

CENTRE FOR GERMAN-JEWISH STUDIES



# The Vienna Paradox:

Jewish identity and Austrian high culture  
From World War I to the Anschluss

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Research Paper No. 13

ISSN 1468-4721

US

UNIVERSITY  
OF SUSSEX





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Her work has been especially concerned

with explicating the writing of experimental and avant-garde poets and relating it to the major currents of modernist and, especially, postmodernist activity in the arts, including the visual arts and literary theory

Her numerous books include *The Futurist Moment: Avant-Garde, Avant-Guerre, and the Language of Rupture* (1986), *Wittgenstein's Ladder: Poetic Language and the Strangeness of the Ordinary* (1996), and *Poetics in a New Key* (2014). Her most recent publication is *Edge of Irony: Modernism in the Shadow of the Habsburg Empire* (2016). This work enlarges on the theme of her 2004 memoir *The Vienna Paradox*.

This illustrated lecture was delivered at the University of Sussex on 3 July 2017 as the Kurt Hellman Memorial Lecture, which forms part of the Max and Hilde Kochmann Summer School.

*Front cover image: Opera House, Vienna, c.1910*

# THE VIENNA PARADOX

# The Vienna Paradox:

## Jewish identity and Austrian high culture

### From World War I to the Anschluss

#### 1. What Remains

For a young child, even a Jewish child, brought up, as I was, in the shaky little Republic of Austria between the two World Wars, nothing was more glamorous than the tales of the Habsburg Emperors, from Rudolf I (1218-91), to the bold Emperor Maximilian (1459-1519), immortalized in Dürer's great portrait [fig. 2], who secured the Netherlands, Hungary, Bohemia, and Spain for the Habsburgs; and especially to the Empress Maria Theresa (1717-1780, [fig. 3]), that powerful sovereign, who presided over her vast empire, orchestrating both the War of the Austrian Succession and the Seven Years' War (both against Prussia), while bearing her husband Francis I sixteen children, one of whom was Marie Antoinette. Stories about Maria Theresa were the stuff of legend and fairytale. The child Mozart, for example, having performed for the Empress, evidently jumped on her lap and kissed her [fig. 4]; she rewarded him with a little suit decorated with gold braid. A devout Catholic, Maria Theresa was staunchly anti-Protestant and even more virulent-



fig. 2 Albrecht Dürer, Kaiser Maximilian, 1519



fig. 3 Empress Maria Theresa, 1790

ly anti-Semitic, but as Austrian children we knew only happy anecdotes and tuneful songs about the great Empress and her succession—for example, the famous *Radetzky March* by Johann Strauss the elder, still performed with great fanfare to a jubilant audience at the annual New Year’s Day concert in Vienna’s *Musikverein* [fig. 5].

The era of good feeling personified by the *Radetzky March* came to an abrupt end with Hitler’s Anschluss of Vienna in 1938 but the real watershed occurred two decades earlier, namely, in 1918, with the demise of the Habsburg Empire at the end of World War I. Consider the following series of maps contrasting the Before and After. Before 1914, the Austro-Hungarian Empire was a multiethnic and polyglot entity covering 240,000 square miles [fig. 6]. Its fifty million inhabitants included what are now Hungarians, Czechs, Slovenes, Serbs, Croats, Bosnians, and Romanians, as well as the Poles of Galicia, the Russians of the West-



fig. 4 Maria Teresa with the young Mozart, 1763



fig. 5 Musikverein am Karlplatz, Main Façade 1866-69,

ern Ukraine, and the Italians of the Southern Tyrol and Trieste [fig. 7]. Four years later, when World War I ended and the Dual Monarchy was dissolved Vienna became the capital of a small and fragile republic that had only six million inhabitants and a territory of 32,000 miles--a nation the shape of a tadpole, whose Eastern head (Vienna) sat uneasily

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fig. 6 Map of Austro-Hungarian Empire, 1914



fig. 7



fig. 8

on a body whose tail was in the Voralberg mountains [fig. 8]. Indeed, the First Republic, born in 1918, was made up of the area that remained after the bulk of the empire was parcelled out to create new nations or to add to existing ones [fig. 9]. As the French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau remarked. ‘L’Autriche, c’est ce qui reste.’<sup>1</sup>

From the hindsight of a century, Hitler’s annexation in 1938 of Austria—“the vague, gray and inert shadow,” as Stefan Zweig called it, “of the former Imperial monarchy,”<sup>2</sup> — was probably inevitable, as was the coming of the Second World War just twenty years after the end of the First. Increasingly, historians are referring to the events of 1914-45 as the Long War or the Second Thirty-Year War. In 1918, most Austrians, including the Jews, had wanted to become part of greater Germany, but Woodrow Wilson and his colleagues were convinced *Anschluss* would make Ger-



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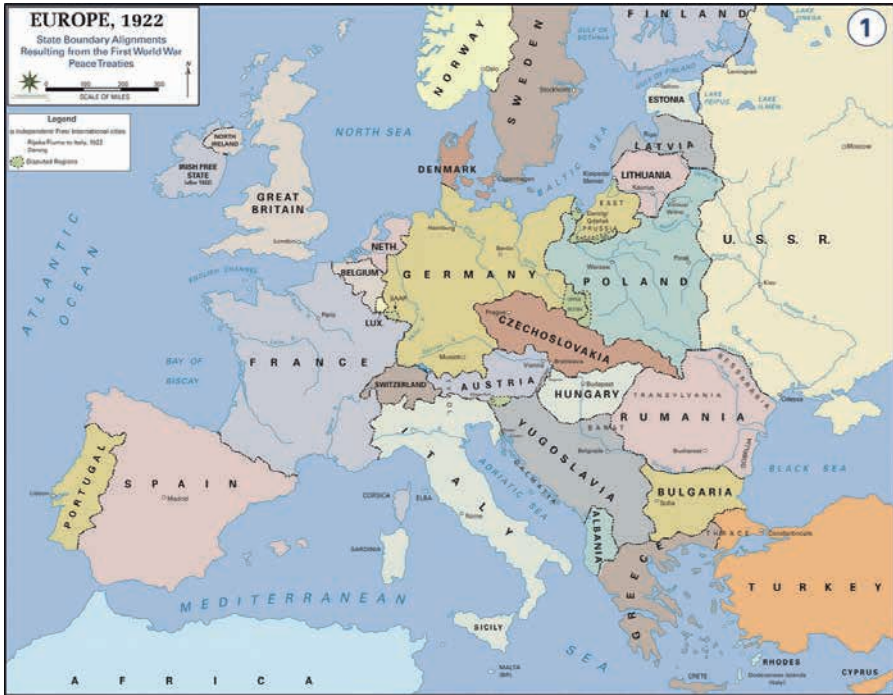


fig. 9

many too powerful and so the merger was prohibited by the Treaty of St. Germain (September 1919). When it finally took place twenty years later, *Anschluss* was achieved not by treaty but by Nazi force.

In Anglophone critical discourse, Austria is more or less synonymous with Vienna. From Carl Schorske's *Fin de siècle Vienna* and Alan Janik's *Wittgenstein's Vienna*, both published in the 1970s, to the recent prominent celebrations of the art of Gustav Klimt and the music of Gustav Mahler, the importance of Vienna as a great art and cultural capital of the early twentieth century is hardly in dispute. But what has been less well understood is the astonishing impact of what I shall call Austro-Modernism in the post-World War I years, when artists and writers from the far-flung frontiers of the dismembered empire—writers, mostly Jewish, who had received a classical German education, as authorized by the cen-

tralized *k. & k. (kaiserlich und königlich)* government—came on the scene [see maps 2-3]. Joseph Roth (1894-1939, [fig. 10]), the author of the now classic *Radetsky March* (1933), was a native of Brody in Galicia, whose capital Lemberg [fig. 11], after WWI, was incorporated into Poland, and later into the Ukraine. He made his living as a journalist, first in Frankfurt and Berlin, then in Paris. Elias Canetti (1905-94, [fig. 12]) came from the Danube city of Ruse ([fig. 13], now in Bulgaria), was a schoolboy in Manchester, England, grew up, studied, and launched his career in Vienna, only to have to flee, in 1938, to asylum in London. Paul Celan (1920-1970, [fig. 14]) was born Paul Antschel in Czernowitz, the capital of the Bukov-



fig. 10



fig. 11

ina province [**fig. 15**], a territory incorporated into Rumania in 1918, occupied by the Russians in 1944, and now part of the Ukraine. After World War II, he lived briefly in Bucharest and then in Vienna, before marrying the French graphic artist Gisèle de Lestrang and settling in Paris.

Brody, Ruse, Czernowitz: these multiethnic towns were hundreds of miles from Vienna and their occupants inevitably spoke a number of languages, but the high culture of the Habsburg Empire provided their intellectual horizon. Current labels are thus rather misleading: Kafka (1883-1924), sometimes classified as a Czech writer, sometimes as a German, or again as a Jewish one, belonged, of course, to the Empire. Celan is generally referred to as a Holocaust poet from Rumania, Canetti as a Sephardic Jew raised in Bulgaria and turned cosmopolitan. Or again, these writers are classified according to their written language as, quite simply, German. The Jewish link, moreover, has obscured the extent to which the decline and fall of the Dual Monarchy also transformed the lives of its non-Jewish writers. Gregor von Rezzori (1914-98, [**fig. 16**], the later chronicler of the declining Habsburg empire, whose cruel but brilliant *Confessions of an Anti-Semite* (1979) has recently been reissued, spent his childhood in the same town as Paul Celan—Czernowitz-- and



fig. 12



fig. 13



fig. 14



fig. 15

studied in Vienna. Robert Musil (1889-1942, [fig. 17]), whose *Man without Qualities* (published in 1930) has long been considered the classic “German” dissection of the impending collapse of “Kakania,” as Musil called the *kaiserlich und königlich* empire, was born in Carinthia, received a classic Austrian education in Brno (Brünn), now in the Czech Republic, graduated from its Technical University, where his father was a leading professor, and continued his scientific studies in Berlin, before settling, with his Jewish wife Martha, in Vienna. In 1938, the Musils had to flee Austria; they settled in Switzerland, where Musil died in great penury during the war. The list of these “provincial” Austrian writers goes on and on, culminating, after World War II, in the work of Thomas Bernhard and Ingeborg Bachmann, both from the Austrian provinces: he from the Wallersee near Salzburg, she from Klagenfurt about twenty-five miles from the Slovenian (then the Yugoslavian) border.



fig. 16



fig. 17

What I shall here call Austro-Modernist literature is thus characterized by its unique position vis-à-vis the First World War. No other national culture experienced the trauma of sudden rupture as fully as did the Austrians. Germany, after all, had been a unified nation less than fifty years when World War I broke out, as had Italy. And, however terrible the war was for the English and French, their sense of national identity was not really called into question in 1918: that was to happen after World War II, with the loss of overseas empire. But consider Rezzori's account of his native city:

Czernowitz, where I was born, was the former capital of the former duchy of Bukovina, an easterly region of Carpathian forestland in the foothills of the Tatra Mountains. In 1775, ceded by the former Ottoman Empire to the former Imperial and Royal Austro-Hungarian realm as compensation for the latter's mediation the Russo-Turkish War. . . .after 1848 it became one of the autonomous former crown lands of the House of Habsburg.

One can readily see that everything in this quick summary . . . is designated as "former," that is to say, not in the present, not truly existing— And this invests my birthplace with a kind of mythic aura, an unreal quality. It is of no use to try to elucidate this mythic twilight by means of historical analysis. That the Austro-Hungarian monarchy has not existed since 1918 is well enough known, yet in Czernowitz people acted as if they didn't quite believe it. German remained the everyday language of most people, Vienna was the closest metropolis, and no one thought of denying it the rank of capital.

Gregor von Rezzori, *The Snows of Yesteryear*<sup>3</sup>

After 1940, the Bukovina was cut in two by a state treaty between the Third Reich and the Soviet Union. The Northern part, which includes Czernovitz (Chernovitsky), became part of the Soviet Republic of the Ukraine. As such, it was no longer the capital of its province because the

capital of Ukraine is Kiev. At this writing, with “Ukraine” once again contested territory, the identity of Czernovitz is shakier than ever.

The literary ethos of Austrian postwar writers, all of them displaying a love-hate relationship to Vienna and opting for various forms of exile, is curiously distinct from its German counterpart. In the “research laboratory for world destruction,” as Karl Kraus [fig. 18] born in the Czech



fig. 18

town of Jičín near the Polish border, called Austria in his monumental anti-war play *The Last Days of Mankind* (1922), the trauma of war followed by the sudden and radical dissolution of the geographical entities into which these writers were born, created a deeply skeptical and resolutely individualistic modernism—one much less ideologically charged than its counterpart in Germany. Neither the intellectually rigorous and revolutionary Marxism of Weimar writers like Bertolt Brecht, nor on the right, Heidegger’s post-transcendental philosophy centering on the disclosure of *Being-in-the World*, seems to have had much appeal to the ironic, satiric, darkly humorous, erotic—and often slightly mystical—world of post-empire Austria. As Musil puts it in Chapter 4 of *The Man without Qualities* in defining what he called “a sense of possibility”:

Whoever has [this sense] does not say, for instance: Here this or that has happened, will happen, must happen; but he invents: Here this or that might, could, or ought to happen. If he is told that something is the way it is, he will think: Well, it could probably just as well be otherwise. . . . The consequences of so creative a disposition can be remarkable, and may, regrettably, often make what people admire seem wrong, and what is taboo permissible, or also make both a matter of indifference. Such possibilists [*Möglichkeitmenschen*] are said to inhabit a more delicate medium, a hazy medium of mist, fantasy, daydreams,

and the subjunctive mood. Children who show this tendency are dealt with firmly and warned that such persons are cranks, dreamers, weaklings, know-it-alls, or troublemakers.<sup>4</sup>

Dreamers, troublemakers—and we could add imaginative writers and artists. Musil’s analysis above echoes Wittgenstein’s [fig. 19] proposition in the *Tractatus* that “Everything we see could also be otherwise” (§5.634) and again, “The sense of the world must lie outside the world. In the world everything is as it is and happens as it does happen” (§6.41).<sup>5</sup> In these circumstances, *change* came to mean,



fig. 19

not political revolution, the change of the social or political order, but a change of consciousness. One must try, Wittgenstein repeatedly and stubbornly insisted, “to turn into a different person.”<sup>6</sup> Ironically, the refusal of direct political engagement did not preclude what was an extraordinary prescience about politics on behalf of Austro-Modernist writers. Kraus and Canetti are notable examples, but so is Joseph Roth, who understood early on how dangerous the idea of *Anschluss* would prove to be. In August 1925, Roth, then a Paris correspondent for the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, writes to his editor Benno Reifenberg:

*I am desperate.* I can’t even go to Vienna since the Jewish Socialists have started clamoring for their Anschluss. What are they after? They want Hindenburg? At the time that Emperor Franz Joseph died, I was already a “revolutionary,” but I shed tears for him. I was a one-year volunteer in a Vienna regiment, a so-called elite unit, that stood by the Kapuzinergruft as a guard of honor, and I tell you, I was crying. An epoch was buried. With the Anschluss, a culture will be put in the ground. Every European must be against the Anschluss. . . . Do they want to become a sort of nether Bavaria? <sup>7</sup>

Roth was often intemperate and irrational: he hated the Germans, veered between pro-Jewish sentiment and anti-Semitism, and was, like his own “hero of Solferino” in *The Radetsky March*, in love with the Emperor, with the Habsburg dynasty, and, in certain moods, even with the Catholic Church. But he had an uncanny understanding of what was happening in Europe in the interwar years, and he also recognized that he himself was always and of necessity an outsider: “The feeling of not belonging anywhere, which has always been with me” haunted him even in his beloved Paris. Yet being an outsider made it possible for him to write his brilliant dispatches about everyday life in post-World War I Berlin and Paris.

Such contradictions—and they are endemic to Austro-Modernism—have been nicely pinpointed by Eric Hobsbaum:

Of all the great multi-lingual and multi-territorial empires that collapsed in the course of the twentieth-century, the decline and fall of the Emperor Franz Josef’s, being both long expected and observed by sophisticated minds, has left us by far the most powerful literary or narrative chronicle. Austrian minds had time to reflect on the death and disintegration of their empire, while it struck all the other empires suddenly, at least by the measure of the historical clock, even those in visibly declining health, like the Soviet Union. But perhaps the perceived and accepted multilinguality, multi-confessionality and multiculturalism of the monarchy helped to a more complex sense of historical perspective. Its subjects lived simultaneously in different social universes and different historical epochs.<sup>8</sup>

It is interesting that Hobsbaum, whose own childhood in 1920s Vienna was one of misery and hardship, and who was soon to become a dedicated Communist revolutionary, recognized that, so far as literature was concerned, the most complex and powerful dissection of empire was that of the Austrians.



## 2. The Red and the Black

The transformation of monarchy into republic was perhaps uniquely difficult in the new Austria. For the First Republic, whose largely rural, provincial and Catholic population was to be governed from the capital—a sophisticated metropolis, ten-percent of whose citizens were Jews—was almost guaranteed to flounder. Indeed, in a referendum of 1919 (later rescinded), the Voralberg (Austria's westernmost province), voted overwhelmingly for annexation to Switzerland as preferable to remaining part of the “Wiener Judenstaat.”<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile, to the South, Innsbruck and the surrounding Tyrol looked to Berlin rather than Vienna to ward off annexation by Italy.



*fig. 20*

In his memoir, my grandfather Richard Schüller [fig. 20], who had served in the pre-World War I cabinet as Sektionschef for Commerce, recalls returning to his Ministry office in the Ballhausplatz on an October day in 1918, even as the Armistice was being negotiated in Paris:

I found my colleagues silently sitting in their offices, not knowing what to do and avoiding a discussion of the catastrophe. . . . I had worked with people of all nationalities for 20 years. Before the war I had worked under 2 Ministers of Commerce, Fort and Fiedler, who were Czechs, and [the] Under Secretary, Dr. Mueller, was a Czech, an assistant secretary a Pole, and in my own department 2 out of 5 officials were Czechs. They asked me if they should leave the office and I advised them to go to Prague, where they might be needed by the new government. . . . They now belonged to victorious

Czechoslovakia and I to defeated Austria. My own mother was a citizen of Czechoslovakia where I had been born [in Brünn, later Brno].

The Secretary of State Victor Adler asked me to leave the Ministry of Commerce and to come to the Foreign Office.<sup>10</sup>

The resulting crisis had no parallel in Germany. The newly established state of Czechoslovakia cut off all coal supplies; the Hungarian and Southern Slavic provinces cut off three-quarters of the former food supply, and in the freezing winter that followed, England and France refused all loans and shipments of grain, flour, or oil (Schüller 219).

In *The World of Yesterday*, Stefan Zweig gives a horrific account of his own train journey, in 1918, from Feldkirch, the Swiss-Austrian border station in the Vorarlberg, to Salzburg, where he owned property(289-90): The guards who showed us our seats were haggard, starved and ragamuffin; they crawled about with torn and shabby uniforms hanging loosely over their stooped shoulders. The leather straps for opening and closing windows had been cut off, for every piece of that material was precious. . . . The electric bulbs had either been smashed or stolen so that whoever searched for anything had to feel his way about with matches . . . . Everyone held on to his baggage anxiously and hugged his package of provisions close; no one dared separate himself from a possession for a single minute in the darkness.

A journey that usually took seven hours took seventeen. And on arrival in Salzburg, there were no porters, no cabs—and later, no fuel and little food: “a young lad shot squirrels in our garden for his Sunday dinner and well-nourished dogs or cats returned only seldom from lengthy prowls” (Zweig 293).

Against this background, the first Austrian parliamentary elections were held in February 1919. There were, in effect, only two political par-

ties: the Christian Socials and the Social Democrats. The Socialist Party primarily drew on Jewish Vienna. It won the first election by six seats (69 to 63), with 26 votes for the small rightwing Nationalist Party. Viktor Adler, the venerable Socialist leader, died shortly after the Armistice; Karl Renner, a German-speaking Czech who had been Li-



*fig. 21 Engelbert Dollfuss (fifth from left) with Richard Schüller at his right and Cardinal Innitzer at his left, Rome, 1933.*

brarian for the *Reichsrat* (Imperial Council), became the first chancellor of the new republic and Otto Bauer, a leading Viennese Austro-Marxist, his foreign minister. In less than two years, the situation was reversed: in 1920, the Christian Socials won 79 seats to the Socialists' 63. For the next eighteen years, the Socialists never again won a national election, although they succeeded in creating a remarkable welfare state in "Red Vienna". The latter became, as Lisa Silverman notes, "a lone 'red' city, surrounded by the 'black' Christian Social provinces and federal government. Antisemitic rhetoric had linked socialism and Jews well before the interwar period, but linkage became even stronger as Jews became more involved and visible in the movement after World War I" (Silverman 22). In 1922, a Catholic priest Ignaz Seipel was elected Chancellor. And Engelbert Dollfuss, the controversial Chancellor of the early 1930s, who ruled autocratically without parliament, also came from the priesthood [fig. 21]. In 1934, just two years into his chancellorship, Dollfuss, who, authoritarian as he was, did dare to defy Hitler, was openly assassinated in his office by Nazi gunmen.

Tens of thousands of Jewish refugees, fleeing the war in Galicia and Bukovina, as well as Poland and Western Russia, had been pouring into Vienna since the fall of 1914, fanning the flames of anti-Semitism that

had long been latent in Catholic Austria. Here some statistics are in order.<sup>11</sup> Since the Emperor's granting of emancipation in 1867, the Jews of Austria, based mostly in Vienna, had multiplied and flourished. There were 40,000 Jews in Vienna in 1870, 72,000 in 1880, and over 118,000 (almost 10% of the population) in 1890. The newly built railways helped to speed up immigration from the East. By 1885, more than sixty percent of all doctors and over half the lawyers registered in the capital were Jews. More important, nearly all the major newspapers in Vienna were owned and staffed by Jews—a situation that gave them a great deal of power to shape public opinion.<sup>12</sup> The editor of the leading newspaper *Die Neue Freie Presse*, Moriz Benedikt, a proponent of pan-Germanism, became the special object of Karl Kraus's scorn. Kraus, a Jewish convert to Catholicism (1899), who later renounced the Church for its complicity in the war, is known for his troubling, arguably anti-Semitic comments, but in the case of Benedikt, Kraus's charges of corruption and mendacity proved to be correct.

The overrepresentation of the Jews in the Social Democratic movements of the period led to open calls for ethnic cleansing. The Russian Revolution of 1905 had prompted a special wave of anti-Semitism. Leon Trotsky, who lived in Vienna between 1907-14, became the symbol of the Jewish drive toward Socialist revolution. Karl Lueger ("der schöne Karl"), the anti-Semitic mayor of Vienna, warned the Jews not to go as far as their Russian counterparts and not to get involved with the Social Democratic revolutionaries: "Should the Jews threaten our fatherland, we will know no mercy either." And the perceived threat was not only from the Left: many of the leading Viennese financiers were Jews as well. "The Jews," Lueger declared, "don't want 'equality' but complete domination." They were said to be planning "the establishment of an international alliance of banks with its seat in Washington" and would soon "publicly dictate its laws to the world."<sup>13</sup> During the war, with the influx of poor Galician Jews, with their black caftans, hats, and long beards, and their "foreign" (Yiddish) speech—Jews who worked as peddlers ("Handeleh") underselling their native counterparts and often becoming wealthy in the process-- the anti-Semitic temperature rose even further.

After the war, the uneven distribution of jobs became more marked. Few Jews, as Bernard Wasserstein points out in his seminal study *On the Eve*, worked in the majority occupations: agriculture, domestic service, mining, or public employment; again, at the other end of the scale, the Jews were underrepresented in the civil service, the army and of course the Church, which was powerful in Catholic Austria. On the other hand, the Jews were greatly overrepresented in commerce, whether the commerce of small shopkeeping or the industrial cartel, in finance, and in the professions and arts. The increasingly large role of Jews on the political Left didn't help matters. "Simultaneously feared and despised . . . as subversive revolutionary and capitalist exploiter," writes Wasserstein, "the Jew was widely regarded as an alien presence."<sup>14</sup>

The assimilated Jews, many of whom like Wittgenstein or Viktor Adler came from families that had long been converted and had distanced themselves from their Jewish origin, were now in an especially difficult position.<sup>15</sup> Members of the preceding generation—for example, Arthur Schnitzler or Gustav Mahler—had certainly experienced anti-Semitism—but exile was not yet a necessity. On the contrary, these artists regarded Vienna as *their* home, *their* city. "Austria-Hungary is no more," declared Freud in 1918, "I do not want to live anywhere else. For me emigration is out of the question. I shall live on with the torso and imagine that it is the whole."<sup>16</sup> Twenty years later, when the Nazis occupied Vienna, the eighty-two year old Freud was still so reluctant to leave that he had to be dragged out of his house by his friends and taken away.

In the following generation, such unqualified allegiance to "our" Vienna was replaced by much more complex and conflicted feelings. Postwar Vienna, Timms reminds us, was the scene of an anti-Semitic crusade. A campaign in parliament to limit further immigration was "dominated by allegations that Christian-German civilization was under threat from an alliance of Marxists and Jews." The Bolshevik danger, as the future Chancellor Ignaz Seipel declared in 1918 (see Timms 30), was a "Jewish danger." Austrian Jews, ironically enough, thus found themselves longing for the lost world of empire:

The majority of the Jews of the Habsburg Empire had felt at ease with the concept of being Austrian in the pre-1918 “cosmopolitan sense of the word: they could be Austrian in Cracow speaking Polish, Austrian in Prague speaking Czech, or Austrian in Trieste speaking Italian, without feeling obliged to deny their Jewish origins. In 1918 this model of multiculturalism collapsed. . . . To be a German-speaking Austrian Jew in an intensely anti-Semitic society was to experience a fractured identity (Timms, 32-33).

Thus exile became increasingly frequent, whether the self-exile of Wittgenstein, who settled in Cambridge in 1930, or of Joseph Roth, whose home as a journalist became Paris, or the forced departure, in 1938, of Cennetti and Musil. The much younger Paul Celan, who was studying literature in Czernowitz, officially part of Romania when World War II broke out, witnessed the Holocaust (in which his parents were killed), becoming a prisoner, first of the Nazis,



*fig. 22 March 15, 1938, Hitler Rally in Heldenplatz*

then of the Communists,

before taking up permanent residence in France in 1948. My own immediate family, fortunately, had the foresight to take flight on the eve of the Anschluss. Three days later, Hitler held his infamous rally in the Heldenplatz [fig. 22].

### 3. The perspective of a seven-year old

My own memory of March 12, 1938, the day of Anschluss, is commemorated for me in two written accounts. The first comprises two very short chapters of a narrative I produced at age seven in a lined black and white school notebook—the kind of notebook standard in the New York City public schools in 1939. My story was called *Eine Reise nach Amerika* (*A Voyage to America*) and in the Table of Contents, Chapter One is called “Die Abreise” (“The Departure”). But in the text, where the German words, already a bit unfamiliar to a child who was feverishly turning herself into an American, are often misspelled, the title reads “Die Areise.” To a student of poetic language, the slip is not insignificant, meaning as it does, “The ‘A’ Journey.” A journey, no doubt to a happier world but hardly perceived as such at the time!

Here is my translation of my first two chapters, “Die Areise” and “Im Zug”:

#### “The Departure”

It was on the twelfth of March in the morning when my mother came into our room and said now we are no longer Austrians. Hitler has taken Austria. I cried hard but there was nothing to be done. Then when I went into my parents’ room, I saw that our suitcases were packed and when my brother Walter and I asked why, my parents said maybe we will go away. Then the next day my grandmother, grandfather, and great-grandmother came for the last time. At 10 o’clock in the evening, we went to the train station where we met our cousins Hedy and Greta Strauss. As soon as we met, Greta said to my brother Walter, “Walter, why are you wearing your cap that way?” But since the train came, my brother couldn’t answer.

#### “On the Train”

On the train, we went to sleep right away. But my cousins, as is typical of them, complained they didn’t sleep all night. In Inns-

bruck, we had to get out and go to the police station where they unpacked all our luggage and my poor Mommy had to repack everything. There was such a mob and we had to wait so long that Mommy said she would unpack a book and I sat down on our hatbox and read. When we finished, we went to the station restaurant where we had ham rolls that tasted very good. And as I was sitting in this restaurant, I didn't yet have any idea that later in America I would write a book. Well, I hadn't experienced much yet but, just wait, there will be much more!

Now compare this account, written by a second grader at P.S. 7, the Bronx, to the following letter sent by my mother, Ilse Schüller Mintz, to her sister Hilde, who had emigrated to London with her husband Otto Kurz the year before.

City Hotel, Zurich  
15 III 1938

Dearest Hilde:

Where shall I begin? We have been through so much and I am so tired and confused that I only noticed now that I've been in the house for 1/2 hour and still have my hat on. And then there are so terribly many crucial decisions to make! But I will try to relate to you the events one by one.

When on Friday afternoon we heard the terrible news, our first thought was "Away!" We wanted to go to Budapest Saturday morning. I packed half the night, then lay awake in bed for a few miserable hours. In the morning, I learned that one couldn't cross the border. My first reaction was one of relief that at least we could still see our parents. Saturday was taken up with visits, while outside there were incessant shouts of "*Sieg Heil!*," bombers flew by overhead, and army vehicles drove down



the street. The Ungers [friends] tried to go to Hungary by car but were turned back. Bommi [another friend] visited us, was practically in tears. Karl Schlesinger has killed himself. Hugo [Ilse's uncle] and Ritti [his wife] naturally in despair. I didn't get to see the Aunts. Papa [her father, Richard Schüller] calm, looks well, says he slept well.

Sunday at noon we heard by coincidence that one could still cross the border, but not to Hungary and Czechoslovakia. We inquired at the train station, the police, etc. and had this verified. So we finished packing and left in the evening: my father-in-law [Alexander Mintz], Stella, Otto, Hedy and Greta [Stella Strauss, my father's sister, her husband Otto and their twin daughters], and Aunt Gerti [Gertrude Schüller, the widow of Ludwig Schüller, Richard's brother]. Those who didn't have the same last name had to pretend not to know one another. This applied to the children as well: they were not allowed to speak and in fact didn't speak. We traveled comfortably second-class as far as Innsbruck. The children slept. In Innsbruck, there was passport control: for Jews, the order was, "Get off the train with your luggage." Aunt Gerti was allowed to continue. Evidently, they took her for Aryan although no one asked. We were taken by the S.A. to the police office, across from the railway station. There, we were held in a narrow corridor, heavily guarded. One after another, we were called into a room where our passports were examined, our money mostly confiscated (since the rules had been changed overnight). They took 850 marks and the equivalent in schillings. We didn't care in the slightest. Our thought was only: will they let us travel further? Will we be arrested? Then all of our luggage was unpacked piece by piece. Finally, we were allowed to leave.

We sat till 2 A.M. in the station restaurant, then we continued. In Feldkirch, everyone had to get out again and we were again

searched, the children and I body-searched as well. Not a handkerchief was left unfolded. The tone: “Aha, from Vienna? Surely from the Leopoldstadt!” Max [Maximilian Mintz, my father] had his war medal with him. “If you really served at the Front, you wouldn’t be leaving.” One had to force oneself to keep quiet. Back on the train, we passed one military convoy after another going the other way.

At 10 in the evening, we arrived [in Zurich]. Why they let us go we still don’t know. The children were fabulous. When, after we had crossed the border, they were reunited with Hedy and Greta, they were immediately cheerful, despite everything that had happened.

Here we are deciding what to do next. Erwin [my mother’s first cousin, son of Aunt Gerti] is naturally a great support; he is charm and graciousness itself. He thinks our parents will be able to enter Italy legally.

Enough for today. Can you imagine that the whole passage through snowy mountains under gorgeous blue skies didn’t induce the slightest feeling of regret in me? From this you can surmise what the last days have been like. In Vienna, no one without a swastika, the Wasa Gymnasium [across the street from our apartment] a barracks for the Hitler Youth, etc. I’ll write soon again and I hope better. Write: Zurich / main post office. To Vienna write very cautiously: about us only, “I have very good news from Ilse.”

My first reaction today to the juxtaposition of my own account to my mother’s is one of enormous gratitude and admiration for a mother who could make what must have been a nightmare trip so relatively benign for us children that my immediate memory, a year or so later, was of the delicious ham sandwiches we ate at what I euphemistically refer to

as the station restaurant. And indeed, in the next chapter of *Eine Reise nach Amerika*, I am already writing about the games we played at the Pension Schmelzberg in Zurich, where we spent the next two months and where the only war on our horizon was the “war” my brother Walter and I declared on our cousins and their new friend, Winnetou. The latter was a slightly older girl who was staying with her Jewish mother (her father was evidently “Aryan”<sup>17</sup>), at our *pension*: they too were trying to obtain a visa. Winnetou, ironically enough, was named for the Apache chief who is the protagonist of the exotic adventure tales of Karl May, the popular author on whose fiction Winnetou’s dramatist father had evidently based one of his plays. Ironically, Karl May also happened to be the favorite boyhood author of Hitler. “I read him,” Hitler was to recall, “by candlelight and with a large magnifying glass by moonlight.” And when, some time later, May was exposed as have invented many of his historical and geographical “facts” about American Indians, Hitler, who borrowed dress clothes so as to attend a lecture May gave in Vienna in 1912, a lecture calling for a future world in which there would only be a single race—was thrilled by May’s words and remained a staunch Winnetou defender.<sup>18</sup> “At Easter,” I wrote in my third chapter, “Winnetou’s mother told us we should stop fighting. But suddenly the word came that we were going to America and we had to learn English quickly.” Mother, who had studied English at school, gave us daily lessons. Within a few weeks we had learned enough to perform *Little Red Riding Hood*. Walter, of course, was the wolf and I Red Riding Hood. But since Mother and Daddy’s English had the standard British speech inflections that German speakers in those days learned as a matter of course, it did not quite prepare us for the actual language we would soon be hearing in New York.

To begin one’s exile from Nazi Austria with a performance of a Grimm fairy tale in which one of the actors was a refugee girl named Winnetou: this is the sort of paradox that haunted the Viennese-Jewish culture of my childhood. It is significant, for example, that my mother’s words of explanation to us children were, “Now we are no longer Austrians. Hitler has taken Austria.” There is no mention of our having to leave as *Jews*, no doubt because despite our nominal Jewishness, we had been

brought up as *Austrians*. In the photographs taken on summer vacations in the Salzkammergut or the Tyrol, we children—and here even my mother (but not Great-Grandmother Rosenthal)-- are dressed in dirndls or lederhosen [fig. 23]



fig. 23 SEEFELD, 1934, Clockwise: Gabriele and Walter Mintz, Ilse Schüller Mintz, Great Grand-Mother Malvine Rosenthal.

Indeed, the wearing of the traditional costume (*Volkstracht*), with its emphasis on *Heimat* and the *Land*, stems back to fin-de-siècle Vienna. In 1907, my mother Ilse is depicted on vacation in Igl, wearing a particularly elegant dirndl [fig. 24]. And in a 1913 photograph

[fig. 25], posed in the studio as a scene in front of a little Alpine hut, Ilse and her sisters wear “simple” dirndls, while their two boy cousins Stephan and Friedl Berndt, the sons of Hedi and Herman Blau, sport lederhosen and peasant jackets. Against the backdrop of this “Alpine Hut,” my mother is holding a butter churn, and the caption above the window reads “Da gibts koa Sünd!”—Austrian dialect for “Here there’s no evil!”

As late as 1937 in Selva [fig. 26] my father, holding my hand, is wearing the familiar costume-- Loden jacket, lederhosen, embroidered suspenders, and high white socks and mountain boots--whereby the most sophisticated of Viennese urbanites might play at being so many authentic Germanic peasants. What my father did not know is that, within the year, there would be a new Nazi government that would pass a law forbidding Jews to wear dirndls and loden suits.

In pre-World War II Vienna, national identity regularly trumped ethnicity, not to mention religion. So “assimilated” were the Austrian upper middle-class Jewish families like my own, many of whose members had been baptized decades earlier, that the Nazi takeover of Austria and immediate expulsion and torture of the Jews came, as my mother notes, as a terrible—and unanticipated—shock. Indeed, the Nazi police taunt—“Aha, from Vienna? Surely from the Leopoldstadt”—must have been perceived by my parents as the ultimate insult: the Leopoldstadt was the enclave of the Eastern unassimilated Jews—men and women in



*fig. 24 Ilse Schüller, Iglis, 1907*



*fig. 25 Clockwise, Cousin Stefan Berndt, Ilse Schüller, Friedl Berndt, Hilde Schüller, Great Grandmother Malvine Rosenthal, Susi Schüller, Iglis 1913*

strange garb who spoke Yiddish and went to the synagogue—men and women who were entirely “foreign” to us and counted as vulgar (*ordinär*) and uneducated (*ungebildet*).

Such class consciousness was exacerbated, in the case of my own family, by a particular circumstance. My mother’s special sense of shock at the “terrible news” of the Anschluss - a coup with hindsight largely predictable for months before it occurred, if not as early as July 1934, when Nazi thugs openly murdered the devoutly Catholic and conservative but staunchly anti-Nazi Austrian Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss— had to do with the position of my maternal grandfather, Richard Schüller.

At sixty-eight, after a long and distinguished career as diplomat and statesman, Grandfather was a close advisor to Kurt Schuschnigg, who had succeeded Dollfuss and was to be the last chancellor of an independent Austria.

Richard Schüller was born in 1870 in Brünn (Brno) in what is now the Czech Republic. The son of a well-off wool manufacturer whose business failed in the late 1880s, he went to Vienna to study law and then economics with the famous Professor Karl Menger, supporting himself in part as a tutor (*Hauslehrer*) to the children of rich families. His dream was to become a professor but in 1898 he was invited to enter the government, first in the Department of Commerce, then, after World War I, in the Foreign Office. In his memoir, published in Austria in 1990 under the title *Unterhändler des Vertrauens (Negotiator of Trust)*, Grandfather

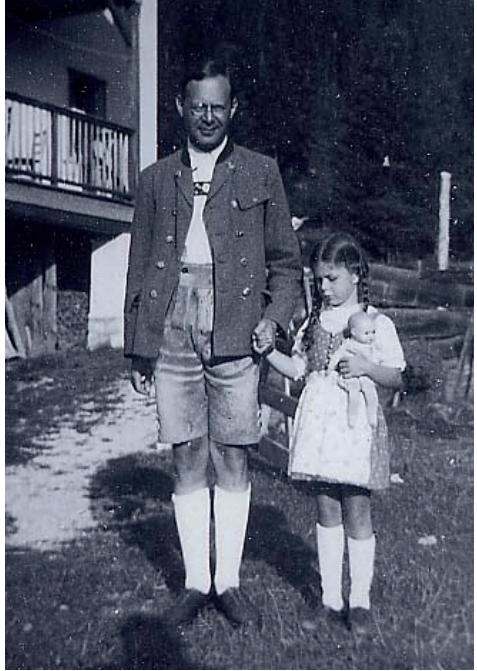


fig. 26 Maximilian Mintz with Gabriele in Selva, 1937

recalls that as the only Jew in the division, he was regularly begged by his superiors to “allow” himself to be baptized. He refused, not because he had any allegiance to the Jewish religion or even to Jewish culture, but because he disliked the idea of what was known as career baptism (*die Karrieretaufe*).<sup>19</sup>

Both his brothers, by contrast, were baptized Lutherans. The youngest, Hugo, was first married to the fabulously wealthy and Jewish Lili Fanto; later, he married a beautiful Catholic woman named Ritti Schiff, who, as it happened, refused to leave Vienna, supposedly because she knew no English and was terrified at the thought of emigration. So Hugo fled alone, first to London, where he was sent to a internment camp for enemy aliens on the Isle of Man, and then in 1939 to New York. The middle brother, Ludwig studied law in Vienna and was also a *Hauslehrer*, primarily to one or the other of the twelve children of Theodor von Taussig, the director of the *Boden-Kreditanstalt*, which was the emperor’s own bank. This “Jewish Lohengrin,” as Ludwig was evidently known in Vienna society (UV 106), married one of his charges, Gertrude--the Aunt Gerti mentioned in my mother’s letter--who had no trouble at the Austrian border because, having been raised in a family that had converted to Christianity decades earlier, and being extremely rich, she was evidently allowed to be Aryan.

The Ludwig Schüllers were the most elegant, rich, and snobbish members of the family. Their sons Erwin and Teddy had an English nanny and their perfect posture was said to be the result of sleeping on a board as young children. It was Uncle Erwin who was so “fabulously helpful” in obtaining our visa in Zurich. Ludwig himself had committed suicide in 1931, just a few months before I was born, when his own bank, Auspritz & Lieben was the first to go under in the 1929 crash. His tragic death by drowning in the Danube resonated through my childhood years. Erwin himself was also to commit suicide some forty years later in New York, jumping from the window of a Madison Avenue skyscraper, perhaps because his own brilliant career had faltered, perhaps for personal reasons.

And there were other Taussig / Schüller casualties. One of Gerti’s many siblings was the well-established painter Helene von Taussig (born

1879), who studied with Maurice Dennis in Paris and later lived and worked in Salzburg. After the Anschluss, her house was appropriated and she was no longer allowed to exhibit, but although Helene evidently had many opportunities to leave Austria, she stayed on. With the outbreak of war in 1940, she moved to Vienna and took refuge in a convent. But in 1942, the convent was raided and, despite her age, Helene was deported to the Izbica Lubelska concentration camp in Poland, where she was killed. Many of her canvases were unfortunately lost, but in the 1990s, her paintings [see **fig. 27**] were rediscovered, and they have been the subject of numerous exhibitions, the first of which—ironically enough—was the 2002 *Juden in Salzburg*.<sup>20</sup>

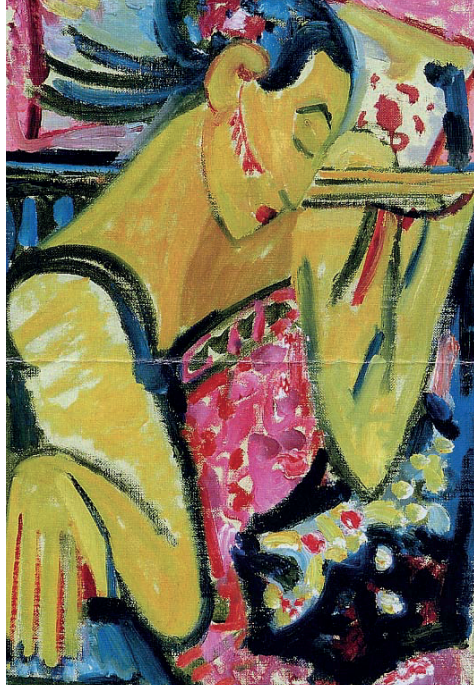


fig. 27 Helene Taussig, *Exotic Dancer*, 1936

These were, in any case, Grandfather Schüller's years of diplomatic renown. Handsome, charming, socially adept, a great ladies' man, Grandfather held one high post after another—for example, he was chief negotiator for Austria of the Peace Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with the Russians in 1917 and, later, Austrian ambassador to the League of Nations in Geneva. At the same time, he managed to produce important scholarly works on monetary theory and trade policy.

In the immediate aftermath of World War I, when, in Grandfather's words, "the Austrian Monarchy, more than 600 years old, fell to pieces silently in a few days" (UV 216), his first priority was to save his country, no matter what the effort. In "Finis Austriae," he described in moving



detail the autumn of 1918, when the former multi-national, multi-ethnic empire was broken into seven parts—Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Yugoslavia, Rumania, and the territories ceded to Italy. The new Austrian republic, now consisting only of the city of Vienna and the Alpine territories, had lost three quarters of its former food supply and ninety percent of its coal, precipitating a series of crises for the newly elected Social Democratic government led by Karl Renner, with Victor Adler as secretary of state. So desperate was the situation in the winter of 1919 that the people of Vienna looted shops and stole wood for fuel from the Wienerwald. Grandfather, now serving Renner in the Foreign Office, sought in vain to get the necessary foreign loans from the Allied Powers. When these failed to help, he turned to Italy, which, as one of the victorious powers of World War I, now saw Austria as a useful buffer between itself and Germany. In 1923, Grandfather made the first of many major trade agreements with the representative of the new Italian premier, Mussolini, whom he began to visit regularly. Mussolini, as the memoir tells it, seems to have placed great trust in Grandfather's judgment on issues of trade, and their fruitful association evidently helped to quell the terrible inflation then plaguing Austria.

The idea that Mussolini's Fascist regime was the self-declared enemy of all democratic process, and that *Il Duce*, who advocated the necessity of continuous imperialist conquest as a way to keep the empire alive, was not to be trusted, does not seem to have been an issue. Indeed, Grandfather's allegiance was never to party, much less to ideology, but to the Austria he had been serving so successfully since the turn of the century. If, in the immediate postwar years, he had been happy to work with the Socialist leader Otto Bauer, later he was equally content to serve the conservative Christian Socialist Ignaz Seipel. Grandfather seems to have been a genuine patriot: if he was at home in aristocratic circles, he also loved to sit in a Grinzing *Heuriger* (as the Austrian wine bar is called), drinking schnapps or beer with the locals, with whom he swapped jokes and stories in the Viennese dialect of the *Volk*, with its soft vowels and dropped consonants. Not surprisingly, then, although he knew precisely how precarious the financial and economic situation of Austria had be-

come, Grandfather was blind to the insidiously growing Nazi presence that was to culminate in the Anschluss.

I surmise this from a story my cousin Herbert Schüller, born in 1905, tells in his memoir. In the winter of 1938, Herbert, whose business and family were based in Budapest, decided to take a ski vacation with his younger brother George in the Arlberg. Passing through Vienna at the beginning of March, he saw “in the streets and many other places hordes of yelling and shouting young men . . . milling around with swastika bands around their arms. They seemed entirely uncontrolled by the police and were a nuisance to everybody who did not cry with them, ‘Heil Hitler.’” Even Herbert, who describes himself and his wife Lorle (then pregnant) as living “the sybaritic life of the Hungarian upper middle class,” became nervous and wondered whether it would be prudent to go on a ski vacation. On March 3, he visited Grandfather at his office in the Ballhausplatz and asked whether it would be safe to travel. “Let the rabble yell,” was Grandfather’s response. “They will soon get hoarse.” So Herbert and George went on their ski vacation. On the night of the Anschluss they had no choice but to ski cross-country for hours before they could catch a train that would bring them back to Vienna and Budapest respectively—and soon thereafter into exile.

How could Grandfather have been so wrong at this fateful moment? In his memoir, recounting Schuschnigg’s last speech to Parliament (a speech whose section on economic affairs Grandfather himself had written), he recounts Schuschnigg’s plans for the plebiscite of March 13, in which seventy percent or so of the voters were projected to vote for an independent Austria, but which was suddenly canceled when Hitler brazenly declared the plebiscite null and void and ordered his troops to cross the border the night of March 11. “I went home,” writes Grandfather, “and knew it was over.” As for the next day, when his resignation was accepted by his former close colleagues and friends, without the proffer of his pension (after forty years of service), he admits dryly (UV, 176), “Despite everything, I had not had the right conception.”

But what was the right conception, and who had it? Egon Schwarz, a professor of German literature at Washington University in St. Louis,

who was fifteen at the time and who came from a very different Jewish milieu--a lower-middle class family living in very modest circumstances and observing the High Holy Days-- recalls in his memoir that his mother had gone to Pressburg (Bratislava) for a few days to visit her family and had planned to come back in time for the plebiscite. When it was canceled and the Anschluss announced on the radio on the evening of March 11, he and his father were stunned. Hadn't Schuschnigg promised just a few days earlier that if the plebiscite succeeded, he would include Social Democrats in his government?<sup>21</sup>

Why was what seems with hindsight an inevitable outcome so hard to predict? This is a question too difficult and complex to take up here. On the 13<sup>th</sup>, in any case, the Mintz and Strauss families fled. A day or two later, Grandmother Schüller and her mother, Great-grandmother Rosenthal took a night train to Rome, where my Aunt Susi (my mother's middle sister who had married an Italian, Giorgio Piroli, two years earlier) lived. The two grandmothers then found asylum in England and later in the U.S. Grandfather stayed behind, partly because he was reluctant to leave without having settled the question of his pension, partly, I suppose, out of pride: he felt his colleagues might still need his counsel and he might still make a contribution. But within days, it became doubtful that he would be so much as *permitted* to leave. In response to his application to the Gestapo to emigrate to Rome, a letter came from the SS-Standartenführer Dr. Wächter that read as follows:

It is well known that Schüller functioned as a typical traitor of a Capitalist and freemasonry persuasion and that he was undoubtedly connected to the international plot to reduce Austria to slavery to the Western powers.

This letter, dated 20 June 1938 is signed "Heil Hitler!" A second letter, written a week later, explains that because of his advanced age, there is no point putting Schüller in a concentration camp, but that the permission to leave Austria would not be granted.

As for Grandfather's putative pension, not only did the Nazis consid-

er his request laughable, but they now went after his other assets, including the securities he held in his Swiss bank account. According to the new law of April 27, 1938, Grandfather had to sign these over immediately: his list includes such items as thirty shares of Bendix Aviation at \$12.00 a share and another thirty of American Metal at \$25.00 a share. It is signed and dated “Wien, 11 Juli.” By the time the government tried to obtain these stocks from Geneva, “the Jew Dr. Richard Schüller” had disappeared. But as late as January 2, 1939, the Reichsbank notified the Ministry for Commerce that these funds must be ap-

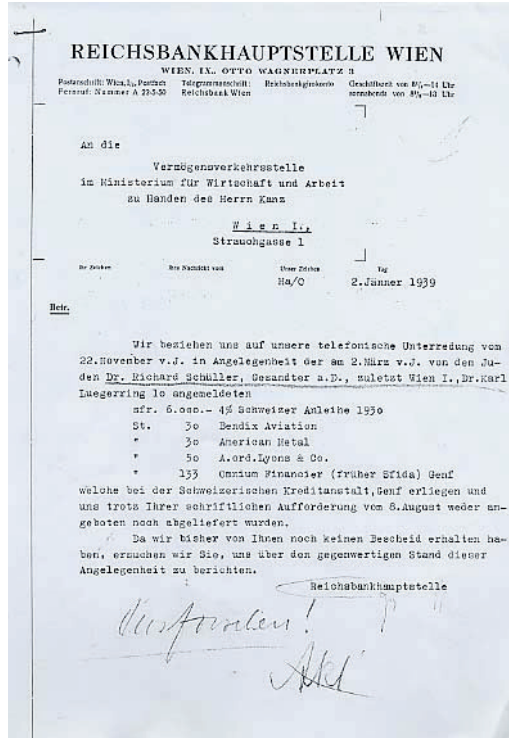


fig. 28

propriated and delivered immediately [fig. 28]. The document has the handwritten codicil “Investigate!” (Ausforschen!), and the follow-up letters all refer to “the Jew Richard Schüller” or “Richard Schüller Israel.”

I have typescripts of these documents, and whenever I see the “Heil Hitler!” above the official signature, my stomach churns. Grandfather himself, however, seems to have taken things calmly: in June 1938, Susi came from Rome and stayed with him in the beautiful old apartment on the Ringstrasse; they played bridge with Aunt Ritti and her friends and went to such parks and cafés as still permitted Jews to be on the premises. He recalls the day in June when his tailor Wesely said, “Business is better. But if I were you, Excellency, I wouldn’t stay in this city” (UV, 180). And indeed in July, Grandfather’s escape took place. He took the



*fig. 29*

night train and then bus to Gurgl, high in the Austrian Alps on the Italian border, where Susi and Giorgio were waiting for him. All three took a mountain trail up the Ferwalljoch [**fig. 29**].

Here is Grandfather's later account:

It was a beautiful day, the ascent easy. We lunched, met no one, no Austrian border guards. After about three hours, when we had reached the top, Susi gave me a little shove and said, "Now you're in Italy." She and Giorgio turned around and went back. From the frontier on, the trail was bad: a steep ridge that was supposed to have a rope rail but the rope was broken and hung down. Then a snowfield where two Italian border guards with a police dog came toward me. They said passage on this path was forbidden and I must immediately go back. I

said, “I am fleeing.” They: “Yes but you cannot proceed without permission.” I: “I’m tired, may I rest in your barracks and then explain.” They: “But afterwards you will have to go back.” They left me, since they knew I couldn’t go forward or back. It had become foggy and I had to climb along steep ridges and couldn’t see the ground.

In the barracks, I found a dozen soldiers and the lieutenant and sergeant that I had met in the snow. . . . An old Tyrolean woman was waiting on them. I had tea with rum, went outside with the lieutenant, told him who I was without mentioning Mussolini, and suggested that he ask his commander what should happen to me. Evidently he regarded this as an interesting distraction from the boredom of border patrol. He let me sign a protocol that I had been taken a prisoner for forbidden border crossing. I was thrilled. Slept in a room with the sergeant and his dog after I had eaten a schnitzel. In the morning we made our way to Merano, walking rapidly for four hours; I felt it in my legs. The Italians were nice, carried my rucksack, gave me food and drink, photographed our group. [Figure 10]. Down in the valley, we took a car . . . and in Merano they took me to a hotel and requested only that I not go too far away. I went for a walk, ate some onion roast and drank two pitchers of beer. The commander said that the lieutenant should have sent me back. But since my passage was a *fait accompli*, he would ask the prefect in Bolzano what to do. The prefect, in turn, said he would make inquiries in Rome. At night, he came to me with a friendly smile and said I was free and the guest of the Italian government. A telegram had come from Rome: “L’amico Schüller è benvenuto” —Mussolini.” A police detective accompanied me to Florence, took care of all my needs, and put me on a bus to Vallombrosa.

Wonderful days in Vallombrosa, reunited and freed from the

worst pressure, despite the uncertainty of the future.  
(UV 180-81)

The photograph of Grandfather with the Italian soldiers [**fig. 30**] hangs in my study. What intrigues me is that, whereas the soldiers are wearing the appropriate alpine uniform, Grandfather is wearing a tweed suit with knickers, a vest, a shirt and tie, a hat, and he is carrying an umbrella. Everyone is smiling, but again, consider the ironies of the whole situation. At a time of hysterical nationalist frenzy, the Austrian Jewish diplomat is saved by *Il Duce*, the Italian Fascist dictator, because of their longstanding diplomatic friendship. Richard Schüller can converse with the soldiers who arrest him in fluent Italian. Again, had he not been trained all his life as an Austrian sportsman, had he not known these mountains intimately from countless summer vacations and winter ski trips, he probably wouldn't have made it. Discipline—the discipline that allowed a man close to seventy to do without any of the amenities we now take for granted—stood him in good stead. He must, after all, have slept in those clothes: I doubt he carried a clean shirt or even a toothbrush in his rucksack. And he knew he had lost all his material belongings.

At the same time, I find Grandfather's actions between March and July 1938 somewhat troubling. He might easily have been imprisoned, interred, or killed by the Gestapo, as were many of his friends. He let his wife and family leave without him because he



fig. 30 Richard Schuller Crossing the Alps.  
With Military border Guard, July 1938

was determined to get his pension—which he never got, although many years later there were some war reparations. He thought that his old friends and colleagues would remain loyal to him; of course they did not. It is not clear that, even after his *Sound of Music* mountain-style escape, he fully understood what had happened—and what would happen to other Austrian Jews less fortunate than himself. On the contrary, after the Vallombrosa idyll, when our immediate family had left for America and he remained in Rome for another three months before going on to London, where he hoped to obtain some work and a visa to the United States, he talks of “once again enjoying Rome” and spending charmed hours in his beloved Vatican Museum and with former diplomatic friends. Felice Guarneri, the president of the Bank of Rome, reports Mussolini having asked him, “*Che crede è venuto tra le monte?*” (“Guess who’s come over the mountains?”). “*L’amico Schüller.*” (UV, 181). Grandfather makes no overt criticism, here or anywhere in the correspondence I have seen, of the Italian Fascist government and its new alliance with Nazi Germany.

Grandfather’s values were, in this regard, the values of his time and place. Equal rights were deemed to be less important than individual integrity and heroism, grace under pressure, the ability to win over others by the force of one’s own personality, and, above all, *action* rather than introspection as to what might have been, especially since the fledgling Austrian Republic was increasingly threatened by dire food shortages, financial collapse and possible dissolution. As for *Amerika*, although Grandfather had spent happy days there on a lengthy diplomatic mission in 1928, it was too strange and too remote a place to figure largely in one’s consciousness. In 1928 America, Grandfather recalls, when he was taken for a drive up the Hudson by an embassy official, he was amazed to see limousines equipped with machine guns to ward off “gangsters,” and he was shocked by the extremes of wealth and poverty on exhibit in New York. The skyscrapers, beautiful as they were at night, were spoiled in daylight by the ugly fire escapes that Theodor Adorno would later complain about in *Minima Moralia*. In Chicago, when Grandfather was met at the train by a Colonel Causey and a Colonel Smith, who had been stationed in Vienna, the two Americans immediately produced bottles of



bootlegged whiskey, much to Grandfather's bemusement.

The spring of 1938 was an odd sort of idyll. Fortunately, both my grandfathers had modest bank deposits in Switzerland: Grandfather Mintz, who was an eminent *Justitzrat*, had had the foresight to deposit his legal fees from foreign clients in Swiss banks; Grandfather Schüller had deposited much or all of his League of Nations salary in Geneva. These funds, itemized in the notorious document described above, tided us over. I learned only much later from my cousin Hedy, who is four years older than I and thus overheard some of the late-night family conversations at the Pension Schmelzberg in Zurich, that the decision to apply for visas to the United States was by no means an automatic one. Otto Strauss evidently thought the Nazi Anschluss might blow over and perhaps we could go back to Vienna. My parents considered emigrating to a familiar Italy, where they would be reunited with Susi and the Schüller grandparents. It was only Grandfather Mintz who had the foresight to know that these were simply not viable alternatives for Jews, that indeed we *must* go to America.



fig. 31

In his youth, Alexander Mintz had aspired to become a writer: he was a member of the literary coterie of Arthur Schnitzler, Hermann Bahr, and Peter Altenberg that met at the Café Griensteidl [fig. 31]. Later in New York, he came back to the love of his youth and wrote a novel about the social life of Vienna in the interwar years. Unfortunately, it was unfinished when he died quite suddenly of a heart attack in 1941. In her journal, his daughter Stella reports that evidently the young and rebellious Alexander, having settled down as a lawyer and married Amélie Schur, the heiress of a wealthy and prominent Russian Jewish family, whom he met in Baden-Baden, became a more observant Jew, in keeping with norms of the Schurs, many of whom had come to Vienna from Galizia and practiced their religion quite openly. Accordingly, he understood, as the wholly assimilated Schüller side of the family evidently did not, that as Jews we must leave not only Austria but Europe itself. For my family, as for so many Austro-Jewish families, the loss of the country that was theirs was never quite recuperated.

#### 4. Writing in Exile

Let's return now to the larger post-Habsburg picture. After the Anschluss in 1938, the Austrian writers of the interwar period found themselves in limbo. Wittgenstein, who had been living and teaching in Cambridge since 1930, wrote in his diary, "I am now in an extraordinarily difficult situation. Through the incorporation of Austria into the German Reich I have become a German citizen. That is for me a frightful circumstance, for I am now subject to a power that I do not in any sense recognize."<sup>22</sup> The venom here is directed of course at the Third Reich rather than at Germany per se, but it is also the case that Wittgenstein had never considered himself a German. In the current situation, his choice was obvious: he must become a British citizen. To John Maynard Keynes, he wrote:

The thought of acquiring British citizenship had *occurred* to me before; but I have always rejected it on the ground that I do not wish to become a sham-English-man (I think you will

understand what I mean). The situation has however entirely changed for me now. For now I have to choose between two new nationalities, one of which deprives me of *everything*, while the other, at least, would allow me to work in a country in which I have spent on and off the greater part of my adult life, have made my greatest friends and have done my best work.<sup>23</sup>

Wittgenstein was more fortunate than most: although he never felt fully at home in Cambridge, he was able to become a British citizen and carry on his life's work. Canetti, who also escaped to England, remained a more embattled—and alienated—figure. Karl Kraus, whose last major satire, *Third Walpurgisnacht* (1933), begins with the dismissive sentence, “Mir fällt zu Hitler nichts ein” (“I have nothing to say about Hitler”),<sup>24</sup> came to recognize, by the time of his death in 1936, that he had grossly underestimated Nazi power. Joseph Roth, in Paris, regarded 1939 as endgame and turned to drink even more; he was soon dead. In the same year, Robert Musil, who was still working on his great novel *The Man without Qualities*, was forced to take his family to Zurich, where he had no financial prospects whatsoever and was to die in penury. And the eighteen-year old Paul Celan, at home with his family in Bukovina, then part of Rumania and hence “protected” by the Soviets when war first began, did not anticipate the Nazi take-over in 1940, much less the Holocaust. His is the saddest Habsburg story of all.

From Kraus to Celan, in any case, Austrian literature had its own particular identity. The nostalgia for an empire within which it had flourished and the ever-impending threat of war and expulsion cast a long shadow on its particular scene of writing—a scene in which the High German acquired in childhood and youth by students of Goethe and Schiller, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche (as well as of Grillparzer, Nestroy, and Raimund) was tempered by the fact that the Austrian modernists were primarily Jewish and regularly in contact with the languages of the Empire's Others. Austro-Modernist literature of the “Long War” years was, quite literally, a literature on the edge.

Notes

- 1 See Lisa Silverman, *Becoming Austrian: Jews and Culture between the World Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 10-11; Gordon Brook-Shepherd, *The Austrians: A Thousand-Year Odyssey* (New York: Carrol & Graf, 1996), 233-51.
- 2 Stefan Zweig, *The World of Yesterday*, trans. Benjamin Huebsch and Helmut Ripberger (1943; Viking, 2011), 285. In his autobiography *Interesting Times: A Twentieth Century Life* (New York: Pantheon, 2002), Eric Hobsbawm refers to Austria as “a smallish provincial republic of great beauty, which did not believe it ought to exist,” 8.
- 3 Gregor von Rezzori, *The Snows of Yesteryear: Portraits for an Autobiography*, trans. H. F. Broch de Rothermann (New York: New York Review Books, 1989), 275-76.
- 4 Robert Musil, *The Man without Qualities*, Part 1 chapter 4, trans. Sophie Wilkins, editorial consultant Burton Pike (New York: Alfred. A. Knopf, 1995), 11; Robert Musil, *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1978), 16.
- 5 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, German text with an English translation *en regard* by C. K. Ogden, with an Introduction by Bertrand Russell (1922; London and New York: Routledge, 1992). References are to proposition numbers (§) rather than pages:  
 §5.634 Alles, was wir sehen, könnte auch anders sein.  
 §6.41 Der Sinn der Welt muss ausserhalb ihrer liegen. In der Welt ist alles wie es ist and geschieht alles wie es geschieht.
- 6 See Hermine Wittgenstein, “My Brother Ludwig,” in Rhees, 1-13: see p. 3; Ray Monk, *Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius* (Macmillan: The Free Press, 1990), 111.
- 7 Joseph Roth, *A Life in Letters*, trans. and ed. Michael Hofmann (New York: Norton, 2012), 56.
- 8 Eric Hobsbaum, “Coda,” *Interesting Times*, 419-20.
- 9 Silverman, 22.
- 10 Richard Schüller, *Unterhändler des Vertrauens: Aus den nachgelassenen Schriften von Sektionschef Dr. Richard Schüller*, ed. and trans Jürgen Nautz (München: R. Oldenbourg, 1990), 216-18.
- 11 I draw here on Brigitte Hamann, “Jews in Vienna,” *Hitler’s Vienna: A Dictator’s Apprenticeship*, trans. Thomas Thornton (New York: Oxford, 1999), 325-59. Cf. Thomas Weyr, *The Setting of the Pearl: Vienna under Hitler* (New York: Oxford, 2005), Chapter 2 *passim*.
- 12 Brook-Shepherd, 98-99. And see Silverman, Introduction: “The Price of Inclusion,” 3-27.
- 13 See Hamann, *Hitler’s Vienna*, 343-46.

- 14 Bernard Wasserstein, *On the Eve: the Jews of Europe Before the Second World War*, (New York: Simon & Shuster, 2012), 18-19, xvii.
- 15 See Edward Timms, *Karl Kraus: Apocalyptic Satirist: The Post-War Crisis and the Rise of the Swastika* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 29-30. Timms estimates that when one includes the converted Jews in one's count, the percentage of Jews in Vienna was close to 30%. His chapter "Austrian Identity Politics" (21-40) is a very valuable succinct source on the crisis of postwar Austrian history and the sharp rise of anti-Semitism. I am indebted to this book, subsequently cited as Timms, throughout. His earlier volume, as well as Timms's earlier volume, *Karl Kraus: Apocalyptic Satirist: Culture and Catastrophe in Habsburg Vienna* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), has an important chapter on *The Last Days of Mankind*, titled "Documentary Drama and Apocalyptic Allegory," 371-87.
- 16 See William M. Johnston, *The Austrian Mind; an Intellectual and Social History 1848-1938* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 238.
- 17 The word *Aryan*, originally applied to the Indo-European languages in their pure form, was introduced by the Nazi regime in 1932 to designate Germans of "pure" or non-Jewish blood. As such, *Aryan* is of course a racist term that I dislike using. But it was the term used by both Jews and non-Jews at the time to differentiate the two, and so one cannot gloss over it.
- 18 See Brigitte Hamann, *Hitler's Vienna*, pp. 11, 382-84.
- 19 Richard Schüller, *Unterhändler des Vertrauens*, ed. Jürgen Nautz (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1990), p. 112. This memoir is mostly in German but contains an English section called "Finis Austriae" that repeats some of the most dramatic stories about the post-World War I reconstruction period in Vienna (see pp.216-272). Subsequently cited as UV.
- 20 The exhibition at the Carolino Augusteum in Salzburg opened on 26 July 2002. The catalog essay (Salzburg: Pustig Verlag, 2002), sent to me by Andrew Schüller, Teddy's son, who visits Austria quite regularly, contains a well-documented, illustrated essay by Helga Embacher, which I cite here.
- 21 Egon Schwarz, *Keine Zeit für Eichendorff: Chronik unfreiwilliger Wanderjahre* (Königstein: Athenäum, 1979), pp. 33-35.
- 22 Wittgenstein Ms 120, Trinity College, Cambridge, cited by Ray Monk, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius* (New York: Macmillan, 1990), 394.
- 23 Cited in Monk, 395.
- 24 *Dritte Walpurgisnacht* was published only posthumously: the authoritative edition is Christian Wagenknecht (ed.), *Dritte Walpurgisnacht* (Munich: Suhrkamp, 1989). For the Hitler sentence and other short extracts, see *Fackel* (1933): F890-905, 153). According to Edward Timms, *Apocalyptic Satirist, Dritte Walpurgisnacht* "incorporates over a thousand excerpts from the political discourse of 1933, interwoven with more than two hundred literary allusions" (Timms 496).



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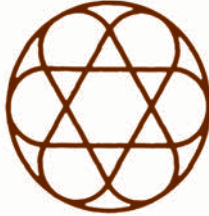
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