

# UC Santa Barbara

## UC Santa Barbara Electronic Theses and Dissertations

### Title

Stateless in Shanghai: History, Memory and Cultural Representations of the Hongkou Jewish Ghetto 1933-1945

### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/02w8h7pv>

### Author

Sun, Xiaoxue

### Publication Date

2022

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Santa Barbara

Stateless in Shanghai: History, Memory and Cultural Representations of the Hongkou

Jewish Ghetto 1933-1945

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Comparative Literature

by

Xiaoxue Sun

Committee in charge:

Professor Xiaorong Li, Co-Chair

Professor Wolf Kittler, Co-Chair

Professor Yunte Huang

Professor Hangping Xu

September 2022

The dissertation of Xiaoxue Sun is approved.

---

Hangping Xu

---

Yunte Huang

---

Wolf Kittler, Committee Co-Chair

---

Xiaorong Li, Committee Co-Chair

July 2022

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my MA advisor Professor Xudong Hu. May he rest in  
peace.

Stateless in Shanghai: History, Memory and Cultural Representations of the Hongkou  
Jewish Ghetto 1933-1945

Copyright © 2022

by

Xiaoxue Sun

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My research is dedicated to my academic advisors, peers, students, and parents, who have helped me tremendously during my doctoral studies at UCSB. First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge my MA advisor Professor Xudong Hu from Peking University, who is unfortunately no longer with us. I developed my interest in the fields of Holocaust Studies in his Contemporary Poetry class, working on Ingeborg Bachmann and Paul Celan. Later, my research interests extended to Memory Studies, Gender and Sexuality Studies, and Comparative Sino-German Studies. I would like to thank Professor Hu from the bottom of my heart for having guided me toward my dissertation topic when I was a junior scholar, and I am forever grateful for his kindness and mentorship.

Second, I would like to genuinely express my gratitude toward my academic advisors and peers at UCSB. Out of all of them, I have worked with Professor Xiaorong Li the longest. I was in her graduate seminar, “Gender and Sexuality Studies in Premodern Chinese Literature,” during my first quarter at UCSB. She has been an incredible mentor to me ever since! I want to thank Professor Li for always believing in me and my research abilities and for cheering me up in times of confusion and depression. She always had more confidence in me than I did in myself and encouraged me to pursue my project and find a way to contribute to the current field.

Professor Wolf Kittler is a fantastic scholar who inspired me to voice my perspectives in academic writing and build my analysis on the foundation of contemporary theories but not solely on theoretical approaches. He helped me tremendously with academic writing, and I am very grateful to him for agreeing to co-chair my dissertation project. He is very detail-

oriented and showed me how to be a scholar who focuses on solid primary sources. Over the course of my studies, he provided detailed comments on every paper I wrote for his seminars, and he has also given me constructive feedback on every dissertation chapter. I am very grateful for Professor Kittler's mentorship.

I thank Professor Yunte Huang, who has worked with me through multiple field exams. We worked on the topics of Gender and Sexuality Studies in Premodern and Modern China and again on Ingeborg Bachmann and Paul Celan in German Studies. He is also a member of my Dissertation Committee and Translation Studies Committee. Professor Huang is exceptionally knowledgeable, and it is a privilege to have studied with him.

I am proud to say that I am one of Professor Hangping Xu's first graduate students at UCSB. He is very passionate about teaching, and he is a great resource not only in terms of academic scholarship but was also of great help during my stages on the job market. I was very inspired by his graduate seminars and have sent out my seminar paper for publication, which a respectable journal has accepted. Professor Xu encouraged me to enter the job market as soon as possible, and he was there to guide me every step of the way. He helped me retouch my cover letter and prepped me for my interviews and campus visits. I am incredibly grateful for his support, and I know that being able to find a job at the end of the doctoral journey has everything to do with his dedicated mentorship and guidance.

In addition to my committee members, I want to thank my other professors at UCSB, especially Professor Catherine Nesci, the previous chair of Comparative Literature and a long-term mentor who has guided me through my academic path in Memory Studies and Trauma Studies. I have worked with Cathy for multiple years. I was further inspired to pursue my interest in Holocaust and Memory Studies in her graduate seminar. I was under

her guidance when we initiated a Memory Studies working group at UCSB. Cathy is a warm, kind-hearted professor who dedicates everything to her students' well-being. Her tough love made me who I am after my doctoral journey. I am forever grateful for all the wonderful seminars and independent study sessions with her.

I also want to thank Professors Elisabeth Weber, Christina Vagt, Dominique Jullien, Eric Prieto, Sara Weld, Suzanne Jill Levine, Sabine Frühstück, Xiaowei Zheng, Katherine Saltzman-Li, Mayfair Yang, John Nathan, Ben Olguin, Stephanie Batiste, Stephanie Hom, Harold Marcuse, Claudio Fogu, Michael Berry, Michael Rothberg, Sven Spieker, Susan Derwin, Kelsey White, Evelyn Reder, and many others whom I had the privilege to work with at UCSB and who helped me tremendously with my academic studies and career path.

I thank the academic scholarly organizations such as the American Comparative Literature Association, the Modern Language Association, and the American Association of Asian Studies. They have provided funding for me to attend conferences that sharpened my expertise and broadened my scholarly network. I am grateful to the institutions that provided financial support and fellowships to support my research projects, such as the Stuart Atkins Fellowship, the Max Kade Foundation, the Holocaust Education Foundation of Northwestern University, and the Confucius Institute. I also want to thank UCSB's Graduate Division, the Comparative Literature Program, the Department of Germanic and Slavic Studies, the East Asian Center, and the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultural Studies.

I want to express my gratitude to my academic peers and friends. They were always ready to support and cheer me up during this challenging journey. This includes Sofie Thomsen, Margarita Delcheva, Daniel Martini, Arpi Movsesian, Linshan Jiang, Yiming Ma,

Ursula Friedman, Yang Zhao, John Schrank, Tegan Raleigh, Samanta De Frutos Garcia, and many others.

I would like to acknowledge my students at UCSB, who are very talented and helped me become a better instructor. I am grateful for their eagerness to learn, significant insights, and inspiring presence, all of which encouraged me to improve my pedagogical abilities.

Ultimately, I would like to thank my parents, who have loved and believed in me unconditionally and provided financial support all these years. They are my most solid support and give me reasons to work hard forever and continue moving forward with my career and life.

VITA OF Xiaoxue Sun  
July 2022

EDUCATION

- 2016–present                      Doctor of Philosophy, Comparative Literature and German  
University of California, Santa Barbara  
Graduate Certificate in Translation Studies
- 2014–2016                         Master of Arts, English Literature  
Bellarmine College of Liberal Arts, Loyola Marymount  
University
- 2009–2012                         Master of Arts, Comparative Literature and World Literature  
Institute of World Literature, School of Foreign Languages,  
Peking University
- 2005–2009                         Bachelor of Arts, Chinese Language and Literature  
College of the Humanities, Jilin University

PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYMENT

- October 2016-present: Graduate Instructor in Comparative Literature at the University of California, Santa Barbara  
September 2014-April 2015: Research Assistant for the Department of Women’s Studies at Loyola Marymount University  
November 2011-May 2014: Officer in Networking at the German Culture Institute, Goethe-Institute  
August 2010-August 2011: Intern at the British Council, Culture and Education Section

PUBLICATIONS

- “Visual Communication in the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum.” Special issue of *Patterns of Prejudice* on “Holocaust Refugees in the Colonial World: Historical and Cultural Approaches.” (Contracted)  
“Portable Images: Digital Video Activism and Queer Marxism in Cui Zi’en’s *Withered in a Blooming Season*.” *Chinese Independent Cinema Observer*. (Conditionally Accepted)

AWARDS

- Spring 2022, Fellow of the 2022 Holocaust Education Foundation of Northwestern University (HEFNU) Regional Institute on the Holocaust and Jewish Civilization at Arizona State University  
2021-2022, Graduate Humanities Research Fellowship, UC Santa Barbara  
2019, 2020, 2021, 2022: Nominated for Academic Senate Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award  
Summer 2021, China Studies Ph.D. Students Award, UC Santa Barbara Confucius Institute

Winter 2021, Atkins Fellowship Award, Department of Germanic and Slavic Studies, UC Santa Barbara  
Summer 2019, Max Kade Travel Grant Award, Department of Germanic and Slavic Studies, UC Santa Barbara  
Spring 2019, Max Kade Fellowship Award, Department of Germanic and Slavic Studies, UC Santa Barbara  
Summer 2018, Max Kade Travel Grant Award, Department of Germanic and Slavic Studies, UC Santa Barbara  
Summer 2017, Max Kade Travel Grant Award, Department of Germanic and Slavic Studies, UC Santa Barbara  
Spring 2017, Atkins Fellowship Award, Department of Germanic and Slavic Studies, UC Santa Barbara  
2016-2017, Block Grant Award, Payment of Non-Resident Tuition, Comparative Literature Program, UC Santa Barbara  
Fall 2016, Graduate Center for Literary Research Recruitment Fellowship  
Winter 2015, Charles Davis Award for Outstanding Graduate Student Presentation, the Rocky Mountains Modern Language Association Conference, Santa Fe, US

#### FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: Comparative Sino-German Studies

Studies in German and Holocaust Studies with Professor Wolf Kittler, Elisabeth Weber, and Christina Vagt

Studies in Gender and Sexuality in China Studies with Professors Xiaorong Li and Hangping Xu

Studies in Comparative Literature and Translation Studies with Professors Yunte Huang, Catherine Nesci, and Dominique Jullien

## **ABSTRACT**

Stateless in Shanghai: History, Memory and Cultural Representations of the Hongkou  
Jewish Ghetto 1933-1945

by

Xiaoxue Sun

My current research responds to two dilemmas in recent critical discourses: the writing of collective history from individual traumatic memories in Holocaust Studies and the construction of heroic fantasies from quotidian routines in Communist China's quest for modernity. My dissertation project, "Stateless in Shanghai: History, Memory and Cultural Representations of the Hongkou Jewish Ghetto 1933-1945," investigates how the Jewish exile in Shanghai from 1933 to 1945 has been represented, reimagined, and reconstructed in mass media productions such as literary fiction, cinema, theatrical performances, and museum exhibitions. In researching and comparing such mass media productions across cultures, my project investigates the historical realities of the Jewish exile in Shanghai. I conclude that in contemporary literature and visual media, the Jewish exile in Shanghai is presented not as objective historical events but as phenomenological horizons, inaccessible to social actors and subject to functional differentiation within social systems. I claim that the Jewish exile in Shanghai has become a medium for Western authors and filmmakers to nostalgically reminisce about the colonial past in the Orient. Simultaneously, the same historical past also functions as an agent for the Chinese nation-state to renegotiate international power and recreate a national biography. This dual sense of historical reality

operates through modern mass media productions. The Sino-Jewish encounter eventually becomes a manufactured product that serves as the bearer of social communication.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
ABSTRACT .....	xi
Introduction.....	1
Chapter I.....	14
Alternative Destination: Mapping Historical Jewish Refuge in Shanghai 1933-1945	14
1.1 The Journey to the East: International Policies and the Forced Jewish Odyssey to Shanghai 1933-1937 .....	15
1.11 Anti-German Sentiments and Sino-Jewish Support.....	18
1.12 Germany’s Political and Commercial Interests between China and Japan .....	25
1.2 Under the Shadow of the Rising Sun: Japanese-Controlled Policies Toward Jewish Refugees 1938-1942.....	26
1.21 Sino-Japanese Relations and The Second Sino-Japanese War ...	29
1.22 The Jewish Myth in Japan .....	31
1.23 The Fugu Plan .....	33
1.24 The Pacific War and Difficulties for Relief Efforts in Japanese-Occupied Shanghai .....	36
1.25 The Meisinger Plan .....	39
1.3 Memories of Hospitality: Sino-Jewish Support and Survival in the Hongkou Ghetto 1942-1945 .....	43
1.4 From Heime back to Home: The Departure of the Jewish Refugees..	51

1.5 Conclusion.....	53
Chapter II.....	56
Contesting Voices from the Shanghai Ghetto in Multidirectional Memoirs.....	56
2.1 Cross-Generational Remembrance in Memories and Post-Memories	58
2.11 Primary Memory and Testimonial Narration in <i>Chinese Exile</i> ..	60
2.12 Secondary Memory and Cross-Generational Grief in <i>Love and Luck</i>	68
2.2 Blind Spots: Gendered Recollections in Memoirs by Women.....	75
2.21 Rena Krasno: A Strong Female Is Always a Stranger .....	79
2.22 Liliane Willens: Sex, Statelessness, and Survival in Shanghai ..	92
2.3 Transnational Memory in Worldly Memoirs.....	100
2.31 Imagined Community and National Biography: Chinese Hospitality Remembered in Selective Jewish Memoirs.....	102
2.32 Once Upon a Chosen Time in Shanghai.....	104
2.33 Implicated Subjects: Chinese Voices Recollected .....	107
2.4 Conclusion .....	109
Chapter III.....	113
What Happened If in Love? Doubling Realities and Alternative Futures in <i>The Cursed Piano</i> and <i>The Song of the Jade Lily</i> .....	113
3.1 Forbidden Love: Imagined Unity and Doubling Realities in <i>The Cursed     Piano</i> .....	116
3.2 Refugees of Intimacies: Relic Objects and Alternative Futures in <i>The Song of     the Jade Lily</i> .....	129
3.21 Relic Objects: The Mysterious Jade Lily and the Hidden Portrait	137

3.22 Things of the Heart: Hidden Words and Unions of Souls .....	145
3.23 The Scene of Intimacy: Balconies and Gardens as Thresholds	153
3.3 Conclusion .....	156
Chapter IV .....	161
Worlds Beyond Words: Communicative Images and Visual Witnessing in Cultural Spaces .....	161
4.1 A Picturesque History of Pain: <i>Exile Shanghai</i> and <i>Survival in Shanghai</i> .....	162
4.2 <i>A Jewish Girl in Shanghai</i> : Utopian Fantasy through Animation ....	175
4.3 Garden of Memories: Physical Sites of Memorials and Cultural Preservation .....	183
4.31 Exhibitions at the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum .....	189
4.32 Cultural Tours and Storytelling.....	194
4.4 Tombstones and Memory Lanes .....	197
4.5 Educating Memories in Virtual Reality: Holocaust Museum LA ....	202
4.6 Conclusion .....	207
Conclusion .....	209
References .....	217

# **Stateless in Shanghai: History, Memory, and Cultural Representations of the Hongkou Jewish Ghetto 1933-1945**

## **Introduction**

In the mid-nineteenth century, following the consequences of the Opium Wars that forced open the market in premodern China, profit-seeking businesses and merchants from all over the world flocked to the foreign settlements in Shanghai.<sup>1</sup> The Sephardi Jewish businessmen who came to Shanghai from India were extraordinarily successful among the foreign merchants. The legendary businessman from Bombay, David Sassoon (1822-1884), sent one of his sons, Elias David Sassoon (1881-1961), to China in 1843 and established a Shanghai branch of David Sassoon & Co. in 1845. The tremendous commercial success of the Sassoon family in the Orient marks the beginning of the modern Jewish presence in Shanghai. The very first wave of Jewish emigration to Shanghai originates from the business activities of the Sephardic Jews, most of whom were employed by the Sassoon business empire. The steady flow of the Sassoons' clerks and their families constitute the first establishment of a Jewish community in Shanghai. Afterward, some employees, such as the Hardoons and the Kadoories, established their own businesses in Shanghai, constituting the core community of the Shanghai Jews. According to Wang Jian's *Shanghai Jewish Cultural Map*, prior to 1900, the number of Jewish immigrants in Shanghai was roughly 800-1000

---

<sup>1</sup> The First Opium War (1839-1842) was fought between the Qing government and the British Naval Forces. In the Second Opium War (1856–1860), the British army was aided by French forces. Both wars ended with a humiliating loss for the Qing government, with China signing what were ultimately to be known as “unequal treaties” because they were so unfavorable for China. As a consequence of the signing of “The Treaty of Nanjing,” Shanghai became an open port for international business.

(Wang 21). Wang states that around the turn of the century, a new wave of Russian Ashkenazi Jews migrated to Shanghai as they fled anti-Semitic persecution in Russia. The Russian Jews mostly traveled via northeast China and moved southwards to Shanghai. In the 1920s, due to the economic decline in northeast China, the Russian Jews, who concentrated primarily in the city of Harbin, gradually moved southwards to Shanghai. By 1924, nearly 1000 Russian Jews were living in Shanghai. Unlike the wealthy Sephardic Jews, who primarily invested in real estate, manufacturing, and public utilities, the Russian Jews mainly managed small businesses. Gradually, through hard work and adjustment, the Russian Jews became part of the middle class in Shanghai's Jewish community. By the 1930s, the Russian Jewish population in Shanghai reached about 4000 out of a total of approximately 5000 Jewish immigrants living in the city.

During this same decade, the establishment of the Nuremberg Laws in 1935 deprived Jews in Germany of both their rights as citizens and government protection.<sup>2</sup> During Hitler's first five years in power, many Jews were able to emigrate from Germany to the United States and other Western countries. Unfortunately, at the end of 1937, the conditions of the German Jewry grew worse, and the Evian Conference, which was held in the summer of 1938 in France, showed the world a lack of international support for the Jews suffering from persecution in Germany. The Nazis were encouraged by the indifferent response of the West and amplified their anti-Semitic policies, with *Kristallnacht* occurring approximately

---

<sup>2</sup> In September 1935, the Nazis held their annual rally in Nuremberg and announced new laws that institutionalized many of the racial theories prevalent in Nazi ideology. The laws excluded German Jews from being citizens of the Reich and prohibited them from marrying or having sexual relations with German Aryans.

four months following the Evian Conference on November 10th, 1938.<sup>3</sup> As Europe and the U.S. closed their doors to Jews seeking to flee Germany, Shanghai, an open port in the Far East and a semi-colonial city under Japanese occupation,<sup>4</sup> was the only open gate offering asylum to European Jews. Due to extraterritoriality, there was no passport control in Shanghai, and the Jewish refugees were able to enter Shanghai without a visa. From the early 1930s to the early 1940s, a large number of Central European Jewish refugees poured into Shanghai. It was in 1933 that the first German Jewish refugees arrived in Shanghai, including about 12 families with over one hundred people. By the end of the 1930s, Sephardic Jews, Ashkenazi Jews, and Jewish refugees from Nazi Europe in Shanghai amounted to over thirty thousand, forming the largest Jewish community in the Far East. In June 1941, the land route to Shanghai for Jewish refugees was interrupted due to the Russo-German conflict.<sup>5</sup> By December 1941, following the outbreak of the Pacific War,<sup>6</sup> Shanghai became an isolated island and was cut off from the rest of the world. Therefore, the route to “Noah’s Ark in the East” was severed after this point. Stateless in Shanghai, the Jewish community slowly developed over time and formed a vibrant cultural space in the Far East.

---

<sup>3</sup> *Kristallnacht*, or “The Night of Broken Glass” (November 9-10, 1938), was a series of anti-Semitic attacks on Jews carried out by Nazi forces and civilians throughout Nazi Germany. The windows of Jewish-owned stores, buildings, and synagogues were smashed, which is why it was called “The Night of the Broken Glass.” The attacks were a consequence of the assassination of the German diplomat Ernst vom Rath (1909-1938) by Herschel Grynszpan (1921-1960), a German-born Polish-Jewish refugee.

<sup>4</sup> Shanghai was an international treaty port and was governed by varied international and Chinese powers in the early 1930s. The Japanese military seized complete power over Shanghai in August 1937.

<sup>5</sup> As authorized by Hitler, Germany began planning an invasion of the Soviet Union in July 1940. Operation Barbarossa (*Unternehmen Barbarossa*) started on Sunday, 22 June 1941, which marks the beginning of the Axis invasion of the Soviet Union.

<sup>6</sup> It is widely accepted that that the Pacific War began on December 7/8 1941 when the Japanese initiated a series of invasions, including the attack of the US military base in Pearl Harbor.

During the Second World War, many countries closed their doors to Jewish refugees. As an international city and port, in the 1930s, Shanghai was divided up and governed by many different nations. Due to the extraterritoriality of the foreign concessions, Jews could obtain visas for China. Many Jewish people took refuge in Shanghai. Hongkou, an area belonging to the Tianqiao district in Shanghai, was home to more than twenty thousand European Jews from 1933 to 1947. After the war ended, although the Jewish refugees gradually departed, what they left behind is a city that has been forever changed by their presence and a history of hospitality and humanity that later was revisited and recollected in numerous literary representations, cinematic reproductions, and cultural exhibitions.

The immigration of central European Jewish refugees to Shanghai can be divided into three main stages. The first stage was from approximately 1933 to July 1937, when Shanghai's gates were wide open, and refugees could seek asylum with relative ease. There was already a well-established Jewish community in Shanghai that had a vibrant political and cultural presence. In 1916, the Zionist Organization was established in Shanghai and was supported by the Chinese National Government.<sup>7</sup> Chinese officials and intellectuals such as the founding father of the Chinese National Government, Dr. Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925), Minister of Foreign Affairs of the National Government Wang Zhenting (1882-1961), and Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Chinese National government Chen Lu (1877-1939), all expressed their sympathy and respect for the Jewish Zionist Movement. In the early 1930s, though both Nazi Germany and the Western powers operating at the

---

<sup>7</sup> The nationalist government's official name was the National Government of the Republic of China. It is also commonly known as the Republic of China (July 1, 1925- May 20, 1948) and was led by the Kuomintang (KMT, Chinese Nationalist Party). This administration was in place until it was replaced by the current government of the People's Republic of China in October 1949.

International Settlement of Shanghai<sup>8</sup> called to curtail the influx of Jewish immigrants, the traditional friendship and harmony between the Jewish community in Shanghai and the Chinese government permitted a smooth transition for Jewish refugees seeking to settle in Shanghai.

The second stage was from 1938 to 1942, after Japan had invaded China and colonized Shanghai. During this period, the conditions for the Jewish people in Nazi Germany had worsened following *Kristallnacht* and the introduction of the Nuremberg Laws. For the few fortunate Jewish refugees who were able to reach Shanghai, survival depended on the hospitality and generosity of the local and international relief committees. In 1937, after the “Anschluss” of Austria,<sup>9</sup> which exacerbated the situation of the Austria Jews, Dr. He Fengshan (1901-1997), Consul General of China in Vienna, took significant professional risks by issuing a large number of Shanghai visas to Jewish refugees. This humanitarian act saved the lives of thousands of Jews. Following the war, the Chinese government recognized him as a hero, and his statue is located in the courtyard of the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum. In 1938, the International Committee for Granting Relief to European Refugees (I.C.) was established, led by the Hungarian Jew Paul Komor (1886-1973).<sup>10</sup> In October 1938, the Committee for Assistance of European Refugees in

---

<sup>8</sup> The British and American settlements were established between 1845 and 1849 in Shanghai. In 1849, the French established their own concession in Shanghai. As the number of English-speaking residents grew, the British and the Americans decided to unite their settlements in 1863. In 1899, the newly merged English-speaking settlement was renamed the Shanghai International Settlement.

<sup>9</sup> Also known as the “Anschluss Österreichs,” which refers to the annexation of Austria to Nazi Germany on March 12, 1938.

<sup>10</sup> Paul Komor was a Hungarian businessman and diplomat. Prior to the war, Paul Komor held the title of Honorary Consul General for Hungary in Shanghai. He co-founded the International Committee for the Organization of European Refugees in China (I.C.), which was established in August 1938 and financed primarily by Victor Sassoon. The IC

Shanghai (C.F.A.) was established, directed by Michael Speelman (1877-?). In January 1939, Victor Sassoon donated a special fund of 150,000 U.S. dollars and set up the Rehabilitation Fund. In January 1939, the C.F.A. began establishing Jewish refugee camps in Hongkou. In 1939, the Shanghai office of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (J.D.C.) was established.

In addition to international and local relief efforts, the Chinese government also proposed a bill in 1939 to designate a temporary residential region in Yunnan Province for the Jews so China could receive and support more refugees.<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, this bill never came to pass. In July 1937, Japan invaded China and controlled Shanghai. Therefore, beginning from July 1937 until the end of the Second World War in 1945, the fate of the Jewish community lay in the hands of the Japanese. Many scholars have argued that the Japanese have never had a history of anti-Semitism and favored the Jewish refugees in the hopes of taking advantage of their talent and skills. In addition, Japan hoped to gain financial support from the international Jewish community to enable its expanded invasion of Asia. For their benefit, the Japanese created the infamous “Fugu Plan”<sup>12</sup> – a scheme for manipulating Jews worldwide to help the Japanese build their “Greater East Asia Co-

---

provided housing, jobs and financial assistance for the around 20,000 German, Austrian, and other Jewish refugees who came into Shanghai.

<sup>11</sup> This bill was proposed in 1937 by Sun Ke (1891-1973), the son of Sun Yat-sen. In early 1939, he formulated a plan to settle European Jewish refugees in Southwest China. On March 7, 1939, the Supreme National Security Council passed Sun Ke’s proposal. The Shanghai Jewish community also expressed support for Sun’s bill. It was discussed in both *Israel’s Messenger* and *Die Gelbe Post*. This plan was not carried out due to lack of funds and Japanese occupation.

<sup>12</sup> In late 1938, under the influence of their German ally, the Japanese began their own Jewish policy regarding a Jewish settlement in Japanese-occupied Manchuria, later referred as “the Fugu Plan.”

prosperity Sphere.”<sup>13</sup> Therefore, the Japanese never constructed concentration camps or followed their German ally’s advice to execute the Jews on a massive scale.

The final stage of Jewish immigration to Shanghai dates from late 1942 to the end of World War II. On December 7, 1941, the Japanese air force attacked the U.S. military base in Pearl Harbor. As the Pacific War broke out, the funds and assets of the British and American Jews were abruptly seized and frozen by the Japanese in Shanghai, which aggravated the financial situation of the Refugee Camps, which relied heavily on local and international charities. To make matters worse, in June 1942, the Nazi Colonel Joseph Meisinger (1899-1947) arrived in Shanghai, intending to enforce the “Final Solution” there. However, there is no official historical documentation of the mysterious “Meisinger Plan” because the Japanese military destroyed massive amounts of secret documents after the war. Survivors and military officials, such as the former German Consul General in Tianjin Fritz Wiedemann (1891-1970) and a Japanese naval officer by the name of Takeshima (?-?), testified that due to the pressure of their German allies, Japan was coerced to design a series of policies discriminating against the Jewish refugees to maintain their alliance with the Nazis. In September 1942, the Japanese organized a foreign Shanghai “Pao Chia” unit, a self-policing unit of Jewish refugees to govern the thousands of Jews driven into the Hongkou district.<sup>14</sup> On February 18, 1943, the Japanese proclaimed that the stateless Jewish refugees had to move to a “Designated Area” of Shanghai. This announcement marked the

---

<sup>13</sup> The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere was a colonial concept created by the Japanese Empire for areas in Asia invaded and occupied by the Japanese from 1931 to 1945.

<sup>14</sup> The baojia system (保甲) was invented by Wang Anshi of the Song dynasty in the eleventh century. It is a self-policing, community-based system of law enforcement and civil control. Here, the Japanese applied this ancient Chinese system in order to police and govern the European Jewish refugees.

establishment of the Jewish Ghetto in Hongkou, a district in Shanghai's most financially destitute area.

From 1942 to 1945, the stateless Jewish refugees were forced to limit their movement and activities within the Hongkou Ghetto. If they needed to cross administrative districts to go to work or run errands, they had to apply for a "Proof of Passage" controlled by the Japanese. Not many Jews were granted passage; therefore, many refugees suffered from unemployment and hunger. This devastating situation lasted until the summer of 1945.<sup>15</sup> At the third and final stage of the Sino-Jewish encounter during WWII, cultural exchanges between the Jewish refugees and the local Chinese people flourished. Many local Chinese people exhibited humanitarian generosity and showed great hospitality towards the Jewish refugees who were confined to the most unfortunate district in Shanghai. Both suffering from the Japanese invaders' atrocities, the Jewish refugees and the local Chinese people were able to understand and sympathize with each other. In July 1945, American aircraft accidentally bombed the residential area of the Jewish refugees in Hongkou, resulting in 31 deaths and around 250 injuries. Many Chinese residents risked their own safety and rescued their Jewish neighbors. The hospitality of the local Chinese people and the friendships between the Jews and the Chinese established in the Hongkou Ghetto have been documented and remembered extensively in memoirs, fiction, cinematic representations, and museum exhibitions.

---

<sup>15</sup> On July 17, 1945, the American army accidentally bombed Hongkou, and just over a month later, on August 23, 1945, the ban on Jews freely leaving the "Designated Area" was lifted. On September 2, 1945, the Japanese officially surrendered in Shanghai, which symbolized the end of World War II in China and the end of the Jewish Ghetto in Shanghai.

Previous scholarship has mainly focused on the historical analyses of the Jewish exile in Shanghai, overlooking memories and cultural representations of this past in mass media production. However, the cultural manifestations of historical memory are of equal importance. Just as Pierre Nora claims in *Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire*, history's practice of eradicating memory "has had the effect of a revelation, as if an ancient bond of identity had been broken and something had ended that we had experienced as a self-evident — the equation of memory and history" (8). My project, "Stateless in Shanghai: History, Memory, and Cultural Representations of the Hongkou Jewish Ghetto 1933-1945," examines the memories of Jewish exile in Shanghai and the representations of such memories in contemporary mass media productions such as fiction, cinemas, and cultural spaces. My research employs interdisciplinary research at the intersection of History, Social Sciences, and Literary and Cultural Studies. I use memory and social communication theory as critical frameworks to investigate the Jewish Exile in Shanghai during WWII across languages and cultures. I intend to bridge Chinese and Jewish Studies and direct the scholarly focus in the Holocaust and Memory Studies fields to the East.

With this project, I attempt to achieve two primary aims. First, by considering the narrative of the Hongkou Ghetto from a comparative angle, I provide a multifaceted perspective on the Jewish exile in Shanghai from 1933 to 1945. Second, while previous scholarship has drawn solely on historical documents and overlooked mass media productions, my project investigates literature, cinema, and cultural spaces. Since the demands of constructing a narrative of extremes challenge the very nature of realism, it is only through multimedia storytelling that we can reconstruct an alternative, doubling reality

that conceptualizes a kind of seeing that might be traditionally inaccurate but is undoubtedly truthful.

In my first chapter, “Alternative Destination: Mapping Historical Jewish Refuge in Shanghai 1933-1945,” I research Shanghai as a Jewish refuge through a historical lens and investigate the historical scholarship of Sino-Jewish, Sino-German, Sino-Japanese, Japanese-German, and Japanese-Jewish relations to provide a greater understanding of the Jewish exile in Shanghai. By demonstrating varied historical narratives about the Jewish exile in Shanghai, I offer a new understanding of narratives about historical trauma. I claim that historical narratives are dialectical and should be considered from transnational perspectives.

Within the theoretical framework of Memory Studies, I address multiple questions in analyzing cross-generational, gendered, and transnational memoirs that arise in studying the literature of the Sino-Jewish encounter in Shanghai, drawing attention to the political impact on the formation of transnational memory. In my second chapter, “Mnemosyne: Contesting Voices from the Shanghai Ghetto in Multidirectional Memoirs,” I draw on Memory Studies to investigate a variety of print media and cultural reproductions. I believe that mass media productions raise awareness about historical events so as to prevent the possible future recurrence of events through the application of democratized media production. In addition, they also provide communicative spaces for social actors to reflect on history and culture, enable dialectical dialogues, and transmit knowledge and memories. My second chapter presents textual anchors that illustrate the Jewish refugees’ spatial, temporal, and gendered dimensions of memories in the Shanghai Ghetto.

Despite its indisputable significance as a literary theme, the phenomenon of love has attracted less attention in Sino-Jewish scholarship. Focusing on the creative aspects of how the Jewish exile in Shanghai is remembered and imagined in print media, I ask why authors from different cultures coincide in their treatment of the topic and their application of the language of love, a prevalent theme that is complex, tangible, and yet contingent and far-reaching, to create the fictional universe about Shanghai. My third chapter, “What Happened If in Love? Doubling Realities and Alternative Futures in *The Cursed Piano* (魔咒钢琴) and *The Song of the Jade Lily*,” surveys the existing novels across languages and cultures on this subject. In comparing these love stories, I propose a synthesis that claims that the narrative fictions related to the Jewish exile in Shanghai, though differing in terms of languages and cultural and political implications, all generate a reconstructive imagining of the past by applying the codification of love and embody the humanitarian fantasy for hope and alternative futurity. I conclude that the love stories reimagined and fantasized in literary fiction are coded forms of emotion and individual expressions of the yearning for a future that declares respect for human rights and decency. Love and intimacy in fictional novels serve as agencies that duplicate doubling realities of times past and bridge the spheres of intimacy between private and public, past and present, local and global. Though love transcends language and culture, a comparative analysis of Chinese and Western literary works still presents striking differences due to various political climates and national agencies. While the fantasized intimacy in the Chinese novels can be interpreted as a social reconstruction of a nation-state identity and a hope to communicate and rebuild Chinese foreign relations through the power of love, the imagined unity in the Western creation not only captures the traumatic details of the war but also highlight the importance of creating a

safe space, where it allows the legitimacy of the individual to indulge in mystical cross-cultural encounters. In addition, the West's reimagined fictional universe of Shanghai also demonstrates a melancholic undertone reminiscing about the colonial past while simultaneously criticizing vanity and materialistic pursuits.

How to inherit traumatic memories of the past to produce a better future has increasingly become a question that drives contemporary scholars' focus. My last chapter examines how the Jewish exile in Shanghai is reimagined and reconstructed in mass media productions such as cinemas, anime, museum exhibitions, and cultural tourism. First, I compare the German filmmaker Ulrike Ottinger's documentary *Exil Shanghai (Exile Shanghai)* with the Chinese documentary *Memory of Life: Jews in Shanghai* (生命的记忆——犹太人在上海), exhibited in the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum. Second, I analyze the Chinese anime *A Jewish Girl in Shanghai* (犹太女孩在上海), exploring the cultural spaces of renegotiating memory through visual media and technology and examining the tension between the communication and commodification of a history of pain. Finally, I extend my literary studies into the physical sites of memories, such as cultural museums and exhibitions, comparing the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum and the Holocaust Museum LA. I argue that documentary footage offers a new capacity to remember and rethink historical events and figures and provides a disruptive ground for postmodern texts to manipulate and recreate history. Cultural spaces and historical sites reconstruct collective remembrance and turn historical trauma into an epistemological yet commodified staged media event open for social communication.

I conclude that in modern cultural cinemas and mass media productions, historical realities are presented not as objective cultural memories but as phenomenological horizons,

which are inaccessible and subject to functional differentiation within social systems. I conclude that for the Western audience, the Jewish history in Shanghai has become a medium for nostalgically reminiscing about the colonial past in the Orient. Simultaneously, it also functions as an agent for the Chinese nation-state to renegotiate international power and recreate a national biography. This dual sense of historical reality operates through modern mass media productions; history becomes a mechanical, manufactured product that acts as the bearer of social communication.

## **Chapter I**

### **Alternative Destination: Mapping Historical Jewish Refuge in Shanghai 1933-1945**

The present chapter provides the historical context for the Jewish refuge in Shanghai from 1933 to 1945. First, this chapter outlines the three major stages of the Jewish migration to Shanghai under varied political phases. In addition, this chapter includes analyses of Sino-Jewish, Sino-German, Sino-Japanese, Japanese-German, and Japanese-Jewish relations to provide a greater historical context for a better understanding of the texts addressed in the subsequent chapters. Finally, it traces the hospitality of the local Shanghainese people and the mutual support between the Jewish and Chinese communities. Through multi-directional analysis, this chapter demonstrates that Shanghai not only made its humanitarian mark on modern world history by providing refuge for around 20,000-25,000 Jews during World War II but has also transformed into an international, cosmopolitan center as a result of the intensified Sino-Jewish cultural exchange. Moreover, the lasting friendship and mutual support between the Chinese and the Jews during World War II has positively impacted the current political climate. The history and memory of the Sino-Jewish encounters in the past have not only led to political alliances in the present but can also be projected to serve as a bridge of communication for future foreign affairs. This chapter concludes that the Sino-Jewish encounter offers humankind an unprecedented model for surviving and thriving during a time of chaos and fear. The history of the Jewish migration in Shanghai has not only fostered a positive relationship between China and the international Jewish community but also served

as an example to dissuade the violation of human rights, extreme nationalism, and anti-Semitic xenophobia while advocating for cross-cultural communication and peaceful co-prosperity.

### ***1.1 The Journey to the East: International Policies and the Forced Jewish Odyssey to Shanghai 1933-1937***

The boycott against Jewish professionals began after Hitler came to power on April 1, 1933. On April 7, 1933, it was ordered that non-Aryans cease their professional activities. Even before the establishment of the Nuremberg Laws in 1935, many Jewish professionals had already lost their livelihoods. According to Irene Eber in *Wartime Shanghai and the Jewish Refugees from Central Europe*, medical professionals such as doctors and dentists had greater visibility than others. They were, therefore, the first Jewish professionals to suffer from the racist boycott. Eber claims that medical professionals were among the first Jewish immigrants from Germany to Shanghai in the early 1930s:

The fact that twenty-seven families, among them five well-known physicians, decided to go to Shanghai in the fall of 1933 in preference to some other countries, was presumably because they had read in a Berlin newspaper about China's shortage of doctors.<sup>16</sup> Although those arrivals represented but a tiny fraction of Jews leaving Germany in 1933 and 1934 (even if their number had apparently grown to eighty physicians, surgeons, and dentists by spring 1934), apprehensions about their presence in China were voiced in German diplomatic circles, seemingly not taking account of their government's policies (40-41).

---

<sup>16</sup> Eber cites a police report dated November 7, 1933. The five physicians were Doctors Rosenthal, Loewenberg, Hess, Elchengrün, and Keinwald. According to official records, thirty families had arrived from Germany by the end of the 1933.

Apprehension about this flight of Jewish professionals raised diplomatic concerns. In *Jewish Refugees in Shanghai 1933-1947: A Selection of Documents*, Eber presents a 1933 letter written by Friedrich Wilhelm Mohr (1881-1936)<sup>17</sup> to the German diplomat Dr. Günter Altenburg (1894-1984),<sup>18</sup> who was serving at the German Foreign Office, voicing concerns about Jewish emigration to Shanghai. In his letter dated August 8, 1933, Mohr states that he heard that a Jewish doctor was invited to immigrate to Shanghai to continue his practice in China due to academic connections. Mohr claims that though he has sympathy for Jewish professors, he fears that the Jews would misrepresent Germany and hurt Sino-German relations:

After all, these professors are ultimately supposed to represent Germany, as are the professors from other countries who are appointed abroad. To me, it does not seem advisable for only dismissed Jewish professors, who certainly cannot leave as friends of Germany and represent the new Germany, to be appointed (57).<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> Mohr (1881-1936) was a senior civil servant who had worked as a German-Chinese translator from 1907-1914. In 1922 he became General Secretary of “Ostasiatischer Verein” and editor of the *Ostasiatische Rundschau*. He campaigned for the development of the political, economic, and cultural ties between Germany and China; see Mechthild Leutner/ Andreas Steen (eds.), *Deutsch-chinesische Beziehungen 1911-1927. Vom Kolonialismus zur „Gleichberechtigung“—Eine Quellesammlung*, Berlin 2006. See Eber, Irene: *Jewish Refugees in Shanghai 1933-1947: A Selection of Documents*” (56).

<sup>18</sup> Altenburg (1894-1984) was a German diplomat who started working for the foreign office in 1920. In 1934, he became a legation councilor in Vienna. From 1935, when he joined the NSDAP, he served in several positions in the Department of Foreign Affairs in Berlin. See Eber, Irene: *Jewish Refugees in Shanghai 1933-1947: A Selection of Documents*” (56).

<sup>19</sup> This is my translation based on the original German text: „Diese Professoren sollen ja schliesslich Deutschland repräsentieren, ebenso wie es die Professoren andere Länder tun, die nach draussen berufen werden. Da scheint es mir doch nicht gerade zweckmässig zu sein, dass nur abgebaute jüdische Professoren berufen werden, die sicherlich nicht als Freunde Deutschlands hinausgehen und das neue Deutschland repräsentieren können.“ See Eber, Irene: *Jewish Refugees in Shanghai 1933-1947: A Selection of Documents*” (57).

While the German diplomatic circle at home worried about the Jewish presence in Shanghai, in December 1933, the German consulate in Beijing also sent a telegram warning about the influx of Jewish physicians. There were accusations of Chinese recruitment of Jewish physicians and evaluations of risks to Sino-German relations. As a response, in March 1934, a report was sent by the mayor of Shanghai to the Nanjing Government voicing the concerns about recent arrivals of Jewish doctors. However, the Chinese National Government was focused on internal affairs, specifically the communist upheavals. While the German Foreign Office admitted that Jewish immigration to China could not be prevented, the German consulates in China, fearing anti-German sentiment, urged Jewish immigration to China to be documented and monitored. There was a solid basis for the German officials' concerns. Tensions between Jewish immigrants and local German interests in Shanghai had increased with the arrival of the Jewish refugees. It is noteworthy that while the German and Chinese governments were concerned about the increasing influx of Jewish immigrants, the international treaty powers also closely surveilled the development of the situation. A secret report authored by Arthur Pitts (1901-?), who served as Detective Sergeant for the Shanghai Municipal Police, was delivered to the Shanghai Municipal Police, dated November 11, 1933, and documented the details of the arrivals of the Jews. In his report, Pitts wrote:

With reference to the endorsement of the Officer d/c Special Branch appearing on the attached translation from *Journal de Shanghai* dated November 7, 1933, I have to report that two batches of Germans of the Jewish faith have arrived in Shanghai recently. The majority of these persons are physicians or surgeons who have come here with the object of escaping from what they term the "harsh" regime at present existent in Germany and to set up practices in some of the larger towns in China.

Without exception, these gentlemen all appear to be fairly well off financially, and some of them hope to commence business in the near future.....It has been learned that a further draft of German physicians of the Jewish faith contemplates proceeding to China, but the local German Consulate-General authorities have cabled Berlin that it would be unwise for any further Jewish practitioners to come here since there are too many doctors of all nationalities striving to make a living at present. (Eber 58-59)

Following the report, Pitts also provided a list of the details about the newly-arrived Jewish doctors – a total of 13 Jewish physicians – and their families. Pitts provided their names, ages, addresses, and professional ties to Germany and Shanghai. In the end, Pitts reported that “All ships from Europe will be watched, and should any of these steamers be carrying further Germans of the Jewish faith who intend to settle down in China in the hope of setting up businesses, a further report will be submitted” (61). Pitts’s report shows that both the German Consulate in China and the international powers were closely surveilling Jewish emigration to Shanghai. It wasn’t long before the Chinese National Government also started to get involved in solving the “Jewish Question.” Leading Chinese intellectuals and political organizations issued statements to fight anti-Semitism. The Chinese government began establishing policies and working on proposals to control and regulate Jewish immigration.

### 1.11 Anti-German Sentiments and Sino-Jewish Support

When the Jews first settled in Shanghai, they brought their culture, science, and religion. However, the early immigrants refused to learn Chinese. Since the early immigrants were mainly well-off financially, learning Chinese was considered to be degrading, an act of compromising with the local community. However, while the Jews influenced Shanghai in various aspects, they were also gradually inspired by Chinese artistic and cultural traditions.

Some Jews practiced Buddhism and believed in Chinese medicine, while others opened their social circles to the upper class of the local elites in Shanghai. As time passed, friendships developed and were established within the Jewish and the Chinese communities. During the rise of fascism, it was shocking for the Chinese to comprehend the inhumane persecution of the Jewish people by the Nazis, particularly since China is a nation without any history of anti-Semitism. Moreover, since Chinese people had been suffering from unequal treatment by the Western powers ever since the Opium War, it was easy for them to sympathize with the Jews, and many supported their struggle against fascism.

On May 13, 1933, a delegation of the “China League for Civil Rights,” headed by Madame Song Qingling (1893-1981), the spouse of the National Party’s founding father Sun Yat-sen, left for the German Consulate in Shanghai in the company of some Chinese and international intellectuals to voice to the German Consul General their strong protest against the atrocities of Nazi Germany. This protest is highly celebrated in Chinese scholarship and remembered as a tribute in the history of humankind that demonstrated a national sense of righteousness and cross-cultural support. On June 2, 1933, the most influential Jewish newspaper in Shanghai, *Israel’s Messenger*,<sup>20</sup> reported on the event. N.E.B. Ezra (1883-1936) wrote a letter of appreciation entitled “The Civilized World Against Hitlerism.” In Ezra’s message of gratitude, he reports that the German Consul R.C.W. Behrend (?-?) received the protesters led by Madame Sun. Statements were exchanged during the meeting, in which

---

<sup>20</sup>*Israel’s Messenger* was created by N.E.B. Ezra in Shanghai and operated from 1904-1941. It started as a biweekly publication and later turned into a monthly newspaper. It was written in English and was the largest and oldest Zionist periodical for the Jewish community in Shanghai. It was published without interruption for 37 years in the interest of providing the Sephardic community in Shanghai with local, national, and international news. This chapter’s material is cited from an online archive: *Israel’s Messenger Online*, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007 <<http://primarysources.brillonline.com/browse/israels-messenger>>

leading Chinese intellectuals, including Lu Xun (1881-1936), Cai Yuanpei (1868-1940), and Lin Yutang (1895-1976), among many others, expressed their concerns regarding the fascist direction that Germany was taking. A statement conveying the League's view was handed to Mr. Behrend, who promised to deliver the message to the German Legation. However, Behrend also stated that the troubles in Germany had been exaggerated in press reports abroad and claimed that the German nation was a victim of adverse propaganda. The protestors exhibited newspaper clippings<sup>21</sup> from the German press and expressed support for the Jews in Germany:

The China League for Civil Rights, which fights against the terror in China, for the civil and human rights of the Chinese people, and which allies itself with progressive forces throughout the world, feels compelled to enter energetic protest against the brutal terror and reaction prevailing in Germany at the present time. We learn from the most varied and reliable sources representing all shades of political opinion that since the fascist regime was established in Germany, 30,000 to 40,000 workers and thousands of working class leaders and intellectuals have been arrested, prisoned and beaten up, and tortured in jails, in the barracks of the Nazi Storm Troops, and the concentration camps [...] The China League for Civil Rights protests in the most energetic manner against these facts, reports of which are duplicated in all the press of Europe and America. We protest against this fearful Terror against the German working class and progressive thinkers, a Terror which is crippling the social, intellectual, and cultural life of Germany. (*Israel's Messenger*)

---

<sup>21</sup> It is not certain which exact articles they showed and used in their negotiations with the German officials during the protest.

Interestingly, in their statement, the intellectuals never referred to the Jews as a specific group of the Jewish faith but instead defined them as working-class intellectuals and progressive thinkers. The National Chinese Government and the Jewish community have a history of mutual political support. Scholars believe that the first Jewish merchants came to China during the Tang Dynasty around 900 A.D. However, most Chinese remained unaware of Jews and Judaism until the mid-nineteenth century. In *Shanghai Sanctuary: Chinese and Japanese Policy toward European Jewish Refugees during World War II*, Gao Bei indicates that it was not until the mid-nineteenth century that “information about Jews and the ‘Jewish Question’ in Europe became more widespread in China via missionaries, businessmen, and Jewish immigrants to Shanghai” (13). After China started to send students overseas in the late nineteenth century, China’s social and intellectual elites began to acquire direct knowledge of European anti-Semitism. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Chinese intellectuals began to address Jewish-related topics in periodicals. According to Gao, the journal *Dongfang zazhi* (Eastern Miscellany), published from 1904 to 1948, contained 53 articles related to Jewish matters. Many of those early articles were translated from journals published in Japan and the United States. Gao states that in those articles, “Jews were characterized as ‘a people of genius’ who made great achievements in financial and academic endeavors” and claims that “economic reasons were often the causes of anti-Semitism and the persecution of Jews in Europe” (13). Early portrayals of the Jewish image in China were very positive. Since China was suffering from war then, a small group of radical Chinese intellectuals sought a path to save the country from colonialism and lessons from the Jewish Zionist Movement.

Starting in the early 1920s, a small group of Chinese nationalists represented by Sun Yat-sen attempted to learn from Jewish Zionism and tie the movement’s experiences and

legacies to Chinese nationalism. The 1911 Xinhai Revolution led by Sun Yatsen destroyed the Qing Dynasty and ended the Chinese history of feudalism. The Republic of China, created by Sun, greatly supported the Jewish Zionist Movement. The first Jewish Zionist Association was established by Ezra in Shanghai, who founded *Israel's Messenger* in 1904 as a mouthpiece for the Shanghai Zionist Association (SZA). After the 1919 “May Fourth Movement,”<sup>22</sup> Sun and many leading intellectuals in China worked diligently to seek a way to bring China towards a path of reunification, reconstruction, and modernization. In 1924, Sun created and developed his “Three Principles of the People” – nationalism, democracy, and people’s livelihood – and made them the cornerstones of the Chinese Nationalist Party’s official policy. On April 24, 1924, Sun wrote a letter to Ezra to express his sympathy for the Zionist Movement, stating:

All lovers of Democracy cannot help but support wholeheartedly and welcome with enthusiasm the movement to restore your wonderful and historic nation, which has contributed so much to the civilization of the world and which rightfully deserves an honorable place in the family of nations. (Gao 14)

Sun’s attitude towards the Jews represented China’s official sympathy for the Jewish faith and fostered the growth of the Jewish community in Shanghai throughout the 1930s. Sun and his followers attempted to inspire the Chinese nation with the example of the Jewish spirit and experience to restore the Chinese nationalist movement. Gao believed that for the officials of the Republic of China, Jews served as a model of their own movement. After Sun’s death, the

---

<sup>22</sup> “The May Fourth Movement” was an anti-imperialist, cultural, and political movement that grew out of student protests in Beijing on May 4, 1919. It is one of the most important and revolutionary events in Chinese history and symbolizes the beginning of China’s transition to modernity.

leaders of the Chinese Nationalist Party inherited and reconfirmed his attitude towards the Jews and the Zionist Movement. Thus, Song Qingling, Sun's widow, continued to espouse his view concerning the Jews and became the face and the spokesperson for a protest movement against the Nazi persecution of Jews. In response, Ezra wrote in his "Letter of Appreciation":

Dear Madame – I take the liberty of addressing you with this letter in order to express my appreciation for the step taken on behalf of suppressed and oppressed humanity in the reign of terror and frightfulness in Nazi Germany. The China League For Civil Rights has fully justified its existence for the fearless manner in which it has rebuked tyranny and oppression, and I am sure the whole civilized world will applaud the step taken under your leadership to tell the aggressor, "Thou art the man." Public opinion has long been against the Hitlerite regime, and there are no two opinions that anti-Semitism is the result of error and misconception prompted by bigotry and narrow-mindedness. Its propaganda is intended to divert the discontent of the masses to the Jews, who are blamed for all the ills from which the world suffers. A galaxy of Jewish thinkers, philosophers, and scientists are today languishing in Nazi Germany, and their freedom and liberty are restricted and frozen to the point of death. Anti-Semitism in Hitlerite Germany is spreading, and nothing will suppress it except the voice of civilized nations, which must begin to see in this new movement a menace to the peace of the whole world. Hitlerite Germany has been arraigned before the bar of civilization and denounced in every land [...] In the hope that your valiant protest may serve to awaken the dormant soul of Germany... (*Israel's Messenger*)

In this letter, Ezra expresses the urgent need for help from the world's nations to save the Jewish population from the Nazis. Moreover, he anticipated that the Nazi threat actually was

a menace to “the peace of the whole world,” further addressing the global scale of the persecution within Germany.

*Israel's Messenger* was the most influential newspaper in the Jewish community, published in Shanghai from 1904 to 1941. It was published in English, and its editor-in-chief was N.E.B Ezra, who served the newspaper for more than 30 years until his death in 1936. Ezra was under surveillance by both the German forces in China and the Chinese government. In the early years, many government officials and leading Chinese intellectuals issued statements in *Israel's Messenger* to announce their support of the Zionist movement and their support of the Jewish refugees. For example, in 1928, Guo Taiqi, commissioner of the Bureau for Foreign Affairs for Jiangsu Province and later vice-minister of foreign affairs in the nationalist government, published a speech in *Israel's Messenger* expressing his faith in Jewish nationalism and “the harmony and goodwill between Jews and China” (Gao 15). German officials noticed the visibility of the trust in strengthening Sino-Jewish relations, the support of the Jewish Zionist Movement, and the anti-German sentiments published in Jewish newspapers in Shanghai. According to Eber in *Wartime Shanghai and the Jewish Refugees from Central Europe*, the German press condemned the protest led by Madame Sun and interpreted the incident as interfering with Germany's internal affairs. Among the members of the China League for Civil Rights delegation was a Jew named Harold R. Issac (1910-1985). He was the only one threatened in the German account of the visit: “We urgently advise him not to poke his fingers in German domestic politics...he is liable to easily burn them” (Eber 43). Eber observes that in solidarity with the protest in Shanghai, other protests organized by local Jewish communities followed in Mukden and Harbin. The anti-German sentiment in Shanghai and other Chinese cities complicated the Sino-German relationship in

the early 1930s. In the mid-1930s, Germany restructured its diplomatic and economic interests in East Asia and slowly but firmly turned its favor from China to Japan.

### 1.12 Germany's Political and Commercial Interests between China and Japan

Germany was part of the Western alliance that had sought favor and profit from China since the Opium Wars. It was one of the colonial powers that gained a territorial foothold in China. After the end of World War I, Germany's territory in Qingdao was given to Japan, which led to the May Fourth Movement in Beijing, one of the most significant democratic protests in modern Chinese history. After losing its colonial power, Germany maintained its important military connections with China through the period of the Weimar Republic. After Hitler came to power, he continued military cooperation with the Nanjing Government in China, led by Chiang Kai-shek (1887-1975). Under Hitler's rule, Germany championed a strong pro-China and pro-Chiang foreign policy. Eber believes that this favoritism was due to Chiang's solid anti-communist stance. Therefore, Germany saw China as being "in a chain of anti-Communist states on the periphery of the USSR" (Eber *Wartime Shanghai* 44). Additionally, some Chinese nationalist members had expressed interest in fascism and its theory of strong leadership. In the early 1930s, while Germany collected financial gains from exports to China to save its internal foreign currency crisis, Chiang benefited from the relationship with Germany for military support to control the Communist uprisings and the Japanese invasion. However, Eber points out that between 1933-1938, Germany's favor slowly turned to Japan. Eber cites four significant events that marked Germany's turn to Japan: "the German-Japanese anti-Comintern Pact, signed on November 25, 1936; the German announcement of its recognition of Japan-dominated Manchukuo on February 20, 1938; the Tripartite Agreement between Germany, Italy, and Japan of September 27, 1940; and Germany's recognition of the

Japan-sanctioned Wang Jingwei (1883-1944) regime on July 1, 1941” (46). Unfortunately, Chiang Kai-shek ignored the alliances between Germany and Japan and assumed that Germany could not afford to lose its friendship with China. It was not until the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937, which forced the Nanjing government to flee to Hankou, and Hitler’s announcement in the Reichstag of Germany’s recognition of Manchukuo on February 20, 1938, that China realized that the winds had turned. On February 23, 1938, the article “Hankou Amazed by Fuehrer’s Speech,” published in one of the most influential Chinese newspapers, *Dagong Bao*, declared that “Germany’s action in forsaking China’s friendship and justice at this hour will never be forgotten by the Chinese” (Eber 46). Sino-German relations turned colder afterward.

## **1.2 Under the Shadow of the Rising Sun: Japanese-Controlled Policies**

### ***Toward Jewish Refugees 1938-1942***

The second stage of Jewish emigration to Shanghai lasted from approximately August 1938 to August 1941. According to prior Chinese research, as stated in Wang Jian’s *Shanghai Jewish Cultural Map*, up until the summer of 1937, “the total number of German Jews arrived in Shanghai was between 1000 to 1500” (Wang 22). While persecution of Jews in Europe had intensified since *Kristallnacht*, other countries in the world had applied stricter restrictions on accepting Jews. Therefore, 1937 to 1939 were the peak years when Jewish refugees fled to Shanghai. However, the journey to Shanghai was not an easy one. Though Jews did not need a visa to enter Shanghai, they still needed a visa to leave their own country. In the early 1930s, visas to China were relatively easy to obtain with the purchase of a round-trip ship ticket. Though many shipping companies owned by Japan and Italy knew for a fact that the Jews would never return from the trip, they still required them to buy a round-trip ticket so as to

exploit their desperate situation. Many Jews gathered money for ship tickets, collected their belongings, and traveled to the Far East. After the war, many survivors recalled that they had to bribe the officers of the shipping companies to get a ticket.<sup>23</sup> The decision to immigrate to Shanghai was severely complicated and difficult to afford, given that Jewish families were robbed of their private property by the Nazis, their businesses were destroyed, and their bank accounts were frozen. To further add to their misery, a tax for fleeing Nazi Germany was enacted in July 1933.<sup>24</sup> In addition to the ship tickets and the bribery, Jews had to pay a large sum of tax money to escape from the persecutions of the Nazi Regime. They were also prohibited from taking more than 10 Reichsmark on their trip. Before they embarked on their journey, Nazi officers inspected their belongings and stripped them of anything valuable. After being robbed multiple times, many once-wealthy Jewish families arrived in Shanghai empty-handed. According to Wang Jiang, from 1937 to 1939, around 20,000 Jewish refugees arrived in Shanghai, where the Jewish community and international relief organizations took quick action and set up more relief funds. However, these relief efforts were insufficient in the face of the massive influx. The Jewish refugees who arrived in the mid-to-late 1930s mainly settled in the Hongkou district because rent in Hongkou was 75% cheaper than in the International Settlement and the French Concession areas. Many refugees took minimally-paying jobs, became street vendors, and opened small businesses. However, the endless influx of refugees to Shanghai brought a financial burden and social unrest to the international community in Shanghai. Around 1939, a rumor circulated in Shanghai's international that the

---

<sup>23</sup> The interviews are found in the documentary *Survival in Shanghai* (2015). This documentary is housed by the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum in an exhibition screening hall.

<sup>24</sup> On July 26, 1933, Germany announced that Jews who wanted to emigrate needed to pay a certain amount of money or “tax for fleeing the Reich,” or the “Reichsfluchtsteuer.”

China General Omnibus Company, a business owned by the Sassoon family, was planning to replace its Russian employees with Jewish refugees. Alarmed by the increasing helplessness of the local relief committees' capacity to provide relief and fears of internal instability, disturbances, and complaints, the Shanghai authorities and the international powers started to enact measures to restrict the Jewish influx. In *A Study of Jewish Refugees in China (1933-1945)*, Pan Guang states that on May 25, 1939, "even the richest Jews, Sassoon, and Hayim, said they would be glad if the influx of Jewish refugees could be checked in some way" (14). Since the influx of refugees in Hongkou also drove up rental costs and business competition, Japanese residents also urged the Japanese authorities to develop policies and measures to curtail Jewish immigration. As a result, in August 1939, an agreement was reached by the Shanghai Municipal Council, the French Municipal Administrative Council, and the Japanese authorities to limit entry:

For European Jewish refugees holding passports stamped with 'J,' authorization for landing should be given to those: (1) having an entry permit issued by the said authorities; (2) possessing available for use in Shanghai not less than 400 USD in the case of an adult, or not less than 100USD in the case of a child of less than 13 years of age; (3) having immediate family relations residing in Shanghai; or (4) having a contract of employment with a resident in Shanghai or intending to contract marriage with a resident of Shanghai. (14)

These stricter immigration policies prevented the Jews from getting visas to Shanghai from European shipping companies, and those already on their way risked being refused entry. However, thanks to the Jewish organizations worldwide, a high number of Jews still reached Shanghai via varied channels. Yet as World War II raged on, the obstacles increased. From

1939 to 1940, Italy declared war on Britain and France; consequently, the route to Shanghai via Italy by water was cut off. However, some Jews still managed to arrive by land through the Soviet Union, Korea, and Japan. After Britain declared war on Germany, many German Jews swarmed into Shanghai from British-controlled Hong Kong and Singapore. In 1941, the outbreak of the Pacific War cut off the Jews' route to Shanghai. Some Jews were held up on their journey in the Soviet Union, Northeast China, or Japan and still managed to get to Shanghai; however, for the majority of the Jews, leaving Continental Europe for Shanghai after 1941 was no longer an option.

### 1.21 Sino-Japanese Relations and The Second Sino-Japanese War

Greed and the lust for power are as old as human history itself. After Japan's Meiji Restoration (1868),<sup>25</sup> this long-time neighbor of China, heavily influenced by its culture, philosophy, and art, began its rapid modernization process and became one of the rising military powers. The first military conflict between China and Japan, also known as the First Sino-Japanese War (July 25, 1894, to April 17, 1895), led to disastrous losses for the Manchu rulers, who suffered a significant financial blow. After World War I, China's involvement in the war did not bring prosperity or respect to the country, but great shame, even though it was among the victorious allies. At the Paris Peace Conference on April 30, 1919, it was decided that Qingdao, a coastal

---

<sup>25</sup> The Meiji Restoration returned practical imperial rule to the Empire of Japan in 1868 under Emperor Meiji. It restored practical abilities and consolidated the political system under the Emperor of Japan. The Meiji Restoration marks Japan's turn to modernity in contemporary history and led to enormous changes in Japan's political and social structures. Through the restoration, Japan rapidly westernized and became an industrialized rising modern power.

city in Shandong Province that Germany previously occupied, was to be handed to the Japanese.

China's political strife with Japan reached a boiling point during World War II, further impacting Jewish immigration to Shanghai. Since 1905, the Japanese had also held extraordinary power in Manchuria, a region in Northeast China. In 1932, Japan installed the last Manchu emperor of the Qing dynasty Pu Yi (1906-1967), established a puppet state, and proclaimed the independence of Manchuria. Facing the aggressive invasion of the Westernized Japanese power, Commander-in-Chief Chiang Kai-shek decided that the internal unification of China had to take precedence over the war against a foreign power. He prioritized fighting against the Communist uprisings in China and gave the Japanese more time to expand their terrifying invasion. It was not until 1936, when Chiang was captured and held prisoner by a northern patriotic warlord Zhang Xueliang (1901-2001), that he agreed under pressure to join the Communist Party in its fight against Japan. On July 7, 1937, the Second Sino-Japanese War broke out. The war resulted from a decades-long Japanese imperialist policy to expand its influence both politically and militarily in broader East Asia and secure its access to encroach on Chinese resources and labor. Chiang's regime lost its governance in many major Chinese cities. Similar to the governance of Manchuria, Japan built a puppet regime, the Wang Jingwei Regime (1940-1945), a collaborationist government led by Wang Jingwei (1883-1944) in Japanese-occupied Nanjing.<sup>26</sup> The Republic Government,

---

<sup>26</sup> The Wang Jingwei Regime (1940-1945) was a puppet government under the influence of the Empire of Japan in eastern China. The Japanese invited Wang Jingwei, a rival of Chiang, to be the face of the puppet regime and forced the leader of the Republic of China, Chiang Kai-shek, out of the capital in Nanjing. Chiang relocated the capital of the Republic of China to Chongqing and fought alongside the Allies of World War II against Japan. The Wang Jingwei Puppet Government existed until the end of World War II and the surrender

under Chiang Kai-shek, was forced to move to the city of Chongqing. In August 1937, the Japanese army seized Shanghai. After that, Shanghai became an isolated island alienated from the rest of the world, besieged by Japanese occupation. The fates of the Jewish refugees in Shanghai were now in the hands of the Japanese invaders. The Second Japanese War began in 1937 and lasted until 1945. The second part of the Sino-Japanese war became a significant part of World War II after 1941.

### 1.22 The Jewish Myth in Japan

Many scholarly studies have investigated the experience of the Jews under Japanese rule in the 1930s and 1940s in East Asia, including Meron Medzini's *Under the Shadow of the Rising Sun: Japan and the Jews during the Holocaust*, Gao Bei's *Shanghai Sanctuary: Chinese and Japanese Policy toward European Jewish Refugees during World War II*, David Kranzler's *Japanese Nazis & Jews: The Jewish Refugee Community of Shanghai 1938-1945*, and Marvin Tokayer's *The Fugu Plan: The Untold Story Of The Japanese and The Jews During World War II*. Previous scholars state that though many Jews experienced Japanese brutality in Shanghai, especially in the occupied areas, they were not explicitly targeted because of their race or religion. The reasons why the Japanese did not single out the Jews from other Western foreigners in Shanghai are manifold. As many scholars have mentioned, historically, Japan is a country that did not put a focus on race. After the Meiji Restoration in 1868, Japan transformed from an agrarian semi-feudal society into a significant industrial and regional military power in East Asia. Though it was one of the three members of the Axis Alliance, along with Nazi Germany and fascist Italy, its expanding greed was focused on Asia,

---

of Japan in August 1945, at which point the regime was dissolved and many of its leading members were executed for treason.

especially its ancient neighbor China. Japan's main goal was to build its twentieth-century empire, the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere," and had no particular interest in participating in the Holocaust and the persecution of the Jewish race.

According to Meron Medzini, before the arrival of Jewish merchants from Europe and America starting in the second half of the 1850s, there were no Jewish communities in Japan. Some sources point out that some seamen and merchants arrived in Japan prior to the nineteenth century, but there was no special mention of Japanese-Jewish relations. Medzini points out that Jewish presence and activity started after the implementation of unequal treaties imposed by foreign powers dating from 1859. Of the ports that were forced to be opened, Yokohama and Nagasaki soon attracted many Jewish merchants. The 1905 Russo-Japanese War led Japanese leaders to account for the Jewish community's economic power for the first time. Japan suffered a significant financial crisis soon after the war broke out. Takahashi Korekiyo (1854-1936), the deputy governor of the Bank of Japan at the time, was sent to London to seek massive international credits and loans to purchase military goods. At a dinner party in London, Takahashi met an American Jewish millionaire Jacob Schiff (1847-1920), who was involved in business with Russia and became interested in supporting the Japanese empire to defeat Russia for liberal causes and help the Russian Jews. Schiff was able to mobilize a loan of 52 million pounds sterling by having his own companies guarantee half the sum and another 30 million sterling in loans from Jewish bankers in London and New York. These loans were vital to Japan's survival. Though Japan did not win the war, Schiff was able to use his influence in Washington to advise President Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919) to mediate between Japan and Russia, which led to a peace negotiation in Portsmouth. The Meiji emperor invited Schiff to visit Japan and awarded him the Medal of the Rising Sun.

Schiff was the first foreigner to be commended with such a prestigious medal. Takahashi later became finance minister and then prime minister of Japan. He even sent his daughter to live with Schiff's family in the United States to pursue a Western university education. As Medzini states, "this episode marks the beginning of the understanding (or myth) among Japan's political and economic elites that world Jewry is a tight-knit powerful and influential group with connections around the world" (8). The historic Jewish-Japanese relations influenced Japan's treatment of the Jews in Shanghai. Instead of carrying out "the Final Solution" ordered by Hitler against the Jewish people, Japan ignored its German ally's demands repeatedly and did not exterminate the Jewish people living in the Japanese home islands and the territories it occupied, such as Shanghai. The Japanese official Sugihara Chiune (1900-1986)<sup>27</sup> granted over 2,600 Japanese transit visas to Polish and Lithuanian Jews. However, though it is crucial to honor humanitarian acts by some Japanese officials, it is essential to recognize that the Japanese power did not save the Jews out of sheer philanthropy. There are various reasons why the Japanese sheltered the Jewish refugees in their territory, in particular a scheme for manipulating world Jewry that was informally referred to as "The Fugu Plan."

### 1.23 The Fugu Plan

After the 1905 Revolution in Russia, hundreds of thousands of Jews escaped the country and immigrated to the United States, Palestine, Siberia, Japan, Northeast China, and Shanghai. After the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, some 1700 Jewish refugees escaped to Japan. Anti-

---

<sup>27</sup> Sugihara Chiune (1900-1986) was a Japanese diplomat who served as Vice-Consul for the Japanese Empire in Kaunas, Lithuania. During the Second World War, Sugihara helped about 6000 Jews flee Europe by issuing transit visas to them so that they could travel through Japanese territory, risking his job and the lives of his family. In 1985, the State of Israel honored Sugihara for his actions. He is the only Japanese national to have been so honored.

Semitic ideas started to develop in Japan because of the influence of German Nazi ideologists such as Alfred Rosenberg (1893-1946). However, the Japanese diplomats and officials were cautious about approaching “The Jewish Question.” In the 1930s, some moderate Japanese leaders came up with the idea of taking advantage of the Jewish community’s connections to help Japan’s cause. This idea later developed into the “Fugu Plan.”

“Fugu” means “blowfish” in Japanese. Though the fish has some poisonous flesh, once the poison is removed and the fish handled delicately, it becomes an exquisite and sought-after dish in Japan. In the late 1930s, the Nazis’ anti-Semitic ideas infiltrated Japan. The Japanese began to view the Jews as “poison” to society; however, they believed that once the Jewish refugees were handled correctly and controlled, they could become assets and benefit the empire. In *The Fugu Plan: The Untold Story of the Japanese and the Jews During World War II*, Marvin Tokayer claims that in the early 1970s, he was shown the historical Kogan Papers, which were “a bound set of pre-war Foreign-Ministry documents which had been found in the back of a second-hand bookstore in Tokyo and subsequently turned over to a Jewish resident named Michael Kogan” (Tokayer 87-88). The papers document the unknown historical fact that the Japanese had secretly devised a plan for a Jewish settlement in Manchuria. Tokayer found out that the pre-war Japanese Foreign Minister Yosuke Matsuoka (1880-1946) had played a considerable role in those papers and was involved in designing the “Fugu Plan,” which, according to Tokayer, was a secret policy devised in the Japanese government’s highest councils between 1934 and 1940. Its purpose was to enlist the talents and skills of European Jewry and encroach on the capital, influence, and sympathy for American Jewry in the construction of Japan’s twentieth-century empire, the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.

In the 1930s, after Japan had gained control of northeast China, it lacked the capital and human resources to develop the wealth of its puppet government in Manchuria. The Japanese hoped that the Jewish refugees would be willing to settle in Manchuria with their technical skills and wealth and help develop the area into a secure buffer zone against the threat of the Soviet Union. Japan also sought to build a bridge with the Western powers, especially the United States. It believed that the Jewish community in the United States controlled the press, media, and financial industry. Therefore, providing refuge for the Jews seemed like a sound foreign policy for the Japanese officials at that time. Without a history of anti-Semitism, Japan designed the Fugu Plan to attract Jewish assistance in building its powerhouse in East Asia. Tokayer pointed out that the creators of the Fugu Plan had undermined their scheme with two very mistaken beliefs: a gross misunderstanding of the nature of the Jewish people as a whole and the essential roles Jews played in the global economy. Besides, as Medzini states, the project also lacked details and an operational plan, and increasingly close ties to Nazi Germany stalled any momentum:

The causes for the failure of the idea to get off the ground were varied and were partly the result of the planners' inability to implement such an ambitious and grandiose plan. There was also a total lack of basic knowledge on the topic, and no one had even begun to prepare the groundwork for such an undertaking. But the main reason seems to be the reticence of the Japanese government in Tokyo as well as the puppet regime of Manchukuo and their reluctance to become involved in such a scheme. In Tokyo, there was less and less enthusiasm for collaborating with Jewish factors because of the growing ties with Nazi Germany, especially after the signing of the Anti-Comintern Pact in 1936. As German and Japanese ties grew stronger and warmer, and Germany

became a strategic asset to Japan, any measure that could be interpreted as helping Jews or encouraging German Jews to remove their capital from Germany was seen as counterproductive. (53-54)

Though the Japanese overestimated the Jews as economic factors and policy shapers in the Western world, the Fugu plan saved the lives of tens of thousands of Jewish refugees living in Japan and Shanghai. Japan never built or operated extermination camps for Jews as the German Nazis had. It is important to note that after the war, Japan was eager to disassociate with Nazi Germany's anti-Semitism and claimed that, under their rule, they had treated the Jews humanely. Though Japan did not execute the Jewish refugees based on their race or religion, their behaviors towards the Jews in Shanghai can be barely called humane. To compromise with their German ally, the Japanese drove thousands of Jewish refugees into the crowded area of the Hongkou district, the most impoverished region in Shanghai at that time. Jewish residences were limited to this area from 1943 to 1945.

#### 1.24 The Pacific War and Difficulties for Relief Efforts in Japanese-Occupied Shanghai

On December 8, 1941, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, signifying the outbreak of the Pacific War. A few hours after this initial attack, the Japanese fired on a British gunboat in the Yangtze River near Shanghai. The Japanese rapidly occupied Shanghai with minimal resistance. As David Kranzler notes in *Japanese, Nazis, and Jews: The Jewish Refugee Community of Shanghai 1938-1945*, "for the first time, the 'foreigners' were directly involved in the undeclared war in China" (453). The international population in Shanghai had enjoyed prestige and protection under the Japanese occupation. However, the outbreak of the Pacific War stripped away their foreign privileges as they became citizens of Japan's declared enemy

nations. Since the wealthy local Jewish community was one of the most significant financial sources that contributed to the relief effort for the *Heime*,<sup>28</sup> the outbreak of the Pacific War had a detrimental effect on the Jews' conditions in Shanghai.

The Japanese seized all of Shanghai's assets and governance control, including Sassoon's legendary Cathay Hotel and the international foreign clubs. Since the wealthy Sephardic Jews, most of whom had passports from Britain or the United States, were now nationals of the enemy countries, their assets were frozen, and the primary source of relief funds for the refugees vanished. David Kranzler states that though the Japanese promised that law and order would be maintained in Shanghai, business did not proceed as usual:

Bank accounts were frozen, except for small withdrawals for living expenses, and all short-wave radios were confiscated unless the short-wave attachment was removed. Most newspapers, especially those with a record of anti-Japanese views, ceased publication. A few journalists known for such opinions were whisked out of Shanghai to Australia by an English ship, one step ahead of the Japanese occupation [...] Notices were soon posted to the effect that all British and Americans had to register with the Japanese *gendarmarie* no later than December 13<sup>th</sup>, 1942, which made them, within the year, liable to internment in special camps. (454-55)

Facing the Japanese regulations, the wealthy Sephardic Jewish community that had long voiced anti-Japanese statements was forced to withdraw their relief efforts almost entirely. The Russian Jews were reluctant to participate in the relief efforts for fear that the Japanese would consider them wealthy and retaliate by robbing them of their belongings. To make matters worse, the chaotic war had significant economic repercussions, and the various Jewish

---

<sup>28</sup> German word for "home." Heime is the name for the refugee camps in Shanghai.

relief committees faced particularly difficult financial challenges. Laura Margolis (1903-1997) and her colleague Manuel Siegel (?-?), both sent by the JDC (American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee), struggled enormously to secure enough funds to operate the refugee camps.<sup>29</sup> Margolis reconstructed the distribution of the Heime's soup kitchens and negotiated with Japanese officials to ask for loans to continue operation. Since all communication between the United States had ceased, no money was forthcoming from the United States for the CFA and the JDC. Margolis convinced Captain Koreshige Inuzuka (1890-1965)<sup>30</sup> to issue

---

<sup>29</sup> After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the Japanese authorities closed Shanghai to further immigration. Yet they deported most of the Jewish refugees then living in Japan and other Jewish refugees trapped in the Far East while in transit to other countries to Shanghai. All told, some 20,000 refugees were living in Shanghai at the start of 1942, and 15,000 survived the war with JDC aid. About two-thirds of the refugees came from Austria and Germany, and the others were from Eastern European countries. In May 1941, JDC representative Laura Margolis arrived in Shanghai to guide refugee aid and emigration activities. A second representative, Manny Siegel, joined her on the eve of the attack on Pearl Harbor. Following Pearl Harbor, direct communications with the U.S. were cut off, leaving JDC representatives communicating with their headquarters via third parties. Under the Japanese occupation, Margolis and Siegel were classified as enemy aliens but were permitted to remain at liberty until February 1943 when they were interned. By then, they had succeeded in organizing a system of emergency relief with the equipment needed to run steam kitchens capable of feeding 10,000 people per day. These kitchens kept the refugees alive for the duration of the war. Between 1946, when emigration resumed, and 1953, JDC helped some 16,000 Jews emigrate from China. See "Refuge in Shanghai (1938-1953)" published on the JDC website: <https://archives.jdc.org/topic-guides/refuge-in-shanghai-1938-1953/>.

<sup>30</sup> Captain Koreshige Inuzuka was an anti-Semitic Japanese Captain. He was convinced by Victor Sassoon to protect the Jewish refugees in Shanghai. Inuzuka was the head of the Japanese Imperial Navy's Advisory Bureau on Jewish Affairs from March 1939 until April 1942. In 1939, Inuzuka sent a report to his superiors, comparing the Jews to *fugu*, the famous poisonous fish delicacy. Inuzuka's plans regarding the Jews came to be known as the Fugu Plan.

In 1941, Inuzuka's help in rescuing Jewish refugees from Nazi Europe was acknowledged and Inuzuka was given a silver cigarette case by the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States; the interior of the case bore an inscription thanking Inuzuka for his services to the Jewish people. After the war, the cigarette case saved him from being tried as a war criminal. The case was later donated to Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem. In 1952, Inuzuka established the Japan-Israel Association and served as president of the Association until his death in 1965. Wikipedia contributors. "Koreshige

two loans from neutral parties and raised as much money from Ashkenazim and even Chinese donors as possible. Unfortunately, by the middle of 1942, Captain Inuzuka was replaced by Captain Saneyoshi (?-?),<sup>31</sup> who showed no favor to the Jewish refugees and was indifferent to their suffering. Margolis and her colleagues desperately resorted to publicity during the negotiation process, voicing their heartbreaking details and struggles in newspapers and on the air. The Japanese authorities were eager to promote an image of a “peaceful takeover” of Shanghai and were very angry with the JDC representatives and almost arrested them. Margolis was arrested in August 1942 for participating in a secret meeting to discuss how to prevent the vindictive “Meisinger Plan” that allegedly schemed to execute all the Jewish refugees by sinking them out at sea. Eventually, after carefully training some refugees to take over their work, Margolis and Siegel resigned on July 15, 1942.

### 1.25 The Meisinger Plan

Japan’s change of policy towards the Jews is frequently discussed within the context of the “Meisinger Plan.” According to Fritz Wiedemann (1891-1970), who served as the German Consul General in China between 1941 and 1945, Germany pressured Japan to change its policies toward the Shanghai Jewish community. His testimony was supported by a Japanese naval officer, Takeshima. Though nowadays there are no official written documents to support such assertions, it is a fact that in July 1942, the notorious Nazi Gestapo Colonel Josef Meisinger (1899-1947) arrived in Shanghai. Meisinger had been head of the Nazi office

---

Inuzuka.” *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 13 Jun. 2020. Web. 19 Jun. 2020.

<sup>31</sup> In spring 1943, Navy Captain Kubota Tsutomu followed Saneyoshi as Chief Director of the Shanghai Office of Stateless Refugee Affairs. He became honorary chairman of SACRA (Shanghai Ashkenazi Communal Relief Association) and presided over SACRA’s new committees.

dealing with matters of abortion and homosexuality. His brutality in Poland gained him the sobriquet “the Warsaw Butcher.” In 1941 he was appointed to the German Embassy in Tokyo and served as the liaison between the Gestapo and the Japanese intelligence services. According to Medzini, in early 1942, the Japanese authorities had already concluded that their regulations towards the Jews needed to be tightened. Discussions addressed how to concentrate the 20,000 to 30,000 Jews in one designated area and get rid of them. The German officers might have learned from the Japanese allies their concerns (77). Therefore, in 1942, Meisinger was sent to Shanghai to deal with the Jewish community. He brought with him the “Final Solution” to solve “the Jewish Question” in Shanghai, hence “the Meisinger Plan.” Medzini claims that the Jewish community in Shanghai learned of “the Meisinger Plan” in August 1942:

He suggested a number of concrete courses of action. One was to send those Jews who were once German nationals to Japan to work as forced laborers for the Japanese War effort. The second was to use Jews as guinea pigs for experiments on human beings. The third and most lethal was to put thousands of Jews aboard cargo ships and either starve them to death on board or sink them in the China Sea. Another remote idea was to transfer the Jews to Nazi-occupied Europe where they would be exterminated. But as the first step, and prior to taking drastic measures against the Jews, they should be concentrated into one area. The experts thought it would be easy to round up all the Jews on the eve of the Jewish New Year since many of them would be in synagogues. (77-78)

Very little evidence of the Meisinger Plan remained after the war. It is believed that to avoid persecution, all the papers that indicated war crimes were destroyed after the war. In a post-

war interview, W. Michael Blumenthal (1926-), former Secretary of the US Treasury and a former Jewish refugee in Shanghai, later discussed the Meisinger Plan.<sup>32</sup> He claimed that he visited Japan frequently during his political career due to official affairs. He tried to ask the Japanese officials about the documentation of the Meisinger Plan, but none of them could tell him anything. Blumenthal's testimony presents the high level of secrecy around Meisinger's project. Medzini believes that not all Japanese officials were willing to execute the Jews under their ally's pressure. The Japanese Vice-Consul Shibata Mitsugu (?-?) decided to alert the Jewish leaders; some of them, such as Dr. Abraham Cohen (1887-1970), quickly contacted Japanese officials to seek help and support. Shortly after, Meisinger's plan was leaked to a local Chinese newspaper.<sup>33</sup> The Japanese officials were furious. They arrested Shibata and some Jewish leaders such as Cohen and Margolis. Shibata was detained for months, later sent back to Japan, and released from the Japanese Foreign Service. The Jewish leaders were released after a few days. However, it is noteworthy that not all Japanese officials and diplomats supported the Nazis' inhumane persecution.

Scholars have debated the inconsistent Japanese attitude towards the Jewish refugees and why they did not follow their German allies' extermination plans. In "Shanghai: A Haven for Holocaust Victims," Pan Guang provided four main reasons why the Japanese did not carry out the Meisinger Plan:

- (1) The lobby within Japan, which advocated peace with the United States, still considered the Jews in Shanghai to be a means by which good relations with the United

---

<sup>32</sup> This interview can be found in the documentary *Survival in Shanghai*, 2015, housed by the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum.

<sup>33</sup> It is not clear yet which newspaper; further research is needed.

States could be restored and exerted their limited influence over the Japanese leadership to this end.

(2) Japanese leaders were still hoping to maintain non-belligerent relations with the Soviet Union. If the Jews in Shanghai were to be slaughtered as the Nazis demanded, no doubt this barbarism would involve Russian Jews and would have an adverse influence on relations between the two countries.

(3) The Jews in Harbin and Japan, who spoke up for the Jewish community in Shanghai with Japanese senior officials in an attempt to persuade Japan not to carry out the 'Meisinger Plan,' also exerted some influence.

(4) As a result of the Confucian cultural tradition, East Asia did not foster the same religious, racial, and cultural prejudices against Jews, which were prevalent in Christian Europe. Even the Japanese and the puppet officials at the middle and lower levels in Shanghai found it hard to accept the 'Meisinger Plan' both intellectually and emotionally. For example, Mr. Shibata, Japanese Vice-Consul in Shanghai, was arrested because he gave secret support to Jews.<sup>34</sup>

As Pan Guang believes, due to the uncertainty of the Pacific War, Japan did not want to exterminate all the Jews in Shanghai, most of whom were of European origin. Medzini also claims that Japan neither wished to harm the wealthy Sephardic Jews with passports from Britain or the United States and who were already being held hostage in detention camps nor the Russian Jews, as this could compromise the delicate relations with the Soviet Union (78). Medzini suggests that though there is no evidence of a connection, it is noteworthy that

---

<sup>34</sup> This paper was archived by The Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme: <https://www.un.org/en/holocaustremembrance/docs/paper15.shtml>

by late 1942 the tide of the Pacific War had begun to turn against Japan. Afraid of further provoking Western countries in case they were to lose the war, Japanese officials might have had to handle the Jews who held passports from major European countries with caution. However, due to the continuous pressure from its Nazi ally, Japan decided to set up a Jewish Ghetto in Shanghai as a designated area for the stateless refugees. In September 1942, the Japanese organized the Shanghai Foreign “Pao-Chia,” a self-policing unit of Jewish refugees. With the proclamation of the “Pao-Chia” organization, the expectation of creating a designated ghetto for the stateless refugees loomed on the horizon.

### ***1.3 Memories of Hospitality: Sino-Jewish Support and Survival in the Hongkou Ghetto 1942-1945***

The final stage of the Jewish experience in Shanghai was from 1942 to 1945. Spurred by Meisinger, who arrived in Shanghai in 1942, Japanese anti-Semitic sentiments soared in late 1942. As a result, the Japanese authorities decided to drive the stateless refugees to the Hongkou district and forced them to limit their activities to a designated area. In 1943, the authorities manipulated the media to spread anti-Semitic propaganda and promote the idea of establishing a Jewish ghetto in Shanghai. On February 6, 1943, the *Shanghai Gazette*<sup>35</sup> published an article condemning the wealthy Sephardic Jews such as the Sassoon, the Hayim, and the Abraham families for gaining their wealth by selling opium and engaging in other sordid businesses and labeled the typical Jew as evil. In *A Study of Jewish Refugees in China (1933-1945)*, Pan Guang points out that on February 18, Shanghai newspapers and radio stations followed the allegations made by the *Shanghai Gazette* and eventually

---

<sup>35</sup> Bilingual Chinese newspaper (ca. 1918-1921).

announced the “Proclamation Concerning Restriction of Residence and Business of Stateless Refugees” issued by the Japanese authorities in Shanghai:

- I. Due to military necessity, places of residence and business of stateless refugees in the Shanghai area shall hereafter be restricted to the under mentioned area in the International Settlement. East of the line connecting Chaoufong Road (now Gaoyang Road), Muirhead Road (now Haimen Road), and Dent Road (now Dongtu Road); West of Yangtzepoo Creek (now Yangshupu Road); North of the line connecting East Seward Road (now East Changzhi Road) and Wayside Road (now Huoshan Road); and South of the boundary of the International Settlement.
- II. The stateless refugees at present residing and/or carrying on business in the district other than the above area shall remove their places of residence and/or business into the area designated above by May 18, 1943. Permission must be obtained from the Japanese authorities for the transfer, sale, purchase, or lease of rooms, houses, shops, or other establishments, which are situated outside the designated area and are now being occupied or used by stateless refugees.
- III. Persons other than stateless refugees shall not remove into the area mentioned in Article I without permission of the Japanese authorities.
- IV. Persons who violate the PROCLAMATION or obstruct its enforcement shall be liable to severe punishment.

Commander-in-Chief of the Imperial Japanese Army in the Shanghai Area

Commander-in-Chief of the Imperial Japanese Navy in the Shanghai Area

February 18, 1943. (60-61)

According to Pan, although the words “Jews” and “Ghetto” were not explicitly mentioned, the European Jewish refugees were referred to as stateless refugees. Pan notes that an article published in the same paper described stateless refugees as “those who ‘arrived in Shanghai since 1937 from Germany (including former Austria and Czecho-Slovakia), Hungary and former Poland, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia and have no nationality at present’” (61). The Japanese authority appointed to be in charge of the relocation was Masao Kubota (?-?). He scheduled a meeting with the Russian Ashkenazi Jews in Shanghai on February 23, 1943. Kubota explained to the Russian Jews that the Proclamation was not anti-Semitic but a result of a short supply of housing and food. He also urged the Russian Jews to cope with the situation and threatened that anyone who failed to cooperate with the Japanese authorities would be severely punished. In February 1943, the Western Shanghai Police carried out the following order:

You and your family are requested to move out of the Western District from February 15 to February 28, 1943. Besides, all of you must go to 70 Muirhead Road to be registered, that is before February 15. You will be appointed by them in Yangtzepoo, where you can have your house, food, and Identification Card. Before Feb. 15, you are requested to go to the Western Shanghai Police (Foreigner Affairs Department) located at 34b Avenue Hang, to report and to get your Moving Permit. Those who move out later than Feb. 15 or not going away, or not coming to the Western Police Headquarters to report will be severely punished.<sup>36</sup>

Some 14,000-18,000 Jewish refugees, including 2800 refugees in temporary shelters, were forced by the Japanese authorities to move into the designated area. However, due to

---

<sup>36</sup> This material is written in English and archived in the Shanghai Municipal Archive.

Shanghai's chaotic situation, the Jews were not living in the Hongkou Ghetto by themselves. The local Chinese people already living in the impoverished district became their neighbors, friends, supporters, and witnesses.

Moving into the overcrowded Ghetto in Hongkou created massive hardships for the Jewish refugees. In August 1943, the Japanese appointed the sadistic officer Ghoya Kanoh (?-?) as the controller of the Jews. Ghoya was responsible for issuing passes to move out of the restricted area and providing permits for Jews to continue their daily activities such as work and education outside the designated area. Many survivors remembered Ghoya as a vindictive and evil psychopath. He was very short in stature and hated the tall Jews. He called himself "The King of the Jews" and physically assaulted the refugees as he pleased when they came to apply for permits. At the end of the war, Herbert Zernik wrote a satirical poem, "Ein Affe wurde Mensch (A Monkey Turned Human),"<sup>37</sup> to represent and remember Ghoya's evil brutality:

He put on a suit,  
a haircut came next,  
Now Go seemed so tame  
And English he spoke,  
revenge on mankind was his aim.  
A town full of dispossessed people,  
he chose to carry out his evil intentions (Eber 104-05).

---

<sup>37</sup> The whole poem can be found in Irene Eber's *Voices From Shanghai: Jewish Exiles in Wartime China*, 2008, pp.104-106. This chapter presents just one stanza.

In contrast to the persecution and inhumane regulations of the Japanese administration, the local Chinese people showed great compassion and sympathy towards the stateless refugees. In “The Friendship and Acculturation in Adversity: On the Relationship between Jewish Refugees and Chinese,” Pan Guang portrays the cross-cultural support between the local Chinese and the Jews in Shanghai:

When thousands of Jewish refugees arrived in Shanghai between 1937 and 1941, millions of Shanghai residents themselves became refugees after the Japanese occupation of Shanghai. However, in spite of this, the natives of Shanghai tried their best to help Jewish refugees in various ways. Chinese residents in Hongkou overcame all kinds of difficulties to vacate their own rooms to put up refugees. Before the hospitals for Jewish refugees were set up, Chinese hospitals treated a great number of Jewish refugees and saved many lives. In the hardest days in Hongkou from 1943 to 1945, Jewish refugees and their Chinese neighbors enjoyed mutual help and shared weal and woe. They, though largely separated by linguistic and cultural barriers, found themselves bound together by mutual suffering. (79)

Compared to the Chinese residents living in the foreign concessions, the residents living in Hongkou were mostly low-income Chinese citizens, and the Jews were exposed to local Chinese cultures of the working class. The Japanese authorities did not give the Jews much time to plan for the relocation; therefore, many Jews lived in Chinese residents’ spare rooms. The close contact with the local Chinese people produced a peak in Sino-Jewish cultural exchange in the ghetto. It was tough for the Jews to adapt initially since most Jews only considered China a temporary shelter and had not planned on interacting with the Chinese people. In addition to language barriers, the Chinese customs also gave them culture

shock. However, the Jews adapted to the meager living conditions and gradually built friendships with their Chinese neighbors. Contemporary Chinese scholarship emphasizes the fact that the local Chinese people demonstrated great hospitality towards the Jewish refugees, as proven by many photos and documents in the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum exhibition hall. The museum's permanent exhibition houses hundreds of pictures of the daily lives of the Jews interacting with the Chinese locals, depicting business operations, deeds of kindness, neighborly friendships, and even interracial romance. Currently, the Sino-Jewish cultural exchange during World War II is highly celebrated in Chinese scholarship. In the permanent exhibition halls at the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum, many photos and testimonies document this unforgettable chapter in the Sino-Jewish encounter, capturing the daily lives in the Hongkou Jewish Ghetto and highlighting the harmonious friendship that developed between the Chinese locals and the Jews. Those fugitive memories reappear in the survivors' numerous postwar memoirs and interviews.

In her memoir, Lilli Finkelstein recalls her time in Shanghai and the friendship she developed with her Chinese neighbors:

We noticed that the Chinese in the neighborhood behaved very friendly toward us. They knew how precarious our situation was, and they didn't take advantage of it. They let us live our life unmolested. One should not overlook the fact that these people were among the poorest and least educated even in Shanghai. I made friends with one or two Chinese women. A Chinese family once invited us to their New Year dinner. (163)<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> This memoir was included multiple times in Pan Guang's research, and the English translation differs slightly. Lilli Finkelstein's memoir can be found in multiple Chinese

Pan Guang presents an interview with Wang Faliang (?-2008), a local Chinese elder who interacted with the Jewish refugees in the Hongkou Ghetto:

When Jews suffered from Hitler, the Japanese persecuted us Chinese. We shared the hard times with the Jewish refugees, and we were friendly to each other and helped each other. We felt so hard when they left after the war. (68)<sup>39</sup>

On July 17, 1945, American aircraft accidentally bombed the Hongkou area. The trauma and anti-fascist sentiment were shared by both the Jewish and Chinese communities. Many survivors later recalled how the Chinese and even the Japanese helped the Jews and each other with medical treatment and survival.<sup>40</sup> In “The Relationship between Jewish Refugees and Chinese in Shanghai during Wartime,” he notes that the division of race, color, culture, and even language were put aside in the face of traumatic incidents:

Some witnesses described how Jewish refugees were ripping up the last of their treasured table and bed linen to make bandages, how the Chinese helped carry the wounded through rubble and offered to transport heavy loads of cots, mattresses, and buckets of water to the clinics, and how the poor Chinese in Hongkew brought food and even money to the emergency clinics. (Pan 80)

Pan’s analysis derives from written testimonies in survivors’ memoirs. In *Stranger Always: A Jewish Family in Wartime Shanghai*, Rena Krasno recalls how her friend Max Scheidlinger, who lived in the Hongkou Ghetto, called her on the phone late at night after the bomb attack and described how everyone was frightened but helped each other. Max

---

sources, published in Chinese. In this chapter, I am citing the English quote that Pan Guang uses in his research.

<sup>39</sup> Interview with Wang Faliang, Shanghai, 18 April, 1994. Pan Guang translated and published this interview in English in his *A Study of Jewish Refugees in China (1933-1945)*.

<sup>40</sup> Interviews can be found in the documentary *Shanghai Ghetto, 2002*.

cried: “Now we are all brothers” (189). When Krasno told her father of Max’s statement, he replied: “Wonderful! Hitler has not been able to destroy the Jewish spirit, nor have centuries of repression killed the inherent goodness of the Chinese!” (189)

The kindness of the Chinese locals was not inspired solely by humanitarian instincts. It is also important to note that the support of the Jews and the Chinese people were mutual; therefore, both parties may have been motivated by gratitude in addition to compassion. The Jews also supported the Chinese people in their fight against the Japanese invaders. The Jews in China not only organized protests against Nazi persecution but also helped the Chinese resist Japanese aggression. Many refugees directly joined the military campaigns to fight the Japanese invaders, and some even became spies and informants for the Chinese side. Many Jewish individuals sided with the Communist Party, such as the key figures: Hans Shippe (?-1941), Ruth Weiss (1908-2006), Jacob Rosenfeld (1903-1952), Richard Frey (1920-2004, original name Richard Stein), Sydney Shapiro (1915-2014), Israel Epstein (1915-2005), and Hans Müller (1915-1994). On October 25, 1937, *Israel’s Messenger* issued a statement to condemn the Japanese invasion:

In the name of humanity and justice, we appeal to the world’s major powers to prevent the arbitrary deprivation of life and property which is taking place in China. The Chinese people are fighting bravely to defend their homeland. We appreciate their heroic deeds. The resistance against the destructive power of terror is admirable. We sincerely hope that the Chinese people will win the war because China’s cause is just and righteous, and they are fighting for their own rights.

*(Israel’s Messenger, October 25, 1937)*

The reasons for the Sino-Jewish mutual support are manifold. The strong bond between the two communities not only derives from the historically harmonious Sino-Jewish relationship but also indicates a global anti-fascist movement that coalesced when integrity and human rights were under attack. The Jewish refugees and the local Chinese people developed a genuinely extraordinary, cross-cultural friendship in the face of hardship. Though some sources such as police reports housed by the Shanghai Municipal archive also indicate conflicts and controversies, mostly related to business disputes, the overall interaction still suggests that individuals with very different backgrounds can support each other and survive together when facing unprecedented danger and tremendous threats.

#### ***1.4 From Heime back to Home: The Departure of the Jewish Refugees***

After WWII, the Jewish refugees slowly left their place of refuge and departed Shanghai. Many stateless refugees no longer had a home and chose to immigrate to the United States, Australia, other Western countries, or Palestine. According to records, most of the refugees left Shanghai before the 1960s. There are varied reasons why the Jews chose to leave China. From the Jewish perspective, Shanghai was never their first choice. They escaped to Shanghai out of desperation and were eager to track down their remaining family and friends in Europe and reunite with loved ones who survived. Because of the enormous cultural and language barriers, Shanghai was never an ideal place for Jews from Europe to settle permanently. Though some took local Chinese spouses and developed friendships with Chinese people, the urge to return to the familiarity of their own culture and customs took precedence. Moreover, both the political and economic environments in China were not peaceful. Chinese life did not return to normal after the victory of World War II. The National Party and the Communist Party were temporarily united during the Sino-Japanese

War, but tensions intensified after the war ended. From 1945 to 1949, China experienced multiple years of national conflict and internal revolutions. The new Communist regime, established in October 1949, prohibited the Jewish merchants from accumulating private wealth by operating businesses in China. The ideological turn and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976)<sup>41</sup> led by Mao Zedong (1893-1976) also created mass confusion and chaos in Chinese society. The police reports in the Shanghai Municipal Archive documented many minor financial conflicts between Jews and Chinese after 1945. Many Jews left China due to social conditions that were not as welcoming as in previous times. While I concur with Chinese scholarship and the conclusion made by the leading scholar Pan Guang, who argues that it is biased for the Western scholarship to claim that it was mainly the ideological factor that drove the refugees' departure, given that the need for reunions and cultural familiarity also played significant roles in the Jews' decisions to leave Shanghai, it is, however, essential to recognize that economic environments favoring international investments and policy incentives were the key reasons for the Jewish community's departure.

As Jonathan Kaufman observes in his *The Last Kings of Shanghai*, after Deng Xiaoping's (1904-1997) opening-up policy in 1979 and China's economic miracle following a series of reforms, Jewish merchants who had previously opened China to the world and changed the face of Shanghai culturally were to return to China and especially Shanghai. Today, the Hongkou district has been restored to its previous glory as "little Vienna," and many historic cultural spaces such as the Jewish synagogue, the former refugee camps, and

---

<sup>41</sup> The Cultural Revolution, formally the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, was a sociopolitical movement in China from 1966 until 1976. It is one of the most traumatic episodes in modern Chinese history, with social development and even education ceasing in daily life, citizens turning on each other, and trust among people being lost.

the famous Jewish restaurants have become valuable sites for preservations to honor the unforgettable memory of the Sino-Jewish encounter that witnessed cross-cultural hospitality and humanitarian acts. The preservation of the historical memory and ongoing Sino-Jewish scholarship generates great hope for a future that thrives on multicultural co-prosperity and embracing racial equality and cultural diversity.

### **1.5 Conclusion**

In the 1930s, Shanghai was not the top choice for many Jewish refugees. For many European Jews, the city of Shanghai was simply a hazy notion, a vague, exotic locale in the far East that somehow did not require a visa for their entries. In *Chinese Exile: My Years in Shanghai and Nanking*, Horst Peter Eisfielder wrote:

No one seemed to know much, if anything, about the place, not even its exact location. Judging by my school atlas, Shanghai seemed to be on the coast just as its Chinese name implied: *Shang* “upon” and *Hai* (the) “sea.” So it transpired that swimsuits were brought for all the family in anticipation of glorious days on beaches that did not exist. (9)

Although in the Jewish refugees’ experience, wartime Shanghai consisted of episodes of chaotic turmoil and impoverished suffering, many Jews developed an affection for Shanghai and China. Documentaries that interview survivors who relocated back to the West after the war show that many kept the habits of eating Chinese food and practicing Chinese customs. Many survivors went back to Shanghai to revisit the sites of their memories and track down their childhood Chinese neighbors and friends. Shanghai changed the lives of the Jewish refugees forever and left a humanitarian mark on world history. Yet every cultural exchange is not one-dimensional, and the Jewish culture also shaped Shanghai. The families of the

Sassoons and the Kadoories laid the foundations of Shanghai's luxurious glamor and lavish Western-style architecture. The refugees brought their art and culture and injected cosmopolitan energy that merged with the traditional Chinese charm. The old world encountered a new order, and a cross-cultural communicative space was created where the wildest dreams were actualized, the impossible made possible, and the abnormal became the new normal.

In the early 2000s, the Hongkou area was listed as a protected district, and historical and cultural heritage sites were renovated and preserved. In addition to maintaining cultural dissemination, the unique history of the Jewish ghetto also serves as a tourist attraction. In 2004, the Ohel Moshe Synagogue was added to the list of architectural heritage treasures of Shanghai. In 2007, it was restored to its original architectural style based on the original drawings in the municipal archives and turned into the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum. According to Wang Jian and Zhang Yanhua in *Preserving the Shanghai Ghetto*, the Ohel Moshe Synagogue welcomes approximately four hundred local and international visitors daily during peak season (84). Through preservation, Shanghai and the Hongkou Jewish Ghetto serve as essential diplomatic spaces to construct both Sino-Jewish and Sino-German relationships. Many foreign leaders and global key figures visited the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum and other cultural sites, which developed into international spaces of diplomacy and communication.

The history and memory of the Sino-Jewish Encounter of World War II are significant assets for our present and future generations to remember and honor. As collective history presents accurate timelines and detailed incidents, individual memories preserve genuine emotions that have the potential to generate an even more powerful public

effect. This unprecedented historical episode has also inspired many creative minds worldwide and developed many works of literature and cinematic productions that will be discussed in the following chapters. The next chapter turns from the history of the Shanghai Jewish Refugees' experience to the memories of the individual refugees who escaped Nazi persecution by fleeing to Shanghai. It focuses on memoirs published in English, German, and Chinese and discusses perspectives and ideas based on primary sources and theoretical applications of scholarship in Memory Studies.

## Chapter II

### Contesting Voices from the Shanghai Ghetto in Multidirectional Memoirs

Many survivors have written about their exile in Shanghai. Some of these memoirs are written by first-generation Jewish refugees, whose work we call “primary memory.”<sup>42</sup> Some memoirs are written by the children of these first-generation refugees, and we refer to recollections made by the second generation as “secondary memory.”<sup>43</sup> Regarding representing the memories from the Shanghai Ghetto, is there a difference between primary and secondary memories? In addition, does gender play a significant role in recollecting the memories of the Jewish Ghetto in Shanghai? Most of these memoirs are published in English, and some are selectively translated into Chinese. Why were some memoirs translated and others not?

In his landmark work on memory, *Multidirectional Memory*, Michael Rothberg suggests that we consider memory as multidirectional, namely as subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not privative. Rothberg believes that testimony “enables and produces a new understanding of, or at least approach

---

<sup>42</sup> This term is derived from Dominick LaCapra’s *History and Memory after Auschwitz*. LaCapra makes a distinction between primary memory and secondary memory. He claims that primary memory is “that of a person who has lived through events and remembers them in a certain manner,” and this kind of memory “almost invariably involves lapses relating to forms of denial, repression, suppression, and evasion, but it also has an immediacy and power that may be compelling” (20).

<sup>43</sup> This term is derived from Dominick LaCapra’s *History and Memory after Auschwitz*. Secondary memory, according to LaCapra, is “the result of critical work on primary memory, whether by the person who initially had the relevant experiences or, more or typically, by an analyst, observer, or secondary witness such as the historian” (20-21).

to, what has remained unconscious and inarticulable” (213). I strive to understand the history of the Jewish Ghetto in Shanghai through the lens of memory with a multidirectional approach. This chapter researches the transmission, representation, and formation of the memories of the Jewish exile in Shanghai and brings multiple voices into dialogue.

My textual analysis in this chapter is divided into three sections. First, I aim to investigate the transmission of memory and compare the differences in the recollections of the Jewish exile in Shanghai between first-generation and second-generation refugees who survived in Shanghai. In applying theories from Memory Studies, I investigate the intergenerational transmission of memories of the Sino-Jewish encounter in the Shanghai Ghetto. I situate my interpretation of Horst Peter Eisfelder’s (1925-?) *Chinese Exile: My Years in Shanghai and Nanking* (2003) in connection with Karen Levi’s (?-?) *Love and Luck* (2016) under the theoretical umbrella of Dominick LaCapra’s notion of primary memory and secondary memory and Marianne Hirsch’s research on Post-Memory Studies. This section concludes that first-generation victim-survivors attempt to counteract the emotions of survival, such as shame, guilt, rage, and anxiety, in the hope of healing, by revisiting traumatic memories and becoming informative writing subjects. As for the second-generation observer-participants, the very absence of the trauma begs for sympathy and recognition.

Second, I address the significance of gender in the survivors’ experiences of exile and investigate whether a specifically gendered form of suffering emerges from their literary representations of the Jewish refugee experience in Shanghai. I examine how the role of gender is manifested in recollections and representations of their refuge in Shanghai. To exemplify the uniqueness of women’s narratives, I turn to two literary representations

written by women: Rena Krasno's *Strangers Always: A Jewish Family in Wartime Shanghai* (1992) and Liliane Willen's *Stateless in Shanghai* (2010). In my analysis of these two memoirs, I focus on themes particular to women and the relationship between gender and memory. My research aims to foreground questions about gender-specific recollections and expressions in women's Holocaust memoirs. I argue that the confrontation of life and death in women survivors' narratives reveals gendered suffering. This insight helps us enrich the collective understanding and cultural inheritance of the Holocaust.

Finally, I draw attention to how national politics is factored in transnational memory formation. I investigate memoirs published in China on the Sino-Jewish encounter and conclude that the Jewish exile's historical memory in Shanghai has become an essential agent in reconstructing the Chinese nation-state's image. By tracing historical hospitality and imagining cross-cultural unity, the Jewish memoirs published in China present an exaggerated imagined unity of Sino-Jewish friendships. They have become agents for the Chinese nation-state that envisions a new world order after China's rise to power.

### ***2.1 Cross-Generational Remembrance in Memories and Post-Memories***

Memory is not history; it is the agency to understand history. In *History and Memory after Auschwitz*, Dominick LaCapra states:

Memory is both more and less than history and vice-versa. History may never capture certain elements of memory: the feel of an experience, the intensity of joy or suffering, the quality of an occurrence. Yet history also includes elements that are not exhausted by memory, such as demographic, ecological, and economic factors. More importantly, it tests memory and ideally leads to the emergence of both a more

accurate memory and a clearer appraisal of what is or is not factual in remembrance.

(LaCapra 20)

LaCapra makes a distinction between primary memory and secondary memory. He claims that primary memory is “that of a person who has lived through events and remembers them in a certain manner” (20). This kind of memory “almost invariably involves lapses relating to forms of denial, repression, suppression, and evasion, but it also has an immediacy and power that may be compelling” (20). Secondary memory, according to LaCapra, is “the result of critical work on primary memory, whether by the person who initially had the relevant experiences or, more or typically, by an analyst, observer, or secondary witness such as the historian” (20-21). LaCapra believes that secondary memory offers a space where the event’s participant and the observer-participant can meet and constitute accurate memory. La Capra believes that memory reformulates and reconceptualizes traumatic events in the art of narration. The narrative is an utterance of the inexpressible horror and fortunate survival.

Studying primary and secondary memoirs is critical in engaging history and memory of the past. Tracing the individual Jewish refugees’ experiences facilitates an understanding of past traumas for later generations of both readers and those whose family legacies remain haunted by suffering and silence. Revisiting the memory of the trauma is the first-generation survivors’ attempt to counteract emotions after the survival, such as shame, guilt, rage, and anxiety, and to heal and work through problems. As for the second-generation observer-participant, the very absence of the trauma urges sympathy and acknowledgment. Crossing primary and secondary memory articulates a network where mourning and healing are

intertwined. It creates an ethical turn where the ghosts of the past are appeased, and the present is reconstructed to shape a livable future.

### 2.11 Primary Memory and Testimonial Narration in *Chinese Exile*

In the Introduction, Eisfelder states that behind *Chinese Exile*'s publication was a request in 1972 from Professor Irene Eber, who taught Chinese History at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and was interested in detailed information about the Jewish refugees' experience in Shanghai.<sup>44</sup> In addition to pointing out the original inspiration for his memoir, Eisfelder claims that this published edition is a revised version of an original story that was initially only meant for a much smaller audience, intended for future generations to remember their family history. He is clear about the subjective nature of his account:

I have relied not so much on my own memory but more on some notes I made during my years in Shanghai, as well as several maps and many newspaper clippings from that period. Although based on these sources, I still make no claim to absolute accuracy. I also have no intention of casting a slur or accusation on anyone mentioned in the text, and consequently, a few names have been fictionalized. (1)

Eisfelder's memoir was written retrospectively and pieced together from remnants of his past; such testimonial narrative typically takes place in a belated manner, where the act of remembering itself is questioned and interrogated. Moreover, memory is bound up with emotions and ethical questions such as rage, justice, vengeance, and forgiveness. Eisfelder states that he extensively reviewed and edited his original version as he learned more about Shanghai's historical background. The belatedness of his memoir allows Eisfelder a more

---

<sup>44</sup> Irene Eber was an acknowledged scholar in the study of Sino-Jewish encounter in Shanghai and cited Eisfelder multiple times in her scholarship.

comprehensive perspective while looking back on his experience. His narration creates a space where he can give a voice to an entire community and address a much broader audience. His memoir translates the private experience of exile into language and communicates insights into the historical collective trauma of surviving the Holocaust. Eisfelder's desire to speak and testify embodies the demand for justice and the hope for healing. Eisfelder's testimonial narration acts as an agent to reconstruct and understand his exile in the past to comprehend and appreciate the present meaning of survival.

In *Chinese Exile*, Eisfelder reports that he was born in 1925 and that his parents left Berlin for Shanghai in October 1938, just before the infamous *Kristallnacht*. His parents first tried to get to the U.S., then Argentina, Costa Rica, and Australia, though their efforts were in vain. Eventually, fearing their passports would expire soon, the family decided to go to Shanghai, the only place accepting refugees due to its exterritorial status. His father's employer was uncertain of their decision and suggested that taking one's chances in Germany was safer than risking an unknown fate in Shanghai. Many other Jews shared the same opinion, and unfortunately, they stayed behind in Germany for too long and missed the last chance to escape to Shanghai, the last possible resort. The Eisfelder family was fortunate in the sense that they did not arrive in Shanghai without any money. Like all the other refugees, they were only permitted to leave the German territory with 10 Reichsmark per person. However, a well-off uncle in the U.S. sent them 1000 U.S. dollars once they arrived in Shanghai and another distant relative living in Italy sent 1000 Italian lira to their hotel. The International Jewish Committee (or Komor Committee) that supported refugees in Shanghai advised his father, the elder Mr. Eisfelder, not to establish a business or look for a job just to scrape by. Eisfelder recounts in his memoir that the Committee estimated that

those finances should have lasted them for three years in Shanghai if they were to limit their daily expenses to 1 U.S. dollar per day. Afterward, they were promised to be taken care of by the Committee. Eisfelder sharply points out in his memoir that the Committee did not have their well-being in mind while giving advice. They simply wanted to protect the stability of the existing foreign businesses in Shanghai and did not want to experience competition from the new arrivals. Instead of supporting refugees to find a job that could sustain a family's livelihood, the Committee urged them not to take any jobs and attend various schools or events hosted by them to occupy their time. By doing so, the Committee tried to preserve the previous superior image of the white men living in Shanghai. The Committee also planned to keep the new arrivals out of town and out of sight to ensure the stability of Shanghai's previously established international community. Eisfelder's memory is essential to understanding the situation of the refugees when they first arrived in Shanghai. Instead of being fully supported and cared for, most of them were seen as potential competition from the existing foreign community. Historical research shows that the situation was more complicated than what Eisfelder recalled. The Jewish Committees were under tremendous pressure. To continue accepting Jewish refugees to Shanghai, they had to establish stability and balance to negotiate with the Chinese government and the international foreign powers governing Shanghai. If the International Settlement experienced any upheaval, Shanghai's hospitality window might be shut entirely, and this is precisely what happened following Pearl Harbor.

Mr. Eisfelder was not a man to just sit back and accept his fate. With the help of Mr. Kammerling, one of the old wealthy Jewish businessmen in Shanghai, the Eisfelder family opened up a German restaurant, Café Louis. With their business earnings, the Eisfelder

family could house family relatives who escaped to Shanghai later and even establish friendly relations with some influential people in Shanghai who were regular customers in their café. Eisfelder believes their luck was due to his family's relatively early arrival in Shanghai. After *Kristallnacht*, the influx of Jewish refugees pouring into Shanghai made such sponsorships and connections less feasible. Business opportunities narrowed after the Japanese took over the International Settlement's governance in December 1941. The varied International Relief Committees and local Jewish communities struggled to support the refugees and keep them alive. Their generosity was only enough to keep the masses fed in the temporary refugee camps once per day. The temporary refugee camps established and run by the international Jewish relief committees were called "Heime," the German word for "home."

Though the Eisfelder family lived a relatively luxurious life compared to the later refugees, Eisfelder dedicated an entire chapter in his memoir testifying to the experiences of the less fortunate. In "How the Others lived," he details the poor conditions in the *Heime*, established by both local and international Jewish communities. He describes how miserable the mental states of the Jews in the refugee camps were:

The heat, humidity, and crowded conditions in the *Heime* all contributed to short tempers and a great deal of unhappiness. Many marriages, often contracted in haste on the eve of departure from Europe, broke up under the strain. Some men gave up the hopeless struggle to find gainful employment and resigned themselves to life in a *Heim*. They lived in the hope that a major upheaval might rescue them and send them home to the land of their dreams, usually the USA. Some young women escaped the misery of it all by selling their bodies in one of the many harborside

nightclubs or bars that sprang up from the Wayside District all the way to the city.

(46)

The language barrier was a primary reason why the refugees gave up hope of finding their own way in the city and kept to their impoverished lives in the refugee camps. Many refugees underwent tremendous culture shock and refused to venture out of the community or learn the Chinese language or local customs. Since Eisfelder's family café hired several Chinese employees, he and his brother Erwin learned to communicate in Chinese. While sympathizing with the Jewish refugees who were dumped into a ghetto and barely survived, Eisfelder did not forget that the living conditions were even worse for many Chinese people. He explained that a Chinese person's average wages were insufficient to live on, and could not support a family. Therefore, Shanghai was famous for its "squeeze" culture:

That is, everyone had to *squeeze* as much as possible out of every deal or business transaction for his or her own pocket. It was a complex and well-established system of corruption, and everyone took part. Those at the very bottom of the commercial structure, with no means of squeezing a few cents out of any transaction, simply stole what they considered their rightful share. Even this was generally tolerated as long as one was not caught in the act. By comparison, most foreigners in commerce or industry drew very generous salaries based on the current wage levels in their home country, plus an allowance for the hardship of living away from home. While these foreigners earned perhaps thirty times the salary of their Chinese counterparts, it did not prevent them from participating in local practices. But their share of the 'squeeze' would be so much larger – considering it a waste of time to trifle over a few cents or dollars, they would pocket thousands instead. (49-50)

Eisfelder's narrative offers a glimpse into the complexity of Shanghai's sociocultural structure in the late 1930s and 1940s. While the refugees led impoverished lives, the local Chinese people were worse off. They had no international support and were abused by the colonial power and suppressed by the Japanese invaders. Many foreigners quickly participated in local corruption and contributed to the difficult living situations in Shanghai.

In his memoir, Eisfelder also presents a collection of family photographs and old pictures taken in Shanghai. These images constitute a disruption in Eisfelder's narration. The images act as a visual intervention and are situated in the narration when his recollection reaches the end of 1942, at the time of the attack on Pearl Harbor. Pressured by their German allies, the Japanese forced the stateless Jewish refugees into Hongkou's designated area, which later became the Hongkou Jewish Ghetto. The intervention of the photos parallels the disruption of their life in exile. After displaying visual memory, Eisfelder's narration jumps to the "The Proclamation of 18 February 1943," in which the Japanese forced thousands of stateless refugees into the designated area of the Hongkou Ghetto. Under pressure from the Japanese, the Eisfelder family had to sell their café to a Japanese businessman at an unfair price and move to the Ghetto, where they shared a small house with several other families. Eisfelder recounts that not everyone subjected to the Proclamation complied. Individuals who did not move to the designated areas were thrown into bunkers at the Japanese-occupied police station. The refugees were infected by various diseases in the bunkers and perished soon after. Forced by the Japanese military in Shanghai, most stateless refugees moved across the Garden Bridge to Hongkou's designated area. The Ghetto was impoverished and overcrowded; the Japanese also limited the stateless Jewish refugees' movements by issuing rigid permits for leaving the designated area. The

Japanese officer Ghoya, responsible for administering the permits, was sadistic and often insulted the refugees and even physically assaulted them. Without a permit, there was no way to find a job outside the Ghetto to make a living wage. The Japanese also borrowed one of the ancient Chinese imperial control systems, the *Pao Chia* system,<sup>45</sup> to govern the stateless refugees in the Ghetto:

Everyone applying for registration had to find another person willing to act as a guarantor to vouch for their compliance with all civil, criminal, and military laws. In turn, the guarantor was required to register and would likewise require someone willing to vouch for their integrity, and so on. In practice, this meant that if anyone offended the occupying power, all guarantors – his or her friends and their friends in turn – would be rounded up and held responsible for the offender’s actions. (173)

Eisfelder further stresses that there was no wall, fence, or barbed wire around the Ghetto. However, the Jewish refugees did not dare leave the Ghetto without official permission in order to keep their friends, families, and community safe. Eisfelder’s family suffered enormously from the unfair sale of their café. However, they soon partnered up with other Jewish business people driven to the Ghetto and opened a second Café Louis. Eisfelder recalls that while their house in Hongkou was old and crowded, it had an illegal flushable toilet. However, to keep the secret, they had to bribe the Chinese coolie, who gathered their “bodily waste products” daily to sell to the countryside farmers.<sup>46</sup> It can be observed that,

---

<sup>45</sup> The *Pao Chia*/Bao Jia system (保甲) was invented by Wang Anshi of the Song dynasty in the eleventh century. It is a self-policing, community-based system of law enforcement and civil control. Here, the Japanese applied this ancient Chinese system in order to police and govern the European Jewish refugees.

<sup>46</sup> This was a common practice in China. Prior to modern bathroom facilities, human waste was sold daily to coolies who further resold them to farmers in the countryside. Here,

unlike official Chinese narratives that celebrate the extraordinary friendship among the refugees and the Chinese locals in the Ghetto, Chinese hospitality and Sino-Jewish cultural exchanges seem minimal in Eisfelder's recollection. Instead of praising the Chinese locals' generosity and friendly manners, Eisfelder recalls that their business was frequently attacked by organized Chinese criminals' schemes and swindles. However, despite all the difficulties the Eisfelder family experienced in Shanghai, they had the intention to make Shanghai and China their permanent home after liberation. Eisfelder even took a job in Nanjing and worked in China until 1947. Unfortunately, the unstable social and economic environment made the Eisfelder family reconsider their decision, and they finally immigrated to Australia with the help of a relative, Rudi. Most of their money sent to Australia was taken by Rudi's neighbor's kids, who picked up Rudi's mail and discovered the cash hidden inside the envelopes. In a time of war and uncertainty, Eisfelder did not express any criticism or rage towards the Chinese locals or the Australian neighbors in his memoir. He ended his recollection with gratitude and claimed that whatever the shortcomings, Shanghai and China had made it possible for him and his family to survive the Holocaust and saved their lives. In the epilogue, Eisfelder states that in March 2000, he revisited Shanghai with his wife and stayed in contact with his friends from the Ghetto.

Eisfelder's narration is a combination of primary recollection and historical description. He inserts historical events and sources he gathered about Shanghai after leaving China and attempts to give his audience a broader picture transcending his individual memory. Eisfelder endeavors to construct an archive of knowledge about the

---

the family Eisfelder had to bribe the coolie because they were damaging his business with the modern toilet.

Shanghai Jewish Ghetto and convey the sentiments and truthful facts to a more general audience. His memoir became an agent for him to commemorate his exile and introduce the historical background by transforming his identity from a victim-survivor to a writing subject. His memoir exemplifies the need to approach the Jewish experience in Shanghai through a multidirectional lens.

Contrary to the descriptions in many literary fictions, in *Chinese Exile*, the Sino-Jewish encounters are limited to business transactions and commercial relationships. Eisfelder also comments on the suffering of the Chinese locals and the dishonest sociocultural environment in old Shanghai. Eisfelder's memoir is not circulated broadly in Chinese scholarship. Nonetheless, it is vital to developing an understanding of the diverse realities of the refugees' lives in Shanghai. Eisfelder's primary memory suggests that documentations overemphasizing Sino-Jewish hospitality and friendship may disregard history and reconstruct the past as a utopian fantasy.

#### 2.12 Secondary Memory and Cross-Generational Grief in *Love and Luck*

*Love and Luck: A Young Woman's Journey from Berlin to Shanghai to San Francisco* is a memoir written by Karen Levi (1951-), a second-generation survivor documenting exile and survival in Shanghai. Published in 2016, Levi's memoir is about the experience of her mother, Eva Wolffheim (1927-?), during her exile in Shanghai. Levi does not approach her mother's story from a single point of view but instead shifts her perspectives from her mother and herself in each chapter. However, her mother's perspective is only indirectly represented and narrated by Levi. This division offers a temporal frame that continuously switches between past and present, broaches the meaning of survival, and addresses memory transmission.

Karen Levi's mother, Eva Wolffheim, was born in Berlin in 1927 to an affluent family. They lived a cultured, happy life until the Nazis took over their business. Her family escaped by fleeing to Shanghai in 1939. Levi recounts that as she was growing up, her mother was always clearly haunted, though as a girl, she did not understand the reasons why:

I have felt a sadness and discomfort surrounding my mother ever since I can remember. As a child, I saw, again and again, my mother's young, pretty face completely composed but with a fixed expression. There seemed to be something brewing inside of her. While I was a sensitive child, there was no way to ascertain what was going on in her head.

I noticed this aura of loss and vulnerability with other older people who were my grandmother's friends. To me, it just seemed normal. These older, often distinguished, and cultured men and women, originally from Germany and Austria, had kind but sad faces, sighed a great deal, and shook their heads unconsciously. Even as a young girl, I could tell something was amiss, and I treaded lightly around them. Perhaps, that is why I have never wanted to cause problems for people, an often-maladaptive behavior that it has taken me decades to conquer. (4)

The sadness of Eva and her friends made a lasting impact on Karen Levi, and the memoir serves as means for her to come to terms with the origins of the sorrow that so perplexed her as a child. She claims that throughout her life, her mother's story has always loomed in the background and that her mother's traumatic story has now ultimately become her own struggle:

What happened to my mother in her youth placed a shadow on her approach to parenting, and that shadow affected me as a young child. This would be an indirect means for which her experiences were transmitted to me. I carry my mother's story with me, for better or worse, and while I am my mother's daughter, I am not she. However, I carried her genes and was raised by her; and like all of us, I received from my mother a version of her burdens, her joys and adventures, and her traumas.

(4)

Levi grew up geographically distant from both Shanghai and Europe in San Francisco's Chinatown. Nonetheless, she experienced how the traumatic past haunted her family and how they coped with the fear of being hurt again in the uncertain future. To understand the trauma that the past marked on her psyche, Levi turns to a psychological investigation of the transmission of trauma and academic research on Shanghai's history. She quotes research from Martin Goldsmith, the author of *The Indistinguishable Symphony* and child of Holocaust survivors. She implies that just as Goldsmith describes, an invisible tree growing in her household represents the past's unspoken stories and unexpressed emotions. Levi also studied Dr. Nathan Kellermann, whose expertise is in the unconscious transmission of parents' experiences to children. Eventually, Karen Levi concludes that what she is experiencing is trans-generational grief:

Research is currently being done all over the world on the effect of parental communication in Holocaust survivors on their offspring. However, there is rarely a clear and simple linear connection between parent and child. The method of transmission of information between the first and second generations is seen as multifaceted. The mechanism by which trauma is communicated is influenced by the

nature of the parent-child relationship as determined by the Holocaust context; the historical imagery provided by the parent, and other cultural processes, such as religious school and secular school, normative developmental conflicts, overall family dynamics independent of the Holocaust; and level of education, social class, nationality, and religious and cultural identity. Overall, research supports the anecdotal evidence that Holocaust survivors have functioned adequately as parents, though they have transmitted aspects of their unique experiences to their children in specific ways. (38-39)

By studying the research from varied scholars, Levi concluded that her mother's transmission of trauma to her falls under the family system category:

One of the mechanisms by which trans-generational grief is transmitted is by the "Conspiracy of Silence." This would fall under the category of "family system." According to Judith Kestenberg, a researcher on the Holocaust, trauma and the concomitant grief are passed down the generations concealed by a cloak of silence. Sometimes there is a total lack of words. Parents may say that they are shielding their children from terrifying horrors when they are actually protecting themselves, purposely forgetting the past, and/ or starting a new life. Sometimes, there is an excess of words, yet there is a silence or an apparent unawareness about the underlying traumas, guilt, shame, and meanings the parents made of their history. Broaching this silence can bring severe responses of anger or hurt, leading, in turn, to retreat from hurting parents who have already been hurt so much. (39-40)

Levi recalls that her mother was upset when she asked about her exile in Shanghai. Her questions result in Eva's fear, rage, sadness, and emotional vulnerability. Levi states that this

kind of “conspiracy of silence” was why it took her so long to connect and comprehend her parent’s experiences and her own fears. She implies that her mother suffers from survival guilt<sup>47</sup> and experiences a great deal of shame and anger, resulting in her silence and complicating her remembrance and will to testify. In the preface to the memoir, Levi describes how her mother refused to be called a survivor and stated that the true survivors were those who actually were deported to the Nazi death camps and lived to see liberation. However, Levi counters this with the definition of “survivors” provided by the U.S. Holocaust Museum, which includes “any persons, Jewish or non-Jewish, who were displaced, persecuted, or discriminated against due to the racial, religious, ethnic, social, political policies of the Nazis and their collaborators from 1933-1945” (2). Though the official definition of survivor includes Eva, she resists being described as a survivor of the Holocaust, claiming that she was too fortunate and was not comparable to the Jews who suffered yet survived the European death camps.

Eva considers herself not a true witness and not even a true survivor. Therefore, she participates in the “conspiracy of silence,” which unconsciously transmits the burden of trauma and the incomprehensibility of survival to her daughter, Karen Levi, who intends to break that silence, conquer denial and guilt, and, most importantly, reconstruct her own identity as a second-generation survivor.

In *The Generation of Postmemory*, Marianne Hirsch defines the relationship between postmemory and the past as mediated not by the action of recollection but by “imaginative

---

<sup>47</sup> “Survivor’s guilt” is a term in Holocaust Studies that describes feelings that survivors of the Holocaust experienced. They feel guilty that they were lucky enough to survive while their family and friends perished under the Nazis.

investment, projection, and creation” (Hirsch 5).<sup>48</sup> She claims that the events of postmemory happen in the past, but their effects continue into the present. In comprehending the past that the author (in our case, Levi) did not witness first-hand but that impacts her daily experience, the author must collect and analyze the memories from previous generations and find a medium to transmit the haunted feeling of the unknown into an acknowledgment of her own identity. In *Love and Luck*, Levi gained insight into her present identity by seeking to comprehend her mother’s past.

W.G. Sebald is a reader of the first-generation memoirs of the Holocaust and focuses in particular on the works of Jean Améry and Primo Levi. In his essay “Jean Améry und Primo Levi,” he states that the mental states of the victim-survivors are no longer those of ordinary human beings after their unfortunate experiences. In putting survivors such as Primo Levi on the opposite side of the spectrum as normal human existence, Sebald challenges the writing of primary memory and questions the precision of memory after

---

<sup>48</sup> In an Interview, Marianne Hirsch defines her understanding of postmemory: “‘Postmemory’ describes the relationship that the ‘generation after’ bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before – to experiences they ‘remember’ only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up. But these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to seem to constitute memories in their own right. As I see it, the connection to the past that I define as postmemory is mediated not by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation. To grow up with overwhelming inherited memories, to be dominated by narratives that preceded one’s birth or one’s consciousness, is to risk having one’s own life stories displaced, even evacuated, by our ancestors. It is to be shaped, however indirectly, by traumatic fragments of events that still defy narrative reconstruction and exceed comprehension. These events happened in the past, but their effects continue into the present. I first used the term ‘postmemory’ in an article on Art Spiegelman’s *Maus* in the early 1990’s. Since then, I’ve been trying to define and refine it, on the basis of personal experience and my reading and viewing of the work of writers and artists of what we might think of as the ‘postgenerations.’” Cited from Columbia University Press: <https://cup.columbia.edu/author-interviews/hirsch-generation-postmemory>

trauma.<sup>49</sup> In Sebald's opinion, Primo Levi's claim that survivors are untrue witnesses is not a question of the memory's precision and value but a problem of the writing subject. The challenge that first-hand memoirs face is not the accuracy of memory but how the survivors can transfer their roles from "the saved" to eloquent witnesses and writing subjects.

Though the victimhood of Karen Levi and Eisfelder are of a very different kind, both of them use memories to transform their subjectivity from victim-survivors to writing subjects. They both seek to comprehend the traumatic experiences of the past that still overshadow their present. Though there are many narrative differences between the writings of primary memories and secondary memories, the shared emphasis is to reveal grief and loss, to appreciate survival and express gratitude, and to hope for healing. While Eisfelder's main goal was to testify and deliver his knowledge to future generations, Karen Levi aims to construct the meaning of survival and rebuild her identity as a second-generation survivor.

---

<sup>49</sup> The text is in German and has not been translated into English. The original text is as follows: „Gewiß stimmt es, daß das Schreiben von dem, was ihnen widerfuhr, für Levi und für Améry einer Art von Errettung gleichkam, insofern jedenfalls als ihnen diese Entäußerung die Last des Gedächtnisses erleichtert hat. Zugleich aber war die Rekapitulation der Schreckenszeit für sie auch ein Abweichen von der Wahrheit. Schaffte der Diskurs die Freiheit des Bewußtseins, so blieb dieses doch insuffizient und beförderte, zumindest für den, der die Mitteilungen machte, eine Irrealisierung der Vergangenheit. Die schweren Depressionen, die Améry periodisch und Levi zuletzt desgleichen heimsuchten, waren darum vielleicht zu verstehen als eine Rückkehr zum unverwandten wortlosen Gedächtnis und zu stummer Zeugenschaft.“ (Sebald 120)

My translation is as follows: “Indeed, it is true that the writing of what has happened to them was equivalent to a kind of salvation for Levi and Améry, since the fact that this expression made the burden of the memory lighter. At the same time, the recapitulation of the time of terror was also a departure from the truth. If the discourse creates the freedom for the consciousness, this remains imperfect and promotes, at least for the person who made the communications, the past becoming unreal. The depressions that Améry periodically developed and that Levi also had, at last, were, perhaps, to be understood as a return to the immovable, wordless memory and silent witness.”

## **2.2 Blind Spots: Gendered Recollections in Memoirs by Women**

While it appears that anti-Semitism contains a monolithic view of Jews, in fact, it looks at and treats Jews who are male and female differently. Our ignorance of these differences creates blind spots in the memories and reconstructions of the Holocaust.

Joan Ringelheim, "Thoughts about Women and the Holocaust"

To grapple with the aftermath of the Holocaust and the Nazi persecutions in World War II, countless scholars, historians, and survivors have documented and examined the period's collective and personal trauma. Recent and controversial lines of inquiry concern the nature of women's experiences during the Nazi persecution: Did men and women suffer differently? If so, what methodology can scholars employ to contend with specifically female suffering? Research related to women's narratives about Auschwitz, for example, has been qualitatively and quantitatively less substantial than the examination of the works of male survivors such as Primo Levi, Jean Améry, and Elie Wiesel, whose writings have assumed canonical status. It was not until the late 1980s and early 1990s that pioneering scholars raised concerns about the male-dominated nature of scholarship in Holocaust studies.<sup>50</sup> They approached the Holocaust's trauma through a gendered perspective, investigating experiences particular to women and focusing on what differentiated their suffering and survival from those of men. They studied the literature and testimonies by women through historical, cultural, political, and social lenses to establish lines of scholarship that identified survivors' sexual and gender differences. This significant factor

---

<sup>50</sup> Scholars such as Joan Ringelheim, Sybil Milton, Dalia Ofer, Lenore J. Weitzman, Myrna Goldenberg, Elizabeth R. Baer, Gisella Bock, and Sara Horowitz, to name a few.

had been previously considered divisive and morally wrong in the field and was largely ignored.<sup>51</sup>

Although pioneering feminists of the past three decades have taken steps to remedy these “blind spots” in scholarship and have contributed to a better understanding of the Holocaust, many scholars still express resistance toward gender-based analyses. It is no doubt justified to acknowledge the concerns of scholars who fear that gender-based analyses will serve as a distraction from the Nazi assault on all Jewish people as a whole, possibly leading to the invidious comparison of victims. Yet, it is also vital to recognize that gender played a crucial role in the victims’ suffering and the ways that survivors related their experiences. Indeed, as scholars have shown, “the Final Solution” of the Nazi genocide affected the men as men and the women as women. While there was no difference in the Jews’ annihilation based on sex, there were many differences in pre-war social roles, coping abilities, and survival rates between Jewish men and Jewish women. More importantly, gender affected the survivors’ experiences in imprisonment, hiding, and even after liberation. Therefore, survivors later evoked gendered memories in their testimonies and narratives. To understand the Holocaust’s ordeal thoroughly and in terms of its innumerable dimensions, we need to study the narratives of men and women equally.

Using gender as a framework for analyzing the testimonies and bodies of work about the Holocaust is an attempt to honor and distinguish particular individual survivors’ experiences during the Holocaust. In the past decades, gender-based research has uncovered new features in understanding individual testimonies. It has made it possible to consider

---

<sup>51</sup> Voices against gender studies have existed for a long time in Holocaust studies until the recent two decades. For references see *Women in the Holocaust*, edited by Dalia Ofer and Lenore J. Weitzman, 1999.

survivors' experiences in keeping with theoretical developments in gender studies. Despite the effort of pioneering feminist scholars, such gender-based analysis is still controversial and faces much scholarly resistance. For example, in his "Gendered Suffering? Women in Holocaust Testimonies," the well-regarded scholar Lawrence Langer emphasizes the fact that women and men alike were threatened in various ways during the Holocaust and criticizes the gender-based approach:

As for the ability to bear suffering, given the unspeakable sorrow with which all victims were burdened, it seems to me that nothing could be crueler or more callous than the attempt to dredge up from this landscape of universal destruction a mythology of comparative endurance that awards favor to one group of individuals over another. The pain of loss and the relief of survival remain entwined in the memory of those lucky enough to have outlived the atrocities. All efforts to find a rule of hierarchy in that darkness, whether based on gender or will, spirit or hope, reflect only our own need to plant a life-sustaining seed in the barren soil that conceals the remnants of two-thirds of European Jewry. The sooner we abandon this design, the quicker we will learn to face such chaos with unshielded eyes. (362).

Langer believes that in the broader context of the Jewish people's suffering and mass murder, gender differences imply a gesture of comparative endurance between men and women. However, what Langer did not consider is that the point of a gendered analysis is not solely a feminist study of traditional gendered roles of Jewish women but a perspective that articulates how these roles constructed gendered sufferings and memories of the Holocaust and its aftermath. The effort of gendered analysis is not to build a hierarchy of suffering but to expand our knowledge about what has happened and question the notion of

the *universality* of Jewish men and women's suffering. However, according to Marlene Heinemann, the field of women's experiences in the Holocaust is still in its earliest stages. The support of publishers, historians, and scholars of the Holocaust are essential to advance such scholarship. She states explicitly that "the study of women's Holocaust memoirs in the context of women's autobiographies in general, can correct conclusions based on too narrow a group of texts and at the same time highlight what makes Holocaust narratives different" (Heinemann 6). Memories and traumatic narratives are personal connections to the survivors' past and tell us what they recall of their respective experiences. Moreover, their records represent what the survivors have remembered and tried to forget and express how they want to be remembered. The traumatic narratives in memoirs by women represent what the authors retain from the Holocaust as female victims and how they want to be remembered in the future as survivors.

In this section, I explore memoirs written by women and investigate how the role of gender is manifested in their recollections and representations of survival in Shanghai. To exemplify the uniqueness of women's narratives and the role of gender in the remembrance of traumatic memories, I turn to two literary representations written by women, namely the well-known memoir *Strangers Always: A Jewish Family in Wartime Shanghai* authored by Rena Krasno, published in 1992, and the classical testimonial by Liliane Willens, *Stateless in Shanghai*, published in 2010. In my analysis of these two texts, I focus on themes particular to women and the relationship between gender and memory. In examining these two texts, this section aims to foreground questions about gender-specific recollections and expressions in women's memoirs from the Jewish experience of exile in Shanghai. I argue that the study of gender in literary representations of the Holocaust challenges the belief that

men and women remember the same aspects of the past, further demonstrating the need for an approach that accounts for a multiplicity of voices. It also reveals gender-specific suffering and enriches our understanding of Holocaust history.

### 2.21 Rena Krasno: A Strong Female Is Always a Stranger

Rena Krasno was born in Shanghai in 1923 to Jewish parents who were stateless immigrants from Russia. Her father, David Rabinovich, was a Russian immigrant who arrived in Shanghai in 1921 from Vladivostok, idealistic and penniless, on his way to Palestine. Due to a sudden surgery, David remained in Shanghai and shortly after married her mother. He was first employed by a British company in Shanghai and worked there for 23 years. Though his company discriminated against him due to his origin, he was still able to support his family. His career ended abruptly when the Japanese requisitioned the company of his employment as an enemy business after Pearl Harbor. Since David could not find a job as a Russian Jew and refused to collaborate with the Japanese, he poured all his energy into building the Jewish community in Shanghai. David Rabinovich was an Honorary Secretary of the Shanghai Ashkenazi Jewish Community. He was also the editor of a Jewish cultural publication in Shanghai, *Nasha Jizn (Our Life)*, and an active Zionist member. He told Krasno that his most cherished hope was to create a center of Jewish culture in distant China, far from Hitler and the German Reich (5).

Krasno's mother took on the family's burden as breadwinner and opened a children's dress store. Her mother's income kept the family's heads above water until the end of the war. Throughout the war, Rena Krasno kept detailed diary entries from December 1941 until August 1945. She also kept newspaper clippings that appeared in her memoir. Later in her life, Krasno studied the history of Shanghai and the literature of the war. She intensely

researched the Jewish presence in Shanghai and decided to publish a memoir cast in the form of a diary. The narrative of her book, published in 1992, offers a peek at survivors' immediate experiences, provides a profound reflection into the past, and presents a vast canvas of the Jewish community's history in Shanghai and the city's multifaceted society. Krasno claims that her memoir's purpose was to recapture and share her momentous days in Shanghai (xiv) and states that her account is entirely factual. She believes that history and experiences are perceived from different angles due to Shanghai's diverse realities. It is important to note that even though Krasno's family was of Jewish origin, they arrived in Shanghai before the war and were therefore not forced to move into the Jewish Ghetto in Hongkou. However, Krasno witnessed the lives in the Ghetto indirectly and provided information from the newspaper clippings she saved. She depicts the Ghetto by telling the lives of her friends who were forced to move into the designated area in Hongkou and testifies to the horrendous fear and suffering of the Jewish community during the war. It is interesting to note that she looks back at Shanghai's memories rather fondly. Fears and sorrow are recalled in conjunction with her romantic affairs associated with a variety of young men. She also depicts Shanghai's charms by remembering its vibrant cultural life and its fashionable taste for luxury.

### **2.211 Man No Good, You Be Number One: Strong Women and Feminist Ideals**

Strong-headed women enjoy a visible presence in Krasno's narrative. Her memoir begins in January 1942, when her father had already lost his job, and her mother had become the family's sole provider. She quotes her father multiple times in her memoir, stressing that it was only through her mother's sacrifice that he could focus on his work in the Jewish

community, serve on various essential committees, and edit, translate, and publish important books and newspapers. Krasno recalls that though her mother joked about her close relationship with her father, she was resentful about the time he dedicated to the more significant cause of the Jewish community's well-being in Shanghai, which left little time for her and her family. Her father, David, viewed his devotion as a form of sacrifice:

Yes, it is true that *Nasha Jizn*, "The Jewish Book," and various committees on which I serve cost me hard work and many, many sleepless nights. But don't you understand that in these disastrous times, we all must make sacrifices? Actually, it is thanks to your mother bearing the burden of the family breadwinner that I can dedicate all my time to causes that I consider urgent and imperative. Don't you see that we are now at a point in history where the very survival of the Jewish people is at stake? We are doomed if we don't keep up a collective spirit to overcome today's dangers. (7)

As David Rabinovich states, his heroic attitude to never collaborate with the Japanese invaders and protect the Jewish heritage and community was only made possible by the mother's economic income. With his wife's support, he became a significant leader in the Jewish community and later connected with important Chinese officials such as Dr. Sun Yatsen, the Chinese National Party's founding father. Krasno's mother opened a children's fashion store in the French Concession. Krasno recalls that "neither the bombs nor the Japanese dampens her mother's *Joie de vivre*"<sup>52</sup> (11). She hired a small group of talented and dedicated workers and was able to put food on the table through her business. Nowadays, David Rabinovich is remembered as an important member of the Jewish

---

<sup>52</sup> A French phrase that means "joy of living."

Community in Shanghai, and Rena Krasno as a distinguished scholar; it is important to note that David's dedication to the Jewish community and Rena's privileged education at a French school were only made possible because her mother went so far above and beyond the call of her wifely duties. David was only able to preserve his integrity by not working for the Japanese occupier, thanks to his wife's support. However, the name of Krasno's mother did not even appear in the memoir. Rena Krasno's narrative directs our attention to the Jewish community's women in exile, whose names did not appear in public spaces but who provided strong support for the Jews' survival while remaining in the background. Krasno's narrative made their silent dedication visible.

Though Krasno's mother was honored as a talented, hardworking woman, Krasno recalls that cooking was never one of her mother's fortes since their family always had excellent Chinese cooks and servants. Specifically, Krasno fondly remembers her Chinese *Ahna*,<sup>53</sup> a nanny called Ah Kwei, who cared for her and encouraged her to grow up as a strong woman. In a diary entry from February 1943, Krasno recalls that her old Chinese nanny Ah Kwei, apprehensive about her family's financial difficulty, gave them a surprise visit with a small basket of oranges and asked if everything was all right in their family. Having worked 15 years for Krasno's family, Ah Kwei left a strong imprint on her memory. Contrary to traditional Chinese female figures, Ah Kwei was an independent, strong woman who supported herself through hard work and despised men. She was headstrong and outspoken and was never married. The first thing that Krasno remembers about Ah Kwei is that her feet were of regular size and not the tiny broken crippled size called "golden lilies,"

---

<sup>53</sup> Chinese phrase referring to old women, mainly used as a general name for elderly female servants.

a result of the ancient misogynist custom of foot-binding. Krasno addresses the foot-binding practice and states that ancient Chinese women's tiny crippled feet were supposed to provoke erotic desires in Chinese men because they made women into helpless and submissive creatures. Foot-binding existed for a long time in ancient China and is considered one of the most misogynistic practices in human history.<sup>54</sup> Krasno had always wondered how Ah Kwei escaped the ancient foot-binding custom. When Krasno approached Ah Kwei about how she had escaped this torturous practice, Ah Kwei simply replied that she did not like it. In traditional China, influenced by the patriarchal hierarchy system in Confucian culture, women were considered inferior to men and were treated as belongings and objects. Though Ah Kwei's struggle was not revealed to young Krasno, it is easy to imagine how difficult it must have been for a female to acquire independence and free will in a misogynist society. Ah Kwei supported herself by doing housework for foreign families and working long hours in the rice field. Her hard work resulted in a limp in her left leg.

Ah Kwei disapproved of Krasno's vibrant dating life and claimed that men were like dogs. Ah Kwei asked Krasno in pidgin English: "Man no good. Why you likee? You stupid" (57). Ah Kwei's disagreement with men speaks volumes of the ancient Chinese culture that suppressed and mistreated women for thousands of years. By giving voice to Ah Kwei, Krasno reveals the wounds of the Chinese women harboring the traumatic experience of the war and the trauma of being a woman. Though illiterate herself, Ah Kwei believed that the only way to escape fate was through education. She told Krasno to study diligently, and her parting words to Krasno ordered her to be "Number One in Doctor School" (57).

---

<sup>54</sup> More on the history and culture of foot-binding can be read in Dorothy Ko's work: *Cinderella's Sisters: A Revisionist History of Footbinding*.

Krasno also recalls a brief encounter with a modern Japanese girl when she vacationed in Japan with her family before the war. One evening, she and her sister encountered a Japanese girl, Chiyoko, at the beach. She had studied in Hawaii and worked in the village as an interpreter. Assuming that their conversation in English was secretive and safe, Chiyoko addressed the political upheavals in Japan, the fear and everyday surveillance in the society, and told them that she had to be careful with what she said in class and in public. She claimed that kids had been ordered to spy on one another and even their parents and friends. People were also encouraged to spy and report on each other:

“Every morning at school,” she continued, “we have to bow in the direction of the Imperial Palace in Tokyo and recite by heart a long, long speech about our duties to the Japanese nation. Then we all sing the Japanese anthem. All this is so hard for me!” (34-35)

Unfortunately, Chiyoko paid a high price for her honest outburst. The following afternoon, her grandfather visited the Krasno family and apologized for Chiyoko’s “shameful behavior and lies” (35). He further explained that Chiyoko had been disgracefully driven away from the village. Krasno often wondered what had happened to Chiyoko and stated that she had wept for her fate for a long time. Chiyoko’s story warns us to generalize and simplify our perspective on the war’s historical memories and calls attention to the fact that, regardless of what side they were on, women’s voices were suppressed and silenced. Krasno’s memoir presents and recalls various strong modern women from varied national, cultural, and educational backgrounds. These strong women differ in political engagements and personal journeys; however, their lives have all been impacted not only by the war’s trauma but also by misogynistic suppression. In writing their stories, Krasno is testifying against the trauma

of the war and reveals the gendered wounds the war marked on many women. Moreover, in the irrational environment of the war, the traditional gender roles were also reversed. The women not only protected the men by taking on the financial burden but also offered emotional relief. The reversed gender roles<sup>55</sup> further emasculated the men in wartime. Memoirs by women challenge the description of femininity beyond traditional gender norms and construct a modern feminist gaze.

### **2.212 The Female Gaze: Sentimental and Emotional Men**

In an interview with Ulrike Ottinger<sup>56</sup>, Rena Krasno states that her youth in Shanghai was culturally vibrant and rich in romance. She had many boyfriends from a wide range of nationalities and backgrounds. Since the Krasno family moved to Shanghai before 1937, they were not targeted by the occupying Japanese forces and escaped the fate of enforced relocation to the Jewish Ghetto in Shanghai. However, Krasno had many friends and boyfriends who were less fortunate. She observes and documents the Jewish exile experience in Shanghai after Kristallnacht through her young friends and romantic partners. Her experiences with many young men were recalled nostalgically in her narrative, with a romantic female perspective amid the chaos and fear that reigned in Shanghai. After Pearl Harbor, the privileged business people from Britain, the Netherlands, and the U.S. were considered citizens of Japan's enemy countries. Facing the sudden loss of power and the great upheaval, these young men are depicted as sentimental beings with longings for

---

<sup>55</sup> Gender reversal, as reflected in literary representations, also happens in other historical contexts such as the Ming-Qing transition.

<sup>56</sup> This interview can be found in Ulrike Ottinger's documentary *Exile Shanghai*, 1997.

friendship, loyalty, and romance. Krasno's memories of her friends and lovers enable her to weave a broader picture of Shanghai's multicultural masculinities and diverse realities.

In her memoir, the first lover Kraso presents is a young Viennese refugee, Eric, who was 19 years old. He fled Nazi Germany when he was 15 years old, right after Kristallnacht, with his mother and older brother. He lived with his family in a small room in the French Concession and worked as a waiter in a Viennese café. Despite difficulties and uncertainties, he found comfort in the romantic relationship with Krasno and always treated her gallantly and gently. They enjoyed walking in parks in the International Settlement, and Eric would tell Krasno about his life in Vienna before the *Anschluss* and his new life in Shanghai. Through recollecting the conversations with Eric, Krasno indirectly testifies to the situation of the newly arrived European Jewish refugees in Shanghai:

Eric and his family live in a tiny room in the French Concession. They are among the more fortunate 4,000 refugees. Since housing is limited and well beyond the means of destitute Europeans, most have been forced by necessity to seek accommodation in a less prosperous area: part of some 1,000 square miles occupied by Japan after the so-called Undeclared War (the Sino-Japanese hostilities terminated by Japanese victory). Much of this territory is still in ruins, and refugees live among rubble in "lane housing" along narrow, filth-strewn roads. Others, in even more desperate straits, have been located in communal *Heime* (homes) supported by public donations from Shanghai residents and ever generous U.S. Jews. Of course, since Pearl Harbor, this complex situation has deteriorated further, and nobody can guess what Japan's next move will be as far as Jews are concerned. After all, the Germans

are their allies, and since the total occupation of Shanghai by the Japanese, the gates of our city have been closed to Jewish refugees. (18)

Krasno's relationships with her young male friends never last long, and she never gives concrete reasons apart from feelings just fading away. She jumps from one relationship to another in her narrative and recalls new adventures with each new romantic interest. One boy in particular who has pride of place in her memory is a young Japanese man called Yorifumi. Yorifumi and Krasno became friendly during a summer vacation that Krasno spent in Inokuchi before the war. Yorifumi was a medical student who had spent many years studying in Canada and spoke fluent English. He was earnest in nature but had a soft side for the literary arts and Krasno. Through Yorifumi, Krasno gained insight into the perspective of ordinary Japanese people regarding their emperor's military tactics. Yorifumi was fearful of his military discipline instructor and confided in Krasno. However, Yorifumi later regretted his confession in a moment of weakness and never mentioned the subject again. After Krasno returned to Shanghai, Yorifumi frequently sent her letters from Japan, confessed his feelings for her in a poetic way, and claimed that when maple leaves rustled, they whispered her name (33). Krasno writes that she'd had hopes that Yorifumi's subtle language indicated romantic interest. Unfortunately, following the attack on Pearl Harbor, Krasno never heard from him again. Later, Krasno discovered that the atomic bomb killed Yorifumi's entire family in Hiroshima. He only escaped because he was in Shanghai at that time. In a diary entry from February 1944, Krasno recalls a conversation with Yorifumi, who explained that he would fight until the very end for the Japanese Empire and commit suicide instead of being taken a prisoner. For Yorifumi, honor, and patriarchy were more important than his own life and the war's cause. Krasno expresses her shock at how much Yorifumi's

belief in the battle went against his gentle nature. Through Yorifumi, Krasno depicts an interesting picture of Japanese intellectuals during the war. The affair to remember between Krasno and Yorifumi challenges the racial profiling of Japanese men during WWII. Beyond the military training and heinous attacks, Krasno calls attention to humanity's soft nature that was destroyed and rebuilt into modern Frankensteins during the war.

Though Krasno had many romantic rendezvous with young men from different cultures and nationalities, she states in her memoir that all relations of any significance in Shanghai would become politically impacted. The young men employed by the British and American companies in Shanghai all had to sign multi-year contracts stating that they were forbidden to enter into marital relations with Chinese and Russian women. If those young men broke these rules, they would be shipped away from Shanghai and shipped home. However, emotions cannot be controlled by contract clauses. In her memoir, Krasno recalls a young American lover named Bob who was sent to a Japanese camp after Pearl Harbor. Krasno remembers a dangerous correspondence with Bob after he was imprisoned:

In the evening, a Chinese dressed in a dark blue gown and wearing spectacles rang our doorbell and asked for me. Without a word, he handed me a letter and left. It was from my American boyfriend, Bob, interned by the Japanese in Pootung Camp. Before his incarceration, I promised him I would call our weekly radio 'Music Request Program' and ask them to play for him 'Blueberry Hill' (his favorite) if I still cared for him, or 'Stormy Weather' on the contrary case. Of course, we had no idea whether he would have access to a radio, but I kept my word – in a way. Even though my romantic interest in him had faded, I couldn't ask them to play 'Stormy Weather' because I didn't want to hurt his feelings. So it was 'Blueberry Hill.' (79)

Krasno's actions infuriated her parents, who believed that Krasno had endangered the whole family by illegally corresponding with Bob. However, Krasno acted against her parents' wishes and wanted to honor her promise to him. The last time Krasno saw Bob was when he was marked as an enemy of the Japanese Empire in public:

The last time I had seen Bob was when he stood together with a large group of 'number one enemy nationals' assembled upon the 'Order of the Japanese Command' in front of the Cathedral Church. All wore the bright red arm-bands they had been given by the Japanese 'Enemy Aliens Office' in Hamilton House shortly after Pearl Harbor... The wearing of these red arm-bands was compulsory outside the house, and, in addition, all persons thus identified (British, American, and Dutch nationals) were forbidden entry into certain stores and public places. Bob and all the others gathered by the Japanese now waited in total silence for transfer to internment camps at an unknown destination. (80)

At Bob's departure, Krasno stood far away to bid farewell safely. When Bob caught a glimpse of her, he was pleasantly surprised and then discreetly turned away. Krasno commented that this episode shows how the once privileged white men who reigned in Shanghai were now reduced to the status of Japanese prisoners. Falling from the pedestal and public humiliation further emasculated the foreign men in Shanghai. They sought comfort from love and romance, and the women in Shanghai offered kindness and love, protecting their pride and respect when they could not have saved themselves.

Krasno also recalls a few male friends with whom she does not indicate romantic relations. Heinz, a German Jew and a male friend of Krasno, plays a significant role in Krasno's narrative depicting the Jewish Ghetto in Hongkou. Upon receiving a letter from

Heinz, Krasno decided to visit Heinz in Hongkou, accompanied by her mother. In a diary entry from August 1944, Krasno recalls that she and her mother worried about Heinz's miserable living conditions in the Ghetto and brought him groceries and homemade butter.

On their way, Krasno experiences the plight of the stateless refugees in Hongkou:

When we arrived in Hongkou, we saw that barbed wire barricades had been erected around the Restricted Area with several control points left open for entry and exit. These gates are policed by armed Japanese guards and the auxiliary force, the Pao Chia. In Hongkew, the responsibility of the Pao Chia is to reinforce strict curfew regulations, check passes, and keep order. It is headed by a German Jewish 'director' who has some 3,500 refugees under his command but who holds a very tight rein over the entire auxiliary force... The refugees are segregated in 40 square blocks of crumbling buildings (some 4 blocks wide and 12 blocks deep). The streets – or rather narrow lanes – are strewn with rubble and refuse. Most houses have no toilets or kitchens for families who live crowded together in single rooms. Tenants are forced to use outside toilets, buy drinking water from street vendors, go to the few public baths, and cook in the lanes or on flat roofs using Japanese 'hibachi' stoves. (134-35)

Krasno's mother invited Heinz and her to have tea at a nice place. Heinz told them about the traumatic incident of Kristallnacht and his journey to Shanghai. Despite all the discomfort and the unsettling social environment in Shanghai, Heinz tried to appear cheerful and considered himself lucky. Due to strict regulations, Krasno and her mother left Hongkou after one hour. This visit was, unfortunately, their last happy memory with Heinz. Heinz survived the war but discovered that the Nazis had exterminated his whole family in Germany. He committed suicide at the tender age of 22.

Another male friend of Krasno's who lived in Hongkou at that time was Max. Max called Krasno on the night of Hongkou's liberation by the American Air Force in July 1945. He described how the refugees and the local Chinese people helped each other during the air raid. Max claims that though the air raid was frightening, there was no panic among the people who were living in Hongkou. He stated that emergency dispensaries were set up at once, and refugee doctors took immediate care of all the wounded without discriminating between Jews and Chinese:

Max described how Jewish refugees are ripping the last of their treasured table and bed linens to make bandages and how the Chinese help carry the wounded through the rubble. They also offered to transport heavy loads to the clinics: cots, mattresses, buckets of water.

'Now we are all brothers!' Max cried with youthful enthusiasm.

When I repeated Max's words to the family, Papa brightened visibly.

'*Zamechatelno!*' ('Wonderful') he repeated several times. 'Hitler has not been able to destroy the Jewish spirit, nor have centuries of repression killed the inherent goodness of the Chinese!' (189)

This indirect memory, through Max, documents humanity in the Jewish Ghetto and vouches for a significant foundation in the Sino-Jewish friendship. Though Krasno did not live in Shanghai's Jewish Ghetto, her testimony is essential to understanding Shanghai's social environment during the war. It constructs collective cultural memory from a female perspective.

## 2.22 Liliane Willens: Sex, Statelessness, and Survival in Shanghai

Representations of sexual violence against women appeared in memoirs, documentary films, literature, and reports after the Holocaust. The University of Southern California Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education houses more than five hundred testimonies that mention sexual violation. However, despite much evidence, there was no official Nazi documentation of the rape and sexual abuse of Jewish women. Due to the *Rassenschande*<sup>57</sup> policy, the common belief was that Jewish women were rarely raped or sexually violated during the Holocaust. Sonja Hedgepeth and Rochelle Saidel aimed to test this claim's validity by examining the testimonial sources. In 2010, they published their findings in the anthology *Sexual Violence against Jewish Women during the Holocaust*. It addresses instances of rape, forced prostitution, forced sterilization, and abortion during the Holocaust. It also brings new evidence of sexual abuse and violence toward women in the camps. The collection expands our understanding of the torments of sexual violation and abuse that specifically targeted women during the Holocaust. According to Sonja Hedgepeth and Rochelle Saidel, sexual abuse against women has scarcely been acknowledged as a theme in previous studies. By focusing on women's sexual abuse, Hedgepeth and Saidel's work goes beyond previous studies of women's experiences during the Holocaust by challenging the common claim that Jewish women were not raped or sexually violated during the Holocaust. This research significantly alters our understanding of women's overall Holocaust trauma.

---

<sup>57</sup> *Rassenschande* (race-disgrace) was an anti-miscegenation concept in Nazi racial policy, pertaining to sexual relations between Aryans and non-Aryans. It was put into practice in 1935 by the Nuremberg racial laws that prohibited marriage between Aryans and non-Aryans. In particular, the policies state that Germans are not allowed to engage in sexual intercourse with Jewish people.

No research has been conducted regarding sexual abuse and violence against women during their exile in Shanghai. Survival through prostitution was barely mentioned in survivors' memoirs. The voices of the female refugees in Shanghai who survived heinous labor demand scholarly recognition and will add another perspective to understanding the gendered wounds of the Jewish exile in Shanghai. In addition, no memoir mentions the fates of the abandoned women left behind after the war. Their lovers and patrons departed with the communist victories, leaving them alone in Communist China. What has become of the abandoned women? Their experiences and laments should be recognized as a theme in future studies of the Sino-Jewish encounter and the general analysis of the traumas of the second world war.

### **2.221 The Body as Means of Survival in Shanghai**

Liliane Willens was born in Shanghai to Russian Jewish parents who had fled to Harbin during the Bolshevik Revolution. Later her family emigrated to Shanghai, and her memoir *Stateless in Shanghai* chronicles her family's life and trials there. Engaging with historical moments and providing direct testimony, Willens's experience uniquely demonstrates how it felt to live as a Russian Jewish woman in early communist China. Moreover, while Willens recalls her privileged French education and diverse social life in Shanghai and Tokyo, in passing, she also mentions the ladies of the night: Jewish, Japanese, and Chinese women who had to offer sexual services to the Japanese invaders and the American soldiers to survive the war. In Chapter Six, "The Parasite Imperialists," Willens introduced the Russian girls who offered their company to make ends meet in wartime:

Although married Russian women often worked in small stores or taught piano and voice lessons, many young and attractive single émigré women found the only way

to avoid starvation was prostitution or work in cabarets, bars, and ballrooms frequented by foreign soldiers flush with money. In Shanghai – “the wickedest city in the East,” – these women were known as “taxi dancers” since they were hired on the floor and were paid a dime a dance. In addition, they received a commission on drinks purchased by the men who spent time with them. The ladies on duty imbibed soft drinks that were billed to their partners as alcoholic drinks. Inevitably, some of them extended their services beyond the dance floor. The foreign community, especially the British and the Americans, looked askance at the white Russians – especially these “immoral” women and the men who did menial labor, often in competition with Chinese workers. White pauperism was a loss of face for the white elite. If the women sold their bodies to Asians, they belittled the Caucasian race, whose prestige needed to be maintained. Such racial intermingling debased the purity of the rigid ethnic caste system in Shanghai. For the Chinese, too, a ‘half-caste’ child was the product of a shameful liaison. The Chinese of all classes, fully aware of the *taipans*’ disdain towards the émigrés, reacted accordingly and generally looked down on the destitute *Loussou nin* (Russians), who, as whites, had no right to be poor. (63-64)

Willens showcases the racial discrimination and gender hierarchy within the international community in Shanghai. In addition to experiencing high unemployment and financial strains, women also suffered from gendered traumatic moments during exile. While many refugees turned to their last resort – their natural beauty – to stay alive, they were ridiculed by their customers and shunned by the white community. They were even belittled and looked down upon by the local Chinese residents and the Japanese invaders. While illegal

businesses flooded Shanghai and macho gang-related activities were feared and respected, female desperation and destitution were reviled. Instead of eliciting sympathy, the emigrant ladies working in entertainment businesses were considered a disgrace to the white race. Willes states that while many of their classmates did not speak to the working female émigrés, she and her sister socialized with them. It is interesting to note that Willens chose to introduce the ladies of the night in a chapter that presents the privileged foreign community in Shanghai as imperial parasites. Her title implies that the women forced to provide sexual labor were not only victims of the war but also victims of the ethnic, cultural, and social power dynamic in Shanghai. Willens' narrative highlights parallel universes that coexisted in Shanghai in the dazzling mid-thirties. Most imperialists considered it natural to live side-by-side with the Chinese but ignored them. As Willens introduces, Shanghai's nickname in the thirties was 'Prostitute of the East.'" Connecting Shanghai's fate with many Jewish female refugees' fortunes, it is worth noting that the city's trauma during the colonial time extended to its residents and inflicted gendered traumas and wounds.

### **2.222 The Female Fate After Liberation**

In Chapter Twenty-One, "Victory and Euphoria," Willens documents romance following the liberation of Shanghai. She excitedly recalls how they admired the young American military boys who had freed them from the clutches of the Japanese and whom they saw as heroes. Many women started to date these young boys. Still, such romances rarely lasted or started them down a path that ultimately led to the U.S. Most American soldiers and officers enjoyed themselves with women in the entertainment quarters and abandoned their Shanghai lovers once they were stationed back in America. Willens recalls that many of the young military men squandered their paychecks very quickly and, after exchanging whatever

dollars they had left on the thriving black market, resorted to selling cigarettes, whiskey, canned food, sweaters, boots, and their popular American jackets to eager Chinese merchants and Western expatriates. Willens's mother was very anxious about her daughters' marriage and feared that foreigners might no longer live a privileged life in Shanghai after the war. Willens and her sister started dating American men carefully:

Riva and I were very selective of the Americans we dated or invited to our home for meals, always making sure, for our parents' sake, that they were well-mannered and did not pick their teeth or chew gum too loudly. The ones we brought home always thanked my mother profusely for her excellent cooking while I plied them with questions about their country, as I hardly knew anything about the history of the United States. America was barely mentioned in our history classes at our Collège Municipal Français except for the important role France played in helping the thirteen colonies gain their independence and some superficial reading about its *Guerre de Secession*, the devastating civil war over slavery and states' rights. There was never fear that women would be mistreated by these young men, who usually behaved like friendly teenagers. The most they would ask for was a long goodnight kiss, which I readily offered, but we never furthered our amorous desires since I was terrified that I could become pregnant. If their desires were too great, they could always be satisfied by the hordes of Chinese, Korean, and White Russian "taxi dancers" and "singing girls" waiting for them in the cabarets and nightclubs.

(211-212)

Willens' memoir recollects the forgotten images of the women who worked in the nightclubs and offered sexual services in Shanghai simply to survive. Later, Willens also

recalled how sad the women of the nightclubs and expatriate women were when the American soldiers left China after the Communist takeover. The voices of the abandoned women still await to be recovered. Willens left Red China in 1950 and lived in Japan for two years, waiting for her quota to immigrate to the United States. She finally received a letter from the United States in 1952 that approved her immigration after a long process and international paperwork trail. While feeling fortunate, Willens also observed how many American soldiers, sailors, and marines filed paperwork at the Consulate for their Japanese fiancées and wives. Willens notes:

I was curious about how these women, most of whom barely spoke English, communicated with their husbands or boyfriends. I also wondered how these young women would be received by their Caucasian in-laws; I had been told by my dates that the white population in America tended to discriminate against Asians, as had been the case in Shanghai. (319)

A closer investigation into Willens's memoir uncovers the world's heartlessness towards the female refugees working in the entertainment quarters and discrimination against the Asian women who had American lovers. Willens states that though she had many white boyfriends, including one American officer who even proposed to her, they all disappeared soon after being stationed back in the U.S. Although Willens did not comment on her romance or the interracial relationships between Asian women and American militants, it is easy to sense a hidden tone of disapproval. Willens did not address the abandoned women in detail, yet her narrative offers a window into women's lives after the war. Caucasian women such as Willens could immigrate to the West and enjoy independence. Japanese women married Americans and were able to embark on a journey to the land of the free. The

Chinese women, suppressed as Chinese and women, were left behind in communist China. Since no scholars have researched them, their voices remained hidden and their laments unheard.

Though distinct in terms of narrative strategy and literary form, Krasno's and Willens's memoirs both brought their memories out of the personal realm and into the public sphere, where they could contribute to collective memory. Their narratives reveal gendered suffering and should be considered integral to Sino-Jewish and feminist history. The study of gender and the Holocaust during the Jewish exile in Shanghai represents an effort to make sense of history and the cultural inheritance of trauma. In an introduction to the section on gender in *Theories of Memory*, Kate Chedgzoy points out that gender studies raise questions regarding authority and power of memory:

In many societies, women's voices are harder to hear than men's and are listened to with less respect: consequently, women's accounts of their memories may be undervalued or distrusted. Though memory has often been symbolized as feminine, women's relations to the practices of memory have been vulnerable and uneasy.

(217)

The choice of what to remember and what to forget has political ramifications. Making room for a feminist approach in the investigation of memories of the Jewish exile reconstructs a socially inherited cultural memory. The study of gender in literary representations of the Jewish exile in Shanghai challenges the belief that men and women remember and forget the same aspects of the past. Furthermore, women's testimonies reveal distinctly different patterns of suffering and reflections from those of men. Therefore, directing attention to women's experiences and writing is essential to bringing the specificity of individual

experiences to light and gaining new insights into gendered memories, suffering, and narratives. In “Women in Holocaust Literature: Engendering Trauma Memory,” Sara Horowitz notes:

...women may remember differently from men – or they may remember different things. Missing from male versions of survival are experiences unique to women, such as menarche, menstruation, and pregnancy in the concentration camps; the strategies some women devised to endure and survive; the ways other women met their deaths, and the subsequent effect on women survivors in family, friendship and civic relations; and the way women reconstruct shattered paradigms of meaning in the face of cultural and personal displacement. In addition, examining the ways the atrocity of the Shoah affected women or men, in specific terms – in their roles as mothers, fathers, wives, husbands, daughters, sons, lovers, friends, workers, homemakers – reveals to us something of the trauma they continue to bear. (366)

It is also essential to note that there is still no scholarship wholly dedicated to the pain and trauma of the humiliated and forgotten women in Shanghai – Jewish or Chinese – who had to survive both the war and sexual assaults. In “Catastrophes: Afterlives of the Exceptionality Paradigm in Holocaust Studies,” Elisabeth Weber quotes Michael Rothberg and points out that the contemporary study of the Holocaust is at risk of competing with the traumatic histories and memories of other cultures (389). To argue against this understanding of “collective memory as competitive memory,” Rothberg proposes considering memories as *multidirectional*. Weber builds on Rothberg’s theory and states:

The perceived absence of “theoretical breakthroughs” in genocide studies in less dominant cultures than those of the English-speaking world might, of course, mirror

the lack of attention and resources granted to regions with less political, economic, and military clout. As Jacques Derrida once remarked, ‘one does not count the dead in the same way from one corner of the globe to the other,’ and, especially in the area of genocide studies, it is our duty to never forget this. (390)

Just as Weber’s statement suggests, the studies of the Holocaust give rise to new challenges to the relationship between memory and history. My study is a starting point for varied research and examinations. The investigation of women who took refuge in the East has been significantly understudied. The two memoirs addressed in this paper only represent a fraction of texts about the experiences of Jewish women exiles in Shanghai.

### ***2.3 Transnational Memory in Worldly Memoirs***

In addition to the cross-generational and gendered transmission of memory, the transnational aspect demands analysis in understanding the diverse realities of the Jewish experience in Shanghai. For anthropologist Stephan Feuchtwang, the transmission of memory goes beyond individual subjectivity, and specific aspects of the past are reinforced, refuted, and reinterpreted in the formation of collective memory. In “Haunting Memory: The Extension of Kinship Beyond the Nation,” he claims:

I want to stress instead the co-existence, within contemporary society, of different if not incompatible collective memories that often involve linkages of transnational sites of memory. In the current condition of people-states, coercive and persuasive politics elicits the idea of a ‘people’ through mediated mobilizations of communities of descent (ethnicity and race), tradition (including regional), language, and faith, even though each and any of them extends spatially in ways that do not coincide with the others. I

want to point out that there is another kind of memory, focusing on families and the intimate sphere, that transgresses or extends across national borders. (271)

Political factors also shaped the memories of the Sino-Jewish encounter in Shanghai. As Feuchtwang points out, the transmission of memory across national borders implies political aspects. In the specific case of Jewish memories in Shanghai, it is not just the sites of memory that transcend national and political borders but the narrative of memory itself.

The current scholarship generated from the Sino-Jewish encounter is not multi-dimensional. In addition to Jewish memoirs narrated in the post-war world in the West, it is also essential to look eastward and investigate how the Chinese remember and tell of the same historical period. The memory of Jewish exiles in Shanghai has become crucial to China's Sino-Jewish scholarship. The recollection of the Chinese hospitality towards the Jews during the war is highly celebrated in Chinese scholarship. It establishes global acknowledgment of national agency, a recognition, reinstatement, and reconstruction of transnational memory that contributes to building the Chinese nation-state's image. In China, Memory Studies feature the earlier decades of post-war Western societies as a critical concern. The focus on present futures and present pasts has shifted from the West to the East. Inevitably, accompanied by the boom of memory is the boom of forgetting. Under socio-cultural pressures, certain aspects of memories are transformed, reinforced, and reconstructed in transnational transmission. In Western scholarship, the survivors in Shanghai are relegated to the periphery of Holocaust scholarship due to oversight. In Chinese scholarship, however, Jewish memories in Shanghai operate in a different register, have been brought into the fold of Chinese international relationships, and play a crucial role in communicating China's promises to the world.

In this section, I turn to the materials in two categories: memoirs published in Chinese and memoirs translated into Chinese. First, I research the recollections of Chinese hospitality in select translated Jewish memoirs and stress that instead of analyzing the history of the Jews in exile, Chinese scholarship fixates on Sino-Jewish friendship and hospitality in the Hongkou Ghetto, thereby aiming to reconstruct a grand narrative of a new communist Red China. Second, I investigate the voices of the Chinese neighbors who lived alongside the Jewish refugees in the Hongkou Ghetto and identify how their memories contribute to socialist realism. By highlighting unity and eliminating the socio-cultural, racial, and spatial differences between the Jewish refugees and the local Chinese neighbors, the memories of the local Shanghainese attempt to erase the distinction between the “I” and “they” and pave a path towards a global collective memory of “we” that emphasizes the role of the Chinese nation in making world history and international politics. In sum, Chinese memoirs’ intervention generates state-controlled narratives that use memories of the past as agents in reconstructing memories for the future. I conclude that the memories of the Sino-Jewish encounter in Shanghai have been instrumentalized in rebuilding the modern Chinese vision of the world order.

### 2.31 Imagined Community and National Biography: Chinese Hospitality

#### Remembered in Selective Jewish Memoirs

The Sino-Jewish encounter in Shanghai portrays the complicated relationships among race, community, and nation. It is important to note that the cultural remembrance of Chinese hospitality has been a crucial element in constructing the discourse about the legacy of the Chinese victory during WWII. While the unifying power within the Jewish community has been highlighted in almost every Jewish memoir, the relationship between the Jews and the

local Chinese people reflects diverse realities and demands further assessment. As Chinese scholarship turned to the Shanghai Ghetto, many memoirs were selectively translated into Chinese and served as the basis for many thorough analyses. The collections of memoirs published in Chinese demonstrate a cultural coherence in celebrating the cross-cultural friendships between the stateless refugees and the local Chinese in Shanghai. The select episodes published in Chinese collections feature an imagined frontline formed of Jews and Chinese fighting against Japanese imperialism and create a narrative that aims to establish an imagined community of homogeneous unity.

In *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Benedict Anderson examines the ways in which communities nationalize themselves and the various essential factors that contribute to the universalization of national ideology formation. Collective cultural memory plays a crucial role in Anderson's scheme.<sup>58</sup> According to Anderson, nations are called into being when the relationship with other communities can produce a narrative of their nations' pasts. The building of a nation is essentially a reconstructive narrative of memorialization and forgetting. Through Anderson's lens, Chinese scholarship about the Sino-Jewish encounter's history and memory is representative of a nationalist imagination. Select moments of Chinese hospitality were identified and reinforced to create a Chinese community. In other words, building the memory of hospitality and unity presupposes the result of an imagined new communist China. The textualization and collectivization of the Sino-Jewish cultural memory participate in the project of writing the Chinese nation's biography. To further demonstrate the imagined fraternity between the

---

<sup>58</sup> Though in his 1983 edition memory was not a theorized category, he added a chapter on "Memory and Forgetting" to the second edition (1991).

Jewish refugees and the local Shanghainese during WWII, I use Rena Krasno's *Once Upon a Time in Shanghai* (2008), a memoir published in China, as a textual anchor and compare it with *Strangers Always* (1992), published in the U.S. I also survey a broad range of Chinese collections of Jewish memories in Shanghai, such as *Jews Remembering Shanghai* (犹太人忆上海) and *Jewish Refugees and Shanghai* (犹太难民与上海). I conclude that the unity between the Jews and Chinese in Shanghai is an imagined community that presents the nation's ideological model.

### 2.32 Once Upon a Chosen Time in Shanghai

Unlike *Strangers Always*, Krasno's *Once Upon a Time in Shanghai* is not written in a journal style but organized thematically. Krasno recalls entertaining moments from the era of the Jewish Ghetto and praises the diligent and talented Chinese locals. The main thread of love and romance that runs through *Strangers Always* has disappeared. Instead, here Krasno focuses her narrative on celebrating Shanghai's local citizens. Krasno centers her recollection on skillful tailors, brilliant servants, and small business owners who quickly learned how to master pidgin English. Krasno highlights Albert Einstein's visit to Shanghai and daily encounters between the Chinese citizens and the Jewish refugees. Indeed, many locals in Shanghai communicated well with the Jewish refugees; however, nothing culturally significant can be identified except for small acts of kindness and gestures of individual friendships. To present a flattering portrait of the Jewish relationship with Shanghai, *Once Upon a Time* avoids private emotions and lacks intriguing affective elements. Instead, Krasno emphasizes China's history, shows sympathy towards the Chinese locals, criticizes foreign invaders, and exposes Japanese brutality. *Once Upon a Time in Shanghai* was published by the China Intercontinental Press and is available in Chinese and English. The style that

differentiates *Once Upon a Time* from *Strangers Always* shows how politics is vital in writing memories that cross national borders. While the memories evoked in the two memoirs are personal recollections, the writing subject chooses what to remember and what to leave out. Once memories cross transnational political spheres, objective memory becomes the competitive memory Rothberg decries and is impacted by the political dimensions of what to recall and omit. When Krasno wrote *Once Upon a Time*, she had just revisited Shanghai after several decades. She had just turned 80 years old and was invited by official Chinese scholars to give talks in China. These factors may have played a role in redirecting the focus in the composition of her memoir. A comparison of her two memoirs invites questions about the limits of realism and how transnational and political influences can reconfigure memories.

Most Jewish memoirs on the Shanghai exile have only been partially translated, including just the sections that highlight the mutual support in the Sino-Jewish communities, such as those in the 2018 collection *Jews Remembering Shanghai* (犹太人忆上海). Edited by the National Committee of CPPCC<sup>59</sup> Literature, History and Study, *Jews Remembering Shanghai* is a collection supported by the Chinese communist party and conducted under the scholarly umbrella of writing the grand narrative of “One Hundred Years of Chinese Memories.” This collection brought together many Chinese scholars affiliated with the committee and presented translations of original memoirs. It features twelve significant Jewish figures who have written memoirs, letters, or reports that contain praise of Chinese hospitality. The collection opens with a letter from Lord Lawrence Kadoorie, who played a crucial part in building the Jewish community in Shanghai and was received by previous

---

<sup>59</sup> The Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference. This is a political advisory body in the People’s Republic of China and a central part of the Chinese Communist Party’s United Front system.

Chairman Deng Xiaoping in 1985. The second translation is a report from Laura Margolis, the head correspondent in Shanghai for the JDC (the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee). The other Jewish writers selected in the collection were also significant social figures such as Abraham Fradkin, an active member of the Zionist organization Betar; Judith Ben-Eliezer, a Jewish businesswoman who served as a secret correspondent for the Chinese Nationalist Government; and Israel Kipen, who was in charge of the refugees' dining operations. Zorach Warhaftig was a leader of the Polish Zionist movement and later became Israel's Religion Minister from 1962 to 1974. William Schurtman wrote a report on the Jewish refugees in Shanghai in 1954. Schurtman claims that most Chinese people were amicable and asserts that the unfriendly ones were simply expressing their frustrations towards the white foreign community that had suppressed the Chinese locals since the Opium Wars of the mid-nineteenth century. The collection also included a chapter from Rena Krasno's *Strangers Always* describing the mutual support of the Jews and the Chinese after the American air raid in the Hongkou Ghetto, as well as Frank Theyleg's *The History of My Life* and Lilli Finkelstein's *Forty Years of My Life*. In addition, the collection features scholarly research, such as the transcription of Steve Hochstadt's interview with Jewish refugee Lisbeth Loewenberg.

These Jewish figures were chosen either for their affiliation with the Communist Party or their significant social roles after the war. The translated Jewish memoirs, carefully selected by the Chinese scholar-officials, present an ideal vision of the Sino-Jewish encounter in the Hongkou Ghetto. However, as Ban Wang notes in "Temporality, Memory, and Myth in Wang Anyi's Fiction," treating personal memory as the repository of meaningful experience has limitations. With its emphasis on private experiences, memory ignores broader historical

movements. Building on the Heideggerian notion of *Dasein*, Wang calls primary memoirs “subjective lifetime” and notes that individual memories may still be inauthentic and need to return to history’s organic shared experience. Wang’s critical negotiation between memory and history calls attention to transnational memory, which tends to embrace a more universal perspective but can also be politically selective: in the transmission process, it embraces a nationalistic agenda at its core. However, a small selective sampling cannot fill the gaps between a personal experience and a collective historical period. We must communicate beyond political aesthetics and national interest to shape memory into history.

### 2.33 Implicated Subjects: Chinese Voices Recollected

In addition to the Jewish refugees’ testimonies, Chinese scholarship addresses local witnesses who speak to the brutality of the Holocaust as implicated subjects. The Chinese locals who lived next to their Jewish neighbors witnessed their struggles and sufferings. *Jewish Refugees and Shanghai*, a collection published by Shanghai Jiaotong University Press and supported by the Chinese Central Propaganda Department and the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film, and Television of China, presents several testimonies from local Shanghainese. These Shanghai locals developed close friendships with their Jewish neighbors in the Hongkou Ghetto and retold stories illustrating Sino-Jewish unity and Chinese hospitality. In their recollections, the emphasis is on everyday kindness and mutual support in surviving the war. Stories such as those of Jewish refugees returning to Shanghai decades later to look for their previous friends and neighbors and Chinese locals having stored thousands of copies of their Jewish neighbors’ books and preserving them across three generations elicit affective emotions. The stories center on the mutual admiration and support between the Chinese and the Jews by introducing connections between young Chinese artists and their

mentor, a Jewish master, and Chinese neighbors who taught the Jews survival skills to avoid starvation. Some second generations of the local Shanghainese neighbors recollect how brilliant, kind, and diligent the refugees were and how they honored and preserved the gifts exchanged before the refugees' departure. Most importantly, biracial marriages between the Jewish refugees and the local Shanghainese were presented to the public for the first time. Since most Chinese spouses immigrated with the refugees at the end of the war, Sino-Jewish love stories were retold indirectly and embellished. However, the historical documentation of the romantic relations between the Jews and the Chinese locals establishes a foundation for the copious quantities of fictional publications about the Sino-Jewish encounter.

In contrast to the selective translation of Jewish memoirs, Chinese scholarship emphasizes historical research and fictional narratives.<sup>60</sup> The memories of the Sino-Jewish encounter are reconstructed into fantastical narratives to form an imagined nationalistic community that celebrates communist values and produces records that correspond to the Chinese nation-state's ambition of rebuilding a global world order in which China plays a more significant part in building ethical communities and reconstructing the Western-dominated image of the Chinese national identity. In sum, the Chinese voices in Chinese scholarship function differently from the Jewish testimonies in the memoirs. Instead of testifying to the horrendous suffering in escaping the Holocaust and the struggle in exile, the Chinese voices have become implicated subjects that stand in between victims and perpetrators. As Michael Rothberg notes in *The Implicated Subject*, "implicated subjects

---

<sup>60</sup> On the Chinese market, there is a staggering number of novels related to the Jewish exile in Shanghai. In fact, a visit to the Shanghai Jewish Museum's bookstore shows that works of fiction heavily outnumber memoirs and historical scholarships. These works of fiction are published in Chinese with no English translations. Some copies offer very poor translations, indicating that the project did not involve Western scholars.

occupy positions aligned with power and privilege without being themselves direct agents of harm; they contribute to, inhabit, inherit, or benefit from regimes of domination but do not originate or control such regimes” (1). Their actions help produce and reproduce the positions of victims and perpetrators. The Chinese locals’ memories help propagate historical violence and hospitalities’ legacies and, eventually, are engineered into the grand formation of national belongings.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

In *Auschwitz et après (Auschwitz and After)*, Charlotte Delbo<sup>61</sup> proposes: “Il faut donner à voir.”<sup>62</sup> Delbo believes that her memoir provides a kind of subjective seeing and speaks for the unspeakable. In the absence of real witnesses, the relationship between the history and memory of the Shanghai Ghetto can only be understood from a multiplicity of perspectives rather than one single point of view. Many of these perspectives will be contradictory, bringing the possibility of objectivity into question. Moreover, many of these accounts of the Shanghai Ghetto were written retrospectively, meaning there is no neat distinction between past and present; in parallel, no single voice speaks in isolation. This chapter aims to bring

---

<sup>61</sup> Charlotte Delbo was not Jewish; she was born near Paris in 1913. She joined the French Young Communist Women’s League in 1932. She married George Dudach in 1934; during the war, the couple printed and distributed pamphlets and other anti-Nazi Germany reading material. On March 2, 1942, the police arrested them and deported them as political prisoners. Dudach was shot on the morning of May 23, and Delbo was held captive in a transit camp near Paris. On January 23, 1943, she was deported to Auschwitz with a lot of French women Resistance fighters. She was one of the few victims to survive the concentration camps. However, she believed that she never truly left Auschwitz. The first volume of her trilogy *Auschwitz, et après (Auschwitz and After)* was entitled *Aucun de nous ne reviendra (None of Us Will Return)*. The title not only suggests the horror she witnessed in the death camps but also points to the struggle she encountered in the post-war society as a victim-survivor.

<sup>62</sup> English translation: It is necessary to show.

these voices into dialogue. It presents an analysis of memoirs from a multidirectional perspective that includes Western views of the Jews' experience of the Holocaust and a perspective from China, which reveals that the Jewish experience is subjected to a new kind of effacement and instrumentalization through a Chinese nationalist narrative.

This chapter addresses multiple questions that arise in studying the literature on the Sino-Jewish encounter in Shanghai. The first section of my chapter compares the primary and secondary memory of the Jewish refugees who escaped the Holocaust in Shanghai. I conclude that while primary memory aims to testify to their experiences, post-memory narratives reconstruct the framework of recollection to allow new experiences to emerge in testifying and seeking comprehension of the past. Both primary and secondary memory help seek peace with the survivor's present identity, generating a form of new individuality in the hope of healing. In my analysis, I also state that gender plays a significant part in the narration. However, the plight of women who took refuge in the Shanghai Ghetto has been significantly understudied. Female gendered perspectives provide materials to supplement historical sources and offer different perspectives on truth and seeing. While it is essential to recognize that gender is only one component of the survivors' overall experience, it is impossible to ignore the fact that gender defines men's social and cultural construction and women's societal roles and positions. It endows men and women with different social skills and networks that later transform into survival skills, reactions, and decisions in the face of danger. Gender also creates different social roles, responsibilities, and expectations for men and women. It affects their spheres of knowledge and expertise, ties to families, and communities, facilitating their chances of survival. In my second section, I challenge the male-dominated scholarship in Holocaust Studies and emphasize that the experience of

escaping the Holocaust in Shanghai is both male *and* female. I looked at two memoirs written by women and concluded that though distinct in terms of narrative strategy and literary form, Krasno and Willens's memoirs both brought their memories out of the personal realm into the public sphere, where they could contribute to collective memory. Their narratives reveal gendered memories and should be considered integral to the history of the Holocaust and feminist history. Finally, in recent years, scholarship has intensified its attention to the role of memory in collective institutions and cultures. Transnational memory plays a crucial part in forming identarian ideologies such as those of communist China. My last section points out that the Chinese scholarship's fixation on hospitality and mutual support in the Shanghai Ghetto reveals the Chinese nation-state's attempt to rewrite its biography and reconstruct its international image. I conclude that the Chinese narrative on the unity between the Jews and Chinese in Shanghai is an imagined community that generates a reconstructive force in building the grand history of New Red China, which corresponds to the celebration of communist social values.

In the age of globalization, to recreate global laws and orders, nation-states need to apply the use of narratives and a method of thinking back, a recollection of the source of history. However, a nation's rebirth needs a recreation of the past. The future cannot be created nor begin until the past has been reinterpreted as communicative narratives. Memory helps us to comprehend the diverse realities of the past. Fiction also supports the process of reincarnating the human mind through imagination.<sup>63</sup> Historical novels that cross temporal,

---

<sup>63</sup> In Greek mythology, Mnemosyne (memory) gave birth to nine muses. They are: Calliope (epic poetry), Clio (history), Euterpe (flutes and lyric poetry), Thalia (comedy and pastoral poetry), Melpomene (tragedy), Terpsichore (dance), Erato (love poetry), Polyhymnia (sacred poetry), and Urania (astronomy). Both history and poetry are children of memory, and are siblings to each other.

cultural, and spatial boundaries become world-making agencies by forming nationalistic communities through transnational communications using the device of memory. Imaginary unity and multidirectional representations divide the world into diverse realities.

Simultaneously, the multidirectional memoirs about the Jewish exile in Shanghai produce a conflicting view of reality and perceptions. The study of literary memoirs alone encounters constraints of subjective experiences. The next chapter will examine another kind of literary approach, namely the fictional universe of the Sino-Jewish encounter, and explore the limits and distortions that fiction imposes.

## Chapter III

### **What Happened If in Love? Doubling Realities and Alternative Futures in *The Cursed Piano* and *The Song of the Jade Lily***

During the Second World War, many countries closed their doors to Jewish refugees. In the 1930s, Shanghai was unusual in that it was semi-colonial, divided up, and governed by many different colonial powers. Due to the extraterritoriality of the foreign concessions, Jews could obtain visas for China. Many Jewish people took refuge in Shanghai. Hongkou, an area belonging to the Tianqiao district in Shanghai, was the home of more than twenty thousand European Jews from the period of 1933 to 1947. After the war ended, although the Jewish refugees gradually left, the city was forever changed by their presence, and a history of hospitality and humanity was later revisited and recollected in numerous literary representations, cinematic reproductions, and cultural exhibitions. In addition to historical and archival research, literature plays a significant part in representing the Jewish experience in Shanghai. Historical novels recalling the historical part of the Sino-Jewish encounter preserve the cultural memory of the daily life in the Hongkou Ghetto and extend the realm of reality that is, in a sense, not precisely what has happened but realistic.

Though novelists customarily have their different ways of representing historical and cultural memories, when it comes to the exchange between the Jews in exile and the local Chinese in Shanghai, the emotion of love was commonly employed to demonstrate insights into the society and the individual during the war and to communicate humanistic values. Despite its indisputable significance as a literary theme, the phenomenon of love has attracted less attention in Sino-Jewish scholarship. Focusing on the creative perspective of

how the Jewish exile in Shanghai is remembered and imagined in literary fiction, I ask why authors from different cultures coincide in their treatment of the topic and apply the topic of love, an emotional subject matter that is complex and tangible and yet contingent and far-reaching, to create the fictional universe in Shanghai. I survey the existing novels across languages and cultures on this subject, focusing on the Canadian-Chinese author Beila's *The Cursed Piano* (2007) and the Australian novelist Kirsty Manning's *The Song of the Jade Lily* (2016) as my primary textual anchors to investigate the codification of love and intimacy in the counterfactual fictitious universe. In comparing these love stories, I propose a synthesis that claims that the novels related to the Jewish exile in Shanghai, though different in terms of language as well as cultural and political implications, generate a reconstructive imagination of the past by applying the codification of love. Love stories between the Chinese locals and the Jewish refugees embody a humanitarian fantasy for the hope of cross-cultural understanding and alternative futurity that values human rights and individual development hindered by family, communal, civic, and cultural ties. My analysis indicates that the reimagined, fantasized love stories are coded emotions and self-expressions about the yearning for a future that declares respect for human rights and decency. Love and intimacy in fictional novels serve as alternative relic objects that duplicate doubling realities<sup>64</sup> of times past and bridge the spheres of intimacy between private and public, past and present, local and global. Though love transcends language and culture, due to various political climates and national agencies, a comparative analysis

---

<sup>64</sup> "Realitätsverdopplung" (Doubling Reality), is a term that originated with Elena Esposito in *Die Fiktion der wahrscheinlichen Realität*. A doubling reality is a narrative that simulates a reality that is not true but truthful. The original German text is: "Die Fiktion, so scheint es, wird als fiktive Konstruktion dann akzeptabel, wenn sie eine Welt vorstellt, die so plausibel ist, daß sie wahr sein könnte" (pp.7-8).

between the Chinese and Western literary works still presents striking differences. While the fantasized intimacy in the Chinese novels can be interpreted as a social reconstruction of a nation-state identity and a hope to communicate and rebuild Chinese foreign relations through the power of love, the imagined unity in the Western creation not only captures the traumatic details of the war but also highlight the importance of creating a safe space where the individual is allowed to indulge in mystical cross-cultural encounters. In addition, the Western reimagined fictional universe in Shanghai also demonstrates a melancholic undertone that reminisces about the colonial past while simultaneously criticizing vanity and materialistic pursuits. This chapter states that while modern Chinese authors communicate messages and scenes depicting imperial suppression, violence, torture, and imagined Sino-Jewish unity, contemporary Western authors attempt to remember the history of pain through adventurous exaggeration and mystical encounters. Chinese scholars and writers meditate on the transference of national trauma and consider cross-cultural love stories and friendships as mediums of communication that permeate future generations and support the rebuilding of international relations and global political impacts in the wake of the Cold War. Simultaneously, their Western counterparts are nostalgic about the colonial past and attempt to inspire curiosity and emotion by forming secular and sacred love unions and advocating for individual development and human rights.

In *Love As Passion*, Niklas Luhmann claims that love should not be treated as a feeling but “rather in terms of its constituting a symbolic code which shows how to communicate effectively in situations where this would otherwise appear improbable” (8-9). In other words, Luhmann sees love as a medium and a code of communication that allows difference to be experienced. Therefore, the literary, idealizing, and mythicizing portrayals

of love still represent society's reactions and the trends of change, even if they do not necessarily portray the factual historical circumstances. Luhmann states that by lending a historically transferrable form to the functional necessities of the social system, the semantics of love can, in each case, "provide an understanding of the relationship between symbolic media and social structure" (20). Suppose we see intimate love relations as the individual's relations to the world; the fictional love stories of the fantasized cross-cultural union between the Jews and the Chinese locals can be interpreted as understandings of the positioning of the nation-state in the world. Additionally, the fictional love stories can be read as alternative affirmations or projections of what could have happened in the historical past and what might happen in the future. The fantasized Sino-Jewish love union implies reconstructing the past and a future simulation. The examinations of the love stories entail a dual perspective, namely, as literary projections of the individuals and collective cultural fantasies. We can decode national experience and anticipations from these love stories: an interpretation of national history and a possible transformative action to react to that history in order to recreate its relationship with the world. In this chapter, by surveying reimagined love stories from a comparative angle, I determine that in literary fiction, the truth of the historical past becomes a perception, and historical realities eventually become manufactured literary products that serve as bearers of self-expression and social communication entailing political agendas and cultural assumptions.

### ***3.1 Forbidden Love: Imagined Unity and Doubling Realities in The Cursed Piano***

Of all the fictional narratives that attempt to impress the Jewish story into Chinese consciousness with vivid depictions of imaginary Sino-Jewish friendships, *The Cursed*

*Piano* is among the most critical since it is the first published piece of such literature and the only work that has been translated into English. *The Cursed Piano* was published in 2007 by the Canadian-Chinese writer Beila (贝拉). As Haiyan Lee points out in “A Sino-Jewish Encounter, a Humanitarian Fantasy,” this is the same year that the Jewish Refugees Museum opened in Shanghai, and this coincidence raises the question as to whether *The Cursed Piano* belongs to a more significant political narrative of reimagining the Sino-Jewish encounter and the heroism of the Chinese nation. Building on Lee’s analysis, I argue that in addition to celebrating the imagined unity between the Jews and the local Chinese, the Chinese nation-state uses the Jewish history in China to facilitate an international dialogue in which China rises to the leading role in global affairs and communicates an alternative future where fantasies can be truthful enough to simulate a probable future.

*The Cursed Piano* inherits the Western sentiments of star-crossed lovers and chronicles a love story between a talented, handsome Polish pianist and a young Chinese student against the background of WWII and the Second Sino-Japanese War. The female protagonist, Li Mei, comes from a communist family and is an orphan taken in by the Red Army. With other Revolutionary Party children, she was sent to Russia to study music in Leningrad. She meets Adam, a talented Jewish pianist from Poland, in exile with his spouse, Vera. Both Mei and Adam are in committed relationships when they meet. Their shared passion for playing the piano soon culminates in forbidden love and desire, leading to an extramarital affair. When the German forces attack Leningrad, Mei persuades the local Jewish leaders to consider escaping to Shanghai. She cites the vibrant Jewish community in Shanghai and praises the hospitality of the Chinese people:

“When I was studying in Shanghai in 1938, the migration of Eastern European Jews had already begun,” Li Mei said. “They started businesses and made noticeable contributions to Shanghai’s development and prosperity. I have heard that in recent years several thousand Jews have arrived from Austria. Zhoushan Road has become a business center that is nicknamed ‘Little Vienna.’ The street is lined with stores, all bustling with activity. There are Jewish schools, Jewish orchestras, Jewish restaurants, and synagogues. Do you know Kovacs, the famous tenor of the Strauss Theater in Vienna? He is now in Shanghai, running a restaurant called ‘the Bratwurst Tenor’ in Little Vienna, attracting many Jewish customers. It’s a favorite gathering place for Jewish musicians and artists. What I’m telling you now isn’t a myth; it’s a fact. Also, I hear that Jews need only an identity card or a passport to enter China. You will be free if you can buy your way past Chinese customs and concessions that are under the control of foreign nations.” (75-76)

While Li Mei’s portrayal of the Jewish life in Shanghai is partly accurate, Beila glorifies the Jewish refugees’ condition in Shanghai. Jews did, in fact, not need passports to enter Shanghai. Yet, in 1941, when Beila’s story began, the Japanese air force had attacked the U.S. military base in Pearl Harbor, and with the outbreak of the Pacific War, the Japanese in Shanghai seized and froze the British and American Jews’ funds and assets. These new orders aggravated the refugee camps’ financial situation, which relied heavily on local and international charities. To make matters worse, in June 1942, the Nazi Colonel Joseph Meisinger (1899-1947) arrived in Shanghai, intending to enforce the “Final Solution” there. Though there is no official historical documentation of the mysterious “Meisinger Plan” because the Japanese military destroyed massive amounts of secret documents after the war,

survivors and military officials such as the former German Consul General in Tianjin, Fritz Wiedemann (1891-1970), and a Japanese naval officer by the name of Takeshima (?-?) testified that due to pressure from their German allies, Japan was coerced into designing a series of policies that discriminated against the Jewish refugees to maintain their alliance with the Nazis. In September 1942, the Japanese organized a Shanghai “Pao Chia”<sup>65</sup> unit, a self-policing unit of Jewish refugees to govern the thousands of Jews driven into the area of Hongkou. On February 18, 1943, the Japanese proclaimed that the stateless Jewish refugees had to move to Shanghai’s “Designated Area.” This announcement marked the establishment of the Jewish Ghetto in Hongkou.

From 1942 to 1945, the stateless Jewish refugees were forced to limit their movement and activities within the Hongkou Ghetto. If they needed to cross administrative districts for work or errands, they had to apply for a “Proof of Passage” controlled by the Japanese. Not many Jews were granted passage; therefore, many refugees suffered from unemployment and hunger. This devastating situation lasted until the summer of 1945. It was not until August 1945, after the American army accidentally bombed Hongkou, that the ban on Jews freely leaving the “Designated Area” was lifted. On September 2, 1945, the Japanese officially surrendered in Shanghai, signaling the end of World War II in China and the Jewish Ghetto in Shanghai. Though cultural exchanges between the Jewish refugees and the local Chinese people flourished during this period, many Jews, confined to the most unfortunate district in Shanghai, did not recount pleasant memories in their memoirs

---

<sup>65</sup> The baojia system (保甲) was invented by Wang Anshi of the Song dynasty in the eleventh century. It is a self-policing, community-based system of law enforcement and civil control. Here, the Japanese applied this ancient Chinese system in order to police and govern the European Jewish refugees.

published after the war. However, Chinese scholarship documents instances where the local Chinese people exhibited humanitarian generosity and hospitality towards the Jewish refugees, emphasizing an alliance against fascism. In particular, it is believed that in July 1945, when American aircraft accidentally bombed the Jewish refugees' residential area in Hongkou, resulting in 31 deaths and around 250 injuries, many Chinese residents risked their own safety and rescued their Jewish neighbors. Drawing from historical realities, memoirs, and official documentation, Beila creates a fictional space that emphasizes Chinese hospitality and amplifies Japanese brutality, using forbidden love as a medium of confirmation and identification. The extramarital affair between Mei and Adam conveys a dual sense of experimental recollection, namely a nationalistic internal monologue about Chinese hospitality during the war and an other-oriented projection that urges a response from the world for recognition and acceptance. Their love story operates as a communicative medium compatible with the historical truth despite not always being truthful.

As Adam and his Jewish community arrive in Shanghai, he loses contact with Li Mei. Mei and her fiancé Zhao Keqiang quickly get married and transfer to a Red Army base north of Shanghai. Li Mei soon discovers she is pregnant; however, the child is from her illegitimate affair with Adam. Mei becomes the focus of gossip on the base and soon leaves for Shanghai to continue the dangerous mission of purchasing medicine for the communist army, for which Zhao gave his life. As a foreign-educated Chinese woman with an exotic-looking infant, she works well as a secret operation agent. One day she hears the piano concerto she and Adam co-authored and discovers that Adam and his Jewish friends are alive but starving. Having discovered the Jewish community's precarious situation in

Hongkou, Mei makes an illegal plan to transport food into the Ghetto. Her relief effort is broadly supported by the local Shanghai people who live close to the border of the Ghetto:

She told them that the Germans and Japanese were both depraved fascists, which was why they needed to help the Jews. The Chinese might be poor and mostly illiterate, but the sense of benevolence and justice in their traditional morality taught them that helping others was the right thing to do. The Jews had fallen into a state worse than theirs simply because they'd once had money and were intelligent, so how could their Chinese neighbors sit by and watch them suffer?

So she told them about her plan and the difficulties involved.

“Sending things over won't present a problem,” old Mr. Li, a reserved man of few words, said leisurely in a Shandong accent, a pipe in his mouth. “All we have to do is toss the stuff over the low walls.”

The other old-timers nodded in agreement and smiled, showing their yellowed teeth.

“Yes, that'll be easy. Just toss it over.” They offered this impassively as if it were a simple matter.

“Toss it over? How?” Li Mei asked in confusion.

“Bundle it up and find a low wall,” old Mr. Li said. “If you have the strength, just swing the bundle over. If you don't, push it over the wall with a bamboo pole.” That, of course, was the answer. As soon as the Japanese patrol passed, they'd fling food bundles over the wall, which would take only a few minutes.

“Grandpa, you've given me the solution,” she said emotionally. “But won't you be afraid to do that?”

“Our lives are like blades of grass, worthless. No one notes our lives or our deaths,” old Mr. Zhang said, also in a Shandong accent. “The most important thing is to live with a clear conscience. How can we sit idly by and watch others die? We can and should do this.” (179-180)

Beila shows how the impoverished Chinese locals were willing to help without any questions asked. Here Beila depicts the Ghetto being surrounded by barbed wires and monitored by patrols, which contradicts the descriptions of the Ghetto in the survivors’ memoirs. For example, in Rena Krasno’s *Strangers Always: A Jewish Family in Wartime Shanghai*, it was remembered that no barbed wires were established around the Hongkou Ghetto. In the counterfactual universe, Beila paints a picture of Chinese locals braving significant risks and dangers to throw parcels of bread and baked goods into the Ghetto during one twenty-minute break between the Japanese patrols. Beila’s presentation of humanitarian working-class citizens corresponds to the celebrated narrative of the Chinese nation-state.

Additionally, Beila portrays the Chinese locals welcoming the Jewish refugees with open arms:

When a clamor arose in the alley, Adam and Vera went out to see what it was. They saw Chinese residents offering to take the shelterless Jews into their own homes; the refugees were refusing to enter, which puzzled the hospitable, sympathetic Chinese, who did not appear to be better off than the Jews. Though their standard of living had also suffered because of the war, they were thrusting steamed buns wrapped in lotus leaves into the hands of the Jews, who shook their heads in firm refusal.

“These are not poisoned,” Mister Zhang said impatiently.

Beyer, who understood both Mandarin and the Shanghai dialect, served as a mediator. “You’re not well off yourselves,” he said, “and they do not want to take food from you or crowd your houses,” he told the Chinese.

“We Chinese have a saying about the poor helping the poor. If we weren’t poor, we would not help you. Have you seen the ferocious dogs outside every rich man’s house? They are there to scare off the poor,” one of the Chinese said. (127)

The utopian love fantasy in *The Cursed Piano* creates a historical past that is mainly fictitious and provides a space for self-idealization that fulfills social requirements. Here, the plot not only conveys the hospitality of the local Chinese but also hints at communist values, which advocate uniting the members of the working class. It further corresponds to the Chinese nation-state’s communist propaganda and explains its success within its literary genre. Haiyan Lee argues that the plot element featuring Mei not only lecturing the wealthy Jewish merchants but blackmailing them for financial support, with her team of no-nonsense humanitarians ready and eager to help the Jews, is a utopian fantasy. In the novel, the forbidden love between Li Mei and Adam parallels the humanitarian love between the Chinese locals and the Jews in exile.

After the communist victory, Mei remains single and devotes all her energy to educating her biracial son. She and her son, Li Bo, are crucified during the Cultural Revolution. Her son is living proof of her intimate relations with foreigners. In addition, since she once performed for the Japanese in order to have a brief meeting with Adam, she is humiliated and called a traitor. The introduction of the historical trauma of the Cultural Revolution is crucial to the plot since it indicates one of the many reasons why the Jewish refugees all left Shanghai at the end of the war. It also suggests that after such a traumatic

historical period, repairing relations with the West and reconstructing its national image is a critical project for the current communist government.

Mei and Li Bo manage to survive. Due to her illegitimate love affair with Adam, Mei is denounced as an indecent woman who collaborated with a foreigner. Her son is sent to the countryside to be reeducated. Li Bo, like his parents, engages in an illegitimate affair that gives him a daughter named Beila. When Li Bo returns years later, he is determined to find his birth father in America. Unfortunately, Li Bo is exposed to diseases during his illegal journey to the U.S. and dies. Adam eventually returns to Shanghai, but Mei feels too guilty about Li Bo's death to meet with him. The tragic pair never cross paths again.

The narrative of *The Cursed Piano* takes the form of an elderly Mei telling the story to her granddaughter Bei, whose name is the first syllable of the author, Beila. This innovative plot design reveals Beila's attempt to legitimize her fictional narrative. Though *The Cursed Piano* presents truthful episodes from the history and memory of the Jewish experience in Shanghai supplemented by a series of locations, events, and dates, the novel's core humanitarian element remains essentially a fantasy. It attempts to create an affective counter-historical narrative that uses love as a medium to communicate the trauma and hope of the Chinese nation-state. Implementing the Western motif of star-crossed lovers, the story implies that literature borrows from tragedy in order to reflect the tragedy involved in the actual historical encounter. The tragic cross-cultural love presented in *The Cursed Piano* is characterized by unfulfilled desire rather than a utopian exchange. It implies that in addition to illusionary self-representation, *The Cursed Piano* may also lament missed opportunities for Chinese humanitarianism and cross-cultural solidarity.

*The Cursed Piano* is one example of many Chinese literary texts about the Sino-Jewish encounter that uses interracial love stories between the Jewish refugees and the local Chinese people to construct narratives about Chinese humanitarianism that have not been clearly presented in archival research. Historical documents show a lack of evidence for extensive or organized Chinese aid in the Shanghai Ghetto. Research in the Shanghai Municipal archive proves that the most significant local relief derives from international Jewish Relief committees such as the JDC (The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee) and CAEJF (Committee for the Assistance of European Jewish Refugees in Shanghai). The international Jewish communities donated most of the local *Heime* (soup kitchens) funds to offer free meals and lodging to the impoverished refugees. According to the JDC's financial records, most donations came from the United States and local foreign merchants. The JDC reports to the French concession annually on their financial situation, and so far, no records demonstrate any significant financial or medical assistance from the Chinese people. It is unclear if individualized humanitarian action from Chinese locals in Shanghai was lost, forgotten, neglected, or not crucial. With the construction of the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum, inevitably, the memories of love between the Jewish refugees and the local Shanghainese will now become institutionalized and desirous of international recognition. Love stories that create a utopian past are now transformed from the utopian to the secular and transcend individualized experiences to establish social expectations. The significant number of publications devoted to the histories and memories of the Jewish exile study in China brings out more evidence that provides literary scholars with a space where memory meets fiction, and historical truths are manifested through

truthful portrayals. Cross-cultural love unions, friendship, and intimacy remain the focus in almost every Chinese novel related to the Sino-Jewish encounter.

In *Love As Passion: The Codification of Intimacy*, Niklas Luhmann notes that love is the basis of personal relationships in modern societies. He believes that a semantics of love has developed to accommodate extramarital relationships in contemporary communities in the postmodern era. He investigates the particular semantics of passionate love that has come to form the basis of modern forms of intimacy and personal relationships and states that the language of love is part of a project that involves self-deception through relationships with both self and other in seeking to establish certainty and ultimately resorting to pseudo-explanations. In this case, the language of love attempts to create new realities. The description of love and romantic relationships in Beila's writings is not merely a humanistic fantasy but a project that involves the Jewish refugee Adam and the Chinese Red Army descendant Li Mei creating fictional Sino-Jewish realities and counterfactual narratives. The narrative provides the author and the Chinese nation-state with a place to reimagine the Sino-Jewish encounter. Their love attempts to create a potential reality that provides a doubling utopian worldview. Their love affair can be viewed as an exchange of symbolic codes that offer a medium of communication. The primary function of the love narrative in *The Cursed Piano* is to create a fictional reality through imagined communication that provides a ground for poetic political exchange, reconstructs a medium of witnessing, and enables redemption.

Fictions are counterfactual by definition. Lee points out that a counterfactual question we need to address concerning the Jewish question in Shanghai is as follows: Had China been a fully sovereign nation-state as it has been since 1949, would it have opened its

gates to the Jews, or would it have behaved like the thirty-one nations out of thirty-two countries present at the Évian Conference of 1938 that refused to admit Jewish immigrants or relax their quotas? Shanghai was governed by international powers such as the British and American representatives on the Municipal Council, the French Consul-General, and Japanese authorities. Therefore, can we treat the fantasized humanitarian fiction created and praised in Chinese scholarship as an incentive to redeem its shameful past and reconstruct a different future? Or is it merely a creation that serves the greater Chinese nation-state's narrative about occupying a more powerful seat on the global political stage?

In *Die Fiktion der wahrscheinlichen Realität (Fiction of the Possible Reality)*, Elena Esposito asserts that sometimes, in modern life, the construction of fiction is more acceptable to people because it creates a doubling reality that could be potentially true and is more morally acceptable compared to the absolute truth:

It seems that fiction becomes acceptable as a fictive construction when it introduces a world so plausible that it could be true. Already in Antiquity, the aesthetics of narration allowed for a certain degree of independence from the truth. This was proved by the much-cited sentence from Aristotle's *Poetics*, according to which the believable impossible is preferable to unbelievable possibilities. It was better to deal with believable untruths than with implausible truths. (13)<sup>66</sup>

---

<sup>66</sup> The above text is my own translation. The original German text is: "Die Fiktion, so scheint es, wird als fiktive Konstruktion dann akzeptable, wenn sie eine Welt vorstellt, die so plausible ist, daß sie wahr sein könnte.

Bereits in der Antike erlaubte die Ästhetik der Erzählung ein gewisses Maß an Unabhängigkeit gegenüber der Wahrheit. Das belegte der vielzitierte Satz aus Aristoteles' Poetik, nachdem das glaubwürdige Unmögliche die unglaubwürdigen Möglichkeiten vorzuziehen sei. Man setzte sich lieber mit glaubwürdigen Unwahrheiten als mit unplausiblen Wahrheiten auseinander."

Esposito claims:

One can only speak of reality if something delimits it – something described either as non-real or realistic in a different way: if this is a case of doubling, then it means that there is a structure within the realm of reality by which real reality can be distinguished from a reality of another kind. This is true for the fictional reality of novels, which are not lies, even though they deal with persons and events that do not exist and never existed. However, this also applies to the apparent reality of the novel, which is not necessarily true even if it is not false. Of course, the fact that these alternative areas are available also changes the meaning of the real and its practical consequences. For the observer, reality only arises when there is something in the world from which it can be distinguished.” (7-8) <sup>67</sup>

The dilemma of the Chinese utopian and fictional creation lies in the perception of reality. According to Esposito, the term reality can be defined in two different ways: it can be precisely what happened or what was witnessed, created, or reconstructed. In *The Cursed Piano*, Beila’s love story can be considered an attempt to create a doubling reality of the humiliating Chinese history and construct a utopian space where communication and

---

<sup>67</sup> The above text is my own translation. The original text is in German: “Über die Realität kann man nur sprechen, wenn man sie von etwas abgrenzt, das entweder als nicht-real oder als auf andere Weise realistisch beschrieben wird: Wenn an dieser Stelle von Verdoppelung die Rede ist, dann ist eine Gliederung innerhalb des Bereichs der Realität gemeint, aufgrund deren die reale Realität von eine Realität anderer Art unterschieden werden kann. Das gilt zum einen für die Scheinrealität der Romane, die keine Lügen sind, obwohl sie von Personen und Ereignissen handeln, die nicht existieren und niemals existierten. Das gilt aber auch für das Wahrscheinliche, das nicht notwendiger Weise wahr ist, selbst wenn es nicht falsch ist. Natürlich verändert die Verfügbarkeit dieser alternativen Bereiche auch die Bedeutung des Realen und seine praktischen Konsequenzen. Für den Beobachter entsteht dann erst Realität, wenn es in der Welt etwas gibt, wovon sie unterschieden werden kann.”

solidarity were possible during the Sino-Jewish encounter at the time of Japanese occupation. In Beila's novel, the romantic struggles between Adam and Li Mei can be considered as struggles to make a doubling reality and construct a utopian space where communication across culture, ethnicity, and language is possible. However, as demonstrated in the novel, such utopian spaces are fragile, leaving the question of whether such communication is possible unresolved.

*The Cursed Piano* has received numerous positive critiques in China. Chinese and English versions both topped the bestseller list at the "2009 Shanghai Book Fair." Its successful reception shows the Chinese nation-state's endeavor to build a counter-historical reality based on memories that are not real but could be confirmed in the future. It also demonstrates how memory novels can inscribe cultural memories into the Chinese citizens' consciousness through narratives that are ultimately imagined self-portraits. Chinese love stories between the Jewish refugees and the local Chinese are a reimagining of what could have happened during the Sino-Jewish encounter using love to communicate its national pride and construct a utopian universe. The Chinese love stories build the possibility of restoring the memory that the Chinese and the Jews share of the traumatic past and create the potential for making their improbable intimacy probable. Its focus is not to document traumatic details of the exile life of the refugees but to rebuild the Chinese nation-state's identity.

### ***3.2 Refugees of Intimacies: Relic Objects and Alternative Futures in The Song of the Jade Lily***

*The Song of the Jade Lily* (2019) is written by the Australian author Kirsty Manning. A family holiday in Shanghai captivated her interest in the city and also led to an explosive

love affair. Her memory of transcultural love invited curiosity into her creative desires. She later visited Shanghai multiple times and developed an affinity for the city's history, especially the Sino-Jewish encounter in Hongkou. She visited Shanghai's parks and gardens, where she explored Chinese philosophy and values. She toured the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum, which displays a colonial past and houses numerous documents about the history and memory of the Jewish exile. In her "Author's Note," she claims that she wrote this story in order to investigate questions about the development of identities and generosity. Her interplay of history and fiction is packaged under the theme of seeking and revealing family secrets. Manning designs mysterious love encounters and shifts the narrative time between past and present. She portrays a divine transcendence of Chinese-foreign relations and captures the traumatic details of the Holocaust in Europe and the Japanese invasion of China. This dual sense of trauma corresponds with her parallel narrative time. It embraces a dual mode of reality that blurs reality and fiction, past and present, and East and West, advocating for an imagined future where individuals can surpass the limitations of their cultural and communal ties and thrive by rebuilding their identities and advocating for human rights. In contrast with the Chinese novels, the Jewish-Chinese love affair in Manning's story does not celebrate the cross-cultural union and Sino-Jewish friendship. Still, it focuses on the intimate emotions and relations of the individual itself.

In recent years, scholars exploring the social aspects of history have turned the focus from the heroic events of important individuals and major wars and conquests to a rather more private realm, namely a history of the self and intimacy, which resulted in the boom of Memory Studies and an interest in the history of the self and intimacy. In "The Refugees of Intimacy," Orest Ranum proposes the following hypothesis:

In the past, the individual identified most intimately with certain particular places – an identification effected by means of emotions, actions, prayers, and dreams. The souvenir-space (walled garden, bedroom, *ruelle*, study, or oratory) and the souvenir-object (book, flower, clothing, ring, ribbon, portrait, or letter) were quite private, having been possessed by an individual unique in time and space. Nevertheless, the significance of such spaces and objects was encoded and perfectly comprehensible to others. The source of meaning was social. (207)

To study the history of privacy, Ranum establishes an archeology of the intimate and claims to draw upon three kinds of evidence. As Ranum declares, relic objects and spaces embody private thoughts and personal identification, and their meanings go beyond ownership. Scholars and historians initiate a dialogue between the owner and the modern beholder in studying such relic objects and spaces. It opens a space for the analysis of the past and reveals private intimacies and individual memories that compensate for historical research on collective memory. Therefore, exploring the sites where intimacy flourishes and investigating the relic objects representing hidden privacy and intimate relations is crucial.

In studying the history of intimacy, then, we draw upon three kinds of evidence. We can study the kinds of places that lent themselves to private intercourse between two individuals. Second, we can examine the relic-objects which people used as mementos of love and friendship. And third, we have the evidence of painting and text: self-portraits, portraits, letters, autobiographies, diaries, and memoirs, which are just as much relic-objects as combs and rings. Every object speaks in its own way. Rather than allow one type of object to speak more than the others, we should note the diffusion and spread of intimate *imagines*. (210)

Ranum believes that the scene of intimacy and things of the heart (relic-objects such as photographs, diaries, and jewelry pieces) foster intimate and private uses and convey meanings of self-expression. They serve as moments and records of the self's inner life and are crucial for understanding individuality and self-representation. In *The Cursed Piano*, the piano orchestra that embodies Adam and Mei's transcultural love union signifies the Chinese imagination of the Sino-Jewish friendship and identifies the Chinese nation as humanistic and hospitable. Just as the Chinese nation-state uses the framework of love to communicate self-identifications, Western authors also apply the codification of transcultural love to reminisce about colonial powers and express Western values for civil rights and independence.

In the following section, I will shift my focus from imagined loved stories written by Chinese authors to one of the most contemporary Western fantasies on the Sino-Jewish romance to invite cross-cultural comparison. Following Ranum's hypothesis, I will analyze the three main elements of intimacy in *The Song of the Jade Lily*, namely: the relic-object, which is the jade lily pendant; the evidence of painting and text in the novel, which includes portraits, letters, and diaries in the story; and the scenes of the enclosed space of the chambers and gardens where the intimacy of the Sino-Jewish romantic affair occurs. I conclude that the jade lily pendant invites criticism of the vanity of material pursuits and social corruption. The painting and diaries carry memories of the past that transmit the struggle of individualized love quests during a time of war, communicating erotic passion and close friendships to future generations. The paintings and diaries offer physical testimonies of the cross-cultural Sino-Jewish intimacies and, at the same time, serve as self-portraits that are concrete embodiments of emotions and feelings. The enclosed chambers

and walled gardens provide a transcendent space for natural behaviors and potential love apart from the pressure of the outside political world. I assert that overall, Manning's love story itself is a self-portrait of the Western perspective on the Jewish exile in Shanghai and embodies reflective contemplations about the colonial past in the Orient.

*The Song of the Jade Lily* revolves around the family secret that the protagonist Romy has kept from her husband Wilhelm, her daughter Sophia, and her granddaughter Alexandra. Romy arrived in Shanghai with her parents in the late 1930s to escape execution in Nazi-occupied Austria. Romy witnessed her elder brother, Benjamin, being killed on the street, and her younger brother, Daniel, was captured and later sent to the concentration camps. Her family tried its best to rescue the younger brother but failed. As the only remaining child in the family, her parents are very protective of her.

With the help of the JDC and the local Jewish community, Romy's family establishes a middle-class lifestyle in the French concessions. Romy's father is a doctor, and it is relatively easy for him to provide for his family. Romy befriends a girl, Nina, on the cruise ship to Shanghai. Nina loses her mother during the journey and becomes an orphan. She has an uncle living in the temporary Jewish *Heime* and joins him when she arrives. Later, Nina also loses her uncle. Romy and her family always try their best to support Nina with living necessities. However, after the Japanese occupied Shanghai, Romy and her family were driven out of the French concession and forced to move into the impoverished Hongkou Ghetto. Nina takes the matter of survival into her own hands and becomes a prostitute. She later manages to rescue Romy when she is in danger and provides food for her when her parents die during the liberation of Shanghai, as the American airforce

accidentally bombs the Hongkou Ghetto. Nina and Romy connect as sisters and later immigrate to Australia together after the war.

In addition to Nina, Romy also manages to befriend the children of her Chinese neighbors in the French concession, Ho Jian and Ho Li. The Ho family practices traditional Chinese medicine and is very affluent. Li and Jian attend Westernized schools, are well educated, and can fluently converse in English and French. The trio becomes inseparable and enjoys a few years of a peaceful childhood until Japan occupies Shanghai. As Jewish refugees, Romy and her family must leave their house in the French concession and move into the Hongkou Ghetto. Unfortunately, due to their unwillingness to cooperate with the puppet government in Shanghai working under the Japanese invaders, Mr. and Mrs. Ho are executed publicly. Both Li and Jian's lives are in great danger. To survive the war and protect Jian, Li agrees to become the lover of the infamous gangster Chang Wu, a collaborator with the Japanese, and works as a nightclub singer at the luxury hotel Cathay. Li cuts ties with her past life and excludes Romy from her new chapter to protect her. Jian joins the local police controlled by the Japanese military but secretly works for the national government. He is under surveillance by Chang Wu and therefore also cuts ties with Romy for her safety.

In her adolescent years, Romy develops a crush on Jian. She is uncertain if Jian reciprocates her feelings, and a relationship between the two does not come to fruition before the war. When Romy loses touch with Li and Jian, she meets the Austrian Jewish refugee Wilhelm and dates him briefly. However, she later realizes that Wilhelm has become quite distant and discovers that he has developed a secret relationship with Ho Li. Witnessing their intimate lovemaking in the Cathay Hotel, Romy alerts them that Chang Wu

almost caught them by knocking at the door and leaving quietly afterward. She keeps their dangerous relationship a secret and even helps deliver their baby, Shu. Li dies giving birth to Shu, and Romy adopts Shu as her own. She later discovers that Wilhelm was also working as a spy and plotting against the Japanese forces. Chang Wu finds out about the relationship between Li and Wilhelm, and his life is in danger. He escapes to Australia, and Romy promises to take care of Shu. Unfortunately, during the attack in which Romy loses her parents, Shu also perishes. Romy is devastated. Jian saves her, and he nurses her back to health. Eventually, Romy and Jian consummate their romantic feelings. However, Jian is also exposed and has to escape to Chongqing. He invites Romy to leave with him, but she refuses. Romy wants to stay in Shanghai and dedicate herself to the well-being of the Jewish community and later discovers she is pregnant. She gives birth to a girl, whom she names Sophia. After the war ends, Wilhelm sponsors Romy and Nina to immigrate to Australia. Romy can't face the burden of telling him that his real daughter Shu has died and pretends that Sophia is Shu. Wilhelm later marries Romy, and they agree to tell Sophia that she was adopted from China and keep their history and relations in Shanghai hidden. It is not until the novel's end that it is revealed that Wilhelm has long known that Sophia was not his own. He accepted the fact lovingly and never confronted Romy with her lies. Romy plans to keep the secret forever; however, her granddaughter Alexandra decides to go to China and seek her roots. In the end, Romy confesses the truth to Alexandra.

Following Romy's footsteps, Manning presents a multifaceted picture of Shanghai, from the precarious conditions of the Jewish Refugees to the starving lower-class Chinese locals and finally to the glorious Cathay Hotel, owned by Sir Victor Sassoon, a landmark of colonial wealth and the domination of global power in Shanghai. While depicting Romy's

life-risking mission to seek out the person she loves, Manning suddenly shifts the storyline and jumps back to Vienna in November 1938 to provide the historical background of the Nazi takeover of Austria and the traumatic memories of *Kristallnacht*, when Romy lost both of her brothers. However, instead of narrating Romy's fate and providing further details of the traumatic history of the Holocaust, Manning once again quickly shifts the geographical site of the narrative to Melbourne, Australia, and ventures into the contemporary period to introduce another protagonist, Romy's granddaughter: Alexandra.

To bid farewell to her beloved grandfather Wilhelm, who is lying on his deathbed, Alexandra hurries back from London to Melbourne, not only to deal with the loss of a grandparent but also her break-up with her longtime fiancé, Hugo. During her visit, Alexandra discovers her late mother's diary, which hints at a hidden family secret linking her roots in China. Alexandra's mother, Sophia, died in a car crash when Alexandra was still young. Unfortunately, her father also died in the same accident. As the only survivor, Alexandra grew up with her grandparents, Romy and Wilhelm. After reading Sophia's diary, Alexandra realizes that Sophia had tried to trace her bloodline in China before her death. Eager to complete Sophia's quest, Alexandra accepts a transfer to the Shanghai office and departs for China to seek her roots. Introducing elements from the mystery genre, Manning crosses geographical sites, time, and spaces of past and present and turns her historical fiction into an inter-generational memory novel.

*The Song of the Jade Lily* creates two parallel universes: one in which Romy seeks love and refuge and one in which Alexandra travels from London to Australia and then to Shanghai to investigate and seek her family secrets that unveil her identity and Chinese blood ties. At the novel's end, Romy reveals the secret she has kept from her family and

finds peace. Alexandra has discovered her original roots and built an authentic love relationship that was once hindered by the commodified corporate world. In connecting Romy's love quest in Shanghai with Alexander's love encounter, also in Shanghai, Manning shifts the discourse from the intimate genre of love to the construction of subjectivity and the awakening of the self.

### 3.21 Relic Objects: The Mysterious Jade Lily and the Hidden Portrait

Alexandra's only connection with the Orient is her physical features, a gift for working with numbers, and a jade pendant passed on to her on her twenty-fifth birthday. The jade pendant is engraved with a lily and signifies pure, unadulterated love. As a successful investment banker, Alexandra is drawn into the digital world of consumption. She has a successful career but can never build the emotional bonds the jade lily represents with a significant other. After breaking up with her ex-boyfriend, Alexandra goes home from London to Melbourne to say goodbye to her grandfather, Wilhelm, on his deathbed. During her visit, she overhears the last words her grandmother Romy utters to him: "*Vergib mir*" (forgive me), which sparks her curiosity to look into the family secret that has been hidden from her all her life. She changes her work location to Shanghai, determined to find her mother's birth parents to shed light on her own identity. In unraveling the family secret surrounding her mother's adoption, Manning narrates her story in parallel universes from a dual perspective that documents the journey of Romy and Alexandra. The latter's trip to Shanghai interweaves the past with the present, connected by the jade pendant. The jade lily becomes a valid object of inquiry for Alexandra, who tries to reveal her own private identity to construct her intimate relationship with herself.

The jade lily first enters the story when Alexandra remembers receiving it on her twenty-first birthday. She recalls that Romy told her the significance of the lily: “To give a lily, my *Liebling*, is to show pure, unfiltered love.” Romy further explained that the lily represented not only the purity of love but also friendship and the care for a child. Alexandra had never had a serious relationship and could not understand Romy’s blessings. The jade lily became a mysterious relic object that connected the exchange of past intimacy and later played a vital role in Alexandra’s endeavor to find her Chinese roots. Alexandra realized that the jade lily might have been her only clue to uncovering her distant Oriental bloodline and the family secret when Wilhelm passed away. She found out that Sophia, her mother, who was supposed to have been adopted by Romy and Wilhelm from China, had also been researching her own identity and searching for her origins. Sophia’s doctoral dissertation, which was about mathematical genetics, was an attempt to explain her gifts with numbers. As a mathematician, Alexandra was determined to discover the truth through logic and not her “unreliable heart.”

The mysterious jade lily was mentioned again in the story through Romy’s narration. It was declared that the jade lily actually belonged to her dear childhood friend and neighbor, Ho Li. While playing games in the French park in Shanghai, Li would touch the jade for luck:

Li reached under her collar and pulled out a pendant on a long gold chain. Etched into the jade was an exquisite lily, just like the one she’d seen in the lobby of the Cathay Hotel. Romy ran her finger over the relief. “It’s beautiful,” she told her friend. Li’s eyes brimmed as her father said, “It comes from Li’s maternal

grandmother, in Soochow.” He looked at his daughter sadly and patted her hand. Jian stared at his tiles. “We have no contact with them now. Not since 1937.” (146)

1937 was the year when the Sino-Japanese war started. Many families lost ties to each other due to the turbulence of the time. Here, the jade lily was given another significant meaning. It represents the blessing of purity and love and carries the memory of love lost. Dr. Ho, Li, and Jian’s father told Romy that the jade lily was supposed to be a gift for Li’s wedding trousseau. It was used as a talisman, carried the grandmother’s blessings, and connected each generation to the next. Here, Manning joins the sentiments of loved ones lost between the Chinese and the Jewish refugees. Manning implies that the suffering of the Jewish refugees and the local Chinese people are similar and opens a space for mutual understanding and possible intimate relations. Therefore, the jade lily gained agency to reveal the unity of Chinese-foreign relations and the traumatic details of the Japanese invasion:

As Li took off her necklace and passed it to Romy so she could have a closer look, she said, “Jade is magic – both yin and yang.”

Romy must have looked puzzled.

Dr. Ho came to the rescue once again. “It’s the energy in everything. At its most basic, good and evil. We all have both these energies in us. We just get to choose which one we use more.”

Romy immediately thought of Franz, the soldier who killed Benjamin. Until it was forbidden, Franz sang as the lead baritone in Benjamin’s choir. They were colleagues and, she had supposed, friends. And yet Franz shot him as if her brother were an animal.

She looked across at the Hos, who seemed equally shaken by the massive change in their lives. They might come from different countries, the Hos and the Bernfelds, but they shared this loss. (147)

The jade lily also bears witness to Romy and Li's friendship, representing the Sino-Jewish friendship beyond cultural boundaries. Li has always cherished the jade pendant and called it her "lucky pendant" (147). However, at the end of her life, she gave both her newborn daughter Shu and the jade pendant to Romy:

Li grabbed Romy's hand. "Leave now through the kitchen into the back alley. Take her to Wilhelm." She ripped the jade pendant from her neck and held it out for Romy. "And give Shu this. Tell her I love her."

"I promise."

"Tell Jian—" But all at once, she subsided, too weak to continue.

Hot tears were streaming down Romy's cheeks as she tried to quell her panic. Her lungs were so heavy with shock she wasn't sure if she could run. She pressed her wet cheek to the pale, clammy cheek of her friend. "I'm so sorry, Li," she choked out. Why had she wasted a minute being angry or jealous of her dear friend? After all they'd been through.

"Go. Save my daughter," Li begged in a whisper. "Give her this" – she ripped her jade necklace from her neck – "but wait until she is safe. That necklace will link her to me ... if Chang Wu or his men recognize it, they will kill Shu. I'm sure of it."

"I'll take care of her. I'll take her to Wilhelm, I promise. And I'll find Jian..." (357-358)

Shu, the daughter of Li and Wilhelm, represents the ultimate love union between the Jewish refugees and Chinese locals in Shanghai. Romy has been secretly in love with Wilhelm since they met in Shanghai. When she discovered the secret affair between Wilhelm and Li in a private room in the Cathy hotel, she walked away with dignity and pride. However, by agreeing to take care of Shu and protecting her, Romy's passion rises to another level of compassion and intimacy. Instead of focusing on her private desires, Romy has moved on to emotions that embrace humanistic values. By passing the jade pendant to Romy, Li gives her blessings, hopes, and a legacy to her Jewish friend. Here, the jade lily signifies Romy's self-sacrificing love. The jade lily represents the inheritance of tradition and memories and conveys the meanings of individual development and a yearning for human rights.

At the same time, the jade pendant also plays a significant role in developing Alexandra's love life in Shanghai. Alexandra represents a new generation blessed with Western and Eastern values and traditions as she accepts and holds on to the jade pendant. The jade lily also poses further questions regarding whether this kind of cross-cultural intimacy could be continued outside the context of the second world war.

Once in Shanghai, Alexandra quickly befriends the Chinese architect Zhang from Hongkong, her neighbor and the designer of the garden of the house that she enjoys renting. A sentiment of romance quickly develops between Alexandra and Zhang. Zhang invites Alexandra to visit a famous local market Tian Zifang when she finds a small boutique store exhibiting many old photographs on its walls. To Alexandra's surprise, in the store, she finds a photo displayed where the young Romy is standing together with a young Chinese girl with the jade lily on her neck. Alexandra freezes and pulls out the same picture from Sophia's diary that she is carrying with her. The image of the jade lily has led Alexandra in

the right direction towards unveiling her family's secrets. Unfortunately, all the shopkeeper knows of the Chinese girl on the calendar is that she was once a famous cabaret singer in Shanghai with the name *Yu Baihe* (Jade Lily):

“Well, she was the most famous cabaret singer in Shanghai: Yu Baihe. Li Ho.”

Cynthia hesitated. “Is there anything, in particular, you're looking for?”

“Do you know if the man who owned the shop or his sister had any relatives?

Children? It's just they may have known my grandmother if they were friends.”

“I assume neither of them had any extended family. I mean, everything in this shop was sold as a job lot by the realtor. There were old receipts, the brother's photos, those books on Chinese medicine...” She pointed to some dusty books on a shelf.

“It's a pity we don't have any of her stuff here. We're having a big launch party soon, you see, and we're having a lot of the original images scanned so we can make some big posters. It's dress-up, of course. Old Shanghai.”

Zhang smiled, and the corners of his eyes crinkled. Alexandra imagined how handsome he'd look in a white tuxedo with a silk scarf.

“You must come,” Cynthia insisted.

“It's in August. Here's the invitation.”

She handed over a card with a Calendar Girl in repose in front of a mountainscape, legs crossed and dressed in a maroon cheongsam with white peonies, shiny black hair pulled back into a bun with a red chrysanthemum tucked behind her ear. She had a demure smile. “She's magic.”

“She is. But you wait until you see your girl in the photo. The details are on the other side. Make sure you dress up!”

“Sounds like I’m off to the tailor,” joked Zhang.

Alexandra felt a tingle of excitement. Zhang was supposed to be back in Hong Kong by August. Would he come back for the party? (216-217)

The tour to Tian Zifang can be seen as Alexandra and Zhang’s first intimate outing.

Accompanied by Zhang, Alexandra goes to Suzhou to visit the famous Chinese garden to track down local manufacturers that may recognize her jade pendant. Unfortunately, she is unable to find the specific origin of her jade lily. The jade lily leads Alexandra towards her Chinese roots, to Li, to the hidden family history, and provides an opportunity for her and Zhang to deepen their relationship further. It is during the trip to Su Zhou that Alexandra and Zhang first confess and consummate their love and passion for each other:

He leaned in closer to look at her necklace.

“May I?” His fingers brushed her skin as he tugged on the gold chain and held it up to catch the light.

“Haven’t you ever wondered about the riddle in this pendant?”

“Riddle?” asked Alexandra.

“It’s a lily. How can that be a riddle? I know the lily symbolizes pure love.”

Her voice wavered. “My Oma filled her house with roses and lilies when Opa was dying. I had to explain to visitors that it was a Chinese thing!”

“Well, riddles are a Chinese thing too. We love a hidden meaning.”

“Go on,” said Alexandra.

He pointed to the table beside them. “See the pendant with the peony in a box? The white jade is called mutton-fat jade – ”

Alexandra chuckled. “Sounds fetching.”

“Well, that represents a peony being unlocked – the key to a happy marriage. The one beside it with two cats, that’s for fidelity. The bat sitting on the left cat represents blessings.”

He pointed to three fish surrounded by three rings. “That picture means: May you give birth to a son who can pass the civil exams.

“But this...” He stroked the lines of Alexandra’s lily with his thumb. She could feel his breath on her face. “This pendant, this lily, is a play on words.”

“A riddle.”

“Exactly. Baihe – the word for lily – sounds like the proverb: Bainian hao he. Happy union for one hundred years... The gift of a lily ties you to that person forever.” (259-260)

As he touches the jade lily, Alexandra gets dizzy with the sensation of Zhang’s touch and warm breath against her skin. She struggles with her newly discovered intimate feelings for Zhang, and not long after, the two lovers finally give in to their feeling and consummate their passions. Their love story indicates Manning’s belief that even beyond the context of the second world war, the legacy of the Sino-Jewish intimacy is continued and carried on in future generations.

The jade lily is the centerpiece that embodies Romy and Alexander’s love encounters. It symbolizes Romy and Alexandra’s individualized quest that favors virtue, honor, beauty, and passion over social and cultural prohibitions. It transmits the aspects and components of intimate relations from Romy to Alexandra, indicating the transmission of traditions and virtues. The jade Lily connects the history of the Jewish exile with memory and fiction, using the codification of love and focusing on private intimacies that portray a

history of the individual. The jade lily as a relic object serves as a valid object of inquiry for the historian to unveil the imagination about the self and intimate relations.

It is conceivable that the star-crossed lovers in *The Cursed Piano* represent the Chinese nation-state's self-portrait of humanistic values. In *The Song of the Jade Lily*, the complex love relations between Li and Wilhelm, Jian and Romy, Romy and Wilhelm, and Alexandra and Zhang indicate common features of individual development that are hindered by cultural, communal, and civic differences, and personal ties. In both *The Cursed Piano* and *The Song of the Jade Lily*, the portrayal of Sino-Jewish friendship and Western civilization are generated through the symbolic meaning of relic objects<sup>68</sup> that paint imaginative self-portraits communicating a present reconstruction of the identity of the Chinese nation-state and the advocacy of the West for civil rights and humanistic values.

### 3.22 Things of the Heart: Hidden Words and Unions of Souls

In the early modern era, behavior was believed to be determined by the quality and quantity of body heat, and the idea of the self was therefore centered in the heart (Ranum 231). It was believed that passions such as friendships and romantic endeavors were effects of the heat originating from the heart. Things of the heart are called souvenirs:

The passions left powerful impressions on the memory. In the vocabulary of intimacy, the word *souvenir*, though not limited to memories of the passions, became the preferred word for them in the eighteenth century. It even acquired a double meaning, denoting both memory and/ or a common object such as a ribbon or comb

---

<sup>68</sup> According to Orest Ranum, relic objects are private things that embody private thoughts and personal identification, and their meanings go beyond ownership. In studying such relic objects, scholars and historians initiate a dialogue between the owner and the modern beholder.

that belonged to a loved one or a gift that expressed the identity of the giver or recipient. Through the exchange of souvenirs, the self became other and the other, the self. All souvenirs were unique and intimate yet immediately recognizable as such by society. A secret was a souvenir decipherable by someone else and therefore kept private by one or the other. (Ranum 232)

Souvenirs such as diaries are objects to trace back to the self and others. They are capable of invoking secret actions and passions. In *The Song of the Jade Lily*, Romy's diary plays a significant role in narrating her intimate feelings and emotions. Through her diary, it is revealed that she has developed romantic feelings for both Jian and Wilhelm. Her writings can be considered confessions of her relations with Wilhelm, Li, and Jian. It is the relic of her intimate relationships and also reflects introspection.

Jian is the first male figure that elicits romantic emotions in her heart. When she first starts hanging out with Li and Jian, there is already an emotional connection between the two:

Romy smiled at Jian, and the apples of his cheeks flushed pink as he flicked his shoes to cover a stone with dirt. When he lifted his head and met her gaze again, it was she who felt whispers of something strange and tingly inside. (139)

Here, the exchange of glances between Jian and Romy can be considered to be their first exchange of love souvenirs, which later become inscribed in their minds. The exchange of admiration is an exchange of love tokens and serves as love declared. The trio spends numerous afternoons together as Romy and Li do their homework, and Jian studies Chinese medicine next to them. However, the latter's real passion is to become a photographer. However, he has been educated to become a doctor to carry the family's legacy. Jian has a

soft temper and never speaks against his father. When he passes parcels of Chinese medicine to Romy to help her mother, Romy thanks him for his kindness, which makes Jian all the shyer. These sweet and innocent interactions promise further development of intimacy in their adolescent years. In April 1939, Romy gets her first diary as a birthday gift from her father. In 1942, she documents how she and her family spend the Chinese New Year with the Ho family. In her diary, Romy recalls an intimate moment with Jian:

Li wore a golden cheongsam and treated us to a performance; Jian played the piano. I had to step outside onto the balcony for some fresh air while the table was being set, and when he'd finished accompanying Li, Jian came out to join me. Li kept on singing for everyone, asking each person to choose their favorite song. I had the strangest feeling she was prolonging her solos on purpose as she nodded slightly at Jian as he left the piano. Jian glanced over his shoulder to see that no one was watching, then he pulled a small red envelope from his pocket and gave it to me. Inside was a thumb-sized piece of sugarcane, but underneath was the calligraphy symbol *Fu*.

"It means good fortune for the year ahead," he explained, and to my mortification, I started to sob.

"I'm sorry," he said, bewildered. He stepped toward me and brushed a tear from my eye with his thumb. His hands smelled spicy and woody. He'd obviously been making moxa with Dr. Ho. Jian rested his hand on my cheek, and for a moment, I thought he was going to kiss me. I closed my eyes and tried to pretend our parents were not on the other side of the wall as my heart pounded.

But I must have been mistaken because Jian removed his hand and stepped back inside without another word. I'd embarrassed him. I stayed on the balcony for another few minutes to make sure my cheeks were not red, and also because I didn't want to see Jian.

He'd been so kind to me lately, teaching me how to make a Sang Ju Yin formula with mulberry leaf and licorice. He'd even kept the illustration I made of the mulberry leaf and slipped me his recipe with amendments on a piece of parchment. It was silly for me to think that I'm anything more to him than his little sister's friend.

But I'm sixteen now and I wonder if he's even noticed. (237-38)

A brief inventory of their intimate moment suggests that if Romy had not been triggered by the word "luck" and started crying for her brothers who were executed by the Nazis, Jian might have made a different move. "Luck" is a word Romy has written repeatedly in her diary, contemplating her good fortune compared to her siblings. She also writes in her diary that she feels lucky that she and her family have been able to survive in Shanghai surrounded by friends, simultaneously expressing compassion for the less fortunate. She also confesses in her diary that she is uneasy about being lucky and staying in Shanghai.

Therefore, Jian does not know that his kind wishes of luck only invoke traumatic memories in Romy. Seeing her tears, Jian might have experienced a change of heart, giving an entirely new direction to the story. Assuming that her crush on Jian was one-sided, Romy suppresses her emotions and soon develops new feelings when she meets Wilhelm, another Jewish refugee. He works as a baker in the Hongkou Ghetto. However, as fate works in mysterious ways, she soon discovers that Wilhelm and Li have become an inseparable pair, and she distances herself from both Jian and Li. In July 1945, as a consequence of Pearl Harbor, the

United States bombs the Japanese terrain in Shanghai. The Hongkou Ghetto is attacked by accident. In a state of panic, it is Jian who saves Romy from danger:

Bodies dropped to the ground, and screams filled the air. Romy pressed her flushed cheek to the scorching concrete as a spray of bullets flew overhead. She felt a hand on her head, and a wiry body covered hers.

“Keep your head down,” a familiar voice whispered in her ear.

“But Mutti, Papa, and Shu are at home. We must go and help them.”

“You’re no use to anyone dead,” Jian said.

When the bombing had ceased, he took her hand and pulled her to her feet.

“Quickly!” he urged. (384).

Unfortunately, Romy loses both her parents and Shu, the daughter of Li and Wilhelm she promised to protect. Devastated by horror and sorrow, Romy loses consciousness, and Jian cares for her. Behind closed doors, Jian explains that he is closely watched by the Japanese collaborator, Chang Wu, and was unable to contact her previously. Li was passing down secret information from the inside as Chang Wu’s lover, and both he and Wilhelm belong to a line of underground operators fighting against the Japanese invaders. Wilhelm has already relocated to Chongqing since Chang Wu grew more suspicious of him and Li. Jian explains that military contacts might be able to get Wilhelm to Australia. Noticing Romy’s guilt over losing Shu, Jian tries to console her. However, when Romy is reconciled with her feelings for Jian, he tells her that just like Wilhelm, he also needs to be relocated and will be leaving for Chongqing:

“Come with me,” Jian urged. Romy shook her head. “I can’t. I can’t leave Nina now.

Besides, they need me at the hospital – there’s so much illness and malnourishment.

I have to help.” Jian nodded, understanding at once. They lay on the pillow together, breathing in sync. (401)

Jian declares his love for Romy by inviting Romy to go with him. However, Romy has decided to devote her energy to the more extensive welfare of the Jewish refugees. Trained as a nurse, she has chosen to transform her love for Jian into an immense love of compassion and humanistic actions. However, before their separation, Romy is overtaken by a desire to feel alive and wants to feel something other than loss. She initiates intimate contact with Jian. Manning eventually reveals Alexandra’s identity: she is the maternal granddaughter of Romy and Jian. It is shown that Sophia is, in fact, the daughter of Romy and Jian.

When she and her best friend Nina immigrate to Australia with Wilhelm’s help, Romy can’t tell Wilhelm the truth. She keeps the identity of Sophia hidden all her life. Romy believes that she is hiding the truth for Wilhelm’s sake. However, at the novel’s end, it is revealed that Wilhelm discovered it many years before when Sophia was still a teenager. He decided that nothing mattered more than being together with Romy and Sophia after their experience during the war. They are his home, and there is nowhere else he’d rather be. After Wilhelm’s death, Romy finally decides to tell Alexandra the truth. She sends her diary to Shanghai, hoping that Alexandra will understand her situation. Alexandra returns home to Melbourne with Zhang and finally finds peace and closure. It is worth mentioning that Romy has also cherished a letter from Jian that is twenty years old. It is a red envelope with a page featuring *Fu* in calligraphy. It is a message from Jian sending his blessings and wishing Romy good fortune. He always knew that Romy would immigrate to the West and Wilhelm.

An investigation into the relationship between Wilhelm, Romy, and Jian involves looking at friendship, gallantry, and passion. In *Love as Passion: The Codification of Intimacy*, Luhmann states that it is possible that in specific social settings, gallantry appears to be an indispensable ingredient to love, yet it could also be deceptive and seductive at the same time and elicits behaviors that are challenging to decipher (76-77). Luhmann claims:

Gallantry, having fulfilled its transitional function, is subject to rejection and ridicule, and the function of reintegrating love and society devolves to a new figure: the moral legitimation of emotion. (78)

Wilhelm's treatment of Romy and her best friend Nina could be considered in terms of gallantry. However, what determines their connection and the eventual union is their solid bond of friendship. Providing support to help them immigrate to Australia is Wilhelm's way of showing gratitude for Romy's affection and protecting Li and their daughter, Shu.

Luhmann believes that a milder form of gallantry and passion is friendship. Friendship is a divine force incarnated in mind and body that encourages dialogues with the other and self. Luhmann argues that with the development of society, love as duty has been slowly transformed into love as a liking another, bringing it closer into line with the ideal of friendship (80). For Romy, her friendship with Li has a sacred value: she can suppress her feelings for Wilhelm and risk her life to protect their daughter. Her friendship with Wilhelm is taking priority over her maternal instinct toward Sophia. Her childhood friendship with Jian flourishes into passionate intimacy and might have more potential if it weren't for the war. According to Ranum, love in marriage is often expressed through the rhetoric of "perfect friendship," or the union on earth of two souls (252). If sexuality often dominates the passion of love, reason often dominates friendships. Ranum states:

An individual, it was believed, could be drawn into ever more intimate relations with another through the combined effect of heart, humor, and spirit. Close friendship was a form of love, a love whose affections and passions were held in check by reason, that is, by the spirit. For an individual of an early modern era, there could be no true friendship without such affection of one body for another. The iconography of friendship celebrated the union of bodies and minds.

...

Marriage involved a mingling of bodies, if not out of passionate desire, then at least out of duty. But sexual relations were not necessarily intimate or friendly. The sexual act required not intimacy, only privacy. (258)

The union between Romy and Wilhelm is a mingling of friendship and duty. Before Wilhelm meets Li, he also has a sexual attraction toward Romy. Therefore, their relationship is intimate and friendly, which is a form of an ideal marriage. Unlike the union between Romy and Wilhelm, both connections between Li and Wilhelm and Romy and Jian are dominated by more primal instincts. Manning's design is quite interesting. Suppose we see the love relations in *The Song of the Jade Lily* as bearers of social communication, meaning social rather than private. In that case, we can consider the love unions in the novel as self-expressions of Western values.

What if the love union in Chinese fiction represents imagined cross-cultural support? In such a scenario, the love union in *The Song of the Jade Lily* signifies the inheritance of traditional values and the spirit of self-sacrificing love. The exchange of intimacy between the Jewish refugees and the Ho siblings represents an exchange of intimacy between the West and the colonial Orient. Manning's love story is an imagining of the Western self and

its intimate relations with the Orient, represented by colonial Shanghai. As Luhmann states, love is an agency that allows communication between the self and the other. In this case, Manning's love story is a reflection of the West's treatment of its colonial past in the Orient. From Manning's perspective, we can identify compassion, humanistic values, and an urge for individualistic development. Here, the love union has transcended the realm of private passion, and the declared love has transformed from intimate relations between individuals to love expressed for human rights and humanistic values.

### 3.23 The Scene of Intimacy: Balconies and Gardens as Thresholds

As relic objects, spaces of intimacy are of equal importance. Places of intimacy such as balconies or gardens' closed chambers are private grounds that foster secret intimacies between two individuals. It is difficult to access the personal and intimate thoughts of the people in the past. However, historians can identify objects on which their opinions are centered and where intimate exchanges occur. In *The Songs of the Jade Lily*, scenes of intimacy play a significant role in shaping private relations and reconstructing identities.

The first intimate encounter between Li and Jian occurs on the balcony outside the Ho family home. Just like in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, the balcony is a space that connects the outside world with the privacy of the home. The balcony provides a middle ground for the lovers to overcome the limitations of time and space to taste boundless and unlimited pleasures. By conversing with Juliet on the balcony, Romeo intrudes on the privacy of her home and crosses the boundaries of social relations and external forces that separate him from Juliet. Like the Shakespearean star-crossed lovers, Romy and Jian are also found conversing on the balcony, exchanging their first love token, the red envelope with the Chinese calligraphy *Fu*. Suppose the red envelope signifies the declaration of Jian's

love for Romy. In this case, the balcony scene is significant because it embodies their connection in a sheltered utopian universe. However, there is a fundamental difference between the two scenes: in Shakespeare, only one of the lovers, Juliet, is standing on the balcony while Romeo is down below. In Manning's book, both lovers are on the same balcony. While Romeo is still declaring his love for Juliet in Shakespeare, in Manning, love has already been declared. This design suggests that the Jewish refugees have already crossed certain boundaries and are in the midst of enjoying the love and hospitality of the Chinese.

The Jewish refugees can forge friendly bonds with the Chinese locals. The balcony represents the sacred enclosed space, linking the Jewish refugees to the local Chinese families. It is a threshold where Romy is simultaneously close to and remote from her Jewish identity. She is imprisoned in the Hongkou Jewish Ghetto and at the same time protected by it, symbolizing the living situation of the Jewish refugees. They are imprisoned but at the same time protected by colonial Shanghai. The balcony overlooks an outside world suffering from war and chaos. The closed space of the balcony can only offer a temporary shelter. In the case of Romeo and Juliet, to expand their love relation beyond the physical sphere of the balcony, they have to overcome the hatred between the families. For Romy and Jian to consummate their love, their love needs to transcend the tension of international relationships and cross-cultural barriers.

In *Romeo and Juliet*, the balcony overlooks the orchid garden. Gardens are also significant places that connect the domestic sphere with the outside world and offer a sacred privacy space. In *The Song of the Jade Lily*, the image of the garden plays a vital role in the novel. Both Zhang and Wilhelm work with gardens. Alexandra and Zhang first meet in a

garden in Shanghai. Zhang designs the garden of the home Alexandra is renting in Shanghai. In addition, Alexandra and Zhang visit the famous gardens in Suzhou together and consummate their love affair in a garden. The space of the garden is significant in Alexandra and Zhang's relationship. It protects them from the gaze of others and offers privacy where love can be nurtured. In both early periods in history and modern society, as soon as love is born, it is threatened by external forces. Therefore, where love is declared is also where violence occurs.

The gardens in Shanghai are given an extra Oriental touch in Manning's narrative. The garden's biblical origin suggests a return to paradise, Eden, and its utopian dimension shelters humans from the outside world. From a Biblical perspective, the urge to return to paradise reflects a wish to be reborn. It allows individuals to reiterate their encounter with the divine, the cosmos, and life energy. Alexandra, blinded by capitalistic consumerism, can be reborn in paradise-like gardens. She is able to encounter Zhang, her Adam, to unearth the universe in which she lives and dissolve her previous identity to recompose a new world where she can experience the purity of love that her jade pendant represents. Here, the garden represents a space where absolute love is possible and allows individuals to gain the capacity to realize a new way of living. Zhang and Alexandra can build a kind of love in harmony with the cosmos inside the gardens.

Moreover, Alexandra can also develop a new self with her newly developed intimacy. Alexandra creates a new vision of identity predicated on being together with Zhang, shedding their worldly or social selves. Hence, they fashion a new desire to leave their simple material conditions. Alexandra and Zhang create a radiant new world to make

desire part of their identity. Considering the differences in their cultural background, Manning conveyed that love can be achieved outside of social rules.

In Chinese Studies, there is a long tradition of researching gardens. The scholarly gardens are considered significant places for a scholar's philosophical thinking. Zhang is an architect, and this profession has a vital meaning. He symbolizes energy that can transcend cultural differences and create an idealized world where the exchanges of absolute intimacy are possible. The garden remains the imaginary space where love can be declared away from cultural backgrounds and external hindrances. However, gardens can only exist with the architects' creation and the gardeners' care. In the novel, Zhang is introduced as a resident of Hongkong. Just like Hongkong itself, Zhang generates a new kind of character that is connected to the evolution of Western culture and Oriental social values. In the secrecy of the private realm, Alexandra reconstructs her individuality by giving a sensual identity to deep emotions. This new knowledge of inner experience leads Alexandra to construct a unique selfhood connecting her to the values of the jade pendant. Manning suggests that individuals can develop a deeper understanding of human rights and humanistic values through love. Manning's love story imagines the relationship between China and the West in a peaceful future and discusses the potentiality of successful coexistence. Ultimately, *The Song of the Jade Lily* advocates for humanistic values and simultaneously explores identity that builds on individual and national levels.

### **3.3 Conclusion**

While previous scholarship has only focused on historical documents and has overlooked mass media productions, my project investigates a variety of literary reproductions. I believe that literary productions raise awareness of what has happened in the historical realm to

keep history from repeating itself. The literary imagination provides the author with a more powerful agency to intervene in history. In addition, it also offers communicative spaces for social actors to reflect on history and culture, enable dialectical dialogues, and transmit knowledge and memories. In this chapter, I research how the Jewish exile in Shanghai from 1933 to 1945 has been represented, reimagined, and reconstructed in cultural memory through literary fiction using the codification of love.

In surveying the fictional literature of the Sino-Jewish encounter, I have discovered that despite its indisputable significance as a literary theme, the phenomenon of love has attracted less attention in Sino-Jewish scholarship. Focusing on the creative perspective of how the Jewish exile in Shanghai is remembered and imagined in print media, I ask why authors from different cultures coincide in their treatment of the topic and apply the topic of love, an emotional subject matter that is complex, tangible, and yet contingent and far-reaching, to create the fictional universe in Shanghai. I survey the existing novels across languages and cultures on this subject. In comparing these love stories, I propose a synthesis that claims that the fictional narratives related to the Jewish exile in Shanghai, though they differ in terms of language as well as cultural and political implications, all generate a reconstructive imagining of the past by applying the codification of love and embody the humanitarian fantasy for hope and alternative futurity. I conclude that the love stories reimagined and fantasized in literary fiction are coded emotions and express the yearning for a future that declares respect for human rights and decency. Love and intimacy in fictional novels serve as alternative relic objects that duplicate doubling realities of times past and bridge the spheres of intimacy between private and public, past and present, local and global.

Though love transcends language and culture, due to various political climates and national agencies, a comparative analysis between the Chinese and Western literary works still presents striking differences. While the fantasized intimacy in the Chinese novels can be interpreted as a social reconstruction of a nation-state identity and a hope to communicate and rebuild Chinese foreign relations through the power of love, the imagined unity in the Western creation not only captures the traumatic details of the war but also highlights the importance of creating a safe space that allows for the legitimacy of the individual to indulge in mystical cross-cultural encounters. In addition, the Western reimagined fictional universe in Shanghai also demonstrates a melancholic undertone, reminiscing about the colonial past while simultaneously criticizing vanity and materialistic pursuits.

The imagined intimacy of the Sino-Jewish encounter is ultimately the imagination of the self. The Chinese love stories can be considered as expressions of the national image of the communist nation-state and an attempt to renegotiate international influence through past hospitality. Therefore, in Chinese novels, love becomes a coded language for communicating Chinese hospitality and humanistic support towards the Jewish refugees. The purpose of the Chinese love stories is not merely to document or represent the trauma of the Holocaust but to highlight the Chinese people's suffering during the Japanese invasion. Chinese authors connect the Chinese people's trauma with the suffering of the Jewish refugees under the Nazi persecution. As such, Chinese love stories related to the Jewish exile in Shanghai, represented by *The Cursed Piano*, are not a realistic representation of the historical event but communicate a present reconstruction of the identity of the communist nation-state and its foreign political affairs that past relations foster in the current world order.

In novels from the West, the focus of the Sino-Jewish subject is less on the portrait of the national state but more on matters of the heart. Its focus reflects Western values and features individual development that parallels the rise of individualism in Western European philosophy. Through tracing historical events, Western authors such as Kirsty Manning explore a history of the self and build an image of the self and its intimate relations with the other through the language of the other. Unlike the memoirs discussed in the previous chapter, memory novels serve as documentation of historical events and as self-expression. In *The Cursed Piano* and *The Song of the Jade Lily*, love stories have coded meanings. The difference is that the imagined portrait in Chinese love stories is the nation-state. The fictive image in Western stories is the individual that embodies Western values of the enlightenment of the self and the declaration of human rights. In Chinese and Western love stories, the fictional narrative's meaning is social.

I strive to present my work as a kind of seeing that provides multidirectional perspectives on the traumatic narratives of the Holocaust. Since the demands of constructing a narrative of extremes challenge the very nature of realism, I believe that it is only through multimedia storytelling that we can reconstruct an alternative doubling reality that conceptualizes a kind of seeing that might be traditionally inaccurate but is undoubtedly truthful. I conclude that in contemporary literature, the Jewish exile in the Hongkou Ghetto is presented not as objective historical events but as phenomenological horizons,<sup>69</sup> inaccessible to social actors and subject to functional differentiation within social systems.

---

<sup>69</sup> The concept of "horizon" with its family of compounds appeared first in Husserl's *Ideen* (1913), simultaneously with the disclosure of the "transcendental" type of phenomenological research. See reference: Helmut Kuhn "The Phenomenological Concept of 'Horizon.'"

The imagined unity in the Western creation captures the traumatic details of the war. It highlights the importance of creating a safe space, allowing individuals to indulge in mystical cross-cultural encounters. In addition, the West's reimagined fictional universe of Shanghai demonstrates a Western perspective on its colonial past. It criticizes vanity and materialistic pursuits and advocates for free will, enlightenment, and civilization. Simultaneously, the same historical past also functions as an agent for the Chinese nation-state to renegotiate international power and recreate a national biography. The Sino-Jewish encounter eventually becomes a manufactured product that serves as the bearer of social communication and facilitates a global dialogue. This dual sense of historical reality operates through fictive literary productions. The next chapter will focus on visual media such as documentaries and anime, cultural spaces such as museums, and spaces preserved for cultural tourism.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Worlds Beyond Words: Communicative Images and Visual**

#### **Witnessing in Cultural Spaces**

The question of inheriting traumatic memories of the past to produce a better future is of increasing interest to contemporary scholars. Interpreting history through virtual knowledge has been widely addressed by philosophers and critics. In “The Age of the World Picture,” Martin Heidegger claims that one critical phenomenon of the modern period under the impact of science and machine technology is that artwork has become the object of mere subjective experience and can be viewed as an expression of human life (116). Heidegger declares the contemporary world as a picture and asserts that “the fundamental event of the modern age is the conquest of the world as a picture” (135-136). Heidegger thus suggests that our modern age is conceived of and grasped as a picture and that our interpretation of our socio-historical culture is reduced to a fixed image. As such, human beings become the foundation of knowledge. Social actors become observer-participants in interpreting and operating historical presents and present futures. Moving pictures are essential to representing lessons and legacies of the past and delivering messages to modern social actors. Cultural cinema raises awareness of what has happened in the historical dimension to prevent what could happen in the future through the application of democratized media production. Visual spaces such as museum exhibitions are new venues that facilitate dialectical dialogues and transmit knowledge translated into popular culture.

This chapter investigates how the Jewish exile in Shanghai is reimagined and reconstructed in mass media productions such as cinema, anime, museum exhibitions, and

cultural tourism. First, I compare the German filmmaker Ulrike Ottinger's documentary *Exile Shanghai* with the Chinese documentary *Memory of Life: Jews in Shanghai*, exhibited at the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum. Additionally, I analyze the Chinese anime film *A Jewish Girl in Shanghai*, exploring the cultural spaces of renegotiating memory through animation and examining the tension between the communication and commodification of a history of pain. Finally, I extend my literary studies to physical places of memory<sup>70</sup> such as cultural tourism sites and museum exhibitions, comparing the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum and the Holocaust Museum LA. I argue that documentary footage offers a new capacity for remembering and rethinking historical events and figures and provides a disruptive ground for postmodern texts to manipulate and recreate history. Cultural spaces and historical sites reconstruct collective remembrance and turn historical trauma into an epistemological yet commodified staged media event open to social communication and operational constructivism. In modern cultural cinema and mass media productions, historical realities are presented not as objective cultural memories but rather as phenomenological horizons that are inaccessible and subject to functional differentiation within social systems.

#### **4.1 A Picturesque History of Pain: *Exile Shanghai* and *Survival in Shanghai***

In recent years, greater scholarly attention has been given to the testimonies of German and Austrian Jews who found refuge in Shanghai. Shot in 1998, Ulrike Ottinger's *Exile Shanghai* is a documentary record of the experience of the Jewish exile in Shanghai from the 1930s to the 1950s. Structured by six interviews with former inhabitants of Shanghai now

---

<sup>70</sup> The term used by Pierre Nora (lieu de mémoire) is most frequently translated as “place of memory” and what I encounter most frequently in scholarship related to the Shoah and memory.

residing in California, Ottinger presents the Jewish experience in Shanghai through primary memories and personal archives. The survivors' stories are presented with shots of Shanghai's social life and visual landscape, crossing the boundaries of historical remembrance and contemporary events, thus offering a broken chronology between past and present. In her films, Ottinger also illustrates surviving archival artifacts such as furniture, newspapers, magazines, documents, and photographs. Through her lens, the home setting of each survivor is carefully staged and indicates an Oriental connection. She does not interrupt the interviewees with questions or comments but instead inserts extended footage of contemporary Shanghai street life to accompany the narratives they give of their memories. Music bridges the gap between unique and cultural timeframes and connects the dots between different survivors' memories.

Ottinger does not ask the survivors questions on camera, and the narrative of each individual seems organic and flows in its specific way. The telling of the exile follows similar timelines, such as the reason for immigration, the journey to Shanghai, the initial shock and adaptations upon arrival, and finally, the integration into the local life in Shanghai and their respective means of survival. Out of the six interviews, three of the individuals are Russian Jews who immigrated to Shanghai before the war. Rena Krasno, Inna Mink, and Georges Spunt (his mother came from Russia and his father from Austria) belong to the categories of the early immigrants and enjoyed a more established existence with Chinese servants, privileged international education, and comfortable life in the French concession. Their narratives recall the glamorous Shanghai life of parties, dating, bar scenes, food, talented Chinese tailors, exotic cosmopolitan culture, fashion, and even gay scenes. In their memories, Shanghai is an Oriental adventure and a playground where East and West meet to

create something so fascinating that it is worth reminiscing about. Ted and Gertrude Alexander are a married couple who fled Europe to escape Nazi persecution. Ted recalls how his English skills helped him find a job immediately in colonial Shanghai, and Gertrude recalls her journey on the Kindertransport and how she later met and fell in love with Ted in the ghetto. The last interviewee, Geoffrey Heller, is a German Jewish refugee who, in contrast with the other interviewees, paints a different picture of Shanghai with candid openness:

I ought to say that my experience in Shanghai is probably by no means a typical one. I don't think anybody's probably is. Shanghai is such a multifaceted city and the experience at that time during the early years of the war was extraordinary. It was sort of an island in time and a mirror of the times, and yet in a strangely and most exotic type of setting. (1:26:32-1:27:06)

Heller further recalls the Sino-Jewish relations during his time in the Ghetto and states:

What I was enormously impressed by about my Chinese neighbors was how civilized they were throughout the war. Remember, they were very, very poorly off; they were very poor. One would have assumed that we might have been exposed to all sorts of animosity. But most important is this: that when the war was over and the Japanese surrendered, the Japanese forces of occupation actually retired, fled, disappeared, and left behind several days or maybe a week and a half of an absolute void. Nobody was in charge, nobody enforced law and order, nobody policed anything. It's the time that you would have assumed tens of thousands of people to rampage in the streets, you know, ripping off property, since people were hungry, people were desperate, and yet, nothing like that happened. A very civilized society.

I am very, very happy to have lived these horrible years in China. (1:53:32-1:1:54:58)

The assumption that locals in Shanghai would also practice anti-Semitism and that once the invaders were gone would descend into chaos suggests psychological profiling that the Westerners of that time have projected onto the East. Heller also mentions that the Jewish encounter with the Chinese locals in Shanghai was, unfortunately, not as promising and prosperous as one might have thought. Foreigners mainly remained to themselves, and cross-cultural exchanges were minimal. Heller's testimony adds an insightful perspective to uncovering the Jewish exile in wartime Shanghai.

Each individual was given the opportunity to tell their own story. Each narration was around one-hour long (the Alexanders are a married couple and were therefore interviewed together, making the whole documentary around 5 hours long). In recalling their experience in Shanghai, each individual's story is unique in its own way but also covers overlaps such as the journey on the ships, the fascinating culture of Shanghai, an unwillingness to cooperate with the Japanese, and sympathy for the Chinese locals. The latter were suppressed and impoverished in their own homes. The repetition of such overlaps creates an archive of memory in which personal experiences are formulated and constructed into collective remembrance. In "Exile Shanghai," Florence Jacobowitz notes:

Some have complained of the resulting repetition as the stories overlap and details already mentioned are retold. This is because each individual account is more or less structured in the same way, beginning with the Russian wave of emigration in the early part of the century or the arrival of refugees from Nazi Europe, followed by the war years, the aftermath of the war and their departure. The repetition is an effective

didactic tool; instead of having the film reconstruct a definitive historical portrait of the period, the viewer is asked to absorb historical facts in a different way.<sup>71</sup>

(*CineAction*, 1998, <https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Exil+Shanghai.-a030571593>, Accessed 20 July 2022.)

Instead of implementing additional voiceover to comment on historical incidents, Ottinger turns to the visual and the artistic way of creating a kind of seeing for the audience, in which she accompanies the survivor's narration with long shots of contemporary scenes of Shanghai's everyday life. The viewer follows the camera's movement and tours Shanghai's buildings, rivers, masses of citizens living ordinary busy lives, street vendors, markets, and the remains of the Hongkou Ghetto. Some critics, such as Kirsten Harjes and Tanja Nusser, view *Exil Shanghai* as a film of cultural tourism instead of a documentation of the Jewish exile in Shanghai. In "An Authentic Experience of History: Tourism in Ulrike Ottinger's *Exil Shanghai*," they claim:

A sign of commodification and mass culture, tourism is usually treated as a disturbance and contamination of the otherwise "authentic" atmosphere of historical artifacts. Drawing on Siegfried Kracauer's and Susan Sontag's theories of photography, this paper argues that transgressions of the genre of historical documentary in *Exil Shanghai* (1997) cast tourism as an authenticating factor in the perception of historical sites. The film thus suggests a notion of historical authenticity grounded in a perception of the passing of time rather than the authority of witness accounts or archival material. This notion of historical authenticity relies on a feminist epistemology that debunks the traditional binary opposition between

---

<sup>71</sup> Online source. ( <https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Exil+Shanghai.-a030571593> )

subject and object by suggesting that the experience of the other is essentially a reflexive experience of the self. (247)

Harjes and Nusser introduce Ottinger as one of Germany's few female filmmakers and an essential representative of the German *Autorenfilm*.<sup>72</sup> Born in Konstanz in 1942, she spent her early childhood in hiding and lost her mother, who was Jewish, to the Nazi genocide. Ottinger has suggested that these experiences, as well as her mother's love of travel, sparked her interest in travelogues and ethnographic studies and in making films about China and Mongolia. Though the encounter between the self and the foreign within the self is a central theme of all of Ottinger's work, including *Exile Shanghai*, I argue that Ottinger's camera work in the film cannot be considered historical tourism but an experimental endeavor to explore Chinese modernity and the ways in which historical events have shaped the city of Shanghai over the course of time. Though I agree with Harjes and Nusser's statement that an authentic experience of history is essentially a reflexive experience derived not from experiential knowledge prefigured by archival historical sources – reenactments of historical events – but from a reflection on one's projection and interpretation of historical narrative, I find it problematic that they consider the contemporary scenes of Shanghai in *Exile Shanghai* to undermine the authority of the interviewee's records:

Ottinger challenges the authority of the survivors' testimonies by eschewing the traditional technique of supporting the oral histories with archival footage. Instead,

---

<sup>72</sup> Autorenfilm, or "author's film" began in Germany as early as 1913 when writers began campaigning for it. It is the idea of a film being judged as the work of an author. The German Autorenfilm was not solely based on the aesthetic properties of film but it was more about filming classical and prestigious plays. It was the first attempt of German cinema to try and reach a middle-class audience and countered the authority of Hollywood by specifically adapting German plays and literature. (Source: <https://sjfilmhistory.wordpress.com/2012/09/24/autorenfilms-in-german-cinema/> )

she “distracts” the viewer with an exploratory tour through present-day Shanghai, only occasionally zooming in on ruinous building facades that bear evidence of the time of Jewish exile. (250)

Critics state that Ottinger’s approach is representative of an Orientalist perspective, with her viewing Shanghai as the exotic and sensual, mystical Oriental figure from a Western perspective, and lacks depth in its presentation of the Jewish life in Shanghai during the war: “Indeed, the film’s reception suggests that Ottinger’s ‘gaze’ is informed by the interests of the photographer and the tourist, rather than by those of the historian” (253).

However, I find the notion of experiencing history in an authentic way itself problematic. The past can only be rendered, remembered, recalled, or represented; it cannot be experienced once again authentically by the contemporary viewer. Authenticity is a projected horizon that the filmmaker can work towards but never achieve. Therefore, it is not objective to define *Exile Shanghai* as a project containing cultural imperialism. Instead, it should be considered a meditation on the experience of the Jewish exile in Shanghai and an exploration of memory formation in modern times. Though the shots of Shanghai are of a city that has transformed over time, it still helps visualize the details being described by the refugees. The viewers are given a medium to commemorate the strangeness of arriving in a foreign culture and are confronted by the impoverished conditions of life in the ghetto. Even in contemporary times, the street life scenes chosen by Ottinger still suggest a less developed economic situation in the late 90s. Jacobowitz notes that Ottinger’s technique “produces a very different notion of cinematic representation in that it recognizes (and thus validates) the inclusion of personal experiential details and memory within the historical

discourse and emphasizes a continuum between the present and the past” (*CineAction*, 1998, <https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Exil+Shanghai.-a030571593>, Accessed 20 July 2022.).<sup>73</sup>

In addition, music also plays a significant part in Ottinger’s documentary. Music of the era from both Jewish and Chinese composers is interspersed with the sounds of the contemporary scenes, providing an aural bridge between the East and the West, the past and the present. It suggests an intertwined cross-cultural life in the Ghetto. Jacobowitz states that “this kind of visual and aural juxtaposition works to vivify the evocation of subjective memory and the experiences being recalled in an illustrative manner” (*CineAction*, 1998, <https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Exil+Shanghai.-a030571593>, Accessed 20 July 2022.).<sup>74</sup> *Exile Shanghai* presents a visual exhibition of past memories staged in a contemporary world and traces the time past in a melancholic tone. The beautiful and mesmerizing long shots of the city, accompanied by melancholic music, communicate a visual and aural embodiment of memory. The documentary mimics the process of remembering and wanders through the contemporary city to recall a historical narrative through the remains of the physical site. In *Ulrike Ottinger: The Autobiography of Art Cinema*, Laurence A Rickels claims that *Exile Shanghai* “projects a detail-obsessed image of the history of a period like hardly another documentary film before” (162).

Similar to their Western counterparts, Chinese representations of the Jewish exile in Shanghai have also received much criticism, such as Birgit Maier-Katkin’s “Documentaries about Jewish Exiles in Shanghai: Witness Testimony and Cross-Cultural Public Memory Formation,” in which she investigates three mainstream documentaries produced by Western

---

<sup>73</sup> Online source. (<https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Exil+Shanghai.-a030571593>).

<sup>74</sup> Online source: <https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Exil+Shanghai.-a030571593>.

filmmakers and the Chinese government: (1) *Shanghai Ghetto* (2002)<sup>75</sup>, (2) *Survival in Shanghai* (2015)<sup>76</sup>, and (3) *Above the Drowning Sea* (2017).<sup>77</sup> Of these three documentaries, *Survival in Shanghai* is particularly significant since it was produced solely by Chinese filmmakers and is also the only one to have been exhibited at the Jewish Refugees Museum in Shanghai.

Produced in 2015, *Survival in Shanghai* is directed by Yan Xiaoying, produced by Wang Jianjun, and distributed by the Network China Visio, a Shanghai Media Group TV News Center. The documentary is divided into three 30-minute episodes: (1) Escape to Shanghai, (2) Surviving in Shanghai (3) Life and Death in the Ghetto. The Chinese production team sent reporters and crews to Germany, Austria, Israel, and the United States to interview around 40 survivors. Though the highlight is the recollection of the Jewish refugees, many historians, scholars, political figures, and even descendants of the Chinese neighbors were featured in the documentary. It is the most extensive report on Shanghai Jewish refugees in Chinese TV history. While the focus remains on the recollection of the

---

<sup>75</sup> *Shanghai Ghetto* is a 2002 film production by the independent filmmakers Amir Mann and Dana Janklowicz-Mann. The documentary was released by Rebel Child Productions and distributed by Menemsha Entertainment. The film received the Audience Choice Award and Human Rights Award at the Santa Barbara Film Festival.

<sup>76</sup> *Survival in Shanghai* (2015) is directed by Yan Xiaoying, produced by Wang Jianjun, and distributed by the Network China Visio, a Shanghai Media Group TV News Center. The documentary is divided into three 30-minute episodes: (1) Escape to Shanghai, (2) Surviving in Shanghai (3) Life and Death in the Ghetto. The documentary received the Gold Remi Award in Houston in 2017.

<sup>77</sup> *Above the Drowning Sea* (2017) is directed by René Balcer and Nicola Zavaglia. Carolyn Hsu-Balcer is the Co-Executive Producer. The film is narrated by Julianna Margulies, Tony Goldwyn, and Nick Mancuso and shot in six countries and on four continents. The documentary won the Golden Dragon Award for Best Documentary (2018), as well as Best Documentary at the Hamilton Film Festival 2018 and Sunrise Film Festival 2019. The film has also been nominated for several awards.

Jewish experience in Shanghai, the narrative centers around the message of Chinese hospitality and Sino-Jewish friendship. The addition of the official record and the editing that implements historical documents such as newspaper clippings and reports on the Holocaust interrupts the organic flow of the survivors' narration. One wonders if only selected episodes of their recollection have been set into the narrative.

Western scholars criticized the effort to craft a collective memory of the Chinese locals' humanitarian deeds during the second world war while suffering under Japanese invasion. In her article, Maier- Katkin offers interesting insights into the interrelationship between individual testimony and collective memory formation. Borrowing Maurice Halbwachs's<sup>78</sup> theory about the construction of public memory, namely that there has to be a social process in place that determines which individual memories are integrated into the predominant thoughts of the society, Maier-Katkin argues that all three documentaries are just methods of transforming personal memory to public memory following specific political agendas:

All three documentaries confirm Maurice Halbwachs' observation that individual and collective memory are bound by a social process that constantly evaluates, legitimizes, and reshapes what we collectively remember of the past. Each film shows that the transformation from individual to public memory is like a double-edged sword. It creates public visibility but also homogenizes and reduces individual experience... As is evident in all three documentaries, it is the task of a documentary

---

<sup>78</sup> Maurice Halbwachs is the author of *On Collective Memory*, ed. and trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

to fit past stories into current collective discourse while also presenting and setting its own agenda. (114-115).

Though I agree with Maier-Katkin that historical perspectives are selected to communicate certain aspects of memory, I find it problematic that she claims “despite the fact that historical research has indicated that the Chinese population merely tolerated the Jewish refugees, the film assigns importance to an alleged history of good relations between the Chinese and the Jewish people” (105). This remark goes against my personal research. As is introduced in previous chapters, though the united front of the Sino-Jewish relation is exaggerated and fantasized in literary representations, historical materials have documented a strong effort made by the Chinese Republican leaders to support and help the Jewish refugees and a history of hospitality between the Jews and the Chinese locals in the Hongkou Ghetto. To strengthen her argument, Maier-Katkin picks apart survivors’ testimonies and challenges their narratives with historical details they could not remember correctly in their old age. Since some facts were wrong, Maier-Katkin questions the testimonies that praise Chinese hospitality. By quoting Steve Hochstadt,<sup>79</sup> she further claims that individual testimonies are not located in the realm of evidentiary truth. Instead, they are used collectively to compose larger narratives about a series of events:

While this film succeeds in bringing in more of a Chinese perspective, it does (at times) lack historical accuracy. In her interview, Lotte Marcus, for instance, claims that Adolf Eichmann wrote the *Judengesetze*. However, the so-called Nuremberg

---

<sup>79</sup> Steve Hochstadt is the author of “The Social History of Jews in the Holocaust: The Necessity of Interviewing Survivors,” published in *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung* 22, nos. 3–4 (1997): 254.

Racial Laws were not written by Eichmann but passed into law by the German Parliament on September 15, 1935. Eichmann was responsible for Jewish Affairs, emigration and later coordinated the train schedule to the concentration camps. William Eisner asserts that Vienna was the birthplace of Hitler when in fact, he was born in Braunau am Inn. This serves as a reminder that historical research, archives, and actual historical footage are important tools to supplement survivor interviews. Memories are subjective and rarely completely reliable. They are acquired “via lived experience... In this way, the documentary can fill the gap between subjective statement and objective truth. Hochstadt’s observation rings true here that in the context of a documentary, “individual testimonies are not located in the realm of evidentiary truth but rather are used collectively to compose larger narratives about series of events. (113)

Is it possible that by criticizing the Chinese narrative in the documentaries, the author has unconsciously fallen into the same pattern she was trying to challenge, namely only choosing perspectives that fit the Eurocentric agenda and turning memory work into a competition of suffering and traumas? In particular, it runs the danger of rendering survivors’ voices void by fixating on historical details and garbling memory with history. Memory is not history; it is a representation of history. By challenging survivors’ testimonies, scholars may fall into the same trap of Holocaust deniers who question the whole historical event based on how many chimneys were in the death camps and how many the survivors later recollected.<sup>80</sup> I agree with Maier-Kaitkin’s conclusion that “the East

---

<sup>80</sup> Reference to the debate about Olga Lengyel’s book *Five Chimneys: A Woman Survivor’s True Story of Auschwitz*.

Asian-Western world trajectory in these documentaries also reveals that cross-cultural or global collective discourse is still limited by national discourse and imagination” (116). However, her concluding remark that “while remembrance of the suffering under the Nazis continues to enter collective cultural memory formation – as is evidenced by all three documentaries – the suffering of the Chinese in Shanghai does not fit neatly into the Western Holocaust narrative and thus can only be touched upon lightly,” (116) is what I call an example of making collective memory into competitive memory and scholarship that compares suffering and traumas based on a Eurocentric perspective and racial profiling that lacks global humanistic value. Scholars must turn to historical research before applying well-established theoretical approaches to literary and cultural representations of history. A biased view can only create a more partial scholarship, and when it comes to the Sino-Jewish encounter, more objective research still awaits scholarly attention.

Just as Maier-Kaitkin notes, while documentaries of the past offer insight into cross-cultural interrelations, they also reveal that certain narrative tropes about the past have been privileged over others. It is worth questioning why *Survival in Shanghai*, exhibited in the Jewish Refugees Museum, does not feature English translations of its subtitles. I witnessed several foreign visitors entering the screening room with interest only to leave after a few minutes since they could not understand the content. This situation raises the question of what kind of collective memory and whose collective memory is being formed by this documentary, and who the targeted audience is.

However, though the Sino-Jewish relation is a utopian fantasy in many literary and cultural productions, fantasy itself does not have to carry negative elements only; instead, it can also generate positive constructions of future memories by forming a collective memory

where hospitality becomes a legacy, and cross-cultural coexistence grows into a traditional heritage. In recent years, such attempts are not only found in state-sponsored documentaries but also permeate the fantasy world of animated films.

#### **4.2 A Jewish Girl in Shanghai: Utopian Fantasy through Animation**

One of the first animated features to focus on the children of the Holocaust, *A Jewish Girl in Shanghai* (犹太女孩在上海) is a 2010 Chinese animated film written by Wu Lin and based on his graphic novel of the same name. Its contemporary Western counterpart is Bernice Eisenstein's memoir *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors*, which also depicts the children of the Holocaust in illustrated form but with a greater focus on the transgenerational transmission of memory rather than primary memory. *A Jewish Girl in Shanghai* is particularly unique in that it was later made into an animated film, which enjoyed great commercial success domestically in mainland China and was recognized at various international film festivals. The graphic novel was published in 2008 and was turned into an animated film in 2010, directed by Wang Genfa and Zhang Zhenhu. It was streamed on CCTV-6,<sup>81</sup> a primary agency of the Communist Party's mass media channel that focuses on movies. As stated in "A Sensitive Chinese Animated Feature on the Holocaust: *A Jewish Girl in Shanghai*," by Vassilis Kroustallis, "the 80-minute animated feature produced by Shanghai Animation Film Studio is a more than a welcome cinematic ambassador for bolstering Jewish-Chinese relations."<sup>82</sup>

---

<sup>81</sup> The China Movie Channel (中国电影频道) is an agency of the Chinese Government's State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television. In mainland China, the agency provides programming to the China Central Television channel CCTV-6, which is dedicated to movies.

<sup>82</sup> Source: <https://www.zippyframes.com/reviews/a-jewish-girl-in-shanghai-sensitive-holocaust>.

*A Jewish Girl in Shanghai* follows the familiar plot of typical Sino-Jewish stories that celebrate the hospitality of the Shanghainese towards the Jews and the bonds of love and friendship in the Hongkou Ghetto. *A Jewish Girl in Shanghai* tells the story of the young Jewish siblings Rina and her younger brother Mishalli (in the graphic novel, the younger brother's name is Rachel). They flee to Shanghai without parental supervision and survive in the Ghetto with the help of their Chinese friend Zhou A-gen. This poor Chinese boy earns his living through child labor at a pancake store. After A-gen gives Rina two pancakes out of sympathy, the children soon become friends. Though A-gen's family is impoverished, with a mother in poor health who works as a servant for a wealthy local family and an absent father who, it is revealed later in the story, has given his life to the anti-Japanese war, they still welcome Rina and Mishalli with open arms and introduce them to the Chinese culture and traditions by celebrating traditional Chinese festivals such as the Chinese New Year together.

Several elements of the animated film are explicitly designed to attract the interest of young adults. First, adults are absent. As Kroustallis observes, "adults in *A Jewish Girl in Shanghai* are either absent, dead, helpless or simply mean." The fact that the siblings can speak Chinese – thanks to their grandparents, who once were foreign officials working in Shanghai – makes it possible for the bonds of friendship between Zhou A-gen and the siblings to develop. Their mother was captured by the Nazis and sent to concentration camps. Due to its family-friendly nature, the brutality of the atrocities of the concentration camps is merely mentioned in passing. It is unclear if their mother survived the death camp in Europe. Their father, Joseph, later joins the siblings in Shanghai. Upon his arrival, Joseph faints at the harbor due to weakness. Coincidentally, Joseph is saved by Zhou A-gen. Though

historical records indicate that the journey to Shanghai was only possible through luxury first-class cruise tickets, the story describes the Jewish refugees' journey as dangerous and exhausting. However, historical precision is not crucial to this film since its purpose is to highlight the young adults' bravery. Both Rina and Zhou A-gen exhibit a great sense of right and wrong, heroism, and humanistic values, helping others despite their impoverishment and destitution. The story highlights the solidarity between the local Chinese community and the Jewish refugees. Their shared hatred of the fascist allies strengthens the connections between Rina and Zhou A-gen.

Zhou A-gen's father is absent, and his mother is very sick. Rina's mother is absent, and the long journey weakens her father immensely. This parallel family condition symbolizes the similarities between the suffering of the Jewish refugees and the local Chinese in Shanghai. It also suggests that the family can be whole only through Sino-Jewish bonds. In a world where humanity is betrayed, and the atrocities are unspeakable and unprecedented, with the parallel universe where children protect the adults, where animals can speak human languages and support their owners, and where brutal Japanese minions can be easily defeated by animal sidekicks such as the parrot, the monkey, and the dog, the inverted logic is a unique design for mirroring the irrational world in wartime Shanghai.

Second, gender plays a significant part in this animated film. A quick comparison between the original graphic novel and the film shows that the aspect of gender is treated more vividly in the latter. Sexual violence against women was not widely acknowledged in memoirs and fiction about the Holocaust until the past decade. To protect herself in wartime Shanghai, Rina cross-dresses as a boy. At the story's beginning, Zhou A-gen does not realize that she is a girl; however, he enrages the owner of the pancake shop and stumbles

upon Japanese soldiers by giving her free pancakes. The same Japanese soldiers are depicted as vindictive and try to harass Rina sexually. Rina escapes with the help of a Japanese boy named Tuo, the stepson of the Japanese commander-in-chief (Tuo's name in the original graphic novel is Aka). Tuo and Zhou A-gen first notice Rina due to her beautiful eyes.

Though neither Tuo nor A-gen knows she is a girl, her beauty helps her survive. Later, violence and sexual harassment are once again introduced into the story. The evil housekeeper whom Zhou A-gen's mother works under attempts to punish Rina for speaking up and protecting Zhou A-gen during a conflict. The housekeeper collaborates with the Japanese invaders. When he finds out that Rina is a beautiful girl who is an accomplished violinist, he devises a devious plan to force her to perform for the Japanese officers. In the end, Rina bravely refuses to cooperate with the Japanese invaders and is punished by the Japanese soldiers, who break her violin. Though the film does not show brutal scenes of violence or atrocities, incorporating gendered aspects and introducing sexual violence against Jewish women during their exile in Shanghai in a feature intended for children and young adults is a bold move. The film is generally family-friendly and has a warm tone. However, it narrates the story of the Jewish survival in Shanghai from various perspectives. It invites discussion on gendered experiences and memories of the Jewish experience in Shanghai. Did women suffer more due to potential sexual violence, or is femininity a protective shield that improves the potential for survival? This film invites complex questions for the young audience to consider.

Third, the Japanese and the Jews are portrayed as humane individuals and exhibit complex characteristics. One common weakness of the Chinese novels that depict Sino-Jewish encounters in the Shanghai Ghetto is the representation of individuals in terms of

collective identities. For example, Japanese soldiers and officials are mainly described as brutal and sadistic and lacking in humanistic values. In this animated film, the young Japanese boy Tuo is idealistic and upright, hopes to coexist with the Chinese, and disagrees with his stepfather's plan to destroy the entire Jewish community. At the end of the story, Tuo tells Rina that his grandfather is a history teacher and that he will go back to school when he returns to Japan. He says that their friendship has made him rethink the essence of the war and that he feels glad that Japan lost. He even asks Rina to greet Zhou A-gen on his behalf (1:13:03-1:13:38). Though this plot is imaginary and can only exist in a fantastical feature, it creates the hopeful atmosphere of a utopian fantasy where opposing parties of the war can reflect on conflicts and seek peace and co-prosperity through education.

Though many plots and narratives in *A Jewish Girl in Shanghai* are not historically precise, it remains that this is an animated world in which animals can speak and fight against Japanese soldiers. This imaginary universe depicts the brave, loyal, and supportive Shanghai locals, represents the Japanese as more individualistic, and communicates hope for Sino-Japanese relations through Tuo's character. Additionally, the Chinese characters are also not described in an exclusively positive light. According to historical records, many Japanese officials opposed the Nazis' plan to destroy the entire Jewish community in Shanghai. Additionally, Jews are also not represented as a tightly-knit entity, as is the case with many Chinese novels of its kind. Chinese figures such as Japanese collaborators and small business owners devoid of empathy also find a way in the story to represent the complex historical memory. They suggest that individual choices make a difference during a time of chaos, inviting the young audience to reflect on the history of WWII.

Finally, *A Jewish Girl in Shanghai* is ambitious regarding its target audience. Unlike many stories of its kind that remain untranslated, it is evident that the film not only aims to educate the young domestic audience but also ambitiously ventures into international venues by providing English translations and uploading its content on YouTube. The original graphic novel is bilingual, which indicates that a global audience was considered from the outset. The film ends with the reunification of A-gen and Rina after 60 years. Rina's last line is: "Shanghai has become more beautiful after 60 years. It is necessary for our children to learn about our story" (1:17:14). This concluding remark portrays the film's ultimate goal: to let both the Chinese and Jewish descendants commemorate and cherish the Sino-Jewish friendship that took place during the Second World War.

*A Jewish Girl in Shanghai* by Wu Lin, the vice president of the Shanghai Collector Association, has won more than ten awards, including a nomination for the Jewish Experience Award at the 27<sup>th</sup> Jerusalem International Film festival, marking the first time a Chinese production received such an honor. *A Jewish Girl in Shanghai* is considered an essential step toward improving China's relations with Israel and promoting Sino-Jewish relations.

Like its predecessors, such as Beila's *The Cursed Piano* and many other works of fiction that focus on Sino-Jewish relations, *A Jewish Girl in Shanghai* uses the language of love to communicate political alliances. The fictional love stories between the Jewish refugees and the Chinese locals in the fictional universe created by Chinese authors are coded narratives that express a yearning for a future that declares respect for human rights and decency. It also invites unsettling moments of empathy and redemption to question if more could have been done to support the Jewish refugees. Since *A Jewish Girl in Shanghai*

focuses on children of the Holocaust, the love theme is replaced by the purity of cross-cultural friendship. However, a sensual romantic attraction and the structure of a love triangle can still be detected among Rina, A-gen, and Tuo. Just as the necklace of Rina's mother symbolizes a cherished Jewish tradition, the theme of friendship and love among the Jewish siblings Rina and Michalli and the Chinese boy Zhou A-gen also serves as an alternative relic object that recreates and reconstructs the times past and bridges the spheres of intimacy between private and public, past and present, local and global.

In *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle*, Susan Napier quotes statistics from the *Washington Post* and claims that "anime is definitely not only for children." She returns to the question of why more and more people worldwide believe in the other world that is anime. She explains:

One is that, in the last few years, fantasy, in general, has roared back into a prominent place in popular culture. The immense success of books such as the *Harry Potter* series or films such as *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy attests to what might be called a global hunger for fantasy. The reasons behind this yearning are no doubt diffuse, but it seems safe to say that the last decade of the twentieth century ushered in an increasing disaffection with technology. Although technology still produces "cool" products, such as cell phones and DVDs, it seems less able to provide the satisfying future that utopian science fiction used to promise. (...) In addition, in America, at least, the events of September 11 have cast a long shadow over the national psyche. It is little wonder that fantasy worlds offering alternatives to the frightening new reality should become increasingly popular. At the same time, it should be emphasized that one of anime's important elements is the uniqueness of

the medium itself, which may make it particularly appropriate for today's culture in which many participants, especially the computer literate, move seamlessly between the "real" and the unreal (...) An even more important aspect of animation is that, compared to other twentieth-century visual media, it is explicitly nonreferential.

Other cinema and photography are both based on an outside reality – even if they use special effects to change that reality, animation stresses to the viewer that it is separate from reality, or perhaps even an alternative reality. (7-8)

Just as Napier states, there is no underlying expectation of any kind of normality in animation. It attends to modern-day irrationality and provides a safe space for the mind to indulge in fantastic narratives. Since the real and the unreal are blurred in animation, the notion of the permeability between reality and illusion illustrates an alternative reality where the memories of the past can be reconstructed through mystical narratives. This kind of utopian universe and imagined fantasy fits in very well with the recreation of the utopian universe of the Shanghai Ghetto. It is the ideal medium for fantasizing about the Sino-Jewish bonds during the Second World War. It imagines a past that is not historically precise but can be probable in the near future in the event of another atrocity. In addition, the commercial success of the series also raises the question of accountability in historical novels. Though expectations of historical accuracy are weakened in genres like graphic novels and anime, the question remains regarding boundaries that need to be drawn to prevent the communication of history from becoming commodification of pain and agencies for nationalistic narratives.

### ***4.3 Garden of Memories: Physical Sites of Memorials and Cultural Preservation***

The period of the Jewish exile in Shanghai has been recollected in numerous survivors' memoirs and reconstructed in films and novels. It has also been involved in a proliferating number of memorial images and spaces worldwide. Among the many educational and cultural exhibitions dedicated to this period, the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum plays an essential role in presenting and preserving the collective and individual memories of the Jewish refugees in Shanghai. It is located at the physical site of the Sino-Jewish encounter that took place in the first half of the twentieth century. It invites retrospection and introspection around a historical period when cross-cultural unity was possible. A utopian narrative was constructed in an area where neither the Jews nor the Chinese locals had control over their fates. The shared traumatic experience of facing the Japanese occupying forces created a unique bond between the Jewish refugees and the local Chinese. This bond is remediated and highlighted in the exhibitions of the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum.

The Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum is located in the historic Tilanqiao area of the Hongkou district in Shanghai and used to be the Ohel Moshe Synagogue. The Tilanqiao area is quite infamous in Shanghai since it was once the location of the largest prison with the best facilities in the Far East. In specific contexts, Tilanqiao itself became synonymous with "prison." It was here that Russian immigrants decided to establish the Ohel Moshe congregation, their spiritual home in the Far East, in 1907. The Ohel Moshe Synagogue was located at 62 Ward Road and was first built as a private home in the same year. With the influx of Jewish refugees, there was a growing desire to create a synagogue. In 1927, Russian Jews collected funds to change the private home into a synagogue, serving Jews

from Russia as well as Central Europe. It is a three-story house with grey brick walls and red bricks arranged in horizontal lines. It has traditional arches, and its interior design reflects characteristic Jewish architectural styles. Above the main entrance is a Star of David to indicate the Jewish faith. During the Second World War, it served as a communicative space in the Far East for the Jewish refugees in Shanghai to strengthen their communities. It also represented the cultural bonds of the Jewish refugees in exile and was a spiritual home for approximately twenty thousand Jews in Shanghai.

After the communist takeover in 1949, the government confiscated the synagogue, converted it into a psychiatric hospital, and used it for office space. In the 1990s, after China's economic growth and rise in political power, the synagogue was re-opened to the public and transformed over the years into a museum that documents the collective memory of the Sino-Jewish encounter in Shanghai during the Second World War. Featuring historical documents, personal photographs, newspaper clippings, personal letters, individual diaries, and documentaries, the museum recalls the memories of the Jewish presence in the restricted sector of the Shanghai Ghetto and their cross-cultural encounter with the Chinese residents of Hongkou. Since its re-opening in the 1990s, the Chinese communist government has continuously shaped the museum as a cultural communicative space to exhibit the Sino-Jewish encounter in Shanghai and inscribe its existence into public memory. The government has repeatedly renovated the Synagogue to expand its explanatory and preservative function to a more international audience.

In *Preserving the Shanghai Ghetto*, Zhang Yanhua and Wang Jian explain the challenges in rebuilding and preserving the Ohel Moshe Synagogue:

First, the exhibition space has been limited – the original three stories are very cramped, with a total area of about 400 square meters. It has also been used as office space for a while. Realistically, the area provided for the exhibition can only be a small part of one floor.

The third floor has a less than 200 square meters projector room and exhibition hall.

On top of that, a small pavilion outside still exhibits the former residence of the Jewish family, Lewinsky. (110)

In 1999, the Ohel Moshe Synagogue members attempted to renovate the building. However, due to the choice of materials, the original features of the building underwent some changes. The renovation was not very successful since it lost its unique charm and soon merged with the surrounding parts of the old town and sunk into its neighborhood's mediocrity. In 2005, the Shanghai municipal government designated the Ohel Moshe Synagogue as a historic municipal building, and a complete renovation carried out by the Hongkou district government began in 2007. During the renovation, the original building was also expanded to construct a cultural memorial site for the Jewish exile in Shanghai. With the "Jewish Refugees in Shanghai" Museum in mind, the first floor of the building was fully utilized and still preserves the traditional functions of a synagogue, serving as a hall for religious services. Up the narrow stairs, the second and third floors were turned into exhibition halls, displaying special exhibits about the Sino-Jewish friendship during the Sino-Japanese war, highlighting Jewish individuals who joined the Communist Party and fought against Japanese forces alongside the Chinese founding members of the PRC. A small projector room was installed on the third floor to display documentaries about the Jewish exile in Shanghai. However, the documentaries are mainly narrated in Chinese without English

subtitles. Except for the interviews with the survivors who speak English in the documentaries, it can be difficult for foreign visitors to make much sense of these screenings. It is still unclear why efforts have not been made to translate the documentaries for a global audience. In addition, the private home on the south side of the original synagogue was turned into a one-story exhibition hall that displays the Jewish history of Shanghai, which has become the core content of the museum. Outside the exhibition halls in the small garden, there is a sculpture of the Chinese diplomat He Fengshan, who was stationed in Austria at the beginning of the war and issued numerous visas to Austrian Jews who could only flee Europe with a pass to China. Next to the sculpture is a display of national flags representing all the political figures who have visited the museum.

In regards to design and renovation, the Ohel Moshe Synagogue has adhered to a relatively high standard:

According to the tentative plan, the Ohel Moshe Synagogue would be changed, making great efforts to return to the original style of 1928, according to the historic blueprint – returning to that year’s measurements for doors and windows and detailed divisions, redoing the north side first-floor entrance, demolishing the northern fourth story, restoring the original terrace, whitewashing the walls, protecting the color and luster, the fine lines of its original style and cleanly repairing the wind-eroded and cracked parts according to their original appearance. In addition, all previously added outer layers were purged. They were peeled down to the earliest layer and returned to their original state. The Ohel Moshe Synagogue, after this renovation, reserved an outdoor exhibition space, displaying the collected Jewish refugee tombstones and related items. The entire east wall between the

exhibition hall and the entrance area is carved with all the names of the Jewish refugees who stopped in Shanghai. (111)

The restoration of the Ohel Moshe Synagogue was meticulous in every aspect. The architects and designers believed that in order to trace memories, we must remain faithful to history. To respect the historical features, instead of reproducing the bricks of the building and making them look old, the architects used real old bricks from the 1920s for the outer walls. It was believed that old bricks carry history and culture and could not be reproduced. The principle was to “restore the old to look like ancient” (113).

In 2007, the Ohel Moshe Synagogue was successfully renovated, and the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum was open to the public. In 2014, a 34-meter-long copper memorial wall was unveiled at the site, engraved with the names of 13,732 Jewish refugees harbored in China during the Second World War. In 2017, the museum underwent another three years of further renovation. According to Chinese sources, the exhibition space was expanded from 1000 square meters to 4000 square meters, and the number of exhibited objects increased from 150 to 1000.<sup>83</sup> On the official website of the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum, videos and news clips show that on December 8, 2020, the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Memorial Hall held a grand opening ceremony. The city leaders and consuls from many countries cut the ribbon to open the new exhibition hall. The reports claim that “the atmosphere was warm and the guests were amazed and excited by the new look of the memorial hall after the expansion”<sup>84</sup> With the dedicated preservation of the Ohel Moshe Synagogue and the constant renovation and expansion of the exhibition space of the

---

<sup>83</sup> Source: [https://m.thepaper.cn/baijiahao\\_10328650](https://m.thepaper.cn/baijiahao_10328650).

<sup>84</sup> Source: <http://www.shhkjrm.com/node2/n4/n5/n8/n21/u1ai809.html>.

Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum, it is evident that the Chinese officials consider the historical past of the Sino-Jewish encounter to occupy a significant position in foreign affairs. For its grand re-opening in 2020, many influential intellectual and foreign leaders were invited to deliver speeches, including the Nobel Prize winner Mo Yan, President of the National Committee on US-China Relations Steve Orlins, Harvard Law School Professor Laurence Tribe, Israel's Diaspora Affairs Minister Omer Yankelevich, President of the American Jewish Congress Jack Rosen, President of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation Arthur Schneider, legendary Jewish business tycoon Michael Kadoorie, and many others. It is evident that the function of the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum is not merely memorial but political and is endowed with an essential agency in Sino-foreign affairs. Its existence communicates the cultural memory of the Jewish exile in Shanghai. Most importantly, it conveys the Chinese people's hope of contributing to world peace and cross-cultural co-prosperity.

The Jewish Museum in Shanghai is wholly dedicated to the Sino-Jewish encounter in Shanghai. The exhibition recalls past experiences and portrays the Chinese nation-state's memory of itself. In addition to the regular meetings between the Jewish refugees and the local Chinese presented in images and photographs, the permanent exhibition also details the Japanese invasion and the takeover of Shanghai. Needless to say, the trauma of the Jewish refugees during the Holocaust is connected to the trauma of the Chinese nation during the second Sino-Japanese war. In short, the Jewish Museum in Shanghai not only serves as a dedication to the memory of the Jewish refugees' life in Shanghai but also presents an aesthetic discourse about the nation's proud history of defending itself against Western

invaders, specifically concerning the war with the Japanese, and also highlights the role of the Communist Party in the historical events.

#### 4.31 Exhibitions at the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum

In 1943, the Japanese occupying forces were under pressure from their German allies to reinforce the “Final Solution” in the East. However, the Japanese did not blindly follow the Third Reich’s plan to exterminate all the Jews in Shanghai but instead adopted a measure to build a ghetto in Hongkou, the poorest section of Shanghai. The Hongkou Ghetto was a restricted sector where the Japanese gathered all the stateless Jewish refugees. The Tilanqiao district in the Hongkou area became a significant settlement for the Jewish refugees and was later preserved as an essential physical site to honor historical memories.

For the majority of the Jewish refugees, being forced to move into the already overcrowded Hongkou area was not an ideal situation. Many had to live with local Chinese families and endure conditions of limited freedom and adapt their living habits; they also suffered from diseases. Tom Lewinsohn, a young boy who escaped from Germany to Shanghai, later recalled:

I only remember a crowded place. We all lived in one room. There was absolutely no privacy. Everything we did in the Jewish district was limited. There was very little to eat, no butter or milk. We had very little money. I had no choice but to go out and beg for money. If I got a few coins, I could go to the movie theater to study English.

(Zhang & Wang 43)

Only after the war did the Jewish refugees realize that compared to what happened to their families and friends who were tortured and suffered to death in the concentration camps, their experience in the Hongkou Ghetto was more or less a blessing. Although they had little

money and lived close to the local Chinese people, the Jewish refugees could preserve their central European lifestyles. The Jewish refugees owned many cafes, bakeries, and small restaurants, which became sites for exchanging news and messages. In addition, many refugees socialized with their Chinese neighbors. Many friendships and biracial marriages blossomed in this utopian horizon where both the foreign guests and the locals were homeless due to the Japanese invasion of Shanghai. This unprecedented bond is the centerpiece of the exhibitions.

Though Holocaust museums worldwide have recognized the Jewish exile in Shanghai, what is exhibited in the West generally consists of official documentation of travel to Shanghai, including visa stamps and passports. In the main exhibition hall of the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum, apart from a brief historical guide that serves as the introduction to the background of World War Two in Europe and the Nazis' execution of the Jews, the focus has been placed on the close contact between the local Shanghainese and the Jewish refugees in the Hongkou Ghetto. What is unique about the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum is that it displays many photographs of the Jewish refugees in the Ghetto either smiling or communicating with the local Shanghainese, including elderly neighbors, street vendors, and children playing together. Though the published memoirs by survivors recall that most refugees did not speak Chinese while living in Shanghai, these photographs serve as evidence that cross-cultural communication flourished in the Hongkou Ghetto and that further documents and materials about this understudied historical period remain to be explored.

A gigantic banner for a special exhibition was hung from the third-floor ceiling with the words: "Three of Them and New China – Jewish Refugees Contributed to the

Foundation of the People's Republic of China during World War II." This unique exhibition occupied the entire third floor. It was designed and overseen by official authorities, including the Party History Research Office of CPC Shanghai Municipal Committee, the Publicity Department of the Hongkou District of Shanghai, the Shanghai Literature and History Research Association, and the Shanghai Society for People's Friendship Studies. An entire exhibition room on the third floor has been dedicated to Jewish life in Shanghai as well as a few Jewish individuals, mainly physicians, who joined the communist army and fought along with the military leaders of the Communist Party during the Sino-Japanese war. The exhibition highlights three Jewish doctors: Jacob Rosenfeld (1903-1952),<sup>85</sup> Hans Miller (1915-1994),<sup>86</sup> and Richard Frey (1920-2004).<sup>87</sup> They were notable members of the

---

<sup>85</sup> Jacob Rosenfeld was born in Austria. He graduated with a medical degree from the University of Vienna in 1927. In 1938, he was sent to the Dachau Concentration Camp and was later transferred to Buchenwald. In 1939, He Fengshan, the appointed Chinese Consul in Vienna, issued him a visa to Shanghai, where he opened a clinic in the French Concession Area. In 1940 he joined the Anti-Japanese War and he held a senior position in the New Fourth Army, the Eighth Route Army, and the Northeast People's Liberation Party. He was the only foreign member to hold a senior position in the Communist army and he was a special member of the Chinese Communist Party. In 1949, Rosenfeld decided to return to Austria. He died in Israel in 1952.

<sup>86</sup> Hans Miller was born in Düsseldorf, Germany. He graduated from Basel University with a M.D. degree. He was expelled from Basel University right before his graduation because he sympathized with the progressives. His Chinese student recommended that he emigrate to China. In May 1939, Miller went to Hong Kong and he was recommended by Liao Chengzhi to the China Defense League, a national salvation organization founded by Song Qing ling. He began to get in touch with the underground Chinese Communist Party and in 1939, he successfully smuggled 600 boxes of medical supplies and an ambulance donated by various foreign countries to the city of Yan An, which served as the front base of the Communist Party and the front base of the anti-Japanese war. Miller fought along with the Communist Party both during the Sino-Japanese war and the national war. He acquired Chinese nationality in 1951 and officially became a member of the Chinese Communist Party in 1957. He passed away in 1994 in Beijing.

<sup>87</sup> Richard Frey was born on February 11, 1920 in Vienna. In his youth, he became a member of the Austrian Communist Party and in 1939 he was exiled to Shanghai to escape Nazi persecution. He first worked for the Shanghai Hongkou Refugee Infectious Disease Isolation Hospital followed by the German-American Hospital in Tianjin, Dow Hospital in

Chinese Communist Party and worked as medical doctors for the Communist army during the Sino-Japanese war. In celebrating the Jewish doctors, the Chinese exhibition connects the construction of communist China with the contribution of the Jewish refugees, which is a special honor and a grand gesture. This exhibit belongs to the museum's permanent exhibition and includes many remarks from important leaders, including a statement from former Chinese President Hu Jintao:

From 1941 to 1949, Dr. Jacob Rosenfeld spent his most precious years on the liberation of the Chinese people. His glorious performance has been written into history. He is a symbol of the friendship between the Chinese and Austrian people and will always be remembered by future generations.<sup>88</sup>

The exhibition presents the biographies of the three Jewish doctors and highlights their careers in the Chinese military armies. Many photographs are accompanied by a bilingual introduction of the events of their lives and comments made by political leaders.

A closer look at the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum's website reveals that though the museum hosts numerous ceremonies that attract the attention of global scholars and leaders, it lacks the pedagogical function of a cultural institution to educate about the past and provide greater access to the public. Compared to its Western counterparts, such as the Holocaust Museum LA, the Jewish Museum in Berlin, the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC, and the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York, the

---

Peking, the Evangelic Hospital in Shunde, and the Tianjin Mackenzie Hospital. In December 1941, he arrived at the Jin Chaji border, which was a base for the anti-Japanese War. In October 1944, he joined the Chinese Communist Party and was personally recommended by the Commander Nie Rongzhen. In 1953, Frey even acquired Chinese nationality. He was awarded the Medal of Independence and Freedom and the Medal of Liberation. He passed away in Beijing on November 16, 2004.

<sup>88</sup> Quoted from the exhibition.

Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum has a relatively small digital archive available to the public. When I visited the museum, I learned that most of the documents related to the Jewish exile in Shanghai were housed in the Shanghai Municipal Archive. Though this archive is open to the Chinese public, most records are not digitized, and gaining access to materials requires a rigorous application process. The current digital library that is displayed on the Shanghai Jewish Museum's website only presents standard documents such as pictures of the "Resident Certificate in Shanghai," the "Foreigners' Resident Certificate," hospital treatment cards, International Committee ID cards, work permits, and several newspaper clippings and photos of Jewish Refugees. To date, there are only 19 items available in the digital archive. Crucial documents and materials such as financial and police reports concerning Jewish life in the Ghetto are not provided. They await scholarly attention to ensure they are displayed.

Moreover, unlike its Western counterparts, the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum does not operate closely with high schools and universities to host scholarly discussions and educational lectures. There is no internship program or record of well-documented educational events with discussion panels. However, the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum has actively coordinated seminars and cultural exchanges at the international level. Its website displays the cultural exchange with the Holocaust Museum in Houston and the Jewish Museum of Belgium in 2008. However, the conversation consisted merely of friendly visits. No traces of a cooperative exhibition tour were found in its documentation. Upon her visit to the museum in 2008, Susan Myer suggested, as recalled on the website, that the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum would benefit from participating in the Association of Holocaust Organizations. The museum would thus broadly increase its

exposure and significance in the West and contribute to the communication of the hidden histories of the Jewish exile in Shanghai. It would attract much more scholarly attention and keep with the Chinese government's goal to bolster its national image and international reputation. However, since the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum is associated with the Chinese government, as are most official cultural institutions in China, it can be assumed that exchanging knowledge and materials could be challenging and would have to follow specific protocols. One of the central images displayed on its website is a picture of a wall with lettering that reads: "Work Together to Build a Community with a Shared Picture for Mankind." It is worth contemplating what this shared picture of humankind looks like, as it can be interpreted differently, depending on the political environments of various social systems. It challenges the core political difference between China and the Western world. It remains a challenge to conquer political differences to honor the historical past of the Sino-Jewish cultural exchange. A shared picture of honoring the lessons and legacies of the historical past is only possible through a shared discussion in the present, just as the Jewish refugees and the Chinese locals shared their hopes, fears, and dreams in the Hongkou Ghetto.

#### 4.32 Cultural Tours and Storytelling

In addition to official political affairs, the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum welcomes domestic and international visitors. Tickets and reservations are relatively easy to purchase online and in person. Apart from individual visitors who wander into the museum out of curiosity, many cultural tours in Shanghai also recognize the significance of including the museum as part of the cultural heritage of Shanghai in its demonstration of the city's multiculturalism and the international humanitarian values it once embraced.

The late Wang Fa Liang has been acknowledged in many scholarly works. He was the synagogue's guide and was referred to as the bond between the Chinese and Jewish history in the Hongkou Ghetto. Since Mr. Wang lived in the neighborhood during the war, he became the living Wikipedia entry for the Sino-Jewish exchange in the ghetto. Zhang Yanhua and Wang Jian note:

Mr. Wang Fa Liang was deservedly dubbed by the title “the shammos” of the old ghetto, or as it was called during the war years, “the designated area,” and with his loving character, gentle smile and knowledge, and of course, his close contact with Jewish refugees during the war years, he thus became the storyteller of the mutual hardship shared by the Chinese and Jewish refugees during WW2. He has lived in the neighborhood, which was also the home to approximately 18,000 Jews from Hitler's Europe, all his life and was always delighted in showing former Shanghailanders or visitors that have not forgotten their past the streets and places which they remembered so vividly upon their return visit. To help reminiscence about some of the good times as well as the more trying days, he enthusiastically took them to places that were immediately familiar to them, including the park, called in those days “Der Kleine Wayside Park,” where a monument was erected honoring the Jews that lived in Shanghai; the Former Emigrant Hospital at the Ward Road Heim; and what was once the Vienna Café on Chusan Road. (117)

Mr. Wang was an ordinary local Shanghainese who had spent his life during the war with the Jewish refugees in the Hongkou Ghetto. When he later became the guide at the synagogue, he tried his best, using his adept English, to tell the visitors the stories he had experienced and witnessed. Many visitors regarded him as a historical witness and publicist.

According to Wang and Zhang's research, Mr. Wang's testimony even surpasses the scholarship and statements of Chinese officials and scholars. Many Jewish visitors expressed their respect and grief through various channels when Mr. Wang passed away (114).

English scholarship that treats the Sino-Jewish encounter in the Hongkou Ghetto mainly focuses on survivors' testimonies. However, every story has a different side. It is worth researching the testimonies of the Chinese neighbors in the Ghetto. On the website of the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum is the following story:

According to Jin Wenzhen's memoir published on *Xinmin Evening News* on May 29, 2015, her grandfather opened a rice store on East Changzhi Road (formerly East Seward Road), and the number was something above 500. The neighborhood had many poor Jews who often came to their store to borrow rice and flour. "As my grandfather was very friendly with the Jews and took pity on them, feeling that they were even worse off than the local Chinese, my grandfather would give them whatever they asked for. Sometimes, he did not require the borrower to sign an IOU. Some Jews had failed to pay back, but he was not upset. He would even give them other help, including necessities free of charge." One evening in 1940, it was dark and raining, and a worried Jewish couple came to Mr. Jin's store, carrying a kid with a high fever. Obviously, the kid was seriously ill and had to go to the hospital, but they could not afford to pay the fee. They asked Mr. Jin for help and gave him a beautiful handbag as a guarantee. They told my grandfather that the handbag was a family treasure and they would redeem it as soon as they had enough money. Mr. Jin gave them a big sum of cash, which amounted to one month's income for the store.

He had never seen them again. “My grandfather was concerned about the kid and hoped that the money he had given the couple could save the kid.” More than 10 years later, Mr. Jin gave the handbag to Jin Wenzhen, asking her to take good care of it as it was the treasure of a Jewish family. As she got older, Jin Wenzhen thought more and more of looking for the Jewish family. She believed that displaying the handbag at the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum would help her find the offspring of the Jewish couple. “It is too old, so the threads were bare. The beads on a thread on the outside of the bag fell as the thread broke.” Jin Wenzhen also found, with surprise, a silver bracelet in the bag. After she brought the worn handbag and the bracelet to the museum, the staff connected with the China Silk Museum in Hangzhou, which promised to repair the bag free of charge after hearing its story. So, the bag regained its splendor after 75 years. It is waiting to go back to the hands of its original owner, which is the wish of Jin Wenzhen and her grandfather.<sup>89</sup>

Testimonies like the story above represent the Sino-Jewish friendship and should be collected and published for the world to reflect upon and remember. The Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum and scholars have the responsibility of uncovering forgotten aspects of the past and inspiring further communication among social actors.

#### ***4.4 Tombstones and Memory Lanes***

In addition to stories and tours associated officially with the museum, in recent years, there have been more and more cultural tours to commemorate and honor the Jewish exile in Shanghai. One of the earliest and best-known tours is led by the Israeli reporter Dvil Bargal.

---

<sup>89</sup> Source: <http://www.shhkjrm.com/node2/n4/n6/n34/n52/index.html>.

He came to China in 2001 and took it upon himself to collect the Jewish tombstones. According to historical records, Shanghai had four public Jewish cemeteries with nearly 3700 gravestones in the 1940s. According to Wang and Zhang, at the beginning of 1958, these public cemeteries were gradually moved to a zone in the international section fifteen kilometers from Shanghai due to municipal considerations. However, many tombstones were destroyed during the turbulence of the Cultural Revolution. Dvir went to small villages and hired a team of workers to restore these tombstones. He made a documentary about this process and negotiated with the Shanghai city council to secure a new graveyard for the restored tombstones. He aims to build a Jewish memorial in Huoshan Park, a park close to the Ghetto, to honor the historical Sino-Jewish friendship. However, due to cultural differences, it is unlikely that the Chinese people will accept a cemetery in the middle of the park and close to residential areas. While Dvir eagerly negotiates with the Chinese officials, he has also become a famous guide who gives foreign visitors a tour of the Hongkou Jewish Ghetto.<sup>90</sup>

In December 2019, I took part in Dvir's tour. We met at the once legendary Cathay Hotel, previously owned by Sir Victor Sassoon. When the group gathered together, we walked to the Bund. With a view facing the iconic Shanghai Tower, Dvir described the history of Shanghai and its development. We later moved to the inside of a café since it was wintertime. In this cozy environment, Dvir explained the Jewish history in Shanghai, starting with the beginning of the Opium War and the beginning of the Jewish settlement in Shanghai with the Sassoons and the Kadorries.

---

<sup>90</sup> I took part of this tour in December 2019. The following research stems from first-hand experience.

The next stop was Houshan Park. Inside the gate is the only memorial to Shanghai's European Jewish refugees. Written in Chinese, English, and Hebrew, it is a small monument to the suffering the Jews experienced after finding refuge in Shanghai. New dimensions for the tour opened up because survivors were returning to the physical site of this shelter. Dvir explained how the Jewish refugees struggled to settle in the Far East. Among our group, there was one elderly gentleman who had lived in the Hongkou Ghetto during the war. He had a dated handbook of businesses in Shanghai with him. He looked for his father's carpentry business and found his family's name in the guide. The visitor was honoring the historical past while witnessing its lasting impact in the present day. At this moment, the observer-participant of the tour became a historian himself, and the secondary memory of the other became the primary memory of the self.

The next stop was Chushan Road. Chushan Road was once the commercial quarter known as Little Vienna. It had been the cultural center of Jewish life in Shanghai during the war. Cultural exchange flourished here, and it was also where many Jewish families crammed into each of the flats, sometimes housing thirty people in a room with bunk beds and curtain dividers until the end of the war. The next stop was the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum. Towards the end of the tour, Dvir brought visitors to a small residential house in one of old Shanghai's small streets. It is now occupied by Chinese families but was once inhabited by Jews. Time seems to have stopped in this small residential area, and it is evident that living conditions here have not improved much compared to the city's cosmopolitan growth. Residents of these flats still carry out their daily lives with no

showers, running water only available in the communal kitchen, and honeypots<sup>91</sup> to be emptied in the morning. The visual image substantially impacts the visitors, and one can certainly imagine how life was for the Jews who were packed into these small flats during the war. The elderly gentleman walked around the lane and found where he and his family lived during the war. He stood in front of the door for a long time.

In *History and Memory after Auschwitz*, Dominick LaCapra states:

Memory is both more and less than history and vice-versa. History may never capture certain elements of memory: the feel of an experience, the intensity of joy or suffering, the quality of an occurrence. Yet history also includes elements that are not exhausted by memory, such as demographic, ecological, and economic factors.

More importantly, it tests memory and ideally leads to the emergence of both a more accurate memory and a clearer appraisal of what is or is not factual in remembrance.

(LaCapra 20)

Memory is not history; it is the agency to understand history. LaCapra makes a distinction between primary memory and secondary memory. He claims that primary memory is “that of a person who has lived through events and remembers them in a certain manner.” This kind of memory “almost invariably involves lapses relating to forms of denial, repression, suppression, and evasion, but it also has an immediacy and power that may be compelling” (20). The testimonies of the Jewish refugees and the Chinese neighbors are primary memories. Secondary memory, according to LaCapra, is “the result of critical work on primary memory, whether by the person who initially had the relevant experiences or, more

---

<sup>91</sup> There are no bathrooms with running water in Shanghai. This is a synonym for “bedpan.”

or typically, by an analyst, observer, or secondary witness such as the historian” (20-21). According to LaCapra, social actors who engage in cultural tours of the museums and researchers who do fieldwork in archives create secondary memories. LaCapra believes that secondary memory offers a space where the event’s participant and observer-participants can meet and constitute accurate memory. Memory reformulates and reconceptualizes traumatic events in the art of narration. The narrative is an utterance of inexpressible horror and uncanny survival. Revisiting the memory of the trauma is the victim’s attempt to counteract emotions after survival, such as shame, guilt, rage, and anxiety, in the hopes of healing and working through problems. As for the observer-participant, the very absence of the trauma urges sympathy and recognition. Crossing primary and secondary memory articulates a connection between mourning and healing. It creates an ethical turn where the dead are put back into their graves, and the present is reconstructed to shape a livable future.

Memory stabilizes our ability to understand the world. Primary memory is fundamental to our perception of the present. The past is an agency for us to reconstitute the present and shape the future. In the shadow of representing and remembering the Holocaust, testimonies are crucial for history. They translate the traumatic private experience of the victim into language and gesture and provide insight into the historical collective trauma. It is mainly through secondary memory or postmemory that social actors such as scholars, observer-participants, and historians remember and honor the historical past. In *The Generation of Postmemory*, Marianne Hirsch defines the relationship between postmemory and the past as being mediated not by recall but “by imaginative investment, projection, and creation” (Hirsch 5). She claims that while the events of postmemory happen in the past, their effects continue into the present. Since postmemories are not visual, photography and

performance play an essential role in narration to display fugitive knowledge that is subjugated and forgotten. Trauma and survival can be transmitted beyond personal memory through cultural exhibitions in museums such as the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum. Cultural museums shift the recollection framework to allow new experiences – experiences that have not been thought of as possible – to emerge. In the reconceptualization of the past, museums create a visual negotiation between past and present, representation and transmission, presence and absence, and broaden the comprehension of history and memory.

#### ***4.5 Educating Memories in Virtual Reality: Holocaust Museum LA***

In contrast to the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum, the Holocaust Museum LA is an independent educational and cultural institution established by Holocaust survivors. The Holocaust Museum LA enjoys more agency in terms of its scholarly events and cultural networks without official ties. Its official introduction states:

Holocaust Museum LA is the first survivor-founded and oldest Holocaust Museum in the United States. A group of Holocaust survivors met in 1961 while taking English classes at Hollywood High School and discovered that each had a precious artifact, photograph, or memory from the past that they wanted to use to educate the public about the Holocaust. The founding survivors worked hard to create a space that would commemorate those who perished, honor those who survived, house the artifacts that miraculously weathered the Holocaust, and educate generations of students on the important lessons from history. Holocaust Museum LA continues its mission to commemorate, educate, and inspire a more dignified and humane world.<sup>92</sup>

---

<sup>92</sup> Cited from its official website: <https://www.holocaustmuseumla.org/about>.

From the statement above, it is evident that the Holocaust Museum LA is an independent cultural institution that considers its mission to be to honor and remember the victims that perished in the Holocaust and educate social actors never to forget what has happened to prevent it from happening again. Holocaust Museum LA prides itself on having a specific focus on educating the younger generations on the lessons and legacies of the Holocaust:

Holocaust Museum LA is the only free cultural institution in Los Angeles with a sole focus on the horrific impact and the enormity of the Holocaust. Through customized tours, artifact-rich exhibitions, creative educational programs, and intergenerational conversations with survivors, the museum teaches students and visitors to think critically about the lessons of the Holocaust and its social relevance today. Museum admission is free for all students and California residents. On October 14, 2010, Holocaust Museum LA opened the doors to its permanent home in Pan Pacific Park. The Museum building, designed by acclaimed architect Hagy Belzberg, has received many architectural awards, including LEED Gold Certification, AIA Awards for Architecture and Interior Architecture, the Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Commission Design Honor Award, and the Green Building Design Award.<sup>93</sup>

Located in the heart of Los Angeles, the museum is constructed next to a verdant park. Under the sunny California skies, many locals enjoy their leisure time there. With the birds chirping, dogs running, children laughing, and adults enjoying their freedom, the park embraces a wonderfully peaceful energy that contrasts with the dark building and the six monuments in front of the museum. Next to a site of life and hope sits the physical memorial

---

<sup>93</sup> Quoted from its official website: <https://www.holocaustmuseumla.org/mission-and-history>.

space of the Holocaust Museum LA, reminding citizens that in the light of the sun lurks the danger of anti-Semitism and the darkness of death. This contrast of confronting life with death and light with darkness stimulates social awareness and communicates the threat of forgetting.

What differentiates the Holocaust Museum LA from the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum is its effort to preserve memories in virtual realities and its focus on educating young students. The ground's surface slopes downwards when you walk into the museum, inviting visitors to physically experience the weight of historical trauma. There is a fifty-five-minute general tour where visitors can browse the exhibition's highlights while listening to their video guides. One aspect of the Holocaust Museum LA's design that distinguishes it from the other Holocaust museums is that the exhibition is divided into several galleries, each on one side of the hallway. While the other Holocaust museums require visitors to walk through each gallery to reach the exit, the Holocaust Museum LA offers the opportunity to choose which galleries to visit and which to skip without disrupting the tour. This unique design accounts for young visitors who might not be able to process the traumatic events of the Holocaust all at once. In this case, visitors, especially young kids, are given the option of skipping certain sections if they need more time and mental preparation to face the historical past's horrendous terrors. This design also allows the museum to invite younger students without necessarily exposing them to traumatizing images. In addition, this design also enables visitors with different levels of knowledge to freely interact with the exhibitions, focusing on the specific materials of their interest. On the walls of each gallery, the front pages of the *Los Angeles Times* are displayed, starting as early as March 1933, when Hitler first came to power, and continuing until 1945. It is an

additional pedagogical tool demonstrating how people gain access to information. It also invites people to reflect on today's situation and question how we think about the news and take in information.

The exhibition of the Holocaust Museum LA helps visitors to contextualize information through various media such as photographs, maps, artifacts, interactive screens, and audio guides. Each narrative in the audio guide features music corresponding to the theme of the introduction and encourages a thoroughly immersive experience. The focus on virtual and audio guides also accounts for the younger generation's tendency to process knowledge virtually. In 2021, twenty-eight thousand students visited the museum virtually and in person, even during the pandemic. Before the pandemic, the number of annual visitors was twenty thousand. The increase in the numbers is attributable to the addition of virtual online tours during the pandemic.

To transmit and virtualize the experience of the Jewish victims during the Holocaust, a boxcar model is located towards the end of one hallway. This artifact is a replica of the trains transporting Jews to various concentration camps. This space is where the tour invites visitors, especially student groups, to sit and process the heavy historical information they have learned so far and reflect on the traumatic past. It also prepares the students for the traumatic information at the back of the gallery. This space exhibits the horrors of the concentration camps and displays survivor testimonies from various centers on touch screens where visitors can choose what to listen to based on individual choice.

It is also worth noting that although the museum introduces the historical event of the Nazi's Final Solution, it is not the central focus of the permanent exhibition. Instead, the narrative focuses on the survivors, the liberators, and the resisters. Towards the end of the

gallery, there is no natural light. The ceiling is at its lowest because visitors are approaching the darkest part of history, where the exhibition addresses concentration camps. The museum highlights eighteen different concentration camps accompanied by survivors' testimonies with an artifact of the Soviet death camps. The artifact model adds an element for visualizing the historical past and providing more context. In Judaism, the number 18 is a spiritual number representing life and good luck. The meaning behind this design is to look at death through the context of life and remind the visitors that there is still hope for the future through survival. It is also a turning point in the exhibition that shows how life continues after the Holocaust. The ceiling rises gradually as visitors leave behind the most traumatic chapter of this history. The gallery continues with exhibitions on rescue and resistance, celebrating the bravery and courage of facing heinous crimes. The permanent collection continues with the liberation of the death camps, with a focus on US soldiers, and eventually ends with the trials of the Nazis. The last gallery next to the exit is a temporary exhibition space. There are plans to curate a special exhibition on the Jewish exile in Shanghai entitled "Hidden History: Recounting the Shanghai Jewish Story." The exhibition will feature the historical Jewish community in Shanghai, gathering materials from different families, collecting artifacts from the period when Japan occupied Shanghai, and showing photographs from 1946. The focus will be on the Shanghai Ghetto and the whole Jewish community in Shanghai. The aim is to raise the audience's awareness of the Holocaust. The opening date was the last weekend of April 2022, and there is a plan to turn it into a touring exhibition.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

The past of the Holocaust haunts the present. Narratives of primary testimonies and secondary memories enact resistance against the efforts of time to erase the past without a trace. Being attentive to prevent the dead from being forgotten and history from repeating itself, the remembrance of the unspeakable, and the utterance of memory enable us to experience the effects of the Holocaust as an ongoing present. Both primary and secondary memories have served the purpose of saving the dead. Though no form of memory recollection can represent the very specificity of the event, the virtual narratives in cultural spaces still explore possibilities for saving the dead – not only those from the past but also those from the future.

In “From Memory’s time: Chronology and Duration in Holocaust Testimonies,” Lawrence L. Langer states that “testimonies of the Holocaust serve nothing; they can only preserve” (Langer 197). However, testimonies and memories can help make certain silences and muted stories audible and make the until now never-present past a visible presence and save the possible death of the future. Both cultural cinema and museum exhibitions have explored the art of representing the Holocaust in virtual, interactive cultural spaces. Though cinema and museums communicate memory through different approaches, they both take into account that the death of the future cannot be saved unless the ghosts of the past can only be put into their graves peacefully by forming a collective remembrance of memories. Cultural productions in the contemporary epoch build onto individual memories and develop a collective memory through mass media productions. The narratives of primary memories, such as the documentation of oral testimonies, and secondary memories, such as exhibitions in Holocaust museums and commodified cultural tourism, are agencies of possible

negotiations to forge new forms of power relations and subjectivities in the future to avert the misfortunes of the past.

Western representations such as Ottinger's film and the Holocaust Museum in LA view the Jewish exile in Shanghai as a fugitive piece of the memory of central Europe's trauma concerning the Holocaust that was exiled to the East and recount the history of the Jews in Shanghai in a melancholy tone. In Western scholarship, the Jewish experience in Shanghai is considered insignificant in Holocaust Studies and is only researched as a case study in the formation of collective remembrance. The Chinese recall the Sino-Jewish encounter as an essential agency for international relationships and nation-building and present the historical period through a more nationalistic narration. The Sino-Jewish encounter is portrayed as a utopian fantasy where cross-cultural unity against fascism is highlighted, and co-prosperity is possible through friendship and humanistic endeavors. Both Chinese and Western approaches indicate that the historical episode of the Jewish exile in Shanghai carries a communicative function and has therefore become the bearer of social communication.

I conclude that for the Western audience, the Jewish history of Shanghai has become a medium for reminiscing nostalgically about the colonial past in the Orient.

Simultaneously, it also functions as an agent for the Chinese nation-state to renegotiate international power and recreate a national biography. This dual sense of historical reality operates through modern mass media productions; history becomes a mechanical and manufactured product that acts as the bearer of social communication.

## Conclusion

More than eighty years ago, China and the city of Shanghai opened their arms to the Jewish refugees. Though history is a matter of complicity and scholarship has documented the same historical period from various perspectives, the fact remains that the Shanghai exile saved around 25,000 thousand Jews from Nazi persecution. The Chinese government gives this extraordinary history high recognition. The Shanghai Jewish exile has been integrated into China's history of the second Sino-Japanese War. It is also considered a partial contribution made by the Chinese people during the war to fight against fascism in the international community. In 1994, the Shanghai Municipal Government and Hongkou District Government set up a monument in Houshan Park to memorialize the Jewish history in Shanghai. Leaders from international communities are frequently invited to deliver speeches at the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum. The Hongkou Ghetto has become more than a tourism site, recalling the memories of the colonial past.

While many scholars working on the Holocaust have turned their focus to researching the historical details of the Jewish exile in Shanghai, no work has currently presented this particular historical period from a multi-faceted point of view. Historians work on reports in official archives, but their scholarship is limited to linguistics and access. Chinese scholarship is not widely translated or widely registered in the field of Holocaust Studies. Literary fiction and cultural representations such as cinema, anime, museum exhibitions, and cultural tours of the Shanghai refuge have not invoked much scholarly attention to date. My project aims to bridge different fields from a comparative angle and provide a multidirectional kind of seeing to demonstrate the historical and reimagined memory of the Jewish exile in the Hongkou Ghetto from 1933 to 1945.

The relationship between history and memory is a significant question I try to address in my work. I strive to present individual memories as being equally crucial to historical reports. My project mainly focuses on the significance of memory and how both public and personalized memories have transmitted their knowledge of the Jewish history in Shanghai into literary and cultural spaces through mass media productions.

Historian Pierre Nora defines the realm of memory as a *lieu de mémoire*.<sup>94</sup> Nora discusses the relationship between history and memory and claims:

Our interest in *lieux de mémoire* where memory crystallizes and secretes itself has occurred at a particular historical moment, a turning point where consciousness of a break with the past is bound up with the sense that memory has been torn but torn in such a way as to pose the problem of the embodiment of memory in certain sites where a sense of historical continuity persists. There are *lieux de mémoire*, sites of memory, because there are no longer *milieux de mémoire*, real environments of memory. (7)

Nora believes that collective history often eradicates the memory of individuals and communities. Memory offers new insights that official history fails to document and contemplates the collective narrative. In discussing the relationship between history and memory, Nora further states:

Memory is life, borne by living societies founded in its name. It remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting,

---

<sup>94</sup> *Lieu de mémoire* is defined by Nora as any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community. See references.

unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived. History, on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer. Memory is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present; history is a representation of the past. Memory, insofar as it is affective and magical, only accommodates those facts that suit it; it nourishes recollections that may be out of focus or telescopic, global or detached, particular or symbolic-responsive to each avenue of conveyance or phenomenal screen, to every censorship or projection. History, because it is an intellectual and secular production, calls for analysis and criticism. Memory installs remembrance within the sacred; history, always prosaic, releases it again. Memory is blind to all but the group it binds-which is to say, as Maurice Halbwachs has said, that there are as many memories as there are groups, that memory is by nature multiple and yet specific; collective, plural, and yet individual. History, on the other hand, belongs to everyone and to no one, whence its claim to universal authority. Memory takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objects; history binds itself strictly to temporal continuities, to progressions, and to relations between things. Memory is absolute, while history can only conceive the relative (8)

As Nora notes, memory is crucial to understanding any historical period. In the case of the Jewish exile in Shanghai, the Chinese nation-state's ambition is assigned to scholars and historians and, therefore, cannot be considered entirely objective. It is crucial to look beyond historical documentation and recollect the individual voices of the survivors who have lived the experience. However, even the recollection of memories can be expressed in varied ways

impacted by factors such as the generational transmission of memories, gender, and the crossing of political boundaries. Memoirs should be analyzed carefully concerning their differences.

Knowledge is open to doubt; however, it is still used as a foundation or starting point. Mass media productions construct our perception of society and the world. Mass media productions such as literature, cinema, and cultural events in communicative spaces further reimagine historical events and reach a much broader audience compared to rigorous archival research conducted by scholars. My work acknowledges that memory is constantly being reimagined and remade through mass media productions that are not precisely true in terms of history but truthful concerning affect and emotions. The masses remember and forget certain aspects of history, and the masses need to be reached to recreate a future that leans towards hope and away from repeated despair. Surveying the existing literature and cinema of the Jewish exile in Shanghai gives us a sense of what messages are being conveyed and through what methods. The unique environment of wartime Shanghai invites varied ways of interpretation and communicates multidirectional memories to the global community. The subject of the Jewish exile in Shanghai is a perfect example of world literature. Its historical context lies in worldly affairs, its memory defines worldly relations, and its representations speak to a worldly audience. It is also a world-making<sup>95</sup> agency that becomes a tool for social communication. The reality of the Sino-Jewish exile is produced within social systems<sup>96</sup> by means of sense-making. Through storytelling, mass media

---

<sup>95</sup> This term derives from Pheng Cheah. In “What is a World? On World Literature as World-Making Activity,” he claims that “world-making” functions as “a process that keeps alive the force that opens up another world, a force that is immanent to the existing world.” (Cheah, 35-36).

<sup>96</sup> This term derives from Niklas Luhmann’s social system theory.

productions such as literature, cinema, and museum exhibitions articulate the Jewish history in Shanghai. They urge contemporary social actors to *defuturize* the future by producing future presents.<sup>97</sup> These representations are world-making<sup>98</sup> practices in which survivors-victims transform into writing subjects politically and socially engaged in their future presents. Since the past haunts the present and impacts our societies' projections into the future, investigating memoirs, fiction, film, and cultural events help us understand the history of the Shanghai Jewish Ghetto and is essential to invoking social communications and political activism in the present to foster alternative futures.

My work employs interdisciplinary research at the intersection of History, Social Sciences, and Literary and Cultural Studies. I use memory and social communication theory as critical frameworks to investigate the Jewish Exile in Shanghai during WWII across languages and cultures. My research bridges Chinese and Jewish Studies. It shows that Communist China's creative yearnings for a utopian universe and imagined communities reveal a reconstructive force between remembering the past and simulating the future. With

---

<sup>97</sup> In "Describing the Future," German sociologist Niklas Luhmann claims that the future depends on social actors' communication and the decisions they make in the future present. According to Luhmann, a "present future" is a future horizon that we project, whereas a "future present" focuses on what social systems can do now. Luhmann concludes that "social revolution will decide on future presents, and presumably it is the prospect of an unavailable fate that feeds the nagging worry that we can only satisfy on the surface in risk-taking and risk communication" (74). In "The Future Cannot Begin: Temporal Structures in Modern Society," Luhmann further elaborates that the process of *futurization* is caused by the limitless possibilities in the social actors' actions in the present future and claims that this kind of process will lead to an open future. The opposite of *futurization* is *defuturization*, which aims to reduce possibilities in the social actors' actions in the future present. Luhmann believes that in modern society, the present is the moment of decision, and every decision entails some degree of risk. Our society assumes risks to protect our future from many different kinds of accidents, and every decision involves risks that lead to economic and political consequences.

<sup>98</sup> Here, my understanding of world-making refers to how we create our worlds and their order by communicative practice and narrative rather than by nature and physical reality.

this project, I have attempted to achieve two primary aims. First, by considering the narrative of the Hongkou Ghetto from a comparative angle, I provide a cross-cultural perspective on the Jewish exile in Shanghai from 1933-1945. Second, while previous scholarship has drawn solely on historical documents and overlooked mass media productions, my project investigates literature, cinema, and cultural spaces. Since the demands of constructing a narrative of extremes challenge the very nature of realism, I believe that it is only through multimedia storytelling that we can reconstruct an alternative, doubling reality that conceptualizes a kind of seeing that might be traditionally inaccurate but is undoubtedly truthful to what could have transpired. In researching and comparing mass media productions across cultures, I conclude that in contemporary literature and visual media, the Jewish exile in Shanghai is presented not as objective historical events but as phenomenological horizons, inaccessible to social actors and subject to functional differentiation within social systems. I claim that the Jewish exile in Shanghai has become a relic object for Western authors and filmmakers to nostalgically reminisce about the colonial past in the Orient. Simultaneously, the same historical past also functions as an agent for the Chinese nation-state to renegotiate international power and recreate a national biography. This dual sense of historical reality operates through modern mass media productions. The Sino-Jewish encounter eventually becomes a manufactured product that serves as the bearer of social communication.

In the current political climate, humanity is facing a great upheaval. There are increasingly visible environmental threats such as climate change and industrial pollution, along with systemic problems such as nationalistic xenophobia, transphobia, and racial discrimination, and their invisible counterparts such as the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. The

Sino-Jewish friendship that flourished in the Hongkou Ghetto provides a model of cross-cultural coexistence in a time of chaos.

In 2020, at the beginning of my current project, an unprecedented epidemic plunged the whole world into a state of panic. COVID-19 is currently threatening all humankind's lives and generating fear, loss, and aggression around the globe. The pandemic resulted in devastating emotional turmoil for humanity and a devastating financial blow to the world's economy. As many people have lost their loved ones and livelihoods, hate speech, xenophobia, and racism have become more commonplace. As the pandemic was believed to have first appeared in Wuhan, a Chinese city, many anti-Chinese conspiracies have ravaged the world, shattering the cooperation of the global organizations encouraged by nationalistic political figures. As a result, racist threats against the Asian community that primarily targets Chinese citizens have become widespread. Amid chaotic fear and uncertainty, the reports of the Western mainstream media show a tendency towards bias based on speculation. Donald Trump referred to the virus with the derogatory and ignorant term "Kung-Flu," inciting hatred and hatred ignorance. However, on April 24, 2020, *The Jewish News of Northern California* reported that local Jewish organizations had teamed up to publish an open letter of support for the Asian-American community, which has faced racist attacks during the coronavirus crisis. The statement claims, "We are deeply concerned about rising xenophobia and anti-Asian scapegoating, heightened by COVID-19 [...] We pledge to do our part to ensure all those feeling marginalized in this current environment feel safe and secure." The article states that it is unfair that "Asians in the U.S. have been unfairly blamed for spreading the disease and faced racism, bigotry, and violent attacks." The fact that the Jewish community condemned the politicization of the pandemic that threatens the human

race shows the integrity of the Jewish people. It provides an excellent model of how lessons and legacies of the past can generate and establish communication and support in the current climate. I hope my work can contribute to the utopian hope that peace among races and nations is possible and awaits us in the future.

## References

1. Ambrüster, et al. *Exil Shanghai 1938-1947: Jüdisches Leben in der Emigration*. Teetz: Hentrich & Hentrich, 2000.
2. Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso Books. Kindle Edition.
3. Beila. *The Cursed Piano*. Trans. Howard Goldblatt and Sylvia Li-Chun Lin. San Francisco: Sinomedia International Group, 2017.
4. Cheah, Pheng. "What is a World? On World Literature As World-Making Activity." *Daedalus*. Vol. 137, No. 3, *On Cosmopolitanism* (Summer, 2008), pp. 26-38.
5. Chedgzoy, Kate. "Introduction." In: *Theories of Memory*. Ed. Rossington and Whitehead, pp. 217-18.
6. Delbo, Charlotte. *Auschwitz and After*. Trans. Rosette C Lamont. New Haven: Yale UP, 1995.
7. ---. *Auschwitz et après*. (French Edition) Minuit. Kindle Edition.
8. De Cesari et al. *Transnational Memory (Media and Cultural Memory / Medien und kulturelle Erinnerung)*. De Gruyter, 2014. Kindle Edition.
9. Eber, Irene, et al. *Voices from Shanghai: Jewish Exiles in Wartime China*. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 2008.
10. ---. *Jewish Refugees in Shanghai: 1933-1947: A Selection of Documents*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co., 2018.
11. ---. *Jewish Exiles in Wartime China: Voices from Shanghai*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008.
12. Eisfelder, Horst, Peter. *Chinese Exile: My Years in Shanghai and Nanking*. Victoria: Makor Jewish Community Library, 2003.
13. Esposito, Elena. *Die Fiktion der wahrscheinlichen Realität*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag KG 2007.
14. Feng, Jinsheng, et al. *Jewish Refugees and Shanghai*. Shanghai: Shanghai Jiaotong UP, 2015.
15. Feuchtwang, Stephan. "Haunting Memory: The Extension of Kinship Beyond the Nation" in *Transnational Memory (Media and Cultural Memory / Medien und kulturelle Erinnerung)*. De Gruyter, 2014. Kindle Edition, pp. 271-86.

16. Finkelstein, Lilli. “Four Decades of My Life, Shanghai Jews Memoirs” in *Jewish People Remembering Shanghai* (犹太人忆上海) Trans. Zhang Jiazhe. Ed. National Political Consultative Committee of Cultural History and Learning (全国政协文史和学习委员会). Beijing: Chinawenshi Press, 2018.
17. Gao, Bei. *Shanghai Sanctuary: Chinese and Japanese Policy toward European Jewish Refugees during World War II*. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.
18. Harjes, Kirsten, and Tanja Nusser. “An Authentic Experience of History: Tourism in Ulrike Ottinger’s *Exil Shanghai*.” *Women in German Yearbook* 15 (1999): 247–263.
19. Heidegger, Martin. *The Question Concerning Technology, And Other Essays*. New York: Garland Pub., 1977.
20. Heinemann, E. Marlene. *Gender and Destiny: Women Writers and the Holocaust*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1986.
21. Hedgepeth et al. *Sexual Violence against Jewish Women during the Holocaust*. Waltham: Brandeis University Press; Hanover and London: UP of New England, 2010.
22. Hirsch, Marianne, and Valerie Smith. “From Feminism and Cultural Memory: An Introduction.” *Theories of Memory*. Rossington and Whitehead, pp. 222-29.
23. Hochstadt, Steve. *A Century of Jewish Life in Shanghai*. Edited by Steve Hochstadt. Boston, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2019.
24. Horowitz, Sara R. “Women in Holocaust Literature: Engendering Trauma Memory.” Eds. Dalia Ofer and Lenore J. Weizman. *Women in the Holocaust*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1998, pp. 364-77.
25. Huyssen, Andreas. Memory, Justice, and the Contemporary Epoch. In *The Collective Memory Reader*. Ed. Olick, Jeffery K et al., pp. 430-36.
26. Halbwachs, Maurice. *On Collective Memory*, edited and translated by Lewis A. Coser. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.
27. Jacobowitz, Florence. “Exil Shanghai.” The Free Library. 1998 CineAction 20 Jul. 2022 <https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Exil+Shanghai.-a030571593>.
28. Kaufmann, Jonathan. *The Last Kings of Shanghai: The Rival Jewish Dynasties that Helped Create Modern China*. New York: Viking, 2020.
29. Kranzler, David. *Japanese, Nazis & Jews: The Jewish Refugee Community of Shanghai, 1938-1945*. Yeshiva University Press, 1976.

30. Krasno, Rena. *Strangers Always: A Jewish Family in Wartime Shanghai*. Berkeley: Pacific View Press, 1992.
31. ---. *Once Upon a Time in Shanghai: A Jewish Woman's Journey through 20th Century China*. Beijing: China Intercontinental Press, 2008.
32. Kuhn, Helmut. "The Phenomenological Concept of 'Horizon.'" *Philosophical Essays in Memory of Edmund Husserl*, edited by Marvin Farber, Cambridge, MA, and London, England: Harvard University Press, 2013, pp. 106-123.
33. LaCapra, Dominick. *History and Memory after Auschwitz*. Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1998.
34. ---. *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. Baltimore: JHUP, 2014.
35. Langer, Lawrence L. "Gendered Suffering? Women in Holocaust Testimonies." Ofer and Weitzman, pp. 351-63.
36. ---. "From Memory's Time: Chronology and Duration in Holocaust Testimonies." *Theories of Memory*. Rossington and Whitehead, pp. 193-98.
37. Lee, Haiyan. "A Sino-Jewish Encounter, A Humanitarian Fantasy." *Verge: Studies in Global Asias*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Spring 2020), pp. 142-167.
38. Levi, Karen. *Love and Luck*. Washington: Opus Press, 2016.
39. Luhmann, Niklas. "The Future Cannot Begin: Temporal Structures in Modern Society." *Social Research* 43.1(1976): 130-52.
40. ---. "Describing the Future." *Observations on Modernity*. Trans. William Whobrey. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998, pp. 63-74.
41. ---. *Love as Passion: The Codification of Intimacy*. Trans. Jeremy Gaines and Doris. L. Jones. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012.
42. Manning, Kirsty. *The Song of the Jade Lily*. New York: William Morrow Paperbacks. 2019.
43. Maier-Katkin, Birgit. "Documentaries about Jewish Exiles in Shanghai: Witness Testimony and Cross-Cultural Public Memory Formation." *East Asian-German Cinema*. Routledge Studies in Cultural History, p. 100. Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition.
44. Medzini, Meron. *Under the Shadow of the Rising Sun: Japan and the Jews during the Holocaust Era*. Brighton: Academic Studies Press, 2016.

45. Nora, Pierre. "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire." *Representations*. Spring, 1989, No. 26, Special Issue: *Memory and Counter Memory* (Spring, 1989), pp. 7-24.
46. Olick, Jeffery K et al. *The Collective Memory Reader*. New York: Oxford UP, 2011.
47. Pan, Guang, et al. *The Jews in Shanghai*. Shanghai: Shanghai Pictorial Publishing House, 1995.
48. ---. *The Jews in China*. Beijing: China Intercontinental Press, 2005.
49. ---. *A Study of Jewish Refugees in China (1933-1945): Histories, Theories, and the Chinese Pattern*. Shanghai: Shanghai Jiaotong University Press, 2019.
50. ---. *Shanghai: A Haven for Holocaust Victims*. The Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme:  
<https://www.un.org/en/holocaustremembrance/docs/pdf/chapter6.pdf>
51. ---. "The Friendship and Acculturation in Adversity: On the Relationship between Jewish Refugees and Chinese." Ambrüster, et al. *Exil Shanghai 1938-1947: Jüdisches Leben in der Emigration*. Teetz: Hentrich & Hentrich, 2000, pp. 77-83.
52. Ranum, Orest. "The Refugees of Intimacy." *A History of Private Life, Vol. 3, Passions of the Renaissance*, edited by Roger Chartier et al., translated by Arthur Goldhammer, The Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1989, pp. 207-63.
53. Rickels, Laurence A. *Ulrike Ottinger: The Autobiography of Art Cinema*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008.
54. Ringelheim, Joan. "Thoughts about Women and the Holocaust." *Thinking the Unthinkable: Meanings of the Holocaust*. Ed. Roger S. Gottlieb. New York: Paulist Press, 1990, pp. 141-49.
55. Rothberg, Michael. *Multidirectional Memory*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009.
56. ---. *The Implicated Subject (Cultural Memory in the Present)*. Stanford University Press, 2019. Kindle Edition.
57. Rossington, Michael, et al. *Theories of Memory: A Reader*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 2007.
58. Sebald, W.G. "Jean Améry und Primo Levi." *Über Jean Améry*. Ed. Irene Heidelberger Leonard. Heidelberg: Carl Winter UP, 1990.
59. Tokayer, Marvin. *The Fugu Plan: The Untold Story of The Japanese and The Jews During World War II*. Gefen Publishing House, 1979. Kindle Edition.

60. Wang, Jian: *Shanghai Jewish Cultural Map*. Shanghai: Shanghai Brilliant Publishing House, 2017.
61. Wang, Ban. "Temporality, Memory, and Myth in Wang Anyi's Fiction." In *Illuminations from the Past: Trauma, Memory, and History in Modern China*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2004, pp. 124-41.
62. Wang Xiaoying, Wang Jianjun. *Survival in Shanghai*. ChinaVision, 2018.
63. Weber, Elisabeth. "Catastrophes: Afterlives of the Exceptionality Paradigm in Holocaust Studies." In *Probing the Ethics of Holocaust Culture*. Eds. Claudio Fogu, Wulf Kansteiner, and Todd Presner. Boston: Harvard UP, 2016, pp. 389-409.
64. Willens, Liliane. *Stateless in Shanghai*. Earnshaw Books. Kindle Edition.
65. Wu, Lin. *Youtai nü hai zai Shanghai (A Jewish Girl in Shanghai)*. 1<sup>st</sup> Edition. Shanghai: Shanghai wen yi chu ban she, 2012.
66. ---. *Youtai nü hai zai Shanghai (A Jewish Girl in Shanghai)*. Shanghai: Shanghai wen yi chu ban she, 2010.
67. Zhang, Yanhua, and Wang Jian. *Preserving the Shanghai Ghetto: Memories of Jewish Refugees in 1940's China*. Trans. Emrie Tomaiko. Encino: Bridge 21 Publication, 2016.
68. Zhang, Ruiyan, et al. *Youtairen yi shanghai. (犹太人忆上海)*. Beijing: Chinawenshi Publishing Press, 2018.

### **Archival Sources**

1. Shanghai Municipal Archive, Shanghai.
2. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC.
3. W. Michael Blumenthal Archive, Jewish Museum Berlin, Berlin.

### **Newspapers and Journals**

1. *Israel's Messenger*
2. *The Jewish News of Northern California*

### **Films and Documentaries**

1. *Shanghai Ghetto*. Dir. Amir Mann and Dana Janklowicz-Mann. Menemsha Entertainment, 2002.
2. *Survival in Shanghai*. Dir. Jianjun Wang. China Vision, 2018. Film.
3. *Exil Shanghai / Ein Film von Ulrike Ottinger*. Dir. Ulrike Ottinger. Berlin: Ulrike Ottinger Filmproduktion, 1997.
4. *A Jewish Girl in Shanghai*. Dr. Wang Genfa and Zhang Zhenhu. Shanghai: Shanghai Animation Film Studio and Shanghai Film Group Corporation, 2010.