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# "Alles Ist Unter der Oberfläche Noch Lebendig"<sup>1</sup>

Penetrating the Schöner Schein through Satire in Josef Haslinger's Opernball and Robert Menasse's Schubumkehr

Anna Souchuk

### Wer Wollen Wir Sein?

The 47th Frankfurter Buchmesse of 1995 featured Austria, specifically Austrian literature from the fin-de-siècle period to the late twentieth century, as its yearly focus. In an introduction written for the event, publishing consultant Rüdiger Wischenbart reframed the programmatic question "Wer sind wir?" in anticipation of the approaching twenty-first century, asking instead, "Wer wollen wir sein?" Indeed, many of the spe akers at the 1995 book fair r eflected on the r ole that history would play in Austria's future identity, including Robert Menasse, who inaugurated the event with his speech, "Geschichte:' der größte historische Irrtum." In his talk, Menasse argues against the linear development of history, emphasizing instead the inevitable cyclical nature of historical events, illustrated by Adorno's reflections on Auschwitz, "Was einmal wirklich war, bleibt ewig möglich" (29). For Adorno, the historical moment, once realized, may reoccur, intruding upon the present and the future ad infinitum. Menasse imagines an alternative structuring of progress, one in which history is not privileged over the present and in which mankind strives for a hopeful future:

Was a ber wär en wir ohne "Geschichte"? Wir wär en Zeitgenossen. Die A nerkennung der U nwiederbringlichkeit je des einz elnen Lebens wär e die einzig e Legitimation für all unser H andeln, das in unserer Lebenszeit erreichbare Glück wäre unser Ziel, und unser e

Grenze wär e es, da bei k eine Wirklichk eit zu pr oduzieren, die al s fortwirkende Möglichkeit künÈige Generationen bedroht. (31)

This, then, is one answer to Wischenbart's "Wer wollen wir sein?" Menasse would propose a scenario in which history would leads not only to positive individual de velopment but al so positive social and political de velopment. The "wir" in Wischenbart's query would be conscious of the past but would not allow it to dictate the present or the future.

In the same y ear as the 4 7th Frankfurt book fair, Josef Haslinger and Robert M enasse both publi shed no vels, Opernball and Schubumkehr, r espectively. These works satirize contemporary Austria and its modes of sel fidentification and self-presentation and target the tourism industry to varying degrees. Inherent in this criticism is an examination of history and Austrian attitudes toward certain historical moments, some still celebrated in the present, others relegated to a collective amnesia. Robert Menasse's Schubumkehr addresses Adorno's post-Auschwitz maxim and demonstrates how history is both resuscitated and manipulated in the reimagining of a small Austrian village. Similarly, the darkly sa tirical Reso Dorf in Josef Haslinger's Opernball symbolizes the conflicts of history. Further, Haslinger examines in his novel how touristic desires pervade Viennese identity, reducing self-representation to a series of performances.

Though neither writer necessarily anticipated Wischenbart's "Wer wollen wir sein?" in the production of his novel, both works nevertheless oder the audience a satirical commentary on Austria in 1995 and a bleak forecast for the millennium. Neither answers the question of who Austrians want to be; rather, they present a foreboding scenario of what they may become. Thr ough a close reading of passages in both novels, I will argue that Haslinger and Menasse deride the mi suse of hi story in conceptions of individual, social, and national Austrian identity, using several manifestations of self-representation as the basis from which they direct their critiques. Further, I will assert that the tourism industry as depict ed in both no vels demands the restructuring of social groups, pitting tourist against resident in a spe ctator-performer relationship. This social dynamic draws from the theoretical frameworks established by soc iologists such as Dean MacCannell and Erving Godmann; using their writings and the writings of others, I will further examine how each novel imagines a fictional Vienna and Austria as divided into front and back spaces, both of which dictate behavior and notions of identity.

## Josef Haslinger's Opernball

In his 1995 political thriller Opernball, Josef Haslinger details the circumstances surrounding a fictional terrorist attack on the Viennese Opera Ball and its attendees. On the night of the e vent, "die Entschlossenen," an under ground neo-Nazi brotherhood, fe ed poi sonous gas through the v entilation system of the Vienna State Opera, killing over three thousand Opera Ball guests inside. In the final count, the dead include the Austrian president, the Austrian chancellor, various other members of the federal government, and, amon g the murdered civilians, Fred Fraser, a cameraman for the fictional company European Television and the son of K urt Fraser, the novel's protagonist. We meet Kurt, also a journalist and cameraman, as he sits in his news van outside the ball, watching (along with all of Europe) the transmission of his son's slow asphyxiation. Motivated by the de ath of hi s son, K urt sets out t o collect a number of investigative interviews for a book about the attack. These, in turn, comprise the content of Haslinger's novel.

Opernball, ho wever, begins and end s with something a little di derent: two fictional new spaper articles that sandwich the narrative and highlight the satirical figure Reso D orf, Vienna's chief of polic e. In the first article, "Reso Dorf bleibt ein Bauernführer," Dorf addresses Vienna's new police appointees, references the opera ball catastrophe, and targets the perpetrators of the attack. Soon, his xenophobia is revealed, evidenced through phrases such as "Die spr itzen wir, wenn sie über mütig werden, von der Straße" (7) and "Die treiben wir über die Donau" (7). Dorf's rhetoric calls to mind language reminiscent of National Socialist ideology, and also subsequent, perhaps derivative, views articulated by Jörg Haider, the leader of Austria's rightwing c onservative F reiheitliche P artei Ö sterreichs. 2 I ndeed, Do rf i s wel l known for his "entschlossene und volkstümliche Sprache," a trait also shared by Haider, who was simi larly associated with populism and simpli stic language (7). Further, the epithet "Bauernführer" here applied to Dorf suggests his connection to a working-class stratum. Dorf apparently christened himself with the nickname, and his surname, which translates to "village," indeed suggests a degree of provincialism inherent to his character.<sup>3</sup> His eugenically tinged speech—"Bis uns plötzlich das L and verging, als sich her ausstellte, daß in diesem D schungel von Halbaden, Ratten und S chmeißfliegen die gefährlichsten Täter her angereiÈ war en, die unser L and bi slang g esehen" (7)—is all the mor e symbolic be cause of its location: D orf addresses the

new police inductees from a podium on the Viennese Heldenplatz, the geographical point at which Hitler declared the annex ation of Austria in 1938 Thus Haslinger begins his novel with a symbolic punch: a police chief stands in Hitler's stead and echoes the ideologies associated with both National Socialism and the controversial extremist parties represented by Jörg Haider.

This, then, is at the foundation of Haslinger's novel: the superimposition of the past onto the present, regardless of spatial or temporal distance, and the persistence of memory in establishing contemporary identity. Haslinger takes issue with the "Schein," questioning the motives of a culture that would seek such fragile artifice as a basis for self-definition. Reso Dorf is himself an embodiment of a culture intoxicated by the illusion of Schein; he is a construct, assembled from figures and influences both historic and current, onto which the fears and desir es of the public ar e projected. What Dorf communicates to his audience through his braggadocio, along with an exploration of those populating that audience, are the principal concerns of Opernball. Haslinger comments on the segmentation of Vienna into two fields: a public stage that is thrust forward as representative of the entire place and a hidden back field to which those deemed unworthy of acting in the front places are relegated. In so doing, he parallels arguments made by sociologists and cultural geographers such as Dean McCannell, Erving Godman, David Harvey, and Doreen Massey who study the r elationships between power and v isibility in soc ial landscapes and define the elements essent ial to creating meaningful places. Haslinger thus explores the multiple facets of place in Vienna and Austria and considers how place, and the ideologies and traditions that govern it, directly aåect those players living in its front and back spaces.

In Vienna, the Opernball traditionally ends the ball season; in a city that devotes an entir e se ason to waltzing, it is the most c elebrated of the b alls. This tradition, singularized by its de cadence, its observation of cust om, and its pomp, is transformed in Haslinger's novel from an evening of social preening to what he terms a "Massenmord." The Vienna Staatsoper, with its "mit Leichen verstopÈen Korridoren," is suddenly, in a single evening, a graveyard (11). Haslinger's depiction of Vienna's Opera Ball as the site of a homegrown terrorist attack suggests a lar ger significance, a gain highlighting his satirical critique of revered Viennese institutions. The Opernball is the manifestation of Vienna as a living museum,4 and it is this reverence for the past that Haslinger targets in his novel. The ball provides its guests a space to re-create, even

resurrect, the past. Richard Schmidleitner, one of the attendees, recounts his experiences from the evening of the attack in an interview with Fraser:

Im Korridor stieß ich a uf die K aiser-Dynastie. Sie war en mit zw ei Prinzessinnen oå enbar a uf dem W eg in die P hilharmoniker-Bar. Wie an unsicht baren Schnürchen gezogen, stellten sich die Menschen zu einem Spalier auf, verbeugten sich zu den Vorbeigehenden und sagten: "Kaiserliche Hoheit." (343)

For S chmidleitner, the O pernball is a place imbue dw ith transformative power, where the p ast is recreated and ex hibited. The players in this spectacle are first the "Kaiserliche Hoheit," presumably actors paid to impersonate the royal family, and also the ball attendees, who part, reflexively and without prompting, as i f pulled by "invisible strings" upon sightin g the p assing royal entourage. The Opernball becomes a performative stage where history is played out, and the V iennese in a ttendance are absorbed into the a ction, themselves willing participants in the artifice.

In her book Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett studies her itage industries and the "museumization"<sup>5</sup> of former times and places. She writes,

Heritage organizations ensure that places and practices in danger of disappearing because they are no longer occupied or functioning or valued will survive. It does this by adding the value of pastness, exhibition, diåerence, and, where possible, indigeneity. (150)

While Vienna's opera house is not a museum per se, the eaect produced by the Kaiserliche Hoheit actors nevertheless imbues this place with a timeless quality or, to appropriate Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's term, a qualit y of "pastness." The scene at the Opernball, then, invites its viewer to another place and time under the guise of a uthenticity. The experience of the ball feels more "real" when the participant places himself in the historical moment while simultaneously imagining the space populated by figures from a byg one era. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett goes on to comment on this phenomenon:

"The past is a foreign country" thanks to the heritage industry. The notion of time travel is explicit in invitations to "take a trip through history" [...] or "walk down memory lane" [...]

Locations be come museums of themselv es within a tourism

economy. Onc e sit es, bui ldings, obje cts, t echnologies, or wa ys of life can no lon ger sustain themselves as they for merly did, they "survive"—they are made economically viable—as representations of themselves. (150-51)

The Opera House in Vienna, then, is a representation of itself in this scene.<sup>6</sup> That is to say, it represents, as the Kasierliche Hoheit moves through its corridors, an incar nation of itsel f from a vani shed moment. One might ar gue that the V ienna O pera H ouse se ems to have no trouble maintaining e conomic viability today, that it need not resort to the her itage industry as a cultural lifesaver. Yet there is a sense that this economic longevity hinges on the institution's dependence on historical memory and maintenance of selfrepresentation. Haslinger satirizes this time travel strategy in his novel, suggesting to his Opera Ball attendees that by observing and participating in the Kaiserliche Hoheit pageant, they too have managed to move through time, ultimately accessing a point at which is located a basis for collective identity.

Dean MacCannell summarizes this phenomenon in his seminal work *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class:* 

Every society necessarily has another society inside itself and beside itself: its p ast epochs and er as and its less de veloped and mor e developed neighbors. Modern society [...] is especially vulnerable to overthrow from within through nostalgia, sentimentality and other tendencies to regress to a previous state, a "golden age" which retrospectively always appears to have been more orderly or normal. (82)

Both the guests at the ball and the ball itself depend on past notions and models of "Viennese-ness" as a me chanism for car ving out person al meaning in the present. The return to these traditions, even for an evening, is thus a return to a moment of self-recognition. In response to a question regarding the Viennese penchant for celebrating its own past, Haslinger suggested,

Das Fatale an diesem Zelebrieren der Kultur der Vergangenheit liegt darin, daß m an meint, Kultur aus der Geschicht e her auslösen zu können, da wird nicht mehr g efragt, wie es Mozart in Wien g egangen ist, wie Schiele, wie Mahler. Man streiÈ die historische Realität einfach ab, übrig bleibt die Vergangenheit als Unterhaltungswert für die Gegenwart. Die B arbarei ist verschwunden, als hätte es sie nie gegeben, sie überwintert im Keller. (Haslinger interview)

His comments speak to the innate difficulty of mining the past as a source for meaning in the present; namely, that which is culled from history is colored by the passage of time and the failing of memory. The version of identity that is extracted from the past is thus shallow, one-sided, and biased. In *Opernball*, Haslinger points to the natural inevitability of this tendency. The Königliche Hoheit scene at the Opernball is of course an intentional resuscitation of the past, though it does produce some telling behavior on the part of the ball guests. In the figure of Reso Dorf, however, one observes a less explicit, and more reflexive, deference to the past. Haslinger thus thematizes in *Opernball* that which he per ceives in facets of public Vienna: the salva ging of im ages and influences from the past as a strategy to pacify the desires of the present.

Vienna, then, be comes as much a ch aracter in *Opernball* as Kurt Fraser and his interviewees. Haslinger emphasizes how the city's physical structures exacerbate the br ewing conflicts among the var ious e conomic, social, and ethnic spheres. This tension is first highlighted in the initial t estimony given by Fritz Amon, a police inspector, who thinks back in his interview to a single evening during which he and a partner find a severed finger in the Karlsplatz U-Bahn station (the finger's significance is later explained in the novel). This extensive station is situated directly adjacent to some of the most hi storically signi ficant a ttractions in V ienna: the S taatsoper, the S ecessionsgebäude, and the Karlskirche, to name a few. In the station, below some of these most revered monuments, lies a bustlin g space filled with fast food r estaurants, shops, bakeries, and, as one appr oaches the exit leading to the opera house, an "Operntoilette" that broadcasts a constant loop of famous arias. Alongside the convenience of the Karlsplatz station, however, is an introduction to the seamier side of V iennese urban life, namely, homelessness, alcoholism, and drug dependency. The city's displaced congregate here, below ground, and Fritz Amon remembers encountering one of these disadvantaged specimens:

Wie oÈ haben wir den Gi Èlern gesagt: "Bringt euch daheim um, aber nicht am Karlsplatz! Wir sind schließlich eine zivilisierte Stadt. Aus aller Welt kommen Menschen zu uns, wollen ein wenig Kultur genießen, zum Heurigen gehen, und stolpern an jeder Ecke über einen SuchtgiÈdeliktler. Da können sie gleich nach Harlem fahren."

Die haben das nicht hör en wollen. Diese Au fsässigkeit. "Wir schicken euch heim", haben wir gesagt, "da, steckt euer Heroin wieder ein und g eht heim, unt er einer Be dingung, daß i hr nie w ieder hier auÈaucht."

Meinen Sie, es hätte etwas genützt? Am nächsten Tag waren sie wieder da. (49-50)

Haslinger paints in A mon's character a m an struggling to keep the pe ace in a city be coming increasingly unstable, and histestimony reveals at elling, perhaps representative, attitude toward drug addicts and other undesirables. Amon labels his city "zivilisert" and validates this assertion by referencing the tourists that visit Vienna and the version of culture that it oders. For Amon, maintaining the tourist appeal of his city is central. Much like Schmidleitner's encounter with the K aiserliche Hoheit at the oper a, here too Amon's testimony evokes images of Vienna as a functional city-museum, one in which the very citizens protect an image for the benefit of visitors. In a later portion of his interview, Amon recalls a diåerent night during which he and his partner stumble across an orgy in a public toilet:

Wenn nicht w ir zu fällig v orbeigekommen wär en, sonder n eine Gruppe aus Amerika, oder sonst Menschen, die Kultur suchen, die setzen sich ins nächste Flugzeug auf Nimmerwiedersehen. So etwas spricht sich doch her um, am Schluß bleiben uns a uch noch die Japaner weg. (100)

Part of Amon's duty as a polic e officer is to negotiate the less sa vory dimension of his city in order to maintain a balance for the greater portion of society. Yet here, Amon prioritizes tourists over drug addicts, who are nevertheless Viennese. He and the police force have as their agenda the maintenance of a sanitized, packaged product. Amon indirectly questions, then, how he, as a permanent inhabitant of Vienna, should understand and approach this city, where attractions seem designed for some undefined Other.

Amon imagines Vienna as a polished exhibit, which in turn suggests that the residents of the city must function as players in this fictionalized cityscape. Borrowing f rom E rving Goå man, Kirshenbla tt-Gimblett seiz es upon the word *performance* in her w riting and c onsiders the eå ect performance may render on those doing the performing:

[T]he challenge in such displays is to avoid "performance," that is, to maintain an asymmetrical reciprocity, whereby those who are being watched go about their business as if no one were paying attention to them, though we have long known that what we observe is changed by virtue of being observed. (48)

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett undersc ores the ne ar impossi bility of m aintaining normalcy when one is observed. Simple behavior and interaction are transformed when imbued with a lar ger sense of me aning derived from the notion that daily life has suddenly become something marketable, worthy of observation and consumption. The potential for artifice in this fantasy world is heightened, and the ea ects of this intensified falseness are also experienced on a personal level. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett continues her discussion of performance and authenticity and considers the individual response to scrutiny in a cultural exhibit. She suggests that the "museum eaect" transforms live people into artifacts and describes this transformation as "dehumanizing" (52, 55). Similarly, in a study of the geographer David Harvey, Sharon Zukin writes on the inconsistent meanings of space when it is reserved for a particular purpose or by a specific social group. Using the example of the Republican bourgeoisie in Paris, which monopolized space for its exclusive use, Zukin asserts that "everyone else was condemned to play the role of a spectator" (108). Her observation speaks to the ine vitable alienation that thrives in tourist areas, where place may sacrifice its authenticity in favor of a more appealing identity culled from history. What the Viennese experience in Haslinger's Opernball, then, is a denigration of personal identity and a homogenous, artificial standard foisted upon them and then r einforced by the perceived desires of outsiders. Haslinger oders little sympathy for this Viennese dilemma, however, suggesting that it has been self-generated.

The subterranean Karlsplatz station, with its late-night orgies and drugaddict-infested passageways, stands in stark c ontrast to the pictur esque cultural center overhead at street level. Indeed, the Staatsoper, site of Haslinger's deadly Opernball, is located right next to the subway station, and so, in a space smaller than a city block, Fritz Amon bears witness to the Viennese cultural dichotomy. He protects the people "up here," so to speak, from those festering "down ther e." Those pe ople a bove ground, ho wever, wal king through Vienna's manicured gardens, visiting its oper a houses, and reposing in its cafés, are somehow not the city's real inhabitants. They are those who come in search of a little culture and who, as a consequence, require protection from the underbelly languishing just below their feet. This high-low dichotomy, then, implies that the "GiÈler" whom Amon is so compelled to prosecute are in fact the authentic Viennese, who derive neither entertainment nor benefit from the city-museum in which they live. And, while Haslinger does not limit the genuine Viennese population to the drug-addled homeless, he nevertheless indicates the di lemma Amon is forced to face. Should the subterranean Karlsplatz dwellers be overlooked for the sake of a cultural image that may or may not actually exist?

By virtue of its location, the U-Bahn station provides a physical barrier between the upper and lo wer strata. Haslinger purposefully selects the Opera House and the subway station, which occupy essentially the same space, into realms of greater and lesser visibility and a ccessibility. This, then, is a nod to Godman's study of front and back places that he established in his The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life. In this influential work, Godman observes the social impulse to behave more culturally appropriately in highly v isible places, in contrast to less visible back places, in which behavior adheres less stringently to social mores. Using the vocabulary of theater and performance, Godman describes the "front region" as "the place where the performance is given" (107), contrasting it with the "back region," where "no member of the audience [that is, the spectator or tourist] will intrude" (113) and "where the impression fostered by the performance is contradicted as a matter of course" (112). Haslinger's Vienna grapples with its own unique problem of lavishing disproportionate attention on the surface at the expense of those back places Godman references. The result is a gradual growth in size, and a deterioration of integrity, in the back place. Haslinger spoke to this specifically Austrian tendency in an int erview: "doch mit Österreich, mit der Geschicht e dieses Landes [...] da g ibt es diese v erborgenen Keller, der en Eingänge versteckt gehalten aber dann doch entdeckt werden. [Das] fällt hier nur besonders auf, weil das Land einen übertriebenen Wert auf eine glänzende Oberfläche legt" (Haslinger interview).8 Like Goå man, Haslinger imagines spaces in Austria as being divided into spheres of varying visibility by virtue of their relationship to hi story. In Opernball, the "verborgene Keller" are filled with silent memories that remain present somewhere in the collective consciousness.

And one should not forget about Reso Dorf, who reemerges at the end of Haslinger's novel in yet another news story entitled, "Neuer Sicherheitsdirektor ist 'alter Hase." The report reveals,

Endlich wurde auch der Posten des Sicherheitsdirektors von Wien wieder besetzt. Polizeipräsident Reso Dorf hatte sich mit der Entscheidung lange Zeit gelassen. Um so über raschender fiel sie aus. Hofrat Major Franz Leitner wurde aus dem Ruhestand zur ückgeholt. Reso Dorf: "In dieser Situtation können wir auf so verdienst-

volle alte Hasen wie Hofrat Leitner keinesfalls verzichten. Ich habe ihn persönlich gebeten uns weiter zur Verfügung zu stehen. Leitner kann zupacken. Und das ist es, was wir jetzt brauchen." (473)

Dorf's insistence on installing reliable characters from the past in the structure of contemporary Vienna resonates with Haslinger's audience. He reveals at the close of his novel that a number of corrupt officers from Dorf's police force had been collaborating with the terrorist group responsible for the Opernball attack; Franz Leitner, himself a member of Dorf's team, is identified as particularly corrupt. These "alte Hasen" like Leitner, superficially benign, are in truth the dangerous heirs of se ething racist traditions, persisting on a c ontinuum that a dvances unchecked into the t wenty-first century. Further, Dorf's decision to recall Leitner from retirement, much like the Kaiserliche Hoheit scene, reemphasizes the privileging of the past over the present. Dorf, a caricature in his constructed ordinariness, is dangerous too for the po wer he wields over the city and the rhetoric of racism and hate that he has normalized as acceptable for the public dom ain. In *Opernball*, Haslinger derides the artifice in his fictional Vienna, satirizing in the popularity of Reso Dorf and the yearning to return to an imperial past a society that would willfully ignore the demons of history in exchange for cultural homogeneity, financial reward through tourist profits, and a return to the fantasy of its own past.

## Robert Menasse's Schubumkehr

Robert Menasse's 1995 novel Schubumkehr, the third in his Trilogie der Entgeisterung, satirizes questionable political practices and personalities in the new Europe of 1989 and, li ke Opernball, examines the phenomen a of per formance and spectacle in Austria. Roman Gilanian, the protagonist of Menasse's trilogy, returns to Austria in this third novel from a self-imposed exile in Brazil. However, this homecoming does not take him to Vienna, the city of his birth and a dolescence, but rather to Komprechts, a financially depleted quarry town on the Czech-Austrian border to which his mother has relocated in the hopes of esta blishing an organic farm, along with her new ( and much younger) husband, Ricky. In an essay about Menasse, Michael P. Olsen explains that "Schubumkehr," translated as "reverse thrust," oc curs "during an airplane catastrophe when the plane implodes because of c onflicting directional forces"9 and suggests that "Menasse uses the term in his novel as a

metaphor of simultaneous forward and backward motion in the period since 1989" (158). Komprechts, then, is the setting for the "reverse thrust" of the new Austria in the late twentieth century, a place torn catastrophically between its past and its future.

Menasse's c ommentary in Schubumkehr r evolves pr incipally ar ound questions of a uthenticity in r elation to place, and we can first turn to the home that Roman's mother Anne has created in Komprechts as a template for this theme. Anne has attempted to create in Komprechts a new life in her invented personal image of health and wellness. The bucolic turn necessary for this transformation manifests itself in the home she and Ricky have acquired: a farmhouse decorated in a rustic style (61). The provincial appeal of the new home strikes Roman as little mor e than futile posing by hi s mother as she attempts her sel f-reinvention. Most extreme in Anne's country house is the space designated as Roman's bedroom. Here Anne has dumped the objects of Roman's early life, spanning from his childhood to his teenage years: a teddy bear, board games, books, pictures, a primitive still life of bananas on a table, a tennis racket, a poster of Che Guevara (61-62). In an instant, Roman is forced to confront the memory of childhood as embodied by these collected items. However, this does not f unction as a moment of a uthentic recognition for him, as this room is more staged exhibit than vehicle for youthful memory. Anne has served up a slice of space and time to her son, and Roman plays observer to the relics of his own childhood.10

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett references the notion of artifacts in situ, in which "the object is a part that stands in a contiguous relation to an absent whole that may or may not be re-created" (19). What Roman faces now is just that: an in situ installation of hi s childhood and a dolescence, div orced from its original context in his childhood apartment in Vienna. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett goes on to suggest that those constructing the display (in this case, Anne) also "constitute the subject" (19). Roman, then, stand s at the door way of a p ast constructed anew by none other than his own mother, transformed there on the threshold into the object of Anne's desires. The history of the items in this life-installation indeed parallels that of artifacts in any museum: long tucked away in st orage, they are now relocated and exhibited, Roman's hanging banana portrait lending a gallery quality to the tableau. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett goes on to describe Plimoth Plantation, a recreated "living history" that "goes beyond re-creation and simulation ... [and is] an extraordinary experiment in virtuality" (189). She writes specifically that this Pilgrim Village is

an imaginary space into which the visitor enters. [...] Travelers are routinely promised idyllic escapes from their harried lives to destinations where time "stands still" or the p ast lives on, untouched by modernity. Time does indeed stand still at the Pilgrim Village. It is always 1627 in the virtual world that emanates from the deep hole of archaeology. (192–94)

Much like the Pilgrim Village curators, Anne is also occupied with matters of archaeology and exhibition, in which time stands still—as it does in Roman's bedroom—and she (re)constructs a moment and place, which struggles in the present to project a de gree of g enuineness. It is always 1627 in the pilgrims' virtual world, and here too, in Anne's home, it is always another time and another place, both of which deny the reality of the present moment. In Komprechts, Anne is both tourist and curator. She and Ricky desire their new farmhouse for its idyllic, earthy quality, the antithesis of the urbane life in Vienna. In this vein, Anne's rural life allows her to achieve an escape from her former self and to languish in a past "untouched by moder nity," to use Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's term. And yet, Anne is also the architect of this new existence, and in this role functions very much like the Pilgrim Village archaeologist: she appropriates fragments of the past and rearranges them, not simply for the sake of exhibition but also as a means to re-create a subject that never existed.

Anne is not the only Kompr—echts r esident pr eoccupied with the reconstruction of place, however. Into this imploding land scape of 1989 Menasse also inser ts Adol f König, the visionary mayor of Kompr—echts who endeavors to save the economically struggling village with plans for revitalization through tourism. König, we soon discover, was actually named Adolf Kral at his birth in 1935, only to have his father Germanize the C zech surname shortly thereaÈer, in 1938 König, then, is a relic of both the Austro-Hungarian empire and twentieth-century Germanic history. He is of Czech descent, now Germanized and living in Austria, with a last name translating to "king" and the symbolically loaded first name of "Adolf." He is also framed as domineering and egotistical, qualities reinforced by the vanity license plate adorning his Mercedes: "KING 1." As mayor, König is faced with the task of reinventing Komprechts, whose quarry industry and glass factory, despite attempts at modernization, no longer suffice as viable centers of revenue for the village. König acknowledges the changing circumstances facing the region on

both an international and domestic scale and perceives the threat that financial decline poses to his community. Located on the Czech border, Komprechts stands at the br ink of pot ential social transformation as the I ron Curtain falls and free movement is again made possible. König glimpses in thi s historical moment a niche for Kompr echts that will enhance the e conomic standing of the once small-scale industrial village. His vision ultimately leads him to pursue a future for his community that will boost his popularity as a social leader and rescue the struggling local economy.

As he plans to re-design Komprechts, König enlists the help of the advertising agent Tobisch, who focuses on the natural landscape of Komprechts, in which he sees opportunities for profit and tourism. What he proposes for his Komprechts marketing campaign is the image of a natural, untouched place where urbanites can experience an "authentic" rural life. He proposes, for example, to attract visitors seeking "Ruhe" with the insertion of generic landscape phot os in the tourist brochure. König, however, soon de velops concerns about the advertising campaign and inquires about the placement of a photo depicting a train station on the back page of the brochure:

Ich weiß nicht. Und was soll diese BildunterschriÈ: Hinter dem kleinen kakanischen Bahnhof.

Schloßgelb haben doch Sie ihn streichen lassen. Übrigens eine gute E ntscheidung, Gr atulation, H err B ürgermeister. Wir gr eifen das auf. Wir sagen kakanisch, das heißt gute alte Zeit, als man noch Sommerfrische sagte, und wo Plastik et was war, was ein Bi ldhauer aus Stein machte, und

Ja, sicher, Aber: Hinter dem kleinen kakanischen Bahnhof verlieren sich die Glei se der S chmalspurbahn in einer F erne en miniature. Was soll das? D a hinten ist gleich die S taatsgrenze. Eiserner Vorhang. Tote Hose.

Eben. Aber F erne en minia ture klin gt doch v iel poeti scher. (121-22)

König's marketed version of Kompr echts is a hodg epodge of Austr ian artifacts that summons space and time and borrows from a wide range of sources that includes works of fiction (for example, Robert Musil's Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törless) and ar chitectural landmarks. The primary influence in this tourist-collage is Austria-Hungary, and M enasse here satirizes the Austrian fixation on feti shizing its own past for the sake of tourism. König's advertising colleague remarks that the village train station has been repainted in a sh ade of y ellow significantly labeled "schlossgelb." The choic e of this particular hue is a nod to Schloss Schönbrunn in Vienna and the traditional shade of yellow emulated throughout the former empire as an homage to the Habsburgs and their "Schönbrunner Gelb." Moreover, in developing his tourist brochure, the agent has coined the phrase "hinter dem kleinen kakanischen Bahnhof," alluding with "kakanisch" to Robert Musil, whose Der Mann Ohne Eigenschaften emblematizes the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In that book, the term "Kakanien," derived from the empire's designation "kaiserlich und königlich" for its dual monarchy, is the fictional representation in Musil's voluminous project.<sup>12</sup> The allusion to Musil locates the Komprechts train station not only in another time, that is, the fin-de-siècle era, but also another place (the Austro-Hungarian Empire) and, perhaps most abstractly, another dimension (the realm of fiction). The inevitable eaect of the a gent's geographical quotation is a displacement that draws visitors to Komprechts while simultaneously directing them away to another place and another moment. Indeed, the agent makes no great edort to conceal his intention, communicating plainly to König that the blueprint for this re-imagined Komprechts is the "gute alte Zeit." Vienna's dual mon archy, a cultur al relic vanished for nearly a century, is still very much the model for contemporary conceptualizations of the Austrian landscape. In writing about Menasse, Olsen asserts that Menasse would "maintain that Austria is a Di sneyland, a c ountry where tourism creates an inauthentic environment and dubious marketing schemes flourish. 'Heimat' has become nothing more than another fa çade. Austria's problem, Menasse summarizes, is ultimately the complete destruction of its authenticity" (162). In Schubumkehr, then, M enasse draws upon the im age of Austr ia as t ourist facade and satirizes the transformation, however tragic, of its landscapes and cityscapes for profit.13

In *Opernball*, Josef Haslinger imagined a Vienna comprised of two strata: the lower Vienna, reveling in all its subterranean roughness in the Karlsplatz subway station, and the upper Vienna, beckoning to tourists with the promise of cultural authenticity. Menasse's Schubumkehr constructs a similar dual identity in Kompr echts, pla cing the a ctual, lived village alon gside König's newly c onceived t ourist destin ation. S haron Z ukin's t erm for e conomies based on "shiÈing forms of advantage" is "symbolic economies"; she suggests that such markets have "pushed men and women to become entrepreneurial in the broadest sense" (117, 12). Based on these criteria, the tourism in Komprechts may be considered a symbolic economy; indeed, König is an entrepreneur invested in the business of r e-inventing his community for pr ofit's sake. Zukin suggests, "With all this image management, the glittering postmodern city is 'a façade, a stage set, a fragment' that is intended to obscure the real city and its social problems" (114). König strives to achieve this stage set eåect in Komprechts. In fact, he seals the fate of the permanent residents of Komprechts with his plan, as they too will be transformed in this cultural makeover, becoming performers within the spectacle in their own right. The village glass factory, which had provided income for many of the Komprechts inhabitants, becomes a part of the performance, itself an exhibit in the living museum. Its function changed, the factory operates as an interactive exhibit, its appeal all the mor e heightened by the employ ment of "genuine" factory workers. Much as in the case in Kirshenbla tt-Gimblett's study of the Pilgrim Village at Plimouth Plantation, here too tourists are encouraged to view, and interact with, Komprechts residents. The most obvious evidence of König's sham is the fact that the glass items produced by the factory will include novelty trinkets intended for purchase by tourists in the attached glass factory giÈ shop. In an essay "Evaluating Urban Tourism," Susan S. Fainstein and David Gladstone comment on this phenomenon: "tourist locales simply be come products to be exch anged within the c onfines of a dvanced capitalism; the resulting process inevitably means that 'tourism is the chance to go and see what has been made trite" (28). König has eå ectively developed a tourism machine that devours visitors to Komprechts at the factory entrance and expectorates them under the guise of having experienced something real. What he may not realize, however, is exactly that dynamic foreshadowed in Fainstein and Gla dstone's essay: the objectification of the residents of Komprechts and the transformation of their lived experience to something trite may, in the end, have disastrous results.14 As it takes shape, König's plan begins to resemble that model critiqued by the social theorist David Harvey, namely the trend that observes cities' sa crifice of hum ane, reasonable living conditions for the sak e of profit, motive, and production (105). He criticizes the aestheticization of the "industrial past" that makes "the urban working class obsolete" (116). Again, in her analysis of Harvey's work on cities, Zukin makes use of the term "fictitious capital" in the postmodern city (114), and König's new vision of Komprechts constitutes fictitious capital in every sense of the word. He and his advertising agent intend to manipulate each square inch of land and every second of memory in Komprechts in order to seek profit in a narrative grounded in fiction.

In another meeting, Tobisch outlines further changes required to complete the tr ansformation of Kompr echts. A lmost everything must g o: the glass factory is uninteresting and won't appeal to the "target group," and the city's sewage plant look s, from a di stance, like a little "nuclear plant" (123). Most revealing, however, are Tobisch's comments on the war monument in the village's city square:

Das Kriegerdenkmal. Ich muss sie wohl nicht dar an er innern, dass unsere Zielgruppe wesentlich aus Pazifisten besteht. Und dann noch SIE GABEN IHR LEBEN HIN FÜR DIE HEIMAT, das käme unserer Zielgruppe garantiert in die falsche Kehle. Was heisst wieso? Herr Bürgermeister! Sie gaben ihr Leben hin für die braune Mordmaschinerie, sagen die, ja ja, ich weiss schon, ich sage ja: sagen die!  $(1\mathcal{I})$ 

As he dismisses every practical feature in the village, Tobisch also ignores the gravitas of the soliders' memor ial located in the town plaza, overlooking the complex historical significance of the monument. The processes provoked by the memorial—namely, reflection and a consideration of history—challenge the reconstruction of Kompr echts as a place devoid of memor y. Here, we can defer a gain to Robert Musil, who wrote in his essay "Monuments" that "if we mean well by monuments, we must inevitably come to the conclusion that they make demands on us that are contrary to our nature, and for the fulfillment of w hich very particular preparations are required" (66). Musil identifies the ch allenge that a monument puts to its observer, namely, the act of remembering, which he suggests, in his tongue-in-cheek tone, is a fundamentally disagreeable process. It is this very cultural laziness that Tobisch exploits in his re-imagining of Komprechts. He recognizes that tourists will seek a spoon-fed, historical "authenticity" that requires neither reflection nor introspection. Tobisch is not naive; rather, his objective to extract maximum profit has rendered him callous to the intricacies of memory. His Komprechts will manufacture a palatable version of history that is, in a sense, history-free.

Moreover, Tobisch is revealed to be an un apologetically cynical opportunist in the above scene, when he constructs an "us vs. them" dichotomy for König. The war monument is itself a deeply complex representation of both Austrian war time sa crifice and per petration, and T obisch r ecognizes this, confiding in an aside t o König that it is only be cause of them ("die," meaning "die Touristen") that the pe ople of Komprechts must sa crifice their memorial. His statement thus also functions as an indirect critique of the Komprechts inhabitants. Dependent on an external a dvertising manager for its financial survival, the way of life in Komprechts is represented as provincial, backwards, conservative, and here, using the example of the war monument, perhaps even racist. By constructing this fractured "us vs. them" society in his novel, Menasse also questions the motives of the people in Komprechts and their remembrance of the Austrian Nazi past.

Ultimately, no r emnant from the for mer Komprechts can be s ustained in this constructed place. König's life is cut shor taÈer he e ats a poi sonous mushroom soup prepared by Frau Nemec, one of the few ch aracters in Menasse's novel who symbolizes longevity and authenticity; in an act of autonomy, Nemec, too, eats the soup and dies by suicide. Even König's son Bruno is dead at the close of the no vel: a er swapping clothes with Maria, a young Czech girl with whom he plays near the Komprechts lake, he is mistaken for a child of Gastarbeiter and is murdered by a gang of men. The attempt to remake Komprechts has utterly failed, and the complete tragedy of Menasse's work speaks to the disastrous consequences of throwing the natural balance out of order. The devastation of nearly everyone in Komprechts underscores Menasse's critical position on tourism, at least in regard to its inefficacy in rehabilitating places for the sake of profit. In Schubumkehr, he ultimately privileges the back place to the front (with the murder of König) and, in so doing, envisages the potential for a critical reevaluation of the bur geoning tourism culture in Kompr echts. The complete dismantling of Kompr echts reminds Menasse's reader that the cultural cleansing of a place is indeed a metaphorical death in itself.

Through the critiques in Opernball and Schubumkehr, Haslinger and Menasse complicate the notion of a uthenticity in Austr ia by undersc oring the privilege of front places and the manufactured version of an idealized Vienna and Austria that they present, at the expense of the more unsightly culture relegated to back places. The end result of this cultural fragmentation is a front place populated by performers, which is vulnerable to the specters of history. These texts further thematize the systematic mining of the past for moments and personalities that can be reassembled in the present as meaningful representations of Austr ia. Inauthenticity, whether it be m anifested in persons or places, is a me chanism by which the troubles of history are repackaged and products of this essentializing process, then, are cast aside like the dregs of society, unfit for consumption. Each author criticizes the privileging of this hollow construct of modern Austria for the sak e of profit. Further, these no vels reveal the gradual deterioration of the back place, as it languishes, marginalized by the dominant cultural standard.

AÈer the publication of his novel Das Vaterspiel in 2000, Haslinger was asked in an int erview a bout the "B arbarei des v ergangenen Jahrhunderts," which seems "in der Gegenwart nicht fern zu sein." He replied,

Trotzdem ist das Grauen in der Gegenwart noch überall verborgen. Diese Gewissheit: "Jetzt haben wir das alles hinter uns" i st trügerisch und g efährlich. Man kann nicht einfa ch alles abstreifen. Das geht nicht von einer Gener ation auf die andere. Alles ist unter der Oberfläche noch lebendig. (S. Fischer Verlag 4)

Haslinger warns that nothing is ever really relegated to the past. He reminds us a gain of Ador no's "Was einm al wirklich war, blei bt ewig möglich"; for Haslinger, and M enasse too, the meta phor "alles i st unt er der Ober fläche noch lebendig" is a response to Adorno's axiom. History does not exist outside of the present as a container for memory; rather, it is always present, just below the surface. Haslinger postulates this living, latent past as somethin g menacing that threatens to reemerge and shatter the foundation upon which postwar Austria was constructed, while Menasse approaches it as something inevitable, indelible, and oÈen inconvenient. Both authors contribute to the long tradition of Austrian satire with their novels, odering a critical perspective on the strategies Austria has employed in negotiating its own issues with self-presentation in the late twentieth century.

#### **Notes**

- 1. This quotation is taken from an interview given by Haslinger in 2000 at the publication of his novel Das Vaterspiel.
  - 2. Haider died in a car accident on Oct. 11, 2008.
- 3. Haider's politics are examined frequently in Haslinger's ouevre, both el sewhere in Opernball and in his other essays and texts. For example, in Politik der Gefühle (a 1986 collection of essays that examines both Kurt Waldheim and Austrian politics as a whole), Haslinger demonstrates how the rise of extremist politics revitalized anti-foreign sentiment in Austria and suggests that the Austrian "Fremdenhass" was intensified by an influx of immigrants after the fall of the Iron Curtain (Haslinger, Politik der Gefühle 42). He thematizes this rurally

based anti-foreign sentiment in *Opernball*, when, in a sc ene at a construction site, workers "schimpfen über die Ausländer" (76) and a dmiringly discuss Jup Bärenthal, the ex tremist leader of Austr ia's National Party, who is almost c ertainly based on J örg Haider. Haider's political career had centered in Carinthia, and he inherited land in this state—a large parcel given him by his uncle and known as "Bärental"—in 1983. Controversy surrounded this transfer when it was revealed that the estate had in fact once belonged to an Italian Jew, who had sold (or had been forced to sell) the property to Haider's great-uncle in 1941.

- 4. H ermann B roch di scusses V ienna's "museumness" ("M useumshaftigkeit") in hi s essay "Hugo Hofmannsthal and hi s Time: The European I magination, 1860–1920" (1947–1948). He further mentions the innate Viennese "love of spectacle" (182) and uses the theater as a metaphor, suggesting that the perpetually reserved "royal box" at the theater meant that "pleasure in the the ater continued to be or dered around the sche me of mon archical value hierarchy" (184).
- 5. Similarly, in *Vienna: City of Modernity*, Tag Gronberg analyzes this phenomenon in particular to Vienna as "the musei fication of Vienna, the transformation of the whole city into a kind of museum" (197).
  - 6. Again, Broch writes in his essay that the city "became a museum to itself" (181).
- 7. Haslinger designs many of his novels and essays around this above/below dichotomy. In his later novel *Das Vaterspiel* (2000), for example, the narrative revolves around Uncle Lucas, an ex-Nazi, who has been hidden for thirty-two years in a New York basement, first by his sister and after her death by his grand-niece and Rupert, the novel's protagonist. Another example is Haslinger's essay "Der braune, unterirdische Fluß" from *Politik der Gefühle*, which examines issues of de-nazification and latent fascism in Austria.
- 8. Haslinger's prescient the ory about these Austrian "hidden cellars," the matized in 2000 in Das Vaterspiel, was unfor tunately proven accurate when, in 2008, the story of Elizabeth Fritzl surfaced in Austria. Fritzl, who was imprisoned in a cellar beneath her home and raped regularly by her father for almost a quarter of a century, is in her person a literal embodiment of the secrets in those back places that Haslinger studies. In response to the Fritzl case, Haslinger remarked, "There is this pretty, shiny surface that Austrians like to show, but it hides a monstrosity . . . on the surface we have moral standards and enlightened policies, but in the b ackground we have this perverse world that nobody wants to talk about. We are still not a ble to accept our mi stakes. So forgetting has become part of the me ntality. If you look too closely you might have to act. So nobody looks. The Austrian character has a hidden, dark side. If we talk about it so much in our ar t, there must be somethin g there in reality" (Campbell). Haslinger makes clear in this quotation one of his motivations for writing novels: they provide an outlet, and a forum, to discuss the pressing but unspoken issue of identity in contemporary Austria. El friede Jelinek also took interest in the Fritzl case, devoting an essay entitled "Im Verlassenen" to the incident. The Fritzl story was the second most famous "cellar" case, the first being Natascha Kampusch's long imprisonment in a secret cellar from 1988 to 2006.
- 9. This definition of reverse thrust is not altogether correct. Thrust reversal is used commonly by aircraft for deceleration purposes and is not necessarily associated with a catastrophic event. However, when incorrectly deployed, reverse thrust can cause an airplane to stall

mid-flight, with devastating results. A number of accidents have been attributed to improper use of reverse thrust, and Menasse refers with his title *Schubumkehr* to Lauda Flight ng 004, which crashed on May 26, 1991, after the thrust reverser was deployed unintentionally. The aircraft crashed in mountainous jungle terrain over Thailand. All passengers and crew were killed ("Lauda Air Flight 004").

10. For a fuller reading of this scene and a close reading of Menasse's novel as a whole, see Sathe. Sathe finds parallels bet ween the muse um motif in R oman's room and simi lar scenes from Hans Lebert's *Der Feuerkreis* and Norbert Gestrein's *Einer*, in which "the objects stress gaps with the past that factor into each novel's definition of authenticity and demonstrate the authors' sensitivity to the touristic setting" (233). Moreover, Sathe suggests that the "museum display" in the bedroom that Anne has constructed for Roman is a principal cause of the crisis of identity that Roman experiences in *Schubumkehr*—a theme that Sathe analyzes in great detail in his project.

- 11. Sathe calls the character of König a "Second Republic en miniature" (242).
- 12. It is interesting to note the name "König" in the word "Königlich."
- 13. Menasse has indicated his interest in the creation of inauthentic identities not just in Austria, but in all places; he cited the American shopping mall ("ein Museum der Moderne") and a man with Stetson hat and boots ("eine Madame Toussaud-Figur") as other examples of inauthenticity outside of Austria (Menasse interview).

14 Sathe's analysis of this scene suggests that "the glass factory's transformation into a tourist attraction severs it from its past, but then artificially perpetuates it." He focuses on the performative aspects of the factory and its workers and the "staged authenticity" postulated by MacCannell in w hich "the glass pr oduction can not only be observed by t ourists, but exists primarily for them" (247).

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