UCLPRESS

Jewish Historical Studies
Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England

Article:

Archives and the Kindertransport: new discoveries and their impact on research

Jennifer Craig-Norton [1,*]

How to cite: Craig-Norton, J. 'Archives and the Kindertransport: new discoveries and their impact on research.' *Jewish Historical Studies*, 2020, 51(*1*), pp. 1-15. DOI: https://doi.org/10.14324/111.444.jhs.2020v51.002.

Published: 27 April 2020

Peer Review:

This article has been peer reviewed through the journal's standard double blind peer-review, where both the reviewers and authors are anonymised during review.

* Correspondence: drjcraignorton@gmail.com
[1] Independent scholar

DOI: 10.14324/111.444.jhs.2020v51.002

Archives and the Kindertransport: new discoveries and their impact on research

JENNIFER CRAIG-NORTON

The Kindertransport is one of the most renowned migration movements in British history but, despite its prominence in public memory, it has been the subject of surprisingly few scholarly works. Most of those that have been published – virtually all within the past decade or so – have not been based on archival documentation from Kinder case files but rather on the administrative records of the Refugee Children's Movement (RCM or Movement) and the "egodocumentation" of former Kindertransportees, most of it collected and published since the mid-1990s. The first of these sources has provided detailed information about the origins of the Kindertransport, the mechanics of emigrating children, and the administration of their aftercare, though only from the perspective of the largest of the voluntary organizations devoted to bringing unaccompanied children to Great Britain. Kinder testimonies and memoirs provide unique and personal perspectives on the child refugee experience, but inherent limitations in these sources present historians and other researchers with numerous challenges in constructing comprehensive accounts of the Kindertransport. Until recently, the missing piece – complex archival sources representing multiple voices – has been virtually absent from academic discourse on the Kindertransport. The discovery of several unknown archival collections and the recent opening up of previously inaccessible records can transform our understanding of many aspects of the child migration movement, contributing to a more nuanced and inclusive historiography.

For decades, researchers have been stymied by a lack of access to the archival sources that would help them construct more complete histories and moderate their reliance on memory documentation. The thousands of case files (or what remains of them) held by the RCM's successor agency, World Jewish Relief, have until recently been closed to researchers. Since mid-2019, these records have been made available on a limited basis

to approved researchers, which is a welcome development for Kindertransport scholarship. However, even this newly accessible archive has limitations, for these files contain no original correspondence but only administrative forms that summarize contacts with the children and their caregivers. Much can be gleaned from these logs of contact, but they do not provide the kinds of insights that can be extracted from the original correspondence on which the entries were based.

The question of what became of the original documentation in the RCM case files has never been fully resolved. Judith Baumel-Schwartz, whose 2012 book *Never Look Back: The Jewish Refugee Children in Great Britain, 1938–1945* is perhaps the definitive account of the Kindertransport's origins and the operations of the RCM, was told several decades ago that much of the RCM documentation was destroyed in the 1950s because former Kinder who had reached powerful positions wished to efface all traces of their refugee pasts.[1] Conversely, the Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR) maintained that the original correspondence and most other records in the files were destroyed more recently because they "became too voluminous to continue storing."[2] Both of these explanations speak to the wilful and seemingly unjustified destruction of invaluable documentation. However, the records of the Worthing Refugee Committee, an independent organization that coordinated with the RCM, may point to a less malign explanation that can be traced to the perilous conditions of wartime Britain. In the minutes of a 1940 meeting, the Worthing Committee secretary noted that it was the Movement's desire "that in the event of an invasion, documents and lists of names should be destroyed" and only "an abbreviated summary of information" be maintained in the children's dossiers.[3] This short entry suggests that fears about the identity of Jewish children and families falling into German hands may have had something to do with the decision to begin preserving only logs of contact and possibly explains the destruction of a great deal of original Kinder documentation early in the Second World War.

1 Judith Tydor Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back: The Jewish Refugee Children in Great Britain, 1938–1945* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2012).

2 Email correspondence with the AJR shared with author, 2 April 2012.

3 Minutes of the 49th meeting of the [Worthing] Executive Committee, 25 March 1940, 2–3, West Sussex Records Office, Mss. 27809/107-9. For a more detailed discussion of the lost/destroyed RCM documentation see Jennifer Craig-Norton, *The Kindertransport: Contesting Memory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019), 15–19. Much of the discussion here of archival sources is drawn from research for this book.

It is clear, however, that the Movement's desire for such documentation to be destroyed was not carried out by all the RCM's regional offices. Somewhat inexplicably, a small trace of it has been preserved and is available in the public domain, though it has remained largely untouched by Kindertransport researchers. Among the vast collection of Central British Fund (CBF) administrative documents that were microfilmed in the 1980s, including the often cited administrative documents of the Movement, are approximately 1600 pages of case records from the RCM's Birmingham regional committee. Most of this material, reflecting the experiences of about 150 Kindertransportees, is limited to case cards and logs of contact, but there are also reports and original correspondence in the case files of several dozen children that provide a glimpse of the rich variety of documentation that once existed for all the child refugees overseen by the RCM.[4] Sadly, my research has also uncovered evidence that even the originals of this microfilmed material were subsequently discarded, which lends credence to claims that much of this documentation was destroyed in the postwar period.[5]

Regardless of the actual reasons for its destruction, the loss of original documentation in the RCM records highlights the importance of several other collections that I discovered in the course of research for my book *The Kindertransport: Contesting Memory* (2019). One of these collections, part of the vast Solomon Schonfeld archive held at the University of Southampton, records the experiences of more than a hundred German-born children of Polish parentage who were expelled from Germany on 28/29 October 1938 in the so-called Polenaktion and subsequently brought to the United Kingdom on three Kindertransports from Gdynia, Poland, by a small and largely unknown organization called the Polish Jewish Refugee Fund (PJRF or Polish Fund). These dossiers, containing more than eight thousand pages of correspondence, photographs, reports, school and employment records, entry cards, and other documents add to Kindertransport scholarship the evidence so long lacking: a body of contemporaneous writings from a variety of actors and voices rarely heard in Kindertransport literature.

Two other collections at the University of Southampton also contain similar documentation, and these case files, along with the RCM records

4 Archives of the Central British Fund, 1933–1960, Part 3, File 301, Reels 65–7 (hereafter CBF/301/reel/item); these microfilmed documents are available at the University of Southampton and the Wiener Holocaust Library, London.

5 Craig-Norton, *Kindertransport*, 18.

on microfilm and those recently made available to researchers, hold the prospect of changing Kindertransport scholarship dramatically. A separate collection of PJRF files contains an additional set of Polenaktion Kinder case files and the papers of the West London Synagogue (WLS) also contain Kindertransportees' dossiers.[6] This Liberal Jewish congregation raised substantial donations to sponsor more than a hundred Kindertransportees and paid for their education, training, and re-emigration. Although not a separate refugee organization like the PJRF, the WLS's Hospitality Committee corresponded with the refugee committees with whom their wards had been placed, their boarding schools, hostels and foster parents, and with the children and their parents. The experience of these children was exceptional in some respects, notably in that most were placed in boarding schools rather than with foster parents, the parents of nearly sixty per cent of them had also emigrated by 1939, and many were reunited with their children before war's end. While some aspects of both the WLS and PJRF cohorts are unique, their case files provide significant new insights into Kinder experience that cannot be found in other types of sources. When juxtaposed with Kinder testimony and the evidence from the more limited RCM records, it is clear that in most respects the refugee lives of the WLS and Polish Kinder are similar to those of other Kindertransportees, making these archives an important source for adding depth and nuance to our understanding of the Kindertransport experience.

This archival documentation is largely comprised of the case files and correspondence of a variety of refugee committees and is concerned with the children's immigration and aftercare. While these records do not contain the private writings and correspondence of Kinder and their families, they nevertheless represent a range of voices that have often been silent in Kindertransport literature, including the children, their caretakers, teachers, guardian agencies, relatives, and parents. These records both supplement and contest Kindertransport narratives that have been built exclusively on the documentation of the RCM, and add important new information about the organizations' treatment of religion, the children's education, their physical, mental, and emotional health, the attitude of carers and guardian agencies, and many other issues.

These archival sources also complement and offer counterpoints to

6 See University of Southampton, Hartley Library Ms. 140/A2049 and Ms. 190/AJ390 (hereafter USHL/Ms.).

the Kinder memory records that have provided a basis for much of the Kindertransport scholarship produced in the past two decades. The methodological, theoretical, and ethical challenges posed by testimony, memoir, and other egodocumentation, especially that recorded by child survivors of trauma, are well known and have been extensively discussed in numerous studies on memory and oral history. Space does not allow for their reiteration here but a fundamental feature of such sources is the mediation that occurs in the process of recording memories. Factors such as temporality, composure/discomposure, intersubjectivity, age, trauma, and the agendas of testimony-gathering institutions among others have profound effects on the production of memory documentation.

Additionally, it is appropriate to make a few observations related specifically to Kinder memory that highlight the contribution of archival materials to Kindertransport historiography. While Kinder often record detailed memories of their refugee experiences, few recall much about the refugee organizations and personnel who were making crucial decisions about their lives, leaving large gaps in our understanding of the interactions between the voluntary agencies and the children in their care. Similarly, while most former child refugees remember something about their carers, even the most willing interviewees with the clearest of memories are unable to provide the carers' perspectives for the historical record – or comment on the problems and challenges their carers encountered. Additionally, since Kinder testimony and memoir has, in the main, been recorded and collected when the former refugee children were in late middle or older age, the letters they wrote to refugee organizations and caregivers while under their supervision bring their authentic children's voices back into the discourse and provide a unique glimpse into their feelings, goals, and problems while they were still refugees, reintroducing details and relationships often lost to time and memory. Finally, it is important to remember that testifiers are self-selected and their output may not be a wholly representative sample of Kinder experience.

While Kinder memory accounts present some challenges to historians, they have also provided the basis for much of what we know about the Kindertransport experience and can be utilized highly effectively along with newly discovered archival sources to construct a more comprehensive historiography. As my own research has demonstrated, archival sources can confirm and substantiate many commonly reported aspects of Kinder experience such as the exploitation of girls as unpaid domestics and the imperatives of gratitude that were explicitly and implicitly demanded of

refugee children. Conversely, memory accounts are sometimes contested by case file documentation, demanding a critical evaluation of both sources that synthesizes the conflicting information to enhance understanding of both memory and archive. Finally, the archive presents an opportunity to fill in the gaps in Kinder memory and to resurrect long-lost and forgotten connections that were once vital to many child refugees as they navigated their acculturation and coming of age in an alien land without parental or familial guidance.

Across all the archival collections, the documentation reflects four main constituencies – refugee organizations, carers, children, and their parents – and their correspondence represents an opportunity to forge new understandings about each of these groups. While it is impossible to cover the archives' full range of revelations here, a few examples from my own research can provide a snapshot of the findings that can be extracted from each group of correspondents. Among voluntary organizations for example, correspondence reveals that a complex web of agencies worked to bring children into the UK and took part in their aftercare. While the RCM at least nominally looked after the majority of the children, many others, including the PJRF, emigrated children, placed them in foster care and hostels, liaised with carers, provided both financial and material maintenance for them, and made crucial decisions about their education, training, employment, health care, and moral and spiritual guidance. Others, like the WLS, had a more limited role, financially guaranteeing children and providing support for education and training, while maintaining close contact with them and helping them with re-emigration.

Several important findings emerge from the correspondence between these agencies and other Kindertransport actors, including the paternalistic, class-inflected, and often gendered attitudes that significantly affected their interactions with and decisions about the children in their care. Correspondence in the PJRF records, for example, shows that young men and women were expected to set aside any professional or advanced educational ambitions, learn a trade, and become self-supporting as soon as possible. In discussing the aspirations of a bright and talented young teenager who had long dreamed of becoming an architect, the General Secretary of the PJRF, Elsley Zeitlyn, wrote to the Worthing Refugee Committee, which was overseeing the boy's care, that "As far as my memory serves me, he shows no special ability to justify this Fund incurring the very great responsibility involved in seconding this

boy's desires. . . . My own ideal is to have the boys taught a handicraft rather than a profession".[7] Innumerable examples throughout the archival case files corroborate the finding that refugees were considered fortunate to have been "saved" and must, as Zeitlyn believed, not be spoiled but learn "to see life as it is".[8] In most cases, this meant accepting "handicraft and homecraft" vocations rather than pursuing professional desires. Fortunately for the aspiring architect, the Worthing Committee advocated for his enrolment in an arts school and the Polish Fund reluctantly conceded to this appeal. This interaction also points to the insights regarding inter-agency relations provided by these archival sources. The number of organizations and committees working with Kindertransportees has generally been little known or understood, and the correspondence among these agencies is invaluable in constructing a more complete picture of Kinder aftercare.

The documents from the various committees make it clear that as voluntary organizations their funds were chronically scarce and financial resources had to be apportioned carefully. For the RCM and the Polish Fund this meant little or no money was to be expended on education past school-leaving age, which was fourteen at the time. The WLS had different priorities, and many of the children they sponsored stayed in school past this age (which required the payment of school fees) and the most promising were even afforded the opportunity to take university entrance examinations and attend higher education. However, even this more enlightened and liberal attitude towards the education of refugees was circumscribed by ingrained ideas about class. As one of the secretaries of the WLS Hospitality Committee wrote to a representative of the RCM, "Our policy has depended entirely on the ability and cultural background of each child. For the children of the professional class, we are trying to provide a good education up to School Certificate standard. For those, who would have gone to work early had they remained at home, we are finding jobs at 14 or 15".[9] Lists of the children sponsored by this committee include a column labelled "class", variously described as "good", "middle and "professional".[10] It is important to understand the attitudes embedded in such documents. Without parents to guide, inspire, and advocate for them, refugee children were at the mercy of the refugee organizations

7 Elsley Zeitlyn to Dorothy Thornycroft, 9 February 1940, USHL/Ms. 183/563/F2.
8 Elsley Zeitlyn to Mayer Marks, 8 March 1939, USHL/Ms. 183/575/F4.
9 Berenice d'Avigdor to Miss Tilling, 14 July 1941, USHL/Ms. 140/A2049/95/32.
10 USHL/Ms. 140/A2049/94/25.

whose members' entrenched beliefs about class, culture, indebtedness, and foreignness played a decisive part in crucial decisions about education and training that had life-long impacts on the children in their care.

These archival collections are also crucial to investigating the refugee organizations' handling of the children's Jewish heritage and faith, a subject that cannot be fully explored through Kinder testimony alone. Former child refugees can speak authoritatively about their own religious lives, but they were not privy to the voluntary organizations' policy decisions or to the communications among agencies and between organizations and carers – communications that help to bring the religious controversies surrounding the Kindertransport into clearer view. Using traditional sources, scholars such as Paula Hill and Judith Baumel-Schwartz have argued that the RCM's placement policies resulted in a large number of Jewish children becoming estranged from their religious heritage and faith.[11] Archival sources not only validate these arguments but also substantiate them with a wealth of new evidence from the case files' correspondence.

Explicitly Jewish committees such as the Polish Fund and the WLS's made sure that their Kindertransportees were initially placed in Jewish settings, but their efforts to preserve the children's connections with Judaism were often challenged by mandatory wartime evacuations in which children were billeted in non-Jewish homes. The children's case files in these collections document the ways in which such organizations strove to keep their wards connected to their Judaism, though these efforts were imperfect and often ineffective. This is highlighted by a case involving the baptism of three children brought over by the PJRF that became notorious in the Anglo-Jewish community. As a representative of the Board of Deputies of British Jews who visited the children prior to their conversion reported, "More than one attempt has been made to transfer the children to a Jewish home, but the attempts have been . . . somewhat maladroit and ill-co-ordinated. The attempts were resisted by the children themselves, and the foster-parents and the local authorities are also antagonistic to removal".[12]

The Movement's placement of more than half its Kindertransportees

11 See Baumel-Schwartz, *Never Look Back*, 165–72, 199–214, and Paula Hill, "Anglo-Jewry and the Refugee Children 1938–1945" (Ph.D. thesis, Royal Holloway University of London, 2002).

12 Leo Elton, "Précis of a specimen case (The case of the Talaton Children)", 27 December 1943, USHL/Ms. 183/674/F3.

with non-Jewish families, including those with explicitly conversionist motivations, and its delayed response to concerns over proselytization and the loss of Jewish children to Judaism is well documented in the RCM records from Birmingham. In this collection, correspondence with foster families and notations on contact logs make it clear that many carers resented it when the Movement began raising religious concerns. Requests that foster families allow Kinder to receive religious instruction, which in most cases did not occur before 1942, were often met with hostility and even outright refusal, as in this response from a Baptist foster mother raising a young Kindertransportee whom she had taken in when he was three years old: "I trust that by now you have decided to leave the religious education of Peter Baronowitz to the one who has housed, clothed and fed him for nearly three and a quarter years. . . . Nothing was mentioned about Religious training by your Movement when the [child was] first taken by me . . . it seems rather mean . . . to spring the subject so suddenly upon me".[13] The foster mother wrote that Peter's mother in Germany knew the family were Baptists and though she had never given them explicit permission to raise Peter in their religion, to the foster mother, "silence was consent".[14] Despite pressing their case for more than a year, the Movement failed to make any headway with the foster mother and at some point the boy's religious affiliation was changed on his records from Jewish to Protestant.[15]

The same set of archival documents reveals that a significant number of children had been placed with Christadelphian families, most of whom were frankly conversionist and who resisted allowing their foster children to take part in any Jewish religious instruction. These placements proved to be so uniquely troublesome that a Birmingham welfare officer referred to them as her "Religious specials". The Movement had such little success in preventing these children from being converted that near the end of the war the RCM General Secretary, Dorothy Hardisty, wrote: "The Movement possibly made a mistake in the beginning in not understanding how impossible it would be for a child to live in a Christadelphian household without sharing its religious life, and in connection with the children under the Christadelphian Community it has been difficult to get over an initial mistake".[16] Although she limited her remorse to the children

13 CBF/301/65/250-1.
14 CBF/301/65/258.
15 CBF/301/65/169.
16 CBF/301/67/1687.

placed with Christadelphians, Jewish children in a variety of non-Jewish placements were similarly estranged from their religious heritage, both actively through proselytization and passively through lack of contact with Jewish communities and teachers. The archival record has much to contribute to our knowledge of the ways in which the refugee organizations handled issues of religion and other challenges of aftercare, contesting narratives that focus solely on the efforts of the RCM and deepening our understanding of the ways in which the voluntary organizations interacted with one another, with the carers, and with the Kinder themselves.

Similarly, new and challenging insights about the role of carers in Kindertransportees' lives can be gleaned from the archival record. Dominant narratives of the Kindertransport, which have been constructed with little information from carers themselves, tend to assume that while there were a few inadequate foster parents, most were motivated by altruism and provided warm and loving homes. The archival documentation complicates this narrative significantly and supplements Kinder memories of care. In testimony, Kinder often speculate on the motivations of those who took them in, and many of them believed that altruism was not the primary impulse. But Kindertransportees' understanding of those who fostered them was necessarily mediated by age, feelings of gratitude, dependency, length of stay, and lack of knowledge about agreements between foster parents and refugee organizations, among other factors. For example, memory documentation indicates that most Kinder were not aware that their foster parents received money for their maintenance, though the archival record confirms that the majority of foster parents did request such payments and, for some, it appeared to be the primary motivating factor for taking in refugee children. Other motivations that emerge from the correspondence of foster parents include the longing of childless couples to have a family, the desire for community approbation, the quest for unpaid household help, and, as noted earlier, the impulse to convert Jewish children to Christianity. Additionally, the determination to assimilate and anglicize refugee children, effacing their foreignness and sometimes even their Jewishness, is strongly evidenced in the case file correspondence.

Archival evidence also shows that many foster parents had limited patience for the Kindertransportees' problem behaviours brought on by separation and trauma, including bedwetting, and a significant number abdicated their responsibility for the children they had agreed to take into their homes. Many of these findings are present in the case of Peter

Baronowitz, whose foster mother insisted on raising him as a Baptist. After his arrival was delayed, she wrote impatiently to the Movement that "There really is a grand time waiting here for Peter, if only his parents knew it . . . he will have the time of his life . . . Do please help me. I'm tired of people saying 'Got your little refugee yet?'"[17] Here, the foster mother indicated a need for community approbation and a certain insensitivity to the agonies of a distant family making the wrenching decision to send their toddler away to live with strangers. This foster mother's copious correspondence also revealed a strong sense of possessiveness and attachment to Peter, so it came as a shock to the Movement when in June 1945 she asked about tracing Peter's mother in Europe and abruptly announced she would "rather be relieved of the responsibility now".[18] Even though Peter had lived with her for more than six years, he was sent to an orphanage for the remainder of his childhood. As the archival record attests, many children were similarly relinquished by their foster families, experiencing multiple upheavals and the attendant insecurity and emotional distress caused by such moves.

Of course, the archives also uncover some mutually satisfying fostering relationships and evidence of foster parents who took little or no financial aid, who treated Kindertransportees as their own children, and who brought them into their homes for humanitarian reasons. The case files also provide a basis for examining a number of unexplored aspects of caregiving, including various models of fostering. The evidence shows that there were distinct differences between children's fostering experiences in strangers' homes, in the homes of relatives, and in the hospitality provided in evacuation billets. Archival sources also reveal the importance of non-custodial caregivers in the Kindertransportees' daily lives and expand our understanding of aftercare roles. The case files show that actors such as educators, hostel staff, community members, and representatives of local refugee committees played significant roles as caregivers, providing support, guidance, and mentorship to parentless children, though these relationships are infrequently mentioned in Kinder memory accounts.

Much about the carers' side of the Kindertransport story remains to be learned and told, and the archives provide a way into a more complex, if less comforting, narrative of caretaking. Through these documents, the carers themselves speak, revealing a range of attitudes and behaviours.

17 CBF/301/65/198.
18 CBF/301/65/304, 308.

The documentation attests to the fact that foster parents were motivated by a complex web of factors both admirable and self-serving and that patience, forbearance, and compassion were often lacking. Some took children in for the money, labour, and prestige they conferred. There were exemplary foster parents but the evidence also points to the conclusion that a significant proportion inflicted emotional, psychological, and even physical harm on the children they had accepted into their homes.

The dossiers also contain a quantity of correspondence from Kinder themselves, which strikingly reveals their dependence on the refugee organizations, their attempts to find the care, guidance, and support that their absent parents could no longer provide, and their efforts to establish agency and autonomy. These letters, in the children's own voices while they were still children, offer multiple new perceptions of their experiences as child refugees. The letters to those caring for them – the personnel of various refugee agencies, foster parents, and teachers – articulate their aspirations, fears, concerns, and requests and demonstrate the perseverance and persistence with which many of these children pursued their goals and needs. They advocated for their own educational and vocational goals, sought help for family members abroad, and tried to establish warm relationships with the adult authority figures in their lives. Particularly notable are the hundreds of letters to "Dear Mrs Goldschmidt" in the WLS case files, written by child refugees of all ages to the general secretary of the synagogue's Hospitality Committee. It is clear from these letters that the children saw her as a uniquely caring figure in their lives, one with whom they remained in contact even after re-emigration, though the testimonies from these same correspondents decades later barely mention the woman who was once so important in their lives. Their contemporary writings are thus hugely significant in restoring connections that have been lost to time and memory, proving the importance of such relationships at a time when Kinder were in need of guidance and support, and providing invaluable snapshots into a little-known past.

The archival record can also provide balance and nuance to memory accounts, when the two sources are juxtaposed and interrogated. A notable example concerns a child named Thea Felix, who was brought to England by the PJRF and whose oral history was recorded and published in 1995. In her slim memoir, Thea never mentioned the Polish Fund or its staff by name and referred to them only once, in an oblique and disparaging

remark in which she characterized them as "exploitative types".[19] Thea painted a pretty grim picture of her education and aftercare in an evacuated school in Ely, Cambridgeshire, and of her headmistress, recalling only her anger when Thea won the English prize. To a reader, absent any other information about Thea's life as a refugee child, this would be the definitive record. However, Thea's case file contains correspondence that challenges this interpretation. Thea's many letters to the Polish Fund express gratitude and make requests for financial support and clothing, even as she struggled to become financially independent at an early age. The correspondence between Thea's headmistress and the PJRF also discloses the care they took when she contracted tuberculosis and was forced to leave school, including the time the headmistress devoted to her recovery and the extra financial resources the Fund expended on her. This disjunction between Thea's memories and the archival evidence is partly attributable to the way in which Thea had constructed her memories to make sense of her traumatic past. But the existence of such a discrepancy between the two sources also points to the need to consult contemporaneous documents whenever possible in order to restore those parts of the story that are missing from the memory record.

Finally, in each of these archival collections are letters from parents and family members – some of the rarest and most important documents for Kindertransport research. For a variety of reasons, the parents have always been on the margins of the Kindertransport narrative, and this correspondence, especially when supplemented with other writings from the parents, provides an opportunity to integrate them fully into the Kindertransport story. In Kindertransport literature, the parents have overwhelmingly been represented through their children's memories, usually bracketing the main narrative. Typically, the parents' appearances have been limited to Kinder accounts of leave-taking and discussions of their postwar reckonings with the appalling toll of the Holocaust. However, many parents were able to write to both the refugee organizations and their children well into or even throughout the war, depending on their location and circumstances, and such letters in the archival record contain valuable insights into the parents' own traumas as they prepared to send their children away and then dealt with the consequences of their families' separation.

19 Irene Reti and Valerie Chase, eds., *A Transported Life: Memories of the Kindertransport, the Oral History of Thea Feliks Eden* (Santa Cruz, CA: Her Books, 1995), 58.

Parents' letters to the refugee organizations, both from German-occupied Europe and elsewhere, illuminate little-known aspects of Kindertransport history. Prewar correspondence explicates the parents' rationales for sending their children away and articulates their hopes for their children's futures in Britain, including, significantly, the maintenance of their Jewishness. They detail the agonizing bureaucracies that parents had to negotiate to get their children on transports and express their despair over the choices they were being forced to make. Significantly, these letters allow the parents' own voices to enter the narrative, which provide important new insights about their states of mind and their hopes and dreams of reuniting with their children. In contrast are the letters written by parents who were able to emigrate themselves, some to Britain and many to other lands. Few of these parents were able immediately to resume custody of their children, and their letters to the refugee organizations, while always expressing gratitude, also exude frustration and powerlessness as decisions about their children's lives and futures were made by those who were physically caring for and financially supporting the children. Since the parents left vanishingly few testimonies or other memory records, their correspondence in these newly revealed archival collections represents one of the most significant finds in Kindertransport research.

The archival collections now available to scholars are an invaluable addition to the range of sources that can be utilized to construct Kindertransport accounts. While some work has already been done using these documents, much remains to be discovered and analysed. The children's case files offer a wealth of new material to interrogate under-researched aspects of the Kindertransport involving a variety of actors. It is now possible to examine in greater depth the relationships among refugee organizations, the organizations' handling of various aftercare challenges, and their interactions with caregivers and Kinder. Similarly, archival correspondence enables researchers to re-evaluate the providers of hospitality, bringing the caregivers' motivations and reactions to the Kinder into clearer focus. While there is a huge amount of Kinder testimony and other memory documentation available, much can also be gained from an examination of the children's correspondence while they were still young refugees, including the reifying of events, feelings, problems, relationships, and aspirations long lost to time and memory. Finally, these records make it possible to integrate more fully the parents

into Kindertransport narratives, bringing their voices, which have remained quite faint in the discourse, back into the literature, and helping to create a more comprehensive and balanced historiography.