

Lynn L. Wolff

THE POWER OF LANGUAGE

The ›Wörterverzeichnis‹ of
H.G. Adler's *Theresienstadt 1941–1945*

1. H.G. Adler's Reflections on Language and his *Theresienstadt* Book

How have Jewish intellectuals reflected on the German language both in relation to and in the aftermath of the ›catastrophe‹? This essay explores one perspective, that of H.G. Adler (Prague, 1910 – London, 1988), a scholar, author, and survivor of the Shoah. Adler's relationship to and reflections on the German language offer insights into the experience of persecution and survival as well as into the memory and representation of the Holocaust. His vast body of work testifies to both the possibility and the necessity of writing ›after Auschwitz‹, and indeed to the necessity of writing *in German* after the Holocaust. A survivor of Theresienstadt, Auschwitz, and two satellite camps of Buchenwald (Niederorschel and Langenstein-Zwieberge), Adler went on to write in various forms, from the analytic to the poetic, about National Socialism, antisemitism, and life and death in the concentration and extermination camp system. His scholarly work made an important contribution to establishing the international and interdisciplinary field of Holocaust Studies, and his poetry and novels bear witness to his own personal experiences in the camps, albeit not in a directly autobiographical form.¹

It should be noted that Adler's oeuvre also includes literary, scholarly, and essayistic work on subjects not limited to the Shoah. One characteristic of Adler's work is its ability to move between and across genres and disciplines. This can be seen from his prewar studies in musicology, philosophy, and literature alongside his first attempts at

1 For a thorough investigation of the many facets of Adler's witnessing across his literary and scholarly work, see Ruth Vogel-Klein, H.G. Adler: Zeugenschaft als Engagement, in: *Monatshefte* 103 (2011), pp. 185–212. This is also one of the first articles to outline the importance of Adler's form of *Sprachkritik*.



writing poetry and prose, to his efforts in Theresienstadt to preserve not only documents but also his own humanity by writing complex cycles of poems and giving lectures on literature and the arts. These efforts continued in the postwar years, as is evident in his prolific production of scholarly monographs and essays, novels and poetry, public lectures and radio pieces. Adler's dedication to language – to the German language in particular – is perhaps the strongest line of continuity in his body of work. It is a continuity, in content if not in form, that extends across his lifetime, and it is marked by an interest in language – its history and etymology, its power and potential.

Adler's contribution to the early stage of Holocaust historiography invites broader considerations of how history is written through individual experience. His groundbreaking study of a single concentration camp – *Theresienstadt 1941–1945. Das Antlitz einer Zwangsgemeinschaft* – approaches Theresienstadt from multiple perspectives, as evidenced in the work's tripartite structure that focuses on history, sociology, and psychology. While written in the immediate postwar years, and first published in 1955,² this pioneering work had its genesis in Theresienstadt:³ Adler made the decision to write a book about Theresienstadt while he was still there. In an essay written in 1956 and published posthumously, Adler recounts how this decision had a restorative effect on him, but he makes it clear that he did not yet know what form this book would take.⁴ Shedding further light on the genesis of the work and suggesting the importance of literature as a mode of perception and documentation, Franz Hochedener states, »In Theresienstadt selbst hat Adler keine schriftlichen Vorarbeiten für sein Buch gemacht, aber er hat »unmittelbar Beobachtetes« in Gedichten wie dem *Theresienstädter Bilderbogen* von 1942 [...] festgehalten.«⁵

For the *Theresienstadt* book Adler drew on his own observations, the experiences of others, and documents that he collected during the two and a half years he was imprisoned in Theresienstadt (February 1942 to October 1944).⁶ Before being deported to Auschwitz, he entrusted Rabbi Leo Baeck with a briefcase containing »the documents he had collected on the administration and workings of Theresienstadt, the beginnings

2 H.G. Adler's publisher »[Hans-Georg] Siebeck proposed an initial print run of two thousand copies of the *Theresienstadt* book. This made it possible to price the book at 38 Marks rather than 45, which the publisher hoped would help with sales.« Peter Filkins, *H.G. Adler. A Life in Many Worlds*, Oxford 2019, p. 267.

3 Franz Hochedener outlines the genesis of the *Theresienstadt* book, noting in particular that H.G. Adler completed an initial manuscript by spring 1948, and that, in Adler's own estimation, the first edition published in 1955 did not differ significantly from this original manuscript. Franz Hochedener, *H.G. Adler (1910–1988). Privatgelehrter und freier Schriftsteller*, Vienna 2009, p. 146.

4 H.G. Adler, »Warum habe ich mein Buch *Theresienstadt 1941–1945* geschrieben?, in: Jeremy Adler (ed.), *H.G. Adler – Der Wahrheit verpflichtet. Interviews, Gedichte, Essays*, Gerlingen 1998, pp. 111–114.

5 Franz Hochedener, »Akribische Dokumentation und sprachliches Kunstwerk: H.G. Adlers Pionierwerk *Theresienstadt 1941–1945*, in: *Literatur und Kritik* 375/376 (2003), pp. 35–40, here p. 38.

6 Adler continued his research on Theresienstadt after the war, while working at the Prague Jewish Museum, where he also gathered thousands of additional documents. See Jeremy Adler, »Nachwort, in: H.G. Adler, *Theresienstadt 1941–1945. Das Antlitz einer Zwangsgemeinschaft*, Göttingen 2005, pp. 895–926, here p. 905.

of *Raoul Feuerstein* [Adler's second novel, L.W.], several short stories and essays, and the poems he had written during his thirty-two months there.⁷ At the end of June 1945, Adler returned to Theresienstadt to meet Baeck, who had survived and kept the notes safe.⁸ The briefcase and part of its contents – in particular Adler's personal papers and literary writings – can be found in his estate, held by the Deutsches Literaturarchiv (German Literature Archive) in Marbach. Adler's estate, one of the largest in Marbach, also includes texts and drawings created by other artists in Theresienstadt, such as manuscripts by Peter Kien, a charcoal drawing by Otto Ungar, and a brush and ink drawing by Karel Fleischmann.⁹ The aforementioned collection of documents that Adler gathered in Theresienstadt is held by the NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies in Amsterdam.¹⁰ This collection warrants its own study, which would illuminate the development of the *Theresienstadt* book out of both personal and historical experience.

Published in the fall of 1955, Adler's pioneering work *Theresienstadt 1941–1945* was widely and positively received.¹¹ In addition to the collection of newspaper, journal, and radio reviews that document the book's reception, Adler's estate includes his extensive correspondence, spanning the years 1947–1958, with scholars, survivors, and survivor-scholars as well as with institutions that held relevant sources and resources for his research. In a letter to Franz Wurm on 17 December 1955, Adler notes, ›Bis jetzt sind 118 Ansuchen aus 13 Ländern um Rezensionsexemplare erfüllt und eine Reihe mehr abgelehnt worden.‹¹² In one such review for *Süddeutscher Rundfunk*, Eugen Kogon, likewise a survivor and author of the renowned work *Der SS-Staat* (1946), not only lauds *Theresienstadt 1941–1945* as the most systematic investigation



7 Filkins, *H.G. Adler* (fn 2), p. 149.

8 See Gesa Dane, Einleitung, in: Jeremy Adler/Gesa Dane (eds), *Literatur und Anthropologie. H.G. Adler, Elias Canetti und Franz Baermann Steiner in London*, Göttingen 2014, pp. 7-15, here p. 8.

9 A reproduction of Fleischmann's drawing is included in Adler's companion volume to the *Theresienstadt* book: *Die verheimlichte Wahrheit. Theresienstädter Dokumente*, Tübingen 1958, p. 273.

10 See Hocheneder, *H.G. Adlers Pionierwerk* (fn 5), p. 40.

11 *Theresienstadt 1941–1945* was of such significance during Adler's lifetime that it overshadowed his literary works; a new phase of reception has subsequently emerged, devoting attention to his novels and poetry. For more on the reception of the *Theresienstadt* book, see Lynn L. Wolff, Framing H.G. Adler: A Survivor, Scholar, and Author in the Wake of the Shoah, in: Lynn L. Wolff (ed.), *A Modernist in Exile. The International Reception of H.G. Adler (1910–1988)*, Cambridge 2019, pp. 3-21.

12 Cited in Marcel Atze, ›Ortlose Botschaft‹. *Der Freundeskreis H.G. Adler, Elias Canetti und Franz Baermann Steiner im englischen Exil*, Marbach am Neckar 1998, p. 138.

of which he is aware, but also argues that Adler's personal experience in Theresienstadt is an asset to the study.¹³ Kogon furthermore highlights the remarkable addition of the detailed list of words included in the text, noting the position of this section at the front of the work: ›Voransteht auf einunddreißig Seiten des Großformats, in dem das Buch erschienen ist, ein bemerkenswertes Verzeichnis von Wörtern des Lager-, Ghetto- und SS-Jargons.«¹⁴ In fact, the glossary was one of the aspects Adler enumerated in a letter to Hans-Georg Siebeck in response to the publisher's concern that the book needed to stand apart from Kogon's work.¹⁵ This significant thirty-page glossary of over six hundred ›Stichwörter«¹⁶ is intended not only to facilitate the readers' understanding of the work, but, more importantly, to give them insight into the world of the camp. It hit an emotional nerve for some readers. Franz Wurm, who escaped Prague at the age of thirteen on a *Kindertransport* and was one of Adler's most important correspondents, wrote to Adler about his difficulties in reading the *Theresienstadt* book: ›Ich habe seinerzeit mit dem vorangestellten Glossar beginnen wollen, es hat mich nur so geschüttelt, in ein paar Worten und deren Erklärungen stecken alles Elend und Niedertracht der ganzen Zeit.«¹⁷

Adler revised the *Theresienstadt* book, and a second edition appeared in 1960, which in turn was reprinted in 2005 with an extensive afterword by Jeremy Adler, a scholar of German literature and H.G. Adler's son. An English translation was published in 2017, but notably without the extensive ›Wörterverzeichnis« (xxix), as Adler titles it. In his review of the English translation of the *Theresienstadt* book, Ben Barkow laments the ›deeply damaging‹ decision to eliminate this section, asserting: ›I contend that you cannot understand Terezín if you do not grapple with the fact that it was part Czech, part German, and part other, more sparsely represented nationalities. This fact, coupled with the ghetto's long pre-history, shaped the language and the language in turn shaped the inmates.«¹⁸ The connection between the creation of Theresienstadt and the creation of a specific camp language – ›eine Sprache, die, wie das ganze Theresienstadt, etwas nie vorher Dagewesenes darstellte«¹⁹ – was a dimension of Adler's

13 Eugen Kogon, Ein Buch und eine Meinung: Eugen Kogon spricht über das Buch *Theresienstadt* von H.G. Adler, broadcast 11 September 1956, *Süddeutscher Rundfunk*, Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach (DLA), A: H.G. Adler, A II 64, pp. 1-8, here p. 3.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

15 See Adler, Nachwort (fn 6), p. 913.

16 Adler, *Theresienstadt 1941–1945* (fn 6), xxix. All further references to the work – cited parenthetically in the body of the article – will be taken from this edition (2005), which is a reprint of the second, revised edition from 1960.

17 Cited in Atze, ›Ortlose Botschaft‹ (fn 12), p. 140.

18 Ben Barkow, A Heroic Work of Extraordinary Scholarship: On the New Translated Edition of H.G. Adler's *Theresienstadt* of 1960, in: *German Historical Institute London Bulletin* 40 (2018) issue 1, pp. 86-98, here p. 92. Barkow's review furthermore provides a detailed description of how the original work was received, see pp. 92-98. Anna Hájková's history of Theresienstadt as a prisoner society provides helpful context for understanding the ways in which language, ethnicity, and nationality intersected in the camp as well as how inmates' relationship to language changed over time. See Anna Hájková, *The Last Ghetto. An Everyday History of Theresienstadt*, Oxford 2020, pp. 4-5.

19 J. Petersen, Das Buch der Woche. H.G. Adler: *Theresienstadt*, broadcast 25 March 1956, MS: Gabriele Strecker, *Hessischer Rundfunk*, DLA, A: H.G. Adler, A II 64, pp. 1-10, here p. 1.

work that was perceived by contemporary reviewers as well. The significance of the role of language and its particular history are, in essence, the implicit argument H.G. Adler is making by compiling such a substantive glossary and including this apparatus at the beginning of his scholarly tome.

My focus here will be on the ›Wörterverzeichnis‹, for it encapsulates both the spirit and the intellect of Adler's particular form of *Sprachkritik*, a historically informed understanding and analysis of language.²⁰ Before delving into the specific details of the glossary, I will first provide some remarks on how Adler guides the readers' use of this section. Then, after an analysis of the glossary as it connects to Adler's form of *Sprachkritik*, I will briefly compare the ›Wörterverzeichnis‹ with a precursor found in Adler's literary estate. Finally, I will contextualize the ›Wörterverzeichnis‹ through further considerations of Adler's relationship to and reflections on the German language.

Adler's attention to language is evident in the *Theresienstadt* book not only in the glossary and its prominent place at the beginning of the work, but also in the entire first paragraph of the foreword to the first edition. The first sentence reads as follows: ›Obwohl ich mich bemühte, dieses Buch in unverdorbenem Deutsch zu schreiben, brachte es das Thema, ein für jüdische Gefangene eingerichtetes Lager der SS, mit sich, daß sich im Text der Sprachverfall im Zeitalter des mechanischen Materialismus im allgemeinen, so wie die gestaltlos krampfhaft Sprache des Nationalsozialismus und die Umgangs- und Schriftsprache in Theresienstadt im besonderen spiegeln und oft geradezu aufdrängen mußte.‹ (xxv) In explaining his attempt to write this study in an untarnished German, Adler draws attention to the fact that language was both manipulated and contaminated under National Socialism, and that such language will thus inevitably be woven into any study of this period. In this first sentence he defends his approach and insists on the need to directly confront both what made *Theresienstadt* possible and the effect this had on language. This first sentence of the foreword also hints at the connection between language and Adler's core concept of ›mechanical materialism.‹²¹

20 I have developed these ideas more fully in a study focusing on a small corpus of articles that Adler wrote for the journal *Muttersprache* in the 1950s and 1960s. In this study, I contextualize Adler's texts both within his larger oeuvre and in relation to the work of other survivors who reflected on language in their literary, autobiographical, and scholarly works (in particular Primo Levi and Victor Klemperer). See Lynn L. Wolff, ›Die Grenzen des Sagbaren‹: Toward a Political Philology in H.G. Adler's Reflections on Language, in: Julia Creet/Sara R. Horowitz/Amira Bojadzija-Dan (eds), *H.G. Adler. Life, Literature, Legacy*, Evanston 2016, pp. 273-301.

21 With this concept, which has its roots in nineteenth-century materialist thought, Adler diagnoses a general condition of modernity, characterized by an absolute devaluing of human life that arises out of abstract rationality. In Adler's words: ›Es ist ein ideenarmes, farbloses, grob sinnliches Denken nach ärmlichen, starr rationalen Formen, die gar nicht die Möglichkeit des Lebens sehen können und zulassen wollen.‹ In this essay, titled ›Der mechanische Materialismus‹, Adler attempts to capture the implications of the concept – essentially, how Hitler and National Socialism were possible – while also emphasizing that ›mechanical materialism‹ is not limited to National Socialism. The essay is, in large part, drawn from the *Theresienstadt* book, notably from the third section on psychology, although it was intended as part of three lectures with a sociological focus. See H.G. Adler, *Der mechanische Materialismus*, in: H.G. Adler, *Nach der Befreiung. Ausgewählte Essays zur Geschichte und Soziologie*, ed. by Peter Filkins, Konstanz 2013, pp. 121-158, here pp. 138-139.

a connection that we will see emphasized repeatedly in the ›Wörterverzeichnis‹. The difficult task of trying to overcome the Nazi past, also from a linguistic point of view, is underscored by the complex construction of the first sentence of the foreword and continued in this line of thought: ›Gewiß jedoch sollte der Ungeist, der dieses Lager schuf und vegetieren ließ, auch sprachlich überwunden werden.‹ (ibid.) To ensure that the reader does not lose sight of the influence of Nazi language, that is, words and phrases, ›die sinnentwertet sind, den Sinn in sein Gegenteil verkehren oder einfach falsch sind‹ (ibid.), Adler consistently and insistently puts such terms in quotation marks throughout the work.²² His emphasis on the power of language – both for good and for bad – and the need to use it critically and carefully is, however, not restricted to the context of National Socialism; rather, he sees a broader potential for language to decline (›Sprachverfall‹) and to become contaminated through political manipulation.

The importance of language is evident even in the more technical comments Adler makes regarding citation in the foreword of the first edition. As context for understanding the linguistic quality – word choice and style – of the documents from which he cites, Adler explains that one must keep in mind that many of the authors of these documents ›teils tschechischer Muttersprache waren und nur mangelhaft deutsch schreiben konnten, teils stilistisch ungeübt und unbeholfen waren‹, not to mention that they were under enormous pressure – both temporal and emotional (›in größter Eile‹ and ›mit dem seelischen Druck‹) (xxvi). Again defending his approach, as he did at the beginning of the foreword, Adler states of the documents: ›[...] an denen [durfte] ich nichts ändern, weil nur ihr getreuer Wortlaut den Charakter der Zwangsgemeinschaft in Theresienstadt unverfälscht spiegelt.‹ (xxvi) Despite the implied infelicities of the language in the documents, Adler insists on citing them as they are, for this reflects the character of the coerced community of Theresienstadt.

2. The ›Wörterverzeichnis‹ of *Theresienstadt 1941–1945*

Adler laid great importance on placing the glossary at the beginning of the work: ›Absichtlich habe ich ein Wörterverzeichnis voran- und nicht nachgestellt, das den Charakter dieses »Ghetto« zu verdeutlichen hilft und auch lehrt, aus welchen Elementen sich die Lagersprache zusammensetzte.‹ (xxv)²³ He prefaces the ›Wörterverzeichnis‹

22 François Ottmann emphasizes the importance of this convention: ›für den Leser materialisiert es diesen Kampf um die deutsche Sprache‹. See François Ottmann, H.G. Adlers *Theresienstadt 1941–1945. Das Antlitz einer Zwangsgemeinschaft*. Ein gattungsübergreifendes Manifest für den Menschen, in: Ruth Vogel-Klein (ed.), *Die ersten Stimmen. Deutschsprachige Texte zur Shoah 1945–1963 / Les premières voix. Écrits sur la Shoah en langue allemande 1945–1963*, Würzburg 2010, pp. 113–126, here p. 121.

23 The entry for ›ghetto‹ makes it clear why he places the term in quotes here, namely, because the historical definition is no longer applicable in the new reality of the National Socialist system of concentration camps. The entry reads: ›Ghetto Es kann nicht oft genug betont werden, daß das historische Ghetto mit dem gleichnamigen Sondertyp des Konzentrationslagers nichts gemein

with a brief note about the different abbreviations used after the keywords in the list: ›O‹ for words found only or mostly in documents (approx. 75 words); ›U‹ for words that were commonly used (›im Umgang‹) (approx. 110 words); ›L‹ designates place names (›Lokalbezeichnungen‹) (approx. 70 words); ›V‹ stands for various expressions that do not technically qualify as ›Lagersprache‹ but that are nevertheless relevant and important (approx. 10 words); ›T‹ is used throughout the list of words as an abbreviation of Theresienstadt. Words not followed by an abbreviation were both part of common usage and found in documents. Following the key to the abbreviations, Adler provides his readers with a brief guide to the pronunciation of Czech words, and, in fact, over fifty of the entries are Czech words or phrases.²⁴ Adler uses asterisks before a word to indicate that it, too, is an entry in the glossary.²⁵ In following such cross-references, one is not only drawn into the logic, narrative even, of the glossary, but begins to develop a more complete picture of Theresienstadt. While the ›Wörterverzeichnis‹ was perhaps not meant to be read alphabetically in its entirety, it is possible and rewarding to do so. With regard to the work's subtitle – *Das Antlitz einer Zwangsgemeinschaft* – the ›Wörterverzeichnis‹ is, in a sense, a snapshot of ›the face of a forced community‹.

In naming this section of the book ›Wörterverzeichnis‹, as opposed to glossary (›Glossar‹), Adler underscores his philological approach. Not limited to definitions, the entries range from brief commentary to detailed explanations, and they help put the information in historical context, that is, in relation to the historical development of Theresienstadt. At times, Adler includes anecdotes, such as in the entry on the death rate in Theresienstadt: ›Sterblichkeit O Die SS ließ sich die »Sterblichkeit« (die tägl. Todesfälle) von einem jüdischen Boten auf Tabellen graphisch veranschaulichen. Die vielen Toten im Spätsommer 1942 lösten bei *»Lagerinspekteur« Bergel kindische Freude aus, und *»Lagerkommandant« Seidl bemerkte einmal dazu: »Die Uhr geht richtig.«‹ (liv)²⁶ At other times, Adler describes a scene to illustrate how the word was

hat. Bis März 1944 hieß es offiziell »Ghetto Theresienstadt«, obwohl nach außen dieser Terminus meist unterdrückt und durch *»jüdische Siedlung« oder »jüdisches Siedlungsgebiet« ersetzt wurde. Dennoch sagte das Internationale Rote Kreuz (IRK) noch 1945 in seinen Berichten nur »Ghetto.« (xxxix) See also the entry for ›Lager‹ (xliv).

- 24 David Rousset prefaces the ›Essai de glossaire‹ (›Attempt at a Glossary‹), included in his *Les jours de notre mort* (*Days of Our Death*, 1947), with a similar guide to pronunciation. David Gramling notes the significance of this: ›[...] without the proper sensory circumstances, the tonal and gestural setting of the words, the reader has access only to a skeletal imitation of the language.‹ See David Gramling, *An Other Unspeakability: Levi and Lagersprache*, in: *New German Critique* 117 (2012), pp. 165-187, here p. 172.
- 25 Similarly, some entries include parenthetical pointers to particular chapters. For instance, the entry on ›Stadtverschönerung‹ ends with ›(s. 6. Kap.)‹ (liii), directing the reader to the sixth chapter, ›»jüdisches Siedlungsgebiet« Sommer 1943/September 1944‹.
- 26 An additional example can be found in the entry ›Zirkus U (1) Name für die *»Transportabteilung« der Prager JKG, besonders in der Provinz. Der Zirkus reiste in die verschiedenen Städte, um dort die Deportationen vorzubereiten und abzuwickeln. (2) Für die *»Kistenproduktion« baute man am Stadtplatz ein großes Zelt. Es hieß: »Theresienstadt hat den einzigen Zirkus der Welt, wo Menschen arbeiten und Bestien zuschauen.«‹ (lix)

used, for example: ›Stern kurz für ›Juden-« oder ›Davidstern«, Abzeichen aus Stoff, das seit September 1941 jeder Jude im Alter von 6 Jahren an außerhalb seiner Wohnung, auf der Kleidung in der Herzgegend fest angenäht tragen mußte. Der Stern war gelb und schwarz mit ›Jude« (bei den Holländern ›Jood«) in Charakteren bedruckt, die den Duktus der hebräischen Schrift verhöhnen wollten. In T herrschte großer Mangel an ›Sternen«, weswegen sie oft umgenäht werden mussten. *OD [Ordnungsdienst] und *GW [Ghettowache] mussten aufpassen, daß ihn jeder habe. *Man sah Leute bestürzt auf der Straße: ›Ich habe meinen Stern vergessen!« Oder sie wurden angehalten: ›Wo haben Sie Ihren Stern?« Dann eilten sie mit schützend vorgehaltener Hand in ihr Quartier.* (liv, emphasis added)²⁷

One gains insight into the inner workings of the camp and the interrelations among individuals, from administrative to social dimensions (two key terms and their related derivations are ›Schleuse‹ and ›Transport‹). One also gains a spatial orientation through the explanations of how the streets were named, with references to the map included in the work (e.g., ›Arische Straße‹, ›L (L1 – L6) = ›Längsstraße‹, außerdem Q (1–9) = ›Quergasse‹); and an architectural and historical orientation through the background information on which buildings in Terezín or parts of the former fortress were repurposed and how (e.g., ›Aussiger (Kaserne)‹, ›Bezirk‹, ›Grandhotel‹).²⁸ Furthermore, one gains an understanding of the particularities of Theresienstadt in comparison to other camps and ghettos through specific entries on Auschwitz, Bergen-Belsen, Birkenau, and Łódź (›Lodsch‹). This is also illustrated by the explanations provided in certain entries, for example: ›Appell entsprach nicht dem gefürchteten ›Zählappell‹ strenger Lager. Appelle der Mannschaft, namentlich vor der SS, wurden fast nur in den ersten Monaten des Lagers abgehalten. Hingegen kannte man ›Haus-Appelle‹ für Insassen eines Hauses, oder ›Appelle‹ (Zusammenkünfte) für bestimmte Funktionäre, z.B. für *›Zimmerälteste‹, ›Hausälteste‹, die ›GW‹ [Ghettowache]. (xl) Several entries help the reader see Theresienstadt's place both within the larger camp system and within the ideology of National Socialism.²⁹

27 Heimrad Bäcker begins his work *nachschrift* (1986) with these three sentences. Taking Bäcker's *nachschrift* as his starting point, Marcel Atze argues for the significance of Adler's ›Wörterverzeichnis‹: ›Adler hat hier wertvolle Arbeit für das kollektive Gedächtnis geleistet. Dieser umfassende Pool an Begriffen aus Täter- und Opfersprache ist [...] bis heute unersetzlich für die literarischen Recherchen zu Theresienstadt.‹ Marcel Atze, ›Wie Adler berichtet. Das Werk H.G. Adlers als Gedächtnisspeicher für die Literatur, in: *Text+Kritik* 163 (2004), pp. 17-30, here p. 19.

28 Barkow also points to the broader history in which Theresienstadt is embedded. Highlighting the term *Ubikation*, he notes, ›The word thus brings to life Adler's comments about Theresienstadt as part of a larger history. It has its origins in [the] time when Terezín was an Austro-Hungarian garrison.‹ See Barkow, *A Heroic Work* (fn 18), p. 92.

29 See the footnote on ›Ghetto‹ above (fn 23) or further entries like ›Judenghetto‹ and ›jüdisches Siedlungsgebiet.‹

The ›Wörterverzeichnis‹ lays bare the nexus of military language (with differentiations between Austrian, Czech, and ›Reichsdeutsch‹) and police language (specifically Czech police language on the one hand and ›Gestapospache‹ [lvi] on the other) and how both fed into NS language. Language from the milieu of criminals (›Verbrechersprache‹, ›Gauinersprache‹) also influenced words that were commonly used in Theresienstadt (e.g., ›Fizl‹). Underscoring the difference between the world of the camp and the outside world, Adler notes in the entry ›Šmelina‹: ›Im tsch. Argot der Kriegs- und Nachkriegsjahre hieß »šmelina« ein »schwarzes«, betrügerisches Geschäft, während es in T eher einen verbotenen Geschäftsvorgang, von dem die SS nichts erfahren durfte, oder einen Schwindel bedeutete.‹ (lii) Adler's focus in the ›Wörterverzeichnis‹ is squarely on the way language was used in Theresienstadt, and beyond the *Theresienstadt* book, we see that Adler was deeply concerned with how the language of National Socialism continued to circulate after the end of the Second World War.³⁰

Several entries demonstrate Adler's form of *Sprachkritik* in terms of how he approaches individual words – often starting with etymology, noting how language changes, and providing warnings against linguistic amnesia – and in terms of outlining the characteristics of ›Lagersprache‹ – one aspect being language contact and language change, seen in the words that he highlights as ›tschechisiert‹ (e.g., ›Zičha‹). Part of Adler's *Sprachkritik* is to not only call out ›Nazisprache‹, but also to reveal how the Nazis dealt with language. Adler does this by underscoring both the influence of Nazi ideology on language³¹ and the intentionality with which the Nazis created language.³² In addition to euphemisms, detailed below, Nazi language both devalued existing expressions – ›betreuen‹ is Adler's key example – and used language to conceal – ›Osten verhüllt für Polen. »Transporte gingen nach dem Osten ab«, wohin? war unbekannt.‹ (xlvi)³³ In many entries, Adler implicitly points out how meaning was manipulated,³⁴ but for the key term ›Aktion‹, Adler is more explicit. The entry reads:

30 See my abovementioned article on Adler's *Sprachkritik* (fn 20) as well as Adler's essay: Wörter der Gewalt, in: *Muttersprache* 75 (1965), pp. 213-230, a slightly revised version of which appeared as: Die Sprache der Gewalt und ihre Wörter, in: Walter Heistermann (ed.), *Abhandlungen aus der Pädagogischen Hochschule Berlin*, Berlin 1980, pp. 179-217.

31 The entry on Jews is a key example: ›Juden V Nach den hitlerdeutschen Begriffen gab es in T »Volljuden« und »Geltungsjuden« = »Halbjuden« oder Getaufte, die auch »Rasse(n)juden« hießen. Im »Protektorat« sprach man von »A-Juden«, »Glaubensjuden« und »B-Juden«, Getauften.‹ (xli)

32 With regard to the suffix ›-Ältester‹, Adler states, ›Die SS schuf diesen Titel und führte ihn in allen Lagern und »Ghettos« ein.‹ (xxx) And of the term ›Arisch versippt‹, Adler notes that it is a ›nationalsozialistische[r] Terminus‹ (xxxi); a further example is: ›Arbeitseingesetzt Menschen wurden, so wollte es die nazideutsche Terminologie, nicht beschäftigt (von schaffen), sondern »eingesetzt«.‹ (xxxi)

33 See further: ›Maßnahme(n) O In *»Tagesbefehlen« usw. wurde verkündet, daß »Ghettoinsassen«, die dies und jenes nicht tun oder lassen, »mit Maßnahmen zu rechnen haben«. Sie wurden nicht genannt, die Drohungen der SS blieben verhüllt.‹ (xlv)

34 See for example: ›Arbeitspflicht V besser Arbeitszwang, bestand für alle Gefangenen im Alter von 16–60 Jahren unbedingt, von 14–65 Jahren bedingt.‹ (xxxi)

›Aktion: hieß in der Nazispache meist eine besondere Handlung, z.B. *›Verschönerungsaktion«. Im Osten wurde ›Aktion« zu einem Euphemismus für Massenmord von Juden, jiddisch »akcije«.< (xxx)³⁵

The first definition listed under ›Arbeitseinsatztransport« makes clear that the term was used as a euphemism.³⁶ Adler states: ›Euphemistisch für Massendeportationen aus T seit 1943, die viele Opfer dem Gastod in Auschwitz auslieferten.< (xxxi) While offering the true meaning behind the term, Adler withholds his own personal experience. Together with his wife and mother-in-law, he was among those deported to Auschwitz in 1944. Upon arrival, his wife chose not to leave her mother's side, and they were sent to the gas chamber together. It is to his wife, Geraldine, Dr. Gertrud Adler-Klepetar, that H.G. Adler dedicates the *Theresienstadt* book (v).³⁷

Finally, through several entries in the ›Wörterverzeichnis«, a core aspect of Adler's own worldview emerges, namely his idea of ›mechanical materialism« as it is manifested in language.³⁸ These entries include:

- ›Erfassen, Erfassung O Sehr beliebt in der Nazispache und auch in T verwendet. Menschen wurden nicht berufen oder herangezogen, sondern »erfaßt«, »für den totalen Einsatz restlos erfaßt«. Typisch für den mechanischen Materialismus, in dem die »Erfassung« = Beherrschung alles Lebendigen als »Masse« erstrebt wird.< (xxxvii)

35 In a series of newspaper articles written in 1945 for *Dos naye lebn*, Nachman Blumental documents new words and new meanings, drawn from both official documents and survivor testimony, to show how language changed under National Socialism, highlighting aspects like euphemism and covert meanings. His first example is: ›Action, which cost so many lives.< He continues, strategically using a German word to accuse the German criminals: ›It appears in absolutely no German dictionary, but nevertheless various SS leaders use it. Who taught them this word with its new connotation? Who is the *Erfinder* of this word? History will have to provide the answer to this question.< Nachman Blumental, transl. Moïshe Dolman, *Historical Dictionary. New Words with a New Meaning*, in: Laura Jockusch (ed.), *Khurbn-Forschung. Documents on Early Holocaust Research in Postwar Poland*, Göttingen 2022, pp. 725-736, here p. 726. See also Hannah Pollin-Galay's contribution in this issue.

36 Further examples of euphemism include: ›Auswanderer, Auswandern O euphemistisch auch für Deportation nach T.< (xxxii); ›Sonderbehandlung V abgekürzt auch SB, außerdem »gesondert unterbringen« = amtliche Auschwitzer Euphemismen für Vergasen von Menschen.< (lii) Adler also devotes attention to euphemism in his essay: *Die Sprache der Gewalt und ihre Wörter* (fn 30).

37 Katrin Kohl connects this dedication to the personification of the subtitle – *Das Antlitz einer Zwangsgemeinschaft* – which lends ›the work an aesthetic dimension that simultaneously foregrounds the fact that the book is about human beings.< Furthermore, she observes that the dedication ›maximally expands the frame of reference, giving the project a moral and religious framework that gains in meaning from the interaction between the personal and the collective [...].< See Katrin Kohl, *Bearing Witness: The Poetics of H.G. Adler and W.G. Sebald*, in: Helen Finch/Lynn L. Wolff (eds), *Witnessing, Memory, Poetics. H.G. Adler and W.G. Sebald*, Rochester 2014, pp. 81-111, here p. 84.

38 Thomas Krämer explores how this concept is central to Adler's novels as well: ›Die Symptomatik des *Mechanischen Materialismus* (Gottlosigkeit, Ideologisierung, Wertezerrfall, Vermassung, Nihilismus etc.) bildet somit den generellen kulturkritischen Hintergrund, vor dem sich die Romane H.G. Adlers entwickeln.< Thomas Krämer, *Die Poetik des Gedenkens. Zu den autobiographischen Romanen H.G. Adlers*, Würzburg 2012, p. 202.

- ›Gehfähig, gehunfähig Wiederholt etwa »gehunfähige Verlauste« (*»angelaust«). Die mechanische *»Erfassung« von Menschen wird aus solchen automatisierenden Attributen deutlich.< (xxxix)
- ›Körperbehindert, Körperbehinderter = Krüppel, vielleicht eine (sprachlich falsche) Lehnübersetzung von tsch. tělesně postižený = körperlich Betroffener, gewählt für Krüppel, Blinder usw. Deutsch ist »Körperbehinderter« ein mechanisch abstrakter Ausdruck, der zwar das auch verächtlich gesagte Krüppel vermeidet, da es ihm wohl zu persönlich scheint, dafür aber die »behinderte Masse« = Körper bezeichnet. Man unterschied »leicht-« und »schwerkörperbehindert-«.< (xliii)
- ›Restlose Erfassung O Für den Totalitätsanspruch des mechanischen Materialismus muss alles »restlos« geschehen (*»erfassen«).< (xlix)
- ›Vorgesetzte Behörde O Hier, wie auch außerhalb von T, verschämte Bezeichnung der ungenannten SS, die sich hinter jüdischen Exekutivämtern verbarg. Alles geschah »auf *Weisung der vorgesetzten Behörde«. Typisch für die unheimliche und bedrohliche, dabei unpersönliche Sprache des mechanischen Materialismus. Der jüdischen Stelle ist die Verantwortung gegenüber den Opfern genommen, der Mensch wird zum reinen Verfügungsobjekt des bürokratischen Machtapparates.< (lvii)

For Adler, language is directly connected to, formed, and informed by society. The processes of bureaucratization and militarization that made the crimes of National Socialism possible also led to the alienation of humanity. This phenomenon is best summarized in Adler's claim made a few years later in his essay on the spirit of language and its decline. He asserts: ›Der Sprachgeist hatte den Menschen verlassen, der von seinesgleichen als *Masse* sprach.<³⁹ The ›Wörterverzeichnis‹ documents both the role of language and the effect this process of dehumanization had on language,⁴⁰ but it also serves as a warning for the future.⁴¹ Finally, the ›Wörterverzeichnis‹ is an attempt to reestablish the link between society and language and through this the individual's agency within society.

39 H.G. Adler, *Sprachgeist und Sprachverfall*, in: *Muttersprache* 68 (1958), pp. 254-258, here p. 257.

40 Adler develops these ideas further in his monumental study of the deportations, describing the ›administered human‹ of the title as: ›extreme Beispiele für einen durch und durch unwürdigen Zustand, in den der moderne Mensch, als »Masse« dehumanisiert auch noch unter der Obhut einer um »Daseinsvorsorge« bemühten Vormundschaft, immer hoffnungsloser verwickelt wird und sich selber verwickelt, kaum noch fähig, ja kaum noch bereit, sich aus diesem Spiel als autonomes Geschöpf herauszuhalten und von der entwürdigenden »Vermassung« zu befreien.< H.G. Adler, *Der verwaltete Mensch. Studien zur Deportation der Juden aus Deutschland*, Tübingen 1974, xxx.

41 On a related note, Helen Finch sees an ›operative function‹ in Adler's form of bearing witness in that ›it attempts to build a more humane language and society‹. Helen Finch, Prague Circles: H.G. Adler's Kafkaesque Hope, in: Creet/Horowitz/Bojadzija-Dan, *H.G. Adler* (fn 20), pp. 251-272, here p. 251.

3. A Precursor to the ›Wörterverzeichnis‹

H.G. Adler's literary estate, held by the Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach, contains a three-page document that represents an early stage of the *Theresienstadt* ›Wörterverzeichnis‹. The title, typed in block letters on the first page, reads: ›ALPHABETISCHES VERZEICHNIS VON TYPISCHEN WOERTERN, REDEWENDUNGEN, OFFIZIELLEN BEZEICHNUNGEN USW. AUS TEREZÍN. / DIVERSE BEZEICHNUNGEN VON AEMTERN UND FUNKTIONAEREN SIND WEGGELASSEN/‹.⁴² The words, phrases, and official terms from Theresienstadt that fill these densely-typed pages appear as a continuous string of signifiers in alphabetical order, separated by commas, and in some cases with brief explanations set off by slashes. Most importantly, the terms largely correspond to the entries in the ›Wörterverzeichnis‹ of the *Theresienstadt* book. The manuscript provides insight into Adler's research and thought process, made visible in parenthetical notes and questions.

In the manuscript entry for ›Messepalast‹, for example, Adler notes that he is inquiring into the corresponding names for such ›palaces‹ in other locations. In the ›Wörterverzeichnis‹, the entry presents the results of his inquiries: ›Messepalast U nannte man das Sammellager für zur Deportation bestimmte Juden in Prag, das in elenden Baracken auf dem Gelände der Mustermesse war. In anderen Orten, z.B. in Brünn und Wien, waren die Sammellager oft noch ärger, verfallene und verschmutzte Plätze des Grauens.‹ (xlvi) Most of Adler's parenthetical questions are related to etymology. Of ›Petite‹, he wonders whether the term is derived from French or Hebrew and Yiddish. The ›Wörterverzeichnis‹ reiterates the conjecture but with further elaboration: ›Petite U Plural »Petites«, vielleicht vom frz. petite (chose). Früher von Prager Juden angewendet für Frechheit, Unverschämtheit, Gaunerei, Betrug. Besonders in den beiden letzten Bedeutungen auch in T öfters gehört.‹ (xlvii) Similarly, with the word ›Šmé‹ in the manuscript, Adler wonders whether the derivation is from Hebrew. This then becomes a more detailed entry in the ›Wörterverzeichnis‹: ›Šmé U Deutsch »Schme«, von Prager und Wiener Juden angewandt für unwahre Sache, Schwindel, unlautere Manipulation; vgl. das in Berlin und auch sonst übliche »Schmu« = unlauterer Gewinn, leichter Betrug. Herkunft aus hebräisch »schemua« = Gerede, über rotwelsch »schmu« = leere Versprechungen. »Šmé« in den erwähnten Bedeutungen oder auch mehr scherzhaft (einen Bären aufbinden) in T üblich.‹ (lii) Another example of how Adler expands on the earlier version is seen in the lemma ›Überstellen‹: ›Überstellung, überstellen O In »Tagesbefehlen« wurde verkündet, daß jemand »strafweise in ein Konzentrationslager überstellt« wurde. Ein sinnverwandtes Wort der Gestaposprache war »verbringen«, vielleicht noch eindeutiger

42 DLA, A: H.G. Adler, Zugangsnummer HS.2002.0048.00001,25, Mediennummer HS00103404X. Adler often dated manuscripts, but this one does not include his usual convention of a date on the last page. A barely legible penciled note in the upper left-hand corner of the first page may read ›1946‹.

ALPHABETISCHES VERZEICHNIS VON TYPISCHEN WOERNERN, REDEWENDUNGEN, OFFIZIELLEN BEZEICHNUNGEN USW. AUS TEREZIN. / DIVERSE BEZEICHNUNGEN VON AEMTERN UND FUNKTIONAEREN SIND WEGGELASSEN /

A - I / Bezeichnung der Häuserblocks, Abgänglich, Abgänglichkeitsanzeige, Abgehen / von Transporten, Abereisen / von Transporten, Abteilung / der Selbstverwaltung, auch Abteilungsleiter, Unterabteilung etc., Abteilung G / der Prager JKG, Abwandern und Abwanderung / Deportation, Abzeichnen / für unterschreiben, Ahojista, AK / Transporte, als Begriff, Aktenvermerk, Aktion / z. B. Verschönerung, Altersheim, Aeltestenrat, -Aeltester / in vielen Zusammensetzungen, Altreich, Angelaust / die verschiedenen Grade der Verlausung, Appell, A-Prominent, Arbeiter / der Begriff, Arbeiterbetreuung, Arbeitseingesetzt, Arbeitseinsatz, Arbeitseinsatztransport, Arbeitsghetto, Arbeitsklassifikation / die Kategorien, Arbeitspflicht / der Begriff, Arbeitszentrale, Arische Strasse / und Umgehungsstrasse, Arisch versippt, Assanierung, Aufbaukommando, Aufscheinen / in Aktenvermerken der WA, Auschwitz, Aussenkommando, Aussensperre, Aussiger / Kaserne, Ustecká, Ausreihen und Ausreihung / bei Transporten, Ausschleusen und Ausschleusung / auch in übertragener Bedeutung, vyšlajsnout, Austragen / Transport, Auswanderer und Auswandern / für Deportation, Auswanderungsfonds f. B. u. M., Authentisch / für Gerüchte, Bäckerei, Badhausgasse / hier sind nur die sinnlosen Gassennamen angeführt, Bahnhofsstrasse, Baracken, Barackenbau, Bašta / als Baustein und als Essen, baštit, Baštei, Bauhof, Bauschowitz / B. er Kessel, Bereitschaft / bei der Arbeit, Bergen Belsen, beruška, Betreuen und Betreuer und Betreuerin und Betreuung, Betreuter, Bezirk, Bezirksältester, Bezugsschein, Bezugsscheinstelle, Bialystok, Birkenau, Block / Plural Blocks und Blöcke, Blockarzt / -oberarzt, Blockhaus, Blockschwester, Bodenältester, Bodenbacher / Podmokelská, Bohušovice, Bonke / Plural Bonken und Bonkes - wie ist bitte die hebr. bezw. jiddische Ableitung? / B-Prominent, Bräuhäuser, Brot / allgemein, Brotkartei, Bortkategoris, Celle, Cetnik u brány povídal / ČBP, Cimerka, Cvok, Cvokárna, Dauerdurchlasschein, Dekade, Dienststelle, Dienststellenleiter, Dorsche, Dresdner / Dráždanská, Durchlasschein, Durchschleusen und Durchschleusung, Egerplatz / E VII, Einreihen und Einreihung / Transport, Einsatz und Einsetzen, Einsatzstelle, Einweisung / einweisen, Einzelzuwachs / EZ, Entghettoisieren und Entghettoisierung, Entwesen und Entweser und Entwesung, Erfassen und Erfassung, Essenskarte, Essschale, Essschuss / ešuš, ešálek, Evakuieren und Evakuierung, Evidenz, Familienzerreissung, Fassen und Fassung / fassunk, fšovát, Filzen und Filzung / filčovát, Fliegende Baukolonne, Flucht / Fluchtversuch, Fluchtverdacht, Formblatt / f. Formular, Freizeit und Freizeitgestaltung / frajcajt, Front und Fronta / z. B. : lidický serte, fronta roste!, Ruška, Gebäude / sind Kasernen, Gebäudeältester, Gebäudeevidenzleiter / als Beispiel für tolle Berufe - ich bitte um Angabe weiterer ungewöhnlicher und sprachlich auffällender Berufsbezeichnungen, auch vulgäre und tschechisch, Gehfähig und Gehunfähig / Verlauste, Gemeinschaftshaus / sokolovna, Gendarmerie, Genie / Kaserne - war auch ein tschechischer Ausdruck üblich?, Gesundheitsbezirk und Gesundheitseinheit, Gesundheitswesen, Ghetto / eingehende Definition, Ghettogeld, Ghettoinsasse, Ghettoisieren und Ghettoisierung, Ghettoökone, Ghetto wache / Gemeindegewache, Gliederungsplan, Glimmer / v glimru, v slídě, v slídárně, Gruppenältester, GW / Ghetto wache, Haft / Bunker etc. / Hamburg / Kaserne, Hannover / Kaserne, HW / Hartgepäck, Haus / sind Zivilhäuser, Hausältester, Hausdienst, Hauswache, Heim, Heimleiter, Heraklid, Herausziehen / aus dem Transport, Hilfsdienst der GW, Hinweisen / es wird darauf hingewiesen... /, Hohenselbe / vrchlabská, Hundertschaft, Insasse, Isr. Kultusgem. Wien, Jäger / Jégrovka, JKG in

02.48.1125

Excerpt from H.G. Adler's preliminary work for his ›Wörterverzeichnis‹, undated (1946?) (Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach, A: H.G. Adler, Zugangsnummer HS.2002.0048.00001,25, Mediennummer HS00103404X. Reproduced with kind permission of Jeremy Adler and the Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach. I would like to extend my thanks to the Michael and Elaine Serling Institute for Jewish Studies and Modern Israel at Michigan State University and to the Frank and Adelaide Kussy Scholarship for supporting the research on this article and the publication of this document.)

das Todesurteil ausdrückend als »überstellen«, das *mir* nach dem Bedenken offizieller Dokumente zunächst mehr auf einen Haftzustand hinzuweisen scheint.« (lvi, emphasis added)

While many entries lay bare Adler's attentiveness to language and in particular his etymological knowledge, and others reveal dimensions of his world view, most notably his notion of »mechanical materialism«, this is the only entry in the »Wörterverzeichnis« that contains an explicit personal reference, albeit limited to a level of reflection that reveals no personal experience. This personal pronoun, the only one in the »Wörterverzeichnis«, is nevertheless noteworthy, as it further emphasizes how Adler brackets out explicit autobiographical comments.

4. H.G. Adler's »Wörterverzeichnis« and Sprachkritik in Context

While there are many unique aspects to H.G. Adler's »Wörterverzeichnis«, the act of including a glossary in his *Theresienstadt* book was not in itself unique. Glossaries can be found in both scholarly and personal works written about the Holocaust, and, as Adler's »Wörterverzeichnis« demonstrates, they do much more than serve historical and linguistic functions. Highlighting how glossaries were common additions to both memoirs and sociological texts written about the camps, David Gramling notes, »Publishers encouraged memoirists to provide a list of common camp terms, which would help readers reconstruct an authentic feeling of a given camp's milieu.«⁴³ In exploring the intersections of linguistic, social, cultural, and historical dimensions, the study of these glossaries contributes to discussions of the ethical and aesthetic questions of the Holocaust's representability. In an illuminating study of Yiddish glossaries of the Holocaust, Hannah Pollin-Galay provides a valuable frame for thinking about the potential of such glossaries: »Rather than proceeding on the dizzying timeline of roundups, restrictions, mass shootings, deportations, and selections that structure many narrative testimonies, the Holocaust Yiddish glossaries create an extended pause, in which one can explore the relationships between different objects and ideas, as experienced by the Jewish prisoner. The glossaries reach toward ontology rather than cause-and-effect narrative.«⁴⁴ In light of this perspective, it is worth reiterating

43 Gramling, *An Other Unspeakability* (fn 24), p. 171. It is interesting to note that the inclusion of a glossary continues to be a common convention to this day in both scholarly and creative works. See for instance the multivolume collection of documents *Die Verfolgung und Ermordung der europäischen Juden durch das nationalsozialistische Deutschland 1933–1945*, herausgegeben im Auftrag des Bundesarchivs, des Instituts für Zeitgeschichte München – Berlin, des Lehrstuhls für Neuere und Neueste Geschichte an der Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg (2008–2021), or the French language graphic novel *Auschwitz* by Pascal Croci (2000, German edition 2005).

44 Hannah Pollin-Galay, »A Rubric of Pain Words«: Mapping Atrocity with Holocaust Yiddish Glossaries, in: *Jewish Quarterly Review* 110 (2020), pp. 161-193, here p. 166.

the significance of Adler's placement of the ›Wörterverzeichnis‹ at the beginning of *Theresienstadt* insofar as it offers an alternative mode of reading and keeps the focus on individual experience.

Just as the inclusion of a glossary is not unique, neither is the struggle with the German language that Adler highlights in the first sentence of the foreword to the first edition, cited above. Any form of witnessing – in the German language in particular – to the persecution of the Jews under National Socialism faces the same dilemma, as François Ottmann observes with regard to Adler: ›[...] wie kann man diese Wirklichkeit beschreiben, ohne die Sprache der Nationalsozialisten zu benutzen, und in ihrer normierenden Kraft gefangen zu sein? Jede schriftliche Darstellung des Nazismus – sei es wissenschaftlich oder literarisch – ist insofern ein Kampf um die Sprache: der Dichter H.G. Adler weiß es wie kein anderer [...]‹.⁴⁵ Not necessarily a struggle, but certainly a deep engagement with language can be seen as a continuity in Adler's life, as mentioned at the outset of this article. In a letter to Gertrud Klepetar on 20 October 1939, written several months after they met and two years before they would marry, Adler writes of his relationship to the German language.⁴⁶ This is, in fact, how he begins the letter – ›Mein Verhältnis zur deutschen Sprache‹ – as if he were giving a title to an essay, and in a sense the letter reads as if it were an essay. He expresses his deep ties to the German language: ›Ich stehe also mit der deutschen Sprache und namentlich mit ihren lyrischen Möglichkeiten in einer Verbindung, die ich durch das Verhältnis zu keiner anderen Sprache je mehr ersetzen könnte.‹ This deep connection is not due to an essentialist view of the German language, but rather because Adler feels that he masters the German language: ›Die deutsche Sprache beherrsche ich‹, as he states at the beginning of the letter. He then goes on to offer extensive reflections on other languages, and it becomes clear that language, for Adler, is intimately connected to literary production.

These considerations of the German language that Adler formulates in this letter also lead him to reflect on the links between what it means for him to speak German and to be a Jew. He writes: ›Judentum ist eine Möglichkeit, und ich liebe die Möglichkeit dieses Volkes der Möglichkeiten. Und ich selbst habe eine jüdische Verpflichtung zu leben und zu erfüllen, so weit sie schlicht vereinbar mit meinem Menschentum und meiner menschlichen Verpflichtung ist. Deshalb also kann ich ruhig weiter bei der deutschen Sprache bleiben, muss kein jüdischer Nationalist sein, nicht der jüdischen Religion angehören. Die Pendelschläge zwischen Deutschtum und Ziontum, beides Möglichkeiten, die mir ohne Zweifel prinzipiell immer offenstanden, habe ich ausgeglichen. [...] Ich sage nicht, dass die von mir gewählte Möglichkeit allein richtig oder auch nur allgemein empfehlenswert ist, aber für mich ist sie gegeben, für den

45 Ottmann, H.G. Adlers *Theresienstadt* (fn 22), p. 120.

46 H.G. Adler to Gertrud Klepetar, 20 October 1939, DLA, A: Adler, A I 46. I thank Jeremy Adler for his permission to quote from the original letter.

Grossteil der Juden aus dem deutschen Sprachbereich scheint sie jetzt und wohl auch in Hinkunft so nicht mehr gegeben zu sein. Ich würde es ruhig auf mich nehmen, der letzte deutsch schreibende Jude zu sein.«

Unlike other survivors who turned away from the German language, Adler does not seem to struggle – on an existential or emotional level – with what it means to write in German after the Holocaust. He is acutely aware of the implications of bearing witness *in the German language* to the persecution of the Jews during the years of National Socialism. One could also argue that Adler transforms this perspective into a productive field of inquiry, a form of ›political philology‹.⁴⁷ Adler's sensitivity towards language, both its semantic potential and the potential for contamination through political manipulation, manifests itself in a form of *Sprachkritik* that can be observed throughout his oeuvre. Keenly aware of the influence National Socialism had on language, and as if sensing the debates that would come – what it would mean for Jews to continue to speak German – Adler reconfirms his commitment to the German language in his letter to the woman who would become his first wife. He maintains this throughout the rest of his life: it can be found in his commitment to both a critical understanding and a critical use of language, which in turn can be connected to a sense of moral obligation to bear witness to the violence and persecution of the Jews under National Socialism. Adler's scholarly works explicitly engage with the effect of National Socialism on language, and his literary works also bear witness to this.⁴⁸

As established through the examples above, one of the axioms inherent in Adler's oeuvre is his belief in the power of language. Language not only *has* power; it *is* power: any loss of language is followed by, or is representative of, a loss of power. In a posthumously published essay, ›Sprache am Verstummen‹, Adler opens with an anecdote about Karl Kraus, ›der wortgewaltigste Publizist deutscher Sprache‹, who had to fight with speechlessness after Hitler came to power and whose work certainly inspired Adler's own form of *Sprachkritik*.⁴⁹ With his reflection on Kraus's experience as a starting point, Adler then explores the phenomenon of language falling silent with its personal and political implications. Such a loss of language is indicative of a loss of political and human rights. An autobiographical dimension can be gleaned from the

47 See note above and Wolff, ›Die Grenzen des Sagbaren‹ (fn 20).

48 Key examples can be found in *Eine Reise* (1962). See for instance Rüdiger Görner, *Ins Innere des Wortes. Über H.G. Adler*, in: *Literatur und Kritik* 237/238 (1989), pp. 298-304, and Traci O'Brien, ›Die Grenzen des Sagbaren‹: H.G. Adler (on) Writing Literature after the Holocaust, in: *Humanities* 10 (2021) 63, pp. 1-17.

49 Adler writes, ›Im kurzen ersten Satz des Werkes [›(Die) Dritte Walpurgisnacht‹] hielt Kraus seine ursprüngliche Stimmung anlässlich der katastrophalen Zeitenwende fest: »Mir fällt zu Hitler nichts ein.« H.G. Adler, *Sprache am Verstummen*, in: H.G. Adler, *Orthodoxie des Herzens. Ausgewählte Essays zu Literatur, Judentum und Politik*, ed. by Peter Filkins, Konstanz 2014, pp. 105-113, here p. 105. According to the note at the end of the essay, this was the version prepared for a presentation at the Austrian P.E.N. Club on 4 November 1982. Adler dates the version 18–21 October 1982. All further citations will be made parenthetically within the text.

essay as well, in statements that assert the strong will that is necessary in order to pull oneself together and not relinquish the ability to speak, as Adler states: ›um sich zusammenzuraffen und seine Sprachfähigkeit nicht einzubüßen‹ (p. 106).

In ›Sprache am Verstummen‹, as in his essays in the journal *Muttersprache*, Adler emphasizes not only the function of language as a medium of expression (›Ausdrucks-mittel‹, p. 107), but also his understanding of language as such (›als Ganzes‹), that is, language as a system (in addition to language as spoken by individual users). Here, too, he outlines two opposing processes: on the one hand language development and on the other language decay, which he describes as characteristic of the ›Mechanisierung unserer Zeit mit dem Wust leerer Ausdrucksweisen‹ (p. 110).⁵⁰ Embedded in these considerations of language is an ›Auseinandersetzung‹, an ›Abrechnung‹ even, with Adorno's dictum that to write a poem after Auschwitz is barbaric. After careful consideration of the various ways to understand Adorno's statement, Adler ultimately refutes it: in the face of the catastrophe, language – literary representation in particular – must not fall silent.

Adler's final move in this essay is to outline a form of *Sprachkritik*. Focusing on the role of euphemism, he points to three examples in circulation during the years of National Socialism: *Sonderbehandlung*, *betreuen*, and *liquidieren*. Asserting the insidiousness of these terms, he states, ›Alle drei verbergen in unterschiedlichen Graden, da sie die Vernichtung von Menschen verharmlosen und deren Mord gewissermaßen unschuldiger erscheinen lassen.‹ (p. 112) It is of utmost importance for Adler to mark the damage that has been done and can be done to language – not only to German but to all languages – for it would be devastating to future generations if this history and the attendant potential for renewed violence would be covered up, erased, and forgotten. Herein lies the nexus of philological precision and historically critical, political engagement.

5. Conclusion

Adler remained committed to writing in German after the war, although it could have been a source of pain. After liberation from Buchenwald, Adler returned to his native city of Prague and was officially stateless, due to the fact that his registration in the 1930 census identified him as holding ›German nationhood through his mother

50 In yet another essay, ›30 Jahre nach Auschwitz / Dennoch brüderlich?‹, Adler embeds his discussion of the ›mass‹ in an analysis of language and specifically of the decay of language. Although he uses the examples of ›betreuen‹ and ›liquidieren‹, he specifies here that this phenomenon is not limited to the German language: ›Wir beschränken uns nicht auf das Deutsche; alle westlichen Sprachen zumindest sind vom Sprachverfall heimgesucht.‹ H.G. Adler, *30 Jahre nach Auschwitz / Dennoch brüderlich?*, in: Adler, *Orthodoxie des Herzens* (fn 49), pp. 243-270, here p. 252. According to the note at the end of the essay, this version was prepared for a lecture at the Gesellschaft für christlich-jüdische Zusammenarbeit in Hamburg on 3 February 1975.

tongue.⁵¹ Then, even within the new English-language context as an exile in London from 1947 on, Adler's intellectual and cultural context remained a Central European one, while his literary context remained rooted in the German language.⁵² This insistence on the perseverance and even defiance of language brings together the three core aspects of Adler's relationship to language in general that this article has explored: (1) a dedication to language and a conviction that it holds great power, (2) the acknowledgement that language has persisted through the ›catastrophe‹ of the Holocaust, and finally, (3) an understanding of language as an act – a ›Sprachhandlung‹, as formulated by Nicolas Berg, Elisabeth Gallas, and Aurélia Kalisky in the introduction to this issue, or as a ›speech act‹, as Pollin-Galay describes the work of those compiling Yiddish glossaries.

By composing poetry in German both in Theresienstadt and in the years after, Adler was writing to keep from falling silent. This enabled him not only to survive but to maintain his humanity and determine his own reality. Adler's body of work demonstrates an early and specific form of thinking and writing about the Holocaust – rooted in personal experience, yet not tied to autobiography. This form – through its emphasis on language – has the power to encourage continued engagement with how we think and write about the Holocaust.

As this close reading of the ›Wörterverzeichnis‹ and its precursor has aimed to show, it is worth studying preliminary stages of historiographical classics and considering them in a wider context. In the case of H.G. Adler's *Theresienstadt* book, such an investigation highlights the multidimensionality of the work, especially with regard to Adler's literary and scholarly production. Finally, the archival materials around this volume reveal the emergence of Holocaust studies as an international and interdisciplinary field.

Lynn L. Wolff, Ph.D.

Michigan State University | Department of Linguistics, Languages, and Cultures

619 Red Cedar Road | B-265 Wells Hall | East Lansing, MI 48824-1027 | USA

E-mail: lwolff@msu.edu

51 Filkins, *H.G. Adler* (fn 2), p. 64.

52 Dane sees this adherence to the German language, not only by Adler but also by his fellow exiles Elias Canetti and Franz Baermann Steiner, as ›ein Widerstand gegen deren Expropriation durch die Nationalsozialisten‹. Dane, *Einleitung* (fn 8), p. 12.