Holocaust Memoirs by Gay German Jewish Survivors: Constructing a Resistant Identity

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Abstract

This article analyses five memoirs of the Holocaust written or co-authored by self-identified German Jewish gay survivors – Alphons Silbermann, Gad Beck, Walter Guttmann, Jerry Rosenstein and Harry Raymon. While these memoirs narrate diverse experiences of persecution ranging from surviving the Holocaust in exile to experiences of brutality in hiding and in concentration camps, they form a unique corpus because of their gay German Jewish narrative voices. The article examines how each of these narratives differently constructs a gay Jewish identity in the face of extreme genocidal persecution and societal homophobia. In contrast to memoirs written by non-Jewish survivors who were persecuted by the Nazis for their homosexuality under paragraph 175, these memoirs construct gay Jewish identity as a source of resistance. As these memoirs were written fifty years or more from the events described, they also bear witness to a narrative of gay rights progress in Europe and the U.S. in the second half of the twentieth century. The article argues that the authors and co-authors also avail of frames of understanding from the 1990s and 2000s to negotiate a lifetime of trauma and construct a resistant gay German Jewish identity in retrospect.

Keywords: Holocaust; memoir; German Jewish; sexuality; queer Holocaust literature

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Introduction

How can the genre of memoir help us understand the experiences of gay Jewish subjects in the Holocaust? How can it help us create a victim-centred queer Holocaust historiography? In this article, I seek to fill in the 'queer archival gap' by reading a corpus of gay German-Jewish memoirs, four of which have received barely any scholarly attention.[1] I ask how these memoirs testify to the intersection of the threefold experience of Jewishness, of persecution, and of queer behaviour or feelings during and

after the Holocaust. I further ask how being persecuted as a member of a racialized group, rather than for stigmatized sexual practices, influences queer Jewish survivors' sense of self. I interrogate how the experience of persecution during the Holocaust intersected with the construction of a gay Jewish identity both during and after the war. In doing so, I respond to recent discussions about queer Holocaust historiography. These include Anna Hájková's attempts to close the queer archival gap in Holocaust historiography; debates about coercion, sexual barter and consent in situations of persecution;[2] Elissa Mailänder's call to queer Holocaust historiography by paying attention to multilayered, fragmented interpretations of history beyond the national, and to pay attention to sometimes uncomfortable emotional realities within history;[3] and inquiries into the construction of masculinities in the context of the Holocaust.[4] By reading queer Jewish Holocaust life writing, we also gain insight into those elements of Holocaust experience that this special issue seeks to foreground, somatic, emotional and 'difficult' facets. As R. W. Connell argues, case studies of homosexual masculinity reveals the fundamental connection between life history and social structures.[5] In analyzing these case studies, I not only contribute to queer Holocaust historiography but also to understandings about how queer masculine Jewish selves are constructed in retrospect through practices of life writing;

Very little testimony by queer Jewish survivors of the Holocaust survives, and still less in the form of published memoirs. While Hájková counts only three examples of Holocaust victims who engaged in same-sex intimacy during the Holocaust and wrote about it, I broaden my definition of victimhood to include memoirs of self-identified gay Jewish men who experienced persecution in Germany, escaped deportation, and then remigrated back to Germany in later life.[6] My corpus does not claim to be an exhaustive survey of all memoirs published by queer Jewish survivors of the Holocaust,

but it nonetheless contains the only three known memoirs of queer Jewish victims who survived under Nazi persecution, as well as including memoirs testifying to the experience of exile and remigration as queer German Jewish subjects.[7] These memoirs were all written by cis gay German men in the German language, four of whom were from prosperous middle-class families in the West of Germany, and of whom all but one were children at the time of the Nazi rise to power. This is a fact that throws up more questions about which Jewish survivors were able to publish memoirs to their queer experiences, and which audiences were receptive of them. The memoirs include Gad Beck's *Und Gad ging zu David. Die Erinnerungen des Gad Beck*, 1995/ *An Underground Life: memoirs of a gay Jew in Nazi Berlin*, 1999), Walter Guttmann's *Ich wollte es so normal wie andere auch: Walter Guttmann erzählt sein Leben/ I wanted normality like others. Walter Guttman tells his life story*, 2011, Harry Raymon's *anders von anfang an: Nachdenken über ein langes Leben/ different from the beginning: Reflections on a long life*, 2020, Jerry Rosenstein's *Ein gutes Leben ist die beste Antwort: die Geschichte des Jerry Rosenstein/ A good life is the best answer: the story of Jerry Rosenstein*, 2014 and Alphons Silbermann's *Verwandlungen. Eine Autobiographie/ Metamorphoses: An Autobiography*, 1989. All five men suffered Nazi persecution for being Jews, rather than under Nazi homophobic policies or the infamous paragraph 175, but all five self-consciously testified as gay Jews. As the authors all use the words 'homosexuell' [homosexual] or 'schwul' [gay] to describe themselves, I consciously use these words to describe them and their memoirs. I consider the self-description as 'homosexual' or 'gay' to intersect with the more capacious, ambivalent and subversive 'queer,' which I reserve for describing narrative style, experiences, feelings or behaviours. The word 'gay' itself is, as Hájková points out when discussing Beck, not always helpful for understanding these men's desires and sexual acts.[8]

Although all identify as 'gay,' along a binary of 'gay' or 'straight', several sleep with heterosexual-identified men, and Raymon describes being sexually involved with and engaged to a woman before his coming-out. Hence, while I honour their self-described sexuality as 'gay', the word 'queer' may be more useful for understanding their experiences.

Although there are many questions that could be asked of this corpus, I have selected it for the intersection of first-person testimony and queer Jewish identity, and therefore focus on the construction and representation of an intersectional queer Jewish identity. These five testimonies appeared during the flourishing of the first and second waves of queer Holocaust research discussed in the introduction to this journal issue. Thus, this study allows us to explore the intersection of first-person experience of the Holocaust and frames of gay self-understanding constructed during the second half of the twentieth century. I ask the following questions: How do their narratives construct their experiences as gay Jewish survivors in the light of fifty years? How do they depict their construction of a gay German Jewish identity? How do they thematize queer Jewish identity in Nazi Germany and the possibility of queer sexual agency in the camps and in hiding?

Before I address these questions, I first provide brief biographies, in alphabetical order. Gad Beck (1923-2012) was born in a working-class family in Berlin, the son of a Jewish immigrant from Vienna and a Berlin convert from Protestantism. His Christian relatives and status as a *Mischling* initially helped save him from deportation, before he went underground and worked as a part of the Chug Chaluzi Zionist resistance group in the last years of the war. After liberation in Berlin, he moved to Palestine before returning to Germany as a Holocaust educator. Walter Guttmann (1928-2014) was born in Duisburg in 1924, to a middle-class family. His mother died when he was a child, his

father died shortly after being released from Dachau in 1938. Guttmann and his small brother Alfred were sent to Holland on a Kindertransport in 1939; they were separately placed with Jewish foster families, and then sent separately to Westerbork in 1943. Alfred was deported from Westerbork to Auschwitz, where he was murdered, whereas Guttmann was sent to Bergen-Belsen and then to Tröbnitz, where he was liberated. He returned to Holland and eventually settled in Israel, where he worked in banking until his retirement. Harry Raymon (1926-) was born as Harry Heyman in 1926, into a middle-class family in the small town of Kirchberg, which his family fled for Cologne in 1936 and America in 1937. The family spent the war years on a farm in New Jersey. Raymon then studied under the famous Expressionist theatre maker Erwin Piscator in New York, and served briefly in the U.S. army in Europe before re-emigrating to Europe. He moved to Stuttgart via Paris in 1948 and settled as an actor and film maker in Munich, where he still lives. Jerry Rosenstein (1927-2016) was born in Bensheim, south-west Germany, to a middle-class family. While his elder brother Ernst emigrated to Palestine in 1939, and died fighting in the British Army, the rest of the family sought refuge in Amsterdam. His middle brother Hans was deported and murdered in Auschwitz in 1942, and the rest of the family deported to Westerbork in 1943. After his parents were sent to Bergen-Belsen without him for some months, Rosenstein reunited with his family in Theresienstadt, before being deported with his father to Auschwitz. They together survived a death march. The reunited parents subsequently emigrated with Rosenstein to the U.S., where Rosenstein lived and worked in import-export until the end of his life. Alphons Silbermann (1909-2000) was born into a bourgeois Jewish family in Cologne, and studied law there before moving to Amsterdam in 1935, Paris and then Australia with his parents in 1938 to flee the Nazis. In Australia, he worked as a fast food entrepreneur and musicologist before returning to Cologne as a professor of

sociology, where he worked until his death. These biographies show a diversity of Holocaust experiences affecting German Jews: exile in Holland, the U.S. and Australia, being sent on a Kindertransport, deportation to ghettos and camps, death marches, resistance work, and survival in Germany underground.

Queer identities and cultures have historically been stigmatized and marginalized within Holocaust memory and culture. More, until very recently, the history of the Holocaust and the history of the persecution of queer subjects under Nazi rule were treated separately. As Hájková comments, it seems as though all persecuted homosexuals were non-Jewish, whereas the Jewish victims always were assumed to be heterosexual.'[9] Natascha Bobrosky notes that the 'Aryan' homosexual man has been turned into a kind of basic victim in queer Holocaust studies.[10] Queer experiences during the Holocaust have been associated with experiences of persecution of mostly non-Jewish 'pink triangle prisoners under the German Paragraph 175 or Austrian Paragraph 129 Ib.[11] These experiences were not only brutal, as shown by the pioneering memoirs of persecuted gay men Josef Kohout and Pierre Seel, but also saturated in shame and silence due to the continued existence of homophobia and anti-sodomy legislation after the Nazi regime ended in 1945.[12] As Michael Bochow writes in his introduction to Walter Guttman's memoir, homosexuals of Jewish origin were a minority among a minority.[13] Only recently has pioneering work on sexuality among Jewish prisoners by, among others, Hájková, Pascale Bos, and Doróta Glowacka probed Jewish queer experiences including rape, sexual barter and sex under conditions of coercion.[14] Florian Zabransky's work on Jewish men and the Holocaust deploys the lens of masculinity studies to explore Jewish men's sexuality during the genocide, noting that 'hardly anything is known about non-violent same-sex relations between inmates,' and that almost all testimony to queer experience from the camps is retrospective

(unlike the eyewitness accounts such as diaries and letters available from ghettoes and DP camps).[15] This further attests to the fragmentary and contingent nature of evidence of queer experience among Jewish victims. In with more expansive definitions of the ideas of 'survivorship,' queer Jewish experiences of the Holocaust must also be seen beyond situations of imprisonment and confinement. Well-known queer Jewish subjects such as Klaus and Erika Mann, or the lawyer Fritz Bauer, who were able to flee into exile, could also be understood as having had queer experiences 'during the Holocaust.'[16] Andreas Pretzel and Andreas Kraß have compiled a set of ninety short biographies of queer Jewish German subjects between 1897 and 1945, detailing a wide range of experiences in the Nazi period, from murder to incarceration to exile and in some cases remigration thereafter.[17] Thus it can be argued that queer experiences in the Holocaust could include any queer experiences during 1933-1945 that affected Jewish subjects who were in some way persecuted by the Nazis.

Narrating and publishing gay German Jewish survival

The five published memoirs being analyzed here represent a significant contribution to closing the 'queer archival gap' in Holocaust historiography in several senses. Firstly, they represent a generic crossing point between the canonized genre of Holocaust testimony and the genre of the coming out memoir.[18] Both genres have a claim to authenticity at their heart, via the 'autobiographical pact' but also via their reference to direct experience of historical persecution or of queer experience and confession.[19] Both genres have developed recognizable stylistic and generic features: most saliently both may be marked by the seeming resolution of either the cessation of persecution or 'coming out' as queer. However, the instability of the intersection of queer, racial and religious identities marks these five memoirs stylistically as well as thematically. For instance, Sarah Emanuel draws attention to the way that Beck's

narrative destabilize racist and heteronormative ideas of ethnicity and gender, and all five share in this destabilizing strategy.[20] The genre of memoir thus can allow for more capacity for self-reflection and self-assertion than such potentially heteronormative and linear formats as the USC Shoah Foundation video interview.[21]

Although all these memoirs were originally written in German, they are also accounts of transnational identity construction because they were produced after periods in exile – Guttmann in Israel via Amsterdam, Rosenstein in California, and Beck, Silbermann and Raymon in Germany but after long periods of exile in Israel, Australia and America. Only Beck's memoir has circulated beyond the German linguasphere by appearing in English translation; they are therefore written, in very different ways, to address German readers. These are also extremely belated testimonies, written fifty to seventy years after the events described. Bochow, the editor of Guttmann's memoir, states in the preface that it is difficult to determine the authenticity of such testimony as Beck's, Guttmann's and Raymon's at such a distance in time, and notes that they are more to be viewed in the light of fictionalizations.[22] I read them therefore less as objective evidence of queer life under persecution, and more as constructions of gay Jewish identity that negotiate the trauma of the Holocaust with the tools of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Hence, as Nicholas Wright has said, they are linguistically hybrid, 'because the lexicon available to these men during the Holocaust and the lexicon available now differ, yet these men appropriate our contemporary grammar of queer existence.'[23] To use Zabransky's words, in reading them I seek to 'excavate not only how Jewish men remember and make sense of their experiences, but also how they chose to form the narrative and how they represented their ordeal.'[24] The very possibility of a *gay German Jewish* identity, I argue, is one that each survivor had to invent under conditions of extreme racial persecution and overwhelming societal

homophobia even after the war. This was true whether they were in exile or experienced direct persecution in Germany.

As memoirs written by men who were prolific cultural producers as well as survivors in exile, Silbermann's 1990 *Verwandlungen* has much in common with Raymon's 2020 memoir, *anders von anfang an*. This is also a counterpart to Raymon's 2005 autobiographical novel *Einmal Exil und zurück [To exile and back].*[25] Nonetheless, their social contexts of publication differ: *Verwandlungen* appeared thirty years bore *anders vom anfang an:* before the removal of paragraph 175 of the German criminal code in 1994 and before legislative restitution to queer victims of the Holocaust. Although they bookend a significant period in queer Holocaust history, these two memoirs both raise similar question of what counts as survivor testimony. On the one hand, both subjects survived the Holocaust in Anglophone exile, both certainly impoverished and precarious, but not at risk of genocide. On the other hand, unlike the other memoirs in this corpus, *Verwandlungen, Einmal Exil und zurück* and *anders von anfang an* were written by the survivors themselves, without the acknowledged help of a ghost writer or editor. They are both highly aware that they are constructing a gay German Jewish identity and memory in retrospect. When describing an early romantic excursion, Silbermann notes

> How would it be possible for anyone but a lying fantasist to examine a so-called turning point that lies decades in the past to see whether it caused pleasure or pain, lecherous or ascetic insights or oppressive scruples. At the same time it is hard for him to leap over first sexual stirrings.[26]

The urgency of telling the 'truth' of Silbermann's somatic memories of queer desire and awakening is placed in ironic tension with his scholarly skepticism about the fallacy of memory. Both authors thus produce a certain distance to their selves-in-memory, Silbermann using the third person, Raymon through his dual strategy of first lightly

fictionalizing his life history and fifteen years later producing a first-person memoir. Raymon further oscillates between the present time of narration – 2017 – and key stages of his self-in-memory. These decentering and destabilizing narrative strategies can in themselves be called queer. As part of its self-reflexive structure*, anders von anfang an* thematizes the difficulty of capturing experience in words: Raymon mirrors Silbermann's empirical skepticism in a more emotive way. Recalling his excitement at meeting his first boyfriend Johnny in 1945, in Cologne, he writes 'Feelings! Can one describe them, make them come alive! Which words can convey the pain which separation or the loss of a beloved person causes? And not least the whirl of feelings that I was in!'[27] Retrospectively, he struggles to find words to express his queer Jewish experience, while as a young man, he does not have the words to describe his identity. Shortly after his eighteenth birthday, he is called up to the US army. He describes himself as baffled by the questions levelled at him about his 'religion, citizenship, homosexuality – yes or no! (The question shocked me, I didn't know what that meant! Should I say 'No, Jewish'?)'[28] The writing gay Jewish self pokes fun at the limited vocabulary of the naive self-in-memory, suggesting that his ignorance of the word 'homosexuality' prevents him from understanding his own gayness. At the same time, his self-irony draws attention both to the structural homophobia of the U.S. army in the 1940s, and to the underlying stereotypes of Jewish 'gender trouble' active in the first half of the twentieth century.

Verwandlungen is saturated both with sexual frankness and also with Silberman's celebration of his double outsider identity. As a Jew and as a gay man, he gleefully enjoys leading hybrid lives and identities, while at the same time managing to restore his lost prewar social status by succeeding in a series of professorships, grant applications, publications, public appearances and interdisciplinary research projects.

'Joining many lives to each other is no hardship to him.'[29] The memoir's camp style of narration in the third person, where Silbermann refers to himself as 'he', adds to this hybrid effect. The bulk of his 600-page autobiography is taken up not with the Holocaust, but with an account of the ups and downs of his long and varied career, research interests and projects. This narrative is interspersed with catty and amusing anecdotes about various love affairs. As Joachim Knoll notes, his autobiography barely thematizes the humiliation and persecution that he experienced in Cologne in the Nazi years.[30] Although untranslated into English, Silbermann's memoir was republished in 2015 and 2022, signaling its continuing significance for the German public. It was acclaimed in the mainstream German news magazine *Spiegel* on its first publication as a 'gigantic buffet of life', the picaresque story of a Rhenish Jewish boy 'spiced with homoerotic tidbits and disasters' (*Der Spiegel*, 11 February 1990.) The *Spiegel* reviewer Peter Ross Range praises the survivor memoir for avoiding 'martyr prose' and 'self-pity.' This suggests that in the 1990s the German public was more inclined to welcome upbeat accounts by middle-class queer Jewish survivors that glossed over the experience of persecution.

Raymon's narrator is more melancholy, and struggles to come to terms with his memories of double survivorship. The structure of *anders von anfang* an is reflective, alternating between chapters recalling Raymon's childhood, emigration and long career, and chapters that form a memoir of his 2017 trip to lay the Stolperstein in Kirchberg. He confidently states both that 'I experienced my orientation neither as a burden nor as misfortune,[31] and that 'I am at peace with myself when it comes to my Jewishness.'[32] However, at the same time as he asserts his proud sense of belonging to a Jewish tradition, he writes that his faith has disappeared because it is incomprehensible for him how one can believe in a God 'who had inflicted Auschwitz on "his" people.'[33]

Jewishness, for Raymon, is not in conflict with his sexuality, and he still feels a sense of Jewish values and always hangs a mezuzah on his door. At the same time, Raymon in 2017 is also unsure as to whether he can count himself as a survivor who is owed a *Stolperstein* at all: 'Am I, who did not have to experience the ordeal of the concentration camps, a "survivor"? May I demand to count as one simply on grounds of age? If so, do I not have a duty to tell "how it was"?'[34] This duty to tell 'how it was' is, for Raymon, the dual duty of telling 'how it was' as a persecuted Jew and as a gay man growing in in the homophobia of the U.S., Paris and Germany in the mid-twentieth century. At the *Stolperstein* ceremony in 2017, Raymon describes how the intersection of his memories of Nazi persecution and his memories of his dawning sexuality and early lovers causes him to break down in tears:

> I was ashamed. The thoughts swirled around in me as though I had been drinking […] Mike and Wolf appeared in exchanged roles. Father appeared with his secret, although he had nothing to do with this. Only a short moment, but it lasted an eternity.[35]

Despite having been invited as an honored guest at the ceremony, Raymon's tears suggest that the shame of a lifetime lived with the trauma of Nazi persecution and the stigma attached to homosexuality persists. Like *Verwandlungen*, *anders von anfang an* is gossipy, picaresque and witty, namedropping (for instance) encounters with Marlene Dietrich and Marlon Brando, and telling stories of a life spent on the stage and in film production. However, although Raymon's artistic output is varied and prolific, the memoir closes with the statement that it is the *Stolperstein* that will remain of him. His memoir appeared after most survivors had passed away, into a context of greater openness towards queer Jewish survivorship but also the loneliness of old age.

In contrast to Silbermann and Raymon, Beck, Guttmann and Rosenstein were all Jewish

children who were unable to escape Nazi persecution before 1945. In this sense, their memoirs more directly bear testimony to queer experiences 'in the Holocaust', as they all experienced their sexual self-understanding emerging against a background of intensifying antisemitic persecution. In another sense, these three testimonies are less direct, as Beck, Guttmann and Rosenstein all produced their memoirs in collaboration with co-writers or editors. Despite their similar experiences, the framing and co-production of Guttmann's and Rosenstein's memoirs is very different. Guttmann's is recorded by historians interested in capturing the detail of his queer Jewish experiences of survivorship during and after the Holocaust, and published in a small gay publishing house. By contrast, Rosenstein's memoir, published with the mainstream Swiss Diogenes publishing house, is half a testimony of Rosenstein's time in the Holocaust, half a record of a 2013 road trip with the co-author, Friedrich Dönhoff. This structure pulls the focus into the present and into the focalization of Dönhoff. The coproduction of the three co-authored memoirs is marked to different degrees. Jerry Rosenstein's memoir appears directly under the name of Dönhoff. Guttmann's appears with Bochow and Pretzel named as editors and the subtitle 'Walter Guttmann tells his life'. Gad Beck's memoir, however, appears under his own name, with Franz Heibert credited as editor in German, whereas in the English version it is credited as 'co-written with Frank Heibert.'[36] Each of these re-narrations and re-inscriptions of these three survivors' stories must therefore be seen as a co-production with younger writers who are bringing an understanding of identity and history that was forged in the postwar years and in the course of the gay liberation struggle after the 1970s.

Each memoir's narrative style forms part of identity construction as well as an appeal to a different audience. Heibert characterises Beck's style in the foreword as an 'unmistakable mixture of Berlin warm-hearted gruffness, Viennese clever charm,

Yiddish chutzpah, and the Oriental art of romancing,' a somewhat racialised comment that nonetheless attests to the innate hybridity of Beck's style. Beck's creative performance of his life history was also the subject of a film, *Die Freiheit des Erzählens [The Freedom of Narration]*.[37] The film's directors, Cackett and Does, comment: 'There is a counterfactual ring to some of his stories, a touch of wishful thinking. Sometimes I think it has something to do with his homosexuality, with the ability to sexualize even most obnoxious situations. Sometimes I think it is Gad's revenge on the Nazis: He won't let them define the past.'[38] This suggests that what is at stake in Beck's memoir of queer experiences in the Holocaust is the creation of a resistant self, over and above the narration of historical facts. As Emanuel argues, Beck's performance of identity – which is extremely camp – serve to demolish the boundaries of Nazi racial laws and allow him to survive.[39] His celebrated love story with the man he claims was his first love, Manfred Lewin, is just one of many sexual escapades detailed in the memoir, where sex with an array of men is figured humorously or romantically as a means of gaining autonomy in precarious situations.

Guttmann 's *Ich wollte es so normal wie andere auch* is explicitly presented as a transcription of a series of interviews, shaped by oral historian Bochow and scholar of gay history Pretzel, who frame the book with prefaces explaining their methodology. As Thomas Rahe, then director of the Bergen-Belsen memorial site, writes in his afterword, the memoir is told 'not with the aspirations of a literary artwork, but in the form of an interview that has only been lightly edited and written down.'[40] Krahe praises the memoir for its 'immediacy' and 'specificity' of detail, as well as for its frank expression both of Jewish identity and of homosexuality. Nonetheless, as Pretzel says in his introduction, Guttmann tells his story 'as he remembers it and may have preserved it in his memory, past experiences are also overlain with later explanations.'[41] Although it

may not be as self-consciously literary as Silbermann's, Raymon's or Beck's memoirs, Guttmann's is still a performance, but one created dialogically, and corresponding to a different generic set of expectations.

Guttmann's narrative of the Holocaust is told in disjointed paragraphs that reflect the brutality of his experiences. The sentences are mostly short, linked with simple conjunctions such as 'and' or 'but', and while the details of Guttmann's suffering and trauma are given vividly, they are not consistently linked to reflections on identity. In some cases, it is possible to speculate that statements about queer experiences in the Holocaust are prompted by the frames of understanding of the interviewers, who have a scholarly interest in persecution under paragraph 175. This is shown when Guttmann says, presumably in response to an interviewer prompt, 'I don't know whether I also saw prisoners with the pink triangle, that is homosexuals.'[42] However, Guttmann's detailed discussions of his gay experiences and Jewish identity run consistently throughout the book, as well as in the video testimony he gave for the Bergen-Belsen memorial site which is integrated into the book.[43]

Although Rosenstein's trajectory reflects Guttmann's in many details, and Rosenstein's story was published only three years later, the framing of the two publications is very different. While Guttmann's memoir was published in the gay publishing house *männerscharm verlag*, *Ein gutes Leben ist die beste Antwort* was published in the mainstream Diogenes press, under the name of the aristocratic Prussian journalist Dönhoff. Like *anders vom anfang an*, it takes the form of chapters that alternate between a present-day narration of a trip back to stations of the survivor's youth in Germany and Holland, and a retrospective narration of Rosenstein's persecution and survival as a child and young man. The present-day sections are narrated by Dönhoff, recording conversations with Rosenstein as well as the journey they undertake together.

The retrospective sections are narrated in Rosenstein's first person. The dialogic structure of the book thus explicitly credits Dönhoff with shaping the narrative. Nonetheless, the present-day sections scrupulously center Rosenstein's voice and reactions, without providing sustained access to Dönhoff's own inner voice. Dönhoff discusses his own role in the project in a few words that frame the memoir in the context of Dönhoff's family background:

> In my family there were supporters as well as opponents of the Nazis, and those who moved somewhere in between. I am interested in this time, and in how the consequences are dealt with. There's something more when it comes to Jerry: How did he manage to lead a life without hate and bitterness?[44]

Dönhoff is best known for his biography of his great-aunt, the journalist Countess Marion von Dönhoff, an aristocratic resistance fighter against Hitler.[45] *Ein gutes Leben* is highly concerned with questions of German *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* [coming to terms with the past].[46] Dönhoff repeatedly stages scenes where Rosenstein patiently talks about his experiences in the Holocaust to the Dutch and German people he meets on his journey; these function as surrogates for an assumed straight non-Jewish reader.

The blurb for the memoir suggests that Rosenstein was speaking about his experiences for the first time on the journey with Dönhoff to Amsterdam and Germany. In fact, Rosenstein had already publicly given testimony, in 1999 to the USC Shoah Foundation, and then in an interview with his Jewish family friend Ingrid Lobid in 2006, hosted on his personal website, jerryrosenstein.info. While the overall arc of the testimony to his life experiences is the same in both narratives, the different formats demonstrate the role of Dönhoff as mediator in creating a normative image. In the 2006 video, Rosenstein is seated in front of a book by the celebrated lesbian author Mary Renault, and speaks at more length, in English, and more analytically about his early understanding of his sexuality than with Dönhoff. By contrast, Dönhoff interweaves

Rosenstein's sexuality throughout the narrative without centring it. He introduces the child Rosenstein as 'a bit different'; once he flees to Amsterdam at the age of nine, he beings to seem 'a bit feminine, a bit like a *Meisje*, a girl. But that didn't bother me.'[47] This statement presents Rosenstein's sexuality as only tangentially a matter that troubles wider questions of gender identity, suggesting that such gender trouble can be reserved for the asexual space of childhood.

Intersectional identity construction: becoming a gay German Jewish man in the Holocaust

Donhoff's largely desexualized presentation of Rosenstein as a cheerful Holocaust survivor leads us to the question of how these men depict negotiating an intersectional gay German Jewish identity, at a time – between 1925 and 1950 – that was both intensely antisemitic and homophobic. Written between the late 1980s and 2022, these memoirs draw upon a twentieth-century history of queer and Jewish identity formation and activism which de-pathologized queer Jewishness.[48] Their understandings of their own queer Jewishness are far from antisemitic ideas of Jewish 'gender trouble' that racialized stereotypes of a 'weak and passive' Jewish masculinity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, or that saw Jewishness as in some way inherently deviant and queer.[49] This study allows us to examine how gay male survivors negotiated such stereotypes, at a time when normative Jewish male identity was in flux due to conditions of extreme danger,[50] and how they rejected such stereotypes in later life.

Although both Silbermann's and Raymon's parents objected to their return to the land of the persecutors, both made the move in search of creative and sexual freedom: postwar Germany, rather than conservative Australia or America, offered this promise.[51] Both create complex, self-contradictory gay German Jewish identities. Raymon has

long been preoccupied with exploring his connection to the Holocaust and his own queer Jewish identity, starting by making a feature film about his parents' life under Nazism, *Regentropfen* [Raindrops] in 1981.[52] While the title of *Einmal Exil und zurück* emphasises Jewish experience, by contrast, the title of the later *Anders von anfang an* is explicitly queer, resonating with Richard Oswald's classic 1919 gay activist film *Anders als die anderen* [Different from the Others.][53] Nonetheless, the lines between the two texts are blurred, as they describe many of the same incidents, and both reproduce documents and photographs from Raymon's life. In the early postwar years in Europe, Raymon, inspired by Marcel Marceau, led a mime troupe, and *Einmal exil und zurück* contains photos of Raymon in performance, face in heavy stage makeup, signaling a deep commitment to play with identities and masks.[54] Like Silbermann's, Raymon's identity is profoundly queer in its performative multiplicity.

Silbermann reports having to construct his own gay identity in the late 1920s in the absence of any of the sexological frameworks in existence at that time: 'thoughts about homosexuality, being an outsider, prostitution, soliciting and criminality were as alien to him as ideals and justifications of male or boy love. He had not yet read Plato's Symposium, nor Magnus Hirschfeld's medical and biological writings.'[55] He also responded with revulsion to the approaches of an older man who constantly hinted at 'classic models – from Michelangelo to Oscar Wilde, from Hadrian to Ludwig II.'[56] Instead of drawing on these now outmoded and secular models of queerness,, after troubled reflection and some reading, he early reconciled his gay identity thanks to his Jewish faith:

> The question, why am I the way I am, or what does it mean that I am the way I am, troubles him even more [...] it neither calms nor gratifies him to read that homosexuality is either sexually or biologically determined […] It must have been

> a visit to the synagogue on the day of atonement, Yom Kippur, when he became fully aware of the omnipotence of the omniscient Creator. For from this moment on the wrangling with himself transformed into the certainty that the Lord wanted to make you just as you are. He has held to this belief until this day.[57]

Even in deeply Catholic 1920s Cologne he could visit the *Dornröschen* [Sleeping Beauty] gay bar. 'I complete entry into a curious circle, which keeps at bay chilling ideas about abnormality, indecency, debauchery or sodomy through its decided uninhibitedness.'[58] Escape from persecution became core to his growing sense of his Jewish identity and Orthodox practice. He details how in Australia, through frozen out of the xenophobic local Jewish community, he 'has not become unbelieving, no, he still holds dialogues with his God, and thanks Him in his prayers at night for saving him from the Nazi barbarism.'[59] Silbermann's gay Jewish identity is an idiosyncratic one, that leads him on a restless search for intellectual and sexual freedom.[60]

Silbermann remained committed to a sociological exploration of these identities throughout his career, publishing widely on antisemitism, as well as an essay exploring the cultural history of homosexuality.[61] Hence, *Verwandlungen* is part of a decentralized constellation of Silbermann's writings on gay and Jewish histories and cultures. Silbermann lived life at a distance from the gay liberation movement and took a critical view of the concept of gay pride. At the end of his memoir, Silbermann reflects that the frames of sociological analysis, no matter how precise they may seem, are inadequate to account for his multiplicities of identities and roles. Instead, he ends with the performative and highly queer metaphor of the theatre to state that 'all the world's a stage', and that masks have their own truth: 'he imagines with his characteristic optimism that, when the performance is over, the public will never see the actor without makeup.'[62] Silbermann's memoir resists normative processes of subject construction.

Beck, by contrast, had a co-author to construct a coherent textual identity. His awakening sexuality is consistently described in tandem with his emerging religiosity and conversion to Zionism throughout his childhood and adolescence in Nazi Berlin. Each deepening of his Jewish faith is linked to a love affair or sexual escapade. His first sexual encounter (with a teacher) takes place after he moves to a Jewish school in 1934, once the antisemitism at his 'Aryan' *Gymnasium* became unbearable. His return to the Jewish Scheunenviertel area of Berlin 'led me in the only direction still open to me, the Jewish one.'[63] The sexual encounter with a teacher also led him to '"come out," as you say nowadays, in a totally nonchalant fashion.'[64] The same constellation of Jewish and gay identity is created when he seduces Lewin at an illegal Zionist youth group. Beck shows how Jewish resistance functions as an erotics:

> We were very loving with each other. Kissing was especially important to him, but he probably concentrated at first on our shared Zionist spirit, letting this common ground carry him into something physical. Whatever we did, it was not much like gay sex as one thinks of it today, but then again, Manfred was heterosexual anyway.[65]

In both of these experiences, Beck's erotics of gay Jewish resistance push back not only against Nazi persecution, but also against the homonormative constructs of the time of writing, the 1990s. Beck critiques the concepts of 'coming out' and 'gay sex' as anachronistic frames that cannot capture his queer experiences in the Holocaust. This critique of contemporary gay frames also appears in *Die Freiheit des Erzählens*, as Tuuva Juvonen notes: 'it is somewhat difficult also for the elderly Beck and the well-intended younger filmmakers to find common ways to talk about the role of sexuality in his life during the war years. 'Had I taken my homosexuality as tragically as you, I'd have hung myself ages ago', he huffs.'[66] This is in contrast to Raymon, whose narrating self reflects more positively on the changes in the possibilities open to gay lovers in

2020 compared to his youth. Discussing the breakup of his first gay relationship in 1945, he writes 'Today, what brought me and Johnny together would probably have had a better chance. At the time that we spent together, feelings had to remain hidden.'[67] This subjunctive future that Raymon suggests here was at odds with his parents' expectation that as a Jewish man he will marry and have children.[68]

Beck did not have to negotiate these expectations. Provocatively, Beck suggests that homosexuality was a protective characteristic for him during the Holocaust, unlike heterosexual relations: 'Although everyone turned a blind eye to whatever we boys were up to with each other […] everyone knew marriage affected one's place on the Nazi scale of discrimination.'[69] Homosexual Jewishness is a means for Beck to elude the genocidal strictures of the Nuremberg laws. *An Underground Life* can thus be read as an erotics of gay Jewish resistance. 'I never felt like an outsider because of my homosexuality,' Beck insists. 'We were all united by a strong sense of solidarity. We were oppressed and persecuted, and we had no desire to become people who discriminated against others.'[70] Rather than creating an outsider identity, Beck's queer Jewish identity is part of a collective resistant identity: a *we* that includes the Jewish youth movements that Beck participates in, but also, by extension, his family, which he claims always accepted his sexuality: 'Anyway, there really were other things to worry about.'[71] Mailänder comments that, among many complex factors, Beck's breezy account of his intersectional identity and sexual adventures tells us as much about his gendered masculine confidence in his positionality and hence narrative voice as they do about the events and situations he describes.[72] The collectivity of his narrative identity hence has its gendered limits.

Guttmann came of age during the Holocaust, and his experiences of Jewishness and of homosexuality are intrinsically linked to persecution. He started at a Jewish

school only a year after Hitler came to power, and notes that, like Beck, he was educated to emigrate to Palestine, as Germany was already becoming impossible as a homeland for Jews.[73] Zionism is key to his Jewish identity: Guttmann describes an underground Zionist youth group in Bergen-Belsen as a source of strength that kept him above water,[74] and declares that Israel is his *Heimat* [homeland].[75] He expresses frank confidence in his gay Jewishness. Describing cruising in Amsterdam as a teenager, he states 'I didn't have the feeling that I was doing anything bad or forbidden. I needed sex a lot and I didn't know what homosexuality was then either.' [76] In old age, he says, he moves happily between gay friendship groups and straight friendship groups, and is active in Aguda, an Israeli gay organization.[77] He celebrates the progress of gay rights in Holland and in Israel in his lifetime, while commenting that homosexuality remains an abomination for Orthodox people and Mizrahi Jews.[78] Guttmann's particular form of gay Jewish identity – Zionist, liberal and happily promiscuous – is framed within his historical circumstances of persecution, subsequent emigration and career success in Israel's founding decades. The documentary form of the memoir means that the historian-interviewers are primarily concerned with recording the detail of Guttmann's statements. Bochow and Pretzel refrain from interpreting Guttmann's statements, allowing his own ambivalence about the extent to which trauma marked his gay experience and identity to be unresolved. Although *Ein gutes Leben* thematizes Rosenstein's homosexuality and his Jewishness, these experiences are not central to Dönhoff's narrative. Instead, they are used to compose the overall image of Rosenstein as a joyful survivor who has overcome internal conflict and bitterness. Dönhoff creates this image in the first pages of the memoir when he introduces Rosenstein as a proud but liberal gay Jew, a member of the LGBTQ-friendly Congregation Sha'ar Zahav in San Francisco, who also happily eats pork.[79] Although the memoir details internal

conflicts about his queer experiences in the past, particularly Rosenstein's tense relationship with his homophobic Orthodox mother, Dönhoff's introduction presents these conflicts as happily resolved in the present.

Sites of survival: gay Jewish lives in exile, camps and life underground

While four of the memoirists fled Germany for Holland, only two them were able to fully escape the most lethal aspects of Nazi persecution by escaping Europe. Raymon was ten at the time that he emigrated, and his memories of Nazi persecution center around discrimination in school, violence towards Jews on the street, and his father's trauma at being forced to sell his business and belongings at a huge loss under threat of being sent to a concentration camp.[80] As Silbermann managed to escape Europe in 1938, and to bring his elderly parents to him to Sydney, he reports very little about the genocide itself. He claims that, to his shame, the news of the pogrom night of 1938 which reached him in Paris seemed like an announcement from another world.[81] In Australia, he learned little of the escalating genocide in Europe, and even had he known anything, he writes, he and his fellow-Jews in Sydney could not do anything about it.[82] Nonetheless, his experiences in a nationalist student fraternity provides evidence of an intersectional experience of oppression as a gay Jew even before the Nazis rise to power. Silbermann attempted to participate in the fraternity not only to negotiate his twin German and Jewish identities, but more importantly as an opportunity for queer encounters.[83] However, the fraternity became infiltrated by national socialist students demanding the expulsion of all Jews. Shortly after, once his sexuality became clear to the group due to his refusal to participate in brothel visits, he was unjustly accused of sexually abusing a younger member of the group. Although he was eventually exonerated by a court of honour, his authority and reputation suffered.[84] After the Nazis came to power, he was beaten up among a group of other Jewish

students on the university steps, and the whole family left for Holland in 1935. Silbermann's experience shows that the structures that would exclude queer and Jewish subjects from German social life were there prior to the Nazi rise to power, but that it was the dramatic stripping of civil rights from Jews that made life in Germany completely impossible.[85]

Beck, Guttmann and Rosenstein all came of age as gay teenagers during Nazi oppression – Beck in the underground, Guttmann and Rosenstein in the camps. Their memoirs thus provide crucial evidence to understand ongoing debates about the sexual experiences in situations of duress in the Holocaust, and the question of the extent to which choices about sexual behaviour could be made in situations of coercion. Although all three men describe sexualized situations during their time underground and in the camps, none frame themselves as victims of sexual coercion. Krondorfer and Creangă note that in the camps, 'the preservation of a sexual identity became an act of self-affirmation and therefore resistance against the life-destroying machinery' of the Nazis.[86] This provides valuable insight particularly into the highly sexualized accounts of Beck and Guttmann. Beck's insistence on figuring gay Jewishness as a camp means of escape may also explain why he glosses over situations of sexual coercion in the Holocaust. When a non-Jewish German makes an apartment available to him on condition that 'he could come by regularly', Beck writes 'At first I was shocked at the bluntness with which he made his demand. But I didn't have much time to waste.'[87] Beck asserts that he basically liked the man, and makes the situation of sexual barter into a camp performance where he wears 'famous silk underwear … For him, I played a real stereotypically female role. I was to look erotically tempting, but by no means was I always to say yes…'[88] Through the subversive act of drag and the camp re-narration of the sexual barter, Beck regains control over the coercive situation. Beck's camp self-in-

narration also takes Zionism and Jewish spirituality extremely seriously. He cites his religious faith as part of his survival strategy: 'Only God can take vengeance and punish, not a human being. Feelings of hatred are an expression of powerlessness.'[89] Power, instead, lies in Beck's power as narrator to harmonize and dramatize desperate situations. Hence, although in *Die Freiheit des Erzählens* Beck's sister and fellow-survivors cast doubt on key aspects of his memoir, including the romantic tale of his farewell from Lewin, what is at stake in the memoirs is less a fidelity to the laws of historical veracity, but the creation of a gay male Jewish self that camply eludes binary laws and norms.[90]

While Rosenstein survived the camps almost always in the company of his father, who afforded him a protective factor against sexual predation, Guttmann went through the camps alone, following the deaths of his parents and murder of his brother. Guttmann's first sexual experiences and formation of his identity took place in the context of the trauma of the formative events of 1937-1939, when his parents both died and he was sent to Holland on a *Kindertransport*.[91]. The seventeen-year-old son of his second Dutch foster-family initiated a sexual relationship with him when Guttmann was twelve. Guttmann says this was 'really more than just a boyish relationship,'[92] and that the relationship continued when he returned from the camps in 1946, by that stage an adult man of twenty-one.[93] Despite his positive evaluation of the relationship – 'that suited us both very well' - it is hard not to see it as sexual exploitation of a young child by an older child at a time when both were in a situation of extreme persecution.[94] As with Beck's claim that his childhood sexual experiences with his teacher were consensual, Guttmann's insistence on the enjoyable nature of his relationship with 'Paul Schreiber' can also be read as an attempt to create agency and a resistant gay Jewish identity in a situation where he had very little agency otherwise. Regular casual sex also

is a constitutive feature of Guttmann's post-war gay identity, in opposition to his remaining extended family's expectations that he should marry and have children.[95] He describes casual queer sexual experiences that start in Amsterdam at the age of 14, continue in the concentration camp of Westerbork, and are a feature of his life into old age in the saunas of Tel Aviv. In the concluding reflections to the memoir, Guttmann states, 'I never wanted to tie myself down, like many homosexuals… I was never monogamous,' and reflects directly that he does not know whether that is because of his traumatic experiences as a child.[96] Hence, Krondorfer and Creangă's claim that sexuality provided a means of preserving a sense of self must be balanced against the fact that both subjects were vulnerable children at the time of the sexual exploits they describe.

Although Guttmann and Rosenstein's experiences were not 'situational homosexuality', as both self-identify as having always been gay, they also cannot unproblematically be described as self-assertion. Zabransky writes that very early sex was also an artefact of the Holocaust, and that sex among very young teenagers became normalized.[97] He includes the testimony of Finn Kollau that 'in Buchenwald, it was common to have sexual intercourse. 'This was normal, this is everywhere with barracking. But I was never a homosexual, never.'[98] Given this context, it is left unresolved whether Guttmann's ideas about 'normal' homosexuality are formed by the norms of the camps, or those of gay life in semi-legality in the postwar years. Here, his gay identity is ambivalently framed between twentieth-century homosexual norms – being 'like many homosexuals' - and his Holocaust trauma. Rosenstein's realization of his sexuality at the age of sixteen, and in Westerbork, is recounted as traumatic in itself: 'I am gay [*schwul*]. This discovery horrifies me. My self-confidence begins to waver, because what I have heard about homosexuals until now was mostly negative.'[99] This

horror contrasts notably with Guttmann's statement, at much the same age and deported to the same camp, that he enjoyed multiple sexual encounters there and did not feel they were wrong. Rosenstein's claim that he had to keep his sexuality secret is possibly in part because, unlike the orphaned Guttmann, Rosenstein continued to be with his mother and father during this period, and subject to their norms and guidance. Rosenstein's shameful sense of his sexuality develops in tandem with the intensification of his persecution in the camps. Like Guttmann, Rosenstein states that he believes that his experience of being left alone in Westerbork when his parents were deported on to Bergen-Belsen traumatized him so deeply that he was incapable of forming a long-term romantic relationship. In the 2006 video interview, Rosenstein goes on to comment that, like Guttmann, 'I had some early sexual experiences in Westerbork which, when you're a horny fifteen-year-old, were terrific, but also very dangerous. […] And of course, it always involved older men, it never involved anybody my own age. But that was my pattern anyway.' This detail is missing from Donhöff's desexualized portrayal of Rosenstein's time alone in Westerbork. This 1999 video evidence raises questions about Rosenstein's potential sexual exploitation in the camps, as Rosenstein's sexual experiences with older men could be read as part of the wider picture of widespread sexual exploitation of boys in the Holocaust researched by Will Jones.[100] The exclusion of these experiences from Dönhoff's narrative, along with the exclusion of Rosenstein's frankly stated preference for intergenerational sex, makes the narrative of Rosenstein's sexuality less troubling for a mainstream, possibly heterosexual, reader in 2014, a period when gay normalization focused on equal marriage was in the ascendent in Germany.[101]

Rosenstein reports another telling sexual experience in the Holocaust when a *Kapo* in Auschwitz offers him chocolate in exchange for sex. Rosenstein protects

himself by pretending to be clueless about what the man wanted. In both memoir and video testimony, Rosenstein contextualizes this moment with his retrospective knowledge about *Piepels*: 'Some time, only much later, do I understand how dangerous the situation was. There are young men in the camp who prostitute themselves […] they are usually dropped sooner or later, the Kapo picks up the next one and sends the previous one to the gas.'[102] However, in the video testimony, Rosenstein reflects on his intersectional vulnerability as a gay Jewish child: 'I didn't have a label on me that I was gay, I was there as a Jewish inmate rather than as a homosexual inmate, but I was gay and I was more vulnerable.' This retrospective awareness of his vulnerability is absent in Dönhoff's memoir, which instead caps this sequence when Rosenstein tells Dönhoff, 'A good life is the best revenge!'[103] Dönhoff structures his narrative such that Rosenstein's present-day 'good life' and friendly encounters on his trip across Germany and Holland is always interwoven with his traumatic narrative of persecution. Yet while the memoir ends on a sobering encounter with a Holocaust denier, Dönhoff's focus on Rosenstein's resilience leaves little space for reflection on the complex multiple vulnerabilities experienced by a gay Jewish child in the camps. Here, the memoir reveals as much about the sensibilities of a mainstream German-language readership in the present as about queer experiences in the Holocaust.

Conclusion. Coming Out

All five survivors' memoirs disrupt not only the competitive model of parallel 'Jewish' and 'gay' Holocausts, but also models of 'feeling backwards,' in the phrase of Heather Love, that view queer history as predominantly a history of loss, pain and shame.[104] All five record the extra vulnerability and difference that their sexual identity caused in the Holocaust and postwar years. Nonetheless, their stories are told in a predominantly upbeat, proud tone, and a camp, ironic style characterizes their voices.[105] This contrasts

with the sense of shame and social annihilation experienced by the paragraph 175 detainees Seel and Heger in the postwar years within their intensely Catholic milieux. All five memoirs draw on Jewish identity as a source of strength and identity formation through the Holocaust and beyond, whether this be Raymon and Rosenstein's cultural practices, Silbermann's idiosyncratic Orthodoxy or Beck's and Guttmann's active Zionism. Dönhoff presents Rosenstein in later life as a proud gay Jew who protested doubly against the visit of Pope John Paul II to San Francisco, switching between the gay group and the Jewish group in the demonstration, just as Guttmann belonged happily to 'two societies.'[106] While Guttmann, Rosenstein and Raymon explicitly note the pain and difficulty of speaking about their traumatic experiences of persecution, they are also able to frame this within a context of collective Jewish memory, mourning and fight for restitution. Both the tone and narrative construction of all five memoirs thus lend themselves to a resistant framing of their gay Jewish survivorship. Beck and Silbermann created their own legends of gay Jewish survival, which continued after their death: Beck's *chuzpe* has seen him elevated to the status of gay hero in popular culture, while a recent volume celebrates Silbermann as a dazzling figure, 'professor, writer, Jew, emigrant, homosexual, media star, founder of a sometime successful fast food chain in far-off Australia – but also a witty conversationalist, an original contrarian, a linguistic artist…'[107] In both cases, we see the power of narrative and in particular a queer flamboyance of language in creating cultural memories of queer Jewish survivorship.

These memoirs all complicate late twentieth-century ideas of resolving wrong feelings and identity crises via 'coming out,' due to the anachrony of linking this experience to the irresolvable experience of the Holocaust.[108] As Wright notes, 'Beck's notion of coming out complicates standard coming-out narratives that focus on feelings,

particularly wrong feelings'.[109] Silbermann does not use the word 'coming out', but writes, 'He ruthlessly overcame conventions, norms, customs and other unwritten laws, by taking his Spanish boyfriend to his parent's home in Holland. This step, which was not governed by any rationality but only by emotionality, was the self-confident revelation of his orientation, in relation to the family as well as to a hostile public.'[110] In hostile Dutch exile in 1936, Silbermann's coming out to his parents is motivated by passion rather than 'wrong feelings,' and is an act of resistance against a homophobic and antisemitic outside world. Dönhoff and Rosenstein brush over Rosenstein's mother's continued homophobic behavior towards her son, without ever describing a coming out scene: 'Jerry speaks about it objectively, almost unemotionally, as always, when the conversation touches on topics that are close to him.'[111] By glossing over these difficult emotions, Dönhoff shores up the upbeat, reconciliatory tone of Rosenstein's memoir. By contrast, as Guttmann's close family was all murdered, 'coming out' as a restructuring of his relationship to his parents was impossible for him. Instead, he demonstrates the emotional distance to his foster families by saying 'No-one from the foster families ever asked me if I was homosexual. All the same they definitely sensed it.'[112] In a different way, Raymon also suggests that the legacy of the Holocaust, rather than wrong feelings, prevented him coming out to his family. He suggests that he had given his family enough trouble by his decisions to work in the theatre and to live in Germany, the land of the perpetrators: 'Should I, who never experienced my orientation as a burden or as unhappiness – no type of relationship is protected from heartbreak – have confronted my parents with it, 'outed' myself?'[113] The answer to this rhetorical question proves to be 'no'. Raymon closes his memoir by describing his photograph in a 2009 exhibition in Munich depicting older gay men, called 'Die Verzauberten'. This is a word used by gay men during the Nazi years to describe themselves, and links Raymon,

a child during the Nazi years, to the long history of gay culture in Germany.[114] Here, Raymon states that his 'coming out' occurred when he was 29, when he had his first relationship with a man – but this is a personal, not familial act of coming out.[115]

Publishing a full memoir is an act of self-assertion, one not open to all queer subjects. These memoirs offer a lens to reflect on silenced, forgotten and fragmented narratives. For instance, Claudia Schoppmann's *Days of Masquerade* includes an interview with the Jewish lesbian writer Annette Eick, who survived in hiding in Berlin. Eick's postwar autobiographical memoir remains unpublished in the ILCS in London, suggesting that gender factors may be at play when determining which queer Jewish survivor memoirs make it to book-length publication.[116] Recent biographies of the trans artist Charlotte Charlaque and the anarchist lesbian Eve Adams have explored less privileged queer Jewish lives in detail, showing that the life trajectory of more marginalized queer Jewish subjects in the Holocaust cannot be presented in as coherent a way as these five cis, middle class German Jewish memoirs.[117] Adams, who was murdered in Auschwitz, never had a chance to write a retrospective memoir of queer experiences in the Holocaust, reflecting the higher proportion of women murdered in the Holocaust. Charlaque's trans experience was marginalized until very recently. Many queer subjects who survived the Holocaust were too ashamed or afraid to record their queer experiences, or may have recorded them in languages that are not accessible to this researcher. Hence, the ability to write about queer Jewish experiences in the Holocaust in a way that goes beyond the experiences of shame that Zabransky details, and to publish them in the period of gay liberation and new openness to queer histories after 1995, is thanks to particular privileged conditions of class, gender, language and accident, as well as forming an exceptional act of resistance in itself.

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[1] Hájková, *People without History are Dust*, 9.

[2] Fries et al, 'I Still Struggle', 189.

[3] Mailänder, 'Von Geschichten', 107.

[4] Krondorfer and Creangă, *The Holocaust and Masculinities*, 30.

[5] Connell, 'A Very Straight Gay', 738.

[6] Hájková, *People without History are Dust,* 9.

[7] George Mosse's 2000 *Confronting History. A Memoir* could also be considered in this corpus, and was omitted for reasons of coherence: Mosse wrote in English, for a global audience.

[8] Hájková, *People without History*, 35.

[9] Hájková, *Menschen ohne Geschichte,* 19.

[10] Bobrowsky, *Verbotene Beziehungen,* 16.

[11] Plant, *The Pink Triangle*.

[12] Heger, *Men with the Pink Triangle*; Seel, *I, Pierre Seel*; Newsome, *Pink Triangle Legacies,*13.

[13] Bochow, 'Vorworte der Herausgeber', 14.

[14] Bos, 'Barter, Prostitution, Abuse?'; Glowacka and Mühlhäuser, 'Gender-Based and Sexual Violence'.

[15] Zabransky, *Jewish Men and the Holocaust,* 55.

[16] Fairweather, *The Prosecutor*.

[17] Pretzel and Krass, 'Queer Jewish Lives in Germany.'

[18] Felman and Laub, *Testimony*.

[19] Lejeune, *On Autobiography*.

[20] Emanuel, 'Letting Judges Breathe.'

[21] Hájková, *People without History*, 13.

[22] Bochow, 'Vorworte der Herausgeber', 13.

[23] Wright, 'Queer Representations, 24.

[24] Zabransky, *Jewish Men and the Holocaust*, 3.

[25] Raymon, *Einmal Exil und zurück*.

[26] Silbermann, *Verwandlungen*, 61. All translations my own.

[27] Ibid, 97.

[28] Ibid, 75.

[29] Ibid, 317.

[30] Knoll, *Alphons Silbermann,* 20.

[31] Raymon, *anders vom anfang an*, 185.

[32] Ibid, 148.

[33] Ibid, 149.

[34] Ibid, 8.

[35] Ibid,168. All translations my own, HF.

[36] Hájková, *People without History*, 23.

[37] *Die Freiheit des Erzählens.*

[38] Cackett and Does, 'The Story of Gad Beck'.

[39] Emanuel, 'Letting Judges Breathe', 400.

[40] Rahe, 'Nachwort', 119. All translations my own, HF.

[41] Pretzel, 'Vorworte der Herausgeber,' 15.

[42] Bochow et al., *Ich wollte es so normal*, 55.

[43] Pretzel, 'Vorworte der Herausgeber', 11.

[44] Dönhoff, *Ein gutes Leben*, 19. All translations mine, HF

[45] Dönhoff, *Die Welt ist so*.

[46] Dönhoff, *Ein gutes Leben*, 19.

[47] Ibid., 36.

[48] These histories are too complex to summarise here. Alongside the transnational gay liberation movements that sought to depathologize homosexuality, the second half of the twentieth century saw the formation of such queer Jewish movements as Kadag in Israel, Yachad in Germany and Keshet in the US and transnationally; and the foundation of LGBTQ+-friendly Reform synagogues such as the one visited by Jerry Rosenstein, Sha'ar Zahav.

[49] Boyarin, et al, 'Strange Bedfellows', 2.

[50] Krondorf and Creangă, *The Holocaust and Masculinities*, 5.

[51] Raymon, *anders von anfang an*, 167.

[52] *Regentropfen*.

[53] *Anders Als Die Andern*.

[54] Raymon, *Einmal Exil und zurück*, 179.

[55] Silbermann, *Verwandlungen*, p. 62.

[56] Ibid, 83.

[57] Ibid, p. 102.

[58] Ibid, 84.

[59] Ibid, 225.

[60] Ibid, 366.

[61] Silbermann, *Der ungeliebte Jude*; Silbermann, *Sind wir Antisemiten?*; Silbermann, 'Freundschaft und Liebe'.

[62] Silbermann, *Verwandlungen*, 600.

[63] Ibid, 21.

[64] Ibid, 22.

[65] Ibid, 54.

[66] Juvonen, 'Which Are the Stories,' 89.

[67] Raymon, *anders von anfang an*, 111.

[68] Ibid, 184.

[69] Beck, *An Underground Life*, 66.

[70] Ibid, 56.

[71] Ibid, 55.

[72] Mailänder, 'Von Geschichten', 95.

[73] Bochow et al., *Ich wollte es so normal,* 19.

[74] Ibid., 52.

[75] Ibid., 110.

[76] Ibid., 40.

[77] Ibid., 105.

[78] Ibid., 102.

[79] Dönhoff, *Ein gutes Leben,* 11.

[80] Raymon, *anders vom anfang an*, 71.

[81] Silbermann, *Verwandlungen*, 163.

[82] Ibid, 191.

[83] Ibid, 86.

[84] Ibid, 93.

[85] Ibid, 117.

[86] Krondorfer and Creangă, *The Holocaust and Masculinities*, 70.

[87] Beck, *An Underground Life*, 120.

[88] Ibid, 121.

[89] Ibid, 150.

[90] Juvonen, 'Which Are the Stories,' 89.

[91] Bochow et al, *Ich wollte es so normal*., 29.

[92] Ibid., 31.

[93] Ibid., 71.

[94] Ibid., 31.

[95] Ibid, 91.

[96] Ibid, 102.

[97] Zabransky, *Jewish Men and the Holocaust*, 53.

[98] Ibid., 86.

[99] Dönhoff, *Ein gutes Leben*, 64.

[100] Jones, ‘‘You Are Going to Be My Bettmann.’

[101] Sutton, *Sexuality in Modern German,* 220.

[102] Dönhoff, *Ein gutes Leben,* 101.

[103] Ibid. 105.

[104] Love, *Feeling Backward.*

[105] Emanuel, ‘Letting Judges Breathe’.

[106] Dönhoff, *Ein gutes Leben,* 174.

[107] Knoll, *Alphons Silbermann*, 14. All translations mine, HF.

[108] Connell, ‘A Very Straight Gay, 274.

[109] Wright, ‘Queer Representations,’ 26.

[110] Silbermann, *Verwandlungen*, 134.

[111] Dönhoff, *Ein gutes Leben,* 174.

[112] Bochow et al, *Ich wollte es so normal*, 103.

[113] Raymon, *anders von anfang an*, 185.

[114] ‘Die Verzauberten.‘

[115] Raymon, *anders von anfang an*, 280.

[116] Eick, ‘Annette Eick Collection.’

[117] Wolfert, *Charlotte Charlaque*; Katz, *The Daring Life*.