternoon." "We had pork chops at tea." It's a lot at that level.' The

inconclusiveness of photographs mirrors Langford's unsuccessful quest to understand her 'stoical' and 'emotionally distant' mother through family photographs. Langford concluded that photographs, despite being 'framed as *intimate'* offer little more than a 'public performance'. [186]

The photographs and Ruth's diaries are seen by the sons as representing the banal and everyday. These are however qualities that are typical for family albums[187] and valuable to cultural historians. Indeed, deconstructing the everyday can be achieved by applying an endiotic sociology as put forward by Les Beck.[188] Beck draws on the work of Georges Perec, a post-war French Jewish sociologist. Originally from Poland, Perec's father was killed fighting against the Nazis and his mother was killed in Auschwitz. For him, 'railway trains only begin to exist when they are derailed, and the more passengers that are killed, the more they exist.' Perec explained that 'my intention in the pages that follow was to describe the rest...that which has no importance: that which happens when nothing happens other than the weather, people, cars, and clouds.' Ruth preferred to document the banal everyday events such as the weather and what she was having for dinner. Indeed, banal facts passed over in silence might have provided an anchor during the darkest days. Furthermore, for a period of three months at the end of 1945, she did not write a single entry in her diary. This period follows her discovery of her parents' death. Her diaries and indeed the photographs reflect a desire for the ordinary and mundane in a world that was

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[186] Emphasis found in text, Langford, 'That Other Woman: The Woman who Accompanied the Cold War Tourist to Paris' *in Picturing the Family*, eds Arnold-de Simine et al, 19-39, 35.
[187] Batchen, 'Snapshots, Art History and The Ethnographic Turn'. *Photographies* 1 (2008): 123; Rose, *Doing Family Photographs.*
[188] Les Beck, 'Foreword: Making the Mundane Remarkable', in *Mundane Methods, Innovative Ways to Research the Everyday*, edited by Helen Holmes and Sarah Marie Hall, xiv-xviii (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020).

overwhelmingly extraordinary and incomprehensible. Reading with hindsight, it is difficult for both the sons and indeed, historians and curators alike, to understand this cursory reflection and representation of events that today muster so many questions. Indeed, it often, as in the case with Tim, leads to frustration and in the case of Tim's blog, a lack of words to describe them. As such, reflecting the inability to comprehend in words the events of the past.

Tim's description of the photographs of the 1938 'tour' illustrates the complexities of comparing visual material and collective memory. In a blog post entitled, 'A holiday away from hell: a poignant picture of normality, 1938', Tim wrote:

> In 1938 life was getting increasingly difficult for my mother's family in Dachau, with all the disadvantages attached to those deemed Jewish in Nazi Germany. She and her brother Raimund were forced out of school in 1938. Their father Hans had already lost his job, and their mother found a little work to try to make ends meet. Yet they were determined to put a positive slant on things: at a time when Vera Neumeyer saw the family's world coming to an end, she rather wonderfully took the decision to spend a lot of their dwindling cash on holidays.[189]

Compared to most Tim's blog posts, this one contains more images than words. He explains this by writing 'most (photos) speak for themselves. They give a

[189] Tim Locke, 'A Holiday Away From Hell: A Poignant Picture of Normality, 1938', *The Ephraims and The Neumeyers* (blog), 21 May 2017, accessed 13 June 2020, https://ephraimneumeyer.wordpress.com/2017/05/21/a-holiday-from-hell-a-poignant-picture-of-normality-1938/

poignant picture of normality.' During the interview, he paused to look at the photographs, commenting, 'all those happy pictures of holidays, and friends and lovely pictures of walks in the mountains.' Here, Tim uses photos less to understand the context of the photograph and more to confirm a story of familial bonds, harmony and innocence: a story of a mother's sacrifice and love for her two children. This relates to what Deborah Schulz sees as photographs attesting 'less to particular evidence but function more, as markers of collective memory.' She cites Michael Griffen who perceives family photographs as most useful 'when they symbolize socially shared concepts or beliefs rather than present new or unfamiliar information.'[190] When reflecting on the type of childhood his mother had Stephen explained how:

> One of the things that has come across to me and I know the IWM is very keen to emphasise nowadays was how normal everything was for Jewish families in Germany until it wasn't. The Holocaust and all those atrocities that surrounded it happened against a background of people doing very ordinary things. Some having a bit of a struggle, some having internal family disputes and all the rest of it. And then suddenly this huge thing came crashing through the front door.[191]

The important message for Stephen is the ordinariness of the family. One photograph stands out to Stephen: a photograph of Ruth, Raimund and friends performing a play (fig. 24). For him, 'it captures a moment of lost innocence

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[190] Deborah Schulz, 'The (Re)constructed Self in the Safe Space of the Family Photograph: Chino Otsuka's *Imagine Finding Me* (2005)', in Arnold-De Simine et al. *Picturing the Family,* 135-51, 138.
[191] Interview with Stephen.

actually. It was just before things got really bad.' It was a moment of ordinariness before the world become extraordinary. A moment or indeed moments when neither words nor images really captured the suffering and fear that we expect from this period. It is not the overt representations of suffering through images nor words which affect Stephen. Instead, it's the display of innocence and ordinariness captured and frozen in time which carry the most poignancy. Indeed, Tim and Stephen's commentary on the photographs suggests that certain photos are potent reminders of happier and calmer times rather than facilitators of understanding.

Figure 24. Photograph of Ruth (front left) performing a play, courtesy of Tim Locke.

Conclusion

There is an etymological connection between albums and new beginnings: the Latin root word 'album' (a blank tablet for lists) was inspired by its whiteness.[192] Vera gave the album to her children when they were sent to England for what was to become the beginning of their new life. The album therefore represented what they had left behind. Photographs are, as photography theorists often argue, symbols of loss. For Ruth and her sons, however, they serve as important visual threads to a life left behind but also to the cultures, values and places which have transcended time and space and remained in their life. Their love for nature and the arts, their home's architecture, travel and the ghostly presence of Vera and Hans all contribute to a sense of the past in the present. This could explain why Tim and Stephen do not feel pressed to visually deconstruct the ideological meanings in the photographs. For the Locke brothers, unlike for auto biographers such as Spence and Kuhn, photographs are not a set of texts to be 'read' – deconstructed and interpreted – but serve to confirm previously held ideas.[193] This could be explained by the fact that family photographs, even our own, are of little interest but exist to serve social or relational ends.[194] Their awareness of the past through photographs occurred at a younger age and therefore do not feature so much as part of their memory work. It was written documents, on the other hand, which helped to piece the fragments of the past together.

The photographs of the 1938 'tour', for Tim, 'speak for themselves'. Yet as we have seen, the presences and absences contained in photographs provide more

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[192] Langford, *Suspended Conversations, 23.*

[193] Kuhn references Jo Spence, *Putting Myself in the Picture: A Political, Personal and Photographic Autobiograph*y (London: Camden Press, 1986) in Kuhn, *Family Secrets*, 154.

[194] Schulz, 'The (Re) Constructed Self,' 138.

clues than what first meets the eye. Ruth’s photographs as well as her diaries contain absences and gaps which both frustrate and help bolster both a familial and popular shared belief in the normality of German Jewish family life prior to the pogroms of November 1938. The term ‘normality’ is, however, problematic: issues of class, religion, acculturation and assimilation creates nuances in one’s reality. Both Ruth and Stephen insisted on the ordinariness of their family story and indeed many aspects of Ruth’s story and the conventions of the photographs are shared by other German-Jews during this period.

But to widen the lens from the photographic material to the social dynamics of album making, album preservation, captioning, archiving and storytelling through three generations helps historians and curators to better understand how memory is shaped over time through the visual, written and oral. As demonstrated, family photographs continue to perplex, above all when compared to the testimonies and other documents. As in the captions and Tim and Stephen’s blogging and interviews, meanings are derived according to the needs of the time: to reassert a family identity with humour and irony or for social and family relational ends. Entrusting IWM with the photograph albums is another part of this memory shaping: Tim and Stephen donated the album in 2021 to be displayed in the new Holocaust Galleries opened at IWM London that year. Through sharing their family heritage, they help continue their mother’s legacy of sharing the past of not only their family but a wider community of Jews who shared the same histories as their family. In doing so, the two generations have been pivotal in transforming collective memory into cultural memory. However, the contours of what has been transformed, have been heavily shaped by the photograph albums and their power to communicate the myth of the cohesive unit rather than a community fractured and fissured by a turbulent past. Ruth's oral testimony and the captions she added to the photograph albums subtly challenge the performativity of both the photographs and her mother’s attempt to create an air of normalcy and to

cover the cracks that were appearing in the family. Despite this the family unit is preserved, no more so in IWM Holocaust Galleries, a point I will expand upon in chapter five. Photographs and testimony, particularly when allowed to support each other possess the capacity to understand Jewish perspectives of the world. This being so it has not always been the case that different generations and professionals have reached out to what is a rich resource of understanding and interpretation.

Chapter Two: Esther Brunstein

Introduction

In 1919, the Bund leader, Vladimir Meden, explained the meaning of the Bund:

> Look comrade, into your own soul. There you will read the answer: you have a home, a family, a basis to stand on; you can feel that around you, above you and within you there is a great force that supports, embraces, and carries you, makes you strong, and does not let you fall.[195]

Esther (nee Zylberberg) Brunstein grew up with the socialist values of the Bund as described by Meden. It was this sense of camaraderie and security from which Esther 'drew strength [...] In the darkest moments of my life'.[196] This chapter focuses on Esther and her daughter, Lorna's relationship with this Bundist minded past and present.

The previous chapter examined how Jewish families used photography to demonstrate their affiliation with Jewish bourgeois modernism. This chapter turns to the role of photographs for asserting a family's cultural, political, and ideological belonging to the Bund movement. In this sense, photographs and testimony reinforce each other by providing further testament to the family's faith in the movement. Despite this, I show that photographs have the potential to confound and destabilise a sense of the past and self, emphasising as I do,

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[195] Vladimir Meden, 'Bulletin of the Bund Archives of the Jewish Labour Movement', *New Series,* no.7-9, (Winter 1988): 1, quoted in Bernard Goldstein, *Twenty Years with the Jewish Labor Bund: A Memoir of Interwar Poland*, (New York, Purdue University Press, 2016), xiii.
[196] Esther Brunstein, 'Esther Brunstein' online, *Holocaust Memorial Day*, 2003, accessed 5 July 2022, https://www.hmd.org.uk/resource/esther-brunstein/.

the importance of understanding photographs and testimony within a long context of meaning-making.

I shall first provide a brief background of the Bund movement and then the family's history. The first subsection takes the photographs as sources of enquiry into the Zylberberg's photography practice and engages with what this tells us about family and individual memory and identity. Hirsch's seminal work on family photographs and memory is key for understanding the meaning-making processes of families. She argues that the function of family photographs are 'integrally tied to the ideology of the modern family.'[197] This ideology posits a cohesive unit held together by family rituals. This 'myth of the family', Hirsch argues, 'dominates lived reality, even though it can exist in conflict with it and can be ruled by different interests. The survival of this myth depends on its narrative and imaginary powers, a power that photographs have a particular capacity to tap'.[198] On the other hand, a study of private photographs must move beyond the confines of the family, a strategy endorsed by Arnold-de Simine et al. Whilst they certainly support the canonical view that family photographs are a mechanism to 'naturalise a Westernized middle-class model of the nuclear family' and enact cohesion,[199] they extend this to give photographs a greater role in which the family takes up a very much wider role of belonging well beyond the confines of the family unit.[200]

This chapter follows Arnold-de Simine et al.'s lead to enlarge the function that family photographs play. In this case I explore the (Brunstein) family's social, relational, and ideological kinship to the Bund. It is worth stating at the outset that this chapter also recognises the importance of familial and domestic

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[197] Hirsch, *Family Frames,* 7.
[198] Ibid, 8.
[199] Arnold-de Simine et al., *Picturing the Family*, 3.
[200] Ibid, 14.

features of family photographs to the family's self-expression and identity. As such, I aim to integrate the political and the personal, the public and the private to discover what role the political played in the family ideology and vice versa. The Bund, I suggest, is central to the Zyllerberg's identity which was in certain respects based on reality: a reality that was to a considerable extent laced with narrative and imaginary power. Family photographs, I argue, have had a 'particular capacity to tap' into this power.[201]

The second subsection will examine Lorna's memory work, particularly the way that Lorna relates to the photographs in my interview and her artwork. Her artwork, which alongside many other second-generation artists, explores her mother-daughter relationships.[202] Although examining wider forms of kinship, I shall also narrow the framework of my analysis to focus on the synchronistic relationship between a mother and daughter because I was only able to interview one of Esther's two daughters. This focus has particular relevance to a growing field of feminist literature and the Holocaust as well as on photography, family and memory more generally.[203] Prominent here are the claims of the feminist theorist Gayatri Spivak who argues that mothers and daughters 'are privileged intergenerational interlocutors when it comes to

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[201] Hirsch, *Family Frames*, 8.
[202] Shahar Marnin-Distelfeld, 'In the Liveliest Place, My Mother's Bosom, There was Death' – Mother-Daughter Relationships in the Work of Rachel Nemesh, Second-Generation Holocaust Survivor', *Holocaust Studies* 28, no.1 (2022): 20-47.
[203] Hirsch, *The Mother/Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989); Hirsch, *Family Frames*; Arnold-de Simine et al.'s volume contains several chapters examining the centrality of the mother and daughter in the authors mediations on the intersections between self, family, memory and photographs: Martha Langford, 'That Other Woman: The Woman who Accompanied the Cold War Tourist to Paris', 19-41; Lizzie Thynne, 'Memory, Subjectivity and Maternal Histories in *Un'Ora Sola Ti Vorrei* (2002), *Histoire d'un Secret* (2003) and *On the Border* (2012)', 41-67; Judith Butler, 'In and Out of Focus: Visualising Loss Through the Family Album', 117-135, all in *Picturing the Family*, ed. Arnold-de Simine et al.

traumatic recollection'.[204] I shall examine how an understanding of wider networks of kinship might affect our understanding of mother-daughter relationships and how these networks might then be understood through family photographs.

For this chapter I also draw on Hirsch's concept of postmemory. Her theory is particularly relevant due to its feminist theories on subjectivity and intersubjectivity and their interactions with political solidarity on the topic of trauma and memory. I also employ Fischer's model of 'memory work' to examine the relationship between postmemory and memory work in Lorna's interview and her artwork. By doing so I argue that the digital and material reuse of private photographs in second generation artwork, creates a personal and embodied connection to the past. These reused photographs reflect Lorna's efforts to make sense of the past. It is important to appreciate that what is discussed here will be different from postmemories where any sense of the past is known but is indirectly connected to her experience.

The final subsection will explore both Esther role in political activism, public engagement and collective remembrance including her relationship with IWM. I draw attention to the absence of Esther's emotional response to events from the public realm as evidence of impossibility of neatly transferring individual memory to cultural memory. Indeed the dissonance between the public and private meanings is a significant feature of her photograph collection.

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[204] Gayatri C. Spivak, 'Acting Bits/Identity Talk', in *Identities*, ed. Anthony Appiah Kwame and Henry Louis Gates, 147-80 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

Methodology

I first met Lorna and her sister Denise at a lunch and presentation hosted by IWM in 2018. As relatives of people whose testimony and objects were represented in the Holocaust Exhibition, they had been invited to offer some thoughts on the design for the new galleries. I spoke to them about my research, and as a result they were both willing to be interviewed. Denise eventually did not feel able to honour her initial enthusiasm and declined to be interviewed. I was, however, able to spend a day at Lorna's house in Bath in 2020 during which she showed me the collection of photographs, shared stories and memories and talked me through her artwork. Her partner Richard White joined us for lunch. Their interest in the academic and personal meaning of photographs, inherited memory and storytelling was evident in our conversation and they spoke with some knowledge on the literary work of Jo Spence and Walter Benjamin. This interest is mirrored in the way Lorna reflects about the social and imaginative role of photographs and how she values their ability to shape and reflect identities and memories. Different subsections examine different generations, but Lorna's voice will remain key in my examination of her family's relationship with photography practices. I was conscious that only speaking to one family member prevented a full transgenerational enquiry into the meaning of their family's collection of photographs, but I have attempted to counteract this by understanding Esther by speaking to IWM professionals and reading media articles about and written by Esther.

The Family Background

The Bund was a Jewish socialist political organisation founded in Vilna, a city in Lithuania, in 1897 in Social-Democratic circles as the Socialist organisation for the Jewish working class in pre-revolutionary Russia. It found popularity in newly independent Poland, emerging as a political party during the German-

Austrian occupation in the First World War.[205] The Bund celebrated the 'ordinary' Jewish worker, physical labour and formed new expressions for the Jewish collective, imbuing it with social ideals of humanity.[206]

The accession of Marshall Piłsudzki as Head of the Polish State in 1926 bred faith amongst Polish Jewry in an emergence of a more social regime and the eradication of antisemitism. However, their faith was quickly dulled, convinced as they were that Jewish emancipation would be attained through long-term toil rather than any revolution. Zionism and the Bund both shared the belief that they deserved a place in the world. Whereas Zionism believed this should be realised in the State of Israel, the Bund sought Jewish co-existence in Poland and other nations and guarantees for cultural differences.[207] Zionism was more attractive to the Jewish intelligentsia and those who could afford the long migration.[208] The Bund did not believe in a form of nationalism which separates states and culture but a flexible nation made up of diverse cultural and political communities to create a 'superstucture', i.e. The state.[209] Searching for allies would thus be key to achieving this goal.

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[205] Jack Jacobs ed., *Jewish Politics in Eastern Europe: The Bund at 100* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001). On the history of the Bund in Poland: Daniel Blatman, 'The Bund in Poland, 1935–1939', *Polin* 9 (1996): 58–82; Yosef Gorny, *Converging Alternatives. The Bund and the Zionist Labor Movement, 1897–1985* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006).
[206] Emanuel Nowogrodzki, *The Jewish Labour Bund in Poland: From its Emergence as an Independent Political Party Until the Beginning of World War II 1915-1939*, trans. Mark Nowogrodzki (London: Shengold Books, 2001), 162-163.
[207] Jacobs, *Jewish Politics in Eastern Europe*, xvi.
[208] Zvi Gitelman, ed. *The Emergence of Modern Jewish Politics: Bundism and Zionism in Eastern Europe* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2003), 4
[209] Daniel Blatman, 'The National Ideology of the Bund in the Test of Antisemitism and the Holocaust, 1933-47', in *Jewish Politics in Eastern Europe,* ed. Jacobs, 197-212, 200-01.

By 1939, Łódź was home to a quarter million Jews[210] who were for the most part relatively poor.[211] Łódź, alongside Vilna and Warsaw, lay within the Bund's heartland.[212] As a large industrial centre and home to a large working class, it was particularly attractive to Polish Jews who were drawn to the social and democratic values that it then shared with much of Central Europe. The rise of Nazism in Germany and beyond would pose a significant ideological challenge to the Bund.[213] Nazi antisemitism was not just new in its intensity but was also quite distinctive from Polish antisemitism. The former was central and fixed to Nazism' worldview whereas the latter was rooted in economic, political, or territorial problems.[214] The question that faced the Bund throughout the 1930s was Jewish national solidarity or international class solidarity. However, Nazi occupation policies consigning Poles and Jews to different fates put into question Jewish national solidarity.

In the 1930s, the Bund had moved away from an ethnic definition of Jewish nationhood held by Zionism and towards a more profoundly Jewish nationalist movement motivated by the idea of a secular Yiddish culture.[215] However, the new realities for Polish Jews under Nazi occupation forced the Bund to collaborate with Zionists, communists and other socialist groups in order to defend their Jewish cultural existence in Poland.[216]

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[210] Isiah Trunk and Yehiel Yeshaia Trunk, *Łódź Ghetto: A History*, trans. Robert Moses Shapiro (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2006), xi.
[211] Robert Jan van Pelt, *Lodz and Getto Litzmannstadt: Promised Land and Croaking Hole of Europe* (Ontario: Art Gallery of Ontario), 14.
[212] Frank Wolff, Loren Balhorn and Jan-Peter Hermann, *Yiddish Revolutionaries in Migration: The Translational History of the Jewish Labour Bund* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2021).
[213] Ibid, 201-05.
[214] Ibid, 202.
[215] Zvi Gitelman, ed. *The Emergence of Modern Jewish Politics*, 4.
[216] Blatman, 'The National Ideology of the Bund,' 208.

Esther was born in Łódź, Poland, in 1928 to a very closely-knit and enlightened working-class family. Her family were active members of the Bund. Esther's father, Fischel was a foreman in a textile factory and was actively involved in Polish Trade Union movements and had once been an official.[217] Her mother, Sara (née Rywka), a housewife, attended the women's branch of the Bund.[218] She had two older brothers, David and Perec who were both members of the Bundist youth organisations. The family was not particularly religious, but Esther attended a private Jewish day school.

German troops occupied Łódź on 8 September 1939, her uncle, a journalist for a socialist newspaper, was arrested among other Bund members by the Gestapo. He was eventually shot in a prison after suffering extended torture at the hands of the Nazis. On 31st December 1939 Esther's father left the city to a small town called Skierniewice and then Warsaw after being warned he was at risk of suffering a similar fate as his brother. In 1941 Esther's eldest brother, David, escaped on foot to Soviet occupied Poland intending to join the resistance in the East.[219] David was captured and shot dead aged 21. Esther's father was captured and imprisoned at some point after 1944 but Esther never discovered exactly what happened to her father.[220]

Esther, her mother and Perec were forced from their home into Łódź ghetto on 1 May 1940, the day the ghetto was closed off.[221] She attended school at the

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[217] Young craftmen in Łódź such as textile makers were among those most represented in the city's Bund: Paweł Samuś, 'The Bund organisation in Łódź, 1898-1939', in *Politics in Eastern Europe,* ed. Jacobs, 93.
[218] On women in the Bund see Blatman, 'Women in the Jewish Labor Bund in Interwar Poland', in *Women in the Holocaust*, eds. Dalia Ofer and Leonore J Weitzman, 68-84 (New Haven, London 1998).
[219] Esther Brunstein, Interview with Conrad Wood, IWM, 29 October 1985, ©IWM 9122.
[220] Interview with Lorna.
[221] Trunk et al., *Łódź Ghetto*; Lucjan Dobroszychi ed., *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto* 1941-1944, trans. Richard Lourie (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).

beginning but when the ghetto was transformed into a labour camp in October 1940,[222] Esther began working in a carpet factory. When deportations from the ghetto increased, Esther and her mother would hide to increase chances of survival.[223] In January 1944 Perec was transported to an ammunition factory in Hasag-Pelcery Labour Camp in Częstochowa, Poland. In the summer 1944, the ghetto began to be liquidated. Esther and her mother were transported to Auschwitz. They were separated upon arrival; her mother was sent directly to the gas chambers.

In August 1944, Esther was transported to a slave labour camp at Hambühren-Ovelgönne, Germany from where, in February 1945 she was forced to march twelve kilometres to Bergen-Belsen concentration camp.[224] Esther caught typhus in Bergen-Belsen eventually awaking four days after liberation to discover that news. She was taken to Sweden and was able to convalesce and gain strength in a displaced person (DP) camp.[225] Esther had to wait for two years to obtain a special permit to go to England to become a domestic worker for an elderly couple. There is evidence that Esther spent some time in the

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[222] Julian Baranowski, *The Łódź Ghetto: 1940-1944* (Łódź: Archiwum Państwowe w Łodzi, 1999), 40.
[223] Esther Brunstein, Interview with Wood.
[223] Interview with Lorna.
[224] On the labour camp at Hambühren-Ovelgönne, which uses a transcript of an interview with Esther, see, Geoffrey P. Megargee, ed., 'Bergen Belsen: Main Camp' in, *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopaedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933-1945, Volume I: Early Camps, Youth Camps, and Concentration Camps and Subcamps under the SS-Business Administration Main Office,* 277-288 (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2009); On the forced walks see Daniel Blatmen, *The Death Marches: The Final Phase of Nazi Genocide* (Cambridge, Mass., Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010); Tim Cole, 'Holocaust Roadscapes: Retracing the "Death Marches" in Contemporary Europe', *Cahiers De Geographie Du Québec* 57, no. 162 (2013): 445–459.
[225] The exact length of time Esther spent in a DP camp in unknown.

Bundist home Mälarbaden's Herrgårdspensionat – a mansion guest house – in Torshälla outside the industrial town of Eskilstuna.[226]

Perec, meanwhile, was liberated from the Theresienstadt ghetto by the Russians on 9 May 1945.[227] He was among the 732 Jewish orphaned child survivors who were allowed to enter England after the war. Perec was housed in a hostel in Windermere in the Lake District[228], and finally emigrated to Montreal, Canada in 1948, where he became an active member of the Yiddish-speaking community.[229] Esther became an actor in a Yiddish theatre in the East End of London where she met her future husband Stanislav Brunstein who was working as a set designer. Stanislav had served with the Polish army serving in Britain. Esther and Stansilav married in 1949 and had two children, Lorna and Denise. Throughout her life, Esther had several jobs as a dental nurse and Yiddish interpreter, translator, and teacher. Stanislav died in 1994 and Esther died in 2017.

Part One – Esther's Affiliation to the Bund Community

This subsection is organised chronologically. My first concern is to examine photographs documenting Esther and Perec's childhood. Secondly, I tell Esther's and Perec's story in the early post-war period, and finally I touch on the role that photographs played in Esther's later *years.* Throughout it should become evident that photo-ellicitation methods both confirm the family's

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[226] Håkan Blomqvist's study on the Bund in Sweden displays a photograph of Esther singing in the choir at the opening celebration of the Bund home, *Socialism in Yiddish: The Jewish Labour Bund* (Huddinge : Södertörns högskola, 2022), 47.
[227] Anna Hájková, *The Last Ghetto: An Everyday History of Theresienstadt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).
[228] Tony Kushner, 'Wandering Lonely Jews in the English Countryside', *Jewish Culture and History* 12 no.1-2 (2010): 223-250; Lyn Smith, 'Young Jewish Refugees in Britain 1938/9 and 1945/6', *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 27, no 4 (2008): 37–42.
[229] Interview with Lorna.

loyalty to the Bundist movement and also illuminate the moments of intimacy between siblings as well as public displays of resistance after liberation. My claim here is that that photo-ellicitation has the potential to both enhance our understanding of post-war meaning making and to challenge persistent myths surrounding post-liberation silence.

Esther's 1995 testimony describes the Bund's impact on life. She recalled the profound incomprehension felt as a child towards the persecution inflicted on Jews. Her parents' subsequent comment that 'this is why we belong to the movement and why we have to fight for a better place to live in'[230] was hardly a justification of what had happened so much as a response to antisemitism. Esther drew on her Bundist values most intensely during her years of internment: 'to survive one day under those conditions and retain one's values was a great act of resistance. We fought by the skin of our teeth not to sink into an abyss where nothing mattered anymore.'[231]

Esther's photograph collection contains multiple photographs of the Bund community. Esther does not mention the photographs in her testimony, but as I shall discuss here, the photographs are certainly important for capturing and reflecting the centrality of the Bund in the familial memory and identity. It is useful to draw on the research conducted by Gil Pasternak and Gill Ziętkiewicz's on the Shalom Foundation's collection of 7000 domestic photographs featuring Jewish life in Poland before, during and after the Second World War.[232] They notice that prevailing debates on domestic photograph collections are invariably framed by democratic capitalist sociocultural values and

[230] Esther Bruntsein, Interview with Wood.
[231] Ibid.
[232] Gil Pasternak and Marta Ziętkiewicz, 'Beyond the Familial Impulse: Domestic Photography and Sociocultural History in Post-Communist Poland, 1989–1996', *Photography and Culture* 10, no.2 (2017): 121-45.

consequently focus on details of affection, familial, proximity and indeed domesticity. The foundation made an appeal to the public in 1994 to send in private photographs. Many of the photographs were accompanied by letters from the senders describing their provenance. Pasternak et al. argue that it was important to examine these photographs within the context of pre-1989 when Poland had been a Soviet satellite state since the political regime and its ideology had an inevitable impact on the creation and storage of the archive. The accompanying letters contained reflections of the socio-politically unstable reality in which the photos were produced and preserved.

Examining Lorna's photographs adds to Pasternak et al's assertion that private collections from Polish Jewish households relate to notions beyond the domestic such as home, family, friendship, and love.[233] Indeed, domestic photography was a luxury only available to those who owned a camera; a privileged group from which the Zylberberg family were excluded. Most of Lorna's photographs under discussion display large groups of people of all ages standing and sitting facing directly towards the camera (figs. 25 and 26). The locations are frequently in the open with backdrops of grassland or trees. Whilst the compositions are invariably formal the subjects appear relaxed, with some children and adults casually reclining at the front of the group in the foreground. A relaxed, inclusive, and protective atmosphere is created by the inclusion of children siting on the laps of the adults creating a clear impression of intergenerational harmony. These photographs are typical of Bund style photographs captured in *Der Bund in Bildern,* i.e. formal large group photographs, demonstrations, marches, school photographs.[234]

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[233] Pasternak et al., 'Beyond the Familial Impulse,' 142.
[234] Jacob Hertz, *Der Bund in Bilder, 1897-1957* (New York: unser Tsayt, 1958) (online), accessed 16 June 2022, https://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/collections/yiddish-books/spb-nybc200640/hertz-j-s-der-bund-in-bilder-1897-1957.

While looking through them together, Lorna described these photographs as ‘extraordinary because they really capture the Bund’. Indeed, this sense of camaraderie is reflected in Esther’s own description of her education as being imbued with a ‘love of humanity, a strong sense of Jewish identity, security and belonging’.[235] Furthermore, the relaxed and congenial blending of children and adults supports Esther’s memory that, ‘I felt part of it, I felt a bit grown up. I was brought up with that spirit.’[236] It is not hard to see the political and social ideals and aspirations of the Bund as being articulated by the assemblages of humour, vitality, fellowship and the ideals of youth and togetherness all captured in a photographic moment.

Figure 25. Photograph of a Bund outing, 1932. Esther's father holds her in the third row from the back in the middle, courtesy of Lorna Brunstein.

[235] Esther Brunstein, ‘But Not Without Scars’, *Survival: Holocaust Survivors tell their Story,* ed. Wendy Whitworth (Nottingham: Quill Press, 2003), 29.
[236] Esther Brunstein, ‘I had to be Strong’, *Socialist Review*, 6 January 2015 (online), accessed 1 July 2022, https://socialistworker.co.uk/socialist-review-archive/i-had-be-strong/.

Figure 26. Photograph of a Bund outing, 1932. Esther's father holds her in the back row, fourth from the left, courtesy of Lorna Brunstein.

Photographs taken at the funerals of key Bund members also feature in Esther's collection (figs. 27 and 28). One such photograph displays Esther's father, Philip, her uncle, Daniel Liebeskind, and her teacher stood amongst a crowd at the funeral of Israel Lichtenstein (fig. 28). Bernard Goldstein states that funerals had a long tradition in the Bundist movement.[237] They were often profoundly political and often resulted in new casualties. In newly created Poland, public displays of political passion were not uncommon and played an increasingly important role for fledgling movements such as the Bund. Indeed, funerals were opportunities seemingly made for public political expression. Lorna pointed to the photograph explaining that that was 'my grandfather, who spoke at this funeral. So again, this just shows: "here we are." It was to make a point. Look how important the Bund was. People just came onto the street crying. It meant so much to all of them.' As well as demonstrating political loyalty, the photograph articulates for Esther profound familial loyalty and pride. Lorna

[237] Goldstein, *Twenty years with the Jewish Labor Bund*, 38.

recalled how her mother 'was always excited to say, "I was there, I was five." She was probably on her father's shoulders and was saying "this is such an important man".' So, identity is key to the oral and photographic record, identity as a member of a family and membership of the wider community and particularly to the Bund and all that it stood for.

Figure 27. Photograph of Daniel Liebeskind (Esther's father's brother) standing on the left with glasses and Esther's father (top left, hand leaning on tombstone) attending the Funeral of Bundist leader, Israel Lichtenstein, circa 1933, courtesy of Lorna Brunstein.

Figure 28. Photographs of the funeral of the Bundist leader, Israel Lichtenstein c.1933 in Łódź. Top photo, Esther's teacher in the foreground looking down, courtesy of Lorna Brunstein.

Like many survivors after the war, both Esther in Sweden and Perec in England tried to trace their families through the Red Cross and the Bund. Lorna described how they finally discovered each other's survival:

> I don't know who spoke to who first *but* letters were exchanged not directly to each other but somebody said to Peretz, (descending into a whisper) "I think your sister is alive" and you know mum was told, "I think your brother is still alive."[238]

After their discoveries, Esther and Perec sent each other photographs of themselves. The first photograph which Perec sent was of himself in a

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[238] Interview with Lorna.

photograph studio in London on 6 December 1945 (fig. 29). Esther must have sent in return a photograph of herself taken in Sweden. Perec then sent Esther another photograph of himself taken in Columbia Studios, London, this time looking at and holding the framed photograph that Esther had just sent to him (fig. 30). These photographs and their captions provide an insight into the way Esther and Perec made sense of their newly discovered worlds. Examining these photographs moves the historiography away from a macro-historical analysis of liberation going beyond the traditional notions of liberation photographs that depict survival and rescue towards ideas of struggle, fight, and resilience.

Figure 29. Perec in a photo studio, London, 6 December 1945, courtesy of Lorna Brunstein.

In the first photograph, Perec holds his right clenched fist to his shoulder, resembling the socialist salute of solidarity. Lorna's own reflections of the photographs certainly complicate traditional representations of liberation

marking the end of suffering for survivors. Instead, Lorna places the photographs in the context of the longer narrative of liberation and emigration that is central to the history of Polish Jewry:

> This was all just after the war. Given it was such a war...so many people lost their lives and went through such terrible things. I think they are...a lot of them they were smiling. Look at that. Sweden. Look at my mum's hair. Somehow, after a concentration camp, death camp, labour camp, ghetto...coming to England looking beautiful. I think they were an amazing bunch of people really, with nothing. She had nothing. This dress would have been given to her.

Lorna's reflections of the photographs set them within a narrative that transcends the momentary freezing of a photograph. She recognises the past suffering of the camps and ghettos, the sense of joy captured in their faces and indeed something of pride in the smartness and even elegance of her mother's dress. On the other, Lorna reflects on the struggle and fight that her mother and uncle would have had to continue. She described how, 'this is him saying, the struggle continues comrades. You know. It was so ingrained in them. I mean it's great.' A key concept of the Bund was "*doikayt*" (here-ness). This was a belief that whichever country Jews lived, it was theirs, and where they would strive for socialism.[239] Perec's defiant stance can be seen to replicate the Bundist belief that even in migration and as a refugee, they would continue to fight for their ideals.

Lorna's description of her mother and uncle's responses to liberation and immigration echoed the words of the sociologist and journalist Anne Karpf.

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[239] Wolff et al., *Yiddish Revolutionaries in Migration*.

Karpf reflects how her own experiences were shaped by her Polish-born parents' experiences of the Holocaust. In her memoir, *The War After: Living with the Holocaust,* Karpf wrote how she 'was touched but always a little embarrassed by the gratitude which my parents felt for Britain as the country which took them in (albeit after the event, as it were).' This gratitude however, was 'greeted instead with a kind of collective indifference'.[240]

Similarly, to Perec's embattled stance, Karpf's memoir captures a sense of that generation's abandoned post-war optimism. Karpf's mother Natalia reflects how 'when we came out of the camps, we thought, "now, we'll never need any passports, there will never be any more wars,' we were sure of it. What a disappointment.'

Figure 30: Perec holding a photo of Esther she had sent him, Columbia Studios, London, 15 April 1946, courtesy of Lorna Brunstein.

[240] Anne Karpf, *The War After: Living with the Holocaust* (London: Penguin Random House, 1997), 165-166.

These two photographs (figs. 29 and 30) also offer an opportunity to examine a more subjective and inter-subjective reading of the post-liberation era than that offered by traditional liberation photographs. I do so by drawing upon Hirsh's concept of 'familial gaze', a term that describes 'a mutual look of a subject looking at an object who is a subject looking (back) at an object.'[241] The familial gaze, Hirsch argues, situates human subjects in the ideology and mythology of the family. Through the camera lens, these individuals can recognise their embeddedness in the family.

The second photograph of Perec (fig. 30) presents him in what is a moment of personal intimacy as he gazes at the image of Esther. His attention and that of us, the viewer must be directed to his sister and not himself. Here the political activist has been transformed into the affectionate, devoted brother. Looking at the photograph seems almost voyeuristic; as if I am intruding upon this moment of intimacy between two siblings despite one person looking and the other being seen. Despite this, it is clearly a posed photograph and its composition and captioning can help us to understand how Perec and Esther related to each other. On the back of the second photograph he wrote a message to Esther in Yiddish:

> Dear Ester!
> I sent you my photo together with yours. Do you like it? We will soon see each other for real.
> Your brother who misses you,
> Perets

[241] Hirsch, F*amily Frames*, 9.

16 April ’46. London.[242]

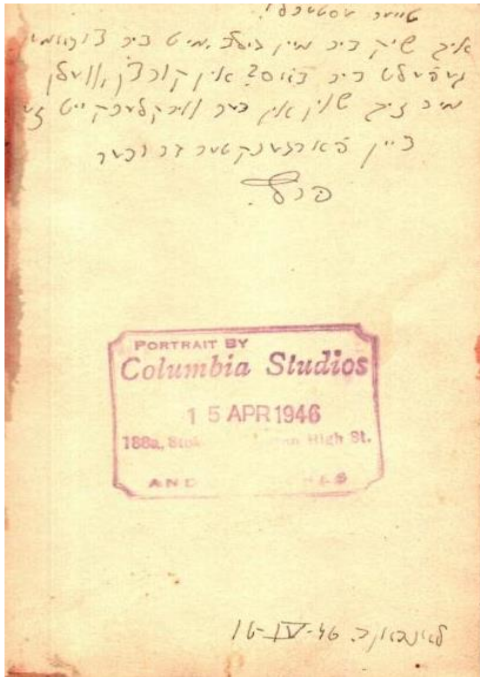

Figure 31. The reverse side of fig. 29 with a message to Esther from Perec, courtesy of Lorna Brunstein.

Lorna described the photo, ‘it’s like a postcard saying I’m here, this is what I look like now. Come and join me you know. So, I think it’s of a generation who went through all of that and survived. And these photos tell that, don’t they?’[243] The photographs represent survival but what else does this exchange of photographs reveal about the siblings’ responses and desires? In the message, Perec asks for his sister’s approval of the way he has placed a photo of her next to his, suggesting he fantasised about receiving a return look.[244] His comment

[242] Perec Zylberberg, *Photograph*, London, trans. Hannah Berliner Fischthal, photo courtesy of Lorna Brunstein.
[243] Interview with Lorna.
[244] Hirsch, *Family Frames*, 11.

‘we will soon see each other for real’ suggests that placing the photograph within the camera frame is a way for Perec and Esther to ‘see’ each other while being apart. It is a poignant act of looking between the two siblings recorded by the camera. But it is also an act of seeing in which Perec situates themselves, so they *see* the other’s survival. The photograph therefore represents survival of both themselves and their family. The photograph is an invitation both to see and be seen.

Visual records as well as written words were important tools to create intimacy at a time where people had been torn apart and were attempting to reconnect. Examining these two similar yet distinct photographs side by side elucidates the dual loyalty of the family, indeed of the Bund and world Jewry. They are at once political activists fighting for liberation and at the same time family comrades searching for their home.

This emphasis on the subjective and inter-subjective response to liberation also builds on David Cesarani and Eric Sundquist’s notion of the ‘myth of silence’.[245] What they mean by this is the canonised historical narrative that arose in the 1990s that survivors had been until then, silenced from speaking about their experiences of prejudice and persecution. Their volume argues that survivors had been recording their experiences even before the war ended. One reason for the development of this myth was language. Millions of Jews around the world spoke Yiddish, hence Yiddish scholarship on the Holocaust flourished. The decline of Yiddish and contraction of competency, Cesarani explains, closed off this source material and gave the illusion of its non-existence.[246] The issue

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[245] David Cesarani and Eric J. Sundquist, eds., *After the Holocaust: Challenging the Myth of Silence* (London: Routledge, 2012). Their volume was inspired by Hasia Diner’s study, *We Remember with Reverence and Love: American Jews and the Myth of Silence After the Holocaust* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).
[246] Cesarani et al. *After the Holocaust,* 11.

of language is also prevalent to the recognition of photographs as a source. Although not recognised by Cesarani, the challenges of 'reading' visual language may also be a key obstacle for understanding the way in which Jews documented their life during and in the early post-war years. Reading a photograph, Graham Clarke argues, is to see it and read it 'as the active play of a visual language.' This demands seeing and reading a photograph as a product of a photographer and to recognise that it exists within a wider body of reference and relates to a series of aesthetic, cultural and social histories.[247] Closely examining post-liberation photographs, in conjunction with written documents and in respect of their cultural, social and aesthetic histories helps scrutinise the 'myth of silence' that the authors in Cesarani et al.'s volume also challenge.

One photograph which elucidates this point is of Esther taken in 1947 (fig.32). Esther stands in a group of nine members of the Woodcraft Folk group. The photograph is striking because of Esther's outfit, she is dressed up in a striped jacket with a Star of David sewn onto the right arm and a shawl covering her head. On the reverse of the photograph Esther has written '1947, Woodcraft Folk Group in Evesham, Fancy dress, I dressed up as Concentration Camp inmate'. The Woodcraft Folk group was a UK break-away faction of the Boy Scout movement with connections with the Co-operative Societies. That a photograph of the Woodcraft Folk outing was taken is not surprising; indeed, it illustrates the continuation of the family's socialist ideals. When Perec, and Esther arrived in England they both became members of the Woodcraft Folk. Despite refusing to have a political association, the group made no secret of its socialist ideals.[248] The tent in the background of the photograph suggests

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[247] Graham Clarke, *The Portrait in Photography* (London: Reaktion Books, 1992), 29.
[248] Mary Davis, *Fashioning a New World: A History of the Woodcraft Folk* (Oxford: Professional Book Supplies, 2000), 54.

Esther was away on a camping trip: an activity which formed a key element in Woodcraft's 'socialist educational method'.[249]

What is surprising about the photograph is the choice of fancy-dress outfits, a feature I shall now turn to. Many of the children are pictured sporting fancy dress: one child is wearing a turban and another is wearing a 'weetabix' outfit with a sign saying 'Fragile.' There is no obvious link or theme connecting the various costumes which leaves it difficult to understand the exact rationale behind Esther's choice of outfit. It is only possible to guess as to what is going on. Possibly Esther's use of the Star of David was intended to create an element of visual irony in which a symbol of oppression is transformed into a symbol of survival and determination not to be silenced.

Figure 32. Photograph of Esther at a Woodcraft Folk Esther, fourth from left, dressed up in a Concentration Camp uniform at a Woodcraft Folk Camp in Eversham, 1947, courtesy of Lorna Brunstein.

[249] Report of IFM Helper Course 1964 *International Camp Work*, YMA/WF/166 cited in Davis, *Fashioning a New World,* 105.

Dressing up in concentration camp uniform may not have been an entirely novel experience for Esther. Writing about child and adult survivors in displaced persons camp, Margarete Myers Feinstein shows how many performed plays about their experiences in order to rewrite 'the Holocaust experience from one of victimization into one of heroic resistance'.[250] Re-enactment, dancing, singing and dressing up were all part of these performances and served as therapeutic tools for emotional release and the sublimation of past trauma through agency, resilience and imagination.[251] Following liberation, Esther spent some time in a Displaced Persons (DP) camp in Sweden. Here, she may have taken part in the cultural life that Myers Feinstein describes. After liberation Esther was actively involved in cultural performances many of which are captured in photographs now held in YIVO archives. The popularity of East London Yiddish theatres is a witness to the important role that theatre and performance played in the lives of the Jewish community and certainly Esther was no exception.

Even in the ghetto, Esther was certain of the outside world's reticence to listen to Jewish stories of persecution. She would meet with others to discuss the end of the war, predicting that 'the outside world would not believe that we were reduced to this state. That the Germans could do this. We felt it then and no one believed us when we came out.'[252] After the war, Esther's predictions rang true, finding it hard to settle into England[253] Lorna remembered her mother saying, 'the British Jewry were the worst. They would say things like "Oh you don't want to talk about that, (whispering) it's gone but aren't you lucky you're

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[250] Margarete Myers Feinstein, 'Re-imagining the Unimaginable: Theatre, Memory and Rehabilitation', in *After the Holocaust,* ed. David Cesarani et al., 39-55.
[251] Ibid, 51.
[252] Esther Brunstein, Interview with Wood.
[253] Interview with Lorna.

here. Look to the future."'[254] This was a suggestion that Esther clearly chose to ignore. By examining this post-Holocaust photograph, it provides an opportunity to challenge the 'myth of silence'. Using visible signs of persecution and, indeed for Esther, survival, may well have been a tactic to counteract societal attempts to silence her. Presenting her past in such a way in an incongruous setting can therefore be read as a form of visual irony, a tool not uncommonly employed by German-Jewish amateur photographers in the 1930s.

Ashkenazi claims that Jewish amateur photography in 1930's Germany used and repurposed familiar iconography, particularly those associated with belonging and middle-class *habitus* in the German community.[255] This re-appropriation of familiar iconography resulted in a visual display of either pathos or irony and became a 'tactic for creating a sense of powerlessness and defiance'.[256] Here, Ashkenazi draws on Michel de Certeau's use of the term 'tactic', meaning an act of tacit dissidence, performed through the re-appropriation of languages of power.[257] Photography, as a tool of power or agency, was explicitly appropriated by Nazi propaganda and, more pertinently here, Allied liberators who framed survivors of camps with little agency. Lorna's use of iconography associated with oppression and persecution is a playful expression of resilience and defiance acted out amongst the bucolic innocence of a camping trip.

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[254] Ibid.
[255] Ashkenazi, 'Reading Private Photography.'
[256] Ibid.
[257] Michel de Certeau, 'The Practice of Everyday Life. 'Making do": Uses and Tactics', in *Practicing History: New Directions in Historical Writing After the Linguistic Turn*, ed. Gabrielle M. Spiegel, 213–223 (London: Routledge, 2005), 219.

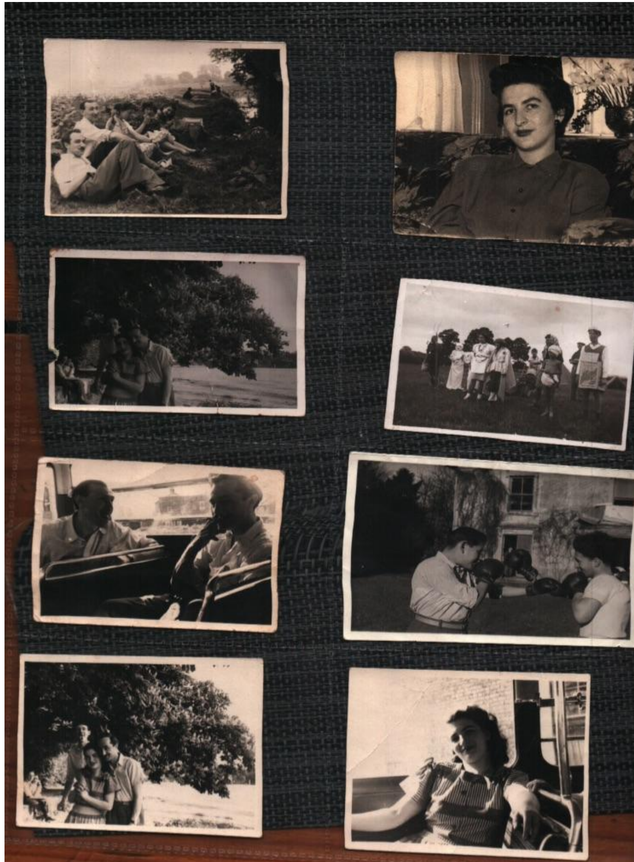

Figure 33. One page of the family photograph album featuring post-war photographs, second photo from the top on the right is the Woodcraft Folk photograph, courtesy of Lorna Brunstein.

Figure 34. The back of a page from family photograph album featuring post-war photographs, second photograph from the top on the left is the Woodcraft Folk photograph, courtesy of Lorna Brunstein.

While pondering on the meaning of this photograph, the former Project Director of IWM’s The Holocaust Exhibition, Suzanne Bardgett, who knew Esther personally, said:

> I do have a sense of [....] How people have become a lot more sensitised to the possible indelicacy of wearing something that is...one probably wouldn’t see that today, but back then, Esther may well have felt, she had lived through the war, she had to wear that thing, she had every right to tell the world, or whoever was at the Woodcraft Folk, of her very recent

> experience. At that stage, the concentration camp uniform, it wouldn't have acquired the kind of resonance it has acquired today.[258]

Bardgett's reflection echoes Clarke's insistence that reading and viewing photographs should take place within a wider body of aesthetic, cultural and social reference.[259] Esther was in a community that shared her values, so her costume choice may not have seemed as shocking as it certainly does to a modern audience. A safe environment possibly offered Esther with both the incentive and the opportunity for this personal demonstration of resilience and the re-appropriation of language and image in what is a playful yet powerful statement that she would never be silenced.

Photographs were important mimetic tools in Esther's later years. Esther had two enlarged photographs of her mother and father framed and positioned on the sideboard. Lorna remembered how her mother 'used to talk to them. Yes, they were very much part of the furniture'. Clearly the pictures were significant visual reminders of the people that she had lost. Furthermore, Lorna arranged the photographs on a digital photograph frame in Esther's care home so that multiple photographs could be displayed on a cycle. Lorna wanted to preserve the photographs so organised them into plastic wallets (figs. 32 and 33). She described how when she visited her mother, they would together look through the wallets, an experience Lorna described as 'nice.' As they did so, Lorna would take notes, scribbling names and dates in pencil on the back of the photographs.

[258] Interview with Bardgett, 15 October 2020.
[259] Clarke, *The Portrait in Photography*, 29.

As discussed earlier in this subsection, Lorna reflected on the photographs placing them in a narrative that transcends the photographic moment. For Esther the pictures were instances of the contradictory power of images; they both enhanced the fantasy of the family set within the wider community and at the same time undermined this. The former is best demonstrated by Esther's idealisation of her childhood. Lorna reflected how her childhood was,

> Probably by necessity, idealised. My mum...did have an extraordinary childhood, and an extraordinary growing up and was privileged. She said she was privileged, lucky and blessed to have the family she did. But it was stuck in time you know. Her parents never aged. So of necessity it was unbearable to think of any, she said they were perfect parents and she couldn't have been happier and that they parents adored each other and everyone was happy and everyone was lovely and you know I think I was saying (descends into a whisper) you must have had some but she could remember that.

Although Lorna does not here directly reference photographs, as discussed above, photographs have held a power within the family to capture the security and cohesion of her mother's childhood. On the other hand, there is evidence that complicates this narrative. When looking through the photographs, Esther used to say:

> It's just telling you that at that second someone is saying I'm taking a photo, smile. And actually she (Esther) said that life was so hard for them. They never had any money. It was really hard. And they had to borrow money. Things were just tough.

> She used to look at these photos and say, 'oh yeah, we did smile sometimes.'[260]

It is clear here that Esther recognised the momentary nature of photographs and its ability to fix that moment in time. This reflection can be read in two ways. Firstly, it could be that captured smiles emphasised their transitory nature and inevitably elicit memories of childhood hardship. Alternatively, these images of apparent happiness and contentment could simply represent family life in which difficulties were to an extent diluted by laughter and contentment. In the case of Esther and Lorna, private photographs have the capacity to confirm and confound their sense of the past. Examining photographs and testimony together demonstrates that the two do not easily align, even in the case of those with direct experience. This juxtaposition is less of a historical fallibility, than a valuable insight into the ways that survivors and their children ascribe meaning to objects to enhance an interpretation of both the present and the past.

Part Two – '"We Stand on the Shoulders of Giants:": Lorna's Relationship with the Photographs

> 'And might it not be […] that we also have appointments to keep in the past, in what has gone before and is for the most part extinguished, and must go there in search of places and people who have some connection with us on the far side of time, so to speak?'[261]

Family life for Lorna was infused with political activism, that was energised by her parents' history. The past was uncomfortably present when Lorna was

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[260] Interview with Lorna.
[261] W.G. Sebald, *Austerlitz* (New York: Random House, 2001), 359.

growing up. Lorna learnt about her mother's experiences at the age of eleven, the same age her mother was when she entered the Łódź ghetto. Lorna admits that, as a teenager in the 1960s and 1970s, she was unwilling to connect with her family's past. She felt ashamed of her 'unpronounceable surname', her lack of grandparents, speaking Yiddish at home, her kosher diet; all of which engendered her sense of being different. Lorna and her sister were gradually but relentlessly introduced to the events of the Holocaust so much so that the diet of exhibitions, shows, film, TV programmes and books was so unabated that Lorna was left unable to digest or absorb what she was shown.[262] Growing up with her parent's past was a significant factor in prompting Lorna to leave home for university on a journey of self-discovery.

The path from knowing to not knowing, confusion to understanding the past is not always linear. This reflects the complicated relationship between postmemory and memory work. This subsection focuses on the intersections between postmemory and memory work and explores the ways that these play out in both the interview and Lorna's artwork. I argue that postmemory, as a state of knowing and not knowing, is connected to the way in which Lorna relates to some of the family photographs and so inevitably leads to discomposure and a profound sense of loss. This leads into an analysis of Lorna 's nostalgia for a past to which she was not privy: a nostalgia which is complicated by the power of photographs to confound myth and reality.

This first part of this subsection takes the interview itself as a source of enquiry into Lorna's own processes of making sense of the past and her communication of this to me as a researcher. I then turn to Lorna's artwork to understand Lorna's memory work.

[262] Interview with Lorna.

To understand Lorna's art, Fischer's term 'memory work' is pertinent.[263] Eva Hoffman, a daughter of two Polish Jewish survivors born in 1946, wrote about her postmemories, realising that the capacity of the imagination is boundless. Fischer believed that only a 'confrontation with the past – however uncanny, however unknown can bring the haunting to an end'.[264] Fischer argues that memory work is concerned with what we do with elements of the past, how we create memories out of relics, and what we do with stories to make deeper meaning. Her model of memory work extends that of Kuhn's stressing as it does the conscious choice to confront the past, rather than Kuhn's belief in the involuntary or unconscious nature of memory work. Attempting to understand Lorna's confrontation of her past demands an application of Fischer's model of 'memory work' to Lorna's creative processes. I shall also draw on Fischer's concept of 'memory nodes' to examine how memory work is both prompted and facilitated by photographic records. I argue that a memory node connected to place has, in most cases the greatest emotional power needed to prompt memory work but that photographs inevitably play a vital role here in facilitating and making tangible this memory work.

'Discomposure', a term coined by Penny Summerfield, is a result of 'an uncomprehending or unsympathetic audience or a particular terrain of memory' that produces 'personal disequilibrium, manifest in confusion, anger, self-contradiction, discomfort and difficulties of sustaining a narrative.'[265] As we looked through the photograph album that Lorna had compiled, Lorna came to

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[263] Fischer, *Memory Work*. 7

[264] Eva Hoffman, *After Such Knowledge*, *Memory, History and the Legacy of the Holocaust* (New York: Public Affairs Books, 2004), 73

[265] Penny Summerfield, 'Culture and Composure: Creating Narratives of the Gendered Self in Oral History Interviews', *Cultural and Social History* 1, no. 1 (2004), 69-70.

the photograph of her mother discussed in the first subsection. Her surprise was discernible:

> Dressed up as a concentration camp inmate!!! What! I think I knew that, but I forgotten that. Where is she? That's her writing.
>
> Where is she? (Lorna attempts to work out which figure in the photograph is her mother.)
>
> What a weird connection.
>
> That's not her there is it. Let me get my magnifying class.
>
> What a strange thing to do. Isn't it? What was...I don't know if you can zoom in. Concentration camp inmate (reading)
>
> Oh, is that the one.
>
> (Whispering) That's my mum, that's a very strange thing to do isn't it?

Here, Lorna expresses a profound sense of confusion at a photograph with which she must have been at least vaguely familiar. Her surprise is authentic. Her discomposure here reflects the disruption of a narrative that Lorna may well have built around the family photographs. Significant here is Hirsch's claim that 'only in meta-photographic texts which can self-consciously contextualise photographs, can photographs disrupt the traditional familiar narratives and myths about family life.'[266] Although presumably familiar with the photograph,

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[266] Hirsch, *Family Frames*, 8.

Lorna's confusion suggests that she had never found answers for this visual idiosyncrasy nor was she able to fit it within traditional narratives and myths about family life. It is this discomposure that signals an aspect of knowing and not knowing, a postmemory of an event which whilst recognisable is also a source of considerable confusion.

Questions surrounding the meaning of this photograph both then and now remain unanswered. As Hirsch argues, by examining these ambiguities, researchers can 'gain access to what these images and stories about this past do not readily reveal - the emotional fabric of daily life in extreme circumstances' and thus demonstrating the 'indeterminacy of that wound and the unlocatability of the source'.[267] Images, as much as stories, despite being retold, reheard or seen again may function more as reminders that past events are both incomprehensible and incommunicable and as such remain inert as sources of truth to which one can be reconciled.

Going through the photographs with Lorna, may well have prompted Lorna to mourn the time that she had spent with her mother. Lorna was often hesitant in immediately naming faces and places. She tended to gather information about the place, period and people in the photograph and then make reserved conclusions. Lorna frequently descended into a whisper as she attempted to reconcile herself with the photograph before her. She admitted that she did not want to invent things and was not afraid of admitting her ignorance, often adding that 'Mum would know.' At one point she whispered, 'I wish my mum was here because she could fill in the gaps. […] My mum would just talk. I can see her here now "don't you remember, that's so and so." I like it. I don't look at them very often so it's nice.' It was evident that were, at least in this instant not primarily evocations of past events as providers of opportunity to share and

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[267] Hirsch, *Generation of Postmemory,* 76.

discuss the past. Here photographs, as social objects, were acting less as evidence of the distant past and more as symbolic reminders of the shared history of mother and daughter.[268] If this were the case then it was inevitable that Lorna was mourning those intimate moments of shared memory between mother and daughter.

As explored in the previous subsection, Lorna's had observed her mother's proclivity towards pre-war life. Lorna's own admiration and yearning for the Bundist movement suggests that despite recognising nuances in her mother's memories, she had inherited her mother's nostalgia for the pre-war period and everything the Bund movement encompassed. Lorna's nostalgia for the Bund permeated throughout the interview. At one point she admitted that the Bund 'was so significant. I'm really envious. I just think there is so little hope and life was so hard for them, but they did have those ideals.' Lorna's sense of envy for her mother's experiences may be surprising but it articulates the power of her mother's nostalgia for the Bund that she herself has inherited. Nostalgia has been described as a positive emotional 'reservoir that people delve into to deal with existential threats'. It is a coping mechanism that serves to 'protect and affirm identity. In this way it can even serve as a type of forgetting'.[269] This is particularly pertinent for children and grandchildren of survivors, for whom, Sara Horowitz suggests, 'nostalgia is experienced as part of a traumatic past'.[270] She adds that the Holocaust triggers nostalgia for a 'world as yet untouched by the Nazi genocide'.[271] On the other hand, far from constituting a failure to

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[268] Edwards, 'Photographs and the Sound of History.'

[269] Lynda Mannik, 'Remembering, Forgetting, and Feeling', in *Oral History and Photography* ed. Freund et al, 77-97, 87.
[270] Sara R. Horowitz, 'Nostalgia and the Holocaust', in *After Representation? The Holocaust, Literature and Culture*, ed. R. Clifton Spargo and Robert M. Ehrenreich, 41-58 (Rutgers: The State University, 2010).
[271] Ibid, 45.

engage with history in a critical way, nostalgia can represent a reaction against a linear notion of progress.[272]

In her turn Arnold-de Simine argues that ‘some forms of nostalgia may provide an impetus for future change, motivating people to work prospectively and creatively.’[273] It is this form of ‘reflective nostalgia’ which is pertinent to Lorna’s motivation to strive for a better future. Lorna echoed the words of Isaac Newton when she said ‘we stand on the shoulders of giants, people that went before. There is some sort of duty I feel [...]. We are here, they are not and for our lives to have meaning we need to do something with them.’ This ‘reflective nostalgia’ relates to the energy and burden of the family’s photographic record, a tension experienced by Hirsch and then described by Lorna.[274] But for Lorna, photographs carry a double burden, they evoke a nostalgia for a time to which she was not party and a host of values that have been either lost or stolen. But most importantly the photographic record carries with it the burden of responsibility from the stolen generation to fight for a better future.

Lorna's artwork embodies this double burden attempting as it does to make sense of the past while remaining loyal to contemporary political meaning. Indeed, Arnold de-Simine et al. argue that examining photographs within different media, has the capacity to enhance our understanding of the ‘mutual transformatory relationship between the family, memory and photography.’[275] Lorna’s artwork, which often places photographs as central within her installations and immersive projects, is ripe for exploring such relationships. On her website, she describes herself:

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[272] Silke Arnold-de Simine, *Mediating Memory in the Museum: Trauma,* Empathy, Nostalgia (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).
[273] Arnold-de Simine, *Mediating Memory,* 56.
[274] Hirsch, *Family Frames,* 6.
[275] Arnold-de Simine et al., *Picturing the Family*, 15.

> As a Second Generation Holocaust Survivor, I am trying to make sense of my family's past, exploring issues of identity, memory, loss, and displacement. I am interested in family histories, memorials, testimony, and the silences we all carry and have been shaped by. The notion of inherited trauma is at the core of my work.[276]

Lorna's artwork can be seen as part of what Hirsch and Spitzer call a 'postmemorial photographic aesthetic'. What they mean by this is an aesthetic created by many 'post-generation artists' who 'resist our desire to see more clearly, to penetrate more deeply'.[277] Lorna's artwork is not dissimilar from the work of many post-generation artists discussed by Hirsch and Spitzer; she blurs, distorts and crops images in unexpected ways. Furthermore, it is possible to draw parallels between Lorna's art and the literary genre 'the narrative of return'.[278] In this subsection, I shall reflect on Lorna's art practice in relation to both postmemorial photographic aesthetic' and 'a narrative of return' in relation to three of Lorna's pieces: 'Dobrzyn Room', 'Return to Auschwitz' and 'Sara's Last Steps'. I examine these pieces as memory works which have used place as a node of memory. Photographs, I suggest, have facilitated this memory work.

Lorna's installation 'The Dobrzyn Room' was created in Bridport in 2002. The installation was a result of memory work in which Lorna confronted the past by revisiting a place connected to her family. Creating the installation forged a node of memory both to the childhoods of her mother and uncle as well as to

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[276] Lorna Brunstein, 'About', *Lorna Brunstein* (online), accessed 4 July 2022, https://lornabrunstein.wordpress.com/about-2/.
[277] Hirsch, *The Generation of Postememory*, 68. On the redeployment of Holocaust photographs by contemporary artists see Liss, *Trespassing through Shadows: Memory, Photography and the Holocaust*.
[278] Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*, 205.

that of her grandparents whom she had never met and allowed her a partial understanding of the past.

In 1989, Lorna, Denise, her two parents and Peretz went on a one-week trip to Poland. They visited Warsaw, where her father was from, Lódź, where Peretz and Esther grew up, and then the sites where Lódź and Warsaw ghetto once stood. They visited Treblinka, the last place where Stanislaw's parents would have been as well as Kraków and Auschwitz. At the end of the trip, they visited Dobrzyn, a town in the south-east of Poland, where her mother and uncle spent their childhood summer holidays. Lorna described having a lot of affection for the place as it was her mother's childhood memory. Moreover, the Vistula river and surrounding countryside provided a welcome contrast to the 'dark tourism' that they had spent the previous week visiting. The family spent a day in Dobrzyn searching for the apartment where her mother's family had stayed. When they found it, Peretz and Esther ran up the stairs to the front door. A woman answered it, and although very suspicious, allowed the family to enter to look around. Once inside, Peretz had whispered to her mother in Yiddish, 'look I can't believe it, the wallpaper is still the same.'

To Lorna, the place looked unclean and uncared for, but it was 'extraordinary being in that space with my mother and my uncle going back there.' She described looking at the light switch and 'all I could think of was most of my family had switched on that light. It was like they were ghosts in the room.' Lorna secretly took some photographs of the room (fig. 35). The images are telling in so far that the current occupiers are hardly visible; Esther blocks out the current owner and the daughter's face is shrouded in darkness. Either intentionally or otherwise the 'intruders' are excluded from the photographer and her family.

Figure 25. Photograph of inside the house in Dobryzn, 1989, courtesy of Lorna Brunstein.

Figure 36. Photograph of ‘The Dobryzn Room’ installation, Bridport, 2002, courtesy of Lorna Brunstein.

Figure 37. Photograph of 'The Dobrzyn Room', Bridport, 2002, courtesy of Lorna Brunstein.

Lorna's installation was a construct of the photograph taken in Dobrzyn. Lorna had recreated the wallpaper in Dobrzyn to hang around the installation together with table and Seder candles (figs. 36 and 37). Lorna's website describes the installation as a:

> Room in darkness with several sound sources - snatched moments of conversation, whispers recalling feelings of going back to pre-war Poland – times that are past and can never return. Against a backdrop of traditional Yiddish lullabies and

> haunting chanting of the Kaddish – the Memorial Prayer for the Dead.[279]

The installation is described as an artistic melee of past and present with the sense of ghostly voices and irretrievable time. There is a sense of the impermanence of time yet the permeance of place since the wallpaper and candles remains the only constants in this recreated scene. In all of this there is the acknowledgment that although one can return to the place, the people, music, and culture are ephemeral, 'snatched' moments that can never be fully retrieved. Their ghostly presence is evanescent and distant yet always somehow present. Lorna's description of the installation echoes the photography theorists, Roland Barthes and Susan Sontag's observation that photographs have an inherent connection to both life and death.[280] The photograph, as well as the installation, has a capacity to hover between life and death, and what Hirsch describes as both the desire and a necessity, but also a difficulty, of mourning.[281]

'After Auschwitz' is an art installation produced by an act of memory work stimulated by a return to Auschwitz. This piece encompasses a transgenerational encounter, linking mother, daughter and granddaughter by connecting to place. Auschwitz, the site where millions were murdered and now millions in turn visit, encompasses a shared space where the past is made clear in Pierre Nora's term, 'lieux de memoire' suggesting a collective place where memories form and are then released.[282] Lorna's connection with

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[279] Lorna Brunstein, 'The Dobzyrn Room', *Lorna Brunstein* (online), accessed 21 April 2020, www.lornabrunstein.wordpress.com/rooms/.
[280] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography,* trans. Richard Howard (London: Vintage Books, 2000); Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (London: Penguin Books, 1979).
[281] Hirsch, *Family Frames*, 20.
[282] Joanne Pettitt & Vered Weiss, 'Introduction', *Holocaust Studies* 22 no.2-3 (2016): 141-150.

Auschwitz had been formed by her mother's stories as well a trip in 1995 with her mother for the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. I argue these were her post-memorial encounters, whereas when she returned in 2017 with her youngest daughter Alessa and not her mother, she conducted her own memory, forming an embodied connection with place and therefore creating her own meaning.

Lorna's was invited by Unite Against Fascism (UAF) group to speak at Auschwitz. Her mother had died earlier that year and she wanted to go for her. She added:

> I'm going because I never knew my grandma and that's the last place she was, and my mum always said that she would. Her mother would have been really proud of me and my sister and her grandchildren. And I would have liked her. I never knew her and that's where she ended up. Maybe I'll go and think about her and think about my mum. And maybe say goodbye to that place I don't know.[283]

The trip was deeply personal encounter with her family's past because she was remembering her mother and grandmother. Her mother had often talked about the selection point at Auschwitz where her mother had been taken from and gassed. Esther had stood at that point with the BBC and talked there. In her memory work at sites of Holocaust, Carol Kidron's has explored the significance of expressions of pathos and identification through the embodied performance for generational connection and continuity.[284] Indeed, when Lorna stood there with her daughter at 'the spot where mother and daughter had been it felt like

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[283] Interview with Lorna.

[284] Carol A. Kidron, 'Surviving Family Memory Work at Sites of Holocaust Remembrance: Institutional Enlistment or Family Agency?', *History and Memory* 27, no.2 (2015), 62.

"an affirmation of life"'.[285] Lorna's transformative experience was nestled in the marriage of generations at one single point in space. It was important for Lorna to be with her daughter at the place where her grandmother and daughter had stood and were then parted. This separation involved death but also on that grey day in November whilst remembering the dead, Lorna and Alessa were able, and even compelled, to affirm the living.

Again, visiting Auschwitz initiated Lorna's confrontation with the past in the form of a multi-media installation. For this project, Lorna worked with soil to create an exhibition titled 'After Auschwitz' which was held at several galleries: 44AD Gallery in Bath, October 2018, Hundred Years Gallery in Hoxton, London in September 2019, and Hoxton and Whitechapel Gallery, London also in September 2019 (fig. 38).[286] The exhibition was based on the idea that soil preserves memories and bears witness. Lorna was unable to use soil from Auschwitz as it is a protected memorial site. Instead, she scraped dry the mud from the shoes of the other members from UAF and took photographs of their mudded shoes. The clay was not only representative of place and therefore memories of those who have died in Auschwitz but it also symbolised the many layers of memory and meaning transferred between place and people and most pertinently those who as activists, are willing to fight against the evil that destroyed her family and their way of living.

The transformative result of this visit captures for Lorna the importance of place and heritage. She explained that when visiting a place there is a connection 'at a bodily level, a sensory level, your memory may find something...maybe smells, or atmosphere or *something.'* She added that photographs of people she has not met do not help her feel connected,

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[285] Interview with Lorna.
[286] Lorna Brunstein, 'Current/Recent', *Lorna Brunstein*, accessed 10 July 2022, https://lornabrunstein.wordpress.com/.

presumably because there is an embodied sensory response to a photograph, a point at odds with Hirsch's theory that photographs connect with bodily and sense memory.[287] It is this need to feel an embodied connection to aspects of her mother's memory that could explain why Lorna felt it hard when younger to listen to her mother's memories, and why she now finds it difficult to retain information about a family photograph. To feel connected to a historical event requires an active process of imagination aided by place rather than a process of looking and remembering that photograph sharing entails.

Figure 38. 'After Auschwitz' installation, courtesy of Lorna Brunstein.

I will now turn to the use of photographs in the walking and multimedia project Lorna co-created with her partner Richard White, himself a walking and

[287] Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*, 111.

multimedia artist/researcher. ‘Sanctuary and Exile: Sara’s Last Steps’ is part of ‘Forced Walks’, a series of walking art projects developed by Lorna and her partner Richard. Here, I examine the trailer video found on the ‘Forced Walks’ website where Lorna and Richard take it in turns to explain the background of the Zylerberg family, the heritage story of the Lake District and the motivation and meaning behind ‘Sara’s Last Steps’. The extended narrative is accompanied by a soundscape of people walking, accompanied by Yiddish lullabies. It is a rich assemblage of images and sound in which family photographs are interspersed with videos of the ‘Forced Walks’ project. At one point, the melange of words, photographs and scenery is particularly poignant with White describing,

> Sara’s last steps takes the route walked by Lorna’s grandmother to the Auschwitz gas chambers and transposes it to the Calgarth Estate. It was on the Calgarth Estate where Peretz discovered that his sister, Esther, had survived the Nazi genocide. Perhaps our walk will take us along the very spot where Peretz opened the letter confirming Esther was alive and living in Sweden.[288]

As the viewer is led down a woodland path, photos of Perec and Esther appear superimposed on the video (fig. 39). The first is that of Perec taken in the photograph studio in 1946 and the second is of Esther taken in Sweden. Both photographs had been exchanged just before they were reunited after the war. It is a powerful moment of connection and even compression of time, space and place where the distance between both Perec and Esther in 1946 and between the siblings and their children shrinks into one moment. White’s hope that the walk will take them to the place where Perec discovered Esther’s

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[288] Lorna Brunstein and Richard White, ‘Sara’s Last Steps’, *Forced Walks* (online), accessed 10 July 2022, https://forcedwalks.co.uk/saras-last-steps-2//.

survival is particularly moving, focusing as it does on the promise of familial camaraderie, survival and hope rather than all that has gone before.

'Sara's Last Steps' is itself a 'narrative of return': a return to a site of reunion rather than a place of unmentionable atrocity. White refers to the cultural theorist, Sara Ahmed's notion of 'making the return', defining it as an acknowledgment of past 'bad feelings' and attending to any past injustices that persist in the present.[289] This aspect of repair is central to Lorna and White's project, 'fuelled' as they say they are by 'a creative imperative to challenge prejudice and bigotry'. 'Repair' is here a highly politicised response to the repeated media coverage of refugees fleeing war torn countries. So *sara's last steps* are taken in solidarity with those who have been and are currently forced to journey, but always in the hope of finding a kinder future.[290]

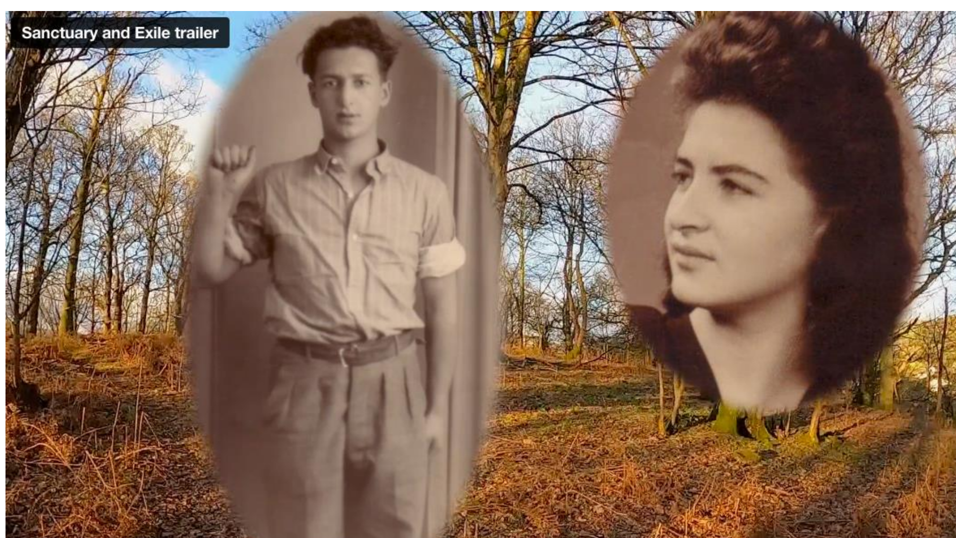

Figure 39. Screenshot of the Sanctuary and Exile Trailer, online.

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[289] Sara Ahmed, 'Happy Objects', in *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, 29–51 (London: Duke University Press, 2010), cited in Richard S. White, 'Walking-with, Re-membering the Holocaust: *Forced Walks: Honouring Esther*, a Case Study of Somatic and Digital Creative Practice', *Holocaust Studies* 28, no.3 (2022): 302-330.

[290] Brunstein et al, 'Sara's Last Steps.'

Returning to specific places connected to her family's past does not necessarily create resolution. For Lorna, each time she returned to Auschwitz, 'I learn something new and each time I go it's as horrific, the scale, the horror of it. Everything becomes less incomprehensible, the less I understand each time I go. I don't know... It just seems (she sighs) ... I still don't understand how.' Hirsch argues that postmemorial artists, 'in displacing and recontextualizing these well-known images in their historical, literary and artistic work', are able to work through an inherited traumatic past.'[291] I am not in the position to, nor would I want to say if Lorna has 'worked through' the past. However, Lorna has recontextualised these images in her artistic work, creating her own memories connected to people and place. And despite an understandable incomprehension about the past, Lorna has in her artwork employed family photographs alongside other artistic media and materials to create links between here and now and here and there.

It is worth mentioning that although the Bund was central to the way that Lorna talked about her mother and the photographs, it is notably absent from her artwork. Familial relations and places connected to the family story are more important to Lorna's engagement with the past through her artwork than the wider political backdrop of the Bund. I wonder if the Bund, as a movement and ideology, was so deeply inscribed in the Brunstein family identity that there has been no need to confront it or make it usable through creative memory work. Whilst Bundist politics crept through every aspect of family life this did not have the drain on emotions that genocide would inevitably demand. The unexplainable disappearance and loss of family members is surely something that even the liveliest fertile mind needs help to make sense of and it is here

[291] Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*, 68.

that Lorna has certainly struggled. By examining the interview and Lorna's artwork it is evident that there is a tension between the memories articulated in the interview and visits and the ideas and sentiments expressed by her art. This tension is captured by Hirsh when she points out that post-generation survivors of trauma are driven by a confusion about the way their lives are shaped by the past and a desire to keep the story going.[292]

Part Three – Activism, Public Engagement and Collective Remembrance

This subsection covers Esther's commitment to activism and commemoration. I examine Esther's public presence and the story that she sought to communicate by loaning photographs to IWM. I do so while highlighting the private side of Esther's engagement to argue that the transmission of individual and collective memories can be both intentionally and incidentally protected from cultural memory.

Esther's story is recorded in books, oral histories, and documentaries where the specifics of her childhood in Lódź, her experiences in the ghetto, Auschwitz and Bergen Belsen, her two years as a refugee in Sweden and migration to England where she settled and brought up a family with her husband are narrated without recrimination or bitterness. Esther found her voice in the heatwave of Holocaust denial, in 1970's when David Irving's lies were gaining attention in the popular press. Esther insisted that the memory of the victims of Nazi genocide should be preserved and that humanity should do all that it could to guard against a repeat of what she had experienced. Esther's contribution to British remembrance of the Holocaust is also remarkable. Her campaign for a national Holocaust museum contributed to the creation of IWM's The Holocaust Exhibition. She was also a contributing factor in lobbying for the first

[292] Marianne Hirsch, 'Generation of Postmemory', *Poetics Today* 29 no.1 (2008): 12

Holocaust Memorial Day in 2001. Esther was not only concerned with preserving memory, she also played a significant role in the fight against injustice wherever it was found. In 1998 Esther addressed the United Nations on the 50th anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights. Then in 2004 she spoke at an Anti-Nazi League meeting. At one point in her recollection, Lorna impersonated her mother speaking at events:

> I'm going to tell you about my life, I'm going to tell you about my story. Why am I important? I'm no more important than anyone else. There were loads of me who were killed. I'm not special.

As seen in her speech at the 50th anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights she used her own experience to elicit empathy and compassion for the plight of contemporary refugees. The photographs of Esther and Perec in Sweden and London demonstrate the tension between proximity and distance, concord and estrangement that they, like many survivors, experienced during the post-war period. It was a sentiment expressed in Esther's speech:

> When Perec and I learned of each other's survival we longed to be together [...] When one would have thought that after surviving this unparalleled tragedy, help and support would have been forthcoming. But no. Strict rules were in operation and no visas were issued to anyone without visible means of support. I wonder what means of support were expected of us, having lost all but our lives in the most literal sense.

Esther identified with the hope and frustration felt by others seeking asylum. She hoped that a collective voice would lead to action:

> Maybe if together we shout loud enough, we will be heard and move those in power to act with wisdom and compassion to lessen the plight and misery of asylum seekers who hope to find shelter in safe lands. [293]

It was this strength of character that surfaced in many of the stories that Lorna recounted to me. However, there was also an underlying pathos welling up from the trauma that her mother experienced in later life. In Esther's 1999 oral history interview, Esther references Jean Améry, the Austrian philosopher tortured by the Gestapo, to describe how she felt: 'anyone who has been tortured remains tortured. Anyone who has suffered torture never again will be able to be at ease in the world, the abomination of the annihilation is never extinguished.'[294] Here and in other media articles, Esther does little more than hint at the pain and suffering that she had and still experienced. Lorna expanded on this suffering in greater detail highlighting the emotional currents that washed through her mother's life and inevitably through her own childhood. I asked Lorna what her mother gained from public speaking. She replied without hesitation, 'well it made her ill each time she did it.' Her mother would be emotionally drained to the extent that she was often sick afterwards. The advice of many to Esther was to refrain from recounting the trauma to avoid reliving it. Lorna described her mother's angered response, '"do you not think it's not in my head when I'm not doing it? It's with me all the time." She said she had a duty.'[295]

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[293] Esther Brunstein, *Esther Brusntein: Text of Speech Given at UN,* (Speech), New York, 10 December 1998), Weiner Library Holocaust Collections, 1610.
[294] Promo Levi cited Jean Améry in, *The Drowned and the Saved* (New York: Vintage International, 1989), 15.
[295] Interview with Lorna.

‘Burden’ was the wrong word, Lorna explained, since her mother suffered from depression and had very dark days; ‘whether she spoke or not it was there with her. The speaking meant she was doing something with it that was important and gave meaning.’ Esther had a public presence that overflowed with resilience and a determination to survive. She spoke engagingly and expressively on stage, often leaving a strong impression on the audience.[296] In my conversations about Esther it was clear that she has a presence even from beyond the grave and this had an impact that was both troubling and also invigorating; troubling because such conversations seemed invasive on emotions that were not my own and invigorating because her story has the potential to inspire.

[296] Denise Fluskey, ‘Auschwitz Survivor who had an Impact’, *The Guardian* (online), accessed 10 January 2020, www.theguarian.com/world/2020/jan/26/auschwitz-survivor-who-had-an-impact.

Figure 40. Newspaper Clipping of Esther Launching the Anti-Nazi League Pamphlet, *The Times*, 27 November 1992, courtesy of Lorna Brunstein.

When using a transgenerational approach, it is important to remember that everyone brings their own subjective experience of the past and Lorna's memories of the psychological and emotional effects on her mother are significant here. New knowledge, or even a new perspective on an individual's life story has unexpectedly raised questions in my research surrounding a hierarchy of memory. Holtschneider pertinently argues that we, as historians and museum practitioners, need to consider the ethics of drawing the private into public. Giving voice to the voiceless 'signals an ethical obligation to their sources and subjects that is erased or side-lined by traditional historical and memory practices.'[297] To supplement someone's life account may create a representation that differs from what that individual desired. On the other

[297] Hannah Holtschneider, 'Narrating the Archive? Family Collections, the Archive and the Historian', in *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 3(2019): 350.

hand, to gloss over added detail may well be an act of insensitivity towards familial memory and the place of inherited trauma in it. In this respect, it is evident that Esther's determination to campaign and educate despite the psychological impact this had on her is not lost on Lorna. Moreover, it appears Lorna has inherited this resolve to repair and redress the past through her projects such as 'Forced Walks' and 'After Auschwitz'.

Esther's political resolve caught the public's imagination; indeed it was something she wanted to communicate to IWM. Lorna explained that the photographs of the Bund were her mother's most valuable and important items that were loaned to IWM or even in the wider public remembrance of the Holocaust. Esther wanted IWM to use the photographs of the Bund because 'it was such a huge thing and it's gone.' Esther needed to communicate the sense of a community bound by a lost ideology, a phenomenon that may have wider impact than the representation of her smaller family unit. Esther was used to appearing on stage to deliver her cautions against Nazism and the far right.

To choose to share mostly photographs of the Bund over photographs of her family reflects the message that she wished to communicate. Photographs of individuals bound together by their commitment to racial harmony, working class rights and the abolition of all forms of discrimination would seem to be a better resource for such a project than staged studio photographs.

Esther wanted to communicate this story to the public, but she yearned for photographs to tell a different story for her private audience; such a longing demonstrates the potential gap between the transmission of individual and cultural memory. Esther felt her collection lacked images of the closer family unit, a concern that Esther dealt with in her later years. During my interview with Katherine Brady, one of the curators of IWM's Exhibition and who worked closely with survivors, she recalled how, 'I went and got Esther's photographs from her, so she didn't have loads of photographs. I was really surprised when

I saw your photographs because a lot of them weren't of her family but were of the Bund.'[298] Indeed, during my research of IWM's Photographic Archive in 2017, most of Esther's photographs *were* connected to the Bund or the family's political roles, although about six were studio portrait photographs of family members. Brady may have been surprised by the presence of photographs of family members due to stronger memories of the Bund related photographs. Brady explained how Esther really wanted a photograph of herself with her parents and brothers rather than one with them dispersed amongst members of the Bund. Brady recalled how,

> One of the people in the photograph archive was playing around (with photo editing softwares) and I must have told Esther this. She said, "could he edit the photograph so it's just me, my parents, my brother?" So, I went back to the photo archive, and we had a quite in-depth discussion about editing historical records. [...] So, she was very happy. We got her a photograph of her and her parents, Perec and David.[299]

Esther was keen to use modern technology to generate a new photograph. It may well be true that an absence is as significant as a presence for understanding familial memory. However, Esther's desire to reunite the family within a photograph suggests that this absence had some personal emotional resonance and needed to be attended to. Historical accuracy and authenticity were for Esther less important than her deep-seated desire to see her family visually reunited. An edited photograph, despite all its clues to these emotional resonances, does not meet IWM's collecting policies. It does however point to the way that a photograph in a museum collection is interesting for what is

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[298] Before the interview I sent Brady a spreadsheet documenting all photographs in the archive at that point in 2017. Interview with Brady.
[299] Interview with Brady.

absent, yet it is these stories of longing which are removed from the process of collecting and thus from the transmission of individual to cultural memory.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to examine two important aspects of Jewish identity: the quest for liberation and the security of home. It has become clear that both have been key elements in Esther and Lorna's photography practice. I have argued that the Brunstein's family photographs, straddle that place between the myth and reality, the myth of the Jewish family life in Poland and the reality of antisemitism in Poland. The family in this instance refers to a wider form of kinship, that includes those who are politically, culturally, and social affiliated. It is this wide sense of belonging that is central to the Brunstein's self-representation and self-narrating. While Lorna repeats her mother's recognition that the Zylbergerg's life was hard she, like her mother, looks fondly at the past with its sense of community, resilience and hope, a point which may challenge this myth. The oral historian, Alistair Thomson wrote 'that the purpose of oral history is to rescue individuals from the generalising force of legends and expose them for the fabrications that they are'.[300] Summerfield warns against this 'myth-and-reality' approach which insists that there is a 'truth' to be discovered.[301] This chapter has demonstrated that both approaches can be beneficial when examining family photographs and testimony. Rather than searching for a 'truth' to be discovered, I have drawn out the complexities, ambiguities, and even contradictions involved in remembering and making sense of the past in the present. It is clear from talking to Lorna that photographs often do not provide answers nor even

[300] Alistair Thomson cited in Penny Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives: Discourse and Subjectivity in Oral Histories of the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 29.
[301] Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives*, 29.

connections to the past. Instead, they offer an opportunity to ask further questions to ponder the past and to imaginatively and artistically appropriate and by doing so to create meaning.

This chapter has demonstrated the possibility of using a family's photographic record to understand the role of politics and identity in fuelling the family narrative. Despite the changing style and content, the photographs narrate the family’s struggle for justice and a profound loyalty to a cause that has been repeatedly challenged and uprooted. For Esther and Lorna photographs are more than just records of the past, they are also symbols of struggle, sources of pride, purveyors of incomprehension and signs of absences. It is these elements of the family story that should be conveyed to the wider networks of researchers, gallery visitors and other audiences.

Chapter Three - Lea Goodman: Hiding in Plain Sight

Introduction

From a young age Naomi Levy (née Goodman) knew that the photograph albums locked away in her father's cabinet were off limits. Forbidden from entering the cabinet, Naomi named it the 'treasure chest'. Naomi recalls how,

> We were naughty. When he (her father) was out, we found a way. We flipped up the door and you could then open it. We would spend many an hour looking at the photo albums even though it was completely forbidden. But the first few pages in the early photograph album we tended not to touch. So that was really forbidden, forbidden. So, I knew roughly they were there but I never looked at them until, until...actually the IWM.[302]

Growing up, photographs were tinted with an air of mystery and transgression. Just as the photograph albums were conspicuously hidden, Naomi's mother Lea, spent the war years hiding in plain sight: assuming a Catholic-Polish identity in Slovakia. These themes of camouflage, hiding, and gingerly exploring the past appear throughout Lea's and Naomi's reflections. Over the last twenty years, Naomi has revisited her family's history as she researched and then wrote two manuscripts, one about her father's war-time story and another about her mother's family history. To these Naomi has added two published chapters containing her own reflections on connecting with this past.[303] The

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[302] Interview with Naomi Levy, 10 January 2022, London.

[303] Naomi Levy, 'Kraków: A Visit with my Mother to her Hometown', in *The Journey Home: Emerging out of the Shadow of the Past*, eds. David Clark and Teresa von Sommaruga Howard, 37-47 (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2022); Naomi Levy, 'On Being Second Generation and My Major Life Choices', in *Researchers Remember: Research*

unpublished book about her mother, ‘Our Polish Family War Story’, contains the largest number of photographs and it is for this reason I chose to focus primarily on this book.

For my research, this book presented both a source of information and a source of enquiry into the way photographs are used as part of memory work and family memorialisation. Examining the photographs in conjunction with interviews offered an opportunity to examine how Polish Jewish children managed the social reality of being in camouflage and how they related to their rescuers.[304] Only three pre-war photographs survived the war; these were packed in Lea and her mother’s suitcases as they fled Kraków. Most of the photograph collection gathered in IWM and in Naomi’s unpublished book comes from their time in hiding in Slovakia or in the early post-war years in France. As a result, this chapter focuses on a lesser studied period, the adjustment of children previously in camouflage to their new lives in post-war Europe.

Lea’s story differs from other narratives of hidden children on two accounts.[305] Firstly, she hid with her mother and secondly her rescuers did not, as far as Lea is aware, know about her Jewish identity. Furthermore, in the early post-war years she lived in the children’s home where her mother worked. This

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*as an Arena of Memory Among Descendants of Holocaust Survivors, A Collected Volume of Academic Autobiographie*s, eds. Judith Tydor Baumel-Schwartz and Shmuel Refael, 201-213 (London: Peter Lang, 2021).

[304] Previous works which have examined these realities and relationships have focused solely on eyewitness testimony, Joanna Michlic, *Jewish Children in Nazi-Occupied Poland* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2008); Nathan Bogner, *At the Mercy of Strangers, The Rescue of Jewish Children with Assumed Identities in Poland*, trans. Ralph Mandel (Offset Shlomo Nathan Press, 2009).

[305] The concept of ‘hidden children’ is relatively recent, dating back to the First International Gathering of Hidden Children which took place in New York in 1991, Françoise S Ouzan, *How Young Holocaust Survivors Rebuilt Their Lives: France, the United States, and Israel* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2018), 94.

experience of familial cohesion haunted by separation and upheaval stands in contrast to many other narratives of hidden children completely separated from their parents, whom they never saw again.[306]

In the first subsection, I shall examine the emotional meaning evoked by photographs. In 1939 when German forces occupied Poland, Lea was only four, but her oral testimonies, interviews and shared memories make it very evident that her childhood memories are both vivid and comprehensive. By examining the photographs less for what they reveal and more for how they are used as mnemonic tools for emotional memories, I argue that photo-elicitation methods provide a more direct access to child survivors' experience than through written testimony. Photos allow Lea to recount her affective experience whereas her accounts of what happened were gained through second-hand instalments.

For the second subsection I focus on Naomi's relationship with the photographs to argue that researching photographs and placing them into a physical narrative has helped her connect to and even place herself within a past from which she had previously felt alienated. In the final subsection, I turn to Lea's responses to 'atrocity' photographs and how her photographs are displayed in the IWM. I demonstrate the intertwining of communicative and cultural memory while highlighting the challenges faced by historians and museum professionals when navigating different generations' desires to understand and bear witness to the past through photographs.

[306] Bogner, *At the Mercy of Strangers*.

Methodology

My research methodology was slightly different from that of the other three case studies. This was because when I interviewed Lea, I saw for the first time Naomi's book about her mother. Until then, I did not know that such a full photographic record existed. Inevitably I had very limited time to prepare questions about the family's relationship to what had become to me a vastly expanded set of photographs. Furthermore, this is the only case study where I have talked to both a survivor and their child about a piece of memorial work i.e. Artwork/blog/book. After interviewing Lea, I spoke with Naomi about the photographs in her book. Following this Naomi sent me a PDF of the book allowing me time to read it thoroughly. I finally revisited Lea to ask her further questions about some of the photographs and her recollections of the war years. All interviews were conducted in public open-air spaces, a decision partly forced by the on-going Covid pandemic. This meant, unfortunately, that I was left with no sense of the way photographs were placed around the home, nor was I able to see the originals. The fact that the interviews took place in public spaces meant that the encounters had a different quality. Furthermore, the interviews were by necessity relatively short due to pressing schedules and the mental exhaustion that Lea experienced as a result of what she termed 'reliving the past'.[307]

Family Biography

Lea Goodman, née Apelzon (formal name Roza Lea) was born on 26 October 1935 in Kraków. [308] She was the only child to her parents Leizer Mendel Apelzon

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[307] Interview with Lea Goodman, 8 July 2022, London.

[308] The majority of Lea's family history and war-time story is taken from Naomi's book unless otherwise stated: Naomi Levy, 'Our Polish Family War Story' (2021), unpublished.

and Liba Pomocnik.[309] Mendel was the second of seven children. Their family came from Głowno, a town 25km northeast of Łódź. His father, a specialist Jewish hat maker, had moved the family 50km southwest from Działoszyce to Kraków where he expected better business opportunities. Lea's maternal family also came from Działoszyce. Liba had three sisters. Liba's mother had died when she was ten and her father remarried and had a son called Jacob. Mendel and Liba married on 29 July 1933 in Łódź. Mendel was an observant Jew who was also receptive to modern culture and mores. He worked in wholesale where he managed hosiery goods for manufactures in Warsaw and Łódź and sold them on in Kraków. Liba worked in a nursery school and at a summer camp for Jewish children in Rabka, 60km south of Kraków. Although Lea's family traditionally spoke Yiddish, Lea grew up speaking Polish surprisingly without a Yiddish accent, a characteristic which would later prove helpful in hiding her Jewish identity. She did however maintain a deep commitment to Jewish religion and practices. Before the war, the family lived in Kraków in the old Jewish quarter of Kazimierz but in a non-Jewish area.[310] Lea attended a Jewish kindergarten and the family attended synagogue on Saturday mornings.

Between the two World Wars, Poland had the largest Jewish community in Europe, numbering approximately 3.3 million.[311] Prior to the Second World War, Kraków, alongside other cities such as Lublin, Warsaw, Vilna, Białystok and Lwów, was one of the most important Jewish centres in Poland.[312] The death in

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[309] Hereon, I will refer to them as Mendel and Liba.

[310] Michael Galas and Antony Polonsky, ed. *Polin Studies in Polish Jewry: Jews in Kraków*, 23 (Portland, OR: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilisation, 2011); On Krakovian's perception of the city and the self at the beginning of the 20th Century see, Nathaniel D. Wood, *Becoming Metropolitan: Urban Selfhood and the Making of Modern Cracow* (DeKalf, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010).

[311] Bogner, *At the Mercy of Strangers,* 15; Antony Polonsky ed., *Studies From Shtetl to Socialism, Studies from Polin* (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilisation, 1993), xxxi.

[312] Galas et al, *POLIN: Studies in Polish Jewry Volume 23: Jews in Kraków,* 12.

May 1935 of Józef Piłsudski, the Polish Minister of Defence and de facto leader, marked a turning point for Polish Jewry. Many Jews felt that Piłsudski was the only figure capable of restraining the 'antisemitic currents that flowed deep within Polish society'.[313] Consistent with Jewish anxieties, the period 1936-1939 saw the radicalisation of antisemitism followed by a catalogue of antisemitic legislation fuelled by rampant nationalism. Jews were targeted as the 'Threatening Other', whose removal would inevitably lead to a strengthened state.[314] In 1936 General Felicjan Sławoj-Składkowski was appointed Prime Minister and immediately promoted anti-Jewish activity particularly the boycotting of Jewish businesses. Harsh economic policies followed accompanied by an increasing governmental concern with what popularly became known as the 'Jewish question'. Popular opinion held that the panacea for such a 'national contamination' should be enforced mass emigration.[315]

The beginning of the Second World War was marked by the invasion of Poland by German and then Soviet forces on the 1 and 17 September 1939 respectively. On 6 October, Soviet and German forces gained full control of Poland resulting in large areas, including Kraków, coming under the control of

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[313] Joshua Zimmerman, *Contested Memories: Poles and Jews During the Holocaust and its Aftermath* (London: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 19. Ezra Mendelsohn calls Piłsudski a "lesser evil" for the Jews because although he did oppose excessively antisemitic slogans, he also "took no steps to alter the state's basic attitude towards the Jews": Ezra Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe Between the World Wars* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 69. Natalia Aleksiun, "Regards from My Shtetl: Polish Jews Write to Piłsudski, 1933-1935", *The Polish Review* 56 (2011), 57-71 uses letters from Jews to Piłsudski to argue that he was thought of as an advocate for Polish Jews.

[314] Jews were often seen as threatening to the national image of Poland. They were believed to be socialist, non-Catholic and non-assimilatory, therefore putting their loyalty to the Polish state in doubt: Michlic, *Poland's Threatening Other.*

[315] In February 1937, the creation of OZON (Camp of National Unity) as an anti-Jewish platform, marked antisemitism as a central political issue. OZON published 13 articles on the 'Jewish Problem in Poland' in May 1938, containing a clear message to the Polish public that the authorities and the ruling circle saw Polish Jews as superfluous, unproductive, alien and destructive: Zimmerman, *Contested Memories*, 21.

the Nazis through the administration of the General Government headed by Hans Frank.[316] The Soviet Union annexed territories in the east, incorporating them into the Soviet Union. The Germans waged a war of terror and brutality against the entire population, destroying the country's economic life and engendering a sharp decline in living standards.[317] The systematic persecution of Jews by the German occupiers started immediately with a policy of expulsion and ghettoization.[318]

In mid-August 1940, the Nazis issued a decree forcing all Jews in Kraków to relocate to the city's hinterlands.[319] Only Jewish merchants, artists and skilled workers and their immediate families were permitted to remain in the city centre.[320] The Kraków ghetto was created in March 1941 and eventually housed between 15,000 and 20,000 Jews.[321] Lea's parents decided to leave for Działoszyce to join her grandfather Henoch and other close family. They stayed in an apartment without electricity or running water for a year. Mendel continued to travel to Kraków for business. Between 2 and 7 September 1942 all Jews in Działoszyce were summoned to go to the market in the early hours

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[316] Martin Winstone, *The Dark Heart of Hitler's Europe: Nazi Rule in Europe* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015).
[317] Bogner, *At the Mercy of Strangers,* 16-17.
[318] For an overview of the measures and restrictions placed on Kraków Jews see Joanna Sliwa, *Jewish Childhood in Kraków: A Microhistory of the Holocaust* (London: Rutgers University Press, 2021)*;* Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution,* 36-43*;* Alexander Rossino, *Hitler Strikes Poland: Blitzkrieg, Ideology, and Atrocity* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 88-120*;* Lucy S Dawidowicz, *The War Against The Jews, 1933-45,* 472-74.
[319] By August 1940, the Nazis had expelled 33,281 Jews from the city: Sliwa, *Jewish Childhood in Kraków,* 22.
[320]Ibid, 19.
[321] For detailed information about Kraków ghetto see, Eric J Sterling, *Life in the Ghetto during the Holocaust* (New York: Syracuse University press, 2005); Joanna Sliwa, 'The Forced Relocation to the Krakow Ghetto as Remembered by Child Survivors', in *The Young Victims of the Nazi Regime: Migration, The Holocaust and Postwar Displacement*, ed. Simone Gigliotti and Monica Tempian, 153-69 (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016).

of the following morning.[322] The elderly were transported by cart to be murdered, while young men, including Lea's cousins Heniek and Elchanan, were sent to work in Prokocim Camp, a labour satellite camp of Kraków-Płaszów concentration camp.[323] Others were deported to Belzec extermination camp. Lea and her parents subsequently left by train to Kraków. Her father made contact with Richard Strauch, a German engineer who owned a light engineering factory. He was taking in Jewish families in exchange for money to work in Kostrze labour camp.[324] On 27 October 1942 Strauch sent all the children on a horse and cart to the ghetto having heard the German authorities had discovered there were children in the camp. Lea's father removed Lea from the cart, saving her from the deportation the following day. Lea then spent some of the war separated from her mother. She stayed for a few days with Mr and Mrs Soltisowas, a childless couple in Podgorze district of Krakow, who were like relatives to Lea and then with Mrs Soltisowas's sister, Mrs Dobrovolska, who was hiding Jews for money.[325] Meanwhile, her parents remained in the camp. Her father was arrested in November/December 1941 and imprisoned in Kraków ghetto's prison.[326] Liba last heard from him on 19 January 1943 when it is believed he was deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau. He was murdered on 10 February 1943.[327] Lea's mother joined her in hiding but was forced to remain in concealment while Lea was sent out to do jobs for the family, a decision

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[322] Alicja Jarkowska, 'Criminal cases involving Jews heard in Kraków District Court in the period 1939–1944. A contribution to further research', *Holocaust Studies* 28, no.12 (2022): 175.
[323] Levy, 'Our Jewish Family War Story,' 17; Yitzhak Arad, *Operation Reinhard Death Camps: Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2018), 122-123.
[324] Martin Gilbert, *The Righteous: The Unsung Heroes* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2003).
[325] The draconian measures meted out against Polish Christians who were found aiding Jews in Poland deterred many Christians from helping. Nevertheless, it is estimated that 2% of the Polish population actively aided the Jews: Bogner, *At The Mercy of Strangers,* 18-19.
[326] The exact date of his arrest is unknown: Levy, 'Our Polish Family War Story,' 18.
[327] This information is gathered from the International Tracing Service research.

presumably based on Lea's blonde hair and therefore 'Aryan' appearance. In total between October 1942 and March 1944 they stayed in four different apartments.[328]

Lea and her mother set off from Kraków in March 1944 with the intention of escaping to Hungary. They took a train to a point near the Slovak border at Zakopane from where they met a Slovak guide who led them by foot across the Tatra mountains.[329] After two attempts, on the first they were separated from their guide, they eventually arrived in Kežmarok, a town in eastern Slovakia. After staying with several different hosts for some nights, their guide introduced them to his relatives, an ethnic German family called the Kredatus with whom they lived until 1946 and were to become life-long friends. Their survival relied on hiding their Jewish identity and assuming a Catholic one.[330]

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[328] Moving quickly and at late notice between rescuers was common for Jews in hiding because of dangers of informers: Bogner, A*t the Mercy of Strangers,* 47.
[329] Sliwa uses Lea's testimony from the Shoah Foundation Archive as one of the case studies about children being smuggled over the Polish-Slovakia border:
[330] Jews in Czechoslovakia were relatively free from persecution during the stable years of the First Czechoslovakia Republic 1919-1938, especially when antisemitic press was censored. This all changed after the deterioration of the First Republic when they ceded its Sudetenland region to Germany on 1 October 1938. The Nazis invasion of the Czech lands in March 1939 ended the censorship of the press ended resulting in the Slovak Republic scapegoating the Jews to divert attention from various foreign policy disasters and blamed them for a lack of security: James Ward, 'The 1938 First Vienna Award and the Holocaust in Slovakia', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 29, no.1 (2015): 76–108. The Slovak Republic was a Nazi puppet, never being directly occupied by Nazi Germany, it had enough autonomy to shape its own domestic policies including those towards Jews, Anna Cichopek-Gajraj, 'Jews, Poles, and Slovaks: A Story of Encounters, 1944-48' (University of Michigan, 2008) (unpublished dissertation), accessed 10 July 2022, https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/61676/acichope_1.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.
In 1942, 57,000 Slovak-Jews, more than half of the Jewish population of Slovakia, were deported to Auschwitz, after which they discontinued any deportations despite constant Nazi pressures to do so: Ivan Kamenec, 'The Deportation of Jewish Citizens from Slovakia in 1942', in *The Tragedy of the Jews of Slovakia 1938-1945: Slovakia*

Lea's mother pretended to be a Polish Christian, escaping Poland to avoid forced labour. The family had six children. Mr Kredatus was a policeman and Mrs Kredatus looked after the farm. Lea's mother helped Mrs Kredatus on the farm and in the home in return for food, board and safety. Although pretending to be Catholic by saying Christian prayers and attending church, Lea and her mother managed to retain some Jewish practices including Jewish prayers and not working on the Sabbath. Kežmarok was liberated by the Russians in February 1945. At the end of the war, Lea and her mother attempted to regain some normality and independence. They were provided with a house by the authorities and Liba made a living by baking and selling cakes. Liba regularly visited Kraków in the hope of gathering news of her family and Mendel but she eventually became resigned to the fact he had been murdered. Few family members survived: only Liba's half-brother Jacob and three cousins. All the others were deported from Działoszyce to Belzec extermination camp between 2 and 7 September 1942.[331] Mendel's two sisters, Dora and Sala, and one cousin were the only ones to survive on the Apelzon side.[332]

In January 1946, Lea and her mother left for Prague where they stayed for three months in a hotel possibly funded by a Jewish organisation. They left for Paris in early April, from where they believed it would be easier to reach Palestine. However, instead, they went to Aix-les-Bains where her mother worked in several children's homes including the Villa Bernarette and Villa Richmond. Lea lived at the children's home, attending a French school in Aix-les-Bains. In Villa Richmond, her mother met her future husband, Albert Lasch, who was at that time working in the home's administration and accounts department. On 17

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and the "Final Solution of the Jewish Question", ed., Wacław Długoborski (Oświęcim, Banská Bystrica: Auschwitz- Birkenau State Museum, 2002), 130.

[331] Levy, 'Our Polish Family War Story', 5.

[332] Lea Goodman, 'Two Autobiographical Letters to an Eleven Year Old French Niece', in *We Remember: Child Survivors of the Holocaust Speak*, 77-91, ed. The Child Survivors' Association of Great Britain (Leicestershire, Matador 3rd ed. 2014).

July 1947 Lea was sent to a clinic in the Swiss mountains in an area called Leysin because of lung problems. Her mother remained in Aix-les-Bains but would often visit. After she recovered, she spent six months in the children's home, Institute Asher in Aiz-les-Bains, to adapt to the air at lower altitude.

Lea, her mother and Albert moved to Nice, where her mother and Albert married and opened a Kosher restaurant-tearoom. They had a daughter, Elaine, born 11 December 1948. Lea had joined them in October that year, staying with her mother and stepfather's business partner, Mrs Eizencweig.[333] Lea helped out at the restaurant where she met Dennis Goodman, a customer, who became her future husband.

Dennis, née Hermann Gutmann, was born on September 1923 and grew up in Frankfurt-am-Main. His father was a banker originally from Stuttgart and his mother came from a well-established Frankfurt family who dealt in antiques and art.[334] In 1936 Dennis was sent to Whittingehame College, a Jewish Residential School in Brighton, a town on the south coast of England. In 1939, aged sixteen, he had to leave because his parents could no longer afford the school fees. His parents had moved to Amsterdam in 1937 to escape increasing antisemitism in Poland and to help his father take over the management of his brother in law's business. He last saw his parents in Amsterdam in 1939 when visiting for the school holidays. He spent some time as a trainee on the shop floor of a handbag factory in Blackburn, a city in the north of England. He moved to London where he was arrested at his house on 2 July 1940 for being an 'enemy alien'.[335] Along with 2000 internees, he boarded the Denura boat at

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[333] Lea Goodman, 'Two Autobiographical Letters,' 85.
[334] Naomi Levy, 'The 1941 Australian, Boy Scout Diary of Dennis J Goodman,' unpublished.
[335] Holders of German and Austrian passports were at this time viewed as 'enemy aliens' due to German's advance and a possible invasion of Britain, Peter Gillman and

Liverpool Docks on 10 July to sail to Sydney, Australia, arriving on 6 September. The British government eventually realised its mistake in sending refugees to Australia and Dennis was allowed to return to the UK providing he joined the army. Arriving back in Liverpool on 28 November 1941 he was posted to Pioneer Corps Companies for eighteen months where he worked in construction. He was eventually transferred to the 8th Kings Royal Irish Hussars in 1943. After the war, as a German speaker, he was posted to Neuengamme, Bergedorf near Hamburg to interrogate suspected war criminals and members of the Nazi Party arrested in Hamburg. He finally learned of the death of his parents when he returned to Amsterdam after the war; they had both been deported from Amsterdam to Sobibor in Poland and murdered on arrival on 23 July 1943.

Lea and Dennis eventually settled in London. Lea trained as a photographer at the London School of Printing and Graphic Art and then worked as a freelance photographer. She later trained at the Hammersmith School of Graphic Art and Building, specialising in direct metal sculpture, a practice which involves heating and shaping metal directly using industrial equipment. Between all of this Lea acted as an art therapist in a London cancer hospital. They had two children, Naomi and Daniel.

Part One – Lea Goodman: Hiding, Dual Identity and Post-war Adaptation

> Anyone who was an adult during the war absorbed and remembered places and people and at the end of the war sat down and counted them and recounted them. [...] For children, it was not the names that were absorbed into memory but something totally different. For them, memory

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Lili Gillmann, *Collar the lot!' How Britain Interned and Expelled its Wartime Refugees* (London: Quartet Books, 1980).

> is a pool that never empties. It is replenished over the years and becomes clearer and clearer. It is not a chronological memory but a flowing and changing one, if one may say such a thing.[336]

Following the war, Lea carefully wrote a diary with alternating pages: a page covering the events of that day and the opposite page containing her memories from the war. While doing so, she discovered that many details of the war years were missing for example, Lea knew nothing of how her mother found the addresses of people with whom they had stayed.[337] Yet Liba was reluctant to revisit the events of her past. Lea once asked her if she could record her narrating her story to which she quickly declined replying, 'do you think I am going to die?'[338] Despite this, Liba did speak to a journalist who then wrote a memoir of her life. This is a source that, although a valuable resource of factual information, Naomi used with caution. Naomi was always suspicious that the journalist could have intentionally or otherwise distorted the testimony.[339]

Throughout my interview with Lea I recognised certain asymmetries of remembering and forgetting. Lea repeatedly insisted that she remembered everything about this time. I asked her *'if'* she 'remembered what it was like...' to which she insisted, 'of course I remember.' However, other questions were greeted with the response that 'I only remember the photograph, I don't remember seeing it myself.' There are also some inconsistencies in Lea's memories of how she felt at certain points of her childhood, a matter to which I shall return later. I do not think that these asymmetries and inconsistencies

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[336] Aharon Appelfeld, *Life Story* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1999), 85, published in English as *The Story of a life* (New York: Schocken, 2004).
[337] Goodman, 'Two Autobiographical Letters,' 83.
[338] Interview with Lea Goodman, 25 November 2021 and Levy, 'Our Polish Family War Story,' 2.
[339] Levy, 'Our Polish Family War Story,' 2.

undermine the veracity of Lea's memory.[340] Indeed, Lea recognises the fallibility of memory when she writes,

> Memory, imperfect as it is, has its own reality. We block out certain thoughts. We cluster others. We telescope significant events of the exclusion of what seems insignificant. We incorporate details to us by others and unknowingly they become our own.[341]

I rather intend to move the focus of attention away from 'what' Lea remembered and towards an analysis of the photographs today. I do so by drawing on 'affect theory' and most particularly on the work of Sara Ahmed and her concern with how we are affected *by* things and our *intentionality* or *a*boutness concerning the world or things around us.[342] Things, in respect to my research refers to photographs. Ahmed uses the Scottish philosopher, David Hume's term 'impressions' to explore how things are pressed upon the mind to become images, leaving values and ideas somewhat vague or blurry.[343] Adding to this, Ahmed argues that certain objects get augmented with value becoming 'good'/'happy' objects.[344] In what follows, I examine how Lea invests certain photographs with either positive or negative value and how these then create impressions of the past. I also consider whether certain photographs then become 'happy' or 'sad' photographs.

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[340] Roseman, *The Past in Hiding* 478; Kushner, 'Saul Friedländer,' 76.
[341] Goodman, 'Two Autobiographical Letters,' 88.
[342] Italics in original, Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 2nd ed (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2014).
[343] Ahmed uses David Hume's discussion of the relationship between ideas and impressions from, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 49-50, in Ahmed, 'Happy Objects,' 36.
[344] Ibid.

The subject of rescued children in Poland either by hiding or assumed identity has received recent scholarly attention. Much of this has focused on testimony in an attempt to understand the myriad experiences of Jewish children.[345] I have selected four themes explored in this literature which correspond to Lea's story. The themes are: security and protection, dual identity, adherence to Catholicism and the challenges of adaptation in the early post-war years.

Lea identifies her arrival in Slovakia and her moving in with the Kredatus family as a turning point in the war. She finally gained a sense of security and safety after years of instability in Kraków. She remembered, 'as we'd crossed the frontier and we were welcomed by a family and our feet were bathed. For me that was the end of the war. I mean I was so excited.'[346] While a surprising number of photographs in Lea's collection capture her time in hiding, the images of Lea and her mother in what seem to be scenes showing on friendly terms with German soldiers conveys a sense of normality that is completely at odds with their real situation. The photographs themselves present a visual tension between reality and camouflage, between shared secrets and hiding in plain sight.

One photograph captures Lea smiling astride a horse in front of some stables (fig. 41). Mr Kradatus holds the horse's rein as they pose for the camera. Before looking through the book together, Lea recalled the photograph, 'out of all the children he had put me on the horse. I don't know how many others, if we took turns to be put on the horse or even who took the photographs.' She repeated something similar when looking at the photograph, 'Again it's very nice. I don't

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[345] Bogner, *At the Mercy of Strangers*; Emunah Nachmany, *Dividing Hearts: The Removal of Jewish Children from Gentile Families in Poland in the Immediate Post Holocaust Years, trans. Naftali Greenwood* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem Publishing, 2009); Sliwa, *Jewish Childhood in Kraków,* 116-137; Michlic, *Jewish Children in Nazi-Occupied Poland*.
[346] Interview with Lea Goodman, 25 November 2021.

know if he put each child on that horse. He certainly put me on the horse for the photograph.' These reflections are significant in two ways: firstly, it suggests that her memory of being on the horse was formed not by the event itself but by seeing the photograph. Secondly, she repeats the point that she may have been the only one put on the horse, certainly implying that she may have been given special treatment by Mr Kredatus. It appears that these photographs have made an impression on Lea and have moved her to consider the ways that she fitted into the family. Emphasising how she may have been given preferred treatment suggests the photograph has been tinged with positive memories of Lea's time with the family. Lea later reflected on this period of her past, commenting, 'it was a good life' and 'I was very happy in that family.' Photographs, although not directly used to communicate them, have the capacity to become enchanted by memory and then to create a profound sense of belonging, of being valued and of being loved.

Figure 41. Photograph of Lea sat on a horse with Mr Kredatus, Kežmarok, 1944, courtesy of Naomi Levy.

Other photographs which convey positive impressions are those of Lea and her mother spending time with the Kredatus family and German soldiers. One was taken at Christmas with the family sitting at one end of the dining table to accommodate the field of the camera lens (fig. 42). Lea is sat at the centre, seemingly on the lap of a German soldier. Her face is half hidden. The second is taken outside by the stables. In both, Lea is in the centre of the photograph in front of the soldiers; her proximity to them suggests little contempt towards or fear of the occupying power. Lea refers to the photograph of her sat on a soldier's lap both in her 1992 testimony and twice in our interviews. Prior to seeing the photograph, she commented, 'so in the book there is a photograph where I am sitting in the lap of German solider...I think he seemed quite nice.' She later added, 'it was Christmas Eve, and I sat on the lap of a German soldier...we befriended more than these two.' Despite this amiable perception of the German soldiers, the reality that Germans were the enemy was not lost on Lea. In her book, Naomi writes that 'mother understood then, despite her young age of 9, that the 'orderly' Germans were 'the baddies' and the 'cannon fodder' was the first wave of Soviet troops, who were young.'[347] Sitting on their lap did not mean that she was unaware of them as a threat, but was rather a gesture of triumph and achievement, since her camouflage and secrecy was complete.

Ahmed argues that emotions involve different movements towards and away from others and objects. On both aforementioned occasions, it can be seen that these photographs are key to Lea's retelling of the past. Her attachment to the photographs is reflected by her referencing them both in our interview and her IWM oral history. The images, I suggest, are ample witnesses to Lea's belonging,

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[347] Levy, 'Our Polish Family War Story,' 30.

to the success of her disguise and to her assimilation into a new way of life which bore no trace of her Jewish identity that, if discovered, could have had devastating consequences for both her and her mother.

Figure 42. Lea sitting on the lap of a German soldier with the Kredatus family, Christmas 1944, courtesy of Naomi Levy.

Figure 43. Photograph of the Kradatus and German soldiers, Lea centre and her mother far right, courtesy of Naomi Levy.

Many Jewish children assuming Catholic identities took Communion as an act of camouflage.[348] For Lea's membership of the Kredatus family necessarily demanded strict adherence to this key Catholic ritual. Two photographs of Lea at her First Communion convey a sense of pride in Naomi who commented that her mother 'played her role beautifully in terms of all the lying she had to do'.[349] The photograph of Lea kneeling on a stool behind a cross, her hands held in prayer and a soft smile provide no hint of deceit or even a burden of guilt (fig. 44). Lea herself described her time in hiding as 'play acting', an appellation that frames her experience as light-hearted and even frivolous rather than inherently dangerous. Indeed, her upright posture and smile support Lea's interpretation of what was happening. The light behind Lea creates something

[348] Bogner, *At the Mercy of Strangers*, 66.
[349] Interview with Levy.

of an angelic halo above Lea, adding to the innocence of her contrivance and the thought that she 'play(s) her role beautifully'.

The second photograph of Lea standing next to her seated mother offers an opportunity to examine the relationship between mother and daughter (fig. 45). Lea's hand is placed on her mother's knee with an air of reassurance while her mother looks away from the camera and smiles at her daughter. For Naomi, these photographs are evocative, representing for her both Lea's dual identity and the profound trust between mother and daughter. She recalls,

> How she (Lea) had to pick up another identity at a young age. Both of them were very brave. My grandmother was very brave for keeping her. [...] I find that very moving. Immense trust between the two of them.[350]

It is however possible to understand these images in a completely different way. Whilst they certainly tell a narrative of camouflage and deception, they are also assertions of commitment to Catholicism. Jewish children who assumed Catholic identities typically observed and absorbed their caregivers' Catholicism,[351] an act that Lea to some extent enjoyed: 'she came to know the Church ritual with all its pomp and ceremony.'[352] She has fond memories of attending church: 'I thought church was wonderful. Incense, First Communion.'[353] Her experience is not dissimilar to that of other Jewish children who assumed some sort of Catholic identity during the war years. Renee, a Jewish child from Alsace, then annexed by Germany, fled to France where she, together with her two sisters, was sent to a convent ostensibly to master the

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[350] Ibid.
[351] Sliwa, *Jewish Childhood in Kraków*, 121.
[352] Levy, 'Our Polish Family War Story,' 29.
[353] Lea Goodman, interview with Lyn Smith, IWM, March 1992, ©IWM 12536.

Catechism and the myriad of rituals associated with that faith. Like Lea, Renee was also ‘hiding in plain sight’ and found the reassurance in her adopted religion, describing the Catholic church and its rituals as ‘comforting’.[354]

Friedländer’s experience of living in a convent during the war was not so dissimilar. He found comfort in Catholicism and at one point felt called to train for the priesthood.[355] Reflecting on Renee and other similar experiences amongst children, Eva Fleischer explains that, the newfound Christian milieu provided a sense of security and safety for children who had found themselves in danger because of their Jewish identity.[356] After the war, when Lea began attending synagogue services, she found it hard to understand how different it all was from the Church service that she remembered fondly,[357] a confusion

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[354] Renee tells her story in Jane Marks, *The Hidden Children: The Secret Survivors of the Holocaust* (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1993), xi.
[355] Saul Friedländer, *When Memory Comes,* trans. Helen Lane (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2016), 14.
[356] Eva Fleischner, ‘”Who am I?” The Struggle for Religious Identity of Jewish Children Hidden by Christians During the Shoah’, in *Grey Zones: Ambiguity and Compromise in the Holocaust and its Aftermath*, ed. Jonathon Petropoulos and John K Roth, 107-117 (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2002), 111.
[357] Levy, ‘Our Polish Family War Story,’ 29.

shared by many other Jewish children who saw the Christian faith as a place of refuge.

Figure 44. Lea on her first communion, Kežmarok, Slovakia, 1944, courtesy of Naomi Levy.

Figure 45. Lea and her mother on her first communion, Kežmarok, Slovakia, 1944, courtesy of Naomi Levy.

Nevertheless, the burden of deception did prove momentarily too heavy to carry, forcing Lea to reveal to the second Kredatus child, 'I've got a big secret, I am Jewish.' Lea reflected on this revelation:

> Did you read about that? No? I am Jewish and at the time, I was what, eight, between the age of eight and nine. But it was such a big thing I just needed to tell it to her, and I thought once I said it, gosh it's just something. What on earth

> have I done? She didn't hear, she didn't know what Jewish was, she never mentioned it.[358]

This story is significant on several accounts. Firstly, this story was not mentioned in Naomi's 'Our Polish Family War Story', in our interview and in my first interview with Lea. Lea does however mention it in her 1992 oral testimony. Secondly, it is surprising, or perhaps even telling, that Lea revealed her secret to the second daughter, Deta: the daughter who, as Lea recalled, was 'a bitchy girl.' Lea recalled during our interview and her 1992 oral testimony how Deta:

> Said to me "you're eating our bread." I think I must have had a piece of bread in my hand and it must have choked me. And I said nothing to her.

Lea repeated this story several times, either when pointing to a photograph of her or when describing her time at the Kredatus' house. It appears that Deta's malicious behaviour has influenced Lea's relationship with her in more recent years.[359] Lea was recently asked to accommodate her during a visit to London, but Lea recalled how,

> I said no. My husband was furious. She was German speaking. My husband was German speaking. And he thought it would be so interesting for her to tell him. She was such a bitchy girl. I think I wasn't going to have her. Even so I did tell her my secret.

Lea's refusal to host Deta was a result not only of Deta's 'bitchy behaviour' but also with the fact she was party to Lea's secret. Nathan Bogner describes other

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[358] Interview with Goodman, 8 July 2022.

[359] Lea also described Deta being a 'bitchy girl' in her 1992 oral history interview.

instances when Jewish children 'blurted out' their secret. He adds, 'it sometimes happened in such families that one of the biological children insulted the adopted child during a quarrel and reminded him of his Jewish origin. Such confrontation not only embarrassed the child but also undermined his self-confidence.'[360]

I am not arguing that revealing her secret to Deta is a source of shame for Lea that she would rather gloss over. Instead, I suggest, that this story does not fit within the photographic narrative and this is why it is not mentioned when the photographs were being viewed both on the occasion of the photo-elicitation interviews with Naomi and Lea and in narrative of 'Our Polish Family War Story'. Instead, the photographs' visual narrative endorses Naomi's commentary of the photographs: that her mother 'played her role beautifully in terms of all the lying she had to do'.[361] Photographs of Lea's Catholicism are associated with the happier memories of security basking in Catholic ritual, and the childish pleasure gained from pretence.

Fleischer's study considers the implications of hiding in plain sight during the early post-war years. She comments that 'what was for most of the world the "happy ending" of the Second World War was, for many of the hidden children, neither "happy" nor an "ending" but rather the beginning of a fragmented, confused existence.'[362] Hidden children were exposed to a plethora of traumatic experiences including: loss of family and home, abandonment and even betrayal, constant exposure to danger, forced silence and secrecy and adoption of a false identity. It was post-war when Lea's sense of abandonment emerged. She recalled, 'when the war ended, after the war was terrible. After

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[360] Bogner, *At the Mercy of Strangers*, 60
[361] Interview with Levy.
[362] Fleischner, '"Who am I?",' 108.

the war when all the drama and whatever had finished. My mother wanted to leave, and luckily I had my half-sister.'[363]

There are two photographs taken in the early-post war years which, I argue, are seen as 'sad photographs' due to the very negative memories associated with them. The first captures Lea in the children's home, the Hotel Beau Site, in 1946/7 (fig. 46) and the second captures her mother in Nice in 1948 (fig. 48). In the first, Lea is dressed in a long, elegant dress one side held up by her hand in a playful manner. She stands upright with a nonchalant smile on her face, portraying a sense of pride in her outfit. During the first interview, Lea commented on the photograph, 'I look as though I have no complexes at all don't you think?' Despite the playfulness of the photograph, it evokes for Lea memories of emotional turmoil and anxiety. However, during the second interview and without the photograph present, Lea recalled (referring to herself in the third person), how she must 'have been a very secure girl at the time' living as she did in the children's home. When asked to explain what she meant by the word 'secure', she added 'I was fine, I think my problems came when the children's home dissolved and some of the children went to Israel. [...] So I think my misery started when aged eleven I was sent to this clinic.' Here the timeline of when her 'problems came' seems to be profoundly confused.

Both Naomi's book and Lea's first interview emphasise Lea's emotional trauma of being separated from her mother when sent to Switzerland to stay in a clinic rather than when she arrived at the children's home. Several times Lea mentioned being 'very miserable' during this time. Some of this misery derived from her relationship with her mother, a relationship often strained due to her

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[363] Interview with Goodman, 25 November 2021.

mother's declining mental health and Lea's inability to care for her. Lea recalled, that whilst in Switzerland, another patient,

> Very stupidly said, [...] Maybe she was jealous. I had a mother, she didn't have a mother. She said your mother said, "to me she visits you but she really pines for her fiancé". I mean what a stupid thing for my mother to say to anybody and for her to repeat to me. So, in that clinic. Nine months in that clinic. [...] Then arriving in Nice and my mother had no accommodation for me. Really those teenage years.

Figure 46. Lea in the gardens of Hotel Beau Site, Aix-les-Bains, 1946/7, courtesy of Naomi Levy.

The photograph was taken during a time of some security and stability. Lea's positive memories are very much based on the fact that she had not then been separated from her mother. Despite this the times were still clouded by some sadness. This became apparent to me during the interview when the veil of youthful theatricality momentarily fell to allow a glimpse of the pain behind.

A similar playful expression can be seen in another photograph in Lea's collection, one that Naomi only found recently when researching the archive of Rescue Children, Inc., the American charitable organisation which set up the children's homes, in Yeshiva University Archive in New York (fig. 47). It is a formal portrait of Lea's head. Her chin is pointing down and she looks up in a cheeky manner. Naomi copied the photograph and showed it to her mother, to which she replied, "I have it". Naomi later came across the photograph in the flat, stored away from the rest of Lea's collection. Why this photograph was kept separately is not clear to either myself nor Naomi; indeed it is not clear whether the photograph removed from the collection for ease of access or to be hidden. Its separation from the others points to its particular resonance to how Lea relates to the past, a resonance that remains elusive to both Naomi and me.

Figure 47. An official photograph of Lea for Rescue Children Inc, courtesy of Naomi Levy

The second photograph which elicits sad memories is that of Lea's mother standing outside her Kosher restaurant, 'Le Gourmand'. Liba had opened the restaurant in Nice with her husband and friend, Gutta Sternbuch in 1948 (fig. 48). Upon seeing this photograph in the interview Lea commented, 'I think she looks rather sad no?' However, to an impartial onlooker, Liba does not look particularly sad. Instead, she is captured smiling and leaning her face sideways in a friendly manner. The occasion of being newly married, expecting a baby and opening a restaurant in newly liberated France would suggest that this was a period of happiness, pride and excitement for her as she sets off on a new adventure with loved ones. However, after reading a letter from Lea to her niece in 2005, I discovered more about the context of this photograph and was

given clues as to why Lea associated it with her mother's grief. In the letter Lea describes how she was with her mother in Nice when a large brown envelope arrived. A batch of photographs dropped out and her mother 'suffered a foreboding of (her) brother's tragic death.' She continued, 'the image of her, highly pregnant with your mother, faced with this tragic news is still with me after 47 years.'[364]

Figure 48. Liba and her friend Gutta Sternbuch in front of their restaurant, Le Gourmand, 16 rue de la Paix, Nice, 1948, courtesy of Naomi Levy.

Lea may have associated a photograph of her mother pregnant with the shock that her mother experienced upon hearing her half-brother Jacob's death, a moment that seems to have had a lasting impact on Lea's evocation of the past. Whilst grief was not part of the moment captured on camera in Nice it lurked in Lea's subconscious only to be summoned to her attention by the presence of the photograph. It may not be too fanciful to suggest that Lea, by posing a

[364] Goodman, 'Two Autobiographical Letters,' 85.

question, drew on me to witness her experience of her mother's grief which she sees represented in the photograph. Experiencing a shared grief may well be a way of uniting oneself to another, an action that is profoundly creative whilst being also as Lea repeatedly recalls, unbearably 'miserable'.

Hirsch argues in her examination of W. G. Sebald's *Austerlitz* that 'photographs can provide the stage for just such an effective encounter that can bring back the most primal childhood fears and desires for care and recognition.'[365] In a similar vein, Lea's photographs can be read in terms of the effective meaning that they were able to conjure up from the recesses of her unconscious. Lurking there were the childhood desires and fears including a need for recognition, love, belonging, all kindled by her fear of abandonment, insecurity and rejection.

Part Two – Naomi Levy: Mourning and Memorialisation in the Visual Narration of the Family History

This subsection addresses Edwards' theory that photographs are active within social networks.[366] Indeed, photographs in the Goodman family have always had a powerful presence through their power to mystify and then reinforce familial relations. This subsection traces Naomi's relationship with the photographs, firstly looking at their physical and emotional place within the family and then examining them on a mnemonic and affective level. Finally, I examine them in an anthropological and memorial sense, considering the way that they have been used in the book to memorialise the past.

Naomi's parents did not mention their past until the late 1980s. She recalled, 'before that it was all about moving forward and living in the present. To me it's

[365] Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*, 52.
[366] Edwards, 'Photographs and the Sound of History.'

all symbolic of boxing away...and then I come along...(laughs) "I would like to know more please."'[367] This process of 'unboxing' the past began in the early 2000s. Before his death in 2007, Naomi's father, Dennis, had already begun researching his background. Naomi, however, knew that she would have to 'pick up the baton of his research'.[368] She joined a second-generation network which helped her to talk through her past within a supportive setting. This helped her to understand 'that the Holocaust was part of me and needed to be addressed.' Because of that, she described, 'I no longer had the urge to put it behind me, and wanted to find out more.'[369] During a visit to see her daughter in Australia, Naomi visited the Jewish Museum in Melbourne, which was then hosting an exhibition on the 'Dunera', a subject which is better known in Melbourne. Naomi was already familiar with the 'Dunera' from spending an afternoon as a teenager reading her father's diary which was hidden away in the 'treasure chest'. Visiting this exhibition, Naomi realised its cultural and personal significance, igniting a desire to research the family's story. While returning to the diary for more information, Naomi 'chanced upon' a box of photographs from both parents' sides of the family dating back to the early twentieth century. This encouraged her to learn more about her family and to use her mother as a resource. Together they visited Kraków hoping that returning to places connected to her childhood would evoke memories for Lea. This spurred Naomi to write 'Our Polish Family's Story' which was completed in 2021.

In the two manuscripts books, Naomi refrains from any self-reflection on the process of engaging with both the family history and the photographic record. Instead, it is, I suggest, a site of memory and a space to structure and

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[367] Interview with Levy.
[368] Interview with Levy. Naomi also talks about this in, 'Kraków: A Visit with my Mother to her Hometown.'
[369] Levy, 'On Being Second Generation,' 208.

memorialise the family's story. Naomi has since contributed two chapters to edited volumes in which she reflects about her own experience of retrieving the family's past. The interviews, her chapters and the book combine to offer a rich understanding of the physical and emotional connections Naomi has made with the photographs and memory work that she has conducted.

Photographs of her father, although hidden away, were always part of Naomi's childhood. Looking at the photographs, Naomi remembered, 'was completely *completely* forbidden because he was worried, we would damage them. That was why. They were absolutely treasured, and we would damage them.' She explained that her father never brought the photographs out himself: 'My father was always looking forward.'[370] The photograph albums and hence the past was not to be explored. Forbidden or not, Naomi chose to secretly explore the past. It was an act that would certainly have prompted a postmemory, an act of knowing but not knowing, of closeness yet distance, in Naomi's case, to her father's past. To this day, the photograph albums have retained their seductive qualities. Naomi commented that 'even when looking at them now, because I have been so indoctrinated, "you mustn't look at them!" I feel guilty every time.'[371] Photographs, both in their social and material presence, make real her father's presence. She continues to look at the photographs with trepidation, aware of her father's continuing presence and the fear he instilled in her for looking at what should remain un-viewed.

When researching her father's story and going through her parents' house in search of documents, Naomi came across another box of photographs dated back to the beginning of the twentieth century.

[370] Interview with Levy.
[371] Ibid.

> I said to my mother, it took a lot of courage for me to do this because we never really did talk ever talk about her personal experience...... Anyway, I plucked up the courage and I said to her, "look one day we have to go through these and tell me who everybody is." And we did that an hour at a time because that is all she could manage. She would get tension headaches.[372]

Despite the secrecy and silence shrouding Lea's parents' past, their history was contained together in a plastic box where their family photographs were chaotically mingled. This fusion of two distinct histories draws wider parallels with the couple's lives. Naomi reflected on the socioeconomic differences between her two parents and how they would have never met had it not been for the war:

> In fact, my grandfather was also a German-Jewish refugee, again from a high-class family. German-Jews were quite snobby. It would be unthinkable to marry a young girl from Poland. It was that degree of snobbery I cannot tell you. It's like upper class aristocracy marrying working class at that time. Anyway, so, the social classes melted away with the war. Also, the geographical distances melted because of the war. To my mind, it was only really thinking this through recently. They were both children really at the outbreak of war. My mother was four, my father was thirteen.

Despite the difference in class and age, they were both child survivors and it was this that tied the two together. For Naomi, Lea and Dennis' photographs,

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[372] Ibid.

stored together in a plastic box, represents the union of two very different worlds:

> I regard them as two child survivors who set up home together, very much affected by the war, in very different ways but affected by the war. So, to me it makes absolute sense that these photographs were put together in one plastic box, put away and not really arranged and coming together over a period of time from different sources.[373]

Disorganised photographs mimic the multiple and diverse histories from which Lea and Dennis came and the challenges of fixing them into a neatly framed narrative.[374] But they could also point towards Lea's reluctance to sort photographs into albums. Such suggestions are confirmed by some tangential observations of a visit of Lea and Naomi to Stockholm. Lea's cousin Laif, the son of Lea's Aunt Sala, had been in possession of some family photographs. Aunt Sala and Lea had been very close before the war. Sala had survived Auschwitz and then moved to Stockholm with her husband Jakob Freilich. Sala had been sent a shoebox containing photographs from their life in Poland. Lea described being disappointed that the photographs had been placed in albums as 'it would have been much more exciting to look at the photos in the shoebox.' Naomi on the other hand, enjoyed seeing the photographs organised into a narrative:

> We were both very excited at seeing photographs we hadn't seen before but there were also photographs of us as children growing up so in that same album it was very historical. Then

[373] Ibid.
[374] Edwards, 'Photographs and the Sound of History,' 34-35.

> there were photographs that clearly my grandmother or my mother had sent to Laif's mother Aunt Sala. And we were all in there, it was a family album. We were thrilled. We were really happy to see those photographs.

Although Lea felt that the chaotic assemblage of photographs to be important as a representation of her life, Naomi's excitement at seeing herself visually placed in a visual narrative is telling. The family album stretching across generations comprised different temporal and spatial layers, forming a continuity of time and space. It was into this that Naomi felt able to place and include herself with an inevitability that required no effort.[375]

Helen Epstein, the daughter of two Holocaust survivors, wrote in her memoir that the past,

> Lay in an iron box buried so deep inside me that I was never sure just what it was. I knew I carried slippery, combustible things more secret than sex and more dangerous than any shadow or ghost. Ghosts had shape and name. What lay inside my iron box had none.[376]

Helen conjures up an image of a box where her dangerous past has been buried, an image not so dissimilar to the way that the Goodmans' past had been tucked away. Finding the plastic box of photographs revived both a collaborative and personal journey for Naomi as she began to dig deeper into the past sometimes alone and sometimes with her mother. Gradually Naomi managed to drag from the kaleidoscope of memories a narrative that started

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[375] Fisher, *Memory Work*, 30.

[376] Helen Epstein, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations with Sons and Daughters of Holocaust Survivors* (London: Penguin Publishing, 1979).

to be comprehensible. Naomi knew certain aspects of the past but had been incapable of giving them form and context. The photographs gave faces to names, homes to houses and context to anecdotes that started to make the past intelligible. Like other memory nodes, photographs through their mnemonic nature, have a connective force.[377] They require mnemonic imagination, a term given by sociologists Emily Keightley and Michael Pickering to describe:

> The ways in which we continuously qualify, adapt, refine and re-synthesize past experience, our own and that of others, into qualitatively new understandings of ourselves and other people, including those to whom we stand in immediate or proximate relation, and those from whom we are more distant.[378]

Photographs of relatives whom Naomi had only heard mentioned helped to give substance to her imaginations and in so doing not only improved her understanding of the familial past but also of her own identity. Firstly, seeing her own and close relatives' physical resemblances in the photographs helped her understand her own heritage. For example, she pointed at the photographs of Mendel saying,

> So for us it's also very meaningful, because I have a younger brother, Daniel who looks very much like him. This blond,

[377] Fisher, *Memory Work,* 31.
[378] Emily Keightley and Michael Pickering, 'Communities of Memory and the Problem of Transmission', *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 16, no.1 (2013): 121.

> blond, blond hair, you can see from his eyebrows how blond
> he is, has come through the family.[379]

In attempting to build connections to their past, Naomi and her brother have gained new understanding of themselves as part of a genetic heritage of 'blondness'. A trait that, as was the case with Lea, feigned membership of the Aryan community, 'blondness' may have acquired special significance within the Goodman family as a symbol of survival.

Other photographs have helped confirm family anecdotes. One such photograph is of Naomi's great grandfather Izak Apelzon and his brother Chaim taken just after the First World War, which Naomi said links with Aunt Sela's (Chaim's daughter) testimony (fig. 49). Naomi added that, 'we just love this photo because it he has such a smiling demeanour. Apparently, he was an inherently happy go lucky, jokey sort of person.[380]

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[379] Interview with Levy.
[380] Ibid.

Figure 49. Photograph of Lea's great-grandfather Isak Apelzon (right) and his brother Chaim, post-First World War, courtesy of Naomi Levy.

On the whole, photographs seem to bring the most pleasure when they can be accommodated into inherited narratives such as descriptions of appearance or character, or the scant descriptions or moments and events such as Naomi's grandmother outside the Kosher restaurant in Nice:

> I was very excited by that photograph because she is on it, and my grandmother is on it pregnant. And a restaurant I never knew. It's just nice to see. Again, helping me through the trajectory of the history of the family. It makes it more

> real than hearing about that they had this photograph. Or hearing about her, it's nice to see the photograph.[381]

When examining photos in an Australian aboriginal context, Gaynor Macdonald argues that 'the more photos connect, the more they are valued. Photos are stories about connections through time, affirming the existence and significance of the past in the present.'[382] It appears that photographs are supremely valued when they link past with present and the imagined with the real. Indeed, it does not seem to matter if the quality of the image is poor, the fact that the image exists itself has an ability to realise the past and bring it into the present. Naomi also acknowledged the ability of photographs to reconstruct her mother's story; she explained, 'to me what's important is to have photographs which track what happened to my mother. For me I can have a sense, a film in my own mind, of what they all looked like when.'[383] To create a film, albeit in one's own mind, could be a way overcome the fleetingness and death of the past which occurs through photographs. Yet more importantly, as it is for Paula Fass, an American historian born to two Polish Jewish survivors, memory work is a response to an urge to find 'connective points in memory, as an alternative to the imagination.'[384] Creating a pictorial narrative in her mind is a way for Naomi to synthesise and structure those fragments of imagination gained from inherited memory and hence make them her own.

Photographs of relatives have not only helped Naomi to connect with people she never knew but also to mourn them. While conducting research on

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[381] Ibid.
[382] Gaynor Macdonald, 'Photos in Wiradjuri Biscuit Tins: Negotiating Relatedness and Validating Colonial Histories', *Oceana* 73, no.4 (2003): 236.
[383] Interview with Levy.
[384] Paula Fass, *Inheriting the Holocaust: A Second Generation Memoir* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2009), 5.

USHMM's website, she chanced upon a photograph of her grandfather Mendel that she had never seen:

> I knew straight away it was him because it was so obviously him. It took up the whole screen. It was the first time I cried for him. It was very hard to mourn for him. In a way my mother never really did because she was so young. And her way of coping was to move forward like so many people going through it. None of us had really cried for him. There was this mourning which had been kept, there was a lid kept on it. It was very moving for me seeing that photo of him.[385]

She described the image as a passport photograph, a copy of which she was able to obtain from Kraków archives (fig. 50). The photograph moved Naomi to tears and triggered a process of mourning. I suggest that the unexpected discovery of the photograph may have added to a sense of essential loss of a relative who Naomi had never met. The photograph, Barthes argues, 'is more traumatic than most memories or mementos because it seems to confirm, prophetically, the later discontinuity created by the absence or death.'[386] Yet, Naomi had seen other photographs of Mendel, and does not state why it was this particular photograph which precipitated a new relationship with her grandfather. Sontag claims that repeated viewing has the capacity to deprive images of their immediacy and ability to stir.[387] As such, it could have been therefore the photograph's novelty which stirred repressed emotions and moved Naomi to tears. Furthermore, the ongoing research that Naomi was undertaking at the time may also have been a factor in forging the new relationship between Naomi and the photographic record. Barthes argues that

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[385] Interview with Levy.
[386] Berger, *Understanding a Photograph*, 63.
[387] Sontag, *On Photography,* 15.

photographs do not facilitate the work of mourning since they produce a counter-memory. What he means by this is that photographs block memories.[388] Yet as Hirsch contends, the power of photographs lies in their ability to summon the past into the present 'in the form of a ghostly revenant.'[389] It may well be that when in that instance Naomi saw her grandfather on the screen for the first time, he appeared as a relative who had a place in her story rather than a stranger gazing across time. In this moment in which she glimpsed something of herself, she felt allowed to shed a tear for herself and what she had never known.

Figure 50. Photograph of Mendel Apelzon for his 1941 application for a *Kennkarte* (residence permit), courtesy of Naomi Levy.

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[388] Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 22.
[389] Hirsch, *Family Frames*, 20.

A memorial, James E. Young notes, may be 'a day, a conference, or a space, but it need not be a monument'. Although neither Naomi nor Lea refer to the book as a memorial or a site of memory, I draw parallels between certain qualities of 'Our Polish Family War Story' with Jewish memorial books to frame it as a site of family collected memory. Jewish memorial books, or Yizkor book, are a model of grassroots commemoration and documentation of Eastern European Jewish life.[390] They traditionally tell the history of a single town or city prior to the Second World War covering the events which swept over the town during the war, and the fate of its inhabitants. Yizkor books became significant memorials for lost communities and their worlds. [391]

'Our Polish Family War Story' contains many memorial qualities shared by Yizkor books. For one, it brings together photographs and different sources and voices that reinforce the 'notable communal assemblage' that is so characteristic of Yizkor books.[392] The book draws on a variety of both recorded history and personal memories such as Naomi's visit to Kraków with her mother where Naomi recounts the stories about the places they visited. The genre of Yizkor can be widened to include further family memorials of the Holocaust including: Lea's 1951 diary that contains substantial memories from the war years; Lea's taped interviews with her uncle and cousin, Avraham Chaba and her Aunt Sela; and an autobiography of her cousin Heniek Pomocnik. Finally, this extended Yizkor book also contains information about people and places

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[390] András Riedlmayer and Stephen Naron, 'From Yizkor Books to Webblogs: Genocide, Grassroots Documentation and New Technologies', in *Community Archives: The Shaping of Memory*, eds. Jeannette Allia Bastian and Ben Alexander, 152 -68 (London: Facet Publishing, 2009), 155.
[391] Michlean J. Amir and Rosemary Horowitz, 'Yizkor Books in the Twenty-First Century: A History and Guide to the Genre', *Judaica Librarianship* 14 (2008), 40.
[392] Christian Riegel, 'Mourning, Memorial, and the Yizkor Books in Eli Mandel's "Out of Place"', *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal* 50, no. 2 (2017): 203.

gleaned by research into archives. As such the Yizkor book is a collection drawn from a wide selection of sources. Of value here might be the distinction made by Browning between collective and collected memory, the latter referring to an amalgamation of individual recollections where there is no intention to seek a 'truth' or unify a narrative.[393] Collected memory is an important feature of Yizkor books. The fact that Naomi includes in the text records of both Lea and Liba, or 'Baba' as she is referred to, turns the text from being an extensive historical record to an item that has a significant and enduring commemorative function.

In the interview, the book acted like an important site of memory for Lea, a place where memories are stored and from where they could be accessed by others. Indeed, there were several instances when Lea's response to questions was that answers could be found in war story book. Comments such as 'if you get the book', and 'if you read the book you will see, my daughter did use my mother's notes, but they are not always 100%. Anyhow you can read about it', and 'so you will read in the book that she got into France, with a Jewish community in Prague, put onto a train, so you will get the details there.' Certainly, being able to refer questioners to the text was a means by which Lea could avoid repeatedly visiting very painful episodes in her history. For Lea and possibly for many survivors, the existence of a *Yizkor* book had the potential to be a manifold blessing.

Typically, memorials are physical and so are located to a specific geographical location. Naomi found this aspect of memorial to be quite problematic. Despite talking about spending a few enjoyable days with her mother in Kraków, Naomi vowed never to return to Poland. Her frustration that her family had been

[393] Christopher Browning, *Collected Memories: Holocaust History and Postwar Testimony* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 38-39.

destroyed whilst the country had been, in her eyes, largely undamaged was very evident when she proclaimed:

> In a way, because so much of my family has been smashed and lived there, you feel it ought to have been destroyed as well, to have been bombed out. Because my family has been bombed out. But actually, it is immaculate. It's untouched.[394]

There was, for Naomi a profound dissonance between the vibrant life of contemporary Kraków, and the silence left by her destroyed family. 'It felt like a ghost town,' she said, 'I felt the spirit of my grandmother.'[395] An inability to situate or imagine her family in a geographical space inevitably leads to the necessity to situate it in an alternative site, such as the pages of a *Yizkor* book.

Photographs have been an important way to memorialise the dead for Lea and her relatives. As mentioned in the previous subsection, Lea wrote a letter to her niece, Elaine, her half-sister's daughter, describing the photographs of Lea's half-uncle Jacob. She explained, 'spanning six years of his life, (they) have provided me with images without which my memory of him would have been nothing as intense.' She adds, 'we say in the memorial service for the dead: "May his soul be bound up in the bond of life". For this reason, she has asked that her niece carry on these memories, since 'I don't want him to suffer from a double death.'[396] Photographs are a way to memorialise relatives and to make sure that those who have gone live on in the thoughts of the living. 'Our Polish Family War Story' contains three photographs of Jacob, two of him taken post-war are placed side by side (fig. 51). The one on the left captures Jacob soon after liberation and the one on the right is him in a DP camp. In the first Jacob

[394] Interview with Levy.
[395] Ibid.
[396] Goodman, 'Two Autobiographical Letters,' 86.

is emaciated, a victim of the Nazi regime. In Lea's letter to Elaine, she explains that the photographs of Jacob in this period 'are the only ones our family have which show the sufferings which were inflicted on us'.[397]

Jacob had survived the war, settling in Kibbutz Ramot Menashe, Northern Israel in 1948.[398] He was injured in a car accident and committed suicide in 1949. Juxtaposing the photographs creates a generative power that comes from the 'double dying' and the 'double surviving' so deeply embedded in the family's story.[399] The suffering of individuals has become an expression of the suffering of all. Certainly, for Lea, the expressions of an individual's suffering have come to symbolise the greater suffering experienced by the whole family. To add to this, a photograph of Jacob's gravestone in Israel is included in the book also indicating that the book has a memorial capacity.[400] The connection between memorial books and gravestones is important: Yizkor books are considered a *matseyve* [gravestone] to the people killed during the Holocaust.[401] The photograph of a single grave, one of the few known graves of an individual whose relative died in the Holocaust, is itself a memorial to the very many relatives who themselves lack a burial site.

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[397] Ibid, 87.
[398] Levy, 'Our Polish Family War Story,' 5.
[399] Marianne Hirsch borrows this term from the title of Alvin K Rosenfeld's book on literature of the Holocaust, *A Double Dying: Reflections on Holocasut Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), quoted in, *The Generation of Postmemory*, 31.
[400] Riegel, 'Mourning, Memorial, and the Yizkor Books,' 199.
[401] Amir et al., 'Yizkor Books in the Twenty-First Century,' 40.

Jacob, post-war.

Figure 51. Two photographs of Jacob Weintraub, post-war, courtesy of Naomi Levy.

Just as Lea intends for the next generation to carry on these memories, I suggest that Naomi also intends to bridge the gap between past, present and future. Naomi's inclusion of a childhood photograph of herself best elucidates this point:

> My mother said, "Naomi, there needs to be a photo of you, you're the author, that's standard practice, normally in the inside cover." I said, "alright we'll have a photo of me." And I found this one which I love. So that's me as a baby. With my grandmother. Passing down a generation. Ironically my youngest baby looks like me, as a baby not as a grown up. I loved my grandmother...I miss her very much. I just thought well...it links the generations and it's a photo of me.

Naomi here links the generations through photographs or resemblance (fig. 52). Thinking back to her excitement at seeing a photograph of herself in Laif’s photo album, it is evident that Naomi is also placing herself within her family history, a history that was once taboo, but which is now familiar and a well visited territory. The front cover of the family book completes this inter-generational link (fig. 53). It features two photographs that Naomi grew up with, one of her mother’s First Communion, and the other of Mendel before the war. The photographs of Mendel, Liba and her mother haunt the text that follows with the realities of life and death, survival and loss and the very stark notions of ‘irreversible pastness and irretrievability’ of that time.[402] The family narrative is cradled between images of memory and postmemory, an apt setting for a text that engages the reader with testimony, memory, academic research and perhaps most poignantly a family's confrontation with its traumatic past.

[402] Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*, 20.

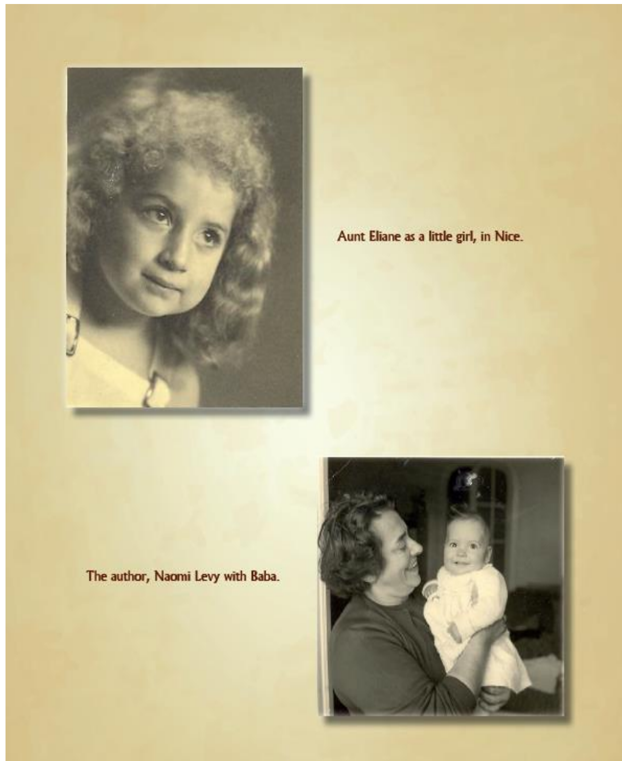

Figure 52. Back cover of 'Our Polish Family War Story', courtesy of Naomi Levy.

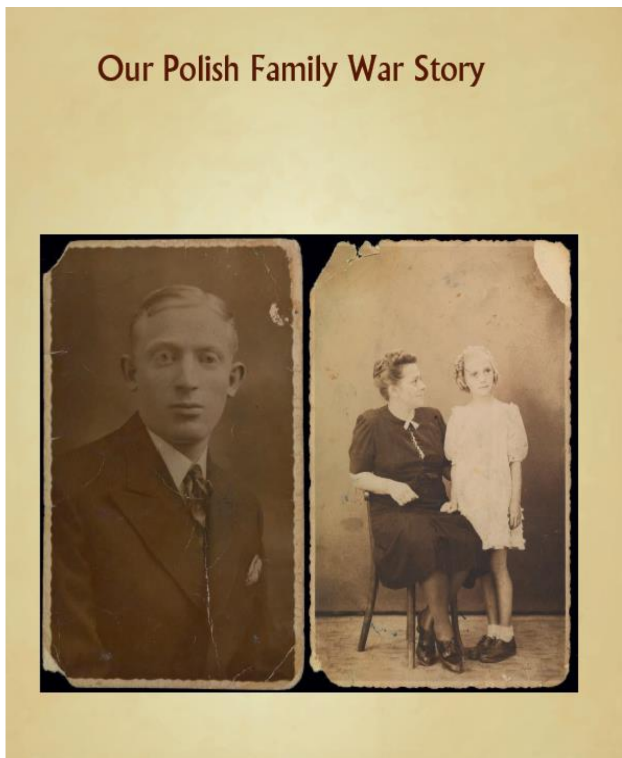

Figure 53. Front cover of 'Our Polish Family War Story', courtesy of Naomi Levy.

As Kugelmass and Boyarin assert, 'the memorial books are the fruit of the impulse to write a testament to future generations. They constitute an unprecedented, truly popular labour to record in writing as much as possible of a destroyed world.'[403] In a self-reflective piece on her own personal journey and encounter with the pass, Naomi writes,

> My passion to know as much as possible about my family's story has been driven by many forces; a desire to pass on information to the next generation about their roots, a wish to know who I should mourn, who I am mourning, and a feeling that this is what my grandparents, Baba and Mendel, Else and Siegfried would have wanted me to do.[404]

Memorial books make private grief public and communal.[405] Sharing the Yizkor book, Lea's testimony and photographic records with IWM and future generations makes very apparent the desire, need, and importance of sharing memory within a range of networks dealing with commemoration and remembrance. The physicality of the family photographs in both storage and the Yizkor book is a witness to the family's relationship to the past. When Naomi was growing up, the secrecy of the photographs reflected the secrecy of the past. Naomi's parents' photographs blended in storage, just like the confection that was her parents' past. Finally, Naomi's printing of the photographs in a

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[403] Jack Kugelmass and Jonathan Boyarin, eds., *From a Ruined Garden: The Memorial Books of Polish Jewry* (New York: Schocken, 1983), 12.
[404] Levy, 'On Being Second Generation,' 212.
[405] Riegal, 'Mourning, Memorial,' 192.

physical book was a substantial fixing of herself into the pages of the past and placing them firmly in the present.

Part Three – Collective and Public Memory

Collective memory of the Holocaust and the Goodmans' familial memory are, I argue, intertwined. Firstly, Lea's reflection that she only became, or acknowledged herself to be, a survivor in the late 1980s,[406] was a time when the meaning of the word 'survivor' widened to extend beyond those who were liberated from the camps.[407] Lea traces this change to her attending the conference funded and organised by the Holocaust survivor Robert Maxwell and his wife Elizabeth. The international and interdisciplinary conference 'Remembering for the Future' first took place in 1988 in London and Oxford. Lea then attended the gathering of Holocaust survivors in California in 1989. From this time Lea described how 'officially, I was able to talk about it.' Key messages from Elizabeth Maxwell's Oxford lecture emerge in Lea's writings. For example, the plea for further testimonies of eye-witnesses to be gathered to avoid a 'second death', is a phrase that Lea used in correspondence with her niece seven years after she had attended the conference.[408] Lea's record of her past is prodigious. She recorded her testimony for IWM in 1992, the Fortunoff Video Archive in 1991 and the USC Shoah Foundation Institute in 1996. On top of this she spent five years researching into her family's experience of the Holocaust during her weekly visits to the British Library and less frequent probes into archives in Poland. She drew a halt to all of this because in her own

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[406] Interview with Goodman, 25 November 2021.

[407] Others who had survived from hiding reflected similar experiences of 'becoming' a survivor in Very similar to other children in hiding compared to those who had survived the concentration camps, Françoise Ouzan, 'Introduction: Rising From The Abyss of Humiliation', in *How Young Holocaust Survivors Rebuilt Their Lives: France, the United States, and Israel*, 1–15 (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2018), 8.

[408] Elisabeth Maxwell, 'Why Should the Holocaust Be Remembered and Therefore Taught?', *European Judaism: A Journal for the New Europe* 22, no.1 (1988): 20.

words, she became aware that 'there is an attraction to the morbid.' She warned me, 'you have to be careful yourself'.[409] This 'attraction of the morbid' was also experienced by Struk who when sharing the camera's witness to Holocaust atrocity felt a compulsion tainted by a very real discomfort.[410]

Lea complained that her daughter sometimes gave her 'horrible images' one of which was of Jews being transported in cattle cars, 'so in a way, she passed on the buck. She shared the horrible image and now I'm sharing the horrible image with you, without giving you more horrible details of them in this cattle car.' This was particularly distressing to Lea because Naomi had just completed research on the deportation of Lea's stepmother and three step-sisters to Belzec. She added she didn't need 'the graphic details'. This is interesting from an intergenerational and representational perspective. One could suggest here that Lea is 'haunted by the past' and unable to see images relating to her past, a point I do not feel the need to challenge. Moreover, such experiences also highlight the unsystematic workings of memory and storytelling which occur when one generation 'inherits' 'witnessing'. The content of demands to witness made by one generation may well not be that same as that of the generation that follows or has gone before. From a representational perspective, this draws into question whose story is being told and whose values are being transmitted when using photographs alongside the testimony of several generations. The events displayed in those 'horrible images' were not experienced or witnessed by Lea herself. They therefore become a form of postmemory, something imagined, or indeed impossible to imagine. As a result, the layers of memory, postmemory, communicative and collective memory have all become impossibly intertwined.

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[409] Interview with Goodman, 25 November 2021. She also warned me against this 'attraction of the morbid' in the second interview.
[410] Struk, *Photographing the Holocaust*, 3.

The intertwining of collective and individual memory also comes clear with Lea's responses to how she is represented in IWM. She expressed disappointment that her story was no longer represented in the same section as 'Schindler Jews and Danish Jews as we crossed illegally as Jews during the war'. In the 2000 Holocaust Exhibition, Lea's story was placed on a panel entitled 'Flight Across Borders' (fig. 54). Accompanying the two photographs, the text reads:

> Eight-year-old Leah Apelzon (now Goodman) and her mother escaped from a labour camp near Krakow and tried to cross the Slovak border to get to Hungary, which was then still unoccupied. Their first attempt failed, as their guide abandoned them, but they succeeded on their second try.
>
> To organise the escape, the Apelzons had to pay many people on both sides of the border. In Kežmarok, Slovakia, Leah and her mother found refuge with the Kredatus family and posed as fellow Catholics

Figure 54. Photograph of the panel in IWM's Holocaust Exhibition displaying two photographs of Lea, author's own photo.

In the new Galleries, her photographs are displayed in the first gallery, therefore given the contemporaneous nature of the galleries, photographs of her life in hiding are not displayed. Lea's disappointment suggests that Lea understands her story set within a wider narrative of escape, camouflage and agency. Furthermore, she was pleased that the story was juxtaposed alongside the familiar story of Oskar Schindler. The panel highlighted the challenges involved in crossing the Slovak border but glosses over the difficult but satisfying time that she spent with the Kredatus's as a Catholic, something Lea returns to several times in her 1992 oral testimony. Photographs from the children's home were not originally shared with IWM suggesting that these images were peripheral to her story. Certainly, the Exhibition's time frame limited it to certain aspects of post-war experience, which may explain why these images were not displayed. What it does tell us is that Lea's 1992 oral testimony and

captioned photographs did not wholly align. Despite this, Lea was impressed with the IWM's previous representation. Perhaps there is here a degree of satisfaction and pride that her story, after forty or so years of being side-lined from cultural memory, was finally placed alongside familiar stories of survival, resistance, and agency. Although Lea has drawn upon cultural narratives to reflect on the past, there are clear dissonances between her story and those that she sees and reads about in archives and in exhibitions. It is something that Lea continues to navigate as she and her daughter confronts the past in both the archive and display cabinets.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have sought to trace Lea's affective encounters with photographs and by doing so helped to move the study of *what happened* to child survivors towards how these survivors *remember or relate* to what happened. I have also examined Naomi's relationship with photographs, a relationship that originates in her childhood and now sheds light on the way family photographs are integral to the process of making the past pertinent to the present.

This case study has been the most challenging in terms of understanding the multiple layers of meaning and memory brought to the past and indeed to the photographic record. The two unpublished books are the product of a lengthy process of emotional and physical labour in which Naomi and Lea have respectively visited and revisited the past. As Naomi reflected, 'writing "Our Polish Family War Story" has been a complicated endeavour and I have worked closely with my mother to ensure that it is as truthful as possible.' Indeed, as a historian working with multiple generations and the sources they have both produced or to which they have brought meaning, I have been made aware of the need to faithfully accommodate the input of all so as not to undermine the contribution of any. The presence of photographs in the interviews lead to

different stories being told and different emotions being evoked. I have argued that for Lea photographs are affective encounters with the past that they have the potential to bring further understanding and recognise her childhood fears and desires. For Naomi, photographs are a way to confirm and evidence the stories that she has inherited. They provide a visual record and structure to the stories that have previously been fragmentary, and in many cases insubstantial.

Uniting mother and daughter is their desire for photographs to memorialise their relatives for them in the present and for future generations. The fact that photographs were hidden for so long, and evoked emotional and physical tensions for Lea, points to their deep yet unspoken meaning. It is never easy for victims to view images of atrocity. Private photographs, meanwhile, possess the ability to evoke emotional responses and memories that are themselves as painful to talk about and share. But engaging with their past and the memories that have haunted them has itself been life affirming for both Lea and Naomi. Naomi, reflecting on her research journey, writes, it 'is my relationship with my mother that has blossomed during this project that constitutes not only a record but a memorial to the many members of the family who perished in the Holocaust.'[411]

[411] Levy, 'Kraków A Visit with my Mother,' 45.

Chapter Four – Jan Imich

Introduction

This chapter focuses on Jan Imich and the interviews I conducted with three members of his family: his son Andre and daughter Judith and her son Charlie. The extended interviews with Jan, as well as with the three different generations, provided an opportunity to examine the multiple layers of meaning that can be ascribed to, evoked, projected onto and even concealed by photographs. In this chapter I pay particular attention to the way in which complexities inherent in understanding a photographic record reflect the complexities of a family engaging with a traumatic past. These complexities prove that photo-elicitation methods are limited in situations where certain photographs block memories. Like Lea and Naomi's commentary of their photographs, Jan and his family's varied responses to the photographs provide clues more to what the present demands of the past, and act less as a record of past events.

Jan grew up in Kraków in an assimilated Jewish middle-class bourgeois family. His childhood photographs offer an insight into the ways in which a family of their class and social status performed before the camera. With an intergenerational approach, this chapter also addresses the relational, sensory and embodied nature of photographs, examining the social dynamic of images through time and space. In doing so, it challenges any positivist notion of the 'meaning' of photographs, instead insisting on a plurality of meanings which are both localised and particular.

This chapter will first provide a brief history of Jan's family history together with his wartime and post-war experiences. The first subsection will examine Jan's childhood photographs in the context of my interviews with him. The intention here will be to examine how engagement with visual images can complicate

notions of belonging, identity, and space, particularly when set within the memory of growing up in Kraków plagued as it was with antisemitism and Nazi occupation. The next subsection will explore questions surrounding postmemory in relation to the photographs, arguing that different generations inscribe different meanings to photographs depending on their relationship with their (grand)father and his past. The third subsection focuses on the family's engagement with cultural memory including IWM and Chelsea Football Club's antisemitism. I argue that although Jan's involvement in IWM was transformative for the family, there remains uncertainty about how the past sits within the family.

Family Biography

Jan’s father, Stanislaw, was a radiographer while his mother, Anna, née Gumplowicz, was a housewife. The Gumplowicz family had a longstanding presence in Kraków and were well-known through the family lending library business that was originally established in 1837 by Jan’s great-great grandfather Abraham. It was the first commercial library in Kraków.[412] Abraham’s son, Ludwik, become a famous Polish psychologist and sociologist.[413] Ludwik had four siblings, the youngest of whom, Elias, was grandfather to Anna, Jan’s mother. Anna and Stanislaw met in Kraków where he came to study medicine at the university. They married in 1920 and Jan was born in 1926.[414] They had a very comfortable life, affording both a cook and a nanny. The nanny lived in and looked after Jan on weekdays. Jan’s family identified as Jewish and celebrated Jewish holidays. They were well integrated in non-Jewish Polish life,

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[412] Market Sroka, ‘The Destruction of Jewish Libraries and Archives in Cracow during World War II’, in *Libraries & Culture* 38 (2003): 147-65.
[413] Irving L Horowitz, ‘Introduction: The Sociology of Ludwig Gumplowicz: 1838-1909’, in Irving L Horowitz, *Outlines of Sociology* (London: Routledge, 1980).
[414] In 1910, Jews made up 24 per cent of doctors in Kraków, Galas et al., *POLIN: Studies in Polish Jewry Volume 23: Jews in Kraków,* 12.

living in the non-Jewish area of Kraków, celebrating Christian holidays and Jan attended an integrated Polish and Catholic school.

On 4 September, Jan's father was called up to join the Polish army reserve and so began a series of a 'punitive' measures directed at all Jews, including Jan's family. From October 1939 Jan was prohibited from attending school and so was secretly schooled from home for several months. The Nazi closure of both Gumplowicz libraries in 1940 had a significant impact on the family.[415] Jan's mother's sister, Matylda Schneider, sought refuge with them when her home was requisitioned by the Wehrmacht. In mid-August 1940, when the Nazis issued a decree forcing all Jews to relocate to either the Kraków ghetto or the city's hinterland, Jan, his mother and aunt escaped Kraków in mid-August 1940 and fled to a farm near to Wieliczka, a small southerly town within the Kraków metropolitan area.[416]

Jan returned to Kraków in June 1942, leaving his mother and aunt hiding on the farm. For two and a half years, Jan hid between the homes of two of his father's Catholic friends, Doctor Gołąb and Doctor Spoczyńska.[417] He acquired a new Polish identity card, although this was largely redundant due to his enforced seclusion.[418] He described this period as extremely lonely and fearful, having

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[415] Sroka, 'The Destruction of Jewish Libraries.' In Jan's 1996 interview, he spoke about one of his fondest memories of growing up was when he went to the lending libraries, which sparked his lifelong love of books.
[416] For information about Jews in Wieliczka during the Second World War see Arnon Rublin, *The Rise and Fall of Jewish Communities in Poland and Their Relics Today: District Kraków* (Tel Aviv: Arnon Rublin, 2006), particularly 346-47. For a witness account of the Jewish experience in Wieliczka under Nazi occupation see Henryk Schönker, *The Touch of an Angel* (Indiana: Indiana University Press).
[417] Nechama Tec draws on testimonies to understand how Christians rescued Jews in Poland: *When Light Pierced the Darkness. Christian Rescue of Jews in Nazi-Occupied Poland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).
[418] Sliwa, *Jewish Childhood in Kraków*, chapter six; Elaine Fox ed., *Out of Chaos: Hidden Children Remember the Holocaust* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2013).

had no news about whether his mother was still alive. Eventually on 18 December 1944, two members of the Gestapo entered Doctor Gołąb's house having been informed that the Doctor was hiding Jews. Jan was discovered, interrogated, and finally ordered to drop his trousers to prove his Jewishness. After complying, Jan was immediately arrested and taken to the Gestapo HQ in Kraków. Following another interrogation Jan was taken to Kraków's Montelupich prison where, during his three-week incarceration, he was unknowingly experimented on with anti-typhoid injections. He was then transported to Gross-Rosen Concentration Camp in Lower Silesia where his only task was to present himself at the daily roll calls. Three weeks later he was evacuated to Mittelbau-Dora concentration camp in northern Germany. At the time Mittelbau-Dora was a holding camp for prisoners as their captors fled west before the Soviet advance.[419] Jan's survival was largely due to the intervention of a fellow prisoner working in the registration office who gave Jan a red triangle badge signifying the status of 'political prisoner' rather than the Star of David badge. Jan was thus able to avoid the brutal regime meted out to fellow Jews and was finally moved to Dora's new sub camp, just north of the main camp in Nordhausen. Jan was eventually liberated by the U.S. 3rd Armoured Division on 11 April 1945. Although liberated, Jan's ordeal left him extremely weak and vulnerable to disease. Jan, like many survivors, developed tuberculosis and was sent for a six-week convalescence in a sanatorium in the Harz mountains in Germany.

The Allied liberation gave Jan the choice of either transportation to the East under Russian occupation or remaining in the western American occupied

[419] Dora camp was originally created for the production of V1 and V2 bombs, housing mostly Russian prisoners and later those from other countries. It used to be a subcamp of Buchenwald, becoming independent in 1944, Nikolaus Wachsmann, *KL: A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps* (London: Little Brown, 2015). Information about the conditions of Nordhausen are on p. 484.

territory. Jan returned to Poland hoping to be united with his parents. He was, however, confronted by the news that most of his family had been killed. Jan's first quest on arrival in Kraków was to seek out Doctor Spoczyńska. However, Jan only managed to contact the Gołąb family although he did receive a telegram from both his uncle and father asking if he was alive. Both failed to mention his mother, so he assumed that she had not survived. He later discovered that on 26 August 1942 his mother had been rounded up in an 'action' in the village of Wieliczka and deported to the extermination camp at Bełżec along with her sister, stepmother, Taube Gumplowicz and other members of the Gumplowicz family.[420]

In August 1946 Jan moved to Blackpool, a coastal town in the North West of England to join his father who was then employed in the Radiography Department in the local hospital. During the war his father had been sent east with the Polish army and was eventually interned in Romania. He managed to escape, and travelled through Hungary and Italy. Finally arriving in Paris where he was able to stay with his uncle. Paris was at the time home to the exiled Polish government together with large remnants of the Polish army. He then accompanied the retreating Allied forces towards Dunkirk and managed to cross the channel in a fisherman's boat to the English coast. He was immediately transported to Scotland where the defeated Polish army was assembling. Despite receiving a letter from his former employer begging him to

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[420] Jan recorded these deaths in 2003 with 'The Holocaust Research Project' however he told me that he remains unsure where or how they died. He suggested they could have been killed during the round-up in the square in Wieliczka. In our interview Jan describes what happened to his mother and aunt: 'I know she was taken into that square……with everybody else and they were marched to the station.....you know...whether she died in the square or because they shot her……or whether the Germans decided. You never know. Nobody ever saw her go into the gas chamber. She could have been shot when they found...when they told her....to take everything they had.' Interview with Jan, 30 January 2020, Eastbourne. His account is based on his aunt's account and other written accounts. This account corresponds with the account in Schönker, *The Touch of an Angel.*

return to Poland and resume his job, he was eager to start a new life in England.[421] A new life in Blackpool did not sit well with all of Jan's ambitions. He told me ‘I wanted to go back and fight for Poland to make sure we were free of Russians. That was the general feeling among the youth in those days. All my friends were there. But slowly, I settled down here [in England] and made friends.’[422]

Jan emigrated from Poland only a few months after the pogrom in Kielce, which claimed the lives of 42 Jews and created an exodus from Poland of 70,000 Jews. Emigration was made possible by the Communist government’s pro-Zionist stance which allowed survivors to cross borders without a Polish exit permit. Although Jan did not link his emigration from Poland to a hostile environment for Jews,[423] he did become part of the biggest exodus of the post-war waves of Jewish emigration from Poland. [424]

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[421] Interview with Jan Imich, 15 September 2021, Eastbourne.
[422] Interview with Jan, 30 January 2020.
[423] Despite the persistence of antisemitism in Poland after the war, Jan explained that he, ‘experienced zero antisemitism on my return to Kraków from the camps and that was in July 1946. That may seem strange to you bearing in mind that it was not long after the anti-Jewish riots there, but I returned to live with the very same people that hid me for nearly 3 years, and all their friends that help them to do that, and many other Jews.’ Email correspondence with Jan Imich, 2 September 2021. On the experiences of Jews returning to Poland after the war see Jan Gross, *Fear: Anti-Semtism in Poland After Auschwitz* (2007); Monika Rice, *“What! Still Alive?! Jewish Survivors in Poland and Israel Rememeber Homecoming* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2017). For an examination of Holocaust memory relating to Polish-Jewish relations see Dorota Glowacka, and Joanna Zylinska, *Imaginary Neighbours: Mediating Polish-Jewish Relations After the Holocaust* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2007). Lukasz Krzyzanowski tells the story of Jews who returned to their hometown of Radom in Poland in *Ghost Citizens: Jewish Return to a Postwar City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2020).
[424] Dariusz Stola, ‘Jewish Emigration from Communist Poland: The Decline of Polish Jewry in the Aftermath of the Holocaust’, *East European Jewish Affairs* 47 (2017): 171-2.

Moving to Blackpool allowed Jan to distance himself from his Jewish identity and history. He attended Blackpool Grammar School whilst living in a hotel with his father. His father's remarriage shortly after the war certainly contributed to Jan’s deteriorating mental health and what was to be a prolonged avoidance of any engagement with his war experiences. His failure to speak with his father about his past was something that Jan later came to regret. Having completed his secondary education Jan moved to Dublin, the capital of the Republic of Ireland to study medicine but struggled with his exams due to ongoing mental health issues. Returning to Blackpool Jan met his wife, Jean and they were married in 1955. Jan resumed his medical studies and Jean found employment as a clerk in a travel insurance company. After a series of moves to Surrey and then Dublin, the couple finally retired to Eastbourne. Jan's father continued his Radiography work in Blackpool until he also retired.

Jean and Jan went on to have four children: Andre, Judith, Rupert and David. Rupert died in his mid-thirties from a heart attack. Jan's silence about his Jewish identity and past persisted. Four years into the marriage Jan finally opened up to Jean but did not speak about such matters to his friends and children until the 1990s when growing Holocaust awareness and increasing pleas for survivors to tell their own stories made his silence more difficult to bear. IWM recorded his testimony in 1996. In total IWM possesses eleven reels, each consisting of about thirty minutes of interview, amounting to 320 minutes of Jan account of his childhood in Kraków, his years during the war and finally his own thoughts about present-day Germany and his need to tell others about his experience. Jan’s testimony was also recorded in 1997 by the SHOAH Foundation. [11] Jan passed away in September 2022. This leads me to the next subsection where I reflect on my oral history interviews with Jan and examine the role photographs played in the way that he related to and reconciled himself with the past.

Part One – Jan's Reconciliation and Reconnection with the Past

Figure 55. Jan Imich at his home in Eastbourne during an interview with the author September 2021, author's own photo.

The first of my four visits to see Jan occurred at a very difficult and sad time only a couple of weeks after the death of his wife Jean. I was aware that I was delving into the past of someone who was experiencing acute loss, whom I hardly knew and whose response to tragedy I could not anticipate. As I walked up the communal stairs of his mansion apartments, Jan stood in his doorway holding the door open for me. He greeted me in a reserved but friendly fashion, taking my coat and showing me into his living room. The first steps into Jan's living space revealed the central presence of photographs, and especially portrait photographs. A phalanx of framed photographs stood on top of a cabinet while others were unframed or printed out on paper and stuck to wooden cabinets around the room. It was clear to me that Jan and Jean had

been a couple who liked being surrounded by loved ones, even if this had to be mediated through photographs. Jan had prepared some albums and boxes of loose photographs on the coffee table. Before talking me through the album, Jan mentioned that his interest in his family started with the discovering of his great-great uncle, Ludwik Gumplowicz. He recalled how on a trip to Kraków with Jean, he had spotted a wall covered with posters. He continued:

> There was one particular poster with a photograph of an elderly gentleman. His name was displayed in large letters. And I stopped and thought. Good God, that's my family name. My maternal family name. I have never met him. Of course, before the war, whilst I did meet a few family members, I certainly didn't recall him. [...] It turned out he was a very well known, one of the founders of Polish psychology. And I never heard of him. So I thought how can I find out about him That fired me. And from then on, I started digging into the past about mother's family and also father's family.

After Jan had introduced his family story and how his engagement with his family history was started, we turned to his photograph album. The album had a black plastic cover. White A4 pieces of paper were held in plastic sleeves. On each page Jan had stuck photographs. Either above or below the photographs was some text with an alphabetical key linking the descriptions to the photographs (fig. 56).

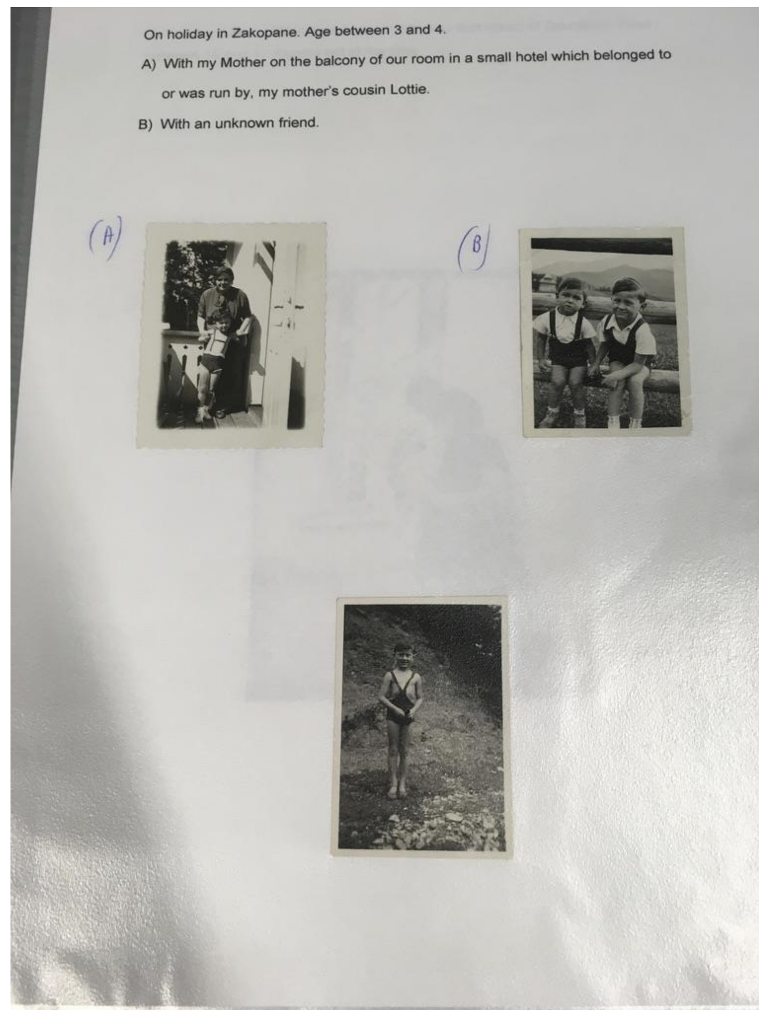

Figure 56, A page of Jan's photograph album, courtesy of Jan Imich.

He explained the motivation for creating an album:

> The point was I was never particularly interested in the past until about 25 years ago...when I realised, you know, I was getting old, and my children knew, and my wife knew practically nothing about me. So, I dug up some old photographs and decided to put them into an album with

some notes so that if anyone was interested someone could see or read all about it.[425]

The assembling of the album was coterminous with the discovery of his great-great uncle Ludwik Gumplowicz, a moment that seems to have awakened Jan to the fact he came from an old established family. This is demonstrated by Jan explaining, ‘what I want to communicate here (the album) is the fact of...I want the family to know ...that I come from a *very* old family. I traced the roots 250 odd years.’ It is clear that Jan did not intend the album to be only a record of his own life but as importantly, a memorial to his family’s past. Indeed, in Yiddish it would be described as a Yizkor book. However, unlike that made by Naomi Levy, Jan's book is almost entirely photographic with only scant attention being given to archival material or explanatory text. Furthermore, despite Jan’s stated intention of communicating a ‘*very* old family’ the earliest photograph in the album was of his father, his mother and his father’s brother and parents taken in 1917/1918 in Chrostowa, southern Poland (fig. 57).

Figure 57. Photograph of (from left to right) Jan’s uncle, his maternal grandparents, father’s brother, father, mother and uncle, 1917/1918 in Chrostowa, courtesy of Jan Imich.

[425] Interview with Jan, January 2020.

In order to examine Jan's relationship with his photographs it is helpful to use cultural historians' concept of 'composure'. This term is used to describe the process by which the subject composes or constructs both memories and their self.[426] Jan created the album when he was in the process of researching his family history as an attempt to make sense of his place in his family's past. This connection between past and present was most marked when Jan identified links to the places in the photograph. For example, one photograph is of Jan walking down a street in Kraków. This prompted Jan to remark 'that isn't there anymore. But I often go there because there is a fabulous restaurant I always visit whenever I go to Krakow [...] I've been going there for 20 years. Gorgeous food' (fig. 58).

Another photograph of his uncle Fredek holding Jan as a child in 1932 (fig. 59) prompted Jan to reflect on the more recent past. The album records that Fredek committed suicide not long after that visit and Jan drew particular attention to this in the interview. As a child Jan was never told exactly what had happened but recalls during the war finding an old newspaper in a junk shop with a whole page devoted to his uncle's funeral together with a photograph. Jan recalled, 'I never kept it. I tried. [...] Some years ago I went back to the town in question. I spent hours and hours in the archive and was unable to find that newspaper.'[427]

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[426] Penny Tinkler, "When I was a girl..." Women Talking About their Childhood Photographs', in *Oral History and Photography*, ed. Freund et al., 46; Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities* (London: Routledge, 1994).
[427] Interview with Jan, January 2020.

Figure 58: Photograph of Jan with his mother (back), father and grandparents (far left and far right), who were visiting from Czestochowa where they lived, near Kraków main railway station, around 1936, courtesy of Jan Imich.

Figure 59: Two photographs of Jan as a baby with his paternal uncle Fredek February or March 1932, courtesy of Jan Imich.

Langford argues that a photograph album is a 'mnemonic device for storytelling'. Jan's album is his way of telling his life story; a life story the discovery of which, I shall argue, is key to Jan's construction of his identity. The album is Jan's face to the world, the version of himself that he feels comfortable sharing, the narrative of his life from before birth to post-liberation. However, as Jan talked his way through the photographs it became evident that what he was seeing was not so much a conduit to moments in his distant childhood as a connection with more recent events. It was clear to me that I was a witness to what Freund and Thiessen claim that 'a systemic use of photographs allows interviewees to tell a different kind of life story.'[428] During the oral history interview, Jan used the photographs to bridge the gap between present and the recent past and tell the story about his family research and his reconnection with Poland and his heritage.

On the other hand, Jan did not display many overt signs of positively engaging with his childhood photographs. It is useful here to draw on Edwards' concept of the 'sound of images' when analysing Jan's engagement with what was before him. Edwards calls for a methodological shift toward a more 'evocative and experiential anthropology and thus the possibility of sensory knowledge'.[429] Focusing on sensory and embodied access to photographs, she argues that we should understand the meaning of photographs in social terms. During the interviews I recognised Jan's lack of overt engagement with the album. There were three features to this. Firstly, the way that he engaged with a photograph of his grown-up family. While sifting through Jan's photographs of his children's childhood, we came across an A4 photograph of himself, his

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[428] Freund et al., 'Mary Brockmeyer's Wedding Pictures,' 28

[429] Edwards, 'Photographs and the Sound of History,' 27.

wife and his four adult children. He took a long pause and then told me that 'that was one of several photographs taken at our 50th anniversary do. That was taken in Brighton. That photograph will appear, be printed on the leaflet at Jean's funeral. That is the six of us.' He sighed and I noticed a smile grow across his face. Jan paused as if acknowledging the joy and loss contained in memories of his family.

Secondly, this lack of 'sensory embrace' of images was highlighted when sensory memories *were* evoked in the absence of photographs.

> Of course, Sundays were the day. Sunday morning was a day I can never forget. It was a ritual, I would wake up, at an appointed hour, it might have been 9 o'clock. I would go to my parents' bedroom and the cook, we had a cook naturally, the cook would then bring breakfast to bed and that was something; that was a real, real treat.[430]

The flow of narrative and the warmth in Jan's voice conveyed the positive emotions connected to Sunday mornings spent with his parents. Jan went on to describe what they ate: 'I would have bread, butter, cheese and then the radishes within the cheese and scrambled eggs on top yum yum yum lovely.' Jan touched his tummy as he said this hinting at the embodied memories of eating.

The sensory disengagement from the photographic material was hinted at in a third way. During the third interview, I asked about the family's photography practice and the sociability of photographs, memories which I argue contributed to Jan experiencing 'discomposure'. I knew that there were very

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[430] Interview with Jan, 15 September 2021.

few remaining photographs and that the ones we were looking at had survived only because they had been sent to Jan's uncle in Paris by his parents. It was his parents' way of sharing their family life with a distant relative. During the war his uncle, aunt and cousin had left their flat to go into hiding. Returning to the flat after the war they found it completely untouched and therefore Jan's childhood photographs had survived. During the third interview I began asking questions about the family's habits around photographs. I asked if he remembered having photographs around the house. He replied with a hint of sadness:

> No... I don't...I think...my mum just had...I don't even remember seeing any albums of photographs...but there might have been albums...and my mother might have kept them in a box somewhere. And she would bring out a box and say "...ah yes". No, I think there were lots of photographs but not in albums, just in boxes...that's what I used to look at when I used to be ill but there you are.[431]

The broken speech and self-contradictions suggest difficulty and discomfort when connecting to this memory, reflecting Summerfield's concept of 'discomposure'. Jan's speech became more fluent when he began to recall how as a child, he had looked at photographs. It is possible that such memories, which did not fit easily within Jan's master narrative concerning the photographs, led to discomposure during the oral history interview. Jan began to offer clues as to how the photographs as material objects sat within his childhood. As the interview came to a close, I asked Jan what he thought about

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[431] Interview with Jan, 30 May 2020.

the role and value of family photographs in representing the Holocaust and Jewish lived experience. Jan responded thus:

> For me they are extremely important. I might have told you. I think I did. We had some two or three big boxes of photos before the war. They were saved during the war by our cook and when I went to visit her, she said, "Oh yes, I've taken them home." Home being some village not too far from Kraków. 'They are there and you can have them but you have to pay me for storage and so on.' And at that time, I said it doesn't matter. How bloody stupid of me. But I wasn't interested. [432]

Although Jan suggests that he might have already told me this story, he had not. Indeed, he had not mentioned the incident in his 1996 IWM interview nor in conversation with his grandson, a point I shall return to later.

Anderson et al.'s oral history methodology is capable of shedding some light on my interviewees' varied channels of meta-statement and moral judgement which point to the idiosyncratic interaction between self-concept and cultural norms and the moral judgements that are placed on ourselves by the outside'.[433] Here, the self-judgement implicit in Jan's comment 'how bloody stupid of me' suggests that there is an aspect of shame and remorse in Jan's reflection on this experience. Jan, blaming himself for not paying for his family

[432] Ibid.
[433] Anderson et al., 'Learning to Listen,' 11.

photographs, was entirely devoid of any sense of anger directed at the cook's unreasonable demand.[434]

There are several possible explanations for why Jan shared this story with me but not in his 1996 interview and with his grandson. Firstly, Jan may have felt more comfortable telling me because I have gained his trust through the three interviews, or because my interests were firmly directed at his family photographs. Secondly, Jan's recently discovered interest in his family past together with the wider interest shown by me on behalf of IWM could well have provoked a sense of regret that he was no longer able to retrieve the photographs. Finally, the passage of time and the not inconsiderable pressure to pass on family memorabilia together with the dearth of visual remnants of his ancestry may have been niggling away at his conscience. Whatever the case, Jan's reluctance to talk about his relationship with these childhood photographs suggest the emotional difficulty he still experienced in reflecting on them as physical objects, uniting as they did his childhood self and his mother at a moment of his illness and need. It is evident that Jan’s recollections of post-war Poland sat uncomfortably with the historiography stressing as it does the antisemitism and violence directed at Jewish survivors returning to Poland.[435] Indeed, the cook's reluctance to hand over the photographs reveals a certain level of hostility that still plays on Jan's mind.

This revelation of what happened to Jan’s photographs provided as a response to the question concerning the meaning of photographs for cultural remembrance is also significant. It suggests that Jan conflates a question about

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[434] The fact the cook demanded money for Jan’s possessions is not surprising since it was reported that Polish Christians demanded money for having rescued and hid Jewish children during the war, Bogner, *At the Mercy of Strangers*, 199-200.
[435] Marc Hillel, *Le Massacre des Suivants: en Pologne aprés l’Holocauste, 1945-1947* (Paris: Plon, 1985); Zimmerman, ed., *Contested Memories.*

cultural value with personal meaning. What was of limited consequence in 1945 then mattered in the last ten years to both Jan and to public memory. Although Jan showed no interest in the photographs at the end of the war, he has in the last twenty years returned to Kraków where he has, in his own words spent, 'hours and hours' looking through old photographs in photographic institutions, shops and museums but [I] never found them.'[436] He was unable to recall any of the photographs that were lost but remembers the ones he looked at as a child 'from 50 years before'.[437] At the forefront of Jan's memory was the social practice of holding and looking at photographs rather than their content. This distinction is important for two reasons. Firstly, it supports Edwards' methodological approach that examining the materiality and sociability of photographs can itself provide meaning. Jan described the act of looking at photographs as a social event shared with his mother. However, the photographs in the album as products of reproduction and circulation, are materially removed from the original act of exchange between mother and son.

Secondly, this distinction raises an important question concerning Jan's recent relationship with the family photographs that form his current archive i.e. The ones he had shared with his uncle George. The photographs in his album are not those he remembered looking at as a child. This may partially explain why few of Jan's photographs evoked detailed memories and why, as I shall argue in more detail in the next subsection, the photographs were themselves at odds with many of his childhood recollections. Furthermore, this entanglement between past and present meaning may provide some understanding as to why Jan created a family photograph album in the first place. The sharing of these photographs both with family and IWM may have been the result of an earnest desire to communicate a family heritage. Jan's efforts to create a formal

[436] Interview with Jan, 30 May 2020.
[437] Ibid.

photographic record could however be understood as the means by which he had invested value into images that he once thought to be worthless. It was an act of catharsis for a distant moment of shame. The next two subsections will examine some of Jan's childhood photographs to investigate the relationship between testimony and photographs.

In her exploration of postmemory, Hirsch suggests 'that photographs locate themselves precisely in the space of contradiction between the myth of the ideal family and the lived reality of family life.'[438] While Hirsch employs various 'meta-photographic texts', such as diaries and other ego-documents, to substantiate her claims, she neglects the potential of oral history interviews to expose these contradictions. My contention here is that the oral history interview is an additional and important 'meta-photographic' source, or what WJT Mitchell calls an 'imagetext', which can bolster Hirsch's argument. Indeed, Jan's oral narrative contradicts the conventions of hegemonic familial ideologies present in the photographs. Other oral historians such as Freund and Thiessen insist that photographs frequently enable interviewees to tell life stories that undermine 'happy memory' photographs.[439] In the case of my interviews with Jan, it became clear that alternative narratives were drawn not so much from his photographic record but from separate conversations in which photographs were not the prime focus of attention.

A photograph of Jan illustrates this point. The photograph is of Jan on his tenth birthday dressed in an outfit resembling that of a Roman soldier (fig. 60). Jan stands tall and alert holding a shield to his chest as if impersonating a soldier standing to attention. The first time we looked through the album he did not

[438] Hirsch, *Family Frames,* 8.
[439] Freund et al., 'Mary Brockmeyer's Wedding Picture.'

comment on the photograph. When we returned to it at my request during our fourth meeting, I asked what his memories were of this photograph; he replied:

> All I can tell you is I am standing in my room. That was my bed, that was part of a wardrobe combined with some bookshelves. I had a collection of bookshelves above the hanging space. That is all I can tell you about it. As I am saying it, it was probably a gift given to me for my birthday.[440]

Here Jan simply describes the content of his bedroom with a scant reference to the outfit as a birthday gift. Clearly, the photograph evoked few memories of his birthday or at least none that he wanted to share. This chimes with Freund and Thiessen's research with rural prairie Canadians which found that while using photo-elicitation in interviews a typical response to 'tell me more about this photo' was often met with a 'hesitant, cursory description of a few words or a sentence or two."[441] In their analysis, they focused on one interview with Mary Brockmeyer to explore contradictions between lived experience and visual representations. Such contradiction becomes apparent through the imagetext. Rather than evoking 'happy memories' as the interviewers expected, photographs summoned up for Brockmeyer stories about an unhappy marriage, poverty and young motherhood. In the same way, Jan's memories of his birthday were not those that might have been expected from such an occasion. Jan explained:

> I hate birthdays I really do. It was a custom at birthdays. You had to go into the room in the morning with a little present. You had to recite a poem [*pulling a disgusted face*].

[440] Interview with Jan, 15 September 2021.
[441] Freund et al, 'Mary Brockmeyer's Wedding Picture,' 30.

Which meant for days before I had to sweat my bloody guts out to learn it. I was always so *nervous* but seemingly I was pretty good at it because I was always called to do recitals at school. That's not my cup of tea at all.

I never wanted to play. I still don't want to play. I will have a game with one person like... A card game of some sort and chess but I never liked playing games with lots of people. Whenever I used to go to things and they said, 'come on let's play this game'. I always used to shy away.

I was always a reserved child and didn't want to play these stupid games. I still call them stupid games.

Here, Jan's disparaging reflections on his birthday made it very evident that the past has had a deep inpact on his present likes and dislikes. Unlike Freund et al's analysis, Jan's comments were evoked *without* the presence of a

photograph. Instead, Jan’s hostility to games were ellicited by *talking* about the practice of taking photographs, rather than *looking at* them.

Figure 60. Photograph of Jan on his birthday, September 1936 wearing an outfit which was a birthday gift, courtesy of Jan Imich.

Jan was, and still is, disgruntled at any form of compulsion, whether it be to reciting a poem or play a game. With this in mind, the photograph of Jan on his birthday takes on new meaning as we see him again having to performing before a camera. A photograph that could once be read as a child innocently dressing up should, alongside Jan's testimony, be read as an image of compulsion. It is indeed entirely possible that our conversation about taking photographs, connected to the memory of birthdays prompted such unhappy sentiments, but certainly, and not very far from Jan's consciousness, there lurks the correlation between birthdays, performance, photographs and negative feelings.

Figure 61: Photograph of Jan with a bouncy ball, July 1933, Kraków, courtesy of Jan Imich.

Jan's playtime was not confined to dressing up. There are numerous photographs of Jan with a host of playthings. Children's games, Philip Stokes argues, are the 'most assiduously recorded of activities.'[442] In his analysis of family photographs he suggests that children are frequently photographed with the clear intention of portraying the child's play as 'observed'; or alternatively and when taken formally, to be present the child as being 'in charge of' their playthings, particularly of dolls. Children are made to act out proprietorial roles

[442] Philip Stokes, 'The Family Photograph Album: So Great a Cloud of Witnesses', in *The Portrait in Photography,* ed., Clarke, 193-94, 199.

that certainly appear contrived rather than spontaneous.'[443] Indeed, Jan's testimony supports Stokes' argument since it reveals that the photograph is imposed as well as opposed. While looking at another photograph of Jan standing beside a bouncy ball (fig. 61). I asked Jan if this was where he would play, to which he replied, 'oh no, oh no. I wasn't allowed to play outside.'[444] Again, the image is at odds with the testimony. What could be seen as a child outside playing can now be read as a more formal and staged photograph. Jan is no longer 'playing' with the ball but rather, as Stokes suggests, 'in charge' of the ball.

Certainly, that the photographs that feature in the album show Jan playing outside project a sense of an untroubled childhood. However, during the fourth interview, Jan told me about an aspect of his childhood that suggests all was not how it seemed:

> Just after my birth I think...he (Jan's father) had a patient ...and somehow another they got friendly and they started having an affair.......and he met the family. He met her, he was introduced to the husband...had two kids and I used to go with him a lot at weekends [...] And I made friends with the two lads. So once or twice I was walking with my nanny somewhere or other I would suddenly come across my father and lady in question so I thought there was something strange and of course my mother's behaviour as well made me feel there was something not quite right.[445]

[443] Ibid.
[444] Interview with Jan, 23 January 2020.

[445] Interview with Jan, 15 September 2021.

Figure 62. Photograph of Jan on his scooter in Jordan Park on the outskirts of Kraków, courtesy of Jan Imich.

Although Jan at the time recognised a tension within his parents' marriage, it was only after the war that he realised that his father had been having an affair. Jan got in touch with the woman's two sons who had survived the war and had moved to Israel. The two sons informed Jan what had happened explaining their mother and Jan's father were very much in love. When I enquired if he had any photographs of the sons, he told me that he did, but they were in a box somewhere. Interestingly, these photographs, despite being part of his childhood, were not part of the album and therefore not part of his visual story. Firstly, it points to the tensions within a family dynamic which remain deliberately hidden from the camera. Secondly, it shows that Jan had excluded

certain uncomfortable aspects of his childhood from his visual storytelling. And thirdly, and this follows on from the second point, it suggests that Jan had been complicit in bolstering the 'happy memories' by creating an album redacted of any images that even hinted of a splintered childhood.

During my time with Jan there were several occasions when his testimony complicated the visual language of a photograph and vice versa. These instances occurred most significantly when reflecting on the themes of space, freedom and friendship at a time of rising antisemitism. As such, these examples demonstrate the range of experience and memory connected to living under Nazi occupation. They also complicate the hegemonic cultural oral and visual narrative which would normally evoke profound empathy. The image canon of cultural memory of Jewish childhood in Nazi occupied Europe which represents social isolation and persecution is most clearly seen in the iconic sequence from *Schindler's List* 'The girl in the Red Coat' and the photograph of the boy in the Warsaw Ghetto which in Lawrence Langer's words has been called 'the best-known photograph to outlast the catastrophe'.[446] The visual signs at play in these two iconic photographs identify and draw attention to a child in relation to the adults around them. Both children look scared, isolated and defenceless and as such evoke pathos in the viewer.

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[446] Richard Raskin, *A Child at Gunpoint: A Case Study in the Life of a Photo* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2004). Yala Korwin wrote a poem about the legacy of this photograph, 'The Little Boy with His Hands Up', in *To Tell the Story: Poems of the Holocaust* (New Haven, 1987), 75; Lawrence Langer, *Preempting the Holocaust*, (Yale University Press 2000111. Batya Brutin provides detailed examination of the way in which the Warsaw Ghetto boy has been used repeatedly as a symbol to represent the fate of children in the Holocaust: *Holocaust Icons in Art: The Warsaw Ghetto Boy and Anne Frank* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2020), 19-33. Hirsch discusses the reproduction and appropriation of this photograph in educational tools, media and art without considering the photograph's specific history, *The Generation of Postememory*, 127-30.

Sliwa's account on childhood in Kraków does well to add nuance to this account by drawing on child survivor testimonies that describe alternative responses to the war such as a sense of adventure and excitement.[447] Adding to this, Jan's oral history interview included memories that add nuance to how children responded to war. Jan mentioned a new-found sense freedom upon the outbreak of war:

> I was introduced to one of the street boys who lived in my flat. He promised to look after me. We played outside which we did. So, I then started having friends in the street. That was really, a real freedom for me being able to do all sorts of things not under anyone's watchful eye.

With his father away with the army and his nanny dismissed, Jan felt liberated. A new freedom to socialise with the 'street boys' was memorable for Jan, replacing the claustrophobic surveillance of family guardians with the comradeship of the 'street.' Furthermore, the notion of being looked after by the 'street boys' injected a sense of security into his life. This memory adds to the cultural memory of children living under occupation a nuance of parents anxious to protect their children from growing antisemitism by limiting their freedom.[448]

Here I move on to a second observation, one concerned with the composition of the photograph which produces a particular effect that is at odds with Jan's description. In two instances, one with and one without the presence of photographs, Jan described his sense of freedom during the summer months of 1942, '43 and 44' when he stayed the Gołąb family on a farm twenty miles

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[447] Sliwa, *Jewish Childhood in Kraków*, 7.
[448] Ibid, 8.

from Kraków. Jan was in hiding with the family and doing all that he could to conceal his Jewish identity.[449] He described this period in the countryside:

> Well it was free, freedom, freedom. The farm was not too big, but I was able to roam around without worries. There were lots of trees, a forest. I used to spend a lot of time in it playing. And also, I became an expert on mushrooms which ones were safe to pick and eat and which ones were not.[450]

Only one photograph exists which captures Jan's time spent in hiding. The photograph is now displayed in Jan's photograph album (fig. 63).

[449] For literature on children in hiding see Jane Marks, *The Hidden Children: The Secret Survivors of the Holocaust* (London: Bantam Books, 1998).
[450] Interview with Jan, 15 September 2021.

The image shows Jan seated on a step to the right of Marysia Gołąb, daughter of the doctor who was hiding him. Karolina Sikora, a German national and friend of the Gołąb family is to Jan's right. The close-up shot creates a sense of intimacy while the low-angled lens and the two young women sitting on higher steps creates a clear hierarchy. The overall effect givers a sense of disconnection between the subjects and what is happening around them. It is as if the three subjects are detached and even concealed from the wider world, an effect that was certainly part of Jan's life at the time. The composition of the two women behind Jan echoes the protective role they had in Jan's life. Despite the physical proximity of the three individuals, Jan recalls spending little time with Marysia

Figure 63: Photograph of Jan Imich (centre) at the farm with the Gołąb family while in hiding during the summer of either 1942, '43 or '44. On the left to Jan is Marysia (Mary) Gołąb and the right to him is Karolina Sikora, courtesy of Jan Imich.

and Karolina, as both were older, and Karolina was frequently away working for the Polish underground. Jan's caption below the photograph states that 'she (Karolina) was instrumental in helping me and many others on several occasions.'

Here, the photographic record of Jan's childhood is not easily reconciled with his memories. Jan painted a picture of his time in hiding with bucolic scenes and a sense of freedom. The sole photo which captures this period, however, emphasises a sense of confinement and the protection of his elders, an image not so dissimilar to the one he described of his childhood in Kraków. Indeed, it should now be evident that the photographic record and Jan's memories often do not align. This points to the challenges of relying on one sole source as well as the frustration at looking at the two in conjunction when they appear to contradict each other. Rather than dismissing the photo-elicitation method or

even the two sources, it may be wiser to see both life-stories as historically valuable. The photo narrative created by the photo album contains a life-story that sits more easily with Jan's public self. While other life-stories, told without the presence of photographs, reflects the more emotional, and private memories of his childhood. What version of ourselves we choose to bring to a particular occasion depends on the time, the audience and our own mood. Pinning one version of the past to one photograph could ignore the fact that these versions are bound to change depending on the viewing context. It is this indeterminate meaning of photographs to which I shall now turn when looking at Jan's children and grandchild's responses to photographs.

Part Two – Generational Differences in Understanding Photographs

Interviewing different generations about Jan's photographs further highlights the indeterminate meaning of photos. For different generations, however, express both a desire and a reluctance to wholly witness their father's suffering. I shall first examine Andre, then Judith and then Charlie's responses to photographs, all of whom reflect on a varied level of engagement with both the oral and visual testimonies to Jan's past.

During our interview Andre produced three copies of photographs from his father's collection now in his possession. Andre explained his modest collection, 'it's partly because anytime I go and see my father, obviously it was my mother as well, they've got lots of the photos and I look at those with them quite often, so I've never felt a need probably to have them on my own.' He went on to explain his possession of the three photographs that he produced that day: 'The first two were obviously to do with IWM and the exhibits there. And I wanted to have them. One of the family walking under the bridge, this one. That's been used by the Imperial War Museum. I wanted to have my own

copy of them. They felt like the two big photos.'[451] Andre was keen to distinguish between the act of collective 'looking' when at his parents and personal possession. It may well be that these three photographs *matter* more to Andre than the rest of the collection. I refer here to Miller's interest in the word 'matter' rather than 'signify' when thinking about the social meaning of photographs."[452] He goes on to claim that the word "matter" is more likely to lead us to the concerns of those being studied (Andre) than the person studying (myself). It is a concern that Edwards has when researching family photographs in an Australian Aboriginal context, and one that I include in my analysis. It is an important distinction since it acknowledges the emotional and sensory impulses which encouraged Andre to possess his own copies rather than just view those of his parents.

Despite the connection between the photographs and IWM, there were other more specific emotional relations between Andre and the photographs. These relations reveal something about Andre's relationship with his father's past. The first photograph I shall discuss was taken in July/August 1945 at the Polish-Czechoslovak border (fig. 64). Jan is wearing a thick coat over a striped shirt. He looks directly at the camera. When I asked Andre why this photograph mattered to him, he responded:

> The sad thing about it to me is that it defines him as a person. That's where he has been coming from for the rest of his life so, you know in a way, it's a bit like a baby photo we all keep of our children (*he laughs*), that's the one that defines him. That's the importance of that one. It's a bit sad perhaps,

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[451] Interview with Andre Imich, 6 July 2020, online.
[452] Miller, *Material Cultures*, 3, 11.

> that's what made him the man he is. The larger part of it anyway.[453]

Andre sees this early post-war photograph as a marker of what for Jan was the beginning of new life similar to an image of a baby soon after birth. Both are moments of optimism, full of hopes for a new future. Indeed, the conflation of birth and the end of the war can be found in much second-generation Holocaust literature. The second-generation writer Melvin Jules argued that 'for the Second Generation there is no Before"; the Holocaust is the defining point of origin.'[454] Similarly, Hoffman wrote ′in the beginning was the war. That was my childhood theory of origins...For me, the world as I knew it and the people in it emerged not from the womb, but from war...For I was born in Poland...and so soon after the cataclysm as to conflate it with the causes of my own birth.'[455]

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[453] Interview with Andre.
[454] Victoria Aarons and Alan L. Berger, *Third-Generation Holocaust Representation: Trauma, History and Memory* (Illinois: Northerwestern University Press, 2017), 202.
[455] Hoffman, *After Such Knowledge*, 11.

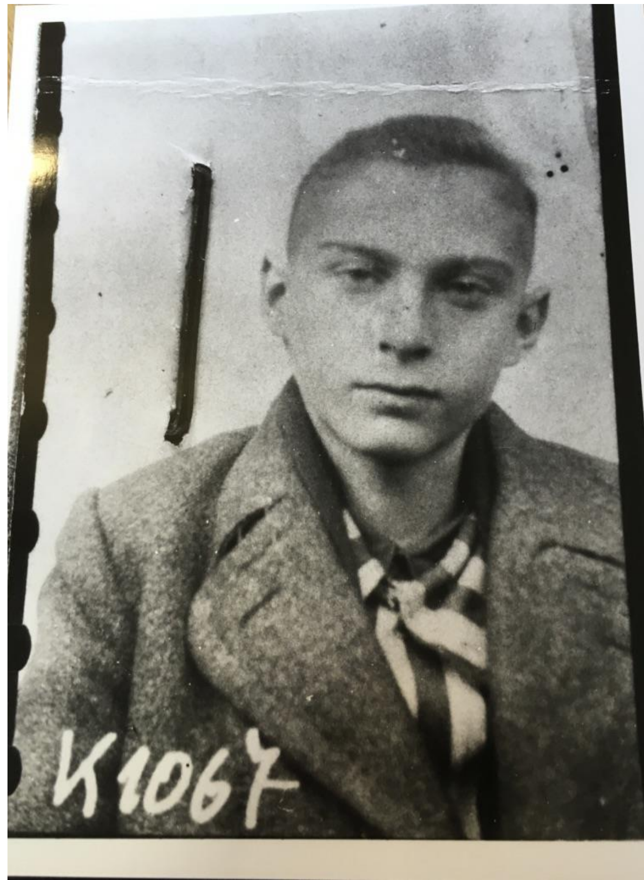

Figure 64: Photograph of Jan at the Czechoslovak-Polish border, August 1945, courtesy of Jan Imich.

Photo theorists have written extensively on the simultaneous presence of both life and death found in photographs.[456] Barthes' phenomenological theories on photographs in particular help us to make sense of Andre's responses to his father's photographs and provide clues to how Andre regards their relationship to one another. In the frequently cited *Camera Lucida,* Barthes describes a photograph of his mother as a five-year old girl standing in their winter garden. Barthes describes the photo and its *punctum* – the unique and personal

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[456] Sontag, *On Photography,* 51-82; Christian Metz, 'Photography and Fetish', in *The Critical Image: Essays on Contemporary Photography* edited by Carol Squiers (Seattle: Bay Press, 1990); Marianne Hirsch, 'Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory', *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 14, no. 1 (2001): 5-37.

response to the photograph - whilst omitting the image from the book, insisting that the reader would not have the same response. Barthes insists that ‘a sort of umbilical cord links the body of the photographed thing to my gaze.’ Here he associates photographs with death by comparing the cutting of the umbilical cord after birth with the underlying bodily response when memory is triggered by a photograph.

We can draw parallels between Barthes’ use of language related to birth with Andre’s likening of the photograph to that of a new-born infant. In her exploration of loss, memory and death in *Camera Lucida*, Kalia Howell argues that ‘the simultaneous death of the (M)other and of the self that results is humanity’s ultimate trauma: its loss of the ability to share emotional or bodily experience with another human being. Because the photograph by nature refers to this ultimate death, it causes us to witness our own failure to witness the other’s suffering, thereby provoking a collective remembering of our shared loss of collective bodily experience.’[457] Read in this way, Andre’s likening of birth and the photograph could reflect what he believed was his own limitations of sharing in his father’s suffering.

Despite the challenges involved in witnessing others’ suffering, Andre’s reading of the photograph could also highlight his own anxieties in relation to his and his father’s familial roles. Again, we can draw upon *Camera Lucida*, this time in the way in which Barthes relates to the image of his mother as a child, a moment that preceded him, with the frail old woman he nursed during her illness: ‘She had become my little girl, uniting for me with that essential child she was in her first photograph.’[458] In Hirsch’s reading of *Camera Lucida*, she

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[457] Kalia Howell, ‘Time, Loss, and the Death of the (M)other in Roland Barthes’ Camera Lucida and Sally Mann’s Deep South’, *Berkeley Undergraduate Journal* 28, no.1 (2015): 78-111.
[458] Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 70.

understands Barthes' reading of the photograph as reflecting his quite conflicted relationship with his mother, him as a carer for her as she dies from an illness.[459] It is also the case that the old acquire a level of vulnerability not dissimilar to that of infancy and that this too creates a sense of responsibility for any, such as Andre to his father, who were emotionally close. In Gabriele Rosenthal's study of second - and third -generation Holocaust survivors she found that there is a common desire among children of survivors to protect and care for parents.[460]

Certainly, Andre had played a supportive role in Jan's journey of reconnection, both with his family heritage and with IWM. It was Andre who sent the IWM appeal for Holocaust survivors to get in touch to his father. This propelled Jan to contact IWM and instigated a relationship with the museum which until his death. Secondly, Andre supported his father's research by visiting archives and researching the family's documents and photographs. Andre reflected how ''I think he (Jan) looked to me for confirmation that certain things were right to share and which ones to share.' A photograph which on the surface represents survival can also be read through a familial lens pointing to Andre's anxieties surrounding a desire to but also recognising the limitations of understanding and witnessing someone' else's suffering and past.

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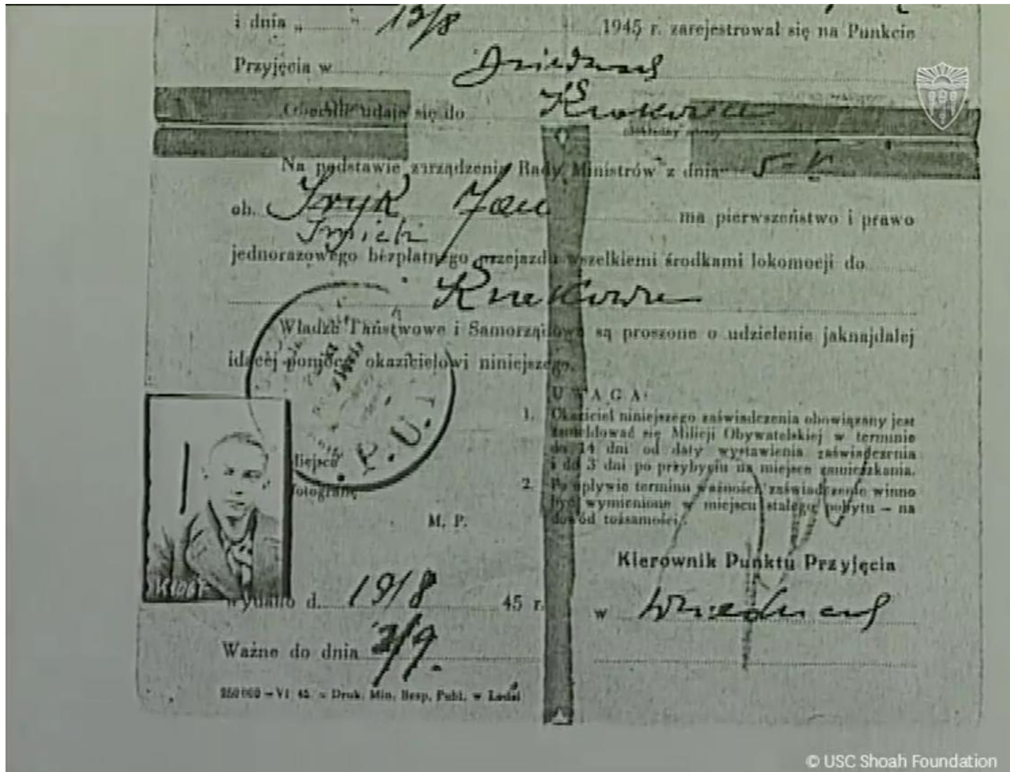
[459] Hirsch, *Family Frames*, 7.

[460] Gabriele Rosenthal quotes the research of F Klein-Parker, 'Dominant Attitudes of Adult Children of Holocaust survivors towards their parents', in *Human Adaption to Extreme Stress* eds., J Wilson Z Harzel and B Kahana, 193-218 (New York: Plenum, 1988), 208, quoted in *The Holocaust in Three Generations: Families of Victims* (London, Cassell, 1998), 9.



i dnia 13/8 1945 r. zarejestrował się na Punkcie
Przyjęcia w
udaje się do
Na podstawie zarządzenia Rady Ministrów z dnia
ob. ma pierwszeństwo i prawo
jednorazowego bezpłatnego przejazdu wszelkiemi środkami lokomocji do
Władze Państwowe i Samorządowe są proszone o udzielenie jaknajdalej idącej pomocy okazicielowi niniejszego.
UWAGA:
1. Okaziciel niniejszego zaświadczenia obowiązany jest zameldować się Milicji Obywatelskiej w terminie do 14 dni od daty wystawienia zaświadczenia i do 3 dni po przybyciu na miejsce zamieszkania.
2. Po upływie terminu ważności zaświadczenie winno być wymienione w miejscu stałego pobytu – na dowód tożsamości.
M. P.
Kierownik Punktu Przyjęcia
Wydano d. 19/8 45 r. w
Ważne do dnia 3/9.
– VI 45 – Druk. Min. Bezp. Publ. w Łodzi

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Figure 65. Document issued to Jan by the Polish authorities at the border after his arrival from Germany, ©USC Shoah Foundation.

Andre's reading of the photograph was at odds with both Jan's and a cultural representation of a concentration camp uniform and liberation. An uninformed viewer might see the heavily coded cultural presence of the uniform and interpret the photograph as being taken in a concentration camp or at liberation. In fact, it was taken around three months after liberation, a gap that Jan highlighted when he reflected, 'what I looked like when I was liberated, only God knows.' It was evidently important for Jan to differentiate between the two identities: Jan as a prisoner upon liberation, gaunt and emaciated and Jan as pictured here clearly benefiting from three months of convalescence. The photograph was included in a display about Jan in the 2000 Exhibition (fig. 66). The photograph was uncaptioned and so visitors had to guess the circumstances in which the photograph had been taken. The last sentence of the text misleadingly states 'He [Jan] was freed in April 1945, suffering from pleurisy and severe malnutrition.' It is therefore more than likely that visitors

connected the photograph with liberation and ill-health, an association undermined by the testimony of both Andre and Jan.

Figure 66. The display cabinet featuring Jan Imich's photographs and documents in IWM's The Holocaust Exhibition, author's own photo.

It is evident that the photograph of Jan in 1945 held multiple meanings within the family. There was a complex interplay between the memory and identity of individuals and the larger group. The subtle and at times quite fluid interplay between private and public memory was entirely lost in the IWM 2000 Exhibition.

Another photograph discussed with Andre during our meeting sheds light on the way in which Andre and his father attempted to bridge the gap between past and present through reperformance and mimetic photographic representation. In doing so, Andre attempts to undo the finality of the past by reanimating it and then preserving it in a photograph. One of the three photographs that Andre showed me was not in the 2000 Exhibition and therefore can be seen to have a more personal resonance for Andre than the other two he showed me. The photograph captures Jan and his mother in 1937 in Zakopane, a holiday resort in the Tatra mountains of southern Poland. Zakopane has since been described as the 'holiday camp of Poland.'[461] A street-photograph shows Jan and his mother accompanied by a costumed bear. Zakopane is known for its wild brown bears. Posing with the iconic costumed bear from Krupówki therefore was a frequently rehearsed tourist activity for Jan and his mother with similar images appearing in album records of summer and winter holidays (fig. 67).

[461] Magdalena Kozłowska, 'Wandering Jews: Camping Culture and Jewish Socialist Youth in Interwar Poland', *Jewish Culture and History* 16, no. 3 (2015): 243. For a history of Zakopane see Maciej Krupa, 'Zakopane is a School of Longing', *Konteksty* no.1 (2013): 78-84.

Figure 67. Photograph of Jan and his mother in 1937 or 1938 in Zakopane, Poland, courtesy of Jan Imich.

Figure 68. Photograph of Andre (right) in Zakopane on a family trip to Poland with the bear that featured in a photograph of his father and a friend, 1978, courtesy of Andre Imich.

Andre showed me the photograph along with one of himself and a friend taken in 1978 stood with a similar costumed bear found in the photograph of Jan (fig. 68). Reading the photograph of Andre in the context of the earlier image of Jan points to the familial legacy of such images. A banal street photograph has received familial meaning and value that elevates it above the mundane and the composition and setting has been ritualized. Edwards' relational analysis helps to understand the role these photographs have played in the family dynamics in both their production and their circulation. Edwards argues that 'the ways in which photographs exist with their viewers and users are always, like relationships, dynamic.'[462] Reperforming his father's photograph and then keeping hold of a copy of his father's photo and his own suggests both Jan and Andre's desire to share in and bear witness to Jan's childhood, an act that was both dynamic in its playfulness and adhesive powers.

It is important to here contextualise the 1978 photograph within the family's history of talking more openly about the past. Jan had already visited Kraków in 1976 and this photo was taken the first time that Jan had been back to Zakopane since 1938.[463] Jan took the photograph on a trip that took place only a few years after Jan started talking to his son about his past. However, Andre remembers that during the visit 'there was not much talk about the past [...] It's all about the here and now and the challenges of living in Communism and so on.'

> I don't think I really sort of took much on board at the time. It took a long time to understand the implications or anything like that, you know. And therefore, one received it in a matter

[462] Edwards, 'Photographs and the Sound of History,' 31.
[463] Interview with Andre.

> of fact, non-emotional way and didn't sort of look much further than that. Really it was all factual.[464]

As images that represented Jan's past, they had the potential to help him build a secure and informed relationship with his son. Jan's photograph of Andre with the bear taken on their first visit to Zakopane may have been a way to reconnect both himself and his son with his own childhood memories in a light-hearted manner. It was not necessary to visit the past through language; images served instead to connect the past with the present. Stokes goes so far as to suggests that children being photographed playing may have been 'an attempt by the adults to recapture moments of their own childhoods, a restaging of those memories that persistently recurred like framed pictures, and which they would like their own children to relive.'[465] Reading this photograph in this way suggests that Andre's performance in the photo is Jan attempting to restage his own childhood memories. Additionally, the fact that Andre has a copy of the Zakopane photograph from both 1938 and 1978 highlights the social role these two photographs play as they interact together. As Edwards argues 'photographs not only hold time and space but extend time and space through sets of multiple relationships, their piled-up significances, an aggregate of relationships.'[466] In this regard, these two photographs circulated through two generations and have helped create a temporal and spatial link between Andre as an adult and Jan as both a child and adult. Certainly, Andre had commented when talking about the 1945 photograph, that he found the past nigh on impossible to imagine. But it is becoming clear that a judicious use of only a few of Jan's photographs allows Andre to claim the period before the war not as a

[464] Ibid.
[465] Stokes, 'The Family Photograph Album,' 200.
[466] Edwards, 'Photographs and the Sound of History,' 31.

time into which he was allowed no access but as a past revealed and made accessible by an interpreted photographic record.

I shall now turn to the interview I conducted with Charlie, Jan's grandson, to demonstrate the potential for photographs to evoke postmemories that somewhat at odds with the content of photographs. I conducted an interview with Charlie online. He did not have any of his own pre-war photographs of his grandfather, adding that 'they aren't the kind of thing...he keeps things like that to himself, but he doesn't really hide them.'[467] For Charlie the two memorable photographs were of his grandfather as a child with his father, mother, and grandparents (fig. 57) and the 1945 image (fig. 64).

Since Charlie had no recollection of a photograph album, I thought it would be interesting to view some of Jan's childhood photographs with him to discover if he recognised any of them. Viewing poor quality images via my computer screen and phone, Charlie confirmed that he had not seen them before. Charlie checked me on the image of Jan carrying a wheelbarrow, wondering when that was taken (fig. 69). I read him the caption:

> Myself in the summer of 1935, in the background: my Mother and Granddad Imich on one of his frequent visits from Czestochowa. Marshall Pilsudzki, the Head of the Polish State died earlier that year and a commemorative mound was being built on the outskirts of Kraków in his honour.[468]

[467] Interview with Charlie Edwards, 10 November 2020, online.
[468] For an analysis on this photograph see Maiken Umbach and Alice Tofts, 'Private Photographs: A Complex Relationship', *Holocaust Studies* (2022).

To which Charlie replied: It’s funny because there is a horrible story of the wheelbarrow in the camps. So, when you show me the picture of the wheelbarrow that’s what I associate him with.[469]

Figure 69. Photograph of Jan pushing a wheelbarrow to help build the Piłsudski Mound, 1935, courtesy of Jan Imich.

Here, Charlie was referring to Jan’s experience in Dora Camp when, recovering from frostbite, he walked into the crematorium with a wheelbarrow of coal where he saw bodies waiting to be burned. Jan, who was already physically exhausted, slumped onto the ground and started to weep.[470] Clearly, the photograph of Jan as a child evoked memories of the story Charlie had heard

[469] Interview with Charlie.
[470] Jan recalls this story in the 1996 recording with IWM.

about his grandfather in the camp. Charlie had spent a lot of time talking with Jan about his past with the intention of writing a biography. He recalls that his grandparents, and particularly his grandmother, were quite keen that he should see the photographs. He remembers there being:

> A box of war memorabilia. So, there were articles written about grandad. I can't really remember exactly but there were a few articles in that box...photos of him during the war – I feel like they are scarce because they would have given them all away. I'm not sure if he retrieved them.
>
> Myself: Do you know what happened to the photographs?
>
> Charlie: No, from doing a bit of research into it, I would assume that he gave them away to people to look after and after the war he went looking for them with a couple of members of the family for belongings. I'm assuming some of them were photos. They didn't retrieve much. I assume if they were lost, that is where they would have been lost.[471]

This association of a wheelbarrow with Jan's wartime experience points to the transmission of memories that has occurred between grandfather and grandson. Drawing on Hirsch's concept of postmemory, I argue that Charlie is performing an 'affiliative post-memorial act' similar to that which Hirsch describes Art Spiegelman performing when he adds a Bourke-White image to his family album and then identifies an anonymous figure as "Poppa."[472] Charlie had previously only seen one photograph of Jan as a child. Charlie had an emotional response to the photograph, initially of surprise. From viewing the

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[471] Interview with Charlie.
[472] Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*, 36.

photograph, Charlie recalls a story his grandfather had told him, one that did match the image. This suggests that he is eager to make sense of the photograph through his own field of reference: a field where stories of his father's time in camps are more prominent than those from before the war. Indeed, in doing so, Charlie makes haphazard attempts to affiliate image and orality together.

Part Three –Private Photographs and Public Engagement

Andre had been instrumental in not only instigating Jan's relationship with IWM but also directed decision making concerning what should be shared with the museum. IWM has therefore played a pivotal role in shaping Jan's and other family members' relationships with the past. In all of this there has been a very fluid relationship between communicative memory and cultural memory of the Holocaust. Indeed, the trajectory between private and public memory and between not knowing and knowing, is more fluid, circular and disjointed than previously imagined.

On 4 April 2019 Jan and Andre attended a dinner as part of a campaign against antisemitism entitled 'Light from the Dark' hosted by the Chelsea Foundation and IWM at Stamford Bridge, Chelsea Football Club's stadium in west London.[473] Andre recalled Jan's surprise at entering the event and seeing an enlarged version of a photograph of himself as an eight-year-old feeding pigeons with his grandfather outside St Mary's Basilica in Krakow's 'Rynek

[473] This event was part of Chelsea Football Club 'Say No to Antisemitism' campaign. The then Club owner Roman Abramovich had donated money to the development of the new Holocaust Galleries to which proceeds of the event were also donated. Chelsea Football Club, 'Say No to Anti-Semitism' (online), accessed 25 January 2021, https://www.chelseafc.com/en/news/type/say-no-to-antisemitism?page=1.

Główny' or Central Square.[474] The photo was displayed as part of the visual backdrop to the dinner. The original photograph is in the album that he made for his family and which he showed me during my first visit.

Andre showed me this photograph over Skype, later sending me a digital copy by email (fig. 70) Jan and his younger self look out in the same direction towards the photographer as if they are situated in the scene. The photograph is striking. Jan stands proudly in front of what appears to be football memorabilia and a life-sized image of him and his father while party lights are projected up the wall, creating circles of incandescence around both Jan and the photo. The elderly Jan's smiles benignly, possibly reflecting the honour he feels from having his photograph displayed at a world-famous football club. This seems to be the same pride as that shown by the young Jan in the photograph behind. The young boy and the elderly man both beam into a lens as if the years that separate them have dissolved and come to nothing. The elderly Jan's posture mimics that of his late grandfather in the photograph. Both stand erect and square on to the camera as if they have nothing to hide. This encounter with an image of his past reminds me of Jan's story told at the beginning of this chapter when he came across a billboard displaying the photograph of his great-great Uncle Ludwik Gumplowicz on it. Although differences remain, i.e. Jan could recognise himself but not Ludwik, there is a pattern of individuals encountering enlarged photographs of the past. In these encounters, individuals are overcome by a sense of honour and prestige. In the first Jan is rejoiced at the prospect of having a celebrated relation and in the second he is clearly raptured by being represented in a Holocaust related event.

[474] Jan had consented to the use of the photograph for the event Jan's surprise may be due to the size of the image, the fact he had forgotten, or perhaps Jan's modesty at seeing himself represented in a world-famous football club.

Figure 70. Photograph of Jan stood by an enlarged photo of him as a child with his grandfather Josef Imich in Kraków Main Square, courtesy of Andre Imich.

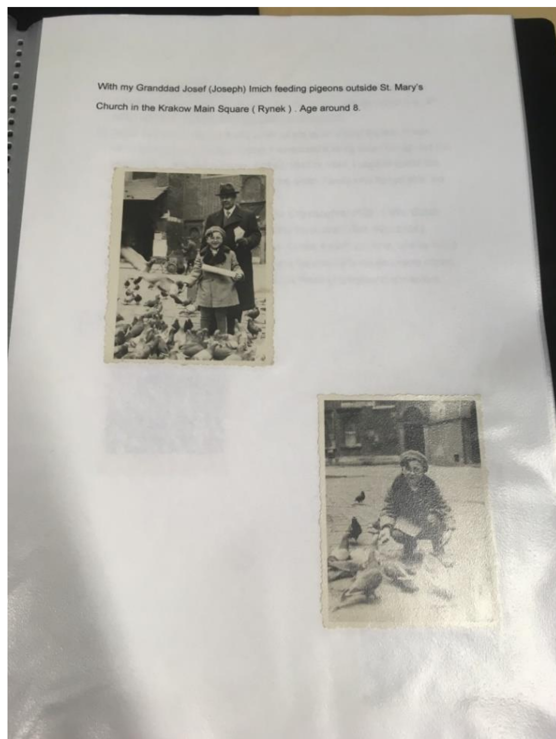

Figure 71. The photo album page where the original photo is displayed, courtesy of Jan Imich.

I shall now discuss the interactions between knowing and not knowing in relation to private and cultural memory. Judith recognised that becoming involved with IWM in the late 1990s was transformative for her father:

> I think it was cathartic for him, it was a way to let it all out and remember it all. To find out more and to sort of open up about it. He was very involved in it, going off to research his family and find out all about it. It was really important part of his life. So, it gave him a focus.[475]

[475] Interview with Judith Edwards, 16 October 2020, online.

Not only does Judith remember this as a turning point for her father but she describes how it provoked a domino effect on the rest of the family. She observed the family began communicating more about the past:

> Since dad got involved, particularly with the Imperial War Museum. It was all then that he started talking about it. He became more involved with it so we obviously all became more involved in it. To hear him speak and that sort of thing.[476]

Despite marking a turning point, Judith struggled to engaging with her father's past. She describes hearing her father speak about his suffering as 'intolerable,' going on to add that 'on a very personal level, it absolutely hits me in the gut, it's unbearable when you think about someone you love. I find it awful.[477] Judith acknowledges that she attends Holocaust Memorial Day events and has visited The Holocaust Exhibition but comments that 'over the years I do as much as I can. I know where I want to go and where I don't want to go, for my own sake really.'

Whilst Andre's past support of his father has been significant, there was a sign that his engagement was dwindling. I asked Andre if he now spent any time looking through the photographs, either alone or with his father.

> I think we've probably done all our talking about the past, or his past that you know we're going to do. Anything else will certainly be incidental if we talk more about his wartime experience or even that element of the past. It would be incidental because something happens that triggers it rather

[476] Ibid.
[477] Ibid.

> than either of us instigating it. We’ve *done* that, many times, we’ve been there with it.[478]

It appears that the past had been well visited. Looking at photographs would involve returning to a place to which Andre seemed incurious and reluctant to return. Finishing the interview, however, Andre reflected ‘it's only been very interesting talking about it all really. It's really raised a few questions to me which I'll need to think about.’ I asked him to comment more on what these questions were. He replied, ‘it's to do with my childhood, really. You know the sort of hidden nature of it and the most significant features of myself. And the impact hiding it may have had on my development.’

It appears that despite Andre’s reticence to engage with his father’s past, the interview raised some key questions about his own relationship to that past and how it may have impacted on him. These are questions that Andre may decide to explore in the future. From examining the case of Jan, Andre and Judith, it is clear that there is no simple linear trajectory where the second generation has opened to and connected with their family’s story. Jan's concerns in all of this were very different at the time of interview from what they had been immediately after the war and even after 1996 when he first encountered IWM. The same can be said for Andre and Judith. What can be said with a fair degree of certainty is that their engagement with the photographic record is more than likely to evolve with the passage of time, even more so perhaps with the death of their father in September 2022.

[478] Ibid.

Conclusion

There were multiple paradoxes in the way that Jan related to his photographs. Firstly, these relate to how he employed photographs to communicate the past. He had a desire to share the images in his album, but was also quite reserved with them, rarely showing them to his family. Secondly there was a paradox in how he felt about his photographs. The images were both a source of pride and shame. Jan's pride in his long family history was very evident. He documented the history in the photographic album and shared it with IWM to be used in Holocaust commemoration and museum representation. Yet he felt a sense of shame for not reclaiming the photographs after the war. Furthermore, the photographs were paradoxically both a burden and a source of liberation. His memories were less constrained without them, and he remarked how he preferred talking in their absence. On the other hand, the photographs helped bind Jan and Andre together allowing them to engage together with the past. And finally, there was both an urgency and a latency in how Jan dealt with the photographs. The urgency derived from his age and his keenness to communicate his past to others in the years that he has left. Conversely the task of sorting and cataloguing the photographs appeared as a large and slightly daunting task before them for both Jan and his daughter. It is therefore unwise to attempt to identify one or two meanings of the photographs or why certain photographs matter. It is perhaps more conducive to acknowledge the complexities of examining a family's relationship to the past when it has been only partly reconciled in the shadows of both the Holocaust and domestic fissures, silences and prolonged suffering.

Hirsch talks about a 'post-Holocaust family romance and survivor fantasy: that before the destruction, there was another world, a happier one, one uncontaminated by the violence that followed'. I argue that this does not apply to the Imich family, reluctant as they are to romanticise pre-war life. Instead, there are many aspects of pre-war life that remain unexplored territory for the

post-war generation. For Judith, the pain of listening to stories about her father's suffering was too heavy a burden; for Charlie, his post-memories of his grandfather's internment and persecution eclipse his imagination about life before the war. Finally, Andre, who has been the most engaged with memory work, allowed his father to lead his own encounter with the past rather than seek his own journey of reconnecting with the past.

From conversations with Jan, it appeared that the main contribution that IWM made to him was the lasting friendships, which ultimately included a group of people who were willing, interested, and eager to hear his story. As with many of the stories that Jan told of people he met over his long life, he was particularly proud of the enduring friendships that he has made with individuals connected with IWM. Moreover, it is clear from speaking with IWM staff who have or who are working on The Holocaust Galleries, that Jan's fondness for IWM was indeed reciprocated, with many IWM professionals mentioning how much they enjoyed spending time with him.

To conclude, I draw upon Bardgett's recollection of a memorable moment during Jan's talk delivered at IWM. A tale that otherwise should be the source of deep sadness and loss was transformed into a moment of levity and laughter:

> Jan had photographs of him in a pram as a little baby. We'd clunkily put an audio-visual presentation together. You didn't even need PowerPoint, it was all awkwardly put on carousel sort of moving it on when Jan spoke. I remember him talking about his father working as a radiographer and this had possibly caused him to have infertility, but then Jan came along, and at that moment, up popped a picture of Jan as a little baby and everyone laughed. It was one of those magical moments when, actually, a photograph does something

> you're not expecting it to, in a talk that obviously went on to talk about some awful times.[479]

This vignette speaks to the many possible emotional and sensory meanings that photographs can evoke. What matters is the contexts, the form of media and possibly most importantly the context given to the images. There is an integral relationship between language and image, which has the potential to transform the moment of connecting with both the past and present.

[479] Interview with Bardgett, 15 October 2020.

Chapter Five – Imperial War Museums' The Holocaust Galleries

Introduction

On 20 October 2021, IWM opened The Holocaust Galleries and Second World War Galleries to the public.[480] The award winning Holocaust Galleries were particularly praised by the media for their ‘stimulating, sensitive, and humane’ representation of the Holocaust through the ‘small human details’[481] and for showing the vibrancy of Jewish life through family stories and images.[482]

This ‘perceived’ intention to ‘humanise’ the story and evidence Jewish culture prior to the Second World War is not unique to the new Galleries. Indeed, James Taylor, a curator of the 2000 Exhibition, understood that telling personal stories and displaying pre-war photographs was an essential way for ‘visitors to empathise with individuals.’[483] The 2000 Exhibition achieved this through four

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[480] The development of the two Galleries was the second phase of ‘Transforming IWM’ the first resulting in the First World War which opened in 2014, ‘Transforming IWM: Phase Two: Second World War and Holocaust Galleries’ (online), accessed 16 August 2022,
https://www.iwm.org.uk/sites/default/files/Transforming_IWM_London_Phase_2.pdf.

[481] Jonathan Freedland, ‘Imperial War Museum Holocaust Galleries Review- History’s Greatest Horro’, *The Guardian* (online), accessed 16 August 2022,
https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2021/oct/11/imperial-war-museum-london-holocaust-gallery-review. The Holocaust Galleries won Best New Permanent Gallery at the 2022 Museum and Heritage Awards and Best Exhibition Design at the Design Awards 2022.

[482] Barry Toberman, ‘New Imperial War Museum Galleries Show Where Innocence Ended and Shoah Horror Began’, *The Jewish Chronicle* (online), 14 October 2021, accessed 16 August 2022, https://www.thejc.com/community/community-news/new-imperial-war-museum-THG-show-where-innocence-ended-and-shoah-horror-began-1.521440.

[483] Interview with James Taylor, The Holocaust Exhibition Curator, IWM, 21 May 2019, online. This move away from large military objects to more personal objects was

methods of display: the first method was encountered in the entrance space where visitors first stepped from the main atrium at IWM London into a semi-circular area. The wooden walls were host to a collection of framed photographs of individuals who were not named in the display. This was a space designed 'for visitors to be settled and given some sense of the gravity of what lay ahead'.[484] The second method was photographs from private collections in display cases with other artefacts and personal stories to give, what Bardgett described as, 'a face to a name'.[485] The third method was displaying throughout the exhibition video testimonies of survivors reflecting on their experiences with their photographs intermittently popping up behind them on the screen. And the fourth method, the final exhibition space was dedicated to survivors' video testimonies that was designed as a 'decompression area'.[486] Photographs from private collections were always evident but subordinate to survivors' testimonies and key artefacts. The priority given to survivors' testimonies *over* private photographs is made explicit by the Holocaust Education coordinator, Paul Salmons, who worked closely with the Exhibition team, when he commented that survivors' voices which 'continuously punctuate the narrative and, continuously reharmonize them, [...] Perhaps do[es] [so] in a more visceral way and a more vivid way than pre-war photographs can do.'[487]

In the 2021 Galleries, private photographs of Holocaust survivors constitute a considerably larger proportion of the objects on display than in the previous

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reflected in wider IWM practice, Kasia Tomasiewicz, '"We are a Social History, not a Military History Museum": Large Objects and the "Peopling" of THG in the Imperial War Museum, London', in *Museums, Modernity and Conflict: Museums and Collections in and of War Since the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Kate Hill, 213-35 (London: Routledge, 2021).

[484] Bardgett, 'The Depiction of the Holocaust,' 155.

[485] Interview with Bardgett, 8 November 2020.

[486] Interview with Taylor.

[487] Interview with Paul Salmons, Holocaust Education Coordinator, IWM, 23 June 2021, online.

Exhibition. Furthermore, survivors' video testimonies only feature in the final space of the gallery. Previously, private photographs were displayed mostly to enhance objects around them, a practice which, Edwards and Sigrid Lien note, is typical of the way photographs are employed in museums more generally.[488] In the 2021 Galleries photographs have crept up what Edwards and al. refer to as the 'hierarchy of value'[489] to the place that they properly deserve as key objects in the complex representation of Jewish experiences. This is not surprising considering the museum's commitment to individualise the history and culture of war, something that photographs have a huge potential to achieve.[490]

In this chapter, I firstly examine the motivations behind, the means by which, and the effect of private photographs climbing up this 'hierarchy of value' and becoming key objects to tell the story of Jewish life before, during and following the Holocaust. Treating private photographs as 'historical objects' raises their historical value. With this increased value comes an increased responsibility to disturb deeply-held categories of visual representations of the Holocaust and Jews. These include the assumption that photographs promote ideas of Jewish victimhood and the Jewish 'Other' and that photographs reveal the truth. I aim to demonstrate how the 2021 Galleries does well to challenge and transform these categories of representation through various interpretive and design devices.

This chapter also considers the findings from this thesis's four family case studies to examine the Galleries' treatment of private photographs as historical and biographical objects, material and social objects, and vessels of memory.

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[488] Elizabeth Edwards and Sigrid Lien, eds., *Uncertain Images: Museums and the Work of Photographs* (Oxford: Routledge, 2014), 8.
[489] Ibid.
[490] Edwards, 'Photography and the Business of Doing History,' 171.

By doing so it asks how individual and familial memory of the period prior to, during and post the second world war transforms into collective and then cultural memory It also asks how the Galleries' curators approached the destabilising, complex yet culturally coded nature of photographs to help ab

Methodology

The methodology for this chapter was characterised by a relationship with IWM professionals involved in the making of the two exhibitions based on both proximity and distance. The former related to the privileges endowed to me as an affiliated student with IWM and the latter related to Covid-19. Due to the nature of my CDP and the then role of my supervisor Rachel Donnelly as Learning and Audience Advocate for The Holocaust Galleries, I was offered a temporary desk in the team's office which I used once or twice a week. I hoped that this close contact with the team would allow me to gain their trust and build a rapport which led to deeper and more considered responses from them during the interviews. Working in the team's office also offered me an opportunity to learn by osmosis the processes by which the team problematised and examined the stories, objects and ideas they wanted to use in the new Galleries. My affiliation with the museum has allowed me access to the people who have shaped the two exhibitions and the documents and networks that have been my resources for writing this chapter.

The various disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic changed how I approached many aspects of my research. Firstly, all interviews, with the exception of one, were conducted online. Secondly, while writing this chapter, due to Covid related closures, I was unable to spend significant amounts of time in the 2000 Exhibition before objects were removed for conservation. Interviewing staff who had worked on the Exhibition project almost twenty years ago presents obvious challenges in terms of recall. Their reflections are also influenced by hindsight and awareness of the subsequent reviews and

indeed criticisms of the Exhibition.[491] All of this meant that my approach to the staff interviews was very focused, and my questions were more direct than were the case used for Holocaust survivors and their families. I was also sensitive of the need to limit the time that staff were asked to devote to my questioning. The first interviewee from the 2000 Exhibition team was Suzanne Bardgett, now IWM's Head of Research and Academic Partnerships, who provided a longer overview of the way in which the team worked with photographs more generally. I interviewed other members of the HEPO team about their particular roles in the Exhibition's conception and construction: James Taylor, now IWM's Assistant Director, Narrative and Content, Kathy Brady, Research Assistant, Lucy Davies, PA to Bardgett, Paul Salmons, Education Coordinator. Brady, Davies and Salmons no longer work for IWM.

I interviewed four members of the 2021 Galleries' Content Team: James Bulgin, Content Lead; Lauren Wilmott, Curator, Lucy May Maxwell, Curator and Jessica Talarico, Project Manager/Curator. I also interviewed Helen Mavin, Head of IWM's Photograph Archive. I interviewed Bulgin twice since I needed to ask him about specific details of the final Galleries not covered in my initial interview. I interviewed all the IWM professionals separately except for Brady and Davies who requested to be interviewed together in order to aid each other's memory. Indeed, there were several moments where they were able to prompt each other on aspects of the 2000 Exhibition that they had glossed over or forgotten. The range of interviews was intended to gather a diverse and more comprehensive understanding of the two projects rather than to uncover inconsistencies and contradictions. This variety of responses built a picture of

[491] A couple of interviewees referred to the criticisms and concerns expressed by Hannah Holtschneider in *The Holocaust and Representations of Jews: History and Identity in the Museum* (London: Routledge, 2014).

the myriad ways by which a curatorial team can influence one another and so shape a final exhibition.

This chapter also draws on qualitative research to which I contributed when I co-produced an engagement workshop with IWM's Public Engagement and Learning (PEL) department. The workshop was held for youth ambassadors of the Holocaust Education Trust (HET).[492] Bulgin gave a talk about the new Galleries to the participants prior to their visit. The artist, Sarah Dobai, then introduced and showed her film installation 'The Donkey Field'. The participants were then divided into groups to discuss a question posed by PEL about the Galleries and installation's storytelling devices. One group responded to a question designed by myself and the other members of PEL to help my research: 'thinking about how the Galleries uses photographs to tell the story of the Jewish experiences in the Second World War, are there any photos that stood out to you and for what reason?' I draw on this research as an insight into how a well-informed and engaged group respond to the display of photographs in the Galleries.

I intertwine research with IWM professionals and HET ambassadors with a critical analysis of the 2000 Exhibition and the 2021 Galleries, aiming to balance an analysis of curatorial intention, rhetoric and practice and outcome. I draw on the methodological framework outlined by Stephanie Moser which takes into account the network of factors that deserve consideration in any serious engagement with the epistemological function of museums.[493] Moser's framework highlights the use of space, design, colour, lighting, text, captions,

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[492] HET ambassadors are aged between sixteen and thirty who have taken part in one of HET's programmes for young people, see 'Ambassador Programme', *Holocaust Educational Trust* (online), accessed 15 September, https://www.het.org.uk/ambassadors.
[493] Stephanie Moser, 'The Devil is in the Detail: Museum Displays and the Creation of Knowledge', *Museum Anthropology* 33, no.1 (2010): 22-32.

layout, display types whilst also being mindful of how these factors interact to compliment or undermine one another.

This chapter follows a visitors' journey from the entrance space in the 2021 Galleries to the final space. The first subsection examines the first two spaces of the Galleries and the oscillation between memory and history. I examine the entrance space where a large audio-visual installation situates the past in the present. I then study the different design and interpretive devices of private photographs in the next space to understand the effects of using them as historical documents. I also explore how in the process of historicising Jewish life, the Galleries creates a version of Hirsch's postmemory; a sense of knowing, not knowing, proximity yet distance. The second subsection uses the display of the Neumeyer's family private collection as a case study to examine how the Galleries transforms the canonical cultural memory of the Kindertransport as a nationalist narrative into a more familial story of loss and separation. I also aim to demonstrate the important role that family memory work plays in curatorial work, a role which subsequently bolsters the 'myth of the family' in the representation of Jewish life. The final subsection focuses on the closing space in the Galleries to examine how the use of survivors' and their family's video testimonies and an installation highlight the incompleteness and the mediation of the past. I refer to this space as a "mnemohistory", borrowing the term from a branch of historiography emerging in the 1980s.[494] The space's exploration of the constructive and distorting effects of memory lends itself well to this term.

[494] Aleida Assmann, 'Transformations between History and Memory,' 62.

Situating the Galleries and the Loaning of Photographs from Private Collections

I begin by situating the 2021 Galleries. By using curatorial rhetoric and practices I highlight the significant developments over the past twenty years in the design and interpretation of photographic displays in IWM. I take my cue from Wayne Modest and his research on colonial photography and museums to focus on the emotional registers, curatorial anxieties and intersubjectivities involved in the collecting, curating and exhibition of Holocaust photographs within IWM.[495] The Content Team began developing the Galleries in 2016. From the outset, James Bulgin, the Content Lead, was conscious of the recent criticism of the use of photographs in Holocaust exhibitions.[496] Whilst the majority of photographs included in the 2000 Exhibition were taken by perpetrators (a reality many Holocaust exhibitions have to navigate) and used as illustration or provide evidence alongside personal stories, Bulgin's approach was to prioritise the use of photographs from private collections and to treat photographs as objects.[497] The Content Team chose to represent Jewish life primarily through this medium. They gave a lesser role to private film because private films are less readily available from that period. The first space in the Galleries alone displays 1,084 photographs and nineteen films many of which are shown on eighteen screens around the space where the stills change every ten seconds. Lauren Willmott, one of the curators, explained that this design ensured that 'no two visitors will see the exact same thing when they walk into the Galleries.'[498] The team aimed to give an impression of the diversity of Jewish life and 'for that we

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[495] Wayne Modest, 'Museums and the Emotional Afterlife of Colonial Photography', in *Uncertain Images,* eds. Edwards et al, 21-43, 35.
[496] Bulgin referred to Holtschneider, *The Holocaust and Representations of Jews*.
[497] Interview with Bulgin, 25 November 2020.
[498] Interview with Lauren Willmott, Holocaust Galleries Curator, IWM 11 November 2020, online.

needed thousands of pictures which we didn't have in our current collection.'[499] The photographs and films were from three different origins: from survivors and their families whose collections were used in the 2000 Exhibition; survivors who had not contributed to that Exhibition but had since developed a relationship with IWM and finally by drawing from other archives particularly USHMM and Yad Vashem.

Lucy May Maxwell and Jessica Talarico, two more curators on the Galleries, went through the museum's archive folders to examine the copyright of all the images, the contracts signed by donors about the use of their images and other artefacts, and the history of communication between the museum and donors. Everything gleaned from this work was then used to inform decision-making about how to reopen conversations with individuals who had already donated or lent photographs.[500] It was not unusual for approaches to be redirected to donors' children, such as Tim and Stephen Locke and Lorna Brunstein because the project's timing was, as Talarico described, 'right on the threshold; survivors have passed away in the course of the project'.[501] As well as rekindling existing relationships the team also forged new ones with survivors which in turn helped to expand the collection of 'display' photographs. It was not unusual for conversations with survivors to shed light on unknown collections. Wilmott described how 'as you get talking to them (survivors) [...] They might just mention photographs in passing, or [...] An object: "oh, that sounds interesting, do you mind if I have a look at it."'[502]

[499] Ibid.
[500]Interview with Jessica Talarico, Holocaust Galleries Project Manager, IWM, 9 April 2021, online; Interview with Lucy May Maxwell, Holocaust Galleries Curator, IWM, 26 November 2020, online.
[501] Ibid.
[502] Interview with Willmott.

From late 2018 to early 2019 the team began the second round of the museum's 'collecting' process. There are three notable elements of this process. Firstly, fewer photographs were added to the Photograph Archive than in the late 1990s. This can be explained by IWM changing its photograph collecting policy in 2012, so that only original photographs could be accessioned. This policy is based on the view that photographs are material objects therefore any copies of originals do not qualify as museum objects.[503] Whereas HEPO had used a Picturescanner to make copy prints or copy negatives, the 2021 Content Team had the technology to create higher resolution copy scans of the photographs. These were added alongside HEPO's collection to IWM's internal collections management software.

Secondly, private photographs were seen from the onset as important objects to tell the story of Jewish experiences of life prior to and during the Second World War. Photographs in the 2000 Exhibition were displayed in a way that was conducive to visitors' engagement with them. Bardgett reported how for the 2000 Exhibition, 'the designers were very keen we didn't over-tax the visitor with too much to read and the entrance area was very definitely an area people were supposed to walk through quickly. They didn't want a bottleneck to develop so that people would arrive and started to look at the photographs and spent forever there.'[504] Other spaces, such as the Exhibition's final room displaying video testimonies offered places to sit and even reflect. The design of the entrance space which contained the most private photographs, and therefore most representative of Jewish self-expression, was meanwhile intended to be a conduit into the 2000 Exhibition. During the second iteration of collection, it quickly became apparent that a key part of representing Jewish

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[503] Interview with Helen Mavin, Head of Photograph Archive, IWM, 23 September 2022, online.
[504] Interview with Bardgett, 15 October 2020.

life was through private photographs and so this inevitably formed an important part of curators' collecting practices.

Thirdly, the 2021 Galleries Content Team treated photographs as historical rather than memory objects. Despite prioritising the collection of private photographs, the team lacked the time and technical resources required to record surplus stories surrounding the photographs beyond the content of the photograph.[505] Maxwell pointed out the complex role the curator must fulfil when visiting survivor families which itself complicated their approach to their subjects.

> We only had an hour or so window. The main thing we needed was to gain their trust to take their photographs away. We had to demonstrate carefully that we are taking nine prints, and they are these ones and we will bring them back.[506]

The curators wrote notes following all meetings with survivors and their families. These notes were added to the museum's internal database and project files, the latter will become part of the museums' archive.[507] The pressure of time meant that the team prioritised the acquisition of adequate factual information about the photographs. It was a challenging requirement due to the team's interest, both personal and professional, in the memories evoked by photographs. Maxwell described how,

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[505] The Content Team recorded the interviews with two survivors: Anita Lasker-Wallfisch and Eva Clarke.
[506] Interview with Maxwell.
[507] Interview with Talarico.

> We wanted them to speak with us, but we knew it wasn't being recorded. Because there wasn't a formal interview, you wanted to learn about the people in the photographs. Say Hortense Gordon, her younger sister didn't make it out, but she spoke about how close they were growing up [...]. So, you'd listen to that and absorb it. It's very different from doing an oral history where you would want to know a lot more about that. In a way you wanted to be a good listener, but you didn't necessarily open up everything that was offered to you.[508]

Evidently, limited resources reduced the potential to record by audio or video the meanings of private photographs. Curators' choices also reflect the value that was placed on photographic records. Indeed, whilst the curators appreciated the power of photographs to evoke memories, their commitments were primarily directed to a methodological and epistemological framework which valued photographs more for their historical facts represented within them than as sources of mediated memory. Ultimately, loaning photographs without recording stories connected to them subsequently situates photographs to the realm of history and not memory.

The Holocaust Galleries follows a contemporaneous narrative, a working practice adopted by IWM's other exhibitions such as the First and Second World War Galleries.[509] Visitors follow a chronological timeline and are only informed of the events that happened at that point of historic time rather than the events that were going to unfold. For example, visitors encounter Jan Imich's father, Stanislaw Imich, in the first space where the timeframe does not show any

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[508] Ibid.

[509] During the planning stages, the Content Team considered not following this contemporaneous narrative.

content beyond the late 1930s (fig. 72). Visitors are informed about his career, his marriage to Anna Gumplowiz and the birth of their son in 1930. His experience during the war isn't referenced at this point. Furthermore, the photographs are captioned in the present tense without any clear view as to what is to come. It is a practice based on the belief that the future is never clearly written in the past and the present, even if we can make predications these can never be given the status of inevitability.

Figure 72. Three photographs of Stanislaw Imich, first gallery of the Galleries, author's own photo.

One of the guiding questions that presented itself to curators when developing the 2021 Galleries was: 'whose story are we telling?'[510] The curatorial team, led by Bulgin, were determined to align themselves with current Holocaust historiography and museology which privileges an integrated and multi-

[510] Interview with Bulgin, 25 November 2020.

perspective narrative of the Holocaust.[511] What this meant for the curators was integrating Jewish personal experiences and their understanding brought to the events of the Holocaust into the main historical narrative rather than focusing on the top down decision-making practices which influenced such events. Private photographs, treated as a source from the time of production, are seen as key tools for representing a multi-perspective narrative and micro-histories of historical events. The majority of private photographs are displayed in the first space and will be examined in the first subsection. Private photographs are also displayed throughout the Galleries in special display spaces dedicated to examining a family or individual. One specific example of this will explored in the second subsection. Survivors and their (grand)children's testimonies are reserved for the final space, a topic for discussion in the final subsection.[512]

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[511] Bulgin, 'IWM Holocaust Galleries Talk', *British Association for Holocaust Studies* (online), 25 November 2020, accessed 10 September 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KqMCRzgmZJg.
[512] See Appendix 1 and 2 for Galleries maps. Note the titles of individual spaces in the maps were internal working titles for IWM and are not found in the actual Galleries.

Figure 73. 'Presence of Absence' AV in the entrance space, The Galleries, author's own photo.

Upon arriving into the Entrance space of the new Galleries, visitors encounter a large audio-visual screen leaning against the wall (fig. 73). It shows a forty-minute film displaying a montage of urban and rural scenes devoid of people; the location of the scene is stated in the bottom-right corner of the screen. The majority of scenes are from sites of Jewish pre-war life and a few from sites of persecution. The chimes of a zimbalon and birdsong emphasise the absence of humanity. The 2000 Exhibition was criticised for its position within a national military war museum, an effect which, according to the historian and eventual Academic Advisory Board member for The Holocaust Galleries, Tim Cole, positioned the Holocaust as the crime of the Other and the very antithesis of

Britishness.[513] HEPO were aware of the uncomfortable juxtaposition of a museum with displays of large military weapons and machines housing an Exhibition devoted to commemoration, mourning and reflection. Creating a space with portraits of people was their response to this problem allowing visitors to gradually move from the mechanical to the personal.[514] In the 2021 Galleries, landscapes have replaced portraits to fill this transitional space. The use of polychromatic film rather than monochrome photographs aims to remind visitors that the Holocaust happened in 'our world' rather than 'something that happened in the distant past and a version of reality distinct from our own'.[515] The film intends to encourage visitors to identify with Jewish experiences by positioning the camera as a participant in a Jewish story rather than from the viewpoint of a perpetrator or bystander of what unfolds. For example, the film is taken from within a concentration camp rather than from the privileged vantage point of an onlooker looking in.

The film presents the Holocaust as, what Cole argues, a place-making event within the European landscape.[516] As a perpetually actual phenomenon, the Holocaust is presented not so much as history but as memory belonging to the Jews who witnessed it.[517] Entering into the Galleries is not so much a step into the past as a passing into a present-located place, which has been shaped by the past. These places become, what Pierre Nora defines as, *lieux de mémoire*,

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[513] Cole, 'Nativization and Nationalization,' 136; Other scholars examining the Holocaust Exhibition emphasised the nationalistic qualities of the Exhibition, Tony Kushner, 'The Holocaust and the Museum World in Britain: A Study of Ethnography', in *Representing the Holocaust: In Honour of Bryan Burns*, ed. Sue Vice (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2003), 27; Tom Lawson, 'The Holocaust and Colonial Genocide at the Imperial War Museum', in *Britain and the Holocaust: Remembering and Representing War and Genocide*, eds. Caroline Sharples and Olaf Jensen (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 161.
[514] Interview with Taylor.
[515] James Bulgin, 'IWM Holocaust Galleries Talk'.
[516] Tim Cole, *Holocaust Landscapes (*London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016), 8.
[517] Nora, 'Between Memory and History,' 7.

or places where memory, most particularly those of Jewish individuals and communities, is embodied and 'historical continuity persists.'[518]

Furthermore, as *lieux de mémoire,* these sites are invested with a symbolic aura of the presence of absence. The AV represents memory while engaging with absence whilst the following space is concerned with affirming a geographically rooted Jewish presence. This representation of memory in the AV sits in juxtaposition with the following space which aims to historicise Jewish life and experiences.

Before the visitor enters the next space, they read the words of Nathan Grzywacz:

> I want the coming generations
> To remember our time...
> I don't know my fate.
> I don't know whether I will be able
> To tell you what happened later.
>
> Nathan Grzywacz, July 1942

This quote provides clues to two important interpretive elements of the Galleries. Firstly, the contemporaneous nature of the Galleries and secondly, the role of photographs to '*remember* our time'. Implicit in this is the multi-temporal nature of photographs, in that they are a source from that time, but they are also a source of memory, a tool to communicate self or group identity. Private photographs are framed in the entrance space by narratives of memory.

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[518] Ibid.

This complicates their status as historical objects in the first space, subsequently emphasising their temporally fluid propensities. In this subsection, I examine the use of photographs as historical rather than memory objects. I demonstrate how the curators problematised the use of historical sources to encourage visitors to reflectivity on the act of photographs and to develop empathy towards the persecuted.

It is generally agreed amongst scholars that photographs *are* important 'instruments of memory', in both the familial and cultural spheres. [519] It is indeed a phenomenon I have explored in the last four chapters. Despite this, the private photographs in the Galleries are specifically defined as historical sources to understand Jewish experiences. What does this historicising of photographs mean for the collective memory of Jewish life and thus the Holocaust? Arnold de-Simine problematises such a polarization between memory and history recognising that they relate to different forms of knowledge and concepts of temporality. Arnold-de Simine argues that this polarisation of memory and history 'unjustly identifies history with knowledge acquisition and reduces knowledge acquisition to a one-dimensional cognitive process when it is in fact a combination of cognitive and affective processes, just like empathy or indeed memory.'[520]

Despite being used as historical objects, the Content Team has not conceptualised photographs as merely sources of knowledge acquisition. Instead, from the outset, Bulgin was interested in 'how photos are used as an interpretive tool but also as an empathetic tool [...] Or an agent for empathy in

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[519] Marianne Hirsch, 'Projected Memory: Holocaust Photographs in Personal and Public Fantasy', in *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*, eds. Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe and Leo Spitzer, 3-24 (London: University Press of New England, 1999), 10.
[520] Arnold-de Simine, *Mediating Memory*, 17.

Holocaust museum museology and particularly our spaces.'[521] Museums certainly have the potential to create historical empathy in their visitors but the means by and extent to which they do this has been debated.[522] For one, Andrea Liss, when examining photographs used in USHMM, questioned the potential of photographs which reside in the archive as objective historical documents to simultaneously work as empathic markers in exhibition spaces.[523]

It is helpful here to draw on the Social Studies educator Kaya Yilmaz who defines historical empathy as,

> The ability to see and judge the past in its own terms by trying to understand the mentality, frames of reference, beliefs, values, intentions, and actions of historical agents using a variety of historical evidence. Empathy is the skill to re-enact the thought of a historical agent in one's mind or the ability to view the world as it was seen by the people in the past without imposing today's values on the past.[524]

Display and interpretation methods of photographs have the potential to enhance visitors' understanding of mind sets, frames of reference, beliefs, values, intentions, and actions of historical agents. However, the extent to which visitors understand the performativity of photographs in the past and

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[521] Interview with Bulgin, 25 November 2020.
[522] Geerte Savenije and Pieter de Bruijn, 'Historical empathy in a Museum: Uniting Contextualisation and Emotional Engagement', *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 23, no.9 (2017): 832-845; Melanie Innes and Heather Sharp, 'Historical Empathy and Museum Culture', *Journal of Museum Education* 46, no.3 (2021): 307-320.
[523] Liss, *Trespassing through Shadows,* 10.
[524] Kaya Yilmaz, 'Historical Empathy and its Implication for Classroom Practices in Schools', *The History Teacher* 40, no.3 (2007): 331

indeed the present, influences the extent of evoking empathy. I shall now examine if and how such display methods in the first space are conducive to evoking empathy amongst visitors and therefore transforming photographs into the realm of memory.

Upon entering the first space, visitors encounter a text panel entitled 'Jewish Life'. This gallery contains 1,084 photographs representing Jewish life before 1939.[525] The photographs are displayed using five different methods including AV screens showing changing stills, large graphics placed around the space, smaller graphics on wooden shelves around the wall, life-sized images on glass totems, and finally their original sized photographs juxtaposed alongside the glass totems (fig. 74). These photographs historicise Jewish identity and

Figure 74: Totems of Jewish individuals in the foreground with large and small graphics and AV screens in the background, the first gallery, The Galleries, author's own photo.

experiences in a broader, embodied, sensory and disruptive way than was the case in 2000 Exhibition.

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[525] James Bulgin, 'IWM Holocaust THG Talk.'

The cultural historian, Hannah Holtschneider, was the loudest critic of the use of photographs in the 2000 Exhibition. Amongst many of her suggestions for improvement was for IWM to display a greater variety of images of Jews, particularly those taken as part of self-representation of a family or community.[526] She also expressed indignation that photographs were both placed within a perpetrator-led narrative presenting Jews as passive victims and reduced Jewish identification to a binary 'us' and 'them'.[527]

The display of more than a thousand private images and film in the 2021 Galleries goes some way towards addressing her pleas to restore agency to victims. Furthermore, the variety of women, men, girls and boys helps to break through the gender bias in the representation of Jewishness which has tended to privilege Jewish men.[528] Bulgin described how 'we tried to ensure there were representations of different socio-economic groups, families versus individuals versus friendships versus different types of years, different types of experiences.'[529] The opening text in this space describes how Jewish identity is rooted in 'religious beliefs and practices, and a strong sense of community. It increasingly became both a spiritual and cultural identity as individuals, families, and communities began to assert their Jewishness in different ways.' Bulgin expressed how he wanted,

> To ensure people saw Jews as a pluralistic diverse group of people at the start and that they were autonomous and self-defined and not defined through the lens of Nazis.[530]

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[526] Holtschneider, *The Holocaust and Representations of Jews*, 71.
[527] Ibid, 63 and 32
[528] Ibid, 71.
[529] Interview with Bulgin, 11 June 2021.
[530] Ibid.

He differentiates this from the way that Jews were represented in the 2000 Exhibition where,

> Your attention is first drawn to the footage of Wehrmacht in the Soviet Union and then Jewish individuals are in the peripheral vision. You read the text about how the Nazis murdered 6 million Jews but then, you see Jewish people in the corner of the eye, but you immediately just see them as people entirely framed through the lens of victimhood.[531]

In addition, the 2021 Galleries help to de-homogenise Jewish life by captioning the rotating photographs displayed on the screens with locations where they were taken. For Maxwell, it was important to label topographically most of the photographs so that 'people aren't just living in the past'[532], but are physically rooted in space. The Content Team ensured they had photographs from every country and the period prior to that country being occupied or ruled by the Nazis. Locating people in their photographs emphasises the geographical scope of the Holocaust but also highlights that the enforced migration that occurred in the 1930s was yet another chapter in the long history of Jews forced to migrate and 'wander'. By recording the geographical origins of Jewish individuals and groups, IWM has helped to integrate the rich and varied story of Jewish life into the narratives of Jewish forced migration and transmigration. When reflecting on the displaced nature of archives documenting Jewish history, James Jordan et al. Ask, 'how do archives and museums today represent general narratives of migration and transmigration' and 'how can the fragmentary character of such collections be made visible?'[533] However, due

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[531] Ibid.
[532] Interview with Maxwell.
[533] James Jordan, Lisa Leff, and Joachim Schlör eds., 'Jewish Migration and the Archive: Introduction', *Jewish Culture and History* 15 (2014).

to the contemporaneous nature of the Galleries, photographs' captions do not include any details of the archive or private collection from where they were sourced. Valuable though it is the captioning fails to address the nature of photographs as historical objects that have survived a catastrophe but are also markers of Jewish displacement and migration.

The inclusion of photographs from every country effected by Nazi anti-Jewish policies is a curatorial device to represent the scale of the Holocaust. A further device used to represent the enormity of Nazi atrocities has been the assemblage of multiple photographs in a single installation, seen for example in Yad Vashem and USHMM's Tower of Faces. It is a device that has however been criticised for universalising victims of Nazi genocide.[534] Reflecting on these criticisms, Liss comments that USHMM's methodology for the Tower of Faces does not 'admit to the impossibility of comprehending the massive and horrific realities or of confronting the near-obscenity of speaking for others'.[535] For Bulgin and his team, rotating large numbers of photographs on screens aims to challenge any ideas of universalising Jewish experiences and instead suggests the 'infinite complexity of lives and existences and peoples' relatives and their distinctiveness.' Bulgin added 'it's quite clear that their personal photos can never testify to more than a fraction of their reality.'[536]

Here, Bulgin attempts to challenge any notion of photographs asserting 'historical truth'. Indeed, photographs which rotate every twenty seconds aim to 'deny the centrality of any particular photo' and as such, any particular moment to represent Jewish lives.[537] This stands in contrast to the role played

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[534] Greig Crysler and Abidin Kusno, 'Angels in the Temple: The Aesthetic Construction of Citizenship in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum', *Art Journal* (1997): 61.
[535] Liss, *Trespassing Through Shadows*, 50.
[536] Interview with Bulgin, 25 November 2020.
[537] Ibid.

by survivors’ stories in the 2000 Exhibition. For Bardgett, the eighteen survivors’ testimonies played around the exhibition stood ‘for the experiences of the millions of people ill-treated’.[538] Presenting the words of a few as spokespeople for the many comes with a number of ethical considerations, not least the inevitable bias toward narratives of those who survived compared to those who did not.[539] Representations of old or very young people or those with illnesses, disabilities or without the means to escape or survive would be, unsurprisingly, obscured. A collation of a wide selection of photographs drawn from a plurality of demographics can be seen to challenge any biases towards survivors’ stories. Furthermore, photographs understood as acts of performance and self-expression offer the potential to illustrate the ways that Jewish people imagined and made sense of their own lives, divorced as they were from the forthcoming yet uncertain tragedy that was about to unfold before them.

When reflecting on the performativity of photographs, Mieke Bal suggests that it misses its ‘effectivity if the act is not cushioned in a culture that remembers what that act can do.’[540] What does it mean for IWM visitors to look at these photographs[541] and how might visitors' visual literacy impact the effectivity of photographs' performativity? Holtschneider posed these questions when examining the 2000 Exhibition, arguing that its effectiveness relied on the accessibility of the images, their immediacy making decoding and decontextualisation unnecessary.[542] Williams’s question was key for Bulgin when thinking about the use of perpetrator and private photographs. I will now

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[538] Bardgett, ‘The use of Oral History.’
[539] David Cesarani, *The Final Solution: The Fate of the Jews 1933-1949*. (London, Macmillan, 2016): xxvi; Georgio Agamben expresses a similar sentiment in, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* (New York: Zone Books, 2002).
[540] Mieke Bal, ‘Performance and Performativity’, *Exploding Aesthetics* 16 (2001): 110.
[541] Paul Williams, *Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities* (Oxford, Berg, 2007): 53
[542] Holtschneider, *The Holocaust and Representations of Jews*, 61.

examine how several interpretive and design effects encourage visitors to ask the question ‘what does it mean to look?’.

One such effect is the different levels of interpretation offered to perpetrator photographs and private photographs. Perpetrator photographs, which are only displayed beyond the first space, are given detailed captions explaining not only who took the photographs but what they reveal. For example, one photograph captures a group of Jewish adults and children at Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1944, the caption reads:

> These photographs, taken by camp officials in the summer of 1944, document the selection of Hungarian Jews at Auschwitz-Birkenau. They capture the chaos of arrival, the moment of selection and the false calm of the final moments before people entered the gas chambers. They are the only known photographic evidence of this process (fig. 75).

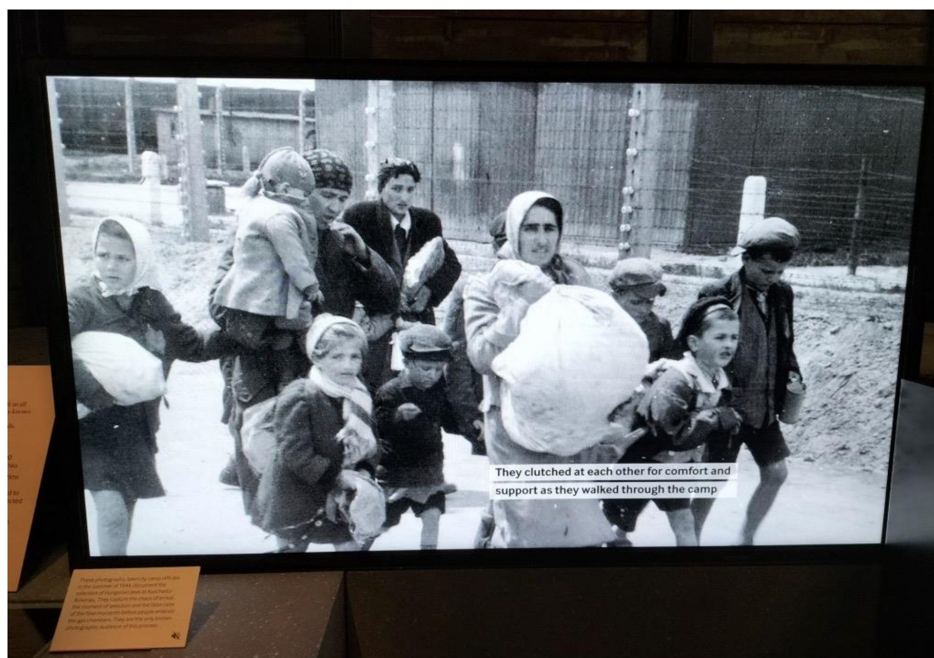

Figure 75: A screen displaying a photograph Capturing the selection of Hungarian Jews at Auschwitz-Birkenau, The Galleries, author’s own photo.

This level of detail and interpretation was not given to private photographs; a dissonance which should be seen less as an idle omission and more out of a respect of a Jewish right to self-expression. The curators refrained from interpreting the private photographs in the light of the conversations that they had with survivors and their families about the photographs. By refusing to overly contextualise private photographs, the Galleries respect Jewish self-expression through photography and appreciates the indeterminate meaning of private photographs.

This is not to say private photographs were not captioned. Indeed, captioning ranged from a description of the content to contextual details again ranging from statements of geographic locations, dates when images were taken to descriptions of the familial or political contexts. The subject of captioning or naming individuals, especially in museums and exhibitions representing genocide is a source of debate amongst scholars in the field. For Liss, 'the importance of giving back names and identities to those who were so horribly defaced in the Holocaust cannot be overestimated.'[543] The historian Susan Crane adds that the walls of unidentified photographs in Yad Vashem and USHMM are offered as testimony as 'a "sense of the past" or a place cumulatively rather than individually, so personal identities are elided, even when the memory of those people is being evoked.'[544] Holtschneider's criticism of the 2000 Exhibition's practice of not identifying the private photographs in the opening space is pertinent here. She argues that photographs require context to be intelligible. She suggests that the uncaptioned photographs in the opening space provided an emotional background, whereby unidentified victims stood in for the collectivity of those who were murdered.[545] The 2021

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543 Liss, *Trespassing the Shadows,* 4.
544 Susan Crane, 'Photographs at/of/and Museums', in *The Handbook of Photography Studies*, ed. Gil Pasternak, 493-513, 508.
545 Holtschneider, *The Holocaust and Representations of Jews*, 58-60.

Galleries' different layers of captioning respond to Holtschneider's complaints whilst respecting the Jewish right to self-expression and the reality of archives which rarely provide a complete interpretation.

It is however important to consider the dangers of contextualising private photographs. Frank Ankersmit contends that the urge to contextualise photographs can drain the object or subject of content so that 'the thing itself ... Will be left with little to say, emptied of other possible contents.'[546] In a similar vein, Edwards points to the limiting effect of contextualising photographs. She argues that due to the fluid and temporally indeterminate nature of photographs, 'overly inflexible, reifying or unconsidered ideas of context can overdetermine photographs, for instance, in cases where ideological concerns are assumed while others overlooked.'

Edwards argues that 'constructing a context can too easily be grounded in assumptions – rather than questions it raises'.[547] Evidently, not interpreting photos is a careful approach from the Galleries' curators to the multifaceted meaning of images and the desire not to speak for them or the people they capture. Edwards argues that photographs' uniqueness as a historical source means that they require context to build an explanatory hypothesis for ideas and materials, but they also challenge how context is thought about.[548] The constrained use of interpretation allows visitors to look more closely at the source and to ask questions about what they see rather than rely on a curators' interpretation which is often seen as authoritative.

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[546] Frank Ankersmit, *Sublime Historical Experience* (Stanford CA: Standford University Press, 2005), 279.
[547] Elizabeth Edwards, *Photographs and the Practice of History*: *A Short Primer* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), 83.
[548] Ibid, 84.

Where some context is provided, however, visitors can juxtapose the limited text and image, thus offering the potential to question the role of images to symbolise and illustrate. For example, a photograph of two men seated on a hill looking at one another is identified as 'Julius Siegel with his son Uri in Palestine, 1937' is accompanied by a longer caption which explains that 'he and his family left Germany for Palestine in 1934 (fig. 76). Palestine, then under British control was a desirable destination for German Jews. However, tighter restrictions on immigration were soon introduced.' The text highlights the hostility and subsequent flight from Nazi rule that Siegel experienced, whereas the image captures a near bucolic existence in a secure haven well away from the ravages of persecution. This dissonance between text and image certainly highlights the asymmetry between the two media and could encourage visitors to reflect on the potential of photographs to offer 'truth'.

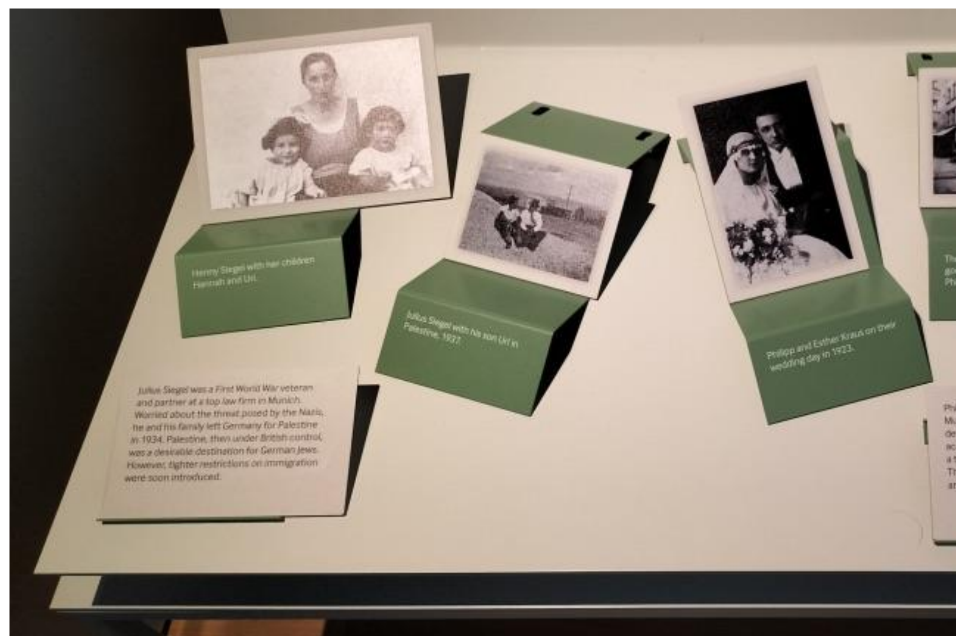

Figure 76. A display of photographs of the Siegel family, The Galleries, author's own photo.

What might visitors deduce from this representation of Jewish life through the visual? Photographs in the 2021 Galleries are seen as potent tools for communicating the mundanity of everyday life, thus humanising victims, with one HET youth ambassador reflecting:

> Pictures of people doing things, especially personal to them, are good. It emphasises that they're people, and links them to us, as well as making them important and giving them the agency rather than just providing us with passive martyrs.[549]

Another HET youth ambassador commented that, 'family photos and photos of holidays demonstrate everyday life for the victims. This is important in humanising the victims of the Holocaust.'[550] Here, photographs are seen as transparent windows onto a world not very different from our own. Reflecting on the relationship between photography and historical method, history and memory, Edwards asks, 'is the fragmentary, still, unstable image capable of carrying historical information, importance or even relevance?'[551] The HET youth ambassadors' responses suggest that photographs carry historical information about how Jews spent their time and it is in *the act of doing things* that gives them agency. The ambassadors, however, did not comment on the complex, mediated and often contradictory position of photographs as a historical source nor on *the act of self-expression* through photography which also gives Jews agency. I make this point while aware of the limitations of the research evaluation since it only posed one question However, the difference between the two acts is worth discussing. The photo-theorist Ariella Azoulay,

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[549] Anonymous HET ambassador, Donkey Field Participant Workshop Answers, (Internal document), 6 December 2021.
[550] Ibid.
[551] Edwards, 'Photography and the Business of Doing History,' 172.

when reflecting on photographs in Israeli archives of Palestinians during the Arab-Israeli War of 1948, talks about a 'civil contract of photography' whereby viewers are called upon to ponder their own position or situation which in turn affects the images' impact. It invites viewers to thoughtfully consider what is shown.[552] A photograph can serve as a unique tool of record, information, and study yet it will always remain for us the viewer, to secure its place as an agent of history. Despite the HET ambassadors' responses, Bulgin's design and interpretive methods surrounding photographs calls visitors into this 'civil contract of photography' to reflect on photographs as mediated windows on the world.

The first way that Bulgin problematised the use of photographs as historical sources was by rotating photographs on audio-visual screens, a technique that suggests or hints at the inadequacy of photographs to capture reality: an inadequacy which is mirrored by the fleetingness of each image on the screen. This was something I frustratingly experienced when I attempted to capture by camera some of the photographs I have discussed in this thesis. Ephemeral images do not lend themselves to being captured by an amateur photographer, however well meaning. My innocent desire to anchor a photograph in the moment, was repeatedly frustrated and I felt the unapologetic resistance of each image to become fixed and certain. Witnessing photographs vanish before me only emphasised their transience and ultimate unknowability. Themes of absence, disappearance and presence evoke a Barthesian view that photographs represent loss and restate the trope of the disappeared 'authentic'.[553] This was something of which Bulgin was mindful when designing the digital screens, how it moved from one image to another. At one point in

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[552] Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography*, trans. Rela Mazali and Ruvik Danieli (New York: Zone Books, 2008), 167-69.
[553] Edwards, *Raw Histories,* 11.

the design process, the screen dipped to white during the transition which Bulgin described as 'a heavy-handed suggestion that the individuals are fading to white, it's like obliteration.'[554] Instead, the screens switch one photo to another without any sense of fading or emptiness. The rotating photographs are a technological device not solely to represent individuals but also to invite reflection on the nature of photography.

A fixed image of an Italian couple holding a camera captioned 'Guido takes a self-portrait with his wife Liel at home [...]' also invites visitors to reflect on the qualities of agency when taking photographs (fig. 77). Bulgin described it as 'a 1930s selfie. But it just means that is what the visitor sees when they first move in, is someone pointing a camera at them like a camera is an essential part of this thing.'[555] This invitation for visitors to consider the relationship between photographer and object is repeated in another photograph on display later in the Galleries. The photograph is by an amateur photographer, Zvi Kadushin (later George Kadish), in which his shadow appears in the corner of the image (fig. 78). The text explains that 'such photography was prohibited and punishable by death.' It visually captures the agency inherent in the act of photographing whilst the text highlights the dangerous act of photography itself.

[554] Interview with Bulgin, 25 November 2020.
[555] Ibid.

Figure 77. Photograph of Giudo Nacamu taking a self-portrait with his wife Lisl at home in Milan, Italy, The Galleries, author's own photo.

Figure 78. Photograph by Zvi Kadushin, The Galleries, author's own photo.

In addition, the display and interpretation of the 'The Sonderkommando photographs' near the end of the 2021 Galleries encourages visitors to be affected by more than the content of the photograph (fig. 79). The caption begins, 'these four photographs were taken in secret by Alberto Errera, a member of the Sonderkommando at Auschwitz-Birkenau. They were intended to provide evidence of the murders at the camp.' Indeed, as an act of Jewish witnessing, it is an act of agency. Dan Stone, chair of the Academic Advisory Board for the 2021 Galleries, encouraged Bulgin to include all four photographs rather than do what publishers and curators often do by removing the last but essential photograph.[556] This sequence of photographs, are according to Stone, harrowing 'not only because of their content, but also because of the extreme difficulties involved in taking them, smuggling the film out of the camp, and having them developed in Kraków.'[557] The last photograph in the sequence which displays nothingness, is even more poignant as it begs the questions, 'how did it come to be like this?'.

[556] Ibid; Dan Stone, 'The Sonderkommando Photographs', *Jewish Social Studies* 7, no. 3 (2001): 137.
[557] Stone, 'The Sonderkommando Photographs,' 132.

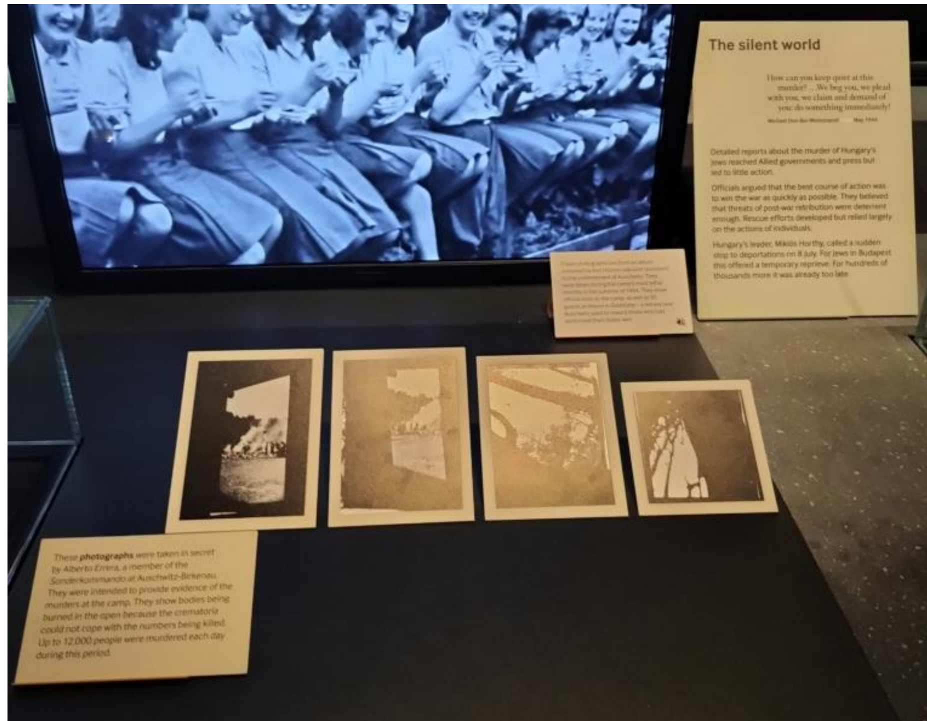

Figure 79. Four photographs of the Sonderkommando, The Galleries, author's own photo.

The sequence of photographs was displayed in the Auschwitz Museum without any historical information with the sole intention of shocking viewers.[558] The 2021 Galleries, however, note that these photographs were taken in secret to evidence the horrors that they convey, as such photographs do more than just shock. As John Tagg argues, the causative link between the indexical nature of the photographs is not separable from the 'technical, cultural and historical process(es) [...] (that) produce a new reality.'[559] The 'new reality' refers to the paper image. The caption and the inclusion of the fourth photograph alerts visitors to some of the technical, cultural and historical processes by which

[558] Stone, 'The Sonderkommando Photographs', 141.
[559] John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation*: Essays *on Photographies and Histories* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1988), 3.

these photographs were taken. The display of these photographs, with their messiness, black spaces and suggestions of voyeurism helps visitors to see photographs not as a 'magical "emanation" but a material product of a material apparatus set to work in specific contexts, by specific forces, for more or less defined purposes.'[560]

Stone builds on Tagg's view on photographs to argue that 'only with some historical information surrounding the production of the photographs, combined with an awareness of our cultural response to mass-murder [...] Can we formulate a serious response to the Sonderkommando photographs.'[561] It is perhaps this combination of information and awareness that helps visitors formulate serious responses to private photographs. An awareness not so much of our cultural response to mass murder, but moreover of Jewish identity and history and thus the specific contexts and forces in which photographs were taken. These invitations to self-reflect and considering one's own positionality are important to engender historical empathy.[562]

Private photographs provide invaluable windows into Jewish self-expressions, subjective realities and experiences. They can be fruitful but are nevertheless complex and unpredictable. Indeed, I have encountered moments when photographs have evoked surprising recollections for those connected to them, recollections that in some instances seem tenuously supported by their visual content. Furthermore, for survivors and their children, the content of the photograph is sometimes at odds with their (post)memories, as such producing discomposure, a form of personal dissonance.[563] Indeed, photographs are both

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[560] John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation*, 3.
[561] Stone, The Sonderkommando Photographs', 133-34.
[562] Maria Grever, Pieter de Bruijn and Carla van Boztel, 'Negotiating Historical Distance: or, How to Deal with the Past as a Foreign Country in Heritage Education', *Pedagogica Historica* 47, no.6 (2012): 886
[563] Summerfield, 'Culture and Composure.'

historical sources and vessels of memory providing both clues to what has gone before and reflections of the past in the present.

The Galleries tend not to highlight the function of photographs as memory objects, thus limiting the potential for photographs to provoke deeper reflective enquiry into the nature of history and memory. It thus impedes an exploration into an individual, familial and collective understanding brought to the events of the Holocaust. Despite this, I add that their sometimes-ambivalent presence in the Galleries creates a sense of postmemory, which creates a helpful metonymic experience of the past in the present.

Postmemory, Hirsch reminds us, 'is not an identity position, but a space of remembrance, more broadly available through cultural and public, and not merely individual and personal, acts of remembrance, identification, and projection'.[564] She also believes that photographs are highly significant guardians and generators of postmemory. How can and how does IWM transmit the experience of Jewish life to those who had no direct experience of it? With the passing away of survivors, this is a growing conversation among museum professionals, with numerous possibilities created by the increased efforts to record survivors' testimonies and lately using technology to survivors' holograms.[565]

Liss sees the accumulation of photographs in USHMM's 'Tower of Faces' as clarity of the community and a sombreness both of which ultimately lead to

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[564] Hirsch, 'Projected Memory,' 9.
[565] 'The Forever Project' at the National Holocaust Centre and Museum, Newark, England and 'New Dimensions in Technology' at the Shoah Foundation, California both use holograms of survivors to allow younger generations to interact with Holocaust survivors, Corey Kai Nelson Schultz, 'Creating the "Virtual" Witness: the Limits of Empathy', *Museum Management and Curatorship* (2021): 1-16.

muteness.[566] It is not only the accumulation of large numbers of photographs in the first space in the 2021 Galleries which is significant here, but the variety of design and interpretation lent to them. Visitors to the Galleries meet photographs in a variety of formats, as life-sized images, as evanescent images on screens, as snapshot graphics laid down on surfaces. Some are captioned with dates, some with locations and others are identified for the people or events captured in them. What is striking about this public space and indeed public encounter with photographs is its correlation with familial spaces and encounters within the private spheres.

Liss argues that 'if the images cannot tell the "full" story, they can be retrieved to work as traces of both lived and projected postmemory.'[567] Here Liss alludes to the frustrating effect of looking at photographs having as they do a tendency to be recognisable yet incomprehensible, to represent identification yet alterity. Frustration as an emotion or cognitive response is certainly not a traditional aim of historians nor curators. Yet Bulgin believes it to be 'not a bad thing.' He predicts that a lot of visitors will find it frustrating when visitors do not find out what happens to individuals when they first meet them in the first gallery space. He argues 'that frustration is a useful thing to say we're talking about people's lives here and we shouldn't be reducing them to a simple detail.'[568]

Indeed, it is this frustration at looking, not looking, knowing and not knowing which characterises postmemory. Hirsch describes how children of survivors had to live with 'broken, forestalled viewing relations' where stories were partially told, silences separated generations and images were obsessively

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[566] Liss, *Trespassing Through Shadows,* 52.
[567] Liss, *Trespassing through Shadows,* 124.
[568] Interview with Bulgin, 11 June 2021.

reviewed.[569] This description draws many parallels with the viewing relations between visitors and photographs in the first space. The materialisation, disappearance and repetition of photographs which seldom provide 'full stories' creates a rational sense of knowing and not knowing. The life-sized totems, however, produce an affective sense of knowing and not knowing. They allow visitors to be at eye-level with Jewish individuals and then with Nazi officials later in the Galleries. Bringing the whole body into the frame moves away from the 2000 Exhibition and USHMM's focus on the face.[570] Scholars have drawn on the French Philosopher, Emmanuel Levinas's concept of the Other to discuss affect, photographs and Holocaust museums.[571] Levinas argued that one can appreciate the 'Other through the very alterity or wholeness as a person and not via an aesthetic appreciation of their features or voice.'[572] The encounter with the 'wholeness' of the individual is what is most striking about the glass totems.

A familiarity yet strangeness abounds from the photograph which is at once life-sized but inanimate. Indeed, one HET ambassador reflected how the 'life-size pictures are very powerful as they humanise the person as if they're standing in front of you'.[573] This HET ambassador experienced a powerful sense of physical encounter between themselves and the Other. Again, photographs have the potential to create an emotional connection the person through its familiarity and a sense of strangeness as a one-dimensional inanimate object. This disequilibrium works as a trace of both lived and projected postmemory.

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[569] Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*, 120-21.
[570] Liss, *Trespassing through Shadows*, 74.
[571] Steven Cooke and Donna-Lee Frieze, 'Affect and the Politics of Testimony in Holocaust Museums', in *Heritage, Affect and Emotion,* eds. Divya Tolia-Kelly, Emma Waterton, Steve Watson, 75-91 (London: Routledge, 2016).
[572] Emmanuel Levinas and Solomon Malka, 'Interview with Salmon Malka', in *Is it Righteous to be? Interviews with Emanuel Levinas*, ed. James Robins, 93–102 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984), 48.
[573] Anonymous HET ambassador, Donkey Field Participant Workshop Answers.

Much consideration has been paid to the design and display of private photographs. Consequently, the galleries do not simply represent Jewish experiences, but also evoke for visitors the potency, frustration, incompleteness and strange familiarity that accompanies the attempts to access the past through photographs.

Part Two – Special Display Cases

An examination of the display of Neumeyers in the new Galleries demonstrates how the Content Team worked with and represented individuals and their family story more comprehensively than in the first space. The Neumeyers are one of three families given a specific display treatment introduced by a text panel entitled 'Seeking Sanctuary.' The display contains Ruth's photograph album, letters from Vera to the Paish's, the family who sponsored Ruth and Raimund to come to England, silver cutlery, some music scores, Ruth's drawing, her teddy bear and dressing gown (fig. 80). All three families have a large piece of white fabric on which a photograph is printed. The Content Team chose to use a photograph of Ruth, Raimund, Vera and Hans walking in the Alps.

Figure 80. Display case representing Ruth Locke's family, The Galleries, author's own photo.

Talarico, who began the project as a curator and worked with Tim Locke, reflected on the importance of Tim’s extensive knowledge of his family for their work:

> It allowed us to add detail to our interpretation which is almost impossible to find, partly because of the nature of our subject but some of these personal familial details, that are so intimate within families. This is the kind of stuff you get from diaries which are captured in historical records. Tim’s ability, not that just what he knew, but he provided visual references for so much of that, allowed us to really enrichen

our interpretation in a way that is almost impossible in other circumstances.[574]

Talarico demonstrates the importance of familial communicative memory in the Galleries' curatorial practice. She highlights that Tim's extensive knowledge about his family provided a unique understanding of historical objects. This emphasises two points. Firstly, the interdependence of communicative and cultural memory which encourage each other. Tim's and Stephen's research is motivated by a public and more pertinently, the museum's interest, in the Neumeyers's story. The museum's work is simultaneously shaped by the brothers' research. This alludes to what the historian Charles Maier meant when he wrote 'memory motivates historical activity; historical research utilizes memory'.[575] Secondly, Talarico highlights the team's focus on intimate family details, a focus which is facilitated by family memory work. This co-curation provides a context to help explain the bolstering of ideology of the family in many of the display cases.

The design treatment of the Locke's photographs, particularly the juxtaposition of text and image bolster Hirsch's affiliative gaze. Above the photograph of the Neumeyers in the Alps is an extract from a letter sent in June 1939 by Vera to Bea Paish who had sponsored Ruth and Raimund to come to England. It reads, 'I miss them greatly, but please do not tell them that as I do not want to effect them with matters that cannot be altered for the moment' (fig. 81). The words resonate with a sense of loss, fear, uncertainty and a mother's protection for her children. The peace, happiness and affection represented in the photograph is tainted by the profound sense of loss expressed in the letter highlighting as it does the cruel familial separation because of British foreign

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[574] Interview with Talarico.

[575] Charles Maier, 'A Surfeit of Memory? Reflections on History, Melancholy and Denial', *History and Memory* 5, no.3 (1993): 143.

policy. Indeed, a well-crafted juxtaposition distracts us from a traditional cultural memory which paints Britain as redemptive for hosting Kindertransportees, an image symbolised by suitcases, to a familial narrative of breakup and loss. In doing so it reframes the Kindertransport from a nationalistic narrative into a familial one.

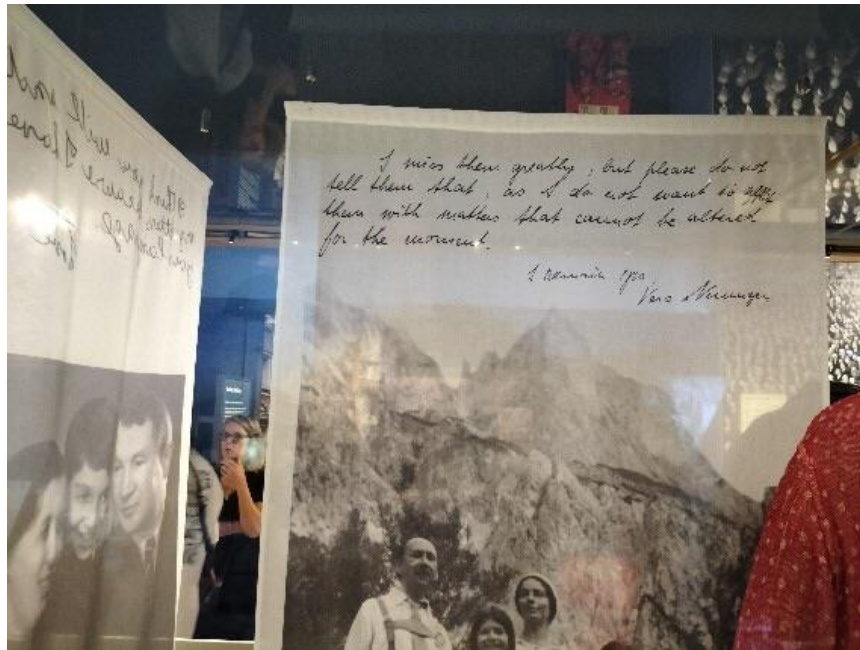

Figure 81. Fabric displaying a photograph of the Neumeyer family in the Alps, The Galleries, author's own photo.

Furthermore, the pairing of the text and image highlights the vulnerability of the family in the face of the Holocaust, a point Hirsch notes when reflecting on the relationship between domestic and atrocity photographs in USHMM. She argues that by emphasising what has been lost and the survival of its traces (i.e. the institution of the family) the Tower of Faces provokes an empathetic investment in that institution.[576] The Neumeyer photograph itself is not

[576] Hirsch, *Family Frames*, 23.

captioned; its meaning is left to be mediated through the letter. The main caption however mentions 'Vera organises a family holiday in Italy in the summer of 1938', an event with which the photograph hanging above it may be associated. This visual symbiosis of text and photographic conventions is in opposition with the historical reality of this event. As discussed in chapter one, Hans was not with the family in Italy in 1938 as he was at the time in Berlin attempting to obtain a visa. This came to Tim's attention relatively recently in the development of the new Galleries therefore it is unfair to accuse the Content Team of misinformation. What this misconfiguration does suggest, however, is that the Neumeyer family's history has been de-specified in favour of an affiliation with the ideology of the family.

The potential for this photograph and indeed photographs in general to stand for the ideology of the family is recognised by Bulgin when he reflects,

> The photos just necessarily assume this metonymic function despite whatever you want to do problematise that. And I don't necessarily think that is a problem. They just definitely stand for a family, a happy family in harmony looking to a future together.[577]

The Alps photograph is no longer seen as an image solely of that time but a fluid and temporally indeterminate object. Bulgin's view on the photograph seems to take into account the familial meaning imbued in it by both Ruth and her sons, a photograph which captured and even froze a happier time of family cohesion. Despite formally positioned as a historical object, it appears that it

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[577] Interview with Bulgin, 25 November 2020.

has slipped into the realm of memory, a slippage about which Bulgin does not seem concerned.

Crownshaw argues in his problematisation of Hirsch's concept of postmemory, that despite her best intentions, Hirsch 'universalizes and de-specifies the Jewish victim and his or her familial context.'[578] He continues that the despecification of the images under the regime of postmemory effectively reinstates them back in the nationalist narrative that effaces the particularity of Jewish identity,'[579] a point with which I disagree. For Jan Imich, Esther Brunstein, and Ruth Locke, the 'myth of the family' is invariably key to how they understand and communicate their photographs. While it may be true that the 2021 Galleries' interpretation does not intentionally support the 'myth of the family', it does however sustain an ideology closely aligned to this myth through its use of photographs, a practice that is clearly in sympathy with the near veneration I viewed with survivors and their families.

Part Three – The Closing Space

'Even as we find ourselves in a time obsessed with collecting and preserving, Holtschneider reminds us 'that access to "the past" is always curated and never direct.'[580] These are two important aspects of cultural memory which are emphasised in the Galleries' final space both using video testimonies and a large AV installation. The entrance and closing spaces bookend the Galleries with spaces of memory. The penultimate space is introduced by a text panel entitled 'Afterwards'. The title alludes to what Jewish internees referred to in the final year in the camps as the 'mythical time afterwards'[581], resonating their

[578] Crownshaw, 'Photography and Memory in Holocaust Museums,' 189.
[579] Ibid, 189.
[580] Holtschneider, *The Holocaust and Representations of Jews*, 337.
[581] Interview with Bulgin, 11 June 2021.

hope for a future life after the camps tainted by a fear that their dreams may never be realised. This notion of post liberation catharsis was recognised in both the 2000 Holocaust Exhibition and USHMM's representation of the Holocaust and led to Holtschneider suggesting that the 2000 exhibition mimicked a Greek tragedy reaching a cathartic and redemptive conclusion.[582] The 2021 Galleries resists such a finale, instead framing the Holocaust as an inconclusive or open event. The Galleries move away from a nationalistic representation towards a familial one with the final space returning to the domestic, to inherited memory and trauma, and the meaning of survival and loss within the specifically familial sphere. This 'myth' of an 'afterwards' is confirmed by the final space which explores the challenging legacies of the Holocaust.

Bulgin explained how the Content Team 'didn't want to give our narrative a happy ending, which I think a lot of people feel obliged to do.'[583] By resisting a sense of closure or a happy ending, he endorses a postmodern perspective that 'consciously warn(s) against the presumption that history can be comprehensively narrated.'[584] Bulgin achieved this in two distinct ways. Firstly, by including testimonies of survivors' children and grandchildren and secondly through an AV installation which focuses on the mediation of history through the archive.

Friedländer applied Freud's psychoanalytical term 'working through' to the task of the historian working on the Holocaust. Similar to the historian, the task of the museum curator must 'keep some measure of balance between the

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[582] Hannah Holtschneider, 'Holocaust Representation in the Imperial War Museum, 2000-2020', in *The Palgrave Handbook of Britain and the Holocaust*, eds. Tom Lawson and Andy Pearce, 389-404 (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 400-401.
[583] Interview with Bulgin, 25 November 2021.
[584] Liss, *Trespassing Through Shadows,* 119.

emotion recurrently breaking through the "protective shield" and numbness that protects this very shield.'[585] Friedländer describes 'working through' as, 'the imperative of rendering as truthful an account as documents and testimonials will allow, *without giving in to the temptation of closure.* Closure in this case would represent an obvious avoidance of what remains indeterminate, elusive and opaque.'[586] This truism is well displayed in the final space which highlights the inconclusiveness of the sources that construct its history in both the private and public spheres.

Visitors move from a space focused on post-war trials into the closing space. On the right-hand wall are two screens showing video testimonies of (great) (grand) children of survivors (fig. 82). To their right are benches for visitors to sit on. Behind these are three screens displaying survivors' testimonies recorded by the museum in the 1990s (fig. 83).[587] Unlike in the 2000 Exhibition, the testimonies have been left unedited. As a consequence, Willmott described that 'people can dip in and out, they won't watch it all, but we thought it was important that the spine of the voice was left as their own rather than having any exterior force selecting bits from it to fit a point.'[588] Admittedly, survivors' testimonies can never be entirely free from narrative constructions and constrictions determined by both interviewer and interviewee.[589] However, leaving them unedited pays respect to Friedlander's plea to create as 'truthful an account as documents and testimonials will allow'.

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[585] Saul Friedländer, 'Trauma, Transference and "Working Through" in Writing the History of the "Shoah"', *History and Memory* 4, no.1 (1992): 52.
[586] Ibid.
[587] Steffi de Jong, *The Witness as Object*, 87-90.
[588] Interview with Willmott.
[589] Steffi de Jong, *The Witness as Object*, 99-100.

Figure 82. AV screen displaying interviews with children and grandchildren of survivors, positioned on the right-hand side wall as visitors enter the closing space of the Galleries, author's own photo.

Figure 83. The closing space of the Galleries with survivor video testimonies far left and right and Pro-43 in the middle, author's own photo.

The video testimonies of children or (great)grandchildren of survivors is a novel feature of the 2021 Galleries compared to the previous Exhibition and one that most supports Friedländer's appeal. Liss claims that incorporating voices of children or grandchildren of survivors helps to 'acknowledge that the museum's presentations of history, like the artists' projects, are but tentative representations neither can claim to be comprehensive or comprehensible accounts of the events.'[590] Relatives of twelve Holocaust survivors were video interviewed for the Galleries. The interviews were conducted by Sarah Gudgin, a freelance oral historian. They were recorded in the entrance space of the Galleries. The interviewees therefore sit in front of the AV screen which roots the past in the physicality of the present. It is an interesting positioning since it confuses any notion of a linear chronology and positions the second generation within the realm of memory and also as a witness to history.

There is one particularly poignant moment during the video interview with the Locke brothers which captures this sense of incompleteness of the past in the present that the Content Team wanted to communicate. The middle son, Nicolas tells how when living in New York he befriended a Jewish decorator and Holocaust survivor called Morris. As they spent time together, Morris slowly revealed parts of his past. Morris's family was unwelcoming to Nicolas, a reason for which Nicolas speculates was because Morris was sharing aspects of the past with him rather than with his own family. Nicolas recognised that he was seeking information and affection from Morris that he had been denied by his mother. The interviewee, Sarah, then asked Tim and Stephen if they wanted to respond, to which Tim fumbled, 'no, not yet, no' and added, 'I had not heard that story at all' (fig. 84).[591]

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[590] Liss, *Trespassing Through Shadows,* 166.
[591] 'Interview with Stephen, Nic and Tim Locke', online, *Lewes HMD*, accessed 3 September 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HrJG2DKF64o,

Figure 84. Video interview with Nicolas (left), Tim and Stephen Locke, closing space of the Galleries, author's own photo.

The collection of video testimonies for the 2000 Exhibition and Yad Vashem amongst others, has been seen as an 'attempt to save for the future the present memorial culture, with its focus on the individual and its quasi-sacral treatment of witnesses to future.'[592] Yet the inclusion of other generations' testimonies complicates this matter. Interviews of one, two or three family members moves the focus from the individual and onto the familial. A visitor does not have to watch the testimonies for long to realise that survivors' children suffered due to their parents' experience of trauma, and feelings of shame, guilt, grief and other complex emotions. It is also important, as De Jong suggests, to ask whether in the present memorial culture 'future generations are supposed to remember in the same way as the current one'.[593] Do second generation voices complicate what future generations are supposed to remember? A focus on the

[592] Steffi de Jong, *The Witness as Object*, 89.
[593] Ibid.

war years, as so many survivor testimonies do, overlooks a significant aspect of survivors' experience: surviving survival.

The revelation that occurred during the Locke brothers' interview demonstrates that communicative memory continues to develop in the present. It also occurred within a context of the production of cultural memory. De Jong argues that since the introduction of video testimonies into museums, the 'relationship between cultural memory and communicative memory as presented by Jan and Aleida Assmann has been turned upside down.' She suggests with the inclusion of second-generation testimonies, communicative memory now *transforms into* rather than *leads onto* cultural memory.[594] Thus signalling the past as "mnemohistory." In Aleida Assmann's explanation of the term, she argues that historical scholarship depends on memory for meaning and relevance. Likewise, the representation of the Holocaust in the Galleries depends on survivors' and second-generation's memories for meaning and relevance.[595] It is important therefore not to conflate the two but to analyse their mutual interaction. I suggest that this has been achieved in the closing space where visitors transition from the presentation of the history of the Holocaust in earlier spaces to the final space of reflection. Jan Assmann adds, 'while the task of traditional historical scholarship and museum practice is to separate memory (the mythical elements) from history (the factual truth), it is the task of mnemohistory to analyse the mythical elements' and reveal their hidden agenda.[596] Indeed, second-generation testimonies, with their revelatory tendencies about their parents' struggles and the haunting of the past in the present act as mnemohistory.

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[594] Ibid, 15-16.
[595] Assmann, 'Transformations Between History and Memory', 63.
[596] Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian, The Memory of Egypt in Western* Monotheism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 10.

Modern memory, Nora argues, is primarily archival.[597] By this she means that the growth of archives signals a loss of internal subjective memory and an increased reliance on external forms of memory storage. The archive subsequently promises an accessible and comprehensive recording of the past.[598] To a certain extent, the final gallery challenges this view of modern memory by simply disempowering the archive as a comprehensive recorder of the past. The installation in the closing space helps remind us of Holtschneider's argument that access to the past is curated and is not direct, since it is often formed from private collections. The installation, referred to as 'Pro-43' by the curators, comprises a large AV screen leaning against the back wall.[599] The screen displays a large grid of tiny squares, some filled with photographs or text content, while others are empty (fig. 85). In an instant, the screen zooms in on a square. A name appears 'Karl Bettelheim' with his birth date. More fragments gradually appear: his identity paper used in 1942; followed by boxes of text revealing more about Bettelheim's life (fig. 86). Lastly, a photograph of Bettelheim as an elderly man seated in an armchair in what seems to be his living room appears on the screen. The screen then returns to the grid before zooming in on another individual's story. Bulgin describes the intention behind the installation:

> The point was to try and make sure that people left the space understanding that behind each object or quote, or anything, there is a whole life. That life is composed of loads of different elements. [...] We wanted to be really clear that this isn't a timeline of a complete narrative, but it's just details we have,

[597] Nora, 'Between Memory and History,' 13.
[598] Ibid.
[599] The installation's title was not revealed in the galleries and only referred to this internally by the Content Team.

either details they wanted to express or details we were able to research.[600]

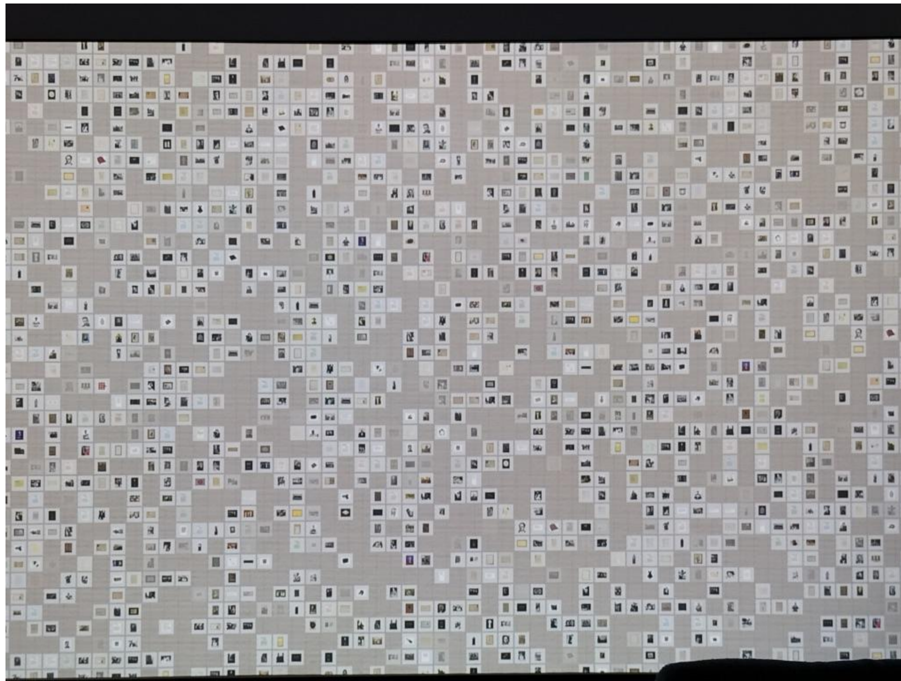

Figure 85. The 'Home' screen of the AV, closing space of the Galleries, author's own photo.

[600] Interview with Bulgin, 11 June 2021.

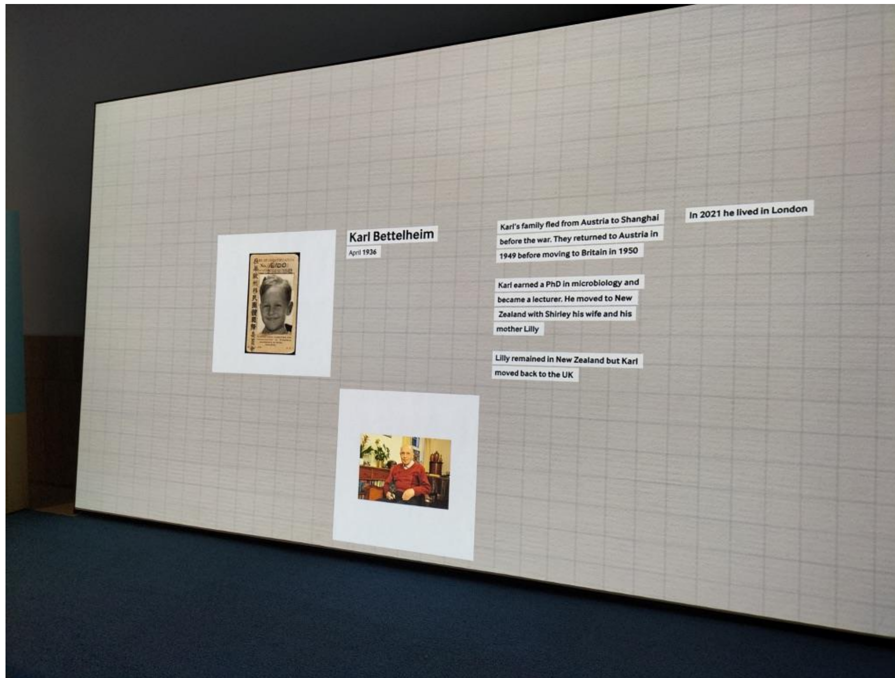

Figure 86. Pro-43 displaying fragments of Karl Bettelheim's story, closing space of the Galleries, author's own photo.

Pro-43 is a response to the inevitable frustration felt by many visitors caused by not knowing what happened to the people represented earlier in the Galleries. The installation links the individuals with the archive by representing whatever objects/quote/film/image etc. Is displayed in the Galleries. For example, Bettelheim's identity paper is on display in an earlier space in in Galleries. Addressing this are the concerns of the photography scholar, Ulrich Baer who worries that images reproduced in museums and archives falsely 'represent the past as fully retrievable (as simply a matter of searching the archive), instead of situating us vis-à-vis the intangible presence of an absence.'[601] Although talking about atrocity images, Baer's concerns are relevant here. The installation reflects Baer's concerns through its clear demonstration of the incomplete

[601] Ulrich Baer, *Spectral Evidence: The Photography of Trauma* (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2002), 7.

nature of records and archive. In the same way not all of the squares on the installation contain as much detail as that on Bettelheim. Some contain a single fragment: a hint to absence of a record or of a person. The installation's caption helps elucidate this point by reading:

> The information it contains is drawn from international sources available to the project's researchers at that time. It is likely that as the historic record continues to evolve, new details will become available. Every attempt was made to contact relatives, where relatives were known.

Indeed, the caption frames the representation of the past as mediated, fragmented and evolving. Central to this framing is the role of the archive. Bulgin noted how 'we decided to be quite explicit about the fact, that peoples' personal belongings have now become museum objects.'[602]

As Richard Cox and others examining the nature of archives argue, what belongs in the archive is determined by what holds 'historical value' by family members and archive policies.[603] In the case of IWM, the relationships between curators and survivors and their families are key players in mediating the past. Dora Osborne, in her examination of post-Holocaust archives in Germany, claims that archives retain considerable political power through their selection of objects to archive and display. Highlighting the reciprocal and dialogical relationships which help build museum archives and displays as well as the

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[602] Interview with Bulgin, 25 November 2020.

[603] Richard Cox, *No Innocent Deposits: Forming Archives by Rethinking Appraisal* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2004), 343; Atina Grossmann 'Versions of Home', *New German Critique* 90, no. 3 (2003): 98, and Leora Auslander, 'Archiving a Life: Post-Shoah Paradoxes of Memory Legacies', in *Unsettling Histories*, ed. Alf Lüdtke and Sebastian Jobs, 127–47 (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2010), 131; Janina Struk, *Photographing the Holocaust*, 194-214, Helen Freshwater, 'The Allure of the Archive', *Poetics Today* 24, no. 4 (2003): 739.

systems of knowledge production and reproduction helps enhance Bulgin's postmodern approach of transparent curation. Moreover, the inclusion of different generations' voices in the video testimonies highlights that making sense of the past and indeed representing history is a social and cultural practice.

Beyond the familial nature of memory formation, the Pro-43 caption highlights the international collaboration that facilitated the development of the Galleries and Holocaust museology and scholarship. Particularly apposite here is the highlighting of what Sharon Macdonald has called 'the global assemblage' of heritage where 'what happens locally [...] Does so in multiple interactions with various elsewhere- embodied in peoples, practices and technologies.'[604] It is also in sympathy with recent movements in cultural memory studies which focus on the movement of memory between and across national and social boundaries. There is here a stark rejection of the national bias that some have accused the 2000 Exhibition of exhibiting.[605]

Widening the geographic lens through which we understand the past is an important representational device. To a certain extent the installation also challenges a narrative that remains focused on the familial. For example, the installation includes the case of 'The Boys', the group of 772 children who came to the UK in 1946 and 1947 (fig. 87). This representation responds to Arnold de-Simine's call for museums to widen the forms of kinship by which Jews are represented. The display contains two photographs, one capturing the group in Prague in 1945 before their departure to the UK and the second a recreated

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[604] Sharon Macdonald, *Difficult Heritage: Navigating the Nazi Past in Nuremberg and Beyond* (London: Routledge, 2009), 186

[605] Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocasut in the Age of Decolonisation* (Stanford CA: Stanford University press, 2009); Aledia Assmann and Sebastian Conrad eds, *Memory in a Global Age: Discourses, Practices and trajectories* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmilan, 2010).

photograph of a section of 'The Boys' returning to Prague in 2019 together with their families. The caption, 'the '45 Aid Society that the group established in 1963 continues to thrive', highlights the power of Jewish communities beyond the family and the role that photographs play in highlighting and even sustaining the bonds of camaraderie created by war and exile.

Furthermore, the installation succeeds in representing the legacy of the Holocaust, by its proportion and position (fig. 82). The installation dwarfs the three smaller screens displaying survivor video testimonies that have been positioned either side and slightly in front of the installation. At about ten times the size of the testimony screens, the Pro-43 installation completely dominates the gallery. Bulgin 'wanted to be sure that visitors leaving were thinking that survivors were not typical'. [606] He also felt obligated to offer information about what happened to the people they encountered throughout the exhibition. The position of the Entrance AV behind the survivors' children and grandchildren as they were interviewed aids these objectives, ensuring that visitors watch their testimonies against a visual backdrop of fragments which make up but do not wholly testify to people's stories such as objects, photographs, words. The overall effect is that the testimonies are firmly embedded within the larger phenomenon of the archive, an archive that for so long has privileged the voices of survivors as the main access to the past.

[606] Interview with Bulgin, 25 November 2020.

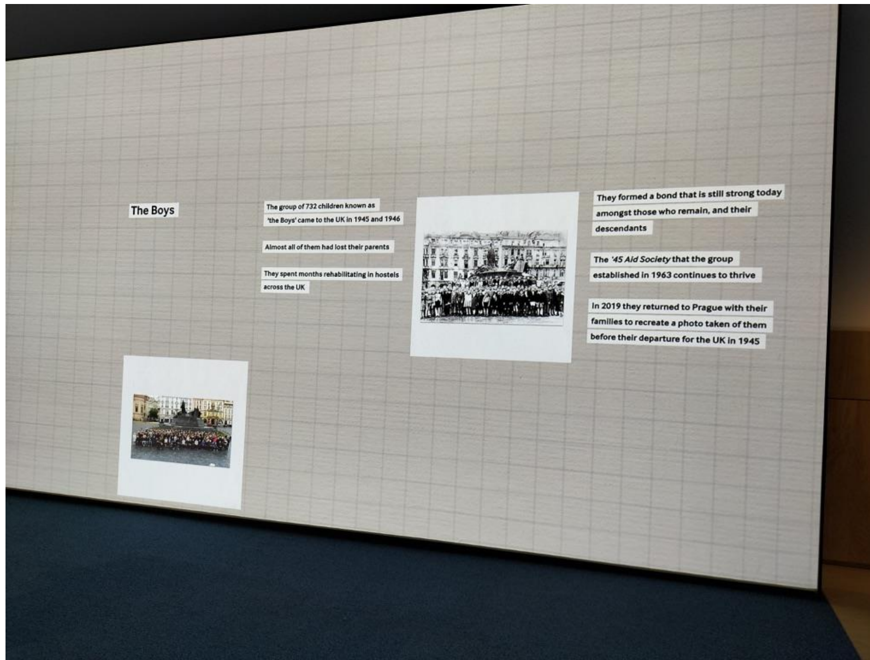

Figure 87. Pro-43 displaying fragments of 'The Boys' story, the Galleries, author's own photo.

Conclusion

What is particularly striking is the similarity that I found between encountering photographs in the 2021 Galleries as a visitor and encountering photographs on my research journey. The first space resembled my first visit to IWM's Photograph Archive where I examined hundreds of photographs in various formats with different levels of annotations and labels. My progress through the gallery and along the path of my research was essentially a series of encounters with individuals learning as I went more and more about their families, their photographs and their histories. Some photographs are more striking because of their *punctum* or simply because of their scale. While in the private spaces of individuals' homes, some are kept in the main collection while others are tucked away. In the Galleries, some pictures invite a closer inspection to read the caption while in the private spaces, meanings are discovered by a quick recourse to read the inscription on the reverse. Photographs vanish on

the screens in the Galleries before you have had the chance to engage with them and sometimes in person survivors moved me on by shuffling photographs before I had the chance to ask further questions.

In both settings, information and understanding is gained but then both give rise to more stories since the full story is never complete. There is the urge to discover information about the wider geopolitical situation to place individual stories into a wider context. In the private spaces, it was frequently an act of juggling where listening to narratives that were often idiosyncratic, responding to questions and compounding further questions and examining the photographs, and managing my own strong emotions had all to be simultaneously attended to in what could quickly become a cognitive maelstrom. In the Galleries there is the frustration felt by being overwhelmed by a multitude of sources all needing some sort of synthesising and organisation on a narrative timeline. This is not to say that the Galleries appears chaotic and disorderly but that the pull of the past in the present can be challenging to navigate in both a methodological and figurative sense. My research experience beginning with examining the Photography Archive and then visiting family members to talk about their photographs has not been so dissimilar from the Content Team's curation of private photographs.

We have both undergone a process of evaluation, selection, and synthesis of photographs facilitated and influenced by the creation of trust and rapport with those to whom they belong. However, the aims of these processes have in some parts differed. Whereas I have reflected more on the processes of memory, this has been side-stepped by the Content Team as part of an institution-wide-effort to contemporaneously and chronologically structure historical narratives. These similarities nonetheless highlight the fluid and circular nature of communicative and cultural memory. Familial values and stories do influence the selection of images and where cultural memory has been at play when decisions are being made as to which photographs are most valuable. The

selection of images to represent the Holocaust and Jewish life is a collaborative project where survivors and their families, although not overtly collaborating on the curation, are significant contributors to it. Their memory work, their facilitation of accessing private collections, their family research, and their emotional endeavours have been key to the shaping the Galleries and thus cultural memory of the Holocaust.

Inevitably, the private photographs in the Galleries, although defined as historical objects, evidently slip into the realm of memory. A slippage that is easily explained by the impossibility of reducing them as sources of their time. Edwards illustrates this well when arguing that,

> While photographs, or indeed other classes of document, are produced within a specific situation and historical location, it is assumed that contemporaneity of time itself provides an adequate context in and of itself. [...] Photographs are too fluid and temporally indeterminate, and often circulate in multiple forms. They belong simultaneously to the same and different historical strata.[607]

Photographs are both objects from the past and objects of the present. They help us to visually imagine Jewish life prior to and during the war and respond to desires for human connection with the past. Liss asks what images are remembered in the imperative to never forget, i.e. What becomes the postmemory of the events?[608]

Notably, the HET ambassadors selected the private photographs as the most memorable and worthy of discussion. One ambassador identified 'the

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[607] Edwards, *Photographs and the Practice of History*, 85

[608] Liss, *Trespassing Through Shadows*, xvii.

photograph of the woman doing their laundry because they were doing something, and it was a day and an event. There was planning and they had a system. It stuck with me and I will think about it.'[609] Whilst this could reflect a desire not to appear voyeuristic it could reflect the fact that private photographs highlight the 'ordinariness' of Jewish people and essential accessibility of Jewish life.

Indeed, the status and role of private photographs in the Galleries have been transformed by the curators' recognition of photographs' myriad possibilities. They recognise photographs' potential to act as empathetic markers of Jewish experiences, to represent the variety of Jewish life and identities and to restore agency and autonomy to Jewish self-expression. However, photographs' power also lies in their mnemonic functions, an important aspect of how survivors, their children and memorial institutions have attempted to make sense of the past. The Galleries has succeeded in valuing and attempting to affect visitors with the destabilising effect of private photographs. This is seen most potently in their ability to simultaneously create distance and proximity to the people, places and events of the past. So, while it could be argued that visitors remember private photographs in the imperative to never forget, it is important to also consider the role of these photographs for understanding the past in the present.

This is a question that Bulgin has considered when he expressed a desire, that if money or resources were not limited, to conceive of an exhibition where visitors entered and left through the first space, the very place where they had set out sometime before in a sort of eternal return. On the second visit, visitors would encounter the reverse of image in a way that they cannot when they enter. It is a hypothetical idea that would challenge the contemporaneous

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[609] Anonymous HET ambassador, Donkey Field Participant Workshop Answers.

narrative by bringing images into the contemporary setting. It would offer an opportunity to consider the representational potential of private photographs. He suggested that by returning to the first space after walking through the Galleries, 'you would end with a sense that "oh, this is what was lost"'. I am left wondering if visitors, having listened to testimonies of both survivors and their families, and then viewed the pro-43 installation could potentially see the photographs in a new light. Could visitors reviewing the first space appreciate the mediated and fragmentary nature of the photographic archive? Would they be able to see beyond the archive to the place that individual photographs certainly have in the lives of survivors and their children? Would it help to emphasise the fluid and intemporal nature of photographs and mark them not only as historical but also as memory objects?

The role of photographs to transmit memories across generations has not been neglected by IWM more generally. Two temporary exhibitions held at IWM London focused on the role of photographs within families and for transmitting memories. *Generations: Portraits of Holocaust Survivors* (October 2021 - January 2022) brought together contemporary photographs of Holocaust survivors taken by various artists (fig. 88).[610] These were taken in survivors' home either alone or with family members. Some survivors hold their own photographs, emphasising the personal nature of private photographs (fig. 89). This layering of time periods and generations within the photographs connects the past, present and future. The survival of the private photograph is reconfirmed through the photographs in the exhibition. *One Story, Many Voices* (October – December 2021) was a touring digital installation created by IWM's Second World War and Holocaust Partnership Programme, storyfutures

[610] IWM, 'Generations: Portraits of Holocaust Survivors', *Imperial War Museums* (online), accessed 1 October 2022, https://www.iwm.org.uk/events/generations-portraits-of-holocaust-survivors.

Academy and a group of writers (fig. 90).[611] The installation connects photographs and sound to creatively engage with themes such as multigenerational storytelling, fissures and silences in family stories, and the legacy of war.

The two temporary exhibitions were held during the first few months of the Galleries' opening. These three exhibitions complemented each other by demonstrating the myriad roles private photographs can play in representing the past. They can be used to historicise Jewish experiences, memorialise family members, and explore the relationship between testimony and images. Together, they highlight the fluidity of private photographs to move between the public archive and the private sphere. Consequently, they emphasise the networks through which photographs are mediated and thus gain visibility and meanings. Photographs in these exhibitions help to tell stories but more importantly, they cannot tell the full story.

[611] IWM, 'One Story Many Voices', *Imperial War Museums* (online), accessed 1 October 2022 http://onestorymanyvoices.iwm.org.uk/.

Figure 88. ‘Generations: Portraits of Holocaust Survivors’ exhibition, IWM London, author's own photo.

Figure 89. ‘Generations: Portraits of Holocaust Survivors’ Exhibition, IWM London, author's own photo.

Figure 90. ‘One Stories, Many Voices' exhibition, IWM London, author’s own photo.

Thesis Conclusion

This research project set out to examine IWM’s loaned collection of photographs from Holocaust survivors’ private collections. It was clear from the beginning that a rich interpretation of these photographs would require an engagement with the survivors and their families. The scale of this endeavour limited my focus to four private collections. I have attempted, as far as the sources allowed, to trace the histories of these photographs from their production to their inclusion in IWM's The Holocaust Galleries. Photographs have been examined as physical, social, and digital objects. I have been particularly respectful of the place of pictures within family homes, as individual items or arranged in albums. The scope of my enquiry has further included museum archives, exhibition cabinets, and storage on smartphones and computers. At the forefront of my interviews have been questions such as: ‘Who took the photograph and why?’; ‘What was not photographed and why?’; ‘How did the photographer or photographed feel at the time?’ and ‘What are their thoughts and sentiments after so many years after the picture was taken?’ I have studied non-verbal cues around photographs and the way that people treat and hold them. I have asked IWM professionals what they thought about photographs and how they approached them. This research has produced a kaleidoscope of meanings, interpretations and imaginaries surrounding photographs. But why does this all matter beyond the obvious consideration of the complexity of human experience?

The questions I raised and the answers I provided matter for several reasons. Firstly, they are an addition to the existing literature which explores how Jewish children and families have struggled to make sense of and remember their lives prior to, during and after the Second World War. Secondly, they support memory studies research into the mechanisms by which individual, collective and cultural memory intertwine. This is a particularly important phenomenon

today, as death removes the last living witnesses from the narrative. My research also contributes to debates about how photographs, and specifically, private photographs, can be used as source in oral history interviews. And fourthly, I hope that my research may support museum practitioners as they engage with the ways that private photographs and testimony could be used in conjunction to represent Jewish experiences.

Certainly, examining private photographs often raises more questions than it answers. This was evident when I first examined IWM's Photograph Archive and started looking at how the visual might guide me to understand the lives of those captured in the images before me. The well-worn adage, 'a picture is worth a thousand words', appeared irrelevant in the context of IWM's Photograph Archive. I began to appreciate that many prior assumptions about photographs' meanings became problematic when set alongside the words of their owners. It became very obvious to me that human input, that is to say, album arrangement, captioning, and oral and sensory responses, has the potential to give life, significance and direction to images that had previously seemed to be little more than inert.

Since photographs should not simply confirm what we already know, I have set out to ask what certain photographs do tell us about how Jewish people moulded themselves within, beyond and opposed to contemporary conventions, ideologies and norms. In the case of Ruth Locke, her photographic record articulates her family's affiliation with the *Lebensreform,* Heimat imagery and the German *Bildungsbürgertum.* It is instructive to uncover that key elements of the photographic record are often less prominent in accompanying written and oral sources. Esther Brunstein's photographs emphasised the family's strong allegiance to the Bund and their wholehearted involvement in socialist politics. Particularly marked here are her post-war photographs that celebrate Esther's and her brother's resilient comradeship with both each other and the socialist cause. The post-war photograph of

Esther dressed up in a concentration camp uniform challenges previously held ideas of Jewish refugees' post-war silence and instead offers an image of Holocaust survivors justifiably compelling those around her and those in the future to witness her past. Lea Goodman's private collection offers a rare insight into life in camouflage. The tension between safety and danger is very evident and witness to the substantial risks Lea and her mother took to survive. And lastly, Jan Imich's photographs, whilst presenting his childhood Kraków in a middle-class Jewish family as idyllic and playful, are at odds with his recollections of a tightly controlled childhood.

A central theme in this thesis is the relationship between the private, public, and the domestic and socio-political. At first glance, the copied photographs in IWM's Photograph Archive were focused on family themes including family studio portraiture, family holidays or more informal photographs taken at home. I have responded to calls to widen the lens through which we understand private collections by relating them to wider forms of kinship. These forms of kinship include Esther's commitment to the Bund, Lea's sense of belonging to the Kredatus family and the Neumeyers's affiliation with the *Lebensreform* movement. These relationships have spanned decades and generations and to different degrees, remain important aspects of the family's identity today. This highlights the mobility of Jewish identities across time and space, and the importance of photographs in signifying or performing these identities.

It is in these attempts to align themselves with and belong to different communities, movements or identities that we see individuals absorb sometimes posed and stylised reflections on the world. These often thinly disguised messages need to be acknowledged and then interpreted. Integrating photographs into oral history interviews has underscored the complexity of using them as sources and to see beneath the 'performance' in front of the camera. In Lea's interviews, it was clear that Lea oscillated between attaching

positive and negative emotions to certain periods of her childhood. Her reflections and commentaries on the photographs reflected these emotional memories despite the fact she later revealed there were nuances in how she emotionally experienced that time. Jan's interviews revealed a different side to his childhood, one not captured in the photographs and hence not imaginable beyond the idyllic childhood captured by the camera. Images of a childhood idyll eclipsed the stressful birthdays, carefully controlled playtime or hushed parental affairs and replaced them with images of skiing trips and outdoor play. Asking questions about photographs prompted Jan to reveal a sense shame for not being able to recover some of the photographs after the war. Jan's discomposure when recalling this loss and how it came about witnessed to the unstable value of photographs as either tokens of loss or symbols of survival.

Both Jan and Lea's interviews reveal the varied emotional meanings attached to photographs. What was revealed was the role that photographs can have in opening (for Lea) or closing (for Jan) the door onto a subject's emotional investment in the past. Multiple interviews with Jan and Lea afforded me a deeper insight into their various life-stories, and helped make sense of variations of memories, facts, and emotions. For Lea, photographs evoked strong emotional responses; however, the connection between the emotions felt at that moment and those she remembered is not always easy to discern. For Jan, photographs elicited new narrative details, while he found it easier to recount emotional memories in the absence of photographs. Photo-elicitation, as predicted, allows participants to tell different life-stories. Where such photos were arranged in albums, however, they could also have different effects: albums are suggestive of particular life narratives, which can at times be at odds with personal memories. Some of this is due to inter-generational dynamics. Photo albums, produced by parents or other adults, often present a different story from that which a child experienced at the time. In neither case do photographs shed light on purely internal experiences. However, looking at

photographs and testimony does reveal the complexity of making sense of the past. It is worth considering that Lea and Jan were reunited with many of the photographs discussed later in their adult life. Making sense of their past may well have occurred before finding these photographs, which were then slotted neatly or unceremoniously into or alongside these life-stories.

It was also evident that the meanings of photographs differ across generations. By using photo-elicitation, the second and third generation revealed how they related to their family's past, rather than simply sharing their parents' stories. It was also clear from Lorna and Naomi's interviews that photographs are uniquely powerful and precious, as personal objects possessing the capacity to remind subjects of their own connections to a past moment.

My thesis excludes two interviews I conducted with Holocaust survivors both of whom also had extensive and rich photograph collections. This points to the limitations of my research methodologies in understanding Jewish pre-war memories and experiences. I interviewed Bea Green briefly before the arrival of a care worker meant that the visit had to end. What I had gleaned was compromised by Bea's limited hearing, the awkwardness imposed by Covid social distancing, and the fact the meeting had to coordinated and interpreted by her son. These ethical and practical challenges led to me to decide not to return to Bea for a further interview.

I also interviewed Anita Lasker Wallfisch. Although she was happy for me to look through her photograph albums, she was only able to offer limited responses to my questions, often resorting to phrases such as 'it was a long time ago, you know'. I thought it wise to repeat the aims of my research as this might prompt any insights, to which she replied,

> Unfortunately, it will make no difference, they still hate us.
> They still hate Jews and we are guilty of everything terrible.

> It is all very nice what you are pursuing but it is worse than ever. You must forgive me if I am very cynical about the whole thing, very cynical. We were totally normal people didn't do anyone any harm.'[612]

We did eventually go on to discuss current antisemitism and her faded hopes that talking would lead to change. It was a fascinating and moving conversation, however, the conversations did not yield enough evidence to address my research questions and I therefore chose to not make it the subject of a separate case study.

Anita has frequently been in the public eye and interviews with her have featured in many documentaries and films. At first it seemed like a failure on my part not to have conducted a productive interview. The experience afforded me the opportunity to reflect on my own practice as an oral historian, and whether a different approach might have had a very different outcome. I concluded that access to other's past should never be assumed. It is a private and hidden country through which any visitor needs to be graciously guided. Certainly, Anita admitted that photographs were meaningful for her as they captured her family. However, she refrained from explaining further, as if the past was a distraction from her immediate goals of fighting antisemitism, a cause about which she felt pessimistic. Therefore, the richness of her photographic collection and the possibility for examining private photographs and transgenerational familial memory were left unexplored. Indeed, photo-elicitation interviews are not always easy. The experience of entering into the 'private' spaces of survivors and their families' homes was both a privilege and a responsibility and one that I did not take lightly. As a CDP student and an

[612] Interview with Anita Lasker Wallfisch, 22 July 2020, London.

affiliate of IWM, I was benefiting from decades of trust, loyalty and friendship created and maintained by the HEPO team and Content Team. These were highly valued and unique relationships that I was determined to preserve and hopefully enhance.

Those individuals who invited me into their homes or other spaces which were part of their lives were extremely generous, and often offered hospitality, too. I saw this not simply as a sign of their politeness, but also as an indication of the value placed on our meeting. I was a representative of a respected national museum, and the kindness that I was shown were gestures of appreciation for the institution and a researcher's interest in their family's story. The difference between the interview with Anita and that of the other case studies highlighted an important factor in a successful interview: the interviewees belief that their (parent's) childhood mattered to those around them and that engaging with their (parent's) stories would lead to personal or collective change.

Additionally, this thesis has focused on the material and social role of photographs within families to understand if and why (some) photographs matter to survivors and their families. Hirsch's theory of postmemory has appeared throughout this thesis when examining how children of survivors have related to the past through photographs. From Hirsch, I have taken her idea of the past being simultaneously knowable and unknowable. This contradictory state accurately describes many second-generation survivors' discussions of their family photographs. The children of all four survivors grew up with a partial sense of their parents' past. The Locke brothers, Naomi and Jan's children grew up only had limited knowledge about their parents' childhood. Lorna, on the other hand, was overwhelmed by information, so much so that for a while, she disengaged from the past. But all of them, in the past decade, have all turned to photographs for clues to questions that remained unanswered.

I have employed Fischer's term 'memory work' to understand how children of survivors have used photographs to interrogate the past and make it usable. This has been useful when thinking about the Locke brothers' blog, Lorna's artwork, and Naomi's manuscrips: all express how photographs can help gain a better sense of themselves and their relation to the past. Yet not all the children of survivors have found answers or meanings in such photographs. Esther and Lorna Brunstein and the Locke brothers were all confounded by the disjunction between personal/familial memories and what the images showed. Photographs of people smiling seemed at odds with what Esther remembered about that time, and Lorna was unable to understand why her mother would dress up in a concentration camp uniform. The Locke brothers were disappointed not to find clues to their mother's emotional responses to the events unfolding around her. I have demonstrated that even when people think they know the past, photographs can push the boundaries of the human imagination.

This leads to another observation: private photographs were easiest to use within families when they confirmed rather than challenged existing ideas about the past. Naomi's family photographs enhanced her imaginations of her relatives and also gave a visual structure to the stories she had heard. They connected her to the people she did not know and triggered a process of mourning. The Locke brothers' photographs were valued for their ability to confirm the ordinariness of their family background. Whilst many photographs were a way to connect with the past, I have also shown their limitations in doing so. Lorna needed an embodied response to feel connected to a place or person, which photographs do not provide. For her, visiting a place connected to the past was more likely to engender an embodied connection. Where Jan's family differ in their personal engagement with their father's photographs may reflect how Jan's past had been hidden to them for many years, and that Jan was still alive at the time of interviewing. The pull to investigate their parent's past

certainly occurs for many children of survivors following the death of their parent. Whilst highlighting the patterns in second-generation responses, experience have also been mindful to emphasise the heterogeneity in second-generation meaning-making practices.

Survivors and their family's relationships with IWM and wider forms of public engagement reflects this heterogenous nature of experience and how individual and familial memory shape and are shaped by cultural memory of the Holocaust. Due to the nature of this IWM archival based project, there was inevitable bias in this research towards individuals who had invested in public engagement. This bias has helped, however, to understand the role photographs play in transforming communicative memory into cultural memory. Time and resources invested in creating loyal and trusting relationships between IWM and survivors has been the bedrock of these transformations. The 2000 Exhibition treated private photographs as secondary objects for the representation of Jewish experiences, despite recognising them as important tools in remembering the human side of the Holocaust for both the family and the museum. These strong relationships with survivors which enabled curators to copy private photographs for the first time lay the foundation for future research, most notably in the form of this thesis.

The 2021 Galleries has aligned itself with new academic thinking surrounding private photographs, particularly concerned with the ethics of using perpetrator photographs and representing a wide range of Jewish experiences. I interviewed the Galleries' curators and analysed the Galleries to provide an insight into both curatorial rhetoric and practice and to analyse their effects in the Galleries. I explored photographs in four areas of enquiry: in curators' visits to survivors and their families, on display in the first gallery, on display in the Neumeyers's special display, and as part of the Pro-43 installation in conjunction with survivors and their (great)-(grand)children's testimonies. As a

result, I examined private photographs on display as part of a more comprehensive view of curatorial practice.

I have explored how private photographs have moved from peripheral to central objects in the representation of Jewish experiences. They have been displayed and interpreted to create a sense of the past, not just to illustrate it. Creating a sense of the past here refers to an embodied, and in this instance, destabilising experience in relation to photographs. Encountering images in the Galleries creates a form of knowing and not knowing that is central to photographs' simultaneously potent and frustrating nature.

An integral part of my analysis was the curators' treatment of private photographs as historical objects within a contemporaneous narrative. Such an approach removed the potential of private photographs to carry memories. But I also examined the display of photographs between bookmarks of memory spaces: the opening space displaying a large installation and the closing space with the Pro-43 installation and video testimonies. This reminds us that private photographs do not exist in a vacuum, but are shaped by individual, familial and cultural memory. The opening AV installation reminds us that the past is ever present, and the closing installation that the present is a mediated and fragmented construction of the past.

These are two important features of private photographs: they continue to shape how people respond to the past and they offer an incomprehensive and representation of that past. My thesis has attempted to make sense of the multiple meanings of photographs for survivors and their families, but simultaneously highlighted that meanings are multiple and fluid. Indeed, photographs cannot tell the whole story: a limitation that the Galleries not only recognise but promote. To integrate all these meanings in an exhibition is certainly beyond the remit of the Galleries. Representing the past as mediated and fragmented could be seen as dangerous considering the post-truth era in

which we live. At worst, it can create space for Holocaust revisionists and deniers to present their own versions of the events. At best, it can reflect the nature of survivors, their families, historians and researchers' experiences of making sense of the past. For survivors and their children, life prior to and during the Holocaust has drawn a shadow on their lives. The few photographs they retained or reclaimed helped them to reconnect with their stolen past. All of the individuals to whom I spoke, neither photographs, memories, nor documents have helped them grasp the entirety of the past: a point the Galleries does well to emphasise in the closing space.

Looking back demands looking within, a process which can be simultaneously challenging and transformative. This certainly relates to the survivors and their children discussed in this thesis. This practice is equally important for museum visitors. I have shown how certain photographs in the 2021 Galleries invite visitors to reflect on their own viewing practices. It is a subtle invitation that I hope visitors will duly accept.

Noteworthy work is being conducted by academics such as Maiken Umbach in collaboration with National Holocaust Centre and Museum to encourage visitors to reflect on their own practice of looking. The touring exhibition, 'The Eye as Witness: Recording the Holocaust', uses Virtual Reality to help visitors think critically about who took photography and why.[613] The temporary exhibition 'Seeing Auschwitz' includes 100 photographs and testimonies of Auschwitz. The exhibition's website hints at the way the exhibition intents to provoke reflection on their own positionality as viewers: 'visitors are confronted by what it means to share the gaze of the perpetrator, the victim,

[613]'The Eye as Witness', *The National Holocaust Museum*, accessed 01 October 2022, https://www.holocaust.org.uk/news/through-whose-eyes.

the onlooker, and to reflect on what this means for us today.'[614] Other exhibitions are embracing private photographs as the main object on display. The Wiener Library's temporary exhibition, 'There was a Time...': Jewish Family Photographs Before 1939', which ran between 21 September and 4 November 2022, examines the material and aesthetic conventions in Jewish family photographs, making a point to exhibit the incompleteness of photograph collections.

Despite all these praiseworthy efforts, certain factors remain an obstacle in the transmission of individual memory into cultural memory. For multiple reasons, only a small proportion of the public access museum exhibitions and physical archives. The majority of school students and the general public consume history via books, TV, films, social media and other online platforms. These media's use of images is influenced by which images are purchasable and, at times, are the cheapest to purchase. The majority of the photographs discussed in this thesis cannot be seen on IWM's online catalogue or be sold as images, since they belong to families and are not museum objects. Indeed, this was one of the guiding principles when copying photographs in the late 1990s.

As such, Sontag's concern regarding the oversaturation of images remains as relevant today as it did in the 1970s.[615] Media producers and authors today have little choice but to rely on a small pool of overused photographs to share. Indeed, private photographs are positioned at a difficult crossroads between the family's rightful grasp of their tangible past and a need for a cultural embrace of intimate representations of the past. Families should not feel pressured to concede these precious photographs to archives. Instead, it

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[614] 'The Exhibition', Seeing Auschwitz (online), accessed 01 October 2022, https://seeingauschwitz.com/london/#experience.
[615] Sontag*, On Photography,* 15.

remains for historians, producers, content writers and families to collaborate to promote an authentic and accurate interpretation of the past through private photographs. Only by doing so will private photographs reach a wider audience and help challenge how the public look and reflect upon Jewish experiences beyond the limited boundaries of ghettos and concentration camps.

Future research

There are four potential lines of enquiry that future research might take. The first would be to extend the methodology employed in this thesis to a further set of collections of private photographs. Four case studies represent a small proportion of the many individuals and families who have loaned their photographs to IWM. Including individuals from different geographical/religious/class and political backgrounds would also be beneficial. The lens of analysis might also be widened to include survivors and families who are less involved in public engagement or private memory work than those studied here. In this way, research could compare how individuals and families may create meanings of photographs more divorced from cultural modes of meaning-making.

Secondly, research could be undertaken on visitors/students' responses to photographs in The Holocaust Galleries or in IWM's learning programmes. A small sample of research was used in chapter five to explore how HET ambassadors responded to photographs in the Galleries. Future research could significantly expand on this by drawing on a wider pool of visitors from different demographics. Such a line of enquiry could extend to the use of photographs in IWM's learning programmes and particularly if educators maximised the potential of photographs to raise questions about the experiences, identities and memories of Jews prior to, during and following the Holocaust.

The third area of interest would be returning to IWM's Photograph Archive in ten years' time to examine if and why survivors' families have donated their family photographs to IWM. With the death of more survivors likely to occur in the next decade, it would be worthwhile to consider if and how their children and grand-children's relationships to their parents' photographs changes.

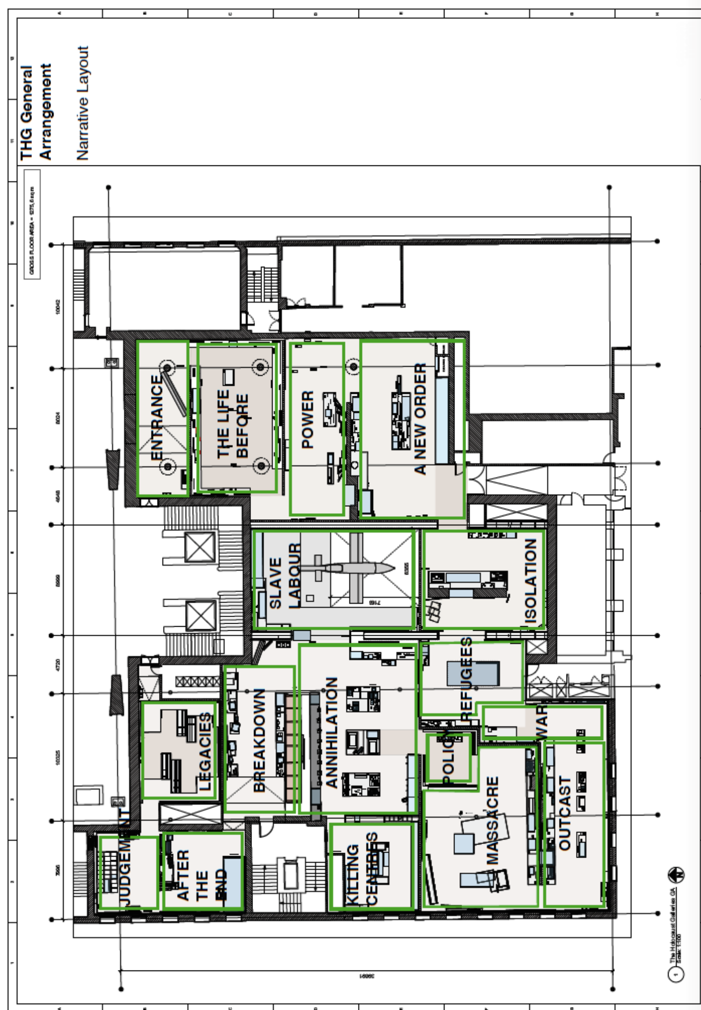
Fourthly, there is potential to conduct practice-based research with private photographs to consider how a range of curatorial practices related to photographs and testimony could produce new and exciting physical and digital exhibitions. It would be useful to build on the burgeoning practice of experimenting with different ways of working with private photographs in order to embrace rather than shy away the often opaque, allusive and sometimes destabilising meanings of private photographs.

This thesis, then, is far from a conclusive study of private photographs. Instead, I hope that it has prepared the ground for future work - in exploring the richness of private photographs as a source for understanding and re-evaluating Jewish experiences of the Holocaust, and, in doing so, shedding light on the value and limitations of some of the major paradigms in pertinent fields of academic research for better understanding this uniquely rich and still under-explored visual archive.

Appendices

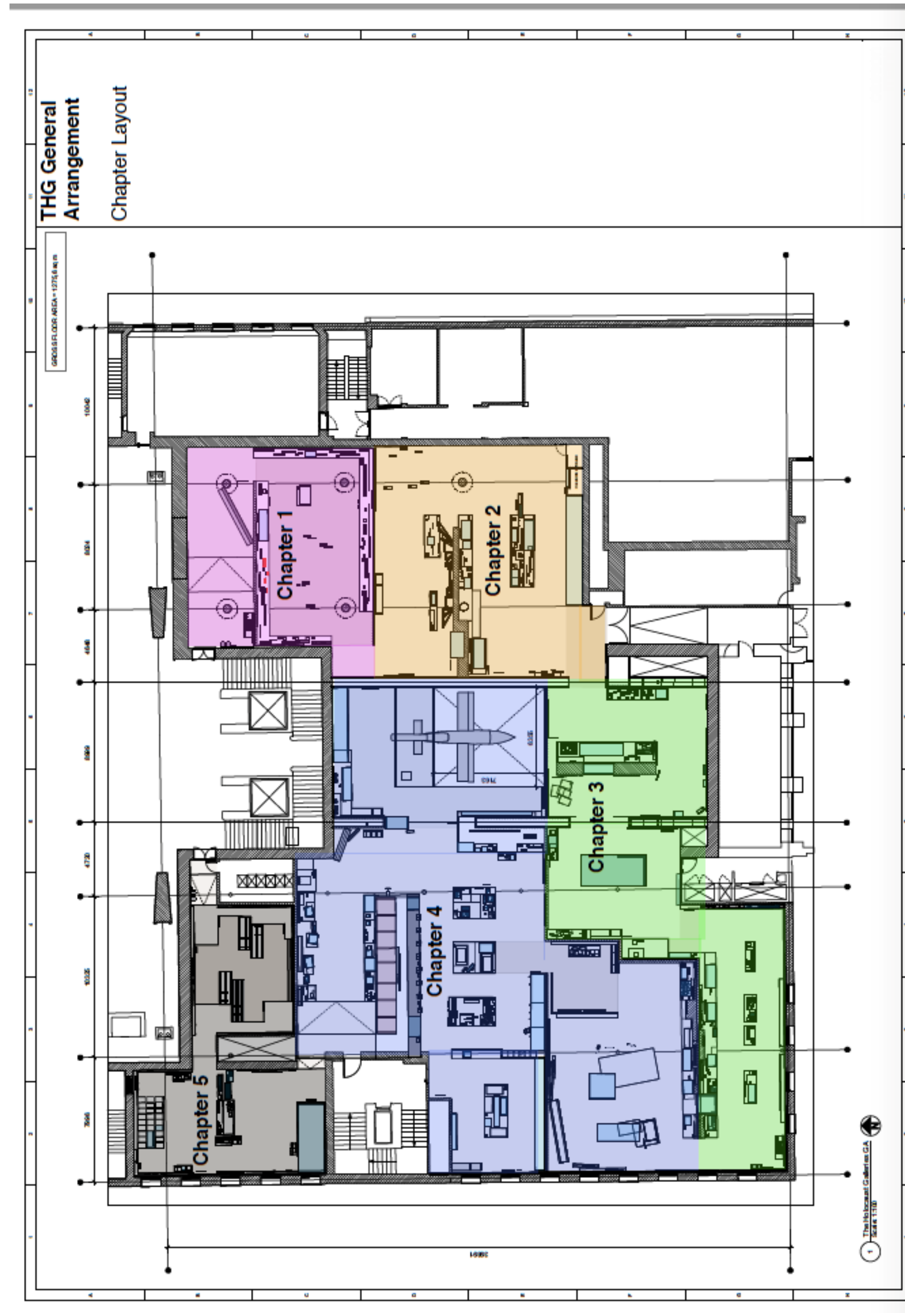
Appendix 1.

The Holocaust Galleries General Arrangement: Narrative Layout for internal reference



Appendix 2.

The Holocaust Galleries General Arrangement: Chapter Layout (for internal reference)



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Brunstein Family's Collection
Naomi Levy's Collection
Jan Imich's Collection
Locke Family's Collection

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Neumeyer family photograph album, IWM Photograph Archive, 2018-01-03/A
Neumeyer family photograph album, IWM Photograph Archive, 2018-01-03/B

Interviews with Holocaust survivors and their (grand)children

Interview with Andre Imich, 6 July 2020 online.
—, 10 September 2020, online.
Interview with Anita Lasker Wallfisch, 22 July 2020, London.
Interview with Bea Green, 2 September 2020, London.
Interview with Charlie Edwards, 10 November 2020, online.
Interview with Jan Imich, 23 January 2020, Eastbourne.
—, 30 January 2020, Eastbourne.
—, 30 May 2020, Eastbourne.
—, 15 September 2021, Eastbourne
Interview with Judith Edwards, 16 October 2020, online.
Interview with Lea Goodman, 25 November 2021, London.
—, 8 July 2022, London.
Interview with Lorna Brunstein, 5 March 2020, Bath.
Interview with Naomi Levy, 10 January 2022, London.
Interview with Stephen Locke, 25 August 2020, London.
Interview with Tim Locke, 14 August 2020, Lewes.

Interviews with IWM Professionals

Interview with Hans Holzhaider, Journalist, 29 March, 2021, online.
Interview with Helen Mavin, Head of Photograph Archive, IWM, 23 September 2022, online.

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