

INTRODUCTION



On New Year's Day 1939, Manfred and Malka Goldfish stepped ashore into the heat of a Trinidadian winter.¹ In Port of Spain it was 30 degrees centigrade and brilliant sunshine. Their journey to freedom had started two weeks earlier, as they left an ice-bound Hamburg to begin their lives as Jewish refugees in the Caribbean:

On a cold day in Koenigsberg, [there was] nothing else left but to say goodbye to a few friends, and at the end of November we were ready to leave the now grey and wintry Baltic ... We boarded a train to Cologne to spend a last week with my parents, and then the sad moment of parting had to be faced. There were no tears, no sighs, only grim faces all round, when the whistle blew, and the Hamburg express started to pull out of the station ... The excitement of the imminent departure kept us awake, and it was almost morning before our eyes closed. At 7 am the desk [in the hotel] woke us as arranged, and an hour later a bus took us to the quay – the great adventure was about to begin. It was bitter cold ... The liner was to sail at noon, and icebreakers were busy keeping channels open so that departure would not be delayed. In spite of the biting cold I could not resist to go on deck to watch tugboats getting into position to pull the giant hulk into the stream. Then a shudder went through the ship as the powerful diesels down below started their run that would not stop for fourteen days and nights. I watched as, to the sound of grinding and crushing ice, the liner slowly edged away from the ice-covered concrete wall of the quay. A strip of black water appeared; we had lost contact with German soil. With long angry blasts of their sirens the tugs began to pull, and we were on our way.



Figure 0.1 Manfred Goldfish and Malka Goldfish (later Wagschal née Golding) a year before leaving Germany for Trinidad in 1937. From *The Last Goldfish*. Umbrella Entertainment, 2017. Screenshot. Published with permission.

Exactly a fortnight after the couple arrived, with mounting numbers of refugee arrivals, Trinidad, alongside other British colonies, placed a ban on the further admission of refugees from Europe. The Goldfishes had married just three months earlier, and immediately started to arrange for passports and look for places to which they might emigrate. After 'Kristallnacht', the Nazi pogrom on the night of 9/10 November 1938, with its thousands of arrests, the looting and destruction of Jewish homes and property, and the burning of synagogues across Germany, Manfred felt it too dangerous to remain. After a fruitless attempt to get visas for the United States through a relative there, in desperation they contacted shipping agents who sold them the last two tickets for a berth on the SS *Cordillera*, bound for Trinidad. It would cost Manfred almost all he had left in his bank account; but watching the 'still smouldering ruins' of one of the synagogues, he paid up. Saying goodbye to his parents in Hamburg, he did not register the full importance of the farewell. In a memoir written years later, he recalled: 'Gradually the figures of my dear parents Lina and Eugen Goldfish faded into the steamy mist of the big railway junction and I had a feeling, almost a premonition, that I would never see them again'.² In 1942 his parents were deported to Theresienstadt where they both died, within a year of each other.

The Goldfishes' experience of escaping Nazi Germany is part of the much larger story of the plight of Jewish refugees fleeing Nazism, of whom, I have estimated, several thousand found sanctuary in British colonies in the Caribbean.³ This book is called *Nearly the New World* because for most



Figure 0.2 View from the SS *Cordillera* (1938). From *The Last Goldfish*. Umbrella Entertainment, 2017. Screenshot. Published with permission.

refugees who found sanctuary, it was nearly, but not quite, the New World that they had hoped for. The British West Indies were a way station, a temporary destination that allowed them entry when the United States, much of South and Central America, the United Kingdom and Palestine had all become closed. For a small number, it became their home. This is the first comprehensive study of modern Jewish emigration to the British West Indies. It reveals how the histories of the Caribbean, of refugees, and of the Holocaust connect through the potential and actual involvement of the British West Indies as a refuge during the 1930s and the Second World War.

This book is also the first to provide a panoptic overview of the different waves of Jewish immigration to the British West Indies. It covers migration from Eastern Europe and Nazi Germany in the 1930s, to the wartime period when refugees crossed the Atlantic from southern France, Portugal and Spain, and Britain brought Jewish refugees to Caribbean colonies as in-transit refugees, internees or evacuees. It addresses the role of the West Indies as a refuge by exploring the actual reception of refugees, the impact on the West Indian economy, and the responses of a post-slavery society (still ruled within a colonial system where decisions on immigration, defence and security were made in Whitehall). As such, it also illuminates both accommodating and restrictive aspects of British immigration policy, as the British West Indies were part of the Crown Colony system of government.⁴ Through researching the archives of the major Jewish aid organizations in the United States and Britain, including the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC or 'Joint'), HICEM, the World Jewish Congress, the Central Council

for German Jewry and the Chief Rabbi's Emergency Committee, I have unearthed new evidence of the crucial role these organizations played in aiding migration and supporting refugees. The themes in this book also have direct relevance to the refugee crisis of the early twenty-first century: the impact of refugees on island communities; the agency of refugee organizations; how competing priorities between government departments influence British refugee policy; refugee integration and acceptance in a post-slavery society; and the refugee experience itself.

Jeffrey Lesser's *Welcoming the Undesirables: Brazil and the Jewish Question* noted that historians have tended to 'lump all but the largest numerical communities into the category of "exotica", and thus not worthy of careful study'.⁵ There has, in fact, been an increased focus on Jewish refugee migration to colonial and 'exotic' settings, most recently by Jennings' *Escape from Vichy* and Kaplan's *Dominican Haven*.⁶ There have also been attempts to globalize Jewish studies by investigating transcultural and hemispheric American dimensions of Jewish experience, and by giving more emphasis to Sephardim; this study therefore adds an important new dimension to the Jewish Atlantic scholarship that has largely focused on the early modern period.⁷ Caribbean studies itself has recently moved beyond an exclusive focus on African and South Asian diasporic presences to address other populations such as the Chinese and the Irish; however, the Jewish presence in the Caribbean and Jewish forms of creolization have been quite neglected by Caribbeanists, with the exception of some work on the early modern Dutch Caribbean. While there are interesting comparisons that can be drawn between the treatment of Jewish refugees in the French, Spanish and Dutch Caribbean, this study restricts itself to the British West Indies.⁸ Also beyond scope of this study, but will remain for other scholars to explore, are the interesting comparisons to be made between the treatment of Jewish refugees and internees across the British Empire, where local conditions led to internment policies being carried out differently.

What happened to refugees in the 1930s has resonated in discourse about sanctuary ever since. In 2015, UN Human Rights Commissioner Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein emphasized the dangers of turning away refugees from European shores, and compared the twenty-first century refugee situation to Europe in the summer of 1938, barely four months before Manfred and Malka Goldfish left Germany for good. Recalling the Evian Conference, held in the French spa town of Evian les Bains in the July of 1938, Al Hussein criticized Britain and other European politicians for using dehumanizing language that, he claimed, 'has echoes of the pre-Second World War rhetoric with which the world effectively turned its back on German and Austrian Jews, and helped pave the way for the Holocaust'.⁹ By the time of the Evian Conference, far-flung destinations such as Trinidad were becoming familiar

in the lexicon of place names consulted by German Jewish families desperate to emigrate.¹⁰ As strict immigration regulations were already in force around the world, opportunities for emigration became more limited, unless one had capital to invest, relatives or friends willing to provide guarantees, or employment offers. From being first regarded as obscure, destinations like Trinidad and Shanghai that did not require visas became the last chance for those still able to leave Nazi-occupied Europe. By that summer, the German Jewish mindset had also changed: after long believing that the antisemitic legislation and persecution introduced in 1933 would be reversed, by now the population of German Jewry who had not yet left had realized that emigration was the only viable response.

My father was a child refugee from Germany, and coming to Britain saved his life and that of his parents, brother and two grandmothers in 1937. Their entry rested on the serendipity of a British passport officer at Dover ignoring the fact that their entry permit was out of date by one day. They were among the approximately eighty thousand Jewish refugees admitted into Britain before the outbreak of war.¹¹ For those unable to enter the United States or Great Britain, these unlikely places of refuge across the British Colonial Empire, from Shanghai to Hong Kong, from Tanzania to Sierra Leone, from Trinidad to British Guiana, undoubtedly saved tens of thousands of lives but were clearly places of last resort for desperate refugees.¹²

I first became interested in this story when searching the Tate & Lyle Archive in Silver Town, London, for papers relating to the seventeenth-century Caribbean. I was researching the Jewish community in Barbados from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, and found a file of correspondence about the internment of one Edward Schonbeck, a refugee chemist from Berlin working for WISCO (West Indies Sugar Company). A number of years later, when I began to research this book, I found files on his internment in the National Archives in the UK (TNA) and managed to contact him. He was the first refugee from the West Indies whom I met, and he told me his story sitting in the Mozart Cafe on the Upper West Side of New York. I subsequently presented an 'Archive Hour' broadcast for BBC Radio 4, 'A Caribbean Jerusalem', including interviews with former refugees and with some West Indians who remembered them in Trinidad and Jamaica. More recently, I have been in touch with a number of descendants, including Su Goldfish, the daughter of Manfred Goldfish, whose documentary, *The Last Goldfish*, was selected for the Sydney Film Festival in 2017.

Refugee narratives are threaded through this book. Using these sources extensively helps to tell a largely untold story, and fills in the gaps in the historiography and in collective memory. While official archives of organizations and governments tell much about the policies and decisions taken that materially impacted refugees and British West Indians, it is through their own

voices that we can uncover the many conflicting stories of refugee survival and experience, of frustration and anguish, of pragmatism and adaptation. In contrast to more established narratives of refugee migration to countries such as the United States and Britain, many of these voices have not been heard before, and are part of the hidden history of Jewish migration to and from the Caribbean.¹³ In Atina Grossmann's work on 'Asiatic' refugee migration, these stories of circuitous routes around the globe, like hers, 'render[s] the history of the Holocaust, its refugees and survivors, transnational and multidirectional in new ways'.¹⁴

This book takes a roughly chronological approach. In Chapter 1, I lay out the contextual drivers for the story to unfold. This includes an overview of how the Crown Colony system operated, of the political and economic changes in the British West Indies during the 1930s and 1940s, and of the formation and background to those Jewish refugee organizations that will be key players in this book. I start by discussing the anxiety expressed by the British Colonial Office from the 1920s about whether the Empire had sufficient immigration legislation to guard against unwanted migration. At this point, the unease was in Eastern Europe, where the world recession, alongside rising nationalism, had created the conditions whereby the Jewish population in particular was becoming increasingly impoverished and marginalized. Once the United States had instigated its hugely restrictive quota law of 1924, the most obvious emigration route had mainly closed.

From the 1920s, a steady accretion of legislation across the Americas and the Caribbean followed the United States' lead. During this period, a significant number of East European Jews, unable to enter the Americas, came to and made their homes in West Indian colonies, including Barbados, Trinidad, Jamaica, British Guiana, British Honduras and Dominica. They were more successful, in general, in putting down roots and establishing small businesses than the Jewish refugees from Nazism who followed. Although most were not interned, once war broke out they effectively became exiles, unable to go back to their country of origin.

The tensions that existed between Crown and colony are highlighted in this chapter, as the call for self-determination became ever louder across the British Empire. The British West Indies in 1933 was a colonial world, but the balance of power was shifting. While the Dominions (including South Africa, New Zealand, Canada and Australia) were viewed by Whitehall as 'grown up', colonial dependencies were viewed in a paternalistic way, and remained reliant on Whitehall for immigration, defence and security. And at the same time as right-wing nationalism was increasing and the refugee crisis in Europe deepening, metropolitan British concerns impacted on colonial ones, and refugee agencies began to see potential in spots around the globe that did not require visas to enter.

Chapter 2 focuses on the period between Hitler's accession to power and the year 1938, when the refugee crisis caused by Nazi Germany becomes an international crisis. It firstly focuses on British refugee policy. While not immune to the plight of refugees, instead of making changes to enable greater numbers to settle in Britain, the government's spotlight from 1933 onwards was placed on its colonies and Dominions to see whether they could provide temporary solutions. While the British government's stated policy in the 1930s was to demonstrate generosity towards refugees, official papers and memoranda show that, in reality, the Home Office, Foreign Office and Colonial Office all operated closed-door policies. One such note is emblematic of the British response: on 11 May 1938, Sir Cosmo Parkinson, the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, was clearly irritated with yet another request from the Foreign Office to find opportunities for refugees in the colonial empire. In an internal message, he wrote: 'People will find it hard to believe that in all the wide expanse of the colonial empire there is really no corner where some of these wretched victims of persecution could find shelter. However, this has been gone into before, and the conclusion reached is always the same'.¹⁵

Parkinson came to this conclusion in May 1938, two months before the Evian Conference. Despite the new urgency as Nazi persecution of the Jewish population had intensified, and German Jewish attempts to emigrate had dramatically increased, I will argue that the British government's position regarding immigration, both to Britain and its Empire, changed little. There was an abiding impasse between government departments due to the tension between their conflicting priorities, with the Colonial Office wishing to guard native populations against undesired large-scale migration, the Home Office resisting any relaxation in domestic regulations, and the Foreign Office increasingly concerned with preventing large-scale Jewish migration to Palestine. Partly to appease public opinion in response to the incontrovertible news of persecution in Germany, specifically following Kristallnacht, British policy did make a major exception. The government created block visa agreements that enabled some ten thousand unaccompanied refugee children, the 'Kindertransport', to come to Britain between 1938 and the outbreak of war.¹⁶

For the Colonial Office, protecting colonial territories from unwanted migration competed at times with the need to comply with Whitehall mandates. This led to a number of missed opportunities, and confused and contradictory messages being sent from Whitehall. On the one hand, governors regularly received circulars from the secretary of state for the colonies asking them to support opportunities for refugee settlement, but when tangible projects with local West Indian support were brought forward, Colonial Office civil servants actively discouraged colonial governors from sponsoring

them. These included new refugee enterprises in a number of colonies with some start-up funding offered by the JDC, and an embroidery factory proposed for British Honduras. For the Home Office, any solution, however small, offered by the Colonial Office was permitted if it helped to draw attention away from their refusal to admit large numbers of adult refugees, increasingly desperate to leave Nazi Germany.

In Chapter 3, I explore how the first significant numbers of Jewish refugees from Nazism appeared in Caribbean colonies as a result of forced migration. Jewish aid agencies played a critical role in signposting Trinidad as one of the destinations that did not require visas. By the time the Goldfishes arrived, there were at least five hundred refugees crowded into temporary accommodation in Port of Spain, attempting to establish themselves.¹⁷ While this was not as stark a situation as the incongruent sight of migrant tent cities on some Mediterranean islands in the early twenty-first century, and Trinidad was on a smaller scale, there were nevertheless very real local fears about the immigrants. These were expressed in observations about housing and health on the letters pages of the *Trinidad Guardian*, and in debates reported in the *Trinidad Hansard*. Interviews, photographs and letters found in the JDC, World Jewish Congress (WJC) and HICEM archives paint a rich picture of a new refugee community, finding its feet and beginning to contribute to the economy and culture. Businesses began to be established, including a hat factory, a cafe, a hairdressing salon, and dry goods stores. Refugees found local employment too, with one refugee becoming a fashion sketch artist for the *Trinidad Guardian*. Two organizations, the Jewish Association of Trinidad and the Jewish Refugee Society of Trinidad, were formed. Despite stark differences between East European and German Jewish refugees, the community overall started to put down roots in Caribbean soil – they sought permission to purchase a section of the graveyard in Port of Spain, rented a synagogue building, and created social activities, including a football club and a dramatic society.

For West Indians, refugees were viewed with ambivalence, reflective of a society undergoing profound change. Some twenty years earlier, a generation of British West Indians had served in the British West Indies Regiment (BWIR) during the First World War. Many came back to form new political parties and would become future leaders of independent Caribbean states. They returned to a society where the franchise still rested on property ownership, and labour and living conditions precipitated strikes and unrest. Most Caribbean societies were highly stratified, but also full of complex mixes of cultural and religious identities made over decades of transmigration between Europe, Africa, the Americas and the Caribbean. Since the nineteenth century, waves of immigrants – Syrian, Palestinian Arabs and Jews, Portuguese, South American, Chinese, German and Indian – had come to

Caribbean countries as indentured servants, for seasonal labour, to sell dry goods and peddle wares.

However, Jewish refugees, both from Eastern Europe and from Nazi Germany, arrived into a community where seasonal labour, both in the Caribbean and neighbouring countries, had dried up and poverty was widespread. While the refugee crisis and rise of Nazism and Fascism in Europe were writ large in daily headlines and syndicated articles in papers such as the *Daily Gleaner* in Jamaica, and the *Trinidad Guardian*, calypsos written at that time are evidence of the mixed responses of locals to the refugees. In addition to a number of calypsos about the situation in Europe and impending war, there were a number written on specific Jewish themes.¹⁸ Some calypsonians greeted refugees with songs of resentment as another 'white' group of settlers competing for jobs and employment, while others expressed sympathy, their plight being compared with that of the slaves.¹⁹ Charlie 'Gorilla' Grant's *Jews in the West Indies*, for example, starts with the question 'Tell me what you think of a dictator / Trampling the Jews like Adolph Hitler', and regarding the daily arrivals into Trinidad, he wrote the memorable line in the second stanza 'the way they are coming all of them, Will make Trinidad a New Jeresuleum [*sic*]'.²⁰

At the Trinidad Carnival of 1939 (see Figure 0.3), Michael Anthony, a local author, remembers that

the city throbbed and jumped to two 'leggoes': *Don't give me the roast saltfish*, and *Matilda*. The roads were filled with tramping feet and the sound of bottle-and-spoon and 'tamboo-bamboo'. During the two hectic days the spectators lived in a fantasy land of Midnight Robbers, fierce Red Indians, marauding Arabians, sailors on shore leave, and beasts of the forests and of the night.²¹

As throngs of Trinidadians and recent arrivals lined up along the crowded streets to watch the processions and be part of the melee of the 1939 Carnival, it is possible they may have heard some of the calypsos on Jewish themes being performed.

In May 1939, the infamous journey of the SS *St Louis* became symbolic of the plight of Jewish refugees. It left Hamburg for Havana, Cuba, and on board were 937 passengers, mostly fleeing Nazi Germany. Cuba refused to honour the valid landing permits, and instead, despite much negotiation with other Latin American countries and the United States, the ship turned back to Germany. At the last minute, Britain, France and Belgium admitted the passengers. As I will show in Chapter 4, it was by no means the only journey where the outcome was partially dependent on Jewish Refugee Organizations (JROs) negotiating with governments and providing financial guarantees for the refugees. Not only have the Evian Conference and the



Figure 0.3 Image of Carnival. Photograph by Hans Stecher. By kind permission of Hans Stecher.

voyage of the *St Louis* often been cited as examples of propaganda coups for Nazi Germany, they also serve as potent symbols of the powerlessness of refugee bodies. Despite being well organized and, to some extent in the early 1930s, well funded, many JROs were powerless to influence Allied or Nazi policies towards Jews and other persecuted groups, whilst remaining, as they had to, the ipso facto main negotiators and financial guarantors for refugees who found themselves on ships 'bound for nowhere'.²² The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee named these ships 'Floating No Man's Lands' as they sailed from pillar to post, their refugee cargo refused entry in each port. Journeys like those of the *SS Caribia*, the *SS Koenigstein*, the *SS Alsina* and the *SS Winnipeg* all involved refugee agencies.²³

As journeys across the Atlantic became more dangerous for refugees, often on board unseaworthy vessels, in crowded conditions, without valid papers, the role of the JROs became evermore critical, negotiating safe passage and temporary shelter, providing maintenance for refugees dependent on aid, and guaranteeing post-war refugee remigration. In Chapters 3 and 4, using the archives of Jewish refugee agencies, their role is brought to life in the moral dilemmas they faced in light of massive humanitarian disaster. In exploring the issues facing these American-Jewish and Anglo-Jewish agencies, which were mainly funded by public philanthropy, there are direct parallels with dilemmas facing aid organizations today. For example, in February 1939, the JDC called for a meeting to discuss:

[a] question of important policy which important [*sic*] Jewish organizations must consider together. We [are] in [a] great quandary although [the] judgement [of] many members [of] our committee and offices is that with continuous similar dumping of shiploads [of refugees] we have no alternative but to refuse financial help. Important question in principle [to] be canvassed with other organizations to determine decision re these passengers and [the] future.²⁴

In 2019, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) continue to rescue people from unseaworthy boats in the Mediterranean, and help them to sanctuary, even when they know that they are on board because of a trade in people smuggling. By continuing to help, they know that they may encourage more illegal trafficking. By refusing assistance, they know these migrants or refugees may drown. It is an impossible dilemma, but from the perspective of an aid organization there is only one humanitarian answer: to rescue refugees from peril. That is the answer that Jewish agencies gave time and time again during the refugee crisis of the 1930s, and against the backdrop of the Holocaust in the 1940s, even when their funding and energies became dissipated and exhausted.

With the onset of war, refugees of an enemy nationality were classified as ‘enemy aliens’ and interned. Chapter 5 demonstrates how detainment disrupted nascent new beginnings for the refugees. In Trinidad and Jamaica, conditions and length of stay in internment camps varied. In general, conditions were relatively humane. However, for some, psychologically, it was agonizing to be in an internment camp, with its attendant inaction and isolation, as knowledge grew about the war and the unprecedented massacres against Jews within occupied Europe. In addition, in Jamaica, some Jewish refugees were incarcerated for long periods with pro-Nazi Germans and Italians. From 1939, refugees on board ships temporarily docking in Caribbean ports, en route to further destinations, were taken from the ships and moved to internment camps. Those whose visas were renewable or valid were kept for a short period; those whose visas were not acceptable were kept far longer, sometimes for the duration of the war.

Until the outbreak of war, the Colonial Office had been successful in protecting its colonies from any schemes, including most of those involving refugees, that they felt might disadvantage local populations. However, as a result of shifting wartime priorities, these arguments no longer held sway over metropolitan ones. This is evidenced in the summer of 1940, with the decision to build ‘Gibraltar Camp’ – at speed, and at great cost – in Jamaica. Gibraltar was of military and strategic importance to Britain, and in April of that year it had been agreed to evacuate the entire civilian population to French Morocco. This failed with the fall of France, and eventually the

majority of these evacuees went to Britain, where it was planned that they would be moved on to Jamaica. Subsequently, in October 1940, a group of 1,104 Gibraltarians arrived in Jamaica. In 1941, a new use was found for the largely unused parts of the camp. The sole escape route from occupied Europe at that time was through Spain and Portugal. A large community of refugees, amongst them stateless Jewish refugees, had managed to cross the mountain ranges of Spain and Portugal and had gathered in Lisbon. These two neutral powers made it plain to Allied forces that they would only allow their vitally important escape routes to be kept open if they removed the bottleneck of refugees staying in the port city. Hence the SS *Serpa Pinto* sailed from Lisbon to Jamaica on 24 January 1942 with 152 Polish Jewish refugees on board. The Polish government in exile was involved with the British in this arrangement, but it was the JDC that shouldered the financial costs. Over the next few years, small groups of Allied nationals, including Jewish refugees, continued to be brought from Spain and Portugal to Gibraltar Camp. Alongside the Gibraltarians, there was a constantly shifting Jewish population which, at its height, numbered about five hundred.²⁵ It is a heretofore largely unknown scandal, which this book uncovers, that the camp remained underoccupied, and its capacity deliberately reduced after receiving enquiries from the High Commissioner for Refugees, Sir Herbert Emerson. These enquiries came shortly after the Allied Declaration of 17 December 1942, when Britain and the United States announced that Germany was carrying out the deliberate extermination of the Jewish population of Europe. I will argue that, despite this knowledge, attempts to bring further refugees to safety in Gibraltar Camp were stalled throughout the war years. The context for the camp's woeful underuse will be shown to be down to Colonial Office intransigence, fear of chartering ships across the Atlantic, particularly during the U-boat war, and a reluctance to bring refugees to Jamaica unless they or JROs could guarantee their remigration after the war.

Fourteen-year-old refugee Hans Stecher arrived in Trinidad in 1938, and his memoir, written in his later years, evokes his sense of adventure, landing in 'a tropical country', which was 'a dream come true'; however, he remembers that for his parents, 'everything was strange and unfamiliar and somewhat frightening'.²⁶ Fred Mann, in his account of life as a teenager at Gibraltar Camp in Jamaica, evokes the sense of adventure but also the boredom they experienced as youths, which was in contrast to the despair that many of the Polish evacuees of military age felt, who were desperate to leave the camp and join the Allied fighting forces.²⁷ In so many cases of refugee testimony, those who were young at the time could see much of the experience as an adventure, while older refugees were less able to adjust to new circumstances, and were perhaps more aware of the dangers they had left and those that might still face them if the Allies lost the war.

Individual accounts tell us much about the experience of being a refugee. In the Epilogue I will explore these accounts, of adapting to challenging circumstances, and of the hope of the majority to continue their journeys to places of permanent refuge, often with established Jewish communities such as in the United States, Canada, South America, South Africa and Palestine. But a few made successful lives in the Caribbean. Hans Stecher's business grew from the initial watch shop that his father set up before internment, to the ten luxury goods shops in Trinidad that bear his name today. Manfred Goldfish worked for Emory Cook Records, eventually becoming the manager of Cook Caribbean. Henry Altman, born in Lublin, Poland, emigrated to Barbados in 1932 and became successful in business, and in the 1970s was instrumental in restoring the Sephardic synagogue, now included on the circuit of Jewish heritage tours to the Caribbean.

There is a complex set of connections to Caribbean and Jewish history, from the Sephardic diaspora of the fifteenth century, to nineteenth-century immigration from Europe and the Middle East, to refugees from Nazism in the 1930s, to the present day. In a recent study of post-colonial literature, Sarah Casteel studies the influence of Jewish identity and presence on West Indian novelists and poets.²⁸ Casteel writes about a contemporary Caribbean where Jewish life is fading, and the twentieth-century refugee episode remains a story largely untold. The British West Indies was, in the 1930s, on the periphery in discussions about refuge, and during the Holocaust on the very margins of what was discussed in relation to rescue, but it nevertheless offered sanctuary and opportunities, some of which resulted in lives being saved, some of which were missed. This book seeks to understand rather than cast blame, drawing heavily on the range of Caribbean, Allied, and refugee perspectives to demonstrate the context in which the British West Indies became involved in the refugee crisis of the 1930s and the question of rescue in the 1940s.

Notes

1. Unpublished manuscript by Manfred Goldfish in author's possession. At some point Goldfish anglicized his name to Goldfish. Therefore, a mixture of Goldfish and Goldfisch has been used throughout the book. For the full text, see Chapter 3.
2. *Ibid.*, 2.
3. I estimate that approximately five thousand European refugees came to the British West Indies. It is difficult to give a precise figure of Jewish refugees as they were counted under nationalities, not their religion. From listing those dependent on aid from the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), and from internment camps and Gibraltar Camp records in Jamaica, it would be reasonable to assume a maximum at any one time of three thousand Jewish refugees amongst the five thousand overall, including all

- British West Indian colonies. Most recently, an estimate of between 5,530 and 6,730 European refugees to British West Indian colonies has been published by Christian Cwik and Verene Muth: 'European Refugees in the Wider Caribbean in the Context of World War II', in Karen E. Eccles and Debbie McCollin (eds), *World War II and the Caribbean* (Jamaica: University of West Indies Press, 2017), 255.
4. For the most comprehensive study of British policy towards Jewish refugees, see Louise London's *Whitehall and the Jews 1933–1948: British Immigration Policy and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). See also Ari J. Sherman's *Island Refuge: Britain and Refugees from the Third Reich 1933–1939* (London: Elek, 1973); this was followed shortly afterwards by Bernard Wasserstein's *Britain and the Jews of Europe, 1939–1945* (originally published in Oxford 1979; edition used here 2nd revised edition, Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1999). All include British policy towards its colonial empire.
 5. Jeffrey Lesser, *Welcoming the Undesirables: Brazil and the Jewish Question* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), XV.
 6. Eric Jennings, *Escape from Vichy: The Refugee Exodus to the French Caribbean* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018). Marion A. Kaplan, *Dominican Haven: The Jewish Refugee Settlement in Sosúa, 1940–1945* (New York: Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, 2008).
 7. See Jonathan Schorsch's *Jews and Blacks in the Early Modern World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Laura Arnold Leibman, *Messianism, Secrecy and Mysticism: A New Interpretation of Early American Jewish Life* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2013); Jane S. Gerber (ed.), *The Jews in the Caribbean* (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2014); and in literature, see Sarah Phillips Casteel, *Calypto Jews: Jewishness in the Caribbean Literary Imagination* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).
 8. For the Dutch West Indies, see Oscar E. Lansen, 'Victims of Circumstance: Jewish Enemy Nationals in the Dutch West Indies 1938–1947', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 13(3) (1991), 441–42. For the French West Indies, see Eric Jennings, *Escape from Vichy: The Refugee Exodus to the French Caribbean* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018).
 9. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/oct/14/refugee-rhetoric-echoes-1938-summit-before-holocaust-un-official-warns> (last accessed 28 July 2018).
 10. There were a number of publications, like the PHILO-Atlas: *Handbuch für die jüdische Auswanderung*, printed in 1938 and listing immigration requirements around the world, which was made available to Jews seeking information on emigration. However, in Steven Robins, *Letters of Stone: From Nazi Germany to South Africa* (Cape Town: Penguin, 2016), it is touching to see how places like Trinidad inhabit private correspondence between families. Robins describes a letter written to his father, already in exile in South Africa, from his grandmother on 20 January 1939, in which she has clearly looked up Trinidad and refers to 'Trinidad being blocked' shortly after the Ordinance was enacted (see pp. 152–53).
 11. See London, *Whitehall and the Jews*, 12.
 12. Paul Bartrop (ed.), *False Havens: The British Empire and the Holocaust* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1995), discusses the difficulties of estimating Jewish refugee numbers as official estimates would count refugees under their nationality; see 'The British Colonial Empire and Jewish Refugees during the Holocaust Period: An Overview', *False Havens*, 1–15. For an estimate of figures across the Caribbean, see Cwik and Muth, 'European Refugees', 253.
 13. See Eureka Henrich, 'Mobility, Migration and Modern Memory', in Anna Maerker, Simon Sleight and Adam Sutcliffe (eds), *History, Memory and Public Life: The Past in the Present* (Oxford: Routledge, 2018). Henrich looks at the way that migration is memori-

- alized in public displays and museums. The dominant narrative of redemption and gratitude leaves little room for a more nuanced historical treatment of the refugee experience, as related by raw memoirs.
14. Atina Grossmann, 'Remapping Relief and Rescue: Flight, Displacement, and International Aid for Jewish Refugees during World War II', *New German Critique* 117, 39(3), (2012), 79. See also the bibliography for an extensive list of refugee memoirs, mainly to the Caribbean, but I have included some to other parts of the British Empire, for example to Mauritius and Rhodesia.
 15. Sir Cosmo Parkinson, Permanent Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, internal Colonial Office memorandum, 11 May 1938, TNA (The National Archives) CO 323/1605/2.
 16. See London, *Whitehall and the Jews*, chapters 5 and 6, pp. 97–169.
 17. I have estimated that in the previous month, December 1938, there were approximately 200 East European Jews in Trinidad. By March 1940, the refugee population was counted as 585, including 366 recorded under the Aliens Registration Order 1939. See Edgar Pereira to Charles Leibman, Refugee Economic Corporation, NY, 12 December 1938, #1047, JDC and Supt. W.E. Rumbelow, 'Refugees in Trinidad and Tobago', Security Office Report, 1 March 1940, TNA CO 323/1799/2.
 18. For example, see typescripts of the following calypsos in Colonial Secretary Office (C.S.O.) files Reference Numbers: C.S.O. No. 41126 Pts. I, II and III dated 1939 to 1941. Courtesy of the National Archives of Trinidad and Tobago: *Hitler Demands by Growler*, *The Horrors of War*, *The World Needs Peace* and *European Situation* by Atilla, *The League of Nations* by Executor, *Neville Chamberlain* by Radio.
 19. See Chapter 3 for a discussion on calypsos.
 20. *Jews in the West Indies* by Gorilla. Typescript of calypso in C.S.O. files. Reference Numbers: C.S.O. No. 41126 Pts. I, II and III dated 1939 to 1941. Courtesy of the National Archives of Trinidad and Tobago. None of the calypsos on Jewish themes were ever recorded according to the Decca Catalogue in the National Archives; see also <https://www.bear-family.com/various-history-calypso-1938-1940-10-cd.html> (last accessed 8 May 2019).
 21. Michael Anthony, *The Making of Port-of-Spain*, Vol. 1, Key Caribbean Publications, National Cultural Council of Trinidad and Tobago, 1978, 200.
 22. This report by Cecilia Razovsky is an unpublished typescript found in the JDC archive: Report by Cecilia Razovsky, National Coordinating Committee, 'Bound for Nowhere: Disorganized Panic Migration', 9 February 1939, JDC, File 1059. The National Coordinating Committee was established in 1934 by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), to maintain close links with the Intergovernmental High Commission for Refugees established at the League of Nations in 1933 to deal with the problem of Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany. The NCC's main function was to coordinate the relief work of affiliated private refugee agencies in the US. The financial support of the NCC came mainly from the JDC. For more on the National Coordinating Committee (NCC) see *Guide to the Records of the National Refugee Service, 1934–1952, (bulk 1939–1946)*, RG 248, processed by Zosa Szajkowski and microfilmed in 1971; microfilm inventory prepared by Yermiyahu Ahron Taub in 1998; finding aid compiled and encoded by Violet Lutz in 2013. <http://digifindingaids.cjh.org/?pID=1865416> (last accessed 30 April 2019).
 23. Eric Jennings has written about the involvement of the French Caribbean in the journeys of the SS *Alsina* and SS *Winnipeg* in his history of refugee migration to that area; see Jennings, *Escape from Vichy*.

24. Telegram, JDC Office NY to JDC Office Paris, 28 February 1939, JDC File 1059.
25. This estimate is discussed in the book, and may well be an underestimate. The firm figure of Jewish refugees dependent on JDC aid at its height is five hundred.
26. Unpublished manuscript by Hans Stecher, in author's possession.
27. Fred Mann, *A Drastic Turn of Destiny* (Toronto, ON: Azrieli Foundation, 2009).
28. Casteel, *Calypso Jews*.