

CHAPTER 3

Post-memory and Artefacts

The Gelber/Altschul Collection¹⁹⁹

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At around the age of 10 I was told that, as a boy aged 12, my father had been put on a *Kindertransport* out of Vienna in late 1938, taken to a camp in England, fostered by an (unnamed) English headmaster and his wife, and then evacuated to Yorkshire where he was boarded at a school until the end of the war. To say this story is brief is an understatement. The details of it were not discussed, and as a child I gleaned these few memories and this truncated version of the story from my father only once, and at the direct urging of my mother.

Yet after my father died in 2017 I discovered a trove of objects, artefacts of a life I knew almost nothing about but which he had had in his possession for decades. These artefacts—books, photographs, letters, and other documents²⁰⁰—had survived World War Two and the bombing of the flat in which his family had once lived in Vienna. But I do not, and will never, know

¹⁹⁹ I presented an earlier version of this at the *Yom HaShoah* (Holocaust Memorial Day) commemoration, The University of Queensland, 1 May 2019.

²⁰⁰ All the artefacts referred to in this essay were donated to the Sydney Jewish Museum in 2019 under the name ‘The Gelber/Altschul Collection.’

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how they survived. I just found them in his filing cabinet and on his bookshelves. Having discovered the artefacts I felt driven to explore their meaning and so embarked on two years of detective work to identify the people whose stories I tell here. Among the artefacts were original photographs, many 100 years old. There were also original letters, postcards, documents, school reports, published books, certificates, and my father's notes. It turned out that he had travelled to Vienna, and further to Eastern Europe, in search of elements of his family history. Again, I knew nothing substantive of this until after he died. His notes were, typically, written in a stream-of-consciousness manner, interpolating a detailed description of the cake he had eaten for afternoon tea in between critical pieces of family history. These notes, too, took a long time to decipher. All of the historically important items I have now donated to the Sydney Jewish Museum as the Gelber/Altschul Collection.

The obligation of second generation storytelling

Having done the preliminary work of identifying people and stories, I was confronted with the deeper question of why I felt compelled to explore these materials. This led me to contemplate the status of being a 'second generation'²⁰¹ storyteller. Eva Hoffman famously discusses the importance of guardianship of the Holocaust through the transmission of stories to and by the second generation, the 'hinge generation in which received, transferred knowledge of events is being transmuted into history, or into myth.'²⁰² She has posited that second generation stories of Holocaust survival help us to grapple with the horrors of that event, even as we instinctively recoil from them.²⁰³

Efraim Sicher conceptualises the idea of a second generation, to whom have fallen the obligation and the difficulties of telling such stories, as broadly as possible, including any who choose to write about the un-writeable.²⁰⁴ As the daughter of a survivor, I am a second generation writer. But even more saliently, Sicher emphasises the obligation of storytelling in the context of the ongoing risks of racism and antisemitism, what he described in 1998 as the 'new

²⁰¹ Efraim Sicher, ed., *Breaking Crystal: Writing and Memory After Auschwitz* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998).

²⁰² Eva Hoffman, *After Such Knowledge: Memory, History, and the Legacy of the Holocaust* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), cited in Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 1.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Efraim Sicher, 'Introduction', in *Breaking Crystal: Writing and Memory After Auschwitz*, ed. E Sicher (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 7.

legitimacy of racist discourse in Europe.²⁰⁵ Twenty years on his warning is even more prescient as racism and antisemitism are on the rise globally.

I am a scholar and researcher focussed on the justifiability of the regulation of hate speech, and the harms of hate speech. I have dedicated my academic career to understanding the power of words to do material harm.²⁰⁶ The obligation to tell these stories has, then, a source both internal in my family history and external in my life's work combatting racism and antisemitism.

I am the daughter of a parent who chose 'silence'²⁰⁷ as his preferred mechanism for dealing with his past. Silence on the part of some survivors was not at all unusual and could reflect a fear of stigma, or simply the unspeakability of their experiences, resulting in an 'inexpressibility' of survivors' anguish.²⁰⁸ I have, therefore, had to glean the information that follows from the artefacts themselves, his disorganised notes, and my own research. I have traced the identities and stories of the strangers whose photographs I discovered. Marianne Hirsch talks of how photographs can be used to help new audiences understand the Holocaust; they can help structure 'post-memory', memories of the second generation of an event they did not experience first-hand but which are embedded in their lived worlds. More than that, she suggests photographs can be a way of reconstituting the family you did not have,²⁰⁹ a means to 'uncover and restore experiences and life stories that might otherwise remain absent from the historical archive.'²¹⁰

There may be errors in the detail, but this is as much of the personal stories as I have been able to recover.²¹¹ In the pages that follow I restore life stories to those whose lives were cut short or significantly altered by the Holocaust. In doing so, I interpolate myself into the story, uncover tales that were otherwise untold, seek to preserve the memory of those who have been lost, and reconstitute a family I did not know enough about.

²⁰⁵ Efraim Sicher, 'The Burden of Memory: The Writing of the Post-Holocaust Generation', in *Breaking Crystal: Writing and Memory After Auschwitz*, ed. E Sicher (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 19.

²⁰⁶ For example Katharine Gelber, 'Differentiating Hate Speech: A Systemic Discrimination Approach', *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* (2019), <https://doi.org/10.1080/13698230.2019.1576006>; Katharine Gelber and Luke McNamara, 'Evidencing the Harms of Hate Speech', *Social Identities* 22, no. 1–3 (2016): 324–41; Katharine Gelber, 'Freedom of Political Speech, Hate Speech and the Argument from Democracy: the Transformative Contribution of Capabilities Theory', *Contemporary Political Theory* 9, no. 3 (2010): 304–24.

²⁰⁷ Sicher, 'The Burden', 24.

²⁰⁸ Hoffman, *After Such*, 46–47.

²⁰⁹ Hirsch, *The Generation*, 13.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 15.

²¹¹ Sicher, 'Introduction', 6.

My father and his parents

My father was born in Vienna in 1926 and in the 1930s moved to Paris with his parents where he lived in the Rue Botzaris in the 16th *arrondissement*. He spoke fluent French all his life as a result. His family also spent some time in Troppau in then Czechoslovakia, before moving back to Vienna in 1937. They lived in a flat in the *Wollzeile*, which was bombed in November 1944. By then the only family member still living there was his Aunt Gretel, who spent the rest of the war in a flat belonging to the managing director of the Vienna Opera, Leopold Ludwig. After the war she transported her belongings back to the flat by handcart, including a tiny Hermes typewriter. She remained living there until she died in 2000. I never met her.

My father was the only child of middleclass parents. Among the artefacts I found were studio photographs, stylised images of my father as a very young child. He had a nanny called Minnie and a dog called Lumpi. Also among his papers I found this photograph (Figure 1), in which he looks about the age of 12. I imagine it was taken on my father's departure for England on the *Kindertransport*. He looks the right age and very unsure of himself.

Among the papers, I discovered stories my father had written down about his life in Vienna before he left. He remembered *Kristallnacht*: people of all ages being beaten, shops being wrecked and plundered. He remembered antisemitic signs scrawled on Jewish shops in Vienna ('Germans, don't buy here'), and old men made to wear a Star of David and on their knees in the street, forced to scrub cobblestones with a toothbrush while being jeered and spat at. He remembered that it was hard to leave as few countries were taking in refugees



Figure 1: Harry Gregor Vlado Emil Gelber,²¹² circa 1930s.

²¹² Born 2 June 1926 Vienna, Austria, died 10 April 2017 Hobart, Australia.

and that debates in the house were frantic, fearful, and anxious. There was talk of destinations such as Sweden, Uruguay, or China. Obstacles, such as fees for exit permits, were put in place by the Nazi regime to make it difficult to leave. He remembered needing to walk softly and 'bite one's tongue', even at home. He remembered wearing a swastika in his buttonhole whenever he went out, and he even wore it on his journey to England.

He remembered in late 1938 that the Nazis had had a dispute with the Cardinal of Vienna, so one day a mob broke in to the Archbishop's residence opposite St Stephen's Cathedral, near where he lived, ransacked it, beat up priests, and threw furniture and books into the courtyard and burned them. The mob then marched down the street in which he lived, in serried ranks that filled the entire street from wall to wall, chanting threatening and menacing slogans. He and his family took care not to stand too close to the window, lest someone should see them and take it as provocation. His parents were terrified and he could smell their fear.

After he was evacuated to England he was housed in a camp, and from there he was taken in by Jean and Geoffrey Turberville—for the first time in my life, I know their names. Although my father had told me when I was a child that he had been evacuated, and that he was taken in by an English couple, I had not known their names. Apparently, after he left their house, my father never contacted them again. The Turbervilles had no children of their own and so were prepared to take in a refugee child. Geoffrey Turberville was headmaster of Eltham College, and the family lived in 'Tower House' across the road from the school. My father's first English words as they drove him home from Dovercourt Bay were, 'I'm hungry'. He remembered watching the Battle of Britain overhead. He remembered air raid warnings and having to clear the school grounds of shell splinters before playing outside. In 1942 Eltham was evacuated to Richmond, North Yorkshire, and Harry boarded at Richmond Grammar—I have no idea who paid for this. He joined the school cadet corps, and he remembered icicles in the winter outdoor showers at 6.30am every day.

After he left school, my father joined the army and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the Northamptonshire Regiment (48th Foot). He was sent to India, then Kuala Lumpur, then Singapore. On his return to the United Kingdom he went to Downing College, Cambridge University, and after graduating obtained a position as a journalist for Reuters. Because he spoke German he was posted to Frankfurt, and then Berlin. There he met my mother, a photography student. After they married he was posted first to Bonn and then to Vienna. My mother told me, when I was about 30 years old, that while they were living in Vienna in 1955 they attended the first event held at the Vienna Opera since the war. My mother told me that an elderly gentleman had approached my father when he saw his nameplate on the table and asked, 'Are you the son of Dolf Gelber?' To which my father apparently answered 'No', and turned his back on him. When my mother asked, 'Why did you do that?' my father would not reply. I have never stopped wondering who the gentleman was and what connections he could have made for us.

My father's parents (Figure 2 and Figure 3) also fled Vienna. His mother had trained herself as a cook before leaving. Among my father's papers was an original letter written for his mother, Gertrude, dated May 1938 stating that she had to be dismissed from her voluntary employment in the kitchen at the Hotel Imperial, Vienna, 'due to the political events in Austria.' Gertrude made her way to England in 1938—I do not know how—and became a cook in a hotel, and then ran a 'British Restaurant' in Cloudesley Square, Islington, which also provided dinners for school children under the auspices of the London City Council. A collection of reference letters, all attesting to her diligence and hard work, was among the possessions I discovered that had been kept by my father.

Dolf was the last to leave Austria and he got out just before borders were closed in September 1939. In late August friends told him the security services were after him and he would be arrested the next day. Most of the frontiers had been warned of his departure, except the Dutch border where these friends would hold up notification about him for 24 hours or so. He slipped across the Dutch border at once, with (as he put it) only a toothbrush and made his way to England. He was interned on Alderney, a Channel Island, and then in South Wales. He joined the Pioneer Corps of the Army, repairing railways and digging latrines. He spent some time at Catterick, England's second largest military complex in North Yorkshire, and told a story that when the General in command wanted entertainment for dinner guests he summoned a string quartet from the pioneers, which typically included the former first violin of the Vienna Philharmonic or a flute player from the Leipzig orchestra. After some time, Dolf saw an advertisement for the Royal Navy wanting German speakers to work as



Figure 2: Dolf Otto Caesar Gelber.²¹³



Figure 3: Gertrude Altschul.²¹⁴

²¹³ Born 30 November 1900 Vienna, Austria, died 2 January 1976 London, United Kingdom.

²¹⁴ Born 2 January 1903 Vienna, Austria, died 28 January 1955 London, United Kingdom.

translators. In his interview, when asked why he wished to fight the Germans, he replied, ‘because so many of my wife’s family died in concentration camps’. He became a Leading Writer Special and translated intercepted U-boat communications. On D-Day he was on the HMS Eglinton off Normandy. Eventually both my father’s parents were able to move to Yorkshire, presumably to live near him while he attended school. But he never lived with them again.

The Altschuls

My father’s mother, Gertrude, came from the Altschul family. Her parents were Max Altschul, originally from Prague, and Bertha Knoepfelmacher (Figure 4).

In the collection of my father’s papers I found documentation that he had evidently obtained from the Austrian archives at some point, confirming the confiscation of their family’s assets under the Nazi occupation—first a leather factory, then personal belongings such as jewellery and silver tableware. At the time the family appealed because their pension was paid on the basis of their assets, and because their assets had been seized their pension was severely reduced, but of course this was of no use. In the later documentation, family members were forced to adopt the middle names ‘Isaac’ and ‘Sarah’, which was a legal way of identifying Jews.

Max and Bertha were deported from Vienna to Theresienstadt/Terezin on 22 July 1942. Bertha worked as a ‘postmistress’ at Theresienstadt/Terezin. They were transported from there to Auschwitz in May 1944. Max died in the train on the way there; Bertha died in Auschwitz in July 1944. Before being deported they had owned a six volume, nineteenth century edition of the collected works of Heinrich Heine. I know this because when I was in my thirties my father



Figure 4: Max Altschul²¹⁵ and Bertha Knoepfelmacher.²¹⁶

²¹⁵ Born 24 September 1870 Prague, Czech Republic, died May 1944, Europe.

²¹⁶ Born 15 March 1878 Vienna, Austria, died 15 July 1944, Auschwitz, Poland.



Figure 5: Max Altschul's siblings.

gifted me these books, as I am the only one of his children who speaks fluent German. In the front cover of the first volume is an annotation: 'To my dear Harry, in memory of his grandparents Max and Bertha' and signed by them. I have no idea how these volumes survived.

Bertha had a brother, Gustav, who moved to Brazil. Among the documents I found were letters exchanged between Gustav's son Pedro, and my father, in which Pedro states that Gustav had identified at least 23 family members who were killed in concentration camps. Among them were siblings of Max Altschul (Figure 5: Top row l-r Marie Wehle, Ludwig Altschul, Moritz Altschul. Middle row l-r Emma Heller nee Altschul, Julie Altschul, Hugo Altschul. Bottom row l-r Emil Altschul, Max and Bertha Altschul, Otto and Otilie Taussig).

Also among the documents I found in my father's possession was an original letter (Figure 6) typed on the flimsiest of blue paper, so thin that the full stops made by the typewriter had created holes in the parchment. It is dated 14 July 1945, and written by Kurt Wehle, a cousin of my family, after his liberation from Auschwitz. Kurt was a survivor of Theresienstadt/Terezin and Auschwitz,

and moved to the United States of America in 1951. In the letter, Kurt details the fate of members of the family. He uses initials to describe both places and names—which I presume was an instinctive safety measure. He said, 'I am writing this first of my letters from S', saying he is 'conscious of being the only one of all the big family and I feel like crying like a child'. He goes on:

The balance sheet of our family after these six years is horrible. E. and H. were deported to Lodz with the first Polish transport in October 1941. ... H. and H. died still in Prague. ... There is no news from R. who was in a Polish labour camp. She is certain not to be alive any more. ... H. O. and S. went to Terezin in summer 1942. H. went on to Poland, where she died. O. and S. died in Terezin. G. V. and their younger daughter Sonja were deported from Melnik to Terezin, and later on to Poland, where they most probably died. ... E. went in summer 1942 to Terezin and on to Poland, where she certainly died. P.H. was since November 1941 in Terezin and died there soon. My father went to Terezin in July 1942 and died there in October of the same year. A. W. and his wife H. were deported to Terezin in December 1942 and from there, in September 1943, to Oswiecim. They died in the gas chamber on 8.3.44 ...

The letter talks of 'Max and Berta' and outlines their fate:

Max and Berta were deported to Terezin in summer 1942. Alice and I, my wife's parents and also A. supplied them with food, often did their cooking and later on, when Alice and I were ourselves in Terezin, we cared for them like for our own parents. Daily we took them food, supplied them with clothes, helped them to better quarters; we had Berta accommodated in the home for the aged, and saw to it that she had medical aid. They longed to see their children once again. Unfortunately, it came otherwise. In May 1944 they were taken from Terezin to Poland. Max died on the train, Berta came to Oswiecim. As I shall describe further down, Alice and I were in the same camp and did for her everything in our power. We got her medical aid, better treatment by overseers and superiors and took her food every day, so she did not go hungry. Around 15.7.44 she died.

He also describes his own circumstances:

Alice and I were taken to Terezin on 10.7.42 and from there on 18.12.43 to Oswiecim, where we were together until 1.7.44. On this day I was taken away to the concentration camp of Oranienburg. From 19.4.45 I was on the evacuation march and arrived in Terezin on 8.5.45. The 10.5.45 I came to Prague. I have no news from Alice since 1.7.44 and always hope she will return. A week ago I learned that she was taken to

Stuffhoff concentration camp and that she was, in August or September 1944, in so hopeless a physical and mental state, that she must be certainly dead by now. Can you imagine how I feel?

Only the first page of this letter survives.



Figure 6: Letter written by Kurt Wehle.

The Gelbers

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Vienna was a melting pot of intellectuals and artists, and the parents of my father's father moved in those circles. My great grandfather was Adolf Gelber (Figure 7), a Jew who had originated from Podhajce in Eastern Europe. Podhajce was a once thriving Jewish town with a grand synagogue built in 1529 and scholar-rabbis, but it had also been subjected to antisemitic pogroms. It has been part of Poland, then the USSR, and is now in Ukraine. He was sent to boarding school in Lemberg (Lvov, now Lviv) at a German high school, then on to the University of Czernowitz. He transferred to Vienna University to study law once the universities became open to Jews. By this time his father had lost his wealth and could no longer support him. His brothers Jacob Josef and Leisor/Ludwig joined him in Vienna and apparently the three brothers had one pair of trousers between them (the family made it a joke: *Das war eine arge Chose, drei Brueder und eine Hose* – That was a funny thing, three brothers and one pair of trousers).



Figure 7: Adolf Aron Abraham Gelber²¹⁷ (photograph from an original portrait by Rauchinger).

Adolf became a literary figure and lecturer with an interest in Shakespeare. His first book in this field was *Shakespearean Problems: Plan and Unity in Hamlet*, published in 1891 and influential in the staging of the play. This led to a highly successful production in Munich in 1896 and among the artefacts I found is a copy of this version of *Hamlet* with Adolf's hand-written notes and corrections in the margin for the theatre production (Figure 8). He interpreted Shakespeare's works for a modern and German-speaking audience.²¹⁸ His version of *Troilus and Cressida* was premiered at the Vienna Burgtheater in 1902 and was also staged by the Hungarian National Theatre. Adolf would often bring people home to lunch with no notice, and was described in his obituary as having an open, welcoming house. Among his friends were Karl May (author),²¹⁹ Otto Artbauer (author), Ferdinand Bonn (actor), and Josef Popper-Lynkeus (poet).²²⁰

²¹⁷ Born 13 or 15 May 1856, Podhajce, Ukraine, died 7 February 1923 Vienna, Austria.

²¹⁸ Adolf Gelber, *Dreihundert Jahre Shylock-Schimpf: Vortrag gehalten am 5. Jänner 1901 in der O. sterr. Israelit. Union* (Vienna: O. sterr. Israelitische Union, 1901).

²¹⁹ For further information on Karl May, see http://karl-may-wiki.de/index.php/Adolf_Gelber.

²²⁰ Signed photographs of these three people are in The Gelber/Altschul Collection.



Figure 8: Hand annotated edition of *Hamlet* for production.

Adolf Gelber was also a journalist and editor of a newspaper (*Neues Wiener Tagblatt*) for 40 years, and a traveller. He visited Greece and wrote a book about it in 1912, for which he was rewarded with the Greek Order of the Redeemer (an original publication of this book, *Auf Griechischer Erde* [On Greek Soil] and the original certificate are in the Gelber/Altschul Collection). He wrote another book after travelling to Poland.²²¹ He wrote a book on *The Origins of the World War*,²²² an essay on 'Human Rights in our Culture',²²³ and a treatise on the poetry of Josef Popper-Lynkeus.²²⁴ I had known the bare bones of this story—that he was a newspaper editor and scholar—but not the details until I found the original books and papers in my father's possessions.

I also found a set of fairy tales on my father's bookshelf, published in the first two decades of the twentieth century and written by Adolf Gelber. I am ashamed to say that when I found them I had no idea what they were, and considered putting them in the trash. But thankfully I Googled them and discovered that Adolf Gelber was a well-known writer of fairy tales, some of which have been preserved in open source format.²²⁵

²²¹ Adolf Gelber, *Auf Polnischer Erde: der Sommer 1917 im Osten* (Vienna: Perles Signature, 1919).

²²² Adolf Gelber, *Die Urheber des Weltkrieges, Sonderdruck des Geleitwortes aus dem 'Heldenwerk 1914–1915'* (Vienna: Verlag des Heldenwerkes, 1915).

²²³ Adolf Gelber, *Der Menschenwert in unserer Kultur* (Vienna: Der Verein zur Abwehr des Antisemitismus, 1911).

²²⁴ Adolf Gelber, *Ueber den 'Weltangstschrei' und seinen Dichter Josef Popper (Lynkeus)* (Vienna: Wladarz, 1912).

²²⁵ For further information on Adolf Gelber, see <https://gutenberg.spiegel.de/autor/adolf-gelber-1430>.



Figure 9: Illustration inside *Snow White's Christmas in the Forest*.

One is a Snow White story of his own invention²²⁶ (Figure 9) and the others are folk tales from different ethnic communities—African,²²⁷ Native American,²²⁸ and the Kalmuck people.²²⁹ I never knew these existed but I have now discovered that the Snow White story was reproduced in a recent edited collection, *The Most Beautiful Christmas Fairytales*.²³⁰ Adolf Gelber also wrote a book about the Arabian Nights tales,²³¹ an interest that occupied him for 16 years. In my father's notes he said he remembered reading this four volume work as a child and that the books were destroyed when the flat was bombed in World War Two. But two volumes survived and are now in the Gelber/Altschul Collection.

Some of the actors, musicians, and writers among the friends of Adolf Gelber met their fate in the Holocaust. Although their photographs do not depict specific events from that time, they reveal people whose stories have otherwise become obscured by the fog of history and the chaos of war. My two years of detective work uncovering their identities from hand-written signatures produced a trove of connections.

²²⁶ Adolf Gelber, *Schneewitchens Weihnachten im Walde* (Vienna: Carl Konegen Verlag, 1919).

²²⁷ Adolf Gelber, *Negermaerchen. Aus Imanas Landen* (Vienna: Rikola Verlag, 1921).

²²⁸ Adolf Gelber, *Indianer-Maerchen. Manito und seine Leute* (Vienna: Rikola Verlag, 1921).

²²⁹ Adolf Gelber, *Kalmueckische Maerchen* (Vienna: Rikola Verlag, 1921).

²³⁰ Adolf Gelber, 'Schneewittchens Weihnachten im Walde', in *Schoensten Maerchen zur Weihnachtszeit* (Frankfurt: Fischer Verlag, 2003).

²³¹ Adolf Gelber, *Tausend und Eine Nacht: der Sinn der Erzählungen der Scheherazade* (Vienna: Verlag von Moritz Perles, 1917).

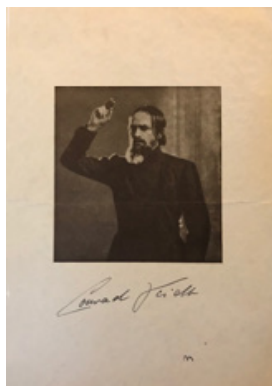


Figure 10: Signed photograph of Conrad Veidt.

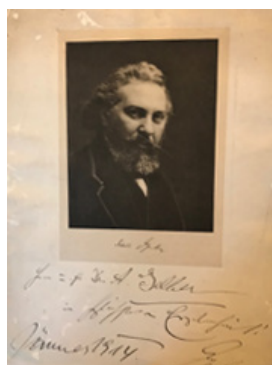


Figure 11: Annotated photograph of Edmund Eysler.

One is a signed photograph of Conrad Veidt (Figure 10), an actor (22 January 1893—3 April 1943), who with his wife was forced to leave Germany in 1933. He is best known for starring as Major Heinrich Strasser in the movie *Casablanca*.

Another is a signed photograph of composer Edmund Eysler (Figure 11), which is annotated 'To Mr and Mrs Dr A. Gelber, in devotion, January 1914'. Edmund Eysler composed hugely popular operettas in Vienna in the early part of the twentieth century. Between the end of World War One and the ban on his works introduced by the Nazi occupation of Vienna, he composed 24 stage works. During the war his works were banned and a plaque outside his birthplace was removed. He survived and, following the war, was welcomed back to Vienna with a return of the plaque.²³²

²³² For further information on Edmund Eysler, see <https://forbiddenmusic.org/2016/02/03/the-heavy-loss-of-the-light-weight-edmund-eyssler/>.



Figure 12: Annotated photograph of Gisela Springer.



Figure 13: Annotated photograph of Thomas Edison.

Gisela Springer (Figure 12) was a solo pianist with the Vienna Symphony. Her photograph is annotated, ‘To the lovely Family Gelber, with the wish that you hold me in as deep affection as I hold you! In true friendship, March 1916’. Gisela Springer moved to Berlin in the 1920s, where she remained until she was deported on 18 October 1941 to Lodz/Litzmannstadt, and then in May 1942 to Chelmno/Kulmhof where she was murdered on 8 May 1942.²³³

I even discovered a signed photograph (Figure 13) of Thomas Edison, inventor, annotated ‘To Dr Adolf Gelber’.²³⁴

²³³ For further information on Gisela Springer, see <https://www.stolpersteine-berlin.de/de/biografie/8178>.

²³⁴ This item is in my private collection.

Reflections

The reconstruction of these stories has filled gaps in my own family history. Uncovering the stories of loss and tragedy evoked very strong emotions as I undertook this work. I hope that by writing this down, these peoples' memories will be preserved. It is interesting that my father kept all of these artefacts without putting them into a coherent narrative. Perhaps I have now been able to do what he wanted, but could not bring himself to do.

Eva Hoffman suggests that post-memory has profound effects on the children of Holocaust survivors, whether the events 'were spoken about or not'.²³⁵ She suggests that the hinge generation moves through 'stages of understanding'²³⁶ the events of the Holocaust and their ongoing impact on political, social, and family life. The photographs I discovered, while they do not depict suffering or harrowing events, tell stories that contribute to our understanding of what was lost. They document untold stories from my family that deserve to be told.

And although in my family the transmission of the details of the stories was sparse as we grew up, it may well have been that the transmission of trauma was not. It is impossible to know how much of my father's personality was a product of his being sent away from his family, to a new country, where he did not speak the language and at such a young age. I knew a man who aspired to identify as an English gentleman, and indeed he did this so successfully that many people with whom he worked and socialised did not know he had been born and raised in Vienna. He was also secretive, critical, and quick to anger. My mother once put a bright orange smiley face over the door of the living room, right opposite where he would sit and read at night in 'his' chair, in a forlorn bid to get him to smile more often.

So I also hope that the telling of these stories can help to heal the intergenerational trauma²³⁷ transmitted to me and my siblings from my father. In the end, second generation stories are also stories of hope. Because those who survived became parents to second generation witnesses, many of whom (myself and my three siblings included) are thriving. That is an achievement of which he would be proud.

²³⁵ Hoffman, *After Such*, xi.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, xiv.

²³⁷ Petra Fachinger, 'Poland and Post-Memory in Second-Generation German Jewish Fiction', *Shofar* 27, no. 4 (2009): 49–65.