

Introduction

Hitler's appointment as Chancellor on 30 January 1933 marked the end of the Weimar Republic and the beginning of a dictatorial regime, based on the rule of the *Führer*. The Nazi seizure of power (*Machtergreifung*) and their subsequent total control through *Gleichschaltung* determined not only the fate of German Jews, but also of those, defined by the Nazis as 'Enemies of the German People'. The Reichstag fire on the night of 27 February 1933 triggered a mass exodus of Nazi opponents; half a million people are reported to have fled Germany between 1933 and 1945.¹ Theodor Wolff, acclaimed political and cultural commentator,² was amongst them.

Wolff was born in 1868 into a family of Jewish textile merchants. At an early stage he showed a talent for writing and, at the age of 38, became the editor-in-chief of the *Berliner Tageblatt*,³ one of the most influential liberal newspapers in Germany. He held this position until the night of the Reichstag fire in 1933, when as a Jew, a liberal democrat and a fierce Nazi opponent he escaped the Nazi terror. Wolff and his family were offered asylum in France, where they settled and lived for almost ten years. Wolff was arrested on 23 May 1943 and imprisoned in Berlin. He died in the Berlin Jewish Hospital on 23 September 1943 aged 75.

¹ *Handbuch der deutschsprachigen Emigration 1933-1945*, eds Claus-Dieter Krohn et al. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1998). 1. *Biographisches Handbuch der deutschsprachigen Emigration nach 1933*, eds Herbert A. Strauss and Werner Röder, vol.1 (München: Saur, 1983). XI.

² Hanno Hardt writes : 'Among those [including Theodor Wolff] who contributed regularly to leading newspapers like the... Berliner Tageblatt... were men and women who represented the highest professional standards and the best intellectual tradition of German journalism.' Hanno Hardt. "Journalism in Exile" *Exile: the Writer's Experience*, eds. John M. Spalek and Robert F. Bell (Chapel Hill: Univ. Of North Carolina Press, 1982). 68. Michael Groth writes: 'Probably the two most outstanding journalists of the Weimar Period, Theodor Wolff and Georg Bernhard. Michael Groth, *The Road to New York: the Emigration of Berlin Journalists 1933-1945* (München: Saur, 1988). 46. See also *Leitartikel bewegen die Welt*, eds. Will Schaber and Walter Fabian (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1964). This work includes two famous articles by Theodor Wolff: *Es ist erreicht!* (*Berliner Tageblatt* 51 (31.1.1933) and Theodor Wolff, *Der Journalist* 351-357) and *Zum Tode Tolstois* (*Berliner Tageblatt* 590 (21.11.1910) and Theodor Wolff, *Der Publizist* 315-321).

³ *Berliner Tageblatt* from now on referred to in the footnotes as BT.

This study investigates Wolff's ten years in exile and explores the relationship between his exile experience and his writing. His experience in exile will be examined with the aim to uncover its importance in his diverse work, encompassing historical works, fiction, autobiographical writing and reflections on the 'Jewish Question'. Sudden forced exile required adjustments in Wolff's outer and inner world; these changes influenced the works written during his ten years in exile.

Exile Studies – Definitions and Critical Issues

According to the *Oxford Book of Exile*, 'Each of us is an exile... The feeling of looking back for the last time, of setting our face to a new and possibly hostile world is one we all know'.⁴ Exile is an ancient, even mythical phenomenon: starting with the expulsion of Adam and Eve, who – after all – were exiles. The scope of the exile phenomenon is vast and includes notable exiles, such as Dante, Heinrich Heine, Thomas Mann, Bertold Brecht and Alexander Solzhenitsyn.

Exiles are forced to flee their country due to racial, religious or political persecution and undergo a prolonged separation from their home country until circumstances allow a return. The Hungarian writer Paul Tabori, Chairman of the Writers in Exile Centre of International PEN,⁵ offers the following definition:

⁴ *The Oxford Book of Exile*, ed. John Simpson (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1995). VII.

⁵ PEN (Poets, Playrights, Essayists, Novelists), a worldwide association of writers to promote freedom of expression, was founded in London in 1921. Wolff became member of the *Deutsche PEN Club im Exil* in August 1939. See Deutsche Bibliothek Frankfurt. Deutsches Exil Archiv. EB75-175. Correspondence between Theodor Wolff and Rudolf Olden (6.8.1939; 9.8.1939).

An exile is a person compelled to leave or remain outside his country of origin on account of well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, or political opinion; a person who considers his exile temporary (even though it may last a lifetime), hoping to return to his fatherland when circumstances permit – but unable or unwilling to do so as long as factors that made him an exile persist.⁶

Exiles are driven by their desire to return home as soon as circumstances permit. Thus, the defining criterion for an exile is the intention to return to his or her homeland. This criterion does not apply to refugees, émigrés or emigrants – terms often used synonymously with exiles. In contrast to exiles, refugees, émigrés or emigrants leave their own country permanently without realistic expectations of returning home. Migrants are usually impelled to leave their home country due to economic hardship and settle permanently in their new chosen land. In order to clarify the various terms, the *Handbuch der deutschsprachigen Emigration 1933-1945* draws the following conclusion:

In der Regel wird mit Emigration die (erzwungene) Auswanderung bezeichnet, wobei der damit in aller Regel verbundene Bruch mit dem Herkunftsland eine spätere Rückkehr ausschloss;... Als Exil dagegen bezeichnet man den erzwungenen und unfreiwilligen Aufenthalt eines Menschen im Ausland, der durch den Wunsch nach späterer Rückkehr bestimmt wird.⁷

Living in exile, Wolff left no doubt that he envisaged returning to Berlin after Hitler's defeat.⁸

While there seems to be a consensus on the general definition of an exile, there is much dissension concerning the definition of the exile writer and, in particular, the German exile literary writer. Debates have centred on whether only those writers who

⁶ Paul Tabori, *The Anatomy of Exile: A Semantic and Historical Study* (London: Harrap, 1972). 27.

⁷ *Handbuch der deutschsprachigen Emigration* XII.

⁸ Bernd Söseman confirms: 'Rudolf Wolff hat erzählt, sein Vater habe keinen Zweifel daran gelassen, nach Deutschland zurückkehren zu wollen. Bernd Söseman, *Theodor Wolff: ein Leben mit der Zeitung* (München: Econ, 2000). 314.

were listed on the Nazis' expatriation lists should be categorised as exile writers. This would exclude persons who, while not on the lists, still had reason to fear for their lives. It has also been debated, whether non-literary writers forced into exile should be included; this was accepted by some researchers and opposed by others.⁹ All exiles were victims of the Nazi regime; it seems incongruous, therefore, to exclude non-literary writers from their ranks. For example, the authenticity of Sigmund Freud and Albert Einstein as exile writers has been questioned. Further debates have focused on writers who went into 'inner exile' within Nazi Germany and on re-emigration of writers after the war and their acceptance back into Germany.¹⁰

While there is little consensus over the definition of who is an exile writer, there is even less consensus as to the definition of exile literature. It is generally agreed that exile literature includes works written by writers living in exile. However, questions arose over the contents of their works. For example: does a non-literary work written by a writer in exile qualify as exile literature? Does a work written by a non-exile, which takes exile as its theme or story-line, qualify as exile literature? The following definition developed by Kurt Adel, author of several works on the history of literature, proposes a single criterion for classifying a work as exile literature: the writer must live or must have once lived in exile for his or her work to qualify as exile literature:

⁹ Strelka insists that political commentators must be included as exile writers: 'It would be most unwise to deny these political implications... scholars could fail to realize how strong the political implications were. In order to avoid an incomplete description of these literary works, our depictions will have to consider such extrinsic factors as these political forces and the various writers' reactions and counter reactions.' *Protest, Form, Tradition: Essays on German Exile Literature*, ed. Joseph P. Strelka (Alabama: Univ. Of Alabama Press, 1979). 8-9.

Durzak, however, excludes political writers: 'Einschränken sollte man daher doch wohl die folgende [politische] Ausweitung des Begriffs Exilliteratur. *Die Deutsche Exilliteratur 1933-1945*, ed. Manfred Durzak (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1973). 11.

¹⁰ For studies into inner emigration see: J.M. (James MacPherson), *German Literature under National Socialism* (London: Croom Helm, 1983).

Unter Exilliteratur versteht man Schriftwerke, die in bzw. aus der Exilsituation entstanden sind, auch wenn das Exil im Vordergrund nicht ihr Thema ist; nicht aber das Exil als Thema, wenn der Schriftsteller nicht im Exil gelebt hat. Diese Literatur ist ganz eng mit dem Literatur produzierenden Menschen verbunden.¹¹

According to this clear definition, the works Wolff wrote between 1933 and 1943 must be regarded as exile literature because his exile experience influenced what he wrote, how he wrote and the topics he chose.

Research on German exile literature has been impeded by the diversity of the exiles. The exile community was a heterogeneous group, divided by ideology, social milieu and religion and motivated by vastly differing concerns. The lack of a unified model hinders the conceptualisation of exile literature. Many researchers have attempted to impose a unity on the genre of exile literature, which proves difficult. Werner Berthold argues: 'Der Begriff 'Exil-Literatur' täuscht ja eine Einheitlichkeit und Gemeinsamkeit vor, die in Wirklichkeit gar nicht besteht.'¹² On the other hand, Hans-Albert Walter, renowned scholar on exile literature, declared German exile literature as an 'Einheit',¹³ a claim for which he has been criticised.¹⁴ All exile writers of this era were united only by the opposition to one common enemy, but were otherwise strongly divided. They never formed a united front. It is arguable, that the difficulties created by this lack of uniformity have been exaggerated. However, Joseph P. Strelka, has pointed at the vacuity of much of the discussion amongst exile researchers and contends: 'Established means and methods of literary study as a

¹¹ Kurt Adel, Thesen zur Definition des Begriffes 'Exil', *Protokoll des Internationalen Symposiums zur Erforschung des Österreichischen Exils*, (Wien: Österreichischer Bundesverlag, 1977). 271.

¹² *Exil-Literatur 1933-1945: eine Ausstellung aus Beständen der Deutschen Bibliothek, Frankfurt am Main, Sammlung Exil Literatur* (Frankfurt am Main: Deutsche Bibliothek, 1965). 12.

¹³ Hans-Albert Walter stated: 'Es ist... generell der erste Versuch, die zwischen 1933 und 1950 ausserhalb Deutschlands geschriebenen Werke deutscher Schriftsteller auf den Hintergrund ihrer Entstehungsbedingungen zu interpretieren und als Einheit zu begreifen – als Exilliteratur'. Hans-Albert Walter, *Bedrohung und Verfolgung.. Deutsche Exilliteratur 1933-1950*, Vol. 1 (Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1973). 7.

¹⁴ Joseph P. Strelka declared: 'To speak under such circumstances from a distant scholarly viewpoint about a 'unity' of exile literature, as Hans-Albert Walter has done is nonsense'. *Protest, Form, Tradition* 3.

scholarly discipline are definitely sufficient to deal with this [exile] phenomenon, provided, of course, that the individual critic is actually familiar with their use.’¹⁵ This caustic remark indicates the level of acrimony amongst the exile literature research community.

During the Third Reich exile writers were victims of politics; it follows, therefore, that exile literature was strongly influenced by political concerns. In consequence, it is generally accepted that analyses of German exile writing after 1933 must examine historical, social and political developments before, during and after the Nazis’ seizure of power. Frühwald and Schieder argue: ‘Exilforschung kann nicht abgetrennt von der NS-Forschung betrieben werden – und umgekehrt’.¹⁶

It is undeniable, however, that exile researchers have further politicised German exile literature by reading their own ideological concerns into the texts in question.¹⁷ Research has overwhelmingly focused on the degree to which politics and National Socialism influenced exile writings. This carries the inherent danger of politicisation of the literature to the detriment of literary analysis. For example, the standard exile research works by Matthias Wegner and Hans-Albert Walter demonstrate the emphasis on political influence on exile literature.¹⁸ Both works include large and detailed examinations of Hitler’s rise to power and the different phases of National Socialism.

¹⁵ *Protest, Form, Tradition* 11.

¹⁶ *Leben im Exil: Probleme der Integration deutscher Flüchtlinge im Ausland 1933-1945*, ed. Wolfgang Frühwald and Wolfgang Schieder. (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1981).

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¹⁷ This danger became apparent in the divided Germany between 1949-1989, when all aspects of life including literary research were separated into west (BRD) and east (DDR). Interpretation of exile literature depended largely on whether the Marxist or the western democratic viewpoint was supported. Exile studies categorized exile writers as either supporters of capitalism and democracy or communism and Marxism.

¹⁸ Both works examine in details political life in Germany under Nazi rule: Matthias Wegner, *Exil und Literatur, Deutsche Schriftsteller im Ausland 1933-1945* (Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum, 1967). Hans-Albert Walter, *Deutsche Exile-Literatur 1933-1950*. Vols. 1- (Darmstadt, Luchterhand, 1972-1974; Stuttgart: Metzler, 1978-).

Vol. 3 (1988): ‘Internierung, Flucht und Lebensbedingungen im Zweiten Weltkrieg’ provides a comprehensive background of exile life in France under German occupation.

The Nazi period from 1933 to 1945 is now the most researched period of German history, as new aspects and fresh material continue to stimulate the academic interest of historians, sociologists, psychologists, literary scholars and the general reading public. Recent studies of exile writers have been influenced by mainly two factors. First, German re-unification and the end of the Cold War ended the divided ideological view of German history and literature enabling scholars to re-examine the past, free of this division. Second, the recent intense interest in exile studies is driven by the desire to obtain personal testimonies from survivors while they are still living. Since exile research is largely dependent on personal memories, fears of losing the link with the last known living exile accelerate strong interest at present. Sixty years after the end of World War II, the number of exile survivors of the Nazi era is rapidly diminishing. This fear is expressed in Hans Sahl's poem: 'Die Letzten. Wir sind die Letzten. Fragt uns.'¹⁹

Exile Studies – Review of the Literature

The current intense interest in exile studies is in stark contrast to the marked lack of interest in years immediately following World War II.²⁰ The post-war period was marked by silence and a denial of the recent Nazi past. Germans were in a state of shock: it was all too much, too close, and they needed time to recover. The notion of 'Zero Hour' was propagated in Germany, a new beginning declared, and all links with the past emphatically severed. As a result, little research was conducted into German exiles during this period. It was not until the late 1960s that a new young generation of

¹⁹ Hans Sahl, *Wir sind die Letzten: Gedichte* (Heidelberg: Lambert Schneider, 1976). 13.

²⁰ Ursula Langkau-Alex provides a valuable contribution to the history of exile studies in her article in: Ursula Langkau-Alex, "Geschichte der Exilforschung", *Handbuch der deutschsprachigen Emigration* 1195-1209.

scholars demanded answers by focusing scholarly attention on the examination of National Socialism, the Holocaust and exile. The following chronological account aims to clarify the emergence of exile studies and research starting in the 1960s and its subsequent proliferation and to identify recent trends.

As mentioned above, serious research into German exiles only started in the late 1960s, when exile studies gradually developed into a separate research discipline. In 1967 this area of research was enhanced by the publication of the previously mentioned significant work by Matthias Wegner *Exil und Literatur: Deutsche Schriftsteller im Ausland 1933-1945*. Wegner's methodical analysis of exile during the Third Reich provided the scholarly basis for the emergent discipline. His research placed strong emphasis on the exiles' living conditions and on the political events around them. Only one earlier work, Pfeiler's *German Literature in Exile: the Concern of the Poets*, published in the USA as early as 1957, analyses the writers' exile experience and, rather unsuccessfully – according to Wegner²¹ - attempts to establish common criteria for the exile experience.²² Werner Vordtriede's contribution (1968) to a typology of exile literature is one of the early attempts to view the writer's experience in exile, declaring politics as a contributing element to the exile's work, but not the only influencing factor.²³ He examines the exile writer as an artist and concepts such as 'Heimweh', suffering and death, love and hate in exile become the central theme for his examination of exile writers from Ovid to Brecht. His approach was ignored for many years. Jost Hermand wrote in 1981: 'Doch aufs Ganze gesehen, hat diese Richtung, die von der Reduktion des Exilprozesses auf 'ewig menschliche

²¹ Wegner argues: 'Zwar stellt er [Pfeiler] auch allerlei nützliches Material zusammen,... aber wieder beschränkt er sich auf das Zitieren von Texten, ohne diese nach einem überzeugenden System zu untergliedern und zu kommentieren'. Wegner 25.

²² WM.K. Pfeiler, *German Literature in Exile: the Concern of the Poets* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1957).

²³ Werner Vordtriede, "Vorläufige Gedanken zu einer Typologie der Exilliteratur," *Akzente* 15 (1968). 556-575.

Grundbefindlichkeiten' ausgeht, keine Schule gemacht'.²⁴ Political activism and National Socialism remained the main focus for the examination of exile literature, while purely artistic elements were largely neglected. This changed during the 1980s when an intense interest in exile autobiography reestablished the focus on the individual's artistic development.

For many years exile research consisted of collecting, preserving, cataloguing and fact-finding accounts, often written by exiles themselves. Grossman,²⁵ who was also forced to flee Berlin on the night of the Reichstag fire, played a vital rescue role with the 'Institute of Jewish Affairs' of the Jewish World Congress and describes in detail the efforts of rescue missions in his publication 'Emigration: Geschichte der Hitler Flüchtlinge 1933-1945'. He also chronicles the associated humanitarian efforts in the south of France, including Varian Fry's²⁶ rescue missions from Marseille.

With Hans-Albert Walter's ambitious plan to complete a nine-volume study, exile research entered a new phase in the 1970s.²⁷ Walter establishes close interrelationships between literature and politics, and his concept of engaged literature stimulates research and general interest in exile literature. His meticulous research, in particular his chapter on exile in France, was helpful for this study. Walter draws on valuable accounts by Fabian and Coulmas,²⁸ and Ernst Erich Noth²⁹ and together with the work by Barbara Vormeier,³⁰ Marrus and Paxton³¹ and Vicky Caron,³² exile in

²⁴ Jost Hermand, "'Man muss das Unrecht auch mit schwachen Mitteln bekämpfen': Stand und Aufgaben der gegenwärtigen Exilforschung," *Diskussion Deutsch* 12 (1981), 238.

²⁵ Kurt R. Grossmann, *Emigration: Geschichte der Hitler-Flüchtlinge 1933-1945*. (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1969).

²⁶ Varian Fry, *Surrender on Demand* (Boulder: Johnson, 1997 (1945)).

²⁷ Hans-Albert Walter, *Deutsche Exil-Literatur 1933-1950*. Vols. 1 - (Darmstadt, Luchterhand, 1972-1974); (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1978-). Editorial differences between Walter and the publisher (Luchterhand) forced the publication to be continued under a new publisher, Metzler in Stuttgart.

²⁸ Ruth Fabian and Corinna Coulmas, *Die Deutsche Emigration in Frankreich nach 1933* (München: Saur, 1978).

²⁹ Ernst Erich Noth, "Die Exilsituation in Frankreich," *Die Deutsche Exilliteratur 1933-1945*, ed. Manfred Durzak (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1973). 73-89.

³⁰ Barbara Vormeier, "Frankreich," *Handbuch der deutschsprachigen Emigration* 213-250.

³¹ Michael R Marrus and Robert O Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews* (New York: Basic Books, 1981).

³² Vicky Caron, *Uneasy Asylum* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1999).

France between 1933 and 1945 continues to attract scholarly interest as the recent publication by Ahlrich Meyer³³ demonstrates. The fate of exiles living in the confusing political environment of the Vichy-governed, Italian-occupied and German-ruled zone in Nice, has been similarly well chronicled.³⁴

In 1973 Egon Schwarz attempted to put order into the 'drohende Chaotisierung und Bagatellisierung der Exilforschung'³⁵ by advancing three proposals: one, the exiles' political and historical views should be fully understood, when analysing their work; two, a systematic interpretation of the exiles' reactions and their adaptation to their host country is essential; and three, the influence of the exiles themselves on their host country should be examined.

Recognition that considerable time had been lost between 1945 and the start of serious research into exile literature, resulted in an increase in exile research during the 1980s. Generous government funding, especially from the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft*, resulted in the completion of major projects, such as the previously mentioned *Biographisches Handbuch der deutschsprachigen Emigration*, an essential research work with biographical details on over 25, 000 German exiles. In addition, the much acclaimed *Handbuch der deutschen Exilpresse*³⁶ by Lieselotte Maas indexes articles by German writers in exile journals from 1933-1945. The small number of articles written by Wolff during exile can be traced through this valuable research tool.³⁷ The *British Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies*

³³ Ahlrich Meyer, *Täter im Verhör: die 'Endlösung der Judenfrage' in Frankreich 1940-1944* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2005).

³⁴ Daniel Carpi, *Between Mussolini and Hitler* (Hanover: Brandeis Univ. Press, 1994). For a valuable compilation of original documents see: Leon Poliakov and Jacques Sabille, *Jews under the Italian Occupation* (New York: Fertig, 1983).

³⁵ Egon Schwarz, "Was ist und zu welchem Ende studieren wir Exilliteratur?" *Exil und Innere Emigration II. Internationale Tagung in St. Louis*, eds. Peter Uwe Hohendahl and Egon Schwarz (Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum, 1973). 164.

³⁶ Lieselotte Maas, *Handbuch der deutschen Exilpresse*, ed. Eberhard Lämmert, 4 vols. (München: Hanser, 1976-1990).

³⁷ See Bibliography.

and the *American Society for Exile Studies* worked closely together with the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Exilforschung* in Munich; their resulting yearbook, *Exilforschung, ein Internationales Jahrbuch*, published annually since 1983, is the most influential scholarly voice in exile studies. Another journal, *Exil: Forschung, Erkenntnis, Ergebnisse*, started in 1981, complements the list of academic exile research publications. Koepke and Winkler collected and edited recognised research papers, including a wide-ranging bibliography on *Exilliteratur 1933-1945* which has become a valued research tool.³⁸

One of the earliest attempts to establish an exile literature typology was undertaken by Strelka, who seems overwhelmed by the complexity of the task: ‘Aber nicht nur die Vielzahl der inneren Reaktionsweisen stellt ein wesentliches literaturkritisches Problem der Exilliteratur dar, sondern in wohl noch höherem Ausmaß die Vielzahl der verschiedenen Arten, wie jene Reaktionsweisen in ihren jeweiligen literarischen Ausdruck umgesetzt wurden.’³⁹ Complexities of various writers’ reactions to the exile experience complicate, yet also enrich, exile research. The exiles coped in their individual way, some experiencing deepest depression, culminating in suicide, while others sensed freedom, liberation, world travel, the escape from parochial environments and the offer of many more opportunities than hitherto.⁴⁰

During the 1980s exile studies became less focused on generic exile issues and the research shifted from the emphasis on politics and National Socialism, to the study

³⁸ *Exilliteratur 1933-1945*, eds. Wulf Koepke and Michael Winkler (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1989).

³⁹ Joseph P. Strelka, *Exilliteratur : Grundprobleme der Theorie, Aspekte der Geschichte und Kritik*. (Bern: Lang, 1983). 42.

⁴⁰ Egon Schwarz 160.

of the individual. This created an interest in psychobiography and an upsurge in the study of exile autobiography. Wolfgang Müller-Funk's⁴¹ study articulates the salient and distinguishing features of exile autobiography, and puts order into the many aspects that distinguish exile autobiography from general autobiography. He develops the notion of a caesura in the exile's life, resulting in physical, emotional and financial trauma, perhaps causing depression, or even leading to suicide. According to Müller-Funk, exile is an illness. Eva D. Becker's article⁴² seeks to identify the difference between exile autobiographies written pre-1945 and post-1945. Wolff's autobiographical account, written prior to 1945, confirms Becker's hypothesis that exile autobiographies differ on the basis of writer's knowledge of the Holocaust. Wolff's outlook was 'pre-Auschwitz', and his tone was still conciliatory. With the full knowledge of the Holocaust, autobiographers lost all optimism and hope.

An entire volume of the 1984 *Exilforschung: ein Internationales Jahrbuch*⁴³ is devoted to exile autobiography with contributions from renowned scholars such as Richard Critchfield, who published his authoritative work on exile autobiography in 1994.⁴⁴ His work draws on James Olney's and Peter Sloterdijk's scholarly works on general autobiography.⁴⁵ Analysing classic examples of exile autobiographies (Alfred Döblin's *Schicksalsreise*,⁴⁶ Heinrich Mann's *Ein Zeitalter wird besichtigt*,⁴⁷ Lion Feuchtwanger's *Unholdes Frankreich*,⁴⁸ Robert Neumann's *Ein leichtes Leben*⁴⁹ and others), Critchfield examines the texts for special features of self-representation in

⁴¹ Wolfgang Müller-Funk, "Das Exil ist eine Krankheit," *Merkur* 36.7 (1982). 1231-1236.

⁴² Eva D. Becker, "Autobiographie im Exil," *Exil* 2 (2000). 15-27.

⁴³ "Erinnerungen ans Exil: kritische Lektüre der Autobiographien nach 1933," *Exilforschung* 2 (1984). 1-415.

⁴⁴ Richard D. Critchfield, *When Lucifer Cometh: the Autobiographical Discourse of Writers and Intellectuals Exiled during the Third Reich* (New York: Lang, 1994).

⁴⁵ James Olney, *Metaphors of Self: the Meaning of Autobiography* (Princeton: Univ. Press, 1972). Peter Sloterdijk, *Literatur und Lebenserfahrung* (München: Hanser, 1978).

⁴⁶ Alfred Döblin, *Schicksalsreise: Bericht und Bekenntnis* (Frankfurt am Main: J.Knecht, 1949).

⁴⁷ Heinrich Mann, *Ein Zeitalter wird besichtigt* (Berlin: Aufbau, 1947).

⁴⁸ Lion Feuchtwanger, *Unholdes Frankreich* (Mexico: Editorial "El Libro libre", 1942).

⁴⁹ Robert Neumann, *Ein leichtes Leben* (Wien: Desch, 1936).

exile. Discontinuity and disharmony mark exile autobiographies and the authors are further burdened by perceived guilt and shame at their failure to stop the rise of National Socialism. Betrayal is another notion keenly felt by the exiles and must be added to the other painful emotions that permeate exile autobiographies. Exile studies have mostly focused on renowned exiles and again Critchfield selected famous writers for his study. However, exile research gradually turned its focus to lesser known exiles. One example is the study by Michael Groth,⁵⁰ which focuses on a group of German exile journalists. Journalists, critics and publicists – together with literary writers – are regarded as the ‘exiles per se’⁵¹ and take a dominant place in exile studies, because their identity, language, expressions, work and professional survival were embedded in their exile experience.

During the 1990s a fundamental change in the focus of exile studies took place, initiated by Wolfgang Benz, Professor at the Berlin *Technische Universität* and Director of the *Zentrum für Antisemitismusforschung* in Berlin. Benz recognised the importance of changing the focus from the famous to the nameless, when he published a collection of revealing stories of the survival of ordinary Jewish families under the title *Das Exil der kleinen Leute: Alltagserfahrung deutscher Juden in der Emigration*.⁵² The analysis of ordinary individuals in exile contributes much to the understanding of life in exile. In addition, new and interesting research topics are emerging, including the exile experience of children and young adults,⁵³ gender

⁵⁰ Michael Groth, *The Road to New York: the Emigration of Berlin Journalists 1933-1945*. (München: Saur, 1988).

⁵¹ *Exile: the Writer's Experience*, eds. John M. Spalek and Robert F. Bell (Chapel Hill: Univ. Of North Carolina Press, 1982). XII.

⁵² Wolfgang Benz, *Das Exil der kleinen Leute: Alltagserfahrung deutscher Juden in der Emigration* (München: Beck, 1991).

⁵³ Zlata Fuss Phillips, *German Children's and Youth Literature in Exile, 1933-1950: Biographies and Bibliographies*. (Munich: Saur, 2001).

studies,⁵⁴ and even exile comedy⁵⁵ and satire.⁵⁶ A recent exile study revisits Germans exiled by the Nazis through the lens of postmodern notions of alienation and marginalisation.⁵⁷ Although the experience of those, who were driven out of Nazi Germany, was unique, continued worldwide political, social and religious unrest forced men and women into exile and thus research into exile remains topical.⁵⁸

Theodor Wolff – Review of the Literature

Although it is argued that Wolff is an exile writer, and although he wrote six major works⁵⁹ in exile, his life and work in exile has not been fully examined. This contrasts with the extensive research on Wolff and his influence on politics and culture in Germany during the time of the Kaiser and the Weimar Republic.⁶⁰ Examinations of Wolff as the publicist, the diplomat and influential voice in German politics and culture are numerous and include three biographies. None of this research, however, addresses aspects of his exile period in detail. The first biography of Theodor Wolff was published by Gotthart Schwarz in 1968⁶¹ and falls into the early period of exile research. Schwarz examines Wolff, the publicist and journalist during the turn of the century, World War I and the Weimar Republic. Wolff's personal papers and

⁵⁴ "Frauen und Exil: Zwischen Anpassung und Selbstbehauptung," *Exilforschung* 11 (1993). 1-283. See also Undine G Giguere, "Women Writers in Exile (1933-1945) : a Paradigmatic Examination of Five Autobiographical Texts Illustrating Exile Experience," State University of New York, 1997, Inge E Aures, "Come, See the World Through My Eyes: Couples in Exile: a Comparison of the Female and Male Perspectives in Exile Autobiographies," Vanderbilt University, Nashville Tennessee, 1997.

⁵⁵ Bernhard Spies, *Die Komödie in der deutschsprachigen Literatur des Exils* (Würzburg: Königshausen, 1997).

⁵⁶ Stephan Braese, *Das teure Experiment: Satire und NS-Faschismus* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1996).

⁵⁷ *Exile and Otherness: New Approaches to the Experience of the Nazi Refugees*, ed. Alexander Stephan (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2005).

⁵⁸ In June 2006 the MLA (Modern Language Association) Bibliography displayed over 5 000 entries under the keyword 'exile' and over 1 000 entries under 'German exile'.

⁵⁹ These are: *Der Marsch durch zwei Jahrzehnte*, *Notes sur l'histoire de la presse*, *Die Schwimmerin: Roman aus der Gegenwart*, *La Terrasse in der Gascogne*, *Das Grabmal des unbekanntenen Soldaten*, 'Die Juden'.

⁶⁰ The list is long. See Bibliography for details: Werner Becker, Bosch, Eksteins, Gay, Holl, Jones, Köhler, Langewiesche, Orth, Platthaus, Röhl, Gotthart Schwarz, Söseemann.

⁶¹ Gotthart Schwarz, *Theodor Wolff und das 'Berliner Tageblatt' : eine liberale Stimme in der deutschen Politik 1906-1933*. (Tübingen: Mohr, 1968). for reviews see: *English Historical Review* 86:338 (Jan. 1971) : 208; *Deutsche Literatur Zeitung* (DDR) 92:10-11 (1971): 925 -926; *Publizistik* 16 (1971): 451-452.

manuscripts became available in the 1970s; consequently Schwarz had to base his research predominantly on Wolff's editorials in the *Berliner Tageblatt*. Schwarz's study is a contribution to research on the role and history of the press in Germany and, at the same time, a history of liberalism in Germany during the first three decades of the 20th century. While it meticulously chronicles Wolff's political life as a defender of liberalism and democracy, it provides no insight into Wolff's life in exile. Whilst Wolff possessed high ideals and intellectual aims, Schwarz claims, 'Er war zu wenig systematischer Denker und theoretischer Analytiker'.⁶² Wolff's apparent failure to assess political reality affected his life in exile. Schwarz's indictment is supported in this study with observations that Wolff did not adequately judge the dangers of National Socialism.

In 1976 Bernd Söseman, historian at the *Freie Universität Berlin* who has written widely on Theodor Wolff, published a comparative study of four liberal democratic publicists during the end of the Weimar Republic, one of whom is Theodor Wolff.⁶³ The focus is on Wolff's personal and intense journalistic engagement to save democracy. The exile period had no place in this study because the battle for democracy in Germany was lost in 1933 and Wolff did not actively fight to restore it during his life in exile.

Ten years passed between Schwarz' biography in 1968 and the next full biography on Wolff by Wolfram Köhler, which appeared in 1978.⁶⁴ By providing a well-balanced history of Wolff's life, this work also represents a history of Europe from the turn of the century to Wolff's death in 1943. Köhler had access to Wolff's

⁶² Gotthart Schwarz 284-285.

⁶³ Bernd Söseman, *Das Ende der Weimarer Republik in der Kritik demokratischer Publizisten: Theodor Wolff, Ernst Feder, Julius Elbau, Leopold Schwarzschild*. (Berlin: Colloquium Verl., 1976).

⁶⁴ Wolfram Köhler, *Der Chef-Redakteur Theodor Wolff, ein Leben in Europa 1868-1943* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1978). For reviews see: *Publizistik* 23 (1978). 281-282; *Das Parlament* 26 (1.7.1978). 141; *Frankfurter Rundschau* 163 (29.7.1978). 11; *Stuttgarter Zeitung* 240 (17. 10.1978). 37.

private papers, letters, diaries and manuscripts through Wolff's son, Rudolf. This close collaboration enabled Köhler to present a comprehensive picture of Wolff, the man, the writer and the liberal democrat. In this biography, enriched by interviews with Rudolf Wolff, the exile period of Theodor Wolff occupies a small, albeit insightful, section. While the circumstances of his life in exile, as well as references to Wolff's exile writings, are well chronicled, observations of Wolff's actual experience in exile, the toll exile took on his physical and mental wellbeing and the effect on his writings are not analysed in depth.

Bernd Sösemann wrote the third biography on Wolff.⁶⁵ Published in 2000, it was the last volume of a four-volume 'Theodor Wolff Edition'.⁶⁶ All four volumes were published by Bernd Sösemann, whose ongoing research interests continue to pay tribute to Theodor Wolff's contribution to German history, media studies and journalistic achievements.⁶⁷ Sösemann's much-acclaimed edition of Wolff's diaries from the years between 1914-1919 represents an essential historical research work for the study of World War I.⁶⁸ Sösemann was also the instigator for the establishment of the annual *Theodor Wolff Preis* in Germany, awarded for outstanding journalistic contributions.⁶⁹ His biography, aptly entitled *Theodor Wolff: ein Leben mit der Zeitung*, analyses Wolff's relationship with the *Berliner Tageblatt*. Due to his detailed

⁶⁵ Sösemann, *Theodor Wolff: ein Leben mit der Zeitung*. For reviews see: Volker Ulrich, "Leben für die Zeitung," *Die Zeit* 4 (18.1.2001). Hermann Boverter, "Erinnerungen an den großen Journalisten Theodor Wolff," *Das Parlament* 15.12.2000, Stefan Berkholz, "Mit dem Bleistift für die Demokratie," *Der Tagespiegel* 17394 (30. April - 1. May 2001). Gernot Wolfram, "Die Unruhe eines politischen Moralisten," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* 301 (28.12.2000).

⁶⁶ Theodor Wolff. *Der Journalist: Berichte und Leitartikel*, ed. Bernd Sösemann (Düsseldorf: Econ, 1993); Theodor Wolff. *Der Publizist: Feuilletons, Gedichte und Aufzeichnungen*, ed. Bernd Sösemann (Düsseldorf: Econ, 1995); Theodor Wolff. *Der Chronist: Krieg, Revolution und Frieden im Tagebuch 1914-1919*, ed. Bernd Sösemann (Düsseldorf: Econ, 1997), and Sösemann, *Theodor Wolff: ein Leben mit der Zeitung*.

⁶⁷ His latest publication : Bernd Sösemann and Jürgen Frölich, *Theodor Wolff: Journalist, Weltbürger, Demokrat*, Jüdische Miniaturen 10 (Berlin: Hentrich, 2004).

⁶⁸ Theodor Wolff, *Tagebücher 1914-1919: der Erste Weltkrieg und die Entstehung der Weimarer Republik in den Tagbüchern, Leitartikeln und Briefen des Chefredakteurs am 'Berliner Tageblatt' und Mitbegründers der 'Deutschen Demokratischen Partei'*. ed. Bernd Sösemann, vol. 1 and 2 (Boppard am Rhein: Boldt, 1984).

⁶⁹ Theodor Wolff Preis (www.bdzv.de/twp). This prize has its equivalent in Australia in the annual Walkley Award (www.walkleys.com)

research and personal approach, Sösemann's writings provide an authoritative record of Wolff's life and work. This latest biography confirms Wolff's important contribution to the political and cultural life in Germany from the late 19th century to World War II. Sösemann deals with Wolff's life as a journalist and editor-in-chief. Wolff's professional life with the *Berliner Tageblatt* – 'sein Leben mit der Zeitung' – finished abruptly in 1933. As a result, Sösemann does not examine his exile period in detail. Wolff's life after 1933 was cut off from German current affairs and the *Berliner Tageblatt*.

Several dissertations,⁷⁰ covering different stages in Wolff's life, have been recently submitted to German universities. None deal with Wolff's life in exile. Heide Niemann explores Wolff's journalistic achievements during his time in Paris from 1894-1906, with particular focus on the Dreyfus affair.⁷¹ Wolff's struggle with government censorship during World War I is expertly examined by Andreas Platthaus in a valuable contribution to the history of the German press and Wolff's political and personal commitment to democracy.⁷² The thesis by Christel M. Goldbach⁷³ on Wolff's attitude towards relationship with his Jewish origins fails to examine his exile years in detail. The thesis chronicles Wolff's life as the assimilated German Jew and attributes equal weight to all stages in his life, from early childhood to his death. Goldbach concludes that Wolff was German first and foremost and had only maintained a distant interest in Jewish issues, a view which is supported in this study and, in fact, by all, who wrote about Wolff. Goldbach's thesis does not

⁷⁰ Despite all efforts, the two latest published theses by Birgit Zimmer-Wagner and Dieter Fabisch could not be obtained in time to be assessed for this study.

Dieter Fabisch, *Der Publizist Theodor Wolff: Kriegsentstehung und -ziele in seinen Tagebüchern 1914 – 1919* (München: M-Press, 2004). Birgit Zimmer-Wagner, *Theodor Wolff und der Erste Weltkrieg 1914 - 1918: ein Journalist zwischen Anpassung und Rebellion* (Frankfurt am Main:Lang, 2005).

⁷¹ Heidi Niemann, "Theodor Wolff als Korrespondent in Paris (1894-1906)." Diss., Freie Universität, Berlin, 1990.

⁷² Andreas Platthaus, "Der Tanz zwischen Dornenspitzen: Theodor Wolffs Rhetorik im Kampf gegen Zensur." Diss., Tübingen, Eberhard Karls Universität, 1994.

⁷³ Christel M Goldbach, "Distanzierte Beobachtung: Theodor Wolff und das Judentum," Magisterarbeit, Oldenburg, Carl von Ossietzky Universität, 2000. (published Oldenburg: BJS, 2002.)

sufficiently recognise that it was his exile experience that dictated Wolff's response to the 'Jewish Question'. It is one of the aims of the present study to demonstrate that exile was the catalyst for Wolff's late response to the 'Jewish Question'.

Exile studies are inevitably intertwined with the 'Jewish Problem', the collapse of the German-Jewish *Lebensgemeinschaft*, antisemitism, and the Holocaust. The literature on all aspects of German-Jewish issues is immense and ever-increasing.⁷⁴ It is beyond the scope of this study to examine the research trends in relation to research aspects of the 'Jewish Question.' For the purpose of the present study, the work by Amos Elon *The Pity of it all* is a reflection on the dilemma of the German Jewish 'symbiosis' and is pertinent to Wolff's exile experience.⁷⁵ However, other works are equally important for the understanding of Wolff's position as an assimilated German Jew, suddenly forced to acknowledge his Jewish origin, due to the effects of the Nazi race laws. Reflecting on antisemitism in Germany during Wolff's life, Peter Pulzer's publication *Jews and the German State* provides valuable background information for this study on Jewish life in Germany during the first half of the 20th Century.⁷⁶

Research and Sources

This study is the result of extensive analysis of primary source material. The volume of primary material on Wolff is due in part to the personal friendship which arose between Wolff's son, Rudolf and Bernd Söseman and their care and dedication to Theodor Wolff's work. The sources comprise both official and private records.

⁷⁴ A comprehensive bibliography on Jewish issues is published annually in: *Selected Bibliography of Books and Articles. Publications of the Leo Baeck Institute. Yearbook.* 1(1956) -.

⁷⁵ Amos Elon, *The Pity of it all: A Portrait of Jews in Germany 1743-1933* (London: Penguin Books, 2004).

⁷⁶ Peter Pulzer, *Jews and the German State: The Political History of a Minority, 1848-1933* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992). See also Shulamit Volkov, *Jüdisches Leben und Antisemitismus im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert: Zehn Essays* (München: Beck, 1990).

Those studied include Wolff's diaries, correspondence, last will and testament, photographs, and memorabilia, internment records from the Drancy concentration camp where Wolff was imprisoned, and hospital and medical records from the Jewish Hospital in Berlin where he died.

Wolff's vast correspondence with famous writers, among them Gerhart Hauptmann, Thomas Mann, and Stefan Zweig, and with high-ranking politicians, including Prince Bernhard von Bülow, longest serving chancellor under Kaiser Wilhelm II. from 1900-1909, Gustav Stresemann, German foreign minister from 1923-1929 and Constantin Neurath, German Foreign Minister from 1932-1938, is evidence of his previous high profile in the cultural and political life in Germany prior to 1933. Wolff was fiercely protective of his privacy and that of his family and letters written whilst travelling during the early exile years are edifying.⁷⁷ They tell the story of uncertainty and anxiety that is suppressed in his exile writings and reveal Wolff, the family man. If reading his private correspondence is a moving experience, official documents are even more poignant, as their neutral bureaucratic tone is at odds with the atrocities and extreme hardships. One such document is a handwritten scribble - virtually Wolff's death sentence - in the margins of a telegram from the *Befehlshaber der Deutschen Sicherheitspolizei* to the German officials in Marseille. It reads: 'Wolff haben wir kürzlich dem RSHA [*Reichssicherheits Hauptamt*] überstellt'.⁷⁸

Wolff's manuscripts written in exile represent the main source material for this study. They comprise both typed⁷⁹ and annotated unpublished manuscripts and printed and published ones. Both versions were studied. An unexpected challenge arose whilst studying these manuscripts in the *Bundesarchiv* in Koblenz. I raised doubts as to the

⁷⁷ Wolff addresses his wife with 'Mein geliebtes Herzblatt', a play on words referring to his other love in life, the *Berliner Tageblatt*.

⁷⁸ Archives du Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine (CDJC), Paris. Theodor Wolff Document I-55.

⁷⁹ The manuscripts were typed by Wolff's daughter Lilly.

authenticity of two manuscripts credited to Wolff and found one manuscript (*Die Kaiserin Friedrich und ihr geheimer Ratgeber*) to be written by Wolff's friend, Ernst Feder;⁸⁰ the other (*Johannes Matthias*) by Wolff's son, Rudolf.⁸¹ The surprise discovery was both an unexpected lesson in the use of primary sources and a significant and satisfying contribution to 'putting the record straight'.

Wolff's exile manuscripts comprise six works: *Der Marsch durch zwei Jahrzehnte*, *Notes sur l'histoire de la presse*, *Die Schwimmerin: Roman aus der Gegenwart*, *La Terrasse in der Gascogne*, *Das Grabmal des unbekanntenen Soldaten*, 'Die Juden' and form the core primary source material for this study. However, it cannot be claimed with certainty that these were the only works Wolff wrote in exile. The question remains whether there were other works written during exile that might not have survived the war.⁸² There is no evidence that Wolff wrote other substantial works in exile, beside the six works examined here in detail. *Der Marsch durch zwei Jahrzehnte*, was written during the early exile years, and published in 1936, followed by an English edition. It was well received and ensures a continuation of the fame and fortune to which Wolff had been accustomed during his time as editor-in-chief of the *Berliner Tageblatt*. Sösemann republished this work in 1989 and this is an indication of ongoing interest in Wolff's influence on German history during the first three decades of the 20th century. *Notes sur l'histoire de la presse*, Wolff's second exile

⁸⁰ The suspicion rose when I discovered that copious handwritten notes in the typed text matched Ernst Feder's handwriting. I was able to match the manuscript from the Theodor Wolff Nachlass with the manuscript in the Ernst Feder Nachlass, kept in the Jüdische Museum Berlin. (Ernst Feder Nachlass. Signatur LBI AR 7040). The two manuscripts were identical. It can be presumed that Wolff received a copy of *Die Kaiserin Friedrich und ihr geheimer Ratgeber* from Ernst Feder prior to his departure to Brazil in 1941.

⁸¹ The suspicion was shared with Bernd Sösemann on account of contents and writing style. *Johannes Matthias* does not match Theodor Wolff's manner of writing. This may be demonstrated in one example: Matthias refers to his love affair: 'Einmal im Leben trifft auch dich das Glück... Niemals bleibt es lange, manchmal nur für Sekunden... Es ist das seltenste Geschenk der Natur, es ist nämlich ein himmlisches Geschenk.' (Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207: 36. Matthias 138) Such romantic rambling was alien to Theodor Wolff.

⁸² Emil Oprecht refers in a letter to Wolff that he is thrilled to hear of the plan for a new novel (AKIP. Letter from Emil Oprecht to Theodor Wolff (9.9.1940)). However, there is no trace of another novel amongst Wolff's *Nachlass* in the Bundesarchiv Koblenz.

work, remains unpublished. This manuscript seems to be unfinished and represents a challenge to the researcher: with pages missing and chapters failing to follow any logical pattern. It was a great surprise to friends and colleagues, when Wolff produced a novel, *Die Schwimmerin: Roman aus der Gegenwart*, as his next exile work, published in 1937. This novel failed to impress the public and critics. It represents the end of Wolff's writing career, as his remaining exile works were not published until after the war. *La Terrasse in der Gascogne* and *Das Grabmal des Unbekannten Soldaten*, both written between 1940 and 1942, were published in 1992 by the historian Margrit Bröhan. '*Die Juden*' (quotation marks are necessary and will be explained in the final chapter), his last work, was written during 1942 and 1943. It is to the credit of Bernd Söseemann that this manuscript was rescued from obscurity and published in 1984.

Various research venues were used for this study and included major libraries in Australia and Germany,⁸³ archives, such as the *Deutsche Literaturarchiv Marbach*, and research centres, including the *Centrum Judaicum Neue Synagoge Berlin*, *Jüdisches Museum Berlin*, *Zentrum für Antisemitismusforschung Berlin*. However, the *Bundesarchiv* in Koblenz was undoubtedly the most important resource centre. This institute houses a thirty six-volume collection of records constituting Wolff's *Nachlass*, including Wolff's manuscripts, correspondence, and diaries. Wolff's son, Rudolf, settled in Paris after the war, worked there as a journalist and cared for the *Nachlass*. Then, in the 1960s, Rudolf Wolff entrusted the *Nachlass* to Wolfgang Bretholz, Theodor Wolff's friend, and colleague, who started sorting the papers with the aim of writing Wolff's biography. However, this project was never completed, and

⁸³ The Library of the University of Western Australia has played a particular important role, as it owns a microfilm copy of the *Berliner Tageblatt* from 1895 to 1939. In Germany the *Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz* was the main source for secondary material for this study.

in 1970, Rudolf Wolff transferred the collection to Bernd Söseman who had commenced a major research project on Wolff and other Liberal Democratic publicists. In 1974, Söseman lodged the *Nachlass* with the *Bundesarchiv* in Koblenz to ensure it remained accessible to the public. A further significant resource was the *Arbeitsstelle für Kommunikationsgeschichte und interkulturelle Publizistik*⁸⁴ at the *Freie Universität* Berlin. This houses the Theodor Wolff Collection under the directorship of Bernd Söseman and provided major primary sources and valuable support for this study.

Consistent with the prevailing trend in the study of exile literature, Wolff's exile works were examined in their political and historical context. In order to contextualise and analyse his experience in exile and his writing, and also demonstrate their nexus, two particular genres of secondary literature were consulted: one providing historical and political analyses of the contemporary period during which Wolff was in exile, and the other providing literary analyses of his exile writings. German history of the first three decades of the 20th century, Hitler's rise to power, the Franco-German relationship from 1933-1943 and the 'Jewish Question' dominated the sources required for this study. The literary analysis relied on those studies on exile literature to which reference was made above. However, several specific aspects within Wolff's writing in exile required additional material, such as information on the concepts of autobiography, the political role of the writer, the interpretation of metaphors and the typology of the novel. Secondary material on these topics was accessible in Australian libraries.

⁸⁴ *Arbeitsstelle für Kommunikationsgeschichte und interkulturelle Publizistik* referred to in the footnotes as AKIP.

Overview

This study investigates the relationship between Wolff's exile experience and his writing in exile. Six works will be subjected to critical analysis: *Der Marsch durch zwei Jahrzehnte*, *Notes sur l'histoire de la presse*, *Die Schwimmerin: Roman aus der Gegenwart*, *La Terrasse in der Gascogne*, *Das Grabmal des Unbekannten Soldaten* and 'Die Juden'. Ten years in exile are divided into four chapters,⁸⁵ starting with the early exile years from 1933 to 1936; followed by the pre-World War II years. The third period deals with Wolff's life during the early years of World War II and the defeat of France in the summer of 1940. The fourth period focuses on the 'Jewish Question' and explores the last two years of Wolff's life, from 1942 to 1943. During each of these four periods Wolff experienced material and psychological trauma causing significant changes to his life, physical as well as existential. His exile works are examined in the context of his experiences and this requires a two-step process. Step one examines his political, social, cultural and physical environment. Step two investigates the effect of each experience on Wolff and the way in which this manifests in the works he wrote in exile. Specific questions are asked in order to establish the nexus between his exile experience and his writing. What were his experiences in exile that influenced his conception of his own work? Why did Wolff write a particular work at a particular time? How was it written? How did life in exile influence genre and style and what were the topics chosen?

The first period, during which Wolff was forced to cope with various changes to his life, was marked by a relative sense of security and the hope that he would be able to return to Germany. He produced two historical works, *Der Marsch durch zwei Jahrzehnte*, published in 1936, and *Notes sur l'histoire de la presse*, written during the

⁸⁵ The division into four chapters follows Theodor Wolff's preference for writing his editorials in four sections.

early years in exile, but never published. Three profound experiences during 1933, his first year in exile, are investigated: foremost his sudden forced departure from Berlin; second, the burning of his books; and third, being refused asylum in Switzerland. These experiences in early exile compounded his decision to retreat from public life and current affairs writing. Unable to accept the present, he turned his attention to the past, exploring the first two decades of the 20th century in *Der Marsch durch zwei Jahrzehnte* and the history of public opinion in *Notes sur l'histoire de la presse*.

During the second period, from 1936 to 1937, Wolff produced a novel, *Die Schwimmerin*, published in 1937. This represents a turning point in his life as a writer and again the question is asked, whether his exile experience was responsible for Wolff turning to fiction writing after a lifetime of successful cultural, political and historical writing. The study examines his exile experience and suggests the start of crippling financial concerns for the family and the degree to which this motivated his decision to write a novel. In addition, – at this stage in exile – Wolff needed to tell his story. Thus he chose *Die Schwimmerin* to both conceal and reveal life in exile in narrative fictional form.

The third period deals with Wolff's exile experience during the summer of 1940 that resulted in an autobiography, which he entitled *La Terrasse in der Gascogne*. Written during the summer of 1940, this work was not published until after nearly fifty years later, in 1992. France's sudden defeat in June caused a dramatic deterioration in his living conditions. National Socialism now virtually ruled Europe and Wolff – for the first time in exile – feared for his life. This study examines the exile experience influencing Wolff to write his autobiographical account, *La Terrasse in der Gascogne*.

During his fourth and final period in exile, Wolff addressed the ‘Jewish Question’ and confronted antisemitism, race and Zionism in his two last works, *Grabmal des Unbekannten Soldaten*, written between 1941 to 1942 and published in 1992, and ‘*Die Juden*’, written before his arrest in May 1943 and published in 1984. His reflections on Jewish issues were the direct result of his experience in exile. The implementation of the Nazi race laws and personally witnessing the persecution of Jews in Nice forced him to reflect on his own origin. Wolff fell victim to both racial and political vilification. However, although much of his work can be read as a response to political persecution, a response to the ‘Jewish Question’ can only be found in the last stage of his life, in the fourth and final period.

In 1943, a few days before his arrest, Wolff confessed: ‘Mir scheint, dass⁸⁶ ich, selbstverständlich mit Etappen der Entwicklung wohl immer so ziemlich derselbe geblieben bin’. (Juden 104) Wolff, a man with solid principles and a firm belief in the survival of democracy, did not drastically change his basic ideas and personality. However, inevitably, exile affected him and changed his life and work. Edward Said argues: ‘Exile is life led outside habitual order. It is nomadic, decentered, contrapuntal, but no sooner does one get accustomed to it than its unsettling force erupts anew’.⁸⁷ These constant unsettling forces after 1933, ranging from endless bureaucratic annoyances to the notion of betrayal, had an affect on Wolff. Three major events at the hands of the Nazis influenced Wolff’s life in exile. Starting with February 1933, when he was forced to flee Germany; in May 1933 his books were burnt by German students during the autodafé; and as final brutality, on 26 October 1937 Wolff received his

⁸⁶ The spelling of the German texts is according to the *Neue Rechtschreibung* (www.neue-rechtschreibung.de) It will not appear as in the original texts, as Theodor Wolff’s typed manuscripts showed confusing inconsistencies, in particular in the use of the ß.

⁸⁷ Edward W. Said, *Reflections on Exile and other Essays* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 2000).186.

expatriation notification.⁸⁸ While losing material possessions was distressing, losing Germans citizenship was a sharp insult for Wolff, who considered himself as a German who had contributed much to Germany's political and cultural life. His exile works reveal the sense of loss, dislocation and alienation – all salient features in exile writing. This study will show the escalation of these 'unsettling forces' during the four periods of Wolff's exile; although still relatively gentle during early exile, the intensity steadily increases, culminating in World War II and Wolff's death in the Jewish Hospital in Berlin in September 1943.

⁸⁸ Expatriation Lists are published in *Die Ausbürgerung deutscher Staatsangehöriger 1933-45 nach den im Reichsanzeiger veröffentlichten Listen*, ed. Michael Hepp, vol. 2 (München: Saur, 1985). 23. Wolff's wife is listed in vol.2 p. 24.

CHAPTER ONE: EARLY EXILE 1933 – 1936

Life in Exile

During the night of the Reichstag fire on 27 to 28 February 1933, the liberal democrat,⁸⁹ Theodor Wolff, was forced to flee Germany to save his life. This hasty departure from Berlin had a fundamental effect on his writing. Wolff withdrew from being a current affairs writer, transformed into a writer of historical reflections and produced *Der Marsch durch zwei Jahrzehnte* and *Notes sur l'histoire de la presse*. Wolff's writing was mainly marked by three experiences during 1933: his sudden forced exile, the burning of his books and being refused asylum in Switzerland. These experiences compounded his decision to retreat from public life and current affairs. His life's work – advocating democracy and freedom – was in the process of rapid destruction, and he was forced to watch helplessly as Germany succumbed to the rule of a dictator. His sudden loss of influence on German culture and politics and his loss of his editorship of the *Berliner Tageblatt* changed his focus; his view was now directed to the past, with the present largely rejected. As editor-in-chief of the *Berliner Tageblatt*, Wolff had commented daily on current affairs. In exile, he abandoned contemporary issues and returned to history and his urgent theme: the loss of democracy and freedom. The present, the result of National Socialism, was so repugnant to him that he refused to comment or respond.

⁸⁹ It is outside the scope of this study to define liberalism or the German liberal democrat. As a political model it supports the freedom and dignity of the individual. Liberalism is committed to the free election of representatives of the people, who are given power through a written constitution. Confusion arises through the various interpretation of liberalism through history. For Wolff, the ideology of liberalism meant freedom and emancipation of the individual based on reason and accountability. There is a large number of investigations into the history and special aspects of liberalism. For the present study the following publications were of particular interest: *In Search of Liberal Germany: Studies in the History of German Liberalism from 1789 to the Present*, eds. Konrad H. Jarausch and Larry Eugene Jones (New York: Berg, 1990). Also Bruce B. Frye, *Liberal Democrats in the Weimar Republic: the History of the German Democratic Party and the German State Party* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1985). Also Dieter Langewiesche, *Liberalism in Germany*, trans. Christian Banerji (London: Macmillan, 2000).

The impact of his forced exile received little or no mention in Wolff's exile writings; he offered only one sentence to describe this defining moment in his life: 'Hitler und die national-sozialistische Partei waren nun allmächtig, ich war genötigt, Berlin zu verlassen'. (Grabmal 308) His controlled and careful choice of a few succinct words attempts to project calmness and the fact that he was 'obliged' (*genötigt*) – not forced – to leave Berlin. *Genötigt* implies civility, manners and consultation. In his contempt for Hitler, he facetiously called him 'almighty' (*allmächtig*), a notion usually attributed to 'higher beings'. Wolff maintained his mild and measured demeanour in the face of his undeserved injustice and hardship. He was joined by other exiles who avoided expressing an opinion on Hitler and the Third Reich, such as Karl Kraus, who stated categorically: 'Mir fällt zu Hitler nichts ein'.⁹⁰ Because of their extreme anguish, exiles tried to conceal their true feelings about their present dilemma and Wolff confirms this in the introduction of his first exile work *Der Marsch durch zwei Jahrzehnte*:

Gerade die meisten derjenigen, die durch die Ereignisse aus ihrem lieb gewonnenen Wohnsitz, ihrem Beruf, ihrem Verdienst vertrieben, plötzlich entwurzelt und zu der Wanderung ins Ungewisse gezwungen waren, wollten... ihre Gefühle nicht zur Schau stellen. (Marsch 5)

For an understanding of Wolff's response to life in exile, a brief overview of the turbulent days and months in 1933 is central, as it testifies his intense involvement in current affairs. It illustrates the contrast between his writings before and after being forced into exile.

On 26 February 1933, one day before Wolff left Berlin forever, he wrote his – now legendary – Sunday editorial, unbeknown to him for the last time from his office in the Mosse House in Jerusalemer Strasse. Alerting the public to the dangers of the

⁹⁰ Karl Kraus, *Dritte Walpurgisnacht*, Karl Kraus Schriften 12. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989). 12.

decline of democracy, he began with the prophetic line: ‘Heute in einer Woche wird gewählt... Zum letztenmal’.⁹¹ Hitler had set the election date for 5 March 1933 and Wolff urged Germans to exercise their democratic rights and vote. Emergency decrees followed the Reichstag fire, and the suspension of civil liberties forced many writers, publicists and political activists to leave the country. Nazi opponents, who did not escape, such as Carl von Ossietzky, Willy Bredel, Kurt Hiller and many others were imprisoned. Wolfgang Bretholz, a close friend and also a fellow journalist with the *Berliner Tageblatt*, had discovered Wolff’s name on the list of ‘Enemies of the German People’.⁹² On the night of the Reichstag fire Bretholz pleaded with Wolff to leave his office and catch the last night train to Munich, a comparatively safe city which was in the middle of *Fasching* (Carnival) celebrations at that time. Under Premier Heinrich Held from the *Katholische Bayerische Volkspartei*, Munich still offered refuge to those fleeing Berlin, which was now Hitler’s stronghold. Walter Kiaulehn, journalist with the *Berliner Tageblatt* provides a vivid description of the night of the Reichstag fire: ‘Die Flammensäule, die hinter dem Brandenburger Tor hochschoss, war für Freunde und Feinde der Republik das große Signal... und so setzte noch in der gleichen Nacht ein Sturm auf die Berliner Hauptbahnhöfe ein’.⁹³ Wolff was one of many who managed to reach a train that carried him to Munich, where he found temporary refuge.

On 5 March 1933, from his hotel room in Munich, Wolff continued his battle against National Socialism urging his readers: ‘Geht hin und wählt’,⁹⁴ which was to be his last editorial for the *Berliner Tageblatt*. In this landmark article Wolff

⁹¹ BT 97 (26.2.1933) and Theodor Wolff, *Der Journalist* 358.

⁹² Sösemann, *Theodor Wolff: ein Leben mit der Zeitung* 290.

⁹³ Walter Kiaulehn, *Berlin - Schicksal einer Weltstadt* (München: dtv, 1981). 564.

⁹⁴ BT 109 (5.3.1933) and Theodor Wolff, *Der Journalist* 363.

questioned the fairness of the election campaign using – unusually for him – bellicose words:

Wahlkampf? – seit dem Brand des Reichstagshauses hat er, in Preußen wenigstens, vollends aufgehört. Das Wort ‘Kampf’ setzt ja wohl voraus, dass Kämpfer, mit den Waffen des Geistes und der Sprache gerüstet, einander kampffähig gegenüberstehen. Solche Kampffähigkeit gab und gibt es für die Gegner der heutigen Regierung nicht.⁹⁵

With this language and style Wolff imitates the dogmatic, repetitive and manipulative language of Nazi propaganda, with the aim of alerting readers to exercise their democratic rights. His plea, ‘Geht hin und wählt!’ forms both the article’s title and its final words and reveals the urgency this political battle.⁹⁶ Addressing the reader personally, with the informal ‘Ihr’, the urgency of the message is further emphasised.⁹⁷ Despite some despondency, he believed that the individual could still make a difference in this election. He exhorted them to defend four basic human rights that had been seriously undermined: ‘Für Freiheit, Sicherheit, Rechtsgleichheit und Heimatglück’.⁹⁸

In the 5 March 1933 election the NSDAP increased its share from 33.1% (November 1932) to 43.9%. Wolff attempted to return to Berlin in order to participate in that deciding election – after all he had been an influential and respected commentator for every election between 1906 and 1933. He also wished to see his family and clarify his contract with the *Berliner Tageblatt*. He underestimated the dangers awaiting him. On his arrival back in Berlin on the election weekend of the 5 March 1933, it required two of his closest friends, Wolfgang Bretholz and Oskar

⁹⁵ BT 109 (5.3.1933) and Theodor Wolff, *Der Journalist* 361.

⁹⁶ ‘Geht hin und wählt’ reminds of several biblical quotes starting with ‘Go forth...’. The Holy Bible. Genesis 8. 16; I Kings 22.22; Isaiah 48:20.

⁹⁷ Wolff used the personal address and the ‘Ihr’ only once before, when he addressed his readers just before the July 1932 elections in his editorial entitled ‘Um alles’. BT 360 (31.7.1932) and Theodor Wolff, *Der Journalist* 329.

⁹⁸ BT 109 (5.3.1933) and Theodor Wolff, *Der Journalist* 363.

Stark, and his son Rudolf, citing arrests of journalists and politicians to convince Wolff to return to Munich forthwith.⁹⁹

However, soon after on 9 March 1933 Premier Held was deposed by *Reichskommissar* Ritter Franz von Epp who secured a Nazi take-over and the *Gleichschaltung* in Bavaria. After a respite in Munich of only ten days, Wolff was 'obliged' to flee again, this time to Austria.

On 23 March 1933 the Reichstag passed the *Ermächtigungsgesetz*. The autodafé in German cities on 10 May 1933 represented another manifestation of Nazi oppression. Now living in Austria, Wolff learnt of the destruction and burning of his works and those of other opponents of the Nazis. Their books were thrown into a pyre erected on the *Opernplatz* in the middle of Berlin, accompanied by the shouting of slogans: 'Gegen volksfremden Journalismus demokratisch-jüdischer Prägung, für verantwortungsbewusste Mitarbeit am Werk des nationalen Aufbaus! Ich übergebe der Flamme die Schriften von Theodor Wolff und Georg Bernhard'.¹⁰⁰ Wolff's works, such as *Vollendete Tatsachen* and *Das Vorspiel*, once highly praised, and even eliciting personal congratulations from Friedrich Ebert, first President of the Weimar Republic,¹⁰¹ they were now burnt and banned in Germany. Wolff referred to the book burning only briefly: 'Vandalismus [hat] fast überall gerade die Bücher und Urkunden

⁹⁹ His friend and colleague Wolfgang Bretholz vividly recalls this event: 'Zum Glück hatter er mich vom Bahnhof aus angerufen... und durch die Aufzählung aller Politiker und Publizisten, die in den letzten Tagen verhaftet worden waren, ließ er sich davon überzeugen, dass er Berlin sofort wieder verlassen müsse'. Wolfgang Bretholz, "Er und das 'Tageblatt' waren eins," *Die Welt* 179 (3.8.1968).1.

Elisabeth Castonier recalls: 'Theodor Wolff... kehrte noch einmal zurück – aus Heimweh, weil er sich von Deutschland nicht trennen konnte. Freunde erwarteten ihn auf dem Bahnsteig, zwangen ihn sofort zurückzureisen, da sein Leben gefährdet war. Er reiste mit dem nächsten Zug zurück.' Elisabeth Castonier, *Stürmisch bis heiter: Memoiren einer Aussenseiterin* (München: dtv, 1967). 197.

¹⁰⁰ Georg Bernhard (1875-1944) was editor-in-chief of the *Vossische Zeitung*. The *Feuersprüche* were published in the *Völkischer Beobachter*.12.5.1933 and quoted in: *Die Bücherverbrennung: Zum 10.Mai 1933*, ed. Gerhard Sauder (Wien: Hanser, 1983). 77.

¹⁰¹ Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207: 7. Letter from Friedrich Ebert to Theodor Wolff (24.11.1924).

der Kultur vernichtet, seinen schlimmsten und verhasstesten Feind, den Geist'.
(Grabmal 253)

After five months in Austria, Wolff moved to Switzerland on 12 September 1933 to be reunited with his wife and daughter Lilly. His two sons stayed behind in Berlin. When Anne and Lilly caught the train from Berlin, they carried only two small suitcases to ensure their departure would appear as a weekend excursion.¹⁰² Farewelling friends at the railway station, the women pretended to arrange meetings again in a couple of days, knowing full well that the departure was to be for quite some time. Wolfgang Bretholz recalls later that the family spent some 'herrliche Tage' in Switzerland.¹⁰³ However, their stay was restricted due to a temporary Swiss visa that had been issued on 2 October 1933 with an expiry date of 31 December 1933.¹⁰⁴ This transient short term visa was a shock for Wolff, who had expected asylum in Switzerland, the country which had provided refuge to many other exiles, amongst them Thomas Mann, Erich Maria Remarque and Robert Musil. During 1933 the Swiss parliament had introduced stringent policies to control the flood of asylum seekers, stating as official reasons labour regulations due to high unemployment (*Überlastung des Arbeitsmarktes*) and the presence of too many foreigners (*Überfremdung*).¹⁰⁵ However, these reasons were not applicable to Wolff, because he did not compete with Swiss citizens for employment. *Überfremdung* was the euphemism for antisemitism, the underlying motive for restrictive emigration laws. Switzerland's dark chapter

¹⁰² Elisabeth Castonier records the departure: 'Anne folgte ihm etwas später, denn ihr ältester Sohn, Richard, wollte nicht abreisen und war in den Tiergarten gelaufen, wo er herumirrte, bis ein Freund ihn zur Flucht überredete. Wir brachten Anne zur Bahn. Sie nahm nur zwei kleine Handkoffer mit. Wir spielten Wochendabschied mit ,Also übermorgen um fünf' ... denn überall standen Beobachter.' Castonier 197.

¹⁰³ Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207: 7. Letter from Wolfgang Bretholz to Theodor Wolff (12. 3.1935).

¹⁰⁴ The visa reads: 'Bis zum 31. Dez. 1933 darf nur befristete Aufenthaltsbewilligung erteilt werden. Alsdann hat die Ausreise aus der Schweiz zu erfolgen.' Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207: 32.

Bitter irony has it that Wolff's visa states 'recreation' (*Erholung*) as reason for entering Switzerland.

¹⁰⁵ Carl Ludwig, *Die Flüchtlingspolitik der Schweiz in den Jahren 1933 bis 1955: Bericht an den Bundesrat zuhanden der eidgenössischen Räte.* (Genf: Bundesrat, 1957). 56.

surrounding the treatment of refugees during the early 1930s and World War II is still under discussion.¹⁰⁶ It has been claimed that Swiss authorities refused asylum to over 30 000 refugees between 1933 and 1945.¹⁰⁷ Although Wolff never mentioned this hurtful event, it can be assumed that it contributed to his decision to step out of the public eye and seek the private refuge in Nice.

Exile Life in Nice

Following their expulsion from Switzerland, Wolff and his family arrived in Nice on 23 December 1933.¹⁰⁸ He hoped to find peace in an atmosphere conducive to resume his writing. He also expected to meet friends and colleagues in the south of France, which had become, like Paris and Prague, a centre for exiled intellectuals. For centuries the French Mediterranean coast had been the destination for sun worshippers. Under the increasing threat of totalitarian oppression in Germany, Russia and Spain, locations such as Nice, Cannes and surrounding coastal villages became a preferred refuge for émigrés from many parts of Europe. The Climate, vegetation, French mentality and flexible emigration laws made France the country of choice for the exiles.¹⁰⁹ They met in coffee houses along the coastal strip and settled into a sedate life of waiting, exchanging news and ideas. Prominent writers such as Lion Feuchtwanger lived and entertained in grand style in Sanary-sur-Mer, a small fishing

¹⁰⁶ Edgar Bonjour confirms: 'Jedenfalls war von der traditionellen Asylgunst, mit der man doch im 19. Jahrhundert die Flüchtlinge verwöhnt hatte, wenig mehr lebendig.' Edgar Bonjour, *Geschichte der Schweizerischen Neutralität*, Vol. 3 (1930-1939) (Basel: Helbig & Lichtenhahn 1967). 314.

¹⁰⁷ Heinz Roschewski, *Rothmund und die Juden: eine historische Fallstudie des Antisemitismus in der schweizerischen Flüchtlingspolitik 1933-1957* (Basel: Schweiz. Israel Gemeindebund, 1997). 21.

¹⁰⁸ Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207: 34. Letter from Theodor Wolff to Le Garde des Sceaux, Ministère de la Justice, Vichy (14. 11. 1941).

The Wolff family moved into an apartment at no. 63 Promenade des Anglais. Hermann Kesten, Joseph Roth and Heinrich Mann also lived at different times in the Promenade des Anglais.

¹⁰⁹ Between 1933 and 1944 close to 150 000 German speaking émigrés fled to France. The number who stayed never exceeded 60 000. Fabian and Coulmas 15.

village not far from Nice from 1933 to 1940.¹¹⁰ He and his wife became the ‘Kristallisationspunkt des literarischen Lebens’.¹¹¹ Literary circles that prior to Hitler’s rise to power used to meet in the cafés in Berlin, Munich or Prague, continued the tradition and met in the cafés on the French Mediterranean coast, providing each other with friendship and support. Ludwig Marcuse, who also lived in Sanary-sur-Mer from 1933 – 1939 painted a life in paradise, yet tinged with uncertainty: ‘Wir waren in dem Land, in dem sich Gott einst am wohlsten fühlte... Alles war azurblau, nur nicht unser Gemüt... Wir wohnten im Paradies – notgedrungen’.¹¹² Wolff was often a guest in the village of Sanary-sur-Mer, which gradually developed into a centre for exiled intellectuals and is described by Ludwig Marcuse as the ‘Hauptstadt der deutschen Literatur’.¹¹³ The list of writers and intellectuals residing in Nice and Sanary-sur-Mer is long: Heinrich Mann, Golo Mann, Erika and Klaus Mann, Annette Kolb, Joseph Roth, Bertolt Brecht, Lion Feuchtwanger, Walter Hasenclever, Alfred Kantorowicz, Hermann Kesten, Arthur Koestler, Franz Werfel, Arnold Zweig and Stefan Zweig. Until the outbreak of World War II, the French readily accepted the exiles and their lucrative and peaceful ‘occupation’ of the French Mediterranean coastal strip. For Wolff and many exiles the years prior to September 1939 were relatively stable and resulted in significant and rich exile writings.

Most exiles – including Wolff – regarded their exile as an extended holiday, convinced the Nazi Regime would not last.¹¹⁴ Alfred Döblin’s response to his sudden exile was typical: ‘Es war nur ein Ausflug; man lässt den Sturm vorrübergehen...

¹¹⁰ René Schickele writes: ‘In Sanary ist wieder mal die halbe Emigration versammelt. Kürzlich gab Feuchtwanger einen Monster-Thee.’ *Annette Kolb, René Schickele: Briefe im Exil 1933-1940*, eds. Heidemarie Gruppe and Hans Bender (Mainz: v. Hase und Koehler, 1987). 294.

¹¹¹ *Literarisches Leben, Exil und Nationalsozialismus: Berlin - Antwerpen - Sanary-sur-Mer - Lippoldsberg*, ed. Gerd Koch (Frankfurt am Main: Brandes & Apsel, 1996).70.

¹¹² Ludwig Marcuse, *Mein Zwanzigstes Jahrhundert: auf dem Weg zu einer Autobiographie*. (München: List, 1960).160-161.

¹¹³ Marcuse 180.

¹¹⁴ Sösemann, *Theodor Wolff: ein Leben mit der Zeitung* 314.

längstens drei bis vier Monate, dann sei man mit den Nazis fertig'.¹¹⁵ Klaus Mann admitted: 'I took it for granted that the Nazi farce wouldn't last. No doubt, the powerful democracies would know how to cope with those primitive rascals.... German people would inevitably come to their senses, once they had been made to understand that one doesn't get away with arson, forgery, murder, in a civilized world'.¹¹⁶ The 'farce' was of course to last a further twelve years. National Socialism was met by Wolff and his fellow exiles with incredulity and contempt. One week after the Reichstag fire, Wolff had written optimistically, 'irgendwie und irgendwann [muss] eine andere Periode kommen, in der nicht mehr das ganze Leben eines Volkes unter dem qualmenden Feuerschein jenes ungeheuerlichen Abends liegt'.¹¹⁷ Wolff wrote: 'Das deutsche Volk hat den Teufel nicht erkannt.' (Juden 280) Wolff also misjudged the dangers of National Socialism. He failed to assess political reality during the Weimar Republic and National Socialism.¹¹⁸ Consequently, his inability to predict political outcomes during his exile period caused him to remain in Europe. His decision not to flee to the USA, like so many of his friends, will be discussed in detail later.¹¹⁹

During their stay in Nice Wolff and his family suffered comparatively little hardship or discrimination under the authorities and indeed received preferential treatment. This was confirmed by Wolff during his final years in exile: 'In den zehn Jahren meines hiesigen Asyllebens [ist mir] niemals etwas Verdrießliches geschehen,

¹¹⁵ Alfred Döblin, *Autobiographische Schriften und letzte Aufzeichnungen* (Freiburg: Walter, 1977). 429.

¹¹⁶ Klaus Mann, *The Turning Point: Thirty-Five years in this Century, the Autobiography of Klaus Mann. With a new introduction by Shelley L Frisch*. (London: Oswald Wolff, 1984). 265.

¹¹⁷ BT 109 (5.3.1933) and Theodor Wolff, *Der Journalist* 362.

¹¹⁸ Gotthart Schwarz writes: '...die scharfsinnige Analyse der erlebten Gegenwart und zukünftiger Entwicklungen war nicht sein Feld'. Gotthart Schwarz 11. Andreas Platthaus confirms: 'Eine theoretische Erörterung der historischen Ereignisse war nicht sein Metier'. Platthaus 67.

Modris Eksteins writes: 'No group of Germans was more devoted to the idea of the Weimar Republic and at the same time more aware of the void between the idea and the reality than those journalists who formed the spiritual core of the German democratic press.' Modris Eksteins, *The Limits of Reason: the German Democratic Press and the Collapse of Weimar Democracy* (Oxford: O.U.P., 1975). 306.

¹¹⁹ See Chapter Three: Reticence to leave Europe.

dass ich mich über nichts zu beklagen habe, sondern von den Behörden dieses Landes in allem Wechsel der Dinge immer sehr freundlich behandelt worden bin'. (Juden 234)

This protection contributed to Wolff's false sense of security and his fateful decision not to leave Europe. His financial situation during early exile was, however, of serious concern, even though the family had been able to transfer one-third of their assets to Nice and to the USA.¹²⁰ Nazi authorities had frozen the remaining two thirds and although Wolff was given permission to sell his shares in Germany, he was prevented from taking the money out of the country.¹²¹ With the assistance of the Foreign Minister, Freiherr von Neurath, some furniture, artworks and his library with some thousands of books (Terrasse 48) were shipped to Nice, including valuable paintings by Munch, Gauguin, Toulouse-Lautrec, Liebermann and Leistikow.¹²² Six tons of household items that proved too expensive to transfer to France were kept in storage in Berlin.¹²³ The family also owned real estate in Berlin, which was 'aryanised' during 1936 and 1937. Nazi authorities kept the proceeds of the forced sale as payment of the compulsory *Reichsfluchtsteuer*.¹²⁴ The German Department for Taxation claimed income tax from Wolff until 1935,¹²⁵ two years after his forced departure from Germany. Blocked bank accounts and a lack of access to entitlements and royalties drastically reduced his income. Wolff, who had never in his life experienced financial hardship, lamented: 'Die Blockierung des... nun unerreichbaren und doch sehr nötigen

¹²⁰ Rudolf Wolff remembers: 'Gewiss, etwa ein Drittel seines Vermögens hatte aus Berlin herausgebracht werden können. Einige Wertpapiere hatte sein schweizer Anwalt in Amerika angelegt.' AKIP. Rudolf Wolff für Köhler p. 3.

¹²¹ A letter from the Reichs- und Preussische Wirtschaftsminister explains: 'Soweit Ihr in Deutschland zurückgelassenes Wertpapierdepot in deutschen, auf Mark lautenden Wertpapieren besteht, können Sie die Papiere durch eine deutsche Devisenbank ohne Genehmigung verkaufen. Eine Überführung des Verkaufserlöses ins Ausland kann ich Ihnen in Anbetracht der Devisenlage des Reichs auch für einen geringen Betrag zu meinem Bedauern nicht in Aussicht stellen'. AKIP. Letter from Reichs- und Preussische Wirtschaftsminister to Wolff (13.12.1935).

¹²² Köhler 268, 271.

¹²³ AKIP. Letter from Dr. S Rieser To Wolff (8.2.1935).

¹²⁴ AKIP. Letter from Anne Wolff to Vermögensverwaltungsstelle beim Magistrat Berlin (18.4.1946).

¹²⁵ Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207: 32. Finanzamt Tiergarten. Steuernummer 203-864 (10.1.1935)

Geldes, ja, auch diese gemeinste, miserabelste und verbreitetste aller Sorgen all das ist hartnäckig wie die grauen Weiber des Faust'. (Terrasse 107) Royalties from his published books in Germany were seized and the payment for articles submitted to various exile newspapers and magazines were unreliable and often not forthcoming.¹²⁶ This is confirmed by René Schickele's bemoaning in 1937 irregular payments for articles submitted to the exile press: 'genau wie Theodor Wolff, der von seinen Vorabdrucken in der 'Revue de Paris' auch nichts bekam'.¹²⁷ In addition to the recognition of the loss of fame and family, home, profession, familiar environment and networks, the loss of financial security added to the trauma of living in exile.

Reticence to Join Journalists in Exile

In exile, Wolff made a clear statement that he was unwilling to cooperate with exiled intellectuals who were actively involved in the anti-fascist press: 'Nachdem ich den oft wohl gefährlichen Nahkampf geliebt hatte, ohne besondere Neigung für den Fernkampf, nahm ich in der Emigration an Zeitungspolemik und propagandistischer Aktivität nicht teil'. (Grabmal 308) Even the establishment in December 1933 of the *Pariser Tageblatt* that tried to emulate the *Berliner Tageblatt* under the editorship of his colleague Georg Bernhard, could not entice Wolff back to a life with the newspaper. Wolff's decision to totally abandon public life and current affairs caused him to settle in Nice rather than Paris, which had become the centre of political activism. Wolff lived in Paris for twelve years, from 1894 to 1906, had visited his favourite city on many occasions and exclaimed later enthusiastically: 'Die zwölf Jahre, die ich in Paris zubrachte, waren die schönsten auf die ich zurückblicken

¹²⁶ For a list of Wolff's articles written in exile see Bibliography.

¹²⁷ Annette Kolb, *Rene Schickele: Briefe im Exil* 312.

kann'.¹²⁸ Creative writers preferred the south of France, whereas political writers and activists settled in Paris.

His decision to settle in Nice, far away from Paris and political activism must be interpreted as his determination to sever his connection with his previous life. Earlier Wolff had often discussed his response to National Socialism and a plan to establish an émigré newspaper. As early as 1930, Rudolf Olden recalls in a letter to Wolff their plan for an exile newspaper: 'Erinnern Sie sich, wie oft wir, seit dem historischen Wahlsieg vom September 30 von der kommenden Emigrantenzeitung gesprochen haben'.¹²⁹ Wolff acknowledged the fact that difficult times called for solidarity and closing ranks, and yet he distanced himself from those 'die im Ausland den Kampf gegen die neuen Machthaber forsetzten'. (Marsch 8) His clear observations, thoughtful and intelligent interpretations and conciliatory arguments had been influential in Germany for nearly forty years. As he did not feel comfortable in the role of an activist, he retreated into his quiet, private environment: 'Man wird solche Abstinenz keinem verübeln dürfen, der tägliche Arbeit zu verbinden hatte... aber nicht eine Kämpfernatur [war]'. (Juden 49)

While Wolff was not alone in turning his back on political involvement,¹³⁰ many other exiles disagreed strongly with those who retreated from public life. Arnold Zweig argued: 'Can I make it plain why it is no longer permissible for a literary artist to withdraw into the ivory tower of his work?... Is it not his work, his vital service to those of his own time, to disclose the forces which are making the history of the

¹²⁸ Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass. 207: 28. Vaters letzte Zeilen. .

¹²⁹ Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass. 207: 17. Letter from Rudolf Olden to Theodor Wolff (28.3.1935)

¹³⁰ Ingrid Belke wrote about Siegfried Kracauer : 'Im Gegensatz zu den meisten politischen Emigranten schloss sich Kracauer jedoch während der Exiljahre in Frankreich keiner linken Organisation, keiner Partei an.' Ingrid Belke, "Identitätsproblem Siegfried Kracauers," *Deutsch-Jüdisches Exil: das Ende der Assimilation? Identitätsprobleme deutscher Juden in der Emigration*, eds. Wolfgang Benz and Marion Neiss (Berlin: Metropol, 1994), 56.

present and the immediate future?’¹³¹ Yet, in Wolff’s opinion, little could be achieved by fighting the enemy from the outside. Erika and Klaus Mann showed empathy with Wolff, when they wrote in 1939:

Den berühmten Chefredakteur und Leitartikler des Berliner Tageblatts, Theodor Wolff zum Beispiel, konnte niemand verdächtigen, mit den Nazis irgend zu sympathisieren oder mit ihnen paktieren zu wollen. Er hatte seinen demokratischen, pazifistischen, in jeder Hinsicht versöhnlichen Standpunkt nicht einmal, sondern Hunderte von Malen in seinen brillant geschriebenen politischen Aufsätzen und Glossen eindeutig und eindringlich genug formuliert. Der alte Herr, dessen Wort in Deutschland durch Jahrzehnte so viel Echo und Einfluss gehabt hatte, schien aber nicht mehr willens oder nicht mehr fähig, im Exil weiter politisch aktiv zu sein... Er hat resigniert – und niemand darf ihn wohl gar bitter anklagen, wenn er heute denkt: Ich habe lange genug gekämpft und mich dem Hass ausgesetzt und bin immer mitten drin gewesen. Nun sind andere dran. Nun sind die Jüngeren dran.¹³²

Wolff rejected the notion of old age preventing him from participating in the political opposition to the Nazi regime: ‘Es war nicht altersschwache Weisheit und nicht Fahnenflucht, wenn ich diese Aktivität auf fremden Boden sehr viel skeptischer und weniger günstig beurteilt habe, als mancher es wünschte’. (Terrasse 78)

Three major reasons were responsible for his refusal to join political activism in Paris. First, Wolff had observed that the exiles did not represent a united front: ‘Nein, das Schicksal bindet nicht alle Menschen der ehemaligen Heimat, reinliche und andere, in Sympathie und Solidarität zusammen’. (Grabmal 320) Wolff was dismayed by the disharmony amongst the exiles who shared little, except their opposition to the Nazi Regime and Hitler, their common enemy. It was simply wrong to speak about a ‘unity’ of exile writers as they were deeply divided by differing ideologies, political convictions and individual motivations. Alfred Kantorowicz observed: ‘Man sieht, eine Einheit waren die Exilierten nicht. Es gab von ultra-rechts bis ultra-links alle

¹³¹ Arnold Zweig, *Insulted and Exiled: The Truth about the German Jews* (London: Miles, 1937).

XV.

¹³² Erika Mann and Klaus Mann, *Escape to Life: Deutsche Kultur im Exil* (München: Spangenberg, 1991). 71.

Nuancen politischer (oder auch dazwischen apolitischer) Gesinnung'.¹³³ Although the exile experience unified exile writers – they all had one common enemy – this was insufficient to overcome individual differences to enable them to speak with one strong voice. The exiles were burdened by their political and social differences from the Weimar era. This was illustrated by the failure to create a *Volksfront* under Heinrich Mann, uniting exiles, mostly writers and intellectuals in a common fight against Hitler. It has been argued that the volatile exile environment even intensified political differences.¹³⁴ It is widely accepted 'dass es *die* deutsche politische Emigration als homogene organisatorisch-politische und geistige Gruppe nicht gab'.¹³⁵ After observing disharmony and disunity amongst politicians and intellectuals during the Weimar years, Wolff held little hope for dispersed exile groups forming an effective resistance movement.

Secondly, challenging National Socialism from a distance seemed doomed to Wolff and he declared: 'in die inneren Parteistreitigkeiten habe ich mich nicht eingemischt, und die Fernkämpfe der Emigration gegen das Hitlerregime sind mir immer zu steril erschienen'. (Terrasse 35) Wolff was convinced that political activism and the exile press had no impact in Germany, where only the official party line was allowed to be published. After 1933 polemics against Hitler's regime largely missed the target. All texts distributed in Germany needed to conform with the *Reichsschrifttumskammer*, and Hitler and Goebbels successfully banned the dissemination of material written by their opponents. Whereas, in the past, Wolff as

¹³³ Alfred Kantorowicz, *Exil in Frankreich: Merkwürdigkeiten und Denkwürdigkeiten* (Bremen: Schünemann, 1971). 76.

¹³⁴ Söseman writes: 'Sowohl im Untergrund als auch im französischen Exil war es nicht gelungen, eine enge Zusammenarbeit zwischen den politischen und weltanschaulichen oftmals heftig zerstrittenen Gegnern der Nationalsozialisten zu begründen... Die Frustrationen und Nöte des Asylantenlebens hatten die politischen Differenzen unter den Emigranten verstärkt'. Bernd Söseman, *Journalistischer Kampf gegen den Nationalsozialismus im deutschen Untergrund und französischen Exil*, Fritz Eberhard, *Rückblicke auf Biographie und Werk*, ed. Bernd Söseman (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2001). 191.

¹³⁵ Herbert E. Tutas, *Nationalsozialismus und Exil: die Politik des Dritten Reiches gegenüber der deutschen politischen Emigration 1933-1939*. (München: Hanser, 1975). 8.

editor-in-chief was accustomed to addressing a large readership and was assured of significant influence, now he was a writer without readers. He questioned the effectiveness of an intellectual battle from a distance without an audience and without access to adequate resources, as strict censorship laws made it impossible to obtain reliable information. Golo Mann agreed with Wolff on the diminished effectiveness of the voices of Nazi opponents working outside Germany: ‘Aus meinen Studien schloss ich, dass Emigranten in ihren oft wechselnden Gastländern niemals gehört werden’.¹³⁶ In a classic metaphor Wolff described resistance writers sitting on a leaking raft in a howling storm trying to be heard:

Aus dem gleichen Gefühl heraus kann auch derjenige, der trotz Ermahnungen und Tadel auf einem sehr lecken rettenden Floß geblieben ist, abgeneigt sein, mit dem wirklichen Heldentum zu konkurrieren, das sich inmitten des Orkans, im Schiffbruch und in der unmittelbaren Lebensgefahr bewährt... Die Wortkanonen des schwersten Kalibers, die aus der Ferne gegen ein unerreichbares Ziel gerichtet werden, können nicht viel vollbringen’. (Juden 39)

The third reason for Wolff’s refusal to join political activists in Paris was the fear of attracting attention from German Nazi officials. Nice promised to be a safe refuge, and restricting his writing to historical topics provided an appropriate avenue to negotiate the challenging dilemma of reaching a readership without attracting the attention of the authorities.

Although refusing to participate in organized opposition activities, Wolff gave generous financial assistance to the ‘Ligue Francaise pour la Defense des Droits de l’Homme et du Citoyen’, as his correspondence with Hellmuth von Gerlach demonstrates.¹³⁷ Lengthy correspondence between Wolff and Hugo Simon, foundation member and spokesperson for the *Bund Neues Deutschland*, documents his resistance

¹³⁶ Golo Mann, *Erinnerungen und Gedanken: Lehrjahre in Frankreich.*, ed. Hans-Martin Gauger und Wolfgang Mertz. (Frankfurt am Main: S.Fischer, 1999). 74.

¹³⁷ Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207:10. Letter from Hellmuth von Gerlach to Theodor Wolff (21.1.1935).

to join the organization. Wolff based his refusal on the fact that he did not want his name on any *Mitgliederliste*, especially in these dangerous times, whilst members of his family were still residing in Berlin.¹³⁸ Wolff's blunt rejection of involvement in German affairs is demonstrated by his refusal to assist in the release of Carl von Ossietzky, his Socialist colleague and editor of *Die Weltbühne*. His contribution, he argued, could never achieve Carl von Ossietzky's freedom; instead, it would antagonize Nazi prison officials.¹³⁹ Wolff felt powerless when confronted with Hitler's justice system, army and police.

Wolff's deliberate decision to keep his distance from politics runs contra to many exile writers. Exile writers confronted politics, as the result of having fallen victim to politics, to a dictatorial political system. The merits of writers entering politics has always resulted in discussions, going back to a scene in Auerbach's cellar in Goethe's *Faust*: 'Ein garstig Lied! Pfui! ein politisch Lied, ein leidig Lied!'¹⁴⁰ In 1918 Thomas Mann argued strongly against writers' involvement in politics in his *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*.¹⁴¹ He advocates to keep politics separate from culture and in March 1932 with the dangers of National Socialism increasing, he still defended his position in a letter to Theodor Wolff: 'Das Entscheidende für mich ist, dass mir jedes direkte Eingreifen in die politischen Dinge im höchsten Grade widersteht und dass ich es unmöglich als meine Aufgabe betrachten kann'.¹⁴² While poets and writers traditionally retreat to their ivory tower of artistic isolation, to avoid contamination with politics, many German exile writers became active in the

¹³⁸ AKIP. Letters from Theodor Wolff to Hans Siemsen 21.2.1938 and 11.8.1938; AKIP. Letters from 'Bund Neues Deutschland' to Theodor Wolff 24.7.1938 and 9.8.1938.

¹³⁹ Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207:7. Letter from Theodor Wolff to Deutsche Liga für Menschenrechte (Kurt Grossmann) (20.10.1934).

¹⁴⁰ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust: eine Tragödie* (2092).

¹⁴¹ Thomas Mann, *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* (Berlin: Fischer, 1920).

¹⁴² Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207:16. Letter from Thomas Mann to Theodor Wolff (24.3.1932).

resistance. The list of writers working in with resistance organisations is long. Heinrich Mann became the spokesperson for the exiles in France from 1933 – 1940 as president of the *Schutzverband deutscher Schriftsteller* and president of the *Deutsche Freiheitsbibliothek* in Paris. Lion Feuchtwanger, Alfred Kantorowicz, Bertolt Brecht, Johannes R. Becher and Klaus Mann joined the anti Fascist resistance. Eventually, in 1939 after the outbreak of World War II, Thomas Mann changed his views. He was forced to retreat from his strongly defended previous conviction that writers should stay out of politics. In his essay *Zwang zur Politik*¹⁴³ he urged writers to voice their opposition and blamed the ‘unpolitical German’ for the German catastrophe: ‘Wie sehr die Unglückseligkeit der deutschen Geschichte und ihr Weg in die Kulturkatastrophe des Nationalsozialismus mit der Politiklosigkeit des bürgerlichen Geistes in Deutschland zusammenhängt... das wurde mir wieder recht bewusst’.¹⁴⁴ In fact, Peter Gay apportioned much blame for Germany’s tragic modern history to the ‘central ingredient that hapless figure, the unpolitical German’.¹⁴⁵ In exile Wolff chose to be one of these unpolitical Germans. He did not return to politics and current affairs and joined those exile writers who avoided contemporary issues. Alfred Döblin calls this denial of the present ‘Mangel an Gegenwart’.¹⁴⁶ Heinz Frieder Tengler argues: ‘Unable to discover suitable material in contemporary events... many German émigré writers turned to the past in search for topics’.¹⁴⁷ Exile writers had to re-orient themselves and focused on coming to terms with their past, closing their eyes to the present. Prior to exile, during his professional life in Berlin, Wolff had worked with the present in order to defend the democracy. In his exile writings, in his historical

¹⁴³ Thomas Mann, "Zwang zur Politik," *Das Neue Tage-Buch* 7 (1939). 710-712.

¹⁴⁴ Thomas Mann, "Zwang zur Politik." 710.

¹⁴⁵ Peter Gay, *Freud, Jews and other Germans: Master and Victims in Modernist Culture*. (Oxford: Univ. Press, 1978). 4.

¹⁴⁶ Alfred Döblin, *Aufsätze zur Literatur* (Freiburg: Walter, 1963). 195.

¹⁴⁷ Heinz Frieder Tengler, "The Historical Novel in German Exile Literature (1933-1945)," PhD Dissertation, University of California, 1982. X.

reflections, he continued to defend democratic values, lost under Hitler. His first exile work, *Der Marsch durch zwei Jahrzehnte* examines the past in order to make sense of the present. Wolff pursued his reflective writing with renewed and genuine passion, convinced Germany would soon return to being a civil society.

Writing in exile

Der Marsch durch zwei Jahrzehnte: Reflections on the Past

Wolff wrote *Der Marsch durch zwei Jahrzehnte* during 1934 and 1935 when life in Nice was still tolerable.

With this opening Wolff sets the scene:

Im Garten eines Landhauses, das auf einem der Hügelzüge an der französischen Küste, in ziemlicher Höhe über dem Meer steht, fanden sich regelmäßig an jedem Sonntag, und manchmal auch an einem Wochentage, sehr verschiedenartige, aber durch geistige Interessen verbundene Menschen zusammen. Sie stammten aus vielerlei Ländern, sie hatten nicht die gleichen Arbeitsgebiete, ihre politische Anschauungen gingen oft auseinander, aber sie waren entweder voll Wissen oder voll Wißbegierde und lebten zwischen der Erbschaft vergangener Jahrhunderte und den Problemen der Gegenwart. (Marsch 5)

Similar introductions are also used by other exiles, such as Golo Mann, who begins his memoirs with a description of a meeting of exiles on a terrace overlooking the Mediterranean.¹⁴⁸ Although a growing sense of uncertainty prevailed, the exiles had still choices, options and hope. Against this background of relative peace and comfort and the stimulating company of other exiled intellectuals, Wolff embarked on this, his first exile project. It consists of a series of talks presented to a group of exiles,

¹⁴⁸ Golo Mann writes: 'Ein Augustnachmittag unter strahlenden Himmel. Die Terrasse einer Villa...' Golo Mann, *Erinnerungen und Gedanken: Lehrjahre in Frankreich*. 11.

who gather regularly on the terrace of a country estate owned by a rich Hamburg merchant. The beautiful landscape, pleasant climate and atmosphere create the illusion of carefree days. However, a heavy cloud hangs over all guests present. In *Der Marsch durch zwei Jahrzehnte* Wolff presents ten portraits of famous men who influenced German history and politics during the first two decades of the 20th Century.¹⁴⁹ The portraits assist in the comprehension of the political disputes on democracy during the early 20th century. According to Wolff, all these men failed to sufficiently support democracy and thus contributed to the downfall of the Weimar Republic and the rise of National Socialism.

In Nice Wolff combined undisturbed reading and writing during the day with meeting friends in the late afternoon and evening.¹⁵⁰ This included close contact with Thomas Mann, who lived near Sanary-sur-Mer and took great interest in the progress of Wolff's work. Thomas Mann recorded in his diary on 20 September 1935: 'Zum Thee Th. Wolff aus Nizza.'¹⁵¹ On 7 November 1935 he noted: 'Nach dem Abendessen Lektüre in Th. Wolffs 'Marsch durch zwei Jahrzehnte'. Kapitel über die gutmütige Revolution von 1918'.¹⁵² Life in Nice at that time was stimulating and productive. Wolff even sounded somewhat relieved and confessed later that at the start of his exile he had felt liberated, released from the pressure of demanding schedules and conflicting responsibilities as editor-in-chief of the *Berliner Tageblatt*. He writes that he was 'im Grunde zufrieden, die journalistische Tagesarbeit, in die ich 45 Jahre lang eingespannt war, abzuschütteln und einige Bücher schreiben zu können'. (Grabmal

¹⁴⁹ They are: Prince Bernhard von Bülow, Count Anton Monts de Mazin, Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg, Georg Michaelis, Count Georg Friedrich Hertling, Max von Baden, Erich Ludendorff, Albert Ballin, Ulrich von Brockdorff-Rantzau and Otto Braun.

¹⁵⁰ 'There were calls (by Thomas Mann) on the former editor of the BT, Theodor Wolff, where many of the émigrés were invited and a general air of optimism seemed to prevail.' Donald Prater, *Thomas Mann, a Life* (Oxford: Univ. Press, 1995).236.

¹⁵¹ Thomas Mann, *Tagebücher 1935-1936*, ed. Peter de Mendelssohn (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1978). 176.

¹⁵² Thomas Mann, *Tagebücher 1935-1936*. 202. *Der Marsch durch zwei Jahrzehnte* was published in 1936. As this diary entry is from 1935, Thomas Mann must have been presented with a pre-publication copy.

308) Wolff perceived early exile life in Nice as an extended holiday and early retirement. As already mentioned, Wolff and many exiles did not foresee National Socialism lasting until 1945.

Wolff commenced on a rigorous writing routine at his beloved *Stehpult*, surrounded by those books from his library which had been transported from Berlin. It has been argued that writers in exile carried their imaginary writing desk with them like snails carrying their homes.¹⁵³ Wolff's attachment to his writing desk has been described by Sösemann: 'Sein Schreibtisch blieb seine Heimat'.¹⁵⁴ In a sense the German language represented *Heimat*. Despite being fluent in French, Wolff chose to write in German rather than in the language of his host country.¹⁵⁵ He shared with other exile writers his preference, close connection to and love for the German language, which was the only German 'possession' that nobody could take away. He was not alone in this, as Matthias Wegner points out: 'Von den bedeutenderen Vertretern der deutschen Literatur hat keiner versucht, seine Werke in einer fremden Sprache zu schreiben'.¹⁵⁶ Günther Anders presents several reasons for the exiles clinging to the German language: it stemmed the pain of homesickness for some, others sought to protect the German language and culture in preparation for life after National Socialism.¹⁵⁷ The exiles deplored the intellectual decay in Germany under Hitler and were determined to protect the German language, which was threatened by an alien Nazi vocabulary, later referred to as LTI (*Lingua Tertii Imperii*).¹⁵⁸ Ludwig Marcuse wrote in 1936: 'Jeder ursprünglich deutsche Satz, jeder grammatikalisch

¹⁵³ Sonja M.Hedgepeth, *Überall blicke ich nach einem heimatlichen Boden aus: Exil im Werk Else Lasker-Schülers* (New York.: Peter Lang, 1994). 27.

¹⁵⁴ Sösemann, *Theodor Wolff: ein Leben mit der Zeitung*, 317.

¹⁵⁵ A French translation was published in 1937. Theodor Wolff, *Le Peuple en March*, trans. M.Rémon (Paris: Michel, 1937).

¹⁵⁶ Wegner 147.

¹⁵⁷ Günther Anders, "Der Emigrant," *Merkur* 16 (1962). 619–622.

¹⁵⁸ Victor Klemperer, *The Language of the Third Reich: LTI, lingua tertii imperii. A Philologist's Notebook* (London: Athlone, 2000).

richtig gebaute deutsche Satz, jeder logische deutsche Satz, der sprachlich blühende deutsche Satz, der heute geschrieben wird, ist eine Brücke über die deutsche Sintflut, eine Verbindung zwischen Gestern und Morgen'.¹⁵⁹ Observing the German language being adulterated, Wolff paid special attention to writing his exile works in German. Losing the German language meant losing the right to belong to Germany and the German culture; a right assimilated Jews had aspired to over several centuries. The German language meant more than just the language. Wolff regarded the German language as a major part of his creativity and identity.

Not only was the exile writers' language endangered, their networks were also threatened. German publishers and royalties were not accessible any more and the exiles were forced to establish new working relationships with publishing houses outside Germany. Three publishers became known for their special attention to exile writers: Oprecht in Zürich, Allert de Lange and Querido in Amsterdam. The market for German exile writers was limited and often not a lucrative financial undertaking, as Oprecht demonstrated in his devastating account details to Wolff.¹⁶⁰ Wolff was fortunate to find a publisher in Allert de Lange, Amsterdam, for *Der Marsch durch zwei Jahrzehnte*. Its educational and entertaining merits are praised in a lengthy correspondence between Allert de Lange and Theodor Wolff.¹⁶¹ However, a dispute arose over the bellicose title *Vorbeimarsch*, suggested by Wolff. The title *Der Marsch durch zwei Jahrzehnte* was also initially rejected. The publisher suggested the rather colourless title, *Erinnerungen und Begegnungen*. Eventually Allert de Lange agreed reluctantly to *Der Marsch durch zwei Jahrzehnte* and the English translation followed

¹⁵⁹ Ludwig Marcuse, "Die Anklage auf Flucht," *Das Neue Tage-Buch* 4-6 (1936). 132.

¹⁶⁰ Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207:17. Several Letters from Oprecht to Theodor Wolff.

¹⁶¹ Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207: 5. Letters from Allert de Lange to Theodor Wolff. (16. 4. 1935; 29. 6. 1935; 8. 7. 1935)

quickly under the title *Through Two Decades*'.¹⁶² It is noteworthy that the English edition eliminated the offensive 'march' in the title, suggesting an awareness of British distaste for rising German militarism. At the time of publication in 1936, Hitler's introduction of conscription, his troops marching into the Rhineland and the prevailing militaristic culture aroused considerable suspicion in the English-speaking world. It is surprising however, that the French accepted the title *Le Peuple en March* for the French translation. Several references in the text explain the importance of 'the march' in the German psyche. Wolff writes: 'Das Bedürfnis nach Unterordnung, nach scharfem Kommandoton, nach Marschieren in straff zusammengehaltenen und geleiteten Verbänden gehört zum deutschen Charakter, das Gehorchen ist wie das Befehlen eine befriedigende Tätigkeit, und es ist kein Zufall, dass die schönsten Militärmärsche die deutschen sind'. (Marsch 371) The German title, *Der Marsch durch zwei Jahrzehnte*, is understandably preferable to the rather nondescript English translation *Through Two Decades*, considering the importance the author placed on the issue of marching in the German psyche. Indeed, marching was an important component of the Third Reich as the Nürnberg mass rallies, documented by Leni Riefenstahl, demonstrate: countless columns of spectacularly choreographed soldiers marching for hours in adoration of their *Führer*. Propaganda images were based on mass formation of willing Germans marching behind the swastika flag. Germans were either enthusiastic spectators or participants. During the 1936 Olympic Games the world witnessed thousands of marching Germans, and marching troops became a symbol for German militarism and the Nazi regime. Wolff consciously and

¹⁶² Theodor Wolff's colleague and friend Henry Wickham Steed, journalist and editor of the *Times* (London) was influential in the choice of the English title, *Through Two Decades*. (Theodor Wolff, *Through Two Decades*, Trans. Ernst Walter Dickes (London: Heinemann, 1936).

In 1924 Henry Wickham Steed had published his own work under the title: *Through Thirty Years*. Henry Wickham Steed, *Through Thirty Years 1892-1922: a Personal Narrative.*, vol. 1 and 2 (New York: Doubleday, 1924).

deliberately used the title: *Der Marsch durch zwei Jahrzehnte*, to illustrate the end of freedom of the individual.

In *Der Marsch durch zwei Jahrzehnte* Wolff chronicles the loss of democratic freedom through the portraits of famous German public figures from the first two decades of the 20th Century, with whom he was well acquainted and had engaged in many meetings and conversations. Personal contact was Wolff's preferred source of reference. This is confirmed by the journalist Helmut Cron: 'Das persönliche Gespräch war ihm wichtiger!'¹⁶³ He preferred his own experiences to any dogma or theory. Platthaus states: 'Eine theoretische Erörterung der historischen Ereignisse war nicht sein Metier, Wolff blieb Zeit seines Lebens ein Empiriker'.¹⁶⁴ Whilst Wolff acknowledged that he was not an academic historian, rather a mere 'unzünftiger Arbeiter', (Marsch 123) critics hailed this work as a major research tool for understanding Germany's role in World War I and the Weimar Republic. The British press published favourable reviews.¹⁶⁵ EW (Ernst Walter) Dickes, the translator of Wolff's earlier work, *Der Krieg des Pontius Pilatus (The Eve of 1914)*, again competently translated and captured Wolff's colourful expressions and nuances in his English translation. However, Dickes took certain liberties in eliminating some important passages. It is outside the scope of this study to evaluate Dickes' translation, but concerns must be raised over several substantial omissions.¹⁶⁶ Harold Nicholson, another of Wolff's London friends, praised the work not only for the wealth of previously unpublished material and revealing historical facts, but also for Wolff's

¹⁶³ *Journalisten über Journalisten*, ed. Hans Jürgen Schultz (München: Kindler, 1980). 141.

¹⁶⁴ Platthaus 67.

¹⁶⁵ Edward Hallett Carr, "Theodor Wolff Remembers," *The Sunday Times* 8.11. 1936. Henry Wickham Steed, "Theodor Wolff as Witness," *The Observer* 1.11. 1936. J. Malthaner, "Review," *Books Abroad* 11.3 Summer (1937). 334. Harold Nicholson, "Behind the Scenes in Foreign Politics," *Daily Telegraph* 23.10. 1936.

¹⁶⁶ The prologue omits a chapter on solidarity amongst exiles (compare *Marsch* p. 8 with *Through Two Decades* p. X) Also passages with references to German writers and intellectuals – apparently of lesser interest to the English reader – are omitted (check *Marsch* p.9 (Jacob Burckhardt) and p.374 (Friedrich von Schiller). In the chapter on Graf Monts, the translator eliminates Graf Monts' correspondence, which implicated England in a lack of commitment to prevent World War I. (Compare *Marsch* p.78-102 with *Through Two Decades* p.63)

balanced judgments, 'although exiled from his country in circumstances of great unfairness'.¹⁶⁷ Henry Wickham Steed, Theodor Wolff's friend and colleague, journalist and editor of the *Times* (London), respected the work for its sound historical research and reliable evidence.¹⁶⁸ It is interesting to note the discrepancy in the reviewers' judgment of Wolff's portrayal of the various statesmen, Ludendorff in particular.¹⁶⁹ Carr wrote: 'A rather dull sketch of Ludendorff',¹⁷⁰ yet Steed professed: 'One of the best sketches is that of Ludendorff'.¹⁷¹ Such opposing critiques confirm subjectivity and emotional and political bias. *Books Abroad* took issue with Wolff over his 'pent up emotions' in the portrayal of Michaelis and his bias towards Ballin and Brockdorf-Rantzau.¹⁷² As recent as 2002 Wolff's work received praise from Hermann Haarmann: 'Hier schreibt ein großer Feuilletonist, sein Ausdruck und die Kraft seiner Sprache münden in eine literarisch hochstehende Prosa'.¹⁷³

Bernd Söseman re-published the work at the end of 1989 under the title, 'Die Wilhelminische Epoche: Fürst Bülow am Fenster und andere Begegnungen', with substantial additional material, including Wolff's relevant feature articles from the *Berliner Tageblatt*. This new edition and Söseman's contribution to Wolff's life and work was applauded by the critics,¹⁷⁴ and rekindled the interest in Theodor Wolff and re-established his influential role in Germany during the first half of the 20th Century.

These ten famous men, portrayed by Wolff, all have some elements in common: they failed to save the democracy, they experience betrayal and are forced to

¹⁶⁷ Nicholson, "Behind the Scenes in Foreign Politics." n.pag.

¹⁶⁸ Steed, "Theodor Wolff as Witness." n.pag.

¹⁶⁹ Ludendorff's rightwing tendencies, support for Hitler and his anti-Semitism made him a controversial figure in German history.

¹⁷⁰ Carr, "Theodor Wolff Remembers." n.pag.

¹⁷¹ Steed, "Theodor Wolff as Witness." n.pag.

¹⁷² Malthaner, "Review." 334.

¹⁷³ Hermann Haarmann, "Wie deutsche Schriftsteller und Publizisten aus dem Exil gegen Hitler kämpften," *Der Nationalsozialismus und die deutsche Gesellschaft: Einführung und Überblick*, ed. Bernd Söseman (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2002). 307.

¹⁷⁴ *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (1.6. 1990) 8; *Süddeutsche Zeitung* 122 (29. 5. 1990) 16; *Der Tagesspiegel* (Berlin) 13505 (25. 2.1990) 55.

deal with some aspects of exile. Wolff examines closely the events leading to the men's downfall and comes to the conclusion 'alles ging zugrunde, was [sie] geliebt und wofür [sie] gelebt hatten'. (Marsch 259) It can be argued that this also applied to Wolff himself. *Der Marsch durch zwei Jahrzehnte* reflects Wolff's personal unease over his own role and inability to prevent Hitler's rise to power. The portraits of these men reflect his own fate, having lost everything he had loved and lived for, i.e., the hope for a liberal democracy in Germany.

The work's configuration, a *Rahmenerzählung*,¹⁷⁵ is reminiscent of Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron*, where a group of exiled young people forced to flee Florence in the grip of the 'Black Plague'.¹⁷⁶ They settle in the country-side and enjoy story telling. Wolff's group of exiled storytellers escaped a different – albeit just as devastating – plague, the 'Brown Plague' of the Nazi Regime. In the *Decameron* Boccaccio praises women; in *Der Marsch durch zwei Jahrzehnte* Wolff exposes the imperfection in man – influential key figures in German public life, who largely failed to save democracy.

Der Marsch durch zwei Jahrzehnte can be viewed as the final volume of a trilogy. The first two works were both written prior to exile. *Das Vorspiel* covers the years around the turn of the century and the rise of Nationalism in Europe. The second volume in this trilogy, *Der Krieg des Pontius Pilatus*,¹⁷⁷ covers detailed events leading to the outbreak of World War I. *Der Marsch durch zwei Jahrzehnte*, written in exile and published in 1936, represents the third and closing volume of Wolff's historical accounts on the first two decades of the 20th Century. With this work Wolff joins a

¹⁷⁵ 'Rahmenerzählung' or Frame Story, a story within a story. Gero von Wilpert offers the following definition: 'Rahmenerzählung, Umschließung von einer oder mehreren Erzählungen durch eine andere umgreifende und meist selbst erzählende'. Gero von Wilpert, *Sachwörterbuch der Literatur* (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1989). 739.

¹⁷⁶ Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron, a new translation*, eds. Mark Musa and Peter E. Bondanella (New York: Norton, 1977).

¹⁷⁷ Although published in 1934, this work was not written in exile and is not included, as this study deals with Wolff's exile writings between 1933 and 1943.

large chorus of historians who argue over Germany's innocence or guilt that led to the rise of National Socialism. Wolff's compassion and his personal commitment to understanding others and drawing conclusions from their ideas and behaviour, give this work special authenticity. Because he knew these men intimately, Wolff searched for answers profiling their political engagement and their (lack of) commitment to democracy.

Der Marsch durch zwei Jahrzehnte was mistakenly catalogued as an autobiography by the curators of the exhibition, *Exil-Literatur 1933-1945*, held in the *Deutsche Bibliothek*, Frankfurt am Main during 1965. The exhibition catalogue lists *Der Marsch durch zwei Jahrzehnte* under 'Autobiographie' – most likely misled by the title. Wolff was less well known compared to the other exile writers in the exhibition.¹⁷⁸ *Der Marsch durch zwei Jahrzehnte* is not an autobiography, rather the story of ten famous men and their influence on German politics during the first two decades of the 20th century. The reader engages with each character, as they are paraded like actors on the stage. It is interesting – perhaps inevitable – that these dignified and honest portraits vary in depth and empathy. All portraits are treated with respect and balanced judgment, notwithstanding the occasional character assassination. The closer Wolff was to his subject, the more colourful and compelling a portrait developed (e.g., the portrait of Albert Ballin, Jewish businessman, head of the world's largest steamship company and the Kaiser's close acquaintance).

¹⁷⁸ *Exil-Literatur 1933-1945, eine Ausstellung aus Beständen der Deutschen Bibliothek, Frankfurt am Main. Sammlung Exil Literatur* (Frankfurt am Main: Deutsche Bibliothek, 1965). 261.

The exhibition included the following classical exile autobiographies: Ernst Toller, *Eine Jugend in Deutschland* (Hamburg:rororo, 1963); Heinrich Mann, *Ein Zeitalter wird besichtigt* (Berlin: Aufbau Verl., 1947); Stefan Zweig, *Die Welt von Gestern: Erinnerungen eines Europäers* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verl., 1970 (1940)).

The nine talks, Wolff presented at the exiles' regular meetings in a friend's villa, high above the French Mediterranean Coast, are placed between a prologue – that introduces the participants and the rules of the 'Round Table' discussions – and an epilogue – that summarises the audience's reaction to the lectures. Wolff – seemingly not part of the group – maintains his distance and avoids personal pronouns such as 'we' or 'us'. He uses phrases such as 'all who were together', 'whole of the company', 'members of the round table' and 'various members of the society'.

An eclectic group of people from vastly varied backgrounds coming together to discuss culture, history and politics to relive their past, and to ease fear and uncertainty, epitomises the classic exile community. Wolff's balanced judgment of people and events are exemplary and to be expected from a man who had always resisted tabloid, sensationalist or unscholarly discourse. At some stage of their illustrious careers every one of these public figures contributed to Germany's destiny and lived in conflict with the government of the day. Some shared their fate with Wolff and were forced into exile. These seemingly unrelated biographical sketches form a cohesive chronicle of German history from the turn of the century (Prince Bernhard von Bülow) to the rise of National Socialism (Otto Braun). Wolff demonstrates that these men were unwilling or unable to contribute to the stabilisation of a parliamentary democracy. As these famous men are paraded before the reader, Wolff asks what he could have contributed to save the republic, when all these ten influential men had failed in their endeavours. Without apportioning blame to one of these men, he asks:

Aber ganz abgesehen vom Verhalten der einen und der anderen, und ganz abgesehen auch von den besonderen Zeitumständen, der Inflation, der Wirtschaftskrise, der zermürenden Arbeitslosigkeit und allen Plagen, die auf das Volk und seine Regierungen niederfielen – passte diesem Volk der Rock, der in Weimar zugeschnitten und genäht worden war? (Marsch 371)

Wolff claims that not one single person could have saved the Republic, as extenuating circumstances contributed to its downfall. As Wolff's exile experience and the affect on his writings are the focus of this study, it is beyond the scope of this study to analyse Wolff's historical accuracy of events or to evaluate his political judgement. Wolff shows respect for all the men portrayed, but at the same time scrutinises their integrity and claims diplomatic bankruptcy, distortion of the truth and personal vanity are some of the less admirable characteristics that contributed to the downfall of democracy and the Weimar Republic.

Two chapters are devoted to Prince Bernhard von Bülow, who – according to Wolff – bestowed little honour on Germany, as Bülow ingratiated himself with the Kaiser and allowed a marked deterioration in Germany's domestic and foreign economy and position. An extensive correspondence between Wolff and Bülow confirms their opposing ideas.¹⁷⁹ Wolff had great reservations concerning Bülow's achievements, especially with regard to his close relationship with the Kaiser and his ability to distort facts. (Marsch 15) In 1909 Bülow lost the Kaiser's confidence, was forced to resign from his post as Chancellor and spent most of his retirement in self-imposed exile in Italy.

The next chapter deals with Prince Bernhard von Bülow's adversary, Count Anton Monts de Mazin, German Ambassador in Rome from 1903 to 1909, whom Wolff rather condescendingly described as somebody who 'ein wenig Sand von einem Häuflein zum anderen hinbewegt'. (Marsch 52) While acknowledging Count Monts' sharp wit and tongue, Wolff was unable to share the general admiration bestowed on him. Wolff attributes – in a rather acerbic tone – aristocratic vanity to Count Monts

¹⁷⁹ Twenty seven personal and confidential letters between Bernhard von Bülow and Theodor Wolff survived and are kept in the Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207:7. See also entries in *Tagebücher* 927-948. Also see p. 955 for list of meetings between Count Bülow and Theodor Wolff. See also articles in BT 211 (3.5. 1924) and Theodor Wolff, *Der Journalist* 192-195; BT 510 (29.10. 1929).

rather than confidence in his statesmanship and political contribution; in Wolff's words he displayed the 'Egoismus eines Verwöhnten, das Bedürfnis nach Bequemlichkeit und Luxus'. (Marsch 77) Regrettably, the English translation omits Monts' correspondence with Theodor Wolff during World War I. This omission results in a lack of flow and compelling argument in the English edition. Monts' aggressive style contrasts with Wolff's calm and reserved manner; Monts' hasty judgment contrasts with Wolff's reflective mood. It is understandable, albeit regrettable, that the English publishers deleted this important correspondence between Wolff and Monts, because they include accusations that British authorities did too little too late to prevent World War I.¹⁸⁰ Even the British exercised censorship and these drastic changes in the English translation must have irritated Wolff. However, he was at the mercy of his English publishers and, for economic reasons, had to cooperate with their demands.

Wolff chronicles the succession of German chancellors during 1917-1918, living in the Chancellery, which Wolff calls the 'Tragic House', the title of the next chapter. Bethmann-Hollweg was forced to resign in 1917 and was exiled to his country estate, Hohenfinow in Brandenburg. A rapid succession of chancellors followed, some lasting only a few weeks.¹⁸¹ These turbulent months contributed little to secure a democratic republic.

In the next chapter Wolff does not portray a person, but a critical historical event: the German November 1918 Revolution. Wolff was known to have – rather overenthusiastically – welcomed the 1918 Revolution. In his editorial for the *Berliner*

¹⁸⁰ The following controversial sentence was omitted from the English translation: 'Dann aber brach der Krieg aus, vier Jahre lang dauerte das Morden, und vier Jahre lang wechselten auf allen Seiten Hoffnung und Enttäuschung, bis dort der Sieg, hier die Niederlage das ungeheure Ringen schloss... Ein Bewusstsein der Mitschuld liegt den geborenen Anklägern fern.' (Marsch 87)

¹⁸¹ Georg Michaelis from 14.7.1917 to 1.11.1917, Graf Georg von Hertling from 1.11.1917 to 30.9.1918, Prinz Max von Baden from 3.10.1918 to 9.11.1918.

Tageblatt on 10 November 1918 he wrote: ‘Die größte aller Revolutionen hat wie ein plötzlich losbrechender Sturmwind das kaiserliche Regime mit allem, was oben und unten dazu gehörte gestürzt... Man kann sie die größte aller Revolutionen nennen’.¹⁸²

Already one year later to the day he was forced to revise this exuberant premature outburst: ‘Die deutsche Revolution hatte schon in der Geburtsstunde, gestern vor einem Jahr, die finsternen Züge jener Kinder, die im Hause der Sorge geboren sind’.¹⁸³ Wolff’s view on the failure of the November Revolution is reflected in the mysterious title, *Die Revolution des Schlemihl (The Dupe’s Revolution)*. The Schlemiel or Schlemihl character refers generally to a well meaning, although weak and vulnerable person in folklore and Jewish fiction.¹⁸⁴ Schlemihl gained popularity with Adalbert von Chamisso’s novel *Peter Schlemihls wundersame Geschichte*.¹⁸⁵ The main protagonist in Chamisso’s story who sells his shadow in exchange for gold has received many interpretations.¹⁸⁶ Schlemiel’s weakness characterises the November Revolution. Ruth R. Wisse writes: ‘The Schlemiel... stands in the age-old company of fools, embodying the most outstanding folly of his culture: its weakness’.¹⁸⁷ Wolff portrays Schlemiel as a fragile character who was easily manipulated, similar to the people in the failed November Revolution. According to Wolff, leadership and followers were ill prepared, untrained, weak and exhausted from four years of war. Powerful names, such as Cromwell or Danton were associated with other revolutions. However, no heroes were associated with the German Revolution and therefore Wolff declares: ‘Die Revolution vom November 1918 war die Revolution des anonymen

¹⁸² BT 576 (10.11.1918) and Theodor Wolff, *Der Journalist* 127. Quoted in English in: Koppel S. Pinson, *Modern Germany, its History and Civilisation*, 2nd ed. (New York, Macmillan, 1966). 365.

¹⁸³ BT 534 (10.11.1919) and Theodor Wolff, *Der Journalist* 147.

¹⁸⁴ Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1899). 623.

¹⁸⁵ Adalbert von Chamisso, *Peter Schlemihls wundersame Geschichte* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1997).

Adalbert von Chamisso was forced into exile during the French Revolution.

¹⁸⁶ Ruth R. Wisse, *The Schlemiel as Modern Hero* (Chicago: Univ. Press, 1971).

¹⁸⁷ Wisse X.

Menschen, des Menschen ohne Namen, und die war, will man ihr doch einen Namen beilegen, die Revolution des Schlemihl'. (Marsch 223) The German November Revolution has been the source of much controversy and – according to Sebastian Haffner – many lies.¹⁸⁸ According to Wolff Germans had experienced too much tragedy and hardship for there to be any interest left in the revolution. There was little revolutionary enthusiasm in the tired people during that cheerless November in 1918. A defeated and demoralized Germany was on its knees, living in desperate conditions due to food shortages, unemployment and anarchy fuelled by extreme right- and left-wing factions. Participants of the Revolution felt deceived by the establishment. Wolff's sense of justice and humanity includes his concern over the question of whether enough food would be handed round in the building the revolutionaries had seized. He expresses his heartfelt sympathy for an unfortunate man in rags, who is supposed to protect him from indiscriminate shooting in the streets in Berlin during November 1918:

Hinter der Person des kleinen müden und hungrigen Mannes, der in dem zu kurzen Jackett und mit dem Gewehr an drückenden Schulterriemen mich in jener Nacht begleitete – unscheinbarer und immer wieder zurückgeworfener, enttäuschter oder betrogener Mitläufer in ‚Reih und Glied‘: Kanonenfutter der nationalen Kriegsführung... dem man den kommenden Tag verspricht und den gegenwärtigen vorenthält. (Marsch 223)

Wolff exposes betrayal and lies that had deceived the German people – not only during World War I and the Revolution, but again during Hitler's rise to power.

The next chapter deals with General Erich Ludendorff. Considering that Ludendorff believed war was part of a natural world order and openly declared Jews responsible for Germany's defeat during World War I, Wolff judges him with

¹⁸⁸ Sebastian Haffner, *Failure of a Revolution: Germany 1918-19* (New York: Library Press, 1972). 194.

surprising leniency.¹⁸⁹ When his military strategy failed in 1918 Ludendorff chose exile in Sweden. Many years later he issued an invitation to meet Wolff because he wanted to explain himself. This meeting bears witness to Wolff's tolerance (and sense of humor):

Jene natürliche Reserviertheit, Gespanntheit, die einer erwarteten Diskussion vorgeht, wurde hinter der Beschäftigung mit den Speisen und Weinen einigermaßen verborgen, ungefähr wie in der Schulaula vor der Verkündigung der Examensresultate, der Versetzungen und der Durchfälle ein feierliches Lied das nervöse Pochen der Herzen übertönt. (Marsch 229)

Whilst addressing Ludendorff's explicit antisemitism with mild sarcasm,¹⁹⁰ Wolff adds an episode that deserves particular attention. He refers to the fact that the host for the evening, Ludendorff's companion and his chauffeur during the war, was a Jew. Although regarded by Wolff as 'ein kleines Detail... von geringer Bedeutung', (Marsch 236) in 1934 it carries substantial significance. At that point Wolff must have already reflected on the 'Jewish Question' to include this unrelated matter. Reflections on a period in German history, when a Jew still could be the companion of the Commander-in-Chief of the German Army, demonstrates the deterioration in the German-Jewish relationship during the intervening 20 years from 1914 to 1934. This leads to the next chapter and the portrait of Imperial Germany's leading Jewish businessman, Albert Ballin.

Wolff had a most cordial relationship with Ballin, which is supported by a vast correspondence¹⁹¹ and detailed entries in his diary. (Tagebücher 1072 and Tagebücher Index) Ballin's portrait is thus the most engaging in *Der Marsch durch zwei Jahrzehnte*. Albert Ballin, chairman of the world's largest shipping company

¹⁸⁹ Wolff writes: 'Während er sich in Verteidigung und Anklage ausgab, konnte man sich fragen, ob etwas von Größe an ihm sei – von Größe der Leidenschaft, wenn auch nicht des Genies. Es war vielleicht nicht Größe, aber starkes Format'. (Marsch 232)

¹⁹⁰ Wolff writes: 'Die Idee, dass die Juden eine Rasse seien, denen ihr Jehova und ihr Talmud die Vernichtung des Germanentums vorschrieben, kam ihm erst, als er sich auch in diese Probleme zu vertiefen begann'. (Marsch 235)

¹⁹¹ Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207:5.

(HAPAG), the assimilated German Jew was every inch a Hamburger in character and carried the pride of a Hamburger. This portrait of Albert Ballin reveals a close affinity between Wolff and his subject. Stereotyping a fellow Jew exposes how comfortable Wolff felt about Jewish features – even his own.

Dass Albert Ballin Jude war, ließ sich weder verheimlichen – aber verheimlichen wollte er es garnicht – noch verkennen. Gesichtsbildung und auffällige Einzelheiten, wie die starken Lippen unter dem Schnurrbart, zeigten es genügend an... Die Nase, nicht mit der gebogenen Linie, die in volkstümlichen Karikaturen die jüdischen Nasen zu haben pflegen, war kräftig...'. (Marsch 238)

Wolff attributes particular importance to this chapter on Ballin and it is not surprising that it triggered a heated debate amongst his audience of exiles during one of their regular meetings. After the reading of the chapter the discussion was particularly animated, as the audience reflected on the status of Jews under the Kaiser. Despite being merely the son of a Jewish family of no particular standing, Ballin had risen to power as one of the most influential industrialists and had reached the status of 'Imperial Jew' and the Kaiser's friend. During the early 20th century it was exceptional for a Jew to be accepted into the Kaiser's inner circle. German non-Jewish industry magnates accepted Ballin in their midst, because economic interests prevailed when 'die hamburgischen Großherren... den jungen jüdischen Mann zu sich holten'. (Marsch 245) In a sarcastic remark Wolff refers to the 'großen Juden' (Marsch 253), who were invited to the Kaiser's palace with the aim of appealing to their own vanity and then for the Kaiser's officials to extract money from them for charity or research.

Even though Wolff observes German society in the early 20th Century to be rarely antisemitic,¹⁹² he detects and describes in detail antisemitic sentiments towards Ballin in Imperial Germany:

Er wurde auch mißtrauisch und feindselig beobachtet, mit einem Mißtrauen und einer Feindseligkeit, die sich nicht offen zeigten, sondern sich zurückhielten und auf

¹⁹² See Wolff and antisemitism in Chapter Four.

weichen Filzsohlen gingen. Einigen Leuten im Auswärtigen Amt, zum Beispiel dem Staatssekretär von Jagow, und feudalen Personen auf den oberen Regierungsposten war er teils seiner Abstammung wegen unsympathisch, teils seines Einflusses wegen unbequem. Man benutze ihn gern in delikaten Fällen, aber wenn er sich dabei den Hals gebrochen hätte, so hätte man sich gefreut. Doch gefährliche Sammelpunkte der stillen Abneigungen waren die Schlossgemächer der Kaiserin. (Marsch 247, 248)

Albert Ballin, the Anglophile Jew and Theodor Wolff, the Francophile Jew, had both warned against Germany's imperialistic foreign policy endangering peace in Europe. Their warnings were ignored. Foreboding words illustrate Wolff's last meeting with Ballin: 'eine Konversation konnte sich nur schleppend vorwärtsbewegen, wie ein Leichenzug... Ballin war eingesponnen in Schwermut, er sah schlecht aus'. (Marsch 279, 280)

Ballin's and Wolff's lives show parallels. When writing about Ballin, Wolff seems at times to write about himself, starting with their shared disillusion over their school education, and ending with the betrayal by German politicians towards the end of their lives. Whilst Wolff remained hopeful, Ballin lost all hope and was unable to cope with the Kaiser's abdication in 1918 and Germany's total defeat in World War I. In November 1918, demoralised by the fall of the monarchy, Ballin died from an overdose of sleeping pills at the age of 61. Historians and Ballin's friends are divided as to whether it was an accident or whether he intended to commit suicide.¹⁹³ Wolff refrains from speculating and writes: 'Am 9. November [1918] ist er unter dem Eindruck der Katastrophe gestorben, die mancher andere besser ertragen hat'.¹⁹⁴ In contrast to Ballin, Wolff confronted these turbulent post-war months with newfound energy and determination to assist in the establishment of a German Republic.¹⁹⁵

Following Ballin's portrait Wolff presents Count Ulrich von Brockdorff-Rantzau, German Foreign Minister during 1918/1919, whom he describes as a great

¹⁹³ Lamar Cecil, *Albert Ballin: Business and Politics in Imperial Germany* (Princeton: Univ. Press, 1967). 345.

¹⁹⁴ BT 318 (9.7.1923) and Theodor Wolff, *Der Journalist* 183.

¹⁹⁵ In November 1918 Wolff became influential in the formation of the *Deutsche Demokratische Partei* (DDP).

ambassador and a romantic figure.¹⁹⁶ Count Ulrich von Brockdorff-Rantzau devoted all his energy to the rejectionists' policy, in order to convince Germany to reject the conditions of the Treaty of Versailles outright. Wolff shared Brockdorff-Rantzau's political views.¹⁹⁷ According to Wolff, the Treaty of Versailles was at the centre of the failure of the Weimar Republic; it dictated total defeat, causing national humiliation to the German people and prepared the ground for the rise of National Socialism. It is therefore not surprising that this chapter takes up the most number of pages. Lengthy accounts of Brockdorff-Rantzau's family and background and day-by-day descriptions of minute events present a meticulous report of those crucial days from 18 January to 28 June, 1919. Wolff perceived the acceptance of the Treaty of Versailles as a catastrophe for the emerging republic. Lingering resentment against the treaty's harsh conditions presented the political right with the opportunity to generate general instability. Wolff voiced strong opposition to the Treaty in many of his editorials during the first half of 1919,¹⁹⁸ and later returned frequently to the topic in his writings. Wolff did not refute Germany's fair proportion of guilt, but rejected Article 231, which explicitly demanded acceptance of Germany's sole responsibility for starting World War I. Wolff believed Germany was entitled to a fair trial. The Treaty of Versailles was signed on 28 June 1919 and Count Brockdorff-Rantzau came under severe criticism by the German people, who held him partly responsible for supporting the Treaty, although he had spearheaded the rejectionist policy. In 1922 he accepted

¹⁹⁶ Dickes' translation of the title of this chapter 'Der tragische Ritter' into 'The Knight of Romance' is puzzling. Theodor Wolff describes Brockdorff-Rantzau as a 'romantische Romanfigur' (Marsch 296) on account of his delicate appearance and his aristocratic demeanour. One could be suspicious that Dickes indulged in an ironic play with words: 'The Knight of Romance' - 'The Night of Romance', as there are many slurs on Brockdorff-Rantzau's sex life. Söseman also entitled this chapter 'Der romantische Ritter' in his edition of *Der Marsch durch Zwei Jahrzehnte* under the title *Die Wilhelmsische Epoche*.

¹⁹⁷ Wolff wrote: 'Wir waren einig in der Meinung, dass ein Friedensvertrag, der den umherschwirrenden Gerüchten, Andeutungen und Prophezeiungen entspräche, nicht unterzeichnet werden dürfe.' (Marsch 312)

¹⁹⁸ BT 127 (24.3.1919); BT 206 (8.5.1919); BT 262 (10.6. 1919) Erzberger contra Brockdorff-Rantzau and Theodor Wolff, *Der Journalist* 134-138; BT 289 (28.6. 1919) and Theodor Wolff, *Der Journalist* 139-142 .

the ambassadorship in Moscow which enabled him to live outside Germany in self-chosen 'exile'.

The last chapter of *Der Marsch durch zwei Jahrzehnte* chronicles the demise of Otto Braun, Social Democrat and Premier of the State of Prussia.¹⁹⁹ In July 1932 Chancellor Franz von Papen removed him from office. Braun was forced into exile and found refuge in Ascona, Switzerland.²⁰⁰ This event has significance, because Braun's removal in July 1932 meant the end of the last Social Democratic State Government within Germany. Wolff pays special attention to Braun's betrayal by Weimar politicians and his forced sudden exile that mirrored his own. Describing Braun's departure Wolff writes: 'nach dem Einzug Hitlers, kam [Otto Braun] ohne Zwischenfall in Ascona an'. (Marsch 359) This short sentence mirrors Wolff's own departure, previously mentioned: 'Hitler und die national-sozialistische Partei war nun allmächtig, ich war genötigt, Berlin zu verlassen'. (Grabmal 308) The Social Democrat Otto Braun and the Liberal Jew Theodor Wolff were both exiled for their political conviction. Otto Braun's exile experience appropriately concludes Wolff's series of lectures on ten influential German public figures and their failed endeavours prior to 1933.

Der Marsch durch zwei Jahrzehnte is Wolff's first exile work and the result of his experiences during his first year in exile. He reflects on the past as the present was blocked out due to the impact of events in his life during 1933: i.e., sudden forced exile in March 1933, burning of his books in May 1933 and the denial of asylum in Switzerland in December 1933. These overwhelming personal setbacks influenced his decision to distance himself from public life and current affairs. *Der Marsch durch*

¹⁹⁹ Otto Braun, *Von Weimar zu Hitler* (Hamburg: Harmonia, 1940).

²⁰⁰ 'Ich reiste von Berlin in den ersten Märztagen ab. Indes hatte ich nicht die Absicht, zu emigrieren. die Ereignisse im Dritten Reich haben mich nun aber schließlich doch in die Emigration gedrängt.' Braun 285.

zwei Jahrzehnte is a historical, at times oblique account from the turn of the century to the start of the Third Reich, with famous public figures illustrating Germany's willing, enthusiastic and dangerous *Marsch durch zwei Jahrzehnte*, first to the tune of Kaiser Wilhelm II. and later Adolf Hitler. Germany's dangerous march becomes a metaphor for her past, present and future:

Wenn die Massen in Deutschland mit festem und dröhnendem Schritt in Reih und Glied marschieren... dann sind sie doch davon durchdrungen, dass sie unterwegs zu allem Großen und Herrlichen sind. Natürlich muss man ihnen Gedanken mitgeben, die ihnen gefallen, aber sie brauchen auch dieses Gefühl des Vorwärtsschreitens, diese von einem scharf hallenden Befehl in Bewegung gesetzte Schwungkraft, die sich dann auf das Seelische überträgt. Der Vorbeimarsch geht weiter, er dauert an... und vorläufig wird er so ohne Stillstand weitergehen. (Marsch 383)

At the conclusion of Wolff's presentation of portraits of famous German men marching through the first two decades of the 20th Century, the group asks the question: 'Wohin noch?' (Marsch 383) No answer is forthcoming. In 1934 the German nation marched blindly towards an unknown, ominous destination. Nobody within this illustrious group of exiles could foresee the disastrous route this march would take. The German people now marched under Hitler. The Third Reich wasted no time to introduce dictatorial legislation under the *Gleichschaltung* and transferred all legislative powers to the Nazi government, resulting in the totalitarian control over the individual. This represented the end of freedom of the press and public opinion. Both were for Wolff of particular interest and his next work, *Notes sur l'histoire de la presse* are his critical reflections on the freedom of expression.

Notes sur l'histoire de la presse: Reflections on Freedom of Expression

Notes sur l'histoire de la presse was written between 1936 and 1939 (Notes 37,116) in an atmosphere in which Hitler was preparing for war and the world's inability or unwillingness to prevent the looming catastrophe. For over three decades of his professional life with the *Berliner Tageblatt* much of Wolff's endeavours were directed towards freedom of opinion. He did not claim to be an academic theorist on the topic of public opinion and the press, as Sösemann confirms in his preface to a collection of Wolff's journalistic writings: 'Wolff war kein theoretischer Kopf'.²⁰¹ He was a pragmatist who devoted his life to liberal democratic principles, balanced and truthful reporting based on facts. In exile his experience, observing the loss of freedom of expression forced him to reflect on the history and virtue of public opinion. *Notes sur l'histoire de la presse* is Wolff's response to the loss of freedom of the press and freedom of expression.

When the Nazis came to power, the press became one of their first targets in their aim to silence any opposition and to secure all media outlets for their own propaganda purposes. The *Berliner Tageblatt* was banned from 10 March to 13 March 1933 to force its surrender to National Socialism. Margret Boveri, a journalist with the *Berliner Tageblatt* from 1933 until 1937, presents insightful and detailed evidence of these turbulent years, when right-wing sympathisers gradually undermined the *Berliner Tageblatt* management and editorship.²⁰² The *Ermächtigungsgesetz* in March 1933 gave Hitler the power to govern by decree without reference to the Reichstag.

²⁰¹ Theodor Wolff, *Der Journalist: Berichte und Leitartikel*, ed. Bernd Sösemann (Düsseldorf: Econ, 1993). 11.

²⁰² Margret Boveri, *Wir lügen alle* (Olten: Walter, 1965). 76ff.

All public life was brought into line by means of the *Gleichschaltung*. The creation of the *Reichspressekammer* within the *Reichskulturkammer* completed the total control over every aspect of German cultural life from the press to the performing arts, from the primary school curriculum to university teaching. Wolff's cynical assessment: 'die Diktatur bestimmt, was schön und hässlich ist' (Notes 156) summarises this process and reveals his contempt. Joseph Goebbels issued the *Schriftleitergesetz* in October 1933, under which all journalists had to be registered and conform to Nazi regulations. German journalists became state officials and Jews were banned from the profession.²⁰³ A single Nazi newspaper, the *Völkische Beobachter* dominated the market and dictated to Germans what to read and what to think.

Wolff's condemnation of Hitler's dictatorial rule is concealed in subtle observations of a free press in other countries. Throughout his exile writings Wolff suppresses reactions to Hitler and National Socialism and Hitler's name is hardly mentioned. Wolff reveals the healthy development of public opinion and the press in democratic countries, while voicing deep concern about dictatorial rule and the lack of freedom of expression. He only refers obliquely to Hitler's dictatorial laws.²⁰⁴ His response to Nazi oppression is not overtly displayed and can only be extracted from his detailed historical accounts of other European countries, England and France in particular, that have a proud history of democracy, whilst Germany – according to Wolff – returned to the dark ages.

Although already exiled for over four years and watching National Socialism gaining strength, he never refers openly to his personal circumstances. Similarly to

²⁰³ Groth 70.

²⁰⁴ The following are examples of Wolff's hidden reference to National Socialism: 'Gerechtigkeit? Sie ist immer nur die blendende Hoffnung gequälter Menschenherzen gewesen und kein anderes Heiligtum wird so wie sie durch Betrug und Mord geschändet und beschmutzt'. (Notes 6) and 'jeder Wunsch, das Wort in seinem freien Fluge zu hemmen, sei ein Verrat.' (Notes 52)

most of his exile writings, *Notes sur l'histoire de la presse* does not reveal personal anger. Reactions to specific events in Germany are cautiously hidden and remarkably restrained. Several reasons are responsible and already previously mentioned, Wolff felt Hitler and National Socialism did not deserve a response and he was most reluctant to display personal experiences and feelings publicly. In fact he has scant respect for autobiographers who indulge in personal memoirs: 'der Memoirenschreiber, der glaubt, mit Erzählungen winziger Erlebnisse 'Dichtung und Wahrheit' nachzumachen, ist ja eine ziemlich unaustehliche Figur'. (Notes 53)²⁰⁵ The following analysis of public opinion, the press and the journalist will demonstrate how eagerly Wolff shares his general ideas on professional issues. While he explores these topics in great detail, he deliberately avoids personal experiences, although he must have keenly felt the loss of his newspaper, his profession and most of all the free press.

Wolff's son Rudolf gave the manuscript the French title, *Notes sur l'histoire de la presse, proces de presse moral, publicité etc.* and, as already mentioned in the introduction, it remains unpublished. Analysis of the text is limited by the fact that the manuscript is incomplete and must be regarded as a draft copy, a work in progress. Only one typed copy of the manuscript has survived and must be treated with reservation, as the lines of argument are not presented with the usual precision for which Wolff was renowned.

Despite great endeavours to have the manuscript published – an extended correspondence bears witness to the complex negotiations,²⁰⁶ – it failed and never found a publisher. Wolff received praise and support from Henry Wickham Steed in a letter to Geoffrey Halliday, chief editor with Curtis Brown: 'like everything Dr.

²⁰⁵ See more on Theodor Wolff and Autobiography in Chapter Three.

²⁰⁶ Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207: 19. Letters from Henry Wickham Steed to Geoffrey Halliday. Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207: 11. Letters from Geoffrey Halliday to Theodor Wolff.

Theodor Wolff writes, this is a thoughtful and well written work. How far it would appeal to our public – now preoccupied with so many serious question [sic] – I cannot judge; but on its merit it deserves publication'.²⁰⁷ On 24 August 1939 Wolff was contacted by Alfred Knopf, one the world's leading publishing houses in New York, expressing an interest in the publication of *Notes sur l'histoire de la presse*. Knopf suggested minor revisions, eliminating the lengthy historical parts and focusing more on Germany and Hitler's rise to power.²⁰⁸ The revisions were never found. The start of the World War II put a final end to any hope or offer of publication.

Correspondence between Wolff and the Curtis Brown Publishing Bureau in London confirms the existence of two complete copies.²⁰⁹ However, searches by Curtis Brown, London have been unsuccessful in tracing the manuscript.²¹⁰ Many pages (88 out of 233) of the only surviving manuscript are missing. On the evidence of the text preceding the missing pages, it can be assumed that these missing pages contained oblique criticism of the Nazi regime and Wolff purposefully removed them when German troops invaded Nice in 1943. It can be inferred that missing pages 65-69 and 119-125 cover a discussion on political slander and lies against the press, missing pages 81-84 and 139-147 deal with Wolff's plea for governments to protect the free press and missing pages 230 and 231 leave no doubt that the missing pages discussed the response of world opinion to the Nazi regime. Difficulties to decipher the manuscript are compounded by unexpected duplication of parts of chapters.

²⁰⁷ Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207: 19. Letter from Henry Wickham Steed to Geoffrey Halliday (4. 6.1939).

²⁰⁸ Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207:11. Letter from Geoffrey Halliday to Theodor Wolff (24. 8.1939).

²⁰⁹ Bundesarchiv Koblenz.Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207: 11. Letter from Geoffrey Halliday to Theodor Wolff (24. 8. 1939).

²¹⁰ E-mail correspondence between Camilla Hornby, Curtis Brown Group LTD and R.Porges (30.1.2004).

Although *Notes sur l'histoire de la presse* covers a myriad of disjointed topics, three central themes can be isolated: public opinion and its relationship with the press, freedom of the press and the role of the journalist. Wolff devotes a disproportionate number of pages to British history, followed by a comprehensive and complimentary account of French history, displaying his knowledge of and respect for democratic principles in both countries. He presents his notion of the role of the journalist in society and includes experiences from his own journalistic career. The text is disjointed and fails to do justice to Wolff's usually tight argumentation and precise style. Lengthy historical details at times appear irrelevant to the issues presented. However, Wolff's response to the demise of freedom of expression deserves investigation.

Public Opinion

Despite extensive research since Wolff, there is still little consensus on the exact definition of public opinion.²¹¹ Bernhard Hennessy offers the following: 'Public opinion is the complex of preferences expressed by a significant number of people on an issue of general importance...Vox populi, the voice of the people... a meaning carried on down the centuries by the democrats of the modern world',²¹² and this confirms Wolff's ideas and emphasis on the close relationship between free public opinion and democracy. Governments asserting control over public opinion endanger

²¹¹ W. Phillips Davison writes: 'There is no generally accepted definition of 'public opinion''. *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, ed. David L. Sills, Vol.13 (New York: Macmillian, 1968). 188. For a comprehensive bibliography on media issues see: Eleanor Blum and Frances Goins Wilhoit, *Mass Media Bibliography* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1990).

²¹² Bernhard Hennessy, *Essentials of Public Opinion* (Belmont, Calif.: Duxbury Press, 1975). 1.

democracy. Wolff regards free and well informed public opinion as the essential foundation on which democracies are able to grow. In contrast, public opinion cannot develop in an autocratic regime: 'Auch einem Analphabeten braucht man nicht erst zu erzählen, dass es in 'autoritär' regierten, von einer rechtsradikalen oder linksradikalen Diktatur beherrschten Ländern nicht das geben kann, was man in Demokratien unter öffentlicher Meinung versteht'. (Notes 38) While irritation speaks in this protest, yet Wolff refrains from strong polemic outbursts, although, as noted above, he must have felt frustration and anguish over the gradual and total loss of freedom of expression under National Socialism.

General interest in public issues and the notion of public opinion gained momentum during the first half of the 20th Century, especially during Wolff's formative years as a journalist, due to better education, the individual's growing awareness of democratic processes, technological advances in the production and distribution of newspapers and the invention of the radio. Wolff reflects on the history of the radio and its influence on public opinion. The advent of the radio opened new dimensions for the dissemination of public opinion. The Nazis quickly learnt to exploit this new medium and used it to their full advantage to manipulate the German public. Wolff condemns the democrats for their failure to see the power of the radio: 'Es waren abermals nur die autoritären Regierungen, die schnell den Wert dieser Technik begriffen – offenbar litten die feinen Nerven der Demokratien unter einem so übermäßigen Geräusch'. (Notes 41) Democrats failed to embrace innovations and new ideas, a topic Wolff explores in his novel, *Die Schwimmerin*, examined in the next chapter.

According to Wolff, democrats also failed to seek the assistance from the League of Nations, which was entrusted to secure human rights, including freedom of

expression. Wolff had put his trust in the League of Nations and its charter that was designed to develop and secure one united voice, free dialogue and public opinion to benefit all nations. However, according to Wolff, it failed dismally: ‘Die Liga der Nationen sollte ein Parlament der öffentlichen Weltmeinung sein... Nach einigem Bemühen, Stimme der Völker zu sein, die Weltmeinung zum Ausdruck zu bringen, ließ man das heilige Feuer erlöschen und auf dem künstlichen Heizapparat wärmte jeder seinen Suppentopf’. (Notes 199) Frustration is hidden in this colourful image. Wolff blames the League of Nations for failing to negotiate between authoritarian and democratic countries. National interests destroyed the idealistic idea of a united world voice designed to secure world peace. In November 1925 Wolff had enthusiastically welcomed the decision by the League of Nations to accept Germany in its midst and thus take it out of its dangerous isolation.²¹³ In October 1933 Hitler withdrew Germany from the League of Nations which had to watch powerlessly as Germany fell under a dictatorship.

Wolff examines the links between public opinion and national characteristics: ‘Was ist public opinion anders als die Kundmachung, die Offenbarung der Eigenschaften, aus deren Vereinigung und aus deren Widerstreit der Volkscharakter besteht?’ (Notes 20) In the case of the English, Wolff admires their ‘Gentlemantum’, their sense of fairness and decency mixed with a healthy dose of common sense, their skilled diplomacy that facilitates compromise. (Notes 21) Decent and measured response combined with national pride provides the British with their characteristic dignity and poise – and their strong commitment to freedom of expression. Wolff

²¹³ BT 566 (30.11.1925) and Theodor Wolff, *Der Journalist* 215-217.

respects the British sense of justice,²¹⁴ which is firmly established in their political system and public life. Hyde Park Corner, a fine example of free expression of public opinion demonstrates ‘einen der schönsten Züge, die das englische Leben aufzuweisen hat’. (Notes 227) Wolff contrasts the flexible British democratic parliamentary system, including open parliamentary debate with the tightly structured political German system: ‘Unsere kontinentale Auffassung von Demokratie will alles in bestimmte Formen bringen’. (Notes 90) He reiterates his claim that Germans only operate under instructions, strict order and strong leadership, ultimately causing Hitler’s rise to power. In Nazi Germany public opinion and the press follow orders und instructions until – according to Wolff - all words ‘march’ in the same direction, ‘wie die Beine der riesenhaften Massenarmee marschieren alle gedruckten Worte in der gleichen Richtung und zum gleichen Ziel’. (Notes 42) As earlier demonstrated the issue of mindless masses of people marching in order has been a topic in several of Wolff’s exile writings. Wolff uses the derogatory image of bleating sheep that follow their leader and relinquish their own opinion. (Notes 233)

Free and democratic countries like England and France serve as role models for Wolff’s vision for a liberated Germany. France is one of the cradles of democracy and Wolff praises her history of free public opinion and free press. (France’s sudden surrender to the German Army in the summer of 1940 and the Vichy Government’s compliance with German authorities was a great shock and disappointment to Wolff and after 1940 he was forced to change his verdict on France.) Wolff maintains that French Governments have always been influenced by strong critical public opinion. The most important chapter in the history of the French press and public opinion was

²¹⁴ Wolff writes: ‘Die klare Vernunft und der Gerechtigkeitssinn des Engländers... sind die stärksten Abwehrgeschütze gegen den barbarischen Ungeist, der seine Herrschaft über das europäische Festland ausgebreitet hat’. (Juden 24)

written during the French Revolution, when the right to freedom of expression was one of the major contributing factors to the people's uprising: 'Freiheit der Presse war das Losungswort, das, wie kaum ein anderes, die Volksseele in Wallung brachte'. (Notes 48) Free public opinion in France contributed to the development of a democratic parliamentary system.

Wolff uses one of his notable metaphors to demonstrate the complexity of the relationship between public opinion and the press: 'Gewiss, der Wind trägt den Blumensamen weit und immer weiter über das Tal. Aber wer macht den Wind?' (Notes 10) He uses crop and seed images to demonstrate the relationship between public opinion (seeds) and the press (wind). Following the natural flow of seasons, good harvests follow poor harvests: 'wenn einmal der Sämann seine Ernte verdorben sieht...die nächste Ernte kann besser sein'. (Notes 36) Optimism speaks from these images. Wolff is hopeful the next harvest will bring improvements, as the last one - under Hitler - was a particular 'poor harvest', and free public opinion will return and restore democracy and freedom in Germany.

The Press

From an objective distance Wolff reflects on the role of the press by embarking on a long historical journey. Especially the post Elizabethan period in England and the years under Napoleon in France capture his imagination. Both countries applied strict censorship during those periods and acknowledged that 'eine Zeitung eine gefährliche Sache, nur ausnahmsweise zu genehmigen und nur unter strenger Aufsicht zu dulden sei'. (Notes 14) Three centuries later Germany's National

Socialists were equally obsessed with gaining control over the press. In *Mein Kampf*²¹⁵ Hitler left no doubt about his views of the press: ‘Der Staat... muss dabei besonders der Presse auf die Finger sehen... er darf sich nicht durch das Geflunker einer sogenannten ‘Pressefreiheit’ beirren und beschwätzen lassen’.²¹⁶ The independent press is usually the first victim of an authoritarian regime. The press ceases to operate independently and becomes the echo of the government. According to Wolff, an independent press cannot exist under an authoritarian government: ‘In keinem autoritär geleiteten Lande kann die Presse handelnde Person sein, immer ist sie nur der begleitende Chor’. (Notes 42)

For Wolff, commercial interference was just as dangerous as political interference: ‘Aber wenn es wahr sein sollte, dass die Presse den stärksten Einfluss auf die Stimmung des Landes hat, einen stärkeren als das Parlament, und wenn man dann annimmt, dass hinter den Zeitungen die paar großkapitalistischen Besitzer oder Aktionäre rührig sind, was ist dann public opinion anders als das Löwengebrüll’. (Notes 85) Wolff signals the demise of the free press due to commercial interests and has Alfred Hugenberg in mind. As director of the Krupp enterprise, Hugenberg was also in charge of the powerful right-wing press syndicate. He controlled the German newspapers and the German film corporation UFA. Wolff exposes Hugenberg, who used the profits of his media outlets to support right-wing extremist parties. Industry financing the media means the end of an independent press.

Wolff recalls his personal experience in balancing editorial independence and fiscal reality during his final years in Berlin, when the *Berliner Tageblatt* lost its

²¹⁵ It is uncertain whether Wolff had read Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*, as he never quotes or refers to it. Amos Elon claims: ‘Three years after publication ‘Mein Kampf’ was still considered unreadable. Theodor Wolff first leafed through it only in 1930.’ Elon 380.

²¹⁶ Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (München: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1936). 264.

independence to financial institutions under the leadership of Lachmann-Mosse,²¹⁷ son-in-law of the long-time proprietor Rudolf Mosse. Wolff's frustration over financial interference in the *Berliner Tageblatt* is expressed in his facetious statement: 'Hitler sei auszuhalten... aber dieser ewige Kleinkampf gegen die Sparmaßnahmen Lachmann-Mosses, das reibe ihn allmählich auf'.²¹⁸ Lachmann-Mosse and his financial expansions into real estate caused the *Berliner Tageblatt* to lose its independence from 1929 onwards. In Wolff's eyes Lachmann-Mosse was just as bad as Hugenberg, as the press can only be free and independent without interference from banks or industry.

In one of his colourful images Wolff illustrates the danger of advertisement, which might appear at first as life giving rain after a drought. However, the rain often causes journalists and editors to catch rheumatism: 'Die Inserate, oder die 'Publizität' wurde für die Presse der befruchtende Regen, aber hier und da hatte dieser Regen Begleiterscheinung, die Moral bekam Schnupfen und bei den Leuten, die eigentlich einen geraden Gang hatten, verbog sich das Rückgrad wie im Rheumatismus oder im Hexenschuss'. (Notes 75) Journalists and editors become 'spineless' under promises of financial incentives and the pressure of a dictatorial regime. Wolff argues that – only under a democratically elected government – accountability and financial ledgers open to public scrutiny can eliminate conflicting interests in the press.

Difficulties and disadvantages of a free press are not ignored by Wolff. A free investigative press must be aware of its duties and responsibilities. Irresponsible reporting can interfere in the democratic processes: 'wo viel Licht ist, [ist] auch starker

²¹⁷ Bundesarchiv Koblenz, Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207: 14 Letter from Theodor Wolff to Hans Lachmann-Mosse (13.4.1931). More on Wolff's relationship with Lachmann-Mosse see Chapter Three under Freedom of Expression.

²¹⁸ Ernst Feder, *Heute sprach ich mit...: Tagebücher eines Berliner Publizisten 1926-1932*, ed. Cecile Lowenthal-Hensel and Arnold Paucker. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1971). 270.

Schatten'. (Notes 43) With this convincing image Wolff acknowledges the irresponsible journalists during the Weimar Republic, when commentators and politicians aiming to shed light on opposing factions, destabilized the system and cast 'long shadows' on Germany.²¹⁹ Wolff's integrity and commitment to democratic principles and a free press is widely acknowledged and it is no surprise that John Hohenberg devotes a whole chapter to Wolff in his acclaimed work *Free Press, Free People*.²²⁰ In its preface Hohenberg summarises the criteria for outstanding journalists: 'Those who fought for freedom of the press and, through it, the freedom of the individual'.²²¹ In *Notes sur l'histoire de la presse* Wolff argues convincingly that freedom of the press is critical to democracy.

The Journalist

Notes sur l'histoire de la presse includes Wolff's reflections on 40 years of his life as a free and independent journalist. The dilemma facing German journalists trying to work under Goebbels' *Schriftleitergesetz* is described by Wolff's friend Henry Wickham Steed :

A few months after Hitler came to power in Germany a German journalist asked my advice upon a matter of painful urgency. I knew him to be a man of upright character and unblemished record. For many years he had served with distinction a German journal widely respected for its independence of outlook, and he had just been warned that this position and, probably, his livelihood would depend upon his willingness to sign a declaration which would 'co-ordinate' him with the National Socialist, or Nazi Party, whose views he did not share. Should he sign, his self-respect would be gone. Should he refuse to sign, he might have only his self-respect to live upon. What ought he to do?²²²

²¹⁹ Theodor Wolff and the democratic press during the last years of the Weimar Republic see: Sösemann, *Das Ende der Weimarer Republik in der Kritik demokratischer Publizisten: Theodor Wolff, Ernst Feder, Julius Elbau, Leopold Schwarzschild*.

²²⁰ John Hohenberg, *Free Press, Free People, the Best Cause* (New York: Free Press, 1973). 162-171.

²²¹ Hohenberg IX.

²²² Henry Wickham Steed, *The Press* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1938). 66.

Wolff – together with many others – were determined to protect their ‘self-respect’, refused to yield to the dictatorial Nazi rule and as a consequence faced exile, imprisonment or even death.

In order to illustrate life as a journalist and the deterioration of working conditions, Wolff reflects on his own career. At the age of seventeen he had considered his career options and recalls a family friend comparing journalism with a snake pit: ‘Er nannte den Journalismus sogar einen Sumpf voll ‘Otterngezücht’’. (Notes 53) This image left strong impressions on the young Wolff²²³ with the consequence that he kept his distance to journalists and refused to demonstrate solidarity with his professional colleagues. (Terrasse 27, Grabmal 320, Juden 48) Wolff is most reluctant to call all journalists ‘colleagues’, observing some of their non-desirable moral and professional standards and lack of accountability. Journalistic misdemeanours, such as ‘backstabbing’ or unethical conduct, had always been widespread.²²⁴ As an example, Wolff describes the scene at the start of World War I, when journalists inflamed nationalism and bellicose public opinion in 1914. However, after the war these ‘arsonists’ refuted their warmongering and claimed to have been part of pacifist movements attempting to extinguish the fire: ‘Die Schuldigsten taten nun unschuldig wie weiße Lilien... Alle hatten nur Wasser herbeigetragen, um das Feuer zu löschen, und dabei rochen ihre Gießkannen noch nach Petroleum’. (Notes 54)

Wolff remembers his early years with the *Berliner Tageblatt* with fondness, as he was able to write in an environment of relative freedom. His journalistic breakthrough came at the end of the 1890s with his reports from Paris on the Dreyfus

²²³ Wolff writes: ‘Als ich etwa 17 Jahre alt war und Journalist werden wollte, bat sie [T.W.’s mother] diesen Jugendfreund... um Rat, worauf er, vermutlich durch persönliche Erfahrungen etwas verbittert, grimmig vor einem Beruf warnte, der ‘ein Nest voll Nattern und Schlangen’ sei’. (Terrasse 116)

²²⁴ Bernhard Rosenberger, *Zeitungen als Kriegstreiber? Die Rolle der Presse im Vorfeld des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Weimar: Böhlau, 1998).

affair.²²⁵ In 1906 his innovative approaches and dedicated performance were rewarded, when Rudolf Mosse promoted Wolff to editor-in-chief of the *Berliner Tageblatt*.²²⁶ Wolff quickly increased the circulation of that newspaper and left his – now acclaimed – mark with his appointment of outstanding writers and journalists and his informative and entertaining articles. Theodor Wolff introduced the ‘Feuilleton in politics’.²²⁷ The feuilletonist presents the interpretation of news in contrast to the journalist who presents facts and details only. The symbiosis between journalistic facts and personal opinion presented in a literary style was his strong point. The term *Feuilleton* – borrowed from and familiar to the French, however the term lacks an English equivalent – was new in German journalism. The feuilletonist puts his individual stamp on his writing and portrays his personal views. Wolff’s feature articles and political commentaries are *Feuilleton* masterpieces, especially his ‘Lundis’, his legendary regular Monday (later Sunday) articles.²²⁸

Reflecting on his own professional career²²⁹ he highlights his respect for Rudolf Mosse, his cousin and owner of the Mosse Publishing House.²³⁰ A high level of trust cemented their working relationship lasting over thirty years. Mosse gave Wolff total freedom and never interfered: ‘Ich habe... neben einem Verleger gearbeitet, der mir... in jedem Augenblick meine volle Freiheit und Unabhängigkeit

²²⁵ More on Wolff and the Dreyfus affair in Chapter Four.

²²⁶ Rudolf Mosse respected his much younger cousin professionally, however, they did not mix socially. Wolff apparently was never invited to their home, because he was married to an actress. Irene Runge and Uwe Stelbrink "Interview with George L. Mosse," *Exil* 11.2 (1991), 20.

²²⁷ ‘Das Feuilletonistische in der Politik, wie es Theodor Wolff zur Blüte brachte....’ Boveri 24.

²²⁸ As mentioned in the introduction, Bernd Sösemann has selected Wolff’s journalistic masterpieces and published them in three volumes: Theodor Wolff, *Der Journalist: Berichte und Leitartikel*, ed. Bernd Sösemann (Düsseldorf: Econ, 1993).; Theodor Wolff, *Der Publizist: Feuilletons, Gedichte und Aufzeichnungen*, ed. Bernd Sösemann (Düsseldorf: Econ, 1995).; and Theodor Wolff, *Der Chronist: Krieg, Revolution und Frieden im Tagebuch 1914-1919*, ed. Bernd Sösemann (Düsseldorf: Econ, 1997).

²²⁹ Wolff’s reflections on his professional life as Jewish journalist and editor-in-chief are further discussed in Chapter Four.

²³⁰ For a treatise on the role of the editor-in-chief see *Chefredakteure: Publizisten oder Administratoren*, ed. Heinz-Dietrich Fischer (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1980). Elisabeth Kraus, *Die Familie Mosse: Deutsch-jüdisches Bürgertum im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (München: C.H.Beck, 1999), George L. Mosse, *Confronting History: a Memoir* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 2000).

ließ... Er wurde nicht erschüttert durch die Klagen erzürnter Kunden, denen ich auf die Füße, auf das Portemonaie oder auf die politische Angstseele getreten hatte’.

(Notes 77)

According to Wolff, the formation of a controlling body, a journalists guild, restricts freedom of ideas and opinions.²³¹ Democratic countries must operate in an environment of self-regulation instead of over-regulation that was introduced under Hitler in the Third Reich with its *Reichskulturkammer* and the *Reichspressekammer* designed to strangle creativity and free reporting.

During exile Wolff returned rarely to journalistic activities and only wrote few articles²³² for overseas newspapers and the German exile press. Correspondence between Wolff and the *Argentinisches Tageblatt*,²³³ *Le Figaro*,²³⁴ *Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfarts-Tidning*²³⁵ and the *Manchester Guardian*²³⁶ documents dialogue between Wolff and several newspapers in Europe, yet resulted in a few published articles. These articles often consisted of reprints of passages from his published books, i.e. *Der Krieg des Pontius Pilatus*, *Der Marsch durch zwei Jahrzehnte* and *Die Schwimmerin* and do not offer an additional insight into Wolff’s exile writings. His son Rudolf referred to these articles correctly as ‘an der Tagespolitik vorbeilaufende Artikel’;²³⁷ they confirm Wolff’s determination not to comment on current affairs nor to join the resistance or exile press, as explained in the

²³¹ In 1926 Wolff resigned from the German Press Association (Reichsverband der Presse). Feder, *Heute sprach ich mit...: Tagebücher eines Berliner Publizisten 1926-1932*. 78.

²³² See Bibliography.

²³³ Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Nachlass Theodor Wolff 207: 5. Letter from Alemann to Theodor Wolff (16.10.1939).

²³⁴ Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Nachlass Theodor Wolff 207: 8. Letter from Denise Clairouin to Theodor Wolff (8.5.1935).

²³⁵ Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Nachlass Theodor Wolff 207: 11 Letter from the *Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfarts-Tidning* to Theodor Wolff (15.3.1940).

²³⁶ Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Nachlass Theodor Wolff 207: 16. Letter from *Manchester Guardian* to Theodor Wolff (12.1.1939; 6.8.1939).

²³⁷ AKIP. Rudolf Wolff für Köhler (16.4.1970). 3.

previous chapter. During 1938 four articles²³⁸ by Wolff were accepted by the renowned *Dépêche de Toulouse*, the old established democratic French newspaper and one of the few that still accepted articles from German journalists. With his four articles Wolff again demonstrates – in Willi Jasper’s words – ‘politische Abstinenz im Exil’.²³⁹ He does not address current affairs, but issues of the past: the Treaty of Versailles and French-German relationship. The isolation of exile compels him to a distant view of current affairs. Wolff retreats from and avoids present reality while the rest of the world is concerned about Hitler preparing for war. *Notes sur l’histoire de la presse* is Wolff’s account of the history of public opinion and the press without addressing urgent current issues, i.e., Hitler’s oppression of the freedom of opinion. Wolff’s deliberate avoidance of directly responding to Germany’s present dilemma marks his exile writings. The exile notion of loss is dominant in *Notes sur l’histoire de la presse*; the loss of freedom of expression, loss of the free press and loss of independent journalism. Despite maintaining some hope for the future the tone in this exile work is defeatist and illustrates a decline in his previously optimistic mood. Following *Notes sur l’histoire de la presse*, Wolff surprised his colleagues and friends by presenting a novel as his next exile work.

²³⁸ See Bibliography

²³⁹ Willi Jasper, "Die Demokratiediskussion deutscher Emigranten in der *Dépêche de Toulouse* 1933-1940", *Heinrich Mann Jahrbuch* 2 (1984). 94.

CHAPTER TWO: TURNING POINT IN EXILE 1937

Return to Fiction Writing

Die Schwimmerin: Roman aus der Gegenwart

At the age of nearly 70, Wolff published a novel of 323 pages, *Die Schwimmerin: Roman aus der Gegenwart*, a kaleidoscope of life in Germany towards the end of World War I, the Weimar Republic and the early 1930s.²⁴⁰ The narrative is driven by the political and ideological conflicts of the early 20th century. Wolff worked on his novel during 1935 and 1936, when life in exile in the south of France was still relatively peaceful. Hitler's march into the Rhineland in March 1936 was met by appeasement policies from France and Great Britain and, apart from that, the world was pre-occupied with Hitler's Olympic Games in Berlin. However, Wolff's life was at a turning point. He was forced to acknowledge that his writing talent was no longer valued. His first exile work, *Der Marsch durch zwei Jahrzehnte*, although highly praised by the critics, was not a financial success. His second exile work, *Notes sur l'histoire de la press*, had difficulties being accepted for publication and now his novel was met with little enthusiasm by the critics.

Wolff is, to this day, regarded as one of the great public commentators of his time. After a lifetime of historical and journalistic writing, he returned to writing fiction. Wolff had written three novels and three plays in his youth between 1891 and 1898.²⁴¹ While only a few – rather devastating – reviews of his early works could be

²⁴⁰ For a Synopsis see Appendix.

²⁴¹ The 3 novels are: Theodor Wolff, *Der Heide: Roman* (Berlin: Freund und Jeckel, 1891), Theodor Wolff, *Der Untergang: Roman* (Berlin: Freund und Jeckel, 1892), Theodor Wolff, *Die Sünder: eine Liebesgeschichte* (Köln:

traced,²⁴² none of his early works made great headlines. Some of his plays were slightly more successful, albeit short lived, and his early novels and plays are of interest only if they are read as examples of 19th century period pieces.

In exile he embarked again on writing a novel, a project that presented him with problems and contributed to financial and emotional hardship. The novel was a setback in Wolff's recognition as fiction writer and meant the end of financial rewards for his writings. Wolff's talent as a writer of fiction impressed only a few. While the documentary value of *Die Schwimmerin* for the study of life in Germany from 1918 to the early 1930s is unquestionable, the novel's literary value is debatable. His isolated foray into fiction writing suggests that the blend of fiction with historical and autobiographical reflections was an uncomfortable genre for Wolff.

The novel was certainly not the commercial success Wolff had hoped for. Köhler confirms: 'Wolff hat auf seine 'Schwimmerin' große Hoffnungen gesetzt, auf das Werk und auf die leibhaftige Heldin. Er schickte das Manuskript allen seinen alten Theaterfreunden'.²⁴³ He was disappointed that the novel did not sell, particularly as he wrote it partly out of financial need. Concerns about money were new and not easy for the Wolff family, which had been previously well off. Wolff shared the need to write for money with other exile writers, e.g. Alfred Kerr, who searched for topics that were 'verkäuflich, damit er seine Familie über Wasser halten konnte'.²⁴⁴ Fiction writing

Ahn, 1892). The 3 plays are: Theodor Wolff, *Die Stille Insel: Schauspiel in 4 Akten* (Berlin: Bibliographisches Bureau, 1894). Theodor Wolff, *Niemand weiß es: Stück in 3 Aufzügen* (Berlin: Bibliographisches Bureau, 1895). Theodor Wolff, *Die Königin: Schauspiel in 3 Aufzügen* (Köln: Ahn, 1898). Some of his plays were performed with minor success in major theatres in Austria and Germany. See Sösemann, *Theodor Wolff: ein Leben mit der Zeitung*. 49ff.

²⁴² Karl Kraus writes: 'Gedankenärmeres als das Märchenspiel *Die Königin* ist selbst an dieser Stätte bisher nicht geboten worden'. Karl Kraus, "Review of 'Die Königin'." *Die Fackel* 1.3 (1899). 27. Alexander Neuman writes: 'Wolff bietet in seinem Roman [*Der Untergang*] eine Ausgeburt abgeschmackter Zeitungspoesie schlimmster Art'. Alexander Neumann, "Der Untergang," *Die Gesellschaft* 8.2 (1892). 1643.

²⁴³ Köhler 284. Also see Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207. Letters by Leopold Jessner, Bernhard Diebold, Ferdinand Bruckner, Siegfried Trebitsch, William Heinemann Publishers and Verlag Oprecht.

²⁴⁴ Deborah Vietor-Engländer, "Ihr wißt, wenn Deutschlands Lob erklingt: Alfred Kerrs Einstellung zum Judentum.," *Deutsch-Jüdisches Exil: das Ende der Assimilation?* Eds. Wolfgang Benz and Marion Neiss (Berlin: Metropol, 1994).73.

promised better commercial prospects than political reflections and historical accounts. Yet, German exile works faced a shrinking market. Exile writers had only two choices: either to write and publish in English or to keep writing in German for a much diminished market. The novel's sales figures painted a depressing picture and the publisher, Oprecht, lamented on 15 March 1939 that only 372 copies of *Die Schwimmerin* had been sold – a financial disaster for both the publisher and the author.²⁴⁵

The need to make the novel a commercial success influenced the choice of the title. *Die Schwimmerin* represents a positive image and encourages the readers to 'keep their heads above water'. A swimmer conveys the image of strength and buoyancy. (The metaphorical significance of the swimmer becomes obvious and will be explored later in this chapter.) The title was chosen to introduce a new era, representing youth and energy.²⁴⁶ While Gerda, the major female character of the novel is the strong swimmer in the title and represents the 'new', Faber, the novel's central figure, represents the 'old', 'drowning' in apathy and lost opportunities; together they experience conflicts emulating those encountered by the Weimar Republic. Although quickly dismissed, other titles for the novel were considered, such as: *Durch den Lärm der Welt* and *Das Geheul der Welt*.²⁴⁷ Whereas these two titles suggest gloominess, the title *Die Schwimmerin* conveys optimism, a notion Wolff develops throughout the novel and still presents at this stage of his exile.

²⁴⁵ AKIP. Abrechnung über den Roman *Die Schwimmerin* (Oprecht) 15.3.1939.

Wolfram Köhler writes: 'Wolffs Fall ist typisch: die deutschen Literaten in der Emigration waren genial und fleißig, und sie schrieben sich die Finger wund – für einen Hungerlohn.' Köhler 290.

²⁴⁶ During his time in Paris (1894-1906) Wolff wrote an essay entitled *Die Schwimmerin*, describing Miss Kellermann, a young Australian swimmer who might have influenced the novel's title. Theodor Wolff, *Pariser Tagebuch* (München: Langen, 1908). 198-202 and Theodor Wolff, *Der Publizist* 229-231.

²⁴⁷ Söseemann, *Theodor Wolff: ein Leben mit der Zeitung* 322.

One lone supportive voice amongst the many negative critics was that of Wolff's friend Ernst Feder, who was among the few who recognized the author's subtle message: his concern for the loss of democracy. He praised the novel's 'unheimlich vorbeihuschenden Stimmungsbilder' and Wolff's empathy with people who were severely affected by political, social, economic and cultural change: 'Es ist ein leises Buch, reich an Andeutungen, die zum Nachsinnen anregen, voll Noblesse und Charme, zwei Eigenschaften, rar in Deutschland'.²⁴⁸ However, the real problem for Wolff was the negative response from the public, the exile community, friends, colleagues and the film industry. While he was well accustomed to objections and critique from his political opponents, he was completely unaccustomed to critique from colleagues and fellow writers. Wolff, who had received accolades for his journalistic writings, was suddenly confronted with scathing reviews. Fritz Erpenbeck, left-wing journalist and writer, who had written a – also less than successful – Marxist exile novel in 1937,²⁴⁹ dismissed *Die Schwimmerin* outright: 'Man ist von seinem Buch sehr enttäuscht'.²⁵⁰ René Schickele demonstrated in a letter to his friend Hermann Kesten his embarrassment over Wolff's failed novel: 'Den braven Theodor sehe ich selten. So oft es geschieht, weiß er von einer günstigen Besprechung seiner unglückseligen 'Schwimmerin' zu berichten... und mit einer müden Handbewegung: "Na spechen wir von was anderem." Ich sitze vor meiner Kaffetasse und schäme

²⁴⁸ A copy of the original newspaper article of the review by Ernst Feder entitled 'Ein Zeitroman' is in my possession, however, title of the newspaper and publication details could not be established. Also quoted in Sösemann, *Theodor Wolff: ein Leben mit der Zeitung*, 320. Sösemann mentions Feder's review as follows: 'Sie erschien am 24. Mai 1937 in einer Schweizer Zeitung'.

²⁴⁹ Fritz Erpenbeck, *Emigranten* (Berlin: Volk und Welt, 1939 (1955)). For a review see: Thomas A Kamla, *Confrontation with Exile: Studies in the German Novel* (Bern: Lang, 1975), 135-143.

²⁵⁰ Fritz Erpenbeck, "Ein zaghafter Schwimmer," *Internationale Literatur* 7 (1937), 126. Hannes Waterkant alias Fritz Erpenbeck, "Denkt man ..." *Das Wort* 12 (1937) 90-91.

mich'.²⁵¹ Wolff's friend had to hide his discomfort while – according to Schickele – Wolff tried courageously to disguise his disappointment.

Criticism of the novel focused on three issues: first, the difficult fusion of historical facts with fictional characters and events;²⁵² second, Wolff's failure to produce a novel with a convincing final conclusion²⁵³ – preferably a happy ending; and third, the leading protagonists' lack of assertiveness and decisive action.²⁵⁴

A major problem from the start is the unbalanced relationship between fact and fiction. The novel's depiction of the collapse of the Weimar Republic and the failure of the relationship between Faber and Gerda must be considered in tandem. For it is precisely through the exposure of the breakdown of communication and cooperation between the opposing factions that the parallels between the private and the public are explored. Wolff designed the two protagonists' relationship as a metaphor for Germany's failed democracy. He felt comfortable writing factual accounts and stated categorically: 'Meine Aufgabe ist es, dafür zu sorgen, dass die Tatsachen laut in die Welt hinausgehen'. (Grabmal 337) Moreover, facts had been essential to Wolff's professional writing all his life and he argued strongly: 'Die Sprache der Tatsachen, der Tatsachen, der Tatsachen, keine andere ist so laut... von der Sprache der Tatsachen würde die Wandlung kommen. Die Sprache der Tatsachen, der Tatsachen, der Tatsachen entschied'. (Grabmal 308 and 314) Indeed, while factual social, political

²⁵¹ *Deutsche Literatur im Exil: Briefe europäischer Autoren 1933-1949*, ed. Hermann Kesten (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1964). 57-58.

²⁵² Wolff's friend Ludwig Hatvany writes: 'Auch der zeitgeschichtliche Hintergrund ist ausgezeichnet... aber warum so viele mystische Geschichten?' Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207: 11. Letter from Ludwig Hatvany to Theodor Wolff (2.6.1937). Hatvany refers to the rape and murder subplot, as well as Gerda's mysterious disappearance somewhere in Europe for over five years.

²⁵³ Elisabeth Bergner, famous actress who performed mainly dramatic roles in Germany and France. Wolff followed her often to see her stage performances. She writes: 'weil die ganze Handlung, die erzählt wird, da aufhört, wo sie eigentlich anfangen müßte'. Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207: 20. Letter from Elisabeth Bergner to Theodor Wolff (11.3.1939).

²⁵⁴ Fritz Erpenbeck writes: 'In diesem Buche aber hat Theodor Wolff [Faber] nicht gekämpft – weder mit dem Gegner, noch mit sich selbst'. Fritz Erpenbeck, "Ein zaghafter Schwimmer." *Internationale Literatur* 7 (1937). 127.

and cultural accounts in the novel are insightful and informative – similar to Wolff’s weekly feature articles in the *Berliner Tageblatt* – the novel’s fictional characters and story line are less compelling. It was perhaps only natural that, given his journalistic background, Wolff built strong factual against weak fictional scenes. At times the intended parallels between fact and fiction fail to mesh. In particular the character of Gerda, representing a new era, is stereotyped and in principle not convincing. Also the character of the arms dealer Magnano Scott, representing unscrupulous capitalism is embellished to the point of appearing grotesque. The rape scene, representing the breakdown of law and order in Berlin, is another example where the novel does not succeed to establish a reasonable parallel between fact and fiction. This results in a deep contrast between Wolff’s clear and precise factual accounts and his vague meandering fictitious narrative and some implausible characterisations.

The second serious criticism relates to the novel’s ending. In contrast to the inconclusive ending of *Die Schwimmerin*, the conclusion of Wolff’s *Berliner Tageblatt* articles was always carefully constructed. Wolff preached the rules of writing: ‘... der Autor soll nicht – manche Romandichter wagen sich so ins Ungewisse hinaus – ohne Kompass und ohne Ziel herumirrend, er muss den Schlußpunkt vor Augen haben’. (Terrasse 120) However, he failed to observe his own rules in *Die Schwimmerin*. The ending of the novel is bewildering and one must suspect that even Wolff himself, who placed special importance on conclusions and the last sentence,²⁵⁵ felt uncomfortable with the ending, as shown by his doubts in a letter to Ernst Feder: ‘Ich hatte beabsichtigt, am Schluss des Buches noch die psychologische Erklärung anzufügen... Diese Erklärung habe ich dann wieder fortgelassen um die Geschichte

²⁵⁵ Wolff proudly declared that he always followed Prince Bülow’s teaching who announced: ‘ich [Bülow] habe immer den letzten Satz, den Schluss meiner Rede gewusst’. (Marsch 51)

nicht zu belasten. Aber das war vielleicht falsch'.²⁵⁶ Hesitancy and uncertainty, new notions in Wolff's writing career, speak through these sentences. From the moment he was writing for money, he was not in control of his own destiny any more. Publishers controlled his writings and asserted pressure in order to increase sales and Wolff was frequently forced to implement changes to pacify and please.²⁵⁷ These changes cloud the clarity of the text, particularly the ending and magnify his problem of writing for money.

The two protagonists in the novel, Faber, 'der richtige Liberale' and Gerda, 'die Schwimmerin' do not have a future together, because their 'Uhr ist abgelaufen'. (Schwimmerin 195) With a dictator now in charge, the old world that Faber and Gerda had known, has vanished, and in this new world there is no place for a happy end; harmony and happiness are out of reach. Wolff convincingly constructs the 'outer' world, i.e., the loss of democracy and freedom; however the 'inner' world and the psychological motivation for the break-up of the two lovers remain unconvincing. Gerda's motivation for rejecting Faber in the end remains unclear. Her declaration: 'Erst muss ich das tun, was ich mir vorgenommen habe, in China', (Schwimmerin 289) cannot be considered an explanation, although she clearly wants to demonstrate that she achieved, what she always wanted without Faber's assistance. China for Gerda is the ultimate proof of her independence from Faber. Very early during their courtship, Gerda shows an intense interest in China, which she quickly dismisses with the defeatist remark: 'Ich werde wohl nie hier herauskommen, Du schickst mich ja doch nicht hinaus.' (Schwimmerin 107) She must demonstrate to herself and the world

²⁵⁶ AKIP. Letter from Theodor Wolff to Ernst Feder (24.5.1937).

²⁵⁷ For an example of the influence publishers exerted, see the letter from the publishers William Heinemann in London to Wolff: 'Dass Sie Ihr so spannendes und fließend geschriebenes Romanmanuskript umarbeiten und 'entpolitisieren' scheint mir ein sehr guter Gedanke zu sein und ich beglückwünsche Sie zu dem Entschluss'. Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207: 19. Letter from William Heinemann Ltd. to Wolff (5.6.1936).

that she gained her independence. However, Gerda's new association with an arms dealer and her rejection of Faber is unpersuasive and similarly Faber's inability to find a solution for a life together with Gerda is difficult to comprehend.

The connections between the protagonists' fictional experiences in the novel and the political events are all too obvious. The failure of Faber's and Gerda's relationship mirrors the failure of liberalism and democracy in Germany. The historian Jürgen Frölich, not referring specifically to the end of the novel, but to Wolff's relationship with Liberalism maintains: 'Das Verhältnis zwischen Theodor Wolff und den liberalen Parteien in Deutschland war im Ganzen gesehen keine Erfolgsgeschichte mit 'happy end'.²⁵⁸ As the novel aims to reflect on the Weimar Republic, a happy end is clearly not applicable in a novel that illustrates the Republic's failure. Wolff recognized that, in times of dissent and general turmoil, a *Zeitroman* ending in happiness and harmony would be incongruous. Writing in exile, he wants to demonstrate that an unstable future associated with mistrust and betrayal is not the time to portray eternal happiness. In addition, according to René Schickele, Wolff, the publicist and journalist was not interested in writing contemporary romance novels like those of Vicki Baum, even if they were highly popular;²⁵⁹ Schickele also suggested in the same letter that the development of the relationship between Faber and Gerda rather than the historical issues should have taken centre stage.²⁶⁰

The unsatisfactory ending of the novel was also responsible for the failure to sell the film-rights. Wolff lobbied hard and travelled to London and Paris on numerous

²⁵⁸ Jürgen Frölich, "Die 'große demokratische Partei für das einige Reich'," *Theodor Wolff: Journalist, Weltbürger, Demokrat*, eds. Bernd Söseemann and Jürgen Frölich (Jüdische Miniaturen 10) (Berlin: Hentrich, 2004), 41.

²⁵⁹ Vicki Baum, Austrian popular novelist, who migrated to the United States in the early 1930s. In 1932 her bestseller *Menschen im Hotel* was made into an Oscar winning film in Hollywood and screened under the title *Grand Hotel*, starring Greta Garbo and Joan Crawford.

²⁶⁰ René Schickele writes: 'Das schöne Erlebnis Ihres Helden mit der Schwimmerin hätte gewonnen, je weiter es in den Vordergrund gerückt worden wäre, je weniger Sie an die historischen Ereignisse im Hintergrund erinnert hätten'. Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207: 18. Letter from René Schickele to Theodor Wolff (16.5.1937).

occasions to try and secure the film rights for his novel. However, the lack of the novel's entertainment value as a love story resulted in a less than enthusiastic reception of *Die Schwimmerin* as a film script. Influenced by his wife, Äne Hickethier, who had been a prominent actress in Germany and France, Wolff had a keen interest and contacts in the performing arts, including film. Correspondence during 1937 and 1938 between Wolff, Bernhard Diebold and Ferdinand Bruckner, documents the failure to secure film rights.²⁶¹ Some saw great potential: 'Die Gerda ist eine Bombenrolle und das Ganze geschaffen für den Film!'²⁶² However, the general verdict suggested that the characters and story line would not appeal to popular taste. The film industry apparently preferred romantic love stories.²⁶³ Film producers viewed the relationship between Faber and Gerda as problematic and difficult to translate to the big screen. Bernhard Diebold, an experienced film and theatre director, judged the novel unsuitable for the big screen:

Selbstverständlich habe ich mich sofort mit Ihrer 'Schwimmerin' auseinandergesetzt... die mir leider ja wenig Filmisches erbringt. Dass das Liebespaar nie zur richtigen Liebeszene kommt, das ist der Branche ein Greuel. ... Die Psychologie der Gerda ist filmisch unübertragbar. Warum will sie ihn eigentlich nicht?? Warum?... Denken Sie bei der Herstellung nie an Ihren Roman, sondern immer an den Film. Es ist mir greulich, einem Mann Ihrer Kultur solche Rezepte geben zu müssen.²⁶⁴

This last sentence shows Diebold's honesty and directness, presumably lacking in people like Schickele and Feder who did not want to hurt Wolff. It is indeed criticism that Wolff had seldom encountered in his whole career. Bernhard Diebold

²⁶¹ Werner Diebold, Theatre director in Munich, lived in exile in Zürich from 1934 onwards. Ferdinand Bruckner, Theatre director in Berlin, emigrated to the USA in 1936. Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207 : 7, 9.

²⁶² Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207:19. Letter from Siegfried Trebitsch to Theodor Wolff (21.6.1942). The exiled novelist, dramatist and poet Siegfried Trebitsch was George Bernard Shaw's official translator and agent for the German-speaking countries; he left Austria three days after its annexation to Germany in 1938 and spent most of the war in Zürich.

²⁶³ This is manifested by the list of Academy Awards during the 1930s, where escapist entertainment such as romance, adventure or musicals were the preferred genre: *Cavalcade*, directed by Frank Lloyd (1933), *It happened One Night*, directed by Frank Capra (1934), *Mutiny on the Bounty*, directed by Frank Lloyd (1935), *The Great Ziegfeld*, directed by Robert Z. Leonard (1936). source: *Chronicle of the Cinema*, (London: Kindersley, 1995).

²⁶⁴ Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207 : 9. Letters from Bernhard Diebold to Theodor Wolff (29.3. 1938 and 10.5.1938 and 30.4. 1938).

encouraged Wolff to revise the novel and again raised Wolff's hopes in January 1939.²⁶⁵ Wolff revised the novel numerous times to appease producers – but to no avail.

While attempts to secure film rights for *Die Schwimmerin* proved frustrating, the final disappointment was that Wolff's close friend, the famous actress Elisabeth Bergner,²⁶⁶ declined the offer to play the role of Gerda Rohr. Elisabeth Bergner found Gerda's behaviour bewildering and less than convincing: 'Ich frage mich, wenn dieses Mädchen den Mann, den sie zu lieben vorgibt, aufgibt, um nach China zu gehen, dann muss sie doch eine große Berufung oder Mission in sich fühlen... Wie kann ich sonst verlangen, dass ein Publikum sie versteht'.²⁶⁷ The writer and journalist Elisabeth Castonier attempted to defend the novel's ending by judging Elisabeth Bergner for her lack of flexibility: 'Ich fand die Bergner, wie stets, zu wenig wandlungsfähig'.²⁶⁸ However, Bergner was not alone in her rejection especially of the ending.²⁶⁹ Gerda's motivation for not wanting to be united with Faber was unworkable for a film production. Ultimately however, these internal obstacles were not the only reasons for the failure to make *Die Schwimmerin* into a film. Political events thwarted Wolff's cinematic goal. The escalation of conflicts in Europe during 1939 and the outbreak of World War II decisively ended Wolff's hopes for a film version of *Die Schwimmerin*.

The third and final reason for the conspicuous lack of the novel's success came from the exile community, which favoured confident protagonists demonstrating

²⁶⁵ 'Ich hoffe, ihnen vielleicht noch einmal in ihrer Filmsache etwas Erfreuliches schreiben zu dürfen. Ich hoffe, ich wünsche, ich warte... wie wir alle'. Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207: 9. Letter from Werner Diebold to Theodor Wolff (5.1. 1939).

²⁶⁶ Her forty-one letters to Wolff are kept in the Bundesarchiv in Koblenz and reveal their strong lifelong friendship. Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207: 20.

²⁶⁷ Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207: 20. Letter from Elisabeth Bergner to Theodor Wolff (11.3.1939).

²⁶⁸ Castonier 196.

²⁶⁹ See letters by Ludwig Hatvany and Bernhard Diebold. Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207: 9,11.

decisive action. The hero of the novel reacts to the world around him in a less than compelling manner and this was particularly frowned upon in exile literature. The exiles expected decisive actions, as Pfeiler states in his treatise on exile literature: 'A writer was expected to stand up and be counted. Works lacking in militancy, regardless of their artistic merits, often were scorned and scored'.²⁷⁰ Faber was found lacking in assertiveness. Critics even perceived Faber's forced exile as escapism into a more comfortable life: 'Ulrich Faber jedoch reist mit seiner 'Schwimmerin' in eine recht behagliche Emigration – damit ist für ihn der Nationalsozialismus erledigt'.²⁷¹ Critics dismissed the fine nuances in Faber's reactions to injustice, loss and alienation that were shared by those in exile. Wolff portrayed Faber as a quiet reflective intellectual who never reacted to political conflicts with polemic outbursts. Wolff's protagonist does not demonstrate the tough determination that was expected by the exile community. Faber is not a fighter. His lifestyle, living in hotels – even prior to exile – , never having a home to call his own, points at an unsettled and uncertain person with no roots and reflects Liberalism during the Weimar era, gradually losing grip on its home base. Ulrich Faber is an alienated individual, lacking a sense of belonging and searching for a lost world.

It can be presumed that Wolff was familiar with Robert Musil's novel *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, volume one, first published 1930.²⁷² It is tempting to seek parallels, as the protagonist in Wolff's and Musil's novel share the same first name. Ulrich Faber responds rather indecisively to events around him and at times seems to suffer similar personality traits – though never to the same extreme – to the Ulrich in *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*. Both protagonists, to varying degrees, suffer from a

²⁷⁰ Pfeiler 54.

²⁷¹ Waterkant 90.

²⁷² Robert Musil, *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Adolf Frisé, Vol.1." Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften" (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1978).

characteristic that makes them reluctant to react to the present, to be proactive and to take a determined stand. They are typical of the tolerant, highly informed intellectuals, who after World War I lost the ability to judge and take decisive actions. This enabled them to remain generally popular and made them appealing on the one hand, but frustrating on the other. Like Ulrich Faber and Ulrich, *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, Hofmannsthal's Hans Karl Bühl in *Der Schwierige*, also avoids confrontations at all cost and declares: 'Es [ist] unmöglich, den Mund aufzumachen, ohne die heillosesten Konfusionen anzurichten! Aber lieber leg ich doch die erbliche Mitgliedschaft nieder und verkriech mich zeitlebens in eine Uhuhöhle.'²⁷³ All three 'heroes', Ulrich Faber, Ulrich, *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* and Hans Karl Bühl, were raised in a culture that is now past. In order to avoid 'confusion' all three remain silent and retreat from any flashpoints. Thus they remain popular, but frustrate with their lack of critical response and action. Gerda accuses Faber: 'Aber Du machst Dir immer so schöne Ausreden zurecht, Du erklärst immer so genau, warum etwas nicht möglich ist oder sich nicht lohnt. Nur um Dich von [sic] allem drücken zu können. Du bist der richtige Liberale'. (Schwimmerin 127) Faber is a likeable fellow who helps wherever he can. He helps Gerda, not only to find a job; he also helps her to flee Germany and assists her financially. Faber defends a wrongly accused socialist in a controversial court case. During World War I Faber saves the life of a fellow soldier, which results in severe injuries to his left arm.²⁷⁴ The role of the fictitious Faber is carefully crafted to emulate liberal democrats during Weimar. Wolff paints him in a manner of a totally amicable fellow; however, his lack of action and vision is partly responsible for the looming catastrophe.

²⁷³ Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Gesammelte Werke*. Vol. 2. Lustspiele: "Der Schwierige" (Frankfurt am Main: S.Fischer, 1954). 312.

²⁷⁴ The significance of Faber's 'kraftlose Arm' will be discussed later in this chapter.

The question was asked, why Wolff placed the story in the contemporary setting. René Schickele criticised Wolff for choosing the Third Reich as the background to the novel, particularly as Wolff had deliberately and strictly avoided public comments on National Socialism.²⁷⁵ It is an appropriate criticism, given that Germany under a dictatorial regime is the novel's background, yet Wolff avoided any direct reference, overt judgment or expressions of indignation. On the other hand *Die Schwimmerin* provides insight into Wolff's perception of his life in Germany during Weimar and the beginning of the third Reich. He attempts to come to terms with his past and the problematic state of exile through the story of the relationship between Faber and Gerda. The narrative of *Die Schwimmerin* develops on two parallel levels, i.e., the private reflecting the public. The failure of the relationship between Faber and Gerda mirrors the gradual collapse of parliamentary democracy in Germany. Their ill-fated relationship reflects the change in political and societal values. The novel illustrates the conflict between young and old, modernity and tradition, a conflict fuelled by new social, political, economic and cultural ideas. Three major issues – political and social conflict, loss of law and order, and an economy in turmoil – affect the lives of the two main protagonists, who are ultimately forced into exile. In his role as current affairs commentator and editor-in-chief of the *Berliner Tageblatt*, Wolff frequently discussed German society and its role in the demise of democracy.²⁷⁶ His novel, *Die Schwimmerin* continues this concern and reflects on a society in conflict and life in exile.

²⁷⁵ René Schickele asks: 'Doch je mehr Sie in das eigentlich Romanhafte hineingeraten, umso mehr drängte sich mir die Frage auf, warum Sie die Handlung in eine Zeit verlegten, mit der Sie sich gar nicht ernstlich auseinandersetzen wollten'. Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207: 18. Letter from René Schickele to Theodor Wolff (16.5.1937).

²⁷⁶ The following are examples of Wolff's editorials in the *Berliner Tageblatt*: BT 73 (12.2.1928) and Theodor Wolff, *Der Journalist* 243-250; BT 523 (4. 11.1928) Vor zehn Jahren; BT 40 (24.1.1932) Die Kinder dieser Zeit.

The narrative is divided into two sections. The first focuses on factors such as class and generational conflict and women's roles, loss of law and order and economic turmoil and the eventual failure of democracy in Germany. The second section depicts life in exile, encapsulating two opposing responses to exile: on the one hand, the many debilitating features, such as alienation, loss of self-esteem, insecurity, as found in Faber, and on the other, new found energy, liberation and confidence, as found in Gerda. Reality is intertwined with fiction; historical facts control the fictitious protagonists' life. Their journey starts during World War I, continues through the Weimar Republic and ends in exile.

Although the title of the novel *Die Schwimmerin* refers to Gerda, the female protagonist, it is the male protagonist, Ulrich Faber, who takes centre stage. This adds to the criticism of the novel, as the reader anticipates the story of a champion, not of a failed hero. Wolff's intense personal interest in Faber overshadows the characterisation of Gerda. Self-representation and autobiographical elements in the fictitious Ulrich Faber are evident: Wolff and the novel's protagonist share a similar fate culminating in forced exile for both. Self reflection – clearly expressed through Faber – reveals an admission of personal failure, lack of political awareness and intervention, not to be found in Wolff's journalistic or historical accounts. These admissions in the novel - even though disguised in fictional context - demonstrate Wolff's own notion of defeat. A wide range of Wolff's interests and life experiences are identical with Faber's.²⁷⁷ For example, Faber is offered the position of Ambassador to Washington the same years as Wolff was offered the position as German

²⁷⁷ The narrator presents: 'Er [Faber] war in geschäftlichen Erörterungen kein kleinlicher Krämer, er verlor niemals die Empfindung für grosse Gesichtspunkte und die Fernwirkungen, und am Abend nach solchen Diskussionen konnten die Fremden sich mit ihm über alles, was sie nun gerade interessierte, unterhalten, über die Politik der Gegenwart und die Geschichte der Vergangenheit, über Briand, den Fürsten Bülow, Lloyd George und Vanderbilt, über die Psychologie, die Ideen und Lebensgewohnheiten der einzelnen Völker, über Reisen, Bilder, Bücher, Theater und über die Frauen'. (*Schwimmerin* 47)

Ambassador to Paris.²⁷⁸ It is noteworthy that Faber's resignation from his position at the Dönhoff Bank occurs in 1926, the same year Wolff resigned from the *Deutsche Demokratische Partei*, the party he founded in 1919. Faber is forced into exile on the night of the burning of the Berlin Exhibition Hall; Wolff flees Berlin on the night of the Reichstag Fire. Both once enjoyed professional and social status, wealth and security in Germany. In their newly adopted country they are unknown and a fugitive. The notion of loss, one of the widely recognized features of the exile experience,²⁷⁹ speaks through Faber, and it is through Faber that Wolff bears witness and writes his story.²⁸⁰ Despite their trauma, both Faber and Wolff remain 'cheerful pessimists'. ('fröhlicher Pessimismus' (Schwimmerin 56) and 'heiterer Pessimismus' (Schwimmerin 166)) They have not abandoned hope for the return of peace and normality in Europe. Wolff explains in a letter to Feder: 'Dass der Ulrich Faber resigniert erscheint, habe ich eigentlich nicht gewollt. Er ist ein 'fröhlicher Pessimist'.²⁸¹ Wolff presents Faber with an outlook that is a reflection of his own personal determination to maintain an optimistic frame of mind, even though it is hardly a realistic one.

The polarity between Faber and Gerda reflects the extremes of the political reality during the Weimar Republic, where – according to Wolff – the Liberal Democrats represented by Faber, failed to see the need for change, represented by Gerda. While Faber represents failed Liberalism and admits: 'Wir sind die Besiegten', (Schwimmerin 192,195) Gerda represents youth, independence and idealism, yet is not

²⁷⁸ According to his son Rudolf, Wolff rejected the offer: 'Er lehnte mit Hinweis auf die verbreitete antijüdische Stimmung in der deutschen Öffentlichkeit ab'. Rudolf Wolff, "Ein Humanist," *Theodor Wolff Preis: Beiträge der Preisträger* 1988 (1989). 9.

²⁷⁹ Andrew Gurr states: 'Exile as the essential characteristic...anticipates the loss...of identity, a sense of home'.

Andrew Gurr, *Writers in Exile: the Identity of Home in Modern Literature* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1981).14.

²⁸⁰ 'Sie [Faber] sind in dem kraftlosen liberalen Zeitalter stecken geblieben'. (Schwimmerin 319) 'Für Menschen seiner [Faber's] Art konnte es vielleicht eine einheitliche Weltanschauung gar nicht mehr geben'. (Schwimmerin 299)

²⁸¹ AKIP. Letter from Theodor Wolff to Ernst Feder (24.5.1937).

affiliated with any particular party: ‘Nein. Ich trete nicht ein. Nicht in diesen Verband und in keinen’. (Schwimmerin 122) Wolff explained the strong interrelationship between the two protagonists in a letter to Ernst Feder, his friend and colleague: ‘[Gerda] ist gewissermaßen der zweite Teil seines [Fabers] Ich... was er in sich vermisst und in ihr findet’.²⁸² Faber sees in Gerda the ‘other’ and all that he lost over the years, i.e., hope for economic stability and enthusiasm for political and social change. The dependency between the two stimulates the storyline and underscores the relationships between the private and the public: Faber and Gerda depend on each other, thus reflecting the interdependency between the factions in the Weimar Republic. Moderate political parties needed each other’s support against the rise of extremism from the left as well as the right.

Prior to exile, Faber is the leader and Gerda the follower. Faber’s liberal ideals for individual freedom, a democratic parliamentary system and a fair social system seem to gain grounds during the early Weimar era. Gerda is his pupil and she follows his teaching, always observing and carefully assessing each situation. However, Faber’s influence and power decreases with rising political and economic conflicts. After 1933 with the Nazis in power, liberals retreated from public life.²⁸³ German liberals, including Wolff did not go down fighting, but capitulated early. From the moment Faber and Gerda enter exile, their roles are reversed. Faber and liberalism are defeated, whereas Gerda gains power and influence in capitalism and free enterprise. Faber has lost all his power, while Gerda is driven by motivation and energy. Both demonstrate two opposing responses to the challenges in exile. The caesura of exile causes a reverse of direction for both.

²⁸² AKIP. Letter from Theodor Wolff to Ernst Feder (24. 5.1937).

²⁸³ Dieter Langewiesche writes: ‘After 1933, the wellknown Weimar liberals retired from politics when the *Gleichschaltung* of the press denied them public opportunities for action’. Langewiesche 303.

Typology

The failure of choosing a clear genre for the novel also contributes to the lack of popular success. The novel can be assigned to four literary genres: *Bildungsroman*, a novel illustrating the development of a character; *Schlüsselroman*, in which characters are the key to real persons and *Zeitroman*, the engaged novel and its sub-class, the *Exilroman*. While the novel reveals some elements for a *Bildungsroman* and a *Schlüsselroman*, criteria associated with the *Zeitroman* are more convincing; particularly in view of the subtitle: *Roman aus der Gegenwart*. However it will be argued that the novel also fits the criteria of – what can be regarded as a sub-class of the *Zeitroman* – the *Exilroman*, where the exile experience is the foreground for the narrative action.

Bildungsroman

Initially, it can be argued that *Die Schwimmerin* can be classified as *Bildungsroman* or *Entwicklungsroman* as defined by Gero von Wilpert: ‘Roman, der in sehr bewußter und sinnvoller Komposition den inneren und äußeren Werdegang eines Menschen von den Anfängen bis zu einer gewissen Reifung der Persönlichkeit mit psychologischer Folgerichtigkeit verfolgt’.²⁸⁴ The prototype of the *Bildungsroman*, best represented by Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister*, has the focus on self-development, learning from childhood through life to maturity. The metaphor of a swimmer, learning to swim and gradually gaining confidence (‘freischwimmen’) gives some weight to the novel’s legitimacy as a *Bildungsroman*. Wolff’s novel depicts Gerda

²⁸⁴ Wilpert 238. For definitions of the German literary genre of *Entwicklungsroman*, *Bildungsroman* and their English equivalent, educational or apprenticeship novel see: Randolph P. Shaffner, *The Apprenticeship Novel: a Study of the Bildungsroman as a Regulative Type in Western Literature with a Focus on Three Classic Representatives by Goethe, Maugham and Mann* (New York: Lang, 1984), 3-5.

and her development from a servant's child to a successful businesswoman against the background of the many influences of the outside world. Gerda enters life, encounters friendship and love, copes with adversities and fights for her place in the world. At the start of the novel she is heavily dependent on Faber: 'Solange er ihr zürnte und ein Bruch möglich schien, war gleichsam das Licht in ihr ausgelöscht. Sie war entfärbt, schlaff, ein Segel ohne Wind'. (Schwimmerin 117) However, gradually she achieves confidence and independence, strives to apply her accumulated knowledge and aims to reach self-reliance. In the *Bildungsroman* the hero, at first, submits to the influence of a mentor, a complex role played by Faber in this novel. Faber's development, or rather his failure to develop, contrasts with Gerda's progress. Gerda is eager to learn, whereas Faber is inflexible and unwilling to embrace change, partly due to a lack of vision and determination and a strong opposition force. With Gerda's ever growing success, Faber retreats and lives on past achievements. According to Gero von Wilpert's definition of the *Bildungsroman*, the author must consciously place the development of a person in the centre of the narrative. As mentioned previously, although the title of the novel refers to Gerda, Wolff did not intend Gerda's development to be the main focus of this novel. Other elements in the work play a stronger role, i.e., the relationships between Faber and Gerda, and the critical examination of the times. For these reasons *Die Schwimmerin* does not qualify fully as a *Bildungsroman*.

Schlüsselroman

The *Schlüsselroman* is a novel in which actual persons are given a fictional mask and the story requires the decoding of these fictional characters for its comprehension. Gero von Wilpert defines *Schlüsselromane* as ‘nur solche, bei denen die Dekodierung des Realitätsbezugs Erzählziel ist, d.h. in denen die verkleideten Gestalten und Handlungen bewußt nach dem Willen des Autors durchschaut werden sollen, um die Anspielungen verständlich und damit den Inhalt überhaupt erst sinnvoll zu machen’.²⁸⁵ Wolfram Köhler, one of Wolff’s biographers, declares *Die Schwimmerin* a *Schlüsselroman*.²⁸⁶ However this can be reasonably disputed for two reasons. Firstly, *Die Schwimmerin* does not demand the decoding of real persons, presented under fictitious names, to be essential for an understanding of the story. Certainly several attempts have been made to decode the fictional character of Gerda and much speculation has centred on her. Many close to Wolff, including his own son Rudolf,²⁸⁷ wished to see in her his close friend, the famous actress Elisabeth Bergner. Bernd Söseman, whilst not intending to enter the discussion as to whether *Die Schwimmerin* is a true *Schlüsselroman*, wanted to set the record straight and has shown convincingly that Gerda Rohr portrayed not Elisabeth Bergner²⁸⁸ but Ilse Stöbe, Wolff’s longstanding secretary.²⁸⁹ Margrit Boveri, journalist with the *Berliner Tageblatt* confirmed that Ilse Stöbe played a role in Wolff’s life and ‘entzückte mit ihrer vielgerühmten blonden Schönheit Theodor Wolff’.²⁹⁰ Either Ilse Stöbe or Elisabeth Bergner may have been the inspiration for the fictitious Gerda, but real

²⁸⁵ Wilpert 827.

²⁸⁶ Köhler 283.

²⁸⁷ Söseman, *Theodor Wolff: ein Leben mit der Zeitung* 320.

²⁸⁸ Söseman, *Theodor Wolff: ein Leben mit der Zeitung* 320-321.

²⁸⁹ Ilse Stöbe (1911-1942) became a member of the Communist Party, was found guilty of treason and shot by the Gestapo in 1942.

²⁹⁰ Boveri 42.

persons were not used for their own sake, which is the aim of a character in a *Schlüsselroman*.

The second reason for the rejection of the novel as *Schlüsselroman* is Wolff's fierce protection of his privacy. He wished to avoid drawing outsiders into his private sphere and it is difficult to accept that he would disclose either his private personal life or his love life to his readers. Wolff would not have wished to expose characters in his novel to public speculations that were intent on drawing links to his private life. While this voyeuristic interest might engage those who are intrigued by Wolff's relationship with famous women of his time, it detracts from his aim of writing a novel with the focus on Germany's political, social and cultural problems during the 1920s and 1930s and the associated forced exile of the two main protagonists. Therefore, *Die Schwimmerin* does not qualify as *Schlüsselroman*.

Zeitroman

Criticism of contemporary issues is one of the central themes of *Die Schwimmerin* and for this reason the novel fits the literary genre of the *Zeitroman*, the engaged novel. The novel chronicles life in Germany from the end of World War I to the early years of National Socialism. The *Zeitroman* is defined by Gero von Wilpert as an 'erweiterte Form des Gesellschaftsromans... ein nicht nur gesellschaftlich, sondern auch geistig und kulturell, politisch und ökonomisch stimmiges Panorama ihrer Zeit'.²⁹¹ Giving his novel the subtitle, *Roman aus der Gegenwart*, clearly signals Wolff's intention to write a *Zeitroman*. The *Zeitroman* or engaged novel is particularly prevalent in troubled times, when criticism – or at least, a critical examination – of the

²⁹¹ Wilpert 1044.

times is the central theme.²⁹² As a result this genre was popular among both writers and readers in the Weimar Republic and during exile in particular. Writers aimed to expose conflicts and readers were eager to be confronted by contemporary problems. Elke Matijevich argues: ‘The assertion by some literary historians that the engaged novel tends to proliferate in times of crisis is substantiated by the genre’s prominence in twentieth-century literature, particularly in Germany, which has seen more than its share of turmoil in the past eight or nine decades’.²⁹³ The following will document that *Die Schwimmerin* meets the criteria of the literary genre of the *Zeitroman*, the novel engaged with the political, social and cultural problems of its times.

The narrative develops on three levels – fiction, history and autobiography – with fictitious events closely reflecting political reality. The story begins in May 1918 and follows the difficult post war years, the inflation of 1923 that rendered the German currency worthless and the collapse of the German economy that hastened Hitler’s rise to power. While Faber, the liberal democrat is insulated from financial ruin as a result of wise and dispersed investments, Gerda’s working-class family is struggling, and it is at this point that Gerda asks Faber for help in finding her a job. This demonstrates the liberal democrats’ strong position during the early 1920s. The next phase, the years from 1924 to 1929, brought some stability to Germany. There was cautious optimism and during this brief time of restored economic prosperity, voters helped to stabilise the Republic instead of working against it as so often in the past. Faber and Gerda are in stable and gainful employment and enjoying their relationship, although differences of opinion emerge gradually. Private difficulties in the relationship between them

²⁹² The following German novels, to mention just a few, testify to this pattern: Alfred Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz: die Geschichte vom Franz Biberkopf* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1982 (1929)). Hans Fallada, *Kleiner Mann, was nun: Roman* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 1935). Erich Kästner, *Fabian: Die Geschichte eines Moralisten* (Berlin: Ullstein, 1959 (1934)). Klaus Mann, *Der Vulkan: Roman unter Emigranten* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1981 (1939)).

²⁹³ Elke Matijevich, *The Zeitroman of the Late Weimar Republic* (New York: Lang, 1995). 3.

reflect the public underlying problems of the Weimar Republic. Conflicts between the old (Faber) and the new (Gerda) escalate during these few years of revival; recovery and economic wealth did not heal political rifts. Since 1919 much had changed in the German political landscape. However large commercial and industrial enterprises remained powerful and positions in government, church, university, the military and judiciary were still mostly in the hands of the conservative elite. As a result Germans had lost trust, became disillusioned with politicians and focused on material recovery, regaining their lost personal wealth following World War I. Through Faber's generosity Gerda enjoys, for the first time in her life, the luxury of elegant food and restaurants, expensive clothes and car travel, while Faber accumulates wealth through additional shares and dividends.

Faber loses some of his assets and Gerda fears redundancy, when the Wall Street stock exchange crash, in October 1929 heralded a prolonged worldwide economic crisis. In Germany the number of unemployed escalated to four million, inflation worsened, and right-wing extremists were able to strengthen and regroup. Germans sought refuge in the extreme right wing party and at the September 1930 election the Nazi Party increased its seats in the *Reichstag* from 12 to 107. In January 1933 Hitler was appointed as Chancellor. In a rather 'larger-than-life' episode Gerda becomes the victim of an attempted rape and is entangled in a murder case. The private scene, violence, murder and rape reflect political events. Nazi seizure of power was accompanied by unprecedented violence in the streets of Berlin.

This *Zeitroman* reveals Wolff's view of the failure of the Weimar Republic through the failure of the relationship between Faber and Gerda. Wolff reflects on his perceived personal failure to save the democracy by hiding his notion of regret in fictional narrative. Much has been written about Wolff's role in the demise of the

Weimar Republic and he has been accused of total impotence in opposing right wing extremists.²⁹⁴ His failure to recognise the susceptibility with which the petit bourgeois embraced National Socialism has received strong criticism.²⁹⁵ Wolff attempts to unravel this burden and understand his past. He disguises his concerns over current events in fiction, which is the essential criterion for the *Zeitroman*.

Die Schwimmerin presents a detailed account of Germany after World War I and how the process of modernisation and political uncertainty unsettles society. The following examination of the novel illustrates how specific topics, class and generational conflict, changes in the role of women, loss of law and order and economic turmoil all contributed to the failure of a liberal democracy.

Class Conflict

The novel describes a society troubled by class distinction and shows the widening gulf between rich and poor, between the ‘nouveau riches’ and beggars in the streets of Berlin. As a critical observer and commentator of German society, Wolff devotes many pages in the novel to social issues, starting in May 1918 with a strong

²⁹⁴ Jacob Toury writes: ‘Über Theodor Wolffs späteren Einfluss auf die Weimarer öffentliche Meinung durch sein Berliner Tageblatt braucht ebenfalls kein Wort verloren zu werden - es sei denn, man wolle seine kulturelle Brisanz und Potenz der tragischen politischen Wirkungslosigkeit, ja Impotenz des Blattes gegenüberstellen. Jacob Toury, "Der S. Fischer Verlag als Wegbereiter der Weimarer Kultur," *Juden in der Weimarer Republik: Skizzen und Portraits*, eds. Walter Grab and Julius H. Schoeps (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1998). 44-45. For an analysis of Theodor Wolff and the Democrats and their role during the Weimar Republic see: Sösemann, *Das Ende der Weimarer Republik in der Kritik demokratischer Publizisten: Theodor Wolff, Ernst Feder, Julius Elbau, Leopold Schwarzschild*. Werner Becker, *Demokratie des sozialen Rechts: die politische Haltung der Frankfurter Zeitung, der Vossischen Zeitung und des Berliner Tageblatts, 1918-1924* (Göttingen: Musterschmidt, 1971). Modris Eksteins, *The Limits of Reason: the German Democratic Press and the Collapse of Weimar Democracy* (Oxford: O.U.P., 1975).

²⁹⁵ Gotthart Schwarz writes: ‘Die Affinität des deutschen Mittelstandes und Kleinbürgertums zur nationalsozialistischen politischen Programmatik hat Theodor Wolff eindeutig unterschätzt.’ Gotthart Schwarz 265.

attack on a German bourgeoisie that continues to believe victory is near and indulges in glamorous charity garden parties.²⁹⁶

Wolff's satirical pictures of bourgeois society in Berlin during World War I expose its superficial and irresponsible lifestyle. Venues are filled with self-important business men holding pretentious conversations: 'Es ist eine große Zeit... Ja, nicht wahr und ein großes Geschäft'. (Schwimmerin 21) The depiction of contrasts between sunny garden parties and dark reality of the war is confronting. The narrator's bitter sarcasm is designed to cause exasperation in the reader. The German bourgeoisie seems oblivious to both the lies told by the government and the bloodshed at the battlefield:

Das Fest war begünstigt durch die Sonne... Aber noch erhebender als die Botschaft des himmlischen Lichtes waren die Nachrichten, die täglich über den Verlauf der Westoffensive eintrafen, diese ununterbrochenen Siegesmeldungen... Freudig angeregt von der Gewissheit des nahen vollständigen Sieges waren zu dem Fest der Dönhoffs bekannte und unbekanntere Persönlichkeiten aus allen besseren Berufskreisen und Ständen gekommen. (Schwimmerin 15-16)

The novel illustrates how war deepens social inequality and accelerates class conflict. The working class was used as 'cannon fodder' and the novel presents an example to demonstrate this social injustice. At this late stage of the war, Gerda's father – despite his old age – is sent to the front and subsequently dies in battle, whereas men from the establishment are able to avoid military service through connections and bribes. (Schwimmerin 17)

After three years of war, conditions at home reach crisis point, especially for the poor. Food and fuel are scarce, their distribution disorganized and living conditions have become desperate, except for the Berlin establishment that has been able to secure food and privileges and persistently closes eyes and ears to the starvation and

²⁹⁶ Wolff assigns over fifty pages to Berlin's society even before Faber and Gerda meet and the story proper begins.

deprivation suffered by ordinary people.²⁹⁷ Wolff uses confronting images, such as a Berlin beer garden in 1918, where hunger forces women to engage in prostitution. This is in stark contrast to Berlin high society's glamorous garden parties, where food and drinks are still plentiful.

The novel's two protagonists operate outside the traditional mould of the Berlin bourgeoisie. Ulrich Faber – a successful Berlin banker, a Catholic, the son of the owner of a small guesthouse near Stuttgart with a bad reputation – is an 'outsider' in Berlin's established Protestant high society. Even the two names (Ulrich Faber and Gerda Rohr) are chosen to illustrate class characteristics. The name *Faber* – Latin for artisan, carpenter or engineer – seems to have been chosen to present a down-to-earth, pragmatic man. Gerda Rohr comes from a hardworking, traditional working class background. A *Rohr* is a reed or conduit, indicating Gerda's dependence on others to achieve her aims. She sways in the wind and veers from side to side to realise her ambition.²⁹⁸ Both, Faber and Gerda share an equally humble background. However, Faber possesses extraordinary business, communication and diplomatic skills that are appreciated and exploited in government and commercial circles, and these open most doors to the Berlin establishment. Faber can move freely:

Faber liebte diesen schnellen Wechsel der Situationen, der Erscheinungen, der Szenerie. Dass er, gänzlich unabhängig, durch alle Stockwerke des sozialen Gebäudes wandern, überall eintreten und nach Gefallen verweilen konnte, erschien ihm als der lohnendste Vorteil, der sich aus seinen mühelos erreichten Erfolgen ergab. (Schwimmerin 66)

Faber manages to move through various social circles, from the Berlin Bohemian world (he has a child with a Berlin artist, Miss Graff) to the offices of high

²⁹⁷ Wolff criticised the food distribution organized by the 'Kriegs - (later called) Reichsernährungsamt' in his Diary. Wolff, *Tagebücher* Vol. 1. 381-382.

²⁹⁸ The narrator describes Gerda Rohr's personality, a combination of reed-like nature and steely determination: 'Sie hatte die anschniegsame Zartheit des Empfindens...und sie hatte auch die Härte, den harten Willen, der, wenn es sein muss störende Sentimentalitäten rücksichtslos beiseite schiebt'. (Schwimmerin 232)

ranking politicians and diplomats. Girls like Gerda, a servant's daughter, have a much harder struggle and it is confirmed that 'Diese Mädchen haben es nicht so leicht wie die reichen Familientöchter'. (Schwimmerin 73) Condescending remarks are intended to confront and reveal strong class prejudice prevalent during the Weimar era: 'Dabei habe [Gerda] für ein Mädchen aus ihren Kreisen in ihrem Benehmen einen erstaunlich sicheren Takt'. (Schwimmerin 98)

The yearning for stability and security is strong and not abandoned during these uncertain political and economic developments in post-war Germany. This is illustrated in Faber's and Gerda's regular meeting in a coffee house on a comfortable *Plüschsofa*, which represents brief happiness and comfort for the couple. Satirical symbolism of the wear and tear of a sofa's fabric is powerful – more powerful than any theoretical accounts of the deterioration of the social fabric of the Weimar Republic. The *Plüschsofa* symbolises cosy middle-class family traditions that are no longer applicable. With old values and standards breaking down, the *Plüschsofa* also fades rapidly with every visit: 'Die Plüschsitze der Sofas waren noch mehr verblasst'. (Schwimmerin 146) The couple seeks to snuggle into the warm comfort of the past for one last time, as the café is threatened by closure, due to massive unemployment and rising poverty. The sofa's fading fabric becomes the symbol for traditional security and comforts vanishing, never to be replaced. Subtle images of Berlin society, such as this, are chosen to demonstrate the loss of old fashioned middle-class values.

The gulf between Faber's world of high society, finance and banking and Gerda's working class background causes friction and misunderstanding between the two. Faber's views are in conflict with Gerda's youthful energetic search for change. Faber is forced to acknowledge that Gerda's world is not his world: 'Ich war Dein Zuhause, Deine Heimat. Gewiss. Aber es war doch nicht unbedingt Deine Heimat...

Eigentlich war ich für Dich doch ein zurückgebliebener, verständnisloser Bourgeois'. (Schwimmerin 281, 282) Faber represents the era that Gerda wants to leave behind. Gerda has moved on, she belongs neither to Faber's old world nor to her old working class. She represents a new class, where self-determination, energy and entrepreneurship want to be recognised, rather than family connections, traditions and prejudices.

With Faber's assistance Gerda embarks on a career in the Bankhaus Dönhoff. She is assertive, industrious and unperturbed by discrimination and traditions. They meet regularly for outings, always in secret, avoiding people they know, as society does not condone a relationship between the much older banker and the servant's daughter. Gerda is respected by some of her colleagues in the bank, as she is caring and helpful; despised by others, because her rapid promotions and her suspected affair with Faber attract the envy of many. Faber calls her a 'Kind des Volkes',²⁹⁹ (Schwimmerin 92) avoids elevating her to the status of a society woman and is aware 'man [darf] sie nicht dem Boden entfremden'. (Schwimmerin 107) Faber dreams of an amalgamation of working class energy with liberal ideals. In the disguise of the fictitious relationship between Faber and Gerda, Wolff exposes the deep rooted problem during the Weimar Republic, when liberals rejected the left and thus failed to see their chance to present a combined front against right extremism.

²⁹⁹ Wolff refers to 'Volk' as 'bodenständig' and as contrast to 'high society', not the 'Blut und Boden' Nazi notion of 'Volk' or 'völkisch'.

Generational Conflict

The novel explores the conflict between the generations. The concept that generational conflict was a contributing factor to the demise of the Weimar Republic has been the subject of some research.³⁰⁰ The battle between the generations is fought out between Faber and Gerda, who rightly accuses Faber, twice her age: 'Du nimmst mich nicht ernst', (Schwimmerin 106) an accusation that reveals the rift between the generations. The novel divides German society into outdated Liberals (Faber) and progressive youth (Gerda); however a distinction needs to be made between progressive and constructive youth (Gerda and her group) and destructive Nazi youth (Münch and his cohorts). Gerda's rising fortune is mirrored by Faber's decline. Faber, the old liberal democrat ignores young Gerda's criticism, thus reflecting historical events, when German Liberal Democrats ignored youth and misjudged its strength during the Weimar Republic.

Rebellious youth and deteriorating family values are also addressed through a subplot that illustrates the relationship between Faber and his illegitimate son Martin. The youth of the Weimar era rejected the moral and social values of their parents' generation and duplicitous standards are exposed. The older generation responded by retreating and consequently losing respect and credibility. In the novel Faber aims to be respected as the pillar of society, yet has to admit to many delicate affairs and an illegitimate son. After Martin dares to confront his father with strong opposing ideas, Faber withdraws and for many years spends little or no time with him. Subsequently Faber expresses surprise, when his son confronts him and defiantly changes his name

³⁰⁰ Larry Eugen Jones, "German Liberalism and the Alienation of the Younger Generation in the Weimar Republic," *In Search of Liberal Germany: Studies in the History of German Liberalism from 1789 to the Present*, eds. Konrad H. Jarausch and Larry Eugene Jones (New York: Berg, 1990), 287-321. Langewiesche 271.

from Faber to Steinhausen,³⁰¹ the name of his mother's new partner, a well-known Berlin artist and painter. In so doing, the son totally rejects his father. Wolff's intention with this interlude, depicting Faber's estranged relationship with his son, is to demonstrate the deep rift between the generations during the Weimar Republic

The young generation (Gerda) accuses the liberal democrats (Faber) of political inaction. Gerda's asks the probing question: 'Findest Du nicht, die Republik hätte auch mehr tun können?... Du hättest sie antreiben sollen. Du hättest es doch gekonnt. Aber Du hast Dich von (sic) allem gedrückt. Man muss tun, was man kann. Sagst Du. Aber was tust Du denn?' (Schwimmerin 126,127) Living in exile, Wolff questions his personal role from an objective distance and recognises that he could have done more to support the Weimar Republic.

The novel documents the eagerness of the young to join the National Socialists who seem to be the only party promising achievable programs to reduce unemployment. It is therefore no surprise that idealistic young people, such as Faber's son and many of Gerda's young friends, follow right wing extremists because the 'Republik tut ja nichts, sie verschafft den Arbeitslosen keine Arbeit'. (Schwimmerin 146) Faber eventually admits: 'Ich war unfähig, das Neue, das Junge zu begreifen'. (Schwimmerin 282) This reveals a sense of failure and resignation. The reality of the generational conflict during the Weimar era is depicted at a family and personal level. The lack of understanding between youth (Gerda and Martin) and the older generation (Faber) creates disharmony and subsequent dissent.

³⁰¹ While the name Steinhausen reflects solid foundation, the name Faber reflects artistic pursuits by a creative person.

The Role of Women

In addition to the generational conflict, the role of women challenged society during the Weimar Republic.³⁰² Life for women improved during the early 20th century due to better education and health and increased industrialisation and democratisation. Wolff had discussed the change in the role of women in the *Berliner Tageblatt*.³⁰³ Women attained economic and social independence through access to better education, careers outside the home and the right to vote. Life during the Weimar Republic was marked by a general perception that everything was possible and that social boundaries could be expanded.³⁰⁴ The novel depicts Gerda Rohr as representing the new woman. She challenges traditional class barriers and does not stop at conventional means to achieve her aims.

Although the novel focuses on Gerda, two other types of women in Weimar society are briefly portrayed: the femme fatale and the glamorous socialite. The role of the femme fatale is played by the dubious Frau Martius, Faber's former partner. Her devious behaviour is partly motivated by jealousy, as Faber has lost interest in her. She appears in the novel whenever morals are compromised and Gerda compares her to a venomous snake: 'So oft Frau Martius sie gesehen hatte, war sie unwillkürlich zurückgewichen, wie man zurückweicht, wenn eine Kreuzotter auf dem Wege liegt'. (Schwimmerin 205) Frau Martius attacks like a snake, without warning, and leaves quickly without a trace. She abuses Gerda's trust and is the instigator and conspirator

³⁰² For the examination of Women in the Weimar Republic see: Vibeke Rützou Petersen, *Women and Modernity in Weimar Germany: Reality and its Representation in Popular Fiction* (New York: Berghahn, 2001). *Gestaltet und gestaltet: Frauen in der deutschen Literatur*, ed. Marianne Burkhard (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1980).

³⁰³ BT 136 (16.3.1914) and Theodor Wolff, *Der Journalist* 104-106; BT 284 (8.6.1914).

³⁰⁴ Petersen 145.

in a brutal assault on her.³⁰⁵ Frau Martius' role exposes immorality and a breakdown in law and order during the Weimar Republic, when innocent victims like Faber and Gerda must flee Germany in fear of persecution, while Frau Martius – always in the company of right wing party officials – continues to play her games in Berlin and is never brought to justice.³⁰⁶

Next to the femme fatale, the novel presents the glamorous woman, played by Dina Holgers, an attractive actress, star of the Berlin and international stage and Faber's companion at the beginning of the story. This seemingly lacklustre relationship between Dina Holgers and Faber signals the change in society, where alluring glamorous women, such as Dina Holgers, who exist only as an adjunct to a man's career, gradually lose their influence. Faber ends the relationship and she fades from the story. Dorothee Dönhoff, the rich banker's daughter, also appears briefly as the glamorous and easily forgotten woman who is more interested in her appearance than a constructive role in society. The narrator compares these types of women with 'edelgezüchtete Tulpen'. (Schwimmerin 22) There is no room for rich idle women in a society in crisis. The 'edelgezüchtete Tulpen' like Dina Holgers and Dorothee Dönhoff are dismissed during the first few pages and it is Gerda, 'die Schwimmerin' representing the new woman, who moves into the centre of the story, overcomes all obstacles and takes charge of her life.

Gerda, *die Schwimmerin*, learns to swim and gains confidence under the guidance of Faber, who admires in her 'die Frische einer Schwimmerin, die soeben aus dem Wasser herausgestiegen [ist]'. (Schwimmerin 61) The metaphor of swimming is pertinent for Gerda as it characterises her energy and clean image. She dives under

³⁰⁵ Ludwig Hatvany judges this event in the novel as somewhat implausible: 'Die Mord- und Todschlagsgeschichte erscheint mir leider wenig glaubhaft.' Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207: 11. Letter from Ludwig Hatvany to Theodor Wolff (2. 6. 1937).

³⁰⁶ The break down of the legal system during the Weimar Republic is dealt with later in this Chapter.

water and floats freely. However, she does not stand in the water and does not touch the ground; her aims and objectives are vague and conflicting. Her determination in refusing sex, presumably to appear moral and clean, contrasts with her acceptance of a business deal with a corrupt arms dealer. Even if she tries to be morally correct, her ethical stand is debatable. At times she swims against the tide. Waves of the ocean of life toss her around and she struggles to keep her head above water and Faber warns: 'Gib acht, damit Dich das Wasser nicht verschlingt!' (Schwimmerin 324) She encounters many storms, but in the end sails confidently across the sea to foreign shores. The sea does not engulf Gerda; she remains in control. Gerda excels as a confident swimmer: 'Sie war eine vorzügliche Schwimmerin. Wie in allem, was sie tat, erpicht darauf, besonderes zu leisten'. (Schwimmerin 145) Her ambition drives her to get rid of all former contacts, the 'anchors' from her former life. She disappears (*untertauchen*) for a long time to establish her own identity and career. In exile, outside her home country, alone in a foreign environment, she succeeds and becomes a successful 'swimmer' in the world of business and finance. Gerda's ambition is to 'swim freely' (*freischwimmen*) and achieve total independence. In the end, this is achievable only, by separating from her close relationship with Faber, her mentor to whom she tries to explain: 'Ich will doch versuchen, es zu etwas zu bringen. Mit Dir, gewiss, aber doch auch ein bisschen [sic] durch mich selbst'. (Schwimmerin 229)

Wolff creates a strong female character who demands independence; nonetheless, during her long journey she still depends on several men for assistance and protection to further her career: Faber, her mentor; Ernst, her loyal friend from childhood days; and later Magnano Scott, the shady arms dealer. Men remain in

charge, a true reflection of a male-dominated Weimar society.³⁰⁷ Faber detects Gerda's skills and talents, acts as mentor and enables her to move away from the preconceived role of women as housewives and mothers.³⁰⁸ She demonstrates great determination to succeed: 'Faber las von ihrem Gesicht das alles ab... den Kampf ums Dasein'. (Schwimmerin 62)

Gerda resists a binding sexual relationship with Faber in order to protect her independence and her confused moral standards. Her sexual restraint, referred to in the novel by the narrator as 'verborgene, gehemmte Erotik', (Schwimmerin 111) is part of her power struggle. The contradictions in Gerda's behaviour – heavily depending on the support and company of men, however never agreeing to a sexual relationship – was heavily criticised at the time.³⁰⁹ Her controversial role illustrates contradictions and conflicts for women in Weimar society, where women achieve some independence, but fulfilment remains elusive.

Loss of Law and Order

The British historian Mary Fulbrook argues: 'Judges showed considerable political bias in treating left-wing offenders harshly, while issuing lenient sentences to offenders on the right'.³¹⁰ Judges frequently failed to conduct fair trials in the Weimar Republic. During the early years violence, especially political murders became a

³⁰⁷ Mary Fulbrook argues: 'But by and large despite the spread of birth control and the progressive framework of the constitution, attitudes both of and towards women remained highly traditional'. Mary Fulbrook, *The Divided Nation: a History of Germany* (Oxford: O.U.P., 1992). 42-43.

³⁰⁸ In his novel Wolff recalls personal experiences, assisting young women of talent. He was known to attract and support young and gifted apprentices. Margrit Boveri writes: 'T.W. hatte die grosse Gabe, junge Talente aufzuspüren, sie nahe an sich heranzuziehen und ihnen ein Lehrer zu sein.' Boveri 41.

³⁰⁹ Ludwig Hatvany questioned Gerda's role in a letter to Wolff: 'Die junge Dame, die echte Berliner Pflanze, mit ihrem alles-nur-das-nicht, ist mit dem Auge des Liebenden das heißt mit der Selbsttäuschung des Verliebten keusch beschrieben. Sie ist entweder eine Streberin, oder eine Frigida.' Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207: 11. Letter from Ludwig Hatvany to Theodor Wolff (2. 6. 1937).

³¹⁰ Fulbrook 32 .

frequent occurrence.³¹¹ While they were publicly condemned, the justice system continued to conduct biased trials. In his editorials in the *Berliner Tageblatt* Wolff frequently exposed the judiciary's role in the demise of democracy.³¹² He regarded the law as one of the cornerstones of democracy and warned the public in an article in 1931: 'Die Juristerei wird zum Selbstzweck... das Gesetz verliert den Sinn'.³¹³

The novel presents this abuse of legal power in a lengthy subplot. The inordinately large number of pages – over 30 – devoted to the court case threatens to detract from the flow of the story, as it interrupts the narrative and contributes nothing to the development of the relationship between Faber and Gerda.³¹⁴ However, with this episode Wolff demonstrates in detail and with great passion his concern over law and order.

This subplot illustrates an unfair trial under a biased legal system. Faber witnesses an argument between Kaluweit, a socialist taxi driver and a group of rightwing agitators that results in a public disturbance. Kaluweit is subsequently accused of assault and sentenced to one year in prison. Faber is the only witness for Kaluweit's defence. The subsequent lengthy court case concerning, in effect, a trivial argument that results in Kaluweit's lengthy prison sentence is added to the novel in order to demonstrate an unjust legal system. The final legal outcome of the court case is announced in a short newspaper article in a brief confronting statement: 'Der

³¹¹ Karl Liebknecht 15.1.1919; Rosa Luxemburg 15.1.1919; Matthias Erzberger 26.8.1921; Walter Rathenau 24.6.1922.

³¹² Wolff writes: 'Aber neben der Anklage steht die Forderung, dass nun endlich die Regierung mit harter Energie einem Treiben angeblicher Patrioten ein Ende machen müsse', BT 405 (29.8.1921) and Theodor Wolff, *Der Journalist* 175; 'Mordpläne konnten zynisch ausgebreitet werden, Bandenführer konnten auf dem Rednerpodium mit ihren brutalen Instinkten protzen, man konnte aus der deutschen Zivilisation ein für alle Kulturmenschen widerwärtiges Schandbild machen, und diese Schmach wurde nicht nur von den ehrenwerten Complicen einer deutschen allgemeinen Presse begünstigt, sondern von den höchsten Richtern und Anwälten des Reiches gütig geduldet.' BT 587 (13.12.1931) and Theodor Wolff, *Der Journalist* 309.

³¹³ BT 90 (22.2.1931) and Theodor Wolff, *Der Journalist* 303.

³¹⁴ Ludwig Hatvany criticises the episode: 'Die ausgezeichnete Epidose [sic] mit dem Chauffeur und die Verhandlung haben leider keine direkten Konsequenzen'. Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207: 11. Letter from Ludwig Hatvany to Theodor Wolff (2.6.1937).

Angeklagte Kaluweit war zu einem Jahr Gefängnis verurteilt worden und das Publikum hatte die Aussage des von der Verteidigung geladenen Financiers und Grossindustriellen Faber mit Protestkundgebungen aufgenommen'. (Schwimmerin 189) The undeserved guilty verdict for Kaluweit, a Socialist and innocent citizen, the public humiliation of Faber for defending Kaluweit and the victorious highly organized right extremist group winning the court case unmistakably demonstrate the judge's bias and public and media frenzy.

The scenes are scripted – not without satire – to resemble a theatre performance with maximum media and audience participation. On the stage are the accuser and the accused and the audience appears 'wie das Publikum im Theater'. (Schwimmerin 169) All court participants in this sequence are stereotyped. The judge is a hardworking, elderly Prussian judge, 'wie man sich einen noch zur älteren Generation gehörenden, gewissenhaften, fleißigen, schlechtbesoldeten preußischen Richter denkt'. (Schwimmerin 169) The prosecutor is a member of a right wing party. (Schwimmerin 181) Kaluweit, the accused is a Social Democrat, a simpleton, who is reminiscent of Marinus van der Lubbe, who was sentenced for setting fire to the Reichstag. Herr Stern, the Jewish defence lawyer, is unable or unwilling to obtain a just verdict for his client. It has been claimed that during the Weimar era Jewish lawyers aimed to please the non-Jewish judiciary, in order to blend in and remain popular with the Gentile jury,³¹⁵ and this is certainly demonstrated by Herr Stern, who confirms the deterioration in law and order: 'Sie (the prosecution) benutzen eben alles, sie machen aus jedem kleinsten Vorfall, aus einem Nichts, eine große politische Angelegenheit. Sie sind sehr geschickt. Auch die Geschichte mit Kaluweit haben sie

³¹⁵ Jack Zipes, "The Negative German-Jewish Symbiosis," *Insiders and Outsiders: Jewish and Gentile Culture in Germany and Austria*, eds. Dagmar C.G.Lorenz and Gabriele Weinberger (Detroit: Wayne Univ. Press, 1994). 146.

sich bis zum richtigen Augenblick aufgespart. Vor zwei Jahren noch wäre Kaluweit bestimmt freigesprochen worden'. (Schwimmerin 165) Faber attempts to assist an innocent victim and is humiliated by thugs led by his former friend Münch.

Faber's worldview has become insecure. He is confronted by many opponents, but none as dangerous as Konrad Münch, whose character is painted in clear colours: a conscript during the war, an impressionable intelligent young man lost and destitute after the war falling into the hands of right extremism. He is the epitome of the lost generation after World War I. During the early post war years Münch shows gratitude towards Faber who had saved his life. In the trenches during World War I, Faber rescued Münch under a considerable risk to his own life during an enemy attack. Faber's left arm is severely injured during this rescue and leaves him permanently incapacitated. Faber's 'kraftloser' injured left arm becomes the metaphor for the *kraftlose* liberal democracy. Faber has not moved with the times and is made painfully aware he is 'in dem kraftlosen liberalen Zeitalter stecken geblieben', (Schwimmerin 319) an accusation hurled at him by Konrad Münch, who later joins the Nazi Party, becomes his greatest opponent and betrays him on several occasions. During the Kaluweit court case Münch not only undermines Faber's credibility, but also holds an inflammatory speech that mentions heroic persons who are destined to have an impact on the future, no doubt referring to the arrival of Hitler. (Schwimmerin 182) Faber, the injured Liberal, is no match for Münch, a ruthless opportunist. Faber fights a losing battle against him. Münch and his extreme right-wing party attract huge followings, whereas the disappointed and defeated Faber retreats from public life and is forced into exile. Münch, the rightwing supporter gains, while Faber loses strength. The relationship between Faber and Münch symbolises the total loss of trust in a decaying system, where 'Treue und Dankbarkeit' (Schwimmerin 13,14) have become discarded

notions. Faber cannot trust his friends and colleagues, let alone expect gratitude for saving a friend's life. During exile they meet in Paris and in a desperate last attempt to assert himself, Faber hits Münch with his fists without inflicting the slightest damage. This episode reflects the final humiliation for Faber, the losing liberal democrat. This scene, demonstrating the futility of resistance at this point, also underscores Wolff's insistence not to join the resistance fight, as he strongly believed that the fight against right extremism was lost.

A biased media adds to the misinterpretation and misuse of the justice system. Faber leaves the court depressed and defeated. His failed attempt to defend an innocent man leaves him with a sense of helplessness against gross injustice by a corrupt legal system. The narrator describes Faber's decline: 'Fabers Stern war nun auch, wie jeder sehen konnte, äußerst mikrig geworden... der Prozess Kaluweit war katastrophal gewesen, es war, nach dem beispiellosten Aufstieg, ein unleugbarer Niedergang'. (Schwimmerin 203) The law is turned on its head, as the guilty are set free and the innocent sent to prison. Kaluweit's trial becomes the metaphor for a corrupt judicial system hastening the end of democracy. Germans experienced loss of trust in the parliamentary and legal system, resulting in an unstable democracy. Weimar society had become divisive and therefore vulnerable to falling victim to a charismatic dictatorial leader.

Economic Turmoil

The failing economy was blamed for the demise of democracy and the novel illustrates in graphic details the world-wide economic instability during the 1920s. During his journalistic career, in the *Berliner Tageblatt* Wolff had seldom commented

on economic issues, though he was obviously aware of the connections between economic volatility and social unrest.³¹⁶ In his exile novel Wolff seems to take a special interest in economic affairs and offers detailed descriptions of commerce and banking, exposing corruption, exploitation and unethical practices. Economic instability plays a major role in Faber's 'unleugbaren Niedergang'. (Schwimmerin 203) Faber, the highly successful banker, is described as an influential modern man at the beginning of the story. On his appointment as senior bank executive, Dönhoff, the owner of one of Berlin's richest and first non-Jewish banks, labels him the 'moderne Schmuckstück.' (Schwimmerin 8) Yet, Faber was much more than a decorative 'Schmuckstück', he was the most competent member of the bank's senior management. He was the 'jewel in the crown' in the old traditional finance hierarchy. However, following his meteoric rise, Faber suffers gradual professional and personal setbacks that mirror the decline of the domestic and international economy. He is forced to accept that economic principles once regarded as indestructible, are only 'in den Sand eingeritzt'. (Schwimmerin 43)

Faber's financial security is threatened by the worldwide stock exchange crash in October 1929 and its aftermath when he loses much of his investments with the Dönhoff Bank, which slides into receivership because of its exposure to collapsing world markets. Faber's private financial dilemma mirrors the collapse of the worldwide economy during the late 1920s. Dramatic realistic accounts of millions unemployed foreshadow the looming danger of the Nazis' rise to power: 'Arbeitslose, die anfangs vom Sozialismus die Beendigung ihrer Leiden erhofft hatten, fluteten jetzt dem gegnerischen Lager zu'. (Schwimmerin 143) The novel paints a graphic picture

³¹⁶ BT 1 (1.1.1933) entitled: Europa, ordne deine Wirtschaft ; BT 241 (24.5.1931) and Theodor Wolff, *Der Journalist* 304-306 ; see also: Gotthart Schwarz 244.

of the plight of the Berliners' daily struggle to provide enough food for the family to survive.

Faber's prophecy of a looming German *Nervenkollaps* (Schwimmerin 71), a euphemism for Germans falling into the hands of National Socialism, proves correct. The *Nervenkollaps* happened in September 1930, when the Nazis' increased their number of seats in the Reichstag from 12 in 1928 to 107 in September 1930. After four years of war, followed by post-war hardship and high inflation, Germans did not have sufficient resilience to sustain the worldwide stock exchange crash of 1929. Economic instability precipitated social unrest and the collapse of the German currency hammered the death nail into the coffin of the Weimar Republic.

Exilroman

In addition to the problems facing the Weimar Republic, the novel deals with life in exile. Wolff's treatment of the protagonists' exile condition deserves special attention, as it allows an insight into his own perception of living in exile, which he seldom exposed in his non-fiction exile writings. Faber's experience in particular reflects Wolff's personal experiences that include a sense of futility, alienation, exasperating bureaucracy, insecurity, loss of familiar environment and professional contact. These exile themes are contrasted with positive elements, such as a sense of adventure, newly found energy, success and achievement as portrayed in *Gerda*. Wolff reflects on life in exile: 'Gewiß, die Umpflanzung kann verjüngen. Aber ebenso wohl kann im unbewässerten, kalten und steinigen Boden die Pflanze verdorren', (Juden 43) confirming that some exiles were inspired by their experience and found motivation and energy in their new homeland, others lost drive and motivation.

Faber and Gerda flee Berlin for the Czech border immediately following the brutal attack on Gerda. Her attacker, murdered by one of her friends, is a high ranking Nazi official. Consequently Faber and Gerda expect fierce reprisals. Unable to make preparations, Faber and Gerda are later caught in bureaucratic nightmares, waiting for passports and their official papers. They decide to separate at the Czech border in order to frustrate detection – for Faber the beginning of five lonely years in exile. Gerda breaks her promise to reunite with Faber in Prague and evades his many and desperate attempts to find her. Gerda moves from one city to another, including Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Stockholm, Paris, London and even Shanghai, and Faber's unsuccessful attempt to find her reflect the fate of many exiles. Their itinerant existence was dominated by disorientation and loneliness.

Exile meant a caesura in Faber's and Gerda's life. The moment they separate at the Czech border their power struggle is reversed: in exile Gerda takes the leading role, while Faber becomes the follower. The various stages of Gerda's and Faber's separate lives in exile are marked by contrast. Exile affects both differently. Each responds according to internal and external circumstances, demonstrating that some exiles gain a new life, while others feel defeated.³¹⁷ Gerda, *die Schwimmerin*, discovers boundless energy, overcomes obstacles and fights to establish her career, while the much older Faber, *der Besiegte*, resigns and searches for a lost world. While forced exile represents a turning point and a change of roles, harsh reality is shared by both. Women in exile were known to forge ahead and respond to exile with strong survival skills.³¹⁸ While Gerda launches her business career, Faber retires from professional life. In contrast to Gerda, her mentor and partner, Faber, though more

³¹⁷ Strelka 25.

³¹⁸ Specific demands on women in exile are analysed in: Hiltrud Häntzschel, "Geschlechtsspezifische Aspekte," *Handbuch der deutschsprachigen Emigration 1933-1945*, ed. Claus-Dieter Krohn (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1998). 101-117.

experienced in life, fails to find similar strength. In exile Faber, formerly active and dominant, develops into a submissive follower (trailing Gerda through Europe) and slips from being a highly respected businessman into a lonely, self-reflecting ‘retiree’. Their reunion in Cannes after many years is marked by a power struggle, both wanting to establish a future and re-establish some degree of security in their lives. Gerda wishes to establish her career overseas, Faber hopes for a future together with Gerda on an orchard in the south of France that rather resembles a quiet retirement.³¹⁹ Their aspirations collide and their final separation is overshadowed by regret and a sense of failure.

The overwhelming feeling of loss dominates Faber’s life in exile. Wolff expresses his despair regarding lost values in a letter to Ernst Feder, ‘dass alles wiederkommen werde – nur eines allerdings nicht: der Glaube, das Vertrauen, in dem wir gelebt haben – dieser Glaube, dass die humanistischen Ideen sehr festgewurzelt seien und dass man sie gewiss nicht ausschalten könnte’.³²⁰ In the novel Faber shares with the exiles his nostalgic longing for 19th century values: ‘Das war ein großes Jahrhundert. Vielleicht das größte von allen.’³²¹ Es war sehr einfach und man wusste, wo man stand’. (Schwimmerin 319, 300) The novel illustrates Faber’s increasing insecurity and nostalgic longing to return to a past that was once safe and secure.

Die Schwimmerin is an exile novel according to John M. Spalek’s definition: ‘The most salient characteristic of exile literature is its inexorable involvement,

³¹⁹ The notion of finally settling and establishing a garden reminds the reader of Voltaire’s *Candide*, who, towards the end of his life, settles on his twenty acres of fertile land. Francois Marie Arouet de Voltaire, *Candide and other Stories*, transl. Joan Spencer (London: O.U.P., 1966).

³²⁰ AKIP. Letter from Theodor Wolff to Ernst Feder 24.5.1937.

³²¹ The nostalgic view of the past is shared by other exile writers. Stefan Zweig in his autobiography, appropriately entitled *Die Welt von gestern*, calls the 19th Century : ‘das goldene Zeitalter der Sicherheit’. Stefan Zweig, *Die Welt von Gestern: Erinnerungen eines Europäers*. 14 and Heinrich Mann claimed: ‘ das Letzte des Zeitalters für sein Bestes’. Heinrich Mann, *Ein Zeitalter wird besichtigt*. 489.

whether directly or in disguise, with the political situation that caused it'.³²² Faber and Gerda must flee Berlin immediately after the rape and murder incident. The breakdown of law and order under an oppressive dictatorial regime, the political situation is responsible for both being forced into exile. Their response to life in exile is one of the topics of *Die Schwimmerin*, and the novel can take its well earned place as an exile novel within German exile literature. Both protagonists are affected by the problematic state of exile. Gerda achieves professional satisfaction, yet limited personal happiness, while Faber seems to achieve neither professional nor personal satisfaction in exile. *Die Schwimmerin* leaves no doubt about the devastating influence of exile: both protagonists suffer and neither finds fulfilment.

Although this validates *Die Schwimmerin* as an exile novel, Wolff had reservations, when he wrote to Ernst Feder, that he 'nicht in den Stil der Emigranten-Romane habe verfallen wollen'.³²³ However, the exile novel must not be confused with the *Emigranten-Roman*. During his times the *Emigranten-Roman* was seen in a negative light and was perceived as trivial and lacking substance. Some exile writers claimed they lacked literary value and Hermann Kesten wrote: 'Emigrationsliteratur... was soll diese Vokabel, die nur einen Sinn hätte, wenn man einen Haufen von Auswanderergeschichten damit bezeichnen wollte... Diesem Wort liegt meist ein Vorwurf, aber niemals ein Begriff zugrunde'.³²⁴ Several explanations can be suggested for Wolff's reluctance to write what he called an *Emigranten-Roman*. Wolff's denial of writing within this genre demonstrates his strong attitude of detachment from the *Emigranten* and his refusal to relate to the exile community. He declares: 'Ich fühle mich keineswegs solidarisch mit dem ganzen unübersehbaren und unübersichtlichen

³²² *Exile: the Writer's Experience* XIII.

³²³ AKIP. Letter from Theodor Wolff to Ernst Feder. 24.5.1937

³²⁴ Hermann Kesten, "Fünf Jahre nach unserer Abreise," *Das Neue Tagebuch* 6.5 (1938).115.

Menschengemisch, das in der Emigration durch die Länder irrt'. (Terrasse 27) Wolff is clearly determined not to be part of the exile community, with his criticism of characters, talents, mentality, interests and ethics dividing the exiles and does not regard the unfortunate destiny and common fate of living in exile as a sufficient basis for a literary genre. He believes his novel shares little with other exile works published at the same time, in which the trauma of exile was the single focus, as perhaps in Bruno Frank's *Der Reisepass* or Hans Habe's *Drei über die Grenze: ein Abenteuer unter deutschen Emigranten*.³²⁵

Wolff denies his novel the status of *Emigranten-Roman*; in addition he denies the main protagonist the status of *Emigrant* and explains: '[Fabers] Fall lag auch anders als der Fall der meisten Auswanderer oder Emigranten, der politischen Verfolgten oder der Juden, die in der Völkerwanderung eine Gruppe bildeten... Er war eigentlich nur zufällig fortgegangen und dann aus freiem Entschluss nicht zurückgekehrt'. (Schwimmerin 264) This is a strange assessment of Faber who becomes a 'wanted person' under the dictatorial regime and is forced to flee. Here Wolff reveals a sense of denial and delusion. None of the exiles had left Germany voluntarily and none had the option to return. This bewildering judgement of Faber's exile situation confirms again that Wolff underestimated National Socialism's power. Wolff (and Faber) had no choice, but to flee Germany and live in exile for as long as the dictatorial government was in power.

After reading the novel, Wolff's friend, the Hungarian writer Ludwig Hatvany expressed his frustration in a letter to Wolff complaining that he missed 'die Wut und

³²⁵ Bruno Frank, *Der Reisepass* (Amsterdam: Querido, 1937). Hans Habe, *Drei über die Grenze: ein Abenteuer unter deutschen Emigranten* (Genf: Editions Union S.A., 1937).

die Verzweiflung der Emigranten'.³²⁶ Faber and Gerda do not express anger over the injustice of their sudden and enforced exile. Considering that Wolff never wrote about his sudden forced departure from Berlin on the night of the Reichstag fire, it is interesting to read his fictitious, albeit not very revealing account. The novel's narrator merely gives a factual account of Faber's and Gerda's hasty departure over the Czech border. For a fleeting moment Faber is overwhelmed by the beauty of the *Riesengebirge*, the mountains dividing Germany and Czechoslovakia. These detailed romantic '*Heimat* paintings' document Wolff's nostalgic feelings and homesickness. Although urgency and fear are apparent, none of the expected outrage about the injustices under National Socialism is evident, only subtle expressions of indignation, such as: 'eine furchtbare Ungerechtigkeit'. (Schwimmerin 218) On another occasion Faber war 'voll Galle... das Leben hatte einen schweren Gang', (Schwimmerin 238) and his anguish finds expression in 'ohnmächtiger Vergangenheitssehnsucht und zielloser Auflehnung'. (Schwimmerin 314) Wolff did not indulge in polemic outbursts, neither as a journalist, nor as a fiction writer.

Summary

Die Schwimmerin marked a turning point for Wolff and involved both practical and personal adjustments. Firstly, he abandoned his familiar territory of factual political, social and cultural comments. Secondly, he returned to a genre not practised since his youth forty years earlier. Thirdly, the return to fiction was an acknowledgement that his successful political writing life was over. Conceding the novel's financial failure and receiving less than enthusiastic reviews was a huge disappointment causing Wolff considerable distress, compounding the strain of life in

³²⁶ Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207: 11. Letter from Ludwig Hatvany to Theodor Wolff (2.6.1937).

exile. *Die Schwimmerin* exposes failure and regret at the loss of democracy in Germany. Together with the rejection of the novel, signalling the end of Wolff's successful career as a writer exacerbated the feeling of failure. Life in exile has now turned from the expectation of continued success to the realisation of hardship. The experience of rejection as a writer of fiction compounded the emotional, personal and professional despondency for Wolff. For Wolff, the new and damaging experience of having his work of fiction rejected coincided with increasing insecurity among exiles during the years immediately preceding World War II. The sense of loss of professional recognition added to the loss of home, job, familiar environment and financial security already being suffered. The classical exile experience of loss, helplessness and regret speak in many of the fictitious sequences in *Die Schwimmerin*. Against this background it is not surprising that Wolff began his next exile work, *La Terrasse in der Gascogne*, in a despondent mood: 'Natürlich ist diese Schrifstellerei im gegenwärtigen Augenblick sinnlos'. (Terrasse 21)

CHAPTER THREE: SECOND EXILE 1940

Life in Exile

This chapter examines Wolff's experiences in exile during the summer of 1940 and highlights the significance in terms of his writing. It explores Theodor Wolff as a writer of autobiography, which he titled *La Terrasse in der Gascogne* and recalls his youth, early career and life in exile. The essential background for the study of the relationship between Wolff's exile experience and writing his autobiography includes two topics: one, his living conditions in France in the summer of 1940, including his fateful decision not to emigrate to the USA and two, the examination of exile autobiography.

During the summer of 1940, fear for his life was the dominant exile experience that influenced Wolff to tell his story and write his autobiography. With the start of World War II, France's sudden surrender, together with the unknown fate of both of his sons, contributed to Wolff feeling defeated.³²⁷ The threat of impending death is offset by the euphoria of experiencing country life. Nature became a refuge for Wolff and the experience of life on a farm and its affect on his writing is significant.

Wolff's leitmotiv, the loss of democracy is the common thread throughout his autobiography. Wolff takes the reader through his early life in Berlin, his friendships and travels, with the one overriding theme, the loss of freedom and social justice.

³²⁷ His first son Richard had migrated to the USA in 1936 and his second son Rudolf had joined the Foreign Legion with the intention to apply for French citizenship. Köhler 293.

Life under the Vichy Government

The summer of 1940, following Germany's invasion of France, Nazi advances plunged Wolff and all exiles in France into insecurity and acute danger.³²⁸ The exile writer Robert Neumann claimed that for many, the awareness of their vulnerability and foreboding death represented an impetus to reflect and write their autobiographies: 'Jeder Gedanke an eine Selbstbeschreibung ist ein Gedanke an den Tod'.³²⁹ Wolff, a known opponent of the Nazi regime and a Jew, according to the race laws, felt trapped and feared for his life. Like many exile writers, he wrote his autobiography in order to depict life in exile with its injustice and hardship and to regain stability and strength in an uncertain and dangerous world.

France's declaration of war on Germany in September 1939 brought about far-reaching changes and a distinct deterioration in the living conditions for all. The start of World War II devastated the last hopes for the exiles to remain in Europe. They were suddenly classified as enemy aliens (*Ressortissants de Pays Ennemis*) and interned in hastily erected camps throughout France, creating great confusion and hardship for many. Feuchtwanger and Kantorowicz referred to exile in France, which had once been called God's own country, as living with the devil.³³⁰

Following the sudden capitulation of France in the summer of 1940, life for all exiles became even more perilous as the whole of Europe was now placed in the

³²⁸ For the most comprehensive summary on exile in France during World War II see: Hans-Albert Walter, *Deutsche Exil-Literatur 1933-1950*, vol. 3. Internierung, Flucht und Lebensbedingungen im Zweiten Weltkrieg (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1988).

³²⁹ Robert Neumann 16.

³³⁰ Lion Feuchtwanger, *Der Teufel in Frankreich: Erlebnisse* (Berlin: Aufbau Verl., 1982 (1942)).

Alfred Kantorowicz writes: 'Das Teuflische offenbarte sich nicht in Roheit und Gewalttätigkeit, sondern in einer zuweilen sogar höflichen ‚Gleichgültigkeit den Leiden anderer gegenüber‘ und durch Schlamperei, die das Leben der Inhaftierten nicht nur erschwerte, sondern zuletzt auch direkt gefährdete'. Kantorowicz 110.

grip of the Nazi regime. Europe developed into a gigantic trap; together with thousands of other exiles Wolff was caught. He identified several reasons for the sudden defeat of France in June 1940. First, Germany had a massive military advantage both in terms of arms and their effective use; second, French military leadership was comparatively inadequate and third, the French people were suffering fatigue that Ernest R. May called 'moral laxness'.³³¹ The French were still recovering from the trauma of World War I and they were unwilling and unable to fight another war. (Terrasse 71) Wolff accused French officials of complicity in the collapse and surrender, and did not hide his moral indictment of France. (Terrasse 66)

On 22 June 1940, France was forced to sign the Armistice Treaty, which divided the defeated nation into two zones. A German military administration was established in the economically rich north together with the entire Atlantic coast. The south remained unoccupied and was governed by Marshal Henri Philippe Pétain, the hero of Verdun.³³² French Government Headquarters were established in the south, in the spa town of Vichy. All exiles had to concede that their initial expectations concerning the transience of Nazi rule had been wrong. With most of Europe under Hitler's command, life in exile was now a semi-permanent situation.

Article 19 of the Armistice Treaty sent shockwaves through the exile community. This notorious article compelled French authorities to hand-over German refugees on demand.³³³ Feuchtwanger spoke for all when he described the impact of Article 19 on the refugees: 'Doch woran man sich nicht gewöhnen konnte, ein Stachel, der mit der Zeit nicht stumpfer wurde, sondern schärfer, das war die Unsicherheit, das

³³¹ Ernest R May, *Strange Victory: Hitler's conquest of France* (London: Tauris, 2000). 5. See also Jean-Luis Cémieux-Brilhac, *Les Français de l'an 40*, 2 vols. (Paris: Laffont, 1990).

³³² Marshal Pétain was sentenced to death on 15 August 1945 for his involvement in sending thousands of Jews to death camps in Eastern Europe. His death sentence was commuted to life in prison, where he died in 1951.

³³³ 'Die französische Regierung ist verpflichtet, alle in Frankreich sowie in den französischen Besitzungen...befindlichen Deutschen, die von der Deutschen Reichsregierung namhaft gemacht werden, auf Verlangen auszuliefern'. Deutsch-französischer Waffenstillstandsvertrag vom 22.6.1940 Art. 19. (Terrasse77)

war die Sorge wegen jener Klausel neunzehn'.³³⁴ In *La Terrasse in der Gascogne* Wolff recorded with a rare expression of outrage the way a news broadcaster announced the introduction of Article 19:

Er macht mit sadistischer Wollust eine kleine Pause zwischen den Schlägen, er verschärft die Qual, indem er den festgebundenen Deliquenten auf den Schmerz des nächsten Hiebes warten lässt. Seine Vorlesung erinnert auch an jene Marterung in älterer Tyrannenzeit, bei der alle vierzig Sekunden ein Wassertropfen von obenher auf den Schädel des Gefangenen fiel. (Terrasse 77)

Article 19 spread fear and insecurity amongst the exiles: they felt betrayed for the second time. Ruth Fabian spoke of the phenomenon of the 'Doppelverfolgung'.³³⁵ The exiles were first betrayed by Germany, the country they were forced to leave, compelling them to seek refuge in France. Now France was unable or unwilling to provide protection. Wolff was deeply affected by France's betrayal.

In October 1940, four months after the Armistice Treaty, the Vichy Government passed laws regulating the status of Jews, thus establishing antisemitism and discrimination against Jews as official policy in France. Similar to the Nuremberg Laws, the *Statut des Juifs* gave French authorities the power to arrest foreign or stateless Jews in the unoccupied territory and to detain them in internment camps. Marshal Pétain and his French military advisers blamed Jews and refugees for the military defeat. Jews became scapegoats and openly accused of maintaining links with left-wing activists worldwide, particularly in Moscow, and thus representing a security risk. Wolff refers to antisemitism in France: 'Besonders in Deutschland und in Frankreich gab es eine antisemitische Philosophie'. (Juden 65) He had witnessed strong French antisemitic sentiments around the turn of the century during his years in

³³⁴ Feuchtwanger, *Der Teufel in Frankreich: Erlebnisse*. 183.

³³⁵ Fabian and Coulmas 10.

Paris when covering the Dreyfus case and antisemitism again became evident under the Vichy Government.

Whether the anti-Jewish laws resulted from German coercion or from an autonomous decision by the Vichy authorities has been a point in historical discussions for decades. Vicky Caron argues that Vichy leaders would not have passed the legislation without extensive outside German pressure.³³⁶ Marrus and Paxton on the other hand claim: 'Years of scrutiny of the records left by German services in Paris and Berlin have turned up no trace of German orders to Vichy'.³³⁷ Vichy authorities' offered autonomous, generous and willing cooperation to assist Germans in their systematic deportation of Jews to the East from 1942 onwards. Recent research has assigned responsibility to the French for their independent and compliant cooperation with German authorities in the 'Final Solution' and the genocide of Jews in Europe. Christian Eggers argues strongly: 'Die Frage nach der Mitverantwortung des Etat Francais ist inzwischen von Historiographie und staatlichen Repräsentanten im Sinne der eindeutigen Bejahung beantwortet worden'.³³⁸

Article 19 transferred France from a country tolerant towards refugees to a country, in which the exiles lived in constant fear of internment and arrest by German authorities. Initially, men from the age of 17 to the age of 56 were interned; the upper age limit was later increased to 65. Wolff, in his seventies, was spared the *Camps de Concentration*, the term used by French officials.³³⁹ Alfred Sprinz, Wolff's son in law,

³³⁶ Caron 353.

³³⁷ Marrus and Paxton 5.

³³⁸ Christian Eggers, *Unerwünschte Ausländer: Juden aus Deutschland und Mitteleuropa in französischen Internierungslagern 1940-1942* (Berlin: Metropol, 2002), 14.

³³⁹ Eggers 14.

was interned in Les Milles, one of the *Camps de Concentration*.³⁴⁰ During a visit to the camp, Wolff paints this Dickensian picture of Les Milles:

In einiger Entfernung graust, in dem ummauerten und jetzt mit Stacheldraht umzogenen Fabrikhof, das häßliche, düstere, durch seine Größe noch bedrückender wirkende Gebäude der ehemaligen Ziegelei. Aus allen Fenstern des oberen Stockwerkes blicken, Kopf an Kopf, die Internierten heraus, ganz wie Gefangene... Die Unterbringung der zusammengepferchten Menschen in Les Milles ist schauerhaft. (Terrasse 39, 40)

Wolff's daughter Lilly was subjected to a hostile reception when she tried to visit her husband and was refused access. Les Milles reminded Wolff of the title of a collection of well-known oriental fairytales, *Le Mille et une nuit*, 'aber leider sind es nicht nur Märchen, was man über diese Dinge erzählt.' (Terrasse 40) The history of the gradual progression of French registration camps in 1939 to internment camps in 1940 and to deportation camps from 1942 represents a dark chapter in modern French history.³⁴¹

The exiles' survival depended on a multitude of official papers that were still possible to be obtained during summer and autumn of 1940. Many of Wolff's friends and colleagues escaped at this time: Lion Feuchtwanger, Stefan Zweig, Alfred Döblin, Alfred Kantorowicz. Wolff made the fateful decision to remain in Nice.

³⁴⁰ Doris Obschernitzki, *Letzte Hoffnung - Ausreise: die Ziegelei von Les Milles 1939-1942, vom Lager für unerwünschte Ausländer zum Deportationszentrum* (Teetz: Hentrich, 1999).

³⁴¹ *Fluchtziel Paris: die deutschsprachige Emigration 1933-1940*, ed. Anne Saint Sauveur-Henn. Reihe Dokumente, Texte, Materialien / Zentrum für Antisemitismusforschung der Technischen Universität Berlin ; Band 48. (Berlin: Metropol, 2002).

Reticence to leave Europe

Wolff missed his last chance to leave Europe. Several obstacles were responsible and according to his friend Ernst Feder ‘the most serious obstacles [for Wolff] came not from without but from within’.³⁴² These obstacles, whether from ‘without’ (bureaucracy, state of his health) or ‘within’ (a sense of security and fatalism) had a major influence on Wolff’s writings.

Chaotic French bureaucracy was one of the reasons from ‘without’ that prevented Wolff and his family from fleeing Europe:

Das Unheil ist, dass es so viele Behörden gibt, die parallele, nebeneinander und manchmal auch gegeneinander arbeiten, und dass man infolgedessen niemals mit Sicherheit etwas über den Stand einer Angelegenheit erfährt. Ganz Frankreich leidet an dieser übermäßigen Anschwellung und an dieser Konfusion der Bürokratie... Und wenn – ein sehr unwahrscheinlicher Fall – alles geordnet ist, erhält man die Auskunft, dass die allerletzte Entscheidung gar nicht hier getroffen wird, sondern von den Ministerien in Paris. (Terrasse 31)

Exiles were at the mercy of French officials and their treatment was marked not so much by physical but rather psychological abuse. Shared authority between the Vichy Government and German Occupational Forces enabled officials to delay or avoid decisions, which provoked great injustice, uncertainty and anxiety. Personal experiences confirm deliberate bureaucratic obstructions, excessive demands for exit visas, transit visas, additional valid personal and financial papers, which were often based on personal vindictiveness rather than legal requirements.³⁴³ There are reports of exiles receiving an expatriation order to leave France within a week and also receiving in the same mail another envelope containing French authorities’ rejection of the

³⁴² Ernst Feder, "In Memoriam Theodor Wolff," *Books abroad* 19.1.1945. 31.

³⁴³ Anna Seghers gives an example: ‘Doch als er an Bord gehen wollte, verweigerte ihm das Hafenamts den letzten Stempel... Er hatte keinen Entlassungsschein aus dem Lager – so war denn alles für ihn umsonst.’ Anna Seghers, *Transit* (Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1963 (1944)). 33. Anna Seghers refers here to Alfred Kantorowicz. See Kantorowicz 232.

exile's exit visa.³⁴⁴ Vichy's harassment of Nazi opponents and Jews by deliberately preventing or delaying their departure from France or by refusing to issue exit visas was a death sentence for many.³⁴⁵ Thousands could have been saved had France issued timely exit visas, and if overseas countries had been more generous in issuing landing visas.³⁴⁶ One of the few escape routes from Europe was via Spain and Lisbon, from where few American ships still carried passengers across the Atlantic. At nearly 70 years of age Heinrich Mann, together with his wife and nephew Golo Mann, Franz Werfel and his wife traversed a treacherous mountain path through the Pyrenees to Spain and via Portugal to reach the USA. This ordeal included losing their few possessions; risking the challenge of obtaining false documents, enduring thirst, hunger and most significantly the fear of being discovered by the Gestapo.³⁴⁷ Wolff was offered assistance from many friends and supporters to escape, but he remained in Nice until it was too late. Alfred Neumann noted in his diary on 12 December 1940: 'Nachmittag bei Theodor Wolff... die gute Mutter Wolff weinte, dem Alten muss drüben geholfen werden. Ich könnte seine Situation nicht schwarz genug schildern. Das ist ebenso traurig wie unverdient'.³⁴⁸ This grim assessment from a close friend illustrates the dire situation in which Wolff and his family were to be found towards the end of 1940.

Wolff expresses his frustration about the bureaucratic obstacles from 'without' in a letter (in nearly perfect English) to his niece Alice Hirschfeldt in London:

³⁴⁴ Kantorowicz 157.

³⁴⁵ Leo Lania writes: '...you can even get your Portuguese and Spanish transit visa – but as for a French exit visa, nothing doing... Without an exit visa you can't get out of France.' Leo Lania, *The Darkest Hour: Adventures and Escapes* (London: Gollancz, 1942). 122. Also: Obschernitzki 410.

³⁴⁶ Grossmann 213.

³⁴⁷ Heinrich Mann, *Ein Zeitalter wird besichtigt*. 440ff.

³⁴⁸ *Exil am Mittelmeer: Deutsche Schriftsteller in Südfrankreich 1933-1941*, eds. Ulrike Voswinckel and Frank Berninger (München: Allitera, 2005). 238. Alfred Neumanns diaries are published here for the first time after they were discovered in the Monacensia, Stadtbibliothek München.

We had our visa, but we put off the start ... and when we were ready to go, certain friends in New York who had promised to have the tickets and to arrange (sic), all failed and their carelessness, their breach of word³⁴⁹ hindered us to start before the visa became unavailable (sic). I asked the prolongation (sic), but in spite of my excellent acquaintances in U.S.A. and eminent protection by important people these things do not go quickly. Then many changes (sic) intervened in the World and I stopped all steps.³⁵⁰

Wolff's financial adviser, Dr. Rieser, who had moved from Zürich to New York, urged Wolff to emigrate to the USA in January 1941. Rieser could not hide his irritation when he received Wolff's refusal to use his valid visa in April 1941: 'Sie haben die Entscheidung getroffen und damit haben sich diejenigen, die sich für Sie in anderer Richtung bemüht haben, abzufinden. Die Konsequenz ist aber auch die, dass Sie selbst sich damit abfinden müssen'.³⁵¹ When Wolff contacted Rieser in July 1941 with a request for renewed financial assistance to emigrate to the USA, Rieser was less than helpful: 'Ich kann im Augenblick in der Sache nichts Weiteres tun, weil ich meine Ferien antreten muß'.³⁵² Varian Fry, a member of the American Emergency Rescue Committee who helped to rescue almost four thousand exiles, was similarly frustrated by Wolff's procrastination. He wrote: 'Theodor Wolff, who had once been the much feared editor of the *Berliner Tageblatt*, was unable to make up his mind to abandon his books and pictures and apartment on the Promenade des Anglais, even to save his life'.³⁵³

³⁴⁹ Wolff referred here to his blocked bank accounts and friends in America retracting promises of assistance. See Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207: 18. Letters from Dr.S.Rieser to Theodor Wolff 1940-1942.

³⁵⁰ Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207: 4. Letter from Theodor Wolff to Alice Hirschfeldt (4. 6. 1942).

³⁵¹ Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207: 18. Letter from Dr. S. Rieser to Theodor Wolff (15. 4. 1941).

From Rieser's letter Wolff's privileged position becomes clear: 'Sie gehören, wie ich vernehme, zu der geringen Anzahl von Menschen, die in dieser günstigen Lage sind, und man erwartet, dass Sie von den Ihnen gegebenen Möglichkeiten Gebrauch machen.' Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207:18. Letter from Dr. S. Rieser to Theodor Wolff (4. 1. 1941 mistakenly dated 1940.) and Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207: 18. Letter from Dr. Rieser to Theodor Wolff (12. 12. 1940).

³⁵² Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207: 18. Letter from Dr. S. Rieser to Theodor Wolff (26.7. 1941). Alfred Neumann writes: 'Dr. Rieser scheidet bedauerlicherweise als Mithelfer gänzlich aus – wie er es mir selber wiederholt schrieb.' Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207: 17 Letter from Alfred Neumann to Theodor Wolff (23. 8. 1941). See also: *Deutsche Literatur im Exil*. 151.

³⁵³ Fry 157.

Another reason from ‘without’ was Wolff’s failing health. He was 72 years of age in August 1940. A cataract operation and ongoing eye problems were partly responsible for his reluctance to leave his comfortable home in Nice.³⁵⁴

Family conflict, differences between Wolff’s children, added to the complications and his reluctance to flee. Richard, assisting with visa and sponsorship applications from his home in New York, offered an additional explanation for his father’s procrastination. He accused his brother Rudolf and sister Lilly, who had remained in Nice for exerting pressure on his father to stay in France.³⁵⁵ This suggests sibling rivalry and ignores the roles of others. Wolff himself explains his reticence to leave Europe with these words:

Ich bin dem Zuge der deutschen, österreichischen und tschechischen Emigranten, die nach dem militärischen Zusammenbruch Frankreich verließen und als das Asyl kein Asyl mehr war, über das Meer flüchteten, nicht gefolgt. Verschiedene Umstände, Krankheit eines Familienmitgliedes, Warten auf die Rückkehr eines anderen aus den Truppenlagern Nordafrikas, bürokratische Trödelei und allerlei sonstige Schwierigkeiten und Komplikationen haben verursacht, dass von den Visa, die Washington mir und den meinigen zur Verfügung gestellt hatte, lange kein Gebrauch gemacht wurde, und als hier, auf dieser Seite des Ozeans, alles bereit war, fehlte... die rechtzeitige Sorge für die Schiffskarten, und der spanische Dampfer fuhr ohne uns ab. (Juden 216-217)

Here Wolff points to all the obstacles from ‘without’; however the true answer lies ‘within’. He was emotionally unable to leave Europe. Max Osborne, a colleague and old school friend from the Berlin *Wilhelmsgymnasium*, alluded to Wolff’s desire to live in peaceful and productive retirement: ‘Seine Natur hatte ihn stets auf vornehme Zurückhaltung gewiesen – nun wollte er in stiller Betrachtung und Phantasiebeschäftigung den Abend verbringen’.³⁵⁶ At his age he regarded another

³⁵⁴ AKIP. Lilly Sprinz-Wolff. Bericht über den Gesundheitszustand des Herrn Theodor Wolff vom Jahre 1932 bis zum Tode im Jahre 1943: ‘...die Gesundheit und die Sehkraft [waren] so geschwächt, dass für ihn eine von vielen unternommene Flucht über die Berge nach Spanien nicht mehr in Frage kam’.

³⁵⁵ Söseemann, *Theodor Wolff: ein Leben mit der Zeitung* 328.

³⁵⁶ Max Osborn, "Theodor Wolff's tragisches Ende," *Aufbau* 10.9 (3.3.1944). Wolff’s biographer, Wolfram Köhler, agreed with Osborne: ‘Ich meine immer noch, dass er eher eine gewisse Altersmüdigkeit, auch eine Art

relocation as inconceivable, especially the prospect of leaving the European continent altogether. America, the unknown, was worlds away and meant permanent departure. While Wolff lived in Nice he could reasonably believe to return to Berlin and resume life in Germany.

The major reason for remaining in Nice was his belief in his privileged status amongst the exiles and that he would be protected by French officials. He considered himself to be a welcome visitor, a citizen of France and not one of the thousands of unwelcome refugees. In his early years he had lived in Paris for more than a decade and was friends with French intellectuals, high-ranking politicians and public figures,³⁵⁷ had participated in diplomatic missions and regarded France as his second home. Wolff voices his strong apprehension about embarking on an uncomfortable journey to an uncertain destination:

Ich bin nicht vom Wanderfieber befallen, obgleich ich sehr gern meinen drüben lebenden Jungen umarmen möchte und es nicht unangenehm sein müßte, im Hafen von New York eine noch so liebe Freiheitsstatue zu sehen. Ich bewundere so mannhafte Anstrengungen, ich verachte durchaus nicht das Abenteuer, aber ich wünsche nicht, versteckt in einem Möbelwagen, nach Spanien hineinzurollen, das mich früher oftmals mit Ehren der Gastfreundschaft empfing. (Terrasse 106)

Under the special treatment ('eine gewisse Bevorzugung' (Terrasse 30)) and protection by French authorities Wolff developed a sense of security, which allowed him 'die ruhige Betrachtung der Umstände... und einen gewissen Fatalismus'. (Terrasse 107) He clearly felt safe, illustrated by the following sequence of events. In September 1940, the family had returned from their forced stay on the farm in

Bequemlichkeit ein Rolle gespielt hat, denn er lebte in seiner grossen Wohnung in Nizza immer noch in einer gewissen Behaglichkeit.' AKIP. Letter from Wolfram Köhler to Bernd Söseman (5.Juli 1998).

³⁵⁷ Thes include: Georges Clemenceau, Léon Blum, Raymond Poincaré, André Tardieu, Pierre Laval and Anatole France, André Gide, Jean Giraudoux.

Gascogne, when they received American entry visas valid until 5 October 1941. Whereas other exiles often had to wait months for their exit visas, Wolff and his family were issued with French exit visas within three days. Wolff placed these visa papers safely in a drawer as he had been assured by French authorities that his life was not in danger and was told: 'Aber Sie haben nichts zu befürchten... Ihnen wird, wenn Sie bleiben doch nichts geschehen'. (Terrasse 34, 35) Wolff announced in a letter to Ernst Feder: 'All diese Dokumente ruhen im Schrank. Bisher war meine Neigung, sie zu benutzen, außerordentlich gering. Amerika ist vielleicht nicht gar so schlimm, wenn man dort einen großen Mäzen oder ein sicheres Einkommen, ein genügendes, vorfinden kann, aber die neue Welt ist schon unter die alten Emigranten verteilt'.³⁵⁸ A mistaken sense of security prevented his recognition of the acute danger now facing his family.³⁵⁹ Wolff misjudged the force of the 'eruption of the volcano' when he chose to remain in Nice and accept the role of an observer positioned 'dicht am Krater des Vesuv'³⁶⁰. (Juden 218) He did not believe that the lava would engulf him, because he underestimated the close collaboration between the three, the French, German and Italian authorities. He was convinced the Italians would provide protection, because he had been an early outspoken admirer of Mussolini and had met him on numerous occasions.³⁶¹ In addition, he was a personal friend of the Italian Consul in Nice.³⁶² Together with many others exiles, Wolff misjudged the military and political situation. He remained optimistic that Nazi Germany would soon be defeated and democracy

³⁵⁸ Archiv des Jüdischen Museums Berlin. Ernst Feder Nachlass. Letter from Theodor Wolff to Ernst Feder (23. 4. 1941).

³⁵⁹ Wolff was not alone in underestimating the danger to his life. Social Democrats, Rudolf Hilferding and Rudolf Breitscheid frequently delayed their emigration to the USA. Both perished in Buchenwald Concentration Camp. Hans Sahl, *Das Exil im Exil* (Frankfurt am Main: Luchterhand, 1990). 90.

³⁶⁰ See also Klaus Mann, *Der Vulkan: Roman unter Emigranten* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1981 (1939)).

³⁶¹ BT 220 (11.5.1930); BT 518 (2.11.1930) and Theodor Wolff, *Der Journalist* 282-288; BT 312 (5.7.1931) and Theodor Wolff, *Der Journalist* 307-308; BT 396 (21.8.1932); Juden 172; Grabmal 309-310.

³⁶² Rudolf Wolff remembered: 'Seit Jahren war er mit dem italienischen Generalkonsul gut befreundet und hatte auch noch andere gute Bekannte aus Italien, mit denen er recht regelmässig zusammentraf. Und dann: er glaubte an Mussolini'. AKIP. Rudolf Wolff für Köhler (16.4.1970).

restored in Europe; Christel M. Goldbach confirms: 'Dennoch hatte er die Hoffnung bis zum Schluss nicht aufgegeben, dass sich die Lage wieder ändern und verbessern würde'.³⁶³

When Wolff eventually considered joining the flood of refugees,³⁶⁴ the escalation of World War II had hermetically sealed all borders. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941 caused the USA to enter the war and prevented the distribution of life-saving visas and landing permits.³⁶⁵

Refuge on a French Farm

In June 1940, following the French surrender and Italy's declaration of war on France, French officials feared an invasion of Italian troops into the south of France. Theodor Wolff, his wife and daughter were evacuated from Nice and forced to join the caravan of refugees into 'die dunkle Ungewißheit'. (Terrasse 35) Seven years after their forced departure from their home in Berlin, they were again 'exiled' and were understandably reluctant to abandon their comfortable apartment and precious belongings. Anguish is felt in Wolff's description of their home in Nice: 'Das Herz meiner Frau hängt an dem hübschen Heim gegenüber dem Meer, an den schönen Möbeln und Bildern, die wir vor Jahrzehnten, jedes einzelne Stück suchend, in Paris gesammelt und nach unserem Weggang aus Deutschland gerettet haben'. (Terrasse 35) Wolff found a new refuge in a country retreat, an old farmhouse named *La Terrasse*

³⁶³ Goldbach 121.

³⁶⁴ Archiv des Jüdischen Museums Berlin. Ernst Feder Nachlass. Letter from Anne Wolff to Ernst Feder (21. 8. 1942). This letter was written by Wolff's wife Anne, because Wolff was recovering from an eye operation and was unable to write.

³⁶⁵ Caron 337.

near Montauban, north of Toulouse. He describes the arrival at the fertile, picturesque oasis:

Schließlich siedelten wir uns auf dem Hügelrand eines wundervoll fruchtbaren Tals in der Gascogne an, in einem alten patriarchalischen Landhaus, umgeben von dickstämmigen Buchen und Zedern, die in vergangenen Jahrhunderten gepflanzt waren, und von jüngeren, schlanken Obstbäumen, deren Pfirsiche und Birnen greifbar dicht vor den Fenstern hingen. (Grabmal 317)

It is interesting to note that Wolff's secret wish to live on a farm is expressed in his novel, *Die Schwimmerin*. Faber, the main protagonist dreams of country life: 'Er (Faber) sah sich auf einer Farm an der südlichen Küste, Reisen, Bücherlesen und andere Abwechslung ließen sich einschalten und man würde, mit einiger Erfindungsgabe, doch wieder etwas schaffen können'. (Schwimmerin 265) Living in rural France became reality for Wolff in 1940, when he moved (not entirely voluntarily) into *La Terrasse*. He spent the summer months in this country retreat and developed a strong affinity with the land and the people: 'Ich habe eine große Freude an der Landschaft der Gascogne, die Landleute hier sind meinem Empfinden nahe'. (Terrasse 127)

Life in the country contrasted vastly with the drama unfolding in Europe, as National Socialism spread 'wie ein Ölfleck'. (Terrasse 64) Despite obvious physical discomfort – primitive amenities, lack of privacy and space, due to sharing the farmhouse with several families – he started work on his autobiography. He was reluctant to return to Nice, when French authorities issued the family with the *Sauf Conduit*, the official permission to return at the end of August 1940. While Änne rejoiced over the prospect of returning to their department in Nice, Wolff made it clear that he preferred to remain on the farm where he found peace and inspiration to write *La Terrasse in der Gascogne*. (Terrasse 127)

Writing in Exile

La Terrasse in der Gascogne: Autobiographical Reflections

This section examines the background to exile autobiography in general and Wolff's autobiography in particular. Wilhelm Dilthey writes: 'In autobiography we encounter the highest and most instructive form of the understanding of life'.³⁶⁶ The understanding of life in exile and exile autobiography presents a particular challenge. James Olney maintains in his study *Metaphors of Self* that autobiography 'brings an increased awareness through an understanding of another life in another time and place'.³⁶⁷ After 1933 certain features are accentuated in exile autobiographies, since many writers, including Wolff, had now become displaced persons, cut off from their home environment, their jobs, their families, their direct source of inspiration and, of course their audience. They were confronted by a new, strange and sometimes hostile reality in which they had less control over the direction of their lives. Autobiography as the vehicle for self-examination is an attempt to bring order into ruptured lives. For exiles, the focal points in their lives were remembering, waiting and preparing for the future. Bearing witness to the past, documenting and preserving provided the exiles with much-needed contact to the things they had lost and a sense of stability and purpose. The opportunity to reflect and evaluate from an objective distance a world they had left behind fuelled a renewed personal strength, despite increasing insecurity.

Exile autobiography written after 1933 reflects the caesura that cut through Germany with Hitler's rise to power. Peter Sloterdijk in his study on the influence of personal experiences on writing, describes sudden and unforeseen events – physically

³⁶⁶ Wilhelm Dilthey, *Selected writings*, trans. H. P. Rickman (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1976). 214.

³⁶⁷ Olney VII.

as well as emotionally disruptive experiences – as *Stör-Erfahrungen*.³⁶⁸ Sudden forced exile caused disruptions, uncertainty and insecurity, similarly described by Stefan Zweig as *Gleichgewichtsstörung*.³⁶⁹ To regain stability and strength, Wolff and the exiles reconstructed their past, and the process of self-reflection provided a healing effect, as well as a strategy to cope with the present and deal with the *Gleichgewichtsstörung*. While Wolff called the confrontation with his past *Aufräumen*, (Terrasse 113) Ludwig Marcuse called the search for clarification and justification through exploration of one's own past *Mit-sich-fertigwerden*.³⁷⁰ Both encapsulate their exile experience; both feel the need to explore their past to cope with the present.

Ernst Weiss succinctly stated at the 1938 PEN Congress in Paris: 'Was bleibt unsereins im Exil jetzt noch übrig, als von Erinnerungen zu leben und Memoiren zu schreiben?'³⁷¹ During the Nazi period, the number of autobiographies by exiles grew.³⁷² According to Rainer Zimmer, 130 exile autobiographies in German were published during the period 1933 to 1945.³⁷³ Expelled from the public arena, Wolff and other exile writers retreated into their own private sphere, where they were left to find their 'inner voice', as their public 'outer voice' had been silenced.³⁷⁴

During the summer crisis of 1940 in France, Wolff developed a sense of great anxiety and commenced on his autobiography, despite regarding writing memoirs as

³⁶⁸ Sloterdijk 113.

³⁶⁹ 'Jede Form von Emigration verursacht an sich schon unvermeidlicherweise eine Art von Gleichgewichtsstörung.' Stefan Zweig, *Die Welt von Gestern: Erinnerungen eines Europäers*. 295.

³⁷⁰ Marcuse, *Mein Zwanzigstes Jahrhundert: auf dem Weg zu einer Autobiographie*. 382.

³⁷¹ quoted in Wegner 154 and F.C. Weiskopf, *Unter fremden Himmeln* (Berlin: Dietz, 1948). 96.

³⁷² There are too many exile autobiographies to list. However, works describing exile life in France are particularly relevant: Seghers, *Transit*. Feuchtwanger, *Der Teufel in Frankreich: Erlebnisse*. Kantorowicz, *Exil in Frankreich: Merkwürdigkeiten und Denkwürdigkeiten*. Klaus Mann, *Wendepunkt*. Marcuse, *Mein Zwanzigstes Jahrhundert: auf dem Weg zu einer Autobiographie*. Döblin, *Schicksalsreise*. Leonard Frank, *Links wo das Herz ist*. Fry, *Surrender on Demand*. Golo Mann, *Erinnerungen und Gedanken: Lehrjahre in Frankreich*. Sahl, *Das Exil im Exil*.

³⁷³ Rainer Zimmer, "Zur Autobiographik des Exils 1933-1945," *Faschismuskritik und Deutschlandbild*, eds. Christian Fritsch and Lutz Winckler (Berlin: Argument, 1981). 214.

³⁷⁴ Exile autobiographies covering the years from 1933-1945 are still being published. To name recent publications: Sebastian Haffner, *Defying Hitler: Geschichte eines Deutschen*, trans. Oliver Pretzel (London: Weidenfeld, 2002). Bela Zsolt, *Nine Suitcases* (London: Cape, 2004).

ostentatious: 'Aber meine Antipathie gegen ein Niederschreiben von Erinnerungen, das prätenziös erscheinen könnte, bleibe bestehen'. (Terrasse 111) Wolff planned to reveal political and historical events and therefore contribute to the understanding of difficult times, as he confidently announced: 'viele meiner Erzählungen wären sicherlich nützliche Bausteine und nicht wertlos für das Verständnis der Zeit'. (Terrasse 110) Herein lies the strength of a text that covers not only Wolff's life, but also contributes to the understanding of German history from the turn of the century to the early 1930s.

La Terrasse in der Gascogne is divided into two distinct parts: Wolff's diary covering the days from 1 June to 5 August 1940 and his memoirs from his childhood to the early years of the Weimar Republic. Careful handwritten annotations in the archived manuscript confirm that Wolff wrote his autobiography with the intention of publishing³⁷⁵ It took another 52 years before in 1992 his manuscript was published by the German historian, Margrit Bröhan, together with his exile manuscript *Das Grabmal des unbekanntes Soldaten* under the appropriate title, *Theodor Wolff: Erlebnisse, Erinnerungen, Gedanken im südfranzösischen Exil*. Margrit Bröhan's edition offers extensive annotations and provides valuable information on Wolff's life and work.³⁷⁶

La Terrasse in der Gascogne does not record Wolff's life in chronological order; disjointed fragments reflect disruptions in his life. No guarantee could be given about the correctness of the chronology because the *Ariadnefaden* (Terrasse 113), as

³⁷⁵ Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207: 21 and 22.

³⁷⁶ For reviews see: Udo Vorholt, "Rezension (Margit Bröhan: Theodor Wolff)," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 43 (1995):78. Hermann Rudolph, "Das ganz erstaunliche Instrument der Sprache," *Tagespiegel (Berlin)* 1.8.1993 (no. 14632), 27.

Wolff called it, was frayed.³⁷⁷ He does not present his life in a continuous narrative. Despite the exile-related broken timeline, fluency creates a cohesive unit and elements are drawn together by a common theme, namely, the commitment to democracy and freedom, the focus of his exile writing. The text's abrupt end points to a sudden forced interruption, precipitated by the family's sudden departure from the farm house and their return to Nice in the autumn of 1940, where Wolff continued his autobiographical reflections in his next work, known as *Das Grabmal des Unbekannten Soldaten*.

Three characteristic elements of exile autobiography in general and Wolff's autobiography in particular will be examined. First, the exiles' search for their identity involved – paradoxically – placing their persona in the background, world events were in the foreground. Critchfield calls this phenomenon the 'Impotenz des Individuums gegenüber dem Fortgang der Geschichte'.³⁷⁸ Exile writers lived in a world in which they were overwhelmed by political events and these became their focus to the exclusion of their personal story. Their lives were dominated by politics and war; they lost control over their personal destiny. This is manifested in Wolff writing a *Zeitdokument* rather than an exposé of himself.

Second, the loss of memory, conscious or unconscious, influenced exile autobiography, causing some events to be recorded, whilst others were ignored. Richard Critchfield described this loss of memory, 'blind spots of memory [that] can be connected to the repression of memories whose conscious replay would be

³⁷⁷ The following provides examples of errors concerning specific dates: Wolff quotes Frederick III. moving into New Palais in Potsdam on 1 Juli 1888, however Frederick III. died on 15 June 1888. (Terrasse 133) Wolff mistakenly writes June and August 1941 instead of June and August 1940. (Terrasse 138, 206)

³⁷⁸ Richard Critchfield, "Autobiographie als Geschichtsdeutung," *Deutschsprachige Exilliteratur: Studien zu ihrer Bestimmung im Kontext der Epoche 1930-1960*, eds. Wulf Koepke and Michael Winkler (Bonn: Bouvier, 1984). 233.

unbearable'.³⁷⁹ The experiences associated with sudden forced exile caused such disruption to the life of some writers that memory 'blind spots' or deliberate endeavours to conceal or embellish events can be identified.

Third, some exiles, particularly Wolff, embraced nature with its beauty and predictability of seasons. Ralf Schnell explains that the exiles were seeking: 'Natur als Mythos eines unbeschädigten Lebens'.³⁸⁰ The peaceful countryside and the cycles of nature represented an oasis within war and destruction and provided much needed stability and strength.

Identity

Exiles were hesitant to expose their identity and reluctant to place themselves in the centre of their work, which was driven by what Olney called the 'anxiety about the self'.³⁸¹ In order to gain some distance and thus a greater objectivity to write about the past, exile writers often marginalized their own identity and chose to hide behind another person. Alfred Döblin wrote: 'I will speak of myself as if of someone else'.³⁸² Klaus Mann³⁸³ wrote his exile autobiography in the first person plural, shifting the 'I' to the 'we', sharing the guilt and lessening his personal burden by hiding within the exile community. Other writers adopted different names in an attempt to protect their

³⁷⁹ Critchfield, *When Lucifer Cometh*. 4.

³⁸⁰ Ralf Schnell, "Zwischen Anpassung und Widerstreit," *Europäische Literatur gegen den Faschismus 1922-1945*, ed. Thomas Bremer (München: Beck, 1986). 28.

³⁸¹ *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, ed. James Olney (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1980). 23.

³⁸² Alfred Döblin, *Destiny's Journey (Schicksalsreise. English)*, trans. Edna McCown (New York: Paragon House, 1992). 79.

³⁸³ Klaus Mann writes: 'Fünf Jahre Exil – das wäre also geschafft. Ist es wirklich schon fünf Jahre her seit wir in einer deutschen Stadt unseren Koffer packten?...Was haben wir inzwischen alles mitgemacht!' Klaus Mann, *Der Vulkan* 470. Richard D. Critchfield notes: 'The use of the pronoun 'we', however may also be presented in the context of the sense of guilt intellectuals and writers felt who believed they had failed to combat Hitler and Nazism.' Critchfield, *When Lucifer Cometh*. 137.

own identity and hide behind another individual.³⁸⁴ This personal and crowd concealment gave anonymity and comfort. The experiences of living in exile had damaged the exiles' self-esteem; the 'self' felt too insecure to be the focus of their stories.

The exiles examined their past, reflected in the titles of autobiographies such as Heinrich Mann's *Ein Zeitalter wird besichtigt* and Stefan Zweig's *Die Welt von Gestern*. Individual identity was subjugated to politics and history and the individual struggled to find space in his or her autobiography.³⁸⁵ Past historical and political events dominated exile autobiography to the detriment of self-reflection. Wolff joined the chorus of those exile autobiographers who did not focus on their own identity and did not intend to place their persona in the centre.³⁸⁶ He leaves no doubt about his views on self-reflection and writing autobiography: 'Es würden Memoiren sein und ich habe davor immer ein Grauen gehabt... Es liegt darin leicht eine Überschätzung der eigenen Person... Der Memoirenschreiber, der glaubt, mit Erzählungen winziger Erlebnisse 'Dichtung und Wahrheit' nachzumachen, ist ja eine ziemlich unausstehliche Figur'. (Notes 89, 53) Wolff reveals his reticence to be the focus of attention. Self-importance was abhorrent to him; even during his high-profile career in Berlin, when he had deflected accolades and consistently avoided the glare of publicity.

Rather than intense self-reflection, Wolff's autobiographical writings are a kaleidoscope of political and historical events. Expectations of revelations into

³⁸⁴ Leonard Frank called himself 'Michael'. Leonard Frank, *Links wo das Herz ist* (München: Nymphenburger, 1952). Hans Sahl concealed his identity behind a man called Georg Kobbe. Hans Sahl, *Die Wenigen und die Vielen: Roman einer Zeit* (München: dtv, 1994). Heinrich Mann introduced himself: 'Es wird Zeit – dass ich mich vorstelle. Mein Name ist Jx.' Mann, *Ein Zeitalter wird besichtigt*. 147.

³⁸⁵ Wulf Koepke, "Probleme und Problematik der Erforschung der Exilliteratur," *Exilerlebnis: Verhandlungen des Vierten Symposium über Deutsche und Österreichische Exilliteratur*, eds. Donald G Daviau and Ludwig M Fischer (Columbia: Camden House, 1982). 348.

³⁸⁶ One example is Stefan Zweig who writes: 'Ich hab meiner Person niemals soviel Wichtigkeit beigemessen, dass es mich verlockt hätte, anderen die Geschichte meines Lebens zu erzählen.' Stefan Zweig 9.

Wolff's intimate private life or personal emotions will not be satisfied; although expectations of an insightful view into 'another time and another place' will be richly rewarded. Wolff's detailed accounts of life first under the Kaiser, followed by the Weimar Republic, and later under the Vichy Government are valuable documents of the times.

In addition to the self effacing technique of placing the achievements of others in the centre of his autobiography, Wolff employs a *Gesprächspartner*, Herr Mathias, the landlord of the country estate *La Terrasse*, to hide behind and share the role of the main protagonist.³⁸⁷ The two exchange ideas and while engaging in lively discussions on their often differing views of the world; they respect each other and value each other's opinions, although Wolff does not regard Herr Mathias as an intellectual equal.³⁸⁸ It can be assumed that Herr Mathias was not a fictitious, but a real person, the son of an Austrian 'Aryan'³⁸⁹ public servant, industrialist and farmer. Herr Mathias – self-taught in the science of fauna and flora, familiar with rural life and its dependence on nature – greatly impresses Wolff with his infectious cheerfulness and his immense knowledge of animals and plants. Wolff eagerly seeks Herr Mathias' company to take advantage of his knowledge of the natural world and his great optimism: 'Er sieht die Welt voll von Herrlichkeit'. (Terrasse 87) Herr Mathias, the idealist, optimist, farmer and dreamer, is the opposite of Wolff, the pragmatist, intellectual city dweller and realist. Herr Mathias plays an important role as catalyst in persuading Wolff to write his autobiography: 'Herr Mathias behauptet wieder, dass ich meine Memoiren

³⁸⁷ Herr Mathias or Matthias, the spelling varies.

³⁸⁸ '...seine [Herr Mathias'] Gedanken sind gewiss sehr gründlich und logisch, aber da sie in einzelnen, bisweilen unzusammenhängenden Aperçus geäußert werden, folge ich ihnen nur unsicher, mit halbem Verständnis, und mit halbem Vertrauen.' (Terrasse 87)

It is tempting to compare Herr Mathias with the narrator in Wolff's novel *Die Schwimmerin*. Both keep a discreet distance from getting too involved in the story and both share a certain cynical view of the world.

³⁸⁹ The fact that Herr Mathias is a pureblood Aryan receives special mention and underscores Wolff's sarcasm about the race issue, when race had to be included in a character reference: 'Herr Mathias, arisch wie nur irgend ein Urgermane.' (Terrasse 79) More on Wolff's reaction to the Nazi race laws see Chapter Four.

schreiben müsste'. (Terrasse 110)³⁹⁰ Herr Mathias is more than just a *Gesprächspartner*; he enables Wolff to create a necessary comfortable distance to pass judgments on events of the past.

Herr Mathias controls the narrative and dictates mood and contents. The dialogue between Wolff and Herr Mathias always begins at a particular important junction in Wolff's life, whenever a change of direction is required. Herr Mathias controls the atmosphere; his optimism reflects highlights in Wolff's life, whilst his pessimism accompanies Wolff's adversities. Statements such as: 'Herr Mathias ist heute in ausnehmend guter Stimmung... ein optimistischer Lebensschwimmer', (Terrasse 184)³⁹¹ evoke in Wolff happy memories, such as the twelve years in Paris from 1894 to 1906, he claimed to have been the happiest in his life.³⁹² Herr Mathias' pessimism evokes gloomy memories, such as: 'Der Gemütszustand des Herrn Mathias erscheint mir schon seit einigen Tagen ein bisschen verworren... die optimistische Schallplatte wird noch aufgelegt, aber der Apparat ist nicht ganz in Ordnung'. (Terrasse 153)

While Wolff and many exile writers were driven by a desire to write their autobiography, they developed serious doubts about the effectiveness of the written word in exile. This insecurity contributed to their growing anxiety 'about the self'. Many regarded it inappropriate to place significance to the individual's struggle in times of war. Peter Weiss shared this sentiment: 'War nicht jedes Wort, das auf ein Papier geschrieben, jede Farbe, die auf eine Leinwand gesetzt wurde, eine Vermessenheit angesichts des Leidens, für das es keine Begrenzung mehr gab'.³⁹³

³⁹⁰ For exile writers to be persuaded by somebody else was widely acknowledged according to Wolfgang Müller-Funk: 'Die von Autobiographen so häufig verwendete Formel, andere hätten den Schreiber zur Abfassung seiner Lebensgeschichte geradezu gedrängt, erhält im Exil eine traurige Glaubwürdigkeit.' Müller-Funk 1233

³⁹¹ For the swimmer metaphor see Chapter Two.

³⁹² '... die Stadt (Paris), die mir später mehr als 12 Jahre hindurch heimatlich und beglückend war.' (Terrasse 146)

³⁹³ Peter Weiss, *Fluchtpunkt* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1962). 50.

Many exiles shared the sense of futility, expressed by Hans Sahl: 'Ja, hat es überhaupt noch einen Sinn, Nacht für Nacht über raschelnden Papieren zu sitzen, Wörter aneinanderzureihen'.³⁹⁴ Similarly Klaus Mann had doubts about anyone listening to exile writers: 'Für wen schreibe ich diese Chronik der vielen Wanderungen und Verirrungen? Wer wird mir zuhören?'.³⁹⁵

Wolff acknowledges the harsh reality that his writing was of little or no consequence. He had lost control over his future and was exposed to the injustices of the Vichy Government. The thought of Europe now under the Nazi regime plagued him with a sense of futility and doubt about the value of writing. As the editor-in-chief of the *Berliner Tageblatt* he had once significantly influenced German political and cultural life. However, now he is forced to question the power of the word and his mood reached a dangerous level of disillusionment: 'Natürlich ist diese Schriftstellerei im gegenwärtigen Augenblick sinnlos... Aber vielleicht ist es noch kläglicher, jetzt ein literarisches Handwerk ausüben zu müssen... Der Sinn der Menschlichkeit ist leider in vielen Seelen erloschen, seit die Unglücksnachrichten aus dem Kriege einander überstürzen'. (Terrasse 21, 25) Words such as 'Ungewißheit' and 'Angst' are frequently found in the text. (Terrasse 21, 28, 35) The opening paragraph, dated 2 June 1940, reads: 'Ich beginne diese Niederschrift in der vollen Ungewißheit, wie lange es möglich sein wird, sie fortzusetzen, und welche Abgründe sich auf ihrem Wege öffnen werden, und wo sie hinführen, wo sie enden wird'. (Terrasse 21) He fears, the world has plunged into darkness. (Terrasse 117) His despondency finds expression in the image of himself shipwrecked: 'Und ich für mein Teil treibe nach dem Schiffbruch auf einer gebrechlichen Planke durch das aufgewühlte Meer'. (Terrasse 115) On the other hand, writing autobiography was a means of survival and as such played a vital role in

³⁹⁴ Sahl, *Die Wenigen und die Vielen: Roman einer Zeit* 16.

³⁹⁵ Klaus Mann, *Der Vulkan* 191.

Wolff's life. As the past represented the only certainty in his life, writing his autobiography gave him purpose in life, as Müller-Funk claims: 'Die Autobiographie wird zum Rettungsring'.³⁹⁶

In order to regain and rebuild confidence in the power of the word, Wolff is greatly assisted by a strict daily routine of uninterrupted writing each morning to a strict discipline 'wie sie dem Gefangenen auferlegt wird'. (Terrasse 21) Wolff wrote to Feder: 'Ich füge gleich hinzu, dass ich wie früher, an jedem Vormittag am Schreibtisch arbeite – das einzige Mittel und die einzige Möglichkeit, nicht, in der Betrachtung der Weltereignisse, das seelische Gleichgewicht zu verlieren'.³⁹⁷ As previously mentioned, the exiles' greatest fear was to lose their balance. Despite increasing disillusionment he continues to work on his autobiography and receives comfort from a routine he had followed all his working life. He compares himself to silkworms, constantly spinning their yarns in a routine that cannot and must not be broken.³⁹⁸

Memory

Writing memoirs implies a capacity to recall the past. How and what is retained and reproduced is the challenge. Memory is highly selective and eclectic; it recalls some events, yet ignores others. During the selection process experiences are often consciously or unconsciously blocked or elevated. The exiles' experiences influenced the selection process; some suppressed, while others embellished their memories. One of the major influences on the flow and the contents of memory was

³⁹⁶ Müller-Funk 1236.

³⁹⁷ Jüdisches Museum Berlin. Ernst Feder Nachlass. Theodor Wolff to Ernst Feder (23. 4. 1941.)

³⁹⁸ Jüdisches Museum Berlin. Ernst Feder Nachlass. Theodor Wolff to Ernst Feder (23. 4. 1941.)

the broken time line in the exiles' lives. The sudden caesura in their lives caused total interruption.³⁹⁹ Life had lost its natural rhythm and chronological sequence. Stefan Zweig describes the broken connections: 'Zwischen unserem Heute, unserem Gestern und Vorgestern sind alle Brücken abgebrochen'.⁴⁰⁰ Exile autobiography aims to rebuild these bridges over ruptured time.

Events such as the Reichstag fire, the start of World War II or the sudden surrender of France represented a sharp break in the lives of exiles and interrupted the normal flow of memories. The broken timeline affected the exiles' writing and Rainer Zimmer claims the denial of the present was common amongst exile writers: 'autobiographisches Schreiben also als Reaktion auf den Realitätsverlust des Exils, gleichzeitig auch: als Gegenwartsflucht'.⁴⁰¹ Wolff recollects the past, while the present and the future are largely ignored. Wolff declares the 'Gegenwart ist ein Provisorium, ihre Zukunft ist der Gendarm'. (Juden 177) The exiles' current existence is an itinerant existence and their future is ruled by official identity papers and controlled by authorities. With the present and future under a cloud, Wolff writes: 'Ich registriere die petits faits der Vergangenheit... und das ist dann zwischen Vergangenheit und Zukunft unsere Flucht aus der Gegenwart'. (Terrasse 111) Wolff avoids the painful reality of the present and escapes into the past.

Memory depends on a selection process, which is compared by Wolff with the performance of a magician: 'Wenn ich von so vielen Menschen der Vergangenheit spreche, komme ich mir vor wie ein Taschenspieler, der aus seinem Hut in bunter Abwechslung hundert verschiedene Dinge zieht'. (Terrasse 198) Under Wolff's

³⁹⁹ This is reflected in the titles of exile autobiographies, such as: Hertha Pauli, *Der Riß der Zeit geht durch mein Herz: ein Erlebnishuch* (Wien: Zsolnay, 1970). and Klaus Mann, *Der Wendepunkt: ein Lebensbericht* (Frankfurt am Main: S.Fischer, 1953).

⁴⁰⁰ Stefan Zweig 10.

⁴⁰¹ Zimmer 221.

command only special events are pulled out of his hat and only ‘einiges’ is to be presented: ‘Schließlich durch... Konzessionen bewogen, erkläre ich, dass ich bereit sei, einiges aus meinem Erinnerungsvorrat...auszukramen’. (Terrasse 111) This admission makes it unambiguous to the readers: they will be privileged only to selected stories in Wolff’s life. Wolff admits not only to deliberate ‘blind spots of memory’, but also to the deliberate destruction of his memories in the form of documents and letters, ‘Sehr oft habe ich die in fünf Jahrzehnten angeschwollenen Archivmassen gelichtet, aber man zerreist (sic) niemals genug’. (Terrasse 207) It is apparent that precious documents were destroyed during this process.

For the most part Wolff presents facts rather than emotional responses in his autobiography. He constructs his autobiography like a building, from the ground up, ‘wie der Bau eines Hauses allmählich nach oben steigt’, (Terrasse 111) based on a solid foundation of facts. Expressions of anguish, frustration or fear are rare. ‘Dann kam die Herrschaft Hitlers’ (Terrasse 67) is Wolff’s only reference to Hitler’s appointment as Chancellor. Behind his unemotional journalistic style is a hidden anguish keeping the reader at a distance, barred from any access to his emotions. Only personal papers and letters⁴⁰² to his family and friends bear witness to his deep affection, care and love for his family. The following, taken from his last will and testament, written during the summer of 1940, reveals some of his deep emotions and his love for his wife: ‘Ich liebe über alles meine treue, tapfere Frau, meine Anne, mein Glück und in Nöten unvergleichliche Gefährtin – Gefährtin durch ein Leben, das an ihrer beglückende Seite reich und schön war’.⁴⁰³ Similar emotions are never expressed in his public writings as Wolff is highly protective of his family and claims: ‘Es gibt

⁴⁰² Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207: 1 and 3.

⁴⁰³ Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207:32 Testament (Hinterlassener Brief dated Montauban 30 Juli 1940).

Schätze, die man entwertet findet, wenn man sie zeigt'. (Terrasse 116) His 'Schätze' are Änne, Lilly and the boys, Richard and Rudolf, and they are never drawn into the public arena. Dates and facts are documented, but the reader is not privy to intimate family matters, neither the joy nor the disputes. Wolff certainly adheres to his assurance given at the beginning of his autobiography; he will only release 'einiges' from his memories.

Nature and Exile

The notion of preferring to communicate with nature was common to exiles during the Third Reich. According to Wolfgang Emmerich: 'Wo die Einvernahme in die menschenverachtende Volksgemeinschaft der Nazis nicht gewollt wird, folgt der Rückzug auf die eigene Subjektivität... der Versuch, ersatzweise statt mit Menschen mit der Natur zu kommunizieren'.⁴⁰⁴ Exiles had lost trust in the people around them and their environment and therefore turned to nature to hide and seek refuge.

Wolff's appreciation of the country, he calls 'Garten Gottes', (Terrasse 57) only developed during exile. He represents the typical urbanite who grew up, lived and worked in the metropolis of Berlin all his life. During his younger years his close friend, the landscape painter Walter Leistikow, had taught him to appreciate and 'paint' nature. However, – with the exception of references to Wolff's love for the Alps and his friendship with Luis Trenker, – no earlier traces can be found that suggest Wolff is a nature lover.⁴⁰⁵ Exile enforced his affinity with nature. The reliable rhythm of the four seasons reassured him of continuity and the strength and beauty of nature

⁴⁰⁴ Wolfgang Emmerich, "Kein Gespräch über Bäume: Naturlyrik unterm Faschismus und im Exil," *Natur and Natürlichkeit*, eds. Reinhold Grimm and Jost Hermand (Königstein: Athenäum, 1981). 85.

⁴⁰⁵ AKIP. Letter from Luis Trenker to Wolfram Köhler (6.7.1978); and Luis Trenker, *Alles gut gegangen* (Hamburg: Mosaik, 1965). 231, 258, 268, 288 and 290.

inspired him to – idealistically – conclude: ‘Gewiss ist die Hoffnung zulässig, dass das abgründige Schauspiel, das wir erleben, heilsam wirken wird’. (Juden 216)

Through the beauty of the natural world Wolff and other exiles regained hope and confidence, especially as they witnessed the growing contrast between the prevailing disharmony in the world since the start of World War II on the one hand and harmony in nature on the other. The natural flow of nature’s ever returning seasons provided stability, predictability and security – all concepts the exiles had long lost. The predictable arrival of the next spring was a certainty that did not exist in the exiles’ lives. Hence according to Edward Said, they were condemned to a permanent state of ‘winter’: ‘Exile is never the state of being satisfied, placid, or secure. Exile, in the words of Wallace Stevens, is a ‘mind of winter’.⁴⁰⁶ The exiles’ ‘mind of winter’ was waiting for the next spring. Certainties of the changing seasons – the rich summer, dying leaves in autumn, nature’s death in winter followed by a new spring – filled the exiles with hope that after the long ‘winter’ in Europe, new life would generate.

The awareness of polarities in life – peace and war, ‘Triumph und Niedergang’ (Terrasse 41), birth and death, arrival and departure, spring and winter – raise Wolff’s awareness of contrasts between nature’s wealth and mankind’s deficiencies. He ‘paints’ colourful pictures of nature’s harmony and balance, its golden sunshine, abundance of fruit, crop and healthy farm animals and places these in opposition to dark foreboding images of dark clouds and erupting volcanoes. He contrasts the simplicity, security and unpretentiousness of farm life with the complexity, insecurity

⁴⁰⁶ Said 186. The ‘mind of Winter’ refers to ‘The Snow Man’, a poem by Wallace Stevens (1879-1955):

One must have a mind of winter
To regard the frost and the boughs
of the pine-trees crusted with snow;
And have been cold a long time.

Wallace Stevens, *The Collected Poems* (New York: Knopf, 1981). 9.

and darkness of the war raging in Europe. Wolff creates memorable images of plant and animal life in order to contrast the natural with the man made environment.

While words often failed the exiles to describe the bleak reality, metaphors were used.⁴⁰⁷ The following examples demonstrate Wolff's skill in using farm life as metaphors for the political reality. He hides behind these metaphors and disguises hardship with biting wit. The farmyard filled with noisy, colourful and temperamental chickens are a reminder of the noisy and colourful exile community in the south of France. These chickens graze happily, show off their plumage, play and fight with each other. However, light-heartedness is abruptly replaced with a bitter prophecy: these chickens are living in blissful ignorance, unaware that 'man auch ihnen den Hals umdrehen und sie rupfen wird'. (Terrasse 58) Exiles were still enjoying life in the sunshine in the south of France and similar to the chickens, going about their daily chores. However, death was never far away, in particular since the start of World War II. Wolff was made aware of his own mortality, especially as the notion of death was all around him with several death notices reaching him during 1940. Wolff's brother Fritz died on the day the Germans marched into Paris. René Schickele⁴⁰⁸ died and Hasenclever took his own life in the French detention camp Les Milles, and Wolff's close friend and colleague Rudolf Olden and his wife drowned in the Atlantic, when a German submarine torpedoed their ship bound for the United States. It was no coincidence that at that time, in July 1940, Wolff prepared his last will and testament, in which he gave precise instructions for 'wenn ich nicht mehr da bin'.⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁷ Gunnar Backmann, *Meaning of Metaphor* (Stockholm: Almqvist, 1991). 14-15.

⁴⁰⁸ Wolff was able to attend Schickele's funeral. *Sanary-sur-Mer: Deutsche Literatur im Exil*, ed. Heinke Wunderlich (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1996). 214.

⁴⁰⁹ Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207:32 Testament (Hinterlassener Brief dated Montauban 30 Juli 1940)

Wolff paints a dark picture of democracy ending up in the gutter, like a dead dog covered in flies. (Terrasse 66) The dog (democracy in France) died in full view of everyone, without anyone coming to its assistance. This image documents Wolff's despair over the humiliating death of democracy with very little hope for the near future. The dog is Wolff's favourite image for illustrating the 'Hundeelend' (Terrasse 206) of the present. The little black farm dog, Matou, receives special attention and hides Wolff's deep feeling of apprehension for Hitler: 'Ein kleiner schwarzer Hund... hält die ganze Herde zusammen, lenkt sie dorthin, wo er sie haben will.... Er hat auch ...die Unermüdlichkeit und den konsequenten Willen zur Macht'. (Terrasse 58) There is only one individual associated with this little black dog and his 'Willen zur Macht'! The little black dog Matou, described as a mongrel of numerous breeds, is forced to live with the stigma of lacking racial purity: 'die Reinheit der Rasse... die auch ihm leider fehlt'. (Terrasse 81) Wolff cleverly hints at Hitler's obvious lack of Arian looks. A reference to National Socialism's race laws is the story of an unfortunate baby owl fallen out of its nest and rescued by the farmer, but 'forced into exile' as a result, because it was touched by human hands, thus *Rassenschande* was committed. The owl 'ist der Rassenschande schuldig, er [der Vogel] hat durch das Zusammenleben mit den Menschen seine Rasse entehrt'. (Terrasse 138) Race laws present Wolff with bewilderment and fear and become a major issue, to be discussed in the next chapter.

Wolff's humorous pictures of a family of ducks mirrors German family life, where motherhood was praised and spinsters shunned, 'Eine dicke Entenmutter führt imposant ihre zwölf noch hellgelben Neugeborenen vorüber. Die komischen Personen der Farm sind zwei schon ältere Entenfräuleins... immer für sich allein'. (Terrasse 81) Under the Nazis motherhood was encouraged and women were honoured with the *Mutterkreuz* for bearing more than two children. Here Wolff demonstrates in an

amusing manner the way Nazi rule touched the core of human existence, even the family structure was controlled.

An ancient cedar tree becomes the metaphor for tradition and stability. While the huge trunk is praised for its solid, reliable strength, its young saplings are bending in the slightest breeze, 'Die jüngsten Ausläufer, die Nachgeborenen des Geschlechtes, bewegen sich nachgiebig im leichten Morgenwind. Nichts berührt den Urbaum'. (Terrasse 57) The virtue and wisdom of old age are contrasted with dangerously impressionable youth, especially Nazi youth.

Moods and weather are linked with great sensitivity. Mist and rain are a metaphor for the general dark defeatist mood engulfing France in 1940. Under the veil of a grey misty haze France capitulated; visibility was poor and the world could not – or would not – see the dangers of National Socialism engulfing Europe, 'Die Welt ist grau vermmumelt und es nieselt mit schläfriger Beharrlichkeit'. (Terrasse 206)

Wolff's metaphors are carefully chosen and disguised in subtle humour in the story of the two frogs falling into the milk. In this story one frog drowns, but the other survives the ordeal, because he paddles hard, until the milk turns into butter. The other frog manages to walk to safety. This story speaks volumes for Wolff's awareness for survival in exile: one must 'paddle hard' if one expects to survive. (Terrasse 82) Connections can be drawn to the image of the strong swimmer, discussed in the previous chapter.

Wolff's vivid description of country life includes not only memorable metaphors, but also insightful observations and a sense of admiration for the unpretentious country lifestyle.⁴¹⁰ Wolff observes people on the land, especially the French farmer Foulon,

⁴¹⁰ As mentioned previously, acknowledging Wolff's admiration for Voltaire, the reader is tempted to think of Voltaire's *Candide*, who, towards the end of his life, settles in the country. Francois Marie Arouet de Voltaire, *Candide and other Stories*, transl. Joan Spencer (London: O.U.P., 1966).

and contrasts his honest, hardworking life to the pretentious existence of some people in the cities and confirming Candide's verdict that farmers 'arranged his life far better than those six kings we had supper with.'⁴¹¹ Farmers' achievements are permanent, whereas many high achievers in politics, business or finance quickly fall into obscurity; a judgment that conceals resignation and defeat; especially coming from a man such as Wolff, who spent a lifetime in the company of eminent politicians, such as Bülow, Bethmann-Hollweg, Rathenau, Stresemann. Together they had influenced German and European politics. Exile changed Wolff's aspirations: he now aspired to a simple, peaceful and secure country existence with a 'Mischung von Behagen und Neid die Stimmung ländlich unprätentiösen Wohllebens und ruhig gebetteter Zufriedenheit'. (Terrasse 63) Exile taught Wolff to appreciate the value of the simple life and as a result switched his admiration for eminent politicians to simple farmers. While living on the farm, Wolff not only learnt to prefer the company of farming people, he admits to communicate rather with nature and animals than with humans, revealing his loss of trust in humanity: 'und ich werde vor allem den Umgang mit Tieren vermissen, der Umgang mit Menschen ist nicht immer so ungetrübt'. (Terrasse 127)

⁴¹¹ Voltaire, *Candide* 220.

Topics

The choice of topics in *La Terrasse in der Gascogne* tells a story of the relationship between Wolff's exile experience and his writings that was marked by a strong sense of loss. Considering the care with which Wolff controls the topics in his autobiography, it is worth examining the highlights he selects. The focus is on his memories on personal freedom in his childhood, youth and early career. At the same time Wolff examines the loss of freedom of expression, trust and friendships. Rather like a painter, Wolff allows the colours of his memories to run into each other and the mix of colours to create new images. The result is a subjective presentation, which he calls *Schönfärberei*; (Terrasse 124) some colours are hidden, others become dominant. The themes reveal a gradual mood change, from light to dark, from hope to despondency reflecting a gradual decline in freedom and democratic rights. The atmosphere changes from bursting with energy and optimism to guarded scepticism and cautious pessimism.

Childhood, Youth and Early Career

Wolff's early years are recalled as a time of freedom, security and innocence; they represent the only private revelations in his autobiography.⁴¹² He remembers his early years with particular fondness and provides loving accounts of his parents, his childhood and young adulthood filled with happiness. Touching accounts of Wolff's early years are found in his expressions of love for his parents and his mother in particular: 'Ich rühme unsere Mutter nicht mit den Worten aus dem Lexikon der Liebe,

⁴¹² See Chapter Four for further autobiographical details on Wolff's response to the 'Jewish Question'.

das arm und durch den Gebrauch schäbig geworden ist... ich empfand, dass mit ihr unendlich viel Schönheit aus meiner Welt verschwand'. (Terrasse 116,117) Wolff displays genuine deep emotions, rarely expressed by a man who preferred to chronicle facts rather than bare his soul.

Wolff's memories of his parents, childhood and early career are revealing. His early talent as a writer was encouraged by his mother. He recalls writing constantly, rather than doing homework from his fourteenth birthday onwards. The importance he attaches to events during his early literary career is noteworthy; his detailed accounts of the 1894 staging of his play *Niemand weiß es* (Terrasse 208) document a chapter in the history of German theatre at the turn of the century and his theatrical ambitions. As mentioned previously, Wolff's success as a literary writer during his youth was limited and he admits: 'Die Leidenschaft des ehrgeizigen Strebens hatte sich im kalten Wasser vermindert, ich zog mich für lange Zeit in den Journalismus zurück und unternahm, übrigens nicht mit froher Überstürzung, den Ritt in die Politik. Daraus ergab sich gewiss kein Verlust für die Bühnenliteratur'. (Terrasse 215)

Colourful descriptions of dancing butterflies, representing freedom and beauty reflect Wolff's happy, carefree childhood and youth that was 'erlebensfroh, im Genuss des hellen Tages', (Terrasse 114) and, similar to a butterfly, he flies from one excitement to the next. However, soon dark memories return and remind him of the ugly worm in the lifecycle of the butterfly. (Terrasse 125) Soon the sky clouds over with a silver veil of thin white cloud, hazy memories start to emerge, as innocence left his carefree childhood. (Terrasse 110) When contrasted with life under National

Socialism, life at the turn of the century was free, peaceful and harmonious, a notion shared with other exiles.⁴¹³

Freedom of Expression

Principal amongst the themes discussed in Wolff's exile works are those of democracy and freedom; no other issue dominated his writing to the same extent. The gradual erosion of democratic rights – especially freedom of expression – has been covered in his manuscript *Notes sur l'histoire de la presse*, where the topic is discussed theoretically. In his autobiography he refers to personal experiences. From the objective distance, now living in exile, he does not miss an opportunity to document events in his life, when - in his view - government authorities unduly assaulted freedom of expression. Wolff's memoirs chronicle in details assaults on the freedom of the individual. The following examples are from Wolff's memories and document his experiences as a writer and editor of the *Berliner Tageblatt* and reflect how government interference had accompanied him all his professional life. Wolff, who was convinced, 'wo Humanität, Respekt vor der Menschenwürde, Freiheit des Denkens...nicht existieren, ist Kultur nur Finsternis und auch die Demokratie ein leeres Gefäß', (Grabmal 256) was deeply affected by the escalation of Hitler's totalitarian regime.

The first time Wolff fell victim to government censorship that inhibited freedom of expression was not in Germany, but in Vienna in 1888, when the performance of Wolff's play, *Die Königin*, was cancelled. Austrian authorities objected to the main protagonist, a feeble-minded queen, who reminded authorities of

⁴¹³ See Stefan Zweig, *Die Welt von Gestern* and Heinrich Mann, *Ein Zeitalter wird besichtigt*.

Marie Antoinette, daughter of Maria Theresia. (Terrasse 214) Even one hundred years after her death, the Habsburg Empire felt compelled to defend their Queen and censor his play. Following a negotiated compromise, the setting of the play was changed from the realistic Habsburg Empire to a fictitious monarchy, which altered the play's atmosphere and storyline drastically and contributed to a resounding failure at the opening performance.

At a time when the Kaiser insisted, 'Was Kunst ist, bestimme ich!' Wolff describes in another episode how he defended the arts and freedom of expression. In 1892 he organised an exhibition of the works by Edvard Munch, the forefather of the Expressionist movement.⁴¹⁴ While Berlin's traditional art critics described Munch's 55 paintings with scorn and ridicule, Wolff praised Munch's art in his editorial in the *Berliner Tageblatt*,⁴¹⁵ causing uproar in the traditional academic art milieu in Berlin. Wolff recalls the interference by Government officials employed by the traditionalists and their profound intolerance of new art forms and demonstrates his contempt for any one stifling freedom of expression. The 1890s brought many Scandinavian writers and artists to Berlin, such as Henrik Ibsen, Björnsterne Björnson, August Strindberg, art collector Willy Greter and Edvard Munch.⁴¹⁶ Wolff's connections with public and private dignitaries, together with his gift for literary expression, made him the perfect ambassador for modern trends in theatre, literature and the arts. *La Terrasse in der Gascogne* presents a detailed chronicle of Wolff's founding of the *Freie Bühne* in Berlin in 1889, a theatre with a manifesto to promote freedom of expression and

⁴¹⁴ This incident – known in the art world as the 'Munch Affair' – was a dispute between the traditional *Berliner Kunst Verein* and the Berlin avant-garde under Max Liebermann and Walter Leistikow. In the end Munch won the right to exhibit his paintings with the help of Theodor Wolff and the Berlin avant-garde.

⁴¹⁵ BT 576 (12.11.1892).

⁴¹⁶ For details of Wolff's involvement in the free spirit of the Berlin art world see: Fritz Paul, "Theodor Wolff und die Berliner Boheme des 'Schwarzen Ferkels'," *Skandinavistik* 12 (1983). 9-30.

oppose Government interference.⁴¹⁷ Wolff describes those vibrant years in great detail and nothing appears to escape his memory. Each event is painted in clear colours, demonstrating the importance he attached to those culturally rich and challenging years in Berlin during the *fin de siècle*, when he contributed so much to free cultural expression in that city. Wolff's self-reflection on his role as a defender of the freedom of expression attained particular importance during World War I, when the *Berliner Tageblatt*, similar to other liberal newspapers, fell victim to draconian censorship laws.⁴¹⁸ German authorities frequently banned Wolff's editorials and his newspaper for long periods during 1916 and 1918. Wolff witnessed government censorship and its devastating results: the government-controlled media seriously misled the public with deceptions and lies; the war was prolonged and the German people suffered needlessly on the battlefield and on the home front.

A further important event in Wolff's life, signalling the betrayal of freedom of expression, was the *Schmutz- und Schundgesetz*⁴¹⁹ that forced him to resign from the *Deutsche Demokratische Partei* (DDP) in December 1926. Much has been written about this event.⁴²⁰ In 1919, when he co-founded the DDP, he had hoped to bridge the gap between democracy and social and economic reality. Historians have questioned both the intent and the success of the DDP and Wolff's involvement has come under

⁴¹⁷ Scandals accompanied many performances, such as Frank Wedekind's *Frühling's Erwachen* and Gerhart Hauptmann's *Vor Sonnenaufgang*. (Terrasse 158ff)

⁴¹⁸ For details on Theodor Wolff and censorship during World War I see: Platthaus; Gotthart Schwarz and Wolff, *Tagebücher*.

⁴¹⁹ The *Schund- und Schmutzgesetz* (Law against Filth and Smut) was passed on 3 December 1926 and intended to protect young people from pornographic literature. However, Wolff correctly recognized that this law could potentially be a vehicle for draconian censorship and raised vigorous objections in his article 'Höher als eine Partei steht uns die Freiheit des Gedankens, höher als ein Minister der Geist'. BT 558 (26.11. 1926) and Theodor Wolff, *Der Journalist* 227.

⁴²⁰ Karl Holl, "Der Austritt Theodor Wolffs aus der Deutschen Demokratischen Partei," *Publizistik* 16 (1971). 294-302. Werner Schneider, *Die Deutsche Demokratische Partei in der Weimarer Republik 1924-1930* (München: Fink, 1978). Hans Mommsen, *Die Verspielte Freiheit: der Weg der Republik von Weimar in den Untergang 1918-1933* (Frankfurt am Main: Propyläen, 1990).

severe criticism.⁴²¹ The DDP's support for the *Schmutz- und Schundgesetz* in 1926 was at odds with Wolff's idea of freedom of expression. As a result, he resigned from the DDP as he was not prepared to compromise.⁴²² Wolff focused on his support for democracy and his actions were founded on moral convictions. Personal doubt and apologetic reflections are the reasons why Wolff devotes much attention to this particular episode in his autobiography.

Wolff's fear of an escalation of right-wing supporters and their threat to freedom of expression came with the October 1929 Wall Street stock exchange crash. In Germany the number of unemployed escalated to four million and right wing extremists stood ready. Germans sought refuge in the extreme right-wing party and in the September 1930 election National Socialists increased their seats from 12 to 107 in the Reichstag. The last three Chancellors of the Weimar Republic, Heinrich Brüning, Franz von Papen and Kurt von Schleicher could only rule with the assistance of the presidential emergency decree. During 1932 German voters were called to the election booths no less than five times.

Although Wolff barely refers to these events in his autobiography, he wrote tirelessly during his time as editor-in-chief of the *Berliner Tageblatt* to warn the public of the dangers of National Socialism, even resorting to facetious comments on Hitler.⁴²³ While his tone and style remained measured and the word *Nazi* was never used,⁴²⁴ he did not hide his contempt for the Nazis and Hitler in particular, calling him

⁴²¹ Larry Eugen Jones writes: 'In point of fact, however, ultimate responsibility for the failure of efforts to create a united liberal party in the days following the collapse of the Second Empire rested not so much with Stresemann as with the Democrats around Wolff, Weber and the 'Berliner Tageblatt.' Larry Eugene Jones, *German Liberalism and the Dissolution of the Weimar Party System 1918-1933* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1988). 21.

⁴²² Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207: 13. Letter from Theodor Wolff to Erich Koch (11.12.1926).

⁴²³ Wolff's scathing comments on Hitler see: BT 126 (15.3.1932) and BT 444 (18.9.1932) and Theodor Wolff, *Der Journalist* 337-341..

⁴²⁴ Wolfgang Bretholz observed: 'Das Wort 'Nazi' oder 'Nazis' hat es im Berliner Tageblatt nicht gegeben.' Wolfgang Bretholz, "Erinnerungen an Theodor Wolff," *Theodor Wolff Preis: Beiträge der Preisträger 1990 und 1991* (1992), 11.

a 'wild zappelnden Demagogen' and 'Schnörkelkünstler', referring to Hitler's failed attempt to become an artist.⁴²⁵

Wolff resorted to desperate steps in trying to save the democracy and freedom of expression. He shocked and surprised his fellow liberals by suggesting that voters should support the Social Democrats (SPD) with the aim to weaken the extreme right. (BT 434 (14.9.1930)) His support for the left revealed his awareness of the looming catastrophe.⁴²⁶ Wolff's 1933 New Year editorial still conveyed some hope: 'Dass die Vernunft kommen werde ist Wunsch und Hoffnung an des neuen Jahres jüngsten Tag'. (BT 1 (1.1.1933)) However, dramatic events pointed to Hitler's inevitable *Machtübernahme*, which Wolff masked in two powerful metaphors. One day before Hitler's appointment he wrote: 'In diesen Wochen umkreisten die Raben immer heftiger und enger den alten Turm'. (BT 49 (29.1.1933)) Ravens circling the crumbling tower painted a striking image of the dying days of the Weimar Republic. Schleicher resigned and Hitler emerged as leader amongst the black scavenging ravens. Wolff's hitherto conciliatory tone changed to one of disbelief and frustration, culminating in despair, as he watched the ravens tear down the last remnants of the Weimar Republic. The other foreboding metaphor had even more significance: 'Gegenwärtig sind wir abermals in einem schwarzen Tunnel, in einem langen, schlecht gelüfteten... Einziger Trost: wenn der Berg nicht einstürzt, kommt man wieder heraus'.⁴²⁷ However, the mountain did collapse, the German people were trapped and Wolff and most Germans could not foresee the darkness of the long tunnel ahead.⁴²⁸

⁴²⁵ BT 100 (28.2.1932); BT 468 (2.10.1932) and Theodor Wolff, *Der Journalist* 343.

⁴²⁶ Hans-Albert Walter's critique is unjustified when he writes: 'Der liberale Theodor Wolff hielt an der Demokratischen Partei noch fest, als sie längst zur Bedeutungslosigkeit herabgesunken und es für seinesgleichen ein Gebot der Klugheit gewesen wäre, die SPD zu unterstützen. Hans-Albert Walter, *Bedrohung und Verfolgung bis 1933*. Deutsche Exilliteratur 1933-1950, Vol. 1 (Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1973) 80.

⁴²⁷ BT 25 (15.1.1933).

⁴²⁸ This is illustrated through an account by Hans Mayer who met with Hermann Kesten, Heinrich Böll, Hans Werner Richter, Wolfgang Koeppen and Erika von Hornstein after the war and asked to recount the events

Insecurity, suspicion and what Wolff called the ‘Dunkelheit der Zukunft’ (BT 85 (19.2.1933)) prevailed during the early months of 1933 as Hitler left no doubt about his plans for the press under National Socialism, when he wrote in ‘Mein Kampf’:

Es ist ein Staats- und Volksinteresse ersten Ranges, zu verhindern, dass diese Menschen in die Hände schlechter, unwissender oder gar übelwollender Erzieher geraten. Der Staat hat deshalb die Pflicht, ihre Erziehung zu überwachen und jeden Unfug zu verhindern... Gerade für unsere geistige Halbwelt aber schreibt der Jude seine sogenannte Intelligenzpresse. Für sie sind die ‘Frankfurter Zeitung’ und das ‘Berliner Tageblatt’ gemacht, für sie ist ihr Ton abgestimmt, und auf diese üben sie ihre Wirkung aus... Sicher wird auch in kommender Zeit der Jude in seinen Zeitungen ein gewaltiges Geschrei erheben, wenn sich erst einmal die Hand auf sein Lieblingsnest legt, dem Presseunfug ein Ende macht, auch dieses Erziehungsmittel in den Dienst des Staates stellt und nicht mehr in der Hand von Volksfremden und Volksfeinden belässt... Eine Dreissig-Zentimeter-Granate zischte immer noch mehr als tausend jüdische Zeitungsvipern – also lasst sie nur zischen!⁴²⁹

Wolff, in his famous article *Es ist erreicht*,⁴³⁰ reacted to Hitler’s appointment as Chancellor on 30 January 1933 with his usual restraint. It is revealing that this editorial was one of his shortest ever, scarcely one column long, while most of his other editorials extended over three or more columns. His desperate urgent message in razor-sharp language pointed at facts: ‘Es ist erreicht. Hitler ist Reichskanzler’. His language was measured and his arguments calm and well constructed. ‘Es ist erreicht’ calls to mind the biblical quote of Jesus’ last words: ‘Es ist vollbracht!’ (Johannes 19: 30).⁴³¹ This is a response to the Nazi coined notion of the ‘Third Reich’, with its religious connotations ‘Dein Reich komme’. The significance of these chosen words in Wolff’s editorial is chilling. The world watched while Germany came under Hitler’s dictatorship. The SA and SS were given special powers, new elections were scheduled and freedom of expression was soon totally abolished. Wolff was forced to recognise

surrounding 30 January 1933. All agreed in the total disbelief of what Hitler and the Nazis stood for: ‘Man glaubte an die Formel: Das geht nicht. Das kann man doch nicht machen.’ Hans Mayer, “Das Gedächtnis und die Geschichte,” *Juden in der deutschen Literatur: ein Deutsch-Israelisches Symposium*, eds. Stephane Moses and Albrecht Schöne (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986). 16.

⁴²⁹ Hitler 264, 268-269.

⁴³⁰ BT 51 (31.1.1933) and Theodor Wolff, *Der Journalist* 351-353.

⁴³¹ As discussed previously Wolff used another biblical quote ‘Geht hin und wählt!’ in his editorial BT 109 (5.3.1933) and Theodor Wolff, *Der Journalist* 363.

that Hitler had achieved his aim with his appointment as Chancellor of Germany: 'Es ist erreicht'.

In addition to the nation-wide political unrest and bitter disappointment over the defeat of democracy, Wolff had to deal with obstacles within the *Berliner Tageblatt*. Danger now came from the most unexpected corners. Herr Kakuschke,⁴³² the lift operator in the Mosse Publishing House was one of the Nazi informants and Wolff remembered later: 'our elevator-boy donned the uniform of a Storm Trooper; it turned out that he had long been keeping an eye on us and was a National Socialist 'platoon leader' or something of the sort'.⁴³³

In the earlier chapter on *Notes sur l'histoire de la presse* reference has been made to the difficulties Wolff encountered during his last years in office as the editor-in-chief of the *Berliner Tageblatt*. Wolff found himself embroiled in a bitter battle with the owner of the *Berliner Tageblatt*, Hans Lachmann-Mosse, who was married to Rudolf Mosse's adopted daughter.⁴³⁴ Modris Eksteins refers to a 'state of war' between the owner and the editor-in-chief.⁴³⁵ With Rudolf Mosse's death in 1920,⁴³⁶ his son-in-law, Hans Lachmann-Mosse, inherited part of the Mosse empire and drastically changed management style and focus of the newspaper business. It was inevitable that this would result in a clash of opinion between the commercially-focused Lachmann-Mosse and Wolff who was not prepared to compromise on ethical

⁴³² Boveri 79 and 187.

⁴³³ Theodor Wolff, "Epitaph of a Newspaper," *Living Age (Boston)*, March 1939, 85 This is confirmed by Hermann Sinsheimer: after the war: '...es stellte sich heraus, dass ausgerechnet unser biederer Fahrstuhlführer der Leiter der Zelle im Mosse-Haus war.' Herman Sinsheimer, *Gelebt im Paradies* (München: Pflaum, 1953). 268.

⁴³⁴ Ernst Feder's diary includes many entries describing the feud between Wolff and Lachmann-Mosse: Wolff hat scharfe Auseinandersetzung mit Lachmann. (2.11.1927) Ganz blass vor Aufregung kommt Wolff von seinem seiner fast täglichen Kämpfe mit Lachmann-Mosse. (11.11.1927) Wolff hat immer wieder Krach mit Lachmann. (11.10.1928) TW dem liefen die Tränen herunter: Ich kann nichts für sie tun, geben Sie den aussichtslosen Kampf auf. (14.12.1932) Feder, *Heute sprach ich mit*.

⁴³⁵ Eksteins 310.

⁴³⁶ Rudolf Mosse (1843-1920) founder of the *Berliner Tageblatt*, Wolff's cousin and mentor. See Wolff's eulogy in BT 431(13.9.1920) and Theodor Wolff, *Der Journalist* 156-158.

and professional standards. Wolff's final years in the Mosse Empire were marred by mistrust, disappointment and frustration. The new management tried to counterbalance financial losses by increasing advertising revenue and diverting assets into real estate. Margrit Boveri recalls Wolff's final years in Berlin and describes him as tired and resigned; loyalty to his colleagues and his beloved *Berliner Tageblatt* alone keeping him at his desk.⁴³⁷ History judged Lachmann-Mosse as ambitious, politically naive and a risk taker who eventually ruined the *Berliner Tageblatt*.⁴³⁸ The correspondence during March 1933 between Wolff and Lachmann-Mosse documents a bitter battle over the *Berliner Tageblatt*.⁴³⁹ While Wolff objected to Lachmann-Mosse's attempt to appease the right to save the newspaper, Lachmann-Mosse accused Wolff, by now writing from the safety of his hotel room in Munich, of his failure to judge the situation from the distance. It must be noted that Lachmann-Mosse himself, despite trying to cooperate with Nazi authorities, was forced into exile during the summer of 1933. His son, the historian George L. Mosse, remembers life in Berlin in March 1933: 'Antisemitische Anpöbeleien gab es zwar auch, aber vor allem die Aufmärsche die auch vor unserem Privathaus stattfanden, weckten mein politisches Bewusstsein'.⁴⁴⁰

After January 1933, the days of the *Berliner Tageblatt* were numbered and Paul Scheffer, wrote in April 1933 to Wolff: 'Das Blatt in der Jerusalemerstrasse, das

⁴³⁷ Boveri 43.

⁴³⁸ Walther G. Oschilewski, *Zeitungen in Berlin im Spiegel der Jahrhunderte*. (Berlin: Haude & Spenersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1975).187. Peter de Mendelssohn, *Zeitungstadt Berlin: Menschen und Mächte in der Geschichte der deutschen Presse* (Frankfurt am Main: Ullstein, 1982). 399. Sösemann, *Theodor Wolff: ein Leben mit der Zeitung*. 255.

George L. Mosse defends his father and attempts to justify his business dealings as essential to the financial survival of the newspaper: 'My father has had very bad press since the end of the World War II. His indifference to politics and his attempts to save money... made for bad blood... Moreover, there were those, like the longtime chief editor Theodor Wolff, who thought that the newspaper were theirs to control.' George L. Mosse, *Confronting History: a Memoir*. 42-43.

⁴³⁹ Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207 : 14.

⁴⁴⁰ George L. Mosse, "Politisches Erwachen," *Die Erfahrung des Exils: Exemplarische Reflexionen*, eds. Wolfgang Benz and Marion Neiss. (Berlin: Metropol, 1997). 69.

jetzt erscheint, hat nichts mehr mit dem Berliner Tageblatt zu tun, dessen Namen es komischerweise trägt'.⁴⁴¹ Wolff's name as editor-in-chief appeared for the last time on the front page of the *Berliner Tageblatt* on 21 March, 1933. Wolff read his *Berliner Tageblatt* for the last time on 1 July 1934, the day after the Röhm putsch. He was disgusted upon discovering that his paper supported Hitler in calling Röhm a traitor. Wolff wrote to Egon Kisch: 'Seither habe ich das *Berliner Tageblatt* nie mehr in die Hand genommen.'⁴⁴² Arnold Zweig also announced the downfall of the *Berliner Tageblatt*: 'It is really a matter of indifference whether the *Berliner Tageblatt* is published or not, since no one now cares to read a journal which used to influence the opinion of the world'.⁴⁴³ The *Berliner Tageblatt*, the liberal paper advocating democratic ideals, especially freedom of expression, was now defunct. The loss of democracy and freedom of expression was his leitmotiv in his autobiography, *La Terrasse in der Gascogne*. Wolff's despondency and anguish seems to grow with each recorded year in exile.

Friends

Exile friendships were particularly vulnerable, as friends were often separated without any certainty as to whether or when they would meet again. The constant stream of friends leaving Europe filled Wolff with sadness, especially on the occasion of Ernst Feder's departure for the USA, 'auch du, Brutus, auch Sie wollen diesen Erdteil verlassen! Ihr Brief nach so langer Zeit, hat mich herzlich gefreut, aber dass er das Wiedersehen so problematisch macht, ist mehr als unwillkommen und verdirbt die

⁴⁴¹ Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207:18. Letter from Paul Scheffer to Theodor Wolff (16.4.1933).

⁴⁴² Egon Erwin Kisch, *Mein Leben für die Zeitung* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1937). 508.

⁴⁴³ Arnold Zweig 129.

Freude'.⁴⁴⁴ As friendships played an important role in the exiles' lives, it is no surprise that Wolff indulges in nostalgic memories of many friends in his autobiography. Filled with disappointment he has to admit: 'Heutzutage macht ziemlich jeder die Erfahrung, dass 'Freunde', die er jetzt vielleicht brauchen würde, sich gern mit ein paar Phrasen der anständigen Pflichterfüllung entziehen'. (Terrasse 170) During these hard times friendships were often severely tested especially under financial stress⁴⁴⁵ and opposing political ideas.

Herr Mathias poses the question, 'Sie haben viele Freunde gehabt?' This opens the door for Wolff to muse over friendships and presents perceptive character descriptions of his closest friends, such as of Theodor Fontane, Gerhart Hauptmann, Walter Leistikow and Karl Werder, a philosopher, who had met Goethe in his student years. This results in a lengthy discussion on Goethe's contributions.⁴⁴⁶ In 1940 Goethe's ideals were buried or re-interpreted by the Nazi regime. A nostalgic cloud lies over this long chapter on Goethe and his achievements and the question, how could the nation of 'Dichter und Denker' descend into a nation of 'Richter und Henker', remains unanswered

Theodor Fontane had a profound influence on the young Wolff. Nine letters reveal Fontane's praise for Wolff's early works and the two men's mutual respect for each other.⁴⁴⁷ There is no hint of Fontane's alleged antisemitic sentiments.⁴⁴⁸ Wolff

⁴⁴⁴ Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207: 10. Letter from Theodor Wolff to Ernst Feder (23.4.1941)

⁴⁴⁵ Wolff wrote: '...nichts lastet schwerer, als ein leichtes Portemonaie'. (Terrasse 36)

⁴⁴⁶ Ritchie Robertson noted that Goethe played a special role in the assimilated German Jewish community: 'Particularly noteworthy is the prominence of Jews among admirers, propagators, commentators, and editors of Goethe.' Ritchie Robertson, *The 'Jewish Question' in German Literature, 1749-1939: Emancipation and its Discontents*. (Oxford: U.P., 1999) 268.

⁴⁴⁷ Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207: 10.

⁴⁴⁸ Heinz Ohff claims: 'Im Alter bemerkt Fontane, dass der Antisemitismus seine Achillesferse ist.' Heinz Ohff, *Theodor Fontane: Leben und Werk* (München: Piper, 1995). 369. Wolfgang Benz, "Judenfeindschaft als Zeitgeist: Theodor Fontane und die wilhelminische Gesellschaft," *Bilder vom Juden: Studien zum alltäglichen Antisemitismus* (München: Beck, 2001). 57-69. Willi Jasper, *Deutsch-Jüdischer Parnass: Literaturgeschichte eines Mythos* (München: Propyläen, 2004). 385.

painstakingly reconstructs his harmonious friendship with the great German novelist, his mentor and teacher. Division among German intellectuals is chronicled through the declining friendship between two friends, Theodor Wolff and Gerhart Hauptmann. Despite Wolff's deep respect for Hauptmann, he sharply criticises Hauptmann's enthusiasm for the start of World War I.⁴⁴⁹ In an article on the occasion of Hauptmann's 70th birthday, Wolff condemned – with his acclaimed sarcasm – Hauptmann's intention in 1914 to enter politics and support the war effort: 'Der Zentaur [i.e.Hauptmann] wollte seine göttlichen Wohnungen verlassen und ein neues Leben als Zirkuspferd beginnen'.⁴⁵⁰ Nineteen years later, Hauptmann's endorsement of Hitler's decision to leave the League of Nation in November 1933 and his attendance at the opening of the *Reichskulturkammer* in Berlin on 15 November 1933 further incensed Wolff and other exiles. When in 1933 a most respectful Christmas letter from Hauptmann⁴⁵¹ reached Wolff in exile in Lugano, Switzerland, Wolff replies in a rather irritated tone:

Ich habe mich in dieser Zeit abseits von der Arena gehalten, übrigens ohne irgend eine Anwendung von Müdigkeit und Resignation. Genützt hat es mir freilich nicht viel und erspart hat es mir nichts... Dass Sie, lieber Gerhart Hauptmann sich nicht in eine politische Aktivität hineinbegeben sollten, habe ich, wie sie wissen, immer gewünscht... Die Freundschaft die nicht verletzen will und zu verstehen versucht, darf so offen reden.⁴⁵²

Hauptmann's political stance at the start and throughout World War I and moreover his controversial relationship with the Nazi regime were the basis of the rift

⁴⁴⁹ Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207:11. Letter from Theodor Wolff to Theodor Hauptmann (29. 11. 1933).

It must be noted that Hauptmann was in illustrious company of writers (e.g. Thomas Mann etc.), intellectuals and academics in their expression of enthusiasm and support for the war in 1914. Kurt Flasch, *Die Geistige Mobilmachung: die deutschen Intellektuellen und der erste Weltkrieg* (Berlin: Fest, 2000). Uwe Schneider and Andreas Schumann, *Krieg der Geister: Erster Weltkrieg und literarische Moderne* (Würzburg: Königshausen, 2000).

⁴⁵⁰ BT 540 (13. 11.1932) and Theodor Wolff, *Der Publizist* 385.

⁴⁵¹ Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207:11. Letter from Gerhart Hauptmann to Theodor Wolff (29.11.1933).

⁴⁵² Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207:11. Letter from Theodor Wolff to Gerhart Hauptmann. (4. 12.1933)

between the two previously close friends. With most friends leaving Europe, the isolation of exile speaks through Wolff's detailed and nostalgic accounts of lost friendships from a past era. In addition Wolff remembers cultural identities, Goethe, Fontane, Hauptmann and many others, once honoured and part of Germany's cultural heritage. Under the Nazis, many icons evaporated and he feels the emptiness that is left behind.

Travels

In *La Terrasse in der Gascogne* Wolff writes lengthy travel accounts to contrast unrestricted travel around the turn of the century with total travel restrictions in 1940. In 1908 and 1909 Wolff published a collection of entertaining travel accounts under the title *Pariser Tagebuch* and *Spaziergänge*,⁴⁵³ describing the joy of free travel, foreign people and places, different cultures and customs. Under close scrutiny it becomes apparent, that his travel accounts in *La Terrasse in der Gascogne*, written in exile, differ strikingly from his earlier travel tales. Life in exile involved restricted movement and it becomes obvious that Wolff uses his travel tales to illustrate his constrained existence.

It is Herr Mathias again who asks the question, 'Sie sind schon in ihrer Jugend viel gereist?' (Terrasse 138) that opens the pathway for Wolff's colourful journey through European and exotic destinations. The following examples illustrate the stark contrast between Wolff's travels during his youth and life in exile. In 1940 the topics reveal sombre and reflective pessimism when compared with his enthusiastic, insightful and colourful earlier travel accounts. His early experiences in Athens,

⁴⁵³ Theodor Wolff, *Pariser Tagebuch* (München, Langen, 1908). Theodor Wolff, *Spaziergänge* (Köln: Albert Ahn, 1909).

visiting the Acropolis and the Parthenon during the early 1880s are animated and inspiring (Spaziergänge 240-253); now all Wolff recalls from his visit to Athens is an earthquake. (Terrasse 144) Now Paris, his favourite city, evokes memories of a severe toothache, (Terrasse 146) a metaphor for the anguish surrounding Paris falling into the hands of Nazi Germany and leaving France in permanent severe pain. A further example is his visit to Constantinople where in his youth he had eyes only for the beautiful women, (Spaziergänge 29-37) while now he describes in detail the tyrannical Sultan as the 'blutige Tyrann, dessen perverse Grausamkeit jedem bekannt... war'. (Terrasse 144) The reader is confronted with a *Konzentrationslager* in Syracuse, where Wolff observes appalling working conditions in a stone quarry. (Terrasse 140) An earthquake, severe toothache, a dictatorial Sultan and a concentration camp are all images representing the adversities associated with life under National Socialism.

Wolff lingers over his travel adventures, which occupy over 15 pages (out of a total of 197 pages). Suddenly, as if being woken from a dream, he abruptly ends with apologies: 'meine Erzählung ist übermäßig lang gewesen, ich habe da auf einmal einen ganzen Sack ausgeschüttet und das soll nicht wieder geschehen'. (Terrasse 153) Wolff appears apologetic about his indulgence to present travel tales, which were in stark contrast to the current atmosphere in Europe at the height of World War II. The exiles were trapped; free movement was severely restricted. Free travel had still been possible until 1939. During early exile Wolff had travelled frequently to Paris and London. His correspondence bears witness to meetings in London with his friend and publisher, Henry Wickham Steed, the actresses Elisabeth Bergner and Grete Mosheim

and his sister Käthe.⁴⁵⁴ Several trips to Paris report meetings with friends and colleagues from the *Berliner Tageblatt*, Ernst Feder and Erich Burger and his brother Fritz.⁴⁵⁵ The freedom that allowed Wolff to travel in Europe during his youth is in stark contrast to the total restriction of movements imposed in 1940. Even the shortest distance travelled without the *Sauf Conduit* was a criminal offence. (Terrasse 127) In 1940, Nice and the south of France, once scenically beautiful tourist destinations, transformed into a prison.

Summary

Autobiographical impulses came from the heightened awareness that his life was in danger and the need to collect, preserve and share memories in order to document and understand the past and gain stability and strength. During this stage in his life Wolff fought despondency and this is reflected in the final sentence in *La Terrasse in der Gascogne*: ‘Der Augenblick war schön’. (Terrasse 218) Wolff felt the overwhelming regret over what was lost. His memory was all that was left and this inspired him to continue his biographical accounts and historical reflections. *La Terrasse in der Gascogne* includes his memoirs of his early years to World War I. His next work *Das Grabmal des Unbekanten Soldaten* continues his memoirs, from World War I to his exile in 1933. In addition it focuses on the ‘Jewish Question’ as persecution of Jews in the south of France accelerated.

⁴⁵⁴ Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207: 19, 20.

⁴⁵⁵ Ernst Feder, *Das Parlament*.31: 3.8.1960. Boveri 48.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINAL YEARS IN EXILE AND THE ‘JEWISH QUESTION’ 1941-1943

Life in Exile

Life under Italian Occupation

The so called ‘Jewish Question’ captured Wolff’s attention rather sudden and late in exile.⁴⁵⁶ At the age of 75, after nearly ten years in exile in France, he finally dealt with Jewish issues. Wolff, a classic example of a highly assimilated Jew, was forced to reflect on his origin as a response to the Nazi destruction of the German-Jewish *Lebensgemeinschaft*. This chapter analyses the fourth and final stage of Wolff’s life in exile, the period from 1941 to 1943.

Two specific experiences influenced his sudden involvement with Jewish themes. Wolff realised the Nazis had redefined him as a Jew, a status from which he could not escape. He also encountered the persecution of Jews in the streets of Nice and became aware of the Jewish catastrophe unfolding in Nazi controlled Europe. These experiences triggered reflections on the ‘Jewish Question’ in both his final works, *Das Grabmal des Unbekannten Soldaten* and ‘*Die Juden*’.⁴⁵⁷ These two works are a blend of autobiographical and historical reflections with antisemitism, Zionism, Jewish history and race forming the major topics. While Wolff explores these issues

⁴⁵⁶ Bernd Hüppauf observed that many exiles suddenly turned their attention to Jewish issues: ‘The assimilated Jew starts to feel an interest in Jewish matters.’ Bernd Hüppauf, "I travelled to the Jews," *From the Emancipation to the Holocaust: Essays on Jewish Literature and History in Central Europe*, ed. Konrad Kwiet (Kensington: Univ. of NSW, Faculty of Arts, 1987). 108.

⁴⁵⁷ Wolff placed inverted commas around ‘*Die Juden*’ to illustrate his denial to acknowledge Jews as one people. This will be further discussed later in this chapter.

on a personal level in *Das Grabmal des Unbekannten Soldaten*, in 'Die Juden' they are explored in a theoretical framework.

The debate surrounding the German-Jewish *Lebensgemeinschaft* has produced an immense and ever-increasing body of literature.⁴⁵⁸ In 1964 Gershom Scholem launched his famous attack, *Against the Myth of the German-Jewish Dialogue*, arguing that there never was a real dialogue between Germans and Jews, since the Germans had never accepted Jews as 'equal partners'.⁴⁵⁹ Jews were expected to abandon all links with their Jewishness and present themselves as Germans. However, even this was still not enough for the Nazis, who did not permit this 'solution' to the 'Jewish Question'. Scholem's attack became the point of departure for historians and others engaged in this debate.⁴⁶⁰ Julius Schoeps, in his appropriately entitled chapter, *The Abortive Emancipation*, argues: 'The struggle conducted for over a century was lost, and for Jews who had identified so closely with Germany this came as a terrible shock'.⁴⁶¹ Wolff uses a striking metaphor for the German-Jewish *Lebensgemeinschaft*: a building with a thatched roof that could be set alight with a single match.⁴⁶² It dawned on Wolff that the German-Jewish 'symbiosis' was as vulnerable as a house built of straw. Wolff felt admiration for Germany and Germans; to be expelled from his home, his work, his cultural and intellectual environment, his friends and family

⁴⁵⁸ See annual bibliography on German-Jewish studies in the *Annual Selected Bibliography of Books and Articles. Yearbook of the Leo Baeck Institute*. London: Secker and Warburg, 1 (1956) -

⁴⁵⁹ Gershom Scholem, "Wider den Mythos vom deutsch-jüdischen 'Gespräch'," *Judaica* 2 (1970). 7-11.

⁴⁶⁰ Katja Behrens, "The Rift and not the Symbiosis," *Unlikely History: the Changing German-Jewish Symbiosis 1945-2000*, ed. Leslie Morris and Jack Zipes (New York : Palgrave, 2002). 31-48. Eva G Reichmann, *Größe und Verhängnis deutsch-jüdischer Existenz: Zeugnisse einer tragischen Begegnung* (Heidelberg: Lambert Schneider, 1974).

⁴⁶¹ Julius H. Schoeps, "The Abortive Emancipation," *The German-Jewish Dilemma*, eds. Edward Timms and Andrea Hammel (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1999). 102.

⁴⁶² Wolff writes: 'Man hat geglaubt, daß man dem Menschen ein Gebäude der Vernunft errichtet habe, und ein Streichholz genügt zur Zerstörung, das ganze Dach steht in Flammen. Weil es eben nur ein Strohdach war'. (Juden 98)

was deeply felt. Wolff and other assimilated Jews felt shock and confusion, when the Nazis seized power and destroyed the German-Jewish *Lebensgemeinschaft*.

In the autumn of 1940 French authorities ordered Wolff and his family to return to Nice from their forced evacuation to the French countryside. On their return they witnessed round ups and deportations of Jews. Alarmed by reports of increasing atrocities against Jews, Wolff writes: ‘Das Schicksal der Juden ist entsetzlich tragisch... und das allein entschuldigt und erzwingt die dauernde Beschäftigung mit dem Thema’. (Grabmal 328)

At this point, it is necessary to chronicle the political and military situation in Europe that intensified the persecution of Jews in Europe and forced Wolff into the *dauernde Beschäftigung* with Jewish issues. From now on Wolff deals exclusively with the ‘Jewish Question’, as the political landscape changed dramatically for him and his family. All refugees were now trapped in the south of France, which up to this point of the war had been one of the few remaining zones in Europe not under Hitler’s control.⁴⁶³ German military defeat at the eastern front towards the end of 1942 exasperated the Nazis into intensifying the persecution of Jews. In addition, the landing of the Anglo-American Armies in the French North African colonies of Morocco and Algeria resulted in Germany’s loss of control over much of North Africa. In preparation for the Allied landing, the German Army invaded the unoccupied French territory at the same time as the Italians occupied the eastern part of France, east of the river Rhone, including the city of Nice. Wolff had categorically denied the possibility of an Italian invasion over the Alps into France: ‘Dass die Italiener die Alpenfront durchbrechen und nach Nizza vordringen könnten, glaubt hier

⁴⁶³ Eggers 395.

kein Franzose und auch ich glaube es nicht'. (Terrasse 24) The Italian invasion of the south of France documents Wolff's and others' miscalculations concerning the reality of the war. Italian authorities were known to be reluctant collaborators with German authorities, far more humanitarian and less antisemitic than the French, and certainly the Germans. Wolff recalls: 'Die Rivieraküste mit Nizza wird den Italienern überlassen, die... bei den Juden nicht unbeliebt sind'. (Juden 261) Jews placed great expectations on the Italian occupying forces, because anti-Jewish legislation under Mussolini's Fascist regime had faced opposition and Italy had thus far not participated in brutalities against Jews. As a result the Italian occupied zone in France became the last refuge for many exiled Jews. Jewish life in Nice was relatively enviable compared to the rest of Europe, where the rounding up of Jews and their transportation to the east intensified daily.⁴⁶⁴

Confusion and panic amongst the exiles were compounded by a blurred demarcation line between the Italian and German occupied zones. Administrative and political powers were in disarray, as the Vichy Government and the Italian and German occupying forces gave conflicting orders. Daniel Carpi describes this confusion: 'The Axis governments wanted to seize both ends of the stick: rule the land with the full authority of an army of occupation, and continue to enjoy the services of a submissive and collaborating [Vichy] government'.⁴⁶⁵ Germany, with already overstretched resources, was not capable of assuming power over local administration and left the Vichy Government in power. The Italian zone was left for the Italians to administer. The Vichy Government tolerated the presence of the Italian occupying forces only with extreme indignation. France had never been defeated by Italy and

⁴⁶⁴ Marrus writes: 'Nice became a Jewish political and cultural center under the benevolent eye of the Italian army.' Marrus and Paxton 319.

⁴⁶⁵ Carpi 83.

resented the Italian army on their soil. Wolff and the refugees tried to cope and live under this highly complex and confusing environment, which caused hardship and despair, especially amongst the thousands of new refugees, who flooded the Italian occupied zone, expecting protection from Italian authorities. The fate of the Jews was to be decided by all three authorities: Vichy authorities were more than willing to cooperate with the Germans; in contrast Italian authorities were reluctant to implement anti-Jewish policies. Italy came under increasing pressure to comply with German demands to cooperate in the implementation of anti-Jewish legislation. On the diplomatic level Italian officials agreed to co-operate fully; however long delays in the lines of command from Rome and lengthy negotiations between Berlin, Vichy and Rome gave many Jews a final opportunity to flee Europe.

As mentioned previously, Wolff had been a personal friend of Mussolini and hoped to receive protection from the Duce. In 1921 Mussolini had visited Wolff in Berlin and another meeting occurred in April 1930 in Rome.⁴⁶⁶ Wolff praised Mussolini's 'menschliche Züge'⁴⁶⁷ and described his amicable meetings with the Duce, which earned Wolff much criticism.⁴⁶⁸ Wolff clearly distinguished between Mussolini, the person and Mussolini, the Fascist dictator, when he contrasted Mussolini with Hitler: 'Der italienische Faschismus lebt nur von der Persönlichkeit des Diktators, und wo diese Persönlichkeit fehlt, bleibt nichts als die ungeistige, rohe Diktatur'.⁴⁶⁹ Wolff was blinded by his earlier friendship with Mussolini, which

⁴⁶⁶ Rudolf Wolff remembers: 'Diese für diese Zeit merkwürdige, fast unerklärliche Achtung des Duce stammte vom 28. April 1930, von dem Tag also, an dem der Chefredakteur des Berliner Tageblatt um 17 Uhr im Palazzo Venezia empfangen wurde... Also hielt es TW für unmöglich, in Nizza bei den Italienern in Gefahr zu geraten'. AKIP. Rudolf Wolff. Für Köhler. p.7.

⁴⁶⁷ Wolff writes: 'Er konnte, wenn er das wollte, einen grossen Charme entwickeln, in dem Marmor gab es die menschlichen Züge... Auch später noch, als ich in der Emigration lebte, hat er mir die gleiche Gesinnung gezeigt'. (Grabmal 310)

⁴⁶⁸ Klaus Mann, *Der Wendepunkt: ein Lebensbericht*. 309. Feder 175. Söseemann, *Theodor Wolff: ein Leben mit der Zeitung*. 265.

⁴⁶⁹ BT 518 (2.11.1930) and Theodor Wolff, *Der Journalist* 287.

contributed to his false sense of security.⁴⁷⁰ The fact that he was well known in prominent circles in Nice also contributed to Wolff's feeling of security. He met socially with Nice's Mayor (Jean Medecin), the Italian Consul General (Alberto Calisse), the Prefect (Marcel Ribiere) and police officials and was regarded as *Ehrengast*.⁴⁷¹ Although life for Jewish refugees in Nice had been initially relatively favourable under Italian occupation, arrests by the Gestapo and Vichy collaborators under Article 19 intensified. After the Wannsee Conference in January 1942 arrests and deportations signalled the beginning of the Final Solution.

Wolff had little or no knowledge of the Nazi policy to exterminate Europe's Jews. In the south of France he was shielded from world news due to censorship and lack of opportunities for tuning into overseas broadcasts. Even when reports reached him, they were regarded as war propaganda. The scale, on which Jews were being murdered, unprecedented in history, defied all human imagination. Taking great risks, Wolff sometimes managed to listen to the radio broadcast by Thomas Mann from the USA.⁴⁷² (Juden 39) Mann transmitted details of Nazi atrocities, which were met with total disbelief by the exiles. Wolff maintained that Thomas Mann must have made an error in his judgement, when quoting figures of Jews deported to the east. (Juden 167) Although it is difficult to assess Wolff's knowledge of the Holocaust in 1942 and 1943, he must have had some foreboding, when he wrote: 'Unzweifelhaft ist die polnische Ebene der große Zirkus, in dem das Tier fortwährend mit Massen von Menschenfleisch gefüttert wird. Sie ist der enorme Schindacker, auf dem der Henker

⁴⁷⁰ For details on the friendship between Wolff and Mussolini see: BT 220 (11.5.1930); BT 518 (2.11.1930) and Theodor Wolff, *Der Journalist* 282-288; BT 312 (5.7.1931) and Theodor Wolff, *Der Journalist* 307-308; 396 (21.8.1932); Juden 172; Grabmal 309-310.

⁴⁷¹ Rudolf Wolff remembers: 'Es kam hinzu, daß TW von den Autoritäten als Ehrengast, sagen wir ruhig auch als Ehren-Emigrant behandelt wurde'. AKIP. Rudolf Wolff. Für Köhler. p.2.

⁴⁷² Thomas Mann, *Deutsche Hörer! Historische Radiosendungen aus dem Exil 1940-1945*, Thomas Mann's Radio Programs, London: BBC 1945 Leuberg Edition ed. (1987).

den laut verkündeten Plan der Ausrottung verwirklichen will'. (Juden 167) These disturbing images suggest that Wolff must have had some foreboding of the unfolding catastrophe.

Writing in Exile

Das Grabmal des Unbekannten Soldaten

Wolff wrote *Das Grabmal des Unbekannten Soldaten* in Nice in 1941, following his return to his apartment overlooking the Mediterranean. Here he resumed his strict writing routine, which he had always regarded as his essential life-support, his 'Gesetz des Lebens'. (Terrasse 21). This work is constructed as a *Rahmenerzählung* or frame story, a genre he had earlier used in *Through Two Decades*, his first exile work.⁴⁷³ On this occasion, the work is framed by a fictitious story, containing the imaginary scholar, Anaxagoras Sakarian,⁴⁷⁴ whose mission is to discover and reveal the Jewish identity of the Unknown Soldier under the Arc de Triomphe. The storyline develops in two parallel directions: one, the fictional account of the story of the Unknown Soldier, the other, Wolff's autobiography. Both converge at Wolff's leitmotiv, democracy and freedom. The narrative links fiction with facts and continues his autobiographical reflections that he commenced in *La Terrasse in der Gascogne*.

The theme of *Das Grabmal des Unbekannten Soldaten* is the fictitious discovery that the French Unknown Soldier buried under the Arc de Triomphe is a

⁴⁷³ As previously mentioned in Chapter One, a *Rahmenerzählung* is a story within a story. Wilpert 739.

⁴⁷⁴ Anaxagoras is the name of a Greek philosopher who lived from 500-428 BC. Wolff connects his protagonist with Athens, the birthplace of democracy. Sakarian is Armenian, a troubled nation that endured persecutions over many centuries.

Jew.⁴⁷⁵ Wolff chooses this topic to highlight the importance of equality, one of the basic human rights and he contrasts this symbol of equality with the hypocrisy of racial discrimination, especially antisemitism. The autobiographical account displays the three features, special to exile autobiography and already analysed in *La Terrasse in der Gascogne*: the reluctance of exiles to place their persona in the centre of their work; the selective memory of exiles and the high level of despondency amongst exiles.

Wolff again attempts to deflect attention away from himself, this time with even greater determination than in *La Terrasse in der Gascogne*. Not only does he place history and politics in the centre of the story, he also employs a fictitious partner, the scholar Anaxagoras Sakarian, who commands all the attention. At this stage in exile, with many of Wolff's friends either dead or overseas, Sakarian becomes his imaginary friend and main protagonist. Both appear as ideal intellectual partners, intense listeners and debaters.⁴⁷⁶ In contrast to Herr Mathias in *La Terrasse in der Gascogne*, Sakarian is Wolff's intellectual equal and plays a noticeably more influential role than Herr Mathias.

Wolff portrays the fictitious Sakarian as his 'other', sharing many characteristics and a common past. Wolff and Sakarian both live in exile. Both share a high regard for their parents, in particular their mothers and both share similar family backgrounds of Jewish merchant families. Furthermore both share a passion for the investigation of facts. As already mentioned, during his professional life as journalist

⁴⁷⁵ The identity of the Unknown Soldier under the Arc de Triomphe has not been established to this day. This is confirmed by Adela Clayton from the Australian War Memorial Research Centre: 'I have not been able to find any reference to the identification of this soldier.' Letter from Adela Clayton (Australian War Memorial Research Centre) to Reingard Porges (5.4. 2004).

⁴⁷⁶ Söseman draws parallels to Goethe and Eckermann in his *Einleitung* to: Theodor Wolff, *Die Wilhelminische Epoche: Fürst Bülow am Fenster und andere Begegnungen*, ed. Bernd Söseman (Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum, 1989). IX.

and publicist Wolff made it his business to present facts, similarly to Sakarian, who has special skills in unearthing facts and secrets. Cemeteries and graves especially capture Sakarian's attention: 'Die Geheimnisse der Gräber zu erforschen, sei für ihn nicht nur ein Zeitvertreib, sondern eine sehr spannende Beschäftigung gewesen'. (Grabmal 253) Sakarian works tirelessly on his project to solve the identity of the Unknown Soldier under the Arc de Triomphe. Although they have much in common, the friendship between Sakarian and Wolff is frequently tested due to differences in lifestyles and ideas. However they maintain mutual respect and constantly challenge each other, enhancing the narrative and increasing the suspense. Again the narrative device and common feature of many exile autobiographies is apparent: Wolff creates a fictitious character to deflect his own emotions and personal opinions.

The second feature, special to exile autobiography, refers to selective memory. Wolff recalls the past – rather selectively – with emphasis on his leitmotif, the end of democracy and the 'Jewish Question' Themes in this work focus on intolerance and discrimination, antonyms for democracy and equality. Wolff's memories again highlight only those political events that influenced democratic processes; other issues are ignored.

Thirdly, a high level of despondency, commonly found in exile autobiography, is demonstrated in Wolff's choice of dark metaphors, especially the gloomy metaphor of the tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Democratic ideas are buried in the tomb as the closing sentences of Wolff's *Grabmal des Unbekannten Soldaten* explain: 'Ihr hattet ganz recht, aus dem Grab eines toten Soldaten euer Symbol zu machen, denn auch eure Ideen sind tot. Ihr habt euer Symbol sehr treffend gewählt'. (Grabmal 337) Other dark metaphors, again deriving from nature, include 'zermatsches Laub' for moral ethics swept away in the gutter; or 'der Tornado war entfesselt', or the 'Bergrutsch'

illustrating National Socialism engulfing Europe. (Grabmal 327, 311, 296) Further examples of Wolff's despondency are also identified in his explosive expressions, not found previously in his writings, such as 'Zum Teufel auch', (Grabmal 319) and defeatist statements, such as 'Aber es war zu spät'. (Grabmal 295)

Das Grabmal des Unbekannten Soldaten is a blend of fiction and autobiographical, political, social, philosophical and cultural reflections. Detailed description of events during World War I, the Weimar Republic, life in exile and the early years of World War II give an insight into his political ideas and his complex attitude to the 'Jewish Question'. Wolff's heightened awareness of the acute danger facing all Jews in Europe forces him to confront Jewish issues and he recognises: 'die Beschäftigung mit der sogenannten jüdischen Frage wurde... notwendig'. (Grabmal 320) For the first time – reluctantly and thinly disguised in a fictitious narrative – Wolff addresses the 'Jewish Question'.

The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier – Equality

The different strands in *Das Grabmal des Unbekannten Soldaten* are intertwined and the variety of plots and subplots give an impression of hasty writing. The narrative is at times disjointed, plots convoluted and messages obscured. Two opposing themes shape the core of the narrative: first, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, a symbol of democracy and equality and second, antisemitism marking the end of democracy and extreme discrimination.

In addition to these two major themes, a third, rather more personal strand can be identified. Although Wolff achieved much in his life, at this stage it appears that he identifies with the Unknown Soldier. Living in exile, Wolff suffered from a lack of

professional recognition, lack of citizenship and lack of home. Wolff takes up the role of the Unknown Soldier, unidentified and unknown, 'ein Unbekannter, ein Mann ohne Namen, ohne Pass'. (Grabmal 227)

The first theme, countries honouring an Unknown Soldier and thus emphasising equality, confirms Wolff's concern for democracy. Wolff summarises the symbolism of the Unknown Soldier's burial: 'Man [hat] jetzt einen unbekanntem Soldaten feierlich bestattet, und in Demokratien sind diese Gräber wundervolle Wahrzeichen, sie verkünden die Gleichheit der Menschen'. (Grabmal 280) He selects the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier to contrast democracies with dictatorships. It is necessary at this point to briefly outline the history of the worship of an Unknown Soldier to highlight his importance as a symbol of democracy.

After the carnage of World War I nations wished to honour their war dead and embraced the symbolism of burying an unknown soldier. The historian George L. Mosse writes: 'England and France pioneered the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier as a place of national worship – 'The Altar of the Fatherland' – symbolic of all military cemeteries spread throughout the former front lines'.⁴⁷⁷ The elevation of a common unknown soldier to the status of national hero demonstrates the shift in political and social perception towards democracy. In the past only the elite enjoyed the privilege of war memorials and statues. Previously only the names of French generals were inscribed on the Arc de Triomphe in Paris. Statues of distinguished generals and statesmen were erected and honoured for their achievements in battle or diplomacy. Then, on 11 November 1920 the remains of an unknown soldier were buried under the

⁴⁷⁷ George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1990). 93. Nearly fifty years lies between Wolff's and Mosse's writings. George L. Mosse, son of Hans Lachmann-Mosse, Wolff's opponent during the final years of the *Berliner Tageblatt*, seems unaware of Theodor Wolff's manuscript *Das Grabmal* and his close personal connection with Wolff. See also: Steven E. Aschheim, "George Mosse at 80.," *In Times of Crisis: Essays on European Culture, Germans and Jews* (Madison, Wisconsin: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 2001). 155-170.

Arc de Triomphe. The French honoured their war dead in an elaborate burial ceremony for a common man, which was copied throughout the world. In many capital cities, such as London, Washington and Rome, a soldier, nameless and without identification was buried in a reverent, elaborate and patriotic ceremony. However, Germany honoured her war dead differently. After World War I German cities and small communities erected memorials, parks and special gardens, so called *Heldenhaine* where trees took the place of graves. Germany did not bury an anonymous soldier until 1969. Georg L. Mosse blames regional interests, the occupation of parts of Germany by foreign troops and the perception that was inappropriate for a defeated nation to erect elaborate war memorials.⁴⁷⁸ Yet, Wolff points to a more sinister explanation for Germany's resistance to honour an unknown soldier. He is convinced during Weimar and especially during the Third Reich German authorities refused to accept the risk associated with the worship of the 'unknown', because an anonymous person could prove to be an 'enemy of the state', a Communist, Marxist, Social Democrat or even a Jew.⁴⁷⁹ The inconceivable prospect that the Unknown Soldier in the tomb under the Arc de Triomphe might be a Jew is at the heart of Wolff's exile work, *Das Grabmal des Unbekannten Soldaten*. The Unknown Soldier, the symbol – 'gewissermaßen ihre Quintessenz' (Grabmal 227) – of democracy was rejected outright by National Socialism and Wolff writes: 'ein

⁴⁷⁸ Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*. 97.

⁴⁷⁹ Ken Inglis, historian at the Australian National University, confirms other nations' concern over the 'purity' of the Unknown Soldier. He quotes the American writer John Dos Passos' who comments on the burial of the American Unknown Soldier in his poem *The Body of an American*:

'Make sure he aint a dinge (black), boys, make sure he aint a guinea (Italian) or a kike (Jew), how can you tell a guy's a hundredpercent, when all you've got's a gunnysack full of bones, bronze buttons stamped with the screaming eagle and a pair of roll puttees?'

Dos Passos, U.S.A. (New York: Modern Library, 1938). 468. Ken Inglis, "Entombing Unknown Soldiers," *Journal of the Australian War Memorial* 23 (October) (1993). 10.

rassistisches Regime kann nicht ohne innere Bedenken am Grabmal eines unbekanntem Soldaten in dankbarer Erinnerung verweilen'. (Grabmal 227)

Wolff contrasts the tolerance of other nations with Germany's intolerance and rejection of the symbolism of the Unknown Soldier: 'Da der Nationalsozialismus jeden, der nicht zu ihm, nicht zu seiner Partei gehört, systematisch verwirft, kann er auch den unbekanntem Soldaten nicht lieben'. (Grabmal 226) Anonymity in a dictatorial system represents an implicit threat. Nazi authorities' files ensured that all citizens were registered, accounted for and their entire public and private affairs transparent. While the Nazi regime rejected the idea of the burial of an unknown soldier, Mussolini declared the Italian Unknown Soldier to be a Fascist and the tomb to be the site for Fascist meetings and ceremonial events.⁴⁸⁰ Reflecting the difference in attitude to most other nations in the world, Germany did not bury an unknown soldier after World War I, during the Weimar Republic, nor during the Third Reich.⁴⁸¹

Antisemitism – Inequality

Antisemitism, the second theme in *Das Grabmal des Unbekanntem Soldaten*, represents inequality and discrimination embodied in Sakarian, the opposite to equality that is symbolised in the Unknown Soldier. Sakarian's tragic life documents the extent of antisemitism in Germany well before Hitler came to power and provides evidence of Wolff's concern over the dichotomy of the German-Jewish 'symbiosis'.

⁴⁸⁰ Inglis 7.

⁴⁸¹ The *Neue Wache* in Berlin *Unter den Linden*, constructed by Karl Friedrich Schinkel for the Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm III. to honour the fallen soldiers during the Napoleonic wars, served as military guard house under the Kaiser. In 1931 a memorial for those who died in World War I was created. It was not until 1969 that the remains of an unknown soldier and an unknown prisoner from a concentration camp were laid to rest in the *Neue Wache*. After Germany's reunification the *Neue Wache* became the central memorial for victims of war and tyranny. *Mother with dead son*, a sculpture by Käthe Kollwitz now occupies the centre of the *Neue Wache*.

Sakarian, born to Jewish parents in one of the Balkan States, encounters antisemitism during the first three decades of the 20th Century culminating in his assassination. He enters the story in 1918, 1922, 1931 and 1940; all four occasions are symbolic and represent major events in Wolff's life in relation to the rise of antisemitism in Europe.

Although Wolff had distanced himself from the Jewish community,⁴⁸² his experiences in late exile force a reassessment of his own position as a member of the Jewish people and the complex relationship between Jews and Germans. Although Jewish issues had always been part of Wolff's life, it is apparent that he had chosen to keep his distance and had mostly ignored his Jewish origin. At this late stage of his life he is forced by the Nazis to recognise that he was born a Jew. An analysis of Wolff's association with Jewish life reveals that exile changes his perception on his life as a Jew. Wolff is now forced to acknowledge that being a Jew had always been an integral and inescapable part of his life, although he had married a Protestant and was proud of his three baptised *Mischling* children, who were educated by a Catholic tutor.⁴⁸³ (Juden 68) Wolff does not refute his Jewish origin and regards it as wrong 'so zu tun, als gehöre man nicht dazu'. (Juden 99) He had remained a member of the *Jüdische Gemeinde* in Berlin.⁴⁸⁴ He contributed to German political, social and cultural life and – like many other assimilated Jews – he was proud to be a German citizen, living and working in Berlin, the metropolis that had opened its doors to Jews who had made Berlin their home.

During his autobiographical writing during exile and especially working on *Das Grabmal des Unbekannten Soldaten* Wolff reflects on his life as an assimilated

⁴⁸² Söseman writes in his preface to Wolff's *Die Juden*: 'Mit der breiten Masse der geflüchteten Juden verband den geachteten, gebildeten und zeitlebens um Assimilation bemühten Juden Theodor Wolff wenig.' (Juden 12)

⁴⁸³ Köhler 116.

⁴⁸⁴ Goldbach 81.

Jew in Berlin during the first three decades of the 20th century. He was born in 1868, eleven years before the infamous slogan *Die Juden sind unser Unglück* was voiced by the historian Heinrich von Treitschke in the wake of the *Berliner Antisemitismus Streit*.⁴⁸⁵ Wolff remembers his protected happy childhood with immense affection, based on a closely-knit and supportive family including members of the extended Rudolf Mosse family. Like many Jews, the Wolffs cultivated a particularly rich family life, in which they found comfort and compensation for frequent anti-Jewish sentiments expressed in public.⁴⁸⁶

There is little evidence that his parents followed traditional Jewish customs. Wolff's mother Recha Wolff, nee Davidsohn, was the daughter of a famous medical doctor, who counted liberal and democratic politicians among his closest friends. As mentioned previously his mother's interest in literature, especially poetry, caused him to be introduced to classical and contemporary writers at an early age. His father belonged to the group of Jews identified as *Dreitage Juden* and Wolff recalls: '[Vaters] religiöses Empfinden hielt sich nicht an rituelle Vorschriften, aber an den höchsten Feiertagen nahm er in der Synagoge seinen gemieteten Sitz ein und er fastete am Versöhnungstag'. (Terrasse 114) Theodor Wolff's motto 'Religion ist bekanntlich Privatsache', (Juden 199) confirms his commitment to the program of liberalism. He had always refrained from commenting on religious matters and maintained his distance to religion. Although a confirmed disbeliever, he has high regard for the Old Testament. 'Wenn jemand fragt: 'Und wie und wo stehst denn Du?' so will ich antworten, dass ich mit Herz und Geist das Alte Testament liebe'. (Juden 36) He

⁴⁸⁵ Heinrich von Treitschke, "Unsere Aussichten," *Preußische Jahrbücher* 44 (1879). 575.

⁴⁸⁶ Wolfgang Benz writes: 'Trost fand man im ausgedehnten und intensiven Familienleben'. *Deutsch-Jüdisches Exil: das Ende der Assimilation? Identitätsprobleme deutscher Juden in der Emigration*, eds. Wolfgang Benz and Marion Neiss (Berlin: Metropol, 1994). 10.

claims, the Old Testament, based on facts is founded 'auf dem Boden der Wirklichkeit'. (Juden 36) According to Wolff, the Old Testament is a historical record that chronicles events of the times in contrast to the New Testament that has one aim: to spread the gospel. Reflective childhood recollections, not religious conviction motivate him to give lengthy accounts of Jewish religious customs and traditions. His description of the Thora carried through the synagogue accompanied by beautiful voices is a nostalgic memory of a Jewish past. (Juden 37)

Like many Jews migrating from rural to urban communities during the 19th century, Wolff's father had moved from rural Silesia to Berlin, where he became a successful textile merchant. Wolff finds it noteworthy to point out that his father endeavoured to blend into Berlin society with his 'kleinen Backenbart, wie unter Wilhelm I. die meisten Bürger'. (Terrasse 114) Father and son were determined not to display Jewish stereotypical traits. The process of assimilation demanded social and cultural integration: dress code, schooling, place of residence and speaking German only.⁴⁸⁷

Wolff perceives his early life in Imperial Germany as 'eine genießbare Epoche, tüchtig, ehrenwert, undramatisch an Sensationen.... jeder hat das Gefühl der Sicherheit, und wenn man den Antisemitismus eines Stöcker [sic]... mit der Gegenwart vergleichen wollte, so hieße das, Kirschwasser mit Arsenik vergleichen'.⁴⁸⁸ (Terrasse 124) While anti-Jewish sentiments were present, they rarely impinged on Wolff's early daily life. At the turn of the century Jews in Berlin were only 4% of the city's

⁴⁸⁷ Shulamit Volkov, *Jüdisches Leben und Antisemitismus im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert: Zehn Essays* (München: Beck, 1990). 131-145.

⁴⁸⁸ Adolf Stoecker, protestant minister at the court of the *Kaiser* from 1874-1890, together with Heinrich von Treitschke proclaimed aggressive antisemitism. The term *antisemitisch* came into use in 1880 with the regular Journal *Antisemitische Hefte* published by Wilhelm Marr.

population. (Jews amounted to only 1% of the total German population.)⁴⁸⁹ Jews had given the metropolis its vibrant, intellectual and commercial life and, in return, Berlin had provided Jews with professional and artistic opportunities.

In 1880, aged 12, Wolff was made aware of antisemitism in Germany that erupted during the election battle between Rudolf Carl Virchow, famous physician and liberal politician, and Adolf Stoecker, Chaplain of the Imperial Court and founder of the Christian Social Party. Although Stoecker's antisemitic supporters were vocal, his election program, dominated by antisemitic slogans was unsuccessful and Virchow won the election. Wolff does not forget his school years and antisemitic episodes at the Königliche Wilhelmsgymnasium in Berlin, which he later describes as 'ein nicht überhörbares antisemitisches Nebengeräusch'. (Terrasse 119) Walther Rathenau, also remembers his early encounters with antisemitism: 'In the youth of every German Jew there is a painful moment that he remembers all his life: when for the first time he becomes fully aware that he came into the world as a second-class citizen, and that no amount of ability and no personal merit can free him from this situation'.⁴⁹⁰ Although antisemitism was a mere 'background noise' for Wolff, it left its mark. Wolff studied only a few semesters at the University in Berlin during a time of rising antisemitism amongst German academics and when student fraternities decided to ban Jews from membership. In exile he explains the reasons for leaving academia:

In den Universitätsäulen hörte ich die Vorlesungen ... des hypernationalen, an einem Sprachfehler würgenden Treitschke... Ich fand, dass regelmäßige Besuche der Hörsäle und das Nachschreiben nur rein mechanische Zeitvergeudung der Phlegmatischen und Faulen seien. (Terrasse 122)

⁴⁸⁹ *Jewish Life in Germany: Memoirs from Three Centuries*, ed. Monika Richarz, (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1991). 6, 8.

⁴⁹⁰ Walther Rathenau, *Staat und Judentum: eine Polemik* (Berlin: Fischer, 1918). 188. English translation in *Jewish Life in Germany: Memoirs from Three Centuries*. 25.

Rudolf Mosse, an older cousin, discovered Wolff's literary skills and ambitions early. The Mosse family had established a successful publishing empire that included the *Berliner Tageblatt*, which under Wolff's leadership became one of the most influential daily papers in Germany. German Jews played a vital role in the world of newspaper publishing, especially in papers read by the liberal sector of the German middle class.⁴⁹¹ In Berlin 50% of the *Berliner Tageblatt* readers were Jewish.⁴⁹² Three Jewish publishing houses, Mosse (*Berliner Tageblatt*), Ullstein (*Vossische Zeitung*) and Sonneman (*Frankfurter Zeitung*) became the leading liberal newspapers in Germany with a readership worldwide. In 1888, Rudolf Mosse suggested that Wolff should begin an apprenticeship in the Mosse publishing company and this was accepted with enthusiasm by Wolff's father who envisaged a promising business career for his son in preparation for him to take over the family's textile business. Wolff, however, looked forward to the stimulating atmosphere of writers, intellectuals, local and world affairs and especially being paid for performing his favourite pastime: writing. Many intellectual Jews around the turn of the century rejected a career in their father's business. Their fathers and grandfathers, through hard work and good management had accumulated wealth that now enabled the next generation to turn to intellectual pursuits. Wolff's relationship with the *Berliner Tageblatt* was to last for 45 years until 1933.

Wolff's love of writing and travelling was rewarded in November 1894, when he received a posting to Paris as foreign correspondent. The twelve years Wolff spent

⁴⁹¹ Werner E Mosse, "Rudolf Mosse and the House of Mosse 1867-1920," *Publications of the Leo Baeck Institute. Year Book 4* (1959). 237-259. Also Elisabeth Kraus.

⁴⁹² Platthaus 14.

in Paris⁴⁹³ must be viewed as his happiest and most impressionable: ‘Die zwölf Jahre, die ich in Paris zubrachte, waren die schönsten auf die ich zurückblicken kann’.⁴⁹⁴ Wolff’s heightened awareness of rising antisemitism in France came with the Dreyfus affair.⁴⁹⁵ Wolff devotes much attention to this court case that created such civil unrest in France and provided the precedent for a French antisemitic and antidemocratic government from 1940 to 1944 under Marshal Petain. Whilst reporting the Dreyfus affair Wolff exposes injustice, intolerance and irresponsible government. These years in Paris proved to be a foreboding for Wolff’s life under National Socialism.

The Dreyfus affair was crucial in Wolff’s life with regard to his political convictions, his confrontation with antisemitism and modern Zionism. Theodor Herzl, the creator of modern Zionism, had his seat next to him in the courtroom’s press gallery.⁴⁹⁶ Events surrounding the Dreyfus affair are described in many of Wolff’s major writings, indicating the importance he placed on the issues surrounding this court case. His regular articles for the *Berliner Tageblatt* identify and explore the social and political significance of the hearing and Wolff’s unbiased, informative reports reveal his concerns over mob rule and press manipulation. The public readily accepted the persecution of Dreyfus as a ‘Jewish traitor’ and the cry, ‘Death to the Jews’, swept the country. Wolff’s articles focus not only on open antisemitism in France, they also reflect on the now abandoned ideals: *liberté, égalité et fraternité* that France had espoused so fervently only a century before.

According to Wolff, Dreyfus was not the only tragic figure in the whole drama. The tragedy was to be found in the French government and the French people, who

⁴⁹³ Heidi Niemann writes: ‘Die entscheidenden Jahre aber, die Wolffs politisches Weltbild und liberale Überzeugung geprägt haben, sind die Jahre seiner Korrespondenten-Tätigkeit in Paris’. Niemann 145.

⁴⁹⁴ Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207: 28. Vaters letzte Zeilen p.2

⁴⁹⁵ Goldbach 59ff. Söseman, *Theodor Wolff: ein Leben mit der Zeitung*. 67-75.

⁴⁹⁶ The relationship between Herzl and Wolff will be further explored in this chapter in connection with Wolff’s views on Zionism.

were entangled in an intriguing and dangerous net of prejudices, manipulation and lies.⁴⁹⁷ Economic antisemitism played a significant role:

Der Kapitän Dreyfus und die Seinen gehören zu einer bevorzugten, zu einer reichen Klasse... Ob sie Juden sind oder Christen, ganz egal – der Antisemitismus ist in Frankreich mehr noch als anderswo ein Schlagwort, in dem sich, weit über die Grenzen einer Religionsgemeinschaft hinaus, die Abneigung gegen eine ganze Kaste, gegen eine ganze Gesellschaft ausdrückt.⁴⁹⁸

Wolff does not hide his uncontrolled repulsion for the Jew Alfred Dreyfus and describes him with disgust, using terms which he later uses to describe the *Ostjuden*:

Unerfreulich, fast abstoßend, erscheint uns sein Äusseres. In seinen hässlichen Zügen, seinem scheuen unklaren Blick glauben wir die äusseren Anzeichen eines im Grunde tristen Charakters zu besitzen. Er scheint zu denen zu gehören, von denen man zu sagen pflegt, es sei ihnen alles zuzutrauen... ein unfroher Streber und Leuteschinder.⁴⁹⁹

The Dreyfus affair left two legacies in France: antisemitism⁵⁰⁰ and the French people's mistrust of parliament, government and democracy, which contributed to the fall of the Third Republic in the summer of 1940. Wolff views the collaborationist Vichy regime and its anti-Jewish legislation to be the direct result of the Dreyfus affair. The old anti-Dreyfus faction won Government and immediately introduced anti-democratic and antisemitic policies.

Following the Dreyfus affair, Wolff's next confrontation with antisemitism emerged during World War I and involved increased tension in the relationship between Germans and Jews. Initially, in August 1914 most Germans, Christians and Jews reacted enthusiastically to the outbreak of war and declared loyalty to their fatherland. Jews shared the euphoria of solidarity expressed by the Kaiser: 'Ich kenne keine Parteien mehr, sondern nur noch Deutsche'. Such slogans gave hope to a united

⁴⁹⁷ Wolff writes: 'Dieses Drama, dessen Held [ist] nicht der Hauptmann Alfred Dreyfus, sondern ein ganzes wie Othello im Lügennetz gefangenes Volk'. (*Pariser Tagebuch* 158-159)

⁴⁹⁸ BT 26 (15. 1.1898).

⁴⁹⁹ BT 579 (12. 11. 1896); BT 561 (4.11.1897).

⁵⁰⁰ See Wolff's article 'Der Antisemitismus in Frankreich'. BT 93 (21.2.1898).

German people, disregarding religious, political and social differences. Initially some conditions improved, e.g., Jews were promoted to officer's rank in the military and prominent Jewish business men, like Albert Ballin, were included in close government circles. However, as the war progressed, the debate over war aims caused dissent. Wolff and his *Berliner Tageblatt* and other liberal newspapers – many Jewish owned – proclaimed support for the anti-annexationists and protested against imperialistic war aims, and these opinions caused Government officials to refer to the publishing houses Sonnemann, Ullstein and Mosse as the *Judenpresse*.⁵⁰¹

Theodor Wolff became a spokesperson for the so-called *Judenpresse*⁵⁰² advocating peace negotiations and democratisation on the domestic front. Consequently his *Berliner Tageblatt* was subjected to severe censorship restrictions.⁵⁰³ German authorities, irritated by his constant critique of war aims and government annexation policies, banned his newspaper in 1916 and again during 1918.⁵⁰⁴ Theodor Wolff was banned from writing and issuing the *Berliner Tageblatt* for over three months, from 1 August to 20 November 1916. (*Tagebücher 1914-1919*. 407, 449, 456) Criticism of the *Berliner Tageblatt* was expected, but personal vitriolic attacks that implied Wolff's profiteering and incompetence, were unprofessional and spiteful. Theodor Haecker wrote his infamous article in the *Brenner* against the Jewish press and Wolff in particular.⁵⁰⁵ Wolff largely ignored such attacks and antisemitism was only one of the many conflicts during those years of great political and social

⁵⁰¹ Herbert Freedman writes: 'The term 'Judenpresse' is part of the lasting inventory of the vocabulary of German anti-Semitism. It was used in reference to those papers that anti-Semites believed were substantially influenced, published and edited by Jews... papers such as those put out by the publishing houses of Mosse and Ullstein.' Herbert Freedman, *The Jewish Press in the Third Reich*, trans. William Templer (Oxford: Berg, 1993). 1.

⁵⁰² Köhler 116.

⁵⁰³ Köhler 116.

⁵⁰⁴ For Wolff and his battle with German censorship authorities during World War I see Platthaus and Wolff's *Tagebücher*.

⁵⁰⁵ Theodor Haecker, "The Jewish Press," *Brenner* 5 (1915). 170. Boveri 27-28. Sösemann, *Theodor Wolff: ein Leben mit der Zeitung*.192.

upheaval. In 1916 the war reached a crucial point and such events as Italy declaring war on Germany (28.8.1916), the German defeat at Verdun (2.9.1916), the Battle of the Somme (24.6.1916 to 26.11.1916), and aborted peace negotiations dominated the political landscape.

In this atmosphere of defeat one episode deserves special attention and concerns the alleged German-Jewish ‘symbiosis’. In October 1916, during a period when Wolff was banned from writing, the Prussian War Ministry ordered an Army census of all personnel serving at the front, including detailed information on religious affiliation. The aim of this statistical survey was to examine whether Jewish men eligible for army service were evading their obligations to serve at the military front. They allegedly either managed to serve in safe administrative positions, far away from the battlefield, or avoided their obligation altogether by being falsely declared unfit for war duties. Jews were accused of under-representation in the army, profiteering and sabotaging the war effort. Jews were clearly singled out and made scapegoats in times of conflict, as Werner T. Angres argues, ‘the Judenzählung was a symptom, a warning sign that antisemitism in Germany was alive and well, especially in times of stress and national reverses’.⁵⁰⁶ In his editorial of 23 July 1917, Wolff condemned the *Judenzählung* and pointed to the German military authorities, who had tried ‘die Juden ins schlechteste Licht zu setzen’, in order to divert the attention away from their own fatal strategic errors during the war.⁵⁰⁷ Attacks on the liberal press and the *Berliner Tageblatt* escalated towards the end of the war. August Eigenbrodt accused the

⁵⁰⁶ Werner T. Angres, "The German Army's Judenzählung of 1916," *Publications of the Leo Baeck Institute. Year Book* 23 (1978). 135. In *Das Grabmal des Unbekannten Soldaten* Wolff emphasises that the fictitious Jew Sakarian had not only served in the war, but had been injured twice and sacrificed his health for the German Empire. (Grabmal 251)

⁵⁰⁷ BT 370 (23.7.1917) and Wolff, *Vollendete Tatsachen* 214.

Berliner Tageblatt of betraying the German people.⁵⁰⁸ Vitriolic attacks were registered in the editorial offices of the *Berliner Tageblatt*, but no reactions or responses were published. Wolff declined to enter the public debate with his opponents. Only his private diaries reveal his concerns over rising antisemitism in Germany at the end of World War I.⁵⁰⁹

It is significant that Wolff gives Sakarian, the fictitious protagonist in *Das Grabmal des Unbekannten Soldaten*, a prominent position in the narrative in September 1918. With Germany's defeat in 1918, antisemitism accelerated due to economic and political instability and the German-Jewish 'symbiosis' was now seriously questioned. Peter Gay confirms: 'That the German-Jewish symbiosis was tenuous at best, received almost daily confirmation in the heady and troubling years of the Weimar Republic'.⁵¹⁰ Wolff and his *Judenpresse* were not spared antisemitic attacks and were held responsible for Germany's defeat.

These particular months in late 1918 were crucial for Germany's future and it is no surprise that Sakarian dominates the narrative at this stage. In *Das Grabmal des Unbekannten Soldaten*, Wolff and Sakarian meet at this crucial point in Vienna, where both are in transit on their way to Budapest.⁵¹¹ Sakarian adopts the role of a guardian, fearing Wolff could lose his way in the dark streets of Vienna. (Grabmal 250) The

⁵⁰⁸ August Eigenbrodt writes: '...für die eigentliche Politik ist Wille zu gründlicher Prüfung, ist Ernst und Tiefe in dem Berliner Tageblatt niemals anzutreffen. Darum kann das Berliner Tageblatt als Ernst zu nehmende Zeitung wenigstens in politischem Sinne nicht angesehen werden'. August Eigenbrodt, *Berliner Tageblatt und Frankfurter Zeitung in ihrem Verhalten zu den nationalen Fragen 1887-1914* (Berlin: Albrecht, 1917). 26.

⁵⁰⁹ Wolff writes: 'Hutten-Czapski [political adviser to Bethmann Hollweg] befürchtet für die Zeit nach dem Kriege sehr trübe innere Zustände, U. anderm auch ein grosses Anwachsen des Antisemitismus, unter dem Vorwand, dass die Juden zuviel bei den Lieferungen verdient haben'. (Tagebücher 190)

'Wassermann [August v. Wassermann] befürchtet, wie sehr viele, für die Zeit nach dem Kriege sehr unerfreuliche Zustände, u.a. ein Anschwellen des Antisemitismus. Sehr richtig sagt er, dass der Antisemitismus Deutschland unendlich geschadet habe, denn er habe dazu geführt, dass jetzt während des Krieges überall die einflussreichen Juden gegen uns Stellung genommen haben'. (Tagebücher 303)

'Nathan [Paul Nathan, writer, politician, philanthropist, founder of the *Hilfsvereins der deutschen Juden*] spricht von der grossen antisemitischen Propaganda, die von reaktionären Kreisen und unbekanntem Stellen zweifellos für die Zeit nach dem Friedensschluss vorbereitet wird'. (Tagebücher 729)

⁵¹⁰ Gay 170.

⁵¹¹ This event is mentioned in great detail in Wolff's diaries. (Tagebücher 616ff)

symbolism of feeling lost in dim, dark war-damaged streets is effective, as many lost their direction during the final stages of the war. The discussions between Wolff and Sakarian centre on the failure of peace negotiations and gloomy prospects for lasting peace and democracy. Wolff's chilling predictions, 'die Menschheit werde durch Giftgase der Rachsucht verseucht bleiben und durch die Stacheldrähte des Hasses getrennt', (Grabmal 253) would prove grim reality for subsequent decades.

Wolff, however, remained focused and not only continued to directly support the Republic, he also decided to enter active politics for the first time in his life, co-founding the *Deutsche Demokratische Partei* (DDP). The list of members of the DDP included illustrious German Jews, such as Albert Einstein, Hugo Preuss, Paul Nathan, Georg Gothein and Rudolf Mosse. As the majority of German Jews was to vote for the DDP it was soon labelled the 'Jew Party'. Two factors contributed to this label: firstly, a small number of benefactors, mostly Jews, assured the party's financial viability and secondly, the editorial support came from the *Judenpresse*, i.e., Mosse, Ullstein and Sonnemann.⁵¹² Jews in Germany and DDP supporters believed in the German-Jewish dialogue and seemed to be unaware of gradually widening social, political and racial tensions.

The *Berliner Tageblatt* was perceived to represent German Jewry and 'its editor Wolff became a symbol of Jewish-liberal 'defeatism''.⁵¹³ In 1920 a publication with the title *Die Sünden des Berliner Tageblattes: ein Mahnruf an Christen und Juden*, urged Jews to denounce the *Berliner Tageblatt*:

Da das Blatt [Berliner Tageblatt] aber als Repräsentant des Judentums gilt und auch in der Tat dafür angesehen werden will, so überträgt sich die Abneigung gegen das Berliner Tageblatt auf das Judentum, das unter diesen Verhältnissen in erster Linie zu leiden hat... Der beste Kampf gegen den Antisemitismus ist daher der Kampf gegen den

⁵¹² Pulzer, *Jews and the German State* 220.

⁵¹³ Pulzer, *Jews and the German State* 204.

[sic] Berliner Tageblatt...Weg und Wahrzeichen für Juden und Christen sei: Krieg dem Berliner Tageblatt!⁵¹⁴

Attacks on Wolff and the *Berliner Tageblatt* intensified with Gustav Blume's blistering pamphlet entitled, *Herr Theodor Wolff und das Ressentiment*. Here Blume writes:

Dass as Berliner Tageblatt zu einem grossen Teil das Blatt des kapitalistisch-jüdischen Grossstadtbourgeoisie ist – [ist]eine Tatsache, die kein Kundiger bestreitet.... Und wenn man fragt, wie es möglich war, dass das stärkste, gefürchtete Volk der Erde diesen über alle Vorstellung erbärmlichen Zusammenbruch erleiden konnte, – auch Sie gehören zu den 'Schuldigen' Herr Theodor Wolff!⁵¹⁵

Wolff and the liberal press were accused of bringing Germany into ill repute with his 'divisive and unpatriotic' articles, including the renowned 'stabbing in the back' accusation. Wolff ignored these attempts to defame him and his *Berliner Tageblatt* and retained 'eine reservierte und distanzierte Haltung'.⁵¹⁶ He describes antisemites to be afflicted with 'geistiger Beschränktheit und sittlicher Haltlosigkeit'⁵¹⁷ and refuses to argue with – in his view – hot headed, ignorant extremists. The *Berliner Tageblatt* was determined to avoid controversies and refrained from hostile polemics.⁵¹⁸ While Wolff's official voice never revealed outrage or fear, years later in exile his personal recollections paint an alarming picture of his life in the Weimar Republic:

Die täglichen Drohbriefe, die aufrichtig gemeinten freundschaftlichen Warnungen, die unangehme, schwer abzuschüttelnde Fürsorge bewachender Polizeiangenten, die Mordlisten, die zumeist aufgebauchten kleinen Zwischenfälle, all

⁵¹⁴ A Herold, *Die Sünden des Berliner Tageblattes: ein Mahnruf an Christen und Juden*, (pseud. E Schilasky) (Hannover: Weber, 1920). 6,78.

⁵¹⁵ Gustav Blume, *Herr Theodor Wolff und das Ressentiment* (Berlin: Warthemann, 1920). 17, 46. Antisemitic attacks on Wolff continued even after he had been forced into exile. Alfred Rosenberg, author and publisher of the *Völkischer Beobachter* wrote in 1939: 'Dabei darf man nicht vergessen, dass das ausgesprochene Ziel des 'Berliner Tagblattes' die Vertretung der Interessen des Judentums war.... Theodor Wolff, wir müssen in ihm einen der gefährlichsten Gegner eines starken Deutschtums erblicken, einen der hauptsächlichsten Unterhöhler unseres Volkstums, von dem wir einmal hoffen, daß er sich vor einem deutschen Staatsgerichtshof zu verantworten haben wird'. Alfred Rosenberg, *Novemberköpfe* (München: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1939). 179 and 183.

⁵¹⁶ Goldbach 96.

⁵¹⁷ BT 405 (29.8.1921). See also : Sösemann, *Das Ende der Weimarer Republik in der Kritik demokratischer Publizisten: Theodor Wolff, Ernst Feder, Julius Elbau, Leopold Schwarzschild*. 26.

⁵¹⁸ Only mild responses can be traced, such as : 'Aber neben der Anklage steht die Forderung, dass nun endlich die Regierung mit harter Energie einem Treiben angeblicher Patrioten ein Ende machen müsse.' BT 405 (29.8.1921). 'So gehen die Angriffe auf das Leben mit furchtbarem Erfolge ungestört fort.' BT 294 (24.6. 1922).

das, wovon wenige andere etwas ahnten, war mir vertraut. Eine Abhärtungskur hatte ich durchgemacht. (Juden 218)

Eyewitnesses testified that his life was in danger as his name was found on a list compiled by right wing nationalists, the *Organisation Consul*, who had been responsible for several political murders.⁵¹⁹ A National Socialist poster declared Wolff an outlaw together with other Jewish politicians and intellectuals.⁵²⁰ In July 1922 Wolff received a warning from the Ambassador to the Netherlands, Hellmuth Freiherr von Stuedten Lucius, not to wander the streets of Berlin alone at night.⁵²¹

During the post war years Jews were held responsible not only for Germany's defeat, but also for the subsequent humiliation and signing of the Treaty of Versailles, even though Wolff, together with other Jews, had advocated strongly against accepting the conditions of the treaty, which he called 'ein Schandstück im Museum der Zivilisation'.⁵²² He predicted Germany's humiliation would plunge the country deeper into unrest and drive it into the arms of extremist powers. Despite openly objecting to signing the treaty, Jews remained targets for right wing extremists and two Jewish politicians, Matthias Erzberger and Walter Rathenau were assassinated in 1921 and 1922.

It is significant that in *Das Grabmal des Unbekannten Soldaten* the fictitious Sakarian meets Wolff again in Berlin in the crucial year of 1922, the year of the Jewish Foreign Minister Walter Rathenau's assassination and they both mourn the loss

⁵¹⁹ Jacobson writes: 'The murder of Rathenau was to have been the beginning of a series of assassinations aimed at a number of Jewish personalities, amongst them Wolff, editor-in-chief of the Berliner Tageblatt...' J. Jacobson, "M.M.Warburg Correspondence," *Publications of the Leo Baeck Institute. Year Book 8* (1963). 266.

Politically motivated murders include: Karl Liebknecht 15.1.1919; Rosa Luxemburg 15.1.1919; Matthias Erzberger 26.8.1921; Walter Rathenau 24.6.1922.

⁵²⁰ Söseman, *Theodor Wolff: ein Leben mit der Zeitung*. 192.

⁵²¹ Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass. 207 : 15. Letter from Hellmuth Freiherr von Stuedten Lucius to Theodor Wolff (3.7.1922).

⁵²² BT 289 (28. 6.1919) and BT 206 (8.5.1919). See also Chapter One, Count Ulrich von Brockdorff-Rantzau and the Treaty of Versailles.

of law and order and rising antisemitism; Wolff recalls 1922 as the ‘Zeit der grossen Verfinsterung’. (Grabmal 117) Sakarian no longer feels safe in Germany, after the murder of his Jewish mentor and closest friend, Doctor Abraham Tannenbaum, by right-wing extremists. Sakarian is offered a high ranking job with the League of Nations in Geneva. Similarly Wolff was offered the Ambassadorship to France. During several visits to Paris in the 1920s Wolff moved in high-ranking government circles and met Leon Blum, French President from 1936-1942; Aristide Briand, French Foreign Minister; André Tardieu, French journalist and politician. Wolff’s popularity in France attested to his familiarity with French political and cultural dignitaries, as well as the trust placed by German and French authorities in his negotiating skills. When Foreign Minister, Hermann Müller, offered the post of German Ambassador to France, Wolff rejected it, claiming that a Jew would not be welcome in France (Grabmal 298),⁵²³ illustrating that antisemitism permeated not only the Weimar Republic but also France during the 1920s. In his memoirs Wolff adds that ‘ein guter Sohn einer anderen Kirche, der katholischen’ (Grabmal 298) had been appointed to the position in Paris.

In 1931 Sakarian moves to Paris and is reunited with Wolff, who had been sent to Paris on an official German Government mission to foster French-German co-operation viewed by Wolff as the key to world peace. The theme of their discussion is rising antisemitism in both countries. Sakarian predicts at this stage that Wolff should take up residence in France: ‘Sie werden auch bald herziehen, es wird ihnen nichts übrig bleiben, Ihre deutsche Republik pfeift auf dem letzten Loch’. (Grabmal 301) He also announces his marriage to Doctor Tannenbaum’s crippled daughter, a Polish

⁵²³ Wolff’s son Rudolf Wolff recalls: ‘Er lehnte mit Hinweis auf die verbreitete antijüdische Stimmung in der deutschen Öffentlichkeit ab. Wie wäre man über ihn hergefallen; über ihn, dessen Frankophilie bereits die politischen Gegner reizte!’ Rudolf Wolff 9.

Jewess, in poor health and on whom Sakarian has taken pity after the cruel assassination of her father. She later commits suicide in fear of being sent to a concentration camp. Wolff includes this disturbing fictional subplot to demonstrate the intensity of persecution of Jews as Sakarian's wife, his father and father-in-law are all killed by rightwing extremists.

During the summer of 1940 Sakarian and Wolff meet for the last time. Wolff manipulates the narrative so that they never see each other again after their meeting on the farm La Terrasse: 'Dies wird wohl nun unsere letzte Begegnung gewesen sein.' (Grabmal 329) Sakarian's prophecy indicates tragedy ahead. In January 1941, a Russian friend of Sakarian's delivers a letter to Wolff with the startling news that Sakarian has been killed.

The final chapter in *Das Grabmal des Unbekannten Soldaten* is dedicated to Sakarian's death and the culmination of Jewish persecution in France. The narrative moves quickly through a myriad of themes and subplots; Wolff seems overwhelmed with ideas and leaves many questions unanswered. A sequence of intriguing events leads to Sakarian's death, starting with his contentious discovery that the Unknown Soldier under the *Arc de Triomphe* is a Jew, called Chaim Goldfarb. This costs Sakarian his life. As soon as he announces his finding, his fellow Jews fear repercussions. They try to silence him and accuse him of being an agent provocateur. During the struggle he is struck and killed. Jews involved in this struggle are accused by French authorities of desecrating the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and are consequently arrested and executed. Sakarian, however, is declared a national hero, not by his fellow Jews but by French Government officials who see in him the defender and protector of the tomb attacked by vandalising Jews. Sakarian is admired by the French, 'weil er das Heldengrab von der Beschmutzung durch die fremde Rasse

habe säubern wollen'. (Grabmal 337) The plot in Wolff's *Grabmal des Unbekannten Soldaten* is an intriguing net of prejudices, manipulation and lies that reflect the Dreyfus case, which was also marked by betrayal and discrimination.

Antisemitism reached new heights after 1940 and Wolff writes: 'Der Riesenbrand breitete sich immer mehr aus'. (Grabmal 330) The persecution of Jews intensified⁵²⁴ and so does Wolff's preoccupation with Jewish issues, which he explores further in his final exile work: '*Die Juden*'.

'Die Juden'

'*Die Juden*' was written during 1942 and 1943 in an atmosphere of political and personal turmoil. Shocked, after witnessing the rounding up of Jews in Nice in 1942, Wolff described the scene:

Diese Nacht zum 26. August 1942, einem Mittwoch, ist in Nizza die erste Schreckensnacht. Ganze Häuserblocks und Stadtviertel werden von der Polizei, von Gendarmen und von eifrigen jungen Burschen, die durch eine Armbinde als Hilfspolizei gekennzeichnet sind, umstellt und abgeriegelt'. (Juden 242)

Wolff was still working on '*Die Juden*', when he was arrested on 23 May 1943. Although one of New York's exile magazines, *Aufbau*, published extracts of the work during 1949, six years after Wolff's death,⁵²⁵ it took over forty years for the work to be re-discovered, published by Bernd Söseman and enriched by his insightful introduction and extensive endnotes.⁵²⁶ Wolff anticipated '*Die Juden*' to be the first

⁵²⁴ Poliakov and Sabille 22. Eggers 179.

⁵²⁵ *Aufbau* 15:17 (1949) 29.4.1949. 3; *Aufbau* 15:18 (1949) 6.5.1949. 3 and 22; *Aufbau* 15:19 (1949) 13.5.1949. 11- 12; *Aufbau* 15: 20 (1949) 20.5.1949.14; *Aufbau* 15: 21 (1949) 27.5.1949. 9-10.

⁵²⁶ For reviews see: Julius H. Schoeps, "Den Massenmord nicht gehnt," *Die Zeit* 5.10.1984 (no.41). 32. Detlev Claussen, "Ein Dokument aus dem Französischen Exil," *Frankfurter Allgemeine* 12.12.1984 (no.281). 11.

Nachum Orland, "Reflexionen eines jüdischen Emigranten," *Frankfurter Rundschau* 18.5.1985. 4. Harry Zohn,

part of a trilogy, with *‘Die Franzosen’* and *‘Die Deutschen’* to follow, thus linking all three to promote understanding between Jews, French and Germans.⁵²⁷ (Juden 19) However, arrest and death put an end to his plan; *‘Die Franzosen’* and *‘Die Deutschen’* were never written. Wolff saw himself as an ambassador who could help to bring about democracy and peace after the war by reuniting Jews, French and Germans. Recognizing that the *Lebensgemeinschaft* between Jews and Germans had come to an end, Wolff responds by examining the past and raising hope for the future. In his introduction to *‘Die Juden’* Wolff makes his intention clear: he wants to write *‘einiges über das jüdische Problem’*. (Juden 19) The persecution of Jews had now reached Wolff’s immediate neighbourhood. He is compelled to deal with the *‘Jewish Problem’* and with his own fate and that of the Jews in Europe.

In characteristic *‘Theodor Wolff style’* – his most important message is in the very last sentence (Marsch 51) – he argues that *the* Jews do not exist: *‘Ich habe im Titel dieses Buches ‘Die Juden’, die kleinen einrahmenden Striche, die das Wort dementieren, hinzugefügt: Weil es die Juden nicht gibt’*. (Juden 285) This reveals the cornerstone of his non-Jewish identity and his firm declaration – stated again and again – throughout his life. With quotation marks around *‘Die Juden’* Wolff rejects Jews as one people. He similarly discards references to *the* French, *the* English or *the* Germans: *‘Ich habe eine grosse Abneigung gegen den Plural. Man kann nicht alle Franzosen oder alle Engländer, alle Deutschen, alle Juden, so behandeln, als ob ihre Seelen so gleichartig wären wie die Bewegungen der Girlsbeine in einer Music Hall’*. (Grabmal 329) While he values the character and achievements of the French, English,

"Review of Theodor Wolff's 'Die Juden'." *German Studies Review* 9.1 Feb. (1986).170-171. Kurt Koszyk,

"Review of Theodor Wolff's 'Die Juden'," *Publizistik* 36 (1991).129.

⁵²⁷ In 1897 Wolff had shown an early interest in German-French relations and published an essay. Theodor Wolff, "Geistige und künstlerische Beziehungen zwischen Deutschland und Frankreich," *Fünfundzwanzig Jahre Deutsche Zeitgeschichte*, ed. Redaktion des Berliner Tageblatts (Berlin: Mosse, 1897). 139-148.

German and Jewish individual, Wolff regards himself as a citizen of the world and rejects the notion of a union of people, insisting it carries the stamp of nationalism. It also gives credence to Wolff's suspicion that the notion of *the Jews* was convenient for Nazis to implement their racial policies. Wolff states categorically: 'Ich habe für die Juden als Gesamtbegriff niemals eine ausgesprochene Vorliebe gehabt'. (Grabmal 332)

While Jewish issues in *Das Grabmal des Unbekannten Soldaten* are intertwined with fiction and personal autobiographical reflections, '*Die Juden*' addresses the theoretical issues of the 'Jewish Question'. While exile life in the south of France form prologue and epilogue, the concepts of race, antisemitism, Jewish history and Zionism are explored in four chapters. Reflecting on these topics, Wolff also predicts a future for Jewish life in Germany after the war. In order to research these themes, he relied on his extensive library, which had been transferred from Berlin to Nice in the early stages of his exile. The literature consulted include multivolume works by Heinrich Graetz, Ernest Renan, Theodor Mommsen, Friedrich Delitzsch, Alexis de Tocqueville.⁵²⁸

With the aim to authenticate his views on the 'Jewish Problem' Wolff endeavours to present his credentials, his 'Ausweispapiere, die mir vielleicht irgend ein jüdischer Leser beim betreten dieses Gebietes abverlagen will'. (Juden 35) However, proof of his connections with the Jewish community and Judaism is rather tenuous and neither current nor close. As credentials of his Jewish origin (beside his official papers, his passport etc.) Wolff can only demonstrate distant connections to

⁵²⁸ Heinrich Graetz, *History of the Jews*, 5 vols. (London: Nutt, 1891). Ernest Renan, *Histoire du Peuple d'Israel*, 5 vols. (Paris: Calmann-Levy, 1889-1893). Theodor Mommsen, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 8 vols. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1905-1913). Friedrich Delitzsch, *Das Land ohne Heimkehr: die Gedanken der Babylonier-Assyrer* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags Anstalt, 1911). Alexis de Tocqueville, *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution* (Paris: Michel Levy Freres, 1887).

Jewish life through childhood memories. Wolff approaches his topic as an outsider looking in, watching through a window as candles were lit in other Jewish people's houses: 'Wenn hinter den Fenstern einer benachbarten Wohnung ein frommes Ehepaar die Sabbathlichter anzündet, so sind das zwar nicht meine Kerzen, aber ihr Licht ist warm'. (Juden 37) This clearly confirms again that he had abandoned ties with Judaism; only some vignettes of the past remain in his memory. The Jewish world remains for him: 'eine fremde Gefühlswelt'. (Juden 56) Only nostalgic childhood memories connect him with Jewish life and both keep him warm, the candle light and the family meals: 'Aus Jugenderinnerungen heraufsteigend ist die Wärme des alt-jüdischen Familienlebens mir fühlbar mit seiner Innigkeit und seinen Gerichten, ob orthodox oder freidenkerisch gekocht'. (Juden 37) Wolff responds to Jewish issues as a 'non-Jewish Jew', a term adopted by Isaac Deutscher.⁵²⁹ Although accepting his Jewish origin, he regards himself German: 'Ich für mein Teil dachte ungefähr wie alle, die sich als Deutsche betrachten durften.' (Juden 190) *'Die Juden'*, written towards the end of his life conveys a sense of powerlessness, as Wolff is forced to acknowledge his Jewish origin and the collapse of the German-Jewish *Lebensgemeinschaft*. He and many others had subscribed to the notion of assimilation and symbiosis, only to find total rejection, expulsion and murder.

Antisemitism

Antisemitism, established in 1933 as State Doctrine in Nazi Germany, had a demoralising effect on Wolff. The racial law declared him a Jew and he perceived his new status as a personal affront. Moreover, antisemitism contradicted his liberal

⁵²⁹ Isaac Deutscher, *The Non-Jewish Jew and other Essays*, ed. Tamara Deutscher (London: Oxford U.P., 1968).

democratic views and commitment to equality, freedom and universal human rights. Heinrich Mann shared this view and expressed this succinctly in his notes, *Aufgaben der Emigration*: ‘Der Hass gegen die Juden ist untergeordnet dem viel umfassenderen Hass gegen die menschliche Freiheit.’⁵³⁰

The following chapter deals with Wolff’s theoretical views on antisemitism. It remains a feature of his writings that he does not express personal anger or dismay. Wolff views antisemitism as an abuse of human rights and claims civilisation is endangered if these rights are not protected and he argues: ‘Ging die Entwicklung zur Zivilisation nicht dahin, den Menschen ohne Unterschied das gesicherte Recht zu verleihen?’ (Juden 30)

It is revealing and disturbing that Wolff himself displays strong antisemitic sentiments, manifested in his sharp criticism of *Ostjuden* in particular. Wolff shares the traditional stereotyping propagated by both non-Jews and Jews, when he states: ‘es gibt auch unbestreitbar eine jüdische Art der Häßlichkeit... Die heutigen Juden, auch die Ostjuden, haben Nasen von allen Sorten... Aber diese rühmen sich dann Adlernasen zu sein’. (Juden 78, 79) Further criticism is directed at Jews’ preference for occupations in marketing, finance, banking and dubious deals, which he calls *Schachergeschäfte*. (Juden 80) Although Wolff pays tribute to the cultural achievements of Jews, he does not hold Jewish leadership in high esteem: ‘Meine Überzeugung ist, dass die jüdische Gesellschaft im gegenwärtigen Stadium ihrer Entwicklung selbst dann, wenn alle Schranken fortfielen, nicht imstande wäre, einen Churchill oder einen Roosevelt hervorzubringen.’ (Juden 83) It is ironic that Wolff denies Jews political leadership qualities, when he had shown considerable leadership

⁵³⁰ Heinrich Mann, *Verteidigung der Kultur: Antifaschistische Streitschriften und Essays* (Hamburg: Claassen, 1960), 13.

during the early years of the German Democratic Party (DDP), known as ‘Jew Party’ after World War I. He had also accredited Walter Rathenau with ‘außerordentlicher Autorität’.⁵³¹

Wolff feels a sense of embarrassment and animosity towards the *Ostjuden*. Germany had become the refuge for thousands of *Ostjuden*, fleeing pogroms in Eastern Europe and Russia during the last decades of the 19th century. They had drifted into large cities such as Berlin, where they amounted to almost 20 % of all Jews.⁵³² Many continued to speak Yiddish in public and their traditional dress and appearance distinguished them from the rest of the Jews. Werner E. Mosse refers to the *Ostjuden* as the new ‘Jewish proletariat’ who refused to assimilate.⁵³³ Wolff fears they provide ammunition for antisemitism and reverse privileges and acceptance into German society. Thus Jews and non-Jews were united in their resentment against *Ostjuden*. Wolff does not refrain from strong outbursts criticising their appearance: ‘Wozu diese ‘Pajes’, diese symbolischen Stirnlöckchen vor den Ohren, und welche dunkle Seele verbirgt der lange schwarze Rock?’ (Juden 103)⁵³⁴ Their traditional appearance was the symbol for their orthodox views and Wolff argues, unless they were prepared to assimilate, they would never be welcome in Berlin.

Wolff is not oblivious to strong criticism of his antisemitic views: ‘Wenn ich offen meine Meinung äussere, werde ich von manchen sehr getadelt werden, aber das ist mir gleichgültig, ich hab vieles dergleichen erlebt und bin... wie ein alter Schirm, auf den es viel herunter geregnet hat’. (Juden 103) Other Jews, like Karl Kraus, Otto

⁵³¹ BT 294 (24.6.1922).

⁵³² *Jewish Life in Germany: Memoirs from Three Centuries*, 6.

⁵³³ Werner E Mosse, "German Jews," *Juden im Nationalsozialistischen Deutschland*, ed. Arnold Paucker (Tübingen: Mohr, 1986). 46.

⁵³⁴ Wolff objects strongly to the traditional hairlock: ‘die grässlichen Stirnlöckchen’. (Juden 78) ‘Einem allzu traditionstreuen polnischen Juden, der das Misstrauen, das seine Person umgibt, ärgerlich empfindet, möchte man den Rat erteilen: Schneiden Sie sich die Ohrlocken ab!’ (Juden 105)

Weininger and Walter Rathenau cultivated an even stronger provocatively antisemitic discourse.⁵³⁵ They not only directed their antisemitic attitude against other Jews, but also against themselves.⁵³⁶ Wolff, however can hardly be labelled a Jewish self-hater. His antisemitic sentiments are directed at specific members of the Jewish community, never at himself. In that sense he falls into the category of Jewish assimilants who shared and disseminated antisemitic sentiments.

Race

Racial antisemitism was new in the long history of Jew-hatred. Racial antisemitism as defined by the Nazis gained increasing intensity and Wolff writes: ‘Die Juden sind die Einzigen, die man nicht deshalb haßt und bekämpft, weil nationale Machtinteressen, Ländergier und politische Rivalität das verlangen, und sie sind die Einzigen, die seit das religiöse Banner kein zugkräftiges Symbol mehr ist, als Rasse zerschmettert und vertilgt werden sollen’. (Juden 212) Nazi race laws insured the arrest of everyone of Jewish origin. Not all Jews were bound by religion and Jews could easily convert and demonstrate, ‘die Taufe beendet alles Judenelend’. (Juden 54) Wolff illustrates the efficiency of the race laws with one of his valuable metaphors, ‘das Rassenprinzip war das technisch vollendete Netz, das es klugen Fischern gestattet, alle Fische, die schmalen und die dicken, zu fangen’. (Juden 61)

Under National Socialism *Rassenkunde*, *Rassenforschung* or *Rassenlehre* emerged as academic disciplines – enjoying the reputation of being ‘scientific’. According to Wolff, the Nazis had made ‘aus dem Kiesel ein

⁵³⁵ Paul Reitter, "Karl Kraus and the Jewish Self-Hatred Question," *Jewish Social Studies* 10 (2003). 78-116; Peter Loewenberg, "Antisemitismus und jüdischer Selbsthaß," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 5.4 (1979). 455-475.

⁵³⁶ Sander L. Gilman provides the following definition: ‘Jewish self-hatred’... is valid as a label for a specific mode of self-abnegation that has existed among Jews throughout their history.’ Sander L. Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Univ. Press, 1986). 1.

Lehrgebäude, aus dem Quark eine Methode, aus dem Krümel ein System.’ (Juden 67)

He expresses strong scepticism and even biting sarcasm and questions *Rassenforschung* as a serious discipline. Wolff declares it futile to develop any defense mechanisms against irrational and unscientific eugenic research, invented in ‘dem Land der Dichter und Denker’. (Juden 66)

His comments on the Nazi race laws are restricted to brief statements: ‘Aber erst Hitler und die Seinigen gaben der Rassenlehre wirklich die populäre, allgemein verständliche Fassung... und die Praxis bis zur letzten Konsequenz. Es ist überflüssig, über die Praxis zu sprechen, deren Einzelheiten der zivilisierten Welt hinreichend bekannt... sind’. (Juden 66) It is striking that Wolff regards it as ‘überflüssig’ to debate the details of the Nazi race laws. This is a further example of his evasive reaction to an important event or aspect in his life.⁵³⁷ Significant life changing moments are dismissed with brief statements and only mere facts are presented. Wolff believes, ‘es ist besser, wie der nüchternste Chronist die Tatsachen aneinanderzureihen’. (Juden 237)⁵³⁸ Wolff’s succinct reactions to vital events are consistent throughout his exile writings and confirmed by his motto: ‘Pathos ist mir zuwider’. (Juden 39)

Zionism

Prior to 1933 Wolff had opposed Zionism; however, exile changed his outlook and he came to view Zionism, albeit reluctantly, in a more positive light. At the turn of the century, against the background of the rise of modern antisemitism and growing

⁵³⁷ Söseman writes in his preface to ‘Die Juden’: ‘Doch immer schon hatte Wolff sich eher um gelassene Kühle und abwägende Distanz in seinen Leitartikeln und Büchern bemüht, als Zorn oder Leidenschaft größeren Raum zu lassen.’ (Juden 12)

⁵³⁸ See also the – previously mentioned – only comment to his forced exile from Berlin. ‘Hitler und die nationalsozialistische Partei waren nun allmächtig, ich war genötigt, Berlin zu verlassen’. (Grabmal 308)

nationalism in Europe, the idea of a national Jewish state had gained momentum. Zionist ideas divided the Jewish community. Assimilated Jews, like Wolff, opposed Zionism as a threat that challenged assimilation and their status in the community. Ultra-orthodox Jews also opposed a Jewish state, as only the Messiah could establish a Jewish homeland. However, Zionists saw the solution of the 'Jewish Problem' in a national Jewish state. Wolff was acutely aware that the 'Jewish Problem' demanded a solution when he asks: 'Wohin mit den jüdischen Auswanderern?' (Juden 186) However, Zionism was not one of his preferred options.

To understand Wolff's path from initial outright rejection to reluctant acceptance of a separate Jewish state, it is necessary to return to his meetings with Theodor Herzl, the founder of modern Zionism. Wolff had discussed Zionist ideas with him and Max Nordau in Paris during the 1890s, when all three were appointed as young foreign press correspondents to report on the Dreyfus trial. Herzl had been a contributor to the *Berliner Tageblatt* and now worked in Paris for the *Neue Freie Presse*, a Vienna liberal daily. Herzl's coverage of the Dreyfus affair differed significantly from Wolff's. Herzl's attention focused on antisemitism in France and for him the Dreyfus affair was 'der Punkt, von dem aus der Anstoss kam' (Juden 197) for modern Zionism. Wolff focused instead on the demise of democracy and freedom of expression.

In exile Wolff admits that he had been 'ein unbeteiligter Zuhörer' (Juden 196) and regrets he had not been a more observant student at the time.⁵³⁹ He recalls the development of the Zionist idea 'in den Köpfen Theodor Herzls and Max Nordaus, [die] allmählich dem Tag der Geburtsanzeige entgegenging' (Juden 190) as they met

⁵³⁹ Wolff writes: 'Später habe ich bisweilen bedauert, dass ich... so wenig von den Gesprächen, in denen der Zionismus vorbereitet wurde, erfasst habe und ein so unaufmerksamer Zuhörer gewesen bin'. (Juden 197)

daily and Wolff describes dinners and long walks with both Zionist leaders, while he adopted the role of non-committal observer, merely ‘zuschauend und zuhörend’. (Grabmal 325) Although both men left a lasting impression on Wolff, he did not want to be associated with their ideas and firmly believed that assimilation would ensure acceptance and eventually solve the ‘Jewish Problem’. Herzl and Wolff differed vastly – not only on the idea of a Jewish state. With his flowing beard Herzl took pride in displaying a Jewish appearance; Wolff in contrast made an effort not to be stereotyped through Jewish traits. Herzl’s diary entry from 5 July 1895 documents their opposing views: ‘Er [Wolff] findet den Antisemitismus nicht so arg... er findet es selbstverständlich, dass er nicht Offizier wird, obwohl er das beste Offiziersexamen machte’.⁵⁴⁰ Herzl was an outspoken critique of the notion of assimilation⁵⁴¹ and was clearly alarmed over Wolff’s acceptance of terms under which the assimilated Jew was prepared to live in Germany. Herzl idealised the military with its tradition and codes of honour, whereas Wolff was adverse to entrenched Prussian military ethos. For Wolff not to be accepted in the German Officers’ Corps was no cause for resentment. Wolff had little admiration for Herzl as journalist (Juden 197) and passed harsh judgment on the two Zionist leaders, Herzl and Nordau: ‘Wenn ich von diesen beiden Erzeugern des Zionismus spreche, so vermag ich das nicht immer im Ton des Hosiannah zu tun’. (Juden 192) In 1895 Herzl returned to Vienna and the men parted company.⁵⁴²

Wolff perceives Zionism as a distraction from the significant achievements by assimilated Jews over decades. As the key propagandist of Liberalism he is concerned:

⁵⁴⁰ Theodor Herzl, *Tagebücher 1895-1904*, 3 vols. (Berlin: Jüdischer Verl., 1922-1923). vol.1. 223.

⁵⁴¹ Robertson 466.

⁵⁴² Wolff and Herzl also differed in their relationship with the Kaiser. Wolff had little respect for the Kaiser and his colonial Empire, (*Das Vorspiel* 31 and BT 575 (9.11.1918) and Theodor Wolff, *Der Journalist* 122-124) whereas Herzl was a great admirer of Wilhelm II. and endorsed the Kaiser’s colonial ambitions. Herzl, *Tagebücher 1895-1904*. vol.3. 317.

Der liberale Jude war Deutscher, Österreicher, Tscheche, Franzose, er wollte von einer jüdischen Nation, einem jüdischen Staat nichts wissen und nichts hören, und er fühlte sich durch eine Bewegung, die ihn von der westlichen Kulturgemeinschaft trennen, ihn wieder nach Jerusalem zurückführen wollte, in den Augen seiner arischen Mitbürger kompromittiert und beschämt. (Juden 189)

Wolff argues strongly against the concept of a Jewish state, putting forward three reasons. First, Jews were neither united by language, mentality, background nor by ideological and political ideas. Not conversing in a common language reveals a non-universal background and danger for disunity. With the question, ‘Wie aber einen Staat aus diesen Menschen machen, die einander nicht kennen und nicht verstehen?’ (Juden 202) he points at Jews as a disparate group. Forcing them into a national unit was doomed to fail, especially due to the predictable dissent between orthodox and liberal Jews.

Second, Jews had not had a homeland for centuries; they were ‘überall und nirgends... Hinter den Juden sieht man keinen festen, keinen eigenen Standort’. (Juden 100, 101) This image was perpetuated by the legend of the ‘Wandering Jew’. Jews destined to wander the earth, so he argues, had declared many countries their home. A Jewish national state could only evoke Jewish nationalism and destabilise the border areas around it, wherever it was to be located.

Third, having been a victim of expulsion himself, Wolff is sensitive to the issues of expulsion and voices strong objection to an enforced homeland for Jews. Wolff sees free and individual choice as the basis for a fair and just human existence and therefore rejects the idea of an imposed relocation for European Jews: ‘Ebensowenig wie man einem Menschen sein Vaterland nehmen kann, darf man versuchen, es ihm aufzuzwingen’. (Juden 178)

However, while arguing strongly against a Jewish homeland, Wolff is now forced to revise his views after witnessing the persecution of Jews in France: ‘Durch

das, was man seit 1933 erlebt, durch die Erfahrungen, die man gemacht hat, wurde in vielen das entschiedene Nein, mit dem sie die Frage des Zionismus beantworten zu einem freilich zögernden und verklausulierten halben Ja'. (Juden 198) Article 19 gave French authorities carte blanche to arrest, hand over to the Nazis who deported people to labour camps in the east. Other countries had closed their borders to the flood of refugees who were trapped in Europe. Wolff becomes aware of the devastating impact of Nazi ferocity and soon there was nowhere to hide and he reluctantly recognises Palestine as a place to save Jewish life: 'In diesem Augenblick, wo unendliche Mengen verfolgter, vertriebener Menschen nur an die Rettung ihres Lebens denken, mag einem Unglücklichen jede Einöde verlockend erscheinen, in der man nicht hinter ihm die Peitsche schwingt'. (Grabmal 327)

The Zionist movement had offered Jews the opportunity to leave their country of birth and settle in the land of Israel. In 1938 Wolff published an article in the *Manchester Guardian*,⁵⁴³ in which he declared Palestine as promised homeland, predominantly for Eastern European Jews, as a possible solution. In 1942 and 1943 he goes one step further and admits: 'Der Zionismus breitet die weitgeöffneten Arme aus und ladete nach Palästina ein. Sein idealistisches Wollen ist unbestritten'. (Juden 188) However, even in this statement Wolff fails to conceal his reservations and incredulity. Palestine, according to Wolff, does not represent a solution to the 'Jewish Problem'.⁵⁴⁴ He still feels unable to identify fully with Zionism, an idea he had opposed all his life. However, he is forced to rethink his position and reluctantly admits: 'Für ihn [den jüdischen Staat] spricht mancherlei'. (Juden 199)

⁵⁴³ Theodor Wolff, "The Birth of Zionism," *Manchester Guardian*. (26.9.1938) 9.

⁵⁴⁴ This accounts for his contradictions. At one point he argues Palestine is far too small and unable to grow and at the same time he argues that Palestine is big enough and has great potential to grow. Wolff writes: 'Palästina ist zu eng, durch arabische Rivalität in seinem Wachstum behindert'. (Grabmal 327) and 'Kleiner Staat kann wachsen, die Zahl der Quadratkilometer allein verbürgt nicht Glück und Bestand'. (Juden 198)

The Future

'*Die Juden*', written in haste, confusion and panic, still conveys Wolff's rather conciliatory spirit and positive vision for the future. Wolff's hope for a rapid end to the war and a return to a free and democratic society was fuelled by the defeat of the German Army in Stalingrad in January 1943 and the Allies' landing in North Africa. In view of Germany's dismal military position, Wolff was expecting peace negotiations and seems to have built a 'dream world' when he writes, inspired by hope and optimism: 'Aber vom Horizont aus ist schon die Helligkeit höhergestiegen, und es ist nicht mehr, wie in der überwundenen dunkelsten Zeit, nur ein mystischer Wunschglaube, dass die Ideen des Rechtes, der Freiheit und der Menschlichkeit nicht unterliegen können'. (Juden 19) Here Wolff reveals in biblical and mystical images his vision for a post-war Germany, in which democracy is restored and Jews re-establish a German-Jewish *Lebensgemeinschaft*.

Consistent with his denial of the existence of Jews as one people, Wolff declares that reconstruction after the war demands strategies to meet the 'innerlichen und äußerlichen Verschiedenheiten, angesichts der Tatsache, dass es kein jüdisches Volk gibt'. (Juden 124) He warns against inflated expectations regarding the speed and nature of reconstruction, a most complex undertaking because of different and sometimes conflicting needs of the dispersed Jewish communities.

Unaware of the full extent of the Nazi genocide, Wolff still argues consistently that the 'Jewish Question' cannot be regarded as the most tragic act in the drama on the world stage. He also rejects the obligation of excessive compensation for victims of Nazi terror, arguing that victims and persecutors would need time to assess their positions and avoid the danger of emerging prejudice and hostility. According to

Wolff, Jewish suffering under the Nazis was not unique: ‘Aber die Juden können nicht mit solcher Bestimmtheit meinen, die Katastrophe ihrer jetzigen Generation sei in ihrer Totalität etwas Einmaliges’. (Juden 183) This statement clearly bears witness to a writer in exile for whom the genocide of European Jews falls outside the realms of comprehension.⁵⁴⁵ Wolff was unaware of the totally planned and systematic slaughter of Jews that made the Nazi Holocaust a unique catastrophe and distinct from the casualties on the battlefield and the general horrors of World War II.

In 1943 Wolff still expressed his admiration for Germans: ‘Bewunderung für die Kraft des deutschen Volkes [ist] durch nichts zu zerstören’. (Juden 68) He even displays concern for Germany’s reputation as he absolves the German general public from the stigma of collaborating with the Nazi regime. Wolff even goes so far as to declare the majority of Germans ‘not guilty’ of being responsible for crimes perpetrated under Nazi rule. Wolff argues: ‘Es ist absolut unwahrscheinlich, dass in Deutschland und in anderen Ländern jener sehr erhebliche Teil der Bevölkerung... die Roheiten der Marterung und des Mordes, die Schamlosigkeit der Ausplünderung, die Eingebungen des Rassenhasses und die Erfindungen der Rassengesetzgebung gewünscht oder gebilligt hat’. (Juden 183) Based on this verdict Wolff has no hesitation in encouraging Jews to return to Germany after the war. Wolff died in September 1943 and thus was spared the disclosure that Germans had participated in

⁵⁴⁵ Wolff writes: ‘Wie das Schicksal der Juden nur eine verhältnismäßig geringe Bedeutung in dem heutigen Schicksal der Welt und der Menschheit hat’. (Juden 264); ‘Aber in den Blutstrom der über die Erde läuft, fließt das jüdische Elend nur mit der Breite eines Baches hinein. Und wenn es sich um weltgeschichtliche Entscheidungen, um Bestand, Werden oder Vergehen einer Weltordnung handelt, erscheint verhältnismäßig unbedeutend die Frage, was aus den Juden wird. (Juden 25) Israel [ist]... heute nicht der Nabel der Welt und [hat] mit all seinen Leiden und Wunden eigentlich nicht mehr Anspruch auf die allgemeine Beachtung, auf Mitgefühl und Hilfe als irgend eine andere der endlosen Opferherden, der im Sand verdursteten Unglückskarawanen, der vielen Gruppen in dem grauenhaften Totentanz’. (Grabmal 332)

the propagation of the 'Final Solution', many as willing and enthusiastic perpetrators or bystanders.⁵⁴⁶

One of Wolff's apt metaphors compares life in post war Germany with a calm, blue ocean, and warns that sharks might still circle underneath the water's surface.⁵⁴⁷ A system poisoned by Nazi ideology could not be quickly transformed into a democracy. Some 'sharks' would still try and destroy the democratic process. Yet, Wolff firmly believes in the end of the German 'verrenkte Mentalität' and the start of a new, fair and democratic Germany. (Juden 279) It can be assumed that Wolff would have been one of the first exiles to return to Germany – a Germany in ruins, occupied by allied forces and flooded by an army of displaced persons.

The End

Theodor Wolff was arrested in Nice on 23 May 1943. Four months later to the day he died in the Berlin Jewish Hospital. In order to comply with German demands for their deportation, the Italian Government dispatched a high-ranking police officer, General Guido Lospinoso to take charge of the Commissariat for Jewish Affairs in Nice, located at the Villa Surany, Boulevard Cimiez. In September 1943 General Lospinoso destroyed all official records covering his time as Police Inspector in Nice.⁵⁴⁸ This act saved many Jewish lives, but later made it virtually impossible to trace the circumstances surrounding Wolff's arrest.

⁵⁴⁶ It is outside the scope of this study to assess the controversy over Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's argument in: Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Knopf, 1996).

⁵⁴⁷ Wolff writes: 'Das ruhig und heiter gewordene Meer ist unter dem blauen Wasserspiegel durch das Gewimmel scharfzähner Haifische verseucht'. (Juden 184)

⁵⁴⁸ Carpi 189.

In spring 1943 it seemed that Italian officials did all in their power to protect Jews.⁵⁴⁹ General Lospinoso joined forces with Angelo Donati, an Italian Jewish banker.⁵⁵⁰ Together they engaged in the rescue of Jews and designed many schemes to partially meet German requirements to purge the zone of Jews and ‘enemy aliens’,⁵⁵¹ while also protecting them and their families. Jews were evacuated from Nice to inland areas under Italian occupation. Thus the Italian authorities were able to continue their protection and at the same time partially fulfil German demands of concentrating Jews in one area and relocating them away from the coast.

However, soon Italian police could no longer defy German orders. With the defeat at the Eastern Front, the intensification of Allied air-raids on Germany and the imminent invasion of Italy and the south of France by the Allies,⁵⁵² the Nazi regime became increasingly aware of its deteriorating military position. It expressed irritation over Italy’s lack of compliance, particularly in the ‘Final Solution of the Jewish Question’. The reluctance of Italian police to implement German policies within the Italian occupied zone had come to the notice of German officials in Berlin. Himmler had contacted Ribbentrop to demand ‘that Jews of foreign nationality residing in the Italian occupied zone of France, whether of Italian or other citizenship, be eliminated.’⁵⁵³ Lengthy negotiations between Vichy, German and Italian authorities over the treatment of Jews in the south of France followed. From May 1943 German Police and SS Commanders – among them SS *Hauptsturmführer* Klaus Barbie in Lyon – increased pressure on Italian police to co-operate. At the same time Mussolini was besieged, culminating in his overthrow on 25 July, 1943. At the time of Wolff’s

⁵⁴⁹ Poliakov and Sabille 47-128.

⁵⁵⁰ Poliakov and Sabille 91 and 94.

⁵⁵¹ Klaus Voigt, "Refuge and persecution in Italy." Simon Wiesenthal Center. Annual 4 (1987). 42.

⁵⁵² On 13 Mai 1943 German and Italian troops trapped in Tunisia surrendered to the Allies.

⁵⁵³ Carpi 104 -105.

arrest in May 1943, the Duce's political position proved increasingly precarious and Wolff could no longer expect assistance from him. Mussolini lost his position and was unable to prevent Wolff's handover to the German Gestapo. Wolff's name had been on the Gestapo's 'most wanted list' for years;⁵⁵⁴ Italian Fascist Secret Police followed German orders.⁵⁵⁵

Wolff, convinced that he and his family were under Italian protection, responded with shock, surprise, panic and disbelief when two Italian policemen, Lieutenant Colonel Bodo and Captain Salvi,⁵⁵⁶ arrived at his apartment around 10am on 23 May 1943.⁵⁵⁷ Helna, Wolff's daughter-in-law was present and recalled the arrest.⁵⁵⁸ After initial polite questioning the two civilian-clothes officers searched his study. They asked him to follow them to the police station for a brief interrogation with assurances he would be home again that night. However, Helna became concerned when asked to pack a small suitcase with personal essential items. Wolff remained calm and followed them to their car. Helna observed: 'Aber er war ganz ruhig, hat das alles sehr würdig getragen'.⁵⁵⁹ This was the last time Theodor Wolff was seen by his family. His wife and daughter fled to a nearby farm and hid in a farm shed.⁵⁶⁰ Helna and his son, Rudolf also went into hiding.

⁵⁵⁴ Walter Oppenheim, co-prisoner in the Police Prison, Berlin claimed, Wolff was arrested by the Italian police because of anti-Italian reactions. This is difficult to sustain, as Wolff did not harbour anti-Italian nor anti-Fascist sentiments. As mentioned above Wolff had always openly admired Mussolini and refrained from any attacks on Italian Fascism. AKIP. Letter from Walter Oppenheim to Rose Scharnberg (26.7.1943).

⁵⁵⁵ *Zone der Ungewissheit: Exil und Internierung in Südfrankreich*, eds. Jacques Grandjonc and Teresia Grundtner (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1990). 99.

⁵⁵⁶ Poliakov and Sabille 91.

⁵⁵⁷ Rudolf Wolff records two dates: 18. and 23. Mai 1943 for Wolff's arrest by Italian authorities.

'Mein Vater, Theodor Wolff, der ehemalige Chefredakteur des Berliner Tageblattes, der ebenfalls in Nizza, 63, Promenade des Anglais, wohnte, wurde dort am 18.5.1943 von den italienischen Behörden verhaftet und in ein Gefängnis in Italien bei San Remo überführt'. (AKIP. Rudolf Wolff. Eidesstattliche Versicherung. 3. June 1952.) and 'Alle waren aufeinander angewiesen und alle fürchteten sich vor dem Unglückstag. Bei uns, in der 6. Etage der Promenade des Anglais, kam er, wenn ich mich nicht ganz irre, am 23. Mai 1943.' (AKIP. Rudolf Wolff. Für Köhler.16.4.1970.)

⁵⁵⁸ AKIP. Helna Wolff. Schilderung der Festnahme.

⁵⁵⁹ AKIP. West Deutscher Rundfunk. Zeitzeichen. 23.9.1978.

⁵⁶⁰ Castonier 325.

Angelo Donati, who lived only a couple of blocks⁵⁶¹ away from Wolff's apartment tried unsuccessfully to intervene in Wolff's arrest. A telegram to the Gestapo Head Office in Marseille dated 22.7.1943 and signed by SS *Hauptscharführer* Bauer reads as follows: 'He (Donati) has furthermore intervened in Rome with regard to the arrest of Jews by Germans, who have handed them over to the German authorities, especially concerning the Jew Wolf (sic) of Nice, Editor-in-Chief of the *Berliner Tageblatt*'.⁵⁶² Wolff's family contacted Italian friends and officials to obtain news of Wolff's whereabouts, yet to no avail. It seems that he was interrogated in the so called 'Foltervilla' Surany, Boulevard Cimiez, Headquarters of the Commissariat for Jewish Affairs in Nice and then immediately handed over to the Gestapo.⁵⁶³ He reached a concentration camp in Imperia on the coast and was transported from there – via Marseille – to Drancy, the notorious transit camp, near Paris, on 28 June 1943.⁵⁶⁴ From here Jews embarked on their journey to the death camps in Eastern Europe.⁵⁶⁵ However, Wolff was sent to Berlin on 18 July 1943, classified as *Schutzhäftling* and taken into *Schutzhaft* at the notorious Police Prison, in the Invaliden Straße.⁵⁶⁶

Walter Oppenheimer, a fellow prisoner describes Wolff's arrival: 'Soeben sind schon wieder ein paar Neulinge auf dem Hof eingetroffen... sei Dir verraten, es ist

⁵⁶¹ Wolff lived at no.63 and Donati at no.37 Promenade des Anglais. Poliakov and Sabille 91.

⁵⁶² Poliakov and Sabille 112.

I wish to acknowledge the assistance of Aurelie Audeval (Archives du Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine (CDJC)) providing me with a copy of the original telegram displaying a handwritten note: 'W(olff)haben wir kürzlich dem RSHA (*Reichssicherheitshauptamt*) überstellt'.

⁵⁶³ AKIP. Rudolf Wolff. Für Köhler. p. 10.

⁵⁶⁴ AKIP. Rudolf Wolff. Für Köhler. p. 9.

Archives du Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine. Paris. (CDJD) Document: Fichier Drancy Adulte. No 22.345.

⁵⁶⁵ Serge Klarsfeld, *Die Endlösung der Judenfrage in Frankreich* (Paris: Beate und Serge Klarsfeld, 1977). 12 and 189.

⁵⁶⁶ Archives du Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine, Paris. (CDJD) Document: Fichier Drancy Adulte. No 22.345.

There is evidence to suggest that Wolff, the internationally prominent émigré, was regarded as a valuable hostage to be used for the exchange for prominent Germans captured behind enemy lines. The unsigned article in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine* reads: 'Nach der Besetzung Südfrankreichs im Herbst 1942 durch die Achsenmächte wurde Theodor Wolff von italienischen Truppen verhaftet und später der Gestapo ausgeliefert, die ihn als 'Geisel' ausersah'. "Theodor Wolff", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* 106 (7.5.1956). 2.

Theodor Wolff vom Berliner Tageblatt'.⁵⁶⁷ Conditions in the Police Prison were desperate, forcing Oppenheimer to plead in the same letter to Rose Scharnberg to obtain help from Herr Adlon from the prestigious Hotel Adlon in Berlin, and beg for cheese, bread, butter and cigarettes on behalf of Theodor Wolff. Prior to 1933 he had been a frequent and respected guest in the Hotel Adlon.⁵⁶⁸ Oppenheimer describes one hot summer afternoon in the prison yard, when the guard permits the inmates to be hosed down with a fire hose: 'Selbst der 75 jährige Theodor Wolff machte mit'.⁵⁶⁹ Wolff – formerly an immaculate dresser, who was always to be found in a three piece suit with starched shirts, collar and tie – receives a special mention. He willingly participated in this spectacle, obviously the only relief from the sweltering summer heat. Wolff and Oppenheimer became friends. Both suffered deteriorating health, which compounded their fear of impending death. Wolff was greatly concerned about his manuscripts, presumably still in his apartment in Nice. He gave Oppenheimer explicit instructions to rescue two manuscripts, *Das Grabmal des Unbekannten Soldaten* and 'Die Juden', and asked him to send them to Oprecht, the Zürich publisher, in case Wolff did not survive the war.⁵⁷⁰ This request confirms that both manuscripts were written with the aim of being published. Walter Oppenheimer perished in Auschwitz in 1943. The two manuscripts never reached the publisher in Zürich.⁵⁷¹ However, both works survived and were published much later in 1992 and 1984, respectively.

⁵⁶⁷ AKIP. Letter from Walther Oppenheimer to Rose Scharnberg (26.7.1943).

⁵⁶⁸ Wolff's diaries give evidence of meetings with Chancellor Bernhard von Bülow, Gerhart Hauptmann and other famous writers, actors, politicians, and diplomats in the dining rooms and reception halls of the *Hotel Adlon*. (Tagebücher Index 1049)

⁵⁶⁹ AKIP. Letter from Walther Oppenheimer to Rose Scharnberg (26.7.1943).

⁵⁷⁰ AKIP. Letter from Walther Oppenheimer to Rose Scharnberg (26.7.1943).

⁵⁷¹ I have been unable to trace these two works at the Oprecht publishing house. Both original manuscripts never reached Oprecht. Bernd Söseman explains in his *Vorbemerkung* to 'Die Juden' that he used a photocopy, as the original could not be traced. (Juden, Vorbemerkung no pag.)

After more than seven weeks of imprisonment, Wolff, afflicted with an inflammation (cellulitis) on his arm due to neglect and maltreatment, was admitted to the Jewish Hospital in Iranische Strasse in Berlin on 15 September 1943.⁵⁷² This was the last Jewish institution still functioning in Berlin under Gestapo supervision.⁵⁷³ It consisted of a complex of seven buildings that housed surgical wards that were staffed by Jewish doctors and nurses, who had been spared deportation, a prison, a deportation centre, a Gestapo office, an orphanage and a block for privileged Jews.⁵⁷⁴ As Gestapo prisoner under the number 1281,⁵⁷⁵ Wolff was placed in a special police ward. Bruno Blau⁵⁷⁶ shared a hospital room with Wolff and gave a report on Wolff's last days:

In the police ward there were a number of well-known personalities, for example Theodor Wolff, the former chief editor of the Berliner Tageblatt, who was not only of eminent significance as a writer but, for a time, also had great influence in Germany as a politician. He had emigrated in 1933 and was living in Nice. There he was arrested and dragged through fourteen prisons until he finally landed in the Berlin police prison. During his stay there he was interrogated twice at the Gestapo headquarters on Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse, without given a reason for his arrest. The interrogation took place in the form of a colloquium; theme on one occasion was Zionism... His mind was completely unimpaired and his appetite was good. That in the end his heart gave out was no wonder, considering all that he had gone through during the last months.⁵⁷⁷

For Nazi officials to question Wolff on Zionism, they were aware of his article on Zionism in the *Manchester Guardian* in 1938,⁵⁷⁸ in which Wolff had explained how Palestine could be seen as a Jewish homeland. Nazi interrogators were

⁵⁷² AKIP. Ärztliche Stellungnahme zum Tod Theodor Wolff's.

⁵⁷³ Daniel B Silver, *Refuge in Hell: How Berlin's Jewish Hospital Outlasted the Nazis* (Boston: Houghton, 2003).

⁵⁷⁴ Wolfgang Benz, "Überleben im Untergrund," *Die Juden in Deutschland 1933-1945*, ed. Wolfgang Benz (München: Beck, 1993). 694.

⁵⁷⁵ Centrum Judaicum. Neue Synagoge Berlin. CJA, 2 A 1 K, Nr. 27, Aufnahmebuch 1941-1946.

⁵⁷⁶ Bruno Blau (1908-1954), lawyer and statistician was arrested in Prague, taken to the police ward of the Jewish Hospital in Berlin suffering from cancer. He survived the war and died in 1954.

Bruno Blau, Wolff's companion during his last days wrote an article on Wolff in the New York exile magazine *Aufbau* in April 1949 in which he states: '...nachdem er in seinem Wohnort Nizza verhaftet und durch 14 Gefängnisse geschleppt worden war; in einem Konzentrationslager aber ist er, wie ich von ihm selbst weiss, nie gewesen.' Bruno Blau, "Theodor Wolff," *Aufbau* 15.17 (29.4.1949). 3. This contradicts several autobiographical accounts that mention Wolff's detention in various concentration camps, such as Oranienburg (Köhler 308) or Dachau (Osborn 2). No official records could be traced to verify Theodor Wolff's detention in these concentration camps.

⁵⁷⁷ Bruno Blau, "Fourteen Years of Misery and Horror" *Jewish Life in Germany: Memoirs from Three Centuries*, ed. Monika Richarz (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1991). 467.

⁵⁷⁸ Theodor Wolff, "The Birth of Zionism" *Manchester Guardian* 26.9.1938: 9.

keen to collect information about the Zionist movement. The interrogations indicate that Wolff was regarded as a ‘special prisoner’, *politischer Schutzhäftling*, and even one who – due to his international reputation – could be used in the prisoner-exchange deals regularly undertaken by the Nazis.

Following surgical treatment for his infected arm, Wolff developed cardiac insufficiency resulting in cardiac arrest. He died on 23 September 1943.⁵⁷⁹ In his last work, ‘*Die Juden*’, completed only days before his arrest, Wolff wrote: ‘Es gibt einen Grad der Qual, bei dem der Mensch keine Gesten, keine Worte und keine Tränen hat’. (Juden 38)⁵⁸⁰

Wolff’s death certificate was issued at the Berlin Registry office on 24 September 1943 stating: ‘Die Namen der Ehefrau sind nicht bekannt’.⁵⁸¹ Officials did not bother searching for his wife’s name. To deprive Theodor Wolff of the dignity to have his wife’s name included on his death certificate is a deep insult. As already mentioned, Wolff loved his wife Anne, as his Last Will and Testament testifies:

Ich liebe über alles meine treue, tapfere Frau, meine Anne, mein in Glück und in Nöten unvergleichliche Gefährtin – Gefährtin durch ein Leben, das an ihrer beglückenden Seite reich und schön war- und ich liebe mit der gleichen unendlichen Liebe meine drei Kinder, jeder in seiner Weise ein prachtvoller, liebenswerte Mensch. Meine Kinder werden, wenn ich nicht mehr da bin, die gütigste beste Mutter sorgend behüten, mit ihrer Kraft, ihrer Tüchtigkeit, und ihrer Zärtlichkeit ihrer Herzen, und meine Anne bitte ich, in der Freude an den Kindern einen Trost für das zu finden, was nicht ewig dauern konnte. Nur der Gedanke an Euch verhindert mich, gleichgültig über das für jeden Menschen unvermeidliche Ende zu denken – es kommt ein wenig früher oder ein wenig später, und diese kleinen Unterschiede bedeuten wenig. Ich weiss dass Ihr mich nicht vergessen werdet, ich werde immer bei Euch sein.⁵⁸²

⁵⁷⁹ The medical report reads: ‘Die monatelange Haft mit den körperlichen und seelischen Belastungen hat aber zweifellos zu einer erheblichen Verschlechterung des Herz- und Kreislaufschadens und damit zum Tode geführt. Ob die Armpflegmone etwa durch unhygienische Verhältnisse während der Polizeihaft entstanden ist oder ob sie im Anfangsstadium durch eine nicht sachgemässe Behandlung ungünstig beeinflusst wurde, kann nicht mehr entschieden werden. Es ist aber sehr wahrscheinlich, dass W. die Infektion unter normalen Verhältnissen überstanden hätte’. AKIP. Ärztliche Stellungnahme zum Tod Theodor Wolff’s.

⁵⁸⁰ The inability to find words was expressed after the war with the quote by Adorno: ‘Nach Auschwitz ein Gedicht zu schreiben, ist barbarisch.’ Theodor W. Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 10:1 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977). 30.

⁵⁸¹ AKIP. Sterbeurkunde. Standesamt Wedding, Berlin 4907-1943.

⁵⁸² Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Theodor Wolff Nachlass 207: 32 Testament. (Hinterlassener Brief dated Montauban 30 Juli 1940).

These intimate lines demonstrate Wolff's strong feelings for his family. They embrace fear and pain and his intense love for his wife and his three children. When Sösemann states: 'die Familie hat ihren Platz insgesamt nicht im Mittelpunkt seines Lebens',⁵⁸³ this might have been true during his professional life with the *Berliner Tageblatt*. In late exile, however, his family became the centre of his life and he displayed frequently deep concern for the wellbeing of his boys, his daughter and his wife.⁵⁸⁴ The family and the world heard of Wolff's death later that year via Radio London.⁵⁸⁵

Wolff was buried on 26 September 1943 in the Berlin-Weißensee Jewish cemetery.⁵⁸⁶ It is highly likely that the Berlin Rabbi, Martin Riesenburger conducted the service, as he was the only remaining Rabbi in Berlin.⁵⁸⁷ No member of Wolff's family, only the courageous Paul Löbe⁵⁸⁸ and ten brave and loyal friends were present at his funeral.⁵⁸⁹ After the war his son Richard returned to Berlin with the American occupying forces and erected an imposing, yet dignified tombstone on Wolff's grave.

⁵⁸³ Sösemann, *Theodor Wolff: ein Leben mit der Zeitung*. 344.

⁵⁸⁴ Wolff writes: '...ich [möchte] sehr gern meinen drüben lebenden Jungen... umarmen'. (Terrasse 106) Wolff's son Rudolf writes: '[Wolff] hatte nur einen Gedanken, dass Frau und Kinder einigermaßen gut über die Sorgen hinweg kamen.' AKIP. Rudolf Wolff. Für Köhler. p. 4.

⁵⁸⁵ AKIP. Rudolf Wolff. Für Köhler. p.10.

⁵⁸⁶ Centrum Judaicum. Neue Synagoge Berlin. CJA Beerdigungsunterlagen Jüdischer Friedhof Berlin Weißensee, Nr. 111226.

⁵⁸⁷ Martin Riesenburger writes in his memoirs: 'Ich erhielt im Juni 1943 die Mitteilung der endgültigen Versetzung zum Friedhof in Weissensee. Dort sollte ich die anfallenden Beerdigungen vollziehen'. Martin Riesenburger, *Das Licht verlöschte nicht: ein Zeugnis aus der Nacht des Faschismus*, Jüdische Memoiren 5. Ed. Hermann Simon (Teetz: Hentrich und Hentrich, 2003). 67.

⁵⁸⁸ Paul Löbe (1875-1967), Social Democrat and Reichstag President from 1924-1933. He and Wolff had both supported conciliatory policies during World War I and the 1919 Revolution. Paul Löbe, *Der Weg war lang* (Berlin: Arani, 1954).

⁵⁸⁹ Boveri 49.

During his lifetime Wolff wrote many – some renowned – obituaries.⁵⁹⁰ However, no such obituaries were written for him at the time of his death. The first obituary appeared in *Die Zeitung* (London) 4 February 1944,⁵⁹¹ followed by the *New York Times* on 29 February 1944.⁵⁹² During March 1944, the *Aufbau* in New York published several obituaries, including one by Max Osborn and another by Dorothy Thompson.⁵⁹³ However, the most moving contribution was published by Wolff's colleague and close friend Ernst Feder⁵⁹⁴ in January 1945, followed by others in Germany as late as 1946.⁵⁹⁵ All tributes acknowledged Wolff's contribution to German culture, politics, history and journalism, his intellect and personal qualities. All deplored his suffering at the hands of the Nazis and all agreed that he died with dignity.

⁵⁹⁰ Emile Zola. BT 501 (2. 10.1902) and Theodor Wolff, *Der Journalist* 60-61; Hippolyte Taine. BT 120 (6.3.1893) and Theodor Wolff, *Der Publizist* 62-70; Guy de Maupassant. BT 341 (7.7.1893) and Theodor Wolff, *Der Publizist* 96-101; Walter Leistikow. BT 376 (26.7.1908) and Theodor Wolff, *Der Publizist* 172-175; Leo Tolstoi. BT 590 (21.11.1910) and Theodor Wolff, *Der Publizist* 315-321; Victor Aubertin. BT 303 (29.6.1928) and Theodor Wolff, *Der Publizist* 360-362; Walther Rathenau. BT 294 (24. 6.1922) and Theodor Wolff, *Der Journalist* 178-180, Friedrich Ebert. BT 102 (1. 3. 1925) and Theodor Wolff, *Der Journalist* 199-201.

⁵⁹¹ D.E.M., "Theodor Wolff," *Die Zeitung* (London) 361 (4.2.1944).

⁵⁹² "Theodor Wolff", *New York Times* 17 (29.2.1944).

⁵⁹³ Max Osborn, "Theodor Wolff's tragisches Ende." *Aufbau* 10.9 (3.3.1944).2."Zum Tode Theodor Wolffs," *Aufbau* 10.10 (10.3.1944). 5. Dorothy Thompson, "In Memoriam Theodor Wolff", *Aufbau* 10.11. (17.3.1944) 32.

⁵⁹⁴ Feder, "In Memoriam Theodor Wolff." 31.

⁵⁹⁵ Victor Klages, "Der Publizist" *Tagespiegel* (Berlin) 2.8.1946.

Conclusion

Exile created a caesura that significantly changed Wolff's life and it is the response in his writing that is at the centre of this study. The study posed the question as to whether there is a connection between Wolff's experience in exile and his writing. The analysis has shown that there is a direct relationship. It reveals that Wolff changed from journalistic writing to literary writing and that his exile works may well not have been written had he not been threatened with Nazi persecution and forced into exile.

Wolff's experience in exile between 1933 and 1943 must be seen in the light of gradual, yet traumatic, deterioration of living conditions in the south of France. The gradual decline of his 'outer' world is reflected in the decline of his 'inner' world and this is illustrated in his writing. During the early stage in exile his mood was positive with expectations of an early return to Berlin. However, the political atmosphere became increasingly oppressive and Wolff's decision to reject current affairs, journalism and public life was precipitated by political events, together with three devastating experiences during 1933 – his expulsion from Berlin, the burning of his books and his failed Swiss asylum application. This series of events triggered the change: he rejected the present and chose to write about the past and this is reflected in the two historical accounts written during his early years in exile, *Der Marsch durch zwei Jahrzehnte* (between 1934 and 1935) and *Notes sur l'histoire de la presse* (between 1936 and 1939). Following a decline in his fame and fortune, Wolff embarked on writing a less than unsuccessful novel, *Die Schwimmerin* (1936), partly driven by financial concerns. In the middle period of his exile, a further decline in acknowledgment as a talented writer and ongoing financial difficulties, the unstoppable expansion of National Socialism in Europe and the loss of colleagues and

friends weighing heavily upon him, Wolff entered the next period filled with uncertainty and fear for his life. This resulted in a need to tell his story and to write an autobiographical account entitled *La Terrasse in der Gascogne* (1940). The final stage demonstrates a particularly strong correlation between his experience in exile and his writing. Wolff, the assimilated German Jew, made Jewish issues the focus of his last two works. He devoted the *Grabmal des Unbekannten Soldaten* (1941) and 'Die Juden' (1942 to May 1943) to the 'Jewish Question', as a direct result of his experience in exile. Hitler's race legislation forced Wolff to re-examine the German-Jewish 'symbiosis' and the position of assimilated German Jews. He had ignored his Jewish origin for most of his life, but during the final years he was forced to acknowledge that he had misjudged his position. He confronted the 'Jewish Question' and did not conceal his error of judgment. While Wolff's life and work demonstrate his abandonment of most ties to Jewish customs and traditions, death reconnects him with his Jewish roots; he died in a Jewish Hospital and was buried in the Berlin Jewish cemetery.

The influence of exile on his works is evident in three areas. First, the study found that Wolff's experience in exile influenced the *raison d'être* for all six works. The question was posed, why did Wolff write a particular work? Several motivational factors were identified, including financial needs. Exile had deprived him of his readership, yet he needed to continue to write and express views and opinions. In exile, he could only contribute his views indirectly concealed in historical accounts, fiction or autobiography.

Second, how was a particular work written? The study demonstrates that Wolff's genre and style changed under the influence of exile. He transformed himself from one of the most influential political and cultural daily commentators in Germany

prior to 1933, to a contemplative writer; he changed from reporting to reflecting. Life in exile shaped both contents and style of his writings, including an attempt to write fiction. Wolff was now frequently not in control of the outcomes of his writings, because they were dictated by publishers, who asserted influence on contents and style to increase sales in a competitive and shrinking market. After a lifetime of leadership as a publicist, he was now controlled by others and these restrictions represented a difficult experience for Wolff, one that contributed to his lack of success.

The third area concerns the influence of exile on his choice of topics. For Wolff, the German-Jewish liberal democrat, the loss of democracy and the loss of the so called German-Jewish ‘symbiosis’ were his main topics. His life had been shaped by the fight for democracy and was also greatly influenced by the German-Jewish *Lebensgemeinschaft*. The loss of both of these was sharp and painful. Freedom of expression – according to Wolff, the cornerstone of democracy – dominates his exile writings. In addition, law and order issues and societal conflict rank high in his choice of topics. Finally, exile forced Wolff to address the ‘Jewish Question’, topics such as antisemitism and Zionism feature in his writings as a direct result of his exile experience.

Limitations and Implications

The ‘tyranny of distance’ caused minor logistical difficulties for the completion of this thesis. Visits to various research centres were limited through time and financial constraints. Some centres placed heavy restrictions on photocopying, resulting in time-consuming transcriptions by hand of texts and documents. Theodor Wolff’s handwriting presented further difficulties. The handwritten material is in

Sütterlinschrift, the old-fashioned style of German handwriting. In addition Wolff's handwriting is exceedingly difficult to decipher. *Notes sur l'histoire de la presse*, Wolff's only unpublished exile work, presented a challenge as the text is in disarray, with pages missing and duplication of whole chapters.

It has been tempting to compare Theodor Wolff's exile experience and the influence on his writings with other exile writers and their experiences. Some chose very different pathways, reflected in their writings. Alfred Döblin converted to Catholicism, Lion Feuchtwanger became a Communist sympathiser, Thomas Mann changed from being apolitical to becoming the leading voice in the war against Hitler, Carl Zuckmayer chose seclusion on an American farm, Arnold Zweig found Zionism and Stefan Zweig tragically decided to end his life. Theodor Wolff provided such a wealth of material that the comparative study originally planned had to be abandoned at an early stage to do justice to Theodor Wolff and the influence of exile on his writing.

It is a conventional conclusion to any research to suggest that more research is needed, and with the recent revival and urgency in the field of exile studies this observation seems particularly appropriate. No comprehensive studies of exiled German journalists and publicists and the influence of their exile experience on their writings have been undertaken. The frequently mentioned study by Michael Groth of journalists in exile in New York between 1933 and 1945 represents the story of only one particular group. Other groups, i.e., exiled journalists who fled to Prague, Paris or London are of great interest.⁵⁹⁶ The exile experience of many renowned journalists and

⁵⁹⁶ Individual journalists in exile in Prague, Paris and London have been studied, but an overall comparative study is still outstanding. Many acclaimed journalists, such as Sebastian Haffner, Kurt Hiller, Alfred Kerr found refuge in London. Their fate has been largely ignored by the otherwise detailed study by Marion Berghahn on German exiles in England. Marion Berghahn, *Continental Britons: German-Jewish Refugees from Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Berg, 1984).

publicists of the Nazi era has not been studied in detail.⁵⁹⁷ Such studies would also reveal a better understanding of the development of patterns of response to exile experiences and their manifestation in exile writing. Exile produced a variety of responses, i.e., turning to religion, strong productivity or total lack of production, either intense involvement in or total rejection of political engagements, seeking the glare of publicity or total seclusion, new found energy or despondency; the list is long.

This study examined Theodor Wolff's exile experience influencing his writing. It is hoped that it might provide an incentive for further investigations into the nexus between exile experience and writing.

⁵⁹⁷ The following publicists should be included: Wolfgang Bretholz, Julius Elbau, Ernst Feder, Bruno Frei, Kurt Hiller, Monty Jacobs, Hans Natonek, Ernst Erich Noth, Henry Pachter, Leopold Schwarzschild and many more. Some publicists' exile stories have been partially told. These include :
Georg Bernhard see Walter Fredrick Peterson, "The German Left-Liberal Press in Exile: Georg Bernhard and the Circle of Emigre Journalists around the 'Pariser Tageblatt' - 'Pariser Tageszeitung' 1933-1940," Diss. State University of New York at Buffalo, 1982.
Fritz Eberhard see Hermann Haarmann, "Socialist, Gewerkschaftler - Fritz Eberhard im Londoner Exil: eine Spurensuche," *Fritz Eberhard: Rückblicke auf Biographie und Werk*, ed. Bernd Sösemann (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2001). 193-201.
Heinrich Eduard Jacob see Anja Clarenbach, "Finis Libri: Der Schriftsteller und Journalist Heinrich Eduard Jacob (1889-1967)," Diss. Universität Hamburg, 2003.
Alfred Kerr see Karlheinz Wendler, "Alfred Kerr im Exil," Diss. Freie Univeristät Berlin, 1981.
Alfred Polgar see Ulrich Weinzierl, *Alfred Polgar: eine Biographie* (Wien: Löcker, 2005).
Hermann Wendel see Lutz Winckler, *Unter der 'Coupole': die Paris Feuilletons Hermann Wendels 1933-1936*. (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1995).

***Appendix : DIE SCHWIMMERIN, ROMAN AUS DER GEGENWART,
Synopsis.***

Ulrich Faber, son of the owner of a small guesthouse of ill repute, rises to great heights as a financier in Berlin, due to his superior personal and professional skills. Gerda Rohr, the daughter of a servant to a rich banker, approaches Faber for assistance to obtain a job in his bank. Faber obliges reluctantly; however, Gerda demonstrates talent and commitment and he becomes her mentor. A relationship develops between Gerda and Faber, who is twenty years her senior. The power struggle between the two drives the storyline. Numerous side plots reveal a society in conflict. Faber's demise due to a world wide financial crisis is aggravated by tension in his personal life. He faces three challenges in his personal life. First, his long-time war companion, Lorenz Münch changes political alliance and betrays Faber, which is particularly spiteful considering that Faber had saved his life during the war and this has left Faber with a permanently weak and wounded arm. Second, Faber's only son turns against his father with extreme political and lifestyle views. However, the third most devastating challenge is Faber's loss of Gerda, after they are both forced to flee the country.

As Gerda climbs the career ladder, she becomes the target of envy and suspicion that culminates in a vicious attempted rape assault in the house of an influential shady character, Frau Martius. Two of Gerda's friends come to her rescue and kill her attacker, a prominent Nazi Party member. Gerda and her friends, including Faber, because of his close relationship with Gerda, are implicated in the killing and therefore all four have to leave Berlin that same night. Gerda and Faber flee to the Czech border. One of Gerda's friends is killed, allegedly while resisting arrest. The other one manages to flee across the border and is later reunited with Gerda in Austria.

In order to avoid detection by German authorities, Gerda and Faber separate at the Czech border and arrange to meet in Prague the following day. However, Gerda does not keep her promise and eludes every effort by Faber to trace her in Europe. The separate journeys of the two exiles lead each to Cannes, where they meet again after many years. Gerda, now in the company of Magnano Scott, an arms dealer, has developed into a self-confident businesswoman, whereas Faber has lost energy, determination. Gerda and Faber revisit their past and contemplate their future. Although revealing their love for each other their aspirations are too different, they are forced to subsequently go their separate ways: Faber returns to Paris and Gerda sails to China.

The novel deals with the relationship between the aging, non-progressive Faber and the young and talented Gerda, the energetic 'Schwimmerin'. The struggle between them is the focus of this novel.

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