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## Introduction

Paul Buchholz

Journal of Austrian Studies, Volume 46, Number 1, Spring 2013, pp.  
ix-xxii (Article)

Published by University of Nebraska Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/oas.2013.0008>



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# Introduction

Paul Buchholz

The scholarship collected in this issue was first presented in October 2010 at the German Studies Association Conference in Oakland, California. These articles address how two interrelated strands of oppositional literary writing, satire and polemic, circulated within Austrian culture of the twentieth century. This pairing of focal points has created a fascinating set of connections between different cultural and political moments of Austrian history, from the last days of the Habsburg empire during World War I to the public debates that marked the turn of the millennium in the Second Republic. Karl Kraus, who bore witness to the beginnings of mass media, is here considered alongside Thomas Bernhard, Robert Menasse, and Josef Haslinger, each of whose literary careers has been crucially integrated into the network of the mass media. The discussions of their work in this issue trace the fascinating paths taken by negative writing, whether humorous or straightforwardly acerbic, through modern Austria. Before summarizing the insights and critical interventions of each article, I will attempt to sketch out a few of the theoretical and literary-historical concerns suggested by the current issue of the *Journal of Austrian Studies*.

From the standpoint of literary theory, satire and polemic stand as distinct modes of writing not only because of a common negative impulse but also because of their indexical nature. Both modes, by definition, attack something outside themselves. They purport to point out, or index, what is wrong in the social world, or at least with another work of literature. Their words are supposed to reach beyond the page or the stage through ridicule, parody, hyperbole and insult. Therefore, in discussing satire and polemic, the question of reference—in particular the question of the relation between literary language and the social world—becomes especially relevant. Thus, while satire and polemic are certainly “ancient” linguistic modes, they are also well suited

for contemplating pressing concerns of European literary modernism, insofar as modernism was an epoch when the autonomy of artworks received special scrutiny. It could be argued that much modernist Austrian literature, echoing the *Sprachkritik* of the *fin de siècle*, experimented with polemic and satire not only to attack the world but also to engage critically and emphatically with the problems of linguistic reference and artistic autonomy. Such issues took on a particular urgency in Austrian postwar literature, as shown by Bianca Theisen in her remarkable 2003 monograph *Silenced Facts: Media Montages in Contemporary Austrian Literature*. According to Theisen, an aggregate of Austrian writers (particularly since the 1950s) has been consistently and emphatically concerned with precisely this question of how a text can index an unspoken social and historical reality beyond itself. The thesis of *Silenced Facts* is that modern Austrian writers—from the postwar Vienna Group to Thomas Bernhard, Peter Rosei, Peter Handke, and Gerhard Roth—have forged a tradition of experimental literature that reflects upon its own act of indication as its central concern. *Silenced Facts* is primarily concerned with postwar literature that reflects upon the role of different media in shaping and silencing perception of reality in a post-fascist social world. The monograph is not primarily concerned with satire, but it can be productively connected to the work of scholars who have stressed that satire is an important site for meta-linguistic self-reflexivity. Jeanne Benay and Gerald Stieg have suggested that satirical works of twentieth-century Austria are characterized by a merging of self-reflexive aesthetic experimentation with pre-twentieth-century traditions of the comic. The Vienna Group, as Benay and Stieg write, was exemplary in presenting a “Verschmelzung avantgardistischer Intentionen und Techniken mit der unverwüstlichen Komik des alten Hanswurst” (xiii). If we read Theisen’s argument in conjunction with the insights of Benay and Stieg, we can hypothesize that satirical and polemical writing of the postwar era was not only meant as unmediated social critique but was also concerned with the different ways in which the boundaries between text and world can be reconfigured or torn down, in order to arrive at new truths about social life. An example of such writing can be found in Peter Handke’s experimental dramatic works of the 1960s.

Peter Handke experimented with textual boundaries in the (satirical and polemical) play *Publikumsbeschimpfung*, first performed in 1966 in Frankfurt. This play is built upon the conceit that, by establishing an extremely polemical tone on the stage, it may be possible for a dramatic text to redefine the

boundaries of art and for getting a new relation to the audience. Shortly before the play's climax, in which an array of insulting and politically loaded names are heaped onto the audience, the players on stage explain how they intend to break down the line separating themselves from those watching and listening in the chairs below: "Indem wir beschimpfen, können wir unmittelbar werden. Wir können einen Funken überspringen lassen. Wir können den Spielraum zerstören. Wir können eine Wand niederreißen. Wir können Sie beachten" (44). Words of insult are said to do a great deal of work here: they create an immediacy that allows a real transfer of energy to the audience, but they also invert the conventional spatial arrangement of staging and witnessing upon which dramatic illusion depends. *Publikumsbeschimpfung* is then, on the one hand, an experimental work that reflects on the role of language in shaping reality, anticipating the audacious *Sprachkritik* of Handke's 1967 play *Kaspar*. At the same time, *Publikumsbeschimpfung* cannot be reduced to a humorless aesthetic experiment performed at the expense of its audience. The directness of the insults hurled out by actors (supposedly unmediated attack on the audience) is matched by brief flashes of indirect satire that point elsewhere (or at least, not to the audience in general). The players' insults are, in fact, preceded by a hyperbolic slew of praise, which reads very much like a parody of newspaper theater reviews: "Ihr habt unvergessliche Szenen geliefert. [...] Euer Spiel war von seltenem Adel. [...] Ihr wart unnachahmlich" (44–45). Such praise is heaped at length and is fairly hilarious (in this writer's opinion) for pointing out the conventions of a certain kind of feuilleton writing. This ironic praise is, arguably, the most satirical (as opposed to polemical) moment of *Publikumsbeschimpfung*. The addressee of the comical compliments is supposedly the audience, but the indirect target of the *Beschimpfung* lies elsewhere. The target of this passage, as satire, is the press that will inevitably critique or praise Handke's play in the days following opening night. In these moments, the *Publikum* targeted is an institutionalized audience (theater criticism) that claims a degree of authority in viewing and reviewing the play. Such critics are not targeted directly by name but satirized through sly imitation.

With its multiple outside reference points, *Publikumsbeschimpfung* can help us put a finer point on the distinction between satirical and polemical modes of writing. Polemic aims to reach *straight* out into the world and attack, whereas satire attacks indirectly, by way of a detour. This way of distinguishing satire and polemic, based on the relative directness of the attack, was ad-

vanced by Sigurd Paul Scheichl in his introduction to the volume *Von Qualtinger bis Bernhard: Satire und Satiriker in Österreich seit 1945*. Here Scheichl lays out a useful framework for the comparative study of the two modes. Scheichl lists three core characteristics of satire, which he sees not as a genre but as an “attitude” that may be more or less manifest in a literary text. First, and most importantly, satire makes an “attack” on something real and present out in the world (8). Second, satire is normative (9). It ridicules based on a “norm” that the satirist would like to uphold. Third, satire is “indirect,” ridiculing not through direct insult but through sarcasm, exaggeration, and other estranging forms of language (9). As an aside, Scheichl considers where polemic might fit into this schema: “Obwohl die—schlecht definierte—Polemik ebenfalls mit Mitteln der Indirektheit arbeitet, ist wahrscheinlich doch im unterschiedlichen Ausmaß von Direktheit oder Indirektheit zwischen Polemik und Satire zu suchen” (9). Handke’s play, as a significant literary experiment in postwar Austrian writing, helps to showcase the utility of Scheichl’s distinction. In reading the articles published in this issue of the *Journal of Austrian Studies*, it can be interesting to use this scale of directness to compare the cases labeled as “satire” (Kraus, Haslinger, Menasse) with those labeled as “polemic” (Bernhard, in various works).

Scheichl not only provides a useful idea for how these satires and polemics relate as modes, he also underscores a gap, as of the time of writing in the late 1990s, in scholarly work on literary polemic, saying it is “badly defined” (9). Since then, several interesting works have in fact been published in the United States and Europe, which have provided further reflection on how polemic could be defined and appreciated as an art form akin to satire. Stefan Straub in 2004 published the monograph *Der Polemiker Karl Kraus: Drei Fallstudien*. Straub proceeds from the definition given by the brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, which requires that polemic have a particular dramatic setup based around a metaphor of combat. Polemic, Straub writes, is the art of fencing-with-words, suggesting again that polemic involves two bodies or characters facing off, displaying their combative skill. Jane Gallop, also in 2004, likened contemporary polemic to medieval allegorical dialogue, as “a way of dramatizing intellectual problems, of working out arguments by means of character” (2). In both cases, literary polemic involves the establishment of a combative character who appears to rail directly against an opponent in a supposedly fatal struggle. These scholars’ works have helped to show how polemic involves a particular dramatization of a direct attack, where the

stakes are high and where the skill of an author or speaker is put on display. And while polemic may remain today a “badly defined” literary mode, the current issue of the *Journal of Austrian Studies* suggests numerous critical insights that may be gained by studying it as a literary mode that engages in a complex dialogue with the social world. Polemic is by no means primarily or only literary, but insofar as it appears in literature, it helps us better understand the interconnections of literature, politics, and the social field.

Unlike polemic, satire (as both a distinct genre and as a literary epiphenomenon) has attracted wide scholarly attention within Austrian studies, and the articles here build on a field of scholarship that has burgeoned since the 1990s. The most comprehensive and literary history of Austrian satire is a set of four volumes published around the turn of the millennium, assembled by a multidisciplinary group of scholars working in France and Austria.<sup>1</sup> Of these collections, the 2002 book *Österreich (1945–2000): Land der Satire* most clearly overlaps with the epochal focus of this issue of the *Journal of Austrian Studies*, in which the 1980s and 1990s are central. Three of the articles collected here would seem to engage critically with this speculation about the origins of modern Austrian satire, made by editors Gerald Stieg and Jeanne Benay in their foreword of their book: “Es ist, als entspräche der Installierung eines über Konsens und Vergessen errichteten politischen Systems von äusserster Friedfertigkeit und Konfliktscheu [...] eine beständige literarische und künstlerische Rebellion, der das Ja immer schwerer und verdächtiger wurde” (xiv). It would appear that there is something about the Second Republic that got the literary bile flowing with unusual intensity, in comparison to other European nation-states; Stieg and Benay put forth this speculation without emphatically undersigning it, implying that it merits further scrutiny. It is precisely this speculation of an Austrian literary exceptionalism that is tested and reframed over the course of the current issue of the *Journal of Austrian Studies*. Several of the articles collected in this issue engage with the different possible causal links between the literary discontent of Austrian writers in recent decades and the post war Austrian political system. The articles in this issue also connect productively to the ideas presented in Gerald Stieg’s essay in *Das Land der Satire*, which posits a longer tradition of “total satire” in Austria from Johann Nestroy through Karl Kraus to Thomas Bernhard. In this broader historical view of Austrian satire, Stieg detects a tendency for Austrian satire to attack not just particular practices and people but also to negate the world totally from a transcendental perspective. In Stieg’s view, many notable Aus-

trian satirists are precisely *not* drawing on concrete specifics of the current social and political world but in fact are speaking from the vantage point of a negative theology, where all human experience boils down to injury and absurdity. Ari Linden's essay in this issue critically connects back to this issue of "transcendental negativity" in Austrian satire; Linden shows how Karl Kraus did, in fact, base his satirical texts upon an emphatic notion of nature existing beyond human society. But for Kraus, "nature" was a complex concept. In Linden's article, nature is shown to be the bearer of an absolute negativity that fuels satirical writing because of its distinctly nonlinguistic existence. In the other three articles in this issue of the *Journal of Austrian Studies*, this negativity tied to nonhuman nature is supplanted with particular forms of social and political negativity. But what all of the articles have in common is that each one outlines a distinct model of how satirical and polemical writing indexes, and circulates within, the social field of modern Austria. The functioning of reference, whether transcendently or within culture, is a key concern in each case. The boundaries between literary work and the world beyond are negotiated in intriguing and divergent ways. To capture the complexity of the arguments put forth in this issue, I will outline how each contributor conceives of the circulation of satirical and polemical language—both within the field of literature and within the public spheres of twentieth-century Austria in its many guises.

Ari Linden begins the issue with a discussion of the most notable Viennese satirist of the twentieth century in "Quoting the Language of Nature in Karl Kraus's Satires." Of the four articles collected here, Linden's is the one most centrally concerned with defining satire as a distinct literary genre. For Linden, this genre has its own particular set of textual devices as well as a special relationship to an outside referent, since satire needs to ridicule something "out there" in the world in order to work. Through Linden's discussion, Karl Kraus emerges as a unique satirist because of a particular philosophy of language and nature. This philosophical bearing, Linden argues, is key to understanding the peculiar workings of Kraus's satire, since Kraus advances very particular ideas about where Kraus's satire comes from, what it is capable of doing, and on whose behalf it is done. Kraus attacks his opponents as a judge who speaks in the name of a particular kind of justice, but what is the grounding for this justice? Linden aims to answer this question by showing how Kraus's metaphysics of language informs his vision of the satirist who doles out a particular kind of justice within the sphere of modern journalism: a justice on behalf of nature.

Kraus's practices of attacking his opponents through direct quotation have been discussed at length in scholarship (see, for instance, Straub). Linden introduces an intriguing new element into this discussion by arguing that there was a common philosophical ground between Kraus's citation practices and Walter Benjamin's philosophy of language. Linden explicates Kraus's implicit understanding of language/nature by adducing elements of Benjamin's theory of nature as being essentially speechless. Kraus mirrors Benjamin's thoughts in that he sees the imposition of language onto nature as a lamentable form of violence that must be punished as a crime. Journalism, the primary object of Kraus's satire, is just such a crime. As an industrially operated system that converts trees into newspapers, extending the dominance of human society over nature, journalism literally forces language onto nature without (Kraus argues) being worthy of it. Linden goes on to consider several compelling passages from Kraus's writings in which nature functions as the engine of satire; Kraus speaks *against* those parties who would force nature to speak without being worthy of it and himself takes up the ethical task of speaking on behalf of nature. Linden argues not that this satire-on-behalf-of-nature is an essentially conservative attempt to "naturalize" human legal forms but rather that it is part of a sophisticated ethical commitment that comprises the most human aspect of Kraus's writings. One compelling example is a text Kraus wrote on behalf of Rosa Luxemburg, where he defends her declaration of pacifism written in prison and speaks against the violence being done, during the Great War, to humans and animals alike. Kraus is able to attack, and make fun of, Luxemburg's critics by making an appeal to nature. As Linden shows, this connection of critical satire to the category of nature is not incidental but profoundly productive. In fact, in Linden's reading, we can recognize Kraus as an unexpected predecessor of contemporary ecocriticism, a field that is just now gaining recognition within Euro-American letters.

Linden's article is the sole contribution that engages with "Austrian literature" created before the founding of the Second Republic. The next three articles are primarily concerned with texts written and performed in the 1980s and 1990s. However, Linden's article establishes a link between the subsequent entries by opening up a discussion of literature and its referents. Satirical and polemical language must have an outside referent, it must point to the thing that it attacks and establish the reality of that thing that is attacked (be it a person, a practice, an institution, or a historical fact). The subsequent contributions by Jakob Norberg, Jack Davis, and Anna Souchuk bear out this thought.



Each article suggests that modern satirical or polemical literary works do not “only” attack some thing out in the social field; they also contain, in miniature, an articulation of the social field. The literary works studied by Norberg, Davis, and Souchuk are never just autonomous, neatly bounded texts; they conjure up an image of the social world in which they intervene. Moreover, they do so in strikingly different ways. First, Norberg shows how a novel by Thomas Bernhard posits a model of Austrian society based around the cultural institution of the museum. Next, Davis writes about how a play by the same author posits a model of Austrian society based around an organism with an immune system. Finally, Souchuk examines novels by two contemporary writers that posit a model of Austrian society as a field of contested, commodified space that is endowed with meaning in a complex conflict between political actors and economic interests (particularly those of the tourist industry). Norberg, Davis, and Souchuk each study literary works that purport to “attack” Austrian society. At the same time, their articles are devoted in large part to explicating the social and theoretical frameworks that make such attacks possible. In this sense they work productively alongside Linden’s contribution, which showed that Kraus’s satirical attacks work in conjunction with very particular definitions of both human language and nonhuman nature.

Jakob Norberg’s article “On Display: Conditions of Critique in Austria” takes as its point of departure the idea that Austrian writers of the twentieth century, more than in other modern nation-states, have thrived on a discourse radically disavowing and detesting their home nation. Thomas Bernhard, Elfriede Jelinek, and Peter Handke serve as the prime examples of this literary-political complex. To be a serious and prominent Austrian writer, Norberg shows, often means to pronounce a hatred of Austria, both as a public intellectual and through the medium of literature. Why is this the case? Norberg’s essay aims to answer this question by establishing some distance to those approaches that would try to explain how Austrian political history, and contemporary Austrian civil society, have been worse than other nations. This may be the case, Norberg writes, but it does not explain why literary legitimacy is continually associated with Austria-hating. Rather, Norberg argues, it is necessary to consider what “infrastructure of critique” these writers are embedded within. What is the institutional framework that makes it possible for these writers to voice such contemptuous critiques of the nation? First Norberg considers the answer provided by prominent public intellectuals such as Robert Menasse. According to such writers, real dissent has historically been

banished from the world of postwar parliamentary politics in Austria, so that literary writing becomes the only venue for shattering the facade of consensus that has been tightly stitched together by the political authorities and media culture. Norberg finds this answer unsatisfactory, not least because it is recognizable as a self-serving legitimization of intellectuals who want to show how politically indispensable they are in a country supposedly founded upon repressed violence of the past and present.

After problematizing this line of argument, Norberg's inquiry takes him away from the explicit self-justifications of Austrian public intellectuals and seeks a fascinating answer within one of the last and most famous novels of Thomas Bernhard, *Alte Meister* from 1985, which recounts the conversations of misanthropic intellectuals within the *Kunsthistorisches Museum* in Vienna. Norberg combines a close reading of Bernhard's text with an account of institutional power influenced by Michel Foucault. *Alte Meister*, Norberg argues, models in miniature the social position of literary writing within postwar Austrian society. Both the characters in that novel and Austrian writers such as Bernhard enter a field of cultural production and consumption that is ruled by the logic of the museum. The museum is the state's means of institutionalizing art in order to legitimize its authority. This institutional structure is preserved and reproduced through curatorial practices of display and criticism. The significance of these practices is not limited to the interior of the museum space, as Norberg argues that the museum was paradigmatic for Austrian cultural institutions and for state governance of the Second Republic in general. Thus, the act of "hating Austria" is not essentially subversive but essential to the self-reproduction of the state apparatus. Both Bernhard himself and his fictional characters faithfully play their roles as agents of institutional power in that they repeatedly and emphatically engage within the act of extreme criticism.

Norberg's article aims to reframe the discussion of polemical and satirical literature as a means of attacking Austria, suggesting instead that such polemics actively participate in the self-reproducing work of art as a state institution. In other words, Norberg's inquiry points to a grand irony that permeates both critical writing on Austria and the institutional apparatus of the state. Norberg paves the way for a fascinating re-reading of Thomas Bernhard, one that reframes the common notion that Bernhard's prose is politically and epistemologically "radical."

In his article "Pathogenic Polemics: *Heldenplatz* and the 'Bernhard Virus,'" Jack Davis provides another account of how literary polemics against

Austria might function as part of a larger autopoietic (self-producing) social system. Like Norberg, Davis focuses on Thomas Bernhard as a national poet in the negative, whose writings shed light on Austrian crises of self-understanding. But whereas Norberg uses the concept of the cultural *institution* to understand the workings of the Austrian public sphere, Davis examines how this same public sphere is articulated (by Bernhard and many others) through the historically loaded concept of the *organism*. Davis shows how the extended metaphor of the nation as a (fragile, illness-prone) organism is conjured up by Bernhard's writings. Following the logic of this metaphor, Davis shows how Bernhard's language has appeared as both an infection and immunization of Austrian society. Polemical literary language, here, again extends its field of concern far beyond the bounds of *Belletristik* and is interpreted alongside a theorization of the social realm.

Davis begins his discussion by showing how Bernhard's polemical Austria-criticism was virulent in the strongest possible sense, because Bernhard's works, along with their academic and medial reception, have replicated a logic of pathology. In a comprehensive overview of Bernhard scholarship, Davis shows how often critics have detected an infectious quality of Bernhard's prose, as literary, journalistic, and academic writers display a proclivity to imitate Bernhard. Thus, Bernhard's works appear capable of "replicating" themselves virally. The viral phenomenon is at work within Bernhard's own narratives, which so often revolve around the overwhelming intellectual influence of a particular dominating male character on susceptible listeners. But, as Davis shows in a reading of the French novelist Hervé Guibert, this fear of infection by the "Bernhard virus" permeated European intellectual culture of the late twentieth century. Following this discussion of the "Bernhard virus," Davis shows how the play *Heldenplatz* from 1988, along with its attendant scandal in the Austrian public sphere, served as a flashpoint in the discourse of pathology that has surrounded Bernhard's works. Davis argues that *Heldenplatz* entered the Austrian public sphere as an immunization for a nation suffering from a suppressed fascist past. The play itself restages, in an attenuated and absurd form, the violence of National Socialist rhetoric. The enraged reception of the press and politicians, by extension of this metaphor, constituted a kind of immune reaction to Bernhard's virulent and violent speech; Bernhard was castigated and condemned with a similar measure of hate speech. Davis thus shows that Bernhard himself, along with significant voices in the Austrian media and government, approached *Heldenplatz* through a logic of pathology.

Like Norberg, Davis questions whether Bernhard's polemics can thereby said to be truly subversive, since their virulent language appears once again an extension of a discourse of national self-reproduction. In Davis's reading, the idea of a subversive Bernhard appears particularly suspicious because, as Davis shows, it reproduces an ideology of the nation as a living body that was so emphatically embraced by National Socialism in its eugenic practices and rhetoric. Norberg and Davis, through contrasting interpretive frameworks, each argue that the strongly polemical and satirical aspects of Bernhard's works must be studied alongside the social framework that makes their "scandalized" reception possible. One of the most interesting questions that arises in the wake of these articles is how these specifically Austrian frameworks of reception are related to the West German literary and political cultures where Bernhard's language also exerted a considerable influence.

Concluding the issue, Anna Souchuk investigates contemporary forms of Austrian satire in "Alles Ist Unter der Oberfläche Noch Lebendig: Penetrating the *Schöner Schein* through Satire in Josef Haslinger's *Opernball* and Robert Menasse's *Schubumkehr*." In Souchuk's article, satire is discussed as a properly critical genre that undoes the misleading facades that have been placed over Austrian urban space through a collusion of the state's mythmaking and private enterprise. Novels by Haslinger and Menasse engage critically with the ways in which Austria has been presented, both by the state and by the tourist industry, as a beautiful land rich with cultural and intellectual heritage. In Austria, Souchuk shows, urban space is performed. Recalling Norberg's discussion of the museum as the model for Austrian postwar society, Souchuk discusses in particular the model of the "living history" or "open air" museum has served as a model for the self-presentation of the Austrian nation. As such, Austrian space is caught in a particularly mobile and broadly encompassing form of commodification. The logic of the open air museum makes virtually any space into a potentially consumable product for tourism—and, at the same time, for an apolitical and uncritical aesthetic enjoyment that ignores social inequality. Haslinger and Menasse respond to this ubiquitous performance of space by performing *ad absurdum* the Austrian performance of space in their novels *Opernball* and *Schubumkehr*. Whereas Haslinger's novel focuses on the inauthentic urban space of contemporary Vienna, Menasse's novel parodies the commodification of space in the provinces, in the eastern border regions of Austria where a certain strain of Habsburg nostalgia has taken hold. In reading both novels, Souchuk draws on two contemporary cul-

tural and political theorists, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and David Harvey, whose work illuminates the late-twentieth-century politics of space that is addressed in each novel. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett theorizes how the display of heritage has been transformed through the expansion of market-driven tourism. Souchuk shows how this transformation of display practices informs that particular consumerist bearing of national self-representation that is satirized in each novel. But, as Souchuk shows, Haslinger and Menasse are not only critiquing this commodification of national identity, their satirical novels also point to the unjust rezoning and reshaping of inhabited space that is caused by this commodification. In discussing the adverse effects of touristic display, Souchuk cites the work of Harvey, who theorizes the contemporary transformation of postindustrial urban space from a Marxist perspective. The consumerist fantasies instilled by television spectacles and museum gift shops are not only problematic because they create an unreal image of city life; their production has material consequences for those social groups that have the most precarious claims on urban space. Haslinger's novel focuses on such displacement, Souchuk shows, by foregrounding the homeless Viennese who are displaced in the commodification of urban space. Satire, then, works in tandem with a contemporary form of social realism.

While Davis and Norberg, in their articles, show certain ways that polemical literary discourse can serve to reproduce the social formations that it purports to undermine, Souchuk's study of Haslinger and Menasse seeks to preserve and define the critical potential of the contemporary satirical novel. Haslinger's and Menasse's satires aim to restage, in hyperbolic and darkly humorous terms, the sorts of performances of space that had been subsidized by the tourist industry and the Austrian state. This parody was significant, Souchuk argues, because it served to intervene in a crucial public debate over the nature of Austrian identity around the year 2000—a debate in which Menasse himself was publicly involved. Souchuk bookends her discussion of the fictional works with a discussion of Menasse's idiosyncratic idea of national history, which was influenced by the thought of Theodor Adorno. Menasse, responding to those who would see the new millennium as a leap into a new era refreshingly distanced from the period of National Socialism, argued that history must be understood in nonlinear terms. Menasse wanted, on the one hand, to caution against the kind of progressivist models of history that would allow a nation gradually to establish distance from a violent past. On the other hand, Menasse hoped that this same nonlinear model of history, which re-

minds us how readily past violence can return, could also give people agency in determining who and what the “we” of a nation is. As Souchuk argues, this kind of open-ended historical thinking, proposed by Menasse, is essential to understanding the novels *Opernball* and *Schubumkehr*. If satire needs not only an object to attack but also a norm to which it takes recourse, then Menasse’s open-ended idea of history is what gives these novels their normative dimension. By ridiculing a current state of affairs in Austrian society, they want to index unrealized possibilities of social coexistence and historical thinking that are being neglected around the turn of the millennium.

In the current issue of the *Journal of Austrian Studies*, we have four compelling examples of what critical insights may be gained from an interdisciplinary approach to traditional literary modes. An special issue on “satire and polemic” may sound like it is pleading for a return to a strictly genre-oriented definition of literature. But nowhere in this issue is there a catalog of the definitive features of either satire or polemic. Instead, “satire” and “polemic” are presented as distinct textual practices that are simultaneously integrated into broader social, political, psychological, and philosophical systems of thought. The different strands of negative language analyzed in this issue are at one and the same time fixed onto the page of a literary work, and wandering through a complex environment that is permeated with pressing ethical and political questions.

Before concluding, many thanks are due to Prof. Patrizia McBride of Cornell University and Samuel Frederick of the Pennsylvania State University for their assistance in planning and providing commentary on the original conference panel in 2010. Their comments were invaluable in fostering the new scholarship that you will now have the pleasure to read.

## Note

1. For more on the first volume of this project, which dealt with Austrian satire in the age of imperial censorship, see Ravy and Benay. The next volume discussed satire in the epoch when official censorship was waning but when new political crises threatened the articulation of satire in Austrian society (Benay and Ravy). Two volumes followed that dealt with the development of Austrian satire during and after National Socialism; these two books overlap in terms of the time period covered but cover a different context of artistic creation. The next volume (Benay and Stieg) focuses on satire produced within the public and literary sphere of the Second Republic. The subject of the final volume is satire produced by artists who had been exiled from Austria during the National Socialist regime (Benay and Pfabigen).

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