

# AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

Elisabeth Feist Hirsch

## I. MY FAMILY BACKGROUND

My father Sigmund Feist was born June 12, 1865. (His given name is indicative of the Wagner enthusiasm of the time.) He grew up in Mainz, a lovely city situated on the Rhine, along whose banks one could take long walks. The city at the time had no university, but the Gutenberg Museum there attracted many visitors. Steamboat trips on the Rhine were a welcome diversion and the famous "Rhinewine" contributed much to the gaiety of the people.

My father belonged to a large family. He had three sisters who never married and a brother who, if I remember right, died at middle age. A paper business provided the family with a modest income. My father was especially devoted to his mother, in whose memory he later dedicated a volume *Die Deutsche Sprache* (*The German language*). After he finished the Gymnasium in Mainz my father selected Strasbourg for his advanced studies. (Strasbourg was then a German city not far from Mainz.) His doctoral thesis was on *Gothische Etymologie* (*Gothic Etymology*), a subject which occupied him for many years to come. It was published in 1888, when he was 23 years old. He dedicated it to Professor Johannes Heinrich Hubschmann, his former teacher at Strasbourg.

Doctorate degree in hand, my father had to look for a teaching position at a Gymnasium. He selected Bingen, which he could reach by train from Mainz. The teaching assignment was rather heavy, in terms of hours, and included subjects with which he was less familiar and demanded much preparation.

Around the turn of the century, when my father was 35 years old, he decided to get married. His future wife Toni Rawicz was born on July 14, 1875. She was the daughter of a rabbi, whom I remember as a tall and friendly man, and his wife, a rather small woman (in that respect, a quite unequal couple), with intense cultural interests. A friend of my Aunt Klara, who later became the wife of President Neilson of Smith College, said of her in her autobiography that she

was a great reader but cared less whether there were some crumbs on the floor.

My mother, a beautiful woman with small features and light brown hair, grew up in Offenburg, a small town at the foot of the Black Forest. She was sent to a monastery school where she made a good record and continued her studies in Freiburg (Baden). She earned a degree as a grade-school teacher, which was quite unusual for a woman at the time, but she never taught.

I do not know how or where my parents met. It is most likely that they were introduced to each other by common friends. When my father would visit his fiancé in Offenburg, they would go for long walks in the woods. We were told the story that on one occasion my mother asked her fiancé what he would do if a wolf would all of a sudden appear. My father's answer was that he would climb a tree. My mother was disappointed since she was eager to know what he planned to do with her.

The wedding took place in 1902. My father did not like the idea of leaving his young bride - she was 25 years old - alone in Mainz while he was teaching in Bingen. He thus decided to open his own school which was frequented by German and French students. As far as I know it was successful.

In 1903 my sister Ilse was born, and I, a year later. My parents could well be satisfied to bring up a family in a city like Mainz, which offered many opportunities for a healthy outdoor life. However, my father had not yet given up hope of being able to pursue his scholarly interests further. He thought of Berlin as the best place to find the necessary material for his research.

My mother liked the idea of moving to a big city which would offer her many attractions. But the question was how to manage such a move. My father could not count on securing a position similar to the one in Bingen because strict regulations were in his way. He would have had to take an oral examination and a teacher's training course to qualify as teacher at a Gymnasium. Luckily another opportunity for transferring to Berlin came to his attention, the possibility of becoming director of an orphanage.

In 1872, with the financial backing of Moritz and Sarah Reichenheim, prominent Jews of Berlin, the Reichenheimsche Orphanage was opened in the city. It was an imposing brownstone building that attracted much attention from the citizens. It enjoyed an outstanding reputation up to the Nazi takeover of the government. Asta Nielsen, the famous actress of silent movies, used girls from the orphanage for certain scenes for the film *Wenn das Leben Nein Sagt* (*When Life Says No*). My father found the offer he received as director of the orphanage attractive, and moved the family to Germany's metropolis in 1906. I would like to refer to an article, reprinted in this volume, that I wrote about the

orphanage and my parents' involvement in running it (see *Gegenwart und Rückblick. Festgabe für die jüdische Gemeinde in Berlin 25 Jahre nach dem Neubeginn*. (Present time and Retrospective. Festive Offering for the Jewish Community of Berlin 25 years after the new beginning) ed. H. Strauss and Kurt Grossman. Heidelberg 1970). The title of my contribution is *Mein Vater Sigmund Feist. Erinnerungen an das Reichenheimsche Waisenhaus* (My Father Sigmund Feist. Remembrances of the Reichenheim Orphanage). The volume contains a good picture of my father and of Asta Nielsen with the girls of the orphanage.

The orphanage was located in the northern sector of Berlin, at Weinbergsweg (Vineyard Way) 13. The name of the street and the hills on both sides recalled the time when grape orchards could be found there. Our family had a large apartment on the first floor where my father's office also was located. Here, with the help of a secretary, he attended to his official duties. He still had time to produce a great number of scholarly writings over the years. Among them were the internationally renowned *Comparative Dictionary of the Gothic Language*. The first edition appeared in 1909, three years after our transfer to Berlin. This was followed in 1923 by a second enlarged edition and in 1937, a third edition. In addition, my father for twenty years was editor of the journal *Jährliche Veröffentlichungen von neuen Ausgaben in deutscher Philologie* (Yearly Publications of new Editions Relating to German Philology). (For my father's scholarly activities, see Professor Ruth Römer, *Zum Andenken an Sigmund Feist* (In Memory of Sigmund Feist) 1865-1943, in the Journal *Muttersprache* in 1977). Among my father's wide interests should also be mentioned his *Stammeskunde der Juden* (The Jewish Tribes), 1925, where he developed the theory that Jews do not represent a certain race but, rather in the course of time, develop the physical traits of the people in the guest country.

In her article, Professor Römer also shows how much abuse my father had to take for his theories from highly conservative scholars in the field who did not abstain from connecting his views with his Jewish background. My father, on the other hand, according to Professor Römer, answered these vicious attacks with utter self-control. The annoyance of his adversaries (especially Much in Vienna and Neckel in Berlin) reached a high point when my father was the first Germanist to lecture at the Sorbonne after the First World War. He selected as his subject: *Celts and Germans at the right bank of the river Rhine*, where he defended the theory that the Germans there were originally Celts who adopted the German language. I think the theory is accepted today, but at the time scholars considered it an affront to speak of Celts instead of Germans in this context.

The description so far gives the impression that my father was a typical

scholar and had little sense of or interest in practical matters. But this was not the case. In contrast to my mother, whom he called "the woman without scientific laws," he was able to fix things in the apartment and to take care of practical matters that came up now and then. It is interesting to note that my father had planned to become a doctor but abandoned the idea because he was near-sighted. Nevertheless, on an important occasion he showed his medical acumen. When we children were about 10 and 11 years old, my mother became sick with blood-poisoning. We never found out what caused it. I still remember how all of us were sitting in the bedroom expecting her to die any minute. At that point, my father came up with an excellent idea. He asked my uncle who was our physician to call the most famous heart specialist in Berlin and to ask him to pump up my mother's heart. It was the right thing to do since no sooner had the doctor done his job, when my mother opened her eyes and was saved.

Since my father was fully occupied with his official duties at the orphanage and his writing, it was fortunate that my mother, an intelligent and able woman with interest in philosophy (which, by the way, I inherited from her) could play an important role at the orphanage. She was in charge of the kitchen and had to take care of problems arising with the girls whereas my father supervised the boys.

In a lovely garden behind the house our family would enjoy a coffee hour during the summer under the shade of four large trees. In winter when snow was on the ground, I would fetch a sled and race down a little hill. On the boys' side of the garden was a gym and some outdoor equipment for exercising. When I was not yet in school, I climbed a high ladder to the top. When I looked down I got scared and screamed for help. Luckily somebody heard my screams and came to my rescue.

My sister and I had a happy youth without much interference from my parents. Sometimes we engaged in rough play, especially when we were alone. On one such occasion, we pushed each other against the entrance to the apartment which was of glass but happily nothing happened to neither us nor the door. We also had an outlet for our activities playing games with the girls of the orphanage in good weather, usually in the garden. We further participated in special events scheduled for the girls. Once a week a teacher gave dance lessons to a group of girls which my sister and I joined and enjoyed very much. A music teacher who also taught the girls was less appreciated by me since I had little talent for the piano and finally gave it up. My parents probably were disappointed since at the time piano playing was part of a girls education.

In contrast to my sister who always looked for some entertainment, I was

the quiet one and designed my own activities. For a few years I was occupied playing school with paper dolls that I had cut out from a magazine and since they could stand, I arranged them on a window sill. I gave them names of my classmates and did my homework calling on one or the other to "answer" my questions. This custom lasted for a few years until I decided I had outgrown it.

There was one iron rule for the whole family to follow: never to be late for supper in order not to cause any inconvenience for the cook in the kitchen. On one occasion this caused me great trouble. I went for the afternoon tea at the house of a friend from school. We had a lively conversation and the hours went by without our noticing it. Suddenly, I remembered I had to be home for supper and that it was high time to leave the company. I had to take a tramway but in my excitement I took it in the wrong direction. When I noticed it, I descended but had to walk home since I had no money left. As I was crying, a friendly lady asked me what is the matter and when I told her she gave me the ten cents for the tramway. I arrived somewhat late for dinner but nobody noticed it because there were guests for the evening meal.

I was a teenager when the First World War broke out and lasted from 1914 to 1918. With each year the food situation got ever more difficult although the orphanage got special food allocations such as fats, and my father had stored some staples like rice and noodles. My mother with some women of the neighborhood prepared a cookbook to teach women how to bring variety to the dinner table. They suggested cutting cabbage, which was readily available, into strips and presenting it as asparagus. For growing children like my sister and myself, it was impossible to buy material for making dresses. Without hesitation, drapes were removed from the windows and a seamstress made them into dresses. I still have before my eyes a green dress embroidered at the neck which I thought was very pretty.

My father taught at a *gymnasium* for boys to relieve the shortage of teachers many of whom had joined the army. He was quite successful judging from the flower arrangements the students had sent him after the war with a note that read: "to the best substitute." When the war was over, the Quakers came to Berlin and delighted the children at school with a lunch including chocolate pudding and white rolls, delicacies we had not seen for a long time.

The worst problem for the postwar situation in Germany was the inflation that followed the high reparations that the Allies had imposed on Germany. As soon as one received some money, one had to spend it right away in order to avoid its further devaluation. In order to make some pocket money for myself, I tutored some girls in school. On the request of one of their parents, I read with

one of them the *Nibelungen* story as used by Wagner.

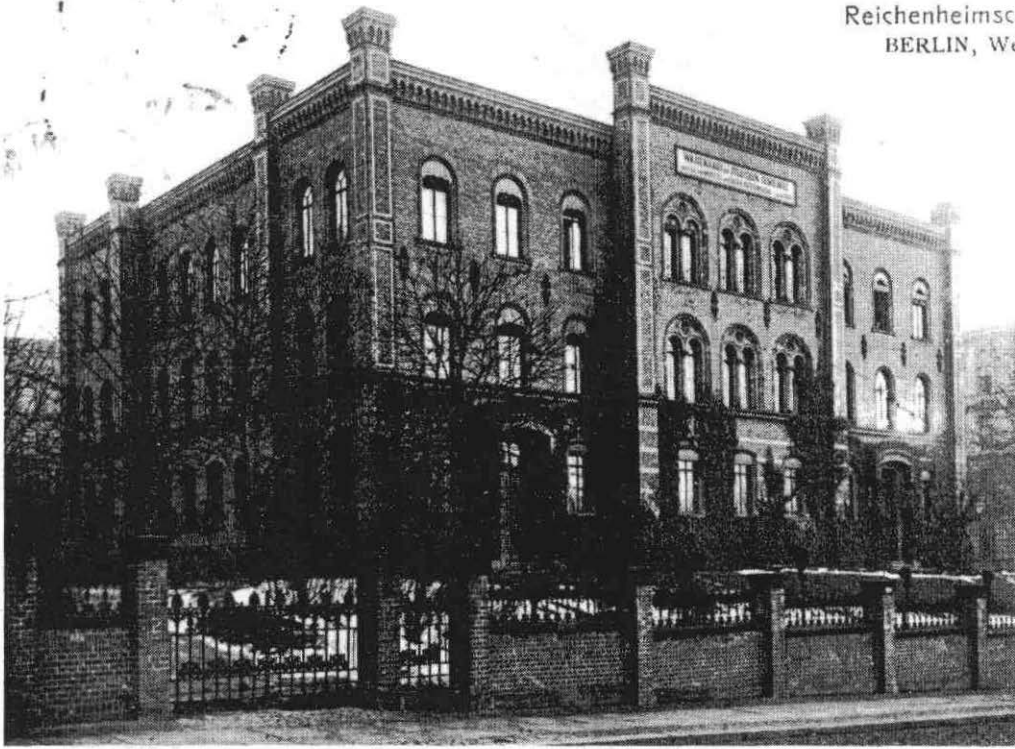
As the depression eased somewhat, my friends and I eagerly watched the cultural scene develop before our eyes. Brecht's *Dreigroschen Oper*, daring as it was for a conventional audience, and plays like Toller's *Masse Mensch* keenly interested us. Mary Wigman's New Dance and Rheinhard's fascinating theater productions were sources of great excitement. We were similarly enthusiastic about Philharmonic concerts under maestros Furtwängler, Bruno Walter, and Kleiber. I still can see the young Yehudi Menuhin in short pants playing the violin for a most appreciative audience. I studied Rilke and George, two great poets whose messages were not easy to comprehend for a young audience, but I tried hard to find my way through them. Thomas Mann, the foremost novelist at the time, was especially challenging. I observed the New Arts, such as expressionism and the Bauhaus with interest but not any special enthusiasm.

At the time when all of this was going on around me, I had finally reached the last year of the Gymnasium. After the latter was behind me, I had to take a written examination that, after I passed it, entitled me to enlist at a university of my choice. There was no doubt in my mind that I would pursue such a career that was open for my generation of women for the first time. My parents did not put any serious obstacles in my way. I decided I would spend my first year at the University of Freiburg. My parents liked the idea because they hoped I would stay during vacations with my grandparents in nearby Offenburg. Because the financial situation of my parents was still difficult, they decided on an exchange. The daughter of a family with whom I would stay would live in turn with my parents in Berlin. In that way, my university career started.

My sister pleased my parents when she married rather young. Her husband was an x-ray specialist, a medical career that was rather new. When Hitler took over, they went to Baghdad where he worked at a hospital, but later they immigrated to the United States where after Walter had passed his doctoral examination, he had no problem getting a job. She was an elegant woman with excellent taste. I was always happy when I could inherit one of her dresses. For a short time my sister ran a wholesale business for blouses which was quite successful, but she gave it up to join her husband who was stationed in Germany. I felt rather sorry for her because her husband was a difficult man to live with. He had no special interests besides his job and I suppose he did not want any children who could have given them some joy. He died rather early of lung cancer. She was a successful hostess and enjoyed my children's visits. She finally suffered a stroke and supported by my sons I buried her next to her husband.

## MY FAMILY BACKGROUND

Reichenheimsches Waisenhaus  
BERLIN, Weinbergsweg 13



Reichenheim Orphanage in Berlin, Germany



Elisabeth, Toni, and Sigmund Feist, late 1920s

## II. MY EDUCATION

At the end of the First World War I was a teenager in Germany, ready to take advantage of the educational opportunities that the Weimar Republic had opened for women. By the turn of the century there was already a strong movement for the emancipation of women and my generation reaped the results. We could attend the university of our choice and teach at the Gymnasium.

After a few years at a secondary school, I attended the Gymnasium for girls that had recently opened in the Northern section of Berlin where we lived. We had excellent teachers who helped us to develop our potential. I vividly remember how a well-known historian told us at one of our school assemblies: "A student must do what she must". The words resounded in my ears for many years to come. I was eager to find my place in society, a task that was made easier by the inspiring teachers I had during the last years of the Gymnasium.

Because there were only about a dozen girls in the class, we enjoyed a close relationship with our teachers. The one we respected and enjoyed most was Dr. Werner Büngel, who taught us German literature with an enthusiasm we fully shared. In addition, he invited some of us for a course in art history he gave in his home. In order to bring the artists we had studied to life, he took us to museums and instilled in us a great love of the arts that never left us. Most important for my own development was another course he taught, one in religious philosophy. I discovered then and there my interest in this subject which has been the focus of my scholarly activities up to the present. After I graduated from the Gymnasium I decided to pursue a university career.

My parents were hardly happy about my plan to study philosophy. They would have preferred it if I had announced that I would be getting married. My father, a linguist, considered philosophy a pseudo-science, yielding no tangible results. He compared it with a useless attempt to find a black cat in the dark. But I prevailed. I attended Freiburg and Berlin Universities before I decided to prepare for my doctorate at Marburg University. The great attraction for students of philosophy at Marburg was Martin Heidegger with whom I planned to study. We were fascinated with Heidegger's new approach to philosophy which he developed in *Being and Time* (*Sein und Zeit*), a book that was published during his years at Marburg. Instead of starting with man as the creator of his world, it was Being (*das Sein*) that in epochal events opens a world for man's consideration. I belonged to a small group of students who were invited by Heidegger for a discussion of phenomenology every two weeks at his house. The sessions



always started with Mrs. Heidegger reading a poem. Following the meetings we would have long, animated discussions among ourselves.

Neither in his lectures nor in the seminars were political questions ever raised. Other former students of Heidegger claimed that he was a conservative at the time. This is in obvious contradiction to the fact that Professor Grimm, Minister for Culture during the Weimar Republic, invited Heidegger to come to Berlin University. Since Heidegger disliked big cities he refused the offer.

However, we were not prepared to find him join the Nazi party in 1933 as Rector of Freiburg University. He soon realized it had been a great mistake and returned to teaching. When my whole family spent a year in Heidelberg in 1954 I inquired in a letter whether I could pay him a visit in Freiburg. His answer came promptly and he gave me a convenient date. At the same time he expressed the hope that if many things in Germany appeared strange to me, one thing (his philosophy) would remain familiar. It surprised me that, although many years had passed since I had studied with him including a catastrophic war, he had not forgotten my enthusiasm for his philosophy. On the occasion of the visit Heidegger gave me a little volume with the title *Aus der Erfahrung des Denkens* (*Of the Experience of Thinking*). The left side pages referred to some scene in nature and the opposite side to some thought. One page 17 (right side) we read: "Who thinks great errs great." When on my next visit I asked Heidegger whether he referred this sentence to himself, his answer was a broad smile that expressed both surprise and amusement that I had found out his rationalization of his political error. I then asked whether he would not say something publicly about his joining Hitler, but he was not sure how that could be done. I knew from previous conversations with Heidegger that he disliked speaking about himself. He finally consented to an interview about his political engagement with the magazine *Der Spiegel*, but it was not quite satisfying.

There was also some talk about Heidegger being antisemitic. My own case clearly refutes this. Another example would be Paul-Oskar Kristeller, a friend of mine who also studied with Heidegger in Marburg. Because he was an accomplished pianist, Heidegger asked him repeatedly to play in his house. Kristeller had hoped to enter a university career and Heidegger had promised to sponsor him. When Hitler took over the government, that was no longer possible because Kristeller was Jewish. Heidegger expressed his regret and gave him recommendations to universities outside Germany.

From what I have said so far it might appear that philosophy was my major subject--it would be better to say my major interest at the time. But I fully

realized that I could not teach philosophy at the Gymnasium in case I selected that as a carrier. I therefore took it as a minor subject with German literature and history as my major under the guidance of Professor Hapke.

Professor Hapke was not just our teacher but our friend, and we could talk with him not only about questions related to our historical studies, but other subjects as well. I remember how on several occasions when I saw him I spoke enthusiastically about Heidegger. He listened quite patiently and finally advised me to emigrate to the United States and teach a seminar on Heidegger there. I could not have anticipated that one day I would become a citizen of that country and speak about Heidegger to various audiences.

Professor Hapke arranged trips for his students to other parts of the country. On such occasions we would always stay overnight with his former students. On one such trip we had to climb a large staircase to our rooms. Without realizing it I took a step backwards and fell all the way down the staircase. For a few minutes I was unconscious and the students later told me that I called "Mama, Mama." This little episode is only interesting in that it shows how even a mature young woman can want her mother when in a difficult situation. But I was soon my own self again, and ready to participate in the planned activities.

For my doctoral thesis I decided to investigate the political theories of Jean Bodin, a famous French writer of the 16th century. A German student whom I met at a conference in France many years later told me that my book was still being used by students at Berlin University.

When I delivered the first draft of the thesis to Professor Hapke, he gave me his judgment in a French poem but I could not determine whether it was positive or not. He was away from Marburg for a few days but after he returned I went right away to see him in order to find out about the draft. He told me that everything was fine and that I should continue with the final version.

I think that most of our professors enjoyed having girls among their students and treated them with respect. I remember only one rather unpleasant experience with a professor at Berlin University with whom I took a seminar in German literature. He would always call on the "next male student" for an answer to a question he had raised. I must confess that none of the girls was greatly upset about it and took it rather with humor. At Marburg University we had a good relationship with both our professors and with other students. Many students belonged to a corporation to which girls were not admitted. Instead we associated with non-corporation students. We went on excursions together

enjoying the lovely landscape around Marburg. We also joined dances arranged by the various departments. They were usually costume affairs. For one such dance my sister had sent me a pants-suit which was the newest fashion. My friend Lotte was also in Marburg where she was studying science. We planned to attend the dance together. When she thought the top of my suit was too décolleté she stitched it together. I, too, felt considerably better this way. The dance lasted until the morning hours and both of us had a splendid time.

Lotte was my closest friend from the time we met at a young age at the Lyceum. Since her family lived rather close to us, we often met after school and played together. We were separated during school vacations when Lotte went to her grandparents who had a lovely farm at a lake some distance from Berlin. I, too, occasionally visited there. My parents took us on walking trips in the beautiful vicinity of Berlin. Whenever we could, Lotte and I would write long letters to each other. Once Lotte told me about an unpleasant experience with a boyfriend at Berlin University where she studied. My answer that she should not worry too much because girls could now also enter a career expressed perfectly my state of mind at the time.

We also took some exciting excursions together. To this day I remember our trip through the length of the Rhineland where we stayed overnight with relatives or friends. In Mainz where my sister and I were born, we were treated by three unmarried sisters of my father with delicious Rhine salmon.

The great attraction at St. Goar was the Lorelei rock which was famous for the many legends told about it. There we stayed at the house of a minister who was not home and hence his daughter took care of us. To our great excitement she arranged a dinner party on top of the Lorelei to which she had invited two boys. After a healthy walk up to the top of the mountain we enjoyed the dinner very much. However, the boys consumed too much of the Rhine wine, the pride of the people, and at the end were completely drunk. We had great difficulty getting them down where they screamed for a boatman to take us to the other bank of the river. We felt sorry for the minister's daughter who was quite upset about it all, but for us it was quite an event to have been on the Lorelei Rock.

The most daring and exciting trip was when Lotte and I climbed a glacier in the Austrian Alps. We stayed overnight in a simple cottage deep in the woods. Our guide made sure that we would start at 3 o'clock in the morning before the snow melted in the sun and made it difficult, if not impossible, to climb to the top of the mountain on a steep slope where you could only step ahead one foot at a time. I was somewhat scared about how I would make the ascent and held on to

the guide's jacket since I was walking behind him. He asked me what was the matter and I truly told him that I was scared. If I had been dizzy he would have to carry me. The way down was not easy either because you had to watch your balance, but we made it without any accident.

Since my parents would have discouraged, if not forbidden, us to undertake such a venture we did not tell them about it. However, we had to write home regularly and we did so from the valleys without telling our parents how we got there. We did not reckon with my father's curiosity: he took out a map to see how we went from one valley to the other. To his surprise he discovered that a high mountain lay between them. When we returned home our parents quite naturally were angry with us for not having told them about our plans. But it could not dampen our happiness about this exciting experience.

When my doctoral thesis was finished and I turned it over to Professor Häpke, I was assigned a date for my oral examination. You could mention a subject you would like to discuss with your professor on this occasion. I selected Napoleon, whom I had studied quite thoroughly, especially his liberal views relating to questions of law which he had introduced in the Rhineland. I was quite stunned when Professor Häpke asked me about Napoleon's battle strategy, which interested me very little. I think that he noticed my uneasiness and changed the subject immediately. Everything went well after this incident.

For the German examination I selected Thomas Mann who had just published the *Magic Mountain*. I had no time to read the book but consulted a master's thesis by a friend of mine. Our conversation about Thomas Mann covered mainly this last published book. My source must have written a good account of it since Professor Elster later told me he enjoyed our conversation.

I was quite worried about the examination in philosophy. I had named Kant as my major interest, but had never taken a seminar on the subject with Heidegger. However, he noted my agitated state of mind and tried to calm me down by telling me that he would discuss with me Kant's concept of imagination. It put me at ease and everything went well and I passed my doctoral examination *magna cum laude*.

Since I planned to teach at the Gymnasium I had to take the so-called State Examination, for which I wrote a master's thesis on Bergson's concept of time. Like my doctoral examination it caused me no problems and I received a *summa cum laude*.

### III. RESEARCH IN FRANCE AND PORTUGAL

After I had passed my doctorate with honors and the Prussian State examination that entitled me to teach at the Gymnasium, I was eager to continue my studies of political theories in France in the sixteenth century. This I could do only in the National Library in Paris which I knew was rich in the material I was looking for. However, the question was how to finance such a venture. At the very time when I had this question on my mind, a friend told me he had received a Rockefeller Fellowship for studies in genetics in the United States. That encouraged me to try my luck with the Foundation, too. The Committee was located in Berlin in easy reach for me. The first step was to get recommendations from my former teachers at the university. They were most willing to do so.

After the committee had received those letters, they asked a professor at Berlin University to discuss with me Bodin's political theories, the subject of my doctoral thesis. It seemed to me he was satisfied with our conversation. It gave me hope that the committee would look favorably at my application. But, unexpectedly, opposition to my appointment was raised by the secretary of the committee. He was against women getting fellowships on the ground that they would get married which would mean the end of their scholarly interests. He could not know that I was an emancipated woman who took her research seriously and did not think of marrying before she had established herself professionally. After this comment I had little hope of being awarded a fellowship. Professor Schmitt-Ott who was president of the so-called *Notgemeinschaft* which helped scholars finance their research or publication, was also in charge of the Rockefeller Committee. It was a happy surprise for me that he would take my side. He mentioned my father's scholarly achievements besides his main professional duties and was sure that I would continue my scholarly interests after marriage. A few weeks later, I received news that I was awarded the fellowship.

I made a list of books I was interested in which would save me some time in the National Library in Paris. However, I was somewhat worried about my proficiency in oral French which I had little opportunity to practice. Because the Rockefeller Foundation had no objection if a fellow like myself took a course in French before she would start her research, I decided to enroll in a summer course in French especially for foreigners at Grenoble University. The course improved considerably my ability to converse with people.

I stayed at a pension outside Grenoble which was frequented by Germans and Italians. I have still a lively recollection of a farewell party for an Italian student who left for home. It was in the main a contest about who could drink the most. I kept to my Contreau which I enjoyed very much and although the liquor had brought me in a gay mood I was still in full command of my actions. This did not please the Italians and in order to raise my spirits they ordered a glass of beer for me which, without hesitation, I emptied under the table. But such frivolous events were quite rare and I did not enjoy them at all.

I was happy in Grenoble and made good progress in improving my oral French. Since I was also a great nature lover, I did not want to miss the Tour des Alpes which was a most enjoyable experience. It ended in Marseille where the wide ocean took me in its grip and the bright moon gave a wonderful light to the landscape.

When the time came to start my research in Paris, I was ready for it. Professor Lichtenberger, who taught German language and literature at the Sorbonne, had recommended the Pension Sévigné at the left bank of the Seine. It was frequented by female students who studied at the Sorbonne or prepared themselves for an examination. There were also some foreign students who enjoyed themselves in the big city. Whether they also studied, I never found out. They apparently took some items from a department store which caused quite a stir at Sévigné. Since their fathers held high office in their respective countries, their actions were ascribed to kleptomania that was beyond their control and they escaped punishment.

For me, the Pension was the right place. It gave me the chance to befriend some French students. Our exchange of views gave me much insight into the French way of life (see my article at the end of this book).

I enjoyed the Boulevard theaters and learned to appreciate the beauty of the French language. All performances lasted until midnight and some people warned me not to go home alone. Since I had not yet any acquaintances outside Sévigné, I had no choice and I certainly did not want to miss this and other great experiences. Once when I was invited for dinner by a friend of mine in her home, I asked her mother whether her daughter could sometimes go with me to the theater. The answer was quite clear and not unexpected. "Oh no, mademoiselle," the mother said, "not without a chaperon." However, she allowed that I, as a foreigner, did not pose the same question. Indeed, my generation of women in Germany was already emancipated and independent. I discovered on my own the beauty of Versailles, the Cathedral of Chartres and cities such as Orléans

or Rouen, to name only a few such excursions.

My days were spent at the Bibliothèque Nationale which was situated on the right bank of the Seine and I had to take a tramway to get there. I finally decided to walk the rather long distance because it gave me the opportunity to enjoy time and again the beauty of the city.

The material related to political theories in the 16th century was so rich that I needed more than a year to cover it all. Therefore I decided to spend a few more months in Paris in the summer of 1931. The materials were all valuable books, many of them printed in the 16th century. That was the reason that I had to sit at a special table with some other people, all of us watched by an employee who made sure that we would not damage the books. It did not occur to me that the authorities would take a dim view when an acquaintance of mine looked at the book I was reading. However, both of us had to appear before the director of the library who warned us if this would happen again our admission cards would be taken away.

The people at the same table now and then engaged in a conversation eager to find out about our respective scholarly research. Thus it happened that one person took a special interest in my work and talked with me about it on several occasions. He even brought me books to the library without introducing himself. However, an employee told me he was the Portuguese ambassador to Vienna, where he had little to do and hence preferred to spend his time in Paris and satisfy his historical interests.

Shortly before the year was over and I had to return to Germany, the ambassador introduced himself and to my surprise, asked me whether I would like to do research in Portugal with a fellowship from the Institute of High Culture. Portugal was not much known in Germany at the time but I was interested in her great Age of Discoveries. On the other hand, I had been much intrigued by a manuscript dealing with religious tolerance that was written by Sebastian Castellio, an adversary of Calvin, in the sixteenth century. So far this had not been published.

I was eager to undertake its publication, but I had to make a decision. Should I abandon my project to publish the manuscript and go instead to Portugal? Indeed, I was not sure at all what I should do. I explained the situation to the ambassador and told him that it was difficult for me to decide one way or the other. I asked him whether I could write him as soon as I had made up my mind. The ambassador was agreeable to my proposition and gave me his address in England where he planned to spend some time. Once back in Berlin, the excite-

ment about the Portuguese project quieted down and I came to the conclusion that I should first publish the manuscript before undertaking another project. Accordingly I wrote to the ambassador. The decision I arrived at was done rather intuitively than rationally, but it was the right one in view of the turn my life took later.

The manuscript was written in Latin with quite a few additions or deletions. It demanded careful reading and not surprisingly took two years. Professor Erich Seeberg, a well-known theologian at Berlin University, had shown a great interest in the manuscript and had arranged for its publication. But when it was ready for the printer, it was 1932 and Hitler would soon be appointed chancellor of Germany. It was impossible for me to publish anything in the country, at the time, because of my Jewish background. However, I was again lucky and a solution for the manuscript's publication was found unexpectedly.

News about my work spread among scholars who were interested in it. Among them was Delio Cantimori, a noted sixteenth century historian of Italy. He visited me in Berlin where we discussed Castellio's concept of tolerance. When the question of its publication arose, Cantimori came to the rescue and offered to add the manuscript under my name to the collection of sources related to the sixteenth century he was preparing. I accepted the proposal gratefully. The book was published by the Royal Academy of Rome in 1937.

Cantimori was a close friend of Professor Roland Bainton of Yale University with whom he shared many scholarly interests, among them the writings of Sebastian Castellio. Our common interest in Castellio started a correspondence back and forth. At some point, Roland asked me whether I would like to come to Yale University to continue my scholarly interests there. He further promised to get me a Sterling Research Fellowship. Nothing more important could have happened to me at the time.

It was the year 1936 when the Olympics were held in Berlin. From his address to the Portuguese people on this occasion, which was published in all newspapers, I learned that Dr. Da Veiga-Simões, the Portuguese ambassador I had known in Paris, had been transferred to Berlin. What a happy surprise! It took all my courage to call the Portuguese embassy where I was told to come with my father for a visit. The very first question the ambassador asked me was a repetition of what he had suggested in Paris, whether I would like to go to Portugal doing research with a fellowship from the Institute of High Culture. I accepted his offer with a strong feeling of gratitude for his generosity and for the fact that he did not harbor any feelings of resentment of my having refused the



same offer in Paris. I learned that one of the Portuguese consuls in Berlin criticized the ambassador for promising a fellowship to a Jewish person. His answer was simple and to the point: "In our country such laws do not exist." In addition the German Foreign Office through its consul in Lisbon voiced its strong objection to my appointment.

Since the Yale Fellowship would be for September 1937 to September 1938, I had the larger part of 1937 for research in Portugal. My father was somewhat worried that I might be stranded in the western-most country of Europe without any financial support. But he was wrong. When I landed in Portugal in the Spring of 1937, I was given the whole fellowship right away and deposited it in a bank. I decided to stay in Carcavelos, an hour by train from Lisbon and in close proximity to the seashore which made it possible for me to enjoy the invigorating air of the sea in the evening after I had finished my work in the library. I roomed with a family of mixed national background. Although the father was a native Portuguese, his wife was of German origin and could help me when I had some difficulty with the Portuguese language.

After several months of research in the library in Lisbon, I finally concentrated on the engaging figure of Damiaõ de Gois who attracted my special attention because of his dedication to humanism and his friendship with Erasmus. King Joao III appointed him secretary of Indiahouse, the Portuguese factory, in Antwerp and sent him on several missions to foreign countries, including England, Poland and Russia. On the way to the latter countries, Gois stopped over in Wittenberg where he had a long talk with Melancthon. It caused him great trouble after his return to Portugal including a prison sentence. Once his mission to Russia was completed, Gois' curiosity led him to the Don River and a visit with the Tatars.

Some of Gois' friends who studied at Louvain University strongly supported his ever growing interest in humanist studies and his final decision to give up his diplomatic career. As a budding humanist, Gois was befriended by Erasmus with whom he stayed in Freiburg for several months.

To grope deeper into Portugal's sixteenth century and the biography of Damiaõ de Gois, I had to use the Rare Book Room. This was only possible with a recommendation from the German consul in Lisbon who refused to do so. I informed the ambassador about my difficulty and without delay he wrote several letters to important people which opened all doors for me.

Not only did I find in Portugal a rewarding scholarly project that kept me busy for quite a few years, I also was enthralled by the beauty of the country and

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its many monuments, as well as with the kindness of the people. In addition I found in Maria José Mendonca, a Portuguese friend with whom I had many enlightening conversations on all kinds of subjects including, of course, her own country. Maria José had studied art and later became the director of the ancient museum in Lisbon. In this capacity, she also visited the United States in order to investigate the country's greatest museums. After my move to America, we exchanged many letters and stayed in contact with each other.

I had to be in the United States in the fall of 1937 for the opening of the new academic year. The Portuguese were kind enough to release me from my contract a few months early (I made later trips to the country to finish my research). After the Second World War, I went back to Portugal with my husband and our two boys. We decided to live in Carcavelos so that the children could go to an English school. When my husband and I took a sightseeing trip, they could even board there. It is characteristic of the good nature of the Portuguese that our landlady worried that the boys would feel lonesome without their parents and visited them every day in school when we were away, bringing them cookies from her own bakery.

To collect the material for a Gois biography, I had to visit various European libraries I was finally able to do this in 1954 when the whole family spent a year in Germany. The book appeared in 1967 after I took a leave from my teaching job and with the help of a Guggenheim Fellowship spent all my time writing the biography. When the book had appeared in print the Portuguese government gave me a generous award. A few years ago, the books were translated into Portuguese. A reviewer praised the lively style and the thorough investigation of sources. I dedicated it quite appropriately to the memory of Dr. Da Veiga-Simões.

## IV. STUDY WITH ROLAND BAINTON

### AT YALE UNIVERSITY

My decision in 1931 to publish the Castellio manuscript before I undertook any new project was indeed momentous. It was my edition of this manuscript that put me in contact with Roland Bainton.

I must admit that at that time I did not know of Professor Bainton's great interest in Castellio. From our correspondence that started with a long letter from Roland in 1933, I learned of his plan to publish an English translation of *De Haëreticis*, Castellio's only book dealing with religious tolerance that was published in his lifetime. When Bainton's book appeared in print in 1935, I wrote a rather long review of it for a German journal.

In the course of our correspondence, Roland Bainton was kind enough to send me articles and references concerning Castellio and was eager to know whether *Of the Art of Doubting*, the Castellio manuscript on which I was working, would soon appear in print.

My correspondence with Roland Bainton continued and in 1936 Roland, without knowing I was Jewish, asked me if I would like to come to Yale University to do research. In answer to his proposal (written in my "best" English), I told Roland Bainton how happy I would be to continue research under his guidance. He also mentioned the possibility of a Sterling Research Fellowship, something that required several letters of recommendation.

Because of the political situation in Germany I was hesitant about asking for the necessary references, but, I must say, I had no disappointments. Among those who wrote recommendations was Erich Seeberg, a noted theologian at Berlin University who took an interest in the publication of the Castellio manuscript. He was a scholar known to Bainton. Another was Professor Elster of Marburg University. I had studied German literature with him and he assured me of his help in the same positive way he had when I was a student.

In the Fall of 1937, I took a ship from Rotterdam to the United States. This made it possible for my whole family to see me off. Their feelings were mixed: happy about the exciting experience awaiting me, but sad to see me go so far away. Although I was apprehensive, I had a taste of the friendliness of the American people as soon as I boarded the ship. I shared a cabin with a woman who introduced herself as Gertrude Smith from Smith College where, as I learned later, she taught music. Her friendly ways broke the ice between us and before the trip

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was over, she invited me for a weekend at Smith College, a weekend which I later enjoyed very much.

Yale's Social Service Office had alerted Travellers' Aid to take care of me once the ship landed in New York. That meant I had to wait until the whole ship was cleared. When that was done, I was safely escorted to International House in New York where I was to stay overnight. It was three o'clock in the morning and I was exhausted, but I was far too excited to find any sleep at all.

The next day everything looked much brighter. A young woman showed me some of the sights of New York before giving me instructions about taking the train from New York to New Haven. Roland Bainton met me at the station. His friendly face and kind manner inspired me with much confidence and softened the jitters caused by the trip into the unknown.

In the beginning I expected that I would feel rather lonesome, far away from family and friends and unfamiliar with the language and customs of Americans. Roland and his family helped greatly to ease my fears and to help make me feel at home in New Haven. Mrs. Bainton took me to the Dutch Treat Restaurant for lunch and then later to the Bainton home outside of New Haven so that I could meet their children. Her charm and liveliness set the tone for the many happy get-togethers that followed and continued after I had established my own family.

After I had found a place to stay that was in easy reach of the university, I had to think about my research. On the application form, I had indicated a plan to study the relationship between Church and State in New England, not realizing at the time that it was impossible to cover that subject in a year. I discussed the matter with Roland and decided to confine myself to the conflict between John Cotton and Roger Williams. Roland introduced me to the staff of the Sterling Research Library whom I found most cordial and ever ready to secure any book for me. To this day I am thankful to them for having facilitated my research. I can still see dear Miss Hall who was in charge of the Rare Book Collection and who always answered my many inquiries most patiently.

Now and then I would find a note from Roland on my desk at the library, telling me of something related to my research or of some event he thought might interest me. The opening of the Divinity School at the beginning of the academic year was an occasion that made a great impression on me. Many people came to greet me after Roland told them that I had just arrived from Berlin. I was flattered by their interest in my background and in my reasons for coming to Yale, but I was painfully aware that the textbook English I had learned in

school did not prepare me to say more than a few words in response to their questions. I encountered my greatest difficulty in conversation when I could not recognize the name of a person who was mentioned. The names should have been familiar, but the English pronunciations puzzled me. Such was the case when Roland arranged a luncheon meeting for me with some Yale professors. I was asked about a person who as a heretic was expelled from Portugal in the Sixteenth century, but it took some time before it dawned on me that I knew who the person was but I just didn't recognize the anglicized name.

To improve my English, I took lessons from a lady who taught German at a school in New Haven. For the same reason I often dined with the students at the Graduate School and learned much in conversation with them. Finally I was ready to take some courses at the University. I attended one of Roland Bainton's lectures and seminars. His vast knowledge of religious history, especially as it related to the sixteenth century, was of great interest to me and helped me to trace the English background of John Cotton and Roger Williams.

My knowledge of American history was scanty at best. At the time, German schools and universities paid little attention to the New World. I decided to take a course in American history offered by Professor Labaree which gave me an excellent introduction to the subject. When Professor Labaree asked me to present some results of my research to his seminar, I accepted, but with some trepidation because I thought my pronunciation of English might cause difficulty for the students. I heard no complaints. In all likelihood this was due both to their understanding of my situation and to their innate politeness. As a matter of fact, I had friendly relations with the students; some even invited me to the Yale vs. Dartmouth football game at the Yale Bowl.

I was grateful to Charles McAndrews, the much admired expert on American history, for reading my paper beforehand and giving his comments on its structure. Some years later, I read a paper at the Historical Association meeting which was based on my research at Yale. This was then published in *Church History* and is reprinted in this volume.

In our frequent conversation I mentioned to Roland how I became acquainted with the Quakers. Realizing that the Quakers might be interested in my experience, Roland introduced me to a Quaker family who invited me for Sunday dinner. After the meal, we went to Westbury where a group of Friends discussed the possibility of helping some countries with refugees from Germany. They asked me to relate my experiences after the war in 1918. A few days later I talked about the same subject over the New Haven Radio Station. With the help

of my German teacher I prepared a little speech that went well. This first experience with the Society of Friends in America eventually developed into a much closer relationship.

I am happy to say that in the course of time my circle of friends increased considerably. When Professor Prokosch learned that I was at Yale, he asked me to come to his office where we had a long conversation. At the Head of the German Department he was familiar with my father's linguistic studies and expressed his great admiration for his *Comparative Dictionary of the Gothic Language* which had just been published in a new edition. Professor Prokosch kindly assured me that he considered me a link between himself and my father.

I had many reasons to be grateful for Professor Prokosch's kindnesses to me. When I became engaged, he invited me and my fiancé for a celebration in his home outside of New Haven. He also wrote several recommendations for me to colleges when I was looking for a position and last, but not least, he gave me an affidavit for my immigration to the United States. I was greatly shocked when I learned that he had died during my stay in Germany.

Professor Prokosch encouraged me to attend a meeting of the Department of Linguistics. Although the papers were beyond my comprehension, I had a welcome opportunity to meet some of the professors. Among them were Professor Sturtevant who did pioneering work on the Hittite language, Professor Oberman who represented the Semitic languages, and Professor Goetze whose specialty was the cultures of the Near East. I took a course with Dr. Goetze on the Hittite culture which was little known to me at that time and read with pleasure his book that he gave me. Over the year I had pleasant relations with his whole family, including his wife and several children. I often had dinner with them at their home and enjoyed many lively conversations.

During the first hectic weeks time passed without my noticing it. November came with two interesting events in store for me. I spent Thanksgiving Day with a family in New York. Besides the splendid meal, I enjoyed the conversation with my hosts who wanted very much to know what was going on in Germany. Staying overnight with a friend offered me the opportunity to see New York in the evening. I was enchanted by the colorful lights of Times Square that gave it a fairyland appearance.

Roland Bainton had urged me to attend the Historical Association meeting in Philadelphia after Christmas. I was told this was a very large meeting, so I was a bit scared about going there by myself. I did not want to disappoint Roland, so I decided to go, no matter what. It went much better than I thought. The open-

## STUDY WITH ROLAND BAINTON AT YALE

ness of Americans made it easy to establish contacts. I attended quite a few lectures that were of interest to me but not easy to follow. During the brief months that I had been in the United States, I still had not completely broken through the language barrier. It was easier for me to understand Roland's lectures, possibly because I was familiar with his thoughts and helped by his lively performances.

I also attended some luncheon meetings where we were seated at small tables which were much more conducive to conversation. This gave me an opportunity to meet Beatrice Reynolds, Professor of History at the Women's College at Hartford, Connecticut. I was surprised and pleased to learn that she had read my dissertation on Jean Bodin in connection with her investigations of political writers who were in favor of a limited monarchy. Beatrice invited me for a weekend at Hartford which I accepted with pleasure.

After the congress in Philadelphia and the New Year's celebrations, I had to think of my future. I wanted to have another year of the fellowship to continue my research on early American history. Both Roland Bainton and Charles McAndrews wrote letters of recommendation to the committee, but at that point that outcome was difficult to predict. Therefore, I decided to try for a position at colleges or universities in the East. Roland Bainton gave me a strong endorsement for Smith and Professor Prokosch for Mount Holyoke.

At Smith I stayed with Gertrude Smith, the Music Professor I met on the ship from Rotterdam. She introduced me to many people, but there were no tangible results. Also on my program were visits to Harvard, Radcliffe, and Boston College. People were friendly and interested without giving me any hope for a position. Some friends warned me that it was much harder for a woman than for a man to find a teaching position. In addition, they said, my Jewish background, or what some called my refugee status, was against me.

Fortunately I had developed many friends among the students at Yale. The first place belongs to Grace Frick who studied English. She took foreigners under her wing, helping them to adjust to American mores. I enjoyed luncheon meetings for women that she arranged and readily corrected my European prejudices that such gatherings should always include both men and women.

Grace also presented me with tickets to the theatre, a good opportunity to learn more about the English language. We kept in contact after both of us left Yale. On her recommendation I later spent a summer at Juniper Lodge where I still remember Mary Ellen Chase reading to us from her books. When she learned that I was expecting a baby, she put a gift in my room with a note that read: "I would have liked to have a daughter to dress her for church."

After Felix and I were married and had moved to Bard College, Grace would visit us occasionally. We then lost touch with her until the 1970s, when we spent a few summers in Northeast Harbor, Maine. One day I looked rather casually at the telephone directory and found to my surprise Grace Frick listed. She invited us to visit her at the house which she shared with Marguerite Yourcenar, the noted French writer (and first woman elected to the Academie Française). Grace was the same old friend. One day she brought to us a whole fish, which we then could eat for several dinners. We joined them on Sunday afternoons, which they had reserved for meeting their friends. We enjoyed the conversation, which left us refreshed until the next time. During the week Marguerite was busy writing and Grace with translating her books into English. Marguerite gave us a signed copy of one of her books during our visit in 1972.

Another among my friends at Yale was Kate Wallach, a woman of German origin who worked for the Law department. I was often invited to her home to enjoy her exquisite dinners. She would also take me and some other friends for drives to show us the environs of New Haven. During one of her conversations, she casually remarked that she had met Felix Hirsch, another refugee from Germany, at the International House in New York. Kate could not guess what memories that name evoked in me. Felix and I had been friends in Germany and were quite fond of each other. At the time Felix was already an established journalist, but I was still pursuing my career and was not yet ready for marriage. I learned from Kate that Felix was Librarian and Professor of History at Bard College, a progressive college that was then part of Columbia University.

We started a correspondence, saw each other on many occasions, and finally decided to become engaged. It was a happy ending of a happy year at Yale. The first person I told about the engagement was, of course, Roland Bainton, who found the right words for the occasion: "I am happy," he said, "that you have had a good year and doubly so because your coming (to Yale) has been the occasion of entering the best career that life holds."

Because Felix had been brought up in the Protestant and I in the Jewish faith, we decided to be married at the Quaker Meeting in New Haven where I had established pleasant contacts with some of the members. I was quite positive about their faith which was free of dogma and stressed a spiritual relationship with the Divine Being. I had told Roland about what I thought of the Jewish situation in Germany, so our decision did not surprise him.

I did not know much about a Quaker marriage ceremony, but hoped that Roland could play some part in it. The Quakers have no minister officiating at a



marriage, but Roland was willing to contribute a prayer of consecration, not as a clergyman, but as a member of the meeting.

Grace Frick, as kind a friend as one could wish for, gave me a "Cotton" shower in her apartment with ten of my closest acquaintances attending. Grace arranged an exhibit of reminiscences of the minister, John Cotton, and then after the meal gave a witty lecture on Cotton. She then asked me to come to the "desk" to look at the gifts which were quite appropriately all of cotton. Once I started unwrapping them, I was delighted to find them both pretty and useful for my future career as a housewife. Among them was a robe which I wore for a long time, an apron, kitchen and guest towels, and other items, many of which have survived to this day.

It was a happy coincidence that at the time of my engagement my sister came to the United States for a visit, so she could help me with the farewell party I had planned. My landlady kindly turned over her house for the occasion, otherwise I could hardly have accommodated the twenty people I had invited. But there were also serious problems to be solved. Because I was still only on a student visa in the United States, I had to go back to Germany in order to immigrate into the country. Unfortunately my passport was no longer valid and I had to ask the German consul in New York to renew it. In view of the situation in Germany, this was not an easy matter. Persuaded by some Yale officials, the consul finally extended the passport for a few months. This allowed me to travel to Germany. Once there I found a long waiting list for immigration to the United States, as the atmosphere in Germany was becoming ever more menacing.

While waiting I busied myself arranging my affairs and deciding what to take with me to my new home in my new country. I enjoyed meeting Felix's mother, a very good-hearted woman, his sister, and her husband and visiting friends, but it was most difficult parting from my parents because I was worried about their fate in Germany. Happily, a professional friend of my father's invited them to come to Denmark. When Hitler entered the country, the Danish aristocracy hid the Jews in their homes until they were transported on small ships to Sweden during the night. My father died in Denmark, but my mother survived and after the war came to live with us at Bard College.

I planned to take the ship from Paris in late September. This was on the same day that Daladier returned from his visit with Hitler. All Paris resounded with shouts of peace, an illusion as they would find out all too soon.

After I returned to New Haven in October, my first concern was to set a wedding date. We decided on November 6th. The ceremony was impressive in

its simplicity and especially meaningful because of Roland Bainton's participation. Roland wrote a letter about the wedding to my parents in which he said: "I wish you might have been here. It was simple and solemn and moving to think that they had found each other by such strange ways of Providence." After the ceremony we shared a dinner with some friends. Roland and Ruth Bainton readily accepted their roles as substitute parents.

**This Certifies that**

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Elizabeth Feist*  
and  
\_\_\_\_\_  
*Felix Hirsch*  
were united by me in

**Holy Matrimony**

on the *sixth* day of the *eleventh* month  
day of the year *A. D. One Thousand Nine Hundred and thirty eight*  
at *New Haven, Connecticut*

in *Dwight Hall*  
according to the rites of the *Society of Friends and of*  
*The Congregational Church*  
and in accordance with the Laws of the State of *Connecticut*

Dated by me on this *sixth* day of  
*November* A. D. 19 *38*

*Roland H. Bainton*  
Minister of the Congregational Church

## V. BARD COLLEGE

After our wedding reception, we stopped over at the Beekman Arms Hotel in Rhinebeck, New York, which is only a short distance from Bard College. The rural setting close to the Hudson River and the interesting historical background of the whole area delighted me. It was here that the Astors and the Vanderbilts had built their large estates. The Zabriskie Estate whose large garden offered a view of the Hudson was later given to Bard.

Not long before we arrived the College had changed from an Episcopalian institution to a progressive college of Columbia University. It was Dean Tewksbury's task to implement this changeover. He assembled an interesting faculty, among them some foreign-born professors such as my husband, who had to transform the library's book collection to the needs of a progressive college. It was a difficult task but he handled it successfully, and was awarded the Bard Medal in 1961 (after we had moved to Trenton) for his efforts. In addition, Felix taught a course in Modern European History. This had been his major interest at the University of Heidelberg where he received his doctoral degree. I still marvel today how Felix, who had been a journalist with the *Berliner Tageblatt* in Germany, found so much satisfaction in his new career. I think his love of books was the reason behind it.

Felix had great respect for Dean Tewksbury and said of him: "Of the six deans/presidents under whom I worked at Bard I have always felt that I learned the most from Tewksbury....He was not an easy man to get along with at times, although I had no personal conflicts with him. He was demanding as far as the work of the library was concerned, and had an enormous wealth of educational ideas, sometimes more than one could carry out...." [See *Education for the Common Good. A History of Bard College-the First 100 Years (1860-1960)*, by Reamer Kline. Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York, 1982]

I found a very kind reception from the faculty at Bard, and we enjoyed many lovely dinner parties given in honor of Felix and myself. I felt very strongly that I should return their many kindnesses. But how could I do this? My mother had often urged me to take cooking lessons in order to be prepared for when I should get married and have to take over the various duties of a housewife. Now the time had come, which meant a definite shift from my scholarly activities. I could not count on my husband's help because Fe-

lix's library duties occupied him not only during the day, but often into the evening. Happily the Baintons had given me a copy of the Fanny Farmer cookbook as a wedding gift, which I consulted whenever the need arose. By and by I felt secure enough to invite friends for a dinner party at our home.

In due course of time our first son was born, late in the evening on November 30, 1939. We named him Roland after Roland Bainton who had done so much for me. In his letters to us he would often sign as Roland I in contrast to our Roland II. On the whole our Roland was a quiet boy who invented his own entertainment.

Two and a half years later, on February 22, 1942, our second son Thomas rounded out our family. He was a somewhat livelier fellow than his brother. In the meantime we had moved from our apartment which had become too small for a family of four to a house at the so-called Faculty Circle which had a lovely garden attached to it. Since all of my life I had enjoyed walking I had fun taking the children on tours of the campus and later discovering the Bard environment with them.

Until both children went to school I devoted my whole time to them and enjoyed seeing them grow up and discovering ever more new things around them. When I would spend a day in New York doing research, Felix would take care of the children. Since he found it difficult to entertain them he preferred to play music records for them which they loved. Our family acquired another member when friends gave us a dog we called Snipper. She became very attached to us and we to her, and she stayed with us into old age.

When the children were in school and made good records I felt free to return to my scholarly interests. I wrote articles and book reviews and enjoyed teaching philosophy at Bard. We often invited a group of students to our house for some refreshments after supper. When Marian, who worked at the library, became engaged to a Bard student, Bill Nichols, we gave them a party at our house. When Bill had finished his studies they settled in Rhinebeck, where we would see them whenever possible. Our friendship with the Nichols has lasted through the years up to the present time.

Felix had great influence on his students and often helped them to select a career when they were not clear about it. Among them was Bob MacAlister, whom Felix advised to think of a career in foreign affairs. He made an excellent record in this field. The students have kept his memory alive and recently contributed to the Bard Library in memory of their former mentor.

Since Vassar College in Poughkeepsie was not far from Bard we had

good relations with the faculty there. I remember that I met a professor of South American history who showed interest in my studies in Portugal. We also tried to see the Baintons as often as possible. I still have vividly in my mind the lecture on Martin Luther Roland delivered at Bard. It made a great impression on the students by its lively presentation not only of his religious teachings but of his personality as well. The lecture showed Roland's complete familiarity with the reformer, which would find a perfect expression in his biography of Luther, *Here I Stand*.

Due to Roland's busy life these visits were rare and the more appreciated by our whole family. It was sad to see him grow older and weaker. We (my son Roland and his daughters Betsy and Sallie went with me) paid a last visit to him in his summer home. We had a nice dinner together, including a chocolate mousse prepared by Betsy which Roland especially enjoyed. We talked about memoirs which he was then writing which appeared in modified form after his death. From this last visit we took with us Roland's unusual personality that combined seriousness with a sense of humor.

When the war in Europe was over, my mother came to the United States on the very first plane. My sister met her and put her on the train to us in Dutchess County. It was a very happy reunion since I had not seen my mother since I left Europe. Felix, too, gave his mother-in-law a very friendly reception. His mother, with whom he had lived until he left Germany, had gone to Norway in the 1930s, where Felix had a cousin, the geochemist Victor Goldschmidt. No one could have realized that this would be such a dangerous country to live in for her. When Hitler entered Norway, the Quislings helped to round up the Jews from Germany. Felix's mother did not believe that they would look for old people such as herself and did not follow Goldschmidt's advice to escape to Sweden, which he later did, and was finally transported to a concentration camp and never heard from again. It still makes me very sad when I think of what the poor woman went through.

Happily my parents were received very kindly in Denmark. The Portuguese ambassador Dr. da Veiga Simões had even arranged that they could enter Portugal. My father gave this careful thought and conceived a plan to take his books along and organize a library of Germanic and Indogermanic books there. It did not work out, and my parents felt quite happy in Denmark. Eventually my father's library was sent to New York and then shipped to us. Felix worked for two weeks preparing a catalog that we could send to universities which might be interested in acquiring the books. The library

was purchased by the University of Rochester and the \$1000 we received for it was sent to Denmark to reimburse the kindly people who had supported my parents financially and in other ways.

My mother enjoyed her life with us at Bard. Occasionally she would visit my sister in New York and loved the big city as she had Berlin. One summer we rented a house on Cape Cod and took along the whole family. One day Roland was eager to prepare the breakfast for all of us. My mother could not believe he could do it and suggested that we all go to a restaurant. I persuaded her to wait and see and she was satisfied with the result.

My mother also took other trips with us but her high blood pressure worried us very much. I still see before me how she enjoyed the reception following the commencement at Bard and went from table to table for refreshments. She looked very cute in a little black hat with a red bow on top. I was worried then that the whole affair was too tiring for her. Unfortunately, the next morning she had a stroke and we had to call an ambulance to take her to the Rhinebeck hospital. After she had made some progress towards recovery we placed her in a new nursing home where I visited her every week, but her condition did not improve and we lost her not long after.



Thomas and Roland at Bard College

## VI. TRENTON

We had been at Bard for sixteen years and Felix was eager to find a library that would be more challenging. It so happened that the Librarian at Trenton State Teachers College in Trenton, New Jersey was leaving and Felix, who had previously taught at Trenton during several summer sessions, was offered the position and was scheduled to begin during the Spring of 1955.

This allowed us to enjoy a trip to Germany which we had planned for some time. In order to help finance the trip, Felix received a grant from the American Philosophical Society and I a fellowship from the American Association of University Women. After we had settled in Heidelberg we spent the rest of the summer with Felix's sister in the mountains of Switzerland. A highlight was a reunion of Felix's family.

In September we enrolled Thomas and Roland as boarding students at the Odenwaldschule (Odenwald School) located at the edge of the Odenwald forest half way between Heidelberg and Frankfurt-am-Main. Felix taught courses in history at the Technische Hochschule Karlsruhe (Technical Institute of Karlsruhe, not far from Heidelberg) and Heidelberg University. He would return to both institutions to teach as a Visiting Professor during the 1960's. I spent my time in libraries trying to find material for my biography of Damião de Gois, the Portuguese humanist and friend of Erasmus.

Felix left Germany in February 1955 to begin his new position at Trenton State. When Thomas, Roland and I returned from Europe in the Fall, Felix had found a new home for us not far from the college and arranged to have all our belongings shipped from Bard where we had had them stored. The house on Pershing Avenue in the Trenton suburb of Ewing Township was our home for close to thirty years, during which time we enjoyed the friendship of neighbors such as Roy and Jean Titus and Bill and Marianne Walker. Roland was enrolled at the George School, a fine Quaker secondary preparatory school in Newtown, Pennsylvania, near Trenton. Thomas went to a Ewing township school for a year and then also went to George School.

We had many friends in the college and in the area and had an active social life. Our friends on the faculty extended across the range of all disciplines and included both teachers and administrators. These friendships began in 1955 when we came to Trenton and many have continued to the present time.

The first year in Trenton I taught philosophy at Rider College. Soon

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after that Roscoe West, President of Trenton State College, came to our house and asked if I would consider teaching German and an introductory history course at the college. I wasn't particularly enthusiastic, but Dr. West assured me that eventually the college would offer courses in philosophy and I would be able to teach them. In a few years I was able to introduce courses not only in philosophy, but also in world religions. Later, under President Robert Heussler, Philosophy and Religion became a separate department at the college, one which still continues today.

Among my courses at Trenton State was one on Heidegger's philosophy. The students were quite interested in it. I gave lectures on Heidegger to diverse scholarly groups, at several colleges as well as at conventions. They didn't know much about Heidegger, but gave my lectures a warm reception. I spoke at a meeting of the American Association of University Professors on Heidegger and poetry, which was later published as "*Heidegger und die Dichtung*" ("Heidegger and Poetry"). I showed this lecture to Heidegger and he suggested a few changes, but not too many. I also wrote "Heidegger and the East". The editor of the journal to which I submitted this manuscript suggested including it in a symposium on Heidegger in Honolulu in 1960. I was happy to take this first chance to visit Hawaii, and the meeting was a success. I was in regular contact with Heidegger during the postwar years, and visited him in Freiburg after the war each time we went to Europe. On the first of these visits, he asked me if I would like a book of his. I said yes, I would like *Sein und Zeit*. By accident his most important book was missing from the library I had transported to the United States. He was surprised that I didn't have a copy of *Sein und Zeit*, since I had taken a course with him just at the time it was published. I realized my mistake, and asked for *Holzwege* instead.

The Danforth Foundation gave a grant to Trenton State for the program in religious studies, with me as director of the project. The funds were used to improve the treatment of Eastern religions. We invited Suzuki to lecture on Zen Buddhism. He aroused much interest in the subject through his clear lectures. The grant also helped us to purchase books for the library's collection on the subject and to bring other lecturers, such as Suzanne Langer, to the College.

I continued my research for the biography of Damião de Gois, begun during the year in Germany. I received, with the support of Roland Bainton, a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1960 for writing the book, and was able to devote full time to the project. The book was published in 1967 by Nijhoff in Hol-



land. The Portuguese government awarded me a prize in the same year for the book, which was the first biography of this Portuguese humanist and diplomat. I traveled to Lisbon with my sister for the presentation. More recently, the book was translated into Portuguese, and received favorable critical notices for its style as well as for the thorough research on the subject.

At Trenton State College Felix had a joint appointment as Librarian and as Professor of History. He was Director of the Library, handling all of the responsibilities of that position. He taught at least two courses in the History Department: a section of the Western Civilization class required for freshman and another in some aspect of Twentieth Century European or German history. He required research papers from his freshman as well as his advanced students. He graded these papers thoroughly, making comments throughout.

He also was an advisor to campus groups, as well as to individual students. In addition he worked at the Reference Desk in the Library and taught sections of Freshman Orientation to the Library, which, in the early years, met once a week for a full semester. In this way he came to know almost every student in the college. Twice, in 1963 and again in 1971, the College yearbook, *The Seal*, was dedicated to him.

Felix worked closely with the Social Studies Association at the College. Through his personal contacts prominent world leaders and scholars such as Hugh Gaitskell, Arnold Toynbee, Alexander Kerensky, Hans Kohn, Roland Bainton, and many others, were invited to lecture at the College. Felix handled all of the publicity for these speakers, writing articles for the local papers, sending announcements to the radio stations, so that the attendance at the lectures sometimes was overwhelming. Kendall Hall was filled, students sat in the aisles, and the overflow audience at times had to be accommodated in the small auditorium nearby with the sound piped in. The response was especially gratifying to the speakers, but it was clear that Felix also was delighted.

To add to the above responsibilities, he served on many College committees, and was active in the New Jersey Library Association, the American Library Association, and the American Historical Association. His particular favorites at the College were the Curriculum and the Graduate Committees. These were the two areas where he could effect the greatest changes in the development of the College.

Felix's energy was incredible. He wrote and published articles on both

history and library topics on a regular basis. He became editor of *New Jersey Libraries* and changed this publication from a minor newsletter to a serious publication for the librarians in the state. His interests centered on the development of the College and University Section of the NJLA, which he served as President, and in the College Standards Committee of the ALA, in which he led the effort to develop standards for college and for junior (two-year) college libraries as its Chair. These standards had a major influence because they gave college librarians the support necessary to improve their libraries throughout the United States.

Indeed these standards were used at Trenton State College when Felix worked for the construction of a large addition to the Library which almost tripled its space. Felix hired Keyes Metcalf, former Director of the Harvard University Library, to serve as consultant in this effort. When Dr. Metcalf was ill during part of this time, Felix traveled to Cambridge to discuss the plans with him and to talk about the progress of the building.

The expansion project was completed shortly before Felix's retirement. The physical plant, the fine book collection, and the expanded and well-qualified staff were all tributes to the inspiration and direction provided by Felix in the seventeen years he served as Librarian. The College acknowledged his many contributions by naming the Reference Room and the entire research collection in his honor. I have a vivid recollection of the ceremony, which took place during his last illness when he still could enjoy the presence of his many friends.

Another honor which came to Felix was the Commander's Cross of the German Order of Merit, bestowed on him by the German Federal Republic for his dedication to improvement of German-American relations in the period after the Second World War, including his many lectures and publications and his part in founding the American Council on Germany.

During the time that Felix served as Librarian and Professor of History, he wrote many articles on history and current events and wrote hundreds of book reviews for specialist and general interest publications, such as the *New York Times Book Review* and *Library Journal*. He used libraries all over Europe and the United States, but his favorite place was a private study-carrel at the Firestone Library at Princeton University.

Felix carried forward his efforts on the biography of Gustav Stresemann during the entire time we lived in Trenton. He published articles and gave lectures on aspects of Stresemann's policies. His positive viewpoint

went against the positions of some American and English scholars and drew criticism from them. This was primarily because Stresemann's foreign policy had dealt with the Soviet Union to the East as well as with the Western powers. Felix was disappointed by the reception his views received, and as a result delayed completion of the project until the 1960's and 1970's, even though he had already signed a contract for the book with the Columbia University Press in the mid-1940's while he was at Bard. Felix wrote a short biography of Stresemann which was published by the Musterschmidt Verlag in Germany in 1964. This met with a favorable reception, and was later translated into English and French.

The full-length biography could not be completed until after Felix retired from Trenton State in 1972. It was published in time for the celebration of the centennial of Stresemann's birth in 1978. We traveled to Germany to take part in the commemorations, our last trip overseas together. The book received numerous reviews both in the United States and in Germany, most of them favorable. Wolfgang Stresemann stated during a lecture tour of the United States that it was the best biography of his father.

This was the last major accomplishment in Felix's long career. Soon after returning from Germany his health began to deteriorate, as evidenced by repeated falls. We were still able to take summer trips to Cape Cod in 1979 and to New Hampshire in 1980, but not long after the latter he was hospitalized. We were fortunate to find a place for him in the nursing care center at the newly opened Pennswood Village across the river from Trenton in Newtown, Pennsylvania. Here he had a cheerfully decorated room, received careful attention from the staff, and had frequent visits from his family and friends. I moved to an apartment at Pennswood in the fall of 1981 to be closer to my husband. After his death on December 12, 1982, a memorial service was held at the Friends Meeting House in Newtown, to which we belonged for many years.

My own retirement has been fulfilling. While Felix was still in good health we traveled to the West Coast, to New England, to Virginia and North Carolina, and to Europe. Since his death I have visited the Trapp Family Lodge in Vermont during the summer months and have traveled to Europe as well.

During the years I kept in contact with my childhood friend, Lotte Hammerling. We talked regularly by telephone and visited each other several times until her death in 1992. In the early 1980's Lotte was still able to

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come to the United States to visit her son Ulli and his family in New York, where he is a research scientist at the Sloan-Kettering Institute. After that she was incapacitated by Parkinson's disease, so I traveled to Germany to visit her at her home in Wilhelmshaven. With the help of her daughter Brigitte, a physician in Dortmund, we were able to have several vacations together.

I have been fortunate to live near the Princeton Theological Seminary and the Speer Library, where I have had access to materials I have needed for my research. I have given papers at conferences in the United States, in Canada, and even in France on various topics. My major interest continues to be the concept of religious tolerance and liberty, with emphasis on the career of Sebastian Castellio. This has interested me throughout my career.

By far my greatest joy has been in watching the growth and development of my four grandchildren, Betsy (born 1972), Daniel (born 1972), Sallie Ann (born 1975), and Paul (born 1977). I have had such pleasure in seeing them grow from small children to interesting young adults. I wish that Felix had lived to see them today. He delighted in young people and would have been so proud of his grandchildren.

My life at Pennswood Village in Newtown has also been satisfying. I have my own apartment and privacy, but I also have the friendship of others who live here, including former faculty members from the College. It is a particular support for me to have frequent visits from the former Associate Librarian at Trenton State College, Joyce Brodowski. I am also fortunate to have regular contact with friends from our days at Bard College, such as Bill and Marian Nichols and Bob and Nina MacAlister. Through Pennswood, I have been able to enjoy concerts by the Philadelphia Orchestra and the Bach Festival in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania and other interesting activities.

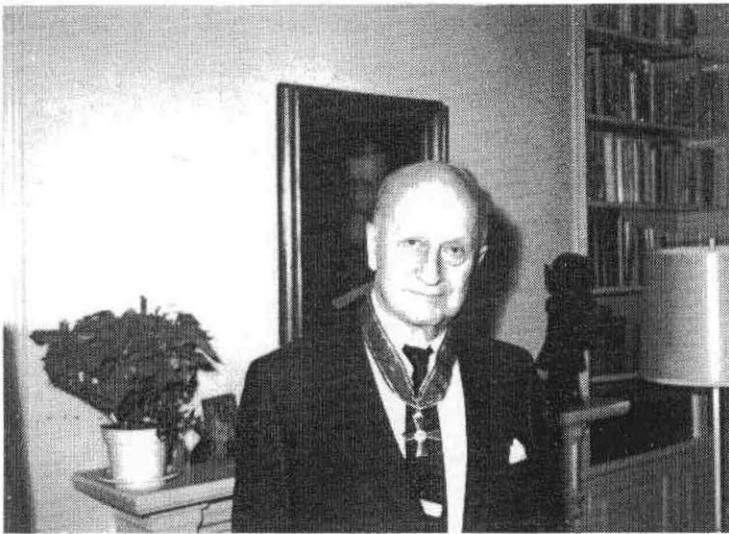
My sons, Thomas who lives in Brooklyn and Roland who lives with his wife Jean outside Washington, are close and dear to me. My cousin Max Samter, a prominent allergist in Evanston, Illinois, and his lovely wife Virginia, an accomplished medical illustrator, are my only other relatives in the United States.

It has been an interesting, varied, and surprising life, one which has carried me from another culture on another continent to my home here in the United States.

Newtown, Pennsylvania, September 1993



Roland Bainton and Elisabeth Feist Hirsch, April 1983



Felix E. Hirsch with the Commander's Cross of the German Order of Merit, January 1973