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Die Grabstätten meiner Väter. Die jüdischen Friedhöfe in Wien.

By Tim Corbett. Schriften des Centrums für Jüdische Studien, 36. Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 2021. Pp. 1041. ISBN: 978-3-205-20672-9. Hardback, €98.00.

Franz Reichel

The historian, author, and translator Tim Corbett (b. 1986) explains in the Preface (p. 13) that Jewish cemeteries are the only Jewish sites that have been continuously present in Vienna's urban landscape since the early modern period. Their graves preserve the otherwise fragmented Jewish history of Vienna with a remarkable continuity from the late Middle Ages to the present day. *Die Grabstätten meiner Väter* (The Graves of My Forefathers) offers, for the first time, an integrated history of these cemeteries. Based on the multilayered, intertextual inscriptions, the social and cultural diversity of Vienna's Jewish communities is comprehensively analysed—thus opening up a new, integrative approach to the city's Jewish history from its beginnings to the present.

The introductory first chapter is entitled “Jewish Spaces, Jewish Cultures: An Introduction to the Location and Significance of Jewish Cemeteries in Historiography” (“Jüdische Räume, jüdische Kulturen. Eine Einführung in die Verortung und Bedeutung jüdischen Friedhöfe in der Geschichtsschreibung”; pp. 15–58). Starting with the death of Arthur Schnitzler (1862–1931), the chapter traces the public staging of his funeral, despite his own wish for a simple burial. The ideological appropriation by the Jewish Community, the cultural establishment, and political actors serves as a paradigmatic example of the tensions between individual legacy and collective memory. The grave of Karl Kraus (1874–1936), whose location and design also contradict his explicit wishes, further underlines that gravestones often reveal more about the interpretive frameworks of those who come after than about the deceased themselves. The subsequent alteration and the ascription of political worldviews on gravestones demonstrate that Jewish cemeteries are dynamic spaces of cultural negotiation. They are understood as “Jewish topographies” in which customs were practised and concepts of life and various identities were negotiated, while also reflecting a “communal space” underpinned by a

complex web of relationships. Their true potential for insight lies in the nuanced examination of the multilayered, historically mutable monuments as expressions of the complex social, religious, and cultural diversity of Jewish life in Vienna across generations. In four subchapters, Corbett explores the anthropological and cultural-historical significance of Jewish cemeteries in Vienna. These are regarded as multifaceted spaces of remembrance, which link death, identity, mourning, and culture. They function as “heterotopias” connecting past and present, individual and collective. With over 100,000 funerary monuments, they constitute a central historical archive of Vienna’s Jewish history from the late Middle Ages to the present day.

Today, Jewish cemeteries are often no longer genuinely Jewish spaces but have been transformed by processes of assimilation. Corbett critiques the notion of clear boundaries between “Jewish” and “non-Jewish” and emphasises the socially constructed nature of Jewish identity. Sepulchral traditions, too, often rely on collective narratives and the legitimisation of religious authority.

Cemeteries reflect both Jewish diversity and the illusion of cultural unity. Their institutional organisation imposed collective order on a heterogeneous population. However, membership in the Jewish Community revealed little about individual religiosity; burial practices primarily attest to legal or social status rather than personal belief. Corbett’s study analyses Vienna’s Jewish cemeteries for the first time as cultural-historical urban spaces in a systematic way. Using qualitative methods, it investigates sepulchral culture in the context of urban development, cultural narratives, and collective memory. Gravestones and inscriptions serve as material sources and mirrors of societal transformation.

Chapter 2 is entitled “The ‘Stone Archive’: On the Origins of the Jewish Cemetery and Its Documentation” (“Das ‘steinerne Archiv’. Zu den Ursprüngen des Jüdischen Friedhofs und seiner Dokumentation”; pp. 59–140). The Jewish cemeteries of Vienna are not merely sites of remembrance but stone archives of collective history. Gravestones are unique testimonies to the Jewish past; however, they mostly reflect privileged social groups. Corbett questions common narrative simplifications, such as the dichotomy between “Jewish” (*jüdisch*) and “non-Jewish” (*nicht-jüdisch*) or “traditional” and “non-traditional,” and criticises the fact that many accounts rely exclusively on orthodox sources. Instead, he advocates for an understanding of Jewish sepulchral culture as a pluralistic, historically changeable structure. Central to this is the recognition that Jewish cemeteries do not document a single unified tradition but a multitude of traditions that developed in the tension between religious norms, individual memory, and social change.

Jewish cemeteries are often referred to as the “House of Life” or “House of Eternity.” The idea of an “eternal” grave exists within a friction between biblical hope for resurrection and historical transience. Concepts of death, afterlife, and resurrection within Judaism are diverse and sometimes contradictory. Jewish cemeteries were traditionally located outside urban settlements, partly in response to exclusion, persecution, and Christian funerary practices. The oldest preserved Jewish gravestones in Vienna date back to the thirteenth century. They demonstrate that Jewish sepulchral culture has always been in flux and deeply intertwined with Central European surrounding cultures. Contrary to widespread assumptions, there are no uniform, universally valid “Jewish rites.” Rather, these are a complex network of diverse regional, social, and historically variable practices shaped by religious laws and historical developments. Today, the administration of Jewish cemeteries in Vienna lies with the *Israelitische Kultusgemeinde* (IKG; Jewish Community). Its cemetery office oversees all practical matters relating to burial, grave maintenance, and international transfers. The Jewish gravestone (*matzevah*) developed from a biblical memorial marker into a personal monument. Initially, it primarily served to mark ritually impure graves; later, it became a symbol of individual remembrance. Jewish language practice has always been multilingual. Hebrew was typically used as the liturgical language, while liturgical texts—such as the *Kaddish*—were in Aramaic. Hebrew began appearing on gravestone inscriptions in the Middle Ages, remained in use throughout the Enlightenment, and experienced a revival after the Shoah. No standardised rules for inscriptions ever existed, with stereotypical symbols and erroneous texts being common.

Gravestone inscriptions are key sources and often the only surviving record of a person. They are brief and idealised, yet they reflect social norms and historical developments (e.g., gender roles). From the fifteenth century onwards, names, dates, acrostics, and poetic forms became common. The Star of David gradually displaced older symbols such as the menorah or the shofar. Due to the sheer volume of material, inscriptions are usually cited only in excerpts.

Chapter 3 is entitled “Community Despite Change and Fragility: The Cemetery in the Seegasse from the Middle Ages to the Reform Era” (“Gemeinwesen trotz Wandel und Brüchigkeit. Der Friedhof in der Seegasse vom Mittelalter bis zur Epoche der Reform”; pp. 141–192). The Jewish cemetery on Seegasse in the ninth district was likely established in the second half of the sixteenth century and remained the only Jewish burial ground in Vienna until 1783. Today, it ranks among the oldest surviving pre-modern Jewish cemeteries in Europe. The Seegasse cemetery is thus not only the oldest pre-

served Jewish cemetery in Vienna but also a rare testament to Jewish continuity despite profound ruptures. The history of Jewish cemeteries in Vienna is marked by discontinuity, persecution, and destruction. In the pre-modern era, Jews in Vienna generally lived in exclusion, with religion serving as a central anchor of identity. From around 1570, a small Jewish community emerged and briefly flourished in Leopoldstadt, until all Jews were expelled in 1669 under Emperor Leopold I (1640–1705; r. 1658–1705). Their synagogue and possessions were destroyed, and many went on to found new communities in Western Hungary or Hamburg. From 1683, only wealthy Jews were permitted to remain, and only under restrictive conditions, as so-called *Hofjuden* (court Jews). Even under Maria Theresa (1717–1780; r. 1745–1765), hostility and exploitation prevailed—for example, through compulsory loans to finance the imperial court. The legacy of this era is the Seegasse cemetery, a symbol of Jewish continuity despite repeated expulsions. Although it was almost destroyed during the Nazi period, it was preserved as a sacred site in the collective memory thanks to early documentation by the Jewish scholar Bernhard Wachstein (1868–1935). Lease agreements guaranteed its preservation, funded through Jewish donations. The cemetery is scarcely documented historically, rarely marked on maps, yet its inscriptions are deeply imbued with religious significance. The gravestones reflect social hierarchies: rabbis and community leaders were buried centrally, marginalised groups at the edges. Inscriptions were typically in Hebrew, sacred and stylised, featuring laudatory formulae, biblical quotations, and chronograms. Women were often mentioned only in terms of family relationships. Symbolic images, such as praying hands or animals, disprove the notion that Jewish funerary art was entirely devoid of imagery. A comparison with the Christian *Stephansfreithof* (Stephen's Cemetery) shows that there were many parallels in funerary epigraphy despite differing living conditions. Both traditions emphasised religious values such as piety and scholarship. Whereas Jewish gravestones tended to reference the inner life of the community, Christian graves more clearly reflected external social rank and titles. The differences, therefore, lay less in the values expressed than in the surrounding social frameworks. In conclusion, the religious segregation of Vienna's Jews was the result of both internal differentiation and (above all) external repressive measures, embedded within the broader context of Habsburg's religious intolerance, particularly during the Counter-Reformation. The suppression of Jewish communities formed part of a larger, complex religious fanaticism. Despite these uncertainties, the enduring concern for the preservation of the Seegasse cemetery testifies to the deep historical and geographical rootedness of Vienna's Jewish population, an expression of collective identity passed down through generations.

Chapter 4 is entitled “‘Tolerance’ and the Establishment of the Community: The Währing Cemetery from the Reform Era to the Liberal Period” (“‘Toleranz’ und Etablierung der Gemeinde. Der Friedhof in Währing von der Epoche der Reform bis zur liberalen Ära”; pp. 193–256). With the reforms of Joseph II (1741–1790; r. 1765–1790), the Jewish cemetery in Währing was opened in 1784 as the first burial ground outside Vienna, following the prohibition of burials within the city. Josephinian principles of equal treatment of the dead quickly met with resistance, but Jewish rituals continued to be practised. The Währing cemetery developed into the main burial site of Vienna’s Jewish community until 1879 and reflects the social transformation from ghetto life to liberal bourgeois society. The gradual establishment of the Israelite Religious Community of Vienna unfolded over generations. The Edict of Tolerance of 1781 brought limited freedoms but no legal equality. Nevertheless, the Jewish population grew significantly, and many “tolerated persons” rose to become influential citizens. The emancipation of 1867 enabled Jewish life to flourish in all areas of society. The cemetery documents this development through monumental graves, noble titles, and a diversity of both religious and secular forms of expression. In the inscriptions and gravestone designs, one sees a blend of tradition and modernity, bilingualism (Hebrew and German), chronograms, biblical quotations, as well as middle-class and familial self-representation. Women and children increasingly came to the fore in commemorative practices. The Währing cemetery thus stands as an essential testimony to Jewish integration and self-assertion within the Habsburg Empire. Comparisons with the St. Marx Cemetery reveal stylistic parallels and shared societal characteristics such as multilingual inscriptions, the use of titles, and the evolving portrayal of women. Both cemeteries represent a pluralistic, bourgeois culture of remembrance in the nineteenth century.

Chapter 5 deals with “Emancipation and Unified Diversity: The Central Cemetery, Gate I, from the Liberal Era to the Period of Decline” (“Emanzipation und einheitliche Vielfalt. Der Zentralfriedhof Tor I von der liberalen Ära bis zum Zerfall”; pp. 257–360). Vienna’s Central Cemetery was established in the nineteenth century as a multi-denominational burial ground, inspired by the Père Lachaise cemetery in Paris, in response to the overcrowding of traditional cemeteries. It no longer reflected individual communities but rather a broader society beyond class, religion, and ideology. Initially located far outside the city, the Central Cemetery developed into a site for celebrated honorary graves. Burial plots were typically maintained for only a few generations except in the Jewish section, where permanent graves were common. The cemetery is regarded as a cultural museum with significant architecture and represents Viennese sepulchral culture, characterised by a

strong tradition of morbidity and nostalgia. The Jewish section includes over 100,000 burials and reveals—despite its diversity—clear shared forms of identity differentiated by class, wealth, and religious background. The cemetery at Gate I is the largest, most diverse, and at the same time most cohesive site of remembrance for Vienna’s Jewish community in the final decades of the Habsburg monarchy. Following the granting of equal rights in the 1867 Constitution, Vienna became a centre of a cosmopolitan Jewish population. The Israelite Religious Community received official state recognition, although internal tensions persisted between Zionism, Orthodoxy, and Hasidism. Despite growing antisemitism, many Jews remained loyal to the Habsburg Empire. The liberal Jewish elite shaped the economy, the press, and the cultural sphere. The area surrounding Gate I of the Central Cemetery reflects this diversity as a unified site of collective memory. The Jewish cemetery at Gate I was autonomously managed by the Jewish Community, although it was integrated into the overall structure of the Central Cemetery. The layout and organisation of the cemetery demonstrate the diversity of Viennese Jewry. Despite opposition from Catholic quarters, emancipation was implemented. A formally regulated burial order allowed for design freedom. From 1887 onwards, the cemetery was expanded, with its architecture and funerary art mirroring the cultural variety and the liberal middle class of the time. The gravestone inscriptions remain largely unexplored but display a wide spectrum of Jewish identity in the tension between religion, social status, and secularisation. The grave styles follow European artistic trends, with the inscriptions usually being bilingual. Secular practices, such as cremation, were also present. Symbols such as the Star of David or priestly hands (*Kohanimhände*) remained open in meaning. Women are underrepresented in official commemorative culture, although there are exceptions in personal dedications. The Döbling Cemetery illustrates this cultural blending: although an officially Christian cemetery, many individuals of Jewish background are buried there. The boundary between “Jewish” and “non-Jewish” became increasingly blurred; many identified as Jewish without being members of the religious community. The soldiers’ graves in Group 76B near Gate I were established during World War I. Jewish officers and soldiers were buried there, often with inscriptions such as *pei-nun* (פִּינּוּן). Religious and national symbolism became intertwined. The biography of Heinz Koch exemplifies this form of Jewish-patriotic remembrance. The cemetery at Gate I reflects the diverse Jewish community of Vienna during its heyday—religious and secular, orthodox and liberal, rich and poor, all representing a wide range of professions and social strata. Like many cemeteries of the time, it reveals strong tendencies towards secularisation, bourgeois culture, and a democratised commemorative style, with monumental grave markers. Divisions were deepened after

World War I, and with the opening of the cemetery at Gate IV internal discord became more pronounced in a changing Austria wherein the role of Jews became increasingly uncertain.

Chapter 6 is entitled “Democracy and Fractured Diversity: The Central Cemetery, Gate IV, from the First World War to the ‘Anschluss’” (“Demokratie und zerstrittene Vielfalt. Der Zentralfriedhof Tor IV vom Ersten Weltkrieg bis zum ‘Anschluß’”; pp. 361–455). During the interwar period, Jewish funerary culture in Vienna underwent a significant reorientation. After the fall of the monarchy in 1918, many Jews lost the social security and privileges they had previously enjoyed. Titles became meaningless and affiliations were called into question. Despite widespread poverty and political instability, the number of burials at the Gate I cemetery continued to rise. At the same time, a new central Jewish burial ground was established at Gate IV, which would go on to accommodate some 70,000 burials up to the 1990s. The Jewish Community experienced change amid the tensions of democratisation, increased orthodoxy, and social exclusion. Although often overlooked in historical narratives, the interwar period was culturally significant, with figures such as Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), Stefan Zweig (1881–1942), and Arnold Schönberg (1874–1951). Although the Jewish population had declined in numbers, it remained diverse, both politically and religiously fragmented. Tensions emerged between Orthodox, Zionist, and secular currents. Rising antisemitism, economic hardship, and social marginalisation led to a renewed emphasis on religious identity. By 1935, around 8,500 Jews had emigrated to Palestine. Zionism gained increasing influence, aided by immigration from Eastern Europe. The processes of democratisation and, later, the rise of the authoritarian *Ständestaat* (Corporate State) altered power dynamics within the community. Financial difficulties and a growing number of destitute burials aggravated the situation. It was during this time that the new Jewish cemetery at Gate IV was established, becoming the central burial ground of the community, while the importance of Gate I declined. As Gate I reached capacity by 1912, the community acquired a separate plot of land in 1913 for the new cemetery at Gate IV, outside municipal ownership. It was provisionally opened in 1914, with the first buildings constructed in 1917. Chief Rabbi Moritz Gudemann (1835–1918) understood the new site as a “House of Eternity” (*Haus der Ewigkeit*) representing a distinctly Jewish space that consciously broke with earlier ideals of integration. The separating wall from the rest of the Central Cemetery symbolised this demarcation. After the war, the cemetery was further developed. In 1924, a monumental ceremonial hall was built, which survived the Shoah. Stricter regulations regarding grave design reflected a striving for religious authenticity, increasingly shaped by Orthodox perspectives. At the time, the community had over 180,000 members,

and in 1936 it expanded the cemetery grounds by purchasing the *Liebfrauengründe*. The Gate IV cemetery reflects the tensions between standardisation and Orthodox influence. Hasidic burial traditions, such as *ohelim* (grave houses) for miracle-working rabbis emphasised isolation and piety, often operating independently of the Jewish Community. Inscriptions were rich in religious references, with cults of personality and group boundaries being dominant. Despite conflicts around piety and symbolism, the cemetery remained a site of internal diversity, from Orthodox to secular, from Ashkenazi to Sephardi. Even after 1918, prominent Jewish individuals continued to be buried at the older Gate I cemetery, signalling a cultural continuity with the Habsburg period. At the same time, a separate Jewish war memorial emerged. Initially, Jewish soldiers were buried in the general military section, but the Jewish Community later established its own war grave group (76B). In 1929, a monumental memorial was unveiled, administered by the conservative League of Jewish Frontline Soldiers (*Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten*). It was intended to affirm Jewish loyalty to the Austrian state, an increasingly precarious stance in light of rising antisemitism. Even highly decorated Jewish veterans were persecuted from 1938 onwards. Gravestone inscriptions often reflect the connection between Austro-Hungarian tradition, Shoah experience, and Jewish resistance. Hugo Bettauer's (1872–1925) 1922 satire *Die Stadt ohne Juden* (The City Without Jews) describes a Vienna that collapses economically and culturally after the Jews are expelled until they are invited back. Tragically, sixteen years later, the Shoah turned this fictional scenario into a horrific reality. Bettauer was murdered in 1925 by an Austrian National Socialist, who was later celebrated as a “hero.” In the early twentieth century, Vienna's Jewish cemeteries powerfully reflected the deep cultural rootedness of Judaism in the city. Moreover, their material presence transformed them into arenas of the tension between preservation and destruction, similarly as in many other European cities.

Chapter 7 is entitled “Valuing, Preserving, Destroying: Parallels and Paradoxes in the Scholarly and Urban Topographical Treatment of Vienna's Jewish Cemeteries from the 19th Century to the Shoah” (“Werden, bewahren, vernichten. Parallelitäten und Paradoxien im wissenschaftlichen und stadtopographischen Umgang mit den Wiener jüdischen Friedhöfen von 19. Jahrhundert bis in die Shoah”; pp. 457–584). Vienna's Jewish cemeteries reflect the contradictory relationship with Jewish culture. On the one hand, they were valued as historical witnesses; on the other, they were systematically devalued or destroyed. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they received recognition through scholarship, art, and heritage conservation. The Seegasse cemetery, in particular, was documented and restored at an early stage. Concurrently, however, an ideologically driven marginalisation of

Jewish culture was taking root, which culminated in blatant plunder and destruction during the Nazi era. Even before 1938, attitudes towards Jewish cemeteries were ambivalent. Whereas heritage conservation and Jewish historiography helped preserve some of them, they were nevertheless simultaneously marginalised. Under National Socialism, Jewish culture was selectively appropriated to serve German identity-building. Cemeteries were looted, and gravestones repurposed as construction material. Their destruction formed part of Nazi urban planning, a deliberate “erasure of memory.” Until the 1930s, the cemeteries were regarded as significant sites of Jewish history. Scholars such as Bernhard Wachstein produced pioneering work. In addition to art-historical analyses, popular guides to the cemeteries were published. This visibility starkly contrasts with their later ideological annihilation. The culture of remembrance, therefore, always existed within a field of tension between appreciation and political appropriation.

In the nineteenth century, Vienna had nineteen Jewish cemeteries. Despite protests, many were closed for urban development reasons. The Jewish Community (*Israelitische Kultusgemeinde*; IKG) fought for their preservation. The Seegasse cemetery became a site of memory through restoration and documentation. Even the Austrian Federal Monuments Office (*Bundesdenkmalamt*) was, at times, involved in their protection—including after 1938. After the *Anschluss* (annexation), local authorities ignored legal protections. Gravestones were sold off, cemeteries expropriated, and bodies exhumed. The City of Vienna planned the complete eradication of Jewish cemeteries within ten years. From 1942 onwards, cemeteries were plundered for raw materials. This expropriation formed part of the broader cultural genocide. The treatment of the Seegasse cemetery revealed contradictions between the Monuments Office and racial biology institutes. On the one hand, there was an interest in preservation for cultural-historical reasons; on the other, the cemetery was exploited for racist research. Gravestones and human remains were stolen. The last residents of the adjacent care home were deported. After 1945, the Monuments Office worked to preserve the site, while many former Nazi officials remained unpunished. From 1941, there were also massive intrusions at the Währing cemetery, exhumations were carried out for the construction of air-raid shelters or for use in racist research supported by academics such as Viktor Christian. Gravestones were sold and prominent individuals were reburied elsewhere. After 1945, there was little investigation and many perpetrators were never held accountable. From 1939, the Jewish section of the Central Cemetery suffered from financial impoverishment and expropriation. The legally mandated rest periods prevented complete destruction. Yet even in death, Jews were stigmatised—for example, through additions such as “Sara” to names on gravestones. The cemetery remained a final

place of Jewish presence in Vienna. After 1945, the small remaining community fought for restitution and maintenance, often against ongoing societal resistance. Archival material was partly moved abroad, and much of it remains inaccessible to this day. The Shoah was not an isolated rupture but rather the culmination of long-standing developments.

“House of Death, House of Life: Coercion and (Survival) Life at Central Cemetery Gate IV during the Shoah” (“Haus des Todes, Haus des Lebens. Zwang und (Über-)Leben am Zentralfriedhof Tor IV während der Shoah”; pp. 585–670) is the title of Chapter 8. After the *Anschluss* in 1938, Vienna’s Jewish population experienced brutal persecution. Around 125,000 Jews were forced to emigrate, whereas many of those who remained were later deported. During this time, the Jewish cemetery at Central Cemetery Gate IV became the last remaining place of Jewish life in Vienna, a final refuge amid oppression. Despite isolation, it developed into a space of community and a symbol of Jewish identity. During the Shoah, the cemetery administration continued to function under the harshest conditions. Burials were carried out despite severe financial hardship, sometimes supported by donations from wealthier community members. The number of deaths declined after 1943 but temporarily rose with the arrival of Hungarian forced labourers. The cemetery regulations were tightened in 1942 and Orthodox burial practices gained in importance. Many staff members were deported although a few managed to lay low and survived. The cemetery became a place of burial, resistance, and refuge. Despite Orthodox prohibitions, urns containing the ashes of Shoah victims were buried. A Nazi directive from 1941 stipulated that all “racial Jews” (*Rassejuden*) had to be buried in Jewish cemeteries, including converts and atheists. This led to internal conflicts within the community regarding questions of belonging, burial rites, and gravestone inscriptions, all consequences of Nazi racial policy and the imposed definition of Jewish identity. From 1940 onwards, unused burial land near Gate IV was repurposed into a *Hachshara* training camp and vegetable garden. Here, young people prepared for emigration—mostly, however, in vain. The site became a space of seemingly normal life, a “house of life” in the midst of death. Most did not survive, yet the burial land remains a symbol of hope and tragic failure. Writers such as Ilse Aichinger (1921–2016), Franz Werfel (1890–1945), and Erich Fried (1921–1988) treated the cemetery in literary works as a symbol of Jewish memory, loss, and identity. The site became a final “homeland” or a mirror of a vanished world. The Jewish cemetery turned into a post-war literary space of remembrance. In 1944, around 15,000 Hungarian Jews were brought to eastern Austria as forced labourers, about 6,000 of them to Vienna, outnumbering thereby the remaining Jewish population. Many died because of forced labour and they were buried in individual or mass graves at Gate

IV. Inscriptions and later memorial markers record this largely unaddressed chapter of the cemetery's history.

Chapter 9 is entitled “A New Community? Collective Memory Construction at Central Cemetery Gate IV after the Shoah” (“Eine neue Gemeinde? Gemeinschaftliche Erinnerungskonstruktion am Zentralfriedhof Tor IV nach der Shoa”; pp. 671–822). After 1945, commemorations at Vienna's Central Cemetery Gate IV were held for victims of National Socialism—primarily for politically persecuted individuals—within the framework of Catholic remembrance days. This practice reflected Austria's post-war self-image as a victim of Nazism, largely excluding however Jewish victims. For the Jewish population, the cemetery thus became the central site for an independent culture of remembrance, separate from state narratives. The Vienna Jewish Community underwent profound changes after the Shoah. Two currents shaped its self-understanding: increasing Orthodoxy and Zionism. The Shoah intensified an “ethnicisation” of Jewish identity, as many returnees oscillated between religious heritage and secular rupture. Cemetery policy became a visible expression of this development. Leaders like Ernst Feldsberg (1894–1970) and later on Paul Chaim Eisenberg (b. 1950) established strict Orthodox norms and occasionally interpreted the Shoah religiously as punishment for secularisation. This interpretative framework caused tensions with liberal or secular Jews. At the same time, the State of Israel gained growing significance. The IKG expressed liturgical and political solidarity with the Jewish state, particularly after 1948. This led to polarisation within the community and the founding of progressive groups that demanded equality and religious openness but were not granted equal recognition. The cemetery at Gate IV was increasingly redesigned according to Orthodox principles, becoming a site of identity within a conservative historical narrative. The IKG claimed to represent all Jews in Vienna, an assertion that came under growing critical scrutiny. After 1945, the IKG developed a commemorative culture at Gate IV that often interpreted the Shoah in religious terms as martyrdom. This view was criticised by historians and survivors such as Ruth Klüger (1931–2020), who saw it as mythologising the Shoah and marginalising secular victims. Even individuals who had been classified as Jews under Nazi racial laws but did not self-identify as such were long excluded from commemoration. In this way, remembrance at Gate IV evolved from Shoah memory into a Zionist-influenced commemorative space marked by intra-Jewish tensions. In addition to central ceremonies, numerous smaller memorials were established at Gate IV, initiated by the IKG, the *Chewra Kadischa* (burial society), or individuals. These attest to a heterogeneous culture of remembrance with no unified narrative. Of particular importance is the belated recognition of Nazi medical crimes. In the 1980s, human remains held in museums were

symbolically buried. The diversity of these commemorative forms makes the cemetery to this day a complex site of internal Jewish engagement with history, religion, and identity. Under Ernst Feldsberg, Vienna's Jewish burial practices after the Shoah became strongly Orthodox, governed by ritual regulations and disputes over the burial of non-Jewish spouses. Conflicts about the definition of "Jewishness" led to controversial actions such as exhumations and reburials. Feldsberg's efforts to ensure religious continuity resulted in an ideological Orthodoxy that excluded many survivors and failed to reflect the diversity of the post-war community. After 1945, a distinct Jewish culture of remembrance emerged at the cemetery near Gate IV, shaped by Orthodoxy, Zionism, and boundary-drawing. Gravestones became symbolic monuments for Shoah victims, featuring Hebrew, Russian, and English inscriptions as well as more personal texts. Their design reflects tensions between tradition, individuality, and exclusion. Overall, the burial culture reveals a fractured identity between religious retrospection and the pluralistic realities of the post-war period. For many descendants who survived abroad, the Jewish cemeteries of Vienna became central sites of remembrance after 1945—for murdered relatives and the lost lives before the Shoah. Despite the geographical distance, they held onto these places as anchors of mourning and origin. The cemeteries became a form of collective memory marked by connection, estrangement, and loss. To this day, they reflect intra-Jewish tensions between tradition, pluralism, Zionism, and diaspora and thus the ongoing negotiation of Jewish identity and memory.

The title of the last, tenth chapter is "... and Always Already a Viennese Tale: Jewish Cemeteries as Arenas of Competing Cultures of Remembrance in the Second Republic" ("... und immer schon eine Wiener G'schicht. Die jüdischen Friedhöfe als Schauplätze konkurrierender Erinnerungskulturen in der Zweiten Republik"; pp. 823–977). After 1945, Jewish history in Vienna was suppressed, with the Jewish cemeteries being neglected and largely excluded from collective memory. Graves decayed, some were deliberately destroyed, while Nazi graves were maintained. Jewish and non-Jewish cultures of remembrance remained divided. Only since the Waldheim Affair (1986) has a slow process of reckoning begun—one that remains incomplete to this day. Austria presented itself after 1945 as the "first victim" of the Nazi regime, which delayed reparations, obscured Nazi continuities, and reinforced antisemitic stereotypes. It was not until the 1980s, prompted by the Waldheim Affair, that a rethinking process began, although remembrance remained largely symbolic and embellished. The neglect of Jewish cemeteries exemplifies this ambivalent memory culture. To this day, Austria's stance towards its Nazi past is shaped by shame, partial confrontation, and delayed compensation. The struggle for recognition, restitution, and restoration began in the

first decade after the war. After 1945, the IKG often fought in vain for the return of confiscated properties and cemeteries or for compensation. Negotiations typically failed due to antisemitic attitudes among officials, financial concerns, and outdated lease agreements. Under growing pressure from the United States, the New York Committee for Jewish Claims on Austria was founded in 1953, since Austria was internationally regarded as neither a perpetrator nor a victim state and had no compensation mechanism. It was not until 1960 that the IKG was legally equalised with Christian churches. Yet, the maintenance of cemeteries as well as many regional issues remained unresolved. Tensions also arose over the definition of Jewish victims—for example, converts were excluded. Orthodox figures like Feldsberg enforced a strict religious definition. Later discoveries of mass graves continue to reveal the extent of Austrian culpability, while many Jewish cemeteries remain decaying and under-researched.

Since 1945, desecrations of Jewish graves have been a frequent form of antisemitic violence in Austria, often occurring on significant memorial days. Perpetrators were often young people, which obscured the antisemitic motives. Such desecrations had already been common during the Nazi era and continued after the war, reflecting the post-war “antisemitism without Jews.” Major incidents occurred from the 1950s and into the 1990s, often with political undertones. The destruction of memorial plaques and gravestones demonstrates the material dimension of antisemitism. Since Jewish graves have been targeted for centuries, there is little sign that this phenomenon will end.

Following the 1955 Austrian State Treaty, financial difficulties within the Jewish Community led to the deterioration of cemeteries, sparking internal Jewish conflict. Emigrants harshly criticised the Jewish Community, especially Ernst Feldsberg, for demanding their participation in cemetery preservation. Controversies around the Währing cemetery and sensationalist media coverage revealed subtle antisemitic tendencies. The handling of Jewish heritage—for example, during the “Schnitzler Year” in 1962—reflected the ambivalent attitudes of the Second Republic. Fierce disputes between Feldsberg and Simon Wiesenthal (1908–2005) over remembrance culture and the naming of the Arthur-Schnitzler-Hof highlighted these tensions.

The oldest Jewish cemetery in Vienna, located at Seegasse, was nearly completely destroyed in 1943 when almost all gravestones were removed. It was not until the early 1980s that comprehensive restoration began—a turning point in the treatment of Vienna’s Jewish cemeteries. As early as 1947, the cemetery was recognised as an important monument of Jewish history in Vienna, but restoration efforts remained minimal and underfunded for dec-

ades. After the adjacent property was sold to the City of Vienna, the renovation was completed in 1984 and the cemetery re-consecrated. The Seegasse restoration shows that full-scale renovations are possible with government support, even if the cemetery's original character is irretrievably lost. By contrast, the Jewish cemetery in Währing developed into the most controversial site of remembrance in the Second Republic.

The Waldheim Affair marked a decisive shift in Austria's handling of Jewish heritage. After decades of suppression and neglect, parts of the population began to recognise the country's Nazi past and its responsibilities towards Jewish victims. From the 1980s onwards, this led to increased public engagement, remembrance, and the restoration of Jewish cemeteries, primarily driven by civil society initiatives like the association *Shalom*. Additionally, a societal divide emerged between progressive forces and remnants of racism. Despite positive developments, problematic memory cultures persisted, especially in the military and in official historiography, which often ignored or distorted Jewish history. Only from the 1990s onwards was Jewish history more deeply integrated into Austrian remembrance culture. Since 2000, the Jewish Community has focused cemetery maintenance primarily on Orthodox religious traditions. Following the 2001 Washington Agreement, the Währing cemetery became a symbol of Austria's handling of its Nazi past and Jewish heritage. Despite repeated damage and neglect, a comprehensive and sustainable maintenance strategy has not materialised, often hindered by jurisdictional disputes and Orthodox interpretations.

A White Paper compiled in 2002 provided a partial overview but was ultimately insufficient. Politically, the cemetery was increasingly viewed as a cultural monument and tourist attraction, while confronting the Nazi past was often sidelined. Criticism mounted over the neglect of Jewish graves compared to the care afforded to SS burial sites. The "Terezín Declaration" (*Theresienstadt Erklärung*) of 2009 committed Austria to preserving Jewish cemeteries, but it was not until 2010 that a law followed. Political resistance and conflicting interests continue to impede implementation. Overall, the recognition of Jewish cultural heritage in Austria depends on social and political openness, but progress is frequently blocked. Jewish cemeteries in Vienna are meant to be preserved "for eternity," a goal grounded in both religious and historical traditions. Although all are under historic preservation status, their condition varies greatly. Some are well maintained, for example, the cemetery at Kärntner Tor, whereas others, like Seegasse, remain practically inaccessible. Many still suffer from neglect and a lack of political support, and as key sites of both Jewish and Austrian remembrance they remain culturally significant yet socially contested. Despite occasional support, the

political will for comprehensive restoration is absent. Vienna's Jewish heritage is alive but remains disputed.

With the afterword (pp. 979–984), Tim Corbett concludes a decade of research for this work, which took him from Vienna to Israel to the United States in pursuit of Vienna's dispersed Jewish history. The study reflects a transnational, socially broad discourse. The work covers a wide chronological and thematic scope. A substantial portion of the source material consists of Hebrew epitaphs, written not in modern Hebrew but in archaic, complex linguistic forms, containing hidden quotations and cryptic texts. This made translation and interpretation particularly challenging. Corbett's concluding remarks include acknowledgments to the many individuals and institutions with whom he collaborated and communicated over the course of his research.

A list of illustrations (pp. 985–986), an extensive bibliography (pp. 987–989) divided into archives (p. 987), newspapers and periodicals (pp. 987–988), and unpublished sources (pp. 988–989), as well as a detailed primary and secondary literature list (pp. 989–1024) and an index of persons (pp. 1025–1042) conclude the work.

Corbett has accomplished a monumental study of Vienna's Jewish cemeteries, exceptional not only by the sheer volume of meticulously researched source material but above all by the profound insights he draws from his investigations. In the individual chapters, the reader encounters well-known families and famous figures from the worlds of science, art, and business, victims and perpetrators alike, who form the backdrop of the country's history like a tapestry, woven from the stories that the cemetery has to tell. For the scholar of religious studies, the work offers fascinating insights into Jewish sepulchral culture, the internal divisions within Judaism amid the tensions between Orthodoxy, secularity, and the heterogeneity of Jewish self-understanding among those concerned. With this work, Corbett also holds up a mirror to Austrian society, unflinchingly highlighting its shameful behaviour towards the victims in the aftermath of the Shoah. Despite its length, the book is full of suspense and surprising discoveries, encouraging further research as well as thoughtful reflection on how we treat our fellow human beings.