

POSTSCRIPT

Katharina Galor

I was never going to return to Germany. I left when I was nineteen and had known for as long as I was able to think about the question of belonging that I would not stay in the country. Our parents—I have one sister, Agnes, who is three years older than I am—had raised us with a typical survivor and refugee mentality, teaching us about the uncertainties of life. We grew up knowing that Germany was most likely a temporary host country and that we should know multiple languages to prepare ourselves for potential moves and changes. These changes—multiple ones, it turned out, but voluntary rather than forced—would happen and take us to various corners of the earth. Agnes has lived in Belgium, France, Germany, Ivory Coast, and, for most of her adult life, Israel. I have lived in France, Germany, Israel, and the United States. Both of us are comfortable with a number of languages (English, French, German, Hebrew, and Hungarian), and though we still speak mostly German with each other, our relationship to Germany remains fraught with memories of our youth—in different ways, of course, but for similar reasons.

Speaking only for myself, I should state that my experiences of anti-Semitism while growing up in Germany, and particularly my memories of my father's stories about his and his family's incarceration in Auschwitz, are always with me. My intellectual and emotional self, as well as my private and professional lives, have been shaped by these events and the memories they created. They have determined the way I think about prejudice, racism, and violence; they have motivated my personal inquiries on how to think about identity, religion, history, and cultural heritage. And most important, they have formed my personal and professional dedication to Judaism and to the history of Israel/Palestine.

When I left Germany after completing my Abitur—the country's high school matriculation—I devoted my studies, teaching, and research to everything Jewish, trying to make sense of the characteristics for which my family and millions of others who had perished in the camps had been singled out by the Nazis. These inquiries, however, kept me far from studies of anti-Semitism and World War II. My interest was more in the origins and early history of Judaism, as seen, in particular, through the lens of visual and material culture.

It was not until my recent temporary move to Berlin that I became drawn to the Holocaust and to memory studies from an academic angle. Clearly, then, this book has a deeply personal dimension. Although my aim has been to leave my upbringing, experiences, and emotions on the side to examine the existing research, media coverage, and, most important, the voices of the many people we spoke to and interviewed, without a predetermined agenda, I realize that this is difficult, if not impossible, to do. All the same, I believe we have been able to do justice to a broad array of viewpoints and opinions on the matters we have confronted here.

My willingness to return to live in Germany after having spent more than thirty years in France, Israel, and the United States came foremost from my respect and love for my husband, Michael. He is of German Jewish descent; his mother, like me, was born in Düsseldorf. His parents and grandparents on both sides had very similar trajectories after escaping Nazi Germany, moving through France (his father's family), Belgium and France (his mother's family), then Cuba, and finally settling in New York, where his mother and father met and where Michael was born and raised. Although Michael and his family have their own share of difficult memories associated with Germany's persecution of the Jews and with the experience of exile and forced migration, their relationship with—and, in particular, *his* attitude toward—Germany and German culture have been very different from the connection (or the lack thereof) that my family and I have experienced. Although I had never been keen on acknowledging my “German roots,” when I met Michael I had to insist on them for the first time and struggle to define them. We have an ongoing friendly fight between us, trying to demonstrate who is more German Jewish: I, who was born and raised in Germany, or he, who was born and raised in New York and whose family spoke English, and occasionally French, at home. Not until recently did I truly understand why he, indeed, qualifies as the more “real” *Yekke* (Jew originating from Germany).

My parents left Romania and lived in France and Belgium before settling in Germany as refugees escaping communism in the early 1960s. My family's Austro-Hungarian background and their exposure to German culture and language as they were growing up in Transylvania made it relatively simple to obtain German citizenship after living in Düsseldorf as refugees for four years. Yet despite the ultimate change in their official status, they would always remain foreigners (*Ausländer*), and this, in combination with being Jewish, was not an easy position to be in in the Germany of the 1960s and 1970s I experienced as a child. My sister and I were both fluent in German and relatively integrated socially, but we never quite felt at home (me even less so than my

sister, who has used German throughout her career in Israel, first as a journalist and more recently as a German teacher).

Michael has dedicated his professional life to German and Austrian history and culture—in particular, to all that is musical (or unmusical) and Jewish. His interest and dedication and, indeed, passion for this area of cultural studies has also shaped his relationship to Germany and, more specifically, to Berlin. When he was offered the position of president of the American Academy in Berlin, I knew that this would be a most amazing fit for him with regard to his personal and scholarly interests. Over the years, I had tried to reexamine Germany through his lens and to grow beyond my childhood and family traumas. I did not want to prevent him from having this opportunity to live and work in Berlin, and I wanted to give myself another chance to reexamine my skewed relationship to Germany and to Germans.

Before Michael began his tenure as president of the American Academy, he spent three months in Berlin, he as a fellow of the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin (Berlin Institute for Advanced Studies) and I at the Berliner Antike-Kolleg. I remember sitting on the terrace of our apartment in Grunewald at the Villa Walther, overlooking one of Berlin's countless beautiful lakes. On a sunny but breezy afternoon, Daniel Boyarin, who was living in the same building at the time, joined me for coffee. We talked about our experiences in Germany as Jews and as scholars of Judaism. He gave me an "intense therapy session," as we both later humorously referred to the meeting. I shared my memories of growing up in Germany and my feelings of alienation due to the anti-Semitism and the xenophobia I had experienced. We spoke about the traumas of my family during the Nazi era and my lifelong difficulties feeling at home in my native country. He spoke about his affection for Berlin; his strong sense of belonging there; the prominent role Judaism and Hebrew were once again playing in the city; and the significant contributions Jews were able to make to contemporary German culture. I remember these months also for the inner dialogues I had with myself as I experienced Berlin with great enthusiasm, finding pleasure in discovering the city and in the numerous interesting people I was meeting while at the same time struggling with my gray memories, my reluctance to feel at home and comfortable, and my resistance to wanting to be a part of this place, this culture, and this country. At first I even resisted speaking German and had difficulty communicating in a language that I had shut down for so long. Somehow my discomfort vanished over time, and I not only learned to appreciate Berlin and the people I met, but I actually started to enjoy living in the city. The experience of having lived and worked in Berlin for some eighteen months has truly transformed my relationship with Germany and Ger-

mans, as well as how I think about the place Jews and Israelis have established for themselves in today's Germany.

Shortly after Michael and I arrived in Berlin, the September 2017 elections took place, which we followed with great attention. We, along with everyone we knew professionally and socially, were alarmed by the results—in particular, by the prominence the Alternative for Germany (AfD) had gained through its official entry into the Bundestag. We were also keenly aware of the political and public debates surrounding the influx of refugees and felt at once impressed with the efforts being made to accommodate and integrate these new populations and worried about the rising waves of xenophobia and racism. Our sense of feeling comfortable in Berlin was largely shaped by the fact that we were surrounded by friends and colleagues who were actively helping refugees, on both modest and ambitious scales; some privately and others in the context of institutionalized efforts. The few encounters and conversations I had with supporters of the AfD, specifically in the context of our field study for this book, proved a rough awakening from the privileged bubble we lived in and a reminder of Berlin's social reality in all of its complexity and diversity.

In many ways, though, the Germany I had left as a young adult had changed for the better, particularly with regard to how the Holocaust is dealt with, both publicly and privately. Clearly, much of what I experienced as a child and adolescent may not have been representative of Germany as a whole at the time. Anti-Semitic remarks were part of my upbringing, coming from my best friend, from schoolmates, and from the kids I played with in our building and on our street. The worst culprit, though, was a neighbor who threatened us and visiting family members and friends with verbal taunts, obscene and violent gestures, and even punctured tires. This harassment ended when he physically assaulted my father, who was returning from a stroll along the nearby Rhine with our mother. My parents reported the incident to the police. After the case was turned over to lawyers, the agreement reached was that the neo-Nazi perpetrator and his family would move away and my parents would not pursue the matter. Had I not known the details of my family's imprisonment in Auschwitz—not to mention the fact that my father was severely handicapped, both physically and emotionally, as a result of his deportation—these incidents I witnessed as a child would not have marked me as intensely as they did. What I also remember of my childhood in Germany is that in the nineteen years I lived there, I never met any German who knew about anyone in their families or among their friends who had had any sort of involvement with the Nazi regime. It often felt as if what my family had lived through belonged to a world to which only we—my family and our Jewish friends—had

access. The Germans seemed to have built a tight wall that cut them off from all past horrors. They seemed to have successfully distanced themselves from past crimes, and from their consequences and implied responsibilities.

The drastic changes I observed during my recent stay in Berlin had much to do with the way German society was grappling with the past openly and sincerely. I was deeply touched by the spaces Berlin and the Berliners had created—physical and intellectual—to explore and learn from the past. The city and the country as a whole have visibly taken on the difficult task of commemorating the horrors and cruelties of World War II. Germany is taking responsibility and has set itself the goal to never again to move in that direction. The Holocaust is tangible in most dimensions of the public sphere, and no citizen or even visitor can escape its lessons.

Among the many friendships I built during my extended Berlin visit, one became especially close. Early in our association, she disclosed to me that her father had been an officer in the *Waffen SS* and that he had played an active role in persecuting and executing thousands of Jews during the war. Her honesty in facing and sharing the suffering she has continued to face since she discovered her father's past touched me and, moreover, taught me that there are many ways to experience the traumas associated with Germany's genocide. Our traumas should not prevent us from acknowledging the pain of other individuals and communities.

Although I was deeply moved by the conscientious and sincere way Germans today seem to grapple with their history, I was also struck by how the Holocaust has been compartmentalized in much public discourse as a unique black hole or a failure that the nation recognizes and for which it takes responsibility. Officially and politically, Israel's existence has assumed a kind of redemptive force, no matter the cost and on whose account. Germans seem to feel that the existence, survival, and safety of Israel and its Jewish citizens counts among their prime responsibilities, particularly in light of the Holocaust, but there is no sense of accountability when it comes to the collateral damage. Official Germany, and most Germans, do not seem to extend their sense of responsibility to the Palestinian cause, either in the context of the Middle East or within the boundaries of their own country. Their self-awareness and generosity often seem to embrace all Jews and all Israelis, but the reach of this benevolence often appears to have very rigid boundaries. I repeatedly pondered why this generosity did not grant the same status to other minorities, particularly the ones who equally were victims of the war.

This said, I am well aware of my own prejudices and accumulated feelings about everything "German." My tendency to project my memories and personal

experiences onto all Germans without adequate differentiation has helped me to understand how many Palestinians have felt toward all Israelis as a result of their exposure to military occupation and racial discrimination. Although I continuously strove to only see the individual as we conducted our interviews in Berlin, and to disregard preconceived ideas and emotions, I became aware of my inner tension when we interviewed Palestinian refugees from Gaza. I realized how generous it was for a Palestinian to meet with me, an Israeli working with another Palestinian, and to be willing to trust me and open up about extremely sensitive issues. I also recognized my mixed feelings of wonder, pain, and gratitude to be able to have a conversation with a Palestinian from Gaza. While I regularly visit the West Bank and the many friends and colleagues who live and work there, my attempts to visit Gaza have failed. As a result, my knowledge of Palestinians from Gaza, is largely limited to what I read in articles or books, or see in films and videos. I must admit that I did feel rather taken with the beautiful, sensitive, and open minds I encountered. All of them were highly motivated, intelligent, and accomplished people eager to be recognized for what Palestinians can offer to society and the world if they are given the chance.

The one incident during my sojourn in Berlin that really shook me to the core was the withdrawal of Sa'ed's invitation to speak at the Jewish Museum Berlin. This event and its outcome, which we also incorporated into our discussion, exemplifies for me one of the most dangerous aspects of Germans' blind support for Israel. The very personal dimension unsettled something in me that almost undid the good I had uncovered in contemporary Germany and the positive developments I had noted in the public discourse and among civil society with regard to World War II, specifically compared with what I remembered from the 1970s and early 1980s. How can it be that an educated German will shut out the voice of a peace-seeking and loving Palestinian who has dedicated his entire life to building bridges and discerning the light, even within his fiercest enemy? How can it be that this kind of action is possible after all this introspection within German society and its commitment not to racially profile and exclude certain populations? Perhaps I am not doing justice to the many people who approached me about the incident and criticized Peter Schäfer, the museum's director, for complying with Israeli Ambassador Jeremy Issacharoff's demand to cancel Sa'ed's lecture. Schäfer's words still resonate with me when I think of the phone call I received just a couple of days before Sa'ed was to speak. He said, "Sa'ed may be a wonderful person, a great scholar and speaker. But I have no choice." This reluctance to take responsibility for an action of great consequence was difficult for me, as a Jew with direct ties to the Holocaust, to hear from a German with authority.

Apart from this incident, I felt safe and comfortable in Berlin, thanks to numerous people and institutions, among them the students and colleagues I met during my fellowships at the Selma Stern Zentrum Jüdische Studien Berlin-Brandenburg (Selma Stern Center for Jewish Studies Berlin-Brandenburg) and at the Einstein-Zentrum Chronoi (Einstein Center Chronoi); as a guest professor at the Theologische Fakultät of Humboldt University (Faculty of Theology of the Humboldt University); and during numerous visits to the Jewish Museum Berlin. I enjoyed the endless variety of exhibits in the city's many galleries and museums (of which there are still more than two hundred I never visited), and I appreciated, perhaps for the first time in my life, the many fabulous theaters that exist in Berlin. I have made numerous friends whom I hope will remain in my life for many more years to come. I am looking forward to regular visits to Berlin in the future, and I hope I will be able to experience the day when the lessons of the past truly open the hearts of all its citizens to people of all faiths and origins.

Sa'ed Atshan

I must admit that I initially did not want to undertake this research project. In fact, I previously thought that I would never set foot in Germany. Although I do not see myself as a victim of the Holocaust, I nonetheless have become sensitive to the trauma that so many Israeli soldiers and settlers inherited as military occupation was imposed on me, my family, and others as I grew up in the West Bank. The German language always gave me chills, and I did not envision wanting to be present in the land where the systematic slaughter of millions of people was rendered so efficient. At the Ramallah Friends School, Palestine's Quaker school, I read Elie Wiesel's *Night* and *The Diary of Anne Frank*, narratives that have always been with me.

Unfortunately, it was not until I was exposed to spaces such as Swarthmore College that I was able to cultivate deep and meaningful relationships with Jewish and Israeli people, beyond the reified historical figure of the subject of Nazi military occupation or the Israeli settlers illegally occupying Palestinian Territories or the soldier brutalizing Palestinian civilians. I learned the importance of humanizing all people, even as we criticize systems and structures of power and injustice. At Swarthmore, my best friend was Jewish American, and I was only one of two non-Jewish people in my closest social circle.

One of my classmates and dear friends shared with me, during our first days at college, her experience escaping anti-Semitism in Belarus. She de-

scribed the childhood dress she was wearing and the bow in her hair the day she and her family left their apartment for good after discovering that one of their neighbors had informed others, who were dangerous, that there was a Jewish family in their building. She experienced betrayal early on in her life from that person, a neighbor she had trusted and who had previously complimented her for her dress and pink hair bow.

Over the years, I have asked myself what I was supposed to do with these stories of anti-Jewish prejudice that I heard from people who are dear to me. I have asked myself what role I would play in addressing the fact that I have witnessed real forms of anti-Semitism in familiar and unfamiliar contexts, here and globally. It is unsatisfying to me when others suggest that concerns about anti-Semitism should be muted by drawing on arguments such as that Arabs are Semites, or that a person in question is Jewish and therefore cannot be anti-Semitic, or that allying with the cause against anti-Semitism could have negative repercussions. As a Quaker I feel strongly that anti-Semitism should be acknowledged and named in all of its forms and that intellectual spaces should continue to be created to historicize its various manifestations. Christians, and people of all faiths, have a responsibility to address and resist the anti-Semitism that has been inherited in theological interpretations within my tradition on questions related to Judaism.

As a result, in my capacity now as a professor at Swarthmore I co-organized, with Rabbi Michael Ramberg, Swarthmore's Jewish adviser, a large symposium on anti-Semitism in September 2018. We brought together ten distinguished figures who are thought leaders on resisting anti-Semitism, in the past and present and in the United States, Europe, and the Middle East/North Africa. This symposium provided an opportunity to demonstrate clear, unequivocal opposition to anti-Semitism. So many Jewish individuals, communities, and organizations have stood in solidarity with others like me as a gay person and a Palestinian. Jewish people have always supported countless others across differences, in the past and present. Reciprocity matters. I want to stand with my Jewish sisters and brothers in love and solidarity.

Even before I realized that organizing such a conference should be a priority for me, I began to recognize that I needed to be more open to shifting my relationship to Germany and how I understand the country's relationship to anti-Semitism and other forms of discrimination. I figured that if Katy [Katharina] could overcome her hesitation about returning to her country of birth after she and her family had experienced unspeakable horrors there simply because of their Jewish identity, then I certainly should embrace spending quality time in Berlin and conducting this research project with her.

I quickly found not only that our examination of the German-Israeli-Palestinian moral triangle was a tremendously important intellectual and political endeavor, but also that Germany has much to teach the world about ownership of past crimes, commemoration, taking responsibility, and dismantling systems and ideologies of hatred and violence. How far Germany has come in its relationship with its Jewish and other victims is truly admirable, and I was deeply moved to watch Katy embrace this, as well. The words of Eli Wiesel were with me throughout my time in Germany: “Because I remember, I despair. Because I remember, I have the duty to reject despair.”

Although we cannot bring back to life the 90 percent of Katy’s family who perished in Auschwitz and elsewhere, the memories of their souls can inspire humanitarianism in the present and future. She demonstrated that to me. From the commemorative plaque over the entrance to the building where she lived in Berlin she discovered that it housed a private music school that opened its door to twenty-five Jewish teachers and one hundred Jewish students who were expelled from Berlin’s main conservatory as the conservatory was Aryanized and who were later deported and killed. It struck me that during their stay in Berlin, she and her husband, Michael, hosted a house concert and fundraiser in their home for a recently established music school for refugee children from the Middle East. These mostly Arab refugee children who were given a safe home in Germany were brought together in the same place where Jewish children had been robbed of their homes and lives.

These are the types of contexts that ultimately made me become so attached to Berlin. Because we met most of our interviewees in their homes or in cafés or parks near their homes, I was able to see Berlin’s neighborhoods across the city. I discovered an exciting urban center, sprawling, well governed, green, relatively prosperous, affordable, and cosmopolitan. I tried many of the world’s cuisines at authentic restaurants managed by people from their countries of origin. I loved hearing so much Arabic and Turkish. I appreciated a society contending with issues of migration and flows of refugees in profound ways. I cherished seeing enthusiastic cyclists and bike lanes being taken seriously; a public transportation system run on a sort of honor system where you almost never have to present or use your ticket, and people with instruments riding and playing while passengers generously fill up their donation cups. I found it brilliant that poor citizens can pick up plastic items and be paid for helping to recycle them. I also remember being startled after my first talk at Humboldt University when the professors and students started knocking on their tables. I learned for the first time that this is what Germans do instead of clapping. I then explained how my students in the United States can snap

their fingers during lectures and events when they are positively moved. The Germans got a kick out of our cross-cultural exchange.

Perhaps what made me feel most welcome in Berlin was my reception as a gay person in this incredibly queer city. I had not known that Berlin was super LGBTQ-friendly and that the queer scene was so exhilarating and open to all kinds of people, or that Berlin was home to the world's first queer social movement. I was cognizant of the fact, while in Berlin, that there was a period of time, not that long ago, when openly (or not so open) LGBTQ people like me were disappeared. Our bodies were marked for elimination by the Nazi regime. Humans—people of conscience—have since worked tirelessly in that same city to ensure that its spaces form a complete break from the past, where people like me can experience pleasure and pride instead of existential fear. Even as I write this, I realize how dramatic that transition truly was and is. This is not to say that Berlin is a queer utopia. But the queer people I met, the queer spaces I traversed, and the knowledge that the Gay Pride parade attracts one million people all made me feel welcome, affirmed, and at home. Berlin is a city that not only tolerates me but embraces me as a queer subject. I can carve out a queer life there, with my dignity intact. Few cities on the planet can compete with this, in my opinion. I have never felt safer as a queer person than I did across Berlin—not even in San Francisco.

Yet I also asked why the organizers of Berlin's annual Gay Pride parade must help circulate countless stickers with Israeli flags. I mourned the fact that while I am embraced as a gay person I am largely disavowed as a Palestinian in Berlin. My voice, life experiences, and struggle are too inconvenient and too disruptive of the hegemonic mainstream narratives that have become so dominant there as they relate to Israel/Palestine. I was heartened in the lectures I gave, the organizations I traversed, the interviews I conducted, and the social exchanges that were possible. I was pleased to discover that there are grassroots and civil society actors, young people, and others (mainly in private) who are open to thinking more critically and with more nuance about Germany's relationship with Israelis and Palestinians. As a Palestinian, I did not choose to be born to a people who for seven decades have experienced systematic violence and oppression at the hands of a state that attempts to justify its gross violations of human rights largely by referencing the German Holocaust.

Hearing Palestinians, Arabs, Middle Easterners, and Muslims in Berlin describe the xenophobia and racism they face, coupled with silencing, was heart-breaking. I was proud to learn about their accomplishments in Germany but also dismayed by the climate of fear and censorship that they face. One person after another described the professional suicide they would face if they were to speak

publicly about their views regarding Israel/Palestine or Germany's relationship to the conflict. Over the course of our interviews there were painful moments in which a Palestinian would make an anti-Semitic remark and a number of cases in which Germans, or sometimes Israelis, would look me in the eye, knowing that I was Palestinian, and still utter some of the most insensitive and racist anti-Arab comments I have ever heard. Fortunately, I was able to remain calm and professional, and so was Katy. She always offered invaluable support that lifted my spirit after these interviews. I worried while I was in Berlin when I heard about potential negative consequences for Palestinians if Germany's economy did not experience growth, or about any further rise or emboldening of the AfD, or about the U.S. ambassador to Germany (who celebrated his gay husband while proclaiming his status as Donald Trump's "right hand man" in Europe) and his agenda of supporting conservative movements in Germany, or about Stephen Bannon speaking openly about shifting gears to Europe and emboldening the populists and white nationalists in various countries there.

I will forever be grateful to Katy for opening her world in Germany to me and providing me with the privilege of undertaking this project together. Despite the political landmines involved in navigating these sensitive issues, my soul has been enriched by meeting so many progressive Israelis, like her, who work toward equality and freedom for Palestinians after being immersed in Europe's largest Palestinian community. I feel deeply connected to these Israelis and Palestinians and hope that I will be able to return one day in a capacity that can help empower the Palestinians. I aspire to contribute beyond giving a voice, through this work, to a people who identify as being denied the opportunity to find and use their voices openly. I also look forward to this book being born as a tangible symbol of an Israeli-Palestinian partnership in a world that is forcefully and persistently trying to drive us as far apart as possible.

We opened this book with a reference to Michael Rothberg's *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, and we end it with that remarkable text. Rothberg's analysis of W. E. B. Du Bois's reflections on his visit to Warsaw after the war is deeply moving. Rothberg refers to Du Bois's writing in *Souls of Black Folk* about the "Sorrow Songs" African American slaves sang as messages to the world: "Through all the sorrow of the Sorrow Songs there breathes a hope—a faith in the ultimate justice of things. The minor cadences of despair change often to triumph and calm confidence. Sometimes it is faith in life, sometimes a faith in death, sometimes assurance of boundless justice in some fair world beyond. But whichever it is, the meaning is always clear: that sometime, somewhere, men will judge men by their souls and not by their skins."¹