"Alles Ist Unter der Oberfläche Noch Lebendig": Penetrating the *Schöner Schein* through Satire in Josef Haslinger's *Opernball* and Robert Menasse's *Schubumkehr*

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"Alles Ist Unter der Oberfläche Noch Lebendig"[1]

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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 speakers at the 1995 book fair reflected on the role 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 aber wären wir ohne "Geschichte"? Wir wären Zeitgenossen. Die Anerkennung der Unwiederbringlichkeit jedes einzelnen Lebens wäre die einzige Legitimation für all unser Handeln, das in unserer Lebenszeit erreichbare Glück wäre unser Ziel, und unsere

> Grenze wäre es, dabei keine Wirklichkeit zu produzieren, die als 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 development but also positive social and political development. 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 year as the 47th Frankfurt book fair, Josef Haslinger and Robert Menasse both published novels, *Opernball* and *Schubumkehr*, respectively. These works satirize contemporary Austria and its modes of self-identification 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 satirical 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 offer 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. Through a close reading of passages in both novels, I will argue that Haslinger and Menasse deride the misuse of history 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 depicted in both novels demands the restructuring of social groups, pitting tourist against resident in a spectator-performer relationship. This social dynamic draws from the theoretical frameworks established by sociologists such as Dean MacCannell and Erving Goffmann; 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 event, "die Entschlossenen," an underground neo-Nazi brotherhood, feed poisonous gas through the ventilation 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, among the murdered civilians, Fred Fraser, a cameraman for the fictional company European Television and the son of Kurt 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 death of his son, Kurt sets out to collect a number of investigative interviews for a book about the attack. These, in turn, comprise the content of Haslinger's novel.

Opernball, however, begins and ends with something a little different: two fictional newspaper articles that sandwich the narrative and highlight the satirical figure Reso Dorf, Vienna's chief of police. 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 spritzen wir, wenn sie übermütig 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 right-wing conservative Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs.[2] Indeed, Dorf is well known for his "entschlossene und volkstümliche Sprache," a trait also shared by Haider, who was similarly associated with populism and simplistic 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.[3] His eugenically tinged speech—"Bis uns plötzlich das Land verging, als sich herausstellte, daß in diesem Dschungel von Halbaden, Ratten und Schmeißfliegen die gefährlichsten Täter hergereiÈ waren, die unser Land bislang gesehen" (7)—is all the more symbolic because of its location: Dorf addresses the

new police inductees from a podium on the Viennese Heldenplatz, the geographical point at which Hitler declared the annexation 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 desires of the public are 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 Goďman, David Harvey, and Doreen Massey who study the relationships between power and visibility in social landscapes and define the elements essential 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 aďect those players living in its front and back spaces.

In Vienna, the Opernball traditionally ends the ball season; in a city that devotes an entire season to waltzing, it is the most celebrated of the balls. This tradition, singularized by its decadence, its observation of custom, 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 larger significance, again 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 auf die Kaiser-Dynastie. Sie waren mit zwei Prinzessinnen offenbar auf dem Weg in die Philharmoniker-Bar. Wie an unsichtbaren Schnürchen gezogen, stellten sich die Menschen zu einem Spalier auf, verbeugten sich zu den Vorbeigehenden und sagten: "Kaiserliche Hoheit." (343)

For Schmidleitner, the Opernball is a place imbued with transformative power, where the past is recreated and exhibited. 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 if pulled by "invisible strings" upon sighting the passing royal entourage. The Opernball becomes a performative stage where history is played out, and the Viennese in attendance are absorbed into the action, themselves willing participants in the artifice.

In her book *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage*, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett studies heritage industries and the "museumization"[5] 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, difference, and, where possible, indigeneity. (150)

While Vienna's opera house is not a museum *per se*, the effect produced by the Kaiserliche Hoheit actors nevertheless imbues this place with a timeless quality or, to appropriate Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's term, a quality of "pastness." The scene at the Opernball, then, invites its viewer to another place and time under the guise of authenticity. 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 bygone 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 become museums of themselves within tourism

> economy. Once sites, buildings, objects, technologies, or ways of life can no longer sustain themselves as they formerly 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.[6] That is to say, it represents, as the Kasierliche Hoheit moves through its corridors, an incarnation of itself from a vanished moment. One might argue that the Vienna Opera House seems to have no trouble maintaining economic viability today, that it need not resort to the heritage 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 self-representation. 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 past epochs and eras and its less developed and more 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 mechanism for carving out personal 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 man meint, Kultur aus der Geschichte herauslösen zu können, da wird nicht mehr gefragt, wie es Mozart in Wien gegangen ist, wie Schiele, wie Mahler. Man streiÈ die historische Realität einfach ab, übrig bleibt die Vergangenheit als Unterhaltungswert für die Gegenwart. Die Barbarei 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 perceives in facets of public Vienna: the salvaging of images and influences from the past as a strategy to pacify the desires of the present.

Vienna, then, becomes as much a character in *Opernball* as Kurt Fraser and his interviewees. Haslinger emphasizes how the city's physical structures exacerbate the brewing conflicts among the various economic, social, and ethnic spheres. This tension is first highlighted in the initial testimony 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 historically significant attractions in Vienna: the Staatsoper, the Secessionsgebäude, and the Karlskirche, to name a few. In the station, below some of these most revered monuments, lies a bustling space filled with fast food restaurants, shops, bakeries, and, as one approaches 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 Viennese 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 GiÈlern 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 hören wollen. Diese Aufsässigkeit. "Wir schicken euch heim", haben wir gesagt, "da, steckt euer Heroin wieder ein und geht heim, unter einer Bedingung, daß ihr nie wieder hier auÈaucht."

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

Haslinger paints in Amon's character a man struggling to keep the peace in a city becoming increasingly unstable, and his testimony reveals a telling, 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 offers. For Amon, maintaining the tourist appeal of his city is central. Much like Schmidleitner's encounter with the Kaiserliche Hoheit at the opera, 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 different night during which he and his partner stumble across an orgy in a public toilet:

> Wenn nicht wir zufällig vorbeigekommen wären, sondern eine Gruppe aus Amerika, oder sonst Menschen, die Kultur suchen, die setzen sich ins nächste Flugzeug auf Nimmerwiedersehen. So etwas spricht sich doch herum, am Schluß bleiben uns auch noch die Japaner weg. (100)

Part of Amon's duty as a police officer is to negotiate the less savory 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 from Erving Goffman, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett seizes upon the word *performance* in her writing and considers the effect 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 underscores the near impossibility of maintaining normalcy when one is observed. Simple behavior and interaction are transformed when imbued with a larger sense of meaning 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 effects 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 effect" 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 inevitable 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 reinforced by the perceived desires of outsiders. Haslinger offers little sympathy for this Viennese dilemma, however, suggesting that it has been self-generated.

The subterranean Karlsplatz station, with its late-night orgies and drug-addict-infested passageways, stands in stark contrast to the picturesque 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 there."[7] Those people above ground, however, walking through Vienna's manicured gardens, visiting its operas 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 neverthe-

less indicates the dilemma 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 lower strata. Haslinger purposefully selects the Opera House and the subway station, which occupy essentially the same space, albeit on different levels, in order to underscore the division of public spaces into realms of greater and lesser visibility and accessibility. This, then, is a nod to Goffman's study of front and back places that he established in his *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. In this influential work, Goffman observes the social impulse to behave more culturally appropriately in highly visible places, in contrast to less visible back places, in which behavior adheres less stringently to social mores. Using the vocabulary of theater and performance, Goffman 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 Goffman 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 interview: "doch mit Österreich, mit der Geschichte dieses Landes [. . .] da gibt es diese verborgenen Keller, deren 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 Goffman, Haslinger imagines spaces in Austria as being divided into spheres of varying visibility by virtue of their relationship to history. 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 überraschender fiel sie aus. Hofrat Major Franz Leitner wurde aus dem Ruhestand zurückgeholt. 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 something racist traditions, persisting on a continuum that advances unchecked into the twenty-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 power he wields over the city and the rhetoric of racism and hate that he has normalized as acceptable for the public domain. 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, like *Opernball*, examines the phenomena of performance 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 adolescence, but rather to Komprechts, a financially depleted quarry town on the Czech-Austrian border to which his mother has relocated in the hopes of establishing 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," occurs "during an airplane catastrophe when the plane implodes because of conflicting 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 commentary in *Schubumkehr* revolves principally around questions of authenticity in relation 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 more than futile posing by his mother as she attempts her self-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 function as a moment of authentic 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 his childhood and adolescence, divorced 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, stands at the doorway of a past 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 storage, 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 past 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 degree of genuineness. 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 modernity," 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 Komprechts resident preoccupied with the reconstruction of place, however. Into this imploding landscape of 1989 Menasse also inserts Adolf König, the visionary mayor of Komprechts 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 Czech surname shortly thereaÈer, in 1938. König, then, is a relic of both the Austro-Hungarian empire and twentieth-century Germanic history.[11] 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 brink of potential social transformation as the Iron Curtain falls and free movement is again made possible. König glimpses in this historical moment a niche for Komprechts that will enhance the economic 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 photos in the tourist brochure. König, however, soon develops 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 Entscheidung, Gratulation, Herr Bürgermeister. Wir greifen das auf. Wir sagen kakanisch, das heißt gute alte Zeit, als man noch Sommerfrische sagte, und wo Plastik etwas war, was ein Bildhauer aus Stein machte, und
>
> Ja, sicher, Aber: Hinter dem kleinen kakanischen Bahnhof verlieren sich die Gleise der Schmalspurbahn in einer Ferne en miniature. Was soll das? Da hinten ist gleich die Staatsgrenze. Eiserner Vorhang. Tote Hose.
>
> Eben. Aber Ferne en miniature klingt doch viel poetischer. (121–22)

König's marketed version of Komprechts is a hodgepodge of Austrian 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 architectural landmarks. The primary influence in this tourist-collage is Austria-Hungary, and Menasse here satirizes the Austrian fixation on fetishizing its own past for the sake of tourism. König's ad-

vertising colleague remarks that the village train station has been repainted in a shade of yellow significantly labeled "schlossgelb." The choice 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.[12] 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 effect of the agent'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 effort to conceal his intention, communicating plainly to König that the blueprint for this re-imagined Komprechts is the "gute alte Zeit." Vienna's dual monarchy, a cultural 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 Disneyland, a country where tourism creates an inauthentic environment and dubious marketing schemes flourish. 'Heimat' has become nothing more than another façade. Austria's problem, Menasse summarizes, is ultimately the complete destruction of its authenticity" (162). In *Schubumkehr*, then, Menasse draws upon the image of Austria as tourist 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 Komprechts, placing the actual, lived village alongside König's newly conceived tourist destination. Sharon Zukin's term for economies based on "shifting forms of advantage" is "symbolic economies"; she suggests that such markets have "pushed men and women to become entrepreneurial in the broadest sense" (117, 122). Based on these criteria, the tourism in Kom-

prechts may be considered a symbolic economy; indeed, König is an entrepreneur invested in the business of re-inventing his community for profit'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 effect 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 more heightened by the employment of "genuine" factory workers. Much as in the case in Kirshenblatt-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 become products to be exchanged within the confines of advanced capitalism; the resulting process inevitably means that 'tourism is the chance to go and see what has been made trite'" (28). König has effectively 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 Gladstone'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' sacrifice of humane, reasonable living conditions for the sake 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 transformation of Komprechts. Almost everything must go: the glass factory is uninteresting and won't appeal to the "target group," and the city's sewage plant looks, from a distance, 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 erinnern, 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! (127)

As he dismisses every practical feature in the village, Tobisch also ignores the gravitas of the soliders' memorial 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 Komprechts as a place devoid of memory. Here, we can defer again 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 which very particular preparations are required" (66). Musil identifies the challenge 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 unapologetically 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 sacrifice and perpetration, and Tobisch recognizes this, confiding in an aside to König that it is only because of them ("die," mean-

ing "die Touristen") that the people of Komprechts must sacrifice their memorial. His statement thus also functions as an indirect critique of the Komprechts inhabitants. Dependent on an external advertising 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 remnant from the former Komprechts can be sustained in this constructed place. König's life is cut short after he eats a poisonous mushroom soup prepared by Frau Nemec, one of the few characters 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 novel: after 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 burgeoning tourism culture in Komprechts. The complete dismantling of Komprechts 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 authenticity in Austria by underscoring 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 Austria. Inauthenticity, whether it be manifested in persons or places, is a mechanism by which the troubles of history are repackaged and proffered again as something new. The byproducts 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 sake of profit. Further, these novels 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 interview about the "Barbarei des vergangenen 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" ist trügerisch und gefährlich. Man kann nicht einfach alles abstreifen. Das geht nicht von einer Generation 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 again of Adorno's "Was einmal wirklich war, bleibt ewig möglich"; for Haslinger, and Menasse too, the metaphor "alles ist unter der Oberfläche 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 something 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, oàering 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 oeuvre, both elsewhere 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 scene at a construction site, workers "schimpfen über die Ausländer" (76) and admiringly discuss Jup Bärenthal, the extremist leader of Austria's National Party, who is almost certainly based on Jörg 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. Hermann Broch discusses Vienna's "museumness" ("Museumshaftigkeit") in his essay "Hugo Hofmannsthal and his Time: The European Imagination, 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 theater continued to be ordered around the scheme of monarchical value hierarchy" (184).

5. Similarly, in *Vienna: City of Modernity*, Tag Gronberg analyzes this phenomenon in particular to Vienna as "the museification 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 theory about these Austrian "hidden cellars," thematized in 2000 in *Das Vaterspiel*, was unfortunately 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 background we have this perverse world that nobody wants to talk about. We are still not able to accept our mistakes. So forgetting has become part of the mentality. 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 art, there must be something 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. Elfriede 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 between the museum motif in Roman's room and similar 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 which "the glass production can not only be observed by tourists, but exists primarily for them" (247).

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