

**THE GAZE IN REFLECTION — A
PILGRIMAGE TOWARDS BIOGRAPHY**

Vera Marie Mecl, Hons BA

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Supervisor: Prof Annette L Combrink

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Summary

The writing of a biography on the life of the cabaret artiste, who was also the wife of a celebrated caricaturist and artist, a socialite, devoted daughter and eventually a mother herself: Hilde Czapski, Hilde Gert, Hilde Simmel and Hilde Mecl, is the subject of this dissertation. A woman born in a country whose androcentric, racist and genocidal tendencies denied her not only a voice as a woman, dignity as a human being, but her very existence.

Chapter 1 deals with aspects of truth and fiction and the position of the narrator within the genre of biography.

Chapter 2 illustrates the reflective path followed by the writer to conceive a biography on her mother.

Chapter 3 looks at the female gaze – upon herself, her world and those closest to her.

Chapter 4 examines humour and its use as a defence mechanism.

Chapter 5 describes the subject's life in her adoptive country, her untimely death, and the emergence of her vindication and immortalisation through biography that will celebrate her life.

Opsomming

Hierdie verhandeling het ten doel om tot 'n biografie te lei oor die lewe van 'n kabaretkunstenares, wat die vrou van 'n hoog aangeskrewe karikaturis en kunstenaar was maar ook 'n sosiale vlinder, 'n toegewyde dogter en uiteindelijke self 'n moeder - Hilde Czapski, Hilde Gert, Hilde Simmel and Hilde Mecl. Sy was 'n vrou wat gebore is in 'n land waar androsentrisme, rassisme en volksmoord hoogty gevier het en hierdie omstandighede het haar ontnem van nie net haar stem as 'n vrou nie, maar ook haar menswaardigheid – inderdaad haar hele bestaan.

Hoofstuk 1 handel oor aspekte van waarheid en fiksie en die posisie van die verteller binne die raamwerk van die genre biografie.

Hoofstuk 2 illustreer die reflektiewe roete wat deur die skrywer gevolg is in die konseptualisering van 'n biografie oor haar moeder.

Hoofstuk 3 kyk na die vroulike blik – op haarself, haar wêreld en diegene wat die naaste aan haar is.

Hoofstuk 4 het te doen met humor en die gebruik van humor as 'n verdedigingsmeganisme.

Hoofstuk 5 bevat 'n beskrywing van die subjek se lewe in haar aangenome land, haar vroeë dood, en die duidelikerwordende realiteit van haar vindikasie en onsterflikheid deur die biografie wat as 'n viering van haar lewe moet dien.

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Preface

1 Background

That the life of the woman, Hildegard Czapski, *Hilde Gert*, Hilde Simmel, Hilde Mecl¹, needed to be vindicated, liberated and remembered with respect and love had been, for the writer, a foregone conclusion for many years.



One morning on arriving at the office situated on the 25th floor of Standard Bank Building, at the southern end of the central business district of Johannesburg, I went round reluctantly switching on the lights.

Reluctantly, because the office windows offered a circular, panoramic view of the entire city and at 5h45, the morning was beautiful and still, the rising sun silhouetting the skyscrapers. Swallows began seeking their thermals. My thoughts were swept along with the swallows on a thermal of nostalgia - I sat at my desk and put pen to paper. The renovation of Simmel's *Landscape with Russian Church* began the psychological journey toward a biography, but that moment at my desk with the swallows circling at my window was the catalyst to begin in earnest. The realisation that there were many gaps in my powers of recollection, as well as in the information I had so scrupulously saved over the years became abundantly clear, not to mention the documents which my late aunt had destroyed prior to her death wishing to protect me from the 'burden of clearing up' and

¹ Photograph of Hilde Mecl in 1973, taken just three weeks prior to her death.

which were now irrevocably lost to me. Gleaning the missing information I knew would be daunting, as so many of mother's friends and colleagues had died or had drifted into senility, apart from the fact that the Second World War had caused so much dislocation, deliberately feigned forgetfulness and obvious loss. The other daunting challenge was that I was situated thousands of kilometres away from the central scene of action.

Over the past decade I seem to have used up a forest of paper communicating with various institutions and bodies in an attempt to obtain information. I, of course, realised that I was not 'on top of anyone's pile' and that I would have to exercise a deal of patience – how much was to take years for me to discover. With time, dedication and faith in what I was doing, I learnt the art of perseverance and endurance. I also prayed that the Muse would settle upon my left shoulder to guide my pen.

The paper trail from Johannesburg to Berlin, Frankfurt, Munich, New York, Chicago, Cologne, Mainz, etc. grew. As already indicated the response was slow or, on occasion, ground to a complete halt. I realised that to accomplish anything I would have to visit Berlin for a time to inhale its atmosphere, walk in my mother's footsteps and glean the information myself. This, with the University's assistance, I was at last able to do during the months of September and October 2001. For their assistance I have pledged the university the two Simmel oils² (see Annexure Nos. 1 and 2), the formal portrait of Hilde Gert by Ilse Ruth Voigt (see Annexure No. 3) as well as vintage photographs and books

² Vide the Icon of the Madonna (Annexure No. 30) juxtaposed to Simmel's portrait of Hilde

relevant to this study; the entire and valuable collection will be handed over to the university when the display area is made available.

Hilde Gert was the stage-name of Hildegard Czapski (1907-1973) who in 1924 married the well-known German caricaturist and artist, Paul Simmel (1887-1933). Gert was born in Wilhelmine Germany, which ended in 1918 at the end of the First World War when 'the hopes that women entertained during the period of the Enlightenment³ faded rapidly in the 19th century, and women came under attack as inferior beings who had no right to expect full integration in society' (Owings 1993:xxvii). Society had created repressive and ideologised conventions formulated for the benefit of the patriarchal hegemony. Therefore, apart from the fact that Gert was Jewish, she had to struggle to create a distinctive career within the phallogocentric confines of *Kleinkunst*⁴.

The Weimar Republic (circa 1919–1933) offered women the possibility of following their various muses. The most important gains at the time were the secondary education and the right to vote. There were even 111 female representatives in the Reichstag. This small progress toward equality ended when Adolf Hitler came to power in 1933. Marriage, however, within such an autocratic society still meant subordination to the husband's will, where the phrase describing the German woman's life expectations, 'Kinder, Kirche, Küche⁵,' summed up reality. The

³ The terms borrowed from the German Aufklärung in the 1860s

⁴ Art and craft presentations, cabaret, which included recitations, songs, acrobatics.

⁵ In the 19th Century, Kaiser Wilhelm II defined the role for women (later taken over by the Nazis)(see <http://www.germanculture.com.ua/library/weekly/aa.o80601.a.htm>).

Simmel household was destined not to have children, a situation the Nazis were to censure, as children were essential to further the advancement of the Aryan ideal. The Third Reich (1933 to 1945) to begin with personified the *Siegfried* image of strutting awe-inspiring blond, physical beauty *en masse*. It soon began to decline with the emergence of hubris, hatred and savagery. The Third Reich wrought its vengeance too in silencing the artiste and the woman, primarily because of her religious persuasion and the suicide of her husband; enforced emigration resulted dislocation, despair and illness and continued silence.

On a very personal note, it had become incumbent upon the writer after a lifetime enshrouded by the vestiges of dimmed limelight and despair to learn to say *Requiescat in Pacem* to that *Zeitgeist*. The 'learning process' has been a difficult one, yet despite the intermittent pain and, at times, regret, regret of what could not be, the process has been enriching in that it has taught the writer patience, forbearance and above all, tolerance. This in turn has led to forgiveness and the will for reconciliation. Following from this again is the inescapable need to capture the events of Gert's life for posterity to 'write her into the fabric of history'.

Virginia Woolf discusses biography in Chapter 2 of *Orlando*:

The biographer is now faced with a difficulty which it is better perhaps to confess than to gloss over. Up to this point in telling the story of Orlando's life, documents, both private and historical, have made it possible to fulfil the first duty of a biographer, which is to plod, without looking to right or left, in the indelible footprints of truth; unenticed by flowers; regardless of

shade; on and on methodically till we fall plump into the grave and write finis on the tombstone above our heads. But now we come to an episode which lies right across our path, so that there is no ignoring it. Yet it is dark, mysterious, and undocumented, so that there is no explaining it. Volumes might be written in interpretation of it; whole religious systems founded upon the signification of it. Our simple duty is to state the facts as far as they are known, and so let the reader make of them what he may (Woolf, 1928:46).

2 Questions, aims, thesis statement and method

2.1 Questions

Bearing the above outline in mind, and against the brief historical background provided above, the following questions present themselves:

- Can an exploration of the 'gaze in reflection' with regard to the life and work of Hilde Gert lead to the construction of a biography within which her silenced voice can be heard in a 'discourse from the dead'? (McHale, 1987:197-203).
- Would a feminist and post-colonial reading of her life story open up the story to interpretation?
- Would the narrator's close relationship with the subject have a detrimental effect on the construction of the biography?
- Would an exploration of the use of humour as a subversive device by the subject help in creating a distinctive discursive tone to the manuscript?

2.2 Aims

This study will therefore attempt, as an over-arching aim, to construct (within a theoretical context comprising feminist and post-colonial theoretical notions) a biography of Hilde Gert in order to allow the silenced voice to re-emerge.

This will involve, by way of secondary aims, to

- Explore the circumstances leading to the silencing of her voice;
- Explore and assess the effect of the narrator's close personal relationship with the subject on the construction of the biography; and
- Explore the way in which humour emerges as a covert subversive mechanism for women to deal with suppression;

2.3 Thesis statement

It is postulated that a biography of Hilde Gert, outlining all the exigencies and vicissitudes of her life, would serve as a vehicle for exploring the woman's gaze within the theoretical framework of a feminist and postcolonial theoretical approach.

In so far as all literature and interpretations thereof are gendered, this study will attempt to examine the social construction of a particular woman during a particular period in history. It will also investigate the concept of gender as a problem rather than as a given.

2.4 Method

It is intended to draw on archival as well as oral information personally received from the subject during her lifetime.

The role of the narrator will be examined to provide a sense of actuality for the reader by reconstructing dialogue and action, as well as determining how the association between the subject and biographer affects the writing of the biography.

A feminist, post-colonial theoretical stance is apposite because it would involve the identification and examination of prejudiced male images and the views of women particularly within Germany and South Africa within a given period.

The study will also identify female stereotypes – either idealised or denigrated – as well as examine the projection of male needs onto woman without, however, being necessarily negative or fixating on victimisation. The post-colonial approach will apply as the subject's latter life in the country of adoption offers parallels with the country of birth.

2.5 Proposed chapter outline

Preface

- Biography – Fact or Fiction
- The 'pilgrimage' towards biography
- The female gaze upon herself, her world, and those closest to her
- Humour as a defence mechanism in dealing with suppression
- Conclusion

CHAPTER ONE

Biography – fact or fiction

It seems that when considering writing a biography one is in danger of either suffocating under the collected mass of material, becoming lost in minor details, adhering too strictly to chronology and failing to separate the important from the trivial or one gazes into the glaring abyss of incomplete and/or missing information. Virginia Woolf states in her essay *The Art of Biography* that 'almost any biographer, if he respects fact, can give us much more than another fact to add to our collection. He can give us creative fact; the fertile fact; the fact that suggests and engenders' (Woolf, 1967:228). For Woolf this is the greatest asset of the biographer, making him/her equal to the novelist in creative power and importance. It is the very useful notion of *creative fact* (my italics) that I shall attempt to convey in this study, which is the precursor to the biography⁶. A life is never lived in a vacuum and the period in which Hilde lived was eventful and exciting.

Phyllis Rose, in her biography of Woolf, defines a life in a non-factual way: 'A life is as much a work of fiction – of guiding narrative structures – as novels and poems, and that the task of literary biography is to explore this fiction' (Rose, 1978:viii). Woolf also said that 'A woman writing thinks back through her mothers' (Woolf, 1967:229-235) - the writer will indeed be doing that, both in the narrow and the extended sense. Ira Bruce Nadel contends that 'the importance of "creative fact," however,

⁶ The whole point of this study is to write a meaningful biography.

skirts the problem of whether those works, which exceed factual detail through the allegiance to conception, rather than record remain biographies. Two questions emerge: what makes a fact creative? And does this creativity impair the authenticity of biography?' (Nadel, 1986:8). Although one would initially turn to biography as a reference tool seeking personal detail, literary criticism or cultural history, one often discovers an element of dramatic conflict, psychological analysis or experimentation. Characterisations and point of view frequently overtake the presentation of material and one recognises that personality and character subsume chronology and objectivity. Nadel further suggests that the best biographies re-invent rather than re-construct. Biography, to my mind, is fundamentally a diegesis that has as its primary task the enactment of character and place through language – a goal similar to that of fiction. The tool of biography is figurative language that organises its form.

The framework of this study will be structured mainly within the context of a Germany and a South Africa that no longer (officially) exist. The writing of the biography is a relative exercise bounded by cultural and historical forces, which alter, as do the personal circumstances of the writer, as in her case, having known the subject intimately, having stood in the shadow of Nazism and having experienced the *apartheid* era. Biography is a reflection from the past – *mise en abyme* - within the reflective present. Nadel (1986:8) cites Hayden White's comment 'that through the suppression or subordination of certain [events] ... and the highlighting of others, by characterisation, motific repetition, variation of tone and point of

view, alternative descriptive strategies, and the like ...' and Northrop Frye as suggesting 'four basic modes of emplotment – Romance, Tragedy, Comedy and Satire – alter biography from a mere record of past events to a meaningful literary form through the use of the conventional structures of fiction. In this way biography becomes a symbolic structure employing formal elements of language, fiction and narration in general'.

Not the facts, but the presentation of those facts, establishes the value of biographical writing. Fictive form, therefore, rather than historical content, dominates, as the events of a life become the elements of a story. This fictive power will direct the composition and reading of biography. The role of fact in biography may be seen as threefold: to establish information, verisimilitude and truthfulness. The first is generally, but not always, the simplest: to convey information and detail; the second is the most evocative and representational, generating a mood or atmosphere; the third may be the biographer's most difficult test; establishing a sense of the character and personality of the subject. Thus imbuing the subject is for the writer the area where creative fiction and myth have sway.

As the subject in this case, or to be more accurate, one of the subject's embodiments is that of having been the biographer's mother, Hilde Mecl, an attempt will be made to convey as much about the person she knew (or thought she knew), as well as what the subject revealed of her other 'personas': Hilde Czapski, Hilde Gert, Hilde Simmel and Hilde Mecl, as is possible. At this point the biographer is faced with the dilemma of the illusion that

has been created for her, albeit by the subject herself, but not exclusively so, nonetheless it is a story swathed within the confines of the subject's various masks, history and gaze.

Freud's remark (cited in Nadel, 1986:178) may therefore be regarded as apposite that 'Anyone who writes a biography is committed to lies, concealments, hypocrisy, flattery and even to hiding his own lack of understanding, for biographical truth does not exist, and if it did we could not use it.' Further, Northrop Frye (cited in Nadel, 1986) posits that 'as a writer attempts to be more artistic, he cannot help but become more subordinated to mythical demands of design and form...' Myth or landscape emerges out of not only the author's need, but also the subject's, as well as the reader's, desire for wholeness and order. Irony emerges out of the tension between the impulses to correct in the biography and, at the same time, it generates new myths about the subject. The writer's attempt to illustrate the subject's Life as closely as is possible, according to what was revealed by the subject herself and what was implied, she will therefore be mindful of not only her gaze within reflection at the time, but also of the writer's own.

Nadel describes the existence of three types of biographical narrators that dominate the form, defined largely by the relation of the story and method of discourse. He claims they have neither historical order nor attachment and coexist at similar periods. They can 'be identified as the dramatic/expressive, the objective/academic and the interpretative/analytic. The first emphasises participation, the second detachment and the third

analysis' (Nadel, 1986:176). The writer shall indeed incorporate the various types, albeit, she trusts, in a 'novel' way.

Metonymy gives rise to greater flow in style and enables one to conceptualise one thing by means of its relation to something else. This may be demonstrated in the following way:

Simmel's genius at times levitated in the realm of madness. Melancholia became increasingly more passionate with a voracious appetite for alcohol and morphine.

Biographical fact and fiction and their relation to the roles of humour and the application of various masks by their very nature create greater interest and will play important rôles in the biography. Hilde's life repertoire consisted of many rôles: that of devoted daughter, German and Jew, popular *diseuse* and wife - public and private, and later her rôle again as wife and mother in another country. As Paul Simmel's wife she needed to reassess her personal priorities, as well as her commitment to her husband, which meant she was required to cover up Simmel's chronic, deep-rooted melancholia and depression by having to go into 'rôle' as the charming and witty hostess, nurse in uniform during his periods of convalescence, efficient business assistant, model and public showpiece. Her life was a constant performance. To the world at large they were a happy and contented couple, behind the scenes reality revealed another existence, a life of pain and fear because of Simmel's rages and jealousy, his impotence and addictions. With each *da capo* nursing performance the gravity of Simmel's melancholia and addictions etched itself deeper into their lives.

To survive Hilde had to develop a finely-honed *Lebenskunst*, a good definition of which is: 'Jemand, der das Beste aus seinem Leben zu machen versteht, der sich besonders mit kleinen Dingen das Leben schön und froh zu gestalten versteht'⁷ (Wahrig, 1986:822). She even followed Emile Coué's (1857-1926)⁸ then popular mantra – 'Tous les jours, a tous points de vue je vais de mieux'.⁹

As far as their public lives were concerned Hilde and Paul were the 'ideal couple'. Sadly, their private lives were fraught with tension and suspicion. The chauffeur, Münzel (see Annexure No. 4), had strict instructions to observe Hilde's every movement and the time spent on each outing. She was not at liberty to give expression to her talent and interests. Simmel, when not in a 'home', spent his time either working or at his *Stammtisch*¹⁰ with his men friends and the Nazis who supplied his morphine.

Erich Fromm (1900-1980)¹¹ maintains that 'a man [is] driven to incessant work by a sense of deep insecurity and loneliness, or another one driven by ambition or greed for money. In all these instances the person is the slave of a passion, and his activity is in reality 'passivity' because he is driven; he is the sufferer, not the 'actor' (Fromm, 1985 [1957]: 24). But in his passion Simmel, who was twenty-two years older than Hilde, caused her both

⁷ One who understands to make the best of life and who, in particular, understands how to make life beautiful and joyful through the small things every life has to offer [my translation].

⁸ A French healer, who became famous for his system of autosuggestion as applied to the treatment of mental and physical ailments.

⁹ Every day in every way I am growing better and better.

¹⁰ A reserved table in either a pub or café.

¹¹ German psychoanalyst and philosopher who, in 1934, settled in America where he practised psychoanalysis and taught at Columbia, Yale and Michigan State Universities.

mental and physical suffering. Phyllis Rose quotes from an article in *Creativity and Psychological Health* to the effect that 'Frank Barron, a psychologist who has written perceptively on the creative process, points out the enormous difference between a dreary, limiting psychosis, which merely subtracts from life, imprisoning its victim, and the kind of madness which is perhaps allied to genius and which represents an enhancement of life, the ability periodically to let go of one's hold on reality as ordinarily perceived in order to achieve a new synthesis, a creative recombination of fact and vision' may well also describe Simmel.

With the threat of amputation of one of his legs, brought on by alcohol-induced diabetes, his marriage to a Jewess, and the looming abyss of Nazism that would lead to a creative wasteland, as well as exposure of his own ancestry, Simmel begs for oblivion in the waters of Lethe. According to Hilde, Simmel's grandfather¹² as well as his own father suffered from depressive melancholia. This legacy had an inevitable further chapter - on 24 March 1933 Paul committed suicide by lethal overdose of Veronal tablets taken in conjunction with cognac and morphine (see Annexure No.5).

Discerning observation is necessary when looking to Simmel, to his supporters and/or fans for input, because of their tendency to overlook flaws and see only what they wish to see - genius, talent and humour, a humour that the Berlin public eagerly awaited in the weekly publication of the *Berliner Illustrirte* (see Annexure No. 6), in so doing, the real and complex person is lost.

¹² Simmel's grandfather was also a suicide.

The private Simmel was impotent and a labile man who had dissipated his life before marrying Hilde. On their wedding night Paul drank himself into a state of oblivion. Hilde battled to get him home. The following morning, not being able to rouse him she called his doctor who was horrified to hear that he had remarried. He took Hilde's hands into his and asked in a fatherly fashion whether anything had happened the previous night. Hilde understood that he meant sexually and replied that nothing could, as Paul had been too drunk. The doctor sighed with relief and explained that Paul was a very sick man being treated for syphilis. He could not understand that Paul had not disclosed this to Hilde. Hilde's confidante was her sister Lucie. She was appalled that her seventeen-year-old sister should find herself in such a predicament. Hilde first sacrificed herself to his charisma, thereafter becoming enslaved by his whims, talent, melancholia, 'workaholia', and drug-induced aggression. She confided to her sister Lucie how much she loved Paul and that she had decided to devote herself to him, little realising that she had indeed become enslaved.¹³

One of the tasks of style in biographical writing is to set the 'viewing distance' between the reader and the subject (and narrator and subject). 'The distance should reflect the kind of (factual) materials out of which the biography is to be created: the more intimate the evidence – letters, diaries, reminiscences – the nearer the reader can be brought to the subject' (Kendall, 1965:10). In this study reference will be made to letters, documents, oral revelations, personal observations, books and

¹³ My aunt Lucie and I often discussed aspects of my mother's life in Berlin.

newspaper cuttings wherein the subject has, or has purposely not, been referred to.

It is difficult to remain impartial when writing a biography because mostly the biographer is deeply involved with another person. She lives, and has lived most of her life another life along with her own, and hopes to persuade the reader to live that life with her. The writer cannot help but become self-biographer and speak, as she shall do in the biography, as if she were another person – a third person – approaching the topic in a fictive manner, making biography a mimetic genre and dramatized mirror. She too shall attempt to regulate emotional distance which is difficult in the light not only of the historical periods in which the subject lived, but also because of the suffering and prolonged and intense mourning of father, husband, Motherland and career Hilde endured which was witnessed, and to some extent experienced, by the writer. Freud's definition of mourning accurately describes Hilde's condition: 'the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal, and so on' (Freud, 1938:243). This tendency encouraged Hilde, especially when life became difficult after her second husband succumbed the first time to cancer when he was forty-two, the same age as Paul when he died, and she had yet again to go into role as the nurse, to live in the past and take succour from the memories of the once-delighted-in limelight and glamour of 'the good days' in Berlin.

It is my contention that fact and fiction within biography are so closely imbricated they are immutable. In terms of Foucault the very act of dissecting a life from the point of view of object and subject is the gaze in action.

I thought it would perhaps be a novel idea to have a prologue to the book in the form of a poem I have written, entitled *Hilde's World*. The poem is set out in such a way upon the page that it adds to the rhythm and heightens meaning.

Hilde's World

Melancholy mists rising
 From the banks of *Oder*
 Foretell unusual times
 Prussian blue skies
 Prussian order
 Prussian mother
 JEW
 Wilhelmine dignity
 Overshadowed by Kaiser greed
 Kaiser need of glory
 Kaiser caught in history
 Jew and Gentile give gold for tin
 Prepared to die for him
 For Fatherland

Left to right
 The world has changed
Zylinder, Pince-nez, Vatermörder
 (A Freudian thought for the genocide to come)
 Culture, wisdom, growing delusion
 Caught in history
 In the abyss of war
 A war unlike any other
 The world has changed
 Burdened with the pain
 Of *Somme* and *Verdun*
 People deceived
 That Germany could win
 Weimar Republic
 Left and right
 Fight to relieve despair
 Hunger and joblessness
 Tucholsky and Brecht satire
 Simmel caricatures the humble and low
 Stumbling in the decadence of genius
 Hilde Gert, the charming, the chic, *die mondäne Frau*
 Sings at the *Schwarzer Kater* and *Bonbonniere*
 To the hits of Hollaender
 The wit of Schaeffers and Prager
 Berlin Metropolis resonant with song
 Richards Wagner, Strauss and Tauber

Lotte Lenya and Fritzi Masary
 Berlin charlestoned and shimmied
 To forget inflation
 Born upon *Oder*
 Revelled in limelight and fame
 Never expected what came
 Sails
 Upon *Spree* and *Wannsee*
 Across the Atlantic to the US of A
 New world, new *Vistras*, new caricatures
 Prospects with Disney
 Offers by Lubitsch, '*aber nein!*
Wir sind Deutsche und müssen zurück!'
 Old anguish and fear
 Consume a union based on deceit
 Genius and morphine madness
 Mixed with cognac and Nazi dreams
 Turns
 To fetid fear horrid in the extreme
 Rising in destruction and dissolution
 Hilde walks *Uschi von Brigitteneck*
 And is criticised for that, but then
Hakenkreuz banners hoist the future
 All based on a lie
 Jews not wanted
 Jews to be removed
 Jewfree, Jewless Europe
 Free for Aryan animus
 Uschi von Brigitteneck squats

Third Reich
 Left to right
 In unequal joust
 National pride erupts
 National hatred
 Fickle population
 Easily led
 Culture degraded
 World dislocated
 Culture and barbarism
 In one breath
 Fetid fear foretells *Auschwitz* death

Die Berliner Luft
 Is hard to leave
 It caresses soul and being
 But to survive she and family
 Flee
 Sails
 For continent dark
 Mysterious land
 Of golden ore
 And sun drenched beaches
 Emerald seas and endless horizon

South Africa
 Left to right
 Years of struggle
 Years of want
 Years of illness
 And despair
O Berliner Luft
And Kurfürstendamm
 Once more
 Alas, the African earth
 Enfolds her now

Left to right
 The world has changed
 The Berlin wall is down
 And Mandela wears freedom's crown
 Peace and reconciliation
Masakhane must have sway
 And tries to show the world the way.

CHAPTER TWO

The 'pilgrimage' towards biography: reflecting on personal events and the creative process

How does biographical writing begin, if not by reflection - through the inward and the backward gaze? The writer reaches out toward another world, another moment in time, a time past, a time recaptured in the backward, reflective gaze — the moment, the reflection, the multifaceted *mise en abyme*, with its repeated poignancy and pain, its joy and delight — all to be relived and recaptured in the writing. For a decade the writer has been delving in genealogical records to gain information going back beyond her grandparents. Access to certain records has been well nigh impossible because of language barriers. Polish/Czech institutions, for example are reluctant to correspond in German because of costly translation services. History has imposed difficulties seemingly insurmountable. The researcher develops tenacity and with each 'find' experiences a tremendous sense of 'discovery' and success. Biography becomes the 'gaze' in action. Reading, reaching towards new horizons, listening to records of the era all require new ears.

One may question the issue as to the audience whom the biographical writing is directed: the subject herself, in an attempt to redress the balance by allowing her silenced voice to 'speak'; society at large and the State which will witness the process of the unfolding or growth of the different levels of 'gaze' revealing a greater truth; or the writer's own self and past? Inevitably, the very nature of the examination will encapsulate the broad spectrum. Jean-Paul Sartre says that 'my selfness and that of

the Other are structures of one and the same totality of being' (Sartre, 1957:367). His point of view may be regarded as an extension of the 'gaze' particularly because of the relationship between the writer and the subject. The subject, Hilde, has spoken, related her joys, experiences, fears and pain thereby inscribing the writer with her life creating its own diegesis. Gillian Banner posits that

'Narrative' and 'memory' do not appear to mix, at least, not conventional narrative, which seeks and desires closure and resolution, longing for an end to ambiguity. Memory tolerates, perhaps even encourages ambiguity because it needs to be able to accommodate essentially ambiguous material concerning the dual truths 'I had been, and became again, a moral creature' and 'I was in a place where morality had no language' (Banner, 2000:33).

Wittgenstein's discussion of the possibility of 'private language' could be relevant here. He sees language as indicative, *eo ipso*, of at least a hearer and a speaker. To speak is to participate in an already established 'language game' which functions according to agreed upon 'usage'. 'Giving meaning to words as a language-user or agent or speaker, it cannot be said at all that I stand back of them or that my position is secured for standing back of them without the hearer who hears, understands, or acknowledges (in patterns of agreement) what I say and picks out my position as a speaker' (High, 1967:105). Therefore, the inferences, nuances, expressions used by Hilde, as well as the interpretation at the time of communication, between the subject and writer, as well as the writer's memory, are what will bind the biography. Gillian Banner posits:

Memory offers a metaphorical approach to fact; it simultaneously represents fact whilst attempting to understand the fact it represents. It is the medium we employ to remind ourselves who we were, who we have become, who we will be. It vies with and undermines the linearity of conventional history. The fact that subject and narrator used both English and German as a means of communication deepens the level of understanding on the part of the narrator (Banner, 2000:9).

Language that disintegrates into hate speech vis-à-vis any oppressed peoples renders that language detestable to the oppressed. 'In an anguished note in his diary for 1940, Klaus Mann observed that he could no longer read new German books: 'Can it be that Hitler has polluted the language of Nietzsche and Hölderlin?' Steiner contends that 'It can' (Steiner, 1967:124). The blacks in *apartheid* South Africa would agree with these sentiments, bearing in mind the fact that they rose up in rebellion at the thought of having the language (Afrikaans) of the oppressor forced upon them as the language of instruction.

Many of Hilde's German-born Jewish friends in South Africa, for many years after the war, refused to speak German, just as they refused to buy German goods. Hilde's attitude towards German, however, was that language ultimately transcended the evil of individuals. She maintained that as a 'world-tongue', a language of learning and poetry, her daughter would learn to speak German and, in time, come to love it.¹⁴

¹⁴ The writer is grateful to her mother for her forethought and inborn Prussian perseverance in the face of difficult odds. An appreciation of the language has provided insight into the complex German psyche; it has also afforded many hours of joy being able to understand and value, not only the Mahler and Schubert *Lieder*, but also the popular songs that Hilde enjoyed and sang. Childhood friends have been deprived not only of the richness and beauty of German, but also of the

George Steiner quotes a section from Thomas Mann's famous letter to the Dean of the University of Bonn when he was stripped of his honorary doctorate upon his emigration: 'The mystery of language is a great one; the responsibility for a language and for its purity is of a symbolic and spiritual kind; this responsibility does not have merely an aesthetic sense. The responsibility for language is, in essence, human responsibility. ... Should a German writer made responsible through his habitual use of language, remain silent, quite silent, in the face of all the irreparable evil which has been committed daily, and is being committed in my country, against body, soul and spirit, against justice and truth, against men and man?' (Steiner, 1967:124-5).

Many South African writers during the *apartheid* period adopted a similar stance for social comment, which among others gave rise to *die sestigers*, an *avant-garde* group of Afrikaans writers of the 1960s¹⁵. However, the German language provides the writer with an invaluable tool to be used in enriching the material to be used in the writing of the biography, which will be in English.

In having to rethink her attitude towards German as a language of poetry and barbarity, the writer has had to weigh up the meaning and effect of some words. A word that conjures up dread, for example, is *Rassenschande*. This evocative word means 'defilement or shame of race' - whose shame, though? It

opportunity of sharing an extra dimension of intimacy with parents, as well as of appreciating their 'roots', as a result of language. The writer was saddened by the fact that her father had not time to teach her to speak Czech. Had she been given that opportunity she could have developed a more meaningful relationship with her paternal grandparents who lived in Vienna and whom she was destined never to meet; she too could have extended her gaze into the Slav world first hand.

¹⁵ *Dictionary of South African English*, 1987. Ed Jane Branford. Oxford University Press.

is ironic that this hateful word instilled so much pain both in Germany and the adoptive country, South Africa. The fricatives fuelling the voracious locomotives' bellies that hauled trainloads of Jews to the Auschwitz, Bergen-Belsen as well as Oranienburg/Sachsenhausen concentration camps, continue to reverberate in one's ears to the present day. Shoah, Struggle, *Rrrassenschande...* *Rrrassenschande* ... *Rrrassenschande* ... the wheels of life turning and grinding into vapour ... *Schande, Schande, Schande*, gathering momentum to journey's end and the fuelling of crematoria furnaces with human detritus. Life is but an illusion. It is difficult to juxtapose such a loaded word with *Heidenröslein*.

Hilde was 'silenced' as an artiste and as a woman, first by her husband and ultimately by the Nazis; deprived of nationality, right to language and dignity. By teaching the writer to speak German she was asserting her German-ness and claiming her right to language and 'Motherland' despite her being Jewish and imbuing the language with love. When upset she claimed that she hated the Germans. However, what she hated was the Nazi regime that came so close to destroying the world, but she loved Germany and her German heritage. By having me christened a Catholic, like her father, she believed she was protecting her daughter from the hatred and repercussions of anti-Semitism, little realising how futile such an action was not only in the eyes of the Nazis but, ironically, also the Catholic Church. The mirror image of this situation is that the writer's school companions, and most likely some of the nuns who ran the convent, regarded her mother, the Jew, as belonging to the 'Christ killers' as I tearfully

reported to my mother on one occasion. Hilde promptly took the matter up with the Mother Superior who tried to reassure her by saying that children were inclined to be cruel. It is strange that even though the Jews are patriarchal it is one tradition that the woman determines lineage – thus, according to Jewish law (and in the eyes of the Nazis) baptism was a quasi-meaningless action. For many years it was difficult for the writer to come to terms with the fact that she has been living in the cleft of such irony, the significance of which has only recently penetrated since meditating on the past and allowing her gaze an insightful view of Hilde's life, and delving into the latest literature on the subject by Daniel Jonah Goldhagen.

His book *A Moral Reckoning*¹⁶ has highlighted the stance adopted by the Catholic Church in regard to Jews in the last millennium, not only during the Nazi era. During the Millennium celebrations Pope John Paul II apologised for many of the church's mistakes and erring ways during the preceding millennium but, the writer feels that a great deal of healing and reconciliation could be brought about by the church's public confession to its even tacit collaboration with Hitler and his evil epoch and the unequivocal renunciation of the church's anti-Semitic stance, thus indicating its commitment to Christ's greatest commandment, that of love towards all of humankind. The Vatican also needs officially to open its archives for the scrutiny of researchers and scholars. Yet in the midst of public outcry against Pope Pius XII and his anti-Semitic leanings there is a Jesuit priest who defends him. *The Star* carried a leading article on 20 May 2003 with the

¹⁶ Daniel Jonah Goldhagen. 2002. Little Brown. London.

banner: 'A Jesuit's defence of Pope Pius XII'. He is Reverend Peter Gumpel who would be happy to see that pope beatified!

The suffering and conflict caused by the absence of language for the family upon immigration was traumatic. The writer early in life became cognizant of the fact that linguistic dispossession is sufficient motive for anger and frustration that can lead to violence, for it is close to the dispossession of one's self. The resultant feeling of inadequacy is like a mind-altering drug. The very act of having to translate every word for normal conversation that one would otherwise have taken for granted in one's own language requires both physical and mental strength. Translation too is flawed through ignorance. When entering a shop for some nuts the writer when still quite young heard a lady ask for half a pound of tonsils¹⁷ The Italian shop assistant laughed with embarrassment not knowing what the woman wanted. The writer wanting to save the woman further embarrassment assisted in German by explaining the error. We are the sum of our languages – the language of family and childhood, education, friendship and love, as well as the larger changing world into which we grow, thus allowing the gaze to transcend the trivial.

Dislocation is the norm rather than the aberration in our time, but even in the event that we spend an entire lifetime in one place, as the writer has done, the interesting diverseness with which we live, especially in a country like South Africa, reminds us that we are no longer the norm or the centre – as was thought

¹⁷ Mandeln is the same word for almonds in German and Afrikaans.

by the previous regime - there is no one geographic centre pulling the world together. Politically, the advent of Hitler ensured this; musically, Elvis Presley and his ilk changed the world, Marshall McLuhan¹⁸ turned it into a 'global village'. We realise that in a decentred world we are always simultaneously at the centre and on the periphery that every competing centre makes us marginal. As a result Hilde and the family always found themselves in the chinks between cultures, and subcultures, political beliefs and credos. They looked different too in dress and body language. The clothes from Berlin were elegantly tailored and fashionable in Europe, rather than Britain or South Africa. The language of communication was perhaps the greatest point of difference. Hilde's eventual use of English by and large was good, but it was the writer's father who developed a better command of the language than her mother, their accents obviously foreign but not particularly German. Hilde's siblings on the other hand always retained strong German accents, marking them as the Other. The writer's first spoken language was German, but Hilde endeavoured to speak English as much as possible to the child to enable her to communicate with her peers in the enclave where they lived near Joubert Park.

Reflection returns the writer to a situation when she was two-and-a-half years old. A Scottish family had moved into the building where the Mecls lived. They had a daughter Patricia who was three-and-a half years old. Hilde asked Mary Ramsay to

¹⁸ Canadian theorist of communication, famed for his views on the effects of technology on modern society. His works include *The Gutenberg Galaxy* 1962 in which he coined the phrase "the global village" for the worldwide electronic society then emerging (*Webster's New World Encyclopedia*, New York, Prentice Hall, 1990)

allow her daughter to play with Vera to enable her to learn to speak English properly. On one occasion Pat rushed into the lounge where the mothers were having tea and chatting and said to her mother 'Mummi I vont to make vivi' whereupon Mary and Hilde burst into laughter. Mary reminded the writer of the irony of that incident until she died many years later. The writer is still wary of Vs and Ws. *Boraine Simone*, the building where we lived was home to very interesting European families, including the Borowskys who owned the pharmacy at street level. The writer heard the Borowsky sons practising scales in their flat above the shop. They were in their late teens and early twenties at the time. They became well-known opera soloists for PACT.¹⁹ They were Jules Borowsky, the elder son and tenor, and Bob Borowsky, baritone, the younger.

Visiting Berlin, from the perspective of the writer's gaze, was an attempt at bringing Hilde back to her beloved city by inscribing herself upon it. The visit was an enriching and exciting experience, a spiritual homecoming, and a time for personal reconciliation with a painful past. Part of the writer's quest was to understand what constituted a Berliner, what makes her/him different from other Germans and also, how the writer herself could reconcile herself to the strong Germanic influences in her life. Among the Germans Berliners are considered to be the Other, not only because of their being Prussian, but also because of their distinctive sense of humour, which is defined by the *Berliner Schnauze* – the pointed, witty and aggressive argot. Jelavich refers to *Meyers Konversations-Lexikon* by stating that

¹⁹ The Performing Arts Council of the Transvaal

'The Berliner is always quick-witted, always ready to find a sharp, spicy, witty formulation for every encounter and event ... But the Berliner also has the tendency to carp at everything great or profound that confronts him, or to drag it down to the level of illusion or fashion, in order to play with it until it is tossed out in favour of another toy'.²⁰ Hilde seemed to think Berliners dwelled within the cleft of a paradox – disrespectful of authority and displaying cynical scepticism toward received values, yet very disciplined as far as punctuality was concerned.

The writer felt drawn to the German way of life because she had from infancy been familiarised by Hilde with the sound of Berlin through her Prussian upbringing, the importance of punctuality, hard work and discipline, the use of *Hochdeutsch* and witty *Berlinerisch*, as well as with so many names and places, that it was not difficult to establish a sense of belonging. However, prior to departure from Johannesburg on the journey of discovery she was somewhat reticent about how she would be regarded; would she detect any latent hatred or resentment? and what would be her resultant reaction. Perhaps because of the way in which she inscribed herself on Berlin as being flesh of German flesh in physiognomy and spirit, as well as having made her position quite clear in wanting information only and neither retribution, nor restitution²¹.

The Germans appear to be serious about ensuring that the youth are informed about Hitler and that invidious period in history and

²⁰ Ernst Dronke, *Berlin* (1846, reprinted Darmstadt, 1987: 17); and 'Berlin' in *Meyers Konversations-Lexikon: Eine Encyclopädie des allgemeinen Wissens* (Leipzig, 1874: 3, 12-13).

²¹ The period is, in any event, proscribed.

ensure that schools visit the various holocaust museums. These museums are frighteningly realistic. The curators have created what one might call 'virtual' camps, bombed out homes with all the attendant destruction where one seems to be walking over rubble, accompanied by bone-chilling sirens, bombers and human anguish. Another thought-provoking site is Bebel Square in front of the Humboldt University, one of the countrywide university sites where Joseph Goebbels (1897-1945) ordered all books by Jewish authors be consumed in bonfires in 1933. Goebbels comments in his diary for 11 May 1933: 'Vor dem Scheiterhaufen der von Studenten entbrannten Schmutz- und Schundbücher. Ich bin in bester Form. Riesenauflauf'²² Goebbels was never modest about his ability to sway the crowds.

There is a glass-covered section in the ground exposing many empty bookcases below alluding to the country's resultant impoverishment. The writer has no illusions, however, that if given the opportunity the people could hate again. The reason for this statement is that after the 11 September 2001 attack on the World Trade Centre in New York the focus was on Muslims, the new scapegoats. Berlin has a very large Muslim community and German fear of Muslim Otherness became palpable. An elderly German couple from the seat behind in the bus was overheard saying with trembling voice: 'Do you see that group of Muslims over there?' 'They could be assassins!' Considering the couple's age they would have had first-hand experience of the Third Reich, may have even been sympathetic towards it. The line between fear and xenophobia is very thin, as we in South

²² 'In front of the pyre of filth and trash. I am in great form. Great assembly'.

Africa know only too well because of the influx of many nations from north of this country's borders.

Reported televised incidents in 1998 and again in 2003 in Mpumalanga where police dog units are still inclined to release their dogs on hapless prisoners confirm the existence of latent hatred. In May 2002 *The Star* newspaper ran an article with the banner headline '*Unlikely allies bound by a common hatred.*' This article shows photographs of Hitler and Osama bin Laden with a sub-heading '*Neo-Nazis sympathise with Muslim extremists.*' Ahmed Huber, a Swiss convert to Islam, is quoted as saying 'The 11th of September has brought together the two sides because the New Right has reacted positively in a big majority. They say, and I agree with them 100%, what happened on 11 September, if it is the Muslims who did it, is not an act of terrorism but an act of counter-terrorism.' The hatred of America, Israel and the Jews is rife. Currently, the totally foreign languages of Turkish and/or Arabic, pose a greater 'threat' to Germans now than the perceived otherness the Jews could ever have posed, as the German Jews invariably spoke German rather than Yiddish even among themselves - narrowing the gap of implied Otherness.

This, notwithstanding, Hitler highlights in *Mein Kampf* a single (and unusual) encounter, which he claimed opened his eyes to the 'Jewish Question'.

Once, as I was strolling through the Inner City, I suddenly encountered an apparition in a black caftan and black hair locks. Is this a Jew? Was my first thought. For, to be sure, they had not looked like that in Linz. I observed the man furtively and cautiously, but the longer I stared at this

foreign face, scrutinizing feature for feature, the more my first question assumed a new form: Is this a German? (Hitler, *Mein Kampf*: 59, cited in Kershaw, 1998:61).

According to Ian Kershaw in his book *Hitler, 1889–1936, Hubris*, 'the language Hitler uses in these pages of *Mein Kampf* betrays a morbid fear of uncleanness, dirt, and disease – all of which he associated with Jews. He also quickly shaped his newly-found hatred into a conspiracy theory. He now linked the Jews with every evil he perceived: the liberal press, cultural life, prostitution, and – most significant of all – identified them as the leading force in Social Democracy. At this, 'the scales dropped from my eyes'. Everything connected with Social Democracy – party leaders, *Reichsrat* deputies, trade union secretaries, and the Marxist press that he devoured with loathing – now seem to him to be Jewish' (Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p 65-6, cited in Kershaw 1998:61).

The *Reichskanzler* Gerhard Schroeder made several appeals to the German nation to remain calm in the wake of the alleged Muslim attack on America, as well as to possible action in Germany. The Germans gave the *Kanzler* unqualified support to assist America in its drive against terrorism *until* taxes were to be imposed to finance any operation that could be required. Rhetoric is one thing, 'putting your money where your mouth is' is another. The German conservatives and their sinister fundamentalist adherents are being kept at bay - for the time being, but as Daniel Jonah Goldhagen warns in *A Moral Reckoning* that there is evidence of continuing Jew hatred in Germany in the form of anti-Zionism which has been called

'ersatz anti-Semitism; it says Israel, but means the Jews' (Goldhagen, 2002:285-286).

Retracing Hilde's footsteps through the city evoked, not only a sense of the national tragedy wrought by the Nazi era, but the pain of irretrievable loss she suffered at having to leave her home, friends and country and, worse, never being able to return. The city is beautiful and vast, sprawling along with the Spree River and forested areas and magnificent architecture. In her day there was little evidence of graffiti and litter until the Nazis defaced everything Jewish. Now the graffiti is terrible and scars the beautiful buildings. Even the underground coaches, upholstery and windows are smeared with obscenities. Hilde's gratitude to South Africa notwithstanding, she sorely missed the history, traditions and elegance of her homeland.

Frank-Manuel Peter, director of the *Tanzarchiv* in Cologne and author of the biography on *Valeska Gert*, the grotesque dancer, made a point of travelling to Berlin to meet the writer and provided her with an interesting perspective reminiscent of the situation in South Africa, inherent in Berlin in that corruption in general, and self-enrichment in particular, seemed to be uppermost in most politicians' minds. For example, Germans spoke (perhaps unfairly) of MBenz and not of Mbeki.

Several hours were spent discussing the *milieu* within which Hilde would have worked, the 'other-worldliness' of top hat and tails, ball gowns, masquerades, and the degeneration of the times and, of course, the vicissitudes of her life with Paul Simmel: the artistic temperament and the different backgrounds that formed

them. What was also discussed was the discipline that was required by artists. For Hilde it would be time allocated to practising dance steps, new routines and songs, then working with the musicians and the director, it often meant travelling and living in hotels, meeting new theatre managements and becoming *au fait* with current happenings. Hilde was also quite adept at falling into the local *patois*, if necessary, for which audiences loved her. Despite the fact that she was a gregarious person she had a particular phobia that had to be worked on continuously, this was, ironically, a fear of having to walk through a crowded room. She generally needed to be accompanied - she did, like any performer, suffer from *Lampenfieber*,²³ from time to time. She was quite comfortable and in control when on the stage.

For Paul the routine was quite different, not that he was a voyeur, but he needed to be unobtrusive in his observation of people doing everyday things, and assimilating the political and economical climate, as well as the foibles of human nature, then returning home to create the unforgettable caricatures, together with the accompanying jokes he was famous for (see Annexure No. 6). Peter had the opportunity of going through all the photographs and the documentation the writer had brought with her. The result was the writer's enrichment of knowledge and Peter's being able to provide an official valuation for the collection.

²³ Stagefright.

Caught in the arms of the city and its atmosphere the following
lines were begun by the writer on 4 September 2001:

It rained all night
a gentle rain, the kind
that nourishes the earth.
I am surprised to hear
little bird song, except
for turtle dove and crow;
the juxtaposition of life and death:
gentleness, vis-à-vis the predatory
realities we face daily and, ultimately.

Moritz the cat, the striped chapel guardian,
has sought and found a cosier spot
while I am left in reverie
with the grand old-new city
of dignified elegance
where mother lived and worked,
loved, laughed and despaired.

The city vast, enchanting and beautiful
Trees and bells, buildings baroque and garish new
Interlaced by river, cobblestone and tarmac
the touchstones of treasured memory.

The rain persists and, at times,
the day threatens to drown
in its own tears; tears shed for all
the lost and displaced.
The *Berliner Luft*, the gently falling rain,
the gentle transition of day into night,
the gently changing seasons.
I see the trees gracefully,
reluctantly, bending to Nature's will
with a gentle blush.

I heard an anxious sound
at my half-open window.
To my delight I saw a creature
glorious black and brilliant red.

A butterfly had mistaken its course.
 I gently opened the window full wide to assist its flight.
 It lingered just long enough to say farewell.

A cherished sound is the sound of *Berlinerish*.
 Those first nurturing words of love and humour
 at Mother's breast
 that sustain me still.
 The sound has me in its thrall.
 My heart beats to the rhythm of Africa
 yet my spirit soars here!
 Who am I?
 A gentle voice whispers:
 'God's child.'

Upon awakening I cross the hall.
 At the eastern window a diffuse, silver-tinsel light
 ripples through the still damp leaves
 'Fear not, I am with you' it seems to say
 so begins another day.

A strange sensation to sit
 at Ranke Strasse Nr 2.
 A restaurant now where I have
Boulette, Kartoffelsalat und bier,
 and marvel that mother once lived here.
 I feel her presence and painful smile
 for from this very place she journeyed south.
 Just then the *Gedächtniskirche's* bells ring out
 as surely they did then. I struggle not to show my pain.

At the bar someone freely quotes Goethe:
 'Tell me with whom you associate and I'll tell you who you
 are.'
 A profound thought over beer
 but surely one of the reasons why I am here.

CHAPTER THREE

The female gaze - upon herself, her world and those closest to her

The age into which Hilde was born could conceivably be called 'hysterical'. The New Woman of the *fin de siècle* created a gender crisis that threatened the ideologised conventions formulated for and by patriarchal society. The Weimar Republic abolished censorship and did offer women the possibility of following various muses. But patriarchal society, nonetheless, regarded women as second-class citizens where the ethos of *Kinder, Küche, Kirche*²⁴ was what was expected of the German woman. The concept of a German woman was one of strength, determination and fortitude. A woman was expected to be able to sacrifice everything for the [father] land. A German woman did not complain, but bore life's vicissitudes with dignity and forbearance. Hilde recounted the chastisement she received when having had her appendix removed when she was seventeen years old. She complained of the pain and was promptly admonished by the nurse who placed a weight upon the dressed wound: 'a German woman does not feel pain!'

Women and children in particular born into the new century were introduced to the hardships and sacrifices demanded by war all too soon. The Kaiser issued an edict demanding that Germans - no discrimination made against Jews in his edict therefore Jewish citizens were included in the demand - surrender all precious metals in their possession, including wedding rings and copper

²⁴ Children, kitchen, church.

kitchen utensils, for the war effort. 'Gold for iron' became the common cry.

Society decreed that the wives and mothers left behind should practise 'self-discipline'. They were to take the heroic deaths of their husbands or sons with equivalent heroism, and they were expected to devote themselves to the less seriously wounded casualties who were home to recuperate before they were once again dispatched to battle (Klabunde, 2001:18).

Jewish men who were able to do so acquired an army commission and did so with pride. Joseph Rappaport, from Hamburg, Germany, whom Lucie, Hilde's sister, was to marry in South Africa, became a decorated officer²⁵ in the Austro-Hungarian Forces despite his being of the Mosaic faith (see Annexure No.7). Paul Simmel, like other young men, enlisted and was decorated with the Iron Cross, which he attached to the seat of his trousers in a fit of pique during the recession.

The Czapski household was a well-ordered one that during the War ran on frugal but loving lines, the children being taught the value of family solidarity. Like any other children they sang the popular folk songs with their friends, although they did not join the *Wandervögel*. They too lived in the aura of *Heinzelmännchen* (gnomes), the ever-popular fairy-tales, and 'making music' in the *Gemütlichkeit* of the home. They were fortunate that they had relatives in Posen who farmed and were in a position to let them have certain provisions from time to time. This kindly aunt, Tante Hulda, and her entire household, were later put to death in

²⁵ Josef Rappaport's rank was that of Captain and he was decorated with the Jubilee Cross.

a concentration camp. The irony is painful. Either way, the Jews died for their Motherland, serving it, or being enslaved by it.

When the war first broke out, and for its first year, the war actually did create the desired social integration between the different social classes, it cut through the monotony of the bourgeois world, and the world of the working class, which had practically become bourgeois. The internal tensions of German society were concentrated on an external enemy. Now those trends were changing. A polarisation was taking place: the broad centre of the population, which had supported the war, was shaken by a left wing that no longer acted as a support to national solidarity but pressed for an end to the war, a peace settlement. ... in April [1917] the country saw its first major wave of strikes, above all among the well-organised armaments workers in Berlin. The government tried to keep the population in line with hortatory slogans, and at the same time it developed a war propaganda based on chauvinism, hatred and concepts of the enemy, and which spread the conviction of the superiority of the German nation (Klabunde, 2001:24-25).

Another irony for the Czapski family was that Hilde's father, Benno, the textile merchant, had supplied uniforms to the Boers in South Africa during the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902). He would later tell Hilde, and she would reflect with a sense of irony, on the various theatrical sketches that rose up out of 'history':

the most pointed of which relating to South Africa came towards the end of the act of the show entitled *Vorüberbrettli*, with the appearance of the leaders of the defeated Boers (Botha, Dewet, and Delarey). In what counted back then as a tearjerker, they sang about British atrocities and deplored the fact that the Kaiser had spurned them. They concluded by appealing to the audience, that is, to the German people. In the ensuing act, which consisted of theatrical parodies, a policeman kept interrupting the action to censor dubious lines (Jelavich, 1993: 108).

After the War the economic situation in Germany was bleak, rife with tension and an air of disillusionment. The loans, which had to be paid for the war and the high reparations demanded by the allied victors, forced the new German government to devalue its currency by printing new money. By late 1923, money was no longer worth the paper it was printed on. Peter Jelavich illustrates the times in his book *Berlin Cabaret*: 'the middle-class lost everything; those who had property or were in a position to manipulate financially became incredibly rich. As cash lost value from one day to the next, the best wealthy profiteers and speculators could do was to spend the money – on anything. This made times ripe for an unprecedented luxury industry catering to the *nouveaux riches*. Consumerism spread its avaricious grip on the nation. Exclusive bars, restaurants, and nightclubs filled Berlin; in 1922, there were 38 cabarets in the city to entertain and lift the people's morale' (Jelavich, 1993[1996]). The people shimmied and tangoed until the early hours as though the following day did not matter.

The word *Kabarett* had found its way into the German vocabulary around 1910, used for an entertainment-oriented, somewhat literary, small music hall. It soon became tailored to the pleasure-seeking public, the wealthy Berliners and the tourists in search of the legendary decadence of the modern Babylon. The cabarets, stressed two things: conspicuous consumption and eroticism. The gaze focused on the glittering surface: opulent interiors, some pompously overrated performers, and a great deal of nudity for the wealthy men who wanted to consume their day's earnings as conspicuously as possible in their tuxedos with

overpriced champagne and bejewelled ladies of shady repute. 'Cabaret always has had a tendency to combine the political with the erotic, in accordance with its desire to shock, or to amuse, or to make someone or something look ridiculous' (Jelavich, 1993 [1996]:50). The typical scene as set by Christopher Isherwood in *Goodbye to Berlin* with the activities of his character Sally Bowles describes the dingier side. Sally wishes to be a performer, a good actress and singer, but she is not. Her life and her behaviour are as mercurial as the times in which she lives. She lives and loves too much. The 1972 movie entitled *Cabaret*, directed by Bob Fosse, starring, inter alia, Liza Minnelli as Sally Bowles, Michael York as Brian and Joel Grey as the sinister, almost demonic Master of Ceremonies reflects the dingy, smoke-filled Kit Kat bar-cum-restaurant, complete with *Damenorchester*²⁶ and table telephones for flirtation and the possibility of immediate gratification. The feigned gaiety Berlin of 1931 is reflected amid the wild hedonism and excesses of the *bourgeoisie* and Nazi assaults. A memorable scene is that of the Hitler youth, beautiful, pure and unblemished, singing of the clean and fresh future promised to the Nazi salute. The gullibility of the emotional masses is frightening. The title song is prophetic especially the line *Life is a cabaret, my chum!*²⁷ When juxtaposed to the post-war Nuremburg Trials.

²⁶ Orchestra/band comprising only women.

²⁷ Musical score by John Kander and lyrics by Fred Ebb.

The social climate was ideal for the caricaturist, the witty conférenciers²⁸ and intelligent artists, to expose the vicissitudes of the times. Cabaret can be said to have reached its apogee during the 1920s and early 1930s. Programmes concentrated on chansons, recitations and sketches, many with satirical leanings, as well as everyday themes such as inflation, bankruptcy, dance trends, these *Schlager* (hits) conjured up and often irreverently mocked the changing morality, the petty hypocrisies and lunacy of the times, counselling optimism and pleasure.

Many composers, lyricists, directors and performers were Jewish and brought style and panache to the stage. A group very popular at this time was the *Comedian Harmonists* – three of the members, which included the founder of the group, were Jewish. The lyrics were often quite silly with the emphasis on fun and often, on innuendo, but the tunes were wonderful to dance to: 'Wer schmeisst den da mit Lehm / der sollte sich was schämen, sollt lieber mit Schok'lade schmeissen als mit dreckigem Lehm'²⁹ this, to the tango tune *A Media Luz*.³⁰ 'Es geht die Lou Lila von Kopf biss Schuh Lila'³¹. Another very popular song sung by the Comedian Harmonists, 'Veronica der Lenz ist da... der Spargel wechst'³² – the innuendo here is quite obvious. Needless to say,

²⁸ The conférencier was cabaret's equivalent of a master of ceremonies, who introduces numbers and, through his extemporizing, makes the spectators feel that they are being addressed directly and personally (Jelavich, 1986: 46).

²⁹ 'He who throws mud should be ashamed, he should rather throw chocolate'

³⁰ *A Media Luz*, a tango by Donato, included on the record *Als Opa noch schwofen ging*, Polydor 46 641.

³¹ Song by Katscher, 1926, on the record *Als Opa noch Schwofen ging!*. Polydor 46 641. *There goes Lou Lila from head to toe in Lilac'*

³² Song by Jurmann, written in 1929. 'Veronica spring is here .. the asparagus is growing'

the lyrics lose meaning in translation and they often only work through the rhyming pattern.

Hilde always related how adventure-seeking tourists sought the Bohemian nightlife that Berlin offered. She always maintained that no other European city, and this included Paris, could compete with the glamour, fun and excitement of Berlin – by day or by night. The *Kurfürstendamm* area near Kaiser Wilhelm's *Gedächtniskirche* was the centre of elegance and *joie de vivre*. The other area was near *Friedrichstrasse* and *Unter den Linden*. The sinister side of the tinsel, jazz and jollity was the greed, dealing in drugs and pornography and ever-present crime.

Alfred Döblin in his prize-winning novel *Alexanderplatz* (1961) questions the existence of two gods in the world: creation and destruction. He examines criminality and what it means to an ordinary person who, in degenerate times, wishes to be good, is innately good, as is his protagonist, Franz Biberkopf who, at the beginning of the novel, is released from prison. He represents the ordinary Berliner who wishes to obey the law and live an orderly life, but it is not possible given the *milieu* within which he lives. He is felled at every turn. Either Berlin or Franz Biberkopf would have to be destroyed to bring about change. As Berlin was unlikely to change it is Biberkopf who must be reshaped or sacrificed. This novel was the first meaningful account of a metropolitan city in German literature.

Goldhagen states that 'It was during the 1930s that the Jews were subjected to the most frequent and intensive verbal attacks, more concentrated verbal violence, than any group has

ever been by its own society'. The Jews were also classified as 'socially dead'. When juxtaposed to *apartheid* ideology and the concept of Bantustans and Orania, it is interesting to look at just two German policies towards the Germans and Jews and see how they correlate:

To turn the Jews into socially dead beings – beings that were violently dominated, natally alienated, and generally dishonoured – and, once they were, to treat them as such. To remove Jews as thoroughly and permanently from social and, as far as possible, from physical contact with the German people, and thereby to neutralize them as a factor in German life (Goldhagen, 1996:135).

History has also recorded how Hitler and his minions divided human beings into a hierarchy of races, race being understood in biological terms. The Nordic peoples – tall, blond, and blue-eyed – were at the apex. Below them were various western European racial strains. Below them were southern Europeans. Below them, already far down, were Slavs. Still below them were Asian peoples. At the bottom somewhere near the boundary separating human beings and primates were Blacks.³³ Interesting to note is that the Jews are not even mentioned as they were considered *Untermensch*³⁴. This was essentially a continuum of putative capacity, with valued attributes, such as intelligence to be found in diminishing quantity the lower a people's position was in the hierarchy. Nazi ideology also articulated an ideal of virility, which put women in subordinate

³³ See Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, 1996, Abacus, p411. For further reading on the central aspects of Nazi race theory, Hans Günther, *Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes*. Munich. 1935. Lehmanns Verlag; also Hans Jürgen Luthhöft, *Der Nordische Gedanke in Deutschland, 1920-1940*. Stuttgart. 1971. Ernst Klett Verlag.

³⁴ Subhuman.

and inferior positions, especially those who were not able to bear children. They also expressed anti-Semitism in explicit gender terms. The Aryan, masculinized nation was defined in contrast to representations of effeminate, homosexual Jews. Those who were excluded and marginalized were also feminised – thus further justifying their exclusion. The Nazis levelled the questions of gender when referring to Jews – neither gender was allowed to work, both were feminised and/or marginalized and rendered impotent. With their 'final solution' policy the Nazis

intended to remove all Jews from existence. This meant that there must not only be no Jews left alive, but that there should no longer be any potential for Jewish life in the future. The Holocaust was an attack in the present upon both the past and the future (Banner, 2000:10).

In 1938 Virginia Woolf described the repressive cult of family, which restricted women in education and the workplace, as a poisonous worm: 'There we have in embryo the creature, Dictator as we call him when he is Italian or German, who believes that he has the right, whether given by God, Nature, sex or race is immaterial; to dictate to other human beings how they shall live, what they shall do' (Woolf, 1938, *Three Guineas*, 228-229).

Colonizers suffered from similar delusions of grandeur, believing they were members of the exalted master race; they adopted similar methods of silencing the colonized 'other' denying them human rights and dignity. Therefore, by tormenting marginalized people, firstly on an emotional, psychological level, stripping them of their identity and then by inflicting bodily pain, either in

prisons, farms or within cities, the oppressors are certain of breaking the people's spirits and ensuring subservience from now dehumanised subjects. It is ironic to note that one of Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe's henchmen, 'Hitler' Hunsvi, should have elected to be named after one of the world's vilest people and a man who would have classified him among the primates.

To understand the fascination some people have for drugs the writer had several discussions on the effects of morphine, Veronal and various other opiates popular at the time with her friend and physician of fifty years, Dr Dieter Brenner, who studied medicine in Berlin during the 1930s - he had also served in the German army as a medical intern, was taken prisoner and shipped to America before being repatriated to South West Africa. Their various discussions covered both the political and social conditions at the time. He advised that morphine, of which heroin is a derivative and being produced in a laboratory and being semi-synthetic, has the greatest addiction potential of the narcotics and is probably the most widely abused of all opiates. The writer had further discussions about the drug with Bobby Hamman a counsellor for the *Drug Wise* organisation. He advised, and it has been reported in the press recently, that heroin is the most abused drug currently in South Africa. Mr Hamman advised that morphine dulls the senses, relieves pain and induces sleep. After injecting the effect begins almost immediately with an orgasmic-like rush, followed by euphoria and

a feeling of tranquillity. Herman Goering was also addicted to morphine³⁵.

Dieter Brenner affirmed Hilde's enthusiasm for Berlin and empathized with her reduced circumstances as a result of the war and illness. He often showed his kindness and generosity to the family in their time of need. To the writer he has been a special friend and his death in 2002 has saddened her very much. Indeed, his being a doctor removed him from some of the social problems of the times in Germany, but his upbringing and being a Christian gave him another perspective of the growth of the Hitler fever which consumed Germany. He was able to see through the bravado and knew that such arrogance and aggression would end in disaster. The writer will never forget her early life and the people who influenced it. As Gillian Banner says:

Change, decay, attrition may afflict memories but loss is not a threat. For some survivors, loss may even suggest a potential for relief from the fear, which does exist: that memory will finally overwhelm and consume the rememberer (Banner, 200:17).

It was against the backdrop of glamour and 'glitz' that Hilde, a very young Jewish girl with natural charm, beauty, talent and intelligence began her career, with enthusiasm and passion, working first on song and dance routines, progressing to more and more sophisticated and demanding musical sketches. She worked under the direction of Rudolf Nelson (see Annexure No

³⁵ Göring was jailed in Sweden in 1923 following the failed *Putsch* as an amoral hysteric and morphine addict. *Collier's Encyclopedia*, Vol 11, p 236. Crowell-Collier Educational Corporation, 1969.

8), Willi Schaeffers, Hans Reimann and Hans Gruss at select venues in Berlin, Frankfurt and Munich (see copies of critiques, programmes and photographs Annexure Nos.9-20). She became a highly paid and sought after *diseuse* whose seasons were always extended owing to great acclaim. One critic, in particular, commented on her superlative rendition of a song that made other singers pale by comparison. Because of her popularity and talent Hilde was also asked to take over a leading role from Mizzi Mittelka another popular *diseuse* who had broken her contract with Willi Schaeffers (see Annexure Nos. 21 and 22). Hilde, like Dietrich, had a sophisticated and elegant style of rendition or *pointierung*³⁶ to make songs memorable.

With the changing times it was not surprising that the celebrated Rudolf Nelson introduced a wider variety of dance acts in his Cabaret on the Kurfürstendamm. Numbers included artists such as Celly de Rheydt who performed nude. However, the artist who elicited scandal and scorn was the nude dancer Anita Berber who performed at the *White Mouse Cabaret*. Modesty was cast to the winds together with the public's cares. It seems as though people were prepared to try anything to have a good time. New dances with outrageous names such as Charleston and Black-Bottom, as well as the Foxtrot, One-step and the seductive Tango, took possession of the hedonistic society, as did the refrain: '*Man lebt nur kurz und ist so lange tot*'³⁷. The authorities attempted to restrain the pleasure-seeking public by distributing

³⁶ Stress and emphasis.

³⁷ 'Life is short, death endless' – my translation.

warning placards, which read: '*Berlin - dein Tänzer ist der Tod*'³⁸ (Greul, 1971:195). Blandine Ebinger, a celebrated performer, gave independent comment of this in her book *Blandine...* '*Berlin - dein Tänzer ist der Tod*' as a chanson by her husband Friedrich Hollaender, that she, although she did not care for the song, sang it for the opening of the newly-established *Schall und Rauch* theatre. The song was intended as a warning to the addicts of gambling dens and sniffers of cocaine (Ebinger, 1992:114). Tango orchestras became perhaps even more popular than the jazz bands in the more sophisticated venues. Well-run establishments engaged gigolos to ensure that women had excellent dancers – others offering much more.

Hollaender (1896-1976), with Hilde as the star performer, had a very successful run in Munich at the *Bonbonniere*, which was an elegant, sophisticated, and much sought-after cabaret. The artistic director was Hans Gruss; his was a fairytale career. He started out as a waiter who, through his ability, soon became manager in large hotels and restaurants. In Cairo he found his life partner, Anna Gruss, who never stood in her husband's shadow but who, like her husband, became a celebrity in Munich. When Mr Feilbach took over the *Bonbonniere*, Gruss became his manager. After Feilbach's sudden demise Gruss took over the sought-after theatre and restaurant³⁹. It was during one of these engagements that Hollaender wrote *Das Hütchenlied*⁴⁰ especially for Hilde prior to his departure. (See Annexure No.23). Jelavich comments that 'Hollaender, one of the outstanding songwriters of

³⁸ '*Berlin you are courting death*' – my translation.

³⁹ See *Tingel Tangel*, Willi Schaeffers' autobiography, Chapter 12, p 83

⁴⁰ A song written by Hollaender, which became a popular encore number.

the Weimar era, noted that cabaret was 'engendered in dissolute passion by theatre, the variety show, and the political tribunal. Berlin cabaret was a product of changes in urban life and artistic taste at the beginning of the twentieth century. Hollaender's formula – the serious aspirations of elite 'theatre,' the framework of the 'variety show,' and the 'political tribunal' of local anti-authoritarian sarcasm – was the recipe for Berlin cabaret' (Jelavich, 1993[1996]:10).

One of the best known theatres that flourished during the so-called Golden Years of the 1920s and 30s, was the *Wintergarten*, established in 1888 and, like the Scotch whisky, *Johnnie Walker*, is 'still going strong,' despite having been bombed out during the war (see *Wintergarten 2001* programme). Hilde often entertained visitors to Berlin by inviting them to the *Wintergarten* for dinner and the show. *The Hugos* performed at the *Wintergarten* on a regular basis to delighted audiences. The writer was fortunate enough to obtain a ticket to a performance entitled *Nacht Gestalten*. The theatre, whose aura is still redolent of more elegant times, dedicates its shows to 'astounding' the public and, as far as the writer is concerned, surpassed its mandate. The programme was outstanding, even the so-called slapstick numbers were so well done that one laughed tears and revelled in this unsurpassed *niveau*. This was where Hilde met and befriended *The Hugos*, a formidable Hungarian family unit (see Annexure Nos.24) who performed all over Europe and were to

become well-known in South Africa: Hugo⁴¹ and Lucie Keleti and their internationally famous daughter, Eve Boswell.

In 1924 Hilde married the popular caricaturist and artist Paul Simmel. The monocled, cigar-smoking, elegant and seemingly modest man was more than 22 years her senior. The newspaper *Die Berliner Illustrirte* became synonymous with the name Simmel. Readers read the paper from the back page, enjoyed his good humour and then read the news. He delighted cabaret audiences at the *Roland von Berlin*⁴² with his quick sketches and humour. *Die einsame Träne, das Buch der guten Witze*⁴³ by Kurt Robitschek and Paul Morgan, illustrated with caricatures by Paul Simmel, was published in November 1924 and advertised in *Das Programm* Nr 1182, dated 30 November 1924, and sold at 3 Mark a copy.

Both he and Hilde were popular personalities in their own right with their own following. Prior to her marriage Hilde had only been exposed to Paul's public image and little did she realise that he was a manic-depressive given to extreme moodiness, jealousy and possessiveness. She was not allowed out on her own but had to be driven everywhere by the chauffeur Münzel who had strict instructions to observe her every action. Hilde resented this treatment because she was not accustomed to this form of bondage and was naturally a gregarious person who had many friends. But she soon realised that to preserve not only the peace at home, but also to avoid physical abuse she would have

⁴¹ Hugo Keleti became an important impresario who would act as agent for the writer's father Eddy Mecl in later years.

⁴² Reported in *Das Programm* November 1924

⁴³ 'The lonely tear - the book of good jokes.'

to submit. Hilde had a gift for creating a warm and comfortable home and Paul's friends and business associates enjoyed being entertained in the Simmel home. Hilde did not allow her unhappiness to show and she was always gracious and welcoming, maintaining her public rôles, as indicated elsewhere in the study.

Paul and Hilde travelled often on business for either product promotions, for example for *Vistra*, a new synthetic textile for I G Farben, and/or material gathering to Paris, Stettin, Munich, Hamburg and to various other centres within Germany. Hilde was his model for his caricatures, his public relations and business manager, and his beautiful showpiece that mirrored his success (see newspaper cuttings and photograph Annexure Nos. 25 and 26).

1926 saw great protest against Jewish Jokes in the Cabaret. Hans Reimann, for example, wrote the type of lyrics that caused offence. Entitled *Trutzhymne*⁴⁴, it appeared in *Die Weltbühne*, 20 Jahrgang 1924, Athenäum Verlag, 1978

Who discovered the Swastika?

The Jews!

Who illustrate the rotundas?

The Jews!

Who inspired the dagger's thrust?

The Jews!

⁴⁴ Hymn to Defiance.

Who rest in Adolf Hitler's favour?

The Jews!

Who are to blame for Kaiser Wilhelm?

The Jews! And so on...

The lead article in *Das Programm* No. 1260, dated 30 May 1926 (see Annexure No. 27), discusses jokes in some detail, paying special attention to the 'Jewish joke' explaining that many humorists who make such jokes are Jews themselves, however, the article closes by stating that there is more poison than blessing and healing in such jokes and that such jokes should not be aired in public.

In 1928 Paul had the honour of being the conférencier with chalk for the special variety performance in honour of Harry Lambertz-Paulsen, a prominent entertainer and friend of the Simmels (see Annexure No.28). Berlin's celebrities attended the evening.

While in Berlin the writer attended a performance of the show *Marlene* at the Renaissance Theatre. She was directed to her seat in a *Loge* - an old-fashioned, semi-enclosed box - at the back of the theatre, and raised above the *parquet* seats. An illusion of *mise en abyme* was almost immediately created for her. The writer questing after the past, to reconstruct the life of a performer, was watching a performer, give a performance about another performer and observing herself at the same time. The intensity of the writer's gaze as a spectator was further heightened by her separation from the other spectators by her position in the *Loge*. Her gaze had several levels - almost an

out-of-body-experience - with the spirit gazing on several scenes at once, including herself sitting in the Loge. Understanding of the word omnipotent entered her consciousness. She was saddened by the fact that she could not maintain the level of awareness and/or consciousness. Her gaze returned to just the physical act of watching a performance. But the performance was of such a high standard - the actress, Judi Winter, having taken the persona of Marlene Dietrich to a level of perfection - that she was satisfied and grateful for having experienced an aspect of the power of the gaze.

Ironically, the writer when young did not like Dietrich claiming that not only could she not sing but that she was *ordinaire*⁴⁵. It was only in 1962 when Dietrich appeared on the boards of the Johannesburg Civic Theatre (see Annexure No. 29), that the writer became enthralled by the magic and artistry of the woman. Certainly, she could not sing, but the manner in which she presented a song was magical, the *pointierung*, perfect. She looked spectacular in the shimmering close-fitting sheath and gave the illusion of being taller than she was. That night was made even more magical when Hilde presented Dietrich with tuberose⁴⁶ before an enthusiastic audience.

The 'gaze' of the 1920s and 1930s had far-reaching consequences for women in Germany. They publicly challenged the status quo by openly demonstrating their independence through their body language, the clothes they wore, the songs they sang, and the books they read, although political and

⁴⁵ Vulgar.

⁴⁶ Dietrich's favourite flower.

economic emancipation was still largely withheld. The books of Hedwig Courths-Mahler (1867-1950)⁴⁷ were popular with many young women, although Hilde described them as '*hintertreppe*'⁴⁸, the 'penny-horribles' read by servants.

With tongue in cheek one could say: 'Coco Chanel gave women freedom, Yves St Laurent gave women power: he dressed them in masculine clothes'⁴⁹ Women's waistlines virtually disappeared, the bust was taboo and hemlines rose and fell with the fashionable tides. Alan Jenkins in his book *The Twenties* quotes Dorothy Parker doing fashion copy on Vogue. 'Fashion copy, throughout the decade, remained euphemistic 'hips' for bottom; 'figure' for breasts – the word for slim was 'svelte'. The tubular silhouette with the flattened bosom (busts are common) was the preferred style. With the deliberate lowering, almost absence of waistline, underclothes had to change. Everything resembling a corset was thrown away. It should be noted that 'Bra' was a relatively new word in 1929. The composite woman was a larger-than-life lady who affected cigarettes in long holders, wore cloche hats, had bobbed hair, and plucked eyebrows, with bands of bracelets (usually diamonds) from wrist to elbow, and earrings hanging like fuchsias' (Jenkins, 1974:62-70).

Dietrich performing in top hat and tails took masquerade to another level of gaze as her films took America and Europe by storm. Danny Leroux, the drag artist, later astounded and entertained audiences all over the world as well, but as Judith

⁴⁷ Courths-Mahler wrote some 200-romance novels.

⁴⁸ Kitsch

⁴⁹ Reference made in 1999 SABC3 Programme on Fashion

Butler points out, drag is able to serve 'a subversive function to the extent that it reflects the mundane impersonations by which heterosexually ideal genders are performed and naturalized and undermines their power by virtue of affecting that exposure' (Butler, 1993:231). This is why 'drag', as an intellectual concept and a subversive cultural activity, is so potentially liberating as it foregrounds the feminine excesses of the feminine in order to parody the original. We are all in drag, says Judith Butler, every time we put on clothes. Gender as a performance becomes articulated when the performance of drag is brought to our attention. One cannot help but consider whether drag in reverse (like the gaze) has quite the same effect. Does a woman parading as a man push at the stereotype in the same way as a man performing as a woman?⁵⁰

The particular 1920s gaze gave the woman the ability to 'penetrate' seemingly into the depths of sexual desire, the eyes either cast heavenwards with the head at a particular angle and hands clutched to the bosom: standing 'Tulpe' (like a tulip) or, the hooded gaze, directed at the audience in a beguiling manner that had an interesting metaphorical extension in the 1927 song written by Amberg and Raymond, 'Ich reiss mir eine Wimper aus und stech dich damit tot'.⁵¹ Such was the intensity of the female gaze to derive *jouissance*. This could also be seen as a way of

⁵⁰ The writer is reminded of the sad film *Boys Don't Cry* based on the true story of Teena Brandon who was brutally murdered because she had been passing herself off as a boy named Brandon Teena and successfully living a lie – for a while. The film, directed by Kimberley Peirce and the difficult role of Brandon played by Hilary Swank, was discussed in the *Star's Tonight* section of March 14, 2000.

⁵¹ Song by Charlie Amberg and Fred Raymond, 1927, on recording *Als Oma noch kniefrei ging!* Polydor No. 46631. 'I'll rip out an eye-lash and with it stab you to death' – my translation.

dealing with sadistic castration wishes. Mother giving the child an admonishing, authoritarian look was often greater punishment than being smacked. The writer never wanted to incur Hilde's wrath.

One way of establishing the gaze is through masquerade. The masquerade is a representation of femininity but then femininity is representation, the representation of the woman: as Lacan says: 'images and symbols of the woman's cannot be isolated from images and symbols of the woman' (Lacan, 321-322). If women are denied power then by their powerful presence let them dominate. Luce Irigaray says 'the masquerade ... is what women do ... in order to participate in man's desire, but at the cost of giving up theirs'⁵² Hilde would have to give up a great deal: not only her career but desire (*das Begehren*) and individuality as well. Twenty-two years younger than Paul in a marriage, which took time to consummate, owing to his having syphilis and suffering impotence, was a great sacrifice. That he had venereal disease and did not disclose the fact to Hilde prior to their marriage was unconscionable. One cannot but question whether this insentience was patriarchal myopia and oppression and/or shame. How was Hilde to think of herself as woman separated from her persona as artiste? Whether both Simmels then suffered from a form of sexual anaesthesia is also moot. This may well have been a spur for a 'mask of womanliness' as a defence mechanism Hilde's seemingly being in possession of the phallus for many responsibilities in their marriage.

⁵² Cited in Stephen Heath's essay in *Formations of Fantasy*, eds. Victor Burgin, James Donald, Cora Kaplan (London: Methuen, 1986)

Masquerade included the manner in which makeup was applied to the eyes to make them appear larger, whereas mouths were painted to make them appear smaller, almost heart-shaped, not unlike the Byzantine icons of the Madonna⁵³ (see Annexure No.30), the smoking of cigarettes from long holders, as well as the wearing expensive jewellery. Heath quotes from Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil* 'Comparing man and woman in general one may say: woman would not have the genius for finery [*das Genie des Putzes*] if she did not have the instinct for the secondary role.' Riviere maintains that finery goes with the secondary - 'the acceptance of "castration", the humility, the admiration of men.'⁵⁴ That Nietzsche found it remarkable that woman could possibly want enlightenment about herself and considered it pretence and just another form of adornment for herself [*einen neuen Putz für sich*] - 'self-adornment [*das Sich-Putzen*] pertains to the eternal-womanly [*das ewig Weibliche*], does it not?' Men preened themselves with pomade, moustaches, monocles and top hats and capes displaying domination and aggression. It is noteworthy that 'display, just like masquerade itself displays a flaw: no one has the phallus' (Heath, 1986:56).

The silver screen's accredited most beautiful woman, Greta Garbo, whose letters and diaries were 'opened' ten years after her death, revealed the 'secret' of why she wanted 'to be alone'. She apparently most often thought of herself as a man and had a

⁵³ Compare Simmel's oil portrait of Hilde.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*

yearning: 'There must be somebody who can ride the passion in my heart'⁵⁵

Juxtaposed to this was the Nazi Ten Commandments for the choice of a spouse, compiled in 1934:

- Remember that you are a German
- If you are genetically healthy you should not remain unmarried.
- Keep your body pure.
- You should keep your mind and body pure
- As a German you should choose only a spouse of the same or Nordic blood.
- In choosing a spouse ask about his ancestors.
- Health is also a precondition for physical beauty.
- Marry only for love.
- Don't look for a playmate but for a companion for marriage
- You should want to have as many children as possible⁵⁶.

The Twenties proved to be very prosperous for the Simmels, especially Paul, who was commissioned by I G Farben to promote new *Vistra* fabrics through the medium of caricature throughout Germany. The Press Club arranged special 'Simmel Balls' to which the celebrated were invited (see Annexure No.31). Despite Hilde's curtailed stage performances she shone as Paul's public relations and business manager, and not least of all, his beautiful, humorous and gracious companion. They were

⁵⁵ *The Star*, 17 April 2000 – The real reason Garbo wanted to be alone.

⁵⁶ Taken from the article on German Culture:
(<http://www.germanculture.com.ua/library/weekly/aa08601.a.htm>)

photographed wherever they went and even had busts made which, for a while, were exhibited with those of other stage personalities. Paul then had them displayed in this studio (see Annexure No. 32). During one of his drunken rages, not long before his suicide, he smashed both of them against the wall while hurling abuse at the shattered clay.

1929 was a watershed year for the Simmels; Paul deciding that he would take a sabbatical and visit America with a view to extending his creative horizon and also visiting the already famous Walt Disney in Hollywood. Hilde hoped that this trip would provide an opportunity for her to be allowed take up her career once again.

The Berlin magnate, Alfred Ballin, built the Hamburg-America Shipping Line into the largest steamship company in the world. His career was bound up with ships, free trade, and peaceful, international competition, the elements, which had brought the city of Hamburg prosperity for over five hundred years. The North Atlantic passenger trade was Albert Ballin's proving ground. By 1886, Ballin was chief of the Passenger Division of the Hamburg-America Line (HAPAG). Some of the famous Ballin ships were the *Imperator*, *Vaterland* and *Bismarck*. Kaiser Wilhelm II, dined frequently at Ballin's house with the result that in time, Ballin's house was called *Klein Potsdam*. Kaiserin Augusta Victoria did not approve of her husband's friendship with the steamship owner. Ballin was a Jew' (Massie, 1991).

The Simmels boarded the *Albert Ballin*, the newest of the Ballin Transamerica liners and sailed from Hamburg on 22 March 1929 to the New World, the land of opportunity and cornucopia (see Annexure No. 33). They travelled with celebrities such as members of the Rothschild family, the conductor Dr Leopold

Stokowski and his family, as well as the American heiress Eugenia Vandever (see Annexure Nos. 34 and 35). The trans-Atlantic crossing was particularly stormy. Hilde, one of the few passengers who easily found sea legs, was invited up to the bridge while Paul groaned and languished in the cabin suffering from *mal de mer* and echoing the misery of the elephants travelling in the hold.

The beckoning Statue of Liberty welcomed the adventurers on a calm, beautiful day. On their arrival in New York they were feted by several of the American English, as well as German, language newspapers (see Annexure Nos. 36, 37 and 38). Hilde was swamped and interviewed by various Women's Rights groups, giving her a taste of American emancipation, as well as filling her with an element of dismay at the extent of their zealotry. They stayed at New York's sumptuous Ritz Plaza Hotel and were entertained lavishly, visiting the then glamorous Harlem, and attending various Broadway shows, the Metropolitan Opera House, the Smithsonian and other places of interest. They were overcome by the towering skyscrapers, which rose through the clouds and ether leaving them breathless. They were suitably impressed by the expanse and charm of Central Park. Trips to the Niagara Falls and the New England states were undertaken. The panoramic countryside with river names resonating Walt Whitman's poetry, majestic Douglas firs, and the vastness of the horizon, had them in thrall.

Like adventurers before them they made their way westwards across the enormity of the continent stopping over at Newark,

New Jersey, where they stayed with Harry Kaplan⁵⁷ and his wife who were distant relations. They then travelled on to Chicago, Detroit visiting various automobile manufacturing plants, hilly, cosmopolitan San Francisco, which Hilde loved, Los Angeles and of course, Hollywood. Simmel did meet with Disney and was invited to join forces with him. Regrettably, no record of the visit exists as Disney only started keeping a diary from the following year.

During their stay in Hollywood both Joseph von Sternberg (1894-1969) and Ernst Lubitsch (1892-1947)⁵⁸ entertained the Simmels. Lubitsch suggested that Paul leave Hilde with him with the promise that he would make a star of her and, being familiar with Hilde's stage career, this was no idle promise. Simmel declined saying that they were Germans and to Germany they would return.

The American tour⁵⁹ made a great impression on both Hilde and Paul. Despite America's brashness the possibility, as well as the temptation, of the American dream had been laid at their feet, but was declined by Paul. Simmel's intransigence, as well as the

⁵⁷ The writer has attempted to make contact with the Kaplan family.

⁵⁸ Sternberg was an Austrian film director who lived in the US from childhood. He worked with Marlene Dietrich on *The Blue Angel* 1930 and other films. He favoured striking imagery over narrative in his work, which includes *Underworld* 1927 and *Blonde Venus* 1932. Lubitsch was a German film director known for his stylish comedies, who worked in the US from 1921. Starting as an actor in silent films in Berlin, he turned to writing and directing, including *Die Augen der Mumie/The eyes of the mummy* 1918 and *Die Austernprinzessin/The Oyster Princess* 1919. In the US he directed sophisticated films with 'the Lubitsch touch.' *The Marriage Circle* 1924 and *The Student Prince* 1927; his sound films include *Trouble in Paradise* 1932, *Design for Living* 1933, *Ninotchka* 1939, with Greta Garbo and *To be or not to be* 1942.)

⁵⁹ The writer has made contact with various libraries in America in an attempt to obtain back copies of further newspaper articles and photographs which may exist as much of Hilde's memorabilia was stolen from trunks at the time stored in her brother's garage in Johannesburg.

course of history, dictated that Hilde would eventually travel, not to America to follow her star, but to South Africa, an unlikely destination for the sophisticated woman, for the survival of her family.

In Berlin Hilde moved in celebrated and illustrious circles. Her elegant salon (see Annexure No. 39) was open to Berlin's well-known and loved singers, writers, composers, actors and directors. When performing in the city Richard Tauber was a frequent visitor who sang and played her Bechstein grand piano. Tauber was very fond of shooting 8mm films to record social gatherings and in the hope that some Simmel footage might still be extant the writer communicated with Charles Castle, the author of *This is Richard Tauber*, who writes of Tauber's films in his book. Sadly, it would appear that not all the cans have survived. Other celebrities such as, inter alia, Trude Hesterberg, Grete Weiser, Willy Prager, Rudolf Nelson, Paul Morgan, Alice Hechy, Kurt Gerron, Ilse Muth, Ernst Lubitsch, Friedrich Hollaender, and Hans Reimann, regularly enjoyed the Simmel's hospitality (see photographs in Annexure Nos. 40, 41). The circus provided an exciting and glamorous form of international entertainment. This was where Hilde met and befriended *The Hugos*, the formidable Hungarian family unit, who were to become well-known in South Africa: Hugo and Lucie Keleti and their famous daughter, Eve Boswell.

The Simmels were written about, photographed and commented on in all the media. Particular attention was given to the annual Simmel Balls, which were spectacular events. Guests, which

included the full spectrum of society, eagerly anticipated receiving invitations to this premier event. Simmel's launches of various products always drew the crowds for autographs, as well as creating the opportunity of meeting him and his elegant wife.

Hans Reimann's (1889-1969) questionable comments about Hilde in his autobiography *Mein blaues Wunder* (Reimann, 1959:312, (see Annexure No. 42) leave the German-speaking reader with a sense of suspicion, and even possibly dismay, at the seeming lack of piety and decorum which he accuses Hilde of displaying the day after Simmel's death. She was criticised not only for taking her dog out for a walk but for her elegant appearance. It should be stressed that Hilde could wear a sack and still look elegant. She was a very caring and considerate person who placed the well-being of others first, even if it meant the needs of an animal, namely her dog, *Uschi von Brigitteneck*, who was possessed of as much dignity and elegance as her mistress.

Reimann's comments are even more offensive when one considers the shock and pain Hilde had suffered as a result of Simmel's suicide and the volatile nature of her marriage to him. One needs to consider whether his 'tone' was merely in sympathy with his friend, Paul Simmel, or whether he was latently misogynistic and anti-Semitic. He was a known womaniser and was married several times yet seemed unable to sustain meaningful relationships with women. Women were regarded as a pleasant distraction and decorative appendage. It is perhaps noteworthy that he sought his friendships among men. Even

when he flatters and compliments Hilde as an artiste (Reimann, 1959:366) (see Annexure No. 43) the 'register' is denigrating.

Hilde's life lay in tatters but society required her to observe the conventions of decorum and the German version of 'the stiff upper lip.' She avoided the press and kept a low profile. Yet despite adhering to convention she was criticised.

1933 was a year that changed not only Hilde's life but also the course of history. Germany was gazing at Valhalla through acquisitive Hitlerian eyes as preparations were being made for the onslaught on an unsuspecting world. Rosa Luxemburg's (1871-1919)⁶⁰ prophecy was about to become reality:

If Social Democracy were to accept the opportunist standpoint, renounce the use of violence, and pledge the working class never to diverge from the path of *bourgeois* legalism, then its whole parliamentary and other activity would sooner or later collapse miserably and leave the field to the untrammelled dominance of reactionary violence (Fröhlich 1940:87-88).

During the New Year celebrations held at her home in Charlottenburg the *Zeitgeist* cast its grim shadow over Hilde's family. Hilde's parties were always lavish and well attended. Her tasteful *Biedermeier* drawing room was decorated with a floor to ceiling Christmas tree dressed in silver tinsel, at the foot of which were gifts in silver wrapping for each guest. Hilde loved dancing with her beloved father and on this special night her father died in her arms while dancing with her, saying 'warte noch, mein

⁶⁰ Polish political reformer who, with Karl Liebknecht, led the Spartakus League. Both were executed.

Kind⁶¹, the significance of the words was poignant as she was to soon to discover. Hilde was grief-stricken and realised that her beloved father had, all along, known of her unhappiness. Paul was home that night visiting from the *Hubertus Klinik* in *Schlachtensee* and, although saddened by Benno Czapski's death, he distanced himself from everything and returned to the clinic and his Nazi friends.

Hilde and her elder brother Adi were left to make all the necessary arrangements for a dignified, albeit low-key, funeral. The writer was given the opportunity to visit the unmarked grave at *Weissensee* Cemetery while in Berlin. The cemetery is quite beautiful with towering trees forming a cupola over grandfather's ivy-covered grave, a grave without a tombstone (see Annexure No. 44). It took a grandchild 68 years to visit the grave, but at least at a time when the cemeteries are once again being well tended. In her marital solitude it was fortunate that Hilde's relationship with her family was a close and loving one, although that love was to cost her dearly.

On 30 January 1933 Hitler sailed to victory and took over the helm in Berlin. Goebbels immediately began his purging reforms. In his diary Goebbels writes: 'Es ist fast wie ein Traum. Die Wilhelmstrasse gehört uns. Der Führer arbeitet bereits in der Reichskanzlei. Wir stehen oben am Fenster, und Hunderttausende und Hunderttausende von Menschen ziehen im lodernden Schein der Fackeln am greisen Reichspräsidenten und jungen Kanzler und rufen ihnen ihre Dankbarkeit und ihren Jubel

⁶¹ 'Wait awhile, my child'.

zu.⁶² (Goebbels, 1933: 357). On 27 February the *Reichstag* goes up in flames for which the Nazis brand and persecute the young retarded Hollander Lubbe for arson.

In those turbulent times Simmel spent a few weeks at home from the nursing home plunging himself into a flurry of work. Hilde, as usual went into 'rôle' as his nurse, model, and business manager. It was she who liaised with Chief Editor Korff at Ullstein, the publishers of the *Berliner Illustrirte*, on a weekly basis. On 24 March 1933 Simmel took Hilde to the Adlon Hotel (see Annexure No. 45) to spend what he said would be 'a cozy evening together.' Much to Hilde's surprise at the end of the evening he decided they would not go home, but would spend the night at a pension they occasionally frequented. He, however, mentioned that he had forgotten a present that he had to give her that night and asked her to wait for him while the chauffeur took him home to fetch the gift. He did not return. In the morning, still fully dressed, Hilde received a telephone call from her maid requesting her to return home immediately, advising that Münzel was on his way to fetch her. Upon arrival at the Charlottenburg apartment the police, an ambulance and the press lay in wait Hilde. Beside the bed the police found an empty cognac bottle, the remainder of Veronal tablets, a syringe and empty morphine vial. Simmel had committed suicide. Was that his ultimate gift to the woman he had thought of in terms of Lehar's '*Du bist meine Sonne/du bist der Traum voll süsser*

⁶² 'It is almost like a dream. Wilhelmstrasse belongs to us. The Führer already works in the Reichskanzlei. We stand above at the window and watch the march past, in the light of the flickering torches, of hundreds and thousands of people before the ageing Reich President and young Kanzler shouting their gratitude and jou.'

Wonne...'.⁶³ Also found was Simmel's handwritten and unwitnessed Last Will and Testament, dated 16 March 1933 (see Annexure Nos. 46 and 47), which made no mention of Hilde (see also newspaper cutting Annexure No. 48). Simmel's selfish behaviour was to have dramatic repercussions for the remainder of Hilde's life.

The boycott of Jewish businesses on 1 April was in full swing throughout Germany. Goebbels arrived in Berlin and 'drives through *Taentzienstrasse* (the continuation of *Kurfürstendamm*) to ensure that the SA-posts are stationed in front of all entrances. The public has declared its solidarity' (Goebbels, 1936:400).

At this time Count Harry Kessler sarcastically recorded in his diary:

The state is to become a snug stable where all obedient domestic animals will feel happy and, as necessity requires, allow themselves to be tamely led to slaughter. I cannot think of any idea which would seem to me more degrading and revolting (Kessler, 1971 [2000]:428).

The atmosphere in Berlin was tense and gunshots were often heard at night. People were afraid to venture out. The authorities proved to be unconcerned that a Jewish widow should wish to contest a Will. The contestation took three years to accomplish and Hilde began receiving royalties. Meanwhile uniformed Nazis appeared like desert flowers after a thunderstorm, invading the streets with malevolent

⁶³ Octavio's aria from Lehar's operetta, *Guiditta* – 'You are my sun/You are the dream full of delight'.

determination. The new regime created total religious chaos and in the process of abolishing even Protestantism and Roman Catholicism, indeed Christianity itself, in order to return to what they regarded as the Old Teutonic faith. Reverence was reserved for the German *Herrenvolk*, the Aryan, the legend of Barbarossa and the *Nibelungen* personified by the image of *Siegfried* - physically beautiful, blond and blue-eyed. Hilde related the awesome spectacle of parades of thousands of goose-stepping uniformed men filling the city with a sense of terrifying grandeur under the flaming standard of the swastika. Censorship became to order of the day. Newspapers opened and closed like triggered Venus flytraps. Hilde, her family and friends could not give credence to what was happening, their world vaporised before their eyes, and became alien beings in their own land.

It was to her friend and jurist Dr Ernst Dahlman that Hilde turned to initiate the contestation of the Will and to fight for what was rightfully hers. He was a charming but impressionable man and, because of this, many relevant documents, including those of the successful contestation of the Will, were lost. This negatively affected her many later court cases for restitution. Neither was Hilde able to re-launch her career because of Goebbels's sweeping reforms, which included that Aryans could not employ Jews in any category, nor could an Aryan associate with a Jew. Jews were not allowed access to any theatres or public places. Some friends who had sworn solidarity after Simmel's death slowly and noticeably withdrew because of her pariah status. She moved from the seven-roomed apartment in *Charlottenburg*

to a smaller apartment at 2 Ranke Strasse,⁶⁴ just off the *Kurfürstendamm*, and within earshot of the bells of the *Gedächtnisskirche*, where she stayed until her emigration. Building up and containing funds became a paramount concern and, to this end, Hilde and her brothers tried marketing the then new Simmel album, as any other form of employment was impossible. This venture was short-lived, however, because businesses were forbidden to engage in any form of trade with Jews. Fortunate in having inherited the Czapski and not the Wreschinski genes of her mother, Hilde was tall, blond, svelte and not Jewish looking, but it became increasingly more difficult for her venture to continue in the prevailing atmosphere. Her sister and brothers were less fortunate having black hair and olive skins, making them prime candidates for intimidation and harassment.

Realising that her foreboding had become a reality and that Germany would no longer tolerate Jews on German soil Hilde had to make decisions to save her family. Her elder brother's shops in Berlin and Leipzig had been stoned, forcing him to close the business. This impacted on the younger brother who worked for him. The situation demanded discreet and careful planning. It was to fall on Hilde's shoulders to finance and plan the entire exodus. Hilde's sister Lucie was divorced from the dissipated, womanising chemist, Felix Sachs (1882-1940), and was also not in a position to contribute. Felix was to die of starvation in the *Oranienburg/Sachsenhausen* Concentration Camp on 21 June

⁶⁴ No 2 Ranke Strasse is now a popular restaurant where the writer consumed *Bolette, Kartoffelsalat und Bier* to the bells of the *Gedächtnisskirche*.

1938 under prisoner number 003762 and died on 18 January 1940 (see Annexure Nos. 49 and 50). Their teenage son Fritz was constantly being intimidated by the Hitler youth at school. He would find swastikas on his desk, under the flap of his chair and on his books. Youths would wait for him on his route home to vilify him and 'beat him up.' Fritz was a complex young man and his later aggression could perhaps be attributed to his formative years in Germany. America seemed a million miles away and no longer an option for Hilde, as too many people were involved.

The Nuremberg Laws promulgated in September 1935, which together with subsequent decrees defined legally who was a Jew, providing for the first time gave a clear national understanding of which people were to be subject to the laws and decrees regulating Jews. Faithful to the racial foundation of the dominant worldview and understanding of Jews, the definitional criteria relied essentially upon bloodlines and not religious identity. Thus, the laws of Germany deemed to be Jews those people who (owing to their or their parents' conversions) were Christians if a requisite portion of their ancestry was Jewish – no matter that they might have no psychological or other social identification with things Jewish. The Nuremberg Laws also stripped Jews of citizenship and, with enormous symbolic as well as practical import, proscribed new marriages and extramarital sexual relations between Jews and non-Jews. All the laws, regulations, and measures of the 1930s served to rob Jews of their livelihoods, to sink them into a state of hopelessness and to isolate them from the larger society in which they had moved

freely but a few years earlier. The Reich declared Jews socially dead⁶⁵. With a heavy heart Hilde began to make plans for the family to immigrate to South Africa.

The first to leave were Hilde's brothers Adolf and Martin, her sister Lucie and her son Fritz. Hilde followed in July 1936 with her mother Ida and the younger brother's son Wolfgang. Hitler at the time courted media favour for German culture and sporting prowess. On 5 August 1936 Goebbels records in his diary that he and Hitler attend the Olympics. 'Germany achieving a Gold Medal, the Americans three, two by Blacks. That is a disgrace' (Goebbels, 1933:655). Hilde not only made it possible for most members of her family, but also assisted several other families, to leave Germany - in all, she had made it possible for fourteen lives to be saved from Hitler's death camps.

Prior to leaving Berlin Hilde had made arrangements with her late husband's brother-in-law the *Studienrat*, Prof Dr Ernst Rust, to take care of most of her furniture, a large collection of paintings, the Mercedes Compressor automobile, the motorboat (see Annexure No. 51) moored at *Wannsee* and to lock up the Summer house at *Königs Wusterhausen*. She found she could not leave without a few treasured items. These were packed and, without drawing the Gestapo's attention, sent on to Genoa for shipment to South Africa. She, her mother and young nephew Wolfgang, made their way to Genoa via Munich where Hilde had made an appointment to see Dr Joseph Goebbels because it had come to her knowledge that he wanted a copy of

⁶⁵ Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, 1996: 138

the then newest Simmel album. The meeting with the notorious Goebbels was perhaps Hilde's most dramatic and dangerous 'rôle'.

On the day Hilde was to see Dr Goebbels she dressed in her inimitable elegant style, from head to toe in brown, even the Simmel album was wrapped in brown.⁶⁶ When the chauffeur from the *Braunhaus* arrived Hilde's mother begged her not to go, but she was adamant this was something she had to do before leaving her beloved motherland.

Dr Goebbels was an avid diarist and fragments of his diaries have been collated and edited by Dr Elke Fröhlich at the behest of the Institute for Contemporary History and in association with the State Archive. Through the library at the University of South Africa the writer gained access to these fragments, which made compulsive reading. Sadly, 1935 and 1936 are very fragmented and she was unable to locate any entry regarding this meeting. Dr Fröhlich has indicated that other fragments have since come to light and that the possibility still exists that a relevant entry may yet be found, if one had indeed been made at the time by the diarist.

Hilde related the meeting with Goebbels on several occasions, the event having made an indelible impression on her and, subsequently, on her daughter:

On entering Dr Goebbels' office I noticed that the curtains had been drawn and the lights were on. The luxurious office

⁶⁶ Hilde, in a subliminal display of irony, wore and used brown accessories while visiting the notorious Braunhaus.

was large as was the desk behind which Goebbels sat. He rose and limped round the impressive desk to greet me. He took my hand and kissed it and escorted me to a chair. 'How charming you look Mrs Simmel all in brown, you are known for your sense of humour...' he said, smiling broadly. 'I see you have brought the Simmel album. How sad that *Paule* should have died so young. By the way, do tell me what actually happened. Why did he commit suicide?' He leant forward on his arms with his hands pressed together in an almost prayer-like manner and waited for me to continue. My heart pounded and I prayed my face would not betray my feelings. The reasons, Herr Doktor, I continued, are quite complicated. Paul was *Seelisch belastet*⁶⁷, an alcoholic, a diabetic who had also become addicted to morphine and the reason he committed suicide was... I hesitated... because of fear. He was about to lose a leg and ... I tried to look as casual as possible before continuing ... because he was married to a Jewess.

As I gazed at him I expected some reaction, but not a finger moved, nothing. After an endless minute of silence he asked me whether it was generally known that I was Jewish because I certainly did not look Jewish. I replied that it was not my custom to discuss religion. 'Well, in that case, my dear Mrs Simmel, you are a wealthy woman, not so?' I tried not to allow my expression to betray me again, thinking if only you knew. 'Consider this proposition, he said expansively: donate say 100 000 Marks to a charity nominated by me and I'll make you Freifrau von ...' He smiled and rose to his feet. I did likewise and he escorted me to the door saying, suggestively, that he would read the Simmel album in the sleeping car of the train to... that evening.

He took my hand and kissed it again this time not releasing it immediately, then bowed and I left. I was repulsed by his kiss and relieved to be out of his office convinced of the

⁶⁷

Depressive melancholic.

malevolent presence lurking behind the drawn curtains. The chauffeur returned me to my hotel and my anxious mother. My gratitude for the tickets to South Africa and that we would be leaving Germany for Genoa the following day was boundless.

The voyage to South Africa on the Lloyd Triestino liner *Giulio Cesare* was punctuated by Hilde's being co-opted to the passenger entertainment committee (see Annexure No. 52). She decided, for her mother's sake, she would make every effort to ensure that the journey be not only as pleasant as possible, but with as little time as possible for reflection on the fact that with each knot travelled the beloved Motherland was receding further and further beyond the horizon bringing them closer to salvation from the Nazis, but also closer to an uncertain future.

Hilde realised only too well the importance of the preservation of humour and dignity as a mechanism for survival, in the deplorable circumstances in which she and the family found themselves.

CHAPTER FOUR

Humour as a defence mechanism

Humour is a mask behind which both Hilde and Paul secreted aspects of their fragile psyches. Bearing Simmel's suicide in mind it has not escaped the writer's attention that many humorists have either committed suicide or died under mysterious circumstances. Tony Hancock, Peter Sellers and Kenneth Williams immediately come to mind, as do the clown's final ironic words from Leoncavallo's opera *I Pagliacci*, after he has killed his wife in a jealous rage: *La commedia è finita*'. Therefore, the fact that Simmel's genius could neither transcend the vicissitudes of the *Zeitgeist*⁶⁸ and the creative wasteland in which he found himself, nor could he summon up the courage to overcome the physical and spiritual necrosis, which his lifestyle had created, it should not be surprising that he too cried *La commedia è finita!*⁶⁹. Hilde often related that it was said that genius borders madness and it seemed to apply to Simmel. Hilde, on the other hand, was forged of finer metal and, although she recognized the impending disaster facing Germany and what strength she would be required to muster, her psyche was tempered for survival.

Humour is a term that can be used in a wide and a narrow sense. In the wider sense, it is applied to all literature and to all informal speech or writing in which the object is to amuse or rouse laughter in the reader or hearer/spectator. In its narrower

⁶⁸ Spirit of the times.

⁶⁹ *The comedy is ended!* Canio's final words from Leoncavallo's opera *I Pagliacci*

sense, humour is distinguished from wit, satire and farce. It is less intellectual and more imaginative than wit, being concerned more with character and situation than with plays upon words or upon ideas; more sympathetic and less cruel than satire; more subtle than farce. On the other side, it shades into fancy and imagination since it is concerned, as they are, with exploring the possibilities of unlikely situations or combinations of ideas, but differs from them in being concerned only with the laughable aspects of these imagined situations.

Peter Jelavich states that according to Nietzsche, 'humor was an indispensable attribute for *revitalization and self-overcoming*, a necessary prelude to the appearance of the future Übermensch⁷⁰ (my italics). Throughout his works Nietzsche praised the value of laughter and dancing. Zarathustra proclaimed that 'lost be to us the day upon which we have not danced at least once! False be the truth that was not accompanied by a laugh!' (Jelavich, 1993[1996]: 29).

One may ask what it is about a situation that makes it laughable? Theories of humour are attempts to solve this problem. D H Monro posits that these theories may be divided into three main types, viz. superiority theories, incongruity theories and relief theories. A fourth type of theory, which takes the central feature of humour to be ambivalence, a mingling of attraction and repulsion, would seem to be of minor importance (Monro, 1969:355).

⁷⁰ Superman

Laughter is often directed at people because they have some failing or defect or because they find themselves at a disadvantage in some way or suffer some small misfortune. Stereotypes such as the miser, the glutton, and the drunkard are stock figures of comedy; so is the henpecked husband or the man who gets hit with a custard pie. Simmel used all these so-called types in his caricatures over the years and these have been preserved for posterity in his various books.⁷¹ We laugh, too, at a person slipping on a banana skin; at schoolboy howlers, faulty pronunciation⁷² and bad grammar. It could be said that the pleasure often derived from humour comes from a feeling of superiority over those we laugh at.

Thomas Hobbes⁷³ (1588-1679), the possible originator of this theory, is cited in Monro's article to the effect that 'Laughter is a kind of sudden glory', glory being used in the sense of 'vainglory' or self-esteem'. When we laugh at the misfortunes or infirmities of others, at our own past follies, provided we are conscious of having now surmounted them, and also at unexpressed successes of our own. According to any superiority theory of humour, the laugher always looks down on whatever he laughs at, and so judges it inferior by some standard. It is in this way that Simmel was prominent as a folk humorist because he did not look down on anyone. He considered himself to be sufficiently a man of the people, a man who had often succumbed to folly and could, therefore, poke fun at himself.

⁷¹ See list at end of bibliography

⁷² What the writer likes to call 'pronouncing'

⁷³ English philosopher and man of letters

Henri Bergson (1859-1941)⁷⁴ gives us both the clearest and most famous instance of a particular application of the superiority theory. He bases his idea of humour on elasticity, adaptability, and, the *élan vital*. For him the laughable is 'something mechanical encrusted upon the living' (Bergson, 1911:37). The typical comic character for him is a person with an obsession, or *idée fixe*, like Don Quixote, or Molière's miser. Laughter could therefore be defined as being society's defence against the eccentric who refuses to adjust himself to its requirements. Or, like Hilde herself, who needed humour as a defence mechanism against the dark side of Simmel and of course also in relation to the emerging darkness that was sweeping over Germany. Interestingly, Bergson does not seem to consider the possibility that humour may sometimes, as in Swift or Shaw, be directed at the social code itself. It is precisely in this way that the cabaret stage offers humorists their cues to encourage social change by illustrating not only the ludicrous, but also the social injustices.

Bergson also considers the 'frustrated expectation', a concept owed to Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), and who also claimed that 'Laughter is the result of an expectation, which, of a sudden, ends in nothing' (Bergson, 1911:85), leaves one with the feeling that more is implied than merely the unexpected. There is the suggestion that humour consists in the violent dissolution of an emotional attitude. This is done by the sudden intrusion that something is felt not to belong there, some element that has strayed from another recess of our minds.

⁷⁴ French philosopher and representative figure of twentieth-century thought.

Humour may therefore be said to consist in the finding of the 'inappropriate within the appropriate'. It is not merely that unexpected connections are found between apparently dissimilar things: our notions of propriety are also involved. In any community certain attitudes are felt to be appropriate to some things but not to others; and there develop 'stereotypes' of such figures as the typical politician, poet, the spinster (other examples have already been cited). But in remembering the unexpected the writer brings to mind a comedy act she saw when as a young girl. When Hugo Keleti started *Variety under the Stars* at the Johannesburg Joubert Park in the late 1950s he and Lucie performed some of their famous dance/musical routine numbers as *The Hugos*. One of their routines started from a blackened stage. A spotlight then shone on the disparate figures of Hugo and Lucie. He sported tails and top hat and she in ballet tutu resting on his knees. Hugo was six foot four inches tall and Lucie possibly just made five foot on her toes (see Annexure No. 53). It was very funny. Humour is often found in the unspoken. The humorist often illuminates inconvenient facts that shatter some attitudes and puncture stereotypes. How can such a tall man be married to such a tiny woman. Simmel revelled in physical and social disparities and thus through his particular brand of 'folk humour' gained popularity among the full spectrum of society.

Since humour often calls conventional social requirements into question, it may be regarded as affording us relief from the restraint of conforming to those requirements. The relief may be only temporary. People who have been undergoing strain will sometimes burst into laughter if the strain is suddenly removed.

The writer remembers a ludicrous situation when looking for an undertaker to arrange her father's funeral. It was quite late when she arrived at AVBOB's⁷⁵, door and had to knock several times. Someone scampering down a flight of stairs was heard. A man opened the door still checking his flies and awkwardly offered apologies for the delay. When learning the reason for the late call the undertaker's mask and body language fell upon him like a liquid robe washing away the smile in a crashing wave. Lips had to be pursed to avoid laughter. It may well be, then, that the central element in humour is neither a feeling of superiority nor the awareness of incongruity, but the feeling of relief that comes from the removal of restraint.

This theory has been reinforced and brought into prominence by Freud who regards humour as a means of outwitting the 'censor,' his name for the internal inhibitions that prevent us from giving rein to many of our natural impulses. It is not only our sexual impulses that are repressed by the censor, but also our malicious ones. In this way Freud is able to account, not only for indecent jokes and the appeal of comic characters like Falstaff who ignore conventional moral restraints, but also for the malicious element in humour to which superiority theories call attention. The censor will allow us to indulge in these forbidden thoughts only if it is first beguiled or disarmed in some way. The beguiling is done, it is thought, by means of the techniques of humour: devices such as punning - representation of the opposite - and so on. For example, an insult is funny if it appears at first sight to

⁷⁵ There was a time when the acronym itself was cause for amusement - '*Alles vrek behalve ons besigheid*' - 'Everything dies except our business'.

be a compliment. This can easily be done from the stage when the performer takes delight in poking fun at a particular member of the audience through hooded gaze and saying suggestively: 'Sitting on a feather, are we?'

An essential element in humour is the intellectual pleasure of playing with words and ideas and of finding unexpected connections. In this manner one may trick the censor. Since the censor is beguiled, and not merely deceived, it is presupposed that such devices are a source of pleasure. The person who simply is funny does not need to be superior or patronising to cause laughter. Such a person is able and without artifice to miraculously seize the moment and alter current vibrations that result in mirth. Hilde Gert was such a person; she had 'einen goldenen unverwüstlichen Humor'. She possessed this 'golden indestructible humour' that few people are blessed with. She too was armed with the sharp wit and sharp tongue that was known as '*Berliner Schnauze*⁷⁶'. She shared an embarrassing but endearing experience. When the writer was but a child of perhaps three or four years of age she accompanied her mother to a Friday night service in the synagogue, which was then, ironically, situated in the ATKV Hall in Wolmarans Street, Johannesburg. When the bearded celebrants entered to begin the service the child was heard to ask, in not muted tones: 'Mutti, vitch von is Father Christmas?' Hilde recounted the incident to the amused rabbi who had the 'joke' printed in the community paper.

⁷⁶ Literally, Berlin snout, but means quick witted and cheeky

Unlike Freud, Bergson's emphasis is not upon the generic and unconscious, but rather upon the conscious memories of the child. Many of our adult pleasures, he suggests, turn out upon examination to be nothing more than recollections of our youthful ones, so that 'After a certain age we become impervious to all fresh and novel forms of joy,' thus the core of present laughter is found in 'renewal of the sensations of childhood' (Swabey, 1961:221-2).

Clowns and fools, comedy and tragedy underpin life's masks and, consequently, the gaze. Reflections on the comic reveal a touch of paradox in the experience. Plato compared it to relieving an itch by scratching, to a mixed feeling of the soul involving both pain and pleasure (Plato, *Philebus*:1131). Plato contrasts his own view with two extreme positions held by certain students of the Academy, the hedonism of Eudoxus, and the anti-hedonism of Speusippus. Pleasure would not be identified with good; on the other hand it is not evil. There are pleasures to be mixed in to the good life, but rational activity is seen to be more important.

Laughter is a natural human expression of joy, cheerfulness, high spirits and even sympathy and may be seen as a crutch or defence mechanism. In sympathetic emotion the identification with others' feelings may occur either with people in real life or with those in fictitious situations, as in reading or watching a performance – in which cases the reader/audience shares the satisfaction, comic attitude and/or distress appropriate to the action of characters with whom he/she feels no real affection. The comic does not appear to exist outside the pale of what is

strictly human. However, the writer is hesitant to be dogmatic, as at least one cat and one dog that have shown great 'humour' have owned her.

'Gallows humour' is the ability under most trying circumstances to lessen painful feelings by turning some psychic expenditure into the channels of a joke. A situation immediately comes to mind when the writer was in the nursing home in 1971 undergoing what was later revealed as 'experimental' surgery for the repair of a hiatus hernia⁷⁷.

Hilde's inherent sense of the comic unwittingly achieved what the physiotherapist had struggled to do, namely get the diaphragm moving. When she entered the ward she lovingly greeted the wretch in the bed. She removed her coat and, not knowing what to do with it, exclaimed: 'Abdul Hamid was mach' ich damit?'⁷⁸ A seemingly innocuous statement. However, when seen in the light of Berlin humour, Hilde's body language, voice and facial expression, it was enough to ask whether the writer was 'sitting on a feather' – a sketch for the 1920s cabaret stage. Not being able to breathe properly, let alone laugh, the sounds that emanated from the lips brought the nurse running into the ward

⁷⁷ The method employed, when seen in terms of current technology, was sadistic in the extreme. It was necessary to collapse the left lung to cut through the ribcage to reach the damaged area, at the same time severing the Vagus (pneumogastric) nerve – an extremely painful and lengthy procedure. Once back in the ward the lung had first to be fully reflatated before any painkillers were administered. The test too was sadistic. The physiotherapist held a paper tissue to the writer's lips requesting her to blow as hard as possible to move the tissue. Only when the tissue moved was the patient given morphine. The ebb and flow of nausea induced by morphine has created an antipathy towards that form of drug. The thought that Paul Simmel and others indulged in drugs for euphoria is beyond comprehension.

⁷⁸ Abdul Hamid was a popular magician and illusionist who often performed in Berlin – 'Abdul Hamid, what do I do with this?'

who immediately ordered Hilde to leave until relative calm had been restored.

Laughter is a biological cleanser – it breaks monotony and challenges social dominance. It is a wellspring for spiritual upliftment and a catalyst for change. The humorist through artistry of presentation is not only able to induce laughter, but is also able to remove in part our blindness with regard to certain factual and moral weaknesses in mankind. While making us laugh the humorist reveals the contradictions or incongruities between the word and the deed, of people not practising what they preach. The humorist gives succinct portrayals of various types as the cad, the gigolo, the gossip, the snob, the fop, the miser, et cetera, that may well assist us to recognize and be on guard against certain tendencies of human nature. Armed with such knowledge one is placed in an advantageous position. But the deepest source of such knowledge involved in the ludicrous one could call metaphysical, as having to do with the structure of truth and reality.

The standpoint of the comic raises itself, as it were above the world, seeking to elude error by adopting an implicitly universal outlook and to survey events with an impartial eye. Through this effort to put himself [herself] in others' place and to see himself [herself] as others see himself [herself] the person with the eye to the ludicrous is able to reflect on even the most absurdly incongruous character, 'There but for the grace of God go I' (Swabey, 1961:11-12).

Through comedy there is an intimation of an evening-up, a balancing in the nature of things. Simmel, could be seen as a Janus *bifrons*, he laughed with one face and reflected despair

with the other. In destroying respect for the subject matter, respect is also destroyed for its proponent and the 'game' becomes suicidal and self-refuting.

From her wedding day Hilde was obliged to use humour as a defence mechanism. The Simmel's wedding celebration took place at the Adlon Hotel in Berlin. Upon their arrival Herr Adlon personally welcomed the Simmels. Paul had specifically asked Hilde to wear a particular black dress he liked. On seeing Hilde plunged in black Herr Adlon enquired, with anguished expression and hands clasped, whether she was in mourning. A prophetic comment in the light of what was to follow. Having been touched by the mercurial *Zeitgeist* Simmel could not come to terms with life and he perceived his only option as being self-removal. Hilde, on the other hand, while often living in the past was able to draw strength and succour from reflection, as well as mild narcosis, through humour.

Martineau posits that 'humor is part of every social system; humor occurs in nearly every type of human interaction and can be analysed as to how it influences each interaction pattern and the social structure emerging from it' (*Psychology of Laughter*: 102). Humour may also be seen as a 'lubricant' or an 'abrasive' in social interaction. It is intended to initiate social interaction freely and smoothly. But it can serve as an abrasive as can be seen in interpersonal friction.

Humor for the oppressed operates to bolster morale and hope; the humor becomes a compensatory device, making the fear and tragedy of the moment seem perhaps only temporary (*Psychology of Laughter*: 104).

Used as a defence mechanism, humour enables the human being to continue life's journey. Hilde would often comment in an ameliorative way that 'things will be better tomorrow' or 'wait, till you're older' - the question of waiting often irritated the writer because she too had to wait seemingly endlessly for everything, but then, they would also 'talk about natural things,' the sunrise, the stars, the formation of the clouds wandering across the sky, or the writer would retort '*erzähle mir ein Schwung aus Dein Leben*'⁷⁹ - it usually had to do with the stage and the personalities and humorous situations. Tension and elasticity are the forces necessary to rekindle hope and life.

Humour may be summed up as being 'die Fähigkeit, auch die Schattenseite des Lebens mit heiterer Gelassenheit und Geistiger Überlegenheit zu betrachten'⁸⁰ a definition with which Plato may have agreed.

⁷⁹ Relate an episode from your life.

⁸⁰ '...the ability to consider the dark side of life with calm, spiritual discernment' - my translation.

CHAPTER FIVE

Shattered lamp – eternal light

Hilde and family decided to settle in Johannesburg, the most populous of South Africa's cities and the business hub of the country - a city surrounded by mine dumps and dust rather than the riverine, forested milieu they were accustomed to. But this was considered a safe haven and Hilde, at least, was prepared to make the adjustments that would clearly be required. Adjustments aside, she was not familiar with the political position or the traditions within the country and would be at pains to correct this lack. She was completely unaware of the fact that 'anti-Semitism as a political phenomenon in South Africa was both older and wider in scope than the very visible activities of the shirt movements. There had been many outbreaks of anti-Semitism before 1933, especially following sudden increases in Jewish immigration'. She too was unaware of 'The anti-Jewish hysteria that struck South Africa in 1936 which had been stimulated, in part, by the sudden boost in migration; 3,344 immigrants came, compared to 1,078 in 1935' (Furlong, 1991:46 and 55). Hilde had assisted her siblings in establishing homes and had arranged for Fritz to attend a technical college to learn a trade - which he resented. He always held this against Hilde as he had expected her to provide the funds to finance him through medical school. He little realised that he would have to spend time learning the language of the country and then also having to assist his mother whose English was virtually non-existent, and who was obliged to accept a menial job as a waitress. She worked for George Petousis, the owner of the Criterion Hotel in

Johannesburg.⁸¹ Ida Czapski was horrified that her elder daughter had to stoop 'so low' to earn a living. When Ida died and Lucie (see Annexure No. 54) needed time off to attend the funeral he fired her. As terrible as this was good came of it as she soon met Josef Rappaport whom she married and settled with in his home in Bulawayo in the then Southern Rhodesia. George Petousis in time regretted his impulsiveness and became a friend of the family. Hilde often recounted a special charity ball she had attended at the City Hall and Petousis had asked her to dance to Ravel's *Bolero* and, being the good sport that she was, she agreed to dance with him. Petousis was not quite five foot tall and must have had his nose buried in her cleavage while dancing. Simmel would have revelled in the caricature opportunity. Eddy was also to work on and off in the *Celebrity Room* at the Criterion Hotel. When Petousis celebrated his 80th birthday, Lucie, Hilde and the writer were invited to attend his party, which was a splendid and glamorous occasion.

General Hertzog (1866-1942) had made it possible for the immigration to take place and for that the family was grateful. He was against conspiratorial secret societies and the danger they represented. He had exposed the *Broederbond* the previous year. He was, however, powerless to prevent the increasing racist momentum within the country. And the words of Professor J C van Rooy '... in order to ensure that *Afrikanerdom* will reach its ultimate destiny of domination (*baasskap*) in South Africa it was necessary that the *Afrikaner Broederbond* shall govern South

⁸¹ Petousis had an interesting history. He was, apparently, a slave in Egypt as a child and had to carry blocks of ice upon his back. At the time of his 80th birthday, the press had interesting interviews with him.

Africa' caused not only him but the family great concern. His loathing for Dr Malan⁸² (1874-1959), a militant clergyman who was destined to become Prime Minister, became manifestly clear and criticised him for having 'watched the Anglo-Boer war from the comfort of the Netherlands', and now sat 'making pronouncements in the *Koffiehuis* in Cape Town' (Welsh, 1998:412). But Malan and his disciples were the men of the future. Malan's so-called new Purified Nationalists were soon to officially change the name to the National Party, usually known as the Nationalists, and they took every opportunity to thwart the Herzog-Smuts alliance. Welsh recalls Malan making a statement by mounting a black horse to attend a rally of the anti-Semitic Greyshirts, one of the multiplying quasi-fascist organisations.

Die Burger, reflecting the views of its German namesake, denied that German Jews were being persecuted, and demanded restrictions on Jewish immigration; very quickly bending to the storm, the government acted to control the arrival of Jews, with a handful of liberals protesting to no avail.

The supporters of *apartheid*⁸³, including many of the dominees of the Afrikaans sister churches, constantly invoked divine authority for the separation of races and the right – the duty – of the white race to govern, a duty which English-speakers had betrayed by thrusting political rights on unprepared blacks; echoes of Hitlerian Germany. It was 'the *Christian* duty of the whites to act as *guardians* over the non-white races until such time as they

⁸² Future Prime Minister of South Africa

⁸³ Separate development

have reached that level where they can look after their own affairs' (Welsh, 1998:415 - my italics).

In 1939 General Jan Smuts ((1970-1950) successfully convinced the House, by eighty votes to sixty-seven, that South Africa should declare war on Germany. Hertzog resigned; with him went thirty-seven Afrikaner members of the United Party. White South Africa was again divided, with most of English-speaking South Africans behind Smuts, as well as a substantial minority of Afrikaners, and all those non-whites who could afford to take an interest in anything so far removed from their daily struggles. Laws were passed that enemies of the State, such as Germans, and this included Austrians, were to be interned. Hilde, deemed stateless, immediately approached the authorities to prevent her husband Eduard Mecl, an Austrian national, from being interned. She feigned pregnancy and argued that as she was Jewish her husband could hardly be regarded as an enemy of the State. The authorities relented but the green ticket that Edi had been issued as a mechanical draughtsman on the mines was withdrawn. It was in this way that Edi's hobby, music, became his profession in South Africa.

An Aliens Amendment Bill, introduced in the Assembly by Eric Louw shocked the more liberal sections of the pro-government press, such as the *Cape Argus* and the *Rand Daily Mail*. It specifically declared Jews to be 'unassimilable' as immigrants, including even British-born subjects of the Jewish faith, a group Malan had excluded in his own 1937 proposals before Parliament. The bill excluded all refugees by denying entrance to immigrants whose passports did not permit re-entry into the country of issue. Any person who supported in any way any 'communistic organization' was also to be excluded. Louw's test for Jewish parentage was

redolent of Hitler's Nuremberg Laws: one 'whose father and mother are or were either wholly or partly Jews, whether or not they profess the Jewish religion. This was bald racial anti-Semitism, departing wholly from the veiled arguments of the past' (Furlong, 1991:67-68).

To broaden his horizons Edi had travelled extensively throughout Europe and South America as a musician and it was during one of his engagements in his hometown Vienna that he and Hilde had met. She told him of her plan to immigrate to South Africa. He proposed marriage but as marriage between the 'socially dead Jews' and Aryans was prohibited, Hilde suggested that he complete his musical contracts in Europe and also consider immigration to South Africa where they could then be safely married. *Rassenschande*⁸⁴ was again uppermost in her mind. It could perhaps be visualized in terms of the Immorality Act in South Africa, but instead of the colour line being transgressed it is the ethnic/religious line that was crossed.

Since many Afrikaners had some German forebears and many leaders had studied in Germany, events in that country were watched with attention and excitement. It is recorded that from February 1939 the *Ossewa Brandwag* (Oxwagon Sentinels – OB) rapidly grew into a uniformed and armed organization along Nazi storm-trooper lines. A few months later the National Institute for Christian Education and Instruction was formed. Welsh writes that both these organizations were offshoots of the *Broederbond*: it is interesting to note that Hans van Rensburg, leader of the OB, a thoroughgoing Nazi admirer, remained on the boards of Sanlam and Santam, Professor van Rooy, Chairman of the

⁸⁴ Defilement or shame of race.

National Institute, was also Chairman of the FAK, the *Broederbond* cultural front; and Dr Piet Meyer, Secretary of the *Broederbond*, held the same post in the FAK.

Racial purity had, of course, been a subject of Nationalist concern for many years. As far back as 1925, the Cape National Party had overwhelmingly adopted a resolution in favour of legislation to ban marriages between whites and those of other groups. But during the 1930s the obsession with racial purity reached hysterical proportions, just as it did in Hitler's Germany. In South Africa this wave peaked during the 1938 general election campaign, which, like that of 1929, was fought largely on the theme of the *swart gevaar* (black danger), and this time anti-Semitism was an important additional ingredient (Furlong, 1991:99-100).

It was soon clear to the family that they may well have gone 'from the frying pan into the fire'.

Eduard August Mecl (1909-1973)(see Annexure No. 55) was born in Vienna to Czech parents, Maria (née Skopal 1887-1958) born in Moravia, and Franz Mecl (1874-1962), born in Chrudim. They both came from families that tilled the land. The Skopals, however, were landowners. The writer's great-grandfather Anton Skopal⁸⁵ lived to a week prior to his one-hundredth birthday. Edi loved visiting his grandparents on their farm as they also kept livestock, geese and a boxer dog, which was his. Several of his many cousins eventually left the land and became teachers, primarily as a result of the Second World War and the advent of Communism they entreated him to cease corresponding, because of the harsh censorship, which could harm their careers. Edi's immigration to South Africa caused heightened tensions. The

⁸⁵ He came in from the lands to have the midday meal with his workers, put his head on his hands on the table and peacefully joined his ancestors.

remaining family consequently disappeared behind the impregnable Iron Curtain extending the sense of dislocation. Franz Mecl was the first in his family who did not till the soil but took up a career in the fur trade by becoming a furrier. He and Maria his wife travelled to Vienna to live and set up his business in the elegant city. Edi was the only child, his mother bringing him up strictly in conformance with dictates of the Roman Catholic Church and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. He disappointed his maternal grandfather by not becoming a priest and was subsequently disinherited. Edi studied mechanical engineering and music instead.

The Mecl home was situated in *Universum Strasse* No. 4 in *Brigettenau*, the twentieth district in Vienna. It was modest but homely. When the writer travelled to Vienna in 1971 a distant relation of Edi's arranged for the writer to see what had been her grandparent's apartment, which was miraculously untouched by the bombs. Buildings to the left and right of it had been razed. The church where Edi was baptised and confirmed still stands; unlike the writer's, the Catholic Pro Cathedral, Kerk Street, Johannesburg (see Annexure No. 56), which was razed to the ground to make way for the Gallo Africa Building when she was still a child.

During the Great War Franz Mecl was taken prisoner of war in Siberia. Upon his repatriation to Vienna he told the young Edi of the beauty and vastness of Russia. Edi was enthralled by the wonders of Mother Russia, her music and literature, but was destined never to see her. He, however, spoke the language,

apart from Czech and German (the language of Austria). The writer was always disappointed that her father had not found time to teach her to speak at least Czech as that would have more easily facilitated communication with her grandparents and opened the door to both Czech and Russian literature.

When juxtaposing the Czapskis and the Mecls, the conclusion has to be drawn that the expression 'coming from different worlds' applies, for despite their central European origins they could not have been more disparate. Religion aside, but perhaps that is an important factor after all, because the Jews and, particularly, the German Jews, are very warm and infused, as they all are, with the concept of *Mensch*, that special characteristic that makes a person stand out, that elevates him to another league. This does not restrict a *Mensch* from being of another denomination however. Despite the fact that the Mecls allowed Edi to study music, the writer had from childhood been given the impression that they were of a 'colder' and parochial disposition than the Czapskis. Edi was inclined to be emotional and introverted. He would perhaps have been better suited to be a priest than to be in the world. His love of music and nature was great, yet he was unable to demonstrate his affection for people. He had difficulty with gestures of magnanimity even as far as saying 'thank you' for a kindness received. Because of his penurious circumstances he was destined never to see his parents again. He was a man of a complex nature who deserved an easier life as he was always diligent and worked day and night when he could.

Edi loved and admired Hilde in his own way and was kind to her, but emotionally and intellectually they were 'worlds apart'. He did not fully understand the world she came from and was certainly unable to compensate for what she had lost, not only in a material sense. The writer had to admire his forbearance living in Simmel's shadow and Hilde's so often living in the past. Perhaps the greatest gift that he did give her (according to Hilde) was their daughter. The writer would have wanted to know her father better but this was prevented when Edi became ill in 1951 and he became one of the first people in South Africa to have a colostomy as a result of colon cancer.

Cancer brought about immutable change in their lives. It was also a time of financial constraint from which Edi was never to fully recover. Insurance policies were ceded for loans and over the years these policies could not be reactivated; this included the policy taken out for the writer's education.

The gaze, as was envisaged by Foucault's paradigm, in his book *The Birth of the Clinic*,⁸⁶ extended to doctors who were, in this case, not able to tell Hilde whether all the cancer had been removed and that it would, in their estimation, take five years of vigilance and waiting to know whether Edi would survive. Because of Eddy's disposition it was thought kinder not to tell him that he had cancer. Hilde guarded him zealously from loose tongues and the burden weighed heavily on everyone. The shock of possibly becoming a widow for the second time, but this time with a child to care for, was great. Hilde started displaying signs

⁸⁶ *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*. A M Sheridan Smith, trans. New York: Pantheon, 1973.

of both osteo and rheumatoid arthritis that, over time, became crippling and was attributed to the trauma of marginalization, loss, dispossession and Eddy's cancer.

The writer was no longer allowed to play with her father lest she cause him pain. She used to love to jump into his lap and have him tell her stories about the *Little Red Fox* – stories he made up about a little misunderstood fox who lived in the forests of Bohemia. Was this little fox Edi himself? Emotionally this deprivation caused repression in both father and child; the father becoming more introverted and the child clinging to the mother. The reversal of power figure again placed Hilde in the position as described by Juliet Mitchell, 'The phallus – with its status as potentially absent – comes to stand in for the necessarily missing object of desire at the level of sexual division' (Heath: 53). Hilde was denied sexual expression and found herself in the rôle of nurse yet again, but with the added responsibility of care and authority over the child. The child was obliged to accept illness and transience as part of the reality of life, cancer being the sword of Damocles ever over her head, a fear she lives with to this day.

Hilde attempted to keep in touch with friends and former colleagues in Berlin despite the war and censorship. Germany was a chapter that Hilde could not close as many émigrés had managed to do. Somehow she always believed she would be able to continue where she had left off by one day returning to the Berlin she had left behind. It took a long time for her to receive replies and with the replies the reality of the war years entered

her life with a ferocity that affected the whole family. More and more Hilde realised that the Berlin she loved was slipping away from her. In 1952 she received a letter from her friend and erstwhile attorney, Dr Ernst Dahlmann (see Annexure No. 57). He spoke of the previous fifteen sorely depressing years in Berlin and in particular the devastation for him. He had escaped with body intact but lost everything else. He claimed, as so many Germans did, to have shut out the past from his consciousness. Regrettably he shut out a great deal more, which was later to harm Hilde.

The entire war period he had spent in Berlin and experienced the raids and the horror first hand. He relocated from the apartment known to Hilde in *Herwarthstrasse* in 1941 to a charming home near the *Tiergartenstrasse*, which, he claims, could not have been lovelier. In November 1943 it was totally bombed out and nothing could be saved. He then moved to a new apartment on *Kurfürstendamm*. He claimed it seemed as though the battle for Berlin had taken place on *Kurfürstendamm*, which was turned into a battlefield with flying exploding shells from Stalpanzers totally destroying his home yet again. Some time was spent in a hotel near the Zoo. From 1950 he lived in a newly renovated block on *Kurfürstendamm* at the corner of *Meinekestrasse*. The worst and most depressing period, he claimed, was the Berlin Blockade – nerve-shattering – as he had to do without heating or electricity or even fresh food.

Destiny had dealt him another severe blow when his wife died in 1950. The war and deprivation had left her in poor health and

she suffered a severe stroke from which she did not recover. He spent four weeks in *Bad Gastein*⁸⁷ and South Germany to recuperate. He had developed diabetes, which laid further constraints upon his health. This had reminded him of Hilde's diabetic mother and he empathised with Hilde's loss. Hilde's beloved mother had passed away in May 1943 with Hilde's baby in her arms. He referred to places he and Hilde had often frequented, such as *Peltzer's Atelier* and *Weiss Csarda* which were, among others, completely destroyed, as well as the house opposite the Eden Hotel where Hilde had once lived – the site a vast, dismal flattened no man's land.

The writer remembers this time very clearly, the heartache, the tears, the preparation of parcels to be sent to Berlin. She sees her mother sewing Hessian wrapping over the parcels and then using an indelible pencil, which had to be repeatedly dipped in water to address them clearly. For a while Hilde could not bring herself to play Richard Tauber's recordings that usually filled the home with magic of the world of operetta, as the sorrow for her Motherland and friends and former life was too great.

Lucie, Hilde's sister, corresponded with Dahlmann to act as restitution attorney on Hilde's behalf in 1953. The German word for this form of restitution is *Wiedgutmachung*, which literally translated means 'to make good again'. By this time the Mecls were in dire straits financially as a result of Eddy's operation, lack of work and life's demands. Lucie had married Josef Rappaport, the importer/exporter from Hamburg who had spent most of his

⁸⁷ Holiday resort and spa

adult life trading in Africa (see Appendix No. 58), and was living in Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia. She was devastated to observe how difficult her sister's life had become. It was thought at the time that because of Dahlmann's friendship he would be the perfect choice to act on Hilde's behalf. This proved to be a mistake as the war, deprivation and the situation within which he found himself in post-war Germany had resulted in his forgetting the details of legal battles, which he had fought on Hilde's behalf, including the contestation of Simmel's Last Will and Testament. He had also lost many of his files when his offices were bombed out.

Dahlmann was elderly and ailing and was obliged to resort to many 'cures' at spas such as *Bad Gastein*. This, notwithstanding the division of Berlin into the various sectors, made it progressively more difficult for him to access information at the various local authorities. He, however, approached the *Wiedergutmachung* process in the wrong manner and missed the priorities of Hilde's claim thus jeopardising the whole process. Josef Rappaport some time later advised Hilde to relieve Dahlmann of her mandate as his senility would cost her dearly and rather approach the Jewish Board of Deputies to act on her behalf. She was reluctant to do this owing to her friendship with Dahlmann. In the interim, however, various aspects of Hilde's claim, owing to lack of documentation, were declined. Eventually she did approach the Board and Dr Friedrich Weissenberg was the attorney recommended to assist her. He was dismayed at the manner in which the case had hitherto been handled. An even more difficult period then began to gather as many

affidavits from friends and colleagues (see Appendix No. 59) to substantiate Hilde's claim before it became proscribed.

It became necessary to establish a legal network with attorneys authorised to act within different areas and sectors of Germany and finding those who were prepared to act without compensation until the successful conclusion of the case. Monies would however have to be found to defray certain expenses. Powers of Attorney had to be issued and the lines of communication became increasingly more convoluted. The attorneys were also acting against time limitations, which added further anxiety to the whole operation.

Meanwhile, the osteo- and rheumatoid arthritis took hold of all Hilde's joints and the surrounding muscles began to show signs of atrophying. The family doctor, Dieter Brenner, began injecting cortisone into each of the affected joints, subjecting the patient to even more pain and despair. The once slender elegant hands were becoming progressively more misshapen and swollen. Hilde's elbows, shoulders and knee joints were deteriorating in a similar fashion. Because of the overwhelming financial constraints it was decided to take the writer out of the convent she was attending and relocate her education to the government system which meant spending a year at a co-ed school prior to her being accepted by the Johannesburg Girls' High School, Barnato Park, Johannesburg. Considering the writer's tender age at the time the world from her gaze was alarming, insecure and seemingly unfair. The change from the convent was a traumatic one as she had to spend one year at Twist Street School, a co-

educational school, before moving up to high school. The writer was a very shy and somewhat introverted child and Twist Street School was what was known as 'rough'. Having no siblings the writer had had very little, if any, contact with boys and some in her class were to prove very trying by constantly running their fingers down her spine to check whether she was wearing a brassiere or not and plunging her into neon-like blushes. In retrospect, the change did benefit the writer as she learned to make friends with those that we considered Other, either because they came from disadvantaged circumstances, were boys, or were mentally challenged⁸⁸. The change of school, as well as the constrained financial position, altered the writer's, as well as her parents', social contacts. Many so-called friends proved to be 'fair-weather friends' and disappeared from their lives. The friends with automobiles were few and far between - confining the Mecl family to the city and the limited transport the city offered.

The cortisone did not help Hilde. Where most people receiving the drug become bloated Hilde became skeletal and fragile. For the *Wiedergutmachung* process she was required to go to a *Vertrauensarzt*, a doctor other than the patient's own medical advisor. The doctor appointed to the task was Dr Lohmann⁸⁹. This doctor was neither empathetic to Hilde's condition nor to her claim against Germany as a Jewess. Hilde had lost much of the strength in her hands and arms as a result of the progressive illness. The doctor disregarded this incapacity and made

⁸⁸ Twist Street School also offered remedial education.

⁸⁹ Lohmann was Dieter Brenner's brother-in-law.

indecent advances towards Hilde who managed to ward him off and on the strength of this action by her, he claimed that she had at least fifteen percent strength to work. When Hilde reported Lohmann's unethical behaviour to Dieter he was appalled and issued an independent affidavit to be sent to Germany. Three other doctors issued affidavits to overturn Dr Lohmann's 'findings'. Hilde felt even more marginalized, victimized and dehumanised by these tactics and yet again reduced to being an object of patriarchal abuse and enforced silence.

Dr Weissenberg advised Hilde that as she had originally won the contestation of the Last Will and Testament and had initially received royalties from the *Plesken Verlag* she should proceed to sue the publishers to honour their commitments. The course of events would lead from *Plesken-Verlag* to *Fakelträger-Verlag* to *Ullstein*.⁹⁰ The fates seemed to be conspiring against Hilde at every turn. The next move was to include the *Kriegsblindenstiftung*⁹¹ in the litigation process for Hilde's share of the Testament, which included her summer home in *Königs Wusterhausen* (see Annexure No. 60), which had become an orphanage. The missing documentation again proved to be an insurmountable stumbling block. One of the lawyers authorised to appear on Hilde's behalf undertook a search in the Deeds Offices situated in the Russian Sector, but those documents continued to be elusive. The repeated submissions, searches and appearances took an inordinate amount of time that created

⁹⁰ Ullstein is one of the largest publishing houses in Germany. It was also one of the first institutions to be *entjudet*, made Jew-free, by Goebbels.

⁹¹ Foundation for the war blind.

lengthy correspondence that added to her burden of ill health and sorrow.

The arthritis had become so bad that Hilde could hardly walk. The cortisone had not worked. Hilde experimented with various drastic diets and natural potions to no avail. Eventually it was suggested that she have her teeth extracted, as teeth were considered often to be the hidden cause of toxins in the body. Hilde's teeth were in good condition, but the arthritic pain was so bad she was prepared to try anything. This beautiful woman's body was being subjected to all forms of torture. The extraction of all her teeth was a terrible ordeal and caused her discomfort and embarrassment until she died. The arthritic pain and swelling did not abate. Through a friend she heard of the Chinese physician Dr Liang who illegally practised from Fordsburg in Johannesburg. He was reputed to give 'gold' injections that were miraculous. The writer and her father took Hilde to consult Dr Liang who said he could not cure the disease but could bring it into remission. After the second injection Hilde could walk unaided from his rooms. This fine doctor and gentleman was not allowed to practise in South Africa officially because he was Chinese, despite the fact that he had degrees from Edinburgh and London. Dr Liang, a marginalized man and victim of *apartheid*, who brought comfort to hundreds of ailing patients, was killed in a motorcar accident several years later. There were many people who mourned his death.

With the receipt of each letter from Dr Weissenberg Hilde's hopes of settlement rose and fell. It seemed as though fate was playing

a cruel game resulting in further insecurity and marginalization. Hilde knew of people who had claimed restitution who had possessed very little in Germany but had, nonetheless, received generous compensation.

In 1960 Hilde eventually received DM3400 towards *Berufsschaden*⁹², but the struggle continued for compensation for the loss of property, and the need to leave her homeland. The case with the *Kriegsblindenstiftung* for payment of royalties and the remainder of her share of the estate, including her home in *Königs Wusterhausen* lingered on. The preparation of further affidavits was required as were further Powers of Attorney.

Dr Weissenberg managed to contact Rita Devant a friend of Hilde's with whom Simmel's Oil Painting *Landscape with Russian Church* had been left in safekeeping. After much persuasion the reluctant Devant agreed to the paintings being freighted to Hilde. Mrs Elli Claasen, the Berlin attorney, arranged with the forwarding agents, Paul Kalies, to despatch the painting. The large painting had been removed from its heavy frame and stretcher and was rolled into a specially constructed plastic lined wooden container for shipping (see Annexure No. 61).

Hilde received the container with great excitement. As the writer and her father opened the container and began unrolling the painting the many tears shed over all the years of waiting were shed yet again as with each unrolling of the huge painting bits of brittle paint cracked and crumbled off the canvas. The mess was heartbreaking. As the writer had taken art as a matriculation

⁹² Career damages.

subject she decided that immediate action was necessary. She telephoned the father of a school friend of hers who owned a photographic business and consequently had many contacts in Germany. Simmel had used *Schmincke* products and she asked Mr Rosewitz whether he could obtain a box of *Schmincke* oils as it was her intention to personally fully restore the painting.

True to his word Alfred Rosewitz obtained the paint. The writer had the canvas stretched⁹³ and so began the careful restoration under Hilde's skilled and watchful gaze with the writer attempting this restoration for the love she bore her Mother. The paint matched perfectly and where mixing was necessary the writer took great care to recreate the painting as if from Simmel's gaze and at times it seemed as though his hand had guided her hers. The experience was interesting and enriching for her as she had always enjoyed painting and showed a deal of talent. Hilde was delighted with the result. The painting was always hung in a prominent position not only because of because of its size. It was never reframed because of the expense involved⁹⁴.

Edi had been in and out of work for some time and decided in 1953 to apply for South African citizenship as it was obvious that a return to Europe was impossible and citizenship could assist in his obtaining more permanent employment. Hilde applied for citizenship in 1956. Eddy had engagements at various well-known venues in Johannesburg over the years, including a salon ensemble at the Carlton Hotel in Eloff Street, the Lutjes Langham

⁹³ The painting just fitted into the elevator of the building in which the Mecls lived.

⁹⁴ This expense will fall to the university once the painting has been entrusted to their keeping.

Hotel, and His Majesty's Cellars. He also worked on contract for African Consolidated Theatres. He travelled the country with visiting international performers, such as, inter alia, Danny Kaye, Kalanag⁹⁵, Connie Francis, Max Bygraves, George Formby and Johnny Ray. The Pat Boone tour was a disaster from the musicians' point of view as the impresario, Michael Klisser, claimed to have made a loss on the contract and failed to pay the musicians. He later committed suicide.

There were also longer engagements at, for example, Fordsburg's well-known *Red Lantern* and *The Prospect Room* at the Sunnyside Hotel, Parktown, Johannesburg, where he was very popular and known as Johannesburg's waltz king. His programme would begin with salon music, and included items such as the *Meditation* from Massenet's *Thaïs*, Beethoven's *Romance*, various Fritz Kreisler pieces – these were usually played while customers were dining and were followed by dance music. He was an accomplished musician, but naïve when it came to business, and was often compromised as a result. He also had lengthy periods of unemployment when Hilde's sister would scrape together what she could to help. The writer's hopes of a university education had been dashed when her father became ill. Lucie's husband Josef Rappaport paid the fees at a secretarial college where the writer would be trained as a shorthand typist as she had to obtain gainful employment as soon as possible after she had matriculated. Her *Weltanschauung* at the time was somewhat resentful because some of Hilde's so-called friends kept saying that surely Hilde

⁹⁵ International magician.

could do better for her only daughter. Hilde's other siblings remained aloof to her problems and never offered to help.

Eddy's choice of mainly salon and dance music was, in the long run, not a good one. He should have followed his friend and colleague Rudolph Eschner's advice soon after their arrival from Vienna, particularly when he was prevented from working on the mines, and joined the SABC Orchestra.⁹⁶ But at the time salaries were somewhat better on the dance rounds. When Eddy did audition for the Orchestra many years later he was considered too old to join. It was a great disappointment for him as by then the conditions of service would have offered a deal of security.

In these years the political situation within South Africa was becoming increasingly more repressive especially under the leadership of Dr Hendrik Verwoerd (1901-1966) who had studied and been influenced in Germany. As editor of *Die Transvaler* he was able to use his newspaper as a vehicle for German propaganda. Harold Macmillan the British Premier is reputed to have called him the 'most granite-like man' he had ever met. As Minister for Native Affairs he had had the opportunity of laying the foundations for institutionalized Afrikaner supremacy. It was he who as Prime Minister was the supreme architect of the grandiose and complex system, *apartheid*, which was to make South Africa 'the skunk among nations' (Welsh, 1998:448-449).

1960 was a key year.

⁹⁶ South African Broadcasting Corporation

At the time of the 'wind of change' speech by Harold Macmillan, Sharpeville was only a month away, and the world's shocked reaction to the massacre seemed to justify Macmillan's warning. On April 8 the Unlawful Organizations Act declared both the ANC (African National Congress) and the PAC (Pan African Congress) illegal, and the following day saw the attempted assassination of Dr Verwoerd by a disgruntled farmer, David Pratt, later found, oddly enough, to be mentally ill (Welsh, 1998:455-456).

The government replaced the pound sterling with a new currency, the rand, then at the rate of two rand to the pound, and backed by considerable gold reserves. A referendum in October 1960 opted for a republican form of government, and in 1961 Prime Minister Verwoerd withdrew South Africa's membership to continue as a member of the Commonwealth. The Union Flag and the British anthem 'God save the Queen' were put aside. South Africa was entering her long period of isolation.

'The ANC decided that the time had come to end its policy of reasonable gradualism and passive resistance, and to accept that some degree of violence was the only route forward.' Nelson Mandela was beginning in 1961 to achieve that stature he was to exhibit so clearly thirty years later' (Welsh, 1998:458). There followed times of great racial unease and tension.

Despite the difficult times Hugo Keleti approached the Parks and Recreation Authorities for permission to establish an open-air theatre on the Twist Street side of Joubert Park, Johannesburg. It was to be a boma-like canvas-enclosed area with raised stage and not intended as a permanent structure. Permission was granted and *Variety under the Stars* became a popular Friday and

Saturday night venue for the entertainment-thirsty cosmopolitan inhabitants of the area. Many entertainers made their South African debut on those boards. The crowds were well entertained by artists such as Gordon Mulholland, Garth Mead, The Hugos, Eve Boswell, Nat Bregman (the very amusing ethnic entertainer), Joe Stewardson and Michael McGovern – in their singing and soft-shoe dancing days, Adam Leslie – prior to his owning his own theatre, Doris Brasch, the Borowski brothers, Don Barrigo, Al Debbo, Mercedes Molina, Anne Ziegler and Webster Booth, Bill Brewer, various other musicians, dancers, illusionists and magicians, amongst others. Come Friday night interested parties prayed that it would not rain, as it was refreshing for the flat-dwellers to have an entertaining and amusing evening out under the stars. The muse was unkind in that when suitable theatres were opening Hilde was no longer able to appear on the stage owing to ill health.

Someone once said 'the law is as crooked as it is straight' – convoluted it certainly was as far as Hilde's case was concerned. What ensued was that the various attorneys advised Hilde to allow the various publishers involved to come to an agreement with the *Kriegsblindenstiftung* without her being represented as a party to the dispute. It was thought that Hilde's claim would automatically be clarified without plunging her into costs. Regrettably this course of action did not have the anticipated outcome. Once again Hilde was given advice that worked against her interests. Affidavits had been submitted regarding her

financial situation but she was not granted the *Armenrecht*⁹⁷ to lodge her claim against the *Kriegsblindenstiftung*. When the Court in Cologne delivered its decision in the case in 1967 (see Annexure No. 62). Hilde's claim was dismissed with costs.

Circumstances and negligence conspired against Hilde and justice was not done.

Life was never uneventful in the Meci home. The writer had been given a complete recording of Lehar's *The Merry Widow* for her birthday. The evening that Hilde, Lucie and the writer were to listen to it the telephone rang. The caller was Lucie's daughter-in-law, Susan, advising that Fritz had had a heart attack and that he was in Rustenburg. The writer immediately made arrangements to take both Fritz's wife and Lucie to the resort in Rustenburg. She drove as fast as was sensibly possible, but they arrived too late. Fritz had died two hours earlier. It was difficult to comfort the women and to make the necessary telephone calls. The Chevra Kadisha⁹⁸ hearse, which had to travel from Johannesburg, arrived in the early hours of the morning to remove the body. The journey back to Johannesburg was sombre and seemingly endless. The writer was asked to make all the funeral arrangements. The shock of losing her son caused Lucie to start losing her hair. In later years she permanently had to wear a wig.

The following year Hilde's elder brother Adolf, known as Adi, became suddenly ill and, within a few days, died. It fell to the

⁹⁷ In pauperus
⁹⁸ Jewish Burial Society

writer yet again to make all the necessary funeral arrangements. The sisters felt his loss very keenly as he had always been their favourite brother. What was also keenly felt was their mortality.

'The lamp of the body is the eye' (*Matt. 6:9.22-23*). Hilde's lamp was growing dim with each disappointment and bereavement. Eddy developed severe bronchitis and laryngitis. Over a period of eight weeks the condition did not improve. Eddy was referred to a specialist who decided that further investigation was required. The results of the tests were alarming. Twenty-five years after the colon cancer Eddy was diagnosed as having lympho-carcinoma. The specialist referred Eddy to the General Hospital where chemotherapy was immediately begun. At the time Eddy was working day and night - during the day as a despatch clerk at John Orr's Departmental Store, and at night he played in the Prospect Room at the Sunnyside Hotel, the engagement he obtained through Hugo Keleti. When his hair began falling out it became necessary for him to wear a wig. Hilde's rôle was once again that of concerned partner and nurse. Her strength was failing and one morning her foot gave way under her in the bedroom and she fell heavily concussing herself badly. Dr Dieter Brenner came immediately and advised that she be taken to the Brenthurst Clinic for X-rays and further examination. It was established that she had what was called a dropped foot condition as a result of the arthritis and the prolonged cortisone treatment.

In 1972 the writer made one of the worst decisions of her life - she got married. On the surface it was a perfect match.

Regrettably and ironically, her husband was a manic-depressive, given to extreme fits of rage, jealousy and excess. After the first two months of marriage the writer knew that her marriage was doomed to failure. Meanwhile, her parents' health continued to deteriorate. On three occasions the writer received telephone calls from John Orr's summoning her as her father was 'dying'. She would leave work and go to his aid in the Despatch Department, each time taking him home. Eventually he was hospitalised at the Johannesburg General Hospital. Hilde too was transferred to the General Hospital for further gruesome tests, including bone marrow tests. This continued for nine months with the writers having to go from one ward to another on a daily basis. When Hilde was discharged from the Hospital she was fitted with callipers. This was perhaps the ultimate indignity for the elegant woman.

The Mecls at the time lived in Metropolitan Heights in Hillbrow. The building belonged a Greek business tycoon whose folly was gambling. One night during a game of poker he wagered the building and lost. All the tenants were given notice to vacate their flats as the new owners were going to redecorate and sell the flats. The writer was thrown into a state of consternation. The only solution seemed to be the dissolution of her parents' home with the sale of most of their belongings and the purchase of a suitable home to house both of them upon their discharge from hospital. As the writer and her husband had little or no money for such a venture, the writer's aunt, Lucie Rappaport, lent her the money for a deposit on a suitable house in Parkwood, which was being sold on Deed of Sale from an Estate.

Within a period of three weeks the writer had packed up her parents' home, as well as her own, and established a new home in Parkwood. Despite the fact that the writer's husband benefited from Hilde's difficulties he became more and more unpleasant and aggressive. When Hilde eventually moved into 'her room' he told her to stay in it and not interfere with the running of the home. As he ran his business from home Hilde was also forbidden telephone calls. It was an untenable situation.

The doctors at the hospital suggested that Eddy be taken out for a day. The writer made arrangements for a wheelchair to be hired and her disoriented father to be brought to his new 'home' – Eddy was so disoriented that he did not recognize anyone and repeatedly asked to be taken 'home'. He was taken back to the hospital ward. Sitting at her father's bedside was difficult as she saw and heard his life slowly ebbing from his emaciated body. The writer at least did have time to arrange for a priest to give him the last Rites. Two days later when he died both Hilde and the writer were with him. The cause of death stated as on the death certificate was 'pneumonia'. The callipered Hilde broke down. With Eddy's death she was now faced with the beneficence of the writer's husband. It was a very fraught situation with the writer caught in the middle trying to keep the peace. She was devastated by her father's death and was left with a feeling of great sorrow and apprehension for the future.

The writer approached the Musicians' Union for assistance with Eddy's burial and funeral service. Eddy had been a paid-up member for over forty years. All the toothless organisation was

able to do was to commission a fellow musician, Salvatore Pompa, a member of the SABC Symphony Orchestra, to play the violin during the service. The service was held at the Catholic Cathedral of Christ the King in Johannesburg and was attended by only a handful of musicians who remembered him, as well as the remainder of the writer's family and a few friends.

The atmosphere in the writer's home was very tense owing to her husband's restrictions on and attitude towards her mother. Hilde decided to spend time with her sister in her one-bed roomed flat. Some three weeks after the funeral the writer and her husband invited her mother and her aunt to have dinner in a restaurant. The evening passed quite pleasantly and Hilde was once again taken to Lucie's flat. That night the writer answered a telephone call from her distraught aunt. It was well after midnight. The writer immediately dressed and drove to Hillbrow and arranged to have her mother taken by ambulance to the General Hospital as her condition was serious. Hilde kept saying that she smelled peculiar and that she had excruciating abdominal pain. After much ado with the hospital authorities Hilde was eventually admitted. Some hours later the writer was advised that Hilde would need immediate surgery. Lucie and the writer remained at the hospital. Not long after Hilde was taken to the theatre the writer was called into the recovery ward where her mother was begging the staff not to hurt her. They kept pulling on her arthritic arms. The sister advised the writer that there was nothing that could be done for Hilde as she had developed gangrene of the bowel from all the medication over the years, and had gone into renal failure. Half an hour later Hilde died.

It was as though the writer had been consumed by an unspeakable emptiness, which threatened to eviscerate her; it was as though her very being had been hollowed out. Lucie was distraught. She and Hilde had been inseparable (see Annexure No. 63). The writer had lost both her parents within three weeks of one another. After the funeral the writer hoped in vain to receive solace from her husband, but all she got was an admonition that it was 'unnatural' to mourn so deeply.

1973 marked the end of Hilde's natural life but she lives on in her daughter who has made it a prime task to ensure that not only 'the memory of the offence',⁹⁹ but also the light and love Hilde had brought to so many lives would not be extinguished. Thus the present study is envisaged as being the first step in the direction of the recuperation of the person Hilde, the granting of a voice to someone rendered voiceless through the vicissitudes of a world rendered invidious through the twin imperative of racist and patriarchal intolerance.

⁹⁹ Cited in *Holocaust Literature* by Gillian Banner. 2000. London. Valentine Mitchell, from Primo Levi's *If this is a man*. Trans. Stuart Woolf, London, Abacus, 1987.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation began with certain views posited by Virginia Woolf and it seemed appropriate to conclude with some of her thoughts previously referred to, which the writer considered relevant:

There we have in embryo the creature, Dictator as we call him when he is Italian or German, who believes that he has the right whether given by God, Nature, sex or race is immaterial, to dictate to other human beings how they shall live; what they shall do. Let us quote again: 'Homes are the real places of the women who are now compelling men to be idle. It is time the Government insisted upon employers giving work to more men, thus enabling them to marry the women they cannot now approach.' Place beside it another quotation: 'There are two worlds in the life of a nation, the world of men and the world of women. Nature has done well to entrust the man with the care of his family and the nation. The woman's world is her family, her husband, her children, and her home.' One is written in English, the other in German. But where is the difference? Are they not both saying the same thing? Are they not both the voices of Dictators, whether they speak English or German, and are we not all agreed that the dictator when we meet him abroad is a very dangerous as well as a very ugly animal? And he is here among us, raising his ugly head, spitting his poison, small still, curled up like a caterpillar on a leaf, but in the heart of ... [South Africa] (Woolf, 1936 [1992]:228-229).

Hilde's choice of country gave her and her family life, and for that she was very grateful, but she was nonetheless part of a marginalized and silenced minority (see Annexure No. 64). She fought valiantly against the enforced silence, but had, to all intents and purposes, lost. It shall be through the written word, and through the writer, that her diegesis be heard. Retribution was never the intention. The cry had been for restitution of what

was rightfully hers. The writing of a biography is the only manner left in which to convey the truth: Hilde's truth and the writer's truth, vengeance belongs to the Lord.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ *The New Jerusalem Bible, Book of Deuteronomy 32:35.* Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd., 1990, London

Der ewige Krieg

Leben ist Kampf ohne Pause:

gegen Herrn Müller und Frau Krause
 gegen die teuren Verwandten,
 gegen ein Heer von Briganten,
 gegen noch mehr Dilettanten,

Kampf gegen ehrliche Feinde,

gegen den Ansturm der Jahre,
 gegen den Ausfall der Haare,
 gegen Finanzformulare

Kampf gegen Schlangen und Mücken,

gegen die eigenen Tücken,
 gegen Dummheit, das Wetter,
 gegen Trompetengeschmetter,
 gegen die Menschen und Götter,

Kampf um das tägliche Brot:

Lebe – und lache dich tot!¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Taken from Willi Schaeffer's *Bunte Platte*, a poem by Günther Schwenn:
 Life is an endless battle/against Mr Müller and Mrs Krause/against the valued
 relatives/against the armed forces and thieves/against even more amateurs/Battle
 against honest enemies/against the rush of years/against the loss of hair/against
 financial formulae/Battle against snakes and mosquitoes/against stupidity, the
 weather/against trumpetblast/against man and gods/Battle for one's daily
 bread:/Live – and die laughing (my translation).

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Annexure No.1



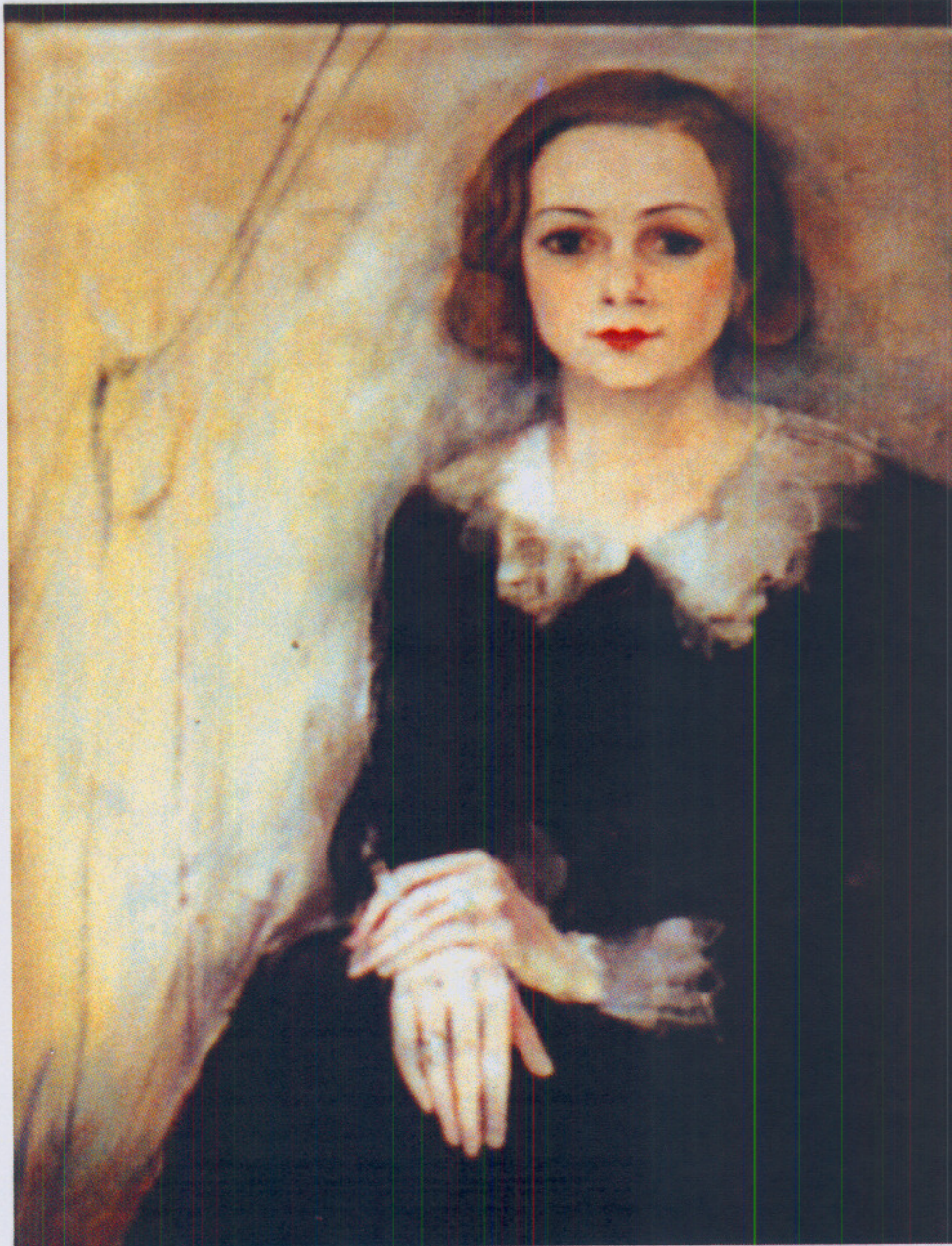
Oil Portrait of Hilde Gert by Paul Simmel

Annexure No. 2



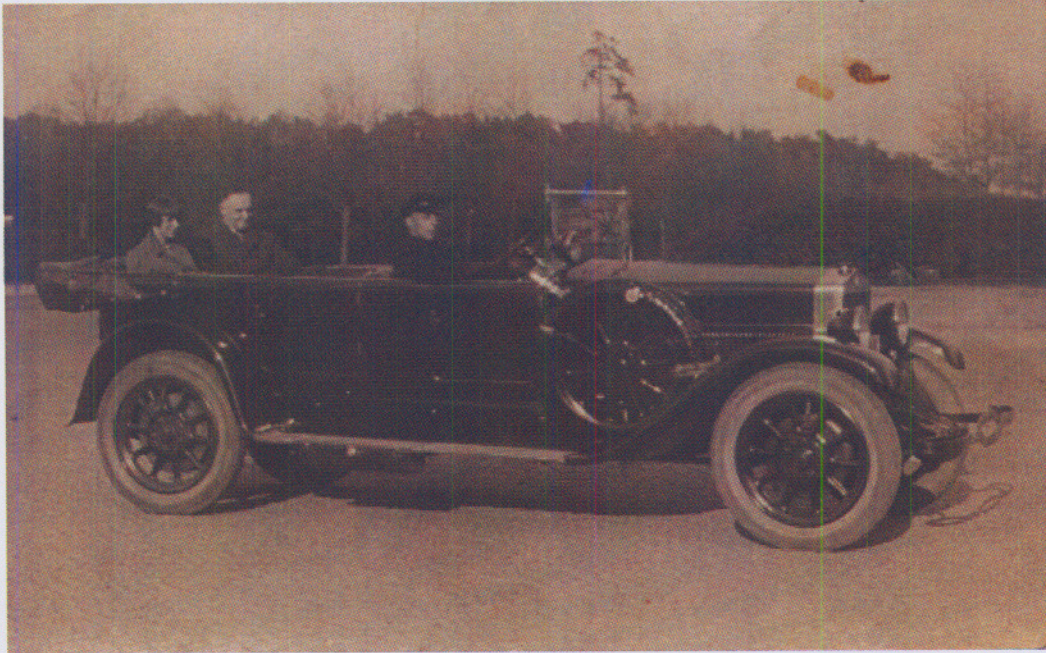
Simmel Oil Landscape with Russian Church in background

Annexure No. 3



Portrait of Hilde Gert by Ilse Ruth Voigt

Annexure No. 4



The Simmels with Chauffeur Münzel

Annexure No. 5



*Kaufmann Paul Simmel
im Ullsteinhaus Kutschke*

*Frankfurt
Okt. 27.*

Simmel and the advertisement for the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*

Annexure No. 6



Caricature with Hilde Gert as Model

Annexure No. 7

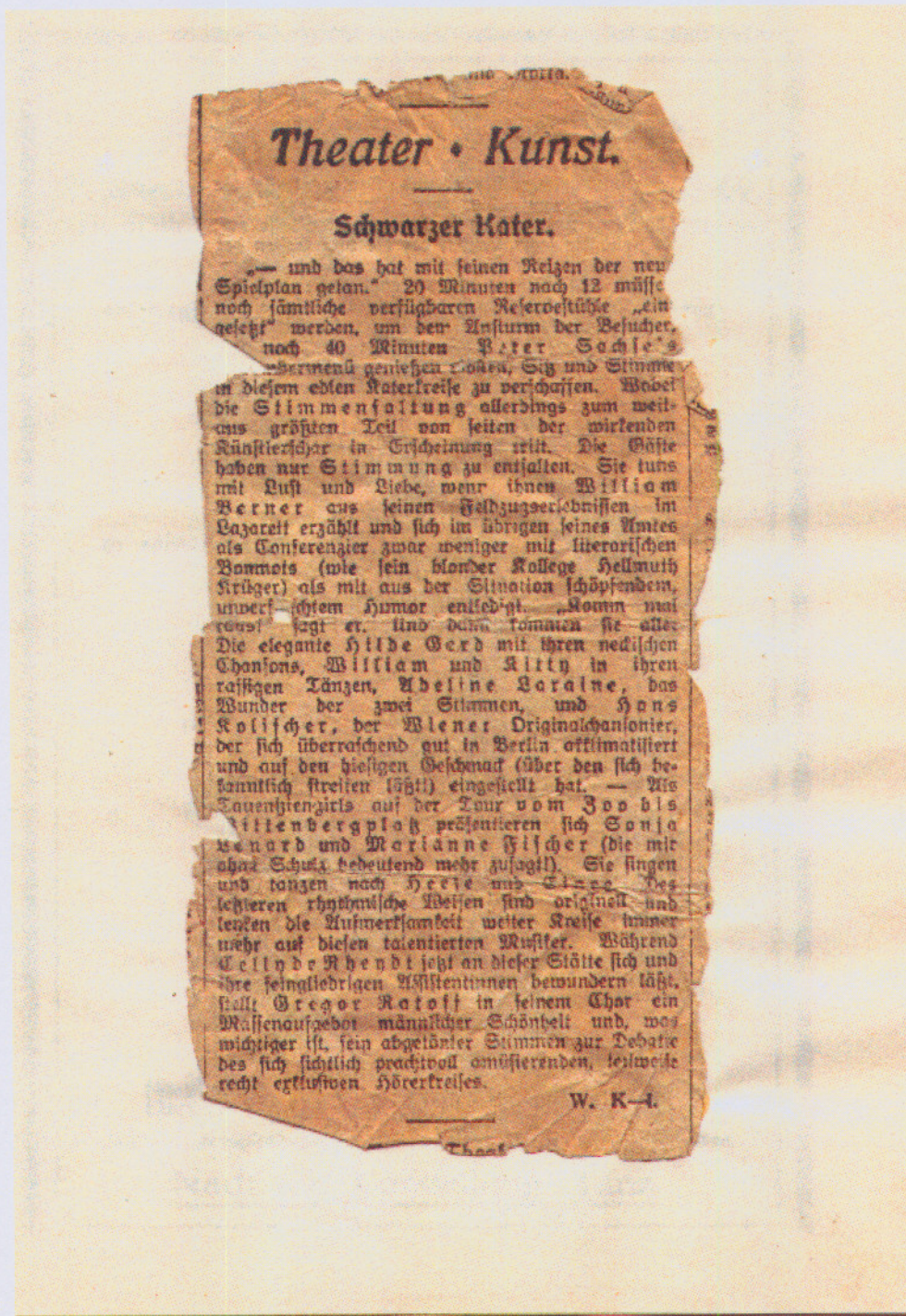


Captain Josef Rappaport

Annexure No. 8



Rudolph Nelson



Theater • Kunst.

Schwarzer Kater.

— und das hat mit seinen Keilgen der neu Spielplan getan. 20 Minuten nach 12 müsse noch sämtliche verfügbaren Katerestühle „ein gesetzt“ werden, um den Ansturm der Besucher, nach 40 Minuten Peter Sachle's —hermann's genieschen Lohes, Sig und Sittane in diesem edlen Katerkreise zu verschaffen. Weder die Stimmenfaltung allerdings zum weit-aus größten Teil von seiten der wirkenden Künstler-schar in Erscheinung tritt. Die Gäste haben nur Stimmung zu empfangen. Sie tun's mit Lust und Liebe, wenn ihnen William Berner aus seinen Faldzugeserlebnissen im Bazaratt erzählt und sich im übrigen seines Amtes als Conferenzier zwar weniger mit literarischen Bonmots (wie sein blonder Kollege Hellmuth Krieger) als mit aus der Situation schöpfendem, unperf-ichem Humor entledigt. „Komm mal raus!“ sagt er, und dann kommen sie alle. Die elegante Hilde Gert mit ihren netzlichen Chansons, William und Kitty in ihren raffigen Tänzen, Abeline Baraine, das Wunder der zwei Stammen, und Hans Kollischer, der Wiener Originalkantonier, der sich überraschend gut in Berlin akklimatisiert und auf den hiesigen Geschehnisse (über den sich be-sammtlich streiten löst) eingestellt hat. — Aus Lauenburgplatz auf der Tour vom Zoo bis Villenbergsplatz präsentieren sich Sonja Leonard und Marianne Fischer (die mit ohne Schutz bedeutend mehr zusagt). Sie singen und tanzen nach Heere und Stage. Des-letzeren rhythmische Wesen sind original und lenken die Aufmerksamkeit weiter Kreise immer mehr auf diesen talentierten Künstler. Während Ellen de Rendi sich an dieser Stätte sich und ihre feinalledrigen Assistentinnen bewundern lässt, stellt Gregor Rasoff in seinem Chor ein Massenaufgebot männlicher Schönbeli und, was wichtiger ist, sein abgeklärter Stimmen zur Debatte des sich stilllich prachtvoll amüsierenden, zeitweise recht exklusiven Hörerkreises.

W. K.-I.

Critique of Hilde Gert's performance at Swarzer Kater, Berlin



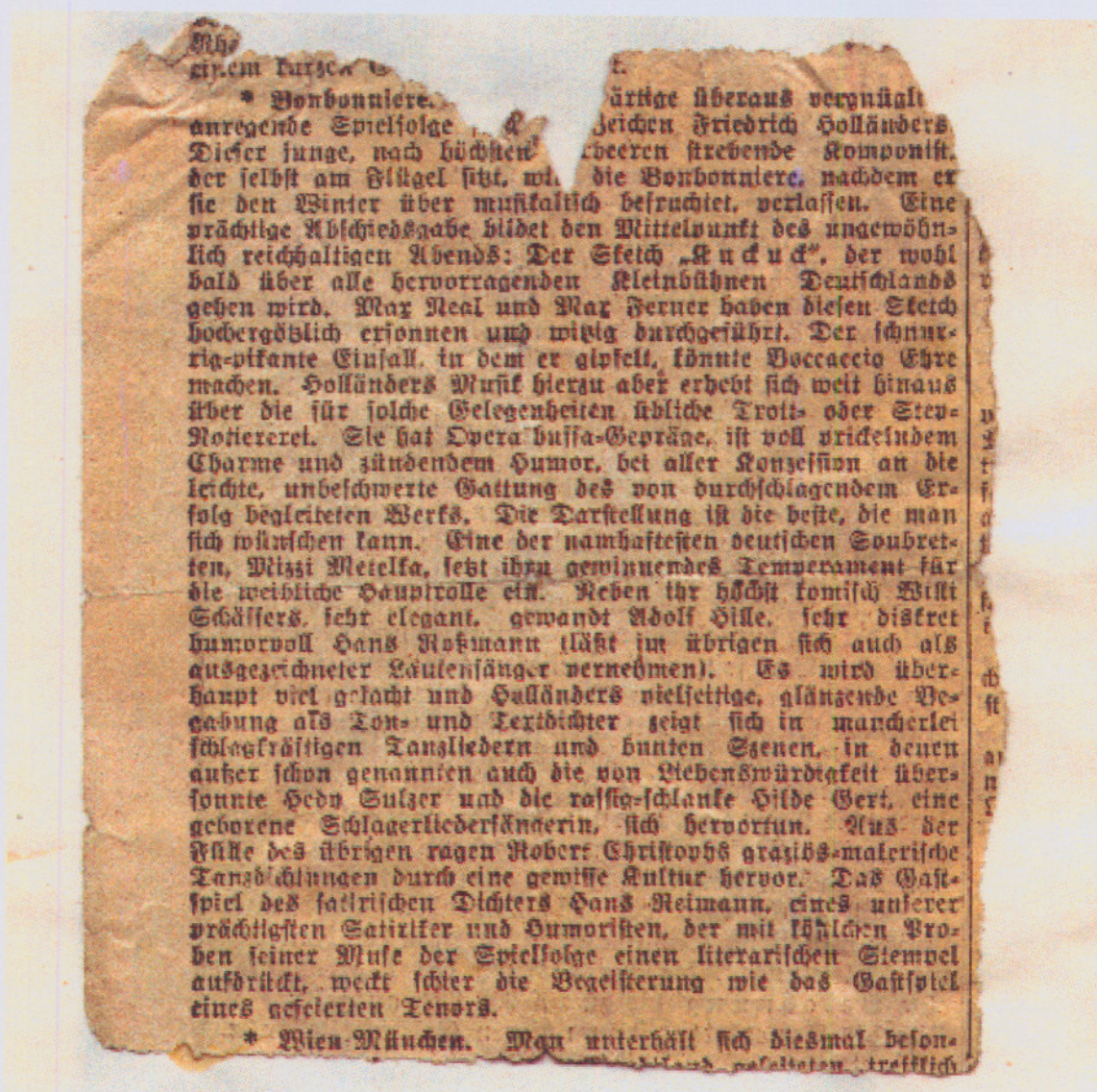
Critique of Hilde Gert's performance at Swarzer Kater, Berlin

= Bonbonniere. Am 1. Dezember findet die Uraufführung der einaktigen Operette *Bonbonni* von Martinsberg-Reimer, Musik von Friedrich Hollaender, statt. In den Hauptrollen sind die Damen Janowsky und Gert, und die Herren W. Schaeffer, Sille und Bauer beschäftigt. Außerdem wird das erlesene Programm des weihnachtlichen Monats gespielt.

...tens, dessen Rhythmus durch nichts zu beirren ist.

* Bonbonniere. Die Spielfolge steht im Zeichen Hilde Gert, die zurzeit auch in den Kammerstufen gastiert. Meteorengleich tauchte diese eigenartige Darstellerin auf, wie einst Lia Eibenschütz bei Reinhardt und die Rebelfrau am Burgtheater. Wie erschüttert sie in ihrer Szene, knallig und schlecht angezogen, ein Kind, aufzulesen aus den Schmutzstücken Bösen in Berlin-Ost, frühreif und wissend, mit einer teuflischen Sehnsucht im Herzen, die niemals die Sonne, nie die Erfüllung kennen lernt! Sie offenbart die tiefe, seelenmörderische Tragik unserer andererseits so vertieften Kultur — komisch und rührend zugleich. Der expressivistische Dialog von Friedrich Hollaender, Dausdichter, Musikkomponist, ausgezeichneten Begleiter am Flügel „Am Baum der Erkenntnis“ voll Abklüchlichkeit und Humor ist überhaupt nur in dieser Darstellung Gert und Willy Schaeffer, dem (nicht oberhin im äußerlichen Sinn) elegantesten Summorthen und einsatzartigen, geistvollen Ansager, möglich. Einen gewissen Gegensatz zur Gert bildet mit Abstand Hilde Gert in ihrer sprühenden Lebenslustigkeit, Nahe und herben Pflanzheit. Den neuen Hollaenderschlag „Öknenlied“ singt sie so temperamentvoll, daß auf der Bühne alle Zuschauer lebendig werden. In einem Ankleideakt spielt sie außerdem die hausbackene Frau, indes Gedo Sulzer mit seiner, mondäner Ueberlegenheit ihre Lehrmeisterin, Adolf Sille — der am Flügel nebenbei sehr ergötzlich komponieren entlarvt — den Satten gibt. Mit Recht wird Hans Rohmann stark gefeiert, der sich zu einem der besten Lautensänger entwickelt hat. Auch getanzelt wird anmutig. Besonderen Eindruck machen die parodistischen Tänze Ina Gubls und Uca Plunck, sowie Madelaines weiche Grazie. Maria Budt zeigt Phantasien in blendender kostümlicher Ausmachung nach künstlerischen Entwürfen von Prof. Haas-Hene.

Critique of Hilde Gert's performance at *Bonbonniere*, Munich



Critique of Hilde Gert's performance at Bonbonniere, Munich

Eintritt frei

Das Kabarett des guten Geschmacks
ist das
Charlott-Casino
Kabarett = Kurfürstendamm 12
Auftritt der Prominenten von Bühne u. Film
Heute: Willy Prager
Alles lacht! der beliebte Humorist, prolongiert Alles lacht!

Hilde Gert
Vortragskünstlerin, prolongiert
Kurt Robitschek
der bekannte Librettist als Conférencier
Margo Lion
die beliebte Parodistin
Kurt Gerron
ein Meister der Vortragskunst
Vera Meron
die charmante Tänzerin
Max Grünberg
der bekannte Film- und Bühnenschauspieler
vom Lessing-Theater
Jitty Menter
in ihren reizenden Vorträgen
Arthur Wright
der gewandte Manipulator
Maria Sallni
die grosse Geigenvirtuosin, prolongiert
Mario Costa
der beliebte Chansonnier
Erika Feige
die Ballettmeisterin in ihren Solotänzen
Am Flügel: Otto Strausky Kapelle: Czinsky
An Tanztagen nach der Vorstellung **TANZ**
Täglich: 5-Uhr-Tee mit buntem Programm
Eleganter Fern. Barbetrieb

Eintritt frei

Eintritt frei

Programme: *Charlott-Casino, Berlin*

Astoria-Bühne

Frankfurt a. M. == Kaiserstr. 67-69.
Inh. Wilh. Loebel Erben. Künstl. Leitung: Hans Reimann.

Januar-Programm.

Am Flügel: Ernst Abromeit :: Kapellmeister: Carl Schulz

Hidda Bartl

erzählt hübsche Sachen

Hildegard Büttner

die zierliche Spitzentänzerin

Karl Gerdo

in seinen Grotesken und Karrikaturen berühmter
Schauspieler

Hilde Gert

die mondäne Frau

Friedel Heinz

die liebenswürdige Vortragskünstlerin

Tedd Cunar-Oklany

ein vielseitiger Künstler eigenster Art

Rath Rex

der Saphir redivivus des Kabarets

Lajos von Szendy

der Hexenmeister am Flügel

„Getuschel“

Szene von Marcel Prévost

Margit Friedel Heinz
Lissy Nini Kieffer

Reihenfolge alphabetisch. Änderungen im Programm vorbehalten

Nach der Vorstellung: Tanz.

Programme: Astoria-Bühne, Frankfurt-am-Main

Astoria-Bühne

Frankfurt a. M.

Februar-Programm.

1.

Erika Kehrmann

Ein Tänzchen in Ehren, darf Niemand wehren.

2.

Fritz Emmel

der Mann Komma welcher ansagt und auch sonst
recht begabt ist.

3:

Friedel Heinz

Das netteste Mädels von Hannover.

4.

Dario Paini

Das Kartenphänomen.

5.

Hilde Gert

nicht ohne Grund prolongiert.

6.

Hans Reimann

7.

Valentine Olida

der bekannte Tanzstar.

8.

Woldemar Sacks

Künstlerische Leitung: Hans Reimann

Am Flügel: Ernst Abromeit :: Kapellmeister: Carl Schulz

Änderungen im Programm vorbehalten

Programme: Astoria-Bühne, Frankfurt-am-Main

Annexure No. 16



Hilde Gert, photographed by Gertrud Munkel, Berlin

Annexure No. 17



Hilde Gert, photographed by Riess

Annexure No. 18



Hilde Gert

Annexure No. 19



HILDE GERT

Annexure No. 20



Photographed by A sahm, Munich

Annexure No. 21



*Willi Schaeffers
für Rede
1944.*

Willi Schaeffers - Raconteur, Conférencier, Director



KABARETT DER KOMIKER

BERLIN - HALENSEE, KURFORSTENDAMM 156

DEUTSCHE BANK, DEP.-K. X2
POSTSCHECK, BERLIN 201100

den 27. Oktober 1946 S/T.
neuer Fernruf 97 86 22

FERNRUF: KASSE 97 76 21/23
BURO 97 43 77

Frau
Hilde Meel
Johannisburg

P.O. Box 30 83
South Afrika

Liebe Hilde !

Das ist ja wohl auch der Witz, im Leben jemand zu erkennen und ihm die Freundschaft zu halten bis ans Ende; auch wenn ^{noch} so viel dazwischen kommt, und Jahre dazwischen liegen. Wie schön, wenn man von einer solchen Freundschaft überzeugt ist. Wie schön aber, wenn man bei Lebzeiten ab und zu mal Beweise bekommt. Und deswegen kann ich Dir gar nicht genug danken; denn darauf wäre ich nie gefasst gewesen, von Dir persönlich zu hören.

Zunächst drücke ich meine Freude darüber aus, dass es Dir gut geht, was wenige von uns sagen können. Und unwahrscheinlich ist Dein Angebot, eventuell etwas zu schicken. Du wirst auch nicht böse sein, wenn wir von diesem Deinen Angebot Gebrauch machen. Selbst wenn nichts dergleichen eintreffen sollte; denn die Menschen sind böse und Verbrecher geworden und klauen wie die Raben. Aber der Versuch kann ja gemacht werden.

Interessant war übrigens, dass ich den Satz mit dem Chanson "Hütchen" im Augenblick übersehen hatte, und nun nicht wusste, wer ist denn nun Hilde. Erst meine Frau hat sofort Deinen Namen genannt. Peter übrigens auch. Und beide lassen Dich herzlich grüßen.

Was meiner Frau am meisten fehlt, wären ein paar Überschuhe Größe 40. Ich selbst kann gebrauchen: Socken, Taschentücher, Unterwäsche, weiße, weiche Hemden Nr. 40 oder 41. Na ja, und das Andere weißt Du ja. Und wenn nur das Geringste ankommt und möglich wäre, wären wir Dir dankbar.

Das Schicksal sei in kurzen Sätzen skizziert:

Am 1. Juni 1945 fingen wir, nachdem das Theater vollkommen verbrannt war, wieder an in einem Interims-Saal, der aber nach fünf Wochen von den Engländern beschlagnahmt wurde. Und nun begann ein Wanderleben, aber unter dem Namen und dem Begriff Kabarett der Komiker-Willi Schaeffers, mit beispiellosen Erfolgen. Momentan baut man ein kleines Theaterchen für mich, und vielleicht wird es am 15. Dezember unter meiner künstlerischen Leitung eröffnet. Peter hat man die Lizenz entzogen, weil es ihm angeblich im dritten Reich zu gut gegangen wäre. Aber er schafft es auf andere Weise. Und eines Tages werden die Alliierten, die uns übrigens sehr gut und an-

WILLI SCHAEFFERS

b-w-

Letter to Hilde from Schaeffers dd 27 October 1946

Annexure No. 22

ständig behandeln, auch sicher verschiedene Ungerechtigkeiten und Härten zurück nehmen. Prager ist auf seine alten Tage ein hervorragender Schauspieler geworden und spielt in der "Tribüne" eine reizende Rolle. Und ich sehe ihn oft. Er wird nun siebzig nächstes Jahr und hat neben dem unsagbaren Leid leider auch viel Krankheit durchgemacht. Aber Du stehst ja wohl in Verbindung mit ihm und der Gunda.

Ich fahre in den nächsten Tagen nach München. Die Stadt soll, wie viele andere deutsche Städte, nicht wieder zu erkennen sein. Unsere geliebte "Bonbänniere" ist natürlich nicht mehr da. Und wenn ich an die Zeit denke, muss ich sagen, es war einmalig. Ich weiss auch, dass Du begabt warst. Denn das macht Dir so leicht keiner nach, wie Du nach dem Kontrakbruch der Mizzi Metelka die schwere Rolle übernahmst. Nun darüber brauchen wir nicht zu sprechen.

Ich wünsche Dir Glück für den Fall, dass Du was aufmachst. Und dann fehlte nur noch, dass ich käme und mitspielte.

Grüss mir Deinen Mann und sei herzlichst von mir und uns allen gegrüsst.

Dei
W. Schaff

Annexure No. 23

Sitzung Deutsches Kohärenz Archiv
 Föhlinstraße 48
 55118 Mainz
 Telefon: (0 61 31) 29 16 95 / 23 16 75



Hilke Gerl zum Abschied.
Das Hütchenlied.
 One-step.

Aufführungsrecht
 vorbehalten.

Text und Musik von
FRIEDRICH HOLLAENDER.

Allegretto gracioso.

Gesang.

Klavier.

1. Puh! Bin ich ge-lau-fen hen-te, im-merk-reuz und quer! Hin und her!
 2. Brü-be-n-wohnt im er-sten Stock 'ne Da-me ganz al-lein! Ü-ber ihr ein E-he-paar, sie
 3. Drum, wenn ihr ein Hütchen braucht, kann macht es so wie wir. Sucht Euch ei-nen

1. Und noch mehr! Pack' ich mei-ne chi-cken Hüt-chen aus und ein,
 2. zart und er ge-mein! Er wollt' ihr kein Hüt-chen kau-fen, und vom Wirtschaftsgeld,
 3. Ka-va-berl! Ei-nen, der die Frau-en kennt und ih-re schwa-che Seit', ver-

1. was ich da er-leb'trepp-auf, trepp-ab, das ist zum Schre'n! Mei-ne Che-fin sagt zu mir:
 2. hat sie heim-lich drei be-stell't. Als die Hütchen kom-men an,
 3. spricht ihm Treu-e, mit dem Hal-len hat's ja Zeit! Setzt das Hütchen mit Hu-mor

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 Anstalt für den Musikalienhandel: München, Maximiliansplatz 18 (Max Hieber).
 Anstalt für Berlin: Groß-Postamt Hermann Augustin, Berlin C. 19, Gertrudenstr. 19/21. Musikverlag Bebenässer, München.

APRIL-PROGRAMM

Zwei Hugos

Das Paar der Gegensätze.

Besser als alle Worte zeigen beifolgende Skizzen den lustig-exzentrischen Stil dieses ungleichen Paares. Er ein betont stattlicher, massiv gebauter Tänzertyp, sie ein ausgesucht niedliches, wieselgewandtes Sprühtenfleichen voll Ausgelassenheit und erstaunlicher artistischer Vielseitigkeit. In nichts ähneln sie sich. Und das ist der Grund, weshalb sie so gut zusammen passen. Das heißt sich so gut ergänzen.

Der männliche Hugo ist Ungar. Er schreibt in einem ebenso übermütig-sprunghaften Stil, wie er tanzt. So schildert er uns seinen

Werdegang wie folgt: „Ich stamme aus Budapest, liche also die Arbeit



nicht sehr und suchte schon als Säugling mit Banjo und Saxophon



Der große und die kleine Hugo

Der bedrohte Tweed / Kennen Sie Vistra?



Paul Simmel schreibt auf der Vistra-Ausstellung bei Karlobst Autogramme.

Jedes Jahr hat seinen Modelstoff. Heuer heißt die Sonderformel Tweed. Mindestens am Vorpittag ist die Dame sonstigen vertrieben, wenn diese kühne Wortbildung nach amerikanischen Muster einmal gestirbt sein soll. Aber je höher der Stoff, desto näher der Abstrus. Wie das nun mal so zu gehen pflegt mit Modediktatoren und Schönheitskonzeptionen — es kommt nur zu bald der gefürchtete Tag, da aus dem ängstlich bestragten Spiegel des Märchenwort zurücktritt: ... aber Schneewittchen ...

Mit einem Wort: Kennen Sie Vistra? Nein? Aber Schneewittchen kann Sie wirklich nicht auf der Höhe. Vistra ist nämlich das Schneewittchen, das den Tweed entthronen wird, wenn nicht alle Reichen trügen. Vistra hat die besten Kuscheln, dieses Jahr auf allen Weltweitstücken zu liegen, Vistra wird als Kleidergehört über alle Ausprobieren wandern, Vistra wird sich als Boderrifst und Robemantel von schöne Glieder schmecken, Vistra deckt, lückerfrei gezeichnet, den Teetisch!

Nicht möglich? Doch! Kommen Sie mit zu Karlobst! Dort gibt es Vistra in allen Lebenslagen, dort harnt Vistra nach alle reizende Aberraffung. Paul Simmel nämlich — ja, Sie hören Recht, der Berliner Künstler — also Paul Simmel hat die Vistra-Ausstellung mit seinem ewigwährenden Geist: unerschrocken

und in seine lustigen Farben getaucht — da laßt selbst der sanftmütige Fädenbaum, aus dem der Wunderstoff gemacht wird. Aus Holz? Genau, Holz ist doch schon lange die große Rede! Freilich, die fauchenden Retorten sind nichts gegen die tausend Wandlungen, die der Holzstoff durchmachen muß, ehe er zum zarten, leuchtenden, schwebelichten Vistra wird, und es hat der J. G. Farben, der Erzeugerin des Stoffes, unzählige Versuche gefolgt, ehe die Epinaler in dieser Schöpfung herauskamen. Sehen Sie diesen Glanz, in Glanz und Glanz der besten Seide so ähnlich? Oder jenen Pratz? Über diese Schlafbede, unter der sich wunderbar mollig ruhen muß? Alles Vistra ... Und dieses weiche Trifot soll f ü n f z e h n M e t g e w o c h e n sein? Vistra ist Belle, Erde, Baumwolle, alles was Sie wollen. Vistra ist einer der Triumphe, die die deutsche Industrie trotz aller Demutnisse und Widrigkeiten immer wieder feiert.

Und dort, wo sich Wasse Mensch zu unüberwindlichen Mauern stellt? Das ist nicht mehr Vistra, das ist Karl Simmel. Ausbrang von Hunderten und neuen Hunderten, legt er am Schreibstisch und schreibt mit langsam ersattender Hand seinen Namen und immer wieder seinen Namen. Es ist schon ein Kreuz, berührt zu sein! Aber gehen Sie deshalb ruhig zur Vistra-Ausstellung — (o vom Ansehen wird man's nicht! L. G.

Handwritten signature: Paul Simmel

Vistra newspaper cutting

Annexure No. 26



Vistra Directorate with the Simmels

Das Programm

Nr. 1260

Berlin, den 30. Mai 1926.

25. Jahrgang

Artistisches Fachblatt G. m. b. H.

Das Organ der Internationalen Artisten-Loge, des Fach- und Berufsverbandes der Spezialitäten-Künstler vom Varieté, Zirkus und Kabarett.

Der Protest gegen jüdische Witze im Kabarett

Von Dr. Allos, zurzeit Stambul.

Von jeher wurde der Satiriker oder der Witzbold von den Leuten angegriffen, deren Persönlichkeit, Rasse, Stand oder Eigenart er heftiglich machte.

Hatten diese Angreifer die Macht in der Hand, so ging es den Witzbolden schlecht, man gab ihnen schwere Strafen. So wurde während der englischen Besetzung Kölns der Händschentheaterbesitzer bestraft, der den Ausspruch prägte: „Ström' herbei, ihr Völkersehnen, haben wir vorher immer gesungen, jetzt haben wir all das Gesocks hier am Rhein!“

Anders dagegen, wenn der Angegriffene keine Macht zu strafen hat, dann steht ihm nur der laute Protest während der Vorstellung zur Verfügung, und auch dieser ist nur dann ratsam, wenn der Protestierende die Majorität des Publikums auf seiner Seite hat.

Sonst kann er nur durch Protest in der Presse oder durch den Beschluß einer größeren gleichgesinnten Gemeinschaft hinterher versuchen, den ihn angreifenden Witzbold zum Schweigen zu bringen.

So ist es selbst dem mächtigen Mussolini nicht gelungen, einen Wiener Komiker zu verhandeln, weiterhin ihn mit einem Schweinskopf zu vergleichen, da die österreichische Regierung erklärte, mangels einer Theaterzensur keinerlei rechtliche Handhabe gegen den Komiker zu haben.

Gerade das Kabarett ist nun die Stätte der Satire, des Witzes über Zeitgenossen, über Zeiterscheinungen und es ist natürlich da auch viel gestündigt worden von Künstlern, welche, um einer guten Pointe willen, oft zu Unrecht politische oder andere Verunglimpfungen von Personen, Parteien oder Ständen vortragen.

Namentlich die linkstehende Presse hat daher viel gegen Beleidigungen des damaligen Reichspräsidenten Ebert und seiner Frau, gegen Parteimänner und Klassen Stellung genommen.

Zum Teil mit Recht, zum Teil mit Unrecht; Denn jeder im öffentlichen Leben stehende Mensch muß sich eine Kritik und eine Satire gefallen lassen, soweit sie nicht offensichtlich die Absicht der Beleidigung und Verleumdung enthält.

Wer in der Öffentlichkeit steht, muß auch Humor haben, oder zumindest ihn auch ertragen können. So hat Minister Severing die Schupo ersucht, alle über sie und ihre Wirksamkeit veröffentlichten Witze zu sammeln, um daraus das wahre Urteil des Volkes zu erkennen.

In der Tat prägt sich im allgemeinen der Wille des Volkes im Witze, der zirkuliert, aus und es heißt nur ein Symptom bekämpfen, wenn man den Witz verbietet, während es besser wäre, aus dem Witze zu erlernen, wo die Krankheit sich befindet, sofern nicht die eben genannten Voraussetzungen niedriger Beleidigungsabsicht gegeben sind.

Witz kann Gift sein, aber im Gift kann auch Segen und Heilung sein.

Nun wird es stets Menschen geben, die sich über Witze freuen, wenn diese andere, ihre Gegner, womöglich treffen, ob der Witz nun gerecht ist oder nicht.

Wenn natürlich die Geschädigten protestieren, so kann man ihnen das nicht nur nachfühlen, sondern man muß es sogar unterstützen aus dem Gefühl der Gerechtigkeit heraus. Gerade in der heutigen mit Giftstoffen gegenseitigen Hasses überwall geladenen Zeit muß Gift vermieden werden, das keine Heilung herbeiführt, sondern noch größere Krisen. Denn Witz soll den Haß und die menschlichen Leidenschaften entspannen, wenn er gut sein soll, aber nicht schüren.

Daher auch mit Recht die Proteste gegen Haßpolitik im Kabarett, die die Verlogenheit und Billigkeit bereits in sich trägt,

denn im Kabarett soll man sich geistig erholen, Anregungen gewinnen, die uns über das Hassen, Streiten, Kämpfen im Alltag erheben, zum mindesten aber durch erlösendes Lachen darüber entspannen.

Ein heikles Gebiet ist nun gerade der im Kabarett und Revuen vielfach gepflegte — jüdische Witz.

Wenn auch nach streng künstlerischem Gesichtspunkt ein Witz-erzähler gar nicht in ein gutes Kabarett gehört, dieser Typus existiert nun eben mal und hat mitunter sogar bei einem harmlosen Publikum Erfolg.

Vor kurzem hat nun in Berlin der Zentralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens in den Union-Festhallen eine Protestversammlung gegen die Kabarettkomiker einberufen, wozu viele hunderte Teilnehmer, darunter auch viele Kabarettisten selbst gekommen waren, die alle folgende Resolution faßten: „Wir legen Verwahrung ein gegen die grobe Verhöhnung und geistlose Verzerrung jüdischen Wesens und jüdischer Einrichtungen in einer großen Reihe von Berliner Theatern und Kabarets. Kein auf Ehre und Anstand haltender Jude sollte derartige Scheinkunst unterstützen. Die Versammlung ersucht den Zentralverein, den Kampf gegen die Auswüchse im Kabarett und Theater mit allen ihm zu Gebote stehenden Mitteln durchzuführen, die Mithilfe aller rechtlich Denkenden ohne Unterschied des Standes und der Religion ist dem Zentralverein sicher!“

Soweit die Resolution.

Nun läßt sich dazu sagen, daß tatsächlich der jüdische Witz im Kabarett schon lange eine — nicht nur künstlerisch — peinliche Frage ist, vor allem aber für — Nichtjuden.

Denn: nicht nur den Juden ist das immer wiederkehrende Motiv des gerissenen Wortverdrehers, der überschlaun Ueberlegenheit im Witz peinlich.

Es ist sogar festzustellen, daß die überaus überwiegende Mehrzahl der Komiker, die jüdische Witze vortragen, selbst — Juden sind.

Und daß fernerhin am lautesten und am meisten darüber — der jüdische Teil des Publikums lacht, was schon daraus sich ergibt, daß die Nichtjuden die vielen eingeflochtenen und sogar oft die Pointe bildenden jüdischen Jargonausdrücke einfach nicht verstehen können.

Durch solche uns unverständlichen Ausdrücke, die bei einem Teil als Witze belacht werden, entsteht unsichtbar eine Wand zwischen Juden und Nichtjuden, die man heute besonders als unnötig empfindet, zumal wenn man im Kabarett sitzt.

Aus diesem Gesichtswinkel heraus handelt der Zentralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens klug daran, den jüdischen Witz im Kabarett zu bekämpfen, weil hier besonders die Voraussetzungen gegeben sind, Haß, Parteilansicht und Uneinigkeit in die Stimmung des Kabarets zu tragen.

Dazu kommt, daß der Witz über den Juden so abgestanden ist. Schon Heinrich Heine sagte zu seiner Zeit, daß die einzigen Witze, die man ungestraft in Deutschland machen dürfe, die „gegen die Leute des Alten Testaments gerichtet“ seien.

Die eigentlichen Schuldigen aber sind — diejenigen jüdischen Elemente selbst, die an dem Erzählen jüdischer Witze ihr Gefallen bekunden und damit ihre Glaubensgenossen unter den Komikern aufzuern, mehr davon zu erzählen.

In diesem jüdischen Witz ist jedoch mehr Gift als — Segen und Heilung, darum werden wir auch als Nichtjuden ihn ablehnen müssen, umso mehr, als vom künstlerischen Standpunkt aus diese Art Witze in einem gut geleiteten Kabarett gar keine Existenzberechtigung hat.

die Humoristen, ein- oder zweimal im Jahr zu gegenseitiger Aussprache zusammenzubringen.

An den Bierabenden in meiner Wohnung, wo sich wöchentlich die großen Komiker Berlins vereinigten, gab es jedesmal neue Überraschungen.

Unvergeßlich, als eines Tages Max Adalbert neben Karl Valentin zu sitzen kam und wir anderen, über zwanzig Kollegen, gespannt waren, wie diese Begegnung zwischen dem wohl berlinischsten Komiker und dem melancholischen Humoristen Bayerns verlaufen würde.

Nun, es geschah gar nichts. Valentin nahm überhaupt keine Notiz von Adalbert. Ich weiß nicht, ob er nichts mit ihm anzufangen wußte oder ob er es bewußt tat. Adalbert rannte mit dem größten Geschütz gegen die bajuwarischen Mauern an, aber sie hielten eisern stand. Bis dann unser Max die Waffen streckte und Valentin Valentin sein ließ.

Unvergeßlich auch die Nachtvorstellung zum Andenken an Harry Lambertz-Paulsen, der nichts hinterließ als seine bezaubernde Frau, für die wir diese Vorstellung im Luxor-Palast in Berlin vor einem erlesenen Publikum machten.

Der Höhepunkt war der Seemannschoral, den Lambertz-Paulsen mit Paul Westermcier, Viktor Schwanneke und mir 1923 in Peter Sachsens »Karussell« kreiert hatte. Seinen Part sang in jener Nacht Heinrich George und beschwor noch einmal die Erinnerung an Harry herauf, dessen skurriler Humor einmalig war.

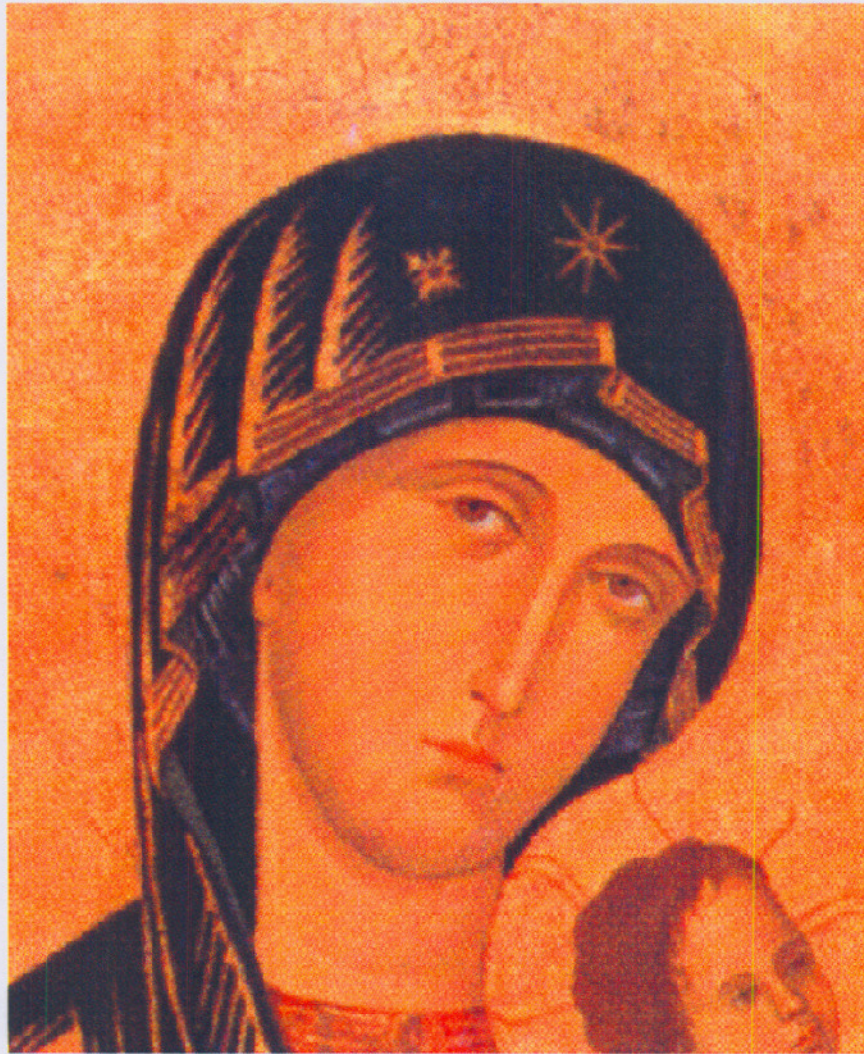
Wie sollte ich vergessen, daß eines Tages Lambertz-Paulsen und Westermcier mich in einen Kaschemmenkeller mitnahmen, in eine der berühmtesten Spelunken, wo dem ehrsamem Bürger nichts getan wurde,

Annexure No. 29



Marlene Dietrich in 1962

Annexure No. 30



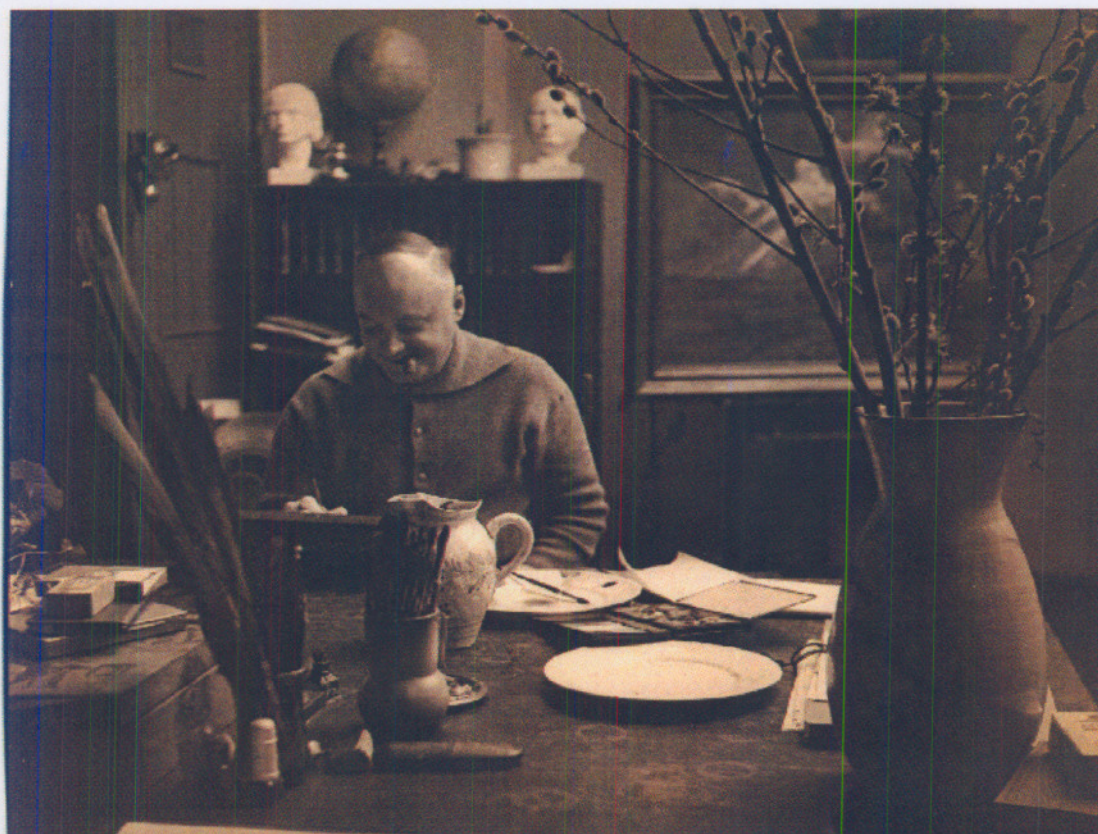
Icon of the Madonna

Annexure No. 31



Hilde and Paul at the Simmel Ball

Annexure No. 32



**Paul Simmel in his Berlin studio
(Note the busts of Paul Simmel and Hilde Gert on the cabinet in
the background)**

Annexure No. 33



Aboard the SS Albert Ballin 1929, the actress Lotte Werdmeisster, sitting between Lucie and Hilde

S. S. "ALBERT BALLIN"

Mr. Bruno Rothschild	Miss Mary D. Sternberg
Mrs. Bruno Rothschild	Dr. Leopold Stokowski
Master Robert S. Rothschild	Mrs. Leopold Stokowski
Master Walter S. Rothschild	Miss Luba Stokowski
Mr. Heinrich Röttges	Miss Sonia Stokowski
Mr. S. Rummelsberg	Mr. Paul Stollreither
Mrs. S. Rummelsberg	Mr. Simon Strauss
	Mrs. Simon Strauss
Mr. Daniel Sachs	Mr. Samuel W. Sturm
Mrs. Sophie Schenk	Mrs. Samuel W. Sturm
Mrs. Amanda Schlesinger	Mrs. A. Suderov
Mr. Hugo N. Schloss	Miss Miriam Suderov
Mrs. Hugo N. Schloss	Mrs. Harry L. Swarts
Miss Marian Schloss	
Mr. H. Schmitt	Dr. Alfred Teves
Mrs. H. Schmitt	Mr. Heinz Teves
Mr. Max Schuchardt	
Mr. Louis Schwarzenberg	Miss Eugenia Vanderveer
Mrs. Louis Schwarzenberg	Mrs. von Veltheim
Mrs. Emma Seifert	Miss von Veltheim
Prof. Paul Simmel	
Mrs. Paul Simmel	Dr. Charlton Wallace
Miss Nellie M. Smith	Mrs. Charlton Wallace
Mr. Max Sobel	Mr. M. Wallbroehl
Mrs. Max Sobel	Mr. Wm. English Walling
Miss Sommer	Mr. J. H. Weil
Miss Mina Sonntag	Mrs. J. H. Weil
Miss Gretchen Sparenberg	Mrs. Harry Weiler
Mrs. Helen M. Spear	Miss Maria D. Werner
Mr. Helmut Stein	Mr. James Wilson
Mr. Julius Stein	Mrs. James Wilson
Mrs. Julius Stein	Dr. Anton Wimmer
Mrs. A. H. Steinbrecher	Mrs. A. J. Wright
Mr. J. Hervey Sternberg	Mrs. Gertrud Wüstenhofer
Mrs. J. Hervey Sternberg	
Master Solon A. Sternberg	
Master Quentin C. Sternberg	

LISTE DER REISENDEN DER ERSTEN KAJÜTE

Frau Agnes Mohrle	Herr Dr. S. Eugene Soskin
Herr Dr. William H. Morley	Herr L. J. Speidel
Frau William H. Morley	Herr Mayer Stearns
Herr Henry Naegeli	Frau Mayer Stearns
Frau Henry Naegeli	Herr Direktor Helmut Stein
Herr W. E. Noyes	Herr Geheimer Regierungsrat Professor Walther Straub
Herr Walter F. Penner	Herr Dr. Alfred Teves
Herr Walter A. Penner	Herr E. S. Townsend
Herr Dr. Friedr. Wilhelm Petersen	Frau E. S. Townsend
Fräulein Florida B. Phillips	Herr Dr. Karl Traetzel
Herr Franz K. Pichler	Herr Dr. Karl Vorländer
Herr B. F. Pincus	Herr Dr. Hans Waldmüller
Herr Generaldirektor Dr. Albert Putsch	Fräulein Sally Wallenstein
Colonel Stewart Roddie	Herr Helmut Walter
Herr Heinrich Röttges	Fräulein Dorothy Weed
Herr Kommerzienrat W. Rüdiger	Herr Erich Weil
Frau Ernst W. Rüdiger	Herr Paul Welles
Herr Hermann Ruhle	Herr E. Karl Wennerlund
Herr Professor Jacko Savitch	Herr Dr. Siegfried G. Werner
Herr Karl Chr. Friedrich Scheerer	Frau Siegfried G. Werner
Herr Albert Scheuer	Herr Hermann Wolfgang
Herr Joseph Schmidt	Frau Gertrud Wüstenhofer
Herr David Siegler	Herr Dr. C. Kurt Wunnenberg
Frau David Siegler	Frau C. Kurt Wunnenberg
Herr Paul Simmel	Herr Allan Van Wyck
Frau Paul Simmel	Frau Allan Van Wyck
	Herr Konsul Andrés Yglesias y Velayos

Section IX Part II

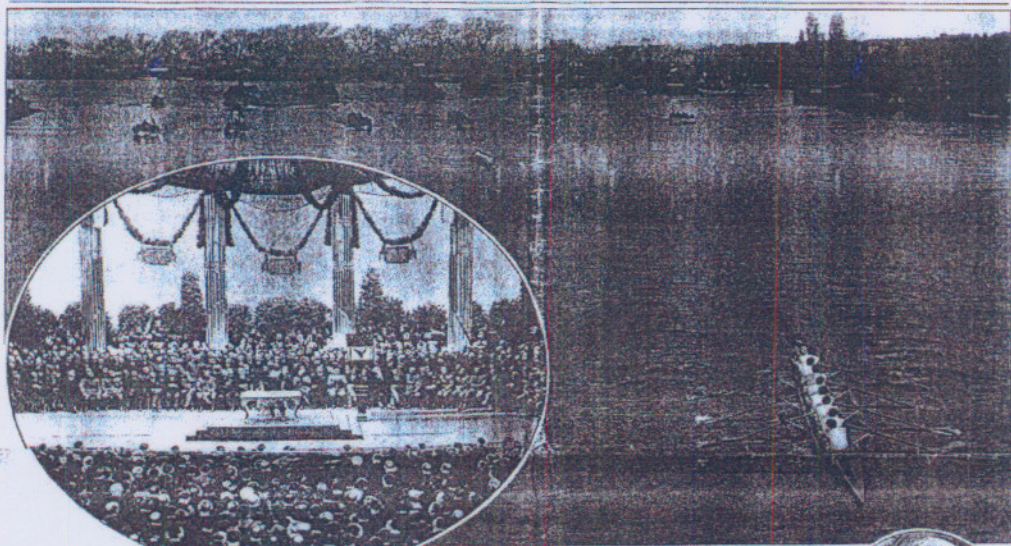
GRAVURE SECTION

NEW YORK Herald Tribune

GRAVURE SECTION

Section IX Part II

SUNDAY, APRIL 14, 1929



SPENCER GODDARD, wearing the costume of a man, is the star of the play, 'The Merchant of Venice', at the Grand Theatre, New York.

WINDY - A BOAT RACE WAS HELD IN THE CENTRAL PARK BOAT CLUB, NEW YORK, SATURDAY. The event was held in honor of the late Albert Einstein, who died on April 18, 1929.



THE CENTRAL PARK BOAT CLUB, NEW YORK, SATURDAY. The event was held in honor of the late Albert Einstein, who died on April 18, 1929.



MISS FLORENCE... a member of the... Albert Einstein... the Central Park Boat Club.



MISS FLORENCE... a member of the... Albert Einstein... the Central Park Boat Club.



MISS FLORENCE... a member of the... Albert Einstein... the Central Park Boat Club.



MISS FLORENCE... a member of the... Albert Einstein... the Central Park Boat Club.

MISS FLORENCE... a member of the... Albert Einstein... the Central Park Boat Club.

GERMAN ARTIST VISITS HERE

Detroit and its people as seen in caricature by a life-long and famous cartoonist of Berlin is on its way to the German city today.

Paul Simmel, who caricatures for the Berlin Illustrated Daily and who is considered Germany's "Bud Fisher," was here yesterday. Accompanying him were his charming wife, Hilda, and Gess Lencen, Germany's foremost radio expert.

Simmel and his wife are here to study the people, the industries and the customs of America, that Simmel might draw of them and send them to Berlin in the hope of further cementing the staunch relations of the two peoples.

Lencen is here on another quest. He is getting patents of American invented and built radios to manufacture them in his native country and distribute them throughout Europe. He has already closed negotiations with one Chicago firm.

The Simmels and Lencen visited the Ford plant at Fordson, the flying fields and other points of interest. Chief among surprises for the party was the concentration of industries here and the city's prosperity.

The Simmels and Lencen had nothing but praise for as much of the United States as they have seen. Mr. Simmel and Mr. Lencen, through interpreters, and Mrs. Simmel in her own native English.

"Mrs. Simmel perhaps expressed the opinion of her husband and Lencen when she clasped her hands together and declared with feeling that she would like to take up her residence here.

16 HEAD LIVE STOCK DESTROYED IN FIRE

RAD AXLE, April 29.—A large barn and 16 head of livestock were destroyed by fire at the Paul Roggenback farm in Moonfield Township. The grainary containing more than 400 bushels of wheat was also destroyed.

Seeing Detroit in Caricature



Germany will see Detroit in caricature through the eyes of its famous cartoonist, Paul Simmel, who made a one-day tour of the city with his pretty wife, Hilda, whom he is shown sketching.

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You Can Remember

when certain Detroit properties could be secured for a song! Communities and business centers are now flourishing where there were vacant fields and lots. Real Estate values will be greater this year than ever before.

See Classifications 90-118
TIMES Classified ADS
Watch Detroit Real Estate in 1929"

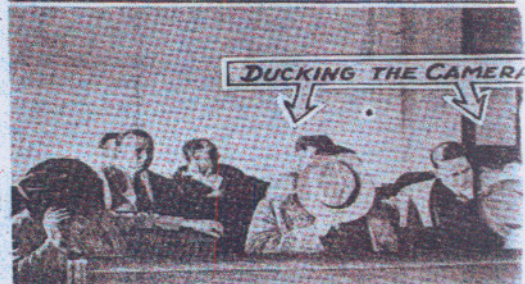
DEATH TAKES DR. BALDWIN

KALAMAZOO, April 29.—Dr. Zell I. Baldwin, 65, for 20 years head of the Baldwin Sanitarium, is dead here today from a complication of diseases. He has been ill for eight months.

Dr. Baldwin was born in Manchester, Mich. He was graduated from the Electric Medical College in Cincinnati and began the practice of medicine in Lawrence, Mich., 40 years ago. He came to Kalamazoo from Niles.

FERNDALE DEFEATS SCHOOL BUILDING PLAN

Ferndale voters defeated yesterday the proposed \$250,000 bond issue to build additions to the Coolidge and the Hardy schools. The bond issue was defeated, 141



Twenty-two blind pig operators faced Justice of the Peace Samuel L. Vreeland (right) in Riverview as a result of the biggest...

Newark in „Paulchens Amerikafahrt“ verewigt Deutschlands berühmtester Karikaturist hier

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„Paulchen“ Simmel, der witzige Zeichner der „Lustigen Blätter“ und „Berliner Illustrierten Zeitung“, der zur Zeit mit seiner Gattin den Ver. Staaten einen Besuch abstattet, machte gestern einen Abstecher nach Newark und traf einen Vertreter der „Freien Zeitung“ im Hause der Verwandten seiner Gattin, Herrn und Frau Harry Kaplan, 296 Walnwright Str.

„Hier ist gut sein; hier lasst uns Hütten bauen,“ meinte er im Hinblick auf Newarks prachtvolle Parkanlagen und malerische Wohnviertel, die seinem Künstlerauge wohlthaten.

„Glauben Sie ja nicht, dass Berlin, wo wir zu Hause sind, ein Ort von ungemischter Freude ist. Ich fühle mich hier viel sicherer, und meine Frau sagt dasselbe. Hier belästigt man keine anständigen Damen auf der Strasse, wie bei uns selbst in der besseren Gegend des Westens am Nollendorf-Platz. Hier wird man nicht von streitsüchtigen Burschen auf der Strasse angerempelt, wie bei uns, wenn man nachts allein ausgeht. Unsere Verbrecher fangen ihre Opfer in raffinierter Weise: Sie utzen einen, dann schlagen sie zu und rauben einen aus. Das hiesige Verbrechertum ist viel anständiger und vernünftiger als die Berliner Gaunerwelt. Aber Sie meinen, ich sollte mit meinem Urteil zurückhalten, bis ich Chicago erlebt habe? Schön, nächste Woche sehen wir uns den dortigen Nachtbetrieb an. Mein Bilderbuch braucht neue Blätter. Ich werde Ihrem Rat folgen und mir die Banditen der Nord Clark-Strasse in mein Skizzenbuch malen. Gewiss, auch „Big Bill“ Thompson, den „Städtebauer“ und Bürgermeister, König Georgs Spezialfreund, hoffe ich im Skizzenbuch zu verewigen.“

„Paulchens Reise nach Amerika“, mit Text und Bildern für die reifere Jugend, wird diesen Sommer in der „Illustrierten“ geschildert sein. Hoffentlich vergisst „Paulchen“ auch Newark nicht, wo er

gestern im gastlichen Hause Kaplan fidele Stunden verlebte, nachdem er eben erst von einer gemütlichen Sitzung mit Ernst Lubitsch, dem grossen Theatermann, der in New York Sänger für eine neue Operette engagiert, nach dem Hotel Astor zurückgekehrt war.

Während das scheussliche Regenwetter den ursprünglichen Plan vereitelte, dem geschätzten Gast die hervorragendsten Persönlichkeiten im öffentlichen Leben Newarks vorzustellen, zeigte Herr Simmel, dass er mit offenem Auge und ungetrübtem Blick die Wunderlichkeiten dieses Landes sicher erfasst. Seine nach Tausenden zählenden Freunde in zwei Weltteilen werden erfahren, dass er bereits, mit Hüftenflasche bewaffnet, das „Gesellschaftsleben“ der sogenannten vornehmen Welt in seiner bizarren Komik mit erlebt hat. Er hofft auch, in Washington dem Gesandten Siams zu begegnen, wenn er auf seinem berühmten weissen Elefanten reitend, einen Schnapslieferungszug unter dem Schutze der Fahne seines Sultans vom Baltimorer Hafen nach der Landeshauptstadt bringt.

Seine liebreizende und kluge kleine Frau führte in der Unterredung mit dem Berichterstatter der „Freien Zeitung“ das Wort, wenn „Paulchen“, bescheiden, wie er ist, von seinen eigenen Taten und Plänen nichts verraten wollte. Frau Hilde findet Newark reizend und möchte am liebsten gleich hier bleiben. „Man kann nicht wissen,“ sagte sie, „vielleicht sagt mein Mann nicht nein, wenn man versucht, ihn später ganz herüber zu bringen. Der Amerikaner schätzt grotesken Humor. Mein Mann würde ein lohnendes Feld für seine spassigen Einfälle in Dollarika finden. Vielleicht sehen wir uns bald wieder.“

Die Herrschaften besuchen noch Detroit und Chicago und gedenken im Mai mit dem „Albert Ballin“ die Heimreise anzutreten.

Annexure No. 39



Hilde's "salon" in Charlottenburg, Berlin

Annexure No. 40



The actress Grete Weiser

Annexure No. 41



**Press Ball 1920, Hilde Gert, Paul Morgan, Alice Heye, Paul Simmel
(Others unknown)**

digkeit umfiel, war er dennoch kackmunter, sobald er daheim anlangte. Meist wandelte er zu Fuß – um das nächste Feuilleton zu entwerfen und aus Sparsamkeit. Zweimal wöchentlich trafen wir uns. Ich lernte viel von ihm, hab' aber alles vergessen.

Andere Abende, die eigentlich Simmel gehörten, wurden durch die Gegenwart so vieler von Paule eingeladenener Schmarotzer getrübt, daß ich mich nach der Handjerystraße in Friedenau aufmachen mußte, um den Lümmel für mich zu haben. Er war Urberliner mit kessem Mundwerk und flottem Zeichenstift, in puncto Bildung das Gegenteil von Auburtin, allzu rasch zu Geld gekommen, auf Genüsse erpicht. Hatte große Rosinen im Kopf. Amerika. Eines Morgens klemmte er seine Frau untern Arm und machte sich auf gen New York. Mit klitzekleinen Rosinen kam er wieder, bezog eine schneie Wohnung gleich links vom Kudamm und quälte sich mit seinem Diabetes. Auch das Zeichnen machte ihm keinen Spaß mehr. So schied er denn aus dem Leben. Bleibendes hat er nicht hinterlassen, aber (wie Walter Trier, der von Kossatz fortgesetzt ward) einen neuen Stil. Olaf Iversen galt als sein legitimer Erbe. Als Paule starb, erblickten die Leute auf der Tauentzien und gafften der an einem dekorativen Hund befestigten Witwe nach, die so todschick war, daß es auch abgebrühten Naturen die Sprache verschlug. Ich kannte sie, als sie Hilde Csapski hieß. Ich kannte sie als Hilde Gert. Ich kannte sie als Frau Simmel. Memoiren schreiben heißt: bedauern, daß man soviel verschweigen muß. Hilde, was wärest du für ein feines Kapitel!

Es tat sich was in Berlin. Vier Wochen sind ein Dreck. Vor und nach meiner Tätigkeit im „Karussell“ war ich zum Kaffee oder zum Mitternachtstrunk bei Max Herrmann (ein paar Häuser rechts von der „Secession“, Rückgebäude), bei Siegfried Jacobsohn, bei Tucholsky, bei Memme Mehring und Sohn, bei Alfred Richard Munkepunkte, beim Trüffelschwein Franz Blei oder beim alten Zille.

Da stand unten „H. Zille. Lithograph“, und oben in der vierten Etage öffnete er eigenhändig die Tür. Ich will den Fackelträger-Verlag, der den Seligen auferstehen ließ, nicht neidisch machen, aber von allen Publikationen die saftigste und gemütlichste ist in meinem Besitz. Als ich wissen wollte, ob das Schild im Hausflur noch Gültigkeit habe, brachte Zille eine Mappe mit Lithos zum Vorschein und kolorierte wohl eine Stunde lang an ihnen herum, während wir schwatzten. Das Werk heißt „Die Landpartie“. Es soll außer meinem noch ein paar Exemplare gehen. Zille hat sie gegen Dollars nach USA verscheuert. Was die da drüben mit dem

Das Plakat „Nie wieder Krieg!“ (nach einem Litho von Käthe Kollwitz) ward von Th. Th. Heine überboten durch ein Simplbild „Nie wieder Erdbeben!“

Am 1. November 1897 öffnete das „Astoria“ seine Pforten — in New York.

Am 1. März 1924 öffnete das „Astoria“ seine Pforten — in Frankfurt am Main, in der Kaiserstraße, die zu einer Friedrich-Ebert-Straße geworden ist. Unten befand sich ein Café, oben das Cabaret, dessen Leitung ich übernommen hatte, dem Wunsche des Mitinhabers Ernst Löbl folgend.

Im März war allabendlich ausverkauft; am 1. April (ich erwähnte es schon) kam kein einziger Besucher; im übrigen konnten wir nicht klagen. Engagiert hatte ich: Hilde Gert (die kesse Di-seuse), Dela Behren (vom Leipziger Schauspielhaus; sie war eine Zierde der „Retorte“ gewesen), Lily Freud-Marlé (verwandt mit Sigmund, dem Großen; Gattin des am Hamburger Schauspielhaus tätigen Arnold Marlé; Interpretin Rabindranath Takkürs, mit dem sie Vortragsreisen absolvierte), Tatjana Barbakoff (die aparte, in kostbaren Gewändern einhergleitende Tänzerin), den Chansonnier Marcel Boissier (Tatjanas Ehemann), einige sehr unterschiedliche Dichter und Schriftsteller (den Dr. Noder, der als A. de Nora zum Stab der „Jugend“ gehörte; den aus Frankfurt stammenden Dichter Karlchen Ettlinger, der im Bankgeschäft Oppenheimer anfang und sich nun ebenfalls bei der „Jugend“ betätigte; den Freiherrn von Schlicht, der eigentlich Wolf Graf von Baudissin hieß und pausenlos Militärhumoresken von sich gab, die sämtlich bei Albert Langen erschienen, und selbstverständlich den Seemann Ringelnatz aus Wurzen). Außerdem, weil ich Einakterchen aufführen ließ, den beliebtesten Mimen des von Arthur Hellmer geleiteten Neuen Theaters (Max Reimann hatte inzwischen mit Hanns Merck das „Intime“ in Nürnberg übernommen): den molligen, quicken, blubbernden Komiker Otto Wallburg, dessen Kredit beim Publikum (seit „Hugos Hochzeit“) erstaunlich gewachsen war. Er ging dann bald mit seinem Direktor nach Berlin. Während jedoch Hellmer an der Spree keinen Blumentopf erbeutete, entwickelte sich Otto (neben Max Adalbert, Max Ehrlich, Szöke Szakall, Julius Falkenstein, Guido Thielscher) zum Spitzenkomiker Berlins. Er landete als Filmstar und bei Max Reinhardt. Als die Nazis kamen, versuchte er, Unterschlupf in der Schweiz zu finden, erhielt aber keine Asylbewilligung. Er ist verschollen, sein Name wird nirgends erwähnt . . . ein Schicksal, das

Annexure No. 44



Benno Czapski's grave site at *Weissensee Cemetery*, Berlin

Annexure No.45



Berliner Verkehr. Pariser Platz, Hotel Adlon.

Adlon Hotel, Berlin

61/52 IV 597.33

PAUL SIMMEL

174828

4. 58. An. Haupt- u. Grundbesitz- u. Vermögensverteilung, am 14. Dec 1933
BERLIN - ERLAUBUNG
HERR WINTERFELDT & CO.

Berlin - Erlaubung 9
den 16. März 1933.

Mein letzter Wille

Ich mit bestem Willen, im Vollbesitz meiner geistigen Kräfte, dass bei Eintritt meines Todes, meine gesamten Rechte auf Testament, Verfügung auf Beteiligung an Erbschaft, nach Erbschaftsgesetz des Reiches in verschiedenen Verlagsverhältnissen etc. der deutschen Kriegsblinden - Stiftung für Land, Meer und Flotte Berlin - Bürgerversicherung etc.

Ferner bestimme ich, da ich bei der Kaiserlichen Lebensversicherung a. G. mit 50.000 M. in Werten; fünfzigtausend Mark versichert bin, diese Versicherungssumme nach Ablauf meines gesamten Lebens, vor allem bei Verlegen (ca 18.000 M.) bei Keldern) meinen Besorgungskosten, Gebüh. etc. der deutschen Kriegsblinden Stiftung für Land, Meer und Flotte Berlin Bürgerversicherung etc.

Folgende Schulden sind von der Versicherungssumme abzuziehen:

- Es bekommen:
- Das Landvolk und Handwerker Institut in Berlin - Hansa Kuratorium 11 - 1000 M. in Werten;
- Einzelne Abgabe des Dr. Jaencke Obmann des Handwerker Institut in Brandenburg 700 M. in Werten
- Einhundert Mark
- meiner langjährige Mitarbeiterin Karl Wöhe in Berlin Postbank-Konto 35 - 3000 M. in Werten. A

Dieser Wille ist im Original bei der deutschen Kriegsblinden Stiftung für Land, Meer und Flotte Berlin - Bürgerversicherung etc. hinterlegt. Die Kopie ist hier abgeschrieben. Berlin den 16. März 1933. Dr. Winterfeldt & Co.

Last Will and Testament of Paul Simmel

174828

Dreitausend Mark!

Zahnarzt Dr. Kurt Wierstra in Berlin
Königin - Straße, Postfach 468 300 Mk. in Noten: Dreihundert
Meine Dienstmädchen Stini und Lisa Köster je
150 Mk. in Noten Einhundert und fünfzig
Mk. zusammen also 300 Mark.
Kaufmann Albert Wimmel, Berlin - Neukölln
Länderstr. 9 - 300 Mk. in Noten: Dreihundert
Mark.

(Die Möbel meiner Wohnung sollen von
einem gerichtlich Inzulassenen Statistiker
versteigert und der Erlös dafür dem Herrn
Witt angeordnet werden (Haus mit No. Haus
Reichstr. 4)

Meine beiden Kraftwagen sollen ebenfalls
durch den geforderten Statistiker gegen
Kaufgeld verkauft, oder versteigert werden. Der
Erlös ist ebenfalls meinem jetzigen Hausbe-
sitzer (Herrn Herr Wallewisch) zu übergeben.
Wenn meine Marktschulden aber, von der Lebens-
versicherungsumme angeordnet werden, fällt der Erlös
für Kraftwagen und Mobilien an ^{die} übergenannten
Hilfsblindenschiiftung.)

(Meine gesamten Originalurkunden soll mein
Mittelsohn Karl Wille Postfach 35.)

Herrn Wallewischs Name ist Postfach 35
Older Straße Reichstr. 47, der sich seine Neu-
schriften in Gegenwart auch von der Wallewisch-
Stimme ablesen kann.

Selbst geschrieben und unterschrieben

Paul Simonel
Berlin - Charlottenburg, Reichstr. 4 am
16. März 1933. 2

Annexure No. 47

Berlin-Charlottenburg 9
16 March 1933

My Last Will

I herewith declare that I am in full possession of my mental faculties and that at my death all my rights to royalties, rights to books published and yet to be published should devolve upon the German War Blind Foundation for Land and Sea, 27 Burg Street. Further, I declare that I am insured with the Karlsruher Insurance Company (AG) for 50 000 Mark (Fifty Thousand Mark) and that the amount accruing after deduction of my various debts, advances from publishers, funeral expenses, tombstone, etc, I bequeath to the German War Blind Foundation for Land and Sea.

The following debts are to be deducted from the amount realized from the Insurance Policy.

The Hubertus Sanatorium and Nursing Home, 11 Kur Street, Schlachtensee, 1000 Mark.

Dr Saewerde, Senior Doctor of the Hubertus, Nursing Home, Schlachtensee, 100 Mark.

My loyal assistant Karl Nätke, 35 Proskauer Street, Berlin, the amount of 3000 Mark.

The dentist Dr Kurt Wienecke, 8 Queen Augusta Street, the amount of 300 Mark.

My maids Anni and Lisa Rösler, the amount of 150 Mark each, that is 300 Mark.

My chauffeur Albert Münzel, 9 Laub Street, Berlin-Neuköln, the amount of 300 Mark.

The household furniture is to be auctioned by a court-accredited auctioneer and the amount realized be paid to the landlord of 4 Reich Street.

The two automobiles should likewise be sold for the highest price by the court-accredited auctioneer, or should be auctioned. The amount realized should be paid to the landlord. If however in the event of the rental for the apartment having been paid in full from the insurance policy, then any monies accruing from the sale should be paid to the German War Blind for Land and Sea.

All by original drawings are bequeathed to my assistant Karl Nätke (35 Proskauer Street).

I name attorney Otto Werda, 47 Gledit...(?) Street, executor of my estate. His expenses and fees should be subtracted from the amount received from the insurance policy.

Written and signed, Paul Simmel, Berlin-Charlottenburg 9, 16 March 1933.

(On the side) Should the aforementioned War Blind Foundation not wish to accept this donation, then the amount from the insurance policy should be divided equally between Dr Saewerde of the Hubertus Nursing Home, and Dr Kurt Wienecke, 8 Queen Augusta Street, Berlin, 16 March, 1933.



Newspaper cutting Re: Simmel's funeral

Annexure No. 49

Stiftung Brandenburgische
Gedenkstätten

Gedenkstätte
und Museum
Sachsenhausen



Straße der Nationen 22
16515 Oranienburg
Telefon: 03301 / 200 - 0
Telefax: 03301 / 81 09 28
gums@brandenburg.de

Gedenkstätte und Museum Sachsenhausen Straße der Nationen 22 16515 Oranienburg

Frau
Vera Mecl
PO Box 46148
Orange grove 2119

Sudafrika

Bearbeiter:

Telefon: 03301 / 200 -

Telefax: 03301 / 200 -

Aktenzeichen:

Datum:

2-10/10
Oranienburg, 29.10.2001

Sehr geehrte Frau Mecl,

nach der Recherche im Archiv kann ich Ihnen auf Ihre Anfrage nach Ihrem Onkel Felix Sachs folgendes mitteilen.

Felix Sachs wurde am 21. Juni 1938 mit der Häftlingsnummer 3762 ins KZ Sachsenhausen eingeliefert. Zuletzt war er im Block 40 untergebracht, bevor er am 18. Januar 1940 um 10.15 Uhr verstarb. Als Todesursache wird Körperschwäche angegeben.

Weitere Angaben über seinen Aufenthalt im KZ Sachsenhausen liegen uns leider nicht vor.

Der Großteil aller Akten der Kommandantur des KZ Sachsenhausen einschließlich der Häftlingskartei sind von der SS im Frühjahr 1945 noch vor der Befreiung des KZ vernichtet worden. Die wenigen, unvollständig erhalten gebliebenen Akten befinden sich zum größten Teil in Archiven der Russischen Föderation. Anhand von Kopien aus diesen Archiven erstellen wir eine Häftlingsnamenskartei, in der bis jetzt Häftlingsdaten aus erhalten gebliebenen Veränderungsmeldungen von 1936-1942 und 1944 erfasst wurden. Besonders ab dem Jahre 1940 wird das Material immer lückenhafter.

Mit freundlichen Grüßen
Im Auftrag

M. Liebscher
Monika Liebscher
Archiv

Anlagen

Spendenkonto:
Hypo Vereinsbank Oranienburg
Konto Nr. 301 79 07
BLZ 100 208 90

Bankverbindung:
Hypo Vereinsbank Oranienburg
Konto Nr. 301 78 77
BLZ 100 208 90

Letter indicating Prisoner No. and date of death



Lilian Koch und die englische Schauspielerin Mrs. Craig im Park von Herbolzheim. Selbst. Expedition in Schwaben.



Fräulein Hilde Simmel, die Gattin des verstorbenen Reichs-Postinspektors Post-Simmel. Von Fräulein S. Schmitt.

AUTO-POTPOURRI

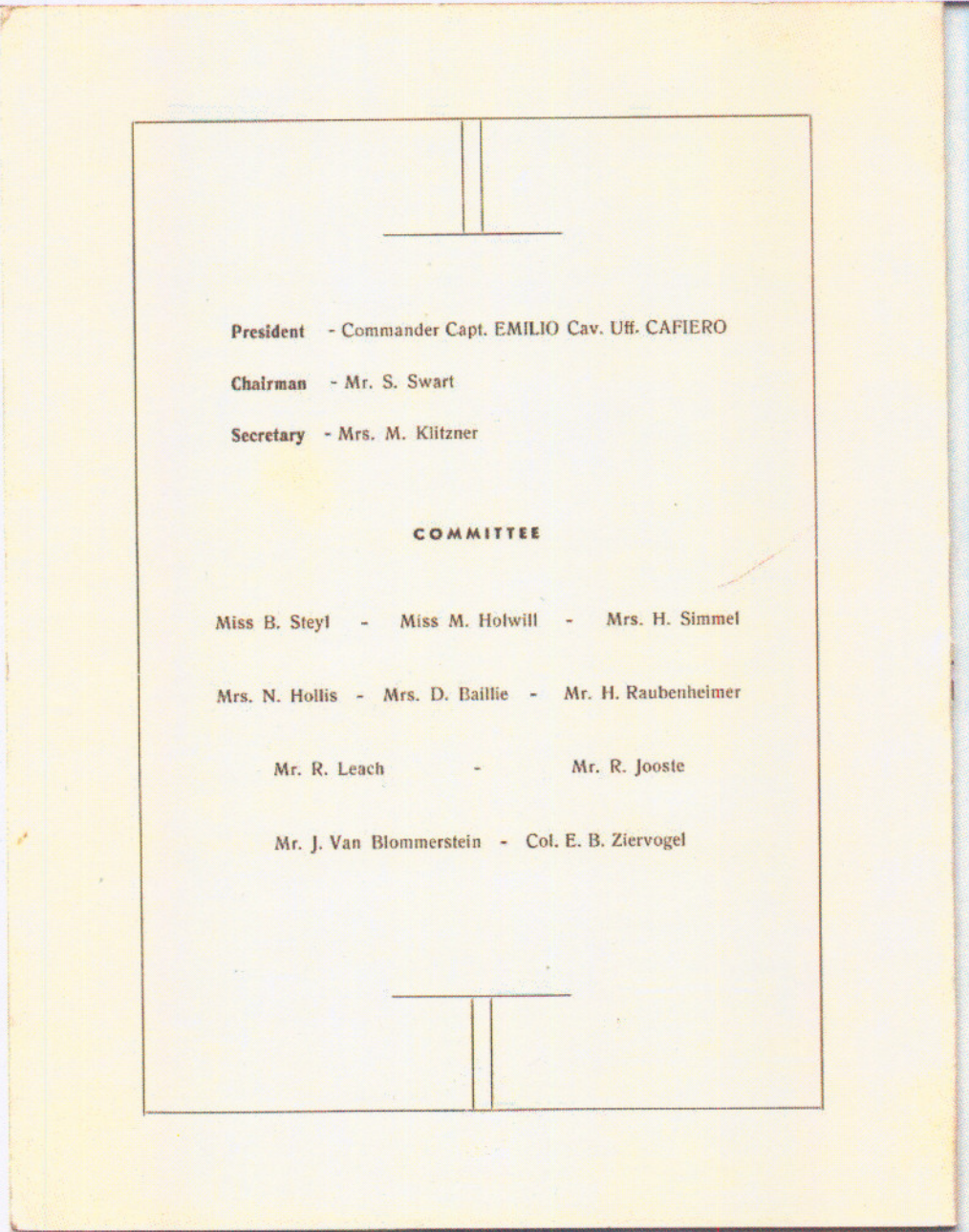
Eine neue Auto-Schau.

(Fortsetzung von Seite 17.)

Besonders wenn sie nicht einzeln von Hand bedient, sondern von einer Zentrale aus eine Rücksicht auf die jeweilige Verkehrs-dichte zu ganz bestimmten Zeitintervallen auf Grün, Gelb oder Rot eingeschaltet werden, den individuell regelbaren Verkehrs-Schloß nicht ersetzen. Es gibt vielfach unnötige Störungen und ärgerlichen Aufenthalt bei der automatischen Regelung nach Schema V. Oft müssen Wagen vor einem Verkehrs-signal stoppen, obwohl in der Querrichtung weit und breit keine Fahrzeug zu sehen ist, das übergeben werden möchte. Ein amerikanischer Ingenieur hat nun eine Konstruktion erdacht, um die zentrale und starre Verkehrs-regelung überall dort anschalten zu können, wo der Verkehr es zutrifft. Und zwar übernimmt mit Hilfe dieser Erfindung der Automobilist selbst die Rolle des Verkehrs-beamten. Diese ideale Lösung des Problems würde durch akustisch gesteuerte Lichtsignale erzielt. Der dazu notwendige Apparat besteht im wesentlichen aus einem Mikrophon, das mit die am nächsten Nähe abgegebenen Ton-signalen reagiert und die Lichtzeichen mit-

**Hilde on board her boat moored at Wannsee, Berlin
with her dog Uschi von Brigitteneck**

Annexure No. 52



SS Giulio Cesare Passenger Entertainment Committee

Hilde and Paul at the Simmel Ball

Annexure No. 53



in *Reynolds & Reynolds* photo
Nov. 1930

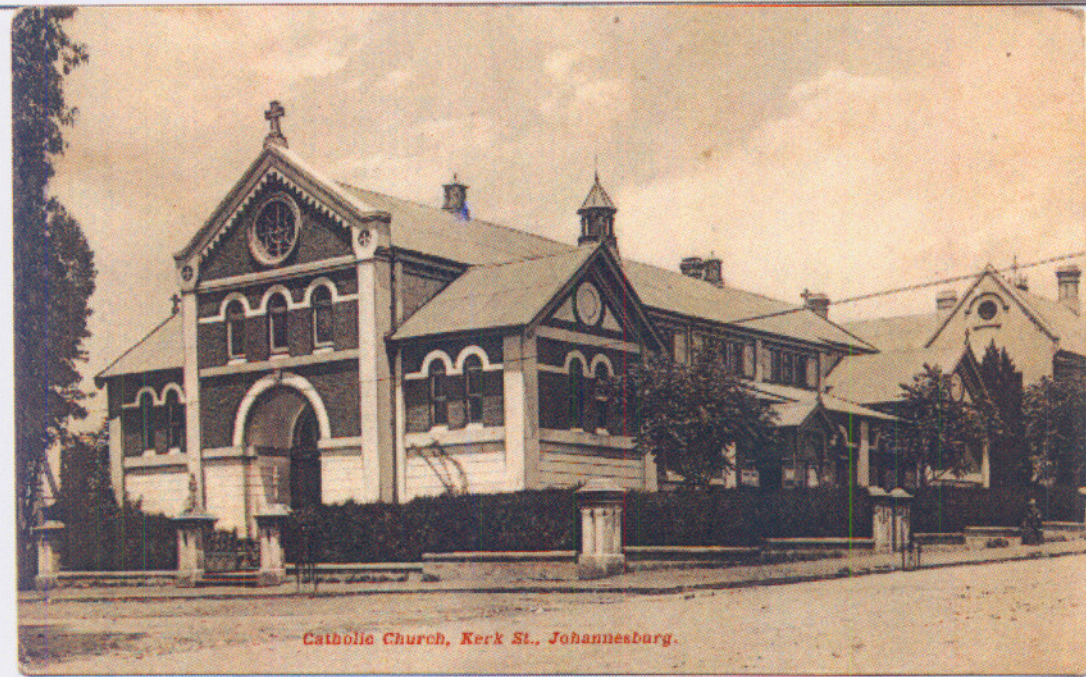
Lucie Hugo on her toes

Annexure No. 55



Edi Mecl, photograph by Studio Pietruszka, Johannesburg

Annexure No. 56



Pro-Cathedral, Kerk Street, Johannesburg

Annexure No. 57

Dr. jur. Ernst Dahlmann

Rechtsanwalt und Notar

Fernsprecher: 91 47 67

Postcheckkonto: Berlin-West 40 30

Berlin W 15, den 25.9.1952

Kurfürstendamm 224 "

Liebe Hilde!

Bei meiner Rückkehr vom Urlaub fand ich zu meiner Freude Deinen Brief vom 9.v.Mts. vor. Ich komme daher erst jetzt zu einer Beantwortung, da Du sicherlich schon auf eine solche gewartet hast

Ich danke Dir herzlich für das liebe Gedenken, das Du mir bewahrt hast. Frau Erna Quilecki hatte mir schon vor kurzem geschrieben, dass Du bei gutem Wohlergehen bist, und Dein Brief bestätigt es zum Glück.

Wenn Du einen Bericht darüber erwartest, wie es mir, seitdem Du Berlin verliessest, ergangen ist, wird es mir sehr schwer, Dir einen solchen zu senden, da die Erinnerung an die letzten 15 Jahre bedrückend ist und ich sie mit gutem Erfolg aus meinem Bewusstsein verdrängt habe. Ich habe den Krieg mit heiler Haut überstanden. Alles andere ist draufgegangen. Während der ganzen Kriegszeit war ich in Berlin, und ich habe die Schrecken und Ängste der Bombennächte durchgemacht. Aus der Dir bekannten Wohnung in der Herwarthstrasse verzog ich 1941 in die Tiergartenstrasse in eine Wohnung, wie sie nicht schöner sein konnte. Am 22. November 1943 wurde sie durch Brandbomben total vernichtet, ohne dass irgend etwas gerettet werden konnte. Ich bezog eine neue Wohnung am Kurfürstendamm. Im Kampf um Berlin, der auf dem Kurfürstendamm wie auf einem Schlachtfeld tobte, flog gegen die Fassade des Hauses ein explodierender Stalin-Panzer, der es in volle Flammen setzte, so dass mir zum zweiten Male eine Wohnung mit Büro total verloren ging. Ich musste froh sein, auf der Flucht aus dem brennenden Hause wenigstens mein Leben vor den umherschwirrenden Kugeln retten zu können. Ich zog dann für einige Zeit in das Hotel am Zoo, wurde dann in eine verlassene, jedoch teilzerstörte Wohnung im Hause, wo die Gaststätte Lauer ist, eingewiesen. Seit 2 Jahren wohne ich in einem der neu aufgebauten Häuser am Kurfürstendamm Ecke Meinekestrasse. Auch die Nachkriegszeit war mit ihren Nöten und Entbehrungen sehr hart. Die härteste Zeit, die ich jedoch durchgemacht habe, war die während der Blockade Berlins. Sie ging am stärksten an die Nerven, da man weder Heizung noch Licht noch irgend welche frischen Lebensmittel

Letter from Dahlmann dd 25 September 1952

Annexure No. 57

- 2 -

hatte. Du kannst jedoch unbesorgt darüber sein, dass ich alle diese Fähigkeiten wohlbehalten überstanden habe, und es geht mir in allem so gut, dass ich mir nichts zu versagen brauche. Allerdings wird das Leben in Berlin zunehmend reizloser, da die Misere mehr und mehr zunimmt.

Ein harter Schicksalsschlag hat mich dadurch getroffen, dass meine liebe Frau vor 2 Jahren von mir ging. Nach der Operation an der Schilddrüse hatte sie die Kriegszeit ausserhalb Berlins ganz gut überstanden. Die Nachkriegszeit griff sie jedoch wieder zu sehr an und sie erlitt einen Schlaganfall mit einer schweren Lähmung, von der sie nach einer kurzen Leidenszeit erlöst wurde.

Ich war 4 Wochen in Bad Gastein und Süddeutschland, wo ich gute Erholung hatte. Ein Zuckerleiden, das sich als Folge nervlicher Überbeanspruchung entwickelt hat, muss ich durch strenge Diätdisziplin bekämpfen, und es ist mir gottlob bisher gelungen, Insulin nicht nötig zu haben.

Wenn meine Gedanken bei Dir weilten, habe ich auch stets Deiner lieben Mutter gedacht, von der ich jetzt aus Deinem Brief erfuhr, dass sie auch schon vor vielen Jahren dahingegangen ist. Ich weiss, wie schwer Dich dieser Verlust getroffen hat. Deinem Brief habe ich jedoch zu meiner Freude ersehen, dass Du glücklich verheiratet bist und Dir das Glück, eine liebe Tochter zu haben, beschieden ist.

Von alten gemeinsamen Bekannten kann ich nur berichten, dass Paul Devant und seine Frau wohlauf sind. Es ging ihm in den ersten Nachkriegsjahren geschäftlich - er handelte mit billigen Schmucksachen - sehr gut. Seit der Währungsreform und der Abschnürung Westberlins von der sowjetischen Zone ist das Geschäft fast zum Stillstand gekommen. Kürzlich erzählte er mir, dass er Arbeitslosenunterstützung beziehe. Er ist jetzt auch entsprechend miserlich heruntergekommen. Seine Frau hat es bei ihm nicht immer leicht gehabt, denn er ist doch häufig ein sehr schwieriger und absonderlicher Mensch, der sie auch nicht immer liebevoll behandelt hat. Immerhin ist sie stets geduldig gewesen und hat sie vielleicht in ihrer grossen Zuneigung zu ihm nicht allzu sehr darunter gelitten. Der Freund von Erna Minzer Herr Diesing betreibt einen kleinen Tuchhandel, und es geht ihm anscheinend leidlich.

Alle Stätten, mit denen Dich wohl eine angenehme Erinnerung verbindet, sind in Trümmer gegangen. Peltzer's Atelier und Weiss Csarda, wo wir so oft saßen, sind total zerstört.

- 3 -

Annexure No. 57

- 3 -

Ebenso gegenüber dem Eden-Hotel das Haus, in welchem Du wohntest. Dort ist in weitem Umkreis eine öde Fläche. Jedoch steht noch das Haus in der Rankestrasse gegenüber Miericke, das so manche gute Erinnerung bei mir wachruft.

Als Zeichen dafür, wie das Gedenken an Paul Simmel fortlebt und gepflegt wird, lege ich einen Zeitungsartikel mit einer Zeichnung von der Karikaturisten-Voll-Sitzung bei, in der sein Bild den Ehrenplatz hat.

Ich hatte kürzlich Besuch von einem Wollhändler aus Capstadt, der mir eingehende Schilderungen über die Lebensverhältnisse in Johannesburg machte. Wenn auch bei manchem Emigranten ein Heimweh zurück nach Berlin wachgeworden ist, das jedoch keinen Sinn hat, da das frühere Berlin hoffnungslos untergegangen ist, hört man doch auch manchmal von Fällen, in denen die Emigration jemandem zum Glücke gereicht hat. Dass Du nach Johannesburg gegangen bist, ist in diesem Sinne sicherlich gut gewesen. Aber ich

- 4 -

Annexure No. 57

- 4 -

hoffe, dass auch die anderen Umstände Deines Lebens jetzt so sind, dass Dir zum Glücke gereicht hat, was zunächst ein hartes Schicksal zu sein schien.

Leider kann ich Dir mit einem gewünschten Bild nicht dienen, da ich nur schreckliche Passbilder habe. Im übrigen höre ich manchmal, dass ich genau so aussehe, wie vor 15 Jahren vermutet wurde, dass ich nach 15 Jahren so aussehen würde. Nur das Körpergewicht ist um etwa 6-8 Pfund leichter geworden infolge der harten Diätdisziplin, die ich halte. Ich durchbreche sie lediglich, wenn ich einen künstlichen Schoppen genieße, wie wir es so oft gemeinsam taten. Auch heute Abend werde ich auf Dein gutes Wohl wieder einen kräftigen Schoppen trinken.

In diesem Sinne grüßt Dich herzlich
Sunt

Annexure No. 58



Josef Rappaport and business associates on camels in Egypt

Annexure No. 59

Copy for Mrs Meel

Eidesstattliche Versicherung.

Ich, der unterzeichnete

Buehnenleiter und Kabarettist Willi Schaeffers,
wohnhaft in Berlin-Charlottenburg, Sybelstr. 5,

bin mir der Bedeutung einer eidesstattlichen Versicherung
bewusst und versichere die Richtigkeit der nachfolgenden
Angaben an Eides statt:

Ich war in den zwanziger Jahren in Berlin und Muenchen
beruflich taetig. In Berlin trat ich haeufig im "Kabarett der
der Komiker" auf, in Muenchen trat ich in der Kleinkunstbuehne
"Bonbonniere" auf, deren kuenstlerischer Leiter ich war.

ausgebildet
wurde.

Etwas im Jahre 1922 lernte ich Hildegard Czapski spaeter
Frau Simmel, jetzt Frau Meel in Berlin kennen; ihre Mutter
sagte mir, dass ihre Tochter als Taenzerin und Vortragskuenst-
lerin; ich gewann den Eindruck, dass Fraeulein Czapski sehr
begabt war und bot ihr ein Engagement bei der "Bonbonniere"
in Muenchen an. Damals hielt ich Fraeulein Czapski fuer
etwa 18 Jaehrig. Inzwischen hat mir aber Frau Meel mitgeteilt,
dass sie sich, um ein Engagement zu erhalten, um einige Jahre
aelter gemacht hatte, dass sie also mir ihr wahres Alter
verschwiegen hat.

Meine Erwartungen ueber die kuenstlerische Entwicklung
von Frau Meel haben sich nicht getraeuert. Sie hatte in Muenchen
wo sie unter dem Kuenstlernamen "Hilde Gert" ihre Kuenstler-
laufbahn begann, grossen Erfolg, und ihr Engagement wurde
vielfach veraengert. Ich gebe nach bester Erinnerung an, dass
sie hintereinander fuer etwa 18 Monate bei der "Bonbonniere"
auftrat. Von Muenchen aus wurde sie bei der "Astoria" Buehne
in Frankfurt/Main engagiert.

Ich hoerte einige Zeit spaetdr, dass Fraeulein Czapski den mir
aus Berliner Kuenstlerkreisen bekannten Zeichner Paul Simmel
geheiratet hatte, und dass dieser nicht wuenschte, dass seine
Frau ihre Buehnenlaufbahn fortsetze. Nach dem Tode ihres
Ehemannes wandte sich Frau Simmel an mich mit der Bitte, ihr
bei Engagements behilflich zu sein. Sie gab an, dass sie
ihren Lebensunterhalt selbst verdienen musste und sich ent-
schlossen habe, ihre unterbrochene Kuenstlerlaufbahn wieder
aufzunehmen. Zur damaligen Zeit waren jedoch von dem Minister
Goebbels aus Bestimmungen ergangen, wonach nichtarische
Kuenstler nicht mehr vor deutschem Publikum spielen durften,
sondern nur noch im Rahmen juedischer Unternehmungen fuer ein
juedisches Publikum. Ich konnte daher Frau Meel nicht behilf-
lich sein; soweit ich mich erinnere gelang es ihr nicht, vor
ihrer Auswanderung aus Deutschland eine Anstellung als Vortrage-
kuenstlerin zu finden.

Nach so langer Zeit kann ich nicht mehr mit Bestimmtheit an-
geben, welches Einkommen Frau Meel als Kuenstlerin hatte.
In den Jahren nach der Inflation war das Anfangsgehalt einer
noch unbekanntem Kuenstlerin etwa Mk 600 monatlich und Hilde
Gert quaerfte mit diesem Gehalt in den ersten Monaten angestellt
gewesen sein. Als sie Erfolg hatte, wird ihr Gehalt allmaehlich
auf Mk 900 monatlich gestiegen sein und ich nehme an, dass
sie bei der Astoria Buehne ein solches Gehalt verdient hat.

Affidavit provided by Willi Schaeffers (original in Berlin)

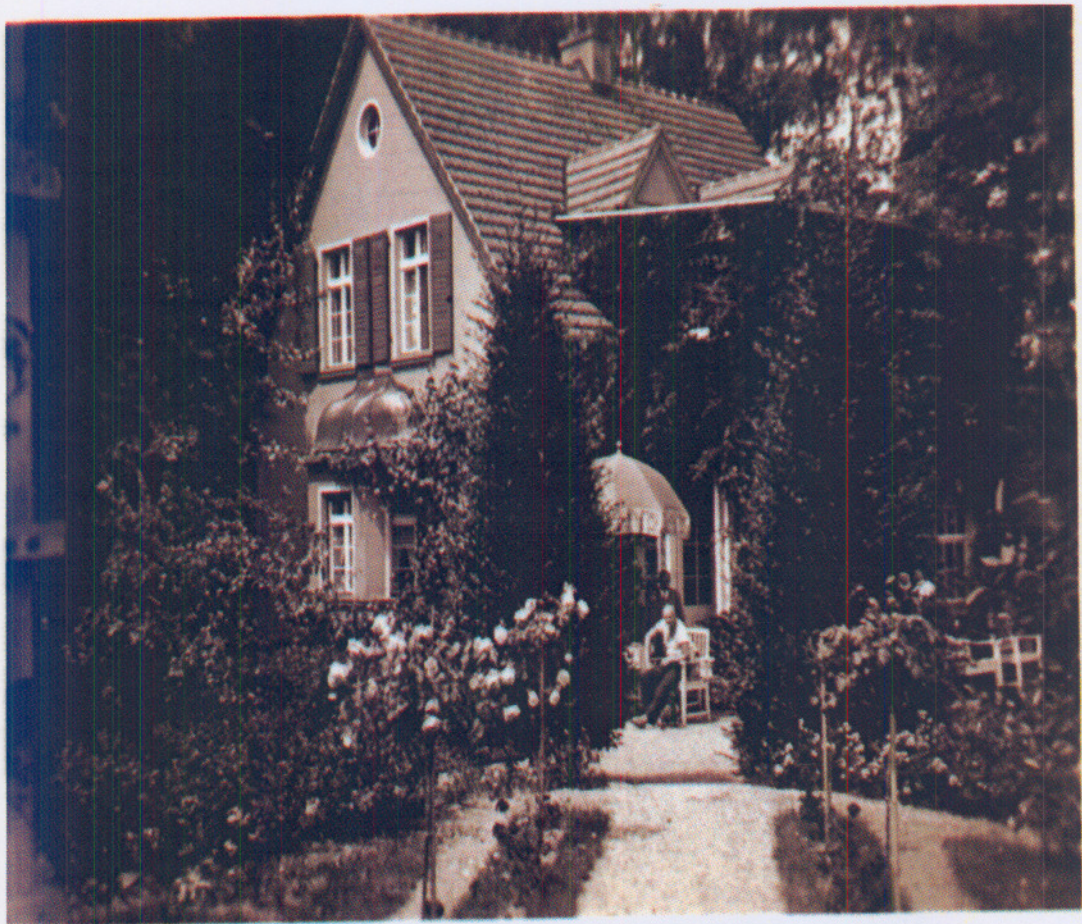
Annexure No. 59

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Als Frau Meel im Jahre 1933 ihre Bucherlaufbahn wieder aufnehmen wollte, war sie unter dem Pseudonym Hilde GERT in Fachkreisen noch gut bekannt und sah sich, dass sie unter normalen Umständen ohne Schwierigkeiten regelmäßige Anstellungen mit einem Monatsgehalt von etwa Mk 900 gefunden hätte.

Berlin, am

Annexure No.60



Hilde's House in *Königs Wusterhausen*, Berlin


Annexure No. 61

Drittbrief

Internationale Spedition
Paul Kalies

Handel- u. Lager- u. Anlieferungs-
Unternehmen - Spedition - Ausfuhr-
Kaufmann, Kaiserstr. 6, Ostern-Verkehr

AGENTS: Hamburg, Harburg, Altona
BRUNNEN, Berliner Straße, An der Hauptstraße
Eck-Corner 5, Berlin S.P.O. - ALTONA, DIESSE
Cottbus, Frankf. a. M., Frankfurt/Main,
Köln, Leipzig, Ostpre.
Postfach 42100, B. G. - DIESSE 10750
PHON N. 1000 27
TELEGRAM ADDRESS: 100000000



Berlin NW 21, 25.1.1961
DOKUMENT-NUMMER
1 8 51 71 40 00 00 00 00 00

S/DK
DOK. NR. 28 508

Rechnung n. Franzilli 01 a a s s e n, Berlin-Steglitz, Grunewaldstr.
6a

PK 8, 1 Rolle Semille nach Johannesburg	DM	Frank	DM
Verpacken, Material			0,50
Liegegebühr, Vermeesen			0,40
Signieren, Besetzen, Material			0,50
Ausfuhrrollverfertigung in Berlin, anstl. Gebühren, Flohen, Material			5,50
Hollgeld zur Verladestelle über Zollamt, Karteseit			4,60
Abfertigungsgebühr			0,25
Frachtübernahme Berlin/Hamburg			4,90 *
Hollgeld zum Kai n/a			3,60
Ausfuhrrollverfertigung in Hamburg			1,20
Kaisgebühren, Hafenfonds			1,50
Fob-Provision, Verschiffungsprovision			2,60
Seefracht Hamburg/Durban n/a			15,00 *
Verlagesprovision			0,20 *
Bearbeitung der Anfuhrgenehmigung, Formulare, Gebühren			3,50
Transportversicherung RM 1.000,-/6% zur Bedingung* frei von Beschädigungen, außer in Strandrungsfall, incl. Diebstahl ganzer Colli			6,00
Feldkassenstempel, Polizeigebühr			1,80
Anfertigung der Versandpapiere, Kennzeich- nungen, Formulare			4,80
Avie, Forti, Papiere, Telefon, Korrespondenz etc.			2,50
S.V.S./h.v.S.			0,35
		z. d. Ort.	67,70
			10,00
<u>Zahlbar sofort</u>			<u>77,70</u>
		zu zahlen	Summe

Der Brief wird ausschließlich auf Veranlassung des Absenders bearbeitet. Die Kosten der Bearbeitung sind im Preis des Briefes enthalten. Die Kosten der Briefbearbeitung sind im Preis des Briefes enthalten.

Paul Kalies Invoice

10 W 68/67
2 0 265/65
(LG Bonn)

Eingegangen
4. DEZ. 1967
Alfons Kessler
Rechtsanwalt

Beschluss

In Sachen

der Frau Hildegard Meel, geb. Czapski, verwitwete Simmel,
Johannesburg, Südafrika, 174 Metropolitan Heigh, Twist
Street, Hillbrow,

Antragstellerin und Beschwerdeführerin,

- Prozessbevollmächtigter: Rechtsanwalt Alfons Kessler in
Bonn -

gegen

die Deutsche Kriegsblindenstiftung, vertreten durch Ober-
studienrat a.D. Dr.Ludwig, Ministerialrat Dr.Malzahn,
Bonn, Schumannstr. 35,

Antragsgegnerin und Beschwerdegegnerin,

- Prozessbevollmächtigter: Rechtsanwalt Dr.rer.pol.Wilde in
Düsseldorf -

hat der 10. Zivilsenat des Oberlandesgerichts Köln
auf die Beschwerde der Antragstellerin vom 9.8.1967 gegen
den Beschluss des Landgerichts Bonn vom 26. April 1967
am 15. November 1967

beschlossen:

Die Beschwerde wird zurückgewiesen.

Die Kosten des Beschwerdeverfahrens trägt die
Antragstellerin.

Herrn RA
Kessler,
Bonn

Gründe.

Die Antragstellerin, die 1936 als Jüdin Deutschland verlassen
musste und in der Südafrikanischen Union lebt, war mit dem
Kunstmaler und Zeichner Paul Simmel verheiratet. Dieser beging
am 23.3.1933 Selbstmord, nachdem er durch privatschriftliches
Testament bestimmt hatte, er vermache seine gesamten Rechte

Annexure No. 63



Lucie and Hilde, the friends, in happier times

Zu Gast bei Paul Simmel

Gedenkausstellung zur Spandauer Heimatwoche

722.2
Tagesspiegel

Mit einer Ausstellung des Karikaturisten Paul Simmel eröffnen die Spandauer am Sonnabend um 10 Uhr ihre Heimatwoche, mit der sie gleichzeitig den zweiten Teil ihres 725jährigen Stadtjubiläums feiern. Im Bürgersaal des Rathauses sind 120 Zeichnungen, Briefe und Bilder des Zeichners zusammengetragen, dessen Vater Aktionär der ersten Spandauer Pferdebahn war. Simmel war Schüler des Königlichen Gymnasiums und wurde dann als Schlosserlehrling ausgebildet. Aber er tauschte bald die Drehbank mit dem Bleistift; zu seinen ersten Arbeiten gehörten anatomische Studien für Geheimrat Virchow. Als Neunzehnjähriger begann er, 1906, mit den Karikaturen. Später konnte er sich vor Aufträgen kaum mehr retten, so daß er ein Atelier mit zwei Zeichnern — Olaf Iversen und Barlog — einrichtete, für die er nur die Skizzen entwarf und die dann die Arbeiten in seinem Stil vollendeten. Simmel war bekannt als Sammler von typischen Berliner Witzen und „Kalauern“, die er sich in Wirtshäusern bei Molle und Korn für einen Taler erzählen ließ, um daraus Stoff für seine Karikaturen zu schöpfen. Schwierige häusliche Verhältnisse machten Simmel zu einem depressiven und melancholischen Menschen, der bereits zu Beginn des Jahres 1933 Freunden gegenüber Selbstmordgedanken äußerte. Im März 1933 nahm er sich das Leben. In seinem Testament hat er bestimmt, daß der Erlös seiner Arbeiten den Kriegswaisen zugute kommen soll.

Tagesspiegel, 22 August 1959