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## The Writing of Memory: Reconstructing Identity in Lore Segal's Memoir *Other People's Houses*.

I propose to examine the literary texts of the Austrian Jewish author Lore Segal, who writes in order to define her identity as an Austrian exile by reconstructing her individual memories within the context of a more public and monumental representation of history. Her memoir *Other People's Houses*, written between 1959 and 1964, is a collage of personal memories shaped by the more traditional representations of history in history books and in the media.

Segal's memoir explores her experiences as one of 10,000 Austrian children of the "Kindertransport" who were transported to England on ships in order to save them from the onslaught of National Socialism. In retracing her steps, Segal seeks to define her adult identity in remembrance of the past – a notion similar to that of Walter Benjamin's "Eingedenken" - by describing her individual memory of childhood in war-torn Vienna, her isolation in London and her experiences of exile as a young woman and adult. Segal's memoir, though chronological according to its author, is fragmented; the linearity of a traditional narrative is constantly broken, subverted and reconstructed. In a personal essay Segal writes of her inability to construct a fluid story of her life: "The most interesting thing sometimes, about a memory is the stubborn impossibility of filling in the holes in it." Her goal, she writes, is to seek out her "basic orientation," her "first geographies," a locus in which her identity might be grounded, a past in which her present might reveal itself more clearly. I will further examine Segal's statements regarding individual and cultural memory as documented in the film by Mark Jonathan Harris *Into the Arms of Strangers* (2002) and in the more recent documentary film by the Salzburg film director Käthe Kratz entitled *Vielleicht habe ich Glück gehabt* (2003).

My paper will provide a context for exile literature by Austrian women such as Segal, and explore the themes present in Segal's memoir of childhood experience in war: that of the reconstruction of memory and the search for an identity that reconciles an Austrian childhood with an English adulthood, the concept of "Heimat," national and religious identity, and how language both voices and shapes identity. Of this Segal writes: "There is something like a blood kinship with our first language which is absent from our most sophisticated familiarity with anything subsequently learned." My paper will show how the acts of writing and game-playing become means for children in exile to cope with trauma. Segal's gender perspective of this Austrian cultural memory from exile is evident in her struggles as a young woman, and the challenges of her mother-daughter and foster mother-foster child relationships. Lastly I will explore how Segal establishes herself and discovers a sense of place during a reunion of childhood "Kindertransport" survivors, an "Erinnerungsgemeinschaft" that is based on trauma, remembrance, and finally, hope.