

Cameron Heid  
History 133B  
Professor Marcuse  
18 March 2024

### **Sex, Love, and Moral Stains: Hugo Bettauer's "The Erotic Revolution"**

- Source of English translation: Hugo Bettauer, "The Erotic Revolution" (1924), in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, edited by Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg. © 1994 Regents of the University of California. Published by the University of California Press, pp. 698-700. Reprinted with permission of the University of California Press.

Source of original German text: Hugo Bettauer, "Die erotische Revolution," *Er und Sie. Wochenschrift für Lebenskultur und Erotik* 1 (1924), pp. 1-2.

[https://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=3880](https://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=3880)

- This source was found, according to the GHDI website article's headnote, "on the title page of the first edition of the magazine *Er und Sie. Wochenschrift für Lebenskultur und Erotik*," which was a weekly publication about sexual liberation and freedom by Hugo Bettauer that, in English, translates to *He and She. Weekly Magazine for Lifestyle and Eroticism*.
- A full copy of Hugo Bettauer's *Er und Sie* weeklies can be found digitally in German in the Austrian National Library.

Bettauer, Hugo. *Er und Sie Wochenschrift für Lebenskultur und Erotik. Hrsg. Hugo Bettauer* Wien: J. N. Vernay, 1924.

<http://data.onb.ac.at/imgk/AZ00275739SZ00285222SZ01331814>.

The Austrian author Maximilian Hugo Bettauer was born in Baden, Austria in 1872 to a middle-class Jewish family. He died in 1925 following being shot in his editorial office after an assassination attempt by dental assistant and national socialist Otto Rothstock.<sup>1</sup> Bettauer worked as a journalist between the cities of New York, Berlin, Munich, and Hamburg. He eventually obtained citizenship in the United States after being expelled from Hamburg and Berlin in the

---

<sup>1</sup> June J Hwang, "Alone in the City: Hugo Bettauer's *Er Und Sie*," *Seminar: A Journal of Germanic Studies (Toronto)* 47, no. 5, Project Muse (November 1, 2011): pg. 559.

early twentieth century for his critical writing on divisive social topics while working as a journalist. He often wrote about various contemporary social issues, especially following the end of World War I, speaking in favor of women's rights and freedom as well as sexual emancipation.<sup>2</sup> While Bettauer had published multiple books and articles as a journalist, he gained notability following the publication of his 1922 book entitled *Die Stadt ohne Juden* ("A City Without Jews"), which was a satirical criticism of growing antisemitic sentiments in Germany and Austria. Bettauer later went on to become the co-publisher of the Vienna magazine *Er und Sie: Wochenschrift für Lebenskultur und Erotik* (*He and She: Weekly Magazine for Lifestyle and Eroticism*), which was first released in February 1924 but was later continued in a different weekly publication, named *Bettauers Wochenschrift* (*Bettauer's Weekly*) after the first few issues had been repeatedly confiscated.<sup>3</sup> Bettauer eventually converted from Protestantism to Judaism and was often criticized for his social stances that went against Christian, conservative traditions, with *Er und Sie* being shut down after only 5 weeks of publication and his follow-up magazine *Bettauers Wochenschrift* being widely criticized as well despite amassing tens of thousands of readers for the divisive content it contained. Due to the perception that he was corrupting public morals as well as his staunch advocacy for the Jewish community, Bettauer's murder is largely regarded as one of the first instances of political violence by the Nazi party in Austria.

Various primary sources from the twentieth century related to the original reactions or responses to Bettauer's *Er und Sie* magazine exist solely in German and many are only available with access to European libraries. Bettauer's *Er und Sie* magazines were published once more as a bulk collection in a 2009 book by Melanie Hacker entitled *„Er und Sie. Wochenschrift für Lebenskultur und Erotik“: Hugo Bettauers Zeitschrift und die Sexualmoral der 1920er Jahre*, but copies of this book are only available in German and via access to the German National Library or through new copies priced over one hundred dollars. For this source exploration, direct sources of the original text will be extrapolated from the original German text of the *Er und Sie* weeklies provided by the Austrian National Library, the English source provided by the GHDI

---

<sup>2</sup> Lisa Silverman, 'Courts of Injustice: Four Trials, Three Murders, Two Jews', *Becoming Austrians: Jews and Culture between the World Wars* (Oxford Academic, 2012; online ed.), pg. 142.

<sup>3</sup> Murray G. Hall, "Bettauers "Erotische Revolution"," Personal Website of Dr. Murray G. Hall, n.d. (<http://personal.murrayhall.com/bettauers-erotische-revolution/>).

website, as well as text analysis from Hugo Bettauer's "Erotic Revolution" on a personal website by a professor of German literature at the University of Vienna named Dr. Murray G. Hall.

In "The Erotic Revolution" article provided by the GHDI database, Bettauer proposes that in spite of the various social contradictions and debates plaguing Germany in the mid-1920s, the erotic revolution is the most prominent. Unabashedly, Bettauer believes that this erotic revolution holds underlying questions revolving around women's sexual liberation and the societal shifts in the traditional, Christian role of German women amidst changing social tides and industrialization. Bettauer champions sexual freedom, especially among his female counterparts, and also proposes expanded human and civil rights for women who may be portrayed as sexual deviants.<sup>4</sup> By March 1924, *Er und Sie* was prohibited from being distributed to citizens under the age of 18 and it was not to be advertised in public areas as it was perceived to be indecent and pornographic. As previously mentioned, the *Er und Sie* publication only lasted for five weeks from February 14, 1924, to March 13, 1924, before the government attempted to indict Bettauer and shut down the publication due to the success it achieved with the public. Bettauer won his case, but regardless, the publication ceased and continued as *Bettauers Wochenschrift*, which lasted until 2 years after Bettauer's murder in 1927 under the guidance of his son.<sup>5</sup> The advice columns and advertisements, specifically, were two of the most important features across *Er und Sie* and *Bettauers Wochenschrift* as they allowed for anonymous, private discussions of various topics related to sex education in addition to relationship issues and social mobility within relationships. Beyond this, these publications also reported on a multitude of social issues including a lack of housing, racial discrimination, class and wealth disparities, as well as antisemitism.<sup>6</sup> Bettauer had been no stranger to censorship and was routinely met with antisemitic slurs, prohibitions on sales, and even public incitations of his "extermination" by National Socialist party members, such as by a man named Kaspar Hellering a month before his murder.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Hugo Bettauer, *Er und Sie Wochenschrift für Lebenskultur und Erotik*, Hrsg. Hugo Bettauer Wien: J. N. Vernay, 1924.

<sup>5</sup> Vasiliki Sakellariou, "The Representation of a Society in Distress: Hugo Bettauer's Novel *The Joyless Street* through its Filmic Adaptation" *Athens Journals, 18th Annual International Conference on History & Archaeology: From Ancient to Modern*, June 2020, pg. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Lisa Silverman, 'Courts of Injustice: Four Trials, Three Murders, Two Jews', *Becoming Austrians: Jews and Culture between the World Wars* (2012; online ed., Oxford Academic, 20 Sept. 2012), pg. 143.

<sup>7</sup> Murray Hall, *Der Fall Bettauer* (Vienna: Löcker, 1978), pg. 79; as cited in Eichner, "City Without Jews: Hugo Bettauer's Vienna," pg. 110.



### Annotated Bibliography in Chronological Order

Ignotus, Von Hugo. *Die Bühne*. "Bettauer - Eine Wiener Erscheinung." Startseite ANNO - Austrian Newspaper Online, March 26, 1925.

<https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno-plus?aid=bue&datum=1925&page=892&size=45>.

Six months following the assassination of Hugo Bettauer, this article was published in the German theater periodical newspaper, *Die Bühne*. The article was originally written by Ignotus after the discontinuation of Bettauer's *Er und Sie* periodical, but due to the moral scandal surrounding the newspaper, it was not published until after his assassination. Upon translating the content from German to English, the article detailed the impact Bettauer had on normalizing discussion of everyday German societal issues, especially concerning matters of sex and love. Largely acting as a commemoration of his work, Ignotus notes how Bettauer was a masterful writer who was able to sensually lure the everyday citizens of Germany and Austria into reading his magazine beyond the means of psychology.

Hall, Murray G. *Der Fall Bettauer*. Vienna: Löcker, 1978.

This book, by German Studies associate professor Murray G. Hall at the University of Vienna, details the circumstances regarding the assassination of Hugo Bettauer. Hall highlights how Bettauer was vanquished from society through an antisemitic hate campaign under the veil of public immorality by utilizing details from his murder trial as well as primary sources of how Bettauer's weaving of politics and taboo, public literature acted as an impetus in his murder.

Kaes, Anton, Martin Jay and Edward Dimendberg. *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*. Berkeley, University of California Press. 1994.

This is a collection of sources related to the Weimar Republic, in which the article "The Erotic Revolution" from Bettauer's *Er und Sie* weekly publication is included. Beyond listing the article text, the Sourcebook also lists background information on the life of Hugo Bettauer as well as his other publications beyond his weekly magazines.

"Aviso/Grüne: Enthüllung Einer Gedenktafel und ein Abend für Hugo Bettauer." OTS.at (Austria Press Agency-Originaltext-Service GmbH), June 17, 2002.

[https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS\\_20020617\\_OTSO064/avisogruene-enthuellung](https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20020617_OTSO064/avisogruene-enthuellung)

[-einer-gedenktafel-und-ein-abend-fuer-hugo-bettauer.](#)

This article details the establishment of a commemorative plaque for Hugo Bettauer, with the aid of Professor Murray G. Hall from the University of Vienna, outside of the editorial office in which he published his weekly magazine. The plaque lists information about how Bettauer was one of the first victims of the National Socialist Party of Germany, largely in relation to his progressive social views and the publication of his weekly magazine *Er und Sie*, which was dedicated to social development and eroticism.

Herzog, Hillary Hope. "Hugo Bettauer" In *Vienna Is Different: Jewish Writers in Austria from the Fin-de-Siècle to the Present*. New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2011, 142-147.

[https://doi.org/10.1515/9780857451828-027.](https://doi.org/10.1515/9780857451828-027)

Herzog discusses Hugo Bettauer and his publications in relation to the antisemitism he faced as a writer and how this hate intensified with his public publications regarding sexual emancipation. Beyond this, Herzog also lists a variety of biographical information about Bettauer and provides more depth on how Bettauer directly criticized how antisemitism was utilized as a tool to economically, socially, and politically dismantle the Jewish community in Vienna.

Hwang, June J. "Alone in the City: Hugo Bettauer's *Er und Sie*." *Seminar: A Journal of Germanic Studies (Toronto)* 47, no. 5, Project Muse (November 1, 2011): 559–577.

[https://doi.org/10.1353/smr.2011.0047.](https://doi.org/10.1353/smr.2011.0047)

This source analyzes why Bettauer held progressive views and positions on certain social issues while comparing his other publications to his *Er und Sie* publication. Hwang also details the importance of the publication to German society and how it aided in shifting perceptions of sexuality, even though his public outcries for sexual freedom eventually costing him his life.

Silverman, Lisa. 'Courts of Injustice: Four Trials, Three Murders, Two Jews', *Becoming Austrians: Jews and Culture between the World Wars* (Oxford Academic, 2012; online ed.). [https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199794843.003.0001.](https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199794843.003.0001)

This source discusses the specific philosophy of Bettauer, citing "The Erotic Revolution" and how it led to Bettauer's assassination, as he was directly debating nationalist beliefs. Silverman notes how Bettauer's critics cast him aside as immoral and placed him under

the archetype of a Jewish vendor of public pornography who was responsible for the decay of the Aryan “race.”

McEwen, Britta. *Sexual Knowledge: Feeling, Fact, and Social Reform in Vienna, 1900-1934*. Berghahn Books. 2012. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qdfjh>.

Being that Bettauer was an Austrian author, “The Erotic Revolution” is utilized to discuss sexuality, gender, and social reform within Vienna as he was a prominent voice in otherwise taboo social topics of femininity and sexuality. McEwen highlights how Bettauer championed the emancipation of women across multiple publications and sought to advance women’s rights amid silencing from the government and certain portions of the Austrian and German public.

McEwen, Britta. “Emotional Expression and the Construction of Heterosexuality: Hugo Bettauer’s Viennese Advice Columns.” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 25, no. 1 (2016): 114–36. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24616619>.

McEwen discusses how Bettauer’s advice columns in his weekly magazines allowed civilians to express concerns on sexual or erotic topics that were widely criticized and policed. These advice columns gave agency to individuals who had no safe space to discuss sexual, taboo issues and they also created a pathway toward ending the stigmatization of sexual freedom and aided in dismantling the debilitating mores that upheld traditional, conservative values of gender and sex.

Cahoon, Kaleb. “The Persecution of Homosexuals in Nazi Germany,” Radford University. May 1, 2017, <https://www.radford.edu/content/dam/colleges/chbs/history/Cahoon.pdf>.

Bettauer was an early champion for homosexual rights and impunity, so “The Erotic Revolution” is utilized in Cahoon’s research thesis as an early voice for sexual freedom and to set a context for debates over sexuality in 1920s Germany that led to the persecution of homosexuals by the Nazi Party.

Schiele, Egon. “Witness of Her Era: Germaine Krull and the Expression of the Neue Frau Between 1919 and 1938.” School of the Art Institute of Chicago Digital Collections. June 22, 2019. <https://digitalcollections.saic.edu/islandora/object/islandora%3A105666>.

This article is a graduate student thesis from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago that discusses various considerations leading to the German public discourse on sexuality.

Bettauer is utilized as a leading voice in relation to sexual dynamics and the divide in German private and public life on sexuality.

Sakellariou, Vasiliki. "The Representation of a Society in Distress: Hugo Bettauer's Novel *The Joyless Street* through its Filmic Adaptation" *Athens Journals, 18th Annual International Conference on History & Archaeology: From Ancient to Modern*. June 2020.

<https://www.athensjournals.gr/reviews/2020-3703-AJHA-LIT.pdf>

This article details how Bettauer's *Er und Sie* publication stood out in 1920s Germany and Austria as a divisive conversation about social taboos. As one of the few Austrian-German authors in the 1920s publicly discussing and acknowledging sexuality and various social ills, Vasiliki exhibits how Bettauer was able to build a large following through his interactions with the general public regarding the breaking of mores.

Weston, Nathaniel Parker. "Memoirs in Miniature: CM/1 Forms and Fragmentary Understandings of the Holocaust" *Humanities* 10, no. 1: 22. Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute. January 28, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.3390/h10010022>.

This source details Bettauer's wife's experience with the Holocaust and her husband's murder through a post-WWII Care and Maintenance form. Bettauer's "The Erotic Revolution" article is mentioned to detail his social positions and beliefs that put him in direct conflict with the German nationalists and Nazi party, which led to national socialist radicals starting a hate campaign against him that ultimately begot his assassination.

Davis, Christian S. "Hugo Bettauer, Feminism, and the Non-White World in Interwar Vienna." *Journal of Austrian Studies* 56, no. 2 (2023): 75-86.

<https://doi.org/10.1353/oas.2023.0026>.

Davis's article follows specific interactions within the advice columns in Hugo Bettauer's weekly publications and how they can be utilized to extrapolate information about the racial and gender relations in 1920s Germany and Austria. Davis notes that while Bettauer's *Er und Sie* magazine dealt mainly with issues regarding gender and sexuality, his other publications such as *Bettauers Wochenschrift: Probleme des Lebens* (*Bettauer's Weekly: Problems of Life*) detailed problems of everyday life. Davis also details how his discussion of taboo subject matters eventually caused outrage from conservative figures and how he was painted as a Jew to legitimize his murder.