

“We might get rich, but we’ll never be refined ... “

*A Three-Hundred Year Family Chronicle in Quotations
in English with the Original German Text.*

Friedrich Breier

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Last page: Photographs from top down:

Isidor Breier, Marie Ringl and Maria Breier, nee Ringl

Karl Ringl

Foreword to the Bilingual Edition

Very soon after the publication of the book „Reich können wir noch werden,...“ the following question arrived at my desk:

„Do you have an English translation of the text?“

And I have to confess, that I felt unable to provide an English Edition. This question came from a gentlemen whose family derives from Central Europe and shares a similar history to mine.

So I shared this issue with the team of Town Media Vienna. These authors were not only willing to translate the text but to 'transform' it into English, which could be understood in the Anglo American Readership as well.

Therefore, my gratitude goes to Ryan Powell and his team for finding the right „tone“ and to Steve Patriarca who helped me with the understanding in a stimulating way.

If this little book of family 'Commonplaces' helps illuminate a small corner of a cultural history then the aim of this text is more than achieved. If it were to stimulate renewed interest in the art of the Commonplace Book then it will have been surpassed!

Vienna, December 2021

About this book

This little book is the result of many felicitous dialogues and just as many infelicitous events, which have given rise to some sayings and citations worthy of remark. Acting as witness to times of need, exile, war, and even times of peace, they have accompanied four generations. Many of these sayings became modes of understanding, others even became modes of conduct. In order to preserve them for successive generations, they have been gathered here, attributed where possible, and preserved for posterity. If not otherwise noted, quotations designated with "21" come from the author. The quotations noted as "trends" and "what cheers you up?" come from Dr. Jutta Breier-Maly.

Whence - wither?

Ungarschitz, now part of the Czech Republic, Drosendorf in the Waldviertel region of Lower Austria, Herzogenaurach in Bavaria, and Vienna: these are the birth places of my grandparents.

They came to Vienna by their professions and in the confusions brought about by the wars, thus becoming scions of a typical "Austrian family". One grandfather, born in 1880, was the proprietor of a Viennese café in Nuremberg, the "White Tower Café", and the "Four Seasons Hotel" in Amberg in the Bavarian Upper Palatinate. The other grandfather, born in 1899, was the proprietor of a butcher's shop in the Viennese suburb of Sievering and managed a wine tavern for a short time in that suburb's Painters' Corner.

This book records the things that these grandfathers, their family members, and perhaps their friends too, might have heard. Incomplete but painstakingly reproduced here, with "19, 20, 21" marking the respective centuries to which they correspond. Thus, the citations from the nineteenth century correspond to my grandfathers' generation; those from the twentieth, to my father's; and the twentieth-first, my own. The "RING L" edition contains both my grandfather's

craftsman insignia as well as a rebus puzzle in the form of a ring and the letter “L”.

Vienna, December 2019

Acknowledgments

I want to thank my siblings Hilde and Franz for their contributions to several of the quotations contained here.

My particular thanks goes to Professor Gotthard Fellerer, an “interart” artist from Wiener Neustadt and editor of the journal BravDa, for his encouragement, his inspiration, and for making this work possible, as well as for his vibrant contributions that resist the cultural flattening of Central Europe.

Disclaimer

Some of these quotations stem from literary sources, many of which are not noted here.

The author has taken especial care to identify the sources, when possible. He is thankful for any additional references provided by readers.

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Preface

Were one to attempt to construct a simple typology of the broad spectrum of autobiographical genres, several forms would immediately stand out: to begin, the diary; second, the chronicle and assorted memorabilia; third, the autobiography, i.e. the biography of the self or self-confessions; and finally, memoirs. Since the sixteenth century, you can also find these in some or other form of combination, cf. Georg Misch's monograph A History of the Autobiography, 4 Volumes, 4th Edition. Frankfurt am Main, 1976.

This book is unique among its kind. It contains a variety of citations from a family, collected over three hundred years and transmitted by members from its different generations, providing a special glimpse into its particular linguistic customs. Although it contains the essential components of the family chronicle, at its core, the conventional family chronicle is a chronological narration of a family history. For more see: Maria Simon, Birgit Dombeck, Family Chronicles as Modes of Genealogical Representation, in: Genealogy, 47./48. Issue, 1998/99. There are even instruction guides on how to put together a family chronicle, highlighting its popularity as a genre.

What is addressed and documented here, on the other hand, is a vocabulary, which is not only of particular but rather

also of general significance. The reader will recognize him or herself, as well as his or her family in these pages – which is a subject of general interest beyond this book. If I am correct, the autobiographical genre has not yet witnessed or featured such a specimen.

Alfred Kohler, Vienna

Professor Dr. Alfred Kohler

Professor of Modern History, University of Vienna. 2004 – 2006, Dean of Historical and Cultural Studies at the University of Vienna.

Antisemitismus

Spätestens bei Adam und Eva
hört sich der Antisemitismus auf.

21.

Antisemitism

*Antisemitism should have stopped
at the latest with Adam and Eve.*

21.

Aufrichtige Anteilnahme

Alle schreiben „aufrichtige Anteilnahme“:
wer schreibt einmal „unaufrichtige Anteilnahme“
bei der Kondolenz?

Sincere Condolences

*Everyone writes “sincere”:
Who will one day write “insincere”
in a letter of condolence?*

21.

Bank und Versicherung

Wenn man über die Schwelle einer
Bank oder Versicherung geht,
ist man schon der Betrogene.

Bank or Insurance Office

*The moment you cross the doorstep
of a bank or an insurance office
you are the one being cheated.*

19.

Bei bösen Vermutungen

Dem Reinen ist alles Rein.

Regarding Evil Apprehensions

For the pure of heart, all things are pure

20.

Bevor ich das tue..

Bevor ich das tue,
scheiss' ich mir lieber in das Halstuch.

Before I'd do that..

*Before I'd do that,
I'd rather shit in my own scarf.*

19.

Börse

Wenn wir über die Börse
schreiben würden: Glücksspiel.

Dann wäre das ehrlich.

Damit wird das Glücksspiel auch deklariert.

Stock Market

If we referred

to the stock market as a lottery.

That would at least be honest.

For then the lottery would be declared.

21.

Compagnon

Wenn es einen Compagnon gibt,
bleibt der immer nur der „Co.“, aber nicht mehr.

Business Partner

*An accompanist will never be anything more
than an accompanist.*

20.

Courage und Angst

Früher war das stärkste Motiv in der
Medizin die Courage;
heute ist es die Angst.

Courage and Fear

*The medical profession
used to be guided by courage;
today it's guided by fear.*

21.

Darben

Gerne will ich darben,
wenn Du nur hast genug.

Starve

*I'd gladly starve,
if you only have enough.*

20.