

A FAMILY DISPERSED: MAINTAINING UNEXPECTED TRANSNATIONAL TIES. AMERICAN ETHNICITY AND AUSTRIAN EXILE

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Family roles clearly affected the information people shared in their correspondence: things parents would not tell children, language children would not use with parents, and so on. Likewise, in cases of dictatorship or wartime, situations where the correspondents anticipated censorship, letter writers shaped their texts with this in mind. The Hine Collection illuminates how individual, generational, gender, and ethnic concerns coalesced and sometimes collided. Through the writings of the Hasterlik family, a bourgeois Viennese family of Jewish roots, whose members fled to various locations around the time of the Anschluss, it explores self-censorship based on internal as well as external motives.

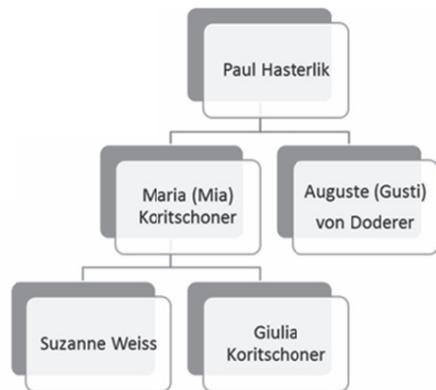
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* Author's note on translations: Giulia (Koritschner) Hine translated most of the letters in the collection from German into English. Giulia spent much of her adult life in the United States, though she also went back and lived in Austria for a few years when her husband worked there. Hine utilized a somewhat literary approach to translation in many cases, meaning the fluidity of the prose and tone of the text took precedence in conveying the meaning over exact wording (or a more literal translation). I read the original German version in the archives and compared it to the online translation for the letters used in this paper. For the vast majority of the work I utilized her translations. In a few isolated instances I changed tiny segments, mainly if Hine's translation seemed unclear given current English usage or if something was missing. I switched the round parentheses Hine used to insert her commentary to square brackets which are standard for translators or editors' comments.

For mobile people of the past, one of the most useful sources of information has been personal letters. This paper takes up two questions of interest to scholars of migration. First, how did roles within families affect the information people shared in their correspondence, things parents would not tell children, language children would not use with parents, and so on? Second, in cases of dictatorship or wartime, situations where the correspondents anticipated censorship, how did they cope with that situation? In other words I deal here with cases of self-censorship based on internal as well as external motives. To explore this kind of censorship I draw upon a rich collection at the Institute on World War II and the Human Experience at Florida State University. The collection includes not just letters, but other materials from a prominent Viennese family who faced many challenges under Nazi rule.¹

Figure 1.

Family Correspondents' Names in 1938



The Hasterlik family shifted both geographically and intellectually from a Czech/Bohemian Jewish background to a Viennese life as practicing Catholics to an urbane, cultural elite. Still, in the face of Nazi versions of race, their Jewish roots put them at risk. The main characters I draw upon here are descendants of Paul Hasterlik (1866–1944), a retired doctor, dentist, and public health official in Vienna, who in 1938 faced the death of his spouse shortly after as his

¹ Hine Collection, FSU Institute on World War II and the Human Experience, <http://ww2.fsu.edu/Collections/Hine-Collection>. General information about the family comes from the biographical information provided on this site.

country faced Anschluss into Hitler's Third Reich. His daughters Auguste von Doderer and Maria Koritschoner formed the next generation. Auguste did not live with her spouse and Maria had divorced her first husband and then been widowed from her second. The third generation consisted of Maria's daughters Suzanne and Giulia. After the war the letters eventually came to Giulia, who lovingly translated them and added commentary, filling in some of the gaps and deciphering code words or phrases. Insider knowledge made it possible at times to identify when a writer gave false reports or withheld key information and sometimes why.

In Austria anti-Semitic measures followed directly on the heels of the Anschluss in March of 1938.² As danger loomed Hasterlik family members sought to migrate, escaping in different directions as opportunities opened. Auguste (or in the letters Gusti) was the first to leave, embarking for the U.S. shortly after Kristallnacht in November of 1938—just after she received her divorce papers from her husband, the writer (and Nazi) Heimito von Doderer—the red “J” on her passport a clear indication of her classification as Jewish.³ Maria (aka Mia and a variety of other pet names) sought first to assure the security of her children, embarking on a clandestine trip Christmas Eve 1938 to take thirteen-year-old Giulia to Switzerland, where she arranged for Giulia to stay with a family. The plan was only for a few months. ... Then Maria hustled back to Vienna to assist daughter Suzanne flee to Kenya with the prospect of an arranged marriage to a man there. Meanwhile anti-Semitic measures made life in Vienna increasingly difficult. Mia cared for her father, particularly after a nasty street car accident, but then headed for Switzerland and on to England herself. She arrived in London the 26th of August 1940—for those who remember dates well you will know Germany invaded Poland September 1st, Great Britain declared war the 3rd, and the massive bombing known as the Blitz started September 7th. Despite the pleas and organizing attempts of family members and friends, the elderly Paul Hasterlik remained in Vienna until it was too late. In 1942 the Nazis deported him to Theresienstadt, the concentration camp where he died two years later.

² See for example E.B. Bukey, *Jews and Inter-marriage in Nazi Austria*, Cambridge, 2011, p. 4.

³ Divorce decree, Auguste Doderer and Heimito Doderer, November 25, 1938, Item 1599; and German Passport of Auguste Doderer, Item 5658, Hine Collection [hereafter HC]. Heimito von Doderer based some of his fictional characters in the books *Die Dämonen* and *Die Strudlhofstiege* on the Hasterlik family. A. Kleinlercher, *Zwischen Wahrheit und Dichtung: Antisemitismus und Nationalsozialismus bei Heimito von Doderer*, Vienna, 2011, p. 366.

The conditions in exile deteriorated, until the situation had all the makings of a major movie plot. Grandfather Paul watching people being arrested and deported in Vienna; Mia living in London during the Blitz; Suzanne seeking to get away from her abusive husband in Kenya; and Giulia contracting polio in Switzerland. Needless to say, not everyone wanted to share all this with one another, and as wartime ensued they had difficulty getting mail back and forth anyway. In the context of the war the family used pet names and code words to get around censorship at times. But even before the war started and when outside of the reach of formal censors, family members employed extensive self-censorship. In the period from 1938 to 1942 that I consider here, this articulate, even somewhat literary family wrote voluminous correspondence to one another and to a variety of other family members and friends, many in similar circumstances. In the letters the mundane mixes with the imminent threat. Let us listen to their words:

My dearest Giulia! This is your mother writing! Be good, not too rambunctious, don't ever forget that you owe all the people around you enormous gratitude. You are a guest of these good people and of this beautiful country. Prove your gratefulness by being modest and behaving nicely and with consideration of others. Please be a really good girl in school, not cheeky, not talkative, not too wild. ... [and then later] Do your homework!!!! Don't be messy!!!! Pay attention in school!!!! Most of all be modest!!!! And don't upset our good mother Sigerist. Please obey me, ... your loving mother.⁴

Mia wrote this to her daughter Giulia about a month after their hurried trip from Vienna to Switzerland on Christmas Eve 1938, traveling on a fake Hungarian passport. The multiple exclamation points, the repeated admonitions to be good and modest, and the mix of “this is your mother writing” along with “please obey me,” illustrated the attempt to maintain parental control from a distance. Now we are talking about a mother communicating with a 13-year old girl, a girl whose father died when she was a toddler and whose mother was a flapper. Add to that, the daughter had been accustomed to a life of wealth in Vienna, a city of around two million,⁵ and now she found herself in

⁴ Maria Koritschoner to [daughter] Giulia Koritschoner, Vienna, Austria to Schaffhausen, Switzerland, 2 February 1939, Letter 0879, HC.

⁵ Bevölkerungsbilanzen 1869–2011 nach Bundesland und Komponenten, Statistik Austria, http://www.statistik.at/web_de/statistiken/bevoelkerung/bevoelkerungsstand_und_veraenderung/bevoelkerungsveraenderung_nach_komponenten/023289.html, 9 June 2014.

comparatively tiny Schaffhausen in a much less affluent setting.⁶ And to make matters worse, neither Giulia nor her mother could say with any certainty how long the separation would last. Clearly part of the urgency came from the circumstances, but the personal also entered. Mia tended to emotional extremes. In the same envelope came another letter from Mia, written slightly later, this one in answer to Giulia's letter. The tone of the second letter seems different. After thanking Giulia for the letter she went on: *[The letter] shows me that you are happy and contented which for me is most important and relieves me of much worry, of which I have an overabundance, so that I do not know how I can get out of this twisted situation.*⁷ Mia went on to highlight her difficulties—deciding what to keep, what to burn, and what to try to ship as she vacated their apartment. *“What about the letters, photos and other dear memories of forgotten days? Such awful problems that I preferred to open my ‘office’ [typewriter], even though it is 11 and I have a bad conscience. What I wanted to say: please, my letters should only be shown to Aunt Alice, the dear and my third little daughter, Gretli. You are not allowed to take them to school, they are not suited for it.”*⁸

In the first letter Mia discusses Giulia's foster mother as “good mother Siegrist”; in the second letter she refers to the foster mother as “Aunt Alice” and Alice's other daughter as one of her children, creating additional fictive family ties. Mia lightened the tone in the following section of the second letter, discussing how a porter who helped to take furniture down from the attic sounded just like an Austrian comedian. The letter ended with lots of hugs and kisses and Mia signed it with a pet name for herself (matching one for her daughter). So this second letter also offered motherly advice, but not in the same frantic tone as the previous one. Still, Mia's desperation and volatility comes through at times. This would be important in the future, for her correspondents had to decide how much to share as things got worse. Perhaps Giulia also sensed what others in the family knew more clearly, that Mia sometimes suffered from depression.⁹ Giulia definitely knew her mother could have difficulties dealing with stress.

⁶ In an interview Giulia noted she was a snob and assumed that the woman who came to pick her up was the maid instead of the foster mother because of the dowdy clothes and looks. Shoah Foundation Interview, Susan Shear with Giulia Hine, 27 October 1995, Item 4619, HC.

⁷ 2 February 1939, Letter 0879, HC.

⁸ 2 February 1939, Letter 0879, HC.

⁹ For example Suzanne [Weiss] Seemann to [aunt] Auguste [Hasterlik] von Doderer “Please console my Maunz whenever she gets depressed as she so often had been in Vienna.” 23 November 1940, Letter 0119, HC.

Mia had gotten drunk on the train trip to Switzerland as they approached the border where they would have to show the forged Hungarian passport.¹⁰

Meanwhile Giulia's older half-sister Suzanne, back in Vienna, prepared to head for Africa and an arranged marriage.¹¹ Suzanne agreed to the marriage, in keeping with gendered expectations for women of her age, yet the political circumstances shifted her opportunities drastically and dictated a need to seek someone immediately and outside her homeland. The family utilized their contacts in Kenya to arrange a match they thought would be appropriate in terms of ethnic and class status. The sisters' letters show a different kind of banter:

My cute Pupperl [little doll]! We can't recriminate each other concerning being lazy writers. But I think you have more time to write to me than I, you old trickster. You can't imagine how excited I am, because the ship is to sail on the 14th, a week from today, and I have neither the visa, nor the ticket. ... I still don't know exactly what I should say to Bobby when we first meet. Rack your little brain and write it to me what YOU would say in my stead, but soon, before the mast is breaking.

Pupperl, I am so happy that you have found such a nice place and that you are rid of the mean sister who always pestered you. As you know, I am still living at Grosspapa's and am enjoyng it. Until now, I always had visitors in the evenings [she means boys] but they are not allowed to come any longer because Grosspapa said I have to concentrate on my being engaged. Funny, what? I feel so queer.

Robert [Bobby] is writing the most charming letters to me. We have long since been saying 'Du' to each other and 'kisses.' It hasn't sunk in, to know him in this way. He recently sent photos of himself and his, or rather our automobile and house. It all sounds like a fairy tale... [and then later] ... So, old bean, keep your fingers crossed, the sooner I get down there, the sooner you come join me. Your letters are so cute and funny and I hope you will write one to me very shortly.¹²

Suzanne went on to thank Giulia for sending a pastry and for her drawings. She included a drawing of her own. Sharing concerns about dealing with her fiancé, writing about men more generally, noting how they both did not write

¹⁰ Oral interview, Edith Cory-King with Giulia Hine, recounting December 1938, June 1998, Item 5209, HC.

¹¹ Many examples of people using arranged marriages for young women who would otherwise be refugees exist. See for example I. Kaprielian-Churchill, 'Armenian refugee women: The picture brides, 1920–1930.' *Journal of American Ethnic History*, Vol, 12, no. 3 (Spring 1993): 3–30.

¹² Suzanne Weiss to [half-sister] Giulia Koritschoner, Vienna, Austria to Schaffhausen, Switzerland, 7 February 1939, Letter 0033, HC.

that often: these items linked the two on a roughly equal basis. Suzanne, unlike her mother, though, wrote about the arranged marriage as an adventure. She presented the challenges of getting all the paperwork as almost unconnected from the Nazi regime that created hurdles and made flight necessary. She described the house in Kenya and suggested Giulia might be able to come there once she was settled. Only the picture at the end, of a woman crying and waving, with the caption “bye, bye” hints that all is not roses. In fact Suzanne managed to write optimistically not just in this letter, but in most others. Giulia, when translating the material, added the commentary that the evening visitors Suzanne no longer entertained were young men.

The letters Mia wrote to her sister Gusti in the U.S. also included personal news and gossip. In April 1939 she reported: *Now a very important item: I never knew how much Papi was and is attached to Lili. I really underestimated it mostly because I lived away from the family.* Later in the same letter she elaborated. Paul refused to think seriously of leaving because of Lili:

Even I am already thinking of the worst but father is not at all afraid, he doesn't care as long as he can be near her. I think that father in spite of his great love for us, only belongs to Lili, that's all he can think of. It saddens me somehow, to have to witness this but then he had always been so good too as to never have refused us, now we must let him have his happiness. ... It all would be different if Lili were really attached to him. Well, one cannot force her. On the other hand we can't deprive our father of his good fortune to be overcome with such feelings at his age. Don't you think? I understand you so well and know how so very kind you are and how much you wish to get Papi out of this hell but I can assure you, for him it is still his heaven. Good or bad, the main thing is SHE is here and he can call her or see her. He spoons on the phone like a 17 year old - I envy him these sweet tones. What none of us know is Lili's future possibilities. ...¹³

This letter also included an apology for sharing unpleasant news. This news Mia could share with her sister privately.

The sharing also meant avoiding the censorship of their father, whom both daughters wanted to protect. After his streetcar accident Mia wrote:

Dearest Guster!!

I am writing you in a hurry, Papi would kill me if he knew of this letter. This is why you must not answer as if you had heard the news from another source.

¹³ Maria Hasterlik Koritschoner to Auguste Hasterlik von Doderer, 23 April 1939, Item 3071, HC. “Lili” here is Helene Koernig. Paul’s spouse Irma had died about a year earlier of something like Alzheimers’ disease.

Please follow my instruction! Papi's reports are always so very rosy. I told him openly that he didn't give dependable reports, therefore I will never leave him otherwise we won't ever know the true state of affairs about his person. Most importantly, his life isn't threatened any longer, thank God. Of course he has very grave injuries. A gash on the forehead and several broken ribs. It was horrible I don't want nor can I describe it to you.¹⁴

Compare this to the report Paul sent to Gusti. His letter started out discussing birthday greetings, friends, and piano playing. Then, after four paragraphs, he inserted – *On July 19th at 5:30 pm, when I tried to cross the Alserstrasse to walk over towards the hospital, I was pushed over by the H 2 street car without being aware of it. I was taken to the emergency room where, after a few hours I regained consciousness. ... I was doing fine in the hospital, didn't need more than a tape bandage on my left side and a few headache pills.¹⁵* When he finally found out that Mia informed others in much more detail about his accident he changed the reports slightly:

Dearest Gusti-child!

This daughter of mine, Mia, hasn't told me anything about all the telegram traffic until last night. She kept it secret for fear it might upset me. Of course I had worried you would be terribly shocked when you heard from me about the accident while I had no idea that you already knew about everything. Now my feelings are all mixed up. Partly I am sorry that you got upset and worried, partly I am really happy that you didn't come here but instead were able to calm yourself having had enough communications so that you needn't feel tortured.¹⁶

Thus Paul admitted withholding information from his daughter Gusti, the older and more emotionally stable of his two children. Note that both authors admit trying to spare the feelings of the recipient through self-censorship: Mia's "It was horrible I don't want nor can I describe it to you"; and Paul's "I had worried you would be terribly shocked." Note how both seek to express emotions in words.

Sometimes, especially before the invasion of Poland, the family used their connections to one another to share news that might not make it to all members. Hence Paul, the grandfather wrote to daughter Gusti in New York about her

¹⁴ Maria Hasterlik Koritschoner to Auguste Hasterlik von Doderer, Vienna, Austria to New York, New York, Item 3081, HC.

¹⁵ Paul Hasterlik to Auguste Hasterlik von Doderer, 29 July 1939, Vienna, Austria to New York, New York, Item 3082, HC.

¹⁶ Paul Hasterlik to Auguste Hasterlik von Doderer, 10 August 1939, Vienna, Austria to New York, New York, Item 3101, HC.

sister Mia having left Vienna. Mia stopped in to see her daughter Giulia in Switzerland, where administrative hurdles made it impossible for mother and daughter to go on together. Mia then flew to London alone. Paul reported Mia's address as well as noting how he packed up a big container to ship to Gusti in the U.S.¹⁷

Within Austria—now a part of the German Reich—Paul still had to be careful about what he wrote. Hence news included descriptions without names, and descriptions that hinted at other things like detention: *The astrol. musician [Olga] is still sick [!], every week one hopes for an improvement but it was postponed again [in jail?] and we can't visit because of danger of infection [Jewish].*¹⁸ Because the family knew the people and the circumstances, it was possible to read between the lines, as Giulia did when translating the letters. She interpreted this to mean their friend Olga was detained by the Nazis, probably still in jail, and Paul could not visit for fear of being labeled Jewish himself. Paul numbered his letters to the family and asked them to keep track of which ones arrived.

Once Great Britain entered the war, shortly after Mia arrived in London, mail transfers became more difficult. When Mia finally made it to New York she telephoned her sister Gusti shortly after arrival. That night she penned a letter full of much that she had not described before. *Never in my life will I forget Oxford Street all shattered and in ruins, neither the fiery sky. - Please be patient if I sometimes seem 'funny.'* [and in another section] *I only hope that the memory of those days and nights will enable me to never again be dissatisfied, no matter how miserable I might be. The 'All Clear' does eventually arrive, even if it takes a long time. It is the same in life, one just has to be able to wait it out.*¹⁹ In the same letter Mia shared a story of her love interest (and future husband) Thomas Heller, who had just gotten out of detention as she left London. So the letter mixed the normal and expected sharing of news about her love life with the horrific tale of war. Mia used the tale to try and reassure her sister of her ability to cope. Gusti remained skeptical. The older sister would withhold information from her younger sibling on a massive scale the following year.

In August 1941 Giulia suddenly came down with polio. She spent months in the hospital, first in Schaffhausen and then in Bern. Her schoolmates could

¹⁷ Paul Hasterlik to Auguste Hasterlik von Doderer, 27 August 1939, Vienna, Austria to New York, New York, Item 3044, HC.

¹⁸ Paul Hasterlik to Auguste Hasterlik von Doderer, 12 January 1940, Vienna to St. Paul, Minnesota, Item 3596, 12 January 1940, HC.

¹⁹ Maria Koritschoner to Auguste Hasterlik von Doderer, 4 October 1940, New York, New York to Dayton, Ohio, Item 3530, HC.

only shout their greetings from afar and send cards. Her Doctor made it clear that to tell her mother would be “torture” and Aunt Gusti agreed that Mia faced too many problems of her own.²⁰ Gusti in the U.S. explained it to Giulia’s foster mother thus:

*Mia would not be capable to receive the bad news without getting completely out of balance. Not only is it the great distance which makes it so terrible, it is Mia’s constant and growing pathological yearning for the child, concurrent with her life-long fear of exactly this particular disease which brought me to this decision. Mia is completely uprooted here, extremely unhappy with only one goal: to have the child, or both children back near her. Mia has always been very impulsive and unfortunately has done some very rash things during periods of extreme pain [drugs] so that I had to assume the worst under these new circumstances since her resistance is lower than usual at the moment.*²¹

Reading between the lines many years later, Giulia wrote that “rash things” referred to taking drugs. Friends from school and the foster family sent supporting messages, but the lack of information to her mother still hurt.

Giulia wrote about the ban in her diary: *The thing with Mutti [Mom] was really unfortunate. I wasn’t allowed to write her about my illness because she herself is not well. How I managed to concoct letters to her is still a puzzle to me. She surely didn’t get very many from me though I was often brimming over with things to tell her.*²² Alice, the foster mother in the family where Giulia stayed felt ill at ease not informing Mia of her daughter’s illness, but dealing only with the aunt in the U.S.: *I do hope that, at the last moment, Mia will not hear about it. According to your wishes we have done our best in this respect. I would feel very sorry for Mia especially because I never wanted to deceive her, neither did Giulia.*²³

Gusti held the strings on other information as well—fearing to tell Mia of problems for Suzanne in Africa. Suzanne finally broke that silence with a letter to her mother in May of 1942—but only after she could report about being in a better situation:

²⁰ Dr. Nettie Sutro of the Zurich Commission for Refugee Children to Alice Siegrist-Ott, Schaffhausen, Switzerland, 1 September 1941, Item 4184, HC.

²¹ Auguste Hasterlik von Doderer to Alice Siegrist-Ott, 8 October 1941, New York, New York to Schaffhausen, Switzerland, Item 1053, HC.

²² Giulia Koritschoner, diary entry, 14 December 1942, Item 2756, HC.

²³ Alice Siegrist-Ott to Auguste Hasterlik von Doderer, 13 September 1942, Schaffhausen, Switzerland to New York, New York, Item 0213, HC.

*My dearest Maunzerl,
this letter will surprise you – at the outset let me tell you – it is very good. Don't know where to start: Your Sumka left her husband. Maunzerl, I was so terribly unhappy with him. I didn't want to write it to you, it would have been dreadful for you and you couldn't have helped me anyhow. Please forgive me for [not telling you], don't be disappointed, you must put yourself in my place. It would have been even worse if I had known that you also were unhappy. Robert is a very brutish man, not only did he hit me many times he also has many other inexcusable faults. You can't imagine what I had to live through at the beginning. Especially when you were in London and had such a bad time. ... [She concluded the letter with] This job is very comfortable. First of all I have a home and should I get sick I have all the help and nursing and even the doctor for free. But I don't think about that at all. I like the work. I am wearing a real nurses' uniform, you can imagine how proud this makes me. Tomorrow is my day off and three of us girl-friends will go to the movies. I can do and not do whatever I like. Please, my darling, don't worry, don't be unhappy that it's over. It was a terribly hard struggle to the end. But I have achieved it and can finally write everything to you. Could NEVER do it before. All will be better from now on and hopefully the war will too come to an end. Maunzerl, please celebrate this letter with a tall glass of gin.”²⁴*

So in that context there were two sisters not telling each other or their mother much in 1942 at the behest of their aunt in the United States who figured everyone had enough to worry about without adding to that. Wartime also interfered, for people did not know if letters would get through. Suzanne finally got news from Gusti in the U.S. and then passed on her thoughts to Giulia.

*My very dearest Pupperl [little doll],
I have to try absolutely everything to get in contact with you again. It has been years since I last heard from you. First of all I am extremely eager to know whether you are well again. I don't really know what you had. Gusterl didn't write any details only that you had been paralyzed. How it all happened is still not clear. So far, Mutti doesn't know anything about it.
First of all I want to report the most important happenings in my life. I ran away from Robert in May 1942 because he treated me very, very badly. I couldn't stand to be with him any longer. ...I am fine, am earning very well and can buy lots of nice dresses, have enough money to rent a decent room and eat well.*

²⁴ Suzanne Weiss Seemann to Maria Hasterlik Koritschoner, May 1942, Nairobi, Kenya to New York, New York, Item 1919, HC.

I am not yet divorced. It is difficult to get a divorce here. But I think I will soon get married again. I have a very sweet boyfriend and am, thank God, once more deeply in love.”²⁵

Note that as in the past, Suzanne shared her love life with her sister. She also reported on the difficulties of getting a divorce, which she withheld from her mother. Note also the paucity of information that Aunt Gusti shared with Suzanne about Giulia’s illness. Suzanne penned this letter two years after Giulia came down with polio. Further note how Suzanne now joined the others in self-censoring this information from her letters to her mother, Mia.

The war made for slow and uncertain communication, even between allies. Correspondence from early 1941 forms a litany: mail delays, telegram delays, lost letters. Staying in contact with Paul, in Vienna, meant getting letters through a secured border. Mia would send them via Switzerland: *My dearest Pupperl [little doll], please please send this letter to grandfather immediately [the upper page of this letter which obviously went to Vienna]. Haven’t had any news for weeks, e.g. since the last card [from Paul] which you sent on to me.*²⁶ Censors opened mail that did get across the lines, ominous Nazi “opened” stamps trumpeting that fact. Paul wrote his granddaughter in early 1942, encouraging her to continue working to regain her health from polio. So he too was part of the group that knew but did not share this information with Mia. He only mentioned in passing another move he had to make in Vienna—noting the new address.

Letters of war and exile often differ from other correspondence between international migrants and those they leave behind. In both cases the ones who left could report on new circumstances and conditions. Unlike the sense of “old world” found in many migrant letters, a place that seems unchanging over time, the world for those who remained behind under Hitler changed rapidly.²⁷ Yet they often could not share this information for fear of censorship. The forced shift of the Jewish population into certain geographic districts, loss of bank account funds and pensions, closing of businesses, restrictions on being in public, deportation of many, did not appear. Only in retrospect, with information from

²⁵ Suzanne Seemann to Giulia Koritschoner, Nairobi, Kenya to Schaffhausen, Switzerland, 29 August 1943, Item 1245, HC.

²⁶ Maria Koritschoner to Giulia Koritschoner, 8 December 1941, [New York?] to Schaffhausen, Switzerland, Item 1054, HC.

²⁷ On the demographics that undergirded the impressions as well as content analysis demonstrating it in letter collections with correspondents on both sides of the Atlantic see H.J. Brinks, “Impressions of the ‘Old World’ 1848–1940,” in *The Dutch in North-America: Their immigration and cultural continuity*, eds. R. Kroes and H. Neuschäfer (Amsterdam 1991), pp. 34–47.

other sources, can we piece together some of the things that Paul did not share regarding anti-Semitic measures going into effect. By the middle of June, just days before his 76th birthday, he penned (as opposed to his normal typing) a note to say his landlords were gone.²⁸ By implication he would no longer be able to get mail or food. The government had already issued an order to evacuate all Jews over 65 out of Vienna. In July of 1942 he too faced deportation to a concentration camp—Theresienstadt. Giulia's foster mother reported a letter marked "address unknown" returned to her in August 1942.²⁹ And then there was silence.

In 1943 Mia complained: *A letter which I wrote to Pupperl [that is Giulia] in October has unfortunately just come back. It means that the child hadn't had any news from me for almost a whole year.*³⁰ News of Grandfather Paul's death in May 1944 would not reach Giulia until six months later and it took another couple of months before she could inform her mother. It would take several additional months—into 1946—before Giulia could gain a visa status that allowed her to join her mother in the U.S. By that time Mia had remarried – Thomas Heller – and become a U.S. citizen.

Other scholars have explored a variety of themes that illuminate this kind of collection. Anne Goldberg, writing about the Salomon sisters' correspondence between Germany and the Soviet Union in the 1930s, postulated that state censorship motivated people to mimic the expected forms of writing in their private letters at the same time they recognized the letters as public. Forbidden information could appear in allegory, code, or silence. Goldberg argued this exemplified a larger shift from the bourgeois writer of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the post-liberal era akin to that suggested by Jürgen Habermas.³¹ Silences and to a lesser degree codes appeared in the Hasterlik collection. Information regarding anti-Semitic laws and the treatment of Jewish friends fell into this category. Paul's letters from Vienna often fit this pattern, especially in late 1941. On the other hand the self-censorship of negative personal

²⁸ Paul Hasterlik to Alice Siegrist-Ott/ Giulia Koritschoner, 15 June 1942, Vienna, Austria to Schaffhausen, Switzerland, Item 2889, HC.

²⁹ Alice Siegrist-Ott to Paul Hasterlik, forwarded to Mrs. Kopetz, original 17 August 1942, resent 14 September 1942, Item 2830, Schaffhausen, Switzerland to Vienna, Austria.

³⁰ Maria Hasterlik Koritschoner to Auguste Hasterlik von Doderer, New York, New York to Camp Louise, Cascade, Maryland, 12 July 1943, Item 5049, HC.

³¹ A. Goldberg, 'Reading and writing across the border of dictatorships: Self-censorship and emigrant experience in Nazi and Stalinist Europe,' in B.S. Elliott, D.A. Gerber, S.M. Sinke, eds, *Letters across borders, the epistolary practices of international migrants*, eds., New York, 2006, pp. 158–172.

information does not quite fit this model, because writers selected with whom they would share the information based on individual characteristics. In the example of Giulia's polio: tell Paul; tell Suzanne a little; tell Mia nothing. Moreover, in this collection Mia's letters contain the most extreme expressions of emotion.

Language and communication scholar Vera Sheridan offered a different approach, looking for psychological insights in the letters of migrants. She suggested that a small group of letters revealed major shifts in family roles in the wake of exile. Her case study of family members separated from one another around the time of the Hungarian Revolution in 1956 illustrated how each of the letter writers faced a slightly different kind of loss of connections to other family members and to their wider social circles.³² This fits in part with the work of David Gerber, who argues in *Authors of their Own Lives*, that letters of migrants more generally serve as a way to retain ties to the past, to maintain a connection to an earlier identity that otherwise faces disjuncture in light of new circumstances.³³ Both Gerber and Sheridan stress a psychological model and take generational roles into consideration. Sheridan places somewhat more emphasis on gender roles as they shift. Other scholars discussing the genre of exile writings echo Sheridan's point of coping with loss and trying to make sense of drastically altered circumstances. Linking these insights, the multiple identities of the individuals help shape their letters. On the one hand each person remains unique, yet characteristics such as being labeled Jewish in the Third Reich placed similar constraints on correspondents. Likewise, a generational or gender identity brought with it cultural expectations of how to write to a recipient depending on that person's status as well. From the titles or nicknames at the outset through the tone to the final greeting, the Hasterliks demonstrated a very different mode of writing than German correspondents of the turn of the century.³⁴

In the case of the Hasterliks, the change in family roles related both to maturation, as the third generation daughters progressed through and out of their teenage years and the adult daughters sought to assist their retired father, as well as the horrific circumstances of anti-Semitism in Hitler's Third Reich. Family dynamics shifted from Paul to Gusti having the most input into decision-making. Family members carefully censored their letters even when they did not

³² V. Sheridan, 'Letters of love and loss in a time of revolution.' *History of the Family*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (2014), p. 269.

³³ D.A. Gerber, *Authors of Their Lives: The Personal Correspondence of British Immigrants to North America in the Nineteenth Century*, New York, 2006.

³⁴ For example the late century works reproduced in W.D. Kamphoefner, W.J. Helbich, U. Sommer, *News from the Land of Freedom: German Immigrants Write Home*, Ithaca, 1991.

anticipate a formal censorship process. Protecting one's own reputation in the eyes of loved ones as well as protecting the feelings of the recipient played key roles in these letters.

The collection offers tremendous insights into silences. Self-censorship meant correspondents withheld many things from one another and misrepresented their situations at times in order to avoid distressing the recipient as well as to avoid being chastised for inappropriate behavior. More formal censorship and the exigencies of war limited correspondence, meaning both that people could not share the rising anti-Semitism that engulfed and overwhelmed their lives and that information about the logistics of escape became increasingly difficult to get. However the writers could, and did for many months, share parts of their lives with one another. This collection underscores the need for background information, for corroboration, and for giving personal letters the kind of scrutiny historians typically find appropriate.