

Culture, Community and Belonging in the Jewish Sections of Vienna's Central Cemetery¹

TIM CORBETT

Vienna

Vienna's Central Cemetery is one of the largest cemeteries in Europe, extending over 2.5 km² and containing some 330,000 graves in which over three million people have been interred since its creation in the 1860s, almost twice the number of living Viennese citizens today.² It is so large that it has its own internal public bus route, the 106. Its creation transformed the outskirts of the city's eleventh district, Simmering, into a parade of mortuaries, stonemasons and flower shops, with tram line 71 having constituted the physical and associative link between the city centre, the Vienna of the living, and the Central Cemetery, the Vienna of the dead, since its inauguration in the 1900s. A popular tourist attraction, each year on All Saints' Day alone the Central Cemetery draws an estimated average of one million visitors.³ It is one of Europe's most striking examples of the nineteenth-century necropolis, 'no longer', as Phillippe Ariès explained this modern phenomenon, 'a municipal repository but a place to be visited'.⁴ It is also the greatest, or at least the largest, demonstration of the idiosyncratically Viennese fascination with death, which finds its most peculiar expression in the *schöne Leich* or beautiful funeral.⁵

Cemeteries have long attracted literati and artists, becoming moreover spaces of keen intellectual inquiry in recent decades. Michel Foucault posited them as

¹ I am indebted to Thomas Rohkrämer, Corinna Peniston-Bird, Ines Koeltzsch, Béla Rásky, Deborah Holmes, Lisa Silverman and the anonymous peer-reviewers for their insightful and constructive feedback on earlier versions of this work. This exploratory paper was distilled from part of a larger research project on the history of Vienna's Jewish cemeteries currently being prepared for publication as a monograph entitled *Die Grabstätten meiner Väter. Die jüdischen Friedhöfe in Wien*.

² <<http://www.friedhofewien.at/eportal2/ep/channelView.do/pageTypeId/75472/channelId/-54304>>, *Wiener Zentralfriedhof* (accessed 12 October 2015). See also Isabella Ackerl, 'Vom Zentrum an den Stadtrand. Wiener Friedhöfe und ihre Geschichte', in *Der Schöne Tod in Wien. Friedhöfe, Grüfte, Gedächtnisstätten*, ed. by Isabella Ackerl, Robert Bouchal and Ingeborg Schödl (Vienna, 2008), p. 40.

³ Werner Bauer, *Wiener Friedhofsführer. Genaue Beschreibung sämtlicher Begräbnisstätten nebst einer Geschichte des Wiener Bestattungswesens* (Vienna, 2004), p. 102.

⁴ Phillippe Ariès, *The Hour of our Death* (translated by Helen Weaver, London, 1981), p. 502.

⁵ As discussed in Roman Sandgruber, 'Alltag des Fin de Siècle', in *Das Zeitalter Kaiser Franz Josephs — 2. Teil. Glanz und Elend* (Vienna, 1987), p. 149.

the most universal of ‘heterotopias’ — spaces, physical and metaphysical at once, to which each human is connected, where they are confronted with their mortality and thereby with profound questions of their being, meaning and belonging in the world.⁶ To anthropologists, burial practices constitute ‘signs of life and community [which] eclipse representations of death and separation’, illuminating ‘the most important cultural values by which people live their lives and evaluate their experiences.’⁷ The latter half of the nineteenth century, an era of rapid and tumultuous change, produced a civic society in Central Europe with a profoundly developed self-consciousness that found widespread expression in monuments and grave-memorials. The development of these cities of the dead and the sacralization of human remains, as Foucault explored, stood in direct proportion to the decline of formal religiosity in modernity, to the greater emphasis on the family as a point of reference, and to the removal of these spaces of death to the outskirts of the city: ‘the cemeteries then came to constitute, no longer the sacred and immortal heart of the city, but “the other city,” where each family possesses its dark resting place.’⁸ The nineteenth century thus witnessed the rise of a cult of the dead, with the cemetery reconceived as a communal memorial space, incidentally also a repository of socio-cultural data, as Ariès remarked: ‘the topography of the cemetery reproduces the society as a whole, just as a relief map reproduces the contours of a piece of land’.⁹

In Jewish tradition — insofar as the term can be used so singularly — the cemetery is known as the ‘House of Eternity’, in allusion to Ecclesiastes 12:5.¹⁰ Death is not the end, the cemetery not the final destination: as the cemetery holds the life that once was, it holds the life that is still to come, for ‘thus said the Lord GOD: I am going to open your graves and lift you out of the graves, O My people, and bring you to the land of Israel’ (Ezekiel 37:12). Hence this tradition commands that the ‘House of Eternity’ be inviolable; the grave is the property of the dead until such time that they shall rise again. Vienna’s Chief Rabbi Moritz Gudemann (1835–1918) poignantly articulated the profound significance of the cemetery at the opening ceremony for the newer Jewish section of the Central Cemetery in April 1917:

So stumm die Friedhöfe sind, ein so tiefes Schweigen sie bedeckt, so führen sie doch die lauteste und beredteste Sprache für den, der diese

⁶ Michel Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces’, translated by Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics*, 16.1 (Spring 1986), 22–27 (p. 25).

⁷ Richard Huntington and Peter Metcalf, *Celebrations of Death. The Anthropology of Mortuary Ritual* (Cambridge, 1979), p. 2.

⁸ Foucault, ‘Spaces’, p. 25.

⁹ Ariès, *Death*, p. 503.

¹⁰ On the cultural history of the Jewish cemetery, see Gustav Cohn, *Der jüdische Friedhof. Seine geschichtliche und kulturgeschichtliche Entwicklung mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der ästhetischen Gestaltung* (Frankfurt am Main, 1930). On *halachic*, that is Jewish-religious, provisions for the cemetery, see the influential, though orthodox-leaning, essay by Ernst Roth, ‘Zur Halachah des jüdischen Friedhofs’, *Udim*, 4 (1973), 97–119.

Sprache versteht. In diesem Verständnis ist ihre Weihe, ihre Heiligkeit, ihre Unverletzlichkeit begründet [...] Das Archiv der jüdischen Geschichte sind die jüdischen Friedhöfe. Deshalb ist für uns der Friedhof keine Stätte des Todes, sondern das 'Haus des Lebens', keine Stätte der Vergänglichkeit, sondern das 'Haus der Ewigkeit'.

[However mute the cemeteries, however deep the silence that covers them, they nevertheless speak the loudest and most eloquent language for those who know how to understand this language. Their sanctity, their holiness, their inviolability are founded in this understanding. (...) The Jewish cemeteries are the archive of Jewish history. Hence the cemetery is to us not a site of death, but the 'House of Life', not a site of transience, but the 'House of Eternity'.]¹¹

This article examines the communal politics of culture and belonging that accompanied the creation of the two Jewish sections of Vienna's Central Cemetery in the period from the 1860s to 1938: the older section known colloquially as Tor I, due to its proximity to the first gate, principally in use from 1879 to 1917, and the newer section known colloquially as Tor IV, in use from 1917 to the present day. These cemeteries are among the only physical testaments to Vienna's once illustrious Jewish community to survive the Shoah in the urban landscape. Moulded in the image of the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde, the Jewish community organization or IKG, they emerged within the fruitful yet at times tense interactions between the IKG and the city council, and between the IKG and the amorphous collective which made up Vienna's Jewish population, defined in the period before 1938 by religion and recognized by the state through membership of the IKG.¹² Arguably no other sites represent so strikingly the plethora of identities, cultures and social castes of Vienna's heterogeneous Jewish population in the much-studied late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries — while simultaneously representing the triumphs and tribulations of its embedding in the Viennese urban, political and cultural landscape.

Following recent developments in the study of Vienna's Jews before the Shoah, I here aim to demonstrate that the cemeteries offer new insights into the conflicted engagements with the concepts of 'Jewishness' and Jewish belonging in Viennese and/or Austrian culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Klaus Hödl demonstrated that Viennese culture in the last decades of Habsburg rule constituted a matrix wherein Jews and non-Jews interactively

¹¹ Quoted in *Der neue israelitische Friedhof in Wien und seine Bauten — Denkschrift* (Vienna, 1928), p. 11.

¹² No institutional history of the IKG exists to date, but a good sense of its makeup and politics can be gleaned from Walter Weitzmann, 'Die Politik der jüdischen Gemeinde Wiens zwischen 1890 und 1914', in *Eine Zerstörte Kultur. Jüdisches Leben und Antisemitismus in Wien seit dem 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. by Gerhard Botz, Ivar Oxaal, Michael Pollak and Nina Scholz (Vienna, 2002), pp. 197–226.

negotiated their identities.¹³ Lisa Silverman expounded the role that ‘Jewish difference’ played as an ever-evolving fault line along which notions of ‘Jewishness’ and ‘Austrianness’ were both defined in the interwar period, demonstrating that ‘Jewish difference’ in the ethnically and culturally divisive First Republic was ‘one of a number of analytical categories or frameworks, like gender and class, that not only intersected and overlapped, but also used each others’ terms in order to articulate their power’.¹⁴ The Jewish sections of Vienna’s Central Cemetery emerged within these conflicted negotiations of Jewishness and of belonging variably within Jewish and/or Viennese society, conditioned by the periodic ruptures in Austria’s political history from the *Ausgleich* in 1867 to the *Anschluss* in 1938. Tumultuous changes in notions of religiosity, ethnicity, class, social milieu, gender and other normative categories alongside Jewishness shaped Austrian society through this period. The cemeteries presented a space which were at once understood explicitly as Jewish, created by and for Jews, yet which simultaneously reflected the profound changes in understandings of this culture and community as they were negotiated, contested and (re)constructed through time. In these spaces, the notion of Jewishness was kaleidoscopic in its heterogeneity, singular and multiple at once: the cemeteries consist of memorials to individual Jews belonging to a loosely defined collective community, within which individual engagements with and understandings of Jewishness and communal belonging were multitudinous indeed.

While various histories have been written on Vienna’s older Jewish cemeteries, and some works have been written on the Central Cemetery more generally, only one monograph currently exists on its Jewish sections.¹⁵ This work, while offering a first inquiry into these deeply neglected spaces, essentially constitutes a brief biographical survey of prominent individuals — mostly wealthy men — buried there, and some useful primary source materials. To date, neither the origins of the Jewish sections of the Central Cemetery as communal spaces, nor the grave-memorials located therein — over 100,000 material artefacts of enormous cultural and historical significance — have been subjected to sustained analysis. Most desirable would be a concise qualitative analysis of the grave-memorials, something which unfortunately exceeds the scope of this article.¹⁶ Instead, inspired by readings of other Jewish cemeteries as palimpsestic socio-cultural memorials, I here offer a preliminary step towards

¹³ Klaus Hödl, *Wiener Juden — jüdische Wiener. Identität, Gedächtnis und Performanz im 19. Jahrhundert* (Innsbruck, 2006).

¹⁴ Lisa Silverman, *Becoming Austrians. Jews and Culture between the World Wars* (New York, 2012), p. 6.

¹⁵ Patricia Steines, *Hunderttausend Steine. Grabstellen großer Österreicher jüdischer Konfession auf dem Wiener Zentralfriedhof Tor I und Tor IV* (Vienna, 1993).

¹⁶ An example of the rewards of such an investigation is Rachel Greenblatt, ‘The Shapes of Memory. Evidence in Stone from the Old Jewish Cemetery in Prague’, *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 47 (2002), 43–67. I undertake such an analysis in the *longue durée* history of Vienna’s Jewish cemeteries in my forthcoming monograph, cited above.

filling this lacuna, based primarily on the internal memoranda of the IKG board and its relevant offices, offering a snapshot of the insights to be gleaned from a deeper exploration of Vienna's Jewish cemeteries.¹⁷

The origins of the Central Cemetery lie in Vienna's rapid urban growth following the granting of a liberal constitution for the Austrian half of the Dual Monarchy in 1867 and the resulting mass migration to the capital. The municipal cemeteries created less than a century earlier could not sustain the growing number of burials and Vienna's city council decided to settle the issue with the creation of one vast cemetery, the scale of which complemented other progressive schemes of urban planning such as the construction of the Ringstraße and the regulation of the Danube. The project quickly raised ideological concerns, evincing conflicts of attitudes between secular and sectarian positions in particular, but also between local and immigrant populations resulting from Vienna's demographic and socio-cultural diversification. The liberal-dominated city council decreed on 28 December 1869 that there was to be a general cemetery, accessible to all religions, but that religious communities could request separate sections in the cemetery if they so wished.¹⁸ The Catholic Church objected, yet was overruled by the city council which further decreed on 13 October 1874 that the cemetery was not to be consecrated.¹⁹ The religious conflict led one satirist to remark that this was more 'Zentralschlachtfeld' [Central Battlefield] than 'Zentralfriedhof' [Central Cemetery].²⁰

The cemetery, construction of which began in 1873, was divided into various subsections, the majority Catholic, some non-denominational, eventually including Protestant, Orthodox, Jewish and, more recently, Muslim and Buddhist sections. The first Jewish section at Tor I, opened in 1879, was secured by a one-time down payment. The IKG contributed to the administrative costs of running the Central Cemetery at a ratio of 20.5 to 346.5, roughly six percent, reflecting the relative size of its section and corresponding roughly to its proportion of the city's population at that time.²¹ This also reflected the IKG's role within the city's administrative organization as the representative of a significant sub-stratum of Viennese society, integrated but nevertheless separate. The IKG had been legally institutionalized, after centuries of ostracism of the city's Jewish community, by 1852. The Jewish population of the Dual Monarchy in this era constituted a good fifth of world Jewry, and was

¹⁷ A brilliant example of such a study is Barbara Mann, 'Modernism and the Zionist Uncanny. Reading the Old Cemetery in Tel Aviv', *Representations* 69, Special Issue: Grounds for Remembering (Winter, 2000), 63–95.

¹⁸ Cited in Hans Pemmer, *Der Wiener Zentralfriedhof. Seine Geschichte und seine Denkmäler* (Vienna, 1924), p. 10.

¹⁹ Hans Havelka, *Zentralfriedhof* (Vienna, 1985), p. 9.

²⁰ Cited in *ibid.*, p. 12.

²¹ [Untitled, internal report of the IKG on Vienna's Jewish cemeteries], 23 November 1939, Archiv der Israelitischen Kultusgemeinde Wien, hereafter AIKGW, A/VIE/IKG/I-II/FH/1/1.

extremely heterogeneous, deeply distinguished by differences between rich and poor, conservative and renegade, orthodox and liberal.²² This heterogeneity was reflected in the makeup of the Viennese Jewish community, its population booming at 72,000 in 1879, the year of the opening of Tor I.²³ The awareness within the Jewish community of the import of the Central Cemetery as a socio-cultural space is attested to by the creation in 1879 of a cemetery office within the IKG to administer all aspects of the new cemetery, whereupon the *chevra kadisha*, the traditional religious burial society which had hitherto administered Vienna's Jewish cemeteries, merely retained responsibility for the ritual interment of the dead.²⁴ Tor I came to be an expression of the new-found self-assuredness of Vienna's Jewish community and its umbrella organization, the IKG.

The IKG faced a considerable challenge having to balance the conflicts of interest which the heterogeneity of its membership entailed, a challenge analogous to the tasks faced by the Habsburg state. The strategies of identification within the community, which crystallized in the debates over the new Jewish cemeteries, oscillated between pluralism, such as loyalty to the Habsburg ideal of multiculturalism — a line adopted with particular insistence by the IKG leadership — and retreat into Jewish particularism, such as Orthodoxy and Zionism. Cosmopolitan individualism existed alongside but divorced from such strategies of group identification. Despite all differences, the cohesive nature of Jewish group belonging in this era is reflected in the choice of burial site. Citizens could convert to any religion and be buried in any cemetery they wished, but the vast majority of Vienna's Jews, religious or not, did not convert and chose to be buried in the Jewish sections of the Central Cemetery. The creation of the unitary cemetery therefore represented to a large degree a success story of the positive self-assertion of a united yet diverse Jewish community and its integration into Viennese society.

This success story was expounded in the speech by Chief Rabbi Adolf Jellinek (1821–1893) at the inauguration of the new cemetery in 1879:

Der Central-Friedhof bezeichnet die moderne Zeit, unsere Siege auf der ganzen Linie des staatlichen Lebens. Mit seinen stummen Leichensteinen wird er den Beginn einer neuen Geschichtsphase verkünden. Denn wer hielt es noch vor einem Vierteljahrhundert für möglich, daß ein einziger Friedhof in der Residenz Oesterreichs den Entschlafenen aller Confessionen eine einzige Ruhestätte bieten würde?

²² See for example Albert Lichtblau, *Als hätten wir dazugehört. Österreichisch-jüdische Lebensgeschichten aus der Habsburgermonarchie* (Vienna, 1999).

²³ Walter Grab, 'Das Wiener Judentum. Eine historische Übersicht', in *Voll Leben und Tod ist diese Erde. Bilder aus der Geschichte der jüdischen Österreicher (1190 bis 1945)*, ed. by Wolfgang Plat (Vienna, 1988), p. 54.

²⁴ *Bericht des Vorstandes der israel. Cultusgemeinde in Wien über seine Thätigkeit in der Periode 1890–1896* (Vienna, 1896), unpaginated.

[The Central Cemetery represents the modern age and our victories in every area of civil life. With its mute cadaver-stones it will herald the dawn of a new era in history. For who would have thought it possible a quarter-century ago that one single cemetery in the imperial capital of Austria would become the sole resting place for the deceased of all confessions?]²⁵

In the full speech, Jellinek posited the creation of the new cemetery as the culmination of the long struggle for Jewish emancipation in Austria. As a space moulded in the image of Vienna's Jewish community, his words framed it in a teleological narrative of progress and optimism befitting the spirit of the time. At the same event, the later Chief Rabbi Moritz Güdemann proclaimed:

Man wird zugeben, daß diese bisher unerhörte Einrichtung erst in der neuesten Zeit möglich gewesen ist. Es mußten erst die confessionellen Gruppen im Leben friedlich nebeneinander bestehen lernen, ehe daran gedacht werden konnte, ihre Grabstätten durch eine Umfassungsmauer zu vereinigen. Nachdem die Scheidewand zwischen den Lebenden gefallen, mochte auch die Annäherung der Todten, soweit sie bei der Verschiedenheit der Riten natürlich ist, erfolgen. Insoferne ist der neue Friedhof ein monumentales Zeugniß von dem Geiste unserer Zeit.

[Admittedly this hitherto unheard of institution only became possible very recently. The denominational groups first had to learn how to coexist peacefully in life before it was conceivable that their graves be united within one perimeter wall. Once the dividing wall between the living fell, the rapprochement of the dead, insofar as the difference in ritual allows, could follow. In this sense the new cemetery is a monumental witness to the spirit of our time.]²⁶

Expressing the same confidence and optimism in the 'spirit of our time' as Jellinek before him, Güdemann highlighted the symbolic significance of the unprecedented absence of a dividing wall between the Jewish and non-Jewish burial sites at the Central Cemetery. This absence constituted a decisive break with established Jewish tradition and illustrated the blurring of boundaries between different communities within Viennese society towards the end of the nineteenth century.

Just as the integration of the Jewish section into the overall masterplan of the Central Cemetery was indicative of the relationship between the Jewish community and the City of Vienna, so the design of Tor I was remarkable for both its deliberate and incidental reflections of the Jewish community and its place within Viennese society. The monumental entrance to the Jewish section was at Tor I, the first gate of the Central Cemetery, hence its colloquial name. This was also the site of the *beit tahara* or ritual funerary house, a neo-classical design by the prolific Jewish-Viennese architect Wilhelm Stiassny (1842–1910), which constituted the focal point of the Jewish section. From here, its main axis

²⁵ *Toast auf die Mitglieder der Chewra Kadischa*, 2 March 1879, cited in Steines, *Steine*, p. 43.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

— the Zeremonienallee or Ceremonial Avenue — ran roughly south. Although the IKG autonomously administered the cemetery, the numbering system of the sections and their layout was integrated into the infrastructure of the Central Cemetery as a whole, a demand of the city council when negotiations over the IKG's lease of the land were first held.²⁷ Various subdivisions existed, such as the soldiers' graves created in section 76B during the First World War, while the area surrounding the *beit tahara*, as well as the plots along the Ceremonial Avenue, lent themselves to the expression of prominence and wealth. The plots along the perimeter wall include the imposing [...] mausolea of entrepreneurial families, as well as the grave-houses of Chassidic rabbis, many of whom fled to Vienna during the First World War. In summary, the spatial layout at Tor I portrays both the illustriousness and the diversity of Vienna's Jewish community in the *fin de siècle*. It remains one of the largest Jewish cemeteries in Europe, containing an estimated 52,000 grave-memorials commemorating over 100,000 individuals, and at 232,500 m² is second only to the newer Jewish section at Tor IV in area.²⁸

Family plots became the norm in both Jewish and non-Jewish Viennese sepulchral culture in the late nineteenth century, with individual grave-memorials, whether modest or ostentatious, often commemorating several generations of the same family. This reflected the growing importance of the family as a focal point of belonging in the unprecedented anonymity of modern, metropolitan life.²⁹ Affluence, influence and the prevailing tastes of the time combined to produce lavish memorials designed by renowned architects, the most prolific of whom was Max Fleischer (1841–1905) who was himself buried at Tor I in a mausoleum of his own design. Significantly, many of the most ostentatious grave-memorials were financed by the IKG to honour what it called 'ausgezeichnete, um die Wiener Cultusgemeinde besonders verdiente Männer' [distinguished, especially notable men of the Viennese Community], including rabbis, community notables, political protagonists of Jewish legal emancipation, literati and others.³⁰ While these are the most conspicuous of grave-memorials at Tor I, representations of a self-conscious and confident community organization, they are reflective solely of the elite of Vienna's *fin-de-siècle* Jewish community. A greater engagement with the masses of ordinary women and men commemorated in this cemetery is therefore most desirable in future scholarship.

By the mid-nineteenth century, bilingual Hebrew-German inscriptions had become the norm in Jewish-Viennese sepulchral epigraphy, although exclusively

²⁷ Steines, *Steine*, pp. 37–38.

²⁸ [Untitled, internal report of the IKG on Vienna's Jewish cemeteries], 23 November 1939, AIKGW, A/VIE/IKG/I-II/FH/1/1.

²⁹ See for example Marion Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class. Women, Family and Identity in Imperial Germany* (Oxford, 1991).

³⁰ *Bericht* [1896], unpaginated.

German-language inscriptions were on the increase while established Jewish epigraphic practices such as the listing of patronymics and the exclusion of dates of birth steadily declined. The epigraphy had ossified into standardized practices including in Hebrew-language epigraphy the use of abbreviations such as 'פ"ט/פ"נ' [here lies buried] and 'ה'נצב"ה' [may his/her soul be bound up in the bundle of life, referencing I Samuel 25:29], of simple phraseology such as a 'קר' [dear] or 'חשוב' [important] woman or man, and in German-language epigraphy the use of phraseology such as 'tief betrauert' [mourned deeply], 'unvergesslich' [unforgettable] and 'Friede seiner/ihrer Asche' [peace unto his/her ashes]. The increasingly secular language of the grave-memorials, coupled with the decline in the use of the Hebrew language, caused growing consternation in some segments of the IKG. In the 1900s, the IKG's cemetery office began bemoaning the frequency of mistakes in the Hebrew-language epigraphy in its annual reports and requested to conserve the 'konfessionellen Charakter[s]' [religious character] of Tor I by including at least a few Hebrew characters or words in the inscriptions.³¹ The epigraphy at Tor I evinces that this remained only a request, with exclusively German-language inscriptions and/or eulogies of a secular nature continuing to abound before 1918, reflecting the increasingly non-religious character of Vienna's Jewish population. While this epigraphy did not preclude a continued sense of Jewishness, the issues surrounding the inclusion of Hebrew were indicative of on-going differences in opinion over the character of Jewish-Viennese communal culture, reflected elsewhere for example in discussion over liturgical reform and synagogal practices.³² The schisms between religious and secular, or at least orthodox and non-orthodox, understandings of Jewishness, and on another level between individual and communal authority in commemorative practices, were direly exacerbated following the First World War and the creation of the new Jewish section at Tor IV.

By 1910 the number of burials at Tor I, in graves that were to remain perpetually undisturbed, necessitated the acquisition of further burial space.³³ The IKG decided to purchase the land immediately adjoining the Protestant cemetery at the other end of the Central Cemetery.³⁴ At first it took its time developing plans for the new cemetery. In April 1913, a team of Jewish architects was invited to submit plans for its overall design, constituting a masterplan

³¹ *Bericht des Vorstandes der israelitischen Kultusgemeinde in Wien über seine Tätigkeit in der Periode 1906–1907* (Vienna, 1908), pp. 38–39.

³² See for example Moritz Güdemann, *Jerusalem, die Opfer und die Orgel* (Vienna, 1871), and Max Grunwald, *Der Kampf um die Orgel in der Wiener israelitischen Kultusgemeinde* (Vienna, 1919).

³³ *Bericht des Vorstandes der israelitischen Kultusgemeinde in Wien über seine Tätigkeit in der Periode 1910–1911* (Vienna, 1912), p. 7.

³⁴ *Plenum 4. Dezember 1910. Erweiterung eines neuen Friedhofsgrundes*, AIKGW, A/VIE/IKG/I-II/FH/1/1.

hitherto unseen in Vienna's Jewish cemeteries.³⁵ A month later, a team of IKG board members was appointed to tour larger cemeteries in Germany to gather inspiration.³⁶ Despite this careful planning, the IKG was forced into action during the First World War, as both the war dead and the sharp increase in civilian dead due to the arrival of Jewish refugees from the war-torn east of the empire rapidly consumed the remaining space at Tor I.³⁷ Temporary walls and a provisional *beit tahara* were therefore erected at Tor IV, and the cemetery was officially opened on 4 April 1917.³⁸ At the opening ceremony, Chief Rabbi Moritz Güdemann once again set the consecration of the cemetery within a wider historical context, as he had done in his speech at the opening of Tor I in 1879:

Als vor 40 Jahren der Zentralfriedhof eröffnet wurde, da meinten manche unter uns, die Gemeinsamkeit des Friedhofes bedeute den Morgenanbruch allgemeiner Brüderlichkeit und sie bedauerten nur die noch immer aufrecht erhaltene Trennung der Konfessionen [...] Heute nach 40 Jahren haben nun wieder alle Konfessionen ihre besonderen Friedhöfe und so weihen wir auch heute unseren eigenen jüdischen Friedhof ein und das alles geschieht in allseitigen Einverständnis. Was liegt auch daran? Nicht das Unter- oder Nebeneinander-Begrabenwerden wird den Friedenstempel aufrichten, in dem eine Religion, die Liebe, alle Menschen vereint [...] Lassen wir denn alles, was jetzt die Menschen mehr als je entzweit, Haß, Feindschaft und Krieg auf den alten Friedhöfen für immer begraben.

[When, forty years ago, the Central Cemetery was opened there were some amongst us who thought that the shared cemetery meant the dawn of universal brotherhood and their only regret was the continuing division of the religious confessions [...] Today, after forty years, all confessions have their own special cemeteries again and so today we too consecrate our own Jewish cemetery, and all of this takes place in mutual agreement. And what does it matter? It is not our burial under and beside one another that will erect the temple of peace in which one religion, love, will unite all people [...] So let us leave everything which now divides people more than ever, hate, enmity and war, buried in the old cemeteries.]³⁹

It is fortunate for posterity that one and the same rabbi officiated at both ceremonies nearly forty years apart, affording a unique insight into how Güdemann, a leading figure in the IKG, perceived the vicissitudes of the times. The rupture of the First World War was as evident in his 1917 speech as the euphoria of emancipation had been in his 1879 speech. Indeed, he himself had been one of those who in 1879 had hoped that 'the shared cemetery meant the

³⁵ *Plenum 10. April 1913*, AIKGW, A/VIE/IKG/I-II/FH/1/1.

³⁶ *Vertreter 4. Mai 1913*, AIKGW, A/VIE/IKG/I-II/FH/1/1.

³⁷ See David Rechter, 'Die große Katastrophe. Die österreichischen Juden und der Krieg', in *Weltuntergang. Jüdisches Leben und Sterben im Ersten Weltkrieg*, ed. by Marcus Patka (Vienna, 2014), pp. 12–25.

³⁸ *Der neue israelitische Friedhof*, p. 10.

³⁹ Cited in *ibid.*, p. 12.

dawn of universal brotherhood'. Implicit in the 1917 speech was the awareness that this dream had exposed itself as a bubble, bursting in the inferno of war. The creation of Tor IV alongside yet outside the Central Cemetery, divided by a perimeter wall and with a separate entrance, represented a spatial segregation between Jewish and non-Jewish burial spaces which broke with the tendency evident since the era of Joseph II of ever-closer enmeshment in the cityscape. This worked as a spatial metaphor for the ruptures of the time and the impending collapse of the multicultural Habsburg project amidst the growing divisions between various groups in Vienna. This spatial metaphor was underlined in ordinance maps of the interwar period. While Tor I was charted in detail, its sections integrated into the overall layout of the Central Cemetery, Tor IV was delineated as a blank and therefore separate space, marked only with the words 'Neuer Israelitischer Friedhof' [new Jewish cemetery].⁴⁰ The contrast in Güdemann's speeches suggests an awareness of the impending collapse and the fallacy of the often-invoked fraternity of peoples in the empire. And though no-one could have foreseen the cataclysm of the Shoah which was to follow not forty years later, Güdemann's words conveyed a sense of foreboding about the state of inter-communal relations in the present and a deep insecurity about the future.

The sudden collapse of the state at the end of the war presented a great calamity for its Jews, transpiring in radical changes in communal life amongst the Jewish-Viennese population of the interwar period.⁴¹ If, as Lisa Silverman has argued, Austria's Jews had before 1918 been 'the most loyal citizens of the monarchy', in the climate of irredentist nationalism and rising antisemitism after 1918 they suddenly found themselves 'in danger of becoming the *least* Austrian' (emphasis in original).⁴² Austria's Jews developed various strategies to cope with the ruptures of the interwar period, conditioned first by the recalibration of 'Austrian' identity and later by the growing isolation they experienced in an increasingly antisemitic environment. These strategies included Austrian state patriotism (especially Unionism, as represented by the Österreichisch-Israelitische Union, later Union österreichischer Juden), Jewish nationalism (especially Zionism) and religious particularism (especially Chassidism).⁴³ These broad divisions, themselves fragmented into various groups, increasingly galvanized communal politics in the embattled IKG in the critical years between the First World War and the *Anschluss*. The proliferation of both Orthodoxy and Zionism have been attributed largely to the many thousands of Galician immigrants who remained in Vienna after 1918, fundamentally altering the makeup of the local Jewish community and, consequently, the politics of the

⁴⁰ See for example *Freytag & Berndts Plan des Wiener Zentralfriedhofes*, 1927, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, KI 100515.

⁴¹ See David Rechter, *The Jews of Vienna and the First World War* (London, 2001).

⁴² Silverman, *Becoming Austrians*, p. 6.

⁴³ See Harriet Friedenreich, *Jewish Politics in Vienna 1918–1938* (Bloomington, 1991).

IKG.⁴⁴ The growth of Orthodoxy, in particular, resulted in the increasing complication of inner-Jewish understandings of culture, community and belonging in the interwar period which were vexedly negotiated in discussions over the 'Jewish' character of Tor IV.

By the 1920s, sepulchral practices that had been emerging for at least a century became points of contention between different interest groups, reflective of the increasing contestation of the boundaries of 'Jewish' and 'non-Jewish' and of the performance of 'Jewish difference' taking place amongst Austrian Jewry. These included the increase in German-language epigraphy and the related rise of what was regarded as profane and un-Jewish symbolism, alongside the decline of Hebrew and of explicit religiosity. The IKG's insistence upon some Hebrew characters to be included on the grave-memorials had been formulated as a polite request in the 1900s; in the revised cemetery ordinance of 1927 it was codified as strict regulation:

Zur Wahrung des konfessionellen Charakters des Friedhofes, muß auf jedem Grab- oder Gruftmonumente mindestens ein hebräisches Wort angebracht werden; in den Abteilungen für Schomre Schabos sind nur hebräische Grabinschriften gestattet. Das Anbringen von Bildern, Büsten und sonstige Abbildungen auf Monumenten ist nach den bestehenden rituellen Vorschriften nicht gestattet.

[To protect the confessional character of the cemetery, at least one Hebrew word must be included on each grave-memorial; in the sections for the *Schomre Schabos* only Hebrew inscriptions are permitted. In accordance with existing religious precepts, the inclusion of pictures, busts and other depictions on grave-memorials is not permitted.]⁴⁵

The reference to *Schomre Schabos*, the 'keepers of the Sabbath', reflected the growing tensions between secular and religious, or at least between liberal and orthodox, perceptions of the cemetery as a Jewish-communal space, in the context of the burgeoning orthodox sub-culture in interwar Vienna.

A similar conflict arose with the opening of the Central Cemetery's monumental crematorium in 1922. Issues arose as to whether or how Jews who chose to be cremated were to be laid to rest at Tor IV. The IKG remarked:

Es kann kein Zweifel darüber obwalten, dass dem jüdischen Religionsgesetze, der traditionellen und der geschichtlichen Ueberlieferung einzig und allein die Erdbestattung des Leichnams entspricht. Die Leichenverbrennung galt und gilt als unjüdisch. Wohl widerspricht es dem Geiste des Judentums, einen Zwang zur Einhaltung religionsgesetzlicher Vorschriften auf die Glaubensangehörigen auszuüben, doch ist es selbstverständlich, dass gewisse religiöse Zeremonien nicht bei einem Akte vorgenommen werden dürfen, der im Gegensatze steht zum Religionsgesetze.

⁴⁴ See Albert Lichtblau, 'Zufluchtsort Wien. Jüdische Flüchtlinge aus Galizien und der Bukowina', in *Weltuntergang*, pp. 134–42.

⁴⁵ *Auszug aus dem Tarif für Taxen und Gebühren, gültig ab 1. April 1927*, AIKGW, A/VIE/IKG/I-II/FH/1/3.

[There can be no doubt that interment of the body is the only way to satisfy Jewish religious law, and traditional and historical customs. Cremation was and is un-Jewish. Of course it is contrary to the spirit of Judaism to force its followers to observe the precepts of religious law, yet it is self-evident that certain religious ceremonies may not be performed as part of an act that contradicts religious law.]⁴⁶

Cremations were thus permitted 'in jenen Fällen, in welchen der Wunsch eines Verstorbenen nach Einäscherung unzweifelhaft nachgewiesen wurde' [in such cases in which the wish of the deceased for cremation was proven beyond a doubt], yet the burial of cremated remains was to take place 'ohne rabbinische oder kantoriale Funktion' [without rabbinical or cantorial ceremonies].⁴⁷ Contention over what was regarded 'Jewish' or 'un-Jewish' practice, and the role of the IKG in arbitrating such matters, was compounded in 1933 when it became known that many Jewish bodies, especially those to be cremated, were being collected by non-Jewish morticians. The IKG directorate complained in a letter sent to all hospitals, sanatoria and morgues in Vienna: 'es scheint das Missverständnis vorzuliegen, dass jüdische Leichen, die zum Krematorium bestimmt sind, von der Kultusgemeinde nicht übernommen werden' [there appears to be the misunderstanding that the IKG does not take responsibility for Jewish corpses intended for the crematorium]. The IKG was being robbed of the ability to administer the requirements of religious law for its deceased, the letter stated, complaining that this constituted 'einen Eingriff' [an encroachment] on its rights and responsibilities.⁴⁸

The IKG in the interwar period evidently sought a middle road between the poles of Orthodoxy and Reform, or religious and secular, seeking to satisfy all parties through compromise and to arbitrate on 'Jewish' matters in accordance with its role as the umbrella organization for all Viennese Jews. The IKG reports demonstrate that these conflicts had their origins in the clamour raised by its Orthodox membership at what it clearly perceived as challenges to the Jewish-religious nature of Tor IV. In 1924, when the cemetery had already been in use for seven years, but no masterplan had yet been applied to its spatial layout, the IKG announced: 'Bei der Ausgestaltung des neuen Friedhofes wird auch auf alle jene berechtigten Begehren Bedacht genommen werden, die im Laufe der Zeit von orthodoxer und konservativer Seite an den Kultusvorstand gestellt wurden' [The design of the new cemetery will also take into consideration the legitimate wishes of all those amongst Orthodox and conservative circles that

⁴⁶ *Bericht der israelitischen Kultusgemeinde Wien über die Tätigkeit in der Periode 1912–1924* (Vienna, 1924), p. 7.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *An die Direktionen der Spitäler, Sanatorien und Leichenbestattungsunternehmen*, 6 March 1933, AIKGW, A/VIE/IKG/1-II/FH/1/3. The role of corpses within the contested politics of 'Jewishness' in the interwar period was explored with regard to the Polish context by Natalia Aleksium, 'Jewish Students and Christian Corpses in Interwar Poland: Playing with the Language of Blood Libel', *Jewish History*, 26.3/4 (December 2012), 327–42.

have been presented before the board of the IKG over the years].⁴⁹ Although underlining the growing concerns of the Orthodox members, the wording of this announcement, especially the term ‘also’, suggests that they were regarded as a minority whose wishes would merely be ‘taken into consideration’ alongside those of the more moderately religious or secular majority. The IKG’s reconciliatory attitude in this period resulted in a further compromise in 1928 in the form of a spatial sub-division of the cemetery: ‘Dem Begehren aus dem Kreise der orthodoxen Gemeindemitglieder Folge gebend, wurde auf dem neuen Friedhofe für Verstorbene, welche Zeit ihres Lebens strenge Schabbos gehalten haben, eine eigene, von einer Hecke umschlossene Abteilung errichtet’ [in accordance with the wishes of Orthodox community members, a separate section enclosed by a hedge was opened in the new cemetery for the deceased who strictly observed the Sabbath throughout their lives].⁵⁰

These conflicts, however, resulted in the gradual adoption of more rigid regulations attempting to conserve, or enforce, particular interpretations of the Jewish-religious nature of the space, demonstrating two important points about the interwar Jewish community: first the continued plurality of its membership, but second the growing conflict between Orthodox and non-Orthodox, the former going as far as segregating themselves spatially in their own section, a cemetery within a cemetery, as they segregated themselves for the most part geographically in the city’s Leopoldstadt district, and socially in their own temples and religious factions.⁵¹ Tor IV thus constituted a central theatre for the negotiation of schisms within Vienna’s interwar Jewish community while reflecting its partial retreat into insularity *vis-à-vis* the non-Jewish majority in Vienna. Today, this cemetery is a complex memorial site reflecting both pre- and post-Shoah Jewish communal life and culture, covering an area of about 252,500m², containing over 70,000 bodies and some 43,000 grave-memorials. Its origins in the context of the First Republic have been over-shadowed by the Shoah, yet it was in the interwar period that the conflicts over the cemetery as a theatre for the negotiation of Jewish and Jewish-Austrian identity began, encoded viscerally in the cemetery which continues to divide the community in the present day.

By contrast, the continued use of Tor I throughout the interwar period constituted a counterbalance which allowed for looser, more interactive engagements with the concepts of ‘Jewishness’ and ‘Austrianness’. Numerous prominent individuals were buried in the honorary plots of sections 5B and 6 in these years, rather than being buried in the new cemetery at Tor IV. This

⁴⁹ *Bericht* [1924], p. 49.

⁵⁰ *Bericht der israelitischen Kultusgemeinde Wien über die Tätigkeit in der Periode 1925–1928* (Vienna, 1928), p. 34.

⁵¹ On the topography of Jewish society in interwar Vienna, see Lisa Silverman, ‘Jewish Memory, Jewish Geography. Vienna before 1938’, in *Making Place. Space and Embodiment in the City*, ed. by Arijit Sen and Lisa Silverman (Bloomington, 2014), pp. 173–97.

area thus continued to constitute a 'hall of fame' of Austrian Jewry in the interwar period, notably including a wide variety of individuals active in non-religious contexts, IKG members on paper only, whose fame was derived from their intense participation in Austrian culture. A prominent example is Arthur Schnitzler, who was buried on 23 October 1931 in an honorary grave that the IKG offered his family immediately upon hearing of his death. A subsequent offer made by the City of Vienna of a grave in the honorary, non-denominational section at the heart of the Central Cemetery was turned down simply, according to a newspaper report, because the family had already agreed to the offer of the IKG.⁵² In his testament, Schnitzler had insisted on a burial of the lowest class free from all ritual trappings: there were to be no wreaths, obituaries, speeches, or mourning.⁵³ Accordingly, he was buried in a simple wooden casket, draped in a black pall, in a ceremony devoid of religious rituals. The funeral was nevertheless attended by a great number of people, including representatives of the Austrian and Viennese governments and of various theatres, as well as 'außerordentlich zahlreiche Persönlichkeiten aus Wiener Schriftstellerkreisen' [extraordinarily numerous personages from Viennese literary circles].⁵⁴

The many obituaries for Schnitzler emphasized the writer's significance for Austria and Austrian culture. For example, the *Neue Freie Presse* commented: 'Nicht Kunst und Literatur allein, ganz Oesterreich trauert um Arthur Schnitzler' [Not only art and literature, but all Austria mourns for Arthur Schnitzler], continuing: 'Wenn es einem Dichter vergönnt war, Inkarnation zu sein eines Zeitalters, göltiger Repräsentant einer Epoche, dann war es Arthur Schnitzler für das Ende des vergangenen Jahrhunderts und für den Beginn des neuen in Oesterreich' [If it was granted to any writer to be the incarnation of an era, the valid representative of an epoch, then it was Arthur Schnitzler for the end of the last century and for the beginning of the new one in Austria].⁵⁵ The apparent indifference of Schnitzler's family towards the question of his burial in either the Jewish or non-Jewish part of the city's Central Cemetery, and the attendance of the essentially non-religious burial by a large number of Viennese notables regardless of their Jewish or non-Jewish background, is indicative of the ambiguity in the writer's own cultural heritage and sense of self. Any 'Jewishness' in Schnitzler's work has been the subject of much debate since his death.⁵⁶ On 1 November 1918, only days before the collapse of the Habsburg state and the proclamation of the First Austrian Republic, Schnitzler had described himself 'als oesterr. Staatsbürger jüdischer Race zur deutschen Kultur mich bekennd' [as an Austrian citizen of the Jewish race

⁵² 'Die heutige Leichenfeier', *Neue Freie Presse*, 23 October 1931, p. 2.

⁵³ 'Die letzten Wünsche des Dichters', *Neue Freie Presse*, 23 October 1931, p. 2.

⁵⁴ 'Artur [sic] Schnitzler', *Wiener Zeitung*, 24 October 1931, p. 9.

⁵⁵ 'Ein erschütternder Verlust für Österreich', *Neue Freie Presse*, 22 October 1931, p. 1.

⁵⁶ See for example Nikolaj Beier, *Vor allem bin ich ich. Judentum, Akkulturation und Antisemitismus in Arthur Schnitzlers Leben und Werk* (Göttingen, 2008).

loyal to German culture].⁵⁷ In these few words, he captured the essence of a very particular Jewish-Austrian identity in the earlier part of the last century, a product of the profound and complex construction of a new Austrian identity in the aftermath of the First World War, and of the intense and influential participation of Austria's Jews therein.

Arthur Schnitzler was laid to rest among rabbis and literati, orthodox religious Jews and secular intelligentsia, Zionists and Austrians, in the most prominent plot of Vienna's then largest Jewish cemetery. The site reflected the convoluted paradigm of Jewish-Viennese cultural identities, albeit dominated by male notables and predominantly reflecting the influential and the affluent. Arguably no other spaces in the Viennese landscape more powerfully exhibit the often tortuous negotiation of Jewish-Austrian identity than do the city's Jewish cemeteries. As I have demonstrated in this article, the cemeteries are poignant archives of and memorials to the Jewish-Austrian experience: the interplay of space, discourse and memory surrounding these sites offers a new insight into the profound but conflicted (re-)constructions of Jewish and Austrian identities in the eventful period from 1867 to 1938. In the light of recent developments in the fields of spatial studies, memory studies, and Jewish/Austrian studies, an integrated history of Vienna's Jewish cemeteries and the complex codes of culture, community and belonging encoded therein is overdue. A holistic analysis of the matrix of textualities in the gravestone inscriptions, in conjunction with the kind of spatial-discursive analysis offered here, is particularly desirable if these memorials to over five hundred years of Jewish-Austrian culture are to be given their due. To paraphrase Moritz Güdemann, quoted at the beginning of this essay, contemporary scholarship offers tools we can use to delve beyond the silence that covers these spaces, disclosing the loud and eloquent language they speak for those who know how to understand it.

⁵⁷ Arthur Schnitzler, *Tagebuch 1917–1919* (Vienna, 1985), p. 196.