

Moritz Goldstein

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Moritz Goldstein is one of the German Jews that were exiled two or more times. He was a journalist with wide literary interests. He escaped Hitler by coming to Italy with his family in 1933. In 1938 they fled from Mussolini's racial laws, fleeing to France and England with his wife Antoine. His son Thomas fled to Norway. They were only able to be together again nearly ten years later in the USA.

Childhood and education

Moritz was born in Berlin 27 March 1880. His parents were Daniel Wilhem Goldstein (1850-1919) and Sophie Knopf (1853-1920). He had an older brother, Paul, born in 1878 and a younger sister, Lenchen who died at only five years old (1883-1888)¹. Moritz attended school and University in the German capital (apart from a term in Munich). He graduated in German Literature. He married 'Toni' Antoine Charlotte Schlesinger and they had a son, Thomas, in 1913.

Moritz was a soldier in the First World War from 1916- 1918. Despite his passion for writing and as a playwright, he found more success as a journalist. In 1918 he started working for the political editorial staff of «Vossische Zeitung». After the death of the reporter Paul Schlesinger in 1928, the head editor Georg Bernhard nominated Moritz in charge of the justice section. Goldstein worked as a court reporter; crimes and the criminal justice system was popular with the public in the years of the Weimar republic, especially in the Berlin Press. In fact, it is reporters such as Paul Schlesinger, Moritz Goldstein e Gabriele Tergit that transformed court news into a

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¹ This information from United States, Social Security Death Index (SSDI), *ad nomen*, available online in <https://www.myheritage.it>.

journalistic profession². Many of Goldstein's articles on judicial procedure were written under the pseudonym «Inquit». His other pseudonyms were «Egon Distel» and «Michel Osten»³. As a journalist, he wrote over a thousand articles, analyses, reports, glossaries and reviews. He was forced to leave his job in 1933 because of his Jewish origins.

From Berlin to Florence: the *Florenz*

In 1933, Moritz and his family moved to Florence. Together with Werner Peiser, who had the backing of the fascist authority, he founded the *Landschulheim Florenz*. The inauguration was on 17 October 1933 at Villa Elena below Fiesole. Goldstein put his own money into this project which provide lodging and education for refugee children from Germany, Jews and non-Jews. It was the biggest and most important of six similar institutions founded in those years. In 1993 they began with five students, by 1936 they had over 100 aged from 8 to 22. They were able to legally transfer money from Germany to Italy and German citizens could stay at the villa without needing a visa⁴. With Goldstein as the Director the *Landschulheim* offered a good level of education especially in the humanities, with qualified teachers, often academics. This permitted the teaching staff to have an income; at the beginning there were 13 teachers which doubled in two years. Moritz Goldstein was the administrative director while his son Thomas was taken on as a teacher after finishing his studies that he had had to interrupt.

In 1936 in the journal «Judische Rundschau» Moritz Goldstein wrote an article giving practical suggestions to Jewish migrants⁵. He explained the

2 Richard F. Wetzell (ed.), *Crime and Criminal Justice in Modern Germany*, New York-Oxford, Berghahn Books, 2014, p. 11.

3 Vedi Andreas Kilcher, *Goldstein, Moritz (Egon Distel, Michael Osten, Inquit)*, in *Deutsch-judische Literatur: 120 Portrats*, Berlin, Springer Verlag, 2016, pp. 72-75.

4 Irmtraud Ubbens, *Das Landschulheim Florenz. In Kindheit und Jugend im Exil. Ein Generationenthema* (Exilforschung. Ein internationales Jahrbuch. Band 24), München, edition text + kritik, 2006, pp. 117-134; Klaus Voigt, *Zuflucht auf Widerruf. Exil in Italien 1933-1945*, Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta, 1989.

5 Moritz Goldstein, *Als Auswanderer in Italien*, «Judische Rundschau», 96, 1936, p. 3.

administrative procedure to obtain a residency permit, how to register at a police office and the bureaucracy needed to go through to have Italian citizenship. He also gave suggestions on finding work according to people's education and skills⁶.

In 1936 he retired from the school where he was replaced by Robert Kempner, who had arrived in 1935. Moritz and Toni Goldstein then managed a hotel in Forte dei Marmi, in Versilia where the school had been based in the summer of 1934⁷. This occurred because the contract on the Fiesole villa had terminated. The school then moved to a new home in Villa Pazzi, owned by a rich English banker, near to the observatory in Arcetri.

With Hitler visiting Florence in May 1938 many of Moritz's colleagues and students from the school were arrested. The College was closed down by the anti-jew laws of 1938. Naturalised Jews had their citizenship cancelled and they were given six months to leave Italy. It was also prohibited to transfer money. Moritz and Toni fled first to France and then to Britain; their son Thomas went to Norway. Both father and son had been under police surveillance for some time. The Gestapo had inquired about any Germans who damaged the political reputation of Germany⁸.

In Great Britain

News about the Goldsteins in England is scarce⁹. In the English census of September 1939 they were registered as German Jewish refugees, living in Manchester at 21 Yew Tree Lane, the home of English philosopher Dorothy Emmet (1904-2000). She was a lecturer at Manchester University from 1938

⁶ Elisabeth Albanis, *German-Jewish Cultural Identity from 1900 to the Aftermath of the First World War: A Comparative Study of Moritz Goldstein, Julius Bab and Ernst Lissauer*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2013, p. 140.

⁷ K. Voigt, *Zuflucht auf Widerruf*, cit.

⁸ *Ivi*.

⁹ The entry in *Encyclopaedia Judaica* has the Goldsteins going directly to the USA from Italy in 1938, see *Goldstein, Moritz*, in Michael Berenbaum, Fred Skolnik (eds.), *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd ed., Detroit, Thomson Gale, 2007 <<https://www.encyclopedia.com>> (accessed 24 April 2019).

in the philosophy of religion where she became professor in 1946¹⁰. It seems that the Goldsteins again took on the activity started in Forte dei Marmi, opening a small hotel in which many refugees came to spend their holidays¹¹. Probably the hotel was in Abersoch, a seaside resort in north-west Wales. This was the last address for the Goldsteins before embarking for the USA aboard the *Mauretania*. They left Southampton on the 14th October 1947¹².

Together again in the USA

Moritz and Toni arrived in New York 20 October 1947: they were registered as *stateless*, with a permission they had obtained in London on 3 July, to join their son at his address: 805, 49th Avenue, Capitol Heights (MD). Awaiting them, in fact, was their son Thomas who by then had settled between New York and Maryland. They had separated in Florence in 1938 and Thomas then had spent a period in Norway and San Domingo. Thomas had got married and finally had entered the United States.

At that time Moritz was 67 and Toni 61, she died a few years later in 1950. Moritz went back to his work as a writer for German newspapers, in particular, the «*Neue Zeitung*» of Munich. In 1953 he obtained American citizenship, at the age of 73, after many years of statelessness status.

During his long working life, he contributed and stimulated the debate on the identity process of German Jews, starting with his article *Deutsch-judischer Parnass* published in 1912. In this article he had expressed strong doubts on the effective assimilation achieved by Jews in Germany. He had dealt with the complex position of Jewish intellectuals and had stated: "We Jews administer the spiritual estate of a nation which denies our rights and our ability to

10 1939 Register of England & Wales, see <<https://www.myheritage.it>> (accessed on registration 3 February 2019): Moritz Goldstein in 1939 is part of the household of Dorothy M. Emmet, Manchester, Lancashire. It also shows Tom [sic] Goldstein born 10 May 1886, German Jewish refugee, but in reality this is Toni.

11 Information, «Association of Jewish refugees in Great Britain», 11, 1977, p. 9.

12 Ellis Island Foundation, Passenger Search, «Moritz Goldstein» and «Toni Goldstein» <<https://www.libertyellisfoundation.org>> (accessed on registration 3 February 2019).

this”¹³. The article started a long and bitter debate. He returned to this theme in 1957, with *German Jewry's Dilemma: The Story of a Provocative Essay*, published in the *Year Book* of the Leo Baeck Institute di New York. In this latter article, his position was less hard than before following on from the war and the tragedy befallen on European Jews.

Moritz lived in New York until his death on 3 September 1977. He wrote that had never felt of New York as home. He is buried at Mount Hebron Cemetery, Flushing, New York¹⁴.

Major publications

- *Deutsch-jüdischer Parnass*, «Kunstwart», 25, 11, 1912, pp. 281-294 <<https://archive.org>>.
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- *Die Gabe Gottes: komische Tragödie in drei Aufzügen*, Berlin, Oesterheld, 1919.
- *Katastrophe. Novellen*, Berlin, Kunst Kammer M. Wasservogel, 1927.
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- *Berliner Jahre: Erinnerungen 1880-1933*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 1977.
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¹³ Moritz Goldstein, *Deutsch-jüdischer Parnass*, «Kunstwart», 25, 11, 1912, pp. 281-294 <<https://archive.org>> (accessed 31 March 2019).

¹⁴ See <<https://it.billiongraves.com>> (accessed on registration 25 March 2019).

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- Irmtraud Ubbens, *Den Stempel, «Inquit» einer Zeit aufgedruckt: Moritz Goldstein - «Inquit» - der Journalist*, «Jahrbuch für Kommunikationsgeschichte», 7, 2005, pp. 93-121.

- Klaus Voigt, *Zuflucht auf Widerruf. Exil in Italien 1933-1945*, Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta, 1989.

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