

Abbo in Exile, or: On the Difficulty of Cultural Translation

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The title of this essay paraphrases a video work by William Kentridge, *Felix in Exile* (1994), at the centre of which is an expatriate living in Paris. Fears and memories of his South African homeland haunt him in the isolation of a hotel room.¹ From Felix, the path leads to another itinerant person – the sculptor Jussuf Abbo from Berlin. In the first half of the twentieth century, Abbo experienced several cross-border relocations, which led him from Safed in Palestine to Berlin and finally to London. The forced departure from Germany in 1935 meant a loss of familiarity, professional and personal relationships, and the security of an established artistic career. In London, his work received only limited attention. What he perceived to be a lack of success, along with the troubles of a precarious life, eventually led to the discontinuation of artistic production.

Exile as forced departure for political reasons can be understood as translation work. Cross-border emigration movements into new linguistic and cultural environments confront the individual with challenges to understand 'the other' and others, to learn languages and to comprehend the laws of the market. At the same time, artistic survival in a foreign country is also an attempt to make oneself and one's work comprehensible to others. Abbo's history of exile shows that translation difficulties not only mean linguistic problems, but also the mutual understanding of artistic attitudes and aesthetic convictions. Thus, translation is understood not only as the transference of words from one language into another, but also as the conflict-laden 'translation of and between cultures'.² In addition, the double semantics of the term 'translation' can be applied. Translation is a linguistic as well

as a cultural process, and in Abbo's sense it points also to the physical crossing of the English Channel, from the mainland to the British Isles, which then (as now) adopted an autonomous attitude towards Europe.

In the following, Abbo's path into exile and his work in London will be examined. Since the sculptor destroyed many of the works he created in England, their number, aesthetic principles, and materials cannot be precisely determined. This leaves many gaps and unanswered questions, which is not untypical of an oeuvre created in exile. Absence, the destroyed and the lost are thus part of an art historiography that does not understand displacement as an exception but rather defines it as a constitutive element of the history of modernism.

Go, Went, Gone³

In the context of mass migration, the temporal conjugation of the verb 'to go' refers to different temporalities: from the decision to leave via the passage through intermediate exile to the arrival in the country of destination. When fugitives arrive in a country, apply for asylum and are granted this, then 'go' becomes the present perfect 'gone' – that is to say, an action completed in the past from the perspective of the completed present. Flight and migration are therefore processual and possess an individual temporality that is elementary for the way one deals with this. Transferred to the cross-border changes of location that shaped Jussuf Abbo's life and work, both migration for educational reasons – intermediate exile – and a new beginning in London can be clearly identified.

Abbo was born in 1888, 1889 or 1890 to Jewish parents, in the Palestinian town of Safed in Upper Galilee; he resettled in Berlin in 1911. From the end of the 1910s on, he established himself as a sculptor, draughtsman and printmaker, and had studios in the Tiergarten (Königin-Augusta-Strasse 51) and Grunewald (Herbertstrasse 1) districts of Berlin. His temporary subtenant was the poet Else Lasker-Schüler, of whom he created several portraits and who dedicated a poem to him.⁴

Both shared the experience of being perceived by their environment as strangers or of receiving attention precisely because of their 'exotic' habitus. They themselves also played with forms of self-exoticisation.⁵ In the case of Else Lasker-Schüler, however, eccentricity and fantastic role changes were often misinterpreted, and her portrait photograph as Jussuf, Prince of Thebes (fig. 1) then led to stereotyped judgments, as described by Gottfried Benn: 'She was small, at the time boyishly slender, had pitch-black hair, cut short, rare in those days, and large, raven-black eyes with an evasive, enigmatic gaze. One could neither then nor later walk across the street with her without all the world standing still and staring at her: extravagant wide skirts or trousers, impossible overgarments, necks and arms draped with striking fake jewellery, chains, earrings and tinsel rings on her fingers.'⁶ Jussuf Abbo (fig. 2) was perceived by the public as similarly foreign or 'oriental'; in 1921, he was said to be 'a son of the Orient. The subdued temperament of the Oriental shines like a distant echo from all the silent, feminine busts'.⁷ Else Lasker-Schüler herself contributed to the exoticisation of Abbo by dedicating a poem to him, published in 1923 by the *Berliner Börsen-Courier* (fig. 3), in which the sculptor speaks the language of the Bedouin princes on his Divan, rides on wild horses, and has eyebrows that 'grow together like a primeval forest'.⁸ These projections and self-dramatisations negate the fact that Abbo had received a traditional academic education at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Berlin and that his sculptures can be placed in the European, Western context of figurative modernism.⁹ Abbo's sculptures, nudes and portrait busts, as well as his lithographs and etchings, reveal forms, techniques and motifs that can be seen in the context of the art production of his time: from the expressive

surface treatment of a sculpture via the strict typification of a woman's head to the expressionist portrait of Lasker-Schüler (fig. 4). His bust of a young woman from 1928, preserved in plaster and bronze (see p. 149), reveals correspondences with Christian Schad's *Sonja* (1928) and August Sander's *Rundfunksekretärin* (Radio Station Secretary, 1930).

Since 1933, Abbo's beginning of a new life was connected with the makeshift conclusion of the previous one: he closed his studio and attempted to collect works, tools and turntables, but had to leave behind much that was still kept in foundries, as well as what was in the possession of art galleries and dealers.¹⁰ The artist deposited a portion of his works and tools in a container in the port of Hamburg, hoping to be able to ship them later. In 1935, Abbo succeeded in obtaining a new Egyptian passport (fig. 5), which gave him entry to England, France, Sweden and the Netherlands.¹¹ With tourist visas, he, his wife Ruth Schulz and their son Jerome were able to leave Germany on 20 September 1935; they reached England six days later. There they found themselves in a difficult financial situation, and they took up lodgings in a furnished attic flat (1 Grove Terrace, Parliament Hill). The choice of London was presumably connected with an offer from the Leicester Galleries and Gallery Wildenstein to organise a retrospective.¹² Abbo certainly hoped for a successful entree into his country of exile.

On Uncertain Ground: Old and New Networks in Exile

Abbo's early years in London were marked by attempts to build up new networks with collectors, museums and gallery owners, to organise exhibitions and to obtain commissions for portraits. The correspondence in the artist's estate, for example, reveals that, shortly after his arrival in London, he had an appointment to present works at the Victoria & Albert Museum – presumably reproductions or small sculptures that he had been able to bring with him from Germany.¹³ The Tate Gallery also attested Abbo great talent: 'You have a sensibility which is quite rare. I think you will have a great success among connoisseurs, artists, and collectors of taste.'¹⁴ As promising as this beginning might have been, the settling in

turned out to be quite difficult. The history of exile shows that emigrants from different professional fields had comparable experiences. Great challenges were posed by, amongst other things, language difficulties, poor contacts to the local cultural scene and associated networks, and difficulties in adapting to the art market, as well as to the theatre and film scenes. Of particular note is that networking was fundamental to professional success across countries and genres. With the outbreak of the Second World War, many emigrants found themselves increasingly exposed to resentment towards artists from Germany, which made it more difficult to establish themselves in their country of exile. Professional and private social contacts, or their absence, were decisive factors for success or failure.

The question is: what became of the network Abbo had before emigrating? Persecution, scattering and displacement impacted on most people from Abbo's circles in the Weimar Republic, of which we have knowledge today. The Hanover-based gallerist Herbert von Garvens-Garvensburg, for example, who had dedicated a solo exhibition to Abbo in the 1920s and published a catalogue on the occasion, emigrated to the Danish island of Bornholm.¹⁵ The gallerist Alfred Flechtheim had emigrated to London in 1933 and was already there when Abbo arrived; Flechtheim also struggled with financial difficulties and did not run his own art dealership in London, working instead for the gallery Fred Hoyland Mayor, where he was particularly committed to the acceptance of continental modernism in England.¹⁶ Ernest Rathenau, whose Euphorion-Verlag house had published Abbo's portfolio *Zehn Lithografien* (Ten Lithographs) in 1923 (fig. 6), emigrated to New York.

The fact that past relationships did not necessarily have to end but could also have an – albeit at times weak – effect in emigration is demonstrated by attempts at contacts made by old acquaintances. In December 1941, the artist Kurt Schwitters wrote a letter to Abbo, after he had seen his work in an exhibition of the Free German League of Culture. The two had met in Hanover in the 1920s.¹⁷ Schwitters had come to Scotland from Norway in 1940 and in the same year had been interned as an 'enemy alien'. On 22 November, he was released from the internment camp and moved to London in December, where

he established contact with Abbo: 'You remember our encounters in Berlin and in the Hanover Secession. I come from Norway, where I had been living for eleven years. When and where can I see you?'¹⁸ Whether this initial contact resulted in a more intensive exile relationship cannot be reconstructed, but nevertheless it bears witness to the persistence of the connections, despite migration and emigration. The presence of a sculpture by Abbo at the *Opening Exhibition* of the Ben Uri Gallery in London in 1944 (fig. 7) also proves that old networks could be maintained in exile.¹⁹ The sculptor is listed here with a *Torso* as catalogue no. 1. The lender is named as 'A. Panofsky': presumably the banker Alfred Max Panofsky, who had emigrated from Berlin to London in 1938.²⁰ It can be assumed that he had already acquired the statuette in Germany and brought it with him into exile. The *Torso* was thus one of the few pre-war works which Abbo was able to present in England.

In order for Abbo to create new professional networks in London and to establish himself artistically in exile, it would have been elementary to be able to show works in sufficient number and quality. However, his own tools and many of his works had initially remained in Germany, so he could neither work nor present much of his previous production. He waited nearly two years for his sculptures and tools to be delivered from the port of Hamburg; he had brought with him only small stone sculptures and terracotta pieces.²¹ It was thus hardly possible to supply sufficient works for the planned exhibitions. Nevertheless, he succeeded in selling a few sculptures, for example to James Bolivar Manson, the director of the Tate Gallery (1930–38).²² But even this recognition of his work was not reflected in any exhibitions or further purchases. Abbo's artistic introduction into England initially meant working for other artists for whom he served as a foundryman. In 1938, he had moved into a small studio in Lambolle Road, in the artists' district of Hampstead, and his family found accommodation nearby (initially in Parkhill Road, and later in Strathray Gardens). The year before, his works had finally arrived from Germany. Nevertheless, Abbo did not succeed in gaining public attention with a solo exhibition. Ruth Abbo writes that many of the works were damaged on the journey to England, and that her husband had no financial means to repair the

damage, especially to the representative bronzes. In addition, he lacked the time since he was forced to continue doing foundry work for other sculptors in order to secure an income.²³ Yet as well as his work as an unskilled labourer, Abbo did occasionally participate in exhibitions. In the summer of 1938, he was able to take part in the exhibition *Contemporary Art in Osterley Park*, where his works were praised by contemporary critics.²⁴ In addition, he occasionally succeeded in obtaining commissions for portrait busts.

Probably the most important commissioned work was a portrait bust of George Lansbury that Abbo made in the summer of 1938. Lansbury was a politician, pacifist and former Chairman of the Labour Party. Until 1940, he was also President of the Peace Pledge Union, a non-governmental organisation promoting pacifism. Presumably at the suggestion of James Bolivar Manson of the Tate Gallery, Abbo was selected as an artist by the Peace Pledge Union Committee, and the bronze bust was financed through a call for donations to the members, which stated: 'We think that the fee which we should offer Mr. Abbo should be at least one hundred and fifty guineas. We are sure that it will be easy to find friends and admirers of George Lansbury in the Peace movement who would like to subscribe one guinea each, in thankfulness for the clear and courageous lead he has given us during the eventful last two years.'²⁵ (fig. 8)

There is a photograph of the meeting (fig. 9) – probably the only one after the model²⁶ – which presumably originates from the hand of Bill Brandt, who was an emigrant like Abbo but who enjoyed great success in England as a photographer and representative of a new photojournalism.²⁷ The bust of Lansbury (fig. 10) was cast in February 1939 at Susse Frères in Paris, and Abbo accompanied the process on site.²⁸ This sojourn provided him with new contacts to the Parisian art scene: he was in contact with Charles Despiau and, in 1939, exhibited at the Salon des Tuileries.²⁹ The official presentation of Lansbury's bust in England led to positive reactions in the press on 6 July 1939; the *Times* praised the expression and recognisability, which did not rely too heavily on naturalism: 'The bust, which is about one-third over life size and in bronze is likely to give permanent satisfaction. It is unmistakably the head of a thinker, with wisdom rather than cleverness as the distinguishing

character. Mr. Abbo, who is Egyptian by birth, has the comparatively rare capacity to combine compact modelling of the general form with full subtlety of expression. He avoids alike the extremes of naturalistic imitation and of empty abstraction, and his work really is a translation of the subject into terms of enduring bronze.'³⁰ This praise did not, however, lead to resounding success nor to follow-up orders.

Compared to the portrait busts of the 1920s, it must be acknowledged that Abbo was less free in dealing with the model here. Identification and representation seem to have been elementary for the commissioned work. The great similarity to the model shows that Abbo, unlike in his busts from the 1920s, worked naturalistically in order to accurately highlight the unique physiognomic features of his model. This difference is particularly evident when, for example, two works with identifiable models are juxtaposed: the bust of the museum director Max J. Friedländer and that of the British politician George Lansbury. Although Abbo accurately grasped Friedländer's gaunt physique and strongly receding hairline in his portrait, the bust as a whole is strikingly reduced and, to a certain extent, abstracted from the model. In contrast, the portrait of Lansbury remains entirely committed to the physiognomy and expression of the sitter.

It was previously unknown that the sculptor Ethel Pye mediated another portrait commission for Abbo. In an exchange of letters in 1940, a portrait bust of the poet Thomas Sturge Moore is mentioned.³¹ The estate contains a bronze bust that bears great resemblance to Sturge Moore (fig. 11): particularly conspicuous are the gaunt face, the expressive cheekbones and the sunken eyes. The beard is somewhat shorter than Sturge Moore wore it at the time, but this simplification might be due to the bronze casting. Nevertheless, the identifiability of the sitter seems to have remained important with regard to the few works commissioned in England.

In contrast to his portrait commissions, Abbo was able to work much more freely on his clay sculptures, which he had been producing in Sussex since 1939. Ruth Abbo had moved with the children to a house in Sussex where it was possible to live more cost-efficiently as a self-provider than in London. With the help of a more favourable lease, the family

had hoped to be able to keep Abbo's studio space in London. In Sussex he created, among others, a nude (fig. 12) and a portrait of a girl (fig. 13), both only about fifteen centimetres high. The girl's head in particular reveals Abbo's characteristic rough treatment of the surface, which shows traces of the modelling with the artist's hands. The malleable clay allowed for an immediate, emotional way of working. The sitter has her head tilted to the side; her shoulder is raised and her eyelids are closed. Although the terracotta bust appears unfinished, Abbo succeeded in empathetically and sensitively translating the expression of sleep. Whether these works were exhibited or were rather intended to serve as models for later sculptures in other materials cannot be verified with certainty, despite the fact that, in the 1940s, Abbo was still able to participate in group exhibitions.

This participation in exhibitions in times of war – that is to say, under difficult conditions – corrects the image of the artistically and socially isolated exile artist conveyed in the few publications on Abbo.³² Of particular interest is the contact with the Free German League of Culture (FGLC).³³ In late 1941, Abbo participated in the *Exhibition of Sculpture, Pottery and Sculptors' Drawings*, which the FGLC had organised in cooperation with the Artists' International Association at its clubhouse in Upper Park Road in London.³⁴ The occasion for the exhibition was the observation that contemporary sculpture and artistic pottery were underrepresented in the English art scene: 'We have all been feeling for some time that as far as the public exhibition of work was concerned, English sculptors and potters had a very thin time in comparison with painters.'³⁵ The exhibition was intended to give emigrated and local sculptors the opportunity of public representation in a sales exhibition. In December 1941, the FGLC's monthly journal looked back on a successful exhibition (fig. 14), 'which was praised by English critics, as well as by critics of the emigration press'. A bust by Abbo is particularly emphasised in the article as a 'magnificent work'. The praise and sales of the exhibited pottery by the artist are also mentioned.³⁶ Heinz Worner, who headed the Fine Arts Section of the FGLC, informed Abbo about the planned sale of a bust to a critic of the *Jewish Chronicle*.³⁷ Meanwhile, in his review of the exhibition, the prospective buyer commented downright

euphorically on Jussuf Abbo: '[...] but of all the works here I would give the palm to the Bronze "Bust" by J. Abbo. It has an Eastern depth of being and simplicity of execution, so that it was not surprising to learn that Mr. Abbo is an Egyptian. He worked in Berlin for some time, but his Semitic origin compelled his departure.'³⁸

The participation in the exhibition and the positive response of critics and the public to Abbo's works reveal that the sculptor was indeed able to achieve small successes. He was present in various institutions in the 1940s: in the Leger Gallery at 13 Old Bond Street, for example, he participated in the exhibitions *Contemporary Continental Art* (1941),³⁹ *Nudes* (1942 and 1943)⁴⁰ and *Modern Paintings and Sculpture* (1945).⁴¹ His works were also included in the group exhibition *Artists of Fame and of Promise* at the Leicester Galleries in London in 1943, and in the opening exhibition of the Ben Uri Gallery in 1944. Nevertheless, these minor successes were neither able to provide him with financial security nor to inspire him artistically.⁴² The sculptor Ethel Pye, who, together with her sister Sybil, regularly financially supported destitute artists, thus wrote in a letter to Thomas Moore: 'The problem of the Abbo family is severe, [although] he may get a few things on show, no one is buying. I write to people – but who has the time + thought for a portrait?'⁴³

It was presumably particularly difficult that, in London in the 1930s and 1940s, sculpture as a genre did not receive as much attention as it did on the continent. During the Weimar Republic, Abbo worked in productive competition with sculptors such as Ernesto de Fiori, Moissey Kogan and Renée Sintenis. In England, however, as the Artists' International Association summed up, sculpture was a little appreciated art: '[...] there are now few galleries in London where sculpture can conveniently be shown, and the high cost of its transport makes it difficult for sculptors to pay a large exhibition fee. [...] the public interest in sculpture in this country seems almost in danger of dying out.'⁴⁴ However, this assessment may not be entirely correct, as sculptors such as Jacob Epstein had already achieved considerable success in England in the 1910s. And in the 1930s, a group of abstract sculptors formed in London with Barbara Hepworth, Naum Gabo and László Moholy-Nagy,

who, with *Circle* (1937), published a joint manifesto-like volume. In the same year, the English translation of Carola Giedion-Welcker's book *Modern Sculpture* was published, in which she related Barbara Hepworth and Henry Moore to continental artists such as Hans Arp and Constantin Brancusi.⁴⁵ In doing so, she created a European narrative of abstract sculpture. Abbo could not, however, profit from this increasing attention to modern and abstract British sculpture – his work was committed to expressive figuration and was much closer to the likes of Hermann Haller⁴⁶ or Moissey Kogan than to the radical sculptures of the artists associated with *Circle*.

In order to secure his livelihood, Jussuf Abbo therefore sporadically worked in the antiques trade, hired himself out as a farm and building labourer, and joined a crew that carried out repairs to bomb damage. Since he had an Egyptian passport, he had not been interned as an 'enemy alien'. During this period, he rented a furnished room in Byne Road in London's Sydenham district. It is of no little importance to note the artist's various addresses, as well as his living and working situations. The repeated relocations were part of the lives of many emigrants who competed on the housing market with the local population and other non-British residents. The art historian Rosa Schapire, who was likewise living in exile in London, also repeatedly moved house, changing landlords and neighbourhoods. For her, too, exile in London meant a social decline – from her flat in Hamburg-Uhlenhorst, which had been furnished by the Expressionist Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, to the sparsely furnished rooms of her London existence.⁴⁷ Abbo's last residential address in London also reveals how precarious his situation actually was. Sydenham was located in southeast London, far from the city centre and his studio. In 1940/41, the district had also been hit hard by German bombs,⁴⁸ so there must have been a great number of destroyed buildings when Abbo moved there. Although the sculptor had thereby rented himself into an affordable living and working environment, he could not maintain his studio; the tenancy agreement was terminated in 1945. As a reaction to this, he smashed most of the works he had created there, as he had neither the financial means to move them nor the necessary space to store them. He also sold his tools.⁴⁹ Perhaps

as a result, he fell seriously ill. On 29 August 1953, Abbo died in England.⁵⁰

Loop: Forgotten, Rediscovered, Forgotten

In the decades after Abbo's death, his work was repeatedly given new attention in Germany only to fall yet again into oblivion. In England, his art was not presented in any exhibitions for many years.

The first extensive monographic exhibition of Abbo's work was in 1965 – that is to say, twelve years after his death – at the Galerie S Ben Wagin in Berlin, accompanied by a small catalogue. Although Leopold Reidemeister, a prominent art historian and founding director of the Brücke Museum, gave the introductory speech, the response remained restrained even after the exhibition.⁵¹ As a result, there were disputes with Ben Wagin, since the retrospective, supported by the City of Berlin, had suffered losses that Wagin, according to the Abbo family, wished to compensate by unauthorised sales of works from the exhibition.⁵²

The lack of interest in Abbo's work in Germany is probably also due to the fact that many of the artist's works were removed from museum collections during the confiscation action 'Entartete Kunst'. In 1937, works by the artist had been confiscated from the Hamburger Kunsthalle, the Kunsthalle Mannheim, the Schlesisches Museum für bildende Künste in Breslau, the Museum für Kunst und Heimatgeschichte in Erfurt and the Kunsthütte Chemnitz, and thus erased from public consciousness.⁵³ Moreover, Abbo, an artist who had died early and without a supportive environment, had no chance of rehabilitation after 1945. Early supporters, collectors and gallerists were also among the persecuted and expellees of the Nazi regime or had already died before 1933.⁵⁴ Hanns Krenz, an employee at the Galerie von Garvens, tried in vain to find Abbo in London after the Second World War.⁵⁵ Only Wilhelm Großhennig, who had taken over the Gerstenberger Gallery in Chemnitz in 1930, where Abbo had a solo exhibition in the 1920s, was able to support the sculptor's work after his death. In the 1970s, Abbo's works were shown at the Galerie Großhennig in Düsseldorf. In addition to Großhennig, the Galerie Wolfgang Ketterer also supported Abbo's rediscovery, and in fact the 1960s and 1970s brought new attention to his work. Hussein

Abbo writes about this: ‘He [Jussuf Abbo] left behind a small quantity of sculptures, mainly portraits and about 1500 drawings, etchings and lithographs. These I have deposited with the Galerie Wolfgang Ketterer in Munich where I hope they will gradually regain some sort of status in the context of the history of modern European Art history.’⁵⁶

The communication with the Galerie Ketterer reveals that the family’s interests in an appreciation of Jussuf Abbo’s oeuvre did not always conform to the market economy interests of the art dealers. Ketterer thus saw to it that the unsigned works were verified with an estate stamp on the front; and the assessments of the material and immaterial value of the sculptures in particular were also occasionally quite divergent.⁵⁷ For the descendants of an artist excluded from art history, fundamental questions arose, such as the inclusion through sales and distribution or the preservation of his memory and the protection from scattering of an already rudimentary oeuvre. In the following years, various German gallerists and art dealers such as Michael Hasenclever (initially Galerie Ketterer and later Galerie Michael Hasenclever, both in Munich) and Ralph Jentsch (Kunstgalerie Esslingen) tried their hand at exhibitions and sales.⁵⁸

The exhibition in Berlin in the late 1980s, *Kunst im Exil in Großbritannien* (Art in Exile in Great Britain), once again attracted attention, since Abbo was placed in the context of other emigrants in England, and a biographical sketch by Ruth Abbo was published.⁵⁹ It was not until the 2000s that Abbo again became the subject of art-historical treatises and exhibitions, and lately with two publications and an exhibition at the Kunsthaus Dahlem in Berlin, the artist was once again noticed in Germany.⁶⁰ In 2018, Abbo’s work in Germany was commemorated with a plaque at his former residence and studio at

Königin-Augusta-Strasse 51 in Berlin.⁶¹ That same year, the Jussuf Abbo family donated a group of works on paper each to the Berlinische Galerie, the Jewish Museum Berlin and the Sprengel Museum Hannover.⁶²

In numerous texts on and biographical testimonies to Abbo, the dominant interpretation of failure in a foreign land, which lies like a shadow over his entire oeuvre, has thus far prevailed. This assessment must be accorded validity, for example when the London art dealer Gustav Delbanco writes: ‘The uprooting from Germany threw Jussuf Abbo off course to such an extent that, as an artist, he was severely hindered in his further development, and his collapse can certainly be largely explained by this turn of fate.’⁶³ Nevertheless, it would not do justice to the poetic, expressive and diverse work to see it merely as an example of failure through exile. A review of his oeuvre reveals that Abbo had already made a new beginning in a foreign language and cultural region (Germany), and that he had made numerous – and occasionally successful – attempts to find a new voice and renewed attention in Great Britain. There were thus more participations in exhibitions in England than initially thought. Nevertheless, unpredictable catastrophes such as the years-late delivery of Abbo’s sculptures and the outbreak of the Second World War with the bombing of London and the restriction of the art trade prevented the artist from gaining a foothold in exile. The constant need for money, the care of a family that grew to three children in this time of crisis, and the psychological and physical strains ultimately led to the decline of artistic creativity. In Germany, the social connections broken by persecution and war, the confiscation of the work in the ‘Entartete Kunst’ action, and the artist’s absence from public discourse since 1935 prevented its reception.⁶⁴

- 1 For more on this work, see: Thomas Lange, ‘Geschichte visualisieren. William Ken-tridges “Felix in Exile” (1994)’, in: Michael Gamper (ed.), *Zeit der Darstellung. Ästhe-tische Eigenzeiten in Kunst, Literatur und Wissenschaft* (Hanover 2014), pp. 137–64.
- 2 Doris Bachmann-Medick, ‘Einleitung: Übersetzung als Repräsentation fremder Kulturen’, in: idem. (ed.), *Übersetzung als Repräsentation fremder Kulturen* (Berlin 1997), pp. 1–18, here p. 1.
- 3 The title of this chapter was inspired by Jenny Erpenbeck’s novel *Go. Went, Gone* (2015) [trans. Susan Bernofsky], with which she reacted to the current mass migration to Germany.
- 4 ‘He [Abbo] was the first Jussuff, Prince of Thebes, who spooked her [Else Lasker-Schüler’s] dreams and poems, although she later confused him with others who spoke to her in letters and conversations in the same way.’ Edouard Roditi, in: *Abbo*, exh. cat. Galerie S Ben Wargin, West-Berlin, 1965, unpaginated [translated]. For more on the relationship between the sculptor and the poet, see: Burcu Dogramaci, ‘Jussufs Gedicht für Jussuf Abbo’, in: Hajo Jahn (ed.), *Der Blaue Reiter ist gefallen. Else Lasker-Schüler Jubiläums-almanach* (Wuppertal 2015), pp. 275–7.
- 5 Abbo’s son Hussein comments on this a letter: ‘He apparently walked about Berlin in arabic [sic] clothes, and a sort of Beduin [sic] myth evolved about him [...]. He prob-ably did nothing to discourage this, as it provided him with suitable enigmatic pos-ture in the rather over dramatic surround-ings of the Berlin artistic circles.’ Letter from Hussein Abbo to Lea, 29 December 1971, Estate of Jussuf Abbo, Brighton/UK.
- 6 Gottfried Benn, ‘Rede auf Else Lasker-Schüler’ (1952), in: idem., *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 4 (Wiesbaden 1968), pp. 1101–4, here p. 1102 [translated].
- 7 M. Kulback [Moyshe Kulbak], ‘Jussuf Abbo’, in: *Jussuf Abbo: Plastik, Zeichnun-gen, Radierungen*, exh. cat. Galerie von Garvens, Hanover, 1921, pp. 3–4, here p. 3 [translated].
- 8 The poem initially appeared in the ‘1. Beilage’ (first supplement), of the *Berliner Börsen-Courier*, vol. 55, no. 327 (morning edition), 15 July 1923, here in a slight variation, in which the sculptor is identified as ‘Jussuff Abbu’. I refer here, however, to the second printing in the publica-tion *Jussuf Abbo: Plastik – Aquarelle – Farbige Zeichnungen – Zeichnungen*, exh. cat. Graphisches Kabinett Georg Maulhardt, Hamburg, 1923, unpaginated [translated]. Reprint of the poem in: Else Lasker-Schüler, *Gedichte* [vol. 1.1 in the series: *Else Lasker-Schüler, Werke und Briefe. Kritische Ausgabe*, ed. Karl Jürgen Skrodzki] (Frankfurt am Main 1996), p. 224.
- 9 For more on this, see the essay by Arie Hartog in this volume, pp. 136–141.
- 10 Ruth Abbo, handwritten manuscript, 26 September 1957, p. 4, Estate of Jussuf Abbo, Brighton/UK.
- 11 After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Abbo had become a stateless person and initially made no effort to acquire another nationality. His passport from 1935 can be found in the Compensation File of the State Office for Residents’ and Regulatory Affairs in Berlin; it states that Abbo’s old passport, issued by the Egyptian consulate in Berlin, was dated 21 January 1924. This results in contradictions or at least incon-sistencies with the handwritten biography of Abbo compiled by Ruth Abbo. There, it is noted that Abbo did not receive an Egyptian passport until 1935. See: Abbo 1957 (see note 10), p. 8. What is more, as early as 1931, the artist indicated ‘Egypt’ as his nationality on the form for the regis-tration of residency in Berlin. Registration of Residency (comprehensive registration form) for Jussuf Abbo, Berlin, 10 October 1931, Estate of Jussuf Abbo, Brighton/UK.
- 12 Abbo 1957 (see note 10), pp. 4, 10.
- 13 Letter from Eric Maclagan, Victoria & Albert Museum, to Jussuf Abbo dated 31 October 1935, Estate of Jussuf Abbo, Brighton/UK.
- 14 Letter from J. B. Manson, Tate Gallery, to Jussuf Abbo, 12 November 1935, Estate of Jussuf Abbo, Brighton/UK.
- 15 Garvens complemented the catalogue to the exhibition in August 1921 with a high-quality special edition of fifty copies accompanied by an original etching. See: ‘Anzeige’, in: *Zwei Jahre Galerie von Garvens* (Hanover 1922), unpaginated.
- 16 Ottfried Dascher, “‘Es ist etwas Wahnsin-niges mit der Kunst”. Alfred Flechtheim. Sammler, Kunsthändler, Verleger”, in: *Quellenstudien zur Kunst*, no. 6 (Wädenswil 2011), pp. 329–31.
- 17 Evidence suggests that Schwitters dedicated his collage *Mz 454* (1922) to Abbo, and he mentions him in his prose text ‘Liebes Breuer’ (1926). See: Heinz Vahlbruch, ‘Der Bildhauer aus dem Beduinenzelt’, in: *Hannoversche Allgemei-ne Zeitung*, 7 January 1988, p. 10.
- 18 Letter from Kurt Schwitters to Jussuf Abbo, London, 23 December 1941, Kurt Schwitters Archives in the Sprengel Museum Hannover, Inv. no. que 06840226,T [translated]. Schwitters also contacted other emigrants from the circle of the FGLC, including Fred Uhlman, Siegfried Charoux and Georg Ehrlich. See: Emma Chambers, ‘Schwitters und England’, in: *Schwitters in England*, ed. Emma Chambers and Karin Orchard, exh. cat. Sprengel Museum Hannover, 2013, pp. 6–19.
- 19 I am grateful to Rachel Dickson and Sarah MacDougall for pointing this out. In 1944, the Ben Uri Gallery had moved into new rooms at 14 Portman Street in London’s West End, which were inaugurated with this exhibition. See: Rachel Dickson, ‘Emigré Artists and the Ben Uri’, in: idem. and Sarah MacDougall (eds.), *Forced Journeys. Artists in Exile in Britain c. 1933–45*, exh. cat. Ben Uri Gallery and Jewish Museum London, London, 2009, pp. 86–90. A self-portrait by Abbo from a private collection in Birmingham is also illustrated in the catalogue (p. 96).
- 20 Some biographical information about Alfred Panofsky can be found in: *Ger-aubte Mitte. Die Arisierung des jüdischen Grundeigentums im Berliner Stadtkern 1933–1945*, ed. Franziska Nentwig, exh. cat. Stiftung Stadtmuseum Berlin, Ephraim Palais, Berlin, 2013, pp. 14–5.
- 21 Abbo 1957 (see note 10), p. 12.
- 22 Ibid. For more on Manson, see: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/camden-town-group/james-bolivar-manson-r1105350> [last accessed: 31.7.2019].
- 23 See: Ruth Abbo, ‘Über den Verlust einer künstlerischen Existenz. Jussuf Abbo im Exil’, in: *Kunst im Exil in Großbritannien 1933–1945*, ed. Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst Berlin, 1986, pp. 181–4, here p. 182.
- 24 See: Abbo 1957 (see note 10), p. 15; Ruth Abbo notes the *Manchester Guardian and the New Statesman and Nation*.
- 25 The committee’s appeal for donations, October 1937, Estate of Jussuf Abbo, Brighton/UK.
- 26 This is at least noted in a letter from Ethel Pye to Mary Sturge Moore, undated [1940]. Senate House Library, University of London.
- 27 An inscription on the photograph in the Abbo Estate notes Brandt as the photographer.
- 28 The bronze bust of Lansbury, cast in Paris in 1938 under the supervision of Abbo and presented to the public in 1939, is now kept in the collection of the People’s History Museum in Manchester, inv. no. NMLH.1995.36.
- 29 See: Salon des Tuileries, *Catalogue de la 16. Exposition*, exh. cat. Palais de Chaillot, Paris, 1939, p. 127. I thank Dorothea Schöne for the reference to the catalogue.
- 30 Anonymous, ‘Bust of Mr. Lansbury’, in: *The Times*, 6 July 1939. Newspaper clipping in the Estate of Jussuf Abbo, Brighton/UK.
- 31 Letter from Ethel Pye to Mary Stuggs Moore, dated 17 June [1940], Senate House Library, University of London. I am grateful to Dorothea Schöne for the valua-ble reference to this correspondence.
- 32 See, among others: Abbo 1986 (see note 23).
- 33 Jutta Vinzent points out that Abbo partici-pated in meetings of the FGLC: Jutta Vinzent, *Identity and Image. Refugee Artists from Nazi Germany in Britain (1933–1945)*

- [*Schriften der Guernica-Gesellschaft*, 16] (Weimar 2006), p. 281. For more on the FGLC, see: Anna Müller-Härlin, 'It all happened in this street, Downshire Hill: Fred Uhlmann and the Free German League of Culture', in: Shulamith Behr and Marian Malet (eds.), *Arts in Exile in Britain 1933–1945. Politics and Cultural Identity* [*The Yearbook of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies*, 6/2004] (Amsterdam/New York 2005), pp. 241–65.
- 34 Reference to the exhibition (8–29 November 1941) in the monthly journal *Freie Deutsche Kultur*, no. 10, October 1941, p. 7; available online at: <https://portal.dnb.de/bookviewer/view/1026558468#page/1/mode/2up> [last accessed: 1.8.2019]. See also: Anna Müller-Härlin, 'The Artists' Section', in: Charmian Brinson and Richard Dove, *Politics By Other Means. The Free German League of Culture in London 1939–1946* (London/Portland, Oregon 2010), pp. 54–73, here p. 66.
- 35 Artists' International Association, *Exhibition of Sculpture, Pottery and Sculptors' Drawings*, undated, Heinz-Worner-Archiv, 133, Archives of the Akademie der Künste (Academy of the Arts), Berlin.
- 36 *Freie Deutsche Kultur*, no. 12, December 1941, p. 10 [translated]; available online at: <https://portal.dnb.de/bookviewer/view/1026558484#page/10/mode/2up> [last accessed: 1.8.2019].
- 37 'Dear Mr Abbo, this afternoon the critic from the "Jewish Chronicle" was here. He liked the exhibition very much – especially your works. He would very much like to purchase this small head from you. But since he does not have sufficient funds at his disposal, the price of seven guineas was too high for him. I asked him how much he could afford to spend, and he said he could pay five guineas. [...] Please be so kind as to write to me with your opinion in this matter. I have the impression that he was very sincere. He would have loved to have purchased your bronze head if he had fifty guineas at his disposal.' Letter from Heinz Worner to Jussuf Abbo dated 17 November 1941, Heinz-Worner-Archiv, 72, Archives of the Akademie der Künste, Berlin [translated].
- 38 *Jewish Chronicle*, 28 November 1941, p. 21. Newspaper clipping in the Heinz-Worner-Archiv, 209, Archives of the Akademie der Künste, Berlin.
- 39 See: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/archive/items/tga-20052-2-11-6/j-leger-son-leger-galleries-private-view-card-for-exhibition-of-contemporary-continental/> [last accessed: 2.8.2019].
- 40 See: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/archive/items/tga-20052-2-15-2/j-leger-son-exhibition-catalogue-titled-exhibition-of-nudes-by-contemporary-artists/1>; <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/archive/items/tga-20052-2-11-8/j-leger-son-exhibition-catalogue-titled-exhibition-of-paintings-drawings-sculptures-nudes> [both last accessed: 2.8.2019].
- 41 14 August–4 September 1945, with works by Paul Nash, Oskar Kokoschka, Fred Uhlman and Theo Balden. Abbo exhibited *Head of a Woman*. Flyer in the Heinz-Worner-Archiv, 172, Archives of the Akademie der Künste, Berlin.
- 42 See: Abbo 1986 (see note 23), pp. 182f.
- 43 Letter from Ethel Pye to Thomas Moore dated 19 October [1940], Senate House Library, University of London. For more on Ethel Pye, see https://sculpture.gla.ac.uk/view/person.php?id=msib2_1204137762 [last accessed: 2.8.2019].
- 44 Artists' International Association, *Exhibition of Sculpture, Pottery and Sculptors' Drawings*, undated, Heinz-Worner-Archiv, 133, Archives of the Akademie der Künste, Berlin.
- 45 Carola Giedion-Welcker, *Modern Plastic Art. Elements of Reality, Volume and Disintegration* (Zürich 1937). See also: Arie Hartog, 'The Centre of Modern Sculpture: Some Thoughts on Hepworth and Moore', in: *Modern British Sculpture*, ed. Penelope Curtis and Keith Wilson, exh. cat. Royal Academy of Arts, London, 2011, pp. 152–9, here p. 154.
- 46 In this author's opinion, there are many parallels to Haller's sculptures. Worth mentioning is, for example, Haller's *terracotta Kopf* (Head, 1907/08) – illustrated in: *Deutsche Bildhauer 1900–1945. Entartet*, ed. Christian Tümpel (Zwolle 1992), p. 101 – which is inspired by Etruscan sculptures. This head allows a comparison with a stone head of a girl by Abbo from the 1920s, in which a braid protrudes from the back of the head at an angle of ninety degrees. Haller was represented by Cassirer and Flechtheim, gallerists with whom Abbo also maintained close professional contacts.
- 47 For more on Schapire's exile, see: Burcu Dogramaci, 'Still Fighting for Modern Art. Rosa Schapire in England', in: idem. and Günther Sandner (eds.), *Rosa und Anna Schapire – Sozialwissenschaft, Kunstgeschichte und Feminismus um 1900* (Berlin 2017), pp. 229–56.
- 48 See the map of the London bombing raids; <http://bombsight.org/explore/greater-london/lewisham/sydenham/> [last accessed: 2.8.2019].
- 49 See: Abbo 1986 (see note 23), p. 184. Few works and drawings survived this act of destruction; these are now in the Estate of Jussuf Abbo, Brighton/UK.
- 50 The amputation of a finger in 1947 destroyed any hope of continuing his artistic work.
- 51 Among others, however, the portrait bust of the actress Brigitte Helm was sold to the sitter herself. See: letter from Ben Wagin to Ruth Abbo dated 29 April 1966, Estate of Jussuf Abbo, Brighton/UK. Today, the bust is located in the Deutsche Kinemathek, Berlin.
- 52 See: correspondence between Ruth and Hussein Abbo and Ben Wagin from the years 1965–67, Estate of Jussuf Abbo, Brighton/UK.
- 53 Register of the Reich Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda, ca. 1941/42; <https://apps.opendatacity.de/entartete-kunst/pdf/abbo.pdf> [last accessed: 2.8.2019]. Illustrations of several works can be found in the confiscation inventory database of the 'Degenerate Art' campaign, in: FU Berlin, Research Centre 'Entartete Kunst'; see: <http://emuseum.campus.fu-berlin.de/eMuseumPlus?service=RedirectService&sp=Collection&sp=Sfield-Value&sp=0&sp=1&sp=3&sp=Sdetail-List&sp=0&sp=Sdetail&sp=0&sp=F> [last accessed: 2.8.2019].
- 54 Paul Cassirer had already committed suicide in 1926, while von Garvens had emigrated – as mentioned above – to Denmark, and Karl Nierendorf had gone into exile in the USA.
- 55 See: letter from Heinz Vahlbruch to Ruth Abbo dated 5 October 1956, Estate of Jussuf Abbo, Brighton/UK.
- 56 Letter from Hussein Abbo to Lea dated 29 December 1971, Estate of Jussuf Abbo, Brighton/UK.
- 57 See: correspondence between Galerie Ketterer and Hussein Abbo from the years 1966–72, Estate of Jussuf Abbo, Brighton/UK. Hussein Abbo designed the desired estate stamp and stamped all graphics in 1970.
- 58 In 1976, Jentsch purchased 230 prints by Abbo for 15,000 euros. See: letter from Ralph Jentsch to Hussein Abbo dated 26 April 1976, Estate of Jussuf Abbo, Brighton/UK. In 1977, an exhibition was held at the Kunstgalerie Esslingen.
- 59 See: Abbo 1986 (see note 23).
- 60 Abbo is mentioned in, among others: Vinzent 2006 (see note 30) and Dickson/MacDougall 2009 (see note 19). Also worthy of mention are, among others, exhibitions such as *Der vergessene Prinz von Theben – Jussuf Abbo (1888–1953)* at the Schaafstall in Bad Münster-Egestorf (2004), organised by Ernst J. Kirchertz, and *Neue/Alte Heimat. Emigration von Künstlerinnen und Künstlern nach 1945* at the Kunsthaus Dahlem in 2017, which, for the first time in many years, presented several of the artist's works in Berlin. These were preceded by the following publications: Burcu Dogramaci, *Deutschland, fremde Heimat. Zur Rückkehr emigrierter Bildhauer nach 1945. Germany / A Foreign Land. The Return of Émigré Sculptors after 1945* [*Schriftenreihe des Kunsthauses Dahlem*] (Berlin 2015); idem. 'Jussufs Gedicht für Jussuf Abbo', in: Jahn 2015 (see note 4). In recent years, the commitment of the artist and collector Said Balbaaki, who organised a commemorative exhibition for Abbo at the Agial Art Gallery in Beirut in 2018, should also be mentioned; see: http://www.agialart.com/Content/uploads/Exhibition/2468_Agial%20Said%20Baalbaki%20Leaflet%20low%20res.pdf [last accessed: 2.8.2019].
- 61 See: <https://www.gedenktafeln-in-berlin.de/nc/gedenktafeln/gedenktafelanzeige/tid/jussuf-abbo/> [last accessed: 2.8.2019].
- 62 See: <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/kultur/juedischer-bildhauer-wieder-entdeckt-jussuf-abbo-unverdor-ben-in-der-hast/22953518.html> [last accessed: 2.8.2019].
- 63 Quoted in: letter from Heinrich Zucker, R. S. Zuriel, Rechtsanwälte, to the Restitution Offices Berlin dated 11 May 1959, Estate of Jussuf Abbo, Brighton/UK [translated].
- 64 See: letter from Leopold Reidemeister, Director General of the former Staatlichen Museen in West-Berlin to Dr. Goldstein dated 1 July 1959, Estate of Jussuf Abbo, in which he states: 'I hereby confirm that I am firmly convinced, knowing the person and the work of Jussuf Abbos, that this artist would have been a great success in Germany if circumstances had not forced him to emigrate.' [translated] It is astonishing that Abbo is not even mentioned in the catalogue *Deutsche Bildhauer 1900–1945. Entartet*, edited by Christian Tümpel (Zwolle 1992). It can thus be stated that, for a long time, he was also overlooked by the research on the action 'Entartete Kunst', and that he thus belongs to the forgotten of the repressed.
- The essay is based on research by the author on London as a city of exile within the European Research Council funded Consolidator Grant 'Relocating Modernism: Metropolises, Modern Art and Exile (METROMOD)'; Horizon 2020, Grant agreement No. 724649, at LMU Munich (2017–2022).*