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Arthur Schnitzler and Jakob Wassermann: A Struggle of
German-Jewish Identities

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Declaration of Originality

I declare that this dissertation is the result of my own work. This thesis includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except where specifically indicated in the text.

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Statement of Length

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Summary
of
Arthur Schnitzler and Jakob Wassermann: A Struggle of German-
Jewish Identities
by Max Matthias Walter Haberich

The purpose of this dissertation is to contrast the differing responses to early political anti-Semitism by Arthur Schnitzler and Jakob Wassermann. By drawing on Schnitzler's primary material, it becomes clear that he identified with certain characters in *Der Weg ins Freie* and *Professor Bernhadi*. Having established this, it is possible to trace the development of Schnitzler's stance on the so-called 'Jewish Question': a concept one may term enlightened apolitical individualism. Enlightened for Schnitzler's rejection of Jewish orthodoxy, apolitical because he always remained strongly averse to politics in general, and individualism because Schnitzler felt there was no general solution to the Jewish problem, only one for every individual. For him, this was mainly an ethical, not a political issue; and he defends his individualist position in *Professor Bernhadi*.

Wassermann's approach is entirely different. In the early stages of his literary career, he attempted to prove his authenticity as a German author by writing 'Volksromane' of Franconia. In the course of the First World War, he began to identify more strongly with his Jewish side. Already before the war, Wassermann had developed the notion of the *Orientele*, inspired by Nietzsche's 'Übermensch': a charismatic leader of Jewish origin who would eventually reconcile the German and Jewish cultures. In the 1920's, this figure was infused with elements of Christian and Jewish belief, notably self-sacrifice for one's fellow man. Like Nietzsche, Wassermann offers a primarily aesthetic solution to a cultural, social, and political problem. This fusion of traditional and modern elements is representative for literary modernism as a whole, which cannot be categorised simply as 'progressive' or 'conservative'. Comparing Schnitzler and Wassermann yields fascinating and rewarding results, as each author provides a unique perspective on the highly complex question of Jewish identity in Vienna in the early-20th century.

*This thesis is dedicated to the memory of two great writers of the 20th century,
Arthur Schnitzler and Jakob Wassermann*

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The archivists and librarians from the Schnitzler Archive in the University Library, Cambridge, and the Deutsches Literaturarchiv, Marbach greatly helped to facilitate my research. The AHRC funded the last two years of my doctoral studies; whereas my college, Clare Hall, not only repeatedly placed research grants at my disposal, but also provided a genial and friendly social environment throughout my years in Cambridge.

Max Haberich
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Introduction

I. Schnitzler's and Wassermann's Correspondence: Two Jewish Writers in Vienna

In the first third of the 20th century, Arthur Schnitzler and Jakob Wassermann were two of the most prominent literary figures in Europe. Wassermann's works, especially *Der Fall Maurizius* (1928), were among the most widely-discussed novels of the Weimar Republic, to the point that Thomas Mann called him the "Weltstar des Romans".¹ Schnitzler was one of the first writers to delve deep into his characters' psyche to explore their rational and irrational motives. He introduced the stream-of-consciousness technique into German literature twenty years before *Ulysses* (1922). His work was translated into English, French, Italian, Swedish, Russian, and Japanese. MGM Studios used a novella of his, *Spiel im Morgengrauen* (1926), for one of their early movies, *Daybreak* (1931).

Schnitzler lived in Vienna his entire life, from 1862 until 1931. He read medicine at the University of Vienna and obtained his medical degree when he was twenty-three. Coming from an assimilated upper middle-class background, he took after his father, who was a renowned laryngologist. Johann Schnitzler treated the singers and actors of the main Viennese theatres. Thus, his son came into contact with the world of the stage very early and was initially more successful as a playwright than as an author of prose.

Wassermann, who lived from 1873 until 1934, came originally from the environs of Nuremberg. Throughout his work, he maintains a broader social focus than Schnitzler. *Die Juden von Zirndorf* (1897) was his first major success. The injustice Jews faced, and Wassermann's own internal struggle between Jewish and German identity, featured prominently in his work. His interest in these issues increased throughout the first decade of the twentieth century and was intensified during the First World War.

After Wassermann moved to Vienna, Schnitzler introduced him to the literary circle of 'Young Vienna'. Both writers became friends and corresponded for over thirty years. In its present form, this thesis constitutes the first comparative study of Schnitzler and Wassermann, two of the most prominent literary figures in the German-speaking world of their day, whose friendship lasted from the turn of the 19th century until Schnitzler's death in 1931.

Both writers were confronted with anti-Semitic attacks throughout their literary careers and responded to anti-Semitism in their work as well as in autobiographical documents. Both

¹ Thomas Mann, *Zum Geleit [für Marta Karlweis' ,Jakob Wassermann']*, *Gesammelte Werke*, 13 vols (Frankfurt/Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1974), Nachträge vol. 13, p.835.

authors have woven their own views on Jewish religion, Zionism, the conversion of Jews to Catholicism, and the Jewish dilemma in general into their literary work; for Schnitzler most prominently in *Professor Bernhardi* (1912) and *Der Weg ins Freie* (1908), and for Wassermann in *Die Juden von Zirndorf*. The development of Wassermann's philosophy is further mirrored in his post-war novel *Christian Wahnschaffe* (1919). By reading these texts closely, side by side with autobiographical documents and essays, it is possible to discern which characters express opinions the authors held themselves. This analytical study draws on a wide range of unpublished sources held in the Schnitzler Archive of the Cambridge University Library, notably aphorisms by Schnitzler on Jewishness and politics, unsent letters, and, in addition, drafts for *Professor Bernhardi* and *Der Weg ins Freie*. I present here two previously unconsidered newspaper articles relevant to *Professor Bernhardi* (see pp. 103-104), which in one case illuminate the anti-Semitic tenor at Viennese hospitals and in the other provide an essential inspirational source used by Schnitzler in the genesis of the plot.

These instances of interconnection between autobiography and literature not only reflect the development of political anti-Semitism in Vienna, they also enhance our understanding of Schnitzler's and Wassermann's unique and fascinating positions in the Jewish identity crisis of the early 20th-century. Both authors came to elaborate very different ethical and philosophical positions on the so-called 'Jewish Question.' In the light of this, and given the prominence and decades-long friendship of both authors, it is surprising that no comparative study between Schnitzler and Wassermann has ever been undertaken.

A brief note on citation from primary material: Unless stated that the source has, to the best of my knowledge, gone unnoticed in scholarship, it has either been covered in the volumes by Bettina Riedmann or Nikolaj Beier cited below. Although Beier also draws on the two drafts for Schnitzler's work, the particular excerpts I cite here are being reproduced for the first time. Schnitzler's reply to Otto Stoessel, who wrote a staunchly anti-Semitic review of *Der Weg ins Freie* in the 'Oesterreichische Rundschau', and his resulting correspondence with the editor, Baron von Oppenheim, has so far gone unconsidered. The Baron's behaviour is highly indicative of Catholic aristocrats of Jewish ancestry, such as Hugo von Hofmannsthal, with whom he was good friends. This incident, which merits closer attention, is covered in more detail in II.d) of the chapter on *Der Weg ins Freie*. The correspondence with Jakob Wassermann, with the exclusion of his letter to Schnitzler on the subject of the 'sunken world', has not been evaluated before, nor, to my knowledge, has Schnitzler's 'Charakteristik' of Wassermann, based on relevant entries from the diaries.

Scholarship on Wassermann is still sparing and interest is only gradually being rekindled. Thomas Kraft has recently published a well-researched biography of Wassermann (2008),² which provides a very readable introduction to the author's life and work. The survey on 'Heimatkunst' is excellent.³ I would like to draw further attention to two of the latest contributions to the scholarship on Wassermann, which provide a more differentiated view of the author. Until recently, Wassermann has been written off as a naive and utopian writer, whose work and philosophy are antiquated by contemporary standards. Alternatively, for his emphasis on soil and 'Heimat', he has been radically misinterpreted as a precursor of fascism.⁴ Christa Joeris' argument that Wassermann was more religious a Jewish author than he believed himself to be is dealt with in the relevant section on *Christian Wahnschaffe*.

To turn to some of the more recent works of scholarship: While Lindemann-Luiken avoids defining Jewish and German identity in specific terms, she does present a detailed overview of the anti-Semitic accusations Wassermann was confronted with.⁵ She points out that he did not condescend to reply to stereotypical charges of Jewish materialism, sexual license, etc. But Wassermann responded strongly to arguments that belittled his capacities as a writer and ascribed his supposed shortcomings to his Jewish origin. He used effective and rational arguments to prove his adherence to German language, culture, nature, and the people, but rational arguments are no proof against anti-Semitism. After listing the most common criticisms against Wassermann as a Jewish writer and examining some of his counter-arguments, Lindemann-Luiken analyses a number of Wassermann's works for positive and negative Jewish figures, dedicating her last chapter to literary equivalents of the messianic 'Orientale'. Whereas Lindemann-Luiken does cast her net of Wassermann-novels wider than mine, I was primarily interested in the figure of the 'Orientale' and thus chose to focus on the two novels in which he is particularly prominent, treating them in greater detail. Continuing the methodology I apply to Schnitzler, I wanted to explore the extent to which the literary 'Orientale' is similar to Wassermann's theoretical concept of the 'Orientale', outlined in his essays. This is why I dedicate a subsection of the thesis to the origin of this concept, i.e., Wassermann's tremendous debt to Nietzsche and Martin Buber. Lindemann-Luiken provides a range of thorough literary analyses, and gives a precise sense of the allegations Wassermann was confronted with, but she does not include this particular aspect of Wassermann's thought,

² Thomas Kraft, *Jakob Wassermann* (Munich: DTV, 2008).

³ A more detailed survey of the 'Heimatkunst'-movement, and Wassermann's relation to it, can be found in I.b) of the Wassermann-chapter.

⁴ For a thorough response to this allegation, see II.b) The Influence of Nietzsche.

⁵ Heike Lindemann-Luiken, „*Es ist vergeblich... Sie sagen: Er ist ein Jude*“: *die Auswirkungen des Antisemitismus im ausgehenden 19. und beginnenden 20. Jahrhundert auf Leben und Werk Jakob Wassermanns* (Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang, 2005).

which was integral to his philosophy.

Wassermann is mainly read in the context of the German-Jewish identity crisis of the early 20th-century. Elisabeth Jütten opens up a new dimension of Wassermann's thought, proving that it is more complex than so often assumed: his concept of justice, which is, of course, connected to anti-Semitism.⁶ She has taken up a common cause with Nicole Plöger,⁷ which is to revise the conventional image of Wassermann as a writer lacking intellectual sophistication and with "präfaschistischen und imperialistischen Tendenzen".⁸ In Jütten's own words, "Entsprechend wird es die Aufgabe der Wassermann-Forschung sein, ähnliche Teilbereiche einer ausgegrenzten Weltanschauung und Denkungsart in ihrer Mehrdimensionalität, Widersprüchlichkeit, aber auch potenziellen Offenheit wieder zu entdecken sowie die Bedeutung seines Werks für die Literatur der Jahrhundertwende aufzuzeigen."⁹ For although Wassermann's notion of a messianic 'Oriental' may appear utopian to us today, it was the example "einer dominierenden Vorstellung der Jahrhundertwende". According to Wassermann, so Jütten explains, it was possible for the individual, by constantly striving for self-fulfillment, to affect changes in behavioural patterns in society as a whole, eventually leading to reform and the diminishing of social injustice. As Jütten shows, Wassermann's thought contains elements ranging from Plato to Buddhism, not to forget a healthy dose of Christianity and Judaism. She firmly establishes Wassermann as a writer of his time. In this respect, she seconds Plöger, who argues that modernity is too complex for writers to be defined simply as either 'progressive' or 'traditional'. Plöger, too, makes a very persuasive case for Wassermann as a writer who was fully aware of the intellectual currents of his age.¹⁰ This thesis intends to build upon the work of both Plöger and Jütten, to help establish a more differentiated perspective on Wassermann.

As for Schnitzler, it is worth mentioning here two recent publications on his Jewish identity that treat the same subject matter as this thesis: Bettina Riedmann, *Ich bin Jude, Österreicher, Deutscher – Judentum in Arthur Schnitzlers Tagebüchern und Briefen* (2002) and Nikolaj Beier, „Vor allem bin ich i c h...“ – *Judentum, Akkulturation und Antisemitismus in Arthur Schnitzlers Leben und Werk* (2008). Riedmann provides an invaluable evaluation of

⁶ Elisabeth Jütten, *Diskurse über Gerechtigkeit im Werk Jakob Wassermanns* (Tübingen: Niemeyer Verlag, 2007).

⁷ Nicole Plöger, *Ästhet – Ankläger – Verkünder: Jakob Wassermanns literarische Anfänge (1890 – 1900)* (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2007). For more detail and the context of Plöger's argument see I.b) 'Lebensreform' and 'Heimatkunst'.

⁸ Jütten, *Diskurse über Gerechtigkeit*, p.7.

⁹ Jütten, p.8.

¹⁰ see p.149, 197.

the diaries and letters, drawing from them clear-cut conclusions on Schnitzler's position on Zionism, Judaism, etc. These will be summarised in the relevant sections of this thesis.

Riedmann refers to Schnitzler's self-understanding as a Jew as "der komplexe Prozeß der Konstituierung einer sehr instabilen, sich wandelnden jüdischen Identität".¹¹ This point about Schnitzler's Jewish identity not as a static construct, but as a fluid one, is central. Wassermann's sense of German-Jewish identity was equally open to development. Whereas Wassermann began with one distinct viewpoint and ended with a very different one, Schnitzler shifted from a more cautious to a more resolute position. These more flexible, changing senses of identity further bolster the most recent interpretations of Jewish identity in Vienna around 1900 as a whole.¹²

Looking to explain an increase in the description of anti-Semitic events in Schnitzler's diary after 1900, Riedmann suggests: "Dafür [ist] nicht ein plötzlicher Anstieg des Antisemitismus in Schnitzlers Umgebung, sondern vielmehr seine Persönlichkeitsentwicklung ausschlaggebend."¹³ Here, she has hit upon a central point. Far from committing to any form of Jewish organisation, and highly sceptical of any form of public political engagement, Schnitzler felt Jewishness to be first and foremost a personal issue. She mentions his literary work as another factor that caused his "intensivere (schriftliche) Auseinandersetzung mit der jüdischen Problematik". In her own words: "Hier ergibt sich eine bemerkenswerte wechselseitige Beeinflussung: Sensibilität und Interesse für das Judentum sind die Voraussetzung dafür, daß er diesem Thema in seinen Werken einen wichtigen Stellenwert einräumt, andererseits steigt mit dem diesbezüglichen literarischen Engagement auch die Anteilnahme an dieser Problematik."¹⁴

Given that Riedmann acknowledges the mutually reinforcing relationship between Schnitzler's oeuvre and his own viewpoint, it is unfortunate that in her study she limits herself entirely to the autobiographical material. She mentions that Schnitzler does not indulge in lengthy reflections on Jewishness in his diaries, which makes it difficult to derive "ein feste[s] Bild von der Bedeutung des Judentums für die Person und den Schriftsteller Schnitzler".¹⁵ Had she included a discussion of Schnitzler's relevant plays and prose, this would have helped her to clarify and give more substance to the notion of the importance of his Jewish background for Schnitzler. Whereas this dissertation draws on her extremely useful surveys

¹¹ Bettina Riedmann, *Ich bin Jude, Österreicher, Deutscher – Judentum in Arthur Schnitzlers Tagebüchern und Briefen* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2002), p.1.

¹² See, for example, the works by Hödl and Riedmann mentioned on p. 27.

¹³ Riedmann, *Ich bin Jude, Österreicher, Deutscher*, p.15.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., p.2.

of primary material, it hopes to contribute to a more complete picture of Schnitzler's identity as an Austrian-Jewish writer by connecting them with developments in his literary work.

Beier's approach is closer to my own. His study offers a tremendous wealth of material. He points out that previous scholarship has tended to keep the biographical examination of Schnitzler as an Austrian-Jewish writer separate from the examination of his literary work. He intends to remedy this by placing *Professor Bernhardt* and *Der Weg ins Freie* not only in their historical, but above all, in their biographical context. Up to this point, I follow Beier's approach, just as I am indebted to his work for bringing to the fore a wide range of primary sources.

However, my main interest lies in the extent to which Schnitzler's literary work was informed by his own notions of Austrian-Jewish identity. And here, Beier's and my approach diverge. He does not take into account the results yielded by recent historiography on the fluid and reciprocal nature of Austrian-Jewish identity in Vienna. Beier's shortcoming is in the analysis. He merely reads Schnitzler's life and work side by side, in a descriptive manner, without taking the final analytical step. To put this more clearly, Beier correctly describes Schnitzler's position on Zionism and Jewish religion – his aversion to Jewish converts, etc. – but fails to bring these separate notions together into one coherent concept of Austrian-Jewish identity. This is the gap my thesis intends to fill, with the concept being 'enlightened apolitical individualism'. Once established, this notion can be recognised in the views of several characters both in *Der Weg ins Freie* and *Professor Bernhardt*. Most significantly, this analytical approach enables us to trace the development of this concept from its early, more cautious phase in the novel to a considerably more decisive viewpoint in the play. This notion of linear evolution is also missing from Beier's volume. As we have seen above, through the work of Riedmann, Schnitzler's Jewish identity was not, as was formerly assumed in scholarship, a static, unchanging concept. Rather, his Jewish identity evolved gradually during the decade of Karl Lueger's mayoralship, when the Jews of Vienna, whether assimilated or not, were confronted with a much more vocal, officially condoned form of anti-Semitism.

Thus, while Beier syphons off his treatment of Schnitzler as an "akkulturiertes jüdisches Österreich" in one chapter, analysing *Der Weg ins Freie* and *Professor Bernhardt* in two others, I consider Schnitzler's viewpoint as an enlightened, apolitical, individualist Austrian-Jewish author in both chapters of my literary analysis. Beier's placement of the works in a biographical context mainly consists of listing the real models for the literary

characters and, in the case of the play, reiterating the well-known autobiographical implications of Schnitzler's apprenticeship at his father's clinic. I read the play not just in its historical context, but above all in the context of Schnitzler's intellectual development at the time, in order to trace the autobiographical elements in the literary texts. This study, therefore, builds on the invaluable work both Riedmann and Beier have already undertaken. A different level of analysis enhances Riedmann's perspective with the literary dimension, while at the same time providing a more coherent argumentative structure for Beier's predominantly descriptive approach.

I.a) Jakob Wassermann (1873-1934)

It would be unjust to say that Wassermann suffered more from German-Jewish antagonism than Schnitzler. But he discussed this problem more openly and gave it more space in his work. He put his reflections before the public in numerous essays, such as *Das Los der Juden* (1904), *Der Jude als Orientale* (1913), and *Die psychologische Situation des Judentums* (1929).

Wassermann struggled for his audience to accept him as an authentically German author for the first decade and a half of his literary career. He underlined his adherence to German culture by distinguishing himself from the Eastern Jews. In a letter to Georg Brandes, he emphasises that the "fränkisch-jüdischer Volksschlag [...] ist ja auch etwas ganz anderes als etwa der galizische oder polnische." His Franconian origin rendered his soul, in his own words, "im Innern deutscher, als ich es selber will".¹⁶

Wassermann sought to legitimate himself by writing a novel sprung from the people of Franconia and their lore. The result was *Caspar Hauser* (1908), with the ancient city of Nuremberg and its medieval traditions of Dürer and the Meistersinger, as well as its surrounding countryside, as its central themes.

In light of this, it comes as no surprise that Wassermann kept a critical distance from Zionism. For him, it was an economic and philanthropic project for the benefit of impoverished Eastern Jews. Considering how strongly Wassermann felt about his own and his family's roots in Franconia, this attachment was too strong for him to consider Zionism as a serious option.

Yet, in the course of World War I, Wassermann's sense of identity must have taken a shift

¹⁶ cited in Lindemann-Luiken, *Es ist vergeblich*, p.97.

towards Jewishness. With hardship and poverty intensifying anti-Semitic feeling, he no longer aspired to acceptance as a 'Heimat'-oriented author. He had initially staked his hopes on the 'Orientale', a charismatic leader of Jewish origin inspired by Nietzsche's superman, who would overcome anti-Semitic prejudice. This concept also changed in the course of the war, however. Increasingly, Wassermann became preoccupied with the notion of justice, since he considered anti-Semitism a primary symptom of the injustice of the time. He expanded his theories on the legal, social, and moral aspects of justice in a trilogy of novels towards the end of his life. At the same time, he embraced mystical concepts of religion more and more. In the post-war novels, starting with *Christian Wahnschaffe*, Wassermann explores various kinds of virtue by modelling the protagonist on St. Francis of Assisi. Christian Wahnschaffe's kind and compassionate behaviour is exemplary. He behaves according to the principles of true humanity and justice, indicating the degree to which the 'Orientale' has changed from an aggressive leader to a conciliatory, self-sacrificing priest.

It is this astonishing fusion of Nietzschean and religious thought, of the atheist 'Übermensch' with Christian virtue, that makes for supposed paradoxes in Wassermann's philosophy. What holds his thought together is his high appraisal of humanity. Humanity and justice would be the fundament of a future society, brought about by people acting in this spirit. In the distant future, he hoped Germans and Jews would thus be able to live in a mutually beneficial symbiosis.

I.b) Arthur Schnitzler (1862-1931)

As for Schnitzler, anti-Semitism dogged him throughout his literary career. Already during his year of military service, when he was 20, the Jewish cadets were called 'Mosesdröner'. Theodor Billroth, whose anti-Semitic views we will touch on later, was one of Schnitzler's examiners at university.¹⁷

Although Schnitzler did not publicly acknowledge his Jewish background until the publication of his first novel, he was in touch with Theodor Herzl, the later Zionist leader, as early as 1894. At the time, Herzl had ambitions as a playwright and Schnitzler agreed to mediate between him and various theatre directors. Herzl's play, *Das Ghetto* (performed 1898 in Vienna as *Das neue Ghetto*), is strongly critical of anti-Semitism and ends with the martyrdom of the protagonist. Schnitzler suggested corrections for both characters and plot, in order to make Herzl's criticism more effective. When they finally met, however, both soon

¹⁷ Giuseppe Farese, *Arthur Schnitzler – Ein Leben in Wien 1862-1931* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1999), p.26.

realised that their differences on Zionism were not to be overcome.¹⁸

Schnitzler was far from being a Zionist or even a practising Jew. His family was non-practising, and he remained at a critical distance to religion throughout his life. Schnitzler considered himself Austrian first and foremost and was strongly attached to his native Vienna. He suffered from reviews in the anti-Semitic press, which tried to deny that a Jew could ever be a genuinely Austrian author. He countered this by stating that a Jewish writer wrote in Hebrew, whereas a German author wrote in German.¹⁹ Had it not been for these anti-Semitic allegations, which he was subjected to throughout his literary career, Schnitzler would probably have neglected his Jewish origins, as one might expect of a comfortably assimilated Austrian citizen and member of the haute bourgeoisie. As things were, Schnitzler was forced into the defensive by his adversaries. Especially under the mayorship of Karl Lueger, the anti-Semitic clamour became more and more vocal, and he came under increasing pressure to justify himself. The first scandal with noticeably anti-Semitic undertones was caused by the publication of *Leutnant Gustl* (1900).

If this may be said to mark the starting point in public agitation against Schnitzler, the *Reigen*-scandal of 1920/21 formed the explosive conclusion. The nationalist papers never ceased to depict the affair as a crusade of German virtue and righteousness against Jewish lust and decadence. There were anti-Semitic assaults after this, as the political situation deteriorated.

In between *Leutnant Gustl* and *Reigen*, Schnitzler was forced to come to terms with his Jewish identity. With his novel *Der Weg ins Freie*, Schnitzler provided his readers with a social panorama of the assimilated Jews of the middle and upper classes in Vienna. Even though he did not openly criticise anti-Semitism or side with Zionism, this was generally perceived to be Schnitzler's public acknowledgement of his Jewish background.

Only four years after *Der Weg ins Freie*, Schnitzler produced the play, *Professor Bernhardt*, which branded anti-Semitism as the scourge of the institutions of the Monarchy. Bernhardt, the Jewish director of a clinic, is tried and jailed following intrigues among his colleagues. Although Liberal journalists offer to plead his case in this Austrian Dreyfus Affair, he declines their help. For Bernhardt, the matter is entirely personal, not political. As we shall see in a later chapter, this is indicative of Schnitzler's own position on the 'Jewish

¹⁸ Marbach, Deutsches Literaturarchiv (DLA), MS Charakteristiken aus den Tagebüchern – Theodor Herzl, Folder 203.

¹⁹ Cambridge, University Library (CUL), Schnitzler Archive, MS Unabgesandte Briefe, Folder 124B, 5.

Question’.

Der Weg ins Freie and *Professor Bernhardt* are the only two works in a wide selection of plays and prose in which Schnitzler deals with issues of Jewishness. He felt strongly attached to Austria and to Vienna in particular. Through the experience of the First World War, this also extended to the wider German-speaking world. When it came to his Jewish identity, Schnitzler took a strongly individualist position. Schnitzler formulated his position in a unique way, however. In *Professor Bernhardt*, he expresses this concept as ‘das Richtige tun’. As we will see later on, it was imperative for Schnitzler to adhere to his view unswervingly, no matter how strong popular opinion or his adversaries fought against him.

Schnitzler was an enlightened, apolitical individual. Enlightened, because he rejected religious orthodoxy and those Jews who converted to Catholicism. Schnitzler was profoundly sceptical of politics and kept at a distance from political movements his entire life. He was an individualist, because he stayed true to his personal convictions, irrespective of what his opponents might have said. What was the result when Schnitzler applied this notion to the ‘Jewish Question’? The answer is to be found in an interview with James Benvenisti for the ‘American Jewish and Hebrew Messenger’ in 1924. Schnitzler states: “The solution of the Jewish Problem is one each individual must find for himself. There is no general solution.”²⁰ This position can be traced from an early, exploratory stage in *Der Weg ins Freie* to a more concrete formulation in *Professor Bernhardt*.

I.c) Schnitzler’s and Wassermann’s Correspondence

“Es dämmert eine Barbarenzeit herauf, vor der wir uns bald in Sicherheit bringen müssen, was ja der liebe Gott prompt besorgen wird.”²¹ This line is taken from the last of Wassermann’s letters to Schnitzler, dated 19 March 1930. Written three years before Hitler’s seizure of power, it reflects the increasing anti-Semitism both authors struggled with throughout their literary careers. Unfortunately, their correspondence does not yield the promising results originally anticipated. While Schnitzler and Wassermann do occasionally refer to each other’s publications, and sometimes even provide several lines of commentary on them, their correspondence is mainly personal in nature, consisting in postcard greetings

²⁰ James L. Benvenisti, ‘Arthur Schnitzler foretells Jewish Renaissance. An exclusive interview with the eminent litterateur.’ in *The American Hebrew and Jewish Messenger*, New York, 29.2.1924, ZAS MF 320. The full English text of the original interview is reproduced in Riedmann, p.396-398. Beier offers German translations of extracts throughout his book.

²¹ DLA, Letters Wassermann to Schnitzler, 19.3.1930, Folder B109,1.

from alpine peaks and inquiries after each other's families.

Schnitzler compiled a *Charakteristik* of Wassermann, based on diary entries and probably for his personal reference, just as he did for numerous other friends such as Hugo von Hofmannsthal. Being eleven years older than Wassermann, Schnitzler is clearly the senior partner in this relationship, and he is usually treated with warmth and reverence by his younger colleague. This does not prevent Wassermann from developing, shall we say, an extremely healthy kind of self-confidence, which goes hand in hand with his considerable literary success. Schnitzler views this with a great sense of irony, which is more apparent in his diaries than in his letters. In January 1907, he notes "W's herrliches Selbstgefühl. Ueberzeugtsein von Mission und Größe."²² In March 1914, Schnitzler records: "Wie Arthur Kaufmann vor Jakob Tolstoi preist und Jakob immer unruhiger endlich ausbricht: 'Was bin denn ich?'"²³ Then there is the conversation at a chess club, where Schnitzler and Wassermann discuss the difference between talent and genius, and Wassermann states quite openly: "Ich halte mich für ein Genie."²⁴

In 1910, relations between the friends are strained due to Julie Wassermann's founding of a school, to which Schnitzler and his wife had contributed significant funds. In March 1911, Schnitzler notes: "Juliens Schulgeschichten. Sie hat sich da in eine finanziell gefährliche Sache verrannt. Die Intrigen gegen sie, die nicht unerklärlich sind. Sie ist geistig kaum ganz normal. Allgemeiner Rat: heraus."²⁵ Schnitzler's view that the intrigues against her are understandable may be due to the 'antisemitische Umtriebe' in the founding committee, and the 'christliche Weltanschauung' of a certain Frau Schalk.²⁶

The fact that Schnitzler perceives Julie as 'mentally not quite normal' is, for sure, also due to Wassermann's extra-marital affairs. One even included Julie's sister Agnes, which Wassermann made no attempt to conceal from his wife. Julie suffered greatly from this. The excruciating divorce proceedings against her husband drew on until 1926, by which time Wassermann had already been living with his new partner, Marta Karlweis, for seven years.²⁷ Schnitzler disapproves of Wassermann's licentiousness, especially when he becomes involved with a close mutual friend, Steffi Bachrach, an intelligent girl Schnitzler very much admired. It is likely that her suicide in 1917 served as an inspiration for *Fräulein Else*. Schnitzler

²² Arthur Schnitzler, *Tagebuch 1903-1908*, ed. by Peter Braunwarth et.al. (Vienna: Verlag der Öst. Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1981-2000), 8.1.1907. Subsequently cited as TB.

²³ TB 1913-1916, 5.3.1914.

²⁴ DLA, MS Charakteristiken aus den Tagebüchern – Jakob Wassermann, Folder 204, 2.

²⁵ TB 1909-1912, 26.3.1911.

²⁶ Ibid., 19.2.1911.

²⁷ Kraft, *Jakob Wassermann*, p.159.

noted: “Jakob schreibt über Steffi, ist bereits stolz darauf, es wird das Schönste, was er je geschrieben. (Und man sollte den Literaten erschlagen).”²⁸

At this low point in their relations, in the years immediately preceding the First World War, Schnitzler comments: “Bei ihm wandelt sich jede intentionierte Noblesse in eine Schäbigkeit, wie jedes menschliche Gefühl in Literatengewäsch.”²⁹ In the course of the war, however, their friendship stabilises. By this point, Schnitzler is no longer in close contact with his friends from the days of Young Vienna: He is disillusioned by Hofmannsthal’s and Bahr’s embrace of Catholicism, while Beer-Hofmann and Felix Salten have joined the Zionist camp. But he still corresponds regularly with Wassermann, who, like Schnitzler, rejects conversion as decisively as Zionism.

And in spite of Schnitzler’s occasional scepticism towards Wassermann, his younger literary colleague continues to admire him. On the publication of Schnitzler’s *Buch der Sprüche und Bedenken* (1927), Wassermann calls him a “reiner, hoher, stolzer, unbestechlicher Beobachter der Welt Dinge” and expresses his belief that these aphorisms would be as “unsterblich” as those of La Rochefoucauld. He continues: “Ich kenne überhaupt nichts derartiges in der Literatur, was eine solche Verschmelzung von Strenge und Milde, von Verstehen und Richtertum, von Scharfsinn und Gefühlskraft darbietet.”³⁰

Likewise, Schnitzler respects the literary talent of his younger friend. After reading *Christian Wahnschaffe*, he notes: “Manches Balzac, manches Tolstoi, manches Dostojewsky auf gleicher Höhe – das Ganze Wassermann. Köstliche Einzelheiten; meisterhaft erzählt [...] Von allen Romanciers, die Deutschland heute hat, der echtste Wassermann.” And yet, he continues: “im Seelischen ein Manko. Kein großer Dichter, aber ein genialer Schriftsteller.”³¹ Schnitzler makes a similar note in 1927: “Und er, bei all dem außerordentlichen Talent (eines der reichsten, das heute lebt) der Literat.”³² What did Schnitzler mean by contrasting the ‘Dichter’ with the ‘Literat’? We have an indication in a diary entry made over a year before, on reading *Laudin und die Seinen* (1925): “‘Laudin’ ausgelesen. Das Talent imponierend wie nur je. Aber ethische Hochstapelei und Tiefsinnschwindel.”³³ It would appear, then, that the ‘Dichter’ is the more sincere artist, while the ‘Literat’ is unable to penetrate the realm of ethical truth, and his productions remain superficial, even insincere.

²⁸ TB 1917-1919, 18.5.1917.

²⁹ TB 1909-1912, 16.12.1912.

³⁰ DLA, Letters Wassermann to Schnitzler, 26.12.1927, B109.

³¹ TB 1917-1919, 27.10.1918.

³² TB 1927-1930, 12.1.1927.

³³ TB 1923-1926, 9.11.1925.

Schnitzler elaborates on the distinction between the poet and the writer in *Der Geist im Wort und der Geist in der Tat* (1927). The basis of this text is two diamond-shaped diagrams juxtaposing various types of human characters, “Urtypen des menschlichen Geistes” (136). The top triangle represents “das Reich der *Wahrheit*, das *negative* [the lower triangle] das der *Lüge*”. (143) If one is born as a ‘Sophist’, one can never become a ‘Philosoph’, the ‘Politiker’ can never become a ‘Staatsmann’, and so forth. (138) He explains that the ‘Dichter’ distinguishes himself from the ‘Literat’ “manchmal nur durch seine geringere Geschicklichkeit in den Bemühungen um einen äußeren Erfolg”. (139) He continues: “Ein Schicksal, das dem Dichter Erlebnis bedeutet, ist dem Literaten meist nur Sensation”. (144) On the whole, the ‘Literat’ is less sincere, less close to the truth – the quest for which was one of the ruling principles of Schnitzler’s life. The ‘Literat’ is more concerned with external signs of success. It is worth noting that, as Schnitzler emphasises, the ‘Dichter’ and the ‘Literat’ are at opposite extremes of the diamond-shaped diagram, with gradations of the statesman, historian, priest and philosopher on the positive end, and their opposites on the negative end. The only level above the ‘Dichter’ is that of the prophet, and above him, God, while only the level of the ‘Tückebold’, or fiend, separates the ‘Literat’ from the devil.

Schnitzler certainly did not see his friend in the service of evil. But it would appear that, while acknowledging Wassermann’s talent, Schnitzler did consider him, fundamentally, a writer who was unable to capture the essence of ethical matters and who was more concerned with his print runs than with enduring problems of human nature and art. There is, however, one ethical issue that Wassermann treated very thoroughly and in a more personal manner than Schnitzler: anti-Semitism, which we will come to shortly.

Given the central importance of humanity and justice in Wassermann’s philosophy, Schnitzler is being unjustly harsh when he states: “Er sagt Gerechtigkeit und meint 100 Auflagen.”³⁴ Three months later, he explains, with reference to Arnold Zweig’s *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa* (1927):

Wenn man Jacob fragte – Wählen Sie – entweder Justizreform oder neue hundert Auflagen – seine Antwort: Hundert Auflagen. Fragte man Zweig: Ihr Roman verschwindet für ewig – aber Grischa ist gerettet – seine Antwort: Grischa’s Rettung! – Und das spürt man natürlich in den Romanen selbst.³⁵

³⁴ TB 1927-1030, 7.3.1928.

³⁵ Ibid., 19.6.1928

This negative verdict is, to a degree, certainly due to the low point in his relations with Wassermann at the time. Like any author, Schnitzler himself was keen to defend his own interests in negotiations with Samuel Fischer and to secure the most financially advantageous settlement for himself. A case in point is their correspondence in October and November 1907, preceding the serialisation of *Der Weg ins Freie* in the journal 'Neue Rundschau' of the Fischer Verlag. After Fischer offers him 10,000 Marks, Schnitzler mentions that the publisher Ullstein has offered him twice that amount and suggests an offer of 15,000 Marks. By 11th November, they have agreed on the sum of 12,000 Marks for the serial publication of the novel.³⁶

By the 1920's, however, there is a chance that Schnitzler may have envied Wassermann's success. According to Kraft, Wassermann was indeed a skilled negotiator and had been so from the start: During business talks with Samuel Fischer, he would drop into the conversation hints of offers other publishers had supposedly made, bemoan and exaggerate his various forms of hardship, and even flatter Fischer's wife, Hedwig. In short: "[Er] ließ nichts unversucht, um seine Verhandlungsposition zu stärken."³⁷

And in the increasingly profit-oriented, 'Americanised' climate of the Weimar years, this was only wise. Given Hermann Ullstein's admiration for the production methods of Henry Ford, and his urge to be up-to-date on the latest developments in marketing, the Ullstein Verlag pioneered cheap, mass-produced editions of classic works as well as trivial literature. This trend was promptly taken up by the Reclam and Fischer Verlage as well, effectively beginning the age of the modern paperback.³⁸ After the inflation of 1923, there was a positive explosion of reading or, in economic terms, 'book consumption' in the German public. Although Kurt Tucholsky, who occasionally worked for Ullstein, described the management as "cold, totally oriented toward success, and pitiless",³⁹ with respect to political orientation, a liberal spirit prevailed in that publishing house. With the proliferation of pro-war fiction and memoirs, progressive writers flocked to Ullstein, but even more so to the houses with a reputation for more serious literature, such as Fischer and Insel. The Rowohlt Verlag was founded in 1919 and welcomed Polgar, Musil, and Hans Fallada to its fold. Kiepenheuer specialised in Expressionist literature, supporting Ernst Toller, Brecht, Werfel, and also

³⁶ see CUL, Letters Schnitzler to Fischer from 14. and 21.10.1907, Folder B121g; Letters Fischer to Schnitzler from 8.10. and 11.11.1907, Folder B121a & b.

³⁷ Kraft, p.113.

³⁸ Heather Valencia, 'Vicki Baum: "A First-Rate Second-Rate Writer"?' in *German Novelists of the Weimar Republic. Intersections of Literature and Politics*, ed. by Karl Leydecker (Woodbridge: Camden House, 2006), pp.229-253 (p.230).

³⁹ Letter to Mary Gerold-Tucholsky from 18.9.1928, cited in Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture. The Outsider as Insider* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1968), p.136.

Heinrich Mann. While Leipzig and Munich remained important cities for the publishing world, its beating heart was in Berlin. In 1927 alone, 1,200 publishers were registered in the official commercial records of the city.⁴⁰ The political orientation and literary tastes of the 'Bürgertum' still predominated, and even if measures to curb more left-wing or avant-garde writing were called for as early as 1920, such as the 'Schundgesetz', intended to preserve moral standards in literature, their success was limited. As Claudius Torp puts it: "Der vom hohen Pathos der Kulturkonservativen getragene Feldzug war der kommerziellen Massenkultur gegenüber machtlos."⁴¹

Wassermann was riding the tide of the times. Along with Hermann Hesse and Thomas Mann, he was one of the bestselling authors of the S. Fischer Verlag,⁴² while Schnitzler was generally considered a writer of a bygone era. In December 1924, Schnitzler wrote to Georg Brandes:

Die Kritiker haben für mich eine neue Formel gefunden: daß ich eine ‚versunkene Welt‘ beschreibe, welche keinen Menschen mehr interessiert. (Man darf nur Stücke von 1924 schreiben – wußten Sie das?) Auch sind Tod und Liebe keine passenden Themen mehr – nur Grenzregulierungen, Währungsfluktuationen, Steuerfragen, Diebstahl und Hungeraufstände interessieren den ernsten (besonders den ernsten deutschen) Mann.⁴³

Schnitzler was much more interested in the 'new' postwar era than his critics would have us believe. He was, for instance, a keen cinema-goer and strongly interested in the artistic potential of film. The project he was working on just before his death was the script for a 'Kriminalfilm'.⁴⁴ However, his plays were being performed much less frequently than before the war. As he confessed to Dora Michaelis, in a letter dated 11.11.1920, he strongly depended on his fees from film adaptations, which exceeded his income from his book sales by far.⁴⁵ It did not help that it was Wassermann who formulated the view voiced time and time again by Schnitzler's critics:

„Fräulein Else“ hingegen ist mir unmittelbar nah gegangen; abgesehen davon, dass da eine ganze Welt (eine abgeschlossene, abgetane, zu Tod verurteilte) in ihrer

⁴⁰ Bärbel Schrader, *The 'Golden' Twenties. Art and Literature in the Weimar Republic* (Leipzig: Edition Leipzig, 1987), p.131-32.

⁴¹ Claudius Torp, *Konsum und Politik in der Weimarer Republik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), p.286.

⁴² Kraft, p.179-180.

⁴³ CUL, Letters Schnitzler to Georg Brandes, 14.12.1924, Folder B17a.

⁴⁴ For more information, see Lea Marquart, 'Schnitzlers letzter Filmentwurf: ein Kriminalfilm', in *Arthur Schnitzler und der Film*, ed. by Achim Aurnhammer et.al. (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2010), pp.113-127.

⁴⁵ Arthur Schnitzler, *Briefe 1913-1931*, ed. by Peter Braunwarth et.al. (Frankfurt/Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1984), p.217-18.

dämonischen Niedrigkeit und sittlichen Verzweiflung in einer Figur, in einer Brennlense in Erscheinung tritt, wodurch ihr Zusammenbruch begreiflich und zum Bilde wird, staunt man, wenn man vom Metier ist, die absolute Meisterschaft an, mit der das Ding gemacht ist; fehlerlos und mit der zartesten Hand.⁴⁶

This rather positive evaluation drew a lengthy reply from Schnitzler, dated 3.11.1924:

Ganz und gar nicht aber bin ich Ihrer Ansicht ueber die „abgeschlossene, abgetane, zum Tod verurteilte Welt“, als welche Ihnen offenbar sowohl die in der „Komoedie der Verfuhrung“, als die ringsum „Fraeulein Else“ erscheint. Was ist abgetan, abgeschlossen, zum Tod verurteilt? Wer hat verurteilt? [...] Dieses Wort von der abgetanen oder versunkenen Welt – (ach, wie oft habe ich es in der letzten Zeit zu lesen bekommen) – erinnert mich so sehr an jenes andere, von der großen Zeit, das ebenso suggestiv und ebenso truegerisch vor noch nicht einem Jahrzehnt unsere Ohren umschwirrt hat. Es war damals keine große Zeit und die angeblich versunkene und abgetane Welt ist genau so lebendig und vorhanden als sie es jemals war. In den einzelnen Menschen hat sich nicht die geringste Veraenderung vollzogen, nichts anderes ist geschehen als daß verschiedene Hemmungen weggeraeumt sind und daß allerlei Buebereien und Schurkereien mit einem verhaeltnismaessig geringeren Risiko in jeder Hinsicht [...] veruebt werden koennen als es frueher der Fall war. Ueberdies redet man etwas mehr und etwas ungescheuter als frueher vom Essen und vom Geld. Sind etwa die [...] Individuen, vom Erdboden verschwunden, die ich geschildert habe und wie ich hoffe noch einige Zeit hindurch zu schildern mir erlauben werde? [...]

Nur eines noch. Wenn es selbst eine „abgetane“ Welt waere, - waere sie darum ein minder wuerdiges Objekt fuer den Dichter? Wenn er Menschen, Geschehnisse, von 1789, von 1520 gestalten oder schildern darf, gerade hinsichtlich der Menschen von 1914 und 1920 sollte es ihm verwehrt sein? Die Kritik hat das mit der Kirche gemein, daß es sie immer wieder juckt Dogmen zu schaffen, die logisch eigentlich jeder Begrueendung entbehren. [...] Ob eine Welt abgetan ist, mag am Ende der Historiker entscheiden, ob sie angefault ist, der Ethiker, ob sie den Untergang verdient, – nun, sagen wir – der liebe Gott; unseres Amts ist es das Gegenwaertige zu bewahren, das Versunkene heraufzubeschwoeren und das Zukuenftige – aber ich will nicht um des Rhythmus willen eine Beilaeufigkeit sagen.⁴⁷

This may be taken as Schnitzler's reply to his post-war reviewers in general, whose allegations annoyed Schnitzler immensely. Wassermann's reply has not survived.

The major common ground between Schnitzler and Wassermann was their steadfastness

⁴⁶ DLA, Letters Wassermann to Schnitzler, 26.10.1924, Folder B109, 1.

⁴⁷ Schnitzler, *Briefe 1913-1931*, p.370.

with respect to their Jewish origins. Schnitzler's friendship (and subsequently his correspondence) with Hugo von Hofmannsthal dwindled over precisely this issue. As we will see in a later chapter, Hofmannsthal entertained strong Catholic sympathies and regularly belittled his Jewish ancestry. This was not the case with Wassermann, and in spite of the weaknesses Schnitzler saw in Wassermann, their mutual adherence to their Jewish identity was a significant factor in maintaining their friendship. Wassermann's wife, Julie, related an incident with her son Albert to Schnitzler, shortly after the publication of *Der Weg ins Freie*: "Er lernt bei mir, hat aber noch nicht Ihren neuen Roman gelesen und fängt neulich bei Tisch dennoch an: 'Papa, wenn ich gross bin, werde ich Christ.' Jakob: 'Warum?' 'Weil Christ schöner ist wie Jud.' – 'Wieso?' – 'Sie sind mächtiger!'"⁴⁸ Already as a young child, Albert grasped that Christians had an advantage over Jews.

When war broke out in August 1914, Schnitzler perceived Wassermann's restlessness at not being able to fight:

Er ist wie immer drollig in seinem Gemisch von Begeisterung und Schwindelhaftigkeit. Angeblich will er durchaus mit, aber einerseits läßt ihn Julie nicht, andererseits ist er untauglich. Aber er hält es nicht mehr lange aus. Dann stellt er sich wieder Hugo für Oktober zur Verfügung.⁴⁹

Hofmannsthal was involved in diplomatic and propaganda efforts at the time.⁵⁰ With respect to Wassermann's view on the 'Jewish Question', Schnitzler recorded: "Er verspricht sich von dem Krieg irgend etwas wie eine Lösung der Judenfrage. Mindestens das Aufhören des Antisemitismus. Dann könnte man auch aus der Gemeinde austreten u.s.w."⁵¹

It is worth noting that Wassermann would have considered leaving the Jewish community only after anti-Semitism had ended. This indicates a degree of determination to stand up for his origins similar to Schnitzler's. As we have seen in previous chapters, the war caused Wassermann to reassess his German nationalism and brought his sense of Jewish identity to the fore. In 1914, he was an enthusiastic patriot; in 1921, he published *Mein Weg als Deutscher und Jude*. His shift in thinking is reflected in Schnitzler's diary entry from 1915:

⁴⁸ DLA, Letters Wassermann to Schnitzler, 18.1.1908, Folder B109, 1.

⁴⁹ TB 1913-1916, 24.8.1914.

⁵⁰ Mathias Mayer, *Hugo von Hofmannsthal* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1993), p.9-10. For more information on Hofmannsthal's political work during World War I, see Heinz Lunzer, *Hofmannsthals politische Tätigkeit in den Jahren 1914-1917* (Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang, 1981).

⁵¹ TB 1913-1916, 20.9.1914.

W., der zuerst tiefsinnelnd und weitblickerisch über die Schicksalsnotwendigkeit des Krieges, die später zu Tage tretenden bedeutenden Folgen spricht, allmählich aber meiner Auffassung, die sich gegen die Flucht ins Abstrakte den aus seiner Philosophie resultierenden Naturalismus wendet, sich nähert und die empörten Briefe des im Feld stehenden Müller-Hofmann zitiert.⁵²

Schnitzler gave the adjectives ‘tiefsinnig’ and ‘weitblickend’ an ironic twist, showing that he could not take Wassermann’s grand speech about the necessity of war seriously. In the end, Wassermann seemed to be accepting Schnitzler’s far more critical view of events.

In April 1920, he recorded: “Las W. ‘Mein Weg als Deutscher und Jude’ trotz gelegentlichen Widerstands mit Interesse und manchmal mit Ergriffenheit.”⁵³ We can only guess about Schnitzler’s ‘occasional resistance’. Was Wassermann too harsh on Jews in general? It is likely that Wassermann’s unusually frank portrayal of his inner conflict may have been distasteful to Schnitzler, who was reluctant in the extreme to make any public statement on political matters. This was a book in which Wassermann proved he was fully capable of treating an ethical matter with the thoroughness it deserved, far beyond the ‘Literat’ Schnitzler made him out to be. It is the most personal, most unashamed depiction of the internal conflict of the German Jew written by any writer of the early 20th-century. Schnitzler’s comment still rings true, for any reader today, on reading *Mein Weg als Deutscher und Jude*, cannot help but feel affected by Wassermann’s inner torment, as well as some of Schnitzler’s ‘occasional resistance’. In any case, this is the only surviving comment of Schnitzler’s we have on Wassermann’s position as a German-Jewish writer.

On the whole, it would appear that their relationship was, as Schnitzler notes, a “heiter-ironisch, freundschaftliches Verhältnis”.⁵⁴ Although they did not speak about it often in their correspondence, a significant factor for the endurance of their friendship was their common ground in the Jewish identity crisis. The more pressing the issue became, the more strain was placed on Schnitzler’s relations with Hofmannsthal, for instance, from whom he became increasingly distant. Not so with Wassermann. Thus, it seems appropriate to conclude with Wassermann’s heartfelt acknowledgement of what Schnitzler’s friendship meant to him:

Lieber Freund, Ihr Brief hat mir eine sehr, sehr grosse Freude bereitet. In der Tat war ja die Beziehung zu Ihnen, als ich nach Wien kam (vor 25 Jahren!) die fruchtbarste,

⁵² Ibid., 6.3.1915.

⁵³ TB 1920-1922, 20.4.1920.

⁵⁴ TB 1909-1912, 1.1.1909.

folgenreichste, menschlichste, und unsere Billardpartien sind mir ebenso unvergesslich wie die literarischen Gespräche, wenn ich Sie spät Nachts [sic] zu Ihrem Haus in der Frankgasse begleitete. [...] Doch im Ernst: Mein Gefühl für Sie ist unverbrüchlich, und keine räumliche Entfernung kann ihm etwas anhaben, denn Sie gehören zu den notwendigen und fest umrissenen Gestalten meines Lebens, zu denjenigen Freunden (es sind nur zwei oder drei), die aus dem verworrenen Drang meiner Natur die Form gelöst haben. Sie sehen also, ich habe Ihnen was zu danken, viel zu danken, und ich weiss es. Und die Worte, die Sie mir nun geschenkt haben, können meine Dankbarkeit und Freundschaft nur vermehren. Ich drücke Ihnen die Hand. Ihr Jakob Wassermann⁵⁵

Schnitzler was quite clearly the senior partner in their friendship. He viewed Wassermann's literary ambitions and inflated self-image with irony, sometimes with downright disapproval. At the same time, Schnitzler admired Wassermann's novels, such as *Christian Wahnschaffe*, which he compared to Balzac and Dostoyevsky. Wassermann always looked up to Schnitzler, for it was Schnitzler who introduced him to the circle of Jung Wien, which laid the basis for Wassermann's subsequent literary career. Aside from personal differences, tension did arise in the post-war era, when Wassermann was at the pinnacle of his fame and Schnitzler was considered the chronicler of a bygone era.

Schnitzler and Wassermann were equally sceptical of Zionism and Jewish orthodoxy, and both firmly rejected Jewish 'Renegaten' who converted to Catholicism. Even though Schnitzler sometimes felt that Wassermann was fundamentally insincere, their main bond was their mutual conviction that they would not compromise on their Jewish background but would face anti-Semitism with determination. Their approaches differed, but their ethical stance was the same. Although he never put it in writing, Schnitzler greatly appreciated this resolve in Wassermann. This held Wassermann's and Schnitzler's friendship together when Schnitzler's relations with his other friends from Jung Wien declined. And they declined precisely because of the 'Jewish Question': with Felix Salten because of his commitment to Zionism and with Hofmannsthal and Hermann Bahr because of their affinity to Catholicism. In the end, along with Richard Beer-Hofmann, only Wassermann remained a close friend of Schnitzler's. Their friendship endured from the days of Jung Wien through the First World War, their respective divorces, and the new post-war era, until Schnitzler's last days. The endurance of this friendship, given the complicated personalities of the two writers and the multitude of their other, more short-lived relationships, speaks for itself.

⁵⁵ DLA, Letters Wassermann to Schnitzler, 26.3.1923, Folder B109.

II. Anti-Semitism in Late 19th-Century Austria

Since the end of the Second World War, scholars have endeavoured to comprehend the historically unique phenomenon of the Holocaust. The past decades have seen an effusion of publications on the Third Reich, making that period one of the best-researched in the history of mankind.⁵⁶ Although work has been done on the origins of modern political anti-Semitism, this does not reach anywhere near the quantities of books written on the decade 1933-1945. It is essential and highly rewarding, if one wishes to understand the wider phenomenon of anti-Semitism, to cast one's boundaries so as to include Austria, and especially Vienna, as far back as 1873.⁵⁷ Vienna, because the city contained the largest Jewish community in Europe outside of Russia. This was, of course, also where Hitler spent his formative years. Whereas he struggled to survive as a painter, he admired the mayor of the town, Karl Lueger, intensely, and expatiates upon him at length in *Mein Kampf* (1925). The year 1873 is important because the stock market crashed, which spelt the decline of the Liberal Party in government. It was succeeded in the final years of the 19th century by the mass-oriented, clerically-minded, and anti-Semitic Christian Social Party.

From the assassination of the reformist Czar Alexander II in 1881 onwards, a repeated series of pogroms in Russia sent waves of refugees across the borders into Germany and Austria-Hungary. These Orthodox Jews were visibly foreign, with their caftans, their long curls, and their Yiddish language. In 1880, there were 15,000 foreign Jews in Germany. By 1910, the figure had risen to 78,000.⁵⁸ Given their increasing numbers, the reputable historian Heinrich von Treitschke launched the so-called 'Antisemitismusstreit'. He argued that Jews were a threat to national integrity and called for their expulsion in order to preserve the purity of the German people.⁵⁹ This lent an aura of middle-class and academic respectability to the

⁵⁶ Two excellent biographies of Hitler cover anti-Semitism in Vienna at the end of the 19th century, and follow the development further into the 20th century: Ian Kershaw, *Hitler*, 2 vols (London: Penguin, 1999-2001) and Joachim C. Fest, *Hitler: eine Biographie* (Frankfurt/Main: Ullstein Verlag, 1987). Other useful studies of National Socialism: A.J.P. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964); Sebastian Haffner, *Anmerkungen zu Hitler* (Munich: Kindler Verlag, 1978); Gordon A. Craig, *Germany 1866-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981); George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology. Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: Schocken Books, 1981); Ian Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship* (London: Arnold, 2000).

⁵⁷ For further reading on this period, see Andrew Gladding Whiteside, *Austrian National Socialism before 1918* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1962); Robert A. Kann, *A History of the Habsburg Empire 1526-1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974); John W. Boyer, *Political Radicalism in Late Imperial Vienna* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981); Brigitte Hamann, *Hitlers Wien: Lehrjahre eines Diktators* (Munich: Piper Verlag, 1997); Peter Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria* (London: Peter Halban, 1988).

⁵⁸ Steven Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers: The East European Jew in German and German Jewish consciousness, 1800-1923* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), p.42.

⁵⁹ Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers*, p.59.

debate, in which he was opposed by the famous classical philologist Theodor Mommsen.⁶⁰

Anti-Semites caricatured these Eastern Jews to create a stereotype, which they then applied to the assimilated members of the middle class. But the middle-class Jews had little connection to Jewish religion, and they had much more in common with their German or Austrian social equals than with the impoverished refugees from the East. They had been, on the whole, happily integrated, having embraced and internalised German customs, literature, and 'Bildung'. Now, their cultural identity was being continuously mocked and called into question. They found themselves forced to accept a heritage they had become estranged from. And the anti-Semitic press typified this heritage in the uncultured, uneducated, and generally primitive 'Ostjude'.

In his *Deutsche Schriften* (1878), Paul de Lagarde called for a revival of German national heritage and character. This was only possible by distinction from Jewish Germans, who, Lagarde claimed, had no understanding of the German need to salvage their national uniqueness. Lagarde was the first to add an anti-Semitic component to the theories of such conservative thinkers as Wilhelm Riehl, for whom the modern city was the catalyst of social inequality. Riehl maintained that the peasantry, with its traditional links to the soil, was the natural counterweight to this.⁶¹

Julius Langbehn, living in Munich around 1890, drew on the success of his book *Rembrandt als Erzieher* (1890), which is considered one of the seminal texts of 'Heimatkunst'. Langbehn insisted that real art springs from native soil, not from the anonymous, even decadent, influence of large cities. For him, peasants are not only the "Grundlage des Staates," but essential to an "arische Erneuerung" of society. "Die Macht des Blutes... ist stärker als alles," he writes. Germans, because of their high sense of virtue and their pureness of blood, have a God-given right to rule over others. In other words, "Die Deutschen sind bestimmt, den Adel der Welt darzustellen."⁶² If Lagarde added anti-Semitism to Riehl's advocacy of life close to one's native soil, as well as the general appreciation of German cultural characteristics, Langbehn introduced the imperialist motive.⁶³

These ideas were in the air in German cities in the last decades of the 19th century. Although it is tempting to label these concepts 'reactionary' from today's perspective, it is

⁶⁰ For more detail, see Walter Böhlich, ed., *Der Berliner Antisemitismusstreit* (Frankfurt/Main: Insel Verlag, 1988).

⁶¹ Kraft, p.52-53.

⁶² Kraft, p.55.

⁶³ For more detail, see Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974).

important to keep in mind that these ideas were considered modern at the time. Equally modern was Darwin's theory of evolution and the pseudo-scientific racial theories Houston Stewart Chamberlain and Arthur de Gobineau derived from it. Gobineau developed the concept of an Aryan race in his essay *Sur l'inégalité des races humaines* (1853), arguing for the superiority of the white race over all others and against a mixing of races. Chamberlain seized on this notion and emphasised the pre-eminence of the Teutonic people in the framework of the Aryan race. He also included an anti-Jewish component that had been missing in Gobineau's essay. Chamberlain's principal work, *Die Grundlagen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* (1899), had sold 100,000 copies by 1914.⁶⁴

III. Vienna – Multi-National Capital of the Habsburg Empire

As the central cultural melting-pot of the Habsburg Empire, Vienna mirrored the larger ethnic struggles of the Monarchy. The conflux of Germans, Czechs, Hungarians, Poles, Italians, and various other nationalities produced an incredible effervescence of cultural creativity. At the same time, the early 20th-century was an era of nationalism and national states. Just how aggressively the diverse ethnic groups of the Dual Monarchy fought each other over language issues may be illustrated by the German and Czech reactions to the Badeni decrees in 1897. The question of obliging Bohemian officials to formulate official correspondence in both German and Czech led otherwise respectable citizens to riot in the streets of Prague and Vienna. Deputies in the Austrian parliament even assaulted each other physically.⁶⁵

Although these strong differences were not necessarily driven by an urge to break away from Habsburg rule, they contributed to a widespread sense of demise and disintegration. After Hungary was accorded the status of a semi-autonomous kingdom in 1867, other national minorities were demanding similar freedoms. The Serbs were perhaps the most militant, given that a Serb national state had emerged just across the border in 1878. The Italian population around Trieste was in a similar situation. And indeed, it was the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand by Serb nationalists in 1914 that led to the outbreak of World War I.

Only a fraction of the Germans, for so long the most loyal supporters of the Habsburg

⁶⁴ William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (Bookclub Associates Edition, 1985), p.107. For more detail on Chamberlain's theories, see Geoffrey G. Fields, *Evangelist of Race: the Germanic Vicion of Houston Stewart Chamberlain* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981).

⁶⁵ Gunther E. Rothenburg, *The Army of Francis Joseph* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1976) p128.

throne, had rallied to Georg von Schönerer's pan-German movement. Schönerer, a virulent anti-Semite much admired by the young Hitler, called for a complete dismantling of the Monarchy and the unification of the German-speaking territories with the neighbouring empire. This movement was on a very small-scale. In 1889, his *Alldeutsche Vereinigung* counted a mere 1.200 members. In 1907, only three German separatist deputies were elected into parliament, at which point the movement can be said to have faltered.⁶⁶ Although it was a small group, it was vocal, and it helped contribute to the tense atmosphere of Karl Lueger's mayorship.

In 1890, the Jewish community made up 12% of the population of Vienna. By 1910, the figure had almost doubled, from 99,441 to 175,318, in a total population of just over two million (8.6%).⁶⁷ In theory, the Jews were citizens with equal rights, ever since emancipation had been issued with the founding of the Dual Monarchy in 1867. In practise, however, things were rather different. It was simply impossible for a Jew to rise higher than a certain level in the administration, judiciary, army, or higher education system.

Robert Wistrich points to Hans Tietze's *Die Juden Wiens* (1933), which describes a German nationalist, Türk, putting forward the claim in parliament around the turn of the century that there were "55 Jewish professors of medicine and law in Vienna". Rabbi Joseph Bloch argued against this, stating that "21 of these professors were converts, and only two were full professors."⁶⁸

These restrictions explain the concentration of Jews in trade and finance, but there was also a strong presence in the so-called 'freie Berufe': 15% of employable male Jews were lawyers, 6% doctors, and 8% writers or journalists.⁶⁹ Most of them lived in the traditional Jewish quarter across the Danube, the Leopoldstadt (34%). The centre and the district immediately north of this, the Alsergrund, each had 20% Jewish inhabitants. The remainder distributed themselves in the Brigittenau, Mariahilf, and the Neubau districts.

In the light of the incessant national squabbles that paralysed parliament for the last decades of the Habsburg Empire, the Jews can be considered Francis Joseph's most loyal subjects. They enjoyed the Emperor's special protection, to the point that nationalist rags

⁶⁶ Wistrich, Robert S., *The Jews of Vienna in the Age of Francis Joseph* (New York, 1989), p. 192.

⁶⁷ Wistrich, *The Jews of Vienna*, p.42.

⁶⁸ cited in Wistrich, p.173.

⁶⁹ Hans Otto Horch, *Judentum, Antisemitismus und europäische Kultur* (Tübingen: Francke Verlag, 1988), p.211-12.

would refer to him as the 'Judenkaiser'.⁷⁰ Since the Emperor was a firm supporter of emancipation, higher Austrian officials could not afford to openly practise anti-Semitism. If they did, they would be acting in blatant contradiction to one of the ruling principles of the Habsburg dynasty.

Widespread anti-Semitism in the higher ranks of the administration was due, among other things, to a longstanding marriage of Church and State in Austria, the bastion of the Counter-reformation. The connection of clerical and political interests is reflected in the views of the censors responsible for the ban on Schnitzler's *Professor Bernhardt*, for instance. This, but also a more vocal form of anti-Semitism, thrived under Karl Lueger's term as mayor.

Francis Joseph had refused to accept Lueger's election as mayor four times, precisely because he feared the open discrimination of his Jewish subjects. The fifth time, the Emperor relented, and Lueger served his term from 1897 until his death in 1910. Lueger famously stated: "Wer ein Jude ist, bestimme ich!" Under his leadership, opportunist anti-Semitism became socially accepted, condoned by the authorities, and openly publicised by the more conservative papers. Although he habitually ranted against Jews in his political speeches, Lueger had Jewish supporters and friends in finance, industry, and the liberal press. There were 'good' Jews under his protection, and 'bad' ones whose reputation he was willing to sacrifice for his political goals.

Anti-Semitism ceased being a trademark of the lower social classes. In earlier decades, it had characterised the resentment of petty shopkeepers, who were possibly in debt to Jewish banks. Now, anti-Jewish feeling took hold among students and professors alike. In 1896, student fraternities issued the Waidhofener Beschluß, which declared Jewish students devoid of honour.⁷¹ As such, they could not defend themselves in an academic fencing duel when they were insulted. This, however, was an ancient privilege of members of the university and formed a very important part of student life. The pronouncement further encouraged the founding of specifically Jewish fraternities, most notably the Kadimah, whose members demonstratively continued to fence.⁷² They did not shy away from clashing violently with the more nationalist groups.

On the professorial side, Dr. Theodor Billroth, a renowned surgeon, publicly expressed his concern over the large numbers of Eastern Jewish students enrolling at the University of

⁷⁰ Wistrich, p.179.

⁷¹ Ibid., p.367

⁷² Marsha Rozenblit, *The Jews of Vienna 1867 – 1914: Assimilation and Identity* (Albany, NY: State of New York University Press, 1983), p.161.

Vienna. He thought that this would inevitably decrease general academic standards, not only because of their feeble grasp of German, but also because of fundamental discrepancies between the Jewish and German races.⁷³

Schulamit Volkov argues that Jewishness does not necessarily describe an ethnic group or a modern form of nationalism, but it is a much broader ‘kulturelles System’. The Jews of Vienna, Berlin and other urban centres lived within a “komplexe Struktur von öffentlichen und privaten Vereinen und Erziehungseinrichtungen”, with their own public sphere, ideologies, and their efforts “gemeinsame jüdische Traditionen zu konstruieren”. In fact, Volkov claims: “Die Erfindung einer Tradition [war] das umfassendste, vielleicht sogar das hervorragendste, kollektive jüdische ‘Projekt der Moderne’.”⁷⁴ According to Volkov, the creation of a Jewish tradition, similar to other projects to invent traditions in the Romantic period, was a more or less conscious response of German-speaking Jews to the general identity crisis of the early 20th-century. During the 19th century, liberal Jewish reformers such as Abraham Geiger intended to reduce Jewishness entirely to a confessional question. In reality, however, irrespective of their public statements, these reformers planned to redesign not only the religious aspect, but the entire Jewish culture. Notably the Zionists planned to modernise it and ascribe to it characteristics of a “moderne politische Nation”. For this, the establishment of one coherent version of Jewish history, one commonly accepted form of Hebrew, and, to the extent possible, one binding form of ethics, was crucial. Volkov sees the revival of literature by German-Jewish authors around 1900 as an offshoot of this development.⁷⁵

Building on the concept of a cultural system, Rozenblit argues that Jewish identity was, in fact, tripartite: shared equally between Austrian citizenship (political), German (cultural), and Jewish (ethnic).⁷⁶ In contrast to the Jews of France or Germany, who felt obliged to adopt the respective national identity and conceal their ethnic origins, this issue was not as pressing in Austria-Hungary. This was the advantage of living in a state founded entirely on political, not on ethnic or national terms. While this Jewish self-concept was already being called into question by anti-Semitism in the early 20th-century, the Habsburg Monarchy was able, on the whole, to provide a stable framework for Jews to sustain this threefold identity. After the

⁷³ Theodor Billroth, *Über das Lehren und Lernen der medizinischen Wissenschaften an den Universitäten deutscher Nation* (Vienna: C. Gerold, 1876), p.152-54.

⁷⁴ Schulamit Volkov, ‘Zur Entstehung des modernen Judentums in Deutschland’, *Historische Zeitschrift* 253 (1991), 603-628 (p.607, 610, 606).

⁷⁵ Volkov, ‘Zur Entstehung des modernen Judentums’, p.609, 628.

⁷⁶ Marsha L. Rozenblit, *Reconstructing a National Identity. The Jews of Habsburg Austria during World War I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.4.

collapse of Austria-Hungary, the Jewish identity crisis intensified, for they were unable to bring their cultural and ethnic sense of self together to the extent that the Christian population could. They continued to be perceived by others as a 'religious-ethnic group', with the ethnic boundaries maintained even after their great sacrifices for the Austrian fatherland during the First World War.⁷⁷

We shall see that Schnitzler represented Rozenblit's notion of threefold identity to perfection. It is all the more surprising that in her book on Austrian Jews in World War I, in which she elaborates her argument most fully, she does not devote a single word to him. Even if other Jewish authors may not fit her scheme as neatly, Schnitzler presents clear and tangible proof of Rozenblit's particular concept of Austrian-Jewish identity.⁷⁸

Ritchie Robertson describes the central problem of modern identity thus: "I want to be able to identify myself with a larger group outside myself; I want to associate my fleeting, unstable self with something at least relatively fixed. But culture is not fixed; it is continually reinvented."⁷⁹ He further points out that the terms 'Jew' and 'German' do not simply name existing groups "but themselves help to construct and reshape those identities". In one section of his study, Robertson first shows the connection between the Enlightenment and Emancipation, before proceeding to portray three 'case studies' of enlightened, liberal Jews: Schnitzler, Stefan Zweig, and Freud. All three, Robertson shows, were critically aware of the hypocrisies and weaknesses inherent in the particular form of liberalism "to which they were vitally attached."⁸⁰

The last three chapters of Robertson's analysis deal with anti-Semitism, assimilation and dissimilation respectively. The final concept was recently developed in scholarship in order to describe the "affirmation of Jewishness in response to an unwelcoming society"⁸¹ and is of particular interest for this dissertation. Both Schnitzler's and Wassermann's elaborate and distinct responses to anti-Semitism are, each in its own way, case studies of dissimilation.

Klaus Hödl opens up another dimension of what it meant to be Jewish in Vienna at that time. Hödl criticises the terms 'Assimilation' and 'Akkulturation' as inadequate, since they imply a minority adapting, in a one-sided manner, to the dominant culture or society. Yet Austrian Jews helped to shape Viennese culture and should be considered as active members

⁷⁷ Rozenblit, *Reconstructing a National Identity*, p.38-39.

⁷⁸ see section I.b) of the chapter on *Der Weg ins Freie*.

⁷⁹ Ritchie Robertson, *The 'Jewish Question' in German Literature 1749 – 1949. Emancipation and Its Discontents* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p.5.

⁸⁰ Robertson, *The 'Jewish Question' in German Literature*, p.7.

⁸¹ *ibid.*, p.8.

of society, not just as people trying to adapt. Hödl calls for a greater emphasis on the interaction between Jews and non-Jews, as opposed to a one-way process. Culture, Hödl argues, is by no means a static concept, but instead “dynamisch und prozesshaft”.⁸² Cultural elements are not fixed, but connected on multiple levels, continually influencing each other. Hödl develops ‘Performanz’ as a more fluid concept of culture, as opposed to the more rigid, conventional notion he terms ‘Text’. Following his notion of the ‘performativer Kulturbegriff’, concepts of acculturation and assimilation appear as movements in both directions, proving relations between Jews and non-Jews were interdependent. In his own words:

Es wird gezeigt, daß es innerhalb eines kulturellen Systems vielfältige Unterscheidungen und Bruchlinien gibt, die unterschiedlichste Kontakte – auch zwischen Juden und Nichtjuden – erlauben. Sie werden immer wieder neu bestimmt und dürfen nie als fixiert und feststehend angenommen werden. Das heißt, daß eine gesellschaftliche Unterscheidung in Juden und Nichtjuden nur eine von vielen möglichen Untergliederungen darstellt und auf keinen Fall festgeschrieben werden kann.⁸³

Hödl’s argument is instrumental in breaking up the static notion of culture with which scholarship has been working for decades. At the same time, he provides an example of the more differentiated perspective on Viennese Jewish identity that recent research has embraced.

Riedmann also adopts a more flexible concept of Jewishness, stating: “Daß sich ‘Identität’ im Wechselspiel zwischen Fremd- und Selbstbestimmung konstituiert und daß es sich dabei um einen pluralen und dynamischen Begriff handelt.”⁸⁴ With special reference to Schnitzler, she cites Frank Stern: “Das Jüdisch-Nichtjüdische ist ein permanenter innerer Dialog [...] von Schnitzlers Wiener Welt.”⁸⁵ Riedmann makes a case against the common tendency to ascribe the work of authors of varying degrees of Jewishness as a ‘jüdischer Beitrag’ to Austrian culture. This implies, so she explains, that the works of Schnitzler, for instance, would not be genuinely Austrian, in whatever sense that may be defined. Riedmann disapproves of the creation of a counter-myth hailing the cultural contributions of ‘our Jews’, which masks

⁸² Klaus Hödl, *Wiener Juden – jüdische Wiener: Identität, Gedächtnis und Performanz im 19. Jahrhundert* (Vienna: Studienverlag, 2006), p.30.

⁸³ Hödl, *Wiener Juden*, p. 31.

⁸⁴ Bettina Riedmann, ‘Arthur Schnitzler. Facetten einer jüdisch-österreichisch-deutschen Identität’, in *Wien und die jüdische Erfahrung 1900-1938*, ed. by Frank Stern and Barbara Eichinger (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2009), pp.369-85 (p.381).

⁸⁵ Riedmann, ‘Arthur Schnitzler’ in *Wien und die jüdische Erfahrung*, p. 382

certain anti-Semitic patterns of thought under a thin philo-Semitic veneer. So as to avoid stigmatisation, Riedmann calls for “ein hohes Maß an Differenzierungsvermögen” before describing an author as Jewish. One should be aware that, frequently, this label is applied with very little about the individual’s own sense of Jewishness being known, in order to draw conclusions about a larger cultural, ethnic, or religious group.⁸⁶

This feeds into Stefan Beller’s question of whether the contribution of Austrian-Jewish intellectuals to modern culture is more Jewish or Austrian. Both interpretations, Beller states, are equally problematic. If one follows the common argument that Jews to a large extent ‘produced’ Austrian culture, it must be taken into account that Jews, at the same time, did not necessarily want to be fully assimilated.⁸⁷ Beller argues convincingly that the culture of assimilated Jews in Vienna was as removed from the Jewish as it was from the ‘Catholic Alpine’ tradition.⁸⁸ The fact is, according to Beller, that an ethnic and cultural sense of identity are not mutually exclusive.⁸⁹ There is no opposition between German or Austrian identity on the one hand and Jewish identity on the other. Beller maintains that trying to establish a pattern of mutual exclusion leads easily to the use of anti-Semitic stereotypes. Rather, both exist simultaneously, embodied, to this day, by the large number of Fin-de-siècle intellectuals and German-speaking Jews of the era. Beller proceeds to advocate a “truly open, inclusive and pluralist Austrian identity”, in order “for Austrians to claim, without fear of contradiction, the enormous part of their modern cultural heritage, and even identity, which was created by Jews, as their own, not despite the fact that it is ‘Jewish’, but because of it.”⁹⁰

Beller’s perspective reinvigorated the historiography of the period. Until his central publication,⁹¹ the arguments of which have been cited above, Carl Schorske’s seminal study, *Fin de Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (1979) had dominated the field. Schorske explained the cultural effusion of the Austrian capital mainly in terms of the liberal bourgeoisie embracing various forms of art after the demise of its political influence, naturally playing down the role of Jewish intellectuals in this development. Beller, on the other hand, laid great stress on the Jewish participation in the culture of Fin-de-siècle Vienna, raising central questions about Jewish identity per se.

⁸⁶ *ibid.*, p.383.

⁸⁷ Steven Beller, ‘What is Austrian about Austrian Culture?’, in *Weltanschauungen des Wiener Fin de Siècle* (Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang, 2002), pp.25-41 (p.25, 34).

⁸⁸ *ibid.*, p. 35-57.

⁸⁹ Steven Beller, ‘Is there a Jewish Aspect to Modern Austrian Identity?’, in *Österreich-Konzeptionen und jüdisches Selbstverständnis*, ed. by Hanni Mittelman and Armin A. Wallas (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2001), pp.43-52 (p.51).

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, p.52.

⁹¹ Beller, Steven, *Vienna and the Jews 1867 – 1938. A Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

In one of the most recent publications on Fin-de-siècle Vienna, Hillary Hope Herzog builds on Beller's methodology in order to analyse the experiences of individual Jewish writers from 1900 until the present day. For Herzog, the crisis of the individual affected all nationalities of the Habsburg Empire at the time, and literary fiction was a key instrument in coming to terms with issues of ethnic and cultural identity.⁹² Following the conclusions from recent scholarship, Herzog sees identity "not as something that is *a priori* present in us, inherent and fixed, but as a dynamic process that unfolds over a lifetime". This definition of constant evolution, Herzog explains, holds true for all questions of national identity, not only that of the Jews of Vienna. Identity, she continues, "must be continually renegotiated in response to the social environment in which one lives and as the result of a reflected engagement with the past and present." Given that identity is essentially a "social and communicative process", the process of writing is "the central avenue to identity", with this particular form of artistic expression "important in producing and giving form to an identity". While not intending to project the writers' biographies on their texts, Herzog does set out to explore how the authors reflected the issues related to identity in their work.⁹³ My approach is very similar. Herzog provides a comprehensive overview of Austrian-Jewish writers in the 20th century, whereas this dissertation focuses more narrowly – and thus in greater detail – on two writers of the Fin de siècle.

Acknowledging his retrospective viewpoint, Armin Wallas warns against the complacent acceptance of the myth of an essentially harmonious, supranational Austria, and the relativisation of Jewish identity inherent in this. The multifarious concepts of Austrian identity are "Ausdruck krisenhaft erlebter Identitätsfindungsprozesse."⁹⁴ Wallas cites Friedrich Heer stating that at every stage in its recent history, Austria found itself in crises of identity, almost constantly threatened with loss of identity.⁹⁵ In this context, Wallas explains, Austrian-Jewish writers responded by either embracing an essentially positive myth of the supranational Habsburg Empire, or by affirming a revolutionary counter-model of the Dual Monarchy as an oppressive, fundamentally conservative system.⁹⁶ Both concepts pose challenges to Jewish identity. They are critical of forms of nationalism, including Jewish nationalism and Zionism. For both models, the quintessential nature of Jewish existence is

⁹² Hillary Hope Herzog, *Jewish Writers in Austria from the Fin de Siècle to the Present* (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2011), p.5.

⁹³ Herzog, *Vienna is Different*, p.8.

⁹⁴ Armin A. Wallas, 'Mythen der Übernationalität und revolutionäre Gegenmodelle' in *Österreich-Konzeptionen*, ed. by Mittelmann and Wallas, pp.171-93 (p.192).

⁹⁵ see Friedrich Heer, *Kampf um österreichische Identität* (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 1981).

⁹⁶ Wallas, 'Mythen der Übernationalität' in *Österreich-Konzeptionen*, p.193.

the Diaspora, an existence conducive both to inter-cultural exchange and revolutionary upheaval. Both models are responses to the loss of national and religious traditions of the Jewish people. They offer myths to counter the impending threat to their sense of Austrian-Jewish identity that provide fertile ground for a wide ideological spectrum from “rückwärtsgewandte Utopien und revolutionärer Gesellschaftskritik”.⁹⁷

As the global nature of Zionist theory would suggest, anti-Semitism was by no means restricted to the German-speaking world. In France, the Dreyfus Affair began in 1894, and would drag on until 1906. The trial split and galvanised the entire country. Here, too, anti-Semitism was not an affair of the petit bourgeois, but could be found in intellectual circles as well. In essence, the Dreyfus Affair was an ideological struggle between those who believed in the glory of France’s cultural achievements, embodied in the army, and those who held the individual rights of man higher than political ideology. It was a clash between the political left and right and their respective sympathisers. When it was revealed, after Dreyfus had spent five years on Devil’s Island in French Guiana, that he had been convicted twice on the basis of forged evidence, the French anti-Semites suffered a defeat that their German counterparts never underwent. Neither Germany nor Austria saw a triumph of republican values over political intrigue, a powerful vindication of the opponents of anti-Semitism, as France did. Those who had fought for Dreyfus’ conviction with all means were thoroughly discredited, and in the public mind, anti-Semitism also lost much of its legitimacy.

The affair was followed with great interest in Vienna. Herzl was the Paris correspondent for the ‘Neue Freie Presse’ during the affair. A friend of Schnitzler’s, Paul Goldmann, even fought a duel with a French journalist who was an anti-Dreyfusard.⁹⁸ The Dreyfus Affair proved how firmly entrenched anti-Semitism had been at high levels of the French administration and the army, and that it had become a perfectly respectable position among the middle and upper classes of society.

The most disturbing feature of this new anti-Semitism was that conversion was no longer a solution to the problem. Fuelled by the theories of Gobineau and Chamberlain, Jewishness was now considered a racial, not only a religious characteristic. And the Jews now had a dual stereotype to contend with. No longer were distinctions made between the ‘good’ Western and the ‘bad’ Eastern Jew. In an industrialised Europe, Jews were considered capitalist exploiters in the nationalist press, exemplified by such successful financiers as the

⁹⁷ *ibid.*

⁹⁸ Arthur Schnitzler, *Briefe 1875-1912*, ed. by Therese Nickl and Heinrich Schnitzler (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer Verlag, 1981), p.307.

Rothschilds or the Ephrussis. At the same time, however, the same journals never tired of pointing out that not only was Marx Jewish, but also Viktor Adler, the founder of the Austrian Social Democrat Party. Since a number of other social democrat politicians were of Jewish background, Jews were also labelled as the driving force behind world revolution. The assimilated Jews of the middle classes could not win against this double-edged sword. These theories of Jewish world conspiracy, achieved either by capitalist or revolutionary means, were summarised in the highly influential, if fraudulent *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, first published in Russian in 1903.⁹⁹

In the Austrian capital, Jewish responses to this new form of anti-Semitism were varied. The first political movement that comes to mind is Zionism. Although Herzl is generally considered the ‘father of Zionism’, similar notions did, in fact, exist before Herzl’s emergence in the public sphere. Herzl’s energy and ambition organised these tendencies, however, and brought them onto the world stage. The first Zionist congress took place in August 1897, with the goal of establishing a state for the Jewish people in Palestine. The Zionists assumed the Jews were one national body. The only solution to the ‘Jewish Question’, in their view, was emigration and statehood. Only this would put an end to the centuries of injustice and persecution and finally enable the Jewish people to rise to be equal with other European nations.

The ‘Österreichisch-Israelitische Union’, founded in 1886,¹⁰⁰ did not share either of these assumptions. Neither did this association consider the Jews one indivisible ethnicity, nor did it believe in mass emigration. The Union was designed, for one, to counter anti-Semitism. For another, it was intended precisely to provide a counter-balance to the Zionist movement, by stressing its members’ Austrian citizenship, their loyalty to the government, and attachment to the nation. The German equivalent was founded in 1893 as the ‘Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens’.¹⁰¹ It is emblematic for its patriotic programme that it placed ‘German citizens’ before ‘Jewish faith’.

In spite of their differing approaches, these unions and Zionism had one thing in common: they aspired to unite all Jews in one general organisation against anti-Semitism. Every German-speaking Jew had to find some personal response to this new form of racial anti-Semitism. In addition to this challenge, there was a discrepancy between the Zionists and the

⁹⁹ Bruce Pauley, *From Prejudice to Persecution* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), p.8.

¹⁰⁰ Rozenblit, *The Jews of Vienna*, p.155.

¹⁰¹ Wistrich, p.192.

Österreichisch-Israelitische Union and the religious community, or 'Israelitische Kultusgemeinde', which in turn was divided into progressive and orthodox forces. In light of this, one begins to see that Jewish identity in Vienna around 1900 was a complex issue indeed.

For there was also a small number of Austrian Jews who did not want to have anything to do with these larger groups whatsoever. These were the painters, composers, philosophers, and writers who left their inextinguishable mark on German culture. In the Fin de siècle, Vienna was one of the European centres of modernism. The tremendous intellectual and artistic flourishing of the early 20th century has never been duplicated since. At the centre of this creative blossoming were the assimilated, middle-class Jews. Why the Jews? There is a strong tradition of learning and respect for the learned in Jewish communities. Freud attributed his adamant defence of psychoanalysis against its widespread initial resistance to his Jewish background. As a Jew, he noted, one is free from intellectual prejudice and ready to enter into opposition against a compact majority.¹⁰² This also rings true for two other Jewish figures of public life who were among the most recognised authors of their age: Arthur Schnitzler and Jakob Wassermann.

¹⁰² Shulamit Volkov, *Antisemitismus als kultureller Code* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2000), p.151.

Der Weg ins Freie: Schnitzler's Exploration of the 'Jewish Question'

I. Introduction

In *Der Weg ins Freie*, Schnitzler provides a minutely-detailed social panorama of the Jewish 'Großbürgertum' of Vienna and their varied responses to anti-Semitism. There is Salomon Ehrenberg, the wealthy owner of a munitions factory, who sympathises with Zionist aims, and enjoys taunting his family by speaking in Yiddish jargon. His son, Oskar, antagonises his father with his distinct sympathies for Catholicism.

The plot of the novel is quite simple: The young aristocrat and composer Georg von Wergenthin is in love with Anna Rosner, who is from a much more humble background. Georg's friend, Heinrich Bermann, represents a more moderate stance on the 'Jewish Question'. His father's political career mirrored the decline of political Liberalism in Austria, since he lost an election to a German nationalist deputy of rather dubious repute. Bermann himself delights in philosophical speculation and provides the anti-Zionist counterbalance to Leo Golowski.

Another character worth noting is Jakob Rosner, Anna's brother. In the first chapter, his parents are disappointed with his lack of ambition and his regular demands for money. However, Jakob soon finds employment with a Christian Social newspaper, the views of which he willingly accepts. He is the only character in the entire novel who finds a clear-cut aim in his life and who manages to pursue his goal with success.

Der Weg ins Freie is Schnitzler's first major work in which he deals with issues of Jewishness. In examining the way in which certain characters and their political viewpoints are presented by the author, it is possible to draw conclusions about his own position. Considering unpublished aphorisms and earlier drafts for the novel, there is a remarkable resemblance between Heinrich Bermann's and Schnitzler's own internal dilemma of German-Jewish identity. Read in conjunction with *Professor Bernhardt*, which also contains strong autobiographical elements, *Der Weg ins Freie* can be taken to constitute an earlier, explorative stage in the development of Schnitzler's stance on Jewish identity. The plot evolved from a much earlier project for a comedy, *Die Entrüsteten*, centering on the seduction of a girl from a lower social milieu and her brother's subsequent revenge. The drafts for this

date from between 1894 and 1900.¹⁰³ Schnitzler began work on the prose version in earnest only hours after the birth of his son, on 9 August 1902, and completed the novel in October 1907.¹⁰⁴ Later, during Karl Lueger's mayorship, Schnitzler would eventually come to a more decisive position against anti-Semitism, as clearly reflected in his play. By May 1908, Schnitzler had completed a draft of the first act of *Professor Bernhardt*, but most of the work still lay ahead of him. It would take another four years to finish the play.¹⁰⁵

Der Weg ins Freie appeared in the 'Neue Rundschau' from January until June 1908 and was first published in book form in June 1908.¹⁰⁶ After the first critical reviews, Schnitzler was disgusted by the fact that he was now generally considered a Jewish author, as the contemporary reviews treated later on will show. And yet the publication of such a work, with predominantly Jewish characters, meant his open acknowledgement of the fact. On 13 January 1910, Schnitzler notes in his diary that "'Der Weg ins Freie' [...] vor allem nicht genug verstanden ist."¹⁰⁷ In September of the same year, he regrets that his literary description of character is not sufficiently recognised, because the Jewish issues weigh too heavily: "Werd ichs noch erleben, daß man die Gestalt wie den "Heinrich Bermann" rein künstlerisch, vorurtheilslos erfaßt -?-"¹⁰⁸ Re-reading the novel in March 1912, Schnitzler records: "Nach dem 4. Cap. hatte ich die dezidierte Empfindung, daß dieses Buch kaum verstanden und gewürdigt wird.-"¹⁰⁹

Throughout his life, Schnitzler felt that this first novel was misunderstood. Why was this? *Der Weg ins Freie* was widely regarded by contemporary critics as a Jewish novel and interpreted in the light of the 'Jewish Question'. As Dr. Karl Rosenfeld wrote in his review, *Der Weg ins Freie* was a "heißes Bekenntnis zur nationalen Auferstehung des Judentums".¹¹⁰ For some, it was too Jewish to be a true novel of Vienna; for others, it did not go far enough in offering a solution to the Jewish dilemma. Schnitzler objected strongly to the book being considered a Jewish 'Schlüsselroman'. On 8 January 1907, he notes in his diary, "Bei Tisch Besprechung meines Romans [...] als 'Schlüssel'roman; ärgerliches Bedenken meinerseits, dass man über der Sensation das Kunstwerk (absichtlich) vergessen könnte.-" Two days

¹⁰³ Farese, *Arthur Schnitzler*, p.132.

¹⁰⁴ Renate Wagner, *Arthur Schnitzler: eine Biographie* (Vienna: Molden Verlag, 1981), p.136, 192.

¹⁰⁵ Wagner, *Schnitzler*, p.206-7, 252.

¹⁰⁶ Arthur Schnitzler, *Gesammelte Werke*, 4 vols (Frankfurt/Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1961-62), *Die erzählenden Schriften*, vol. 2 (1962), p.993; Farese, p.137.

¹⁰⁷ TB 1909-1912, 13.1.1910.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 24.9.1910.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 30.3.1912.

¹¹⁰ Hans-Ulrich Lindken, *Arthur Schnitzler – Aspekte und Akzente* (Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang, 1984), p.78-79.

later, he adds, “Zu Haus schlecht gearbeitet; ziemlich irritirt von der Schlüsselauffassung.”¹¹¹

A roman à clef is a novel where the boundaries between fiction and reality are fluent, and the characters are assumed to exist in real life as well. Thomas Mann faced vicious criticism in his native Lübeck once people began to recognise prominent citizens in his first novel, *Buddenbrooks* (1900). The underlying issue in Schnitzler’s novel, however, was a different one. If he conceded publicly that the Jewish dilemma was a central issue for him, his work would be even more gravely misunderstood than it already was. That way, he would be written off as a Jewish author for the foreseeable future, just as nearly every one of his female characters was interpreted as the ‘süßes Mädel’ type he had invented. Schnitzler was fully conscious of his Jewish background but considered himself an Austrian author first and foremost. As noted earlier, he held that a Jewish author wrote in Hebrew, whereas a ‘deutscher Dichter’ wrote in German.¹¹² In a letter to the Jüdischer National Fonds, which asked for support for the Zionist cause, Schnitzler clarifies:

Ich betrachte mich nämlich keineswegs als einen jüdischen Dichter, sondern als einen deutschen Dichter, der, soweit sich so etwas überhaupt nachweisen lässt, der jüdischen Rasse angehört, dessen Blut jedenfalls vorwiegend jüdisch ist und der auch in manchen seiner Eigenschaften vieles findet, das als charakteristisch jüdisch angesprochen werden darf.

Ich schreibe in deutscher Sprache, lebe innerhalb eines deutschen Kulturkreises, verdanke gewiß von allen Kulturen der deutschen weitaus am meisten, wenn ich auch ganz genau weiß, was ich der hebräischen, der hellenischen und der römischen schuldig geworden bin, von der romanischen ganz zu schweigen. Daran, daß ich ein deutscher Dichter bin, wird mich weder jüdisch-zionistisches Ressentiment, noch die Albernheit und Unverschämtheit deutscher Nationalisten, im geringsten irre machen; nicht einmal der Verdacht, daß ich mich beim Deutschtum oder gerade bei seinen kläglichsten Vertretern anbieten möchte, wird mich daran hindern zu fühlen was ich fühle, zu wissen was ich weiß [...] ¹¹³

In the light of this, it does not seem surprising that Schnitzler should ignore those reviews trying to portray the Jewish dilemma in *Der Weg ins Freie* as one of Schnitzler’s own key conflicts. But the critics had struck a nerve. Schnitzler was very much attached to his novel, and he had written much of his own internal strife into it. This was not only because of the strongly autobiographical description of his relationship with Marie Reinhard; Schnitzler had, for the first time, presented himself to the public as an author of Jewish origin. A few years

¹¹¹ TB 1903-1909, 8.1. & 10.1.1907.

¹¹² CUL, MS Unabgesandte Briefe, Folder 124B, No.5.

¹¹³ Ibid., No.3.

later, he would note: “Ich [...] habe mich begreiflicherweise niemals entschliessen können, auf all die antisemitischen Verdrehungen, Begeiferungen und Verleumdungen, die ich im Laufe einer mehr als zwanzigjährigen schriftstellerischen Tätigkeit erfahren habe, ein Wort zu entgegnen.” (27.1.1915)¹¹⁴ Schnitzler knew there was more to his prose and plays than the Jewish dilemma, and he wanted them to be appreciated as works of art, grappling with various problems affecting human nature. That is one of the reasons why he was so averse to the interpretation of *Der Weg ins Freie* as a ‘Schlüsselstück’. In his diary, Schnitzler noted: “An der Stelle, die ihm gebührt wird der Roman erst in der reinern Atmosphäre späterer Jahre sich behaupten.”¹¹⁵

I.a) More than a ‘Judenroman’

At one point, Georg says to Bermann: “Es ist eine Manie von Ihnen [...] Man hat wirklich manchmal den Eindruck, daß Sie überhaupt nicht mehr imstande sind, etwas anderes in der Welt zu sehen als immer und überall die Judenfrage.” (p.234) This could be Schnitzler speaking to one of his reviewers. This was also why Schnitzler felt, throughout his lifetime, that his novel was misunderstood. As we have seen, Schnitzler was irritated that all other themes in the book were subsumed by the so-called ‘Jewish Question’, and for this reason, objected strongly to the book being termed his ‘Schlüsselstück’. There is more to *Der Weg ins Freie* than issues of Jewish identity. Schnitzler writes to Leonie Meyerhof-Hildeck:

Ich darf bei dieser Gelegenheit wohl vermuten, daß Sie zu denjenigen Kennern meines Romans gehören, die darin auch andre Beziehungen und Probleme zu entdecken vermocht haben als die jüdischen. Daß man all dies andre so vielfach übersehen konnte, liegt wohl auch mehr in der großen Bedeutung der Judenfrage an sich begründet, als in dem Ausmaß, das der Frage innerhalb meines Romans eingeräumt ist. Man könnte alles Theoretische über das Judenproblem [...] herausstreichen und es bliebe noch immer ein recht umfangreiches Buch übrig. (7.12.1908)¹¹⁶

Following in a similar vein, he explains to Georg Brandes:

Manche von diesen Problemen sind mir allerdings erst im Laufe der Arbeit zu ihrer eigentlichen Bedeutung erstanden [...] insbesondere das Problem der Schuld und der Verantwortung. [...] Fiel es Ihnen nicht auch auf, wie sowohl Georg als Heinrich

¹¹⁴ Schnitzler, *Briefe 1913-1931*, p.76.

¹¹⁵ TB 1909-1912, 1.1.1909.

¹¹⁶ Schnitzler, *Briefe 1875-1912*, p.583.

Bermann als Leo Golowski jeder ein Menschenleben auf dem Gewissen haben? [...] Und es kam mir ja schließlich nicht darauf an, irgendwas nachzuweisen [...] sondern ich wollte, ohne Tendenz, Menschen und Beziehungen darstellen – die ich gesehn habe [...] (4.7.1908)¹¹⁷

The central reason why Schnitzler felt his novel was misunderstood was, indeed, the negligence of other important issues in the plot, such as guilt and responsibility. Furthermore, Schnitzler uses Georg's and Anna's relationship to condemn the rigid conventions women were placed under at the time. Related to this, Schnitzler criticised the double standards of polite society, which granted men of a higher social standing considerably more freedom. The wealthy sons of the upper classes readily abused this freedom in their dealings with girls from the working classes. This follows a line of criticism that Schnitzler had developed already in such early plays as *Das Märchen* (1893) and *Liebelei* (1895).

'Schuld' and 'Verantwortung' are the key terms here, especially in the relationship of men to women. That is why Schnitzler welcomed Auguste Hauschner's review with enthusiasm, because she had equated the plight of the middle-class woman – a theme decidedly more enduring in Schnitzler's work than issues of Jewishness – to the dilemma of the Viennese Jews. Thus, central as *Der Weg ins Freie* is to the formation of Schnitzler's stance on the 'Jewish Question', we must not make the mistake of the contemporary reviewers and read it only as a 'Judenroman'. Schnitzler himself always denied it was a roman à clef, while in reality, it was his first public acknowledgement of his Jewish background. And yet this is, indeed, but 'half' of the novel. Only in conjunction with the equally profound treatment of human weaknesses does the novel find its place among Schnitzler's other works and is it raised to a more sublime level than a mere social panorama: that of a lasting work of literature.

I.b) Sympathy without Commitment: Schnitzler's Stance on Zionism

Keeping the above point in mind, we may ask the question to what extent Schnitzler's own views on the Jewish identity crisis are prevalent in the novel. As indicated in the letter to the Jüdischer National Fonds, Schnitzler always maintained a critical distance from Zionism. He regarded it as a sensible philanthropic measure for disadvantaged Eastern European Jews suffering persecution in Russia. But he had no desire to support the movement politically:

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p.579-80.

Man kann aufs Allerhöchste einschätzen, was diese Bewegung, insbesondere für arme, verfolgte, gemarterte Juden geleistet hat und noch leisten wird. Man wird sich vor der Wahrheit nicht verschliessen, dass hunderttausende Juden tatsächlich durch die Verfolgungen ihrer Wirtsvölker, mehr noch durch die Schurkereien der betreffenden Regierungen heimatlos geworden sind, einer neuen Heimat dringend bedürfen. Man wird auch ohneweiters zugeben, dass unzählige Juden [...] einfach durch den Ekel über die Anfeindungen, denen sie [...] ausgesetzt waren, in verletztem Stolz diese Heimat verlassen und sich eine andere suchen wollen, und dass ihnen diejenige als die angemessenste erscheint, wo eben vor 2000 Jahren ihre Urväter zuhause gewesen sind.¹¹⁸

Beier lists numerous instances where Schnitzler rejected invitations to contribute to the Zionist mouthpiece *Die Welt* in 1902, to donate for land purchases in Egypt in 1907, or to speak at Zionist associations, such as at the student group Bar Kochba, two years later.¹¹⁹ Schnitzler declined to give a speech at the tenth anniversary of Theodor Herzl's death, in April 1914. His reason was, "dass ich mich in meiner innersten Gesinnung niemals so sehr mit Herzl verbunden gefühlt habe, als dass es mir bei einer solchen Gelegenheit gestattet sein dürfte, öffentlich das Wort für Herzl zu ergreifen." (11.4.1914)¹²⁰

Schnitzler's acquaintance with the man who became the Zionist leader began with Herzl's congratulatory note on his play *Das Märchen*, which Herzl very much admired, in 1892. In 1894 and 1895, Schnitzler worked as an intermediary for Herzl in his effort to find a director who would stage his play *Das Ghetto*. The drama, which would eventually be performed in 1898 as *Das neue Ghetto*, vehemently criticises the injustice Jews were faced with and ends with the virtual martyrdom of the Jewish protagonist. Schnitzler suggested new characters and offered corrections to the plot, in order to make Herzl's criticism more effective.

In their correspondence, the two got along very well. When they met in person, however, on Herzl's return from Paris in 1895, Schnitzler disapproved of Herzl's political ambitions. It was precisely the beginning of Herzl's political activity for Zionism that estranged Schnitzler. They discussed the settlement of Palestine repeatedly later in 1895 and 1896, with Schnitzler always voicing his scepticism of the idea.¹²¹

Recognising their disagreement, they rarely met or corresponded after this phase of discussions. However, in early July 1904, Schnitzler noted in his diary being "sehr

¹¹⁸ CUL, MS Unabgesandte Briefe, Folder B124, No.7.

¹¹⁹ TB 1893-1902, 18.12.1902; TB 1902-1908, 9.1.1907; TB 1909-1912, 26.2., 30.10., 25.11.1909.

¹²⁰ Schnitzler, *Briefe 1913-1931*, p.38.

¹²¹ DLA, MS Charakteristiken aus den Tagebüchern – Theodor Herzl, Folder 187, No.453.

erschüttert” on hearing of Herzl’s death.¹²² Repeatedly, Schnitzler regrets not having openly expressed his admiration for Herzl and having been misunderstood by him. Writing on 7 August, he acknowledges the Zionist leader’s international fame: “Wohl bedeutend zu nennen, Weltruhm, Staaten gründen wollend, von Millionen beweint, da er starb – Juden in Odessa sperrten die Geschäfte, wie die Todesnachricht kam”.¹²³ In September 1906, he records, “Ich erinnere mich auch Herzls, der mich nicht leiden konnte (in den letzten Jahren) sich wirklich dumm gegen mich benahm – und nie erfahren hat, wie sehr ich ihn respektirt [sic], ja bewunderte.”¹²⁴ Schnitzler reiterates this in December, mentioning a conversation with Raoul Auernheimer: “Über Herzl viel (der mich, wie ich weiss, nie leiden mochte und keine Ahnung von mir hatte, während ich ihn wirklich bewunderte)”.¹²⁵

Nevertheless, admiring Herzl did not change Schnitzler’s position on Zionism. He acknowledged Herzl’s efforts because he championed a cause with unwavering determination. But Schnitzler would not let himself be harnessed to a political movement such as Zionism.

Aber daß man ein überzeugter Assimilant oder ein überzeugter Zionist sein könnte, ist beides gleich unbegreiflich. Das hieße ja die Zukunft vorher sehn können. Man kann nur Vermutungen, Ansichten haben welche Lösung die vorteilhaftere sein könnte für einen selber, für seine Angehörigen, für ein Volk, dem man angehört ob mit oder ohne Liebe, mit Stolz oder mit Scham.

Es ist nicht Feigheit Assimilant und es ist nicht Mut Zionist zu sein. Man kann bewußter Jude sein und doch Assimilant. [...] Auch ohne sich solidarisch zu fühlen, kann man das offenbare Unrecht, das an den Juden geschieht, verabscheuen.¹²⁶

“Die Zukunft vorher sehn können” means seeing which solution to the ‘Jewish Question’ would eventually prove to be the right one. For the present, one could only speculate on the advantages of the different positions for one’s people, but also for oneself and one’s family. Again, Schnitzler’s individualism is apparent. The last sentence points to Schnitzler’s stance towards the Eastern Jewish refugees: His sense of justice was offended by the persecutions and sufferings they had to endure, even though he did not share their social or religious background.

¹²² TB 1903-1908, 4.6.1904.

¹²³ Ibid., 7.8.1904.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 24.9.1906.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 7.12.1906.

¹²⁶ CUL, MS Aphorismen, Folder A5.

Personal differences with Herzl, and his aversion to the politics of Zionism, which he felt was more useful to impoverished Jewish refugees from the East than to assimilated Austrian Jews of the middle class, led Schnitzler to distance himself from Herzl's movement. Another important reason for this was Schnitzler's attachment to Austria and his complete integration into the society of his native Vienna. He was one of the most successful authors in the German-speaking world and relied on a German audience for a living.

Schnitzler was also very much attached to Vienna, which he left only for travels. He considered German-speaking Austria native soil. In a short *Bekanntnis* from 1904, he states: "Ich liebe mein Vaterland nicht, weil es mein Vaterland, sondern weil ich es schön find. Ich habe Heimatgefühl, aber keinen Patriotismus."¹²⁷ Schnitzler distinguishes between attachment to his 'Heimat' and political allegiance. Not the state but the country is the object of Schnitzler's affection. He expands upon this 'Heimatgefühl' in his interview with Benvenisti in 1924:

I am rooted here in Vienna, my home and the home of my youth. I have grown up identifying myself with its highly individual culture. I am part of it, and it is part of me. Why should I leave this country because a few ignorant and ill-bred fools of anti-Semites tell me I do not belong here?¹²⁸

If Schnitzler's wider sense of cultural identity was with the German-speaking world, in more specific terms, he identified with Austria. His dilemma arose from anti-Semites denying that anyone of Jewish origin could be a true Austrian. In an unpublished statement, he defends his position:

Sie rechnen uns nicht zu ihresgleichen. Ich möchte es mir auch verboten haben. Sie finden, ich sei kein Österreicher wie sie. Vor allem bin ich ich, was mir fürs Erste genügt, und daß ich in Österreich auf die Welt gekommen bin, kann mir Niemand abstreiten. Wenn Millionen Cretins finden, daß ich nicht hierher gehöre, so weiß ich's besser als diese, daß ich hier heimischer bin als sie Alle.¹²⁹

Schnitzler's cultural identity was threefold: Austrian, German, and Jewish. He expresses this tripartite allegiance in a letter to his sister-in-law, Lisl Steinrück, in the first months of the First World War:

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Benvenisti, 'Arthur Schnitzler foretells Jewish Renaissance', ZAS MF 320.

¹²⁹ CUL, MS Aphorismen, Folder A5.

Es geht uns Oesterreichern – fast schon wie – uns Juden –; übrigens, mit Beziehung aufs Ausland könnte man fortsetzen: uns Deutschen – wie uns Oesterreichern – und uns Juden. *Wir* werden verkannt. Sonderbar, dass wir uns in dieser Zeit als alles zugleich fühlen müssen. Ich bin Jude, Oesterreicher, Deutscher. Es muss wohl so sein – denn beleidigt fühl ich mich im Namen des Judentums, des Oesterreichertums und Deutschlands, wenn man einem von den Dreien was Schlimmes nachsagt. (22.12.1914)¹³⁰

During the war, Schnitzler felt a certain antagonism between his Jewish origin on the one hand, and his strong adherence to both German-speaking culture and attachment to his native Austria, on the other. The nationalism of the war's propaganda made this more acute than it had been in peacetime. In 1915, he wrote:

Und nun erlebe ich als Deutscher, als Angehöriger des deutschen Volkes, mit Millionen anderen Deutschen, mit Hunderttausenden, die mich nicht zu den ihren rechneten, [...] trotz der Zusammengehörigkeit, die von gemeinsam erduldeter Feindseligkeit stärker geschmiedet wird als von gemeinsam geatmeter Luft, gemeinsam geliebten Werken und Menschen; nun erlebe ich es wieder, daß ich mich frage, zusammen mit jenen, die mich nicht zu den Ihren rechneten: Warum kennt ihr uns nicht? Warum wollt ihr uns nicht kennen? Und diese Frage geht weit in die Welt hinaus, nach allen Himmelsrichtungen in denen die Nationen [...] leben, die sich [...] auch mit lang genährtem bürgerlichen Widerwillen gegen das große Deutschland wenden, in dem ich, ein Abkömmling jüdischer Rasse, ein Österreicher, mich jederzeit als dazugehörig, gleichberechtigt und mitverantwortlich gefühlt habe. Und ich frage nun die Deutschen, die gleich mir [...] diese Frage zum wahrhaft neutralen Himmel aufsenden [...]: Warum kennen sie uns nicht? Warum wollen sie uns nicht kennen?¹³¹

In the later course of the war, Schnitzler's identification with the German and the Austrian cause would decrease, as he became increasingly sceptical of the government's war aims and more and more repulsed by the nationalist propaganda.

His sense of German, Austrian and Jewish identity was fairly consistent, however. Throughout his life, he felt equally strongly that he was an Austrian of Jewish background, and thus part of the wider German-speaking culture. In a diary entry from 1918, he summarises his cultural identity in the phrase: "Ich bin oesterreichischer Staatsbürger

¹³⁰ Schnitzler, *Briefe 1913-1931*, p.68-69.

¹³¹ Arthur Schnitzler, *Aphorismen und Betrachtungen*, ed. by Robert O. Weiss (Frankfurt/Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1967), p.198.

jüdischer Race, zur deutschen Kultur mich bekennd.“¹³² As such, and given his strong attachment to his native Vienna, he saw no reason to emigrate to Palestine.

I.c) “[Einer der] wenigen vermeidbaren Ursachen des Antisemitismus” – against Orthodoxy and the ‘Renegat’

Schnitzler was raised in a family of non-practising Jews. In *Jugend in Wien*, he relates how his family used matzo as biscuits for coffee¹³³ – showing the full extent to which orthodox rituals had transformed into a secularised and polite ceremony of the middle class. Schnitzler remained at a critical distance to Jewish orthodoxy throughout his life. In October 1912, he asks Salomon Zimmels, his son’s teacher of religion, whether Heinrich could be exempted from attending classes at the synagogue (10.10.1912).¹³⁴

Three years later, during the war, Schnitzler was requested to donate to provide Jewish prisoners of war with unleavened bread for Pessach. Instead of a donation, he sent a letter to the committee of the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde, explaining he considered this not only an “unzeitgemäß” but also a dangerous idea. “Warum,” he asks, “konstituiert sich ein Ausschuss zur rituellen Beköstigung u.s.w u.s.w. in einer Zeit, wo es um so viel wichtigere, wesentlichere und wie ich hinzusetzen möchte, weniger aufreizende Dinge zu beraten und zu tun gäbe?”

He continues that the rabbis, rather than encouraging religious superstition, should work for enlightening the Jews (“endlich einmal aufklären”).

Jetzt oder nie, nicht nur bei den Kriegsgefangenen [...] wäre nun Gelegenheit auf das Unzeitgemäße, auf das Aberwitzige, ja auf das Gefährliche aller jener rituellen Gebräuche hinzuweisen, die mit dem Wesen der Religion, mit der wahren Gottesverehrung nicht das Geringste zu tun zu haben.

Man hebe nicht nur die für unsere Zeit und für unser Klima nicht mehr passenden Speisegesetze auf, sondern, was mir noch viel wichtiger dünkt, man mache sich endlich daran den Sabbath auf den Sonntag zu verlegen. Selbst der orthodoxeste Jude wird sich von seinem Rabbiner ohne Schwierigkeiten überzeugen lassen, daß es Gott, der ja am Ende auch die Entstehung des Christentums geduldet hat, vollkommen gleichgültig ist, ob man den Sabbath oder den Sonntag heilige.¹³⁵

¹³² TB 1917-1919, 1.11.1918.

¹³³ Schnitzler, *Jugend in Wien*, p.18.

¹³⁴ Schnitzler, *Briefe 1875-1912*, p.702.

¹³⁵ CUL, MS An den Ausschuss zur rituellen Beköstigung der jüdischen Kriegsgefangenen und Zivilgefangenen an den Pessachfeiertagen, März 1915, Folder 60, Nos.68-72.

Schnitzler could not state his scepticism and even disapproval of Jewish religious customs more openly. He points out that ostentatious measures in wartime such as these help foster anti-Semitic feeling.

Gerade ich vielleicht darf es aussprechen, der in dogmatischer Hinsicht vollkommen konfessionslos, seine Stammeszugehörigkeit niemals verleugnet, [...] dass ein solches Festhalten an Aeusserlichkeiten der Religion [...] zu den Ursachen und zwar zu den vermeidbaren, zu den wenigen vermeidbaren Ursachen des Antisemitismus mir gegolten hat.

Und ich scheue den Vorwurf des Assimilantentums von Seite der Juden so wenig als es mich jemals an meinem Wesen irre gemacht hat, wenn die Deutschnationalen mir mein Deutschtum abzuerkennen versuchten. Und ich hätte die Empfindung für meine Person eine Unehrllichkeit, ja eine Feigheit zu begehen, wenn ich mich dazu hergäbe einen Aberglauben zu unterstützen, der bei gutem Willen [...] und bei etwas politischem Scharfblick der zur religiösen Führung ihrer Glaubensgenossen berufenen Juden längst hätte aus der Welt geschafft sein können.¹³⁶

Schnitzler emphasises his individualism, disregarding allegations from both religious Jews and from German nationalists. If he did not criticise openly that which he felt played into the hands of anti-Semites, he would consider himself a coward. Thinking back to the first citation, Schnitzler positions himself somewhere between “jüdisch-zionistisches Ressentiment” and “die Unverschämtheit deutscher Nationalisten”. Given his sceptical stance on both Jewish orthodoxy and Zionism, and his profound attachment to German-speaking Austria, one may ask to what extent he considered himself Jewish at all. Schnitzler perceived his Jewish background as a cultural heritage more than a religious or even an ethnic adherence. Upholding his Jewish origins was, for Schnitzler, a question of personal integrity. He had nothing but contempt for those Jews who denied their background for opportunistic reasons or even converted to Catholicism. In *Der Geist im Wort und der Geist in der Tat*, Schnitzler states:

Du magst deinen neuen Glauben ebenso hoch halten, wie du deinen früheren gehalten hast, du bist in jedem Falle ein schlechterer geworden als du warst, denn du bist nun ein Renegat. Und wenn du zu deinem neuen Gott ebenso andächtig betest als zu jenem, den du verließest, der neue Gott ist darum kein besserer als der frühere war, du bist aber ein schlechterer geworden.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ *ibid.*

¹³⁷ Schnitzler, *Aphorismen und Betrachtungen*, p.260.

These were Jews who, in an attempt to hide their origins, went so far as to embrace anti-Semitism themselves. Just as much as he loathed those anti-Semites who denied the existence of anti-Semitism, so he condemned Jews who denied their Jewishness or even converted to Catholicism. A letter to Gustav Schwarzkopf on Karl Kraus' anti-Semitic outbursts, in spite of Kraus being himself Jewish, is written in the same vein:

Der kleine Kraus sitzt im Theater [...]; seine Stellung zu den Antisemiten ist doch das widerwärtigste, was mir je vorgekommen. Ja wenn es Einsicht, Intention zu Gerechtigkeit wäre; aber es ist schließlich auf nichts als Kriecherei – irgend was wie das, was ich einmal in einer Tramway erlebt habe, wo ein schäbiger jüdischer Commis vor Lueger Platz machte und sagte: „Bitte Herr Doktor“ und entzückt war, von Lueger keinen Fußtritt zu erhalten – kurz die Haltung des kleinen Kraus gegen die Antisemiten – ist echt jüdisch. (29.9.1899)¹³⁸

‘Jüdisch’ is meant in the negative sense here, i.e., total servility towards the non-Jewish ‘host’ community. One of Schnitzler’s favourite terms to describe this kind of ‘jüdisch’ behaviour was ‘Esoi’, from a much-quoted anecdote related in *Der Weg ins Freie*: A Jew is alone in a train carriage with his legs stretched out on the seat in front of him, when a fellow traveller comes in. The Jew takes his feet off the seat until the other passenger speaks to him with a Jewish accent. “Ä soi,” (“ach so”), the first Jew says and stretches his legs out onto the seat in front of him again.¹³⁹

It is this lack of respect and support among Jews themselves, and ‘Kriecherei’ before anti-Semites such as Karl Lueger, that Schnitzler strongly objects to. Closely related to ‘Renegaten’ are Jews who practice ‘Kriecherei’. In an undated aphorism, presumably from 1914 or 1915, which has not been noted in scholarship so far, Schnitzler writes:

Kein bewußter Jude sein ist schlimmer als Feigheit, ist Dummheit. Es heißt leugnen, daß man von Vater und Mutter stammt, daß diese weder Väter und Mütter gehabt haben, heißt leugnen, daß man überhaupt ein Geschöpf, ein ganz bestimmtes Wesen, ein Individuum unter anderm ist.¹⁴⁰

Schnitzler’s use of the term ‘feig’, which he also employs in aphorisms on the changeability of political persuasions, recurs in the following citation. This indicates that, for Schnitzler, denying one’s Jewish origins revealed a lack of personal integrity.

¹³⁸ Schnitzler, *Briefe 1875-1912*, p.379.

¹³⁹ Schnitzler, *Der Weg ins Freie* (Frankfurt/Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1992), p.146.

¹⁴⁰ CUL, MS Aphorismen, Folder A5.

Der Renegat ist immer ein Mensch, der sich seiner eigenen Minderwertigkeit dunkel bewußt ist, und den feigen oder tückischen Versuch unternimmt, seine Familie, seine Nation, seine Rasse für seine höchst individuellen Mängel verantwortlich zu machen.¹⁴¹

A very similar phenomenon Schnitzler qualifies as Jewish ‘Snobismus’. In *Jugend in Wien*, speaking of his mother’s wealthy, assimilated Jewish family, Schnitzler mentions, “daß [...] der Snobismus, die Weltkrankheit unserer Epoche, ausnehmend günstige Entwicklungsbedingungen vorfinden mußte.”¹⁴² He is speaking not of snobbism as such, but of the Jewish form of over-assimilation to the point of anti-Semitism. One prominent example of this kind of ‘Renegat’, as Schnitzler perceived him, was Hugo von Hofmannsthal. Their friendship was put to a test by Schnitzler’s novel.

I.d) Hugo von Hofmannsthal’s Curious Response

Der Weg ins Freie was not one of Hofmannsthal’s favourite works. On 6 June 1908, Schnitzler notes in his diary: “Mit O. Rodaun gefahren zu Hugo’s. [...] Über den Roman kein Wort, nicht einmal Dank. Nur ein Spass über Stanzides. Mußte innerlich lachen.”¹⁴³

Why did Hofmannsthal pretend Schnitzler had never written *Der Weg ins Freie*? As for his background, Hofmannsthal was an aristocrat of Jewish origin, whose grandfather had converted to Catholicism. He was known among his friends for indulging in anti-Semitic comments. And yet Hofmannsthal was the object of anti-Semitic satire himself, as it appeared in the journal *Kikeriki*.¹⁴⁴ In fact, it was even alleged that his *Ödipus* (1906) was written in ‘Judendeutsch’.¹⁴⁵ Hofmannsthal was aware that this was mainly due to his circle of Jewish literary friends, and although he had no desire to break with them, he did attempt to distinguish himself from them both in literary and in personal terms. He married into a wealthy Jewish family with similar leanings. Of Hofmannsthal’s brother-in-law, Hans Schlesinger, Schnitzler notes in his diary: “Glaubt schon ans Fegefeuer und alles andre im Katechismus. Ist jetzt glücklich und zufrieden. Wird vielleicht sogar Priester. – Ein Jude sollte entweder intelligent oder überhaupt nicht geboren sein.”¹⁴⁶

¹⁴¹ Arthur Schnitzler, *Ohne Maske – Aphorismen und Notate*, ed. by Manfred Diersch (Leipzig: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1992), p.205.

¹⁴² Schnitzler, *Jugend in Wien*, p.18.

¹⁴³ TB 1903-1908, 6.6.1908.

¹⁴⁴ Riedmann, p.223.

¹⁴⁵ Beller, *Vienna and the Jews*, p.205.

¹⁴⁶ TB 1909 – 1912, 10.1.1911.

Given that these were the tendencies in his wife's family, it comes as no surprise that Hofmannsthal was profoundly Catholic, and his belief found expression in such plays as *Der Schwierige* (1921) and *Der Unbestechliche* (1923). Both end, after trials and tribulations, with a harmonious marriage. This was a holy institution for Hofmannsthal, with the family as the essential symbol of society and order. Hofmannsthal felt averse to both the Jewish component of *Der Weg ins Freie* and to the 'loose' relationship of Georg and Anna, with its tragic ending of a stillborn baby. In July 1908, he writes to Schnitzler:

Ich meine mein gar nicht glückliches Verhältnis zu Ihrem Roman. Da ich Sie eben sehr gerne habe, und zwischen Ihnen und Ihren Arbeiten natürlich keine Grenzen ziehen kann, so hat mich dies durch einige Wochen sehr verstört. Es wäre mir ebenso qualvoll gewesen, darüber reden zu müssen, als es mir peinlich war zu schweigen.¹⁴⁷

In his diary, Schnitzler mentions feeling 'touchiert', supposing: "um diesem Roman gegenüber nichts als 'verstört' zu sein, muss man von seinem Dichter sich innerlich mehr entfernt haben als man geahnt hat."¹⁴⁸

Two years later, in late October, Hofmannsthal confesses to having forgotten Schnitzler's novel on a train, "halb zufällig halb absichtlich".¹⁴⁹ Schnitzler was very much offended by this phrase, which suggested Hofmannsthal's indifference, even disapproval, of the book. He considers it "völlig unvereinbar mit unseren künstlerischen und menschlichen Beziehungen, wie ich sie bisher gesehen habe."¹⁵⁰

For Schnitzler, Hofmannsthal's behaviour was symptomatic of 'Snobismus'. It is undeniable that Hofmannsthal had qualms about his family's Jewish origins, because he was branded a Jewish author by the anti-Semitic press. Ostentatious sympathy for Catholicism, anti-Semitic statements, and his association with such editors as Felix von Oppenheimer were but attempts to break away from his Jewish origins. There are several indications of Hofmannsthal's 'Snobismus' in Schnitzler's diaries. In November 1914, Schnitzler speaks to Auernheimer about "Hugo, dessen Feudalismus sich nun wieder zu entwickeln scheint (Artikel in der Oe[sterreichischen] R[undschau])".¹⁵¹ A month later, he notes: "Hugo, als

¹⁴⁷ CUL, MS Letters Hofmannsthal to Schnitzler, 24.7.1908, Folder B 43,2.

¹⁴⁸ TB 1903-1908, 25.7.1908.

¹⁴⁹ CUL, MS Hofmannsthal to Schnitzler, 29.10.1910, Folder B 43.

¹⁵⁰ CUL, MS Letters Schnitzler to Hofmannsthal, 2.11.1910, Folder B 43a.

¹⁵¹ TB 1913-1916, 13.11.1914. For more detail on the relationship between Schnitzler and Hofmannsthal, see the essays by Jacques Le Rider and Giuseppe Farese in *Arthur Schnitzler im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. by Konstanze Fliedl (Vienna: Picus Verlag, 2003).

Politiker, will die übeln Wirkungen des Katholizismus nicht zugeben.”¹⁵² In April 1917, following a lecture by Hofmannsthal, Schnitzler comments once more on his ‘Snobismus’,¹⁵³ and finally at the end of the year: “Dieses seltsame Gemisch von Satanismus, Eifersucht, Unsicherheit, Herrschsucht, Streberei, Beiläufigkeit, Hast – alles auf dem Boden seines Snobismus.”¹⁵⁴ In reducing *Der Weg ins Freie* to nothing more than a Jewish book, Hofmannsthal joined the ranks of those critics for whom the book was too Jewish, a ‘Judenroman’. It was this kind of reaction from a friend that disappointed Schnitzler most and led to the outburst in his letter. As late as April 1929, Schnitzler remembers how painful Hofmannsthal’s ‘snobistisch gehässige’ rejection of the novel was.¹⁵⁵ And only a few months later, Hofmannsthal writes to Schnitzler: “Den Roman habe ich auch wieder gelesen, so wie Sie es vorschlugen, von Capitel 5 bis zum Ende. Aber ich habe diese Arbeit nun einmal weniger gern, und ich könnte es auch begründen. Die Einwände beginnen mit der Hauptfigur, die mir nicht ganz consistent erscheint [...] – aber der Haupteinwand geht tiefer.”¹⁵⁶

Hofmannsthal’s ‘Snobismus’ was different from ‘Renegatentum’, in that it included aristocratic pretensions and even Catholic sympathies. The ‘Renegat’ had no higher aspirations and was a more submissive character, due to his more modest social background. His self-denial could go so far as conversion, but by necessity and a sense of desperation, whereas the snob would do this for his own social advancement. At one point, Schnitzler complained: “Der Snobismus ist eine in unserer Zeit so verbreitete Erkrankung der Seele, daß man ihm fast einen epidemischen Charakter zusprechen [...] könnte.”¹⁵⁷ In a letter to the historian Richard Charmatz, he states:

Als die peinlichsten Zeitgenossen freilich empfinde ich diejenigen Juden, die vom Antisemitismus nichts spüren oder nichts zu spüren vorgeben, sei es nun aus Mangel an Feingefühl, aus Bequemlichkeit, aus Saturiertheit, aus Snobismus oder aus Kriecherei. In Hinsicht auf *diese* Sorte Juden bin ich sogar Antisemit wie nur irgend einer, und *mein* Antisemitismus hat den Vorzug, die Richtigen zu treffen [...] (4.1.1913)¹⁵⁸

The snob’s similarity to the ‘Renegat’ is also underlined in the following aphorism: “Der

¹⁵² Ibid., 18.12.1914.

¹⁵³ TB 1917-1919, 26.4.1917.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 22.12.1917.

¹⁵⁵ TB 1927-1930, 1.4. & 13.4.1929.

¹⁵⁶ cited in Farese, ‘Arthur Schnitzler und Hugo von Hofmannsthal’ in *Arthur Schnitzler im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. by Fliedl, p.303.

¹⁵⁷ Arthur Schnitzler, *Buch der Sprüche und Bedenken*, ed. by Robert O. Weiss (Frankfurt / Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1967), p.88.

¹⁵⁸ Schnitzler, *Briefe 1913-1931*, p.4.

Snob ist ein Mensch, der scheinbare Selbsterhöhung auf dem Wege tatsächlicher Selbsterniedrigung anstrebt. Er ist im eigentlichen Sinne der Masochist der Gesellschaftsordnung.”¹⁵⁹ In both instances, Schnitzler implies that neither the snob nor the ‘Renegat’ have any sense of self-respect. Admittedly, in Hofmannsthal’s case, it was his grandfather, not Hofmannsthal himself, who converted to Catholicism. Although Schnitzler did not think highly of those Jews who gave up their heritage, Schnitzler and Hugo remained friends.

To return to Hofmannsthal’s reception of *Der Weg ins Freie*, Schnitzler had hoped that a capable fellow writer such as Hofmannsthal would be able to grasp the multitude of themes treated in the book. Yet Hofmannsthal was evidently uneasy because it was widely perceived as a Jewish novel, and given his Catholic leanings, he felt he should distance himself from it. Jacques Le Rider states: “Die Beziehung zwischen Schnitzler und Hofmannsthal war nie eine einfache gewesen, und die Dissonanzen überwogen Bewunderung und Freundschaft.”¹⁶⁰ Hartmut Scheible suggests that Hofmannsthal was fully convinced of “die Einheit der Welt”, so inevitably, a novel in which there was nothing left of this unity had an effect on him that was “zutiefst erschreckend”.¹⁶¹

I.e) A Provocative Publication – Schnitzler’s Public Acknowledgement of His Jewish Background

As early as May 1900, Schnitzler communicated to Georg Brandes,

Es wird nämlich kaum möglich sein in der nächsten Zeit etwas Wienerisches zu schreiben, in das nicht die antisemitische Frage hineinspielt – und meine Art darüber zu denken wird weder den Christen noch den Juden recht sein. –¹⁶²

But it was not Schnitzler’s style to blunt the sharpness of his points merely to avoid a scandal. His wife, Olga, was enthralled by the third chapter, in which Leo Golowski and Heinrich Bermann conduct their central discussion on the ‘Jewish Question’. She believed passages like those “werden einschlagen wie eine Bombe[!].-”¹⁶³

¹⁵⁹ Schnitzler, *Buch der Sprüche und Bedenken*, p.55.

¹⁶⁰ Jacques Le Rider, ‘Arthur Schnitzlers Identitätskrise während des Ersten Weltkriegs’, in *Arthur Schnitzler im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. by Fliedl, pp.158-192, (171-172).

¹⁶¹ Hartmut Scheible, *Arthur Schnitzler* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Verlag, 1976), p.96-97.

¹⁶² CUL, MS Letters Schnitzler to Brandes, 3.5.1900, Folder B17b,2.

¹⁶³ TB 1903-1908, 23.10.1907.

Schnitzler was aware of the dangers that lay in store for an author of Jewish origin attempting to write a novel of Vienna. He related an example of this to Alfred Freiherr von Berger, the director of the Burgtheater:

Die beiden Herren unterhielten sich über Literatur; und als die Rede auf mich kam, äußerten sie sich beide einmütig sehr empört über meine Versuche, der wienerischen Volksseele beizukommen, deren tiefere Erkenntnis mir, dem Juden, naturgemäß versagt bleiben müßte. Und nachdem sie sich gehörig ausgeschimpft, bemerkte der eine: "Und er soll ja seine Sachen nicht einmal selber schreiben; ein armer christlicher Student macht sie ihm." – Keine Anekdote, verehrtester Herr Baron. Und zu bedenken, daß es nicht einmal sicher ist, ob diese beiden Herren wirklich die borniertesten Exemplare dieser angenehmen, in der Wiener Atmosphäre bis zur Horizontverdunkelung verbreiteten Spezies vorstellen! –¹⁶⁴

In the light of this, it is safe to conclude that Schnitzler took a calculated risk with his novel's publication and was willing to accept the consequences. He knew of the problem he faced when he stated: "Es war nicht möglich, insbesondere für einen Juden, der in der Öffentlichkeit stand, davon abzusehen, daß er Jude war, da die anderen es nicht taten, die Christen nicht und die Juden noch weniger."¹⁶⁵ Inevitably, by publishing a novel which was set almost exclusively in the Jewish upper classes of society, Schnitzler would be perceived as a Jewish author – as indeed he was. Thus, although Schnitzler consistently denied it was the 'Schlüsselstück' his critics made the novel out to be, it is a crucial document in the evolution of Schnitzler's Jewish identity. After all, in a literary career spanning slightly less than 40 years, Schnitzler only published two works dealing with issues of Jewishness. As he conceded himself in a letter to Hofmannsthal, *Der Weg ins Freie* was "eine der persönlichsten meiner Schöpfungen" (6.11.1910).¹⁶⁶

Although Schnitzler does not come forward with his views as decisively as in *Professor Bernhardi*, they are present in their initial stages in *Der Weg ins Freie*. In fact, there appears to be a consistent development in Schnitzler's advocacy of apolitical individualism in Jewish matters, from the novel to the play. And this should not come as a surprise, since Schnitzler began work on *Professor Bernhardi* in May 1908, while his novel was being serialised. Schnitzler was keenly aware of the prevalence of anti-Semitic sentiment during the years of Dr. Karl Lueger's mayoralship, which is why his treatment of anti-Semitism moved from *Der*

¹⁶⁴ Schnitzler, *Briefe 1875-1912*, p.563.

¹⁶⁵ Schnitzler, *Jugend in Wien*, p.328.

¹⁶⁶ Schnitzler, *Briefe 1875-1912*, p.632.

Weg ins Freie to *Professor Bernhardi* in a seamless transition.

Given Schnitzler's own intellectual independence, and his life-long aversion to politics, he could not accept Zionism or Jewish nationalism as the solution. Instead, every Austrian Jew had to solve this dilemma for himself, and, while never forgetting his Jewish origins, cleave to this position no matter how powerful the anti-Semitic surge would become. He was an enlightened apolitical individual. Enlightened, because he rejected religious orthodoxy, and those Jews, 'Renegaten', who converted to Catholicism. Schnitzler was profoundly sceptical of politics, and kept at a distance from political movements his entire life. An individual, because Schnitzler did what was in line with his personal convictions, irrespective of what his opponents might say. While keeping in mind the ultimate significance of *Professor Bernhardi*, it is worth citing Schnitzler's statement from another interview for the 'American Hebrew Messenger' in November 1923: "All I have to say on the Jewish question is in my book, '*Der Weg ins Freie*'".¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁷ Benvenisti, 'Arthur Schnitzler foretells Jewish Renaissance', ZAS MF 320.

II. “Es ist etwas Unfreies in Allem” – *Der Weg ins Freie* in Contemporary Reviews

II.a) No ‘Jewish Question’ at All: Raoul Auernheimer’s Review in the ‘Neue Freie Presse’

No analysis of Schnitzler’s novel in its historical context can do without Andrea Willi’s instrumental study of contemporary press reviews. All reviews are taken from her volume, with the exception of that by Willi Handl from 1909, which is presented here for the first time.¹⁶⁸ Hartmut Scheible suggests that behind Schnitzler’s unpolitical stance lies “sein Festhalten an den freiheitlichen Tendenzen des Liberalismus.”¹⁶⁹ Konstanze Fliedl seconds this when she states: “Schnitzler [hielt] lebenslang an liberalen Grundwerten fest, sofern sie in aufklärerischen Überzeugungen wurzelten, etwa, was die moralische Selbstverantwortung des Individuums betraf.”¹⁷⁰ The atmosphere not only of his parents’ house, but of the entire era of his childhood, was one of tolerance. He reflects upon this in *Jugend in Wien*:

Damals, es war in der Spätblütezeit des Liberalismus, existierte der Antisemitismus zwar, wie seit jeher, als Gefühlsregung in zahlreichen, dazu disponierten Seelen und höchst entwicklungsfähige Idee; aber weder als politischer noch als sozialer Faktor spielte er eine bedeutende Rolle. Nicht einmal das Wort war geprägt, und man begnügte sich damit, Leute, die den Juden besonders übel gesinnt waren, fast abschätzig als „Judenfresser“ zu bezeichnen.¹⁷¹

Schnitzler was too sharp-sighted and aware of its political failure to idealise the liberal era of his early years. Nonetheless, he cherished the tolerance of and appreciation for humanist values throughout his life, contrasting this favourably with the period of liberal decline which followed the Viennese Stock Market Crash of 1873. Although there were still liberal ministers in office, the power vacuum was filled by the mass politics of the Christian Social and the Social Democrat parties. It was the former who dominated Viennese politics for over a decade, once their candidate Dr. Karl Lueger was elected mayor in 1897. Anti-Semitism was publicly condoned under his regime, and it is no coincidence that Schnitzler wrote his only two ‘Jewish’ works under Lueger’s mayoralship.

Scheible mentions that Liberalism still prevailed in the press, and in one newspaper especially: the highly reputable ‘Neue Freie Presse’.¹⁷² It was the flagship of liberal middle-class opinion. Many friends of Schnitzler’s, such as Felix Salten and Hermann Bahr, wrote

¹⁶⁸ Andrea Willi, *Arthur Schnitzlers Roman “Der Weg ins Freie”. Eine Untersuchung zur Tageskritik und ihren zeitgenössischen Bezügen* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1989).

¹⁶⁹ Scheible, *Arthur Schnitzler*, p.95.

¹⁷⁰ Fliedl, *Arthur Schnitzler*, p.18.

¹⁷¹ Schnitzler, *Jugend in Wien*, p.78.

¹⁷² Scheible, p.21.

for the paper. Theodor Herzl was its Paris correspondent during the Dreyfus Affair and joined the editorial board upon his return to Vienna in 1896.¹⁷³ The “Neue Freie Presse” was, as Bruce Pauley mentions, “Austria’s only newspaper with international circulation and reputation”.¹⁷⁴ The editors and most of the staff were Jewish, which meant that the editor-in-chief, Moritz Benedikt, and his right-hand man, Eduard Bacher, “went through incredible lengths to save the paper from being identified with purely Jewish interests, and thereby incurred the odium of dual loyalties.”¹⁷⁵ Fränkel points out that both men were German-speaking Jews from Bohemia, and “both evinced the exaggerated Germanophile attitudes typical of their background.”¹⁷⁶

Their strictly neutral stance on Jewish matters, to the point of simply not treating them at all, prompted Lueger to state that “the main creator of Austrian anti-Semitism was the Jewish-liberal press”.¹⁷⁷ Remarkably, Karl Kraus found Benedikt “more guilty of having caused and perpetuated the First World War than any statesmen or generals directly involved”.¹⁷⁸ This, along with the background of the chief editors, would suggest that the predominant tone of the paper was that of the patriotic, good Austrian citizen, an attitude very similar to that of the Centralverein in Germany.

In fact, Herzl, once he was literary editor, came very close to falling out with Benedikt over this denial of Jewish issues. The editor-in-chief refused to espouse any decisive stance on the ‘Jewish Question’, whereas Herzl insisted on a more militant viewpoint, i.e., Zionism.¹⁷⁹ This was but one example of, to cite Fränkel once more, the “pathetically Austrophile editors’ [...] ostrich-like incapability to look realities in the face”.¹⁸⁰

In the light of this, it is worth noting that there is no reference at all to the Jewish characters in Raoul Auernheimer’s review in the ‘Neue Freie Presse’. He regards Georg’s struggle between “Künstlertum und bürgerliches Glück” as one half of the novel and Georg’s choice between Else and Anna as the other. Writing to Auernheimer on *Anatol* in December 1910, Schnitzler states: “Doch ich vergesse, daß es in der N Fr Pr – unter dem Strich doch keine Judenfrage gibt, also auch keine Judenantwort, also auch keinen Judendialog.”

¹⁷³ Willi, *Arthur Schnitzlers Roman “Der Weg ins Freie”*, p.119-20.

¹⁷⁴ Pauley, *From Prejudice to Persecution*, p.114.

¹⁷⁵ Josef Fränkel, *The Jews of Austria: Essays on Their Life, History and Destruction* (London: Vallentine & Mitchell, 1970), p.90.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.88.

¹⁷⁷ cited in Fränkel, p.87.

¹⁷⁸ cited in Fränkel, p.88

¹⁷⁹ Wistrich, p.446.

¹⁸⁰ Fränkel, p.90.

(6.12.1910)¹⁸¹ Because Auernheimer, for all his benevolence, does not address one of the central issues of his novel, Schnitzler notes no more, after reading the review, than, “Auernheimers Feuilleton über den Weg in der N.Fr.Pr. liebenswürdig und oberflächlich.”¹⁸²

On an amusing note, Schnitzler had originally conceived a figure like Auernheimer to feature in *Der Weg ins Freie*. In the early draft for *Die Entrüsteten*, he lists a son of Salomon Ehrenberg, Jonas, as “streberisch, gesinnungslos, liberaler Journalist”.¹⁸³

II.b) ‘Das Buch des Judentums’?

One allegation in the critical reviews was that the ‘Jewish Question’ was very close to Schnitzler’s personal struggle as a Jewish writer, which prevented him from discussing it objectively. An anonymous review in ‘Der Türmer’ goes so far as to call it “d a s B u c h d e s J u d e n t u m s ”.¹⁸⁴ Carl Busse provides another example for this kind of review. In the very first line, he points out that Schnitzler is “gewiss kein blutechter Dichter”. As such, he would naturally want to discuss the ‘Jewish Question’. However:

Er hat eine Unmenge Menschen, die mit der Handlung nicht das geringste zu tun haben, einfach aufgegriffen und mitgehen heissen, nur damit sie fortgesetzt über die ihn selbst sehr erregende Judenfrage reden können. Und er hat überhaupt keinen Versuch gemacht, diese Frage irgendwie mit dem eigentlichen Thema der Erzählung zu verknüpfen, sondern er hat die Diskussionen darüber einfach ringsherum gehängt, so dass man sie ohne weiteres durch Debatten über das lenkbare Luftschiff oder die Entdeckung des Nordpols ersetzen könnte.¹⁸⁵

Busse failed to grasp one of the two central themes of the novel. As Schnitzler himself mentioned, both Georg’s and Anna’s relationship and the issues of Jewishness carry equal weight. For Busse, the discussions on Zionism and Jewish identity are entirely interchangeable with more trivial topics. He views the prevalence of Jewish themes as an expression of Schnitzler’s personal concerns (“die ihn selbst sehr erregende Judenfrage”).

Busse also refers to “viel zorniger Schmerz” over certain Jewish characters, and continues:

Aber es ist etwas Unfreies in allem, Schnitzler selbst fühlt sich gebunden. Und diese heimliche Bedrängnis und Erbitterung zerstört ihm das Kunstwerk. Er e r ö r t e r t

¹⁸¹ Schnitzler, *Briefe 1875-1912*, p.640.

¹⁸² TB 1903-1908, 3.6.1908.

¹⁸³ CUL, MS Die Entrüsteten, Folder A132.

¹⁸⁴ Anonymous, ‘Neue Erzählungsbücher’, *Der Türmer*, April 1909, 92.

¹⁸⁵ Carl Busse, ‘Der Weg ins Freie’, *Velhagen & Clasing’s Monatshefte*, Vol.23 No.2, October 1908, 317-19.

n e b e n der Erzählung eine ganz p e r s ö n l i c h e Not, anstatt in der Erzählung die aus dem Erleben der Helden erwachsende Not zu g e s t a l t e n . Er schweigt diesmal, wo er reden sollte.¹⁸⁶

Had Busse not seriously misunderstood Schnitzler's treatment of the Jewish problem, he would have seen that Bermann's words on 'Heimat' and the 'Jewish Question' were very much 'reden' and not 'schweigen'. As matters stood, Busse argued that Schnitzler's personal dilemma prevented *Der Weg ins Freie* from becoming a real work of art.

Following a more moderate line, Eduard Goldbeck wrote in 'Zukunft':

Erstaunlich ist, dass dabei dies Buch ein ganz "aktuelles" Thema behandelt: die Judenfrage. [...] Es hat mich nur befremdet und betrübt, dass ein Mann wie Arthur Schnitzler an seiner jüdischen Abstammung so schwer leidet, dass er einer poetischen Befreiung überhaupt bedarf.¹⁸⁷

In his reply to Goldbeck, Schnitzler finally takes position against some of these claims. Making clear that his statement is not intended for publication, he explains,

Ich leide nicht im geringsten unter meiner jüdischen Abstammung, ja ich bin so fern von diesem Gefühl, als es einer nur sein kann, der es am Ende auch dumm fände, auf sein Judentum oder auf sonst irgend etwas stolz zu sein. Wenn ich unter etwas leide, so ist es höchstens das Judentum mancher andern Leute, oder richtiger die klägliche Art, in der sich so viele Juden gerade innerhalb unserer Kultur zu der Tatsache ihrer Abstammung verhalten. Der Widerwille gegen diese Leute mag in meinem Roman da und dort sehr lebhaft durchleuchten. Ja mit solcher Deutlichkeit will mir scheinen, daß ich eher glauben möchte, Sie hätten sich nicht ganz richtig ausgedrückt, als mich nicht ganz richtig verstanden. (15.3.1909)¹⁸⁸

II.c) "Nicht um Haaresbreite vorwärts" – No Solution to the 'Jewish Question'

Apart from *Der Weg ins Freie* being 'too Jewish', another popular objection in contemporary criticism was that Schnitzler did not offer any solution to the 'Jewish Question'. Hermann Kienzl thought Schnitzler was too implicated in Jewish society to regard its problems with critical distance.

¹⁸⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ Eduard Goldbeck, 'Der Weg ins Freie', *Die Zukunft*, Vol.66 No.24, 13 March 1909, 417-18.

¹⁸⁸ Schnitzler, *Briefe 1875-1912*, p.589-90.

Nicht um Haaresbreite vorwärts gelangt er in der "Judenfrage". Sie ist ihm eine ganz persönliche Frage, so umfassend, so erschöpfend das Panorama des jüdischen geistigen Wien geriet. Die Leser [...] wollen nicht die heimlichen Fragen des Einzelnen, des Dichters, hören, – wollen Antwort haben auf ihre gemeinsamen Fragen. So geht es, wenn eine ganz persönliche Dichtung sich an den Rang eines "aktuellen Themas" begiebt. Und nun gar die Judenfrage...! Die, die selbst die vorurteilslosesten Gemüter, nicht am wenigsten die jüdischen, in leidenschaftliche Bewegung versetzt, die macht die meisten unfähig, sich mit dem sanft bewegten Dichter einer innerlichen Betrachtung dieser Dinge hinzugeben.¹⁸⁹

At the same time, Kienzl complains that Schnitzler proposes no solution to the 'Jewish Question'. This, he claims, is what contemporaries would expect when reading about a current problem. They are, so Kienzl explains, too emotional on the subject ('leidenschaftliche Bewegung') to weigh the arguments for and against calmly and objectively, as Schnitzler invites them to do.

Klara Carmely asserts that Schnitzler "erörtert Wege einer Lösung", listing three possibilities: assimilation, socialism, and Zionism, while conceding that Schnitzler himself stood outside them.¹⁹⁰ Carmely is simplifying a highly complex topic by dividing possible solutions to the Jewish dilemma into three neat categories. One must also be careful when suggesting that Schnitzler was actively looking for a solution to the 'Jewish Question'. Schnitzler felt strongly that it was not for him to solve the Jewish problem, nor any problems of the day, for that matter. In 1907, he made this clear to his friend, Richard Beer-Hofmann: "Er kam auf das Esoithema; er fand, ich müsste es 'erledigen' – in meinem Roman; ich sagte ihm, dass ich in meinem Roman auch erklärte, es gäbe keine Erledigungen von Tagesfragen."¹⁹¹

He wrote in a similar vein to the author and feminist Leonie Meyerhof-Hildeck:

Sie fragen mich, in welchem meiner Werke außer im "Weg ins Freie" ich jüdische Probleme, Personen und Verhältnisse behandelt habe. Hierauf muß ich antworten, daß wohl in manchen andern meiner Bücher Anspielungen auf die Stellung der Juden innerhalb der modernen Kultur und Gesellschaft vorkommen, [...] daß aber von einer eingehendern Behandlung des Problems oder der Probleme, sowohl nach der sozialen als nach der psychologischen Seite hin kaum die Rede sein kann. (7.12.1908)¹⁹²

¹⁸⁹ Hermann Kienzl, 'Das literarische Echo', Vol.2 No.1, 1 October 1908, 28-30.

¹⁹⁰ Klara Carmely, *Das Identitätsproblem jüdischer Autoren im deutschen Sprachraum* (Königstein/Taunus: Scriptor Verlag, 1981), p.7.

¹⁹¹ TB 1903-1908, 19.10.1907.

¹⁹² Schnitzler, *Briefe 1875-1912*, p.583.

In the light of this, it would appear more accurate to follow Florian Krobb's argument, which views *Der Weg ins Freie* as a "Bestandsaufnahme der Disparität des zeitgenössischen Diskurses" among the Jewish 'Bürgertum'. Krobb states that Schnitzler's book is "kein Thesenroman", comparing it favourably with other so-called 'Jewish novels' of the time, such as Georg Hermann's highly successful *Jettchen Gebert* (1906), which provide no further perspectives than a "festumrissene Weltsicht".¹⁹³

Other contemporary reviewers were more perceptive than Kienzl, appreciating the wider perspective and the personal insights Schnitzler's novel offered. Hugo Bergmann, for instance, writing in the Jewish monthly 'Ost und West', senses that, "In den Gesprächen, die Heinrich Bermann mit Leo Golowski, dem jungen Zionisten führt, hat Schnitzler vielleicht das tiefste gesagt, was ein jüdischer Politiker oder Dichter des Westens je über den Kampf zwischen Assimilation und Zionismus gesagt hat." We will examine this conversation in greater detail in the next section.

Willi Handl was a critic of considerable insight, writing for the Fischer Verlag's 'Die Neue Rundschau':

Den Juden in sich hat Schnitzler wohl längst entdeckt und als wichtige Potenz in die Oekonomie seiner schaffenden Kräfte einbezogen; nun stellt er ihn offen zu Diskussion. Damit bietet er seine eigene Person, nicht sein Talent allein, dem allgemeinen Urteil an. [...] Nun stellt er sich persönlich vor sein Werk, verweist ausdrücklich auf sein Judentum und spricht darüber. Denn alle Fragen, die in dem Buche laut werden, sind irgendwie der Vielfältigkeit des einen Problem es entnommen, das die Juden durch ihren lebhaften und eindringlichen Anteil an allen Bewegungen der modernen Kultur geschaffen haben. Man hat sie so lange und so erbittert nach ihrem Recht auf diese Anteilnahme gefragt, daß sie nun vielfach selbst, von außen bedrängt und im Innern aufgestört, nach einer Antwort verlangen.¹⁹⁴

It is reassuring, states Handl, that in spite of the complexity and acuteness of the problem, Schnitzler reflects upon it so calmly. He values the unparalleled psychological insights into the Jewish problem. For this reason, Handl acknowledges the book's "unverkennbar höhere Notwendigkeit". He appreciates, at the same time, that the Jewish dilemma is also a personal one for Schnitzler, although he expresses this with considerably more understanding than

¹⁹³ Florian Krobb, 'Der Weg ins Freie im Kontext des deutsch-jüdischen Zeitromans' in *Arthur Schnitzler: Zeitgenossenschaften – Contemporaneities*, ed. by Ian Foster and Florian Krobb (Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang, 2002), pp.199-216 (p.202).

¹⁹⁴ Willi Handl, 'Arthur Schnitzlers neuer Roman', *Die Neue Rundschau*, Vol.19 No.12, December 1908, 1851-52.

Kienzl or Busse.

In 1909, Handl wrote another article on *Der Weg ins Freie*, this time for the 'Neue Revue'. Here, more so than in his first review, he brings out the personal nature of the problems treated in the novel: "Niemals noch war Arthur Schnitzler den Problemen seines eigenen Wesens so herzlich nahe, wie in seinem letzten Roman 'Der Weg ins Freie'. Was ihn und was an ihm beunruhigt hat, hier erscheint es klar und deutlich aufgeschrieben: die Unsicherheit des Juden in der modernen Kultur."¹⁹⁵ He recognises that the novel is a very personal text for Schnitzler, and yet does not, per the Schlüsselstück-polemic, reduce it to its Jewish issues.

II.d) Otto Stoessel's Review in the 'Oesterreichische Rundschau'

A noteworthy case of anti-Semitic journalism comes from the 'Oesterreichische Rundschau', a middle-class newspaper, very much supportive of the Habsburg dynasty and neutral in questions of nationality, in accordance with the Austrian imperial principle. In spite of this apparently liberal programme, it was edited by Christian aristocrats: Felix von Oppenheimer, Leopold von Chlumecky, and Alfred von Berger, who was director of the Burgtheater from 1910 until 1912. Karl Glossy was also on the editorial board,¹⁹⁶ and would later join the censorship committee for *Professor Bernhardt*.

Oppenheimer repeatedly requested Schnitzler's co-operation with the paper, and Schnitzler, holding both the paper and the baron's kindness in high esteem, seriously considered it. (20.12.1905)¹⁹⁷ A review by Otto Stoessl proves, though, that the neutral political position of the editors was not always mirrored in the journalism itself. Stoessl, a railway official versed in legal matters, and of Jewish origin himself, successfully pursued his literary interests and published both plays and prose. His most successful, and at the same time most typical novel, *Das Haus Erath* (1920), is set in an idealised, pre-modern Austria of the early 19th century.¹⁹⁸ He was highly sceptical of literary modernism, especially that embraced by the Griensteidl-circle, which he referred to as 'Café Grössenwahn'.¹⁹⁹

Schnitzler was not in the habit of replying to criticism, especially if he knew the critic had

¹⁹⁵ Willi Handl, 'Neue Wiener Romane', *Neue Revue*, Vol.3, 1909, 613.

¹⁹⁶ Willi, p.138.

¹⁹⁷ Schnitzler, *Briefe 1875-1912*, p.522-23.

¹⁹⁸ Willi, p.135-36.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

misunderstood his intentions – which was the case more often than not. But this outburst of anti-Semitic derision in a supposedly friendly paper caught him entirely off guard. Fuming, Schnitzler wrote a response, *Gegen Kritik und Fälschung*, which he did not send off and which has not yet been noted in scholarship:

Es ist nicht Dummheit, wenigstens nicht Dummheit allein, sondern bewußte Fälschung, wenn Herr S. behauptet, der Roman [Weg ins Freie] spiele in dem eigentümlichen Milieu des reichen Wiener Judentums, das sein im Grunde ewiges Ghetto für die Welt zu halten und auszugeben geneigt ist, - und weil er damit die Tatsache unterschlägt, daß mehr als die Hälfte der handelnden Personen durchaus nicht zu den reichen Wiener Juden gehören und eine ebenso große Anzahl überhaupt keine Juden sind. Es ist nicht Dummheit, sondern bewußte Fälschung, wenn Herr S. der sich selbst als gesellschaftsfremd bezeichnet meine Typen (Figuren) nicht als lebensechte Gestalten bezeichnet, sondern nur gelungene, in diesen Kreisen übliche Stihlkopien [sic.] gelten läßt. Es ist nicht Dummheit, sondern bewußte Fälschung wenn der Dialog des Romans mit den Lokalzugsstudien aus der Sonn- und Montagszeitung verglichen wird [...]²⁰⁰

‘Fälschung’, for Schnitzler, was the distorted and excessively simplified view of *Der Weg ins Freie*, as conveyed in Stoessl’s article. This, he argued, was not criticism, but something more primitive and insulting – Fälschung, in a word. As Schnitzler uses the term, it means not only misrepresentation, but ill-disguised, open animosity. What he cannot understand, and what he puts to von Oppenheimer in the letter, is why the editors approach him repeatedly on the subject of co-operation, when their paper publishes such reviews as Stoessl’s. In his own words,

Dann bleibt noch immer die Frage ungelöst, was den Redakteur einer Zeitschrift, die ihren Lesern ein so groteskes Zerrbild eines Autors vorsetzt dazu veranlassen kann diesen selben Autor immer wieder zur Mitarbeiterschaft aufzufordern. [...] Lassen Sie in Ihrer Zeitung was immer, das Albernstes, das Verlogenste, aber behalten Sie doch wenigstens den guten Geschmack mich nicht immer wieder zur Mitarbeiterschaft aufzufordern.²⁰¹

In the end, Schnitzler and Oppenheimer clarified their misunderstanding and remained on good terms. Schnitzler published excerpts of *Das weite Land* in the ‘Oesterreichische

²⁰⁰ CUL, MS Gegen Kritik und Fälschung, Folder A15.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

Rundschau' in 1910.²⁰² It is worth noting that the baron was one of the closest friends of Hugo von Hofmannsthal.²⁰³ Both were the descendants of noble families, but, also, they both had Jewish ancestry. Hofmannsthal's grandfather had converted to Catholicism. Oppenheimer, on the other hand, was of an old Jewish family from the Rhine. In August 1909, following Oppenheimer's second enquiry, Schnitzler wrote to his wife: "Aus Oppenhe.s Brief spricht ein schlechtes Gewissen und ein nicht viel besserer Hugo." (29.8.1909)²⁰⁴

Hofmannsthal's first loyalty seems to have been to other Catholic aristocrats such as Oppenheimer and only then to Schnitzler. Schnitzler ended his correspondence with Baron Oppenheimer in 1909 on good terms. Even if he thought his behaviour reproachable before, it is doubtful whether Schnitzler would have placed him under the same verdict he passed on Stoessl: "O.St. Kritiker, Jude, sich bei den Antisemiten anbietend, über Undeutsche spottend, kriecherisch."²⁰⁵

II.e) Scholarship

Contemporary scholars agree that Schnitzler's first novel, *Der Weg ins Freie*, captures the Jewish identity crisis at the beginning of the 20th century. Florian Krobb speaks of the "Krisensituation des Jahrhundertwechsels", and states that "Identitätsbewahrung [ist die] fortwährende Aufgabe deutsch-jüdischer Literatur".²⁰⁶ Similar to Herzog, Krobb considers the "deutsches Literatursystem", as well as the "jüdisches kulturelles System", central to the formulation of Jewish identity.²⁰⁷ In other words, identity is created through writing or, in Krobb's words, German-Jewish literature is "einer der Austragungsorte dieser jüdischen Identitätskonstruktion", serving the purpose "die jüdische Welt sich selbst vorstellig zu machen".²⁰⁸

One of the reasons for this may be, as Andrea Willi suggests: "Die Versöhnung zwischen Individuum und Gesellschaft ist am Ende der liberalen Ära nicht möglich."²⁰⁹ This points to the social identity crisis of the 'Bürgertum' towards the end of the 19th century, following the decline of political Liberalism. The middle-class Jews of Vienna, who had been identifying

²⁰² TB 1909-1912, 22.9.1910.

²⁰³ Schnitzler, *Briefe 1875-1912*, p.900.

²⁰⁴ Schnitzler, *Briefe 1875-1912*, p.607.

²⁰⁵ Arthur Schnitzler, *Entworfenes und Verworfenes*, ed. by Reinhard Urbach (Frankfurt/Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1977), p.204.

²⁰⁶ Krobb, 'Der Weg ins Freie im Kontext des deutsch-jüdischen Zeitromans' in *Zeitgenossenschaften*, ed. by Foster and Krobb, p.216.

²⁰⁷ Florian Krobb, *Selbstdarstellungen. Untersuchungen zur deutsch-jüdischen Erzählliteratur im neunzehnten Jahrhundert* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2000), p.22.

²⁰⁸ Krobb, *Selbstdarstellungen*, p.21.

²⁰⁹ Willi, p.43-45.

with liberal interests since 1848, found their political influence and representation declining following the electoral defeat of the Liberals in 1879. This will be treated in greater detail in a later chapter, so as to be free to explore the nature of the identity crisis in 1900 here.

Janz and Laermann follow a similar line to Willi, in seeing the main theme of Schnitzler's novel as "Identitätsschwäche und Identitätsverlust", which reflects the "psychische Verfassung des Wiener Bürgertums um 1900". Psychological identity is inextricably connected to social identity, so the loss of one inevitably brings with it the loss of the other. The artists in the novel experience this identity crisis above all as a crisis of artistic creativity.²¹⁰ This is reflected in the characters Wergenthin, Bermann, and Nürnberger, who are all three unable to be artistically productive.

Hans-Ulrich Lindken grasps a crucial point when he states that Schnitzler "[hat] die Judenfrage nach innen gekehrt", calling this "die Stärke eines der psychologischen Beobachtung fähigen Dichters". He continues: "Sein Schauplatz ist nicht Österreich, sondern die menschliche Seele!"²¹¹

Ritchie Robertson takes this up, listing Schnitzler together with Freud and Stefan Zweig as examples of German-speaking Jews who kept liberal, humanist values alive. Robertson grants that these three Jewish intellectuals did not belong to any group or organisation, but each steered his own course in the Jewish identity crisis of the early 20th-century. In mentioning Schnitzler's "ironic acknowledgement of the self-defeating nature of honest inquiry",²¹² Robertson makes a very interesting case for Schnitzler's complete commitment to truthfulness and honesty. At a certain point, however, so Robertson argues, self-knowledge does not improve an individual's moral conduct but instead renders him ineffective. By refusing to take up any cause at all, even one an individual may be sympathetic to, he becomes nothing more than a "paralysed spectator". If he tries to be utterly objective and neutral in all matters, the individual can only observe events but not take action himself.²¹³

As *Der Weg ins Freie* shows, Schnitzler turned this "ruthless honesty"²¹⁴ against the liberal values of the former generation that he himself honoured. He was well aware of their limitations and contradictions, and given his slightly nostalgic attachment to them, his quest

²¹⁰ Rolf-Peter Janz and Klaus Laermann, *Arthur Schnitzler: zur Diagnose des Wiener Bürgertums im Fin de siècle* (Stuttgart: Metzler Verlag, 1977), p.172-73.

²¹¹ Hans-Ulrich Lindken, *Arthur Schnitzler – Aspekte und Akzente* (Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang, 1984), p.115-16.

²¹² Robertson, p.94.

²¹³ Robertson, p.103-5.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.97.

for truthfulness must have been painful. Schnitzler upheld this commitment on other issues as well, and turned it against the conventions and moral dogma of his class as well as against his own personal leanings and predilections. As numerous diary entries testify – and both *Der Weg ins Freie* and *Professor Bernhardi* prove – this life-long pledge to self-knowledge and truthfulness could be a torment just as much as a blessing. By the time he had moved from the novel to the play, Schnitzler had left behind him a mere retreat from commitment into isolation. Instead, he had adapted one of the preferred literary techniques of Thomas Mann and sublimated the Jewish dilemma with a profound sense of irony.

We see, however, that the identity crisis coincides with a moral one. The liberal values can no longer meet the challenges of Lueger's mayorship and the era of mass politics. And yet, the 'Zucht und Sitte' propounded by the Christian Socials are equally hollow. Norbert Abels mentions that Schnitzler warned of the "trügerischer Sicherheitswahn" and the "Wahn des Geborgenseins" prevalent during the liberal period, when unquestioned values were assumed stable and enduring. Thus, Abels argues, *Der Weg ins Freie* turns against the "goldenes Zeitalter der Sicherheit", exploring instead the "von der Gesellschaft isolierten und exterritorialiserten Individuums".²¹⁵ This, however, is not an answer to a moral dilemma, it is merely an analysis of it. Each character in the novel is looking for his way into the open, but they are bound by social, economic, or cultural constraints. Both Leo Golowski and Heinrich Bermann are effectively 'paralysed' by the utter self-honesty described by Robertson. Else Ehrenberg manages to detach herself from the problematic situation by marrying and following her husband to England. Georg von Wergenthin also finds his solution by leaving Vienna. But this is more a question of leaving his responsibilities behind than the answer to his inner discontent.

In *Modernity and Crises of Identity*, Jacques Le Rider opens up a new dimension of this identity crisis of the Fin de siècle. Le Rider determines "the 'triangle' of masculine, feminine and Jew" as "the underlying structure of Viennese modernism".²¹⁶ All three concepts, Le Rider explains, were being called into question and undergoing serious change in the Fin de siècle. One reaction he identifies is a "'masculine protest' against the feminization of modern culture". Others, on the Jewish side, include utter denial of one's Jewish background but also its opposite: the full embrace of Judaism or Zionism.²¹⁷ The effeminate Jew, especially in the

²¹⁵ Norbert Abels, '„...wenn auch heute noch in Österreich die Scheiterhaufen gen Himmel lohten.“ Zur Dialektik des Ressentiments in Schnitzlers Komödie „Professor Bernhardi“' in *Arthur Schnitzler im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. by Flieidl, pp.140-157 (p.141).

²¹⁶ Le Rider, *Modernity and Crises of Identity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), p.183.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.165

literary world, was a popular stereotype. German nationalists tended to call for healthy masculine virtues to counter the weakening, disintegrating effect of the Jews. One of the key expressions of this was, of course, Otto Weininger's *Geschlecht und Charakter* (1903). Weininger, who committed suicide at the age of 23, was deeply concerned with what was, in his view, the fundamental flaw of contemporary culture and the cause of its decline: an over-feminisation and, intrinsically connected to this, an 'over-Jewification' of European civilisation.²¹⁸ Le Rider also mentions Freud's theory of the 'Kastrations-komplex', which determines the subconscious root of anti-Semitism to lie in fear of circumcision and thus of the deprivation of masculinity.²¹⁹

Der Weg ins Freie is a cornerstone of Le Rider's theory of the identity 'triangle'.²²⁰ The tragic love affair between Georg von Wergenthin and Anna Rosner culminates in the birth of a stillborn child. Georg's inability to decide to marry Anna is, for Le Rider, a moment of confusion for the usually so decisive male. He argues, quite convincingly, that the Jewish identity crisis, as surveyed in the novel, is paralleled not only by a crisis in creativity, exemplified by Nürnberger and Bermann, but also by a crisis of masculinity. Lou Andreas-Salomé wrote to Schnitzler that she noticed his female characters were always stronger than the male, and she compared to them as health to disease.²²¹ Finally, when prompted by Georg Brandes about having written two separate stories in one, he mentions that the combination of the Jewish dilemma with the tragic love affair between Georg and Anna arose "aus seiner überwältigenden inneren Notwendigkeit" (4.7.1908).²²² Having stated his case, Le Rider concludes: "In the work of Arthur Schnitzler, the woman and the Jew share the difficult and sometimes tragic role of hero and victim of modernity."²²³

At least one contemporary reviewer seems to corroborate Le Rider's thesis: Auguste Hauschner, a writer from Prague, and herself of Jewish origin, who contributed her work *Die Familie Lowositz* (1908) to the number of Jewish family novels appearing around 1900. Together with its sequel *Rudolf und Camilla* (1910), it is set in the Jewish milieu of Prague and Berlin and explores issues of Jewish identity.²²⁴ Hauschner wrote:

Es wird Schnitzler vorgeworfen, sein Roman sei ohne Einheit, zwei Probleme liefen

²¹⁸ Ibid., p.165-67, p.180.

²¹⁹ Ibid., p.168/9

²²⁰ Ibid., p.183.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Schnitzler, *Briefe 1875-1912*, p.579-80.

²²³ Le Rider, *Modernity and Crises of Identity*, p.3.

²²⁴ Willi, p.202.

darin unvermittelt parallel. Mir erscheinen sie miteinander eng verflochten. Die Juden und die Frauen, seit Jahrtausenden die Unterdrückten und auf Schleichwegen die Sieger, abgelehnt, betrogen, heimlich aufgesucht und mächtig, beide streben sie in Schnitzlers Buch aus ihrer Enge. Unter den Juden ist nicht einer, der noch von dem Stolz erfüllt ist, zu Jehovas Auserwählten zu gehören... Und die jungen Mädchen erörtern sexuelle Dinge, treten ins öffentliche Leben und verleugnen die Empfindung, die bisher ihr Fluch und ihre Seligkeit gewesen ist – das Auf- und Untergehen in der Liebe, die bedingungslose Treue. [...] Die Juden und die Frauen – sie zeigen beide sich in einer neuen Phase, beide auf der Suche nach dem Weg ins Freie.

She concludes, “Oben angelangt wird er von den andern befreit sein. Auch von sich selbst? Gibt es einen Weg zur Selbstbefreiung?”²²⁵ Hauschner understood that Schnitzler was writing about a very personal issue for the first time. He was trying to free himself from it, or at least come to terms with it, in his work. She was also one of the very few reviewers who grasped Schnitzler’s sympathy for the lot of women at the time. He replies very favourably, proving she had understood one of the points Schnitzler had elaborated on:

Ich danke Ihnen sehr, daß Sie mir Ihren schönen Artikel geschickt haben. [...] Wie viele Leserinnen Ihrer Art denken Sie gibt es wohl? [...] Sie haben mir durch gedrucktes, geschriebenes und gefühltes herzliche Freude bereitet! (23.1.1909)²²⁶

Hillary Hope Herzog seconds Le Rider’s argument that the crisis of masculinity at the Fin de siècle, combined with the repercussions of anti-Semitism, had a ‘paralysing effect’ on the Jewish community of Vienna.²²⁷ Just as Georg’s personal crisis remains unresolved at the end of *Der Weg ins Freie*, the same is true of the identity crisis of the Viennese Jews. “Schnitzler,” so Herzog explains, casts doubt on even the possibility of an individual solution to the identity crises caused by or exacerbated by anti-Semitism.”²²⁸ Here, too, she follows Le Rider, who stated that Schnitzler’s novel “has no ‘message’ unless this be the awareness of the contradictions and insufficiencies of all these reactions of assimilated Jews to anti-Semitism.” Further on, he simply claims: “Arthur Schnitzler has no solution to suggest.”²²⁹

Reading the text in conjunction with Schnitzler’s autobiographical material, *Der Weg ins Freie* does, in fact, provide indications of Schnitzler’s individualist solution to the Jewish

²²⁵ Auguste Hauschner, ‘Der Weg ins Freie’, *Die Hilfe*, Vol.17 No.3, 1909, 59.

²²⁶ Schnitzler, *Briefe 1875-1912*, p.588.

²²⁷ Herzog, *Vienna is Different*, p.31.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Le Rider, *Modernity and Crises of Identity*, p.182.

dilemma. For the moment, let us continue with another interesting aspect of Herzog's argument: the geographical emphasis of the 'Jewish problem' in Vienna. As an artist, Georg moves between various social worlds (and areas of the city), without really feeling comfortable in any one of them.²³⁰ This, in turn, reflects his general lack of orientation or ambition in life. Given that neither Georg nor Heinrich can find a way into the open, so Herzog argues, geography is both the problem and the solution.²³¹ She points to the similar titles of a number of Schnitzler's works, all involving spatial terms: *Der einsame Weg* (1903), *Der Weg ins Freie*, *Das weite Land* (1911), *Flucht in die Finsternis* (1931). Thus, Herzog concludes that "the only tenable response to the main problem is to remove oneself from it physically."²³² This is, in fact, precisely what Georg does in the end. However, when he leaves for Detmold, there is no positive connotation of freedom and liberation. Instead, as Julian Preece puts it, it is more a question of freedom from commitment, of detachment, and of isolation.²³³

²³⁰ Hope Herzog, p.26-27.

²³¹ Ibid., p.31, 33.

²³² Ibid., p.36, 38.

²³³ Julian Preece, 'The Ethics of Empathy and Correspondence Culture in Arthur Schnitzler's *Der Weg ins Freie*', *Seminar – A Journal of Germanic Studies*, Vol.46 No.4 (2010), 364-381 (p.381).

III. Jewish Solidarity and ‘Jüdischer Snobismus’

III.a) The Militant Jew: Salomon Ehrenberg

Salomon Ehrenberg is the wealthy owner of a munitions factory. We hear that out of consideration for his family, he abbreviated his Jewish first name on the door of his house. It is likely that in holding back his name, he did not want to underline that his residence belonged to a Jew and thereby encourage popular anti-Semitic stereotypes. Ehrenberg is one of the more militant Jews in the novel, who, along with Leo Golowski, believes in a decisive stance against anti-Semitism. Ehrenberg says to Nürnberger, “Es wird Sie sicher freuen zu erfahren [...], daß auch mein Sohn ein Antisemit ist.” For his wife, this is a “fixe Idee”. “Überall sieht er Antisemiten, selbst in der eigenen Familie.” (p.70)²³⁴

“Wenn es nach ihm ginge,” Willy Eißler says of Salomon Ehrenberg, “möchte er am liebsten zu Gesellschaften, die Madame Ehrenberg gibt, im Kaftan und mit den gewissen Löckchen erscheinen.” (p.15) This has nothing to do with piety, Eißler avers, but would be designed to provoke his son Oskar, who has “feudale Bestrebungen”. We also learn that Oskar would prefer to convert to Catholicism. In this case, however, he would be disinherited, according to his father’s will. Oskar is ashamed of his background, which makes him a Jewish snob, in Schnitzler’s eyes, just like Hofmannsthal.

Ehrenberg is fully aware of his wife’s and son’s anxiety about their Jewishness and enjoys provoking them with these “Rücksichtslosigkeiten”. His first contribution to a conversation is: “Die Saison fängt an, und vor die Jours im Haus Ehrenberg is mir mies”. (p.68) “Mies” is a specifically Jewish expression signifying dislike. It is interesting that Schnitzler should use Jewish jargon here, since, as Bettina Riedmann points out, this was a favourite anti-Semitic technique.²³⁵ While Fontane uses dialect to enhance the realism of a social milieu, Schnitzler uses it to create ironic distance from Ehrenberg and his Zionist views. At the same time, Frau and Oskar Ehrenberg’s nervousness at this pronounced Jewishness appears in a highly ironic light.

Ehrenberg is infuriated by submissive Jews and longs for a clear stand against anti-Semitism. At one point, he voices his Zionist sympathies: “Ja, vielleicht ist es nur, weil man älter wird, vielleicht weil man soviel vom Zionismus liest und dergleichen, aber ich kann mir nicht helfen, ich möchte Jerusalem gesehen haben, eh’ ich sterbe.” His wife only shrugs her

²³⁴ Schnitzler, *Der Weg ins Freie* (Frankfurt/Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1992). All subsequent page nrs. from this edition.

²³⁵ Riedmann, p.223.

shoulders, and he continues: “Das sind Sachen [...], die meine Frau nicht versteht – und meine Kinder noch weniger. [...] Aber wenn man so liest, was in der Welt vorgeht, man möchte selber manchmal glauben, es gibt für uns keinen andern Ausweg.” (p.68)

Yet when he does travel to Jerusalem later on, he returns disillusioned. He is repelled by the poverty and does not even visit the Jewish settlements there. This reflects Schnitzler’s own view that Zionism was not the real solution to the ‘Jewish Question’. After all, in materialistic terms, the Jews were enjoying considerable stability in Vienna. In Steven Beller’s words, there was “no active persecution, but a very negative atmosphere”.²³⁶ Why should they leave their native country, where their ancestors had lived for centuries, merely because of the anti-Semitic writings of uneducated journalists?

Nürnberger feels Ehrenberg does not show the necessary objectivity in the matter. This makes Ehrenberg angry. With “wutzitternden Fingern”, he puts his cigar on the ashtray. “Wenn mir einer damit kommt... oder sind Sie vielleicht getauft...? Man kann ja heutzutage nicht wissen.” Nürnberger explains that he does not belong to any confession, because he never felt Jewish. Ehrenberg counters, “Wenn man Ihnen einmal den Zylinder einschlägt auf der Ringstraße, weil Sie, mit Verlaub, eine etwas jüdische Nase haben, werden Sie sich schon als Jude getroffen fühlen, verlassen Sie sich darauf.”

The objectivity Nürnberger is referring to is the same kind of ‘neutrality’ upheld by the ‘Neue Freie Presse’ on all Jewish matters, to the point of simply ignoring them. Auernheimer’s review of Schnitzler’s novel in that reputable paper did not mention the ‘Jewish Question’ in a single word. In fact, this view was widespread among the assimilated Jews of the middle and upper classes, who considered anti-Semitism an attitude of the less educated segments of society. When the ‘Neue Freie Presse’ did take a stand against nationalism or clericalism, it was always with the argument of ‘Bildung’ and the Enlightenment against the forces of ignorance and reaction. This paper in particular portrayed the Christian Socials as philistines, by using Lueger’s habit of speaking in ‘broadest Viennese’ as an example and trying to turn the party’s closeness to the common population against it.²³⁷

Ehrenberg’s anger stems from the fact that simply ignoring anti-Semitism does not solve the problem, because the nationalists are not ignoring it and instead are becoming increasingly vocal. With Nürnberger and Ehrenberg, two opposing viewpoints in the Jewish community clash: the ‘neutral’ position of the ‘Neue Freie Presse’, widespread among the assimilated ‘Bürgertum’, and the more militant Jewish nationalist or Zionist position, which called for a

²³⁶ Beller, p.197.

²³⁷ Beller, p.198-99.

more decisive stance.

Ehrenberg is as disillusioned with Austrian politics as Berthold Stauber. Discussing Social Democracy with Therese Golowski, he exclaims:

Wer hat die liberale Bewegung in Österreich geschaffen?... Die Juden!... Von wem sind die Juden verraten und verlassen worden? Von den Liberalen. Wer hat die deutschnationale Bewegung in Österreich geschaffen? Die Juden. Von wem sind die Juden im Stich gelassen... was sag ich im Stich gelassen... bespuckt worden wie die Hund'?... Von den Deutschen! Und geradeso wird's ihnen jetzt ergehen mit dem Sozialismus und dem Kommunismus. Wenn die Suppe erst aufgetragen ist, so jagen sie euch vom Tisch. (p.78)

Ehrenberg is referring to the fact that political Liberalism had been identified with Jewish interests in Austria since 1848. As Steven Beller mentions, among Viennese Jews there was “no absolute dividing line” between German Liberals and German nationalists.²³⁸ Two cornerstones of liberal policy were centralism and Germanisation, and the party was at pains not to appear overly partial to Jewish interests. And yet its narrow social base comprised only the assimilated, German-speaking Jews and the German middle class.²³⁹ There was the remarkable instance of liberal ‘betrayal’ in 1882, when Adolf Fischhof, the ‘grand old man’ of Austrian Liberalism, tried to found the ‘Deutsche Volkspartei’ for Liberals of all nationalities. There was no German-Jewish support for this, following the liberal line of centralism, with the general distrust of the Slav ethnicities. In the end, the Liberals combined with Schönerer’s Pan-Germans against the new party and fought it so vigorously that Fischhof abandoned his attempt.²⁴⁰

The problem was that Jews could be, and were, identified with both socialist revolution and capitalist interests. One of the most successful arguments of von Schönerer and Lueger, who both began their careers as liberal politicians,²⁴¹ was the protection of the petite bourgeoisie from Jewish capitalists. This brought them tremendous support from tradesmen, shopkeepers and, notably, the artisans of Vienna.²⁴² The nationalist movement arose from Liberalism, but then turned against it the more it became identified with capitalist, and therefore supposedly Jewish, interests. This development, so Ehrenberg predicts, would be

²³⁸ Ibid., p.160.

²³⁹ Le Rider, *Modernity and Crises of Identity*, p.190.

²⁴⁰ Wistrich, p.157-160.

²⁴¹ Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1979), p.133.

²⁴² Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, p.142, 146.

mirrored in socialism: Founded by the Austrian Jew Viktor Adler, and following the theories of the Jewish thinker Karl Marx, the Socialist Workers' Party naturally targeted the major financiers and industrialists, of whom a number were Jewish in turn. The gist of Ehrenberg's exclamation is, therefore, that whichever way the Jews turn, they cannot hope to win.

III.b) The Zionist: Leo Golowski

Schnitzler notes in February 1905, "Mit Leo Vanjung Meissl.- Seit einigen Tagen tritt die an ihn erinnernde Figur in meinem Roman auf, und ich freue mich, wenn er zu mir die Sachen sagt, die ich schon aufgeschrieben habe."²⁴³ Leo Golowski is based on Schnitzler's friend Leo Van-Jung, who is a convinced Zionist. Just as Van-Jung is of Ukranian origin, so Golowski originally comes from the East. The Golowskis were once well off, but their fortunes have since declined. Van-Jung's mathematical and musical interests and his rootless way of life all flowed into the character of Leo Golowski. Schnitzler was able to define his own position through the discussions between Bermann and Golowski. Nikolaj Beier mentions that like Golowski, Leo Van-Jung attended a Zionist congress in 1903 and promised to relate his impressions to Schnitzler.²⁴⁴ In 1910, Schnitzler read excerpts of his novel to a group of friends, including Van-Jung. "Eine nicht ganz alltägliche Situation," he writes, "Als ich Leo Vanjung aus dem Buch Stellen vorlas, die sein Abbild Leo Golowski spricht und die er eben selbst gesagt hatte oder nah daran war zu sagen".²⁴⁵

Leo, being what Schnitzler would term a 'Kraftjude', shares with Salomon Ehrenberg his urge for decisive action. 'Muskeljudentum', coined by Max Nordau, is a similar phrase, applying to those younger Jews who organised themselves in such sports clubs and fraternities as the Kadimah, in order to counter the stereotypical image of the weak, effete Jew.²⁴⁶ Zionism is a personal stance for him, and when he challenges an anti-Semitic lieutenant to a duel, this is as much a vent for his energies and frustration as a political statement.

Leo is just as trapped as Ehrenberg in his social and cultural environment. His family's economic quandary prevents him from seeking his way into the open, although he does embark on mathematical studies in the end. He is no less happy and fulfilled than Bermann or

²⁴³ TB 1903-1908, 15.2.1905.

²⁴⁴ Nikolaj Beier, „Vor allem bin ich i c h...“ – *Judentum, Akkulturation und Antisemitismus in Arthur Schnitzlers Leben und Werk* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2008), p.74

²⁴⁵ TB 1909-1912, 13.1.1910.

²⁴⁶ Robertson, p.480-83.

Ehrenberg, because he renounces his Austrian 'Heimat', and yet he cannot be attached in the same way to the idea of Palestine. His artistic crisis, i.e., his unwillingness to embark on a professional career as a musician, goes together with a moral crisis: his attempt to dispose of anti-Semitism by shooting its proponents. Naturally, he is punished according to the prevailing legal system. His actions reflect the general crisis of identity and values of the Fin de siècle. The utter and detrimental relativism that Leo imposes on himself can be found in the following phrase on Bermann: "ein Dichter [...], der zufällig, weil er in einem deutschen Land geboren, in deutscher Sprache und, weil er in Österreich lebt, über österreichische Menschen und Verhältnisse schreibt." (p.105) There is no security, no reliability, no stability at all in this, and in arguing against Bermann, Leo deprives himself of the ground under his own feet. He continues:

Es handelt sich aber in erster Linie gar nicht um Sie und auch nicht um mich, auch nicht um die paar jüdischen Beamten, die nicht avancieren, die paar jüdischen Freiwilligen, die nicht Offiziere werden, die jüdischen Dozenten, die man nicht oder verspätet zu Professoren macht, – das sind lauter Unannehmlichkeiten zweiten Ranges.
(p.105)

Leo is trivialising the issue here, for the symptoms he describes are, in reality, far more serious than second-rate inconveniences. In adhering to Zionism, and in his strong reactions when confronted with anti-Semitism, he shows how deeply the issue affects him personally. And yet it is crucial to note that he is not involved with furthering the Zionist movement and organising events. It would appear that Zionism is merely the term applied to his personal militancy. In pretending Bermann is an Austrian writer purely by coincidence, and that therefore, by implication, Leo too is only Austrian by chance, Leo is only aggravating his personal identity crisis. His general disorientation and aimlessness is typical of the younger generation in the novel, which no longer has any moral guideline to follow. Although Schnitzler does formulate his own answer eventually, it is clear that it is not Zionism or Jewish nationalism.

III.c) The Snob: Oskar Ehrenberg

Schnitzler objected to Jewish snobbery especially. He defines it in 1901 as the desire "zu einer Art von Menschen gerechnet zu werden, die irgend eine Eigenschaft höher ausgebildet

besitzen als wir und von der wir daher nicht als gleichwertig betrachtet werden.”²⁴⁷ In the case of Jews, this implied discomfort with one’s background, and ‘kriecherisch’ behaviour towards Christians in a higher social position. Another factor could include Catholic sympathies, as demonstrated by Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Hermann Bahr. For Schnitzler, this was a sign of dishonesty and insincerity. It ran counter to his notion of ‘Unbeirrtheit’ and determination with respect to one’s Jewish heritage. As we have seen, this form of snobbery seriously strained relations with Hofmannsthal once *Der Weg ins Freie* was published.

Oskar, the son of the factory owner Salomon Ehrenberg, is an admirable example of a snob – not only with respect to his Jewish origins. In chapter five, Therese mentions Ehrenberg’s “versnobten Sohn”. (p.216) His aristocratic leanings are all too apparent when he speaks of his affair with a girl from a more modest background:

Solche Sachen dürfen nicht länger dauern als höchstens ein Jahr. Sie können sich übrigens vom Dezember an bei ihr Ihre Handschuhe kaufen [...] Ich richte ihr nämlich ein kleines Geschäft ein. Das bin ich ihr gewissermaßen schuldig, denn ich hab sie aus einer ziemlich sichern Situation herausgerissen. (p.54)

Working-class women such as Amelie Reiter, Oskar’s mistress, were in a particularly vulnerable position, not just because of their financial dependence, but also because of the strict conventions society applied to women while granting men considerably more freedom. Oskar makes use of this in a way that seems ruthless to a modern reader, but was quite common practise among the sons of the haute bourgeoisie, in the Vienna of *Der Weg ins Freie*.

With the figure of Oskar, Schnitzler continues his criticism of irresponsible young ‘Lebemänner’, and their potential to ruin the entire lives of working-class girls, who were considered ‘Gefallene’ (‘fallen ones’) once they had engaged in a pre-marital affair. Schnitzler included himself among these young men, for he pursued a great number of similar adventures in his student years and after. He knew from his own experience what he was condemning. Schnitzler’s criticism began with the plays *Das Märchen* and *Liebelei* and provides a recurring theme in his work. This culminates in his second novel, *Therese* (1928), which recounts the life and hardship of one of those women from the working class.

Georg von Wergenthin, Heinrich Bermann, and Oskar Ehrenberg all fit this category. In the end, they are unable to grasp the full consequences of their behaviour towards the women

²⁴⁷ CUL, MS Schnitzler: Autobiographie, Folder A173, 34.

they have temporarily attached themselves to. Both Georg and Oskar deprive their respective women of the stability of married life. Anna and her family hope for marriage throughout the plot. Oskar has caused Amélie Reiter to break off her engagement to another man, although he is quite clear in his mind that he will end their relationship in less than a year. Matrimony was the only way women of the time could guarantee their respectability, and more basic than that, their social acceptance. If they engaged in any pre-marital relationship, they forfeited this right and became ostracised 'Gefallene'. Redemption was virtually impossible, and the only option left to these 'fallen women' was to move to another city.

Oskar's snobbery eventually leads to a complete break with his family. One day, he raises his hat in front of St. Michael's Church, perhaps to greet some young aristocrats, "vor denen sich Oskar katholisch gebärden wollte." (p.207) Through an unfortunate coincidence, his father passes by at the same moment. Furious at this gesture of submission to Catholicism, Ehrenberg strikes his son in the face. Here, it is not an anti-Semite but a Jew striking another Jew for not standing up to his origins. This instance symbolises how deep the rifts were within the Jewish community of Vienna, given that here the father is pitted against the son. The consequences are devastating, and eventually lead to Oskar's suicide.

Bermann considers the whole affair tragicomic. When Georg protests, he argues,

Die Ohrfeige des alten Ehrenberg war eine Brutalität, der Selbstmord Oskars eine Albernheit; daß er so schlecht getroffen hat, eine Ungeschicklichkeit. Aus diesen Motiven kann doch nichts Tragisches resultieren. Eine etwas widerliche Affäre, das ist alles. (p.249)

Bermann's sympathies lie neither with the Zionist father nor with the Catholic son. For him, it is merely one more tragic, unhealable generational rift, similar to the difference between the elder and younger Stauber and Bermann and his own father. Schnitzler depicts the actions of the Jewish snob, the fictional equivalent of Hofmannsthal or Oppenheimer, as little more than a 'repulsive affair', the consequences of which cannot even be considered tragic, only pathetic.

IV. Apolitical Liberalism – A Contradiction in Terms?

IV.a) The Jews of Vienna and German Liberalism

Before 1848, the Viennese Jews were generally opposed to the Habsburg state and the restrictive measures imposed by the foreign minister Count Clemens von Metternich. Because of this, they had no dynastic patriotism to speak of and entertained liberal-democratic as well as pan-German sympathies, looking across the border to the more liberal and progressive tendencies in Germany.²⁴⁸ In 1848, when revolution broke out in Vienna, Jewish medical students were among the first to set up barricades. It was Adolf Fischhof, a Jewish doctor from Budapest, who gave the revolution its programme in a spontaneous speech in front of enthusiastic Viennese crowds.²⁴⁹ It seems only natural that Jews would identify with such liberal aims as religious freedom and freedom of the press.

Wolfgang Häusler mentions that already in the very same year, Jews were being identified with the revolutionary upheaval. He points to the artillery officer and publicist Johann Quirin Endlich, who reiterated, throughout the subsequent decade, his line: “die Juden sind überall gleich”. Endlich stressed that it did not matter whether an individual was a democratic revolutionary or a conservative banker – only his Jewish background counted. No wonder, then, that the National Socialists considered Endlich one of their forerunners “in ihrem Sinne”.²⁵⁰

In the period of liberal rule in Germany and Austria, which Robertson dates roughly from the 1860's until the 1880's, the Jewish middle class came to identify strongly with the state – in contrast to the development of Liberalism in Great Britain.²⁵¹ In Great Britain, over the course of these two decades, there was a gradual, but noticeable, shift in Liberal ideology away from the values of the Enlightenment and political emancipation to an increasing emphasis on free-market economy.²⁵² In Germany and Austria, on the other hand, just as Bismarck's National Liberals and the Jews of the Centralverein became confidently patriotic citizens,²⁵³ so Jewish Liberals in Austria became more committed to the state and dynasty than any other nationality of the empire. They understood that the emperor was the guarantor of their constitutional rights and insisted on the equality of his subjects, regardless of

²⁴⁸ Wistrich, p.140.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., p.149.

²⁵⁰ Wolfgang Häusler, “‘Aus dem Ghetto’- Aufbruch des österreichischen Judentums in bürgerliche Zeitalter”, in *Judentum, Antisemitismus und deutschsprachige Literatur vom 18. Jahrhundert bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg*, ed. by Horst Denkler and Hans-Otto Horch (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1988), pp.47-70, (p.63-64).

²⁵¹ Robertson, p.77.

²⁵² Ibid., p.78.

²⁵³ Ibid., p.83-85.

nationality or confession.²⁵⁴ This reached the point that in June 1917, the 'Österreichische Wochenschrift' wrote: "The Jews are not only the most loyal citizens of the Monarchy, but also the only unconditional Austrians in the state."²⁵⁵

The fundamental problem was that the Austrian Liberals only had a very narrow social basis of support: the middle-class Germans and the German Jews. Their political power rested on a restricted franchise, and the Liberals fought every attempt to extend it. The root of the liberal tragedy lay in the fact that, in spite of their driving role in economic and industrial progress, they were never able to dislodge or replace the traditional elites of the Habsburg Monarchy: The aristocracy, the Church, the bureaucracy and the army were all pillars of the dynasty, and every one of them opposed the form of progress the Liberals advocated.²⁵⁶

Karlheinz Rossbacher reminds us that the study of Liberalism should be foremost the study of a political and ideological movement, not that of a particular segment of society. For the Liberals did not represent the entire middle class, nor did they constitute one coherent social group. Instead, they shared common values. Liberal achievements in Austria are given as the establishment of parliamentary democracy, industrial capitalism based on small and medium-sized companies, the ascendancy and political hegemony of the middle class, freedom of thought and of speech, individualism, a form of national self-determination, and anti-clericalism.²⁵⁷ These were, at the same time, the reason why the Liberals could never hope to constitute the Austrian-wide ruling class: For the staunch Catholics, mainly the peasants and the petit bourgeois, they were anti-clerical; for the German nationalists they numbered too many Jews in their ranks; for the non-German nationalities, they were too German; for the working class, they were capitalist exploiters.²⁵⁸

Once they assumed political power, the Liberals moved beyond their revolutionary fervour to a more conservative stance favouring the status quo. It became clear they supported the imperial bureaucracy and government 'from above', based on their abhorrence of revolution and anarchy as well as their unswerving faith in progress. Musil spoke of the "Wert-Vakuum" and the "Verlogenheit" of the Liberal Era, implying not only disillusionment with the strong Liberal faith in technological and economic progress, which, by the end of the 19th century, had become widespread; but also the evident corruption in the party of the banks and the stock market. Rossbacher indicates that it might be revealing, from this point of view, that the "Schaukünste", or performing arts, dominated during this period, as opposed to

²⁵⁴ Wistrich, p.169, 179-81.

²⁵⁵ cited in Robertson, p.84.

²⁵⁶ Wistrich, p.146-47.

²⁵⁷ cited in Karlheinz Rossbacher, *Literatur und Liberalismus* (Vienna: Dachs Verlag, 1992), p.45.

²⁵⁸ Rossbacher, *Literatur und Liberalismus*, p.46.

literature, perhaps suggesting a more superficial artistic and moral tone in the enfranchised classes of society.²⁵⁹ Finally, the stock market crash of 1873 largely discredited the liberal movement, leading to its decline throughout the following years, until its crushing electoral defeat in 1879. Count Taaffe's succeeding government was comprised of clerical, aristocratic, and Slav representatives, notably from Poland and Bohemia – all of which were enemies of Liberalism. The extension of the franchise in 1882 destroyed the electoral basis of liberal support, giving rise to the era of mass politics and reducing its sphere of – mainly cultural – influence to Vienna.²⁶⁰

Even after the defeat of political Liberalism, it was still largely identified with Jewish interests. Janz and Laermann mention that the Christian Socials regarded Jews as the “Inbegriff [des] österreichischen Liberalismus”, and fought them along with the Social Democrats as their primary enemies.²⁶¹ Le Rider emphasises that the key characteristics of Austrian Liberalism were centralism and Germanisation. The Liberals did not want to encourage the view that they represented Jewish interests, but instead emphasised the links between assimilated Jews and the German ‘Staatsvolk’. It is interesting to note that in spite of their diminishing political influence, the Austrian Jews of the middle class still held on to several of the largest newspapers in Vienna – the most famous being the ‘Neue Freie Presse’ – and were also strongly represented among the intellectual avant-garde.²⁶² Thus, the liberal middle classes were still able to retain a certain degree of influence in the public sphere: through journalism, but also thanks to representatives in high administrative offices, and, not lastly, in the financial sector, where Jews were represented “out of all proportion to their numbers”.²⁶³ Their actual political influence was being reduced, and yet, in Le Rider's words, the Jewish middle class of Vienna was not only the “richest potential source of cultural output”, but “also an indispensable part of its public”.²⁶⁴

IV.b) Berthold Stauber and His Father

Schnitzler illuminates the moral crisis of the turn of the century by contrasting the generations of fathers and sons. Berthold, the younger, is a doctor and one of Georg's acquaintances. The elder and younger Stauber discuss the trial of Leo Golowski, who shot a

²⁵⁹ Rossbacher, p.14-16.

²⁶⁰ Robertson, p. 188.

²⁶¹ Janz and Laermann, *Zur Diagnose des Bürgertums im Fin-de-Siècle*, p.155

²⁶² Le Rider, *Modernity and Crises of Identity*, p.190/91.

²⁶³ Robertson, p.84, 80.

²⁶⁴ Le Rider, p.192.

lieutenant in a duel. Berthold Stauber takes a stronger stand against anti-Semitic tendencies than does his father, who still shares the liberals' faith in the Austrian state and society. Berthold Stauber mentions that Golowski's enemies tried to press a charge for murder. The conversation becomes more intense when his father states:

Ich finde, du fängst an, dich in deine Ideen zu verbohren. Es wird krankhaft bei dir. [...] Daß einer losschlägt, wie es Leo Golowski getan, das kann ich noch verstehen, so wenig ich es billigen möchte. Aber immer dastehen, die geballte Faust in der Tasche, sozusagen, was hat das für einen Zweck? [...] Was kann dir Arges passieren? Daß du um ein paar Jahre später die Professur kriegst als ein anderer. Das Unglück fänd' ich nicht so groß. Deine Arbeiten wird man doch nicht totsichweigen können, wenn sie was wert sind. (p.318-19)

It is worth noting that Dr. Stauber uses the same argument as Leo Golowski. For both of them, the fact that a Jewish academic is awarded a professorship several years later than a non-Jew is merely one of the "Unannehmlichkeiten zweiten Ranges". Both trivialise the matter at stake, although, as Wistrich points out, the great majority of Jewish lecturers at university were 'Privatdozenten' and not state-employed professors.²⁶⁵ Freud had to wait seventeen years for his professorship, whereas the general rule was eight.²⁶⁶ But although, for Leo, the Zionist mission supersedes combatting this discrimination, relegating it to a secondary issue, for Dr. Stauber, these are merely minor flaws on the general road to progress. He would have been the first generation to fully benefit from emancipation in 1867. In the ensuing decades, Jews everywhere in the Monarchy left their restrictive ghettos behind and travelled to the major cities to make their fortune, as did Schnitzler's, Freud's, and Herzl's fathers. Many succeeded in becoming assimilated, respectable middle-class citizens like them. For their generation, the centuries of persecution had finally come to an end, and the road was open to a brighter future, to progress. Anti-Semitism was merely an unpleasant side-issue, a phenomenon of the lower, uneducated classes that they felt able to ignore.

For Berthold's generation, however, this strong faith in progress has been shaken by anti-Semitism, which, as the younger ones realise, is much more than just a side-issue. It strikes at the core of their identity, denying them their affiliation with their native country and culture and relegating them to second-class citizens. The second generation after Emancipation is much less sure of itself, not only of its Austrian-Jewish identity, but also of its moral guidelines. Schnitzler presents Dr. Stauber's liberal generation with a degree of nostalgic

²⁶⁵ Wistrich, p.173-4.

²⁶⁶ Schorske, p.184.

empathy, but he was too clear-sighted to deny that their era was over. Liberal values are no longer adequate for the Fin-de-siècle Vienna of Lueger and his Christian Socials. Thus, the liberals too are no longer able to offer a moral solution to the increasingly prevalent anti-Semitism. Their predominance lasted for two decades only, and although it was a time of enlightened tolerance and 'Bildung', their values are a thing of the past.

The generational rift between Berthold Stauber and his father becomes apparent when both try to determine who 'the others' are. At one point, Berthold says of Georg: "Nun ja, ein schöner, schlanker, blonder junger Mann; Freiherr, Germane, Christ – welcher Jude könnte diesem Zauber widerstehen". (p.324) Dr. Stauber appeals to him: "Besinn dich auf dich! Wisse, wer du bist." Berthold answers that he does. "Nein," Dr. Stauber counters, "Du weißt es nicht. Sonst könntest du nicht so oft vergessen, wer die andern sind." (p.324)

He refers on the one hand to the medical, as opposed to the political profession. On the other hand, however, Berthold's father could be speaking about his son's confused sense of Jewishness. For Dr. Stauber, during the liberal era of his youth, 'die anderen' were certainly the orthodox Jews, while he himself was an accepted, assimilated member of the middle class. For his son, with the changing cultural tide, 'die anderen' are the clerical and nationalist parties, while he himself is forced to consider himself Jewish, and to take some position on the 'Jewish Question' – especially as a parliamentary deputy.

Heinrich Bermann uses the term in quite a similar sense, when he vents his disapproval of Jewish 'Renegaten': "Das sind die, die vor andern und manchmal auch vor sich selber tun, als wenn sie nicht dazu gehörten." The 'andern' are the non-Jews in this case, just as when he speaks of the "widerwärtigen Eigenheiten der andern" (p.147). Heinrich's subconscious choice of words reveals the difference between his and his father's generation: While 'the other' meant Jews, and not assimilated Austrian citizens for the generation of the liberal period, for their sons, it signifies anti-Semites, or in any case, gentiles.

The end of the liberal period, with its unwavering faith in linear progress, is described in Nürnberger's book:

Auf der Reise hatte er endlich den Roman Nürnbergers gelesen, der in einer nun halbvergangenen Zeit spielte, derselben, wie es Georg schien, von der der alte Stauber einmal zu ihm gesprochen hatte. Über jene lügendumpfe Welt, in der erwachsene Menschen für reif, altgewordene für erfahren und Leute, die sich gegen kein geschriebenes Gesetz vergingen, als rechtlich, in der Freiheitsliebe, Humanität und

Patriotismus schlechtweg als Tugenden galten, auch wenn sie dem faulen Boden der Gedankenlosigkeit oder der Feigheit entsproßt waren, hatte Nürnberger grimmige Leuchten angezündet; und zum Helden seines Buches einen Mann gewählt, der, von den wohlfeilen Phrasen der Epoche emporgetragen, auf der Höhe Überblick und Einsicht gewann und in der Erkenntnis seines schwindelnden Aufstiegs von Grauen erfaßt, in das Leere hinabstürzte, aus dem er gekommen war. (p.228)

Elsewhere Ehrenberg remarks, “wie in dem Buch eigentlich schon das ganze heutige Österreich vorausgeahnt ist”. (p.75) Nürnberger sees through the contradictions of Liberalism, the blind reliance on progress and patriotism “einer nun halbvergangenen Zeit”, and sends his hero crashing to the ground once he gains insight into the true nature of man and society. Total objectivity and self-exploration, the unrelenting maxims of Schnitzler’s own life, provide no moral solution or salvation, but instead send the protagonist, “von Grauen erfaßt”, back from where he came.

IV.c) Heinrich Bermann and His Father

The Bermanns provide another perspective on the differences between the parental and filial generations. Whereas in the Staubers’ case, Schnitzler describes the intellectual divergence, the political decline of the elder Bermann is a more tragic affair. The career of Heinrich’s father indicates the changing times:

Nach einer kurzen Epoche der Beliebtheit und des Erfolgs hatte das Anwachsen der antisemitischen Bewegung ihn aus der deutsch-liberalen Partei gedrängt, die meisten Freunde hatten ihn verlassen und verraten, und ein verbummelter Couleurstudent, der in den Versammlungen die Tschechen und Juden als die gefährlichsten Feinde deutscher Zucht und Sitte hinstellte, daheim seine Frau prügelte und seinen Mägden Kinder machte, war sein Nachfolger im Vertrauen der Wähler und im Parlament geworden. Heinrich, dem die Phrasen des Vaters von Deutschtum, Freiheit, Fortschritt in all ihrer Ehrlichkeit immer gegen den Strich gegangen waren, hatte dem Niedergang des alternden Mannes anfangs wie mit Schadenfreude zugesehen; allmählich erst, als der einst gesuchte Anwalt auch seine Klienten zu verlieren begann und die materiellen Verhältnisse der Familie sich von Tag zu Tag verschlechterten, stellte bei dem Sohne sich ein verspätetes Mitleid ein. (p.92)

We have the key liberal virtues of “Deutschtum, Freiheit, Fortschritt” listed in one sentence. Patriotism was an intrinsic part of the liberal movement. This brings to mind Ehrenberg’s rhetorical outburst: “Wer hat die deutschnationale Bewegung in Österreich

geschaffen? Die Juden.” (p.78) For Heinrich, these are nothing but phrases. Schnitzler regards these concepts as inadequate for Lueger’s Vienna, but the ‘Zucht und Sitte’ of the clerical and nationalist parties are just as hollow, as he indicates with sarcasm. The ethical solutions offered by any political party are insincere and only aggravate the general moral disorientation of the Fin de siècle. And yet the above paragraph shows that, in spite of his objectivity, Schnitzler is decidedly not partial to nationalist groups.

Heinrich’s plan is to make his father “die wahrhaft tragikomische Mittelpunktfigur” of his new political drama, a literary tribute to his memory. He insists:

Ein Jude, der sein Vaterland liebt [...] ich meine, so wie mein Vater es getan, mit Solidaritätsgefühlen, mit dynastischer Begeisterung, ist unbedingt eine tragikomische Figur. Das heißt [...] er war es zu jener liberalisierenden Epoche der siebziger und achtziger Jahre, da auch kluge Menschen dem Phrasentaumel der Zeit unterlegen sind. Heute wäre ein solcher Mensch allerdings ausschließlich komisch. (p.234)

‘Heute’ is the Vienna of Lueger, where anti-Semitism is officially condoned. The liberal ‘Phrasentaumel’ of progress and patriotism is no answer to the moral void of the present, just as little as is the hollow and hypocritical defence of ‘Zucht und Sitte’ by the Christian Socials. A Jew who clung to the values of political Liberalism in the twenty years following Emancipation was tragicomic, in Bermann’s view. He lacked clear-sightedness, but he concedes that even clever people succumbed to this blind optimism. To continue to adhere to these beliefs in the present era of mass politics, however, is no more than comic.

Where to turn? At this stage, Bermann appears no more aware of his way into the open than the other characters. And yet, in a later chapter, he will voice Schnitzler’s own answer to the profound dissatisfaction of the Viennese Jews, to their identity crisis embedded in the wider moral crisis of the Fin de siècle: There is no general solution, there are only innumerable individual solutions. For Ritchie Robertson, this extreme commitment to objectivity, which results in the author’s lack of inner fulfilment and dissatisfaction, recurs throughout Schnitzler’s work.

V. Heinrich Bermann as Schnitzler's Alter Ego: Jewish Individualism and Attachment to 'Heimat'

Bermann is a critical thinker and a writer. In his first appearance, he is likened to “ein fanatischer jüdischer Lehrer”. (p.20) One of his works depicted the injustice among the lower classes, the other was a social satire that caused a scandal. (p.44) He was attacked by the conservative and clerical papers “aufs heftigste”. (p.48) At this point, Georg reflects: “Aber was geht das mich an [...] Schon wieder einer, den man beleidigt hat! Es war wirklich absolut ausgeschlossen, mit diesen Leuten harmlos zu verkehren.” With “diese Leute”, Georg means Jewish intellectuals.

Bermann is attached to the country and city of his birth – in contrast to the convinced Zionist Leo Golowski, for instance. For Golowski, anti-Semitism is merely the affirmation of “eine anthropologisch und geschichtlich feststehende Tatsache.” (p.104) In conversation with him, Bermann states:

Mein Instinkt sagt mir untrüglich, daß hier, gerade hier meine Heimat ist und nicht in irgendeinem Land, das ich nicht kenne, das mir nach den Schilderungen nicht im geringsten zusagt und das mir gewisse Leute jetzt als Vaterland einreden wollen, mit der Begründung, daß meine Urahnen vor einigen tausend Jahren gerade von dort aus in die Welt verstreut worden sind. (p.105)

This is very similar to Schnitzler's own position, as we will see shortly. Golowski considers this viewpoint limited. He recounts his experiences at the Zionist congress in Basel and the enthusiasm felt there for the settlement of Palestine. Bermann retorts that Zionism is “die schlimmste Heimsuchung [...], die jemals über die Juden hereingebrochen war”.

Vaterland [...] das war ja überhaupt eine Fiktion, ein Begriff der Politik [...] Etwas Reales bedeutete nur die Heimat, nicht das Vaterland [...] und so war Heimatsgefühl auch Heimatsrecht. [...] Und zusammengehörig fühlte er sich mit niemandem, nein, mit niemandem auf der Welt. Mit den weinenden Juden in Basel gerade so wenig als mit den grölenden Alldeutschen im österreichischen Parlament. (p.106-107)

Bermann distinguishes between attachment to 'Heimat' and the political state in the same way Schnitzler himself did. In an aphoristic vignette from 1904, titled *Vaterland*, Schnitzler wrote:

Ich liebe dieses Land, dessen Wälder und Auen mir vertraut sind.

Die Sprache lieb' ich, die mein Vater sprach.

Doch wie kann ich einen staatlichen Komplex lieben, der sich allmählig bildete, durch Eroberungslust [...]; wie kann ich diesen Herren lieben, von dem ich nichts weiß, als daß er [...] Macht hat über mich [...]

- Nein! Nennt ihr das Vaterland, so lieb' ich's nicht und keiner liebt's.²⁶⁷

Schnitzler expands upon the staunch individualism expressed in the phrase “zusammengehörig fühlte er sich mit niemandem” in a draft for the novel. Here, Bermann postulates:

Wir haben unsere Heimat, (daran fehlt's nicht;) nur Mitbürger haben wir nicht, und darum – was mir übrigens sehr egal ist – kein Vaterland. [...] So wenig ich mich als Bruder eines Fleischhauergesellen oder eines vertrottelten Grafen fühlen würde, wenn ich genötigt würde mit ihm zusammen in eine Schlacht zu ziehn, so wenig verwandt fühl' ich mich, mit einem jüdischen Commis oder Banquierprotzen, weil ein Gassenjunge oder ein Abgeordneter ihn und mich mit den gleichen Schimpfwörtern bedenkt. Ich wähle mir meine Brüder selbst und sie brauchen gar nichts davon zu wissen.²⁶⁸

The resemblance to Schnitzler's own view is striking. He wrote in a *Bekanntnis*, dated 1904:

Ich fühle mich mit Niemandem solidarisch, weil er zufällig der selben Nation, dem selben Stand, der selben Rasse, der selben Familie angehört wie ich. (Ich bin auf Niemanden stolz, nicht einmal auf mich selbst.) Es ist ausschliesslich meine Sache, mit wem ich mich verwandt zu fühlen wünsche; (ich erkenne keine Verpflichtung in dieser Frage an.) Ich habe Mitbürger in jeder Nation, Kameraden in jedem Stand und Brüder, die keine Ahnung von meiner Existenz haben.²⁶⁹

The phrasing is, in parts, almost identical. According to the manuscript, Schnitzler was working on the draft of the third chapter, the ‘Sophienalpe-Kapitel’, from January to March 1905. Schnitzler's strong sense of individualism speaks out of these lines. He left the above passage out in the final version, presumably because he wanted to focus on Zionism and Golowksi's arguments, not Bermann's personality, in this scene. Bermann's personal dilemma comes to the fore in his conversation with Georg, in chapter six. Why did Schnitzler not include the passage here? There is a high chance that he simply considered it too personal

²⁶⁷ CUL, MS Aphorismen, Folder A5.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

– just as the whole novel was “einer der persönlichsten meiner Schöpfungen”.

A further parallel between Bermann and Schnitzler lies in their mutual rejection of the ‘Renegat’. Bermann voices his disgust at being held responsible for the indelicacy or even ‘Geschmacklosigkeit’ of people with whom he does not want to have anything to do. A few lines further, he states:

Aber es gibt schon Juden, die ich wirklich hasse, als Juden hasse. Das sind die, die vor andern und manchmal auch vor sich selber tun, als wenn sie nicht dazu gehörten. Die sich in [...] kriecherischer Weise bei ihren Feinden und Verächtern anzubiedern suchen [...] Das sind übrigens beinahe immer solche Juden, die im Gefühl ihrer eigenen höchst persönlichen Schäßigkeit herumgehen und dafür unbewußt oder bewußt ihre Rasse verantwortlich machen möchten. Natürlich hilft’s ihnen nicht das geringste. (p.147-48)

Here, we cannot help but think of Schnitzler’s vicious comment on Karl Kraus’ ‘Kriecherei’ (see p.44). Bermann specifies that he is speaking of those Jews “die so irgend etwas wie eine äußerliche oder innerliche Hilfe brauchen.” If a German-speaking Jew is confident enough, and has enough inner strength to draw upon, he can rise above his dilemma. Thanks to this resolve, so it is implied, he is capable of doing ‘das Rechte’, which places him, as an individual, above any religious, political, or social allegiance.

When Bermann explains how ashamed he is of other Jews at times, Georg calls him “ein ärgerer Antisemit [...] als die meisten Christen, die ich kenne.” (p.147) Bermann laughs and confesses, “Ein richtiger wohl nicht. [...] Aber in gewissem Sinne haben Sie schon recht. Ich gestatte mir schließlich auch Antiarier zu sein. Jede Rasse als solche ist mir natürlich widerwärtig. Nur der einzelne vermag es zuweilen, durch persönliche Vorzüge mit den Widerlichkeiten seiner Rasse zu versöhnen.” (p.147)

Bermann grants that he is particularly sensitive to “Fehlern der Juden”. From childhood, every member of society, including the Jews, are driven (“darauf hingehetzt”) to perceive certain Jewish characteristics as especially ridiculous or repulsive, but not supposedly German or Christian qualities. He continues,

Ich will es gar nicht verhehlen, – wenn sich ein Jude in meiner Gegenwart ungezogen oder lächerlich benimmt, befällt mich manchmal ein so peinliches Gefühl, daß ich vergehen möchte [...] Es erbittert einen eben, daß man immer wieder für die

Fehler von andern mit verantwortlich gemacht wird, daß man für jedes Verbrechen, für jede Geschmacklosigkeit, für jede Unvorsichtigkeit, die sich irgendein Jude auf der Welt zuschulden kommen läßt, mitzubüßen hat. (p.147)

Because of this strong sense of independence, Bermann can acknowledge the philanthropic benefits of Zionism, but not more. Georg suggests that the logical consequence of this would be to emigrate to Palestine, whereupon Bermann replies:

Hab' ich denn behauptet, daß ich von hier fort will? Daß ich irgendwo anders lieber leben möchte als hier? Insbesondere, daß ich unter lauter Juden existieren möchte? Das wäre, für mich wenigstens, die recht äußerliche Lösung einer höchst innerlichen Angelegenheit. (p.235)

Not only does Bermann want to stay in his 'Heimat'. He feels Austrian, and wants to live among Austrians, not "unter lauter Juden". This is the root of his dilemma: He is attached not only to the nature, but also to the culture and population of his home place, even if it rejects him. He explains to Georg "ganz gequält": "Ich sagte Ihnen ja schon, die Sache ist viel zu kompliziert, um überhaupt erledigt zu werden. Sogar innerlich ist es nahezu unmöglich. Und nun gar in Worten!" (p.235)

In any case, Bermann does not really believe in assimilation. "Sie wird wohl kommen, irgendeinmal [...] in sehr, sehr langer Zeit." For all his partiality to Austria, and his scepticism towards Esoi-behaviour, he does acknowledge certain positive Jewish qualities: "Ein Menschheitsferment", he calls the Jewish population, implying the traditional respect for learning in the Jewish community. Looking at the large number of Jewish intellectuals in Vienna at the time, such as Schnitzler's literary circle, Klimt and Kokoschka, Mahler, and Freud, it does ring true that the Jewish thinkers and artists were the 'yeast' of the Wiener Moderne.

On the one hand, Bermann acknowledges Jewish achievement and loathes any form of anti-Semitism. On the other, he strongly disapproves of Esoi-behaviour, he rejects Zionism, and knows he belongs in Austria, among Austrians. Feeling pulled in both directions, he states:

Für unsere Zeit gibt es keine Lösung, das steht einmal fest. Keine allgemeine wenigstens. Eher gibt es hunderttausend verschiedene Lösungen. Weil es eben eine Angelegenheit ist, die bis auf weiteres jeder mit sich selbst abmachen muß, wie er kann. Jeder muß selber dazusehen, wie er herausfindet aus seinem Ärger, oder aus seiner Verzweiflung, oder aus seinem Ekel, irgendwohin, wo er wieder frei aufatmen kann.

Vielleicht gibt es wirklich Leute, die dazu bis nach Jerusalem spazieren müssen [...] Es kommt nur für jeden darauf an, seinen inneren Weg zu finden. [...] Sich nicht beirren lassen. Ja, das müßte das tägliche Gebet jedes anständigen Menschen sein: Unbeirrtheit! (p.236)

This is the programme of *Professor Bernhardt* in embryonic form: Each German-speaking Jew must find a position on the 'Jewish Question' for himself, and adhere to it "unbeirrt". This brings to mind two previous instances when this concept was mentioned. In the first chapter, Berthold Stauber speaks of doing "das Rechte". In conversation with Leo Golowski, Bermann himself insists that one can only achieve "was uns innerhalb unseres Wesens und unserer Fähigkeiten zu leisten gegeben ist." There is a direct continuation from this concept to Bernhardt's statement of 'das Richtige tun' in conversation with the Hofrat in act five.

Georg's response to Bermann, which he keeps to himself, runs thus: "Und er hat einmal behauptet, daß er sich mit niemandem zusammengehörig fühle! Es ist ja nicht wahr. Mit allen Juden fühlt er sich zusammengehörig, und mit dem letzten von ihnen noch immer enger als mit mir." (p.237) Here, we have the Jewish dilemma in a nutshell. Even if a Jew expressly distances himself from the community, he is still part of it, because he is forced to take a position against stereotypic thinking, however mild it may be. Anyone who feels obliged to justify himself with respect to the 'Jewish Question' is a Jew himself.

In *Der Weg ins Freie*, the parallel between Schnitzler and Bermann is not obvious at first glance. Indeed, Florian Krobb states, because of Georg's subjectivity: "Es ist unsinnig, feststellen zu wollen, aus welchen Gestalten Schnitzler selbst spricht."²⁷⁰ But the similarities become strikingly clear when Schnitzler's autobiographical material is compared to Bermann's statements. We have seen the striking parallels between the author and his literary creation when it comes to their sense of 'Heimat'. Another point is religious scepticism.

In the drafts of chapter three, there is a passage of conversation between Leo and Heinrich on religion that has been left out in the final version. Here, Heinrich suggests that it would be a serious blow to anti-Semitic feeling if the Jews left their religious communities. Leo mentions that others have also suggested mass conversions to Catholicism, but Heinrich makes clear that this is not what he means.

Aber dass es sich hier ausschliesslich um eine Rassenfrage handelt ist einfach nicht richtig. [...] Und dass die Juden dem praktischen Antisemitismus seine Arbeit

²⁷⁰ Krobb, *Selbstdarstellungen*, p.157.

beträchtlich erleichtern, dadurch, dass sie überall ihren Staat im Staate bilden, ihre Gebräuche und ihre Feiertage beibehalten, das werden Sie selbst nicht leugnen.²⁷¹

This brings to mind Schnitzler's letter of rejection to the council for Jewish prisoners of war. For Schnitzler, outdated religious practises only provided fertile ground for anti-Semitism – just as for Bermann.

Finally, there is a diary entry from July 1914, which underlines the extent to which Schnitzler identified with Bermann. It runs: “‘Patriotische’ Empfindungen. Dazugehörigkeit. Leo widerspricht. Ich mache ihn aufmerksam, dass ‘wir’ dieses Gespräch schon im ‘Weg ins freie’ geführt haben.-”²⁷² Schnitzler had made clear on several occasions that Leo Van-Jung's equivalent in the novel was Leo Golowski. It follows that Schnitzler's part was spoken by none other than Heinrich Bermann.²⁷³

VI. Conclusion: Pre-empting *Professor Bernhardi* – Anti-Politics and ‘das Richtige tun’

One passage towards the end of the novel reveals the author's strong scepticism of politics. This principle would be taken a step further in *Professor Bernhardi*, and, in fact, embodied by the professor himself. Throughout the political turbulences of the play, Bernhardi rejects any help from liberal journalists, for instance, who offer their support, and insists that his is an entirely personal, not a political matter. In the novel, Nürnberger tells Heinrich Bermann:

In solch einem Stück, das eine Zeitfrage behandelt [...] werden Sie mit der Objektivität nie was erreichen. Das Publikum im Theater verlangt, daß die Themen, die der Dichter anschlägt, auch erledigt werden, oder daß wenigstens eine Täuschung dieser Art erweckt werde. Denn natürlich gibt's nie und nimmer eine wirkliche Erledigung. Und scheinbar erledigen kann eben nur einer, der den Mut oder die Einfalt oder das Temperament hat, Partei zu ergreifen. (p.347)

And yet, in the drafts for *Der Weg ins Freie*, Schnitzler comments:

Um einer Partei anzugehören ist eine gewisse Portion Einfalt unerlässlich. Vernünftige Leute, die den Standpunkt ihrer Partei bis in die letzten Konsequenzen zu vertreten versuchen, erwecken immer den Eindruck, als ob sie konfus oder unehrlich

²⁷¹ CUL, MS *Der Weg ins Freie* – Stellen und Einfälle, meist nicht verwendet, Folder A133,3.

²⁷² TB 1913-1916, 27.7.1914.

²⁷³ Nikolaj Beier reaches the same conclusion, yet he mentions the resemblance only in passing, without taking note of the almost word-for word parallels between the drafts for the novel and Schnitzler's notes on *Vaterland* and the *Bekanntnis* (see Beier, *Vor allem bin ich i c h*, p.73-74).

geworden wären.²⁷⁴

This anti-political scepticism finds its literary expression in the internal conflict of the younger Dr. Stauber, who is thinking of retiring from politics, after a heated debate over Therese Golowski's lese-majesty. She was accused, acquitted, charged again, and this time sentenced to two months in prison. Stauber protested against this in parliament, and was shouted down by the "sogenannten staatserhaltenden Parteien", i.e., the nationalists and the clericals, with the insults: "Ruhig, Jud! Halt's Maul! Jud! Jud! Kusch!" (p.32)

The reason why Stauber is considering giving up his mandate is not simply anti-Semitic effrontery. It is the two-faced nature of politics, exemplified by the paper merchant Jalaudek. Jalaudek attacks Stauber more viciously than all others, yet afterwards tries to make polite conversation with him as if nothing had happened. Stauber calls this "österreichisch." He continues, "Bei uns ist ja die Entrüstung so wenig echt wie die Begeisterung." (p.33) For Stauber, the core of Austrian politics is indifference, insincerity, even boredom. Masking this with more or less real emotion is essential for political success: "Ein parlamentarisches Leben ohne Komödientheater ist ja überhaupt nicht möglich. Ich hätte [...] selber mitagieren, dem Kerl womöglich zutrinken sollen, der mich öffentlich beschimpft hat. Das wäre bequem, österreichisch – und vielleicht sogar das Richtige gewesen." (p.34)

Jalaudek's behaviour suggests that not even a rant against Jews is really sincere, on an individual level at least. It is used to sway political opinion and to further party interests. Political insincerity, coupled with the very real pain from anti-Semitic insult, makes for Stauber's disillusionment with politics. He states:

Es gibt am Ende doch nur zwei Methoden, mittels derer in der Politik praktisch etwas zu leisten ist; entweder durch eine großartige Frivolität, die das ganze öffentliche Leben als ein amüsanteres Spiel betrachtet, die in Wahrheit für nichts begeistert, gegen nichts entrüstet ist, und der die Menschen, um deren Glück oder Elend es sich doch im letzten Sinn handeln sollte, vollkommen gleichgültig bleiben. [...] Die andre Methode aber ist: bereit sein, in jedem Augenblick für das, was man das Rechte hält, seine ganze Existenz, sein Leben im wahrsten Sinne des Wortes – (p.35)

This is the essence of Bernhardt's dilemma. He is caught up in the ambiguity and changeability of political intrigue, unable to disentangle himself, and sees no alternative but to pursue his own individual course. Bermann formulates a very similar view:

²⁷⁴ CUL, MS Der Weg ins Freie – Paralipomena, Folder A134.

Und was bedeuten überhaupt politische Ansichten bei Menschen, denen die Politik nicht zugleich Beruf oder Geschäft ist? Nehmen sie den geringsten Einfluß auf die Lebensführung, auf die Gestaltung des Daseins? Sowohl Sie, Leo, als ich, wir beide werden nie etwas anderes tun, nie etwas anderes tun können, als eben das leisten, was uns innerhalb unseres Wesens und unserer Fähigkeiten zu leisten gegeben ist. (p.109)

Heinrich Bermann is equally sceptical of politics. Later on, he states: “Es würde doch nie das aus mir, was man einen Politiker nennt: ein Parteiführer, ein Genosse, ein Minister.” (p.130) Schnitzler originally wanted Heinrich Bermann to say:

Nicht auf Gesinnung kommt es an, sondern auf Anschauung. Die Leute mit der Gesinnung waren immer diejenigen, die den Holzstoss angezündet haben für die Leute mit der Anschauung.²⁷⁵

This brings to mind the conversation in a later chapter, when Golowski enquires what Bermann will do when the pyres are lit once more. In that case, Bermann replies, he will follow Leo’s example. Georg defuses the situation by reassuring them that those times will not come again.

Bermann avows that, even though he is entirely indifferent in religious matters, he will never be baptised, “selbst wenn es möglich ware – was ja heute weniger der Fall ist als je – durch einen solchen Trug antisemitischer Beschränktheit und Schurkerei für alle Zeiten zu entrinnen.” (p.109) Bermann intends, within his abilities, to do what is possible to stand up for his Jewishness.

The term “Scheiterhaufen” refers, of course, to the medieval burning of Jews or, in a wider sense, of heretics. One instance is in act five, when Minister Flint suggests Bernhardi would not have acted as persistently as he did “wenn heute noch in Österreich die Scheiterhaufen den Himmel lohten.”²⁷⁶ The whole play may be seen, in fact – adapting this formula in somewhat simplified terms – as people with political “Gesinnung” persecuting the one individual with “Anschauung”, i.e., independent principles.

The statements of Stauber and Bermann are early expressions of what would become Bernhardi’s ruling principle: the programme of the enlightened, apolitical individual struggling against the masses or the authorities. These observations prove that the aversion to politics that would become programmatic in the play was already fully developed while

²⁷⁵ CUL, MS Der Weg ins Freie – Paralipomena, Folder A134.

²⁷⁶ Arthur Schnitzler, *Professor Bernhardi*, Gesammelte Werke, Die dramatischen Werke vol. 2, p.456.

Schnitzler was working on his novel. But also the notion of ‘das Richtige tun’ had formed in his mind.

In an interview with James L. Benvenisti for the ‘American Hebrew and Jewish Messenger’ on 29 February 1924, Schnitzler proclaims:

The solution of the Jewish Problem is one each individual must find for himself. There is no general solution. Zionism does not seem to me to be a solution at all. [...] This does not prevent me from admiring Zionism. I admire people who can reach out so high and dream so splendidly, but they will never convince me.²⁷⁷

The parallel to Bermann’s statement 16 years earlier is striking. Schnitzler was not interested in extensive socio-cultural theory, unlike, for example, his friend and literary colleague Jakob Wassermann. He found his position as an Austrian-Jewish author early on, since, coming from a non-practising family, religion never was a serious issue for him. Once established, Schnitzler saw no reason to change in his persuasion. Although, as the comparison between *Der Weg ins Freie* and *Professor Bernhardi* proves, his stance on the ‘Jewish Question’ did gradually evolve in his work. There is a direct line from Stauber’s and Bermann’s statements to Bernhardi’s assertion in act five. ‘Das Richtige tun’ is unmistakably formulated in the interview of 1924, with Schnitzler stating that the ‘Jewish Question’ was a purely individual matter. Even though he does not state this clearly until 1924, this position was forming in his mind ever since he first became a public figure. As his wife wrote in *Spiegelbild der Freundschaft*: “Es war jedenfalls ein Schicksal, dessen Härte er mit aller Männlichkeit auf sich zu nehmen gewillt war, dem er sich entstellte, ohne je auszubiegen, nämlich das zu sein, wozu er sich immer wieder bekannte: ein europäischer Jude deutscher Kultur.”²⁷⁸

²⁷⁷ Benvenisti, ‘Arthur Schnitzler foretells Jewish Renaissance’, ZAS MF 320.

²⁷⁸ Olga Schnitzler, *Spiegelbild der Freundschaft* (Salzburg: Residenz Verlag, 1962), p.96.

Professor Bernhardt – Anti-Semitism on the Stage and in Reality

I. Introduction

Apart from *Der Weg ins Freie*, *Professor Bernhardt* is the only work in which Schnitzler dealt seriously with issues of anti-Semitism. The play developed out of a drama entitled, *Die Egoisten*. As early as April 1903, Schnitzler decided to separate the “Junggesell- und Ärztstück” into two parts, with the former soon being renamed *Der einsame Weg*.²⁷⁹ Yet it was not until May 1912 that Schnitzler was able to bring work on *Professor Bernhardt* to a successful conclusion.²⁸⁰

The play was banned by the Viennese censors in November of that year and was first performed in Berlin later that month. Contrary to what the authorities had feared, the play was very well-received throughout Germany, with no theatre scandals or other forms of public disturbance. In spite of this, the ban remained in place in Austria until the end of the Monarchy in 1918. The play was staged in Budapest in April 1913, performed by the ensemble from the Kleines Theater in Berlin, and was a great success. But an attempt to produce it only a few weeks later in the city now known as Bratislava was foiled by the municipal authorities.²⁸¹

The only demonstrations against the play took place in Wiener Neustadt in 1919, when nationalist students disturbed the performance and assaulted members of the audience afterwards.²⁸² All in all, however, *Professor Bernhardt* was one of Schnitzler’s most lasting successes and was continuously produced throughout his lifetime.

Following the first performances in Germany, the Liberal and Social Democrat press took up the cause of the play, advocating a repeal of the ban, whereas the Christian Social and nationalist papers argued for it to remain in place. The situation was, in fact, very similar to *Professor Bernhardt*’s own predicament.

The play opens with a fatally ill patient in a state of euphoria just before the end. *Bernhardt*, the Jewish director of the clinic, forbids the priest to enter for the last rites, since

²⁷⁹ Konstanze Fliedl, *Arthur Schnitzler* (Stuttgart: Reclam Verlag, 2005), p.152.

²⁸⁰ Wagner, p.252.

²⁸¹ For a more detailed account, see Beier, p.459-67, 472.

²⁸² *ibid.*, p.479-80.

he wants to ensure that his patient's final moments are free of distress. This occurrence, as soon as it becomes public, is blown up into a scandal and is vigorously debated in parliament. Intrigues among Bernhardt's colleagues lead to his voluntary resignation. Furthermore, he is prosecuted and sentenced to two months imprisonment for 'Religionsstörung'. His sentence is revoked following the confession of the key witnesses to false testimony. In the end, Bernhardt, in conversation with a high-ranking official, explains that he would act exactly the same way a second time. He adheres unshakably to what he feels is right, in trying to establish the truth.

Before turning to the play itself, we will cast a glance at the sources Schnitzler drew on for inspiration for *Professor Bernhardt*. His own observations as a medical student, when he worked at his father's Allgemeine Poliklinik, are the most obvious. As an assistant, he was well aware of the intrigues and the anti-Semitic atmosphere that intensified throughout the 1880's, resulting in a deterioration of his father's reputation as director of the clinic. But there were also political events in Vienna at the time that are recognisable in the plot of Schnitzler's play, such as the Feilbogen scandal and the Wahrmund affair.²⁸³ The second chapter will explore the reactions of Schnitzler's literary colleagues to the play, and the critical reception both before and after 1918, before looking at the reasons, whether justified or not, for the ban on the play.

The political events mentioned above fuelled Schnitzler's own thinking on the Jewish dilemma. In the years from 1897 until 1910, anti-Semitic journals became increasingly outspoken, condoned as they were by Karl Lueger. Locating the play within the framework of Schnitzler's autobiographical writings at the time, and, as for *Der Weg ins Freie*, analysing how he presented particular characters and their views, it becomes clear that Professor Bernhardt's steadfastness and determination were very much the author's own. This constitutes the second and final stage in Schnitzler's self-perception as an author of Jewish origin, and it is much more decisive than the exploratory and largely impartial survey of the Jewish question offered in *Der Weg ins Freie*. Schnitzler's position as a German-speaking Jew was first and foremost an ethical one, as this chapter will show, firmly based on integrity of character. In this chapter, I will have the opportunity to present two newspaper clippings previously unnoticed in scholarship, one of which makes up a crucial source of inspiration for the initial setting of the play.

²⁸³ Covered in more detail in section II.c), p.102.

For a better understanding of the phenomenon of anti-Semitism, as it is treated in the play, it makes sense to group the characters into three general categories: first, the decided anti-Semites, Bernhardi's staunchest opposers, who have no doubts about their position. Second, the latent anti-Semites, who either pretend to, or, in the case of Dr. Adler, eventually come around to supporting Bernhardi. Those doctors who turn against Bernhardi, such as Ebenwald and Schreimann, simply deny that such a thing as anti-Semitism even exists. They reject any allegation that their position is a political one. This is also true for the Jewish 'Renegaten', Adler and Goldenthal. In evaluating their statements and their behaviour, they confirm Hermann Bahr's very real findings in the interviews he conducted on anti-Semitism, which he collected and published under the title: *Der Antisemitismus. Ein internationales Interview* (1893). The Minister Flint is the archetype of the opportunistic politician. Inconstancy was a thing Schnitzler abhorred, exemplified in his condemnation of Jewish converts. Politicians, to Schnitzler's mind, embodied this kind of insincerity, and Flint represents this type of politician par excellence.

Third, we will examine Bernhardi's allies, their reasons for backing him, and the points in which he agrees and disagrees with them. Fourth, we will analyse Bernhardi's conversation with the priest, in order to determine that the true nature of their conflict is not that of science versus religion, but of the individual against an institutional programme. Finally, it is worth suggesting reasons why Schnitzler called this play a 'Charakterkomödie', when it has been argued time and time again that it proves the futility of human striving and concludes under circumstances not very different from the beginning. William Rey has pointed to the fact that Bernhardi, as a Jew, is the most Christian character of the play.²⁸⁴ Heinrich Kaulen takes this further, considering the essence of the comedy to be the ironic parallel between the injustice against the Jew Bernhardi and the Passion of Christ.²⁸⁵

One point often ignored in scholarship is that the term 'Komödie', or 'Komödie spielen', in the Austrian dialect, can mean disguising or dissimulating as well as comedy. Schnitzler uses the term in this sense repeatedly in his aphorisms on politics, but also in his literary work when characters accuse each other of dishonesty. Therefore, it seems very likely that Schnitzler had that meaning in mind when he chose the genre for *Professor Bernhardi*.

²⁸⁴ William Rey, *Arthur Schnitzler – Professor Bernhardi* (Munich: Fink Verlag, 1971), p.54.

²⁸⁵ Heinrich Kaulen, 'Antisemitismus und Aufklärung – zum Verständnis von Arthur Schnitzlers *Professor Bernhardi*', *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie*, 100 (1981), 177-198 (p.183-84).

I.a) Schnitzler's and Bernhardi's Shared Aversion to Politics: Apolitical Individualism

Biographers such as Giuseppe Farese, Renate Wagner, Konstanze Fliedl, and Hartmut Scheible draw attention to Schnitzler's sympathies for Liberalism. In *Jugend in Wien*, begun in 1915, we see that Schnitzler held the atmosphere of tolerance, which pervaded the Viennese middle class during his childhood, in high esteem. More than once, he would compare the predominantly anti-Semitic tone of later years with this favourable era before the 1870's, when the Liberals' influence began to decline. Like Professor Bernhardi, though, Schnitzler would not lend himself to a political cause.

In his aphorisms, he writes:

Es liegt im Wesen der Politik, daß sie durchaus zweckhaft gerichtet sein muß, daß also ethische Motive, so häufig solche auch vorgeschützt werden, überhaupt nicht in Frage kommen dürfen. [...] Unter den Politikern selbst wird es kaum einen geben, der sich der Komödie nicht bewußt wäre, die er mit größerem oder geringerem Talent [...] seiner Partei, seinem Vaterland, ja der gesamten Menschheit berufsmäßig vorzuagieren verpflichtet ist; und auch das Publikum merkt es oft genug.²⁸⁶

Politicians are thus, by Schnitzler's definition, involved in a comedy of dissimulation, whereby their real aims are usually masked by faux ethical motives. In politics, it is impossible to sustain lasting, morally sound principles. With reference to the play, we have the anti-Semitic doctors pretending to be offended by Bernhardi's 'Religionsstörung', an ethical motive, while in reality they are driven by political intent, or even personal aversion. By continuously using such principles as a mask for less genuinely ethical ambitions, politicians confuse the 'Moralbegriff', or understanding of morality. Those who suffer from this are the individual citizens. Schnitzler continues,

Das Unglück ist nur, daß von dieser politischen Atmosphäre aus [...] eine Vergiftung auch der angrenzenden geistigen Luftschichten mit Notwendigkeit stattfinden muß, daß solchermaßen die Verwirrung aller Moralbegriffe vom politischen Horizonte aus, der über der gesamten Kulturmenschheit dunstet, sich immer weiter verbreitet, und daß dieser Vergiftung kein Mensch, insofern er Staatsbürger, also politisches Geschöpf ist, sich vollkommen zu entziehen vermag. Und mancher gibt sich ihr vielleicht umso williger hin, als er in dieser politischen Benommenheit sich mancher Verantwortlichkeiten entledigt sieht, sowohl intellektueller als moralischer Natur, die

²⁸⁶ Schnitzler, *Ohne Maske – Aphorismen und Notate*, ed. by Diersch, p.56.

ihm als privatem Individuum das Leben zu erschweren geeignet waren.²⁸⁷

This last sentence summarises the difference between Flint and Bernhardi. Flint is, as minister, on the side of the state, which ensures his ethical liability. It seems as if Schnitzler had Flint in mind when he wrote:

Politische Überzeugung? – Das ist oft nichts anderes, als die bequeme Larve, hinter der ein Lump seine widerliche Fratze verstecken möchte, um unter dem Schutz der Maskenfreiheit auf dem politischen Faschingsrummel, den wir am Aschermittwoch Weltgeschichte zu nennen pflegen, ungestraft oder gar bejubelt sein feiges Unwesen zu treiben.²⁸⁸

The key word here is ‘feige’. For those who find it easy to change their persuasion at a moment’s notice, such as Flint, Schnitzler has no respect. Adler and Schreimann show lack of integrity as well. They were both members of nationalist fraternities in their student days, they play down their Jewish background, and even back Ebenwald against Bernhardi. Goldenthal also belittles his own Jewishness and, like Schreimann, has gone so far as conversion. Goldenthal’s wife wears a cross for all to see, and he sends his son to the Jesuit boarding-school at Kalksburg. (p.419)

Schnitzler’s sympathies did not lie with those who changed sides opportunistically or who were not true to their origins. He admired those who were consistent and reliable in their actions – that is why he lent those qualities to Bernhardi, the positive counter-balance to Flint.

In 1930, the actor Heinz Salfner sent a critical note to Schnitzler about the character he was supposed to play, calling Bernhardi a ‘Waschlappen’. Far from being a crusader for individual freedom, Salfner claims, the professor simply wants to be left in peace. In his reply, Schnitzler vindicates Bernhardi, with special reference to his perseverance and bravery:

Diesen Mann, der so völlig konsequent seiner Menschlichkeit und seiner Gesinnung nach handelt, der zwei Monate im Gefängnis sitzt und auch sonst allerlei Unannehmlichkeiten durchmacht, die er sich durch die leiseste Nachgiebigkeit ohneweiters hätte ersparen können und der am Ende, nachdem er seine Strafe schon abgesessen, auf den billigen Triumph einer Revisionsverhandlung verzichtet, deren Ausgang zu seinen Gunsten überhaupt nicht mehr zweifelhaft sein kann, der nur von dem Gesindel seine Ruhe haben will, mit dem er es zu tun hat und sich im übrigen

²⁸⁷ Schnitzler, *Ohne Maske*, p.56-57.

²⁸⁸ Schnitzler, *Aphorismen und Betrachtungen*, ed. by Weiss, p.90

durchaus nicht nach Ruhe, sondern nach wirklicher *Arbeit* sehnt; – diesen Mann einen Waschlappen zu nennen – welch bösesartiges Unverständnis oder welche abgründige Parteitrottelei gehört dazu! (20.3.1930)²⁸⁹

Even though Bernhardi may be a passive figure in many ways – he is no reformer, and refuses to champion his cause on the political stage – he is nonetheless a brave and determined man. He stays true to his individualist convictions and does not waver from them once, no matter how bleak his prospects and how powerful his enemies may seem. These were qualities that Schnitzler valued greatly. And although he did not model the professor entirely on himself, there is an undeniable resemblance in character and ethical viewpoint between Bernhardi and Schnitzler himself. It does not come as a surprise, then, that after re-reading the play in March 1918, Schnitzler noted in his diary: “Es gibt Sachen von mir die ich lieber habe, – aber mich hab ich nirgends lieber als im Bernhardi.”²⁹⁰

I.b) Scholarship

Interpretations of Bernhardi’s character are widely divergent. Heinrich Kaulen sees Bernhardi as “forced to passivity”, a figure who finally realises the “ridiculousness”, and thus the absurdity, of his actions. The play ends without a harmonious solution for this innocent, but “beaten hero”, who Kaulen even calls a “figure of failure”.²⁹¹ Robert Weiss provides a somewhat milder reading of the play. The fact that Bernhardi “acts rather than reacts” makes him a “half-hero”. In the end, he is a ridiculous character, because he is forced to become the “champion of causes he never intended to assist.” He is a “rebel without a cause, a martyr without martyrdom, an avenger incapable of revenge.” Weiss sees the comical essence of the play in the idea that Bernhardi becomes a popular hero without any intention and without any heroic deeds.²⁹²

It is true that Bernhardi is not the traditional autonomous hero. Especially in the crucial discussion scene in act three, where he confronts his enemies, he chooses to resign his directorship instead of continuing the struggle. This is not heroic behaviour. But does this make Bernhardi a failure, as Kaulen suggests? The play ends on a note of optimism. Although Bernhardi was not able to change the anti-Semitism prevalent in political, legal, and

²⁸⁹ Schnitzler, *Briefe 1913-1931*, p.668.

²⁹⁰ TB 1917-1919, 27.3.1918.

²⁹¹ Kaulen, ‘Antisemitismus und Aufklärung’, p.191-94.

²⁹² Robert Weiss, ‘The “Hero” in Schnitzler’s Comedy *Professor Bernhardi*’, *Modern Austrian Literature*, 2, 4 (1969), 30-34 (p.32-33).

medical institutions, he has considerable popular support by the end of the play, and it seems very likely that he will be able to continue his medical career. He maintained a consistent line without compromise and was not forced to make any concession on his intellectual stance: that he had fulfilled his duty as a doctor and done the only thing possible. In the end, both the public and his enemies had to recognise this. In this respect, Bernhardi did not fail but succeeded.

Weiss ignores that Bernhardi's cause is simply to follow his personal convictions. The "causes he never intended to assist" were those of the Liberal movement, represented by certain professorial colleagues and the journalist Kulka, who all offer to fight a more militant campaign for Bernhardi. But he turns each one of them down. Under no circumstances does Bernhardi want to be harnessed to one particular political movement, be it that of friend or foe. His cause is purely individual, as William Rey argues. In fact, Rey continues, Bernhardi mirrors Schnitzler's own persistent rejection of any political involvement. This determined apolitical position made Schnitzler a moral author in a profound sense, "the conscience of his nation, even his whole period", who saw through the "mendacious nature of society".²⁹³

Schnitzler contrasts the 'masculine' qualities of determination and steadfastness favourably with the insincerity and lack of resolve of the 'Renegat'. Bernhardi's determination, according to Hillary Hope Herzog, is in line with the efforts of Herzl and Nordau to counter the anti-Semitic stereotype of the feeble Jew with a stronger, masculine type.²⁹⁴ A similar character is Leo Golowski from *Der Weg ins Freie*. Whereas Herzog's point certainly seems accurate, in a later chapter, she states that Schnitzler's attitude as a Jew "remained quite vague and unreflected."²⁹⁵

Placing 'das Richtige tun' in the context of Schnitzler's statements in his letters and diaries, it becomes clear that he did, in fact, have a very precise view of his position as an Austrian Jew. Schnitzler was convinced that every German-speaking Jew had to find his own solution to the Jewish dilemma. That is, to position himself in the array of different political and intellectual currents of Fin-de-siècle Vienna, be this Zionism, Socialism, or another, while never forgetting his Jewish background. Once found, he must see this position through, no matter how loud the anti-Semitic clamour becomes.

Schnitzler seems to be a case in point for Steven Beller, who argues that due to the political

²⁹³ Rey, *Arthur Schnitzler – Professor Bernhardi*, p.75,78.

²⁹⁴ Hillary Hope Herzog, *Vienna Is Different: Jewish Writers in Austria from the Fin de Siècle to the Present*, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011), p.33.

²⁹⁵ Herzog, *Vienna Is Different*, p.114.

stalemate in the late Habsburg Monarchy, one option for the Jews of Vienna was the “retreat into the self”. Beller is keen to stress that this was not purely for an aesthetic, but also, and mainly, for an ethical purpose. If one was unable to assert one’s will on the political stage, or even be adequately represented, at least one could set out a personal moral code. Given the decline of political Liberalism, which Schnitzler was sympathetic to, this was the only course open to him. For Schnitzler, Beller explains, this went hand in hand with an “imperative for the truth”.²⁹⁶ This imperative finds its literary expression in *Professor Bernhardi*. In fact, it is the major driving force for the professor’s perseverance throughout the whole affair. In conversation with the priest, Bernhardi states: “Ich kann mir nicht denken, daß es für einen so mutigen Mann [...] eine heiligere Sache geben könnte, als die Wahrheit.”²⁹⁷

Connected with this, the underlying conflict in *Professor Bernhardi* is not so much a struggle between science and religion, as others such as Peter Horwath have argued,²⁹⁸ but closer to Bruce Thompson’s interpretation, that the play “represents the fate of an apolitical man in the unsavoury world of politics.”²⁹⁹ For, Thompson continues, “nobody really believes that Bernhardi was consciously taking an anti-clerical stance, or making a political point, but some people have welcomed the opportunity of making political capital out of the case.”³⁰⁰ And yet, in a wider sense, *Professor Bernhardi* shows the struggle between the critical thinker and those who prefer institutions and parties to think for them. Taken as a fundamental conflict between the individual and the masses, this makes *Professor Bernhardi* a very modern play indeed. Peter Gay explains that the individualism Schnitzler embraced was due to his negative experience with mass parties. Lueger’s Christian Socials were markedly anti-Semitic, but neither could the Social Democrats free themselves from a latent anti-Semitic tendency.³⁰¹ Critical thinker that Schnitzler was, he disapproved of any larger group, be it political, social, or religious in nature, prescribing a particular set of views to its members.

In the course of the play, Schnitzler’s own position on the ‘Jewish Question’ is laid out on a metatextual level. From the neutral stance of the observer in *Der Weg ins Freie*, various

²⁹⁶ Beller, p.218-19.

²⁹⁷ Schnitzler, *Professor Bernhardi*, Gesammelte Werke, Die dramatischen Werke vol. 2, p.431. All subsequent page nrs. from this edition.

²⁹⁸ Peter Horwath, ‘Arthur Schnitzlers *Professor Bernhardi*: Eine Studie über Person und Tendenz’, *Literatur und Kritik* 2 (1967), 88-104 (p.88).

²⁹⁹ Thompson, *Schnitzler’s Vienna*, p.172

³⁰⁰ Thompson, p.168.

³⁰¹ Gay, *Schnitzler’s Century*, (New York: Norton & Company, 2002) p.116-7.

incidents in public life since then helped Schnitzler position himself more clearly by 1912. He identified himself with Bernhardi to a considerable degree, sharing a strong aversion to any form of politics. Schnitzler felt that it was essential to stay true to one's Jewish background, no matter how harmful the anti-Semitic campaigns in press and politics may be. The 'Jewish Question', for Schnitzler, was a purely personal matter, as he stated in an interview in the later years of his life. It was up to every German-speaking Jew individually to do what he felt was 'das Richtige', just like Bernhardi, while adhering to his Jewish origins and never wavering from that course. *Professor Bernhardi* is a crucial work in Schnitzler's coming to terms with his Jewishness, from the relative neutrality of *Der Weg ins Freie* to his stance in the interview with James Benvenisti in February 1924.

II. Anti-Semitism on the Stage and in Reality

II.a) Hermann Bahr's *Der Antisemitismus* (1893)

Dr. Schreimann's assertion that there is no political motive in the Bernhardi-debate was drawn from statements from real anti-Semites. In the collection of interviews, *Der Antisemitismus*, compiled by Schnitzler's friend Hermann Bahr, Bahr cites Maximilian Harden, known for his anti-Semitic leanings, whose first statement in the interview is to deny he is an anti-Semite. When Bahr persists, Harden counters: "Weil ich gegen den Zwischenhändlergeist, gegen den Börsenpöbel, gegen den fauligen Egoismus der Bourgeoisie bin! Kann ich dafür, daß man da gleich Antisemit heißt?" Harden claims that his main concern is the extremes of capitalism. He concedes that prominent anti-capitalists were of Jewish origin, such as Marx and Lassalle. Yet he reveals his true colours when he states: "Die Juden selber machen den Antisemitismus, indem sie töricht genug sind, dem kapitalistischen Schwindel als Schild zu dienen, der alle Hiebe fängt."³⁰²

Thus, according to Harden, the Jews themselves are to blame for anti-Semitism. We find a similar position with Adolf Wagner, the leader of the Christian Social Party. Upon Bahr's prompt that he is considered the "leader of anti-Semitism", he avows: "Das bin ich schon gar nicht. [...] Ich bin christlich-sozial. Aber den Antisemitismus, wie man ihn heute versteht, habe ich niemals vertreten." Why, Bahr then continues, are you known as an anti-Semite? Wagner replies:

Weil die Juden sich immer mit dem Kapitalismus identifizieren! Wenn man gegen das Kapital etwas sagt, tun sie, als hätte man ihre Religion beleidigt. Und in gewissem Sinne bin ich ja auch Antisemit. Ich mag das jüdische Wesen, die jüdischen Unarten nicht leiden, und ich glaube allerdings, daß es den deutschen Sitten Gefahr bringen kann. Schauen Sie sich einmal die Jüdinnen auf der Straße an, wie sie sich kleiden und benehmen! Das muß einen gewissen ästhetischen Antisemitismus erwecken [...] Ich gebe ja zu: die Juden sind zuwider und verletzen unseren Geschmack. Aber was weiter? [...] Totschlagen können wir sie nicht, aus dem Lande treiben auch nicht. Irgendwie müssen wir sie eben verdauen.³⁰³

Wagner generously concedes that we can neither murder nor exile the Jews, so we must "digest" them in some way. He, too, flatly denies his anti-Semitism at the outset, only to expose it all the more visibly in his answers. Once more, Jews are equated with capitalists.

³⁰² Hermann Bahr, *Der Antisemitismus*, ed. by Claus Pias, (Weimar: VDG, 2005), p.39.

³⁰³ Bahr, *Der Antisemitismus*, p.54-55.

While Harden was primarily concerned with the economic aspect, Wagner extends his anti-Semitism into the moral, and even “aesthetic” dimension, expressing his concern for “deutsche Sitten”.

As a side-note, none of Bahr’s interlocutors, as staunchly opposed to “Jewish interests” as they may be, call for laws against them or mass expulsion. The furthest the German anti-Semites go is to suggest restrictions on immigration from the East. Their anti-Semitism, it would appear from Bahr’s interviews, was certainly not as radical as that of National Socialism. Bahr concludes:

Ich fand die Frage in jedem Lande anders. Der deutsche Antisemitismus ist reaktionär, eine Revolte der kleinen Bürger gegen die industrielle Entwicklung, der „teutschen“ Tugend gegen die Freiheit der Moderne. Der Pariser Antisemitismus ist revolutionär, gegen die Häufung des Geldes und gegen die Herrschaft der Reichen, indem er den Juden bloß als ein bequemes und wirksames Beispiel des Kapitalisten nimmt.³⁰⁴

The distinction between German and French anti-Semitism is interesting. The concern of “German virtue” under threat is reflected in Wagner’s statements. The defence of German morals was also very much the programme of the Christian Social Party, which fought against the dangers emanating from progress and modernity, as exemplified by Jewish intellectuals. But the point most immediately relevant to *Professor Bernhardi* is that the anti-Semites cited above shamelessly deny their anti-Semitism, which then comes to the fore only too clearly in their subsequent comments. Bernhardi’s opponents use the same tactic. Ebenwald claims, with regard to a fierce press campaign that his cousin, a parliamentary deputy, instigated against Bernhardi: “Mir ist von einer Hetze nichts bekannt.” (p.396) When Pflugfelder argues that the formal parliamentary interpellation was nothing more than a political manoeuvre, which was evidently the case, Filitz seconds Ebenwald’s approach by shouting: “Unsinn!” (p.401) As we see, Schnitzler drew Bernhardi’s enemies from life, and their actions are infused with a strong degree of realism.

³⁰⁴ Ibid., p.141.

II.b) “Wie es sich zugetragen haben könnte” – Schnitzler’s Father as Director of the Wiener Allgemeine Poliklinik

Among other sources, Schnitzler drew inspiration from his father’s position as director of the Wiener Allgemeine Poliklinik and the fact that he had to come to terms with anti-Semitic tendencies among the professors. Schnitzler was his father’s assistant in the clinic and took patients in his private practise, just like Oskar Bernhardi. Again like Oskar, Schnitzler chaired the polyclinic’s ball committee in 1889. Anti-Semitism featured in both organisations, as Schnitzler records in *Jugend in Wien*:

The ball was announced in the liberal papers, and promised to be a large-scale social event, just as Hochroitzpointner mentions of the ball at the Elisabethinum in the first act. (p.340) One of the committee members, who wanted to make his anti-Jewish viewpoint clear, passed information on to a Christian Social paper, the ‘Deutsches Volksblatt’, acting against the general consensus that anti-Semitic papers were not to be notified. Schnitzler saw this as an open provocation and brought in a vote of no confidence against his colleague at the next committee meeting. This was approved. During the ball, Schnitzler asked the band for a waltz instead of the quadrille listed in the sequence of dances. For this ‘eigenmächtiges Handeln’, his rival demanded a public apology at the next meeting. Schnitzler refused to do so, and there were heated discussions between the two opposing factions in the meeting, very similar to those in the third act of *Professor Bernhardi*.³⁰⁵

In act four, Oskar Bernhardi seems to have trouble with his father’s strict apolitical neutrality. At one moment, he has tears of anger in his eyes: “Ich bin nur wütend.” (p.426). Schnitzler lent Oskar his own feelings at the injustice his father was confronted with. Since the stage directions for Oskar are “*kommt bald wieder*”, there is no rift between him and his father. It would appear Oskar is not angry at his father’s tenacity so much as at the injustice of political anti-Semitism.

During his years as assistant at the Poliklinik, from 1885 until 1893, and as son of the director, Schnitzler gained insights into the administrative side and the internal politics of the clinic. According to *Jugend in Wien*, an “antisemitischer Flügel” had formed among the polyclinic’s assistant doctors by the late 1880’s.³⁰⁶ Writing to Brandes, Schnitzler attributed a decline in his father’s reputation and in patients, especially from higher social circles, not only to the rise of a new generation of specialists, but also to increasing anti-Semitic tendencies

³⁰⁵ Schnitzler, *Jugend in Wien*, p.312-13.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p.199, 307.

(27.2.1913).³⁰⁷

Georg Brandes certainly assumed that the model for Bernhardi was Schnitzler's father. Schnitzler's reply is dated 27 February 1913:

Die Komödie behandelt nicht eigentlich „ein Lebensschicksal, wie es mein Vater erfahren hat, der Inhalt ist vielmehr frei erfunden. Mein Vater hat wohl seinerzeit, mit Freunden zusammen, ein Krankeninstitut in der Art des Elisabethinums gegründet, hat es gegen mancherlei Anfeindungen mit Aufgebot seiner ganzen Begabung und Tatkraft, natürlich nicht ohne die Mithilfe ausgezeichnete Arbeits- und Kampfgefährten, zu hoher Blüte gebracht und mußte insbesondere gegen Schluß seines Lebens von mancher Seite Undank und Kränkung erfahren; – aber wenn sein Ausscheiden aus dem von ihm gegründeten Institut vielleicht auch Einem oder dem Andern nicht unangenehm gewesen wäre, er ist keineswegs „hinausintrigiert“ worden, ja, ist sogar als Direktor des Instituts am 2. Mai 1893 gestorben. Übrigens hat mein Titelheld, der „Professor Bernhardi“, von meinem Vater nur wenige Züge entliehen, und auch die anderen Figuren meines Stückes sind, mit der freilich unerläßlichen Benützung von Wirklichkeitszügen so frei gestaltet, daß nur Kunstfremde, an denen es natürlich niemals mangelt, hier von einem Schlüsselstück reden konnten. Meine Komödie hat keine andre Wahrheit als die, daß sich die Handlung genau so, wie ich sie erfunden habe, zugetragen haben könnte, – zum mindesten in Wien zu Ende des vorigen Jahrhunderts.³⁰⁸

Schnitzler expressly denies that *Professor Bernhardi* is based on his father's career. Furthermore, the character of Bernhardi has “von meinem Vater nur wenige Züge entliehen”. The plot is “frei erfunden”, and his comedy “hat keine andre Wahrheit als die, daß sich die Handlung genau so, wie ich sie erfunden habe, zugetragen haben könnte”.

Looking into the circumstances of the Poliklinik at the time, it would appear that Schnitzler did draw on his father's situation more than he would have Brandes believe. In January 1893, the professors of the polyclinic voted their main accountant, a Jewish syphilis specialist, out of office, and replaced him with the non-Jewish dermatologist Prof. Hans von Hebra.³⁰⁹ There were allegations of an anti-Semitic bias following this decision. The parallel to the question of appointing Dr. Hell or Dr. Wenger at the Elisabethinum is obvious.

Nine professors sent a rather curt letter to Dr. Johann Schnitzler, asking him to confirm that the vote had been passed not on the basis of party, but of administrative interests. Had

³⁰⁷ Schnitzler, *Briefe 1913-1931*, p.12.

³⁰⁸ CUL, Letters Brandes to Schnitzler, 27.2.1913, Folder B17b.

³⁰⁹ Beier, *Vor allem bin ich i c h*, p.302.

Schnitzler's father obliged, he would have officially denied the anti-Semitic element in an obviously anti-Semitic intrigue.³¹⁰ Twelve days before his death, Johann Schnitzler wrote a detailed reply, voicing his objections not only to the corrupting influence of political interests among the professors, but also to the unnecessarily formal tone of the letter.

Ob das nunmehr der Ton ist, der in der Poliklinik zur Herrschaft gelangen soll?! *Das* also ist der Ton, den die Herren anschlagen gegen denjenigen, der das Institut mitbegründet und mitgeschaffen hat, das ist die Sprache, die man gegen denjenigen führt, der Jahre hindurch die Poliklinik [sic] gegen alle Angriffe vertheidigt hat [...]³¹¹

This could be Bernhardi speaking during the discussion scene in act three. Even though neither side uses the specific term during that scene, Johann Schnitzler speaks of anti-Semitism quite openly:

[...] wenn schon der Eine oder Andere möglicherweise von früher her vielleicht etwas antisemitisch angehaucht wäre, so würden die Herren, sobald sie einmal an der Poliklinik wirkten, gewiss ihre frühere Gesinnung bald ändern, da sie ja nur zu gut wüssten, dass die Poliklinik ausschliesslich jüdischen Ursprungs ist, indem an den Vorberathungen bei Gründung des Institutes einzig und allein jüdische Aerzte Theil genommen haben; weil ferner Allen sehr wohl bekannt sei, dass auch die Mittel zur Erhaltung der Anstalt, dann zum Ankaufe von Grund und Boden und später zum Bau des neuen Hauses zum grossen Theile von Juden gespendet wurden.³¹²

This reminds us of Bernhardi voting for Ebenwald three years earlier – “Aber mit einiger Selbstüberwindung, nicht wahr?” remarks Ebenwald. (p.378) The situation of the Elisabethinum is virtually identical, considering Löwenstein's remark of about 80 % of their clinic's funding coming from Jewish donors. (see IV.c), p.119) Publicly, Johann Schnitzler did not want to acknowledge the level of anti-Semitism in his hospital.

Ich habe mich im Gegentheile stets gegen das Vorhandensein derartiger Tendenzen, wenigstens innerhalb der Poliklinik, verwahrt. [...] Dies war der Standpunkt, den ich [...] aller Welt gegenüber [...] eingenommen habe, wenn nach den Ausstreungen *Ihrer* eigenen Freunde die Rede davon war, man werde trachten, die Poliklinik nunmehr *judenrein* zu machen.³¹³

³¹⁰ Rey, p.90.

³¹¹ Ibid., p.93.

³¹² Ibid., p.96.

³¹³ Ibid.

Perhaps Johann Schnitzler shared a certain naiveté with Bernhardt, with respect to the anti-Semitic tendencies in his institution. Perhaps, like Bernhardt, Johann Schnitzler placed too much trust in human nature, which made him, in Flint's words, an 'anständiger Mensch'.

We see that not only did Schnitzler represent himself, to an extent, in Oskar Bernhardt, but he used the situation of the Poliklinik as a model for the Elisabethinum and drew on his father's position in the clinic as inspiration for Bernhardt. But *Professor Bernhardt* reveals more about its author than that Schnitzler was an individualist, deeply suspicious of politics in general, who believed in adhering steadfastly to what he felt was right. The play also casts light on Schnitzler's feelings towards his fellow Jews, his sense of Jewish identity, and even his stand on the 'Jewish Question'.

II.c) Institutional Anti-Semitism and Other Sources of Inspiration

The anti-Semitism that pervaded the higher ranks of the medical system, the judiciary, and politics in *Professor Bernhardt* was part of the actual conditions in late Habsburg Austria. Robert Wistrich points out that in spite of the complete equality of all citizens irrespective of creed, proclaimed with the Emancipation of 1867, non-baptized Jews were still unable to obtain professorships or become judges.³¹⁴ Wistrich quotes from Hans Tietze's *Die Juden Wiens* (1933) that the vast majority of Jewish lecturers at university were 'Privatdozenten', and not state-employed professors.³¹⁵

Dr. Theodor Billroth, a university professor and surgeon of international repute, publicly stated that a Jew could never discard his racial characteristics, nor could he ever engage in the healthy national struggle as the Germans could.³¹⁶

During Karl Lueger's term as mayor, the Christian Social faction mounted attacks on the Jewish press, Jewish teachers, and also Jewish doctors. When the budget for Vienna's hospitals was due for discussion in parliament in October 1903, one of Lueger's friends, Leopold Steiner, claimed Jewish professors were experimenting in vivisections, which resulted in their insensitivity to patients' afflictions.³¹⁷ From then on, the Christian Social Party campaigned to end vivisection in Viennese hospitals. The medical faculty of the university protested against this intervention in their affairs by parliamentary deputies.

³¹⁴ Wistrich, p.173-74.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ Billroth, *Über das Lehren und Lernen der medizinischen Wissenschaften*, p.152-54.

³¹⁷ Richard Geehr, *Karl Lueger – Mayor of Fin de Siècle Vienna* (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1990), p.185.

Speaking in the Reichsrat, Lueger countered, “The college of professors should look to itself, and rather endeavour to weed out certain elements from the medical profession which only injure it, so that finally, a Christian conviction will return to those circles.”³¹⁸ By December, the fervour had subsided. The Christian Socials had repeatedly given away their lack of medical knowledge, which exposed them to caricature in the Liberal papers.³¹⁹

In the folder with Schnitzler’s drafts for *Professor Bernhardt*, there is a newspaper clipping recording an incidence of anti-Semitism at the ‘Kaiserjubiläumsspital’. It has not been considered so far in the literature on Schnitzler’s play, and yet it is an important indication of the political atmosphere of the time, which is why it is reproduced here. The article is dated 7 May 1910, only a few weeks after Lueger’s death. Unfortunately, there is no clue as to which paper it is taken from.

Dr. Oskar H e i n verweist in einer Interpellation auf eine Aeußerung, die Vizebürgermeister Hierhammer nach den Berichten christlichsozialer Blätter in einer Versammlung der Wähler des ersten Wahlkörpers der Josefstadt getan hat und deren Tenor dahin ging, daß an dem Kaiserjubiläumsspital nur „Aerzte arischer Abstammung“ angestellt werden sollen, und fragt: Ist der Herr Bürgermeister geneigt, erstens über die obzitierte Aeußerung des Herrn Vizebürgermeisters Hierhammer, welche mit dem von ihm geleisteten Diensteide in offenkundigem Widerspruche steht, seine Mißbilligung auszusprechen, zweitens dahin zu wirken, daß in Zukunft im Sinne des Artikels 3 des Staatsgrundgesetzes vom 21. Dezember 1867, [...] über die allgemeinen Rechte der Staatsbürger die Aemter bei der Gemeinde Wien für alle Staatsbürger gleich zugänglich gemacht werden?³²⁰

This article proves that tension remained between the municipal authorities and the hospitals. The openly anti-Semitic vice-mayor interfered in the internal business of a clinic, and Dr. Hein rightly points out that this contravenes the rights guaranteed to Jews in the Austrian constitution. The issue of only employing “Ärzte arischer Abstammung” recalls the question of whether Dr. Tugendvetter’s successor should be Jewish or not. The article is also indicative of Lueger’s legacy: a high-ranking member of the city council having no inhibitions against making anti-Semitic declarations quite openly in public.

Although not related to the political background, it is worth inserting another newspaper

³¹⁸ cited in Geehr, *Karl Lueger*, p.186.

³¹⁹ Geehr, p.188.

³²⁰ CUL, MS Entwürfe zu Professor Bernhardt, Folder A118, Nos.3-4.

clipping here, which has previously not been considered in scholarship. This is surprising, as it can be taken as the direct inspiration for the catalysing first scene of *Professor Bernhardi*: the priest wishing to see a dying patient, with potentially fatal consequences. This article is also to be found in the folder with Schnitzler's drafts for the play and is dated 1910. It treats a childhood experience of Franz Nissel (1831-1893), one of the most renowned Austrian playwrights during the Liberal Era. He was awarded the Berlin Schillerpreis for his piece *Agnes von Meran* (1877), a tragedy which depicts the struggle against the overwhelming strength of the Church.

Er hatte einen Bruder gehabt, an dem er mit zärtlicher Liebe gegangen war. Dieser war in Linz [...] auf den Tod erkrankt [...] Nun gab der Vater die Weisung, es solle um den Priester geschickt werden. Die jammernde Mutter tat Einsprache dagegen [...] Der Vater aber, eine pedantisch-ängstliche Natur, besorgt, die Unterlassung eines solchen Gebots pflichtgemäßer Gläubigkeit könne seiner Stellung in der Stadt schaden, bestand darauf und der Geistliche wurde herbeigerufen. Bei seinem Eintritt [...] bäumte sich der kranke Knabe in wildem Entsetzen im Bette auf, stieß den Schreckensruf aus: „Sterben muß ich?!“ – und sank ohnmächtig zurück. Die Krise nahm darauf ihren beschleunigten Verlauf. Unverlöschlich fürs ganze Leben aber war die Nachwirkung der gräßlichen Szene auf den anderen, jüngeren Bruder geblieben – sie hatte ihn zum „Ketzer“ gemacht.³²¹

This brief excerpt provides a valuable insight into the creative process of writing *Professor Bernhardi*, which spanned almost a decade. Indeed, this can be considered a key text in the genesis of the play.

To return to the public sphere, in April 1908, Schnitzler noted in his diary, “Die Affairen Wahrmond und Feilbogen bringen mich wieder dem Bernhardi Stoff sehr nah.”³²² The Feilbogen scandal took place earlier in the same month. A Jewish ‘Privatdozent’ from the university travelled to Rome with his wife, and took part in the papal Easter mass in the Sistine Chapel. Unaccustomed to the Catholic liturgy, Feilbogen’s sister-in-law accepted communion, after which she quickly took the Eucharist out of her mouth and wrapped it in a handkerchief. For the next fortnight, the ‘Deutsches Volksblatt’ reported this ‘Judenfrechheit’ and ‘Blasphemie’ on the front pages. It was repeatedly claimed that the incident offended the religious feeling of Christians, and it was eventually classified as the criminal offence of ‘Religionsstörung’. On 30 April, anti-Semitic deputies raised the matter in parliament, demanding to know what would be done to prevent similar outrages in future.

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² TB 1903-1908, 30.4.1908.

Even though there was no court trial, Feilbogen was obliged to give up his teaching position and to retire by the end of term.³²³

Dr. Ludwig Wahrmund was one of Schnitzler's closer friends, and a professor of ecclesiastical law at the University of Innsbruck. Regularly, he had expressed criticism of religious education and Catholic dogma, advocating a reform of marital law. He summarised his views in *Katholische Weltanschauung und freie Wissenschaft* (1908), in which he argues that scientific enquiry and religious orthodoxy are mutually exclusive.³²⁴ Clerical parties demanded his resignation, and student demonstrations in Graz and Innsbruck reached such violence that the universities had to be closed for the summer months. In the end, Wahrmund was transferred to Prague, after accepting a governmental research grant of 10.000 Kronen per annum, limited to two years, and a pension of 2.000 Kronen annually should he retire early from his academic career. When these details became known, Wahrmund lost all academic credibility, even though he rejected the pension.³²⁵

The Dreyfus Affair (1894-1906) was also on Schnitzler's mind while he was working on *Professor Bernhardi*. Flint compares Bernhardi's situation to the Dreyfus Affair in act five. (p.448) Theodor Herzl was the Paris correspondent for the largest liberal paper 'Neue Freie Presse' during the time of the Affair, which was also the time in which both men regularly corresponded. Paul Goldmann, a friend of Schnitzler's, demanded the resumption of the trial repeatedly between September and November 1896, when it became clear that Dreyfus had been convicted on the basis of false evidence. Lucien Millevoie, a former deputy, insulted Goldmann as "lâche coquin", or coward, whereupon Goldmann challenged him to a duel. So Schnitzler felt the effects of the Dreyfus Affair in his immediate circle. Following the safe outcome of Goldmann's duel, Schnitzler wrote to him: "Also dazu schreib ich extra Stücke gegen's Duell."³²⁶

These events sped the development of Schnitzler's position on the 'Jewish Question' as an Austrian Jew. The Wahrmund Affair is similar to *Professor Bernhardi* in the merciless press campaigns calling for his resignation. Wahrmund lost his profession as a result of the affair, just as Bernhardi gives up the directorship of the Elisabethinum and loses his doctoral degree.

³²³ cited in Beier, p.312-13.

³²⁴ Beier, p.311.

³²⁵ Geehr, p.189-190.

³²⁶ Schnitzler, *Briefe 1875-1912*, p.307.

Perhaps Schnitzler modelled Bernhardi on Wahrmund's personality to an extent, as both seem to share a spirit of critical enquiry.

The Feilbogen-Scandal was qualified as a case of 'Religionsstörung', just like Bernhardi's behaviour towards the priest. Both incidents are blown up by the press and heatedly discussed in parliament. In the case of Feilbogen, the affair resulted in the end of his career, but not in a trial. For Bernhardi, there is hope that he will be able to continue his medical career after his prison sentence.

These vicious press campaigns on behalf of the clerical and nationalist parties, and the obvious injustice in both instances, strengthened Schnitzler's resolve to criticise rather than just observe, as he had done in *Der Weg ins Freie*. Professor Bernhardi's individualism allows for no compromise on one's position once taken. This was Schnitzler's viewpoint in the light of the Christian Social campaigns against Viennese hospitals, the corruption of the municipal authorities, and the anti-Semitic agitation in the press.

III. “Nostra ipsissima res agitur” – the Reception of the Play

III.a) Professor Bernhardi Seen by Stefan Zweig, Felix Salten, Karl Kraus

Schnitzler’s fellow writers were divided as to the political motivation behind *Professor Bernhardi*. Certain reviews held that the play was a ‘Tendenzstück’ with clear political designs, whereas others argued it was a very life-like work of art, beyond political intentions. Stefan Zweig followed this line. For him, the play captured the essential issues in the heart of every Austrian Jew:

Ich spürte im ersten Lesen gar nicht mehr, daß dies ein Drama ist [...] ich spürte nur lebendigstes Leben, das mich ergriff wie ein fait divers der Zeitung, ein politischer Fall, [...] Und immer habe ich noch keine Ruhe, um den Bernhardi als Kunstwerk oder gar auf den Theatererfolg hin betrachten zu können, ich bin zu passioniert davon, zu sehr mit Sympathie und Zorn gegen und für seine so herrlich lebendigen, so atemnahen Menschen. Nostra ipsissima res agitur – ich spür es zu sehr und kann gar nicht recht heraus, mir’s zu betrachten, so sehr bin ich darin.³²⁷

Zweig places *Professor Bernhardi* on one level with the real incidents of the Feilbogen scandal, the Wahrmond- or the Dreyfus Affair. Not only do the characters have their equivalent types in reality – the ‘Renegaten’, and the anti-Semites claiming objectivity – but Schnitzler also captures the central problem of the Austrian Jews: Nostra ipsissima res agitur, which could be translated as: It involves our innermost concerns. Zweig is, of course, referring to the discrimination against Jews in Austrian political, medical, and legal institutions. But he is also thinking of Bernhardi’s dilemma, that a Jew in public life cannot escape his Jewishness, even if he himself attaches little importance to it and wishes to keep out of any political conflict.

Felix Salten, as an Austrian Jew, also professes to have been profoundly affected by Schnitzler’s play:

Was Sie mir über Ihren “Bernhardi” schreiben, hab’ ich garnicht anders erwartet. Ich verstehe es so gut, dass Sie garnicht anders verfahren können. Das spüre ich wie Sie, es ist ein lebendiges Wesen. Hat seine Notwendigkeit und seine Mission. Und es wäre gerade für Sie unmöglich, ohne diese Existenz nun wieder zu leben. Ich kann es mir sehr lebhaft denken, dass Sie es als schlimmere Eventualität empfinden, das Stück vorsichtig zurückzuhalten, als es seinen Weg gehen und sein Schicksal haben zu lassen. Dagegen würden Sie es gewiß verstehen, dass ich fürs erste doch den Versuch machte,

³²⁷ CUL, Letters Zweig to Schnitzler, 12.11.1912, Folder B118.

Sie zur Vorsicht zu bewegen. [...] und ich muß sagen [...] möchte ich weder für jetzt noch für alles, was schon noch kommt, unsere Diskussion über die Gefährlichkeitspunkte nicht missen. [sic] Ich hoffe übrigens, dass ich in meiner Besorgnis nicht zu schwarz gesehen habe, und dass auch hier alles anders kommen wird, als man sich's vorstellt.³²⁸

For Salten, as for Zweig, the play is very close to the truth. He acknowledges the play's "Mission", but does not try to pressure Schnitzler into any public campaign for it, speaking specifically of "seinen Weg", the play's own course. Salten advises caution, but his underlying emotion is anxiety, not scepticism. Salten acknowledges that it takes courage to write a play such as *Professor Bernhardi* and to have it performed. Contrary to Fischer or Zweig, Salten is worried that the anti-Semitic attacks in the press and perhaps in public demonstrations could cause Schnitzler harm. In the last line, he hopes he has not been too pessimistic and that all will turn out much better than expected.

Even Karl Kraus, otherwise very critical of Schnitzler, spoke against the ban of *Professor Bernhardi* in an issue of *Die Fackel* from late 1912:

Ich halte ja von den Professoren der Medizin nicht viel. [...] Sie wollen dann eben wirklich keine Gelegenheit vorübergehen lassen, sich in den Schutz der herrschenden Mächte zu begeben, nämlich jener Mächte, die immer behaupten, daß die andern die herrschenden Mächte seien. Was aber den „Professor Bernhardi“ betrifft, so ist es höchste Zeit, daß die Zensur ihn freigibt. Ich bin jetzt selbst dafür; denn dieser letzten Tage Qual war groß. Von allen Problemen, die einem zum Hals herauswachsen, dürfte der „Professor Bernhardi“ jetzt das dringendste sein. Wir wollen ihn haben. Ich war schon lang nicht im Theater. Wenn aber der „Professor Bernhardi“ gegeben wird, nehme ich mir einen Sitz, von dem man das Publikum gut sehen und hören kann. Ich werde mir keinen Dialog im Zwischenakt entgehen lassen und die Gesichter der Volkstheater-Premierenleute mir genau bei der Stelle ansehen, wo man deutlich sehen kann wie die Weltanschauungen aufeinanderplatzen.³²⁹

The last point brings to mind the review by Berta Zuckermandl, in which she mentions how close the piece is to real-life conditions. In the play, "herrschende Mächte" are the Church and those institutions dominated by Christian Socialism. Kraus reverses this, so that as he states it, the Jews are the dominant force in public life. These two sides are meant when Kraus speaks of "Weltanschauungen aufeinanderplatzen". He is referring to the clerical and

³²⁸ CUL, Letters to Felix Salten, 22.7.1912, Folder B089b/2.

³²⁹ Karl Kraus, 'Wie er Weltanschauungen aufeinanderplatzen läßt', *Die Fackel*, Vol.14 No.370/71, 1912/13, 15-16.

nationalist sympathisers on the one hand, and the Liberals, predominantly Jewish, and Social Democrats on the other. But ‘Weltanschauung’ implies more than politics. Kraus says the play is symptomatic of one of the urgent contemporary problems, i.e., the subjection of Viennese Jews to rising anti-Semitism. The atmosphere does not seem favourable after more than a decade of Lueger’s mayorship and incidents such as the Feilbogen- and the Wahrmond-Affair. And so, beyond politics or confession, the different ‘Weltanschauungen’ will mean the reactions of the Viennese audience to the critical portrayal of contemporary anti-Semitism. Kraus is just as curious as the censors as to whether there will be public demonstrations at the premiere or not. The production in Berlin would show that the audience received the play much better than the censors.

III.b) The Play’s Reception until 1918

After discussions with such friends as Gustav Schwarzkopf, Schnitzler did not really believe the play could be performed at the Burgtheater. He was proven right: neither Alfred von Berger, director of the Burgtheater, nor Otto Brahm at the Lessingtheater in Berlin, wanted to perform *Professor Bernhardt*, although both had cooperated well with the author in the past. Schnitzler sent the play to von Berger, adding, “[...] wenn ich es auch als geradezu ausgeschlossen betrachten muß, daß das hier behandelte Thema zur Diskussion auf der k.k. Hofbühne zugelassen werden könnte.” (17.6.1912)³³⁰

Berger confirmed that the play could not be staged at the Burgtheater, probably because he knew *Professor Bernhardt* was too close to the truth. This came as no surprise to Schnitzler. But he was taken aback when his friend Brahm, the champion of such controversial authors as Ibsen and Hauptmann, refused the play. Brahm mentioned “das uns fremdartige des Milieus” and “das für eine norddeutsche Hörerschaft schwer Eingängige der Voraussetzungen”. He continues:

Die Berliner jüdischen Aerzte sind nicht verfolgt, sie dominieren; wir sind nicht katholisch [...] und so wird der Ausgangspunkt des Stückes und sein Verlauf bei uns weniger fesseln als im Lande des Eucharisten-Kongresses. [...] So muß ich mit dem allerlebhaftesten Bedauern zu dem Entschluß kommen, auf die Aufführung zu verzichten – mindestens so lange, bis die Wirkung auf demjenigen Boden, in dem das

³³⁰ Schnitzler, *Briefe 1875-1912*, p.698.

Stück wurzelt, sich stark genug erwiesen hat, um meine Bedenken zu widerlegen.³³¹

Finally, Viktor Barnowsky accepted the play for his Kleines Theater Unter den Linden. The premiere, on 28 November 1912, was a great success. There were no demonstrations as the Austrian authorities had feared, and not only the audience but also the reviews were largely positive. Naturally, the more conservative papers and those with clerical sympathies proved an exception to this. The next three evenings were sold out, and until March 1913, *Professor Bernhardi* was staged more than 100 times.³³² The play also had considerable success in Stuttgart, Cologne, and Karlsruhe, where it was performed in the following year. During the performance in Munich on 8 February, which Schnitzler attended, he was given standing ovations.

The censors in Munich had approved *Professor Bernhardi* without reservation, and the play's success proved the Austrian authorities' concerns wrong. Still, the ban in Austria was not relaxed. On 16 April 1913, the play was staged in Budapest, which was not under the jurisdiction of the Austrian Interior Ministry. Schnitzler attended this, and the play's fame spread to such an extent that critics and theatre-goers from Vienna travelled to Hungary to see the performance. Schnitzler is cited in the 'Wiener Wochenschrift' as saying: "Wir sind eben Nachbarn, Oesterreich und Ungarn." sagte er, "In Berlin hat das Stück auch Glück gehabt, aber es lag doch wie ein Schleier zwischen Bühne und Zuschauerraum. Hier versteht man alles, jede Anspielung und jeden Witz."³³³ Another positive review came from Friedrich Hertz, writing in 'Der Morgen': "Jeder nicht gänzlich abgestumpfte Österreicher hat seinen besonderen Fall Bernhardi erlebt."³³⁴

The public understood the play well and refrained from any form of anti-Semitic demonstration, leaving this to the Catholic and nationalist papers. The fact that the censors' ban remained in place in Austria until 1918, in spite of how well the play was received elsewhere, is further proof that the authorities were motivated by factors other than mere concern for public order.

Anti-Semitism was not limited to the authorities of Vienna. Schnitzler had arranged for another performance with the Kleines Theater ensemble, following their success in Budapest. They had chosen Preßburg, now Bratislava, also formally under Hungarian jurisdiction. On 29 April, his friend Heller received a note from the municipal council in Preßburg, stating that

³³¹ DLA, Letters Brahm to Schnitzler, 19.9.1912, Folder B0016d.

³³² Beier, p.472.

³³³ cited in Beier, p.472.

³³⁴ cited in Beier, p.485.

the performance could not be permitted because the play had not been registered in time. Heller offered 200 crowns as a donation to the Preßburg garrison if the authorities acquiesced. In the council's vote on the matter, however, the proposal was defeated by seven votes against five. According to the official justification, a play banned in Austria for portraying religion in a derisive manner must not be performed in Preßburg by a visiting ensemble.³³⁵

The following day, Berta Zuckerkandl wrote in the 'Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung':

Als das Stück erschien, waren die Meinungen darüber geteilt, wie es zu datieren sei. Manche dachten an die Mitte der achtziger Jahre, an die Keim-Epoche des Antisemitismus. Manche glaubten, eine spätere Zeit darin zu erkennen. Arthur Schnitzler darüber befragt, erwiderte, es sei ihm ungefähr die Epoche um 1900 vorgeschwebt, was bei einigen (worunter auch ich mich befand) Widerspruch hervorrief. Denn wir meinten: Über die Möglichkeiten, die im ‚Bernhardi‘ zum dramatischen Konflikt führen, sei man damals schon hinweg gewesen. Wir haben uns alle geirrt. Die Zeit des ‚Bernhardi‘ ist 1913. Das zeigt das Schicksal dieser Komödie, das zeigt die Affäre von Preßburg. Oder vielmehr dieser ‚Bernhardi‘ ist, was eigentlich jedes Stück von Dichters Wesen sein soll: es ist von immer! ... Und wenn es sonst bei Theaterstücken heißt: ‚Wie aus dem Leben gegriffen‘, so muß man von diesem Verbot der ‚Bernhardi‘-Komödie sagen, daß es bestes Theater war. Arthur Schnitzler hat sich nicht zu beklagen. Sein ‚Bernhardi‘ ist doch in Preßburg gespielt worden. Im Sitzungssaal!³³⁶

While Budapest did not cooperate with the Austrian authorities, the town hall of Preßburg did. Both institutions were closer to the interests of the Church than to the cause of artistic liberty, especially if the artist was a Jew.

III.c) The Play's Reception in Austria after 1918

Censorship was abolished with the collapse of the Monarchy, and by November 1918, preparations to perform *Professor Bernhardi* at the Volkstheater under Alfred Bernau were in full swing. Although a police official had warned Schnitzler of potential demonstrations, the first Viennese performance on 21 December was a great success. Even the press reviews were, for the most part, favourable. By the end of May 1919, Schnitzler's play had been performed more than 50 times.³³⁷

One scathing and openly anti-Semitic review in the 'Wiener Neustädter Zeitung' on 16

³³⁵ *ibid.*, p.465.

³³⁶ cited in Beier, p.466.

³³⁷ *ibid.*, p.477.

October 1918 was followed by a threatening article after the production:

Sollte aber die Direktion eine Wiederholung ansetzen, so lehnen die Führer der Antisemiten heute schon jede Verantwortung ab... Ein zweites Mal würde kein Polizeiaufgebot zurückhalten können, dem Tendenzstück seine verdiente Aufnahme zu bereiten.³³⁸

On 25 October, pupils of several of the local Gymnasia arranged a strike in protest against the staging of the play, which was supported by many of the teachers as well.³³⁹ Evidently, the anti-Semitic feeling had been intensified by the hardship of the war and the subsequent political instability. Schnitzler noted in his diary that these were the first scandals ever caused by *Professor Bernhardt*.³⁴⁰

More than a decade later, in 1930, Arthur Eloesser mentioned: "Schnitzlers Zeitstück ist außerordentlich aktuell geblieben, ist für uns Reichsdeutsche sogar noch aktueller geworden. [...] Wie weise ist dieses Stück und in wie beschämender Weise müssen wir dem Dichter auch gegen uns Recht geben, nach einer so erfolgreichen Vermehrung von Klassen- und Rassenhass."³⁴¹

Pauley draws attention to the electoral success of the National Socialists in the same year, when they managed to secure 6.4 million votes. This made them the second largest party in the Reichstag after the Social Democrats.³⁴² In the light of this, it does not come as a surprise that *Professor Bernhardt* was the central act of the Berlin memorial service for Schnitzler on 21 October 1931.³⁴³ Perhaps some of the guests surmised, but none of them knew for certain that this would be one of the last occasions for an effective public statement against anti-Semitism in Germany.

III.d) A Mirror of Institutional Anti-Semitism: Censorship of the Play

Nikolaj Beier has done invaluable work unearthing, for the first time, the material available in the Niederösterreichisches Landesarchiv on the censorship of *Professor Bernhardt*. Only a brief overview is provided here, while a more detailed examination can be found in *Vor allem*

³³⁸ cited in Beier, p.479-80.

³³⁹ Riedmann, p.298.

³⁴⁰ TB 1917-19, 25.10., 15.11.1919.

³⁴¹ cited in Bayerdörfer, 'Österreichische Verhältnisse' in *Von Franzos zu Canetti*, p.223.

³⁴² Pauley, p.233.

³⁴³ Bayerdörfer, 'Österreichische Verhältnisse', p.224.

*bin ich i c h.*³⁴⁴

What can the censorship of *Professor Bernhardi* tell us about forms of white-collar anti-Semitism? The censors themselves never used the term and found other justifications for the ban. The Emperor himself insisted on a fair treatment of all his subjects, irrespective of confession, according to the Emancipation in 1867. In the light of this, higher Austrian officials could not afford to openly practise anti-Semitism. Therefore, their reports mention that the play exaggerates certain weaknesses of the Austrian administration, or that it shows prominent Viennese citizens in a negative light.

Of the three censors on the council, only one, Karl Glossy, spoke against a ban. He expressed concern that a press campaign both in Austria and abroad would only help the book of the play to more publicity.³⁴⁵ Indeed, the book sold extremely well both in Germany and Austria after its publication in December 1912, reaching 25,000 copies by 1925.³⁴⁶

The notice of the Statthalterei to the director of the Volkstheater, Adolf Weisse, pronouncing a ban on *Professor Bernhardi*, does not give any reasons. It was customary to do so, however, usually with a list of the passages in question, when the ‘Zensurbeirat’ did not decide unanimously.³⁴⁷ The Statthalterei explained to the Ministry of the Interior that a full justification for the ban, “Gefährdung der öffentlichen Ruhe und Ordnung”, was “prinzipiell unmöglich”, since this would have to be as extensive and detailed as the play itself. Furthermore, it would lead to “unwillkommenste Erörterungen” in public.³⁴⁸

The Statthalterei thus refused on point of principle to give any valid reason for the ban of the play. The “most unwelcome discussions” in public would, of course, be political in nature and be critical of clerical interests. The underlying anxiety was, in all likelihood, a public debate on anti-Semitism in the authorities, which is indicated in the citation below. If such discussions or enquiries arose, they would revolve around such questions as why Jews could only rise to a certain level at university and in the legal profession. If this fact, for instance, became a matter of public debate, it would cast an extremely negative light on all public institutions in Austria. It would prove the corruption of supposedly impartial officials, all the more important in Austria, where neutrality in questions of ethnicity was one of the ruling principles of the Habsburg dynasty. It would disclose, furthermore, that imperial bureaucrats

³⁴⁴ see Beier, p.445-67.

³⁴⁵ Beier, p.451.

³⁴⁶ Wagner, p.253.

³⁴⁷ Beier, p.452-53.

³⁴⁸ Vienna, Öst. Staatsarchiv, MS Informationsschreiben der Statthalterei an das k.k. Ministerium des Innern, 15.1.1913, Zl.1565-913.

were continually acting in contradiction to one of the emperor's central principles: equality for his Jewish subjects.

The Austrian officials dealing with the censorship ban were only too aware of these implications. A statement of the Statthaltereie to the Ministry of the Interior from 15 January 1913 demonstrates this very clearly:

Die Schnitzler'sche Komödie ‚Professor Bernhardi‘ ist kein gewöhnliches Tendenzstück im landläufigen Sinne dieses Wortes; es wird darin nicht etwa eine bestimmte, gegen ganz spezielle Verhältnisse gerichtete animöse Absicht verfolgt, sondern in sozusagen umfassender Art und Weise nahezu Alles, was in Oesterreich für das öffentliche Leben als wichtiger Faktor in Betracht kommen kann, einer überaus scharfen, herben Kritik unterzogen und als durch und durch korrupt und verlogen hingestellt. Die Einrichtungen auf unseren Hochschulen, namentlich die Zusammenhänge aller Personalfragen mit politischen und anderen, von der reinen Wissenschaft weit entfernten Verhältnissen, dann diese politischen Verhältnisse selbst, der Parlamentarismus in seiner bei uns bestehenden Form und Wirksamkeit, die obersten Regierungsbehörden und die dem Rate der Krone angehörenden Funktionäre, nicht minder aber das Geschworenengericht, die geistlichen Behörden, selbst die Presse – Alles, alles erscheint in dem Stücke entweder von erschreckender innerer Fäulnis zerfressen oder von alberner Rückständigkeit, Feigheit und Intoleranz durchseucht.³⁴⁹

This was Schnitzler's highly effective criticism in *Professor Bernhardi*, and he struck exactly where state-employed officials were most sensitive. Nothing about their institutions is spared: “Es wird [...] Alles, was in Oesterreich für das öffentliche Leben als wichtiger Faktor in Betracht kommen kann [...] als durch und durch korrupt und verlogen hingestellt.” “Verlogen” is used very much in the sense of the anti-Semites in the play. After all, they pretend that there are no political implications in the Bernhardi affair.

And yet both the judge and the jury are determined to sentence Bernhardi from the start. Pflugfelder speaks of “die böswilligen Idioten auf der Geschworenenbank, die vom ersten Augenblick an entschlossen waren, Bernhardi schuldig zu sprechen [...] und die Richter, die die Kerkerstrafe für Bernhardi sozusagen in der Aktentasche mitgebracht haben”. (p.428) the judge's verdict is based only on the testimonies of the nurse and Hochroitzpointner, which later prove to be false. As Löwenstein remarks: “Da ist also Bernhardi tatsächlich nur auf die Zeugenaussagen von dieser hysterischen Schwester Ludmilla und von diesem sauberen Herrn Hochroitzpointner hin verurteilt worden?! Denn alle anderen Aussagen haben ihn doch

³⁴⁹ Vienna, Öst. Staatsarchiv, MS Informationsschreiben der Statthaltereie an das k.k. Ministerium des Innern, 15.1.1913, Zl.1565-913.

vollständig entlastet.” (p.419)

Another instance of anti-Semitic corruption is when Ebenwald exerts pressure on Bernhardi to appoint the non-Jewish Dr. Hell to the dermatological ward. Ebenwald suggests that his cousin, a deputy in parliament, could prevent unpleasant political consequences for the director if he makes the ‘right’ decision. After Ebenwald has proposed his deal to Bernhardi, which the director soundly rejects, Ebenwald avows, “Es ist ja wirklich schrecklich, daß bei uns in Österreich alle Personalfragen auf politischem Gebiete endigen. Aber damit muß man sich schon einmal abfinden.” (p.379) Schnitzler shows that every ‘Personalfrage’ is also a ‘politische Frage’ in Austria, especially with respect to Jews and non-Jews.

The anonymous official who wrote the above citation also considers the play derisive of Austrian politics in general, the parliamentary system, the highest governmental officials, the judiciary, the clergy, and even the press. The terms used in the last line, such as “erschreckende innere Fäulnis”, apply to the latent anti-Semitism, as the play exposes it. “Alberne Rückständigkeit” is an allusion to its medieval nature, “Feigheit” is one of its intrinsic qualities, as Schnitzler has proven more than once, and its “Intoleranz” goes without saying.

The particular phrases of this note prove that the officials knew what kind of corruption Schnitzler was driving at. It would not state this in such clear terms if it had been anything other than a document for internal use only.

IV. Determined Anti-Semites

Professor Bernhardt treats anti-Semitism in a more critical manner than *Der Weg ins Freie*. The professorial body of the Elisabethinum, Bernhardt's clinic, is divided into two camps: On the one side, supporting Bernhardt, are Pflugfelder, Cyprian, and Löwenstein. Also on Bernhardt's side are his son, Oskar, and Pflugfelder's son, Kurt, although neither take part in the climactic meeting of the third act, where the two opposing parties confront each other. Wenger, of Jewish origin, would probably support Bernhardt's cause, since the anti-Semitic professors resisted his appointment in the earlier stages of the play. But since he only recently joined the clinic, he does not involve himself in the debate. Ebenwald is Bernhardt's major adversary, along with Schreimann, Filitz, and Adler.

IV.a) Dr. Schreimann

Schreimann is a convert to Catholicism and has adopted an anti-Semitic outlook. He only appears in the climactic discussion scene in act three. His exchange with Ebenwald, before the meeting begins, is highly revealing for the mindset of the converted Jew as Schnitzler saw him.

SCHREIMANN ...Vier Stimmen für ...Hell, vier für den Doktor S. Wenger – *zu Hochroitpointner gewandt* Samuel –

HOCHROITZPOINTNER Das wird aber doch nicht ausgeschrieben.

SCHREIMANN Möcht wissen, warum. Mein Großvater zum Beispiel hat Samuel geheißen und hat sich immer ausgeschrieben, und ich heiße Siegfried und schreib mich auch immer aus. (p.392-3)

Schreimann mentions his Jewish grandfather. This ancestor would have seen the time before Emancipation, when Jews, living among themselves, saw no need to abbreviate their first names. In the ensuing Liberal Era, there was no need to abbreviate Jewish names either. In the more intolerant present of the play, Samuel "wird [...] nicht ausgeschrieben". Schnitzler ironically juxtaposes the grandfather's Jewish name with the father's choice of Siegfried, a German name par excellence, shared with the hero from the Nibelungen-saga. This reflects the pride of assimilated, middle-class Jews in German culture. There is, of course, no need to shorten such a thoroughly Teutonic name as Siegfried.

Ebenwald does not regard his colleague as a fully fledged German. Schreimann points out that he received a 'Schmiß' nonetheless. Like Adler, he was a member of a Burschenschaft in

his student days, before the Waidhofener Beschluß of 1896. Being taunted because of his Jewish origins, he had to defend himself in a ‘Mensur’, a student duel of honour. In the present of the play, scars are a prerogative of German nationalist students. Ebenwald retorts, “Auf deinen jüdischen Schmiß bist du heut noch stolzer als auf dein ganzes Deutschtum.” (p.395) For Schreimann, the scar is evidence of his German nature, but for Ebenwald, it proves nothing but his Jewish background.

IV.b) Dr. Filitz

One of Bernhardi’s staunchest adversaries is Filitz, the gynaecologist. In act two, speaking to Oskar Bernhardi and Löwenstein, he calls anti-Semitism their “fixe Idee”, and proceeds to ask, “Bin ich denn auch Antisemit? Ich, der ich immer mindestens einen jüdischen Assistenten habe? Gegenüber anständigen Juden gibt es keinen Antisemitismus.” (p.366)

This sounds like an echo of the famous phrase of Karl Lueger, who had been mayor of Vienna until 1910: “Wer ein Jude ist, bestimme ich!” Under Lueger, opportunist anti-Semitism became socially accepted, condoned by the authorities, and openly publicised by the more conservative papers. Although Lueger habitually ranted against Jews in his political speeches, he had Jewish supporters and friends in finance, industry, and the liberal press.³⁵⁰ Hence the above quotation is a statement of political fact: There were ‘good’ Jews under his protection, and ‘bad’ ones whose reputation he was willing to sacrifice for his political goals, just as Flint sacrifices Bernhardi for his own ambition.

What, then, does Filitz mean by “anständiger Jude”? As with Lueger, it is the Jews he chooses because they can be useful to him. These are the submissive and acquiescent Jews, not vocal, independent-minded ones like Bernhardi. Filitz belittles, or even denies that there is such a thing as real, universal anti-Semitism. Not only does he himself have a Jewish assistant, he also promises to help Dr. Feuermann, who, through lack of experience, was not able to save a mother in childbirth and risks losing his job. “Wenn es irgend möglich ist, reiße ich ihn heraus, *mit triumphierendem Blick auf Löwenstein*, trotzdem er Jude ist.” (p.367) Feuermann is an “anständiger Jude” for Filitz, because his case can help him refute allegations of anti-Semitism.

In the decisive scene in act three, the professorial meeting, it is no coincidence that Filitz, who is always trying to mask his strong anti-Semitism, is chosen to read the exaggerated newspaper report. He remarks, speaking of the brusque manner in which Bernhardi is

³⁵⁰ Wistrich, p.219.

supposed to have restrained the priest, “Als wenn es auf den Stoß ankäme.” (p.399) For him, the central issue, or so he claims, is Jewish effrontery towards a Catholic clergyman.

IV.c) Dr. Ebenwald

Dr. Ebenwald is the vice-director of the Elisabethinum and Bernhardi's principal opponent. The professorial body is divided on the appointment of the new dermatologist, so that four votes will be cast on each side. In this case, the director's vote decides. Should Bernhardi decide against Wenger, Ebenwald would, through his cousin, prevent the parliamentary interpellation. However, Bernhardi considers Wenger the more competent candidate by far and refuses to let any other than medical criteria impinge upon his judgement.

The conflict in act three is foreshadowed when Bernhardi says openly to Ebenwald, “Und so sage ich Ihnen, Herr Professor, daß Sie nur darum für Hell agitieren, weil er – kein Jude ist.” Ebenwald retorts, calmly, without finishing his sentence: “Mit demselben Recht könnte ich Ihnen erwidern, Herr Direktor, daß Ihre Stellungnahme für Wenger –” Bernhardi refutes this allegation of Jewish solidarity by reminding his colleague that three years ago, he voted for Ebenwald's appointment. Ebenwald retorts, “Aber mit einiger Selbstüberwindung, nicht wahr? Und so ging's mir auch mit dem Wenger, Herr Direktor. Und darum tu ich's nicht. So was bereut man immer.”

Ebenwald proceeds to mention that in a ‘Korporation’, it is the general atmosphere, not the individual that counts. It seems evident that with ‘Korporation’, Ebenwald means the Elisabethinum. However, interestingly, the German term also refers to a student association such as a Burschenschaft. Schnitzler attaches obvious significance to each character's allegiance in his student days, with those doctors with a ‘Schmiß’ being alumni of a fencing, nationalist Burschenschaft. These include Adler, Schreimann, and Hochroitzpointner. Before leaving the meeting, Löwenstein throws “Exkneipe” at Ebenwald, who prided himself, in front of Schreimann, as being an ‘alter Herr’ (fraternity alumnus) of staunch nationalist principles. A ‘Kneipe’ is a traditional fraternity event where, in accordance with old rituals, the members engage in a ceremony of singing traditional songs and drinking beer. Their student past, whether spent within nationalist Burschenschaften or not, appears to be in the minds of the professors as much as it was in Schnitzler's own when he wrote the scene. It seems possible that Schnitzler intended the double meaning of ‘Korporation’. This would, of course, indicate that Ebenwald hoped for a similar uniform, anti-Semitic tone in the Elisabethinum as in his old fraternity.

Later on, Ebenwald makes a statement that quite possibly helped bring the official censors down against the play: “Denn es gibt ja noch immer einige unter Ihnen, meine Herren, die mit Zeit- und Volksströmungen nicht zu rechnen wissen, und bei öffentlichen Anstalten muß man damit rechnen, ob man diese Strömungen von einem philosophischen Standpunkt aus für berechtigt halt oder nicht.” Ebenwald here acknowledges that anti-Semitism is present in official Austrian institutions, governmental or otherwise, and is a force to be reckoned with.

Following the example of the Kaiser, the official stance of imperial authorities was strict neutrality in ethnic matters. This was the governmental principle that enabled the Habsburgs to keep their multi-national realm together and their peoples at relative peace for centuries. To show anti-Semitic bias as an official equalled nothing less than undermining the principle of the state and meant being the opposite of a ‘good Austrian’. The Jews were grateful to the emperor and were perhaps the most dynastically loyal subjects of all. This is reflected in the name of the Elisabethinum, named in honour of Empress Elisabeth.

In the constitution of 1867, Jews were granted the freedom to settle wherever in the Monarchy they wished, as well as the freedom to practise their religion and to enter the professions of their choice, including public offices and teaching positions.³⁵¹ It is, therefore, a disturbing trend indeed that, from Ebenwald’s words, the imperial bureaucracy appears to be counteracting the policy of the head of state. He continues,

Es gibt halt viele Leute, die es nicht richtig finden, daß in einem Institut, wo ein Prinz Kurator ist und ein Bischof, und wo statistisch fünfundachtzig Perzent der Patienten Katholiken sind, die behandelnden Ärzte zur überwiegenden Anzahl einer anderen Konfession zugehören. Das macht nun einmal böses Blut in gewissen Kreisen.
(p.412)

These “gewisse Kreise” are higher social circles: the aristocracy (a prince), the state officials (Hofrat Winkler), and the clergy (the bishop). Löwenstein is quick to point out that 80% of the Elisabethinum’s funds also come “von der andern Konfession”, presumably the financiers and factory-owners of the Jewish middle-class.

IV.d) Hochroitzpointner

The assistant Hochroitzpointner is firmly in the anti-Semitic camp. He is an indication of

³⁵¹ Pauley, p.22.

what Schnitzler meant in classifying *Professor Bernhardi* as a 'Charakterkomödie'. With the figure of Hochroitzpointner, Schnitzler parodies the rustic peasant type from Tyrol in his early 20th-century urban guise. The name alone is a mouthful of alpine provincialism. At the outset of act three, and more than once, Schnitzler's stage directions for Hochroitzpointner are 'dumm'. There Hochroitzpointner behaves towards Schreimann, who used to be his regimental superior, with unnecessary military subservience, which lends an element of parody to the situation. Later on, both the nurse's and Hochroitzpointner's false testimonies, their lying under oath, lead to Bernhardi's imprisonment.

V. Undecided Anti-Semites and ‘Renegaten’

We have seen, in section I.c) of the previous chapter, to what extent Schnitzler disapproved of unreliability and insincerity. These characteristics were represented most strongly, in Schnitzler’s eyes, in politicians and in Jewish ‘Renegaten’, whose ‘convictions’ he regarded with extreme scepticism. In *Der Weg ins Freie*, there are indications of the insincere politician in the form of the paper merchant Jalaudek, but he is only a marginal character. In *Professor Bernhardi*, the Minister Flint embodies this mendaciousness to perfection, and he is one of the most important figures of the play. ‘Renegaten’ hardly play a role in *Der Weg ins Freie*, while here, there are several characters representing various degrees of inconstancy: Dr. Adler, of Jewish origin and latently anti-Semitic, who first opposes Bernhardi, and then switches over to his side. Dr. Goldenthal, a convert with demonstrative Catholic tendencies, Bernhardi’s lawyer. Finally, there is the Minister Flint himself, a case-study of political opportunism. They provide the contrast to Bernhardi’s steadfastness and determination.

V.a) Dr. Adler

Adler, is not as staunchly adverse to Bernhardi as Filitz, for instance, but does vote for an open statement condemning Bernhardi’s behaviour towards the priest. Being half Jewish, he points out to Kurt Pflugfelder: “Habe sogar Gelegenheit gehabt, in meiner Studentenzeit für die andere Hälfte zu bluten.” This means that during his student days, when he was a member of a fencing fraternity, someone offended Adler because of his Jewish background, giving cause for a fencing duel. Being able to engage in these ‘Mensuren’ was a point of honour for students. Adler studied in the years before the Waidhofener Beschluß of 1896.³⁵²

When Bernhardi decides to prevent the priest from entering his patient’s room, Adler is the first to express his disapproval. Bernhardi responds, “daß ich mir das gleich hätte denken können.” (p.358) It comes as no surprise to Bernhardi that Adler is not on his side. In the third act, Adler performs a curious balancing act in stating his respect and appreciation for Bernhardi but supports the vote of no confidence against him.

In act four, after Adler defends Bernhardi in court, Löwenstein and Cyprian consider him redeemed. Bernhardi welcomes him with the words of Jesus himself: “Ein reuiger Sünder ist in meinem Auge wohlgefälliger als zehn Gerechte.” (p.424) This is only one of several examples of Bernhardi citing the New Testament. They are treated in greater detail in section

³⁵² Wistrich, p.367.

VIII. The irony of a Jew citing Jesus Christ, and by his actions, actually proving himself more Christian than his clerically-minded opponents, is not lost on the reader.

V.b) Dr. Goldenthal

Dr. Goldenthal is Bernhardi's defence counsel at court and a convert to Catholicism. Löwenstein says of him: "Ein Getaufter! Seine Frau trägt so ein Kreuz. Seinen Sohn läßt er in Kalksburg erziehen! Das sind schon die Richtigen." (p.416) Löwenstein and Pflugfelder are not happy with his performance in court; they feel he has been too lenient in dealing with the prosecution. Goldenthal's plan is to apply for a 'Nichtigkeitsbeschwerde', i.e., a complaint that the court ruling should be annulled due to a distortion of the facts of the case.

Goldenthal uses 'unsere Sache' in the same sense as Löwenstein, meaning a campaign against anti-Semitism. "Man kann ermessen, wie stark gewisse Strömungen in der heutigen Bevölkerung sein müssen," he continues, "Wenn nicht einmal die Aussage eines Pfarrers imstande war, unserer Sache zu nützen." Bernhardi doubts that that was the priest's intention in the first place, and Goldenthal says, "Wie können Sie annehmen, daß ein Diener der Kirche jemals wissentlich eine Unwahrheit aussprechen würde." (p.424) This seems ironic, although there are no stage directions to that effect. But given that Goldenthal is a convert, this remark may not be meant as ironically as it sounds.

According to Pflugfelder, Goldenthal treated far too well "die böswilligen Idioten von der Geschworenenbank, die vom ersten Augenblick an entschlossen waren, Bernhardi schuldig zu sprechen wie die erlesensten Köpfe der Nation." Even though Hochroitzpointer and Nurse Ludmilla both lied under oath, Goldenthal did not for a moment express doubt about their testimonies. "Immer zuerst ein höfliches Neigen des Kopfes gegen den Herrn Klienten, und dann ein tiefes Buckerl nach der Seite, wo seine Feinde standen, vor der Dummheit, der Verleumdung, der Heuchelei." (p.428)

V.c) Dr. Flint

Flint, although leading Bernhardi to believe he is on his side, proves his true allegiance in parliament. An old friend of Bernhardi's from student days, he now belongs to the clerical fraction, but, with the wiliness of the politician, initially succeeds in disguising this. Already in act one, both Dr. Tugendvetter and Dr. Cyprian ensure Bernhardi of Flint's favourable attitude towards the Elisabethinum. Cyprian even hopes to ask for a state subsidy for the

institute, so as to be free from private sponsorship. Remembering the time when Flint fought against Bernhardt's clinic, ("Er hat's doch einmal aus lauter Interesse ruinieren wollen", p.347) the director remains sceptical. "Er war immer ein guter Politiker", he tells Tugendvetter a few lines further on, which, in the light of what both Bernhardt and Schnitzler thought of politics, is not exactly a compliment.

"Flint's 'Ueberzeugung', in a nutshell, appears to apply only to what he calls 'das Wesentliche'. As Flint explains, this lies somewhere between his major socio-educational projects and the 'greater good'. The play reveals 'das große Ganze', in fact, to mean little more than his own career. This self-centredness places Flint in line with other supreme egotists in Schnitzler's plays: Stephan von Sala and Julius Fichtner in *Der einsame Weg*, and the notorious Friedrich Hofreiter in *Das weite Land*.

Flint himself is not a social visionary by any means. For him, the average person is "kleinlich", and Bernhardt is an "Überschätzer der Menschheit". Although he pretends to have the greater good in mind, what really matters are his own achievements – not for his own intellectual and moral fulfilment, but for his political party. As he says on the subject of his ministerial appointment, "Ich habe das Portefeuille angenommen, einfach weil ich weiß, daß kein anderer da ist, der das heute in Österreich machen kann, was endlich gemacht werden muß." (p.457)

VI. Bernhardi's Supporters: Determined Jews

VI.a) Dr. Cyprian

Cyprian and Löwenstein are both strong supporters of Bernhardi. Although Cyprian is the more critical of the two. He is a witness to the scene with Bernhardi and the priest and tells him immediately after the priest has left, "Es war nicht richtig.", meaning Bernhardi's refusal to let the priest see the patient. When Bernhardi asks why, Cyprian explains, "Und nebstbei wird es ein Einzelfall bleiben. Du wirst an der Sache selbst nichts ändern." Bernhardi returns, "An der S a c h e? Das war auch nicht meine Absicht." (p.358) Cyprian is speaking of the wider issue of the priest administering the last rites in hospital, as described below, while Bernhardi, playing on the ambiguity of the term 'Sache', refers to his confrontation with the priest, which he has no regrets about.

As Nikolaj Beier points out, in earlier drafts, Cyprian has strong Social Democrat sympathies. He is a member of the 'demokratischer Bürgerverein' and as politically determined as Pflugfelder in the final version, stating: "Jeder Mensch, der mit Bewusstsein in der Welt lebt ist Philosoph und jeder der mit Bewusstsein als Staatsbürger lebt ist Politiker."³⁵³ He and Pflugfelder represent those friends of Bernhardi's who, like the opposition, want to move him to action. Bernhardi consistently refuses, explaining: "Seine Feinde muß man nehmen, wie und wo man sie findet; meine Freunde kann ich mir aussuchen – glücklicherweise –" (p.440).

The 'Sache' in this particular case involved the question of whether priests should be admitted to the deathbed of patients, and this appears to have been an issue at Dr. Johann Schnitzler's polyclinic. The following quotation is taken from an anonymous letter sent to the 'Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt' in January 1913, and is reproduced by Beier:

Vor vielen Jahren, als Hofrat Professor T h e o d o r M e y n e r t die psychiatrische Klinik leitete, gab er dem Wartepersonal den Auftrag, Priester n u r dann zu rufen, wenn dem auf dem Sterbebette befindlichen Kranken das Bewußtsein geschwunden ist. Im anderen Falle nicht. Man hat von einem Widerstand gegen diese Order nichts gehört. Hofrat Meynert ging im Sommer auf Urlaub und übertrug die Stellvertretung seinem ersten Assistenten. Einem Juden. Während der Abwesenheit des Vorstandes kam der Direktor des Allgemeinen Krankenhauses und fragte, ob es wahr sei, daß Priester, welche das Sterbesakrament spenden wollen, nicht zu den Kranken gelassen werden? 'Und wie denken Sie über einen solchen Auftrag', forschte der Spitalsdirektor weiter.

³⁵³ CUL, Schnitzler Archive, MS Professor Bernhardi – Skizzen und Entwürfe, A118,7.

‘Es wäre eine Taktlosigkeit von mir, wollte ich Erlässe meines Chefs und Lehrers kritisieren.’ Man wartete auf Hofrat Meynerts Rückkehr. Was dann geschah, entzieht sich meiner Kenntnis.³⁵⁴

Especially the Social Democratic press opposed the idea of allowing priests to see dying patients, with the clerical papers speaking for it. Schnitzler himself worked as an assistant to Meynert in the psychiatric ward from 1886 until 1888,³⁵⁵ and he was able to draw on events such as these for *Professor Bernhardt*.

VI.b) Dr. Löwenstein and Dr. Pflugfelder

Löwenstein is Bernhardt’s unconditional supporter and does not have a political counter-campaign in mind as does Pflugfelder. In his outspokenness and conviction, he is the opposite of what Filitz and Flint would consider an “anständiger Jude”.

In act four, Löwenstein calls Goldenthal’s appeal against the court ruling “aussichtslos”, while Pflugfelder, true to the spirit of 1848, feels one should appeal to the population. “Zum Volk willst du sprechen? Zu u n s e r e r Bevölkerung! Die Geschworenen heute könnten dir doch als Kostprobe dienen.” This brings to mind a sentence from Herzl’s letters to Schnitzler on the subject of Herzl’s play *Das Ghetto*: “Ich rede zu einem Volk von Antisemiten.”³⁵⁶

Ebenwald calls Pflugfelder “Der alte Achtundvierziger!”, in an attempt to discredit him as outdated and excessively liberal. The reference is to the liberal revolution of 1848. Ebenwald is trying to identify Pflugfelder not only with a failed revolution, but more widely with a failed political cause. Schnitzler remembered the Liberal Era of his childhood very fondly, with its unpolitical public sphere and its pervasive tolerance, which declined, along with the political influence of the Liberals, after the Viennese stock market crash of 1873.³⁵⁷ Schnitzler treated the generational differences between the generation of 1848 and his own extensively in *Der Weg ins Freie*.

VI.c) Kulka

When Bernhardt enters, Kulka offers him his paper’s cooperation, “im Kampf für Fortschritt und Freiheit”. Bernhardt, however, interrupts him: “Verzeihen Sie, ich bin kein

³⁵⁴ cited in Beier, p.440.

³⁵⁵ Scheible, p.138.

³⁵⁶ CUL, Letters Herzl to Schnitzler, 27.11.1894, Folder B039.

³⁵⁷ Scheible, p.10-12.

Bundesgenosse.” (p.439) He clarifies, “Ich gehöre keiner Partei an und wünsche von keiner als der ihrige in Anspruch genommen zu werden.” (p.440) This points to one of the principle arguments of the play, which is: In cases of anti-Semitism, friends or other Jews can be the worst enemies. Bernhardi has Goldenthal and Kulka in mind, but also Pflugfelder, who proposes decisive political action.

Nikolaj Beier points to a striking parallel to Bernhardi’s refusal of Kulka’s assistance: Moriz Benedikt, the general editor of the main liberal paper ‘Neue Freie Presse’, approached Schnitzler twice in July, again in December 1904, and also in October 1908, asking for his regular journalistic co-operation. Schnitzler refused each time.³⁵⁸ One cannot help but think of Bernhardi’s reply to Kulka on the subject of last words: “Die unterscheiden sich selten von meinen ersten.” (p.440)

³⁵⁸ Beier, p.352.

VII. 'Glaube' versus 'Wissenschaft'?

Peter Horwath sees the underlying conflict of the play between “Wissenschaft und Glaube”.³⁵⁹ The whole affair begins as a clash between medical and religious duty, which is carried out by supporters of the priest against the supporters of a man of science. It is tempting to read into this a clash between science and religion exclusively. But what Bernhardi is struggling against in a wider sense is the concept of anti-individualism and its political expressions. This gives us, on the one hand, the critical enquirer and seeker after truth, and, on the other, the anti-intellectual who is happy to accept the programme of a social group or institution.

When the aristocratic sponsors of Bernhardi's clinic gradually withdraw their support, Dr. Cyprian reprimands Bernhardi for his provocative behaviour during an earlier interview. He continues,

Es gibt Dinge, über die die Fürstin nicht einmal nachdenken darf, sonst wäre sie gerade so eine Entartete wie du, wenn du nicht über diese Dinge nachdächtest. Wir müssen diese Leute verstehen, das gehört zu unserem Wesen, und sie dürfen uns gar nicht verstehen, das gehört wieder zu ihrem Wesen. (p.369)

Here, Cyprian is referring to nothing less than critical reflection. Cyprian seems to suggest that the nobility would begin to doubt its very existence if it engaged in critical thought. A further example is the priest, who, in act four, calls to say that Bernhardi acted “vollkommen korrekt” and could not have behaved any other way. The priest did not state this in court, though, because he felt this would have “der mir heiligsten Sache [...] unermeßlichen Schaden zugefügt”. For a brave man, replies Bernhardi, what could be a holier cause than the truth? The priest argues:

Eine höhere als die meiner Kirche vermag ich nicht anzuerkennen, Herr Professor. Und meiner Kirche höchstes Gesetz heißt Einordnung und Gehorsam. Denn bin ich aus der Gemeinschaft ausgestoßen, [...] so ist für mich, anders aus bei Männern, die in einem freien Berufe stehen, wie Sie, Herr Professor, die Möglichkeit jeden Wirkens und damit der ganze Sinn meines Daseins aufgehoben. (p.431-32)

Here, the professor's and the priest's world views clash. The priest cannot acknowledge a

³⁵⁹ Peter Horwath, “Arthur Schnitzlers *Professor Bernhardi*: Eine Studie über Person und Tendenz.” *Literatur und Kritik* 2 (1967), 88-104 (p.88).

higher truth than that of his Church. He expressly mentions the truth as the Church proclaims it rather than that of faith itself, which can be divergent. Again, it is the Catholic Church that demands submission and obedience, not necessarily Christian belief itself. For the priest, however, as a servant of the Church, the two things coincide. If he begins to act against the interests of the Church, he also acts against its dogma, which deprives his professional and personal existence of all ethical justification. The priest lives to serve the interests of a party or institution. Bernhardi concludes: “weil Sie fühlen, was ja auch ich fühle – [...] daß irgend etwas uns trennt – über dessen Vorhandensein wir auch unter freundlicheren Umständen uns nicht hinwegtäuschen könnten. [...] Es ist von etwas höherer Art, denk ich – und – von hoffnungsloserer.” (p.434-5)

Bernhardi, on the other hand, is a creature of scepticism and intellectual enquiry, whose objective is always the underlying truth, or the true nature of an institution or character. Cyprian is speaking more in terms of human than of social nature, however, which is apparent from his comparison not of nobility and, say, the middle class, but of two individuals, the countess and Bernhardi. We have, then, the critical enquirer and seeker of truth on the one hand, and on the other, the non-intellectual who is happy to accept the programme of a social group or institution. Apart from allusions to Bernhardi's Jewish background, the priest is speaking of critically-minded thinkers. He refers to discussions with “Männer aus Ihren Kreisen, mit – Gelehrten, mit Aufgeklärten” (p.435), and to the dualism between ‘Glaube’ and ‘Zweifel’.

Pflugfelder varies this slightly when he claims, “Die Welt ist überhaupt nur dadurch weitergekommen, daß irgend jemand die Courage gehabt hat, an Dinge zu rühren, von denen Leute, in deren Interesse das lag, durch Jahrhundert behauptet haben, daß man nicht an sie rühren darf.” (p.427) In other words, it is intellectuals and enlightened thinkers who overcome orthodoxies and conventions in thought, working for the progress of mankind. Schnitzler contrasts Bernhardi's courage favourably against the weakness and wavering loyalties of Hochroitzpointner, the politician Flint, and ‘Renegaten’ such as Adler.

Had Schnitzler wanted to make Bernhardi a champion of science, there would have been many occasions to have the professor state this openly. It is striking that Schnitzler does not once use the term ‘Wissenschaft’ in the confrontational scene with the priest. Instead, Bernhardi stands for critical enquiry, for intellectualism, and for the Enlightenment. Although he is not a philosopher, Bernhardi follows in the line of such enlightened thinkers as

Lessing and Moses Mendelssohn.

In an unpublished commentary entitled *Antikritik* Schnitzler replies to the allegation that the priest and Bernhardi “reden aneinander vorbei”:

Gewiss, meine Lieben, dies ist ja der Sinn gerade dieses Dialogs. Jeder sagt das, was er aus seinem Wesen heraus sagen muß. Würden sie einander völlig verstehen, so wären sie identisch. Aber wären sie an persönlicher Denkart und Weltanschauung die vollkommensten Menschen ihrer Art, so würden sie die große Frage, die auf dem Grund dieses Dialogs schlummert, über freien Willen und Kausalität doch niemals lösen. Hätten sie nicht aneinander vorbeigeredet, so müßte ja einer den anderen überzeugen; es stünde am Schlusse jeder dort, wo der andere am Anfang stand und die Geschichte könnte wieder von vorn anfangen.³⁶⁰

The point is that Bernhardi and the priest – to whom one may add the Princess Stixenstein – are of such profoundly different Weltanschauung that they cannot help but talk at cross purposes. The highest rule for the priest is ‘Einordnung und Gehorsam’, not only to the principles of his belief, but more importantly, to the laws of the institution of the Church. For Princess Stixenstein the same applies, for she must submit to the strict behavioural and moral code of the aristocracy. This is fundamentally opposed to the ‘freier Wille’ of Bernhardi, and his pursuit not only of scientific enquiry, but more broadly, of ‘Zweifel’.

Finally, Schnitzler himself made clear that he did not want the struggle between Bernhardi and his opponents to be reduced to the antagonism between religion and science.

Es ist eine Charakterkomödie. Der Inhalt ist nicht, wie journalistische Oberflächlichkeit behauptet, der Kampf zwischen Glaube und Wissenschaft, sondern das Schicksal eines Arztes, der fern von allen politischen Interessen einfach dadurch, daß er in einem speziellen Fall das Selbstverständliche tut in das politische Treiben hineingezogen wird, und der diesem unerwünschten Wirrsal so bald als möglich zu entfliehen trachtet. (17.12.1912)³⁶¹

The professor’s real adversaries use religion only as a cover for a more sinister motive to harm him, one that will always be associated with the history of the 20th century: anti-Semitism, as it was already employed in mass politics at the time. This is the key to *Professor Bernhardi*, and here we have the play’s underlying struggle. It is one individual

³⁶⁰ CUL, MS Antikritik, Folder A20 Nr.10.

³⁶¹ *ibid.*

fighting against the interests of a collective, be this a social, religious, or political association. The critically-minded thinker is pitted against the anti-individualist, the man of the masses. This is what makes Schnitzler's play so enduringly modern.

Bernhardi is no reformer, as the Hofrat mentions in act five, nor had he intended "im entferntesten [...] irgendeine Frage lösen zu wollen." (p.463) Instead, as he lets the liberal journalist Kulka know, "Meine Angelegenheit ist eine rein persönliche." (p.439) Opposed as Bernhardi is to the anti-Semitic clerical and nationalist parties, he has no desire to become a figurehead of the liberal movement. He makes very clear to Kulka, "Ich führe keinen politischen Kampf. Das lächerliche Kriegsgeschrei, das sich von einigen Seiten erheben will, wird mich nicht zu einer Rolle verführen, die mir nicht behagt, zu der ich mich gar nicht tauglich fühle, weil es eben nur eine Rolle wäre." (p.441)

This is a rejection of politics in general. In act five, Flint mentions it is only a question of time until Bernhardi will be offered a seat in parliament, just as public opinion is turning in his favour. (p.457) But the professor turns it down. Bernhardi is, above all else, even above his medical responsibilities, an individual. He is an individual with a mind and a will of his own, who refuses to be ensnared in political campaigns. Instead, "ohne jede Rücksicht auf Unannehmlichkeit und Gefahr", Bernhardi states what he considers to be "Recht und Wahrheit". (p.432) In other words: "die Wahrheit, – nur auf die kommt es an". (p.391)

As he reminds Löwenstein and Cyprian, "Ich habe nämlich wirklich gar keine Lust, den Helden um jeden Preis zu spielen. Daß ich im Ernstfalle der Mann bin, durchzusetzen, was ich will, das habe ich ja schon etliche Male bewiesen." (p.375) Finally, and most openly, Bernhardi makes clear to the Hofrat, "Ich habe einfach in einem ganz speziellen Fall getan, was ich für das Richtige hielt." (p.463)

In this, he is the opposite both of Flint, who stands for the party interests and anonymity of the state, and of the priest, who embodies the interconnection of religious belief and the institution of the Church. In late Habsburg Austria, there was no official separation between the two. In fact, Church and state had been in a close partnership since the Counter-Reformation. Both bodies were mutually supportive of each other, due to the Catholic persuasion of most ministers and higher state officials and the success of the Christian Social party at parliamentary level.

In the play, Church and state are pitted against the enlightened individual, Bernhardi. The most direct confrontation is the trial, where representatives of the judiciary sentence

Bernhardi to imprisonment. No wonder that it is Flint and not one of the doctors who draws the parallel between Bernhardi's case and the Dreyfus Affair. (p.448) He does not only mean the press campaigns, but is also thinking of the implications at administrative levels, i.e., the extent to which anti-Semitism in the French legal system is mirrored by the situation in Austria.

There is a chilling reference to the antagonism between the individual and the state, which, through the civil courts, holds power over individual citizen's lives and freedom, in act two. Bernhardi tells his colleagues "*etwas geschmeichelt lächelnd*" that Prince Konstantin, a member of the funding commission, said "Daß ich vor ein paar hundert Jahren wahrscheinlich auf dem Scheiterhaufen geendet hätte." In a letter to Herzl dated 17 November 1894, Schnitzler discusses Herzl's play *Das Ghetto*, which criticised the injustice against Jews very effectively. He writes, "Es gab eine Zeit, wo die Juden zu tausenden auf den Scheiterhaufen verbrannt wurden. Sie haben zu sterben gewußt. Und man hat sie nicht leben lassen – deswegen."³⁶² Schnitzler is referring to the medieval burnings of the Jews, which took place in intervals throughout Europe in the 14th and 15th centuries.³⁶³ The parallel to Bernhardi's situation is obvious. He suffers a penal sentence for something he had no intention of doing. Fortunately, in his case, it is only a two-month prison sentence.

Flint finishes his speech, in which he justifies having surrendered Bernhardi to his enemies for "das große Ganze", with an allusion to those medieval trials. He doubts his old friend would have maintained his position, "wenn heute noch in Österreich die Scheiterhaufen gen Himmel lohten." (p.456) As before, Bernhardi takes this reference with humour, and applauds. After his experience, Flint's speeches are mere rhetorical exercises for him, with little substance. Nonetheless, it is disturbing that a minister of state mentions these burnings as if to indicate that the Jews live lives so safe and comfortable today that they can afford to indulge in public scandals like the Bernhardi- or the Dreyfus Affair. Because of this, Bernhardi would certainly not fit Dr. Filitz's definition of an "anständiger Jude".

There is more to Bernhardi than irony and stubbornness. In the campaign he finds himself caught up in, he pursues a course of his own, which is the quest for truth. Bernhardi explains to Flint that truth is "das Wesentliche" (p.389) – one of the fundamental disparities between them, since the minister means something very different by this. Bernhardi reiterates this point to the priest: "Ich kann mir nicht denken, daß es für einen so mutigen Mann [...] eine

³⁶² Schnitzler, *Briefe 1875-1912*, p.237.

³⁶³ Pauley, p.14-15.

heiligere Sache geben könnte, als die Wahrheit.” (p.431) The professor’s critical nature, his medical vocation, and his abhorrence of anti-Semitic slander lead him to pursue truth as the highest good man can strive for – in the spirit of critical inquiry. He is the individual pitted against the interests of the group or, in a wider sense, mass society.

VIII. 'Eine Komödie in höherem Sinn'? Comic and Serious Elements in *Professor Bernhardi*

Let us begin this section with a note on terminology. In English-speaking scholarship, 'Komödie' is almost always taken to mean 'comedy', the most obvious translation. In the Austrian dialect, however, 'Komödie spielen' signifies a game of dissimulation. Schnitzler uses this expression repeatedly in his work, such as in the *Große Szene*, a one-act play in the cycle *Komödie der Worte*. In this cycle of plays, Schnitzler explores the repercussions for human relations when one partner takes words seriously and the other not at all. The character Sophie implores her fiancé, Herbot: "Ich könnte ja alles verstehen, alles verzeihen, nur um das eine fleh ich dich an, spiele keine Komödie. Vor mir spiele keine."³⁶⁴ She is beseeching him to be honest about a case of infidelity.

Schnitzler uses the expression in the same sense in his aphorism on politicians, cited in the introduction: "Unter den Politikern selbst wird es kaum einen geben, der sich der Komödie nicht bewußt wäre, die er [...] seinem Vaterland, ja der gesamten Menschheit berufsmäßig vorzuagieren verpflichtet ist."³⁶⁵ Again, politicians are, by definition, involved in a masquerade of dishonesty described here as 'Komödie spielen'. Given this typically Austrian meaning of the term, it seems to suit the efforts of Bernhardi's opponents to disguise their real motives for persecuting him. We should keep this definition in mind when looking more closely at why Schnitzler termed *Professor Bernhardi* a comedy – not an obvious choice of genre by any means.

Time and time again, scholars have called Bernhardi a "half-hero" and an "unfreiwilliger Held". Robert Weiss argues that because Bernhardi is swept up by circumstances beyond his control, he reacts rather than acts, making him essentially a passive character. To a degree, he is even "lächerlich", because he becomes "the champion of causes he never intended to assist [...] A rebel without a cause, a martyr without martyrdom, an avenger incapable of revenge; and he becomes a popular hero without having intended or done anything heroic." Because of this, Bernhardi is a kind of "comical figure". It is mainly the irony of his situation that renders *Professor Bernhardi* a comedy.³⁶⁶

There is a case to be made for this. Bernhardi has no intention of becoming a political

³⁶⁴ Arthur Schnitzler, *Große Szene*, Gesammelte Werke, Die dramatischen Werke vol. 2, p.512.

³⁶⁵ Schnitzler, *Ohne Maske*, ed. by Diersch, p.56.

³⁶⁶ Robert Weiss, 'The Hero in Schnitzler's Comedy *Professor Bernhardi*', p.32-33.

figure and rejects the support of both a liberal paper and like-minded campaigners in act four. Bernhardt refuses to resume legal proceedings after the nurse confesses to false testimony, and exclaims, “Ich verzichte auf die wohltätigen Folgen. Ich will meine Ruhe haben!” (p.459). A few lines on, he states: “Vor dem, was sich jetzt zu entwickeln scheint, ergreife ich die Flucht.” (p.461)

What speaks for Weiss’ argument of “Lächerlichkeit” is both Cyprian referring to Bernhardt’s “Eitelkeit” (p.373) in refusing to compromise, and Flint to a “Tragikomödie des Eigensinns”. (p.456) The final lines of the play also point in this direction, with the famous allegation of being a “Viech”. Bernhardt does not reply to this. Michael Degen, playing Bernhardt in Otto Schenk’s 1988 production, chooses to end the play shifting his head from side to side and smiling ironically, considering that the Hofrat might just be right. Given Bernhardt’s ironic streak, which persists throughout the play, this seems more apt than a frustrated Bernhardt with a grim face and thin lips.

Most significantly, during the climactic discussion scene in act three, where the two enemy factions are pitted against one another, Bernhardt does not deliver the crushing blow to his opponents that a ‘hero’ would. In the heat of battle, when he could make a clear statement against his adversaries, which, within days, would turn into a public stand against anti-Semitism, he resigns his directorship and takes leave. This is not the action of a hero – it seems either that Bernhardt is acknowledging defeat, or he is deserting his position and the professors who have sided with him.

A more subtle element of comedy here is that it is in Bernhardt’s hands to end, or at least reduce, the harmful repercussions of the affair: firstly, by writing the note of apology to the priest, which he tears up after Ebenwald’s visit. Furthermore, he could have dealt his enemies a blow by mobilising the forces of Liberalism against them, as Kulka offers. Bernhardt refuses. An apology at any point would have deprived his opponents of the ammunition to continue their persecution. And yet Bernhardt doesn’t apologise, for reasons of personal principle. In this respect, the reader sympathises with his strength of character.

Which brings us to the next refined point of comedy: This whole affair should not have happened in the first place. For one, doctors are supposed to heal their patients, not engage in political intrigue against one another. The noble mission of Bernhardt’s enemies is very much at odds with their obvious weakness of character. As a doctor, Bernhardt was simply doing his duty, i.e., ensuring a patient’s peaceful death. His light touch on the priest’s shoulder as he forbids him to enter is soon exaggerated to a violent push in the papers. This very innocent occurrence is blown up far beyond its importance by major political parties

quite detached from the hospital and the event itself. Religious concern and other more noble motives are offered, when in reality, the driving force is nothing more than political enmity. That someone 'disliked' by a particular interest group is prosecuted to the point of a prison sentence strikes us as essentially, tragically infantile. And yet it is grown men indulging in this behaviour, believing the superficial reasons they themselves proffer to mask their real motives. This is a detailed, harrowing illustration of the political man as Schnitzler saw him: insincere, casting reason and his critical judgement as an individual aside, and catering instead to the baser instincts of his fellow beings.

This tragicomical instance, which makes the reader want to laugh in disbelief, and yet stops the laughter in his throat, provides crucial evidence for why Schnitzler chose to term *Professor Bernhardi* a comedy of characters. It is an exhibition of human weakness, both on an individual and a group level. It is a comedy of the human condition and all its frailties, of special relevance after the experiences of the 20th century, which have revealed the terrible consequences of the unbridled drive of mass politics. What Schnitzler himself intended as only a psychological study of human behaviour, both for an individual and within groups, anticipated the fatal developments that could result from the weaknesses he described. For the events that followed only years after Schnitzler's death, there would be no quiet victor Bernhardi, capable of contemplating his hardship with an ironic smirk.

True to the genre 'Charakterkomödie', Schnitzler introduces ironic and satirical characters. Hofrat Winkler is one of the more ironic figures, like Bernhardi himself, but one who is not essential to the plot. Hochroitzpointner is the not-much-exaggerated type of the nationalist 'Couleurstudent', whose unnecessary military conduct in act three is perfectly ridiculous. Dr. Tugendvetter, in his over-brimming good nature, with his habitual "wie?", is also a humorous character. He is not one of the principal actors, and only appears in the first and final acts. His position in the question of his succession, and the fact that he very apparently was not on Bernhardi's side, reveals rather a weak will behind his cheerful facade. Finally, his visit to the Hofrat in act five contains a comic element. He asks whether the ministry could speed his award of the Hofrat title for no other reason than that he can present it to his wife on her birthday.

Bernhardi himself is characteristically ironic. One of his trademarks, according to the stage directions, is his "*ironisches Lächeln*". The professor sees through such characters as Ebenwald, Adler, and Hochroitzpointner, which gives him a certain distance from the goings-on around him. This distance helps Bernhardi to remain calm in spite of the obvious injustice

directed against him. He only loses his temper once, in the discussion in act three, and raises his voice only when Flint mentions the distorted account of the incident with the priest.

There are indications that he simply does not take seriously certain developments that others very much do, such as when Filitz' wife is not admitted to the Countess Stixenstein. Another instance is his gentle parody of Flint's ministerial tone: "*Mit seinem ironischen Lächeln Auf dem des medizinischen Unterrichtes, der sozialen Hygiene, der Volksbildung. – Hab' ich noch etwas vergessen?*" (p.381)

The professor is an "anständiger Mensch". He has such strong faith in common sense and human nature that it seems almost naive. In conversation with Cyprian, he assumes that because the public knows he had no intention of offending religious feeling, the affair will not get out of hand. (p.372) Cyprian proves more realistic, and Bernhardi is surprised at his insistence that he, Bernhardi, will have no supporters at all. In act four, Bernhardi says to Goldenthal: "Man wird mir glauben – auch ohne Beweise." (p.425) Given that Bernhardi's trial was a farce, it seems surprising he would believe this. It shows, however, that he is truly "anständig", good at heart, and this is certainly one parallel with the figure of Christ.

William Rey points out that, because Bernhardi embodies several Christian virtues, he is "paradoxerweise einer der wenigen wahren Christen in einer korrumpierten 'christlichen' Gesellschaft."³⁶⁷ Kaulen takes the parallel further, drawing attention to the fact that there are twelve doctors, just as there are twelve apostles. In this "Passionsgruppierung", Kaulen sees a Judas, a Pilate, and other figures from the passion of Christ. For Kaulen, the underlying comedy in *Professor Bernhardi* is that the messiah is a Jew pursued by Christians, in a reversal of the accounts in the New Testament.³⁶⁸

There is an indication that Schnitzler intended this parallel, in a 1910 draft of the third act where Pflugfelder says, "Bernhardi hat aus den reinsten Motiven gehandelt, aus wahrhaft menschlichen, aus Nächstenliebe, die Sie, meine Herren, aus mir unbekanntem Gründen, mit dem Epitheton christliche zu versehen pflegen."³⁶⁹

Further evidence can be found in the biblical quotations Bernhardi utters. They are all, without exception, taken from the New Testament. After the incident with the priest, the following exchange takes place:

HOCHROITZPOINTNER Herr Direktor, wir leben in einem christlichen Staat.

³⁶⁷ Rey, p.54.

³⁶⁸ Kaulen, 'Antisemitismus und Aufklärung', p.183-84.

³⁶⁹ CUL, MS Entwürfe zu Professor Bernhardi, Folder 118, Nr.303.

BERNHARDI Ja. *Sieht ihn lange an* Der Herr verzeihe ihnen – – sie wissen
verdammst gut, was sie tun. (p.359)

This is the variation on Jesus', 'Forgive them, Father, for they know not what they do', which he says before he is nailed to the cross. Following Adler's vote against him, Adler nonetheless expresses his admiration for the director. Bernhardi retorts: "Wer nicht für mich ist, der ist wider mich." (p.416) Finally, as noted above, in act four, after Adler testified in Bernhardi's favour in court, the professor welcomes him: "Ein reuiger Sünder ist in meinem Angesicht wohlgefälliger als zehn Gerechte." (p.424)

For Schnitzler, this parallel between Jesus and Bernhardi did not only have provocative connotations for the clericals. It plays ironically with the inversion of roles of Jews and Christians both in the Bible and in his own time. This analogy with the New Testament may indeed be the deeper meaning of Schnitzler's comedy, as it is for Kaulen. Those who pride themselves on their Christianity, in opposition to Jewishness, do not in fact behave like Christians at all. Instead, the Jew, whom they turn against, has internalised these values to a greater degree than they could ever hope to. This is also a strong argument for Bernhardi's complete integration into Austrian culture, as a middle-class professional. The bitter irony of these parallels is obvious, and it renders Schnitzler's criticism more effective. It shows humour intertwined with the underlying gravity of anti-Semitic injustice.

To summarise the aspects of comedy in Schnitzler's play: there are several instances where Bernhardi could diminish the destructive reverberations of the affair, yet he refuses to do so. A further tragic-comic point is that his affair, which originated with a perfectly harmless occurrence, motivated by the best of intentions, shouldn't have exploded into a public scandal in the first place. The ultimate result is that a decent individual, an "anständiger Mensch", is confined to prison.

Schnitzler's choice of the term 'Charakterkomödie' derives not only from Bernhardi's continuous irony, but also the exaggerated figures of Hochroitzpointner and Tugendvetter; not to forget the sarcastic Hofrat Winkler. The play lays bare the weaknesses of the human character. It shows the damage that can be done when individuals suspend their critical judgement and, instead, accept a much lower level of reasoning as a group. The parallel between the Jew Bernhardi and Christ, who was ostracised by his community for similarly shallow reasons, and was even sentenced to death, is the pinnacle of irony.

As Ekehard Catholy points out, Aristotle demanded a catharsis for every drama. Even though Aristotle's writings on tragedy survived, those on comedy, if they existed, do not.

Applied to comedy, this would mean that the audience could be educated by laughing about human weakness.³⁷⁰ There is no catharsis in *Professor Bernhardi*. Although the baser elements of human nature which the play comments on so bitterly are unchanging, there is still hope for Bernhardi as an individual. Public opinion has swung in his favour, and there is a chance he will have his doctoral title restored to him. The play ends on a note of individual hope in the face of a more general sense of resignation. Perhaps Schnitzler saw one element of comedy in exposing human weakness to the public, in all of its equally ridiculous and frightening aspects.

Unlike in the tremendously popular plays of Johann Nestroy from the previous generation of Viennese playwrights, there is no slapstick and no loud humour that would qualify *Professor Bernhardi* as a 'Volksstück' or a 'Posse'. To take just one example, in *Zu ebener Erde und erster Stock* (1835), the characters challenge the rules of society, but once the challenge is overcome, the social order is restored, and there is usually a harmonious ending with marriage. Several plays by Schnitzler's friend Hofmannsthal, such as *Der Schwierige*, are similar in this respect, albeit lacking the brawling humour Nestroy or, for that matter, Aristophanes would have approved of.

In Schnitzler's piece, as with Hauptmann or other proponents of modern drama, the personal principles of the individual clash with the principles, or rules, of society. In Nestroy's Vienna, the middle-class audience enjoyed laughing about the moral deficits portrayed on stage and the characters' vices foiled by righteousness, which confirmed the ruling laws of society. By Schnitzler's time, the rules of society were being called into question by politicians and intellectuals alike. This, of course, transferred onto the stage.

Speaking of comedy, Winfried Freund states: "Statt einem externen Konflikt entsteht eine interne Krise, wenn sich das Gesellschaftsspiel als korrupt erweist [...] wenn ein Einzelner nicht mitspielen will oder die Gruppe ihn nicht mitspielen läßt."³⁷¹ The situation becomes absurd when the entrenched rules are proven corrupt and the individual, who perhaps even has to face punishment for his persistence, is in the right. Freund continues that the modern comedy usually remains a fragment, for in a morally deficient society, the conflict is aborted where the transition to a harmonious solution – or the ultimate catastrophe – would otherwise occur.³⁷²

³⁷⁰ Eckehard Catholy, 'Aristoteles und die Folgen' in *Die deutsche Komödie im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. by Wolfgang Paulsen (Heidelberg: L. Stiehm Verlag, 1972), pp.11-26 (p.18).

³⁷¹ Winfried Freund, *Deutsche Komödien vom Barock bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich: Fink Verlag, 1988), p.112.

³⁷² Freund, *Deutsche Komödien*, p.14.

What remains for the modern reader in a morally disoriented society is to laugh about it and the tragicomic, absurd position he is in no position to change. Although there may be no satisfactory conclusion, laughter, however loudly or subtly, is one way to deal with the overwhelming complexity of modernity and the anonymity and powerlessness of the individual inextricably caught in its web. Rey argues that with *Professor Bernhardt*, Schnitzler overcomes the traditional structure of comedy to create a new “Komödie der Komödie”. Far from the burlesque humour and the affirmation of society of Nestroy’s plays, it would seem that Rey was right in concluding Schnitzler’s play was “eine Komödie [...] auf höherer Ebene”,³⁷³ a comedy on a higher plane.

IX. Summary

Read in the context of his autobiographical writings, notably the diaries and correspondence, but also unpublished aphorisms as well as the drafts for *Der Weg ins Freie*, we see that Schnitzler wrote more of his own viewpoint into both the novel and *Professor Bernhardt* than was previously assumed. Given the barely critical position against anti-Semitism in the novel, and the much more firm stance against it in the play, this would suggest a linear development in Schnitzler’s position as a German-speaking Jew, from an exploratory to a resolute stage. By 1912, Schnitzler, as an Austrian of Jewish origin, had decided on an enlightened, apolitical, individualist position: the ethical principle of ‘das Richtige tun’, as exemplified by Professor Bernhardt. As the interview with James L. Benvenisti proves, Schnitzler remained true to this viewpoint even in the later years of his life. Having established Schnitzler’s position in the Jewish identity crisis of the early 20th-century, let us now turn to his friend and literary colleague Jakob Wassermann and analyse his response to political anti-Semitism, which was entirely different.

³⁷³ Rey, p.83.

Jakob Wassermann: A Bridge between German and Jewish Cultures

I. Introduction

In the 1920's, Wassermann was one of the most widely-read authors of the German-speaking world. He died in 1934, and after the intellectual cataclysm of the Third Reich, when his books were burned, he was largely forgotten. It would be a challenge to re-introduce his lengthy novels to the bookshelves of the Federal Republic, but the great value of his autobiographical writings remains. No other German-Jewish author articulated his inner conflict as vividly as did Wassermann in *Mein Weg als Deutscher und Jude* (1921).

In the early stages of his literary career, Wassermann endeavoured to prove himself a truly German writer. He never tired of stressing his roots in the soil and population of Franconia, an effort which found expression in two 'Volksromane': *Caspar Hauser* (1908) and *Das Gänsemännchen* (1915). They appear to have certain affinities with the conservative 'Heimatkunst'-movement. 'Heimatkunst' was an artistic branch of the wider current of 'Lebensreform'. A tendency common to both is the view that industrialised urban existence was the main flaw of modern civilisation. Thus, the movements advocate a return to a healthy rural lifestyle. Although initially apolitical, both movements laid the groundwork for reactionary ideologies, suggesting radical solutions to what was perceived as modern degeneracy. Julius Langbehn, Paul de Lagarde and Theodor Fritsch contributed their own theories, heavily laden with nationalist, racist, and anti-Semitic components. How can Wassermann be situated in this context, being Jewish himself, yet at the same time feeling a strong attachment to German culture, and being critical of progress as it was understood in the 19th and 20th centuries?

While his thought contained elements that may be considered reactionary from the modern point of view, his adoption of Nietzsche's 'Kulturkritik', for example, his criticism of contemporary culture was decidedly modern at the time. The fact is that the concept of modernism is highly complex and contains a number of contradictory artistic and philosophic currents. The general discontent with modern civilisation, which is the only common ground these currents share – with the exception of futurism – gave rise to conservative and progressive theories alike. After looking more closely at Wassermann's attempt to prove himself an authentic German writer, we will try to situate him in the context of the

‘Heimatkunst’- and ‘Lebensreform’-movements – finding that although his thought contains elements of both, he in fact belonged to neither side.

After Wassermann’s discovery of his Jewish side, during the years of World War I, he remained at a distance to both Zionism and religious orthodoxy. Already before the war, he had developed the concept of the ‘Orientale’, inspired heavily by both Nietzsche and Martin Buber. This charismatic leader figure would, as he saw it, bring about the peaceful reconciliation of Jews and Germans. The main characters of his post-war novels, however, indicate a change in this idea. No longer are they like the forceful, messianic protagonist of *Die Juden von Zirndorf*, full of Dionysian energy, who goes so far as to murder his harshly anti-Semitic antagonist. Instead, they are much less of an Übermensch and much more of a self-sacrificing Christian, showing the influence of both Christianity and Judaism on Wassermann’s thought. In the economic instability and political unrest of the 1920’s, Wassermann became preoccupied with the concept of justice. Opposed to the institutionalised legal system, he called for the establishment of a more human, truly just society. The world of tomorrow would be based on a new set of morals, beyond the nationalistic antagonism of the present. The Jewish dilemma was only the symptom of the wider problem of injustice, and this could be overcome only by each individual striving to bridge the boundaries between him and his fellow man. Only truly selfless action can leave the egocentric ‘Trägheit des Herzens’ behind, making for not only the unity of mankind, but also of mankind with God.

This mystical notion, again, makes Wassermann’s theory seem utopian to the modern mind. Its characteristics are, however, soundly modern by early-20th-century standards. Far from being the outdated author he is often made out to be in scholarship, Wassermann remained in touch with the problems of his time and was only too well aware of the deteriorating political situation in the later years of his life. His last novels are all set in the present, the problems he addresses there are fully contemporary, and his readers appreciated this by providing him with sales as high as those of any other major German author. For now, let us start with Wassermann’s early years as a writer and his sense of cultural identity at that time.

I.a) A True Author of the Franconian ‘Volk’

‘Heimat’ was a crucial concept for Wassermann. The nature, or ‘Landschaft’ of his native region is a “Jahrtausende umfassender Komplex”, a mythical amalgamation of nature and

culture, created over time by the many generations that worked and lived in it. According to Wassermann, its influence extends to the unborn child in the womb and helps to shape what will be the child's personality. Wassermann reiterates this idea in his 1915 essay, *Nationalgefühl* (1915): "Es ist eine sympathetische Beziehung zwischen Mensch und Landschaft vorhanden, die sich bis zur Identität vertieft".³⁷⁴

Wassermann's first major novel, *Die Juden von Zirndorf*, begins with an evocation of his 'Heimat':

Gemächlich schwebt die Zeit hin über die Länder und über die Geschlechter, und wenn sie auch Städte zertritt und Wälder zerstampft... so vermag sie doch dem heimatlichen Boden niemals seine Lieblichkeit zu rauben oder seine Rauheit, kurz jene Gestalt und jenes Antlitz, womit die Heimat ihren Sohn erfüllt, indem sie ihn gleichsam als ihr Eigentum in Anspruch nimmt und ihm auf den Weg seines Lebens nur diese Worte zur Mitgift wählt: Aus meinem Ton bist du gemacht.³⁷⁵

Elsewhere, Wassermann notes: "Erste Eindrücke sind unverwischbar. In einer deutschen Landschaft von charakteristischen Zügen geboren, bot sich mir diese in meiner Jugend als Urbild aller Landschaft an."³⁷⁶ Wassermann notes that this particular adherence left its traces in *Die Juden von Zirndorf*, *Caspar Hauser*, and in *Das Gänsemännchen*. Wassermann's most vivid depiction of the nature of his 'Heimat' is to be found at the beginning of *Die Juden von Zirndorf*. Franconian soil is described as fertile, implying a healthy population as well.

Dort, wo Rednitz und Pegnitz zusammenfließen, haben freilich die letzten zweihundert Jahre den Flor der Wälder vernichtet, aber weiter hinüber, jenseits der Alten Veste mit ihren Steinbrüchen und ihren dunklen Tannen, dehnt sich der fränkische Gau seit Urandenken als eine weite, breite, friedliche, fruchtbare Ebene, wo das Korn gedeiht [...]³⁷⁷

Wassermann ties nature to the ancient history of the region, for he refers to the chapel of Charlemagne soon after, as well as to the "Schwedenstein". This is a pile of rocks said to have been built there by the Swedish army in the Thirty Years' War, to commemorate their victories. Already on the next page, we learn that there is a Jewish gravestone wedged into the heap of stones together with Christian ones, which no one had removed for fear of being

³⁷⁴ Lindemann-Luiken, p.97.

³⁷⁵ Jakob Wassermann, *Die Juden von Zirndorf* (Cadolzburg: ars vivendi, 1995), p.7.

³⁷⁶ Wassermann, *Mein Weg als Deutscher und Jude* in *Deutscher und Jude*, ed. by Rodewald, p.122-23.

³⁷⁷ Wassermann, *Die Juden von Zirndorf*, p.7

cursed by the “verruchten Judenblock”.³⁷⁸ While Jewishness and anti-Semitism were not an issue in his earlier novels, here they are central.

Having been confronted with anti-Semitism from an early age, he felt a constant need to prove his cultural adherence to Germany. One way he hoped to achieve this was by distinguishing himself from the orthodox ‘Ostjuden’ who fled from pogroms in Russia to the cities of Germany and Austria. The Jewish population of Vienna rose from 99.441 in 1890 to 175.318 ten years later, in a total population of just over 2 Million (8.6%). This was the largest Jewish community in Europe outside Russia, even surpassing Berlin.³⁷⁹ The Jews from the East were generally taken to be less civilised than the assimilated Western Jews. As Steven Aschheim puts it, they were perceived as “immoral, culturally backward creatures of ugly and anachronistic ghettos”.³⁸⁰ The Western Jews were usually very willing to emphasise this for their own benefit – it made them appear more German themselves. The Eastern Jews, with their Yiddish language, their orthodox customs, and their diet and dress, were a visibly foreign element in the city of Vienna. In popular perception, these were all signs of backwardness, of some primeval past. For, since the 18th century, enlightenment and emancipation meant leaving the shackles of the ghetto behind. It was generally assumed that the more progressive a Jew, the more assimilated he was.³⁸¹

Wassermann felt the urge to emphasise his own degree of assimilation very strongly. In a letter to Georg Brandes from 1901, he explains that his “fränkisch-jüdischer Volksschlag [...] ist ja auch etwas ganz anderes als etwa der galizische oder polnische.”³⁸² He even goes so far as to state:

Sah ich einen polnischen oder galizischen Juden, sprach ich mit ihm, [...] so konnte er mich wohl rühren oder verwundern oder zum Mitleid, zur Trauer stimmen, aber eine Regung von Brüderlichkeit, ja nur von Verwandtschaft verspürte ich durchaus nicht. Er war mir vollkommen fremd, in den Äußerungen, in jedem Hauch fremd, und wenn sich keine menschlich-individuelle Sympathie ergab, sogar abstoßend.³⁸³

At this stage of his life, Wassermann felt decidedly more German than Jewish. His Jewishness is forced upon him by an increasingly hostile environment. In *Mein Weg als*

³⁷⁸ Ibid., p.8.

³⁷⁹ Wistrich, p.42.

³⁸⁰ Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers*, p.3.

³⁸¹ Ibid., p.4-20.

³⁸² Lindemann-Luiken, p.97.

³⁸³ Wassermann, *Mein Weg als Deutscher und Jude* in Rodewald, p.115.

Deutscher und Jude he remembers: “In aller Unschuld war ich bisher überzeugt gewesen, ich sei deutschem Leben, deutscher Menschheit nicht bloß zugehörig, sondern zugeboren.”³⁸⁴ Several pages later, he confesses, “daß ich in allerletzter Linie mehr für die Deutschen als für die Juden leide. Leidet man nicht immer am meisten dort, wo man am tiefsten liebt, wenn auch am vergeblichsten?”³⁸⁵

It was in this vein that he wrote *Caspar Hauser*. He sought to legitimate himself by writing a ‘Volksroman’, using what was almost a popular legend, as well as by turning the ancient city of Nuremberg, with its medieval traditions of Dürer and the Meistersinger and its surrounding ‘Landschaft’, into central themes. In his own words,

Der Vorgang nun steht in der Landschaft, die ihm bereits vor der Geschichte gegeben war; innerste deutsche Welt und, ich glaube es wohl sagen zu dürfen, gültige deutsche Menschen. Deutsch die Stadt, deutsch der Weg, deutsch die Nacht, deutsch der Baum, deutsch die Luft und das Wort.³⁸⁶

In this first attempt at a ‘Volksroman’, Wassermann does not indulge in lengthy descriptions of Franconian nature, as one might expect from someone for whom the ‘Landschaft’ was a central part of his cultural identity. Nor does Wassermann use the local dialect – a technique which secured Fontane his place as *the* author of Berlin and Brandenburg. Rather, Wassermann pays tribute to his ‘Heimat’ with the tale of Caspar Hauser itself, which is firmly rooted in that region and nothing less than a real-life Franconian legend.

Although the novel centres on the character of Caspar Hauser and his tribulations, the atmosphere of the ancient city is emanant. Still today, Nuremberg prides itself on its rich medieval heritage, with its castle, its centuries-old churches, its fortifications, and the half-timbered patrician dwellings on the market square, which are all expressions of the wealth, confidence and independence of its citizens. Wassermann was born in the neighbouring town of Fürth, an industrial town devoid of notable architectural heritage. When, as a writer of Jewish origin, he wanted to stress his adherence to Germany, it is no surprise that he chose to set his novels in Nuremberg. Apart from his obvious regional ties, there was hardly a more traditional, more German, city he could have chosen.

Another central theme in *Caspar Hauser* is the people of the city. Apart from Caspar,

³⁸⁴ Ibid., p.67-68.

³⁸⁵ Ibid., p.129.

³⁸⁶ Ibid., p.94.

other protagonists include the teacher Daumer, the chief justice Feuerbach, and the mayor Binder. All of them are dignitaries in the extended village that Nuremberg was in the first half of the 19th century. Their and their families' lives, loves, and aspirations form the offshoots of the main plot, illustrating a German ideal of domesticity typical of the Biedermeier-era. It is the town's middle and lower classes that provide the social backdrop for the novel, because this is what was commonly understood as the 'Volk'. These were the people Wassermann, himself of modest origin, was trying to identify with. Any major reference to the German-Jewish antagonism, which he drew on in the earlier *Juden von Zirndorf*, would have been a hindrance to achieving this identification. That is why there are no references to this issue in *Caspar Hauser*.

Instead, the key elements of Wassermann's first major success were firstly, the tale itself, firmly rooted in Franconia; secondly, the traditional, quintessentially German atmosphere of Nuremberg and its environment; and thirdly, the 'Bürgertum' and 'Kleinbürgertum', i.e. the 'Volk', which is the real protagonist of the tale. Wassermann tried to show his intrinsic connection to these people by writing a 'Volksroman', which breathed the ideals of Biedermeier domesticity. He was to take this declaration of cultural adherence a step further with *Das Gänsemännchen*. Unfortunately for Wassermann, neither novel was accepted as proof of his genuinely German character.

Das Gänsemännchen recounts the tale of Daniel Nothafft, who is torn between two sisters: the cheerful Lenore and Gertrud – faithful but prone to melancholy – whom he later marries. Daniel is a composer but never attains the public recognition he strives for. He makes a living by giving music lessons and copying sheet music. Here again, the social milieu is that of the petite bourgeoisie of a provincial town. Such characters as Carovius, a provincially-minded landlord, and his brother-in-law Andreas Döderlein, a professor of music, help to bring it alive with their hopes, ambitions, and infidelities.

Because Daniel's marriage to Gertrud does not prevent him from continuing his relationship with Lenore, the talk of the town labels him the 'Gänsemännchen'. The Gänsemännchen Well, one of the oldest wells of Nuremberg, shows a peasant with two geese under his arm that he is carrying to market. It is in itself a symbol of Nuremberg's, and thus Franconia's, cultural and historic identity. The figure on the well brings together Nuremberg's architectural heritage and its 'Bürgertum', as well as fiction and reality. It is an essentially German, more, a Franconian symbol, for not only does the gossip of the 'Volk' revolve around it, but it also serves as a mark of the city's cultural identity. Wassermann's

choice of this well indicates that in his second ‘Volksroman’, the protagonist is not necessarily one person alone. Daniel is not as prominent a main character as Caspar was, because, once more, the protagonist here is none other than the town of Nuremberg and its ‘Volk’.

Anti-Semitic critics, however, would not concede Wassermann ‘Volkstümlichkeit’. Adolf Bartels, who went on to become one of the most prominent philologists of the Third Reich, declared quite simply “daß ein Jude kein deutscher Dichter werden kann.”³⁸⁷ The Catholic author Konrad Weiß wrote in the literary review ‘Hochland’ in 1909, “etwas Orientalisches [liegt] im selbstquälerischen Zug des Juden Wassermann.” The early Expressionist Kasimir Edschmid, writing in ‘Die weißen Blätter’, denied flatly what Wassermann was trying to prove, by stating that Wassermann “hat keine elementare Bindung in den Boden hinein.”³⁸⁸

In *Mein Weg als Deutscher und Jude*, Wassermann responds:

Ich bildete mir ein, den Deutschen ein wesentlich deutsches Buch gegeben zu haben, wie aus der Seele des Volkes heraus; ich bildete mir ein, da ein Jude es geschaffen, den Beweis geliefert zu haben, daß ein Jude [...] das Vorurteil der Fremdheit besiegen könne. Aber in dieser Erwartung wurde ich getäuscht.³⁸⁹

Interestingly, he notes that in his youth, he only saw the option of belonging to either German or Jewish culture, while not being sure of how to achieve acceptance by either. And yet, in conversation with a friend, after stating his allegiance to German culture, he explains:

Ich atme in der Sprache. [...] Ihr Wort und Rhythmus machen mein innerstes Dasein aus. [...] Sie ist mir vertraut, als sei ich von Ewigkeit her mit diesem Element verschwistert gewesen. [...] Ist das nicht gültiger [...] als eine Fremdlingsrolle, die durch Furcht und Stolz auf der einen Seite, auf der anderen durch Aberglauben, Bosheit und Trägheit besteht?³⁹⁰

This dilemma was further complicated by Wassermann’s aim to be accepted as a writer. A German author, he writes, can never represent his nation to the extent that Balzac can represent France, Dickens England, or Tolstoi Russia. As a fairly new country, Germany, so Wassermann felt, lacked a national epic as a keystone of cultural identity, unlike other, older

³⁸⁷ Lindemann-Luiken, p.46

³⁸⁸ *ibid.*, p.62, 68.

³⁸⁹ Wassermann, *Mein Weg als Deutscher und Jude* in Rodewald, p.91.

³⁹⁰ *ibid.*, p.67-68.

nations ranging back to classical Rome and Greece. Germany had a dramatic and lyrical tradition, but “der deutsche Epiker hängt in der Luft.” Could it be up to him to fulfil this role? As things were, Wassermann felt thrice isolated: “als Literat; als Deutscher ohne gesellschaftliche Legitimation; als Jude ohne Zugehörigkeit.”³⁹¹

Wassermann fits the argument outlined in the study *Heimat: A German Dream* (2000) by Boa and Palfreyman. The authors point out that while during the 1920's and 30's, 'Heimat' came to be understood in terms of the nation at large, in the 19th and early 20th century it generally meant a particular region. 'Heimat' is a spatial metaphor encompassing identity, memories, family, and society.³⁹² In Wassermann's case, it is certainly true that Franconia embodied all of these particular values. The authors emphasise the dynamic of in- and exclusion inherent in the 'Heimat'-concept, as well as the fundamentally “antithetical mode of thinking” as expressed in the key construct of self and other.³⁹³ It is apparent that Wassermann endeavoured, by means of his early novels, to prove that he was not part of the 'other' but instead belonged to his native region.

Moving towards regional art ('Heimatkunst'), Boa and Palfreyman stress that, just as the transition between regional and national 'Heimat' can be fluid, likewise, there are no clear-cut boundaries between 'Heimatkunst' and Naturalism.³⁹⁴ This is only one dimension of the ambivalent nature of 'Heimatkunst'. Friedrich Lienhard, the editor of the main journal of the movement, entitled 'Heimat: Blätter für Literatur und Volkstum', was looking for contributors with “modernster und doch volkstümlicher Bildung”, in order to attract readers both in the city and in the country. Lienhard wanted to appeal to the essentially conservative public interested in their 'Heimat', and yet at the same time meet the demands of contemporary art.³⁹⁵ It was entirely possible to criticise the narrowness and potential oppressiveness of the rural 'Heimat', as Clara Viebig did in *Das Kreuz im Venn* (1908).

Whereas 'Heimatkunst' could try to establish a balance between local loyalties, national citizenship and cosmopolitan openness, it was also susceptible to such reactionary tendencies as anti-Semitism. Adolf Bartels, for instance, was a close collaborator with Lienhard.³⁹⁶ When the ethnographer Hanns Fischer, who was associated with the movement, stated, “Bauerntum [ist] eine innere Haltung, nicht ein Erwerbszweig”, this brought to mind the utterly reactionary theories of Theodor Fritsch, Julius Langbehn, and Paul de Lagarde. As we

³⁹¹ *ibid.*, p.86, 87.

³⁹² *Heimat: A German Dream*, ed. by Elizabeth Boa and Rachel Palfreyman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.5, 23.

³⁹³ *Heimat*, ed. by Boa and Palfreyman, p.27.

³⁹⁴ *ibid.*, p.31.

³⁹⁵ *ibid.*, p.32-33.

³⁹⁶ *ibid.*, p.34.

move on to examine 'Heimatkunst' in greater detail, it is worth keeping in mind not only the conciliatory potential of the 'Heimat'-concept, but also the understanding of 'Heimatkunst' at the time as being a new form of art, the aim of which was to fuse tradition and the challenges of modernity into one harmonious and aesthetic whole.

I.b) 'Lebensreform' and 'Heimatkunst'

Given his preoccupation with his native soil and the 'Volk' of Franconia, was Wassermann, then, a reactionary? Birgit Stengel-Marchand goes so far as to take him for a direct precursor of fascism. She holds that Wassermann's thought was anti-individualistic, since it aspired to the total unity of the individual and the world around him. More specifically, this entailed the submission of the individual to a given "Weltgesetzlichkeit", revealing tendencies that are both "erkenntnisfeindlich" and "antiaufklärerisch". Wassermann "sucht seine Herkunft zunächst durch Blut und Erde zu bestimmen", which is a characteristic trait of "völkisches Denken".³⁹⁷

For Stengel-Marchand, Wassermann's 'Literat' draws on anti-Semitic clichés, such as that of the Jewish journalist infiltrating and breaking up German literary culture from within. He is the enemy in Wassermann's simple black-and-white philosophy. Furthermore, Wassermann calls for "einen ethisch-sittlichen Führer und die Vernichtung Andersdenkender". His is a "totalitäres Weltbild". Wassermann's thinking "leistet[e] der nationalsozialistischen Ideologie und deren machtpolitische Umsetzung erheblichen Vorschub."³⁹⁸ She concludes, "Erschreckend aber ist, daß er nicht erkannte, welcher Weltanschauung er als Wegbereiter diente."³⁹⁹

Wassermann's profound disillusionment in the later years of his life, and the decline of his health as a result, was due precisely to the rise of those forces for which Stengel-Marchand sees Wassermann as having cleared the path. Also, Wassermann, as a Jew, was one of the first authors to be blacklisted by the 'Börsenblatt des Deutschen Buchhandels', after the Nazis seized power. These facts aside, Stengel-Marchand completely ignores that Wassermann's ruling principles were humanity and justice. His 'Orientale' aspired to a more humane society in the future; and all of his post-war novels are pervaded by a truly Christian sense of self-sacrifice and brotherly love. This, for Wassermann, was the only way to overcome the

³⁹⁷ Birgit Stengel-Marchand, 'Das tragische Paradox der Assimilation – der Fall Wassermann', *Der Deutschunterricht*, No.37, Issue 3 (1985), pp.38-41 (p.40).

³⁹⁸ Stengel-Marchand, *Das tragische Paradox der Assimilation*, p.41.

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

institutionalised injustice and the intolerance in contemporary society. We will expand upon this in a later chapter.

Stengel-Marchand's misinterpretation proves how easy it is, from a present-day perspective, to label Wassermann as a reactionary author. Any writer under the influence of Nietzsche, for example – who offers many opportunities to classify him as a reactionary thinker – is likely to be similarly pigeonholed. The problem is not only ideologically-driven scholarship, but also the incredible complexity of the phenomenon of modernism. There were, as Plöger argues, decidedly anti-modern, conservative traits among the intellectual currents of modernism. It is worth casting a glance at these movements, which were considered progressive at the time, in order to place Wassermann more accurately in the artistic and intellectual effusion of the early 20th century.

Plöger states: “Wichtig nicht nur für Wassermanns Frühwerk, sondern für sein gesamtes Schaffen, sind die sich gerade in der Münchner Moderne konzentrierenden Strömungen, die ich unter dem Sammelbegriff ‘Lebensreform’ zusammenfassen möchte.”⁴⁰⁰ She lists the main characteristics of these movements as being a celebration of life, in the Dionysian or Nietzschean sense, a cult of health, youth, and beauty, and also a tendency to the irrational, mystical, even occult.

Some movements gathered under the umbrella of ‘Lebensreform’ are vegetarianism, anti-alcoholism, nudism, and homeopathy. What these currents had in common was the belief that modern life, urban and industrialised, was unhealthy and essentially inhuman. They were anti-capitalist, anti-materialist, anti-bourgeois, but in some cases also anti-socialist, in short: highly critical of civilisation as it existed in 1900. The return to nature was all-important, whether this meant eating natural foods, using natural remedies, or living in close communion with nature. The Wandervogel youth groups, which spread all over Germany, promoted a natural lifestyle by rambling through and camping out in the countryside. This immediate experience of nature, and more specifically, of their native region, was essential for the Wandervögel, as a counter-balance to the industrial world of factories and sprawling urban expansion.

On an intellectual level, Theodor Fritsch and Walter Riehl were two vocal critics of modern urban existence. They capitalised on the feeling expressed by a journalist writing for ‘Die Tat’:

⁴⁰⁰ Nicole Plöger, ‘Wassermann und die Münchner Moderne’ in *Jakob Wassermann: Deutscher – Jude – Literat*, ed. by Dirk Niefanger et al. (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2007), pp.15-29 (p.23).

Der Ackerbau ist die älteste, naturgemäße und gesündeste Arbeit, die dem Menschen, der aus dem Paradiese gleich auf den Acker hinausgeworfen wurde, beschieden ist, sie war es von jeher, und sie wird sich auch mit eiserner Notwendigkeit aus unserer Industriezeit heraus entwickeln; sie wird auch unserer nerventötenden, unermüdbaren Gewinn- und Genußsucht wieder zur freiwilligen, gesunden Lebenstätigkeit führen, wie der Bauer sie hat im Anschluß an den Glanz des Jahres.⁴⁰¹

Riehl felt similarly. For him, the city was the root of all evil. The peasantry was its uncorrupted, healthy antagonist. The time-honoured traditions of the peasants, which had evolved from a life close to nature, were the counter-weight to the socialism of the urban proletariat, dwelling in their cramped, unhygienic slums. This meant, according to Riehl, that art from rural areas was more original and more natural than art produced in the city. He tried to prove that the brightest minds in art and philosophy originally came from the peasantry. Although his theory is untenable, Riehl's texts were used to legitimise 'Heimatkunst'.⁴⁰²

Fritsch is particularly interesting in the context of 'Lebensreform', expanding it by a 'völkisch' dimension. He began as an advocate of the garden city, calling the modern metropolis the "Pestbeule der Cultur". In his *Stadt der Zukunft* (1896), he argued for the reversal of the general exodus from the rural areas to the cities, hoping to turn the "Landflucht" into a "Flucht nach dem Lande".⁴⁰³ But at the same time, Fritsch was an anti-Semite of the worst degree. In 1887, he published *Der Antisemiten-Katechismus*, a compendium of vicious allegations and prejudices against Jews, which was to become one of the key texts of modern anti-Semitism. Apart from the anti-Semitic journal 'Der Hammer – Blätter für den deutschen Sinn', his Hammer-Verlag in Leipzig also issued numerous propaganda pamphlets against Jews, condemning, to give just one example, sexual relations between Jews and Aryans and calling for German girls to protect themselves from Jewish depravity.⁴⁰⁴ Fritsch is also responsible for the publication of the German version of *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (1924). Thus, it comes as no surprise that Fritsch saw his Gartenstadt also as an Aryan colony with the potential to improve the "rassische Qualitäten" of the German 'Volk'.⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰¹ cited in Wolfgang Krabbe, *Gesellschaftsveränderung durch Lebensreform* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974), p.27.

⁴⁰² Kraft, p.52-53.

⁴⁰³ Krabbe, *Gesellschaftsveränderung durch Lebensreform*, p.29.

⁴⁰⁴ Saul Friedländer, 'Die politischen Veränderungen der Kriegszeit und ihre Auswirkungen auf die Judenfrage' in *Deutsches Judentum in Krieg und Revolution 1916-1923*, ed. by Werner E. Mosse (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr Verlag, 1971), p.64.

⁴⁰⁵ Massimo Zumbini, *Die Wurzeln des Bösen. Die Gründerjahre des Antisemitismus – von der Bismarckzeit zu Hitler* (Frankfurt/Main: Vittorio Klostermann Verlag, 2003), p.416.

For more detail see also Dirk Schubert, ed., *Die Gartenstadtidee zwischen reaktionärer Ideologie und*

‘Heimatkunst’ celebrated rural existence. ‘Heimat’ means native region, but it can be taken to mean all of Germany, as well. As Celia Applegate points out in her study on the concept of ‘Heimat’, there was “no satisfactory national symbology” in the recently-unified state of 1871.⁴⁰⁶ Interest in one’s regional ‘Heimat’ grew very strongly. From 1880 onwards, this found expression in the constitution of numerous ‘Heimat’ associations, each of which took upon itself the responsibility to preserve the nature, architectural heritage, or folklore of the region. Applegate emphasises that these were no political or social movements, but were rather practised by its proponents as a kind of hobby.⁴⁰⁷ Interestingly, although these associations “gloried in nature at a time when the city was changing the landscape, in ruins when new buildings were springing up everywhere, in handicrafts when factory work predominated”, they equally embraced major technological achievements, the splendour of the capital, and whatever pertained to national prestige.⁴⁰⁸ As a new nation-state, Germany lacked the centralised culture of a country that had been one relatively coherent whole since the Middle Ages, such as Britain or France. Thus, German patriotism was lived out by celebrating regional pride in Bavaria, Franconia, or the Pfalz. Remarkably, this unpolitical ‘Heimatspflege’ largely disappeared with the official, centralised nationalism of the Nazi era but emerged from the war virtually unblemished.⁴⁰⁹

In the years before the First World War, ‘Heimatkunst’ emerged from this renewed interest in nature and the soil. It began as an unpolitical movement critical of industrialised society and urban existence. Its thinkers, who later included such ardent nationalists as Paul de Lagarde and Julius Langbehn, could draw on Bismarck’s phrase of the “Bauernstand als Rückgrat der Nation” and his statement: “Politisch und wirtschaftlich habe ich stets auf dem Standpunkt gestanden, daß der deutsche Bauernstand geschützt werden müsse, und habe somit stets als Bauer empfunden.”⁴¹⁰

Langbehn contributed a nationalist edge to the notion of uncorrupted rural life, suggesting that the authenticity of the German population was preserved only in the countryside. In his *Rembrandt als Erzieher* (1890), he further calls for an examination of every German’s ancestry, “zwar nicht auf rein deutsches Blut, aber doch auf rein deutsche Gesinnung”.⁴¹¹ Wilhelm Schubring, the representative of a ‘Heimatspflege’ organisation, called for a

pragmatischer Umsetzung (Dortmund: Verlag Dorothea Rohn, 2004).

⁴⁰⁶ Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p.17.

⁴⁰⁷ Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials*, p.3.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p.62.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p.18.

⁴¹⁰ Kraft, p.56.

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.55.

reorganisation not along political borders, but only in tribal units, or “Stammeseinheiten”. It is worth noting that this stress on German blood and the peasantry alienated the ‘Heimat’ groups, who had no real association with nationalist movements at the time, from these particular thinkers.⁴¹²

‘Lebensreform’ was a similarly flexible phenomenon. Although conceived as a progressive movement, elements of it were conducive to conservative, even reactionary thought. Another case in point is Eduard Baltzer, a committed socialist and vegetarian. He was open to fellow-vegetarian Gustav Struve’s ideas of “sittlicher Sozialismus”, outlined in the volume *Die Pflanzenkost* (1869): By following a natural lifestyle in diet and clothing, there would be no discrepancy between rich and poor, capital and labour. Everyone would be able to afford the basic needs that nature has to offer.⁴¹³

Baltzer aspired towards “das Zusammenleben [...] auf dem Grunde freier Selbstbestimmung”.⁴¹⁴ He was a dedicated pacifist and argued in *Die natürliche Lebensweise* (1867) against the existing military structures. If nations keep armies, argues Baltzer, war one day will be inevitable. He writes, “daß dies Militärsystem der ärgste Moloch ist, der je existierte und Menschenopfer verlangte und empfing.”⁴¹⁵ And yet, like other essentially pacifist vegetarians, Baltzer was also receptive to the notion of the supremacy of German culture. In the same book, he explains that after the other European high cultures had fulfilled their mission, “das nächste Weltalter [gehört] dem Germanismus”. “Das Wesen des Germanismus”, states Baltzer, lies “in der freien Selbstbestimmung”. He places Germany side by side with England and America. England rose to a world power thanks to its core idea of individual freedom. America is per se the country of freedom and labour, which has managed to safeguard the virtues of its founding fathers while overcoming their vices, such as slavery. Germany contributed to the development of freedom with the Reformation, its philosophy and music, and through its successful warding off of the Romans, the Turks and the French. Whether England, America or Germany led the world in the future did not matter much to Baltzer, since, for him, all three represented the principle of “Germanismus”.⁴¹⁶

In spite of such figures as Baltzer, it was not long before Lagarde (*Deutsche Schriften*, 1878) and Theodor Fritsch, two of the foremost anti-Semites in Germany, added the component of anti-Semitism to their specific line of ‘Kulturkritik’. Fritsch’s aim in particular

⁴¹² Applegate, p.106.

⁴¹³ Krabbe, p.154.

⁴¹⁴ see also Baltzer’s *Erinnerungen* (Frankfurt/Main, 1907), cited in Krabbe, p.154.

⁴¹⁵ Krabbe, p.155.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid., p.157.

was to exclude Jews from any contribution to German cultural life, propagating a victory of a people that was racially pure and close to the soil over this degenerating influence. This brought him a serious rebuke by Nietzsche in the form of two letters.⁴¹⁷ Lagarde went so far as to call for the Jews' extermination as if they were "trichinae and bacilli". In 1944, with the systematic elimination of European Jews well underway, the National Socialists had the army distribute an anthology of Lagarde's writings.⁴¹⁸ This biological form of nationalism, coupled with vicious anti-Semitism, seems far removed from the pacifist ideas of the vegetarian Baltzer. Yet both Fritsch and he belong under the umbrella of 'Lebensreform'.

Such concepts of modernism as anti-capitalism, or other forms of Kulturkritik, were open to both progressive and conservative inflections. One need only look at the back-to-nature movements, which encompass currents as diverse as vegetarianism, homeopathy, Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophy, and 'Heimatkunst'. We saw that even Baltzer's Germanismus was not of the typical nationalist brand – although it must be added that he belonged to the pre-'Heimatkunst'-generation. What all of these highly diverse trends had in common was their profound dissatisfaction with contemporary civilisation and their aspiration towards a better future. Early 20th-century European culture was generally perceived as flawed: Art and society were degenerate and had to be renewed, and at the same time, they were bound by ossified morals and hierarchies that had to be overcome. With this mindset, it becomes clear why Nietzsche, who spoke of the "Krankheit des Willens" in Europe, and of the "schlotterlichem Gewande von westländischer Bildung",⁴¹⁹ was widely hailed as the great philosopher of the age – precisely for his criticism of contemporary culture. Indeed, intellectuals of all denominations were able to recognise elements of their own in his thought.

To return to Wassermann, we must be careful, in spite of his emphasis on his Franconian origins and his native soil, not to place him into the conservative, or even 'völkisch' box just because of this. As we will see in a later chapter, there were decidedly modern aspects of Wassermann's thought, apart from his preoccupation with contemporary problems and his forward-looking attitude. With this in mind, let us now examine more closely the transition of Wassermann's cultural adherence from a purely German to a more balanced German-Jewish sense of identity.

⁴¹⁷ Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), p.91.

⁴¹⁸ Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair*, p.63.

⁴¹⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Werke in sechs Bänden*, ed. by Karl Schlechta (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1980), IV: *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* (1980), §208, p.671.

I.c) Deutsche Charaktere und Begebenheiten

I.c) i) Volume 1 (1915)

At the outbreak of war, Wassermann was as eager and patriotic as many other writers to join the fray. His wife, Julie, held him back. In August 1914, he even made an attempt to cycle to the next army office without telling her, but she still caught him out.⁴²⁰

Wassermann was a committed patriot. In his essay *Nationalgefühl*, he maintains: “Ein Mensch ohne Nationalgefühl ist wie einer ohne Glauben und ohne Gott.”⁴²¹ Because he is aware of the positively German, ‘volkstümlich’ nature of his work, he points out to his publisher Samuel Fischer as late as 1919 that a translation of his works into English would be “als deutsche Propaganda [...] nicht zu verachten.” (6.12.1919)⁴²²

The last important work from Wassermann’s German phase is a collection of vignettes on generals, kings, and notable citizens, entitled *Deutsche Charaktere*. It was published in the second year of the First World War in order to boost morale. In it, he includes such subjects as Wallenstein; Moritz von Sachsen, the 16th-century hero of the protestant cause; Emperor Rudolf II; a conversation between Frederick the Great and General Ziethen; Joachim Nettelbeck, a Prussian patriot staunchly opposed to Napoleon; and Goethe’s patron, Karl August von Weimar; among others.

It is tempting, but it would be simplistic to write off these anecdotes as propaganda, in the modern sense of the word. Wassermann did understand his work as an argument for the German cause, but in the sense that, as a high-quality work of literature, it was evidence for the high level of German culture. The anecdotes are of literary and cultural value, which explains why, in 1924, they were expanded and re-issued in two volumes. It is clear that Wassermann had no political or military motives in mind when he wrote *Deutsche Charaktere*. His concern was of a cultural nature. In his introduction, he mentions Scharnhorst and Moltke, but he also refers to Holbein, Cranach, Luther, Kepler, and Bach. These were the main representatives of German culture that he had in mind: artists, thinkers, and composers. They represented the best Germany had to offer, that is artistic creativity. Wassermann hoped to raise “der Deutsche als Gestalt zur Idee”.⁴²³ This idea is a sublime form of German culture, which draws together art and philosophy to one great reservoir, from

⁴²⁰ Kraft, p.133-34.

⁴²¹ Jakob Wassermann, ‘Nationalgefühl’ in *Neue Rundschau*, No.26, Vol.1/6 (1915), 757-772 (p.771).

⁴²² cited in Lindemann-Luiken, p.23.

⁴²³ Jakob Wassermann, *Deutsche Charaktere und Begebenheiten* (Vienna: Rikola Verlag, 1924), p.x.

which the nation may draw its creative power. That is also why Wassermann notes that “die deutsche Begeisterung [findet sich] eher in Religion und im Geiste als in der Politik. Sie ist innerlich eher als äußerlich.”⁴²⁴ Wassermann concludes:

Der Deutsche hat die ihm gemäße Art von Politik gefunden; ich möchte sie die Politik des unbeirraren Triebes nennen; die Politik der Entfaltung, der Erkenntnis und der Bestimmung. Sie kann der Winkelzüge, der veralteten Rezepte und geheimen Wege entraten, da sie auf den natürlichen Rechten des Geistes und Herzens ruht, nicht auf willkürlichen Machenschaften, sondern auf einer Notwendigkeit und einer welthistorischen Idee.⁴²⁵

For Wassermann, the war is justified by Germany’s cultural, not political or economic mission. As the war dragged on, however, propaganda on both sides became increasingly crude. Hunger, poverty, and general hardship increased the tighter the grip of the British blockade became. Wassermann’s initial fervour died as word of the first major death tolls reached him. He noted in his diary, “Bin trotz der beständig einlaufenden Siegesnachrichten tief verstimmt. Wenn eine Welt in Blut schwimmt, wie soll man sich da freuen können?” (19.8.1914)⁴²⁶

I.c) ii) Volume 2 (1924)

The second volume could not be more different than the first. While the 1915 edition is a truly positive portrayal of German heroes of the past, the version from 1924 reveals Wassermann’s acute concern with matters of injustice. His sympathy with the weak and the outcast comes to the fore. The historic fate of the Jews plays a role in this, but it is not as central as one might expect. The second volume of *Deutsche Charaktere* shows why it is difficult to divide Wassermann’s intellectual development neatly into a German and a Jewish phase.

The atrocities on the battlefield, and the intellectual havoc caused by propaganda, led not only to a change in Wassermann’s thinking, but also to his reconsideration of his position between two cultures. After the war, he never wrote another ‘Volksroman’. Instead, in 1921, Wassermann published *Mein Weg als Deutscher und Jude*, which mirrors the internal struggle between his German and Jewish identities, while not being accepted by either cultural group.

⁴²⁴ Ibid., p.xxi.

⁴²⁵ Ibid., p.xxii-xxiv

⁴²⁶ cited in Marta Karlowis, *Jakob Wassermann – Bild, Kampf und Werk*. (Amsterdam: Querido Verlag, 1935), p.244.

Three years later, *Deutsche Charaktere* was re-published, with the second volume having a decidedly different slant from the first, which remained unmodified.

Most appropriately, there is also an anecdote from the witch trials of the 15th century. A young girl is sentenced and tortured but does not confess to being a witch. “Nie zuvor,” Wassermann writes, “Gab es so ein albernes und grausames System gerichtlicher Prozedur, nie zuvor hat die Kirche die weltliche Justiz frevelhafter mißbraucht.”⁴²⁷

Finally, two of the stories are related to the lot of Jews. One relates the lynching of the moneylender Joachim Röder in the 18th century, who is not specifically identified as Jewish, although he owned a small garden home in “Israelsdorf”. The other is entitled *Eine Judenbekehrung unter dem Galgen* and recounts the brutal method of forcing a Jew, sentenced for stealing, to conversion. He is strung up on the gallows by his feet and lacerated by hungry dogs, while a priest preaches to him. At first, the Jew is steadfast and sings Hebrew psalms, but then he gives in. Once he has converted to Christianity, he is hung “zum Lobe Christi”.⁴²⁸

The fact is that Wassermann was moving beyond his struggle for cultural acceptance. During the course of the war, he became increasingly concerned with questions of justice. Injustice, Wassermann found, had become institutionalised in the political, social and judicial system as it existed. The Jewish dilemma was a key symptom of the general injustice inherent in Western culture, society, and the legal system. This is what Wassermann meant when he wrote in the *Selbstbetrachtungen* (1931):

Nun hat mich aber doch das Schicksal zum Juden gemacht, das heißt zu einem Menschen, der sein Alles dransetzt, um zur *Gleichgewichtslage* zu gelangen; wundert es dich da noch, daß die Idee der Gerechtigkeit über ihm hängt wie eine azurne Flamme?⁴²⁹

I.d) Breakthrough of Jewish Identity

During the First World War, in 1916, the so-called ‘Judenzählung’ was instigated in the Prussian army, in an attempt to prove that the Jewish soldiers were not pulling their weight to the degree that the Christian soldiers were. The opposite proved to be the case.⁴³⁰

⁴²⁷ Wassermann, *Deutsche Charaktere und Begebenheiten*, p.204.

⁴²⁸ Ibid., p.160.

⁴²⁹ Jakob Wassermann, *Meine Landschaft, äußere und innere* in Rodewald, p.218.

⁴³⁰ David Brenner, *Marketing Identities – The Invention of Jewish Ethnicity in Ost und West* (Detroit: Wayne

Nevertheless, after the war, the Social Democrat ministers and diplomats of the new republic, many of whom were of Jewish origin, were blamed for defeat. Jewish financiers and industrialists were accused of war profiteering, while the non-Jewish population suffered from hunger and poverty.⁴³¹

Furthermore, the ‘Ostjudenfrage’ had intensified. The Eastern Front had run through the areas in Eastern Europe most heavily populated by Jews: The Pale of Settlement. The Eastern Jewish refugees gathered in Berlin and Vienna, where their poverty and misery reinforced stereotypes of the uncivilised, ‘degenerate’ Eastern Jew. There were movements in both Berlin and Munich to expel Eastern Jews, fired by right-wing demagogues who called for violent action against them. In 1923, the year of hyper-inflation, a food riot turned into a pogrom, with a mob looting Jewish stores and beating their owners in the Scheunenviertel of Berlin. The violence was only stopped by massive police reinforcements.⁴³²

Another drastic expression of intensified anti-Semitic feeling was the assassination of Walter Rathenau by right-wing radicals in 1922. Thomas Kraft, in his recent biography, describes how this tragedy shook Wassermann to the core. Not only had Wassermann been friends with Rathenau, he considered him to be a true ‘Schicksalsgenosse’, since Rathenau was equally sceptical of Zionism and had proven his critical distance from ‘modernes Judentum’ with his polemic, *Höre Israel!* (1897). According to Kraft, this loss “beraubte Wassermann all jener Hoffnungen auf eine neue Gesellschaft, in der Juden und Deutsche gemeinsam und vertrauensvoll zusammenleben könnten.”⁴³³

The situation in Vienna was equally appalling. The new Social Democrat government had hardly any backing among the middle and upper classes, since it levied a range of new taxes on them to finance its large-scale housing developments and other major projects. Vienna and other cities were a hub of support for the ruling party, thanks especially to the working classes, whereas the countryside remained largely conservative.⁴³⁴ Many Austrians believed their mutilated rump state could not survive on its own economically. On 12 November 1918, the provisional national assembly voted for unification with Germany, with 164 out of 165 votes. The allies, however, expressly prohibited this act of union.⁴³⁵ Furthermore, Social

State UP, 1998), p.151.

⁴³¹ Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers*, p.145-46.

⁴³² Ibid., p.243.

⁴³³ Kraft, p.173.

⁴³⁴ George Berkley, *Vienna and Its Jews: The Tragedy of Success 1880-1980* (Cambridge, MA: Madison Books, 1988), p.151-52.

⁴³⁵ Berkley, *Vienna and Its Jews*, p.142-43.

Democracy was considered by many a Jewish movement.⁴³⁶ In the countryside, as Schnitzler overheard on one of his excursions, Vienna was perceived as being “in the hands of the Jews”.⁴³⁷

As in Germany, the new republican government was perceived as weak and was held responsible for accepting the country’s humiliating defeat. Especially in the months immediately after the war, the threat of a pogrom seemed imminent. And even when the Jews no longer feared for their lives, huge anti-Semitic rallies still took place, attended by thousands, which called for the expulsion of the Jews.⁴³⁸

Wassermann was driven to the Jewish side of his identity by increasing anti-Semitism. In this gradual process he learned to accept, and even defend, his Jewish identity. He writes:

Nur die Gegenbewegung nötigt sie mir auf, indem sie das Gesamte meiner Leistung und meiner Wirkung bezweifelt und mich in eine Verteidigungsstellung zwingt, die wider die Natur, wider den Geist, wider die Kunst und wider die Wahrheit ist.⁴³⁹

The supreme expression of Wassermann’s inner struggle is his autobiographical manifesto, *Mein Weg als Deutscher und Jude*. Wassermann knew this would cause a stir, and he designed it to be confrontational. In this, Wassermann’s personal ‘J’accuse’, he states, “Ich bin Deutscher, und ich bin Jude, eines so sehr und so völlig wie das andere, keines ist vom anderen zu lösen.”⁴⁴⁰ Wassermann felt torn between the two sides of his character, while his primary allegiance was still with German culture. A few pages further on, he notes: “daß ich in allerletzter Linie mehr für die Deutschen als für die Juden leide. Leidet man nicht immer am meisten dort, wo man am tiefsten liebt, wenn auch am vergeblichsten?”⁴⁴¹

Although Wassermann fought against anti-Semitism for his entire literary career, he still felt somewhat uncomfortable among the Jews of Vienna – excepting, of course, his literary colleagues.

Mein Verhältnis zu ihnen, innerlich wie äußerlich, war von Anfang an ein höchst zwiespältiges. Um aufrichtig zu sein, muß ich gestehen, daß ich mir bisweilen wie in Verbannung geraten unter ihnen erschien. Ich war bei den deutschen Juden mehr an bürgerliche Abgeschliffenheit gewöhnt. Hier wurde ich eine gewisse Scham nie ganz

⁴³⁶ Pauley, p.134-39.

⁴³⁷ Schnitzler, TB 1917-1919, 14.12.1919.

⁴³⁸ Pauley, p.80-81.

⁴³⁹ Wassermann, *Meine Landschaft, äußere und innere*, cited in Lindemann-Luiken, p.30.

⁴⁴⁰ Wassermann, *Mein Weg als Deutscher und Jude* in Rodewald, p.130.

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.129.

los. Ich schämte mich ihrer Manieren, ich schämte mich ihrer Haltung. Die Scham für den andern ist ein ungemein quälendes Gefühl, am quälendsten natürlich, wo Blut- und Rasseverwandtschaft im Spiel ist, und man durch ein unabwälzbares inneres Gebot wie infolge moralischer Selbsterziehung verpflichtet ist, für jede Äußerung und jede Handlung von ihm in irgendwelcher Weise einzustehen.⁴⁴²

In the light of this, it comes as no surprise that Wassermann kept a critical distance from Zionism. In *Die psychologische Situation des Judentums* (1929), he mentions the visit of a young philosopher from South Germany, Hans Blüher. Blüher was a committed monarchist during the Weimar Republic. He sympathised with National Socialism but distanced himself from it clearly after the Röhm-Putsch in 1934. After pondering the Jewish dilemma at some length, he conceived the concept of ‘secessio judaica’: a natural, historical process of the Jews separating from their host people.⁴⁴³ He did believe that Half-Jews and patriotic Jews were not real Germans, however. Blüher was willing to adapt the latently anti-Semitic racial theories of his time. This, and his pronounced aversion to the Jewish ‘Literat’, examples of whom were Kurt Tucholsky and Siegfried Jacobsohn, certainly qualify Blüher as an anti-Semite by modern standards. But he appears to have been a benevolent, or shall we say, a moderate one.

Blüher tried to persuade first Walther Rathenau, the German foreign minister at the time, and then Wassermann to spearhead a mass-emigration to Palestine. “Warum kommen Sie gerade zu mir?” Wassermann enquires. “Ich muß Sie in Ihren Erwartungen genau so enttäuschen, wie Walther Rathenau Sie enttäuscht hat – er hatte für die Ideen und Ziele des Zionismus genau so wenig übrig wie ich”.⁴⁴⁴ Wassermann continued to emphasise his and his family’s roots in Franconia. Clearly, his attachment to his ‘Heimat’ was too strong to consider Zionism as a serious option.

Furthermore, Wassermann had no connection to Jewish orthodoxy. Along with his aversion to Zionism, this made for enemies on the Jewish side as well. Wassermann’s parents were not practising Jews, and he remembers:

Man wagte die Fessel nicht ganz abzustreifen; man bekannte sich zu den Religionsgenossen, obwohl von Genossenschaft wie von Religion kaum noch Spuren geblieben waren. Genau betrachtet war man Jude nur dem Namen nach und durch die

⁴⁴² Wassermann, *Mein Weg als Deutscher und Jude* in Rodewald, p.111-12.

⁴⁴³ Lindemann-Luiken, p.35.

⁴⁴⁴ Wassermann, *Zwei Briefe an einen deutschen Philosophen* in Rodewald, p.161.

Feindseligkeit, Fremdheit oder Ablehnung der christlichen Umwelt [...] ⁴⁴⁵

In later years, Wassermann would call for an overcoming of the entrenched forms of Christian and Jewish religion, just as Nietzsche rejected the Christian ‘Sklavenmoral’. This would be replaced with a new set of morals, based on genuine humanity. In *Das Los der Juden*, he asks: “Wo gäbe es überhaupt noch Religion, die nicht im Kultus erfroren wäre?” ⁴⁴⁶ He phrases this more devastatingly in the draft of a chapter for *Mein Weg als Deutscher und Jude*, entitled *Was sollen aber die Juden tun?* from 1920:

Der Jude [...] hat den Begriff des gerechten Gottes erschaffen. Die Idee aber ist ihm erstarrt. [...]

Erst die Gottgestalt des Deuteronomiums verkündet: Ich bin Gott und niemand ist ausser mir. Es ist der Gott des geschriebenen Gesetzes, der Gott des Pharisäismus, der Gott der Erstarrung.

Gerechtigkeit ohne Liebe ist nicht denkbar. Dass es Gerechtigkeit ohne Liebe wollte, in Gerechtigkeit leben wollte ohne Liebe, daran ist das Judentum gescheitert. ⁴⁴⁷

What, then, should the Jews do? In Wassermann’s own words:

Und so scheint mir, dass es die Aufgabe des Juden ist: zu vergehen. Nicht im Sinne der Assimilation zu vergehen, sondern im Sein des ewigen Flusses aller Dinge und alles Lebens. [...]

Es zeigt sich ja deutlich: je mehr ein Jude “vergeht”, je fremder, zweifelnder und verzweifelter wird er dem Judentum und dem Gott des Judentums gegenüberstehen, je suchender, werbender, wirkender, menschenhafter dem Menschentum und der Menschheit.

Ich sage also: tretet aus der Erstarrung heraus; aus der lieblosen Gerechtigkeit heraus zur gerechtwerdenden Liebe. ⁴⁴⁸

Wassermann calls for the Jews to leave their frozen religious forms behind them and strive for the new ideals of love and justice, in one word: humanity. This would be achieved by a particularly charismatic and determined kind of Jew, a new man – the ‘Orientale’.

⁴⁴⁵ Wassermann, *Mein Weg als Deutscher und Jude* in Rodewald, p.41.

⁴⁴⁶ Jakob Wassermann, *Das Los der Juden*, in Rodewald, p.23.

⁴⁴⁷ *Appendix II: Nachweise, Varianten, Zeugnisse, Erläuterungen* in *Deutscher und Jude: Reden und Schriften*, ed. by Rodewald, p.264.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.

II. The 'Orientale'

II.a) The Influence of Martin Buber

Wassermann sought to re-define the Oriental Jew. He formulated his thoughts in the essay *Der Jude als Orientale*. Wassermann's terminology, and several of his concepts, can be traced to Martin Buber's early essays. Buber introduced Wassermann to the Bar Kochba-circle of Jewish students in Prague and encouraged him to write for them.⁴⁴⁹

The concept of myth was central in Buber's early writings. For Buber, myth had not been overcome by scientific and technical progress. Rather, it was a timeless, ennobling quality of existence. Faced with the threat of isolation in mechanised modernity, a world ruled by the masses, one can obtain a temporary state of perfection, and thus of existential meaning, by unity with God. This moment of ecstasy overcomes all human divisions and unites all that is individual into one universal, divine spirit. This brings to mind the Nietzschean concept of the Apollonian and Dionysian principles, as expounded in the *Geburt der Tragödie*. The Dionysian is the primeval force of nature that was celebrated in the excessive ceremonies of the Greek cult of Dionysus. "In der dionysischen Kunst[...]" writes Nietzsche, "Redet uns dieselbe Natur mit ihrer wahren, unverstellten Stimme an: 'Seid wie ich bin! Unter dem unaufhörlichen Wechsel der Erscheinungen die ewig schöpferische, ewig zum Dasein zwingende, an diesem Erscheinungswechsel sich ewig befriedigende Urmutter!'"⁴⁵⁰

This elemental life-force overcomes the principium individuationis of the Apollinian, the power of art and aesthetics, which veils the existential fear and suffering with beauty. Its tendency to structure, order, and aesthetic harmony is also one of separation, or individualisation, which is swept aside in the surge of Dionysian striving for unification, of 'Lebensbejahung'. As Nietzsche puts it:

Apollo steht vor mir, als der verklärende Genius des principii individuationis, durch den allein die Erlösung im Scheine wahrhaft zu erlangen ist: während unter dem mystischen Jubelruf des Dionysus der Bann der Individuation zersprengt wird und der Weg zu den Müttern des Seins, zu dem innersten Kern der Dinge offen liegt.⁴⁵¹

Buber was, as Steven Aschheim points out, a key figure in bringing Nietzsche to German-

⁴⁴⁹ Kraft, p.101.

⁴⁵⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die Geburt der Tragödie in Schriften zu Literatur und Philosophie der Griechen*, ed. by Manfred Landfester (Frankfurt/Main: Insel Verlag, 1994), p.192.

⁴⁵¹ Nietzsche, *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, p.187.

speaking Zionism.⁴⁵² Nietzsche had a tremendous impact on Buber, and so it comes as no surprise that this notion of overcoming artificial, man-made divisions, whether aesthetic, cultural, or social, should be an important feature of Buber's thought as well. Where Nietzsche left religion behind him, Buber embraced it, however, and never gave it up.

Dominik Biemann mentions an unpublished preparatory study Buber compiled for his dissertation, in which he outlines the dualism of the Apollinian 'Erkenner' and the Dionysian 'Erfüller'. In a wider sense, Buber develops the contrast between observing, or recognising ('erkennen') and living, or creating. The similarity with Nietzsche, here, is that the equivalent of the Dionysian, 'erfüllen', is also an elemental life-force. The point of difference to Nietzsche, in this respect, is the notion of creativity. Nietzsche stresses the intoxication of the Dionysian, and the overcoming of the boundaries between every individual, as a blind force of nature.

Buber, on the other hand, seeks to harness this elemental power for creation, in the wider sense of positive, productive action, as opposed to passive contemplation. In *Geist des Orients und das Judentum* (1916), he argues that the intellectual and cultural life of Europe was lacking a vital dynamism. It had become excessively scientific and would dry out completely without the "morgenländischen Zufluß". This is where the Jewish mission sets in. Those who were driven to action by this creative impulse were those who would bring about a Renaissance of the Jewish people. For his striving for unity is essentially creative, or 'schöpferisch'. These creative Jews represent the victory of harmony over duality, of synthesis over disunity, of yes over no: "In ihrem Leben, in ihrem Werk erlöste sich das Volk."⁴⁵³

This notion was adapted completely by Wassermann in his dualism of the 'Literat' (Buber's 'Erkenner') and the 'Schöpfer', or 'Orientale' (Buber's 'Erfüller'). In fact, Wassermann dedicated *Der Jude als Orientale* to his "dear friend" Buber and wrote that essay, he explains, because Buber hoped for clarification of a passage in *Der Literat oder Mythos und Persönlichkeit* (1910). The 'Literat', for Wassermann, is the cosmopolitan European, who lacks the creative drive of the Oriental 'Schöpfer'. Wassermann distinguishes between artificiality ('Literat') and authenticity ('Schöpfer'), between frigidity and fertility. The 'Literaten', in the Jewish intellectual world, are the "tausend modernen Juden, die alle

⁴⁵² Steven Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany 1890 – 1990*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p.105/6.

⁴⁵³ Dominik Biemann, *Erkenntnis und Erfüllung: die Philosophie Martin Bubers und ihr Begriff aus dem Geist der hebräischen Weisheit* (Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang, 1995), p.155-57.

Fundamente benagen, weil sie selbst ohne Fundament sind”.⁴⁵⁴ The ‘Literat’ is the excessively docile Jew, who caters to the paradoxical demands of anti-Semites, which can never be fulfilled. Because the ‘Literat’ has none of the original authenticity of his people left within him, he denies himself, which in turn prevents him from working actively towards the improvement of his people’s lot.

The ‘Orientale’, on the other hand, is still in touch with the mythic origins of the Jewish people. This enables him to be a true creator, or ‘Schöpfer’, which the overly assimilated ‘Literat’ can never be. The ‘Schöpfer’ can reconcile Jews and German Christians with the force of his personality, his confidence, and also his kindness and openness towards his fellow men. At the same time, he is an “offenbartes Wesen und frei; er hat alles innen, was die andern außen suchen – er ruht und schafft.”⁴⁵⁵ At the end of his essay, Wassermann concedes his ideal Oriental Jew may be “Vielleicht mehr Idee als Erscheinung – aber sind es nicht Ideen, durch welche die Erscheinung hervorgebracht wird?”⁴⁵⁶

Remarkably, Wassermann did not see this type preserved in the ‘Ostjuden’, even though they spoke Hebrew and upheld traditions the middle-class Jews of Germany and Austria had long forgotten. Would this not seem the more authentic Oriental Jew, in contrast to the assimilated Western one? Wassermann would have answered no. The Eastern Jews were entirely lacking in artistic inclinations. They were “rückwärtsgewandt” and suffered from their Jewishness passively.⁴⁵⁷ They are the “tausend modern Juden [...] – sie besudeln heute, was sie gestern geliebt [...] und geben sich nur hin, wo sie sich verlieren können.”⁴⁵⁸ The ‘Orientale’, however, would turn these sufferings into a positive force for change:

Der Jude als Orientale, nicht im ethnographischen, sondern im mythischen Sinne, welcher die *verwandelnde* Kraft zur Gegenwart schon zur Bedingung macht, kann Schöpfer sein. [...] Leidenschaft ist ja die erste und letzte Lebensgewalt; in ihr vereinen sich Element und Wille; sie kann eine unproduktive Ordnung zum Chaos führen, aber aus dem Chaos wieder eine neue Welt erzeugen, Sammlung aus der Diaspora. Dann mag sich ein Weg auftun zum Mythos und zu Gott.⁴⁵⁹

Turning suffering into a creative force is, by the way, a Nietzschean concept, which he develops with particular reference to those thinkers who move beyond conventional morality,

⁴⁵⁴ Jakob Wassermann, *Der Jude als Orientale* in Rodewald, p.31.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., p.32.

⁴⁵⁷ Jütten, p.174.

⁴⁵⁸ Wassermann, *Der Jude als Orientale* in Rodewald, p.31.

⁴⁵⁹ Jakob Wassermann, *Der Literat oder Mythos und Persönlichkeit* (Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 1910), p.80.

the “freie Geister”.⁴⁶⁰ To return to Wassermann’s view, the Eastern Jews were not integrated in society enough to make a difference, as Agathon Geyer from *Die Juden von Zirndorf* would have been able to. This one ‘Übermensch’, Wassermann was later to believe, would be able to work towards a true German-Jewish synthesis, and even more, overcome what the ‘Jewish Question’ was only a symptom of: social injustice. What began with Geyer received ideological underpinning in *Der Jude als Orientale*, where he affirms:

Der Orientale ist symbolische Figur, er ist auch legitimes Erbe. Er ist sich selbst, der Welt und der Menschheit sicher. Er kann sich nicht verlieren, da ihn ein edles Bewußtsein, Blutbewußtsein, an die Vergangenheit knüpft und ihn eine ungemaine Verantwortung der Zukunft verpflichtet.⁴⁶¹

We have observed the transformation of Nietzsche’s dualism of the Apollinian and Dionysian into Buber’s ‘Erkenner’ and ‘Erfüller’, and finally into Wassermann’s ‘Literat’ and ‘Orientale’. The element from Nietzsche’s original concept that was carried over was that of a powerful, primeval force of life, to which Buber adds the creative aspect. Buber already sees those Jews who have internalised the Dionysian as potential renewers of their people. Wassermann anchors this firmly in contemporary society by applying this dualism to the Western Jew and an Eastern Jew, who is in touch with the mystic origin of his people. He is, however, a bridge between Western civilisation and Oriental authenticity and not a traditionally-minded, orthodox ‘Ostjude’.

The Apollinian, or its equivalent, was reinvented by each thinker. With Nietzsche, it was an entirely aesthetic phenomenon, that of the ‘schöner Schein’ – of the artist veiling the sufferings of existence with beautiful works of art. Buber introduces the idea of the ‘Erkenner’ being a passive observer, with the ‘Erfüller’ being driven to action. Only action can improve the situation of the Jewish people around 1900, not mere observation. Thus, the ‘Erkenner’ seems to be a more negative figure than the essentially positive ‘Erfüller’. Wassermann adapts and changes this again, calling the Western Jew essentially passive, and incapable of working for the improvement of his peoples’ fate, because he is too assimilated to his European host culture. The ‘Orientale’, on the other hand, draws his creative powers, and his energy to act, from a mystical connection to the origin of his people.

It is no coincidence that Wassermann chose the term ‘Literat’ to describe the excessively assimilated, infertile writer, whose products are at best high-quality newspaper articles. The

⁴⁶⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Werke in sechs Bänden*, ed. by Karl Schlechta (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1980), IV: *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* (1980), §44, p.605.

⁴⁶¹ Wassermann, *Der Jude als Orientale*, in Rodewald, p.31.

'Literat' was a stereotype of the Jewish journalist whose 'Jewish style' infiltrated and damaged the German language. Schnitzler also attributed largely negative qualities to the 'Literat', as opposed to the more sincere 'Dichter'.⁴⁶² Anti-Semitic reviewers tried to defame Wassermann as an excessively intellectual, typical Jewish 'Literat', which is why he distanced himself from that term in two essays. The stress on the soil and people of Franconia in his pre-war novels is another attempt to counter the stereotype of the 'Literat' that he himself was confronted with.

This defensive stance helps to explain why Wassermann so strongly disapproved of Heine. As an interesting side-note, the young Nietzsche, in his Wagnerian days, detested Heine, calling him a 'farceur' ruining the German language. Later in life, in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche attests Heine 'göttliche Bosheit', and continues: "Ich suche umsonst in allen Reichen der Jahrtausende nach einer gleich süßen und leidenschaftlichen Musik."⁴⁶³ In Wassermann's eyes, however, Heine personified the true 'Literat', and Wassermann never overcame this attitude. In his own words: "Was mir bei Heine wider das Blut ging, war vielleicht das Blut. Seine zeitbedingte Erscheinung war [...] jüdisch."⁴⁶⁴

Wassermann never accepted that assimilation had failed, as Heine had. Heine turned the resulting dilemma not only into themes in his work but into language itself. Wassermann was only too aware that Heine spelt out what would have brought his own philosophy to shambles: that the project of the Enlightenment, and with it, any chance of German-Jewish reconciliation, had failed – already in the first half of the 19th century.

Enlightenment is understood here, in the widest sense, as an open and inclusive stance towards Jews from the perspective of German-speaking society. As Robertson explains, three aspects of the Enlightenment ideal were particularly conducive to this: toleration, mercantilism, and rationality.⁴⁶⁵ Given the tolerant attitude towards different Christian denominations, it only made sense to extend this principle to adherents of Jewish faith. The rational and moral aspects of Judaism were acclaimed. Furthermore, the main idea was to help the Jews become productive citizens contributing to the economy of the nation. But Enlightenment went both ways: Apart from this position on the non-Jewish side, Jewish intellectual leaders were no longer adamant about upholding particular forms of religious

⁴⁶² see p.13 for more detail on Schnitzler's concept.

⁴⁶³ cited in David Midgley, 'Heine bei Nietzsche' in *Harry...Heinrich...Henri...Heine. Deutscher, Jude, Europäer*, ed. by Dietmar Goltschnigg et.al. (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2008), p.301-2.

⁴⁶⁴ cited in Markus May, 'Die Wunde Heine' in *Jakob Wassermann: Deutscher – Jude – Literat*, ed. by Dirk Niefanger et.al., pp.91-109 (p.99).

⁴⁶⁵ Robertson, p.31

tradition.⁴⁶⁶ Moses Mendelssohn, the most well-known Jewish representative of Enlightenment thought, held that religion should no longer prescribe political rules governing the entire community but should instead be considered first and foremost a private matter. The key to Jewish assimilation, for Mendelssohn, was language. A Jew who persisted in his particular intonation or dialect had no one to blame but himself.⁴⁶⁷

Rather symbolically, Heine used literature to express his inner unease as a German-speaking Jew with the *Rabbi von Bacharach* (1840). It was written in the wake of the ‘Damascus Affair’ in the same year, which was based on an accusation of ritual murder in that city, led to a wave of anti-Semitic violence there, and saw the French government take an indifferent position in order to appease Catholic interests.⁴⁶⁸ The European reaction to the incident, which ranged from apathy to aggression against Jews, as well as the outburst of the anti-Semitic ‘Hep Hep’-riots in Germany 1819 that had been sparked by anxiety about economic competition, showed all too clearly that the spirit of the Enlightenment had come to an end.

Heine came too close to German-Jewish reality for Wassermann. In his own words, “Heine schloß zuviel des Gegenwärtigen ein und aus; er war die Wunde, die ich vor kurzem erlitten habe.”⁴⁶⁹ The reason for Wassermann’s violent rejection was perhaps that he was able to identify with Heine only too well. For Wassermann, to acknowledge that already several decades before his birth the Enlightenment project had come to nothing, would have meant to deny his own existence: “Was bleibt? Selbstvernichtung?”⁴⁷⁰ It is for this reason that Wassermann had to discredit Heine and deny his literary programme at all costs. He used harsh polemics because he could not find any rational argument to use against Heine. This, not the desire to identify with his German readership was the pain that issued from ‘die Wunde Heine’.

To recapitulate: The aim of the new, ‘schöpferisch’ Jews, proposed by both Buber and Wassermann, was harmony and reconciliation, not individualism and segregation. With their creative impulse, a new energy would surge through the Jewish people and lead to a Jewish Renaissance – from which the West would benefit equally. As he explains in *Judentum und Menschheit*, the ‘neuer Jude’ would help to bring together individual and nation, nation and

⁴⁶⁶ *ibid.*, p.21.

⁴⁶⁷ *ibid.*, p.61, 58-59.

⁴⁶⁸ For more detail on the ‘Damascus Affair’, see Jonathan Frankel, *The Damascus Affair: “Ritual Murder”, Politics and the Jews in 1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

⁴⁶⁹ cited in in May, ‘Die Wunde Heine’, p.99.

⁴⁷⁰ Wassermann, *Mein Weg als Deutscher und Jude* in Rodewald, p.130.

nation, mankind and all beings, God and the world. This would save the world from its disturbing trends of nationalism, militarism, and blind faith in technological advancement. “Zu welcher Synthese bereitet sich heute der Geist des Judentums?” Buber asks, speaking of religious, intellectual and social forms of symbioses. “Vielleicht zu einer, die eine Synthese all jener Synthesen sein wird.”⁴⁷¹ This element of Buber’s philosophy is present even in Wassermann’s later thought, as one can see in his essays *Rede über die Humanität* (1923) and *Humanität und das Problem des Glaubens* (1934). For him, the mystical “Synthese aller Synthesen” meant not only the ultimate unification of the German and Jewish people, but of all nations and of mankind with God. For the moment, let us return to Wassermann’s early years and to another seminal figure who profoundly influenced the young author.

II.b) The Influence of Nietzsche

II.b)i) Concepts of Europe, Hellas, and the Orient

Buber, well aware of the Jewish dilemma of the period, made his ‘Erfüller’ Jewish, and so was Wassermann’s ‘Orientale’. Both characters were people of action, not reflection, both were driven to action by their powerful creative impulse. While the mission of Buber’s ‘Erfüller’, on the one hand, was to work towards the Jewish cultural Renaissance, the ‘Orientale’’s ultimate task was reconciliation between Germans and the Jews, in the spirit of a new sense of humanity. Why did this character have to be of Jewish origin? Both writers adapted Nietzsche’s concepts, not only because he was the most influential thinker in Germany in the 1890’s, but also because he was deeply sympathetic to the Jewish people. Nietzsche calls them “ohne allen Zweifel die stärkste, zähste und reinste Rasse, die in Europa lebt.”⁴⁷² Nietzsche saw Fin-de-siècle Europe pervaded with ossified, even decaying Christian morality. For a better understanding of the particular role Nietzsche accorded to the Jews, it is vital to look at Nietzsche’s own concept of the Oriental.

Nietzsche’s concept of Asia is complex and contradictory. In many respects, Nietzsche had a favourable view of the East. He refers to “die ungeheure Vernunft Asiens, [...] Asiens Instinkt-Überlegenheit”⁴⁷³, and states: “Es zeichnet vielleicht die Asiaten vor den Europäern aus, daß sie einer längeren, tieferen Ruhe fähig sind als diese; selbst ihre *Narcotica* wirken langsam

⁴⁷¹ Martin Buber, ‘Judentum und Menschheit’ in *Martin Buber – Der Jude und sein Judentum*, ed. by Björn Biester (Gerlingen: L. Schneider Verlag, 1993), p.26.

⁴⁷² Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, §251, p.717.

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*, §238, p.701.

und verlangen Geduld, im Gegensatz zu der widrigen Plötzlichkeit des europäischen Giftes, des Alkohols.”⁴⁷⁴ This contrasts favourably with the “*Moderne Unruhe*”, since: “Aus Mangel an Ruhe läuft unsere Zivilisation in eine neue Barbarei aus.”⁴⁷⁵ The Asiatic calm was, to Nietzsche’s mind, a remedy for the American restlessness that was infiltrating Europe.⁴⁷⁶

But in some instances, Nietzsche transposes this positive quality into the negative, using the term “oriental” to imply lack of development, stasis, even barbarism.⁴⁷⁷ Significantly, in the *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen*, Nietzsche calls Christianity “ein Stück orientalischen Altertums”.⁴⁷⁸ Acknowledging its oriental roots, he states: “Es ist etwas Orientalisches [...] im Christentum”,⁴⁷⁹ continuing to decry it as “im tiefsten Verstande barbarisch, asiatisch, unvornehm, ungriechisch.”⁴⁸⁰

What he objects to first and foremost is the “Umwertung aller antiken Werte”: “Der christliche Glaube ist von Anbeginn Opferung: Opferung aller Freiheit, alles Stolzes, aller Selbstgewißheit des Geistes zugleich Verknechtung und Selbst-Verhöhnung”. Who is responsible for this? “Es ist der Orient, der tiefe Orient, es ist der orientalische Sklave, der auf diese Weise an Rom [...] Rache nahm.”⁴⁸¹

Who else could the orientalischer Sklave be but the Jew, “ein Volk, ‘geboren zur Sklaverei’”?⁴⁸² Just as morality is an Oriental invention,⁴⁸³ so Christianity, as Nietzsche claims, is originally a Jewish concept: “Sünde, so wie sie jetzt überall empfunden wird, wo das Christentum herrscht oder einmal geherrscht hat: Sünde ist ein jüdisches Gefühl und eine jüdische Erfindung”. Ancient Greece, in contrast, was “eine Welt ohne Sündengefühle”⁴⁸⁴ and its concomitant self-deprecation. Furthermore, Christianity “ist nicht eine Gegenbewegung gegen den jüdischen Instinkt, es ist dessen Folgerichtigkeit selbst, ein Schluß weiter in dessen furchteinflößender Logik.”⁴⁸⁵ Nietzsche is referring to the translation of the messianic concept of Judaism into the understanding of Christ as the redeemer of mankind.

In a later section of *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, Nietzsche explains: “Die Juden haben jenes

⁴⁷⁴ Nietzsche, *Werke in sechs Bänden*, ed. by Schlechta, III: *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* (1980), §42, p.67.

⁴⁷⁵ Nietzsche, *Werke in sechs Bänden*, ed. by Schlechta, II: *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* (1980), I §285, p.620.

⁴⁷⁶ Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, §329, p.190.

⁴⁷⁷ Duncan Large, *Nietzsche’s Orientalism* (forthcoming), p.9.

⁴⁷⁸ Nietzsche, *Werke in sechs Bänden*, ed. by Schlechta, I: *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen* (1980), IV §4, p.380.

⁴⁷⁹ Nietzsche, *Werke in drei Bänden*, ed. by Schlechta, II: *Morgenröte* (1980), §75, p.1062.

⁴⁸⁰ Nietzsche, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, I §114, p.526.

⁴⁸¹ Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, §46, p.610.

⁴⁸² *Ibid.*, §195, p.653.

⁴⁸³ ‘Moralität, eine asiatische Erfindung. Wir sind abhängig von Asien’ (KSA 9, 26), cited in Large p.12.

⁴⁸⁴ Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, §135, p.131.

⁴⁸⁵ Nietzsche, *Werke in sechs Bänden*, ed. by Schlechta, IV: *Der Antichrist* (1980), §24, p.1183.

Wunderstück von Umkehrung der Werte zustande gebracht [...] In dieser Umkehrung der Werte (zu der es gehört, das Wort für ‘Arm’ als synonym mit ‘Heilig’ und ‘Freund’ zu brauchen) liegt die Bedeutung des jüdischen Volks: mit *ihm* beginnt der *Sklaven-Aufstand der Moral*.⁴⁸⁶ He clarifies this in *Zur Genealogie der Moral*:

Die Juden sind es gewesen, die gegen die aristokratische Wertgleichung (gut = vornehm = mächtig = schön = glücklich = gottgeliebt) mit einer furchteinflößenden Folgerichtigkeit die Umkehrung gewagt [...] haben, nämlich ‘die Elenden sind allein die Guten, [...] die Leidenden, Entbehrenden, Kranken, Häßlichen sind auch die einzig Frommen [...] – dagegen ihr, ihr Vornehmen und Gewaltigen, ihr seid in alle Ewigkeit die Bösen, die Grausamen [...] Ich erinnere [...] daß nämlich mit den Juden *der Sklavenaufstand der Moral* beginnt: jener Aufstand, welcher eine zweitausendjährige Geschichte hinter sich hat und der uns heute nur deshalb aus den Augen gerückt ist, weil er – siegreich gewesen ist...⁴⁸⁷

The free spirit, the great individual should not be subject to the weaker elements in society, but should be free from all bounds to grow and develop. This was the case in Ancient Greece, where “Mensch- und Gottverehrung ineinander überklagen”, and the Hellene could pursue his passion, “Gott Mensch werden zu lassen”.⁴⁸⁸ This Promethean closeness of god and man is what Nietzsche advocated as the ‘Übermensch’. For the moment, we will stay with the dismantling of Hellenic virtues by Christianity. Nietzsche develops the contrast with Antiquity further:

Die Griechen sahen über sich die homerischen Götter nicht als Herren und sich unter ihnen nicht als Knechte [...] Sie sahen gleichsam nur das Spiegelbild der gelungensten Exemplare ihrer eigenen Kaste, also ein Ideal, kein Gegensatz des eignen Wesens. [...] Der Mensch denkt vornehm von sich, wenn er sich solche Götter gibt, und stellt sich in ein Verhältnis, wie das des niedrigeren Adels zum höheren ist [...] Das Christentum dagegen zerdrückte und zerbrach den Menschen vollständig und versenkte ihn wie in tiefen Schlamm: in des Gefühl völliger Verworfenheit ließ es dann mit einem Male den Glanz eines göttlichen Erbarmens hineinleuchten, so daß der Überraschte [...] einen Schrei des Entzückens ausstieß [...] [Das Christentum] will vernichten, zerbrechen, betäuben, berauschen, es will nur eins nicht: das *Maß*, und deshalb ist es im tiefsten Verstande barbarisch, asiatisch, unvornehm, ungriechisch.⁴⁸⁹

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid.: *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, §7, p.779-80.

⁴⁸⁸ Nietzsche, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, II §222, p.823.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid., I §114, p.526.

Nietzsche's primary reproach to Christianity is that it has deprived man of his self-confidence and individuality, which was, according to Nietzsche, very much part of Hellenic life and thought. It is this Nietzsche is thinking of when he refers to the Occident: This is the authentically European spirit, the heritage of the Greeks. Orientalisation is the imposing of the 'Sklavenmoral' on a more independent form of self-determination. Nietzsche had nothing but scorn for this rule of the weakest, through compassion, over the highest individuals. Speaking of Christianity, in his own words, "Menschen, nicht vornehm genug, um die abgründlich verschiedene Rangordnung und Rangkluft zwischen Mensch und Mensch zu sehn – *solche* Menschen haben, mit ihrem 'Gleich vor Gott', bisher über dem Schicksal Europas gewaltet, bis endlich eine verkleinerte, fast lächerliche Art, ein Herdentier, etwas Gutwilliges, Kränkliches und Mittelmäßiges herangezüchtet ist, der heutige Europäer..."⁴⁹⁰

But in contemporary Europe, Nietzsche evaluates the role of the Jews positively. In the course of the centuries, "[warf] das Schiff des Christentums einen guten Teil des jüdischen Ballastes über Bord",⁴⁹¹ probably meaning certain Jewish laws, and re-wrote the Old Testament as a prophecy of the coming of Christ: "ich meine den Versuch, das Alte Testament den Juden unter dem Leibe wegzuziehen, mit der Behauptung, es enthalte nichts als christliche Lehren und *gehöre* den Christen als dem *wahren* Volke Israel".⁴⁹² Thus, this Christian morality was diffused throughout Europe, and became European values, while its origins were denied and forgotten⁴⁹³ to the point of some embracing anti-Semitism.

In remaining free of the Christian 'Sklavenmoral', the Jews, Nietzsche explained, kept free from the pernicious influence that was responsible for Europe's present decline. They were the only people who had succeeded in safeguarding the originally European, Hellenic ideal. They continued the European mission of Greece and Rome; and therefore the Jews, so Nietzsche argues, were the ideal new ruling caste for Europe. In *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, Nietzsche explains that Jewish thinkers and scholars had preserved European civilisation throughout the Middle Ages, when the Church had effectively suppressed the Greek spirit of scientific and philosophical enquiry. To cite the passage:

In den dunkelsten Zeiten des Mittelalters, als sich die asiatische Wolkenschicht schwer über Europa gelagert hatte, waren es jüdische Freidenker, Gelehrte und Ärzte,

⁴⁹⁰ Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, §62, p.624

⁴⁹¹ Nietzsche, *Morgenröte*, §68, p.1055.

⁴⁹² *Ibid.*, §84, p.1068.

⁴⁹³ Sarah Kofman, *Le mépris des Juifs: Nietzsche, les Juifs, l'antisémitisme* (Paris: Galilée, 1994), p. 62.

welche das Banner der Aufklärung und der geistigen Unabhängigkeit unter dem härtesten persönlichsten Zwange festhielten und Europa gegen Asien verteidigten; ihren Bemühungen ist es nicht am wenigsten zu danken, daß eine natürliche, vernunftgemäßere und jedenfalls unmythische Erklärung der Welt endlich wieder zum Siege kommen konnte und daß der Ring der Kultur, welcher uns jetzt mit der Aufklärung des griechisch-römischen Altertums zusammenknüpft, unzerbrochen blieb. Wenn das Christentum alles getan hat, um den Okzident zu orientalisieren, so hat das Judentum wesentlich mit dabei geholfen, ihn immer wieder zu okzidentalizieren: was in einem bestimmten Sinne so viel heißt, als Europas Aufgabe und Geschichte zu einer *Fortsetzung der griechischen* zu machen.⁴⁹⁴

Both the “asiatische Wolkenschicht” and “Asien” refer to the influence of Christianity. While the originally oriental religion of Christianity had driven Europe into decadence and weakness (“den Okzident zu orientalisieren”), it was up to a people perceived as oriental, who, according to Nietzsche, were actually European in the most positive sense, to re-introduce the self-confidence and individualism of the Ancient Greeks into European culture (“zu okzidentalizieren”). At present, Europe is in a state of “tolle *Halbbarbarei*”⁴⁹⁵, and suffering from the “Krankheit des Willens [...] Sie zeigt sich dort am größten und vielfältigsten, wo die Kultur schon am längsten heimisch ist”. The remedy for this would be:

*Einen Willen zu bekommen, durch das Mittel einer neuen über Europa herrschenden Kaste, einen langen, furchtbaren eigenen Willen, der sich über Jahrtausende hin Ziele setzen könnte – damit endlich die langgesponnene Komödie seiner Kleinstaaterei und ebenso seine dynastische wie demokratische Vielwollerei zu einem Abschluß käme.*⁴⁹⁶

In a section defending the Jews against the anti-Semitic attacks of German nationalists, Nietzsche mentions: “Daß die Juden, wenn sie wollten [...] jetzt schon [...] ganz wörtlich die Herrschaft über Europa haben *könnten*”. He concludes that “das ‘europäische Problem’, wie ich es verstehe [ist] die Züchtung einer neuen über Europa regierenden Kaste.–”⁴⁹⁷ Nietzsche makes it quite clear: “Sobald es sich [...] um die Erzeugung einer möglichst kräftigen europäischen Mischrasse handelt, ist der Jude als Ingredienz ebenso brauchbar und erwünscht als irgendein anderer nationaler Rest.”⁴⁹⁸

Here, Nietzsche is speaking as the true European that he was, with a strong aversion to

⁴⁹⁴ Nietzsche, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, I 475, p.686.

⁴⁹⁵ Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, §224, p.687.

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, §208, p.671, 673.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, §251, p.718.

⁴⁹⁸ Nietzsche, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, I §475, p.686.

nationalism, which he called “Nationalitäts-Wahnsinn” causing “krankhafte Entfremdung [...] zwischen den Völkern Europas”.⁴⁹⁹ This was, in fact, what Nietzsche admired in Napoleon – much more so than his military victories. He lauded Napoleon’s construction of artificial, supra-national states and condemned the Wars of Liberation, which gave rise to “the misfortune of the insanity of nationalities (with the consequence of race fights in such long-mixed countries as Europe!)”⁵⁰⁰ For Nietzsche, the future lay in a unified Europe. He speaks of the “unzweideutigsten Anzeichen [...], daß *Europa eins werden will.*” Among these “Europäer der Zukunft”, who stand above nationalism, Nietzsche names “Napoleon, Goethe, Beethoven, Stendhal, Heinrich Heine, Schopenhauer”.⁵⁰¹ Like these great men, the Jews are also free of the intellectual shackles of nationalism, and it is no wonder that he lists one the most celebrated German-Jewish writers among them: Heine, of whom it was well-known that he had been consciously Jewish. Heine had treated his own dilemma as a German-Jew in his work. He was identified by the general public as a Jewish writer.

Nietzsche’s view of the state of cultural depravity in Europe as well as his concept of the Orient cast a new light on his Zarathustra. Christianity was originally an oriental religion, but the Greeks were also once “die besten Erben und Schüler Asiens”,⁵⁰² and their strength lay precisely in adapting Asian influences. “Die Formen aus der Fremde entlehnen, nicht schaffen, aber zum schönsten Schein umbilden – das ist griechisch”.⁵⁰³ Here, Nietzsche was carrying the Orient into Europe once more, in the form of a counter-model to the New Testament, the style of which he parodied in *Also sprach Zarathustra*. Just as Asia had originally invigorated Greece, and Greece, by incorporating Asian influences, had risen to greatness,⁵⁰⁴ so Nietzsche hoped to renew the weakened, decadent Old World with a healthy infusion of new values – in the guise of the teachings of a Persian philosopher. But Zarathustra was not just a thinker, he was the founder of a new religion, one to establish a clear distinction between good and evil. Christianity had come from the East to reverse the values of the independent-minded Greeks (who loved what was strong and beautiful), preaching the goodness of the weak and ugly instead. That is why Nietzsche so violently opposed Christianity; and his work, culminating in *Also sprach Zarathustra*, was to make for another “Umwertung aller Werte”, reviving the Greek model, epitomised in the ‘Übermensch’. With this book, written in a biblical style, Nietzsche gave a

⁴⁹⁹ Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, §256, p.724.

⁵⁰⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nachlass*, cited in Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche – Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974), p.315.

⁵⁰¹ Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, §256, p.724.

⁵⁰² *Ibid.*, §238, p.701.

⁵⁰³ Nietzsche, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, MA II §221, p.821.

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p.7-8.

new set of morals to Europe. This is the reason he chose the pre-Christian religious leader Zarathustra to be his mouthpiece and no other thinker of the Western or Eastern spheres.

II.b)ii) The 'Übermensch'

Wassermann's coming to terms with Nietzsche began in earnest once the recognised author Ernst von Wolzogen had taken him on as his secretary in 1890. Both writers got along well and worked together on a daily basis. Wassermann looked up to von Wolzogen, who was established in the Munich literary scene. From 1895 on, as Nicole Plöger points out, there are more and more traces of Nietzsche's thought in Wassermann's work: In the case of the early novel *Formes, der Student* (1892-94, unpublished), a parallel of the Zarathustrian theme may be seen in the youthful hero on a mission to free himself from the burden of his former existence, which goal is achieved by reflection, by coming to terms with oneself on solitary wanderings, in a word, by 'Selbstüberwindung'. Another hallmark of Nietzsche's thought, Plöger explains, is the embrace of life ('Diesseitsbejahung'), and the raising of earthly existence to a higher plane, rather than preoccupation with the after-life.

But Wassermann also met regularly with Lou Andreas-Salomé, who had known Nietzsche very well, for stimulating discussions on contemporary philosophy and literature.⁵⁰⁵ He made her acquaintance after 1896, once his contributions to the satirical magazine 'Simplicissimus' were making him known in the literary circles of Munich. In May 1897, Andreas-Salomé met Rilke on a visit to Wassermann's home.⁵⁰⁶ If Wolzogen was the man who introduced Wassermann to Nietzsche, Lou Andreas-Salomé helped to deepen the young author's understanding of this most influential philosopher of his day. Given her willingness to read religious or quasi-religious elements into Nietzsche's thinking, as we will see further on, it seems likely that Wassermann would have interpreted Nietzsche in a similar vein.

Also the powerful 'Lebens- und Diesseitsbejahung', which Nietzsche celebrates from the Dionysian in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* until the *Dionysus-Dithyramben*, is reflected in Wassermann's 'Orientale'. His aim is to overcome the injustice in the world to gain life – his actions are not directed towards the afterlife in any way. In even more general terms, the emphasis is on 'überwinden', or overcoming. Human nature, for Nietzsche, is still very close to animal nature, and this animalistic nature must be overcome. His Zarathustra states: "Ihr habt den Weg vom Wurm zum Menschen gemacht, und vieles ist in euch noch Wurm. Einst

⁵⁰⁵ Plöger, *Ästhet – Ankläger – Verkünder*, p.153.

⁵⁰⁶ Michaela Wiesner-Bangard, Ursula Welsch, *Lou Andreas-Salomé – „...wie ich Dich liebe, Rätselleben“*. Eine Biographie (Stuttgart: Reclam Verlag, 2002), p.129.

wart ihr Affen, und auch jetzt noch ist der Mensch mehr Affe, als irgendein Affe.”⁵⁰⁷ He continues, “Was groß ist am Menschen, das ist, daß er eine Brücke und kein Zweck ist: was geliebt werden kann am Menschen, das ist, daß er ein *Übergang* und ein *Untergang* ist.”⁵⁰⁸

Only those capable of overcoming this animal nature are “jene wahrhaften *Menschen, jene Nicht-mehr-Tiere, die Philosophen, Künstler und Heiligen*”.⁵⁰⁹ In practising this form of ‘Selbstüberwindung’, man disciplines his passions – while remaining passionate himself – and refines his basic impulses, channelling this primitive, Dionysian energy into a creative force. The ‘Übermensch’ is a creative being in the highest sense, an artist, a ‘Schöpfer’. For, as Nietzsche explains, “Nein, das *Ziel der Menschheit* kann nicht am Ende liegen, sondern nur *in ihren höchsten Exemplaren*.”⁵¹⁰

Nietzsche’s concept of *Überwindung* is an integral part of his ‘Übermensch’. For this reason, Walter Kaufmann suggests translating ‘Übermensch’ not as superman, but as overman, so that the common prefix with ‘überwinden’, or overcome, is preserved in English.⁵¹¹ The term superman immediately triggers connotations of racial superiority which Nietzsche did not intend, whereas overman appears to be closer to his original concept.

To further clarify this notion of the ‘Übermensch’, which has become so distorted by the ideologies of the 20th century, it is worth contrasting it with the evolutionary theories of Darwinism. Zarathustra says to the people, “Der Mensch ist ein Seil, geknüpft zwischen Tier und Übermensch – ein Seil über einem Abgrunde.”⁵¹² He continues,

*Ich lehre Euch den Übermenschen. Der Mensch ist etwas, das überwunden werden soll. [...] Was ist der Affe für den Menschen? Ein Gelächter oder eine schmerzliche Scham. Und ebendas soll der Mensch für den Übermenschen sein: ein Gelächter oder eine schmerzliche Scham.*⁵¹³

This would seem to indicate very clearly a biological approach to the development, and improvement, of the human race. As Rüdiger Safranski points out, it was impossible for someone as intellectually active as Nietzsche to remain untouched by the most significant scientific theory of the 19th century: evolution. But his ‘Übermensch’ was more mystical, more artistic, more intellectual in nature than biological and racial, as we have seen above. In

⁵⁰⁷ Nietzsche, *Werke in sechs Bänden*, ed. by Schlechta, III: *Also sprach Zarathustra*, p.279.

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p.281.

⁵⁰⁹ Nietzsche, *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen*, III §5, p.324.

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*, II §9, p.270.

⁵¹¹ Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, p.309.

⁵¹² Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, p.281.

⁵¹³ *Ibid.*, p.279.

Ecce Homo, Nietzsche vents his irritation about the misinterpretations of the ‘Übermensch’: “Anderes gelehrtes Hornvieh hat mich seinethalben des Darwinismus verdächtigt; selbst der von mir so boshaft abgelehnte ‘Heroen-Cultus’ jenes grossen Falschmünzers wider Wissen und Willen, Carlyle’s [sic], ist darin wiedererkannt worden.”⁵¹⁴

For Carlyle, the value of the ‘great man’ and hero-worship was that it provided a degree of social cohesion and prevented anarchy.⁵¹⁵ Nietzsche’s ‘Übermensch’ was much more self-contained. His value was first and foremost not to society, but to himself. In a senseless world of Eternal Recurrence, the ‘Übermensch’ was the only absolute value worth aspiring to.⁵¹⁶

Thanks to his creative energies, the ‘Übermensch’ is capable of producing meaning, art, and values in the world. He is a Promethean being, moulding a new man from his image. Zarathustra says: “Zum Menschen treibt er mich stets von Neuem, mein inbrünstiger Schaffens-Wille; so treibt’s den Hammer hin zum Steine. Ach, ihr Menschen, im Steine schläft mir ein Bild, das Bild meiner Bilder! Ach, dass es im härtesten, hässlichsten Steine schlafen muss! Nun wütet mein Hammer grausam gegen sein Gefängnis. Vom Steine stäuben Stücke: was schiert mich das?”⁵¹⁷

This resemblance to Prometheus was fully intentional, for Nietzsche had the title page of his first publication, *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, illustrated with the unbound Prometheus, as the ideal of a heroic humanity independent of the gods.⁵¹⁸ Nietzsche’s close friend, Lou Andreas-Salomé, regards the ‘Übermensch’ as a “gotthaftes Überwesen”, a replacement of God for the “Gläubigen, denen Gott fehlt”. In the light of Nietzsche’s desperation, when faced with the Principle of Eternal Recurrence, he urges, so Andreas-Salomé explains, “[dem Übermenschen] *religiös* eine Wahrheit zuzugestehen”.⁵¹⁹

Rüdiger Safranski follows a similar line, considering that “Gott [...], von dem man weiß, daß er nur durch den Menschen und in ihm lebt, ist lebendig, er ist ein Name für die schöpferische Macht des Menschen. Und diese schöpferische Macht läßt den Menschen teilhaben am Ungeheuren des Seins.”⁵²⁰ Thus, there is a divine element in the ‘Übermensch’. He has appropriated it and is able to turn it into an essentially human spark, a dynamic that will find its expression in art, in new post-Christian values. As Safranski puts it: “Dieser

⁵¹⁴ Nietzsche, *Werke in sechs Bänden*, ed. by Schlechta, IV: *Ecce Homo*, IV §1, p.1101.

⁵¹⁵ Kaufmann, p.313.

⁵¹⁶ Rüdiger Safranski, *Nietzsche – Biographie seines Denkens* (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 2000), p.327.

⁵¹⁷ Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, p.345.

⁵¹⁸ William J. McGrath, ‘Mahler and the Vienna Nietzsche Society’, in *Nietzsche and Jewish Culture*, ed. by Jacob Golomb (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp.218-233 (p.218).

⁵¹⁹ Lou Andreas-Salomé, *Nietzsche in seinen Werken* (Frankfurt/Main: Insel Verlag, 2000), p.245-7.

⁵²⁰ Safranski, *Nietzsche*, p.281.

‘Übermensch’ nach dem Tode Gottes ist der Mensch, der nicht mehr den Umweg über Gott gehen muß, um an sich selbst glauben zu können.”⁵²¹ He is the one capable of understanding the Principle of Eternal Recurrence without being overwhelmed by it, making him the fundament of the new order and the new mankind – the Atlas on whom the new world will rest.

Wassermann’s ‘Orientale’ and Nietzsche’s ‘Übermensch’ have a strong dynamism in common, a forceful striving ahead to leave behind an unjust and constraining society. Their source of strength and their resolve stems from a charismatic, commanding personality. Zarathustra says: “*Ich lehre euch den Übermenschen. Der Mensch ist etwas, das überwunden werden soll. Was habt Ihr getan, ihn zu überwinden?*”⁵²² And a few lines further on, he not only emphasises the ‘Diesseits’-orientation of the ‘Übermensch’, but also his opposition to the representatives of Christian morality:

Der Übermensch ist der Sinn der Erde. Euer Wille sage: der Übermensch sei der Sinn der Erde!

Ich beschwöre euch, meine Brüder, *bleibt der Erde treu* und glaubt denen nicht, welche euch von überirdischen Hoffnungen reden! Giftmischer sind es, ob sie es wissen oder nicht.

Verächter des Lebens sind es, Absterbende und selber Vergiftete, deren die Erde müde ist: so mögen sie dahinfahren!⁵²³

While we can recognise the concept of “der Erde treu bleiben” in *Die Juden von Zirndorf*, and the protagonist, Agathon Geyer, is an energetic, forward-striving ‘Übermensch’ in his own right, in his later work, Wassermann’s messianic character differs from Nietzsche’s. For the ultimate unity to which Wassermann’s ‘Orientale’ was aspiring was religious in nature. The outdated, cast-iron rules of society, of Christian and Jewish dogma, would be overcome for a new religion of humanity. This would be a higher form of existence, a life closer to God, a mystical unity of God with his people. This is the living and eternal myth that Buber sees as the font of Jewish renewal. Wassermann eagerly took over Buber’s notions of mysticism. But while Buber focused mainly on the Jewish community and its cultural revival, Wassermann sought to bridge both the Christian German and the Jewish cultures.

In Wassermann’s thought, the religious component began with the all-overcoming

⁵²¹ Ibid., p.282.

⁵²² Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, p.289.

⁵²³ Ibid., p.280.

messianic figure of Agathon Geyer. In his later novels, this essentially Jewish idea is complemented and enhanced by elements that are visibly Christian. We will begin to explore this transformation by casting a glance at Wassermann's first major success, *Die Juden von Zirndorf*, and then contrast Geyer with the protagonist from his post-war novel, *Christian Wahnschaffe*.

III. From the 'Orientale' to the New Man

III.a) *Die Juden von Zirndorf*

III.a) i) *The Novel as a Social Panorama*

Wassermann's first major literary success shows noticeable parallels with Schnitzler's *Der Weg ins Freie*. Whereas Schnitzler provides a social panorama of the upper middle class, Wassermann concentrates on the provincial 'Kleinbürgertum', displaying a similar breadth of opinion among the German-speaking Jews. There is the peasant Isidor Rosenau, a minor character of whom we are told: "nichts beglückte ihn mehr, als wenn man ihn für keinen Juden ansah."⁵²⁴ There is the humane grandfather-figure Geldaja Löwengard, who speaks the Jewish dialect, described as 'mauscheln' – just as Salomon Ehrenberg, who speaks dialect intentionally to aggravate his family, was so described in Schnitzler's novel.

Stefan Gudstikker, a non-Jewish writer, states: "Die Juden sind viel bessere Menschen als wir, edlere Menschen." (p.106) He is confronted in discussion by the young teacher Erich Bojesen, who is troubled by the fact that Jewish writers, and artists in general, have become inextricably bound up in their 'host culture'. Bojesen regards this as a problem because Jews lack sincerity and depth ('Tiefe'):

Sie nehmen uns die Wahrheit und die Aufrichtigkeit in der Kunst [...] Sie ersetzen es unbewußt mit dem Schein von Wahrheit, dem Schein von Aufrichtigkeit; sie bringen uns eine neue Art von Sentimentalität, die sich als Naivität gibt und mit grüblerischer Wehmut nach den Gründen der Dinge schreit. Ich schwöre Ihnen, mein Lieber, das ist eines von diesen Dingen, die das Schicksal und das Leben ganzer Jahrhunderte verdüstern. Darin liegt die "Judenfrage" [...] Darum müssen die Juden fort und tausendmal fort. (p.124)

This point brings to mind the conversations in *Der Weg ins Freie*, in which Heinrich Bermann endeavours to explain his inner conflict to his non-Jewish friend Georg von Wergenthin, who regards the Jewish dilemma from a distance as a largely indifferent, somewhat bemused spectator.

In a later chapter, Bojesen clarifies that he does not disapprove of the older Jews, "die noch fromm sind", but of the "sogenannten modernen Juden, die vollgesogen sind mit dem ganzen Geist und der Überkultur des Jahrhunderts". This notion of cultural decadence, revealing a reader of Nietzsche, we have already seen in Wassermann's essay, *Der Jude als Orientale*, in

⁵²⁴ Wassermann, *Die Juden von Zirndorf* (Cadolzburg: ars vivendi, 1995), p.75. All subsequent page numbers from this edition.

which he criticises the ‘modern Jew’ for his superficiality and destructive influence. Bojesen echoes Wassermann in another aspect, as well. He accuses the over-civilised contemporary Jew of erecting “ein Pseudochristentum [...] mit Gefühlskasteiungen, fleckenloser Liebe und dergleichen [...] Auch Christus war ja ein Jude.” (p.150-1)

The idea of the interchangeable nature of Judaism and Christianity, for both are based on a moral dogma, recurs in a later chapter. Bojesen states: “Es ist ein eigenes Schicksal, daß gerade das Judentum ein Christentum gebären mußte und daß die Mutter jetzt absolut zum Kind werden will.” (p.180) Speaking of these systems of belief, Bojesen continues: “Daß wir hier sitzen und uns über Christentum und Judentum echauffieren, ist auch trivial. Symbol, Symbol, alles nur Symbol.” (p.182) His interlocutor, Edward Nieberding, a young Jewish intellectual, mentions at one point:

Sie haben beliebt, mich als den Typus des modernen dekadenten Juden hinzustellen. [...] Wenn etwas daran wahr ist, ist es dies: Wir wirklich modernen Juden haben aufgehört, Juden zu sein. Wir sind in unserer Seele Christen geworden. Nicht Christen nach der Form, sondern nach dem Geist. (p.179)

A variant of the transposable nature of these two religions, that Jews may have certain Christian virtues and vice versa, is elucidated in the next section on *Christian Wahnschaffe*. Wassermann will also expand on this notion in *Mein Weg als Deutscher und Jude*. Later on, Bojesen argues: “Der wirkliche Antisemit müßte ein noch feuriger Antichrist sein.” (p.180) This is Wassermann’s own programme of turning against any form of religious orthodoxy for the sake of an entirely new sense of morality, his answer to the cultural decline of his era. The traditional religions cannot provide the answer to the “letzte Zuckungen” of the “Ende einer Kulturepoche”. (p.181) Bojesen calls the Jews “giftiger Sauerteig” and claims: “Es kann gar nicht geleugnet werden, daß wir viel schneller dem Abgrund zurutschen, seit die Juden emanzipiert sind.” (p.181) And yet, in spite of this, he concedes:

Es ist mir, als müsse gerade aus den Juden noch einmal ein großer Prophet aufstehen, der alles wieder zusammenleimt. Es ist selten, aber bisweilen trifft man einen Juden, der das herrlichste Menschexemplar ist, das man finden kann, um und um. Alle reinen Glieder der Rasse scheinen sich vereinigt zu haben, ihn hervorzubringen, ihn mit allen köstlichen Eigenschaften auszustatten, die die Nation je besessen hat: Kraft und Tiefe, sittliche Größe und Freiheit [...] In seinem Kopf sitzen ein paar Augen voll Mildheit und Güte, man möchte sagen Frommheit in einem neuen Sinn, feurig und doch wieder schüchtern [...] (p.182)

Bojesen is referring to the messianic figure Wassermann describes as the 'Orientale' in his essays, personified by Agathon Geyer in the novel. It is worth noting that towards the end of the novel, Bojesen descends into debauchery and alcoholism (p.263), and Agathon turns away from him. This ending does not discredit Bojesen's ideas, however, which may be taken as representative, even popular at the time of the novel's publication.

With Schnitzler's *Der Weg ins Freie* in mind, especially the generational conflict between fathers and sons, it is interesting to note that Wassermann also contrasts the older with the younger generation, reaching as far back as the grandfathers Löwengard and Geyer. In Schnitzler's novel, the conflict arises when the older generation's faith in Liberalism and Emancipation confronts the younger generation's disillusionment because of the advent of political anti-Semitism. Wassermann's approaches the matter from a different angle: Baron Löwengard is so committed to the rules of his social class that he insists on his daughter Jeanette's marriage to a very much older, wealthy man. In his case, the older generation appears too rigid and set in their ways. His unbending strictness leads to his daughter's estrangement from him, and she eventually runs away from home.

A similar rigidity determines the behaviour of Enoch Geyer, Agathon's maternal grandfather. In his desperate financial situation, Agathon's father, Elkan, turns to his father-in-law for help. Enoch has a reputation for charging extortionate interest on his loans, and is eventually arrested for this: His behaviour is in keeping with the stereotype of the parsimonious Jew. In another instance, admonishing Elkan for his 'reckless' investment in a storage shed, Enoch refuses to help his own daughter's husband.

An exception to the rule is Geldaja Löwengard, Jeanette's grandfather. He is the opposite of both the Baron and Enoch Geyer, thanks to his sense of humanity. When Agathon is confused by the attention of Monika Olifat, Geldaja tells him:

Und wenn de hast eine große Begehr, dann gehste hin, sonst wird verstopft dein Geist un dein Gemüt [...] Laß' dir nit einjagen Angst durch die falschen Lehren: Es is ka Unglück und ka Verbrechen, es ist menschlich [...] Un wenn de eines Tages fühlst mehr un dein Herz wird sein voll Liebe, dann gehste hin und siehst, ob se gefällt deinen Sinnen. Un wenn se gefällt seinen Sinnen, gefällt se aach deinem Haus un deine Kinder. (p.119)

The elder Löwengard has freed himself from the "falschen Lehren" of social conventions and morality that the rest of the Jewish and Christian communities are ensnared in. Instead,

he is able to offer Agathon advice based entirely on his understanding of human nature.

His sceptical distance from Judaism is particularly apparent in an earlier conversation with Agathon, where he states: “Ob de bist gottesfürchtig, ob de bist nit gottesfürchtig, ’s aach egal.” He continues:

Gott hat die Zeit verloren, sie is ihm gefallen aus der Hand, nebbich. Du hörst se schreien von Juden un Christen, aber was se meinen, is das Geld, un was se nicht meinen, ist die Frommheit. Was is Gott? Is das Gott, wenn ich mach e Kreuz, wenn ich bet in der Thora? Is das Papier Gott? Is das Holz Gott? Is der Gott der Himmel, is Gott der Mond? Nix is Gott; Gott is meine Gutwilligkeit un mein Armsein. Ich bin Gott, du bist Gott, e Gespenst is Gott, e Stück Armut un Elend. (p.112)

Geldaja’s disavowal of God is similar to Agathon’s, as is his appraisal of man as a divine, Promethean creature (“du bist Gott”). Later on, it is Geldaja who bursts out laughing in the synagogue, “gerade, als der Gottesdienst mit dem Kaddisch endigen sollte”, grinning at “einem unsichtbaren Etwas in der Luft”. (p.115) He sees through the insincerity of those Jews who try to link their piety with praise for the fatherland and the Emperor, as they did in this particular service. His experience of life has taught him what Agathon intuitively knows, that man himself, and faith in mankind, is the only ultimate value.

Interestingly, when the profiteer Enoch Geyer is arrested, Geldaja deplores his lack of compassion, which is a Christian virtue: “O Enoch, Enoch, hättste gehabt Erbarmen mit andre, hättste auch gehabt Erbarmen mit dir selber.” (p.139) Geldaja adopts those elements of Christianity and Judaism in keeping with his own sense of morality, just as Agathon does, as we will see in the next section; and as do the protagonists in Wassermann’s later novels. For although Geldaja is not a religious Jew, he still reminds his granddaughter Jeanette: “Bleib’ e gute Jüdin, wenn de aach nit glaubst, denn wir sin e großes Volk mit bedeutende Gelehrte.” (p.177) Geldaja is referring to a cultural, not a religious sense of Jewishness – for example, the notion of being isolated in society. This is expressed in the fact that Geldaja Löwengard epitomises the ‘wandering Jew’, cast out from his family, obliged to spend the night in his cousin’s barn and condemned to a life of wandering the countryside, begging for subsistence. (p. 112, 177) And yet this Ahasver-character is one of the most humane, understanding, and tolerant characters in the novel, especially when compared to the provincial piety and fervour of the more religious Jews and Christians.

After we have seen the severity of the Baron Löwengard and Enoch Geyer, with Geldaja as the exception to the rule, Elkan Geyer personifies another weakness of the older generation.

Agathon's father is too feeble to change, or even desire to change, the disadvantaged social position of the Jewish people. Even after the brutal anti-Semite Sürich Sperling intentionally rams their boat, causing Agathon to fall in the river, Elkan tells his son "er [dürfe] sich ja nicht schlecht benehmen gegen Sürich Sperling", for he owes the innkeeper money. (p.71) Even though Sperling is about to pawn his shop, Elkan nonetheless concedes: "Er ist unheimlich, jawohl, aber er hat etwas Edles an sich." (p.76) – perhaps for being the living ideal of Teutonic manhood. Agathon abhors this submissive behaviour towards the personification of the predominant form of social injustice. When the decree of arrest for his grandfather Enoch is read, Elkan sinks to the floor "wie ein Wurm sich windend, [und begann] hilflos zu schluchzen." Agathon cannot bring himself to witness this prostration of his father and turns away. (p.138)

At the same time, Elkan still upholds elements of traditional Jewish belief that his son decidedly condemns. In his narrow world of social and financial restrictions, Elkan retains "jenes hinreißende Vertrauen auf ihren Gott und auf den Kommenden, den Messias, das in allen frommen Juden schlummert und das ihn selten verließ". (p.79) When Elkan catches his son reading the New Testament, he tears it to shreds and throws it in the corner. In the subsequent discussion, Agathon claims, "Wir haben kein Vaterland", and his father retorts that their fatherland is Germany, where they are protected by the Emperor and the law. "Wo man geschützt werden muß," Agathon argues, "Ist man auch nicht daheim." (p.80) This scene shows a clear parallel to the discussion between the elder and younger Stauber in *Der Weg ins Freie*. Agathon means 'we Jews' when he uses 'wir', just as Berthold Stauber does, in contrast to his father, who takes 'wir' to refer to 'us Germans'.

To stay with evidence for Elkan's religiosity for the moment, he is willing to accept the post of prayer leader or litanist ('Vorbeter') in the Jewish community, in order to sustain his family financially. (p.114) When Elkan's wife contracts a near-fatal illness, in his grief, and sensing his son's profound difference from himself, he tries to throttle him, shouting: "Aus meinen Haus, du Christ!" (p.143) This is the worst condemnation Elkan can think of in this situation, revealing his deep-rooted suspicion of the Gojim. He shares this with a poor traveller he once took into his house, who, after saying his prayers, turns away from the maid and covers his face with his hands, "um nicht durch den Anblick einer Christin verunreinigt zu werden." (p.81)

In summary, with the exception of Geldaja Löwengard, the older generation is portrayed as set in their ways and strict to the point of causing human suffering. Even though the elders are not necessarily all filled with religious superstition, they are shown to be un-enlightened.

It is these entrenched behavioural and moral codes that Agathon sets out to overcome, in order to bring down social injustice and anti-Semitism and establish a new, more humane order in the world. In short, the Jewish dilemma is treated more superficially in *Die Juden von Zirndorf*, when compared to *Der Weg ins Freie*. The dialogues in which relevant matters are discussed, usually involving the latent anti-Semite Bojesen, are much more compact than in Schnitzler's novel. Zionism is entirely left out. While Bojesen does mention that the Jewish people should emigrate as a whole, he does not specify Palestine as their destination. Schnitzler's overview of the Jewish identity crisis may be more comprehensive, and his presentation of a German-speaking Jew's inner conflict more subtle and profound. But Wassermann's elucidation of the issue was perceived as more controversial at the time of publication, and *Die Juden von Zirndorf* had a lasting impact on the German and Austrian audience.

III.a) ii) Agathon Geyer as a Messianic Figure

Agathon Geyer is of Jewish origin, although not religious. He exhibits kindness and generosity towards his fellow creatures, even though he suffers regular insults for being Jewish. This does not turn him against his Christian persecutors, however, but rather against religion as a whole. At one point, he exclaims that, for his fellow man, he wants to “den Himmel nehmen und ihnen die Erde geben”. (p.235) The development of Wassermann's thought proves that this is not atheism, but rather a new, mystical form of religion that combines elements of the Jewish and Christian faith. But to start with, following Nietzsche, Wassermann has his protagonist be highly sceptical of religion.

On observing Jews returning from evening service, he felt “daß diese alte Religion der Juden etwas Totes sein müsse, etwas nicht mehr zu Erweckendes, Steinernes, Gespensterhaftes. Er wandte seine Augen ab von diesen häßlichen Gesichtern voll Schachereifers und Glaubensheuchelei.”⁵²⁵

Already in the previous section, we have seen indications of the interchangeability of Christians and Jews, in both a positive (Jews and Christians adopting beneficial characteristics of the other) and a negative sense (religion as a general impediment to moral renewal). Agathon has moved beyond religion. After murdering Sürich Sperling, he explains to his father:

⁵²⁵ *ibid.*, p.86.

Ich bin kein Jude mehr und kein Christ mehr, und ich habe nicht euer Schuldfehlen in mir. [...] Wie dein Haus, deine Wände, deine Kleider, deine Messer und dein Gebet es nicht dulden dürfen, und sie mußten alles das an dich heften, wovon ich frei war und frei sein mußte. Denn ich weiß, was bevorsteht, Vater, und meine Hände sind schon ausgestreckt für die künftige Arbeit. Ich weiß, daß mir genau so ist, als ob mit Sürich Sperling die ganze christliche Religion gestorben wäre oder vielleicht nur der christliche Geist in dem Volk, durch den es hassen mußte und Blut vergießen [...] Vielleicht hab' auch nicht ich die Tat begangen, sondern der neue, fremde Geist, der jetzt kommt [...]

(p.194)

Bojesen tells Gudstikker: "In wessen Augen ein Evangelium glänzt, der ist gebrandmarkt. Drei Stützen hat die Schule heutzutage: Religion, Patriotismus und Strafzettel". (p.126) In this respect, school resembles society at large; and therefore it comes as no surprise that much of Agathon's thought centers upon improving the institution of school. When his essays on the subject are discovered by his teachers, he is called before the principal and the committee of teachers and severely reprimanded. (p.132) And yet Agathon states: "Oft war mir, als müsse ich allen Juden ein Wort sagen, das sie befreien könnte." (p.133) He proceeds to plan to lead the children out of the Jewish orphanage, where they are subjected to exceptionally harsh treatment, justified by religious dogma. This highly symbolic act can easily be read as the messiah leading his young and innocent people out of the restrictions of an outdated morality into a new, more humane future.

In Schnitzler's *Professor Bernhardt*, the Jewish protagonist appears as the most Christian character of the play. He cites the New Testament repeatedly and is certainly more mild-mannered than his allegedly Christian, anti-Semitic opponents. There is a similar ironic inversion in *Die Juden von Zirndorf*, when Agathon speaks to the construction workers on the site next to his mother's house, who have been throwing bricks into the garden of the "Judenpack". (p.161) Even though the builders had been harassing his mother for several days, Agathon approaches the loudest among them quite calmly and manages to get them to place themselves in his shoes. They then desist from further persecution. (p.162)

Stefan Gudstikker recognises a special spark in Agathon.

Sehen Sie, Sie gefallen mir. Ich weiß kaum warum, aber vielleicht steckt etwas in Ihnen, was in mir nicht steckt. Sie sind ein Jude. Bei den Leuten gibt es manchmal Individuen von wunderlicher Kraft. Besonders in Ihrem Alter. [...] Wenn sie so jung sind, ist ihre Seele von einem reinlichen, unbeschmutzten Feuer erfüllt. Sie sind starke Träumer, möchten die Welt aus den Angeln heben und wissen doch nichts von der

Welt. [...] Gehen Sie hin, Agathon, wecken Sie Ihr Volk auf. Sagen Sie, wach auf mein Volk, wie der Prophet in der Bibel⁵²⁶.

This spark in Agathon originated centuries ago: the first half of the novel is set in the 17th century. The Jews of Fürth hear the news that the Messiah has appeared in Smyrna, based on the historical figure of Sabbatai Zwi. Forgetting religious rules of fasting and penance, they feast orgiastically before leaving their homes for the Promised Land. They have not travelled far when they learn that the alleged Messiah has converted to Islam. He who was to save the Jewish people and finally lead them out of captivity proved to be only human, and, giving in to torture, converted to another religion. This element in the narrative is a recognisable allusion to the biblical story of the dance around the golden calf. The people of Israel sacrificed to a false God, forgot their rules of conduct, and indulged in excess before Moses returned from Mount Sinai with the Ten Commandments, providing his people with a new set of ethical values. This false messiah was none other than the golden calf, and four hundred years later, Agathon is the chosen one, selected to instil his people with creative energy, confidence, and self-esteem.

Agathon is one who acts and moves forward, not one who reflects in passivity and seclusion. The supreme expression of this is Agathon's murder of his main antagonist, the rabid anti-Semite Sürich Sperling. He is described as the archetype of the primitive German. Wassermann plays on the typical racial stereotype of his period, as it was expounded by the theoreticians of 'Heimatkunst'. Whereas they generally saw the Jew as weak, refined, and feminine, the German was generally seen as strong, robust, and close to the soil. In his *Rembrandt als Erzieher*, Langbehn lauds precisely Rembrandt's "robust simplicity, his faith, his massive physique", in short: all "that marked him as a peasant", as quintessentially German.⁵²⁷ The same applies to Sperling:

Er ist ein Germane, das Urbild eines Germanen [...] In ihm schien sich alles Glänzende und Rohe, alles Kraftvolle und Plumpe der Rasse vereinigt zu haben. Er liebte und haßte ohne Rechenschaft und Künstelei, ohne Berechnung und Überlegung. Er haßte die Juden unbeschreiblich; jede Gebärde, jeder Ton der Stimme, jede Handlung regte ihn auf wie Wein. [...] Er war ein Tier: wild, stolz, unbezähmbar, keinem Vernunftgrund der Welt zugänglich.⁵²⁸

Sperling openly avows his hatred of Jews to a weak, defenceless reader of prayers,

⁵²⁶ Ibid., p.90.

⁵²⁷ Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair*, p.147.

⁵²⁸ Wassermann, *Die Juden von Zirndorf*, p.77

Lämelche. Agathon interrupts Lämelche's mistreatment. Promptly, Sperling grabs Agathon instead, takes him inside, and crucifies him: He strips Agathon naked, ties him to a cross, and injures him. (p.134) Following this humiliating abuse, Agathon, the 'Erwecker seines Volkes' decides to take decisive action.

Agathon, whose name in Greek means 'the good one', is the positive antipode to the false messiah Sabbati Zwi. He rejects the ossified dogmas of both Christianity and Judaism, with the antiquated morality they have imposed on society – the "fallende, stürzende, vermorschte Gesellschaft" (p.239). Because of the predominance of religious orthodoxy, Agathon sees all of society "von einem Schmerz gepeinigt, von einer Lüge erhalten". In other words:

Und Jude oder Christ, was bedeutete ihm das noch [...]? Jude und Christ hatten in gleicher Weise dazu beigetragen, das Jahrhundert dorthin zu führen, wo es stand, und ihre ergraute, blinde, lahme und taube Moral, halbverreckt an Altersschwäche, konnte den Tod nicht finden, wenn man ihr Leben in angestrengtem Bemühen durch Kunstmittel verlängerte. (p.261)

Agathon is a higher individual, who strives to overcome this entrenched set of values. He is beyond good and evil, beyond virtue and sin in the Christian sense – which enables him to go so far as to murder Sperling. It is of great symbolic value that Agathon screams, "als ob es gelte, über den ganzen Erdkreis hinauszuschreien", from within the burning church, "Laßt sie brennen, die Kirche!" He defends himself from the fanatical priest with a burning piece of wood and leads a crowd of followers out of the building, feeling "wie der Vater eines neuen, freien, gottlosen Geschlechts." (p.229)

In contrast, let us now turn to the protagonist of Wassermann's first post-war novel, *Christian Wahnschaffe*. We will see that the strong Nietzschean influence has given way, as has the messianic element, to a more selfless, in fact, a more Christian, character.

III.b) *Christian Wahnschaffe* – A Fusion of Influences from Judaism and Christianity

Christian Wahnschaffe relates the story of a young man from a well-to-do family, who embarks on a journey through all levels of society with his friend, Amadeus Voß. Eventually, Christian rejects the comforts and attitudes of the upper class, in order to work towards a more humane society. He supports Voß financially. When he meets the outcast and highly pregnant Karen Engelschall, Christian takes her in. She turns out to be a very exacting woman, who abuses Christian's benevolence outrageously. In one instance, she demands that he brings his mother's pearl necklace to her, which is of special sentimental value for

Christian – and he does.

A selfless sister in spirit is Ruth Hofmann, whom Christian befriends. Yet Ruth, personifying hope and genuine human compassion, is murdered by the alcoholic Niels Heinrich, the father of Karen's child. Nonetheless, Christian does not feel anger towards him and refuses to hand him over to justice. In his own words: "Nur Sie selbst haben das Maß für das, was Sie getan haben, nicht die, die Ihre Richter sein werden. Auch ich habe kein Maß dafür, aber ich richte nicht."⁵²⁹

Christian appears naive in many ways. He is a truly good person, but submissive to the point of slavishness. He lacks the will to action and the qualities of a leader that Agathon personifies. Elisabeth Jütten calls his story a 'moderne säkuläre Heiligenlegende'.⁵³⁰ Similarly to Agathon, however, he embraces life and the 'Diesseits' as it is, rejecting any form of religious doctrine. Through his selfless sacrifices, he strives for a new humanity. He overcomes his own inhibitions and instincts, sublimating them into service for his fellow beings. Although atheist 'Diesseitsbejahung' is a Nietzschean concept, altruistic self-sacrifice most definitely is not. Indeed, Christian appears to have internalised the virtues of the religion that shares his name, but his faith is not in God. It lies in himself, in his fellow beings, and in his sense of humanity. Christian bears their incredible demands, exemplified by Karen Engelschall, without a grudge, and reaches the height of human compassion by not even passing judgement on the murderer of his dear friend. Christian lives the principle of loving one's enemies and of offering the other cheek when he has been struck. Troubles of Jewish identity hardly feature in what seems to be a thoroughly Christian work of literature. Although Wassermann was averse to any form of religious dogma throughout his life, the virtues of compassion and humanity are indeed a crucial part of Wassermann's concept of the 'new man'.

According to Christian teaching, there are four cardinal virtues, which derive from Classical philosophy, especially Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*: justice, courage, wisdom, and temperance. In addition to these, there are the theological virtues of charity, faith, and hope, contributed by St. Paul. Of these seven, courage is arguably not brought to the fore in Wassermann's novel to the extent of justice and temperance – although, of course, it does take a significant degree of courage to sacrifice the comforts of a carefree, upper-class lifestyle in order to live only for one's fellow beings, as Christian Wahnschaffe does.

⁵²⁹ Jakob Wassermann, *Christian Wahnschaffe* (Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1932), p.723.

⁵³⁰ Jütten, p.115.

St. Thomas Aquinas, one of the great moral philosophers of Christianity, distinguishes between acquired and infused virtue, with the former having civil good as its aim and the latter perfecting spiritual life. While this distinction would seem to apply to cardinal and theological virtues, Aquinas also attributes it to unique qualities of individual human personalities, as opposed to characteristics one can learn.⁵³¹ In the context of Wassermann's thought, the 'new man' is indeed born with a more highly developed moral sense than most people, but the example of Christian Wahnschaffe shows that it is entirely possible to acquire the qualities necessary for a virtuous lifestyle. As in Christian moral teaching, the ultimate goal for Wassermann is also a form of quasi-religious holiness and beatitude, which is achieved by living according to the principles of justice and humanity. However, the essential element of Aquinas' and other Christian thinkers' moral teaching, the Holy Ghost, which constitutes the link between man and God as well as the source of his virtue, is missing in Wassermann's thought. This does not come as a surprise, nor does the absence of any notion of original sin necessitating the redemption of mankind.

In *Die Juden von Zirndorf*, suffering is regarded as a negative condition, one that must be overcome by forceful action. By 1919, Wassermann had changed his view. Perhaps the most profound resemblance to Christian doctrine concerns the concept of suffering. Just as suffering is central to salvation in the life of Christ, so Christian Wahnschaffe also endures the incredible demands of his fellow human beings in order to reach a new height of human compassion and thus reach a new level of humanity.

Even though *Christian Wahnschaffe* was not conceived as a specifically Christian novel, the protagonist's first name may suggest the contrary, and we have just discussed the most prominent elements of Christian religion contained therein. To stay with Wahnschaffe's name for a moment, there may be more revealed in it about the protagonist's programme than first appears. 'Wahn', in a slightly dated meaning – but most certainly in the sense Nietzsche used it – signifies not only madness and delusion, but also a state of ecstasy, intoxication or trance. It may be argued that Christian has attained this higher state of being by casting off the shackles of his wealthy background, and that this is, at the same time, his impulse for his actions, or 'Schaffen': his self-sacrificing deeds for his fellow men.

With Wassermann being such a keen follower of Nietzsche, the foremost atheist philosopher of the 19th century, it's difficult to see how he could have introduced elements of

⁵³¹ Romanus Cessario, *The Moral Virtues and Theological Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), p.110.

religion into his own writings. The main common ground between Wassermann and Nietzsche is their propensity to an aesthetic form of mysticism. As Lou Andreas-Salomé argues, Nietzsche offers a solution to his own profound dissatisfaction with the real cultural and social circumstances of the late 19th century only by raising it to the aesthetic plane and sublimating it with the quasi-religious ‘Übermensch’. Wassermann proceeds along similar lines, countering the harsh reality of political anti-Semitism with an essentially mystical figure from literary aestheticism: the ‘Orientale’.

In *Aspekte des Judentums im Werk Jakob Wassermanns*, Christa Joeris argues that he was, in fact, a religious Jew. She identifies three main influences of Jewish religious thought visible in his work: Chassidism, teachings of the Book of Sohar, and Lurian Cabbalism. She states that he was influenced by Rabbinism, but on the whole was closer to Cabbalism than either scholarship acknowledged or Wassermann himself was aware of.⁵³² She continues:

Natürlich können die besagten Romane auf diese Weise gelesen und rezipiert werden, doch Wassermann war zu sehr Moralist und mystisch-religiöser Autor, um lediglich das Wort-Wörtliche zu meinen. Für ihn war die Wirklichkeit Symbol, und man überlässe die über die Darstellung des Menschen hinausgehende allegorische Darstellung und die ihm als religiöser Schriftsteller wichtige Ideenvermittlung, eben seine ethisch-moralische Botschaft, wenn nur die vordergründige Lesart Geltung hätte.⁵³³

Joeris maintains that Wassermann’s religious conviction, which was neither Christian nor Jewish, but a fusion of the two, proves the level of complexity of Wassermann’s thought. She proceeds to examine the three main aspects of Judaism recognisable in his work.

Medieval Chassidism was a mystical movement in the Jewish communities in Germany in the 12th and 13th centuries. It describes the way of life of the pious Jew, the Chassid, and should be understood more as a manual for religious practice than as theological dogma. The Chassid turns inward in regular prayer, meditation, and penance to achieve a state of inner calm and contentment.⁵³⁴ Wassermann’s ‘Schöpfer’-figures, be it Agathon Geyer, Christian Wahnschaffe, Friedrich Laudin in *Laudin und die Seinen*, or Joseph Kerkhoven in *Joseph Kerkhovens Dritte Existenz* (1934), all share an attachment to nature, which makes for purity of the soul. It also provides them with the inner resolve which allows them to ‘in sich ruhen’, a key feature of Wassermann’s ideal Oriental Jew. Their inner equilibrium is the fount of their profound optimism and their love for their fellow man. Nietzsche would call this ‘amor

⁵³² Joeris, *Aspekte des Judentums im Werk Jakob Wassermanns*, p. 159.

⁵³³ Joeris, p.160.

⁵³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.124.

fati', or love of fate, i.e., the full acceptance of one's fate, to the point of wanting nothing more than the inescapable for oneself. From this they draw their strength to act, as the 'Schöpfer' does, as opposed to the passive 'Literat'.

Connected to this are ideas from the Book of Sohar, from which Wassermann quotes in the first half of *Die Juden von Zirndorf*. It is the most important text of the Jewish Cabbala and contains comments on the Talmud in the form of dialogues or narratives. It explains how the messiah is an original, mystical, pre-modern human, the first of all creatures and conceived in the glory of God. Eventually, he is transformed from a human to a heavenly being. These ideas are recapitulated in the opening passages of *Die Juden von Zirndorf*.⁵³⁵

Lurian thought was the last form of Cabbalism to be accepted throughout the Diaspora. Its originator was Isaac Luria (1534-1572), considered the father of modern Cabbalism. It was spread in moralist pamphlets and popular books throughout Europe from around 1550 to 1750, to the point that every Jewish household owned some simplified form of this moral code. It is, first and foremost, a spiritual doctrine, concerned with the exile of the Jewish people, and their 'exile of the soul'. This only comes to an end with the advent of the messiah, who brings salvation to each individual believer. But, crucially, man helps bring about his salvation by acting according to the laws of God, by observing regular prayer and penance, and by kindness to his fellow man. It is a doctrine of action rather than of ascetics and seclusion from the world. For Wassermann, 'Tat' was essential for the improvement of society and for prevailing over 'Trägheit des Herzens'.

There is a strong religious element in Wassermann's novels, which probably owes more to Judaism than to Christian doctrine. But one must tread carefully when tempted to label Wassermann a solidly Jewish author in the sense of creed. When Joeris compares his work to a 'fortgeschrittene Agada', i.e., the legends of the Talmud, and calls him a 'moderner synkretischer Kabbalist', she is pushing her argument too far. In *Mein Weg als Deutscher und Jude*, he relates a conversation on Germans and Jews with a friend: "Worin besteht das Trennende? fragte ich. Im Glauben? Ich habe nicht den jüdischen Glauben, du hast nicht den christlichen."⁵³⁶ One may associate Wassermann's novels with Jewish religion, since Joeris showed convincingly which elements of this he borrowed. But identifying someone who claims to be an unbeliever with a particular religion is not legitimate.

Wassermann was not *only* the Jewish author Joeris makes him out to be, but a German-Jewish author, who was susceptible to influences other than the Cabbala – although elements

⁵³⁵ Ibid., p.84.

⁵³⁶ Wassermann, *Mein Weg als Deutscher und Jude* in Rodewald, p.65-66.

of it did affect his work recognisably. Joeris' strong focus on Wassermann as a writer of religious 'Judentum' is due to her limitation to two of his works only, *Die Juden von Zirndorf* and *Christian Wahnschaffe*. These two novels are perhaps Wassermann's most 'religious' works, and they provide a wealth of examples for her argument. Also, several of the strains of thought she identifies, such as the aspiration to a messianic figure; the emphasis on justice, kindness, and humanity; and the concepts of exile and salvation are recurrent throughout Wassermann's work.

The central aspect of Wassermann's later thought, 'Gerechtigkeit', or 'Humanität', is founded on the concept of brotherly love, which is borrowed from Christianity. St. Francis of Assisi, to name one example, embodied the kind of humanity Wassermann had in mind, and it is on him that he modelled Christian Wahnschaffe. Wassermann's mystical notions of a new religion are not entirely Jewish, as Joeris argues, but show strong Christian influences as well. In *Mein Weg als Deutscher und Jude*, Wassermann writes,

Sind es doch gerade die edlen Juden heute, die Allerstillsten freilich da und dort im Lande, in denen die christliche Idee und christliche Art in kristallener Reinheit ausgeprägt ist, ein Verwandlungsphänomen freilich, das in die Zukunft deutet.⁵³⁷

Several years later, in *Die psychologische Situation des Judentums*, he takes up this argument again:

Oder einer sagte: Ja, wenn alle Juden so wären wie Sie; worauf ich nur zu entgegnen hatte: Ja, wenn alle Christen so wären wie ich; wobei ich innerlich, wie jedesmal die Gegensatzstellung Jude - Christ wie etwas Unwahres empfand oder doch wie ein Nicht-mehr-Wahres.⁵³⁸

It was this astonishing fusion of Jewish and Christian thought, combined with Nietzsche's call to overcome petrified forms of religion, that made for apparent paradoxes in Wassermann's philosophy. What holds it together is his high appraisal of humanity. When Wassermann speaks of God, it is most likely that he means the fundamental good in man, which, for him, exists in the outside world as a semi-religious spirit. Attaining unity with it, beyond all traditional dogma, means reaching the "höheres Leben der Seele".⁵³⁹

⁵³⁷ Ibid., p.127.

⁵³⁸ Jakob Wassermann, *Die psychologische Situation des Judentums*, cited in Joeris, p.48.

⁵³⁹ Wassermann, *Humanität und das Problem des Glaubens*, cited in Joeris, p.36.

This unusual amalgamation explains why for him, the non-religious Jews could be the “Träger und Bewahrer der religiösen Kultur”,⁵⁴⁰ and why the messiah, who would not save the Jewish people alone but the German people as well, had to reject Jewish religion but have a Jewish background.⁵⁴¹ What may seem idealistic from our retrospective view was quite modern in the first third of the 20th century, owing to the strong and widespread interest in Nietzsche’s Kulturkritik. In fusing these atheist theories with elements of Judaism and Christianity, Wassermann created a philosophy of his own that was entirely original at the time and considerably more complex than it first appears.

Granted that Agathon fulfils a messianic role in *Die Juden von Zirndorf*, this act is very different from the compassion and humanity Wassermann preaches in the post-war novels. The actions the protagonists Christian Wahnschaffe, Friedrich Laudin and Joseph Kerkhoven take are more mundane and all geared towards the improvement of the suffering of their fellow man. Christian takes in the pregnant Karen Engelschall, Pia Laudin tolerates her husband’s infatuation with another woman, and Kerkhoven forgives his wife for her infidelity. Thus, it would be wise to distinguish between the Messianism embodied in Agathon, as described in one of Wassermann’s first novels, and the humanity subscribed to by the central characters in his later works.

⁵⁴⁰ Joeris, p.24

⁵⁴¹ Jütten, p.214-215.

IV. Wassermann's Later Works: A Mystical Notion of 'Humanität'

While still largely preoccupied with issues of Jewishness and anti-Semitism in the early 1920's, Wassermann's focus had shifted to the wider concept of justice by the end of that decade, as reflected in his novels from that period. Starting with his fight against anti-Semitism, he became interested in a more general definition of injustice and cases of miscarriage of justice. The most prominent example of the post-war period was the case of Karl Hau, who, though innocent, had been sentenced to 17 years in prison in 1907. His release in 1924 strongly revived public interest in the trial.⁵⁴² Wassermann based *Der Fall Maurizius* on this real-life legal scandal, and it was to become one of the leading novels of the Weimar Republic. Gradually, Wassermann's German-Jewish identity struggle, so central in the immediate post-war years – and never entirely disappearing – became subsumed by the wider concepts of justice and humanity.

Due to its extensive coverage in scholarship, there is no need for a full synopsis here.⁵⁴³ Suffice to say that Etzel Andergast, the son of the crown lawyer Wolf von Andergast, struggles to prove the innocence of Leonhart Maurizius, who was put into jail by his father over a decade before. With his cold authority, the crown lawyer mirrors the established legal system and its central flaw: a lack of compassion, which Wassermann called 'Trägheit des Herzens'. His quest to set Maurizius free gives rise to such a severe conflict between Etzel and his father that their relationship is severed, and the father descends into insanity.

The Jewish dilemma does feature here in the character Georg Warschauer, who also takes the name of Gregor Waremme. He represents Wassermann's own inner conflict between his German and Jewish cultural identities, but Warschauer-Waremme is, at the same time, a critique of the opportunistic 'Renegat', the 'modern Jew' or 'Literat' Wassermann so strongly disapproved of. However, the Jewish dilemma is no longer the central issue. The main theme is the suffering of the individual human at the hands of an anonymous, pitiless institution, but also under the morality that underpins this institution in society. Wassermann's answer to injustice is the selfless striving of a young man to free his fellow being, to establish justice, or, indeed, humanity.

For Wassermann, a higher form of justice would be instilled by a new sense of humanity.

⁵⁴² Isabella Claßen, *Wider die Todesstrafe. Über Vorlage und Fabel zum „Fall Maurizius“* in *Jakob Wassermann – Werk und Wirkung* ed. by Rudolf Wolff (Bonn: Bouvier, 1987), pp.33-43 (p.33).

⁵⁴³ For a comprehensive survey of the Andergast trilogy, of which *Der Fall Maurizius* is the first part, see Stephen Garrin, *The Concept of Justice in Jakob Wassermann's Trilogy* (Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang, 1979).

This is the bridge to Christian Wahnschaffe, who, with his self-sacrificing behaviour, proves a living example of this genuine humanity. Wassermann also called this ‘Cortesia’, or ‘Höflichkeit des Herzens’.⁵⁴⁴ This means overcoming the antonym of this, ‘Trägheit des Herzens’ – which also happens to be the subtitle of Caspar Hauser. Caspar himself is a victim of this particular form of neglect, a self-centredness of his fellow beings. He personifies pre-civilised innocence and a kind of naiveté lost in the 20th century. He leads a difficult life after his entry in modern urban society, and is used and abused by various parties who claim to have his best interests at heart. Finally, he is murdered as the result of an intrigue beyond his control.

Caspar Hauser does not fit this category, but his story shows an underlying concept behind Wassermann’s philosophy of justice, that of compassion, or in a wider sense, of brotherly love. According to Wassermann’s principles, the teacher Georg Friedrich Daumer acts in an exemplary fashion, not looking away from this outcast unable to read and write, but taking him in instead and giving him a basic education. This fits with Wassermann’s ideal of action as the ‘Schöpfer’s’ means for positive change. Again, Daumer’s displaying his ‘Wille zur Gerechtigkeit’ is a breach with the ‘Kultur des Wegschauens’, ignoring the weak (which was harmful for Jews among others). Just like the German Jews, Caspar has been condemned to a difficult life as an outcast and through no choice of his own but as an innocent. Instead of ‘Trägheit’, Daumer proves himself to possess ‘Höflichkeit des Herzens’ and overcomes society’s injustice towards Caspar with the virtue of kindness.⁵⁴⁵

In his *Rede über Humanität* (1923), Wassermann explains that by ‘Humanität’, he means “Liebe zu sich selbst als menschlichem Wesen, das irgendwie seinen Ursprung aus dem Göttlichen herleitet.”⁵⁴⁶ It is a question of breaking through the “Trägheit des Herzens, die in der Regel verhindert, das Ungewöhnliche, das Ungewohnte zu tun”, in small, everyday acts. Proving “Herzensadel”, means rejecting materialism “als hauptsächliches Hindernis zur Cortesia”,⁵⁴⁷ and working against the “Zersetzung der Fundamente des Geistes” through technological and industrial progress. ‘Cortesia’ is the answer to the “Gefahr und Unsicherheit der Moderne, die Infragestellung von Autorität und Selbstbehauptung”.⁵⁴⁸ He who has ‘Humanität’ is in a position to make “kleine Alltäglichkeiten und Opfer, die zu

⁵⁴⁴ The concept is elucidated in Jakob Wassermann, ‘Rede über Humanität’, *Neue Rundschau*, 34 (1923), 1-24.

⁵⁴⁵ Jütten, p.298-301

⁵⁴⁶ Wassermann, ‘Rede über Humanität’, p.21.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid., p.24.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid., p.14-16.

bringen oft schwerer sind als große”.⁵⁴⁹

In his essay, *Humanität oder das Problem des Glaubens* (1934), Wassermann mentions that ‘Cortesia’ is the central motive (‘Leitmotiv’) in *Christian Wahnschaffe*,⁵⁵⁰ and it continues throughout all of his later novels. Both Pia Laudin and Joseph Kerkhoven from the later novels have a similar, wholly altruistic attitude towards their fellow beings, their selfless deeds being reminiscent of secular saints. While Wahnschaffe takes in Karen Engelschall, who abuses him, and Kerkhoven supports his student Etzel, who begins an affair with his wife, so Pia Laudin has a near-religious tolerance for her husband’s infatuation with the actress Lu Dercum, which also places a considerable strain on the family’s finances. Even when these characters are being exploited by the creatures they protect, they do not exert their position of power, if they are in one, but instead turn the other cheek.

This was the new morality Wassermann advocated – just as Nietzsche had thunderously proclaimed a new, individualist morality, inspired by the values of classical Antiquity, once the Christian ‘Sklavenmoral’ had been overcome. But even though both thinkers were highly critical of contemporary bourgeois ethics and insisted that they must be left behind, Wassermann’s humanity was much more oriented towards Christianity and Judaism – in spite of his aversion to any form of religious dogma. This new religion of humanity he proposed was secular, but mystical. Arguing against the excessive analysing of the world and its secrets by the scientific approach (‘Erklärungswahn’), he states that the “natürlich-übernatürliche Bedingung des Seins [ist ein] Heiligtum, das vor jedem Wissensangriff zu schützen ist.”⁵⁵¹

According to Wassermann, every human being has a desire for God; it is an “elementares Wesensbedürfnis”.⁵⁵² God himself is an “unbestimmbares Wesen – ein das Universum durchdringendes, geheimnisvolles, alle Lebensvorgänge potenzierendes Gut.” This understanding of God as an all-pervading being is just as mystical as Wassermann’s emphasis on the underlying secret of the world. “Das Geheimnis” is at the “Pforte zum Glauben”, which, in turn, is the precondition for “Teilhabschaft an Gott”. Man can thus participate in this God, and Wassermann is more specific further on: “Im Geheimnis [liegt der] Sieg des Lebensbegriffs über bloßes organisches Leben.”⁵⁵³ At the same time, death is no more than the “Hinüberfließen” into this universal, mystical secret, which Wassermann, rather than

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid., p.8.

⁵⁵⁰ Jakob Wassermann, ‘Humanität und das Problem des Glaubens’, *Neue Rundschau*, 45 Vol.2 (1934), 132-148 (p.133).

⁵⁵¹ Ibid., p.142.

⁵⁵² Ibid., p.143.

⁵⁵³ Ibid., p.144-45.

specifying his meaning, prefers to keep vague.⁵⁵⁴

Wassermann distanced himself from Christianity and Judaism, and, in spite of being hesitant to subscribe to a particular doctrine, did not go so far as to embrace atheism. The above notion is a clearly agnostic train of thought. He makes this clear later in the essay, listing the official, dogmatic 'Divinität' and his notion of 'Humanität' as a "fundamentale Gegenströmung" to each other. He even goes so far as to say: "Es gibt keine Rettung durch bestehende Religionen."⁵⁵⁵ The focus of this mystical, quasi-religious sense of God was man himself. For: "Gott wohnt im Menschen, man muß seine Menschen mit Gottesliebe verbinden." Where, then, lies the origin of this divinely-inspired humanity? "In der Liebe göttlicher Dunkelheit," answers Wassermann, "Nur in ihr entsteht Glaube."⁵⁵⁶

Wassermann was offering a solution for very real problems, but primarily on a mystical, aesthetic plane. Here, again, is common ground with Nietzsche: For is not the 'Übermensch', as Lou Andreas-Salomé argues, first and foremost an aesthetic and quasi-religious solution for the harsh reality of cultural decline? In declaring the coming of the 'Übermensch', Nietzsche is fairly consistent. Wassermann's theory undergoes a change during the First World War. Initially, the key concept is the 'Orientale', directly inspired by Nietzsche's superman. Then, in the post-war period, it becomes an idea embodied by the protagonists of three of his later novels: humanity.

Utopian, even naive as Wassermann's approach may seem in retrospect, it may still be considered decidedly modern by 20th-century standards. Nietzsche's books were not widely read by the general public until the 1890's, but then his influence was brought to bear on intellectuals throughout the world. The notion of a cultural decay in Europe was still very much present in the first half of the 20th century – arguably, it still is – and so was the cry for the overcoming of the existing circumstances, especially given the extensive social, political, and economic instability in Europe. With his advocacy of a new, more just society, after the social and moral constraints of Old Europe had been left behind, Wassermann joins the ranks of the decidedly modern, forward-looking intellectuals of the 20th century.

Simply because Wassermann was not a proponent of the Expressionist movement, a committed socialist, or another type of obvious 'progressive', it would not be reasonable to conclude that he was not modern. He was, as Nicole Plöger argues, a "Mittler zwischen

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid., p.148.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid., p.146-47.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid., p.148.

Tradition und Moderne”.⁵⁵⁷ One must not be led to assumptions merely based on Wassermann’s traditional literary style. Modernity as a phenomenon is far too complex to define with categories as simple as ‘conservative’ and ‘progressive’, which often become politicised, depending on the scholar. Instead, many artists reveal traditional and progressive elements in their work, both in style and in content. Wassermann’s colleague Arthur Schnitzler may be a case in point: His *Fräulein Else*, a stream-of-consciousness novella, was nonetheless written in a traditional, that is, non-Expressionist, narrative style.

⁵⁵⁷ Plöger, *Ästhet – Ankläger – Verkünder*, p.384.

Conclusion

The purpose of this dissertation is to contrast the development of Arthur Schnitzler's and Jakob Wassermann's respective sense of cultural identity, divided as it was among its German, Austrian, and Jewish elements. Their correspondence, although taken into account, yields few rewarding results. It has proven more productive to explore the transition of Schnitzler's viewpoint on the 'Jewish Question' from his novel, *Der Weg ins Freie* to his play *Professor Bernhardi* – his only two works in a literary career spanning thirty-five years that deal with issues of anti-Semitism. Drawing on his letters, diaries, and the drafts of these two works, it is possible to trace Schnitzler's identification with main characters from both the novel and the play and, furthermore, to draw decisive conclusions about Schnitzler's cultural identity this way.

The controversial and, at the same time, most confusing point about Schnitzler's first novel, *Der Weg ins Freie*, is that he consistently denied the allegations that it was a roman à clef reflecting his personal dilemma. Nevertheless, Bernmann did indeed mirror Schnitzler's personal struggle as an Austrian Jew and embodied clear autobiographical elements. Like Schnitzler himself, Bernmann adheres to the nature of his fatherland rather than to the political construct of the state. Like Schnitzler, Bernmann refuses to belong to a political group but insists adamantly on his independence. Bernmann considers himself a fully-fledged Austrian and despises nationalist anti-Semites for pretending he belongs to some other ethnicity. At the same time, he is painfully aware that there is no general solution to the 'Jewish Question' – which is also the root of Schnitzler's own dilemma. This observation would prompt him, over the course of the next few years, to develop an answer to this: the individualist notion of 'das Richtige tun', as exemplified by *Professor Bernhardi*.

In a wider sense, and perhaps more importantly for himself and his contemporaries, the publication of *Der Weg ins Freie* was Schnitzler's first public acknowledgement of his Jewish background. He was able to survey the various responses to anti-Semitism from the Jewish 'Großbürgertum' he knew so well, covering Zionism, Jewish snobbery, and Liberalism – each of these views represented in his own circle of friends.

For all his sympathy for Liberalism, Schnitzler was too critical a thinker not to see through the hypocrisies of certain middle-class values. He realised quite clearly that the attitude of the previous generation towards emancipation, and towards the 'others' – as reflected in the views of the elder Dr. Stauber – was no longer adequate to the anti-Semitism of 1900.

Schnitzler treated his personal dilemma at length in the figure of Heinrich Bermann, who is very strongly attached to his native country but despises those self-declared nationalists who deny him his origins. Already in his novel, there are indications of Schnitzler's ethical answer to the political problem of anti-Semitism: following one's convictions irrespective of the consequences, 'das Richtige tun'. This approach is formulated by Berthold Stauber and also by Bermann himself.

Far from the thorough exploration of the Jewish identity crisis that he gives in his novel, Schnitzler's play, *Professor Bernhardi*, is a political work. It reveals the devious nature of anti-Semitism, with Bernhardi's most serious opponents flatly denying there is such a thing as anti-Semitism or that politics play any role in his affair. There are also those undecided anti-Semites, or 'Renegaten', who feel a certain sympathy for Bernhardi but side with the dominant party when matters get serious. Being the strong-willed individual that he is, Bernhardi even rejects his friends' offers of support. He stresses time and time again that his is a personal, not a political affair. This is very close to Schnitzler's own attitude and brings to mind the instance when Schnitzler repeatedly declined to contribute to the 'Neue Freie Presse', the flagship of liberal opinion. Schnitzler refused to let himself be harnessed to a particular political or religious group. Like Bernhardi, he endeavoured to preserve his own critical spirit of inquiry at all costs, rather than submitting his intellectual independence to the programme of a political party.

This individualist notion, which Bernhardi formulates as 'das Richtige tun', is, in essence, Schnitzler's own take on the 'Jewish Question'. Neither religious orthodoxy nor Zionism can offer any real solution, in his eyes. Conversion to Catholicism is only an option for the weakest individuals. Instead, it is up to every individual German-speaking Jew to find a solution for himself, while never denying his Jewish background. As he stated to James L. Benvenisti: "The solution of the Jewish Problem is one each individual must find for himself."

To turn to Jakob Wassermann, his intellectual development is not as linear as Schnitzler's. At the beginning of his career, he endeavoured to prove himself a truly German author by writing 'Volksromane', set in his native region of Franconia. It was not until the First World War that a rise in anti-Semitism shifted his sense of identity towards Jewishness. While Schnitzler had very little sympathy for Jewish orthodoxy, Wassermann was keenly interested in the reciprocal influences of Judaism and Christianity. He conceived a rather broad social

theory based on Nietzsche's concept of the 'Übermensch' and Martin Buber's positive evaluation of the oriental: a German-Jewish messiah, the 'Orientale', would overcome the ossified morals of bourgeois society and eventually bring about a German-Jewish symbiosis. Following the predicament of the First World War, and the aggravation of anti-Semitism by political and social upheaval, justice and humanity became the predominant themes of his philosophy.

Like Nietzsche, Wassermann offers a primarily aesthetic, mystical solution to the real problems of contemporary culture and society. As Lou Andreas-Salomé explains, Nietzsche sublimates the very real social and cultural problems of his era into aesthetic terms, and offers the quasi-religious 'Übermensch', with his promise of social and ethic renewal, as an answer to the general European 'decadence' of his age. Wassermann's thought may appear utopian, even reactionary from a present-day perspective. Stengel-Marchand goes so far as to argue that Wassermann was a precursor of fascism. And yet his philosophy was truly original and genuinely modern at the time. Modernism is too complex a phenomenon to be divided into categories of 'progressive' and 'reactionary', since many writers, artists and thinkers from the early 20th-century took up elements of both. Wassermann is a prime example of this. His post-war novels are set exclusively in contemporary society, treating at length the ills of the disadvantaged and victims of injustice. His forward-looking concept of the 'Orientale' centers on the belief in a future utopia, in which society is infused with a new sense of humanity, which in turn would give rise to a new form of ethics. For all his original proximity to 'Heimatkunst', he was a forward-looking thinker and certainly not a forerunner of National Socialism.

Both Schnitzler and Wassermann were sceptical of Jewish orthodoxy, with Wassermann tending to religious mysticism, and both soundly rejected Zionism. They had no respect for Jews who gave up their origins and converted to Catholicism. They cannot be placed into a particular camp. The two friends and literary colleagues each developed his unique answer to the so-called 'Jewish Question': Schnitzler's enlightened, apolitical, individualist notion of 'das Richtige tun' and Wassermann's mystical concept of the 'Orientale' bringing to society a new sense of humanity and justice and abolishing anti-Semitism for all time. Both Schnitzler and Wassermann offer rich and highly illuminating perspectives on the exceedingly complex Jewish identity crisis in the first half of the 20th century.

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