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(Re-)Writing Austria's Modern Jewish History Using Émigré and Survivor Memoirs and Other "Memory Texts"[1]

Tim Corbett

Independent Scholar

Abstract: Hundreds of thousands of Jewish Austrians – defined first in the broader, Habsburg sense of "Austria" and later in the narrower, republican sense – migrated abroad in the first half of the twentieth century, 130,000 alone fleeing Vienna under National Socialism. This diverse collective, often with roots all over Central Europe and with extremely eclectic religious, economic, cultural, linguistic, educational, professional, and other backgrounds, were nevertheless united through the common experience of having once been Austrians, many having been driven violently from their homes to settle across the world. Thousands of these individuals recorded their experiences and the memories of their Austrian past in a wide array of "memory texts," including hundreds of memoirs, published and unpublished. This paper outlines this eclectic corpus of Jewish Austrian memory texts, focusing predominantly on the Austrian Heritage Collection at the Leo Baeck Institute in New York and the broader Jewish Austrian experience of cultural genesis, genocide, survival, and rebirth in the twentieth century recounted therein. It closes with a range of new questions that allow for the parameters in which scholarship has conceived of Jewish Austrian history and culture to date to be substantially augmented or even revised.

Keywords: Austrian Heritage Collection, Leo Baeck Institute, Collective Memory, Jewish Austrian Culture, Exile Memoirs

As the pioneering Jewish gender historian Paula Hyman remarked, "the experience of most Jews – women and Jewish men who did not reach leadership ranks – was not necessarily subsumed in statements by those who represented them in public records" (4—5), meaning that Jewish histories that relied on

official documents – the bread and butter of traditional, community-oriented historiography – were characterized from the outset by a severe imbalance in perspectives and by colossal lacunae regarding both "ordinary" and "outsider" experiences.[2] My research to date has focused primarily on an unusual and unique type of source, namely Jewish gravestones, as a means to essentially retell the *longue durée* history of Jews in Vienna from a far broader sociocultural perspective than has often been undertaken in historiography to date. Gravestones, so I have argued, "reveal the construction of a form of collective communal memory and its modification and/or contestation by individuals, families and collectives who formed a part of this community" (Corbett, "A 'Capable Wife' or a 'Woman of Valor'?" 79), both from a synchronic and a diachronic perspective (i.e., the shape of communal memory at a given moment in time or its development over a longer period of time).[3] The eulogistic inscriptions on gravestones are by nature both brief and highly selective, yet few other source types are so fundamentally democratic, constituting individual "memory texts" of an incomparably broad cross section of a particular community (I will discuss the term "memory text" a little later). Gravestones thus allow for collective histories and the role of large numbers of individuals and subaltern groupings therein to be fundamentally reconceived and rewritten.

Among numerous other source types that complement the analysis of Jewish gravestones, I have frequently drawn on memoirs by Jewish Austrians, penned mostly in the aftermath of National Socialism and the Holocaust. Cemeteries feature strikingly in many post-Holocaust memoirs, as immediate sites of personal memory and cultural heritage in the Viennese cityscape, but moreover metonymically: as emblems of Europe's destroyed Jewish culture and, certainly in some earlier memoirs, of the irredeemable loss of a Jewish past and the hopelessness of any Jewish future on the European continent.[4] Given the relative lack of formal theories and systematic methodologies in this field, my analysis of gravestones as memory texts is moreover informed by theoretical approaches drawn from textual analysis and/or focusing on more conventional textual sources, such as memoirs. Albert Lichtblau, in an early, in-depth example of a work of Jewish Austrian history based on memoirs, noted that studies drawing on even a generous number of such texts cannot possibly be representative of the collective biographies of some 1.3 million people – this figure referring to the Jewish inhabitants of Cisleithania, the Austrian half of the Dual Monarchy before 1918, who formed the focal point of Lichtblau's study. However, he continued that a selection of memory texts – in his case 34 extracts from interviews, memoirs, autobiographies, diaries and similar texts – can offer a cross-sectional impression of the variability of both individual stories and broader sociocultural transformations spanning generations: "Sie können zu sprachlichen Gedenk-

stätten für ein Volk, für Verlorenes, für einzelne Menschen, für Orte, Gebräuche, Traditionen und Mentalitäten werden"; Lichtblau consequently called such memory texts "Sprachmonumente des kollektiven Gedächtnisses" (*Als hätten wir dazugehört* 124).

Collective source bases relating to largely non-hegemonic individual and collective memories, such as gravestones and memoirs, offer a rich and fruitful new approach into the broad sociocultural history of Jews in modern Austria, enabling a paradigmatic shift in our very conception of "Jewish Austrian" history. As Michael Brenner summarized a general tendency in Jewish studies of late, they enable historiographic analyses to shift the focus "from *one* Jewish community to *many* Jewish cultures" and allow for the writing of "not *a* Jewish history but rather *many* Jewish histories" (204—05; my emphasis). As Dan Diner explained in the introduction to a recent encyclopedia of Jewish history, scholarship needs to distinguish far more stringently between "Judentum" (Judaism) as a bundle of religious traditions, "räumlich und ethnisch diverser Judenheiten" (Jewries) as collectives often conceived in ethnic, communal, or familial terms, and "einzelner staatsbürgerlich emanzipierter, sich dem kollektiv entfremdender jüdischer Personen bzw. Personen jüdischer Herkunft, einzelner Juden" (Jews), with this latter category in particular offering the greatest diversity in makeup, experience, and outlook (x).

Such a distinction, put simply, allows for hegemonic narratives to be complicated and top-down collective histories to be rewritten. A more eclectic and cross-sectional perspective enables a greater focus on the kaleidoscopic variability of individual experiences and the relationship between individuals, smaller collectives, and hegemonic collectives as a whole – in our case the vast collective subsumed under the term "Austrian Jewry" in various chronological, geographical, and cultural contexts – and thereby helps overcome the simplistic narratives, generalizations, and one-size-fits-all models that all too often dominate in historiography, such as the tenacious narrative of an ostensible, and ostensibly failed, Jewish "assimilation" in the German-speaking world.[5]

This paper is intended as an exploratory survey of a very general question: namely how the memoirs of Jewish Austrians, mostly émigrés and survivors of the Holocaust outside of Austria as well as "rémigrés" (returnees) or immigrants to Austria after the Holocaust, serve to augment, revise, or even to write anew the modern history of Jews in Austria and to locate the "Jewish experience" – to put it misleadingly in singular form – within modern Austrian history generally, particularly in the era of cultural genesis, genocide, survival, and rebirth reaching from the early twentieth into the early twenty-first centuries. It is not intended to offer a theoretical discussion on the use of memoirs as a historical source, but rather to demonstrate the fecundity of this particular source pool

and its promise for future insights into the already well-trodden field of modern Jewish Austrian history.[6]

To begin with, I will outline who is included under the deceptively straightforward-seeming label of "Jewish Austrians," an exercise that in itself already highlights the complexity of this research area as well as its potential to complicate our understanding of both "Jewish" and "Austrian" cultural histories and their entanglement in modern Central Europe. I will then outline the three largest extant corpuses of "memory texts" relating to Jewish Austrian émigré, survivor, and "rémigré" communities after 1945: those in the USA, those in Palestine/Israel, and those in the Second Austrian Republic. This will be followed by a basic definition of what I have so far been calling "memory texts" – ego-documents, memoirs, interviews, and more – before I outline the specific corpus under discussion here, in particular the memoirs held in the Austrian Heritage Collection at the Leo Baeck Institute, and demonstrate the breadth and diversity of the thousands of sources contained therein. I will then move on to an overview of key studies conducted to date and the theoretical and methodological questions arising from these, before concluding with a sketch of the many research questions, themes, and potential insights that arise from this matrix of memory texts.

The collective of "Austrian Jewry" around 1900, when it was defined at its broadest in terms of the Austrian (Cisleithanian) half of the Dual Monarchy, comprised some 1.3 million people, who, together with a similar number of Jews living in the Hungarian half of the monarchy (Transleithania), made up a good fifth of the world's Jewish population. The porous definition of "Austrian Jewry" already becomes evident here, when this category (whether one conceives of Jews in religious, cultural, or ethnic terms) included Bohemians, Moravians, Galicians, Bukovinians, and, a sub-category in its own right, Viennese. At this time, Vienna, home to almost fifteen percent of Cisleithanian Jewry and reflecting a kaleidoscope of the various Jewries of the empire from among whom its Jewish population originated, numbered along with Budapest, Warsaw, and New York as one of the world's largest Jewish metropolises (Lichtblau, *Als hätten wir dazugehört* 43, 48). Even the dismemberment of the Habsburg Empire into new "nation states" (which were anything but nationally homogenous) such as Czechoslovakia, Poland, and of course the Austrian Republic by no means meant an end to the identification with "Austria" – often still conceived in the broader, multicultural Habsburg sense – by Jews who may no longer even have been "Austrian" citizens in the new, narrow republican sense.[7] The same is true for countless tens or even hundreds of thousands of Jews who left Austria (however defined) for the USA before and during World War II, of whom many penned the memoirs that are the focus of this paper.[8]

About 175,000 Jews – self-defined, as attested by their membership in their respective Jewish community organizations – were living in Austria by the "Anschluss" in 1938, the majority of whom, over ninety percent, lived in Vienna.[9] A further 25,000 Austrians, give or take, were classified as "Jewish" according to the Nuremberg Laws, a result of mixed marriages and their offspring, conversions, and formal departures ("Austritte") from the official Jewish community organizations.[10] This latter point in particular is important to bear in mind when outlining the field of modern "Jewish" culture in Austria. As the Vienna-born art historian Ernst Gombrich, who was himself persecuted as a "Jew" under National Socialism and lived out the rest of his life in the United Kingdom, put it: "Jude ist, wer sich als Jude fühlt, und kein anderer" (85). Gombrich thereby cautioned against unwittingly adopting Nazi definitions of who belonged to the Jewish collective – an issue that is still often acutely under-reflected in Jewish historiography. That being said, and as becomes evident in many of the memoirs under discussion here, the experience of persecution and genocide perpetrated by the Nazis fundamentally reshaped individual attitudes towards one's own "Jewishness," not least of all through the newfound sense of belonging to a "Schicksalsgemeinschaft" in the wake of the Holocaust, which continues reverberating today, in subsequent generations.

About two thirds of those Austrians who defined themselves or were defined by the Nazis as Jews, some 130,000 people, managed to flee abroad. Of those remaining in Austria or in other territories caught up by the Nazi war machinery, as many as 66,500 were murdered in the Holocaust.[11] Jews, or those defined as such by the Nuremberg Laws, therefore made up the majority of the estimated 200,000 Austrians generally who went into exile in the years 1934 to 1945 (this figure including those who emigrated during the short-lived "Austrofascist" dictatorship from 1934 to 1938, which is often eclipsed in historiography by the cataclysm of the Holocaust which followed) (Eppel 1, 7). About 30,000 of the Jewish Austrian émigrés fled to the USA, making this the single greatest destination for this demographic, followed by Palestine (since 1948 Israel) with about 15,000 Jewish Austrian émigrés (Embacher 85).

The primary focus of this paper is on the broad segment of Jewish Austrians who ended up in the USA. This reflects the overwhelming shift of the center of gravity of the "Jewish world" from Europe to America in the early to mid-twentieth century, as evinced in the preponderance of memoirs – published and unpublished – by Jewish Austrians in the USA, which are primarily held at the Leo Baeck Institute (LBI) in New York. The LBI was founded in 1955, in the aftermath of the Holocaust, in order to preserve and study the "history and culture of German-speaking Jews," reflecting the widespread and tenacious conflation through the latter half of the twentieth century of "Austrian" and "German"

Jews, despite their obviously very different geographic, not to mention sociocultural, backgrounds, as well as a lack of critical engagement with what the terms "Austrian" and "German" actually mean in any given context.[12] Yet, despite this conflation, the LBI – then and now the flagship institution for German-speaking Jewish history and culture – actually held very little material on Austrian Jews (however defined) until as late as the 1990s. This changed dramatically with the creation of the Austrian Heritage Collection, which is outlined in detail below.

Beyond its centrality to the post-Holocaust history of Austrian-born Jews, my focus on this first corpus in the USA, in particular focusing on New York City as one of the major immigration hubs for Jewish Austrians fleeing from the Nazis, is also conditioned by pragmatic considerations, such as my own linguistic concentration on primarily German- and English-language sources. By contrast, the second corpus, namely the memory texts of Jewish Austrians who emigrated to Palestine/Israel, including the collections of the LBI in Jerusalem, includes a sizeable Hebrew-language component. However, the choice of focus on the USA also reflects important contentual and contextual considerations: The motivations for Jewish Austrians to emigrate to what was then Mandatory Palestine, their experiences there, and the circumstances surrounding the lives they built for themselves in the later State of Israel open up a field of questions and concerns that go entirely beyond the scope of the corpus of memoirs under consideration here. Nevertheless, there is undoubtedly ample potential for future comparative studies drawing on both corpuses, particularly by scholars with a better grasp of Hebrew and a research focus on modern Israeli history.

The third corpus of memoirs, finally, relates to Jewish Austrians who remained in, returned, or were new immigrants to the Second Austrian Republic after 1945. While I will not exhaustively discuss this group and the appertaining corpus of memoirs in this paper, it is worth outlining nevertheless (and it does form a comparative aspect of my ongoing research). Estimates of the number of rémigrés – those who had gone into exile but returned after the defeat of National Socialism – range from 4,500 to 15,000, the reason for this enormous margin being that many of these people persecuted as Jews had not been members of the formal Jewish community organizations before 1945 and/or did not register thereafter. As Jacqueline Vansant noted in her trailblazing work on rémigré memoirs, this very obscurity of numbers "underscores the diversity of the Jewish population within Austria as well as the problematic nature of the label 'Jewish'" (13). The Jewish "community" – to again use a singular term misleadingly – that established itself in Austria after 1945 was in key respects not identical with, perhaps not even directly the successor to, the much larger community that had gone before it and was destroyed during the Holocaust.[13] As Ruth Beckermann, a prolific Austrian film director and herself the child of

Holocaust survivors, remarked in a kind of "memoir" penned during the volatile post-Waldheim years, the majority of the small present-day Jewish community, who as before are concentrated mainly in Vienna, are descended either from Eastern European displaced persons or from rémigrés from Palestine/Israel (9). Notably, very few Jewish Austrians who fled to the USA during National Socialism decided to return to Austria after 1945.

Despite enormous fluctuations over the years due to immigration, emigration, and refugee movements, the new community in Vienna has never exceeded a number of about 10,000 people (at least those formally registered with the community organization) and as such was for a long time actually considerably smaller than the "Austria-in-exile" community living in the USA. The Austrian-born contingent of this latter group is by now sadly dying out: An article published in 2002 cited a number of 4,000 Jewish Austrian émigrés living in the New York City area alone, but, given the age of this demographic, this number can be presumed to have dwindled rapidly in the intervening years – someone who had only just been born when World War II broke out in 1939 would be over 80 at the time this paper is published (Klösch 235). This fact in itself underlines the growing historiographic importance of the corpus of memoirs the wartime generations left behind.

Meanwhile, the enormous imbalance between the Jewish Austrian communities existing in the latter half of the twentieth century in the USA and in the Second Republic respectively makes a comparison of their respective corpuses of memory texts – of the "old" Austrians in the USA, with roots going back to the Habsburg Empire, and of the "new" Austrians in the Second Republic, who often do not have roots in Austria reaching beyond the Holocaust – especially revealing of the interrelated discourses on "Jewishness" and "Austrianness" and the transformations of both these interrelated mental and cultural landscapes through the ruptures of the twentieth century. Specifically, and that is the key argument of this paper, the juxtaposition of the individual memoirs and of the corpuses as a whole reveals not only the plurality of Jewish Austrian "cultures" through the twentieth century, but also the generational malleability of the very concepts of "Jewish" and "Austrian" through the ruptures of this era.

This paper is historiographic in nature and empirical in approach, and thus in no way intends to intervene in discussions of literary genre. Nevertheless, a distinction of terminology is helpful in approaching the diverse corpus of "memory texts" that I will be discussing in more detail shortly. To this end, a survey article by Anke Stephan, which provides both a concise typology of various "ego-documents" and a useful trove of further bibliographic references, amply suffices for our brief survey. "Ego-documents," meaning texts or documents generally relating to an individual, are not necessarily self-authored.

This broad category therefore includes both institutionally compiled official documentation, itself a substantial source type in our context when considering the copious official documentation of émigrés, deportees, and victims of the Holocaust, as well as "Selbstzeugnisse," the latter constituting "eine Unter-Kategorie der Ego-Dokumente," which are "immer autobiographischer Natur. Zu ihnen gehören Autobiographien, Memoiren, Tagebücher, Briefe oder Zeitzeugeninterviews" (Stephan 3).

Autobiographies and memoirs, as a further sub-category, and the most relevant in our context, constitute "*literarische Gattungen* mit spezifischen Strukturen. Sie nehmen eine Zwitterstellung zwischen Faktenbericht und literarischem Kunstwerk ein." The two are often distinguished in literary analyses (by virtue of the respective emphasis on either the subject's personal life or their broader social environment), but such a distinction – as Stephan herself says – is not overly useful in our historiographic context, not least of all because "[v]iele Texte lassen sich nicht eindeutig der einen oder anderen Gattung zuordnen, sondern stellen Mischformen dar" (5—6; emphasis in the original). (Lichtblau, in his key work cited above, bypassed this discussion altogether by using the generic term "Lebensgeschichten.") These texts, in any case, share the common characteristic that their authors regard themselves as "*Chronistinnen und Chronisten der Zeit* […] Die Gliederung der eigenen Lebensabschnitte entlang politischer Ereignisse ist daher ein wichtiges Strukturmerkmal" (Stephan 9; emphasis in the original). These texts are thus often structured along ostensibly "objective" historical timelines, yet they absolutely do not constitute objective sources of historical events, even in cases where they present themselves precisely as such. Much rather, these retrospective, interpretative texts serve the reconstruction of "Wertesysteme, Normen, Mentalitäten und Weltbilder" (Stephan 12) that abounded in a given temporal and cultural context and/or of a given demographic – in our case amongst the broad Jewish Austrian collective in the first half of the twentieth century.

A final sub-category that needs to be distinguished in its own right consists of oral history interviews, a source type with its own unique methodology, which moreover constitutes "die einzige Quellengattung […] die erst *durch das Interesse der Forschenden produziert* wird" (Stephan 15; emphasis in the original), as interviews tend to be structured around the questions and contentual prioritizations of the interviewer, rather than the interviewee. What all these source types share in common, nevertheless, aside from their relation to individual life stories, is that "Erlebtes durch neu gewonnene Erkenntnisse und veränderte Lebensumstände ständig umgeformt und an neue Lebenssituationen und Selbstbilder angepasst [wird]" (19—20). In other words, memory, and the construction of a usable personal narrative of the past, often plays a larger role than does the

devotion to historical veracity or "objective" facts. This is a key point to bear in mind when it comes to discussing the use of this source type in historiography, which I collectively call "memory texts" to emphasize the role of memory in shaping heterogeneous narratives of the past.

A plethora of works were already penned during the interwar period that could, and should, be included in a corpus of Jewish Austrian memory texts of the twentieth century.[14] Yet it was the Holocaust, with all its broader ramifications – in particular the mass exodus of Jews from Europe – that spawned an enormous corpus of extremely diverse memory texts, mostly taking the form of personal memoirs. These were moreover significantly authored by a much broader demographic, not just by famous literati. The majority of these are today held in the collections of the LBI in New York.

Through the initiative of Albert Lichtblau, who at that time was just beginning his research into Jewish Austrian memoirs at the LBI that would lead to the publication of his trailblazing study of "österreichisch-jüdische Lebensgeschichten" discussed above, the LBI began expanding the Austrian dimension of its collections, actively soliciting materials, including memoirs and other ego-documents, from surviving Jewish Austrians or their descendants around the world.[15] So, for example, the newsletter of the Jewish community organization in Vienna published an ad in 1995 calling for anyone from the former lands of the Habsburg Empire, not just from the Austrian Republic, to submit memoirs, or even to write memoirs specifically, to be made available for research in New York, under the rubric: "Damit es nicht verloren geht…" ("Österreichische Memoiren gesucht"). This reflects not only the profoundly late creation of the bulk of this corpus of collective memory – a significant point when it comes to interpreting these texts, as both solicited and deeply retrospective "memory texts" – but also the enduring understanding, at least among Jewish Austrians themselves, of the Habsburg Jewish context as being simultaneously part and parcel of "Austrian" Jewish history and culture.

The LBI's initiative led to the creation in 1996 of the Austrian Heritage Collection (AHC). This name designates both an ongoing cooperative project between the LBI and the Austrian Verein Gedenkdienst, "whose specific goal is to document the history of Austrian-Jewish émigrés who fled to the USA during the Nazi years," and a broader bundle of individual collections of ego-documents which emerged from this project and which is held at the LBI.[16] Today, the "Austrian" collections – again in the broader historical sense of the term – make up a good thirty percent of the total archive and library holdings of the LBI, reflecting a dramatic shift since the 1990s in the perception and reception of German-speaking Jewries in Central and Eastern Europe outside the narrower remit of a "national German" context.

The primary focus of the AHC, in particular of the ongoing project run by the Gedenkdienst, is on oral history, with over 500 interviews with Jewish Austrians having been recorded to date, many of which are available digitally online through the catalog of the Center for Jewish History in New York (of which the LBI is a constituent part).[17] By 2010, the AHC had elicited responses to a short initial survey from over 3,500 people born between 1880 and 1939, the vast majority (almost 3,000) having been born between 1910 and 1929. Of these respondents, 97 percent lived in the US, 87 percent of whom were born in Vienna, reflecting the predominance in these life stories of both Vienna in the past and the USA, particularly the New York metropolitan area, in the present. The circa 500 in-depth interviews that have been conducted to date were drawn from this pool of respondents. The gender balance was fairly even in both stages, the initial survey and the interviews, while the project canvassed actively for interviews with underrepresented groups, for example the much smaller number of Jewish Austrians from the federal states outside of Vienna.[18]

A further stage in the process of locating and surveying the surviving Jewish Austrians in exile, predominantly in the USA, involved the solicitation of any and all ego-documents to be stored at the AHC and made available for future research. While this latter aspect is not quantified in the scant, interview-focused publications on the topic, I have identified hundreds of individual collections of Jewish Austrians contained at the LBI beyond the collection of digitized AHC interviews. These broader collections include anything from personal photographs, ID cards and passports, emigration documents and the like through to my key interest here: a great number of "memoirs" of the most various types.

The Stephan Shiffers Collection, to cite an example chosen at random, includes both a transcript of an oral interview conducted with Shiffers in 2001 as well as a written "auto-biographical essay" he penned in 1996 by request for the AHC. In another randomly selected example, the Herta Pollak Collection does not contain a self-authored, purpose-written memoir, but it does contain both the long and short questionnaires conducted by the AHC as well as Pollak's original "Heimatschein" (proof of Austrian citizenship before 1938), three "autobiographic letters" (which in style and intent come close to memoirs), a professional certificate belonging to her husband Leopold Pollak, inflation money and theater programs from the interwar period, her husband's birth certificate, her parents' 1915 wedding photograph, and a 1919 family photograph. Her digital AHC interview from 1998 is also available separately online.[19] The AHC – an evidently broad and rich collection of memory texts – today constitutes the largest single collection pertaining to Jewish Austrian émigrés, "und darüber hinaus eine der größten Sammlungen zur Exilgeschichte überhaupt" (Klösch 238). Since 2017, a growing number of AHC interviews – both videos and transcripts

along with infographic data – are moreover being made publicly available on an interactive website called the "Austrian Heritage Archive," which promises to become a primary resource for scholars working with oral histories of Jewish Austrians in the future.[20]

A large part of the broad corpus of Jewish Austrian memory texts of the twentieth century consists of written memoirs, a fraction of which have been published with varying degrees of public reception, all of which emerged in a variety of contexts. Many of these memoirs were written from the 1990s onwards in response to direct requests from the LBI and through the AHC project, such as the above-mentioned autobiography by Stephan Shiffers. He opened immediately by self-reference to the act of remembering and the tendentiousness of memory generally: "Today, fifty-four days before my eighty-seventh birthday, I am telling you happenings and conditions of my past life, among them fortyfour [sic] days as prisoner of the Nazis in Dachau, Bavaria. Please consider therefore, [sic] that some important details might have been forgotten, while minor incidents from my childhood are indelibly impregnated in my memory" (Shiffers n. pag.).

Some memoirs were written explicitly for or on the request of children and grandchildren, including a children's book, *To Sail a Ship of Treasures*, published in 1984 by the Vienna-born illustrator and children's book author Lisl Weil, which attempts to explain her story of persecution and emigration to a younger audience. The preface "invites the reader to treasure the memories of life, whether it has been a long or a short one," and the book closes with the sentiment: "Good or sad, everything one remembers is important. Our memories help make us the people we are" (Weil n. pag.).

Some memoirs emerged in the context of public lectures, often penned by academics, such as John Emanuel Ullmann's *The Jews of Vienna: A Somewhat Personal Memoir*, which was based on a lecture delivered at Hofstra University, where Ullmann was a professor of management, on 23 November 1992. As the subtitle suggests, Ullmann here wove his family history into the general narrative of Vienna's past, for his family's "own good times came and went with what happened to the city. If I speak a lot of them tonight," he continued, "it is also because that is one way of showing you Jewish life in Vienna in a personal way, rather than giving you only a historical survey, with lots of dates and numbers" (Ullmann 2). In a strikingly early example of memoirs arising from such public academic contexts, Harvard University in 1940 invited submissions for an essay competition entitled "Mein Leben in Deutschland vor und nach dem 30. Januar 1933." Despite the misleading title (a case in point of the conflation of German and Austrian Jews), a whopping 39 of the 263 submissions, about 15 percent, were written by individuals from Vienna.[21] For example, the 44-page essay of

this title by Philipp Flesch, a World War I veteran born in Vienna in 1896, opens with his family's history in Central Europe reaching back at least until the seventeenth century, through which Flesch wished to emphasize the longevity of his ancestral ties to "Deutschland" (sic!), while in fact revealing their roots across Habsburg Central Europe – in Vienna, Moravia, and Hungary (Flesch 1).

Some of the memoirs in the collection, published or unpublished, are as short as a few pages, others are hundreds of pages long. They are sometimes prosaic, sometimes highly literary, constructed in the form of a novel or even a scholarly treatise. Frederic Morton, for example, who was born Fritz Mandelbaum in Vienna in 1924, covered both these bases: His 1979 work *A Nervous Splendour*, which significantly coincided with the publication of Carl Schorske's groundbreaking *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, offers a novelesque history of belle époque Vienna in the year 1888. Reading like an impossible melodrama featuring a cast of familiar figures, from Emperor Franz Joseph and Crown Prince Rudolf to Gustav Klimt, Arnold Schönberg, Anton Bruckner, Theodor Herzl, Arthur Schnitzler, and others, the story culminates in the birth of another notorious "memoirist" of Viennese culture a year later: Adolf Hitler. Morton thereby also predated by almost twenty years the first scholarly treatise to locate Hitler's ideology in his fin-de-siècle Viennese past, Brigitte Hamann's *Hitlers Wien*. In 2009, Morton also published a more conventional autobiography, *Runaway Waltz*, reflecting more explicitly on his personal background. An even more scholarly take on the memoir genre is the 248-page unpublished manuscript *Memoirs & Reminiscences* by the geographer Eric Fischer, in which his passage to America functions metonymically for the passing of the European age.

The authors of these memoirs span multiple generations, including individuals from a wide variety of educational, economic, cultural, political, and religious backgrounds, both men and women. Even some of the unpublished memoirs, which as such may have escaped the scrutiny of all but the most specialized of scholars working with the AHC, were written by individuals who were not just "participant observers" (as the part-Viennese historian Eric Hobsbawm called his generation), but were actively and deeply involved in the political events and turmoil of their place and time.[22] A prominent example of this latter case is the 1972 memoir *Wien 1938/39* by Bukovinian-born Charles Kapralik, who ran the foreign currency office of the Vienna Jewish community organization as it was forced to administer its own dissolution after 1938. This is therefore a unique insider account of this crucial aspect of the history not only of Jews in Vienna, but also of the Holocaust generally.

On the flipside, even such eyewitness accounts by important functionaries can be astonishingly taciturn when it comes to historical detail, so for example the undated and unpublished *Selbstbiographie* by Isidor Klaber. Briefly appoint-

ed by Adolf Eichmann as leader of the same coerced Jewish community organization in 1938 before being replaced by Josef Löwenherz, Klaber's memoir focuses on his personal past and merely skirts over the "Hitlerzeit, die ich nicht schildern will," closing laconically from his new perspective in exile in Palestine: "Es waren nun Jahre des Krieges, der Untergrundbewegung, illegale Einwanderung, alles wurde von uns miterlebt. Der Junge in der Haganah, beim Militär, die Eltern in begreiflicher Sorge Tag für Tag. Die Wohnung in Jaffa-Nähe. Nachrichten vom Untergang der Unseren durch Hitler. Unsere Hilflosigkeit!" (Klaber 14). Klaber's successor to the ill-fated job, Josef Löwenherz, incidentally spawned an entire collection at the LBI – but which only shows up in the catalog under the name "Joseph Loewenherz."

Dozens of memoirs of Jewish Austrians have been published over the years, the library of the LBI constituting the most comprehensive repository of published works relating to Jewish Austrian history in the world, complementing the unpublished archival holdings of the AHC. Some published memoirs have in fact become international bestsellers, perhaps the most famous example from Vienna, certainly in scholarly and/or German-speaking circles, being the comparatively late (1992) autobiography by the recently deceased Holocaust survivor Ruth Klüger, *weiter leben*. Klüger here paradigmatically underlined the inaccessibility and incommunicability of the Holocaust, and thereby the related problems of representation and memory in its aftermath, as encapsulated in the recurring trope of barbed wire: "Eine Wand ist immer zwischen den Generationen, hier aber Stacheldraht, alter, rostiger Stacheldraht" (*weiter leben* 72). The issue of intergenerational discourse raised here is moreover exemplary of the explicitly dialogic nature of Klüger's work as a whole, which engages both its readership and the historiography on the Holocaust generally, as was the subject of a monograph comparing Klüger's work to that of Primo Levi.[23] Her work finally also offers an outspoken – and deeply critical – engagement with the gendered dimension of the Holocaust. Both the gendered dimension as well as the dialogic nature of this exceptionally rich memoir are characteristically expressed in the following sardonic remark, introduced in mid-sentence parentheses: "wer rechnet schon mit männlichen Lesern? Die lesen nur von anderen Männern Geschriebenes" (*weiter leben* 82).

The above-cited study of dialogue in *weiter leben* is indicative of the degree to which such memory texts have furthermore become the focus of scholarly discourse, mostly in the field of literary studies, but increasingly also of historiography, in recent years. The impact of some of these memoirs has in turn led to their authors being invited to contribute to academic works on Jewish Austrian history and culture. George Clare, who was born Georg Klaar in Vienna in 1920, the author of the family autobiography *Last Waltz in Vienna* (1982), was

for example interviewed for the trailblazing publication *Eine zerstörte Kultur* in 1990. Here, he reflected critically on the development of Viennese culture since 1938/45 and appealed directly to a broad audience: "Freunde, Historiker, ehemalige Landsleute – begraben wir den 'Herrn Karl' [a reference to the famous literary creation of Helmut Qualtinger and Carl Merz]: kein gutes Wort soll ihn begleiten. Wenn das geschieht, dann wäre Wien nicht länger fremd" (Clare, "Letzter Walzer in Wien" 356).

Such memoirs have of course also been used as sources in the growing scholarly research on Jewish Austrian history and the Holocaust in recent years.[24] Conversely, some works of historical scholarship contain explicitly autobiographical elements, if their authors had personal or familial ties to Austria. Thomas Weyr, for example, who was born in Vienna in 1927, explicitly thematized his childhood memories in his work on the history of Vienna under National Socialism, reflecting for example on how the makeup of his school, the Döblinger Gymnasium, where "full, half, and quarter Jews" made up about a third of the student body, reflected the interweaving of cultures in this secular, upper-middle-class suburb before National Socialism (Weyr 82).

Some memoirs emerged in contexts entirely unrelated to their Jewish Austrian authors' backgrounds or their experiences of persecution and flight, for example the autobiography of the neuroscientist Eric Kandel, *In Search of Memory*, which he was invited to write upon receipt of the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 2000. Even this work, however, contributes profoundly to the complex picture of Jewish Austrian history and the memory and impact thereof reaching into the twenty-first century. As Kandel, who was forced to flee Vienna with his family at only nine years of age, and whose work has revolutionized our understanding of the physiological mechanism of memory, outlined in the preface: "In the course of writing mine [his autobiography], I saw more clearly than before how my interest in the nature of memory was rooted in my childhood experiences in Vienna" (xiv).

The postwar scope of Jewish Austrian memory texts far exceeds these more specific types of autobiographies and memoirs. Poetry by émigrés has been cited as a specific – and rich – type of memory text relating to the experience of exile and the relationship of the authors to Austria and to the German language generally. A succinct case in point is the layers of personal reflection on identity, culture, and belonging folded into just two lines in a 1943 poem written in New York by the Viennese-born World War I veteran Ernst Waldinger: "Ich bin ein Sohn der deutschen Sprache nur, Ich bin kein Deutscher, wohl ist mir darum."[25]

A further sub-genre of memory texts could include biographies not by, but about Jewish Austrians, such as Tom Segev's exemplary work on the life of Simon Wiesenthal. Though this work was not authored by Wiesenthal himself,

was in fact written after Wiesenthal's death, and thus does not constitute an ego-document as such, it draws on copious amounts of personal papers from, among other places, the Simon Wiesenthal Archive in Vienna, and thus contains many citations and reflections pertinent to a discussion of Jewish Austrian memory of the twentieth century through the example of one of its most famous protagonists. Consider the following scene from Wiesenthal's ninetieth birthday celebration at the Hotel Imperial on the Ringstraße and the light it casts on Holocaust memory and survival: "Although he had always been a secular person, he insisted that the meal be a kosher one; the idea that the hotel that once hosted Adolf Hitler was serving a kosher meal to guests honouring Simon Wiesenthal enchanted him" (Segev 409). Even more indirectly, one could here include works such as the 2010 international bestseller *The Hare with the Amber Eyes* by Edmund de Waal, the British-born descendant of a prominent part-Viennese family, and as such reflecting transgenerational memories and interpretations of the Jewish Austrian past.

This survey must include a brief discussion of some of the historiography emerging after the Holocaust, not just to give due credit to the studies existing to date, but also because the genealogy of these works evinces an evolution in the disciplinary, methodological, and contentual use of these various memory texts in scholarship. One of the earliest scholarly studies to use such texts was in fact a sociological study based on the life stories of rémigrés to Austria, Christoph Reinprecht's *Zurückgekehrt* (1992). Aside from its contentual novelty, Reinprecht also made a significant interpretative contribution to the field, certainly predating comparable trends in historiographic research on Jewish Austrian culture, by pointing out that "Jewishness" as a category of identification – the primary category for many of the subjects of interest here after 1945 – though largely imposed from without, became the pivotal factor around which individual patterns of communication, relations, and belonging were negotiated, both within the Jewish "community" and within Austrian society more broadly. Not until the following decade would scholars such as Klaus Hödl and Lisa Silverman adopt a similar approach in historiographical studies: With the development of the concept of "Jewish difference" as a fluid category of negotiated belonging and as a performance of belonging, akin to gender or class, scholars have recently been breaking with outdated yet tenacious essentialist narratives of Jewish "identity" such as that of a Jewish "assimilation" into an essentially "non-Jewish," implicitly unchanging, hegemonic Austrian (or worse German) "Leitkultur."[26]

The 2000s saw a progression in this trend of memoir-based studies of Jewish Austrian history from a variety of perspectives, including the above-cited work on rémigré memoirs by Jacqueline Vansant from 2001, a foundational study in

this field, particularly regarding the context of the Second Republic, albeit from more of a literary and biographical and less of a historiographic perspective. In 2008, Michaela Raggam-Blesch published a work on Jewish women's history in fin-de-siècle Vienna that was based almost entirely on the by now extensive AHC. The origins of this latter work in a research project at the Center for Jewish History in New York demonstrated both the growing comprehension of Jewish Austrian history as a field in its own right within Jewish studies, significantly separate from "German" Jewish history and located increasingly in the context of the former Habsburg Empire, and the potential of these sources held at the LBI for opening new research areas within the field, in this case pertaining to Jewish women's and gender studies. Following the trend set by Klaus Hödl, Raggam-Blesch's study was moreover notable for introducing a more critical engagement not only with the source materials, but also with the concepts underlying the field – in her case problematizing "Jewishness" much in the same way that she problematized gender. Raggam-Blesch's critical distinction of the appertaining memory texts, similar to those cited by Anke Stephan above, and her emphasis on the tension between the recounting of the past and the insertion of interpretation and meaning-making in the present, not to mention the hidden acts of obfuscation and outright concealment inherent in such memory texts, goes a long way to informing the use of the memoirs under discussion here.

As Manès Sperber, the Galician-born essayist in exile, was quoted saying in Lichtblau's early work, memoirs may not even reflect memories as such, already one stage removed from the actual events of the past, but may in fact be "*Erinnerungen an Erinnerungen.*"[27] In other words, the writing of memoirs – which in this context often occurred only decades after the events recounted and was often prompted by third parties, as in the case of the AHC – consists of the present retrieval of past memories that themselves were formulated perhaps half a century ago, following the events being remembered: a complicated mnemonic convolution. However, as memories become textualized in the form of memoirs, and these corpuses of memoirs in turn become canonized in historiography, they can blur the lines between recognizably personal, individual, "communicative" memories and the general "collective" or "cultural" memory of entire eras.[28] By inference, historians run the risk of citing memories and narratives drawn from memoirs as historical fact, or of adopting collective narratives canonized in memoir corpuses as "objective" historical accounts of the past.

Conversely, these precise tensions between the individual and the collective, as between chosen and conferred identities, and thereby the problems inherent in using memoirs of individual Jews to write a "Jewish" history, equally point to the ways in which these memoirs can augment or even revise historical think-

ing about Jews and Jewish culture in Austria – if the inherent complexity and subjectivity of the individual memoirs is placed center stage, and not merely glossed over. A broad corpus of memory texts such as the Austrian Heritage Collection could well offer an opportunity for the "more anarchical and comprehensive" approach to the examination of memory-making called for by Alon Confino over twenty years ago (Cofino 1402). Rather than constituting a priori a form of "collective" memory, memoir corpuses should in fact be approached as a form of "collected" memories, "an aggregate of individual memories," characterized by diversity, ambivalence, and contrasts (Kansteiner 186). Seen in this light, the historiographic use of memoirs can avoid the pitfalls of subsuming these sources under an ostensible "collective" history and thereby actually obliterating those experiences that do not support the collective narrative.

A whole range of questions can and should be applied to each memory text chosen from this vast corpus: Who was the author? What motivated them to write about their memories of Austria, their emigration, and/or their experiences during the Holocaust? What are the key themes in their texts, and are there any glaring omissions? How "literary" are these texts, how ostensibly "factual"? In what sense does the author's background, experience, generation, age, gender etc. inform the reading of their text? In what language was the text written, for which audience, was it published, and if so, in what context? An entirely different set of questions emerges when one places these texts in relation to one another: In what ways are the backgrounds, motivations etc. of the authors comparable or different? How are the similarities or differences related to characteristics of the authors such as generation, experience, gender, and so on? How does the view towards themes, context, and historical interpretation change in relation to issues such as the text's creation date or whether or not it was published?

Approached like this, our vast and eclectic corpus of memory texts reveals, to summarize very briefly, an astonishing array of insights into the history of Jewish Austrians over the last century. These texts share in common that the individual narratives are mostly structured in relation to specific historical events and/or eras – evincing the blurring of classic genres of "autobiography" and "memoir" or even "eyewitness accounts" as outlined by Anke Stephan above. Categories of belonging – such as Jewishness, gender, class, or broader political and cultural belongings – are often framed retrospectively, for example reflecting on life in Habsburg society from the vantage point of a new life in the USA, looking back through the prism of the Holocaust. Language is here a not inconsiderable issue, reflecting the authors' self-conception, their relationship to their Austrian past and to their American (or other) present, while translations of memory texts from one language to another in some cases constitute entirely

new editions intended for entirely different audiences.[29] Often, incidental or even marginalized topics come to the fore in these mostly non-elite sources: The generally understudied era of Austrofascist rule in the mid-1930s, to cite just one example, could be entirely reconceived from a "Jewish" perspective through the use of these memoirs.[30]

Generational shifts are key here, with some memoirists, such as Ruth Klüger, having being born into fascism and antisemitism, while other, older memoirists, such as Eric Fischer, reflect as far back as the "German Wars" of the 1860s and interpret what followed accordingly. The issue of generational difference itself is sometimes explicitly discussed in these sources (as in Klüger's barbed wire), at other times not, another key example of the caution that needs to be exercised when assessing the "objective" historical veracity of individual experiences, for example – an often discussed example – regarding the extent and aggressiveness of antisemitism in Austrian society before 1938.

The contextual scope of the sources naturally goes far beyond Austria, including reflections on the exile condition generally and on new home cities or homelands, such as most prolifically New York and the USA. Of course, as the variability of the individual collections of the AHC already suggests, these sources shed even more insights when they are placed in relation to other existing ego-documents pertaining to one and the same individual, such as photographs, newspaper reports, gravestones, appearances in scholarly literature, and more. Anecdotes and discussions of other people and/or the citation of other people's memories form a further, almost intertextual, certainly interpersonal level of memory construction in this source pool. Explicit engagements with the audience, with some of these memoirs even addressing the reader, form yet another level of inter- or metatextuality. As such, this corpus itself constitutes a more or less explicit engagement with memory as a whole and/or with historiography by contrast to personal memory.

The corpus of memory texts outlined here opens up a plethora of thematic contexts: identity, culture, "Jewishness," but also "Austrianness" (not to mention later "Americanness") are central issues, while Jewishness in particular breaks down further into issues of religion, culture, practice, heritage, heredity, discrimination, persecution, and more. The personal narratives often revolve around particular historical events: the late Habsburg Empire, World War I, life in the crownlands or later federal states versus Vienna, revolution and republic, Red Vienna, fascism and National Socialism, not to mention the "Anschluss," November Pogrom, and the Holocaust – each constitutes a particular *lieu de memoire* allowing for the experience of Jewish Austrians to be grasped in its kaleidoscopic plurality, whether from a synchronic perspective (focusing on

one particular moment, such as World War I) or as a diachronic development (in its broadest from the Habsburg Empire through to the twenty-first century).

With projects such as the Austrian Heritage Collection in recent years generating a vast array of new memory texts, a veritable corpus of sources relating to modern Jewish Austrian history, but given that the historiographic engagement with this textual heritage – the highly qualitative studies published to date notwithstanding – is still in its infancy, these sources of thousands upon thousands of Jewish Austrian life stories promise rich and exciting new insights into this already much-discussed field of modern history, which as a result should show no sign of stagnation in the foreseeable future.

Notes

1 I am indebted to Jacqueline Vansant for her critical suggestions on an early draft of this text, to Philipp Rohrbach for sharing his insider knowledge of the Austrian Heritage Collection, and to Joseph Moser for his invitation to contribute to this special volume. Research for this article was made possible by a generous grant from the Edith Saurer Fonds.

2 This point was made with specific regard to the historiography of Jews in Vienna by Beller (18).

3 This article was both a specific thematic take on the broad topic of Jewish Viennese sepulchral culture and a kind of pilot study for a comprehensive book on the history of Vienna's Jewish cemeteries, entitled *Die Grabstätten meiner Väter: Die jüdischen Friedhöfe in Wien.*

4 For an early and characteristic example, see the published reflection by Pick.

5 See Corbett et al.

6 I am not going to reiterate here the substantial and well-known roster of historiographies on Jews in Austria, the Habsburg Empire, and Central Europe. Still the most comprehensive overview of the history of Jews in Austria to date is Brugger et al., *Geschichte der Juden in Österreich*, while an overview of recent developments in the field, from a variety of perspectives but with a focus on cultural history, can be gleaned from Silverman and Holmes.

7 A groundbreaking new work in this respect, which argues against the long-dominant nationalist historiographies that a sense of "Austrian" identity and loyalty to the Habsburg "state" was a powerful and lasting force generally in modern Central Europe, not only amongst Jews, is Judson, *The Habsburg Empire*.

8 Despite the difficulty of determining exact numbers from the census data of the US State Department, Lichtblau showed that, even before the Holocaust,

the USA was the numerically greatest destination for Jews emigrating from Austria and, conversely, that the Habsburg Empire was the second-greatest country of origin of Jewish immigrants in the USA, after the Russian Empire (Lichtblau, *Als hätten wir dazugehört* 56).

9 On these figures, see Brugger et al. 501—05, 525.

10 On the sociological background to this circumstance, see Oxaal 58.

11 See the current estimates of the Documentation Centre of Austrian Resistance at www.doew.at/erforschen/projekte/datenbankprojekte/namentliche-erfassung-der-oesterreichischen-holocaustopfer. Web. 24 Jan. 2019.

12 See www.lbi.org/. Web. 24 Jan. 2019.

13 See the seminal work on the new community by Adunka, especially 17.

14 A well-known example is Wassermann, *Mein Weg als Deutscher und Jude*, published in 1921. To be sure, Wassermann was a Bavarian-born German citizen, yet he spent the majority of his life in Austria, where he died and was buried, and interwar Vienna features prominently in his autobiography. This is a case in point of the diversity and complexity of both the memoirs included in our corpus and their authors, as well as of the porousness of the definition of "Jewish Austrians" throughout the twentieth century. One could even include explicitly fictional literature here, such as Joseph Roth's 1927 novella *Die Flucht ohne Ende*, which was, however, tellingly subtitled "Ein Bericht," as well as Roth's extensive essayistic oeuvre from the 1930s, compiled in Volumes 3 and 4 of Kesten, *Joseph Roth Werke*.

15 See Lichtblau, "Community-orientiertes Arbeiten konkret".

16 See www.lbi.org/collections/austrian-heritage-collection/. Web. 12 Oct. 2020.

17 These can be accessed by searching either generally with the term "Austrian Heritage Collection," which brings up a list of almost 500 relevant collections, or using the specific name of an individual collection, at www.cjh.org/. Web. 12 Oct. 2020.

18 See Lichtblau, "Community-orientiertes Arbeiten konkret" 139—140, 143. See also Klösch 237.

19 The individual URLs are too long to reproduce here, but each of these examples can be found by searching on the above-cited CJH catalog using the name of the collection, the individual, and/or the item in question.

20 See austrianheritagearchive.at. Web. 12 Oct. 2020.

21 As indicated in Hecht et al. 144, footnote 15.

22 Hobsbawm used this expression self-referentially in his autobiography, *Interesting Times* (xiii).

23 Bianchi, *Shoah und Dialog bei Primo Levi und Ruth Klüger*.

24 For example the German edition of Trahan, *Geisterbeschwörung*, which was one of numerous memoirs cited extensively in Hecht et al., *Topographie der Shoah*.
25 Cited in Herz-Kestranek et al. 499.
26 See in particular Hödl, *Wiener Juden – jüdische Wiener*, and Silverman, *Becoming Austrians*.
27 Cited in Lichtblau, *Als hätten wir dazugehört* 129. Emphasis in the original.
28 I am drawing here on the well-established distinction between "communicative" and "cultural" memory outlined by Assmann (13).
29 For example the English-language edition of Ruth Klüger's *weiter leben*, entitled *Still Alive*, which is not so much a translation of the German original as an "American edition" in the fullest sense.
30 I offered an example of such a reappraisal in Corbett, "Once 'the Only True Austrians'."

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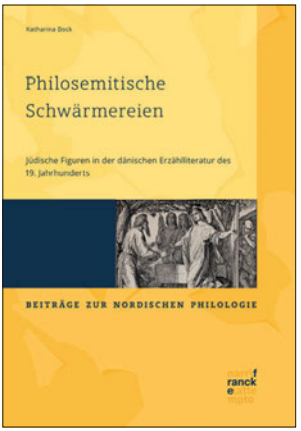

Katharina Bock

Philosemitische Schwärmereien

Jüdische Figuren in der dänischen Erzählliteratur des 19. Jahrhunderts

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Dieser Band untersucht anhand ausgewählter dänischer Prosa im 19. Jahrhundert die Ambivalenz philosemitischer Literatur. Es wird gezeigt, wie bestehende Vorstellungen über Juden und Jüdinnen einerseits literarisch entlarvt und gebrochen werden, und wie andererseits jüdische Figuren weiterhin Projektionsfläche und christliches Phantasma bleiben. Philosemitismus wird als spezifisch literarisches Phänomen betrachtet, indem gefragt wird, welche Erzählmöglichkeiten sich durch die jüdischen Figuren im Text eröffnen und was diese Figuren literarisch so attraktiv macht. Obwohl die untersuchten Texte zumeist um das Thema Religion kreisen, interessieren sie sich kaum für das Judentum ihrer jüdischen Figuren. Vielmehr dienen die Juden und Jüdinnen dazu, das Christentum aufzuwerten und zu erneuern.

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