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# Entangled Entertainers

Jews and Popular Culture in  
Fin-de-Siècle Vienna



Klaus Hödl



## ENTANGLED ENTERTAINERS

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# ENTANGLED ENTERTAINERS

*Jews and Popular Culture  
in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*



Klaus Hödl

Translated by Corey Twitchell



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For Natalia





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## INTRODUCTION



On an icy December day in the year 1900, a mother was found wandering with four children along the bank of the Danube Canal in Vienna. She made a move as if to throw herself and her little ones from a bridge into the cold water. A lineman heard the children's cries and was able to keep the woman from following through with her plan. He brought the family to the nearest police station. There, it was learned that the suicidal woman was an impoverished peddler who could no longer feed her children and was facing eviction. Her husband, a "wandering performer," had taken a job as a ventriloquist and was working far away from the city. In the last letter she had received from him, her husband had advised her to sell the bedsprings and the kitchenware and use the money to buy food for the children.<sup>1</sup> She had eaten nothing in the two days leading up to her suicide attempt. After these living conditions came to light, a plea was made to the Viennese population, a call for help for this family in their distress. It was rumored that the money collected amounted to a considerable sum. The donations, however, did not result in a sustained improvement in the family's situation. After the family once again accumulated debts they could not pay off, the woman disappeared with her children, leaving the apartment behind. What happened to the family following this episode remains unknown.<sup>2</sup>

By and large, the social situation of the Katz family (the family named in the previous anecdote) scarcely differed from that of thousands of other Jewish families in Vienna at the end of the nineteenth century and the turn of the twentieth century. A significant number of them lived in dire circumstances and had few resources to cope with the difficulties they encountered over the course of their everyday lives. Jews, and non-Jews as well, sometimes lived in dark, damp quarters with several people crammed into one room, often sharing a single bed. Sometimes families also temporarily housed strangers within their already confined domestic spaces, *Bettgeher* (bed lodgers) who rented a bed or a place to sleep just for the night. Moral delinquency, illness, and social neglect found an ideal breeding ground in such conditions.<sup>3</sup> Some media outlets even described the

pitiful dwellings of the Jews as “bug castles” and “pest caves,” which were said to pose a health risk to the non-Jewish population.<sup>4</sup>

The oppressive poverty that characterized the everyday life of the Katz family was familiar not only to some of the Jewish, but also to non-Jewish members of the Viennese population. Such experiences, shared by both Jews and non-Jews, were also evident in Anna Katz’s attempt to plunge into the Danube Canal as a result of her seemingly hopeless misery. Contemporary newspapers were full of accounts of people whose living conditions were so desperate that they saw no way out other than to commit suicide. We see the full extent of this tragic situation, for example, in the 1904 case of four female corpses that a pedestrian discovered in the Danube Canal. Independent of one another, the women had jumped into the ice-cold water, and all washed up on the riverbank at roughly the same time and place.<sup>5</sup> In 1900, when Anna Katz decided to take her own life, she was among five hundred other Viennese citizens who chose a similar course of action.<sup>6</sup> Only suicide by hanging and gunshot wound claimed more victims than suicide by drowning. Often, the people who drowned in the Danube also took their children with them to their deaths. Anna Katz’s failed suicide attempt thus corresponds to a widespread pattern of behavior. Their desperate act was, consciously or unconsciously, established in a culturally prescribed way.<sup>7</sup> In eastern Europe, on the other hand, where poverty among Jews could be even more dire than in Vienna, suicide was largely unheard of.<sup>8</sup>

We can surmise that many Viennese Jews acted in concert with the city’s non-Jewish population than with Jews in other areas and cultures. We cannot speak of a uniform Jewry that was clearly distinguishable from its non-Jewish counterparts, at least when considering this cultural background. Jews and non-Jews in Vienna often followed similar lines of action that differed from those in other areas or regions.

Anna Katz’s identity as a woman working as a peddler warrants further discussion. Her occupation is difficult to reconcile in light of existing narratives about Jews in Vienna. To be sure, a comprehensive scholarly study investigating the history of Jewish peddlers and peddling in the Danube metropolis has yet to be written.<sup>9</sup> The few scholarly works that do exist on the subject only discuss men engaged in this kind of work. According to the dominant narrative, Jewish women seem to have had no presence in this profession. On the other hand, various accounts of eastern European Orthodox Jewish life portray women engaged in the profession of peddling.<sup>10</sup> At times, men devoted themselves exclusively to the study of religious scriptures, while their wives cared for and earned money to support the family.<sup>11</sup> For the case of Vienna, however, Jews quickly brought gender roles into line with prevailing social standards. According to these standards, the man of the household was responsible for providing for his family with money earned through gainful employment.<sup>12</sup> In any case, Anna Katz’s existence seems to deviate from this established historical narrative. The cause for

this difference may have been living conditions so miserable that aligning herself with bourgeois values seemed impossible. Her daily routine was much like that of the impoverished non-Jewish population in Vienna, which included quite a few peddlers.<sup>13</sup>

The scant information that exists about Anna Katz's life portrays a woman who moved in the cultural fabric of the Vienna of her time. It seems that her everyday life was largely similar to that of non-Jewish women. This does not mean that she identified first and foremost with non-Jews nor that she was unconnected to any sense of Jewish identity. It also does not mean that her social interactions failed to include other Viennese Jews. The fact that the financial support that she received following the public petition for help in the aftermath of her suicide attempt came from Jews suggests that she maintained ties with the Jewish community.<sup>14</sup> Anna Katz may have been at home in both Jewish and non-Jewish spheres. She led an existence that was likely commonplace in Vienna—indeed, much more ordinary than what most of the scholarship available on the topic reflects. The fact that such evidence seems rare is probably due to the fact that historians have thus far scarcely researched and investigated them.<sup>15</sup> It is difficult to insert them into or even allow them to contradict the dominant historical narrative regarding Jews. According to this narrative, Jews are either part of a largely closed, mostly religiously Jewish world, or they leave it behind by “assimilating” or “acculturating” into non-Jewish society. The idea that Jewish and non-Jewish spheres overlap and that the boundaries between them are more permeable than sometimes believed—and at the same time constantly change and must be renegotiated—is scarcely mentioned in the prevalent historiographical accounts.<sup>16</sup>

An example of an interaction between Jews and non-Jews that dissolves clear distinctions between them (and at the same time speaks to Anna Katz's profession) can be seen in a situation involving a Jewish peddler named Samuel Scholder. In December 1896, he was selling toys on the Rotenturmstrasse, when an employee of a nearby business approached him. At first, this employee only verbally accosted Scholder, but then proceeded to attack him physically.<sup>17</sup> At first glance, we might assume that this instance serves as further evidence of Jewish peddlers struggling to eke out a living in Vienna. The general argument that one encounters in scholarly literature, to a large extent undoubtedly correct, is that these peddlers drew the envy of other tradespeople and represented the impoverished eastern European Jew in the eyes of the non-Jewish population. Jewish peddlers were often scorned, a target for antisemitic projections.<sup>18</sup> There is virtually no counter-narrative to this, no available evidence that would emphasize the fruitful coexistence between them and non-Jews. However, the case involving Scholder deviates from the widespread depictions of Jewish peddlers, as the rest of this story of aggression seems to indicate: The attacker, a man named Joseph Knot, fled the scene following the altercation, but he did not get far. “A crowd of people” chased after the assailant and caught up to him. The pursuit had worked

up the crowd so much that they took justice into their own hands and began to beat the culprit. “One bystander (even) broke his walking stick over Knot’s head.”<sup>19</sup>

This incident allows us to draw different interpretations of the relationship between Jews and non-Jews. On the one hand, we can view it in terms of anti-semitism. But on the other, it demonstrates the readiness of the Viennese people to come to the aid of a Jew and defend him against antisemitism. Ultimately, both interpretations are simultaneously possible, and we may draw appropriate conclusions in light of this evidence. It is likely that a significant number of Jews in Vienna at the turn of the century were personally familiar with both kinds of experiences, including both the hostility of non-Jews and friendly interactions with them. At any rate, Anna Katz and Samuel Scholder provide us examples of the complexity of Jewish experiences.

Another aspect of this situation, hardly mentioned in the historiographical accounts of Viennese Jews, is Mr. Katz’s choice of profession. Anna Katz’s husband was an *escamoteur* (a kind of magician), as well as a ventriloquist. He entertained people who sought distraction from the monotony of everyday life. He competed with many other Jews who worked in various branches of general (i.e., not specifically Jewish) popular culture. Jewish participation in popular culture has received comparatively little scholarly attention to date, especially in terms of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>20</sup> For this reason, Jews are almost exclusively associated with the professions of merchant, trader, and banker, perhaps also with laborers and peddlers.<sup>21</sup>

Mr. Katz was engaged in a profession that many other people in Vienna—perhaps too many—also attempted to pursue. Those who could afford the membership fee belonged to an association called *Die Schwalbe* (The Swallow). This organization publicly represented the interests of the artists and showmen and supported the poorest among them.<sup>22</sup> It may be that the glut of magicians in the metropolis convinced Katz to seek his fortune in the provinces, where competition was less pronounced. He also suffered from a lung disease that made it difficult for him to work. With the onset of this illness, he was no longer able to provide for his family as he once had and was forced to surrender his best performance opportunities to his colleagues. In any case, he gave up the artist’s life in Vienna, where he was known by the name of Kaciander, and exchanged it for a life of wandering.

At the time, while Katz still earned his livelihood in Vienna, his wife also worked as a performing artist. She garnered considerable success as an expert in remembering (*Mnemotechnikerin*) and performed under the stage name “Leontine Rey,” even in the most important Viennese variety establishments, such as the Ronacher and Danzer’s Orpheum. She also worked as what was known in fin-de-siècle Vienna as a “fakir” (a kind of fortune-teller).<sup>23</sup> She became a peddler only after her husband left her alone with their children.

Poverty was widespread among the artists and performers, and not a few of them lived under oppressive conditions similar to those that the Katz family endured. In the summer months, when demand for performance sharply dropped and people traveled into the country (as far from the city as their means would allow them) or amused themselves in the Prater (Vienna's principal city park), the homeless shelters were literally stormed by actors.<sup>24</sup> Requests for donations for starving families of actors who did not have a roof over their heads were not uncommon.<sup>25</sup> But of course not all of these performers were poor. For example, the ventriloquist Franz Donner, one of Mr. Katz's colleagues, enjoyed a successful career in Vienna—so successful, in fact, that he was able to buy property in Moravia and spend his retirement there.<sup>26</sup>

The Katz family, along with their children, may well have represented an average Jewish family, as there were thousands of Jewish families like them in Vienna between the end of nineteenth and the early decades of twentieth century. This normality is probably one of the reasons why historians have thus far only cautiously devoted research to this segment of the population. Nonetheless, by analyzing these kinds of individuals and historical incidents, we may gain insight into the everyday lives of the Viennese Jews who otherwise remain in obscurity.

## The Tradition of Jewish Entertainers in Vienna

The overall lack of historical engagement with the topic of Jews in the field of popular culture may be largely due to the prevailing research paradigm. The scholarly effort to trace Jewish adaptation to bourgeois standards has ignored aspects related to popular culture, commonly associated with the underprivileged. Jews who were active in the non-bourgeois entertainment culture have received little academic attention and appear in scholarly literature only sporadically. Nevertheless, they existed as organizers and producers, as well as consumers. They were indispensable to Viennese entertainment culture, and this study endeavors to honor the role they played accordingly.<sup>27</sup>

The lack of historiographical interest in Jews in popular culture is not limited to the Habsburg metropolis, but is also reflected in the history of the Jews in eastern Europe, especially in Galicia, where many Jews in Vienna traced their origins.<sup>28</sup> Moyshe Fayershteyn, for example, was a Galician Jewish entertainer who traveled with circus troupes across Europe. His attraction entailed swallowing live frogs and mice and spitting them out again after gargling with water.<sup>29</sup> In this context, we should also mention Josephine Joseph. She was originally from Kraków and decided to try her luck in America. She made a career at the New York amusement park Coney Island, where audiences marveled at her as a hermaphrodite.<sup>30</sup>

Fayershteyn and Joseph were not exceptions among Jews of the time. Crushing poverty and limited employment opportunities made the profession of performer and entertainer an attractive niche occupation. More than a few were able to make their living solely with strange skills and by exhibiting peculiarities perceived as bizarre. By doing so, they joined a long history of Jewish entertainers, in particular magicians and trick artists, as well as “mentalists,” who had gained considerable fame.<sup>31</sup> One of these was Samuel Thiersfeld (1829–1918), born in the Galician town of Jaroslaw, who, on account of his skills, was invited to perform for Emperor Franz Joseph, Wilhelm I, and the German chancellor Otto von Bismarck. After training as a pastry chef and a short-lived stint in a military band, he decided to dedicate himself to the art of magic. From 1857 on, he appeared only under the stage name Professor St. Roman. His special attraction was that he was able to conjure ducks, without technical aids, while standing in the middle of the auditorium.<sup>32</sup> Another Jewish magician was Fred Roner from Lvov, in Galicia. He settled in Vienna, where he soon succeeded in gaining membership in an association of magicians. With their recommendation, he no longer had to worry about securing performance opportunities. Roner mainly worked in variety shows, where he amazed the audience with his card tricks. He relied less on his dexterity than on his tremendous memory.<sup>33</sup>

Thiersfeld and Roner were not the first Jewish magicians in Vienna. There is record of Jewish magicians working in Vienna since the late eighteenth century. In the spring of 1774, for example, the *Wiener Zeitung* announced the arrival of Jacob Meyer, who was known by the stage name “Philadelphia.” He is said to have performed at the courts of various aristocrats in Europe since 1758. In Vienna, he performed his tricks for several weeks in an inn on the Kärntnerstrasse.<sup>34</sup> Just a few years later, some Jewish magicians settled permanently in the city. One of them was a man named Jonas, whose sleight-of-hand tricks made him so popular that in 1783 he was asked to give a performance in the Palais Auersperg for the Moroccan ambassador. Abraham Romaldi, another Jewish playwright, made his debut in Vienna in 1789. Like Jonas, he renounced performances on the Sabbath.<sup>35</sup>

Another famous Jewish magician paid his respects to Vienna around the middle of the nineteenth century. His name was Carl Compars Herrmann (1816–1887). He was likely born in a town somewhere on the Galician-Russian border. After a stay in Paris to study medicine and his first appearances as a magician in London, he came to Austria via Germany, where he was celebrated in the Viennese Carl-Theater in 1851 by an enthusiastic audience. Carl Compars Herrmann was a busy man. His performances took him to South America, and President Lincoln once even requested that he perform at the White House. Despite his many travels, he remained connected to Vienna. He assumed Austrian citizenship in 1865, counted among his many friends Adolf Jelinek, the preacher of the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Wien (the Vienna Jewish Community), and was



also very popular among the poor of Vienna on account of his charitable donations.<sup>36</sup> His magical talents left a strong impression on the population, and through various media he has remained in the collective memory of the Viennese population. A portrait of him currently hangs in the Austrian Museum in the Belvedere, and one of his friends, Johann Strauss, dedicated a polka to him in 1851, which he first introduced at a performance in the dance hall Sperl.<sup>37</sup>

This short overview allows us to see that Katz's job as *escamoteur* was not unusual for Jews. The widespread idea that they were particularly suited to being magicians on account of their knowledge of Kabbalah increased their popular attraction and proved to be an advantage over non-Jewish colleagues. One of the reasons for this stereotype is that non-Jewish magicians were an unknown quantity to a larger audience prior to 1790.<sup>38</sup>

## Overview of the Chapters

A review of the available scholarly literature on the history of the Jews of Vienna makes it clear that Jewish magicians and toad swallows have thus far received scant scholarly attention. They have been largely ignored and continue to be ignored. These omissions have not led to a fundamentally incorrect portrayal of Viennese Jewry, but rather to an incomplete one—which has ultimately fueled a distorted idea about them and their history. That is why the Jewish population in the Danube metropolis is still almost exclusively associated with the bourgeoisie or the process of becoming “bourgeois” (*Verbürgerlichung*).<sup>39</sup> The fact that Jews were also generally active in popular culture and sometimes paid little attention to the standards of the much-lauded bourgeoisie has been overlooked. In chapter 1, I demonstrate with a series of concrete examples a different path that some Jews chose to take.

In this study, I pose a number of questions and endeavor to answer them. My primary thesis is that Jews played a substantial role in the shaping of Viennese popular culture. Though my argument has until recently been to some degree contentious, I am able to substantiate it using a wide variety of sources.

In chapter 1 in particular, I pose a central question, namely why so few scholars have researched and written about Jews in Viennese popular culture around 1900. What has prevented historical scholarship from intensive explorations of the subject? Why have historians tended to engage with the topic of Jews and “high” culture instead of also considering popular culture? One possible reason for this scholarly neglect may be linked to the so-called invisibility of Jewish artists. They often performed using a *nom de plume* and demonstrated no other (obvious) Jewish characteristics. In instances when their contemporaries, and sometimes even their fellow performers, did not recognize them as Jews, it can be even more difficult for historians in retrospect to identify certain *Volkssänger*

as Jewish. In one way or another, this often open-ended aspect of Jewishness frames this entire study, functioning as a contextual parenthesis: How is Jewishness expressed; how is it made legible? The difficulties involved in comprehending Jewishness has a discernible impact on historiography and the terms used for portraying the relationship between Jews and non-Jews. To highlight these difficulties, I specifically investigate two terms that scholars have often employed, “assimilation” and “acculturation.” Ultimately, my investigation of the reception of general (i.e., not specifically Jewish) media by Jews who did not belong to the enlightened upper middle class clearly illustrates the intertwining of Jewish and non-Jewish culture, thereby calling attention to another reason for the difficulty posed by the topic of Jews in Viennese popular culture.

The question of how to understand Jewishness among both non-Jewish and in particular Jewish *Volkssänger* and performing musicians permeates my entire study. My treatment of this topic proceeds on several levels. First, I analyze a series of theatrical works. In chapter 2, I frame this analysis with a description of the most important Viennese Jewish *Volkssänger* groups. My investigation focuses on specific aspects of language that Jewish *Volkssänger* used, the origins of individual performers, intra-Jewish tensions and conflicts, and the gradual replacement of the *Volkssänger* by vaudeville (i.e., the variety show). This chapter thus provides an overview of Jewish participation in Viennese popular culture. I argue that popular culture in the Habsburg capital would likely have been an entirely different phenomenon had Jews not been actively involved in the entertainment industry.

Chapter 3 traces the conflict between the Jewish *Volkssänger* Albert Hirsch and his Jewish and non-Jewish colleagues. Over the course of this dispute, described by contemporary media as a “*Volkssänger* war” (or “war among performing musicians”), Hirsch demonstrates a performative concept of Jewishness. By probing the statements and comments made during this sometimes bitter conflict, I offer a detailed examination of the Viennese *Volkssänger* milieu and the historical context in which it developed. By exploring this wider context, I discuss the extent to which antisemitism was widespread among the *Volkssänger*, as well as in other areas of society, and to what extent we must understand the hostility against Hirsch as an expression of Judeophobia. I provide an in-depth analysis of the “Hirsch affair,” because it reveals how the world of the *Volkssänger* in the early twentieth century was constructed and outlines, at least in part, the relationship between Jews and non-Jews in the Habsburg capital. Within this context, the *Volkssänger* war represents a micro-history of Jewish–non-Jewish relations in Vienna around 1900.

Chapter 4 explores how Jewish artists in fin-de-siècle Vienna conceived of time and space. I discuss, among other things, whether these conceptions show evidence of a Jewish difference that is not based on religion. In light of my analysis, articulated throughout this book, this question is of considerable relevance.

Namely, it reconceives the discourse regarding expressions of Jewishness. By doing so, I also link my discussion to recent trends in Jewish studies—for example, the spatial turn. I accomplish this through close readings of a specific selection of theatrical works that were both very well-known and highly esteemed in turn-of-the-century Vienna.

In the fifth and final chapter, I summarize the characteristics of Jewish self-understanding that I highlight throughout this study and evaluate them within the historical context of the antisemitism prevalent at the time. In doing so, I focus on how Jewish *Volkssänger* treated in their plays the stereotypical “Jewish” way of speaking (*jiddeln*), as well as specific physical traits often attributed to Jews. Other questions that arise as a result of my analysis include the role of the Jewish religion in the consciousness of Jewish *Volkssänger* and impresarios, as well as the relationship between Jewish and non-Jewish operators in Viennese popular culture. Within this framework, I present the new cultural-theoretical concept of *similarity*. Its innovative dimension lies in the rigorous rejection of dichotomous approaches to describing human interactions or cultural comparisons. The concept of similarity deals with congruences and commonalities between two comparable subjects without obscuring differences between them. Similarity thus proves to be a considerably fruitful analytical tool for exploring Jewish and non-Jewish relationships and interactions.

## Notes

1. *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt* [*IWE* in subsequent citations] 358 (31 January 1900): 2–3.
2. *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* 251 (10 September 1904): 5–6.
3. Bruno Frei, *Jüdisches Elend in Wien: Bilder und Daten* (Vienna/Berlin: R. Löwit, 1920), 41–60.
4. “Eine Pesthöhle,” *Deutsches Volksblatt* 3712 (4 May 1899): 6.
5. *IWE* 8 (8 January 1904): 3.
6. *IWE* 8 (8 January 1901): 7.
7. The assertion that the Katz incident was a cultural pattern is reinforced by other suicide attempts that were almost exactly identical to this one. In this context, it is worth mentioning the additional example of auxiliary worker Karoline Birk’s suicide attempt. At the end of November 1902, Birk intended to jump from the Brigittabrücke with her four children. She had a sick husband, who had previously worked as a merchant, and lived in squalor. Like Anna Katz, Karoline Birk had already sold most of her furniture in order to buy food for her children. A watchman who heard the children’s crying ultimately prevented the suicide (see *IWE* 326 [28 November 1902]: 2; and *IWE* 327 [29 November 1902]: 4).
8. Mitchell B. Hart, *Social Science and the Politics of Modern Jewish Identity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 132. It is beyond the scope of this study to determine whether social predicaments actually contribute to a suicide attempt or whether it is in-

- stead the result of mental illness or a particular mental state. What is important for my study is that suicide (or a suicide attempt) as a reaction to specific circumstances is based on a larger cultural pattern.
9. See Michael John and Albert Lichtblau, *Schmelztiegel Wien—einst und jetzt: Zur Geschichte und Gegenwart von Zuwanderung und Minderheiten* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1990), 46.
  10. See Gershon David Hundert, “Approaches to the History of the Jewish Family in Early Modern Poland-Lithuania,” in *The Jewish Family: Myths and Reality*, ed. Steven M. Cohen and Paula E. Hyman (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1996), 22–23. See also Gershon David Hundert, *Jews in Poland-Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century: A Genealogy of Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 52.
  11. See Susan A. Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl: Life and Labor in the Immigrant Generation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 111. However, this seems to have been more an ideal and less a reality, as recent historical scholarship has recognized. As a general rule, both men and women were permitted to pursue a profession, whereby a woman’s work was generally understood more in terms of supporting her husband rather than as her own independent enterprise. See Glenn Dynner, *Yankel’s Tavern: Jews, Liquor, and Life in the Kingdom of Poland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2014), 91.
  12. Klaus Hödl, *Als Bettler in die Leopoldstadt: Galizische Juden auf dem Weg nach Wien* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1994), 208–26.
  13. See *IWE* 332 (4 December 1902): 6.
  14. See *IWE* 2 (2 February 1901): 2.
  15. For an example of a scholarly study that does in fact pursue this overlapping between Jewish and non-Jewish spheres, see Christoph Lind, *Kleine jüdische Kolonien: Juden in Niederösterreich 1782–1914* (Vienna: Mandelbaum, 2013). As the title suggests, Lind’s work explores small Jewish communities in Lower Austria. His study brings to the fore astonishing examples of Jewish–non-Jewish interaction.
  16. There are of course notable exceptions to this general consensus. An example of a young scholar whose work rethinks the relationship between Jewish and non-Jewish spheres is Jana Schumann. See Schumann, “Von ‘jüdischem Humor’ und ‘verjudeter Kunst’: Konzeptionen jüdischer Identität und der Populärkulturdiskurs,” in *Nicht nur Bildung, nicht nur Bürger: Juden in der Populärkultur*, ed. Klaus Hödl (Innsbruck: StudienVerlag, 2013), 91–102.
  17. “Ein geschlagener Hausirer,” *IWE* 23 (23 January 1897): 8.
  18. John W. Boyer, *Political Radicalism in Late Imperial Vienna* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 58.
  19. *IWE* 23 (23 January 1897): 8.
  20. For the most important exceptions around 1900, see in particular Philip V. Bohlman, “Auf der Bima—Auf der Bühne: Zur Emanzipation der jüdischen Populärmusik im Wien der Jahrhundertwende,” in *Vergleichend-systematische Musikwissenschaft: Beiträge zu Methode und Problematik der systematischen, ethnologischen und historischen Musikwissenschaft*, ed. Elisabeth Th. Hilscher and Theophil Antonicek (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1994), 417–49. See also Philip V. Bohlman, “An Endgame’s ‘Dramatis Personae’: Jewish Popular Music in the Public Spaces of the Habsburg Monarchy,” *Vienna: Jews and the City of Music 1870–1938*, ed. Leon Botstein and Werner Hanak (Hofheim: Wolke, 2004), 93–105; Philip V. Bohlman, *Jüdische Volksmusik: Eine mitteleuropäische Geistesgeschichte* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2005); Marie-Theres Arnbom and Georg Wacks, eds., *Jüdisches Kabarett in Wien 1889–2009* (Vienna: Armin Berg, 2009); Gertraud Pressler, “Jüdisches

- und Antisemitisches in der Wiener Volksunterhaltung,” *Musicologica Austriaca* 17 (1998): 63–82; Georg Wacks, *Die Budapester Orpheumsgesellschaft: Ein Variété in Wien 1889–1919* (Vienna: Holzhausen, 2002); Birgit Peter and Robert Kaldy-Karo, eds., *Artistenleben auf vergessenen Wegen: Eine Spurensuche in Wien* (Vienna: LIT, 2013). The topic of soccer and Jews has received considerable scholarly attention. See Michael Lechner, “*Wie vom anderen Stern*”—*jüdischer Fußball in Wien (1909–1938): Eine Kultur- und Sportgeschichte* (Saarbrücken: VDM, 2010); David Forster, Georg Spitaler, and Jacob Rosenberg, eds., *Fußball unterm Hakenkreuz in der Ostmark* (Vienna: Die Werkstatt, 2014). In the last few years, several scholars have begun to rethink this topic, as is evident in a series of master’s theses and dissertations on the subject of Jewish and various aspects of popular culture. I cite these works as appropriate over the course of this study.
21. We find an illustrative example of this tendency in a recent study of Jews in the Viennese *Vorstädte* (outlying city districts). The promotional information on the back of this title declares, “Among the Jews that lived here, there numbered prosperous entrepreneurs and landowners, but also many workers, small tradespeople, day laborers and peddlers as well.” See Evelyn Adunka and Gabriele Anderl, *Jüdisches Leben in der Vorstadt Ottakring und Hernals* (Vienna: Mandelbaum, 2012). There is no mention of Jews who worked in the cultural realm, in particular no reference to Jews engaged in the many and varied aspects of popular culture.
  22. *IWE* 5 (5 January 1901): 6.
  23. *IWE* 1 (1 January 1901): 4.
  24. *IWE* 192 (15 July 1900): 23.
  25. *IWE* 249 (11 November 1901): 5.
  26. *IWE* 320 (21 November 1901): 7.
  27. For more on this, see chapter 1.
  28. Marsha L. Rozenblit, *Juden in Wien 1867–1914* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1988), 29, 48.
  29. Edward Portnoy, “Warsaw Jews and Popular Performance, 1912–1930,” *TDR: The Drama Review* 50, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 127f.
  30. Portnoy, “Warsaw Jews,” 129, 131.
  31. Names such as David Copperfield and Uri Geller underscore the propensity that some Jews have historically felt for engaging in the public performance of magic as a form of entertainment and publicity.
  32. Stephan Oettermann, and Sibylle Spiegel, *Bio-Bibliographisches Lexikon der Zauberkünstler* (Offenbach: Edition Volker Huber, 2004), 338.
  33. Günther Dammann, *Die Juden in der Taschenspielerkunst: Eine biographische Stoffsammlung* (Berlin, 1933), 42–43.
  34. Reinhard Buchberger, “Jüdische Taschenspieler, kabbalistsche Zaubersprüche: Jakob Philadelphia und die jüdischen Zauberkünstler im Wien der Aufklärung,” in *Rare Künste: Zur Kultur- und Mediengeschichte der Zauberkunst*, ed. Brigitte Felderer and Ernst Strouhal (Vienna: Springer, 2007), 151, 160.
  35. Buchberger, “Jüdische Taschenspieler,” 162–63.
  36. “Magic Christian, Carl Compars Herrmann: Zum 120. Todestag gewidmet,” *Magie* 7 (2008): 358–63.
  37. [http://www.biographien.ac.at/oebl/oebl\\_H/Herrmann\\_Compars\\_1816\\_1887.xml](http://www.biographien.ac.at/oebl/oebl_H/Herrmann_Compars_1816_1887.xml) (accessed 8 May 2019).
  38. The extent to which this stereotype is still in circulation today is evident in the fact that the Central Council of Jews in Germany recently felt the need to take an explicit stand

- against it. The council has stated that “the worldview and also the laws of the Torah reject this [witchcraft and magic] as reprehensible practices and . . . categorically [prohibit] all magic as idolatry.” <https://www.magisch.at/> (accessed 8 May 2019).
39. Evidence for the assumption that Jews have historically avoided popular culture can be found in the publication *Blackface, White Noise* by the American political scientist Michael Rogin. In considering Steven Beller’s *Vienna and the Jews* (which deals almost exclusively with high culture), Rogin states that Viennese Jews distanced themselves from popular culture at the turn of the twentieth century. As a result of this inaccurate evaluation, he concludes that Jews were alienated from Viennese society and thus stoked the flames of antisemitism. See Michael Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998). To be fair, I should note here that Steven Beller does mention Jewish participation in the light entertainment industry (see Steven Beller, *Vienna and the Jews 1867–1938* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989], 180). He also does this in *A Concise History of Austria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 203.

## JEWES IN VIENNESE POPULAR CULTURE AROUND 1900 AS RESEARCH TOPIC



Popular culture represents a paradigmatic arena for exploring the interwovenness and interactions between Jews and non-Jews.<sup>1</sup> When considering the topic of Jews in the realm of Viennese popular culture at the end of the nineteenth and turn of the twentieth centuries, we must realize that this was an aspect of history not predominantly characterized by antisemitism. To be sure, antisemitism has represented one aspect characterizing the many and various relationships between Jews and non-Jews. But there was also cooperation between the two that was at times more pronounced than anti-Jewish hostility. We see evidence of the juxtaposition between Judeophobia and multifaceted forms of Jewish and non-Jewish coexistence in a brief newspaper quotation from 1904. The topic of this quotation is the Viennese folk song, and the anonymous author states that after a long time “an authentic, sentimental song, infused with folk humor, that is, an authentic Viennese folk song [*Wiener Volkslied*]” had finally once again been written. The song in question was “Everything Will Be Fine Again” (“Es wird ja alles wieder gut”). Martin Schenk (1860–1919) wrote the song’s lyrics, and Karl Hartl composed the tune.<sup>2</sup> The quotation continues, “After . . . the prevalence of Yiddish and Jewish anecdotes on the Viennese stage, following the unnatural fashions that have been grafted onto Viennese folk culture and which, as fashion always does, are thoughtlessly imitated, it does one good to hear once again something authentically Viennese.”<sup>3</sup> The article in which this quotation appeared indicates that the song appeared in Joseph Blaha’s publishing house. What the author does not mention is the fact that Blaha was also Jewish.<sup>4</sup> In addition, Martin Schenk was a longtime member of the Budapest Orpheum Society (Budapester Orpheumsgesellschaft), certainly the most important “jargon troupe” in Vienna in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The anonymous author of this quotation works from the assumption that Jews were responsible for a feeling of alienation that pervaded both Viennese folk songs and theatrical *Volkssänger* (performing musician) performances and plays.<sup>5</sup> According to the stereotype evoked in this quotation, Jews exerted a detrimental influence on local Viennese culture. This culture is described as atmospheric and authentic, while the musical productions of Jews deviated from this tradition and therefore created an unnatural effect. In addition, Jews consciously and emphatically manipulated popular Viennese culture, as the use of the term “graft” (*auffpfropfen*) suggests.

The supposed distortion of the Viennese folk song is implicitly related to the widespread antisemitic stereotype of the cosmopolitan Jew. According to this prejudice, Jews are stateless and remain unrooted in the local, native culture and can therefore never understand it. The speaking of Yiddish (*mauscheln*) mentioned in the quotation symbolizes the allegedly difficult and complicated relationship between Jews and the majority culture in which they lived.<sup>6</sup>

However, we may also read this short newspaper quotation from a different perspective, keeping in mind that Jews helped considerably to shape the tradition of the Viennese folk song (*Wienerlied*), an interpretation that points to their cultural participation in Viennese folk culture. Although the author of this newspaper notice exaggerates the number of Jews who were involved as producers of Viennese songs and other popular folk pieces, he also does not entirely distort the facts. Jewish participation in this arena of cultural production was indeed remarkable. The importance of this Jewish involvement comes to the fore indirectly in an obituary written to eulogize Karl Kratzl (1852–1904). Kratzl composed the music for songs written by Josef Modl (1863–1915), Anton Amon (1862–1931), and other musicians, making him one of the best-known Viennese song composers. The author of his obituary remarks that Kratzl’s “‘Mir hat amal vom Himmel tramt!’ [will] live forever, just like the songs of Krakauer, Pick’s ‘Vienna Coachman’s Song’ [*Fiakerlied*], and certain songs by Wiesberg and the melodies of Sioly.”<sup>7</sup> Of the four people named in the obituary, two were Jews, Gustav Pick (1832–1921) and Alexander Krakauer (1864–97). The author of the obituary also references the founding of the association Jolly Knights by Kratzl and Modl (who was also Jewish), hinting further at Jewish and non-Jewish cooperation in the realm of music and entertainment.<sup>8</sup>

We can therefore interpret the newspaper quotation regarding the ostensible detrimental influence of Jews on the Viennese *Volkssänger* tradition in a variety of ways, and no single interpretation is entirely correct or incorrect. To some degree, the interpretation of this quotation is subjective, dependent upon the individual reader. It is worth noting that the author of the quotation does not resort to the notorious prejudice that Jews were only capable of imitation and were therefore incapable of independent achievements.<sup>9</sup> Instead, the author objects to the influence Jews had on the Viennese *Volkssänger* tradition and their attempt to assert



their own understanding of popular music. If we disregard, for a moment, the newspaper quotation's antisemitic exaggeration and anti-Jewish edge, the assertion made by the anonymous author clearly contains a grain of truth. Indeed, scholarly investigation into the topic "Jews in popular culture" demonstrates that Jews did not adapt to any popular cultural standards. But unlike the quotation suggests, neither did they manipulate them. Rather, Jews were involved in the music-cultural scene and helped steer its course. In other words, at least in this branch of Jewish cultural activity, the concept of acculturation, which still characterizes historiography about Jews, especially in Austria (see below), cannot accurately account for Jewish participation in popular culture.

A second theme that arises in connection with research on Jews in popular culture concerns the notion that their everyday life in Vienna was heavily influenced by antisemitism and that they lived largely separate from non-Jews. We see this assumption in the frequently cited idea that although Jews and non-Jews had professional interactions with each other, they rarely maintained private contacts.<sup>10</sup> While this observation may have been true for particular segments of the Jewish and non-Jewish population, it can explain only to a limited extent the complexities of the relationships among participants in popular culture. In the realm of entertainment and popular culture, there was no dichotomous relationship between Jews and non-Jews.

A study on Jews in Viennese popular culture thus questions the validity of two basic assumptions in historiographical writing about them. Nevertheless, or perhaps because of this, as I mentioned in the introduction, this aspect of the Jewish past remains underrepresented in historical scholarship. In the following, I introduce four additional reasons that explain the widespread historiographical neglect of the subject of Jews in Viennese popular culture. I discuss in detail the last of these reasons, the selective coverage of Jewish newspapers, as it provides additional insight into relations between Viennese Jews and non-Jews at the turn of the twentieth century.

## **Identifying Jewish Artists in Popular Culture**

At the turn of the twentieth century, there was a fruit vendor known as "Jewish Lisi" (Judenlisi) who sold her wares at the Viennese Naschmarkt. Her name alone might indicate that she was a Jewish businesswoman. Along similar lines, there was a woman named "Jewish-Liesel" (Juden-Liesel), a harpist from the early nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup> She sang, was a prostitute, and drew audiences with her ribald, suggestive songs.<sup>12</sup> Unlike the fruit vendor at the Naschmarkt, whose real name was Elisabeth Schrattenholzer and who was called Judenlisi only on account of her predominantly Jewish clientele, the true identity of Jewish-Liesel (Juden-Liesel) remains unknown.<sup>13</sup> We cannot deduce whether artists who took

part in the early days of Viennese *Volkssänger* scene were Jewish based on their names alone. This lack of clarity also applies to Juden-Pepi, a member of the troupe surrounding the amateur dramatist Franz Deckmayer (1851–97).<sup>14</sup>

During the late nineteenth century, performing artists habitually adopted stage names, a practice that often creates confusion for scholars today working to assemble biographical data about them. When scholars happen upon newspaper reports on individual artists (or mentions of particular artists in print), it is for the most part impossible to determine whether they were Jewish or identified as Jewish at the time. To be sure, a name alone is never a sure indication of the individual's Jewishness, but it sometimes provides an important clue or starting point from which further investigations can be made. For example, in the previous chapter, I discussed the case of Mr. Katz. He performed under the pseudonym "Kaciander," a name that also gives no indication of his relationship to Judaism. In this particular case, however, I was able to identify him as Jewish on account of additional remarks made about him in various media. Otherwise, I could only pursue research on Katz-Kaciander's Jewishness if I could identify his real name, and consequently find it in the registers of the Viennese Jewish religious community (Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Wien). Often, though not always, one can find entries for specific names and thus attain confirmation that the individuals bearing these names were born, married, or died as Jews.<sup>15</sup>

The widespread practice among Jewish artists to assume stage names occasionally leads researchers to use questionable methods to secure concrete subjects for their studies. An example would be the examination of lists that the National Socialists created for the purpose of defaming Jewish artists to exclude them from the cultural scene and persecute them.<sup>16</sup> This does not mean that researchers looking for Jewish participants in popular culture using such a source must remain faithful to the Nazi racist definition of Jewishness. In principle, they could exclude from their research those artists for whom there is no evidence of Jewish identification. Nevertheless, the difficulty in identifying Jews who performed and participated in popular culture can bear strange results.

Another Jewish artist who appeared under a pseudonym was de Brye or Gaston de Brie, as he called himself, a so-called female impersonator. De Brye worked in various Viennese variety shows. His stage name does not appear to evince any connection to Judaism, nor does his name appear in Jewish community records. If de Brye had been an average artist with an inconspicuous lifestyle, then his Jewish background would probably have remained unknown to historians. But there are court proceedings pertaining to his ventures and intrigues, and a compilation of these proceedings allows us to identify the man behind the stage name as Emanuel Müller, also known as Emanuel Adler-Müller. We also learn that he opened a nightclub in the Viennese district Leopoldstadt in the late autumn of 1899 and invited *Volkssänger* to perform there.<sup>17</sup>

Stage names do not always pose a problem for historians. Occasionally, we find that various studies and publications have already researched individual Jewish artists, comedians, and *Volkssänger* and identified their real names and identities. Examples include Josef Armin (1858–1925), who was actually called Josef Rottensteiner; Heinrich Eisenbach (1870–1923), the singing comedian of the Budapest Orpheum Society, who was born Heinrich Mandl and also known by the nickname “Wamperl”; Armin Berg, also known as Hermann Weinberger; and Josef Müller, whose real name was Josef Schlesinger. This is just to name a few, as the list of these artists and performers goes on and on.

The use of artist names on the part of Jewish artists and *Volkssänger* engaged in Viennese popular culture around 1900 makes it difficult, not only in historical retrospect, to engage in scholarly studies about them. Sometimes even their contemporaries were mistaken about the ethnic-cultural or religious affiliation of these entertainers. We see a particularly interesting example of this kind of error in the announcement of the alleged death of the “humpbacked wine tavern poet [*Heurigendichter*]” Loisl Ungrad. He was famous for his “impromptu” *Gstanzeln* (short satirical songs), which he performed on the *Brettl*—the stages where *Volkssänger* performed. Ungrad, like many of his colleagues, performed under an assumed name. His real name, so people assumed, was Kohn. Only through an obituary printed by mistake do we learn that he was actually named Vopitschka (Ungrad even read the report of his own death in the newspaper).<sup>18</sup>

The choice of stage names also exerts an influence over historical research in other ways. For example, Koller’s 1931 overview of Viennese folk songs, *Das Wiener Volksängertum*, states that Franz Kriebaum, longtime director of Danzer’s Orpheum and a former *Volkssänger*, was “actually called Grünbaum.”<sup>19</sup> We find this piece of information in almost all subsequent scholarly discussions and mentions of Kriebaum, including Ernst Weber’s 2006 article in which he references “Franz Xaver Kriebaum (a.k.a. Grünbaum, 1836–1900).”<sup>20</sup> Although not specifically mentioned, this kind of formulation contains an implicit reference to Kriebaum’s ostensible Jewishness.<sup>21</sup> Even the 1994 *Historisches Lexikon Wien* (Historical lexicon of Vienna) gives the name “Grünbaum” in brackets following the name Kriebaum.<sup>22</sup> The proliferation of this kind of information occurs despite reference in the encyclopedia entry to an article from the *Wiener Zeitung* stating that the name Kriebaum can be found listed in the baptismal records of the parish Nussdorf, indicating that his family was never called Grünbaum.<sup>23</sup> But the particular formulation of this artist’s name, “Kriebaum a.k.a. Grünbaum,” has apparently become so popular that it has been taken for granted, meaning that Kriebaum’s connection to Judaism has persisted in the scholarship as a given fact.

This approach seems to be the product of what might be described in Yiddish as *Efn a zeml un aroys a yid*, “Wherever you turn, you meet a Jew.” In other words,

many scholars endeavor to identify as many Jews as possible.<sup>24</sup> Whether some of these scholars consciously engage in this kind of practice simply for the purpose of bolstering their research findings remains unclear. Whatever the motivation for the negligent treatment of biographies, it distorts the results of this kind of scholarly work.

For historians, it may therefore be difficult to identify Jews among the artists who were a part of Viennese popular culture. Their custom of performing under a stage name often conceals clear references to their Jewish identity. This problem may constitute one of several reasons why scholarly research has tended to neglect them.

## The Subversive Dimension of Popular Culture

Another reason that may have contributed to the widespread omission in scholarly research of the topic “Jews in popular culture” could be their subversive potential. Because popular culture is primarily constituted by practices that can easily elude established social standards, popular culture offers the possibility for criticizing normative prescriptions as well as countercultural ambitions.<sup>25</sup> We see this potential for subversion in Viennese popular culture around 1900, not least in the performances of Jewish *Volkssänger* and cabaret artists. These performers often ridiculed the values that were considered bourgeois and with which a large portion of the Jewish population identified. “Jewish” humor, with all its irony and sarcasm, rebelled against middle-class Jewish self-understanding, a practice that was often met with irritation among predominantly Jewish audiences. In this context, I draw the reader’s attention to an indignant letter addressed to the *Oesterreichische Wochenschrift*. This anonymous letter submitted to the newspaper remarks about the Budapest Orpheum Society: “A Jew (in the case of the Budapesters, everyone speaks Yiddish)—so one Jew spits in the other’s face; the same Jew engages in toilet humor, and so on with grace into infinity . . . any decent person can only react by saying ‘ugh!’”<sup>26</sup>

A similar reaction to a performance deemed indecent occurred during a solo scene that Heinrich Eisenbach performed. After Eisenbach engaged in all sorts of lewd behavior while on stage, the audience broke out in a tumult. As one newspaper reported, they began to make noise, stamp their feet, whistle, and hoot. It was only after a long break and a formal apology from Eisenbach that the audience members calmed down enough for him to continue his performance.<sup>27</sup>

The deliberate violation of social conventions and widely accepted mores and the parodying of these values articulated a critique of the self-understanding of much of the Jewish community. This popular cultural revolt against bourgeois values may have contributed decisively to the fact that Jewish newspapers had little regard for this kind of performance and the artists responsible for them.

In turn, this tendency makes it difficult for scholars today to identify archival evidence that points to Jewish participation in popular culture.

Jewish *Volkssänger* not only violated the accepted norms of decency and articulated salacious ideas, but they also sometimes attacked bourgeois values directly. The aforementioned composer Alexander Krakauer provides a key example of a Jewish artist who engaged in this kind of anti-bourgeois performance.<sup>28</sup> His songs, which have a radically pessimistic basic tenor and are deeply disillusioned, celebrate the destruction of positive sentiments such as love, joy, and success. Above all, marriage and the assurance that marriage brings happiness are frequent targets of his sarcasm. In one of his songs, he even describes marriage as suicide.<sup>29</sup> Krakauer was not alone in his criticism of marriage and family life. This critique of traditional bourgeois values formed a recurrent and central theme in many pieces composed and performed by Jewish *Volkssänger*.<sup>30</sup> Above all, this critique entailed an examination of traditional Jewish gender relationships, according to which women sometimes played the role of family breadwinner.<sup>31</sup>

Jewish *Volkssänger* tended to oppose social conventions and were therefore provocative. At times, the pieces that they performed were considered by many to be offensive and obscene. No matter how these performances were understood at the time, one thing remains certain: these performers and artists acted as anything but guardians of bourgeois values. This ribald behavior has not only contributed to their overall neglect in the Jewish press at the turn of the century, but this lacuna also creates difficulties for contemporary historians who endeavor to integrate such artists and their work into their historical narratives. Most of these historians assume that Jews habitually adopted bourgeois values.<sup>32</sup>

## The Historiography of Acculturation

Until the last quarter of the twentieth century, academic studies on Jews in Austria were rather rare.<sup>33</sup> And only a few such studies reflected larger international trends in their methodological approach. But in the late 1980s, a shift took place in the Austrian research landscape. In the wake of the Waldheim affair, initiatives were established that ushered in an intensive examination of the history of Jews and Judaism in Austria.<sup>34</sup> Without wishing to reconstruct here the multiplicity of activities that resulted from this larger cultural examination, I mention here only the most salient aspects, which have also found a permanent institutional foothold. The most important institution, whose foundation was announced at the height of international criticism of Austria's engagement with its Nazi past, is the Jewish Museum Vienna (Jüdisches Museum der Stadt Wien).<sup>35</sup> Since Danielle Spera took over the management of the institution in 2010, the Jewish Museum Vienna has significantly shaped the national conversation regarding Jewish history in Austria. The Institute for Jewish History in

Austria (Institut für jüdische Geschichte Österreichs), which has published a significant number of scholarly studies, especially on medieval Jewish history, has also emerged from this political context.<sup>36</sup> Students and scholars writing master's theses and doctoral dissertations at some Austrian universities came into contact with scholars from other countries and conducted their research under their influence. This contact laid the foundation for the Center for Jewish Studies at the University of Graz. At the University of Salzburg, the Center of Jewish Cultural History was founded at roughly the same time.<sup>37</sup>

These academic studies stood in the shadow of pathbreaking work done by Anglo-American historians who had gained renown in the late 1980s with internationally acclaimed publications on Viennese Jews in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Among the most important authors were Steven Beller, Marsha Rozenblit, and Robert Wistrich.<sup>38</sup> Although they approached their topics from different perspectives and also differed in their methodological approach, their studies evince some similarities. For example, they widely portray the Jewish past as a history of assimilation or acculturation vis-à-vis the dominant, majority culture—that is, as an attempt to gain social advancement, above all to become part of the bourgeoisie. Steven Beller writes in this context, “It is true that Jews used culture as a means of creating an assimilation.” Although Rozenblit doubts that Viennese Jews completely assimilated, she writes instead of their acculturation, “Along with the apparent success with which Viennese Jews outwardly acculturated, and with which some of their numbers almost totally assimilated. . . .”<sup>39</sup>

These three scholars were all trained at leading universities outside of Austria and incorporated theoretical approaches and questions into their work that shaped international research in the late twentieth century. Their publications were examples of cutting-edge research and represented important landmarks for the Austrian research landscape. Thus, the historiographical narrative of acculturation and the paradigm of embourgeoisement established themselves as *de rigueur*, in turn shaping the vast majority of subsequent publications on Austrian Jewry to this day.<sup>40</sup>

But it was not long before the historical narrative regarding Jewish adaptation encountered increasing criticism. In Jewish studies in the German-speaking world, this development began in the late 1990s. Within the framework of cultural studies, scholars began to question the static, monolithic concept of culture—a questioning that in turn led to the dissolution of this concept.<sup>41</sup> Instead, they began to perceive culture as dynamic and plural, making it difficult to write about Jewish adaptation to Viennese or Austrian culture. In addition, scholars working on the concept of cultural transfer drew attention to the fact that any group that adopts cultural standards aligns it with its own system of cultural interpretation, thereby altering it.<sup>42</sup> The assumption that Jews, if they adopt cultural attitudes with which at least individual sectors of society identify, interpret these cultural

attitudes the same as these other groups must be viewed as counterproductive.<sup>43</sup> As a result of this scholarly innovation, some Jewish studies researchers have abandoned the acculturation narrative altogether.<sup>44</sup>

Working with the concept of Jewish acculturation requires two things: first, knowledge of the culture or cultures in which adaptation takes place, that is, what constitutes these cultural systems; and second, an understanding of the agglomerate of (in this case Jewish) cultural significance, aspects of which must be abandoned in the process of acculturation. Only under these conditions is it possible to determine how Jewish acculturation takes place. But since culture cannot be fixed, but rather must be understood as something emergent and thus constantly in shift, such definitions are hardly useful.<sup>45</sup> In addition, a culture cannot be split into discrete parts. In concrete terms, this means that the attempt to differentiate the culture or cultural processes of a society into clearly transferable Jewish and non-Jewish components is essentially an impossible task.<sup>46</sup>

Against the background of these theoretical considerations, scholars once again called into question the concept of acculturation. A change of perspective in the theorization of Jewish–non-Jewish relationships has also contributed to this reconsideration. According to this shift in perspective, Jews did not follow established cultural standards, but influenced and shaped them alongside non-Jews. Within this revised framework, Jews are not considered a foreign, non-native element, but rather are seen as belonging to the society in which they lived and worked. In particular, Israeli historian Steven E. Aschheim represented this viewpoint in the late 1990s.<sup>47</sup> Around the same time, German historian Till van Rahden confirmed this conception of Jewishness in his dissertation *Juden und andere Breslauer* (later published in English as *Jews and Other Germans*) by way of concrete examples, and he introduced the concept of situational ethnicity into Jewish studies.<sup>48</sup> Jewishness was thus radically contextualized and released from the burden of previous interpretations.

A prime example often given for the adaptation of Jews to the standards of the majority society is their ostensible adoption of prevailing clothing trends.<sup>49</sup> But we can see how misleading this example can be, however, when we take a look at a late nineteenth-century photographic collection from Galician Krakow, which American historian Nathaniel D. Wood analyzes in his study *Becoming Metropolitan*. The photographs from the 1880s show people who are clearly identifiable in their appearance as Jews, workers, Roma, aristocrats, and members of other groups. But in the photographs taken about thirty years later, it is not possible to make such differentiations. In the later set of images, the individuals all look strikingly similar to one another.<sup>50</sup> During the time period between the two sets of images, the individuals depicted were not trying to adopt the same fashion standards, but rather were all undergoing the process of modernization. We can neither explain nor trace this development using the concept of acculturation. In addition, the garment industry, with its large percentage of Jewish produc-

ers, traders, and sellers of fashion articles, and fashion designers in particular, offers a paradigmatic example of an area in which Jews co-determined prevalent standards.<sup>51</sup> Lisa Silverman has recently described the significant role that the Viennese Zwieback department store played in this cultural and economic sector.<sup>52</sup> In other words, even if some Jews traded the caftan in favor of the business suit, reflecting an acculturation to prevailing clothing conventions, this did not constitute the adoption of non-Jewish standards, but rather an interest in fashion trends that were pursued by Jews and non-Jews alike.

Finally, I must mention the influence of the performative turn in cultural studies. This influence has also contributed to theoretical reflections in the field of Jewish studies that have in turn undermined the previously upheld importance of the acculturation narrative.<sup>53</sup> According to the concept of performance, cultural meaning is constituted interactively between a sender and a receiver. For every performative act, at least two people or two interacting groups are necessary. Every change in the communication partner and any change in the composition of the group or the context of interaction has an impact on the content of the culturally negotiated message. Culture is considered highly fluid in this case. Its transience eludes any effort to determine exactly how and where cultural adaptation might take place. Instead of acculturation, the performative approach outlines social and cultural processes that were jointly designed by non-Jews *and* Jews. Especially in the field of Viennese popular culture at the turn of the twentieth century, where there was a dense network of Jewish–non-Jewish cooperation, this concept has proved immensely fruitful.

We can see a special form of interaction that influenced Viennese popular culture and reveals the dynamic character of cultural significance in performances by *Volkssänger* groups. They took place in a so-called performative setting. This means that the audience was able to participate in the performances by making noises, whistling, uttering compliments, and other articulations, and so to some extent also negotiated the interpretation of the plot, as the actors only roughly adhered to a script and focused instead on improvisation. Since Jewish *Volkssänger* groups usually played in front of a mixed, Jewish and non-Jewish audience, non-Jews also took part in these performances. Non-Jews were thus involved in the creation of cultural meaning, and sometimes also in the understanding of what was “Jewish.”

We can identify an example of a performance influenced by the interaction between audience and actors in the theater piece *Der Findling* (The foundling) by the S. Fischer Society. In this play, a Jewish peddler takes shelter in the home of a man known to be a miser and to his surprise discovers that his daughter is employed as the man’s cook. Concerned about her well-being, he starts a conversation with her employer, which turns into a fight. In what follows, the miser expels the Jewish peddler from his house. At this point, a portion of the audience took sides with the peddler, while another segment of the audience found themselves rooting for the miser. Both groups loudly expressed their respective sympathies



and thereby influenced the further representation of the characters. During one performance, however, the actors apparently did not respond to the satisfaction of the audience members, who were worked up over the miser's treatment of the peddler and even wanted to beat up the actor playing the miser after the performance.<sup>54</sup> In this instance, the spectators (a group that may have also included non-Jews) were clearly rooting for the Jewish character. Whether the favorable portrayal of the Jewish peddler influenced the audience's attitude toward Jews in everyday life remains unclear in this particular instance.

### ***Constructions of Jewishness in Popular Literature***

The performance of *Der Findling* by the S. Fischer Society suggests how Jews and non-Jews mutually negotiated Jewishness. Additionally, American literary scholar Jonathan Hess deftly analyzes in a recent article how *Deborah*, a melodramatic folk play from the 1840s, portrays this process of negotiation. *Deborah* was written by the German-Austrian Jewish writer Salomon Hermann Mosenthal (1821–77) and was one of the greatest successes of nineteenth-century German-language theater. *Deborah* has been performed in various European countries as well as in the United States and has been translated into fifteen languages. Due to audience enthusiasm for the drama, Mosenthal came to be known as the “Jewish Schiller.” After Mosenthal's death, his play continued to find resonance for a period of time, especially in English-speaking countries, and at the beginning of the twentieth century, there were even several film adaptations of his theater piece.<sup>55</sup>

*Deborah* tells the story of a secret love between a young Jewish woman and a non-Jewish man in a small town in the Austrian province. Social conventions and prejudices prevent public acceptance of this relationship and ultimately bring about its demise. Mosenthal charged (if not perhaps overcharged) *Deborah* with lofty, tragic emotions, and without the outstanding performances of the actresses, who in this specific case were non-Jewish, the play never would have reached the stage of the Vienna Burgtheater or any other renowned theater. What was remarkable about the depictions was that they elicited in the audience a strong empathy for the experiences of the Jewish protagonist, including her despair at the prejudices and the stubbornness of the predominantly Christian world in which she lived. In other words, the play was able to achieve its particular effect because the non-Jewish actors were so attuned to their roles that they gave sensitive, insightful performances. The drama thus provides a vivid example of the formation of cultural meaning by both Jews *and* non-Jews. Their cooperation, as Jonathan Hess writes, produced an “affective community” that, at least for a short time, showed solidarity with a Jewish figure.<sup>56</sup>

Another example of how non-Jews participated in the depiction of Jewishness in popular culture is the 1863 novel *Der lange Isaak* (The long Isaac), written by Julius von Wickede (1819–96), who was the scion of an old German aristocratic

family. His novel, an example of formula fiction (*Trivialliteratur*), takes place during the Napoleonic wars. Isaac, a Jewish peddler, takes advantage of the mobility inherent to his profession to spy on the movements of French troops. His “German patriotism” is even surpassed by that of his daughter Rebekka. A rabbi introduces her to the masterpieces of German literature, which arouses in her a love of German culture.<sup>57</sup>

We could categorize *Der lange Isaak* as a work of Jewish literature. The Jewish self-understanding of the protagonists and the treatment of Jewish questions would speak to this inclusion, even if the author of the novel was not Jewish. But we could also consider the text a product of German culture, and there would be convincing reasons for such a decision. But neither of the two categorizations would do the work justice; the notion of both of these two ostensibly discrete categories is predicated on the possibility of precisely defining and thus also distinguishing between what is Jewish and what is German.<sup>58</sup> Such dichotomous indicators are fundamentally problematic and, above all, do not apply to this specific case. Rather, *Der lange Isaak* is another example of the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of clearly separating Jewish and non-Jewish cultural areas, which, however, is a precondition for the acculturation narrative. Thus, von Wickedé’s novel also calls into question the overall utility of the concept of Jewish cultural adaptation.

## Lacunae in the Jewish Press

Another important reason that explains why scholars in Jewish studies and related disciplines have thus far scarcely investigated the topic of Jews in Viennese popular culture may have something to do with the coverage of Jewish newspapers and journals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Jewish press reported on popular cultural events only sporadically and superficially—if at all. Because scholars often analyze only Jewish (rather than general) print media as part of their work on Jewish life in Vienna, they gain only a one-sided picture of Jewish cultural activities.<sup>59</sup> Even if they employ general newspapers as sources in their research, they tend to focus mostly on high-profile newspapers primarily devoted to high culture.<sup>60</sup> Such publications contain hardly any news or reporting related to Jews in popular culture. The central question that I wish to raise in this section is: why did the Jewish press in Austria neglect Jewish engagement in popular cultural activities?

As I mentioned earlier, the sometimes subversive nature of popular cultural entertainment provides a possible explanation for the neglect in the Jewish press to report on such cultural activities and events. I now turn my attention to additional aspects that may have been decisive factors in why the Jewish press chose to report on some events and ignored others. I contextualize the news coverage

that appeared in Jewish media within the larger framework of the reception of newspaper media among the Viennese Jewish population.

### ***Differentiating between Jewish and Non-Jewish Newspapers***

Scholarly focus on Jewish newspapers, or even on high-brow general newspapers, does not necessarily lead to incorrect assertions about the life of Viennese Jews. The most accomplished studies undertaken thus far have not incorporated insights available in the Viennese popular press, which advertised the performances of Jewish popular artists.<sup>61</sup> If we are to be critical of this approach, however, we might point out that it has led to the assumption that there was no connection between Jews and Viennese popular culture and that there is therefore no need to research this particular aspect of Jewish history.<sup>62</sup> As a result, there have been few scholarly studies dedicated to this topic, which in turn has strengthened the idea that Jews were generally disinterested in popular culture. It is a classic case of circular logic that has only served to cement misconceptions. Due to this oversight, at least an entire aspect of the history of Viennese Jews remains unexplored.

Investigating Jewish newspapers inevitably raises the question of how to define them. What exactly distinguishes Jewish newspapers from non-Jewish media, and does a juxtaposition between the Jewish and non-Jewish press even do the topic justice? In the following, I consider Jewish newspapers and magazines, including *Die Wahrheit*, *Bloch's Oesterreichische Wochenschrift*, the *(Neue) National-Zeitung*, *Die Welt*, and other print media that were dedicated to strengthening Jewish ethnic and cultural awareness, to promoting Jewish religious concerns, and to communicating news of particular interest to the majority of Jews. The particular orientation of the Jewish media outlets thus distinguished them from the general (non-Jewish) press. Occasionally, non-Jewish media also reported on events that were primarily relevant for a Jewish readership. Such events include, for example, elections to the executive committee of the Jewish communities in Hernals, Ottakring, and Neulerchenfeld, which appeared in print in the *Wiener Vororte-Zeitung* (Newspaper of the outlying districts of Vienna).<sup>63</sup> However, the reporting of such information in non-Jewish media was more likely to be the exception rather than the rule in communicating the news.<sup>64</sup>

In referencing the specific focus of their reporting, I call attention to the widely accepted circumscription of Jewish newspapers.<sup>65</sup> We can trace this idea back to an article by Margaret T. Edelheim-Muehsam, published in the first edition of the *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* in 1956. She asserts, "If we speak of the German-Jewish press, we refer to the periodicals published by Jews for Jewish readers, with special emphasis on Jewish problems. This does not exclude that any paper may have occasionally been published by non-Jewish authors, nor that non-Jews read the paper."<sup>66</sup>

Viennese Jewish newspapers explicitly established their specific scope in their program implementations. For example, in its first issue from 1 January 1899, the newspaper *Die Wahrheit* declared that it would “foster all things capable of awakening and preserving Jewish life.”<sup>67</sup> *Die Wahrheit* confirmed that it would focus on Jewish themes and concerns. The statement indicates only implicitly that it would report on general social events, insofar as they concerned Jewish interests. Many Jewish national and Zionist media were even more explicit in their commitment to reporting specifically on Jewish matters. *Die Welt* stated, “Our weekly newspaper is a ‘Judenblatt’ [a Jewish newspaper]. . . . *Die Welt* will be the news outlet of the men who wish to lead Judaism from this moment in time to better times in the future.”<sup>68</sup> The publication then focuses solely on Jewish interests—specifically Jewish Zionist interests.

### ***Selective Reporting in the Jewish Press***

With regard to the programmatic establishment of news reporting, we might expect that Jewish media overlooked events that involved Jews if these events did not entail specific aspects of Jewish religion or culture or if they were of no relevance to larger portions of the Viennese Jewish community. We can see the legitimacy of this argument in the example of the affair surrounding the suicide of the Jewish merchant Heinrich Löwy at the beginning of 1899. The man who committed suicide was the owner of a commission business located in the city center of Vienna. He made his living by purchasing goods from a Bohemian supplier and reselling them to Viennese businessmen. Unfortunately, and to his detriment, Löwy’s customers included members of a gang of swindlers and racketeers. Moriz Rosenberger, Samuel Schmilowitz, Sigmund Kohn, Samuel Weiss, and several others started sham businesses, which they outfitted with goods from Löwy. They failed to pay him, but they nevertheless sold the goods to other merchants. Löwy was thereby driven to ruin. He saw suicide as the only way out of his misery. On the last day of 1898, he arrived home late for lunch—the main meal of the day. His family was already sitting at the table, waiting for him. After entering the apartment, he walked wordlessly past his wife and children, opened a window in an adjoining room, and plunged from the fourth floor to the courtyard below. Heavily injured, he was carried to the apartment of the caretaker living on the ground floor, where those helping the seriously injured man awaited the ambulance. Löwy succumbed to his injuries while in the hospital.<sup>69</sup>

The newspapers were full of reports of his tragic death in the first few days of January. He seemed to symbolize the powerlessness of individual people in the face of criminal activities. Despite his diligence and a degree of business acumen, Löwy was unable to prevent his social collapse. The bottom line seemed to be that bourgeois virtues offered no protection against unfeeling fellow citizens. But although the perpetrators, as well as the injured party, were all Jews and although

the situation might have been considered an “intra-Jewish affair,” the Jewish media ignored this case.

The self-proclaimed scope of the Jewish press helps explain why they ignored the Löwy affair. But their declaration of scope and intent does not answer the question why Jewish media devoted themselves to such a specific policy and thus chose a very restrictive line of reporting. What moved these Jewish newspapers to ignore some of the everyday experiences of Jews, and thus also popular cultural entertainment culture? There are essentially two reasons for this phenomenon.

The first reason may have been the desire to halt or even reverse the clearly discernible decline in traditional forms of Jewishness and the diminishing observance of Jewish religious rules and customs.<sup>70</sup> It was believed that this trend was the result of various influences, such as interdenominational marriage.<sup>71</sup> To be sure, the press was not the only medium that made it its task to counteract this development. Both the Viennese Jewish Museum and Jewish folk culture were committed to a goal similar to that of Jewish newspapers.<sup>72</sup> All of them were concerned, among other goals, with conveying so-called Jewish values and attitudes to those Jews who had already distanced themselves from Judaism or were on the verge of doing so.<sup>73</sup> The intent was to make their readers familiar with a sense of Jewishness with which they could identify. At a time when newspapers became increasingly affordable and, as a result, a mass medium, they became a key component of an extremely attractive and likely effective strategy for pursuing this goal.<sup>74</sup>

Given that many Jews were firmly rooted in their surroundings, were in close contact with non-Jews, had non-Jewish neighbors and colleagues, attended events and frequented coffeehouses and engaged in other leisure activities with them, and were often as affected by everyday occurrences as non-Jews, the attempt on the part of Jewish newspapers to connect Jews to their religion and culture would have probably been more successful if they had not simply ignored everyday life, but rather had presented it from a Jewish perspective and reconciled them with Jewish values.<sup>75</sup> Some Jewish physicians adopted this approach at about the same time, as they interpreted the observance of Jewish religious rites and practices as beneficial to one’s health. In doing so, they combined Jewish practices with a value of central importance to the middle class (*bourgeoisie*) at the time.<sup>76</sup> Jews who felt that they belonged to the middle class and had alienated themselves from their religion on account of this allegiance were able to return to Judaism without having to abandon a secular lifestyle. The Jewish press could—and perhaps even should—have followed in the footsteps of these Jewish doctors in order to reach Jews who were indifferent to Judaism.<sup>77</sup> The Jewish media, however, failed to do so.

If the narrowly focused reporting undertaken by Jewish media contributed little to strengthening Jewish self-understanding, we may reasonably assume that there were reasons for the oversight. We may infer this from the fact that the Jew-

ish press not only ignored events, even those that involved Jewish participants, if they had no relation to Jewish religious or cultural life, but Jewish newspapers also often ignored everyday events that demonstrably influenced the Viennese Jewish community, or at least large swathes of the Jewish community—events that they might well have reported on according to their own publishing policies. We can see this illustrated in two examples that I discuss below. Subsequently, I formulate and substantiate a thesis explaining why these omissions in Jewish newspapers occurred.

The first example involves a case of fraud against banker Albert Vogl. He was accused of wresting an oral last will and testament from a mentally incapacitated client, Georg Herz Taubin, on his deathbed. Vogl was a well-known personality in Vienna and maintained many friendships and acquaintances among socially respected circles. He was the owner of a currency exchange office located at Vienna's most respected business address, am Graben, which he had founded with money he had made in New York. His business, however, was not particularly successful. He speculated in the stock market, lost money, and was rescued from bankruptcy by the intervention of a handful of Viennese banks. Vogl's accumulated debts were seen as the motive that drove him to profit fraudulently at Taubin's expense.<sup>78</sup>

The fact that a person as illustrious as Vogl had to appear as a defendant in court was in itself a minor sensation. The contemporary media with their multi-page reports on the trial gave the affair an additional touch of the spectacular. The biography of the alleged fraud victim, Georg Herz Taubin, also contributed to the interest. He had immigrated from Russia and possessed a small fortune that enabled him to lead an extravagant lifestyle in Vienna, well outside of established social conventions. He was considered an eccentric, on account of his clothes, his manner of speaking, and especially his behavior. At the same time, according to newspaper reports, he had a reputation for being well-read and was said to have even studied the Talmud. However, it was also said that a meaningful conversation with him was scarcely possible, as his education was too superficial and his knowledge too diffuse. Those who associated with him were usually suspicious of his idiosyncrasies and sometimes worried about how these idiosyncrasies would affect them. He is said to have led a "life inclined toward wild orgies" and also to have been "devoted to drunkenness in a boundless manner."<sup>79</sup> His alcoholism was seen as the cause of his mental disintegration, which manifested itself not only in radical mood swings but also in delusions of persecution and megalomania. He allegedly told the Zionist and later delegate to the Imperial Assembly (Reichsrat) Isidor Schalit (1871–1954) that he was the Greek god Zeus and had come to punish people.<sup>80</sup> While he was perceived to be an affectionate person during the short phases when he was sober, he was reputed to have been insane while in a drunken state, berating the people around him and regularly demanding sex from his domestic servant.

To the surprise of the general public, the defendant succeeded in convincing the court that Taubin, who was apparently in a state of incoherence on his deathbed, temporarily regained his mental faculties and clearly articulated the wish that his entire fortune be bequeathed to Vogl.<sup>81</sup> In any case, the accused was acquitted.

This case is noteworthy not only due to its outcome, but also because it generated interest exclusively in the general, non-Jewish press. Indeed, the Jewish press ignored the trial altogether, despite the fact that all personalities involved were Jewish, including Vogl, Taubin, and his relatives, who fought for their share of the inheritance and accused Vogl of inheritance fraud. Admittedly, the “Vogl affair” did not promote Jewish concerns and did not contribute to strengthening Jewish religious interests, which were considered prerequisites for reporting in the Jewish media. However, the coverage in many non-Jewish daily newspapers had such an unequivocally antisemitic tone that it could be reasonably expected that the Jewish press would respond to it, as was the case with many newspaper assertions that were far less antisemitic. To be sure, not all newspapers were as explicit as the *Deutsches Volksblatt*, which described the case as an “affair” in which “Jewish greed and avarice play a leading role.”<sup>82</sup> But despite examples of greater subtlety in dealing with antisemitic stereotypes, many other print media outlets came forward with biased, antisemitic reporting.<sup>83</sup>

Taubin’s eccentric nature had brought him into contact with a number of prominent Jews, all of whom served as witnesses in court. As a result, the trial was of direct interest to at least some Viennese Jews and for this reason garnered the keen attention of another part of the city’s Jewish population. Perhaps the most dazzling personality on the witness stand was Theodor Herzl. Taubin had met with him because Taubin had offered to support his Zionist movement financially. Herzl, however, recognized Taubin’s lack of mental stability and refused further contact with him. Nevertheless, he had to testify before the court.<sup>84</sup> In addition, Taubin regularly donated to Jewish charities. This devotion also brought him into contact with various illustrious members of the Viennese Jewish community. All of Taubin’s enterprises were mentioned during the trial, and various individuals were questioned about them. However, only non-Jewish newspapers reported on the case.

Another case that the Jewish media ignored, despite the fact that it drew the attention of a considerable number of Viennese Jews, was the robbery and murder of second-hand dealer Israel Kessler. One winter day in January 1902, shortly before noon, a man entered Kessler’s shop while Kessler was alone and killed him with a hammer. The murderer nabbed Kessler’s wallet, which was filled with cash. He then walked out of the store in no apparent hurry, probably so as not to attract attention. One of Kessler’s acquaintances saw the assailant leave the store but assumed he was a customer. Only when Kessler’s servant arrived to fetch her employer for lunch was the murder discovered.<sup>85</sup>

The killing horrified the people of Vienna. For several days, the crime dominated the city’s news cycle, and all of Vienna seemed to be on a hunt for the mur-

derer. A roving mob apprehended suspicious people who resembled the widely circulated description of the perpetrator, harassed them, and handed them over to the police. The police also wished to cultivate the appearance of doing everything they could and in turn combed public houses, hotels, and mass quarters in search of the suspect. Although this search led to the arrest of several wanted criminals, Kessler's killer remained at large.<sup>86</sup> Single women were particularly frightened. They notified the police at the slightest noise. A public announcement was made offering a considerable reward if information led to the perpetrator's arrest. This circumstance further fueled the general sense of uncertainty. A state of emergency prevailed throughout the city. Ultimately, the authorities were able to make the crucial breakthrough in their investigation. The police identified the murderer as Johann Woboril, a railroad employee, and arrested him a short while later in Bohemia.<sup>87</sup>

All the citizens of Vienna fell under the spell of the news of this case. Jews felt particularly affected by the bloody deed, as Johann Woboril seemed to exhibit animosity toward them. Indeed, there was no convincing evidence that he had murdered the shop owner on account of antisemitic sentiment. But the fact that one day before the crime Woboril had told strangers that he would like to give "the Jew [meaning Kessler] a few slaps" was interpreted as an antisemitic motive.<sup>88</sup> Representatives of the Jewish religious community and various temple associations attended Kessler's funeral, as if to honor someone famous. The media thus stylized Kessler as a Jewish victim of his non-Jewish environment. Rabbi Taglicht had to interrupt his eulogy several times because tears stifled his voice.<sup>89</sup>

In this sense, we may assert that Kessler's murder deeply moved and disturbed the Jewish community in Vienna. Nevertheless, almost nothing was reported about him in the Jewish media. The reason for this, however, can hardly lie in their specific program for reporting. Although it may justify the omission of the Löwy affair, it does not explain why Jewish newspapers ignored the cases surrounding Kessler and Vogl. I argue that these latter two cases were ignored because the publishers of Jewish media were aware that Jews gained information about everyday life in Vienna, including the two criminal cases, from general (non-Jewish) newspapers. Therefore, there was no need for the Jewish press to repeat such news. This also applies to popular cultural performances, which sometimes even had a direct connection to religious Jewish culture. The Jewish newspapers neglected to report on such events because the general press devoted space to such performances and Jews read these newspapers.

### ***The Reception of General Newspapers by Jews***

It comes as no surprise that Jews read non-Jewish media. After all, Jews had higher than average participation in the newspaper industry in terms of their percentage of the population.<sup>90</sup> Important media sources such as the *Neue Freie*



*Presse*, the *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*, the *Wiener Sonn- und Montagszeitung*, and the *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung* had Jewish owners or publishers. Even the tabloid *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt* was one of these publications. We must also not forget that a considerable number of journalists and editors were Jewish.<sup>91</sup> The feature pages (*Feuilleton*), an indispensable component of quality newspapers, owed its high standard to Jewish engagement.<sup>92</sup> And finally, there is considerable evidence, including diary entries and literary references, that suggest or indicate that Jews read general newspapers.<sup>93</sup> The participation of Jews in the press was a well-known and sometimes exaggerated fact, as antisemitic slander regarding Jewish manipulation of public opinion demonstrates.<sup>94</sup>

In this sense, it is by no means a stretch to argue that Jews resorted to the general (non-Jewish) press to keep up to date with events that took place in their immediate environment. In a concrete sense, however, my thesis focuses not on Jewish intellectuals and “high” culture mavens, but rather on ordinary, poorer, and sometimes very religious Jews in Vienna—that is, the portion of the Jewish population that made up the majority of those who attended popular cultural events and who had a particular stake in consuming news about them. And the topic of how these Jews consumed various media remains an under-researched area. Despite this scholarly lacuna, we may reasonably assume that they read general (non-Jewish) newspapers. We may draw this conclusion at least in part from the establishment of Jewish newspapers throughout the nineteenth century in the German-speaking world that were aimed at traditionally minded Jews. These initiatives in new media outlets sought to prevent religious Jews from reading not only the liberal Jewish but also the non-Jewish press.<sup>95</sup> They therefore must have exhibited a certain willingness to resort to non-Jewish media. This may have been the case among the poorer and religious Jews of Vienna at the turn of the twentieth century and may have ultimately been one of the reasons why Jewish newspapers generally omitted news about popular culture. We might therefore conclude that Jewish newspapers to a large extent would have reproduced only news items that were already familiar to readers.

In light of this discussion, how do we substantiate the thesis that ordinary—and even Orthodox—Jews read general newspapers? The main explanation for the specifically Jewish focus of the Jewish press hinges on this larger pattern of the Jewish consumption of non-Jewish media. These Jews did not typically leave behind memoirs or journals that might indicate how and what media they consumed during their lifetime. Due to a lack of data from this realm, I must substantiate my thesis further by investigating other avenues. In the following, I discuss four types of evidence that support my claim that this portion of the Jewish population read general, non-Jewish newspapers.

For the first example, let us refer back to the Kessler case. Jewish newspapers essentially provided no coverage of the case. We find an exception to this omission in the Jewish newspaper *Oesterreichische Wochenschrift*, which briefly dealt

with the case, calling it an antisemitic act. In a follow-up, the paper published a note about the difficulties that Kessler's wife was having with the insurance company with which her husband had arranged a life insurance policy prior to his death.<sup>96</sup> These two references to the Kessler murder case in this paper did not give the reader any information regarding what had happened. That is, this example of reporting in the Jewish press only makes sense if readers were already aware of the crime. This means that Jewish readers must have also read non-Jewish newspapers and must have therefore also been consumers of general media targeted at larger audience. The report on the widow Kessler's problems with the insurance company appeared exclusively in the Jewish *Oesterreichische Wochenschrift*. In this sense, the newspaper filled in blanks, supplying information not covered by the general press, which wrote nothing about this particular aspect of the case.

The second piece of evidence concerns advertisements in general newspapers that specifically targeted Jewish readers. We can identify this specificity in advertisements that refer to Jewish religious customs or attitudes. For example, some non-Jewish newspapers advertised where customers could buy matzah, or unleavened bread. The product was advertised in Hebrew letters, which would have been illegible for most non-Jewish readers.<sup>97</sup> We find another example in the weekly newspaper *Wiener Caricaturen* (Vienna caricatures), which praises the products from "Berg's Selchwaren-Produktion" (Berg's salted and smoked meats), a company based in the Vienna-Meidling neighborhood, indicating that their products were kosher.<sup>98</sup> Clearly, these products were marketed specifically to Jews. The same applies to an announcement for a kosher restaurant in the Ottakringerstrasse that appeared in the Vienna *Vorort* newspaper.<sup>99</sup>

This does not mean that general newspapers were riddled with a variety of advertisements specifically addressing Jews. At times, businesses tried to garner Jewish consumers through advertisements designed specifically for Jewish newspapers. This was the case, for example, with Kunerol, a type of margarine.<sup>100</sup> An advertisement in the *Wiener Sonn- und Montagszeitung* described it as a cost-effective and worthwhile substitute for butter and lard. Jews who wanted to adhere (at least partially) to religious dietary laws might have felt that such advertisements addressed them personally—but we can only speculate as to how individual readers responded to such efforts. At the same time, the Jewish magazine *Oesterreichische Wochenschrift* also advertised Kunerol. This ad states that the product was manufactured under the supervision of the rabbis of Mattersdorf and Huszt and was therefore kosher.<sup>101</sup> The Cologne-based company Stollwerck pursued a similar sales strategy, advertising in the Jewish press that their chocolate and cocoa were "produced under supervision and with the certificate of the Orthodox rabbinate of Bratislava."<sup>102</sup> Both companies attempted to address potential Jewish buyers through Jewish-specific media.

Precisely because different versions of the same advertising campaigns appeared in both Jewish and general newspapers, it is striking that advertisements

specifically targeting a Jewish audience also appeared in the non-Jewish press. These ads make it clear that Jews—and sometimes very religious, Orthodox Jews—read and consumed non-Jewish media. We can see further evidence of this phenomenon in an advertisement that can be found in an 1870 edition of the *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*. In it, the “exchange office Jos. Kohn & Komp” featured its slogan, “May God bless Kohn in Vienna.”<sup>103</sup> This slogan refers to the Jewish custom of being blessed by the *kohanim* in the synagogue during the High Holidays.<sup>104</sup> This ad would not have made sense if the company that paid for it had not been trying to reach potential Jewish customers.

The third piece of evidence that supports my thesis that Jews read general newspapers can be found in the *Volkssänger* scene and its performances. At times, audiences would have understood aspects of these performances only if they were aware of the larger events that unfolded in everyday life in Vienna. An example of such an event was the “Jellinek affair,” to which the Budapest Orpheum Society alluded in some of their pieces. Edmund Jellinek had embezzled almost five million crowns (*Kronen*) in his capacity as an official of the state bank (*Länderbank*). He had invested the money in industrial ventures and tried his hand at stock market speculation. He escaped imminent arrest at the end of September 1902 by fleeing to Krems via Saint Pölten, a town in Lower Austria. There, on the banks of the Danube, he disappeared without a trace. Although some evidence suggested he committed suicide, police suspected that Jellinek had only faked his death,<sup>105</sup> which is why they continued their intensive search for fugitive.

In the following days, the rumor spread that Jellinek had boarded a ship and was sailing overseas. According to another story, he had been spotted in London.<sup>106</sup> Austrian readers outside Vienna also closely followed news of the Jellinek affair. A reward of 1,000 crowns for information leading to Jellinek’s arrest also certainly contributed to public interest in the case. Given this atmosphere of suspicion, it comes as no surprise that strangers who exhibited conspicuous behavior were sometimes suspected of involvement in the affair. In the Upper Austrian town of Enns, for example, police arrested a man who spent an unusually large amount of money. The police believed that the man was Jellinek, who had changed his appearance and adopted a new identity.<sup>107</sup>

Ten days after Jellinek’s disappearance, a body was discovered in the Danube. After initial doubts, authorities were able to make a positive identification. Jellinek had been found. The body was taken to Kirchberg am Wagram, where a funeral was organized for him with the help of the Viennese Jewish Community (Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Wien, or IKG).<sup>108</sup>

The Jellinek affair dominated the the Austrian media for over a week and a half. In part, descriptions of Jellinek’s escape were drawn out over several pages, complete with illustrations. In contrast, the Jewish press devoted nary a line to the Jellinek case. As I have argued above, this comes as no surprise because Jewish newspapers devoted themselves to Jewish—that is, religious—culture. After all,

this case of fraud had nothing to do with Judaism. Even Jellinek's Jewishness could not evoke a mention from the Jewish media. Only an antisemitic response to the case would have put the Jellinek affair on their radar.<sup>109</sup>

A few months after the Jellinek affair, the Budapest Orpheum Society brought the farce *Der kleine Kohn* (Little Kohn) to the stage (for details on the content of the play, see chapter 4). In the play, Leopold Kohn, treasurer of the Spitzer bank, is accused of embezzling money. At one point in the performance, Marcus Spitzer speaks to a police officer about Kohn, saying, "There has never been such a Jellinek before."<sup>110</sup> Caprice, the author of the play, uses the name Jellinek as a synonym for a crook. Such a reference only makes sense if the ostensibly majority Jewish audience of the Budapest Orpheum Society was aware of the Jellinek case. But this also means that their audience must have followed the reports that appeared in the non-Jewish press. The Jellinek affair was part of the everyday Jewish perspective, even if the Jewish media did not write about it.

A fourth and final piece of evidence elucidating my thesis that ordinary—even Orthodox—Jews read general newspapers includes newspaper reports containing clearly religious references and even advertisements referring to Jewish cultural life. For example, an article from March 1904 announced the restoration of the Währing Jewish cemetery and informed relatives of the deceased that they should communicate any changes they wish to make to the graves to the religious community.<sup>111</sup> In this case, the announcement targeted a Jewish audience, as it was unequivocally a religious matter. Because Jewish newspapers made it their goal to address Jewish concerns, one might assume that this piece of news would have been within their purview. However, the Jewish newspapers omitted reporting on it. As such, Jewish readers only learned about the cemetery restorations if they consumed general media.

We see a similar pattern in announcements advertising the Lemberg Singspiel Society, a theater company from Galicia. The group performed in Leopoldstadt, where a considerable number of eastern European Jewish immigrants resided. Lemberg Singspiel Society performances sometimes had a clearly religious context.<sup>112</sup> The "Polish," as they were called, at times performed plays by well-known Yiddish authors, such as Abraham Goldfaden (1840–1908) or Joseph Lateiner (1853–1935).<sup>113</sup> Announcements for the programs of these performances sometimes emphasized that theatergoers could expect "strictly ritual food" as part of the entertainment. Such advertising thus also addressed religious Jews as potential audience members.<sup>114</sup>

Although Lemberg Singspiel Society performances thematized Jewish cultural life, the Jewish press did not make any mention of these cultural activities. This lacuna corroborates my thesis that Jewish newspapers sometimes failed to report on issues with clear references to Judaism if the general press already allocated sufficient print space to them. Maybe Jewish newspapers did not wish to be redundant and instead focused on reporting that readers could find nowhere else.

As it stands, the coverage in Jewish and general news outlets overlapped and complemented each other to some extent. And this overlap was probably the reason why there were hardly any reports related to popular cultural performances in Jewish print media.

### ***Variations in the Interpretation of Events***

In summary, a review of Jewish newspapers indicates that religious issues, their associations and organizations, and the need to defend against antisemitism were of considerable significance to the Jews of the Habsburg metropolis. This seems to imply that Viennese everyday life was not relevant to the city's Jewish population. However, we must juxtapose this claim with evidence that they read and received general media. It suggests that Jews, at least a majority of them, exhibited considerable interest in their social environment. They did not live secluded in their own world, nor did they display indifference to events outside their immediate everyday milieu. And because Jews consumed general media, I argue that Jewish newspapers were able to concentrate their news coverage on those areas that the general press did not cover. At any rate, Viennese popular culture was not one of these areas. For this reason, historians who only analyze Jewish media in their research on the history of Viennese Jews find little evidence of their involvement in popular cultural activities. This circumstance is likely to be one of the reasons why scholars have tended to neglect this topic in their studies.

The media consumption habits of Viennese Jews allow us to see that they were informed about current events and were familiar with social trends, standards of value, and intellectual ideas. Like non-Jews, they took interest in contemporary discourses and also helped shape them. And their everyday expectations may have been similar to those of non-Jews in many ways. Nevertheless, differences remained between them. These differences manifested themselves in many ways and were not necessarily based on religion. We see one of these differences at the beginning of the twentieth century in the interpretation of cantor performances in Viennese synagogues, about which both Jewish and non-Jewish newspapers wrote. A comparison of respective reports reveals clear distinctions in the interpretation of these performances.

The singing skills and performances of cantors have often inspired worshippers. But what traditional Jews perceived as a novelty in nineteenth-century Vienna, however, was the spectacular character associated with many such performances and the reactions of some worshippers who saw them only as entertainment, divorced from any religious content. Some Jewish newspapers strongly condemned this development. They warned that the synagogue would become a theater or concert hall and that many people would only attend to be entertained.<sup>115</sup>

This criticism was formulated, for example, on the occasion of the performance of a Hungarian cantor in the Leopoldstadt Temple. The cantor in question

had originally applied for a position at the Ottakring Temple in the sixteenth district of Vienna and had been invited to deliver a trial presentation. He amazed the audience with his vocal virtuosity and was also invited to demonstrate his skills in the second municipal district. The sole deciding factor here was the cantor's artistic ability, which is precisely how synagogue visitors perceived the performance. During the service, the audience members loudly expressed their approval and applauded the Hungarian guest.<sup>116</sup>

At times, the organizers contributed to worship services featuring an illustrious cantor being misunderstood as a special cultural event. This misunderstanding arose when they asked visitors for an entrance fee. The atmosphere during some cantor presentations was sometimes so exuberant that critics drew comparisons between these performances and ancient Roman spectacles.<sup>117</sup> Announcements that well-known cantors were to sing attracted the masses, hence the comparison with Rome. In response to this phenomenon, *Die Wahrheit* reported in 1900 that "one [sees how] every Friday evening hundreds and thousands, not only from the lower classes, but also from the middle and upper classes, rush to the Leopoldstadt Temple . . . just in time to score a seat to enjoy the anticipated treat for the ears."<sup>118</sup>

Jewish newspapers objected to how these special cantor appearances ostensibly neglected the religious dimension. Commentators criticized the tendency among audience members to understand these events merely as entertainment, comparable to theatrical and similar performances. By contrast, non-Jewish media viewed the cantor appearances as mere cultural events. We see this for example in an announcement in the entertainment section of the *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* from July 1901 advertising the Galician cantor Baruch Schorr.<sup>119</sup> In the opinion of *Die Wahrheit*, Schorr's performance was thereby reduced to a mere leisure activity, one of many opportunities for amusement.

In the case of the cantor presentations, varying narratives collided. We can understand the different approaches to reporting the same event as a Jewish/non-Jewish struggle for the interpretation of cultural events. At the same time, we may also see it as further evidence of the coexistence between Jews and non-Jews. The advertisement in the *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* may have addressed both Jewish and non-Jewish readers as potential audience members for cantor performances. We know that non-Jews sometimes attended Jewish services in order to be edified by the cantors' singing, as was the case when Salomon Sulzer appeared in the Viennese City Temple.<sup>120</sup>

Throughout this study, I analyze archival evidence related to numerous interpretations of the same event or, as in the instance just discussed, I investigate how various newspaper articles portrayed the same occurrence. In particular, I investigate the question of whether we can or must interpret certain acts and occurrences as antisemitic or, on the other hand, as a characteristic of intimate Jewish and non-Jewish contact. In doing so, I demonstrate to what degree a par-

ticular historical perspective can influence the assessment of Jewish–non-Jewish relationships and how controversial this assertion can in fact be.

## Notes

1. Barbara Hahn, *Die Jüdin Pallas Athene: Auch eine Theorie der Moderne* (Berlin: Berliner Taschenbuch, 2005), 121; Moshe Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism: A Quest for the Historical Ba'al Shem Tov* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2013 [first edition 1996]), 56f.
2. Martin Schenk was born in Vienna. He made his debut in 1881 at the Deutsches Theater in Budapest and subsequently performed at various venues throughout Europe. In 1884, he switched to vaudeville, performing first as a member of the *Establissement Drechsler* in Vienna, before taking the stage again in Budapest. After performing in Cologne, Munich, Danzig, and other places, he was engaged with the *Budapester Orpheumgesellschaft*. Later, he moved to the *Gartenbau* variety show, where he garnered considerable success as a director and comedian. See *Das Variété* 17 (25 February 1903): 1.
3. *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt* [IWE in subsequent citations] 266 (25 September 1904): 18.
4. Mel Gordon and Erik Jan Hanussen, *Hitler's Jewish Clairvoyant* (Los Angeles: Feral House, 2001), 7–8.
5. The language in this quotation is reminiscent of the anti-Jewish polemic that Richard Wagner (1813–83) expressed in his 1850 essay *Das Judentum und die Musik* (Judaism in music). In this essay, he writes that “the Jew who is innately incapable . . . of articulating himself to us artistically . . . [has] nonetheless been able to attain mastery of public taste in the most widespread of modern art forms, i.e., music” (Gottfried H. Wagner, “Nietzsches Dynamit in der Bewertung des Judentums und Wagners Antisemitismus,” in *Rudolf Kreis, Nietzsche, Wagner und die Juden* [Würzburg: Königshausen and Neumann, 1995], 12).
6. For more on this, see Sander L. Gilman, *Inscribing the Other* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991). At times, *mauscheln* (speaking Yiddish or Yiddish-inflected German) was also associated with anatomical characteristics attributed to Jews. See Bernhard Blechmann, “Ein Beitrag zur Anthropologie der Juden” (published medical dissertation, Dorpat, 1882), 11.
7. *IWE* 205 (25 July 1904): 4.
8. For more on Modl, Pick, and Krakauer, see below.
9. For more on this stereotype, see Jay Geller, “Of Mice and Mensa: Anti-Semitism and the Jewish Genius,” *Centennial Review* 38, no. 2 (1994): 361–85.
10. See Eleonore Lappin, “Jüdische Lebenserinnerungen: Rekonstruktionen von jüdischer Kindheit und Jugend im Wien der Zwischenkriegszeit,” in *Wien und die jüdische Erfahrung 1900–1938: Akkulturation, Antisemitismus, Zionismus*, ed. Frank Stern and Barbara Eichinger (Vienna: Böhlau, 2009), 35.
11. Harpists were the cultural predecessors of the *Volkssänger*. The *Volkssänger* had replaced them in the entertainment industry by the end of the first third of the nineteenth century. See Hans Hauenstein, *Chronik des Wienerliedes: Ein Streifzug von den Minnesängern über den lieben Augustin, den Harfenisten und Volkssängern bis in die heutige Zeit* (Klosterneuburg: Jasomirgott, 1976), 35–70.

12. Josef Koller, *Das Wiener Volkssängertum in alter und neuer Zeit. Nacherzähltes und Selbsterlebtes* (Vienna: Gerlach and Wiedling, 1931), 8.
13. For more on “Judenlisi,” see *IWE* 77 (19 March 1903): 12.
14. Gertraud Pressler, “Jüdisches und Antisemitisches in der Wiener Volksunterhaltung,” *Musicologica Austriaca* 17 (1998): 78.
15. If this is true, historians who do not adhere to an essentialist interpretation of Jewishness must ask whether they can reference the artists listed in this register within the framework of a study of Jews in popular culture. How did their Jewishness manifest itself to legitimize such an approach? Did they identify with Jewish culture or religion, or did they show special solidarity with the Jewish community? Perhaps they were indifferent or even hostile to Judaism? Did they perceive themselves as Jewish artists? For more on this controversial point, see Ernst H. Gombrich, *Jüdische Identität und jüdisches Schicksal: Eine Diskussionsbemerkung* (Vienna: Passagen, 1997).
16. Theophil Stengel and Herbert Gerigk’s *Lexikon der Juden in der Musik: mit einem Titelverzeichnis jüdischer Werke* (Berlin: B. Hahnefeld, 1940) serves as an important reference source.
17. For more on Emanuel Müller’s activities as the artistic director of the Halls of Nestroy (Nestroy-Säle), see chapter 2.
18. “Ein totesagter und ein wirklich gestorbener Volksänger,” *Die Bühne* 2, no. 13 (5 February 1925): 35.
19. Koller, *Volkssängertum*, 96.
20. Ernst Weber, “Die Wienermusik der Jahrhundertwende bis 1914,” in *Wien: Musikgeschichte I* (Volksmusik und Wienerlied), ed. Elisabeth Th. Fritz and Helmut Kretschmer (Vienna: LIT, 2006), 260.
21. Pressler, “Jüdisches,” 63–82. The author provided personal confirmation that she works from the assumption that Kriebaum was Jewish.
22. See Felix Czeike, *Historisches Lexikon Wien*, vol. 3 (Vienna: Kremayr & Scheriau, 1994), 614.
23. Hans Pemmer, “Volksänger F. Kriebaum 50 Jahre tot,” *Wiener Zeitung* 166 (20 July 1950): 5. My own inquiries at the Vienna Israelite (Jewish) Community as well as an independent search of records of past conversions have not produced any contrary results.
24. On this, see Eddy Portnoy, “Superman Is a Glatt Goy,” *Marginalia Review of Books*, <https://marginalia.lareviewofbooks.org/superman-is-a-glatt-goy/> (accessed 12 January 2019). A particularly illustrative example of this phenomenon appeared on 3 November 2016 in *Forward* magazine. In it, the author of the article attempts to demonstrate that the Swedish pop group ABBA has a special closeness to Judaism, expressed, among other things, in the group’s name (Hebrew for “father”). See Seth Rogovoy, “The Secret Jewish History of Abba,” *Forward*, 3 November 2016, [http://forward.com/culture/353049/the-secret-jewish-history-of-abba/?utm\\_content=culture\\_Newsletter\\_MainList\\_Title\\_Position-1&utm\\_source=Sailthru&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=Automated%20Culture%202016-11-05&utm\\_term=Arts](http://forward.com/culture/353049/the-secret-jewish-history-of-abba/?utm_content=culture_Newsletter_MainList_Title_Position-1&utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Automated%20Culture%202016-11-05&utm_term=Arts) (accessed 12 January 2019).
25. Andrew Ross, *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 231.
26. See Amalie Kraftner, “Von der Budapester Orpheum-Gesellschaft,” *Oesterreichische Wochenschrift [OW in subsequent citations]* 1 (6 January 1899): 9.
27. *IWE* 42 (12 February 1907): 6.



28. Alexander Krakauer (1866–1894) was born in Hungary. He attended the Technische Hochschule in Vienna and received a musical education at the same time. His compositions were interpreted by the most famous and important *Volksänger* of his time, such as Edmund Guschelbauer (1839–1912) and Alexander Girardi (1850–1918). At the end of his life, he was plagued by a lung disease that he wanted to have cured in the spa town of Bad Gleichenberg. He died on his journey there. See Theophil Antonicek and Alexander Krakauer, “Skizze einer Würdigung,” in *Volksmusik – Wandel und Deutung: Festschrift Walter Deutsch zum 75. Geburtstag*, ed. Gerlinde Haid, Ursula Hemetek, and Rudolf Pietsch (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2000), 566–67.
29. Antonicek and Krakauer, “Skizze einer Würdigung,” 567–68.
30. There may have been a difference here between Vienna and Berlin, where a positive portrayal of family played a prime role, at least in the performances held at the Herrnfeld Theater. See Stefan Hofmann, “Bürgerlicher Habitus und jüdische Zugehörigkeit: Das Herrnfeld-Theater um 1900,” *Jahrbuch des Simon-Dubnow-Instituts* 12 (2013): 446.
31. See Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 33–80. See also chapter 4 of this study.
32. Marline Otte also discusses this point, if perhaps from another perspective, in her path-breaking study *Jewish Identities in German Popular Entertainment, 1890–1933* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 15–16.
33. Anna Drabek, et al., *Das österreichische Judentum: Voraussetzungen und Geschichte* (Vienna: Jugend und Volk, 1982). In particular, see also the *Studia Judaica Austriaca* series published by the Association of the Österreichisches Jüdisches Museum Eisenstadt (Austrian Jewish Museum Eisenstadt).
34. Former UN secretary general Kurt Waldheim ran for president of Austria in 1986. Over the course of his campaign, it was made public that he concealed in his biography certain aspects of his past, namely that he had been an officer in the German Wehrmacht during World War II. Waldheim’s actions and the fact that large parts of the Austrian government and the Austrian public defended him provoked fierce criticism from outside the country, in particular from the World Jewish Congress. On this, see Cornelius Lehn-guth, *Waldheim und die Folgen: Der parteipolitische Umgang mit dem Nationalsozialismus in Österreich* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2013), 91–152.
35. For more on the initial activities of the Jewish Museum, see “Das Jüdische Museum der Stadt Wien 1993/94. Chronik,” in *Wiener Jahrbuch für jüdische Geschichte, Kultur und Museumswesen* (Vienna: Christian Brandstätter, 1994/95), 187–93.
36. Gerald Lamprecht, “Die österreichischen jüdischen Museen im zeitgeschichtlichen Kontext,” in *Zeitgeschichte ausstellen in Österreich: Museen – Gedenkstätten – Ausstellungen*, ed. Dirk Rupnow and Heidemarie Uhl (Vienna: Böhlau, 2011), 217–20 [213–35].
37. Gerhard Bodendorfer, “Ein Forschungsinstitut für ‘Jüdische Kulturgeschichte’ in Salzburg?!” in *Jüdische Studien: Reflexionen zu Theorie und Praxis eines wissenschaftlichen Feldes*, ed. Klaus Hödl (Innsbruck: StudienVerlag, 2003), 51–72.
38. Marsha L. Rozenblit, *The Jews of Vienna, 1867–1914: Assimilation and Identity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983); Steven Beller, *Vienna and the Jews, 1867–1938* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Robert S. Wistrich, *The Jews of Vienna in the Age of Franz Joseph* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1990).

39. Beller, *Vienna and the Jews*, 102; Rozenblit, *Jews of Vienna*, 7. The difference between assimilation and acculturation is usually considered a different degree of adaptation. Assimilation leads to a total absorption of the assimilating part of the population in society, while acculturation usually indicates only cultural adaptation that preserves structural differences, in particular group consciousness (see Rozenblit, *Jews of Vienna*, 3–5).
40. An example of a recent (also excellent) study that employs the concept of assimilation without critical distance, without considering the critical engagement with the notion in the past twenty years, is Elana Shapira and Moses und Herkules, “Ein Beitrag des jüdischen Bürgertums zur Gestaltung der Ringstraße und des Praters,” in *Ringstrasse: Ein jüdischer Boulevard*, ed. Gabriele Kohlbauer-Fritz (Vienna: Amalthea, 2015), 161–88.
41. An early example and perhaps the most important study on this topic is Till van Rahden, “Mingling, Marrying, and Distancing: Jewish Integration in Wilhelminian Breslau and Its Erosion in Early Weimar Germany,” in *Jüdisches Leben in der Weimarer Republik / Jews in the Weimar Republic*, ed. Wolfgang Benz, Arnold Paucker, and Peter Pulzer (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 1998). See also Klaus Hödl, “Jewish Culture in Historical Studies,” in *The Routledge Handbook to Contemporary Jewish Cultures*, ed. Laurence Roth and Nadia Valman (London: Routledge, 2014), 83–94.
42. Wolfgang Schmale, ed., “Kulturtransfer,” in *Wiener Schriften zur Geschichte der Neuzeit*, vol. 2 (Vienna, 2003).
43. Klaus Hödl, “Zum Wandel des Selbstverständnisses zentraleuropäischer Juden durch Kulturtransfer,” in *Kulturtransfer in der jüdischen Geschichte*, ed. Wolfgang Schmale and Martina Steer (Frankfurt: Campus, 2006), 57–82.
44. A pathbreaking publication that integrates these new approaches is the collected volume *Cultures of the Jews*. See David Biale, ed., *Cultures of the Jews: A New History* (New York: Schocken, 2002).
45. For more on the concept of “emergence,” see Paul E. Meehl and Wilfried Sellars, “The Concept of Emergence,” *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science* 1 (1956): 239–52; Steven C. Pepper, “Emergence,” *Journal of Philosophy* 23 (1926): 241–45.
46. This does not mean that there are no differences between Jewish and non-Jewish cultural spheres. Such an assertion would be a *contradictio in adjecto*. However, these differences are not predetermined, but are to a large extent bound by context and are the result of concrete processes of negotiation or have been, as one sees for example in the case of religion, deliberately normalized. On this point, the American historian Sharon Gillerman asserts, “One of the intellectual problems one sometimes encounters within Jewish Studies generally, and in German Jewish Studies in particular, is that it too often presumes to know what Jews and Jewishness are.” She argues that there are instead “culturally negotiated, shifting, and contingent meanings of Jewishness.” Sharon Gillerman, “Muscles by Mail: Jewishness and the Self-Made Man in Post–World War I America” (paper presented at the workshop “Jews and the Study of Popular Culture” at the German Studies Association Conference, Arlington, VA, October 2015).
47. Steven E. Aschheim, “German History and German Jewry: Boundaries, Junctions and Interdependence,” *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 43 (1998): 318–19. In addition see Scott Spector, “Forget Assimilation: Introducing Subjectivity to German-Jewish History,” *Jewish History* 20, no. 3/4 (2006): 349–361; Andreas Gotzmann, “Reconsidering Judaism as a Religion – The Religious Emancipation Period,” *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 7, no.4 (2000): 352–366.
48. Till van Rahden, *Juden und andere Breslauer: Die Beziehungen zwischen Juden, Protestan-*

- ten und Katholiken in einer deutschen Großstadt von 1860–1925* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2000).
49. Giesen, Bernhard, *Kollektive Identität: Die Intellektuellen und die Nation*, vol. 2 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1999), 297.
  50. Nathaniel D. Wood, *Becoming Metropolitan: Urban Selfhood and the Making of Modern Cracow* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010), 196–97.
  51. See Christian Gschiel, Ulrike Nimeth, and Leonhard Weidinger, *Die Wiener Familie Rothberger* (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2010); Catharina Christ, “Jüdische k. und k. Hoflieferanten in der Textilbranche mit Niederlassung in Wien in der Zeit von 1870 bis 1938” (PhD dissertation, Vienna, 2000).
  52. Lisa Silverman, *Becoming Austrians: Jews and Culture between the World Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 82–84.
  53. On the *performative turn*, see Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Theater als Modell für eine performative Kultur: Zum performative turn in der europäischen Kultur des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Universitätsreden 46 (Saarbrücken: Pressestelle der Universität des Saarlandes, 2000); Doris Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural Turns: Neuorientierungen in den Kulturwissenschaften* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2006), 104–43; Klaus Hödl, *Wiener Juden – Jüdische Wiener: Identität, Gedächtnis und Performanz im 19. Jahrhundert* (Innsbruck: StudienVerlag, 2006), 47–68.
  54. Koller, *Völkssängertum*, 149.
  55. Jonathan Hess, “Shylock’s Daughters: Philosemitism, Popular Culture, and the Liberal Imagination,” *Transversal* 13, no. 1 (2015): 30, [http://www.degruyter.com/dg/viewjournalissue.articlelist.resultlinks.fullcontentlink:pdfeventlink/\\$002fj\\$002ftra.2015.13.issue-1\\$002ftra-2015-0005\\$002ftra-2015-0005.pdf/tra-2015-0005.pdf?ac=j\\$002ftra.2015.13.issue-1\\$002fissue-files\\$002ftra.2015.13.issue-1.xml](http://www.degruyter.com/dg/viewjournalissue.articlelist.resultlinks.fullcontentlink:pdfeventlink/$002fj$002ftra.2015.13.issue-1$002ftra-2015-0005$002ftra-2015-0005.pdf/tra-2015-0005.pdf?ac=j$002ftra.2015.13.issue-1$002fissue-files$002ftra.2015.13.issue-1.xml).
  56. Hess, “Shylock’s Daughters,” 32.
  57. Brent Peterson, “Julius von Wickede and the Question of German-Jewish Popular Literature” (paper presented at the workshop “Jews and the Study of Popular Culture,” German Studies Association Annual Conference, Arlington, VA, October 2015).
  58. See also Andreas B. Kilcher, “Was ist ‘deutsch-jüdische Literatur’? Eine historische Diskursanalyse,” *Weimarer Beiträge* 45, no. 4 (1999): 487.
  59. We can see the extent to which historians tend to shy away from incorporating non-Jewish media into their research in the bibliography of the relevant publications.
  60. For example, see Leon Botstein, *Judentum und Modernität: Essays zur Rolle der Juden in der deutschen und österreichischen Kultur 1848 bis 1938* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1991).
  61. See the works of Marsha Rozenblit, Steven Beller, and Robert Wistrich that I have already mentioned.
  62. See the last note in the introduction.
  63. *Wiener Vororte-Zeitung* 43 (24 December 1876): [3].
  64. Occasionally, media outlets with a Jewish publisher or owner or with Jewish journalistic staff are also counted among the Jewish press. This was, for example, the case in an expert opinion that formed part of an application that I submitted to the Austrian National Bank to fund research on the topic “Jewish/non-Jewish points of contact in Vienna around 1900.” This kind of a categorization, however, is not entirely free from antisemitic notions. An antisemitic perspective, for example, would classify a newspaper that employed a Jewish journalist for a period of time as a *Judenblatt* (a “Jew paper”). See Mario Sauschlager, “Antisemitische Feindbilder: Darstellung jüdischer Studentenschaft

- in österreichischen Tageszeitungen 1890–1914” (PhD thesis, Vienna, 2014), 90. If the content of a newspaper’s reporting is the deciding factor in determining whether it is specifically Jewish or general, then the possibility of questionable categorization disappears.
65. Esther Schmidt, “Nationalism and the Creation of Jewish Music: The Politicization of Music and Language in the German-Jewish Press Prior to the Second World War,” *Musica Judaica* 15 (2000–2001): 12–18.
  66. Margaret T. Edelman-Muehsam, “The Jewish Press in Germany,” *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 1 (1956): 163.
  67. “Unser Programm,” *Die Wahrheit* 1 (1 January 1899): 1.
  68. “Programm,” *Die Welt* 1 (4 June 1897): 1.
  69. *Fremden-Blatt* 1 (1 January 1899), 4; and 3 (3 January 1899), 3.
  70. On this, see Joanna Merrill, “American Jewish Identity and Newspapers: The Medium That Maintained an Imagined Community through a Change in Identity” (bachelor’s honors thesis in history, University of Colorado, 2012).
  71. Rozenblit, *Jews of Vienna*, 114; Peter Honigmann, “Jewish Conversions—A Measure of Assimilation? A Discussion of the Berlin Secession Statistics of 1770–1941,” *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 34 (1989): 3–39.
  72. Klaus Hödl, *Wiener Juden – Jüdische Wiener: Identität, Gedächtnis und Performanz im 19. Jahrhundert* (Innsbruck: StudienVerlag, 2006), 71–90. On Jewish folklore, see Birgit Johler and Barbara Staudinger, eds., *Ist das jüdisch? Jüdische Volkskunde im historischen Kontext* (Vienna: Novographic, 2010).
  73. In this instance, Judaism was not understood merely as a religious community. This circumstance, as well as the partial comparability of the scope of Jewish newspapers with that of Jewish museums and folklore, clearly distinguishes the Jewish press from Protestant media, which also did not maintain comprehensive coverage.
  74. Ernst Bollinger, *Pressegeschichte II. 1840–1930: Die goldenen Jahre der Massenpresse* (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag Freiburg Schweiz, 1996).
  75. On Jewish and non-Jewish interconnectedness, see Peter Schmidtbauer, “Zur sozialen Situation der Wiener Juden im Jahre 1857,” in *Studia Judaica Austriaca*, vol. 6 (Eisenstadt: Rötzer-Druck, 1978), 57–90. See also Charlotte Maria Toth, “‘Gemma schau, gemma schau . . .’ Vergnügen als Verpflichtung? Untersuchung zu den Freizeitträumen und Freizeitaktivitäten des Wiener Bürgertums in den Jahren 1890–1910” (MA thesis, Vienna, 1986); Mirjam Zadoff, *Next Year in Marienbad: The Lost Worlds of Jewish Spa Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012); Christian Brandstätter, ed., *Wien 1900: Kunst und Kultur: Fokus der europäischen Moderne* (Vienna: Christian Brandstätter, 2005).
  76. John M. Efron, *Medicine and the German Jews: A History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 186–233.
  77. On the Jewish Renaissance, see Michael Brenner, *Jüdische Kultur in der Weimarer Republik* (Munich: Beck, 2000), 31.
  78. *IWE* 185 (9 July 1901): 2.
  79. *IWE* 185 (9 July 1901): 2.
  80. *Deutsches Volksblatt* [DV in subsequent citations] 4494 (10 July 1901): 9.
  81. *IWE* 185 (9 July 1901): 3.
  82. *DV* 4493 (9 July 1901): 2.
  83. See *Reichpost* 155 (10 July 1901): 7; and 156 (11 July 1901): 9–10.
  84. *Deutsches Volksblatt* 4494 (10 July 1901): 9.
  85. “Der Raubmord am Neubau,” *IWE* 27 (28 January 1902): 2.

86. "Der Raubmord am Neubau," *IWE* 27 (28 January 1902): 3.
87. "Der Raubmord am Neubau," *IWE* 30 (31 January 1902): 3–4.
88. "Der Raubmord am Neubau," *IWE* 28 (29 January 1902): 3–4.
89. "Der Raubmord am Neubau," *IWE* 29 (30 January 1902): 2.
90. Doris Mair am Tinkhof, "Die Juden in der Presse in Wien um 1900" (PhD thesis, Vienna, 2005).
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97. Klaus Hödl, "Das 'Jüdische' in der allgemeinen Populärkultur," in *Konzeptionen jüdischer Identität und der Populärkulturdiskurs: Nicht nur Bildung, nicht nur Bürger: Juden in der Populärkultur*, ed. Klaus Hödl (Innsbruck: StudienVerlag, 2013), 11. For the advertisement, see *IWE* 113 (26 April 1900): 17.
98. *Wiener Caricaturen* 19, no. 6 (5 February 1899): 10.
99. *Wiener Vororte-Zeitung* 22 (6 January 1876): 3; and 23 (21 January 1876): 4.
100. *Wiener Sonn- und Montagszeitung* 5 (3 February 1902): 4.
101. *OW* 11 (1902): 188.
102. *Jüdische Presse* 8 (1923): 47.
103. *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* 148 (30 May 1870).
104. Many thanks to Jeffrey Grossman and Armin Eidherr, who brought this to my attention.
105. "Die Defraudation bei der Länderbank," *IWE* 259 (20 September 1902): 3–4.
106. "Die Defraudation bei der Länderbank," *IWE* 259 (20 September 1902): 3.
107. "Jellinek-Spuk," *IWE* (evening addition) 265 (26 September 1902): 3.
108. "Die Defraudation bei der Länderbank," *IWE* 269 (30 September 1902): 6–8.
109. *DV* 4926 (20 September 1902): 1–2.
110. Caprice, "Der kleine Kohn," Niederösterreichisches Landesarchiv (Theaterzensur), Box 117/31 (1902), 87.
111. *IWE* 65 (5 March 1904): 6.
112. For example, *Die Opferung Isaaks* (The sacrifice of Isaac) was performed on 6 February 1904. See *IWE* 37 (6 February 1904): 16.
113. *IWE* 268 (27 September 1904): 14–15; and 191 (13 July 1902): 31.
114. *IWE* 60 (2 March 1902): 37.
115. *Die Wahrheit* 43 (1913): 3–4.
116. *Die Wahrheit* 14 (1905): 7.
117. *Die Wahrheit* 18 (1900): 3.
118. *Die Wahrheit* 18 (1900): 3.
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## JEWISH *VOLKSSÄNGER* AND MUSICAL PERFORMERS IN VIENNA AROUND 1900



A few years ago, the American historian Mary Gluck gave a lecture at the International Research Center for Cultural Studies in Vienna on her research on Jews and popular culture in Budapest, which resulted in her book *The Invisible Jewish Budapest*.<sup>1</sup> In the discussion following her talk, she also touched on the topic of Jewish participation in Viennese entertainment culture at the turn of the twentieth century. The unanimous view, shared by both Gluck and the audience, was that Viennese Jews contributed to new forms of urban leisure and pastimes far less than their counterparts in Budapest.

It is an undisputed fact that Budapest had a vibrant, innovative, and dynamic singspiel scene that Jews in particular helped cultivate and maintain. Nevertheless, Jews also had a substantial presence in the entertainment scene in Vienna. On the one hand, we can attribute the fact that Jewish participation in Viennese popular culture has remained relatively unknown to the lack of relevant scholarship on the topic. Indeed, a considerable number of dissertations have been written on the topic of Jews in Viennese population culture in recent years.<sup>2</sup> With a few exceptions, the authors have not (yet) revised their projects to prepare them for publication. In the previous chapter, I discussed in detail why this topic has remained to a large extent a historiographical lacuna.

On the other hand, the lack of knowledge regarding the extent to which Jews participated in popular-cultural forms in Vienna is connected to the question of visibility. Although Jews did not conceal their identity as Jews, Jews and non-Jews were often so interconnected that at first glance and sometimes even after thorough investigation, it may be difficult if not impossible to identify anything Jewish about specific performers or the cultural activities in which they participated.

The following chapter takes this thesis as its point of departure. I begin with an overview of the most important Jewish *Volkssänger* groups and their performance venues, which in turn allows me to discuss what makes a *Volkssänger* ensemble Jewish and whether we can speak of “Jewish” singspiel venues. I also discuss whether a theater director who converted can still be understood as Jewish, as scholars have tended to do, for example, in the case of Gabor Steiner, the manager of Venice in Vienna (Venedig in Wien), Danzer’s Orpheum, and the Ronacher.

## The Etablissement Nestroy-Säle

“The two main streets in the Leopoldstadt are Taborstraße and Praterstraße. Praterstraße is almost grand, and it leads directly to pleasure. Jews and Christians populate it. It is smooth, wide, and bright. It has many coffeehouses.”<sup>3</sup> This is how Austrian writer Joseph Roth (1894–1939), in his book *The Wandering Jews (Juden auf Wanderschaft)*, describes the boulevard that leads from the city center to the Prater, Vienna’s extensive entertainment and recreation area. One of the cafes to which Roth alludes was the Café Willy, a meeting place for musicians and artists who enlivened Viennese nightlife with their performances. The coffeehouse provided a space for artists to set up performances at singspiel halls and variety shows, make and cultivate contacts, and exchange information with fellow artists. In addition, the Café Willy had the meeting room for the “Jolly Knights” (Lustige Ritter), an association of Viennese *Volkssänger*.<sup>4</sup>

Jews and non-Jews alike socialized at Café Willy. Together, they shaped the entertainment options available to the Viennese population and made up the audiences that attended the cabarets as well as the performances put on by *Volkssänger* and wrestlers, ventriloquists, and magicians in Leopoldstadt. Together, they also marveled at the artistic feats and exotic oddities on display in the variety shows. In this sense, Joseph Roth’s observation that “Jews and Christians” bustled about alongside one another on the Praterstrasse was nothing out of the ordinary. And the ethnic distribution of the people inhabiting this part of the city suggests that both Jews and non-Jews were visible in the streets of Vienna’s second district. Among all the Viennese districts, Leopoldstadt had the highest proportion of Jewish residents. Around 1900, 35.8 percent of Viennese Jews lived there. On account of this high concentration of Jews, this district was often called “Matzah Island” (Mazzeinsel).<sup>5</sup> Of this district’s entire population, 36.4 percent was Jewish.<sup>6</sup> But this means that the Jewish percentage of the population in Leopoldstadt was significantly lower than in the “Jewish” areas of other cities, such as Terézváros, Budapest’s sixth district, where three-quarters of the population was Jewish. Nevertheless, it is not surprising that both Jews and non-Jews left their mark on the streetscape of the Leopoldstadt. Needless to say, their presence next to one another was not always characterized by mutual understanding but also by tension and conflict.<sup>7</sup>

A part of Viennese entertainment culture at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries took place in an ethnically diverse and culturally plural environment in which Jewish and non-Jewish migrants, recent arrivals to the city, encountered a local population that was equally diverse and reflective of a rich array of cultural traditions.<sup>8</sup> This hybrid situation constituted the cultural atmosphere of the singspiel venues and the milieu in which the folk singers zeroed in on the characters that they satirized in their songs as the “Jew,” the “Bohemian,” and the “Croat.” And though Jews and non-Jews mutually built and maintained the entertainment landscape in and around the Praterstrasse, there were, without a doubt, performance venues that were more popular among Jews than non-Jews, not to mention the so-called suburban theater groups, whose audiences were, at least at certain moments in time, either mostly or entirely non-Jewish. Nevertheless, we cannot draw clear lines distinguishing between “Jewish” and “non-Jewish” ensembles. This lack of division seems to be partially the result of the milieu surrounding the singspiel halls, an expression of a new, urban culture that did not concern itself with such binaries or was perhaps possible precisely because of the lack of such oppositions.<sup>9</sup>

A second aspect of Roth’s quotation speaks to the venues that were situated in the Praterstrasse. This street housed not only the cafés that he mentions but also a number of theatrical establishments and other entertainment options. The Carltheater was perhaps the most famous of these, a *Volksbühne* (people’s theater) that the Austrian dramatist Johann Nestroy (1801–62) directed, starting in the mid-nineteenth century. He was also the namesake of a building constructed in 1898 in close proximity to the Carltheater, designed by the Zionist architect Oskar Marmorek. This building named after Johann Nestroy, the Nestroyhof, featured an entertainment venue located on the ground floor called the Halls of Nestroy (Nestroy-Säle), which opened on 11 November 1899.<sup>10</sup> The man who leased this space was Emanuel Adler or, as he also called himself, Adler-Müller. As I briefly mentioned in the previous chapter, Adler had previously performed up until this time under the name de Brye or Gaston de Brie as a “female impersonator.” One of the venues where audiences admired his acting skills was the Ronacher, the most important *variété* (vaudeville theater) in Vienna around the turn of the twentieth century. With the Halls of Nestroy, he sought to establish himself as an independent entrepreneur in the entertainment sector.<sup>11</sup> Karl Steidler, the director of an entertainment venue named after him, served as co-director.<sup>12</sup> Because the Halls of Nestroy were classified as a singspiel venue that was only permitted to perform one-act plays alongside musical performances, we may conclude that Adler-Müller required the support of his colleague on account of Steidler’s license, which allowed him to produce multi-act plays, and for this reason joined his company.<sup>13</sup>

Compared to some other *Volkssänger* venues, the performances held by the Halls of Nestroy demonstrated markedly high quality. Caprice, a former salesclerk from Pest, was the *Hausdichter* (house poet). He was born Antal Lövi, changed



his name to Antal Oroszi in 1869, but was known in Vienna first and foremost by his stage name.<sup>14</sup> Other Jewish groups, such as the Budapest Orpheum Society, the Albert Hirsch Society, and the S. Fischer Society embraced and performed Caprice's burlesques. Another author whose plays the Halls of Nestroy often produced was Louis Taufstein (1870–1942). He wrote numerous comic songs, theater pieces, opera librettos, and comedies. Like Caprice, Taufstein was Jewish, and the plays that both of them wrote were mostly performed within the context of a Jewish milieu. The managers of the Halls of Nestroy, however, viewed themselves connected not only to a thematically Jewish theater but also to a general theater tradition associated with Viennese culture. We observe this pattern not least because the plays of Johann Nestroy were featured prominently in their performance program.<sup>15</sup>

Even though there was no shortage of Jewish ensembles in Vienna at the turn of the century, the Halls of Nestroy were an important addition to the entertainment scene. However, this venue had a short-lived history. Soon after the Halls of Nestroy opened its doors, people began to talk more about its financial problems than its performances. Adler-Müller was neither an experienced businessman nor did he possess the financial means to compensate for his lack of entrepreneurial acumen. Although he was able to secure substantial financial support from the Pilsner Brewery to keep the Halls of Nestroy temporarily afloat, the venue's debts soon took over. Since the members of the ensemble were paid only irregularly, they refused to perform on some days. In addition, the public's growing uncertainty that they would actually get to see the performance for which they bought tickets thus further worsened an already precarious financial situation. It comes as no surprise then that after only half a year of being in operation, the Halls of Nestroy had to be shut down. Adler-Müller was subsequently charged with fraud and embezzlement.<sup>16</sup> However, he did not wish to resign himself to failure. In September 1890, he managed to reopen the Halls of Nestroy. Once again, he had won the favor of a strong financial investor. To everyone's amazement, this investor's contributions were so significant that Adler-Müller was able to buy back the inventory that had been sold a few months earlier, at more than twice the price. But it quickly became clear that he had bitten off more than he could chew. Performances resumed only for a few weeks. And even this handful of performances was only possible because Adler-Müller pawned the jewelry of one of his staff members. On October 26, Adler-Müller's enterprise was closed for good, and he was sentenced to prison.<sup>17</sup>

## **The Folies Comiques**

The closing of the Halls of Nestroy so soon after Adler-Müller attempted to reopen the venue left no lasting lacuna in the Viennese entertainment landscape.

Just a year later, the Folies Comiques began to hold performances in the space of the Nestroyhof that Adler-Müller's failed enterprise had left empty.<sup>18</sup> Roland Eder initially led the Folies Comiques with a co-partner, before he took over the direction of the entire operation at the end of 1902.<sup>19</sup> Prior to trying his hand at leading a singspiel hall, Eder had gained fame particularly for his farces. Fritz Lung, of Edelhofer's Leopoldstadt Folk Orpheum, was brought on board as license holder (see my discussion below). In addition to the texts written by Eder, the Folies Comiques mainly performed pieces by Josef Armin, who, along with his wife, was one of the actors in the ensemble until April 1903.<sup>20</sup> Armin's performances were part of the actual attraction of the Folies Comiques. Louis Taufstein was also the author of numerous farces that the troupe brought to the stage.

As was the case with the Halls of Nestroy, the Folies Comiques echoed various aspects of a cultural tradition associated with Vienna. An example of this group's relationship to and engagement with Viennese culture was when a member joined the group in the spring of 1903 who performed as the composer Franz Schubert (1797–1821). Schubert was widely regarded as the epitome of Vienna as a city of music. Only a few years prior, a large exhibit had been dedicated to him and his works, permanently anchoring him in Vienna's collective memory.<sup>21</sup> In referencing the figure of Franz Schubert, the Folies Comiques participated in the local cult of personality surrounding the composer and thus positioned their performances within the larger cultural atmosphere that characterized Vienna. In addition, this troupe performed “jargon” or “slang” comedy (comedy in Yiddish-inflected German). One of the plays that we can attribute to the Folies Comiques was titled *Family Pschesina*, written by Louis Taufstein.<sup>22</sup> “Pschesina,” or sometimes “Brzezina,” was the name for a Bohemian stock character in Vienna around 1900, whose Jewish counterpart was “Little Kohn.” The name Brzezina gained cultural prominence on account of a comic song called “Servus Brezina” (“Greetings, Brezina!”) that Emil Várady performed at the Etablissement Gartenbau at the turn of the century. The name thus became a general byword used to refer to Czechs.<sup>23</sup> In everyday Vienna—and even in the Austrian Reichsrat—the term was frequently used in a discriminatory manner.<sup>24</sup>

At first glance, *Family Pschesina* is a simple comedy of errors. But the play deals with the question of what constituted Jewishness in fin-de-siècle Vienna. In the play, Boleslav Pschesina, a wealthy Czech Jew, wants his niece Helen to marry August Lerchenfeld, the son of one of his business associates. He awaits a visit from the future groom. Boleslav's wife, Eulalia, however, wants Helen to marry her son Isidor so that her jewelry remains in the family. Isidor also feels a strong emotional attachment to Helen. On the day before the anticipated visit, Isidor encounters August Lerchenfeld and his father's accountant, Menasse Pfeifendeckel, outside of Pschesina's villa. When they ask Isidor where Pschesina's home is, he tells them that it is still a long way off and advises them to stay the night in a nearby brothel. He tells them that Boleslav's house is the brothel. In

doing so, Isidor hopes that August will treat Helen disdainfully, assuming that she is a prostitute, and thereby discredit himself as potential husband. August and Menasse arrive at the Boleslav's home, which Isidor has purposefully misidentified as a house of ill repute, and August proceeds to treat Helen and Eulalia in a vulgar manner. He ends up in a fight with Boleslav, tossing the man out of his own home. When August's father arrives on the scene, they sort out the misunderstanding. Isidor's deceitfulness is made known, and he is forced to apologize. Ultimately, he cannot prevent August and Helen from marrying.

We should emphasize that *Family Pschesina* does not portray the Jewishness of its characters on the basis of a criterion as conventional as religious affiliation. Instead, Jewishness is indicated through the names of the protagonists, such as Menasse Pfeifendeckel, as well as the play's use of Yiddish terms such as *mishpoche* (family), *punim* (face), and *schmooze* (talk, chatter). But both of these kinds of indicators are only of limited use for identifying a person's Jewishness. The Yiddish expressions are to some degree a part of the Viennese idiom and can also be used by non-Jews. And both Pfeifendeckel and Lerchenfeld are not exclusively Jewish names. The reverse is also true: in turn-of-the-century Vienna, only "ethnic" Czechs were referred to as Brzezina/Pschesina, but the farce uses it as a Jewish family name.

Language and names are thus extremely unreliable indicators of national and ethnic identification and their usage is largely dependent on context. *Family Pschesina* demonstrates how some performances in the Viennese singspiel halls questioned ethnic categorizations and the perceived unambiguity of cultural affiliations.

## The Lemberg Singspiel Society

Not far from the Halls of Nestroy, in the Rotensterngasse, was Edelhofer's Leopoldstadt Folk Orpheum, which served in 1901 as the home of the Lemberg Singspiel Society.<sup>25</sup> The actors in the troupe had previously been active in Galicia with the Yiddish theater group led by Jacob-Ber Gimpel (1840–1906).<sup>26</sup> Brigitte Dalinger, who discusses the "Polish" (as the Lemberg Singspiel Society was also called) in her dissertation, argues that we must classify this group of actors somewhere along the spectrum between the Singers of Brod, a precursor of Yiddish theater in eastern Europe, and Viennese folk singers.<sup>27</sup> As a result, Galician and other eastern European Jewish immigrants in particular made up the audiences that attended the performances of the "Polish." These "Polish" actors represented an important source of cultural mediation between the traditional Jewish world in the eastern European provinces and modernity, which these immigrants encountered in Vienna. We see prime examples of this form of cultural mediation in two plays that the Lemberg Singspiel Society performed in 1903 and 1904.

The first play, *The Soldier of Plevna*, takes place in the historical context of the Russo-Turkish War and the Siege of Plevna (1877), during which a unit of Russian and Romanian troops defeated the Turks.<sup>28</sup> Max, the play's central character, fights on the side of the Romanians and distinguishes himself on account of his extraordinary valor. Deeply impressed by his courage, Max's comrades ask him who he is once the battle is over. Max answers, "I am a Jew and will always be a Jew." In a subsequent scene, which highlights his domestic sphere, Max converses with Chaim, the father of his bride. His father-in-law is surprised by Max's military involvement and asks him why he is so fearless. Max explains that he considers defending his homeland to be his duty. Chaim fails to understand Max's response. He asks Max what part of Romania he views as his homeland and whether he is paid for being a soldier. In response, Max refers to the rights he enjoys in Romania, which for him are sufficient motivation for his military service.

*The Soldier of Plevna* depicts the tensions between two Jews. The first, Chaim, lives in a traditional Jewish environment and therefore cannot understand Max's patriotism. Max, on the other hand, demonstrates an interest in the legal emancipation of the Jews and thus considers the divisions between the Jewish and non-Jewish worlds to be of no consequence. As a result, Max's Jewishness and his participation in the war are not incompatible. On the contrary, these two aspects are for him directly connected with one another, as his response to the question posed by his comrades shows. When they ask him who he is, he does not give his name, but rather refers to his Jewishness. The play portrays Max's Jewishness not through religious plotlines, nor through the observance of religious laws, but rather through his heroism. The audience was thus presented with values that were of little significance in a Jewish environment marked by religiosity. In this context, it is worth noting that the Zionists of the time praised qualities such as valor and a willingness to participate in military combat as characteristics of a "new" Jew in Palestine. The idea was that the "new" Jew discarded attributes such as cowardice and physical weakness, which were sometimes used to characterize Jews in the Diaspora.<sup>29</sup> *The Soldier of Plevna*, however, combines the Zionist idea of the heroic Jew with a Diaspora nationalism. This play that the Lemberg Singspiel Society performed thus critiques the Zionist interpretation of Jewish life in non-Jewish "majority societies," as well as the values of the traditional Jewish world.

The second play that I wish to discuss in this context is *Jüdalj with His Travelling Bag*.<sup>30</sup> Dalinger describes it as "the first [play] performed in Vienna with a Zionist tendency" that can be found in the Archiv für Theaterzensur (archive of theater censorship).<sup>31</sup> The primary protagonist is a wealthy Jew by the name of Bauchfett, who wishes to marry his daughter Rebecca to a baron. The non-Jewish aristocrat is however only interested in Bauchfett's fortune and uses Rebecca in an attempt to take control of it. Meanwhile, Rebecca, who refuses to marry the baron, is in love with a poor teacher named Albert Kohn, a staunch Zionist. For a time, it appears to be a tricky situation with no way out. Ultimately, one of Albert

Kohn's friends, the Zionist Samuel Pinkeles, succeeds in convincing Bauchfett that he puts Judaism at risk with his plan to have the baron marry his daughter. At the end, Bauchfett supports the marriage between Rebecca and Albert.

Unlike *The Soldier of Plevna*, *Jüdalj with His Traveling Bag* depicts Jewishness through the construction of a sense of responsibility toward the Jewish community, specifically through Zionist sentiment. It communicates an appreciation for Zionism while simultaneously calling for a reformulation of traditional Jewish life. We see this in the play's criticism of the arranged marriage. To be sure, interconfessional marriage, as portrayed in *Jüdalj with His Traveling Bag*, was anything but common practice among Jews, determined neither by the parents of the bride or groom nor by the couple of their own free will. But an arranged marriage involving only Jewish partners, which failed to consider the young people's feelings, was widespread. Liberal-minded Jews had been fighting against this practice since the Haskalah.<sup>32</sup> *Jüdalj with His Traveling Bag* situates itself within this critical tradition. The performances of the "Polish" thus showed audiences an alternative to the lifestyle with which many Jewish immigrants from Galicia were accustomed. The "Polish" introduced new rules of conduct and acquainted their public with values that prevailed in Vienna at the time.

### ***"Jargon" Replaces Yiddish***

Although the actors who were members of the Lemberg Singspiel Society originally came from a Yiddish-language ensemble, they probably adapted quickly to local demand in Vienna and abandoned the Yiddish language in favor of "Jewish jargon." This is why one can categorize the "Polish" as a part of the Viennese *Volkssänger* scene rather than assigning them to the Yiddish theater tradition, as many Yiddish sources do.<sup>33</sup> There are various reasons for not including the "Polish" in the Yiddish tradition. I discuss some of these reasons in the following section, because they shed light on Viennese cultural specificity.

We see the first indication that the "Polish" were not a Yiddish theater group in the reaction that the Viennese public had to guest appearances of Jacob-Ber Gimpel's Yiddish ensemble from Lemberg. Not long after the Lemberg Singspiel Society was established in Edelhofer's Leopoldstadt Folk Orpheum, Gimpel came to Vienna with his troupe. Gimpel organized his own performances in the hotel Bairischer Hof, located in the Taborstrasse mentioned in Joseph Roth's quotation and thus not far from the performance venue of the "Polish."<sup>34</sup> It is possible that Gimpel moved his performances in order to benefit from the lively popularity that the "Polish" enjoyed in Vienna.<sup>35</sup> This interpretation of events would imply that they performed pieces in the Yiddish language. But there is also evidence to suggest that Gimpel came to Vienna to compete with the "Polish" and thereby compromise their success. Dalinger argues that the manager of Edelhofer's Leopoldstadt Folk Orpheum went to Lemberg (Lvov) to entice

some of the members of Gimpel's troupe to move to Vienna so that he could found the Lemberg Singspiel Society.<sup>36</sup> If this was the case, then Gimpel may have been prompted to come to Vienna out of a desire for retaliation. However, he was not successful. It is quite possible that his failure was due to the lack of resonance that Yiddish performances found among the population of Vienna.<sup>37</sup> But the fact that the shows put on by the Lemberg Singspiel Society met with significant audience approval suggests that the "Polish" abstained from performing in Yiddish.

Gimpel failed to garner the favor of the Viennese, and many folk singers also distanced themselves from him. They sometimes made him the target of their mockery and ridicule. We see this ridicule in a production of the Albert Hirsch Society (which I discuss in greater detail below). After Gimpel's arrival in Vienna, Hirsch's troupe performed a piece titled *Gimpel (from Lemberg) Is Here!*, a parody of the Galician theater director.<sup>38</sup> Similar to *Jüdualy with His Traveling Bag*, this play also depicts an arranged marriage. Jacob Beer, the father of a Jewish girl named Malke, and Gimpel's father decide that their children should marry one another. For Jacob Beer, this appears to be an extremely advantageous arrangement, as Gimpel comes from a rather wealthy family. Malke, however, feels a strong attraction to Theodor, who only comes to the fore in the play because of the cavalier behavior that he displays. Jacob Beer remains unfazed by his daughter's feelings and holds fast to his decision. On the other hand, Malke's mother, Zelda, feels sorry for her daughter. In her youth, Zelda had been a member of an amateur theater and showcases her skills as an actress to prevent the marriage between Malke and Gimpel. When Gimpel arrives in Vienna one day to meet his future wife, Zelda comes to meet him as Malke. Gimpel, who is expecting to be greeted by a young lady, is disturbed by the age of his apparent bride and escapes the marriage agreement by fleeing back to Lemberg. Malke is then released from the marriage pledge and is free to marry Theodor.

We see the allusion to Gimpel clearly expressed in Hirsch's choice of the protagonist's surname and place of origin, as well as in the name of Malke's father, who has the same first name as the Lemberg ensemble director. The mockery of Gimpel, which also entails the humorous aspect of the piece, lies in Malke's mother, a former actress, being able to dupe him. Gimpel, who dedicated his life to the theater, is portrayed as too naïve to see through an "amateur performance" like the one Malke's mother gives, in reference to her past experience in the theater. Indeed, the character Gimpel in the play claims to have the ability to switch back and forth between various roles in order to deceive the people in his immediate surroundings and thereby influence situations to his benefit. When he finds himself in a compartment filled with antisemites on a train journey from Lemberg to Vienna who loudly rant about Jews, Gimpel conceals his Jewishness and is proud of his skill in pulling the wool over their eyes. But when he arrives in Vienna, he is beaten at his own game. He is the one who is misled. Because

Gimpel is unable to recognize deception as such, he appears incapable of living in the modern metropolis and is therefore wise to return to his hometown in Galicia. We also see this on Gimpel's way from the station to Jacob Beer's home. He sees a woman whom he thinks waves to him, but he can't properly interpret the gesture. The everyday cultural complexity of the metropolis confuses him, and the imagined blends with reality. Vienna overwhelms him.

Why Albert Hirsch chose to write a play that makes fun of Gimpel remains unclear. Various factors may have played a role in his decision. It is possible that Hirsch, a Viennese-born Jew, perceived a strong connection to the local folk-singer scene (see chapter 3) and simultaneously perceived antipathy for the Galician Jewish Gimpel and the Yiddish theater—an antipathy that was not uncommon between so-called East and West Jews during this period.<sup>39</sup> It may also be that when Hirsch debuted *Gimpel (from Lemberg) Is Here!* in the summer of 1901, he was toying with the idea of taking over as director of the Lemberg Singspiel Society, which is precisely what he did the following year. If this is true, he may have attempted to position his play as strategy for eliminating Gimpel's troupe as a potential source of competition. In any case, the Galician theater director did not stay long in Vienna. We cannot definitively say whether Hirsch specifically contributed to Gimpel's failure to find success in Vienna.

Unlike the two plays that I already discussed, the question of Jewishness has no relevance in *Gimpel (from Lemberg) Is Here!* In addition to mocking Gimpel, Hirsch's play offers a critique of arranged marriages, similar to the one found in *Jüdalay with His Traveling Bag* and many other textual templates that Jewish *Volkssänger* groups performed. The frequency with which this theme appears in such performances is a sign that it was of great concern to Viennese Jews. In any case, *Gimpel (from Lemberg) Is Here!* was well received by audiences. We can draw this conclusion from op-ed articles in newspapers, one of which declared that the play's performance provoked such an "enormous amount of laughter, the likes of which hadn't been heard for years."<sup>40</sup> As my discussion of its failed performances in Vienna illustrates, the Gimpel troupe did not find a place in the Viennese *Volkssänger* scene with its Yiddish-language plays. Gimpel and his group ultimately returned to their home city in eastern Galicia.

The evidence that I have introduced thus far allows us to deduce that the Lemberg Singspiel Society either gave no performances in Yiddish or quickly dispensed with them upon arrival in Vienna. Instead, this group presented plays in Jewish "jargon." The actors in this troupe, similar to those who performed with the Budapest Orpheum Society or Albert Hirsch's troupe, used a local Austrian (i.e., German-language) idiom colored with elements of Yiddish and a corresponding intonation.<sup>41</sup> An announcement in the magazine *Das Variété* points to this theatrical use of jargon. The announcement states that Mr. and Mrs. Kanner, members of the Lemberg Singspiel Society, presented the public with new "things in jargon" (*Jargonsachen*).<sup>42</sup> There is no mention of performances in Yiddish.

Another point that makes it unlikely that the “Polish” performed in Yiddish pertains to the group’s leadership. This aspect deserves particular attention, because it exemplifies the intertwining of Jews and non-Jews and their joint formation of Viennese popular culture. When the Lemberg Singspiel Society was founded in Vienna in 1901 and performed in Edelhofer’s Leopoldstadt Folk Orpheum, it was renamed the Fritz Lung Singspiel. This means that the “Polish” performed under the aegis of Fritz Lung’s license, with Lung acting as director. Though Lung (1844–1922) was Catholic, he was firmly rooted in the Jewish cultural milieu.<sup>43</sup> We know this to be the case because, as I discussed earlier, he also served as a license holder for the performances of the *Folies Comiques*.

In the spring of 1902, Albert Hirsch took over as director of the Lemberg Singspiel Society. Unlike Lung, he was Jewish, but it is doubtful whether as a native of Vienna he was familiar with the eastern European Jewish milieu, from which the members of the Lemberg Singspiel Society came. Nevertheless, his own troupe, which he had led before he took over the “Polish” group, had often used Jewish jargon. But that does not mean that he could speak or understand Yiddish. As was the case with Lung, it is unlikely that Hirsch would have applied for a position in a Yiddish-language troupe. Hirsch urged the “Polish” to bring their program more in line with local Viennese cultural expectations. To this end, he had the group perform pieces that he himself had written and already performed with his previous ensemble. Hirsch’s plays included, for example, *A Game of Klabrias in Court* and *The Rich Mr. Herzl*.<sup>44</sup> Additionally, under his direction, the “Polish” staged *Dada-Dodo*, written by (non-Jewish) *Volkssänger* Wilhelm Wiesberg (1850–96).<sup>45</sup> But this does not mean that the Lemberg Singspiel Society broke away from its eastern European Jewish cultural roots. The Lemberg Singspiel Society’s performances also included dramas and burlesques from the Yiddish theatrical repertoire, such as *Shmendrik* by Abraham Goldfaden (1840–1908). But even this play was not likely to have been performed in Yiddish, as we may deduce from the publicity used to promote it. It was specifically advertised with the title *Shmendrik, oder: Eine Dorfhochzeit* (*Schmendrik, or: the village wedding*).<sup>46</sup>

The Lemberg Singspiel Society, with its “mixed program” that encompassed both eastern European cultural traditions and Viennese *Volkssänger* pieces, seems to have found considerable favor with audiences. We see the group’s popularity not least of all in the fact that it had many imitators. For example, these imitators included a “German-Polish ensemble from Lemberg” that performed in various venues in the fifth, sixth, and fourteenth districts, all of which had only a small percentage of the city’s Jewish population.<sup>47</sup> “Polish” may have been synonymous with “eastern Jewish,” and the use of the term “German” may have been used to distinguish the copycat group from the original Lemberg Singspiel Society. In any event, the “Polish-German” group also performed plays composed by Yiddish authors.<sup>48</sup>



Marietta Kriebaum and Paula Baumann directed two other ensembles that sought to imitate the Lemberg Singspiel Society. Kriebaum presided over the Polish Variety Show from Lemberg, which performed in the café Zum goldenen Widder (the Golden Ram) located in 36 Taborstrasse.<sup>49</sup> At the same time, Baumann's troupe gave its performances in the Antreiber'schen Restauration, which was situated in the Krummbaumgasse.<sup>50</sup> Just like Fritz Lung, Kriebaum was not Jewish, but also had many contacts with Jews and was familiar with the Jewish milieu. Sara Frimmel, who appeared under the stage name Paula Baumann, was the first wife of Salomon Fischer, a well-known director of Jewish singspiel halls (see below). Marietta Kriebaum was married to Franz Xaver Kriebaum (1836–1900), the director of Danzer's Orpheum, who died in July 1900.<sup>51</sup> At one time, he performed with Albert Hirsch, alongside Josefine Schmer (1842–1904).<sup>52</sup> Kriebaum and Hirsch remained close acquaintances. We know this to be the case based, among other things, on the eulogy that Hirsch gave at Kriebaum's funeral. Hirsch's son Adolfi also had a personal connection with the Kriebaum family. We see evidence of this close connection in a letter to the editor that Adolfi wrote, which appeared in the *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt* in the summer of 1901. The author of the letter asks the Jolly Knights, the *Volkssänger* association, why they have not yet arranged a tombstone for their former chairman, Franz Kriebaum. Adolfi mentions that immediately after Kriebaum's death, Josef Armin announced a collection to finance the tombstone and that they had already commissioned it. In December, it was reportedly too cold to set up the gravestone. Adolfi's letter goes on to say, "Well, today it's 29 July 1901, and it's not that cold out anymore! Kriebaum's grave is still missing a gravestone. Or is it the intense heat that prevents you from installing it? . . . How many degrees Réaumur, Celsius or Fahrenheit must it be for you to make good on your promise?"<sup>53</sup> A week later, Marietta Kriebaum also addressed the gravestone situation with her own letter to the editor. She corrects Adolfi to some degree, saying that Armin's idea for organizing a collection, which he had mentioned, never came to be. At that time, she explains that she objected to it, because she found it unpleasant "to beg for money for [her] deceased husband." That's why the Jolly Knights, she said, had agreed to organize a gravestone at the group's own expense. Nevertheless, Marietta Kriebaum concludes her own letter by complaining that her husband had been forgotten. She laments that in earlier times, when he was still director of Danzer's Orpheum, he had enjoyed the company of many friends, who had since vanished.<sup>54</sup>

Franz Kassina, Hirsch's son-in-law, took Emma Kriebaum, the daughter of Marietta and her deceased husband, under his wing and invited her to join his troupe in the summer of 1901.<sup>55</sup> This provides additional evidence that the Kriebaum family moved in a—albeit not exclusively—Jewish *Volkssänger* environment. It therefore comes as no surprise that Marietta Kriebaum, although she wasn't Jewish, operated a troupe in Leopoldstadt, which embraced the peculiari-

ties of the Lemberg Singspiel Society, in order to benefit from the popularity that the “Polish” had gained in Vienna.<sup>56</sup> Before Marietta Kriebaum ran the Polish Variety Show from Lemberg, she belonged to a troupe in which Käthe and Josef Armin were also members. Both had been employed for a long time at her husband’s Danzer’s Orpheum, a further indicator that the Kriebaums enjoyed relationships with Jewish colleagues and friends.<sup>57</sup>

If the Lemberg Singspiel Society performed in Yiddish and if Kriebaum and Baumann’s troupes, following their example, also gave their performances in Yiddish, then the majority of the Yiddish ensembles performing in Vienna at the time would have been directed by non-Jews. This is, to my mind, very unlikely. That two groups, led by non-Jewish directors, employed Jewish jargon in their productions is already surprising. But this phenomenon only serves to demonstrate that Jewish jargon was part of the Viennese linguistic landscape and was seen as such. This linguistic feature was the result of the overlapping of German, Jewish, Polish, and other cultural and communicative spaces, and we may even understand it as emblematic of the linguistic and cultural plurality of Vienna.<sup>58</sup> In any case, non-Jews did not necessarily feel alienated by the use of Jewish jargon, especially when they were familiar with the interstitial spaces in which Jews moved and operated. This was the case, for example, with the opera singer Leo Slezak (1873–1946) from Moravia. He was, as the *Illustrierte Wiener Extrablatt* writes, a “perfect Aryan [*Bravourarier*].” However, he is said to have been intimately acquainted with Jewish jargon and to have “spoken with a Yiddish accent [*gejüdelit*],” “as if his cradle had been in Half Asia.”<sup>59</sup> And it was a similar situation with Lung and Kriebaum. Marietta Kriebaum and her folk-singer groups demonstrably overlapped with various cultural spaces. Kriebaum was not only active in Leopoldstadt, but she also organized performances in the tavern Zum grünen Thor (the Green Gate), located in Lerchenfelder Strasse, where she produced both “Jewish” and “non-Jewish” plays.<sup>60</sup> And Paula Baumann was not just connected to the Jewish milieu, but also maintained a balancing act between different cultural worlds. After Baumann’s jargon troupe was banned from performing, she founded a new group. This group’s repertoire included popular folk pieces as well as aspects related to the Jewish world.<sup>61</sup>

A final reason why it is doubtful that the Lemberg Singspiel Society gave performances in Yiddish concerns a dispute among the *Volkssänger* regarding the announcement that the “Jewish” group Folies Caprice from Budapest intended to relocate to Vienna (for more on this, see chapter 3). In particular, the directors of three singspiel theaters that were located right next to the proposed new home of the Folies Caprice protested the move. The outraged directors were the managers of the Budapest Orpheum Society, the Lemberg Singspiel Society, and the Folies Comiques. If the “Polish” had indeed performed in Yiddish, then their director would not have perceived the presence of the Folies Caprice to be a threat, because their productions would have targeted a different segment of the

Viennese population. Only when the Lemberg Singspiel Society and the other two ensembles performed using Jewish jargon did the Folies Caprice appear to them to be a source of competition.

## The S. Fischer Society

The address 49 Zufahrtstrasse, in the heart of the Viennese Prater, was home to a venue called Zum Marokkaner (the Moroccan), where the S. Fischer Society usually performed. The group's director, Salomon Fischer (1853–1909), was born in Holicz in Moravia and tried his hand at acting when he was a young man. His early attempts in the theater, however, did not pan out. As a result, he instead became a *Volkssänger* and made his debut on the *Brettl* in 1873. Incidentally, he was the first of his profession to perform in the Prater all year round, while his colleagues fell back on the theatrical stages in other parts of the city during the winter months.<sup>62</sup> When he received his license in 1892, he was able to establish his own company, which he initially co-directed with his wife Paula Baumann, before they parted ways.<sup>63</sup>

Salomon Fischer is a vivid example of the close ties between Jewish and non-Jewish cultural strands that both contributed to a common Viennese cultural tradition. On the one hand, Fischer was firmly anchored in the Jewish world, but with his performances he also extended well beyond the Jewish milieu, thus creating a repertoire that in its entirety reflected Vienna's metropolitan cultural ambience. He organized Purim festivals and hired actors (albeit not exclusively) who had previously been employed by other Jewish theater troupes and who were familiar with the Jewish *Volkssänger* scene.<sup>64</sup> These actors included, for example, Josef Müller, who was born in Budapest in 1852.<sup>65</sup> He was primarily known for the songs he composed himself, which he performed in Jewish jargon. On the other hand, Fischer's repertoire also included plays that had no relationship to Judaism at all. In the spring of 1902, he included Ploni Pötzl, the "queen of all yodelers," in his performance program.<sup>66</sup> The entertainment staged in Zum Marokkaner thus reflected a cultural hybridity that was also clearly highlighted in one of Fischer's pieces, titled *The Jewish Christmas Tree*, which he performed on 25 and 26 December 1901.<sup>67</sup>

For Fischer, there seemed to be no clear boundaries between the Jewish and non-Jewish worlds. He renegotiated ethnic-cultural affiliations in the context of what he presented on stage, breaking down binary oppositions. In particular, we see this gesture toward critiquing binaries in the play *Your Only Patient*, written by Louis Taufstein and performed by the S. Fischer Society in 1903.<sup>68</sup> *Your Only Patient* portrays how the Jewish peddler Salamon Eisig is treated by the (non-Jewish) doctor Eulalia Pimperl. Eisig is her only patient. He comes to her office every day and complains of a series of ailments. Over the course of the play, it

becomes clear that he only fakes his illnesses. The real reason for his daily appearances is the financial support he receives from Eulalia to acquire the medications she prescribes. However, he pockets the money she gives him instead of going to the pharmacy. In addition, the doctor treats him to lunch every day, another reason for his regular visits.

The opening scenes depict Salamon as a small-time crook who shamelessly exploits Eulalia's sense of compassion. However, this depiction changes as the plot progresses, especially in light of a conversation between Eulalia and Julius Senftberger, the secret lover of her niece Ida. Julius visits Eulalia to ask her permission to marry Ida. But he proves to be too shy to make his request known. Eulalia assumes that Julius is a patient who wants to be examined, which is why she asks him to undress for the medical exam. Since Julius does not know that Ida's aunt is a doctor, he thinks her request amounts to a desire for a love affair. He is deeply outraged at Eulalia's seemingly impertinent behavior. The comical misunderstanding, however, is cleared up by the end of the play.

But before the misunderstanding can come to light, Julius rushes to Ida and reproaches her for not telling him the true nature of her aunt's profession. At this point in the play, Salamon joins Julius and Ida and confesses that he has been pulling the wool over Eulalia's eyes with regard to his illnesses. In this context, his dishonesty no longer seems like deception, but rather a venial misconduct, on par with Ida's unsettling reticence regarding her aunt's profession. Salamon, the Jewish peddler who at the beginning seemed to be a con artist, becomes a person with human weaknesses just like any non-Jew, in this case just like Ida.

Salamon's Jewishness is not explicitly mentioned or articulated in *Your Only Patient*. Since religion plays no role at all in the entire play, only his name and profession seem to hint at his Jewish identity. These are very unreliable criteria for determining a character's Jewishness. Even though the profession of the peddler was often associated with Jews, many non-Jews also practiced it. As I discussed in the case of the play *Family Pschesina*, a name alone cannot provide us a clear indication of one's ethnic or cultural affiliation. In addition, *Your Only Patient* portrays Salamon as greedy and sneaky, characteristics that were frequently employed at the time in antisemitic discourse.<sup>69</sup> But these characteristics were not used solely to describe Jews. The traits evoked to establish a character as Jewish are thus inclusive and can apply to non-Jews as well. Whether such traits are indicative of Jewishness depends entirely on context. Jewishness in *Your Only Patient* consists primarily in a difference that is also inclusive. Toward the end, when the play establishes a parallel between Salamon's behavior and that of non-Jews (at least comparable to the non-Jewish Ida's conduct), this difference largely dissolves. The distinctness of being Jewish is hardly present in the play. The boundaries between Jews and non-Jews become even more obscure and blurred.

Not all plays at this time in Vienna portrayed Jewishness as indeterminately as *Your Only Patient*. Some burlesques, written by Jews and performed by Jewish

ensembles, gesture toward the protagonists' Jewishness by implementing ostensibly immutable physical characteristics. We see such characteristics in the play *At the Marriage Broker's*, which the S. Fischer Society performed in 1903.<sup>70</sup> As the title suggests, the plot takes place in an agency that offers customers match-making and marriage brokering. Audiences would have recognized its owner, Mr. Zimt (literally "Mr. Cinnamon"), as Jewish on account of his use of a number of Yiddish terms, such as *chutzpah bokher* (*Chuzpejünger*), *shiksa*, *geschmusst*, and *ganef*. His employee, a young man named Leiser, is portrayed as a fun-loving type, who likes to smoke and seeks the acquaintance of non-Jewish women. One day, a woman comes to the office, seeking Zimt's matchmaking services to find a groom. Unfortunately, she finds all the suggested candidates unappealing. When Leiser also expresses a desire to marry during their conversation, Zimt laughs at him. Zimt declares that Leiser's big nose will prevent him from finding a bride. The customer, however, thinks Leiser is very attractive. In the end, Leiser and the woman promise to marry each other and plan to emigrate to America.

*At the Marriage Broker's* employs the trope of a big nose, an attribute often associated with Jews, and empties it of its stigmatizing power, interpreting it as a sign of beauty. The reversal of the original significance of this physical characteristic occurs by way of a straightforward critique of the anti-Jewish stereotype.<sup>71</sup> Taking the work of Homi Bhabha as a point of departure, we can understand this reversal as an act of "mimicry," whereby a common, pejorative image associated with Jews is incorporated but then reinterpreted and given new meaning through its use in a new context.<sup>72</sup> We also see this reference to a particular kind of nose, drained of its negative meaning and employed by Jewish authors of *Volkssänger* pieces as code signaling the characters' Jewishness, in a short parody of Adolphi, Albert Hirsch's son. In this piece, Adolphi talks about a woman whom he invites to accompany him to the Gänsehäufel, a public bathing beach in Vienna. There, he notices his friend Löbel, "[who has] a nose the size of a piece of Thonet furniture."<sup>73</sup> We can identify another example of a positive reworking of the "Jewish" nose in a 1909 play by Josef Armin. In this play, the plot revolves around a court case, during which the judge asks the (Jewish) defendant what her religion is. Before the defendant has a chance to answer, the plaintiff jumps in and says that everyone can see that she's Jewish on account of her nose.<sup>74</sup>

Unlike the significance that it had in antisemitic discourse of the time, the nose has no pejorative meaning in the examples that I have discussed. The trope to the "Jewish" nose often employed by Jewish *Volkssänger* serves, I argue, to invalidate the antisemitic stereotype rather than to strengthen it.

Salomon Fischer's son followed in his father's footsteps and chose a life in the theater. Emil Fischer and his wife, who performed with various groups under the stage name Charlotte Kranz, established their own ensemble in 1903 and chose as their venue Zum römischen Kaiser (the Roman Emperor), located in the Prater.<sup>75</sup> However, Emil Fischer was unable to achieve the same kind of success

that his father had. We can likely contribute his failure to the fact that by the time he founded his ensemble, the heyday of the *Volkssänger* and the singspiel halls, which had reached its peak at the beginning of the twentieth century, was already over. By the early 1900s, vaudeville and cinema had become the most popular forms of entertainment.

We can see the extent to which *Volkssänger* saw the vaudeville variety show as a particular source of competition in the fact that they increasingly oriented their performances and chose names more in line with what was happening in the vaudeville scene. For example, in the summer of 1904, Salomon Fischer hired Mister Marrion, Mister Raab, and Roszinka Galombosy to perform at the Prater-Orpheum. Marrion was lauded for his talents as a “vocal phenomenon,” Raab was famous for his ability to imitate an entire orchestra, and Galombosy was known as a “transformation singer.” Only after these three had taken the stage were there two theatrical performances with a Jewish connection: Josef Armin’s *Gutmann’s Success* and Louis Taufstein’s *The Silent Partner*.<sup>76</sup> In 1899, Albert Hirsch sought to draw crowds by advertising the performances of an “Afro-Cuban dancer named Vera Corézé” as part of his ensemble.<sup>77</sup> A year later, Hirsch announced that he had renamed his group the Variété Hirsch.<sup>78</sup>

## **The Hirsch and Kassina Ensembles**

The most important Jewish *Volkssänger* in Vienna at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by far was Albert Hirsch (1841–1927). Despite his importance for the entire *Volkssänger* industry, little scholarly attention has been devoted to him thus far. Most studies that discuss Hirsch merely repeat the information provided by Josef Koller’s 1931 survey of Viennese *Volkssänger*. Because I devote nearly the entire third chapter of this study to Albert Hirsch, I outline here only a few details related to his biography.

Albert Hirsch was born in Vienna and began his acting career early by performing with the Theater an der Wien, Theater in der Josephstadt, and Theater unter den Tuchlauben. However, despite this experience, he was unable to find a foothold in the world of theater, which is why he turned his attention to the folk-singer scene. For a time, he and his wife worked for the Drexler Singspiel and later for the Josefine Schmer Ensemble. Hirsch subsequently started his own ensemble, with family members making up the performers. His son Adolf, who was known simply by his nickname “Adolfi” and who had completed his musical education under the tutelage of Anton Bruckner (among others), was responsible for the group’s music.<sup>79</sup> Albert Hirsch, his wife, who was also a former actress, and his daughters played various roles in the group’s performances. He later added to his roster well-known *Volkssänger* such Mr. and Mrs. Armin, Karl Noisser, and Josef Müller.<sup>80</sup>

We can draw a parallel between the Jewishness that Hirsch portrayed in his plays and the sense of Jewish identification made evident by his actions. While religion was not a factor for Hirsch, we detect in his life and work a performative distinction between Jews and non-Jews. Although other *Volkssänger* had at least to some extent a similar conception of Jewish self-understanding, Hirsch provides us a clear and concrete example of this kind of Jewishness (see chapter 3). To echo what I discussed in chapter 1, Hirsch represents the Viennese Jews whose experiences and self-understanding cannot be understood in terms of acculturation.

We clearly see the deemphasizing of religion in one of Hirsch's plays, titled *Wrestlers at the Kosher Restaurant*. The focus of this play is a tavern that suffers from a painful lack of patrons.<sup>81</sup> The innkeepers, Zalma and Yentl, blame their kosher menu for their failing enterprise. They complain that even Jews avoid their restaurant because they have all discovered a love for pork. To remedy the situation, they decide to attract customers by offering entertainment and have a kind of vaudeville act in mind. However, they find themselves incapable of making any concrete steps to implement their new business model.

Zalma and Yentl's marriage appears to be in shambles, and Yentl regrets having married him. Their daughter Malvina's plans for the future are closely tied to the fate of the restaurant. Moritz, the waiter who works there, wants to marry Malvina, but Zalma is against it because Moritz does not earn enough money to support a family. Moritz suggests that they organize a wrestling match at the tavern. He argues that this attraction will lead to an influx of customers, thereby increasing profit. But before that, Moritz wants Zalma's promise that he can marry his daughter. Zalma agrees to the proposition and even puts their agreement in writing. In what follows, they announce the wrestling match with great fanfare, and patrons do indeed show up. The problem is that the customers immediately leave because the restaurant doesn't serve pork. Moritz's suggestion to organize the wrestling match reveals itself as a way of deceiving the family into allowing him to marry Malvina. Instead of inviting famous wrestlers, Moritz and another waiter who works at the restaurant enter the ring.

*Wrestlers at the Kosher Restaurant* critiques boundaries between Jews and non-Jews based on the observance of religious dietary laws. As the play illustrates it, they not only alienate Jews from non-Jews but also Jews from fellow Jews, as the absence of Jewish patrons at the restaurant underscores. A tavern restaurant offering a wide array of entertainment options—essentially an emblematic space for Jewish–non-Jewish interactions—drives off its customers in complying with a religious commandment. We might interpret the play's representation of dietary laws as an admonition that religion has no place in popular culture, that is, the realm of *Volkssänger*. The religious dimension of Jewishness, which does not appear in the overwhelming majority of *Volkssänger* plays, is thematized in *Wrestlers at the Kosher Restaurant*, only to be rejected. A religious outlook is depicted as obsolete and detrimental to everyday life. On the other hand, the play offers

no alternative, “more suitable,” form of Jewishness. We might conclude from Hirsch’s portrayal that it is preferable if Jewishness not play a role at all.

Albert Hirsch’s daughter Anna married Karl Kassina (1863–1909). Kassina started out as a Hirsch Society performer and in December 1901 received his own license to operate a singspiel.<sup>82</sup> Even when Anna and Karl Kassina left to form their own group, the two troupes maintained close professional and personal ties. Whenever the demand for *Volkssänger* abated, one of the troupes would temporarily disband and the Hirsch family would find work with the Kassinas, or vice versa. At the same time, there was a lively exchange between the two groups. It is worth noting here that the Kassina Ensemble regularly performed at the inn Neufellner’s Restaurant, located on the Lerchenfelder Gürtel in the sixteenth district, where Jews only made up about 2 percent of the population. We may therefore conclude that the group’s performances also attracted a number of non-Jews.

## **The Budapest Orpheum Society**

The Budapest Orpheum Society was probably the most well-known Jewish *Volkssänger* ensemble in all of Vienna. Because a monograph and several articles have already been devoted to this subject, I offer here only a brief outline of the group’s history.<sup>83</sup>

The reference to Budapest in the name is linked to the group’s origins. Some members of the ensemble, though they were for the most part originally from Vienna, had previously worked in the Hungarian capital. The reason for this was that Budapest was the central European center of Jewish jargon comedy, and it had a much larger and more vivid entertainment scene than Vienna.<sup>84</sup> In addition, the large singspiel halls that were mostly directed by Jewish impresarios held their performances in German, which meant that Viennese entertainers did not have to contend with a language barrier. Georg Wacks explains that Matthias Bernhard Lautzky (1819–1901), who had a license to operate a singspiel hall, traveled to Budapest in the spring of 1889 to find *Volkssänger* willing to join him in establishing his own ensemble in Vienna.<sup>85</sup> He quickly found what he was looking for. Together with Josef Modl (1863–1915), who was also a well-known folk singer, Lautzky founded the Budapest Orpheum Society.<sup>86</sup> Modl was in charge of the artistic direction. We should note here that Lautzky was not Jewish. In establishing with Modl one of the most important and famous entertainment groups in Vienna, Lautzky serves as a prime example for the mutual cooperation between Jews and non-Jews in the creation of popular cultural entertainment forms in the Habsburg metropolis. Initially, Lautzky and Modl chose the hotel Zum Schwarzen Adler, located in 11 Taborstrasse, as the performance venue for the Budapest Orpheum Society.



The plays that the Budapest Orpheum Society produced became the epitome of jargon comedy. Unlike many other singspiel groups, this ensemble was only partly associated with an aspect of popular culture that many viewed in a negative light. The Budapest Orpheum Society was also able to draw intellectuals and people from the upper echelons of society into their audiences. With their attractive performance lineup that was both extremely humorous and critical of the times, the ensemble found its way into literary works and thus became a part of collective memory.<sup>87</sup> Karl Kraus, though he wasn't entirely serious, even compared the Budapest Orpheum Society with the Burgtheater.<sup>88</sup> In any case, there was no other theater company in Vienna at the turn of the twentieth century that embodied Jewish entertainment like the Budapest Orpheum Society.

Their most important and best-known work was probably *Die Klabriaspartie* (The game of Klaberjass). Antal Oroszi (Caprice) wrote the play in 1889 and debuted it in Budapest in the same year. A year later, a somewhat altered version of the play written by Adolf Bergmann appeared in Vienna (see chapter 3 for a longer discussion).<sup>89</sup> *Die Klabriaspartie* enjoyed thousands of performances. The play focuses on a card game that Jews named Prokop Janitschek, Simon Dalles, and Jonas Ries, as well as the “Bohemian” Kiebitz Dowidl, play in a coffeehouse. There is also a character named Moritz, who is a waiter. Subtle punchlines and humorous statements run through the entire piece, and there is no recognizable course of action.<sup>90</sup> Despite the lack of plot, the play addresses the question of Jewishness like almost no other production of the time. It rejects all attempts to define Jewishness in a comprehensible fashion, suggesting that Jewishness cannot be described or measured empirically.<sup>91</sup> Similar to the other *Volkssänger* pieces that I have discussed here, the message of *Die Klabriaspartie* seems clear: there are no predetermined criteria for determining Jewishness, because it can only be negotiated contextually.

### ***Distinguishing between Jewish and Non-Jewish groups***

Thus far, I have focused in this chapter on *Volkssänger* ensembles that were generally considered to be Jewish and are still viewed as such today. This categorization appears to be justified in that the majority of these groups were made up of Jewish members, when we consider their ethnic, cultural, and religious affiliation. In addition, they performed pieces that often speak to a Jewish milieu or articulate a Jewish theme. Because these “Jewish” groups often hired and rehired the same actors and performers, they may well have made up an entire Jewish *Volkssänger* milieu. Examples of actors who performed with various Jewish groups are Karl Noisser and Mizzi Symer. While Noisser worked for the Hirsch Society, the Kassina Ensemble, and the Lemberg Singspiel Society, Symer performed with the Hirsch Society, the Karl Kassina Ensemble, the S. Fischer Society, as well as the Folies Caprice. To cite additional examples, Karl and Anna Kassina were

not only members of Albert Hirsch's company but were also engaged by the S. Fischer Society for a temporary stint in June 1903.<sup>92</sup> Armin Berg (1883–1956) also worked for Fischer, as well as the Budapest Orpheum Society, the Budapest Variété (a spin-off of the Budapest Orpheum Society), and other Jewish groups.<sup>93</sup> The Jewish *Volkssänger* and the groups they worked for were all closely linked with one another and thus created an environment that did not exclude non-Jews but could nonetheless be viewed at least to some extent as independent. We see this interconnectedness also in celebrations that were sometimes held to honor one of these actors. Most of the actors who took part in such events were Jewish and had previously performed in various Jewish groups alongside their colleague being celebrated. Non-Jews tended to be absent from such events, just as Jews often did not attend other festivities.<sup>94</sup>

Nevertheless, it would be incorrect to assume that there was a sharp contrast between Jews and non-Jews in the Viennese *Volkssänger* scene, as there was a fair amount of overlap between Jewish and non-Jewish groups. The composition of these groups frequently shifted; non-Jewish groups might have a Jewish director or Jewish members from one day to the next. The Gartenbau Restaurant, with its vaudeville performances, provides us an example of this variability. At the beginning of 1901, Käthe and Josef Armin both performed there. Martin Schenk, who was not Jewish but had previously performed with the Budapest Orpheum Society, was also engaged there.<sup>95</sup> Josef Müller, who was famous for his jargon songs, earned his living for a time at the Gartenbau.<sup>96</sup> This venue exemplifies the close cooperation that existed between Jews and non-Jews in Viennese popular culture.

We see a similar amalgamation between Jewish and non-Jewish groups in the performances that they offered the public. Troupes that had few if any Jewish actors in their ranks frequently staged so-called Jewish plays. These ensembles sometimes replaced their Alpine popular folk pieces with Jewish burlesques or simply added them to their lineup. In addition to other groups, the Mannsfeld Singspiel Group, located at the Wiedener Variété in the fourth district, did just this. In May 1904, the Blümel Comedy Ensemble was still the big attraction at the Wiedener Variété.<sup>97</sup> At the beginning of October, the group performed Josef Armin's *Illustrated Pages*.<sup>98</sup> Armin's play is a Jewish farce that the S. Fischer Society and the Folies Caprice also staged.<sup>99</sup> Two years prior, the Wiedener Variété had performed a play that it had borrowed from the Budapest Orpheum Society.<sup>100</sup> In mid-October 1904, Louis Taufstein's *A Fine Society* was performed.<sup>101</sup> Taufstein's pieces were also incorporated into the repertoire of the aforementioned Gartenbau Restaurant, which frequently offered farces and singspiel performances with Jewish themes. In this context, I would be remiss if I did not mention the heavily advertised performance of Adolf Wollner, who sang the hit song "Worüm war der klane Kohn nix zu finden?" ("Why was Little Kohn nowhere to be found?"), written by Eugen Joessel.<sup>102</sup> But none of these details that I have discussed here mean that the Mannsfeld Singspiel, the Gartenbau Restaurant, or other outfits

were specifically Jewish establishments. Rather, they positioned themselves in an interstitial space that made clear demarcations between Jewish and non-Jewish impossible.

My analysis here underscores how the divisions between Jewish and non-Jewish *Volkssänger* groups remained ambiguous. But we should not find this surprising. Instead, we must question the validity of seeking to identify a clear distinction between Jewish and non-Jewish ensembles. Such an approach is often based on a framework that involves binary categories, which consequently makes it difficult to discover the overlap between the two. Sometimes, this perceived need to seek out a contrast between Jewish and non-Jewish is the result of particular publication motives. For example, a study on Jewish popular cultural entertainment will hardly meet the expectations if its thesis argues that such a distinction cannot be made because the definition of Jewish is indeterminate.<sup>103</sup>

## **The Apollo and Danzer's Orpheum**

At any rate, the diverse interrelations between Jewish and non-Jewish *Volkssänger* ensembles make it somewhat difficult to identify particular groups as Jewish. This kind of classification is entirely impossible in the case of the vaudeville act (*variété*). The fact that a group performed individual jargon pieces and/or had a Jewish director is not enough to consider it Jewish. Otherwise, we would have to categorize the Ronacher in the final decade of the nineteenth century as a Jewish institution, because Josef Modl was the big star there. The problem of categorization is particularly evident when we take into consideration the Apollo Theater and Danzer's Orpheum, which were both directed by Jews. The Apollo was opened in September 1904. Ben Tieber (1867–1925), who was born in Bratislava, not far from Vienna, took over as manager.<sup>104</sup> Tieber traveled to America at a young age, and he was in charge of vaudeville shows in New York and other cities. He may have also spent time in South Africa engaged in similar activities, but the historical evidence for this is not as solid.<sup>105</sup> While he was abroad, Tieber acquired skills in business, which came in handy when he returned to Vienna. Upon his return, he first oversaw the Colosseum, before he took over management of the Apollo in 1904, serving as director there until 1923. After this time, illness forced him to lease out the space to another company.<sup>106</sup> On account of his entrepreneurial acumen, Tieber quickly succeeded in bringing in enough profit to acquire the Apollo one year after taking it over by means of a lease agreement. With an attractive lineup that not only brought internationally acclaimed productions to Vienna, but also vaunted its original performances, Tieber's Apollo was soon able to outstrip the Ronacher as the most prominent entertainment establishment.<sup>107</sup> His booming success also had something to do with appearances made by scantily clad dancers, earning Tieber the nickname “nudist specialist.”<sup>108</sup>

Ben Tieber was always concerned with offering the public new attractions, which is why he often traveled abroad. In 1905, for example, he spent several months in Germany, France, and England to discover new acts that he could bring back to Vienna.<sup>109</sup> Success, however, did not grace Tieber forever. Over time, the variety show outlived its popularity. As a result, Tieber saw the need to transform the Apollo into a theater in the traditional sense. He obtained the necessary approval for this change through the persistence that he was known to bring to all his endeavors.

When Gabor Steiner replaced Franz Kriebaum as director of Danzer's Orpheum in May 1900, he seems to have realized that the golden years of singspiel and vaudeville were, if not yet entirely over, fast approaching their end.<sup>110</sup> His predecessor's bankruptcy may have acted as a warning to him.<sup>111</sup> For this reason, Steiner sought to rebrand Danzer's Orpheum and turn it into a "boulevard theater" that would "unite true art with international artists."<sup>112</sup> For him, "true art" consisted of the operetta and bourgeois theater.

Gabor Steiner (1858–1944) was born in Temesvár, then part of the Kingdom of Hungary. He came from a family firmly rooted in the theater business. His father, Maximilian Steiner (1830–80), made his living as an actor before taking over as artistic director of the Theater an der Wien in 1869 and then as principal director of the theater in 1873. He appointed the operetta composer Carl Millöcker (1844–99) musical director of the theater. Later he also hired Johann Strauss II (1825–99) to work at the theater.<sup>113</sup> After Maximilian's death, his eldest son Franz Steiner (1855–1920) took over as director of Theater an der Wien. A few years later, he became manager of the Carltheater in the Praterstrasse, where his brother Gabor Steiner worked as a director and artistic director. He gained fame primarily as the director of Venice in Vienna (Venedig in Wien), located in the Vienna Prater, which replicated the sights of Venice with its canals and gondolas.<sup>114</sup>

## Venice in Vienna

In its early days, Venice in Vienna was by far the most important entertainment venue in all of Vienna. There were days when it attracted up to twenty thousand people. Gabor Steiner was able to make a name for himself as theater director there. During the winter months, Danzer's Orpheum served as a temporary home for Venice in Vienna's theatrical productions. From 1909 until 1912, Gabor Steiner also functioned as the director of the Ronacher. His son Max (1888–1971) was a film composer in the United States. He wrote the score for film classics such as *Gone with the Wind* (1939) and *Casablanca* (1943).<sup>115</sup>

The opening event at Danzer's Orpheum at the end of October 1900 featured the Brothers O'Brien, a pair of horizontal bar gymnasts, the dancer La

Sylphe, the eccentrics Smith and Cook, as well as other internationally known vaudeville stars.<sup>116</sup> The season premiere at the Apollo on 2 September 1904 presented, among other attractions, the soubrette Adele Moraw, the “mulatto dandies” Johnson & Dean, the juggler Everhardt, the Patty Frank gymnast troupe from Vienna, and a “biotophon,” an invention from the early days of cinema that entertained audiences with “singing, talking, and musical photographs.”<sup>117</sup> This colorful program once again demonstrates how difficult, if not impossible, it is to consider the Apollo, Danzer’s Orpheum, or even a number of other venues that existed in Vienna at this time as part of the “Jewish” entertainment industry.

The fact that both Ben Tieber and Gabor Steiner left Judaism problematizes this categorization further still. This begs the question whether we can even regard the two to be Jewish directors. Some academic studies sidestep the question of whether converts can still be considered to be Jews by referring to their “origin.”<sup>118</sup> This kind of historical approach needn’t take into account religious affiliation and can simply dismiss a biographical detail such as the rejection of Judaism. My approach in this study is altogether different.<sup>119</sup> I therefore attempt to answer the question of whether Ben Tieber and Gabor Steiner are examples of Jewish entrepreneurs in the Viennese entertainment industry using different means.

### ***Establishing a Criterion for Jewish Difference***

In the following, I explore two aspects that will help us to characterize Ben Tieber and Gabor Steiner as Jewish without reference to their religious status. We can subsume these two aspects under the term “Jewish difference,” in that they draw a distinction between Jews and non-Jews. The characteristics are dependent upon context and usually contain a performative element.<sup>120</sup>

The first aspect pertains to the choice of religion of the two converts. In 1887, Gabor Steiner married a former Catholic who had converted to Judaism. The fact that he remained faithful to Judaism and did not convert or agree to a civil wedding ceremony suggests that he saw himself as Jewish at the time. However, six years later, both Gabor Steiner and his wife converted from Judaism and became Protestants.<sup>121</sup> Though we do not know their exact motivations for this decision, it may have been the result of professional considerations. In this context, we should mention that the Vienna Zoo was forced to declare bankruptcy in 1900 because it had failed to receive public subsidies. It is quite possible that the city government, with Karl Lueger as mayor at that time, refused to assist the failing enterprise due to antisemitic sentiment. The zoo was a large attraction in Vienna, and tens of thousands of people came to visit its exhibitions featuring indigenous peoples. The zoo’s provisional director was Richard Goldmann, who was Jewish.<sup>122</sup> Given the political climate in fin-de-siècle Vienna, Gabor Steiner perhaps decided to officially renounce Judaism to attract paying customers with antisemitic inclinations who might have otherwise chosen other entertainment

options. It was known that Karl Lueger often attended performances at Venice in Vienna.<sup>123</sup> We can only speculate as to whether Lueger would have avoided the venue if Steiner had remained Jewish. In any case, Steiner's decision to leave the Jewish community likely did not hurt his professional ambitions.

Ben Tieber converted from Judaism and was baptized a Protestant in January 1899. A sense of conviction may have been more of a motivation for Tieber than for Steiner. There is historical evidence indicating that Tieber more or less felt a personal connection to and identified with Protestantism. His charitable donations to Protestant schools seem to suggest this sense of commitment.<sup>124</sup> We should note that both Ben Tieber and Gabor Steiner made a conscious decision to convert to Protestantism, which was a minority religion in Austria. Only a little more than 5 percent of the Austrian population was Protestant. Nevertheless, a fourth of Jews who decided to convert chose to be Protestant. Approximately half of Jewish converts decided to become Catholic, while the final fourth chose to be unaffiliated with any religious faith.<sup>125</sup> It is entirely possible that the decision to become Protestant had something to do with particular cultural similarities between Protestantism and the worldview of the bourgeoisie, to which a significant number of Jews belonged.<sup>126</sup> This choice of conversion may have also been the result of an unwillingness to join the religion chiefly responsible for the intellectual climate in Austria in which Jews who lived visibly as Jews had to contend with considerable disadvantages.<sup>127</sup> Seen in this light, conversion to Protestantism points to a particular form of Jewish self-understanding and underscores a distinction between Jews and non-Jews in Vienna around 1900.

The second aspect of "Jewish difference" that I identify in my analysis of Gabor Steiner and Ben Tieber concerns their mutual focus on the international. Because of this focus, they clearly stood out from a large part of the popular entertainment sector in Vienna around 1900. The Viennese entertainment industry was strongly influenced by *Volkssänger*, even if the various singspiel halls created a tangible sense of competition among them. The *Volkssänger* were closely associated with the trope of Old Vienna and highlighted in their songs a culture based on the local. An open atmosphere of xenophobia was one result of this emphasis (see chapter 3). Even though Jews participated in this tradition, it is possible that this sense of xenophobia was for some of them a source of discomfort. They may have been aware that the construction of a culture that was closely tied to a concept of Vienna and based on the delineation between itself and "foreign" influences could quickly lead to an attempt to deny Jews the possibility of participating in it. I have already shown an example of this attempt at exclusivity in chapter 1. And this sense of anguish may have been a reason that the city's large variety theaters, whose international performances provided a cultural counterpoint to the local cult around Old Vienna, were at least partially run or financed by Jews.<sup>128</sup> A look at Viennese institutions illustrates this point. Among the most important establishments that made up the city's entertainment industry at the

turn of the century were the Gschwandner, the Prater-Variété, Brady's Wintergarten, Weigl's Variété, the Ronacher, the Colosseum, the Apollo Theater, Danzer's Orpheum, and the Budapest Orpheum.<sup>129</sup> The last five of these establishments on this list were probably the most popular and most well-known entertainment venues in Vienna. In this context, it is rather remarkable that, at least for a short time and sometimes over the course of many years, these establishments all had a Jewish director who was also responsible for the artistic program.<sup>130</sup> And it seems that these impresarios were more enthusiastic than their non-Jewish counterparts about introducing the Viennese to international acts from around the world. Presumably, they endeavored to bring the international element as a remedy for Vienna's intellectual narrowness and provincial atmosphere. Gabor Steiner, for one, was explicitly committed to this goal. At the end of 1930, he wrote in the *Illustrierte Wochenpost* that he was particularly motivated in his work as a theater director by a desire to make the city more cosmopolitan through international performing acts.<sup>131</sup> He also considered himself to have been one of the first to invite African Americans to perform in Vienna.<sup>132</sup> As I have already discussed, Ben Tieber also had many international experiences that he put to good use in Vienna.<sup>133</sup> A look at what the Apollo offered before and during Ben Tieber's time as theater director makes for a compelling comparison. Whereas Tieber entertained audiences with a number of international attractions, the performance program in the year before he took over the venue was characterized by Old Viennese classics such as *The Sweet Guys* (*Die süßen Buam*) and the "Viennese yodeling duet, Kiesel-Marie and Korber."<sup>134</sup>

## Conclusion

I argue that the *Volksänger* plays penned by Jewish authors portray Jewishness without reference to religion. In these representations, Jewishness is anything but clearly outlined; instead, it is fluid, multifaceted, and opaque. In most of these pieces, Jewishness is expressed in a form of performative difference: Jews distinguish themselves from non-Jews through activities or their effects. This means that Jewish difference, as constructed in these works, is time- and context-dependent. In addition, this concept of Jewish self-understanding is inclusive, in that even non-Jews can adopt their characteristics. But that does not mean that all difference between Jews and non-Jews is lost (for more on this point, see chapter 5).

I have demonstrated through a range of *Volksänger* pieces that the Jewishness of the characters is indicated by way of their use of Yiddish-language terms. The use of Yiddish is not surprising. As the capital of a multiethnic monarchy, fin-de-siècle Vienna was the haven of tens of thousands of migrants who brought their own linguistic particularity and made multilingualism a prime characteristic of the city. Vienna's inhabitants connected their various ethnic and cultural identifi-

cations to language, thus promoting the particular brand of linguistic nationalism that would ultimately lead to the Austro-Hungarian Empire's downfall.<sup>135</sup> The fact that the Jewish characters in the farces performed by *Volkssänger* ensembles also demonstrate their difference through language underscores Jewish participation in the discourses and cultural processes of the time. Simultaneously, these pieces question the importance of language for ethnic identity. In particular, we see this in the fact that Jewishness was often indicated by the use of Yiddish expressions that were also a part of everyday speech in Vienna. Although the Jewish characters spoke German with Yiddish inflection (*jiddeln*), they used language that non-Jews could also understand and use. These plays thus eliminate one potential clear distinction between Jews and non-Jews and call into question the significance of differentiation based on ethnicity and culture.

One farce that clearly illustrates the problem of language is the play *Viennese Hospitality*, written by Adolf Hirsch.<sup>136</sup> It takes place in a Viennese coffeehouse that fails to attract business. For this reason, the coffeehouse's owner is all the more pleased when Count Horlos, one of his few regular customers, announces that he wants to introduce a friend from Bohemia to Viennese hospitality. Count Horlos explains that he would like to invite his friend to the café that evening. Because he has to attend the opera with his wife and leave his friend to his own devices for a period of time, Horlos asks the owner to be friendly toward his guest and serve him well. He assures the owner that he will take care of the bill. That evening, a Berliner comes to the coffeehouse, and the staff assume that he is the count's friend. The waiters provide him exemplary service, bringing him all the delicacies on their menu and the best champagne. When he attempts to pay the bill after his opulent meal, they not only comp his bill but also give him a cash sum. They do all this on the assumption that Count Horlos will later pay the bill. The only difficulty that arises is the conversation between the waiters and the guest. The conversations create misunderstandings, thereby also confusion and discord. The reason for this misunderstanding lies in the fine linguistic differences between the Berlin and Viennese ways of speaking. When the count's real friend, a beer brewer from Bohemia finally shows up, they think he is a dine-and-dasher and almost throw him out. Only the appearance of the count prevents this embarrassment from happening. Once he arrives, they all clear up the misunderstanding.

The play is more than a simple comedy of errors. Against the background of the multiethnic Habsburg monarchy with its linguistic pluralism and the closely related nationalisms, it deconstructs the notion of a language-based cultural homogeneity. Although both the guest from Berlin and the Viennese waiters speak German, serious problems in communication arise that point to deeper cultural differences. *Viennese Hospitality* thus thematizes aspects of language use—a topic that has received considerable attention throughout Austrian history. Questions such as how to establish mutual understanding despite linguistic differences be-



tween various ethnic groups and how to communicate meaning without ambiguity dominated political debate at the time and occupied many scholars and intellectuals.<sup>137</sup> Especially this situation throughout the monarchy influenced, for example, how the philosophers Ludwig Wittgenstein and Fritz Mauthner engaged with questions related to language.<sup>138</sup> Writers and intellectuals such as Hugo von Hofmannsthal and especially Karl Kraus devoted themselves to the question of language's potential as a form of expression.<sup>139</sup> Jewish *Volksänger* also entertained these kinds of questions. *Viennese Hospitality* illustrates how divisions between people are maintained despite—or perhaps even because of—their shared language and the underlying concept of a German cultural nation. The construction of identity based on language thus proves to be a myth. The play calls to mind the adage, incorrectly attributed to Karl Kraus, that nothing separates the Germans and the Austrians quite like the language they have in common.

## Notes

1. Mary Gluck, *The Invisible Jewish Budapest: Metropolitan Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2016).
2. See the bibliography for additional information.
3. Joseph Roth, *Juden auf Wanderschaft* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer und Witsch, 1985), 46.
4. *Das Variété* 17 (25 February 1903): 1.
5. Ruth Beckermann, *Die Mazzesinsel: Juden in der Leopoldstadt 1918–1938* (Vienna: Löcker, 1992).
6. Marsha L. Rozenblit, *Juden in Wien 1867–1914: Assimilation und Identität* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1989), 85, 87.
7. See Peter Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988).
8. See Andreas Resch, “Die Wiener Kulturwirtschaft um 1910 und die Partizipation von Juden, Tschechen und ‘Staatsfremden,’” in *Migration und Innovation um 1900: Perspektiven auf das Wien der Jahrhundertwende*, ed. Elisabeth Röhrlich (Vienna: Böhlau, 2016), 165.
9. Gluck, *Jewish Budapest*, 168.
10. *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt (IWE* in subsequent citations) 309 (9 November 1899): 8; 310 (10 November 1899): 15. In some instances, the opening date is erroneously given as 1 November 1899. See Johannes A. Löcker, “Vom Donaukanal zum Praterstern,” in *Artistenleben auf vergessenen Wegen: Eine Spurensuche in Wien*, ed. Birgit Peter, Robert Kaldy-Karo (= *Wien – Musik und Theater* 4, Vienna: LIT, 2013), 36.
11. *IWE* 66 (8 March 1900): 5.
12. *IWE* 320 (26 September 1899): 19.
13. Verena Schäffer, “Theater und Variété im Nestroyhof: 1899 bis 1938. Vier Jahrzehnte theatraler Produktion in der Wiener Leopoldstadt” (unpublished thesis, Vienna, 2008), 42–43.
14. Gerhard Müller-Schwefe, *Was haben die aus Shakespeare gemacht! Weitere alte und neue Shakespeare-Parodien* (Tübingen: A. Francke, 1993), 75.

15. For example, see *IWE* 245 (6 September 1900): 14.
16. *IWE* 300 (1 November 1900): 4.
17. *IWE* 284 (16 October 1901): 2.
18. Schäffer, “Theater,” 51.
19. *Das Variété* 6 (29 November 1902): n.p.
20. Josef Armin (Rottenstein) (1858–1925) was born in Budapest and came to Vienna in 1873, where he got his start in a textiles company. He soon joined a traveling *Volkssänger* troupe. Along with his wife, Armin performed with various groups, including the Hirsch Society and the Folies Comiques. He also worked as a comedian at Danzer’s Orpheum, the Gartenbau variety, and Venice in Vienna. He attained his greatest fame with the farces that he composed for the Budapest Orpheum Society. See Josef Koller, *Das Wiener Volkssängertum in alter und neuer Zeit: Nacherzähltes und Selbsterlebtes* (Vienna: Gerlach & Wiedling, 1931).
21. Ulrike Spring, “Der Himmel über Wien. Franz Schubert, sein Körper und Alt-Wien,” in *Alt-Wien: Die Stadt, die niemals war*, ed. Wolfgang Kos and Christian Rapp (Vienna: Verlag, 2004), 151–58.
22. Louis Taufstein, *Familie Pschesina*, Niederösterreichisches Landesarchiv [NÖLA in subsequent citations] (Theaterzensur), Box 37/12 (1903). Newspapers also announced the play *Familie Pschesina* variously as *Familie Brzezina* (*IWE* 35 [3 February 1903]: 18). The spelling of Pschesina likely corresponded to how the name was pronounced.
23. *Das Variété* 1 (15 October 1902): n.p.
24. During a performance of the opera *The Bartered Bride* by Bedrich Smetana in February 1903, an ensemble member is said to have proclaimed the words “Waclav Brzezina” during the performance. A Czech newspaper reported this occurrence and interpreted it as an insult to the “Czech nation” (*IWE* 45 [15 February 1903]: 5).
25. *IWE* 287 (19 October 1901): 14.
26. Doris A. Karner, *Lachen unter Tränen. Jüdisches Theater in Ostgalizien und der Bukowina* (Vienna: Edition Steinbauer, 2005), 118.
27. Brigitte Dalinger, “‘Verloschene Sterne’: Geschichte des jüdischen Theaters in Wien” (PhD dissertation, Vienna, 1995), 21.
28. Siegler, “Der Soldat von Plewna,” NÖLA (Theaterzensur), Box 14/10 (1903).
29. See Daniel Wildmann, *Der veränderbare Körper: Jüdische Turner, Männlichkeit und das Wiedergewinnen von Geschichte in Deutschland um 1900* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009).
30. S. Larescu, “Jüdalys mit dem Wandersack: Realistisches Bild mit Tanz und Gesang,” NÖLA (Theaterzensur), Box 14/17 (1904).
31. Dalinger, “Sterne,” 23.
32. David Biale, *Eros and the Jews: From Biblical Israel to Contemporary America* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 159–60.
33. On this, also see the footnotes in Dalinger, “Sterne,” 20–27.
34. *IWE* 194 (18 July 1901): 15.
35. Dalinger, “Sterne,” 21.
36. Dalinger, “Sterne,” 21.
37. Yiddish theater did not gain prominence in Vienna until the end of the first decade of the twentieth century. See Dalinger, “Sterne,” 28.
38. The play is actually called *Gimpel Is here!* (See Albert Hirsch, *Der Gimpel ist da!*, NÖLA [Theaterzensur], Box 21/20 [1901].) However, the newspapers announced the piece as

- Gimpel from Lemberg Is Here!* probably on account of the obvious reference to the real-life theater director. For my purposes here, I have placed “from Lemberg” in parentheses.
39. Klaus Hödl, *Als Bettler in die Leopoldstadt: Galizische Juden auf dem Weg nach Wien* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1994), 148–52.
  40. *IWE* 194 (18 July 1901): 15.
  41. Georg Wacks, “Der schöne Moritz von der Klabriaspattie,” in *Jüdisches Kabarett in Wien 1889–2009*, ed. Marie-Theres Arnbom and Georg Wacks (Vienna: Armin Berg, 2009), 54–55.
  42. *Das Variété* 15 (8 February 1903): n.p.
  43. Fritz Lung was born in Vienna as Friedrich Lung and as a child acted at the Josefstadt Theater. Later, he performed in Berlin, Hamburg, Dresden, and other cities, before he became a *Volkssänger*. In 1897, he received a license to operate a singspiel hall and was able to start his own business (*IWE* 78 [18 March 1904]: 7).
  44. *IWE* 28 (28 January 1903): 6.
  45. See *IWE* 175 (27 June 1902): 15; *IWE* 166 (18 June 1902): 13. Hirsch’s own troupe performed *Dada-Dodo* in November 1901. See *IWE* 314 (15 January 1901): 23. On Wiesberg, see Anna Maria Huber, “Wilhelm Wiesberg” (unpublished PhD dissertation, Vienna, 1938).
  46. *IWE* 166 (18 June 1902): 13. On Schmendrik, see Klaus Hödl, “A Space of Cultural Exchange: Reflections on the Yiddish Theatre in the Late Nineteenth Century,” *Pinkas* 3 (2010): 24–41.
  47. See *IWE* 198 (20 July 1902): 23; *IWE* 235 (26 August 1902): 15; *IWE* 237 (28 August 1902): 15.
  48. For example, see *IWE* 177 (29 June 1902): 20.
  49. *IWE* 328 (29 November 1901): 14.
  50. *IWE* 356 (28 December 1901): 6.
  51. Franz Xaver Kriebaum was born in Vienna and apprenticed to be a saddle maker. During the war against Prussia in 1866, he demonstrated great valor, for which he received the Silver Cross of Merit and later a singspiel license. At first, he tried his hand at performing as a *Volkssänger* in Pest and then had a breakthrough in Vienna, where he took the stage as part of a duo along with Aton Nowak. After their collaboration ended, he established his own variety show but gained greater fame only after taking over as director of Danzer’s Orpheum (*Artistentribüne* 34 [22 August 1895]: 1–2).
  52. Born in Pest, Josefine Schmer began her career in Vienna as a member of the prominent group run by Johann Fürst (1825–82). She often played men and became famous for her so-called trousers roles (*Hosenrollen*). Many of the great stars of the Viennese *Volkssänger* scene performed in the ensemble that she founded in 1870.
  53. *IWE* 200 (24 July 1901): 3.
  54. *IWE* 212 (5 August 1901): 3.
  55. *IWE* 187 (11 July 1901): 15.
  56. Marietta Kriebaum had also once been a singer at the Deutsches Landestheater in Prague, where she met her husband (*IWE* 187 [11 July 1901]: 15). After marriage, she retreated into the domestic sphere and gained a reputation as a patron. She later received a license to run her own ensemble after the death of her husband.
  57. *IWE* 314 (15 November 1900): 15; *IWE* 328 (29 November 1900): 8.
  58. I borrow the term “space of communication” from the Austrian historian Moritz Csáky, “Hybride Kommunikationsräume und Mehrfachidentitäten. Zentraleuropa und Wien

- um 1900,” in *Migration und Innovation um 1900: Perspektiven auf das Wien der Jahrhundertwende*, ed. Elisabeth Röhrlich (Vienna: Böhlau, 2016), 65–97.
59. *IWE* 123 (3 May 1904): 8.
  60. *IWE* 314 (15 November 1900): 15.
  61. *IWE* 201 (23 July 1902): 14.
  62. *IWE* 71 (13 March 1901): 9.
  63. Koller, *Volkssängertum*, 146, 149.
  64. On Fischer’s Purim in 1901, see *IWE* 63 (5 March 1901): 15.
  65. Koller, *Volkssängertum*, 92–94.
  66. *IWE* 89 (1 April 1902): 8.
  67. *IWE* 354 (25 December 1901): 83.
  68. Louis Taufstein, “Ihr einziger Patient,” *NÖLA* (Theaterzensur), Box 17/11 (1903).
  69. Henry Wassermann, “Stereotype Darstellungen von Juden in der Karikatur,” in *Antisemitismus: Erscheinungsformen der Judenfeindschaft gestern und heute*, ed. Günther B. Ginzler (Bielefeld: Wissenschaft und Politik, 1991), 426.
  70. Alfred Walters, “Im Heiratsbureau,” *NÖLA* (Zensur), Box 17/9 (1903).
  71. For more on the stereotype of the Jewish nose, see Sander Gilman, *The Jew’s Body* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 169–93.
  72. Homi K. Bhabha, *Die Verortung der Kultur* (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 2000), 25–50.
  73. Adolff Hirsch, “Der ‘Dumme Kerl’ im *Gänsehäufel*,” *NÖLA* (Theaterzensur), Box 23/5 (1912), 5.
  74. Josef Armin, “Die Frau mit der Maske: Original-Posse in 1 Akt” (1909; 47 pp.) in *NÖLA* (Zensurakten), Box 29/6. We can see the degree to which the idea of the “Jewish nose” was part and parcel of the thinking of the time in a drawing that appeared in 1899 in the *Illustrierte Wiener Extrablatt*. The purpose of the drawing was to give readers an impression of the “Narrenabend des Wiener Männergesangsvereins” (Fool’s Night at the Viennese Men’s Choral Society). Among the masked men portrayed in the image is Heinrich Eisenbach (1870–1923), who functioned as the leader of the Budapest Orpheum Society from 1894 until World War I. Eisenbach, whose family was originally from Galicia, is clearly identified by a hooked nose. Despite the disguise he wears, he cannot hide. Even if the sketch in this instance was not the result of anti-Jewish motive, it nevertheless further solidifies the notorious stereotype that Jews had a particular type of nose.
  75. *IWE* 293 (25 October 1903): 16.
  76. *IWE* 181 (1 July 1904): 15.
  77. *IWE* 49 (18 February 1899): 8.
  78. *IWE* 5 (6 January 1900): 16.
  79. *Österreichisches Musiklexikon* (Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften), [http://www.musiklexikon.ac.at/ml/musik\\_H/Hirsch\\_Familie\\_2.xml](http://www.musiklexikon.ac.at/ml/musik_H/Hirsch_Familie_2.xml) (accessed 12 January 2019).
  80. Koller, *Volkssängertum*, 131.
  81. Albert Hirsch, *Ringkämpfer in der Koscher-Restaurations*, *NÖLA* (Zensur), Box 21/17 (1900).
  82. *IWE* 353 (24 December 1901): 9.
  83. See Georg Wacks’s important monograph, *Die Budapester Orpheumgesellschaft: Ein Varieté in Wien 1889–1919* (Vienna: Holzhausen, 2002).
  84. Gluck, *Jewish Budapest*, 141.

85. Wacks, *Budapester Orpheumgesellschaft*, 6.
86. Josef Modl was born in Vienna and was hired by Drexler's Singpielhalle in 1884. He spent much of his professional life in Budapest. In Vienna, he performed mostly with the Budapest Orpheum Society and the Ronacher. See Koller, *Volkssängertum*, 166–67.
87. Simon Usaty, "O Tempora O Zores: Der österreichische Kabarettist Armin Berg" (PhD diss., Vienna, 2008), 5.
88. Dietmar Krug, "Was die Österreicher und die Deutschen trennt," *Die Presse*, 17 November 2012, <http://diepresse.com/home/meinung/diesedeutschen/1313957/Was-die-Österreicher-und-die-Deutschen-trennt> (accessed 12 January 2019).
89. Gluck, *Jewish Budapest*, 168–70.
90. Wacks, *Budapester Orpheumgesellschaft*, 56–57.
91. Gluck, *Jewish Budapest*, 170.
92. *IWE* 145 (2 June 1903): 8.
93. Usaty, "Tempora."
94. For example, see *IWE* 92 (4 April 1900): 7.
95. *IWE* 278 (10 October 1901): 18.
96. *IWE* 1 (1 January 1902): 8.
97. *IWE* 123 (3 May 1904): 16.
98. *IWE* 272 (1 October 1904): 10.
99. *IWE* 283 (12 October 1904): 15; 342 (13 December 1903): 43.
100. *Das Variété* 2 (15 October 1902): n.p.
101. *IWE* 283 (12 October 1904): 15.
102. *Das Variété* 5 (16 November 1902): n.p.
103. In this context, it is useful refer to a companion volume that accompanied an exhibit at the Jewish Museum Vienna that took place in 2016, titled "Wege ins Vergnügen: Unterhaltung zwischen Prater und Stadt" ("Paths to pleasure: Entertainment between Prater and the city"). The topic of the exhibit was "Jewish" entertainment establishments and artists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For example, the companion volume mentions that the Budapest Orpheum Society was "a group of Jewish actors" (Brigitte Dalinger, "Jüdisches und Jiddisches," in *Wege ins Vergnügen: Unterhaltung zwischen Prater und Stadt*, ed. Brigitte Dalinger, Werner Hanak-Lettner, and Lisa Noggler [Vienna: Metropolverlag, 2016], 29.) Although this characterization might be appropriate for a publication dedicated to Jewish life, it is nonetheless incorrect. Admittedly, the majority of the members of the Budapest Orpheum Society was Jewish, but the group also had non-Jewish performers. And, I might add, not every single satirical song that the group sang and not every farce that they performed had a Jewish theme, even if this was often the case.
104. Other sources indicate that this birthplace was "somewhere in Galicia or in the Bukovina." See Rudolf Oesterreicher, "Ein großer Mann und seine kleinen Schwächen," in *Festschrift der Apollo Kino- und Theater-Ges. M. B. H.* (Vienna, 1954), 18.
105. *Österreichisches Biographisches Lexikon 1815–1850*, vol. 14 (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2014), 338–39.
106. Sabine Claudia Tanner, *Vom Variété zum Kino: Die Baugeschichte des Wiener 'Apollo'-Varietés von 1903–1929* (Saarbrücken: Dr. Müller, 2009), 24–25.
107. Tanner, *Variété*, 26.
108. Birgit Peter, "Schaulust und Vergnügen: Zirkus, Variété und Revue im Wien der Ersten Republik" (PhD diss., Vienna, 2001), 100.

109. *IWE* 241 (1 September 1905): 7.
110. *IWE* 132 (15 May 1900): 6.
111. In particular, Kriebaum had to contend with competition from the Colosseum, which Ben Tieber managed at the time.
112. *IWE* 133 (16 May 1900): 5; 274 (6 October 1901): 3.
113. Norbert Rubey and Peter Schoenwald, *Venedig in Wien: Theater- und Vergnügungsstadt der Jahrhundertwende* (Vienna: Carl Ueberreuter 1996), 10–15.
114. Rubey and Schoenwald, *Venedig in Wien*, 39–161.
115. Rubey and Schoenwald, *Venedig in Wien*, 37.
116. *IWE* 299 (31 October 1900): 6.
117. Josef Zak, “Fünfzig Jahre ‘Apollo’ – Ein Rückblick,” *Festschrift der Apollo Kino- und Theater-Ges. M. B. H.* (Vienna, 1954), 12.
118. Steven Beller, “The Influence of Jewish Immigration,” in *Migration und Innovation um 1900: Perspektiven auf das Wien der Jahrhundertwende*, ed. Elisabeth Röhrlich (Vienna: Böhlau, 2016), 194.
119. Susan Glenn criticizes the reference to origin and ancestry as “blood logic.” See Susan A. Glenn, “In the Blood? Consent, Descent, and the Ironies of Jewish Identity,” *Jewish Social Studies* 8, no. 2 (2002): 139–52.
120. On the concept of “Jewish difference,” though formulated in different terms, also see Lisa Silverman, “Reconsidering the Margins: Jewishness as an Analytical Framework,” *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 8, no. 1 (2009): 103–20.
121. Rubey and Schoenwald, *Venedig in Wien*, 25.
122. Werner Michael Schwarz, *Anthropologische Spektakel: Zur Schaustellung ‘exotischer’ Menschen, Wien 1870–1910* (Vienna: Turia + Kant, 2001), 167.
123. Rubey and Schoenwald, *Venedig in Wien*, 34–35.
124. Astrid Schweighofer, *Religiöse Sucher in der Moderne: Konversionen vom Judentum zum Protestantismus in Wien um 1900* (Munich: de Gruyter, 2015), 359.
125. Rozenblit, *Juden in Wien*, 148.
126. Schweighofer, *Religiöse Sucher*, 57–63.
127. Michael Pollak, “Innovation und soziale Identität im Wien des Fin de Siècle,” in *Eine zerstörte Kultur: Jüdisches Leben und Antisemitismus in Wien seit dem 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. Gerhard Botz, Ivar Oxaal, and Michael Pollak (Vienna: Czernin, 1990), 91.
128. This includes the Ronacher, which was co-founded by the Jewish journalist Max Friedländer.
129. On the *Gschwandner*, see Astrid Göttche, *Erich Bernard, Das Gschwandner: Ein legendäres Wiener Etablissement* (Vienna: Metroverlag, 2012).
130. This was also the case with other establishments. Along with her sister Sofie Ruzek and two other individuals, Minna Rott founded in March 1903 an “amusement establishment in true Viennese tradition” with the name Zum süßen Mädél (*IWE* 72 [14 March 1903]: 13). When they sold it soon after, Minna Rott and her sister bought the extremely popular Brady’s Wintergarten.
131. I am indebted to the Viennese art historian Elana Shapira for bringing this to my attention.
132. Konrad Nowakowski, “‘30 Negroes (Ladies and Gentlemen): The Syncopated Orchestra in Vienna,” *Black Music Research Journal* 2, no. 2 (2009): 240.
133. *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* 245 (4 September 1904): 10.
134. *IWE* 67 (9 March 1902): 22.

135. Elisabeth Leinfellner-Rupertsberger, “Die Republik der Sprachen bei Fritz Mauthner: Sprache und Nationalismus,” in *Die Wiener Jahrhundertwende*, ed. Jürgen Nautz and Richard Vahrenkamp (Vienna: Böhlau, 1993), 389–404.
136. Adolf Hirsch, *Die Wiener Gemütlichkeit*, NÖLA (Theaterzensur), Box 23/14 (1917).
137. David S. Luft, *Robert Musil and the Crisis of European Culture 1880–1942* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 17.
138. See William M. Johnston, *The Austrian Mind: An Intellectual and Social History 1848–1938* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).
139. Dagmar Lorenz, *Wiener Moderne* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2007).

## JEWISHNESS AND THE VIENNESE *VOLKSSÄNGER*



The interpretation of Jewish history remains open and up for debate. The fact that for several decades after World War II historians viewed and thus narrowly interpreted Jewish history from the point of view of anti-Jewish persecution and antisemitism can be linked to the post-Holocaust context.<sup>1</sup> Such a perspective on Jewish history is not fundamentally wrong. Nevertheless, it presents the Jewish past as one-sided and incomplete. It overlooks aspects of Jewish experience by largely ignoring the coexistence and interactions between Jews and non-Jews that did in fact take place. The encounters between Jews and non-Jews and their cultural interdependencies were significant events, because they shaped Judaism and Jewish (and non-Jewish) self-understanding and had a lasting influence on social developments. This is why we would be remiss if we ignored the evidence of interconnectedness between Jews and non-Jews. An examination of Jewish and non-Jewish interactions helps fill in the incomplete narrative that results from an analysis limited to antisemitic structures and processes or an exclusive analysis of Jewish life that fails to take into account relationships to non-Jews. Taking a look at the larger picture provided by an investigation of the overlap between Jewish and non-Jewish life thus offers a more complete understanding of Jewish history.

A conflict that took place among *Volkssänger* in fin-de-siècle Vienna illustrates to what extent we can interpret Jewish history in a wide variety of ways and how a specific interpretation of this history is invariably rooted in the respective views of the historians who treat the subject. The immediate trigger for this conflict was the rumor that the well-known and successful Budapest troupe Folies Caprice was planning to move to Vienna. A large part of the city's professional



singers feared that this influx of Budapest performers would dramatically exacerbate competition among them. The ensuing dispute among Viennese performing musicians reached its climax in the spring of 1903 and was conducted with such bitterness that the print media even referred to it as a “*Volkssänger* war.”

In this chapter, I provide a detailed account of the “*Volkssänger* war” for three principal reasons. First, I employ the conflict as an example that demonstrates just how diffuse and blurred the dividing lines between Jews and non-Jews were in Vienna in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>2</sup> Second, this dispute underscores how the acculturation narrative that chroniclers of Jewish history sometimes employ fails to accommodate the complexities of Jewish and non-Jewish relationships. Furthermore, an analysis of the *Volkssänger* war brings to light Jewish *Volkssänger* Albert Hirsch’s efforts to be recognized as a peer by his non-Jewish colleagues without having to submit to any specific process of adaptation. Instead of understanding the connections between Hirsch and his colleagues as the result of acculturation, I demonstrate the performative character of these relationships. And third, comprehensive outline of the lives and work of Viennese *Volkssänger* around 1900 allows us to understand better the conflicts that shaped their experience as Jews in Vienna.

## The “*Volkssänger* War” in the Early Twentieth Century

On 24 December 1901, the *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt (IWE)* reported that there would be a meeting of Viennese performing musicians and artists immediately after Christmas to discuss a ban that the Hungarian authorities had issued, which forbade a troupe of Viennese *Volkssänger* from giving a guest performance.<sup>3</sup> Three days after the announcement, the meeting took place at the Goldener Luchs (Golden Lynx), a tavern in the Viennese district Ottakring. The choice of meeting place was to a certain extent symbolic: Ottakring was located on the outskirts of Vienna and was first incorporated as a district only when the city annexed its outlying areas during the late nineteenth century. During the process of annexation, the originally independent town of Ottakring merged with Neulerchenfeld but retained its original name.<sup>4</sup> The new Viennese district was partly composed of a village structure with taverns and inns where *Volkssänger* gave performances and idealized the city’s past, the so-called Old Vienna, and praised Viennese “hospitality” in their songs.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, Ottakring was home to the workforce employed at the various industries located in the area. These workers made up a significant portion of the audiences who attended *Volkssänger* performances. The decision to hold their meeting at the Goldener Luchs situated the *Volkssänger* in the primarily proletarian and lower-middle-class suburb, simultaneously positioning them in juxtaposition to “high” culture, whose institutions were located overwhelmingly in Vienna’s city center.<sup>6</sup>

The motto of the meeting at the Goldener Luchs was “Protect Vienna’s *Volksänger!*” Approximately one hundred people attended the meeting. There were, however, far more than a hundred *Volksänger* in the city. At this time, Vienna had approximately sixty performing groups, each of which employed several members.<sup>7</sup> But what gave this meeting special significance was the fact that the most important and most influential performing musicians attended. Karl Spacek, one of the most respected artists in the *Volkssänger* scene, organized the assembly.<sup>8</sup> In this sense, the gathering was an important event, which is why it would also have a far-reaching impact on all of Vienna’s *Volkssänger*.

The topic of the meeting, namely the Hungarian authorities and their condemnation of Viennese performers, had been clearly stated, and no one seemed to anticipate any disagreement. Nevertheless, the participants at the gathering broke out into fights. Over the course of the meeting, a particular source of conflict came to light, one that would, in the months following, continue to intensify and result in anti-Jewish statements. For this reason, the debate that took place at the Goldener Luchs and in particular the dispute’s development up until the spring of 1903 provide insight into the complex relationships between Jewish and non-Jewish *Volkssänger*. In this context, we must ask whether this event provides a mere snapshot or whether it articulates a larger statement about the quality of the interactions that occurred between Jewish and non-Jewish *Volkssänger* and, by extension, between Vienna’s Jewish and non-Jewish inhabitants.

### ***Conflicts among Viennese Volkssänger***

Disputes that often ended up in court were not uncommon among *Volkssänger*. In addition to the disputes that were described as a “war” at the beginning of the twentieth century, there were a number of other conflicts. The pronounced competitive atmosphere that characterized the folk singers’ work environment served as an ideal breeding ground for all kinds of friction. One of numerous examples that I could mention in this context concerns the lawsuit that artist Karl Schöpf brought against Adolph Slusche, the owner of a coffeehouse in the Viennese district Josefstadt. Slusche’s café was a popular meeting place for many performing musicians and was therefore commonly known as the *Volkssängerbörse* (*Volkssänger* stock exchange). Schöpf had gained a bad reputation among his colleagues, because he brokered opportunities for the artists to perform. He profited from the city’s oversupply of *Volkssänger* by taking a portion of their already scanty salary when they used his services to book a gig. When he became abusive against individual *Volkssänger* and insulted them, they told Slusche that they would find another meeting place if he didn’t kick Schöpf out of his coffeehouse. When Slusche complied with the performers’ request and forbade Schöpf from entering the café, Schöpf felt that his honor had been injured and in turn tried to sue Slusche. Schöpf did not win the case.<sup>9</sup>

Another court case concerns a complaint that Josef Armin, in his capacity as playwright, brought against the director of the Budapest Orpheum Society, Karl Lechner.<sup>10</sup> Armin was under contract to write six comedies for the Budapest Orpheum over the course of 1905. In exchange for these six pieces, he was to receive 300 crowns and be listed on the group's playbills as "in-house dramaturg" (*Hausdramaturg*). Although Armin delivered the set number of plays, Lechner withheld paying him the total sum of the fee that they had agreed upon. Lechner stated that his reason for refusing payment in full was that two of the six farces that Armin wrote were so obscene that the group was unable to perform them. This might sound surprising coming from Lechner. The Budapest Orpheum had a reputation for putting on indecent plays. Armin could not believe that the director of this particular ensemble was suddenly keen on preserving decency. Therefore, Armin sued Lechner in court for the entire amount that they had contractually agreed upon. Ultimately, the judge was able to persuade both sides to reach an agreement.<sup>11</sup>

The two court cases that I just mentioned were the result of ordinary conflicts that can happen anytime or anywhere business interests are involved. Such disputes were common among *Volkssänger*. We might also even describe the *Volkssänger* war as a trivial dispute for much of its duration. However, what clearly distinguishes the "war" from the "Schöpf affair" and the lawsuit between Armin and Lechner was the fact that the *Volkssänger* war provoked anti-Jewish sentiments. The reason for this distinction may well be rooted in the particular constellations that made up these individual conflicts. In these two instances, antisemitism, as a potential strategy for defaming the Jewish party in a dispute, was a factor neither in the Schöpf case, which happened to involve no Jews, nor in the second case, in which the plaintiff Armin was Jewish and Lechner managed at least one predominantly Jewish ensemble.

The situation among the Viennese *Volkssänger* was usually no different, even when Jews and non-Jews faced each other as opponents in a trial. In this context, I refer back to the director of the Apollo, Ben Tieber, whom I discussed in chapter 2. He seems to have been a confrontational person. He often pursued lawsuits against the managers of other singspiel venues. These lawsuits usually entailed Tieber and his rivals attempting to lure performers away from one another. Although the parties involved in these conflicts did not hesitate to make fierce accusations and sometimes even offensive allegations, Tieber's Jewishness never played a role. We see a lack of antisemitic sentiment, for example, in a conflict between Tieber and Arthur Brill, manager of the Colosseum.<sup>12</sup> The dispute revolved around the parodist Lene Land and the performances she promised to give. She was under contract to perform at the Apollo in January and February 1906. At the same time, she had a commitment to perform at the Colosseum. She took the stage at the Colosseum rather than at the Apollo. Tieber obtained a court-issued stage ban against Land, but it didn't prevent her from performing.

In fact, she was so popular among audiences that Brill refused to remove her from his program, choosing instead to pay the fines that he incurred.<sup>13</sup> Throughout the conflict, no mention was made of the fact that Tieber was Jewish—not even the slightest allusion. Even if *Volkssänger* and singspiel venue directors personally entertained anti-Jewish sentiment, expressing such attitudes seems to have remained largely taboo.

Therefore, the clash of disputing parties cannot serve as the sole explanation for the antisemitic statements made in the context of the *Volkssänger* war. In the following, I discuss the cause of the antisemitic imputations made over the course of this conflict. My analysis also illustrates how antisemitism managed to take hold in a milieu that seems for the most part to have been far less receptive to it than other spheres of society.

### **The *Volkssänger* Meeting at the Goldener Luchs on 27 December 1901**

The first person who spoke at the meeting held on 27 December 1901 was Karl Recher, a “conductor and master pianist” by profession.<sup>14</sup> In his remarks, he specifically addressed the principal item on the meeting’s agenda, that is, the prohibition of German-language performances in Hungary. But the next speaker, Karl Rötzer (1862–1908), deviated from the program. He focused instead on the general difficulties that Viennese *Volkssänger* faced. Rötzer was one of the most prominent members of his profession. He distinguished himself not least on account of his prolific output. By the turn of the century, he had already written about a thousand songs, farces, and short scenes.<sup>15</sup> He was also well connected and held a number of honorary offices. He served as secretary of the League of Viennese *Volkssänger* and Performers (Zwölferbund der Wiener Volkssänger und Artisten), which organized fund-raisers to support disabled members.<sup>16</sup> At any rate, Rötzer enjoyed the respect of his colleagues, and perhaps that was why no one wanted to interrupt his remarks and steer the meeting back to its original purpose. In retrospect, this may have been a sensible decision. Rötzer’s remarks were the starting point for many subsequent discussions about the social and professional conditions of Viennese *Volkssänger*—a larger conversation that took place over the course of the following months. These debates initiated a reform in the law concerning popular singers, which in turn introduced a series of service to benefit and support their members.

Rötzer was probably able to digress from the agenda so easily because the social situation of the *Volkssänger* was in fact very much in need of improvement. Even the most successful among them did not lead carefree lives. They, too, were often seized by the subliminal fear of one day losing the favor of the public and falling victim to poverty. Karl Spacek, who had organized the meeting at the

Goldener Luchs, was said to have been massively overcome by such a fear a year and a half before. This fear allegedly plagued him to such an extent that it drove him “insane.” Initially, Spacek experienced this anxiety only in the form of “nervous headaches.” But after a time, he fell into despair and believed that the only way to escape the distress and misery that he felt was to end his own life. While in this mental state, he wanted to jump from a window to his death, but he was saved at the last moment before this could happen.<sup>17</sup> It took a while for him to recover from depression and be able to resume his job.

The fact that the city did not recognize the *Volkssänger* as craftsmen or trade professionals further exacerbated the already difficult social conditions that the *Volkssänger* experienced. Although they paid taxes and dues like trade professionals did, health insurance did not cover them. So that they would at least have a rudimentary social network, the performers established their own organizations, which they could join by paying a small fee. In addition to the League (Zwölferbund), we should also mention in this context the Jolly Knights and the General Viennese *Volkssänger* Health Fund (Allgemeine Wiener *Volkssänger*-Krankenverein). The Jolly Knights were first and foremost known for running a home that they provided as a shelter for their impoverished members.<sup>18</sup> Without these kinds of privately run benefits that would have otherwise normally been offered by public insurance, unemployed *Volkssänger* could hardly lead a life of dignity. There were *Volkssänger*, such as Josefine Schmer, who had been extremely popular during their days of actively performing (see chapter 2). But despite her successful career, Schmer was not able to save enough to provide for her retirement. For this reason, she was forced to spend her golden years in a nursing home where she shared a room with sixteen other women. Since she could not afford even the bare essentials for everyday life, she was also dependent on donations.<sup>19</sup> Not a few of Schmer’s colleagues shared a similar fate.<sup>20</sup>

In his speech at the Goldener Luchs, Rötzer proposed to improve the social situation of the Viennese *Volkssänger* by prohibiting foreign folk singers from performing. In this context, he told his audience the story of two innkeepers who had recently applied to the Viennese authorities for licenses for Czech ensembles. Rötzer encouraged his fellow *Volkssänger* to prevent this from happening. For this purpose, Rötzer proposed that they form a deputation that would bring their objections to the attention of the governor. The deputation would also request that licenses be awarded for life, without the need for annual renewal. In addition, they wanted to no longer allow the leasing of these licenses to third parties, requiring instead that all individual licensees perform using the license they had been awarded.<sup>21</sup> The intention behind this plan was to guarantee a certain degree of occupational security for licensed, and in some sense already established, *Volkssänger*.

Recher once again took the floor after Rötzer. This time, he too ignored the meeting’s agenda and joined Rötzer in discussing the urgent problems that

*Volkssänger* faced. He also addressed the subject of pay. He was less interested in the specific amount that they earned and more in their social status. The *Volkssänger* had a dubious reputation. On the one hand, the general population of Vienna tended to equate them with beggars. This view was reinforced by the fact that anyone who applied for a *Volkssänger* license had to prove infirmity or another similar reason that made it impossible for the applicant to pursue another profession.<sup>22</sup> As a result, *Volkssänger*, like beggars, were considered incapacitated or unwilling to work. And like them, the *Volkssänger* defrayed the cost of living through charitable donations. They did not receive a fixed salary for their services. Rather, a member of the ensemble usually walked around during or after the performance and asked the audience to donate money to compensate the actors.

Recher wanted to mitigate this dependence on donations by charging a fixed entry fee (*Entrée*).<sup>23</sup> While the meeting's participants generally seemed interested in Recher's proposal, some criticized it as impracticable. For example, Albert Hirsch said that the innkeepers and owners of the performance venues would never agree to such a plan. They earned a living by packing their establishments with as many people as possible. As Hirsch explained it, their customers came both to enjoy the performances and to order food and drink; being forced to pay a fixed entry fee would only discourage their attendance.<sup>24</sup>

The second factor that contributed to the dubious reputation of the *Volkssänger* had to do with the (sometimes) vague boundaries between their female members and the prostitution industry. There had been overlap between the two occupations since the beginning of folk singing in the early nineteenth century. Some of the best-known *Volkssänger* had first been prostitutes before beginning their new profession as singing performers.<sup>25</sup> And even as *Volkssänger*, some women continued to engage in prostitution on the side. For example, we see this kind of attitude in a remark that Rötzer made about musical directors who played with their *Damenkapellen* (all-female dance bands, as such groups were called) during *Volkssänger* performances. According to Rötzer, these directors frequently hired girls with no talent. He said that although the girls received only a small fee, they managed to get by surprisingly well.<sup>26</sup> It is difficult to determine whether Rötzer merely wanted to express a general sense of grievance or intended to criticize specific people. For example, Adolphi Hirsch, under the direction of his father Albert, operated a *Damenkapelle*.<sup>27</sup>

When it was Amon Berg's turn to address the audience, there was no doubt that he was specifically criticizing Albert Hirsch.<sup>28</sup> Berg demanded that "licensees"—that is, the *Volkssänger* with a license—be better protected. Berg stated that it had become a habit for singspiel directors, and here he specifically referred to Hirsch, to hire four or five licensed *Volkssänger*, but to allow "guest" performers to take the stage, especially during weekend performances. This kind of hiring practice meant that directors like Hirsch eliminated opportunities for licensed *Volkssänger* to perform, which in turn meant that they lost a portion of their fee.<sup>29</sup> At that

time, Hirsch managed a variety show in Koller's Concert Hall (Koller's Concertsaal) located on Mariahilferstrasse and had "guests" perform there.<sup>30</sup> When Hirsch attempted to respond to Berg during the meeting, the mood escalated. The tense atmosphere was further fueled by Karl Spacek's claim that Hirsch was a liar.

When Hirsch finally regained the group's attention, he steered the discussion back to the original agenda. He noted that there was really little that they could do to counteract the decision of the Hungarian authorities. As Hirsch saw it, the only measure that could motivate them to rethink their decision was a ban on Hungarian *Volkssänger* performing in Vienna. He formulated his suggestion with rather heartfelt words: "If the German colleagues are expelled from Hungary, then it is time to take a stand and not rest until the last 'gypsy' [Hirsch's pejorative term for the Hungarians] has been driven from Vienna."<sup>31</sup>

The excitement over the Hungarian authorities seemed ultimately to have been unnecessary. After Hirsch spoke, Karl Hauser (1851–1927) took the floor and delivered good news.<sup>32</sup> He announced that he had received a telegram from Budapest, sent by Josef Modl. In the telegram, Modl announced that a delegation of popular singers from Vienna had auditioned before the Hungarian authorities, the result being that German-language performances were once again allowed to take place.

With the telegram, the assembly's principal matter to discuss—but not the meeting itself—became irrelevant. As the various remarks from the meeting that I have mentioned here demonstrate, Viennese *Volkssänger* faced a number of problems. The meeting's participants agreed to a petition that summarized the social and professional problems under discussion and called for improvements. The petition requested that Viennese authorities award all future *Volkssänger* licenses for life. These licenses, furthermore, should only be awarded to persons who had previously worked in Vienna for ten years. The petition also asked for a stipulation that each licensee must use the license for their own performances (rather than leasing the license to a third party). The performing singers' petition also asked that foreign actors and musicians be prevented from performing in Vienna for more than one month. Each *Volkssänger* troupe would be required to hire at least six licensed *Volkssänger* and no more than four unlicensed colleagues.<sup>33</sup>

On 2 January 1902, a deputation representing the *Volkssänger* submitted their petition to Governor Erich von Kielmannsegg (1847–1923). He listened to additional complaints that they brought to his attention and then promised to press for their proposed changes.<sup>34</sup>

### ***Conclusion: The Meeting at the Goldener Luchs***

The meeting held on 27 December 1901 provides us a rare but very illuminating look into the social situation of Viennese *Volkssänger*. It underscores the bureau-

cratic hurdles that made it difficult for them to do their jobs and make a living. At the same time, we should also take note of the xenophobic atmosphere present at the meeting. This sense of xenophobia may have been rooted in the discrepancy between the performers' popularity among segments of the population and their actual social position: as performers, the (at least successful) *Volkssänger* enjoyed the attention of the public eye on a daily basis. They provided entertainment on the numerous suburban stages and enjoyed the attention and recognition they received. Their popularity sometimes had flattering consequences that extended into their everyday lives. For example, when Josef Modl was performing at the Drexler Singspielhalle located in the Prater, a group of boys habitually followed him whenever he left his house, boisterously chanting "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow."<sup>35</sup> The most well-known representatives of the entertainment scene even received public honors. Karl Blasel (1831–1922), who was briefly director of the Viennese vaudeville Colosseum, had an audience with Emperor Franz Joseph on the occasion of his fiftieth anniversary, and the mayor Karl Lueger presented him with the Golden Salvator Medal for special services to the city of Vienna.<sup>36</sup> In September 1900, the Persian shah invited a group of artists and *Volkssänger* to travel to the health resort Marianske Lazne to provide entertainment during his stay there.<sup>37</sup>

Even though the *Volkssänger* sometimes received acclaim and public honors, they must have been aware that they belonged to the lowest social class. The contrast between everyday subjective experiences and their actual social status may have lingered, gnawing at their self-esteem. In such a situation, people often tend to use every available opportunity to maintain or improve their social position, even if they do this at the expense of their colleagues. The sense of xenophobia among the *Volkssänger*, which my discussion of the meeting at the Goldener Luchs has brought to light, may have been rooted in this impulse toward self-preservation.<sup>38</sup> Foreign ensembles reduced the performance opportunities of local *Volkssänger* on the hotly contested Viennese market and diminished their opportunities to step into the spotlight.

In addition to certain aspects of a xenophobic mood that may have been triggered by social envy, we also see evidence of slight hostility directed toward Albert Hirsch during the assembly at the Goldener Luchs. The archival evidence that I have examined, however, shows no indication of explicit antisemitism, neither in general nor specifically related to Hirsch. On the contrary, Recher emphasized in his remarks that the "Polish"—that is, Galician Jewish troupes that performed in Vienna—were not foreign groups that should be prohibited from taking the stage. As Recher saw it, the "Polish" troupes were "no competition for the Viennese *Volkssänger*."<sup>39</sup>

During the meeting, Albert Hirsch emerged as spokesman for the *Volkssänger* who favored banning Hungarian groups from performing in Vienna. This attitude would prove to be an integral part of Hirsch's profile over the next fifteen



months, until the conflict climaxed in the *Volkssänger* war. Whether Hirsch articulated this position because of xenophobic sentiment or as a strategy for protecting his own interests was not clear at the time.

### *The “Polish” in Vienna*

The fact that Recher even brought up the “Polish” ensembles probably had something to do with the fact that a few days before the meeting at the Goldener Luchs there had been a highly publicized police intervention in two establishments in Leopoldstadt where groups performed using Jewish jargon. The police raided Marietta Kriebaum and Paula Baumann’s ensembles (see chapter 2). The police crackdown brought an abrupt end to the short-lived hype about Jewish ensembles from the eastern part of the Habsburg monarchy. Performances were completely prohibited. The reason that the police gave was that “Jewish jargon cannot be permitted because no one understands here.”<sup>40</sup> The real reason, however, was censorship. Groups had to receive approval in advance for each piece that they wished to perform. The two ensembles that the police shut down were accused of performing their farces in “Jewish jargon” after previously submitting their manuscripts to the authorities in German. Several anonymous letters claiming that the two groups were deviating significantly from the German texts that they had submitted and were performing their plays in jargon triggered police action. The ban remained in place, even after Albert Hirsch, whom the police consulted as a language expert, testified that the plays in question not only were in compliance but also demonstrated markedly patriotic content.<sup>41</sup>

The only individual in the Viennese entertainment industry who had reason to fear Marietta Kriebaum and Paula Baumann’s groups as potential competition for a numerically limited audience was Fritz Lung, the owner of the singspiel license for the aforementioned Edelhofer’s Leopoldstadt Folk Orpheum. He was clearly the party responsible for denouncing them to the police. The slander against Kriebaum and Baumann’s groups was thus more the result of competition among Jewish groups than Judeophobia.

### **The First Austrian “*Volkssänger* and Vocal Artists’ Day” (27 October 1902)**

Despite the enthusiasm with which the *Volkssänger* attending the meeting at the end of 1901 greeted the news that Hungarian authorities had overturned the prohibition against German-language performances in Budapest, their excitement was to remain brief. Because the authorities followed up the announcement with no course of action, Viennese ensembles continued to be harassed in Hungary. It was nearly a year before the Viennese *Volkssänger* could once again formulate

an initiative in response to the Hungarian authorities. This time, the agenda included additional problems that the *Volkssänger* faced.

The Professional Association of Viennese *Volkssänger* and Artists (Fachverein der Wiener Volkssänger und Artisten) took initial steps. The organization's chairman, Albert Hirsch, accompanied by two colleagues, visited the police advisor for *Volkssänger* affairs in early October. The deputation submitted a request to allow *Volkssänger* to perform in coffeehouses, as musicians and "nature" singers were permitted to do. In addition, Hirsch addressed the problems that German-speaking *Volkssänger* encountered in Hungary. In order not to appear as xenophobic, he stressed that in principle he had nothing against "foreigners" such as the French, the Germans, or the Polish. However, he did take a stand "against the Hungarian musicians, because German speakers also face difficulties performing in Hungary."<sup>42</sup> And finally, he mentioned the "questionable services" that some female ensemble members provided. According to Hirsch, there were innkeepers "who directed female singers to motivate guests to further consumption after the performance in a small 'parlor' [*Stüberl*]. These 'stimulation waitresses' [*Animirmamsellen*] bring the moral standard of the *Volkssänger* down even more than it already is."<sup>43</sup>

In terms of content, the deputation's demands, with Hirsch at the helm, differed in two essential respects from the items discussed at the meeting held at the end of 1901. For one, Hirsch and his colleagues pursued the goal of expanding the performance opportunities of the *Volkssänger*. This topic had not come up at all ten months earlier and was not slated to be addressed until February 1904, nine months after the *Volkssänger* dispute would end.<sup>44</sup> Second, Hirsch and his party did not mention the question of licensing. Hirsch may not have been interested in lobbying for a special protection for license holders. Hirsch's decision to ignore this issue would have considerable ramifications for the further course of the *Volkssänger* conflict.

It appears that Hirsch went to the police advisor for *Volkssänger* affairs without first consulting the organizers of the meeting on 27 December 1901. Hirsch presumably pursued a double strategy: On the one hand, he may have surrounded himself with a group of colleagues who could, if necessary, assist him in protecting and enforcing separate interests. This angle may have included ignoring the petition for stricter guidelines for issuing *Volkssänger* licenses. On the other hand, Hirsch also wanted to become involved in the meetings that Recher and Rötzer organized, thereby influencing their outcome. We see this in particular in the fact that Hirsch, together with Recher, took over as co-chairman of the first Austrian "*Volkssänger* and Vocal Artists' Day," which took place on 27 October 1902, a few weeks after Hirsch's visit to the police advisor. We can interpret this event as a continuation of the meeting that had taken place at the Goldener Luchs in December of the previous year.

In contrast to the meeting ten months earlier, almost all the performing musicians active in Vienna were present at the *Volkssänger* and Vocal Artists' Day. The

assembly even had a semi-official character, since it was held in the presence of a member of the Imperial Assembly (Reichsrat) as well as the district head of Vienna-Meidling. This meeting's agenda included the question of whether *Volkssänger* should strive to be recognized as a licensed trade. The idea was that this new status would allow them increased access to social security and insurance benefits. The alternative, however, was not for them to maintain their present status, according to which they were little more than beggars. Rather, the alternative was whether the *Volkssänger* should declare themselves as artists. This decision would have two ramifications.

First of all, each *Volkssänger* would have to prove that they had received a special musical education to receive permission to perform. Indeed, the law applying to *Volkssänger* already maintained similar stipulations. But the proposed change in status would also mean further tightening of these prerequisites. Some performers may have seen the proposal as a hindrance to obtaining a license. Others may have considered stricter rules as a reasonable way for *Volkssänger* to escape their crisis, which was tied to dwindling public interest. They thought that the crisis was due to what they deemed to be poor vocal skills of many performing musicians. One of the *Volkssänger* present at the meeting on 27 October 1902 made the connection: "The public no longer desires [to hear] the eternal 'This Is My Vienna,' 'O, You, My St. Stephen's Tower,' and all the other songs; . . . if these songs are not performed well, then they lose value."<sup>45</sup>

The second consequence of the proposal to consider *Volkssänger* as artists would have entailed the elimination of *Volkssänger* licenses. The abolishment of licenses would have not only dissolved an internal distinction between licensed and unlicensed *Volkssänger* (those with a license were allowed to manage their own ensembles), but it also would have made restricting the access of foreign groups to the Viennese market impossible. The discussion about drawing up measures to retaliate against Hungarian groups who wanted to perform in Vienna would have been rendered pointless by such a decision.

The decision for or against artist status basically came down to the question of whether the *Volkssänger* wished to modernize. Should the *Volkssänger*, who increasingly lost audiences to variety shows, respond to their declining popularity by blocking innovative fellow performers who were unlicensed or of foreign extraction? Or should they expand their profession to include intensified competition, in the hope that those most capable of responding to the public's expectations would in the end prevail, thus garnering greater respect for all *Volkssänger*?

### ***The Volkssänger Crisis***

The *Volkssänger* did not gain their popularity in Vienna solely by being entertainers. Their ability to convey a bygone—and therefore glorified—attitude toward life in their Viennese songs (*Wienerlieder*) and singspiels was equally important.

The *Volkssänger* represented an idealized Vienna that was increasingly disappearing as a result of urban planning measures, industrialization, and other changes to the surrounding environment.<sup>46</sup> They sang about life in the city's outlying suburbs districts with their village ambience, the Vienna of narrow streets and small houses, many of which were being demolished in order to give way to magnificent new buildings. They evoked an idyllic Vienna that never existed but nevertheless served as a mental refuge from the upheavals of the present.<sup>47</sup> This conception of the city, which was located in the past and idealized a more easily comprehensible, cozier image of life, culminated in the topos of Old Vienna (see chapter 4).<sup>48</sup>

The inhabitants of Vienna, or at least a portion of them, admittedly let their gaze wander into the past and constructed Old Vienna as a positive contrast to the hardships of contemporary everyday life, to the experience of alienation in a rapidly changing urban environment. A growing segment of the city's population, however, considered the entertainment options associated with Old Vienna, the performances of farces and the swaying back and forth to the rhythm of Viennese songs, to be boring. They found that many other aspects of the entertainment industry promised greater excitement. These included breathtaking acrobatics, performances by artists with extraordinary abilities, individuals with "strange" peculiarities, and even people from "exotic" cultures. Variety shows, which popped up everywhere, offered Vienna's pleasure-seeking population all this and more. Danzer's Orpheum, the Ronacher, the Apollo Theater, the Colosseum, the Gartenbau variety, and the like showed the entertainment industry how to inspire people. These establishments were structurally designed to accommodate the masses. Their seating capacity was enormous; the Apollo, for example, offered 24 loges (boxes) and 1,600 numbered seats. They also featured a restaurant, a coffeehouse, a beer tunnel, as well as other facilities.<sup>49</sup> The Ronacher was even more bombastic. It housed a "production hall" with enough tables and chairs to seat more than 1,500 people, not including its 62 loges. The "production hall" also had a stage where performances could be held. In addition, the Ronacher had a ballroom that could hold another 1,200 guests.<sup>50</sup>

The audiences who attended the variety shows wanted to be astounded by artists who either had outrageous abilities or could create the illusion of having such abilities. This included, for example, the American-Jewish "escape act king" Harry Houdini, who appeared on stage at the Ronacher in the spring of 1902.<sup>51</sup> During his performances, he was bound in chains and then freed himself in a very short amount of time. Houdini's audience members not only passively admired his skills but were also allowed to approach the stage and confirm that his shackles were indeed securely locked in place. They were even sometimes permitted to lock Houdini's chains themselves. The audience actively participated in the spectacle. "Every evening, when Houdini arrives on the scene, many visitors come on stage, bringing their own shackles and handcuffs, hoping to embarrass

Houdini. But no one can outwit the ‘King of the Escape Artists’; no matter how strong and secure his bonds are, Houdini frees himself within seconds.”<sup>52</sup>

We also see Houdini’s enormous popularity in the number of artists who sought to imitate him and his profits. After Houdini concluded his guest performances in Vienna, copycat artists performed under a similar name and with almost the same routine. At the Wiedener Variété, one could admire the “escape artist king Alfred Mourdini,” who announced in newspapers that he bet a handsome sum of 500 crowns that he could free himself from any and all shackles.<sup>53</sup> In 1904, audiences could marvel at the “escape artist king Esco Nordini” at the Ronacher. However, Nordini attracted attention mainly through a lawsuit that he brought against Josef Modl. Modl slapped Nordini in the face because he had insulted his wife.<sup>54</sup>

### *The Volkssänger in the Context of Modernity*

The variety shows offered a more modern form of entertainment than the *Volkssänger* and contributed significantly to their crisis. In a sense, they began their succession without completely ousting the *Volkssänger*. On the one hand, we can see the connection between the two in the fact that variety shows often engaged renowned *Volkssänger* as part of their programs. A prime example of a famous *Volkssänger* who made vaudeville appearances was Josef Modl, the co-founder of the Budapest Orpheum Society. In 1889, Modl moved to the Ronacher and remained a celebrated star there until 1900. At the same time, the *Volkssänger* ensembles expanded their programs and thus increasingly resembled cheap variety theaters or even included the term in their ensemble names.<sup>55</sup> But in addition to overlap between these two aspects of the Viennese entertainment industry, I have identified three main differences between *Volkssänger* groups and vaudeville shows. Although not all groups and institutions display evidence of these three differences, they nonetheless allow us to distinguish in broad brushstrokes between the vaudeville variety acts and *Volkssänger* troupes.

First and foremost, the vaudeville varieties were keen on presenting the latest international developments in the entertainment sector, even if their performances made overt connections to *Volkssänger* culture and thus also to local Viennese ambience. The vaudeville variety shows endeavored to bring everything that caused a sensation abroad to the Habsburg capital and offer it to local audiences for consumption. In contrast, the *Volkssänger* had little interest in international trends. Rather, they demonstrated xenophobic tendencies and lobbied for political measures to prohibit the appearance of foreign performing troupes in Vienna. The *Volkssänger* were intent on communicating down-to-earth folksiness and local tradition in the pieces that they performed. Because people perceived this local culture to be vanishing as a result of the modernization of everyday life, it was first and foremost associated with the past.

The differing senses of temporality and the different ways of dealing with foreign artists were decisive but did not constitute the only distinction between the *Volkssänger* and vaudeville. They also had different approaches to everyday life. If the *Volkssänger* enjoyed a leisurely tempo, the variety shows embodied an accelerated pace of life. We see this in particular in their performance program. In order to be able to afford world-famous stars like Sarah Bernhard, vaudeville managers had to fill the grandiose performance halls to capacity.<sup>56</sup> It was important to shield their audiences from any hint of boredom, lest their customers disperse in search of something more exciting. In order to keep the public's interest, variety shows frequently changed their lineup. Individual performances were often discontinued after a short time and replaced by new attractions. More than a few performance hall managers bit off more than they could chew and found themselves forced to file for bankruptcy.<sup>57</sup>

In contrast to the vaudeville variety shows, the *Volkssänger* troupes, committed to the tried and true, distinguished themselves in their overall lack of innovative spirit. This shortage of innovation was sometimes so apparent that even those who sympathized with the *Volkssänger* complained. A 1902 article from *Das Variété* identifies this shortage as a major reason for the declining popularity of *Volkssänger* performances among the Viennese: "In the nervous rush that has today seized even the lowest classes of the population, it has become a natural necessity to stimulate the audience and this certainly does not happen by [merely] repeating the very oldest performances."<sup>58</sup>

This quotation points to the gap between what the *Volkssänger* offered in the form of entertainment and what audiences demanded and expected. The shift in public interest was not only the result of the *Volkssänger* performers failing to introduce change and renewal, but it was also connected to a larger widespread cultural phenomenon. Frequent repetitions of the same performance program contradicted the zeitgeist in fin-de-siècle Vienna. People wanted something new, something spectacular; they no longer wished to be entertained by the established and the familiar. The prevailing mood went beyond variety shows and increasingly determined people's everyday lives. A vivid example of this development was the rapidly increasing circulation of the tabloids, which endeavored to disseminate important events as promptly as possible through their morning and evening editions and to satisfy readers' thirst for information as quickly as possible.<sup>59</sup> Even the writing style employed in the tabloid papers adapted to the new way of managing time. The articles became easier to peruse, the sentences became shorter, and the information was kept to the essentials so that reading would not cost an unnecessary amount of time.<sup>60</sup> New experiences of increased acceleration and velocity characterized daily life in the late nineteenth century.<sup>61</sup> We see this new understanding of time not least in the steep increase in the production and sales of pocket watches. Large swathes of the population became accustomed to experiencing shorter intervals of time. They increasingly measured activities in

minutes and seconds and learned punctuality. Better organization meant that more could be achieved in a given time than ever before.<sup>62</sup>

The accelerated speed of life was also reflected in the means of locomotion. Leisurely strolls seemed to be a thing of the past. More and more people seemed to be constantly in a rush. In his seminal work *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (*The Man without Qualities*), Robert Musil noted that in the years leading up to World War I, people could be seen hurrying through the streets faster than in previous decades.<sup>63</sup> And if that was still too slow, you could always hop on a bicycle. However, this form of locomotion was not without various dangers. For example, if cyclists rode too fast, they could get “bicycle face.”<sup>64</sup> And traveling by train was even faster than riding a bike. While the *Volkssänger*, clinging to the past, glorified the horse and cart, people became increasingly enthusiastic about the new means of transport.<sup>65</sup> Here, too, we see a discrepancy and growing sense of alienation between the *Volkssänger* and their audience.

The acceleration of life was not only perceived as positive. It also seemed to be connected to all sorts of illnesses.<sup>66</sup> Medical professionals at the time warned that the enormous increase in economic transactions due to the expansion of the railroad, the use of steam power, and the invention of the telegraph would lead to increased tooth decay and promote hair loss. But even more threatening was the rise in cases of nerve weakness (neurasthenia). The American physician Georg M. Beard is attributed with first describing this condition. He saw the cause in the “American way of life.”<sup>67</sup> In Vienna, the Jewish physician Martin Engländer researched this ailment (among other things). In a lecture that he gave to a Zionist association, which appeared in print in 1902, during the turmoil among the Viennese *Volkssänger*, Engländer argued that the “struggle, hustle and bustle, hunt for happiness . . . did not slip past man without a trace. . . . Broad layers of contemporary society in all European countries and particularly in America have become nervous and neurasthenic.”<sup>68</sup> It was no accident that Engländer posted advertisements for potential patients who wanted to be treated for nerve problems in the entertainment section where newspapers advertised new entertainment options.<sup>69</sup>

At times, doctors believed that people could adapt to the new circumstances. Beard, for example, agreed with this supposition. Others, such as the writer and Zionist Max Nordau (1849–1923), feared that the inhabitants of the modern world were experiencing a form of decay and described this process as degeneration. He saw in modernity and its concomitant phenomena the source for the increase in mental illness, crime, and other types of suffering.<sup>70</sup> In this sense, the acceleration of everyday life was at best an ambivalent development and, from a medical point of view, perhaps even very problematic. The leisureliness of the lifestyle that the *Volkssänger* embodied, on the other hand, seemed to impede illness, especially the neurasthenia associated with America and other so-called nervous diseases that were connected with the new hectic pace of everyday life.

In addition, another source of concern was the “cultural vulgarization” (*Verpöbelung*) that was often associated with the foreignness of America. The Jewish writer Richard Guttman (1884–1920) saw a connection between this cultural degeneration and vaudeville. The variety, he writes,

bristles with splendor. Everything is gorgeous, great, phenomenal, overwhelming. . . . Provincials with their prurient women and overripe daughters, . . . peasants dressed up in city clothes, . . . habitual poverty alongside sudden prosperity. . . . The idea of an inner vulgarity connects them all. . . . This audacity belongs to the biology of the mob. A lack of culture, all impossibility at development is transformed into the act of watching. . . . Boredom is expelled chiefly by satisfied curiosity. . . . There, one performer eats nails and shards of glass, another one pierces his cheek. There, a Chinese acrobat dangles by his own braid, a fakir lets his eye hang out, a Negro bites through a snake, and a white man walks across a horizontal ladder with his head turned down. In anxious anticipation, the audience awaits the moment when he shatters his own skull. . . . Animals and humans are no longer enough to satisfy the mob. Voluntary suffering, as a sacrifice and a feast of curiosity, becomes an end in itself.<sup>71</sup>

But despite the concerns about the new forms of entertainment, people showed increasing enthusiasm for the variety shows and, of course, the cinema. The *Volkssänger* had to fight harder than they ever had before for their audience and found themselves in a veritable crisis. We must understand their wavering popularity as another important factor that fueled their hostility toward the Hungarian ensembles and ultimately also a reason contributing to the *Volkssänger* war.

## Conflict Becomes “War”

At the end of the meeting on 27 October 1902, the *Volkssänger* decided to submit a petition for their profession to be recognized as a licensed trade. They decided that they did not want to fundamentally modernize their profession and allow greater competition from unlicensed performers. The submission of the petition was entrusted to a committee that included, among others, Recher, Rötzer, and Hirsch.<sup>72</sup> They also had the task of formulating any additional reforms. To discuss them, another meeting took place on 13 December 1902 at Café Polzhofer, a coffeehouse that *Volkssänger* frequented.

Reichsrat delegate Alois Heilinger (1851–1921) chaired this meeting. Heilinger’s participation shows that the *Volkssänger* situation was increasingly becoming a political agenda. Rötzer and Hirsch held the primary speeches at the meeting. Both reaffirmed the need to grant *Volkssänger* licenses for life. However, the authorities were to continue to have the ability to revoke the licenses of ensemble managers who failed to employ their members for the entire year. In addition, they discussed founding a cooperative for *Volkssänger*. The idea was that when someone applied for a license, the authorities would contact the cooperative prior



to granting the license and ask it to weigh in on the applicant. Rötzer, Recher, and Hirsch would carry out any necessary preparations in advance.

At first glance, the willingness of the *Volkssänger* to allow the authorities to retain the power to revoke licenses seems like a concession to unlicensed performers. This would at least increase the likelihood that unlicensed *Volkssänger* could be granted a license and therefore be able to enjoy its benefits. The real reason that the *Volkssänger* relented, however, may have been the fear that a lack of official control could lead to abuses that would in turn be deleterious for the entire profession. The recent past provided an instructive example. In March 1896, the Vienna police revoked ten licenses because the ensemble managers in question were too old (or otherwise impaired) to run their own company. For example, it was an open secret that the troupe of Johann Kwapil, who was seventy-nine at the time, was de facto led by cast member Lina Ott.<sup>73</sup> Nonetheless, Kwapil was still the licensee and had full decision-making power over his ensemble.<sup>74</sup> Another *Volkssänger* director was said to have worked another job during the week and therefore allowed his troupe to perform only on Sundays. His employees were thus barely able to earn enough money to survive.

With the police confiscating licenses, many families fell into financial hardship. In reaction to this situation, the *Volkssänger* organized a meeting on 14 March 1896 in the Viennese district of Hernals. During the meeting, Hirsch proposed that they take up a collection for the families of colleagues who had lost their jobs. He also declared himself ready to lead a deputation that would submit a memorandum to Minister-President Count Kasimir Felix Badeni (1846–1909) regarding their recently unemployed colleagues.<sup>75</sup> The meeting with Badeni took place two days later. Shortly thereafter, the police informed Hirsch that nine of the ten *Volkssänger* in question would be allowed to apply for a renewal of their license.<sup>76</sup>

Due to his successful handling of the affair, Hirsch earned great respect in the *Volkssänger* milieu. A daily newspaper remarked, “In a very affectionate way, our good Viennese *Volkssänger* Hirsch takes on the cause of his impoverished(!) colleagues. The man is on his feet all day. He runs from one government office to another, asking for mercy for the reprimanded *Volkssänger*.”<sup>77</sup>

The meeting on 13 December 1902 was the last meeting in which Hirsch expressed his support for the reform ideas of Recher, Rötzer, and their followers. In the weeks that followed, he displayed behavior that, retrospectively, could be interpreted as evidence of a change of heart. The first indication of this change was a meeting of the deputation committee on 9 January 1903, to which Hirsch had belonged since its foundation at the end of October of the previous year. The committee issued the slogan “Protect the native Viennese,” and the members voted to maintain the licensing obligation. At the time, Hirsch claimed he could not attend this meeting due to health reasons. A few months later, it would become known that he attended another meeting of fellow *Volkssänger* who were in favor of lifting the licensing requirement.<sup>78</sup>

Another salient moment on Hirsch's path to revealing his true intentions was 19 January 1903. Surprised by the deep-seated and widespread dissatisfaction that the *Volkssänger* demonstrated with the legal requirements for their professional practice, the Vienna police conducted on this day an enquiry regarding their desire for a new set of regulations.<sup>79</sup> They invited experts to represent the profession, including Hirsch, Recher, Rötzer, Karl Walenta, and Spacek. The compromise between the *Volkssänger* and the police was that the licenses would be awarded for a three-year period and could subsequently be extended if the licensee did not commit any infractions. They also agreed that licenses could not be leased to third parties. When the question arose as to whether *Volkssänger* ensembles would be required to hire licensed members or be permitted to employ cheaper, unlicensed colleagues, the debate became so heated that the enquiry had to be adjourned and postponed for a week. On behalf of forty-one fellow *Volkssänger*, Walenta submitted the request to abolish any and all licensing requirements. Recher and Rötzer in particular were against this proposal. They argued that this "would mean the complete ruin of the Viennese *Volkssänger*. The unlicensed performers would then completely oust the licensed ones."<sup>80</sup> Hirsch remained in the background during the argument. At the time, Recher and Rötzer did not know that he was also one of the *Volkssänger* whom Walenta represented. Hirsch first spoke up when it came to the so-called harassment of Austrian *Volkssänger* in Hungary. He again demanded that the Hungarian performers be shut out. In this matter, he seemed to be faithful to the positions that he had previously held. He was still considered one of the most relentless opponents of performances by Hungarian groups in Vienna.

In February and March 1903 events unfolded in rapid succession. The trigger for this acceleration was the rumor that the Hungarian group Folies Caprice planned to move to Vienna in the near future. As rumor had it, the performance facilities at the Hotel Central on Taborstrasse were already being updated to accommodate the group. In response to the news, three singspiel ensemble managers, whose establishments were located in the immediate vicinity of the Hotel Central, submitted a protest to the local authorities. The three protestors were Karl Lechner, who led the Budapest Orpheum Society; Fritz Lung, the director of the Folies Comiques; and Albert Hirsch, the manager of the Lemberg Singspiel Society at Edelhofer's Leopoldstadt Folk Orpheum.<sup>81</sup> It is worth noting that all three groups in the broader sense were considered "Jewish" ensembles. This designation was also applicable to the Hungarian group Folies Caprice. Given this context, we may view a large part of the commotion that took place in the world of the *Volkssänger* in Vienna of 1902–3 as "intra-Jewish competition."

A few days after this protest was issued, a delegation of Viennese *Volkssänger* and singspiel ensemble managers, consisting of Recher, Rötzer, and Lechner, paid a visit to the Reichsrat. The delegation presented a memorandum to Reichsrat member Alois Heilingner. In it, they criticized the treatment of Austrian *Volkssänger*

and singspiel managers in Hungary and demanded that performances by Hungarian colleagues in Vienna no longer be permitted. They explicitly addressed the case of the *Folies Caprice*. Heilingner promised to pass on their concerns to the minister-president in the form of an interpellation.

The *Folies Caprice* is the first example of a specific Hungarian group being considered the enemy of the Viennese *Volkssänger*. The representatives of the *Volkssänger* found themselves once again in a new, difficult situation: From now on, they could no longer advocate a general ban on Hungarian troupes performing in Vienna. Rather, they had to demonstrate their influence on local politics by advocating a specific issue on behalf of their colleagues. The blocking of the planned move of the *Folies Caprice* to Vienna served, as it were, as a litmus test for the delegation committee's ability to assert itself in the interest of the performers it represented.

The performing musicians' initial reaction to the *Folies Caprice's* plan to move to Vienna manifested itself in a radicalization of language. Discussions no longer focused on Hungarian performers in Vienna, but rather on the "invasion of Hungarian *Volkssänger*." The heightened use of language in turn increased the imagined threat. Furthermore, the Viennese *Volkssänger* did not want the ban on Hungarian ensembles in Vienna to seem only like a strategic tactic in a professional rivalry. For this purpose, the Viennese *Volkssänger* emphasized the connection between their artistic occupation and the historical and cultural "heritage" of the Habsburg capital. They said that the "total ruin of a professional branch that was intertwined with Vienna and closely linked with local history" would occur in just a short time.<sup>82</sup> According to this view, the planned move of the *Folies Caprice* to Leopoldstadt was interpreted as an attack on the entire "Viennese spirit" and the widespread sentiments attached to the idea of Old Vienna.

### ***Albert Hirsch Betrays His Fellow Volkssänger***

Indeed, it is somewhat surprising that Hirsch was not a part of the deputation that brought the matter to the Reichsrat. As a member of the delegation committee, which was launched on the occasion of the first Austrian *Volkssänger* and Vocal Artists' Day on 27 October 1902, and as one of the three singspiel hall operators who had submitted a protest to the authorities against the *Folies Caprice* moving to Taborstrasse, he himself might have even been in a position to lead the delegation. But despite Hirsch's absence, there was no indication at the time that the *Volkssänger* were split with respect to the question of how to deal with the issue of the Hungarian performers.

Only with this context in mind can we understand the commotion and indignation that a kind of letter to the editor in the *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt* triggered among the Viennese *Volkssänger*. The letter had been written by Hirsch and Franz Pischkittl (the leaseholder at the Hotel Central, where the Hungar-

ian group *Folies Caprice* intended to give their performances) and was printed six days after the *Volkssänger* appeared before the Reichsrat. With this letter, the subliminal conflicts boiling under the surface among the *Volkssänger* degenerated into a “war” that cast a spell not only over the Viennese tabloids.

We can divide Hirsch and Pischkittl’s letter into five main thematic points. This letter was the first time that Hirsch publicly expressed his opinion regarding the situation within the *Volkssänger* community and did not try to satisfy any expectations. In this sense, those who read his letter in the newspaper also learned something of his interpretation of the events that had recently taken place.

First, Hirsch begins the letter by questioning Rötzer’s legitimacy in representing the *Volkssänger*. By bringing this topic up, Hirsch makes reference to the *Volkssänger* enquiry that took place on 19 January 1903, during which Walenta submitted a petition in the name of forty-one fellow performing musicians requesting that the performing licensing system be entirely abolished. In his letter, Hirsch now asserts that these *Volkssänger* had voted against being represented by Rötzer. As Hirsch sees it, Rötzer was therefore not authorized to speak on their behalf.<sup>83</sup>

The second point that Hirsch makes in the letter concerns Recher and Lechner’s motives for opposing the Hungarian *Volkssänger*. Hirsch calls attention to what he sees as the two protestors’ contradictory behavior. On the one hand, they agitated against the performance of Hungarian ensembles in Vienna. On the other, the two, according to Hirsch, had recently enjoyed in a fruitful cooperation with female Hungarian singers (*Artistinnen*). Hirsch states that there were only two female Hungarian singers in all of Vienna at the time. The first was Clara Aranyossi, who was under contract with Karl Recher, the musical director at Café Riedl. And the other was Sophie Ferenczi, who until recently had been a member of the Budapest Orpheum Society, which Lechner ran.<sup>84</sup> By bringing up the topic, Hirsch sought to question publicly Lechner and Recher’s anti-Hungarian stance.

As Hirsch saw it, Rötzer, Recher, and Lechner had no right to speak out against the proposed move of the *Folies Caprice* to Vienna. All three were, as he indicates, discredited in one way or another. Hirsch then brings up his third point. For the first time, he takes a public stand against the issuing of performance licenses. He describes the expected consequences of abolishing licenses, such as an increase in competition among the performers, as developments that were more or less part of everyday life. According to the opinion that Hirsch formulates, the Viennese *Volkssänger* should not understand the resettlement of the *Folies Caprice* in Vienna as an intrusion of strangers from the outside. Rather, the potential presence of the *Folies Caprice* was merely a consequence of the occupational mobility inherent in being a *Volkssänger*. Hirsch continues to say that even he had suffered in the past under the influx of Hungarian artists to Vienna. He explains that about a decade ago, when the Budapest Orpheum Society moved

to the Hotel Schwarzer Adler, “we children of Vienna: Kutzle, Mirzl, Seidl-Wiesberg, Gutschelbauer(!), and my humble self [were] crowded out from the venue [where we played], and business was booming.” The people whom Hirsch names represent the cream of the crop of the older Viennese *Volkssänger* community. By including his name in this list, Hirsch situates himself as an “original Viennese,” and thus as a *Volkssänger* belonging to Old Vienna. In this way, he may have been attempting to anticipate any challenge to his representing an “authentic” *Volkssänger* on account of his Jewishness.

Although the Budapest Orpheum Society, as Hirsch describes it, initially caused irritation among the local Viennese *Volkssänger*, the new group succeeded very quickly in becoming a universally respected and integral part of Viennese entertainment culture. The Budapest Orpheum, according to Hirsch, thus serves as an excellent example of a foreign troupe’s ability to enrich the local entertainment industry. In the letter, he rhetorically establishes the Budapest Orpheum’s move to Vienna as a precedent for the Folies Caprice. Hirsch thus attempts to dispel concerns about the group’s announced move to the Habsburg capital.

Furthermore, Hirsch emphasizes in his letter to the editor that the Folies Caprice would be established as a “family variety,” meaning that the pieces they would stage would be devoid of any piquancy, so that even children could be a part of the audience. Hirsch’s announcement makes sense when we consider that the Folies Caprice had a reputation for their salacious performances. By making this point, Hirsch wanted to forestall critics who might make an argument against the Folies Caprice based on moral grounds.

After mollifying readers somewhat by making these points, Hirsch gets to the heart of matter and makes his explosive point. He signs the letter, “A. Hirsch, Viennese and future sole director of the new family variety show at the Hotel Central, located at 8 Taborstrasse.”<sup>85</sup> Hirsch introduces himself, in an offhand kind of way, as the leader of the Folies Caprice, as the one responsible for bringing the group to Vienna.

The appearance of this letter to the editor put all of Vienna’s *Volkssänger* in a brief state of shock. For a year and a half, the *Volkssänger* had been holding meetings, drafting resolutions, and contacting politicians, all for the purpose of preventing Hungarian groups from performing in Vienna. It now almost seemed like it had all been in vain. However, the perception that one of their own had betrayed and compromised them weighed even heavier than their futile efforts. And they felt particularly betrayed by someone who had always clearly spoken out against Hungarian groups.

Hirsch must have been aware this declaration would trigger an uproar in the *Volkssänger* community. With his tactic of presenting the licensing issue as the central point of his letter, he sought to mitigate the anticipated outrage at least to some degree. Revoking the licensing requirement that many of his colleagues demanded implied that foreign ensembles would be able to perform in Vienna

without any restrictions. Hirsch assumed that the *Volkssänger* who had spoken out against the licenses and thus accepted the possibility of increased competition would not oppose him. This assumption would prove to be incorrect.

### ***From the Polish Performers to Polish Jews***

After the publication of his letter, Hirsch experienced massive hostility from his fellow *Volkssänger*. Only a very few took his side. A few days later, he was given the opportunity to comment on his actions in a broader context. To this end, Recher and Rötzer organized a public forum at Seifert's Saal in the Viennese district of Hernals. The meeting's slogan was the "critical illumination of the *Volkssänger* Hirsch." The meeting resulted in a fierce battle of words and screaming matches. The commotion attracted the attention of many people on the street, who besieged Seifert's Saal out of curiosity. The police had great difficulty in keeping the crowd in check. By that point at the very latest, the meeting had turned into a spectacle for the masses.

The hall where the meeting took place was already packed before it began. Albert Hirsch arrived with a group of about twenty supporters who were intent on supporting him against his critics. Not all seemed to be *Volkssänger*. Even at the beginning of the meeting it was clear that the warring camps would find no reconciliation. The tensions between the two sides seemed to be too great, and no one was willing to rein in personal accusations. For example, Albert Hirsch and his son Adolfi attempted to compromise Recher by pointing out grammatical and syntactical errors that he had made in the invitation to the meeting. Hirsch and his son stated that these mistakes were proof of "what an inferior education the convener enjoys."<sup>86</sup> The first upset occurred when Recher was elected chairman and Spacek was elected his deputy. Hirsch and his supporters protested at the top of their voices.

Because the participants at this meeting discussed not only Hirsch's behavior regarding the *Folies Caprice* but also his other activities, the various statements and speeches that they made once again provide us informative insight into the Viennese *Volkssänger* milieu. Recher functioned as the main speaker during the meeting. His remarks, for example, make it clear why the December 1901 meeting's mood had been so hostile toward Hirsch. Recher reminded the Viennese *Volkssänger* that Hirsch had been duping them for years. As an example, he names the *Extrablatt* (special edition) boycott. The *Volkssänger* had agreed to sever all contact with the *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt*. According to Recher, Hirsch had undermined this agreement by continuing to send the newspaper information regarding the Viennese *Volkssänger* scene. As a result, this paper portrayed him in a positive light. Recher argued that by doing this Hirsch had employed unfair tactics to gain a competitive advantage over his fellow *Volkssänger*. In his harangue of Hirsch, Recher also spoke of the relationship between the *Volkssänger*

and the authors' society. In January 1897, Hirsch had encouraged his colleagues to boycott the authors' society because their royalties were unreasonably high.<sup>87</sup> He had proposed that the *Volkssänger* perform their own plays that they themselves penned. A year later, Hirsch announced in an advertisement in one of the daily newspapers that he was accepting farces and musical pieces by authors and composers. Recher argued that Hirsch had arbitrarily renounced solidarity with the *Volkssänger*.<sup>88</sup>

In Recher's opinion, Hirsch was doing the same thing again, this time with the *Folies Caprice*. He had previously been an ardent opponent of the Hungarian troupes and had even encouraged fellow performing musicians to follow his lead. And now he was bringing an ensemble from Budapest to Vienna. According to him, the *Folies Caprice*, which did not have a license to perform in Vienna, approached Hirsch through a middleman and offered him twelve gulden a day if he as a licensed *Volkssänger* agreed to serve as their director. Because the Polish singspiel society from Lemberg had offered him only eight gulden, Hirsch did not hesitate to agree to the plan that the *Folies Caprice* proposed. Recher accused Hirsch of being ruthless and greedy. Recher also accused him of being the kind of person who changed his character as often as other people change their underwear, flocking to anyone who brings him the greatest profit.<sup>89</sup>

The extent to which these accusations against Hirsch were true remains open to debate. But in the context of Hirsch's Jewishness, the similarity between the tone of these accusations and anti-Jewish stereotypes prevalent at the time may not have been entirely accidental. We see that Recher was not averse to making antisemitic allusions in other remarks that he made. When he mentioned Hirsch being director of the Lemberg Singspiel Society, he referred to the ensemble members as "Polish Jews."<sup>90</sup> Although some people immediately interrupted and asked him to call them "Polish artists" rather than Jews, Recher nonetheless repeated the designation "Polish Jews."<sup>91</sup> For the first time in the dispute among the *Volkssänger*, someone stigmatized Jewishness. It was used as a category replacing the term "artist." Recher thus introduced a twofold dichotomy: being Viennese versus being Polish and being a *Volkssänger* versus being Jewish. According to Recher, a member of the Lemberg ensemble was neither truly Viennese nor a true *Volkssänger*.

Following Recher, Modl took the floor. He criticized Hirsch's comment that with the Budapest Orpheum Society a Hungarian troupe had already come to Vienna and that he had suffered as a result of their appearance in the city. Modl emphasized that the vast majority of the ensemble's members at the time it was founded were not Hungarian but Viennese, although they did perform in Budapest. In saying this, Modl drew a clear distinction between the Budapest Orpheum Society and the *Folies Caprice*. He had explicitly spoken against the *Folies Caprice* moving to Vienna, declaring, "But we don't need any all-Hungarian groups. We don't want to let ourselves be devoured by an influx of foreigners."<sup>92</sup>

At the same time, Modl emphasized that the community of artists was international. He thus supported Hirsch's line of argument and positioned himself in opposition to Recher's attempts to nationalize the *Volkssänger* and pit them against Jews.<sup>93</sup>

### ***Identity as Performance***

While Modl was very careful to distance himself from Recher, Hirsch reacted much more directly to Recher's anti-Jewish jibes. He explicitly addressed the topic of his Jewishness and contrasted it with common anti-Jewish stereotypes. As he had done a few days before in the letter to the editor he had written, he now attempted during the meeting to style himself as an authentic *Wiener* (Viennese person) who was different from the members of "foreign ensembles." He again criticized the Budapest Orpheum Society, in particular their absence from important activities involving the Viennese *Volkssänger*. In this context, he referenced the inauguration of a *Volkssänger* flag that had taken place two years previously.<sup>94</sup> He emphasized that the "Budapester" had not been present at this ceremonial event. But he highlighted his own participation in the event, explaining, "In the church, I, Hirsch the Jew, stood next to the mayor. Gentlemen, you couldn't very well expect me to say, 'All hail Lueger,' [because] I'm Jewish, but it was still nice of him to show up. Do you know who didn't show up? The Budapester."<sup>95</sup>

For Hirsch, being Jewish was no reason to be absent from a Christian ritual held in a church. It also does not seem to have bothered him that he had to stand in close proximity to Vienna's antisemitic mayor. Rather, Hirsch used this coincidence as an opportunity to show that he was very much a part of the Viennese *Volkssänger* community. For Hirsch, the crucial criterion that determines belonging to a particular group, in this case the *Volkssänger*, is neither ethnicity nor religious affiliation, but rather participation in common activities. As he sees it, group solidarity is the result of a performative act. During the flag ceremony, this included, however temporarily, both the antisemite Lueger and the Jewish performer Hirsch.

If ethnicity and race are considered prerequisites for belonging to the *Volkssänger* community (echoing national myths of origin), Jews can easily be excluded from belonging to the larger social group. Recher did just this, explicitly excluding the Lemberg Singspiel Society and implicitly shutting out Hirsch. With so-called primordial codes, the constructed body is the decisive criterion for inclusion in a group, which does not allow freedom of choice.<sup>96</sup> Although participation in a primordial community is established from birth, those who belong assure themselves of their belonging and difference from outsiders by way of various rules of conduct. I argue that Hirsch sought to replace the primordial



with a performative community, which presupposes the active engagement of its members in solidarity-building actions and knows no exclusion rituals. In this context, we can now make sense of Hirsch's reference during the Seifert's Saal meeting to the fact that Rötzer had dined in his home in the recent past.<sup>97</sup> Inviting his opponent into his home is indicative of close social relationships that do not recognize primordial distinctions and related taboos regarding food.

Hirsch's argument during the meeting at Seifert's Saal that group belonging is performatively constituted does not seem to have merely been the result of his efforts to justify his behavior toward his peers. Rather, his argument seems to have corresponded to his true understanding of community. He also expresses his commitment to a conception of coexistence that is not based on essentialist features in several of his performances. As an example, let us consider his farce *Ein riskirtes Geschäft* (A risky business).<sup>98</sup> The plot of the piece seems quite simple: Gottfried Säufer (literally "drunkard") finds himself in a precarious situation due to his extraordinary alcohol consumption. In order to master it, he borrows 8,000 gulden from Salomon Teitelbaum. The two parties agree that Gottfried will repay 2,000 gulden annually over the next five years. They decide on a high interest rate because in the event of Gottfried's demise, Salomon would lose out on the outstanding sum of money before the end of the repayment period. To prevent this from happening, Salomon cares for the health of his debtor with great zeal. He follows him at every turn and tries to prevent him from engaging in unadvised activities and protect him from unpredictable situations. Gottfried, in turn, is interested in Salomon's well-being because he might need him again as a lender in the future. The non-Jew Gottfried and the Jew Salomon are thereby bound up in a kind of symbiotic community. They are to some degree dependent on each other and appear in public almost only together.

At one point, the two go to a tavern, where they run into the butcher Eulalie Schinkenbein, a former lover of Gottfried's. She is deeply upset over his broken promise to marry her. Over the course of their verbal exchange, she goes so far as to threaten to kill him with a knife. When Salomon tries to intervene to settle the dispute, she warns him to butt out, otherwise she will "stab [him] like a pig."<sup>99</sup> Salomon now faces a considerable dilemma: If he tries to help Gottfried, he puts himself in mortal danger. If he does not intervene, he could possibly lose Gottfried as well as the money he has lent him. Thus, the harmony gained through their mutual interest in caring for one another is lost.

Despite its simple plot, the play treats a controversial topic by portraying possibilities of coexistence between Jews and non-Jews. The Jewish Salomon and the non-Jewish Gottfried both mutually profit from one another as long as they take care of each other and coordinate their activities. Salomon's Jewishness does not interfere with their interactions. Their two-person Jewish–non-Jewish community is not based on noble ideals but is created by practical action.

### ***The Volkssänger War Goes to Court***

Although it was not intended to result in conflict, the meeting held on 21 March 1903 contributed to an intensification of the *Volkssänger* dispute. Because Hirsch believed that Rötzer and Recher had confronted him with unjustified accusations during the heated exchange at Seifert's Saal, he accused them both of slander. The case appeared before the district court in Hernals on 11 May 1903. The authorities, aware of the hostile mood among the *Volkssänger*, were intent on preventing any fights or other clashes from occurring by asking everyone present to relinquish their umbrellas or any other objects that could be used in an altercation.

The case was complicated by the fact that the court hearing involved not only the complaint that Hirsch brought against the defendants, but also the grievances that they brought against him. Rötzer for one felt that Hirsch had damaged his reputation by saying that "Rötzer should really be named *Hetzer* [instigator]" and took legal action against him for the statement. From the beginning, the judge's strategy was to mediate a settlement between the two parties. But both sides emphatically resisted the judge's efforts. The first day of the hearing thus consisted of little more than banter, each side blaming the other, and self-righteous statements made by both plaintiffs. Two incidents stand out from the unspectacular normality of the court proceedings and provide us particular insight into the poisoned atmosphere that plagued the *Volkssänger*. The first is an unexpected jeremiad that Hirsch delivered concerning the way in which the other *Volkssänger* had treated him. He complained to the judge that his fellow performing musicians had ostracized him. He stated bitterly, "Ever since the meeting when they viciously reproached me, a blameless person, my health has been jeopardized and I have been having thoughts of resorting to a murder weapon."<sup>100</sup> It is not clear from his remarks whether he was threatening suicide or contemplating murdering Recher and Rötzer. But his words nonetheless suggest the extent to which the "*Volkssänger* war" had demoralized and oppressed him.

The second incident worth noting took place in front of the courthouse after the trial. Around a hundred *Volkssänger* gathered there and engaged in a vigorous debate about what had taken place in the courtroom. One of those present was Adolf Hirsch, the plaintiff's son. When he caught sight of the lawyer representing his father's opponents, he began to abuse the man verbally. Other *Volkssänger* became involved in the ensuing war of words, further fueling the aggressive mood outside the court building. Albert Hirsch, who had already lost his temper several times during the trial, now completely lost his composure. He believed that he could only assert himself against his opponents with brute force and wanted to assault the lawyer. Passersby attracted by the commotion prevented him from doing so. The "*Volkssänger* war," which had up to this point consisted only of accusations and the occasional undercut, now threatened to deteriorate into violence.<sup>101</sup>

The court hearing that was suspended on 11 May continued two weeks later. The judge called a number of witnesses to take the stand. Most relieved Hirsch of the accusation of having damaged the reputation of the *Volkssänger*. Among others, Heinrich Leitner, the director of the Folies Caprice, who had not yet moved to Vienna from Budapest, spoke in Hirsch's favor. He denied the accusation that he had concluded a sham contract with Hirsch only to obtain a performance license for Vienna. Contrary to popular assumptions, Hirsch would, together with him, lead the ensemble and occasionally appear on stage as an actor.<sup>102</sup> Leitner also emphasized that a large part of the group was made up of native Viennese rather than Hungarians. He argued in defense of the Folies Caprice much like Modl had done with respect to the Budapest Orpheum Society during the meeting on 21 March. Many of the *Volkssänger* who were present in the courtroom, however, did not believe Leitner's statements and loudly expressed their dissatisfaction. Nevertheless, the lawsuit against Hirsch collapsed with Leitner's statements in his defense. After this, nothing stood in the way of the respective plaintiffs reaching a compromise, and the judge was able to persuade them all to come to an agreement. The *Volkssänger* war thus came to an end.

### ***The Aftermath of the Volkssänger War***

The *Volkssänger* dispute deeply clouded the relationship between some of them. The conflict seems to have done the most damage to Albert Hirsch. At the end of May 1903, he resigned his position as singspiel hall director of Edelhofer's Leopoldstadt Folk Orpheum. Despite the plan that he had announced, Hirsch probably did not end up working with the Folies Caprice, as his name did not appear in the group's performance announcements. Instead, he performed for a while with his own group. However, he was unable to achieve the success he had had in the past. In the fall of 1903, he joined his son-in-law Karl Kassina's burlesque theater troupe.<sup>103</sup> Hirsch had lost his professional independence for the time being.

In June 1904, Hirsch set off on a tour of Bohemia and Moravia with an ensemble.<sup>104</sup> In doing so, he followed the lead of numerous *Volkssänger* groups that annually trailed behind the Viennese who left the city during the heat of summer in search of relief. In a sense, they escorted their audiences, performing in well-known vacation destinations and on smaller stages outside Vienna. These groups left the Habsburg capital to try to compensate for what was generally sluggish business in July and August. Hirsch's guest appearances, however, differed from those of other groups. His tour lasted well beyond the summer months. He did not return to Vienna until the middle of November.<sup>105</sup> This longer absence suggests that Hirsch had difficulties finding work in his home city.

We also reach this conclusion when we take into consideration the press releases detailing Hirsch's guest spots. Normally, the media did not report on Vien-

nese ensemble performances that took place outside of the metropolis, but they covered Hirsch's performances in great detail. But this detailed coverage, however, was not part of typical reporting but instead appeared in the form of special announcements and brief notices that Hirsch himself was likely responsible for launching.<sup>106</sup> Since these notices were probably not intended to lure the Viennese away from the city, we can reasonably assume that they were intended to serve as advertisements meant to increase Hirsch's chances of finding work in Vienna. On 2 August 1904, a notice appeared advertising Hirsch's guest performance in Prague. It states, "Restaurateurs reflecting on this burlesque ensemble may reach A. Hirsch at the above address."<sup>107</sup> This notice thus demonstrates that Hirsch sought engagement in Vienna by using these kinds of advertisements. He may have been in a desperate situation. Despite these efforts, he was still unable to find work when he returned to the city in the late autumn of the same year. This is why he turned to Viennese locale owners with a "request for an offer from the gentlemen restaurateurs and café owners."<sup>108</sup>

The degree to which Hirsch's multi-month tour might have also been a reason for his inability to find work in Vienna can be seen in an advertisement published at the beginning of 1904 offering his entertainment services at family celebrations.<sup>109</sup> When we consider that only a few months earlier he had delighted a larger theater audience every evening and had been one of the best-known representatives of the Viennese *Volkssänger*, we must likely interpret his willingness to offer private performances as a considerable career decline. I argue that the *Volkssänger* conflict had sweeping, long-term consequences for Hirsch. He was unable to regain a foothold in the *Volkssänger* scene. Although he briefly performed in the spring of 1905 with a group called the Leopoldstadt Burlesque Ensemble, we may nonetheless conclude the longer pauses between his performances signaled the end of his career as a leading *Volkssänger*, a status he had been able to maintain until the turn of the century.

The Folies Caprice ensemble may have also had difficulty establishing itself in Vienna. In any case, the performances that were supposed to take place in the Hotel Central never came to be. The first indications that the ensemble was giving performances in Vienna were in August 1903 when newspapers advertised their engagement in the Bijou Theater on the grounds of Venice in Vienna.<sup>110</sup> The director was not Albert Hirsch, but rather Heinrich Leitner. In addition, the Folies Caprice had to compete with a newly founded group called the Viennese Folies Caprice. The establishment of the Viennese Folies Caprice ensemble seemed to be a direct response to the Hungarian group and began to take the stage in the Hotel Stefanie in the Taborstrasse in the middle of December 1903.<sup>111</sup> The group's manager merely added the epithet "Viennese" to the ensemble's name in an attempt to underscore the foreignness of the original Folies Caprice. A group of Viennese *Volkssänger* had thus become active as a way of luring business away from the troupe from Budapest. As a result, the Hun-

garians renamed their ensemble the Original Folies Caprice in order to highlight their “authenticity.”

## Interpreting the *Volkssänger* Conflict

I began this chapter by asserting that there are often multiple ways to interpret past events—in this case events from the Jewish past. I argued that we can view the disputes among the *Volkssänger* as evidence of this multiplicity of interpretive possibilities. The question that arises from my discussion of this conflict is whether I can substantiate my original thesis. Can we in fact interpret the *Volkssänger* war both in terms of antisemitism and its opposite, that is, as an example of prosperous Jewish and non-Jewish cooperation?

Three points seem undisputed when considering the tensions among the performing musicians, and we must take them into account in an effort to answer this question. First, there were no measurable differences between Jews and non-Jews. To be sure, some Jews supported their fellow Jew, Albert Hirsch. This was especially noticeable in the case of Karl Kassina.<sup>112</sup> Salomon Fischer, who was admittedly not particularly active in the entire affair, at least advocated for a revocation of the license requirement and took Hirsch’s side in this point. Other Jews, however, such as Josef Modl, criticized Hirsch. Hirsch himself complained about the behavior of the Budapest Orpheum Society. The trenches that opened up between the *Volkssänger* also existed between their Jewish members. There was no dividing line according to religious or ethnic affiliation, but rather according to specific professional interests.

Second, we cannot deny that Hirsch was guilty of disappointing many of his fellow performers. He deceived them out of self-interest while simultaneously declaring solidarity with them. His behavior had provoked the outrage over this apparent betrayal as well as the hostility with which a number of the Viennese *Volkssänger* reacted to him. The court proceedings that represented the culmination of the conflict put a strain first and foremost on Hirsch. Nevertheless, he was not personally subjected to antisemitism.

At first glance, these two points seem to indicate that Jews enjoyed a solid position in the local *Volkssänger* scene. They seem to have been widely accepted by their non-Jewish colleagues. The Jewishness of Hirsch, Fischer, Armin, Heinrich Eisenbach, Modl, and many others was not a reason for their fellow non-Jewish *Volkssänger* either to be suspicious of or to reject them. However, this assertion—and now I address the third point—runs contrary to Recher’s allusion to the Lemberg Singspiel Society as somehow different, as not belonging to the group. He evoked their Jewishness as a feature of their difference. Despite the fact that many of his colleagues explicitly requested that he not refer to the “Polish” as Jewish, Recher refused to relent. The real target of his attack was not likely to be

the Lemberg Singspiel Society, but rather Hirsch. This is also apparent in that at the end of December 1901 Recher emphasized that the “Polish” should not be disadvantaged as compared to the Viennese *Volkssänger*. I have identified no subsequent event that might have served to contradict this finding. The Lemberg Singspiel Society probably only served Recher as a means to threaten Hirsch, suggesting the possibility that his Jewishness could be used against him.

The reason why Recher did not make an antisemitic attack on Hirsch may have been rooted in his popularity. He was an integral member of the Viennese *Volkssänger*, and as one of their most important representatives he enjoyed great prestige among the population. The Viennese probably would not have favored anti-Jewish attacks directed against him. The Lemberg Singspiel Society, however, was a different matter. As Galician Jews, the members of the Lemberg ensemble were categorized as immigrants, whom the Viennese population already treated with deep-seated hostility.<sup>113</sup> In addition, they avoided participating in the social activities of the *Volkssänger*, and their performances in (Jewish) jargon did little to help establish the “Polish” as an integral part of the Viennese *Volkssänger* milieu. Recher therefore assumed that discriminating the group by calling them “Jewish” would be greeted with little objection. However, he was wrong in this assumption.

Let us return to my initial question concerning the historical evaluation of the *Volkssänger* war. Whether the conflict serves as evidence of an ineradicable antisemitism or whether we observe the relative lack of antisemitic sentiment undoubtedly depends on the interpretive lens we bring to the topic. On the one hand, the “war” revealed anti-Jewish sentiments, but on the other hand, it allows us to see that the Jewish and non-Jewish *Volkssänger* also prospered together. If historians focus on antisemitism, however, they should not only look for explicit antisemitic formulations, which were altogether scarce. Historians must also consider that the *Volkssänger* war took place in a city with a pronounced antisemitic climate.<sup>114</sup> Antisemitic clichés and stereotypes were part of its cultural texture. In this context, all one had to do was portray a person as having attributes that, according to widespread understanding, characterized Jews in order to brand that person as “Jewish.” The accusation that Hirsch was characterless and sacrificed solidarity for the sake of profit may well have been one of these codes used to characterize someone implicitly as Jewish.

Despite Lueger’s antisemitism, however, Jews were better off than ever during his time as mayor of Vienna.<sup>115</sup> This was partly due to favorable economic developments. On the other hand, the impression that conditions for Jews in fin-de-siècle Vienna were altogether favorable was also probably connected to the sheer number of Jewish and non-Jewish interactions that made the existing hostility toward Jews to a certain extent tolerable, sometimes even ignorable. The mayor himself embodied this paradox in that he was a rabid antisemite but also had Jewish friends.<sup>116</sup> He acted according to the motto he had formulated: “I decide who is Jewish.”<sup>117</sup>

In addition to the close professional connections that Jewish and non-Jewish *Volkssänger* shared (which I discussed in chapter 2), they also had numerous private groups or in-crowds, a phenomenon that even involved Hirsch and his later opponents in the *Volkssänger* war. An individual's Jewishness did not matter. Jews and non-Jews not only ate together and celebrated their festivals together, but also maintained intimate relationships and sometimes married each other. Salomon Fischer, who married Gisela Josefine Pichler in a civil ceremony in 1905 after he had separated from his second wife, Mitzi Jäger, was one of the Jewish *Volkssänger* who had an interdenominational marriage. In this context, we can also mention Josef Armin. He met his wife Kathi Rieder, a singer, during a stay in Lemberg (Lvov). They then moved to Vienna, where they initially worked together for the Hirsch ensemble.<sup>118</sup>

The world of Jewish and non-Jewish *Volkssänger* was closely intertwined and sometimes marked by entirely contradictory developments. Antisemitism and Jewish–non-Jewish intimacy coexisted alongside Jewish difference and mental similarities between Jewish and non-Jewish colleagues. On the one hand, Jewish *Volkssänger* ensembles, as I will demonstrate in the following, belonged to an *Aufführungsgemeinschaft* (community of performers), meaning that they had their own cultural milieu and perhaps even demonstrated their own separate “Jewish” humor. On the other hand, these groups performed the same farces and burlesques as the non-Jewish ensembles, suggesting that they all shared a common understanding of humor and roguishness, in particular the specific contexts that comedians poked fun at for the audience's amusement. It is interesting to note that the plays that Jewish groups performed were often written by Karl Rötzer. The *Volkssänger* war apparently had no detrimental effects on this relationship. Only a few days after its completion, the S. Fischer Society introduced Rötzer's *Alt- und Jung-Heidelberg* (Old and young Heidelberg). Members of the ensemble included, among others, one of Albert Hirsch's daughters and her husband Karl Kassina, who had actively supported his father-in-law during the disputes with Recher and Rötzer.<sup>119</sup> Before the conflict arose over the *Folies Caprice*, Hirsch also benefited from Rötzer's ingenuity. In 1896, he produced the play *Ein Wiener in Constantinopel oder im Harem!* (A Viennese in Constantinople or in the harem!).<sup>120</sup> But non-Jewish ensembles also staged pieces containing Jewish themes, such as when the Ludwig Kirnbauer Singspiel Hall performed *Der Herr Hekler* (The lord Hekler) by Louis Taufstein (1870–1942).<sup>121</sup> The play portrays hidden and accepted forms of Jewishness, the characters use a variety of common Yiddish terms, and only a cooperative Bohemian servant named Ladislaus suggests that there is also a non-Jewish world beyond the depicted milieu.

Both antisemitism and close private relationships with Jews existed in Vienna at the turn of the twentieth century and were not necessarily mutually exclusive. The two may have even been inseparable.<sup>122</sup> I argue that we can explain this antisemitism by taking as a point of departure Shulamit Volkov's concept of the “cul-

tural code.” According to this concept, antisemitic thinking was part of the basic attitude of a large part of the Viennese population, irrespective of whether an individual who entertained antisemitic ideas exhibited animosities against Jews. A person’s antisemitic views indicated that they were familiar with (Viennese) non-Jewish society. “Thus, the position on the Jewish question, even if not in itself of paramount importance,” Volkov argues, “came to indicate a belonging to a larger camp, a political stand and an overall cultural choice.”<sup>123</sup> Individuals could therefore bring Judeophobic sentiment into alignment with their specific personal relations with Jews. An observation that Arthur Schnitzler made in his 1908 novel *The Road into the Open* (*Der Weg ins Freie*) is illuminating in this context. In the novel, Schnitzler described the Habsburg metropolis immediately before the turn of the twentieth century as a city in which antisemitism was noticeably on the rise, but the relationships between Jews and non-Jews remained unaffected.<sup>124</sup>

The *Volkssänger* were a part of this ambiguous situation too. We see this ambiguity exemplified in the antisemitic body of songs that also belonged to the performing musicians’ repertoire. As part of Viennese society, above all through the anchoring of the *Volkssänger* in Viennese culture, it should come as no surprise that these songs expressed the attitudes of the petty-bourgeois Viennese milieu, including antisemitic ideas, in one form or another.

One of the notorious authors of antisemitic texts was Carl Lorens (1851–1901), who was also one of the most important composers of *Wienerlieder*. He owed his breakthrough not least to Julius Löwy, a Jewish editor of the *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt*, who reprinted the song “D’Mutterliab” by Lorens in the newspaper and helped him gain prominence.<sup>125</sup> But that did not stop Lorens from incorporating anti-Jewish stereotypes into his songs. His satirical song “Jeiteles, Mauscheles, Isak Silberstein,” for example, focuses on the ostentatious wealth of the Jews, which even the stock market crash failed to diminish. According to Lorens’s song, “Jewish” wealth was evident in the Jewish-owned Palais am Wiener Ring, in the guests of the Hotel Sacher, where primarily Jews dined, as well as in the opera, whose ticket holders were predominantly Jewish. Wealthy Jews thus frequented expensive locales that *Volkssänger* audiences tended to avoid because they could not afford them. Due to the presence of Jewish wealth, no matter how much this group represented a minute fraction of the overall population, Jews were seen as the polar opposite of popular “folk” culture.<sup>126</sup> The song “Der Jüd” (The Jew) demonstrates, albeit in a more vulgar fashion, this popular image of Jews. The explicit nature of the song’s antisemitic lyrics might well seem jarring: “Who goes in and out of the stock exchange all year round? The Jew. Who drinks champagne at the Hotel Sacher? The Jew . . . who eats everything but nothing from the pig? The Jew, the Jew, the Jew. Who takes 20 percent even on a gulden? The Jew.”<sup>127</sup> Lorenz even composed some of his songs in jargon to emphasize the foreignness of Jews using linguistic codes. For example, in his song “Der kosher



Jeinkef” (The kosher Jeinkef), Lorens holds Jews responsible not only for the stock market crash but also for the antisemitism of the press.<sup>128</sup>

The antisemitic texts that Carl Lorens penned do not seem to have deleteriously affected the friendships he had with many Jews.<sup>129</sup> This apparent paradox illustrates the complex and difficult relationship between Jewish and non-Jewish *Volkssänger*. Volkov’s concept of the “cultural code” helps explain this phenomenon. That is why some historians doubt that the inhabitants of Vienna in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in fact interpreted Lorens’s songs, which Josef Modl also sang, as viciously antisemitic.<sup>130</sup>

German philosopher Jürgen Habermas argues that a community can only exist if its formation is not undermined by linguistic articulations. In particular, he emphasizes participation in ritual acts.<sup>131</sup> It is possible that there were these or similar forms of socialization at work in fin-de-siècle Vienna that contributed to neutralizing antisemitic stereotypes in the plays, as we saw in Lorens’s songs. If this was the case, then Albert Hirsch’s concept of a special performative community involving both Jews and non-Jews was not a utopian ideal. In this sense, Hirsch’s concept merely served to highlight preexisting social processes and attribute greater significance to them.

### ***Approaches to Albert Hirsch’s Jewishness***

Up until the meeting held on 21 March 1903, Jewishness did not play a role in the *Volkssänger* war. In any event, it was not explicitly mentioned. But during the meeting at Seifert’s Saal, Recher brought up Jewishness in a discriminatory fashion, and Hirsch also mentioned it in referring to himself. Hirsch consciously presented himself as a Jew, who, despite perceiving a degree of similarity between himself and antisemites, specifically Karl Lueger, understood the limits in interacting with them and did not wish to exceed these limits. As he described it, his Jewishness prevented him from joining his colleagues in exclaiming “All hail Lueger!”

In the following, I search for additional evidence of Hirsch’s Jewishness. Can we identify additional clues that point to his Jewish self-understanding, apart from the explicit reference he made during the *Volkssänger* meeting? To answer this question, I analyze Hirsch’s actions and statements. Rather than arguing for an additional obvious avowal of religious affiliation, I present evidence of Hirsch’s performative articulations that underscore a particular kind of relationship to Judaism.

The first indication of Hirsch’s Jewish self-understanding, I assert, lies in his sense of solidarity with Jews who were in distress. This does not mean that he was hard-hearted toward non-Jews. On the contrary, he was often involved with assisting impoverished colleagues and thus garnered great sympathy, which went beyond the *Volkssänger* milieu. However, there is no evidence that Hirsch also

organized relief efforts for people in need who were not Jewish and were not *Volks-sänger*. Nevertheless, he did come to the aid of Jews such as Anna Katz, who wanted to commit suicide by plunging into the Danube Canal along with her children (see the introduction to this book). In order to alleviate the family's misery and give them a new lease on life, Hirsch organized a collection for Katz at his New Year's performance on 1 January 1901.<sup>132</sup> It is interesting to note that other Jews, such as the Zionist Reichsrat member Heinrich Spitzer, also tried to help Anna Katz by collecting donations.<sup>133</sup> Hirsch and Spitzer may have been motivated by their sense of Jewishness to intervene on behalf of the suicidal woman and her children. Their actions may have been based on a particular feeling of empathy for other Jews and can be understood as a commitment to "Jewish solidarity."

We can deduce another indication regarding Hirsch's Jewish self-conception from his performance repertoire. In this sense, I refer not only to his farces, which were usually set in a Jewish milieu or at least included Jewish protagonists, but also to the remarkable similarities between the performances that Hirsch's ensemble offered and other Jewish *Volks-sänger* groups. It is probably no accident that certain plays that they all staged (albeit in different versions) have markedly Jewish content. The *Volks-sänger* thus formed a "Jewish performance community." One of the plays that illustrates this connection among Jewish performing musicians was *Die Klabriaspattie* (see chapter 2). Georg Wacks argues that this work brought Jewish expressions to the stage for the first time.<sup>134</sup> Although Wacks's assertion seems doubtful, the version of the play that was performed in Vienna was closely linked to the everyday culture of the Jews in the Habsburg capital.<sup>135</sup> We identify this overlap between the play and everyday Jewish life first and foremost in the location where the card game takes place. Vienna's Café Abeles located in Salzgries, a meeting place for mainly Jewish immigrants from the East, likely served as a model for the play's setting.<sup>136</sup> Furthermore, *Klabrias* was an actual card game that was very popular among Jews. We see the game's popularity not least in the numerous court cases that were the result of card-playing disputes.<sup>137</sup> This prompted a judge in March 1900 to proclaim that it was strange that many *Klabrias* games held in Leopoldstadt were properly concluded only in court.<sup>138</sup>

In addition to the Budapest Orpheum Society's performance of *Klabriaspattie*, the S. Fischer Society performed the play in April 1904 at the Prater Orpheum, announcing it as *Soirée bei Dalles*.<sup>139</sup> In August of the same year, Fischer staged the *Original Budapester Klabrias-Partie*.<sup>140</sup> Around the same time, the Kassina Singspiel Hall offered a production of *Die Klabriaspattie im Olymp* (The *Klabrias* game on Olympus).<sup>141</sup> The Halls of Nestroy performed *Die Klabriaspattie auf der Reise nach Chicago* (The *Klabrias* game on a trip to Chicago).<sup>142</sup> And the Hirsch Society in turn produced *Die Klabriaspattie vor Gericht* (The *Klabrias* game goes to court).<sup>143</sup>

A final clue that speaks to Hirsch's identification with Judaism relates to his interactions with Jewish celebrations and festival culture. To be sure, it appears

that he did not participate much in the way of a religious lifestyle. At any rate, I have not found any evidence that would suggest otherwise. Even in his farces he does not portray the Jewishness of his protagonists by way of religious plotlines. However, Hirsch organized Purim celebrations with his ensemble.<sup>144</sup> These celebrations, I argue, indicate a connection to Jewish tradition. We may therefore make the logical conclusion that Hirsch was a part of not only a “community of Jewish solidarity” and a “Jewish performance community,” but also a “Jewish cultural community.” In this context, it is worth noting that Hirsch produced the play *Wrestlers at the Kosher Restaurant* in the autumn of 1900 on the occasion of a Simchat Torah celebration that took place in the fifteenth district of Vienna.<sup>145</sup>

Hirsch’s Jewish self-understanding was fragmented. This sense of Jewishness manifested itself in his participation in various Jewish communities. It is therefore not possible to speak of Hirsch’s Jewish self-understanding in general terms, as he does not seem to have personally possessed a unified or holistic concept of Jewishness. Instead, he displayed various facets of it. And he expressed these facets performatively, as they manifested themselves in his actions.

## Conclusion

In recent years, some scholars have begun to recognize the topic “Jews in popular culture” as a lacuna in historical research and have as a result been determined to engage with the theme more intensively and thoroughly. Although they have often employed a vague definition of popular culture and have reflected in part only on the Jewish rather than on the general aspects of popular culture, they have nonetheless acknowledged its importance for Jewish–non-Jewish interactions.<sup>146</sup> Hirsch was already aware in the late nineteenth century of what some historians have just now begun to discern, namely the advantageous role of popular culture in the formation of community between Jews and non-Jews. Within the framework of popular culture, he provides a keen example of the subject we analyze today.

In many respects, the *Volkssänger* war, which I have described in detail in this chapter, provides an eye-opening look into the history of Viennese Jews. The conflict not only supports the claim that close ties existed between Jewish and non-Jewish performing artists and that there was no binary categorization separating them, but it also demonstrates that the terms of Jewish adaptation or integration frequently employed in historiography represent problematic analytical instruments that cannot adequately describe the close social ties between Jews and non-Jews and their joint formation of cultural processes. My analysis of the *Volkssänger* dispute thus substantiates my thesis, formulated in the first chapter, that the prominence of the acculturation narrative in historiographical accounts of Jews makes a scholarly treatment of popular culture difficult. Albert

Hirsch never made any attempt to adapt to non-Jewish majority culture. Rather, he pursued his own interests. And he did not have to integrate himself into the Viennese *Volkssänger* scene. There was no reason for this, because he was already an important member of it. Nevertheless, he also wanted his fellow performers to accept him as an equal and treat him first and foremost as a *Volkssänger* rather than a Jew, despite any factual differences between him and the majority of them. Quarreling parties should conduct a disagreement with sound arguments, not by attacking the opposition with disparaging remarks related to religious or ethnic affiliation. We may reasonably conclude that Hirsch was convinced that unprejudiced coexistence was possible in a community whose members commit to creating it on a performative basis. Individual participation in processes of group formulation, rather than primordial codes, should be the decisive factor for structuring belonging.

These community-building processes include church visits. At times, Hirsch demonstratively ignored the divisiveness of religion. This was not only the case with the flag consecration ceremony, but also, as another example, his attendance at the funerals of colleagues.<sup>147</sup> In his farces, he repeatedly touched on the topic of Jews attending church. Hirsch's personal church visits, as well as those of the Jewish characters in his pieces, are always associated with a certain occasion, especially with concrete liminal events. The purpose of this attendance is either to mourn the death of a colleague, to celebrate an individual's acceptance into a religious community, or, as was the case with the consecration of the *Volkssänger* flag, to strengthen ritually the performing singers' collective identity. Those present at such events pursue a common goal that binds them together, at least for the duration of the event. Distinctions and differences that separate them in everyday life seem to be largely eliminated during these kinds of ceremonial occasions. They take place in a kind of "interstitial space" that is neither part of nor completely removed from everyday life, therefore allowing for the formation of a particular kind of community. The French ethnologist Arnold van Gennep (1873–1957) theorized such a "liminal space" in 1909.<sup>148</sup> His colleague, the Scottish anthropologist Victor Turner (1920–1983), further developed his concept, introducing the notion of *communitas*, a space in which the participants merge together.<sup>149</sup> Hirsch's particular sense of connection with those present at the church during the consecration of the *Volkssänger* flag, which also allowed him to find common ground with the antisemite Lueger, may have been the result of a "threshold" experience.

Hirsch's localization of community in a liminal space is not rooted in a long-established notion of history that typically serves as the origin of national myths and conceptions of ethnic authenticity.<sup>150</sup> Rather, he sought to evoke the recent past when he described examples of Jewish and non-Jewish coexistence.

There was a direct connection between Hirsch's understanding of time and his concept of space, in which community was constituted performatively. Other

Jewish artists, as I illustrate in the following chapter, articulated a similar framework for community. The triad of time, space, and performance represented a prism of identity for a segment of Viennese Jewry, which distinguished them from many non-Jews. We can interpret this triad as a way of characterizing Jewishness based on secular, rather than religious, differences.

## Notes

1. See Evyatar Friesel, “The German-Jewish Encounter as a Historical Problem: A Reconsideration,” *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 41, no. 1 (1996): 263–64.
2. For general information on this, see Scott Spector, “Forget Assimilation: Introducing Subjectivity to German-Jewish History,” *Jewish History* 20, no. 3/4 (2006): 349–61.
3. *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt* [*IWE* in subsequent citations] 353 (24 December 1901): 9. Hungary generally pursued a nationalist policy with respect to *Volksänger*, making it difficult not only for Austrian artists to perform but also for those residing in the country that wanted to hold performances in German. See *IWE* 160 (12 June 1902): 8.
4. Carola Leitner and Kurt Hamtil, *Ottakring: Wiens 16. Bezirk in alten Fotografien* (Vienna: Carl Ueberreuter, 2006), 7.
5. One of the most well-known spots in Ottakring was the “Stalehner,” which was turned from a tavern into a vaudeville venue over the course of the nineteenth century. See “Abschied vom alten Haus Stalehner,” *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt* 53 (23 Februar 1907): 7. See also chapter 4.
6. Wolfgang Maderthaner and Lutz Musner, *Die Anarchie der Vorstadt: Das andere Wien um 1900* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1999), 35, 118.
7. *IWE* 295 (26 January 1902): 33.
8. Karl Spacek (1850–1904) was already performing in the Prater in the 1860s and worked for various ensembles. In the 1880s, he founded his own company and became famous for his role as the “Bohemian.” In the last twenty years of his career, he took the stage at the Etablissement Mandl in the district of Hernalers for performances on Sundays and holidays. His prominence is evident in his honorary membership in various *Volksänger* associations (see *IWE* 161 [11 June 1904]: 5f.).
9. *IWE* 139 (22 May 1900): 9.
10. Karl Lechner (1870–1927) took over as director of the Budapest Orpheum Society in 1901, replacing his uncle Lautzky.
11. *IWE* (20 January 1906): 9.
12. Before the turn of the twentieth century, Ben Tieber presided for a time over the Colosseum. Following his time there, he repeatedly brought lawsuits against the establishment’s owners. For example, see *IWE* 164 (17 June 1900): 24.
13. *IWE* 7 (8 January 1906): 5. Contractual agreements were generally not taken very seriously, and court proceedings were therefore relatively frequent. For example, see “Was ist ein Vertragsbruch?,” *Das Variété* 32 (14 June 1903): n.p.
14. *IWE* 130 (12 May 1903): 12.
15. *IWE* 38 (8 February 1903): 4.
16. Josef Koller, *Das Wiener Volksängertum in alter und neuer Zeit. Nacherzähltes und Selbsterlebtes* (Vienna: Gerlach and Wiedling, 1931), 145.

17. *IWE* 232 (24 August 1903): 7.
18. *IWE* 314 (15 November 1903): 18.
19. See *IWE* 359 (31 December 1903): 5.
20. See *IWE* 359 (31 December 1903): 5.
21. *IWE* 356 (28 December 1901): 4.
22. In fact, only a very few *Volkssänger* suffered from a physical handicap. The others surreptitiously obtained permission to be a *Volkssänger* by pretending to have poor eyesight. See Elisabeth Brauner-Berger, “Volkssängertum im Wandel” (PhD diss., Vienna, 1993), 52.
23. A few *Volkssänger* had attempted to do this some years before: see Iris Fink, “‘Wien, Wien, nur Du allein . . .’ Das Wiener Lied im österreichischen Kabarett als Ort der Identitätsfindung,” ed. Joanne McNally and Peter Sprengel, *Hundert Jahre Kabarett: Zur Inszenierung gesellschaftlicher Identität zwischen Protest und Propaganda* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2013), 51–63, here 53.
24. Despite the objections, it was not long before the *Volkssänger* began to charge a fixed entry fee (*fixes Entrée*). Indeed, one of the first was Salomon Fischer. After he received a license to manage a singspiel hall in 1904, he abandoned the practice of collecting donations from the audience at the Prater Orpheum, where he was a guest performer at the time (see *IWE* 103 [13 April 1904]: 6; *IWE* 131 [11 May 1904]: 11).
25. Brauner-Berger, “Volkssängertum,” 53.
26. *IWE* 356 (28 December 1901): 4.
27. *IWE* 183 (6 July 1900): 15.
28. Amon Berg was the author of numerous well-known one-act pieces, solo scenes, and satirical songs, such as “The Old Drahrer” and “Dear Augustin.” He began his career in 1875 and rendered great services as co-founder of the *Allgemeine Wiener Volkssängerverein*. In the 1890s, he suffered a stroke on stage and was unable to practice his profession for a long time. After a period of impoverishment, he was finally able to make a comeback (see *IWE* 62 [3 March 1899]: 5.)
29. Strict laws governed *Volkssänger* performances in Vienna. Performing musicians were required to have a permit, issued under specific prerequisites. For example, one of the requirements for obtaining a permit was that applicants had to reside in Vienna for a certain period of time (usually multiple years). But in reality, the leaders or managers of *Volkssänger* groups, who were “licensed” (*lizenziert*), often hired performers who did not have a permit. Amon Berg criticized the fact that ensembles not only had a mixture of licensed and unlicensed members, but they also sometimes provided guest spots to foreign *Volkssänger*.
30. See *IWE* 350 (21 December 1901): 15.
31. *IWE* 356 (28 December 1901): 4.
32. Hauser was the first and longtime chairman of the “League” of Viennese *Volkssänger*.
33. *IWE* 356 (28 December 1901): 4.
34. *IWE* 3 (3 January 1902): 6.
35. Koller, *Volkssängertum*, 166f.
36. *IWE* 321 (21 November 1899): 4; *IWE* 329 (29 November 1899): 2.
37. *IWE* 261 (23 September 1900): 9.
38. For more general information on the topic of xenophobia and social envy, see Herfried Münkler, *Populismus in Deutschland. Eine Geschichte seiner Mentalitäten, Mythen und Symbole* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint Press, 2012), 15–16.
39. *IWE* 356 (28 December 1901): 4.

40. *IWE* 356 (26 January 1901): 6.
41. *IWE* 356 (26 December 1901): 6.
42. *IWE* 272 (3 October 1902): 5.
43. *IWE* 272 (3 October 1902): 5.
44. *IWE* 37 (6 February 1904): 37. On 1 September 1904, the Viennese *Volkssänger* were finally permitted to perform in coffeehouses. See *IWE* 240 (30 August 1904): 2.
45. *IWE* 297 (28 October 1902): 5.
46. Marion Linhardt, *Residenzstadt und Metropole: Zu einer kulturellen Topographie des Wiener Unterhaltungstheaters (1885–1918)* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2006), 4–7.
47. Fink, “Wien,” 54.
48. We see the explicit connection between the *Volkssänger* and this nostalgic take on Vienna’s past in a remark made in 1903 about Edmund Guschelbauer (1839–1912), one of the most famous Viennese *Volkssänger*, on the occasion of his fortieth year as a performing musician. Guschelbauer was called “one of the last representatives of the singing ‘Old Vienna’” (*Das Variété* 16 [15 February 1903]: n.p.).
49. *IWE* 225 (14 August 1904): 9.
50. Gerhard Eberstaller, *Ronacher: Ein Theater seiner Zeit* (Vienna: Edition Wien, 1993), 29–30.
51. *IWE* 59 (1 March 1902): 8.
52. *IWE* 64 (6 March 1902): 8.
53. *IWE* 43 (13 February): 7.
54. *IWE* 121 (11 May 1904): 11.
55. See *IWE* 243 (5 September 1903): 14.
56. See *IWE* 249 (9 September 1905): 10.
57. See *IWE* 66 (8 March 1901): 5.
58. J. Kurz, “Zur Lage des Wiener Volkssängertums,” *Das Variété* 2 (26 October 1902): n.p. On the topic of repetition in *Volkssänger* performances, see *Das Variété* 1 (15 October 1902): n.p.
59. On the wide circulations of newspapers of the time, see Gabriele Melischek and Josef Seethaler, “Auflagenzahlen der Wiener Tageszeitungen 1895–1930 in quellenkritischer Bearbeitung,” *Arbeitsberichte der Kommission für historische Pressedokumentation* 1 (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2001).
60. Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space 1880–1918* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 115.
61. Hartmut Rosa, *Beschleunigung: Die Veränderung der Zeitstrukturen in der Moderne* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2005).
62. Kern, *Culture*, 110–11.
63. Robert Musil, *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (Hamburg: Reinbek, 1995), 31–32.
64. Kern, *Culture*, 111.
65. See Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Geschichte der Eisenbahnreise: Zur Industrialisierung von Raum und Zeit im 19. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch, 2000). For example, we see the cultural association between the *Volkssänger* milieu and horse-drawn carriages in one of the most well-known *Wienerlieder* (Viennese songs), the “Coachman’s Song,” composed in 1885 by Gustav Pick (1832–1921), the son of a Jewish merchant. The song gained popularity in particular through the rendition performed by actor and singer Alexander Girardi (1850–1918). The history of the “Coachman’s Song” also serves as a superlative example of Jewish–non-Jewish cooperation in the *Volkssänger*

- realm (see Klaus Hödl, “The Quest for Amusement: Jewish Leisure Activities in Vienna circa 1900,” *Jewish Culture and History* 15 (2012): 1–17, <http://www.tandfonline.com/eprint/yzPgEjuSfb2QZZS7tgWq/full> [accessed 12 January 2019]). An additional example of the horse-and-buggy theme appears in the song “Leb’ wohl, Du altes Tramwayferd, Du hast für d’neue Zeit kein Werth” (Farewell, you old tramway horse, you are worthless in this new day and age), which helped Adolphi, Albert Hirsch’s son, attain initial success.
66. Joachim Radkau, *Das Zeitalter der Nervosität: Deutschland zwischen Bismarck und Hitler* (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1998), 173–259.
  67. Beard is said to have outlined “neurasthenia” in 1869 (Charles E. Rosenberg, “The Place of Georg M. Beard in Nineteenth-Century Psychiatry,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 36 [1962]: 248.) But another American had used the term in a lecture already a year prior (Philip P. Wiener, “G. M. Beard and Freud on American Nervousness,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 2 [1956]: 271).
  68. Martin Engländer, “Die auffallend häufigen Krankheitserscheinungen der jüdischen Rasse” (Vienna, 1902), 16.
  69. *IWE* 4 (4 January 1903): 27.
  70. Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993).
  71. Richard Guttman, *Variété: Beiträge zur Psychologie des Pöbels* (Vienna: Deutsch-Österreichischer Verlag, 1919).
  72. *IWE* 297 (28 October 1902): 5.
  73. Johann Kwopil (1818–1910) was by profession a tailor. After a stay in England, he took over as manager of the Universum in the Viennese district Brittengau in 1853 and stayed there nine years. Later, he directed various *Volkssänger* ensembles and singspiel halls (see Koller, *Volkssängertum*, 16).
  74. *IWE* 73 (14 March 1896): 3.
  75. *IWE* 74 (15 March 1896): 3.
  76. *IWE* 77 (18 March 1896): 4.
  77. *IWE* 76 (17 March 1896): 3.
  78. *IWE* 144 (26 May 1903): 9.
  79. *Das Variété* 13 (25 January 1903): n.p.
  80. *IWE* 20 (20 January 1903): 6.
  81. *Das Variété* 20 (18 March 1903): n.p.
  82. *IWE* 69 (11 March 1903): 3.
  83. *IWE* 74 (16 March 1903): 3.
  84. *Das Variété* 20 (18 March 1903): n.p.
  85. *IWE* 74 (16 March 1903): 3.
  86. *Das Variété* 21 (25 March 1903): n.p.
  87. On this point, see also *IWE* 198 (22 July 1901): 3.
  88. *Das Variété* 21 (25 March 1903) : n.p.
  89. *Das Variété* 21 (25 March 1903): n.p.
  90. Because Hirsch was born in Vienna, Recher did not explicitly include him in this designation, but it may well have been implicitly directed at him.
  91. *Das Variété* 21 (25 March 1903) : n.p.
  92. *Das Variété* 21 (25 March 1903) : n.p.
  93. *Das Variété* 21 (25 March 1903) : n.p.
  94. *Das Variété* 21 (25 March 1903): n.p. This ceremony allowed the Viennese *Volkssänger*



- and performing musicians to create their own flag. For this purpose, they organized a festive procession accompanied by riders on horseback wearing traditional old German costume as well as a fanfare of brass music. A band, numerous girls dressed in white, and finally the *Volkssänger* followed. The mayor Karl Lueger and other officials were already waiting in the church where the flag consecration ceremony took place. Thousands of people attended the celebration concluding the church ceremony (see *IWE* 283 [15 October 1900]: 3).
95. *Das Variété* 21 (25 March 1903): n.p.
  96. Bernhard Giesen, *Kollektive Identität: Die Intellektuellen und die Nation 2* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1999), 32.
  97. *IWE* 128 (10 May 1903): 27.
  98. Albert Hirsch, *Ein riskirtes Geschäft*, Niederösterreichisches Landesarchiv [NÖLA in subsequent citations] (Theaterzensur), Box 21/12 (1897).
  99. Hirsch, *Geschäft*, 11.
  100. *IWE* 130 (12 May 1903): 12.
  101. *IWE* 130 (12 May 1903): 11–12.
  102. *IWE* 144 (26 May 1903): 9.
  103. *IWE* 269 (1 October 1903): 8; *IWE* 6 (6 January 1904): 9.
  104. *IWE* 181 (1 July 1904): 15; *IWE* 200 (20 July 1904): 9.
  105. *IWE* 318 (16 November 1904): 13.
  106. *IWE* 181 (1 July 1904): 15; *IWE* (20 July 1904): 9.
  107. *IWE* 213 (2 August 1904): 15.
  108. *IWE* 318 (16 November 1904): 13.
  109. *IWE* 44 (13 February 1904): 18.
  110. *IWE* 227 (20 August 1903): 7.
  111. *IWE* 340 (11 December 1903): 14.
  112. *IWE* 80 (22 March 1903): 4.
  113. Robert S. Wistrich, *The Jews of Vienna in the Age of Franz Joseph* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1990), 65.
  114. Peter Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988).
  115. Bruce F. Pauley, *From Prejudice to Persecution: A History of Austrian Anti-Semitism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 45.
  116. Hannah Arendt, *Die verborgene Tradition: Essays* (Frankfurt: Jüdischer Verlag, 2000), 86.
  117. George E. Berkley, *Vienna and Its Jews: The Tragedy of Success, 1880s–1980s* (Boston: Madison Books, 1988), 106.
  118. Koller, *Volkssängertum*, 114.
  119. *IWE* 150 (2 June 1903): 8.
  120. Karl Rötzer, *Wiener in Constantinopel oder im Harem!*, NÖLA 21/10 (1896).
  121. Louis Taufstein, *Der Herr Hekler: Posse* (1909; 42 pp.), NÖLA (Zensurakten), Box 29/2. Taufstein composed numerous farces, in particular for the Budapest Orpheum Society. In later years, he also wrote operettas and film scripts. He was murdered by the National Socialists in 1942.
  122. An example of the cultivation of relationships that mask existing antisemitism is the professional cooperation between the councilman Rudolf Spannagel, a member of the antisemitic Christian Social Party, and his accountant, Goldstein. They opened a meat stall in a Viennese market hall, despite the fact that neither of them possessed the neces-

- sary permit. Spannagel's political influence made this possible. Goldstein, in turn, made contact with a Galician butcher who supplied their meat. Spannagel's antisemitic beliefs did not deleteriously affect their mutually profitable enterprise (*IWE* 241 [1 September 1904]: 8; *IWE* 258 [17 September 1904]: 4).
123. Shulamit Volkov, "Readjusting Cultural Codes: Reflections on Anti-Semitism and Anti-Zionism," *Journal of Israeli History* 25, no. 1 (2006): 51.
  124. Arthur Schnitzler, *Der Weg ins Freie* (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1922).
  125. Koller, *Volkssängertum*, 115–17.
  126. Sammlung der Musikabteilung der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek, n. 6.
  127. Sammlung der Musikabteilung der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek, n. 6.
  128. Sammlung der Musikabteilung der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek, n. 110.
  129. Gertraud Pressler, "Jüdisches und Antisemitisches in der Wiener Volksunterhaltung," *Musicologica Austriaca* 17 (1998): 73.
  130. Pressler, "Jüdisches," 71–72.
  131. For more on Jürgen Habermas and community, see Thomas Assheuer, "Akademische Affenliebe," *Die Zeit* 26 (18 June 2014): 46.
  132. *IWE* 2 (2 February 1901): 2.
  133. *IWE* 2 (2 February 1901): 2.
  134. Georg Wacks, *Die Budapester Orpheumgesellschaft: Ein Varieté in Wien 1889–1919* (Vienna: Holzhausen, 2002), 62.
  135. *Eine Klabbriaspertie* had already been performed in Budapest in 1889. The Viennese version differs somewhat from the original. Mary Gluck, *The Invisible Jewish Budapest: Metropolitan Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2016), 168–74.
  136. *IWE* 33 (3 February 1906): 9.
  137. For example, see *IWE* (7 May 1899): 23.
  138. *IWE* 65 (11 March 1900): 29.
  139. *IWE* 115 (25 April 1904): 13. Incidentally, Dalles is also the name of a card player.
  140. *IWE* 233 (23 August 1904): 15.
  141. *IWE* 145 (26 May 1904): 19.
  142. See NÖLA (Theaterzensur), Box 50/17 (1897).
  143. See *IWE* 243 (5 September 1903): 14.
  144. *IWE* 73 (16 March 1900): 14. Hirsch was not alone in this. Salomon Fischer also arranged a Purim celebration with a ball (see *IWE* 56 [25 February 1899]: 14.)
  145. *IWE* 282 (14 October 1900): 27.
  146. In this context, the work of John Efron has been pathbreaking. In a 2009 article, he emphatically advocates research in the realm of popular culture, particularly Jewish popular culture. He writes, "One area of German Jewish historiography that cries out for more attention . . . is to study popular culture. Intellectual history has been a dominant trend in German Jewish history . . . little attention has been paid to the quotidian character of German Jewish life and especially in the recreational habits of the community" (John M. Efron, "New Directions in Future Research," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 54 [2009]: 4).
  147. *IWE* 291 (23 October 1901): 8.
  148. Arnold van Gennep, *Übergangsriten (Les rites de passage)* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1999), 27–28.
  149. Victor Turner, *Das Ritual: Struktur und Anti-Struktur* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2000).
  150. Giesen, *Kollektive Identität*, 253.

## JEWISH SPACES OF RETREAT AT THE TURN OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY



In the second and third chapters, I discussed the conception of Jewishness that appears in Jewish *Volkssänger* plays, as well Albert Hirsch's life and theatrical work. My analysis highlights how the representation of Jewishness takes precedent over its content, that is, what defines it. I have demonstrated how one cannot tie Jewishness to concrete, universal attributes. Rather, Jewishness reveals itself in a differentiation that comes to the fore in a performative way. I have shown how difference is inclusive, meaning that, in principle, non-Jews could also potentially adopt the related attributes (see chapter 5).

In the following section of the study, I explore a form of Jewish differentiation that is grounded in content matter, which I illustrate on the basis of concrete conceptions of space and time. This form of differentiation abrogates the notion of the fluidity of difference, without essentializing it. That is to say, these notions of time and place are determined by context. To outline them, we must expand our study beyond popular Jewish stage entertainment and take into account literary and artistic works by Jews as well. I thereby situate my thesis that (at least some) Viennese Jews at the turn of the twentieth century shared a specific Jewish understanding of time and space within a wider framework.

### **Retreating into the Past**

When Claude Monet and his fellow painters, who would later become known as Impressionists, turned to plein-air painting, they were still seen as eccentric. However, they were certainly not the first to set up their canvases outside to

capture the scenes of nature before their eyes and their impressions thereof. In painting outdoors, they followed the example of the Barbizon School.<sup>1</sup> From a broader point of view, they were not merely concerned with a new method of painting. Instead, nature became more significant as a motif against the backdrop of contemporary urbanization and industrialization.<sup>2</sup> Nature was understood as a retreat, and they depicted a premodern landscape that was in the process of disappearing. For those who questioned the acceleration of life in urban surroundings, this landscape became a site of longing.

Tina Blau, an Austrian Impressionist, also painted spaces of retreat within the sphere of tangible reality. Born in Vienna in 1845 and having converted from Judaism to Protestantism in 1883, the landscape painter achieved fame in Austria and beyond.<sup>3</sup> Among her large and varied painterly oeuvre are depictions of Vienna's periphery and past. These include *Aus der Wiener Vorstadt* (On the outskirts of Vienna; 1905) and *Altwiener Hof* (Old Viennese courtyard; 1910). They depict idyllic settings that had already been lost during the modernization of Vienna or were in danger of being demolished. Industrialization and the new construction boom, which demolished entire streets to replace seemingly peaceful rows of houses with new living quarters built from scratch, ripped many people from their familiar surroundings and awakened in them a desire for a simpler way of life. These were then located on the city's outskirts (*Vorstadt*) or in the topos of Alt-Wien (Old Vienna). In the late nineteenth century, these spaces were often conflated, their meanings intermingling. Old Vienna was localized on the periphery, and the outskirts respectively embodied conditions that were supposedly characteristic of Vienna's past. For Tina Blau, these locations assumed the same purpose that nature held for other Impressionists.

Blau's representations of spaces of retreat from the ostensible rigors of the present are similar to those of Felix Salten, a member of the literary circle Jung Wien. Salten was born as Siegmund Salzman in Budapest in 1869. His father, who came from a renowned family of rabbis, moved with his wife and children to Vienna, where Siegmund went to school. Shortly after completing secondary school, he became a member of the writers' circle Jung Wien. *Bambi* and *Josefine Mutzenbacher* are among his most famous works, although the authorship of the latter has not yet been fully clarified. Salten also wrote about the outskirts. He himself had spent part of his childhood on the periphery of Vienna, after his father had lost his fortune to speculation and his family had to give up their apartment in a bourgeois neighborhood. Salten's excursions to the outskirts therefore were motivated in no small part by his childhood memories.<sup>4</sup> In this manner, he associated them with a sense of safety and security. Occasionally, he was able to discover them in the way of life associated with the outskirts, as well as in some of the taverns and establishments in Vienna's city center. Essentially, he sought a place where people of various social strata, classes, and ethnicities, including Jews and non-Jews, came together and were able to forget their differences and

create a sense of fellowship in the context of Viennese congeniality and hospitality (*Gemütlichkeit*).<sup>5</sup> He wrote about Brady, a tavern that offered entertainment in the city center: “And as young princes, officers, old rakes, clerks, bourgeois, coachmen, and young women sit next to each other and sing, it feels as if one is in a very small town, where the residents come together to form a particular kind of family.”<sup>6</sup> Thus, for Salten, the outskirts were not necessarily a specific geographic location in the city, but rather a place that enabled the creation of a community that might include both Jews and non-Jews.

For Tina Blau and Felix Salten, Old Vienna and the periphery served as spaces free from the unrest of modernity, which therefore represented a bucolic counterpoint to the realities of everyday life. Further, both places evoked the past. Old Vienna stood for a lost Vienna—first and foremost for the Biedermeier era—although it could also reach further into the past. By contrast, the city’s outlying districts were associated with a contemplative life in a seemingly village-like atmosphere that had already disappeared in the rest of Vienna, or was vanishing in principle, as it was being displaced by the modernization of the urban surroundings.<sup>7</sup>

Incidentally, sites of retreat from the present into history were also represented in architecture. Sometimes the facades of the palaces on Vienna’s Ringstrasse that Jews owned evinced a strong longing for a world in which the chasm between Jews and non-Jews could be eradicated or at least bridged.<sup>8</sup>

### *Jewish Difference in the Topos of Old Vienna*

Within the realms of art and literature, Tina Blau and Felix Salten depicted spaces of retreat that were transfigured by nostalgia. Anchored in the old Viennese past, they largely correspond with the refuge construed by Vienna’s general population.<sup>9</sup> In Old Vienna, they likewise perceived an imagined counterpoint to the transfigured, modern metropolis on the Danube.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, it appears that there are two substantial differences between Jewish and non-Jewish conceptions of space. These relate to the function of Old Vienna. For Jews, the embellishment of the city’s recent history did not merely serve as a critique of the present. Rather, Old Vienna was a foil that allowed them to inscribe themselves into the history of the city. A Jewish presence in the past was meant to serve as a counterpoint to the widespread view that Jews were foreign, immigrants, who did not truly belong to society. Although the topos of Old Vienna did not generally imply a reference to Jewish existence, Jews who represented it foregrounded this very notion. Indeed, they presented examples of a “shared history” (to use a term prevalent today).<sup>11</sup>

One exception among the general representations of Old Vienna, in which Jewish life in the past is indeed referenced, is found in a series of articles in the *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt*. It repeatedly presents buildings that are tied to a Jewish existence in Vienna. For instance, in a text from the early twentieth cen-

tury, the Judenplatz is described as an example of Old Vienna that has endured in the midst of new Viennese (*neu-Wiener*) surroundings.<sup>12</sup> An article on sections of Leopoldstadt, the Prater and what is today the third district, or the Landstrasse, provides further documentation thereof. Among other things, the article goes back to the seventeenth century and mentions a house located on the Unterer Werd, which later became Leopoldstadt. It was torn down in 1901. The article specifies that it had been known as a Jewish tavern since 1623. The building was situated on a street that was named Herrengasse three hundred years prior and was known as the seat of wealthy Jewish merchants.<sup>13</sup> However, the article does not acknowledge that this circumscribed area was in fact the Jewish ghetto (1625–70) and that Jews were forbidden from occupying the city long after it was abolished.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, it gives the impression that there was a continuous Jewish presence well into the twentieth century.

The International Exhibition of Music and Theater (Internationale Ausstellung für Musik- und Theaterwesen), which took place from May to October 1892 at the Wiener Prater, illustrates a “Jewish” effort to present Jews as an integral part of Old Viennese society. One of the event’s most popular attractions was the representation of Old Vienna, with a reconstruction of the Hoher Markt, a square in Vienna’s city center, as the centerpiece.<sup>15</sup> Oskar Marmorek, a well-known Jewish architect, was commissioned for the project. To that end, he studied building plans from the seventeenth century. Nonetheless, these only served as rough guidelines for his work. To design the buildings, he relied upon his imagination, by means of which he “‘understood’ the historical square.”<sup>16</sup> To a certain extent, he played with and constructed the past. Marmorek, who was familiar with Zionism and had a keen sense of Jewishness, did not miss the opportunity to reveal the historical existence of Jews through his work. We may observe this in the fact that he included the Judengasse among the few side streets that led to his reconstruction of the Hoher Markt.<sup>17</sup> Marmorek constructed a notion of the past that was also marked by Jews. In this manner, the exhibition conveyed to viewers that Jews belonged to Vienna’s past.<sup>18</sup>

The second difference between the Jewish and the general constructions of Old Vienna was directly tied to the emphasis placed on a Jewish presence in the city’s past. This emphasis did not lie in the representation of the city itself, but rather in showing Jews in peaceful interaction with non-Jews.

Albert Hirsch’s work serves as a significant example of this manner of portraying Jewish existence. At the beginning of 1902, his troupe performed a burlesque that he had written entitled *Der Apostel vom Schottenfeld* (The apostle of Schottenfeld).<sup>19</sup> On the one hand, newspaper advertisements demonstrate its ties to the city’s past, as they market it as an old Viennese play. On the other, this connection would have been apparent to many contemporaries from the title itself.<sup>20</sup> Although Schottenfeld was not on Vienna’s periphery, after it was incorporated into the seventh district in 1850, it stood in close relationship to the outskirts and

its contemplative way of life.<sup>21</sup> This is evident in the short stories by Jewish journalist Julius Löwy (1851–1905) for the *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt*, which captured everyday life in Vienna and the periphery and which repeatedly align them with Schottenfeld. On March 4, 1900, his essay (“Der Kaiser vom Schottenfeld als eine Wiener Vorstadtgeschichte” (The king of Schottenfeld as a tale of the Viennese outskirts) was published,<sup>22</sup> and six months later, “Der Kirchtagegeiger vom Schottenfeld” (The church festival fiddler from Schottenfeld), which was termed an “old Viennese character.”<sup>23</sup> Old Vienna, the periphery, and Schottenfeld were strongly associated with one another, with Schottenfeld serving as a quasi-synonym for the old Viennese periphery.

It was no coincidence that Albert Hirsch wrote a play that referred to Schottenfeld, and by extension to Old Vienna. First, he understood himself as a member of the community of Viennese *Volkssänger*, which was closely tied to the folk music tradition and the atmosphere of historic Vienna. Additionally, he and his ensemble often appeared in the taverns on Mariahilferstrasse, which is in the immediate vicinity of Schottenfeld.<sup>24</sup> By explicitly naming this quarter of the city in the title of his piece, Hirsch was able to directly address the surrounding population and advertise his performances. He also did this with the character of the priest, who plays a central role in *The Apostle of Schottenfeld*. Hirsch based his character on Karl Stern, the parish priest of Schottenfeld, who had died in March 1901. He was truly beloved, enjoyed renown beyond his parish, and by virtue of his advanced age of eighty-six years personified a piece of Old Vienna.<sup>25</sup> Hirsch thus likely intended for his play to benefit from the reference to the well-known priest.

*The Apostle of Schottenfeld* is about a young Jewish couple, Bruno and Esther, who attempt to obtain permission to marry. Esther’s father, a stockbroker named Goldmann, and his wife are against the relationship because Bruno is too interested in sports, and they think his professional plans are pipe dreams.<sup>26</sup> He wants to train animals and have them perform at the Ronacher, as well as build a blimp, and therefore needs start-up funds for his ventures. However, he does not have any money, and Mr. Goldmann does not want to give or loan it to him.

In the first scene, Mr. and Mrs. Goldmann find their daughter having a rendezvous with Bruno. The young couple tells Esther’s parents that they cannot live without one other. Bruno concedes that he must seem like a terrible groom, because without a profession and financial means, he cannot provide for Esther. What is more, an improvement in his situation is not foreseeable in the near future. Yet he is certain that he will ultimately reach his goal. Mr. Goldmann does not share Bruno’s confidence. Convinced that he will never have any money, he tells Bruno that he may have his daughter’s hand as soon as he produces 1,000 gulden in cash. He then considers the matter settled.

Both Esther and Bruno are deeply troubled by this stipulation. A wedding no longer seems to be in the picture. Frustrated, Esther threatens to throw herself into the Danube. Bruno will not be upstaged and voices the same resolution. Mr.

Goldmann reacts to this pronouncement by stating that money rules the world. When Esther and Bruno are alone again, they hear the voice of the priest, Father Lorenz. Since they are especially familiar with his charitable reputation, they resolve to ask him for a way out of their predicament.

The following scene shows Father Lorenz, who is granting his assistance to a young woman. Her father lost his life a year ago in a work accident, and her mother desperately needs medication that she cannot afford. Father Lorenz, who collects money from the rich to help the poor, pays for the remedy.

Bruno and Esther hope to win his support, despite their particular circumstances. They tell him about Mr. Goldmann's decision to withhold his consent to their marriage until Bruno is in possession of 1,000 gulden. Father Lorenz knows Mr. Goldmann from his charitable donations for the building of the church. Conversely, Esther's mother is also acquainted with him, having heard him give a eulogy at a funeral several years before. According to Esther, his sermon moved Mrs. Goldmann so much that she returned home in tears. The Goldmann family and Father Lorenz have not cultivated a close personal acquaintance, but they respect one another. Over the course of the conversation with Esther and Bruno, Father Lorenz devises a plan to get Mr. Goldmann to change his mind about his daughter's marriage request. To that end, the priest must speak with him in person. He sends Esther back home to her parents, so that she may be present at the meeting.

In the fourth scene, Mrs. Goldmann reads aloud to her husband from the newspaper about a fund-raising drive in remembrance of those who perished in the Ringtheater fire.<sup>27</sup> All residents were asked to contribute something. Mr. Goldmann reckons that there must have been Jews among those who died and that he would therefore contribute 100 gulden. When the doorbell rings shortly thereafter and Father Lorenz enters, Mr. and Mrs. Goldmann believe that he is there for the door-to-door collection that had been announced in the paper. Without prompting, Mr. Goldmann declares his willingness to contribute a considerable sum. Yet, upon the Catholic priest's request for 1,000 gulden, Mr. Goldmann is so shocked that he almost faints. His wife has to help him stay on his feet. After he recovers, Mrs. Goldmann urges him to give Father Lorenz the requested sum. Initially, Mr. Goldmann protests, but he nevertheless gives in. Father Lorenz gives Bruno the money, who presents the sum to Mr. Goldmann.

In the end, Bruno and Esther receive Mr. and Mrs. Goldmann's permission to marry. Father Lorenz appears once more as well. His parting words to Bruno and Esther are "Fare thee well, children, live well with one another, you have seen that Father Lorenz does not only pray for Christians, but also for Jews, when they are decent people."

*The Apostle of Schottenfeld* is Hirsch's most famous work. In it, he not only portrays Jews as part of old Viennese society, but also presents them in close relationship to non-Jews. He foregrounds both of these aspects in the farce *A*



*Gschicht' von anno dazumal* (A tale from yesteryear).<sup>28</sup> It is about two women, Gertrud and her daughter Burgai, who can no longer pay the rent for their small house. The baron who owns the building is unmoved by his tenants' unfortunate circumstances and gives them an eviction notice. At over sixty years of age, the property manager promises to appeal to the aristocrat on the women's behalf if the eighteen-year-old Burgai marries him. However, she brusquely rejects this offer. Instead, she wants to persuade their aged roommate Isak to leave the house. "The old Jew," Burgai's derogatory name for him, lives with the women without contributing to rent or for his board. Burgai believes that if he moves out, they could save enough money to settle the rent. Gertrud, however, strictly opposes her daughter's plan. She tells Burgai that Isak was her late father's best friend. Isak had lent him the money that he needed to build his business, but because it had not gone well, Isak had never received any of his money back.

Isak has secretly listened in on the women's conversation and is deeply unsettled by Burgai's proposition. Consequently, he decides to leave the house forever. Before he goes, he tells Burgai why he and her late father were such good friends. Both were born in Langenzersdorf, a small town not far from Vienna. As a young boy, Burgai's father had often carried the peddler's sack belonging to Isak's father, while Isak would lie in the stall of Burgai's grandparents and drink milk fresh from the cow. After his parents died, Isak inherited 3,000 gulden from them. He lost 2,000 gulden and gave the remaining 1,000 to Burgai's parents over the years.

Shortly before the notice is up for Burgai and Gertrud to evacuate their home, the baron, his daughter, and the manager stop by. The aristocrat has had a hunting accident and wants to rest in the house for a while. Gertrud seizes the opportunity and implores him to withdraw the eviction notice. The baron will not be swayed and merely gives her a short extension. As justification for his decision, he claims that the women had declared they did not have money for the rent, but nonetheless could defray the costs for an old Jew's board.

When Isak enters the room where the women are sitting with their guests, the manager and the baron are voicing their anti-Jewish attitudes. Isaac, however, does not let himself be intimidated by their hostility toward him. He turns to the baron and tells him that he had saved his life some decades ago. At the time, Isak bought wares in Vienna and sold them to farmers in the surrounding area. On a forest path, he saw the baron, who at that precise moment had turned a revolver on himself. When Isak asked him why he was in despair, the baron explained that he was deeply in debt. Isak took pity on him and gave him 2,000 gulden. He explains further that he never asked to be paid back. For that reason, Isak assumes that the loan is sufficient to allow Gertrud and Burgai to continue to live in the house.

The baron is moved by Isak's remarks, and his displeasure with him transforms into a feeling of solidarity. He replies to Isak that after he inherited his father's

title, he searched the entire country for his former benefactor. Since the baron did not know his name, he distributed fliers throughout the country to announce that he wanted to repay the sum. As a result, approximately one thousand Jews came to him claiming to be the creditor, but he saw through their lies.

The story has a conciliatory ending. The baron allows both women to keep living in the house. The manager is punished for his selfish behavior, while the baron takes Isak back to his castle and cares for the man until his dying day. A deep friendship develops between the Jew Isak and the non-Jewish baron, which alludes to their mutual sense of care. The performance ends with the sentence “No matter a Jew or Christian / As long as he is a good person.”

*A Tale from Yesteryear* takes place in a generalized past, in which Jews were part of society. While we discern a harmonious coexistence between Jews and non-Jews illustrated in the relationship between Burgai’s father and Isak, there is also anti-Jewish hostility. The latter stems in large part from misunderstandings. By resolving these, a path is cleared for friendships and close relationships between Jews and non-Jews. According to the conclusion of *A Tale from Yesteryear*, different ethnic or religious affiliations need not cloud Jewish–non-Jewish relationships. Isak, the altruistic Jew, seems to have more in common with the baron, who had initially revealed himself to be an antisemite, than he does with other Jews, who are portrayed as deceitful and dishonest.

The theatrical representation of close relationships and varied interactions between Jews and non-Jews in the Old Vienna period tends to mask tensions and frictions between them. Open anti-Judaism largely recedes in favor of harmonious relationships. Occasionally, possible references to it are placed in new contexts and thereby reinterpreted. We see this exemplified in a Purim ball organized by the Brigittenauer Israelite Support Society (Brigittenauer Israelitischer Unterstützungsverein) in 1903. Its board members attended this event in the “old Viennese fashion.”<sup>29</sup> Among other things, their attire included a “colorful tailcoat, gaudy doublet, and pointed hat.” One of the attendees even appeared as a “knight in shining armor’ with a silk cloak and sword.”<sup>30</sup> The Jews thus used the ball to present themselves as part of the distant past, by way of the concrete example of the Middle Ages.<sup>31</sup> In this respect, it is worth noting that Jews were required to wear pointed hats during that period to distinguish them from non-Jews.<sup>32</sup> However, in the context of the ball, it no longer contained an anti-Jewish meaning. Instead, it served as an indicator that Jews had participated in Old Viennese society.

## **The Transition from Past to Present**

We must situate the idealization of the periphery or outskirts, which maintained a reference to the past in its association with Old Vienna, as well as the glorification of the Habsburg capital of earlier decades and centuries, within the pan-

European context of historicism. Likewise, the notion of an idyll on the Viennese periphery that was largely free of the imponderability of the present was a reaction to processes of modernization, the effects of which were at once felt in people's immediate environments, and to the orientation toward the future that industrialization brought with it.<sup>33</sup> Historicism not only imbued the past with great importance, but also allowed for a pluralization of the past.<sup>34</sup> It was accompanied by a loosening of traditions and an undercutting of standardized interpretations of history.<sup>35</sup> This fundamental openness toward pluralistic interpretations of the past made it possible for Jews to introduce their own ideas about the history of Vienna to the contemporary discourse on modernity, which, like their conceptions of Old Vienna, differed from those of non-Jews.

The open juxtaposition of different representations of history was not to last long. At the end of the nineteenth century, professional historians, experts, and conservationists impeded laymen from interpreting the past, and these professionals alone increasingly determined how it was to be construed. A single, comprehensive narrative developed out of many histories presented to the public at museums and exhibitions. History no longer led people to "empathize," and the past was no longer "felt," but rather interpreted and rationalized according to strict methodology. The majority of the population who were enthusiastic about history thereby lost their access to the subject. In other words, it became foreign to them. Consequently, there was a renunciation of the past and an orientation toward the present.

We observe this reversal in the understanding of time in many areas of art and literature, as well as in numerous academic disciplines, and it was a transnational phenomenon. It found clear expression in the works of the Impressionists, whom I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, particularly in Claude Monet's painting *Quai du Louvre*. The painting depicts people strolling in the city from the high vantage point of an onlooker. In the process, the observer turns his or her back on the Old Masters in the museums. For them, prosaic movement in the here and now was far more significant than the creative endeavors of long-dead painters.<sup>36</sup>

Felix Salten provides a concrete example of this shift toward the present. Specifically, it concerns his reaction to the demolition of the Stalehner in 1907. The Stalehner was a tavern where *Volkssänger* groups held performances. It was located in Hernals, on the city's outskirts, and symbolized the Old Viennese way of life. Correspondingly, the daily paper *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt* evoked this when it wrote about the demolition of the Stalehner. The report maintains a maudlin tone throughout, and its representation of the history of the locale idealizes its location in the outskirts.<sup>37</sup> By contrast, Salten's commentary on the disappearance of the Stalehner is rather distanced. For him, the demise of the Stalehner meant the loss of a place where people of different social origins could come together and fraternize.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, he recognized that the conditions necessary for

this kind of communal sense of belonging had been relegated to the past. With great uneasiness, Salten followed the rise of antisemites in the Viennese outskirts, where they eroded the creation of community between Jews and non-Jews. Confounded by the increasing resonance of anti-Jewish hostility among the general public, Salten increasingly lost sympathy for the outskirts so closely linked to his biography. He therefore bid farewell to the Stalehner, and with it the periphery and the old Viennese period: “One must say, that better, more venerable and more valuable locales have been lost than the Stalehner. The new young city has overtaken it, and we have forgotten the one to which it belonged. We will also get over the Stalehner.” Shortly thereafter, he reckons, “It certainly deserves an obituary.”<sup>39</sup> Salten’s writings do not express a lament, but rather an epitaph that allows one to come to terms with the past. In this refutation of the past lay a significant moment of modernity, which played an important role for the formation of self-understanding among Jews in Vienna.<sup>40</sup>

In this respect, Old Vienna and the outskirts lost their relevance. This shift was not only apparent in a considerable decline in Jewish cultural figures’ efforts to draw attention to a Jewish presence in earlier decades and centuries. The Old Viennese past as a whole was also represented with increasing ambivalence. Ultimately, during this period, Jews in Vienna lived with many restrictions. Pogroms and residency bans made their existence in the city impossible for long spans of time. The last expulsion of Jews took place in 1670, and it would be 180 years before a new Jewish community was officially permitted to live in Vienna.<sup>41</sup> Julius Löwy’s texts highlight this sober view of Old Vienna. Löwy was born in the Bohemian town of Edlitz and came to Vienna at the age of three. There he attended secondary school and began to study medicine. After a year, he decided to devote himself instead to journalism, a field in which he was very successful. As early as 1873, he was a member of the editorial board of the *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt*. For years, he published his “Wiener Skizzen” (Viennese sketches) there.<sup>42</sup> These short stories primarily equated the city’s past with Old Vienna. They illustrate nostalgic views of the past and homey descriptions of a time gone by. Unlike Hirsch, Löwy makes scarcely any reference to Jewishness in his writing. If Jews are present in his narratives, they merely play bit parts.

One of Löwy’s descriptions of old buildings and courtyards, which until then had been spared demolition, demonstrates just how idyllic his work depicts the past. Especially in comparison to the modern housing complexes for the working class, these buildings—most of which would soon be demolished—provide genuine sources of joy in everyday life for their occupants. In contrast to the dreary streets where the tenement houses stand, “everything in the old courtyard” is fragrant and

the pleasant fresh green of the garden beckons in such a friendly manner. The tender flowers in their simple beds are resplendent in red and green, yellow and white. Since

those who live in these old buildings usually have good neighbors, in the evenings there is sometimes a lively game of tarok [*Tarokpartie*] under the chestnut tree. What fun and banter are to be had at such courtyard tarok games. And as soon as dawn comes, the courtyard is again full of children, who set out ropes to make swings at the foot of the old chestnut tree.<sup>43</sup>

These homey descriptions represent only one side of his stories. Time and again, Löwy allows darker aspects to creep in that portray Old Vienna or the village-like structure of the city's periphery in an unflattering light. We see an example of this more insidious aspect in his text "Die Poldi" (Poldi), which is presented as a short story about the city's outskirts.<sup>44</sup> The main character, Poldi, is described as a charming and lovely young woman with whom many young men have fallen in love. Yet she does not pay her suitors any attention. None of them knows that she is having a love affair with a stranger. She becomes pregnant and has his child. Since she and her lover are not married and having a child out of wedlock is seen as shameful, Poldi tries to keep the pregnancy and birth secret. Her fear of public disgrace eventually leads her to infanticide. The police find out and Poldi is sentenced to a long imprisonment, but she dies only one year into her incarceration.

In "Poldi," Löwy not only recounts the memorable fate of a young woman, but he also criticizes the manners and morals in the outskirts, especially the antiquated stance on intimate relationships, which are only considered legitimate upon marriage. Other forms of sexual activity are frowned upon in such a way that the fear of being found out proves to be greater than the horror of committing murder.

Löwy's book *Geschichten aus der Wienerstadt* (Stories from the city of Vienna) makes the tension between the idyll and a moral abyss even more explicit. The foreword states that the author delights readers with stories from the outskirts and Old Vienna. It goes on to describe the outlying districts as places where Viennese women and men "sit in little houses, humble parlors, courtyards from which the green has not yet disappeared."<sup>45</sup> Only one Jew appears in the whole book. His Jewishness is not addressed specifically and is evident only in his name: "Moses Goldschlagpapier from Rzeszow."<sup>46</sup> Apart from a short mention that he works as a buyer, he does not play a role in the story. Above all, Löwy characterizes life in Old Vienna and the outskirts respectively as convivial spaces. People make merry together and spend most of their free time with one another. Unlike the present, which many of Löwy's contemporaries experienced as solitary and isolated, premodern Vienna seems to have provided for a fulfilling existence.

According to Löwy, the conviviality that characterizes the existence in Old Vienna and the outskirts stems not least from the cramped housing and living conditions that drives people out of their homes and thereby encourages contact with neighbors. However, the effects of these conditions are not limited to fostering community. They also sow the seeds for various types of wrongdoing. Poverty

and the lack of prospects that so often define life in these locales abet alcoholism, often accompanied by violence, in most cases perpetrated by husbands against their wives.<sup>47</sup> For some women who married hastily before sufficiently getting to know their husbands, the early death of a spouse is more of a relief than an occasion for mourning.<sup>48</sup>

Löwy paints a complex portrait of historic Vienna. On the one hand, nostalgic and romanticized qualities characterize life in the past or in Vienna's village-like outskirts. On the other, he sheds light on their shortcomings. In this respect, the modernization of the city is not necessarily a reason for lament. Emphasizing the tranquility of these locales also means downplaying their disadvantages. Old Vienna and the periphery therefore seem particularly ambivalent in Löwy's stories. Furthermore, his portrayal suggests that a longing for the past is misplaced.

### *From the Periphery to the Prater*

The replacement of the past with the present was tied to the development of new concepts of space. With regard to artistic and literary representations of the periphery, the Prater often makes an appearance. Tina Blau's paintings that feature this Viennese leisure area as a motif are among the most significant documents within her oeuvre. They are therefore even more significant than her images of the periphery.<sup>49</sup>

While Felix Salten turned away from the outskirts due to increasing antisemitism in Vienna's outlying districts, he projected his ideas of a refuge onto the Prater, which he denoted as "the eternal periphery."<sup>50</sup> He described the Würstelprater, the amusement park within the extensive recreational area, as a domain that was largely cut off from the rest of the city. Specifically, antisemitism and nationalism were absent from this space, and it therefore did not provoke hostility. These circumstances made it possible for visitors to assume hybrid identifications.<sup>51</sup> People who would not normally associate with one another in everyday life could come into contact with one another and experience a sense of camaraderie and belonging. To Salten's mind, the Prater was not a nostalgic site of longing anchored primarily in the past, but rather a real locale that was accessible at any time, even if he exaggerated its positive qualities.

Stefan Zweig, another Jewish author from the circle of Jung Wien, was also interested in the Prater. He too saw it as a typically Viennese place that was nevertheless distinct and shielded from the rest of the city. It therefore enabled social interactions that seemed impossible in other locations. Hillary Hope Herzog argues that, in a sense, Zweig thought of the Prater as a space similar to the Wild West, in that prevailing norms were suspended there. In a description of the horse races that took place at the Prater, Zweig describes how the onlookers turned into a frantic, wild mass during the competition, deteriorating into a frenzy together. Through this collective experience, the differences between the

attendees receded to the background or remained entirely unnoticed.<sup>52</sup> Hence, for Zweig, the Prater was a space where people could be transformed through a new type of togetherness, even if only momentarily.

Felix Salten and Stefan Zweig thought that the sweeping entertainment and recreation area in Vienna's second district represented a space that was open to every social class. Moreover, the city's ethnic and cultural groups, including Jews, could mill about and frolic there. Numerous accounts indicate that this was indeed the case. For Galician immigrants and wealthy resident Jews alike, the Prater was a site of entertainment and diversion.<sup>53</sup> It gained this ability to forge connections and create community through its role as a kind of intermediary space. Although the Prater was part of Vienna, it was not to be equated with the city. Thus, the social barriers that one usually encountered in the metropolis were not an issue at the Prater. In this manner, it did not displace the periphery with a geographically fixed location, but rather in its function as a liminal space.

### *Two Types of Present*

Since the turn to the present extended to all disciplines and was not constrained by geography, its most important proponents were active in various intellectual and cultural fields and in different societies. Among its most significant European advocates were the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen, and the Austrian architect Otto Wagner, as well as the Italian Futurists.<sup>54</sup> They proclaimed a break from the past and disputed its relevance for the present.

Not everyone, however, cast aside the past in the same spirit. There was also a group of intellectuals who in fact rejected the excess of history and welcomed the newfound relevance of the present. At the same time, they believed that the present could not be understood without the past. Nevertheless, these intellectuals did not refer to a "factualized" past, but rather to a subjectivized one. The inclusion of personal experiences of the past were to make the present comprehensible. As it were, supporters of this approach were international as well. The French philosopher Henri Bergson, his compatriot the writer Marcel Proust, the German-Austrian philosopher Edmund Husserl, and, above all, Sigmund Freud may be counted among their ranks.<sup>55</sup>

As they allowed biographical experiences to slip into present consciousness, which was especially vital to Freud's psychoanalysis, they understood the present as a vast epoch in which the past acted.<sup>56</sup> Their perception was distinct from the widespread understanding among their contemporaries that the present could only be experienced as the sum of discrete points in time, which were full of contingencies. This sense of the present as transitory, distracted, and fragmented was the result of technological innovations and their impact on people's lives.<sup>57</sup> A host of artists, scientists, and intellectuals grappled with this new understanding

of time. Walter Benjamin, Siegfried Kracauer, and especially Georg Simmel, all of whom were Jewish, are some of the most famous commentators on this perception of time.<sup>58</sup>

A comparison between the aforementioned proponents of a break from the past and those who advocated that it be made subjective, and with it an expansion of the present, reveals that the first group does not include Jews, while the second consists of Jews alone. The American historian Stephen Kern traces this difference to the historical experiences of the Jews. According to Kern, Jews, on account of their historical existence in the ghettos and the lack of their own home, ascribed little meaning to place and instead became fixated upon time. Since Jews could look back on a long history, their concept of time was anchored in the past to a far greater degree than that of non-Jews.<sup>59</sup>

Generally speaking, Kern provides an insightful point of departure for tracing the development of a distinct concept of time and place among Jews over the course of their history.<sup>60</sup> For my analysis of fin-de-siècle Vienna, however, Kern's assertion applies only in part. Space, in its function as an interstice, was of the utmost importance to Viennese Jews, as I have demonstrated with the examples of Felix Salten and Stefan Zweig.<sup>61</sup> Nonetheless, we may bring Kern's argument regarding the differences between how Jews and non-Jews understood time to bear on the case of the Hapsburg capital. It appears that there was a dividing line also in Vienna between Jews and non-Jews, between those who sought to break from the past and those who advocated the notion of an expanded present. Moreover, this difference in the perception of time, as I demonstrate below, was connected to ideas about social interaction and concepts of space. A present that is experienced as the sum of momentary impressions largely corresponds to a network of interpersonal relationships that is just as fragmented. The reason for this lies in the lack of the temporal continuum that is necessary to deepen liaisons. In this manner, people often remain strangers. Georg Simmel clearly describes this atmosphere in his thoughts on life in the metropolis, which is defined by a multitude of selective sensory impressions. He writes, "In formal terms, the spiritual attitude of city dwellers toward one another may be deemed as reserve." Moreover, Simmel continues that "as a consequence of . . . [the reserve] we often do not recognize by sight neighbors of many years."<sup>62</sup> Although physically present, one's closest neighbor is a stranger in everyday life. There is no time to engage with fellow human beings. In lieu of places where differences among people become insignificant and solidarity may be forged, different groups have their own respective spaces. In this context, we may also refer to the spaces the *Volkssänger* Carl Lorenz denoted as Jewish (see chapter 3).

By contrast, the expanded present offers a time frame in which human relationships can be formed such that a feeling of togetherness arises. Primarily taking Niklas Luhmann's argument as a point of departure, Aleida Assmann writes that in "an expanded space of the present" there may be "simultaneous perceptions,



information exchanged and coordinated acts with one another.”<sup>63</sup> Further, these mutually created and interdependent experiences can build alliances and connect people to one another. In Stefan Zweig’s abovementioned horse race at the Prater, for example, there is a charged communal sense of conviviality that brings the on-lookers together as a group and minimizes their differences. Likewise, for Salten, collective action and intensifying emotionality are the most important prerequisites for a new sense of solidarity that transcends divisive nationalisms and ethnic isolation. In a description of the dancing at the Prater, he writes:

For all the simple and humble ones who stream into Vienna from the empire’s colorful provinces, for all the youth who move to the metropolis from the villages and smaller cities, . . . there is comfort here. . . . The musicians play an Austrian *Ländler*. . . . And now Steiermark, Salzburg, Tirol are here. . . . The music plays a *Kreuzpolka*. . . . Now Bohemia is here, the sunny hilly country of Moravia is here. . . . The orchestra begins playing a Hungarian *czárdás*, and now Hungary is here. . . . Here no one revolts against the song of another.<sup>64</sup>

Independent of their backgrounds and traditions, the dancers move to the rhythm of the music and merge into a group of boisterous revelers.

The following section analyzes Jewish *Volkssänger* plays in which the different regimentations of time—the fragmented present and the expanded present experienced as ongoing—play a major role. The first piece, *Der kleine Kohn* (Little Kohn), demonstrates that momentary experiences of time make it impossible to build interpersonal relationships and can lead to antisemitism. In the second piece, *Die Reise nach Grosswardein* (The journey to Grosswardein) by Josef Armin, the extended present plays a significant role, as it leads to the development of relationships between Jews and non-Jews.

## The Fleeting Present

Georg Simmel articulated an insightful analysis of just how much a present that is constructed of selective, ephemeral impressions prevents human interaction and leads to individual isolation. The German painter Lesser Ury (1861–1931), who like Simmel was Jewish, was also a sharp observer of this context. In his 1889 painting *Café*, we see a guest smoking a cigar and a few tables away another man who is absorbed in his newspaper. Although they do not sit far from one another, there is nothing to bring them together. Outside the coffeehouse, pedestrians hurry by, and life in the metropolis takes its course. Despite the lively bustle on the nearby street and the presence of other people in the café, each guest remains alone, virtually trapped in an impenetrable cocoon.<sup>65</sup> Lesser Ury was the first painter in Germany to capture the experience of big-city dwellers, while his colleagues often remained imprisoned in the past and devoted themselves to

representations of Alt-Berlin.<sup>66</sup> Early on, Ury took the step from the past into the present, which for him was accompanied by experiences of alienation.

### **Little Kohn**

The written version of *Little Kohn*, a work by Caprice, was approved by the censorship board at the end of 1902 and performed by the Budapest Orpheum Society the following year.<sup>67</sup> The performances were among the troupe's greatest popular successes, even though they did not begin to approach the popularity of *Die Klabriaspartie*. *Little Kohn* reflects the consequences of a transitory present that is experienced as fleeting and reveals the difficulty of building relationships between people, especially Jews and non-Jews, against this backdrop. At the same time, the work takes up antisemitic ideas and provides an illuminating glimpse of one of the tactics that part of Viennese Jewish society employed upon encountering views hostile to Jews.

*Little Kohn* counters two specific antisemitic stereotypes. First, the piece constitutes a response to the figure of the "Little Kohn," a motif that was very popular in the form of a series of postcards and as a theme for songs and poems around the turn of the century.<sup>68</sup> Little Kohn's appearance was an emblematic product of the contemporary antisemitic imagination. He exhibited the essential physical features that were ascribed to Jews. These included the hooked nose, thick lips, large ears, crooked legs, and a small stature.<sup>69</sup> These peculiarities are clearly discernable in the caricatures of Little Kohn that appeared in *Kikeriki*, an antisemitic Viennese satirical journal.<sup>70</sup>

In addition to his physical characteristics, Little Kohn had two other defining attributes. The first concerned his flightiness. He was difficult to catch, always appearing briefly and then disappearing again. In a sense, Little Kohn simultaneously embodied the temporal experience of the late nineteenth century and contemporary mobility. Hundreds of thousands of people were ripped from their everyday existence each year and roamed about, searching for better living conditions. They migrated from the rural provinces into the cities and from one country to another. Whereas some accepted this uprooting from their spheres of experience, others perceived a threat to the existing order in the ensuing uncertainty. Little Kohn embodied this sense of instability that could not be circumvented. Yet even more than the general phenomenon of vagrancy, he was the epitome of the wandering Jew. Jews were perceived as far more itinerant than others. Contemporary antisemitic publications certainly perpetuated this idea; Adolf Wahrmund's text *Das Gesetz des Nomadenthums und die heutige Judenhererschaft* (*The Law of Nomadism and the Modern Domination of Jews*) is a primary example.<sup>71</sup> However, the centuries-old tradition of Jews being in perpetual motion and unable to put down roots was crystallized in the trope of "the eternal Jew."<sup>72</sup> In

the late nineteenth century, scientists also researched and devised medical justifications for the phenomenon of nomadism among Jews. In this manner, they associated it with nervous disorders to which Jews were particularly susceptible.<sup>73</sup> Thus, Little Kohn's perpetual appearance and disappearance was nothing out of the ordinary. According to the prejudicial thinking of the time, Jews were to a certain degree generally characterized as itinerant.

Little Kohn's second defining attribute was his extraordinary appetite for extramarital sex. This idiosyncrasy was an integral part of the contemporary anti-semitic repertoire as well. Jews were seen as sexually hyperactive.<sup>74</sup> However, Little Kohn was hardly successful in his libidinous affairs. His relationships were always only short-lived, were destroyed by a series of mishaps, and never resulted in the longed-for gratification. Thus, they remained nothing more than innocuous trysts.

Both of Little Kohn's attributes circulated in an extremely popular contemporary street song (*Straßenschlager*). Written by Julius Einödshofer (1863–1930), the song describes Little Kohn enjoying the company of a young woman. While strolling along the street, he suddenly recognizes his wife. Since he does not want her to see him with his female companion, he disappears suddenly, without informing her of his escape beforehand. Bewildered, she begins to search for him with increasing worry and in the process asks every obliging person if he or she has seen Little Kohn. A growing crowd of sympathizers joins the search, asking, "Haven't you seen Little Kohn?"<sup>75</sup> These words were a common phrase in Vienna in the late nineteenth century, lending Little Kohn a presence in the everyday antisemitic discourse of his time.

The second prejudice that the play *Little Kohn* challenged stems from newspaper accounts of the Jelinek affair. Edmund Jelinek was a bank employee who had embezzled money and escaped his arrest by going on the lam (see chapter 1). The majority of the daily papers attributed Jelinek's criminal activity to his Jewishness. *Little Kohn* sought to expose the contradictions of antisemitic thought that found expression therein and thereby rob them of their potency.

### ***The Plot of Little Kohn***

Caprice's play is far more complex than Hirsch's *The Apostle of Schottenfeld*. In no small part, this is due to the fact that *Little Kohn* is named for an anti-Jewish stereotype. In order to prevent the attributes commonly associated with Little Kohn from becoming more firmly anchored in common discourse, Caprice had to expose the weaknesses of antisemitic thinking and portray Little Kohn in an agreeable manner. This required a subtle approach.

The first scene begins with the entrance of Leopold Kohn, the teller at Marcus Spitzer's bank. He is in his employer's home teaching a parrot to say "Little Kohn." Kohn is clearly at ease and appears to be fully integrated in the Spitzer

family's private sphere. This comes as no surprise: after all, he maintains amorous relationships with Spitzer's daughters Bertha, Ida, and Ella and plans to run away with Spitzer's wife, Malvine. Nevertheless, each family member remains unaware of the other romantic relationships. Kohn promises Bertha, Ida, and Ella alike to ask for their father's hand in marriage. He is of course unable to keep his promise. It seems that Kohn is insincere in his liaisons and lives out his pronounced sexual desire by deceiving his gullible partners.

Marcus Spitzer is an irritable patriarch. Fixated upon his work, he neglects his family and is unaware of Kohn's liaisons with his daughters. It is only when his bookkeeper, Moritz Beer, tells him that he encountered Kohn with Spitzer's housekeeper Marie at a hotel, who were likely there for an intimate tryst, that Spitzer gets an inkling of Kohn's sexual excesses. He, too, seems to have a liaison with her, becomes enraged, and wants to admonish Kohn at once. To that end, Spitzer searches the entire house but cannot find him anywhere. The other family members are also interested in Kohn's whereabouts and ask about him tirelessly. All the while, the parrot caws "Little Kohn." These circumstances make Spitzer so angry that he bellows, "No matter what is going on in this house, Little Kohn has a hand in it."<sup>76</sup>

Although Leopold Kohn is physically absent, he nevertheless displays a striking presence. Everyone in the house is talking about and looking for him, and everything revolves around him. The Jewish Kohn is the axis around which the events revolve. Without taking specific action, he is presented as an all-powerful figure. Finally, Kohn turns up, utterly bewildered by all the fuss. Spitzer pounces on him in order to reprimand him for his conduct with Marie. To Spitzer's surprise, Kohn does not deny that they had met at the hotel. However, he claims he did not do anything dishonorable in the process and instead becomes infuriated with Spitzer for interfering in his personal life. Thus, the question of whether Kohn has a romantic relationship with Marie remains unanswered. Although there is much to suggest that he does, in the end there is no proof.

That said, Spitzer is still convinced that Kohn maintains intimate relations with Marie. He therefore orders him to change his behavior and end the affair with her, because "it cannot go on like this."<sup>77</sup> Yet Kohn does not want to adhere to any code of conduct. When he has heard enough of Spitzer's grumbling, Kohn asks what he wants from him. The banker answers, "I want to rid myself of you; in six weeks I want to be de-Kohned."<sup>78</sup> Kohn answers that if Spitzer does not approve of his presence, he could always leave.

Spitzer's desire to divest himself of Kohn is easier said than done. After the sparring match between the two, Ida confesses to her father that she is pregnant with Kohn's child. This revelation makes Spitzer so angry that he yells at Kohn, "You have taken the liberty of populating my house with illegitimate children? You have laid the cornerstone for my future progeny?"<sup>79</sup> To his great consternation, he cannot get rid of Kohn because he now belongs to the family. The ties between the Jew Kohn and the non-Jew Spitzer appear to be unbreakable.

In the following scene, Moritz Beer informs Spitzer that thieves have emptied the till at his bank. Spitzer immediately accuses Kohn of the misdeed and calls the police. Yet he is too nervous to speak on the phone himself and therefore has Beer do it for him. Beer tries to give the police a profile of Kohn, beginning with his family name. The policeman on the other end of the line tells him that because there are 3,700 Kohns in the city, Beer must give more specific details. Thereupon, Beer gives Kohn's first name, which is of no further help because there is a total of 2,826 Leopold Kohns. Even the tip that Kohn is small in stature helps little, since almost 1,200 Leopold Kohns are short. And Beer's reference to Kohn's hook nose is superfluous, because according to the policeman, all Kohns have this type of nose.<sup>80</sup>

It does not take long before a policeman calls on the Spitzer family. However, instead of relaying the capture of the fugitive Kohn, he notifies them of Leopold Kohn's probable suicide. The policeman tells them that Kohn was seen jumping off a bridge into the Danube. Witness descriptions of the suicide leave no doubt that it was him. In order to close the case once and for all, the Spitzer family must help identify the deceased. When the policeman mentions that the perpetrator had twisted legs, curly hair, and a hooked nose and was very small, Spitzer's daughters are certain that it was Kohn. Marcus Spitzer is nevertheless skeptical of Kohn's suicide because he did not enjoy taking a bath and therefore would not have willingly jumped into the Danube.<sup>81</sup> Only when the police officer shows him an article of clothing belonging to the drowned man is Spitzer convinced that Kohn has committed suicide.

In the final part of the play, Josef, the bank's porter, enters. He tells Herr Spitzer that he has taken his wife's suitcase to the train station. Spitzer is shocked by Malvine's departure. When Joseph adds that he saw her with Kohn in a private compartment, Herr Spitzer is fully perplexed. This would not only mean that Kohn was still alive, but also that his wife had been unfaithful to him. Josef hands Spitzer a letter from Kohn, in which he admits to stealing the money from the register at the bank because he needed it for the journey. Amidst this general chaos, Malvine reappears. She tells her husband that she had not really planned to abscond with Kohn. Instead, she only wanted to shock Spitzer because he had been acting so cruelly toward her of late. In this regard, the Spitzer family is reunited, while the wrongdoer Kohn flees to America.

Assumptions course through the entire plot of *Little Kohn*. The protagonists do not have time to question or prove them, which in turn leads to distrust among them. Their encounters are too brief and fleeting for them to be able to respond to and really get to know each other. Impressions and suspicions therefore define their immediate surroundings, instead of facts. In this context, Kohn appears as a thief and a heartbreaker. However, it becomes clear at the end of the performance that his surroundings have forced him into this role; he does not play it willingly. By contrast, Spitzer, who sees himself as Kohn's victim and makes a great fuss

about it, is the real monster. Almost bankrupt, he commits insurance fraud to maintain the appearance of his prosperity. Yet all of this remains hidden from his family and other people. They are too busy with their daily routines to uncover his machinations. Ultimately, momentary impressions define everyday life and erode trust between individuals.

## **The Persistent Present**

At this juncture, we should not regard Stephen Kern's conclusion that the proponents of an expanded present were Jewish as a stark opposition between the ways Jews and non-Jews conceived of time, but rather as a point of departure for further research on the subject. As we have seen, there were no exclusive markers of consciousness among Jews (*Bewusstseinsmerkmale bei Juden*) that would allow us to make a hard and fast contrast. In general, a certain conception of place and time may be more pronounced among Jews than non-Jews, due to the formers' desire for a Jewish–non-Jewish coexistence. However, since non-Jews also expressed a continuous present in various forms of cultural production, we cannot consider this an exclusively Jewish concept. For instance, we see a persistent present in the work of Gustav Klimt (1862–1918).<sup>82</sup> His paintings are characterized by their equilibrium. These dreamlike images evoke an Arcadian realm. Further, they convey a state of passivity that is embedded in a seemingly everlasting temporal framework. We also see such a notion at work in Leopold Andrian-Werburg's 1895 *Der Garten der Erkenntnis* (The garden of knowledge), in Richard Beer-Hofmann's 1900 novel *Der Tod Georgs* (The death of Georg), and in Hugo von Hofmannsthal's 1893 *Der Tor und der Tod* (Death and the fool).<sup>83</sup> While Beer-Hofmann may certainly be considered a Jewish author, Andrian-Werburg's and Hofmannsthal's status as Jewish remains open to debate.<sup>84</sup> Nevertheless, their writings convey the idea of a persistent present.

## ***The Journey to Grosswardein***

One such continuous present may also be found in the piece *Die Reise nach Grosswardein* (The journey to Grosswardein). Like *Little Kohn*, it was performed by the Budapest Orpheum Society.<sup>85</sup> Essentially, the plot revolves around the attempt of a Jew who is evidently from Vienna to travel to Grosswardein (present-day Oradea in Romania). Josef Armin's farce is divided into five scenes, all of which take place at a train station.

Lipperl, who is fleeing from his wife, enters at the beginning of the performance. He feels oppressed by her, and in a full-throated monologue, he huffs and puffs that she forbids him from speaking. Having arrived at the train station

without a concrete travel destination, Lipperl only wants to leave as quickly as possible, regardless of where he may end up. He is determined to leave on the earliest train possible. The station staff informs him that the next train departs for Grosswardein. Until it arrives, he reads the paper to pass the time. During this spell, he notices an advertisement from an Englishman (*Engländer*) who is traveling in Europe. The latter had heard the song “To Grosswardein” (“Nach Grosswardein”), which was beloved in Austria-Hungary, and decided to go there. However, he still needed a travel companion and writes that interested parties should meet him at the train station at nine o’clock. Lipperl immediately decides to offer to accompany the Englishman.

Maxi appears shortly thereafter. He is also running away from his wife. He explains that they have been married for five years. His wife is angry that their marriage has remained childless and blames him for it. Always irritable, she fights with him tirelessly and does not hesitate to inflict physical harm upon him. First thing in the morning, she threw dishes at him, one of which struck his head. Maxi also read the Englishman’s notice in the newspaper and wants to travel with him to Grosswardein. When Lipperl sees him, he thinks Maxi is the sought-after Englishman, so he addresses him in English. However, Maxi only speaks German. When Lipperl asks him, “How do you do?” he hears, “Hau du Jud, du” (“Get lost, you Jew, you!”). After a while, they resolve the confusion and are both deeply disappointed.

In the third scene, two new characters are introduced: Mayer Jamfrosch and his son Lebele. Both are from Grosswardein and are in Vienna for a visit. Lebele is scared of train travel and seeks excuses to avoid the journey. Soon thereafter, Teppenhuber and Rosl, the only non-Jews among the protagonists, arrive at the station. In contrast to the others, who continually intermingle Yiddish words like *meshugge*, *ganef*, *treyf*, and *tsores* in their speech, Teppenhuber’s and Rosl’s extremely limited vocabulary is made up of pure German words. In the course of the conversation, they refer to themselves as “honest farm folk,” whereas the others emphasize their Jewishness. Lebele falls in love with Rosl, who is admittedly less taken with him.

Finally, Rosalia and Jentel, the wives of Lipperl and Maxi, mingle among those waiting on the platform. They are also looking for the Englishman, because they have seen his newspaper announcement. Unlike their husbands, they do not seek to join him because they want to escape the fighting and hostility, but rather because their husbands are missing and they no longer have any reason to stay at home. It takes a while for Lipperl’s and Maxi’s wives to notice them on the platform.

In the fifth scene, a group of students comes to the train station. Among them is Fritz, who placed the notice in the paper. He explains that he was falsely taken for an Englishman because he had declared his name to be Fritz Engländer. He is also a member of a fraternity. Subsequently, the train to Grosswardein arrives, but

the protagonists are in such deep conversation with one another that they take no notice. They fail to board the train, and it departs without them.

In *The Journey to Grosswardein*, the train station constitutes a liminal space.<sup>86</sup> It stands between the past, which was defined by oppression, and the future represented by Grosswardein. The events at the station take place in the present. However, it is not the fleeting present, which we can only apprehend as transitory moments of the here and now that are fused together. Rather, the period that is defined by waiting for the train is expanded. There is no action to interrupt the tedious boredom that overtakes the passengers; nothing happens to rip them from their stupor. Time does not seem to pass quickly. And this excess of time allows those who are waiting to begin a conversation with one another, in which they increasingly immerse themselves, thereby allowing them to form a sense of community. The bonds between them become so strong that they even give up their original intention to travel to Grosswardein. Ignoring the train's arrival, they let it depart without them. Being together at the train station is more important for the characters than achieving their intended outcome.

## Conclusion

The analysis of *The Apostle of Schottenfeld*, *Little Kohn*, and *The Journey to Grosswardein* brings to light concepts of place and an understanding of the present that other Jewish cultural figures articulated as well. In the longing for Old Vienna, Jews realized the potential of writing themselves into the history of Vienna. Through evidence of their historical presence in the Danube capital, they wanted to divest themselves of their status as foreigners who had come from somewhere else and therefore did not truly belong to society. The inscription in the past is tied to the delineation of a largely harmonious relationship between Jews and non-Jews. In this manner, they set forth a counternarrative to the history of anti-Jewish animosity. With the shift from the past to the present, a liminal space thus replaced one that was constructed in retrospect. Indeed, this space exists in Vienna, but the events that take place there are distinct from everyday urban life in that similarities rather than differences come to the fore. As Stephen Kern observed with respect to Jewish European intellectuals, Jews in Vienna likewise seem to have articulated a preference for an “expanded present” in art and literature.<sup>87</sup>

The social context clarifies the difference between a Jewish and non-Jewish understanding of time and space. Jews in Vienna around 1900 regimented time and experienced space differently than Jews in other epochs and in different social contexts.<sup>88</sup> In Vienna, this understanding appeared distinct, in a manner that replaced religion and other prevalent signifiers of Jewish difference, but without running the risk of being essentialized.



## Notes

1. Philip Nord, *Impressionists and Politics: Art and Democracy in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2000), 11.
2. Felix Krämer, “Monet und die Geburt des Impressionismus,” in *Monet und die Geburt des Impressionismus* (Munich: Prestel, 2015), 16–18.
3. Whether we may consider Tina Blau a Jewish painter despite her conversion is a difficult question, for her exact relationship to Judaism remains unknown. However, for the purposes of this study, I categorize her as a Jewish artist, as the Jewish Museum in Vienna also dedicated an exhibition to her work in 1996. See G. Tobias Natter and Claus Jesina, *Tina Blau (1845–1916)* (Salzburg: Galerie Welz, 1999). On Tina Blau, see also Zdrawka Ebenstein, “Zum Werk von Tina Blau,” in *Tina Blau (1845–1916): Eine Wiener Malerin*, ed. Österreichische Galerie im Oberen Belvedere (Vienna: Eigenverlag), 17–22.
4. Hillary Hope Baron, “Vienna Is Different,” in *Jewish Writers in Austria from the Fin de Siècle to the Present*, Austrian and Habsburg Studies 12 (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013), 42–43; Felix Salten, *Das österreichische Anlitz* (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1910), 117–26.
5. Salten, *Anlitz*, 78.
6. Salten, 78.
7. Old Vienna (Alt-Wien) was occupied periodically as early as the Middle Ages. See Richard Kralik and Hans Schlitter, *Wien: Geschichte der Kaiserstadt und ihrer Kultur* (Vienna: Holzhausen, 1912), 736.
8. Elana Shapira and Moses und Herkules, “Ein Beitrag des jüdischen Bürgertums zur Gestaltung der Ringstraße und des Praters, in *Ringstrasse: Ein jüdischer Boulevard*, ed. Gabriele Kohlbauer-Fritz (Vienna: Amalthea, 2015), 168. On the ways Jews in the nineteenth century engaged with Hellenistic Judaism, see Yaacov Shavit, *Athens in Jerusalem: Classical Antiquity and Hellenism in the Making of the Modern Secular Jew* (London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1999).
9. In *Becoming Austrians: Jews and Culture between the World Wars*, Lisa Silverman writes, “For Jews, however, this vision [Old Vienna] had little appeal, given that it did not include them” (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2012), 118. This estimation appears to stem less from original research than from simplistic reasoning, as it cannot be substantiated here.
10. On Old Vienna, see Wolfgang Kos and Christian Rapp, eds., *Alt-Wien. Die Stadt, die niemals war* (Wien: Czernin Verlag 2005); Monika Sommer and Heidemarie Uhl, eds., *Mythos Alt-Wien. Spannungsfelder urbaner Identitäten* (Innsbruck: Studienverlag, 2009); Inge Posbrecky, “Die Wiener Ringstrasse,” in *Der Traum vom Glück: Die Kunst des Historismus in Europa* (Vienna: Christian Brandstätter, 1996), 267 (267–73). A space of retreat without the burdens and tensions that shaped reality was a prevalent topos in many cities, in addition to Vienna. Just as the Habsburg metropolis Vienna did with Old Vienna, the French capital for example created a copy of itself that extended back into history with Vieux Paris (Old Paris). At the World’s Fair in 1900, the historic version of the city was one of the most popular attractions (Philipp Blom, *Der taumelnde Kontinent: Europa 1900–1914* (Munich: Carl Hanser, 2009), 23.
11. Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia,” *Modern Asian Studies* 31, no. 3 (1997): 735–61.
12. *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt [IWE in subsequent citations]* 115 (27 April 1903): 1.

13. *IWE* 352 (25 December 1902): 50.
14. Hans Tietze, *Die Juden Wiens: Geschichte, Wirtschaft, Kultur* (Vienna: E. P. Tal, 1933), 41–78.
15. Theophil Antonicek, *Die Internationale Ausstellung für Musik- und Theaterwesen 1892* (Vienna, 2013), 129–30.
16. Arkus Kristan, *Oskar Marmorek 1863–1909: Architekt und Zionist* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1996), 160.
17. Antonicek, *Ausstellung*, 130.
18. The effort to visualize the historical existence of Jews in the city extended to a variety of other endeavors. In this respect, the work of the historical commission of the Jewish *Gemeinde* (community) of Vienna must be mentioned, as they produced studies on the history of Viennese Jews at the turn of the twentieth century. See Lisa Silverman, *Becoming Austrians: Jews and Culture between the World Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 114–15.
19. Albert Hirsch, “Der Apostel vom Schottenfeld,” *Niederösterreichisches Landesarchiv* [NÖLA in subsequent citations] (Theaterzensur), Box 21/22 (1902).
20. See *IWE* 11 (12 January 1902): 25.
21. See Felix Czeike, “Schottenfeld,” in *Historisches Lexikon Wien*, vol. 5 (Vienna: Kremayr and Scheriau, 1992), 135–36.
22. *IWE* 61 (4 March 1900): 7–8.
23. *IWE* 241 (2 September 1900): 7.
24. See, for example, *IWE* 1 (1 January 1899): 3.
25. *IWE* 76 (18 March 1901): 4.
26. On the casting, see *IWE* 10 (11 January 1902): 12.
27. The fire at the Vienna Ringtheater took place on 8 December 1881. It was one of the worst fires in Austria during the nineteenth century. Almost four hundred people lost their lives.
28. Albert Hirsch, *A Gschicht' von anno dazumal*, NÖLA (Theaterzensur), Box 21/1 (1898).
29. “Altwiener Toilette,” *Die Wahrheit* 12 (1903): 7.
30. “Altwiener Toilette,” 7.
31. On this topic, see also Klaus Hödl, “The Quest for Amusement: Jewish Leisure Activities in Vienna circa 1900,” *Jewish Culture and History* 14, no. 1 (2013): 1–17.
32. Naomi Lubrich, “The Wandering Hat: Iterations of the Medieval Jewish Pointed Cap,” *Jewish History* 29 (2015): 203–44.
33. Friedrich Jaeger, *Jörn Rüsen, Geschichte des Historismus* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1992), 165.
34. Moritz Csáky, “Geschichtlichkeit und Stilpluralität. Die sozialen und intellektuellen Voraussetzungen des Historismus,” in *Der Traum vom Glück. Die Kunst des Historismus in Europa*, ed. Hermann Fillitz (Vienna: Christian Brandstätter, 1996), 29.
35. Bernhard Giesen, *Kollektive Identität. Die Intellektuellen und die Nation* 2 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1999), 184.
36. Krämer, “Monet,” 19–20.
37. *IWE* 112 (25 April 1907): 5.
38. Baron, “Vienna,” 47.
39. Salten, *Anlitz*, 61.
40. On Jewish cultural figures’ references to the past, see Peter Gay, *Die Moderne* (Frankfurt: S. Fischer Verlag, 2008), 59, 101.
41. Nikolaus Vielmetti, “Vom Beginn der Neuzeit bis zur Toleranz,” in *Das österreichische*

- Judentum: Voraussetzungen und Geschichte*, ed. Anna Drabek et al. (Vienna: Jugend und Volk, 1982), 72–77.
42. [https://www.wien.gv.at/wiki/index.php/Julius\\_L%C3%B6wy](https://www.wien.gv.at/wiki/index.php/Julius_L%C3%B6wy) (accessed 14 August 2015).
  43. Julius Löwy, “Der alte Hof: Eine Geschichte aus dem Wiener Leben,” *IWE* 6 (6 January 1901): 7.
  44. *IWE* 317 (15 November 1904): 6–7.
  45. Julius Löwy, *Geschichten aus der Wienerstadt* (Vienna: A. Bauer, n.d.), preface.
  46. Löwy, *Geschichten*, 62.
  47. Löwy, *Geschichten*, 52.
  48. Löwy, *Geschichten*, 60.
  49. Natter and Jesina, *Blau*, 10–12.
  50. Herzog, *Vienna*, 47–48.
  51. Herzog, *Vienna*, 48.
  52. Herzog, *Vienna*, 52–53.
  53. Gertraud Pressler, “Jüdisches und Antisemitisches in der Wiener Volksunterhaltung,” *Musicalogica Austriaca* 17 (1998): 66.
  54. Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space 1880–1918* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 51–57.
  55. Giesen, *Kollektive Identität*, 233–34.
  56. A second form of this vast present was created by simultaneity. In the late nineteenth century, the telephone and other technological inventions made it possible to transcend great distances and to provide people with information largely at the same time. See Rüdiger Safranski, *Zeit. Was sie aus uns macht und was wir aus ihr machen* (Munich: Carl Hanser, 2015), 96.
  57. Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 13.
  58. Georg Simmel, *Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2006; original 1903). See also Lynn Hunt, *Measuring Time, Making History* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2008), 20.
  59. Kern, *Culture*, 50–51.
  60. See also Michal Kümper and Barbara Rösch, eds., *Makom: Orte und Räume im Judentum* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2007); Barbara E. Mann, *Place and Space in Jewish Studies* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2012); Sylvie Anne Goldberg, “Temporality as Paradox: The Jewish Time,” in *Jewish Studies in a New Europe: Proceedings of the Fifth Congress of Jewish Studies in Copenhagen 1994 under the Auspices of the European Association for Jewish Studies*, ed. Ulf Haxen (Copenhagen: Reitzel, 1998), 284–92.
  61. In this respect, I should also mention the coffeehouse, as it too constituted a kind of liminal space between the public and private spheres and facilitated interactions that more seldomly took place in everyday life. It may be argued that Viennese Jews developed a penchant for these cafés for this very reason. See Charlotte Ashby, “The Cafés of Vienna: Space and Sociability,” in *The Viennese Café and Fin-de-siècle Culture*, ed. Charlotte Ashby, Tag Gronberg, and Simon Shaw-Miller (New York: Berghahn Books, 2015), 22.
  62. Simmel, *Großstädte*, 23.
  63. Aleida Assmann, *Ist die Zeit aus den Fugen? Aufstieg und Fall des Zeitregimes der Moderne* (Munich: Carl Hanser, 2013), 71.
  64. Felix Salten, *Wurstelprater: Mit Bildern von Dr. Emil Mayer* (Vienna: Fritz Molden, 1973; photocopy of 1911 edition), 71–76.

65. Susan Tumarkin Goodman, “Reshaping Jewish Identity in Art,” in *The Emergence of Jewish Artists in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, ed. Susan Tumarkin Goodman (New York: Merrell, 2001), 26–27.
66. Emily D. Bilski, “Images of Identity and Urban Life: Jewish Artists in Turn-of-the-Century Berlin,” in *Berlin Metropolis: Jews and the New Culture 1890–1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 118.
67. Caprice, *Der kleine Kohn*, NÖLA (Theaterzensur), Box 117/31 (1902), 87. Caprice was a pseudonym for Antal Oroszi. See Nikola Roßbach, ed., *Wien parodiert. Theatertexte um 1900* (Vienna: Praesens, 2007), 131.
68. Fritz Backhaus, “‘Hab’n Sie nicht den kleinen Cohn geseh’n?’ Ein Schlager der Jahrhundertwende,” in *Abgestempelt: Judenfeindliche Postkarten*, ed. Helmut Gold and Georg Heuberger (Frankfurt: Umschau Buchverlag, 1999), 238.
69. See “Kohn-Lexikon des Kikeriki,” *Kikeriki* (21 September 1902): 5, 7.
70. Sarah Holzinger, “Die Darstellung von Juden und Jüdinnen im humoristischen Volksblatt *Kikeriki*” (MA thesis, University of Graz, 2015), 94–96.
71. Adolf Wahrmund, *Das Gesetz des Nomadenthums und die heutige Juden Herrschaft* (Munich: Deutscher Volksverlag, 1887).
72. Galit Hasan-Rokem and Alan Dundes, eds., *The Wandering Jew: Essays in the Interpretation of a Christian Legend* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).
73. See Klaus Hödl, “Der ‘Juif Errant’ in der französischen medizinischen Literatur,” *Aschkenas* 9 (1999): 109–31; Henry Meige, “Étude sur certains névropathes voyageurs: Le Juif-Errant à la Salétrière” (medical dissertation, Paris, 1893).
74. See Sander L. Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), 168.
75. Julius Einödshofer, *Der kleine Kohn*, Archiv des Wiener Volksliedwerkes, Box 82,69/35.
76. Caprice, *Kohn*, 21.
77. Caprice, *Kohn*, 33.
78. Caprice, *Kohn*, 36–37.
79. Caprice, *Kohn*, 49.
80. Caprice, *Kohn*, 71.
81. Caprice, *Kohn*, 89.
82. André Dombrowski, “Augenblicke, Momente, Minuten: Der Impressionismus und die Industrialisierung der Zeit,” in *Monet und die Geburt des Impressionismus* (Munich: Prestel, 2015), 45.
83. William M. Johnston, *The Austrian Mind: An Intellectual and Social History 1848–1938* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 145–47; Baron, “Vienna,” 79. In Hofmannsthal’s short play, the figure of death comes to the protagonist Claudio. He is shocked and dismayed by this unexpected appearance. He converses with Death and attempts to convince him that his demise has come too soon. However, his arguments are not persuasive. There is no more future for him. This lack of prospects firmly anchors the storyline in the present, which is protracted and appears not to elapse (Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Der Tor und der Tod* [North Charleston, SC: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013]).
84. Leopold Andrian-Werburg’s mother was a daughter of Giacomo Meyerbeer, and Hugo von Hofmannsthal’s father was Jewish. On Hofmannsthal’s relationship to Judaism, see Jens Rieckmann, “(Anti-)Semitism and Homoeroticism: Hofmannsthal’s Reading of Bahr’s Novel *Die Rotte Kohras*,” *German Quarterly* 66, no. 2 (1993): 212–21.

85. Josef Armin, *Die Reise nach Grosswardein*, NÖLA (Theaterakten), Box 113/16 (1894).
86. Graeme Gilloch, *Myth and Metropolis: Walter Benjamin and the City* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), 131.
87. The distinction at hand is merely tendential. In this sense, I should mention the Jewish author and notorious bohemian Peter Altenberg (1859–1919), who epitomized the distraction and fragmented character of the present like almost no other. See Dagmar Lorenz, *Wiener Moderne* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2007), 188.
88. Nils Roemer, “Conceptions of Time and the German-Jewish Experience in the Nineteenth Century,” *Jewish History* 14, no. 3 (2000): 245–363.

## FROM DIFFERENCE TO SIMILARITY



**T**he *Apostle of Schottenfeld*, *Little Kohn*, and *The Journey to Grosswardein* not only provide insight into how Viennese Jews culturally processed time and space. In this chapter, I demonstrate how these texts also highlight the possibility of a peaceful coexistence between Jews and non-Jews in the particular image of Jewishness that they cultivate. In doing so, my investigation uncovers how these three texts evince significant overlap with the other *Völkssänger* pieces that I have explored in the previous chapters. Through an analysis of these three works, I draw conclusions about the Jewish *Völkssänger* milieu in general.

In addition to this aspect, I discuss some of the implications of the concept of “inclusive” Jewish difference. Specifically, I explore the question whether we must understand inclusiveness and difference to be mutually exclusive. Can Jewishness in fact maintain its distinctiveness when associated with qualities that potentially also characterize non-Jews?

### **The Struggle against Antisemitism**

In one way or another, all three *Völkssänger* plays depict the antisemitism prevalent in Vienna at the time. While Albert Hirsch’s stage work deals with concrete anti-Jewish ascriptions, *Little Kohn* deals with widespread stereotypes. Both plays aim to expose how antisemitic views are baseless and have nothing to do with fact. *The Journey to Grosswardein* once again makes it clear that the attempts to escape these prejudices—that is, in its depiction of Zionism—do not represent a realistic solution. In the following section, I focus on a few select details from each work to demonstrate how all three portray anti-Jewish prejudices and their impact.

### *Language as an Indication of Jewishness*

In *The Apostle of Schottenfeld*, Mr. and Mrs. Goldmann correspond to a large extent to the image that many Viennese non-Jews had of Jews who lived in Vienna, as well as to the prevailing view within Judaism regarding “assimilated” Jews. We see this image exemplified in the play’s satirical depiction of Mr. and Mrs. Goldmann’s efforts to adapt to their non-Jewish social environment. In doing so, they and their daughter appear to ignore religious characteristics of Jewishness, viewing them as unimportant. This attitude is particularly clear in their disregard of religious dietary laws. When Esther comes home from Father Lorenz, she finds her mother in the kitchen preparing *Grammelknödel* (dumplings made with pork fat).<sup>1</sup> Esther calls them *Griebenknödel* (another word for dumplings prepared with pork fat), but her mother corrects her because she thinks *Grammeln* (pork cracklings) is the more appropriate term. The ensuing debate between mother and daughter thus zeroes in on the socially accepted name of the dish, rather than the question of whether *Grammeln* or *Griebeln* are compatible with a Jewish religious way of life. The Goldmann family members are still noticeably uncertain about their new lifestyle and look for guidance in everyday life. The use of language seems to be suited to them. It contains codes that help to hide their Jewishness. The debate between mother and daughter becomes comical, thus provoking the opposite of the intended effect, when Mr. Goldmann interferes in the situation. He asserts that neither the word *Grammeln* nor *Griebeln* is important, because they aren’t called *Knödel*, but rather *kneydlekh*.

*Kneydlekh* is the plural form of the word *kneydl* (dumpling) in Yiddish. Mr. Goldmann’s use of the term reveals his familiarity with the Yiddish language, thus allowing us to draw conclusions about his Jewishness. Although he endeavors to conceal any hint of Jewishness, he is obviously not immune to linguistic lapses that expose it. In this scene, Hirsch evokes a socially widespread idea regarding Jews. According to the stereotype, Jews attempt to keep their “origin” a secret, only to be undermined mainly by linguistic slippages that give them away.<sup>2</sup> Whether it be their intonation, syntactical particularities, or the use of specific terms that mark them as Jewish, Jews are ostensibly unable to conceal their ethnic background. *The Apostle of Schottenfeld* also depicts this aspect in the scene in which Father Lorenz visits the Goldmanns in their home. As a gesture of hospitality, they offer him a garnished pig’s head as a meal.<sup>3</sup> No other moment in the play better expresses the family’s endeavor to camouflage their Jewishness. On the other hand, Mrs. Goldmann is so surprised by the priest’s visit that she briefly loses her composure and exclaims “Shema Yisrael.” Despite all their attempts at assimilation, a single impulse is sufficient for calling attention to their connection to Jewish culture.

In this context, language reveals itself to be a telltale medium. “Jewish” speech seemingly cannot be eradicated, in spite of all efforts to the contrary. The teach-

erous nature of language is also the message of a popular antisemitic short story written by the German psychiatrist and author Oskar Panizza (1853–1921), published in 1893 under the title “The Operated Jew.”<sup>4</sup> In it, the main protagonist, Itzig Faitel Stern, undergoes surgery and blood transfusion to discard his externally recognizable Jewish nature. He also converts to Protestantism. His life after the operation, especially his professional career, is as a result crowned with success. Ultimately, he even wins the heart of a “blonde German woman.” During the wedding, however, Itzig Faitel Stern’s latent Jewishness returns with a vengeance. His concealed Jewish identity resurfaces above all in how he speaks. In a state of exasperation, his “high-pitched, tinny voice” returns and he shouts, “Kéllnererera! . . . Kéllnererera! – Champágnrerera! – What’s it called? – Shall I have nothing to drink? – Am I not as good and worthwhile as you all!”<sup>5</sup> The wedding guests are deeply disturbed by the revelation of Stern’s Jewishness and hastily abandon the festivities. Only a few remaining people witness Itzig Faitel Stern’s entire transformation back into a “Jew.” The groom’s metamorphosis is not just linguistic, but his pre-op “Jewish” physical characteristics also return in full force. His blond hair begins to curl and turn blue-black, his limbs regain their previous crookedness, and in the end, he even releases the *foetor judaicus*, the dreaded “Jewish stench.” But the central distinguishing feature that betrays his Jewishness in the first place is his idiosyncratic use of language.

Although Hirsch’s portrayal of Jewish linguistic particularity and its function as an urgent feature of Jewishness repeats a well-known anti-Jewish stereotype, he does not, however, leave it at that. As has been the case in most of the farces I have discussed thus far, Hirsch’s depiction of language as an inclusive characteristic for the determination of being Jewish, which does not establish an unchanging difference between Jews and non-Jews, also in turn problematizes the role of language as an essential criterion of distinguishing between Jews and non-Jews. We can see this in *The Apostle of Schottenfeld* in the conversation between Bruno and Father Lorenz. When Bruno tells him that he is destitute, he uses the term *stier* (broke). Since Father Lorenz is unfamiliar with this word, Bruno attempts to explain it by saying, “Because I’m in *Dalles* [poverty].”<sup>6</sup> This phrase is equally incomprehensible to the priest. Bruno adds that people say *stier* in Schottenfeld and *Dalles* in Leopoldstadt. The Jews of the Leopoldstadt therefore have a distinct mode of expression; they are at least partially linguistically different from the rest of Viennese society. At the same time, there are also distinctions among non-Jews. Bruno’s use of the word *stier* points to a sociolect partly unknown to Father Lorenz. Even different non-Jewish groups in Vienna do not always seem to understand each other. In this context, language does not indicate any ethnic affiliation, but possesses a social potential for distinction. In Hirsch’s farce, a Jew explains to a Catholic priest the meaning of a term used in his own parish. If the use of language marks a gap between people, then this gulf is, in this case, more



pronounced between the Catholic priest and his parishioners than between Jews and non-Jews.

### ***“Jewish” Physical Characteristics***

As I have illustrated in my analysis of the example provided by Oskar Panizza’s protagonist Itzig Faitel Stern, antisemitic stereotypes prevalent at the turn of the twentieth century portrayed Jews as having not only specific linguistic patterns but also a peculiar physical constitution, above all a peculiar physiognomy. We also see an evocation of this stereotype in *The Apostle of Schottenfeld* when Esther and Bruno visit Father Lorenz. He immediately suspects Bruno of being Jewish. The decisive factor for him is Bruno’s nose. We see the notion of a “Jewish” nose at work not only in Hirsch’s “Old Viennese” play, but, as I mentioned in chapter 2, in a variety of Jewish popular-cultural stage works.

Language and noses seem to be the two most important differences between Jews and non-Jews in Jewish *Volkssänger* burlesque plays. And this is no accident. The stereotype that a particular nose shape is an indisputable indicator of Jewishness has been in circulation since the end of the thirteenth century.<sup>7</sup> From the end of the eighteenth century on, the “Jewish” nose has been described and discussed in anthropological terms. Anti-Jewish thinkers believed that they had scientifically proven the existence of the “Jewish” nose.<sup>8</sup> Soon after scientific (or pseudo-scientific) discourse began to view the “hooked” nose as an essential aspect of Jewishness, it became associated with a particularly Jewish way of speaking.<sup>9</sup> In light of these anti-Jewish stereotypes, Jews seemed to distinguish themselves first and foremost through the shape of their noses and linguistic patterns.<sup>10</sup>

Just as contemporary prejudicial thinking connected the ostensible particularity of Jewish speech with questionable morality, so too was the “Jewish” nose seen not merely as an indication of Jewishness but also as a sign of a defective ethical disposition.<sup>11</sup> We see these assumptions in a conversation between Esther, Bruno, and Father Lorenz. When Esther claims that Bruno is “a good young man,” the priest asserts, “But he has a suspicious face [*Fason*].”<sup>12</sup> Bruno’s face, with his “Jewish” nose, thus makes him suspect and allows Father Lorenz to cast doubt on Esther’s characterization. A person with a nose like Bruno’s, according to this antisemitic line of thinking, is usually a dangerous type.

But *Volkssänger* plays, especially Hirsch’s *The Apostle of Schottenfeld*, strip the nose of its essentialist function, just as they do with language. We see this clearly in Bruno’s response to Father Lorenz’s statement about his “suspicious *Fason*.” Bruno states, “I apologize, sir, it is true, I am a bit of a Jew, but Esther told me back there that you are a gracious lord and benefactor(!), who makes no distinction between humans . . . and as far as my nose is concerned, I will now grow a mustache just like Kaiser Wilhelm II so that my nose disappears a bit.”<sup>13</sup> The

nose can therefore be concealed, thus losing its status as a “Jewish” characteristic. Unlike the physical idiosyncrasies of Oskar Panizza’s character Itzig Faitel Stern, Hirsch’s farce does not indelibly inscribe the nose’s function as a marker of difference onto the body. A simple mustache, which both Jews and non-Jews can grow, is enough to obscure Jewishness. Hirsch thus dismantles its link to nose shape.

By taking up the tropes of language and the nose in *The Apostle of Schottenfeld*, Hirsch thematizes two ostensible characteristics of Jewishness that also appear in the majority of Jewish *Volkssänger* plays. Similar to the authors of these works, Hirsch also invalidates them as indelible markers of an individual’s Jewishness. In this sense, Hirsch had much in common with his fellow Jewish colleagues. The frequency with which these farces treat the topic of “Jewish” speech and the “Jewish” nose also reinforces the fact that these stereotypes were prevalent in fin-de-siècle Vienna.

### ***Blurring the Lines between Reality and Fiction***

The central question that I pose in light of my analysis of “Jewish” speech and the “Jewish” nose relates to how these features operated to stigmatize Jews and therefore how they have functioned as components of antisemitic discourse in general. In *Little Kohn*, one condition essential for the perpetuation of these stereotypes is the construction of reality based on assumptions and rumors. Judgments about fellow human beings, in this instance about Jews, are based not on verifiable facts, but on hints and credulity, and in part also on preconceptions. We see the impact of assumptions and rumors in the play’s first scene when characters speculate the reason behind Kohn’s rendezvous with Marie in the hotel. Although many of the plot’s details suggest an intimate meeting, this cannot be proven. While Kohn could have done what others have accused him of, they cannot substantiate their suspicions. The boundary between truth and mere insinuations proves to be fluid.

The relationship between reality and assumptions remains an important theme throughout the play. We also see this reflected in Kohn’s relationship with the Spitzer family women. Although it seems clear at the beginning that Kohn is sexually hyperactive, doubts regarding the veracity of this assertion arise over the course of the plot. It becomes increasingly clear that he only reluctantly yields to the expectations that Spitzer’s daughters ascribe to him. Kohn has no real interest in engaging in a liaison with or even marrying them. It seems he merely surrenders to their desire for courtship, as if they impose the role of the lady’s man on him. Nonetheless, he maintains the status of unbridled womanizer. What distinguishes him from his fellow characters are their projections—the characteristics that they attribute to him. Kohn does not reveal his real identity, his actual desires and aspirations, to the other persons in the play.

The contrast between conjecture and verifiable reality seems to disappear altogether in an attempt to identify Kohn as a victim of suicide. Although the clothes that the police officer presents to Mr. Spitzer and his daughters seem to constitute indisputable evidence of Kohn's suicide, this assumption turns out to be incorrect. A similarly confusing situation, though in reverse, was Jellinek's actual suicide several months before the production of *Little Kohn* (see chapter 1). Although all the evidence seemed to point to the fact that he had actually committed suicide, the police assumed that Jellinek was intent on pulling the wool over everyone's eyes. This conjecture prevailed over existing facts. The rumors that fueled the Jellinek case and turned it into a veritable scandal also shape the interpretation of Kohn. They construct a villain that does not exist. The play illustrates how antisemitic projections usually operate.

## A Response to Antisemitism

Vienna can be described as the cradle of political Zionism. The city served as the movement's center at least in its early years. Not only did Theodor Herzl reside there, but the primary newspaper of the Zionist movement *Die Welt* (The world) was also published in the Habsburg capital. In addition, the Zionist organization's central office, which directed the Zionist agenda on an international level, was located in the city until 1905.<sup>14</sup> One and a half decades before the publication of Herzl's *The Jewish State* (1896), the Akademischer Verein Kadimah was founded in Vienna, the first Jewish-national student association in western and central Europe.

Zionism also found relatively large support among Viennese Jews. Although Zionists did not gain a seat until after World War I on the board of the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Wien (the Vienna Jewish Community), the official representational body of the Jews in Vienna, Zionist lists were able to win around one-third of the votes cast before 1914 at the biennial polls, despite the restrictive electoral system that excluded many Jews from voting because of a lack of taxation.<sup>15</sup> But before Theodor Herzl gained a certain amount of prominence, the situation looked different. Until the late 1890s, adherents of Zionism were mainly confined to the student milieu. The Kadimah as well as figures such as Nathan Birnbaum (1864–1937) were unable to persuade the rest of Vienna's Jews of the validity of emigrating to Palestine and thus giving up life in the Habsburg capital in exchange for life in impoverished and economically underdeveloped regions.<sup>16</sup> We see this hesitation with respect to Zionism reflected in the *Volkssänger* play *The Journey to Grosswardein*. The historical background informing this play's plot structure includes this hesitation, even hostile attitude, toward Zionist endeavors.

### ***Aspects of Anti-Zionist Pastiche***

In Josef Armin's farce, Grosswardein stands in for Palestine, which provides in Zionist ideology a refuge for Jews who encounter hostility in their surroundings and fear for their physical safety and mental health. Lipperl and Maxi are two Jewish characters who no longer wish to tolerate the violence and psychological pressure that they confront in their everyday lives in Vienna and therefore seek a new way of life. In this sense, their willingness to travel to Grosswardein by train seems to correspond to the desire many Jews had when planning to leave for Palestine. However, in the play, there are no rabid antisemites making life difficult for Lipperl and Maxi. Rather, the source of their dissatisfaction is their quarrelsome wives. Armin's farce thus takes the theme of hostile conditions in the Diaspora, one of the primary concerns among Zionist supporters and a principal reason contributing to their advocating leaving Europe, and detaches it from anti-Jewish peculiarity, thus rendering it humorous. *The Journey to Grosswardein* questions whether the reason that the Zionists give for building their own community in Palestine is really as serious as they claim.

Armin's choice of Grosswardein (Oradea in present-day Romania) as a metaphor for Palestine is no coincidence. Located in the Hungarian half of the Habsburg monarchy, the town was considered a largely Jewish center due to the ethnic composition of its population. It had around fifty thousand inhabitants at the turn of the century, 70 percent of whom were Jewish.<sup>17</sup> Grosswardein was thus a fitting choice to symbolize the site of Jewish settlement, an analogue to the concept of Palestine so integral to Zionist ideology.

We should note that in Armin's farce a song about Grosswardein evokes in the character Fritz Engländer a desire to visit the city. In fact, at the turn of the century, there was a hugely popular song called "Nach Grosswardein" (To Grosswardein). Hungarian Jewish composer Hermann Rosenzweig wrote the music.<sup>18</sup> The cover of the song sheet, which sold numerous copies, depicts four Hasidic Jews dancing against a silhouette of Grosswardein. The image thus creates an iconographic association between Judaism and this geographic location, emphasizing its significance as a Jewish city. In this context, we also identify an additional reference to Zionism: the outline of Grosswardein depicted on the song sheet imbues the site with a Middle Eastern character. With vaguely recognizable mosques illustrated in the background, the image evokes an "Oriental" atmosphere.<sup>19</sup> This portrayal of Grosswardein is thus more reminiscent of Palestine and the landscape of the eastern Mediterranean than the landscape of Transylvania, where it was actually located.

In this sense, the image on the song sheet links the "Jewish city" of Grosswardein with Palestine. Within this context, it comes as no surprise that Josef Armin chose Grosswardein as the focal point for his anti-Zionist satire. There are two additional reasons why Armin may have specifically chosen Grosswardein:

First, it held a firm place in the mental cartography of Viennese Jews. Several different *Volkssänger* plays reference the location. For example, in Caprice's 1913 farce *Ein Schmoch*, Grosswardein is the young couple's honeymoon destination, where they visit relatives.<sup>20</sup> In addition, the play *The Woman with the Mask* (discussed previously), performed in 1909 by Ludwig Kirnbauer's singspiel hall, takes place entirely in this city.

Another reason Armin may have chosen this location for his play is that the theme of the futile attempt to travel to Grosswardein seems to have been a topos among the Viennese *Volkssänger*. The town makes an appearance in "Das jüdische Schaffnerlied" (The Jewish conductor's song), composed by Carl Lorens and performed by Adolphi, the son of Albert Hirsch. The text of the song is about a Jewish boy from the Galician town of Tarnow, whom his father sends to Grosswardein to find work. The boy, however, takes the wrong train and arrives at the Vienna North Station. At first, he wants to return to Tarnow, but then he stays in Vienna, earning his money as a peddler and even attaining prosperity.<sup>21</sup> Grosswardein is the destination to which the boy wants to travel but cannot ultimately reach. And Vienna seems to be a better alternative. The boy from Tarnow quickly adapts to his new fate and manages to lead a contented life.

Josef Armin's play is not the only text in which Grosswardein serves as a symbol of an unattainable Palestine. Armin, however, expands this theme into a biting satire of Zionist aspirations. Not unlike "The Jewish Conductor's Song," *The Journey to Grosswardein* suggests that Jews who flee difficult situations at home do not succeed in finding better conditions abroad. We see this portrayed in Armin's play when Lipperl and Maxi's wives also try to board the train to Grosswardein. This turn of events further suggests that the individuals responsible for the negative and oppressive living conditions in Vienna will only follow the tormented Jews to their place of refuge. Emigration is therefore not a solution to the problems that Jews face.

Emigration's failure to provide a real solution to antisemitism also seems to be the significance of the scene in which Fritz Engländer follows his friends to the train station. As it turns out, he is actually an Austrian, whose surname just happens to be *Engländer* (Englishman). We also learn that he is a member of a fraternity, an institution that formed the radical spearhead of antisemitism in Vienna at the end of the nineteenth century. Had Engländer as fraternity brother joined Lipperl and Maxi, then a potential antisemite might have accompanied the Jews on their journey to escape such problems. Again, it seems that emigration to Palestine is a fruitless enterprise.

We identify another aspect of the play's humorous critique of Zionist ideology when Lebele courts Rosl. The Zionist movement, especially the Viennese Kadimah, strove to create a social environment that prevented "Jewish" assimilation.<sup>22</sup> Interdenominational marriages were considered one of the most important aspects of assimilation. But Lebele, who grew up in Grosswardein, the meta-

phorical Palestine, proclaims that he has fallen in love with a *shiksa* (non-Jewish woman). In addition, no comprehensible motive seems to underpin Lebele's affection for Rosl. In Vienna, many Jews married non-Jews for social advancement.<sup>23</sup> Non-Jewish women often belonged to a higher social class, into which Jews could marry. Although Jewish religious authorities did not accept and certainly did not legitimize such marriages, this pattern of behavior was to a certain extent understandable. In Armin's play, however, Rosl is a simpleminded peasant woman. Her family name, Teppenhuber, suggests such a social background. Thus, conditions in Grosswardein not only seem to perpetuate assimilation, but they are even more pronounced here than in Vienna. Grosswardein (i.e., Palestine) thus aggravates the conditions that Zionists cautioned against and equated with the Diaspora.

The exaggeration of certain core elements of Zionism for the purpose of humorous effect indicates that *The Journey to Grosswardein* functions as an anti-Zionist piece. It shows that Zionism does not represent a reasonable escape from the antisemitism that Jews faced in Vienna.

## Articulating Jewishness

None of these *Volkssänger* plays that I have analyzed defines Jewishness in terms of religion. Nonetheless, it is impossible to pin Jewishness down precisely, because it can and will always change. I argue that Jewishness does not have a fixed definition. Context thus determines Jewishness. The only consistent characteristic is that Jewishness distinguishes Jews from non-Jews. These "Jewish" farces represent Jewishness as an inclusive difference.

Although Jewishness as a category varies, the features employed to articulate it remain largely constant. I have identified four primary features that tend to indicate what or who is Jewish. Within the context of these four features, I also discuss the notion of difference as well as a conceptual alternative to it.

### ***Inclusivity, Individuality, Interactionality, Performance***

Both *The Apostle of Schottenfeld* and *A Tale from Yesteryear* conclude with noteworthy statements. *The Apostle of Schottenfeld* ends with "Father Lorenz does not only pray for Christians, but also for Jews, if they are decent humans [*Menschen*]." The final line in *A Tale from Yesteryear* is "Whether a Jew or Christ / As long as he is human [*ein Mensch*]." The concept of a human (or person) is central to the two pieces. However, the term does not remain a neutral category; it is laden with significance. For Hirsch, a human (*ein Mensch*) is "decent," as *The Apostle of Schottenfeld* suggests, when he or she is characterized by certain ethical qualities. This particular understanding of "human" probably originated in Yid-

dish language culture. In Yiddish, a *mentsb* (not just a human, but a good person) is distinguished by generosity and integrity. A *mentsb* thus serves as a role model in his particular social environment.<sup>24</sup>

According to this understanding, both Jews and non-Jews can be a *mentsb*. *Mentshlikhkeyt* (Yiddish for the quality of being a good, decent person) is therefore an inclusive characteristic. Rather than being innate, this quality is reflected in a certain commitment to fellow human beings. It is made tangible through performance. *Mentshlikhkeyt* does not characterize a collective whole, but distinguishes individuals based on generous activities. *Mentshlikhkeyt* therefore varies on an individual basis. In Hirsch's plays, *mentshlikhkeyt* manifests itself specifically in charity, interactively in exchanges between Jews and non-Jews.

We find all four features—inclusivity, individuality, interactionality, performance—in *The Apostle of Schottenfeld* as well as *A Tale from Yesteryear*. Both the Jewish Isak and the non-Jewish baron demonstrate *inclusivity* in their willingness to help others. Isak does not, however, represent all Jews. Many of them want to cheat the baron by pretending to have lent him money and demanding repayment. In this sense, compassion is not a general Jewish characteristic, but an *individual* trait associated specifically with Isak. Isak actively *performs* this trait. We thus see Jewish–non-Jewish *interaction* performed mutually, in Isak's supporting the baron and the baron's supporting his erstwhile savior.

These four features of Jewishness, though they do not always appear in concert with one another, distinguish most of the other *Volkssänger* plays that I discussed in chapters 2 and 3. I have thus founded my thesis—that we should understand Jewishness as largely fluid, unrelated to religious Judaism, as the result of a close Jewish–non-Jewish togetherness, and as inclusive—on a wide range of evidence. Instead of formulating a specific definition of Jewish self-understanding (except to say that religion plays no definitive role), these plays, I have demonstrated, determine Jewishness contextually.

Given my discussion thus far, we must ask whether a concept of Jewishness as difference based on inclusive qualities that can influence the self-understanding of both Jews and non-Jews is at first glance merely a contradiction. Doesn't inclusivity mean that Jewishness loses its distinctiveness when non-Jews also adopt and demonstrate its features?

## The Concept of Similarity

My argument that Jewishness constitutes a form of difference based on inclusive qualities, which can also shape the identity of non-Jews, may seem at first glance paradoxical. But let us consider two points that disentangle this ostensible contradiction. My first point refers to the semantic field of the term “Jewishness.” One could assert that, unlike what we have seen in the *Volkssänger* farces,

Jewishness does not in fact consist of a mere handful of attitudes and behaviors. Although Albert Hirsch and his colleagues only focused on individual aspects, such as charity and linguistic patterns, this may have been the result of the discourse of the time, in which charity was generally considered important and language nationalisms had an impact on everyday life in the Habsburg capital.<sup>25</sup> But Jewishness, one could argue, is much more comprehensive and exhibits many other differences. Thus, when non-Jews assume individual traits that previously characterized Jewishness, no equality is established between Jews and non-Jews, only a partial congruence. The first point fails to consider that we can understand this congruence of individual aspects as a *similarity* between the two. Similarity between people or collectives means that there is neither total distinctness nor complete alignment between them. Similarity between Jews and non-Jews does not resolve differences between them; it indicates a gradual, rather than a fundamental, difference.

The term “similarity” refers here to a new “concept from cultural theory” that consciously diverges from the idea of binary opposites, which at least implicitly underpins scholarly work on the notion of difference.<sup>26</sup> The concepts of hybridity, dissolving borders, and alterity—concepts that have received much attention in cultural studies and postcolonial research in recent years—are all characterized by the notion of dichotomous difference.<sup>27</sup> For my purposes in this study, inclusive difference—that is, similarity—underscores a relationship between Jews and non-Jews underpinned neither by dichotomous categories nor by total equality between them. Instead, this understanding of similarity focuses on points of contact that simultaneously maintain a distinction between the two.

The second point that resolves the apparent incompatibility between inclusiveness and difference pertains to the potential consequences of any overlap of Jewish and non-Jewish self-understanding. At times, a specific Jewish distinction becomes apparent. We can better register this dialectic by using the concept of inclusive difference than by making use of the notion of similarity. For this reason, I have chosen to retain the term “inclusive difference” throughout this study.

We see inclusive difference vividly portrayed in various stage works that Albert Hirsch penned. This kind of difference appears in *The Apostle of Schottenfeld*, for example, in a scene in which Mr. Goldmann announces his willingness to donate to a fund to support the victims of the Ringtheater fire.<sup>28</sup> He identifies with a community that commemorates members who have become victims of harsh circumstances. There seems to be a consensus between non-Jews and Mr. Goldmann on this point. Nevertheless, his understanding of charity underscores his particular sense of identification with fellow Jews. In explaining his reasoning for offering his financial help, Mr. Goldmann points not to all victims’ need, but only to Jewish ones’. Mr. Goldmann is thereby committed to Jewish community solidarity.

A sense of Jewishness that emphasizes the similarity between Jews and non-Jews is also evident in the visit to the church. The attendance of Jews at a Chris-



tian church service demonstrates, I argue, at least a temporary dissolution of religious boundaries, especially with Jewish churchgoers actively participating in Mass. Isak experiences this overcoming of boundaries at Burgai's baptism in *A Tale from Yesteryear*. In her telling of the events, Gertrud emphasizes that Isak even prayed along with everyone else and in doing so was no different from the rest of the Christians present. The religious divisions between Isak and the others, however, do not disappear. Rather, these divisions express a sense of distance between them. Although Isak prays with the other baptismal guests, he does so by retreating to a corner in the back of the sacred space.<sup>29</sup> The common activity of praying thus reveals a similarity between the Jew Isak and the other non-Jewish attendees. It does not indicate equality between them, but rather reveals a Jewish–non-Jewish difference. Hirsch had similar personal experiences in reality (outside the diegetic world of his plays). When he was at the church during the consecration of the *Volkssänger* flag and stood next to Karl Lueger, he felt connected to the Viennese *Volkssänger* community. At the same time, he was aware that he could not celebrate the mayor, since Lueger was an antisemite and he himself was Jewish. The visit to the church reminded Hirsch that being Jewish can also mean a lack of belonging.<sup>30</sup>

“Similarity” is admittedly a vague term.<sup>31</sup> The vagueness of this term lies less in its theoretical detachment than in its everyday application and the numerous meanings resulting from its usage. Similarity constitutes more of a basic category of experience and classification with which everyone seems to be familiar than an analytical tool.<sup>32</sup> Nonetheless, similarity may prove to be a particularly productive concept for the field of Jewish studies. It contradicts all ideas of Jewish foreignness that have determined social interactions between Jews and non-Jews for centuries. In terms of a Jewish–non-Jewish dichotomy, these prejudicial ideas are still unfortunately widespread today. To some degree, as I demonstrated in chapter 1, they even continue to exert an influence on current historiographies that rely on the assimilationist narrative. By questioning the dependency on normative cultures and emphasizing the maintenance of difference, the concept of similarity points to the inadequacy of the assimilation and acculturation narrative.<sup>33</sup>

No other figure of argumentation opposes antisemitic thinking like the concept of similarity. We may to some degree reasonably argue that throughout history, antisemitic animosity has been all the more rabid and the insistence on an unbridgeable divide between Jews and non-Jews has been all the more vehement as the similarities between the two increasingly emerged. In this sense, there seems to be a general connection between similarity and rejection. Only a common foundation makes it possible for one to defame the other, in this case for non-Jews to radically reject Jews and even to deny them the right to exist.<sup>34</sup>

*Little Kohn* illustrates this point. On the one hand, Spitzer wants to get rid of Kohn. He endeavors, as he puts it, to “de-Kohn” (*entkohnen*) himself by eradicating any biological traces of Kohn. However, Spitzer is unsuccessful. Leopold

Kohn has impregnated Spitzer's daughter and is therefore a part of his family. This is exactly what antisemites feared the most—that Jews would implant themselves in the *Völkskörper* (body of the people) and become part of it. Eugen Dühring's *Judenfrage* serves as an example of a shoddily argued piece of propaganda that highlights this racist ideology.<sup>35</sup> In Austria, Karl Ritter von Schönerer, the leader of the German National Party, advocated the acquisition of Dühring's book by local libraries. But real life of course differed from the ideologically driven opinions that this kind of text promoted.<sup>36</sup> The social consequences that arose out of the similarity between Jews and non-Jews could not be suppressed.

It is not only Leopold Kohn's future paternity that prevents Spitzer from being able to "de-Kohn" himself. Other circumstances that point to a significant similarity between the two men also seem to make this endeavor impossible. At the beginning of the play, there is a marked polarity between Marcus Spitzer and the Jew Leopold Kohn. The banker acts condescendingly and hostile toward his bank teller. The play does not explicitly explain whether antisemitism is the motivation behind Spitzer's actions. Over the course of the plot, however, the contrast between Kohn and Spitzer decreases. Any difference begins to dissolve when Spitzer refers to himself as *meshugge* (crazy). As I have already argued, language was an important, albeit not conclusive, indication of a person's ethnic background. In this context, we could argue that Spitzer's self-description belies a sense of Jewishness.

This interpretation is reinforced when Spitzer learns that his wife sits in a train compartment with Kohn. He initially reacts to this news with dismay. His reaction is similar to when he receives word of the theft. He begins to stammer, and his syntax is strongly reminiscent of Yiddish. Language seems to expose him as a Jew. The initial Jewish–non-Jewish polarity that characterizes the relationship between Spitzer as employer and Kohn as employee becomes a constellation in which ethnic dividing lines grow indistinct. It is not clear whether the conflict between Spitzer and Kohn is an altercation between two Jews or a confrontation between a Jew and a non-Jew. Doubts about Spitzer's Jewishness persist. In the end, we see that the play emphasizes a sense of similarity between the two characters. Spitzer cannot simply dismiss the overlap between himself and his counterpart.

## Notes

1. *Grammeln* are rendered from pork fat.
2. Sander L. Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 139–48.
3. Albert Hirsch, *Der Apostel vom Schottenfeld*, Niederösterreichisches Landesarchiv [NÖLA in subsequent citations] (Theaterzensur), Box 21/22 (1902), 53.
4. See Sander Gilman, *Franz Kafka, the Jewish Patient* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 213–14.

5. <http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/buch/der-operierte-jud-227/1> (accessed 9 May 2019).
6. Hirsch, *Apostel*, 28.
7. Joel Carmichael, *The Satanizing of the Jews: Origin and Development of Mystical Anti-Semitism* (New York: Fromm, 1992), 71.
8. Klaus Hödl, *Die Pathologisierung des jüdischen Körpers: Antisemitismus, Geschlecht und Medizin im Fin de Siècle* (Vienna: Picus Verlag, 1997), 114.
9. Wachter, "Bemerkung über den Kopf der Juden," *Magazin der Gesellschaft naturforschender Freunde für die neuesten Entdeckungen in der gesamten Naturkunde*, 1812, 64–65.
10. Sander L. Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 169–93.
11. For more on the connection between "Jewish" speech and the lack of moral fiber, see Gilman, *Self-Hatred*, 101–2.
12. Hirsch, *Apostel*, 29.
13. Hirsch, *Apostel*, 29f.
14. Adolf Gaisbauer, *Davidstern und Doppeladler: Zionismus und jüdischer Nationalismus in Österreich 1882–1918* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1988).
15. Harriet Pass Friedenreich, *Jewish Politics in Vienna, 1918–1938* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 72.
16. For more on the Kadimah and Palestine, see Robert S. Wistrich, *The Jews of Vienna in the Age of Franz Joseph* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1990), 365. On Birnbaum, see Wistrich, *Jews of Vienna*, 381–420. See also Nathan Birnbaum, "Die Mission des Judenthumes, einst und jetzt," *Selbst-Emancipation* 7 (1890): 240.
17. Philip V. Bohlman, *Jewish Music and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 56.
18. Philip V. Bohlman, "An Endgame's 'Dramatis Personae': Jewish Popular Music in the Public Spaces of the Habsburg Monarchy," in *Vienna: Jews and the City of Music 1870–1938*, ed. Leon Botstein and Werner Hanak (Annandale-on-Hudson, NY: Bard College, 2004), 96.
19. Bohlman, "Jewish Popular Music," 57.
20. Caprice, *Ein Schmoch*, NÖLA (Theaterakten), Karton 8/13.
21. Bohlmann, "Jewish Popular Music," 161–64.
22. Wistrich, *Jews of Vienna*, 363.
23. Marsha L. Rozenblit, *Juden in Wien 1867–1914* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1988), 143.
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25. David Rechter, "Ethnicity and the Politics of Welfare—The Case of Habsburg Austrian Jewry," *Yearbook of the Simon Dubnow Institute* 1 (2001): 257–76.
26. Anil Bhatti et al., "Ähnlichkeit: Ein kulturtheoretisches Paradigma," *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur* 36, no. 1 (2011): 233–47.
27. Jürgen Osterhammel, "Ähnlichkeit—Divergenz—Konvergenz: Für eine Historiographie relationaler Prozesse," in *Ähnlichkeit: Ein kulturtheoretisches Paradigma*, ed. Anil Bhatti and Dorothee Kimmich (Konstanz: Konstanz University Press, 2015), 79.
28. Hirsch, *Apostel*, 42.
29. Albert Hirsch, *A Gschicht' von anno dazumal*, NÖLA (Theaterzensur), Box 21/1 (1898), 7.
30. We also see a similarity between Jews and non-Jews in *Ein riskirtes Geschäff* (see chapter 3). In it, Gottfried introduces his creditor Salomon Teitelbaum to the butcher Eulalie as a good person, because he was prepared to lend money to an alcoholic and take care of his health. Eulalie respectfully refers to Salomon as "Mr. Israelite" and "Lord Jud" (Albert

- Hirsch, *Ein riskirtes Geschäft*, NÖLA [Theaterzensur], Box 21/12 [1897], anno 13 and 14). While she wishes to express her appreciation for Salomon and treat him as one of her kind, she simultaneously emphasizes his Jewishness and thus his otherness. Both the abrogation of and emphasis on Jewish–non-Jewish differences are articulated in the same sentence.
31. Anil Bhatti and Dorothee Kimmich, “Einleitung,” in Bhatti and Kimmich, *Ähnlichkeit*, 10.
  32. Klaus Sachs-Hombach, “Ähnlichkeit: Funktionen und Bereiche eines umstrittenen Begriffs,” in Bhatti and Kimmich, *Ähnlichkeit*, 93.
  33. On this, see Albrecht Koschorke, “Ähnlichkeit: Valenzen eines post-postkolonialen Konzepts,” in Bhatti and Kimmich, *Ähnlichkeit*, 36.
  34. Koschorke, “Ähnlichkeit,” 42–43.
  35. Eugen Dühring, *Die Judenfrage als Frage der Racenschädlichkeit für die Existenz, Sitte und Cultur der Völker. Mit einer weltgeschichtlichen Antwort* (Karlsruhe, 1886).
  36. Friedrich Polleroß, “‘Die Erinnerung tut zu weh!’ Georg Ritter von Schönerer und die Folgen,” in *Die Macht der Bilder: Antisemitische Vorurteile und Mythen*, ed. Jüdisches Museum der Stadt Wien (Vienna: Picus, 1995), 159–60.

## CONCLUSION



In this study, I have sought to provide an overview of Viennese Jewish *Volkssänger* while simultaneously investigating the question of their Jewishness. I have focused primarily on burlesques and farces that Jewish *Volkssänger* either wrote or performed, as a method for analyzing their Jewish self-understanding. Given this focus, it is also important to ask whether the insights we gain by investigating their conception of Jewishness pertain solely to the fictional characters in their works or whether we may also draw conclusions about Jewish *Volkssänger* and their personal experiences in the real world.

I have proposed to answer this question by plumbing Albert Hirsch's biographical details, specifically his professional life. Chapter 3 offered insights into his sometimes difficult relationship with his colleagues. At the height of the "*Volkssänger* war," he presented his colleagues with statements that speak to his conception of Jewishness. At the same time, I have ascertained numerous similarities between individual protagonists in his plays and Hirsch's biography. We may reasonably conclude that his farces more or less clearly trace his own personal understanding of Jewishness. Because there are numerous similarities between the portrayal of Jewishness in Hirsch's performances and the plays penned by other Jewish *Volkssänger*, I argue that their manuscripts and performances provide insight into their self-understanding as well, no matter how fluid it may have been.

These *Volkssänger* plays, I assert, repeatedly address certain topics, despite that a variety of authors penned them and numerous ensembles performed them. This repetition potentially indicates that they were topoi that the public both recognized and anticipated seeing in the performances. But these themes may have also preoccupied Viennese Jews (or at least a portion of the Viennese Jewish population) to a considerable extent and therefore consistently appeared in theatrical works. Seen in this light, these farces represent important sources regarding everyday life among Viennese Jewry.

One of these themes that these farces often incorporate is suicide or the threat of suicide by plunging into the Danube. As I discussed in the introduction by

analyzing the example of Anna Katz, more than a few Jews chose this form of suicide. The high number of suicides or attempted suicides, carried out in this manner according to a culturally prescribed pattern, may have been the subject of heated debate among both Jews and non-Jews in Vienna, explaining why the theme found its way into the works of Viennese *Volkssänger*.<sup>1</sup>

Another frequent theme in these theatrical works is marital discord brought on by the reversal of traditional gender roles. In these burlesques, women often steer the course of everyday events in the household and oppress their husbands. An emblematic example of a play that features this theme is *The Journey to Grosswardein*. Lipperl and Maxi flee from their wives because the women behave in an authoritarian manner and try to dictate their husbands' behavior through force. Comic effect may have been one reason why the play depicts the Jewish man as weak and the Jewish woman as masculine. But it also likely served another purpose. This depiction of "reversed" gender roles also served, I argue, to invalidate the stereotype of the effeminate Jew, a widespread idea in the late nineteenth century. We see the social relevance of this concept in the fact that even the sciences, in particular medicine and anthropology, actively engaged with the stereotype and attempted to substantiate it with facts. In a series of studies, physicians and anthropologists asserted that certain physical characteristics and physiological processes were more prevalent among male Jews than among male non-Jews—qualities that usually characterized non-Jewish women as well. These included a low chest circumference, indicating a weak physical condition, the alleged inability to perform military service, as well as a high susceptibility to nervous diseases. The feminization of the Jewish man was thus determined by concrete characteristics, ostensibly proven by empirical evidence.<sup>2</sup>

The "effeminate" Jew is a common trope in *Volkssänger* theatrical works. We see this in *The Apostle of Schottenfeld* in the scene where Mr. Goldmann begins to totter in the face of Father Lorenz's request to give him 1,000 gulden. His wife tersely comments on his reaction, stating, "I've known for a long time now that you are a weakling with no virility."<sup>3</sup> In the play *Im Schwarzen Rössl*, performed by the Budapest Orpheum Society in 1899, the Warsaw merchant Kiewe rents a room in the hotel Im Schwarzen Rössl for a few days with his mistress. As a cover for this assignation, he tells his wife that he has been summoned for military exercises. She does not believe him and secretly follows him. When Kiewe catches sight of his wife descending the stairs at the hotel, he is deeply shocked and afraid that she will beat him.<sup>4</sup> Again, the Jewish woman is portrayed as violent and her husband as a coward. As a final example, we identify another form of female dominance in *Wrestlers at the Kosher Restaurant* (see chapter 2). In this case, there is no threat of physical violence, but Yentl is mentally superior to her husband Zalma and therefore regrets marrying him. Zalma is dependent on her and seems unable to manage the challenges of life without her.

Just as the *Volkssänger* take up the notions of a Jewish nose and Jewish speech patterns and attempt to strip them of their antisemitic sentiment, the distorted portrayal of the Jewish man was intended to dissolve the widespread prejudice of his effeminacy into laughter. The frequent reference to the feeble Jewish man underscores that Viennese Jews were preoccupied with the stereotype of the effeminate Jew and endeavored to respond to it. An analysis of *Volkssänger* plays, I have argued throughout this study, allows us insight into the everyday life of the Jews around 1900, their sensitivities, problems, and concerns.

The explorations I have undertaken in this book began with the question why the topic of Jews in the general Viennese popular culture around 1900 has remained relatively unexplored. One of the reasons for this neglect may be the analytical tools that historians use. In the following chapters, I have introduced Jewish *Volkssänger* groups and a series of plays that they produced and performed. By analyzing these works and their historical contexts, I have deduced several features that constituted Jewishness among the Jewish *Volkssänger*. Their relations with non-Jewish colleagues, in summary, were notably complex and interwoven. Dichotomous categorizations cannot account for this complexity. These Jewish–non-Jewish interactions were also fraught with tension, and anti-Jewish hostility sometimes expressed itself. Antisemitic sentiment, however, was likely less pronounced among the *Volkssänger* than in other areas of Viennese society.

## Notes

1. Hannes Leidinger, *Die Bedeutung der Selbstausslöschung: Aspekte der Suizidproblematik in Österreich von der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts bis zur Zweiten Republik* (Innsbruck: Studien-Verlag, 2012).
2. Because many scholars have already written about the prejudice of the “effeminate Jew” based on physical and medical characteristics, I do not discuss it in detail here. On this, see in particular Sander L. Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (New York: Routledge, 1991); Klaus Hödl, *Die Pathologisierung des jüdischen Körpers: Antisemitismus, Geschlecht und Medizin im Fin de Siècle* (Vienna: Picus Verlag, 1997), 164–314.
3. Albert Hirsch, “Der Apostel vom Schottenfeld,” *Niederösterreichisches Landesarchiv* [NÖLA in subsequent citations] (Theaterzensur), Box 21/22 (1902), 51.
4. Bernhard Haskel, *Im schwarzen Rössl*, NÖLA (Zensur), Box 115/35 (1898), 81.

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*DV* = *Deutsches Volksblatt*

*IWE* = *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt*

NÖLA = Niederösterreichisches Landesarchiv

*OW* = *Oesterreichische Wochenschrift*

## Newspapers

*Artistenbühne*

*Das Variété*

*Die Presse*

*Die Wahrheit*

*Die Welt*

*Fremden-Blatt*

*Mephisto*

*Selbst-Emancipation*

*Wiener Caricaturen*

*Wiener Sonn- und Montagszeitung*

*Wiener Vororte-Zeitung*

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