

WOMEN AND MINORITIES ARCHIVES WAYS OF ARCHIVING



Sammlung Frauennachlässe
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WOMEN AND MINORITIES: WAYS OF ARCHIVING

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EDITH SAURER: "FOR WOMEN, THE ACT OF WRITING – WHETHER LETTERS OR DIARIES – EXPRESSES THEIR IDENTITY, THEIR LIVES' AMBITION, THE WILL TO SURVIVE"

Interview with EDITH SAURER



Kristina Popova: "How did the interest in women's written estates emerge? How did the collection of such archives change women's place in history?"

Edith Saurer: "I can say that the emergence of the collection of women's written estates was a process and not a decision as in 'Let's make a collection of women's written estates'. It probably could not have been decided as such. Nonetheless, from the start we had an interest in women's history and gender history and that made us conscious of this type.

Personally, I had been interested in the history of the lower class and of women since the 1970s. In 1989, a group of female historians prepared an exhibition "70 years of women's right to vote" and wondered where we could find the sources which would demonstrate the experience of women taking part in the first vote. After putting an advertisement in the paper, we later received some documents at the institute – which I actually collected myself – after the exhibition had finished. However, we needed sources for women's and gender history. This first acquisition remains the largest of all, even though over a period of 20 years we have received 200 different unpublished works in our collection. We realised what a wealth of references for women existed, which we had previously known nothing about. We were amazed how many women had put pen to paper. Not only letters, but also diaries. And not only middle class women of urban backgrounds, but women from rural backgrounds as well. Particularly significant for me is part of the written legacy of 'Marilde Hanzel-Hübner'. There was an exchange of letters between this woman and a female friend, which began when they were still girls.

They wrote to each other every Wednesday, as they had arranged between themselves, even though they both lived in Vienna. It was more important to them to write than to meet and talk to each other. Obviously, writing gave them opportunities to express more important subjects. The practice of writing led to a specific possibility of self-knowledge, the clarification of relationships and also a type of sensuality. Writing is a sensual experience. I had no idea before of this intensive and extensive world of writing. The many letters written by the upper classes in the 18th century also became the practice of middle class women in the 19th and 20th centuries (if they have still been kept). However, women of the lower classes also had some experience of writing."

Kristina Popova: "Where did women of the lower classes write and keep their letters? People need a bit of space to do this. What sort of space did these women have to write?"

Edith Saurer: "I believe that under various circumstances, possibilities were found when the strong desire to write prevailed, as we are shown. In our collection, there is a diary of a female miller, which was originally a notebook used to account for income and expenditure. But later, when her son did not return from the war in 1945, she used it as a diary. She did it as a means to overcome this crisis in her life and rows of numbers turned into rows of sentences. She grabbed hold of a lifeline – which no-one had recommended to her – that created a diversion. She found time and space to write down her feelings."

Kristina Popova: "The ability to write is dormant."

Edith Saurer: "The ability to write is dormant and the need to write can erupt; or simply, writing as a means of communication is important – as in the case of migration. Amongst our collection there is a record of a woman who emigrated from Germany to New York, where she worked as a maid. Writing letters was the only possible means to stay in touch with her relatives. Even though she was not previously familiar with the practice of writing, her new circumstances made it a necessity. This had more to do with her own identity than her past, her family and her origin implied in this case.

An important aspect of writing is the will to live or will to survive. In the number

of documents we have, especially valuable to us are some printed postcards sent by a woman in a concentration camp in Theresienstadt to her relatives. For the relatives they were presumably the only proof that she was alive; for herself – although abridged, standardised and censored – they were a chance to ‘escape’ from the concentration camp through writing.

This was an important new discovery for us, it meant that women’s writing had/had given them the option of defining their own experiences, their identity, and their will to live and survive. We would like to pass on this discovery in our research to our students.

In continuation, you perhaps know that we publish the “L’HOMME. *Archiv*” series, where sources from our collection appear, as well as other publications. We had intended also to make a new publication of classics but have not yet completed this project. The first series was “Autobiography and Women’s Questions. Diaries, Correspondence, Political Works of Mathilde Hanzel-Hübner (1884–1970)” edited by Monika Bernold and Johanna Gehmacher. Now we have the next series, about Therese Lindenberg, by Christa Hämmerle and Li Gehalter with the collaboration of Ingrid Brommer and Christine Karner; and about Werti Teuschl, by Nikola Langreiter. Therese Lindenberg was a singer, who wrote her diary during the Second World War, and unequivocally discussed the problems, persecution and humiliation she experienced as a result of her ‘mixed marriage’ – as they were called at that time – between Jews and Aryans.

Diaries and letters give an insight into the meaning that writing had for women and often the resistance they showed against political conditions. This is a well known fact during the First World War, also that there were numerous examples of forbidden love affairs which women maintained with prisoners-of-war. But such personal subjects are rarely documented. The diary of Johanna K., found in an attic in Klagenfurt, is one exception to this rule. It consists of two parts, that of a girl’s diary and the diary of an adult woman, who fell in love with a French officer. It concerns her desires, the skepticism she felt towards German nationalism and her social environment. She was born in 1892 near Cortbus in northern Germany. I really don’t know how this diary came to be in an attic in Klagenfurt. No idea! But I do know that it means a lot that it made the journey from Cortbus to Klagenfurt. It was intended to be kept. Certainly we do not know how

many diaries and letters from women have been thrown away, but we know that many were deliberately saved. This means that the authors themselves and those who saved the contents thought them worth saving as a record for the next generation; on condition that it be recognised as part of their history ...”

Kristina Popova: “Has this affected how you see yourself?”

Edith Saurer: “Writing is a focal point of my life. It is definitely professional writing. Now and again I keep a diary, when I feel the need to. I do not further reflect as to ‘why’, but of course there is the ‘collection’ and my professional occupation with diaries. This sometimes causes problems, whereby I start to analyse and this imposes limits. As a historian, the sources of the collection have given me an insight into women’s courses of action when, regardless of restrictions imposed by law, still went their own unusual ways. Civil laws had a big influence on the limited conditions imposed on women, but the extent of alternatives was nonetheless much greater. And they used it.”

Kristina Popova: “What do these personal references mean to young students, for young historians? Are they interested? Do they want to read them?”

Edith Saurer: “The students are very interested in these documents, since they lead them into another world, which they also have to reconstruct for themselves. They have to make contexts from the written words, establish their authenticity, identify people. Here is an example: Therese Lindenberg, who I have already spoken about, had a travel diary in her archive, written in her handwriting. In the course of her work on the diary, the graduate student Eva Weidinger-Vols discovered that this was simply a copy from the diary of another woman, who had travelled to Egypt, and whom Therese Lindenberg had cared for during a serious illness. She was able to reconstruct the text. It concerns the search for clues, which not only inspires knowledge, but also deepens the field of study.”

WOMEN'S MEMORIES

DECISIONS AND CHANCES – THE WINDING PATH OF WOMEN'S PERSONAL TESTIMONIES.

THE COLLECTION OF WOMEN'S ESTATES / SAMMLUNG FRAUENNACHLÄSSE, VIENNA

Li Gerhalter

The *Collection of Women's Estates – Sammlung Frauennachlässe*¹ – at the *Department of History of the University of Vienna* currently maintains the estates of 196 persons (spring 2009). They were teachers, a miller, wives of factory owners, one photographer, housewives, maids, aristocratic women, women of independent means, pupils, students, farmers, Red Cross assistants, one butcher, artists, writers and dressmakers. They were young and old, urban and rural women, and sometimes the estates of their families, partners, or friends are included. None of them played a prominent role in public life.

All in all, the estates contain

- 523 diaries and diary-like records,
- 479 other book-like documents like almanacs, household accounts, poetry albums, etc.,
- about 25,000 pieces of correspondence,
- about 7,950 photographs,
- about 2,550 official and business documents, certificates, etc.,
- 45 autobiographical texts,
- 7 literary estates.

Slightly more than one fifth of the estates contain not only written records, but also small objects like awards and medals, so-called Star of David badges or caskets used for keeping letters.

The earliest record is an official document from 1738, the most recent one a diary

from 2002. However, most of the personal testimonies archived in the collection were written in the late 19th and in the first half of the 20th century. There is a regional focus on what is today Austria. Several estates, however, come from the crown lands of the former Habsburg monarchy, and some correspondences even span several continents.²

The estates' sizes vary greatly: the largest correspondence archived in the *Collection of Women's Estates* contains about 3,500 letters, about 2,000 of which were written during World War I alone. The largest diary estates comprise 47, 55, and 60 books respectively, the largest photographic estate includes around 2,500 pictures. On the other hand, numerous estates only contain single documents.³

In addition to these private estates, the *Collection of Women's Estates* also includes the estate of a women's welfare association, the *Wiener Settlement*.⁴

What is remembered and what is not: The winding path of a source to an archive

The inventory of the *Collection of Women's Estates* exhibits great diversity regarding the contents and materials as well as the life stories of authors. All the records have in common that they are material objects and written expression of individual practices of self-representation and memory, stored in a public archive and open for scholarly research. But how did these documents get into this institutional place?

Certain preconditions must be met for personal testimonies of non-prominent women to find their way into an archive – preconditions that are part of different histories: the history of the concrete historical documents (1), the history of the archives and – in interdependency – the history of the scholarly interests (2) and the history of the documents' donation (3):

- 1 a) The documents must have been written.
- 1 b) The documents must have been preserved.
- 2 a) There have to be archives collecting personal testimonies of women who were not prominent in public life.
- 2 b) The owners of the documents need to know about these archives.
- 3 a) The owners of the documents need to consider it useful to donate the personal testimonies of women to an archive.
- 3 b) The owners of the documents need to be prepared to pass them on to the archive.

Thus, the “winding path” of women’s estates into a public archive is determined by a number of decisions made by different persons. When it comes to historical archives for personal testimonies of women, chance plays an especially important role, as Christa Hämmerle points out right at the beginning of her portrait of the *Collection of Women’s Estates* “Fragmente aus vielen Leben”:⁵

In the following, I will give a concrete description of the “route” of preconditions listed above. On the basis of my experience as custodian of the *Collection of Women’s Estates*, I will give special attention to the role of the donors’ being the persons passing the documents on to the archive.

1 a) The writing of documents: Who writes what and for whom?

The diversity of sources archived in the *Collection of Women’s Estates* – which can hardly be reduced to a common denominator – gives an impression that urban as well as rural women performed writing practices in the past – and that they continue to do so.⁶ Personal testimonials serve different purposes, namely communication and the wish for, and the convention of, (self-)documentation.⁷ Numerous examples from the *Collection of Women’s Estates* demonstrate that some writers in fact had long-term plans: we have a total of 47 diaries written by the Viennese Bernhardine Alma between 1908 and 1979 that is from the age of 13 to the age of 84. Already in the first preserved book, the then 13-year-old took down the following thought: “... when one day I’ll read this diary as an old woman! What will I think about it then?” According to this entry, the object of her diary was her own self – and she herself also was the reader she imagined. Six years later, she intensified the writing project: “From now on, I will write more often in my diary; otherwise, when reading it in years to come, I will not have any idea about my girlhood at all.”⁸

Quite often, diary writers comment on their entries in a very self-critical manner when reading them again later on. For example, 19-year-old teacher-to-be Mathilde Hanzel-Hübner titled her entry of 1 January 1901 two and a half years later with the commentary “I hardly think this was worth writing.” Her daughter Ruthlilt Hanzel, who herself even typed out her own diary later on, commented on it in an ironical as well as self-critical manner: “When reading one’s whinnings two years later, one cannot help but think: Good Lord what an awkward girl.”¹⁰ The young student probably

“reworked” her girlhood diary in order to communicate her personal development to her fiancé. Opposed to that, the Viennese writer and musician Therese Lindenberg transcribed her diaries from World War II only decades later on the request of her son-in-law. When comparing the transcription with the originals, it is striking that the latter contain only fragmentary information on the Jewish family’s life-threatening situation during National Socialism; this can be seen as evidence of the many instances of writing censorship.¹¹

Therese Lindenberg wrote diaries for eight decades, and the wartime diaries are only one part of the large total lot of 60 books. Many writers, however, were prompted by times of war or crises to start writing diaries or letters. In times of sudden separation, people who probably wouldn’t have communicated in written form otherwise were forced to write letters. Accordingly, many of the large correspondences of the *Collection of Women’s Estates* are wartime letters from both World Wars.¹²

1 b) Keeping the documents: Who has room – what for?

Whether the recipients keep personal testimonies like letters or not is usually determined by their appreciation for the authors as well as by the importance of the contents. Additionally, I feel that there is a certain hierarchy concerning the different genres, where for example love letters¹³ or wartime correspondences receive special attention. Dressmaker Julie Schreiber, for example, wrote 461 letters to her husband at the front line between 1943 and 1945 on an almost daily basis. They were collected by the recipient, sorted into small parcels, labelled and kept in a specially designed cardboard box. Other letters by the couple have not been preserved.

Teacher Tilde Mell describes herself the privileged handling she gave to the letters of a former school friend: “I still have every small piece of paper you sent to me. A large bundle! ... Look, my left desk drawer contains it all ... When I open the drawer, I see everything laying there in ... pretty parcels, bound with bright yellow laces. On those quiet Sunday evenings in winter, when everything is silent around me, I like to rummage through it all.”¹⁴

Compared to that, the maid Martha Teichmann – who emigrated from Leipzig (Germany) to the United States at the beginning of the 20th century – seems to have kept all the letters she ever received. Her correspondence includes around 800 letters from different senders. In storing the letters, however, she does not seem to have applied

any systematic order (or at least none that is obvious to outsiders). She rather kept them in unconventional places like handbags.

As I have mentioned above, diary projects usually were (at least) planned on a long-term basis by their authors; in any way, diaries belong to the type of documents that are quite often preserved. Still, the already mentioned practice of re-reading them harbours a certain risk: the journalist Helga K., for example, reported to have thrown away the first nine of her overall 31 girlhood diaries after reading them again at a later time because she couldn't identify with the adolescent writer of her own self any more.

In addition to the decisions based on the appreciation of authors and recipients, there are external factors playing a role in keeping personal testimonies over a long period of time, for example the question of space. This aspect might explain at least in part why so many more documents written by persons from the upper social classes at the beginning of the 20th century have been preserved than those written by working-class people. On the one hand, bourgeois women and men certainly had a better chance of creating written sources – and additionally, it was a social practice of self-representation that came naturally to them. On the other hand, these persons had larger apartments or houses and did not move quite as often. Other important external factors are wartime destructions or (forced) migration.

I think that an especially difficult turning point is reached when the author or recipient dies. If the heirs (are able to) look into the written estate at all, they often do



The wartime correspondence of Julie Schreiber was organized by the recipient Anton Schreiber (SFN NL 86)



The sorted correspondence of the social worker Fini Tietz with her female boss (SFN NL 96)



Love letters from Martha Teichman (SFN NL 67)



A Handbag from Martha Teichman, filled with pieces of correspondence (SFN NL 67)



The *Collection of Women's Estates* received Martha Teichman's estate as a complete chaos in boxes that looked like that (SFN NL 67)

not realize why this or that document was important to the author/recipient. Additionally, the practical question of where to keep it (at a new place?) comes up again.

2 a) Archives and scholarly interest: The chicken or the eggs, who is looking for what?

The focus on "great events" and "important men" from the fields of politics (and maybe art, science, economy and military) as major objects of historiography also set the standard of which sources were regarded to have historical value and importance. In the hegemonic collecting practice of the (modern) state, which finds expression for example in state archives or museums, the texts written by women who were not in the public eye were not considered to be worthy of tradition. Accordingly, these documents did not find their way into such an institution. This is also true for men from the middle or lower classes and for members of so-called minorities.

During the last three decades of the 20th century, a large number of special purpose archives have been founded that focus exactly on formerly neglected groups. Women's estates are of special interest to the several information institutions of the so-called new feminist movement.¹⁵

According to Dagmar Jank, however, these numerous initiatives cannot "compensate for the shortcomings of a male-dominated world of archives and libraries".¹⁶ She supports her claim for Germany by taking the *Zentrale Datenbank Nachlässe* (*Central Database Estates*) as an example. The database contains the names of 25,000 persons – whereas Jank compiled a list of women's estates archived in a public (German) institution that contains 2,000 names.¹⁷

In this context, it should also be mentioned that women's estates are often neglected when it comes to processing them. Communal or state archives do contain the written estates of women; due to traditional academic approaches (and the notorious tightness of resources), however, the processing of these estates is postponed – and the documents remain inaccessible. Additionally, many documents written by women are archived with the estates of men they had some relation to.¹⁸

The *Collection of Women's Estates*

The initiators and staff members of the *Collection of Women's Estates* pursue academic as well as political objectives. On the political level, the collection aims at giving

institutionalised space to documents written by women, thus granting them historical significance.

As an academic institution, the *Collection of Women's Estates* can be seen as an example of a changing sense of history. Firstly, it follows the 'new' approaches that have been incorporated into historical research since the 1970s: that is, the "history of everyday life", the History of Mentality, and Social History in general, and shows an increasing breadth in the field of autobiographical and biographical research. At the same time, the collection's establishment corresponds with the growing importance and institutionalisation of Women's and Gender History.

Indeed, scholars have underestimated for a long time the prevalence of writing as a social practice, especially among the strata of society with little or no education. They simply did not know how much had been written or how many of these personal notes, letters, etc. were kept in private attics. It is the collection's mission to gather exactly this kind of document, to archive them and to make them available for research. In this spirit, the collection of Women's Estates regards itself as a kind of "counter-hegemonic memory store".¹⁹ Its focus on collecting the personal testimonies of women outside the public eye in particular is unique at least in Central Europe.

The Archives' History

The *Collection of Women's Estates* at the Department of History of the University of Vienna was initiated by Edith Saurer in 1989. Today, she is head of the archive together with Christa Hammerle.

The collection originated in connection with research of the political anniversary "70 Years of Women's Suffrage in Austria": because the planned exhibition also wanted to represent the voices of non-prominent women, an ad was launched in the newspapers. The residents of Vienna were asked to hand in personal testimonies that might fit the cause. Indeed, the estate of a woman who was active in the First Women's Movement around 1900 – Mathilde Hanzel-Hübner – has been uncovered. This very substantial estate is the collection's largest so far. It has been researched and edited in large parts.²⁰

In 2000, an association was founded; since 2006, the archive has been part of the "Research Platform for the Repositioning of Women's and Gender History in the New European Context" based at the *University of Vienna*.²¹ However, funds are not secure in the long term, and subsidies are only granted on a one-year basis.

2 b) Archives and donors: Who finds whom?

The 196 estates currently archived in the *Collection of Women's Estates* were handed over by a total of 111 donors (that is some donors gave us the estates of several persons). Contact between the owners of historical women's estates and the archive was established in different ways.

- The donors learned about the collection in ads, newspaper articles, or radio shows (35 donors or 35.32 percent)

- The donors are co-workers, friends or relatives of one of the archive's staff members (22 donors or 22.20 percent)

- Other donors directed them to us (8 donors or 7 percent)

- The donors contacted us on their own account (9 donors or 8 percent)

- Most donors were directed to us by other archives with a different focus (37 donors or 33 percent).²²

In any case – like in all oral history projects – the personal contact to the persons who wish to donate an estate or already have done so is an important and central part of the work as custodian of an archive like the *Collection of Women's Estates*.

3 a) The transfer of documents: Who aims at achieving what?

In recent years, more and more often a (designated) donor of an estate has established contact with the *Collection of Women's Estates* (or a person or an institution who then directed her or him to the archive) on his or her own initiative. This may hint at a changing sense of history in at least part of the population, being the (interdependent) result of the many-fold oral history projects as well as of the publication of popular science biographies, TV and radio shows that have enjoyed increasing popularity for some time (at least in Austria).

At any rate, the donors have their own motivation for giving specific documents to the archive – and the transfer is always a story unto itself.

In most cases, the owners fear that the documents could not be meaningful to anyone anymore and be thrown away after their death, and therefore donate them to an archive.

"I don't have anyone anymore",²³ Franziska Grasel said. For fear that her written

memories might get *into the wrong hands* after her death, she even wanted to burn them: "I have to throw them into the stove, or they will end up in the recycling bin. And what do you think these people are doing in the paper mill? They'll have a fine laugh. And that's something I don't want. And I couldn't bring myself to burn them. It was really like ... more than once I had them in the basement at the furnace, and I always carried them up again."

When a friend established contact with the *Collection of Women's Estates*, it suited Franziska Grasel just fine and she decided to donate her memories of the time of *Reichsarbeitsdienst* (Reich Labour Service) during World War II: 145 letters, 370 photographs and other records. The fact that the souvenirs so important to her were thus accessible to an academic public gave her an additional sense of identity.

Franziska Grasel's wish to communicate her memories to someone is exemplary for the motivation for giving one's own documents into an archive. In total, however, those 35 estates containing documents that were written by the donors themselves do not account for the majority of archived records (18 percent of all records).

The majority of 105 estates (54 percent) were donated by relatives of the authors (children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, nieces or nephews, cousins or children-in-law). 22 estates (16 percent) were donated by the author's acquaintances (neighbours, acquaintances of relatives, friends, the employer's son, the daughter of a student, the granddaughter of the second wife of the author's divorced husband). Often it seems that these donors – many of whom are of old age themselves – want to secure their mothers or relatives some posthumous appreciation by giving their written estates to a public institution, such as the university.

Franziska Nunnally, who, being Jewish, had to flee from Austria during World War II, describes this in a very powerful way: "My parents, brother, grandmother, aunts, uncles and so on – all of them perished in the Shoah. *Nothing* remains of them – no pieces of furniture, no works of art, no golden watch, no ring – all the things that are passed on from generation to generation in other families. They don't even have a grave. The *only proof* of their existence lies in their *letters*."²⁴

Sometimes, chance and luck play a great role as well. The most spectacular case in our collection is a correspondence of about three hundred letters from an upper-class family from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The letters were thrown into a paper recycling bin, where a journalist found them – otherwise they would have been lost.

Other documents are regularly dug out from flea markets or attics. The collection contains 24 estates (12 percent) where there is no personal relationship between donors and authors of the documents. Still, it seemed to be important to the donors that they save the memory of these – unknown – people.

We can assume that all donors of an estate wish that somebody occupy herself (or himself) with the documents. The way I see it, this does not necessarily mean that they expect the publication of a book or even a bestseller. I rather have the feeling that these people want the documents to be kept in a suitable place like the university. On the other hand, I have the impression that in most instances it is not really important for the donors to which archive they hand over their sources. What is important for them is the interest taken in their personal lives – or the lives of their ancestors. The way these sources are used afterwards seem less relevant to them; even more so, as most have little insight into the possibilities and limitations of academic research.

3 b) The transfer of documents: Decision or chance?

The final "turning point" on the difficult path of women's personal testimonies is their actual delivery. In the case of the *Collection of Women's Estates*, it usually takes place over a longer period of time. Whether it be that the donors compile the documents only by and by,²⁵ or that they wish to "distance" themselves from single documents at a different pace.²⁶ In general, the delivery of the documents follows the terms of a contract between the estate donors and the *Collection of Women's Estates*. This way the archive is granted the right to use the documents. Additionally, it is possible to stipulate special conditions of use.

For example, we offer to take copies or scans of the documents into the archive, whereas the original source remains with the donor.²⁷ Another possibility is anonymous research on an estate's author. This option is rarely taken, however – and usually anonymity is requested for other persons named in the documents, and not for the author herself. Such "other persons" might be an early love whom she has not seen for a long time ... It seems that those who give their own personal testimonies into an archive – or testimonies they have been entrusted with – prefer to be known by their own name. This is even true if the sources cover a phase of their lives that might be problematic from a current viewpoint, such as the time of National Socialism.

I have gained the overall impression that usually the donors are very deliberate about which sources to hand over to the archive. We have some very large estates that maybe span the written legacy of several generations; they certainly contain every written record ever preserved in the family. At least as many estates, however, contain only a selection of documents, while other records remain with the family.

In most cases the motivation for donating only certain documents is to preserve the memory of a certain person or a certain event. I can only presume that other documents – or whole family estates – are kept back or even destroyed in order to withhold them from the public. After all, as an archives staff member, I only meet those persons wishing to donate some documents. Should the donors hold back certain documents, they usually keep the fact to themselves, and there have been only two cases where such a decision was mentioned.

In some cases, however, the delivery of documents seems to express a paradoxical wish for “forgetfulness”. A lady from Vienna, for example, gave us the love letters her former boyfriend had written to her in World War II. She had kept the relationship a secret from her family later on, and the letters were stored safely in the closet. It seems a paradoxical situation that this woman wanted to give her secret letters to a public institution. Another donor gave the written estate of her whole family to the *Collection of Women's Estates* so that (among other reasons) her sister could not get the documents.

Both women did not want to keep the documents at home any longer for certain reasons – but throwing them away had obviously not been an option. Giving them to an archive probably seemed like a good compromise.

Translation by Birgit Wagner

¹ See <http://www.univie.ac.at/Geschichte/sfn> (in German).

² We were able to identify the names of 88 Austrian, 119 European and 15 non-European places where at least one of the archived sources was written. We estimate the actual number to be much higher; however, it will be impossible to establish in detail as the Collection contains a large number of wartime letters (around 7.360) where usually the names of the places where they were written are not specified for reasons of censorship.

³ Cf. Li Gerhalter, Bestandsverzeichnis der Sammlung Frauennachlässe am Institut für Geschichte [Inventory of the Collection of Women's Estates at the Department of History], Wien 2008. The catalogue offers a description of every estate processed by January 2008 as well as a register of all archived documents and the places where they were written.

⁴ Cf. Elisabeth Malteier, Das Orakringer Siedlement. Zur Geschichte eines frühen internationalen Sozialprojekts [The Orakring Settlement. History of an Early International Welfare Project], Wien 2005.

⁵ Christa Hämmerle, Fragmente aus vielen Leben. Ein Porträt der “Sammlung Frauennachlässe” am Institut für Geschichte der Universität Wien [Fragments of Many Lives. A Portrait of the “Collection of

Women's Estates” at the Department of History of the University of Vienna], in: L'HOMME. Z. F. G., 14, 1 (2003), 375–378, 375.

⁶ Cf. Christa Hämmerle, Nebenpläne? Populäre Selbstzeugnisse des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts in geschlechtervergleichender Perspektive [Byways? Popular Personal Testimonies of the 19th and 20th Centuries in Gender-Comparative Perspective], in: Thomas Winkelbauer ed., Vom Lebenslauf zur Biographie. Geschichte, Quellen und Probleme der historischen Biographie und Autobiographie [From *Garricellum Vitae* to Biography. History, Sources and Problems of Writing Historical and Autobiographical and Autobiographies], Krems 2000, 135–167; ed., “Und etwas von mir wird bleiben ...” Von Frauennachlässen und ihrer historischen (Nicht-)Überlieferung [“And something of myself will remain ...” Of Women's Estates and Their Historical (Non-)Tradition], in: Monfort, Vierteljahresschrift für Geschichte und Gegenwart Vorarlbergs, 55, 2 (2003), 154–174; ed., Fragmente, see note 5; ed., Die “Sammlung Frauennachlässe” am Institut für Geschichte der Universität Wien [The “Collection of Women's Estates” at the Department of History of the University of Vienna], in: Peter Eigner, Christa Hämmerle and Günter Müller eds., Briefe – Tagebücher – Autobiographien. Studien und Quellen für den Unterricht [Letters – Diaries – Autobiographies. Studies and Sources for Teaching], Wien 2006, 132–139.

⁷ From the end of the 19th century on, it was *comme il faut* for bourgeois girls to keep a diary that sometimes was even checked by their mothers and teachers. During the World Wars, children and adolescents were also encouraged from different sides to write a diary. Cf. Christa Hämmerle, Diaries, in: Miriam Dobson and Benjamin Ziemann eds., Reading Primary Sources. The Interpretation of Texts from 19th and 20th Century History, London, 2008, 141–158.

⁸ Sammlung Frauennachlässe (hereafter SFN) NL 91: Bernhardine Alma, February 2, 1908 and October 7, 1914. Cf. Ulrike Moser, Herzensbildung. Moral und Sexualität in den Tagebüchern junger bürgerlicher Frauen um 1900 [Development of the Heart. Education, Morality and Sexuality in the Diaries of Young Bourgeois Women Around 1900], Wien (PhD) 2006 and Ulrike Seiser: “... ich will keinen Krieg oder als Krankenschwester mit!” Selbstinszenierungen, Kriegsrezeption und Männlichkeitsbilder im Tagebuch einer jungen Frau im Ersten Weltkrieg! [“... I don't want any war at all or come along as a nurse!” Self-Creation, War Reception and Images of Maleness in the Diary of a Young Woman in World War I], Wien (MA) Wien 2002.

⁹ SFN NL 1, diary of Mathilde Hanzel Hübner, September 28, 1903. See among others Monika Bernold and Johanna Gschnaider, Auro/Biographie und Frauenfrage. Tagebücher, Briefwechsel und Politische Schriften von Mathilde Hanzel-Hübner (1884–1970) [Auro/Biography and Women's Question. Diaries, Correspondences, and Political Writings by Mathilde Hanzel-Hübner (1884–1970)], (L'HOMME Archiv, 1), Wien 2003.

¹⁰ SFN NL 2, 1, diary transcript of Ruthild Lemche (born Hanzel), September 8, 1926. Cf. Birgit Wagner, “Matura. Härte dich gerne geküsst, bevor wir begannen.” Frauenbildung und Selbstentwurf. Die Tagebücher der Philosophiestudentin Ruthild Hanzel (1926–1929) [“Final Exams. I'd have liked to kiss you before the start.” Women's Education and Concepts of the Self. The Diaries of the Student of Philosophy Ruthild Hanzel (1926–1929)], Wien (unpublished term paper) 2007.

¹¹ Cf. Christa Hämmerle and Li Gerhalter eds. with the cooperation of Ingrid Brommer and Christine Kämer, Apokalyptische Jahre. Die Tagebücher der Theresese Lindenbergs (1938 bis 1946) [Apocalyptic Years. The Diaries of Theresese Lindenbergs (1938 to 1946)], Köln/Weimar/Wien forthcoming.

¹² Of the 165 estates currently archived, 57 contain letters from soldiers or prisoners of war. 16 estates only consist of wartime correspondence. Cf. Gerhalter, Bestandsverzeichnis, see note 3.

¹³ Cf. Nikola Langreiter, “... greif' zur Feder wieder, schreib', ach schreibe nur ein Wort...” Mit Liebesbriefen in den Geschichtsunterricht [“... put the pen to paper again and write, oh write just one single word...” With Love Letters into the History Lesson], in: Eigner/Hämmerle/Müller, Briefe, see note 6, Wien 2006, 46–62.

¹⁴ SFN NL 1, Tilde Mell to Tilly Hübner, 1 November 1907. See Li Gerhalter, Freundschaft als geschriebener Ort. Briefliche Selbst-Inszenierungen von Frauenfreundschaften der jungen Lehrerin Tilde Mell, Wien 1903 bis 1912 [Friendship in Writing. Self-Construction of Women's Friendship in the Letters of the

Young Teacher Title Mall, Vienna 1903 to 1912], in: Ariadne, Forum für Frauen- und Geschlechterstudien, 48 (2005), 62–69.

¹⁵ In Vienna, there are among others *STICHWORT – Archiv der Frauen- & Lebensbewegung [Archives of the Women's and Lesbian's Movements]*, the *Johanna Dohnal Archiv* (cf. Margit Hauser's and Maria Steiner's articles in this volume) or the database *biografA. Biografische Datenbank und Lexikon österreichischer Frauen [biografA. Biographical Database and Dictionary of Austrian Women]* (<http://www.biografA.at/>).

¹⁶ Dagmar Jank, *Frauenmächte in Archiven, Bibliotheken und Spezialinrichtungen. Beispiele, Probleme und Erfordernisse [Women's Estates in Archives, Libraries and Special Institutions. Examples, Problems and Desiderata]*, in: Botho Brachmann et al. eds., *Die Kunst des Vernetzens. Festschrift für Wolfgang Hempel [The Art of Networking. Celebration Publication for Wolfgang Hempel]*, Berlin 2006, 411–419, 412.

¹⁷ See note 16 and cf. Gesa Heinrich, *Gibt es eine Gleichstellungsquote für archivische Quellen? Problematik der Quellen zur Frauengeschichte in Archiven und Wege zu ihrer Sichtbarkeit [Is there an Equal Opportunities Quota for Archive Sources? Difficulties with Sources on Women's History in Archives and Ways to Increase Their Visibility]*, in: Zentrum für interdisziplinäre Frauenforschung und die Frauenbeauftragte der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin eds., *Zur Geschichte des Frauenstudiums und weiblicher Berufskarrieren an der Berliner Universität [History of Women's Academic Studies and Occupational Careers at the Berlin University]*, Berlin 1996, 6–17; Jutta Weber, *Jenseits des Kanons – Jenseits der Vernetzung. Die Person für sich [Beyond the Canon – Beyond Networking. The Person-for-herself]*, in: Christiane Caemmerer et al. eds., *Die totale Erinnerung. Sicherung und Zerstörung kulturhistorischer Vergangenheit und Gegenwart in den modernen Industriegesellschaften [Total Recall. Protection and Destruction of Cultural-Historical Past and Present in Modern Industrialised Societies]*, Bern et al. 1997, 113–126.

¹⁸ Cf. Alessandra Contini, "Archivio per la memoria e la scrittura delle donne": un cantiere aperto [“Archive for the Memory and the Writings of Women”: An Open Construction Site], in: Archivio storico italiano, CLX (2002), 769–787. A detailed description of the project can be found at the website <http://www.archiviodistato.firenze.it/memoriadonne/> (in Italian). The „Research Platform for the Repositioning of Women's and Gender History“ has started a similar initiative: as a first step, the *hidden diaries of women* are being researched in the archives of Vienna.

¹⁹ Hämmerle, *Fragmente*, see note 5, 375.

²⁰ See among others Bernold/Gehmacher, *Auro/Biographie und Frauenfrage*, see note 9.

²¹ See <http://www.univie.ac.at/Geschichte/Neuverortung-Geschlechtergeschichte/>.

²² The largest part of these donations came about thanks to *Dokumentation lebensgeschichtlicher Aufzeichnungen [Documentation of Autobiographical Writings]*, an archive at the Department of Economic and Social History of the University of Vienna, a close cooperation partner of the SFN. Cf. Günter Müller, *Writing Life-Stories in Dialogue. The example of collecting and interpreting life stories in the "Dokumentation lebensgeschichtlicher Aufzeichnungen"* at the University of Vienna, in: *Bulgarian Ethnology*, XXX, 4 (2004), 108–121 and <http://wiriges.univie.ac.at/doku> (in German).

²³ Interview by Martina Smurny, November 2003, in: ead., *Der Reichsarbeitsdienst in der Erinnerung. Ein Nachlass als Gedächtnisort [Remembering the Reich's Labour Service. An Estate as a Site of Memory]*, Wien (MA) Wien 2004, 85.

²⁴ SFN NL 36, letter by Frances Nunnally from the US to SFN, 21 February 2000.

²⁵ This is true for the already mentioned estate of Mahilde Hanzel-Hübner (SFN, NL 1), where the donors have repeatedly delivered single documents to the archive for by now ten years, some of which were newly found in foreign places.

²⁶ Cf. Smurny, *Reichsarbeitsdienst*, see note 23.

²⁷ In 45 estates (23 per cent), some of the materials are copies. In some cases, the documents were first donated to the SFN as copies and then in the original later on.

THE DIARY OF WETTI TEUSCHL: AN INSTRUMENT FOR REMEMBERING? – AN INSTRUMENT FOR FORGETTING?

Nikola Langreiter

Studies in the area of memory have been booming for quite some time. They are about policy of remembrance, cultural commemoration and such of memory; there is a certain focus on memory storage – literature, museums, and art, places loaded with reminiscence have been investigated. And what happens if some past – due to ideological pressures or beliefs – is officially excluded from memory, has been thoroughly discussed. Delicate aspects and difficult questions such as discourse and construction of any memory being a (re-)invention have been integrated, and some grand theories drafted – the *lieux de mémoire*-concept for example or the idea of *cosmopolitan memory/mémoire croisée* (especially concerning the Shoah). In biographical research the relationship between individuals and the social side has been explored, and the gaps between official reminiscence as collective reality and the so called private remembrance have been fat-homed. In this field, so far, comparatively less energy has been put in the antonym of remembrance – in forgetting, abandoning the past, earlier experiences, and former selves. So it was a nice surprise to find the opposition of remembering and forgetting in the title of this year's XVII International Round Table "Memory and Forgetfulness" in Blagevgrad. In our project "Women and Minority Documentation and Digital Presentation – from Fragmented Data to Integration in the Information Society" we – and this is somehow self evident, if working on improving documentation and archiving – never talked about the advantages of deliberately forgetting, about throwing out and discarding. And we did not consider (modern) life maybe requiring forgetfulness from individuals in order to keep them functioning.

Despite this, I am just about to put together an edition of the diary of an Austrian woman, born in 1851 in Krems, which is a small but then quite prosperous merchant's town in Lower Austria, not too far from the capital Vienna. Wetti Teuschl began to write at the age of eighteen and had been continuing her diary for fifteen years. Her records cover only a few years of a long life (as she lived to 1944). Nevertheless, they tell a manifold and dynamic story. I am grateful for the encouragement to explore this mate-