Mary Gluck

“The Jewish Ambassador to Budapest”: Mór Wahrmann and the Politics of “Tactfulness”

In this article I explore the cultural paradoxes associated with the articulation of Jewish identity in fin-de-siècle Hungary. By focusing on the political career of Mór Wahrmann, I trace the implicit contradictions of a liberal public sphere that officially recognized freedom of religion for Jews but implicitly banned all expression of Jewish cultural or ethnic difference. Reading Wahrmann’s career through his famous joke about the “Jewish ambassador in Budapest,” I argue that this system gave rise to a radically bifurcated public culture, which prohibited even the mention of a distinct Jewish identity in official politics or social life, but tolerated and even celebrated the performance of Jewish difference in the realms of commercial entertainment and humor. The paper is part of a larger book project entitled “The Invisible Jewish Budapest,” which attempts to recuperate the lost world of Jewish urban experience that flourished in Budapest in the years between 1867 and 1914.

Keywords: Jewish identity, fin-de-siècle Hungary, tolerance, anti-Semitism, Mór Wahrmann, political culture

The Funeral

On November 29, 1892, the citizens of Budapest were treated to an elaborate state funeral, staged according to the theatrical traditions that had become the custom of the fin-de-siècle Monarchy. The funeral was to honor Mór Wahrmann, the first Jewish Member of Parliament, who had represented for almost a quarter of a century the affluent Lípótváros, a neighborhood closely affiliated with Jewish capital and high finance. Wahrmann’s unexpected death provoked an outpouring of tributes in the national press, which showed remarkable consensus about the significance of his life and career. Wahrmann, the prominent politician, fabulously wealthy banker and businessman, and influential President of the Neolog Jewish Congregation of Budapest, was invariably depicted as the ideal type of the assimilated Hungarian Jew. More

---

than the sum total of his individual achievements, Wahrmann’s life was seen as the symbolic expression of the aspirations of a secular and modernizing Jewish community. “The Jews of Hungary,” proclaimed the liberal daily, Pesti Hirlap, “possessed in Mór Wahrmann their virtual chief and leader.”

Wahrmann’s exemplary status, however, transcended the Jewish community. He was also celebrated as a symbol of Hungarian liberalism and one of the mainstays of the Compromise of 1867, which had established the constitutional framework of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.

Wahrmann’s funeral represented the summation and reenactment of the progressive principles that defined the liberal party. In particular, the funeral served to showcase a series of highly controversial secularization laws, recently

---

2 Pesti Hirlap, November 27, 1892, XIV, no. 328. Wahrmann’s obituaries were collected in “Néhai Wahrmann Mór országgyűlési képviselő, a Pesti Izraelita Hitközség elnöke stb. stb. emlékezete” [Rememberances of the Deceased Mór Wahrmann, Member of Parliament and President of the Budapest Jewish Congregation] by the Magyar Zsidó Múzeum és Levéltár [Hungarian Jewish Museum and Archives], Budapest.

introduced in parliament by the liberal party, which became the fulcrum of political battles for years to come. Since the crowning achievement of these measures was the so-called Law of Reception, granting Judaism equal status with other religions of the state, Wahrmann’s figure was a particularly charged symbol for the liberal establishment. There was no attempt to disguise the political agenda that formed the subtext of the funeral. As an editorial of the illustrated family magazine, *Vasárnapi Ujság* acknowledged the week after the ceremony:

In these days of deepening religious antagonism and strife, the general sympathy manifested at the funeral of this veteran figure of our public life has a virtually symbolic importance. Present at the funeral were members of the ruling party and officials representing every branch of our state and national institutions. Even the man of the street, usually indifferent to such things, made an attempt to express his condolences by his participation in the event. This was the emblem of our national solidarity, an encouraging sign for the future, and a rebuttal of hundreds of dark prophesies and thousands of disquieting fears.4

The political hopes proclaimed by the *Vasárnapi Ujság* were echoed in the hundreds of obituaries published in the wake of Wahrmann’s funeral. The defining themes of these obituaries were already sounded at a special session of parliament convened on the Monday after Wahrmann’s death. Sándor Hegedűs, speaking on behalf of the finance committee that Wahrmann headed for years, touched on Wahrmann’s remarkable abilities as an economic and financial expert.

No one had a more impressive capacity to harmonize practical life with abstract considerations […] Thus, he never supported a practical measure without theoretical and principled justification, and he never put forth a theory or principle without practical illustration.5

Károly Eötvös, a member of the opposition Independence Party and the former defense attorney of the Jews of Tiszaeszlár,6 singled out Wahrmann’s contributions to the Budapest Jewish Congregation, and Count Albert Apponyi

4 *Vasárnapi Ujság*, December 4, 1892, XXXIX, no. 49.
6 In 1882, the Jews of Tiszaeszlár were accused of ritual murder in connection with their Passover celebration. The ritual murder trial, in which Károly Eötvös acted as the defense attorney of the accused Jews, became one of the notorious events in the history of late nineteenth-century Hungarian anti-Semitism.
stressed Wahrmann’s exemplary role in the transformation of the national capital into an increasingly Hungarian-speaking city.⁷

In these accounts, Wahrmann assumed the larger-than-life role of a man whose sheer force of character had allowed him to transcend the myriad contradictions threatening the unity of the liberal state. Successfully balancing economic pragmatism with political idealism, Hungarian national interests with the imperatives of Dualism, Wahrmann became the symbol of an ideal liberalism that increasingly eluded political practitioners. His greatest and most frequently cited achievement, however, was his ability to align and harmonize his Jewish identity with his Hungarian identity. In the words of a representative who identified himself as a political opponent of Wahrmann’s, no other member of the Jewish elite possessed a comparable ability to “reconcile—we would say even fuse—a genuine love of his native land with an equal devotion to his religious denomination.”⁸

Perhaps not surprisingly, it was the Hungarian–Jewish press that produced the most effusive narrative on the theme of reconciliation embodied in Wahrmann’s figure. He exemplified, wrote the Magyar Zsidó Szemle, “all the characteristic traits of Hungarian Jewry: enthusiasm for the Hungarian state, striving for economic modernization and prosperity, a fervent liberalism and clear-sighted religious consciousness.”⁹ Wahrmann’s death, proclaimed the Jewish liberal weekly, Egyenlőség affected all segments of Hungarian society: “Charitable institutions mourn the loss of their benefactor; the representatives of political life, their hard-working colleague; business and industrial interests, their leader; the creators of scholarship and art, their patron; Jewish organizational life, its column of fire.”¹⁰

**Challenges to the Liberal Narrative**

The image of Wahrmann created by these eulogies bore only slight resemblance to the actual politician who had participated in Hungarian political life since 1868. In fact, the relationship between assimilated Jewry and the Hungarian liberal state was far more problematic than these narratives of inclusion and reconciliation suggested. Equally idealized was the narrative of liberalism presented in these commemorations. Not surprisingly, challenges to the public celebration

---

⁷ Pesti Napló Esti Lapja, November 28, 1892, no. 329.
⁸ Egyetértés, November 27, 1892, no. 328.
¹⁰ Samu Haber, “Wahrmann Mórról,” Egyenlőség, December 2, 1892, XI, no. 49.
and Wahrmann’s role within it emerged almost immediately after the funeral. Predictably, the most common objection was the alleged inappropriateness of according a mere Jewish politician the honor of a state funeral, usually reserved for prominent national figures. The Catholic conservative *Magyar Állam* voiced these concerns in their most explicit form. Wahrmann, suggested its editorial, was hardly equal to such political luminaries as the former Prime Minister, Gyula Andrásy, or the prominent railway developer, Gábor Baross, who had been given similar funerals in 1890 and 1892 respectively. What had been enacted in this ceremony, suggested the writer, was a defense of Jewish interests, not of Hungarian values. “At such times, the true face of the famous Hungarian liberalism is revealed: it is nothing more than Jewish liberalism!”

![Figure 3. Photograph of the young Wahrmann](source: Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum [Hungarian National Museum] Történeti Fényképtár [Historical Photo Gallery])

The attempt to incorporate Wahrmann into the Hungarian national pantheon typically found more muted and indirect forms of opposition. One of the most bizarre was reported in the Viennese liberal paper, the *Neue Freie Presse*, which never missed an opportunity to embarrass the Hungarian political establishment. The episode, described in a postscript to an otherwise respectful

---

11 *Magyar Állam*, November 30, 1892, III, no. 274.
obituary for Wahrmann, had to do with a conflict about the size of the black flag raised at the time of Wahrmann’s death above the Hungarian Lower House. The flag in question, it turns out, was not identical with the large one ordered on the occasion of the death of Archduke Rudolf in 1889 and also used to honor Dániel Irányi, a hero of the Hungarian Revolution of 1848, who had died only weeks before Wahrmann. The older, smaller flag hoisted for Wahrmann presumably denoted a lesser degree of respect than the one accorded to Irányi. When Dezső Bánffy, the President of the House, found out about the substitution, “he called to task the official responsible, explaining that he would not tolerate even the hint of anti-Semitism, and he ordered that the large flag be raised.”

Behind the triviality of these episodes were fundamental and unresolved questions about the relationship of Jews to the nation state, which were hardly a concern unique to conservative and anti-Semitic opponents. These were issues deeply embedded within the fabric of Hungarian society and characteristic of the entire period of liberal hegemony since 1867. What political role should Jews assume within the liberal state? Under what conditions could Jews appear as Jews in the public sphere? Theoretically, these questions had been rendered irrelevant by emancipation, which had granted Jews full legal and political equality. With the rights of citizenship, Jews had presumably gained equal access to a disinterested and transparent public realm, where they could articulate their interests in the same way and under the same conditions as other citizens. In the context of liberal ideology, the discussion of Jewish collective identity or political strategies made no sense, since Jews were by definition citizens indistinguishable from others in the state. In fact, however, the ideal of a neutral public sphere was a fiction and Jews never became transparent, unmarked selves within the modern Hungarian state. The stigmatized status of Jews remained an unspoken and inadmissible fact of liberal society, creating unceasing tension between official political ideology and everyday social practice. The solution to the conflict was the repression of all public expressions of Jewish difference, which became an implicit clause of the so-called assimilation contract between Jews and the Hungarian nation.

In theory, all representations of Jewish identity were banished from the public realm. In practice, however, Jews did not disappear from public view, but became hyper-visible. Jewish difference was performed in the ubiquitous Jewish

---

12 Neue Freie Presse, November 28, 1892, no. 10153.
joke, which became the *lingua franca* of Budapest urban culture; it was represented in venues of commercial entertainment, where parodies of Jewish life became an unavoidable staple; it was reflected in popular literature and the mass media, where the interaction between Jews and non-Jews was a constant theme. Representations of Jews were everywhere in the culture and it was impossible to navigate public life without encountering them. Significantly, however, there was nothing haphazard or improvised about these representations. They were governed by protocols that functioned as internalized reflexes, making some kinds of public statements about Jews acceptable and others not.

*The Jewish Ambassador Anecdote*

Perhaps no one was a more adroit practitioner of these unwritten rules than Wahrmann himself, who, through much of his life, managed to be the consummate political insider, as well as the ultimate cultural outsider. His true skills were those of the performer, who could function in different social settings and play in different cultural registers at the same time. It is not surprising that during his life Wahrmann was far better known for his wit and humor than for his elevated public sentiments. *Borsszem Jankó*, the major humor magazine of the age, paid him the ultimate professional compliment by writing his obituary in Wahrmann’s own distinctive voice.

I have to admit, that the speech pronounced by Miksa Falk at my graveside was brilliant. But I can’t help feeling that I would much have preferred my own speech at his gravesite.14

A connoisseur of jokes, Wahrmann frequently used the double-edged weapon of humor to deflate official ideologies and to give expression to the actual conditions of Jews in a fractured political culture. He was, in fact, the author of arguably the most famous witticism on the subject of Jews in public life, which came to be known as the “Jewish ambassador” joke. It provides an appropriate point of entry into my analysis of this tangled subject.

The joke, which circulated in Budapest as late as the 1890s, assumed the classic question and answer format, with Cohen representing the Jewish protagonist.

---

Question: “Why does Cohen support the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine?”

Answer: “So he can become Jewish ambassador in Budapest.”

In its final version, the joke was clearly a witty reference to Hungarian Jewry’s well-known patriotism and excessive devotion to the urban culture of Budapest. The historical context of the Jewish ambassador joke, however, suggests a more complex, explicitly political provenance. Despite appearances, the joke was not about the conflict between Zionism and assimilation, which only became a concern of the Hungarian–Jewish press in the course of the 1890s. The origins of the joke reached back to the late 1870s, when a new brand of political anti-Semitism was introduced to Hungarian parliament by ideologues like Győző Istóczy. Istóczy and his followers single-handedly radicalized the Jewish question by demanding the revocation of the emancipation decree of 1867 and the physical expulsion of the Jews from Hungary. The actual reference to a Jewish state in Palestine came from Istóczy, who suggested that the solution of the Jewish question would be the forced emigration of Jews to Palestine.

Wahrmann formulated the most memorable rebuttal to this proposal. Several versions of the response were passed from mouth to mouth at the fin-de-siècle, but the most reliable was probably the following. Wahrmann was accustomed to visiting the home of Cardinal Lajos Haynald, a prominent Catholic cleric who was a good friend of his and whose afternoon teas were attended by the political luminaries of the age. At one of these gatherings, the conversation turned to Istóczy’s recent parliamentary speech about deporting the Jews to Palestine. Haynald jokingly turned to Wahrmann with the remark:

Haynald: “If they establish a Jewish state in Palestine, all Jews will be expected to go there, including you Moric, no matter how great a patriot you are.”

Wahrmann replied: “I have no intention of going. I cannot live anywhere but here.”

---

15 The joke still had enough traction as late as 1972 to find its way into Georg Lukács’ autobiography, Gelebtes Denken, where he characterized his father’s conformism and patriotism with the dismissive phrase: “Jewish ambassador in Budapest.”

16 A version of the episode found inclusion in one of Wahrmann’s obituaries, which recounted that, “[m]any of his [Wahrmann’s] former colleagues in parliament still remember the following witty saying of his. It took place during the outbreak of anti-Semitism, when Istóczy suggested that the Jews of Hungary should be deported to Jerusalem. Wahrmann humorously commented on this idea to his friends: ‘The plan is not a bad one and I have no objections to it. But I reserve the right to stay among you as ambassador from Jerusalem.’” “Wahrmann Mór” Egyetértés, November 27, 1892, no. 328.
“The Jewish Ambassador to Budapest”

Haynald: “And if you have to?”
Wahrmann: “If I have to, I will go, but I would hope to have enough influence to have myself immediately appointed Jewish ambassador to Budapest.”

AZ ISTÓCZY UJ-ZSIDÓORSZÁGA.

Figure 4. Wahrmann portrayed as Jewish ambassador
Source: Borsszem Jankó, June 23, 1878

The predicament at the heart of the joke was the so-called Jewish question, or the irreducible otherness of Jews within the body politic. In Istóczy’s radical definition of the Jewish question, Jews themselves were presumed to be alien and fundamentally threatening to the political community. In the friendly environment of Haynald’s salon, no essentialist assumption was made about individual Jews like Wahrmann, who was a welcome guest. But on the collective level, even liberal Hungarians tended to define Jews in terms of difference and incompatibility with national values.

The significance of Wahrmann’s response was that it circumvented the specific problem of anti-Semitism as posed by Istóczy’s challenge. It addressed

---

17 For a full version of the incident, including its sources, see Tibor Frank, “Magyar és zsidó: a Wahrmann-életrajz kérdései,” in Honzergyetet és felekezeti bűßg, 36–37.
the broader issue of the Jewish question itself, which had clearly invaded not only political life, but also semi-private spaces of sociability like Haynald’s salon. Wahrmann’s bargain to return to Budapest in the guise of Jewish ambassador from Palestine was more than a clever ploy to reaffirm his Hungarian identity; it was also a proposal to renegotiate the terms of his identity as a Hungarian Jew. It involved a strategic concession on two crucial issues that had always been central to Jewish liberal ideology. By hypothetically accepting the existence of a Jewish state, he implicitly recognized what advocates of the Jewish question had always claimed, that Judaism was not just a religion, but also a collective ethnic and political identity. By agreeing to a symbolic emigration to Palestine, he made an even bigger concession, abdicating his symbolic status as a citizen in the state. In a sense, he was withdrawing from the contested terrain of political life, where Jews continued to be considered strangers in fact, if not in law. In return, however, he gained the right to return to Budapest in the guise of the stranger with the legal credentials to settle there. The bargain was not as disadvantageous as it appears. It is true that the Jewish ambassador lost his unequivocal status as citizen, but he acquired the more tenuous, but also more creative, role of the insider/outsider, with the freedom to express his identity and interpret reality within the alternative public sphere of popular culture, commercial entertainment, and, especially, humor.

The Jewish ambassador joke was, in a sense, the unacknowledged master metaphor for the much-acclaimed Hungarian–Jewish symbiosis of the fin-de-siècle. It functioned on different symbolic and analytic levels at the same time. On the most obvious level, it provided a brilliantly subversive reformulation of the liberal ideal of emancipation, which continued to define official Jewish narratives of assimilation throughout the fin-de-siècle. It offered a sly parody of the idealized self-representation of Jewish officialdom, which refused to acknowledge the ambiguities of liberal politics, mistaking political rhetoric for reality. At a different level, however, it was also a daring thought-experiment, which used the utopian conventions of humor to reimagine the relationship between Jews and politics under the changed conditions of late-nineteenth-century nationalism. It supplied an explicitly cultural, as opposed to a social, definition of Jewish identity in an attempt to bypass the deadly and irresolvable conflicts of the Jewish question. At the most general level, however, the Jewish ambassador joke was what Kenneth Burke has called a “representative anecdote,” which provided an abstract model of actual social relations between Jews and non-Jews. According to Burke, the representative anecdote was a condensation
or distillation of social realities that made no pretense at formal realism. It was, he suggested, “summational in character... wherein human relations grandly converge.”

Viewed as a representative anecdote, the Jewish ambassador joke offered a blueprint of an empirical world that was far closer to the hypothetical logic of the joke than to the ideological formulae of politics. It suggested that in the world of social relations and collective experience, Jews did in fact function as ambassadors from a non-existent nation, and their status was defined by informal rules and unspoken conventions. Within this world, Jews alternately played the roles of insiders and outsiders, natives and foreigners, depending on the context in which they found themselves. Their dual status may not have been formally acknowledged in politics or the legal system, but it was imprinted within the subliminal cultural codes of society. This explains why the representation of Jewish themes became such a highly charged matter, in constant need of supervision and discipline. In official politics, in respectable society, in high culture; the formal principle of Jewish equality prevailed and the presentation of Jewish difference, or even references to individuals as Jews, was considered bad form and strictly banned. In popular culture, however, especially in commercial entertainment and the realm of humor, Jewish difference was not only permitted, but encouraged and given unchecked expression.

**Representation of Jews in Literature, Society and Politics**

One of the striking features of this bifurcated cultural system was its unofficial, informal character. There were no publicly acknowledged codes or formulae that defined the appropriate representation of Jews in public life. These matters were a part of an elaborate set of internalized cultural reflexes, which were surrounded by a peculiarly illicit, underground quality. The subject could not be openly broached and analyzed without exposing the ideological inconsistencies and even hypocrisy of the liberal order. The very definition of cultural competence at the fin-de-siècle presumed the mastery of the codes for talking about Jews in public life.

Ignorance of these codes could have serious consequences. One revealing example was recounted in the autobiography of the working class, non-Jewish

---

writer, Lajos Nagy, whose initial attempts to break into the literary life of the capital ran aground precisely on his lack of understanding of the unwritten rules for representing Jews in literature. According to his account, he submitted to the modernist literary journal *Nyugat* a short story written in the naturalist style, modeled on a Polish-Jewish immigrant family living in Király Street. The point of the story, which was based on the family of his best friend, Gábor Kaufman, was to explore the complicated linguistic practices and cultural identities of a typical, lower-middle class Jewish family in Budapest. To the astonishment and indignation of the author, his short story was published in a severely truncated form. Ernő Osvát, the powerful Jewish editor of *Nyugat*, had unilaterally expunged nearly all references to the Jewish origins of the characters and to the ethnic features of their milieu. Even the original title, “The Schvarczes” (The Schvarcz family) was changed to the non-descript “Este van” (It is evening). As this painful introduction to contemporary literary life illustrated, the political shadow of the Jewish question could not be exorcised from even the most innocent and high-minded literary enterprises.

The discrepancies between legitimate and illegitimate expressions of Jewish identity provided a virtual gold mine for the humor mills of Budapest. Indeed, central to Budapest Jewish humor was the paradoxical status of Jews, who were considered simultaneously equal, but also unequal in society. The problem found a wonderfully economical illustration in a caricature of Borsszem Jankó that focused on the common dilemma of children of mixed marriages, but implied a much broader kind of experience as well.

> “Imagine papa,” asks the little girl of her father, “mama says that you are Jewish!” “I am darling,” responds the father, “and it is not something to be ashamed of. But I don’t want to hear you ever talking about it again!”

The Jewish humorist, Adolf Ágai, provided an astute parody of the same phenomenon in one of his urban essays published in *Travels from Pest to Budapest 1843–1907*. The essay, which focused on commercial entertainment in Budapest, sardonically commented on Jewish middle class attitudes to parodic representations of Jewish themes in Orpheums and music halls.

---

Strange, he mused. If our Israelite fellow citizens are made fun of in Hungarian—be it on stage, in literature, or in art—he is full of indignation. But if the Jew is represented through the characteristic dialect and disjointed gestures of Szércsen Street or in the Polish-Jewish inflections of ‘Ingvar,’ his amusement is without bounds.23

Ágai’s mock surprise at the apparent hypocrisy of Jewish elites, who seemed unwilling to acknowledge their Jewish identity in official culture but were more than willing to laugh at it in popular venues, was only rhetorical. He was perfectly aware of the cultural codes that constrained public articulations of Jewish identity in fin-de-siècle Budapest. Ágai’s readers, no less sensitized to these codes, recognized their own self-portrait in Ágai’s imagined Orpheum audiences. Whether they were aware of it or not, they were all “Jewish ambassadors in Budapest,” who had learned the art of monitoring their performance and self-presentation in the public sphere.

The imperative for Jewish self-censorship in all areas of public life could lead to paradoxical results, especially in the realm of politics. In 1884, when the Lower House publicly condemned anti-Semitism in the wake of the election of sixteen anti-Semitic members to parliament, the Jewish deputies conspicuously recused themselves from participating in the debate. The periodical Magyar Zsidó Szemle praised their action in the following words:

The Jewish deputies in the House displayed enough tact to refrain from participating in the pre-advertised debate, and enough self-esteem to refuse to enter into dialogue with the anti-Semitic gentlemen.24

The same strategy of non-involvement was repeated in 1895, during the final phase of the controversial Law of Reception debate. The ten Jewish deputies in the Lower House, including Wahrmann himself, agreed not to address the question as a separate group, but to have their voices represented by the liberal Hungarian leadership as a whole. Their reasoning was that the Reception of Judaism was not a parochial Jewish issue, but a universal liberal principle, and therefore, best represented by Hungarian liberal politicians. The actual reason, however, was the old fear of being perceived as acting collectively in Jewish interests.

23 Porzó (Adolf Ágai), Utazás Pestről – Budapestre 1843–1907: Rajzok és emlékek a magyar főváros utolsó 65 esztendejéből (Budapest: Fekete Šas Kiadó, 1998), 408.
The deputies of the Jewish faith in both the Lower and Upper Houses abstained from addressing the matter for reasons that, in my opinion, can be understood. They were concerned that if they addressed the question as Jews, their words might be construed by the nation as the collective voice of Hungarian Jewry. For this task, however, they did not feel empowered by their charge.25

The Code of “Tactfulness”

As these random episodes illustrate, the very act of representing Jewish identity in the public arena (be it in literature, in society or in politics), was surrounded by anxiety and uncertainty. The special skill needed to navigate the treacherous waters of this realm was commonly referred to as “tact” (tapintat). Wahrmann, for instance, was praised for his “discretion and tact” in dealing with the conflicts of party politics.26 The Jewish deputies who chose to remain passive during the parliamentary initiative that condemned anti-Semitism in 1884 were commended for showing “tact” in refusing to engage with their opponents. Perhaps most puzzling of all was the frequent use of the word in the context of the Tiszaeszlár blood libel affair in 1882–1883. Jews who manifested solidarity with the accused Jews were reproached for showing “tactlessness” and thus provoking public opinion. When in the summer of 1882 the Jews of the Tokaj region purchased guns to defend their property against anti-Semitic vandalism, they were sharply rebuked for their “tactlessness.”

Their first tactless act was their open decision to purchase weapons from Zákó’s gunsmith […] and this was far from the only tactless act they committed… Certain Jewish elements alienate the intelligentsia far more than the so-called common people, because the sense of justice among the intelligentsia is stronger and their displeasure against lawless, provocative and aggressive action greater and more natural.27

The very extremity of the language of the article is instructive, for it reflects the unacceptability of even the most justifiable collective action on the part of the threatened Jewish population. The fact that it was the intelligentsia, rather than the common man, who was most provoked by such acts was added as an afterthought, but suggests an important motif in the debate. Clearly, Jewish

26 Budapesti Hirlap, November 30, 1892, XII, no. 331.
27 “A Tisza-eszlári gyilkosság,” Függetlenség, July 1, 1882.
collective action in public life was perceived as a theoretical, not just a practical, infraction that seemed to be more apparent to intellectuals than to the man of the street. But why this should be the case and why such actions were invariably described as “tactless” needs further elaboration.

The word was obviously derived from the realm of etiquette, rather than politics. The notion of “tactless behavior” suggests not a transgression against impersonal rules used to regulate political society; but a breach of social courtesy in an intimate setting such as a salon or a closed circle of friends. In fact, the most fraught interactions between Jews and non-Jews often did take place in the semi-private spaces of professional life and urban sociability, where the identity and legitimacy of the Jewish participants were by definition ambiguous or imperfectly articulated. One of the paradoxical results of the success of Jewish integration within Hungarian society was the growth of opportunities for social tensions and misunderstandings between Jews and non-Jews.

The predicament could result in excruciating situations, poignantly depicted in an essay published in 1890 in *Egyenlőség*. Simply entitled “Jews in Society,” the article examined the common situation of individual Jews finding themselves in social settings where the general topic of conversation turned to the “Jewish question” or the negative character of the Jews, without the company being aware of, or concerned about, the presence in their midst of a member of the group under discussion. The explicit goal of the article was to provide its Jewish readers with practical guidelines for dealing with such awkward encounters. According to the author, the extremes of silent acquiescence or open confrontation were both to be avoided.

Let us admit quite openly that there are Jews who, on occasions when the ‘Jewish question’ is raised as a general topic of conversation, prove themselves quite capable of listening with external calm, though with inner disquiet, to even the most insulting details, as if they had nothing to do with the subject.28

Such behavior was condemned as both ethically contemptible and socially unrealistic. Yet, the alternate strategy of open affirmation of Jewish difference was also rejected as disruptive of social harmony among friends. “The tendency,” concluded the article, “to fall into the other extreme and exercise a kind of terrorism on the relaxed good cheer of the company would also be a pity. The

Jew should have self-respect, but should be selective about the occasions on which he chooses to express it.”

The suggested solution for the inherent ambiguities of Jewish presence in public life was, of course, “tact,” that elusive quality capable of resolving the intractable contradiction between equality and difference, self-effacement and self-assertion. The actual recipe for “tactful” behavior remained sketchy in the article, the aim of which was essentially didactic, pointing out behavior to avoid rather than practices to adopt. Its general concern, however, helps illustrate the everyday dimension of the problem of Jewish and non-Jewish interaction in the public realm. “Tact” was an indispensable requirement of everyday life, as well as of politics, which were inseparably associated with each other. The “tactful” Jew was not just an individual who had learned to avoid embarrassing confrontations in the public realm, but one capable of mastering distinct discursive realms for the appropriate articulation of his Jewishness.

*The Janus Face of Wahrmann/Börziczy*

One of the reasons the attribute of “tact” proved so difficult to define or identify lay in the fact that, for an action to be truly successful, it had to become virtually invisible and unnoticeable. Tactfulness was a social skill and political attribute that needed to be seamlessly incorporated into daily life, perceived and experienced as part of the inevitable order of things. Perhaps this is why the idealized portrait of Wahrmann, produced at the time of his death, appeared so unsurprising and “realistic” to the general public. He was able to embody and represent the ideal type of the assimilated Hungarian Jew because this is the type people expected to encounter in public life. On closer view, however, Wahrmann’s apparently harmonious persona hid a highly fragmented and paradoxical self, whose inner contradictions could still be read between the lines of the respectful obituaries. It is worth returning to these tributes, in order to analyze more fully the meaning of “tact” in the life of one of the consummate practitioners of the genre.

Wahrmann, as most of the obituaries directly or obliquely acknowledged, was not a typical Hungarian politician. He was, for one thing, a poor orator, whose skepticism toward great ideals deprived his speeches of all theatricality. “His arguments,” one obituary admitted, “often fizzled into mere cleverness.”

---

29 Ibid.
30 *Pesti Hirlap*, November 27, 1892, XIV, no. 328.
Wahrmann avoided the political limelight, suggested another, preferring to express himself through “silent, tireless and successful work.” He stood outside the conflicts of party politics and “wore the honorable mantle of independence… with discretion and tact.”\textsuperscript{31} Wahrmann’s public persona, however, was not synonymous with the self-effacing technocrat, working anonymously behind the scenes. Almost every obituary made extended reference to Wahrmann’s humor, which apparently enjoyed universal acclaim.\textsuperscript{32} “Eventually,” elaborated one account, the jokes and witticisms associated with Wahrmann became independent of him, “and congealed into a recognizable social persona, constructed in part by his colleagues and in part by Borsszem Jankó, the pages of which featured him as a permanent caricature.”\textsuperscript{33}

In the guise of his comic alter ego, W. M. Börzeviczy, Wahrmann regularly transgressed the boundaries of tactful behavior and confronted questions such as anti-Semitism and his own Jewish identity with remarkable directness and insight. Wahrmann’s relationship to Börzeviczy is a complex one, not easy to define in any direct or causal way. Though Wahrmann did not single-handedly create Börzeviczy, there is no question that he was the inspiration for the rotund, wisecracking Jewish businessman/politician, who became a regular feature and beloved social type of Borsszem Jankó. Börzeviczy’s physical characteristics, as well as his habit of punning in Hungarian and commenting on his own wit in German, were closely modeled on Wahrmann himself. It is also probable that most of the jokes published on the pages of Borsszem Jankó under the title, “The Witticisms of W. M. Börzeviczy,” were actual transcriptions of Wahrmann’s famous jokes that circulated in parliament and beyond. At the same time, however, Börzeviczy as a social type unquestionably owed its broader symbolic power to the editors of Borsszem Jankó. It is they who assigned the Wahrmann caricature the satiric name of “Börzeviczy,” which was a reference to Wahrmann’s complex relationship to the Hungarian political elite and to the public realm in general. While the initials, “W. M.” unambiguously pointed to Wahrmann, “Börzeviczy” was a comic distortion of the name of the liberal politician, Albert Berzeviczy, a descendant of an illustrious Hungarian noble family. With the substitution of only on letter, the original historic name gained an entirely new connotation, since “börze” meant stock exchange in Hungarian. “Börzeviczy,” thus became not only the shadow of the liberal politician, but also a commerce-minded

\textsuperscript{31} Budapesti Hirlap, November 30, 1892, XII, no. 331.
\textsuperscript{32} Nemzet, November 27, 1892.
\textsuperscript{33} Szabadság, November 27, 1892, XVII, no. 293.
Börzeviczy was, on one level, the physical incarnation and the genial symbol of Jewish difference in public life. This idea found iconic representation in the image of Wahrmann/Börzeviczy in ill-fitting and comical Hungarian national costume, which was commonly featured on the pages of Borsszem Jankó. A particularly famous example depicted Wahrmann and a fellow politician, both wearing national costumes and swords, trying to pass each other in a narrow space. As his companion apologizes to Wahrmann for the nuisance of his sword, Wahrmann responded that his own sword bothered him far more than that of his colleague. The visual focus on the Hungarian national costume helped establish the conceptual links between public life, national culture and historic traditions, which Jews could not enter without appearing ridiculous and inappropriate.

Significantly, however, Börzeviczy was not merely a parody of the Jewish politician in public life. He was also a brilliant analyst and devastating critic of the conditions that defined this role. Börzeviczy’s dominant characteristic was his utter freedom from the constraints of tact. Indeed, his self-defined task was to expose and ridicule the contradictions of official political culture that found transformation and usurpation of his historic name, something that Jews were frequently accused of doing.
its reconciling principle in tactful behavior. Unlike Wahrmann the politician, Börzeviczy the humorist openly acknowledged his Jewish identity and wittily commented on the paradoxes of Jewish collective existence in Hungary. In one of his most succinct formulations, he defined Hungarian Jewry as plaintiffs in a prolonged paternity suit filed against the Hungarian nation, which refused to acknowledged them as legitimate sons.\(^{34}\)

In many respects, Börzeviczy was the mirror image of Wahrmann, making explicit and public what the empirical Wahrmann kept implicit and private. While Wahrmann aspired to make Jewish identity invisible and universal in the public realm, Börzeviczy performed a highly visible and culturally distinct version of the same identity. At times, Börzeviczy's candor was remarkable, extending to the delicate issue of Wahrmann's own self-erasure as a Jew. He admitted that his reluctance to engage openly with Jewish issues drew criticism from certain quarters. He added, however, that the opposite course of action would provoke recrimination from the very same quarters. He characterized his decision to withdraw from public activity in the House with the following witty pun: “Up till now, I had a standing in the House; now I have a seating.”\(^{35}\) His irony was particularly trenchant on the question of anti-Semitism, which never failed to provoke him, especially when it involved long-term friends like Franz Liszt, who regularly performed at his home.

That Liszt! I can’t calmly accept his dalliance with anti-Semitism, when he has been invited to so many soirees in so many Jewish salons. To a surprising degree he lacks rhythm [in Hungarian, the word for rhythm is taktus and therefore echoes the overcharged word, tact. – M. G.], and therefore offends against good tone! (Wird ihm wehtun!)\(^{36}\)

The dichotomies encoded within the twin personae of Wahrmann/Börzeviczy were responses to a radically bifurcated political culture, whose official principles were increasingly at odds with its informal values and actual social practices. Already anticipated in the Jewish ambassador joke, the project of Jewish public participation required mental agility, discernment, and, of course, tact. It presupposed the ability to distinguish between the realms of political rhetoric and cultural discourse, between the appropriate venues for expressing Hungarian identification and Jewish difference. Wahrmann, the consummate

---

\(^{34}\) Borsszem Jankó, November 4, 1884.

\(^{35}\) Ibid., October 5, 1879.

\(^{36}\) Ibid., December 4, 1881.
political performer, rarely made the mistake of confusing the discursive territory of the two realms. Only once did the carefully constructed walls between Wahrmann, the politician, and Börzeviczy, the humorist, temporarily break down. The result was an astonishing and ultimately mock-heroic duel between Wahrmann, the discrete parliamentarian; and Istóczy, the flamboyant anti-Semite. The highly publicized social drama provoked by the duel was played out on the streets of Budapest in June 1882, only a decade before Wahrmann’s state funeral in 1892. The two events form appropriate bookends for the assessment of Wahrmann’s political legacy.

The Duel

The duel was precipitated by a controversial parliamentary debate about Russian-Jewish immigration to Hungary in the wake of massive anti-Jewish pogroms that had broken out in Russia in early 1882. Despite his previous resolution to keep silent, Wahrmann decided in the last minute to speak on the issue after the inflammatory speech of Istóczy, who insisted on connecting the immigration discussion with the status of Hungarian Jews. Wahrmann began his speech with the familiar Jewish parliamentary gesture of refusing to recognize the anti-Semites as debating partners.

A man, who incites to unlimited internal warfare within this house may have the right to such expressions as a representative enjoying the privileges of parliamentary immunity, but he can have no right to claim me as a participant in debate.37

Having rejected political dialogue with anti-Semitism, Wahrmann then proceeded to express his own views as to why mass immigration on the part of Russian-Jews was undesirable. Veering self-consciously away from the specifics of the Jewish question, Wahrmann suggested that the issue was not whether Russian Jews, but whether any foreign group, be they “Russian Jews or Russian nihilists, German Social Democrats or Irish Fenians, Serbians, Romanians, or Saxons,” should be allowed to settle in the country. With this shift of emphasis, Wahrmann succeeded in grounding the debate on questions of utility and national self-interest, rather than on issues of religion or national character. Only at the

end did he permit himself to drop the language of pragmatism and to address the House directly through the familiar rhetoric of Hungarian patriotism.

Honorable House! I have no fear of the emergence of a Jewish Question in this country, no matter how much some individuals might agitate for this […] I trust in the wisdom of this legislative body, in the justice of this administration […] I trust in the level headedness and in the sense of fair play of the Hungarian people, which will not easily allow itself to be led astray.38

Wahrmann concluded his speech with a rhetorical flourish that seemed to point toward Istóczy. The gesture set in motion a sequence of implausible and melodramatic events that were to culminate in the much-publicized duel between the two deputies. The steps leading to the duel were exhaustively reported in the daily press and had the appearance of inevitability. The overall logic of the confrontation, however, is less apparent, especially in light of Wahrmann’s well-known cautious and skeptical temperament. It appears that Istóczy took offence at Wahrmann’s concluding gesture and immediately left the floor of the House in seeming agitation. Within minutes, two of his friends approached Wahrmann with the demand of satisfaction in the form of a duel for the recently inflicted insult on Istóczy. Reasonable bourgeois that he was, Wahrmann refused the challenge, explaining that his were oratorical gestures not intended for Istóczy personally, and that, in any case, parliamentary immunity would preclude his talk from being construed as a personal affront. After the message was relayed to Istóczy, he decided to confront Wahrmann in person. Overtaking his antagonist in the parliamentary library in the midst of conversation with a group, Istóczy accused Wahrmann of cowardice for refusing to accept the duel. Wahrmann repeated his previous claim that he had not insulted Istóczy and that he was, in any case, not obliged to offer satisfaction for words spoken in Parliament. After an exchange of unflattering epithets, physical violence suddenly erupted, as Istóczy lounged toward Wahrmann in an attempt to slap him. Bystanders intervened just in time to deflect the blow from Wahrmann’s face to the back of his neck.39

This unconventional confrontation in the parliamentary library resulted in an even more unlikely event: a duel between Wahrmann and Istóczy. The

38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
Wahrmann–Istóczy affair, as it rapidly came to be known, was played out according to a carefully constructed choreography that took the form of a social drama. It was the anthropologist Victor Turner who coined the phrase “social drama” to refer to certain kinds of collective conflicts or crisis that tend to be acted out in patterns strongly resembling, indeed, anticipating aesthetic drama and theatrical performance. The social drama, as Turner described it, has two distinguishing features that are of particular relevance to the events that erupted in Budapest in the aftermath of the immigration debate on June 8. The first is that it takes place outside the boundaries of normal, institutional social action. It has, to use Turner’s word, “liminal’ characteristics since each is a ‘threshold’ (limen) between more or less stable and harmonious phases of social processes.”

The social drama, thus, represents a breach in the public norms and values of a collectivity, exposing precisely those fault lines that underlie existing social consensus. The social drama, to return to Turner, “takes up its menacing stance in the forum or agora itself, and as it were, challenges the representatives of order to grapple with it.” The second characteristic of the social drama is that it is “processually structured”; that is, it unfolds according to a fairly coherent sequence of events or moments that Turner considered inherent in the very nature of human agonistic behavior. Beginning as an infraction in the rules of social norms, the social drama opens up a deeper cleavage in social relations. After attempts to adjudicate the breach fail, the conflict is ritually enacted between the conflicting parties. The social drama ends, Turner claimed, either with the reintegration of the disturbed groups within the community or the recognition that an irreparable breach has occurred that can only be resolved by separating the hostile parties.

Applying Turner’s model to the Wahrmann–Istóczy conflict, it is clear that a symbolic breach had occurred within the dominant liberal order, which ordinarily kept such conflicts under check and outside the public arena. As was apparent to all participants, the confrontation between Wahrmann and Istóczy was not simply between two individuals, but between Jews and anti-Semites, who enacted their hostility within a public arena outside of liberal institutions. The transformation of the initial breach of parliamentary conventions into

---

41 Ibid.
generalized social crisis was well under way by Friday afternoon of June 8, when a crowd of four or five hundred people gathered outside Parliament in hopes of finding first-hand information about the rumored conflict between Wahrmann and Istóczy. As excited groups collected throughout the city, on street corners, in coffee houses, and in stores and offices, contradictory versions of the story circulated, especially concerning the crucial issue of who had insulted whom. One popular rumor held that Wahrmann had initiated the provocation and that the House, bribed by the Jews, had supported him. Among the majority of Jews, on the other hand, it was Wahrmann who was perceived as the victim, and fears of anti-Semitic violence, ever present under the surface of liberal society, were flamed into new life.43

The affair rapidly divided the capital, and eventually the nation, into two antagonistic camps, cheering on their respective champions in a ritualized confrontation minutely reported, embroidered upon, and analyzed by the popular press. According to one report, “Every layer of society was feverishly preoccupied with the affair.”44 The process of polarization continued over the weekend, which proved unsuitable for the duel for religious reasons: Wahrmann refused to fight on Saturday and Istóczy on Sunday. Each side found dramatic public gestures through which to express its commitment to its cause. Wahrmann’s constituents in the Lipótváros planned a torchlight procession with music to show their support for their champion. As one article reported:

In this well-to-do neighborhood, every individual feels himself personally affronted […] Several members of the younger generation want to ask for personal satisfaction from Istóczy, since they strongly condemn an act that forces a half-blind man to fight a duel. [Wahrmann had very poor eyesight and wore thick glasses. – M. G.] Calmer elements, fearing possibly dangerous consequence, are scarcely able to restrain them.45

Istóczy, too, was overwhelmed by gestures of support from all over the country. On Sunday, his apartment was thronged with visitors and inundated with letters and telegrams “commending his true cause under the protection of God.” Typical of the overheated atmosphere was his associate’s formal petition to the prime minister for guards to assure his safety, for rumors were rife that

Jewish army officers were planning to assassinate Istóczy if Wahrmann should be injured in the duel.46

The much-awaited and highly publicized duel was to take place on Monday morning at 6:00 a.m. on the site of the old racetrack at the edge of the city. The antagonists, their seconds, and their respective physicians, were ready at 5:50, and the formalities of the duel were scrupulously played out. Perhaps the most important participants were the representatives of the press, who were present in full force, ready to inform the nation of the antagonists’ every move. After the space had been measured out and the pistols filled, one of the seconds undertook the traditional role of attempting to reconcile the parties. Both refused any thought of reconciliation, Istóczy curtly, with the words, “Let’s get down to business,” Wahrmann, more expansively, with, “After such an insult, there is no room for reconciliation.”

At this critical junction, the figure of a mounted police officer suddenly appeared from behind the bushes. He trotted up to the duelers and declared that his mission was to “prevent the enactment of illegal deeds.”47 (Dueling was technically illegal in Hungary, through in practice it was never interfered with.) This sudden intervention by the liberal government initiated what Turner refers to as the third phase of the social drama: the application of “redressive or remedial procedures” by the collective authority of the community in order to contain the contagion and prevent the crisis from spreading. The liberal government had intervened in the final moment to stop the conflict, but, typically, the mechanisms for redress that were brought into play were only symbolic and entirely ineffectual. Instead of behind-the-scenes negotiations, influence, or pressure, which were well within their means, the liberal authorities chose to intervene through a highly theatrical gesture that could have had no impact on the events.

The police interruption only delayed the duel by a few hours. The participants and their entourages reassembled near the estate of Count Brunswick outside of Budapest to finish what they had started in the morning.

The two shots went off almost simultaneously, and to the question, did anyone get hurt, both parties answered in the negative. At this point, the seconds shook hands with the duelers. The duelers, however, remained cool and distant from each other. Ónódy, Istóczy’s second,

47 “Istóczy és Wahrmann párbaja: A párbaj meghiúsítása a löverseny téren,” Függetlenség, June 12, 1882.
briefly suggested reconciliation, but Wahrmann shook his head and Istóczy said: “Let everything remain as before.”

The two parties drove separately to the nearby town of Ercsi to await the midnight train back to Budapest. Istóczy and his friends spent the intervening hours in a tavern, where they were joined by local intellectuals. They drank wine and sang anti-Semitic ditties to the accompaniment of a Gypsy band. Wahrmann and his party retired to the private home of a coreligionist, where they were greeted by an official delegation of the local Jewish community. The contrast between the patterns of social interaction characteristic of the two groups could not have been more revealing. As readers of these accounts would have been quick to grasp, the duel had ritually enacted not only collective grievances, but also different ways of life, different modes of being Hungarian. Graphically juxtaposed were the traditional habits of the Hungarian gentry on the one side, and the culture of the newly assimilated bourgeoisie on the other.

The social drama, with its collective enactment of breach, crisis, attempted redress, and final resolution, seemed over by Tuesday morning, when editorials scrambled to clarify the implications of what had taken place. In the words of one summary:

The Jewish question, in the sense that it was defined by the movement against Russian immigration, is now over. It began quietly, it rapidly generated public passion, and it ended with pistol shots. After the nerve-wracking excitement of the past few days, moods are ready to return to normal.

The assessment that the duel had somehow put to rest the Jewish question, or in any case made it retreat from the public forum to the recesses of private opinion, proved to be a mistaken conclusion. Indeed, the final phase of the social drama did not play out according to the classic pattern suggested by Turner. It brought about neither “the reintegration of the disturbed social groups” nor “the social recognition of irreparable breach between the contending parties.” What happened, instead, was a radical reinterpretation and transformation of the meaning of the duel itself, accomplished by the humor magazine, Borsszem Jankó. The week after the confrontation between Wahrmann and Istóczy, it published as its frontispiece a satirical depiction of the recently concluded duel, entitled,

---

49 “A zsidó papság és a zsidóság,” Függetlenség, June 14, 1882.
“The End of the Comedy.” The caricature portrayed Wahrmann and Istóczy holding hands on stage, smoking pistols in hand, taking self-satisfied bows in front of a wildly enthusiastic audience, half of whom were cheering Wahrmann, the other half, Istóczy. Between the two actors on stage was the prompter’s box, conspicuousely labeled “Noble Casino,” to symbolize the highly ambiguous role of the Hungarian liberal establishment in the affair.

By reframing the Wahrmann–Istóczy affair and placing it within the realm of the melodrama, Borsszem Jankó trivialized the event and made explicit what seems to have been common knowledge among its contemporary spectators; namely that the duel had been rigged and the guns had been fixed to fire awry, so
that the participants would not sustain injuries. The confrontation that had held the capital spellbound for days was, after all, only a theatrical production that did not need to be taken overly seriously. The mock-heroic image of Wahrmann and Istóczy, united by the professional bonds of actors, though divided by the popular passion of their followers, repudiated the political legitimacy not only of anti-Semitism, but of all ideological interpretations of the Jewish question. The duel, which had briefly threatened to disrupt public life and transform politics into popular action, could once again be returned to its appropriate place: the non-serious realm of humor and parody.51

The final assessment of the Wahrmann–Istóczy duel came a year after the event, from one of the wittiest novelists and parliamentary reporters of the age, Kálmán Mikszáth, who was famous for his ironic parliamentary vignettes, printed in Pesti Hirlap.

Gentlemen, let us not condemn all duels, since there are some that are, by their very nature, convivial affairs, which bring a smile to people’s faces, or even cause gales of laughter among those hearing about it. Such was the duel fought by Wahrmann and Istóczy, which needs no detailed description, since its entire text conforms perfectly to the conventions of the classic operetta.52

What had apparently taken place was not a social drama, but a farce, a comic reenactment on the streets and in the popular press, of a dangerous social conflict that had been disallowed in the official forums of political life.

The Possibilities of Jewish Politics in a Liberal State

How are we to assess the long-range implications of this political operetta? How does it fit into the larger problem of the relationship of Jews to the liberal state? Such questions cannot avoid confronting Hannah Arendt’s devastating critique of Jewish assimilation in Central Europe, most fully articulated in The Origins of Totalitarianism, but already anticipated in her Jewish essays of the 1940s. According to Arendt, secular Jews showed dangerous myopia and unwarranted indifference to politics when they failed to oppose anti-Semitism directly. Lacking political traditions or experiences of their own, she contended, Jews placed excessive

51 Frontispiece, Borsszem Jankó, June 15, 1882.
faith in the liberal state that had protected them since emancipation. In this respect, even Heine, that most astute observer of the limitations of assimilation, manifested the kind of “worldlessness” commonly displayed by traditional Judaism. His “attitude of amused indifference,” she claimed, was inadequate, “when measured by the standards of political realities.” “When one comes down to earth,” she concluded, “one has to admit that laughter does not kill and that neither slaves nor tyrants are extinguished by mere amusement.”

Arendt’s critique, infused by tragic historical hindsight and an abstract, macro-political perspective, is irrefutable. Yet, it is also historically inaccurate. It fails to take into sufficient account the limited political options available for Jewish political practice within the liberal state. Given the contradictory impulses of Central European liberalism, which simultaneously granted Jews the roles of legal insiders and of cultural outsiders, the possibilities for autonomous Jewish political action were severely circumscribed. Wahrmann was fully aware of these limitations and illustrated their consequences in his famous Jewish ambassador joke. As Jewish ambassador in Budapest, he provided an example of how to wield influence through indirection and how to use humor to confront, and even triumph, over ideology. This practice can hardly be called “worldless” or indifferent to political affairs. It was, on the contrary, highly pragmatic and brilliantly calibrated to the paradoxical realities and possibilities of liberal politics.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Borsszem Jankó [Tom Thumb], 1879, 1881, 1882, 1884.
Budapesti Hirlap [Budapest Daily], 1892.
Egyetértés [Agreement], 1892.
Magyar Állam [Hungarian State], 1892.
Magyar Hirlap [Hungarian Daily], 1892.
Nemzet [Nation], 1892.
Neue Freie Presse, 1892.
Pesti Hirlap [Pest Daily], 1892.

“The Jewish Ambassador to Budapest”

*Pesti Napló Esti Lapja* [The Evening Edition of the Pest News], 1892.
*Szabadság* [Freedom], 1892.
*Vasárnapi Ujság* [Sunday Paper] 1892.

*Képviselőházi Napló* [Parliamentary Records], 1884–1887.

“A Tisza-eszlári gyilkosság” [The Murder at Tiszaeszlár]. *Függetlenség* [Independence], July 1, 1882.
“A zsidó papság és a zsidóság” [The Jewish Clergy and Jewry]. *Függetlenség*, June 14, 1882.
,,Budától Erksiig” [From Buda to Ercsi]. *Függetlenség*, June 12, 1882.
Haber, Samu. “Wahrmann Mórról” [About Mór Wahrmann]. *Egyenlőség* [Equality], December 2, 1892.
“Polgári házasság” [Civil Marriage]. *Borsszem Jankó*, April 3, 1881. 10.
Szabolcsi, Miksa. “A mi nagy veszteségünk” [Our Great Loss]. Egyenlőség, December 2, 1892.


“Wahrmann Mór” Egyetértés, November 27, 1892. 328.

Secondary Sources


Nagy, Lajos. “Este van” [It is Evening]. Nyugat 1, no. 10 (May 16, 1908): 554–58.


Tóth, Vilmos. “Wahrmann Mór temetése és a Wahrmann-mauzoleum” [The Funeral of Mór Wahrmann and the Wahrmann Mausoleum]. In Honszeretet és felekezeti
