

JEWS AND QUEERS

SYMPTOMS OF MODERNITY

**IN LATE-TWENTIETH-
CENTURY VIENNA**

MATTI BUNZL



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CHAPTER I

Myths and Silences

*It would be unkind not to speak about your guilt
that bends you to the ground and threatens to crush you.
And this very guilt of yours becomes entirely my own
like your mountains and your misery.
One day you shall not just point your finger at me:
Punish the evil neighbor who compelled me!
It is you who must confess to your guilt
and name your own name in court.
It fills me with fear to return to you,
to atone with you, I who never struck a blow.
I will defend myself against false penitents,
and you will be smooth with deceit again and again!
Probably I might teach you this or that,
and learn as well. . . . But am I strong enough?
Yet, the train takes me on a homebound course.
You are my risk — and I must take my chance with you.*

Erich Fried, *To Austria*

Written in the aftermath of the Holocaust, Erich Fried's poem *To Austria* was an eloquent and painful indictment of post–World War II Austrian hegemonies. In a poetic corpus that often addressed the memory of pre-Nazi culture, Nazi atrocities, and the victims of the Shoah, the text stood out for its incisive analysis of the postwar relations between Austrians and Jews. In a few lines, it not only captured the structures of subordination, unacknowledged guilt, and persistent deceit that characterized those

relations, but also charted the inherently ambivalent feelings of Jews vis-à-vis Austria's Second Republic.

Fried's analysis of postwar Jewish marginalization had a strongly autobiographical quality. The poet, who was born in Vienna in 1921, had survived the war in London, and like a number of other émigré intellectuals, he had contemplated a permanent return to his country of origin. Visits to postwar Vienna, however, proved disappointing, as Fried quickly realized that he would always remain an "outsider or at best a newcomer."¹

As the following analysis will show, Fried's experience in post-Holocaust Austria was paradigmatic. In a cultural field constituted in continued abjection of a Jewish Other, there was no conceptual space for real-life Jews. Whether they were "réémigrés" like Fried or post-Holocaust arrivals from Eastern Europe, Austria's Jews faced a state apparatus that systematically excluded them from the national imaginary. That imaginary was no longer predicated on the Jews' genocidal removal, but it still presupposed their foundational absence from the public sphere. Indeed, as symptoms of modernity, postwar Austria's Jews remained unseen during the first decades of the Second Republic. But in their privatized world of cultural difference, they began to develop the counteridentifications that would underwrite their latter-day resistance against the homogenizing forces of the nation-state.

Victim Myths and Postwar Austrian Nationness

Austria's status as a nation-state had been somewhat tenuous during the interwar years. As the Habsburg Monarchy's German successor state, the country claimed a German national identity. But while the majority of the population regarded the country in those terms, efforts were also underway to constitute a distinct Austrian nationality. Championed in radically different political contexts by factions of the Christian Social Party and Austria's Communists, the project of Austrian nation-building faltered, however. In 1934, the civil war between the Social Democratic *Schutzbund* and the Christian social *Heimwehr* destroyed the fiction of a unified Austrian polity, and the subsequent establishment of the totalitarian *Ständestaat* further undermined the viability of Austrian nationness. As a result, even Social Democratic politicians welcomed the 1938 *Anschluss* to Germany as a development of historical inevitability.²

When Austria was reestablished after World War II, the project of Austrian nation-building assumed renewed urgency. Culturally the country would still define itself as German, but in the wake of the Holocaust,

it was much more opportune to emphasize the qualities that distinguished Austria from Germany proper. It was in this context that the narrative of Austria as Nazi Germany's first victim was offered by the reconstituted state as the core of a newly invented Austrian national identity. While hardly the collective basis of a classic nation-state, Austria's "victim myth" nonetheless imagined the national community in terms more stridently exclusionary of Jews than any other European country.³ Subordinating Jews on constitutive grounds in an articulation of unabated antisemitism, it located Jews outside the boundaries of the nation-state.

Ironically, the victim myth had its origin in the international struggle against Nazism. In the Moscow declaration of 1943, the allies had deemed Austria the "first victim" of Hitler's aggression, in a strategic move intended to stimulate Austrian resistance against the Third Reich.⁴ Eager to capitalize on the status of victim, the political elite of postwar Austria seized on the allies' original formulation, enshrining it in the country's declaration of independence. Signed on April 27, 1945 by representatives of the three "anti-fascist" parties — the Socialist Party (SPÖ), the Christian Conservative People's Party (ÖVP), and the Communist Party (KPÖ) — the declaration interpreted the years between 1938 and 1945 as the violent imposition of a foreign regime.⁵ That narrative was further codified in an official state document published a year later. Subtitled "Justice for Austria," the *Rot-Weiss-Rot-Buch* gave an account of the country's "occupation" in order to justify the thesis of Austria's victimization at the hands of National Socialist aggression. Abandoned by the world, Austria — it was claimed — was left in a "state of confusion," defenseless against the ensuing "political destruction and economic exploitation." A possible short-lived euphoria following the *Anschluss* in March 1938 was said to have been superseded by general disillusionment, sparking an ever-growing "spirit of resistance." Moreover, according to the authors, the "overwhelming majority of the population had never been national socialist," thus allowing the conclusion that the country's restoration as an independent and democratic state should proceed without making the "*Anschluss* and its concomitant circumstances . . . the basis for the political treatment of Austria."⁶

As a principal vehicle of postwar Austrian nation-building, the country's official historiography was designed to externalize the Third Reich and such concomitant circumstances as the Holocaust. As such, the years between 1938 and 1945 were seen as an interruption of Austrian history, which had properly ceased on the day of the *Anschluss*. In order to sustain this narrative, it was not only necessary to ignore the widespread involvement of native Austrians in the Nazi machinery, but also to discount

National Socialism's high level of popular support. Since that support persisted long after the terrorist nature of the Nazi regime had become apparent, it needed to be downplayed to sustain the narrative of widespread anti-Nazi sentiments.⁷

Austrian *Entnazifizierung* (denazification) proceeded along these very lines. Figured as implicit victims rather than perpetrators, the state dealt with former Nazis in decidedly cavalier terms. As early as 1945, the main strategy regarding the several hundred thousand Nazi Party members was thus one of integration rather than exclusion.⁸ Nazis were quickly restored to positions of power,⁹ and beginning in 1949 — when the former members of the NSDAP were allowed to vote again in general elections, after having being barred in 1945 — both SPÖ and ÖVP fought over their votes with the tacit promise that their role in the Third Reich could be reconciled within the framework of the new Austria.¹⁰

Austria's founding myth was reinforced by the country's treatment at the hands of the international community. Spared the German fate of partition, ostracism, and the burden of paying adequate reparations, Austria and its citizens were not confronted with their role in the Third Reich.¹¹ As a consequence, the majority of Austria's population never developed a sense of responsibility for the Third Reich and the Holocaust. Instead, they organized their historical memory around the trope of victimization.¹² Promoted in principle by all major political forces, the country's official historiography thus served to coalesce and sanctify a narrative of collective innocence.

For over forty years, Austria's victim myth remained essentially unchallenged in national and international discourse. Along with the country's neutrality and the political system of social partnership, it came to serve as the central tenet of postwar Austrian nationness.¹³ In combination, these three principles constituted Austria as an "island of the blessed" rather than a conquered aggressor whose might needed to be quelled through allied occupation. The very logic of the Cold War order that had divided Germany between East and West thus not only allowed Austria to remain intact but created it as a viable national entity.¹⁴

Jews and the Nation of Victims

Jews disturbed the ongoing articulation of Austria's victim myth. As the actual victims of Nazi oppression, they not only functioned as embodied signs of the country's co-responsibility for the Holocaust, but under-

mined the conceptual stability of Austria's postwar arrangements. Those arrangements constituted the nation-state as a collective victim of Nazism — a narrative that could never integrate the Jewish experience of the Shoah. To forge postwar Austria's national imaginary, Jewish voices thus needed to be silenced in the interest of preserving the fiction of a homogeneous victim society. As the presence of Jews in and of itself seemed antithetical to the logic of the imagined community, the state once again became an agent of abject identification. Through a series of political and administrative technologies, postwar Austria sought to purge its national sphere of any Jewish traces. It was a process that at once reproduced Jews' original exclusion on German national grounds and rearticulated it according to the postwar logic of Austrian victimization. The result was a mutual reinforcement that posited Jews as the constitutive Other of a newly purified national collectivity. Jews once more gave coherence to the narration of the nation-state.

In this sense, 1945 was hardly a *Stunde Null* (zero hour). Even though the social exclusion of Austria's Jews had just been taken to its catastrophic extreme, antisemitic structures remained effectively unchallenged in the wake of Austria's liberation. The cultural expressions of these structures extended from the realities of everyday life to utterances by the country's elected officials. In regard to the former, traditional resentments combined with the economic deprivations of the day to incite a pogrom-like atmosphere. As former Nazis were quickly normalized in postwar Austria's national community, virulent antisemitism was manifest in numerous settings, ranging from film screenings and university lectures to Vienna's soccer fields and the city's transportation system.¹⁵

The severity of postwar antisemitism was exacerbated by the denial of its very existence. Austria's politicians, for their part, had a vested interest in negating a phenomenon that clearly contradicted the tenets of the country's victim myth. In 1947, Vienna's Socialist mayor Theodor Körner, for example, defended the city and its population against the accusation of persistent antisemitism. Denouncing the numerous reports of anti-Jewish incidents as "deliberate lies and thoughtless chatter," he noted that the "Viennese" was "intrinsicly no antisemite." After all, he was a "citizen of the world," and as such, "antisemitic tendencies were completely alien to him."¹⁶ Körner's defense of postwar Vienna was part and parcel of a larger political strategy in regard to the Jewish question. Having constituted the imagined community in terms of collective victimization, Austria's politicians needed to disallow any categorical distinctions between Austrian and Jewish victims. The result of this situation was an

act of cynical universalization. Jews, it was suggested, could be reintegrated into the national imaginary if they accepted their position as fellow victims. "We have all suffered," was the way Chancellor Leopold Figl put it in 1946. "The Jews, too, of course," but now, "we wish only to be Austrians, irrespective of what religion we belong to."¹⁷

Figl's paradigmatic sentiment may have implied a theory of postwar Jewish integration; the practical situation, however, rendered it an impossibility. The crux of the matter was the question of return and restitution. The state might have imagined Austrians and Jews as fellow victims of Nazi Germany, but the reality of forced emigration and widespread dispossession placed the two groups in stark opposition. Even if the state of Austria had not instigated the process of violent exclusion, the country's population had been its clear benefactors, the Jews its obvious victims. In this context, the Jews' possible return raised the specter of restitution, which in turn sparked a reactionary movement. In 1946, a survey found that 46 percent of Austrians opposed the return of the country's Jews, and in 1948, the *Verband der Rückstellungsbetroffenen* (Organization of Those Affected by Restitution) constituted itself to capitalize on this popular sentiment and to lobby on behalf of the rights of "Aryanizers."¹⁸ Given the virulently antisemitic climate, their defense of Austrians' claims on formerly Jewish property resonated widely, effectively constructing Jewish demands for restitution as an alien threat to the nation's economic viability. The sentiment was echoed by the political elite. Interior Secretary Oskar Helmer warned against the imminent danger of "Jewish expansion," while President Karl Renner noted that in its "present mood," Austria would not tolerate the restoration of "Jewish monopolies."¹⁹ The mass media, too, was complicit in this project of exclusionary nation-building; for years, Jews appeared in the Austrian press only as the aggressive agents of foreign claims on an embattled Second Republic.²⁰

This effective reversal of the roles of victim and perpetrator articulated with the cultural logic of the Second Republic. As such, it served as an extension of the victim myth and its construction of Austria as a hapless casualty of foreign intrusion. Having been victimized by Nazi Germany, Austria was now the target of unjust Jewish claims that needed to be diffused in order to preserve the country's reputation. In this light, the Austrian government decided to approach the question of restitution through a strategy of protraction, famously captured in the phrase "I am in favor of stretching out the issue."²¹ Refusing to enter formal negotiations until 1953, the Austrian government never altered its position fundamentally, continuing to insist that the country and its citizens should

not be held responsible for Nazi crimes. According to the Jewish negotiator Gustav Jellinek, the state's position was that "Austria cannot be blamed for all those bad things, and where there is no guilt, there is no obligation to give compensation."²² For a nation whose ongoing narration depended on the rearticulation of the victim myth, genuine amends remained an impossibility. On the contrary, the abjection of Jews needed to continue to sustain the fiction of collective victimization.

Structural Exclusions

The symbolic economy of the Second Republic fortified a national Self in constitutive opposition to an externalized Jewish threat. But if Jews thus appeared as an inherently alien entity, their physical presence in postwar Austria undermined the constitution of a purified victim society. As racialized targets of Nazi genocide, their collective experience of the Holocaust could never articulate with the country's fiction of political victimization; as such, they potentially impeded the postwar nation's successful narration. The Jewish community of post-Holocaust Vienna never counted more than ten thousand people, but given their disruptive position vis-à-vis Austria's victim myth, they had to be kept outside the bounds of normal nationness. In this situation, postwar Austria's Jews were the subject of an ongoing process of structural exclusion. Enacted and policed by the state apparatus and the country's mass media, it constituted them beyond the imagined community and barred them from the public sphere of national reproduction.

The constitutive exclusion of Jews was codified during the originary moments of Austria's Second Republic. As the resurrected nation imagined itself in a new legal code, the surviving victims of Nazism received special attention. In light of the new state's symbolic economy, however, all suffering was not equal. When the legislature passed the first *Opferfürsorgegesetz* (the law regulating support for war victims) in 1945, only political victims of Nazism were eligible to receive financial support.²³ In the postfascist society imagined by the Second Republic's founders, their suffering symbolized the fate of the country at large and therefore stood at the heart of postwar nation-building. This was in contrast to those who had "merely" been racially persecuted. For them, there was no obvious space in a society of political victims. To be eligible for benefits under the *Opferfürsorgegesetz*, returning concentration camp survivors had to prove that they were not just Jews, but political opponents

of National Socialism as well. In and of itself, being a Jew did not confer membership in the imagined victim society. Quite on the contrary, Jewish émigrés were not entitled to support at all, since they had ostensibly escaped Nazi victimization.²⁴

The foundational inequality of this legislation was challenged almost immediately. In 1946, Jewish survivors established an organization defending the rights of racially persecuted Nazi victims; in the context of the country's Allied occupation, their demands led to the passing of a second *Opferfürsorgegesetz* in 1947.²⁵ The new law did provide a degree of support for Jews; but since political victims remained starkly privileged, it became an ongoing site of contestation. Consequently, the *Opferfürsorgegesetz* was amended frequently over the next few years. In 1949, for example, Jews attained equal benefits, but only if they had spent either six months in a concentration camp or a year in "regular" prison. Later that year, the inequality was leveled somewhat further when Jews with diminished earning capacities finally became eligible for support. The different valuation remained in place, however, as Jews were required to demonstrate a higher degree of disability than political victims. It was not until the sixteenth revision of the *Opferfürsorgegesetz*, in 1964, that full legal equality was achieved.²⁶

If postwar Austria's legal code subordinated Jews vis-à-vis the imagined victim community, the public celebration of nationness systematically enacted their performative exclusion. Simply put, Jews had no space in the Austrian state's ritualized narrations of Self. Invariably grounded in a constitutive affirmation of the country's victim status, these public narrations did not merely overlook Jews. Rather, a Jewish presence had to be actively suppressed to sustain the fiction of postwar Austria's imagined community.

The twenty-fifth anniversary of the *Anschluss* was a paradigmatic example of the manner in which the Austrian state's memorial apparatus effectively produced Jewish silence.²⁷ Much like other historically meaningful dates, the state used March 1963 to publicly affirm the project of postwar Austrian nationness. Embedded in a series of commemorative events that included sessions by the Austrian parliament and Vienna's state legislature, a grand ceremony on the capital's *Heldenplatz* constituted the climax of the activities.²⁸ There, at the very site of Hitler's triumphant 1938 speech, the pillars of Austria's Second Republic — the antifascist parties, the church, and the military — performed their access to and claim on the state. Broadcast live on television and radio, the event featured only one speech. Delivered by Chancellor Alfons Gorbach (ÖVP), it presented a classic statement of Austria's victim narrative. Blaming the world com-

munity for its ostensible abandonment of Austria in 1938, it reaffirmed the country's innocence in regard to the atrocities committed by the Third Reich. Even more importantly, however, the speech presented a paradigmatic argument about the Second Republic as a state brought forth by the common victimization of former enemies. In this narrative, the bitter opponents from the country's 1934 civil war, Christian Socials and Social Democrats, forged a bond of Austrian patriotism in opposition to Nazi oppression. A Socialist speaker might have glossed the civil war with slightly more animus, but Gorbach's main thrust was readily acceptable to all constituencies of postwar Austrian nationness. In calling for an emphasis on "that which unites us over that which divides us," he constructed Austria as a homogeneous society of political victims; insofar as he pleaded with the nation to "forgive and forget," he also managed to incorporate former Nazis into the state's imagined community.²⁹

The Jewish community was constitutively excluded from such ritualized narrations. Given the experience of the Holocaust, its members found it impossible to simply "forgive and forget," not least because it marked a divide that could not be overcome through the invocation of a common victimization. Even more relevant for the Jews' structural exclusion from the nation's public sphere, however, were the actions of the state itself. Since Jews would disrupt the ritualized narration of postwar Austrian nationness, they were effectively silenced. In the decades following World War II, Jews never spoke at official state events and rarely even attended them. Instead, they stood apart, symbolically and spatially, from the public articulation of Austrianness.

Again, the events of March 1963 were paradigmatic. While the state performed its official ritual of national affirmation, the Jewish community enacted its silencing with a simple and private ceremony. Excluded from the *Heldenplatz* as a site of state power, the *Israelitische Kultusgemeinde* (IKG), the administrative and governing body of Vienna's Jews, assembled its employees for a quiet session in remembrance of the Jewish dead.³⁰

Everyone took their seats in silence and with a somber mood. Not a word was said, no speech was given. An employee who had suffered unending pain during the years of persecution, lit a candle; thereafter the IKG's cantor sang the *El Mole Rachamim* in a low voice.³¹

Ultimately, this event reflected a larger memorial structure. In a context where Austria's public sphere was occupied with the exclusionary narration of the country's victim myth, there was no space for alternative articulations. If anything, the IKG's silence dramatized this inequality.

The IKG's memorial resignation was much more than a momentary

reflection of Austrian power structures. Echoing an entire history of commemorative violence, it highlighted the Jewish community's general inability to resist Austria's postwar hegemony. As such, the silence of March 1963 implicitly recalled a number of failed attempts at inserting the Jewish experience into the Second Republic's master narrative. An event in November 1948 was crucial in the exclusionary structure's originary constitution. Seeking to confront Austria's political elite with the Jewish memory of the catastrophe, the IKG staged a ceremony on the tenth anniversary of *Kristallnacht*.³² As thousands of Jews congregated in one of Vienna's festive halls, their demand for "Peace, humanity, and justice!" would be clearly heard by the non-Jewish guests of honor.

That group was led by Chancellor Leopold Figl (ÖVP). But his speech at once performed and cemented the Jewish exclusion from postwar Austria's master narrative. For, even in the face of the victims of racial genocide, he reaffirmed the cynical notion of a common Nazi experience. "If you have invited me to speak at this ceremony of mourning and memory," he opened his remarks in metonymic representation of Austria at large, "it is because I endured the time of degradation with so many of your co-religionists."³³ Figl proceeded to elaborate on the identificatory fiction. As Austria was "raped" in front of an indifferent world, its population could not stem the "crimes and atrocities designed and organized beyond our borders." But even if all Austrians thus suffered equally, the postwar government was willing to make amends. As Figl made clear, however, this gesture would be purely symbolic. "Reconstruction and reparation need to start in the intellectual realm," he noted, effectively limiting the state's task to one of re-education. If Figl thus dashed Jewish hopes for justice and restitution, he went even further when he identified his Jewish audience as a potential hindrance in Austria's postwar path. While he praised the Jews who were willing to "regard themselves as part of the Austrian people," he admonished those "victims" who were still "closing off their hearts." Figl granted that the "rubble of the destroyed temples and the wreckage of so many destroyed lives" might weigh heavily on Austria's Jews, but that, he concluded, should not impede the quest "toward our common goal."

The constitutive exclusions transported in Figl's speech were both obvious and painful. On the one hand, Austria's victim narrative equated the Jewish experience of racial genocide with the state's political disenfranchisement—a situation that at once obscured and silenced the specificity of Jewish suffering. On the other hand, the Jewish memory of that suffering was itself figured as an obstacle in the constitution of post-

war nationness — a construction that placed Jews outside the boundaries of Austria's imagined community. In staging the memorial event of November 1948, the IKG hoped to win sympathy for the plight of postwar Austria's Jews. Instead, members of the Jewish community were admonished for their persistent memories of genocide. In light of the distress brought on by such impudence, Vienna's Jews retreated into the private realm of memory. Indeed, when the IKG organized an event to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of *Kristallnacht* in 1958, official representatives of the Austrian state were not invited.³⁴ Much like the commemoration of March 1963, Jews could only articulate the specificity of their post-Holocaust experience in isolation from public domains of national reproduction.³⁵

The constitutive exclusion of Jewish experience from the symbolic economy of postwar Austrian nationness was embodied in paradigmatic fashion by Bruno Kreisky. On the surface, the notion might seem counterintuitive. Kreisky, after all, was the scion of a Jewish family who emerged as one of the defining politicians of Austria's Second Republic, serving as the country's Socialist chancellor from 1970 to 1983. On closer inspection, however, it becomes clear that his political career retraced rather than resisted postwar Austrian hegemony. Central to that pattern was Kreisky's persistent refusal of public Jewish identification. This was not an act of opportunistic duplicity, but a reflection of deeply held cultural values. A product of the assimilationist variant of German-Jewish emancipation, Kreisky had always rejected ethnic and national conceptions of Jewishness. Instead, he understood Jews as an exclusively religious entity; and given his own secularism, he never felt a particular allegiance to a community constituted on confessional grounds.³⁶

Kreisky's cultural background, of course, was shared by many postwar Jews, who had also regarded socialism and communism as vehicles of secular assimilation. For most of them, however, the Holocaust had occasioned an identification with the fellow members of a Jewish *Schicksalsgemeinschaft* (community of fate). What rendered Kreisky's position unique and uniquely acceptable to the Second Republic's body politic was his refusal to identify even with the racialized targets of genocide. Instead, he constructed his wartime experience in Swedish exile in the terms of Austria's victim narrative:

I would have been persecuted, driven into emigration, or left to succumb in a camp if German fascism had been free of antisemitism. Mussolini banished our Italian comrades to the Liparian Islands, the German Socialists went to concentration

camps. I never understood my emigration as a consequence of my Jewish background: I would have been persecuted in the same manner that I had been four years prior [in the wake of the 1934 civil war]: for purely political reasons.³⁷

Kreisky's sentiments were sincere. But they aided and abetted the structural exclusion of Jewish experience from postwar Austria's political field. Here, after all, was a "racial Jew" who constructed his biography in the dominant terms of political victimization. In doing so, Kreisky not only diffused vague feelings of Austrian guilt by effecting a collective exoneration, but he foreclosed the legitimacy of a distinctly Jewish Holocaust experience. That foreclosure, of course, was constitutive of postwar Austrian nationness in general; it was in that sense that Kreisky stood less for the public articulation of Jewishness than for its foundational repudiation.

Kreisky sought in fact to protect Austria from Jewish incursions. In 1975, he famously attacked Simon Wiesenthal when the latter threatened the country's postwar arrangements. Wiesenthal, who had already criticized the inclusion of former Nazis in Kreisky's cabinets, uncovered the involvement of Friedrich Peter in war crimes committed by the Waffen-SS. As the leader of the Freedom Party (FPÖ) — the successor of the Union of Independents (*Verband der Unabhängigen*, VdU), itself founded as a political haven for Austria's former NSDAP members — Peter was not an immediate political associate of Kreisky. But in the interest of political alliances and the acceptance of former Nazi sympathizers into postwar Austria's imagined community, Kreisky came to Peter's defense. In the process, he constructed Wiesenthal as a dangerous outsider who sought to undermine Austria's ongoing quest for national reconciliation. In an interview, he went so far as to suggest that "the man [Wiesenthal] must disappear."³⁸ In Kreisky's Austria, there was no space for Jews who articulated the specificity of Jewish suffering. Their experience would remain incompatible with the realities of postwar Austrian nationness.

Jewishness and the Mass Media

It was not just postwar Austria's political field that constructed Jews as inherent outsiders of the imagined community. The country's mass media were also complicit in the national project of structural exclusion. In the years after World War II, media outlets had represented Jews as agents of foreign demands for restitution, and when the country's press began to

engage the Jewish question more substantively in the 1960s, they continued to produce the constitutive dichotomization. In the eyes of the mass media, Jews were at once separate and subordinated, a representational structure that created an Austrian Self in foundational opposition to a Jewish Other. While the state apparatus subjugated Jews through the dismissal of their Holocaust experience, the mass media thus gave cultural contours to their continued abjection.

A 1964 article in *Die Furche*, a centrist Catholic publication, provided a paradigmatic template for the mass-media representation of postwar Austria's Jews.³⁹ Written as a well-meaning contribution to an emerging Catholic endeavor of Christian-Jewish reconciliation, the piece was designed to examine the project's difficulties. Those were quickly located. They lay with Vienna's Jews, who, as the article proclaimed at the very beginning, were unwilling to enter into the proposed dialogue. Ultimately, the piece sought to uncover the reasons for this hesitancy, finding them not in the experience of the Holocaust or the realities of persistent antisemitism, but in the Jews' irreducible difference. Focusing exclusively on Vienna's small orthodox minority, the city's Jews were portrayed as the bearers of a strange set of beliefs and practices that were intrinsically incompatible with Austrian culture at large. Indeed, as the article proceeded to recount the author's quest into the heart of Jewish darkness, his subjects seemed like members of a clandestine cult that willfully shunned the prospect of social recognition.

The first site of Jewish sociability already sets the stage of impenetrable difference and cultural destitution. The "dilapidated" building that is home to an orthodox youth group is marked by "cool darkness."⁴⁰ It takes time to adjust to the scene; but when the author does, he beholds a "not particularly cozy room whose walls are adorned with pictures of bearded rabbis as well as some posters." Fitted with "one of those caps that orthodox Jews wear everywhere and all the time," he enters into conversations that are interrupted when the "boys are called to the afternoon prayer." "The girls stay in the room," the author informs his readers, because "among the Jews, praying and worship are men's affairs."⁴¹ As the author waits for the boys' return, the girls start to sing, and "the metallic sound of their voices holds a strangely foreign charm for the visitor."

As the article went on to discuss the goings-on in Vienna's only kosher restaurant in similarly exoticist terms, the interpretive gist became clear. In a logic that recalled Chancellor Figl's speech of 1948, Austria — or, in this case, Catholic Austria — was constructed as a space of cultural normalization. But if the nation was thus imagined as a champion of

antifascism and Christian-Jewish reconciliation, the operative logic of the victim myth prevented the identification of Austria and its citizens as the bearers of historical and social responsibility. In the absence of adequate restitution and genuine remorse, however, Jews were unable to enter into unencumbered dialogue. This refusal potentially undermined the fiction of postwar Austria as a racially and ethnically neutral space, and it was in that situation that the Jews themselves were accountable for their exclusion from the national sphere. Whereas Figl found Jewish hearts to be closed, *Die Furche* reinvented the Jews as an inherent Other on religious grounds. Jews, the publication ultimately suggested, were an intrinsically foreign entity, whose strange customs and bizarre existence prevented their ready integration into postwar Austria's national field.⁴²

The mass-media construction of Jews as national outsiders was a persistent feature of postwar Austria's cultural field. But it came to a virulent climax in the spring of 1974, when the *Neue Kronen Zeitung* published a series of forty-two articles under the title "The Jews in Austria." A seminal moment in postwar Austrian-Jewish history and the history of the country's antisemitism, the series brought unparalleled attention to the "Jewish question." Written by Viktor Reimann — a journalist with a complicated Nazi past and German nationalist sympathies — and advertised on huge billboards across the country, it purported to settle age-old debates regarding the "Jewish character" and its influence on Austria and Western culture at large.⁴³ In this light, the series' title was hardly accidental. Juxtaposing two discrete entities, it gestured to a basic incompatibility that was never in doubt. If the framing of the series was thus highly tendentious, it assumed added significance in light of the publication venue. A tabloid with center-right leanings, the *Krone* has always been unabashedly populist and readily antisemitic. As the self-styled "voice of the small man," it had a history of "guarding" Austrian interests against Jewish demands, particularly in regard to questions of restitution. Other Austrian newspapers had followed similar agendas, but the *Krone* stood out for its sheer popular success. In a country of seven million people, the paper maintained a readership of over two million.

In the course of the series' publication in April and May of 1974, "The Jews in Austria" developed a convoluted argument about the persistence of Jewish difference. On the one hand, Jews were portrayed as obstinate bearers of a tradition that required their self-imposed isolation from the rest of society. To make the point, Reimann repeatedly discussed some religious aspects of Judaism, commenting that "no people" was more "stubborn" in the "preservation of its customs."⁴⁴ On the other hand, however, Jews were also seen as particularly adaptable. "As an eternal wan-

derer,” “the Jew” had the ability to take on the cultural guises of different national traditions.⁴⁵ But that, too, was ultimately seen as a form of exceptionalism. While other peoples lived sedentary existences, Jews distinguished themselves by invading Europe’s national spheres. In the *Krone’s* racial logic, in which Karl Marx figured as the Jewish “Moses of Socialism,” this constituted an intolerable imposition of foreign elements — a notion Reimann supported with numbers documenting the undue “influence” and “strength” of the Jews in pre-World War II Austria.⁴⁶

In the framework of the *Krone* series, such arguments on Jewish difference and influence had a number of concrete implications. First and foremost, it allowed Reimann to recast the responsibility for antisemitic persecutions. Between the Jews’ stubborn refusal to abandon their religious isolation and their aggressive infiltration of other peoples, they were themselves to blame for their frequent oppression. As Reimann put it repeatedly, “One of the major reasons for antisemitism can be found in the Jew himself.”⁴⁷ This logic, of course, articulated perfectly with Austria’s postwar arrangements. If the Jews were responsible for their own victimization, then Austria was hardly culpable.

But not even Reimann could overlook the sheer devastation of European Jewry. While he suggested that “Jewish reports of over six million dead were clearly exaggerated,” he did express outrage over the Holocaust.⁴⁸ In classic accordance with Austria’s victim myth, however, he went to great pains to exculpate the country and its citizens. He had identified the Jews as a cause of antisemitism; now he argued that its development into a political force of genocidal proportions had nothing to do with Austria. According to Reimann, it was a foreign import, invented by such figures as Arthur Gobineau, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Wilhelm Marr, Eugen Dühring, and Adolf Stöcker.⁴⁹ This list conveniently omitted the Austrian pioneers of political antisemitism. But to Reimann, Schönerer and Lueger had been “unsystematic” in their Jew-hatred, which proved not only that “Austria never had fundamental thinkers of antisemitism,” but that the country was truly innocent of the Holocaust.⁵⁰

Reflecting the country’s victim myth, Reimann’s fiction of Austrian innocence was connected to the question of restitution. Jewish demands for compensation appeared both outlandish and fundamentally unfair in this framework. Austria, in this widely resonant reading, was the target of a predatory plot by world Jewry — a situation that not only demanded the vigorous defense of the country’s integrity, but fueled Reimann’s basic contention that Jewish impudence was at the heart of antisemitism. Indeed, Reimann himself performed this reversal of victims and perpetrators in response to protests by Vienna’s Jewish community. In late April

of 1974, the IKG had appealed to Austria's press council, pleading for a condemnation of the series in "moral support" of a "defenseless Jewish population."⁵¹ Reimann responded with vitriol. Having established the Jewish control of America's mass media at the beginning of the series, he regarded the IKG's action not as a desperate attempt by a besieged minority, but as part of an international Jewish conspiracy.⁵² "The Jews in Austria" thus readily stood in for the country at large, and Reimann threatened that the series' discontinuation would be the "beginning of a real antisemitism."⁵³

But if "The Jews in Austria" thus turned on the ramifications of the country's postwar victim narrative, Reimann's series also articulated with an older logic of nationalist exclusion. That exclusion was a function of the Jews' fundamental alterity, which Reimann asserted both on cultural and racial grounds. In presenting the historical trajectory of an inherently alien entity, much of the series could in fact be read in terms of a purifying national project. Reimann's audience certainly understood the series in those terms. In a typical letter to the editor, a reader insisted that the "Jews are a foreign body in our people," while another praised Reimann's "developmental depiction of Judaism," since it showed that the "best solution of the Jewish question" was the "strengthening of one's own nationality."⁵⁴ Reimann himself seemed to advocate a similarly exclusionary solution when he closed his series with an invocation of Israel. With the state's founding, he noted, "the Jew as eternal wanderer and refugee is a thing of the past." Now, "Jews who are not comfortable in the land of their birth" need not look for a "new homeland," but can "return to their true home."⁵⁵

In the antisemitic context of Reimann's series, the concluding remark seemed clear. Reproducing the modernist logic of Jewish abjection, it envisioned the departure of Austria's Jews as an act of national fortification. Reimann, to be sure, did not advocate a new Holocaust. But much like the postwar Austrian nation-state he championed, he regarded Jews as an obstacle and a burden. Between their imagined characteristics and real Holocaust experiences, they stood apart from the imagined community, structurally excluded from its public and publicized reproduction.

Antisemitic Lifeworlds

Jews in postwar Austria experienced structural exclusion in the form of unabated antisemitism. For some of them, it came as a terrible shock.

Many *rémigrés* had anticipated a warm welcome in light of their faith in Austria's future. Instead, they were greeted with the same contempt that was shown to the new arrivals from Eastern Europe, who quickly came to constitute the majority of Vienna's Jewish community.

Ignored by the public at large, the antisemitic excesses could be traced in the pages of the Jewish press. In the immediate postwar years, reports of administrative harassment and popular antipathy dominated. Bitter complaints were registered in this manner about demeaning questions by officials and outright hostility in the face of claims for restitution.⁵⁶ By the 1950s, individual cases of violent antisemitism took center stage, foremost among them a 1954 instance of police brutality against a rabbi who was detained amid shouts of "Hitler has not exterminated enough Jews."⁵⁷ Such coverage received renewed urgency in the early 1960s, when an antisemitic wave swept over Germany and Austria. In January of 1960, *Die Gemeinde* — the official publication of the IKG — reported on the defacement of Vienna's main synagogue; a few months later, the paper noted that an event commemorating the last Jewish victims was disrupted by bellows of "Heil Hitler."⁵⁸ The next few years brought a litany of antisemitic incidents. Covered with increasing despondency in *Die Gemeinde*, they ranged from repeated vandalism of Jewish cemeteries and open ridicule of Holocaust victims to public singing of Nazi songs and the persistent appearance of prominent antisemitic graffiti.⁵⁹

Ethnographic realities mirrored the picture created in the Jewish press. In interviews conducted with Austrian Jews who had returned to Vienna in the immediate postwar years, experiences with antisemitism were a constant theme. Ranging from random epithets to routine dealings with hostile bureaucracies intent on protecting "Austrian" against "Jewish" interests, they painted a picture of permanent subordination.⁶⁰

Covering Jewish experiences from the late 1950s onward, the ethnographic interviews conducted for this study reveal a similar picture. Simply put, every Austrian Jew I talked to had had foundational encounters with antisemitism. Narratives of such experiences were frequently set in Vienna's schools. There Jews were subject to unique forms of surveillance that reinforced their identification as perennial outsiders. Recording students' religious affiliations, such official documents as transcripts and the so-called "class books," for instance, publicly marked Jews as Other.⁶¹ Even more importantly, Jews did not sit in on Catholic religion classes. Offered during regular school hours and attended by the overwhelming majority of any school's student body, these classes segregated Jews on a regular basis, constituting microcosms of Austria's imagined community.

Produced and identified by the school apparatus as a distinct entity, Jews were thus a ready target for antisemitic excesses ranging from verbal abuse to willful exclusion from the student community — painful experiences that occupied prominent places in many postwar Austrian-Jewish narratives.⁶²

If schools appeared as archetypal sites for the experience of antisemitism as a face-to-face phenomenon, the anonymity of Vienna's urban space provided a layer of collective hostility. Numerous Jewish interlocutors supplemented their accounts of specific incidents with an overall perception of antisemitism in the population at large. Antisemitic comments overheard in such public and semipublic spheres as sporting events, government offices, and restaurants were central to such narratives. To most Jews coming of age in postwar Vienna, such comments were more than incidental events; they evidenced the country's antisemitic realities and served as potent reminders of Austrian Jews' perilous existence.

Social scientific research confirms Jewish perceptions of Austrian antisemitism during the Cold War era. Setting aside for the moment the inherent problems of "representative sampling," it seems clear that the overwhelming majority of Austria's population readily adopted the postwar master narrative of Austrian victimization and its concomitant antisemitism. Surveys conducted in the 1970s and early 1980s showed that roughly 80 percent of the populace rejected Jewish claims for restitution, not least because — as the same percentage of respondents held with *Krone* series author Viktor Reimann — the Jews were at least partially responsible for their repeated persecution.⁶³ This antisemitic reflex went hand-in-hand with a collective construction of Jews as a numerically powerful, and hence imminently threatening, presence. In 1976, nearly 90 percent of Austrians overestimated the number of Jews living in Austria by a factor of fifty, with 50 percent missing the actual mark of less than ten thousand by a factor of more than a hundred. If these numbers hinted at the significance of antisemitism in the constitution of non-Jewish Austrian selves, its centrality was further confirmed by the responses to a range of classic survey questions. In this vein, studies in the late 1960s and 1970s indicated that only 23 percent of Austrians regarded Jews who had converted to Christianity as true Christians, while fewer than 50 percent entertained the notion that Jews could be considered genuine Austrians.

Along with the structural exclusions engendered by postwar Austria's victim myth, this persistent antisemitism had momentous repercussions for Jewish existence. As a technology of social reproduction, it not only

demarcated the national sphere in constitutive abjection of a Jewish Other, but foreclosed altogether the public articulation of Jewishness. Jewish identity, in consequence, became necessarily privatized — a mode of cultural subordination that extended modernity's exclusionary project. Jews were no longer murdered, of course, but since the public sphere was still policed in the interest of national purification, they were forced into a diffident posture. In practice, this meant that Jews were effectively absent from public debate. As a collectivity, they were given no voice in Austria's official realms, and even individual Jews hardly ever appeared in the country's mass media. In the rare circumstances in which Jews did emerge into the national sphere, moreover, they tended to follow Kreisky's model, downplaying their Jewish identity in the interest of foregrounding a public image of normative Austrianness.⁶⁴

In the ethnographic realities of everyday life, this enforced privatization took similar forms of identity management. Hoping to pass in public as unmarked citizens, Jews avoided the display of overt signs of difference. Thus it became common, for example, to give children two names. Among family and Jewish friends, an individual would be known by an identifiably Jewish appellation like "Avi" or "Shuki." Officially — on birth certificates, in school, and in professional contexts — the person would appear as "Alexander" or "Michael."

Given its overt iconography, the Star of David was seen as far too provocative for public display. Klara — a lawyer who came of age in the Vienna of the late 1950s and early 1960s — described her feelings in regard to the symbol in typical fashion:

When I was young, it would never have occurred to me to wear a *Magen David* [Star of David], not even on a necklace. Who knows what could have happened if people in the streetcar had been able to tell that I was Jewish. I was Jewish at home with my family and our friends, but outside of the house, I tried to make sure that no one would know.

Hannah, who was born in 1960, gave a similar account of her feelings during the 1970s and 1980s. "I didn't try to expose myself," she noted, so "when I would go out to shop for example, I never wore a Star of David. I was just too afraid about the reaction." In private, Vienna's Jews regarded the symbol as a sign of affirmative Jewishness, but in public, it was eschewed as a compromising icon of abject difference.⁶⁵

Such sentiments are not idiosyncratic. Quite on the contrary, they are indicative of larger social realities characterized by the systematic retreat into a private sphere of Jewish association. Confronted with the constant

threat of antisemitism, Jews turned to other Jews in an effort to constitute a lifeworld apart from the public sphere of Austrian nationness.⁶⁶ In building this privatized society, a number of institutions played central roles. Predictably, Vienna's main synagogue and other sites of worship were significant, but the overwhelming majority of Viennese Jews were secular, rendering religious locales a relatively minor component in the creation of Jewish lifeworlds. More important than religious sites were informal friendship networks. In interview after interview, I heard about prominent memories of birthday celebrations, dinner parties, and family outings spent in exclusively Jewish company.⁶⁷ "We just got each other's jokes," was the way one man put it, while another interlocutor emphasized the "basic political understanding" that sustained Jewish conviviality. In many instances, such Jewish friendship networks persisted over a number of generations, often lasting into the twenty-first century.

More than in any other institution, however, the constitution and reproduction of postwar Jewish society occurred in Vienna's two Jewish youth organizations. Those groups — the secular, socialist HaSchomer Hazair (Young Guard) and the religiously oriented Bnei Akiba (Sons of Akiba) — achieved a remarkable level of social integration, uniting the overwhelming majority of Jews who grew up in postwar Vienna in cross-generational ties of enduring personal association. In existence since 1947 and 1949 respectively, the youth organizations functioned as a crucial alternative to the antisemitic realities of Vienna's schools. There Jewish children were excluded from the normative processes of social reproduction, a situation that often translated into a persistent sense of difference. As one man who entered school in late 1960s Vienna put it, "It was there that I realized I was totally different. I didn't just look different, I was brought up differently too." Many other Jews experienced Austrian schools in similar terms; it is against such a backdrop of personal isolation and antisemitic rejection that the Jewish youth groups functioned as defining spaces of postwar Jewish socialization. Ilana, who entered the HaSchomer Hazair in the late 1960s, offered the following paradigmatic narrative:

It was incredibly difficult for me to find friends in school, because I always had the feeling that the other children saw me as an intruder. I didn't have the same clothes and I didn't speak the same language, and they always made me remember that. And then my search for another situation began. One day, a girl from a higher grade came to me and said, "I'll take you to a group, and you will be comfortable there." So when I was twelve, I went to the Schomer for the first time. That was a group of wild, lively, and funny children. There, I had the feeling I

could be the way I was, I didn't have to disguise myself. For me, that was a fundamental experience. . . . I immediately felt a part of it. . . . The Schomer has been more formative for me than anything else in life.

Such sentiments were expressed to me again and again; like Ilana, a majority of postwar Jews lived from weekend to weekend, abiding their marginalization in Austria's schools in anticipation of their authenticating inclusion in Vienna's Jewish youth organizations. Against the hegemonic processes of structural exclusion that rendered Jews constitutive outsiders in Austria's national field, the HaSchomer Hazair and Bnei Akiba thus served as principal anchors of positive identification. If Vienna's schools reproduced the antisemitic lifeworld, it was the youth groups that provided and created a privatized sphere of affirmative Jewish difference.

Jewish Subjectifications

The privatized society of postwar Austrian Jewry induced modes of identification that reflected its structural configuration. In its near total separation from Austria's antisemitic lifeworld, it engendered a drastically oppositional stance — a stance that was a function of the strict dichotomy between “Austrians” and “Jews.” While a minority of the latter favored the abandonment of their Jewish identity in the interest of national normalization, the overwhelming majority chose the obverse route, creating their subjectivity in constitutive opposition to a hegemonic Austrian Self. It was in this sense that most postwar Austrian Jews readily disavowed any Austrian identity. In conversation after conversation, I was told by Jews that they never “felt Austrian.” They may have had Austrian citizenship, but this was rarely experienced as anything other than a formal arrangement. Jews readily noted that they “didn't really care about Austria”; they were quick to differentiate themselves from such ostensibly Austrian traits as conservatism and provincialism, which came to function as the constitutive outside of Jewish identification. Up until the twenty-first century, this dissociation with Austria was reflected in Jews' everyday discourse, where the unmarked term *Austrian* always referred to non-Jews. In a cultural field shaped by the Holocaust and the victim myth, Jews found and located themselves outside the symbolic confines of the Austrian nation-state.

The Jewish rejection of Austria's imagined community reflected the

availability of a ready alternative. That alternative, of course, was Israel; for years it seemed that the Zionist state was the inevitable destiny of postwar Viennese Jews.⁶⁸ In 1948, the founding of the state of Israel was welcomed enthusiastically by all of Vienna's Jewish organizations, and from that moment on, all official ceremonies featured the Hatikvah and Israeli flag alongside their Austrian counterparts.⁶⁹ This is not to say that all political groupings within the IKG were equally committed to the Zionist project as individual practice. Some exhibited reserve about the prospect of aliya, while others championed it with great vigor.⁷⁰ Regardless of their particular stance on the question of emigration, however, all groups regarded Israel as the self-evident site of Austrian Jewry's future. After all, Vienna's Jewish community had been reestablished in 1945 to facilitate emigration to Palestine, and between the European experience of genocide and the treatment of Jews in postwar Austria, Zionism emerged as the defining mode of Jewish cultural identification.⁷¹

This was particularly the case for the younger generation. For Jews born in the years after the Holocaust, Israel not only held out the prospect of a viable Jewish existence, but it presented a powerful model of social autonomy in the face of Austrian subordination. Once again, HaSchomer Hazair and Bnei Akiba were the central sites of this Jewish socialization process. Both youth groups were explicitly Zionist, committed to the strengthening of Jewish national consciousness as well as the goal of eventual aliya. "Israel was the thing," one member of Bnei Akiba noted in describing the group's commitments in the late 1950s and 1960s, "the idea was to be prepared for aliya, and it was clear that everyone would move to Israel at one point." The situation was analogous in the Schomer. "For us," Ilana told me, "Israel simply was the holy land of milk and honey. We all dreamed of moving there immediately to build up the country." This feeling persisted from the late 1940s until well into the 1980s. Describing her time in the Schomer in the early 1950s, one woman commented that "Israel was simply the future" — a sentiment that was echoed by a man who attended the group in the late 1970s and who noted that "our identities were totally focused on Israel. To live in Austria or to stay there was a historical mistake." Indeed, the highlight in the calendars of Vienna's Jewish youth organizations was the annual pilgrimage to Theodor Herzl's original grave at the city's Döbling cemetery. The grave, of course, was empty; and that fact took on an obvious symbolic significance. Much like Herzl's remains, the members of HaSchomer Hazair and Bnei Akiba would leave Europe's antisemitic confines for the safe haven of the Jewish state.

While the Jewish youth groups were the principal sites of alternative national identification, they were not alone in constructing Israel as the telos of Austrian Jewry. The Jewish press also imagined Vienna's postwar community in overtly Zionist terms. Nowhere was this situation more apparent than in the pages of *Die Gemeinde*. In principle, the official newspaper of the IKG was supposed to cover a broad range of topics, including Austrian and European politics, antisemitism, and the struggle for restitution, as well as religious life and ritual affairs. In practice, however, the publication was almost exclusively concerned with Israel, particularly in the years following the Six-Day War, when a typical issue of the monthly paper rarely appeared with less than 60 percent of its coverage devoted to the Jewish state. Even more significant than the statistical dominance by Israeli affairs, however, was the identificatory thrust transported in *Die Gemeinde*. In issue after issue, the publication constructed a view of Jewish life completely centered on the state of Israel. In this manner, the front pages of *Die Gemeinde* were usually devoted to aspects of the Middle East conflict, while the bulk of the remaining articles chronicled aspects of everyday life and reported on Israel's social, cultural, scientific, and technological accomplishments.⁷² As Austrian-Jewish affairs went practically unreported, the predominance of Israeli coverage constituted Vienna's Jews as part of an imagined community of Zionist affiliation. It was in this sense that *Die Gemeinde* at once reflected and engendered a situation in which Vienna's Jews came to see themselves as something akin to a temporary Israeli outpost.

However, the invocation of Israel was not the only mode of Jewish identification beyond the antisemitic realities of the postwar Austrian nation-state. A simultaneous process of Jewish subjectification had strategic recourse to a privileged moment in Austrian-Jewish history. That moment was linked to the supranational structure of the Habsburg Monarchy and anchored in the glorious image of fin de siècle Vienna. Although the monarchy had given way to exclusionary nation-states, the supranational vision of a Habsburg identity was remarkably persistent among post-Holocaust Jews. Many Jews who arrived in postwar Austria as immigrants from former Habsburg lands regarded Vienna as a symbol of successful Jewish emancipation, and it was in this sense that the mediated memory of the monarchy came to serve as a crucial reference point. Anchored in the urban topography of the imperial capital, Vienna, and bracketing the political antisemitism that characterized its last decades, the monarchy signaled the possibility of Jewish advancement according to the nineteenth-century model of German-Jewish emancipation.

The forging of links with Habsburg elements thus allowed immigrants from Eastern Europe to feel at home in Vienna; even more importantly, however, their children would be socialized into an imaginary cultural field whose coordinates were not the antisemitic lifeworld of postwar Austria, but selective narratives of Jewish greatness in the age of Francis Joseph. In many ways, this mode of affirmative subjectification was sanctioned by the Jewish community at large. *Die Gemeinde*, for instance, regularly published articles on Austrian Jewry's accomplishments during the Habsburg Monarchy.⁷³ In these pieces, Jews invariably figured as cultural heroes; they were not only the bearers of a distinctly Jewish tradition, but the true representatives of all that was good in Austrian history. In an article on Jewish writers, for example, the author suggested that Austrian literature as a whole was the product of Jewish genius. This was in contrast to Germany, where Jews had played a comparatively minor role in the formation of the literary canon.⁷⁴ Such arguments about Austrian-Jewish specificity were always linked to the privileged status of Jews in the supranational monarchy. While other groups vied for national autonomy, Jews were perfectly content in a structure that decoupled citizenship from ethnic and religious identity. The monarchy's pluralist design was in turn always represented by the figure of the emperor. "The Jews of his empire loved [Francis Joseph]," an article in *Die Gemeinde* extolled, because he "was no antisemite and respected accomplishments without regard to confession." His fairness brought Jews "titles and honors"; such Jewish "luminaries as Sigmund Freud and Arthur Schnitzler" praised Francis Joseph, "who had become a legend, almost a myth, in the highest tones."⁷⁵ Vienna was the spatial epitome of Habsburg's supranational vision, and it was in that sense that the "Jews of the Monarchy" saw the city as the "center of all feeling and longing, the goal which everyone espoused." Vienna was thus the place where all the "talent and genius of the Jews came together, where it was ignited, and where it unfolded."⁷⁶ While the author located this Jewish cultural efflorescence at the fin de siècle, the essay's textual economy extended it to the post-Holocaust period. To be sure, the Jews of postwar Vienna "live in difficult circumstances"; but viewed from the perspective of its glorious tradition, the "Vienna of today is a livable place for those who cannot be in Israel."

If such *Gemeinde* articles were designed to imagine a cosmopolitan Vienna beyond the exclusionary principles of the Austrian nation-state, my ethnographic interviews suggest their widespread resonance. For Jews coming of age in postwar Austria, the city functioned through a memorial economy that separated it from Austria's symbolic field. In such quin-

tessentially urban spaces as the coffeehouse and the various institutions of high culture, postwar Jews could localize and inscribe themselves in the enduring legacy of a Jewish fin de siècle. Ilana, for example, invoked the coffeehouse when she asserted that “there are Jewish continuities in Vienna; even though Vienna was almost free of Jews (*judenrein*), there still is a continuity.”⁷⁷

For most postwar Jews, such continuities only existed in a fictional realm of transhistorical identification. As children of Eastern European survivors, they had no immediate connections to pre-Holocaust Vienna. But in the context of the city’s social construction as an enduring space of supranational affiliation, it could serve as a site of Jewish subjectification beyond the confines of the Austrian nation-state. Bettina, who was born to Eastern European survivors in the mid-1950s, echoed *Die Gemeinde* when she invoked fin de siècle literature as a durable feature of Jewish identification:

To me, Vienna’s Jewish connotation exists primarily in the realm of fantasy. This is how we grew up, with the literature of the turn of the century and that has stayed with me. It is a part of Vienna and it is a part of me, even though in reality there might not exist much of it. As a child, I was enamored of these great stories of turn-of-the-century Vienna, and I believe that it was that seemingly perfect, Jewish, intellectual, pristine world of bourgeois and artistic bliss that was so attractive.

For Sarah, like Bettina the child of Eastern European immigrants, the collective memory of the fin de siècle figured similarly in the constitution of a specifically Viennese-Jewish sensitivity. As she put it, “my entire history is” caught up in “those books that I feel I truly understand — that is, Schnitzler or Joseph Roth.” In turn, these texts were constitutive of a fantasmatic field that allowed the constitution of a viable Jewish subject position independent of Austrian hegemonies:

I believe I started reading these things [in the late 1950s] when I was around ten. In my girlish fantasies, I wanted to live at the turn of the century. I so longed to sit in the *Kaffeehaus* with Schnitzler and all these other people, to have a salon — all these things greatly excited me. I would have loved to have the clothes of the time. I wanted to be surrounded by all these smart men — the fantasies of a young girl. I imagined that this city was a fascinating place, and that I played an important role in it.

The Jews who came of age in postwar Vienna lived in the Austrian nation-state, but few experienced it as a viable site of affirmative

identification. Constituted through the structural exclusion of a Jewish Other, it not only engendered popular antisemitism, but foreclosed the very articulation of Jewish specificity. In this situation, Jews turned to sites of subjectification beyond the exclusionary logic of the Austrian nation-state. They found them in Israel and fin de siècle Vienna. The former offered the model of a nation-state where Jewishness was normalized, while the latter gestured to a supranational field in which Jewish difference could be readily integrated into the imagined community. In public, Jews endured their constitutive subordination; in private, they forged the alternative identities that would place them outside the homogenizing logic of the Austrian nation-state and its antisemitic life-world.

The Specter of Waldheim

Jews refused identification with the postwar Austrian nation-state in light of persistent antisemitism and structural exclusions. Throughout the Second Republic, these had constituted an enduring pattern of symbolic violence — a pattern that reached a virulent climax in 1986. In the so-called Waldheim affair, Austria's postwar arrangements were at once staged and heightened. But if the event thus reproduced the Jewish community's subordination, it also became a turning point, not only for Austria's Jews, but for the country at large.

In 1985, the ÖVP had nominated former U.N. Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim as the party's candidate for the upcoming election for the largely ceremonial Austrian presidency. After a rather uneventful early election campaign, the situation heated up in March of 1986, when Austrian and American media published documents that revealed Waldheim's previously unknown military involvement in the Balkans, as well as his possible membership in two National Socialist organizations.⁷⁸ At the same time, the World Jewish Congress (WJC) began to publicize its investigations into Waldheim's wartime activities. In a number of press conferences and press releases, its representatives presented additional documentary material suggesting Waldheim's extensive knowledge of prisoner interrogations, assassinations, kidnappings, and deportations.⁷⁹

As more and more documents were issued by the WJC, the reactions of Waldheim and other Austrian politicians followed the national script of the victim myth. From the initial disclosure of his possible association

with Nazi organizations, Waldheim categorically dismissed such allegations as vicious lies. In doing so, he not only avoided the substantive issues raised in the course of the investigation, but readily recast himself as the victim, in this case of a slander campaign. In reproducing postwar Austria's reversal of victim and perpetrator, the discourse of Waldheim and his supporters quickly shifted to a frantic "search" for the campaign's supposed instigators. That search was undertaken by members of the ÖVP and a substantial part of the national media, the *Krone* most vocal among them; in concert, they quickly identified a culturally intelligible culprit. Waldheim suggested that he was targeted by Jews who held him responsible for the United Nations' Middle East policies;⁸⁰ some leading ÖVP politicians eagerly seconded that assessment. To them, the "campaign" was carried out by "dishonorable cohorts of the WJC" who orchestrated a "manhunt" using "Mafia-like methods." In this manner, the "campaign" against Waldheim was readily constructed as a Jewish conspiracy — a notion further evidenced by the critical reporting of the "east coast press," which was seen as the handmaiden of an all-powerful American-Jewish lobby.⁸¹ The ÖVP's ostensible concern that the WJC's "unreasonable attacks" might feed "emotions that none of us wanted" revealed a subtext that ascribed the origin of antisemitism to Jews rather than antisemites.⁸²

In such an atmosphere, where "Jewish" allegations against a respected Austrian diplomat challenged the country's victim myth, the election campaign became a struggle to maintain postwar Austrian nationness. According to Alois Mock, the chairman of the ÖVP, the "campaign" against Waldheim was an "attack against Austria and our history. We need to be aware of that. They wanted to attack Waldheim. And they attacked Austria and its history."⁸³ In this situation, a vote for Waldheim became synonymous with the fortification of an Austrian Self vis-à-vis a Jewish Other. Indeed, for Michael Graff, the ÖVP's party secretary, "the election of Waldheim" was tantamount to a "patriotic deed"⁸⁴ — a notion whose instrumentalization of the Jew as alien threat became all the more evident in light of Waldheim's main campaign slogans: "We Austrians elect who we want," "Now more than ever." By casting their ballot for Waldheim, Austrians could fend off the Jewish challenge and preserve the Second Republic's status quo.

Predictably, the Waldheim affair unleashed a wave of antisemitic incidents. But even as the affair and its shocking effects caused many Austrian Jews to contemplate immediate emigration, the IKG remained essentially mute. Reproducing Jews' enforced privatization, the organization main-

tained the diffident posture it had assumed in a long-standing effort to garner tolerance in return for nonconfrontational behavior. Indeed, throughout the Second Republic, the IKG had aided in the protection of Austria's status quo. Tacitly accepting the position accorded Jews through the logic of the victim myth, it had failed to challenge Austrian hegemony by public articulation of Jewish specificity. Instead, the official governing body of Vienna's Jews had generally chosen an accommodationist path, centered on behind-the-scenes struggles for recognition and deferential appeals for acceptance.⁸⁵

This dynamic engendered the official Jewish position during the Waldheim affair. Continuing its postwar policy of passive nonintervention, the IKG did not intervene in the reckless deployment of political antisemitism. Represented by the aged president Ivan Hacker, the IKG neither sponsored demonstrations nor held public protests; it failed to denounce Waldheim's campaign and refused to recommend a vote against him. But the victim's performative acquiescence went even further. Fearing the antisemitic repercussions occasioned by any breach of postwar Austria's status quo, the IKG found it prudent to defend the country against "foreign" accusations of antisemitism. In a statement published in the newspaper *Kurier* at the height of the Waldheim affair, the IKG's governing board thus noted that the "impression Austria was an antisemitic country" was wrong; "even though the small Jewish community has been the subject of much abuse and many threats in the past weeks, we say 'no' to this assessment."⁸⁶ In the final analysis, IKG's stance during the Waldheim crisis was emblematic of Jews' constitutive silencing in Austria's postwar cultural field. Given the violent logic of the Second Republic's victim myth, its hegemonic reproduction rested on the reiteration of Jewish abjection — an abjection, moreover, that engendered the victims' enforced consent at the very moment of their displacement from the imagined community.

The Waldheim affair reproduced the constitutive subordination of Jews in postwar Austria. But if the event thus extended the structural exclusions and compulsory privatizations characterizing Jewish existence throughout the Second Republic, it also ushered in a new era for the symptoms of modernity. For, as became clear over the next few years, the Waldheim affair galvanized a younger generation of Austrian Jews, who embarked on a path of political and cultural resistance that would come to anchor Jewishness in Vienna's public sphere.