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The Rise of and Literary Response to the New Far Right in Austria and Germany

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Abstract

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The Austrian Freedom Party, once a marginal force in politics, experienced a meteoric electoral rise between 1986 and 2000 under the leadership of Jörg Haider; this was accompanied by a simultaneous, and drastic, shift of that party to the right. I explore the dynamics of this shift through a dual focus on party rhetoric, viewed through the analysis of party manifestos, and literary opposition, focusing on Thomas Bernhard's *Heldenplatz*, Elfriede Jelinek's *Das Lebewohl*, and Werner Thuswaldner's *Pittersberg*. I show that such literature embodies a dual role in understanding right-wing politics, as it responds both to the political changes themselves and the societal conditions that allow for such changes. From here, to view applicability to contemporary developments, I make a comparative analysis of the German case, centered on the recently-created far-right *Alternative für Deutschland* party, with the primary texts being Gregor Weichbrodt and Hannes Bajohr's *Glaube, Liebe, Hoffnung* – itself a case-study in digital literature, important given the use of social media by the New Far Right – and Ilija Trojanow's *Nach der Flucht*.

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I. Introduction

The Austrian Freedom Party (*Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs*, FPÖ) is, outside of Austria, not exactly a household name. To those familiar with it, then, its appearance in the American news cycle in the fall of 2018 was both surprising and a bit uncanny. “Rep. Steve King met with members of a far-right Austrian party with historical Nazi ties during a European trip” was the first line of the *Washington Post* story,¹ a succinct summary, but one raising more questions than answers. Why was a United States Congressman representing rural Iowa meeting with an Austrian political party virtually unknown in the States? On its face, at least, it seems quite the unlikely pairing.

Digging deeper, however, the similarities show almost immediately. The centerpiece of King’s visit to Vienna was an interview, published unedited and in full, with *unzensuriert* (*uncensored*), a news site allied strongly with the FPÖ with articles in English and German. The text illustrates plainly the primary connection between King and Europe’s far right: anti-immigrant sentiments.

“We recently got to know about the case of Mollie Tibbets, that took place in your home State of Iowa,” the interviewer begins,² referencing the July 2018 killing of a University of Iowa student by an undocumented immigrant that, two days earlier, had been amplified significantly by a Donald Trump video address posted on Twitter.³ After

¹ Mike DeBonis, “Rep. King Met with Far-Right Austrians on Trip Funded by Holocaust Memorial Group,” *Washington Post*, October 25, 2018, <http://washingtonpost.com/powerpost/holocaust-memorial-group-unwittingly-funded-rep-kings-meeting-with-far-right-austrians/2018/10/25/a18f4f6a-d875-11e8-83a2-d1c3da28d6b6/>.

² “Steve King: Bring Pride Back to Austria,” *unzensuriert*, September 2, 2018, <http://unzensuriert.at/content/0027654-Steve-King-Bring-Pride-back-Austria/>.

³ Donald J. Trump, Twitter Post, August 22, 2018, 3:24 PM, <http://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1032393212126613504/>.

being asked his opinion on the case, King answers by linking America and Austria's immigration policies together:

The individual who murdered Mollie Tibbets should have never been in America. [...] These are young men, pretty much the same demographics as those who came to Austria in 2015 and as those who still are coming to Austria. If you look at the boats full of them, if you look at the jail cells the border patrol gathers together: these guys are all military age. You can put them all into the military. They are invading our country, they are just not wearing uniforms.⁴

This is, as King and his interviewer agree, part of the “Great Replacement” of white Europeans (and Americans) by minority immigrants. The culprit is, according to King, George Soros, Jewish financier and liberal philanthropist,⁵ whose supposed machinations serve to continue the age-long struggle of the West against the East. As King explains in the interview's conclusion:

When I saw the sign that Pope John Paul II celebrated mass here [in Vienna's Kahlenberg Church], it was on September 12th, 1983, 300 years to the day after the siege of the battle of Vienna against the Muslims. Had Christian armies not lifted that siege, Vienna would have collapsed and Western Civilization likely would have been purged from the face of the earth.⁶

Published on September 2nd, the interview's existence and contents did not reach mainstream news until more than a month later. Initial reporting primarily focused on the fact that King's trip to Europe was funded by a Holocaust memorial group – the trip to Vienna followed a visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau –⁷ but this focus shifted dramatically following the October 27th shooting at a Pittsburgh synagogue, killing eleven worshippers. Now of increased note were the FPÖ's Nazi ties – the party's founder was a former SS officer – and King's endorsement of Faith Goldy, a Toronto

⁴ “Steve King: Bring Pride Back,” *unzensuriert*.

⁵ DeBonis.

⁶ “Steve King: Bring Pride Back,” *unzensuriert*.

⁷ DeBonis.

mayoral candidate and former journalist, who was notably fired from *Rebel Media*, itself far-right politically, for appearing on a neo-Nazi podcast.⁸

King defended himself from allegations of antisemitism. “I don’t think of George Soros as a Jew. I think of him as an operator, a leftist operator,” he claimed after the investor was targeted as part of a string of mail bombs shipped to prominent Democratic politicians and supporters.⁹ Of the FPÖ, King defended the party, saying all Nazi elements had long since been purged,¹⁰ and that “if they were in America pushing the platform that they push, they would be Republicans.”¹¹

And yet, despite this coming just a week before midterm elections, despite losing financial support from his own party and major corporate donors,¹² and despite being denounced by local and national Jewish organizations,¹³ Steve King won reelection to a ninth term.¹⁴ And though he was later stripped of his committee assignments after further inflammatory statements in an interview with *The New York Times*,¹⁵ he

⁸ Julie Zauzmer, “Following the Pittsburgh Attack, Rep. Steve King’s Iowa Supporters Brush aside Concern about His White Nationalist Views,” *Washington Post*, October 28, 2018, <http://washingtonpost.com/politics/in-the-wake-of-the-pittsburgh-attack-rep-steve-kings-iowa-supporters-brush-aside-concern-about-his-white-nationalist-views/2018/10/28/a16b7044-dabf-11e8-b732-3c72cbf131f2/>.

⁹ DeBonis.

¹⁰ Joyce Russell, “Congressman Steve King Defends Austria’s Freedom Party in Partnership Address,” *Iowa Public Radio*, November 2, 2018, <http://iowapublicradio.org/post/congressman-steve-king-defends-austria-s-freedom-party-partnership-address/>.

¹¹ Zauzmer.

¹² Tina Nguyen, “Steve King’s White Nationalism May Finally Cost Him,” *Vanity Fair*, October 30, 2018, <http://vanityfair.com/news/2018/10/steve-king-white-nationalism-iowa-midterm/>.

¹³ Justin Wise, “Anti-Defamation League Calls on Paul Ryan to Take Action against Steve King,” *The Hill*, October 31, 2018, <http://thehill.com/homenews/house/414073-anti-defamation-league-calls-on-paul-ryan-to-take-action-against-steve-king/>.

¹⁴ Nick Carey and Jeffrey Benkoe, “U.S. Rep. Steve King Wins Re-Election despite Furor over His Views,” *Reuters*, November 7, 2018, <http://reuters.com/article/us-usa-election-iowa/u-s-rep-steve-king-wins-re-election-despite-furor-over-his-views-idUSKCN1NC1XN/>.

¹⁵ Trip Gabriel, Jonathan Martin, and Nicholas Fandos, “Steve King Removed from Committee Assignments over White Supremacy Remark,” *New York Times*, January 14, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/14/us/politics/steve-king-white-supremacy.html/>.

nevertheless will, barring further developments, be a United States Congressman through 2020.

Two years before all this, Steve King's brand of politics was on top of the world. 2016 was a watershed year for the far right, catching the world almost completely by surprise. The victory of Leave in the June 23rd Brexit referendum, fulfilling the main goal of the right-wing populist U.K. Independence Party, was a shock to most European observers. Prime Minister David Cameron resigned the day after the vote, with no obvious successor.¹⁶ The British pound sterling fell 15% within two weeks, suggesting that the financial markets, too, had failed to adequately gauge the likelihood of far-right success.¹⁷

Donald Trump, then in Scotland, reacted positively to the news, saying, "I felt it [Brexit] was going to happen, and there is [sic] great similarities between what happened here and my campaign. Yeah. People want to take their country back."¹⁸ This proved prescient. Less than half a year later, Trump won the presidency in, as the New York Times front-page headline termed it, a "stunning repudiation of the establishment."¹⁹

But should it have been stunning? Or were the signs there, if we only knew where to look? To understand the rise of right-wing populism today, we seek the rise of right-

¹⁶ Heather Stewart, Rowena Mason, and Rajeev Syal, "David Cameron Resigns after UK Votes to Leave European Union," *The Guardian*, June 24, 2018, <http://theguardian.com/politics/2016/jun/24/david-cameron-resigns-after-uk-votes-to-leave-european-union/>.

¹⁷ Ivana Kottasova, "Brexit Britain: Pound Drops to \$1.28," *CNN Business*, July 6, 2016, <http://money.cnn.com/2016/07/06/investing/brexit-pound-drops/>.

¹⁸ Chris Cillizza, "Donald Trump's Brexit Press Conference Was beyond Bizarre," *Washington Post*, June 24, 2016, <http://washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/06/24/donald-trumps-brexit-press-conference-was-beyond-bizarre/>.

¹⁹ Matt Flegenheimer and Michael Barbaro, "Donald Trump Is Elected President in Stunning Repudiation of the Establishment," *New York Times*, November 9, 2016, <http://nytimes.com/2016/11/09/us/politics/hillary-clinton-donald-trump-president.html/>.

wing populism yesterday, which brings us back to the Austrian Freedom Party and its longtime, enterprising leader, Jörg Haider, who brought it from electoral obscurity in the mid-1980s to junior coalition partner at the start of the new millennium.

The choice of Haider's FPÖ may seem questionable. Parties such as the National Front (now the National Rally) in France are certainly better known. But the Freedom Party is indeed a very special case, for the simple fact that it was the first far-right party to enter governing coalition in Western Europe since the fall of fascism in 1945.²⁰ It represents, then, a prototype of sorts for how far-right populism can gain political power – its words and actions a model by which to analyze similar forces today.

And such a model is indeed important. Though ominous comparisons of the modern right to interwar fascist parties are oftentimes specious, they are not entirely without merit. To quote Robert Paxton on the possibility of resurgent fascism today:

We need not look for exact replicas, in which fascist veterans dust off their swastikas. [...] Much more likely to exert an influence are extreme Right movements that have learned to moderate their language, abandon classical fascist symbolism, and appear “normal.”²¹

If true, the Freedom Party, now three decades old in its present incarnation and still firmly entrenched in Austrian politics, is perhaps the strongest harbinger of any.

This work seeks, first off, to investigate and understand the rise of the Freedom Party primarily through the lens of rhetoric. This is indeed a natural starting point for studying the New Far Right; as seen in Steve King's interview, it is oftentimes the commonalities in discourse, more so than the specific policies, that tie these groups together. And this holds true historically, as well; a case-in-point is seen in Adam

²⁰ William Drozdiak, “EU Warns Austria of Sanctions,” *Washington Post*, February 1, 2000, <http://washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/WPcap/2000-02/01/010r-020100-idx.html>

²¹ Robert O. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (New York: Vintage Books, 2005), 205.

Serwer's powerful article for *The Atlantic*, subtitled "a long-overdue excavation of the book Hitler called his 'bible,' and the man who wrote it," which links early-1900s American fears of "race suicide," exemplified by "blue blood" New Englander Madison Grant's *The Passing of the Great Race*, to mid-1900s Nazi eugenic policies.²² It was indeed a *trans-Atlantic* circulation of rhetoric which helped along the emergence of early twentieth-century fascism.

And, if we are to study rhetoric, it is a natural next step to analyze literature, which reflects the context in which it is created and offers a removed but incisive lens on contemporary political dialogue. Moving from rhetoric to literature makes even more sense within the Austro-German context, where for many years the task of coming to terms with the fascist past – to borrow the unwieldy German term, *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* – was left to those countries' writers. This is perhaps most famously embodied by Germany's *Gruppe '47*,²³ which was known for its emphasis on "engaged literature,"²⁴ or writing that followed Jean-Paul Sartre's view of literary work as political praxis. Examining the work of this strain of postwar German-language authors is therefore instrumental in viewing and understanding political and literary opposition to the postwar Far Right.

But the usefulness of literary analysis extends further than just that. Writers' work, after all, is a function of the society from which they come. This theoretical framework is more formally outlined by literary critic Jakob Norberg as a nation's

²² Adam Serwer, "White Nationalism's Deep American Roots," *The Atlantic*, April 2019, <http://theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2019/04/adam-serwer-madison-grant-white-nationalism/583258/>.

²³ Heinz Ludwig Arnold, *Die Gruppe 47* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 2004), 10-11.

²⁴ Volker Meid, *Sachwörterbuch zur deutschen Literatur* (Stuttgart: Reclam Verlag, 2018), 319.

“conditions of critique,” that is to say its overarching sociological tendencies – including, but not limited to politics – from which writers draw their inspirations.²⁵ Thus, at the same time that literature responds to politics, it also indicates, in part, the societal basis for those same politics. And while this can perhaps be seen most clearly in the Austria of the 1980s, to which Norberg applies his analysis, the framing is applicable to cases more broadly.

It is with this in mind that we turn the focus to Germany. The same reason that makes the Freedom Party a compelling case, namely the fact that it arose decades prior to the recent resurgence of populism, makes it perhaps more difficult to apply to the modern-day context. In contrast, Germany’s most dominant postwar far-right party, the *Alternative für Deutschland*, was founded less than a decade ago. In that sense, then, it presents a much better opportunity to understand contemporary American developments – Steve King, Donald Trump – while in turn, due to shared cultural and linguistic characteristics, being informed by the Austrian case studied earlier. In a nutshell – my analysis moves from Austria, through Germany, to America.

Finally, a note on the literary sources selected for this piece. They are, in a word, eclectic; at first glance, they may seem somewhat random. Yet each, I would argue, has its place in what seeks to be as comprehensive a view as possible. Canonical authors such as Thomas Bernhard and Nobel laureate Elfriede Jelinek are presented alongside the less-renowned Werner Thuswaldner. Novel “digital literature” is analyzed alongside more orthodox literary forms. That there are not always obvious links from text to text is not a disadvantage of this thesis – it shows, instead, the breadth of ways that writers

²⁵ Jakob Norberg, “On Display: Conditions of Critique in Austria,” *Journal of Austrian Studies* 46, no. 1 (2013): 23-24.

have tackled this perceived issue and how they have evolved to match the cultural conditions of the day.

That is to say, at least when it comes to analyzing literary opposition to the New Far Right, diversity is a strength.

II. Concordant Democracy in Austria

We begin our foray with Austrian politics of the early-1970s, a time when Austria was “The Island of the Blessed.” As famously coined back in 1971 by Pope Paul VI, such a description seems almost impossible given the political vitriol to be encountered in the rest of this study. Yet Austrian society during this time was remarkably harmonious, resistant even to shocks like the 1973 Oil Crisis.²⁶ At least superficially, the factionalism and political violence that had marked the short-lived First Austrian Republic from 1919 to 1934 had vanished, not to be replaced.

This was, indeed, by design. As is common in post-conflict contexts, the first provisional government in postwar Austria, formed in April 1945 during the first weeks of Soviet occupation, was a unity government. Led by Karl Renner – the quintessential elder statesman, he was also the first Prime Minister of the First Austrian Republic back in 1918 – power was shared evenly between the Socialist Party (*Sozialistische Partei Österreichs*, SPÖ), the Christian-Democratic People’s Party (*Österreichische Volkspartei*, ÖVP), and the Communist Party (*Kommunistische Partei Österreichs*, KPÖ).²⁷

²⁶ “Island of the Blessed,” *Demokratiezentrum Wien*, last modified February, 2006, <http://demokratiezentrum.org/en/knowledge/stations-a-z/island-of-the-blessed/>.

²⁷ Oliver Rathkolb, “Die Zweite Republik (seit 1945),” in *Geschichte Österreichs*, ed. Thomas Winkelbauer (Stuttgart: Reclam Verlag, 2015), 530.

Unlike other unity governments, however, Austria's lasted, arguably, for decades. Though the first elections, held some months later in November 1945, provided the Christian Democrats an absolute majority of seats, they chose not to form a single party government.²⁸ Instead, a system of *Proporz* (from *Proportionalität*, proportionality) was instituted, whereby government ministries were allocated in accordance with the share of votes each party received.²⁹ And though this system initially included the Communists, their pitiful electoral showings of only 5% meant their exit from government by 1947,³⁰ allowing the SPÖ and ÖVP to command an extraordinary proportion of votes – always exceeding 85% and oftentimes 90% – and all ministerial posts up until the mid-1980s.³¹

Proporz should therefore be seen primarily as an arrangement between the SPÖ and ÖVP, and its longevity had good reasons behind it. Such “controlled democracy” was both a necessary bulwark against the forces that led their predecessor parties into the 1934 Austrian Civil War and, overall, was emblematic of broader societal will towards continued national unity.³² That is, rather than view politics as zero sum competition, with elections solely to provide a mandate for (an often slim) majority rule, Austrian political leaders, and the electorate they represented, simply preferred, in the words of political scientist Gerhard Lehmbruch, “to manage their conflict by negotiated agreements.”³³

²⁸ Klaus Poier, “Austria,” in *Elections in Europe*, eds. Dieter Nohlen and Philip Stöver (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2010), 176, 213-215.

²⁹ “Proporz,” *Demokratiezentrum Wien*, last modified February, 2006, <http://demokratiezentrum.org/en/knowledge/stations-a-z/proporz/>.

³⁰ Poier, 176.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 213-215.

³² Rathkolb, 546.

³³ Gerhard Lehmbruch, “A Non-Competitive Pattern of Conflict Management in Liberal Democracies: The Case of Switzerland, Austria and Lebanon,” in *Consociational Democracy: Political Accommodation in Segmented Societies*, ed. Kenneth D. McRae (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1974), 95.

This tendency was most obvious in the period from 1945 to 1966, during which the Socialists and Christian Democrats governed in a formalized Grand Coalition; yet even as Austria turned to single party rule, first under the People's Party in 1966, then under the Social Democrats from 1970 to 1983, power was still largely shared by the two main parties through what was termed the Social Partnership (*Sozialpartnerschaft*). This quasi-governmental board brought labor and business groups together for collective bargaining on economic policies, as mediated by government representatives,³⁴ ensuring that “everyday politics” remained fundamentally concordant – between the two main parties, of course.³⁵

This was, naturally, a monopolization of political power, which inevitably raised questions of fairness. The People's Party and Socialists were “cartels,” to apply the later political theories of Katz and Mair,³⁶ and as early as the 1960s the arrangement was accused of robbing voters of true electoral choice and, according to its harsher critics, of being plainly undemocratic.³⁷ Yet, beyond these criticisms on democratic principle, there seemed to be no ill effects in everyday life – the Austrian citizen was not suffering economically, after all. A fundamental change in the structures of power simply did not seem necessary.

This would change, however, with a series of scandals from the mid-1970s into the 1980s that involved both main parties. First came the so-called Kreisky-Peter-Wiesenthal affair, which implicated the Socialists in consorting with former Nazis. The

³⁴ “At the Round-Table,” *Demokratiezentrum Wien*, last modified February, 2006, <http://demokratiezentrum.org/en/knowledge/stations-a-z/at-the-round-table/>.

³⁵ Rathkolb, 547.

³⁶ Richard S. Katz and Peter Mair, “Changing Models of Party Organization and Party Democracy: The Emergence of the Cartel Party,” *Party Politics* 1, no. 1 (1995): 5.

³⁷ Rathkolb, 546.

SPÖ, then led by Chancellor Bruno Kreisky, who was himself Jewish and spent the duration of the war in exile in Sweden,³⁸ was governing in the minority. Consequently, it required votes from the Freedom Party, a marginal force who held just six of one hundred sixty-five seats, to support its budget and thus keep it in power.³⁹

This support was indeed provided, albeit in exchange for complex electoral reform that helped the Freedom Party increase its parliamentary standing.⁴⁰ Simon Wiesenthal, prominent Nazi-hunter, took the opportunity to release details of Freedom Party chairman Friedrich Peter's wartime participation in the SS, sullyng the reputation of both Kreisky personally – his extreme reaction, making unfounded accusations against Wiesenthal of Nazi collaboration, did not help matters – and his party more generally.⁴¹

Neither were the Christian Democrats without historical baggage, however, as would become clear in the Waldheim Affair a decade later. This centered on former United Nations Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim, who in 1986 ran for the Austrian presidency; though a largely ceremonial role, it was still a symbolically significant post as the Austrian head of state.

During the course of the campaign, however, it came to light, through the World Jewish Congress, that Waldheim had lied about his role in the Second World War. Rather than leaving service in 1941 after being wounded, as he had claimed in his autobiography, Waldheim continued serving as a German army intelligence officer in

³⁸ Ibid, 553.

³⁹ Ibid, 560.

⁴⁰ Poier, 188.

⁴¹ Rathkolb 560.

the Balkans, in which capacity he was implicated, among other Nazi war crimes, in the deportation of Croatian Jews to the Stara Gradiska concentration camp.⁴²

Despite all this, Kurt Waldheim was elected President of Austria on July 8th, 1986. Socialist Chancellor Fred Sinowatz resigned the next day in protest, and international reactions were perhaps even harsher; Waldheim was made *persona non grata* both in the United States, where he was placed on an official watch list, and across Western Europe, where he was conspicuously not invited on state visits.⁴³ And so, with both main parties struggling to avoid scandal, and with their combined control of politics surpassing forty years, criticism against the political status quo began to increase.

III. Thomas Bernhard's *Österreichkritik*

For evidence of such dissatisfaction, we turn to the Austrian literary sphere, which – as hinted at earlier – has been a consistent and powerful voice of political critique. True certainly during the 19th century, this character only intensified after 1945, such that literature was arguably the only place one could find such opposition. In the words of literary critique Jakob Norberg – himself drawing on the ideas of the famous Austrian essayist Robert Menasse – “postwar Austria was a case study in politically managed society-wide reconciliation, an achievement that came at the cost of vigorous public discussion over political principles,” forcing writers to “effectively [take]

⁴² Mary Kathryn Barbier, “Kurt Waldheim – Patriot or Villain?” in *Spies, Lies, and Citizenship: The Hunt for Nazi Criminals* (Lincoln, Neb.: Potomac Books, 2017), 131, 158.

⁴³ Rathkolb, 558, 563.

up the otherwise unperformed task of political critique.”⁴⁴ And perhaps no better is this represented than in Thomas Bernhard’s *Heldenplatz*.

Titled after a notable square in the center of Vienna, the play, set in March 1988, begins immediately after the funeral of Professor Josef Schuster, an Austrian Jew, who, after living in self-imposed exile in Oxford, returned to his native Vienna to accept a chaired professorship before committing suicide by throwing himself out his apartment window overlooking that same square. The significance of this setting, both temporal and locational, cannot be overstated; fifty years earlier, on March 15th, 1938, Adolf Hitler delivered at *Heldenplatz* his speech to the Austrian people following their *Anschluss* into the German *Reich*.⁴⁵ The roaring applause he then received becomes a striking motif throughout the play, eventually – as indicated in the stage directions – being pumped into the theater throughout the final scene.⁴⁶

Throughout its duration, the play’s plot is minimal. Its characters instead serve as a mouthpiece for Bernhard’s polemic, railing against all the mainstays of Austrian life. The people, newspapers, theater, music, and – perhaps above all – politics of Austria are repeatedly denigrated, dragged through the mud in endless monologues, all to prove one central thesis, presented as a quote by the late Professor in the first lines of the play: „*Jetzt ist alles noch viel schlimmer / als vor fünfzig Jahren*“,⁴⁷ (“Everything’s even worse now / than it was fifty years ago he said”).⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Norberg, 26.

⁴⁵ G. E. R. Gedye, “Hitler Hails Coup: Tells Vienna Throng His Greatest Task Is Done – Reviews Big Parade,” *New York Times*, March 16, 1938, <http://nytimes.com/1938/03/16/archives/hitler-hails-coup-tells-vienna-throng-his-greatest-task-is.html>

⁴⁶ Thomas Bernhard, *Heldenplatz* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988), 159.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 11.

⁴⁸ Thomas Bernhard, *Heldenplatz*, trans. Meredith Oakes and Andrea Tierney (London: Oberon Books, 2010), 17.

This was a positively vitriolic accusation. The play was commissioned, after all, as part of *Gedenkjahr 1988* (Year of Commemoration 1988), which saw Austria seek to both bring remembrance to their annexation by Germany fifty years prior and, presumably, honor the progress democratic Austria had made in the decades after.⁴⁹ (That this also, coincidentally, marked the centennial of the new *Burgtheater* on Vienna's famed *Ringstraße* heightened the drama of the occasion).⁵⁰ But Bernhard simply refused to play along with this idea of progress, making it overwhelmingly clear that, to him, Austrians were still very much the same: „*Am liebsten würden sie / wenn sie ehrlich sind / uns auch heute genauso wie vor fünfzig Jahren / vergasen*“,⁵¹ (“If they were honest / they’d love to gas us / today just as they did fifty years ago”).⁵²

Yet Bernhard saves some of his strongest rhetoric for Austria's politicians, as delivered by the late professor's brother Robert in a multipage diatribe:

*diese sogenannten Sozialisten die schon ein halbes Jahrhundert
keine Sozialisten mehr sind
sind ja die eigentlichen Totengräber dieses Österreich
das ist ja das Erschreckende and tagtäglich Ekelhafte
[...]
die Sozialisten sind heute die Kapitalisten
die Sozialisten die keine Sozialisten sind
sind die eigentlichen Verbrecher an diesem Staat
dagegen ist ja diese katholische Gesindel geradezu unerheblich,*⁵³

these so-called socialists who for the past half-century
have not been socialists
are the real grave-diggers of Austria
that's what's so frightening and nauseating every day
[...]
the socialists are today's capitalists

⁴⁹ Jack Davis, “Pathogenic Polemics: *Heldenplatz* and the ‘Bernhard Virus,’” *Journal of Austrian Studies* 46, no. 1 (2013): 47.

⁵⁰ Gitta Honegger, *Thomas Bernhard: The Making of an Austrian* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2001), 282.

⁵¹ Bernhard, *Heldenplatz*, 115.

⁵² Bernhard, *Heldenplatz*, trans. Oakes and Tierney, 94.

⁵³ Bernhard, *Heldenplatz*, 98.

the socialists who are no longer socialists
are the real criminals in this country
compared with them the catholic riff-raff is downright irrelevant.⁵⁴

This lack of political differentiation provides the context for Bernhard's critique. Both parties have abandoned their roots, their *raison d'être*. Their ideologies are now, in the eyes of Bernhard, merely „*total verkommener Sozialismus / total verkommenes Christentum*“,⁵⁵ (“a totally degenerate socialism / a totally degenerate christianity”).⁵⁶ This ideological bleaching is the way the parties avoid conflict, and it is verifiably successful, but at the great cost of destroying the meaningful distinctions between them, and thereby making them unaccountable to their voters:

*das ist ja vollkommen gleichgültig was das für eine Regierung ist
es ist ja eine wie die andere
es sind ja immer dieselben Leute
es sind ja immer dieselben Geschäfte
die diese Leute machen
es sind immer dieselben Interessen
das sind ja immer diese ganz und gar verkommene Leute
die mit jedem Tag den Staat mehr zugrunde richten,*⁵⁷

it doesn't make any difference what government we've got
they're all the same
it's always the same people
it's always the same deals
these people make
it's always the same interests
it's always these out and out corrupt people
driving the state to ruin day after day.⁵⁸

And this is, indeed, the point on which Bernhard chooses to end the play, as Robert, now shouting over the roar of 1938 Heldenplatz, provides final judgment on the parties, black being the color of the Christian Democrats and red that of the Socialists:

⁵⁴ Bernhard, *Heldenplatz*, trans. Oakes and Tierney, 81.

⁵⁵ Bernhard, *Heldenplatz*, 118.

⁵⁶ Bernhard, *Heldenplatz*, trans. Oakes and Tierney, 97.

⁵⁷ Bernhard, *Heldenplatz*, 120.

⁵⁸ Bernhard, *Heldenplatz*, trans. Oakes and Tierney, 98.

*In diesem fürchterlichsten aller Staaten
haben Sie ja nur die Wahl
zwischen schwarzen und roten Schweinen,*⁵⁹

In this most awful of all countries
you can only choose
between black pigs and red pigs.⁶⁰

Yet textual analysis informs only a part of Bernhard's political critique. With *Heldenplatz*, much of its commentary came from the societal reaction it provoked.

This began even before its November premiere when, in August, some of the most incendiary passages of the play were leaked to the Austrian press.⁶¹ The reactions were swift and harsh. Ex-chancellor Bruno Kreisky, now in retirement in Mallorca, urged "that such denigrations of Austria must not go unchallenged."⁶² President Waldheim, who himself drew direct reference in the play as „*ein verschlagener verlogener Banause*“,⁶³ ("a cunning lying philistine"),⁶⁴ termed the production a slur upon the Austrian people.⁶⁵ Vice-chancellor Alois Mock of the People's Party proposed shutting down the production through invocation of the *Wiederbetätigungsverbot*, a legal ban on the reengagement of Nazi activities.⁶⁶ That is to say, the popular reaction only served to reaffirm Bernhard's accusations of enforced consensus.

A short aside – it would be irresponsible to continue without giving any mention to the widespread acclaim Bernhard's work is given in the field of literary scholarship. His corpus, of which *Heldenplatz* is the last and best-known piece, was foundational in

⁵⁹ Bernhard, *Heldenplatz*, 164.

⁶⁰ Bernhard, *Heldenplatz*, trans. Oakes and Tierney, 131.

⁶¹ Manfred Mittermayer, *Thomas Bernhard: Eine Biografie* (Vienna: Residenz Verlag, 2015), 417.

⁶² Honegger, 290.

⁶³ Bernhard, *Heldenplatz*, 102.

⁶⁴ Bernhard, *Heldenplatz*, trans. Oakes and Tierney, 84.

⁶⁵ Mittermayer, 418.

⁶⁶ Honegger, 289.

forcing an Austrian *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. Indeed – though it was drowned out by the overall scandal – the play did draw contemporaneous praise for doing just that.⁶⁷

Strikingly, the play’s regard has only increased in decades of analysis since. Critic Jack Davis, for instance, argues *Heldenplatz* served as a “literary ‘vaccination’ of the Austrian political sphere,” accomplished primarily by “reframing [fascist] speech but directing its polemic thrust against the Nazi past.”⁶⁸ Fatima Naqvi views *Heldenplatz* similarly; by providing the Schuster “victims” with the rhetoric of “perpetrators,” Bernhard attempts to deconstruct such categories, whose rigidities “inhibit critical judgment and even political action.”⁶⁹ These are all complex arguments that a purely historical reading must necessarily set aside, yet they reveal the important anti-fascist power that Bernhard’s *Österreichkritik* embodied.

IV. The Rise of the Austrian Far Right

It is unfortunate, then, that the work of Bernhard brings us to one Jörg Haider, a man whose *New York Times* obituary notes was famous for prominently “praising the *Waffen-SS* and the employment policies of the Nazi government.”⁷⁰ Before that, however, and of relevance here, he was one of Bernhard’s strongest critics during the *Heldenplatz* scandal, in which his voice was especially amplified due to his position as

⁶⁷ Oliver Bentz, *Thomas Bernhard: Dichtung als Skandal* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2000): 97.

⁶⁸ Davis, 48.

⁶⁹ Fatima Naqvi, “Dialectic at a Standstill: The Discourse of Victimhood in Thomas Bernhard’s *Heldenplatz*,” *German Quarterly* 75, no. 4 (2002): 417.

⁷⁰ Nicholas Kulish and Eugen Freund, “Jörg Haider, Austrian Rightist, Is Dead at 58,” *New York Times*, October 11, 2008, <http://nytimes.com/2008/10/12/world/europe/12haider.html>

the newly-ascended chairman of the Austrian Freedom Party (*Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs*, FPÖ).⁷¹

Indeed, his rise to power requires its own examination. Established in 1955, the Freedom Party combined two strands of otherwise-unrepresented politics – liberalism (note that this term, throughout the text, is used in the European sense, referring to what an American would likely term libertarianism) and Germanic nationalism.⁷² The relative importance of these two factions would be a matter of debate for the next thirty years.

Liberalism was initially, in the words of historian Oliver Rathkolb, merely a “thin little cloak” to shield criticism of the party’s courting of former Nazi members by, among other things, opposing denazification policies and the return of Jewish property stolen during the war.⁷³ Yet by the mid-1970s, the liberals seemed to be winning the war for the party, a notion strengthened significantly by their joining of the Liberal International political federation in 1979.⁷⁴ Indeed, by 1983, the party had sufficiently reformed to allow the Socialists, after failing to retain an absolute majority, to maintain power through formal coalition with the Freedom Party, now under leader Norbert Steger, without drawing the same type of criticism as they had a decade earlier for merely informal arrangements with Friedrich Peter.⁷⁵

Evidence for this shift can be seen, in part, through analysis of the party’s manifestos, as obtained from the Manifesto Project database maintained by the

⁷¹ Honegger, 289.

⁷² Rathkolb, 559.

⁷³ Rathkolb, 559-560.

⁷⁴ Piero Ignazi, *Extreme Right Parties in Western Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 112.

⁷⁵ Rathkolb, 560.

Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin (WZB) Social Science Center.⁷⁶ In early iterations, callbacks to National Socialism can be easily seen. Point two of the 1955 platform is, for instance:

Wir bekennen uns zur sozialen Volksgemeinschaft und bekämpfen das Denken und Handeln in Klassen und Gruppeninteressen.

We avow ourselves of the social *Volksgemeinschaft* and combat the thinking and action in terms of class and group interests.⁷⁷

Volksgemeinschaft is of course an explicitly Nazi term, indeed a foundational part of Third Reich propaganda,⁷⁸ whose literal translation of “People’s Community” was and should be read as being inherently racialized to include only the Aryan German.

This was not an accidental inclusion; the term reappears in the prelude to the party’s program for the next legislative election in 1959:

Ziel der FPÖ ist eine nationale, freiheitliche und soziale Politik auf der Grundlage echter Volksgemeinschaft.

The objective of the FPÖ is national, liberal and social politics on the basis of true *Volksgemeinschaft*.⁷⁹

Yet by the 1980s, during which decade the party entered into the governing coalition, such language was tempered. The party now advocated for a „*Volksbewußte Gemeinschaft*“ (A People-Conscious Community):

Wir bejahen die organische gewachsene Gesellschaft, die von den natürlichen und sittlichen Bindungen an Gemeinschaft, wie Familie, Nachbarschaft, regionale Einheit, Staat und Volk getragen wird. Das ist das nationale Bekenntnis freiheitlicher Politik. Als Partei der Gemeinschaft wissen wir um die Bedeutung dieser lebendigen Gemeinschaft für die Selbstverwirklichung des Einzelnen.

⁷⁶ Werner Krause et al., *Manifesto Corpus: Version 2018b*, (Berlin: WZB Berlin Social Science Center, 2018).

⁷⁷ FPÖ Party Program 1955.

⁷⁸ Frank Bajohr and Michael Wildt, “Einleitung,” in *Volksgemeinschaft: Neue Forschungen zur Gesellschaft des Nationalsozialismus*, eds. Frank Bajohr and Michael Wildt (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2009), 8.

⁷⁹ FPÖ Party Program 1957.

We affirm the organically evolving society, borne by natural and ethical community ties like family, neighborhood, regional unit, country, and *Volk*. That is the nationalistic creed of liberal politics. As the Party of Community, we know the meaning of these vital communities for the self-actualization of the individual.⁸⁰

The language treads close to Nazi tropes, certainly, but it avoids any explicit references, relying instead on the ambiguity of *Volk*, which, unlike *Volksgemeinschaft*, can – but not necessarily should – be extricated from Nazism and read as simply meaning “people.” By using such weasel words, any fascist insinuations were insulated with plausible deniability, such that the party could be seen, at least outwardly, as rehabilitated. And so it was that the party entered government viewed primarily, to quote *The New York Times*, as “a champion of free enterprise.”⁸¹

Inside the party, however, the situation was more complex. Nationalists were infuriated by Steger’s so-called “change of base,” which effectively abandoned them in order to court the liberal Center Left. And as the government struggled in opinion polls, even those ideological allies of Steger became worried about losing the far-right support that kept the party viable electorally; state-level elections in 1984, which gave the Freedom Party heavy losses in both Salzburg and Lower Austria, only strengthened these fears. Per political historian Lothar Höbelt: “Discontent for Steger welled up – for reasons of both pragmatism and principle – from those who feared the loss of their political traditions and from those who simply feared extinction at the polls.”⁸²

Infighting culminated at the September 1986 party conference in Innsbruck, where party leadership faced a stiff challenge from Jörg Haider, who represented the

⁸⁰ FPÖ Party Program 1983, 5.

⁸¹ James A. Markham, “Austria Socialists Lose a Majority; Kreisky to Resign,” *New York Times*, April 25, 1983, <http://nytimes.com/1983/04/25/world/austria-socialists-lose-a-majority-kreisky-to-resign.html>

⁸² Lothar Höbelt, *Defiant Populist: Jörg Haider and the Politics of Austria* (West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue University Press 2003), 22-23.

consensus choice of both anti-Steger factions; he had used his perch as state party chairman in Carinthia to consistently criticize the liberal party factions, which enamored him to the nationalists;⁸³ appealing to the pragmatists, meanwhile, he had defied electoral gravity, increasing the party's vote share in Carinthia's state election from 12 to 16 percent in what was otherwise a catastrophic cycle for the party.⁸⁴

The leadership vote was decisive: Haider won by a margin of 263 to 179 in what would become a turning point, in two ways, for the party.⁸⁵ Firstly, under his leadership, the party began a meteoric electoral rise. From its nadir in 1983, winning just 5.0% of the vote, the party won a 9.7% vote share in 1986, then 16.6% in 1990, 22.5% in 1994, and ultimately 26.9% in 1999, making it the second largest party in Austria.⁸⁶ Secondly, such electoral success was accompanied (or perhaps caused) by a sharp ideological shift towards distinctive right-wing populism,⁸⁷ led from the very top by Haider himself.

V. The Populist Polemic of the FPÖ

But why such staggering success? The answer to this question is a central thesis of this work: Jörg Haider utilized, in regards to Austria's political duopoly, a similar style of polemical attack as Bernhard, and to a similar level of effect. In other words, just as Bernhard reaped controversy, Haider reaped vote share. Their rhetorical strategies mirror each other – and for further analysis of this we return to party manifestos, beginning in 1986 with the party's first election under its new chairman.

⁸³ Ibid, 39.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 24.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 46.

⁸⁶ Poier, 216-217.

⁸⁷ Ludger Helms, "Right-wing Populist Parties in Austria and Switzerland: A Comparative Analysis of Electoral Support and Conditions of Success," *West European Politics* 20, no. 2 (1997): 40.

The program's first point, „Für eine Politik ohne Privilegien“ (For Politics without Privilege), attacks career politicians and civil servants, calling for a reduction in their income and an increase in their taxes.⁸⁸ The second point, „Für eine saubere bürgernahe Verwaltung“ (For Clean, Citizen-Adjacent Administration), rails against the Grand Coalition:

Postenproporz und große Koalition sind untrennbare Zwillinge. Wir Freiheitlichen fordern: Der Einfluß der Parteien auf die Postenvergabe im öffentlichen Dienst ist zu beseitigen. Kampf der Korruption im Interesse des Bürgers.

The Grand Coalition and the allocation of government posts through *Proporz* are inseparable twins. We liberals advocate: The influence of parties on the allocation of public service positions is to be eradicated. Fight against corruption in the interest of the citizen.⁸⁹

Moving on, the third point of the manifesto, „Für die Weiterentwicklung der Demokratie“ (For the Continued Development of Democracy), advocates changes in the electoral system, which is decried as rigged for the benefit of the main parties and thus having „Anmaßung gegenüber dem Bürger“ (hubris with respect to the citizen).⁹⁰ If we assume that party positions are ordered, at least roughly, by importance, then the top three party priorities all attack the political system, the latter two in remarkably strong terms.

Following the success this strategy brought in 1986, the party doubled down on such lines of attack during its 1990 election campaign. The introduction to that year's manifesto, ambitiously titled „Präambel für Österreichs Zukunft“ (Preamble to Austria's Future), portrays the party as a heroic figure, supported by the citizens who have cast off their „angepaßte ‚Gefügigkeit‘“ (adaptable submissiveness) for a „kritischen System-

⁸⁸ FPÖ Party Program 1986.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

hinterfragung“ (critical examination of the system). Downplaying any ideology, the party is cast as merely a conduit for the people’s will:

In dieser demokratielähmenden und reformfeindlichen Situation sind die Freiheitlichen unter Jörg Haider, Norbert Gugerbauer und Heide Schmidt zur politischen Offensive angetreten: Als harte, unbestechlich kontrollierende Opposition, mit dem klaren Ziel, den Bürger und Wähler zu mobilisieren, und so von Wahlerfolg zu Wahlerfolg eilend die Machtbürokraten der Großen Koalition und der Sozialpartner mehr als nur zu stören; Das „System“ darf nicht Gewohnheit werden!

In this democratically paralyzed and reform-hostile situation, the Liberals under Jörg Haider, Norbert Gugerbauer and Heide Schmidt are mounting a political offensive: As a tough, incorruptibly policing opposition, with the clear goal to mobilize the citizens and voters, and so through electoral success after electoral success to quickly disrupt the powerful bureaucrats of the Grand Coalition and the Social Partnership; we must not let the “system” become a habit!⁹¹

This appeal to populism was indeed a play to broaden electoral support; no longer simply for disaffected Nazis, the Freedom Party was now for anyone dissatisfied with Austrian politics, who yearned for something, anything new:

Die neuen politischen Herausforderungen verlangen außerordentliche politische Phantasie, Reformwillen und politische Veränderungsfähigkeit. Wer dazu Ja sagt, wird in der FPÖ, gleichgültig, ob sie in Regierung oder Opposition ist, Mitverfechter und politische Partner finden.

New political challenges demand exceptional political imagination, the will to reform, and the capacity for political change. Whoever says Yes to this will find in the FPÖ, regardless if it is in government or opposition, an advocate and political partner.⁹²

So it was that the Freedom Party used polemic to portray itself as the only reasonable force to combat the Grand Coalition. Equally of note, however, is that – unlike as with Steger – it did so while playing strongly to its far-right base.

⁹¹ FPÖ Party Program 1990.

⁹² Ibid.

How can we know this? There are, first off, the litany of gaffes – although that term seems unduly minimizing – committed by Haider. Most glaring was, when serving as president of the Carinthian assembly, his praise of the “orderly employment policy carried out in the Third Reich.”⁹³ The event was rendered in the American press as “Austrian’s Praise of Nazis Draws Call for Resignation,”⁹⁴ and he did indeed resign from that position.⁹⁵

After that came his guest speakership at a “war veterans’ get-together” – the fact that the veterans were predominantly former *Waffen-SS* members, who Haider then remarked were “decent people,” led to his being sued under an Austrian law forbidding “glorifying the Nazi past.”⁹⁶

Other figures in the party made even more crass remarks. There was John Gudenus, a Viennese city councilman who referred to the existence of gas chambers as “dogmatic history.”⁹⁷ There was Reinhart Gaugg, who, as a member of FPÖ leadership, attempted to redefine the word “Nazi” as an acronym for „*Neu, attraktiv, zielstrebig, ideenreich*“ (New, attractive, zealous, imaginative).⁹⁸ As the list goes on, it becomes difficult *not* to conclude, as Austrian political scientist Walter Manoschek does, that

⁹³ Michael Z. Wise, “Austrian’s Praise of Nazis Draws Calls for Resignation,” *Washington Post*, June 19, 1991, <http://washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1991/06/19/austrians-praise-of-nazis-draws-call-for-resignation/ccef7e17-097a-48fd-88e0-32a4af22682a/>.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Ignazi, 114.

⁹⁶ Alan Cowell, “Right’s Rise Confronts Austria with Its Nazi Past,” *New York Times*, February 8, 1996, <http://nytimes.com/1996/02/08/world/right-s-rise-confronts-austria-with-its-nazi-past.html>

⁹⁷ David Art, *The Politics of the Nazi Past in Germany and Austria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 140.

⁹⁸ “Reinhart ‘Neu, attraktiv, zielstrebig, ideenreich’ Gaugg,” *Der Standard* (Vienna), August 5, 2002, <http://derstandard.at/1030823/Reinhart-Neu-attraktiv-zielstrebig-ideenreich-Gaugg/>.

these “are, in fact, structural characteristics of the FPÖ world-view and not ‘verbal slip-ups,’ as those who wish to play down outrageous statements would have us believe.”⁹⁹

Yet we need not even look for “slip-ups” – in its official messaging, the party invoked fascistic callbacks, especially with respect to immigration. Returning to the 1990 party program, point six is entitled „*Die Ausländerfrage*“ (The Foreigner Question), which advocates severe restrictions on immigration, predicated on the basis that „*Österreich ist kein Einwanderungsland wie die USA oder Kanada*“ (Austria is not a land of immigrants like the USA or Canada).¹⁰⁰ And though this type of “question” formulation has seen broad use across Europe, its use in German is highly problematic. Parallels to *die Judenfrage* (the Jewish Question), for which Hitler applied his “Final Solution,” are not easily ignored.¹⁰¹

While this precise formulation does not reappear after 1990, anti-immigrant rhetoric and policy prescriptions continued. Point five of the 1999 manifesto, titled „*Österreich zuerst*“ (Austria first), calls for an immediate freeze on immigration,¹⁰² while the party’s main campaign poster read „*Stop der Überfremdung*“ (“Stop foreign infiltration”), a phrase repurposed from its previous use by Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels to signify the Jews.¹⁰³

Yet the context of these allusions should not be forgotten. On the same exact page outlining the immigration freeze is this claim:

⁹⁹ Walter Manoschek, “FPÖ, ÖVP, and Austria’s Nazi Past,” in *The Haider Phenomenon in Austria*, eds. Ruth Wodak and Anton Pelinka (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2002), 35.

¹⁰⁰ FPÖ Party Program 1990.

¹⁰¹ Holly Case, *The Age of Questions* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2018), 3-7, 131.

¹⁰² FPÖ Party Program 1999.

¹⁰³ Ruth Wodak and Anton Pelinka, “Introduction: From Waldheim to Haider,” in *The Haider Phenomenon in Austria*, eds. Ruth Wodak and Anton Pelinka (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2002), xv.

Die Altparteien SPÖ und ÖVP sind dafür verantwortlich, daß Kinder in Österreich täglich brutal mißbraucht werden.

The Old Parties SPÖ and ÖVP are responsible
for children in Austria being brutally abused every day.¹⁰⁴

The Freedom Party flirted with Nazism, yes, but it did so while (justifiably or not) relentlessly, polemically hammering the establishment parties. It was this anti-system orientation, these anti-system attacks that – in a system that for decades had not seen change – courted a much broader, disaffected base. And it allowed for accusations of neo-fascism to simply be brushed off as libel by the establishment parties, as was indeed done in the party program back in 1990:

die Große Koalition [hat] versucht, die Freiheitlichen als Neo-Nazi-Partei zu diffamieren, als ob mit Gespenster-Wiederbelebung von vorgestern irgendetwas Positives geschehen würde.

the Grand Coalition has attempted to defame the Liberals as a neo-Nazi party, as if reviving the ghosts of the distant past would precipitate anything positive.¹⁰⁵

And it is this dual strategy – anti-system populism while simultaneously campaigning to the Far Right – which creates a defining tension.

Thomas Bernhard employed polemical agitation to criticize Austria, its political parties especially. Jörg Haider used a similar polemical style, targeting the same two parties. And there are indeed further historical connections between them – Haider declared himself a Bernhard fan in the run-up to the 1999 election,¹⁰⁶ and his very eulogy by far-right compatriots contained a reference to Bernhard.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ FPÖ Party Program 1999.

¹⁰⁵ FPÖ Party Program 1990.

¹⁰⁶ Honegger, 289.

¹⁰⁷ Matthias Beilein, “Ist Thomas Bernhard ein kanonischer Autor?,” in *Gegenwartsliteratur: A German Studies Yearbook*, Vol. 13, eds. Paul Michael Lützeler, Erin McGlothlin, and Jennifer Kapczynski (Tübingen: Stauffenburg Verlag, 2014), 188.

Yet their rhetoric, however similar in style, advocated two worldviews that could not be more antithetical, such that the Freedom Party actively took steps to try to crack down on Bernhard's artistic successors. From their 1995 manifesto:

Die Freiheit der Kunst ist zu respektieren, öffentliche Förderung kann es aber nur geben, wo auch ein öffentliches Interesse besteht: Bei Österreich-Beschimpfern oder extremistischen Agitatoren ist dies nicht der Fall.

Artistic freedom is to be respected, but public support can be provided only if there exists a public interest: With blasphemers of Austria or extreme agitators, this is not the case.¹⁰⁸

Polemical was, then, for the Freedom Party, to be used only to advocate the Austrian nation, the Austrian *Volk*. To use it to attack Austria was “agitation” or “blasphemy.” But such a fundamental distinction between nationalist and anti-nationalist rhetoric seemed not to matter in terms of efficacy; both Bernhard and Haider were remarkably successful at what they did.

Thus, it was the case that, in 2000, the Freedom Party entered government as junior coalition partner to the Christian-Democratic ÖVP. The event was unprecedented; as stated earlier, the FPÖ was the first European far-right party to enter into government in the postwar era,¹⁰⁹ and Austria was formally sanctioned by the EU as a result.¹¹⁰ In their descriptions, politics watchers did not mince their words:

When President Klestil swore in the new Austrian government of ÖVP and FPÖ at the beginning of February 2000, the postwar-era in Austria came to an end. [...] The political system in Austria, under strain for over a decade, has finally capsized: the change from a democracy of concord to one of conflict is now final.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ FPÖ Party Program 1995.

¹⁰⁹ William Drozdiak, “EU Warns Austria of Sanctions,” *Washington Post*, February 1, 2000, <http://washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/WPcap/2000-02/01/010r-020100-idx.html>

¹¹⁰ Ian Black, “Europe Rallies against Haider Coalition,” *The Guardian*, February 4, 2000, <http://theguardian.com/world/2000/feb/04/austria.ianblack/>.

¹¹¹ Manoschek, 3.

Applying this to the literary sphere, then, through Norberg's formulation, the "conditions of critique" in Austria had been diametrically altered. And with old rhetorical methods now taken up by the right, the next generation of writers required new strategies, to which we now turn.

VI. The Austrian Literary Response

We find our first example of resistance to far-right ascendance in the "post-dramatic" theater of Elfriede Jelinek. As described by critic Fatima Naqvi, the genre "eschews the primacy of the written text, standard scenic development, and depth-psychological characters; it opts for non-referential images or parodies the media images it absorbs."¹¹² In this respect, the style could be viewed somewhat as a logical continuation of *Heldenplatz*, with Bernhard's minimal plot eliminated entirely. At any rate, Jelinek's innovation of the style led, at least in part, to her being awarded, in 2004, the Nobel Prize in Literature.¹¹³

Jelinek's repertoire is intensely political, and it is not difficult to locate a piece taking aim at the Freedom Party under Jörg Haider, namely *Das Lebewohl* – literally translating as *The Farewell*, or, as its French subtitle terms it, *Les Adieux*. Its relevance to Haider is indeed without question; it was written to be performed during the ongoing Vienna-based "Thursday Demonstrations" against the new ÖVP/FPÖ government.¹¹⁴ In the text itself, Jelinek, in the stage directions, terms the piece a „*Haider-Monolog*“,¹¹⁵

¹¹² Fatima Naqvi, "Cognitive Dissonances: Elfriede Jelinek," in *The Literary and Cultural Rhetoric of Victimhood: Western Europe, 1970-2005* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 172-173.

¹¹³ "The Nobel Prize in Literature 2004," *Nobel Media*, accessed March 22, 2019, <http://nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/2004/summary/>.

¹¹⁴ "Das Lebewohl' von Jelinek," *Der Standard* (Vienna), December 1, 2000, <http://derstandard.at/407760/Das-Lebewohl-von-Jelinek/>.

¹¹⁵ Elfriede Jelinek, *Das Lebewohl*, in *Das Lebewohl: 3 kl. Dramen* (Berlin: Berlin Verlag, 2004), 9.

reformulating his February 2000 resignation as Freedom Party chairman and return to Carinthian, rather than national, politics. Indeed, in such a context, analysis can be made of the title itself, which is taken from the name of the first movement of Beethoven's Sonata in E-flat Opus 81a; that piece's third movement is entitled "Das Wiedersehen" ("The Return") – in the context of Haider, a warning of sorts.¹¹⁶

Regardless, a monologue it is indeed – through nearly thirty pages of speech, devoid of paragraph breaks or stage directions, *Der Sprecher* (The Speaker), as Jelinek terms her singular character, rants, alternatingly, to a group of boys surrounding him and to the audience itself. Far from the charismatic, camera-polished image Haider is known for,¹¹⁷ Jelinek's ventriloquy of him presents on stage a much different character, one almost entirely unrestrained. Guarded rhetoric becomes shouted fanaticism – that is to say, the fascist insinuations that Haider and his party rely on are amplified, allowing the audience to pass judgement.

As a quick preface, post-dramatic theater is remarkably difficult to analyze; to dissect the piece and present it neatly for analysis necessarily loses the sense of cacophonous madness it means to imply. Still, there is at least some value gained by analyzing the piece's numerous motifs, two of which – those of culpability and the father – are especially important for this discussion.

First, to culpability. While Haider (and his party generally) has always been careful to deny any connection to the Nazis, Jelinek's portrayal quickly abandons such pretext; denial changes quickly to minimization and excuses:

¹¹⁶ Allyson Fiddler, "Staging Jörg Haider: Protest and Resignation in Elfriede Jelinek's *Das Lebewohl* and Other Recent Texts for the Theatre," *Modern Language Review* 97, no. 2 (2002): 354, 362.

¹¹⁷ Nicholas Kulish and Eugen Freund, "Jörg Haider, Austrian Rightist, Is Dead at 58," *New York Times*, October 11, 2008, <http://nytimes.com/2008/10/12/world/europe/12haider.html>

Wir haben keine Mitschuld an der Tat. Wir haben auch keine Morde befohlen. Das kann man von uns nicht sagen. Wir haben den Fall von Anfang an erörtert: wir warens nicht, und unsre Väter warens auch nicht. Sie könnens nicht gewesen sein. Ach! Unsere Väter warens vielleicht doch, aber es hat nichts gemacht. Es hat ihnen nicht geschadet. Wenn Sie so wollen, dann waren sies halt. Es waren abscheuliche, einmalige Verbrechen. Sowas wirds nie wieder geben. Es war einmal, es ist nicht mehr. Nie wieder, sagen wir! Nie wieder! Und schon bekommen wirs frisch herein, wir warens zwar, gut, wenn Sies so wollen unbedingt, und wenn wir jemand gekränkt haben, wir bedauern, aber haben wir nicht Recht?

We are not complicit in that crime. We also have not ordered any murders. One cannot say that about us. From the very beginning we debated the case: it wasn't us, and it wasn't our fathers either. It couldn't have been. Fine! It may have perhaps been our fathers, but it didn't matter. It didn't damage them. If you want, sure, it was them. Those were hideous, one-of-a-kind crimes. There will never be anything like them again. It was once, it isn't any more. Never again, we say! Never again! And since we're getting into it, it definitely was us, unconditionally, if that's what you want, and if we aggrieved someone, we regret it, but are we not right?¹¹⁸

Of course, already in the same passage we begin to see the father motif. These themes, indeed all themes of the texts, cannot be fully isolated. This is indeed a feature of post-dramatic style, which emphasizes “de-hierarchization” and “parataxis” – linking phrases and ideas together without grammatical, or even logical, connections.¹¹⁹ “Mania” is perhaps a more accessible way to describe it.

As necessary context for this latter theme, it is important to know that Jörg Haider's father indeed was an early Nazi party member.¹²⁰ This is, of course, not uncommon in the Austria of Haider's generation, and his home state of Carinthia is viewed, deservedly or not, as being especially “brown.”¹²¹ What is unusual, however, is

¹¹⁸ Jelinek, 13-14.

¹¹⁹ Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, trans. Karen Jürs-Munby (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 86-87.

¹²⁰ Friedrich Weissensteiner, “Das politische Phänomen Jörg Haider,” *Wiener Zeitung* (Vienna), October 9, 2004, http://wienerzeitung.at/nachrichten/archiv/146972_Das-politische-Phaenomen-Joerg-Haider.html/.

¹²¹ Robert Knight, “Denazification and Integration in the Austrian Province of Carinthia,” *Journal of Modern History* 79, no. 3 (2007): 577-579.

the extent to which – at least in the play – Haider identifies with and even defends his father and, by extension, Nazism more broadly.

Again, the effect is analogous to *Heldenplatz*. Just as Bernhard, in the eyes of literary critics, put the Austrian nation on trial,¹²² Jelinek puts Haider on the stand to testify. His defense, perhaps to be expected, is that he has done all he can:

Früher waren wir der Tod, wir entschuldigen uns und sind hiemit entschuldigt. Wenn Sie so wollen, dann waren wirs halt. Heute sind das ewige Leben wir und können nichts dafür, das macht kaum einen Unterschied. Sie schreien, wir aber verlangen Gerechtigkeit für uns. Alles für uns! Wir haben uns entschuldigt, wir haben uns mehr als entschuldigt, und viel mehr können wir nicht tun.

Earlier we were death, we apologize and are hereby excused. If you want, we did it, quite simply. Today we are eternal life and can't do anything about it, it barely makes a difference. You shout, "But we demand our justice. Everything for us!" We have apologized, we have more than apologized, and we can't do much more than that.¹²³

And, taking it a step further, he argues that it is actually he and his family who have been the ones wronged:

Ich mußte miterleben, wie meine Familie, meine Familie, die Guten, Gescheiten, die vor Blondheit Strotzenden, von brutal Gewalttätigen in Mitleidenschaft gezogen wurde.

I had to witness how my family, my family: the good, prudent, the abounding with blondness, was violently forced to suffer.¹²⁴

But a simple defense is not the end of it. Jelinek proceeds to have Haider confess his goals – his real goals, as she sees them, not the democratic corrective which he purports himself to be. Haider, in her view, wishes to finish that which his father could not, the indictment being delivered in, to continue the metaphor, a climactic closing argument:

¹²² Naqvi, "Dialectic at a Standstill," 409.

¹²³ Jelinek, 14.

¹²⁴ Ibid, 16-17.

Nicht weiter zeugen, nicht weiter Sohn sein, nicht weiter Sonne sein, Schuld – ebenfalls: genug! [...] Zögern will nicht auch: ich. Mein Vater sein will auch: ich. Sag nicht Mutter! Sag Vater! Sag nicht Mutter! Sag Vater! Und zieh dein Schwert! Die Toten sein will auch: ich! Mutiger Helfer sein will auch: ich. Das Tuch vor Augen, um die Gemordeten nicht zu sehen, brauche nicht: ich. Alle niedermachen will auch: ich.

No longer bear witness, no longer be a son, no longer be the Sun, guilt – likewise, enough! [...] Also not to hesitate, I wish. Also to be my father, I wish. Don't say Mother! Say Father! Don't say Mother! Say Father! And draw your sword! Also to be the dead, I wish. Also to be a brave helper, I wish. A cloth before my eyes, so not to see the murdered, I do not need. To also massacre everyone, I wish.¹²⁵

Through her own wordplay, Jelinek strips Haider of his charisma, of his caution, of *his* wordplay. Now, on the theater stage, he is forced to say what he means, as Jelinek extends his argument to what, in her view, is its logical conclusion. To reference a very different work, Jelinek, like Toto, reveals the man behind the curtain for all to see.

Jelinek's is a compelling piece, certainly, and it is one that ties in well with Thomas Bernhard. Yet to focus only on this strain of dramatic satire by well-known, canonical authors is somewhat limiting. With that in mind, to broaden our scope of inquiry we turn then to *Pittersberg*, a novel by Austrian writer Werner Thuswaldner, published – as was Jelinek's play – in 2000.

This is a break from previous examples in two ways. First, though it received favorable reviews upon release, including in such prestigious outlets as the *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, a paper of record, neither the work nor its author were ever particularly well-known. Secondly while Jelinek thrives on the experimental, Thuswaldner's work is quite conventional. It serves, therefore, as a good representation of what could be termed a more traditionally novelistic critique of the New Far Right, and illustrates the

¹²⁵ Ibid, 34.

diversity of ways in which writers employed both the experimental *and* the conventional to political ends.

In its analysis, too, the work requires a change of pace. Though rhetoric is certainly important, the criticism of Jörg Haider, who is indeed never explicitly mentioned, is largely driven by the work's plot, which therefore requires some description. Told in first person, the unnamed narrator is an Austrian historian from Dellach, a small village in Carinthia, who is asked by a Hamburg-based magazine to write a column studying the rise of the "Pittersberg Circle." This far-right group, based out of the narrator's own hometown and holding meetings at a nearby ruined fortress, has recently become national news. As the narrator explains:

Auf einem jährlichen Veteranentreffen in Dellach waren Äußerungen gefallen, die aufhorchen ließen. Jemand hatte Videoaufnahmen von dem Treffen gemacht und sie dann dem Fernsehen angeboten. Die Veteranen, begierig darauf, beim Anhören patriotischer Sprüche wieder einmal ein wenig Leben in ihren alten Knochen zu spüren, waren ruhig dagesessen und hatten sich vom jugendlich wirkenden Anführer des Pittersberg-Kreises, der sich von dem Anlass hinreißen ließ, als große Vorbilder der österreichischen Jugend feiern lassen. Phrasen wie: Die Generation von heute müsse den Kampf ihrer Väter erst führen, prägten seine Rede. Immer wieder fielen beim Abspielen des unscharfen Videos von ordensbedeckten Uniformen die Begriffe «Pflichterfüllung» und «Vaterlandsliebe».

At a yearly veterans' meeting in Dellach, remarks were made which made people take notice. Someone had video recorded the meeting, then provided the footage to the TV networks. The veterans, eager to feel some life in their old bones by listening once again to patriotic patter, sat there quietly and reveled at the youthful-looking ringleader of the Pittersberg Circle, who was himself enraptured by the occasion, as a great model of the Austrian youth. Phrases like "today's generation must now lead the fight of their fathers" punctuated his speech. Time and again, as the blurry video of men in their medal-pinned uniforms played back, came the notions of "fulfilling one's duty" and "love of the fatherland".¹²⁶

¹²⁶ Werner Thuswaldner, *Pittersberg* (Munich: Albrecht Knaus Verlag, 2000), 13.

Only a dozen pages into the book, the connections to reality are already quite clear. Our first introduction to the Pittersberg Circle is almost exactly a description of Haider's speech to SS veterans, as referenced previously. Reviews of the book attest to this as well; to quote Egon Schwarz, writing for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine*:

Wenn er [Thuswaldner] den Anführer eines rechtskonservativen Kults "beifallheischend gegen die Türken wettern" lässt, gegen "die Frauen mit den Kopftüchern" und ihre vielen Kinder, um so die Angst zu schüren, dann wird es nicht viele Leser geben, die herumrätseln müssen, wer gemeint ist.

When he [Thuswaldner] lets the ringleader of a right-wing conservative cult "vociferate against the Turks in hopes of applause" and against "the women with the headscarves" and "their many children" in order to stoke fear, there are not many readers who have to puzzle over who is meant by that.¹²⁷

But the novel is not primarily about Jörg Haider, or "The Ringleader," as his representation is called. The overall story is a deeply personal one, quite possibly drawn from Thuswaldner's own life experience – from the biographical insert, we know that he, like his narrator, is also a Carinthian-born historian and columnist. Thus, the main focus of the novel is the protagonist being forced, by the nature of studying events in his hometown, to return to his troubled roots, all the while resurrecting traumatic memories of abuse at the hands of his father and older brother.

Still, attacks on Haider, when they do come, are biting. The primary example of this is established through a legend surrounding the Pittersberg ruins, stating that, back in the 15th century, the fortress was a bulwark against invading Ottoman Turks. This is a struggle the Far Right identifies with strongly – recall Steve King referencing it in his interview with *unzensuriert* – viewing itself as the modern-day successor to such

¹²⁷ Egon Schwarz, "Verworren fundamental," *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, April 4, 2000, <http://faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/buecher/rezensionen/belletristik/rezension-belletristik-verworren-fundamental-110773.html/>.

resistance to Muslim “invaders,” for which the protagonist provides a sarcastic explanation:

Paradiesisches Leben fing an, sich zu entfalten, solange, bis die Türken ins Abendland einfielen, blutrünstige, kulturlose Untermenschen. Die Türken rannten lang vergeblich gegen den Pittersberg an, ihre Angriffe wurden immer wieder heldenhaft zurückgeschlagen, bis diese «asiatischen Feiglinge» zu einer List griffen und die Burg in brand setzen.

Idyllic life began to unravel as the Turks broke into the West, those bloodthirsty, cultureless subhumans. The Turks fought long against Pittersberg without success, their attacks were time and again heroically driven back, until those “Asiatic cowards” used a bit of cunning and set the fortress ablaze.¹²⁸

Bringing the plot threads together, the narrator’s family – as eventually becomes clear – is indeed implicated in the whole affair. His father, who in the interwar period set up a sanatorium near Pittersberg, discovered there some horseshoes that bore no resemblance to Austrian ones of that historical period – they must, therefore, have been Turkish, thereby bringing the legend to life. That the Pittersberg Circle exists at all is then, in some respect, his father’s doing – as a historian friend relates to him, *„dein Vater und seine Rolle ist im Pittersberg-Kreis nicht vergessen“* (your father, and the role he played, is not forgotten by the Pittersberg Circle).¹²⁹

Such evidence in hand, the Circle’s ultimate goal is to rebuild the fortress, thereby rekindling popular interest and serving as a central propagandic symbol for their anti-immigrant politics. To this end, the narrator’s friend, Stefanie, who works in the film industry, is enlisted to shoot a documentary about the project, centering on The Ringleader and culminating with a speech by him from the fortress ruins. And if the

¹²⁸ Thuswaldner, 70.

¹²⁹ Ibid, 141.

connections to Haider were not yet already cemented, the description makes them even more apparent:

Mit ihrem Charme habe sie [Stefanie] den Anführer dazu gebracht, oben auf dem Pittersberg nach der Besichtigung der Baustelle zur Wiedererrichtung der Burg eine flammende Hetzrede gegen die Ausländer im Allgemein und die Türken im Besonderen zu halten.

With her charm, she [Stefanie] convinced the Ringleader, after inspecting the site for the rebuilding of the fortress, into giving – up on the ruins – an inflammatory diatribe against foreigners in general and Turks more specifically.¹³⁰

This is, however, a dismal failure. The audio recording, whether by accident or purposeful sabotage, is ruined by background noise, which renders the Ringleader's climactic oratory as nothing but farcical:

Seine Ansprache auf der Baustelle der neuen Burg werde immer wieder von einem unerklärlichen Piepston unterbrochen, so dass jede einzelne seiner Aussagen über die Unterwanderung des Abendlands durch finstere Rauschgifthändler und andere Individuen aus dem Osten, vom Balkan und sogar aus Afrika ins Lächerliche gezogen werde.

His speech from the construction site of the new castle was continuously interjected by an inexplicable beeping noise, such that every one of his assertions about the infiltration of the West through sinister narcotic dealers, and other individuals, from the East, Balkans, and Africa, was transformed into the absurd.¹³¹

Yet Thuswaldner's sharpest critique, beyond even this, is that the whole legend, the whole basis for the Far Right's adopting of Pittersberg, is founded on a lie. The horseshoes were not Turkish – they were atypical simply because they were used for oxen, not horses.¹³² That the historical site is irreparably damaged by an oil pipeline leak two weeks later, as revealed at the very end of the work,¹³³ places the capstone on Thuswaldner's argument – Haider, the Ringleader, bases his „*verworrener*

¹³⁰ Ibid, 159.

¹³¹ Ibid, 165.

¹³² Ibid, 141-142.

¹³³ Ibid, 189.

abendländischer Fundamentalismus“ (confused Western fundamentalism) solely on lies,¹³⁴ and with it he destroys everything he touches.

It should be noted that Thuswaldner has written scholarly literary criticism on Austrian writer Peter Handke;¹³⁵ he is well acquainted with the Austrian literary mainstream. This makes his difference in style perhaps even more notable – the critique is sharp, certainly, yet it is done quite indirectly, interspersed between scores of pages which have nothing to do with criticizing the Far Right at all. Indeed, at least one reviewer was dismayed with the roundabout way in which the subject of Haider is tackled.¹³⁶

Yet by intertwining the Haider figure into a personal story of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* – the narrator finds closure only when he finally learns, as he had previously suspected, that his brother and father were both highly involved with Nazis – the influence of the far right is humanized to a far greater degree than in the harsh, polemical versions of critique we have previously seen. Thereby, *Pittersberg* reflects the fact that indirect attacks are a viable way to criticize the Far Right in literature, which will become more apparent (and important) as we transition, now, to the German case.

VII. The Rise of the German Far Right

If Austria could be considered one of the first European countries to see far-right success, Germany was quite possibly the last. As political scientist Piero Ignazi introduces the topic in his overview of that ideology across Western Europe, the Far

¹³⁴ Ibid, 166.

¹³⁵ Thomas F. Barry, “Postmodern Longings for the Static Moment: On Recent Peter Handke Criticism,” *German Quarterly* 60, no. 1 (1987): 96.

¹³⁶ Arne Dessaul, “Haider im Nebel,” *Rubens* (Bochum), July 1, 2000.

Right in Germany was, notably, “The Spectre That Never Materialized.”¹³⁷ This was an accurate assertion; between the fall of fascism 1945 and that work’s publication in 2003, far right parties had been held to vote shares on the order of one to two percent.¹³⁸ As Ignazi makes clear, however, this does not mean that the country had been purged of far-right sentiment – opinion surveys showed quite the opposite. His concluding paragraph elaborates:

The third wave of right-extremism reflects the latent needs of a German society emerging from structural/economic and value modification. [...] Moreover, reunification has provided further opportunities: it has produced economic stagnation (extremely pronounced in the East) which has fed hostility towards the government and the parties in general, and has relaunched – mainly because of immigration – the nationalist *völkisch* interpretation of national identity. The lack of a large network of political associations in the East has liberated a violent mobilization by movements and groups and a (still latent) neo-Nazi revival. If the extreme right failed in the electoral arena it is still present (and aggressive) in street-level activity, especially in the East.¹³⁹

In other words, the situation in Germany, particularly in Eastern Germany, was not all that different than the situation in Austria in the 1980s. The same anti-system mindset („*Systemverdrossenheit*“) was present, with widespread dissatisfaction with the political mainstream;¹⁴⁰ in that context, electoral exploitation of far-right undercurrents was perhaps inevitable, manifesting finally with the Alternative for Germany (*Alternative für Deutschland*, AfD).

The AfD, in stark contrast to the Freedom Party, is a very recent phenomenon. It was created in 2013, at the height of the so-called Euro crisis, and was, at that time, practically a single-issue party. As they articulated in the first lines of their inaugural party program:

¹³⁷ Ignazi, 62

¹³⁸ Ibid, 68.

¹³⁹ Ibid, 82.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

Wir fordern eine geordnete Auflösung des Euro-Währungsgebietes. Deutschland braucht den Euro nicht. Anderen Ländern schadet der Euro.

We advocate an organized dissolution of the Eurozone. Germany does not need the Euro. Other countries damage the Euro.¹⁴¹

Its members, however, contended otherwise. As one of its founders, journalist Konrad Adam, claimed in an interview with Berlin newspaper *Die Welt* about his fledgling party, *Euro-Politik* was simply indicative of broader political neglect of German democratic principles by Angela Merkel's coalition government – “the danger of idling democracy” was more serious than “the problem of the Euro.”¹⁴² This forms, already, the basis for the populism to which the party would soon pivot.

On this anti-system, yet decidedly technocratic, platform, the party won 4.7% of the vote in the German legislative elections of September 2013. While certainly a good showing for a fledgling party, German law sets an electoral threshold of 5% of the vote in order to be eligible for proportional representation in the national parliament; the party therefore did not receive seats.¹⁴³

That would have to wait until September 2017, when the AfD won roughly 13% of the vote, becoming the third strongest party in Germany in what was deemed a “political earthquake.”¹⁴⁴ Furthermore, as evidenced by American press headlines such as “Far-Right Party Wins Seats in German Parliament for First Time in Decades,” the party's identity had seemingly shifted.¹⁴⁵ So, what happened in those intervening four years?

¹⁴¹ AfD Party Program 2013, 1.

¹⁴² Günther Lachmann, “Anti-Euro-Partei geißelt die Politik der Kanzlerin,” *Die Welt* (Berlin), March 3, 2013, <http://welt.de/politik/deutschland/article114091447/Anti-Euro-Partei-geisselt-die-Politik-der-Kanzlerin.html/>.

¹⁴³ D.H., K.N.C., and P.K., “Who's in the Haus?,” *The Economist*, September 23, 2013, <http://economist.com/charlemagne/2013/09/23/whos-in-the-haus/>.

¹⁴⁴ Judith Vonberg and Nadine Schmidt, “Far-Right Party Wins Seats in German Parliament for First Time in Decades,” *CNN*, September 25, 2017, <http://cnn.com/2017/09/24/europe/germany-far-right-party-election/index.html>

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

The answer traces a remarkably similar path to that of the Freedom Party – namely, the liberal leadership was usurped by a far-right, nationalist faction. We see this tension already in the run-up to the 2013 election, when party chairman Bernd Lucke declared a ban on party membership for former members of „*Die Freiheit*“ (Freedom, not to be confused with the Freedom *Party* mentioned previously), a far-right movement that, alongside a call for a general freeze on immigration, pledged in its program, „*Wir setzen uns mit aller Kraft gegen eine Islamisierung unseres Landes ein*“ (We apply ourselves, with all our power, against an Islamization of our country).¹⁴⁶ And this did indeed contrast strongly with the AfD’s immigration policy prescriptions of that time:

Ernsthaft politisch Verfolgte müssen in Deutschland Asyl finden können. Zu einer menschenwürdigen Behandlung gehört auch, dass Asylbewerber hier arbeiten können.

Those who are genuinely politically persecuted must be able to find asylum in Germany. Humane treatment implies that asylum seekers are able to work here.¹⁴⁷

Yet the ban was met with immediate criticism from some of Lucke’s deputies, chief among them Frauke Petry, Alexander Gauland, and Matthias Wohlfarth, all three of whom represented states in the former GDR – Saxony, Brandenburg, and Thuringia, respectively. Wohlfarth in particular called Lucke’s actions a restriction on free thought,¹⁴⁸ which did presumably violate the party platform, specifically this point:

Wir setzen uns dafür ein, dass auch unkonventionelle Meinungen im öffentlichen Diskurs ergebnisoffen diskutiert werden, solange die Meinungen nicht gegen die Werte des Grundgesetzes verstoßen.

¹⁴⁶ Peter Schilder, “Aufnahmestopp: AfD streitet über Rechtspopulisten,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, July 10, 2013, <http://faz.net/aktuell/politik/inland/aufnahmestopp-afd-streitet-ueber-rechtspopulisten-12606356.html/>.

¹⁴⁷ AfD Party Program 2013, 4.

¹⁴⁸ Schilder.

We espouse that even unconventional opinions should be able to be discussed in public, in an open and unbiased way, so long as such opinions do not contravene the values of the constitution.¹⁴⁹

Thus, we see the same factionalism and contradiction as were present in the Austrian Freedom Party of the early 1980s. And, just as occurred then, it was resolved only by a contentious leadership vote at the party conference, this time in July 2015 in the city of Essen. Frauke Petry, who had by then strengthened her anti-immigrant rhetoric even further – going so far as to advocate for talks with the starkly anti-immigrant protest organization PEGIDA (*Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes*, Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the Occident) – won 60 percent of the votes, ousting Lucke, who had indeed been booed earlier at the convention “when he spoke against completely condemning Islam during his speech.”¹⁵⁰

This marked the beginning of the new AfD – that is to say, its current far-right, anti-immigrant formulation, under which it entered parliament in 2017. Its manifesto, approved in April of that year for the elections in September, is radically altered from the previous iteration.

As was done by the Freedom Party, the manifesto begins with a portrayal of the party as a populist corrective to a failed political system, in their words a „*Verteidigung der Demokratie in Deutschland*“ (Defense of Democracy in Germany). Holding true to its founding Euroskeptic principles, the European Union is held most accountable for this democratic deficit, as it violates the very idea of nationhood:

Es gibt weder ein europäisches Staatsvolk, das für ein solches Vorhaben [wie die EU] konstitutiv wäre, noch ist erkennbar, dass sich ein solches auf absehbare

¹⁴⁹ AfD Party Program 2013, 2.

¹⁵⁰ “Germany’s Euroskeptic AfD Elects Conservative Leader Petry,” *Deutsche Welle*, July 4, 2015, <http://dw.com/en/germanys-euroskeptic-afd-elects-conservative-leader-petry/a-18561912/>.

Zeit herausbildet. Kulturen, Sprachen und nationale Identitäten sind durch Jahrhunderte dauernde geschichtliche Entwicklungen entstanden. Sie stellen für ihre Angehörigen unverzichtbare Identifikationsräume dar, die nur in nationalen Staaten mit demokratischer Verfassung wirkungsvoll ausgestaltet werden können. Nur hier kann Volkssouveränität gelebt werden, die Mutter und das Herzstück der Demokratie.

There is neither a constitutive European people that would be suitable for such a project [as the EU], nor is it perceptible that such will come to be in the foreseeable future. Cultures, languages and national identities have come to being through centuries of historical development. These represent indispensable identity for those who belong to them, and can only be effectively implemented in nation states with democratic constitutions. Only then can the people's sovereignty exist, that mother and beating heart of democracy.¹⁵¹

But blame ultimately lies – as it did in the eyes the Freedom Party – at the feet of the ruling Grand Coalition of Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) and Social Democrats (SPD). It is against these forces that the party, on behalf of the people, wishes to fight:

1.3 Das Volk muss wieder zum Souverän werden

Heimlicher Souverän in Deutschland ist eine kleine, machtvolle politische Oligarchie, die sich in den bestehenden politischen Parteien ausgebildet hat. Sie hat die Fehlentwicklungen der letzten Jahrzehnte zu verantworten. Es hat sich eine politische Klasse herausgebildet, deren vordringliches Interesse ihrer Macht, ihrem Status und ihrem materiellen Wohlergehen gilt. Diese Oligarchie hat die Schalthebel der staatlichen Macht, der politischen Bildung und des informationellen und medialen Einflusses auf die Bevölkerung in Händen. Die stetigen Verletzungen der Prinzipien der deutschen Staatlichkeit gipfeln in der Flüchtlingspolitik der Bundesregierung von CDU/CSU und SPD.

1.3 The people must be returned to sovereignty

The secret sovereign in Germany is a small, powerful political oligarchy, which has been cultivated in the existing political parties. It is responsible for the maldevelopment of the past decades. It has established a political class whose utmost interest is holding on to their power, status and material wellbeing. This oligarchy wields the levers of state power, of political education and of informational and media influences on the populace. The continual injuries of the principles of German statehood culminates in the immigration policies of the CDU/CSU and SPD.¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ AfD Party Program 2017, 7.

¹⁵² Ibid.

These claims, together, form the rationale for the party's first policy prescription, indicated as such by italicization: „Wir wollen den souveränen, demokratischen Nationalstaat erhalten!“ (*We wish to preserve the sovereign, democratic nation state!*).¹⁵³ But what exactly does such a nation-state entail?

The first component, populist democracy, is obvious; and as with the Austrian case, it is a powerful force. That such populism is inextricably linked to the concept of *Volk* – as both visible in the manifesto and noted by scholars of the subject –¹⁵⁴ only increases this rhetorical power, especially in the East, where the famous Monday Demonstrations of fall 1989 against the East German regime were punctuated by the now-famous refrain „*Wir sind das Volk*“ (We are the People).¹⁵⁵

That is, if, as we have seen, a two-party duopoly on power led to disaffection and far-right populist support in Austria, it is no surprise that a single-party *monopoly* on power would do the same in the former GDR. While other factors are at play, economic disparity especially, the sheer difference in vote share for the AfD, 20.6% in the East versus 10.7% in the West, certainly backs this up.¹⁵⁶ But, and again in parallel to the Freedom Party, this populist rhetoric is also a necessary factor in tempering what is seen by many as the party's true cause.

Populist democracy is, after all, only half of the “democratic nation state” ideal. That second qualifier, nation, brings the party's rhetoric from *Volk* to *völkisch*, advocating a drive towards, in the words of Humboldt University historian Michael

¹⁵³ Ibid, 6.

¹⁵⁴ Michael Wildt, *Volk, Volksgemeinschaft, AfD* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2017), 97.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 133.

¹⁵⁶ “Angela Merkel Warns against East-West Division over AfD Rise,” *Deutsche Welle*, September 30, 2017, <http://dw.com/en/angela-merkel-warns-against-east-west-division-over-afd-rise/a-40757989/>.

Wildt, „*Ethnische Homogenität*“ (Ethnic Homogeneity). As he introduces that so-titled section of his book *Volk, Volksgemeinschaft, AfD*:

Tatsächlich steht hinter der AfD-Definition des Volkes ein ethnisch wie kulturell homogenes Volk, das mit deutlichen Grenzen Zugehörigkeit und Nicht-Zugehörigkeit bestimmt.

Indeed, behind the AfD's definition of *Volk* stands an ethnic-cum-cultural homogeneous *Volk*, defined with clear borders of belonging and nonbelonging.¹⁵⁷

And making this quite clear are two sections of the AfD's party program on the topics of Islam and immigration.

To the former is devoted the entirety of the manifesto's sixth chapter, entitled „*Der Islam im Konflikt mit der freiheitlich-demokratischen Grundordnung*“ (Islam in Conflict with Fundamental Liberal-Democratic Principles). From its very outset, it is extreme in its wording:

Der Islam gehört nicht zu Deutschland. In der Ausbreitung des Islam und der Präsenz von über 5 Millionen Muslimen, deren Zahl ständig wächst, sieht die AfD eine große Gefahr für unseren Staat, unsere Gesellschaft und unsere Werteordnung.

Islam is not German. In the spread of Islam and the presence of more than 5 million Muslims, whose numbers continually increase, the AfD sees a great danger for our country, our society and our value-system.¹⁵⁸

This “continual increase” is, of course, easily read as being due to immigration policies; indeed, in the AfD's rhetoric, the two are hardly separated. Immigration is simplified almost completely to the asylum seekers of the so-called “refugee crisis,” which began in 2015 as Angela Merkel's governing coalition granted protections to hundreds of thousands of Syrians fleeing that country's civil war.¹⁵⁹ Meanwhile,

¹⁵⁷ Wildt, 105.

¹⁵⁸ AfD Party Program 2017, 33.

¹⁵⁹ Wesley Dockery, “Two Years since Germany Opened Its Borders to Refugees: A Chronology,” *Deutsche Welle*, September 4, 2017, <http://dw.com/en/two-years-since-germany-opened-its-borders-to-refugees-a-chronology/a-40327634/>.

European Union policies allowing for freedom of movement, such that any EU citizen can live and work in Germany, receives only a passing mention as being “abused.”¹⁶⁰

So perhaps it should not be surprising that the AfD’s chapter on immigration is even more polemical, more inciteful, and more *völkisch* than that on Islam itself. The first policy proposal, again indicated by italics, reads, „Ziel der AfD ist Selbsterhaltung, nicht Selbstzerstörung unseres Staates und Volkes“ (*The goal of the AfD is the self-preservation, not the self-destruction, of our country and Volk*). The immediate follow-up makes its racial insinuations even more clear:

Die Zukunft Deutschlands und Europas muss langfristig gesichert werden. Wir wollen unseren Nachkommen ein Land hinterlassen, das noch als unser Deutschland erkennbar ist.

The future of Germany and Europe must be ensured in the long term. We wish to leave behind for our descendants a country, which is still recognizable as our Germany.¹⁶¹

But does such *völkisch* insinuation reach the point of *Volksgemeinschaft*? This is a strong accusation, and the term is never used directly. Yet, when looking into the party’s rhetoric, it is difficult to come to a different conclusion. As Michael Wildt writes:

Es ist daher nicht verwunderlich, dass innerhalb der AfD Begriffe wie »Volksgemeinschaft« oder »völkisch« salonfähig werden, weil damit an semantische Felder von »Volk« angeknüpft werden kann, mit denen ethnische Zugehörigkeitsmerkmale verstärkt werden.

It is therefore not surprising that within the AfD terms such as “*Volksgemeinschaft*” or “*völkisch*” become acceptable to use, because they can thereby be tied onto semantic arrays of “*Volk*,” with which ethnic characteristics for belonging are strengthened.¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ AfD Party Program 2017, 28-29.

¹⁶¹ Ibid, 27.

¹⁶² Wildt, 114.

His evidence for that assertion is a Facebook post by AfD party chairman for the German state of Saxony-Anhalt, André Poggenburg, in which he attempts, as Reinhart Gaugg did with the word “Nazi,” to rehabilitate fascist terminology:

Die AfD Sachsen-Anhalt spricht eine klare, unideologische Sprache und verwehrt sich gegen das ideologische Überzeichnen und einseitige Zuordnen sprachlicher Begriffe, die in ihrem Ursprung und ihrer grundsätzlichen Bedeutung ein positiver Ausdruck und Bestandteil der deutschen Sprache sind. »Volksgemeinschaft« ist ein solcher Begriff. Die enthaltenen Worte Volk und Gemeinschaft sind in keiner Weise negativ zu sehen, so wie der Begriff Volksgemeinschaft insgesamt.

The AfD of Saxony-Anhalt speaks in a clear, non-ideological manner, and therefore defies ideological oversubscription and absolute ascription of linguistic terms, which in their origin and basic meaning are a positive phrase and feature of the German language. “*Volksgemeinschaft*” is one such term. The constituent words “*Volk*” and “*Gemeinschaft*” can in no way be viewed negatively, and so is the term *Volksgemeinschaft* in its entirety.¹⁶³

So while arguing that „*demokratische Nationstaat*“ is a reformulation of *Volksgemeinschaft* is a strong assertion, it is one that is evidenced by both primary and secondary sources. Sixty years since the first Freedom Party manifesto called for that Nazified term, the postwar far right’s themes seem not to have changed all that much.

Literature, however, certainly has.

VIII. The German Literary Response

To understand this, we return once again to Norberg’s “conditions of critique,” and to the fact that between the Freedom Party coming to power in 2000 and the formation of the AfD in 2013 came the Digital Revolution, changing politics, media, and rhetoric irreversibly.

¹⁶³ André Poggenburg’s Facebook Page, accessed March 21, 2019, <http://facebook.com/poggenburg/posts/1249762595039034/>.

With regards to politics, the German Far Right has utilized these new technologies extensively. That the previous source was a politician's Facebook post could perhaps serve as a case-in-point, but the phenomenon has also been studied in more systematic ways. To quote recent scholarship:

Neurechten Netzwerke, deren parteipolitische Repräsentation die AfD inzwischen darstellt, werden publizistisch durch eine Vielzahl von Zeitschriften, Monografien, Sammelbänden, Blogs usw. flankiert. Sie verhelfen der AfD im Rahmen des von ihr selbst ausgerufenen »Kampf um kulturelle Hegemonie« zu medialer Aufmerksamkeit. Auf dem Feld der Sozial Medien geschieht dies in vergleichbarer Weise mittels Twitter-Accounts, Youtube-Kanälen sowie Facebook-Seiten und Facebook-Gruppen.

New-right groups, whose representation in party politics is by now the AfD, are flanked journalistically by a number of magazines, monographs, anthologies, blogs etc. These in turn help provide to the AfD, in the realm of their self-styled "struggle for cultural hegemony," media attention. In the field of social media, this occurs in comparable ways by means of Twitter accounts, Youtube channels, as well as Facebook pages and groups.¹⁶⁴

Perhaps the most obvious instance of this was with the previously-mentioned PEGIDA organization, whose anti-immigration, anti-government "Monday demonstrations" in the city of Dresden reached a strength of 20,000 at their peak. Initially stemming from a Facebook group,¹⁶⁵ they were visited early on by then AfD vice-chairman Alexander Gauland, who reportedly described them internally as "quite possibly our natural allies."¹⁶⁶

Within a few months, the group was the subject of a biting literary critique. That work, entitled *Glaube, Liebe, Hoffnung (Faith, Love, Hope)*, was self-published by

¹⁶⁴ Christoph Butterwegge, Gudrun Hentges, and Gerd Wiegel, *Rechtspopulisten im Parlament: Polemik, Agitation und Propaganda der AfD* (Frankfurt am Main: Westend Verlag, 2018), 203-204.

¹⁶⁵ André Haller and Kristoffer Holt, "Paradoxical Populism: How PEGIDA Relates to Mainstream and Alternative Media," *Information, Communication & Society* (2018): 2-3, accessed March 22, 2019, <http://tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1369118X.2018.1449882/>.

¹⁶⁶ Olaf Sundermeyer, "PEGIDA und die Radikalisierung von rechts – Beobachtungen einer menschenfeindlichen Bewegung," in *Wut, Verachtung, Abwertung: Rechtspopulismus in Deutschland*, eds. Andreas Ralf Melzer and Dietmar Molthagen (Bonn: Verlag J. H. W. Dietz Nachf., 2015), 167.

authors Gregor Weichbrodt and Hannes Bajohr on the website oxoa. Named after the hexadecimal representation for a line break in digital text, the site describes itself described as a “writers’ collective for digital literature,” which “strives to be a workshop, a laboratory, a showcase and a focal point for digital conceptual literature.”¹⁶⁷

The text itself, available free online as a seventy-page file, responds to the PEGIDA protests through the framing of that group’s stated principles, defense of *das Abendland* – translatable as the Occident, or literally as the “Evening Land,” the word denotes the idea of a singularly *Christian West*.¹⁶⁸ The organization’s members could, therefore, be expected to uphold Christian values, which the authors define using the Apostle Paul’s words in his First Letter to the Corinthians, „*Nun aber bleiben Glaube, Hoffnung, Liebe, diese drei; aber die Liebe ist die größte unter ihnen*“,¹⁶⁹ (“So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love”).¹⁷⁰

Standing in stark, highly ironic contrast to this thematic basis, the work is drawn entirely from comments on PEGIDA Facebook pages, and their spin-offs, which directly reference those three biblical themes – that is, those comments beginning with the formulations „*Ich glaube*“, (I believe), „*Ich liebe*“, (I love), and „*Ich hoffe*“, (I hope).¹⁷¹ No commentary is provided, spelling and formatting mistakes are preserved, and the ordering is merely alphabetical. Thus, the piece begins:

*Ich glaube 90% der polizisten sind im herzen bei uns.
Ich glaube aber ohnehin das diese Pegida Nummer vom Staat angerührt ist.
Ich glaube alles ist von langer hand geplant
Ich glaube,alles was von links kommt,ist ein Fake.
Ich glaube am Freitag den 30.1.1933 ist in China auch ein Sack Reis*

¹⁶⁷ “Thesis,” *oxoa*, accessed March 21, 2019, <http://oxoa.li/en/these/>.

¹⁶⁸ “Abendland,” *Duden*, accessed March 21, 2019, <http://duden.de/rechtschreibung/Abendland/>.

¹⁶⁹ 1 Cor. 13:13 LUT.

¹⁷⁰ 1 Cor. 13:13 ESV.

¹⁷¹ Gregor Weichbrodt and Hannes Bajohr, *Glaube, Liebe, Hoffnung* (self-pub., oxoa, 2015), <http://oxoa.li/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Glaube-Liebe-Hoffnung.pdf>, 5.

umgefallen, wem interessiert das heute noch?

I believe 90% of politicians are, in their hearts, with us.
 I believe, anyhow, that the number of Pegida protesters is manipulated by
 the state.
 I believe everything is planned long in advance
 I believe everything that comes from the Left is a fake.
 I believe on Friday, January 30th, 1933, there was also a sack of rice that fell over
 in China, who still cares about that today?¹⁷²

In this way, *Glaube, Liebe, Hoffnung* can be viewed as an extension of Elfriede Jelinek's post-drama to the digital age. Purely alphabetical ordering intrinsically creates non-hierarchy, with each line unrelated to the next. This is broken only by circumstance, with quirks of the alphabet revealing contradictions, for instance this series of proclamations:

Ich glaube an Gott zu 100%.
Ich glaube an kein einziges mehr.
Ich glaube an keinen Gott.

I believe in God, 100%.
 I don't believe in anything anymore.
 I don't believe in God.¹⁷³

And while Jelinek *ventriloquizes* to provide her critique of Haider, with *Glaube, Liebe, Hoffnung*, using the abundance of political rhetoric now available with a few simple clicks, Weichbrodt and Bajohr can simply *quote*. So while the end result is the same in that it reflects a "cacophony of voices," so to speak, the strategy is updated for the digital age.

And it is indeed this broader source material that allows some of the authors' most pointed critique, which occurs through nonhierarchical structuring. By placing rank hatred and antisemitism next to seemingly benign rhetoric, the latter is, as was

¹⁷² Ibid, 7.

¹⁷³ Ibid, 8.

Jelinek's Haider, unmasked in its implications. Consider for instance this passage from the piece's second section:

Ich liebe alle Menschen und ich möchte nicht, dass die armen Ausländer mit den ganzen bösen Nazis hier Probleme haben müssen ;)
Ich liebe auch katzen ...
ICH LIEBE DEN SCHWARZEN LIEBER ALS DEN KAPITALISTISCHEN JUDEN DER SEINE EIGENE BRUT AUFHÄNGEN LÄSST !
Ich liebe deutschland und must keine islam in deutschland und in frankreich !!!
Ich liebe deutschelaaaand
Ich liebe DEUTSCHELAND.
Ich liebe Deutschland.
Ich liebe Deutschland!

I love all people and I would certainly not want for the poor foreigners to have to have problems with the totally evil Nazis here ;)
 I love cats too ...
I LOVE THE BLACKS MORE THAN THE CAPITALIST JEWS WHO LEAVE THEIR OWN SPAWN TO HANG !
 I love germany and there must not be islam in germany and in france !!!
 I love germanyyyyy.
 I love GERMAN-Y.
 I love Germany.
 I love Germany!¹⁷⁴

To return to our previous formulation, *Glaube, Liebe, Hoffnung* serves to amplify insinuations. While loving Germany is not objectionable on its face, its use by the Far Right cannot be extricated from a context of blatant racism, xenophobia, and antisemitism, exemplified by the all-caps “polemic.”

Yet the piece accomplishes one more thing; by quoting those at the bottom, rather than those at the top as per Jelinek, the power of political agitation is shown. That is, the piece provides an important link between the politicians' inciteful rhetoric – as published in easily accessible manifestos and, if controversial enough, in the popular press – and similar speech in the party's bloc, which is generally more difficult to access.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 39.

In addition to critique, then, the piece serves as original research, from which the connections of party elite and party voter can be seen.

That is to say, we can see reflections of the party's anti-system rhetoric – „*Ich hoffe dieses Miststück von Merkel kann bald ihre Sachen packen*“ (I hope that bitch Merkel can finally just pack up and go) –¹⁷⁵ as well as its anti-Muslim polemic – „*Ich hoffe dann das die alle als Sklaven gehalten werden mit Kopftuch und ohne Rechte und in Angst dahin vegetierend*“ (In that case I hope that they're all taken as slaves with headscarves and without rights and vegetating in fear).¹⁷⁶ So too appears the harkening back to East German resistance – „*Ich liebe die Dresdener.....schon damals 1989.....Hut ab !*“ (I love the people of Dresden.....even back in 1989.....hats off to them !).¹⁷⁷ Even stripped of literary considerations, the work is highly informative simply as a historical document.

And while the piece focuses on PEGIDA, not the AfD itself, the link to the party is not left abstract; the two entities are indeed conflated by *those on the right*, as evidenced by posts such as, „*Ich hoffe das bei der nächste Wahl jeder von uns das kreuz an der richtigen Stelle macht AFD nur so können wir noch mehr erreichen*“ (I hope that at the next election all of us will check the right box AfD only then can we achieve even more).¹⁷⁸ And while none of this is precisely of the authors' doing – this is simply quotation, after all – the criticism shines clear, even if the precise message is left more to the formulation of the reader.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, 59.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, 47

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, 40.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 48.

Glaube, Liebe, Hoffnung alone is, however, not particularly illustrative of the body of anti-AfD literature. Whereas the biting satirical style of Austria's Bernhard and Jelinek came arguably to almost define the nation's literary identity,¹⁷⁹ no such ubiquitous strategy is analogous in the German case. To illustrate this breadth of style, we turn to Ilija Trojanow's *Nach der Flucht*.

With a title that translates to *After the Flight*, the text is highly autobiographical, describing what are presumably Trojanow's own experiences as a refugee – as the book's biographical insert tells us, at the age of six he fled with his family from communist Bulgaria to Germany. That flight's aftermath is described in a series of short notes, ranging in length from a sentence to a page, recalling the famous aphorisms of his fellow German-speaking Bulgarian writer Elias Canetti.¹⁸⁰

But the book is about much more than just Trojanow himself; inspired by artist Jacob Lawrence's "The Migration Series,"¹⁸¹ which describes the Great Migration of African Americans out of the South,¹⁸² *Nach der Flucht* explores coerced movement more generally – as Trojanow phrases it in the work's introduction, he seeks to understand the refugee as „eine eigene Kategorie Mensch“ (its own category of man).¹⁸³ Thus, as with Thuswaldner's *Pittersberg*, the work is primarily about personal experience and emotion, thus raising the question, is this even a critique of the Far Right at all?

¹⁷⁹ Norberg, 23.

¹⁸⁰ Reinhard Baumgart, "Gedanken wie Kometenschwärme," *Die Zeit* (Hamburg), March 12, 1993, <http://zeit.de/1993/11/gedanken-wie-kometenschwaerme>

¹⁸¹ Ilija Trojanow, *Nach der Flucht* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 2017), 8.

¹⁸² "Jacob Lawrence: The Migration Series," *Phillips Collection*, accessed March 21, 2019, <http://lawrencemigration.phillipscollection.org/>.

¹⁸³ Trojanow, 9.

Most certainly. Though not the piece's main focus, interspersed throughout the piece are the same sorts of direct criticism we have seen before. Perhaps the best example comes near the end of the work, which attacks the meaning, indeed the very viability of nationalist identity itself:

Nationalisten missachten den intimen Kern von Heimat. Sie setzen der persönlichen Weltbeziehung die Narrenkappe einer konstruierten Uniformierung auf. Sie suggerieren dem Einzelnen eine abstrakte Identität, die ihn zwar nicht durch den Alltag bringt, aber in den Krieg ziehen lässt. Die den Vorteil hat, leicht austauschbar zu sein. Vorvorgestern Preußen, vorgestern das Deutsche Reich, gestern die BRD/DDR, gestern Deutschland, heute Europa, morgen wieder Deutschland. Und danach?

Nationalists abuse the intimate essence of Home. Onto personal world experience, they place the dunce cap of constructed uniformity. They put into the individual's mind an abstract identity, which does not bring him through his daily life, but rather steeps him into war. This has the advantage of being easily exchangeable. Four days ago Prussia, three days ago the German *Reich*, two days ago the GDR/FRG, yesterday Germany, today Europe, tomorrow again Germany. And after that?¹⁸⁴

To focus simply on direct criticisms is, however, overly simplistic. More fundamentally, given the context – given quotes in *Glaube, Liebe, Hoffnung* like „*Ich hoffe sehr das Deutschland Deutsch bleibt*“ (I really hope that Germany stays German),¹⁸⁵ or, as Trojanow himself references in the piece, British Prime Minister Theresa May's claim, “But if you are a citizen of the world, you are a citizen of nowhere” –¹⁸⁶ to write such a piece at all, as a Bulgarian-German refugee who takes pride in such an identity, is criticism in and of itself. And this is indeed a broader strategy in today's Germany,¹⁸⁷ where amplifying the voices of those targeted by the Far

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, 109.

¹⁸⁵ Weichbrodt and Bajohr, 68.

¹⁸⁶ Trojanow, 95.

¹⁸⁷ Anna Prizkau, “Eure Heimat ist unser Albtraum’: Nervt, bitte!,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, March 4, 2019, <http://faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/buecher/rezensionen/anthologie-eure-heimat-ist-unser-albtraum-16067743.html/>.

Right seeks, it seems, to be, recalling Davis, that Bernhardian “vaccination” of the public sphere.¹⁸⁸

But Trojanow goes one step further; his strongest argument is what earlier authors seemed to have avoided – his own prescription for, to use the Freedom Party’s terminology, the „*Ausländerfrage*“. Unsurprisingly, it is one fully antithetical to that of the AfD and the FPÖ – empathetic cosmopolitanism. As laid out in the closing pages:

Die Menschheit kann nur kosmopolitisch überleben. Je ausgelaugter der Planet wird, desto stärker werden die Kräfte der Abgrenzung und Ausgrenzung den exterminatorischen Kampf um die verbliebenen Ressourcen anheizen. Alle zentralen Probleme können nur weltgemeinschaftlich gelöst werden. Der Nationalist im 21. Jahrhundert ist ein Apokalyptiker.

Humanity can only survive as cosmopolitan. The more depleted the planet becomes, the stronger the powers of demarcation and ostracism will inflame the exterminatory struggle for any remaining resources. All central problems can only be solved as a world community. The 21st century nationalist is an apocalypticist.¹⁸⁹

This is expanded upon later:

Der Kosmopolit gehört seiner Bezeichnung nach der größtmöglichen polis an, dem Universum. Aber als Bürger gehört er zugleich einer bestimmten Burg an, verteidigte sie einst, bewohnte sie dann, lebte in ihrem Schatten in einer wachsenden Stadt. Im »kosmopolitischen Bürger« finden das Globale und das Lokale als zwei Seiten einer Medaille zusammen. Der Kosmopolit beherrscht das bifokale Sehen.

The cosmopolitan belongs, by nature of that label, to the largest possible *polis*, the Universe. But, as a citizen, he likewise belongs to a particular locality, at one point defended it, inhabited it, lived in its shadow in a growing city. In “cosmopolitan citizen,” the global and local find themselves as two sides of the same coin. The cosmopolitan masters bifocal vision.¹⁹⁰

Such rhetoric cannot be in more stark contrast with that of the AfD, for whom such cosmopolitanism is anathema. As Alexander Gauland – who had by this time risen

¹⁸⁸ Davis, 47.

¹⁸⁹ Trojanow, 110.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, 111.

to party chairman – made clear in a 2018 op-ed for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, such a new “globalized class” of “urban elites,” which Gauland argues has emerged in the post-Cold War era, necessarily have a “weak connection to their particular homeland.”¹⁹¹ To support the everyman „für die Heimat noch immer ein Wert an sich ist“ (for whom homeland is still valuable unto itself) is the AfD’s reason for being.¹⁹² And just because the party is not directly referenced certainly does not mean that Trojanow’s critique of such a platform is any less powerful.

Indeed, on the whole, Trojanow and Gauland represent two competing historical threads of German political philosophy. Trojanow’s cosmopolitanism reads almost as an extension of Immanuel Kant’s arguments in *Zum ewigen Frieden (Perpetual Peace)*, in which Kant’s third definitive article outlines a “law of world citizenship” established through “universal hospitality.”¹⁹³ Gauland’s opposition to, as some Germans pointed out, urbanites that “speak fluent English” and “sit in multinational corporations, in organizations like the UN, in media, start-ups, universities and, because they control the flow of information, set the pace culturally and politically,” draws parallels to Hitler.¹⁹⁴

IX. Conclusion

On March 15, 2019, as I was finishing up work on this piece, a far-right terrorist attacked two mosques in the New Zealand city of Christchurch, killing fifty people. It

¹⁹¹ Alexander Gauland, “Warum muss es Populismus sein?,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, October 6, 2018, <http://faz.net/social-media/instagram/alexander-gauland-warum-muss-es-populismus-sein-15823206.html?premium/>.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Immanuel Kant, *Zum Ewigen Frieden* (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam Verlag, 1984), 21.

¹⁹⁴ Tilmann Warnecke, “Twitter-User entdeckt Parallelen zwischen Gauland-Text und Hitler-Rede,” *Der Tagesspiegel* (Berlin), October 9, 2018, <http://tagesspiegel.de/wissen/populismus-beitrag-in-der-faz-twitter-user-entdeckt-parallelen-zwischen-gauland-text-und-hitler-rede/23165376.html/>.

was the deadliest terror attack in New Zealand’s history, and it was also the deadliest right-wing extremist attack in the West since the July 22, 2011, attacks in Norway.¹⁹⁵

Prior to the killings, the shooter posted a seventy-eight page manifesto online. It is a disheartening document to read, and certainly not one I wish to delve into at any length, but the first page is too relevant to ignore.

The title of the document is “The Great Replacement.”¹⁹⁶ This is, of course, the same conspiracy that Congressman Steve King discussed with the Austrian Far Right, as mentioned in the introduction, which is that white majorities in the Western world will be “replaced” by immigrants – in King’s words, “somebody else’s babies.”¹⁹⁷ It is also directly alluded to in the AfD’s most recent party program, framed statistically:

5.1 Die demografischen Probleme Europas und Afrikas

Während die europäische Bevölkerung überaltert und schrumpft, explodiert sie in Afrika und in den arabisch-muslimischen Ländern des Nahen und Mittleren Ostens. In Afrika bekommt jede Frau im Durchschnitt 4,5 Kinder. Gleichzeitig nimmt die Kindersterblichkeit dank internationaler Hilfe stark ab. Die Geburtenrate in Europa liegt demgegenüber bei 1,6 und in Deutschland bei 1,4.

5.1 The Demographic Problems of Europe and Africa

While the European population grays and shrinks, the population of Africa and the Arab-Muslim countries of the Near- and Middle East explode. In Africa, each woman has, on average, 4.5 children. At the same time, thanks to international aid, the child mortality rate is dropping significantly. In contrast, the birth rate of Europe is 1.6, in Germany 1.4.¹⁹⁸

The first lines of the shooter’s manifesto: “It’s the birthrates,” repeated thrice over.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁵ Jane Coaston, “The New Zealand Shooter’s Manifesto Shows how White Nationalist Rhetoric Spreads,” *Vox*, March 18, 2019, <http://vox.com/identities/2019/3/15/18267163/new-zealand-shooting-christchurch-white-nationalism-racism-language/>.

¹⁹⁶ Leslie Root, “Racist Terrorists Are Obsessed with Demographics. Let’s Not Give Them Talking Points,” *Washington Post*, March 18, 2019, <http://washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/03/18/racist-terrorists-are-obsessed-with-demographics-lets-not-give-them-talking-points/>.

¹⁹⁷ “Steve King: Bring Pride Back to Austria,” *unzensuriert* (Vienna), September 2, 2018, <http://unzensuriert.at/content/0027654-Steve-King-Bring-Pride-back-Austria/>.

¹⁹⁸ AfD Party Program 2017, 27.

¹⁹⁹ Root.

To be clear – it is not difficult, when researching the Freedom Party and Alternative to Germany, to find them described as neo-Nazi or neo-fascist; such comparisons are widespread in the sphere of political social media and, arguably, in the mainstream as well. While I do not necessarily disagree with the assessment, I have done my best to avoid automatically describing them as such. These are powerful accusations, and ones I do not believe I have done adequate research to immediately make.

What is undeniable, however, is that the rhetoric these parties use has distinct commonalities with the views espoused by neo-Nazis and neo-fascists. Indeed, the rhetoric used by these political parties and neo-Nazis is similar to the point that they are oftentimes indistinguishable. And, it is worth repeating, such rhetoric is a fundamental characteristic of these parties, iterated in official party programs and reiterated in speeches and online. That these parties maintain vestiges of their liberal roots, or advance arguably necessary populist correctives to a frozen political system, does not change the fact that their presence in parliament and government normalizes the same ideologies that are used to perpetuate horrific violence.

This danger is compounded by the fact that, referring back to Jack Davis's theories on *Heldenplatz*, the types of polemic used by these parties are viral.²⁰⁰ Applied more specifically, this is essentially the argument Ruth Wodak makes in describing "The Haiderization of Europe," summarized in her paraphrase of Marx that "the spectre of radical right-wing populism" is the one currently haunting Europe.²⁰¹ The mass shooting

²⁰⁰ Davis, 47.

²⁰¹ Ruth Wodak, "Anything Goes!' – The Haiderization of Europe." In *Right-Wing Populism in Europe: Politics and Discourse*, edited by Ruth Wodak, Majid KhosraviNik, and Brigitte Mral (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 23-24.

in New Zealand provides only the latest evidence for this; as Jane Coaston alludes to in her piece for *Vox*, “The New Zealand Shooter’s Manifesto Shows How White Nationalist Rhetoric Spreads,”²⁰² white nationalism – in the age of instantaneous communication – is now white *internationalism*.

With all that in mind, it must be understood that these parties’ existence is not necessarily an attack on democracy; indeed, one could even argue quite the opposite. The rise of the Alternative for Germany, for instance, is due in part to “political support from former non-voters and other individuals who were previously reluctant to express their racist preferences publicly.”²⁰³ Taken in the vacuum of objectivity, to facilitate the ability of more citizens to vote in accordance with their views cannot, nominally, be called antidemocratic, even if these voters’ views themselves contradict democratic values.

This is an important contradiction – these parties cause harm and their rhetoric spreads dangerously, yet their existence is, or can at least be interpreted as, a function of fundamental liberal-democratic values. Although when the FPÖ and AfD were marginal forces it might have seemed possible to wish away their base of support, it is now clear that this is impossible. Instead, direct cultural opposition is required – of which literature is a vital part.

Throughout this thesis, we have seen numerous examples of how such literary opposition can be conducted. It is important, though, that the literary analyses presented here are not viewed simply as a set of isolated studies; rather, they exemplify an evolution of literary discourse. The works of Thomas Bernhard, Elfriede Jelinek, and

²⁰² Coaston.

²⁰³ Claire Greenstein, “How Far Has Germany Actually Moved to the Right?” *New America*, November 8, 2018, <http://newamerica.org/weekly/edition-225/germany-afd-right/>.

Werner Thuswaldner are powerful, certainly – and they laid a basis for the genre. They also would not work nearly as effectively in today’s “conditions of critique.” In the opinion of the author, it seems clear that Ilija Trojanow provides the best rhetorical model for modern opposition.

The Far Right advances a radical, overarching view of the world, of what society should look like – whether that be a “sovereign nation state,” in far-right words, or a *Volksgemeinschaft*, in the words of the far right’s critics, who point to historical precedents. To counter this, as Trojanow does, with an equally radical, yet antithetically-situated worldview, is at very least an intuitive way to reclaim public discourse.

Indeed, we can see the power of such diametric opposition playing out politically. In the same fall 2018 election in which the AfD made waves in entering the Bavarian parliament, the decidedly left-wing Green Party doubled its vote share.²⁰⁴ Or, on this side of the Atlantic, as Donald Trump has shifted American politics sharply to the right, the Democratic Socialists of America has grown its membership sevenfold.²⁰⁵

To phrase it in the Newtonian sense – each action requires an equal, yet opposite, reaction. To phrase it in terms of my other major of study – the easiest way to fully neutralize a strong acid is with an equally strong base.

²⁰⁴ Matthew Karnitschnig and Zia Weise, “Bavarian Voters Rattle Berlin Politics,” *Politico Europe*, October 16, 2018, <http://politico.eu/article/bavaria-merkel-afd-greens-election-result/>.

²⁰⁵ Danielle Kurtzleben and Kenny Malone, “What You Need to Know about the Democratic Socialists of America,” *NPR*, July 26, 2018, <http://npr.org/2018/07/26/630960719/what-you-need-to-know-about-the-democratic-socialists-of-america/>.

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