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To cite this article: Elana Shapira (2011) Adolf Loos and the Fashioning of “the Other”: Memory, Fashion, and Interiors, *Interiors*, 2:2, 213-237

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2752/204191211X13070211134385>



Published online: 27 Apr 2015.



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Adolf Loos and the Fashioning of “the Other”: Memory, Fashion, and Interiors

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ABSTRACT *The Czech-Austrian architect and interior designer Adolf Loos projected the ideal dress of the English gentleman as new “cultured dress” onto his interiors in order to encourage his clients – mostly acculturated Jews – to preserve a distinguished position as “outsiders” (the Other) and at the same time to secure their integration into Viennese society. The process of acculturation forced Jews to redefine their relation to their history as well as to find a secured future direction. Acculturated Jews like Orthodox Jews were forced to defend themselves and to redefine their identity and material-culture preferences against anti-Semitic prejudice. Yet, the question of belonging regarding the “body image” of acculturated Jews, as will be shown in this article, was more exposed to critical scrutiny. Protecting their bodies as objects of integrity*

was a crucial need for Jews, who were also driven by the fear of losing their respected positions in society. In this article I describe how the architect Loos addressed the need of acculturated Jews to carefully shape their bodies as respected Western sites of cultural difference by fashioning their dress, interiors, and memories. I argue that Loos recognized that fashion and furniture could provide sources of self-confidence for his Jewish clients, but only if they helped them master and come to terms with Jewish history and memory.

KEYWORDS: Adolf Loos, Hermann Bahr, Sigmund Freud, Leopold Goldman, clients, Jewish acculturation, caftan, frock coat, Jewish memory, British culture, Egyptian stool, Vienna, modernism

The Czech-Austrian architect and interior designer Adolf Loos projected the ideal dress of the English gentleman as new “cultured dress” onto his interiors in order to encourage his clients – mostly acculturated Jews – to preserve a distinguished position as “outsiders” (the Other) and at the same time to secure their integration into Viennese society. The process of acculturation forced Jews to redefine their relation to their history as well as to find a secured future direction.¹ Acculturated Jews like Orthodox Jews were forced to defend themselves and to redefine their identity and material-culture preferences against anti-Semitic prejudice. Yet, the question of belonging regarding the “body image” of acculturated Jews, as will be shown in this article, was more exposed to critical scrutiny.² Protecting their bodies as objects of integrity was a crucial need for Jews, who were also driven by the fear of losing their respected positions in society. In 1908, author and playwright Arthur Schnitzler confessed through the protagonist of his novel *Der Weg ins Freie* [*The Road into the Open*] the embarrassment of being identified as a “Jew.” His hero Heinrich Bermann describes his experience of shame while witnessing a Jew ridiculing himself as akin to the humiliation accompanying witnessing the physical exposure of one’s sister:

From our youth on we have been driven to see precisely Jewish characteristics as especially comical or repulsive characteristics, which is not the case with regard to the equally comical and repulsive characteristics of the others. And I won’t conceal the fact that when a Jew behaves crudely or comically in my presence, sometimes such a painful feeling seizes me that I want to die, to sink into the earth. It’s a sort of shame that is perhaps related somehow to the shame a brother feels if his sister undresses in front of him. (Schnitzler 1992[1908]: 114)³

In this article I describe how the architect Loos addressed the need of acculturated Jews to carefully shape their bodies as respected Western sites of cultural difference by fashioning their dress, interiors, and memories. My thesis expands upon the following argument presented by art and design historian John Potvin:

The narratological potential that spaces enliven within the complicated relationships between fashion and furniture provides an assurance we look to material and visual objects as at once ever-changing, yet present, living entities that elicit myriad experiences for the body. (Potvin 2010: 9)

I argue that Loos recognized that fashion and furniture could provide sources of self-confidence for his Jewish clients, but only if they helped them master and come to terms with Jewish history and memory. Loos was aware of acculturated Jews’ anxiety about appearing correctly dressed in public. In his writings, Loos established a relationship between advocating the correct “modern dress” and recommending the appropriate British interior design in order to offer his clients – as the title of Schnitzler’s novel suggests – physically and psychologically secure “roads to the open” as they pursued social mobility.⁴

This article reconsiders the argument of the German studies scholar Janet Stewart that Loos used the ideal of the clothing of the English gentleman in order to realize his vision of an egalitarian society for all (anonymous?) “modern persons” (Stewart 2000: 128). Instead I describe the specific needs of his acculturated Jewish clients and further analyze how Loos addressed these needs in his writings and in his interiors. I further criticize the statement made by the historian Steven Beller about the influence of bourgeois Jews on Viennese modernity:

There were, of course, many figures in Viennese modern culture who were not Jewish, or of Jewish descent, but it is my contention that the Jewish presence was so large and so influential that, as far as Viennese modernity was concerned, those in the artistic and intellectual élite who were not Jewish were essentially following and reacting to the ideas and problematic of the children of the Jewish bourgeoisie. (Beller 1993: 177)

Instead of this general statement about “Jewish influence,” I show how Loos’s interiors, a recognized canonical representation of Viennese modernism, resulted from fruitful dialogues between the gentile architect Loos, who smartly observed the needs of his clients to dress correctly in public and their needs to come to terms with their Jewish memory in their interiors, and his Jewish clients who welcomed his creative authority.

In his writings and in his interiors, Loos addressed two opposing historical memories that still greatly affected the Jewish identities of his clients: the rejected memory of their experience in “the Ghetto” and the nostalgic memory of their relationship to ancient Egypt. While Loos recognized the first as a hindrance to his clients’ desire to acculturate, he promoted the second as integral to a shared cultural platform between Jews and Christians that could form the basis for integration. Loos’s and his clients’ affinity to British culture served to bridge the psychological gap between living in the past and present realities. Loos presented portable furniture pieces, such as chairs, side tables, and stools within well-tailored compact spaces, thus securing positive Jewish memory and proud identity in a modernist arrangement of an elegant British bourgeois household.

Jewish Emancipation, Men’s Fashion, and Modern Interiors

Adolf Loos engaged in public discourse concerning men’s fashion and modernity, through critical lectures and articles in journals and newspapers such as *Die Wage*, *Die Zeit*, and the *Neue Freie Presse* at the end of the nineteenth century, when two major historical events demonstrated the crisis in the integration process of Jews in society. The election of the anti-Semitic Karl Lueger as the mayor of Vienna and the Dreyfus Affair in France had revealed Jews’ vulnerability in Europe. Fashion was for Loos an important cultural cipher and he was aware of the different dress codes within the Jewish minority in the Austro-Hungarian double monarchy. He took special note of how Jewish immigrants from East Europe in Vienna looked, recognizing the Orthodox Galician men’s striking long black silk coat – the caftan – as a public affirmation of their discriminated position in society. In an unpublished text titled “Jewish Emancipation,” Loos reacted to the performance of Theodore Herzl’s play *Das neue Ghetto* [*The New Ghetto*] in Vienna in 1898, describing the failed integration attempts of its young Jewish protagonist, and further to the success of the Secessionist Joseph Maria Olbrich in the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1900. Loos criticized Jews for creating a new ghetto for themselves by comparing their choice of Secessionist interiors in their homes to the striking appearance of the caftan in public:

Any friend of Jewish emancipation, any enemy of the ghetto, meaning any friend of our culture must suffer when he sees how our Jews are creating a new ghetto. Jews who have given up the caftan a long time ago are happy now to take it up again. *Since the Secessionist interior furnishings are nothing but disguised caftans*, like the names Gold and Silberstein, like the names Moritz and Siegfried.

... But I feel sorry for the man, who wants to overcome the caftan and the Samuel and falls into an Olbrich or a Siegfried again.

Then we would be again in the old spot. In the new ghetto. And the poor people have believed that they could emancipate themselves from Judaism through an Olbrich or a Siegfried. To eat ham alone is not enough. (cited in Rukschcio and Schachel 1982: 70f.; emphasis added)

By mentioning the name Siegfried three times in this passage, Loos was possibly referring to the entrepreneur of Art Nouveau in Paris, the Jewish porcelain manufacturer Siegfried Bing, who supposedly changed his first name from Samuel to Siegfried.⁵ Bing's pavilion in the Exposition Universelle in 1900 was a great success. Loos chose to criticize the Secessionist design of Olbrich and the Art Nouveau design of Bing's workshops as inappropriate for acculturated Jews by arguing that these designs produced the same striking impression in public as did wearing the caftan, and forced their owners into the same unwanted social isolation that the ghetto experience produced. Loos believed that by choosing a design by Olbrich as well as by choosing the name Siegfried, acculturated Jews expressed on the one hand their desire to win exclusivity and on the other hand their over-eagerness to assimilate into German culture. In this case, they thus ironically created new ghettos for themselves in the process of their desire to integrate.

Bing's reputation was promoted in Vienna by Hermann Bahr, the editor of the journal *Die Zeit* and the spokesman of the Secession movement. In 1898, Bahr reviewed the performance of Herzl's above-mentioned play *Das neue Ghetto* in *Die Zeit*. Supporting the Zionist message of Herzl's play, Bahr argued that assimilated Jews no longer belonged to the Jewish people, but neither did they belong to the German people. He further claimed that they had neither “Jewish instincts” nor “German instincts,” but rather were misfits, “reduced creatures,” and a source of torment to themselves (Bahr 1898: 28). Yet, Bahr granted art a healing function against existential torments. He was impressed by the lead of French Art Nouveau in design and in his article “Kunstgewerbe” (“Applied Arts,” 1898), he praised Bing's gallery by considering it as an important stimulus for the local scene:

Here they learned to feel that a room is not a museum, but should express something spiritual; each object in the room must be an instrument in an orchestra, the architect is the conductor, and the whole should produce a symphony. (Bahr 1900: 33f.)⁶

The formal signature of Bing's Art Nouveau was a whiplash curve representing a natural metaphor (Weisberg 1986: 150). The historian Debora L. Silverman suggests that “Bing's appeal to nature was cast as a binding net for French and non-French creators. Artists from England, Belgium, Holland, America, Germany, and France were

commissioned to design a total organic ensemble" (Silverman 1989: 273). The natural imagery expressed the wish for a new beginning representing all-inclusive modernity without historical ties that could appeal to Christian and acculturated Jewish clients.⁷ Bing himself, in an article on "Art Nouveau" published in the American journal *The Craftsman* (1903), noted that the representation of nature was meant to chase off "old memories":

But our minds being heavily burdened with old memories, how was it possible to resume the march of progress so long interrupted? Where seek a trustworthy guide? What rules were to be observed? A reversion to free Nature could alone restore and rejuvenate our spirits. (Bing 1970[1903]: 229)

Nature also served as a metaphor for the modern interiors of Bahr's protégée, the architect Olbrich. In the introduction to the book *Ideen von Olbrich* [*Ideas of Olbrich*] (1900), the cultural critic Ludwig Hevesi referred to the decoration of the chair in the dining room of Villa Friedmann as a fantasy product (Hevesi 1984[1906]: 209). Hevesi described the Art Nouveau-like pattern featuring two stylized roses decorating the upholstered upper back of the chair.⁸ The many references to nature inspired Hevesi to compliment Olbrich's house as a "living organism" and each room in it is a "living organ" (Hevesi 1984[1906]: 210). Moreover, Hevesi noted that in Olbrich's art "everything is new, even the old is new and the very old is new" (Hevesi 1984[1906]: 211). In contrast to Bing and Olbrich, Loos recognized that selected historical references would support his Jewish clients' integration. He rejected the fashionable practice of creating furniture pieces in order to chase away memories and as artistic products. Instead, he chose British furniture pieces that strengthen the family history and as part of the ideal Western "cultured dress" that would allow his clients to perceive their interior as the actual representation of their own style and to further develop themselves (Loos 1898a: 15).⁹

As mentioned above Loos observed the difference in dress codes within the Jewish minority. He noted the striking difference between the appearance of the Hassidic Jew with his beard and side locks wearing a black caftan and traditional rounded hat and the liberal Orthodox, reform, or secular Jews who were most likely shaved or sporting stylish mustaches, wearing fashionable "Western suits," and top hats (Figure 1). Hassidic dress regulations imitating the dress of the Polish aristocracy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were considered a vehicle to ward off modernity and strengthen a group identity. Their distinctive and uniform style of dress, most noticeably, the caftan, demonstrated three aims: first, to reinforce the social cohesion of the group, second, to symbolize their separate way of life, and third, to propagate the ethical ideals of their spiritual leaders, the Rabbis (Lederman 1981). On the other hand, Jews from



Figure 1

Leopold Goldman, 1909. Courtesy of the late Kitty Goldmann-Beligradeanu.

all schools, Orthodox, reform, and secular, who wanted to promote their integration into the city, deserted the caftan in favor of modern-day dress. Not only was Loos aware of this fashionable trend among various members of the Jewish minority, but, significantly, he used their example to support his arguments about the modernization of dress among European social classes in general. For example, in the first issue of his short lived journal *Das Andere* [*The Other*], "a journal to promote Western culture in Austria," he expressed his view that farmers should give up their leather trousers in favor of modern Western clothing, and explained the rationale of this interest by noting: "I have never heard from a Western dressed Jew the demand that the Jews in Galicia should keep their caftan on"

(Loos 1903a: 2). Loos recognized how important it was for Jews to desert the “caftan” as a symbol of the old way of life in the ghetto in order to demonstrate to a broader public as well as to themselves their acceptance of modern, urban life. From these examples, it is clear that Loos was not only aware of, but also sympathized with, the complicated social dynamics of his Jewish clients, friends, and colleagues in the media, especially their wish to reject the memory of the ghetto, as identified with the caftan, in favor of a new enlightened and modern experience identified with the Western dress.¹⁰ Loos encouraged his readers by writing about men’s fashion to see a direct link between choosing a modern mode of dress and choosing Loos as their “tailor” for their apartments and buildings. He promised his clients a “cultured dress” that will serve their integration interests in the city, as noted in the second issue of Loos’s *Das Andere*:

There is also the following way of earning my living: A farmer comes to me and says: “I want to move to the city and to live like a city dweller. Please provide me with everything. You will receive ten percent of the expenses as an ‘architect’s fee.’” And then I will go with him to the tailor, to the shoemaker, shirt maker. A cane and an umbrella, handkerchief, [to the] printer for visiting-cards, and tie-pin. Finished. Next. A culture guide for strangers to culture. (Loos 1903b: 8f.)

Acculturated Jewish clients welcomed Loos’s intention to design for them a “cultured dress” as a distinguished and modern visiting card. Moreover, his clients, who were aware of the relationship between self-representation and self-marketing in the modern world, promoted Loos’s reputation as an excellent outfitter (Shapira 2004: 27). In a letter from February 1905, Hedwig Kanner, a recent client of Loos, advised her friend Annie Eisenberger in Berlin to allow Loos to design a music room for her husband, a music professor. The future music room was to be presented in an exhibition on modern interiors. Kanner argued that the exhibition will be a favorable advertisement for Eisenberger’s husband since such things are immensely talked about in public (Rukschcio and Schachel 1982: 99).

In fashioning his interiors as a “cultured dress,” Loos drew inspiration from his respected tailors. He was impressed by the professionalism of his Jewish tailor Michael Goldman, owner of the elite men’s fashion salon Goldman & Salatsch, and believed that his tailored suits even played a role in determining modern aesthetics. He claimed, for example, that the architect Josef Hoffmann changed his style after his visit to the Goldman & Salatsch store in 1900.¹¹ Goldman offered distinguished tailored suits following the paragon of the “English gentleman” as prescribed by King Edward VII, but it was Loos who transformed the idea of a “tailored suit” into a form of a new “cultured dress.”¹²

Loos's Replacement of the Caftan with the Frock Coat

In his groundbreaking book *Die Traumdeutung* [*The Interpretation of Dreams*] (1900) the father of psychoanalysis Sigmund Freud documented the important role of dress and his feeling of threat of physical exposure as an acculturated Jew in Viennese society.¹³ Freud presented a private dream expressing the importance of “correct dress.” He was trying one day to find out the meaning of being inhibited – “of being glued to the spot” – which often occurs in dreams handling anxiety. In his dream that night:

I was very incompletely dressed and was going upstairs from a flat on the ground floor to a higher storey. I was going up three steps at a time and was delighted at my agility. Suddenly I saw a maid-servant coming down the stairs – coming towards me, that is. I felt ashamed and tried to hurry, and at this point the feeling of being inhibited set in: I was glued to the steps and unable to budge from the spot. (Freud 1965[1900]: 272)

Freud explains the notion of “incomplete dress” by referring to the evening before in which he had made the same journey “in rather disordered dress – that is to say, I had taken off my collar and tie and cuffs. In the dream this had been turned into a higher degree of undress, but, as usual, an indeterminate one” (Freud 1965[1900]: 272). Freud makes evident the relationship between “disordered dress,” “incompletely dressed” (beginning with taking off the collar ...), and eventually “higher degree of undress” and the emergence of anxiety. In other words, “orderly” dress and “complete” dress are expressions of self-control and “guarantee” anxiety-free journeys. It is further interesting to note that the “undressed” Jewish doctor Freud is caught by the gaze of a socially lower-ranked gentile woman, making him fear the possibility of her questioning his authority and masculinity.

Loos established his reputation in Viennese society as a well-dressed gentleman. The journalist and author Robert Scheu in his tribute to Loos in Karl Kraus's *Die Fackel* identified Loos's charisma as representing “the cosmopolitan” in Vienna (Scheu 1909). In analyzing Loos's architecture, the architectural historian Mary McLeod refers to her colleague Beatriz Colomina's argument about Loos's division between the public persona represented by the exterior of the house and the private man represented by the *richness* of the interior (McLeod 1994: 65).¹⁴ However, McLeod questions scholars' tendency of identifying Loos' facades and interiors as different gender categories of a “male” exterior of rationality and discipline and a “female” interior of comfort, privacy, and subjectivity (McLeod 1994: 113).¹⁵ McLeod considers the knowledge that Loos gained during his design for various men's fashion houses, noting that Loos “changes” in his interiors from the formal suit to the intimate silk robe:

His early interiors, especially the domestic ones, hardly evoke images of the feminine; more often they evoke the world of British men's clubs – leather club chairs, Chesterfield sofas, and wood beams and paneling. While masculine, the atmosphere is certainly not austere or formal. To make another analogy to clothing, it is akin not to black evening apparel but men's intimate apparel (silk smoking jackets, cravats, braces) – the luxurious simplicity of the accessories sold in the men's fashion houses that he designed ... (McLeod 1994: 65f.)

In her conclusion, McLeod suggests that the modern was still a male province in the majority of Loos's writings and interiors (McLeod 1994: 69). The question arises why did Loos need to create the impression that modernity is still a "male province?" My suggestion is that the impression of "male province" was needed not only as opposition to the Secessionist interiors but also to help Loos's clients to ward off anti-Semitic prejudice against Jewish men as being effeminate.¹⁶ Yet it was his shared wish with them to feel as if one is "dressed" for an evening in an aristocratic club that led Loos to replace the Jewish caftan with the European frock coat.

The frock coat was a popular man's coat during the mid- to late nineteenth century and it is characterized by knee-length skirts all around the base. In 1907, Hevesi reviewed Loos's interiors and quoted him explaining his interiors as different variations of a frock coat:

And when he furnishes an apartment, he guarantees: "It is always the same. Like a frock coat, it could not look differently. The lining naturally will be different and the pockets are varied according to the need, but a frock coat is a frock coat. This is my sideboard, this is my desk. And still each room looks completely different. The variety is infinite." (Hevesi 1986[1909]: 285)

Loos evoked a mature and sensual man's "body image" by choosing perhaps the "silk smoking jacket" as McLeod suggested or rather visualizing the fine needlework of the silk lining of the frock coat as he himself admitted (Figure 2) in his interiors. Loos wanted to grant his clients a sense of belonging to an elite intellectual club. In his article reviewing Arthur von Scala's Christmas exhibition at the Austrian Museum (1897) Loos stated: "It is the task of modern artists to raise the taste of the multitude in its various characteristic class gradations; in doing so they are fulfilling the needs of the intellectual aristocracy at any given time" (Loos 1982[1897]: 94). Early in his career Loos recognized correctly that the frock coat is a classic and representative clothing article that will slowly be removed from the market circulation (Shapira 2008: 56f.). Loos preferred to market his interiors as variations of a frock coat in order to make a claim for a



Figure 2

Inside of a Frock Coat. Private Photo Archive.

distinguished and classical trademark. The question arises did Loos expect that his “frock coat” interior design could serve as an alternative to the “caftan” Secessionist interior design as a modern dress?

This question is critical given Loos’s claim for mastering the subtleties of men’s fashion. Hevesi compared in the beginning of his above-mentioned review Loos’s interiors to Loos’s tailored suits and claimed that both represented geometric elegance (Hevesi 1986[1909]: 285). Hevesi was not the first to compare Loos’s design with the design of men’s dress. Loos’s colleague, the critic Wilhelm Schölermann, in his review of Viennese interiors in the *Innen-Dekoration* acknowledged Loos’s style as the style of the “International Gentleman” (Schölermann 1905: 33, 38). He acknowledged the relationship between Loos’s style and the ethics

of men's fashion by noting, before introducing Loos's works, the progressive movement toward the triumph of sober male clothing in interior design and the design of objects for daily use (Schölermann 1905: 33, 38). Yet, Loos did not provide an original definition of the ethics of men's fashion presented in his article "Die Herrenmode" ["Men's Fashion"] in the *Neue Freie Presse* (1898) and in the text "Die Kleidung" ["The Clothing"] in his journal *Das Andere* 1903. Loos's famous dictum about modern men's dress expresses his wish to project the ethics of men's fashion into a socially upgrading design: "One is dressed modern, when one does not stand out at the center of the Western culture on a specific occasion in the BEST of society" (Loos 1903a: 8).¹⁷

Scholars repeatedly related Loos's claim about modern dress to the culture of British men's fashion. Burkhardt Rukschcio and Roland Schachel identified Loos's fashion ideal with the English dandy, as prescribed by the legendary "Beau Brummell" (George Bryan Brummell, 1778–1840; Rukschcio and Schachel 1982: 61).¹⁸ In his article "Adolf Loos and the English Dandy," Jules Lubbock outlined the social ideology implicit in Loos's ideas about style (Lubbock 1983: 44f.). Lubbock introduced more evidence for the claim that the English dandy George Brummell served as a role model for Loos's cultural evaluation criteria, noting that Brummell is renowned for his statement that the worst crime of a gentleman is to draw attention to himself. Brummell, who is perceived as a heroic figure, represents a social-climber with a lesson that can be applied to everything in life (Lubbock 1983: 44f.). Referring to Lubbock's article, McLeod in her above-mentioned article "Undressing Architecture: Fashion, Gender, and Modernity" also identified the choice of George Brummell as Loos's ideal. However, she pointed out that fashion psychologist John Carl Flugel identified Brummell's reform of men's dress in the 1800s as the beginning of the great renunciation of men's dress (McLeod 1994: 60).¹⁹ In his book *White Walls, Dress Designers*, Mark Wigley observed that Loos viewed fashion as the "only means of maintaining identity," and Loos's writings as "nothing more than the attempt to discipline fashion" (Wigley 1995: 172). Beatriz Colomina in her article "On Adolf Loos and Josef Hoffmann" argues that Loos's blank facades were used as a social mask (Colomina 1991[1987]: 66f.). These arguments, however, should be reconsidered in relation to the repositioning of acculturated Jews in Viennese society, including additional examinations of the relevance of history and hierarchy to the culture of the Viennese elite men's fashion salons.

The German studies scholar Mark Anderson in his book *Kafka's Clothes* noted that for the acculturated Jewish aesthetes and writers who followed French and English role models, "the dialectic of distinguishing oneself without being noticed inevitably had a different political meaning" and suggests in his explanation a generational conflict between sons and fathers:

Their parents and relatives, often enough professionals in the clothing business, stood out as Jews, looked and dressed “like Jews” in the eyes of an anti-Semitic public; at the same time, however, they were in the process of giving up their religious beliefs and trying to assimilate into German society. The sons (for the question of female clothing is entirely different for social and historical reasons) fled from this unhappy combination into a more refined, aristocratic, less visibly “Jewish” elegance. (Anderson 1992: 218)

Loos’s choice of replacing the caftan with the frock coat echoed the wish of the Jewish sons to relate to an invented aristocratic father (or father who was a public representative) dressed in a frock coat; thus, demonstrating their rejection of the historical memory of – or the prejudice against – their father dressed in a caftan. This elitist claim was in accordance with “the promise” of cultural prestige offered by elite fashion salons where Loos purchased his clothes.

The formal criteria determining the elegance of men’s tailored clothing was produced in elite fashion salons without democratic intention meaning to contribute to the leveling process in society. A close look at Loos’s interior design of his favorite men’s fashion salon in the new Goldman & Salatsch House at Michaelerplatz in Vienna 1910 shows his orchestration of the fashion salon as an elitist men’s club: the customer would enter the grand entrance hall wainscoted with mahogany where ready-made clothes and articles were sold. Walking a few steps forward in a straight line he would reach a single flight of stairs that separates in the middle into two lateral branches like the staircases in a Viennese baroque palace. It would lead him to the outfitting department at the mezzanine. Directed to the waiting corner on an upper level of the mezzanine, the customer would be invited to sit in a leather club chair next to windows looking across the Michaelerplatz to the Imperial Court. Here the client was symbolically positioned near the “father” of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The privileged status of the customer would be confirmed through his granted physical nearness to the Kaiser. The aristocratic claim was further supported by a historical reference expressed through the choice to hang on a side wall of the waiting corner a copy of Giovanni Battista Maroni’s masterpiece *The Tailor*, c. 1570 (National Gallery, London), representing also Michael Goldman’s son, Leopold’s pride in the history of his profession. Loos’s and Goldman’s choice to hang this portrait further demonstrated that this fashion salon – founded by the Jewish immigrant Goldman from Moravia and the Catholic immigrant Salatsch from Bohemia – was part of a respectable European cultural history.²⁰

Parallel to securing an illusion of hierarchy the master-tailors contributed to a quiet revolution of redefining the “distinguished class.” They granted the bourgeois citizens with no aristocratic ties and bourgeoisie Jews an entry ticket to the elitist men club – the club

of those who could afford excellent tailored suits and to dress like the King of England himself – allowing their clients to position themselves literally among the best representatives and at the center of Western society. The cultural authority of the bourgeois newcomers was achieved through their distinct taste and propriety (Chenoune 1995: 17). Further, they gained their superior stance by being aware of and open to subtle innovative changes in fashion. Thus, questions arise: how did Loos transform the old fashioned “frock coat” into a modernist Western “cultured-dress?” Did Loos indeed offer his Jewish clients an alternative to the Secessionist (Eastern) “caftan” interiors?

Are the Englishmen Jews? Modernist Interiors and Fashioning “the Other”

In 1906, aware of the Jewish romantic identification with the British culture, the critic Hevesi published a humorist piece reporting an absurd theory claiming that the Englishmen actually originate from the lost ten tribes of Israel (Hevesi 1906: 247).²¹ Acculturated Jews fitted Loos’s expectations of the ideal clients that he would like to “dress up.” On one hand they felt insecure about their Jewish heritage and shared his admiration of the English culture. On the other hand they considered themselves – and were considered by others – as Europeans and citizens of the world since presumably they did not have their own country. Loos’s tailor Goldman changed the spelling of his name from the German Goldmann to the English Goldman. Prominent Jews such as Freud idealized England as a place where they could win respect in contrast to their experience of discrimination in Austria, as noted in a letter from young Freud to his fiancée Martha in 1882:

I am aching for independence, so as to follow my own wishes. The thought of England surges up before me, with its sober industriousness, its generous devotion to the public will, the stubbornness and sensitive feeling for justice of its inhabitants, the running fire of general interest that can strike sparks in the newspapers – all the ineffaceable impressions of my journey of seven years ago, one that had a decisive influence on my whole life, have been awakened in their full vividness [...] Must we stay here, Martha? If possible let us seek a home where human worth is more respected. (cited in Le Rider 1993: 224)

Similar to his clients, Loos identified the ideal bourgeois with the “proud and simple ways” of the British bourgeois (Loos 1982[1897]). Accordingly, the future Loosian milieu would “wear” interior design dresses following a British bourgeois model symbolized, for example, by copies of the eighteenth-century Chippendale chairs (originally exhibited in the Austrian Museum for Art and Industry), as seen in photos showing the dining rooms of the Hirsch apartment in Pilsen

1907 and the Steiner House in Vienna 1910. They were copied either by the furniture firm Schmidt or by Loos's favorite carpenter Josef Veillich. Loos chose further from the English second half of the eighteenth century cabinet-maker tradition and even early eighteenth century furniture for his dining rooms and salons Heppelwhite chairs (Turnowsky apartment around 1900; Schwarzwald apartment, 1905), Queen Ann chairs (Goldman apartment, 1910), and Windsor chairs (own apartment, 1903) (Ottillinger 1994: 140f.). Further, he chose the Knee-Swimmer-Fauteuil for Leopold Goldman's lobby (Figure 3) and later for Knize's men's fashion salon in Paris. Loos's Knee-Swimmer may have originated in a photograph of the British model produced by the London firm Hampton & Sons and reproduced with the title New Shaped Easy Chair in *The Studio* 1901 (Ottillinger 1989: 93f.). The Knee-Swimmer-Fauteuil was offered in the catalog of the firm Otto Friedrich Schmidt. The three different armchairs near a side table seen in the photo of Goldman's lobby (Figure 3) represent Loos's recommendation following once more – as he noted – an English model that each chair should offer a different sort of physical relaxation (Loos 1898b: 16). Goldman who considered himself and was regarded by others as a Viennese gentleman decorated the walls of his lobby room with four maps showing Vienna, Austria, Europe, and the World. Loos's possible recommendation to Goldman to hang these four maps, granting the lobby room a double identity of a family gathering place²² and a studio of an English gentleman (Kerr 1864), further showed Loos's reference to the English gentleman in order to support Goldman's positioning himself as a European gentleman.



Figure 3

Goldman Lobby Room 1911. Private Collection.

Loos's interior designs considered the appropriate and the psychological effect of both "cut" and choice of "fabrics" (spatial plan and paneling), according to the traditional division in the bourgeoisie apartment between public and private areas. His strategy to lower the ceiling in the niche (alcove) near the salon, in order to create a cozy atmosphere, resulted as well in evoking a spacious impression in the salon itself as seen in Loos's apartment and in Goldman's lobby.²³ Loos chose mahogany paneling for the formal dining room (Rudolf Kraus apartment in Vienna, 1907; Wilhelm and Martha Hirsch apartment in Pilsen, 1907) and for the men's study-room (Arthur and Leonie Friedmann apartment in Vienna, 1906–7), sensual cherry wood paneling for the music salon (Friedmann apartment, 1906–7; Hirsch apartment, 1907), and maplewood paneling for the intimate more relaxed bedroom (Alfred Sobotka apartment in Vienna, 1904) (Loos 1907; Rukschcio and Schachel 1982: 444f., 453). The spatial arrangement and the choice of "fabric" – namely, the choice of wood – also supported existing gender constructions as witnessed in Loos's design for Karl Kraus's beloved sister Marie and her husband, the businessman Gustav Turnowsky (around 1900).²⁴ Loos's demand, according to the witness of his student and colleague Heinrich Kulka, that the center should remain free in order to permit continuous movement was applied to Gustav's study-room, but not to Marie's lady's room (Spindler 1996: 15). Loos placed the sitting arrangement at the corner in the study-room, while placing it at the center in the lady's room. Loos further established gender differentiation through his choice of wood for the furniture in these rooms: mahogany for the studio-room and maplewood for the lady's room (Loos 1907; Shapira 2004: 284f.). In the text introducing the visit in the Turnowsky's apartment in his Viennese Apartment-Walking-Tours brochure, Loos explained: "Family has a lot of old silver and porcelain, therefore many sideboards" (Loos 1907). Loos catered for the specific needs of each client individually and yet, aware of the needs of his acculturated Jewish clients to preserve group identification, he chose to use English furniture pieces in order to evoke specific historical narratives.

In an early example of the salon niche in Alfred Sobotka's apartment 1904, Loos placed within the cozy arrangement of a train compartment the oriental side-table with round brass-plate following a popular British example at the end of the nineteenth century (Rukschcio and Schachel 1982: 434). Thus, the oriental side-table rewrote a Jewish identification with the Orient as a fashionable identification with the British Empire. Originally Loos intended to place another example of a side-table following a British example, namely the Elephant Trunk Table, with a brass belt surrounding the upper plate and variation of six to eight curved legs in Sobotka's niche. This Elephant Trunk Table was placed in different rooms such as Haberfeld's studio-room, in Stoessl's apartment, 1900, in Turnowsky's study-room, 1903, and in Friedmann's salon, 1907.

According to the firm Schmidt, which produced this table, the idea was taken from an antique Chippendale table and simplified by the owner Max Schmidt and Loos himself.²⁵ The art historian Eva Ottillinger referred to several possible sources for the inspiration but noted that the most immediate English source could have been a model of a side-table published in the journal *The Cabinet Maker* (January 1899: 173) by the London firm Hampton & Sons in 1899 (Ottillinger 1994: 77). Thus, this side-table was still part of the modern English household at the beginning of the twentieth century. Loos staged the public rooms of his acculturated Jewish clients following a model of the home of the British gentleman in relation to the tradition of the British cabinetmaker in the eighteenth century and in relation to an imagined journey taken by his gentleman-client through the British colonies in the Near East. Loos’s “cultured dress” interiors of well-tailored spaces as well as his choice of “fabric” and furniture pieces guaranteed that his clients would be identified with the cultural persona of the English gentleman and therefore appear as respected and distinguished members of Western society. Yet, similar to the Hassidic reasoning of choosing the black caftan (and not as they were perceived in public) – Loos’s interior designs achieved two different yet complimentary intentions, first not to attract attention in public, second to enable rituals of self-exclusion within the Viennese metropolitan in order to reinforce the cohesion of this new social group.

A New Caftan? Rituals of Self-exclusion in Loos’s Interiors

In his dream titled “My son, the Myop,” analyzed in his book *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud recalled an image of himself as a sad Jew in exile longing to return to Jerusalem by referring to the quote: “By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept” (Psalms 137; Freud 1965[1900]: 478). Yet, the Diaspora experience was also remembered in a nostalgic manner. Freud chose to hang above the treatment couch in his office a print of a nineteenth-century water-color drawing by Ernst Körner of the Abu Simbel Temple in Egypt (Freud Museum, London). Possibly aware of this Jewish nostalgia towards Egypt, Loos chose as his brand tag to be placed in the homes of his loyal clients alternately one of two types of ancient Egyptian stools – the first with four legs and a stretched leather seat, seen in the photo of study-room of the art historian Hugo Haberfeld (Figure 4) and in the study-room of the official in the railway ministry, theater critic, and author Otto Stoessl in 1900; and the second with three-legs and a diagonal wooden seat as seen in the salon of the owner of a textile factory and of a Plume and Feather store Hugo Steiner and his wife Lilly (Steiner House) and in the apartment of his tailor Leopold Goldman and his wife Lilly (Goldman apartment) in 1910.²⁶ These stools (Hocker) stemmed from Thebes, a city identified as the center at one stage of monotheism (Safran 1985: 33f.). The



Figure 4
Haberfeld Studio with the four-legged Thebes stool, 1899. Reproduced in
Interieur, 1903.

three-legged stool – an easy-to-move piece of furniture – originated in an Egyptian king's grave, and was first integrated in Western interiors in England. The British Liberty firm patented the three-legged stool as the "Thebes Stool" according to a model found in the British Museum (1300 BC) in 1884 (Ottillinger 1989: 98). The "Thebes Stool" was also sold in the Art Nouveau gallery of Siegfried Bing in Paris. Only Loos's reference to the Jewish identification with the Orient demonstrated – in contrast to the popular nineteenth-century representation of the Orient as an exotic site displaying sensual and dangerous allure – intellectual pride. Loos's variation was produced by Joseph Veilich in three kinds of wood – mahogany, oak, and cherry wood – and it differed from the Liberty model in having more compacted proportions. The art historian Yehuda Safran also pointed out that the stool with the rectangular seat originated in an Architect's

Tomb. Still, Safran suggests that: “These choices (or stances) offered him [Loos] a singular fulcrum allowing him to draw upon an antique past without being merely antiquarian or vainly historicist” (Safran 1985: 33f.). Safran’s observation could also apply to Loos’s clients. The choice of a reference to ancient Egypt was not accidental. It may have been inspired by Loos’s wish to offer a new narrative connecting the memory of the Jews in Egypt with his British “cultured dress,” in order to draw an equation between Jews in Egypt in antiquity and the Jews in the Diaspora at the present. The appearance of the stool in the newly designed “cultured dress” suggested a historical recurrence, and widened the historical perspective, starting with the beginning of the Jewish national narrative. Yet, this Jewish memory was reclaimed through Loos’s grafted identification of his clients with British national pride.

In the context of Loos’s modernist “cultured dress” narrative the Thebes stools may have represented trophies collected by the British Empire, meaning they expressed an identification with British colonialism or with the British colonies. Moreover, through his recommendation of copies and improvements of furniture pieces originating in England in the eighteenth century, Loos’s interior dresses, like the aim of the Hassidic dress imitating the dress of the Polish aristocracy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, referred to another time and another place.²⁷ Consequently, Loos secured his clients’ separate way of life from the rest of Viennese society by idealizing another culture, namely British bourgeoisie, and referring to the success of other Empires (the British – possibly also the Egyptian but not the Austro-Hungarian).

Viennese Modernism: Memory, Fashion, and Interiors

Loos projected the ideal dress of the English gentleman as new Western “cultured dress” onto his interiors in order to grant his clients a sense of distinction and a sense of belonging to a European milieu. His Jewish clients welcomed his style as a means to reposition themselves in Viennese society and to project their identification as enlightened Europeans. Smart choice of dress as well as reliance on carefully designed interiors granted them, physically and psychologically, a sense of distinction and a sense of belonging. Loos’s interiors secured his clients identification with the British culture, protected their individuality, and allowed them to preserve their collective memory by rejecting the experience of the ghetto and upholding instead their historical relation to Egypt. Loos replaced the Jewish experience of isolation in the Ghetto with an alternative interior setting that evoked the experience of cultural “Otherness” by choice.

Notes

1. I am grateful to my friend and colleague Lisa Silverman for her critique and feedback on this article. Unless otherwise noted the English translations are mine. The process of Jewish acculturation

- in Vienna – before and after the reception of equal rights (1867) – has been identified as the cultural process of integration into the Christian society.
2. The reason for this scrutiny was because “Assimilated Jews challenged the very authority of the finely honed and deeply ingrained Jewish stereotype” (Kleeblatt 2000: 78).
 3. Schnitzler reacted in his book to Theodor Herzl’s play *Das neue Ghetto* [*The New Ghetto*] mentioned below.
 4. According to Sigmund Freud: “The Jewish problem, concern about the future of one’s children, to whom one cannot give a country of their own, concern about educating them in such a way that they can move freely across frontiers ...” (Freud 1965[1900]: 478). Freud presented this argument at the beginning of his analysis of his dream “My son, the Myop,” provoked by a play he saw by Theodor Herzl, *Das neue Ghetto*. The play also referred to by Loos in his “Jewish Emancipation” below was first performed in Vienna on January 5, 1898. Neither Freud nor Loos mention the name Herzl in their texts.
 5. The architectural historian Fredrich Bedoire also identified Loos’s anecdote as a reference to Bing (Bedoire 2004: 197). Loos was wrong. Siegfried Bing did not change his name and did not need to prove his German identification (see Weisberg 2005: 65).
 6. “Hier lernten die Leute fühlen, dass ein Zimmer kein Museum ist, sondern etwas Seelisches äußern soll; jedes Ding in einem Zimmer muss wie ein Instrument in einem Orchester sein, der Architekt ist der Dirigent, das Ganze soll eine Symphonie geben” (Bahr 1900: 33f.).
 7. Bing’s choice of natural metaphor as visual reference was not accidental. Jews were identified as city dwellers and were ridiculed for supposedly being alienated to nature (for example on the front page of the *Fliegende Blätter*, Vol. 117, no. 2982, Munich, 1901–2) a caricature with the title “Threatened Self-Image” depicts a mountain climber asking a man who looks like an anti-Semitic caricature of a Jewish businessman “... and why does Herr councillor of commerce not go on an Alpine tour? – and the Jewish man replies “why? Because I read everywhere that ‘one should feel himself humble [small] while looking at the majestic high mountains’ and this does not fit me!” Bing’s choice was meant to demonstrate the sentimental relationship of his clients to nature.
 8. Olbrich was inspired by the Rose motif seen on dresses, walls, furniture, and floors designed by the Glasgow Four (architect Charles Rennie Mackintosh, his wife, artist Margaret MacDonald, her sister Frances MacNair, and her husband James Herbert MacNair).
 9. “Jedes Möbel, jedes Ding, jeder Gegenstand *erzählt eine Geschichte, die Geschichte der Familie*. Die Wohnung war nie fertig; sie entwickelte sich mit uns und wir in ihr. Wol war kein

Styl darin. Das heißt kein fremder, kein alter. Aber einen Styl hatte die Wohnung, den Styl ihrer Bewohner, den Styl der Familie” (Loos 1898a: 15; my emphasis).

10. In October, 1904, the editor Leo Winz explained in his article “Assimilation” in the journal *Ost und West*, a monthly journal for modern Judaism, the failure of assimilated Jews to attract the acceptance of the Christian majority, by explaining that their new dress was a collection of foreign rags chosen at random. His critical description of the assimilation process allowed Winz to introduce his main message that only through fighting assimilation, through presenting an independent taken for granted identity, will the majority accept the Jewish integration process (Winz 1904: Column 644f.).
11. “... Seit damals, das Datum kann durch die Firma Goldman & Salatsch leicht eruiert werden, ist Hoffmann europäisch angezogen. Und die gerade Linie wurde das Merkmal der Secession.” Adolf Loos’s undated manuscript quoted in Rukschcio and Schachel (1982: 62).
12. In February 1903, Goldman & Salatsch came out with a new advertisement stating that they were the Viennese agency of the firm, “Henry Heath,” located at 105 Oxford Street, London, which was manufacturing the hats for his majesty the King of England (*Allgemeine Sport-Zeitung*, February 1, 1903: 104).
13. The prejudice against Jewish men and their presumed physical deformation was represented in anti-Semitic caricatures in fashionable journals such as *Jugend*. In 1893, Oskar Panizza published a short anti-Semitic novella titled the “Operated Jew.” In the story a Jew, who went through painful operations in order to acquire a “Christian mask,” exposes his true identity after becoming completely drunk. The German studies scholar and historian Sander Gilman suggested that the rationale behind the story is that “Jews become their true selves when constraints of civilization are removed” (Gilman 1993: 39).
14. Beatriz Colomina referred to a famous citation from Loos’s article “Heimatkunst,” (1914): “The House does not have to tell anything to the exterior; instead, all its richness must be manifest in the interior.”
15. McLeod refers in her footnote to Colomina’s analysis of the *Zimmer der Dame* in the Müller house 1930, serving as a theater box for the lady of the house to inspect and supervise activity. McLeod questions Colomina’s reconstruction of the activity in this interior, referring to photographs showing a pulled curtain, implementing separation, and preventing supervision (McLeod, 1994: 113, fn. 96).
16. See my discussion on this subject in relation to the modernist interiors in the house of the art collector and patron of the Wiener Werkstätte Fritz Waerndorfer (Shapira 2006: 62–5, 76–82.)

17. In "Men's Fashion" (1898) Loos noted that given the fact that there are no sumptuary laws anymore and everyone has the right to dress like a king, one can measure the cultural level of a state through counting how many of its citizens actually take advantage of this fact. Loos is referring to the fact that the King of England, King Edward VII (1841–1910) became the paragon of men's fashion during the second half of the nineteenth century. (The celebrated Viennese tailor C.M. Frank traveled all the way to the King's health resort in Germany in order to take notes about his newest suits.)
18. George Bryan Brummell was an influential friend of George IV, who managed to give up the custom of the powdered wig, introduced long trousers, taught the people to wear clean underwear, and was a ruling instance in questions of taste.
19. McLeod refers to John Carl Flügel's famous book *The Psychology of Clothes* published in London in 1930.
20. Josef Salatsch left the firm before Loos became a regular client of this fashion salon in 1896.
21. In 1890, Hevesi, age forty-seven, son of the doctor of medicine Samuel Löwy and Marie nee Rottenstein, received the official right to change his family name from Löwy to Hevesi. Hevesi, who moved to Vienna fifteen years earlier, adopted his birth place Heves in Hungary as his family name. A few days later he converted to the Evangelist Reform church (Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv: Verlassenschaftsakt nach Ludwig Hevesi [A IV 22/10]).
22. Two doors in the hall elegantly covered with curtains on both sides were used both by the inhabitants and the visitors to the house, leading either back to the entrance hall or forward to the salon, dining room, etc. A third door near the fireplace niche in the lobby room was used by the staff and led to the kitchen. It was covered with heavy brocade (interview with the daughter of Leopold Goldman, Kitty Goldmann, in Santiago de Chile on February 16, 2001).
23. I thank Burkhardt Rukschcio for this observation.
24. I agree with Tag Gronberg's conclusion of her analysis of Loos's publicized photo of his wife's bedroom in Peter Altenberg's *Kunst* compared to the unpublished photo showing him dressed in black suit and Lina in a white loose-fitting dress in front of the fire place in their new apartment "... a closer reading of Loosian discourse reveals that modern subjectivities result not so much from the separation of apparent 'opposites', nor indeed from the transcendence of one by the other, of the feminine by the masculine (as postulated by Weininger); they involve rather an interdependence and interaction between the two" (Gronberg 2007: 118).
25. Loos noted at the end of his text accompanying his "Apartment Walking-Tours" that it was developed in the workshop

of Schmidt, following the instruction of Max Schmidt (Loos 1907).

26. Photo of Kitty Goldmann as a child climbing on the Egyptian stool c. 1922 (private collection).
27. In the introduction to their collected essays book *Orientalism and the Jews*, Ivan Davidson Kalmar and Derek J. Penslar suggested that even though the *Ostjuden* (East European Jews) were rejected by the Western Jews in times in typical orientalist terms: “nonetheless, they [*Ostjuden*] too could be the target of romantic orientalism (Kalmar and Penslar 2004: xix.)

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