AUTHENTICITY AND THE CRITIQUE OF THE TOURISM INDUSTRY IN POSTWAR AUSTRIAN LITERATURE

DISSERTATION

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By

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ABSTRACT

Since 1945 the tourism industry has wielded an undeniable influence on Austrian society in social, cultural, political, and especially economic terms. This pervasive presence is evident in postwar literature as well, where numerous authors, especially since the 1970s, have addressed tourism and its myriad consequences for Austrian society. This dissertation examines three postwar Austrian texts that reflect on the impacts of the tourism industry and its imbrication in issues of national identity. This project argues that the concept of authenticity is a unifying element to these works and that it allows the artists to censure the industry and its diverse impacts, to address questions of national identity, and to pursue individual aesthetic or thematic concerns.

Functioning as an index of tourism’s negative effects, the concept of authenticity enables the authors to portray the industry as transforming people and place into someone or something other than what they once were. While theorists of tourism have recognized shortcomings of this concept, such as viewing tourism as the sole catalyst of change or assuming a culture’s previous stability and wholeness, this project contends that authenticity, which must be understood as a construction serving rhetorical or ideological aims, remains integral for an understanding of the literary portrayal of tourism. The authors central to this study remain invested in maintaining a concept of
authenticity because it serves their critique of tourism by highlighting what this industry has eroded or threatens. Since this concept is charged by tensions between an ideal and an actual condition, authenticity then functions as a vehicle with which the artists foreground figures experiencing an instability of meaning with regard to identity. Through these characters, who are unsure of who they should be, the artists treated here address questions of personal or collective identities in an exemplary manner.

Hans Lebert’s novel, Der Feuerkreis (1971), depicts the development of the industry to censure Austria’s amnesia about its Nazi past and invention of a national consciousness. His novel envisions an industry that both creates false representations of Austria, which allow an erasure of its Nazi complicity, and places the host in a servile relationship. Norbert Gstrein’s story Einer (1988) gestures toward authenticity through the central character’s alienation as he struggles with the tasks of working as a host under the frayed social conditions in a Tyrolean village, where he must grapple with the constant pressures of being onstage for tourists. The structures of touristic display are replicated in the work’s formal constellation, which reinforces Gstrein’s critique of the host’s predicament and articulates his skepticism of biographical representation. Robert Menasse’s novel Schubumkehr (1995) juxtaposes its protagonist’s identity crisis with the events surrounding the conversion of an economically stagnant village into a resort specializing in soft tourism. A state of inauthenticity appears as the result of both processes because the central character and the village are altered from what they once were, illustrating his critique of history.

While this study shows that the concept of authenticity serves different purposes in each author’s individual projects, it locates a strong continuity in their employment of
this concept for the critique of tourism. Authenticity emerges as an indispensable concept for finding fault with this industry because it highlights the differences resulting from radical changes and because it facilitates the incorporation of broader questions of identity, by revealing uncertainties about who one is or should be.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study examines Austrian authors’ reflections on arguably the dominant cultural, social, and economic factor in Austrian society: the tourism industry. Situated at the center of Europe, Austria has for centuries been a destination or transit land for countless travelers and migrants. During the eighteenth century the country was more a stopping point than a prominent destination for young nobles on their grand tours to Italy. This changed in the late eighteenth and into the nineteenth century as the Romantic invention of the Alps as a desirable landscape and the birth of Alpinism made Austria’s mountains a favored destination. From the latter part of the nineteenth and into the twentieth century aristocrats and the well-to-do frequented a network of spas and lake resorts located across the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The rising middle classes and eventually the working classes spent their “Sommerfrische” (rural summer retreats) closer to the urban centers. With the end of the monarchy in 1918, Austria’s borders shrank and its tourist centers were now concentrated in the new republic’s eastern provinces and in a few alpine regions in the west, which quickly flourished, bolstered by the creation of the Salzburg and Vienna festivals. After the Anschluss of 1938, the National Socialist “Kraft durch Freude” tourism policy maintained Austria’s role, now as the “Ostmark,” as a significant tourist locale until the onset of war. After the cataclysms of the Second World War, Austria began its problematic process of nation building and
self-definition. The new leaders soon set their sights on the tourism industry as an engine for the country’s reconstruction, which proved to be a prescient move. Spurred by still vivid experiences of wartime poverty and backed by Marshall-Plan funding, the Austrian tourism industry grew exponentially and developed an infrastructure in even the smallest of villages, particularly in Alpine provinces, welcoming domestic and foreign guests, above all Germans enjoying the postwar economic miracle.

Since the 1950s tourism has seen great economic growth, which has had a lopsided distribution geographically: the prime tourism regions are concentrated in the southern and western provinces, and the majority of tourists in Austria visit, aside from a few urban cultural centers, rural areas offering Alpine sports and attractions. These attractions and the touristic infrastructure have made tourism a leading sector in the national economy. With 18,430 Schillings in 1996, for example, Austria has one of the world’s highest per capita income from tourism, which makes up roughly six percent of the GDP, and in western provinces nearly two out of three jobs are partly dependent on this sector (Luger and East 227). Aside from a few island nations Austria has one of the world’s highest levels of tourism intensity, as this country of only 8 million is visited by 15 million foreign and another 5.5 million domestic guests who together account for roughly 28 million overnight stays per year (Zimmerman 154).

The economic significance of tourism has lead to its unmistakable role in the construction of regional and national images. Particularly in the most visited destinations of Tyrol and Salzburg, regional imagery is closely bound up with touristic promotion. The city of Salzburg, for example, consistently associates, both in official imagery and a wide range of touristic products, itself with the person and music of Mozart, whose birthplace and residences are some of the city’s prime attractions (Kammerhofer-
Images sponsored by the national government also betray the significance of tourism, which can be seen, for example, in the selection of the engravings featured on the Euro coins minted in Austria. They feature items associated with the two prime draws of Austrian tourism: the Alps, represented through images of mountain flowers, and Austria’s cultural heritage, evinced by images of Mozart, the Sezession building, and the Belvedere Palace, which was the site of the signing of the 1955 State Treaty, but is today one of Vienna’s leading art museums.

The rapid growth and expansion that fueled the economic success of the tourism industry since the 1950s has been accompanied by both positive and negative developments. For example, hotel development in village resorts has lead to price inflation that prohibits residents from living in their own communities (Lichtenberger 298). The construction of ski lifts and slopes has caused significant environmental damage, because these facilities require the clear cutting of forests that once provided protection against erosion and avalanches (Preglau 51-2). The rapid growth of small-scale pensions and hotels, which are often additions to private homes or farmhouses, has been a significant, yet surely not the only factor in the alteration of existing social and familial structures in village resorts, for example, through the rearrangement of family quarters and the perception of private space, or shifts in value systems through the transition to a service economy (Rest “Identität” 86-89). At the same time, however, we can find many examples of tourism’s positive influences. Particularly in the western provinces, the growth of the industry has made declining regions financially solvent and ended rural emigration (“Landflucht”) both by offering employment and by supplementing agricultural incomes, which has ensured the continuation of farming in alpine regions, whose topography makes this type of agriculture financially unfeasible
Tourism similarly has fostered the preservation and restoration of cultural practices, despite many critics’ claims that tourism erodes traditional culture. Kappeler, for example, details how numerous folk customs are maintained and revitalized through tourism, such as seasonal agricultural processions (153), religious festivals (163), and traditional styles of cooking (194-198).

Given the pervasive presence that tourism has had on Austrian society since 1945, it is hardly surprising that the tourism industry has been a focus for many artists. Through poetry, drama, and above all prose, artists have reacted to and addressed the consequences of the tourism industry and its implications for the course of postwar Austria. Overwhelmingly, artists have taken a negative stance towards this sector. Some authors use satirical or melodramatic means to address tourism and its impacts both implicitly and explicitly, while others employ this industry more as a backdrop or context, which often enables the author to focus on questions of national or regional identity. Less frequent are works that take an affirmative stance towards the industry and works of travel literature to Austrian sites. While tourism has been a dominant presence throughout the postwar era, it does not appear frequently as a focus in literary texts until the 1950s, when the industry began to grow significantly. Texts from the 1950s to the early 1970s include satirical works on the government’s instrumentalization of tourism for economic and political aims, as well as texts, often set in resorts, that parallel the

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1 Der blaue Sessellift (1975), for example, was written by Paul Gerhard Gruber, an agrarian journalist, and seeks to enlighten farmers about productive means of supplementing income through the tourism industry. An example of a work of travel literature about an Austrian site by an Austrian writer can be found in Julian Schutting’s novel Wasserfarben (1991), which depicts the author’s impressions of the Salzkammergut region. Though not literary texts per se, the large number of “Touristenfilme,” a subcategory of Heimat films from the 1950s and 1960s offer numerous examples of works that take a positive view of tourism in Austria. Similarly, Karl Heinrich Waggerl wrote many essays and autobiographical reflections that present a positive image of tourism in the province of Salzburg (Cf. Könighofer).
promotion of the industry with the concealment of the fascist past. From the mid-1970s to the early 1990s a large body of works emerged that are directly critical of tourism’s impact on people and place. Since the 1990s tourism continues to be a subject for numerous authors, yet the emphasis has shifted from social or environmental concerns to a more symbolic function in addressing diverse aspects of Austrian identity. The range of texts that appeared in these periods can be grouped into four broad and by no means exclusive categories.

First, numerous authors represent tourist sites because of their role as markers of national significance, without explicitly criticizing them or the industry. In such works characters visit or interact with tourist sites, as for example, in many of the works of Thomas Bernhard. The protagonist of his *Frost* (1963) curses the mountain landscape, and the characters in *Alte Meister* (1985) visit the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, a symbol of Austrian cultural institutions. These sites serve the protagonists as a point of departure for their tirades on Austrian institutions, yet their specific role as tourist attractions is not directly addressed. In Karl Merz and Helmut Qualtinger’s *Der Herr Karl* (1961), the title character recounts his passive role in major events, closing his survey with references to natural wonders he has visited. Placed alongside Hitler’s 1938 speech in Vienna announcing the Anschluss or the declaration of the Austrian State Treaty in 1955, these tourist sites become manifestations of another stage in Austrian history that he has witnessed.2

Second, other works are set in the milieu of the tourism industry, yet are not invested in criticizing it per se. An example of such a work is Fritz Hochwälder’s play

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2 Additional examples include Ingeborg Bachmann’s “Besichtigung einer alten Stadt” (1971) and Christoph Ransmayer’s *Morus Kitaharra* (1995), which is set amid the ruins of a former lake resort. Many poems from Ernst Jandl’s collection *Dingfest* (1973), such as “Gastein: Stubnerkogel” and “Salzburger Balkone” also represent touristic sites.
Der Himbeerpfücker (1965), in which a village innkeeper’s Nazi past comes to light after he mistakes a guest for his former concentration camp leader. While this work certainly addresses an important aspect of Austrian identity, the tourism industry is not central to it and remains largely a background setting. Similarly, the central characters in Alfred Dorfer and Josef Hader’s cabaret piece Indien (1991), which was filmed in 1995, are traveling inspectors for the tourism industry. This work, however, does not explore the characters’ roles as Wiener Schnitzel-tester and hotel room inspector, but rather the odd relationship that develops between them.3

Third, several works are set amid the tourism industry and employ this locus primarily to address aspects of national identity and history. While these works present a negative image of tourism, their critique of the industry is secondary. An early example is Gerhard Fritsch’s 1958 novel Moos auf den Steinen, in which the main characters debate Austria’s future as they contemplate the renovation of a run-down palace, a symbol of the faded Habsburg legacy, into a hotel and conference center. Perhaps the most prominent representative of this category is Elfriede Jelinek, whose oeuvre is highly critical of Austrian history and institutions. In many of her works Jelinek employs tourism industry characters and settings, such as in Oh Wildnis, oh Schutz vor ihr (1985), which critically addresses the appropriation of the landscape in national imagery, literature, philosophy, and tourism. More recently, her dramatic trilogy In den Alpen (2002), reflects on a catastrophic ski-lift accident in 2000 at Kaprun, exploring this

3 A similar locus in the industry is evident in H.C. Artmann’s “Herr Hasenbein und der Fremdenverkehr” (1967), Barbara Frischmuth’s Einander Kind (1995), and in several novels by Alois Brandstetter, such as Almträume (1993) and Hier kocht der Wirt (1995). Although they are less directly focused on the tourism industry, many works that are often categorized as examples of the New Subjectivity, such as novels from the 1970s and 80s by Peter Handke, Gerhard Roth, and Peter Rosei, can be loosely included in this category, as their protagonists wander through Austrian landscapes struggling to find genuine experiences. An example would be Handke’s Der Chinese des Schmerzes (1983), whose protagonist wanders past the cityscapes of Salzburg.
incident’s parallels with Austria’s postwar reconstruction and its erasure of its fascist complicity.⁴

Fourth, many works are both set in the tourism industry and are explicitly concerned with making a direct critique of tourism and its consequences. Many of these works are by authors from the province of Tyrol, Austria’s most visited tourist destination. Examples include the novel Abseits vom Oberlangendorf (1975) from Hans Haid, an ethnographer whose numerous essays demonize tourism and its pernicious influences on folk customs. The major figure in this category is Felix Mitterer, who addresses tourism in many of his works since the 1970s. His collection, An den Rand des Dorfes (1981), presents numerous stories that posit tourism as the cause of social and cultural alienation (“Da Umbau”) and the erosion of a Tyrolean identity (“Frankenstein oder Tirol 1984”). Mitterer continues to address the tourism industry in his recent script for the detective film Tödliche Souvenirs (2003).⁵

The overwhelming number of literary works devoted to the tourism industry notwithstanding, little secondary literature has been written about these texts and their concerns with tourism’s consequences or with issues of national identity. This dissertation fills this gap by examining three exemplary works in which the authors merge their reflections on the tourism industry with their interrogation of Austrian

⁴ Other works by Jelinek that fit in this category are Die Liebhaberinnen (1975), Totenauberg (1991) and Die Kinder der Toten (1995). Numerous plays by Marlene Streeruwitz, such as New York, New York (1993) and Waikiki Beach (1992), offer further examples. In this category I would also include many works of the so-called Anti-Heimat genre that often depict aspects of the tourism industry for their deconstruction of rural society. Examples of such works include Franz Innerhofer’s Schöne Tage (1974) and many novels by Josef Winkler, such as Der Leibeigene (1987).

⁵ This category of works clearly intent on castigating the tourism industry is surely the largest. In addition to many other works by Mitterer’s, such as Die Piefke Saga (1986), other instances of this category include the dialect poetry of Bernhard Bünker (Da ausvakaufte Hamat [1975]); Walter Klier’s novel Katarina Müller: Biografie (1988); Walter Kappacher’s novel Touristomania (1990); Toni Kleinlechner’s Chronik eines angekündigten Schneefalls (1993); and Luise Marie Schöpf’s Ausgebucht (1994).
national identity: namely, Hans Lebert’s *Der Feuerkreis* (1971), Norbert Gstrein’s *Einer* (1988), and Robert Menasse’s *Schubumkehr* (1995). To broaden the import of my study I have chosen these works to offer a sampling of the four categories outlined above. While the novels by Lebert and Menasse most generally fall into the third and Gstrein’s work into the fourth category, these three texts straddle the categories and present us with a variety of approaches toward tourism. Equally diverse are the stages and time periods that each work depicts. Lebert’s novel is set primarily in 1947 with an epilogue in 1965, and its characters imagine but never develop a tourism industry in a remote Styrian village. Gstrein’s work describes a roughly thirty year period up to the 1980s and features a fully established industry in a Tyrolean resort. The events in Menasse’s novel take place in 1989 and center on a village on the Austrian-Czechoslovakian border that is in the process of transforming itself into a resort. The diversity in content is further evident on a formal level, as the three works in my study exhibit very different stylistic and formal approaches. Lebert employs a more traditional form of narration, into which he mixes motifs from Wagnerian myth and fascist literature. Gstrein takes an innovative approach, radically blending narrative perspectives. Menasse presents a fragmentary novel that juxtaposes an array of narrative patterns with different textual structures, such as letters and videos. The different stylistic and thematic elements in these three works offer us a sample that reflects the larger body of texts described above.

Despite their disparate stylistic qualities, I argue that a common element shared by these three works, as well as by the majority of other texts that depict tourism in Austria, is a highly negative assessment of the industry and its diverse cultural, economic, environmental, and social consequences. My study has located a common thread unifying the depiction of tourism in the image of an industry that radically alters the cultural and
physical landscape and the people who live and work in it. The artists present the tourism industry and its impacts as a force that changes the physical, social, and cultural environment from what it once was, which implicitly praises this former condition and raises the issue of what the genuine nature of this environment should be. Should the changes that tourism unleashes be accepted and productively incorporated, or should they be rejected as a negative deviation?

By probing these tensions, the artists are raising questions about the issue of authenticity, about what someone or something really is or should be. As my readings show, questions regarding authenticity are central to the artists’ depiction of tourism and the narrative conflicts in their works. My understanding of authenticity is informed by theoretical discussions of tourism, yet focuses on a broader context. When we refer to authenticity in general, we implicitly assume that there is an inauthenticity with which it contrasts, a demarcation that is problematic to define. Aside from certain objects that can be evaluated in objective scientific or historical terms, the designation of authenticity and its significance is highly subjective, which is all the more pronounced when we apply the notion to humans and to social dimensions. Authenticity and inauthenticity thus cannot be understood as essential, fixed properties, but as imaginary constructions that are affixed as attributes of objects, people, or practices. This issue thus has an inherently political dimension as it functions to create an argument about the “real” nature of things. What is deemed authentic may be postulated as true, legitimate, and more valuable in an ethical, moral, or perhaps financial sense. The inauthentic, in turn, is implicitly denounced as false, fraudulent, and less valuable.

In my readings of the three literary texts, I argue that the artists use this rhetorical function of “authenticity” in their depiction and criticism of tourism. The artists present
tourism as inducing inauthenticity, as they assert that the industry unleashes disruptive and alienating changes for the local environment and population that render them false and different from what they were. Implicit to this construction is a contrastive notion of authenticity. Although the artists are somewhat hesitant to define what the authentic might be, it remains implied in their depictions of the industry and its impacts. Authenticity namely serves their critique of tourism in that it functions as an ideal against which the changes that tourism has wrought can be evaluated. At the same time, the instability that is inherent in questions of authenticity – that is, the uncertainty about who one is or should be – also serves the artists as a point of departure for their concerns with national identity, which they illustrate through characters who experience identity crises hinging in part on their involvement with the tourism industry.

A useful introduction to the questions that this study addresses can be found in a satirical novella, “Fremdenverkehr,” by Reinhard P. Gruber. Published in Gruber’s 1988 collection of his “Weststeierische Novellen,” this short piece centers on a timeless question for those in the tourist industry: how to market their product to appeal to tourists’ desires and expectations.

Herr Hotter ist schon zum großen steirischen Verdienstkreuz vorgeschlagen worden, will aber vorher eine Kropfsteirerin heiraten. (Schilcher 101)

Supported by images from old guidebooks, the tourism industry elevates the goiter into a sign of Styrian authenticity to capitalize on a potential market. By lampooning the industry’s will to have goiters proliferate, Gruber’s text paints a negative image of tourism as a greedy, shameless industry and foregrounds its instrumentalization of the supposedly authentic. The tourism industry calls up a characteristic from the past, one that has been lost to modernization, and then conspires with the regional government to certify it as a marker of authentic Styrian-ness that deserves preservation. The industry leaders then market this authenticity to tourists. Gruber’s satire relies on the falseness of this authenticity, revealing it as a fabrication of what Styrians are and as a marketing ploy for tourists. In pointing this out, Gruber’s text implicitly lambastes the industry for the effects it will have on the local population: the industry’s redefinition of authenticity will alter the locals as they develop goiters and are turned into objects for the coming tourists.

The emphasis on authenticity in Gruber’s “Fremdenverkehr” succinctly encapsulates the two main foci of this study. First, Gruber makes an implicit critique of tourism’s consequences by depicting the inauthenticity that is its result. His tourism industry literally turns the mountain residents into someone else. Gruber’s goiters are thus a comic reference to tourism’s impacts. By showing how the industry manipulates these goiters, Gruber foregrounds the construction of touristic representations of people and place, while also highlighting the power relations of touristic exchange. His text namely stresses the industry’s complicity in fostering this inauthentic image of Styrians, which points to the role that tourist expectations play in determining what identities are imposed on the local population and alludes to their potential willingness to conform to them. The three texts in my study similarly employ a focus on authenticity, using it as an
index of tourism’s negative effects and as a means of raising questions regarding the relationship between tourists and the destination culture.

Second, Gruber links his representation of the tourism industry to issues of a collective, in this case, regional identity. His fictional tourism manager instrumentalizes the authenticity of Styrians as a matter of provincial pride and urgency and colludes with the regional government to create “das Ursprünglich-Steirische.” In foregrounding this artificial construction, Gruber invites the reader to question the nature of a Styrian identity. He satirizes tourism’s invention and exploitation of this regional identity. The three works in this study similarly question tourism’s influence on a collective identity, but also use these reflections as a springboard into other regional or national issues. Like Gruber, the three artists in my study also locate their works in a specific setting, but they have a less explicitly regional focus, depicting tensions between a local collective and an outside while maintaining an implicit reference towards a larger context.

In pointing to the negative impacts of the industry while stressing the links between tourism and a larger collective identity, then, Gruber’s satire illuminates on a smaller scale how a focus on authenticity mediates our investigation of the two interrelated themes of this study. To begin this mediation effectively, we must first explore the concept of authenticity in tourism.

1.1 Authenticity and tourism’s negative effects

As the tourism scholar George Hughes argued in 1995, “The issue of authenticity runs, like an obbligato, through tourism studies” (781). Authenticity is perhaps the most central issue in the theoretical discussion of tourism but also has been highly contested as a valid focus for investigating tourism. Christoph Hennig describes the theoretical
concern with authenticity hinders a more productive understanding of tourist motivations and practices (148). Kevin Meethan similarly is skeptical of this concept because it relies on a dichotomy that simplistically opposes authenticity with inauthenticity, its presumed opposite, and because it implicitly assumes an essentialist mode in which there is only one manner of interpreting culture (111). Taking into account these problematic aspects of authenticity in theories of tourism, this issue is significant for my reading because it remains a central component of the artists’ understanding of tourism and their criticism of the industry.

From this discourse I have located two broad categories that help my study of literary texts produce insights into the manner in which artists raise questions about authenticity in their works as well as into the more incongruous aspects of their critique. The first category is concerned with the experience of authenticity from the perspective of the tourists, and the second focuses on the perspective of those who work in the industry, namely the hosts. The terms “tourist” and “host,” as Tom Selwyn has pointed out, are simplistic and homogenizing labels that can only fail to capture the complexities and nuances of the phenomena they are meant to describe (8). There is, for example, no single “tourist” or “host” experience, and the distinction between these terms is blurred, particularly in a globalized age and in a modern society like Austria. Given these caveats, I will continue to use these terms both for the sake of efficiency and because the literary texts under discussion foreground specific characters’ functions as hosts and tourists.

While the stress in this study will fall on the host’s side, the artists are keenly aware of the tourists’ influence on the host culture. It is thus essential to begin our examination of authenticity from the tourist’s perspective because it will expand our
understanding of tourists’ desires and attune us to how their impact is reflected in the
depictions of host figures and environment. For tourists, the experience of authenticity
has two broad dimensions, which Selwyn usefully divides into “hot” and “cool”
authenticity (19-28). “Hot” authenticity refers to the emotions and pleasures that tourists
derive from their experiences. The conception of “hot” authenticity rests on an
assumption of tourism as a means of escaping the constraints of everyday reality and
achieving a more genuine sense of self. The tourist leaves a space of a presumably
alienating modernity for a destination where it is suspended and the tourist can achieve an
authenticity of self either through exhilarating experiences, such as through sports, or
through contact with an “authentic Other.” Such an “Other” can be understood in
temporal and spatial terms – for example, foreign or domestic regions where antiquated
social patterns seem to exist and where tourists seek “a world which is eminently and
authentically social” that has a “‘special spirit of place,’ which derives from the
sociability of its residents” (Selwyn 21). Understanding this notion of the tourists’ desire
for “hot” authenticity will benefit our reading of the three literary works because it
heightens our understanding of the identity expectations to which the fictional host
characters should conform. As we already saw in Gruber’s campaign for an
“ursprünglich” image of Styrians, other authors, including Gstrein and Menasse, portray
characters who fabricate gestures of rusticity and agrarian simplicity, which allows them
to foreground the tourists’ influence and to criticize the hosts accommodation to it.

“Cool” authenticity refers not to the emotions of the tourist, but to the quality of
knowledge about a touristic experience. For this conception, authenticity has an
objective, museum-like status, and refers to the genuineness of the objects and services
consumed by tourists. Concerns with “cool” authenticity center on questions regarding a
product’s status as historically original, whether it is an authorized example of a certain category, or whether it has been fabricated specifically for tourists. The degree of mediation involved is crucial for the evaluation of “cool” authenticity: the more mediation, the less authentic tourists will perceive it. Examples of objects and services whose appeal is dependent on “cool” authenticity might include the house where Mozart was born, a set of clothes made according to a traditional style, or the performance of a folk dance. But even the hospitality a host provides is subject to this wish for authenticity: it too should be, or at least appear to be genuine and uncontrived. My reading of literary texts has greatly benefited from the notion of “cool” authenticity, because it is inherently concerned with notions of truth and historical accuracy, issues that are central to the authors’ critique of tourism and its consequences. In Lebert’s novel, for example, we find a representation of traditional clothing that is linked to the promotion of the tourism industry. Lebert foregrounds characters who wear traditional clothing, which he depicts as inauthentic because the characters distort the outfits’ function as an expression of regional identity. Lebert namely links these clothes to both the promotion of tourism and the concealment of the fascist past. Like Gruber’s goiters, then, Lebert’s traditional clothing becomes an attribute that those in the tourism industry hope to present their future guests.

The artists in this study are cognizant of tourists’ desires for authenticity, but they locate their works primarily on the other side of the touristic context, that is, largely from the perspective of the host or the residents of resort environments. An understanding of the relationship between these two perspectives is best facilitated through the notion of staged authenticity, which stems from Dean MacCannell, one of the most influential theorists of tourism. He employs the idea of “front” and “back” regions to describe the
arrangement of space in tourist settings, basing his theory on a “common-sense polarity of social life: the putative ‘intimate and real’ as against ‘show’” (94). The front region is thus a space in which something is staged for tourists, and here objects or services are mediated, that is, they are clearly marked as being carried out for touristic purposes. On the other hand, the back region is located behind the front region and is an unmarked space, where objects and services are not conducted solely for the sake of tourism. Excluded from view for tourists, the back region allows the “concealment of props and activities that might discredit the performance out front” (94) and allows performers to retreat from their “front” persona. Tourists thus regard the back region as a space of genuineness, “real” life, and truth, and the front region as inauthentic, as a space of artifice, mediation, and show.

MacCannell rejects a clear demarcation between front and back regions, because “What is taken to be real might, in fact, be a show that is based on the structure of reality” (95). Between the front and the back, then, he locates “staged authenticity,” in which “what is taken to be entry into a back region is really entry into a front region that has been totally set up in advance for touristic visitation” (100). MacCannell sees the front and the back as poles, between which there is a progression of staged back regions. Some have an obvious “front” quality, such as, to use an Austrian example, the folklore performance known as a “Heimatabend,” which are indeed performed on a stage. Others seem to be further in the “back,” such as a pension providing “Urlaub am Bauernhof,” where the agrarian trappings must often be reinstalled or relearned (Luger and Rest 665), or the practice of “Animation,” in which ski-instructors or pension proprietors are expected to entertain tourists on a more casual level. For MacCannell’s tourists, the back regions are a prized destination. He writes: “Just having a back region generates the
belief that there is something more than meets the eye” (93). The tourists are skeptical of the front, because it seems too staged, and any penetration behind it is tempered by anxiety about the subsequent region’s authenticity. Thus MacCannell argues, tourists are compelled to try to move beyond staged areas and even further towards the back region, where they will inevitably only find staged authenticity because of the mediation inherent to the tourist setting.

While MacCannell’s conception of “staged authenticity” is useful, it has a number of faults. It presumes a singular touristic type; it neglects the individual tourist’s awareness or even preference of inauthentic attractions; and it is dated and thus cannot fully account for the perception and tolerance of front regions in a multimedia world that has become vastly different from the 1970s when MacCannell conceived this idea. Nonetheless, it is useful for my readings of the literary works because it helps us understand the vantage point from which the authors view and depict the touristic context: namely, from the back region, from the perspective of the host community. While MacCannell’s principle focus is on the tourist, his model is useful for understanding touristic settings from the hosts’ perspective. This model thus enriches our readings by enabling us to isolate questions of authenticity in the literary works in three significant ways.

First, it presents a plane along which the dynamics of the interactions between tourists and the host culture can be mapped. What tourists might perceive as an attempt to get closer to the authentic and to break through to the back region, hosts will often perceive as a violation, an infringement on private and personal space, and these differing perceptions shape the power relations between hosts and tourists. My readings will benefit from this spatial model because the fictional texts depict characters who are aware...
of and struggle with their position in relation to the visiting tourists. Attention to the notion of front and back regions proves especially enlightening for my interpretation of Gstrein’s *Einer*, in which the protagonist suffers from the tensions that arise as he straddles these regions, which, as I show, are even recreated on a narrative level.

Second, MacCannell’s notion of front regions and of false back regions theorizes the construction of objects or performances specifically for tourists, and thus explicate a context in which hosts cater to them, creating, yet also accommodating to their expectations. This concept of the hosts’ willing adaptation to the demands and wishes of the tourists is a central point in the criticisms present in our primary texts, in particular those by Lebert and Gstrein. For these authors, the creation of false back regions becomes an indication of the fictional hosts’ subordinate position, because they conform to the tourists’ desires and expectations. Examining how the authors present these inauthentic back regions thus yields insights into their views on the hosts’ predicament and the effects of the tourism industry.

Third, MacCannell’s model helps us evaluate the meaning of authenticity from the host’s perspective. His tourists find that the inauthenticity in the false front and staged back regions diminishes the value and significance of the toured objects. When we consider this context from the host’s perspective, we find a parallel. For the hosts, the creation of false back regions results in inauthenticity and loss in meaning, because the objects, traditions, and even the hosts’ own behavior can be altered to deliver a product for the tourists. The artists in my study highlight this situation to contend that the host culture becomes inauthentic through tourism, and in turn to effect a criticism of the industry. My readings reveal that a conception of inauthenticity emerges in the artists’ depiction of both objects and people, and I show that this conception is rooted in notions
of truth and constancy: they target tourism for changing the host culture and divorcing or diminishing it from what it once was.

My focus on the human dimension of inauthenticity through tourism draws on a formulation from the Austrian essayist Peter Turrini’s polemic from 1988, “Die Deutschen und die Österreicher – Chronik einer touristischen Begegnung.” Turrini’s piece is an example of the many texts critical of the tourism industry that have emerged since the 1970s, in which authors socialized during the great expansion of the tourism industry during the first few postwar decades began to criticize this phenomenon. Turrini summarizes tourism’s consequences, writing:

Wenn der Wirt, seine Frau, seine Kinder, die Verwandtschaft, das Personal, Tag und Nacht “anders” sein müssen, dann werden sie zu Anderen. Die sprachliche, die zeitliche, die seelische Abrichtung auf den Fremden hat sie selber zu Fremden gemacht: sie sind sich und ihren Nächsten fremd geworden. (Österreich 139)

Just as objects are altered as they are placed in the front and false back regions, the hosts are alienated through their roles in the industry: they become “anders,” someone other than what they once were. This view of how hosts and their culture are changed allows me to locate the central notion of authenticity in the critique of the tourism industry in the works in my study. The three authors portray tourism as making those who live and work in the industry “anders.” Returning to the notion of front and back regions, then, I argue that the artists portray the genuine back region as a space that has been lost or is threatened by tourism, as it is gradually becomes “anders” and is turned into a false, staged back region.

My study shows that the artists are criticizing the (impending) lack of authenticity in the genuine back region. The novels depict tourism and its impacts as a threat,

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6 My citation is from an expanded version of Turrini’s essay, which was originally published in Der Spiegel under the title “Die touristische Bananenrepublik” in 1986.
implicitly noting a failure to protect the authenticity of the back region from tourism. The notion that the real back region is a space in which the hosts attempt to protect their sense of self or aspects of their culture is already implicit in MacCannell. He views the back region as a space of retreat for the performers in the touristic setting. The notion of protection has been extended by Jeremy Boissevain, who has examined host communities’ struggles against tourism’s impacts. He outlines common strategies used to negotiate the challenges of tourism and to protect the host culture, such as directing tourists’ attention away from the objects or events the host culture wishes to keep private or free from touristic commodification (14-21). In the fictional works in this study, however, the artists highlight the failure or lack of tactics of protection for the real back region, which allows them to construct the consequences of tourism as a factor that impinges on the alleged authenticity of the host culture.

The threat to the authenticity of the back region that the artists find posed in tourism is rooted, as we noted above, in conceptions of truth and continuity. This is a common thrust in much of the theoretical discussion of tourism’s impacts, and one that has been sharply criticized. As the anthropologist Davyd Greenwood has argued, when critics lament tourism’s destruction of authenticity they are imagining the host culture as “the pristine, relatively static, traditional community plunged into the modern capitalist arena” (181). Such a view assumes that cultures were bounded and stable before the arrival of tourism, which is thus cast as an exclusively external force that upsets the alleged integrity and wholeness of the culture. This assumption is too simplistic, Greenwood notes, because it neglects the constant process of cultural change and the myriad influences on a destination culture and tempts the scholar to reject tourism’s impacts on moral grounds and plead for preservation of authenticity. Greenwood thus
urge critics to “conceptualize communities as a complex process of stability and change, and then to factor in the changes tourism brings” (182).

Greenwood’s thoughts are productive for our readings, because they alert us to the shortcomings of authenticity as a notion for criticizing tourism. The artists in this study depict tourism’s impacts as a deviation from a previous condition, and while they do not all explicitly construct what tourism erases or threatens as the true, ideal condition, they implicitly valorize its authenticity. This reiterates my understanding of the function of authenticity in the artists’ critique of the tourism industry: they highlight presumably damaged or missing authenticity to target the consequences of tourism. Their portrayal of tourism as resulting in inauthenticity, then, is an indictment that exhibits the outrage that Greenwood found in academic studies. Greenwood’s caveats for scientific inquiries of tourism, however, are of limited utility for my study of literary texts. While we may be tempted to dismiss the artists’ attacks on a lack of or threat to authenticity because of their misconceptions of the dynamics of cultural change, we must instead recognize them as an expression of critique of the tourism industry and its diverse impacts. In my reading of these fictional works, I locate the artists’ awareness of the tensions regarding a valorization of authenticity and show that they do portray other factors impinging on the destinations and characters. In the end, however, the artists foreground a link between tourism and inauthenticity, ultimately adhering to a notion of idealized authenticity that privileges pre-existing conditions and their alleged wholeness. I thus argue that the artists remain invested in a notion of authenticity precisely because it allows them to posit the negative influences of tourism. Given their clear interest in censuring the industry, the artists avoid a more balanced assessment of the industry, which would have only dampened the import and rhetorical thrust of their criticism.
1.2 Issues of Austrian identity and tourism

The artists find fault with tourism by targeting the threat to authenticity that results from this industry, and my study shows that this concern, which encompasses tensions between what is and what once was, parallels a concern with matters of identity, which is diffused along a local and national level. The focus on tourism in the novels serves to raise issues about who one is or should be. The link between tourism and identity is a natural one: the promoters of a touristic destination are inherently concerned with choosing and presenting representative images of themselves and their particular environment. Tourism is inherently localized: it occurs in a specific place, and the tensions that this industry creates exist on a basic level between the local and the external. On another level, group identities factor into this context. The local presents itself to tourists, who are by definition from somewhere else. By visiting another place the tourists confirm their identities as members of a different group, and touristic expectations compel the hosts to present typical and common images that construct an identity as a particular collective. The focal point is mutually dependent on tourists and hosts: domestic tourism stresses regional and international tourism stresses national identities. The three works in this study are fixed in distinct regional settings and my readings show that the authors explore tensions between the local and the external, which is manifested on several different levels. The national context proves to be particularly significant for the literary texts, as the authors stress relations with foreign guests and link their fictional tourist industries to matters of a more national significance. To facilitate this connection, we will review key dynamics of Austrian identity in the postwar era.
My analysis of the artists’ concerns with Austrian identity and nationhood is informed by historian Peter Thaler’s study of nation building in the Second Republic, *The Ambivalence of Identity* (2001). He argues that republican Austria provides an unusual example of the conception of national identity as a social construction that national elites craft to forge a collective from a fragmented group (2-3). Austria diverges from this traditional model, in that the fragmented group is not a premodern disunity, but has already undergone the experience of modern nationalism, which revolved around questions of Austria’s German cultural identity. Though opinion polls in the 1990s show that a majority of Austrians perceive an independent nationhood, roughly ten percent of the population still maintain notions of a German cultural nation (Thaler 192). The presence of this minority, despite over 40 years of nation building measures, indicates for Thaler the “ambivalence of identity” (188). The literary texts in our study present a positive assertion of national identity yet by depicting tensions regarding this issue they lend support to Thaler’s notions of ambivalence and reveal the instability of expressions of Austrian identity.

Notions of a German cultural nation have long figured in discussions of Austrian identity. The creation of the First Republic in 1918 was conceived as the cultural German remnant of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. During both the First Republic and the Austro-fascist state from 1934-8, there was popular support for Austria’s place in a German cultural nation, a sentiment that became reality with the 1938 Anschluss to Nazi Germany. After 1945, Austrian leaders sought to reverse this position. As Thaler writes: “In order to achieve their national goals, the postwar Austrian elites had to transform the existing national consciousness of an already politicized modern population” (2). Seeds of a separate national status were cultivated by exiles and resistance groups during the
Second World War, and they received a further impulse from the Moscow Declaration of 1943, which held Austria to be the first victim of Hitlerite aggression, and thus ignored the widespread support for the Anschluss and the high degree of Austrian involvement in National Socialism.

Postwar Austrian leaders began a concerted movement to forge an independent Austrian national consciousness through political, economic, social, and cultural institutions, which relied on a distancing of all things German. This distancing also served ideological aims, as it ensured the externalization of Austria’s responsibility for National Socialism: Austria could claim to be a different state, making Germany responsible for the Holocaust. The myth of Austrian innocence helped to legitimize the Second Republic, which was established through the State Treaty of 1955, in which Austrian neutrality was stipulated, and unification with Germany forbidden. As Thaler’s analysis of numerous opinion polls concludes, the postwar campaign was successful in fostering an independent consciousness, with only a small minority of respondents in the 1990s continuing to reject ideas of a separate Austrian national identity (184).

Austria’s German question reverberates in the subsequent challenges to its nationhood. The first major break with the myth of Austrian innocence came with the scandal surrounding the presidential election of Kurt Waldheim. Though his involvement in Nazi war crimes was never proven, the scandal prompted national debates, which forced the government to begin to acknowledge Austrian complicity. At the same time, the scandal bolstered some who supported notions of a German cultural nation, as many conservative groups rallied around Waldheim, who was viewed as the victim of international pressures. The scandal thus ironically paved the way for an increasing support of the far-right in political discourse, embodied by Freedom Party leader Jörg
Haider. In his rise many critics saw a threat to the autonomy of Austrian nationhood and describe Haider’s drives for constitutional alterations as advocating a “Dritte Republik.” Haider also profited from his exploitation of the public’s fears of increasing immigration, and his party forced debates on “Überfremdung” and cultural identity, in which their views on Austria’s place in a German cultural nation reached a larger audience. The “Wende” of 1989 posed further questions as Austria lost its role as a neutral mediator between East and West with the end of the Cold War. A partial response to Austria’s diminished status can be seen in the public’s support for Austria’s entry into the European Union that was decided after a 1994 referendum which was accompanied by debates on founding issues, including neutrality and the prohibition of unification with Germany. More recently, the 1999 election, which led to the Freedom Party’s entry into the federal government, prompted international protests and sanctions because of the party’s xenophobic views and praise of Nazi policies. One of the most prominent reactions to the election was a boycott of the Austrian tourism industry, in which the Belgian foreign minister declared that skiing in Haider’s Austria would be immoral (“Austrian tourism”).

The boycott, which ultimately had little impact on the industry, illustrates the importance of tourism for Austria’s international image. This industry, however, also played a significant role in different aspects of Austria’s postwar nation building. First, the industry was an important tool for the rebuilding of the national economy, both because it could help correct the negative balance of payments and because it would be an engine of development and modernization in rural, economically depressed areas. As

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7 Ironically, the boycott employed the same tactics of the National Socialists in 1933-38. To weaken the Austrian economy and bolster support for the Anschluss, they initiated the so-called “Tausend Mark Sperre,” a prohibitive levy on all German visitors to Austria, which significantly diminished tourism industry receipts (Otruba 2-8).
Günther Bischoff details, various regional and federal groups lobbied the government and promoted the importance of the industry for the new nation, eventually garnering Marshall fund support for the rebuilding and expansion of the touristic infrastructure (370-4). One of the biggest hurdles for tourism promoters was overcoming the mistrust of foreigners in many rural areas, for which campaigns to instill a “Fremdenverkehrsgesinnung” were devised to make the populace more accepting of tourists. A Ministry of Education decree from 1949, for example, describes tourism as a matter of national importance and admonishes educators about their role in facilitating this notion to pupils:


The industry presented the nation’s reputation as being at stake and to secure it, the industry sought to make the population more amenable to serving tourists and to make them perceive the “Fremde” as a “Gast, der willkommen ist” (Swoboda 154). While there is little evidence on the efficacy of this campaign, what is clear is that the tourism industry was highly successful from the 1950s to the 1970s, particularly in the western provinces. Tyrol, for example, had 1.3 million arrivals and 6 million overnight stays in 1955, but by 1972 had 4.4 million arrivals and 30.8 million overnight stays (Tschurtschenthaler 165). From the mid-1970s the industry first began to show decreases which have continued into the early 1990s (Sandgruber 520).
For virtually all of the postwar era, the most important guests have been German tourists. Since 1951, when the Allies relaxed visa controls, international tourism has been most significant financially for Austria, with foreigners constituting roughly 75 to 80 percent of all tourists, of which nearly 80 percent are German – making them over 60 percent of all tourists (Sandgruber 519). This statistic reveals a contradiction in Austria’s promotion of a national consciousness: while the Second Republic sought to distance itself from Germany on a political and cultural level, its tourism industry, and other sectors as well, remained closely tied on an economic level (Thaler 36).

Second, the tourism industry played a further role in shaping Austrian nation building by helping to forge national imagery. Already in 1945, chancellor Karl Renner stated: “Wir brauchen den Fremdenverkehr und laden alle Welt zu uns zu Gaste. Wien und Salzburg werden als Stätte der Kunst, unsere Alpen als touristische Ziele ersten Ranges gelten, die Fremde mit Freude begrüssen” (qtd. in Wöldrich 51). Renner’s words posit an “us” and refer to “our” Alps, thus casting Austria’s people, culture, and landscapes as products for the tourism industry as representatives of the nation. The attractions to which he refers figure prominently both in nation-building texts and in the promotion of tourism. For example, Ernst Marboe’s Österreich Buch (1948) was distributed in public institutions, schools, and embassies and thus offers an illustration of what the new nation sought to construct as its history, achievements, and unique features. In particular this text foregrounds touristic images of alpine landscapes and traditionally clad peasantry, and many of its images would not be out of place in a brochure. In the 1950s the construction of the hydroelectric power plant in Kaprun was mobilized as a symbol of the new nation’s potential, and was doubly important for the tourism industry because it itself became an attraction, but also provided power for the developing
industry in the profitable western provinces (Hackl *Eingeborene*, 58). Images that indirectly promote the tourism industry have, as we noted above, figured prominently in national symbols, such as stamps, currency, or the national anthem. In subsequent decades, the Austria’s Olympic skiing teams have functioned as sport heroes and have been instrumentalized as promoters of the tourism industry (Brusatti 157).

My summary of the historical events and factors influencing Austrian identity and their interrelationship with the development of the tourism industry provides an introductory background for my literary analysis. The artists reflect on many of these events and link them to their criticism of the tourism industry. Lebert’s novel is most overt in this regard and thematizes Austria’s fascist past, the construction of an independent consciousness, and the question of Austria’s place in a German cultural nation through his depiction of the potential conversion of a house into a hotel. Menasse addresses later historical events, such as the continued denial of Nazi complicity, xenophobia, and the entry into the European Union. Gstein’s *Einer* does not explicitly refer to these issues, but what unites it with the other works is its focus on the tourism industry itself and the impacts that it has as a matter of identity in regions dependent on tourism. My analysis of all three works profits from our review of the economic importance of tourism, because the artists all question the industry’s promise of economic recovery by highlighting the economic pressures and social costs that the industry creates for the host figures. Both Gstrein and Lebert further probe the tensions between German guests and Austrian hosts, pointing to the contradictions mentioned above. Finally, all three novels dispel images that have been associated with the industry. Lebert’s novel overturns, for example, the image of traditional clothing and the pristine landscape, linking both to the repressed guilt of the Holocaust. Gstrein presents snow, the lifeblood
of winter tourism, as a metaphor for the destruction of the social fabric of the local community and goes on to expose the underbelly of the hospitality industry. Menasse’s novel envisions the construction of a quarry museum, which will uproot the local residents near it and whose creators will likely conceal the actual history of the quarry because of its connections to fascism. These examples demonstrate how the artists address of issues of national identity through their depiction and criticism of tourism, and thus illustrate the two foci of this study.

1.3 Project outline

The critique of the tourism industry and its consequences has not been thoroughly addressed in previous studies of literary works that examine tourism in Austria, nor has the relationship to issues of national identity. Wolfgang Hackl’s unpublished postdoctoral thesis, Eingeborene im Paradies (1998), focuses on German language literary works from the nineteenth to the twentieth centuries that reflect on tourism in the Alps, concentrating primarily on Austrian texts. While he does touch on artists’ critique of tourism, this discussion is limited to his methodological foci on tourism as a space of interaction with the foreign and on the aesthetic perception of the Alps. Wolfgang Straub’s published dissertation Willkommen: Literatur und Fremdenverkehr in Österreich (2001) provides an overview of postwar works that broadly deal with tourism in Austria. The breadth and encyclopedic quality of Straub’s study precludes him from conducting a detailed reading of any work. Furthermore, he organizes his study around thematic topoi, such as the mountain or the “Kraftwerk,” and privileges the literary means by which the authors depict these topoi at the expense of a discussion of their focus on critique. Straub’s neglect of this crucial aspect is most apparent in his discussion of the topos of
the Tyrolean village, where artists have expressed their censure most directly. Given the clear criticism of the tourism industry in many of the literary works described earlier, the omissions in the studies by Hackl and Straub are significant and what they exclude deserves a more thorough investigation. Through their fictional works, the artists are addressing a concrete reality of tourism, which is an undeniable presence, but, given the dependence on this industry, has often escaped critical discussion, and which has been an important factor in the development of postwar Austria.

My analysis of the works by Lebert, Gstrein, and Menasse thus centers on the author’s critique of the tourism industry, which I locate in direct reflections, narrative conflicts, and even formal structures in their texts, complementing these readings with examinations of the artists’ interviews and essays. In order to support my study with a fundamental understanding of the dynamics of the specific context at hand, I will explicate the individual author’s emphasis on authenticity in the touristic context and how it functions within their critical reflection on tourism’s impacts. By highlighting the artists’ depictions of a threatened or diminished authenticity through tourism, it becomes clear that the authors depict products and people who are altered through their involvement in tourism, a transformation that the artists decry as negative and foreground as an index of the industry’s consequences.

Concentrating on the artists’ assertion of tourism’s impingement on authenticity isolates their portrayal of an instability of meaning regarding an individual character’s or a collective identity. This in turn allows me to demonstrate how the artists’ charges against tourism are linked in particular to questions of Austrian identity. The uncertainties depicted on a touristic plane parallel the artists’ discussion of instabilities
regarding national identity, such as the denial of the fascist past or the decision to enter the European Union.

While my study isolates the nexus of authenticity, tourism criticism, and questions of identity in these works, my readings demonstrate that these elements are clearly rooted in the larger projects that each author is pursuing. Lebert employs the development of the tourism industry to thematize questions of national consciousness and the repression of fascist guilt. Gstrein centers on the industry not only to denounce its social impacts, but also because its structures of staging and presenting images provides a vehicle for expressing his skepticism regarding narrative representation. Menasse uses the radical shifts ensuing through village’s transformation into a resort to illustrate his criticism of the concept of history. Locating how questions of authenticity and tourism are firmly embedded into these projects will strengthen our conclusions about these works and the function of their critique of the industry.

Since we are dealing with three prose texts that are all aesthetically complex and rich in intertextual allusions and formal innovations, the fundamental approach of this study will be a close reading of each work. While accounting for the complexities of these works is beyond the scope of this project, I engage this dimension where relevant to my analysis and locate numerous stylistic and formal strategies that enhance the questioning of tourism and identity in each of the texts. To strengthen my analysis of these works and root them in the contexts informing them, I will support my readings with references to relevant historical events, and contemporary debates about national identity and the consequences of tourism.

In Chapter Two I examine Der Feuerkreis (1971) by Hans Lebert, an author known for his at times problematic blending of Heimat novel motifs, Wagnerian myth,
and pointed criticism of Austria’s National Socialist complicity. My reading locates Lebert’s negative view of the tourism industry and shows how it is linked to the author’s polemical project regarding three interrelated issues of postwar nation building: the question of Austria’s place in a German cultural nation, postwar Austria’s denial of its fascist past, and the forging of an independent national consciousness. I read these links out of the narrative conflict between the central characters, that revolves around one figure’s unwillingness to confront her National Socialist past and that Lebert parallels with the potential conversion of a mountain villa into a hotel. Through an analysis of these conflicts and of a number of motifs and secondary figures, I isolate underlying notions of authenticity in Lebert’s portrayal. He associates authenticity with an independent Austrian consciousness and then links inauthenticity to pan-Germanism and an opportunistic denial of fascist responsibility, both of which are represented by characters connected to the tourism industry. My analysis is supported by discussions of contemporary texts on the tourism industry, historical debates on Austrian identity, socio-cultural accounts of individual motifs, and a vitriolic speech by Lebert on the tourism industry and its link to deficiencies in Austrian nationhood.

Chapter Three turns to, Einer (1988), by Norbert Gstrein, who debuted and earned great critical success with this work and has since garnered a reputation for his formally complex novels that play with the limits of (auto)biographical representation. My reading highlights the broad critique of tourism in Gstrein’s text, which focuses primarily on its social dimensions. This critique is enacted through the depiction of the central character’s gradual demise in a mountain village where his family runs a small hotel and ski school. Gstrein presents a resort that has long become inauthentic through the impacts of tourism, and he parallels this inauthenticity with the central character’s
downfall, showing that he too is gradually turned into someone else. After elaborating Gstrein’s criticism on a thematic level, I show how the formal construction of the text both reinforces and expands his criticism. Drawing on the concept of front and back regions allows me to demonstrate that Gstrein recreates the dynamics of this structural model, placing the reader in a role like that of a tourist trying to gain a more complete and accurate perspective on the central character and his fate. This formal strategy proves significant for three reasons. First, it reiterates the tensions that the central character faces and invites us to reflect on the host’s position. Second, by highlighting how tourist industry characters conceal aspects of the central character’s life, it also demonstrates how the industry seeks to silence the discussion of tourism’s negative consequences. Third, it articulates Gstrein’s problematization of biographical representation. I ground my analysis of Einer with insights from theoretical discussions of tourism, a tourism industry public relations campaign, and by situating Gstrein’s text in the context of other literary texts explicitly critical of tourism.

The focus of Chapter Four is Schubumkehr (1995) by Robert Menasse, an author known for both his essays on Austrian politics and culture and his novels that engage questions of philosophy and history. In my interpretation I isolate Menasse’s criticism of tourism, which is concentrated on the displacement of the natural and social landscape that ensues as a village is transformed into a resort. I read these views in the struggles of a number of secondary characters and in the alienation faced by the protagonist, as he travels to the village to return to his mother, who begins to convert her farmhouse into a pension. These elements provide me with numerous examples of how Menasse targets the inauthenticity in his fictional resort, both for his protagonist, other figures, and the village itself. The conversion of the village is juxtaposed with the “Wende” of 1989, but
my reading contends that the novel is reflecting on Austria’s decision to enter the European Union in 1994 and thus break with previous aspects of its identity, which is further evidenced in the fissures in the fictional village’s conversion that reveal parallels with Austrian history, in particular regarding the fascist legacy. My reading shows that Menasse’s conception of inauthenticity rests on notions of a break with historical continuity. Recognizing this definition allows us to show how Menasse employs images of tourism and his characters’ conflicts to illustrate his own critical reflection on the nature of history, which he elaborates in numerous other writings. Menasse rejects teleological views of history, which his central character illustrates by eventually accepting his own loss of historical continuity. I argue that the notion of authenticity Menasse uses to illustrate his view on history is thus at odds with the notion that he uses to criticize the tourism industry. While the fate of Menasse’s protagonists advocates a break with historical continuity, the village’s transformation into a resort is criticized as a loss of history. This contradiction ultimately confirms the significance of Menasse’s criticism of tourism. My close reading of Schubumkehr is supported by an analysis of speeches and essays in which Menasse presents his arguments on history and on Austrian identity.

This study will show that the artists present a highly negative image of the Austrian tourism industry, in which we can locate a critique of tourism’s diverse impacts. In particular, the artists stress the social consequences, such as the host characters’ subordinate position, the alienating conditions of working in the industry, and the social and cultural displacement that results from touristic development. Their critique is enacted through the central notion of authenticity in these works. They imagine tourism as threatening or damaging the authenticity of the social fabric, the natural landscape, and
to a lesser extent the cultural traditions of a destination, (potentially) rendering them inauthentic, someone other than what they were. While no uniform definition of authenticity emerges, it is clear that the authors employ this notion to serve as an ideal of what tourism threatens, for which they thus privilege specific conditions that existed before the ruptures of touristic development.

With each work, the artists link the inauthenticity that the industry creates to instabilities in identities. Central characters in each text suffer from identity crises that are inflected to varying degrees by the industry and represent characters uncertain of who they should be. Only Lebert’s novel attempts to force a resolution to this crisis. He constructs a figure through whom he instrumentalizes an idealized acceptance of fascist responsibility and of an Austrian national consciousness. Gstrein’s central figure, on the other hand, slowly disintegrates, which allows the author to make a damning depiction of tourism’s impacts on the individuals who live in a resort. Similarly, most of the characters in Menasse’s novel face crises that force them to confront their relationship to their past and that remain indeterminate or end in disaster. Taken together, the instabilities that are depicted in these works reinforce the notion of ambivalence that we described above.

This study will demonstrate the usefulness of attending to a literary work’s socio-historical context and the context of the world it depicts. The political and historical backgrounds will enrich our understanding of these works, but above all, our focus on the notion of authenticity will expand our interpretation, because this notion is central to the theoretical discussions of tourism. It proves productive for our reading of the fictional touristic environments in these works, by helping us articulate the artists’ critique of the
tourism industry and by mediating the relationship of this critique to the artists’ larger projects and their focus on issues of identity.
CHAPTER 2

“UNSERE BERGE SIND BERGE VON TOTEN”: HANS LEBERT’S DER FEUERKREIS

2.1 Introduction

Hans Lebert is an author well-known for his engagement with questions of Austrian national identity and the legacy of National Socialism in Austria. His first novel Die Wolfshaut (1960) depicts the postwar revelation of hidden fascist crimes in a remote mountain village. Lebert began his second and final novel Der Feuerkreis in 1965, but did not complete it until 1971 because he suffered a heart attack after writing the first chapter. Like its predecessor, this novel again turns to an alpine setting to uncover a character’s Nazi past, but this work directly connects this issue to questions of Austrian national consciousness. To foreground his novel’s concerns with postwar Austria, Lebert singles out a sector that is closely tied to the country’s reconstruction: the tourism industry.

As Lebert has noted, his inspiration was a radio show, in which listeners were asked what they would do if a relative were revealed as a war criminal (“Patriotische Tat” 238). This is precisely the question facing the protagonist Gottfried Jerschek, who after emigrating during the Anschluss in 1938, returns to Austria in 1947 as a British officer. The novel begins with Jerschek’s arrival at his family’s mountain villa, where he finds
his half-sister, Hilde Brunner, who remains an ardent Nazi.\(^8\) Jerschek gradually discovers that she was a concentration camp guard and committed two wartime murders. Through allusions and associations, the novel constructs Hilde as a symbol for Austria and elevates Jerschek’s return into a mission to enlighten and bring her, and by extension Austria, to accept responsibility for the past. Hilde initially denies her Nazi crimes and is poised to follow the plans of her lover and fellow former Nazi, Max Hindler. He aims to rehabilitate himself by converting the villa into a hotel and becoming a host, but Jerschek’s return thwarts these plans. Spending the winter in the villa, Jerschek begins to break Hilde’s resistance. But this goal is complicated as he drifts back into the intense, nearly incestuous love-hate relationship that he had with her as a youth. These emotions charge Jerschek’s inner conflict. On the one hand, he feels he must protect his half-sister, and, on the other, he senses that she must be brought to justice, even though he knows she will receive the death sentence. Jerschek’s sense of duty prevails, and he insists that she turn herself in. Initially resistant, Hilde ultimately assumes responsibility for her murders and sends a confession letter to the authorities. She then rejects Hindler, who attacks her, fearing his own exposure. Jerschek kills Hindler during his assault, which severely wounds Hilde. When she implores Jerschek for mercy, he shoots her, which the novel stylizes as her symbolic execution. Jerschek then sets fire to the villa and leaves again for Britain. In the epilogue, a dying Jerschek returns seventeen years later in 1965 to find only the ruins of the villa.\(^9\) Just before his death he meets a young woman named Veronika, in whom he sees a sign both of Hilde’s redemption and of his own forgiveness for his execution of Hilde.

\(^8\) In this chapter I will adopt the novel’s terms for its characters, which refers to male characters by their family names (Jerschek, Hindler, Riegler, Lenz) and female characters by their first names (Hilde, Veronika).

\(^9\) This final chapter is referred to as an epilogue, but it appeared with the first publication of the novel.
This chapter examines the representation and criticism of the tourism industry in Der Feuerkreis. I complement my reading of the novel by examining Lebert’s 1964 speech, “Die Fabel vom Rollentausch.”¹⁰ This speech enriches our reading, because it offers a direct formulation of Lebert’s critique of tourism and its connections to Austria’s postwar denial of the Nazi past. My analysis of the novel expands on the understanding of Lebert’s critique of tourism gained from the “Rollentausch” speech by demonstrating how he entwines this critique within a narrative conflict centering on a character’s refusal to come to terms with her fascist past. Because this is a literary text that is rich in symbolic and intertextual references, my approach is a close reading that will be informed by an exploration of the relevant historical, political, and cultural contexts, which will illuminate Lebert’s critique of tourism and national identity. I begin with an overview of the novel’s reception and then explicate the nexus that links the criticism of tourism and the notion of authenticity to the novel’s main projects. I then read this nexus out of my analysis of the novel’s depiction of diverse elements in the tourism industry.

My reading shows that Lebert’s novel imagines the tourism industry as a catalyst of inauthenticity: that is, it has an altering effect on people and place, as they change themselves or are changed to conform to the desires of tourists and the intricacies of the marketplace. In the touristic settings of Lebert’s novel, landscapes and hosts are deceptive, manipulating their appearance for ulterior motives. Working in the industry also transforms hosts by making them subject to the control of the tourist. Lebert, however, is not concerned with this inauthenticity as an indication of acculturation or of self-alienation, but rather as the locus of his censure of postwar reconstruction. My

¹⁰ The speech was delivered at the Alpbach Forum in 1964 and was published under the title: “Rede über die Freiheit” in 1965. I will refer to it as the “Rollentausch” speech.
reading demonstrates how Lebert’s portrayal of the dynamics of the tourism industry articulates his polemics on Austrian national identity. Namely he constructs the role of the host as one that allows the rehabilitation of former Nazis and the continued repression of their fascist past and alleges that the fabrication of pleasant façades are impediments to an Austrian national consciousness. Lebert also explores the other half of the touristic equation and criticizes various practices of tourism, such as skiing or viewing the landscape, and I will show that this serves his attack on Austria’s denial of the fascist past. By focusing on the tourism industry, I not only investigate a dimension that has not been explored in any detail in previous scholarship, but my probing of the question of authenticity allows me to show that Lebert’s depiction of the tourism industry actually reinforces his other critical projects.

Lebert’s Der Feuerkreis is a problematic novel on many fronts. My reading will reveal the retrograde aspects of Lebert’s construction of gender roles, the contradictions in his polemics on Austrian identity and its relationship to its Nazi past, and his lack of critical distance to fascist and reactionary literature. Keeping these caveats in mind, I argue that Lebert’s novel warrants our attention because it has been an influential work for later Austrian writers, such as Robert Menasse, Christoph Ransmayr, and Elfriede Jelinek, and because it offers us one of the earliest works that links questions of national identity to its critique of the tourism industry, which addresses a broad range of elements in this phenomenon.

2.1.1 The reception of Der Feuerkreis

Der Feuerkreis did not enjoy the same critical praise as Lebert’s first novel. In an interview before publication Lebert revealed his cognizance of the risky nature of the
novel, noting “dieses Buch werden dennoch wahnsinnig viele Leute in den falschen Hals kriegen. Die Linken werden mich für einen verkappten Nazi halten und die Rechten für einen wüsten Bolschewiken. Es war für mich eine Balance auf messerscharfer Schneide zwischen Devotionalien- und Sexkitsch, Heimatroman, Kolportage und politischer Agitation” (“Patriotische Tat” 240-241). Lebert’s premonitions were confirmed by the novel’s largely negative reviews. Many critics found the novel tasteless and argued that Lebert was unable to maintain a balance amid many stylistic extremes. Most problematic for reviewers was the novel’s use of myth in the depiction of the postwar world and critical response to the legacy of Nazism. This mythic world view, however, was indeed Lebert’s goal: “Ich versuchte, die Vergangenheit von einer ganz anderen Seite her zu bewältigen, den Gegner aus einem trojanischen Pferd heraus anzugehen” (“Patriotische Tat” 241). Lebert’s novel is critical of fascism and its postwar legacy, but delivers this critique from within a “Trojan horse;” that is, from within the mythic, magical, and irrational perspective that was integral to both fascist literature and propaganda. Lebert casts his text’s conflicts as a mythical struggle between good and evil and, as a loose plot framework, borrows from Richard Wagner’s operatic cycle Der Ring des Nibelungen, which was itself appropriated by the National Socialists.11

Many critics condemned Lebert’s use of myth to denounce National Socialism and explain historical events, arguing that it failed to provide insight or enlightenment. For example, a reviewer in 1971 concedes Lebert’s antifascism, but rejects his approach as nebulous: “Wo analytische Entlarvung nottäte, schafft [Lebert] neue Mythen, statt der Denunzierung eines Systems und seiner Ideologie mittels Rationalität setzt Lebert

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11 Lebert’s familiarity with Wagner surely stems from his training as an opera singer. Lebert specialized in Wagner, and performed before and after the war in Germany and Austria (Zeder 307-311).
wirkungsvolle pathetische Appelle” (Wallner, qtd. in Arrer 287). In his 1975 dissertation, Kurt Arrer argues that Lebert was blindsided by his fascination for myth and Wagnerian motifs, a contention that again decries the absence of an analytical, rational approach in the novel’s critique of fascism.

The republication of Lebert’s works in the early 1990s brought with it an expansion of the meager scholarly attention to Der Feuerkreis. It was previously limited to the dissertation by Arrer, which examines Lebert’s œuvre in the context of its problematization of the Heimatroman genre, and a study by Marie Luise Caputo-Mayr that examines his thematization of guilt and judgment in the context of his use of religious and mythic elements (1974). The reissue of Lebert’s works was met with a number of dissertations, a monograph, and a volume of essays in the Dossier series (1997) that examines the narrative strategies, sexual and horror metaphors, Wagnerian adaptations, and antifascist agitation in Lebert’s works.12

While the reception of the republication of Der Feuerkreis often concurs with earlier critics’ negative assessment of the novel’s aesthetic qualities, the more recent critics have been more accepting of the novel’s use of myth. Jürgen Egyptien, the editor of the re-release and author of a monograph on Lebert, notes that the initial condemnation of the mythic, Wagnerian elements and heroic stylization must be seen in the context of the political climate of its release in 1971, when, in the immediate wake of 1968, critics often insisted on rational, political enlightenment and were also hypersensitive to works that smacked of fascism (“Fegefeuer” 349). Egyptien’s readings of Lebert’s works stress the religious dimensions in his work and contend that the mythic, irrational elements in

12 Of the three novels in this study, Lebert’s Feuerkreis has received the most scholarly attention. For a complete overview of the reception history see Egyptien’s “Im Fegefeuer der Sprache” (1995).
Der Feuerkreis offer insights into realms that have been neglected, even tabooed: “Im Angesicht der unwirklichen Wirklichkeit der KZ erscheint eine mythologische Interpretation als die eigentlich aufklärerische, denn sie vermag im Medium der Kunst eine Ahnung zu vermitteln, die sich dem bloß rationalen Diskurs verweigert” (“Fegefeuer” 354). Similarly, Daniela Strigl argues that Lebert’s mythic constructions allow his novel to go beyond a “bloße Analyse und ‘aufklärerische’ Pflichtübung” (“Roman” 34). She invokes Ernst Bloch’s warnings against the repression of the irrational in the critique of fascism, to illustrate how Lebert’s works indeed use myth to enlighten and deliver a “politische Lektion” (“Lektion” 117).

Strigl’s emphasis on the novel’s political didacticism reminds us of the need to look beyond the focus on myth that has dominated the popular and secondary reception. The initial reception’s insistence that the novel take a more critical and rational perspective on fascism misses what I see as the main focus of the novel, which is not the evil of fascism per se, but its unchallenged legacy and impact on national identity in Austria. Furthermore, in stressing the novel’s supernatural and timeless dimensions or its religious connotations, as Egyptien does, previous scholarship neglects the concrete and specific historical contexts that are reflected in Der Feuerkreis. My focus on the novel’s representation of the tourism industry offers a productive apparatus for examining Lebert’s historically contextualized critique of Austria’s response to fascism and its postwar construction of a national consciousness.

Several studies mention Lebert’s focus on the tourism industry, but remain limited to isolated aspects and do not consider how it functions in the novel as a whole. Egyptien’s monograph briefly mentions tourism in the context of Austria’s relationship with Germany (Anschluß 228); Robert Menasse touches on tourism and the notion of
Heimat (Land 117-125); and Werner Anzensberger zeroes in on the symbolism of the novel’s villa (384-90). Only Wolfgang Straub specifically examines the representation of tourism, yet his study concentrates primarily on the topoi of nature and the mountain (Willkommen 118-121) and contends that the focus on tourism is merely a “Beiwerk” in Lebert’s novel (120). My study builds on and expands these previous works to reveal how the depiction of the tourism industry is not simply a “Beiwerk,” but rather an integral function in the novel’s symbolism and narrative resolution. It reveals Lebert’s cultural criticism and illustrates his critique of the postwar response to the National Socialist past and the problematic process of Austrian nation building. I argue that Lebert’s representation of nature, his construction of the main characters and the tensions charging the conflicts between them are all a response to Austria’s postwar touristic recreation.

2.2 Authenticity and the critique of tourism in Der Feuerkreis

Lebert’s critique of tourism in Der Feuerkreis fulfills three main agendas. It first serves a conventional function of disdaining practices of tourism. But this criticism is not merely a reflection of an aversion to tourism or a cultural pessimism concerning the postwar era. It pursues two other significant agenda within the context of his novel. On the one hand, it reinforces the author’s account of Austria’s failure to address its National Socialist past. On the other, Lebert’s censure of tourism solidifies his endorsement of an independent Austrian national consciousness and a rejection of pan-Germanist conceptions of Austria’s place in a German cultural nation. Notions of authenticity in tourism inhere in all three of these critical agendas.
2.2.1 Anti-tourism

Through its depiction of and through the narrator's commentary on various tourist activities, Der Feuerkreis paints a highly negative picture of tourism, yet simultaneously presents a positive view of certain aspects. This conflicted perspective illustrates a dynamic common to denunciations of tourism: one form of tourism is criticized, which implicitly privileges another. For my reading of this phenomenon in Lebert's novel, I will adopt Christoph Hennig's term: “Anti-Tourismus” (23). Examining Lebert’s anti-tourism sentiments will benefit our interpretation in two ways. First, this will reveal Lebert’s general cultural pessimism, which feeds into his scorn for Austria’s failure to confront its fascist past and for its deficiencies in building a national consciousness. Second, this provides us with an example of the role that the notion of authenticity frequently has in tourism critique and thus gives us a foundation from which we can better see how Lebert goes beyond this conventional criticism and links his arguments against tourism to his focus on national identity issues.

As Hennig notes, anti-tourism critics perceive in mass tourism the decline of an older, more exclusive form of tourism (13-26). Through its interdependent prongs of vilification and valorization, anti-tourism supports this distinction between mass tourism and true travel. The critic denigrates the practices of mass tourism, bemoaning the presence of tourists as an intrusion and emphasizing their inability to appreciate a particular attraction. This simultaneously constructs the critic as a true traveler, one who allegedly possesses a genuine understanding of the site and thus deserves exclusive access to it. As Hennig notes, this dynamic began in the nineteenth century as the aristocracy progressively lost its exclusive claims to tourism when the middle and later the lower classes repeated their models of tourism. The aristocrats and upper classes
shifted their practices and views of tourism to distinguish themselves from the newcomers. To fulfill this desire for social distinction, anti-tourism discourses often rely on the notion of authenticity. Here authenticity rests on the perceived genuineness and originality of an object or experience and on the acquired knowledge necessary to recognize this. The true traveler is defined as one who possesses the taste and knowledge to appreciate the authentic, but the mass tourist, on the other hand, is attacked for failing to find or understand the authentic or is faulted for being satisfied with the inauthentic. The question of authenticity in anti-tourism thus masks a perceived threat to access, privilege, class, and power that the intrusion of mass tourists poses.

Der Feuerkreis implicitly employs an anti-tourism approach in its portrayal of tourism and tourists. This is most evident indirectly, that is, it can be read through implications in the depiction of the tourist activities of the central character. While Lebert’s novel does not explicitly portray Jerschek foremost as a tourist figure, we can make this categorization for two reasons. First, structural elements warrant a consideration of Jerschek as a tourist. His narrative follows the course of a touristic visit: it begins with Jerschek’s arrival, follows him on hikes and “Ausflüge,” ends with his departure, and the epilogue then treats a return visit. Second, Jerschek refers to his return as a visit. The locus of the novel, his family villa, is indeed a space where he spent his holidays as a child, and several passages reveal his comparisons of this visit to previous ones. In the novel’s first pages, Jerschek sees familiar markers and relives anticipatory rituals of his youth as his jeep draws closer to the villa (11-13). Later when inquiring about a visit to a nearby chapel, Jerschek remarks: “Sommer für Sommer hab ich mir’s vorgenommen. Vielleicht tu ich’s diesmal” (83). The word “diesmal” reinforces that Jerschek is here on another visit.
Lebert constructs Jerschek’s experiences to make an anti-tourism critique. While tourists have a small role in the novel, their presence is clearly evoked in many depictions of Jerschek, which foreground how his actions are distinct from those of mass tourists. The implicit emphasis on mass tourism illustrates the novel’s anachronistic focus: it depicts 1947, yet clearly addresses its contemporary age, the late 1960s and early 70s, when mass tourism was in full swing. Jerschek’s visit to the villa and many of his activities are constructed in sharp contrast to the activities of mass tourism, which thus depicts Jerschek’s tourism as an ostensibly more legitimate and noble mode, because he is shown as having a more authentic experience of this destination. This is evident in the portrayal of the food Jerschek consumes, his chosen activities, and his accommodations.

Lebert’s novel stresses a regional or local quality in its selection of food and drink. This local coloring serves two purposes; first, it distances Jerschek’s experience from that of mass tourism, which thus valorizes his form of tourism; second, it reveals an anxiety about authenticity in tourism in that the novel foregrounds the uniqueness of Jerschek’s visit. In Lebert’s novel, few objects, especially those consumed, worn, or viewed are symbolically neutral: his characters never simply have “Bier,” “Wein,” or even “Abendessen.” Jerschek’s meals and libations are depicted as typical for the rural, agrarian population or as regionally distinct for the novel’s clearly indicated setting in southern Styria. They range from the broadly rural “Most” (79) and “Sterz” (122, 147) to the more specifically Styrian “Kernöl” (123) and “Schilcher” (250). By concentrating on rather obscure items, the text seems compelled to prove that Jerschek is indeed

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13 Bernd Tschofen’s study describes a passage from Peter Altenberg’s autobiography that illuminates the significance of “Sterz” as a marker of the tourist’s authentic experience of local traditions: “Sein Vater, der jüdische Industrielle aus Wien habe im Sommer wie ein ‘Holzknecht’ gekleidet in einer Jaghütte gehaust und Sterz gegessen, und er sei von anderen Touristen für einen Einheimischen gehalten worden” (qtd. in Tschofen 176).
partaking of genuine products specific to the region, which thus contrasts Jerschek with an imaginary mass tourist who ostensibly would not have access to such items. The novel even calls attention to the special quality of some items, proving this authenticity for the reader. For example, in a letter Jerschek writes to his former fiancée Esther we read: “Heute mittag war Kernöl auf dem Salat (das olivgrüne Öl, das man aus Kürbiskernen gewinnt) […] ich habe dir oft davon geschwärmt. Wenn es so was auch in Palästina gibt, dann komme ich” (123). By highlighting the uniqueness of pumpkinseed oil, the novel ironically participates in the commodifying discourse of tourism, as it transforms regional products into marketable, “authentic” objects worthy of consumption. In the context of Lebert’s anti-tourism, the reference to the oil stresses the genuineness of Jerschek’s experience, which suggests that there are mass tourists who do not have access to this product.

Jerschek’s activities extend this contrast to mass tourism. The novel’s tourists are depicted skiing or in a bar. Jerschek’s touristic activity concentrates on his hikes, which are generally circular and aimless or have unique destinations. Unlike the skiers, who appear only in masses, Jerschek hikes alone or in the company of his half-sister Hilde. As we will see below, the novel envisions skiing as a violent interaction with nature that provides physical pleasures. Jerschek’s hikes, on the other hand, are presented as providing an intense, yet contemplative and appreciative experience of the landscape, in part through its natural beauty and because of its reawakening of his memories. During one “Rundgang” (118), the narrator foregrounds the perceived exclusivity of Jerschek’s experience: “Er holte tief Atem: herrlich! Das schmeckte nach nichts, was schon in den Lungen anderer gewesen war” (119). This passage praises environmental integrity and purity to convey Jerschek’s enthusiasm for his return, but it also showcases the
uniqueness of Jerschek’s hike and the exclusivity of his contact with nature. Drawing attention to the untouched air quality, the passage intimates that there are hordes of tourists intruding on Jerschek’s privileged space, and we later see that he comes across the traces of these hordes. In this passage, however, we are shown that Jerschek has escaped these crowds and thus attempts to devalue the mode of tourism they represent.

The two destinations Jerschek visits suggest a contrast to mass tourism, because both are unmediated attractions, whose obscurity and lack of touristic markings heighten their originality and limited access, and with both spaces the appeal does not rest on the physical thrills. The first is an abandoned saw mill, where Jerschek and Hilde return to a place from their past. The water-powered mill is significant as an attraction because it is the type of site favored in cultural tourism, as it illustrates still intact pre-modern ways for an alienated present and serves as a testament to a pre-consumerist age before mass production, uniformity, and modernization. At the mill, a conventional symbol for the passage of time, Jerschek and Hilde are: “zurückverwandelt in das Paar von einst” (199), and temporarily experience a return to their childhood, which is heightened by the somber, melancholy tone of this scene. The mill has an emotional value for its two visitors, commanding their wistful appreciation, which strongly diverges from the fleeting thrills and sightseeing of mass tourism. Jerschek’s second destination is the chapel at St. Jakob, which he also visits with Hilde. The novel explicitly reminds us that the chapel was a tourist site during Jerschek’s youth, but that he never visited it (83).

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14 Hilde even calls attention to the proximity of this transition, reminding Jerschek that: “Vor ein paar Jahren haben hier die Bauern noch ihr Korn gemahlen” (199).
15 The episode at the mill has an intertextual significance as well. It is here that Jerschek first cites the poem by Franz Werfel, “Romanze der Schwermut,” which recurs throughout the novel and foreshadows Jerschek’s predicament. In the poem the lyrical self has returned from its life-journey to find its home has become alien. Asked to account for its life, the lyrical self reports that it is responsible for the demise of its beloved and that all that remains is its memory of an abandoned mill. The poem thus alludes to Jerschek’s execution of Hilde and his departure from Austria, leaving him only the memory of the mill.
This site is physically out of reach for the casual tourist, which underscores its contrast to mass tourism. Located in a remote spot on the no-man’s land along the Yugoslavian border, the chapel could not be more off the beaten path, and Hilde even worries about attacks by snipers along the border (300). The chapel is a site of cultural and religious significance, and their visit takes on the qualities of a pilgrimage. Even though partisans have ravaged its interior, the chapel still fulfills its ritualistic, transforming function, as Hilde finally resolves her conflict with Jerschek here. Unlike the skiers who are shown zooming through the landscape, Hilde is envisioned as having a more genuine experience of this particular site, which confirms its status in opposition to mass tourism.

Jerschek’s accommodations present a marked difference from a conventional mass tourist hotel. The villa is not a hotel but rather a former holiday residence that, as we will see below, is slated to become a hotel and the novel foreshadows this by having Jerschek and Hilde take on roles like that of guest and host. In the villa’s depiction we can find numerous contrasts with mass tourism. It is the inter-war vacation home of Jerschek’s upper class family, and is thus a leftover of a more exclusive tourism, one that would be erased by mass tourism. At the same time, Lebert stresses the villa’s antiquated nature, informing the reader that it has no electricity or running water and must be heated by wood stove. This pre-modern state strikes me as a response to mass tourism in Austria, where hotels have long cultivated a rustic, peasant-style appearance, yet offer guests modern amenities. Lebert’s villa implicitly stands in contrast to such accommodations, and this distinction reverberates with the critique of modern society that he expresses in other texts.16 In his “Rollentausch” speech, Lebert argues that

16 The villa presents an inverse of what Lebert has described as the modern lifestyle. For example, he begins an autobiographical account of his family villa with a parable about the lack of self-sufficiency that is propagated by the modern home: a family becomes trapped in their high rise apartment when the water, electricity, telephone, gas heat, and elevator no longer work (qtd. in Egyptien 262).
modernization leads to a regression in human capabilities and a disenchantment of nature: he laments the “Entfernung des Menschen von allem Elementaren” and an “Allgemeine Simplifizierung der Welt und des Lebens” (8). He imagines tourism as an agent of this process and bemoans the absence of “Abenteuer,” cynically asking where youth could find unbridled nature: “Pfade finden neben Autostrassen? Pfade finden hinter Sesselliften und Seilbahnen?” (8). His speech envisions the world of mass tourism as one of control and regulation. In Der Feuerkreis, Lebert creates a contrast and stresses the elemental dimension of his protagonist’s stay. The novel devotes considerable space to episodes of Jerschek and Hilde cutting down trees for firewood, explicitly explaining that it must be done before the arrival of winter (129-39, 279-80). These elemental experiences and the antiquated quality of the villa intensify the authenticity of Jerschek’s visit, implicitly distancing it from the experience of a conventional tourist.

The anti-tourism critique that is evident in the depiction of these above aspects of Jerschek’s visit finds its most direct expression in a statement attributed to Jerschek that reveals his status anxieties. This passage does not depict the masses but their “kolosallen Stapfen” (247), that is, the tracks left by skiers. When Jerschek comes across these traces, we read:


This passage employs tropes of conventional anti-tourism: the tourists are depicted as a loud, crude, and destructive “Herde” that has illegitimately trampled its way into exclusive territory and thus ruined the quality of a particular space (“Stille”), which was
once was restricted ("Zäune") to protect the access of a privileged insider group ("uns"). These gestures implicitly grant greater validity to Jerschek and construct his mode of tourism, the "Sommerfrische" – the tourism of wealthy Viennese in provincial retreats – as the legitimate form of tourism.

The group in which Jerschek locates himself in the above passage is distinguished from mass tourists on three levels. First, with the reference to the "kleine[n] Unterschied" we see that Jerschek’s sense of threat to his status is mapped across gender divisions, which attempts to naturalize the dominant order he seeks to preserve. The entry of the female into a putatively male sphere is a placeholder for the intrusion of mass tourists into territory Jerschek perceives as his own province. Second, the tourists’ increased access does not refer to women alone, but to others, in particular to the lower classes. In denouncing the notion of a classless society as a "Herde," Lebert’s novel betrays a desire for clear hierarchical boundaries and an anxiety about diminished exclusivity due to the intrusion of other classes into the privileged sphere of tourism, in which Jerschek is positioned through the reference to an "uns." This anxiety suggests the novel’s anachronistic focus on the 1960s, when tourism had become more of a mass phenomenon as the economic miracle spread its wealth to more and more segments of society. On a third level, the novel describes the loss of order and privilege that Jerschek imagines in these footprints as a threat to all values, which points to a clash of cultures Jerschek finds reflected in these tourists and their shunning of class and gender distinctions.

An implicit element of the threat to cultural values that Jerschek perceives is the issue of taste, which often figures in anti-tourism critique. The novel portrays mass tourism as a part of low culture and places tourists on the low end of the cultural divide.
The novel, as the above passage shows, consistently treats tourists as idiotic masses, referring to their language as “Gelächter,” “Gebrüll,” or “Geschrei” (243, 247). This solidifies the tourists’ distinction from Jerschek, who elsewhere is cast as a defender of high culture.\footnote{Other examples of this positioning include Jerschek’s disdain for the Nazi authors. When looking for a book in Hilde’s bookcase, he shuns these authors and chooses a book by Kleist (174). Jerschek further dismisses Hilde’s suggestion to listen to jazz, stating his preference for “Gute Musik. Ernst Musik” (103).} This opposition is especially jarring in an episode in which the novel shifts, line by line, between the songs of tourists and farmers at a bar and Jerschek’s recollection of a text by Wagner (258). Wagner’s poetic language thus becomes for Jerschek an antidote to the encroachment of low culture represented by the tourist’s songs. This juxtaposition demonstrates the novel’s distinction between high and low culture and shores up its valorization of Jerschek and the type of tourism he embodies.

Jerschek’s denunciation of the tourists on the grounds of taste mirrors the cultural pessimism evident in Lebert’s “Rollentausch” speech. There Lebert presents an elitist view of low culture and the commercialization of high culture, attributing both to a decadent postwar society, which he blasts for its obsession with consumerism, technology and progress. He argues that this age has produced only “ein Meer von glänzenden Autodächern […] ein Meer von Belanglosigkeiten aus Plastik und Blech” (8). When Lebert describes societal malaise as a “Jahrmarkstrummel, der Sommer für Sommer im Reisebetrieb und Winter für Winter im Weihnachtsgeschäft kulminiert”(8), he singles out mass tourism and consumerism as attempts to escape what he calls the “Vakuum. Die große Leere”(8). This situation has resulted in negative changes in behavioral norms and standards of culture, and in Der Feuerkreis tourists represent such developments. Jerschek interprets their emergence as a threat to his values, and their large numbers and lack of social distinctions intimate a mass society, reveling in escape
and pleasure. This is evident both in Jerschek’s comments on the skiers’ footprints, but also in the image preceding them. There the narrator points out that the tourists used stacks of wood to recline and sunbathe (247). Earlier in the novel the woodpiles are shown as the result of hard labor needed to heat homes. Relaxing on these piles, then, the tourists are presented as creatures of excess and leisure, which renders Jerschek’s serious and somber approach all the more legitimate.

This anti-tourism critique in Der Feuerkreis we have outlined above follows conventional patterns. It repeats anti-tourism’s inherent contradiction: it demonizes tourism by valorizing tourism. It privileges the elitist form of tourism associated with Jerschek’s aristocratic, pre-war youth as offering a more authentic experience than that of the mass tourist, and thus laments the loss of a golden age of exclusive tourism and rails against its democratization. This suggests Lebert’s own unease over a perceived loss of order, norms, and privilege, and this view finds support when we consider the cultural pessimism evident in Lebert’s novel and his “Rollentausch” speech. I argue, however, that Lebert’s censure does not merely target a cultural decline and a loss of access, but serves his larger projects of addressing Austria’s fascist denial and struggle for a national consciousness.

The “Rollentausch” speech offers us a productive opening to understand how the novel goes beyond a standard condescending attack on tourism. In that piece, Lebert attributes the consumerism and leisure of postwar society to its failure to deal with its role in National Socialism. Instead of acknowledging guilt and developing a “moralische Kraft” (8), postwar society avoids the past and responsibility, enjoying instead the fruits of the “Wiederaufbau.” Lebert specifically points to Austria’s failure to confront its fascist past and singles out the boom in the tourism industry to illustrate this failure:
Sobald wir [die Schuldigen und Besiegten] wieder genug zu essen hatten, wurden wir lustig. Lustig, gemütlich, originell, und vor allem sehr harmlos. Und für all diese Eigenschaften haben wir Abnehmer gefunden; das alles wird an den Mann gebracht. Auch daraus haben wir gewissermassen eine Industrie entwickelt. (8)

Instead of admitting and learning from its past postwar Austria has attempted to erase it and present itself as a harmless nation of victims. The national images created by the tourism industry erase the recent past for a more glorified Habsburg legacy and images of timeless peasantry:


This passage displays Lebert’s scorn for tourism’s infringement on the privileged sphere of high culture and on the realm of folk culture. Most significant for our reading, however, this passage highlights the falseness and inauthenticity of the images of Austria forged by the tourism industry. They enact a denial of the past and are an inaccurate representation of Austria. In this speech, then, Lebert links tourism to the denial of Austria’s Nazi past and its postwar national reconstruction, two issues that, as my reading shows, are articulated through Lebert’s critique of tourism in Der Feuerkreis.

2.2.2 The relation of tourism critique to questions of Austrian national identity

Austria’s coming to terms with its fascist past and its development of a national consciousness are the key concerns of Der Feuerkreis, and I contend that the course of
Hilde’s transformation and Jerschek’s conflicts about reporting her are conveyed through a focus on the tourism industry. Lebert articulates Jerschek’s struggles with Hilde through tensions concerning the conversion of the villa into a hotel and Hilde’s potential role as a host. Inauthenticity in tourism provides the link to the issues of national identity. The novel overturns the images and accoutrements associated with tourism as false, and highlights how they allow certain figures to conceal their fascist complicity. It depicts the roles and the relationships in the industry as turning the host into someone else, which thus presents them as an obstacle to the development of a national consciousness.

2.2.2.1 The denial of Austria’s National Socialist past

Victimization under National Socialism became one of the founding myths of the Second Republic and served its task of nation building, enabling Austria to externalize responsibility for Nazi crimes and avoid engagement with the years of National Socialism and Austro-fascist rule. As in Germany, Allied denazification processes did not meet their high ideals in Austria, but here former Nazis were rehabilitated into a society that denied its complicity (Johnson 146-151). The victim myth remained unchallenged in Austria’s harmonious political climate of the early postwar era, which sought to avoid the internecine political instability of the 1930s. Lebert’s novels are widely recognized as some of the first literary works to challenge this myth, in particular Die Wolfshaut from 1960. That novel clearly refers to the Austrian context, yet does so through a more abstract focus. Der Feuerkreis, on the other hand, explicitly locates itself in the temporal and spatial setting of postwar Austria and zeroes in on its denial of a fascist past.
Lebert’s novel uses the figure of Hilde to construct an idealized process of confronting and coming to terms with the Nazi past. Jerschek sets this process in motion, and in the novel’s first pages, the narrator points out that we are to see Jerschek as fulfilling a mission, an “Auftrag,” that will provide a “Beispiel” or “Modell” (10). Initially Hilde does not reveal to Jerschek what she did during the war and strongly adheres to her fascist beliefs. Her defiance of Jerschek, however, contrasts with her moments of intense silence and melancholy. Lebert thus echoes the Mitscherlichs’ accounts of the postwar psyche, by showing how Hilde tries to manage her feelings of guilt through her self-denial and immersion in hard, agrarian labor. Jerschek’s intervention neutralizes this tactic, as her comments on his return reveal:

Wärst du doch nie zurückgekommen […] ich hab schon angefangen, alles zu vergessen, auch mich selbst – und den Krieg, diese Jahre […]; ich hab schon so prachtvolle Scheuklappen getragen und bin dahingetrottet, ohne links und rechts zu schauen, [...]. Denn für mich war die Vergangenheit ‘bewältigt’ […] aber dann bist du dahergekommen. (215)

Jerschek’s return cancels another potential strategy for evading the past: as the legal heir and owner of the villa, he also puts an end to Hindler’s plans of renovation. By the close of the novel, Hilde confesses her crimes to Jerschek and shows remorse for them. After first renouncing her hope for some cosmic retribution for her deeds, she finally accepts the punishment and authority of the state by sending her confession to the military police.18

18 Jerschek’s demand underlines the novel’s thematization of freedom, which holds that the individual must take responsibility for her or his actions. This view can also be found in Lebert’s “Rollentausch” speech, where he argues that the war was not the significant test, but rather the immediate postwar period in which Austria was “nicht freigesprochen, sondern nur begnadigt” (8). In this period Austria, he argues, squandered the opportunity to demonstrate its “innere Freiheit” and assume responsibility (8). The novel places Hilde in a parallel position when Jerschek admonishes her: “Du hast noch nie gewußt, was Freiheit ist und wie schrecklich sie ist; jetzt weißt du es endlich: Es steht dir frei, dich selber freizusprechen” (302). For Jerschek, this freedom entails her admission of guilt: thus he insists that Hilde not shirk this responsibility and must willingly turn herself in rather than be punished by him.
The completion of Hilde’s coming to terms with the past reveals the problematic nature of this process and reinforces her symbolic reference to Austria. During her final confrontation with Hindler, Hilde details an array of Nazi atrocities and claims responsibility for each of them by proclaiming: “Ich habs getan” (327-9). The novel thus constructs her as assuming the guilt of others and with her death positions her as a martyr figure. The narrator’s description of Hilde’s bloody corpse reveals her allegorical status: “Sie sieht aus, als sei sie rot-weiß-rot beflaggt” (331): the flag image bluntly symbolizes her establishment of an Austrian national consciousness. 19 After Hilde’s death, Jerschek washes her body, which the novel elevates into an absolution for her and Austria. This symbolic absolution is confirmed in the novel’s epilogue through the figure of Veronika, whom Jerschek sees as proof of Hilde’s and Austria’s redemption.

In envisioning the washing away of Hilde’s and Austria’s crimes in his novel, Lebert contradicts the views on “Vergangenheitsbewältigung” that he expressed in his “Rollentausch” speech, where he notes:

> Von einer Vergangenheit, die niemand bewältigen kann, weil sie ganz einfach nicht zu bewältigen ist, braucht man nicht erst zu sagen, daß sie unbewältigt sei; tut man es doch, so erweckt man damit die irrige Hoffnung, daß sie irgendwann bewältigt werden könnte. (8)

Lebert’s speech echoes Adorno’s argument that the past can never be mastered fully. 20 His novel, however, attempts, on a symbolic level at least, to do exactly that by

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19 While we can concur with many critics’ evaluation of this bloody image as tasteless or overbearing (Schmidt-Dengler “Wälsungen” 76), we must not forget that Lebert is attempting to situate this image in an historical, yet heavily mythologized context and thereby intensify its status as a symbol of Austrian identity. The red-white-red flag that is imagined on Hilde’s corpse repeats the legendary origin of the Austrian flag, whose red-white-red stripes are believed to be inspired by an incident during the Crusades in Akkon (Syria) in 1191. After a victorious battle, Leopold the Babenberger removed his belt, revealing a white stripe flanked by two red ones from his blood-soaked tunic (Spann 42-3).

20 In his “Was bedeutet: Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit?” (1959) Adorno writes of the real goal behind ‘coming to terms with the past:’ “[M]an will einen Schlußstrich darunter ziehen und womöglich es [das Vergangene] selbst aus der Erinnerung wegwischen” (555).
presenting Veronika as a symbol of Hilde’s and Austria’s restored innocence. This symbolic exculpation has a further contradiction in that it is not consistent with the novel’s critique of postwar Austria. Just as Hilde is replaced by the innocent Veronika, Austria sought its own absolution through its self-presentation as an innocent victim of National Socialism and thus erasure of its role in fascism. Egpytien argues that these contradictions do not figure into Lebert’s mythic framework. Lebert’s novel adopts Wagnerian models and casts Jerschek and Hilde in the roles of Siegfried and Brünnhilde: Jerschek awakens Hilde, releasing her from the impenetrable ring of fire, namely her own internal resistance, and brings her to her admission of guilt and thus her innocence. This magical restoration of innocence, as Egyptien contends, “kann sich allein mythisch legitimieren” (Anschluß 244): it can only be justified in the context of Lebert’s mythic conception of good triumphing over evil. While Egyptien’s thoughts help us explain the novel’s contradictory tensions, they neglect to consider the concrete and historical elements on which Lebert draws to construct his clash between good and evil. While Lebert has Hilde’s transformation become the result of Jerschek’s mythic mission, he undergirds this process with her renouncement of the tourism industry.

Lebert’s depiction of the tourism industry supports his critique of postwar Austrians’ denial of complicity in National Socialism. Lebert forges a connection

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21 Lebert links the repression of Austria’s Nazi past to the development of its tourism industry already in Die Wolfshaut. The narrator of that novel, for example, introduces the village of Schweigen as “eine Gegend, die nichts zu bieten hat und deshalb auch kaum bekannt ist” (7). The village elders do not want to remain off the beaten path and have acquired modern, tourist-friendly amenities, such as jukeboxes, neon signs, and espresso machines. Their goals are threatened, however, by the novel’s protagonist, Unfreund, who seeks to discover the villagers’ secret – the wartime murder of forced laborers. In the novel’s most climactic moment, Unfreund finally uncovers these corpses only to have them reburied when a wall suddenly collapses. The narrative then immediately cuts to a town meeting where the topic is the tourism industry. The villagers vote to widen the main street and remove the trees that line it to insure “Daß der Fremdenverkehr in Schwung kommt! […] Daß es bei uns in Schweigen ein bissel modern wird!” (543). One character even complains that the trees prohibit potential tourists from seeing his inn’s new sign and its freshly painted façade (549). Just as Unfreund seeks to unearths Nazi crimes below the surface, then, the villagers conspire to make that surface even more prominent – and in turn more concealing.
between tourism and the fascist legacy by intricately constructing the industry as the negative alternative to Hilde’s process of coming to terms with the past. The catalyst for this alternative is Hindler, who intends to exploit a career in tourism to hide his criminal past and assimilate into respectable postwar society. His plan to convert the villa into a hotel thus offers Hilde as well a potential means of reinventing herself as a hotel proprietor, which would allow her to escape her past. Tourism is thus the concrete outcome that Jerschek must divert. His mission of bringing Hilde to change her ways and restoring her innocence doubles as a mission to halt the conversion of the villa and the denial of responsibility that it would precipitate. He accomplishes these by bringing Hilde to accept her guilt and eventually burning down the villa. The epilogue confirms Jerschek’s actions, as he returns to an Austria that seems free from a reliance on the industry.

With regard to its treatment of Hilde’s coming to terms with the past, Lebert’s novel presents a twist on our focus on the tourism industry. Like many critics of Austrian tourism, Lebert disdains the predominance of the industry and denounces it as an enterprise that turns Austria and the Austrian host into someone else. But with regard to the fascist past, the novel emphasizes not how the Austrian hosts are victims of this transformation, but how they opportunistically manipulate it. The novel’s focus on inauthenticity in tourism stresses how certain figures adopt the roles of the tourism industry as a disguise to conceal what they have done. *Der Feuerkreis* thus links inauthenticity to the denial of the fascist complicity. Lebert’s novel isolates several touristic motifs, such as traditional clothing, skiing, or the landscape, and presents them as enacting a deception or fabrication that conceals and avoids a sinister, corrupt past. Lebert does, however, invoke the more common emphasis on inauthenticity as a type of
alienation that effects a loss of identity for the host through his novel’s project concerning national consciousness.

2.2.2.2 The development of an Austrian national consciousness

The novel’s focus on Austrian national consciousness reflects a key concern for Austrian leaders after 1945, who attempted to foster an independent consciousness that promoted Austria’s Habsburg, multicultural heritage and abandoned conceptions of belonging to a German cultural nation. As Ernst Bruckmüller details, however, Austria’s German question was the subject of many heated debates around 1965 (87-8). In particular, the comments of the anti-Semitic, pan-German professor Taras Borodajkewicz incited riots in 1965, during which a participant was killed by a Neo-Nazi demonstrator in Vienna. These events exposed the fragility of the developing consciousness and contributed to the government’s inauguration of a national holiday in 1965 to commemorate Austrian independence (Bruckmüller 88).

Lebert takes an overtly affirmative stand on Austrian national consciousness in Der Feuerkreis. In the epilogue, which is set in 1965, seventeen years after the main narrative, the protagonist’s explicit comments on the Borodajkewicz affair lament that contemporary Austria has not fully accepted an independent national consciousness and

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22 Such views were promoted on the right (Alfred Missong’s Die österreichische Nation [1948]) as well as on the left (the Communist Ernst Fischer’s Die Entstehung des österreichischen Volkscharakters [1948]).

23 In 1964 demonstrations concerning school materials in Styria revealed public support for pan-German sentiments, sparking debates between national leaders that reached a large audience in the newly dominant medium of television (Bruckmüller 87).

24 The question of a German cultural nation has certainly not been resolved. It appeared again in the disputes in the late 1980s between historians regarding an Austrian history separate from Germany’s that has been described as the Austrian “Historikerstreit” (Thaler 5). This issue continues to resurface in political debates as well. In 1988 Jörg Haider sparked a controversy when he referred to the Austrian nation as an “ideologische Mißgeburt” (qtd. in Bruckmüller 88). In 2002, a less incendiary controversy began when Freedom party representative Wolfgang Jung stated “Wenn Sie mich nach meiner Nationalität fragen, nach der Volkszugehörigkeit, bin ich Deutscher” (Der Standard 10 May 2002).
notes that contemporary Austria still needs a “Lektion” on this matter (336), a term that Jerschek used earlier when confronting Hilde (226). The novel’s main narrative indeed presents such a lesson to the reader. Lebert constructs a world in which Austria seems to have undertaken few attempts to distance itself from Germany, and all but Jerschek reject the idea of an Austrian nation. Lebert engages this issue by having the central characters directly debate Austrian nationhood (249-262) and by infusing the tensions of this debate into their narrative conflicts. The focus on the tourism industry again provides us a productive means of understanding Lebert’s project because it is an underlying element in the characters’ debates.

For Lebert’s novel, the issue of Austrian consciousness turns on the clash between two broad definitions of nationhood that have been dominant in European history: the cultural nation and the civic nation.25 The idea of a the cultural nation or “Kulturnation” is based on notions of shared cultural traits, such as language, heritage, or ethnicity, and in its extremes envisions a racial whole. In contrast, the civic nation or “Staatsnation” is not constructed around an imaginary essentialized identity shared by its members, but rather on the notion of a state, in which a political union is established by citizens of a particular territorial space, and membership is determined by the laws of that state.

Lebert’s characters subscribe to these different views of nationhood. Hilde and Hindler affirm the notion of a cultural nation and assert Austria’s membership in a larger German community, which for them is constituted through racial and cultural identity. Hilde, for example, initially valorizes the German “Volk” over the “lächerlicher Kleinstaat” (251) to which she finds Austria has been reduced after 1945. Jerschek, on

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25 My definition of these two conceptions is informed by Peter Thaler’s study on Austrian nation building (6-7).
the other hand, subscribes to the concept of a “Staatsnation.” As an Allied officer, though, he is a complicated representative of law and the state because he enforces the will of the occupying powers. He does, however, advocate and Austrian “Staat” (251) and inveighs against Hilde’s views of Austria’s German ethnicity. While Lebert clearly has Jerschek serve as a contrast figure for the “Kultnation,” he arms this character with flawed arguments that ultimately support this concept. Jerschek namely rejects Austria’s cultural and ethnic bonds to Germany, instead imagining multicultural origins that nonetheless rely on notions of ethnicity and race. He describes Austrians as “dies[es] verrückt[e] Gemisch aus Kelten, Illyren, Romanen, Bayern und Slawen, das zufällig deutsch spricht” (251). While Jerschek envisions a hybrid conception of Austrian identity, he seems preoccupied by fears of “impurity,” which is evident in his limiting of any German influence to the “Bavarian” and his disclaimer that linguistic ties are merely “coincidental.” This blindness in Lebert’s construction of Jerschek reflects an obsession of many founders of the Second Republic to distance the new nation from Germany and to construct Austrian identity foremost as non-German. Consequently, Lebert portrays Jerschek as a figure bent on bringing Hilde to confront her past, but also to accept an Austrian national consciousness and reject the notion of a cultural nation.

Lebert’s novel draws on the tourism industry for its engagement with Austrian national consciousness, in particular the dynamics of working in tourism. First,

26 Lebert indirectly privileges notions of Austrian multiculturalism by having Hilde denounce it. When she counters Jerschek’s praise for the Viennese, Hilde retorts: “Wer sind die Wiener?! Tschechen! Polen! Ungarn! Slowaken! Kroaten!” and then describes Vienna as a “Pestgeschwür, ein feindlicher Brückenkopf auf deutschem Gebiet” (74), and thus reinforces the opposition of Austrian multiculturalism to pan-German and Nazi thought. The epilogue underscores this on an intertextual level, as Jerschek recalls a line from Gustav Mahler’s Lied von der Erde (336). The Germanic Wagner has thus been replaced by Mahler, a representative of Habsburg diversity (Czech, Jewish, peasant).

27 An often-cited example, and one to which Lebert’s text alludes, is the brief renaming of the school subject “Deutsch” with the term “Unterrichtssprache,” which as Thaler notes, reflects the “uneasiness about the presence of the German language in the Austrian nation” (146 n30).
Jerschek’s monologues use images of Austrian hosts and the German tourists to argue against Austria’s place in a German cultural nation. The relationship is constructed as a power hierarchy in which Austrian hosts subjugate themselves to tourists and conform to their wishes, thus abandoning their own identities. Second, these views find illustration in the figure of the innkeeper and to a lesser extent in Hilde. The novel places both characters in submissive roles through their economic relationships with guests: Hilde agrees to provide for Jerschek’s room and board (32), and the innkeeper is transformed when her business becomes profit-oriented after the currency reform (181). The tourism industry imagined in Lebert’s novel thus becomes an enterprise that would keep Austrians tied to and dependent on tourists. With regard to its connection between working in tourism and national consciousness, Lebert’s novel employs a notion of authenticity common to the remaining works in our study. He pictures the industry as a catalyst of inauthenticity, because it makes Austrians become someone else. More precisely, it hinders them from becoming what Lebert’s novel constructs as genuine: adherents of an Austrian civic nation. Because the relationship between host and tourist keeps the host dependent on or submissive to their guests, who in this novel are consistently envisioned as German, Lebert thus portrays this relationship as one that impedes the development of an Austrian consciousness.

Lebert pushes the links between tourism and the two concepts of nationhood even further with Jerschek. His narrative revolves around his internal conflict regarding Hilde: should he protect his half-sister or should he ensure that she be brought to justice? Before confessing about her past and murders, Hilde obliquely poses this question to Jerschek: “Was würde dir mehr bedeuten? Die Freundschaft oder das Recht?” (225). Hilde is using the analogy of friendship to avoid reference to her real relationship with
Jerschek, which is familial and is further portrayed as based on a love that borders on the incestuous. The choice she presents Jerschek, though, is between the bonds of emotion and kinship and the bonds of law and political consensus: this choice thus resonates with the same tensions inherent in the conflict between the cultural nation and the civic nation. Once he learns of Hilde’s crimes, Jerschek is torn between these tensions. On the one hand, he is swayed by his feelings for his half-sister and the sense of Heimat that he occasionally perceives when they are together. On the other, he is compelled by his responsibilities as an officer and his commitment to a legal code. Jerschek’s emotions and sexual desires for Hilde become a temptation for him: they lure him into abandoning his mission with Hilde. The incest temptation thus is associated with the notion of a cultural nation. Although the novel flirts with the incestuous aspects of the relationship between Hilde and Jerschek, it clearly preserves the taboo nature of incest and ultimately shows that Jerschek resists this temptation. He suspends his emotional bonds and adheres to his legal and official roles. Thus, when Jerschek resolves his internal conflict by accepting that he must report Hilde, fully aware that it will result in her death, he is simultaneously rejecting the appeals of the cultural nation that tempted him.

Jerschek’s temptation and his emotional attachment to Hilde can be read out of the depiction of his touristic experiences. Jerschek’s return is treated as a visit, and his prime recreations are his many “[Ausflüge]” into the landscape (300). Nature is depicted,

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28 My reading of this incestuous dimension diverges from Menasse’s, which serves his examination of the Austrian Social Partnership in literature and stresses how Austrians turn themselves into both victims and perpetrators. He finds this stance exemplified in Jerschek, who as an exile is a victim of fascism but becomes a perpetrator by killing Hilde. He thus sees Veronika, the result of their symbolic union, as a synthesis of these opposing positions. Menasse thus argues that Jerschek does give in to his incestuous desire (Land 120-125). I agree that Jerschek illustrates Lebert’s views on collective guilt, but disagree that this is evident in his symbolic incest with Hilde. Menasse’s reading, in my view, ignores the taboo nature of incest that the novel maintains. It even explicitly points out to the reader that Jerschek and Hilde do not commit incest (154). Succumbing to taboo desires is presented as an abandonment of the ideals of Austrian consciousness that the novel creates.
on the one hand, as oppressive, demonic and decaying, and on the other, as intoxicatingly beautiful and alive. The landscape is often paralleled with Hilde, and, like her, it functions as a temptation for Jerschek, luring him with its beauty and the memories that it triggers of his youth at the villa. These appeals eventually reveal themselves as deceptive for Jerschek, which again points to inauthenticity: they are not what they seem to be. The sublime landscape appears to Jerschek at times as an “Attrappe” (52), occasionally revealing a darker, hidden element – for example, the mountains suddenly seem to be made of bones (91) and a sunrise is likened to a wound bleeding onto the landscape (272-3). Changing from a source of enchantment to one of repulsion, the landscape thus exposes the repressed past for Jerschek, leading him to reject the desires that it awakens. Just as Jerschek recognizes the dangers of the emotional bonds he perceives with Hilde, he suspends his attachment to the landscape and the villa. Jerschek’s rejection of the touristic appeal is significant because it parallels the novel’s repudiation of Austria’s place in a German cultural nation, and because it simultaneously reinforces the critique of Austria’s touristic imagery and their association with amnesia.

But as we noted above, Lebert’s notion of inauthenticity in tourism is not only concerned with deception and fakeness, but also with the alteration of those employed in it. This focus on the host’s alienation dovetails with the anxieties about Austrian identity that are evident in the novel. Der Feuerkreis is clearly probing the definition of who Austrians are/should be and in particular, what their relation to the past should be. This is reinforced through the novel’s alignment of characters in terms of their support of the tourism industry and of an Austrian national consciousness, which Lebert problematically heightens through references to ethnicity. Hindler and Jerschek are cast as opposite poles, and the novel charts Hilde’s progression from one to the other. Since Lebert
undergirds this opposition with the characters’ ethnicity, he undermines his novel’s rejection of a cultural nation. Hindler is the strongest supporter of the tourism industry in the novel, and his commitment to Austrian identity is presented as fake. A Sudeten German, Hindler describes himself as an “Altösterreicher,” but then argues:

> “Gerade wir Sudetendeutschen sind die reinsten Deutschen.”
> “Ich dachte, Sie sind Österreichier!” sagte Jerschek.
> “Gewiß. Ich habe die österreichische Staatsbürgerschaft.” (164)

Hindler feigns an acceptance of the concept of a civic nation, yet he clearly sees himself as ethnically German. While Lebert thus highlights Hindler’s phony support for the civic nation, he reinscribes the ethnic elements of the cultural nation by pointing out that Hindler is a Sudeten German, a gesture that becomes all the more problematic when we recognize its contrast in Jerschek.

The novel’s most vehement critic of the tourism industry and its sole supporter of an Austrian nation is Jerschek, whose link to an independent Austria, and thus distance from a German cultural nation, Lebert underscores through his family heritage. He presents this character as maintaining continuity with Austria’s Habsburg past: his father was an imperial lieutenant who was killed at the Isonzo in the First World War (97). Jerschek’s family name, with its vaguely Slavic associations, constructs him, not Hindler, as the ostensibly genuine heir to an “Altösterreich.”

Thus, although Jerschek should represent the opposition to a cultural nation, his construction seems to affirm it. Lebert further attempts to associate Jerschek with a multicultural Austria by pointing out several times that Jerschek’s former fiancée [Esther] is a Viennese Jew who has emigrated to Palestine (123, 298, 317).

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29 In contrast, Hindler’s name appears all the more Germanic and has a particularly dubious association: Jerschek describes it as “ein Zwischending zwischen Hitler und Himmler” (165).
Hilde is cast between the poles that Jerschek and Hindler represent. Lebert depicts her as having a false consciousness that she abandons to achieve her apparently genuine self, which in the novel’s conception is predicated on her acceptance of an Austrian identity. An earlier, unpublished manuscript of the novel includes an illuminating passage that links notions of inauthenticity and Austrian consciousness. Reflecting on her existence before Jerschek’s arrival, Hilde states: “Ich war schon auf dem besten Wege, eine echte Österreicherin zu werden, mich einzuordnen in das Heer der Stummen und Gedächtnislosen” (emphasis added, qtd. in Arrer 178). Hilde’s ironic reference to a “genuine Austrian” alludes to Hindler’s falseness. By the close of the novel, Hilde makes a transformation from Hindler’s inauthentic to Jerschek’s authentic consciousness. Again, Lebert uncritically employs notions of purity with Hilde and goes so far as to portray her as an allegedly racial impurity. She is the daughter of a Viennese woman, who is Jerschek’s mother, and an Austrian figure, whom Lebert vilifies as both a Nazi and as a member of the lower class. In Lebert’s novel, Hilde’s impurity can only be resolved though her death, which both undermines his criticism of the cultural nation and seems to affirm fascist racial ideologies.

Hilde’s racialized construction offers yet another example of Lebert’s instrumentalization of this figure. He casts her development as an idealized achievement of Austrian identity, and, as we noted earlier, Hilde illustrates a process of coming to terms with the past. The misogynist dimensions of Lebert’s instrumentalization of this figure make clear the risky nature and ultimate failure of his “Trojan Horse” strategy: that is, his attempt to criticize the fascist legacies by using structures that figure in fascist

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30 This class bias is evident in Jerschek’s imagining of this character’s speech, which is written in dialect form, a consistent marker in Lebert’s works for lower classes and a lack of intelligence (168).
literature. Lebert constructs Hilde as a morally and sexually deviant female who must be rescued and redeemed by a crusading male figure, which places her transformation on a problematic gendered axis. This relies on Lebert’s frequent association of her involvement in National Socialism (and by extension pan-Germanist thought) with prostitution, which he intensifies by equating her sexual transgression with physical decay. Even her initial acceptance of Austrian consciousness is forced onto the gendered context of a birth. When Hilde abandons her Nazi views at the chapel, the narrator describes her screams as sounding “als gebäre sie ein Kind, ein ganzes Land, sich selbst” (312). Lebert likens her transformation to a moral cleansing and completes it with a purification by fire, that, through the emergence of Veronika, results in the restoration of virginal purity. These risky elements not only fail to distance the novel from the fascist models it intends to problematize, but by having Jerschek appear as the authority over Hilde’s transformation, they also ultimately negate the individual agency and personal development that Lebert aims to demonstrate through her fictional example.

2.3 The representation of the tourism industry

As we have seen, Lebert aligns Hilde’s transformation and Jerschek’s engagement in it within his novel’s rejection of the tourism industry. Jerschek’s actions to bring Hilde to reject her fascist beliefs and to accept an Austrian consciousness coincide with his thwarting Hindler’s plans to convert the villa. Lebert’s portrayal of tourist activities and various aspects of the tourism industry reinforce his criticism of tourism by supporting his associations with the denial of the fascist past and the impediments to a national consciousness. In the remaining sections of this chapter, we will demonstrate how Lebert’s depiction of the tourism industry is linked to his novel’s critique of Austrian
identity, beginning with his portrayal of tourist activities and proceeding to the tourism industry.

2.3.1 Skiing

One of the main tourist activities featured in *Der Feuerkreis* is skiing, which is addressed in the narrator’s depiction of skiers on the slopes, through their presence in a scene at the inn, and in a number of discussions between Jerschek and Hilde. Lebert’s focus on skiing has an anachronistic bent, because the novel’s temporal setting in 1947-8 was a period of economic instability that precluded mass tourism and skiing. The novel thus reflects the postwar obsession that began in the mid-1950s and that remains a preoccupation in Austrian society. The international success of the skier Toni Sailer in the late 1950s and the 1964 Innsbruck Olympics were catalysts for a skiing craze in Austria during this period (Hanisch 440). Consequently, the 1960-70s saw an abundance of representations of skiing in the media as well, which ranged from skier biographies, films featuring star athletes, and reflections on skiing by literary figures (Straub 179-184). The major trends in the literary texts on skiing tended towards “Spott, Satire, oder Erinnerung” (Straub 182). “Spott” predominates in Lebert’s depictions of skiing. The novel’s negative view of skiing must also be seen as a reaction to the sport’s relationship to the touristic boom. The craze for skiing contributed greatly to the growth of winter tourism, which during the 1960s-70s advanced to the dominant tourist season (Brusatti 153-78). Austria’s prominent skiers played no small role in this process, as they were elevated into national figures and became profitable tourism advertisements.

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31 Getraud Steiner notes that “Schifilme” (56) have their roots in pre-war mountain films and reminds us that the postwar first film made in Austria was a ski-film: Geza von Cziffra’s *Glaube an mich* (1946). After Toni Sailer’s Olympic success, he appeared in a total of 23 films, such as Hans Quest’s *12 Mädchen und ein Mann* (1959).
Enthusiasm for national team sports has long been a link to feelings of national identity and pride, and in the first decades of the Second Republic soccer and especially Olympic skiing were events that stirred national interest, in particular when the opponent was West Germany. The trials of Austrian skiers could easily incite nationalistic impulses and surely contributed to the development of Austrian national identity, which is suggested in chancellor Bruno Kreisky’s tautology “Wo es eine Nationalbank und eine Nationalmannschaft gibt, dort gibt es auch eine Nation” (qtd. in Breuss, et. al. 292). Lebert’s fictional world, however, ignores this function of skiing. While his dismissal of the sport reflects his cultural pessimism and scorn for the importance attributed to sports by the national media, Lebert’s rejection of a dimension to skiing that would actually support his polemics for national consciousness clearly points to his purpose in depicting this sport. Lebert uses skiing to highlight postwar fascist continuity by associating it with a repression of Austria’s recent past and with the perpetuation of fascist myths of the body.

The novelforegrounds skiing emotional effects, and treats pleasant sensations – be they gazing at nature or the physical thrills of skiing – as a source of subjective physical and emotional pleasure that deny reality. In one passage, skiers and farmers sing the praises of skiing at the inn: “Zwoa Bredln, a g’führiger Schnee. Juche” (249-255). This verse exudes praise for the immediate moment - all one needs is two skis and great

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32 Breuss, et. al. note that sports served “als Plattform für die Darstellung einer nichtdeutschen Identität Österreichs, für seine Selbststilisierung als Staat, der gegen die Gefahr ankämpft, vom großen Nachbar verschluckt zu werden und sich ständig dagegen behaupten muß” (293). As an example, they detail how Austria’s upset of the German soccer team in 1978 was stylized in the media as a moment of national triumph (293-4).

33 An event that happened one year after the publication of Der Feuerkreis offers an insight into sports and nationalism as well as the dominant role skiing played in Austrian culture. At the 1972 Olympics the Austrian skier Karl Schranz was disqualified, which lead to national outrage in Austria. On his return, thousands gathered at a historically charged location, the balcony overlooking Vienna’s Heldenplatz, to greet Schranz as a returning hero (Breuss, et. al 294-5).
snow: it illustrates the emotional appeal of skiing and thus its potential role as a diversion. Skiing is particularly tied to a sense of a flight from reality: it is an individually experienced sport, in which the participant experiences great speed and feelings of floating.\textsuperscript{34} Lebert proceeds from the implications of these subjective thrills and feelings of escape and links skiing to amnesia about the Nazi past.

In his “Rollentausch” speech Lebert attacks what he sees as the postwar generation’s inappropriate casual attitude and lack of seriousness and remorse that encourages a denial of memory: “Gerade wir, die Schuldigen und die Besiegten […] in diesem Kriege, und angesichts seiner Verbrechen, irgend etwas hätten lernen müssen. Es hätte uns zumindest angestanden, ernst und ein wenig nachdenklich zu werden. Doch – schau an! – genau das Gegenteil ist eingetreten” (8). In \textit{Der Feuerkreis}, Lebert illustrates the “Gegenteil” to which his speech refers: the postwar obsession with leisure and sports, in particular skiing. Jerschek expresses a similar sentiment when he chides Hilde’s enthusiasm for skiing: “Ein Volk, das noch vor kurzem indirekt – und auch direkt – an einem Massenmord beteiligt war, ein solches ‘Volk in Leibesübungen,’ hat nicht schon wieder unter Ski Heil und Hallo und Gelächter über die Hänge zu rutschen” (220). Through his character’s speech, Lebert argues that the conspicuous pleasure demonstrated in skiing has not been earned: they are an indicator of the spiritual and moral void he sees in postwar Austria, which result from the repression of the war and Austria’s crimes. The “Ski Heil und Hallo und Gelächter” are incongruous with the experience of the recent past. With this reference Lebert thus decries the speed in which

\textsuperscript{34} A contemporary example of such an interpretation of skiing can be found in “Lob des Schilaufs” (1958) by former Nazi and Heimat novel author Karl Heinrich Waggerl. He lauds skiing for its capacity to offer skiers a moment of transcendence, an escape from the everyday: “Also ist es offenkundig, daß die höheren Mächte dem Schläfer wohltollen. […] Das Joch der Schwere nehmen sie ihm ab und schenken ihm die selige Leichtigkeit des Vogels. Sie schließen seinen Mund und lassen ihn das Geschwätz der Welt vergessen” (586).
Austria can shift from a site of the Holocaust to a winter sports paradise and criticizes skiing for its role in the Austrian failure to confront the past. The novel implies that the enjoyment and pleasure that Austrians and tourists derive from skiing, and by extension from the prosperity of the “Wiederaufbau,” occurs at the cost of the past and allow postwar generations to avoid expressing genuine signs of remorse or shame. The novel expands this link between skiing and the denial of responsibility when Hilde and Jerschek attempt to visit a church on a Christmas Eve walk. Finding the door locked, Hilde comments that “Der liebe Gott ist ausgeflogen […] ist vermutlich auch auf einer Schitour” (225). The novel here uses skiing as a metaphor to extend its position on the denial of responsibility onto a spiritual level. In Lebert’s fictive postwar Austria God has seemingly abandoned all duties. We must remember that the novel predicates Hilde’s transformation on her acceptance of responsibility and her uttering of a Christian creed. Thus, Lebert implies that for it to occur, God must return from this “Schitour.”

Integral to the novel’s linking of skiing to forgetting the past and the flight from responsibility is its view of sport as a denial of reason. This situates Lebert’s censure of skiing within cultural critiques that see sports in general as an index of cultural decline and as a mindless activity that denies the intellect. Der Feuerkreis portrays Hilde as a skiing enthusiast and generally emphasizes her athletic corporeality and brute physical strength, so that its protagonist Jerschek can link these features to Nazi brutality and lack of reason. During a walk, Hilde asks whether Jerschek fears cows roaming in the field:

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35 A number of passages evoke the Mitscherlich’s famous study. The novel explicitly refers to an absent “Fähigkeit zu leiden” (172) or “Scham zu empfinden” (76), “keine Bereitschaft zur Sühne” (222).
36 John Hoberman’s study, Sport and Political Ideology (1984), locates these tendencies in thinkers from the interwar period (where an inverse praise of sport was also present) (122-3) and in postwar critiques, such as those of the Frankfurt School. He notes, for example, that “Adorno seems literally unable to imagine sport as something other than a complex of pathological attitudes and instincts” (244) and traces his critique of sports and corporeality to his engagement with fascism and authoritarianism.
he responds that he fears “Vor allem, was viel Kraft und keinen Verstand hat,” to which Hilde replies “Das hat wohl mir gegolten?” (64). Later this association of irrational animals is extended to skiers. As we saw above, Jerschek describes their footprints as coming from a “Herde” “mit Gebrüll” that leaves “kolossalen Stapfen” and refers to their motion with the verb “zertrampeln” (247-8). This depiction constructs the irrationality and brutality of the skiers, and the passage even highlights their disrespect for the existing forests paths, which suggests their unwillingness and inability to adhere to accepted, rational behavior.

The novel emphasizes the irrational and physical appeal that skiing has and associates it with violence and war, which serves its critique of Austria’s fascist continuities. As Wolfgang Straub shows, the growth in the popularity of skiing, which was invented for transportation, not leisure purposes, is itself closely bound up with warfare: the author notes how the soldiers who learned to ski for maneuvers on the Dolomite front during World War I later popularized the sport as civilians (172-3). Lebert’s novel continues to link skiing and war. The most vehement supporter of skiing is Hilde, but she is never depicted skiing, a gap that heightens the association with war. Hilde namely cannot go skiing, because she donated her skis to the “Rußlandfeldzug” (205). Lebert’s narrator later uses military imagery to describe skiers, for example: “Blondes Feuer schrie aus dem Flammenwerfer des Abgrunds ein grelles Geschrei und prallte gellend von den weißen Flächen ab. Daneben klang das Kriegsgeschrei der Sportler winzig und wie eingefroren in der harten Luft” (243). The skiers in this passage seem to enact a campaign on the landscape and into what Jerschek claims as his sphere, which can be seen in his anger at the footprints of the “Heer der Sportler” we noted above (247).
Former National Socialists are the most significant “Heer” for Lebert’s novel, which thus denounces skiing as a perpetuation and re-channeling of Nazi myths of the body and power into the present. In the passage quoted earlier, Jerschek clearly makes this connection by referring to: “ein solches ‘Volk in Leibesübungen,’” (220), a concept stemming from the Nazi ideologue Alfred Bäumler, who emphasized the connections between the physical training of the individual body and the ideological training of the “Gesamtleib,” the collective body of the nation (Hoberman 163). For Jerschek, skiing poses as a means through which Nazi idealizations of the body and physical power persist into the postwar present. Though skiing is an individual sport, the novel portrays skiing as a collective activity, strengthening the military association. Lebert’s novel carries these associations to the extreme when Hilde expresses her enthusiasm for skiing, claiming that “Wintersport ist eine Weltanschauung” and then jokes about erecting a “Diktatur der Wintersportler” (246-7). This passage heightens the antagonism between Hilde and Jerschek, whom she deems the first person who would be killed in her dictatorship. Though Hilde’s remarks are made in jest, they allow Lebert to allude to the fascist glorification of sport and the body for political gain. This shows us that Lebert’s negative view of sport rests in part on conventional critiques of sport as a tool for manipulating and inciting the masses to violence (Hoberman 245). This predilection sheds light on Lebert’s ignoring the productive role skiing had in fomenting national consciousness. Because Lebert presents skiing as a potential mode in which Nazi ideologies can be rehabilitated and continued, he rejects skiing’s status as a national icon.

Skiing’s role in perpetuating fascist continuities and hindering confrontation with the past is reinforced in the episode set at the inn. Here the main characters debate Austrian national identity while the tourists and farmers present sing about skiing,
repeating the same verse: “Zwoa Bredln, a g’führiger Schnee. Juche” (249-255). The singers change their tune when Hilde, intent on proving to Jerschek that Nazi sympathies are still present, prompts them to an army song and then shifts to the “Horst Wessel-Lied” (258-261). What Lebert shows with this quick transition from a seemingly harmless ski verse to a Nazi song of war is that Austria’s transition from fascism to a postwar democracy has been too quick, and that support for fascist thought still is present. The novel thus highlights skiing as a mode through which these sentiments are easily mobilized.

The skiers’ text foregrounds the sport’s potential motivation to obfuscate the past by stressing, as we noted earlier, its emotional, diversionary pleasure of skiing. This association with forgetting is illustrated on a structural level. The phrase from the skiers’ song is repeated six times in this long passage that is presented largely in direct discourse. This constantly breaks up the interchanges between the three characters, creating a tension that heightens the already tense topic at hand: Jerschek’s polemics on Austria’s Nazi past and on an independent identity. Since Jerschek’s “Lektion” is repeatedly interrupted by the skiers, the depiction thus mirrors the novel’s view of skiing’s effect on Austria’s engagement with its past: it blocks Jerschek’s attempt to enlighten Hilde.37

Given the societal significance of skiing in Austria, Lebert’s vitriolic depiction of the sport and his postulation of its links to fascist continuities and denial betray a subversive impulse. Lebert’s novel is attacking a sacred cow of the tourism industry, the media, the sports establishment, and the national pride of Austrian fans. His take on

37 Jerschek puts an end to the SS song with a denunciatory monologue. The patrons’ response to it reinforces the novel’s critique of skiing. As the narrator notes: “Blödes Gelächter der Sportler; sie setzten sich nach und nach hin. Doch die Waldarbeiter und die Bauern standen immer noch bereit” (262). The skiers have complete disregard for Jerschek’s admonishment, illustrating Lebert’s perception of a postwar avoidance of the past and preoccupation with prosperity and leisure.
skiing, then, can be read as a gesture that challenges the prevailing contemporary discourse on the sport and the importance it held in the national imagination. Der Feuerkreis remains one of the first postwar Austrian novels to lay bare the ideological implications behind this sport and its importance for the tourism industry, where it is perhaps the most significant tourist draw for postwar Austria and has attracted millions of foreign guests.

2.3.2 Natural landscapes

The significance of skiing is predicated on Austria’s natural landscape, which is a significant element to Lebert’s critique because it is perhaps the most important aspect in Austria’s touristic appeal and is a key component to Austria’s postwar self-image.

As Thomas Wöldrich’s study on touristic promotion shows, national and regional marketing campaigns have employed the natural landscape throughout the twentieth century, invariably stressing the most pristine and perfect spaces and weather (48-50). Lebert’s novel challenges these emphases, but his focus not only questions the touristic appropriation of nature, but also the natural landscape’s place in the creation of postwar Austrian identity, which we noted in chapter one. The republic’s use of landscape imagery in national symbols had the ideological function of diverting attention from postwar Austria’s recent past. But nature also promoted national identity. Klaus Zeyringer examines the use of nature in various postwar sources on nation building and notes that:

Die schönen Naturbilder dienten einer Bindung an das zu schaffende bzw. zu stärkende National- und Heimatgefühl. Sie dienten weiters dem symbolischen Ausdruck der fruchtbaren Arbeit in der anregenden Umwelt, der freudigen Aufbruchsstimmung des jungen Staates und schließlich immer mehr auch der Tourismuswerbung. (268)
Der Feuerkreis is indeed concerned with the establishment of a “National- und Heimatgefühl,” but its use of the natural landscape in its novel’s symbolic inventory has contradictory elements. On one hand, it is clearly critical of the diversionary appropriation of images of nature, but on the other, its epilogue seems to affirm them.

Lebert devotes considerable space to the touristic interaction with nature in Der Feuerkreis, in particular through Jerschek’s many walks and hikes. While critics have discussed the novel’s treatment of the natural landscape and have alluded to the tourism industry, none have considered that its protagonist indeed is presented like a tourist in this landscape. Jerschek’s actions as a tourist are significant because they allow us to link Jerschek’s return to the novel’s critique of the conception of a German cultural nation and of Austria’s fascist denial. First, Lebert illustrates Jerschek’s love-hate relationship with Austria and his temptation to submit to his emotions through his experiences as a tourist, viewing objects of his ambivalent desires. Second, Lebert portrays the beauty of nature that would enchant the postwar tourist as a diversion that obscures the memory of the recent past.

The novel’s more positive landscape images appear mostly in the first half of the text and are intricately connected to Jerschek’s recollections of earlier visits to the villa. Particularly in the many depictions of Jerschek’s hikes, the landscape appears mysteriously beautiful and vividly alive, sparking bittersweet memories. During these incidents, the novel presents idyllic images of forests and meadows and foregrounds the sensations associated with them, such as sounds and smells, which emphasizes Jerschek’s subjective remembrance. For example, the narrator describes the first walk depicted in the novel as follows:
Der Weg stieg an, dann fiel er wieder ab; wie planlos folgte er dem bewaldeten Rückgrat des Berges, verlief einmal westlich, dann wieder östlich des welligen Grates, und Jerschek sah durch die Stämme erst rechts und gleich darauf links jene meerblaue Tiefe, aus der vielfach gebrochen das Echo des Windes heraufdrang, angereichert mit dem Klang der Herdenschellen und dem Ruf der Bäche, und der Geruch von nassem Gras und nassem Holz und die Fasern des Nebels wie weiße, verworrene Haare emporflatterten. Er lauschte. Erinnerungen erwachten in ihm […] und da – fast glaubte er zu träumen, doch er träumte keineswegs – mischte sich noch eine gut bekannte Stimme in den Chor, [...]. “Ein Klappotez! Das gibt es auch noch!” sagte er beglückt. (68)

Passages such as this one illustrate how the novel places Jerschek in the position of a tourist. It includes seemingly insignificant details about the lay of the land, emphasizes what he is observing or sensing on his hikes, and describes the emotions that these experiences awaken. As Jerschek is visiting a space of his childhood, these emotions center on memories that lure him with a sense of belonging that is awakened by familiar sounds. In the passage above Jerschek hears an indigenous bird, the echo from a brook, and the cowbells, a recurring symbol for his sense of transcendence and Heimat. These sounds and Jerschek’s experience of nature thus have a healing effect on him, recalling the classical function of nature in idylls and pastorals as well as in conventional Heimat works. Such passages construct the viewing of nature as a magical experience for Jerschek that captivates him, taking control of his senses.

Lebert portrays the arresting power of nature to highlight the diversion it produces. The sublimity of the landscape briefly compromises Jerschek: the landscape presents Jerschek with feelings of Heimat that tempt him to overlook the memory of the recent past and to forget his duties with regard to his mission. The experience of tourism has been theorized as a temporary release from existential burdens and everyday rules and restrictions, as the tourist briefly suspends these inhibitions (Wang “Rethinking” 358-61). During Jerschek’s touristic experience of nature, he seems to perceive a similar escape from the burdens of his life. In one passage, the narrator describes how Jerschek
is lulled to sleep by the sounds of nature. The narrator describes this nap in a field as:
“Augenblicke, da er sich dem kreatürlichen Behagen hingab dazusein, Augenblicke, in denen er wieder zum Kind wurde, wieder zum Tier wurde [...] und so sich selbst vergaß und dergestalt auch jede Zeit. Dann hörte er bisweilen seine Mutter locken wie ein Muttertier” (123). As Kurt Arrer has noted about this passage: “Das Natur-Werden ist [Jerschek] für Augenblicke möglich, es bedeutet Idealwelt, Vergessen, Zeitlosigkeit, Ausweg aus dem Konflikt mit Hilde, Entspannung. Die Natur fungiert hier als positiver Wert, als problemloser, zeitloser Bereich” (213). I would also stress that this passage displays Jerschek’s touristic experience of nature. Jerschek has again taken a hike and the sights and sounds of the landscape allow Jerschek an escape from his memory of the war and his present responsibility with Hilde. The passage’s emphasis on a return to the past further highlights this sense of escape.38 As Arrer correctly contends, this scene transports Jerschek back to his prewar existence, “als hätte inzwischen der II. Weltkrieg nicht stattgefunden” (Arrer 210). The beauty of the natural environment thus is revealed as a deception, inducing Jerschek to forget the past and succumb to his feelings. A comment by Hilde even illustrates how this connection can be exploited. When Jerschek asks her a prying question about her past, she responds: “Sprechen wir nicht davon [...] Schau dir lieber das Gebirge an” (88). Hilde’s remark reveals the novel’s skepticism of postwar Austria’s appropriation of the landscape in tourism or national images, which channel attention away from the country’s past.

Lebert’s focus on the landscape goes further and isolates elements of the landscape as metaphors for forgetting, in particular through snow, which has

38 Similarly, when Jerschek and Hilde visit the abandoned mill, another touristic experience, Jerschek remarks “Wir waren in der Kindheit[…] in der Kindheit gibt es keine Zeit” (201).
conventionally been associated with forgetting and innocence. Klaus Zeyringer has shown that in many postwar Austrian works snow functions as a metaphor that reveals a “Blick hinter die falschen Kulissen” (251). Lebert’s novel illustrates this trend and associates snow with Hilde’s repressed past and her refusal to confront it. The first snowfall is paralleled with Jerschek’s vague suspicion that Hilde is hiding something (117-8). A later snowfall is described as a “Weiβer Narkose” (204) and happens on the night when Jerschek fails to uncover clues about Hilde’s past, prompting his thought: “Der Schnee deckt alles reinlich und geräuschlos zu. Das Land, das Haus, die Sünden, die Gräber” (207). Consequently, Jerschek’s speeches in the inn, which result in Hilde’s first defiance of Hindler, are followed by a sudden rise in temperature (262-3). The resultant melting snow thus signifies Hilde’s move towards accepting her final transformation.

Zeyringer’s notion of a “falsche Kulisse” allows us to see that the novel’s depiction of nature in general illustrates the tensions of Jerschek’s internal conflict about reporting Hilde. Lebert instrumentalizes Hilde as a temptation for Jerschek, problematically portraying her as a source of corruption that the male figure must overcome and correct. Lebert extends this notion of temptation to the landscape by associating it with Hilde. Jerschek’s perceptions of nature introduce moments of doubt, because it often induces his feelings of Heimat. For example, on their first walk, we read: “[Hilde wurde] mit allem ringsum eins, mit dem Wald, den Wiesen, dem Wind, der Weite des Landes […] und kam Jerschek auf einmal so nahe wie bisher noch nie”(68). Both Hilde and the landscape have an arresting effect on Jerschek, temporarily suspending his suspicions and reservations about her past. Jerschek is indeed aware of Hilde’s deceptive beauty and the feelings it arouses in him, as we see in a warning to
himself: “laß dich nicht einlullen von dem Gesicht deiner Mutter, auch wenn es da und
dort wie etwas Heiliges durch diese Züge schimmert. Die Tochter hat ihr eigenes Gesicht,
und das ist anders!” (70). Similarly, the novel shows that Jerschek is captivated by the
landscape’s sublimity, but points out very early that he is aware of its deceptive
capacities, which we can see in the novel’s central image of the mountain range. On
Jerschek’s first morning at the villa he sees the nearby mountains that he longed for while
in Britain and that he constructed as his connection to Heimat, and when he now sees
them, he notices a change:

Es war das alte, lang herbeigesehnte Bild; er betrachtete es, besah es mit
nüchternen Augen, fern jeder Rührung; und – schau an – er fand es längst nicht
mehr so überwältigend wie einst, eher arm, als habe es die Macht, das
Grenzenlose zu beschwören, eingebüßt: Es war nun wahrhaftig ein Bild, ein Bild
hinter Glas [. . .]. Er dachte: ‘Das Ganze sieht vorläufig aus wie eine Attrappe;
aber das gibt sich. Geh hinaus, laß dir vom Wind ein paar Ohrfeigen geben, und
gut wird es sein!’ (52)

That the mountain range has lost its power to enrapture Jerschek foregrounds his status as
a “Heimkehrer” figure: he is returning to a home, but his experiences away have changed
him and seem to have changed this space as well. In Britain Jerschek had invested his
memory of the mountains with high expectations and emotional intensity, but this cannot
be upheld when he finally sees the real thing. For Jerschek, the mountain range seems to
be an “Attrappe,” a term that reveals a variation on the notion of authenticity in Lebert’s
novel. The mountain range is not what it appears to be, or rather, what Jerschek wants it
to be. What diminishes its authenticity is the divergence from the ideal image of the
mountain Jerschek constructed out of his memories. This mountain range, however, is
also a site of tourism, and this notion of the mountain as inauthentic advances Lebert’s
critique. As we saw with skiing, the reference to the mountain range as an “Attrappe”
indicts Austria’s deceptive self-images and their entwining in touristic promotion. The
reference thus suggests that images of the natural landscape must be hiding something. This is further intimated as Jerschek continues to gaze at the mountain range: “Er dachte ‘Aber manchmal wird das Bild auch transparent, durchscheinend wie eine Hinterglasmalerei. Dann ist es, als schimmerten alle vergessenen Träume und Schrecken und Ängste als verdeckte Malschicht durch seine Oberfläche hindurch’” (52). Just as Jerschek suspects that Hilde is concealing her past, he suspects that the landscape harbors darker secrets.

The novel confirms Jerschek’s suspicions for the reader by presenting negative images of nature that contrast with its depiction of idyllic scenes, thus also countering the touristic image of the Austrian landscape. These images, which center on darkness, coldness, and decay, generally appear in moments of Jerschek’s uncertainty and anxiety, as well as moments of anger or jealousy regarding Hilde. For example, during Jerschek’s arrival at the villa the night sky is described as a “Bleiplatte des Himmels” (13). We then see Jerschek stumbling across wet, rotting underbrush, mistaking a row of mushrooms for bones, and imagining in the sounds of frogs a secret code warning of the arrival of the “Feind” (15). When we recall that the landscape is closely associated with Hilde and her body, the decay and vileness of nature reveals itself as a metaphor for Hilde’s corrupted self and the nature of her crimes. This is particularly evident in the passage in which the main characters cut down trees, where nature is connected with death and with a threatening female sexuality.

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39 For example, the narrator conveys Jerschek’s repulsion at Hilde and the landscape in which they must secure trees: “Man watete in einem saft- bis schimmelgrünen Matsch von Überpflanzen und in der Fäulnis, die sich unterhalb verborgen hielt: man kletterte wie durch die Sparren eines eingestürzten Dachstuhls, stolperte, glitt aus, morsche Stangen knickten unter jedem Tritt, […] plötzlich brach man ein, versank im Humus, in Friedhofserde, in Asche und Staub und mußte froh sein, wenn man aus dem allen wieder heil herauskam” (130). These images recur in Jerschek’s later dream, in which he imagines sinking into a pit of sludge, which he compares to Hilde’s body (141).
The natural landscape also begins to reveal its secrets in that remnants of the wartime past slowly begin to appear within it. On walks, Hilde points out to Jerschek a rusted gas mask in which plants have begun growing (68) and shows him the wreckage of an American plane (84-5). Metaphorical references transform natural objects into reminders of the Nazi past. For example, Jerschek likens the silhouette of trees to Hermann Göring with his arm raised in a “Hitlergruß” (183-4). Rain, in particular, is described through military metaphors; for example, when Jerschek first approaches the villa, rain falls “schwer wie MG-Kugeln” (18). After Jerschek hears about the crimes of Hilde’s father, the narrator describes the first drop as a “Genickschuß” followed by “weitere Geschosse,” comparing a downpour to an assault: “das ging in Stellung, spannte Stacheldraht, hob Gräben aus” (149). Lebert’s nature imagery must in part be viewed in the context of his problematization of conventional Heimat novels and films, a mode that has been associated with fascism and nationalism and later with restorative, exculpating postwar impulses. Lebert’s novels take a critical stance towards the ideology and aesthetics of conventional Heimat works, which is reflected in this novel’s negative depiction of the natural world. Unlike the harmonious landscapes of these works, the images of nature in Der Feuerkreis stress foremost the corruption and complicity that is hidden by the touristic image of the landscape.

The most pronounced indictment of tourism, the natural landscape, and the repressed fascist past is revealed during Jerschek’s interrogation of Hilde. Unable to

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40 To be sure, Lebert’s metaphorical use of nature does not differ from that found in the generic Heimat work, where nature and weather correspond to the subjective world of the characters. Lebert’s divergence from conventional Heimat literature is present in the radical ugliness of his nature imagery. In more conventional novels and films idealized landscapes underscore resident characters’ intact innocence or can restore innocence for the outsiders. Lebert’s nature, however, can only temporarily deliver the “Gesundung” that, for example, Ludwig Ganghofer prescribed for nature: the healing quality that releases protagonists from the toils of history and the modern world (Mettenleitner 150-153).
maintain her denial during Jerschek’s relentless questions, Hilde admits that she is indeed plagued by her crimes:


This image of the mountains and nature thus fully shatters the grandeur of the landscape and its invigorating scents that fascinate and tempt Jerschek throughout the novel. The “Attrappe” that Jerschek sensed in the mountain range now has a figurative unveiling: the natural world makes Austria’s fascist past transparent. If the landscape earlier was an invitation for Jerschek to escape the past and travel back to a more innocent time, Hilde’s image restores history and the memory of the Holocaust to the landscape. It interrupts the sublimity of the landscape by figuratively locating within it the real “Leichenberge” of the concentration camps.41

Through this association, the image contains the novel’s most potent challenge to the ideological dimension of the landscape in postwar Austrian touristic imagery. The pleasurable, restorative majesty of the landscape fails to restore solace or innocence to Hilde and Jerschek, and the touristic commodification of nature is exposed as a partner in the attempted erasure of the past’s horrors, replacing the unwanted and unspeakable with a pleasant façade of leisure and recreation. Furthermore, this image takes Lebert’s subversion of the postwar view of skiing to an extreme: Hilde likens the ski slopes to

41 The image of the “Leichenberge” in the novel is a variation on one of Lebert’s recurring images: the mountain of bones. In Der Feuerkreis, the narrator describes Jerschek’s premonition of a “schlimme[s] Gebirge verrotter Knochen” (91), for example. In his “Rollentausch” speech, Lebert writes that the achievements of postwar prosperity are insignificant next to the “hoch aufgerecktes Gebirge aus Knochen” (8), which the experience of the Second World War represents for his generation.
mountains of corpses, intensifying the novel’s contention that skiing proliferates at a cost of the memory of the past. Her skiers are unaware of what is hidden underneath their slopes.

The reference to “Leichenberge” (238) in the landscape puts an end to its function as a temptation for Jerschek. Since Jerschek learns the full truth of Hilde’s past during the “Leichenberge” passage, the remainder of the novel concentrates on his efforts at bringing her to justice and renunciation. The novel continues to depict nature as mysteriously fascinating (243, 263, 272, 300), but it no longer is shown exerting the same influence over Jerschek. Nature, which has become a landscape of “Leichenberge,” thus loses its appeal for Jerschek and ends his search for the “heile Welt” (88) for which he longed while in Britain. This transformation is actually foreshadowed in the passage in which Jerschek perceives the mountain range to be an “Attrappe.” There we read “Er stand da, wie eben ein Fremder in einer beliebigen Gegend herumsteht und gafft, und erkannte, daß es völlig sinnlos war, so dazustehen. ‘Das Alpenpanorama hilft mir einen Schmarrn,’ dachte er. ‘Ein Panorama ist noch kein Zuhause’” (59). This passage reminds us of Jerschek’s search for belonging and foreshadows his final refutation of the natural landscape as a source of this belonging because it only clouds his assessment of Austria. In doing this, the passage problematizes the connections between Austria’s touristic recreation and postwar nation building. By clearly stating that a panorama, a touristic term, cannot be a home, the novel rejects the role that tourism plays in postwar reconstruction. It suggests that a touristic presentation alone, despite the emotions that may be bound up with it, is not a sufficient foundation for a home or by extension a nation. Rejecting the conflation of touristic imagery with nationhood, the passage thus
implies that the touristic images and cliches of Austria have diverted attention from its need to address its fascist past and its emergent national consciousness.

Given this dismissal of the natural landscape and the thrust of the “Leichenberge” passage, which uncovers the repressed past in the landscape, it is thus ironic that the novel actually perpetuates a deception through its earlier portrayal of one aspect of the landscape. During Jerschek’s interrogation of Hilde we find a blatant denial of the presence of concentration camps in Austria (233-9). In this courtroom-like scene Jerschek questions Hilde about her knowledge of Nazi policies and actions, detailing an array of facts to the reader, which suggests the influence of the contemporary Auschwitz trials in Frankfurt and their literary reflection in works such as Peter Weiss’ Die Ermittlung. When he asks Hilde where she served, Jerschek lists over twenty locations, but tellingly fails to mention any in Austria, such as Mauthausen, Ebensee, or Hartheim. Thus, while attempting to interrogate Austrian involvement in the Holocaust, the novel continues to render the Holocaust an entirely German creation, perpetuating the myth of Austrian innocence. This scene removes the traces of the Nazi past from present-day Austria, and thus carries out the same erasure of the past in the landscape, for which the novel faults tourism.

In the epilogue, the novel continues to undermine its critique of touristic imagery and national identity, as Jerschek’s early rejection of the landscape is revoked. As we discussed above, Veronika’s appearance completes a symbolic absolution of Hilde and by extension Austria, ostensibly mastering the past and granting Austria an innocent status. A similar contradiction is evident in the portrayal of the landscape. Although the epilogue does address the pan-German ills that the narrator locates in 1965 Austria, the landscape, which once was deceptive and illusory, now appears truly idyllic and agrarian.
to Jerschek. The grounds of the villa are now a meadow for cows. The villa’s foundation is “alles verwachsen! […] ein Dickicht! Ein Urwald,” covered with “gilbende Birken, gilbende Lärchen, gilbenden Ahorn […] hohe, dürre Gras” (335). The crimes and mistakes of the past thus seem erased by nature, which no longer is in a state of putrid decay but autumnal peace. This bucolic landscape is further reflected in the figure of Veronika, whose voice and eyes are compared to the “Locken klarer wilder Bäche” (338). Again, this contradiction can be explained within Lebert’s mythic conception of the novel. In the epilogue, Jerschek is presented as fulfilling his mission and finding harmony. The epilogue’s images of nature suggest this harmony. They offer him the respite he has sought and, in turn, overturn his previous claim: this “Alpenpanorama” grants him a “Zuhause,” if only in death. While the restoration of the landscape’s awe-inspiring qualities may have a logic within the context of Lebert’s utopian conclusion, it nonetheless participates in the erasure of the fascist past that he criticizes in his earlier depiction of Jerschek’s touristic experiences in the landscape. Lebert employs this notion of deception in his images of characters who work in the industry.

2.3.3 Former National Socialist figures and the tourism industry

In concentrating on the tourism industry, Lebert targets a sector that was representative of Austria’s postwar recovery. As we noted in the first chapter, the industry experienced a great expansion during the postwar era, and the prime motivation was economic. Federal and provincial leaders promoted the industry as a tool of economic reconstruction. For individuals in the booming regions, tourism offered opportunities for personal recovery, both through participation in the growing industry and through the renovation of the private home into a pension. In his novel, Lebert refers
to his characters’ economic needs, but their prime interest is on the industry as a tool of political opportunism. Lebert’s former Nazi characters seek to recreate themselves as hosts and thus exploit tourism as a means of concealing their Nazi involvement.

The profession of the host is not only one that was a common part of Austrian historical reality that the novel depicts, but also lends itself well to illustrating an individual character’s goals of hiding the past. A former Nazi intent on concealing past crimes could be depicted through any profession, but the tourism industry is one that makes particularly transparent a fictional character’s deliberate attempt to alter their existing, compromised image with a more acceptable, advantageous one, because tourism involves the host’s performance of roles and conformity to what is appealing to or expected by their guests. Lebert’s novel utilizes this potential discrepancy between appearance and reality by portraying former Nazi characters as intent on beginning a career in tourism. Lebert’s fictional industry is a branch in which Austrians become someone else, and his novel highlights figures who intend to instrumentalize this alteration to conceal the barbarity of past crimes with a mantel of innocence and uprightness, of charm and decency.

In his “Rollentausch” speech Lebert contends that Austria’s re-creation as a touristic paradise enabled its avoidance of responsibility for National Socialism. Lebert argues that Austrians adopted a touristic persona, instead of showing remorse and a will to learn from the past. Lebert describes the phenomenon of the Austrian tourism industry as a disguise: an amusing, pleasant exterior that masks a criminal past. The industry and the prosperity it brings become part of the façade that postwar society erects to avoid engagement with its guilt. In his speech Lebert cynically charges that tourism hinders an inquiry into Austria’s predicament: “ich möchte auch gern wissen, was hier los ist. Aber
ich sehe das Land vor Gaststätten nicht mehr, und die Bevölkerung vor Kellnern und vor Wirten nicht” (8). He then suggests that the boom in tourism obfuscates more sinister actions and suspects: “daß in einem solchen Klima einiges gedeiht und daß hinter einer so auffällig lustigen Tarnung Dinge vor sich gehen, die eigentlich nicht mehr vor sich gehen dürften” (8). Lebert is likening the touristic re-creation of postwar Austria to a kind of camouflage, implying that it has concealed the continuity of power for former Nazi figures and of fascist, or what amounts to the same thing for Lebert, pan-Germanist thought.

In Lebert’s novel this hidden continuity is evident in nearly all of the characters who are associated with the tourism industry. The anti-Semitic traveling salesman, Riegler, whom Jerschek encounters at the inn, reveals his rejection of an independent Austrian nation by describing himself as coming from “Oberdonau,” the Nazi designation for the province of Upper Austria (211). Riegler assumes that Jerschek is a tourist and speaks about skiing and the local slopes, paving the way for Jerschek’s later invectives that align the postwar craze for skiing to fascist continuities. The farmer Lenz further illustrates these continuities. When he describes his imprisonment by the Soviets, he ridicules them for giving him preferential treatment as an Austrian (80) and later cannot understand Jerschek’s point that Austria actually won the war (81). His children even address Jerschek with “Heil Hittla” (296) and later curse him as a “Jud” (298). Lenz suggests to Jerschek that the villa should be made into a hotel because of its “wunderbare Aussicht” (297). He refers to constant radio reports that promote the tourism industry, a reference that is significant in three ways. First, by depicting a promotional campaign, Lebert is reminding us of tourism’s role in postwar reconstruction and thus justifying this field as an important target for his critique. Second, Lenz’s enthusiasm for tourism
furthers Lebert’s association of former Nazi figures with the promotion of the tourism industry. Third, it reinforces Lenz as a figure who follows the dictates handed out by the authorities: just as he followed the National Socialists in 1938, he is ready to follow the postwar promoters of the tourism industry.

The most prominent former Nazi in _Der Feuerkreis_ is Hindler. Only Hilde knows the truth about his Nazi involvement, which is initially hidden from the reader and from Jerschek. On two occasions, Hindler lies to Jerschek about his past. First, he describes himself as a soldier (172), and later claims that he was a “Deutschnationaler” but never a Nazi, and that since the war he has been “Nur noch Mensch – und Christ. Unabhängig” (256).42 Earlier Hilde denounces the tactics of former Nazis, such as Hindler, as a “Heuchelei” and curses them for abandoning the cause: “Ihr Parteiabzeichen haben sie in den Lokus geworfen – und waren schon wieder Österreicher und Vorzugsschüler und Erzdemokraten und harmlose Opfer” (196). With little subtlety this hints to the reader that Hindler’s assertions are not what they seem, but the novel does not fully reveal Hindler’s past until Hilde’s confronts him and exposes his role as a former adjutant at a concentration camp (327-8).

With the most compromised past, Hindler is presented as the novel’s most vocal proponent of the tourism industry. When he first meets Jerschek, he announces his plot to make a hotel out of the villa (173). But the ulterior motives behind his touristic plans are explicitly revealed when Hilde finally rejects Hindler. After exposing his secrets, she denounces him: “Geh nach Argentinien und werde Farmer! Oder bleib da und mach wie du vorhast, in Fremdenverkehr und Demokratie und Humanität” (329). This passage

42 Hindler’s claim to be “unabhängig” is surely an allusion to the Verband der Unabhängigen, a political party that did not emerge until 1949, and maintained considerable strength until 1956. This allusion is significant because the party consisted of former Nazis unsatisfied with the two coalition parties. The VdU became known as the Freedom Party in 1956.
directly indicts the Austrian tourism industry. It places the industry alongside the commonly imagined escape to South America, and thus clearly constructs tourism as a tactic for evading Nazi culpability and continues to question the sincerity of the acceptance of democracy and the values of the western Allies that were quickly espoused in denazification procedures. With her final rejection of Hindler, then, Hilde again portrays his claims as mere ciphers – empty rhetoric that he uses to cast himself as a respectable, upstanding citizen and to feign proof of his rehabilitation and clearly indicates that his touristic plans are a further strategy of deception.

In paralleling “Demokratie” and “Humanität” with “Fremdenverkehr,” the novel undermines buzzwords of Austrian reconstruction and again merges its critique of tourism and Austrian national identity. Hindler’s intended tactics are reminiscent of a statement from Lebert’s “Rollentausch” speech that attacks postwar Austria for its corruption: “Wir haben es fertiggebracht […] Machinationen zu machen, Dinge zu drehen, die mit Tugend nicht das Mindeste zu tun haben” (8). Hindler’s plans are an example of such a manipulation of “Tugend,” and are akin to that of a host in tourism: he intends to adopt the role that the outside world will find acceptable and appealing. The reference to putting the best “spin” on things in Lebert’s speech finds an equivalent in his novel’s symbolic use of clothing.

2.3.4 Traditional clothing and the tourism industry

Because traditional clothing is specifically linked to tourism and questions of authenticity, Lebert uses it to mark the ideological positions of individual characters,
especially those connected to the tourism industry. As a unique and marketable attribute of a region, traditional clothing styles have long been elevated into standard bearers of a destination in tourist representations and clichés, particularly in locales that emphasize their pre-modernity and traditional, agrarian ways, such as many rural Austrian sites. Listing several “Richtlinien für Erholungsdörfer,” a tourism industry manual from 1966 even recommends the “Tragen von Trachten” as a convenient means of allowing tourists “Anschluß an die Wesensart und das Brauchtum der Einwohner” (Swoboda 184-5). As we noted earlier, Lebert directly condemns the appropriation of traditional clothing in his “Rollentausch” speech, where he chides “die synthetische, höchst photogene Urwüchsigkeit in der Gestalt von Trachtenvereinen” (8). The issue of authenticity is clearly woven into Lebert’s critique: traditional clothing is used to denote naturalness or rusticity, but it is artificial and marketed for tourists. In his speech and in his novel, Lebert is not foremost concerned with preserving the authenticity of traditional clothing from erosion, a prime concern of critics of tourism. Rather, he highlights the falsehood that he finds perpetuated though traditional clothing’s symbolic function.

In artistic representation and political symbolism, traditional clothing has historically served as a multi-functional ideological marker, usually pointing to conservative or nationalistic views, as it represents “‘Tradition,’ ‘Ursprünglichkeit,’ ‘Heimat,’ etc.,” (Breuss et al. 323). Traditional clothing had specific implications with

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43 With traditional clothing I am referring to what Lebert’s narrator and character refer to as a “Steireranzug” for men (325), and a “Steirerkostüm” (97) or “Steirergwandl” (297) for women. As Ollagasser’s report notes, the term “Tracht” is often used instead of “Gewand.”
44 Cf. Ollagasser’s radio broadcast, which cites in particular the polemics of Hans Haid against the leveling of folk culture through tourism.
45 For example, Ulrike Kammerhofer-Aggermann details the often conflicting instrumentalizations of traditional clothing in the interwar period. Both Austrian nationalists and supporters of pan-German and Nazi views idealized it as a marker of fidelity to an Austrian or German nationality. And in 1938 a law was passed denying Jews the right to wear traditional Trachten. (273).
regard to postwar Austrian nation building. In the postwar era it was, on the one hand, often rejected because of its clash with notions of progress and modernization and because of its idealizations in Nazi imagery, but on the other hand, it was seen as an expression of Austrian consciousness (Breuss et al. 326). Traditional clothing came to symbolize a preservation of traditions of the pre-Nazi past and thus was utilized to grant legitimacy to the “Austrian” while also avoiding the recent past. Given this function, it is not surprising that during the first decades of the Second Republic questions of authenticity preoccupy the discussions of traditional clothing in etiquette and fashion guides or “Heimatpflege” publications. Over time, however, this anxiety about the authenticity of the traditional clothing gradually decreases. Breuss, et al. see this shift in opinion as reflective of the uncertainty regarding Austrian national identity, whose integrity was also initially questioned, but gradually attained stability (327-8). The discussion of a clothing article’s deficient respect for or fidelity to tradition thus reverberates with anxieties about Austrian identity.

Lebert’s novel infuses the dichotomy of authentic and inauthentic into its depiction of traditional clothing, which in turn reinforces his characters’ ideological positions. Figures with a commitment to an independent Austrian identity either wear traditional clothing that is depicted as authentic or reject this attire altogether. In contrast, characters compromised by their past and their pan-German ideology wear traditional clothing that is depicted as inauthentic. The local hunter is also characterized through his traditional clothing, and Jerschek’s thoughts on the hunter reveal his position: “Auch

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46 A postwar Anstandsbuch notes that “Kitsch in der Kleidung ist alles, was vortäuschen will, was es nicht ist [...]. Kitsch [ist] die Abwandlungen der alpenländischen Trachten […] [. . .]. Elegant ist nur die echte Tracht.” (Haluschka 79-80). The author further implores readers to remember that “die Tracht auch achtsensible Volksüberlieferung ist, die wir nicht verhöhnen, versüßlichen oder lächerlich machen dürfen” (Haluschka 80).
dieser Jäger hatte [1938] zur Lederhose ein Braunhemd getragen! Jetzt verbarg er seine Heldenbrust in einer grünen Weste – widerlich!” (117). In the “Rollentausch” speech, Lebert likens the tourism industry and the rustic images it produces to a type of “Tarnung,” and the novel adopts this notion, suggesting that characters instrumentalize traditional clothing as a disguise, which is most evident with Hindler.

During his first appearance and when he suggests to Jerschek that the villa could made into a hotel, Hindler is wearing a “langen, feldgrauen Offiziersledermantel, und auf dem Kopfe trug er einen Steirerhut mit Gamsbart” (172). His attire thus both exemplifies the fascist past (military coat) and an attempt at disguising it that simultaneously professes Austrian-ness (“Steirerhut”). With Hindler’s next appearance, the narrator sarcastically notes: “Er hatte einen neuen Anzug, einen Steireranzug an – ganz österreichisch!” (243). The narrator’s comment alerts the reader that Hindler’s attire is not only a strategy of hiding complicity, but also of seeking legitimacy by promoting an Austrian identity, which is brought home again when Hilde rejects Hindler. After noting that he is the true “Vermummte[r]” and “Maskierte[r],” she then strikes him with a whip, screaming “Runter mit dem Steireranzug!!! Runter mit der Maskerade!!!” (325), thus denouncing traditional clothing and its touristic inflection as a camouflage rendering Nazi complicity invisible.

By foregrounding Hindler’s traditional clothing, Lebert aligns Hindler’s hidden past with his feigned national consciousness. Here Lebert picks up debates on the authenticity of traditional clothing and makes an implicit comparison between Hindler’s clothes and those of his counterweight: Jerschek, whose clothing is valorized as more authentic. Although the novel is set in Styria, the prefix “Steirer-” with Hindler’s traditional clothing most likely does not indicate a regional distinction. As Bernd
Tschofen notes, during the early postwar years the once regionally distinct Styrian outfit gained in popularity and acquired the unofficial status of “österreichische Bundestracht […] Gebrauchstracht” (171).\textsuperscript{47} What this shows is that Hindler’s “Steireranzug” is not a genuine expression of identity, but is a fashion trend appropriated across the country. In contrast, Jerschek’s traditional clothing bears a more direct and unbroken continuity with the past. This is stressed in that Jerschek finds his old “Lodenjacke” while rummaging through his belongings stored in the attic (97). This episode is strategically placed just after Jerschek examines the remaining mementos of his mother and father. His “Lodenjacke” is thus aligned as a relic from his pre-war past, forging a symbolic continuity with the period of the First Republic. Through their traditional clothing, then, the novel thus extends its opposition between Jerschek and Hindler. The implicit emphasis on the authenticity of each character’s clothing thus foregrounds their commitment to an Austrian national consciousness. Clothing thus reinforces Jerschek’s status as the authentic Austrian and highlights the fakeness of Hindler’s Austrian consciousness.

Hilde’s traditional clothes reveal the faulty foundation on which her national consciousness initially rests. We see this first in a flashback to 1938, where the novel strengthens Jerschek’s perception of Hilde’s self-compromise by drawing her in a BDM uniform (56).\textsuperscript{48} In the narrative present, Lebert uses her “Steirerkostüm” to depict her attempts to repress her past. Lebert underscores this repression by limiting her use of this outfit to key scenes (297, 318) and for most of the novel keeping it sealed in her wardrobe. There Jerschek must first uncover it, as he secretly investigates in search of

\textsuperscript{47} Cf. also Breuss et al. 329-330.
\textsuperscript{48} Even the language she uses to describe her new uniform, “Kluft” and “Klamotten,” seems foreign to Jerschek (56): the narrator even later describes Hilde’s language as “Anschluß-Deutsch” (100).
clues about her past. When he first finds it, he notices the “feldgrau” color of the German Wehrmacht and assumes that it has been constructed out of her former uniform (97). Certain that “der deutsche Adler wirft noch heute einen Schatten” (206), Jerschek later searches in vain for the faded traces of her “Hoheitszeichen,” which leads him to suspect, correctly as she later confesses, that Hilde worked for the SS. Hilde’s “Steirerkostüm” thus literally embodies the continuity of fascism. Lebert hammers this home to the reader when he has Jerschek cynically comment on Hilde’s outfit: “Die neue Naziumiform: das Steirergwandl!” (297).

Most critics of Lebert’s novel have treated Hilde’s outfit as a marker of her Nazi past, but I argue that it takes on a greater significance when Hilde removes it. When Hindler confronts Hilde at the close of the novel, she is wearing her outfit. Hindler makes sexual demands on her, and she feigns acquiescence and removes her “Steirerkostüm.” She then proceeds to expose his crimes and confess her own guilt, and thus reject her connection to Hindler, his pan-German views and his touristic plans (323-9). What Lebert stresses through Hilde’s disrobing is that she is putting an end to her masquerade. Hilde’s traditional outfit is thus a potent symbol that articulates the novel’s main conflicts. It is an object that symbolizes the postwar continuity of Nazi tendencies and thought, which are then uncovered by Jerschek, who prompts Hilde to confront her guilt. By associating traditional clothing with the tourism industry and with Hindler and his opportunism, the novel uses Hilde’s outfit to indicate the stages of her transformation. Lebert thus attempts to write her national consciousness across her body, whose nakedness he transfigures into a sign of her rejection of her Nazi beliefs.

Lebert’s epilogue confirms the signification of Hilde’s national consciousness through the absence of her traditional outfit. In this episode, Lebert employs Veronika as
symbol of an independent Austrian identity, and she too appears without traditional clothing. Veronika, “[e]in Bauernmädchen. Eine junge Landarbeiterin” (338), is wearing a flannel shirt, ragged blue jeans, and rubber boots. Neither a “Steirerkostüm” nor a Dirndl, Veronika’s clothes intimate that she is ostensibly free of the ideological trappings woven into such clothes.49 Her clothing and the reference to her labor in the fields imply that she does not work in the tourism industry, where, to conform to tourists’ cliches, she would be wearing traditional clothes. This suggests that in the epilogue’s utopian vision, Austria has shed its reliance on the tourism industry, because farmers would indeed be principle targets for adaptation to the industry. Finally, unlike Hindler’s clothing, which is worn to feign a commitment to Austria and democracy, Veronika’s clothing seems functional, utilitarian. It posits a correspondence between her appearance and her inner self, not a deception, as was implied with Hindler. The novel’s utopian vision of a steadfast, self-aware Austria that has accepted its past and renounced its technique of concealment through a false stylization of traditional culture, then, is symbolized by Veronika and the absence of traditional clothing in her attire.

2.3.5 The villa and the tourism industry

The transition that is implied from Hilde to Veronika has a parallel in the transition that the villa undergoes. With the first reference to this house, the narrator even uses the metaphor of traditional clothing: “Aus schwarzen Augenhöhlen stierte [Jerschek] das Haus entgegen, ein hohler Kopf mit einem Steirerhut von mürben Schindeln” (18). The villa is the proposed site of a hotel with which Hindler hopes to

49 The term “Landarbeiterin” implies a postwar synthesis of the Social Democrat and Christian Conservative camps, whose animosity during the 1930s lead to a civil war.
conceal his past, and whereas Hindler actually wears traditional clothing as an attempt to do this, he does not succeed in converting the villa into a hotel, because Jerschek intervenes. This structure is important for our study for three reasons. First, the villa, which has many parallels with Hilde, is a locus of Jerschek’s feelings of Heimat, and his reaction to it provides insights into his internal conflict. Second, the villa illuminates the novel’s positions on coming to terms with the past through the metaphor of structural damage and reconstruction. Third, by showing the destruction of this building, Lebert diverges from contemporary views on the conversion of a house into a hotel and thus makes a pointed indictment of the tourism industry.

The villa in Der Feuerkreis is based on a site significant for Lebert: the Villa Sommerhof in Trahütten, Styria. Lebert wrote the novel almost twenty years after last visiting this site, which parallels the situation of his protagonists, who returns to a space of his past. Many scenes indeed depict Jerschek, “von Erinnerungen überwältigt” (97) as he observes the contents of each room, contemplating the progression of time (22, 51-2, 93-97). As a locus of his past this space factors into Jerschek’s temptation by a sense of Heimat, as it evokes feelings of familiarity and belonging. When he first enters his childhood room, for example, he tells Hilde “Ein kleines Stückchen Heimat ist noch da” (32), and when he awakens the next morning to the familiar smell of the wooden walls: “Es gelang ihm [Jerschek] für Sekunden, sich der Täuschung hinzugeben, daß er glücklich sei” (51). Yet, at this early point in the novel, Jerschek senses that the happiness and security he experiences in the villa are a seductive “Täuschung” that will

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50 In Lebert’s interwar youth Sommerhof was the setting for summer vacations with his family and their guests. During the war Lebert and his mother left Vienna for the villa, where Lebert is said to have had some contact with resistance groups. After the war, it was severely damaged by plundering Russian troops and partisans, curtailing Lebert’s plan to remain in there and prompting his move to Vienna and later Baden (Anzenberger 387-8, Zeder 311-318).
fail to restore any sense of Heimat. This failure had already been foreshadowed for Jerschek in a nightmare that he experiences while in England. The narrator details that in Jerschek’s dream: “[D]as Haus war durch Umbauten derart verändert, derart entstellt, daß man darin in die Irre lief, sich nicht mehr zurechtfand. Das Labyrinth!” (37). This dream symbolizes the irreparable damage that National Socialism has done to Austria and the villa, and the reference to “Umbauten” alludes to their potential touristic conversion.

Throughout the novel Lebert slowly reveals the history of the villa and its residents. Through many parallels with Austria’s history, this estate becomes a symbol of Austria. It has been in Jerschek’s family since the late nineteenth century, when it was inherited by Jerschek’s father, an imperial officer, which thus points again to the legacy of Austria’s monarchical past. Jerschek’s vacations here in the interwar period ended as Austria became fascist in 1934, followed by the Anschluß in 1938. At the same time the house was frequented by Jerschek’s mother and her second husband, an ardent Nazi, who was Hilde’s father. After Jerschek’s mother is killed and the Vienna apartment destroyed by Allied bombings, Hilde’s father resides in the villa at the end of the war, as does Hilde when she returns from the concentration camps. Her father is then executed there by partisans who discover that he is a Nazi informant, which leaves control of the house to Hilde. In conjunction with Austria’s postwar boom in tourism, the most likely future outcome would be its conversion into a hotel, which Hindler indeed plans. Jerschek’s return thus necessitates his engagement with the building’s legacy and future, which is made clear when Hilde asks Jerschek why he returned, to which he replies: “Ich wollte einmal sehen, was hier los ist […]. Wie es dir geht, was du hier treibst, in welchen Zustand sich die Hütte befindet – ob irgenwelche Reparaturen notwendig sind” (28). This passage sets up the parallels between Hilde and the villa and alludes to the tasks that
Lebert’s novel assigns Jerschek with both: he must uncover their present condition and determine what repairs are necessary, eventually finding to be damaged by their past.

The villa is in need of repair because it is corroded by dry rot, which signifies National Socialism’s destructive legacy. Upon discovering mildew on the parlor floor, Jerschek uncovers a board to find that the internal beams are rotting. Lenz later confirms that this is dry rot (“Hausschwamm”) and that the entire frame must be rebuilt (186-8). Hilde reveals that the mold is located precisely where her father was executed and that she had to scrub blood stains for weeks until no traces were left.51 Adopting the biological symbolism common in Blood and Soil literature, this image suggests that “Nazi” blood has infected and corrupted a putatively pure “Austrian” entity. Many critics take up this interpretation and point to the blood of Hilde’s Nazi father as the source of this dry rot (Anzenberger 389, Arrer 183-4). Jürgen Egyptien, for instance, sees the blood as symbolic of “die innere Zersetzung und letztliche Selbstzerstörung des Hauses Österreichs” (231). This reading, however, fails to examine the stated cause of the dry rot: water. The novel points out that the roof is water-tight, which indicates that the water Hilde used to clean the blood is responsible. Water, then, is symbolically thicker than blood. This novel is less concerned with past Nazi crimes, than with their impact on the present. The dry rot suggests that the misguided and false condition of the present is caused by a dubious attempt at dealing with the past, namely by trying to wash away the past. Hilde’s sense that the dry rot is a supernatural intervention by her dead father, whom she suspects “will nicht, daß das Haus und wir ihn überleben” (188) must be read as an attempted denial of responsibility: she gives him and his blood the blame rather

51 This spot is significant in Hilde’s moment of defiance against Hindler as well. She corners him into this location and delivers her accusations as Hindler clutches a shelf to keep from falling through the holes in the floor caused by the dry rot. Her actions suggest that the holes are a portal through which she tries to push back the current incarnation of evil.
than examining her own actions. While the dry rot may have figurative roots in National Socialism and its crimes, then, its ultimate significance lies in Austria’s attempt to hide its Nazi complicity.

By uncovering the structural damage and the truth about Hilde’s Nazi past, Jerschek is faced with a decision about their future, which places him in an internal conflict. As we noted above, Jerschek’s conflict regarding Hilde centers on his emotions and has implications for the novel’s promotion of the idea of a civic nation: he must suspend his feelings for her and ensure that she adheres to the law. With the villa he is confronted with a similar predicament. Werner Kummer correctly points out that this structure “steht nostalgisch für die verlorene Oberschichtskultur Österreichs vor dem ersten Weltkrieg,” but his contention that the it is “durch den Ausverkauf an Nazideutschland zu einem unannehmaren Erbe geworden, das konsequent nur mehr vernichtet werden kann” (10) neglects Jerschek’s emotional ties. He is bound to the villa because it is the last space in which he can maintain a connection to the Heimat of his childhood, to his past, and his family (21, 97, 117). This connection is threatened when he learns Hilde’s secret and discovers the dry rot. In destroying the villa at the close of the novel, then, Jerschek must overcome his nostalgia and emotional attachment to the villa in much the same manner as he submits to his official duties, rather than his emotions with Hilde. The most significant threat to the villa for our study, however, is Hindler’s possible conversion into a hotel, a threat Jerschek finally erases by burning it down, an unusual outcome for the novel’s historical context.

Lebert’s novel offers a direct challenge to the postwar ideological image of reconstruction. Instead of presenting its optimistic renovation, Lebert portrays the villa’s destruction. It is a structure ripe with potential symbolism for the postwar era. It bears
the traces of the past, has been damaged by the experiences of war, and is slated for a modernization, which is invested with a hope for renewal. Werner Anzenberger notes that in postwar Austria "Aufbau' wird zum Schlagwort einer ganzen Ära" and describes how construction imagery was dominant in speeches, official and commercial publications, and films during the early years of the Second Republic (393). Such imagery was intimately tied to the enthusiasm and excitement of the newly founded, recently liberated nation. Although Der Feuerkreis is very much concerned with the project of nation-building, it negates this potential symbol of reconstruction. This reveals Lebert's contention that the villa, and by extension Austria, is in need of a more stable foundation for its future. The present one is tainted by National Socialist complicity and by strategies of concealing that past. But this criticism extends beyond the general notion of reconstruction itself and directly targets the projected outcome of reconstruction: the hotel.

By burning down the villa, Jerschek averts its conversion into a hotel. With this action Lebert shatters a pervasive symbol of postwar Austria’s rebirth and touristic recreation. The refurbishing of private homes into tourist accommodations was a common practice in the early decades of the Second Republic, and is bound up with promises of financial independence and stability. The theme of opening or refurbishing a hotel is common both in works that are critical of the tourism industry and those that take a more affirmative stance. While most literary works are critical of the tourism industry, a considerable body of films from the 1950s and 60s, which Gertraud Steiner calls

52 Cf. also Wolfgang Kos, Eigenheim.
53 Contemporaries of Lebert are Paul Gerhard Gruber’s pro-tourism novel Der blau Sessellift (1974), and Hans Haid’s denunciatory Abseits von Oberlangendorf (1975).
“Touristenfilme,” portrays the tourism industry in a positive light. For example, two of the most popular postwar Austrian films both portray the renovation of a hotel as a key to the characters’ narrative and financial success: Hans Wolff’s Der Hofrat Geiger (1947) and Werner Jacob’s remake of that film as Mariandl (1961). I submit that such films collectively create what I call the hotel narrative. Briefly examining this notion will enrich our understanding of the critique of the tourism industry in Lebert’s novel, which consciously makes a radical break with the hotel narrative.

The basic plot of the hotel narrative is that a house or an extant, yet dilapidated hotel that comes to the protagonist, and is renovated into a modern business. It then becomes successful after the harmonious resolution of the protagonist’s tension with another character, often with a love interest. This narrative obliquely refers to issues relevant to the postwar era. First, the emphasis centers on reconstructing or renovating, which suggests a rehabilitation of a damaged past. Second, this renovation serves foremost economic motives, pointing to the burgeoning economic miracle and early anxieties about financial recovery. Third, concomitant with the economic advance, an emphasis is placed on technological and commercial modernization. Especially in films, new products and technologies are introduced to the viewer: in tourist-films, new or renovated attractions are gratuitously shown. Fourth, as private property the hotel’s renovation proves that (Austrian) figures can socially reestablish themselves as

54Steiner’s categorization of Tourist-Films includes films centering on the protagonists’ vacations to a particular place as well as films dealing with the conversion or restructuring of hotels. My discussion is limited only to the latter group. Some examples include the following: Franz Antel’s Eva erbt das Paradies (1951), Harald Reinl’s Almenrausch und Edelweiß (1957), Werner Jacobs’ Im weißen Rößl (1960), and Franz Antel’s Außer Rand und Band am Wolfgangsee (1972). Cf. Büttner and Dewald for a survey of the proliferation of hotels in Austrian film.

55 In Werner Jacob’s Im weißen Rößl (1960), for example, the viewer is treated to images of mass tourism, such as ski-lifts, bus tours, or water-skiing. Sabine Hake notes a similar trend in West German cinema, where “travel films showed their overworked audiences how to take a break from the pressures of economic growth and prosperity” (111).
successful, productive citizens, whose accomplishments generate pride – a privilege diminished after the war. The hotel and the scenery become attractions visited by international guests, which further restores a positive reputation. Finally, particularly in films, the inheritor of the house is often female, and her romantic interest is often with an older male character, who after the conflict’s resolution will assume control of the hotel.\textsuperscript{56} This shift in control reflects postwar gender anxieties, which illustrate a desire to restore status to a damaged male ego and to reestablish conventional gender roles.

While the basic plot constellation of Lebert’s novel could serve as a screenplay for a tourist-film, the novel expressly counters the hotel narrative that one might expect. The lovers in Lebert’s text, Hilde and Hindler, both with mysterious pasts that they seek to conceal, are not united at the novel’s conclusion. The tourist practices depicted in the novel, above all skiing, are demonized by Jerschek and the narrator. Most importantly, the requisite hotel renovation and its fantasy of wealth and success never come to fruition, as the potential hotel is set aflame. The novel’s main narrative ends with Jerschek walking away as the villa burns in the background. This is a potent image that directly contrasts with the endings of a hotel narrative. For example, in the emblematic closing sequence of Werner Jacob’s \textit{Im weißen Rößl} (1960) the camera, shooting from a boat full of tourists returning home, pulls away from the hotel, which is surrounded by newly arrived tourists and the host protagonists, all waving farewell. Instead of such a gleaming, sunny, guest-filled hotel Lebert’s novel presents us with a burning villa. This is significant because it denies the hotel’s potential function as a symbol of rejuvenation and prosperity. The image of the burning villa must thus be read as a criticism of the role

\textsuperscript{56} A “Verwechslungspiel” is often involved. This is another parallel present in Lebert’s novel; initially, the past identities of the three main characters are hidden to either the reader or the other characters.
of the tourism industry in Austria’s postwar reconstruction and as Lebert’s gesture for an end to the hotel narrative that supports it.

The destruction of this space illustrates Lebert’s dismay and pessimism for the war generation. In the “Rollentausch” speech, for example, he suggests that the war generation will never overcome the experience of fascism and pleads that the youth not be corrupted (8). The burning of this structure points to similar conclusion in that it does not allow an incorporation of those who experienced the war: just as the villa is destroyed, Hilde’s redemption comes only with her death, and Jerschek’s final resolution will also occur in extremis. The villa’s destruction, then, repeats a contradiction that we saw with Hilde’s absolution: it similarly puts an end to the past, even though Lebert argues that the past can never be completely mastered. Burning down the house suggests the failure of analysis and productive engagement with the past: instead of reconstruction, the novel argues for a completely new start, entertaining the notion of a “Stunde Null.”

The figurative caesura is reinforced by the parallel this image has in Wagner’s Ring. The burning villa is an adaptation from Wagner’s Götterdämmerung, which closes as the flames of Siegfried’s funeral pyre rise up and engulf Valhalla, ultimately destroying it. In Der Feuerkreis, the flames of Hilde’s funeral pyre spread and overtake the entire house. With Wagner, the destruction of Valhalla symbolizes the end of an old order. As William Cord summarizes, Wagner’s Ring “relates the actions and events that lead to and conclude with the destruction of the ancient gods, the doom of the corrupt

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57 Lebert employs the burning of the villa to further his critique of the conservative Austrian literary establishment. As Joseph McVeigh has shown, the literary world in first two decades of the Second Republic exhibited a great deal of continuity with the “Ständesstaat,” canonizing authors who were former Nazis, and whose predominant styles and themes were Heimat novels and nature poetry. Lebert addresses these authors through the fate of the villa. The villa’s library contains books by authors from this period and by authors associated with conservative or Heimat literature (174, 201). To ignite Hilde’s funeral pyre, Jerschek uses these books, making the end of the villa a “Bücherverbrennung” of the texts that the novel implicitly criticizes.
world they had shaped, and the rebirth of the universe, cleansed and newly undefiled, through the thoughts and deeds of a valorous, virtuous champion” (14). Lebert’s novel similarly imagines the end of one age and the beginning of another. The corrupt world, which Hilde nearly joined and which is represented by Hindler, comes to an end with the destruction of the villa. Through the Wagnerian allusion, Lebert’s novel constructs a mythic defeat for Hindler’s strategy of concealing his fascist guilt through the tourism industry and his denial of Austrian nationhood. This will be replaced by the emergence of a universe that is “cleansed and newly undefiled:” namely through the figure of Veronika and the utopian world that she inhabits.

In the novel’s epilogue, the destruction of the old order is confirmed. Seventeen years later, Jerschek returns only to find the villa’s foundation, overgrown with weeds and brush. This is another adaptation of Wagner, whose Valhalla is swallowed by the flooding waters of the Rhine. The image of these ruins confirms that the old order that Jerschek obliterated has not re-established itself: the villa has not been rebuilt, and there is no hotel on this site. Thus, in the epilogue’s utopian Austria of 1965, the tourism industry has not become the dominant factor it did become in reality. The ruins appear in the epilogue as a monument, and their significance as such was foretold in an earlier argument with Hilde, in which Jerschek insists that the bombed ruins of the State Opera should remain as a symbol because: “Ihr [Austrians like Hilde] braucht keine Wagneropern, sondern ein Mahnmal” (252). With the ruins of the villa the novel raises this fictive monument, and Jerschek’s visit even attaches to it a pilgrimage-like significance. Instead of erecting a hotel or rebuilding the villa, Lebert’s fictional

58 The counter-image to reconstruction that Lebert’s epilogue offers is a return to pre-modern, agrarian age, creating a fictional world valorizing the past over the present and making Veronika, as Schmidt-Dengler puts it, a “Repräsentantin einer anderen Zeit” (“Wälsungen” 67).
landscape leaves the ruins as a reminder of Austria’s internal failure to account for its past, warning against attempts at concealing it. The “mythic” allusions in the destruction of the villa and later the absence of a hotel, then, allow the novel to counter the myth of postwar Austrian progress and rebirth through tourism.

2.3.6 Power dynamics of working in the tourism industry

In his portrayal of the villa as a potential hotel, Lebert selects a symbolic site of tourism, and I contend that he goes further and criticizes the industry on a more structural level by examining the economic and power dynamics that emerge between tourists and hosts. Lebert demonizes tourists as intruders and emphasizes the hosts’ servility and economic dependency. The novel’s conception of the hosts and their relationship to tourists articulates its project concerning an independent Austrian identity. Lebert portrays tourism as a sector that propagates a German presence in Austria and that results in the host’s self-denial and loss of sovereignty. What this shows is that Lebert draws this industry as an obstacle to an Austrian consciousness. These views are expressed in a number of polemic passages by Jerschek and are manifested as well in the portrayal of both the innkeeper and Hilde.

Jerschek delivers the novel’s most direct critique of the power dynamics of the tourism industry. This is particularly evident in the long scene set in the local inn, where Jerschek debates nationhood with Hilde and Hindler. Jerschek continues his attempt to enlighten Hilde, who vehemently rejects his arguments, encouraged perhaps by the boisterous atmosphere of singing skiers and farmers. Jerschek dismisses her notions of a German cultural nation in favor of the civic state and seeks to negate any linguistic and cultural ties to Germany. Addressing Hilde and Hindler, he argues that pan-Germanists
have made a laughing stock of postwar Austria: “Weil ihr immer was andres sein wollt, als ihr tatsächlich seid” (251). For Jerschek, the pan-Germanists resist acceptance of an Austrian identity and instead desire to be someone else. In this reference to Austrians’ transformation into someone else, we thus find an illustration of Lebert’s use of authenticity. He uses this notion in the novel to articulate his view of who Austrians should be: inauthentic Austrians are those who deny their Austrian identity and submit to a larger German cultural nation. Lebert extends this notion of inauthenticity through his depiction of the power dynamics of tourism, which place the Austrian host in a self-negating position subservient to the tourist.

Lebert sets up this constellation by constructing a negative image of German tourists. To be sure, the novel rarely refers to their nationality, but in all of Jerschek’s tirades, the visitors he envisions are German, and his general references to Germans emphasize their role as tourists in Austria. In the scene at the inn, Jerschek counters Hilde’s visions of Austria’s affinity to Germany by charging that it is not reciprocal. He alleges that Germans view Austrians as a separate group and proceeds to list German stereotypes of Austrians, which draw on touristic cliches: “Sie sehen in uns einen trinkgelderheischenden Trachtenverein oder eine Bande krimineller Operettenkomiker. Sie halten uns für alles mögliche, für prostituierte Jodler […] nur, um Himmels willen, nicht für ihresgleichen, nicht für Deutsche” (254). This passage has two foci. First, it attacks Austrians for constructing and exploiting these stereotypes through tourism. These particular images, which echo those from Lebert’s “Rollentausch” speech, fault Austrians for their greed and touristic appropriation of cultural traditions. Second, it furthers the novel’s opposition between Germans and Austrians. Jerschek vilifies Germans, constructing them as condescending and scornful. What is especially
important for our reading though, is that these images call attention to the Germans’
touristic interaction with Austria. This reinforces the dominant constellation in Jerschek’s
rhetoric and thus the novel’s critique of the industry: the tourists are German and the
hosts Austrian.

Lebert’s novel opens up this touristic constellation to highlight its inherent power
inequities. We can see this in Jerschek’s retort to Hilde’s protest that Germans indeed
have an affinity for Austrians:

Die Landschaft schätzen sie [die Deutschen] sehr. Wenn sie diesen Krieg
gewonnen hätten, hätten sie uns ausgesiedelt […] und sie selber hier
hereingesetzt! […]
[Sie schätzen die Österreicher] als Stiefelputzer […]. Eventuell, auch noch als
Käufer ihrer Waren … Und als Kanonenfutter! (254)

The reference to a “Landschaft” clearly indicates that Lebert is using the touristic context
to reveal the tensions between Austrians and Germans. Austrians in this passage are
placed in a servile and economically dependent position, and Germans are positioned in
the more powerful role as tourists. Lebert’s nuanced use of the word “Landschaft” here
demands that we consider its allusions to two common tropes in tourism criticism:
tourism as a invasion and as a form of imperialistic colonization, both of which yield
insights into Lebert’s stance on tourism’s power dynamics.

The above passage describes Germans as invaders and plays on the notion of
Germans as a “Volk ohne Raum.” It thus evokes the Nazi legacy of aggression and in
particular, the Anschluss. But Lebert parallels this militaristic interest in “Land” with his
assertion of Germans’ appreciation of “Landschaft” and thus implicitly associates tourism
with a military conquest. The image of tourists as military invaders bent on occupation is
a conventional image in tourism criticism.\textsuperscript{59} The reference to a hypothetical invasion is an anachronistic allusion to the masses of German tourists that would later come to Austria. The exaggeration of an “Aussiedlung” of Austrians can be read as a metaphor of the socio-cultural alienation and displacement that is often a result of tourism. It also foreshadows debates about vacation homes that would emerge in popular touristic communities in Austria.\textsuperscript{60} But especially within the context of Lebert’s critique of German and Austrian relations, this military metaphor is a problematic rhetorical strategy. It makes a questionable allegation of German territorial designs, which assigns Germans the aggressor role and elevates Austrians to victims, slated for an “Aussiedlung.” By making them the innocent party, this metaphor perpetuates the central contradiction of the Austrian victim myth, which the novel overturns elsewhere. Furthermore, portraying Austrians as the conquered party ignores their willing role in the industry, who, by the nature of their business, would welcome an “invasion” by tourists.

These contradictions inhere in another parallel between military and touristic “conquest” gestured to in the above passage: namely to colonization. This trope figures often in analyses of tourism such as one sociological study illustrating the industry’s economic detriments, arguing: “to opt for tourism as a growth strategy is to ask for continued control by overseas forces” (Crick 27). An example of the specific terminology of neo-colonialism being used in reference to Austria can be found in the essay by Peter Turrini we mentioned earlier. Focusing on 1948, Lebert’s novel cannot adopt Turrini’s image of Austria as a banana republic serving German tourists.

\textsuperscript{59} We can find examples from the Austrian context in Bruno Wieser’s essay “Perfekter Krieg: Zur alljährlichen Besetzung und Okkupation (West-)Österreichs durch…” in Schuh (9-13), and Felix Mitterer’s “Von Invasoren und Leibeigenen und wie alles ein gutes Ende nahm” in Schönberger (7-15).

\textsuperscript{60} Lichtenberger notes that during the mid 1970s the “Zweiter Wohnsitz” debates prompted laws against foreign ownership of second homes in the provinces with the highest rates of tourism (298, Cf. 98, 202-3).
His novel, however, does align tourism with references to invasion, resettlement, economic domination and servility, which intimates a colonized power hierarchy. This shores up Lebert’s negative portrayal of Germans and of tourism’s economic and power dynamics. In Jerschek’s statement Germans resemble colonizers who would invade and claim Austrian territory, exploiting it for their (touristic) needs, displacing and subjugating Austrians as laborers and a trapped market. With Jerschek’s earlier claim that Germans view Austrians as “eine völlig inferiore Abart ihrer Art” (254), the novel even infuses this trope with the racially-based differentiation often present in colonial contexts. Applied to the touristic context in the novel, the charge of colonization protests the undue influence that the outsider tourists could wield over the local environment and the individual host.

Like the invasion metaphor, however, this implied charge of colonization is problematic in many ways. First, focusing on a conflict situation, the novel defines *the* Germans and *the* Austrians simply in terms of their opposition. This reminds us of the dilemma Lebert’s novel seeks to resolve, one that has long been an Austrian impasse: namely, the difficulty in defining who it is. Second, the charge of colonization through tourism also is not fully appropriate for Austria, because it is a wealthy, modernized country and because its tourism industry is generally controlled by interests at the local and regional level, not by foreign and thus “imperial” concerns. Third, the notion of colonization further casts the tourists as intruders and constructs the hosts as helpless victims who become dependent on tourists. Rhetorically this paints a negative picture of the tourists and reproaches their inequitable position, but its simple “us versus them” dichotomy obscures the power relations in tourism, because it glosses over the hosts’ agency and responsibility.
Lebert’s novel, however, does not remain one-sided in its allocation of responsibility. Through Jerschek’s vitriol the novel takes Austrians to task for their willingness to enter a touristic relationship. In the episode at the inn, where Jerschek’s monologue shifts from a demonization of Germans to an attack on those Austrians who deny the idea of nationhood and see themselves as German. He denounces these pan-Germanists through the metaphor of an obedient dog:

\[\text{Aber ihr sitzt weiter da wie gut dressierte Hunde, hechelnd, mit einer vor Gier heraushängenden Zunge, und wartet auf die Peitsche und den Tritt des Stiefels und zwischendurch einige wohlwollende Worte. [...] Aber ich sehe euch schon, wie ihr euch abermals anbiedern werdet und jedem deutschen Touristen die Schuhsolen abschlecken werdet, wie ‘Kamerad Schnürschuh’ mit gieriger, trenzender, wollüstig schnalzender Zunge dem ‘großen Bruder’ die verdreckten Knobelbecher wieder aufpolieren wird. (254)}\] 

In this passage we find a continued disparaging of Germans, but the canine metaphor is employed to criticize pan-Germanist Austrians. It singles out their obedience and willingness to assimilate and submit to the power of the “master” and place themselves in an inferior and subjugated role, which amounts to a self-negation. Lebert again targets the tourism industry as a key site for his critique, which is revealed through an inconsistency. Aside from the military reference to “Schnürschuh,” the tourism industry is the only part of the passage that breaks with the dog-master metaphor. It is the concrete sector Lebert isolates to reprimand the Austrian’s self-negation: namely through compliant submission to the imagined German tourists. The canine metaphor indicts the servility inherent to working in the tourism industry, viewing it as an agent of self-denial and thus inauthenticity: submitting autonomy, the host becomes someone else.

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61 “Kamerad Schnürschuh” is a term that was used by German soldiers in the First World War to describe Austrian comrades and has the connotation of a slightly backward, yet endearing soldier. (“Kamerad Schürschuh”).
This loss of autonomy is the center of the novel’s critique of the denial of Austrian nationhood. This is evident in the quotation marks that are placed around “großen Bruder,” which indicate Jerschek’s scorn for the notion of a fraternal relationship between Germany and Austria. Jerschek’s rejection – the narrator even informs us that after delivering the above monologue “Fast hätte er ausgespuckt” (254) – stems on one hand from his assertion that the servile relationship of tourism does not constitute the equality that fraternity implies. On the other, it points directly to the novel’s repudiation of the cultural nation and its imagined familial bonds. Jerschek renounces the notion of fraternal relationship a second time when he later dismisses Lenz’s suggestion that the villa could be converted into a hotel: “Ich weiß, was für Fremde hierherkommen würden […] Die sollen lieber bleiben, wo sie sind und wo sie hingehören. Sonst verbrüdert ihr euch noch ein zweites Mal” (297). Tourism again provides the vehicle for Lebert’s criticism. The future visitors envisioned here are German and their touristic “Verbrüderung” is likened to a second Anschluss. The novel thus depicts the relationship between the Austrian host and German tourist as enforcing a hierarchical subordination that nullifies an independent Austrian identity.

The power hierarchy of this relationship rests on its economic dimensions. By positing the tourism industry’s imbrication in the uneven development of postwar Austria, Lebert highlights the paradoxical role that the economy played in the process of Austrian nation-building. As we noted earlier, Austrians leaders sought to distance the nation from Germany on a political and institutional level, but as Peter Thaler points out, this did not occur on an economic level:

Considering that Austria, unlike the FRG, did not belong to the European Community and that the State Treaty of Vienna imposed particular restraints on the Austrian economic relationship with Germany, the commercial interweaving
of both countries seems especially significant. In the course of European reconstruction, Germany became Austria’s largest trading partner by far. (36) Thaler shows that despite Austria’s attempts at disassociation, it remained more closely tied to Germany than ever on an economic level. Tourism was a prime instance of this connection, and since the early 1950s Germans have constituted the largest and fiscally most significant tourist market for Austria. Lebert’s novel is keenly aware of these economic ties and introduces its skepticism regarding Austria’s economic connections with Germany when Hindler first meets Jerschek. The narrator relays Hindler’s idea that “eines Tages werde eine europäische Vereinigung erfolgen und auf diese Weise Österreich an Deutschland wieder angeschlossen werden” (165). By having the pan-Germanist Hindler reveal the economy as a potential means of Austria’s return to a German nation, Lebert foregrounds his assessment of this inconsistency in Austrian nation building. In addressing the concrete context of tourism Lebert’s novel posits Austria’s economic connections to Germany as an impediment to the development of a national consciousness.

2.3.6.1 The innkeeper

Lebert demonstrates this economic context through his portrayal of the innkeeper (“Wirtin”), a figure that has been ignored in the secondary literature on Der Feuerkreis. This has been a significant omission, as the innkeeper’s depiction encapsulates Lebert’s critique of tourism’s power relations which undergird his arguments on national identity. The innkeeper is the novel’s only figure who explicitly works in the tourism industry, and like the other innkeepers and waitresses in Lebert’s works, she is portrayed in a less than
flattering light, foregrounding her greed and calculation. With every mention of her inn, the novel continues to underscore the innkeeper’s commercial qualities by reminding the reader, through full capitalization, that a “REININGHAUSBIER” sign hangs in front (7, 90, 194, 220). This symbol of commoditization thus visibly stands out amid the novel’s overwhelming preoccupation with the natural world. Already in her first appearance, she speculates on the effects of the weather on her business, discounting autumn and looking forward to the more profitable winter season (7-8).

In 1947 the winter had not yet overtaken the summer season as the most profitable, so the innkeeper’s expectations are either prescient or anachronistic. This inconsistency stresses how the innkeeper is in charge of her business, but the representation of a contemporary historical event signals a shift in her actions. After the currency reform of 1947, which increases the value of the Schilling, the innkeeper begins to act differently. As the narrator notes: “Auch im Gasthaus machte sich der neue Kurs bemerkbar. Nicht nur daß man plötzlich freie Speisen und verschiedenste Getränke haben konnte, die Wirtin hatte eine neue Miene aufgesetzt und benahm sich fortan wieder, wie es einer Wirtin, die verdienen wollte, anstand” (181). The narrator then describes how the innkeeper, who previously was brusque to Jerschek (147), now “wischte säuberlich den Tisch ab, fragte dabei untertänigst, ob sie auch was essen wollten, […] und murmelte sogar noch einen Segenswunsch” (181). The innkeeper is driven by the profit motive, as she exploits her own hospitality for her gain, and this altered demeanor illustrates the novel’s critique of the economic influence on personal autonomy. What Lebert is stressing here is that she becomes “untertänig” to the wishes

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62 We find other examples in the figure Herta Binder in the Wolfshaut and the innkeeper in Lebert’s novella Das Schiff im Gebirge. Lebert’s negative view of these figures reflects the general condescension his narrators reserve for figures from lower classes, drawing them as slow-witted, and ill-mannered.
of her customers. She abandons the power and agency she once exhibited and defers to her guests. She thus seems to have learned from government campaigns and adopted the “Fremdenverkehrsgesinnung” that we discussed in chapter one, and whose “oberster Grundsatz es sei, im Touristen nicht den “Fremden” zu sehen, sondern den “Gast,” der willkommen und dessen Aufenthalt möglichst angenehm zu gestalten ist” (Swoboda 154). In elevating Jerschek into a “Gast,” however, the innkeeper also turns herself into a “Gastgeberin,” a hostess. The above passage shows that the innkeeper adopts “eine neue Miene.” Her chameleon-like example shows how Lebert employs the notion of inauthenticity in his assessment of tourism. The industry necessitates that she devalue herself and conform to the wishes of the tourist. She thus becomes someone else through her role as a host.

This new role pictures the innkeeper as a servant to her guests. Lebert’s depiction of this character, however, reveals a break with servant figures in the Austrian cultural tradition. Breuss et al. note that: “Dienst und Diener sind ein fixer Bestandteil im literarischen und politischen Selbstbild Österreichs” (110), and chart how the figure of the servant has been largely positive. Lebert’s novel, however, overturns this concept and does not elevate its servant figure to a national hero, dutifully standing next to the larger, more powerful master. Instead, Lebert’s servant, the innkeeper, is portrayed as submissive and lacking self-autonomy. Lebert’s disavowal of the valorized image of the servant adds weight to his negative portrayal of the tourism industry, particularly when we consider that the tourists envisioned in his polemics are German. We must thus see

63 Their study describes how showing deference to and serving a superior has been idealized as a means of preserving oneself and ideals amid the tumult of politics and change. They cite examples in which the “Diener” figure has positive connotations, invoking on the one hand, honor and duty in the figure of Franz Joseph or in characters by Grillparzer; and on the other, improvisation and ingenuity in Nestroy’s characters or the film roles of Hans Moser, such as in the aforementioned Hofrat Geiger.
the deference and self-denial that Lebert foregrounds with the innkeeper as a clear illustration of his view on the power dynamics of the tourism industry. His fictional hosts must assume an inferior role and submit to the demands of German tourists.

2.3.6.2 Hilde’s characterization as a host figure

Since the novel denounces the self-effacing, economic dependency under which the tourism industry places the host, it is striking that Hilde is actually depicted assuming such a role. Critics of Lebert’s novel have, as with the innkeeper, neglected to consider Hilde’s role as a host, yet I submit that it is significant for two reasons. First, it illustrates the tensions of her relationship to Jerschek. Second, it reinforces Lebert’s examination of tourism’s power dynamics that we noted with the innkeeper, but at the same time, the unfinished quality of this role opens up contradictions in the novel’s critique of tourism.

First, indications of Hilde’s role as a host and its function in her relationship with Jerschek appear early in the novel. Upon Jerschek’s arrival, the narrator notes that Hilde carries Jerschek’s bag “Wie ein Hotelstubenmädchen” (30), which foreshadows Hindler’s designs for the villa and Hilde. On Jerschek’s first night in the villa, he actually makes an agreement with Hilde, asking her: “Würdest du mich verpflegen? Natürlich bezahl ich” (32). When he rejects her option of paying “auf Verrechnung,” she takes his money, but promises: “Aber Rechnung werde ich dir trotzdem legen” (33). This passage clearly likens their initial interaction to that of a hotel guest checking in with a host.  

64 In an earlier version of this passage, which Lebert published in Literatur und Kritik in 1968, the wording is slightly different: Jerschek asks: “Würdest du mich verköstigen? Natürlich gegen Entgelt. Und Marken geb ich dir auch” and then adds “Du verstehst: ich hab keine Lust, ins Wirtshaus zu gehen. Der Weg ist weit. Und alle Tage und bei jedem Wetter” (137). This change is significant for two reasons. First, with Jerschek’s explanation, which is not in the published novel, it is clear Lebert felt compelled to provide a reason for this aspect of Jerschek’s relationship with Hilde. This confirms the importance of this host-guest relationship for Lebert and suggests that it is intended to serve a significant function. The omission of this passage in the published novel lends support to my thesis that Lebert did not pursue his initial plans with
following morning Hilde reflects on the agreement: “[I]ch hasse ihn […] macht mich zum Dienstboten hier! Macht mich zur Köchin! Legt mir Geld hin, und ich stecke es wahrhaftig ein!” (50). While these thoughts enhance the portrayal of Hilde’s resistance to Jerschek and the power he represents by allowing her to position him as an agent of “Besatzung” and not “Befreiung,” they indicate her awareness of this deferential role as a host. Although she initially continues her job as a farm laborer, Hilde in effect becomes a “Hotelstubenmädchen” for Jerschek. The narrator reminds us that Hilde has either cooked every meal for Jerschek, or, if he dines at the inn, that she has been relieved from this task (90-91,116, 166, 212). In a playful moment with Jerschek, Hilde teases: “Bin ich nicht ein liebes Stubenmädchen?” (171). The novel intends this statement as ironic, yet given Hilde’s duties for Jerschek, we must read it as a literal description of their arrangement.

Lebert emphasizes these contractual implications of this relationship to portray Hilde’s strained ties with Jerschek. The host-guest dimension mediates their love-hate relationship, which alternates between intimacy and distance. When Jerschek asks her to provide these services, he has just returned after ten years of separation. With their agreement and Hilde’s comment about a “Rechnung,” then, it is clear that this is not Hilde’s reunion with her long-lost brother. Instead, she is cast as a host and is entering a contract with a customer. The monetary nature of this transaction and its implicit hierarchy stresses the emotional distance between Jerschek and Hilde. This is evident in

the host-guest tension. Second, the absence of Jerschek’s explanation, which concentrates only on food, sheds light on the change from “verköstigen” to “verpflegen.” While one could argue that Lebert dropped the former because it belongs to a more colloquial register and thus does not conform to Jerschek’s character, I think that he opted for the latter verb because of its broader focus. “Verköstigen” specifically refers to feeding, whereas “verpflegen” suggests a larger range of services: this shift in terms implies a contract shift from “board” to “room and board,” which thus foregrounds Hilde’s role as a host.
the following passage, in which the narrator compares Hilde’s services to those carried out in a pension:

Unterdessen kochte Hilde weiterhin für ihn das Essen und servierte es ihm im Speisezimmer wie einem Pensionsgast […]. Und am Ende der Woche legte sie ihm eine Abrechnung hin, also legte Jerschek einen neuen Vorschuß auf den Tisch, und bei der nächsten Mahlzeit lag bereits ein Zettel da, darauf sie den erhaltenen Betrag bestätigte. Auch fand er, wenn er heimkam, stets das Bett gemacht, die Kabuse immer gründlich aufgeräumt. (124)

This passage appears in a section, in which the narrator relays Jerschek’s emotions for Hilde, and here the narrator describes Hilde’s phantom-like service: she is absent and only the results of her labor remain. This passage thus implicitly shows Jerschek’s dismay at the contractual dimension of their relationship and suggests his wish for a more immediate relationship with his sister.

The second way in which Hilde’s role as a host is significant is that the economic dimension to her relationship reinforces Lebert’s critique of tourism’s power inequities. The novel reminds us that Hilde is “vollkommen stier” (33) and has maintained a very meager existence; Jerschek, on the other hand, has an endless supply of money and food ration coupons (32, 180). By entering her agreement with Jerschek, she places herself in a position of economic dependence. This entails, as we saw with the innkeeper, her assumption of a subordinate role, which creates an inconsistency in Hilde’s characterization. Her submissiveness to Jerschek in this role is incongruous with the defiance that she exhibits for much of the novel. While Lebert grants Jerschek a political authority and moral superiority as an Allied officer and committed anti-fascist, Hilde scoffs at both of these and resists him until her transformation at the end of the work. She does, however, defer to his economic authority as the paying guest. Like the innkeeper, then, Hilde too seems to become someone else when she performs her tasks as
a host. As we noted above, Hilde’s thoughts about her acceptance of Jerschek’s offer only confirm that she perceives a loss of autonomy, as she curses herself for assuming this servile role and for her seeming surrender to Jerschek.

This disproportionate power structure exemplifies Lebert’s censure of the industry, but since it involves Hilde, it undermines the links to the issue of national identity. Jerschek’s mission seeks Hilde’s admission of guilt and her development of an Austrian consciousness, both of which are bound up with her rejection of Hindler and his touristic plans for the villa. Jerschek’s contract of “Verpflegung,” however, assigns Hilde precisely the duties of a host. He thus does not adhere to the arguments he puts forth in his diatribes about Austrian servility and effectively turns her into a “Stiefelputzer” for the, in this case non-German, tourist. Although Lebert instrumentalizes her to create an ideal awakening to an authentic Austrian identity, he places her in a position that makes her inauthentic: as a host, she is turned into someone else, into a “Dienstboten,” a “Köchin.”

This contradiction is made all the more conspicuous by the unevenness of Lebert’s portrayal of Hilde. It namely strikes the reader as unfinished, as if the author intended to return to Hilde’s status as a host, but never did. We find nearly all references to Hilde’s role as a host in the first half of the work. For the second half of the text, though, there is virtually no reflection on this role, but we do find reminders that she still carries out her duties for Jerschek. Thus, even if Jerschek will ultimately rescue Hilde from her touristic role, the novel never challenges her initial assumption of this role, nor does it show that she is relieved from it. She continues her tasks even after the rhetorical point they illustrate has been made.
The inconsistency of Hilde’s subordinate role is repeated in the novel’s narrative structure. The personal narrator’s shifting perspectives mirror the hierarchy between Jerschek and Hilde. In the first two chapters the narrative voice shifts between Jerschek and Hilde, but then remains almost exclusively centered on Jerschek, returning to Hilde’s perspective only briefly for her flashbacks to the concentration camps and her murders. Even the two scenes in which Hilde undergoes crucial transformations are viewed nearly completely from Jerschek’s perspective – namely, her confrontation with her past (on the visit to the chapel) and the establishment of an Austrian identity (after Hindler’s attack). For these key scenes she is not the subject but the object of her transformation, in much the same way she is made into a host for Jerschek. This focus places Hilde, on a narrative level, in an inferior position to Jerschek. Her example thus anticipates what we will see in Gstrein’s novel: the narrative “control” of the host figures mirrors their domination.

While the breaks in the Lebert’s completion of the novel offer a possible explanation for the textual inconsistencies, his uneven treatment of Hilde is certainly congruent with the novel’s retrograde assignment of gender roles that we noted above. Hilde’s placement into the role of host returns her to a conventional role. At the start of the novel, we learn that Hilde works independently as a farm laborer, but by the close of the text, she seems to have abandoned this task. She is thus removed from her private role outside the home and placed back into the house, where her duties are, quite literally, cooking and cleaning for the dominant male figure. Lebert’s text thus inadvertently provides a reminder of the gendered divisions of the division of touristic labor, which has often been addressed in analyses of tourism. In the Austrian context, for example, Schönberger notes that the bulk of the physical labor in the industry falls on female
workers, because it centers on largely domestic activities that conventionally have been left to women, such as cooking, cleaning, and laundry (65-75). Lebert assigns these tasks to Hilde. That he employs this gender role and the power discrepancy it upholds suggests that he perceived no reason to address them in the novel. But while Lebert fails to de-assign Hilde a status as host, he does reject it with Hilde’s symbolic return, Veronika. While Veronika, who is imagined as virginal and pious, certainly does maintain conventional gender patterns, she is not cast a host figure. As we noted earlier, she is not a “Stubenmädchen” but a “Landarbeiterin,” ostensibly dependent on the soil, not tourists.

The epilogue envisions an Austria seemingly devoid of the tourism industry. While tourism’s power dynamics have been a touchstone throughout the novel, the epilogue avoids any direct reference to them precisely because this would destabilize its utopian thrust. Lebert’s critique of this relationship, however, does resonate in Jerschek’s thoughts about the events of 1965 in the epilogue. For example, he scorns those Austrians who continue to assert its place in a German cultural nation, describing them as looking to Germany: “Mit Anschlußhälsen! Habgierig, schamlos, allzeit bereit sich aufzugeben, sich zu verkaufen” (336). These charges of greed, self-denial, and deference echo those that the novel employed in its repudiation of the tourism industry. Jerschek further claims that Austria has been “ausgehöhlt von cleveren Geschäftemachern” (336), whom he likens to termites. The emphasis on an internal “hollowing” has a similarity with the novel’s notion of the inauthenticity generated by and for the tourism industry: what remains is a shell that disguises the truth about the interior space. As the novel’s depiction of tourism has shown, this industry similarly works to hollow out Austria, concentrating on cliches and façades that detract from the content of the true, interior identity, that Lebert seeks to promote.
2.4 Conclusion

My focus on Lebert’s depiction of the tourism industry in *Der Feuerkreis* opens up a perspective from which we can productively re-examine the prominent themes in the novel. It becomes clear that Lebert is not merely concerned with a mythic world of good versus evil, but indeed roots his text in a historical context through his emphasis on tourism and its relation to Austria’s denial of its National Socialist past and its postwar formation of a national consciousness. Lebert’s characters and their conflicts contest these issues, and do so not only through the abstract forum of their debates, but through their interaction with the tourism industry, which provides Lebert a concrete context to articulate his polemics on these larger issues.

Lebert uses the industry to mediate his positions on Austria’s fascist continuities and its nascent national identity, by raising questions regarding authenticity, which are inherent in his depiction of tourism in three principle modes. First, the novel follows a conventional anti-tourism tactic and criticizes certain aspects of tourism, such as specific food items, as inauthentic only to highlight others as genuine, which valorizes Jerschek’s form of tourism against mass tourism. Second, Lebert goes beyond this standard criticism and foregrounds the inauthenticity of touristic objects to raise issues of fakeness, truth, and deception, which allows Lebert to address Austria’s fascist past. On the one hand, the characters in the tourism industry seek to exploit it so that they may conceal their fascist complicity: for example, through traditional clothing or through the conversion of the villa into a hotel. On the other hand, tourist activities in Lebert’s novel are drawn to reveal a similar obfuscation. The thrills of skiing or the wonders of the natural landscape divert the tourist from Austria’s recent past. The third mode of
Lebert’s deployment of authenticity / inauthenticity operates on a personal level. His work represents the tourism industry as a sector in which the individual becomes transformed into someone else through their roles working in it. By imagining the host as submissive, in particular to German tourists, Lebert articulates his critique of the notion of a German cultural nation, in which he finds an obstacle to an independent national consciousness.

I thus show that Lebert’s novel challenges the central role of the tourism industry in Austria’s postwar reconstruction in order to carry out its critique of and plea for Austrian national consciousness. By likening Austria’s mountains to “Leichenberge,” the novel addresses the denial of the fascist past, positing that it is perpetuated through tourism’s presentation of the landscape. By denouncing the host profession as that of a “Stiefelputzer” (254), Lebert both locates in the implied servility of this role a sign of the postwar era’s failure to develop a national consciousness and overturns the industry’s association with entrepreneurship and self-sufficiency. Our next novel continues to dispel the industry’s image as an agent of renewal, delving even deeper into the working conditions of those in the tourism industry.
CHAPTER 3

“DARÜBER WURDE NICHT GESPROCHEN”: NORBERT GSTREIN’S EINER

3.1 Introduction

This chapter examines Norbert Gstrein’s highly acclaimed text Einer (1988), a work that makes a broad and complex critique of the Austrian tourism industry, which is reinforced through its elaborate formal structure. The impulses that charge the work’s thematic and formal foci are evident in its title. “Einer” is a demonstrative pronoun, but it appears without a clear antecedent, which demands that the reader actively seek this missing referent, a necessary strategy because this story contains numerous informational gaps that it never fills. The implicit meanings of this pronoun point us in two directions. On the one hand, “Einer” denotes a member of a particular group or a representative of a particular category, for example “einer von denen,” “einer von vielen.” But on the other hand, it also stresses separateness and singularity and thus a difference from or a lack of membership in a particular group: for example, “einer gegen die anderen.” Is the “Einer” of the title one like so many others, or one quite different from and perhaps opposed to them? The meanings of this pronoun, as well as the concealment that its missing antecedent enacts, all resonate in my reading of the story’s critique of the tourism industry.

65 This text is labelled an “Erzählung” and appeared as an independent publication. I will thus refer to it as a story and will underline its title.
The title’s likely referent is the central character, Jakob, a hotelier’s son, who after a troubled childhood in a Tyrolean resort begins working in tourism, only to become a village outsider who shuns the industry. For him, living in this touristic environment has an alienating effect, as he experiences the gradual loss of his autonomy and stability through the encroachment of tourists and the tourism industry. The story presents the reader with a figure who illustrates the negative consequences of tourism and who resists this industry. Jakob’s despair and alienation culminate in an act that remains hidden from the reader, but is most likely a crime (quite possibly a murder), which prompts his removal by an “Inspektor.” The uncertainty evident in the ambiguous title is reiterated by the different narrative perspectives, each relating episodes from his life that could explain his action. The accounts detail crucial moments in Jakob’s life and reveal the conditions behind the scenes in this resort, but they simultaneously hide and withhold information about Jakob and often each other. This wavering between showing and hiding creates aesthetic tensions in the work that mirror the contradictory pressures experienced by those subject to permanent contact with tourism.

In this chapter I examine the representation and criticism of the tourism industry in Einer. As we will see, Gstrein’s story directs its critique more specifically at the conditions of living and working in the industry than was the case in Lebert’s novel. My analysis begins with a discussion of the work’s reception in the context of contemporary debates about the effects of the tourism industry and with reference to other literary works critical of the industry. This discussion will allow us to develop a notion of authenticity from within the story’s critique of the tourism industry that is unique within this context and has been overlooked in the criticism. My close reading of the depiction of the central character’s life will elaborate this on both a thematic and a formal level.
Just as the front and back regions of tourism deny the tourist the desired experience with the authentic, so too does the text’s structuring of front and back realms of Jakob’s life deny the reader knowledge to his story.

My analysis will show that Einer’s approach to the question of authenticity for those living and working within the tourism industry is aesthetically more radical than that developed by Lebert and others; however, we will also become aware that Gstrein nonetheless falls back on this notion in generating his critique. In likening Jakob to an object that is used and sold in the tourism industry, I will argue, Einer also concurs with the critiques of the tourism industry as an enemy of authenticity, both on a cultural and social level. This viewpoint holds that the tourism industry has the effect of altering existing cultural patterns and traditions and that it erodes social structures as the hosts adapt their ways of life to serve their guests. Thus, while on the one hand seeming to question the idea of authenticity altogether, Gstrein reiterates the view of the tourism industry as an alienating force that makes the host “anders” and hence insists on some initial state of authenticity. When concerned with Jakob’s life and with the conditions and traditions in the village, the notion of authenticity functions in the text as an ideal for what should have been, and as a critique of what does exist. Gstrein’s focus on this inauthenticity through tourism thus enacts a critique of this industry and the social conditions it upholds.
3.1.1 Reception of Einer

The release of Einer made Gstrein an overnight sensation and earned him numerous awards. Critics heaped praise on the author, declaring that “Hier hat sich ein neuer Autor mit seiner ersten Erzählung schon als Meister ausgewiesen” (Krättli 426). The popular reception of Einer has loosely taken two directions. The first concentrates on the text’s thematic concerns, and the second lauds the story’s elaborate narrative structure and its reflection on language and representation. This second direction often displays hostility towards the first. Anton Krättli’s review, for example, contends that: “Erstaunlich und bewundernswert ist nicht ihr [the story’s] Thema […] Erstaunlich und bewundernswert ist die Sprache, und vor allem die Kunst, mit der sie erzählerisch inszeniert sind” (424). While Gstrein’s critical take on village life is certainly not new for Austrian literature, and while I share the reviewers admiration for Gstrein’s narrative style, I find that views such as Krättli’s downplay the story’s critique of the tourism industry and neglect its relationship to the elaborate formal elements.

This union has not been explored in the existing academic reception of Einer, which, like the popular reception, focuses on the form or examines the story’s thematic aspects, such as its portrayal of an outsider figure, its position in the so-called Anti-Heimat genre, and its focus on the plight of those in touristic communities. Only Wolfgang Straub’s study of tourism in Austrian literature touches on both of these

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66 For example, the Bremer Literaturpreis, the Rauriser Literaturpreis, the Ingeborg Bachmann Preis des Landes Kärnten, and the Stadtpreis from Graz.
67 Examples of the first direction can be found in the reviews by Haider, Holzner, Christoph, and Kunne. The second direction is most prevalent, and examples include the reviews by Weiss, Weinzierl, Melzer, Krättli, Harb, and Liessmann (1989).
68 Among the larger studies Hackl, Perger, Hofer, and Schütte concentrate primarily on the themes explored in Einer, and Pfandler and Kramatschek on its formal qualities. Thonhauser-Jursnick touches on but does not unite both aspects, as his study is primarily committed to exploring how the linguistic theory of the frame functions in diverse texts.
aspects when discussing Gstrein’s works, but he devotes surprisingly little attention to 
*Einer*, which is arguably the most relevant text for his study. He only cites it as an 
example of the topos of the Tyrolean village and concentrates briefly on its literary 
quality. Straub largely neglects *Einer*’s critique of tourism and even alleges that in this 
work: “meist nur implizit und selten konkrete Kritik [wird] geübt, wenn auch niemals 
Unklarheit über die kritische Haltung des Autors gegenüber dem Tourismus aufkommen 
kann” (199). While such a claim may hold for Gstrein’s later works, it cannot for 
*Einer*, where subtle critique is juxtaposed with very direct and concrete statements 
against tourism. Straub’s reading of *Einer* illustrates how much scholarship focusing on 
*Einer*’s literary qualities shies away from addressing its criticism of the tourism industry 
and social conditions. As I will show, this fails to do justice to the complexity of 
Gstrein’s text, as it ignores the interrelationship between text’s form and its critical 
content. My reading shows that the formal elements are inseparable from the text’s 
themes and that the work’s complex narrative structure can only be fully understood 
through its grappling with tourism.

The shortcomings of the critical reception of *Einer* notwithstanding, the existing 
scholarship has raised a number of issues from which my analysis benefits. Claudia 
Kramatschek and Wolf Käfer are useful because they isolate Gstrein’s problematization 
of biographical representation and causality in literature through his works’ narrative 
patterns, but neither link these to the touristic setting or critique of the industry in *Einer*. 
Gernot Pfandler’s thesis also offers insights into Gstrein’s techniques, specifically

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69 In another passage in his dissertation, however, Straub does concede that *Einer*: “geht ausführlich wie 
keiner zuvor auf die Fremdenverkehrsthematik ein und gibt – lange bevor der Ruf nach einer qualitativ-
soziologischen Durchforschung laut wurde – ein dicht gezeichnetes Beispiel der ‘menschlichen Tragödie 
hinter der Freizeitindustrie’” (95). The conflicting perspectives in Straub’s study are reflective of its 
eglect of the tourism critique in literary works, especially in his reading of *Einer*. 

highlighting the tension between proximity and distance and between exterior and interior narrative spaces in the text. His study, however, does not map these tensions onto the text’s diverse narrators, a mapping that, as I show, reveals Einer’s plays on notions of immediacy and authenticity in the touristic context. Christian Hofer details the text’s representation of mental illness in the main character, and his “anti-psychiatric”(59) analysis convincingly demonstrates that Gstrein’s depiction of mental illness serves his societal critique. Hofer, however, does not successfully read this analysis out of the text’s narrative complexity and thus fails to consider the impact that the social construction of mental illness in the story is determined in the context of the tourism industry. I will show that Gstrein questions the label of mental illness by showing that it is based less on a medical diagnosis than on the village figures’ assertions, which allows Gstrein to intensify his critique of tourism by pointing out how the hosts themselves are complicit in their predicament. The critics who do concentrate on tourism – Wolfgang Hackl, Alexandra Perger, Wolfgang Straub, and Ingo Thonhauser-Jursnick – provide insightful observations about the central character’s plight as a host and carefully detail the literary traditions of tourism criticism in Tyrol. But these four secondary works have an incomplete perspective, because they do not adequately address the formal dimensions of Gstrein’s critique and are not sensitive to the text’s awareness of theoretical discussions of tourism. My reading will expand the secondary literature’s details on Gstrein’s formal concerns regarding biographical representation, his depiction of mental illness, and the spatial contrasts in his text, by merging them with insights from the theoretical discussion of tourism, which will allow me to demonstrate how Gstrein entwines content and form for his critique of tourism.
3.1.2 Literary and historical context of Einer

Resort villages in Tyrol are a prevalent setting and theme in many of Gstrein’s early works. The protagonist of his narrative Anderntags (1989) works for a Communist journal that publishes an issue critical of tourism. The semi-autobiographical main characters in Gstrein’s first novel Das Register (1992) contend with tourists and ski fans and question the validity of the label “Austrian” that they feel forced on them, in part by the tourist industry. Gstrein’s novella O₂ (1993) centers on a German balloon flight in the 1930s, which comes to an end in a Tyrolean resort, where hiking tourists discover the wrecked balloon. Gstrein’s last turn to this theme is Der Kommerzialrat (1995), which examines the machinations and the public and private misfortunes of a so-called “Talkaiser,” a dominant tourism tycoon. Gstrein’s debut publication, however, remains his most thorough and critical engagement with tourism.

In criticizing the tourism industry, Einer takes its place in a long tradition in Tyrolean literature. Tourism has long been an important factor in that province, which advanced to Austria’s most visited tourist destination after 1945. As Straub notes, Tyrolean authors have reacted to this sector since the mid-nineteenth century (192-200). He divides them roughly into two camps: on the one hand, those who promote or encourage tourism, and on the other, those who vehemently campaign against the industry and its cliched views of Tyrol. The early figures in this second tradition are non-canonical, regional authors, such as Reimmichl, a priest who in the 1890s wrote village tales about tourism and the pernicious influences of foreign tourists, and Sepp Schluifer, whose 1909 satire Fern von Europa lampoons tourists and especially their Tyrolean
Starting in the 1970s authors from Tyrol who were critical of tourism became more prominent on a national and international level. As we noted in chapter one, such authors include the ethnographer Hans Haid who wrote a novel, and works of dialect poetry, and Felix Mitterer, who is perhaps the most prominent and prolific critic of Tyrolean tourism. His film-script for *Die Piefke-Saga* was made into a television miniseries that aired in 1991 and 1993, which was the center of a period that saw the release of many works, including Gstrein’s *Einer*, that dealt with the consequences of the tourism industry.

The topic of tourism and its social and cultural impacts is not only reflected in the fictional works, but was addressed and debated in a range of other discourses as well. Given its wide critical and commercial reception, Gstrein’s text, and the films of Mitterer’s *Piefke Saga* as well, can be seen as participants in the contemporary concern for and engagement with tourism’s impacts. Commenting on the context in which *Einer* appeared, Gstrein has noted:

> Der Fremdenverkehr scheint seine eigenen Kinder zu fressen oder gefressen zu haben, und es hat allzu lange niemanden gegeben, der dazu nicht noch ‘Hurra!’ gerufen hat. Es gibt erst in der jüngeren Generation Leute, die sich Gedanken machen, daß es nicht mehr so weitergehen kann. Ich glaube, daß […]. *Einer*, was sein Thema betrifft, einfach fällig war. Hätte ich das Thema nicht aufgegriffen, hätte es wohl jemand anderer gemacht. (‘Eine Art’ 19)

Gstrein’s comment glosses over the earlier works by Haid and Mitterer noted above, but he is correct in pointing out that engagement with the tourism industry greatly intensified with a younger generation, to which he himself belongs. From the mid-1980s to the early 1990s, after roughly 30 years of sustained mass tourism, a number of texts appeared that

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70 For more on Reimmichl see Hackl (129-147) and Riedmann (282-297); for more on Schluiferer see Hackl (126-9) and Riedmann (163-6).
72 For example, the novels by Klier (1988), Kappacher (1992), Kleinlechner (1993), and Schöpf (1994).
testify to the topicality of tourism’s effects.\textsuperscript{73} For example, Hans Haid, though not a member of the younger generation, published several pamphlets that bitterly attack tourism for its degenerative influence on peasant culture during this period.\textsuperscript{74} A more economic-oriented focus appeared in 1994 in a double issue of the communist journal Der Föhn devoted to mass tourism in Tyrol.\textsuperscript{75} Contemporary academic publications participated in this discussion. Since the 1940s scholars had mainly examined the industry from an economic perspective, but in the 1980s and early 1990s numerous studies and conferences began to examine tourism and its impacts from sociological, ethnographic, theological, and environmental perspectives.\textsuperscript{76} Industry officials responded to the public debates as well: in 1987, for example, the Tyrolean Minister of tourism initiated a series of workshops examining its environmental and social impacts (Forcher 355). In 1988 the Tyrolean tourism advertising board countered with a publicity campaign to remind residents of the benefits of tourism.\textsuperscript{77} Its brochure, “Licht und Schatten,” parallels common criticisms of tourism with an enumeration of the industry’s primarily economic and material benefits, but this presentation overwhelmingly favors the pros often without earnestly addressing the cons it mentions.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[73] As Luger/Rest show, the public concerns concerning the mass influx of tourists often intersected with discussions of international commercial transit through Austria, and especially through Tyrol (“Kulturen” 663).
\item[74] Von Schneekanononen und Transitlawinen (1993), Volkskultur und Tourismus (1996), and Stadl, Alm, Gaudi (1997).
\item[75] The edition’s editor Markus Wilhelm curses Norbert Gstrein as an “in seiner Kritik am Massentourismus schamloser Opportunist” (49). He argues that Gstrein’s speech at the Frankfurt book fair does not address issues relevant to those Austrians in the industry, and merely rehashes cliches about Tyroleans as “ein[e] Horde von Speichelleckern und Arschkriechn” (49) for an international audience that expects such a view from the author.
\item[76] Some examples include the proceedings of the Arbeitskreis für Freizeit und Tourismus, which was formed in 1988, and the studies by Preglau (1983), Kapeller (1991), Findl (1993), Schönberger (1994), Högl (1995), and the many works by Kurt Luger and Franz Rest.
\item[77] Similar campaigns were mounted in other provinces. In 1993 the chamber of commerce in Salzburg published “Pro Fremdenverkehr,” and in 1997 the brochure “Was gond mi d’ Gäscht a?: Einsichten und Ansichten zum Toruismus in Vorarlberg” appeared in Vorarlberg.
\end{footnotes}
Einer, which was also published in 1988, addresses many of the unanswered criticisms in the “Licht und Schatten” text, both by reflecting on industry representatives who attempt to silence dissent and by overturning the positive images of promotional materials and public relations campaigns with negative assessments of the realities of the industry. For example, “Licht and Schatten” does little more than acknowledge tourism’s negative environmental impacts, but in Einer we find an avalanche directly resulting from touristic over-development for the production of ski-slopes, which serves as a metaphor for the central character’s demise. The brochure praises the tourism industry as the “Motor der Tiroler Wirtschaft” (6), yet avoids discussion of the economic dependency that results from this often one-dimensional industry, to which Einer alludes in numerous instances. For example, Einer refers to the “Renovierungsarbeiten […] unnötige Zubauten wie jeden Herbst” (17), actions that increase the hotel owners’ debt and dependence as they attempt to defer loans through capital investment, an actual situation that Elisabeth Lichtenberger has studied (250-6). “Licht und Schatten” tries to neutralize the social conditions under the tourism industry by emphasizing its economic benefits. For example, it cites a common criticism that “Wir sind ein Volk von Untertanen geworden. Trinkgeldempfänger fremdländischer Könige” (10), and balances this with a reference to the low unemployment rates and higher tax revenues in resort areas, which ignores the largely low-paying salaries and seasonal instability. The narrators in Einer, however, reflect on the unfavorable working conditions and also continue the critique of the power relations in the tourism industry that we saw in Lebert’s novel. The brochure is confident that Tyroleans have not lost their positive self-image, because otherwise the region would not have the highest percentage of return visitors worldwide (18). Einer, however, counters this optimistic view by depicting the host’s world as dominated by
greed, depression, and alcoholism. In its treatment of the cultural realm, “Licht und Schatten” concedes that much has been devalued through touristic commodification, but cites the industry’s role as a patron of folk culture, that is, as a source of hope for its renewal. In Gstrein’s text, however, we can only find instances of cultural inauthenticity in tourism, exemplified in the cliched “Heimatabend” performances of its characters.

Gstrein attributes the heightened level of concern for tourism’s consequences that is evident in his story and in contemporary texts in part to generational shifts. Economic factors, however, also contributed to the emergence of these studies and the general public discussion: since the mid-1980s the industry in Tyrol has experienced a general economic stagnation (Nussbaumer 201). The declining economic figures, then, may have increased a willingness to question the consequences of this dominant sector. Another factor that once discouraged critical voices was, as Gstrein’s remarks above hint, the taboo surrounding the tourism industry.78 On one level, in regions such as that depicted in Einer, economic dependency on the tourism industry hinders engagement with its negative consequences: any disparaging of tourism would be seen as an attack on the region’s livelihood. On another level, the specific structures of the industry deny the individual hosts outlets for such critical discussion. As Schönberger’s study contends, the intense local competition in resorts prohibits an acknowledgement of the difficulties in coping with the profession, which also must be hidden from the constantly present guests, for whom they would be a “Negativwerbung” (32), thus furthering the silence regarding tourism’s impacts.

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Einer clearly breaks these taboos, and Gstrein’s personal investment in addressing the problems of those living and working in a resort clearly stems in part from the author’s engagement with his own life story. Like his central character Jakob, Gstrein grew up in a mountain resort, Vent, which finds a thinly veiled reference in the text’s fictional setting of “Fend.” While my interest in this study is directed at Einer, not its author, Gstrein’s remarks on his work’s autobiographical parallels shed light on its critique of tourism. In an interview Gstrein states that his first works follow the models of many artists, in that he too focuses on aspects of his own life because this allows him to treat a subject matter with which he is certain and familiar. He also notes that these writings were necessary for his personal and artistic development, describing them as “Eine Abrechnung eher in dem Sinn, daß ich die Rechnung für mich mache, Bilanz ziehe und weiß, ich muß von gewissen Dingen loskommen, wenn ich meinen Kopf über Wasser halten will – in meinem Leben und in meinem Schreiben (‘Eine Art’ 19). Gstrein attributes a therapeutic function to his first three works, which center on characters’ conflicts with their families, villages, and the tourism industry. About this function in Einer, he notes “ich [habe] darüber nachgedacht, was mit mir möglicherweise passiert wäre, wäre ich im Dorf geblieben. Dann hätte ich mir am ehesten so ein Leben, so ein Schicksal wie das der Hauptfigur ausgemalt. Also haben diese Bücher auch die Funktion, Gespenster zu bannen” (‘Eine Art’ 19). The hypothetical version of Jakob’s life becomes for Gstrein a means of confronting his own story.80

79 Gstrein’s connections to the tourism industry begin with his family, which has been in the hotel and ski school business for three generations. His grandfather was also an early promoter of tourism. In discussing these connections, Horst Christoph details many of the parallels between the real world of Vent and the fictional world of Fend, noting that the names of hotels and restaurants in the text have been unchanged and that the descriptions of the fictional village square match those in the real village (96).

80 Gstrein inserts a clue into the text that reminds the reader of this hypothetical association between himself and his figure Jakob. When Jakob’s brothers describe the contents of his room, they note: “San Francisco stand auf einem [Koffer], aber wer wäre dort gewesen?” (89). The biographical blurb indicates
Gstrein has expressed a skepticism of literary autobiography and demands that for it to be successful, it must involve a “Formwille in der Arbeit” (“Eine Art” 19); that is, it must reflect on the means of representation. He then argues that the life story must have an “exemplarische Bedeutung” (“Eine Art” 19); it must transcend the singular and personal. As Gstrein notes in another interview, Einer is an attempt, “in exemplarischer Weise das Leben eines Menschen nachzuzeichnen – eines Menschen, wie es nicht nur in Tirol, sondern in allen Alpentälern gibt, die vom Fremdenverkehr leben” (“Talfahrt” 18). Gstrein synthesizes these concerns for autobiographical writing in Einer by using multiple narrators, who call their own and the accounts of others into question and thus complicate the representation of its central figure’s life. At the same time, Jakob’s story exemplifies the circumstances of living and working in a resort village. As Gstrein has noted, he addresses his own life in Einer, but he demands a limit to this personal reference: “Teile in meinen Büchern sind autobiographisch, diese Teile möchte ich nicht ungeschützt erzählen” (qtd. in Jetschgo 87). Gstrein’s wish to communicate his own experiences, yet also maintain privacy has a parallel in the tensions between hiding and showing that are inherent in his story’s critical focus on the tourism industry.

3.2 Authenticity and the critique of tourism in Einer

With his depiction of Jakob’s life Gstrein does not advocate a specific program of action, but clearly pursues a goal of raising awareness and effecting a critique. In an interview, Gstrein states the critical impetus of his story:

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that Gstrein was a student at Stanford University, and the location printed at the close of the text reveals that Gstrein wrote it in Palo Alto and Innsbruck.

81 In his interview with Alfons Gruber, for example, he insists: “Ich setze mich gewiss nicht hin zum Schreiben mit dem Anspruch, die Welt zu verbessern. Ich habe auch kein Patentrezept wie man leben soll […] Ich fühle mich nicht als Prediger” (18).
Ich glaube etwa, daß *Einer* ein sehr politisches Buch ist. Es ist eine Darstellung dieser kleinen Gesellschaft in den siebziger, achtziger Jahren, und wenn jemand wissen will, wie es damals war, dann erfährt er einiges aus diesem Buch. Denn es ist ja nicht in die Luft geschrieben. Ohne aufdringlich zu sein, ist es in einem fort Gesellschaftskritik. ("Eine Art" 19)

Gstrein sees his book as decidedly political, as engaging a societal reality, but he does not want it to be “aufdringlich,” overbearing or dogmatic, arguing earlier in the interview that overtly political literature is aesthetically unsuccessful. While Gstrein’s “Gesellschaftskritik” is often quite pointed it is primarily achieved through more subtle means.

I locate two modes through which Gstrein deploys his critique. First, much of the work’s criticisms of the tourism industry are made not through direct polemics, as we saw with Lebert, but through a more neutral illustration of the circumstances it produces. *Einer* carefully weaves together different narrators’ depictions of Jakob, which as a whole provide a glimpse into the world of an alpine resort and show how the industry has negative impacts. Second, the neutral quality in many of these accounts activates us as readers, inviting us to ponder the consequences of tourism, rather than merely receive direct commentary. The story further engages the reader by hiding and obscuring information, which is accomplished on a formal level through the unequal access to Jakob’s life that the different narrators have. Both through this formal technique and through the image that emerges of Jakob and his village, the issue of authenticity is a central tension in Gstrein’s critique. *Einer* portrays this resort and its inhabitants as having become inauthentic, and the story’s form reiterates the structures of touristic display and gazing, which demands that the reader reflect on Jakob’s authenticity, on who he should be.
3.2.1 Thematic aspects of *Einer*

A study of *Einer* greatly benefits from an elaboration of theoretical perspectives on tourism, because the work is clearly aware of them, and they will aid in understanding both the focus of the story and the predicaments faced by its central character. A useful starting point is Dean MacCannell’s concept of the staging of authenticity, which uses the notion of regions to describe the spatial, both figurative and literal, arrangements in tourism. The hosts present themselves to the tourists in what he calls the “front” region. MacCannel conceives tourists as wanting to experience a culture authentically – that is, without mediation and fabrication by the industry. His tourists reject the front region, namely what the tourism industry markets as genuine, and instead seek a glimpse of a less mediated image, which they presume can be found in a “back” region. These tourists attempt to proceed further into back regions, which are the spaces of the hosts, where they hope to escape the mediated front region and find a more genuine experience of the destination culture. The industry is aware of this desire and caters to it by presenting a staged back region, which has the appearance of a real back region, but is actually another front region. This theoretically could result in a situation in which everything is a false back region, as the tourists’ skepticism leads them to push further into the back and the host continues to meet this desire with more staged back regions. It would be an amusement park-like space that has been geared to tourists’ desires and expectations. Gstrein’s fictional Fend is such a space, and its inhabitants are shown ever aware of the gazing tourists, who seek to observe more and more of their lives and culture.

The notion of the back region illuminates the significance of what Gstrein’s story shows. It is clearly attempting to go beyond the image of its resort that a tourist would see and instead to give the reader a glimpse into the back region, that is, it aims to expose
the realities behind the façades of the tourism industry. This thrust underlies Gstrein’s earlier statement, that the reader of his story can see “wie es damals war.” Gstrein’s note speaks not only to his goal of representing a specific context, but also suggests his view that this context has not received its due attention.

Given this impulse to show what goes on behind the scenes, the setting of the frame narrative, the kitchen of the family’s hotel is particularly significant. The function of the kitchen in the family home, as Franz Rest has argued, illustrates tourism’s internal displacement of the social structure in family-run hotels (91). As the traditional family room (“Stube”) is converted for use by tourists, private, family activities become restricted to the kitchen. It thus becomes one of the remaining spaces of refuge for the host and should be kept out of view of tourists. That the frame narrative of Einer anchors in this privileged, yet threatened space underscores Gstrein’s goal of revealing the perspective of those who work and live in the tourism industry. Gstrein tethers the text to this setting by having the narrators repeatedly interrupt their narration with references to the sounds that can be heard from the kitchen when someone enters the family hotel (12, 26, 67, 114). These sounds reinforce the focus on the hosts’ perspective and allude to their different perception of home: their front door is not a barrier, but a permanent opening through which anyone can enter, illustrating how the host’s back region is compromised and under threat. At one point, Jakob’s brothers even pause their narration as hotel guests enter the hall. When these visitors pass by the kitchen without inquiring about the commotion, the narrators note that they are “froh, daß sie [the guests] nichts ahnen, nicht beharrlich vor dem Herd stehen und fragen und alles wissen wollen – und noch mehr” (49). This passage illustrates the fragility of this privileged space of the
kitchen for the host, a space that, as the narrators indicate, is not entirely safe from the
gaze of curious tourists.

The episodes of Jakob’s life that the different narrators present continue this focus
on the back region. First, many are set in the off-seasons of spring and fall. This allows
Gstrein to make a contrast with the conventional images of gaiety and enthusiasm at a
resort village. The “Zwischensaisonen” in his portrayal are a time of social paralysis
“wenn man nicht wüßte, was sagen” (16). He later foregrounds the hosts’ depression,
pointing to “das Weinen und Händeringen an den langen Herbstabenden, wenn sie
untätig in den leeren Häusern sassen” (58). Second, in a number of episodes we find a
conspicuous amount of background information, which reveals a will to show what goes
on in the village. For example, in the episode which details the family’s decision to send
Jakob to boarding school there is a page-long description of the village during the fall
off-season (17). This description has little significance for our image of Jakob, but does
enhance our optic into the back region, as it shows us more of the inner workings of the
industry and the hosts’ perception of it.

The notion of staging authenticity illustrates the dynamic through which the world
of the hosts is altered in Gstrein’s text. To accommodate the desires of the tourists, the
hosts turn further elements of their culture into tourist attractions, which then alters their
meaning for the hosts. We can find a reinforcement of this notion in a narrator’s cynical
remark that the tourists in Fend “ahnten nicht, daß längst nichts mehr stimmte und alle
verkauft waren für billiges Geld” (56). As the front region and the fabricated back
regions expand, everything thus becomes inauthentic through touristic commodification.

Gstrein’s critique of the inauthenticity of this resort primarily centers not on
objects, but on the host’s social environment, whose articulation I also illuminate through
MacCannell’s model. This, however, is a point at which looking at another conception of the back region will be crucial. In it, Jeremy Boissevain fully elaborates an aspect that is only implicit in MacCannel: namely, the significance of the back region for the host. While MacCannell conceives of the back region as a space in which hosts retreat from their front region personae, he primarily centers on the tourists’ experience and thus concentrates on the false back regions as a ploy used to mediate attractions, making them inauthentic for tourists. In contrast, Boissevain studies how the hosts cope with tourists, arguing that the back region is a space that the host seeks to protect. He thus shows that the false back regions become a means of protecting against the touristic commodification of the real back region (14-17). His false back regions create a buffer around the real back region, where hosts maintain a separate space, in which they can alleviate the pressures of interacting with tourists and maintain their own culture, traditions, and private emotions, without being subjected to the gaze of the tourist. Boissevain thus treats the real back region as a space of authenticity that the host protects in coping with tourists. They threaten this back region, by trying to see more of the host culture, which pushes the host further into the back and prompts the creation of a false back region. With each fabricated region, the hosts abandon a formerly privileged part of their own space, which can leave them in environments where everything is staged for the tourists, with no or only a severely compromised real back region. Their world thus becomes altered and inauthentic.

Because the fictional Fend is a space that has been compromised by tourism and because the central character seeks a space where he may protect his sense of self, Boissevain’s conception of the real back region as a space of authenticity that needs protection is very useful for my reading of Einer. This conception provides a model for
interpreting how the notion of inauthenticity is crucial to the central character’s demise. The story presents instances in which Jakob hides from tourists and seeks a private refuge, which allows us to trace how Jakob’s dilemma in maintaining his sense of self is linked to his inability to maintain a stable back region. Without this, Jakob is unable to find escape from tourists or to find communication and meaningful connections with his family and companions. In this alienation and lack of a back region I locate the notion of authenticity in Gstrein’s critique of tourism. To use a phrase from Turrini’s famous essay, Jakob becomes “anders” through the dominance of the industry in his environment. He conforms to the demands of the tourism industry and is altered by the conditions that it creates in the village. Gstrein thus argues that the host inhabits a dual reality: on one side, the world that is put on for the ever-present tourists, and behind it, the host’s private world that shrinks under the pressures of inquisitive guests and an industry that must cater to their desires. Jakob fails to compensate for this division and for the absence of a private space. Alcohol and his rocky relationship with Hanna provide only temporary relief from his alienation and dissolution. Without a stable back region, then, Jakob is unable to maintain his identity. By presenting a village and its touristic inauthenticity and a character who himself is seen as inauthentic, Gstrein levels a powerful critique of the tourism industry.

3.2.2 Formal aspects of Einer

Gstrein intensifies the critique of tourism that his text enacts through its content by charging the formal construction of his work with the same tensions that trouble his protagonist. While many critics of the story have lauded its elaborate formal structure, none have recognized that Gstrein’s complex narrative structure actually replicates the
separation between front and back regions in a touristic setting. This places the reader in the position of a tourist and produces a tension between showing and hiding. The tension creates an indeterminacy about Jakob, which engages our critical facilities. Since we are presented with divergent accounts of Jakob’s life, we must confront the issue of authenticity, as we evaluate these different accounts to try to uncover the truth about Jakob and his actions.

The first sentence of Einer, “Jetzt kommen sie und holen Jakob” (9), immediately thrusts us into the action of the text, prompting questions: who is Jakob? Why is he being picked up? Who is picking him up? Answers to these questions remain vague, but it is clear that Jakob is a hotelier’s son who has committed an act that is not revealed to the reader, but which is most likely the murder of his companion Hanna. Why Jakob committed this act becomes a matter of speculation that the different characters attempt to resolve. Einer is structured around a present tense frame narrative, which is set the morning after Jakob has committed the unspecified action and the “Inspektor” has arrived to collect Jakob. The frame characters discuss Jakob’s life with the inspector, who occasionally poses questions. This frame narrative provides the structure for the main narrative, which consists of the fragmentary accounts of Jakob’s life both by the frame characters and by an authorial narrator. The main narrative constantly switches between these diverse perspectives, defying any chronological order as the narrators offer episodes.

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82 The opening sentence present us with one of its striking similarities to Uwe Johnson’s Mutmassungen über Jakob (1959). Johnson’s first sentence, “Aber Jakob ist immer quer über die Gleise gegangen” (7), also thrusts us into an action that has already begun. In addition to having numerous figures make speculations about a figure named Jakob, Gstrein’s story also employs Johnson’s fragmentary style, which demands that the reader construct meaning from the pieces by different narrators.

83 Just as we do not know what Jakob did, we do not know what kind of “Inspektor” this is. In all semantic likelihood, however, it is a police officer, but it is possible that this term could refer to an agent sent from a mental institution.

84 I will use the term “frame characters” to refer to those figures in the frame narrative: Jakob’s mother and two brothers, and his neighbors Gritschin, Viz, and Valentin.
from Jakob’s childhood up to the previous night and his probable murder of Hanna. These episodes give the text its complex structure, demanding that the reader attempt to reconstruct Jakob’s story.

The most striking aspect of this intricate narrative arrangement is that it re-employs the structure of touristic display by presenting a front and back region, which places the reader in the role similar to that of a tourist observing Jakob. Gstrein’s text interweaves different narrators, voices, and moods, and these diverse strands can be divided into two broad perspectives: first, the stories told by Jakob’s brothers and other figures, and second, the narration from an omniscient authorial perspective. This split creates the effect of the front and back regions in tourism, because these levels differ in terms of their access to Jakob and the type of episodes they present. The front region consists of the narration by Jakob’s brothers, who present their own accounts of Jakob’s life and relay those of other frame characters. This perspective is limited to what these figures could know: that is, they can only present what they have observed. Behind this front region we find the back region, which is constituted by the accounts of the authorial narrator. In MacCannell’s model, the back region has a more exclusive perspective that the tourist perceives as more authentic than the front region’s. In Gstrein’s narrative constellation, his authorial narrator seems to have full access to Jakob and thus promises a more exclusive perspective.85

By having the frame characters present an inspector with their accounts (which likely detail the events of a crime), Gstrein employs the basic scenario of a detective novel. This places the reader in the role of the detective who attempts to solve the crime.

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85 Technically, there is a third level of narration in which the authorial narrator relays to the reader the frame characters’ thoughts and occasionally their speech (through forms of indirect discourse). I will treat this third level as a part of the “front” region of narration because it still does not have the more direct access to Jakob’s life that is found in the back region.
as evidence is revealed. I contend that the touristic model is more productive for reading *Einer* both because the story is clearly invested in giving us a glimpse into Jakob’s life and the structures of the resort, but more importantly because of its split into two levels of narrative access to Jakob. Gstrein’s inspector does not so much “inspect” as merely receive the accounts of the frame characters, and he does not have access to the accounts of the authorial narrator. The reader, however, does and is thus presented with these differing levels of access that recreate the touristic setting.

The front region of narration offers us many episodes from Jakob’s life, but, in keeping with the touristic model, what this region shows seems compromised. The frame characters are giving the inspector, and hence the reader, their accounts of Jakob’s life. This foregrounds the mediation of Jakob’s life to the reader, which is heightened in that the accounts of Jakob’s brothers and the frame characters provoke our skepticism, because they are riddled with suspicious or elusive claims. First, some accounts are cast into doubt as the frame characters are unwilling to give definite answers, often immediately calling statements into question: “er wüßte, oder wußte er nicht” (103) or relativizing their statements with vague phrases, such as “wie man sagt” (84) or “hieß es” (72). Other figures even admit their uncertainty: for example, when questioned about his claim that Jakob threatened Hanna, the character Viz replies “Vielleicht […] ich kann mich verhört haben” (83). Second, the text suggests other potential sources of information but then denies them. For instance, Jakob’s brothers suspect that the cook Nowak, who is a silent observer present throughout the frame narrative, knows more about Jakob, but the story calls attention to the fact that he never speaks: “In der lang

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86 The character Gritschin is equally uncertain of her details: “[Jakob und Hanna] mußten gestritten haben […] Zehn Minuten, eine Viertelstunde, ich weiß nicht” (100).
Third, some characters blatantly give false information. We are provided with an interior monologue from Jakob’s brother, in which he recollects hearing something suspicious the previous night, but then, in direct speech, he tells the inspector “Ich habe nichts gehört” (62). Finally, the frame narrators are presenting episodes that might help the inspector understand what led Jakob to his actions, but in some instances they seem to be pursuing their own interests. What this suggests is that they are denying their own complicity in Jakob’s fate or are quietly advocating his removal. We can find examples in Viz’s aforementioned claim of a threat and in an episode in which Jakob’s brother describes why he fired him from his ski-school: “Ich habe abgewartet und schließlich nicht anders können, erinnert euch, ihn entlassen müssen, als er die Frau angriff” (74). His statement attempts to justify his treatment of Jakob and simultaneously confirms Jakob’s violent tendencies. The frame characters’ ulterior motives will become most evident when we examine their allegations of Jakob’s mental illness, which, as we will discuss below, seem to serve their needs by validating his removal. These inconsistencies in the front region of narration by Jakob’s brothers arouse our suspicions about the truthfulness of its portrayal of Jakob.

The back region of narration offers an expanded insight into Jakob’s life. The authorial narrator appears to have more direct access to Jakob’s thoughts and memories and can thus present events in which Jakob was alone and which could not have been witnessed by his family. For example, the authorial perspective divulges to the reader what Jakob did on his solitary, nocturnal walks and during his private moments with Hanna. Jakob’s brothers only report Jakob’s behavior after he quits boarding school, but the authorial narrator details what Jakob did while away from home. After describing the
pupils’ punishment rituals at boarding school, the authorial narrator even calls attention to the ignorance of Jakob’s family: “Davon wußten sie nichts, weil Jakob nie etwas erzählt hatte, an den Wochenenden nicht und auch später nicht, als er wieder zu Hause war” (24). In a number of passages the authorial narrator details particularly harrowing episodes for Jakob, such as his probable abuse at boarding school, or moments of despair, such as his feelings of estrangement (70, 76). Such passages confirm the authorial narrator’s more intimate knowledge of Jakob, and this is underscored when Jakob is addressed in the second person. The authorial narrator’s more exclusive details and presentation of Jakob’s emotions has the feeling of a back region, because it promises more truthful and privileged insights into his life.

But while the authorial narrator’s perspective does give us a more complete picture of who Jakob is, it raises further questions and leaves others unanswered. As in the touristic model, then, this back region offers more exclusive access to Jakob than the front region that Jakob’s brothers provide, but it contains gaps that make us aware that more direct access is being withheld and that an even more truthful image of Jakob eludes us. We can find an example of this in unusual passages where the authorial narrator calls attention to the fact that it is mediating the reader’s access to Jakob. This occurs when the story has Jakob actually deliver his words in direct speech, but then curtails him by having the authorial narrator rewrite them indirectly through third person forms. For example, in a passage describing Jakob’s reactions to the abuse at boarding school we read: “Natürlich habe ich mich gewehrt. Er schlug um sich […]” (24). Later, his uncertainty during his first kiss is relayed as follows: “Soll ich? Sollte er sie küssen?” (40). These passages are striking because they are among the only points where Jakob becomes a speaking subject and his voice is presented without mediation by other
narrators. This is clearly significant for these passages because they detail intimate and intense episodes, which indicate that the author deems them too important not to let Jakob’s subjectivity come forward in them. But because their immediacy is at odds with the rest of the story, these passages have a jarring effect that seems to silence Jakob just as he speaks, which makes us aware that we are denied access to him. In keeping with the notion of front and back regions, these passages are cracks that allow a brief glimpse further into the back; that is, they indicate that there is yet another back region behind that of the authorial narrator where authenticity might be found. They reveal a more thorough perspective on Jakob, but immediately restrict our view, which foregrounds the mediation of Jakob’s story and reminds us of the limits imposed on our access to it. These limits are further evident in the fact that some things remain unclear or are simply never revealed to the reader. The authorial narrator hints that Jakob was abused at boarding school, but its account of these incidents is vague about the nature of this abuse (24). The authorial narrator claims that Jakob never slept with any of the young tourists (41, 69), but in later episodes suggests that he might have done so (107, 113). Most markedly, Jakob’s actions with Hanna, which are the likely catalyst for the story’s action, are never exposed to the reader.

This missing information, the tension between the narration by Jakob’s brothers and the authorial narrator, and the awareness that we are never given access to Jakob together deny closure for the reader. The authorial narrator’s additional insights into Jakob’s life, while more exclusive and detailed than those of the frame characters, do not clarify Jakob’s actions, but only reveal more possibilities that might have induced them and point to still unrevealed perspectives. Through these two regions, the story thus denies the reader authenticity with regard to Jakob: it does not allow a definitive image of
Jakob nor what led to his actions. What this indeterminacy does is allow Gstrein to problematize biographical representation and the narrative construction of causality, which have been principal concerns in many of his texts. As Claudia Kramatschek has noted, Gstrein dealt with this issue already in his dissertation on situational semantics, which argued that language will always fail to capture a truth fully, because meaning is always dependent on a specific and coincidental constellation (3). In an interview, Gstrein comments on his doubts about accurately portraying cause and effect, because: “[J]ede Festlegung beinhaltet einfach die Gefahr, nicht richtig, weil zu wenig komplex zu sein” (qtd. in Müller-Vahl 102). The division of the text into the front and back regions, then, must be seen as a means of becoming aware of this complexity and denying any facile establishment of causality. The two narrative perspectives dispense with a chronological ordering and thus preclude a simple, linear cause and effect formula, and the different reasons and motives posited by the diverse range of characters and narrators further impedes, as Kramatschek notes, “eine allgemein gültige, definitive Lesart des Geschilderten” (3).

The split into front and back regions of narration and the indeterminacy they create is significant for our reading of his story’s critique of the tourism industry in three specific ways. First, the different perspectives on Jakob’s life and the deliberate lack of clarity that the regions of narration enact initiates the reader as a co-creator of the text. To find meaning we must actively sort through what the different narrators present to look for a motivation for Jakob’s actions. In examining what drove Jakob’s demise, we must simultaneously confront and evaluate the possible impacts of the tourism industry as well as the myriad other factors imposed on him. The indeterminacy of this work invites us as readers to draw our own conclusion. Gstrein’s claim that his critique is not
intended to be “aufdringlich” thus needs qualification. His work does not present specific polemics in the manner, for example, Lebert’s does, but instead demands that the reader examine numerous perspectives and criticisms of the tourism industry and rural society in general and then take a stand on them.

Second, since the two levels of narration mediate the reader’s access to Jakob, he almost never becomes a speaking subject in the story. Jakob is hidden from the reader, as the story that we get about him is both contained in and controlled by others’ reports. As Gerhard Melzer has noted, this formal arrangement mirrors the “Entmündigung” that Jakob faces in the village: he fails to develop his own voice and conforms to the norms of the village (38). I would argue that this notion can be pushed even further by linking it to Gstrein’s critique of the tourism industry. The control of Jakob by the narrators also mirrors the control and external pressures that he faces as a host. As we will see, Jakob feels he becomes a product that tourists have purchased and thus feels compelled to cater to their demands. On another level, the roles that Jakob and others assume for their guests are shaped by the fantasies and stereotypes of tourists and industry marketers, which again enforces an external control over the hosts. By foregrounding how the different narrators determine what image of Jakob is produced, then, Einer reinforces its critique of the industry’s influence over the host.

Third, by having the different narrators control the access to Jakob, the story has the effect of hiding Jakob from the reader. This is enhanced through the split into a frame and main narrative. In the frame narrative, Jakob literally is hidden from view: he is sedated in another room for almost the entire text.\(^{87}\) In the past-tense, main narrative, Jakob

\(^{87}\) When Jakob does finally enter the frame narrative in the text’s final pages, his appearance is anticlimactic in its brevity, and the frame narrators even foreground his near invisibility: “Wir treten ans Fenster, als vor dem Haus der Wagen anfährt, und nur Mutter bleibt reglos stehen, […] sie schaut nicht, wie sie mit gewichtigen Schritten die Treppe hinuntergehen, Jakob in der Mitte, kaum sichtbar zwischen
Jakob is only a figure conjured up by the authorial narrator and Jakob’s brothers, and the story highlights their construction of Jakob, by constantly shifting the narrators’ accounts back to the frame setting through the use of deictic markers. For example, the frame characters often address other characters (“erinnert euch,” [78], “Ihr kennt ihn, ja”[64]) and refer to objects and events in the frame setting, such as the clock that has stopped or the sound of the church bells. By calling attention to this mediation, the text centers our focus not on the past events where Jakob was present but on the frame setting in the kitchen where he is conspicuously absent. While this absence creates a suspenseful tension in the story, I contend that it further reinforces Gstrein’s critical depiction of tourism. As we will see, one of Jakob’s main strategies in coping with tourists is to hide, to try to find a refuge in a back region. Like the guests that trouble Jakob, we as readers also seek to place his private life under investigation. But we encounter a limit to what we are permitted to know, as the story denies our unmediated access to Jakob and prohibits us from subjecting him to our interpretive gaze entirely. The text thus hides Jakob, achieving, if only on a fictional level, the protection from inquisitive tourists that has eluded him for much of the story. More importantly, by formally demonstrating the constellation Jakob faces as a host, the story alerts us to his predicament, inviting us to reflect on the impacts of tourism on the host population. In calling attention to the limits to our knowledge of Jakob, the text thus seeks to remind us of the limits to private space that trouble host communities as they cope with the pressures of tourism and also of the consequences these limits have for Jakob.

den Uniformen” (115). After this short entrance, the text closes as Jakob is taken away, taken permanently out of view for the reader and the frame characters.
The narrative constellation of front and back regions in Einer modeled on touristic staging thematizes the issue of authenticity by complicating the reader’s search for the truth about Jakob’s case. At the same time, this structure, along with its effect of both determining and hiding Jakob, activates the reader to confront and evaluate tourism’s various impacts on the host. These front and back regions of narration, then, enable Gstrein a powerful critique of tourism because they make use of the very structures inherent to this industry. As we will see in the following sections, the notions of front and back regions remain crucial to understanding how Einer utilizes Jakob’s demise for its censure of tourism.

3.3 Jakob’s life in the tourism industry

3.3.1 Jakob’s youth

Gstrein includes variations on the phrase “Es war kein Leben” (85) three times in the story when addressing Jakob’s fate in the village. By writing that Jakob’s life is “not a life,” Gstrein signals the notion of authenticity present in his portrayal, because this implies that there is another “life” that Jakob could lead. Gstrein thus presents us with a life that he argues to be inauthentic, and he links this inauthenticity to the conditions created by the dominant tourism industry, by intricately focusing on Jakob’s struggles with these conditions in his youth in the family hotel, as a worker in the industry, and during his later alienation and despair as an adult. The episodes of Jakob as a child portray one who is averse to the tourism industry. This aversion stems from his realization of the split between the world of the guests and of the hosts – between front and back regions. For example, the authorial narrator describes Jakob’s early perceptions of his father’s behavior with the guests in the hotel:
Er [Jakob] konnte die anderen nicht verstehen und lachte sie aus oder schüttelte wortlos den Kopf vor ihrem dienerhaften Verhalten. Er sah den Vater, wie er den Fernseher fast unhörbar leise drehte, weil im Zimmer darüber Gäste schliefen, wie er augenblicklich aufsprang vom Essen und ja sagte, gleich, wenn sie um etwas baten, und dann zurückkam und fluchte und nicht mehr aufhören konnte zu fluchen über ihre Unverschämtheit (56-7).

In the front region, the father dutifully acquiesces to the guests’ wishes, but when he returns to the back, where he is briefly out of view of the guests, he curses them. The authorial narrator describes Jakob’s dismay at such behavior: “Damals war er betroffen von der Lüge, die sie für Fremde tun ließ, was sie nie für einander getan hätten oder für sich selbst” (57). By pointing out Jakob’s displeasure at his father’s contradiction, Einer prevents host figures who must maintain a split when they are in the front region, silencing their emotions and replacing them with ones suitable for their customers. When Jakob asks his father about this contradiction, he threatens him with violence, effectively silencing Jakob’s question. This threat simultaneously reinforces the internal split that his father faces as a host: just as he suppresses his feelings when dealing with guests, he continues to suppress them even during a private moment by refusing to discuss them with his son. Jakob’s brothers relay an incident that further illuminates the host’s predicament. In a neighbor’s basement, they stumble onto the proprietor in the wine cellar as she hastily drinks during a break (78). This incident concludes a passage focusing on the specifically rigorous conditions for female workers in the industry, which suggests that this neighbor seeks release from her profession through alcohol. This presents a similarity with the father’s refusal to discuss his behavior: both portray the host’s internalization of their front region roles that they perform for tourists. These two incidents also foreshadow Jakob’s later aggressive and alcohol-induced responses to his own role in the tourism industry as an adult.
Jakob is confronted with the tension between front and back regions not only through observing others, but also through his own experiences as a youth in the family hotel. Typical for resort villages in Austria’s alpine regions, the setting for Einer is a family-run hotel that is also the owner’s private home. In these hotels, guests and hosts share many of the same spaces, which makes a separation of front and back regions difficult, forcing contact and a loss of private space for the hosts. The ubiquitous presence and curiosity of guests in his family’s hotel is a source of anxiety for Jakob. As the narrator reminds us, Jakob eventually becomes certain of “das unbestimmte Gefühl [...] daß sie [the tourists] in den Leuten eine Sehenswürdigkeit sahen, eine Erfahrung für den Urlaub, nicht vereinbar mit dem Leben zu Hause” (54). These tourists, then, regard the hosts as objects that will enhance their vacation and seek a more fulfilling experience by trying to gain a better view of the hosts’ world. The authorial narrator describes the tourists’ intrusions as an “[U]ngefragte Nähe mit der sie einen bedrängten und nicht losließen, jeden Winter, jeden Sommer und zuletzt ganz, wenn man nicht achtgab” (112). The tourists’ gaze becomes a source of tension for the young Jakob. Knowing that access to their private sphere will please their guests, his parents expect their children to present themselves, their report cards, and their ski-trophies to convey a degree of intimacy for the guests (54). Jakob’s sense of self is thus threatened at a very early age, because his family uses him as a product to satisfy tourist desires. He is transformed from a member of the family into a cast member of a performance.

Jakob’s method of attending to this threat is literally to hide. For example, the authorial narrator details Jakob’s response as a child: “Er hatte sich versteckt, lief schnell durch die Hintertür ins Vorhaus, wenn sie in die Küche kamen und die Kinder kennenlernen wollten mit Namen und Alter, und was sie jetzt machen und später würden,
und er wußte nicht vor Scham wohin” (54). This is a passage that demonstrates how the notion of the back region helps us understand Jakob’s actions and the criticism they articulate. Jakob is overcome with anxiety and conceals himself from guests when they enter the family’s quarters, only reluctantly greeting them when forced by his father. He flees and seeks a retreat, a back region, where he can escape this objectification by the tourists. Towards the end of the text, the authorial narrator summarizes Jakob’s childhood in the hotel and points out extremes of the penetration into this back region: “Solange er ein Kind war, hatten sie ihn als Kind behandelt und bis unters Dach verfolgt mit ihren Fragen und den Süßigkeiten, die sie ihm hinhielten, damit er unter dem Küchentisch hervorkäme und erzählte oder zuhörte” (111). As these examples show, Gstrein inveighs against the conditions of the tourism industry by constructing the real back region as a space that no longer fulfills such a function for Jakob. Already in his childhood, then, Jakob’s sense of self is threatened because in the family hotel, there is no barrier the tourists cannot cross, which limits Jakob’s ability to find refuge or stability.

One space to which he retreats and where he seems to find a small degree of security as a child is a series of caves at the edge of the village, the “Fuchshöhlen.” Jakob’s brothers describe their adventures with Jakob at these caves, where they pretended to be Native Americans defending their fortress against invaders. They felt their games there to be “[W]irklicher als das Leben im Dorf, das tausend Kilometer entfernt sein mochte und sie nichts mehr anging mit diesen Gästen, die unermüdlich einen Gipfel nach dem anderen bestiegen” (15-16). As Ingo Thonhauser-Jursnick notes, the caves become a “Gegen-Welt” standing in opposition to both the conditions in the village and the world of the tourists (137). Gstrein reinforces this contrast between the young host children and the tourists on a spatial level: the subterranean caves lie far
beneath the tourists’ desired mountain peaks. What this passage shows is that the caves functioned as a back region for Jakob where he could maintain a physical and emotional distance from tourists that granted him a respite from the social confines of the tourist industry. Later episodes confirm that an older Jakob returns to the caves, attempting and yet failing to find the distance that this back region once offered him.

Thinking of the “Fuchshöhlen” as a back region that briefly provides a release for the young Jakob expands the notion of a back region to illustrate how the story problematizes Jakob’s authenticity. The back region refers to any space that offers a protective, restoring function for Jakob because it distances him from the front region, its values, and processes. Thus it refers not only to physical spaces, such as the caves, but also to certain activities or desires. We read that Jakob has a number of talents and yearnings as a child, which he gradually abandons or have been denied him, which has the result that Jakob becomes, if only briefly, a worker in the tourism industry. This process creates a parallel with the inauthenticity of touristic products: just as an object – for example, an object of traditional clothing – is altered and made more tourist-friendly and efficient, Jakob’s individuality, interests, and talents are slowly eroded as he is socialized into the world of the village, leaving him no option other than the tourism industry. The host may not exactly be made more tourist-friendly and efficient like the hypothetical traditional clothing, but is not encouraged to become something other than a host. What I am suggesting is that Gstrein’s story portrays a touristic environment that produces the hosts it needs by offering few other alternatives and by enforcing its strict normative codes. These norms deny Jakob a real back region, a space where he could achieve a level of personal authenticity and “become himself.” He namely abandons or is denied the childhood talents that seem to offer him respite, which results in his entry into
the family profession. We can find illustrations of this in the story’s depiction of his talent for learning, language, and his sexuality.

Early in the story, Jakob’s brothers inform us that Jakob is a good student (14), and this is further shown through Jakob’s early love for reading and learning. This talent, however, is given little opportunity to blossom, which reveals how the norms of the village neither provide a stable back region nor aid Jakob in securing one for himself. For Jakob’s family, work in the industry necessitates that they always are at the disposal of their guests, which infringes on their private space and time, and hinders development in other directions. Serving their guests, Jakob’s family has little time and patience for him, which appears to be a repressed source of guilt for Jakob’s mother as she recollects on his life (111). Because of Jakob’s unreliability and aversion to serving tourists, his father is very intolerant of the boy who has failed to become a “brauchbarer Mensch” (36), which for him is an industrious, unquestioning worker (15). The family’s strict norms regarding Jakob’s role in the hotel factor into their decision to send him to boarding school, a decision in no way based on a desire to let him develop his own talents. His father sees Jakob’s potential for education as an opportunity to get him out of the house and eventually persuade his wife to send him away (16). She, however, regards schooling as a waste of time and holds to her belief that anyone who strays from the village ways will soon fail. She has only contempt for Jakob’s studies and considers the books he loves to be “Flausen und Gespinsten” (36).

While Jakob’s home environment is not a fertile ground for his talents, what he experiences at boarding school is equally stifling. The authorial narrator relays moments from Jakob’s stay there, which are among the most ambiguous in the work. What is clear is that Jakob is completely isolated from his classmates: he is not assigned a roommate
and spends most of his time on long walks. Less clear is the episode that reveals Jakob suffered some form of abuse by older pupils. Gstrein suggests that this abuse was likely sexual in nature and stresses Jakob’s loss of autonomy in these instances:

[…] die Schläge, und den vielen Speichel im Mund, an dem er würgte, die fremde Zunge, und über sich langes Haar, ein fettes Gesicht und süßlichem Atem, der den Gestank nach alten Socken erstickte. Na also. Warum nicht gleich? Von da an ließen sie ihn zu sich kommen, und er ging wie ohne eigenen Willen den langen Flur hinunter, klopfte an die Tür und trat ein, zweimal, dreimal am Tag, und erst wenn er wieder draußen war, fand er Tränen […] (24)

Jakob’s family is not aware of this abuse, and the ambiguity of this passage obscures it for the reader as well. This calls attention to the fact that there are events in Jakob’s life to which we have no access, alerting us to the presence of another back region. By blocking our insight into actions that are significant for Jakob, Gstrein denies us any clear answer to his character’s predicament. He does clearly portray Jakob’s abuse as eroding his sense of self, both by portraying it as a traumatic experience and by linking it to his departure from school. When Jakob quits school and returns to the village, his mother, who has no knowledge of the abuse, see this as a confirmation of her skepticism and is pleased that she now has another worker in the hotel (33). Upon Jakob’s return, the villagers initially mock his failure, but soon accept him, since he is no longer “der Studierte” (36). With the abrupt end of his schooling, Jakob loses the transformative potential that his education might have offered and becomes caught in the village’s norms.

The story underlines its presentation of Jakob’s talent for reading and learning by highlighting Jakob’s relationship to language. While there are surely autobiographical motivations at work here, the focus on young Jakob’s abilities with storytelling and reading (14) as well as his later sensitivities for others’ words (70) have the function of
revealing how they diminish through the course of his socialization. Jakob’s relationship to language provides an index of the state of communication in the village, which is characterized by restrictive social norms and a reluctance to address taboo topics, such as the stresses of work and serving one’s guests. When asked if he often spoke to Jakob, Jakob’s brother provides an answer that speaks to this problem: “Wer führe Gespräche im Dorf, wer gebrauche die Sprache anders als allein für die alltäglichsten Notwendigkeiten” (47). While his answer seeks to lessen his complicity in Jakob’s neglect, it also attests to the villagers’ avoidance of and difficulties in communication and discussion of emotional matters. This only reinforces the conformity to village norms described above, since no one questions them.

Gstrein portrays host figures who place the highest value on financial success and on maintaining a positive appearance and thus highlights how business concerns color their language. For example, the authorial narrator notes “die Sprache entwickelte mit der Zeit eigene Umgangsformen... wieviel Leute, sagten sie für: wie geht’s, und miese Saison für: es geht schon, oder gut oder schlecht und für alles” (77). This resignification illustrates the negative influence of the industry: the inquiry into hotel affairs takes precedence over the individual’s well-being. Gstrein intensifies this focus by having the narrators reflect on several proverbs. These phrases foreground the hosts’ greed or justify to the hosts the toll of their livelihood with the promise of material gain: “Man müsse das Heu eintun, wenn es dürr ist, und die Kuh melken, so lange sie Milch gibt” (68). These proverbs are meant to console their families in moments of distress, offering the hope that they will one day have time to themselves, when they can retreat from the front region. But as the authorial narrator reminds us, these phrases are repeated incessantly, which renders them an empty promise for the host.
Jakob is well aware of the others’ and his own difficulty in communicating. This is illustrated in the narrator’s presentation of his brothers’ early encounters with young tourists “[Jakob] erkannte unter den großartigen Gesten, hinter den gewichtigen Sprüchen die beklemmende Sprachlosigkeit, die ihnen von Kind an beigebracht wird” (38). He then watches how alcohol makes his companions open up, only to see that it creates “Sätze, die nicht ihre waren, fremde Worte, gekünsteltes Hochdeutsch, gebrochenes Englisch, löste die vom Vater an den Sohn und immer wieder weitergegebene Erstarrung” (38). The “foreign-ness” alluded to in this passage again points a finger at conditions in the tourism industry: Jakob’s brothers become more efficient hosts and their language becomes more like that of the tourists, whom they are to entertain.88

Gstrein highlights the village’s norms regarding language to strengthen his portrayal of Jakob’s conformity and decline. He gradually loses his talents and becomes unable to defend or express his own feelings, and thus must accept other norms. For example, a pointed, accusatory question lays bare Jakob’s failure to discuss a painful experience at boarding school: “Hatte sie ihn, Mutter, hast du mich je die richtigen Worte gelehrt, oder der Vater?” (25). The shift between indirect and direct discourse here provides another example of a moment where Jakob’s voice briefly breaks into the story. Because Jakob is lamenting his deficiencies with language, this shift has an ironic effect that makes his appeal all the more intense and conspicuous. Lacking the right words, Jakob is unable to counter the norms of the village: “Jakob zweifelte manchmal, ob sie tatsächlich meinten, was sie sagten, oder nur grundsätzlich alles Neue abwiesen […] und

88 The story’s reference to “foreign” words resembles a statement sentiment Gstrein has made about his own linguistic development: “Mein Deutsch ist ja kein österreichisches oder tirolerisches Deutsch […] sondern ein Mischmasch aus dem Tirolerischen und dem Piefkinesischen der Gäste. Bei vielen Dingen kannte ich zuerst das piefkinesische Wort. Mit Sahne bin ich grossgeworden, das war so gewöhnlich für mich, daß ich Obers dann für das nicht-österreichische Wort hielt” (qtd. in Käfer 11).
doch widersprach er ihnen nie – sie hätten ihn ohnehin nicht ernst genommen wie jeden, der nicht ihre Meinung teilt – und habe gewöhnlich sogar zugestimmt“ (70). Jakob’s inability to resist the ways of the village is further revealed when we read that Jakob blindly repeats (“nachgeplappert” [68]) some of the consoling phrases discussed above. That Jakob eventually begins to repeat these proverbs serves as a marker of his diminishing abilities. Jakob’s difficulties with language are thus another instance of his loss of elements that would help him form a stable back region.

The gap between his own feelings and his ability to express himself is made wider by his perceived deficiencies in his own dialect. We find an example of this in the authorial narrator’s account of Jakob’s first experiences of love:

Für Liebeserklärungen war der Dialekt nicht geschaffen, und er lernte, sie nach der Schrift zu machen. Einstudiert klangen sie falsch und verlogen, in den fremden Sätzen oft zu großartig für das, was er sagen wollte, und dann wieder bei weitem zu kleinlich. Mit dem hochdeutschen Wort ging er um wie ein Neureicher mit Geld […] und bekam es trotzdem lange nicht in den Griff.” (43)

Perceiving his own language lacking, Jakob adopts another, one that is “fremd” for him, but this does not provide him with a meaningful expression of the feelings he has. His use of standard German signals a retreat from a more positive assertion of identity, which was once evident in his use of dialect as a youth. In boarding school Jakob namely refused to accommodate to the urban speech of the fellow pupils, which he once thought of as “bloßes Getue” (21). For his encounters with young tourists, though, he abandons this stance.

89 Gstrein’s acceptance speech for the Bremer Literaturpreis hints at an autobiographical parallel with Jakob’s difficulties in developing his own voice: “Ich glaube nicht, daß mich je jemand aufgefordert hat zu reden, daß man wissen wollte, was ich denke, wo alles feststand, wo Schweigen als Tugend galt und stets einer da war, der Vater oder sonstwer, der es besser wußte. Von Anfang an hieß Lernen immer auch lernen, den Mund zu halten, ungefragt zuzuhören, hieß von anderen lernen – bis man war wie sie oder zugrunde ging” (“Reden” 385).
Jakob’s relationships with young women illustrate a third example of how he loses something that is meaningful for him and that could have helped him find a more stable back region. The ultimate failure of his relationship with Hanna is indeed the final stage of his alienation and removal from the village. As with his troubles with language, Jakob must contend with his own uncertainty and with the perceived norms of others in his relationships. Love for him is a mystery, surrounded by his own expectations as well as those of others. Gstrein intensifies our sense of Jakob’s confusion by inserting a long dictionary entry on “Liebe” into the text (42). The possible meanings and different usage of the term in this entry are clearly selected to reveal what is missing in Jakob’s life, for example: “mütterliche L.,” “die L. der Eltern,” “die wahre, große L.,” “jmdm. eine L. erweisen.” The other variations of the definition, which include everyday examples and trivial proverbs, further reveal the expectations that confront and frustrate Jakob. For him, the word for “love” itself is foreign: “Weil es das Wort im Dialekt nicht gab, stand es geschrieben wie losgelöst von den anderen und nicht dazugehörig” (43). When Jakob first experiences feelings of love, he feels that they cannot be explained by the word alone. As the authorial narrator notes, Jakob dreams of “[eine neue] Buchstabenkombination, [eine], die nicht zu finden war in den Tausenden von Dudenseiten” (44). Jakob’s feelings, which seem to break with norms and established conditions, are only fleeting and will remain unexpressed.

Just as Jakob conforms to the village’s linguistic norms, his sexualization follows the models of his older brothers. One of his and his brothers’ first encounters with sexuality is through the pornographic magazines they glimpse in the cook’s room. As a youth he watches his brothers’ grope Hanna and does it himself as a young adult, making his first sexual experience, an event that is conventionally imbued with notions of
uniqueness and singularity, a copy of the actions of his brothers. His early encounters with young women, for the most part the visiting tourists, are complicated by his uncertain attempts to follow the models of others. While watching his brothers in their first experiences with women, he is disappointed and thinks “daß er es anders machen würde, wüßte nicht wie, wüßte nur: anders, zärtlicher” (39). Jakob wishes to break with their patterns and to act on his own, but he does not succeed and ends up copying them again, acting out what he perceives as the expected behavior.90

Although Jakob has a desire for intimacy and closeness with others, the female tourists of his youth remain hollow experiences for him. As the narrator notes, “Er lernte sie kennen, wenigstens dem Namen nach, nie näher oder nahe genug, sich geborgen zu fühlen, in den zwei Wochen oder drei, und dann reisten sie ab in eine andere Welt, als wären sie nie da gewesen, beanspruchten ihren Teil und hinterließen nichts als die Leere, die von Mal zu Mal wuchs” (40). This aspect of Jakob’s relationships conforms to Gstrein’s general portrayal of hosts, which posits that they become purchased objects over which the tourist takes control. At the same time, it is significant for the depiction of Jakob’s emotions. For him, these relationships take on the nature of a performance that ends when the tourists depart, even though he continues to participate in his role. These short-lived relationships are ultimately meaningless for Jakob and thus fail to help him form a concrete sense of self, a solid back region not subject to the tourists’ whims. The depiction of Jakob’s early experiences with young women, his failures with learning and his struggles with language and the village codes illustrate how Einer employs a notion of authenticity. With all of these elements, he is unable to create a stable place

90 “Er faßte sie an, wie er dachte, daß es von ihm gewollt wurde, und sprach, wenn er sprach, weil er glaubte, es wäre Zeit dazu” (107).
where he may distance himself from the pressures of the front region that he experiences as a youth and thus fails to develop his sense of self. These tensions between the front and back regions that trouble Jakob as a child are multiplied, when he begins working in the tourism industry.

3.3.2 Jakob’s role as a worker in the tourism industry

Focusing on Jakob’s role as a worker shifts our attention toward the front region and to the staged back regions of the touristic setting where he performs his tasks. Einer makes some of its strongest criticisms through its depiction of Jakob’s roles as a host. Central to this critique is the notion of authenticity: the story portrays Jakob’s tasks as continuing to turn him into someone else, because they entail alienation and a denial of self. Einer presents the tourism industry as a profession in which hosts must assume roles that clash with their conception of who they are, because their economic relationship pressures them into accommodating to tourists’ wishes and expectations.

Jakob enters the business after abruptly quitting boarding school and vowing never to leave the village. Gstrein foreshadows the outcome of this transition by paralleling his return with a destructive avalanche: “An den längst abgeholzten Hängen brachen die Schneemassen, rutschten, wälzten sich unaufhaltsam ins Tal und stoben mit ungeheurer Wucht über alles hinweg, was ungeschützt stand oder nicht weit genug abseits” (31). The snow in this episode clearly illustrates the contradictions of the tourism industry. On the one hand it is the source of livelihood and its abundance is a necessity. Gstrein stresses this in a later passage, in which a priest prays for new snow
But at the same time, excessive snow can have devastating impacts. The reference to the clear-cut slopes, which reveal over-development, thus symbolize tourism’s negative consequences in general, while simultaneously indicting the industry’s environmental damage. This passage also points to Jakob’s predicament. The “Jungwald” (31) that is swept away is an allusion to Jakob, and the reference to being far enough “abseits” reiterates the spatial dimension of the back region. Like the virginal forest, Jakob’s entry into the profession will not offer him a refuge strong or hidden enough to shield him from the destructive forces in his environment.

Jakob’s entry into the industry is another signal of his conforming to the expectations of his family and the villagers. The authorial narrator informs the reader that the young Jakob “hätte nie gedacht, daß er sich nicht zu wehren wüßte und mitgerissen würde in derselben Hilflosigkeit wie alle” (56). It is thus all the more surprising to Jakob’s brothers when he does briefly join the family business and become a ski instructor, especially since he avoided tourists as a child. To be a ski-instructor, Jakob must enter the front region and contend with serving and being observed by his students, both on the slopes and during the “Animation,” the instructor’s casual entertaining of his students in bars after lessons. Jakob, if reluctantly, takes part in

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91 In the prayer for snow, we can locate a possible criticism of tourism as a moral corruption: the material concerns of the industry infiltrate and alter a domain that is traditionally intended as a spiritual one. This scene creates an intertextual parallel with the works of Hans Haid, whose fictional religious figures also pray for snow (Schneekanonen 23).

92 The other instances of snow as a metaphor continue to signify contrasts between pleasure and menace. Snow has a beautiful appearance, but can cover up and deceive. Jakob’s nocturnal walks with Hanna, a moment of joy for him, take place on snowy streets. At the same time, snow appears in moments of despair, such as an episode in which Jakob appears to have suicidal thoughts, and in the mother’s recollection of how she beat Jakob as a child. Snow also appears in the identical opening and closing sequences, in which the motorbikers ride in circles and seem to be burying themselves behind a wall of snow, which serves as a metaphor for the industry’s concealment of the damage it creates.

93 The authorial narrator stresses the intensity of this task: “[Die Gastgeber] fielen nicht aus der zugedachten Rolle, keiner, waren den Gästen zu Gefallen und animierten, animierten oft an drei Tischen gleichzeitig, animierten um ihr Leben und animierten sich zu Tode” (58).
many such activities, fulfilling the roles that the industry and the tourists expect of him. For this role Jakob cannot use his childhood tactic of hiding from the tourists in the family home. His brothers cannot understand “wie er den Umgang mit Fremden plötzlich gelernt hat oder wenigstens ertragen” (53). They do point out, however, that Jakob does indeed separate himself from other instructors: to avoid being observed, he takes his students to secluded areas for their ski lessons, which his brothers suspect he does so that no one could watch and ridicule him. I would also argue that his seclusion indicates an attempt to conceal his entry into the business, to conceal his failure that he “mitgerissen würde in derselben Hilflosigkeit wie alle.” That is, he seeks to hide his failure to avoid the path so many others have chosen: the tourism industry.

The passive phrase in the above passage and the reference to a state of helplessness underscores the story’s portrayal of the working conditions in the industry as a threat to the host’s sense of self. To illustrate how these working conditions and the roles they entail enact a self-negation for the host figures, I will use the notion of the commodity because it foregrounds the economic exchange. This term helps to explain how Jakob, and other hosts, are subjected to outside forces which exert a powerful influence over their lives, a critique that is familiar to us from Lebert’s novel but carried a step further in the environment Gstrein depicts. When individuals become hosts in the industry of tourism they sell their labor power and so are subject to the classical process of alienation under capitalism. However, because they themselves as hosts are part of the attraction sought and purchased by the tourist – that is, an integral part of the touristic experience that is to be the product of their labor – they are subject to a double process of alienation. The host’s sovereignty as a subject is not merely diminished through his or her role as a laborer in an industry; rather, that identity as a representative of the
destination culture is itself the product of that labor generated for the purposes of exchange. This commodity is fetishized as a cultural value by the consumers, the tourists, and thus has an economic value for the producers in the tourist industry. At the same time, this process not only fails to produce anything that could be seen as authentic, it also performs an erasure of the point of departure where authenticity may have resided.94

To understand how Gstrein’s image of the hosts engages this relationship, we will benefit from a description of the dynamics of the tourism industry for the local community in Jost Krippendorf’s, The Holiday Makers. Krippendorf writes: “The population in the rural areas owns the other two means of production required, namely land and work, yet these are sold all too cheaply […]. In order to get a share in the tourist business, the locals sell their land and labor at bargain prices” (49-50). Krippendorf’s study is relevant for the type of small proprietors depicted in Einer. He argues that even though the hosts may own their land and labor, economic competition demands that they exploit them. This is further complicated when we consider the nature of their products: “the ingredients of the landscape, namely the good air, the sun, the snow, the mountains, the hills, the lakes, the seas and the beaches are free commodities” (50). While Krippendorf fails to account for the time, capital, and labor invested in maintaining the landscape – either through farming or environmental protection – his statement does point to a grave contradiction between the possibilities of tourism and its actual practice.

For my purposes, the most interesting point is raised through another omission in Krippendorf’s assessment. What also is seemingly free in the touristic exchange is hospitality and the accommodation to the guests’ wishes. The hosts not only own the

94 For a detailed reading of tourism and the notion of the commodity see Watson and Kopachevsky (1996).
means of production, they are a significant part of the product that is produced for consumption. To maximize their potential, then, they must exploit themselves; to entice the guests to return, the host must ensure that their stay is most enjoyable. The relationship thus implies that the hosts must accommodate to the guests, if they wish to be successful. Whatever alterations they make to render their product more profitable and appreciated will exert a toll on their personal lives, in terms of labor or sense of self. This conception of the host as a commodity will thus aid our understanding of Gstrein’s portrayal of Jakob’s role in the industry, because it illuminates how hosts are pressured into altering themselves to become what the guest wants.

The story highlights this loss of authenticity to show that Jakob is subject to external control and yet senses an inability to be who he perceives himself to be. To further its portrayal of tourism as a self-negation for the host, then, the story foregrounds the industry’s perception of the host in economic terms. Jakob’s brothers point out that they had to work in the hotel already as children (15). We noted earlier that Jakob’s parents satisfied their customers’ desire for intimacy by having their children interact with them, which turns them into objects for display. We can now see in this an illustration of the depth of the problem of commodification, for by bringing them into the front realm the parents literally “produce” these children as attractions. Gstrein stresses how the family regards Jakob as a worker after he quits school. For example, his mother greets his return because she needs another hand in the kitchen and because she is pleased that he has finally become a “brauchbarer Mensch” (36). As a worker, though, Jakob proves to be a liability because he is unreliable in his duties and gradually becomes aggressive to tourists through his pranks and insults, which eventually get him fired from his brother’s ski school. In his later years, Jakob continues to be seen in economic terms
by family and villagers. He is tolerated at home only because he is a member of the family, but when his sister-in-law gains a greater say in the control of the business she banishes him from the family table. Since Jakob refuses to complete any work, she demands that he eat with the personnel and thus nullifies familial bonds in favor of economic terms, which also reinforces the tentative nature of the kitchen as a secure “back region.” Similarly, the villagers in Fend have a low tolerance for Jakob, appreciating him only for his drunken antics: “im besten Fall könnte man versuchen, einen kleinen Vorteil herauszuschlagen. Solange es dem Geschäft nicht schadete, war alles erlaubt” (94). They thus tolerate Jakob as long as he serves their business needs of entertaining guests.

Gstrein’s focus on economic dimensions emphasizes not only the family’s view of Jakob in terms of his capacity for labor, but also the specific relationships that Jakob’s position as a host entails. These reinforce the critique of tourism as a self-negating enterprise for the host. Einer portrays Jakob and other hosts both as raw materials of touristic production and as a product that is consumed by the tourist. This allows Gstrein to foreground the hosts’ subjection to external control: he imagines the host as the property of the guest. Gstrein concretizes these aspects through interesting grammatical shifts and vocabulary usage. In the following passage, the authorial narrator describes how Jakob is conflicted by his obligations to the industry and his personal feelings and aversion to tourists:

An den Abenden ging er mit ihnen aus und haßte sich, daß er nie nein sagte, wenn sie selbstverständlich über ihn verfügten: sie seien nach dem Essen im Hotel, später in der Milchbar oder im Café Tirol, du kommst doch, ohne seine Antwort abzuwarten, die zustimmend sein mußte und inbegriffen im Preis, den sie bezahlten. (55)
The shifts in mood in this passage reflect the situation it describes: namely, Jakob’s anger at his compromised sovereignty and his sense of being controlled by the guests. The indirect discourse pulls us from a general reflection into a non-specific occurrence, but the sudden turn to the veiled command in present tense, “du kommst doch,” juts out at the reader. Through this immediacy the command is made louder for the reader, intimating the authoritative tone it has for Jakob, for whom it has the effect of confirming his status as a commodity and inducing his submission to the demands of the tourists. On the surface, the choice of the word “verfügen” in this passage is not unusual, as it describes the situation of command and control that the guest here exerts over the host. But I contend that a related meaning is vital for this context: this passage namely plays on a phrase that demonstrates a host’s willingness to serve – “Ich stehe Ihnen zur Verfügung.” This meaning resonates in the above passage and heightens its censure of the tourist’s undue power over the host.

While the demands of the tourists are shown to be a determining factor for the hosts, the play in the meaning of “verfügen” shows the critique to be simultaneously directed at the hosts themselves. When the hosts promise to be “at the guest’s disposal,” they place themselves under the “control” of the guests, who can dispose of the hosts as they wish. While this passage indirectly reproaches the hosts for their willing acceptance of tourism’s negative impacts, the story also makes direct accusations. By addressing the hosts’ responsibility for their lot in the industry, Gstrein avoids portraying the hosts as innocent victims. An example of this direct criticism can be found in the repetition of a specific proverb with densely layered associations. Jakob’s brothers describe a scene in which a drunken Jakob, after hearing a bartender complain about a poor tourist season, begins to shout “Wer zahlt, schafft an” (65). Krippendorf actually uses this same phrase
in his study to introduce the economic inequities that the host faces, translating it as “The
guy who pays gives the orders” (49). Krippendorf’s translation, however, conveys only
part of the meaning that is relevant for the use of this proverb in Einer. Interpreting
“anschaffen” as “to order or command” correctly conveys the meaning and critique of the
power relations between hosts and guests that Gstrein’s character is addressing. This
interpretation also points to a specific audience: this meaning of “anschaffen” is common
in the southern German-speaking regions, where Einer is set. In standard German,
however, “anschaffen” has the meaning of “to purchase, acquire,” as in “Ich habe mir ein
Auto angeschafft.” This variation intensifies the proverb’s implicit critique of the host’s
accommodation to the guests: whoever is paying is also getting something that they want.
This meaning thus points to the guest’s role in determining the roles that the host must
assume. When Jakob repeats this phrase in the bar, he is silenced by the violent threats of
the barkeeper, which confirms the effectiveness of his words. The barkeeper’s reaction
signifies the industry’s reluctance to acknowledge its negative consequences. The
proverb is disturbing for the barkeeper because it reminds him of his dependency and
submissiveness and bluntly shows how tourist wants determine host identities.

Gstrein’s usage of the word “holen” further illustrates how Jakob is treated as an
object, which continues his indictment of both tourist and host. Often translated as
“fetch,” “get,” or “collect,” “holen” denotes the control and dominance over a passive

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95 Gstrein is possibly making an intertextual reference. This phrase appears throughout Felix Mitterer’s
play Das Leben des Hoftyrolers Peter Prosch (1985), which was based on a sixteenth century manuscript by
Peter Prosch, one of the most famous of the singers who toured the courts of central Europe performing
Tyrolean folksongs and telling tales of rustic mountain life. Mitterer describes this historical figure as the
first “Fremdenverkehrstrioler.” In the play Peter Prosch repeatedly uses the phrase “Wer zahlt, schafft an”
when he expresses his reservations about conforming to others’ cliched expectations of a Tyrolean, a term
whose feminine inflection in this period was synonymous with “whore.”

96 The word “anschaffen” brings up another indirect association that is relevant for the story’s critique of
the host: namely, in colloquial usage “anschaffen gehen” means to prostitute oneself. With this proverb,
however, the notion of prostitution applies not to “the one who pays” but to the one who receives.
object. Furthermore, it can have the connotation of an economic transaction. In *Einer*, the word appears in moments that reveal how the hosts are reduced to objects and commodities in the industry. It appears in the opening sentence of the text: “Jetzt kommen sie und holen Jakob” (9). Without an explanatory context, “holen” here can take on both its colloquial meaning of “arrest or incarcerate” and also its general meaning, both of which instantly alert us to Jakob’s passive role as an object that will be controlled by other forces. As we noted earlier, Jakob is indeed controlled by others on a formal level as well: all the episodes of his life are not relayed by him but by the different narrators, which keeps him an object of their descriptions and accounts. Even we as readers are attempting to take control of Jakob, in that we try to understand his story and extract meaning from the story’s various perspectives on his life. The first sentence thus allows a profitable misreading as “Jetzt kommen [Sie]” which would make it a reminder to us as readers that by beginning the story, we will be making an attempt to “get” Jakob. As our discussion of the formal structure shows, the story problematizes any such attempt.

Another instance in which a variation of the verb “holen” is used is in the final passage of the main narrative, just before Jakob is finally removed from the village. Here, the authorial narrator delivers a final rant against tourists and the tourism industry: “Wenn sie [Jakob] brauchten, wurde er hervorgeholt und durfte mit auf die Bühne, als Schilehrer, Jodler, Tellerwäscher oder was ihnen einfiel, Alpenrose, vielleicht Gamsjäger” (emphasis added, 112). The addition of the prefix “hervor” has further connotations that enhance the story’s critique of the host’s position. The prefix completes the spatial dimensions of the metaphor of a stage, on which Jakob performs his role as a host: he is pulled up onto this figurative stage and pushed into the spotlight.
This reference to a figurative “Bühne” reinforces the central notion of the front and back regions because the host must perform roles in the front and the false back regions. The verb “hervorholen” also conveys the notion of picking an object out of another space, whereby the object that is picked out is not instantly visible or perhaps concealed by other objects. This association, coupled with the reference to the roles that Jakob performs, strengthens the depiction of the depersonalizing nature of the host’s duties. This phrase likens Jakob to an object that is picked out of a container of objects which is then utilized for a particular task as if it were a spare part that can fit into any role that is desired. The ambiguous pronoun “sie” heightens the implicit critique in this passage: the antecedent of this pronoun is unclear and could refer to the tourists watching the show, or to the hosts who assemble what is on it. Regardless of who “needs” Jakob, he becomes an object, which is further stressed through the passive construction in this passage. For the industry, he is an object valued as a multi-purpose function, not as a person, and for the tourists, he is the commodity that can be purchased in numerous guises. That Jakob can seemingly be plugged into any of these roles, foregrounds their estranging effects: Jakob’s individuality is no longer important because he is used to fill the roles that the industry presents.

The narrator’s cynical description of the roles Jakob assumes reveals the story’s castigation of the tourism industry’s impact on cultural authenticity. The leveling between the roles: “Schilehrer,” “Jodler,” “Tellerwäscher,” “Alpenrose,” and “Gamsjäger” clearly indicate that the tourism industry in Einer is not concerned with assuring the authenticity of the goods and services they offer. This is one of the few passages in the story where Gstrein approaches the type of critique we might find with Felix Mitterer or Hans Haid, both of whom denounce the commodification and erosion of
cultural traditions through tourism. Gstrein’s narrator clearly foregrounds cliched “Heimatabend”-style roles, “Jodler,” “Gamsjäger,” or “Alpenrose”, and reminds us that some roles are inventions: “oder was ihnen einfiel.” The ambiguous pronoun reference is again significant, as it could refer to either those in the industry or to the tourists, whose desires and expectations create these roles. In either case, the image of the village that the story projects is the same: if more subtle than the touristic dystopia in Mitterer’s Piefke-Saga, Gstrein’s Fend is a resort where everything is inauthentic, where, as the authorial narrator remarks, “längst nichts mehr stimmte” (56) – that is, where everything has been altered through touristic commodification.

While Einer presents Fend as a space of inauthenticity, the tourists it describes do seek an authentic experience there. We can see this in the their desire to know details about the village and its residents and in their questions to Jakob about specific customs, for example, what the traditional way of serving a local liqueur is (56). The tourists’ concern for authenticity is not limited to facts about the village or local ways, but is an attribute of their experiences as well, that is, the services they purchase. They thus want assurance not only that the specialty they eat or drink is authentic, but also that the hosts’ hospitality is genuine and sincere. In the following passage, the authorial narrator amalgamates several tourist wishes that illustrate this desire for intimacy: “[M]itunter versuchten sie kläglich, den Dialekt nachzuahmen, klopften einander auf die Schultern, wie schön das war, großartig, meinten sie, großartig, sich einheimisch fühlen, doll, und dazugehören” (54). This passage indicates the tourists’ attempt to lay claim to a position of acceptance by the villagers. As such theorists of tourism as Ning Wang (“Rethinking” 365-8) and Tom Selwyn (21-24) contend, tourists seek proof of the authenticity of their experience, in part to distinguish themselves from other tourists, who would be satisfied
with the superficial and inauthentic. The feeling of being “einheimisch” in the above passage, thus functions as a confirmation of belonging and acceptance: it is a verification that they have broken through to the back region, and that the host’s sentiments are indeed genuine.

Gstrein concentrates on the tourists’ desire for authenticity primarily to illustrate further the pressures placed on the host, who must ensure that these wishes are fulfilled. As we saw above, this desire for authenticity and intimacy becomes a burden for the host because it brings the guests deeper into the hosts’ space and shrinks the available back regions, turning them into front regions. Remaining under observation even in their private space, then, the hosts cannot achieve the meaningful contact among themselves that might otherwise have been possible. At the same time, they must also force an intimacy with their guests, an intimacy that is not borne out of a genuine interest and closeness, but rather from the economic relationship: it is what the guest has purchased. The authorial narrator describes how Jakob experienced this forced intimacy: “Eine Saison um die andere sah er zu, wie sie ihm ein Leben vorgaukelten, das Lust- und Trauerspiel ihres angeblichen Alltags, und er stand da, ein Zuschauer, der alles für die Wirklichkeit halten sollte und ‘schön’ rufen oder ‘doll’ und aufgeregt in die Hände klatschen” (112). This passage describes the constraints placed on Jakob as he performs hospitality for his guests. He is compelled to suppress his own feelings and perceptions so that he can satisfy his guests by pretending to accept their version of reality and to feign an intimate relationship with them. Gstrein’s vocabulary usage in this passage further reflects Jakob’s accommodation to the tourists: the word “doll” is a Northern German variant of the standard German “toll.”
Another term in this previous passage indicates a further tourist desire that places a burden on the host. Even though Jakob is the host, the text does not refer to him as a performer or actor, but a “Zuschauer,” an observer. This ostensible contradiction actually points to a role that Jakob performs for his guest: namely, through feigning enthusiasm and acceptance of his guests, he is allowing them to define themselves. As Christoph Hennig (18-23, 124-9) and Wang (“Rethinking” 358-61) have argued, for example, the experience of travel allows tourists an opportunity to re-define notions of themselves, either through opposition to other tourists or through their hosts: the encounter with others recharges the notion of the self. This aspect is relevant for our reading of the story, because it reveals another pressure that is placed on the host figures in Einer. Its tourists use travel as a confirmation of their own superiority, which for Jakob means that he must accept, at least in the tourists’ eyes, an inferior position. The authorial narrator describes Jakob’s perception of the tourist’s assumptions: “Manchmal wußte er nicht, wie ernst es ihnen war mit den Fragen, ob man im Dorf dies kannte und wie lange schon das, bis er in den Gesichtern sah, daß sie sich am Ende der Welt glaubten oder wenigstens weit von ihrem Mittelpunkt oder was sie dafür hielten” (54-5). The tourists’ views described here project an image of exotic backwardness onto the village, which simultaneously affirm the superiority of the tourists’ home and their way of life. Jakob’s reflections further point to what drives the tourists’ assertions of superiority: “[B]isweilen verstand er ihre ungeschickte Großtuerei, sah sie als unmäßige Antwort auf Zustände zu Hause, als plötzliche Befreiung davon, und der richtige Platz dafür mußte das Dorf sein, nicht einer der großen Wintersportorte, für die sie zu alt wären, zu mittelmäßig und nicht schick genug” (55). Such passages as the two above suggest Gstrein’s strong awareness of theoretical perspectives of tourism, which define this activity as a suspension of the
everyday that in turn gives meaning to it. Gstrein then utilizes these insights to highlight the hosts’ predicament. Economic motives would require that the ideal hosts restrain from objecting to the tourists’ fantasies and assertions or even confirm the guests’ views of their backwardness. As we saw earlier, Jakob conforms, feeling he “[sollte] alles für die Wirklichkeit halten” (112), that is, he does not challenge his guests. Pointing out Jakob’s awareness and understanding of the tourists’ desires, then, only intensifies the portrayal of the self-alienation he faces in serving them.

The particular tourists depicted in the story add another level of significance to Jakob’s predicament. The story’s guest figures are all nameless and, for the most part, their nationality is not specified. This emphasizes the contrast between hosts and guests and supports Gstrein’s contention cited above, that his work attempts to present a general picture of any alpine village dependent on tourism. Of course, Einer clearly sets its village in a distinct place and builds on its associations: namely the village of Fend, which is obviously based on Gstrein’s home of Vent. But while the story does have a clear anchor in Tyrol, I would argue that it is addressing a national context as well: this Tyrolean village is a representative of the larger Austrian tourism industry. The word “Tirol,” in fact, only appears as the name of a café (11), which is more indicative of its status as a marketing signifier than as a marker of regional setting. The national context is particularly significantly when the story refers to the nationality of the guests it depicts. While it mentions Dutch tourists and those from other parts of Austria, the text most frequently refers to German tourists.

In placing greatest emphasis on this group, Gstrein is of course reflecting actual statistics, and his portrayal of Germans in Einer aligns the story with the many works that deal with tourism in Austria, by continuing the negative image of the domineering
German tourist. The animosities and affinities between German tourists and Austrian hosts, which are as tense and charged as the historical and political relationships between the two nations, certainly resonate in Gstrein’s German tourists, although his images do not approach the same level of vilification we saw in Lebert’s novel. For example, the authorial narrator describes an incident in which a German tourist is skeptical of Jakob’s reference to his schooling and claims “selbst mit Abschluß, eine Matura wäre nie ein Abitur, wäre nur etwas Österreichisches” (112). This passage illustrates our earlier point that tourists define themselves through contrast with the visited culture, but it also reiterates the stereotype of Germans as arrogant, as this figure alleges German superiority. This negative image is conveyed more subtly than in Lebert’s novel. Gstrein only describes the situation, not Jakob’s reaction. While he clearly implies that Jakob is taken aback by the above remarks, he leaves it to the reader to make associations with other stereotypes of Germans. Elsewhere in the story, Gstrein more directly addresses Austrian prejudices by having his characters frequently refer to Germans as “Piefke” (57, 74, 94, 113).

While we may raise questions about such statements as pandering to Austrian animosities, especially among those working in tourism, Gstrein’s portrayal of Germans serves the polemical energies of his story in three ways. First, it extends the story’s depiction of the power inequities between hosts and guests. Picturing German tourists as domineering heightens Gstrein’s portrayal of the host’s placement in a submissive position. Second, it adds a national dimension to the story’s censure of the host’s alienation. Since the rules of economics demand that the hosts cater to the whims of their guests, the hosts in this story not only must assume roles for their tasks in the industry, but must assume roles that conform to the wishes of their German guests, which the story
invariably portrays as fostering a sense of German superiority. The hosts, then, should not openly challenge their guests and should thus accept this inferior position. Third, as our second point already suggested, the portrayal of German tourists adds further charges to the story’s critique of the host’s role in accepting their position. For example, the story finds fault with hosts’ when the authorial narrator describes their language as one “in der sie die Deutschen Leute nannten, als wären sie selbst keine, und dann wieder Piefke und mit Spott belegten und den übelsten Schimpfworten” (57). These hosts are clearly cognizant of their dilemma in performing tasks that conflict with their sense of self. Their doubled language when referring to Germans illustrates the split personality Gstrein’s hosts maintain.

Gstrein’s certain yet subdued focus on German tourists registers a shift from what we noted in Der Feuerkreis. Einer does not exhibit that novel’s obsessive focus on Austrian national context, which surely reflects Gstrein’s later generation, for whom this was no longer an issue. Gstrein does, however, return to the matter of national consciousness to further his view of German tourists’ arrogance and their power over the host. We see this in an incident between Jakob and German tourists: “Und nicht nur einmal habe man ihm einen Arm um die Schultern gelegt und ganz nah, viel zu nah vor seinem Gesicht mit ein paar Worten alles gutzumachen versucht: warum er [Jakob] sich auferge, wir sind doch alle deutsch” (56). This generic tourist asserts power over the host by enforcing a definition that denies a separate Austrian identity. The narrator then notes that Jakob “sah wortlos den Mann an” (56), indicating both his anger at this comment and his internal conflict about responding to it. These passages clearly convey Jakob’s sense of alienation. On the one hand, they suggest his self-perception as Austrian, not German, but on the other, reveal his inability to assert this. Gstrein’s story, then, picks up the
notion of the tourism as impediment to nation identity from Der Feuerkreis, although he does not carry it to Lebert’s extremes. Gstrein’s focus centers not on national consciousness, but on the impacts of the tourism industry.97

Gstrein extends his view of the host’s self-negation by portraying the hosts’ internalization of their roles in the industry. With internalization, I mean that the hosts are depicted as accepting their imposed inferior position or their self-denial even when they are not serving their tourists: that is, their front region has overtaken their back region. Two passages on Jakob’s views of himself in relation to tourists provide an example of how the hosts internalize the guests’ perspectives. In the first, the authorial narrator describes Jakob’s views as a youth: “[Sie waren] nicht glücklicher und nicht trauriger in ihren Ruhrgebieten, oder besser dran oder schlechter als die Leute hier” (55). This young Jakob rejects the superiority of the German guests, cynically lumping them together into the amalgamation “Ruhrgaebieten.” Later in the text, the authorial narrator repeats the passage, altering it to reflect the thoughts of an older Jakob: “Er […] dachte bisweilen: vielleicht waren sie glücklich und besser dran in ihren Ruhrgaebieten, jedenfalls besser als er” (95). Jakob thus conforms to the guests’ view that their world is the definitive, better one. The authorial narrator even notes Jakob’s view that the guests’ life “[Sei] tatsächlich eines” (95). This passage further reveals how Jakob has accepted the guest’s view of their superiority and views his own life as insignificant, which carries his sense of alienation to an extreme.

The portrayal of the hosts’ perceptions of the off-seasons illustrates how these characters internalize their functions in the industry. As Schönberger has argued, the off-season is a time when the hosts have few responsibilities in the industry and are more prone to alcoholism, depression, and suicide (141-5). In *Einer*, the authorial narrator comments on the misery and depression faced by the hosts during this period by describing hosts who fixate on the coming winter season as a time “wenn das Leben weiterginge und sie hervorholte” (58). In this phrase, we find a repetition of the verb “hervorholen” and its association with the hosts’ sense of alienation. This description thus illustrates the hosts’ internalization of their roles in the industry. Without tourists, these hosts feel that their lives are insignificant and can only be fetched into existence by the arrival of the tourists.

With Jakob we can find examples of both his internalization of his host roles as well as his resistance to them and to the conditions of working in the industry that I have described above. For example, the authorial narrator presents an image of Jakob during the off-season: “In den Zwischensaison schritt er zuweilen die langen Flure ab und öffnete wahllos die Türen zu den leeren Gästezimmern, bis er in helle Erregung geriet beim Gedanken, daß niemand ahnte, wo er war, und schließlich irgendwo eintrat und, auf dem Bett sitzend, die Weinflasche entkorkte” (102). This passage points to the isolation and alcoholism that characterize Jakob’s adulthood in the village. This ambiguous passage, however, offers several readings. Jakob’s “helle Erregung” could signify his relief that he has finally escaped the presence of tourists and that they cannot take possession of him. At the same time this passage reinforces the notion of the host’s internalization of their roles, because it echoes the idea of being “hervorgeholt.” Jakob’s
actions in the empty hotel rooms resemble the sentiments expressed by the hosts described above, who dream of the next season to call them into existence.

But while Jakob exhibits signs of internalization, he also provides examples of a resistance to his roles in the industry and the pressures they entail. Earlier, we noted Jakob’s unease at his sense of being controlled by his guests. His anger at this external control culminates in his violent attack on a tourist that gets him expelled from service. His brother recounts: “er [griff] die Frau [an], sie solle aufhören ihn anzustarren, er wäre nicht ihr Kuli oder Waschlappen oder ihr irgend etwas” (74). The entities, which Jakob protests that he is not, are revealing on a semantic level. “Kuli” and “Waschlappen” denote agents of service and obedience, but they also allow different meanings. The homonym “Kuli” and the literal meaning of “Waschlappen” denote actual objects. The terms thus not only filter Jakob’s feelings of dominance and subjugation, but also indirectly reinforce the perception that he has become an object that the tourist possesses. The associations with enslavement seen in this passage are repeated when the authorial narrator comments on how the hosts have served tourists for generations (57, 95), and notes that the hosts “[Konnten] in Wirklichkeit gar nichts anders” (57). Gstrein is not only addressing the real structures that maintain the host’s economic dependence on tourism, but again presents this industry as a force that brings on the host’s sense of self-negation and erasing their sense of a back region, a space where they can maintain a distance from their roles and tasks.

Jakob’s attack on the female tourist, which seeks to ameliorate his alienated condition, can be read as one of the five responses that Jeremy Boissevain has outlined in

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98 Uwe Schütte places Einer in the tradition of Austrian postwar Anti-Heimat works critical of a various forms of servitude and oppression, describing tourism as “eine andere, ungleich modernere Variante des alten Herr-Knecht-Verhältnisses” (75)
his sociological study on how hosts respond to mass tourism: namely, hiding/fencing, ritual, covert resistance, organized protest, and aggression (14-20). These categories are beneficial for our reading because they illuminate Jakob’s actions and his attempts to restore the security of his back regions and his sense of self. Hiding and fencing are related techniques through which host communities protect particular elements of their culture from touristic appropriation. As we noted above, hiding is one of Jakob’s main strategies of dealing with tourists. In his final years in the village, Jakob continues to isolate himself from guests and hosts alike, remaining at the margins of the village. Boissevain’s next strategy is the ritual, which refers to events that foster community identity and celebrate local culture. In Einer, I find a similar strategy in the reverence and nostalgia Jakob has for the “Fuchshöhlen.” From this space he seeks a restoration of, as Boissevain describes it, “the camaraderie and identity being worn away by changes” (19). The caves, however, only serve to remind him of what he has lost. Boissevain’s category of covert resistance includes mundane actions such as “the sulking, grumbling, obstruction, gossip, ridicule, and surreptitious insults directed by the weak at the more powerful” (14). Jakob conducts many acts of quiet defiance, such as calling Germans “Piefke” (94, 113), or inventing technique mistakes for his overachiever ski students (54). These actions can at best provide only temporary relief and are not presented as establishing any solidarity with other hosts. Overly sensitive to potential disruptions, they instead use Jakob’s pranks to further justify his marginalization. Boissevain’s next category is “organized protest,” but in the fictional Fend, where the hosts are presented as “gefangen in dieser Haltung” (57), and where the problems are tabooed and conformity is enforced, organized challenges to the industry’s authority are non-existent. A number of Jakob’s statements, however, can be read as a form of agitation – for both the fictional
host figures and the reader. We saw this in his repetition of the proverb “Wer zahlt, schafft an” and its disturbing effect on the barkeeper. Jakob further provokes him by encouraging him to be happy with the poor season because it means less work (65). He also angers his sister-in-law by insinuating that “[sie hätte] statt eines süßen Lebens mit dem Gasthaus die Arbeit geheiratet” (54), a sentiment that directly refutes the idealized image of the hotel narrative that we sketched in the previous chapter. Boissevain’s final category, aggression, includes acts against tourists or their property. Jakob clearly makes a similar response when he attacks a female ski-student (74) and when he deliberately takes beginners on a difficult ski slope only to ridicule them as they tumble (54). As with his milder forms of resistance, however, Jakob’s acts of aggression spark his fellow hosts’ anger and justify his stigmatization. Jakob’s resistance to his role and his aggression against the tourist may free him the subservience to tourists by getting him fired, but this ultimately does not bring him a release into a more secure back region, because his alienation intensifies as he becomes a village outsider.

3.3.3 Symbols of Jakob’s alienation

While Boissevain’s categories are useful in examining Jakob’s reactions to his condition, they primarily emphasize productive actions for hosts. Throughout the story and especially in its focus on Jakob’s final years, we see that these actions have no lasting effect and that his alienation only intensifies. Those elements that might have helped him find a stable back region all fail him: that is, his relationship with Hanna, for example, does not grant him a release from his predicament, nor does his flight into alcohol. A scene in which Jakob’s brothers break into his room provides a useful summary because
the room’s contents make symbolic references to what led to his downfall and to what could have helped rescue him from his demise (89-91).

First, it is significant that Jakob’s room is sealed off from his family and must be opened with a picklock, and that the windows are covered with thick wool blankets. This illustrates Jakob’s general strategy of hiding, of trying to conceal himself from tourists, but at the same time reinforces the isolation and estrangement from his family and other host figures that characterizes his later years in the village. The image of this room shows that Jakob has cut himself off from others. Jakob’s already poor communication with his family only heightens his isolation, which is illustrated in a scene in which his mother attempts to speak with him, but he refuses to open the door (105). His brother further notes that the arrangement of the furniture in the room has not changed since Jakob moved in, which reiterates that Jakob has not made any attempts to alter his condition. The image of Jakob’s locked room offers a very apt reflection of the formal structure of *Einer*. To get into this room, Jakob’s brothers must use a picklock. Entering it, they encounter various objects from his life, divorced from the contexts and contiguities that gave them their significance for Jakob. The story operates under the same context implicit in this scene. It straddles tensions between hiding and showing, between revealing aspects of a life and keeping other things private. As readers, we too are attempting to break into Jakob’s life and invade his private world, but find only isolated fragments that must be given meaning through a narrative context.

In this scene we find a stack of books all still wrapped in brown packaging. These unopened books, which represent both education and a refined form of language and communication, remind us of Jakob’s abandonment of his early inclinations and talents. Jakob’s brother also uncovers Jakob’s accordion, which earlier is portrayed as a
source of consolation on Jakob’s nocturnal walks (51). Like his books though, the accordion – and the pleasure and escape it brought him – is also tossed aside as Jakob’s alienation progresses. This is further shown in the dirty clothes on the floor in Jakob’s room, which are significant symbols of his self-alienation. First, we learn that Jakob inherits clothes from his brothers, and thus literally wears the “roles” of others: their inappropriateness for him is conveyed through his brother’s comment that they are too big and out of style (48,87). Second, the story foregrounds Jakob’s dirty clothes and disheveled physical appearance, both of which serve as external manifestations of his internal inability to alter his condition. Finally, the narrators note that Jakob often wears the red sweater that was a present from Hanna, which suggests its ritualistic significance: it is the only thing he has of a relationship that offers him some support.

Another significant object is Jakob’s hand-crafted bow, which is a link to moments that hold a release from his alienation: namely, through his relationship with children. As an adult, Jakob enjoys contact with his brothers’ children, who are fascinated by him and shower him with questions (52-3). Gstrein portrays them as innocents untainted by the ways of the village through whom Jakob seems to forget his inhibitions and find genuine pleasure (71). Jakob’s family is scornful of his participation in the children’s games: his brother asserts that Jakob began to lose touch with reality through these games, and his vindictive sister-in-law even forbids her children from visiting him. The bow thus refers back to Jakob’s happier moments with children because he taught them how to use it and to make arrows that flew “[V]on einem Hang

99 Jakob’s brothers note that they could hear him playing: “Man konnte in der Dämmerung von einem der Hänge die Töne hören, leise über den Dächern des Dorfs” (51). This recurrent motif of floating over the village signifies Jakob’s attempt to escape from its norms. The accordion’s significance is reinforced when Jakob’s mother becomes worried about his well-being after she hears him playing after a long period of silence (103).
über die Dächer des Dorfs auf den anderen” (53), an image that conveys Jakob’s wish for escape: his adult experiences with the children become a short-lived means of transcending the reality of the village.

The bow further alludes to the “Fuchshöhlen,” where he himself played with it as a child. As I noted above, this space briefly serves as a genuine back region, because it grants Jakob a physical and emotional distance from tourists and the villagers. The caves gradually lose this function as Jakob grows older. Jakob continues to idealize them, telling his brothers that he never ventured back inside: “aus Angst, er würde die Erinnerung an die Kindheit zerstören und alles” (34). But when he and his brothers return as adults, the caves have lost their magic. As his brothers detail, the caves now have “[D]en traurigen Geschmack einer falschen Wirklichkeit” (34) and they realize that “Sie waren keine Indianer mehr” (34). This passage not only indicates their awareness of how they have since matured and changed, but also, on a figurative level, that they are no longer ready to do battle with the outside world. They have thus surrendered this fortress, and, as is expected of them, entered the tourist industry. That Jakob’s bow lies in his room covered with dust indicates that the caves no longer provide him a space of refuge, perhaps because it only makes him aware of the irretrievability of his past. Gstrein points out that Jakob idealizes the past, which suggests his dismay at his alienated condition. The authorial narrator describes an instance in which Jakob speaks about the past, only to have Hanna, who unlike him has abandoned all illusions, correct him: “[S]ie fuhr ihm über den Mund: komm, hör auf, so schön sei es nicht gewesen” (110). Jakob’s nostalgia for a better past functions as a consolation for his desolate situation in the present. But he is denied this comforting function as well, as he is made cognizant that he cannot return to the past, which was certainly not idyllic.
The wardrobe reveals one of the most significant elements of Jakob’s alienation: it is filled with empty bottles, which points to the outlet Jakob chooses when his alternatives fail: alcohol. This proves detrimental, however, as he becomes alcoholic and becomes further distanced from what he perceives himself to be. Through Jakob’s alcoholism Gstrein addresses a well-documented problem for workers in the tourist industry. Schönberger has noted the high rates of alcoholism in resort villages and provides interviews with hosts who describe how they used alcohol as a means of entertaining their guests and slowly became addicted, relying on it and other narcotics to maintain a mask of hospitality or to escape from their situation (101-16). In Einer, we find similar examples of these uses of alcohol for host characters. For example, as a child, Jakob discovers his female neighbor’s secret alcohol abuse (78). The story provides numerous instances of Jakob’s alcohol abuse and links many to his touristic roles. As a child he earns sips from his elders by participating in their pranks (14), and as an adult he is given wine in exchange for entertaining guests (73, 94). The authorial narrator notes that alcohol is also the bond holding his unstable relationship with Hanna intact.100 Gstrein highlights Jakob’s alcoholism to support his portrayal of his alienation. First, in many scenes alcohol does not provide Jakob with an escape, but only makes him more aware of the severity of his problems, placing the return to his self even further out of reach. As the authorial narrator describes it, alcohol gives Jakob only “ein schmerzhaft klares Bewußtsein von sich selbst, in doppelter Erstarrung und in einem Schweigen, das endgültig schien” (39). Next, alcohol turns Jakob into someone else, both because his drunkenness is itself a deviation, but also because he must suspend his aversion to tourists and perform for them in order to support his habit. As we noted

100 “Am ehesten kamen sie miteinander aus, wenn beide betrunken waren” (92).
earlier, Jakob once assured himself that he would not become like the others in the industry (56), but with his alcoholism, he again becomes entrapped in the village’s dominant patterns.

The wardrobe also points to Jakob’s failed attempts at finding love and intimacy. It is covered with small photographs, carved hearts, and inscribed proclamations of love for his many temporary acquaintances. We are further reminded of how this desire for human contact and the hope projected onto it remain unfulfilled because the carved longings devolve into obscene sayings and phrases. One of these phrases, “[die Welt] sei, wie sie ist” (90), underlines Jakob’s resignation and despair. A further indication of Jakob’s deviation from his ideal of love can be found in the pornographic magazine underneath his bed, which creates an associative link back to the cook’s magazine he viewed as a child. That the magazine now belongs to Jakob reiterates that he has abandoned his own longings and replaced them with pornography, which stresses the copying motif that characterizes many of his failures.

Inside the wardrobe, “Dahinter, an der Rückwand” (90), there is a photograph of Hanna, and its location deep in the wardrobe indicates her importance for Jakob. She provides him with his most meaningful relationship, one in which Gstrein presents moments in which Jakob escapes from his sense of alienation. Several episodes with her create a contrast to the many scenes of Jakob’s despair. For example, the authorial narrator notes that when Jakob was with Hanna: “Kein Mensch schien auf der Welt zu sein in diesen Nächten, wenn sie ins Freie traten, unsichtbar im finsteren Dorf” (59). The reference to invisibility here illustrates Hanna’s link to a sense of self for Jakob. He seems to sense that he has escaped the pressures of being in the front region and under the gaze of the tourists, and finds security when with her. The authorial narrator further
describes Jakob’s experiences with Hanna as moments in which: “Er war ein anderer in
diesen Stunden, vielleicht endlich er selbst, mochte lange geschwiegen haben und
unvermittelt ausgelassen sein, lachen oder kleine Dummheiten erzählen wie damals,
wenn sie im Wald gespielt hatten” (60). This passage clearly demonstrates the notion of
authenticity inherent to the portrayal of Jakob. Like a traditional object that becomes
inauthentic through the touristic exchange, Jakob, through both the conditions of the
industry and in his personal life, has also become inauthentic, altered from what he once
was, or at least was perceived to be. With Hanna, however, Jakob can thus be “er selbst,”
not “jemand anders,” and can escape the “Vermittlung” that keeps him from being what
he (or at least the authorial narrator) perceives to be his true nature.

But if Jakob becomes more “authentic” when with Hanna, his relationship with
her is highly unstable. It is subject to their melancholia, violent mood swings, and
alcoholism and thus ultimately cannot offer Jakob a more stable sense of self and
security. This failure is reinforced through the image of Hanna in Jakob’s wardrobe.
This photograph is only of Hanna’s head, which has been cut out and affixed to a picture
of a figure skater poised to jump. On the one hand, this image alludes to the hope Jakob
projects onto Hanna. Just as he hopes the arrows he made for the young children can fly
over the rooftops, he hopes to escape from the reality of the village through Hanna. On
the other hand, the stark contrast between her image and that of the figure skater makes
clear the gap between ideal hopes and reality. The image thus foreshadows that Hanna
will remain one of the many objects in the room that began as promising ideals but was
overcome by reality.

Hanna’s importance for Jakob and for the story’s criticism of the tourism industry
is underscored by the lack of clarity in her portrayal. Just like the episodes of Jakob’s
abuse, the depiction of Hanna is shrouded in uncertainties. By frustrating our perspective on these elements, Gstrein highlights their significance for Jakob, encouraging us to probe them further. It becomes clear that Hanna appears as a parallel figure to Jakob, because she too is a child of the industry. After abandoning her dreams of leaving for Paris, she ends up as an alcoholic village outsider, but unlike Jakob, she holds a position as a waitress. As Jakob’s brothers intimate, this position involves a questionable sexual relationship with the owner (51), which indicates the exploitation her role in the industry entails.

The most glaring omission regarding Hanna is her ultimate fate. While the characters know what happened to her, this is conspicuously denied the reader, as the episode detailing what Jakob’s mother found in his room on his final night is curtailed just as she opens the door to his room (45). Most likely, she has been murdered or perhaps assaulted by Jakob. Because Hanna’s life, like Jakob’s, has been profoundly affected by the negative conditions in the resort, her death thus serves as a further illustration of tourism’s negative effects on the host community.

Given his attachment to Hanna, the motivations behind Jakob’s likely violence against her become especially significant. They indeed provide the impulse that drives the work, as the different episodes attempt to explain Jakob’s actions. While Gstrein ultimately denies us any clear answer, what is clear is the import of her probable death for his critique of tourism. Since it is likely that it occurred by Jakob’s hands, it posits that it posits that the excesses of the industry strike back at those who allegedly benefit from them. For Jakob’s narrative, these actions signify an extreme of his alienation: in having assaulted or killed Hanna, he negates the most important figure for his sense of self.
3.3.4 The question of Jakob’s mental illness

The frame characters seek to explain Jakob’s actions by strongly speculating that Jakob suffers from mental illness. The authorial narrator, however, both challenges and at times supports this claim, leaving Jakob’s status as mentally ill ultimately unclear. The questionable nature of this potential diagnosis yields insights into Gstrein’s critique of the tourism industry. My point here will not be to attempt a clinical analysis of Gstrein’s representation of mental illness.¹⁰¹ Instead, I will demonstrate the function that mental illness, whether real or merely alleged, plays in the story’s portrayal of Jakob and the societal impacts that influence him.

First, mental illness presents a potential final stage of Jakob’s self-alienation. Jakob’s brother describes his “Ausdruck, der seine zweite, oder gar eigentlich Natur sein mochte, der bedeutungsschwer ist wie nur etwas und gleichzeitig leer wie nichts” (48). His brother perceives a split-personality in Jakob and a deterioration from what he once was. Such descriptions of mental illness thus intensify the story’s portrayal of Jakob’s inauthenticity, as they suggest that his mental illness is an indicator that he has become someone else.

Second, an anti-psychiatric perspective offers us a very productive approach because it allows us to link Jakob’s potential illness to societal influences. As Christian Hofer details, this approach rejects traditional psychiatry as an institution that justifies its own power by claiming its authority to define and explain flaws in human behavior. For anti-psychiatry:

¹⁰¹ A detailed reading of the clinical aspects of Jakob’s case can be found in Christian Hofer’s master’s thesis.
Die tatsächliche Schuld an dieser Störung der Kommunikation zwischen Gesellschaft und dem Einzelindividuum muß […] nicht unbedingt auf Seiten der als ‘schizophren’ bezeichneten Patienten liegen, ein zentrales Anliegen der antipsychiatrisch orientierten Forscher ist es vielmehr zu untersuchen, welche gesellschaftlichen Zwänge den Erkrankten dazu gebracht haben, sich auf eine pathologische Weise zu verhalten und seine Kommunikation mit der Umwelt derartig rigide zu begrenzen. (60)

The anti-psychiatric perspective thus shifts significance from any illness inherent to Jakob onto the larger societal forces. This is indeed congruent with the thrust of Gstrein’s story, where the reader is invited to draw conclusions about the various impacts on Jakob’s life, above all those related to the tourism industry. Through such a focus on Jakob’s illness, then, we can isolate its function as a further marker of tourism’s consequences on the individual.

Third, the possibility that Jakob is not ill offers another perspective that clearly reveals Gstrein’s focus on tourism. Considering this possibility requires an examination of how Jakob’s status as mentally ill is determined. The allegations of this status are made primarily by the frame characters, all of whom are representatives of the tourism industry. Since Jakob’s behavior exposes the undersides of this industry, the frame characters’ role in labeling his mental illness raises questions about ulterior motives. As the authorial narrator describes their views on Jakob: “Sein Leben war nicht anders geworden, nur ihr Blick dafür” (50). Including this possibility, then, allows Gstrein to thematicize the industry’s attempts to silence internal dissent.

These three dimensions add weight to Gstrein’s portrayal of Jakob, yet his story does not allow us to reach a definite conclusion about Jakob’s illness. This indeterminacy is created through the story’s different narrative perspectives. Our reading will thus benefit from a return to the notion of the front and back regions of narration – that is, the narration by Jakob’s brothers and by the authorial narrator – because the
tension between them is significant with regard to questions about Jakob’s mental illness.
Each regions presents accounts that offer multiple, at times conflicting perspectives that
complicate an assessment of Jakob’s condition. This demonstrates Gstrein’s
problematization of narrative causality and stimulates the reader’s reflection on tourism’s
impacts.

The front region presents us with the accounts of Jakob’s family and neighbors. The majority of their statements does not specifically address his illness but details moments from his life that attest to his abnormal behavior and for them indicate his mental illness. These episodes illustrate the pitfalls of causality because they attempt to construct an image of Jakob as mentally ill by selecting events intended to link deviant incidents from his past with his action with Hanna. Jakob’s family, however, do also describe incidents that might generally be referred to as schizophrenic behavior, such as Jakob’s incoherent ramblings, or his sudden bouts of tears or silence. His brother, for example, contends that Jakob “hätte zusehends die wirkliche Welt mit allen möglichen durcheinandergebracht, Gespinsten in seinem Gehirn” (72). Gstrein foregrounds the family’s uncertainty about Jakob’s illness by having them offer different beginnings. His brothers locate it in his childhood (13-15), but report that Jakob’s mother argues that it began with his sudden departure from boarding school (30). While Jakob’s family members diverge on its outset, they share the assumption of Jakob’s mental illness, for which they find support in a diagnosis by the family doctor. Gstrein, however, destabilizes this by revealing that the physician only hears the family’s description of Jakob’s symptoms without ever directly examining Jakob, who hides during the doctor’s visit: “Im Sommer redete Mutter mit einem Arzt und Jakob ließ sich nicht blicken, erinnert euch, ihn würde niemand holen und so einer schon gar nicht” (94). Again, Jakob
shows a resistance to being “geholt,” and this context mirrors the reader’s frustration in trying to get clarity about Jakob’s mental illness. Like the doctor, the reader is only allowed a highly mediated observation of Jakob’s condition: the doctor can only base the diagnosis on hearsay and the reader can only access Jakob through others’ accounts of his life.

While the back region, that is, the narration by the authorial narrator, has greater access to Jakob, it presents episodes that unravel the family’s construction of mental illness, and others that actually support it. For example, the authorial narrator enlightens the reader with potential reasons for Jakob’s actions his family deems inexplicable. Foremost among them is the authorial narrator’s revelation that Jakob was abused, probably sexually, by older students at boarding school. Jakob’s family, however, is unaware of this abuse and sees his sudden return from school as irrational and thus as indicative of his illness (33). The authorial narrator further counters the family’s depiction of Jakob’s melancholy and aggression by describing happier moments from his life, especially the episodes with Hanna (59-60), or by directly challenging their viewpoints: “Er hatte seine eigene Welt, und es ging ihm nicht schlecht, wenigstens nicht so schlecht, wie andere glaubten mit unverrückbar festen Ideen von einem gelungenen Leben” (51). As our reading has shown, the back region provides numerous instances that implicate social forces in Jakob’s condition. Some are known to the frame characters, for example, the neglect by his father (15-16) or the torture and humiliation by villagers at a bar (85), but others are not, for example, the many instances of Jakob’s isolation and despair: “Manchmal trank er so viel, daß er alles vergaß und, die Augen weit geöffnet, nichts sah, und später, wenn andere über ihn sprachen, dachte er nicht an sich oder dachte nur: es gibt mich nicht” (102). As this last passage shows, the back
region thus does not exclude the possibility of Jakob’s illness and even details further incidences that might confirm it, such as his “Spinnerei[en]” (72-3), trance-like moments when he incessantly repeated odd-sounding words. The authorial narrator also divulges an episode in which Jakob slept with a foreign tourist and had uncontrollable thoughts of strangling her (107). This incident remains unknown to Jakob’s family, who would most likely have treated it as an indication of his later actions, but since the authorial narrator leaves this incident unchallenged, it retains significance as an indicator of his instability and a foreshadowing of what Jakob might have done.

In both regions, Einer includes moments that cast doubt on the possibility of Jakob’s mental illness and point to ulterior motives that the host figures have in alleging this. In particular, many incidents Jakob’s family describes turn on his transgression of the norms of the tourism industry. This is noticeable, for example, in their depictions of Jakob’s aggression towards tourists (74, 92-4), his drunken pranks and outbursts that disturb the atmosphere of the aprés-ski bars (65, 72, 84-5), or even his physical appearance (88), all of which are deemed abnormal. A revealing example can be found in the brothers’ account of how barkeepers reacted to Jakob’s behavior with guests:

> [S]ie hatten einen überscharfen Blick, der sie bei einem Verdacht gleich das Ärgste fürchten ließ; daß die Gäste davonliefen oder gewiß nie wiederkämen. Sie wußten Jakob mit Gespür auf den rechten Platz zu rücken […]. Aber immer öfter zogen sie ihn stillschweigend zurück, weil er plötzlich zu schreien begann: Piefke; manchmal das einzige Wort, oder sein Anblick war einfach nicht zu ertragen, und die Damen wandten sich angeekelt ab. (94)

With the image of women “angeekelt” by Jakob’s appearance, this passage creates a clear intertextual parallel with the villagers in Kein Platz für Idioten, a play by fellow critic of tourism Felix Mitterer, who fear that the presence of a mentally retarded youth will be bad for business. While Mitterer’s work constructs the shunned figure as a victim to find
fault with the industry, Gstrein goes further and has the host figures stigmatize Jakob’s subversive actions. This allows him to encourage the reader to locate the hosts’ motivations: they allege his instability not only because of his unpredictable and aggressive actions, but also because they upset their business.

The perspective of the authorial narrator also heightens the text’s questioning of the motivations behind the label of mental illness. The passage below merges episodes from Jakob’s past with a bitter description of the stress and depression workers in the tourism industry face:

[D]arüber wurde nicht gesprochen, und wer weiß schon um das Weinen und Händерingen an den langen Herbstabenden, wenn sie in den leeren Häusern saßen, ausgezehrt vom vergangenen Sommer […]. Jeder mußte selbst damit fertig werden oder wenigstens verbergen, daß er nicht damit fertig wurde, und wenn einer sich mit zwei Flaschen Schnaps im Zimmer eingeschlossen hatte und mitten in der Nacht in den ärgersten Obszönitäten sein Unglück vom Balkon schrie oder ein anderer weiße Mäuse sah und wild gegen das Blaulicht der Rettung ausschlug, sagten sie immer noch nichts, nichts Angemessenes. (58)

Through this passage, Gstrein is addressing the taboo nature of openly discussing the problems of tourism in resort settings, which as Schönberger contends, results in higher rates of alcohol and drug abuse, depression and suicide (28-32). Gstrein’s narrator describes hosts who must keep their problems hidden, from their guests and from other hosts, because of the tourism industry’s reliance on positive appearances and the cutthroat rumors and competition in small resorts. The reference to “verbergen” in this passage thus diverges from the more positive sense of protection that we discussed earlier with regard to the notion of real back region. The sense of hiding in this passage, in fact, intensifies the idea that such a real back region is denied the hosts in this story, because even when they retreat from guests, they must continue to suppress their emotions by hiding their struggles in coping.
The dilemma revealed in this passage raises suspicions about the family’s references to Jakob’s mental illness. Jakob’s aggression, alcoholism, despair, instability, and isolation are all marshaled as signs of his illness, but they are also outlets through which he cannot conceal “daß er nicht damit fertig wurde.” His behavior breaks the unwritten codes of the village and publicizes that, as the above passage shows, the hosts in this fictional Fend share his depression, despair and alcoholism. Since Jakob brings to light what they would rather repress, there is an ulterior motive in his family’s attribution of his behavior to a mental illness. This claim serves their interest in suppressing their own struggles with these issues as well as in downplaying their own failure to help Jakob.102

The question of Jakob’s mental illness is central to the story’s goal of uncovering what led to his demise, but the different perspectives presented in the front and back region of narration create an indeterminacy regarding his condition. This demands that the reader negotiate a conclusion from the many factors provided: Jakob’s abuse, his neglect, the pressures of working for and living in view of tourists, the harsh norms of the village, mental illness, or, what is most convincingly the case, all of these. The instability between the front and back regions denies the primacy of any of these reasons, which is precisely the effect sought by the author. Gstrein wants his texts to contain “etwas Zittriges” (qtd. in Müller-Vahl 104), an uncertainty that incites the readers’ critical reflection. The text’s refusal to provide any easy causality is an instance of this instability, because such an endeavor would only fail to account for the myriad variables and conditions that factor shape Jakob’s actions. But at the same time, Einer vehemently

102 Several passages from Jakob’s family members indicate an acknowledgement of their own guilt in Jakob’s failures (47, 104). For example, his mother denies that her beating of Jakob as an infant, due to her ignorance of his pneumonia, had a lasting affect (111). Jakob’s brothers, sensing an accusation in a neighbor’s expression, feel threatened: “War es unsere Schuld?”(66).
takes the tourism industry to task. The indeterminacy regarding Jakob’s illness only enhances this critique because it allows Gstrein to avoid a simplistic allocation of guilt and to activate the reader. The thematization of the host characters’ ulterior motives further enhances the reader’s reflection and warns against the nullification of criticism that we noted in industry campaigns, such as the “Licht und Schatten” brochure. At the close of the story, Jakob is removed from the village, bringing an end to his troubling actions and silencing the dissent that became evident through them. Through Jakob’s negative outcome, however, Gstrein’s story gives voice to this dissent and reveals to the reader “worüber nicht gesprochen wurde.”

3.4 Conclusion

Einer is a work whose content and form demonstrates a keen awareness of tourism’s structures and idiosyncrasies, and our interpretation greatly benefits from an examination of theoretical perspectives on tourism. In particular, the notions of front and back regions offer a useful model for extrapolating Gstrein’s biting critique of the tourism industry’s diverse impacts on the host community both in his story’s portrayal of its central character’s demise, as well as in its formal structure. First, it is clear that the story’s subject matter attempts to present the reader with a back region perspective on a resort village, because Jakob’s life story exposes the hidden and darker side of the hospitality industry. Above all it illustrates the social costs of tourism, for which it utilizes the notion of authenticity as an indicator of tourism’s consequences for the individual. The industry’s demands on the host and the conditions it creates are imagined as turning Jakob into someone else, which adopts the same notion of inauthenticity that we noted in Lebert’s novel. But whereas Lebert employed this symbolically to fault
deficiencies in national consciousness, Gstrein concentrates on Jakob’s inauthenticity to lay bare the specific conditions of the industry. Through the duties Jakob performs in the front region, Gstrein likens him to an object that is sold and used in the touristic exchange, which illustrates how he is altered by his roles in the industry. Gstrein then foregrounds Jakob’s inability to secure a genuine back region, where he might retreat from his struggles as a host and his pressure to conform to the tourist’s desires and expectations. Einer portrays a world where such a real back region has been severely compromised, leaving the host little refuge, which in Jakob’s case finds an outlet in isolation, alcoholism, and alienation.

Second, my attention to the formal construction of Einer reveals that its complex narrative structure creates the effect of the front and back regions of the touristic model, which allows Gstrein to reinforce and intensify the critique of the tourism industry that we located in Jakob’s life. The story constructs for the reader a position similar to that of a tourist, who must negotiate the differing perspectives on Jakob by the frame characters and by the authorial narrator. Just as the theoretical tourist fails to find authenticity due to the staging and hiding of the front and faked back regions, the reader is denied a definitive reading of Jakob, because the gaps and tensions between the two narrative perspectives forge an indeterminacy. This inconclusiveness, however, only strengthens Gstrein’s criticism, because it precludes Jakob’s lionization as purely a victim and avoids a simplistic allotment of guilt. Instead, the uncertainty activates the reader to reflect on the various influences that impend into Jakob’s life. This is perhaps most evident in the different allegations of Jakob’s mental illness, whereby the conflicting narrative perspectives raise the reader’s suspicion about ulterior motives behind this diagnosis. These motives thus illustrate the tourism industry’s impulse to negate self-criticism.
The insights from the theoretical discussion of tourism expand our understanding of the novel and its criticism of the industry, which demonstrates the value and efficacy of using tourism’s own dynamics to evaluate its textual representation. This approach offers a model for future inquiries, and demonstrates that *Einer* provides us with the most direct and thorough attack on the tourism industry in all the works in this study, as it pinpoints its negative environmental, economic, and social consequences by depicting Jakob’s inauthenticity and gradual dissolution. In our next novel, we find another character who becomes unsure of who he is, as he is caught in a village that is converting itself into a resort.
CHAPTER 4

“GENAU WIE ES SEIN SOLL”: ROBERT MENASSE’S SCHUBUMKEHR

4.1 Introduction

The aeronautical term “Schubumkehr” refers to the simultaneous activation of forward and backward engine thrust, a situation that results in internal breakdown and collapse. As Robert Menasse has noted, the title of his novel was inspired by a report in which an airline CEO explained that an airplane crash was caused by “Schubumkehr,” a process which Menasse found to be the “Begriff für die Epoche, die wir erleben” (qtd. in Posthofen, “Wälder” 139). The epoch to which Menasse is referring is both the aftermath of 1989 and, in a specifically Austrian context, the country’s decision to join the European Union in 1994. Menasse argues that the term “Schubumkehr” describes these events because they are dominated by shifts in historical identity that exhibit both an enthusiastic acceptance of the new and a simultaneous clinging to the old. Menasse’s novel reflects on these events and in general on the upheavals of identity. To concretize his focus on transitions, he places a village’s conversion into a resort at the center of his novel, depicting the radical changes unleashed as the old merges with the new. The novel thus offers a rich source for examining the author’s reflections on the tourism industry and its impacts, which for Menasse becomes a means of reflecting on the concept of history.
Set in 1989 and ending with the opening of the Czech border during the “Wende,” Schubumkehr is a highly de-centered novel that consists of three chapters fragmented into sixty-one smaller sections, which together contain two narrative strands. The first is the protagonist Roman’s gradual alienation and disintegration, which begins when he receives a letter in Brazil from his widowed Viennese mother, Anne, who informs him that she has decided to become an organic farmer with her new and much younger husband Richard. This prompts Roman’s return not to his former home in Vienna, but to Komprechts, a village near the Czechoslovakian border, where Anne and Richard have renovated a farmhouse. Roman wanders aimlessly through the landscape, randomly videotaping what he sees and befriending an aging surveyor, Ölzant. Roman’s alienation intensifies as he is confronted with moments from his past and irritated by his mother’s new lifestyle. After sinking into a deep depression and regressing to an almost child-like helplessness, he finally leaves Komprechts, presumably for Brazil, while Anne remains and has converted her house into a pension offering “Urlaub am Bauernhof.”

Roman’s dissolution is paralleled with a second strand that details the changes resulting from Komprechts’ transformation into a resort to avert financial ruin, which is revealed through numerous subplots. These center on the philandering mayor, Adolf König, who hopes that his machinations with political opponents to sell the idea of tourism will ensure his tenure and allow him to become the architect of Komprechts’ renewal. This seems imminent as the village is thrown into a euphoria of renovation, but König meets his downfall in Frau Nemec. Her world is altered as the nearby quarry is

103 Lebert and Gstrein create many links between the fictitious villages in their works and real locations of personal significance for each author. The secondary literature on Menasse has not noted any similar regional significance for the setting of this novel. In Literarische Reisen durch Niederösterreich, however, Wolfgang Straub and Barbara Higgs point to strong resemblance between the fictional village of Komprechts and those of Gopprechts and Nagelberg in the upper Waldviertel region of Lower Austria (107).
closed and her home is slated for touristic expropriation, which prompt her revenge on König followed by her own suicide. König’s son is also murdered when a group of villagers, who are angered by their lost jobs at the glass factory, mistake him for the child of foreign workers. This occurs shortly after the publication of a fictional play by the amateur author, Vinzenz Trisko, in which he hopes to document the changes in the village. But when the child’s death mirrors the murder in the play, Trisko is arrested as an accomplice. These catastrophic events and Roman’s departure are followed, at the close of the novel, by the opening of the border to Czechoslovakia during the Velvet Revolution.

The novel’s two main strands are held together by several episodes in which two unnamed observers comment on the protagonist’s videotapes, which they search for clues about the murders that close the novel. As this work is rich in allusions, symbolic imagery, and densely entwined plot strands, all of which carry our Menasse’s indirect but clear criticism of tourism, my fundamental approach will be a close reading of the novel. This reading will be supported by numerous essays and speeches by Menasse, which will both illuminate his views on the industry and introduce his perspectives on history. I begin with a summary of the secondary reception and then articulate my analysis of Menasse’s use of authenticity in his critique of both tourism and the concept of history. These two issues then guide my reading of the novel, which I begin by focusing on the strand centering on the protagonist, from which I then proceed to the depiction of the village’s transformation. In the final section, I examine the catastrophes that close the novel, through which I am able to highlight the inconsonant relationship between Menasse’s criticism of tourism and his historical project.
My analysis reveals that *Schubumkehr*, like the previous novels in this study, employs a notion of authenticity for its censure of the tourism industry, in that the novel depicts people and objects who are transformed into someone or something else because of touristic development. A key element that Menasse foregrounds in this transformation is the deviation from historical continuity. Isolating this emphasis allows me to show that Menasse’s representation of the tourism industry equally serves his critique of the concept of history. As the metaphorical title implies, these breaks elicit conflicting reactions that range from accepting change to resisting it and holding on to the past. Menasse’s particular conception of inauthenticity thus allows his negative perspective on the tourism industry to illustrate his reflections on conventional conceptions of history, whose teleology and assumptions of rational progress he rejects. Menasse articulates different aspects of his critique of history through the notion of authenticity, which he associates with continuity, consequently associating inauthenticity with ruptures in the past. The novel denigrates the inauthenticity that results from the impact of touristic development on diverse characters, but it suggests that the resolution of the protagonist’s identity crisis is a positive development because it illustrates a rejection of conventional views on history. The resolution of this crisis is associated with the protagonist’s inauthenticity, it but simultaneously suggests that he has abandoned the logic of authenticity and inauthenticity altogether. My analysis argues that this inconsistency only affirms Menasse’s censure of the industry, which must maintain a notion of authenticity to denounce tourism’s impacts.
4.1.1 Reception of Schubumkehr

Schubumkehr is the third and final novel in Menasse’s “Trilogie der Entgeisterung,” a trilogy that actually has four parts. The first is the novel Sinnliche Gewißheit (1988), which centers around the character Roman Gilanian, an Austrian lecturer on literature and philosophy in Brazil, and his friendship with two other expatriates, Leo Singer and Judith Katz. The trilogy’s second novel, Selige Zeiten, Brüchige Welt (1991), is actually a pre-history to the first. It traces Singer’s and Katz’s past in Vienna and Brazil as well as the composition of Singer’s monumental text, a philosophical tractate that he conceives as a continuation to Hegel’s Phänomenologie des Geistes. This fictional philosophical work became reality with the publication of the third part of the trilogy, Menasse’s Phänomenologie der Entgeisterung (1995), a philosophical text that elaborates the development of history and consciousness since Hegel by following, in reverse order, the concepts of Hegel’s Phänomenologie. The final novel of this trilogy is Schubumkehr, in which the protagonist Roman returns to Austria and visits his mother in Komprechts.

My project concentrates only on Schubumkehr, a decision warranted both by the compositional structure of the trilogy and by the scope of this study. First, while the works in this trilogy share a thematic focus on questions of history and the notion of “Entgeisterung,” they can be read independently of each other, because none of the novels requires that the reader have knowledge of the others, which is particularly the case with Schubumkehr. Whereas the first two novels revolve around Singer, Katz and the creation of Singer’s tractate, Schubumkehr excludes these characters altogether and

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104 This text, subtitled Geschichte des verschwindenden Wissens, was originally published in the journal Literatur und Kritik in 1991 under the pseudonym Leo Singer. In 1995 it was published under Menasse’s name, yet still bears a dedication to the fictional Judith Katz (4).
focuses only on Roman, making virtually no references to the first two novels.\footnote{Schubumkehr has few recurring figures from the previous novels. First, the sculptor Franz Zahradnik from the first novel does not appear in Schubumkehr, but he is credited as the creator of Nemic’s statues. Second, the novel features two letters that Roman writes to his friend Norbert, a character in Sinnliche Gewißheit. Finally, while the protagonist Roman clearly shares many of the same characteristics as Roman Gilanian of the previous works, the novel never explicitly mentions his family name.}

Second, the three novels are stylistically very different. The first features a first-person narrator; the second has an omniscient authorial narrator; and Schubumkehr makes a break with these more conventional forms through its fragmentary style, which unites numerous narrative perspectives and forms, such as letters interrupted with interior monologues, and videotapes which are replayed and discussed by outside figures. Finally, my exclusive focus on Schubumkehr allows me to isolate Menasse’s critique of the Austrian tourism industry and its relation to questions of national identity, a concern that is absent in the previous works which are set primarily in Brazil.

Schubumkehr was very widely reviewed in newspapers and literary journals. Its broad reception can be attributed to the anticipation following the positive response to Menasse’s previous novels, but it more likely rests on the novel’s release in 1995. Schubumkehr was one of many texts by major Austrian authors released that year, when “Austria” was the main theme of the influential Frankfurt book fair, and Menasse’s novel was particularly cast in the spotlight because he delivered the fair’s opening address. The wide attention given to the novel, however, was not accompanied by a critical success, as it garnered mostly mixed reviews. Many critics praised its formal innovation and extreme intertextuality (Zobl, Leipprand, Hofmann-Ostenhof), while others found these same features unsuccessful or excessive (Tauber, Kastberger, Meyer-Gosau). Interpretations of the novel’s themes were equally split: many lauded the novel’s clever take on the zeitgeist and its reflections on the meaning of history (Liessmann,
Hennenberg, Nuber), while others argued that the novel failed to synthesize its many themes and rarely escaped formulaic patterns (Isenschmied, Nüchtern, Ohrlinger, Lewis). Critics remained divided in their enthusiasm regarding Menasse’s reflection on Austrian history and society, but were clearly impressed with his novel’s incorporation of so many diverse aspects. Foremost among them was the focus on the tourism industry, which is mentioned by numerous reviewers, but not linked carefully to the other issues addressed in the novel.

The discussion of Schubumkehr in academic discourse exhibits a similar neglect regarding the novel’s depiction of tourism. Schubumkehr has received the least scholarly attention of all the novels in this study. Several studies examine it in the context of the entire trilogy, but here too, Schubumkehr is given less consideration than Menasse’s previous novels, in part because of the novel’s incongruity with its predecessors.¹⁰⁶ Menasse’s representation of the tourism industry has been directly addressed only by Wolfgang Straub, both in a newspaper review and in his published dissertation. Straub’s readings, however, are limited to one scene, in which the novel explicitly satirizes the industry’s marketing techniques. This leads Straub to praise Menasse’s “Ausgewogenheit und dezenten Umgang mit Tourismus” (98), but reveals his failure to consider the polemical, yet more subtly articulated criticisms in Schubumkehr. Straub’s focus on specific topoi does not allow him a more detailed discussion of Menasse’s novel, since it is not set in a traditional touristic region, nor does it enable him to link Menasse’s focus on tourism to the other issues in his novel. Through my close reading of

¹⁰⁶ Schubumkehr does not share the same plot elements nor does it contain the same degree of explicit philosophical reflection as the other novels. The trilogy as a whole has been examined in an unpublished thesis (Themesl-Huber) and in several shorter studies (Feijóo, Lücke, Meyer, Krause, and in those collected in Stolz).
Schubumkehr I isolate Menasse’s censure of the tourism industry and reveal its links to the novel’s narrative conflicts and thematic projects.

My reading of Menasse’s views on tourism benefits from and expands the existing scholarship on Schubumkehr, in which philosophical issues have been a prevalent focus. Feijóo and Müller-Tamm, for example, both examine Menasse’s critique of history in the context of his revision of Walter Benjamin’s angel, in which he has the angel thrown of its course in order to question notions of history as progress. This reversal is further addressed in studies by Meyer (“Kein Mensch”) and Steiner, who both link it to the different media that figure into the novel’s narrative structure. Of these scholars, only Feijóo begins to read the novel’s stance on history within its depiction of tourist attractions. Similarly, Meyer and Hagner both explicate Menasse’s reinterpretation of Hegel’s concept of immediate consciousness to argue that human history does not illustrate progress, but rather regression. While they both focus on the protagonist’s predicament, they do not fully consider how Menasse further illustrates his play on Hegel through the touristic recreation of the lakeshore.

A second dominant focus in the secondary literature is the issue of Heimat and more specifically the reflection on Austrian conditions. Olson, Aspetsberger, and Breitenstein discuss the novel’s relationship to the anti-Heimat genre in Austrian literature and the protagonist’s struggle for Heimat, yet their readings of tourism are limited to the tensions surrounding the village’s conversion into a resort, thus ignoring the implications of the protagonist’s status as a tourist. While many scholars, such as Posthofen and Millner, address the novel’s investment in Austrian issues and introduce several relevant historical and political contexts, they generally give the tourism industry only cursory treatment. My close reading of Schubumkehr will thus illuminate these
deficiencies by offering a detailed analysis of Menasse’s depiction and critique of tourism.

4.2 Authenticity in Schubumkehr

4.2.1 The critique of the tourism industry

Menasse’s focus on tourism in Schubumkehr pursues two main goals. First, it allows the author to make a critique of diverse aspects of the industry, and this critique is linked to broader issues of Austrian identity. Second, Menasse uses his depictions of the tourism industry to criticize the concept of history, which is a project he has articulated in many of his writings. In Schubumkehr, he continues this project through his depiction of both the protagonist’s actions in Komprechts and the village’s conversion.

The representation of the tourism industry in Schubumkehr clearly reflects the views that Menasse has directly expressed in interviews and essays. His texts have touched on the industry’s investment in forming national symbols and alluded to the role tourism has played in Austria’s historical development. In his essay collection Das Land ohne Eigenschaften, Menasse argues that postwar Austria succeeded in creating a nation, but not in fostering a sense of Heimat, which he conceives as involving both a sense of belonging in a particular place as well as a sense of identity and completeness. This occurred both because the Second Republic’s explicit focus on nation-building left little room for such a concept that stressed regional or local identification, and because the fascist appropriation of this concept made it unusable. He then specifically addresses the relationship between the compromised sense of Heimat and the influence of the tourism industry:
Menasse contends that tourism has further eliminated an Austrian perception of Heimat, because its commodification by the tourism industry as well as the conditions that tourism creates both render a place inhospitable to its residents and sever their identifications with it. Menasse’s emphasis on the notion of Heimat thus reiterates the critique of tourism we have seen from the previous works in this study: the tourism industry makes Austria inauthentic. In fully destroying “die Identität der dort lebenden Menschen” tourism makes people and place different, “anders.” Menasse’s statement views the advent of tourism as enacting a loss of existing ways of life. This passage thus reveals the problem of authenticity in Menasse’s views on the impacts of tourism. In lamenting what is lost to tourism, he implicitly elevates it to the status of the authentic, as what should be maintained.

Menasse repeats these sentiments in an interview in which he discusses Schubumkehr. When asked about the novel’s strong focus on tourism, Menasse replied:

Das ist meine Sehweise von Österreich insgesamt. Das ganze Land ist in Wirklichkeit eine unheimliche und gespenstische Kunstatur, also ein Vergnügungspark für ausländische Touristen. In dem Maß, in dem der Fremdenverkehr immer konsequenter betrieben wird, führt das zu immer größeren Problemen für die Menschen, die hier zu Hause sind. (“Unfähig” 23-4)

This passage exhibits ideas common to much tourism criticism. The charge that foreign tourists will be the principle benefactors of tourism, for example, implies a loss of control for the local population, because what was perceived to be theirs becomes the province of others and their interests. Menasse does not specify the “Probleme” that tourism will bring in the passage, but in his novel, he addresses its environmental, economic, and social dimensions.
Most importantly for our reading, this passage reinforces the importance of the notion of authenticity in Menasse’s critique and provides insights into how he defines it. Menasse may compare Austria to an amusement park, but his statement and his novel are not focused on the complete fabrication inherent to such attractions. Rather, the inauthenticity to which this statement refers stems from the deviation from existing patterns. He portrays a local population that loses its connection to its existing ways of life, which are threatened as touristic development compels the host community to alter themselves and environment to serve the needs of the industry. Menasse describes Austria’s touristic landscape as having a “Kunstnatur,” an oxymoron that foregrounds the artificiality that the industry imposes on a place.  

107 It is further described as “unheimlich” and “gespenstisch,” terms that refer to the peculiar and unsettling appearance and to the absence of human presence and life. This absence is a reminder of how previously existing structures or ways of life have been lost through the construction of a touristic environment. Menasse’s de facto sense of the authentic, then, resides in the continuity with the past or tradition. Consequently, in depicting inauthenticity his novel emphasizes elements that have been broken out of this continuity and generally presents its loss as a negative development and a deviation from a purportedly better state.

Schubumkehr employs this conception of inauthenticity in its portrayal of different characters and of the village itself. Menasse has commented on the novel’s setting in a region that has not undergone much touristic development: “Das Waldviertel ist durch seine Rückständigkeit heute Avantgarde in Österreich geworden, weil da die Verwüstung durch den Tourismus noch nicht so weit fortgeschritten ist” (“Unfähig” 23-

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107 This phrase in Menasse’s essay echoes a key passage from the fourth episode of Felix Mitterer’s Piefke Saga, in which the central character, after uncovering the secret behind a dystopian resort, cries out: “Das ganze Land aus Kunststoff.”
4). Like the real region on which it is based, the fictional Komprechts does not have a
touristic infrastructure, and by focusing on such a place, Menasse rhetorically stacks the
deck in his favor, because this allows him to heighten his depiction of tourism’s impacts
and clearly show how they result in a break from a previous condition. Through the
figure of Nemec, for example, Menasse illustrates the socio-cultural impacts of tourism:
the mayor’s plans to turn the quarry into a tourist attraction threaten her archaic ways of
life, not least because he hopes to remove her from her antiquated home and relocate her
to a modern apartment. Similarly, the depiction of the lakeshore foregrounds tourism’s
alteration of the natural environment. The lakeshore begins as a wild landscape, but is
radically transformed as developers turn it into a swimming facility. By imagining the
authenticity of both Nemec and the lakeshore as threatened by tourism, Menasse’s
employment of this concept thus aligns his novel’s critique of the industry with those in
Lebert and Gstrein, as he continues to envision the industry as a producer of
inauthenticity, because it makes the individual and his or her environment into someone
or something else.

4.2.2 The critique of history

By representing the alteration of individual characters and tourist attractions as
they struggle with the new identities that the industry imposes on them, Menasse’s novel
foregrounds changes from a previous condition. Recognizing that the category of
historical continuity is central to Menasse’s definition of authenticity will namely allow
us to show that his depictions of characters and places, particularly those associated with
the tourism industry, reinforce his larger project of questioning the concept of history,
both on a personal and public level. A concise account of Menasse’s critique of
Menasse attacks the idealistic, Enlightenment views of history as a logical development towards a positive goal. To accept such a notion of progress guided by reason, Menasse argues, one would actually have to forget the past, because history provides countless examples of its own repetition, and thus cannot illustrate progress if it repeats its own catastrophes. Menasse refutes teleological conceptions, arguing that they allow the instrumentalization of history for purposes of legitimization or manipulation, as it is exploited to justify or invoke actions in the present.

Menasse examines history not just as a tool of leaders and opinion-makers, but also as a basic human desire:

Die Menschen wollen Ordnungen, sie wollen das Gefühl haben, daß Zusammenhänge existieren. Das Wissen, daß alles, was gleichzeitig existiert, eben gleichzeitig existiert, ist für niemanden per se befriedigend. Da müssen Zusammenhänge her, deshalb werden unausgesetzt welche produziert. (Interview with Neuber 249)

This implies that if we rely on history to make sense out of our lives and the state of the world, it can assume a determining role in our lives. Menasse’s focus on the concept of history thus has implications for the individual as well, specifically with regard to the
personal struggle with one’s past and heritage. Menasse namely repudiates the notion that one’s wish for connections and sense of history should play a determining role in one’s present and future.

What Menasse advocates is a rejection of such a view of history, both on a meta-level and on a personal, individual one. He argues, however, that the past should not be forgotten, quoting Adorno’s reflection on the Holocaust that “Was einmal wirklich war, bleibt ewig möglich” to stress this point (29). For Menasse, we should not dismiss history, but its misuse and the assumption of its progress. Without this teleological notion, our focus would be on the present and on concrete, achievable goals and not on the burdens of the past: “Wir wären deshalb nicht ohne Vergangenheit, aber sie wäre kein strittiges Erbe, und wir wären auch nicht ohne Zukunft, aber sie wäre kein ewig bedrohliches Vermächtnis” (“Geschichte” 31). Menasse’s views on history are ultimately ambiguous. As Margy Gerber notes, Menasse’s implicit assumption that “The only way to counter the repetition of history – the echoes and the copies – is man’s realization of his role in it and his knowledge of the original” (11), rests on a further assumption of our inherent reason and ability to learn from the past. Menasse thus wants us to reject conventional notions of history, but still demands that we maintain a historical consciousness. We should thus be cognizant of the past, but it should not assume an authoritative function in determining our present course of actions by demanding that we maintain continuity with a specific tradition or uphold the dictates of a legacy.

This reading of Menasse’s views on history is crucial for our analysis of Schubumkehr because he embeds them in the narrative conflicts and images in the novel. This is foremost evident in his protagonist’s gradual dissolution, because Roman’s
identity crisis illustrates Menasse’s emphasis on history on a personal level. Roman struggles with his own past, alternating between dismissing its importance and being paralyzed by it. The novel’s ambiguous ending suggests that Roman develops a heightened consciousness of himself and his past and thus rejects the constricting demands of history that Menasse criticizes.

Since Roman’s crisis with his own history parallels those of characters more directly associated with the tourism industry and its development in Komprechts, he thus becomes a useful contrast figure for understanding the village’s conversion into a resort, and how it reinforces Menasse’s critique of history. In secondary characters, such as Nemec, König, Trisko, and Ölzant, and in spaces Menasse depicts we can locate different aspects of this critique. König, for example, dismisses history through his plans for the village, but at the same time justifies his actions as being in the service of future generations. With each of tourist attractions in the village it becomes clear that Menasse foregrounds the rupture with the past that emerges through their creation, which can be seen in the transformation of the quarry into a museum and park. For individual figures, such as Nemec, the conversion of the quarry induces changes in personal history as it alters her perception of her home environment. On a larger, public level, the closure of the quarry overturns the village’s existing socioeconomic structure and livelihood. When the plans for the museum bring to the surface the quarry’s hidden past as an aryanized firm, its transformation creates a doubled break in continuity with its history. Not only is it no longer what it used to be, its previous condition is now revealed as a lie. The secondary characters and the tourist attractions, through which Menasse already presents his critique of the tourism industry, thus also serve his project with history in that they
complement the portrayal of Roman by providing variations on his struggle with his past and with his own history.

The dual function that these figures and objects have is underscored by the Menasse’s references to authenticity. His novel’s representational strategy separates characters and attractions according to their particular relationship to public and/or private history by aligning them between poles of authenticity and inauthenticity. Those who illustrate a solid connection to the past, such as Nemec and Ölzant, are associated with authenticity through specific metaphors and images, in particular that of stone. On the other hand, the characters and objects, such as König and the tourist attractions in Komprechts, who make breaks with history are associated with inauthenticity, which Menasse highlights through motifs such as name changes and especially through the characters’ degree of involvement in tourism. The novel valorizes those figures associated with authenticity by casting them as the most sympathetically drawn characters. Subsequently, the objects and figures characterized as inauthentic, most of which are linked to the tourism industry, are generally negative figures or are portrayed satirically. This usage of the notion of authenticity, then, redoubles the novel’s negative view of tourism, while reiterating its focus on questions of history.

The use of authenticity, however, reveals incongruities between Menasse’s historical project and his critique of tourism. As we will see, this discrepancy becomes apparent through a comparison between the outcome of Roman’s crisis and those of the different villagers. These characters and the village itself experience radical breaks with their personal or public history, a shift that Menasse portrays as a move towards inauthenticity and, as we will see, is cast in a negative light. Roman also experiences a break with his history, but Menasse depicts this transformation as potentially positive.
Even though it uses motifs that denote Roman’s inauthenticity, Menasse’s novel suggests that Roman has rejected conventional conceptions of history and thus escaped the logic of (in)authenticity. This discrepancy is important for our reading, not because it points to the unevenness of Menasse’s focus on history, but because it indicates the significance of the critique of the tourism industry in *Schubumkehr*. By examining the value that Menasse assigns to historical continuity when using the notion of authenticity to criticize tourism, it will become evident that the discrepancy regarding the protagonist is the blind spot allowing Menasse to maintain his negative view of the industry and its effects. Because Menasse’s censure of tourism highlights inauthenticity and thus implicitly valorizes a perpetuation of historical continuity, it is not compatible with his rejection of history’s function and misuse in determining the actions of the present.

4.3 Roman’s identity crisis

For my reading I will use the term “identity crisis” to encapsulate the various factors that bear upon the protagonist. The central issue for this figure is his contradictory relationship to his past: on the one hand, he denies the meaning of his personal history, and on the other, he is immobilized by his inability to come to terms with it. Similarly, he dismisses the significance of a sense of Heimat, but at the same time is clearly searching for one. *Schubumkehr* interweaves episodes of Roman’s identity crisis with episodes of the village’s transformation, heightening the protagonist’s connection to its construction of tourist attractions, by imaging him as a tourist. Roman’s crisis is structured as a journey: it begins in Brazil, concentrates on his visit to Komprechts, and finally ends with departure, presumably for Brazil. The novel employs this model to intensify Roman’s contradictions and to play on the notion of travel as
transformation towards an authentic self. This function has been assigned to travel both in theories of tourist motivation and in artistic representations, which envision tourists as being liberated from the pressures of their everyday world through their experiences in another place.\textsuperscript{108} Roman dismisses this notion, which is evident in his thoughts after a weekend trip: “Er fragte sich […] warum sie glaubten, daß die Sonne an einem anderen Ort eine andere Sonne sei, nur weil man dort andere Umstände traf als zu Hause, um sich vor ihr zu schützen” (17). His cynical disdain for tourists, who construct fantasies out of their destinations, reveals his rejection of the notion that travel can offer radically different, authentic experiences. At the same time, however, Roman travels to Komprechts precisely in the hopes of resolving his uncertainties about his past and is thus also chasing “eine andere Sonne.”

Through the character of Roman, Menasse illustrates the tensions he addresses in his critique of history. Roman demonstrates the metaphor implicit in the novel’s title: he is driven by two opposing impulses. On the one hand, Roman rejects the notion that one’s past should have an effect on one’s identity. As the narrator notes: “Diese ganze Geschichte mit dem sogenannten Geprägt-Sein hielt er für eine Ausrede. Die Kindheit präjudiziert gar nichts. Irgendwann stellt man fest, daß man auf der Welt ist, zwar ein beschriebenes Blatt – das man aber nie mehr durchliest” (72). Roman’s views in this passage carry Menasse’s skepticism of history as a determining force to an extreme: Roman wants to dismiss his history altogether. On the other hand, Roman’s actions show that he is equally motivated by a desire to reconnect with his past, to read his “beschriebenes Blatt.” This impulse prompts his return to Austria from Brazil. Roman’s

\textsuperscript{108} We find an example of this notion of the authentic self in Komprechts’ promotion: the advertising agent, quoting Goethe, uses this notion to describe the appeals that the town’s brochure should make: “Der potentielle Urlauber soll sich denken: Der Mensch hier ist er selbst. Hier ist er Mensch, hier will er sein” (emphasis added, 129).
identity crisis is set in motion by a letter from his mother, Anne. Her letter informs him of her remarriage and decision to leave Vienna and includes a photograph, which reveals the extent to which she has changed.\textsuperscript{109} The news of his mother’s radical lifestyle change and her move to Komprechts leads Roman to feel separated from his past: “Weil das, was hinter ihm lag, nun nicht mehr hinter ihm lag, sondern fort war, verschwunden, das, was so war, wie es war. Gewesen ist” (43).\textsuperscript{110} Resting on notions of space and time, this passage points to Roman’s sense of depthlessness. His past, his “background,” has disappeared, leaving him with no foundation upon which to anchor his sense of identity. He thus leaves Brazil for Austria in the hopes of finding this connection to his past that he senses he has lost.

Beginning Roman’s crisis in Brazil allows Menasse to highlight his protagonist’s initial disregard for his past. Roman is from Vienna and has been living as a university lecturer in Sao Paulo, and the novel points out that this separation has not been an issue for him, indicating that no strong connection or longing for his past has incited feelings of homesickness. The news of his mother’s transformation and move to Komprechts, however, undermine this sense of security: “Zum ersten Mal nach all den Jahren empfand er Heimweh, aussichtsloses Heimweh: Entwurzelung. Als wäre er erst jetzt, nach sieben Jahren Wegsein, in der Fremde angekommen” (43). His sense of Heimat thus is initiated with its loss, which subsequently renders the “Fremde” “fremd.” Brazil’s lack of

\textsuperscript{109} The narrator details Roman’s response to Anne’s picture: “Dieses Polaraoidfoto, das seine Mutter zeigte vor einigen Schafen, das war nicht seine Mutter” (44). Roman contrasts this image with his last memory of her: “Sie hatte ein elegantes französisches Kostüm getragen, das war seine Mutter” (44). This scene rests on tensions between original and the copy. Both the photograph and Roman’s memory are copies of an original, Anne. The discrepancy between these two copies throws the authenticity of the original into question for Roman, inducing him to travel to Komprechts.

\textsuperscript{110} This passage parallels a similar one describing König’s thoughts on Komprechts’ predicament. “So wie es war, konnte es nicht bleiben, so wie es gewesen war, konnte es nicht mehr werden. Es mußte etwas geschehen” (78). These parallel passages contrast the two figures and their response to the past: Roman will seek to return to it, König is trying to break with it.
foreignness for Roman is mirrored in the novel’s depiction of the country. Only a few scenes are set in Brazil, and they are of a generic quality and, aside from a few geographical references, could easily be set anywhere. Many of the episodes in Brazil are further distanced in that they are either dream sequences or appear in Roman’s videos, which are relayed through the observers’ remarks. Like Roman, then, the novel seems to disregard the difference that Brazil would surely signify. What this reveals is that for Roman the real foreign space is not Brazil, but his destination of Komprechts.

The motif of the journey underscores Roman’s alienation from his past and simultaneously to deride tourism. Roman’s return to Austria is not to his home in Vienna, but to Komprechts, and its setting not in the central capital but on the Austrian border only intensifies its foreignness for him.111 The destination’s significance as an unknown place is foregrounded in an early passage detailing Roman’s irritation with his lover’s desire to take weekend trips in Brazil:

Er war ein Wiederholungsopfer. Immer wieder wurde er von ihr zu fremden Kulissen geschleppt, die im glücklichsten Fall so aussahen wie deren Abbildungen in den Prospekten, die sie dorthin gelockt hatten. Er fragte sich, warum es Menschen Wollust bereitete, etwas wiederzuerkennen, das sie zum ersten Mal sahen. (17)

This passage repeats cultural criticism of tourists’ ignorance, and for the novel it highlights Roman’s contradictions. He ridicules this impulse, but it is what drives him to Komprechts. Instead of a brochure, a picture of his mother sets his journey in motion. The person in the picture, however, seems an utter stranger to him: Anne has married Richard Bauer, a man Roman’s age, and become an organic farmer, thus abandoning her

111 The motif of travel is reinforced upon Roman’s arrival. When he views the animals on his mother’s farm, a goat eats his passport, figuratively inspecting and confiscating his identity papers.
job as a secretary and her home in Vienna. Roman’s journey thus does not take him to his past, but to a person that he is seeing for the first time.

The place Roman visits is also new for him, which intensifies his sense of estrangement from his past. Menasse heightens his protagonist’s predicament by portraying him engaging in touristic activities. For much of his stay in Komprechts, Roman observes the transformation of different spaces into tourist attractions, either on his aimless wanderings or from his preferred vantage point: the observation tower. This perspective is used in a scene that invokes the trope of the promontory viewing of a landscape from travel literature. To be sure, Schubumkehr cannot be regarded as a work of this genre, but by negating this trope, the novel continues its rejection of tourism as a self-transformation. The representation of the landscape in conventional travel accounts, as Mary Louise Pratt notes, places the viewers of that landscape in a position of dominance because their “monarch-of-all-I-survey” account determines what can and should be seen (201). Pratt further notes that in late twentieth-century travel literature, this position is ironically re-employed to reflect on the disenchantment of travel through mass tourism and to problematize travel’s affinity with conquering and domination. Schubumkehr presents a similar approach to this convention when Roman first visits the tower:

Roman sah nichts. Oder alles. Alles von nichts. Die in einer langgestreckten Schwingung sich einbuchtende Lichtung des Waldes, der hier weitgehend unversehrt war, die Wiese davor, die sanft zum Komprechtser See abfiel, der, wahrscheinlich wegen der Farbe seines moorhaltnigen Wassers, Braunsee hieß. […] Jeder, der keinen Blick für die menschlichen Eingriffe in eine bewirtschaftete Natur hatte, konnte von diesem Hochsitz aus den Eindruck einer menschenleeren Welt gewinnen, wenn nicht gar die Vorstellung, daß jeder, der in dieses Panorama eindringe, sich nach und nach entmaterialisieren und verschwinden müsse. […] Weder konnte er, was er sah, im einzelnen benennen, noch im Ganzen mit Metaphern versehen, weder konnte er Fichten und Föhren auseinanderhalten noch
As in much travel literature, the landscape in this passage is organized into an imaginary picture frame in which foreground and background are established (Pratt 204). But unlike such conventional accounts, there is no sense of mastery and authority to the viewer’s vision: the landscape seems empty and devoid of meaningful markers for Roman. This image thus subverts the conventional positioning of the traveler, because it is the landscape that seems to master the traveler, as Roman is unable to comprehend or describe what he sees.

Roman later begins to videotape what he sees from the tower, which grants the novel a useful narrative perspective for stressing Roman’s identity crisis. Already in Brazil Roman films his environment and he continues this in Komprechts, detailing the events and attractions he observes. His videotaping is likely what prompted the village’s conversion into a resort, as the mayor decides for this option after seeing a tourist on the village square. Once this process starts, Roman begins to film Komprechts’ transformation. Menasse inserts accounts of these videos and the commentary by two observers, and these passages thus allow the inclusion of numerous portrayals of the process of conversion that is taking place in Komprechts. Menasse uses these videos to display the radical changes when he has Roman edit images from his tapes together to show “wie sich aus dem alten Komprechts das neue heraussülpte, der Film war ohne Ton, aber es schien geradezu Plop zu machen zwischen Vorher und Nachher” (124). This is one of the few scenes in which what Roman sees on his tapes is meaningful for him. This video illustrates a linear progression of events and documents a development. At the same time, however, this development is the erasure of the past, because its traces vanish on these tapes as they register the village’s transformation. By holding on to a
sense of history even as it charts its disappearance, the video thus reiterates Roman’s dilemma.

Schubumkehr uses Roman’s videos to highlight his identity crisis, and this is a point where Menasse’s reinterpretation of Hegel’s Phänomenologie des Geistes becomes evident. In his trilogy, Menasse has different figures illustrate his concept of “Entgeisterung,” which argues that human consciousness since Hegel has taken precisely the opposite course that Hegel describes. In Hegel’s Phänomenologie human consciousness proceeds from the phase of immediate consciousness (“sinnliche Gewißheit”), gradually acquires recognition of history and its dialectical course, and culminates with absolute knowledge (“absolutes Wissen”), the highest state of consciousness which Hegel claims to have achieved. Menasse’s version contends that the course of consciousness from Hegel’s age to the late twentieth century can be interpreted as proceeding backwards: it devolves from absolute knowledge back to the immediate consciousness. Hegel describes the immediate consciousness as reflecting the lowest, most primitive stage and as indicative of the childhood of humankind. It is a passive consciousness that focuses only on immediate appearances and is unable to reflect on the objects it sees, which exist as here and now without connection to a past history.112 While Menasse’s reinterpretation of Hegel is ultimately of limited importance for my study of tourism and authenticity, its depiction of the devolution to an immediate consciousness enriches our understanding of Roman’s identity crisis.

Roman’s stay in Komprechts is dominated by his increasing disorientation and a loss of reality, which reveals how his crisis is loosely structured regression toward the

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112 For example, in Hegel’s Phänomenologie, he argues that for the immediate consciousness, “die Wahrheit dieser unmittelbaren Beziehung ist die Wahrheit dieses Ich, der sich auf ein Jetzt oder ein Hier einschränkt. Würden wir nachher diese Wahrheit vornehmen oder entfernt davon stehen, so hätte sie gar keine Bedeutung, denn wir höben die Unmittelbarkeit auf, die ihr wesentlich ist” (85).
stage of immediate consciousness. Roman does not fully devolve to this stage, neither losing his memory nor becoming fully incoherent, but he becomes increasingly unable to understand his surroundings. For example, right before leaving Sao Paulo Roman: “schloß die Augen und versuchte, sich das Haus, das sich hinter seinem Rücken befand, in dem er die letzten Jahre gewohnt hatte, mit all seinen Details vorzustellen – es gelang ihm nicht. Es nahm keine Gestalt an. Dies versetzte ihm einen Schock” (56). Roman is unable to remember and reflect on the house, which is only meaningful for him in its immediacy. When Roman is in Komprechts, the novel further conveys his regression through his videos, which function as an alternative consciousness. As Jürgen Meyer points out, Roman’s videos are indicative of the state of immediate consciousness illustrating “das unkritische Für-Wahr-Nehmen des Vorgespielten, so daß schließlich nur noch dem Augenschein Glauben geschenkt wird” (Meyer “Kein Mensch” 83). The immediate consciousness is only able to perceive a here and now without any connection to history. Similarly, when Roman watches his tapes toward the end of the novel, the events depicted on them have no meaning for him. Roman’s videos thus reflect his struggle with historical memory and sense of connection to his past, which characterize his identity crisis in Komprechts.

The tension regarding personal history that charges Roman’s crisis is most evident in the depiction of the two characters with whom he interacts in Komprechts: the surveyor Ölzant and his mother Anne. These figures serve as contrast points and represent opposing positions in terms of their relationship to the past, which Menasse underscores by associating them with different degrees of authenticity. On one end of the

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113 Furthermore, the videos have a completely different meaning for the observer figures. This thus repeats Hegel’s notion of how an “anderes Ich” sees a different here and now.
spectrum is Ölzant, who embodies a strong continuity with the past and is thus linked to authenticity. Ölzant is a retired quarry man who now works as a private surveyor, but Roman’s relationship with him is initially cast in touristic dimensions. In their first encounter, the surveyor is first unaware that Roman is filming him in the quarry, but then suspects Roman is a company spy sent to record him stealing granite. When Ölzant threatens him, Roman replies that he is not a spy but “nur ein Tourist, sozusagen ein Tourist” (104). Roman is fascinated by Ölzant and continues to film him and his work, which heightens his status as a tourist and Ölzant’s as an object that Roman is observing on his visit. Ölzant’s status is reinforced for the reader in a sequence depicting Roman’s videos, in which the two observers mistake Ölzant for a tour guide: “Vielleicht ist er sozusagen ein Ausstellungsstück, ich meine, der Steinbruch ist doch jetzt ein Museum, und er ist vielleicht als typischer Arbeiter ausgestellt” (109). Though Ölzant does not work in the museum, he does function as an “Ausstellungsstück” for Roman.

What seems to impress Roman is Ölzant’s relationship to history. He preserves and displays a tradition of the past, performing the duties of what was once known as an “Untergänger.” Ölzant explains that his grandfather was one of the last of the “Untergänger,” a profession that existed in until the end of the monarchy and was once highly respected. The “Untergänger” was responsible for demarcating borders with stone markers so that conflicting parties could trace and settle property disputes. The “Untergang,” the remarking of the village border, was once an annual event in which the entire village walked the border: “Damit sie, wenn die Alten sterben, auch ganz genau wissen, wie der Grenzverlauf ist” (111). The surveyor Ölzant has been hired to redraw the village border and has begun to carve his personal markings into the stones as an “Untergänger” would. His sequence of stones is referred to as a “Satz” and has
decorative inscriptions, that, when read in their linear sequence, depict his life story, or as he describes it: “was ich dalassen wollte, was dasein soll, wenn ich einmal rübergegangen bin, sozusagen über die Grenze” (116).  

Ölzant presents a contrast figure for Roman because he is firmly embedded within a historical continuity. Yet the notion of the “Untergänger,” while an actual historical term, nonetheless plays on the role of extinction and disappearance in historical progression, and thus complicates Ölzant’s connection to the past. He is literally following in the footsteps of his grandfather, and he makes it his task to record his own history. The markings on these stones create a linear progression, clearly situating each one in a sequential relationship with the past and the future. Ölzant’s “Satz” thus contrasts with Roman’s ambivalence about his history, which is particularly evident with Roman’s videotapes, which demonstrate his dwindling connection to his past. Towards the end of the novel Roman retraces his own record of the last few months of his life by watching all of his tapes, only to find that: “Dieser Film ist kein Leben gewesen, nur Ersatzmaterial, reproduzierbar und ohne Belang, von nachvollziehbarer Bedeutung nur das Banalste” (160). Unlike Ölzant’s life story in stone, Roman’s tapes only record images of the landscape that unintentionally chart the changes of the seasons. Like the unmarked stones that Ölzant will later place around Anne’s house, then, Roman’s videos are essentially empty and “stumm” (163), demarcating only an absence. The material difference between the tapes and the stones solidify their contrasting positions on history. Ölzant’s markers are made of granite, and its durable, eternal quality becomes a central

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114 The figure of Ölzant is very likely based on a real person, Franz Xaver Ölzant. This real Ölzant is, to my knowledge, not an “Untergänger,” but is a sculptor from Lower Austria, whose statues are granite carvings that are displayed in the natural landscape. Cf. http://www.bildhauerverband.at/Bildhauer/franzhoelzant.htm
metaphor for authenticity. Ölzant’s task is to place these markers of history across a landscape, in which history is vanishing. Roman’s plastic videotapes, in contrast, are erasable, reusable, and thus transitory, and merely record disposable images of the landscape.

At the other end of the spectrum from Ölzant is Roman’s mother Anne, who represents discontinuity with personal history. The narrator reveals that Anne’s life has been characterized by abrupt breaks with her past:

Wieder etwas, das zu Ende war, abgerissen, ohne daß weghängende Fäden des Vergangenen sich in den neuen Anfang einflechten würden, so war es immer wieder gewesen, plötzlich diese Wendepunkte, nach denen das, was sie vorher als ihr Leben angesehen hatte, einfach aus ihrem Leben verschwunden war oder zurückgelassen werden mußte. (35)

The clear sequential progression and continuity that the signs on Ölzant’s stone markers symbolized are thus contrasted by the image of Anne’s disconnected threads. In the course of the novel she radically shifts aspects of her identity. She abandons her life in Vienna to marry a very young man and become an organic farmer in Komprechts, only later to give up her organic lifestyle and divorce Richard. Finally, after her divorce leaves her the farmhouse she accepts the mayor’s subsidies and begins to convert her farmhouse into a pension. Menasse stresses Anne’s ruptures with her past by calling attention to her acceptance of Richard’s surname, Bauer. This name makes a sarcastic commentary on Anne’s new profession, but also introduces the novel’s recurring

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115 Menasse reinforces Ölzant’s authenticity on a formal level as well. Ölzant is presented to the reader in two ways: first, through the authorial narrator’s depiction of him and Roman’s thoughts while filming him; second, through the episodes in which the observers watch Roman’s tapes, which usually contain both an authorial narrative description of the tape and the two observers’ direct speech. Because Ölzant is always presented through the videotapes – either as they are being filmed or watched – his statements, which are long descriptions of his profession, are some of the only and are certainly the longest passages delivered in direct speech. Unlike the other video episodes, his accounts are not interrupted by comments from the two observers. Ölzant’s descriptions thus become some of the most unmediated passages in the novel.
metaphor of name-changes, which Menasse associates with inauthenticity, implying the falseness of the new names because of the break with the past they signify.

The characterization of Anne’s inauthenticity is most clearly conveyed through her relation to the farmhouse and her attempt at an organic lifestyle. This structure reflects Anne’s discontinuities with the past: she modernizes the dilapidated building, but fashions it according to romanticized images of farm life that she gleans from “Das große Buch vom Leben auf dem Lande” (40). She then fills it with the remnants of her Viennese apartment. Roman is irritated by the farmhouse’s appearance and its incongruities. His thoughts on its modern windows synthesize his perspective on the entire house: “offenbar neu […] aber zweifellos dem Original nachgebaut, allerdings mit Thermoverglasung” (61). For him the house illustrates inauthenticity and is a modernized copy of something perceived as original. His comments equally apply to Anne’s organic habits and attempt at becoming a farmer, which he chides as fake. Like the farmhouse, her new lifestyle are for him “abgeschlossen und beziehungslos, so falsch und verquer hier musealisiert und aufbewahrt” (72). With regard to Anne, the passage thus shows that she signifies both a radical break with the past and a decontextualized, false connection to it.

Anne reveals contradictions that charge Roman’s identity crisis. Given her relationship to her own history, one would expect that Roman would try to emulate her. She namely seems to represent the approach he initially advocates in that she is ever-ready to separate herself from her past, without letting it determine her actions. At the same time, Anne is the locus of his return and is the link to the past with which he is attempting to reconnect. Her radical lifestyle changes and move to Komprechts thus hinder Roman from resolving his identity crisis and his feelings of homesickness. Anne
complicates Roman’s dilemma in that she does not abandon her past with Roman and continues to infantilize him. That Roman stays at his mother’s farmhouse thus places an ironic twist on his predicament. The farmhouse is a site culturally encoded as a locus of Heimat and the ways of the past, but for Roman this cliché only intensifies his loss, because his mother has falsely adopted this lifestyle and the house is not his childhood home. The foreignness of these quarters is equally heightened in that they will eventually be converted into an idyllic “Urlaubsbauernhof”(118), albeit without the requisite farm. This expresses Roman’s dilemma because he is staying at what is the closest thing he has to a home, which by the close of his stay is converted into a hotel and thus indicates his separation from his past. Furthermore, he previously ridicules the desire for an “Urlaub am Bauernhof” as “Ein untrügliches Symptom für gestörtes Bewußtsein” (46), but, because he stays at his mother’s farmhouse, his visit becomes just such an “Urlaub” at a “Bauernhof.”

Roman’s room at Anne’s house continues to emphasize his identity crisis. Just as Roman finds Anna’s lifestyle and the impulses behind her farm to be “musealisiert und aufbewahrt” (72), he finds this room, which the narrator describes as a “Gerümpelkammer seiner Kindheit” (61), to be equally disturbing. Anne has taken all of his possessions from their Vienna apartment and randomly placed them together far away in Komprechts, creating a disorienting museum-like arrangement containing pictures he drew as a child, the toys of his youth, and posters from his student days. The contents of this room do not provide a link to his past, offering him instead: “keine Sekunde[…] in der es Rührung, Sentimentalität, eine glückliche, aus dem Vergessen sich herausschälende Übereinstimmung mit sich selbst gegeben hätte. Nur Haß und Verachtung” (72). These objects thus indicate Roman’s inner contradictions: he returns
to his mother to remedy his homesickness, yet here he only seeks to suppress the memories that these objects evoke. And although he dismisses the significance of the past, his intense aversion to these objects confirms it.

The museum motif in this room presents a striking similarity with scenes from the other novels in this study. The depiction of each protagonist’s room and the objects in it amplify the characterization of that figure. Lebert has Jerschek nostalgically revisit his childhood when he returns to the villa to find his “Kabuse” nearly untouched by time. Gstrein has Jakob’s brothers observe his private room, which invites the reader to review the objects that chart his alienation. Menasse’s image foregrounds his protagonist’s struggles in dealing with his identity crisis. In all three examples the objects stress gaps with the past that factor into each novel’s definition of authenticity and demonstrate the authors’ sensitivity to the touristic setting.

While the objects in Roman’s room only evoke negative memories and confirm his dismissal of the past, another object reveals its further significance: namely, a plate from his father’s dishware. Roman’s father was a Holocaust survivor who died while Roman was a child. Although his father was not a practicing Jew, he maintained the orthodox ritual of keeping separate dishware for dairy and meat products. After the war, Roman’s father was consumed by fear, which he sublimated by purchasing two identical sets of dishes that would inevitably be mixed. Never certain whether a plate was for meat or milk, his father’s indeterminate fear found an outlet in the dishes, which he regularly discarded, always replacing them with two identical sets. When Roman sees this plate at Anne’s house, he realizes that it is from his father’s final set. In a letter describing this discovery Roman imagines that the plate is staring at him “wie eine vergiftete
The novel includes this letter and interrupts it, through non-italicized typesetting, with Roman’s interior monologue, which reveals the significance of his father for his crisis:

[I]rgendwann hatte ich das überhaupt vergessen. Völlig vergessen. Na also man kann eine zweite Unschuld erringen eine dritte die Schuldlosen können das immer die Schuldigen sowieso biologisch statt koscher Amerika statt Europa eine neue Sprache eine andere Sonne Wo kommst du her ich hab es vergessen ich will zurück wo ist zurück da oder dort? Schluß Lieber Norbert, ich mache für heute Schluß. (90)

This passage suggests a discrepancy between Roman’s account of this event and his real memories of his father. What is clear is that Roman has struggled with feelings of guilt about his father’s death, which is confirmed in a later passage detailing his childhood reaction to his father’s sudden passing (106). Roman’s interior monologue intimates that his actions as an adult, in particular his move to Brazil, have been an attempt to deal with his feelings of guilt. This notion of escaping from his personal history is indicated by the repetition of “eine andere Sonne,” an image Roman used earlier to chide his lover’s enthusiasm for visiting new tourist destinations (17). Although Roman dismissed her desire as naivety, it seems that he too once hoped to move away from his father’s legacy through his stay in Brazil. Seeing this plate brings the past home to Roman. Since his father’s death, the two identical sets have dwindled into a single set, which highlights the ruptures Roman now perceives.

The significance of Roman’s broken relationship with his father is reinforced in his recollection of his father’s death. The depiction of this memory reaffirms the relevance of Ölzant’s markers for Roman’s identity crisis as well. The narrator describes

116 Roman alludes to this image from Proust earlier in the novel when he describes a dream in which he suffers from amnesia. When his lover is bored by his account of the dream, he invents an ending, in which the memory of reading Proust’s Madeleine passage restores his memory in the dream (31-33).
Roman’s memory of: “ein Kind an einem Bett, in dem sein erster Sterbender lag, sein Vater, der ihn betrog um ein letztes Wort, einen letzten Satz, den er behalten hätte können, vermehren zu einer Lebensgeschichte” (158-9, emphasis added). His father’s death not only severed Roman’s link to his family, but his silence also denied Roman any future connection to his own history. The reference to this absent communication contains a gesture to Ölzant’s stones, heightening their importance as a symbol of the sense of continuity with the past that eludes Roman. Unlike Ölzant’s “Satz” whose sequential markings chart a linear progression that signify his personal connection between past and future, Roman has no “Satz” from which to construct a complete life story.¹¹⁷

Roman’s discontinuity is heightened when he attempts to return to the space of his past by making a trip to Vienna. This trip appears to fail, denying him a reconnection to his former existence. Menasse highlights Vienna’s absence for Roman and his inability to restore it by conspicuously eliding the trip for the reader. The novel describes Roman’s ride to the train station in Komprechts and then shifts directly to his ride back from the train station, using a mere paragraph break to denote the temporal and spatial gap of Roman’s trip (101). By actually calling attention to this gap, the novel highlights its significance: both Roman and the reader are in effect denied access to the longed-for paradise of Vienna, which seems to exist solely in the past. We are, however, presented with clues that his attempt was futile. Roman reflects that during his stay he counted his remaining money, which throughout the novel is used a signifier for his desperation (84–117). This is literally brought home to Roman when Anne hires Ölzant to demarcate the border of her farmhouse after her divorce. The stones that Ölzant uses are devoid of any symbolic markings and are thus: “Ein stummer Satz. Nichts mehr zu entziffern. Leere Grenzzeichen, sonst nichts” (163). Unlike Ölzant’s decorated personal stones, these tell no story, underscoring Roman’s lack of connection to his past.
5, 103, 162). His failure is most evident in the narrator’s note that Roman had to stay in a hotel: “in Wien, in der Stadt, in der er aufgewachsen war und studiert hatte, in dieser Stadt ist er in einem Hotel gewesen” (103). By pointing out that Roman no longer has a home in Vienna, this reference to his hotel stay thus conveys Roman’s alienation from his past. After this trip and the incident with his father’s plate Roman’s identity crisis intensifies, and he sinks into a depressive state.

Roman experiences a brief sense of connection to his past when his mother changes her lifestyle. When Anne becomes disillusioned with her organic ways and begins smoking and drinking coffee again, the narrator describes Roman’s view that “Seine Mutter rauchte wieder, und nach und nach wurde sie, wer sie war” (116). For Roman, Anne has become who she “was,” thus restoring the lost person of his memories: “Es tat sich Heimat auf” (118), and he feels that he has returned to the sense of home that had been denied him. Roman’s euphoria in returning to this Heimat, however, is limited. Just as Anne resumes her previous habits, she also divorces Richard, but instead of returning to Vienna, she remains in Komprechts and begins the conversion of the farmhouse.

Roman’s sense “dass er erst jetzt allmählich heimkehrte” (116) after his mother’s shift in identity only accelerates his crisis, which increasingly exhibits signs of his infantilization and his devolution to an immediate consciousness. Menasse places Roman in this process of regression to denigrate Roman’s longing for an identity with his past and a sense of Heimat. Menasse carries this desire to an extreme: the womb. His mother already placed him in a recreated childhood room and infantilized him with her attention, but after Roman cuts his finger, a symbolic umbilical cord, he regresses further, winding up in the figurative womb of his mother’s bed, where she cares for and feeds him in his
malaise. There he experiences a nightmare about his father’s death and envisions his own. He awakens from this dream when he realizes that he has just embraced Anne, which sends him running from the bed. His regression thus ends just before a literal return to the womb. By nearly sending Roman to this conclusion, Menasse problematizes Roman’s longing for Heimat and a restoration of the past that was sparked by his mother’s figurative return. The novel implies that the ultimate result of Roman’s desire for security will be complete regression. As Roman’s dream suggests, becoming identical with oneself and returning to the past, stopping the progression of time and its changes, would end in stasis and death.

By leaving his mother’s bed Roman halts his regression but still remains conflicted, as his next move forces him to confront his relationship to his past. He senses he must escape, but he is unable to bring himself to leave.118 His anxiety about leaving revolves around thoughts of his death or further regression: “Wenn er flüchtete, egal wohin, und dann stellte sich heraus, daß es keinen Neuanfang gab, weil es nur noch das Ende gab, und er würde Windeln brauchen und Schnabeltassen” (161). The narrator goes on to tie Roman’s view of his predicament to an image of tourism: “Er mußte weg, das war, sagte er sich, ein Besuch, ein Heimatsurlaub, Ferien, jetzt ist es Herbst, und er konnte sich verabschieden, warum tat er es nicht?” (161). The use of the word “Heimatsurlaub” reveals an internal contradiction: “Heimat” and “Urlaub” describe opposites – on the one hand, the security and stability of being at home and on the other, the uncertainty and transience of being away and on vacation. These two opposites inhere in Roman’s dilemma between holding on to a sense of security with his past and letting go of it,

118 Roman’s sense of entrapment is emphasized by the fence that his mother has erected around her farmhouse: “das sah nicht aus wie ein enfacher Gartenzaun, das wirkte bedrohlich, das sah nach Quarantäne aus, nach Anhaltelager” (163).
between Heimat as an “Urlaub” or as a residence. His internal conflict thus resonates with the motif of a “Schubumkehr,” torn as he is between the impulses to leave and to stay. Leaving would mean he must face an indeterminate future and the forces of change; staying might offer a degree of stability and connection to his past, but also would entail regression and stasis.\textsuperscript{119}

The resolution of Roman’s dilemma is entwined with the catastrophes that close the novel, such as Nemec’s suicide, and the murders of the mayor, his son, and Ölzant. These ruptures center on the village’s conversion, and the events and the different conflicts inherent in them revolve around broken relationships to the past and the challenges of new identities. Because these catastrophes parallel and reverberate with the similar tensions as Roman’s dilemma, we will postpone our discussion of his resolution to examine Menasse’s depiction of the village’s transformation into a resort. This will allow us to place this conclusion of this process alongside Roman’s, from which the novel’s ambiguous stance towards historical continuity will become apparent. The breaks with history, which were first welcomed but then lamented by Roman, recur in the different episodes set in Komprechts.

\textsuperscript{119} Roman’s dilemma has echoes in a story Menasse uses in his Frankfurt book fair speech. He describes a seventeenth century Rabbi whose most precious possession in a jar containing the calcified fetus of his unborn brother, who was discovered in his mother’s body during an autopsy. The Rabbi contemplates a move to the New World but cannot find a way to transport this jar without damaging it and eventually cancels his plans to leave. Menasse sees in this story the epitome of humankind’s unwillingness to break with the conventions of history – namely “in der Unentschlossenheit, das eigene Leben von einer virtuellen Geschichte zu trennen, deren Zerstörung in Kauf zu nehmen” (36). In contemplating his departure from Komprechts, Roman faces a similar predicament: he is torn between accepting the changes of a new identity and clinging to the security and continuity of the past.
4.4 Menasse’s depiction of the tourism industry

_Schubumkehr_ juxtaposes its portrayal of Roman’s identity crisis with that of Komprechts’ transformation into a resort. Through these narrative strands Menasse paints a negative picture of the village’s renovations. Menasse enacts his criticism less through direct polemics than through images and conflicts that highlight negative aspects of the industry, targeting environmental, economic, and above all socio-cultural consequences. This critical perspective on tourism, however, cannot be seen as separate from the focus on the concept of history that we isolated in Roman’s narrative. Menasse utilizes his images of Komprechts’ conversion to reinforce his views on history. These episodes provide parallels with Roman’s struggles or offer variations on Menasse’s perspectives on history. What links these parallels together is the notion of authenticity, which in Menasse’s criticism of tourism serves a conventional function, in that the inauthentic is denigrated and the authentic privileged. As with Lebert and Gstrein, Menasse’s definition of inauthenticity in the touristic context revolves around a person or an object becoming something else, and within this dynamic Menasse stresses the lack of fidelity and continuity with a past identity. This use of authenticity, then, shares the same purpose it has in Roman’s narrative, which thus allows Menasse’s depiction of Komprechts’ burgeoning tourism industry its dual function.

4.4.1 König

The central figure for Menasse’s portrayal of the tourism industry is the mayor, Adolf König. He is cast as the catalyst of inauthenticity in the village through his promotion of tourism as a key to economic development, a move that will alter the village and its residents. The very first mention of the industry associates it with far-
fetched designs. Komprechts faces economic ruin after the closure of the glass factory and the quarry, because they are no longer technologically efficient. König and the town council consider a number of recovery proposals, such as a Hot-Dry-Rock hydro-thermal plant, and the production of space shuttle windows (67-70). Tourism, in the form of a quarry museum, is also suggested. Placed alongside the other proposals, tourism thus appears as a scheme that is met with skepticism by the villagers. König and the council reject all proposals as ridiculous and infeasible, in particular the idea of a museum: “Wer soll hineingehen in dein Museum? Die, die vorher dort gearbeitet haben? Sollen die Eintritt bezahlen, damit sie sich ihre früheren Arbeitsplätze anschauen dürfen, ja?” (70). Only after calculating the political gains the tourism industry would offer, however, does König opt for and promote it.

By noting this focus on the mayor’s machinations we see that Menasse is utilizing König’s plans to address the Austrian context and further his critique of the “Sozialpartnerschaft” system, which he has discussed in numerous essays and interviews. The social partnership system rests on unofficial agreements between political, industrial, and labor leaders designed to ensure political and economic stability, which, as Menasse has noted, results in stasis and a calcification of power. König’s plan illustrates these anti-democratic, immobilizing tendencies. König, a Social Democrat, strategically crafts his proposal in secret collusion with his opponents in the conservative and the Green parties. It offers something for everyone by preserving some glass factory jobs, approving the construction of a museum at the quarry, and guaranteeing funds to both workers and farmers for renovations needed to accommodate the coming tourists, all the while ensuring that everything will be environmentally friendly (94-98). His plan ensures that each party can claim some responsibility for the future recovery and thus maintain their
voters and power. By including this constellation in his fictional village’s political structure Menasse thus suggests his attempt to create Komprechts as a microcosm of Austria, while underlining his negative stance toward the industry.

The villagers enthusiastically accept the mayor’s plans, and in König’s rhetoric and self-assessment we can locate Menasse’s skepticism of the instrumentalization of history. König enjoys his newfound reputation as “der Vater des neuen Komprechts” (142) and as a “rettender Engel” (99), two images that convey his wish to claim responsibility for the village’s possible future success. In one episode he refers to his plans as leading to a “neue historische Etappe, die jetzt in unserer Gemeinde beginnt” (94). While König’s plans all result in ruptures with the past, he nonetheless speaks of the necessity of maintaining continuity into the future. König’s references to the present’s responsibility for future generations echoes Menasse’s rejection of the assumption of progress implicit to notions of history. This is most evident in König’s attempt to convince Nemec to sell her home. In this episode, the narrator notes that König, “sprach von der neuen Zeit […] von Dynamik und Flexibilität, von Modernisierungsschub, und immer wieder Zukunft, für die jetzt der Grundstein gelegt werde, Zukunft, die jetzt beginne, Zukunft, für die jeder einen Beitrag leisten müsse, um, wie er sagte, mitpartizipieren zu können” (136). König clearly is manipulating this appeal to the future in lobbying for his agenda: he argues that Nemec’s duty to history and progress should warrant her compliance. This duty to the future, however, is simultaneously a break with the past, which is implicit in König’s euphemism of “flexibility.” By having König use the conventional metaphor of a “Grundstein” Menasse thus foregrounds the rupture König’s designs will cause. The foundation stone refers to the beginning of a new era, yet in the novel stone is consistently linked to
historical continuity and resistance to change. In laying a new “Grundstein” for a new historical era, then, König will literally erase another.

König’s association with broken continuity is reinforced through his name. As we noted with the figure of Anne, Menasse uses changes in nomenclature to illustrate the characters’ relationship to their personal history and to indicate their degree of authenticity. The surname “König” is certainly a reference to this character’s power and his authority in the village and it spells out his function as the prime instigator and benefactor of tourism. König’s name has, however, undergone many changes, which, as Menasse has indicated in an interview, further his microcosmic representation of Komprechts by creating a history of the Second Republic en miniature (qtd. in Heinrich 41). At birth in 1935, the figure was “Adolf Kral,” but by 1938 his Czech name was germanized to “König,” and with his later success as mayor he is referred to as “Dolf,” and later as “der King,” which is the logo from his vanity license plate. Finally, during the village’s unstable economic situation the brushstroke of an unsatisfied voter on the license plate turns him into “Kong,” foreshadowing his downfall (52-3).

König’s touristic designs will impose onto the village the breaks with history implicit in his name. The collective of villagers that the novel describes welcome König’s plans, which the novel depicts through Roman’s videos that document the drastic renovations of their homes (124). This transformation throws the village into a state of euphoria, which the narrator conveys by noting the dominant mood and desire for change: “Neu, neu, neu, wo man auch hinhörte, jeder Satz schien in eine Schachtel verpackt, auf der NEU daraufstand. Neubeginn, Erneuerung, neue Zeit, Neugestaltung” (143). The emergence of the new depends on the erasure of the old, and König and his
political partners even consider giving the village a new name, “Moorbad Komprechts” (142-3), to stress its new role as tourist destination.

Menasse portrays the transformation to tourism as one that will turn many residents into someone else. This is evident in a conversation between König and a political partner, in which they consider his vision of the future: “jeder hätte Geld und Arbeit, beim Hausumbau, und eine Perspektive, als künftiger Selbstständiger, ein Volk der Wirte und Zimmervermieter” (98). The village economy, which was dominated by the quarry and glass factory, will be transformed into one based on private enterprise. This incongruence is reiterated in a later passage in which the observers of Roman’s videos comment on the renovations. When one figure finds the villagers’ homes insignificant, the other retorts: “Arbeiterhäuser an die Fremdenzimmer angebaut wurden – das ist für Sie kein Bild von symbolischer Bedeutung?” (125). This figure implies that the villagers who live in these houses are undergoing a radical change to their identity: as hosts they will transform themselves from workers into entrepreneurs. Menasse’s narrator delivers a final image that encompasses the ambivalence and tensions that result from the radical shifts that König’s plans will release and again plays on the imagery of stone. The narrator describes how: “Kein Stein sollte auf dem anderen bleiben, nun aber nicht mehr deshalb, weil alles zusammenkrachte, sondern weil umgebaut wurde, ein ganz neues Komprechts sollte entstehen, in einem Moment, in dem es zu einem Geisterdorf zu werden drohte” (99). The villagers’ euphoria reflects a view of König’s all-encompassing reconstruction, which will leave no stone untouched, as a positive progression, but in the context of the novel’s metaphoric usage, the narrator’s reference to stone must be read as an allusion to the negative consequences of the tourism industry.
4.4.2 Tourist attractions

Giant stones are literally removed and altered for the touristic refurbishing of the lakeshore, which is the only completed tourist attraction depicted in the novel. Menasse uses this site to address tourism’s environmental impacts, while simultaneously retrenching his emphasis on breaks in historical continuity. Although König’s plan envisions an ecologically sound design, these aims are not being wholeheartedly pursued, which is evident in a conversation between König and the Green party representative, where he makes clear that the bottom line is profit, not the environment:

Und du sagst, keine Hotelneubauten, nur Privatzimmer, sanfter Tourismus, Wanderwege
Erlebniswanderwege, meinetwegen Kräuterwanderwege
Lehrwanderwege, Radwanderwege
Ja, sanft, aber lukrativ. (98)

In König’s caveat, “Sanft aber lukrativ,” the novel continues its economic critique of the tourism industry. It will place financial gain above the preservation of the environment or traditional ways of life and seeks to extract maximum value from virtually any resource. König’s statement reveals Menasse’s skepticism of “soft tourism,” suggesting that it is merely a marketing scheme and that it ultimately fails to synthesize its ecological ideals with the demands of modern tourism.

Menasse exposes the contradictions between the ideals of soft tourism and the ecological ruptures inherent to it and most forms of tourism through his depiction of Braunsee’s conversion into a beach facility. The entire lakeshore is reconstructed for the coming tourists: heavy machinery flattens the natural banks into an accessible shoreline, removing trees and repositioning the moss-covered stones to conform to the designs of landscape architects. Developers then erect different facilities, such as food stalls, bathrooms, changing booths, and parking lots. The hiking trails and parking lots that will
traverse the landscape implicitly signal further external environmental threats in that they will allow even greater numbers of tourists and cars to intrude into this environment. Its future is thus reflected in Roman’s observation: “War nun wieder Ruhe? Hier wird nie wieder Ruhe sein” (128). His comment alludes both to the construction machinery at the site and its future use as a tourist attraction.

Schubumkehr foregrounds the contradictions between the alleged environmental concerns and touristic promotion by including a conversation between König and Tobisch, the designer of Komprechts’ brochure. This cynical episode privileges the lakeshore that existed before its conversion and criticizes touristic development as a radical transformation of the natural lake, by highlighting the inauthenticity of the new development. The brochure images of the lakeshore stylize Komprechts as a natural paradise geared towards the environmentally conscious tourist. But as Tobisch’s praise for König’s endeavors reveals, these images and the refurbished lakeshore are an illusion: “Sieht jetzt gepflegter aus, und doch naturbelassen. Die Menschen wollen Natur, aber sie wollen keine Wildnis” (128). The lake appears to be in a preserved natural state, yet the entire landscape has been altered to present this impression. The lakeshore and its idyllic images in the brochure conceal the environmental degradation wrought through their creation. Tobisch even encourages König to take advantage of this illusion when he advises him to erect more observation towers because they lead tourists to believe that wildlife is present (129). In stressing the deception of Komprechts’ image as a natural paradise, which is conveyed through the towers and the lakeshore, Menasse’s conception of authenticity thus relies on issues of fakeness and truth.120

120 The blurring between image and reality is intensified when the villagers carry Tobisch’s suggestion to an extreme and erect rows of observation towers. For Roman their linear arrangement gives him the impression that they are guard towers constructed along a new international border (141).
Roman’s observations of the lakeshore’s inauthenticity define this notion somewhat differently. His thoughts center on the environmental ruptures that preceded its refashioning, and thus emphasize the deviation from its previous, natural condition. He is dumbfounded at the speed in which the shoreline is completely erased and turned into “dieses Loch im Nichts, diese aufgerissene Lücke im Niemandsland” (128), only to then be reformed as a tourist-friendly and commercialized landscape, which is denoted by the logo: “GEWIDMET VON DER RAFFEISENBANK KOMPRECHTS” (128).121

The wild trees are replaced with symmetrically planted seedlings, and the giant stones are removed, but then reappear, strategically repositioned, stripped of their moss and polished, which gives them the appearance of paper maché. They are repackaged as completely new versions of themselves, which thus figuratively repeats the renaming of individual characters to indicate their inauthenticity and break with the past. The novel’s continues its linkage between granite and history by revealing that the repositioning of the stones also divorces them from their historical context. As we later learn, they have a cultural significance as markers in local legends, but it is stripped along with their moss. The end product of the lakeshore is thus a fully inauthentic landscape that appears brand new, yet in which the traces of the past are no longer present. Since this absence is caused by the destruction of the natural landscape, Menasse thus uses this break in history to address tourism’s ecological impacts.

While the lakeshore’s touristic conversion constitutes a radical rupture with its history, the glass factory’s transformation into a tourist attraction severs it from its past, but then artificially perpetuates it. The glass factory is no longer efficient, but König

121 Menasse’s use of full capitalization presents a parallel with Lebert’s novel, where this stylistic trope was also used to convey touristic commercialization.
cannot authorize its closure because he depends on the votes of the workers. His plans for the village do rescue the factory, but force it to abandon its previous production capacities. First, he calls for a reduction in employees, which he offsets by promoting their future as entrepreneurs. This shift throws existing class tensions further into disarray as some workers make a rocky transition into hosts and pension owners while others contend with the influx of foreign workers (168). When the factory begins to employ foreigners, however, the former workers are incensed, and their actions lead to the violence that concludes the novel.

Second, König endorses the creation of a guided factory tour to attract visitors. He adopts this idea from a managerial consultant, who promises “darauf fahren sie [tourists] ab, wenn sie die Männer mit den nackten Oberkörpern sehen vor den Öfen mit den glühenden Dingern da” (96). This is a point where MacCannell’s notion of staged authenticity is useful for our reading. The glass factory workers will be put on display, but this will be highly mediated for the tourists, as figurative stages would be created from which tourists could observe production. Menasse’s novel takes advantage of the inauthenticity described by MacCannell and actually carries it to its extreme: in his fictional attraction the glass production can not only be observed by tourists, but exists primarily for them. The factory shifts production only to the more profitable “Qualitätsglas, Gourmetglas” (96), which will then be sold to the tourists. The factory’s artificial perpetuation thus presents a variation on the novel’s motif of name-changing indicating some form of essential change. This factory will persist as an inauthentic copy of its old self: it will appear to be a productive factory, but the production is only continued for its own sake- that is, for the visitors who come to watch that production.
The touristic appropriation of the quarry takes a similar form: while the quarry no longer functions as a site for granite extraction, it too is turned into a museum of itself, refashioned as an “Abenteuersteinbruch […] [ein] Lehrsteinbruch […] mit einem Steinbruchmuseum” (137). The quarry will assume forms that are inconsistent with its past state, but at the same time, its new identity relies on “preserving” that past state in the museum. As we noted above, stone acts as a potent reference to history and the past throughout Schubumkehr, and this remains the case with the quarry and the granite extracted from it. On one hand, the quarry seems to display history itself through its exposed layers of sediment and access roads whose descent into the center chart a development. Roman notes the seeming progression when he likens the quarry to “der Negativabdruck des babylonischen Turms, genauso notwendig unvollendbar” (84). On the other hand, the expansive, empty space of the quarry physically constitutes an absence, which calls attention to history by reminding the viewer of what has vanished. We see this with Nemec, who peers into the quarry and recollects not the stone that has been extracted but the miners who once worked there: for her, the quarry is “dieses riesige Gefäß, aus dem sie ihr Leben geschöpft hatte und das jetzt leer war” (173). Menasse further exploits both associations aroused through Nemec’s personal history by having the quarry carry a specific historical connotation that points to Austria’s recent past. His fictional quarry alludes to the real concentration camp Mauthausen with its infamous granite “Todesstiege” which connected the labor and extermination camp to the neighboring quarry.122

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122 Alexandra Millner examines the recurrence of this motif in novels from the 1990s, including Schubumkehr (12-13), and Wolfgang Straub reminds us that this motif of the “Steinbruch” even appears in Der Feuerkreis, as Jerschek, on his initial approach to the villa passes by three abandoned quarries (Willkommen 120).
The association with Mauthausen suggests how Austria’s postwar denial of its fascist past is imbricated in the tourism industry, a suggestion that undergirds the novel’s references to fictional plays. The amateur playwright Trisko begins to compose a play about the quarry’s history, which he plans to stage for Komprechts’ expected tourists. His research uncovers the quarry’s hidden past: it previously belonged to a Jewish owner, but was aryanized in 1938. During wartime forced laborers were used in the quarry, and, many were executed during an escape attempt shortly before the end of the war, a clear fictional parallel with the so-called “Mühlviertler Hasenjagd” at Mauthausen. Trisko plans to incorporate these facts into his play, “Das Denkmal,” that will be structured around the debates for a village square monument, which eventually was erected not as a memorial to the murdered laborers but to commemorate local soldiers. Trisko never writes this play, however, because König threatens a boycott by the local actors, intervening against what he calls an “Aufwärmen alter Hüte” (165). He then assures Trisko that his ideas would be more appropriate for the museum, because, as the narrator notes, it is there that the village residents: “sollen sich im Museum mit diesen Fakten auseinandersetzen, mit historischen Fakten, dort wird man nicht sagen können, das sei nur Literatur, mit der er provozieren habe wollen” (166). König’s paternalistic gesture is clearly an attempt to silence Trisko’s critical perspective on the village’s past. The novel never reveals what is displayed in the museum, but given König’s earlier insistence that the “Kriegerdenkmal” be included in Komprechts’ brochure (127), the sincerity of his intentions regarding the museum is questionable.

Through his characters’ conflicts regarding the play and the museum’s contents Menasse highlights the role touristic sites can play in shaping national images. The quarry museum will present and construct local and national history to both the residents
and to tourists. The initial conception of the museum for example, reveals an attempt to situate Komprechts’ significance within a larger national narrative. The museum planner enumerates the structures built with the local granite, all of which are located either in Vienna or in former imperial provinces (98), which constructs Komprechts as a figure in the Habsburg history while simultaneously reinforcing notions of Austrian centrality in an imaginary “Mitteleuropa.” Through this privileging of the imperial legacy and the likely elision of Austria’s more recent past in the museum Menasse implicitly questions the ideological dimensions of the touristic presentation of heritage. And by highlighting König’s intervention into the museum’s content, the novel addresses the political and economic influences on what history will be represented. Like Der Feuerkreis, then, Schubumkehr thematizes tourist attractions’ role in shaping the memory of the past. In Lebert’s novel the sublimity of the natural landscape functioned as an attraction tempting the viewer to forget. In Menasse’s text the man-made attraction will likely be constructed to downplay or even erase the fascist past altogether. The quarry museum, then, complicates the novel’s metaphorical use of stone. In most instances stone is used to signify authenticity and continuity with the past, but through its transformation into a tourist attraction, the quarry – the very source of Ölzant’s markers or Nemec’s house – becomes inauthentic and will enact a distortion of history.

Menasse’s three tourist attractions all turn on their deviation from the past, which is underlined in that each one is in the process of conversion. This allows Menasse to portray their transformation as one that renders them inauthentic because it involves falseness, which we saw in the idyllic ads for the lakeshore and in the likely content of the quarry museum, or a break with what these places represented for the village and its residents, in particular the quarry, which was once the lifeblood of the village. Menasse
thus utilizes the transformation of these attractions to concretize the environmental and socio-economic impacts of touristic development, a gesture that is even more evident in the character of Nemec.

4.4.3 Nemec

The most pivotal figure for the novel’s critique of the tourism industry is Frau Nemec, because the way of life she represents is threatened by the promotion of tourism in Komprechts, as König plots to expropriate her house. Her resistance to König’s designs and her contrast with other figures reveal Nemec as a locus of authenticity in the novel. Consequently, she is the character drawn with the most stable sense of identity, who, along with Ölzant, illustrates the strongest continuity with her past. In this figure and her opposition to the inauthenticity of the tourism industry, then, we can locate both a critique of tourism’s social impacts and a contrastive position for Roman and his dilemma regarding the past.

“Nemec” is a name rich in symbolism, that indicates her role in the novel’s dramatic conflicts and that underscores her degree of authenticity. First, through its similarity with the word “Nemesis,” this points to her conflict with König. In German, “Nemesis” has the meaning “punishing or retributive justice” and stems from the name of the Greek god of justice and revenge (Wahrig 915). Both of these nuances allude to Nemec’s actions against König, and the English meaning of “nemesis” as “arch rival” resonates as well and foreshadows her ultimate antagonism with König.

Second, Menasse highlights Nemec’s continuity with her past and thus her authenticity by calling attention to the fact that her name has never been changed. Unlike Anne or König, whose changes illustrate their shifts in identities and political
opportunism, Nemec does not change hers, which is of Slavic origin, and demonstrates her connection to the past and her resistance to change. As we also saw in Lebert’s nomenclature (“Jerschek”), the use of a Slavic term situates this character in an Austrian multicultural, monarchical era. When we consider the Czech meaning of “Nemec,” its role as a marker of a multi-ethnic, Habsburg past becomes more complicated: “Nemec” means “German.” Menasse was perhaps unaware of the meaning of this common surname, but his use of this term heightens the symbolism of the name change for the novel and reinforces Nemec’s resistance to change. König and Schneider make their names German, but Nemec’s name already is “German” and refers to the intercultural dichotomy that lead the others to change their name. Menasse underscores Nemec’s distinction from other figures by having her reflect on their name changes. The original name of Frau Schneider, the representative of the pensioner’s club, was “Krejci,” and after she informs Nemec of her removal from the board, the narrator describes Nemec’s cynical thoughts: “Ja glaubten sie denn, der König, die Schneider, sie hätte das vergessen? Alle hatten es vergessen. […] Heutzutage heiraten die Kinder der Geschwisterkinder und wissen nicht einmal mehr daß sie verwandt sind, und diese debile Inzuchtbrut ist dann wieder eine neue Zeit, die Zukunft, der Aufschwung” (139-40). Just as her name maintains ties to history, Nemec’s memory preserves the past as well, one that others would have forgotten. By comparing König’s touristic plans with the rise of National Socialism, Nemec’s thoughts in this passage enhance Menasse’s denigration of the tourism industry and its promise of progress.

Nemec’s home is targeted for touristic development by König, and Menasse’s depiction of this site strengthens her association with authenticity. Again, the metaphor

123 I am grateful to Katharina Gebhardt and Michaela Peroutkova for this insight.
of stone solidifies this connection. Nemec’s house is made from the local granite and is
the lifetime achievement of her deceased husband, a quarry worker. He elaborately
constructed the house to appear as if it were made from one giant piece of granite, which
prompts the narrator’s description of it as: “ein gigantisches Wohnmonument, an dem
ejeder Orkan zerbrechen würde” (50). The lack of fragmentation in her house thus
signifies the wholeness, completeness, and authenticity that the novel attaches to her.
Linked to stone and to its properties of strength, duration, and immutability, then, Nemec
embodies both historical continuity and a resistance to change and adaptation. A sudden
shift in the weather at the start of the novel, however, portends that Nemec will be
confronted by radical changes. This freezing fog storm, which levels the forest
surrounding her, symbolizes the changes that will result from Komprechts’
transformation and is perceived by Nemec as a supernatural harbinger of misfortune (22).
It arrives in the form of König’s idea to turn Nemec’s stone home into the quarry
museum. He pressures Nemec to sell in exchange for a generous pension and new,
modern apartment, but she resists his offer.

In her resistance to König, Nemec fulfills a contrastive function in the novel’s
critique of the tourism industry. Nemec’s aversion to change and the conversion of her
home distinguishes her from the collective of villagers, who accept König’s plans.
Menasse lampoons these workers and farmers for their investment in the tourism industry
through the commentary of the observers of Roman’s videos. Viewing images of the
houses, they note: “Das hat etwas / Groteskes” (124) and then comment on the bizarre
uniformity of these houses. The uniqueness of Nemec’s house and her refusal to
surrender it continue the denigration of the villager’s accession to König. In particular,
Nemec’s example contrasts with Anne’s compliance, casting her willing participation in Komprechts’ touristic conversion in negative relief.

The opposition between Nemec and Anne is not limited to their homes, but extends to their relationship with nature. Anne moves to Komprechts to become an organic farmer, and Nemec, though not a farmer, nonetheless leads a life that is presented as genuinely natural, which thus strongly distinguishes her ways of life from Anne’s organic lifestyle. Anne, for example, is depicted as making homemade bread and cheese, but later abandons this for, as Roman perceives it, “gekauftes Brot und gekauften Käse, das war kein Käse mehr, das waren kalorienreduzierte gelbe Plastikscheiben” (113). Nemec, on the other hand, is pictured making a dish for König that he describes as “[echt]” (172), and to make the sauce for this dish, she even collects wild mushrooms. Anne merely paints images of mushrooms on glass plates and tiles in her farmhouse and later plans to sell them to her guests (61, 178).

The depiction of Nemec’s connection to nature reveals the novel’s valorization of the authenticity of traditional ways of life. As mentioned above, Nemec is often associated with the surrounding landscape, especially granite and the forest, associations that contribute to a naturalization of her authenticity and that foreground her rooting in local traditions.124 Nemec’s connection to nature is revealed in particular through her knowledge of the local flora and fauna. The narrator reminds us that “Frau Nemec kannte die Stellen genau, wo die Pilze wuchsen. Welche zu finden, war für sie nicht Glücksache” (152). Her skill in finding the mushrooms does not appear entirely

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124 Nemec’s connections to the natural world create a parallel with the Mutter Gisson figure in Hermann Broch’s Die Verzauberung. Nemec’s opponent in the novel is König, who bears similarities with Broch’s Marius Ratti, who attempts to persuade the villagers to follow his demonic plans, and to Broch’s Wenzel, Ratti’s most devout disciple. But whereas Mutter Gisson could impart her knowledge to Agatha before her death, Nemec does not have a figure to ensure her knowledge and continuity.
mythical, however, because the narrator explicitly reminds us that she picked the wild mushrooms using the same process she had done since her childhood, cutting them at the base to ensure that their spores are dispersed. This passage thus embeds Nemec within the seasonal, cyclical world of nature and positions her as a force in touch with its propagation, which centers her within a continuity. That König’s plans threaten her bond with nature is reinforced in an episode depicting the renovation of the lakeshore, in which Roman watches as Nemec is told to move away from a giant stone so that it can be loaded onto a truck (127). The import of this scene is that both Nemec and the natural world can literally be removed to make way for the alleged progress of touristic development. König similarly seeks to remove Nemec from her stone house – both literally and figuratively. Menasse’s depiction of Nemec’s home as antiquated thus underlines both her difference from the modern world.125 Thus for Nemec, König’s offer of a “neue, helle Gemeindewohnung, wo sie alles hätte, was sie bräuchte, alles neu” (136) amounts to a double loss of her way of life.

Menasse’s clear stress on Nemec’s authenticity ultimately serves his address of tourism’s negative socio-cultural consequences. Nemec and the ways of life she embodies are threatened by touristic development. Menasse’s novel adopts what amounts to a romantic anti-capitalist stance on the promotion of the tourism industry, depicting it as overturning existing, traditional structures by reducing them to economic terms. Nemec and her way of life become an additional cost in König’s touristic plans: he attempts to buy out Nemec, a move that will eradicate her way of life. Exuding

125 The antiquated nature of her house is revealed in the opening pages, where it is suggested that her house does not have electricity. When the forest collapses, the absence of the trees and the shade they provide results in entirely new light conditions in Nemec’s house. Complicit with Menasse’s teleological critique, this “enlightenment” does not result in progress for Nemec, but throws her world further into disorder. (The image of a room suddenly being illuminated is one Menasse borrows from his essay, Das Land ohne Eigenschaften (7).)
authenticity, Nemec represents a “non-contemporaneity”\textsuperscript{126} that reveals contradictions in
the notion of progress that is inherent to economic development. It threatens her with
expulsion to a new apartment that would alienate her from her antiquated way of life.
Through her potential expropriation, displacement, and loss of authenticity Menasse thus
presents a skeptical image of the promised benefits of the tourism industry.

While the threat to Nemec’s home serves Menasse’s representation of tourism’s
negative consequences and sets up her conflict with König, what ultimately charges it is
his destruction of Nemec’s ornamental angels. This act triggers Nemec’s revenge and
intensifies Menasse’s focus both on tourism and on the concept of history. Nemec’s
husband built a family crypt and to complete his project ordered three granite angel
statues from Nemec’s brother, a sculptor in Vienna.\textsuperscript{127} Long after her husband’s death,
the angels finally arrive, each depicting different figures from the Last Judgement: a
“Würgeengel,” Engel mit Zornesschale,” and a “Posaunenengel des Jüngsten Gerichts”
(51-2). The angels are not delivered to the cemetery, but to Nemec’s home, and her first
response is to offer them to the mayor. König, however, is consumed with finding a
solution for Komprechts’ financial dilemma and ignores her (51-3). Without Nemec’s
approval, he later has a crane operator working nearby dump the statues into the quarry.
The three angel statues fall back to the ground where they lie “in unzählige Teile
zerbrochen, als Geröll in der Sohle des Steinbruchs” (79-80). The energy, dedication,

\textsuperscript{126} My thoughts on this term from Ernst Bloch are informed by Steven Brockman’s study on the literature
of German Reunification, in which he writes “The very speed and remorselessness of economic “progress”
creates for Bloch a nostalgic resistance located everywhere in values, traditions, institutions, and social
groups that are threatened by that “progress”” (170). Nemec constitutes a similar force of resistance to
König’s plans for the village.

\textsuperscript{127} This figure, Franz Zahradnik, and his angel sculptures appear in the second novel in Menasse’s trilogy,
Selige Zeiten, brüchige Welt.
and above all time that was expended in the creation and delivery of these statues is erased with one gesture by König.\textsuperscript{128}

With the image of angels falling and smashing into shards of rubbish, Menasse’s novel enacts a reversal of the famous image from Walter Benjamin’s ninth thesis of history.\textsuperscript{129} The storm of progress propels Benjamin’s angel into the future with its gaze fixed on the past, whose fragments collect before the angel as it moves upward. Menasse’s angels are thrown off this course: his storm of progress blows the angel downward into the past, where it crashes back onto the rubble heap of history. On one level, it reiterates Menasse’s criticism of the teleological concept of history, by figuratively having the notion of an implicit goal of history smash to the ground. On another level, Menasse’s play on Benjamin’s image adds weight to his negative view of the tourism industry. Its alleged progress through economic development and modernization is turned upside down and results in destruction.

The angels’ destruction is foremost a foreshadowing of what each character will do to the other. König has these stone angels removed, and he in effect attempts the same with Nemec. The novel’s description of these statues, which contains brief narratives about the angels of revenge and judgement, allude to Nemec’s actions. The loss of these angels becomes her motivation for revenge. When König first makes Nemec an offer for her house, she immediately questions him about the statues, to which he replies that they: “wären natürlich eine Attraktion gewesen für das Museum, ein toller künstlerischer Aufputz, Sie haben recht, Frau Nemec, aber wer hat das damals wissen können, Sie nicht,”\textsuperscript{128}

\textsuperscript{128} The mysterious disappearance of these statues is heightened in a letter Roman writes to a friend describing what he has seen in Komprechts: “Drei Skulpturen aus Stein, von ernormer Größe, bedrohlich […] Das waren Tonnen von Stein, wo kamen sie her, wo sind sie hin?”(86).

\textsuperscript{129} This reversal of Benjamin’s angel appears in various guises in the other novels of Menasse’s trilogy as well. For more on the angel motif in Menasse’s works see Meyer (1996) and Müller-Tamm.
ich nicht, wer hätte denn gedacht, [...] daß die also plötzlich ins Konzept passen würden” (137). When Nemec crafts her revenge, the novel returns her to the scene of König’s misdeed, where she: “schaute in die Tiefe und versuchte im Schotter und Abraum die Stücke der Engel zu erkennen, die dort zerborsten waren, sie konnte es nicht. Sie waren nicht erkennbar, als wären sie nicht mehr da” (139). König’s drive for progress has destroyed this element of Nemec’s family history, and thus indicates the further ruptures that König’s touristic plans will spell for her. As the image above suggests, König’s plot will reduce the totality of her previous way of life to rubble, which cannot be made whole again.

Menasse reiterates this notion in two other scenes, in which Nemec observes the landscape. When she notes that the collapsed forest has been artificially replanted, she perceives this landscape as being similar to a “Baumschule” (140), an image that repeats that of the freshly polished boulders along the lakeshore. Her environment has thus had its history erased. This is already apparent in an earlier scene in which Nemec ponders the sounds and images of this new environment, struck by its deviation from the past. As the narrator notes, Nemec imagines that she is now living “in diesem gespenstisch stillen Seepanorama, in dieser falschen Idylle, wo ihre eigene Kindheit, ihr ganzes Leben von Lärm erfüllt gewesen ist, vom Leben des Steinbruchs” (134). This passage echoes the interview cited above, in which Menasse describes Austria’s tourism industry as having given the landscape “eine unheimliche und gespenstische Kunstatur” (“Unfähig” 23-4). The inauthentic landscape that Nemec confronts is similarly haunted with the memories of the past: her “Seepanorama” and the panorama of the quarry of the past have vanished and no longer offer her a sense of Heimat.
Nemec is thus faced with resisting König’s pressures to sell, yet live in a space that has become false and inauthentic for her or with accepting his offer, which again would force her to abandon her ways. In deciding to exact revenge, she rejects both options. Her resolve must thus be read not only as retaliation for the statues, but also as a response to the fragmentation and alienation that tourism will bring for her. The narrator relays her thoughts as Nemec plots her revenge: “Sie wird nicht fliegen, sich nicht stoßen lassen” (139). Clearly alluding to König’s removal of the statues, Nemec refuses to comply with his plans and be pushed aside for the village’s touristic development. Nor will she remain in “dieser falschen Idylle” from which her previous existence has been erased. Her predicament thus exhibits a parallel with Roman’s in that she too must choose between holding onto her past or abandoning it. As we will see in our final section, Menasse resolves these characters’ responses to their dilemma with history differently.

4.4.4 Trisko

_Schubumkehr_ describes three plays by the fictional amateur author, Vinzenz Trisko. By including these plays, two of which have both an implicit and explicit focus on the impacts of touristic development, Menasse’s novel calls attention to the role that literature has played in the investigation of the tourism and its effects on Austrian society, and reminds us that his novel takes part in this investigation as well. As we noted above, Trisko’s second play, “Das Denkmal,” is neither performed nor written, because König pressures him into abandoning this work, which would have exposed Kompcrechts’ fascist legacies. The performance of Trisko’s first play, “Steinreich,” and the composition of his third, “Gründerzeit,” are similarly cut short. Although these two works are never
completed in the reality of the novel, a closer investigation of them is beneficial for our reading for three reasons. First, it will become clear that Menasse furthers his negative image of tourism through his depiction of these texts. Second, they continue his engagement with the concept of history, in particular with regard to notions of a goal of history. Finally, examining the construction of these plays yields insights into Menasse’s reflection on literature’s role in the critique of the tourism industry.

The performance of “Steinreich” is depicted in the opening pages of the novel, but its relevance for Menasse’s criticism of tourism becomes apparent only once the village begins its transformation. The play and its curtailed performance signal a skeptical commentary on the industry’s developmental potential. “Steinreich” merges two seventeenth century legends about Komprechts and its economic plights. The first concerns Barbara Witty, a peasant who experiences a divine vision revealing how to extract granite, which she then delivers to the villagers, who employ it and secure Komprechts’ fortunes. The second centers on the figure of Graf Wenzel, who makes a pact with the devil to burn down the local church in exchange for the power to turn the abundant granite into gold.130 Wenzel sets fire to the church, but the villagers awaken to save it, which sends the Devil back to Hell, who had been watching the fire from a large lakeshore stone, whose throne-like indentation earns it the name “Teufelstein.”

Menasse links characters from both legends to the village’s champion of the tourism industry, König. First, he assumes a position like that assumed by the legendary Barbara Witty figure, in that his touristic plans promise the villagers a means of bringing prosperity to Komprechts. His idea even resembles a vision, because he crafts it after

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130 The name Wenzel makes another allusion to Broch’s *Verzauberung*, in which the character Wenzel is the prime follower of and recruiter for the demonic figure Marius Ratti.
seeing a stranger, whom he assumes to be a tourist, filming the village square (94). For König, this alleged tourist takes on the role of the message-bearing angel from the legend, which again ironically associates the tourist with an economic savior. The person König sees, however, is not the type of tourist he desires, but is most likely Roman wandering in Komprechts (94). After König’s proposal is accepted and the village is thrown into a euphoria of renovation, the narrator notes that König “fühlte sich gleichsam als Barbara Witty des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts, als rettender Engel dieses Gemeinwesens” (99).

Menasse tempers König’s role as the legendary Witty figure by further associating him with both the figure of Graf Wenzel and the Devil. In the play’s performance, König has the role of Wenzel, and this thus invites the reader to compare his later plans for the village to a Faustian bargain for riches.131 This implicitly places the tourism industry in a negative light: rendering it a dubious enterprise necessitating personal compromise and risk. But since König, spurned by financial managers and advertising agents, actually encourages the villagers to accept his plans, a more appropriate association is with the Devil. The villagers as a whole will assume the role of Wenzel and enthusiastically support König’s plot. The figurative church that König indirectly demands his followers burn finds its equivalent in the environment, the existing economic structures, the traditional ways of life, and the connections to the past that villagers, such as Nemec, must abandon.

The parallels between “Steinreich” and the events of Schubumkehr thus reveal that Menasse utilizes these legends to envelope a critique of the tourism industry. First, the Witty legend points to tourism’s often hollow promise of prosperity and recovery,

131 In Christain Berger’s film Mautplatz (1995), we find a similar demonic deal with regard to the tourism industry. In that film the decision to become a transit officer, and thus be responsible for the influx of traffic through Tyrol, is depicted as a Faustian bargain that will put an end to the rural, peasant ways.
which is then suggested in the novel’s depiction of the loans and subsidies that the
villagers need to finance their renovations (97-8). Second, the transposing of the
Wenzel/Devil legend onto König advances the novel’s censure of the tourism impacts,
which become evident through Nemec’s displacement and the radical alteration of the
lakeshore. Menasse solidifies the play’s critical function, by having the performance of
“Steinreich” cut short before its conclusion. Thus both the rescue of the village from the
Devil’s fires and the recovery of the village through Barbara Witty’s insights never come
to fruition. Just after the church is set ablaze in the action of the play, real volunteer
firemen burst onto the stage warning the audience of a fire near the glass factory.132
The audience is initially “baff wegen des überzeugenden Realismus der Inszenierung” (13),
but then leaves, ending the performance. The legendary rescue of the village, then, never
happens, pointing towards a pessimistic view of the outcome of König’s plans.

Trisko’s final play, “Gründerzeit,” is set in the novel’s present and has a
concretely direct reference to the events taking place in Komprechts. While this play is
never performed and only its first act is written, its plot and Trisko’s aims for it are
detailed for the reader. The narrator notes that Trisko:

beschrieb, wie die Gemeinde drängend, auf den Ausbau von Fremdenzimmern zu
setzen und Werbekampagnen plante, um Fremde herzuleiten, während zugleich
in der Gemeinde eine fremdenfeindliche Stimmung aufkam, wegen der
Gastarbeiter, die plötzlich in der Glasfabrik eingestellt wurden. Durch den
Lohndruck und die Rationalisierungen in der Glasfabrik lebten auch alte
tlassenkämpferische Parolen auf, die sich seltsam vermischten mit dem
Unternehmerbewusstsein, das die zukünftigen Zimmerwirte gleichzeitig
herausbildeten. (167-8)

From the description of the play, it is clear that it resembles much of Schubumkehr itself,
and Menasse uses these parallels to embed into his novel an ironic reflection on the

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132 This warning proves unfounded as the firemen soon discover that they have mistaken an aurora borealis
for a fire.
interplay between literature and societal critique, portraying Trisko as idealistic and somewhat naïve. Trisko sees his play as an attempt to make sense of his surroundings and to raise questions regarding the future development of Komprechts and its reliance on tourism. As the narrator notes Trisko seeks to engage with the historical epoch and focus on “die aktuelle Aufbruchsstimmung, die Wende, die neue Zeit in Komprechts, der er mit seinem Stück ein Denkmal setzen wollte, ja, dieses Stück nun sollte ein “Denkmal” werden” (166). Given Trisko’s ambitions, “Denkmal” must be understood as both monument and memorial: that is, as a historical account of the era that is depicted and as a warning for future generations about the issues it depicts.

Trisko’s goal is not merely to record history, but to foment change: namely, the development of an ecological consciousness through soft tourism. The divergent impulses in these aims become evident when the narrator relays Trikso’s conception of his role as an artist: “[Trisko] verstand sich als Seismograph, als Sonde, die alle Regungen, alle wirkenden Kräfte und Widersprüche in der Gemeinde aufzeichnete, um dann exemplarisch zu zeigen, daß am Ende die Vernunft siegte. Er stellte sich vor, wie die Komprechtser einmal, wenn sie sein Stück sahen, sagen werden: Ja, so wars!” (168). Trisko aims to record the events of the present with a scientific accuracy, but also wants his play to provide an example of the triumph of reason. The metaphors of the probe and the seismograph foreground this contradiction. Both should precisely register fluctuations of data as they randomly occur. Trisko’s ultimate aim, however, is not to record the historical period, but to chart a path towards the achievement of a utopian goal. His metaphorical instruments, then, have been manipulated: they do not record impressions accurately but are programmed to deliver the conclusions Trisko has established in advance.
The title of the play already alludes to Trisko’s pedagogical and political aims. The word refers to the dawn of a new age, but also to the Green party: “im Titel ‘Gründerzeit’ steckte auch das Wort Grün drinnen, und das sollte die Pointe sein: der Sieg der Vernunft, des ökologischen Bewußtseins” (166). As this description reveals, Menasse includes Trisko’s intentions to highlight the character’s faith in notions of a dialectical progression towards a better society. Just as König envisions his developmental plans will lead to a better future, Trisko imagines that his art will create a model for achieving a more enlightened state. He hopes to make an implicit critique of the tensions present in Komprechts and point out resolutions to them. The narrator again describes Trisko’s aims, in which we can see further parallels with the novel:

Das Ringen von alter und neuer Zeit in einer Umbruchsituation, notierte Trisko in seinem Konzept, auf der einen Seite: Modernisierung, Euphorie, Dynamik; auf der anderen Seite: Ängste, Aufleben archaischer Mythen und überlebter Ideologien; als sich aber herausstellt, daß das Konzept vom sanften Toruismus funktioniert, verlieren die Menschen ihre Ängste, überlebte Ideologien sterben endgültig ab, der Aberglaube zerbricht an der aufgeklärten Praxis, und Komprechts steht am Ende des dritten Akts als Umweltmustergemeinde da, der es gelingt, vernünftige Traditionen und altes Wissen mit den Anforderungen des Fortschrittes glücklich zu versöhnen. (167)

Menasse uses Trisko’s ideals to thematize his critique of history and teleology. Trisko clearly subscribes to notions of history as progress towards a more positive, rational goal. In his writings on history, Menasse rejects such a position, and in this novel he will use the outcome of “Gründerzeit” to express this rejection.

Trisko’s play never proceeds beyond the first act. After its publication, a real murder occurs in Komprechts that seems to follow the events described in Trisko’s fictional text. Although he has nothing to do with the murder, Trisko is interrogated and eventually arrested as an accomplice. As the title of the newspaper report on Trisko reveals, his play becomes a: “Chronik eines angekündigten Mordes” (169), not the
chronicle of Komprechts’ ecological awakening. Trisko, then, is never able to conceive his utopian goal. What this shows is that the progress, which he assumed would prevail, is revealed as an illusion.

Through this outcome of Trisko’s play, Menasse’s novel makes a commentary on the pedagogical impulse in literature. Menasse enhances this focus by creating parallels between Trisko and a well known author, who pursued such aims, Adalbert Stifter.133 Schubumkehr playfully caricatures the pedagogical and agitational aims of authors, such as Stifter, by depicting the subversion of Trisko’s goals for the play. On one hand, the play is entirely, if ironically, successful in its goal of providing a model for emulation. The play’s first act depicts a murder of the child of a guest worker at the lakeshore, and in the reality of the novel, a child who is presumed to be the daughter of a guest worker is actually murdered, which lands Trisko in prison. This pedagogically inclined author is thus punished when his aims of edifying the audience seem to be achieved. Although this is not the “lesson” Trisko intends, his readers “learn” and apply it in reality. On the other hand, the events of the novel show that Trisko fails to achieve his visions of awakening environmental consciousness and instructing his fellow citizens about soft tourism. In the novel’s reality, the villagers subscribe to the “unenlightened” modes of thinking that

133 Stifter was a teacher and also served as the director of the educational system in the province of Upper Austria. Trisko does not share the same prestigious position, but is an “Oberlehrer” (9). Menasse’s work includes many intertextual references to Stifter. One of the first lines of Menasse’s first novel reads: “Mein Vater war kein Kaufmann” (Sinnliche Gewißheit, 7), which is a negation of the opening line of Stifter’s Nachsommer and thus points to Menasse’s critical engagement with Stifter. In Schubumkehr, the protagonist directly quotes passages from Der Nachsommer in his videos (48-9), and as Meyer (“Kein Mensch” 85) notes, the frozen fog storm in Schubumkehr is a motif borrowed from Stifter’s Die Mappe meines Urgroßvaters. Furthermore, the symbolic significance of stone in the novel and the granite landscape that is traversed in Schubumkehr further recall Stifter’s works, which are often set in Upper Austrian and Bohemian regions that border the region where Menasse’s fictional Komprechts is located.
Trisko’s play seeks to combat: superstitions, myths, fears, and resistance to touristic development take the upper hand, culminating in the murders that close the novel.\textsuperscript{134}

The shortcomings of Trisko’s goals and the fact that Menasse explicitly includes them in the novel suggest his own reflection on the pursuit of pedagogical impulses or political engagement through literature. Our reading of Schubumkehr shows that it clearly pursues these goals, and that it affects an implicit critique of Austrian political structures, the response to the fascist past, and above all the impacts of the tourism industry. Menasse does not, however, attempt the exemplification that Trikso’s play would have pursued. That is, he does not portray the village’s realization of the ideals of sustainable tourism, and instead features negative developments, where progress is rejected and utopian, historical goals are not achieved. These negative events nonetheless paint an image of the tourism industry and its consequences to the reader that is unmistakably critical.

Menasse’s representation of Trisko’s project and its failed outcome, then, can be read, on the one hand, as an ironic perspective on his novel’s own gestures at societal critique. He is critical of this tradition of pedagogically engaged literature, but at the same time, his novel participates in it. On the other hand, I contend that Menasse seems to mock Trisko’s goals of enacting critique through literature to downplay that his work attempts, although through different means, a similar task. The descriptions of the plays and the intentions behind them contain explicitly critical perspectives on the impacts of

\textsuperscript{134} The failure of Trisko’s intentions and the resurgence of mythic perspectives in the village illuminates another parallel, albeit an inverted one, between the play and Menasse’s novel. Trisko seeks to show the triumph of reason and enlightenment, and Menasse’s novel, following the author’s aim of showing a process of “Entgeistierung” and a reversal of Hegel’s progression to the absolute spirit, traces the regression back to through lesser stages of consciousness. One of these most primitive stages is the mythic mindset, in which supernatural or irrational explanations are given for phenomena. Menasse’s novel portrays such a regression with the events that close the novel. The murder of the child, for example, is viewed as the fulfillment of a village superstition that Braunsee claims a victim every eight years (176).
the tourism industry, but remain embedded in the novel. The plays, while they remain only descriptions of fictional works, thus function like texts within the text. This makes them part of Menasse’s novel, yet seem to be simultaneously not a part of it, which functions to draw attention away from the novel’s own tendentious, critical motives. This is consistent with Menasse’s general approach in Schubumkehr of allowing the reader to locate his criticism in symbolic narrative conflicts and images, rather than through overt polemics. These plays thus confirm Menasse’s critical impulses even while they may seem to neutralize them.

4.5 Schubumkehr’s catastrophic conclusion

The catastrophic final scenes of the novel parallel its different narrative strands and bring their conflicts to a conclusion. I use the term “catastrophic” because, aside from Roman and Anne, most of the novel’s principal characters are killed, or in the case of Trisko, sent to prison. In the resolution of the villager’s reaction to their touristic transformation we can locate the finalization of Menasse’s critique of both the tourism industry and the concept of history. The ambivalent conclusion of Roman’s identity crisis bears similarities with the villager’s outcome, yet the attribution of inauthenticity with both is divergent and assumes conflicting valences, which I argue affirms Menasse’s critical perspective on tourism.

The village itself is confronted with a major shift as the “Wende” of 1989 takes place at the close of the novel. The only reference to this event involves a scene in which ministers from Austria and Czechoslovakia turn the lifting of the border barriers into a media circus (180). By placing this certainly life-changing event on the final pages of the novel, Menasse intensifies its significance as a radical shift for the village. The “Wende”
in effect places a question mark on the village’s touristic transformation, as Komprechts would have to rethink its new position as a gateway to another country rather than the last outpost to the Iron Curtain. Menasse thus aligns the “Wende” with the murders and Roman’s departure, as it involves a drastic transition from one era or condition to another, bringing an end to some identities and opening the door to others.

The peculiarities of Menasse’s depiction of the “Wende” of 1989 reveal his concerns for addressing the Austrian context. While Schubumkehr is set in Austria before the main events of the Wende, the novel seems to refer to the situation after the “Wende” and to a former communist country, not Austria. For example, the novel depicts an economically backward region where the former primary industries, both highly subsidized, are shut down. The villagers then adopt a new and profit-driven economic system, which is partly imposed from outside. This plan then radically alters the village, throwing some villagers into a state of euphoria and inducing in others both melancholic disorientation and violent resistance to the changes. We can illuminate this dissonance by recognizing that Austria’s joining of the European Union is the context that is more directly addressed by the reference to the “Wende” in Schubumkehr.135

The novel depicts Komprechts’ debates about tourism and then the beginning of its conversion process, and they echo those about entering the EU, in that they center on economic dimensions. König’s plans, which are titled “Komprechts 2000” (94), emphasize the future and a new age.136 The mayor’s speeches are filled with references “von der neuen Zeit und von der hoffnungsvollen Zukunft der Gemeinde” and encourage

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135 The European Union is only briefly mentioned in the novel (69), but in the novel’s temporal setting of 1989 entry into the European Union was the subject of an unsuccessful referendum.

136 In Norbert Gstrein’s novel Der Kommerzialrat, another work from 1995, we also find the depiction of a village’s drive to boost its tourism industry, and the title of its campaign bears a striking similarity to König’s. The Kommerzialrat in Gstrein’s novel titles his recovery plan, “Tourismus 2000” (147).
“mitpartizipieren” (136). Not participating will mean Komprechts will be excluded from this future recovery, which reverberates with campaigns warning against Austria’s exclusion from the European Union. The changes that will occur in Komprechts implicitly refer to the changes that would occur in Austria after joining the European Union. Komprechts makes a choice that will open itself up to the outside world and will make its economy dependent on the economy of its neighbors, who will come as visitors and workers to Komprechts – the same dynamics at work in the entry to the European Union. The reference to this new era for Austria, then, is only heightened by the fact that the novel closes with the major historical shift of 1989. Menasse’s representation of the “Wende” thus can be read as a symbol for Austria’s entry into the European Union in 1995. Since the novel concludes with this shift, yet does not show its fallout, Schubumkehr addresses the situation of the (Austrian) reader of 1995, when the novel was released. Just as the characters experience a radical and sudden shift that will undoubtedly influence their plans and identities, Austria in 1995 stood at the threshold of a new era through its entry into a united Europe. It too was confronted with the challenge of maintaining previous elements of its national identity and incorporating others, for example, the neutrality clause, its forbidden union with Germany, and its role as a bridge between East and West.

In the fictional events described in Schubumkehr the novel’s characters respond to less dramatic events, which nonetheless induce radical changes. König’s restructuring of the economy, for example, creates shifts in identity for the villagers that can be seen in the murder of a child at the lakeshore, which landed Trisko in jail. As we noted earlier, this shift leads to tensions between the new entrepreneurs and the former workers (168). When foreign workers are used to replace the already reduced staff at the glass factory,
the tensions in the village find an outlet in xenophobia. Because former workers have opted to become hosts, yet become resentful of outsiders, this xenophobia must be seen as an ironic commentary on tourism and the new roles it demands of the villagers. The villagers illustrate a conflicted position akin to Roman’s: on the one hand, they have accepted their new roles and transformed their homes to welcome paying tourists, but on the other, they are angry at foreigners whom they perceive as having taken their former jobs, which indicates their attempt to maintain their previous identities. The result of this internal conflict is the murder of a child, who is mistaken for the child of a foreign worker. This murder reveals how the villagers ultimately seek to resist change: they attempt to rid themselves of what they perceive as a force threatening their previous ways.

By having the murder stem from a mistaken identity, Menasse turns it into a metaphor for the effects of tourism on the local population. The villagers’ hatred is directed at foreigners, yet the person who is killed is a local: König’s sensitive young son Bruno. Before his murder, Bruno plays a game with a Czech girl, in which they swap clothes. This swap is fatal for Bruno, when a mob of villagers finds him and mistakes him for the foreign girl, drowning him in the lake. This violence thus misses its intended target: in trying to remove what they perceive as the other, they actually strike someone from the village. This murder strengthens Menasse’s negative view of the tourism industry by intensifying what he shows with Nemec. The victim of the dislocations that König’s plans set in motion is once again revealed as the local population itself.

Bruno’s murder appears to confirm a legend and superstition in Komprechts that the lake will claim a victim every eight years. This context serves Menasse’s novel in two ways. First, it enables him to give the murder a meaning with regard to the critique
of history he illustrates through König. Inherent to his plans for Komprechts’ new age is the notion of progress and modernization. The murder thwarts these plans and confirms a mythical tradition and superstition, which has König’s progress halted by a very antiquated sentiment. König’s partner Ableidinger even voices his concern that the legend will be bad for business: “Was ist, wenn nächstes Jahr, gleich zu Beginn der Saison – ich sage ja nur, sagte Ableidinger. Wenn was dran ist an der Geschichte, ich stell mir nur vor, alles voller Gäste, dann gibts gleich einen Toten, schon können wir wieder zusperren” (143). In having the murder seemingly confirm this superstition, then, Menasse furthers his questioning of assumptions of historical progress.

Second, the murder enhances Menasse’s negative portrayal of the industry in that he leaves clues suggesting the industry may have had some knowledge of it. When König rushes to the lake to view the child’s corpse, the narrator presents his thoughts: “Alle acht Jahre, dachte er, eine Legende, aber sie wirkt. Wenn man nachhilft. Das hilft. Acht Jahre Ruhe. Und wenn was aufkommt?” (176). This ambiguous passage could suggest that König may have conspired in the murder or that the villagers may perceive that he did so. A further suggestion appears in one of Roman’s videos, in which he cites the Greek myth of King Athamas, who shoots at a white stag, but actually kills his son Learchos: the figures viewing the tapes then interpret Roman’s association as a possible clue in the murder investigation (156). By including this myth and by raising suspicions about König’s knowledge of the murder, Menasse is thus inviting the reader to view König, if not as directly complicit, at least as partly responsible, because his plans for the village were the catalyst for the villagers’ hostility, which, bolstered by their superstition, led to Bruno’s death.
Menasse also renders König’s death as a return of traditional and mythic forces, which overturn the mayor’s drive for progress and touristic transformation. König is murdered by Nemec, who seeks revenge for his destruction of her statues and more generally for the shifts that his transformation of Komprechts would enact for her. Menasse overlays mythic overtones onto Nemec’s role as murder in three ways. First, her name, as we noted above, resembles that of “Nemesis,” the Greek god of punishment and revenge. Her murder of König is stylized as delivering a punishing, retributive justice. Second, her actions mete out the judgement and punishment that were depicted in the ornamental angels, which were figures from the Last Judgement. Third, Nemec’s murder seems to carry out a mythic plea that Trisko used to open his play, “Gründerzeit,” whose sentiment he hoped to combat in the play. The poem begs a “Großvater Stein” for retribution: “zu halten Gericht / Über Mord und Frevel, und dein Gewicht / Zermalme jeden, der das Gesicht / von Großmutter Erde zerstört!” (164). At the close of the novel, this fictional plea is answered in reality as König, who is the catalyst for the lakeshore’s destruction and recreation, is murdered.

The means by which Nemec kills König have a similar connection to a legend and are metaphorically charged to foreground her connection to the authentic ways of the past. She poisons König with her potato dumpling and mushroom sauce, which she makes with a few toxic specimens, and the narrator reminds us that one type is “im Volksmund bekannt unter dem Namen Racheengel” (152). This name recalls Nemec’s motives for killing König and the cause of her revenge. She tells König that she will accept his offer on her house and offers him this dish along with her permission. König is delighted to hear the news of Nemec’s acceptance and is equally pleased with her meal: “Sogar eine Schwammerlsoß hab ich bekommen. Sehr gut war sie. Mit einem
echten Erdäpfelknödel, ganz blau, genau wie es sein soll. So was macht mir meine Frau
nicht mehr, ist ihr zuviel Arbeit, da gibt's nur die blassen aus dem Packl” (172). This
passage surges with markers of authenticity. For König, this dish exudes authenticity
because it maintains fidelity with past traditions, and it is even easily distinguished from
its inauthentic component, the pale, packaged dumplings. König’s definition of
authenticity even highlights the role of labor: the store-bought food has concealed its ties
to a specific place and the labor involved in its mass production, but Nemec’s bluish
creations bear the traces of her work forming them and harvesting the wild mushrooms.

This dish is significant because it exposes König’s contradictory role in the
touristic recreation of Komprechts and the resultant loss of authenticity. König praises
the authenticity of Nemec’s dish, but the same elements that make it authentic for him are
precisely what his touristic plans will eradicate. König’s remarks dismissing the store-
bought dumplings could just as easily be made about what his designs for the lakeshore
would produce. The lakeshore becomes a man-made shoreline that has been calibrated
for maximum efficiency for guests and for the management, and that has been packaged
to look like an ideal shoreline yet conceals its constructedness. Similarly, he would have
Nemec separated from her traditional ways of life and displaced to a modern apartment.
There he promises she would have “weniger Arbeit, mehr Komfort” (136), which thus
contrasts with the “zuviel Arbeit” he found evident in her meal, which he praised.

Menasse enhances this critical potential of this dish by playing on its notions of
authenticity. While it appears to adhere to authentic ways, this is partly an illusion: it is
prepared according to custom and contains wild, hand-picked items, but some are
poisonous and prove fatal. Nemec thus uses the same strategy that is apparent in König’s
plans and in the village’s touristic conversion in general: the objects are presented as
authentic, but have undergone manipulation. For example, the lakeshore only appears “naturbelassen,” and the glass factory workers are in essence performing roles as such. Nemec’s dish appears to be genuine, but harbors a more sinister deception. This is already foreshadowed when König discusses the village brochure and is disappointed because it features images of poisonous mushrooms. Herr Tobisch convinces him that these images are more effective for the consumer because they exploit customers’ fairy tale associations (122-3). König allows the image of the village to be misrepresented and determined by the tourists and their fantasies of rural life. With the deadly meal that has been made to seem genuine, König falls prey to that same logic.

While Nemec’s deceptive dish clearly serves Menasse by enriching his critique of the tourism industry’s impacts, I contend that he uses it as a culinary symbol for Austria, in particular the image it fosters through tourism. In an essay Menasse admires a similar technique in a novel by Gerhard Fritsch (Land 37-40). Fritsch, he argues, uses the “Punschkrapfen” pastry as a potent symbol for Austria:

Der Punschkrapfen […] ist aussen rosa, innen braun. […] Daß der Punschkrapfen als Symbol für die Zweite Republik gelten kann, funktioniert nur auf der Basis von zwei Voraussetzungen: Erstens ist der Punschkrapfen tatsächlich ein zwar unwesentlicher, aber doch irgendwie typischer Bestandteil der österreichischen Lebensrealität. Zweitens muß dessen Beschreibung zumindest ein minimales historisches Wissen ganz selbstverständlich evozieren, in diesem Fall die historische Bedeutung der Farbe Braun. (37)

Nemec’s dish fulfills these prerequisites. It is certainly a banal example of everyday reality, and as the novel stresses, it also evokes a specific historical knowledge: König perceives it as a regional dish and that it adheres to traditional method of preparation, “genau wie es sein soll” (172). The dumplings and mushroom sauce evoke this historical knowledge and then subvert it: the meal is made according to custom and thus appears (and to an extent is) authentic, but it has been manipulated and made toxic. As with
Menasse’s interpretation of the “Punschkrapfen,” this dish relies on a deception: the exterior promises authenticity, wholesomeness, and “Gemütlichkeit,” but conceals its manipulation and fabrication. With its illusion of authenticity, then, this dish functions in Menasse’s novel as a symbol for and an implicit critique of Austria’s touristic presentation.

The actual depiction of König’s death lends support to our reading of his demise as Nemec’s revenge for the destruction of authenticity that his touristic plans wreak. After the hallucinations induced by Nemec’s meal begin, König is summoned to the lakeshore where police have discovered a murdered child. König recognizes that the dead child is his son and climbs atop the nearby, yet polished and repositioned Teufelstein, where he then dies. This setting once again positions König as the Devil figure from Trisko’s play, “Steinreich,” where the Devil watches from the Teufelstein as his plans to burn down the church are thwarted. Having König’s death follow the model of a seventeenth-century legend thus further exhibits Menasse’s questioning of the notion of history as progress, in that König’s plans for the village’s recovery do not result in progress, but repeat the events of a legend from the past. The fact that König dies on the lakeshore further confirms the local superstition, which again portray history guided by myth, not reason. Above all, by associating König with the Devil figure, who attempted in the legend to corrupt Komprechts and its social structures, Menasse plants a subtle indictment of the tourism industry’s negative consequences.

Menasse seals this criticism through the death of Nemec and Ölzant as well. König can be seen as the catalyst of inauthenticity in the novel, and Menasse presents his death as a retribution for his actions. Consequently, the portrayal of Nemec’s death valorizes authenticity in that she resists König’s plans, which threaten to render her
inauthentic by displacing her and severing her continuity with her past. Rather than
become inauthentic, Nemec kills König and then commits suicide by eating the same dish
she prepares for him. Her suicide is both a retribution for and resistance against König,
but also illustrates her refusal to change. Nemec resists the upheavals König’s designs
would entail and thus seeks to remain continuous with her past identity by committing
suicide. Her refusal to become inauthentic by abandoning her own past is only
underscored in that she also kills Ölzant, the novel’s other representative of authenticity,
by inviting him to join in this meal, which he does not know is poisonous. Through their
deaths, these two figures, who most clearly embody a strong connection to their personal
history, thus escape the inauthenticity that predominates in the village. Their deaths,
which are never actually depicted, are not shown to be heroic acts, but are certainly not
imbued with notions of revenge or victimization, as are König’s and Bruno’s. What this
indicates is that Menasse continues to privilege the authenticity and connection to history
that they represent.

Nemec and König display opposing poles of the reactions to touristic
development and its challenge to one’s personal history. König advocates a wholesale
acceptance of and assimilation to the altered identities that the tourism industry
necessitates, and Nemec attempts to resist these changes and remain connected to her past
existence. Although both characters suffer the same fate in the novel, it is clear that
Menasse casts Nemec and the authenticity she represents positively and in opposition to
König. These two poles parallel the situation faced by the protagonist Roman, who is
conflicted about leaving and about the connections to his own history that he has fused
there. He is torn between holding on to his past and breaking with it.
In the end, Roman adopts König’s alternative and leaves Komprechts. His final appearance shows him waiting at the Vienna airport, likely headed for Brazil. Through the recurring motif of the name change his departure becomes associated with inauthenticity and a break with the past, but this type of inauthenticity seems different from that constructed through the other characters. Roman explains his sudden departure to his mother in a letter, and the novel includes his salutations and his thoughts: “Dein Dich liebender Sohn – ja, das war auch schon egal, darauf kam es nicht mehr an: Romy” (178). “Romy” is Anne’s nickname for Roman that he despised as infantile earlier in the novel (18). Roman’s use of this name at his departure conveys his resigned acceptance of it and suggests that he is ready to change his relationship to his own history, which now seems “egal.” Rather than insist on being called “Roman,” which conveys a selfhood of which he is no longer certain, Roman shifts to “Romy.” In this passage, Roman illustrates Menasse’s refutation of history that we outlined earlier. Before arriving in Komprechts Roman rejected the notion that his past has any impact on his life, but during his stay he became aware of the definite impact that it has on him, only to regress as he tries to cling to the tenuous connections that remain. Through his resigned use of the name “Romy,” he seems to have come to accept, if reluctantly, that he cannot maintain continuity with the past and to recognize that it will remain incomplete, that is, that “Roman” was an idealized construction that he cannot and could never truly uphold.137

Roman’s departure thus appears as a positive development for him, which is suggested by three details from the final pages of the novel. First, a passage from

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137 The name “Romy” is surely an allusion to the actress Romy Schneider, whose most well-known roles were in the popular Sissi films, which presented a cliched, nostalgic illusion of Habsburg Austria to postwar audiences. By drawing on these associations, then, Menasse has the false images of imperial Austria in these films resonate in our perception of Roman’s inauthenticity and his aversion to the his mother’s nickname.
Roman’s letter hints that he has made an internal development. The last sentence of his letter reads: “Bald schreibe ich ausführlicher” (178). This passage could signify an empty promise and an attempt at avoiding communication with his mother. But the sentence also implies that he has indeed learned something from his experience and will later be able to write about it. Such a reading draws on the sentence’s intertextual reference: it closely resembles the final sentence of Peter Handke’s novel Wunschloses Unglück: “Später werde ich über das alles Genaueres schreiben” (80). Handke’s novel ends with its narrator having achieved a greater awareness of himself and his mother. His subjective narrator promises to reflect on this later and write something more “specific” about his feelings for his mother. Menasse’s protagonist promises to write more “thoroughly” about his awareness, which calls attention to the gaps he has recognized. Earlier in the novel we saw that Roman was unable to finish the letters. Thus, his promise to write more later offers an indication that he has come to a heightened awareness of self and his predicament.

Second, while Roman writes the letter to Anne in the airport, he is impressed by a departure table, in which he finds an epitome of the relationship to his own history that he seeks. As a symbol of travel, the departure table immediately points to Roman’s imminent transition and readiness to separate himself from his past. What he admires is that it is “Übersichtlich, funktional […] alles klar lesbar und am aktuellen Stand” (178). The chronologically listed destinations on the board are constantly in flux. The destinations disappear from the board when their flights depart, instantly being replaced by the future destinations. The past destinations are not erased, but are preserved in the shifting pieces of the departure table. Each row contains all past and future destinations in one unit. Through this image, Roman imagines a means of dealing with his personal
history: the departure table is always changing and shedding its past, yet at the same time it retains and synthesizes the past in itself.

Third, the closing episode offers a final suggestion of Roman’s positive development. It features the observer figures set to watch Roman’s final video tape, onto which he has written “Okt. 89 ENDE” (180), and which they find to be blank. The first observer assumes that Roman has erased the video, but the second argues that the tape may have always been blank and that Roman might have simply given up his filming, speculating that: “Vielleicht ist er, wie soll ich sagen, aufgewacht. Alptraum aus und zu Ende” (180). This enigmatic conclusion and the ambiguous images that close Schubumkehr complicate a definitive reading of Roman’s identity crisis. But the second observer’s argument has already been confirmed in the text: an earlier episode in which Roman watches the two children at the lakeshore reveals that he has given up filming (171). Roman’s departure from Komprechts and his promise of writing more both suggest that Roman has undergone a change through which his “Alptraum” in Komprechts has come to an end. I contend that Roman has reluctantly broken with his insistence on reestablishing continuity with his personal history.

Thus, even though Roman undergoes a name-change, his departure is accompanied by his tentative, yet positive development regarding his relationship to his past. This strongly diverges from the name-changes associated with other objects and figures, for whom the name-change functions as a marker of inauthenticity. As we have seen throughout the chapter, inauthenticity is associated with discontinuity and alienation from the past and is treated negatively. By severing himself from his personal history, however, Roman seems to liberate himself from his regression and possibly find a new beginning. His example thus reveals an incongruency with the attribution of
inauthenticity to signify the relationship to the past that has prevailed throughout the novel. Roman’s name-change and his departure from Komprechts and his own history thus are depicted as events or a state in which (in)authenticity, as it has been constructed through the novel’s others characters and objects, no longer pertains.

This dissonance reveals the ultimate incompatibility of Menasse’s critique of history and his critique of tourism’s consequences. Menasse’s criticisms of history do not deny its significance, but reject the pre-determining role that it could play for the individual, which would lead to stasis. He also rejects the manipulation of history and the assumption of progress, which can be exploited to determine the actions of the present. Both gestures problematize the significance of continuity either as a connection with an imagined, previous wholeness or as a progression to such an ideal completeness. This view clashes with the notion of authenticity that generally figures in conventional criticisms of tourism. The lack of authenticity is often defined as a deviation from some form from the past, whether real or imagined.

Menasse’s novel employs this notion of authenticity with regard to tourism and its impacts, defining it precisely as a continuity with the past. The figures and objects who are affected by Komprechts’ touristic conversion are depicted as inauthentic because they deviate from their previous essentialized existence, and this is consistently imaged as a devolution. If the novel treats Roman’s break with his personal history as a positive change, it cannot do so with the ruptures that results from touristic development, because they entail a disregard for history, socio-cultural structures and traditions, and the natural environment, all of which are implicitly criticized by Menasse. Subsequently, *Schubumkehr* privileges the figures it deems authentic because they resist touristic development or maintain continuity with history. These positive figures, such as Nemec
or Ölzant, and the negative instances, such as König or all of the tourist attractions, all remain within the logic of (in)authenticity and are thus judged according to their relationship to their individual histories. Roman, however, escapes this logic and enters a space where the past does not have the same determining, constricting function. The divergence between the protagonist and the other figures thus ultimately affirms the centrality of the censure of the tourism industry in Schubumkehr, because it gives weight to Menasse’s negative image of tourism’s impacts.

4.6 Conclusion

My analysis expands the secondary literature on Menasse’s novel in two ways. First, it shows that Menasse’s criticism of the tourism industry is present in the work on more levels and with more intensity than has been previously recognized. Second, it reveals that this criticism of tourism is intricately related to Menasse’s interrogation of conventional conceptions of history, focus that has been widely discussed. By recognizing the significance of the notion of authenticity, I am able to achieve these two developments. It becomes clear that Menasse’s depiction of a village’s transformation into a resort employs the notion of authenticity to assess the radical changes and shifts in identity that this transformation precipitates. By showing that Menasse’s definition of authenticity depends on the fidelity and continuity with the past, we see that he effects a broad portrayal of tourism’s negative environmental, economic, and social impacts, locating in them a transformation to a state of inauthenticity. His employment of this notion, then, remains conventional in that it criticizes tourism for enacting a deviation from a previous condition essentialized as natural – “genau wie es sein soll” (172).
The conventional notion of authenticity that Menasse engages for his criticism of tourism, however, diverges from the more ahistorical notion of authenticity that is revealed in his critique of history, which refutes the significance of continuity, either as determined by the past or legitimated by the future, and imagines a state in which the individual is not restricted by the contingencies of historical change. By comparing Menasse’s portrayal of the protagonist’s identity crisis to the ruptures with personal or collective history that are unleashed during the village’s conversion, this chapter reveals that the divergent notions of authenticity in the novel ultimately affirm the significance of Menasse’s critique of tourism.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has examined how three postwar Austrian authors treat the country’s dominant tourism industry in prose texts. My study has located a unifying element to these works in the question of authenticity, which the authors raise in their depictions of tourism and its consequences for people and place. For my analysis of the authors’ focus on authenticity, I have benefited from debates on this notion in theoretical discussions of tourism, where it occupies a central position. Utilizing the insights from this discourse has entailed the methodological hurdle of crossing disciplinary boundaries and of drawing conclusions on artistic representations with the aid of tools from empirical and theoretical inquiries. Applying concepts from theories of tourism, however, has allowed me a greater conceptual understanding of the artists’ portrayal and especially their criticism of tourism. My readings of these three authors show that they all employ a notion of authenticity to censure this industry and its diverse impacts, to address questions of national identity, and to pursue their individual aesthetic or thematic concerns.

With regard to the impacts of tourism, authenticity emerges in these texts as an index of its negative effects. Specifically, the artists portray the industry as transforming both those who work in it and also the cultural, social, and ecological environment that it affects, turning them into someone or something other than what they once were.
Implicit to this conception is the assumed wholeness or integrity of the destination culture before the impact of tourism. The industry is thus imagined as the cause of a present lack of authenticity, which is manifested in the fragmentation and loss of or the alienation from an earlier condition. This original condition is presumed more complete and is thus implicitly, if not directly valorized within the context of the critique of tourism. Theorists of tourism have recognized numerous shortcomings of this view of the industry as an enemy of authenticity. Such a viewpoint casts tourism as the sole culprit and thus ignores other catalysts of change. It further assumes that a culture was stable and fixed before the arrival of tourism, which fails to account for the continuous processes of cultural change that preclude any notion of original stability. By imagining tourism’s impacts as negative and alienating, this perspective also denies tourism and modernization in general any positive influence. While the artists under consideration here demonstrate an awareness of these faulty assumptions, they nonetheless maintain that the industry produces a loss of authenticity. In all three texts, there are tensions between a troubling present and a more idealized past for the main characters. Without specifically defining what authenticity might be, the authors highlight what it is not. In doing so, they implicitly privilege previous time periods in which tourism was not present or did not exhibit present consequences. These contrasts enable the authors to criticize the tourism industry by highlighting what it has erased, diminished, or threatened.

While the artists touch on tourism’s effects on the environment or cultural traditions, they specifically target two aspects. First, they portray the industry as having a deleterious effect on the social fabric of local communities, and they find its tasks to be alienating for individual hosts, who must assume roles that conflict with their own sense of self and autonomy. Second, this focus on the negative social costs gives weight to the
authors’ criticism of the industry as an engine of economic development. By underscoring the economic factors driving the promotion of tourism in their works and by highlighting the negative socioeconomic forces tourism unleashes or the failures of its supporters’ grand designs, the artists implicitly question the economic dimension of the industry, which has been a principle justification for the development of this sector in postwar Austria.

With regard to issues of identity, this study has located a related tension between an ideal and an actual condition. The artists portray tourism as transforming social and physical landscapes, and then parallel these changes with those that individual figures undergo. These characters experience an instability of meaning with regard to their identity and become unsure of who they should be, as they deviate from their own or others’ idealized identities. With some figures, the authors foreground these uncertainties to heighten their negative portrayal of tourism by linking their struggles directly to touristic development. With others, they explore questions of national or collective identity, thus infusing the uncertainties that arise through tourism with the tensions of issues such as the development of a national consciousness or the entry into the European Union. The identity crises in these works remain, for the most part, inconclusive and present us with variations on the often discussed theme of Austrian indeterminacy – that is, the difficulty in defining what Austria is.

Of all the primary works in this study, Hans Lebert’s Der Feuerkreis most distinctly focuses on questions of national identity and actually attempts to resolve the tensions involved in defining Austria. Lebert pursues the precarious project of criticizing postwar Austria’s denial of its fascist past and its uneven construction of a national consciousness by using the mythic and heroic structures that frequently figured in fascist
literature and propaganda. My reading has shown that Lebert anchors his characters’ mythic conflicts in a concretely historical context: the proposed introduction of the tourism industry in a mountain village. Lebert’s novel clearly aligns the development of the tourism industry with Austria’s amnesia about the past and the persistence of pan-Germanist sentiment through his focus on authenticity. First, he links the attractions and promotion of the industry to the erasure of the past and thus the denial of responsibility. The sublimity of the alpine landscape or the thrills of skiing are envisioned as inauthentic in that they present a false image of Austria that diverts attention from and conceals the horrors of the past. Consequently, the developers of the industry appear as former Nazis intent on instrumentalizing tourism to hide their complicity, a sleight of hand that is revealed, for example, in their donning of traditional clothing, which does not illustrate a genuine sense of Austrian identity but literally covers their fascist past. Second, Lebert portrays the host profession as one that turns the individual into someone else, whereby he stresses how this alteration places the host in a servile relationship with the tourists, whom his novel invariably imagines as German. By depicting Austrians as dependent on and submissive to Germans, this constellation charges Lebert’s polemics for Austrian national consciousness, which chastise Austrians for adhering to notions of a German cultural nation. Lebert’s use of authenticity thus allows him to criticize tourism and its role in economic reconstruction and in turn to further his project regarding Austrian identity and its coming to terms with the National Socialist past.

Norbert Gstrein’s Einer most clearly demonstrates concerns for the impacts of tourism on host communities. His story makes the most biting, if at times subtle criticism of tourism by depicting a character’s gradual dissolution in a resort, positing the industry’s alienating impacts for those who live and work in such villages. My study has
revealed that the notion of authenticity is significant for Gstrein’s story in three ways. First, it implicitly reveals what tourism has diminished or eradicated, which is evident with Gstrein’s central character, who is portrayed as becoming inauthentic. Growing up in the resort, this figure gradually loses his childhood talents and interests and never develops into what he, as the story suggests, should have become. When he later begins working in the tourism industry his self-alienation only intensifies, culminating in alcoholism, possible mental illness, and the likely murder of his companion. The nature of working as a host and the frayed social conditions in the resort are shown as key influences on the central character’s demise. Second, by drawing on theories of tourism, I was able to show that Gstrein’s elaborate narrative constellation replicates the structures of touristic display, creating a compromised “front” region and a more exclusive “back” region, each offering differing views on the central character’s life, which thus throws the authenticity of these two accounts into question. This creates a tension that stimulates the reader’s reflection on the host’s predicament as an object of the tourists’ gaze. By having the two perspectives present at times conflicting views on the central character and his alleged mental illness, the story then invites the reader to question the ulterior motives behind the other characters’ assertions. In doing so, Gstrein ultimately suggests that they are attempting to neutralize the dissent against the industry that the central character represents. Finally, my reading locates Gstrein’s narrative structure, which problematizes the authenticity of the divergent accounts of the central character’s life, within the context of the author’s skepticism of biographical representation, which has remained a central concern of his subsequent works.

Robert Menasse’s novel Schubumkehr probes the tensions between past and present that are inherent to questions of authenticity. Through its juxtaposition of the
protagonist’s identity crisis with a village’s transformation into a resort, Menasse’s novel paints a negative portrayal of the tourism industry, while simultaneously illustrating the author’s criticism of traditional concepts of history. My reading has shown that the notion of authenticity is central to both projects. As we saw with Gstrein and Lebert, Menasse implicitly uses authenticity to foreground the negative impacts of the tourism industry. His novel concentrates on the conversion of a number of sites into tourist attractions, foregrounding the deviation from their previous condition, which allows him to indict tourism’s negative social, cultural, and environmental consequences. His fictional touristic transformation overturns the village’s socioeconomic structures, displaces one character and the traditional ways of life she represents, and constructs a false image of local history that would erase its National Socialist past. Menasse parallels the village’s transformation with his protagonist’s identity crisis and uses both of these narrative strands to demonstrate his criticism of teleological conceptions of history. Here again, authenticity is significant because Menasse uses it to signify the degree of continuity with the past that a person or object exhibits. Menasse highlights negative developments and the catastrophic endings to the village’s plans for its tourism industry as resulting in inauthenticity, because they induce radical shifts in identity. My reading, however, locates a discrepancy in his novel’s application of this criticism. Menasse portrays his protagonist’s break with his past as a positive development that illustrates an escape from conventional notions of history, but the break with the past that the other characters and objects experience, which are all connected to the village’s touristic development, are portrayed as negative. Since this incongruity maintains Menasse’s negative view of tourism’s impacts, I have argued that it ultimately affirms the significance of his novel’s criticism of the tourism industry. While Menasse seeks to
refute the determining strictures in history as conceived teleologically, his censure of
tourism and its consequences cannot avoid the logic of authenticity, and thus the
insistence on continuity with past identities.

My study has uncovered a number of questions that offer additional areas for
future analysis. First, given the authors’ focus on characters in small-scale, family run
hotels or on figures who are returning to their family, my study opens possibilities for
further examinations of the themes of home and Heimat in postwar Austrian literature,
where there is a long tradition of artists and writers have critically engaging with the
exigencies of rural society. Tourism depends on an opposition between home and away,
implicitly defining these spheres for the tourist. This raises interesting tensions for the
hosts, as their “home” serves as an “away” for their tourists. Placed in the context of
debates on globalization, for example, my notion of authenticity might serve as a
productive avenue for examining the reconfiguration of home and away as localities
contend with external and internal forces of change as well as impulses to resist these
factors and maintain local or regional integrity and autonomy. Keeping in mind the
questions my study has raised about the meaning of authenticity for the host culture
contributes to an understanding of reactions to cultural change by further reminding us of
the problems of privileging notions of flux and hybridity (Morley 225-235).

Second, my readings reveal a consistency in the authors’ use of female figures,
such as Hilde, Hanna, and Nemec, whereby the negative impacts of tourism and the loss
of authenticity are demonstrated through the female figures’ placement in servile roles or
through their death. This specifically gendered constellation reflects, on the one hand,
the real world assignment of menial tasks to women workers in the industry. On the
other hand, it problematically repeats the common subtext in literary treatments of
tourism, which imagines women as threatened by the sexual and moral corruption through the influx of tourism and tourists. This extends the link I have developed between the role of authenticity in (anti-)tourism literature and conservative conceptions such as Heimat, in which women are associated with the land and hence metaphorically representative of its defilement through foreign agents. While a detailed study of this prevalent trend exceeds the scope of my study, my emphasis on the notion of authenticity promises a useful angle for analyses that demand the support of concepts from gender theory coupled with empirical studies on the situation of women in the tourism industry. Fully incorporating perspectives from gender studies will further unmask the problematic ideological impulses behind the critique of a lost or threatened authenticity that this study has begun to locate.

Third, my specific focus on the Austrian context and on the host culture begs the question of other destinations and of the perspective of the tourist. My dissertation thus offers a base for broader “vertical” studies that would incorporate the larger realms of travel literature and the culture of travel in Austria and might examine domestic practices of tourism and its reflection in other cultural productions, in particular film and cabaret. My project will also contribute to “horizontal,” comparative studies of artistic responses to tourism across cultures, especially in places that have been highly coded as tourist destinations, such as Mallorca, Italy, or Hawaii. At the same time, my project advances Austrian cultural studies by documenting the significant effect that tourism, both real and imagined, has had in the aesthetic realm.

By concentrating on the notion of authenticity, which is crucial to the understanding of the phenomenon of tourism, my project has demonstrated how alternative methodologies can be productively adopted for the interpretation of literary
texts. Because these works intensely engage the tourism industry and because they, in particular Einer, are aware of its internal structures, my reading has profited from theoretical discussions of tourism, which have enabled me to draw more insightful conclusions about the function of authenticity in the artists’ criticism of the industry. While my readings show that these three works utilize authenticity to various ends in their individual thematic and aesthetic projects, I show that they exhibit a strong consistency in their use of authenticity for their censure of tourism. Authenticity appears as a notion that serves their critique of tourism and its consequences by functioning as an indicator of what is wrong and in turn gestures to what should be. While this conception of authenticity falls back on conventional perspectives that theorists of tourism have disputed, for the artists it remains a powerful notion for finding fault with this industry, in particular because it facilitates the incorporation of broader questions of identity, highlighting uncertainties and polemical arguments about who one is or should be. By exploring how authenticity emerges in the artists’ censure of the tourism industry, I have examined how this notion allows the artists to articulate their specific thematic or aesthetic concerns and to raise issues regarding national identity.

At the outset of this project we noted four broad categories of works that address tourism in Austria. With its focus on authenticity, this dissertation offers a paradigm that can be used to interpret the larger body of works in these four categories, but one that also destabilizes and complicates them. Centering on the concept of authenticity namely sets up a productive approach to these texts from which we can understand both their criticism of the tourism industry and how it doubles as a vehicle for the artists to address their concerns with personal or national identity or with individual projects. My readings have located the dense entwining of these diverse aspects, indicating the difficulty of
establishing heuristic groupings to categorize literary works dealing with tourism. Given the centrality of this industry in diverse areas of Austrian society, it becomes somewhat redundant to look for boundaries between texts reflecting on this phenomenon, such as whether they are merely set in the industry, explicitly criticize it, or use it as a metaphor for addressing other issues. As my readings show, these aspects are inextricably linked in the Austrian context.

A brief sampling of other texts confirms how these issues dovetail in the artists’ portrayal of the tourism industry. For example, Elfriede Jelinek’s Die Kinder der Toten (1995) clearly engages the legacy of Hans Lebert’s writings and reinvigorates his image of “Berge von Toten” to create a landscape where dead skiers and tourists mingle with the living, allowing her narrator to dredge up the horrors and inanities of the past.138 When the “real” does emerge in this landscape, namely through the discovery of corpses underneath a hotel, the tourism industry quickly conceals it, effectively re-burying the past. Peter Turrini’s Alpenglühren (1992) probes the means by which our illusions about our past mutually shape perceptions of identity, which he highlights by casting the blind central figure as a guide who fakes animal sounds to enthrall mountain hikers. It never becomes clear if this figure is a former Nazi, a journalist who lost his sight, or a failed theater director. Ironically, his most genuine moment of human contact occurs in an artificial context: namely, when he and his companion recite Shakespeare, assuming the roles of Romeo and Juliet. Walter Kappacher’s Touristomania (1990) goes so far as to envision a Salzburg that is purely a façade where tourists are shuffled through streets on conveyor belts. The novel’s narrator, the diabolical CEO of a multinational amusement

138 Jelinek’s affinity for Lebert is evident in her preface to Jürgen Egyptien’s monograph on Lebert, “Der Springer am Werk.”
park chain, seeks to preserve an authentic Salzburg for himself, however, intending to rebuild it according to images from seventeenth century tapestries. Even though quite different in form and tone than the “serious” literature I have treated here, the script for Felix Mitterer’s *Piefke Saga* (1991) inveighs against tourism’s harmful effects and maintains this contradictory sense of authenticity. Tourism corrupts virtually all elements of Tyrolean society in this work, which culminates in the dystopian creation of a completely inauthentic world where Tyroleans are programmed as rustic robots and the alpine landscape is merely a plastic set concealing mountains of garbage. Nonetheless, authenticity remains the touchstone for Mitterer’s critique of tourism, which casts the fake, plastic Tyroleans in the industry against a romanticized band of resisters, at whose center is an almost mythical octogenarian, who maintains antiquated peasant ways.

This brief glance at additional works reiterates the importance of authenticity in understanding literary reflections on the Austrian tourism industry that this dissertation has demonstrated. These other artists, like Lebert, Gstrein, and Menasse, fuse their condemnation of this industry’s impacts with inquiries into personal, regional, and national identities in contemporary Austrian literature and culture. By establishing these links, my study has formed a base from which to examine further how the tourism industry continues to influence the construction of “authenticity” in Austrian society and culture on a regional and national scale.
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