

***RAVEN MOTHER* a memoir-
biography**

**Writing about the self and family,
intergenerational trauma and political
conflict.**

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Please be aware that this presentation discusses
suicide.

The family narrative and personal images in my
presentation are owned by the Messer family and are
not to be reproduced. Please contact Jane Messer at
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Bella Messer on yacht with friends, late 1920s?

With son Michael, circa 1932, Berlin





My father Michael Messer, aged 92 in 2019. (Now aged 94.)



Myself and son Louis, Berlin, 2014.
Louis outside his grandfather's first home. Hufelandstrasse 24, Berlin. 2014.



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- Bella Rosa Riess born 1893.
 - Marries Willy Messer 1921. Daughter Ruth born 1922. Son Michael born 1927.
 - Michael and Ruth arrive at Bunce Court school, Sept 1935, from Berlin.
 - Bella and Willy leave Germany for Palestine April 1937.
 - Ruth arrives in Tel Aviv from Bunce Court, Sept 1938.
 - Willy leaves in January 1939 for Australia; Ruth follows May 1939.
 - Michael in Britain until February 1947; arrives in Melbourne March 1947.
 - Bella arrives in Melbourne January 1948; dies December 1949.



'German Jews were aware that suicide levels had reached a new maximum. On 22 May 1942, Victor Klemperer noted in his diary that there had recently been 2,000 Jewish suicides in Berlin. In 1942, Jews committed 39.6 per cent of suicides in Berlin.'

Bella in 1914 (21 yrs) with her mother Doris (56 yrs) holidaying at Oberbergen, near the border with France.



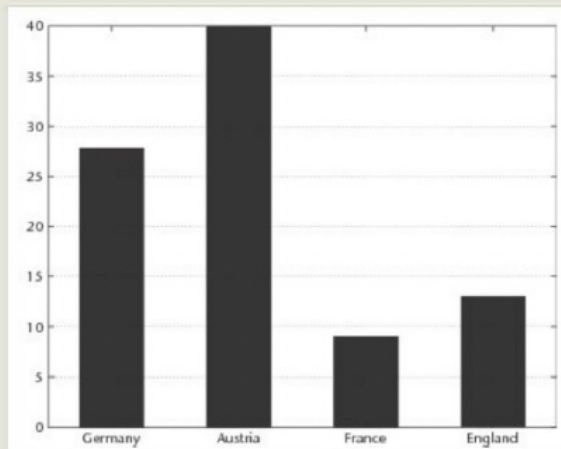


Fig. 1. Suicides per 100,000 population in Germany, Austria, France, and England and Wales, calculated as an annual average for 1919–30 (compiled from Gruhle, *Selbstmord*, 17)

Germany – approx. 27 deaths per 100,00 before 1930

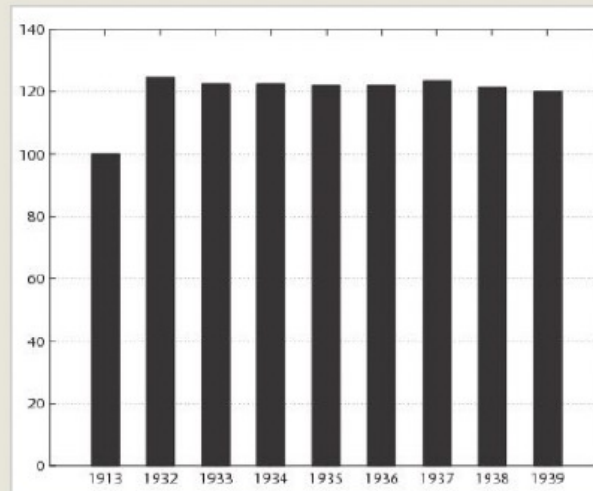


Fig. 8. Suicides in Germany per 100,000 population, 1932–9, excluding Austria and annexed territories, calculated as an index 1913 = 100 (source as in Fig 7)

Germany – over 120 deaths per 100,00 after 1932

Christian Goeschel, *Suicide in Nazi Germany*, New York: Oxford University Press 2009

Comparison with latest figures, per 100,000 (source: WHO)

- Australia: 11.25
- Israel: 11
- Germany: 8.3
- UK: 6.9
- Middle East: 6
- Gaza: 2.5

Note, Gaza and West Bank data is not collected by the WHO. This is my estimate based on reading various reports. Report authors believe that suicide is under-reported in Gaza and West Bank. See for instance, Itani, T., Jacobsen, K. H., & Kraemer, A. (2017). Suicidal ideation and planning among Palestinian middle school students living in Gaza Strip, West Bank, and United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) camps. *International Journal of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*, 4(2), 54–60.

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA. Form No. 47.

APPLICATION FOR PERMIT TO ENTER AUSTRALIA.

(Immigration Act 1901-1935.)

NOTE.—This Application must be filled up in the English language.

To the SECRETARY,
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
CANBERRA,
AUSTRALIA.

I, Willy Messer of Tel-Aviv
Address: 6 Hagalil Street Palestine do hereby make application for
permission to enter Australia, and in support of the same submit the following particulars:—

(1) Full name. Willy Messer
(2) Nationality. Stateless Race European
(3) I was born at Berlin on the 25 th
day of June 1901
Marital status (single, married, widowed or divorced) married
(4) I shall be accompanied by the following members of my family:—

	Name.	Sex.	Age Next Birthday.	Birthplace.
Wife	<u>Bella Messer née Riess</u>	<u>fem.</u>	<u>46</u>	<u>Berlin</u>
	<u>Ruth Messer</u>	<u>fem.</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>Berlin</u>
	<u>Michael Messer</u>	<u>male</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>Berlin</u>
Children				

(5) My last place of permanent residence was Tel-Aviv, Palestine
(6) My present occupation is manufacturer
(7) My proposed occupation in Australia is Production of apparatus (photocopy) and Light Screens (Laminagraphy)
(8) The amount of money in English currency which I undertake to bring with me to Australia is £. 1000.- (thousand)
(9) I attach a certificate by a qualified medical practitioner as to the mental and physical health of myself and the members of my family.
(10) Neither I nor any member of my family has ever been in prison or in a mental hospital. (To be supported by a certificate from a police officer or other public official.)
(11) The European languages in which I can read and write fluently are English and German
(12) The names and addresses of friends and/or relatives in Australia are:—

Full Name.	Address.	Relationship.
<u>A. Patkin</u>	<u>317 Collins St. Melbourne</u>	

(13) My intended place of residence in Australia is (if known) _____
(14) I attach two photographs of myself and the members of my family who will accompany me.

Dated at Tel-Aviv 25 day of June 1938
Signature of Applicant Willy Messer

WARNING.—Any person whose admission has been authorized may be prevented from landing on arrival if it is found that he has given misleading information in his application.

By Authority: L. F. JOHNSON, Commonwealth Government Printer, Canberra.

Willy Messer's Application/landing document.



Michael Messer upon arrival in Melbourne in 1947, with sister Ruth, nephew Leigh and father, Willy.

Perish, on the other hand, from the Latin verb *pereo*, the literal meaning of which is 'to pass through', feels more ample; it always suggests to me a realm of possibilities far beyond the mere fact of death...

Daniel Mendelsohn, p229

