The Sting of Desire: Hugo Marcus's Theology of Male Friendship

In this chapter, we turn to Hugo Marcus (1880–1966) at a time when the turn-of-the-century German emancipatory debates and his encounter with Indian Muslims in the interwar period were culminating in his theological writings on exalted male friendship. What did this German homosexual of the 1880s make of the distinguished Ahmadi gentlemen from faraway Lahore? What actually happened when the latter made a place for this elderly man who described himself as painfully shy? And how was his theology received? To answer these questions, I continue my earlier discussion of Hugo Marcus, which addressed his conversion to Islam and role as leading thinker of the mosque community in Berlin.¹

As an adolescent, Hugo Marcus acquired the habit of writing on a daily basis and kept faithful to it for the rest of his life. His writings were on the thoughts that crossed his mind, rather than on any of the things he or others said or did, for reality was not a topic he was able to address. What he noted in his diaries and published in a wide range of books and journals initially took the form of short stories about exalted male friendship, the numbers of which ran into the hundreds. These were followed by thousands of aphorisms on the tension between Eros and Heroism. In fact, as the latter commented on the former, the two were often published together. Like so many of his generation, Hugo Marcus borrowed these topics from Friedrich Nietzsche. As I explain later in this chapter, they aptly express the inner tension with which he wrestled throughout his life.

After studying philosophy at Berlin University, he turned his mind to beauty – in music, landscapes and the human body. For Marcus, any thought of aesthetics posed inevitable questions about balance and belonging, questions that European thought had insufficiently addressed, or so he felt. In his dissertation, he suggested rethinking the issue of unity in the domain of man's innermost feelings, the soul, stating that every soul is full of opposition, and that the feelings it engenders are by nature lawless. He called it the antinomy of the

1 Gerdien Jonker, *The Ahmadiyya Quest for Religious Progress: Missionizing Europe 1900–1965* (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2016), 109–13, 144–5, 199–205.

soul. Unity, he concluded, consists of a large variety of forms and feelings that may be interdependent, yet are never the same.²

In addition to the hundreds of articles and short stories mentioned above, Marcus's search for aesthetics and the acknowledgement of diversity also found expression in a dozen books. His first novel (*Das Frühlingsglück*, Spring happiness) was published when he was 20, his last booklet with aphorisms (*Einer sucht den Freund*, Looking for a friend) when he was 81.³ In different ways, they mark Hugo Marcus's lifelong quest for the seemingly impossible, which was to escape the labyrinth of his mind, dissolve himself and fuse with another.

At the age of 51, Hugo Marcus converted to Islam. He was not exactly an impulsive man, for he had been an active member of the Ahmadiyya mosque in Berlin for the best part of eight years. During that time Marcus tutored young Indian students in German language and European culture. He also organized lectures, edited the mosque journal and engaged in intellectual debates with the Ahmadiyya missionaries. These activities brought him into contact with men from a wholly different cultural milieu, and one that encouraged the sorts of male friendships that seemed to bring Marcus out of himself. These encounters unleashed in him a torrent of writings, in which he embarked on no less than a complete reappraisal of European thought in the light of his newly acquired knowledge of Muslims and Muslim culture. He studied towering figures like Goethe, Nietzsche, Kant and Spinoza, which allowed him to remain on his home ground yet apply their insights to his understanding of Islam. He was now able to describe all the demons with which he had been grappling since his youth and that had troubled him for the better part of his life in a new light – be they about love, heroism, friendship, pride, modesty, belief, hope, sin, redemption, magic, miracles, mysticism, asceticism, justice or unity. He acquired a new, less constrained, understanding of these issues and 20 of his treatises were published in the mosque journal, *Die Moslemische Revue*. The Central Library in Zurich, which houses the Hugo Marcus collected papers has another 50 unpublished typescripts on the topic of Islam.⁴

2 Hugo Marcus, *Die Philosophie des Monopluralismus: Grundzüge einer analytischen Naturphilosophie und eines ABC im Versuch* (Berlin: Concordia Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1907), 31–55.

3 Hugo Marcus, *Frühlingsglück: Die Geschichte einer ersten Liebe* (Dresden: E. Pierson's Verlag, 1900); Hugo Marcus, *Einer sucht den Freund. Gedanken zum Thema Das Ewige und der Freund* (Heidelberg: Verlag Lambert Schneider, 1961).

4 Hugo Marcus private archive, Box 8 (two containers). The collected papers are stored in 40 containers, numbered Box 1 to 13. The order of the papers reflects the order in which Hugo Marcus left them behind. Apart from an approximate enumeration, there is no archival development.

Writing was Hugo Marcus's life. His collected papers contain a bundle of 35 typescripts with titles including 'The Library', 'The Book', 'How a Book Emerges', 'The Wandering Book', 'A Predestination Theory of Books', 'On the Eternal Fragment', 'Portrait of a Reader', 'The Elite Reader', 'From the Diary of a Literate Man', 'Disastrous Critic', and many more.⁵ His writings were his reality. When he fled from Germany on 23 August 1939, he put everything he had ever written in his luggage – yellowed diaries and handwritten manuscripts, typescripts with handwritten corrections, galley proofs fresh from the publisher and his many books. Other Jewish refugees took household goods and winter clothes.⁶ What Hugo Marcus chose to carry across the border was 40 years' worth of his own writings, weighing at least a hundred kilos. Once he had settled in Switzerland and was able to receive letters again, his lifelong friend and partner Roman wrote from Berlin: 'My dear, dear Hugo, I am sure you will feel at home wherever your thoughts are.'⁷ More to the point, Hugo Marcus only felt at ease if he had all his texts around him.

A short overview of how Marcus's writings were received is perhaps called for here. After he died in 1966, his works, which during his lifetime received little attention, were totally forgotten. Among his collected papers, there are 20 reviews of his books that came out between 1900 and 1912 and they are not always favourable. One reviewer called *The Philosophy of Mono-Pluralism* 'the work of a dilettante'. Another referred to him as 'more a poet than a logician'.⁸ In 1912, the leading German *Philosophical Lexicon* assigned Hugo Marcus a 90-word entry. After that, German lexicons ignored him for a whole century until, in 2008, the Swiss finally rediscovered him as a philosopher.⁹ In the 1990s, Marcus's conversion received fleeting attention in studies on Islam in Germany, but merely because he had been a Jew.¹⁰ At the start of the new century, interest in Hugo Marcus was rekindled because of his link with homosexual circles.

5 Hugo Marcus private archive, Box 4.

6 Johannes F. Everlein, 'Erste Dinge – Reisegepäck im Exil: Eine phänomenologische Lektüre', in Doerte Bischoff and Joachim Schlör (eds) *Dinge des Exils* (Munich: edition text + kritik, 2013), 23–35.

7 Letter from Roman Malicki to Hugo Marcus, dated 12 December 1939. Hugo Marcus private archive, Box 12.2.1.

8 Hugo Marcus private archive, Box 11.

9 Apart from the 90-word entry on him in Rudolf Eisler, *Philosophen-Lexikon* (Berlin: 1912), 452; the other two were Anon, 'Hugo Marcus', in *Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz* (2008), www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/d/D44511.php; Anon, 'Hugo Marcus', *Personenlexikon des Kantons Basel-Landschaft* (24 November 2014), www.personenlexikon.bl.ch/Hugo_Marcus.

10 Burkhard Schöder, 'Faschistischer Islam?' *Tip: Berliner Magazin* Nr. 22 (17 October 1966), 62. The text consists of an interview with Gerhard Höpp and Yahya Schülzke on the history of 'Islam and the Third Reich'.

Incidentally, homosexual was a word he himself avoided throughout his writings. In 2008, the Lahore-Ahmadiyya community published a portrait of 'The German Muslim Dr Hamid Hugo Marcus', which gave ample attention to his correspondence with *Der Kreis* (The Circle), a homosexual journal founded in Zurich in 1947 that published some of the lofty male friendship stories that Marcus wrote after the war. The portrait, however, failed to include an overview of his writings on Islam.¹¹ Meanwhile, the historian Marc Baer dedicated two texts to Marcus in which he tried to make sense of a homosexual man being interested in Islam, while barely considering Marcus the novelist.¹²

Reading through the 40 containers of Marcus's papers in Zurich, one begins to understand the silence that surrounded him. In his struggle to reconcile his body and mind, he reveals a painful history of repression. Because reality was one subject that he could not and would not address, his thoughts are phrased in a terse, almost obscure language that at times makes their reading difficult. Yet, to understand his transformation from a German modernist occupying a respectable niche in society to becoming the spokesperson for the Berlin mosque for 16 whole years, these writings are of the essence. In this chapter, I shall thus take a look at them.

1 Coming of Age around 1900

Two years after the Second World War ended, Hugo Marcus's mother died at the age of 93. Her final address had been an old people's home in Zurich, which was not far from her son who, ever since he had fled from Germany, had lived in rented rooms near Basel. During the war years, which she spent in the French-speaking part of Switzerland, they had been in regular contact. Every Friday he wrote her a letter; every other Sunday he visited. When she died, the son, torn by grief and unable to take part in the funeral, sat down at his desk to write a funeral speech that summarized her achievements.¹³

11 Manfred Backhausen, 'Der deutsche Muslim Dr Hamid Hugo Marcus', in *Die Lahore-Ahmadiyya-Bewegung in Europa* (Wembley, UK: Ahmadiyya Anjuman Lahore Publications, 2008), 110–9.

12 Marc David Baer, 'Muslim encounters with Nazism and the Holocaust: the Ahmadi of Berlin and Jewish convert to Islam Hugo Marcus', *The American Historical Review*, 120 (1), 2015, 140–71; Marc David Baer, 'Protestant Islam in Weimar Germany: Hugo Marcus and "The Message of the Holy Prophet Muhammad to Europe"', *New German Critique*, 44 (2017), 163–200.

13 The following draws from the funeral speech, an account of the Hepner genealogy by Unknown, and a series of biographical sketches that Marcus wrote when he was applying for Restitution in 1957. Hugo Marcus private archive, Box 1.

Cäcilie Hepner (1854–1947) was born into a family of merchants that had acquired its wealth through liquors and spirits. They lived in Jaraczewo near Posen (now Poznan in Poland), where they owned an impressive mansion. Theirs was a cultured family that surrounded itself with books and music. Cäcilie, the eldest daughter, was allowed to develop her talents as she wished. Early on, she studied music and, before marrying a 'distinguished but somewhat difficult man', Hugo's father, she became a singer and performer of German Romantic music. Their best moments, the son would recall, were in music. Musical performance brought the family together. It glossed over the tensions and facilitated an intense feeling of belonging, of melting into one. The mother sang German Lieder, Schubert's *Winterreise* and *Schöne Müllerin*, Schumann's settings of Goethe poems, Gustav Mahler's *Lied von der Erde*. The son accompanied her on the piano, performed Beethoven's *Appassionata* for four hands with his brothers, and assisted in piano quintets. These moments of bliss were among Hugo's earliest memories, and they constituted the pillars of his adolescence. Being united in music was the highest feeling he knew. It was to become his benchmark for attaining closeness to somebody else and, because it was she who gave him the experience, he loved his mother more than anybody else.

Hugo Marcus explored that theme in his first Romantic novel, *Frühlingsglück*. Shy, sensitive Guido courts Adeline, who is of noble descent and with whom he shares a longing for beauty 'of mind and body'. Together they listen to music and together they play Mendelsohn's violin concerto and the Beethoven Sonatas for violin. They are a high-minded couple, but in his pocket Guido carries a photograph of Ernst, a boy with whom he only exchanged a few words. Guido pines for Ernst and, despite their musical bond, feels lonely in Adeline's company. He grows resentful. In the end, it is she who tells him that they have to part. '*Adé und auf Wiedersehen*' (adieu and goodbye) are the laconic words with which she sends him away. For the author, it marks the end of his attempts to find a suitable woman. He will live with his mother for the rest of her life.

In his short story called 'From distant days: notes from a time long before the war – not of public but of spiritual interest', Marcus recalls how his life evolved from that point:

Krupp is on his way to Capri. Well, you know! They say that he loves boys. It was even written in a Naples daily. What is Krupp to me? Nothing. And really, that was our relationship. Nonetheless, he was the first man about whom I learned that he felt like I did. I was filled to the brim with mystical imaginations and presumptions about that kind of man. So, what would

he look like and how would he feel about life? Although I myself was a young man of that kind, it did not occur to me to contact him. He simply happened to be the first one I ever saw. He caused in me wonderful, free imaginations, spreading in every direction.¹⁴

Rare in his work, this account is rooted in an actual historical occurrence. Friedrich Alfred Krupp, the famous industrialist, the German 'canon king' who employed 20,000 steelworkers and was close to the Kaiser, was also a regular visitor to Capri. Hugo's family often visited the island and stayed in the same hotel as Krupp. Marcus's father had been a steel manufacturer, a producer of trains and rails, so the two men would have been acquainted.

Marcus recollects sitting in the corner of a hotel lounge watching numerous visitors congregating around the great man, Krupp. As he is sitting there he weaves an imaginary web between them, in which he feels that, in a mystical way, being 'that kind' automatically ties them together. He imagines himself and Krupp being like Hadrian and Antinous, the famous lovers from antiquity. When he learns, some months later, that Krupp had killed himself, the young Hugo was shattered. Thrown into deep mourning, he feels that Krupp was the friend with whom he shared his most intimate thoughts. To our understanding of how Hugo Marcus communicated, the story is paradigmatic.

However, more was at stake here. Around 1900, denunciations of homosexuality and sexual slander were regularly featured in the headlines of European newspapers. Media attention in Germany focused on members of the court and the Prussian military. There were spectacular court cases, with the defendants convicted of 'improper' sexual acts and widely slandered.¹⁵ Prominent men ran the risk of being accused of the kind of 'improper sexual behaviour' in which 'the rich and degenerate' would indulge. The denunciation of Friedrich Alfred Krupp (he committed suicide in June 1902) was only one such example. It so happened that Hugo Marcus had been watching Krupp at close range as the drama unfolded.

When Marcus came of age, a growing number of public spaces were becoming available in Berlin where men who felt attracted to other men could meet. The researcher and eyewitness Magnus Hirschfeld (1868–1935) describes a

14 Hugo Marcus, 'Aus fernen Tagen: Aufzeichnungen aus einer Zeit lange vor dem Krieg – kein öffentliches, wohl aber ein seelisches Interesse' (c.1918). Private archive, Hugo Marcus, Box 4.

15 Norman Domeier, 'Die sexuelle Denunziation in der deutschen Politik seit dem frühen 20. Jahrhundert', in Andreas Pretzel and Andreas Weiß (eds) *Politiken in Bewegung. Die Emanzipation Homosexueller im 20. Jahrhundert* (Hamburg: Männerschwarm Verlag, 2017), 103–6.

lively set of semi-clandestine circles stretching across society from the lower middle classes to the imperial court. In every segment of society, there was a wide choice of parties, dances, concerts, picnics and *jours fixes* available on any day of the week for any man looking for a friend.¹⁶ Some cafés and restaurants set certain hours aside for such meetings and about 20 private clubs and bars were frequented by transvestite men. In some of the bars prostitution was offered.¹⁷ Female circles, about which Hirschfeld knew far less, seemed to have preferred pastry shops for their meetings.¹⁸

Hirschfeld used the now obsolete term Uranian to describe a male homosexual, which he borrowed from Greek mythology on the grounds that it traced the roots of homosexuality back to Antiquity. Nonetheless, the increased visibility of gay people in Wilhelmine society and the growing demands for decriminalization constituted a shift. Hirschfeld, a medical doctor, studied homosexuality and concluded that it was an innocent form of sexual pathology and pleaded with society to be less condemnatory. All men and women are born with male and female hormones, he argued, the only difference being that some men and women simply happen to have more female or male ones than others. He referred to Uranians as 'the third gender' and, in 1897, founded the Scientific Humanitarian Committee to popularize his findings and gather supporters who strove to remove that particular anomaly from the penal code.¹⁹

Then again, Hirschfeld was not alone in influencing public opinion. His opponent Hans Blüher (1888–1955) depicted gay men as super masculine, thus assigning them the pseudo-scientific label of *typus inversus* – a man who turns to his own kind. Blüher disparaged Hirschfeld's subjects as effeminate and branded men in women's clothes as degenerate. As the debate developed over time, he placed them in the same category as Jews (whom he thought effeminate by nature), and accused them of racial inferiority.²⁰ Men who were attracted to other men not only constituted a culturally elevated race, in his mind, but far more than that, they were born to rule and for that reason must

16 Magnus Hirschfeld, *Berlins Dritte Geschlecht* (1904), edited by Manfred Herzer (Berlin: Verlag rosa Winkel, 1991), 57–69.

17 Hirschfeld, *Berlins Dritte Geschlecht*, 74, for numbers see also 174–5.

18 Hirschfeld, *Berlins Dritte Geschlecht*, 72–4. Social segmentation also characterized the women's circles; Hirschfeld mentions a bakery in the north of Berlin where only Jewish women met.

19 Claudia Bruns, 'Thr Männer seid Männer! Maskulinistische Positionen in der deutschen Homosexuellenbewegung zu Beginn des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts: Zwischen Revolution und Reaktion', in Andreas Pretzel and Andreas Weiß (eds) *Politiken in Bewegung: Die Emanzipation Homosexueller im 20. Jahrhundert* (Hamburg: Männerschwarm Verlag, 2017), 28–31.

20 Hans Blüher, *Die deutsche Wandervögelbewegung als erotisches Phänomen: Ein Beitrag zur Erkenntnis der sexuellen Inversion* (Prien: Anthropos-Verlag, 1920), 6–14.

act as 'real men'. He saw important tasks like building states and exercising power as rooted in sexual male bonding as a matter of course.²¹ Incidentally, there was no place for women in such elevated realms. It was Blüher's strong opinion that women should confine themselves to the kitchen and childbearing.²² Whereas Hirschfeld simply did not see women, Blüher explicitly detested them.

What caused a public debate on homosexuality (as it was soon called) to occur at that particular time and place? Several answers come to mind. First, Hugo Marcus grew up in a country in which young people were trying to free themselves from the constraints of a highly militarized society. Young men were trying to escape from what Max Weber called 'the iron cage of masculine society'²³ and young women were throwing away their corsets. Born into middle-class families that had profited from a period of rapid industrial growth and that could provide their children with money and leisure, theirs was the first generation vehemently to claim room for its individuality. This emancipation was manifested in multiple and assorted ways, many of which, as we have seen in earlier chapters, came under the umbrella of the life reform movement. Liberation of the body was pursued through love of nature and the *Wandervögel* (Wayfarers) movement, sunbathing in the nude, expressive dance, vegetarianism and bodybuilding. Liberation of the mind was to be attained through experiments with art, aesthetics and the esoteric.²⁴ Experimenting with sexuality became part of the movement as a matter of course.

Second, alongside life reform, a strong women's movement had come into existence that worked towards female emancipation. Access to health care, the protection of women workers, the legalization of abortion, an entitlement to the vote, and admission to universities and the professions were only some of the women's aims. By 1900 they had gained strength and enormous visibility. Young women wanted to explore their sexuality, just as the men did; it stung the latter when the 'girls' joined 'their' local *Wandervögel* sections in large numbers, then bonded among themselves.²⁵ The women undermined Prussian

21 Bruns, 'Ihr Männer Seid Männer!', 31–7.

22 Hans Blüher, 'Die Frau und die Familie', in Hans Blüher, *Die Rolle der Erotik in der männlichen Gesellschaft*. Vol. II. *Familie und Männerbund* (Jena: Eugen Diederichs, 1921), 7–90.

23 Max Weber, 'The iron cage and value-fragmentation', *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (2007/2017). <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/weber/>.

24 Kai Buchholz, Rita Latocha, Hilke Peckmann, Hilke Wolbert and Klaus Wolbert (eds) *Die Lebensreform: Entwürfe zur Neugestaltung von Leben und Kunst um 1900* (Darmstadt: Häusser-media, 2001).

25 Marion E.P. de Ras, *Körper, Eros und weibliche Kultur: Mädchen im Wandervögel und in der bündischen Jugend 1900–1933* (Pfaffenweiler: Centaurus-Verlag, 1988).

society in more ways than any of the other movements, so it was no surprise that in certain quarters they were viewed as a threat.

One aspect of male sexual bonding to appear alongside the large emancipatory movements was its violent reaction to the women's movement and the way women took liberties for themselves. To emphasize their anti-women, super-virile position, Blüher and his friends, declaring themselves 'masculinists' and 'anti-feminist', put themselves forward as a 'male' alternative to the women's movement.²⁶ The resentment of women did not stop there. As mentioned earlier, the male homosexual spectrum was wide and varied. At one end of the scale were the Uranians, men who dressed as women to 'out' their feminine souls, who ignored the other sex, or at best did not quite notice them. At the other end of the spectrum were the inverts, the men who craved virile masculinity and considered male sexual bonding a 'natural' prerequisite to statesmanship. To attain their aims, they needed women to adhere to their traditional roles and they therefore abhorred female emancipation. One can presume that the majority of homosexual men positioned themselves somewhere in the middle. Whether fusing 'Greek boy love' with 'pedagogical Eros', posing as leaders of the youth hiking movement, or reforming school education, such men preferred to keep their tracks covered.²⁷

The place that Hugo Marcus occupied was in the middle. As a young man he fashioned himself a patchwork of emancipatory devices that best answered his needs. He considered himself a life reformer, joined the *Wandervögel* in his youth, took up writing to express his innermost feelings, loved beauty and exalted male friendship, avoided the company of women and, as will become clear, eyed sexuality between men with a mixture of distaste and envy. The Krupp experience might well have served as a salutary warning. Being both rich and Jewish, the Marcus family was vulnerable and, given that it represented everything that was dear to him, Hugo wished neither to damage it nor be separated from his mother. Caught in between, and badly in need of a friend in whom to confide, until the Ahmadiyya mosque community presented him

26 Anon, 'Antifeminismus', in Daniela Weiland (ed.) *Handlexikon der Geschichte der Frauenemanzipation in Deutschland und Österreich* (Munich: ECON Taschenbuch Verlag, 1983), 24–8; Hans Blüher, 'Die Theorie der männlichen Gesellschaft', in Hans Blüher, *Die Rolle der Erotik in der männlichen Gesellschaft*. Vol. 11. *Familie und Männerbund* (Jena: Eugen Diederichs, 1921), 91–110; Bruns, 'Ihr Männer seid Männer!', 27–8.

27 For an overview of the different positions, see Marita Keilson-Lauritz, 'Tanten, Kerle, Skandale: Flügelkämpfe der Emanzipation', in Andreas Pretzel and Andreas Weiß (eds) *Politiken in Bewegung: Die Emanzipation Homosexueller im 20. Jahrhundert* (Hamburg: Männerschwarm Verlag, 2017), 65–78.

with a wholly new reality, his life had become a torment of oppression and inner conflict.

The last factor to tie Hugo Marcus to his generation was the use of a certain vocabulary. What he shared with practically every member of every emancipatory movement, be they men or women, feminists or anti-feminists, life reformers or those who counted themselves among the 'third gender', was the appropriation of the language of Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900). Being a generation older than they were, Nietzsche had provided them with all the key words they needed.²⁸ The young generation took his comment that 'all becoming and growing, all that guarantees the future, postulates pain'²⁹ as a lodestar for their liberation struggle. They understood 'God is dead – I teach you Super Man'³⁰ as an invitation to develop their personality and claim their individuality.

It was Nietzsche who advocated vegetarianism, a simple life and a heroic attitude as ways of sublimating sexual desire.³¹ It was he who gave them the tools with which to present two different faces – the public 'Apollonian' face representing order, reason, the world of the mind and man's will to power, and the hidden 'Dionysian' face, hinting at the frenzy of sexuality, dark passion and chaos.³² His collection of aphorisms, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, was considered essential reading. Many young people thought that merely having it in their pockets was enough to make them part of the big experiment with change, whatever shape that took.³³

Hugo Marcus studied Nietzsche intensely. More than any other German philosopher, Nietzsche offered him a stage on which he was able to act. For instance, he wove the themes of 'Eros and the Heroic' into all his writings in an attempt to defend the need to suppress his feelings. To an even greater extent, however, Marcus drew on the split between 'the Apollonian and the Dionysian'

28 The following draws on Ulrich Linse, 'Nietzsches Lebensphilosophie und die Lebensreform', in Kai Buchholz, Rita Latocha, Hilke Peckmann, Hilke and Klaus Wolbert (eds) *Die Lebensreform: Entwürfe zur Neugestaltung von Leben und Kunst um 1900* (Stuttgart: haeussler-media, 2001), 165–7; Theo Meyer, 'Nietzsche: Lebens-, Kunst- und Kulturbegriff', in Buchholz et al., *Die Lebensreform*, 161–3; Manfred Schneider, 'Zarathustra-Sätze, Zarathustra-Gefühle: Nietzsche und die Jugendbewegung', in *Die Lebensreform*, 169–73.

29 Quoted in Schneider, 'Zarathustra-Sätze', 170.

30 Quoted in Meyer, 'Nietzsche', 161.

31 Schneider, 'Zarathustra-Sätze', 171.

32 Alexander Gatherer, 'The Dionysian and the Apollonian in Nietzsche: the birth of tragedy' (2010), *The Oxford Philosopher*. <https://theoxfordphilosopher.com>.

33 For an overview of the most popular quotations, see Else Frobenius, *Mit uns zieht die neue Zeit: Eine Geschichte der Jugendbewegung* (Berlin: Deutsche Buchgemeinschaft, 1927), 35; cf. Schneider, 'Zarathustra-Sätze', 170.

sides of his personality, which he turned into two separate spheres of his writing. He described his lifelong struggle with his physical body in the short stories that addressed his 'Dionysian' side. Their in-depth analysis became the task of the philosopher, which called on his 'Apollonian' side. Marcus was not alone in this. The split in his writing mirrored a split in Wilhelmine society, of which he was very much a part.

2 The Novelist

In 1904, the year in which Frank Wedekind produced his play *Die Büchse der Pandora* (*Pandora's Box*), which the censors immediately seized on because of its danger to public decency, the year in which Rosa Luxemburg was imprisoned for her disrespectful behaviour towards the authorities, and the year in which a large international women's conference caused an uproar in Berlin, Hugo Marcus published his first collection of aphorisms.³⁴ In their different ways, these were all manifestations of the new time, filled with the 'morning air' that these young people craved.³⁵

Marcus wrote in the introduction that he started the collection at the age of 15 and that it took him eight years to complete. His booklet was a compilation of everything that mattered to a young man at that time and place – love, sex, genius, rebellion and unhappiness. Marcus adopted different literary forms to explore the themes and interlaced the aphorisms with short stories and love poems. More than a century later the booklet makes curious reading, but at the time of publication it received some generous reviews. One reviewer even called the author 'a sublimated Dionysian' on the grounds that he knew how to master dark desires, which civilized Germans should.³⁶ This must have pleased Marcus tremendously.

A new couple appears in the short stories – the unhappy protagonist of *Das Frühlingsglück* Guido and Heinrich, two boys in a problematic relationship. Guido is outgoing, nervous and talkative, while Heinrich sits in a corner and wraps himself in silence. The aphorisms comment on the relationship and the poems raise it to staggering heights. *Meditations* marks the beginning of a long series of stories about Heinrich and Guido that appear throughout the collected papers in all stages of preparation. They are found in the many containers

34 Hugo Marcus, *Meditationen* (Berlin: E. Ebering, 1904).

35 Joachim Radkau, 'Die Verheißungen der Morgenfrühe: Die Lebensreform in der neuen Moderne', in Buchholz et al., *Die Lebensreform*, 55–60.

36 Hugo Marcus private archive, Box 11, reviews.

marked 'Novelistic Small writings' (Boxes 4, 5 and 6) as well as in 'Journal Articles' (Box 9). They even pop up among 'Translations from the English' (Box 10). Counting them proved a difficult task. Sometimes Heinrich fuses with an 'I'. Guido is sometimes replaced with Albert, Lothar or Eduard. All in all, I identified 700–800 texts that in some way or another belong to them. Written over a period of at least 25 years, Marcus only stopped writing the stories when he started to engage with the Ahmadiyya mosque.

There are no recognizable outdoor settings in which their meetings take place. They usually meet at home, mostly at Guido's, where they sit on separate sofas. Heinrich, it is once said, has already sat 'a hollow' into his cushion. Sometimes, somebody (a brother, a father) performs Beethoven's piano music behind the double doors that separate their space from the main drawing room. They fill their time with talking, or at least Guido talks. There are prolonged silences. After some time, Heinrich will heave himself to his feet and leave.

What do these stories tell us? As they are largely void of action, a look at the poems in the rear is needed to explain the many undercurrents that run between the friends. As one poem notes,

I do not want you to love me/as I do not want to love you myself
I want us to fly together/to beauty's highest reaches
That we are then united/at their feet
Because up there, or so I think/the greatest happiness lies!³⁷

Torn between passivity and longing, despair and repression, with the Heinrich and Guido stories Hugo Marcus seems to have compulsively described every single occasion on which he suppressed his body, feelings and chance to love another person. 'Nietzsche is to blame', he noted more than once. Most of those stories remained unpublished, but as he grew older and gained confidence, more and more found their way into print and, between 1916 and 1923, two dozen appeared in expressionist magazines.³⁸ However, it was in 1915, in *Das Tor dröhnt zu* (*The Gate Slams Shut*), that Marcus published the largest collection of Heinrich and Guido stories.³⁹

37 'Ich wünsche nicht, dass Du mich liebst, / ich will auch Dich nicht lieben, / ich will, dass wir zusammen / zur höchsten Schönheit fliegen, / dass wir sodann gemein-vereint / zu ihren Füßen liegen, / in dieser Einheit scheint mir / das höchste Glück zu liegen!', Marcus, *Meditationen*, 194. The poem is much longer.

38 *Die Gegenwart* (The Presence), *Der Feuerreiter* (The Fire Rider) and *Das junge Deutschland* (Young Germany).

39 Hugo Marcus, *Das Tor dröhnt zu* (Berlin: Paß & Garleb, 1915).

Das Tor was privately published and the author appeared in it anonymously, but occasionally acknowledged his authorship by writing his name on the back of it.⁴⁰ It tells the story of a true love that needed time to develop. Sensitive, creative Guido runs into his old schoolfriend Heinrich when they are students in Berlin. This time, it is Heinrich who does the talking and his tone is reproachful. 'Dear Guido, I am very alone, everything is silent around me', he tells his friend and, 'when you were with me, you were always far away, but you did not notice'.⁴¹ The friends join the *Wandervögel* and Heinrich becomes the leader of the younger boys. He says he wants to be their hero, but 'they do with him what they want'.⁴² Once again, Heinrich feels torn between the impulses of his body and his will to move beyond it: 'it is a great consolation to think that Eros – the sting of desire – conjures up the hero'.⁴³ The sting of desire is the secret motor propelling Heinrich forward; everything else evolves from it.

In a dramatic moment, he asks Guido, 'are you looking at my brow?' 'No', he replies, 'it will not stand between us anymore. I want to overflow in you. I want to be you!'⁴⁴ From now on, the pages are filled with reflections on Friendship and The Friend written in large capitals. Bliss emanates from Heinrich's words: he speaks of how they will live in isolation and lose themselves in the boundlessness of their thoughts; how they will listen to Beethoven together; and yes, how they will be one. As Marcus lets him explain, 'I want: not to have you, no, I want to be as you!'⁴⁵

Marcus, the novelist, relentlessly urges Heinrich to reach for the impossible. Heinrich must grow wings and leave himself behind. Consequently, *Das Tor* is full of exalted demands. At times, a claustrophobic tightness pervades, which is painful to behold. Which door is being slammed shut as their love starts to blossom? Is it perhaps the door that seals Heinrich's, hence Marcus's, fate of being compelled to constrain his feelings as a good German Dionysian should? Could this be the reason for the revulsion and shame that the stories exude? One has to consult the philosopher in Hugo Marcus to grasp fully the dilemma he was facing. In 1920, he wrote:

The stronger the erotic urge, the stronger the protective, inhibiting pull. If we want a thing, we at the same time experience a counter feeling that impels us not to want it. We do not want it because we want it too much,

40 See the copy that is kept in the *Deutsche Nationalbibliothek* in Leipzig.

41 Marcus, *Das Tor*, 3.

42 Marcus, *Das Tor*, 7.

43 Marcus, *Das Tor*, 21.

44 Marcus, *Das Tor*, 21.

45 Marcus, *Das Tor*, 8.

because we are enslaved. This is cruel, because in this way we can never find a way out of the inner conflict: it is asceticism out of shame.⁴⁶

Marcus's conclusion that 'we will never find a way out' sums up the dilemma that his generation faced. Groping for more sexual liberty, they were trapped between 'the sting of desire' and society's forbidding strictures. Homosexual desire may have been nothing new, but explicitly writing about the dilemmas it caused in Wilhelmine society was certainly breaking new ground. Marcus was a man of the middle, brave enough to venture into male circles, yet crippling constrained by society's demands.

His friends Kurt Hiller (1885–1972) and Arnim T. Wegner (1886–1978), whom he originally met at Scientific Humanitarian Committee meetings and who remained friends for life, seemed to have had much more freedom of movement than he did. In 1916, Hiller started the radical journal *Das Ziel* (*The Aim*), which, among other things, campaigned to end the war and to accord everyone the right to any kind of sexual relationship.⁴⁷ At about the same time, Wegner founded the Federation of Radical War Resisters and published poems in which he explicitly addressed male sexuality.⁴⁸ Both men addressed homosexuality, but instead of focusing on the homosexual virtuosi of Berlin, they turned to the many young men who encountered it in the war trenches. Hiller and Wegner were activists who tried to revolutionize society from within. For that, they reached out to the centre ground, not to its eccentric edges. They valued Hugo Marcus's work for his attempt to give that centre a voice, and they said so on several occasions.⁴⁹ This tells us something about how his writings were received.

46 Je stärker der erotische Drang, desto stärker auch die schützenden, hemmenden Saiten. Wenn wir eine Sache wollen, so ist zugleich eine Gegenbewegung in uns, die uns gebietet, dieselbe Sache nicht zu wollen. Und zwar sie nur deshalb nicht zu wollen, weil wir sie zu sehr wollen, weil wir so versklavt an sie hängen. Das ist grausam, denn wir geraten auf diese Weise niemals aus dem Zustand der inneren Gerissenheit wieder heraus: Askese aus der Scham heraus', From: 'Das Sexuelle Erlebnis als Schlüssel zum Weltverständnis (Innere Zerrissenheit)', c.1920. Other articles in which Hugo Marcus addressed the subject of inner conflict were 'Die Paradoxien des Gefühls' (Paradoxes of feeling) (1927) and 'Das Tantaluserlebnis' (The Tantalus experience). Private archive, Hugo Marcus, Box 4.

47 Kurt Hiller, 'Vorwort', in *Das Ziel. Jahrbücher für geistige Politik*, vol. 1 (1916). Marcus contributed to vol. 5 (1921) with 'Die Entlarvung der Tiere' ('Exposure of the animals').

48 Arnim T. Wegner, *Das Antlitz der Städte* (Berlin: Egon Fleischel, 1917).

49 Kurt Hiller, *Leben gegen der Zeit* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1969), 74, 107, 231, 408; Arnim T. Wegner, *Zeugnis* (9 August 1958) and Arnim T. Wegner, *Botschaft an die Freunde* (1962). Hugo Marcus private archive, Box 1.

The only person to whom Hugo Marcus could reveal his true self was Roman Malicki, a young man with whom he had been to school in Poznan and who, once in Berlin, had set up a successful clothing business.⁵⁰ Roman was a practical man, well versed in fabrics, cuts and dresses, and adept at dealing with the most capricious of clients. Accounting and calculating were no mystery to him. His letters to Marcus, at least the few that survived, are filled to the brim with descriptions. Roman cherished *Das Tor* and considered it 'his' book because, in so many words, it showed *that* (although not *how*) Marcus was eventually able to let down his defences.

However discreetly Hugo had set about producing it, the publication of *Das Tor dröhnt zu* was not favourably received in the Marcus family. This may be why, when Hugo Marcus left Berlin on 23 August 1939 with all his books and papers, he did not bring a single copy with him. When Roman passed by the family apartment to say goodbye to Cäcilie, who was planning to follow her son to Switzerland on the last day of the year, he had a revealing conversation with her. In a letter to Hugo, he wrote: 'your mother passed on your greetings to me yesterday. I told her, thank you for allowing me to adore you for 20 long years! Mother: well, you were a friend of Hugo's, were you not? Nothing more. Take the black pelerine with you. I don't wear things like that'.⁵¹ As far as Cäcilie was concerned, their friendship was already a thing of the past. However, instead of the pelerine, Roman stuffed some copies of *Das Tor dröhnt zu* into his pocket, knowing full well that Marcus had left them behind. To Marcus he wrote: 'your mother said, it is not worth it. Who wants to read that? And aunt Clara said, Let me take one in any case – one can always rip them up'.⁵²

During this little farewell scene, Alfred, Hugo's older brother, also made an entry. As Roman put it, 'Alfred was there too, ignoring me in his usual icy manner. When I came round to collect my carpet, he refused to give me the table you set aside for me. What shall I say? It is all over now. It can't be helped that bad memories remain'.⁵³ While the members of the Marcus family failed to appreciate *Das Tor*, they heartily despised Roman and took care to let him know it. Roman's letters to Marcus are revealing. In trying to understand why

50 His letters to Marcus bear the return address 'Roman Malicki, Kantstrasse 30, Berlin-Charlottenburg'. The Berlin address book of 1939 enters him as 'Roman – Konfektionär, Charlöb Kantstrasse 30'.

51 Letter from Roman Malicki to Hugo Marcus dated 25 December 1939. Hugo Marcus private archive, Box 1.

52 Letter from Roman Malicki to Hugo Marcus dated 4 January 1940. Hugo Marcus private archive, Box 1.

53 Letter from Roman Malicki to Hugo Marcus dated 25 December 1939. Hugo Marcus private archive, Box 12.2.1.

Nietzsche's split between the Dionysian and the Apollonian should have touched Wilhelmine society so deeply, his family is a good place to start.

However, Roman was not dispirited. Quite the contrary, he thought it a good idea to give people copies of *Das Tor* as Christmas presents and receive laudatory thanks in return. Roman told Marcus that, 'my optician wrote to me, "when one has lived through a love such as your booklet describes, one must be a happier human being!" (He thinks that I wrote it myself)'. Alongside this happy piece of news, he added, 'but all in all, I feel that I caused you much worry until 1914'.⁵⁴

Whatever the relationship between this couple and the Heinrich and Lothar stories, Roman was Hugo's trusted friend. He remained in Berlin during the war. Given that he was not of Jewish descent, we may assume that his business profited once the Nazis had chased out the Jewish tailors and couturiers.⁵⁵ Nonetheless, Roman proved to be an observant witness of everything that was happening and would regularly inform Marcus about who among their colleagues and friends had been deported and, later, who had returned from the concentration camps. It was Roman who contacted Eva Weisshaupt, a survivor of Theresienstadt, and through her learned about the fate of Marcus's brother Alfred and his wife Gertrud. After the war he also wrote to Marcus about his Polish acquaintances, about how they had been kept as prisoners in forced labour camps under shameful conditions. If nothing else, this much we know about Roman Malicki: he was not afraid to speak out about what he saw.⁵⁶

3 The Muslim Theorist

Hugo Marcus's first encounter with Ahmadi Muslims was in Berlin in 1920 and the meeting was quite by chance. After Poland gained independence and the Marcus family's steelworks in Poznan were nationalized, Hugo was forced to contribute to the family income for the first time in his life.⁵⁷ He found a niche for himself in private tutoring and, two years after the war ended, Muslim students were streaming into Berlin because of the low cost of living and

54 Letter from Roman Malicki to Hugo Marcus dated 4 January 1940. Hugo Marcus private archive, Box 12.2.1.

55 Uwe Westphal, *Berliner Konfektion und Mode 1836–1939: Die Zerstörung einer Tradition* (Berlin: Hentrich, 1992); see also Uwe Westphal collection in the Leo Baeck Institute, New York.

56 Some 23 letters from Roman Malicki to Hugo Marcus dated between 1940 and 1947. Hugo Marcus private archive, Box 12.2.1.

57 Hugo Marcus, *Biographical Sketch* (1957). Hugo Marcus private archive, Box 1.

Germany's good name in the Muslim world.⁵⁸ Over the next two chapters, I describe how the Indians settled down in this city, but for the moment it suffices to know that to enrol as a student at Berlin University, it was necessary to have good knowledge of the German language. To meet that demand, the Ahmadiyya imam, Abdullah, would find his way to the Oettinger home in 1928, where Susanna taught him German and her mother introduced him to German culture (Chapter 3).

Hugo Marcus also met Ahmadi students. For instance, Abdul Majid, editor of the *Islamic Review* in London, took private lessons from him in 1922/3 in German, philosophy and literature.⁵⁹ When fighting for restitution after the Second World War, Marcus wrote that his Indian students were educated and refined, and wanted to know everything about Nietzsche. Likewise, Arnim T. Wegner, who once sat in on their meetings, noted how much the Indians impressed him.⁶⁰ As a teacher, Hugo Marcus was a success. The Indians loved Nietzsche, Goethe and Germany, and they absorbed everything he said. In 1923, when the Ahmadiyya built the mosque in Berlin-Wilmersdorf, they introduced him to Sadruddin (1880–1980), a brilliant and exceedingly witty missionary.⁶¹ Busy founding a Muslim community in utterly foreign surroundings, Sadruddin was quick to recognize that Hugo Marcus would be the ideal man to explain German society to them. He offered him a permanent position, entrusted him with courses and a lecture series on German culture and appointed him editor of *Die Moslemische Revue*. Marcus accepted.⁶²

For Hugo Marcus, their meeting was a revelation. Until then he had lived an inhibited and provincial life in the fishbowl of German society and took it for granted that that was what the world was like. His mind was filled with everything German – German language, German music, German philosophy and a particular form of sexual restraint that Wilhelmine society required. If anything, his meeting with the Indians showed him that other worlds existed.

In *Arctic Summer*, a biographical portrait of E.M. Forster, Damon Galgut narrates how this shy young Englishman, Marcus's contemporary and himself a teacher of young Indian students, is taken utterly by surprise when his pupil starts to romp. 'Then he sprang up and seized hold of Morgan, pushing him backward on the couch and tickling him furiously. It was shocking – for the first instant like assault and only then like play'.⁶³ Likewise, David Lelyveld, in

58 Jonker, *The Ahmadiyya Quest*, 63–93.

59 Abdul Majid, *Testimony* (1957). Hugo Marcus private archive, Box 1.

60 Arnim T. Wegner, *Zeugnis* (9 August 1958). Hugo Marcus private archive, Box 1.

61 A short biography was published in Jonker, *The Ahmadiyya Quest*, 54–5.

62 Hugo Marcus, *Biographical Sketch* (1957). Hugo Marcus private archive, Box 1.

63 Damon Galgut, *Arctic Summer* (London: Atlantic Books, 2014), 20.

his history of Aligarh University relates how the Muslim and Hindu students used to include their English professors in childish, touch-and-run games.⁶⁴ Touching, romping around, walking hand in hand, even petting, were the expressions of a wholly other self-understanding between men. Erotic relationships existed and, at least for the Indian upper classes, had been considered 'a natural pleasure' until, in 1860, the British colonial administration forbade same-sex relationships on account of its own Victorian inhibitions.⁶⁵

On entering the mosque, Hugo Marcus breathed a different air. It rendered the split between Dionysian and Apollonian meaningless and the Heinrich and Lothar stories became obsolete. Instead, Marcus turned to the wonders of 'religion', a subject that he had never before thought about. In his first piece for the mosque journal, 'The Spirit of Islam', he explained, more to himself than to his Indian audience, what engagement with 'religion' held in store:

Religion stems from the fear of being alone. Being part of the community is the answer. A community in prayer is the religious equivalent of the worldly community. ... *Religion is like art.* The two allow for a relationship between the subjective self and the objective world out there. ... *Religion is resignation.* Religion is not about shaping the world; it is a turn towards shaping the soul. Religion is the technique of the soul. It is a consolation.⁶⁶

From then on, Hugo Marcus became part of a male community that accepted him in its midst as if it were the most natural thing in the world. From the perspective of the Indians, he was their admired teacher, and a respected philosopher who could explain the subtlety of a foreign culture and bring Weimar society within their reach. Praying together signified the moment of their union. In a text that echoes the Krupp episode, Marcus describes how one day he was praying in the mosque when he noticed a young man kneeling and rising in rhythm with him. Once again, he experiences a mystical bond. As in his youth, when he was sitting in his corner longing for a relationship between himself and the other man, he feels that there must be something going on.

64 David Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation: Muslim Solidarity in British India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 253–61.

65 Quotation from Lawrence James, *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India* (London: Abacus, 1997), 325ff. See also Ibtsam Ahmed, 'The British Empire's homophobic legacy could finally be overturned in India', *Independent*, 1 September 2017. <https://www.independent.co.uk>.

66 Hugo Marcus, 'Das Wesen der Religion', *Moslemische Revue*, 2 (1924), 79–84, quotations 82–3, author's emphasis.

FIGURE 5.1. Marcus and his students, c.1924.

This time, no Adrian and Antinous come to his mind, but rather the impending Eid al-Fitr festival when all the men will embrace.⁶⁷ When the prayer row is formed, Marcus stands 'as if nothing has happened', but a thought nonetheless crosses his mind – 'maybe God is good to you and will bring you more together as you think it possible today'.⁶⁸

Marcus disliked women, so it was unfortunate for him that the mosque community included quite a number of emancipated German women. His contemporary Emilia Oettinger co-founded the German-Muslim Society. Her daughters Lisa and Susanna Oettinger were in search of a cosmopolitan lifestyle and a husband to match. The many group photographs taken at Eid al-Fitr festivals, make it amply clear that emancipated women were at the very core of the community of converts. S.M. Abdullah's photograph albums, from which Marcus is entirely absent, show hiking tours, picnics, tennis matches, sunbathing in the mosque garden, and other forms of socializing. Abdullah took great care to teach the women about marriage laws in foreign Muslim countries. Assistant Imam Azeez Ur-Rahman Mirza sent the Indian men into the kitchen to

67 Eid al-Fitr is the three-day festival that brings the fasting period to an end. After morning prayers, everyone present embraces ceremoniously.

68 Hugo Marcus, 'In der Moschee zu Berlin' (c.1938). Hugo Marcus private archive, Box 4.

prepare them for a possible match (Chapter 3). Marcus kept his distance. He socialized with the men, but tried to ignore the women. Only once, in a treatise called 'What does the Quran tell us?' did he try to lay down the law by stipulating a woman's place 'in Islam'.⁶⁹ To do so, he first developed a theology of symmetry and balance to which true male love was the centrepiece:

The philosopher Fichte says 'I am me'. Likewise, the Quran (Sura 1) tells us that 'God is God'. They mean the same thing, namely that every size is equal to itself. ... The twofold number of similar phenomena (two hands, two feet, two ears) is symmetry and the fundamental law of love. So real beauty consists of nothing but secret covenants of love. And love is the will to beauty. God is God!⁷⁰

After this daring piece of homosexual theology, the author turned to the women:

But what does the Muslim woman do? Obey – be silent – serve the man. Their actions are always in accordance with the holy law – they are in themselves worship. So she resembles – with lowered eyes – a priest. And because she always serves and obeys and does not ask for herself, she does not really know anyone and nobody know her.⁷¹

This text is the only one in which Hugo Marcus addressed women directly. Taking a stand closer to Blüher than Hirschfeld, he downright told them off, ordering them to stay in their (religious) place, to serve the men with downcast eyes and make themselves invisible. In the same breath, he declared love between men in line with symmetry in nature, and thus more advanced religiously. Needless to say, the text was never published.⁷² The Ahmadiyya

69 Hugo Marcus, 'Was ist uns der Qu'ran?' (c.1938). Hugo Marcus private archive, Box 8.

70 'Fichte sagt, "ich bin ich". Gleichweis sagt uns der Qu'ran (Sure 1), "Gott ist Gott". Jede Größe ist sich selber gleich. Die Zweizahl gleichgearteter Erscheinungen (zwei Hände, zwei Füße, zwei Ohren) ist Symmetrie und das Grundgesetz der Liebe. So besteht denn die Schönheit aus lauter heimlichen Liebesbündnissen. Und die Liebe ist Wille zur Schönheit. Gott ist Gott!' Marcus, 'Was ist uns der Qu'ran?' Hugo Marcus private archive, Box 8.

71 'Was aber tut die muslimische Frau? Gehorcht – schweigt – dient dem Manne. Ihr Tun ist immer Dienst nach heiliger Vorschrift, ist Gottesdienst. So ähnelt sie, mit gesenkten Augen ... einen Priester. Und weil sie immer nur dient und gehorcht und nicht nach sich fragt, kennt sie eigentlich niemand und kennt niemand sie', in Marcus, 'Was ist uns der Qu'ran?' Hugo Marcus private archive, Box 8.

72 Until 1936 Hugo Marcus published in the *Moslemische Revue* either with his name or his initials. After the Nazis forced him to step down as president of the German-Muslim Society, he continued under the pseudonym H.M. Schneider.

were clearly in favour of women. As part of their modernizing strategy, the Ahmadi missionaries wanted to encourage cross-gender relations and through them create global bonds. The women in Berlin responded favourably to them, and tried hard to turn the idea of Indian–German/Muslim–Jewish marriages into a practice that would endure for generations. Seen from that angle, the Ahmadi could not countenance Marcus's attempt to exclude women from the mosque.

4 Looking for a Friend

Throughout 1938, while Hugo Marcus was formulating his thoughts about life in the mosque, the Nazis were stepping up their persecution of the Jews. Aside from the extensive regulations through which Jewish Germans were isolated, 1938 saw the wide-ranging political measures that prepared for their removal.⁷³ On 12 March, Austria's annexation signalled the beginning of the confiscation of Jewish companies, mass humiliation, flight and eviction. In the weeks leading up to 29 September, the day the Munich Agreement was concluded, 20,000 Jews started to flee from parts of the Sudetenland. On the night of 28/9 October, 24,000 Polish Jews in Germany were pushed over the Polish border with nothing but the clothes on their backs. On the night leading up to 9 November, any Jewish heads of households who still remained in Germany, some 26,000 men, were taken from their beds and imprisoned in concentration camps. The next day all the German synagogues were set on fire.

Hugo Marcus was also convicted. Arrested at his mother's flat, where he had been registered as head of household since his father's death in 1930, he was sent to the concentration camp of Oranienburg in the vicinity of Berlin. In his restitution claim he describes, in a few dry words, how he was released after a month thanks to the efforts of Imam Abdullah.⁷⁴ In reality, this was the moment when his Muslim friends really demonstrated their friendship. The Ahmadiyya organization in Lahore offered Marcus a job, along with a visa for Albania and India, as well as transit to Switzerland and his former pupil, Abdul Majid, invited him to come to London and work for the *Islamic Review*. Armed with all these documents, Abdullah came to his rescue. Accompanied by two German gentlemen from the community, he travelled to Oranienburg

73 Leo Baeck Institute, 1938 project – *Posts from the Past*. <https://www.lbi.org/1938projekt/3/branded>.

74 Restitution Request 1957. Hugo Marcus private archive, Box 1; broader descriptions can be found in Baer, 'Muslim Encounters', 166 ff; Jonker, *The Ahmadiyya Quest*, 203–4.

to present the camp wardens with both the visa and the money that the travel necessitated, thereby securing Marcus's release.

Missionary Sadraddin offered him his bungalow in Lahore. To Marcus he wrote, 'I gladly offer you my own bungalow. It is not very big and it has not as much furniture as you have at home, but it will do'.⁷⁵ Aware that Hugo Marcus lived with his mother and that Cäcilie had a say in what happened, he added in his usual buoyant style, 'please pass on my greetings to your mother. The lady should not worry about her Hamid. Sadraddin will adopt the role of mother in her stead'.⁷⁶ But, despite the opportunities on offer, Marcus hesitated. Sadraddin, guessing the cause of the delay and worrying about the consequences, once again urged him to 'please tell your mother that we will all take good care of *Klein-Hugo* [little Hugo] and that he will feel at home here'.⁷⁷ Meanwhile, S.M. Abdullah left. However, his many letters to Marcus from Lahore show that the missionaries continued to care for their employee. In fact, their cheques only discontinued in 1957 when they learned that Marcus's restitution money would hitherto be able to cover his costs.

In the meanwhile, Hugo Marcus remained in Berlin, where he busied himself with the completion of Sadraddin's translation of the Quran into German. Only when it was published in July 1939 did he pack up his papers and leave. As already mentioned, 85-year-old Cäcilie followed him on 31 December. Once she too had gone, 'our furniture and books were thrown into the courtyard. What happened to them afterwards is unknown',⁷⁸ but their departure signalled the end of the Marcus household in Berlin. Marcus's brother Richard was harassed until his death in 1933 and Alfred died in Theresienstadt. His wife Gertrud, one of the few to survive the terror, left Germany for the United States. When peace was finally established, there was no one left to whom the refugees could return.

Hugo Marcus spent the rest of his life in Switzerland. After his mother died, he established contact with *Der Kreis*, a monthly paper for homosexual men that was published in Zurich and for which his old friend Kurt Hiller paved the way. Writing under the pseudonym of Hans Alienus (Hans the Foreigner), for some years Marcus sent in soft stories perpetuating his long-held fascination with sublimated love and eternal friendship. *Der Kreis*, however, was

75 Letter from Sadraddin to Hugo Marcus dated 12 December 1938. Hugo Marcus private archive, Box 12.1.

76 Letter from Sadraddin to Hugo Marcus dated 12 December 1938. Hugo Marcus private archive, Box 12.1.

77 Letter from Sadraddin to Hugo Marcus dated 2 February 1939. Hugo Marcus private archive, Box 12.1.

78 Restitution claim 1957. Hugo Marcus private archive, Box 1.

unambiguously homoerotic; it defended homosexual rights and printed photographs of naked men with exposed genitals. Its readership must have been oblivious to prewar notions of Platonic friendship, for the editor stopped publishing Marcus's stories in 1956.

His letters show that he was lonely. For the last ten years of his life, apart from his publishers and the bank, there was hardly anyone with whom Hugo Marcus was still in touch.⁷⁹ Hiller seemed to have kept his distance, but stayed informed through the editor of *Der Kreis*.⁸⁰ Only Arnim T. Wegner, who painted a loving little sketch of him in 1962,⁸¹ remained loyal to their friendship until the end. During those final years, Marcus took refuge in his old fictional friend Heinrich, the one he knew better than anybody else. His last booklet of aphorisms, 'Looking for a Friend' is dedicated to him. In it, Marcus summarizes his lifelong quest: 'my life is a search for man', 'who wants to be a friend must be a poet on the side', 'being friends is being chosen', 'where the one possesses love, the other must believe', 'let me become as he, my friend, thinks that I already am'.⁸² The sting of desire has gone from those observations. What remains is a rare peace of mind, which the author seemed at last to have captured.

79 Zentralbibliothek Zurich, 'Übersicht über den Hugo Marcus private archive', 6–15 (enumeration of the letters), internal document.

80 Backhausen, 'Der deutsche Muslim Dr Hamid Hugo Marcus', 110–9.

81 Wegner, *Botschaft an die Freunde* (1962). Hugo Marcus private archive, Box 1.

82 Marcus, *Einer sucht den Freund*, 14, 16, 50, 51, 63.