From Purkersdorf to Peking

Tourism and Globalization in Ingeborg Bachmann's Malina *and Elfriede Jelinek's* Gier

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> (kennen Sie den? Ein Mann will sich eine Eisenbahnfahrkarte nach Peking kaufen. Er kommt zum Fahrkartenschalter Purkersdorf und verlangt einmal einfach Peking bitte. Der Mann am Schalter sagt, Sie spinnen ja, ich kann Ihnen höchstens eine Karte bis zur polnischen Grenze verkaufen, von dort müssen Sie dann schauen, wie Sie weiterkommen, mit der Transsibirischen, der Transmongolischen oder mit dem Hundeschlitte, wurscht. Kurzum, der Bahnkunde kommt nach Peking, amüsiert sich wie der Blöde, der er ist, weil er dazu bis nach Peking gefahren ist, irgendwann will er dann aber wieder zurück. Er geht am Hauptbahnhof Peking zum Fahrkartenschalter und verlangt: Einmal einfach nach Purkersdorf bitte. Fragt der Mann am Schalter: Ober- oder Unterpurkersdorf? Haha. Wie? Was haben Sie gesagt? Wurscht.)
>
> Elfriede Jelinek, *Gier*

When this puzzling and seemingly frivolous joke appears near the conclusion of Elfriede Jelinek's novel *Gier* (2000)—her last large-scale narrative work before becoming a Nobel laureate in 2004—it is intended as an interruption. While it may be misleading to speak of anything truly resembling a plot in *Gier*, at least in the conventional sense, this lengthy parenthetical anecdote nevertheless constitutes a narrative break in the book's final chapter: The reader *had* been following an Autobahn excursion through the towns and villages west of Vienna: "über Hadersdorf, Mauerbach, Unter- und Oberpurkersdorf" (438)—the last of which, of course, bring the audience

on this unexpected journey to "Peking," or, as it is known today, Beijing. The joke, then, operates as a *narrative* and a *geographical* diversion as much as a syntactic one: deferring arrival at the final destination of the novel's muddled plot and dramatizing this deferral on a formal level through the parenthetical nature of the aside. Thus frustrating its own forward motion, the chapter indulges in a kind of literary tourism while gleefully subverting the same.

My interpretation of Jelinek's *Gier*—which Margarete Lamb-Faffelberger has aptly identified as both "a caricature of life in small town Austria" and simultaneously a show of "undisguised contempt at neoliberal globalization" (43)—will be anchored in an exploration of this road trip around Vienna recounted at the book's conclusion with a particular focus on the variety of distraction constituted by the Beijing joke that interrupts it. I will read this outing alongside Ingeborg Bachmann's *Besichtigung einer alten Stadt*—a draft fragment (which is to say, another apparently extraneous diversion) from the author's only published novel, *Malina* (1971), in which the unnamed narrator takes the eponymous character on a bus tour of Vienna.[1] Read together, these texts reveal how each author acts as a national-literary tour guide in an increasingly global economy. But whereas Bachmann resists this precarious position, Jelinek comes to embrace it, understanding her role as an Austrian author as an odd cultural ambassadorship: protecting her national identity both by besmirching it and by lamenting its gradual disappearance—often to a non-Austrian audience, whom she invites on a rather morbid sightseeing tour of her Alpine homeland.

Lamb-Faffelberger's double identification of Jelinek's novel as at once an affront on the local and on the global hints at an inherent tension in the work: put briefly, as a parody of Austrian parochialism that nevertheless condemns globalization, the novel is obliged to rally a defense for the very culture it is attacking. From either angle, the work necessarily involves a renegotiation of the significance of Austrian literature and culture on a transnational scale. Presented as peripheral to the narrative of *Gier*, the latent content of the Purkersdorf tourist anecdote is, then, nonetheless quite central to the novel's chief concerns—ultimately destabilizing the notions of centrality and periphery on which it depends. At first blush, the Purkersdorf joke might seem a rather straightforward critique of Austrian provincialism: whereas the Beijing ticket clerk can instantly distinguish between different train stations in an insignificant Austrian municipality, the clerk in Purkersdorf can think only as far as the Polish border. But for an Austrian author like Jelinek, there

is a far more troubling aspect to this risible juxtaposition between a small village near Vienna and a major foreign metropolis with more than twice the population of her entire country: it calls into question the foundations of her literary project, hinting at an underlying anxiety regarding the relevance and the importance of Austrian literature on a global scale and in a global era.

Both Bachmann and Jelinek, each in their own way, grapple with this anxiety, attempting to reaffirm their nation's significance while resisting the dual hazard of advanced capitalism: the homogenizing influence of *globalization*, on the one hand, and the cultural commodification constituted by international *tourism*, on the other. If globalization threatens to flatten the differences between distinct nations, making *everywhere the center* simultaneously, tourism depends on the *preservation of periphery*, reducing national identity to an exoticized simulacrum of itself. Navigating between the Scylla of anonymity and the Charybdis of cultural cliché, these authors negotiate Austrian uniqueness and importance: If Bachmann's nostalgia is for the cosmopolitan character of the defunct Austro-Hungarian Empire, Jelinek is obliged to conceive of her homeland in the context of advanced globalization—as part of a unified Europe with open borders. Despite the palpably different historical backgrounds, then, both authors make themselves at home in an Austria that is inherently transnational. But if Bachmann recognizes and resists the early symptoms of the burgeoning postnational, still holding out hope for the possibility of a homecoming, Jelinek's work is addressed to an *already* globalized audience. At the end of the article I return to the Purkersdorf joke with which I began in order to explore how the later author herself capitalizes on the international reader's problematic *complicity* in the intrusion of homogenized global culture in an Austrian setting.

1

Much like Robert Musil's magnum opus before it, Bachmann's uncompleted *Todesarten* cycle—of which *Malina* was intended as the first installment—constitutes a literary cross-section of Austrian society. But like the setting of Musil's *Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (1930–1942), Bachmann's literary homeland is not her contemporary Austria but rather the ironically remembered utopia of the defunct Austro-Hungarian Empire.[2] As the narrator of *Malina* puts it in a frequently cited passage: "Am liebsten war mir immer der Ausdruck 'das Haus Österreich', denn es hat mir immer besser erklärt, was mich bin-

det, als alle Ausdrücke, die man mir anzubieten hat" (3.1: 397; part 3 of the *"Todesarten"-Projekt* is divided into two parts). Admittedly, this is more a matter of expression than of any real political preference: Bachmann was born nearly a decade after the dissolution of the dual monarchy.[3] As important as the historical referent, then, is the precise diction of the phrase "the House of Austria": the sense of home and of belonging ("was mich bindet") evoked by the word *house*.

In two articles on Jelinek's *Gier* and works by other Austrian authors, notably Bachmann, Juliet Wigmore has revealed this recurring house motif to be a marker of national identity in Austrian literature. Following Ingvild Folkvord, whose work on Bachmann's *Malina* demonstrates that all three of the novel's chapters "beziehen sich auf die Haus-Metaphorik," Wigmore addresses the author's attachment to the vanished monarchy, "das Haus Österreich," rather than to the modern Austrian nation. As the narrator of *Malina* playfully explains her preference: "Ich sage immer lieber, wie man früher gesagt hat: das Haus Österreich, denn ein Land wäre mir zu groß, zu geräumig, zu unbequem, Land sag ich nur zu kleineren Einheiten" (3.1: 395). Like Musil's Kakanien, Bachmann's fictional-historical homeland might be said to be transnational *avant la lettre*: it is a multiethnic empire encompassing many distinct modern nations.[4] Andrea Stoll, portraying Bachmann as a global citizen or *Weltbürgerin*, thus chooses to emphasize the cosmopolitan nature of this imagined Austria: "Es war der Kulturraum des politisch längst untergegangenen *Vielvölkerstaates* der Habsburger Monarchie, jenes 'Haus Österreich', das sie in *Malina* erwähnt und in dem sie sich zuhause fühlte" (25, emphasis added). Without any anxiety, then, Bachmann takes this "Haus" as a metaphor not for an Austrian nation per se but rather for an intact national identity having little to do with political borders: for her, the transnational is homier than the national.[5]

It is precisely this comforting, nostalgic mythology that Bachmann's *Besichtigung* fragment initially upsets but perhaps ultimately hopes to rehabilitate—just as the eager but unsuccessful tour guide portrayed in the passage attempts, in awkward English, to impress upon his audience the former grandeur and diversity of his now-small nation:

> Wednesday of July 28th 1914 the Emperor of the most famous Empire in the world spoke to his nineteen peoples and declared that in the most earnest hour of the greatest decision of our time before the

> Almighty, he is conscious. Eine kleine Miss ruft: Gosh! sie will nicht glauben, daß so ein kleines Land einmal ein großes Land war, sie war auf eine Operette gefaßt, auf Grinzing, auf die schöne blaue Donau. Unser Fremdenführer weist die hübsche kleine Amerikanerin zurecht: this was the biggest country which ever existed in the world and it gave a famous word, in this country the sun never goes down. Malina sagt hilfreich: the sun never set (3.2: 700).

Against an understanding of Austria as a unified and relatively insignificant country the guide opposes a poetic vision of an important empire—insistently locating his land at the center rather than on the periphery of world culture. But this understanding of Austria as a cosmopolitan plurality does not translate to foreign tourists anticipating reductive clichés of a single nation with a single cultural identity: "Der Fremdenführer blättert in seinem Notizblock, er hat endlich die Stelle gefunden: An meine Völker! Der Fremdenführer sieht hilfesuchend zu Malina und mir, er hat schon einen Verdacht, denn er weiß offenbar nicht, wie er die drei Worte übersetzen soll" (3.2: 698). The difficulty in communicating this title reveals that the various cultures encompassed by the use of the word *Völker* have been lumped together and subsumed under a single heading. Little more than half of a century after the manifesto in question (the declaration of the First World War) Austria's importance as a player on the global stage has been so diminished that it appears almost unfathomable "daß so ein kleines Land einmal ein großes Land war"—lending a poignant irony to the tour guide's ill-fated efforts and to the claim that this was an empire on which the sun never set.

The same nostalgic doubt haunts Bachmann's work on the whole, and a comparison to the narrator's similar insistence ("Land sag ich nur zu kleineren Einheiten") gives good cause to read this *Fremdenführer* as an ironic stand-in for the novel's speaker—or even for the author herself: his endeavored performance of an iconic Austria mirrors the purpose of Bachmann's writing project. The mocking but still somehow complicit tone of *Besichtigung einer alten Stadt* might then amount to a sympathetic self-parody of her literary undertaking: a contemplation of the limitations of this introduction to an Austria of her own invention. In *Besichtigung*, posing as Americans, "Mr. and Mrs. Malina" tag along with "echten Ausländern" (3.2: 698) through a surreal touristic simulacrum of the Austrian capital, growing increasingly alienated from their own hometown by the very mechanism ostensibly intended to fa-

miliarize them with it. The city tour with Malina—initially intended as the opening to the novel's final chapter but not, ultimately, included in the definitive text—is itself a possible draft, reprisal, or revision of an earlier passage in which the narrator drives around Vienna with her lover Ivan; a juxtaposition of the two accounts makes evident the growing sense of alienation from Austria as a homeland that Bachmann builds into—but then, in this case, tellingly writes out of—her literary work.

"Während wir schnell auf die Stadt zufahren," recounts the narrator of her joyful excursion with Ivan,

> über die Reichsbrücke und den Praterstern, dreht Ivan das Radio laut auf im Auto, seine Kommentare zu den Manövern der anderen Autofahrer sind trotzdem nicht zu überhören, aber wenn Musik aus dem Radio und das Schnellfahren, das schnelle Abbremsen, Wiederanfahren, ein Gefühl vom großen Abenteuer in mir hervorruft, verändern sich für mich die bekannten Gegenden und Straßen, durch die wir fahren. (3.1: 340)

Entering the *Innenstadt* via the Reichsbrücke,[6] the pair embarks on a veritable sightseeing tour of the Austrian capital, with Ivan's complaints about the other drivers serving as a humorous analogue to the tour guide's commentary in the corresponding draft passage. The heightened experience of these familiar locations seen in passing at great speed is made palpable by the dizzying syntax of a single run-on sentence:

> Ich halte mich mit den Händen fest an den Haltegriffen und so angeklammert würde ich gerne singen im Auto, wenn ich eine Stimme hätte, oder ihm sagen, schneller, noch schneller, ich lasse furchtlos die Haltegriffe los und lege die Arme hinter meinen Kopf zurück, ich strahle den Franz-Josefs-Kai und den Donaukanal und den Schottenring an, denn Ivan macht aus Übermut eine Rundfahrt um die Innere Stadt, ich hoffe, daß wir noch lange über den Ring brauchen, in den wir einbiegen jetzt, wir kommen ins Stocken, zwängen uns durch, haben zur Rechten die Universität, in die ich gegangen bin, aber sie steht nicht mehr da wie damals, nicht mehr bedrückend, und das Burgtheater, das Rathaus und das Parlament sind von einer Musik unterschwemmt, die aus dem Radio kommt, die ganze Ringstrasse ist untermalt von einer Musik, ich muß lachen, weil wir

> sprungartig fahren, weil ich überhaupt keine Angst habe heute und nicht an der nächsten Ampel herausspringen will, weil ich noch stundenlang weiterfahren möchte, leise mitsummend, für mich schon zu hören, aber für Ivan nicht, weil die Musik lauter ist. (3.1: 340)

The phrasing here is an explicit parody of the same kind of bus tour depicted in *Besichtigung* ("haben zur Rechten die Universität [. . .] das Burgtheater, das Rathaus und das Parlament"), but as the backdrop for a love affair[7] these familiar sights are transformed, becoming almost *alluringly foreign*; the narrator notes that well-known streets and neighborhoods suddenly call forth a sense of adventure reinforced by the music playing in the background—a markedly French melody, "Auprès de ma blonde," that punctuates the couple's conversation:

> Auprès de ma blonde
> Ich bin
> Was bist du?
> Ich bin
> Was?
> Ich bin glücklich
> Qu'il fait bon. (3.1: 340)

The centrality of this passage to Bachmann's text is made evident, then, by the likelihood that this is also the origin of this chapter's ironic title, "Glücklich mit Ivan" (ironic because in reality the narrator is anything but "glücklich").[8] It is in this bustling and ever-changing Vienna that the narrator feels at home.

But while the places and attractions visited by the narrator and Malina in *Besichtigung einer alten Stadt* are largely the same as those mentioned in this previous automotive outing, the sentiment of distance could hardly be more different; with Malina it is no longer an attractive charm but rather an exhausting alienation engendered by the over-insistence on a neatly defined and prepackaged version of Viennese culture. Here the speed with which Ivan and the narrator had cheerfully driven into the city becomes an element of superficiality, a measure of the commodification inflicted on these sites:

> Wir fahren *rasch* an der Staatsoper vorbei, where are happening the greatest singing successes and singing accidents in the world, und *besonders rasch* geht es am Burgtheater vorbei, where are happening

> every evening the oldest and most famous dramas and murderings in Europa. Vor der Universität geht dem Fremdenführer der Atem aus, er erklärt sie *eilig* zum oldest museum of the world. (3.2: 701, emphasis added)

An authentic Austria seems to have given way almost entirely to a hurried mise-en-scène: each of these performance spaces (the theater and opera as well as the university) is proffered as an emblem for Western culture on the whole. But with the emphasis placed so squarely on fame and historical import, the possibility of a vibrant and contemporary Austrian culture (the experience represented by the narrator's pleasure ride with Ivan) is entirely revoked.[9]

Accordingly, in *Besichtigung* it is an insipid cliché of Austrian music—"Wien, Wien, nur du allein!" replacing the French melody from before—and the tour guide's hackneyed commentary that form the soundtrack for the same itinerary:

> und alle singen Die Geschichten aus dem Wiener Wald mit, der Fremdenführer und der Fahrer versuchen sich allein im Wiener Blut. Endlich stellt sich heraus, daß nur der Fahrer wirklich eine prächtige Stimme hat, und alle wollen, daß er etwas allein singt, für ihn gibt es kein Halten. Wien, Wien, nur du allein! (3.2: 701)

Vienna has been transformed into a theme park—an operatic imitation of itself. Fatigued by this performance, the couple's masquerade (their own impersonation) begins to wear thin:

> Malina ist am Ende seiner Kräfte, ich fühle es von ihm auf mich übergehen, er schiebt dem Fahrer ein Trinkgeld zu, der mir zuzwinkert und mich jetzt als einziger durschaut hat, er läßt mich nicht aus den Augen, kümmert sich keinen Deut um die junge Amerikanerin, und singt zu Malina hin: Grüß mir die lachenden, reizenden Frauen in schööönen Wien! Your husband doesn't like music? fragt der Fremdenführer aufmerksam, und ich sage verwirrt: not so late, not so early in the morning. (3.2: 701–2)

Recognizable as an Austrian, the narrator is, however, now less than entirely native: no longer (as she had been in the car with Ivan) the laughing lover mentioned in the song, now posing as a tourist instead, the narrator of *Besichtigung*

has become one. When the sightseeing tour becomes too nauseating—quite literally so, with an American tourist vomiting in the Kapuzinergruft[10]—the narrator and Malina retreat home, but now they do so, still continuing the transparent charade, as tourists returning to their hotel:

> Malina und ich steigen nicht ein, wir bedanken uns und behaupten, wir hätten nur ein paar Schritte zu unserem Hotel, und gehen schweigend, eingehängt, eng aneinandergedrängt zum nächsten Taxistand. Im Taxi sprechen wir kein Wort, Malina ist am Einschlafen, und zu Hause, in der Ungargasse, sage ich: das war doch deine Idee. Malina sagt erschöpft: ich bitte schon sehr, das war wieder einmal deine Idee. (3.2: 702)

It is an ambivalent ending to the excursion: As the exhausted couple retreats to the domestic space, their return home to the Ungargasse, to their *own* Austria, no longer feels like an entirely satisfying homecoming.

It would be difficult to overstate the importance of this street to the question of home in *Malina*. Tellingly referred to by the novel's narrator as her "Ungargassenland," it is the location of the "zwei Häuser" occupied by the three central characters, each hailing from a different region of what was once Austria-Hungary. Wigmore, like Walter Fanta before her, has rightly read Ungargasse as a nostalgic reflection of "das Haus Österreich": the multiethnic, multicultural, and even multinational nature of the vanished empire—a unified Europe preceding the present, ostensibly postnational, era.[11] The touching irony of this attempt to escape the commodification of Vienna by returning to Ungargasse is that it indulges in the same nostalgia for an older, vanished Austria as had the emetic tour itself. In this manner, the critique of tourism in the *Besichtigung* fragment parodies and problematizes the author's own desire for a literary homeland: While it *does* allow for the possibility of a certain homecoming, this return is perhaps ultimately an imaginary one—a comforting fiction.[12] It is this fiction that Jelinek's text works to demythologize.

2

In a short text that the *London Review of Books* has taken as the point of departure for its appraisal of the English translation of *Greed*, Elfriede Jelinek contends that "Österreich ist eine kleine Welt, in der die große ihre Probe

hält" ("Im Verlassenen," quoted in Spice 1). The context, as is often the case in Jelinek, is one of gender violence: The essay treats an appalling incident of domestic imprisonment, incest, and rape in small-town Austria. But the author's brief rhyme is less an apologia of her lurid fixation on such subject matter than it is a justification of her sustained and all but exclusive focus on her homeland—a relatively minor player on the global stage—in the implied context of a world literature. Locating Austria's importance in its exemplarity, perhaps Jelinek's dramaturgical metaphor, like Bachmann's *Besichtigung*, also intimates that Austria performs its national identity as a foil for the world at large. More obviously than in Bachmann, though, there is a self-referential aspect to this metaphor: Herself a dramatist, Jelinek appears to intuit her own involvement in the dress rehearsal constituted by Austrian culture. Moreover, paradoxically, such a performance participates in the same homogenization it resists by making the small European nation a *synecdoche* of larger and more global phenomena.

Transposed into an era of advanced globalization (already nascent and noticeable at the time of Bachmann's writing) Austria becomes important precisely for its relative anonymity when considered from this sweeping international perspective: it is no longer a vast multinational entity encompassing the entire map of Middle Europe but instead one small piece of the puzzle, just as representative as any other. Matthias Konzett has summarized this phenomenon in Jelinek's work as follows:

> Jelinek treats Austria's unremarkable and minor appearance as that of a curious symptom, one in which the larger extent of an illness is condensed, concealed and contained in a specific part standing in for the whole. The country, so to speak, stands in pars pro toto for Western European culture. (8)

This is most certainly the case for the author's treatment of her homeland in *Gier*, where the country is intended as an exemplary case study for the perils of European capitalism more globally. "Behandeln wir einmal kleine Figuren als etwas Großes" (425), suggests Jelinek in reference to Austria's relationship to Europe in the opening sentence of *Gier*'s ninth and final chapter. This treatment of the miniature as representative of something larger is both an indication that the short Purkersdorf anecdote in this chapter may be of greater significance than it appears and another potential justification for the author's own extended focus on her native Austria in a globalized literary economy.

But if Jelinek's Austria is something symptomatic and synechdocal, the position of the author and her homeland must also remain *im Abseits*, as the title of her Nobel Prize acceptance speech (controversially delivered via satellite link) implies: As in the Purkersdorf anecdote, here the symbolic center is simultaneously on the periphery. For this reason, as early as 1985 the author addressed an open letter to Austrian Chancellor Franz Vranitzky warning of the imminent loss of the Alpine nation's historical heritage and unique cultural identity—and hyperbolically condemning the proposed participation of Austria in what was to become the European Union as an "Anschluß" even more disturbing than the annexation by Nazi Germany (quoted in Janke 29).[13] This infamous Austrian *Nestbeschmutzerin*, an author whose literary career was (and still is) established on a brutal critique of her homeland, nevertheless found herself at the forefront of its defense against what she perceived as the growing threat of globalization.[14]

Wigmore therefore opposes the house motif in Bachmann's era (and earlier) to post-1989 Austrian authors—among whom Jelinek, at least in the current context, can be classed—for whom the house initially appears to constitute "a defined, concrete representation of the home and a sense of Heimat." Especially after the fall of the Berlin Wall, she continues, the house metaphor "stands in opposition not only to deterritorialisation, but also to the abstract nature of the term 'globalization'" ("From 'Das Haus Österreich'" 65).[15] The house trope then takes on new significance, as Wigmore has also demonstrated, with Gorbachev's coinage of the concept of *the common house of Europe*—the very notion to which Jelinek is so vehemently opposed in her early comments on the Schengen Agreement, which opened Europe's internal borders. In *Gier*, Wigmore contends, "the house has become a metaphor not only for the nation state, but, in the age of the postnational, for the entire political system to which Austria belongs" ("Crime, Corruption, Capitalism," 280).

But just as Bachmann's fragment both confirms and subverts her own desire for an older Austria, it is precisely this comforting view of the house as a guarantor of stable borders that will be explicitly uprooted by Jelinek's novel. A brutal pastiche both of cozy *Heimat* literature on the one hand and of the *Krimi* genre on the other, Jelinek's book—like Bachmann's *Besichtigung*—forces its reader into the position of a kind of tourist, playing its audience's curiosity against the eponymous greed illustrated by its antihero, country policeman Kurt Janisch. *Gier* follows this central figure in his violent relationships with two women: aging Gerti, whom he seduces in the hope of inher-

iting her house, and teenage Gabi, whom he has strangled before the book begins. We have, as it were, two novels in one.

As Wigmore has astutely intimated, the connection between these two relatively distinct plotlines hinges largely on the notion that the figure of the house can be read as a political metaphor for the nation in one direction but as associatively rooted in the female body in another. While the elder Janisch woos women in an effort to coerce them to sign over the deeds to their houses, the next generation of his family lives under the roof of an old woman whose death they greedily await, all for the extra *Lebensraum* it would bequeath them: the same drive fuels gender violence and the attempted acquisition of desirable private property. In fact, the gendarme's craving for the female body is predicated absolutely on his lust for houses: "Das Fleisch ist nur das Mittel [. . .] und der höchste Wert ist ein Grundstück samt Haus [. . .] Zwei Beine spreizen sich, ganz für ihn allein, einfach so, und ein ganzes Haus kommt in ihrer Mitte daher" (160–61). The association between the house and the human body seems so essential that the trajectory of the semiological relationship between the two terms becomes undeterminable: While the house operates metaphorically as a stand-in for the female form, the body itself serves only to represent the house. "Spreche ich jetzt noch vom Haus oder schon von einem menschl. Körper?" (454) wonders the narrator, ventriloquizing Janisch, in the novel's final chapter. It is a similar conflation (as well as the definitive loss of her home to the country policeman) that drives Gerti to her death—in this case very literally so, as this chapter also documents her road trip from the author's native Styria into Vienna for one last visit to the house that was once hers before her suicide in the novel's final lines. What is at stake, then, in the geographic displacement enacted by the Purkersdorf joke that interrupts this drive is nothing less than ownership of one's own home.

A house, the narrator suggests in *Gier*, first gains form, "indem es Grenzen bekommt," and the country policeman—"selbst der Grenzenzieher"—desires houses as an intermediary permitting delineation of his otherwise all-too-fluid self: "Nur in einem festeren Haus könnte er sich dauerhaft sicher fühlen, glaubt der Mann, trotz allem, was mit Häusern passieren und was [. . .] mit Menschen auch passieren kann" (218). Jelinek speaks ominously of houses being swallowed by the earth, just as the young girl's corpse is swallowed and then spat up by the little man-made lake into which Kurt Janisch dumps it in

the novel's opening pages. Returning to this image in the penultimate chapter, Jelinek makes the comparison explicit:

> Er hat das Mädchen zu seiner eigenen Sicherheit wegräumen wollen [. . .] . So lieber tun wir den Körper jetzt in diese seit längerem vorbereitete Mülltüte aus grünem Plastik hinein, welche von einer Baustelle stammt [. . .] und erst die Häuser [. . .] das ist etwas, an das man sich halten kann, ja, auch die Knochen, die Haare, die Finger-und Zehennägel dürfen bleiben, aber nicht so lang wie ein Haus. (421)

Slipping into a sarcastic free indirect discourse, the author ridicules her character's credence in the symbolic stability of the house. As fragile as the female body to which it is analogous, the house (as a metonym for Austria) will fail to provide the stable borders upon which the identity of the nation-state apparently depends. By murdering Gabi, the policeman has unwittingly undermined his own desire for impenetrable borders, revealing the fallibility of any sense of self constituted along national(ist) lines. This is made all the more evident by the admission that Kurt Janisch has no real desire to *dwell* within the houses he acquires, to make of them a *home*: "Schauen Sie. Es gibt da einen Mann, der sieht Häuser nicht als eine Möglichkeit zum drin Wohnen, sondern, obwohl sie ihm gar nicht gehören und vielleicht nie gehören werden, bereits als etwas, das ihm gehört, und zwar weil es ihm gehören MUSS" (437). His insatiable greed is purely and perversely touristic.

Requiring her reader to follow along with this pursuit, Jelinek makes her audience complicit in it—while also punishing them for their violently touristic tendencies. The detour demonstrated by the parenthetical Purkersdorf anecdote is typical of Jelinek's narrative procedure throughout the whole of *Gier*, which the author has misleadingly labeled an *Unterhaltungsroman*, perhaps primarily for her *own* entertainment at the audience's ensuing bewilderment. If the Purkersdorf joke decenters the rural Austrian homeland while at the same time making it exemplary, the novel's subversion of its audience's expectation of suspense will make its reader in part responsible for this displacement insomuch as we, as readers and consumers, turn the pages of this would-be page-turner. These are the *narrative* implications of the country policeman's greed and gender violence: the similar consumerist tourism practiced by an Austrian or international reader confronted by Jelinek's text. If our own *Neugier* about Gabi's demise constitutes the ostensibly suspense-

ful aspect of this parody of a crime novel, the gendarme's *Gier* for houses in the anti-*Heimatroman* intimates what is at stake politically in the work: the (im)possibility of a national home in a time of contemporary transnationalism.[16] Putting these two elements (capitalist greed and narrative curiosity) into unexpected parallel, Jelinek diagnoses our own globalizing tendencies as readers of literature and more specifically as readers of Austria.

This ruse is accomplished through the construction of the metonymic chain isolated by Wigmore: the *female body* as an analogue to the *house,* which is (as we have seen) in turn an analogue for the *Austrian nation*. Although we know from the first pages that Janisch is the murderer, we continue reading, perhaps mostly in the hope that his motivation will eventually be revealed, that the purported entertainment novel, so to speak, might eventually develop a more compelling plot. But any reader hoping that Jelinek will tell a story will inevitably end up disappointed by an endless series of deferrals and distractions: the precise reason for Gabi's death is nowhere explicitly divulged, and the faux crime novel is thus subsumed by the faux *Heimatroman*. Rather than an engaging plot that would satisfy our readerly curiosity, we are repeatedly confronted only by increasingly grotesque images of Gabi's battered body—itself (through its intimate connection to the central house motif) a reminder of domestic and national fragility. In our curiosity about the fate of Gabi's corpse, we as readers come to perpetrate the violation of this female body—a violation that in turn portends a metaphorical threat to the stability of Austrian national identity.

As we continue to turn the pages in an endeavor to understand the incomprehensible murder with which the book began, we come to actualize—as if we were the perpetrator—the death with which it ends. This dynamic is most manifest in the final chapter, as the novel stutters towards its conclusion in stop-and-go ("Mehr Ruck als Zuck," 435) rush-hour traffic—literalizing the strategy of narrative diversion that Jelinek has practiced throughout. Here especially the author peppers her storytelling with sardonic, self-aware asides deriding the reader's boredom and frustration with the book and encouraging her audience to put it down. Indeed, Jelinek even explicitly mocks her public's longing for a plot. Just a page before the Purkersdorf diversion, punning playfully on the semantic proximity of *Gier* and *Neugier*, she suggests a certain resemblance between her reader's lust for narrative and Kurt Janisch's rapacious greed for houses:

> Die Gier nach dem Neuen, jaja, es ist doch so, seien wir ehrlich, daß die Neugier eben nicht wirklich auf etwas Zukünftiges gerichtet ist als eine Möglichkeit, sondern in ihrer Gier begehrt die Neugier eben das Mögliche bereits als Wirkliches. Oder so ähnlich. (437)

This desire for the realization of the possible is both a lust for possession and for tangible *borders*: the gendarme's craving for the borders of a house and the reader's wish to have the book bordered by a satisfying conclusion, to master or to *own* the story, as it were. The tourism in which the reader is complicit at the book's end, this similarity between our *Neugier* and the country gendarme's *Gier*, will lead to Gerti's loss both of her house and of her life.

3

Ingeborg Bachmann also deals in diversions. "Weil Malina und ich Wien sehen wollen," her *Besichtigung* fragment begins, "das wir uns noch nie angeschaut haben, machen wir eine Fahrt mit dem AUSTROBUS" (3.2: 698). Not long into the tour, however, the route is turned outside the city:

> es wird aus der Stadt hinausgefahren. Denn wegen einer Einsturzgefahr müßten wir den Stephansdom vermeiden, die Pummerin sei gerade ausgeliehen nach Amerika und werde auf einer Wanderaustellung gezeigt, das Riesenrad sei leider in einer der größten deutschen Firmen, zum Umbau, um vergrößert zu werden für die künftigen, immer größer werdenden Ansprüche. (3.2: 698)

There is a double geographical deviation at play here: the traffic accident, on an immediate level, that obligates the visiting tourists to observe Vienna from a distance, but also, and more importantly, the outsourcing or exportation of Austrian culture abroad—the "Wanderaustellung" as ambulatory as this quick passage through the city—and the tailoring of Austrian tourist attractions to international expectations.

Jelinek's roadtrip commences in a parallel fashion before being similarly sidetracked: "Fahren wir in die Hauptstadt, sagt sich die Frau in der Früh. Bevor, wie jeden Tag, die Ängstlichkeit kommt, setzen wir uns ins Auto" (426). Also an explicit parody of a sightseeing tour, Jelinek's reader virtually visits all of Vienna's key attractions alongside the "Kolosse der Reisebusse"

> die [. . .] anstatt brav am Stadrand zu warten, sich um badewannenkleine Stellplätzchen balgen [. . .] überlassen wir sie unseren Wientouristen, solange die überhaupt noch kommen, und fahren wir selber weiter, wir kennen uns ja aus. Wien ist anders [. . .] was ist dagegen der blöde big apple. (435)

Here the tourist invasion forces out the native residents as Vienna struggles to distinguish itself from cities like New York. What the comparison to Bachmann makes apparent is that this seemingly innocuous allusion to an emblematic foreign metropolis is anything but: As we ostensible natives willingly surrender our spaces to the battling tour buses, the retreat shows the irony implicit in the narrator's assertion that "we" are at home here and that we know our way around ("wir kennen uns ja aus"). Once again, our journey into Vienna has been diverted by a geographical and narrative aside; despite the explicit assertion to the contrary, we are indeed tourists—and, moreover, we are lost. While Bachmann resists her complicity in this phenomenon—ultimately unwriting her potential resemblance to the maligned tour guide of *Besichtigung*—Jelinek chooses instead to capitalize on it in an extremely ambivalent way. Parading the perversity of Austrian politics as much for a Swedish prize committee as for a domestic audience, the author also ends up participating in a variety of tourism, or rather in its inverse: its negative image.

Throughout the novel, but most especially in this final chapter, Jelinek returns to her vehement disparagement of the tourist industry, criticizing the country that endeavors to keep immigrants out while simultaneously attempting to attract vacationers—a hypocrisy particularly apparent following the political ascent of Jörg Haider's far-right Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPÖ) and the ensuing boycotts and economic sanctions imposed on Austria.[17] ("Wir beteuern vieles," writes Jelinek on the first page of the chapter, "wir haben es nicht so gemeint, doch die EU zerrt mit ihren Mutterhänden an uns, nicht einmal die Nase putzen können wir uns mehr, ohne daß wir von ihr streng beobachtet werden," 425.) Like the reader of this chapter, alienated from the Viennese cityscape by a lampoon of sightseeing, Jelinek repeatedly expresses her own sentiment of having become a foreigner at home. At one point she speaks of how "der Rest Österreichs voll Liebe und *Gier* die Touristen auffängt, unsere lieben Gäste, die uns besuchen, außer die Regierung paßt ihnen nicht. Mir paßt sie auch nicht. *Fremd bin daher auch ich*" (361, emphasis added).

This hints at the darker side, a measure of postcolonial panic, to the Purkersdorf anecdote quoted at the outset of this article. Clearly, the farcical aside has an element of linguistic nonsense to it; on one level, the ticket clerk's reply ("Ober- oder Unterpurkersdorf?") operates as total gibberish, as is made evident by the conclusion to the parenthesis: "Haha. Wie? Was haben Sie gesagt? *Wurscht*" (43, emphasis added). Here the speaking voice is not entirely determinable: As a response to the punch line, these four short sentences might function either as the continuation of the tourist's dialogue, as a scripted reaction for the reader of the novel, or as both at once. In any event, this reaction is one of incomprehension and disorientation. Most troubling, then, is the distasteful play of language by which the names of these Austrian villages, in the context of the anecdote, begin to mimic a stereotyped impression of the intonations of Mandarin. With the familiar rendered foreign by its appearance in another tongue, seen from an outside perspective, the home is made *unheimlich*: phonetically displacing this Austrian *Heimat* abroad, in China, on the other side of the globe.

At issue, then, is nothing less than ownership of one's own home: In some small sense, the returning tourist *from* Purkersdorf has become a tourist *in* Purkersdorf as well. Unable to possess the place name Purkersdorf, the anecdotal Austrian is alienated from his *Heimat*; the return that had been taken for granted proves impossible.[18] Set into the context of another impossible homecoming—Gerti's journey toward Vienna—the true significance of this apparently unimportant anecdote is revealed. As in Bachmann's *Besichtigung* fragment, the formally supplemental nature of the passage mirrors such geographical diversions, but it is here that the fundamental difference between Bachmann and Jelinek is made manifest: Whereas Bachmann ultimately omits the *Besichtigung* fragment from her novel, repressing the anxiety it represents and instead opting for the more optimistic outing with Ivan, Jelinek elects to include her Purkersdorf anecdote *sous rature* in the form of a parenthetical aside.

Unlike Bachmann, then, Jelinek comes to consider her feeling of being a foreigner as an indication of the utter impossibility of home. After lambasting her protagonist's unflagging faith in borders, the author mordantly laments:

> an den Grenzen geht es auch nicht weiter. Als ob ich eine Ausländerin ware, von außerhalb der wunderschönen Schengenstaaten [. . .] da ist niemand, weil alle sich zerstreuen wollen und *daher derzeit und*

> *für alle künftigen Zeiten nicht zu Hause sind und sein werden* [. . .] unser europäisches Haus ist fast immer zu klein dafür, und jetzt ist es auch zu klein für Österreich, das Musterkind [. . .] . Wir wollen es aber auch anderen nicht gönnen, da wir nirgendwo mehr erwünscht sind, dafür bei uns, den Bewohnern Österreichs, zu Hause zu sein (da müßten wir unser gemeinsames Haus ja räumen! Da könnte ja jeder kommen). (422, emphasis added)

The conservative quest to strengthen borders against unwanted immigration—ostensibly an attempt to preserve Austrian national character—is made all the more laughable by an underlying and relentless drive for expansion and dispersion. The symbolic center, the common house of Europe or the House of Austria, has been evacuated, leaving it uninhabitable to natives and to new arrivals alike. Representing herself as an *Ausländerin im Abseits*, Jelinek indicates an originary alienation, refusing any notion of an idyllic Austria that would precede its fragmented and dissolved form. The national, it would appear, was *already* transnational, the world in which we live *already* globalized. National identity has definitively been shown to be a fiction.

Recalling the intentionally muddled but still hopeful position of the narrator in Bachmann's *Malina* ("Ich sage immer lieber [. . .] das Haus Österreich, denn ein Land wäre mir zu groß, zu geräumig, zu unbequem, Land sag ich nur zu kleineren Einheiten"), Jelinek's Austria is subsumed into a greater European context that somehow fails to contain it ("unser europäisches Haus ist fast immer zu klein dafür, und jetzt ist es auch zu klein für Österreich"). But if Bachmann's wistful celebration of "das Haus Österreich" tacitly opposed an idealized *trans*nationalism to this postwar world of increasingly blurring borders, Jelinek's nationally defined *Heimat* arises *as a response* to the same phenomenon. The *post*national has become a necessary precondition for the invention of national identity.

While Jelinek later tempered and revised her initial views on European unification, the question of Austrian national character in an international domain—what the author refers to in one interview as "a very fragile identity" (quoted in Bethman 61)—remains of central significance to her work. A decade after her open letter protesting the Schengen Agreement, on the eve of her country's definitive entry into the European Union, Jelinek spoke of "Leute wie mich [. . .] die auf ihre Weise versuchen, die Geschichte ihres Landes aufzuarbeiten [. . .] . Gerade in diesem größeren Zusammenhang

Europa werde ich wirklich Luft holen können" (quoted in Scheller, "'Mit einem Kopfsprung nach Europa'"). It is only in an international environment, in this view, that the national literature shall thrive, and, indeed, with the bestowal of the Nobel Prize for Literature, this distinctly Austrian author was finally to become the focus of transnational attention. It is only in an age of globalization that Jelinek's critique of the same can have any relevance or any audience—that this *Nestbeschmutzerin* becomes a key protector of her country's delicate cultural heritage. This is a strangely hopeful paradox, as relevant in Purkersdorf as it is in Peking.

Notes

1. While the connection between these two passages has not yet been noted in the secondary literature, it is frequently acknowledged that Jelinek's novel takes its title from another of Bachmann's unfinished narratives, also called *Gier* (1973). It has also been noted—by Bärbel Lücke, for instance—that the last line of Jelinek's novel ("Es war ein Unfall") is an allusion to the final line of *Malina* ("Es war Mord") (Lücke 71). Tracing the intertextual and genetic connections to Bachmann's final text, "Drei Wege zum See" (1972), Luigi Reitani has noted that the heroine of that story reads a newspaper account of the murder central to Bachmann's *Gier* and that "Mit diesem Mord wird nämlich die Heimat unheimlich" (41).

2. Utopian in the sense alluded to by Walter Fanta: "Beim 'Haus Österreich' handelt es sich um eine Seifenblase (konsequente Dekonstruction): Österreich ist 'aus der Geschichte ausgetreten', als 'Imperium aus der Geschichte verstoßen', ein Land, in dem 'nichts mehr geschieht', damit um KEIN LAND (Utopia) mehr" (165).

3. As Malcom Spencer notes: "The external circumstances of Bachmann's life in the 1950s and 1960s are not sufficient to explain her identification with the vanished empire, nor her preoccupation with exile and the search for a home" (194).

4. Following Claudio Magris's influential study, *Der Habsburgische Mythos in der österreichischen Literatur* (1996), Walter Fanta also compares Bachmann's *Haus Österreich* to Robert Musil's Kakanien but emphasizes the difference in historical perspective between the two authors: "Ingeborg Bachmann ZITIERT den Mythos. Es liegt ihr nicht direkter Beschwörung alter Zeiten; der Mythos erhält eine rein referenzielle Funktion. Damit schließt sie wieder an Musil an, dessen Chiffre 'Kakanien' deutlich ironisch getönt ist" (Fanta 168).

5. As Wigmore contends, "the political and historical allusions in *Malina* present little sense of a deterritorialized world or even of a Europe with open borders, although it does evoke utopian memories of an earlier unity in which Austria played a central role" ("From 'Das Haus Österreich'" 67).

6. This bridge—which was used as a location in the source of the title of the novel's second chapter (Carol Reed's 1949 film noir *The Third Man*)—collapsed just five years after the publication of *Malina*. On this intertext, see Revesz.

7. Barbara Agnese reads this passage as an example of *lieux de mémoire* in Bachmann's

Vienna, commenting that the association of place names with Ivan allows the narrator to go about her daily life without succumbing to fear (56).

8. Together with the potential allusion to *The Third Man*, this single passage contains the germs of the titles of two of the novel's three chapters.

9. The overemphasis on Austrian "history" and "culture" is symptomatic of what Malcolm Spencer has identified as the peculiar "Geschichtslosigkeit" of postwar Austria: "mass tourism increasingly transformed the Alpine republic into a theme park for foreign consumption, its real history swept away in favor of a sanitized 'Sound of Music' Austria inhabited by yodeling men and dirndl-clad women [. . .] described by Marie-Thérèse Kerschbaumer as 'das gebuchte Österrreich [. . .] ein [. . .] geldgieriges Operetten-und Biskuit-Museum.'" For Spencer, this is an important part of Austria's positioning in Europe: "Suppression of the past and mass tourism are specific phenomena, but beneath them lies a deeper, suppressed 'Geschichtslosigkeit': the necessity felt by the 'neutral' Alpine republic to orient itself westward and so deny its central European heritage (hence the importance of the Austrian *Mitteleuropa* debate of the 1980s, which challenged this denial). For [. . .] Bachmann, by contrast, Austria remains inextricably linked with its Slav neighbors" (199).

10. The evocation of the *Kapuzinergruft* is both a reference to the site itself and an allusion to a 1938 novel by Joseph Roth that Malcom Spencer, following Leo Lensing, has extensively discussed in the context of Bachmann's late work. Spencer 207.

11. As Rhonda Duffaut has put it, "The narrator's different type of interaction not only demonstrates how the continual necessity to reinstate definition undermines nationhood, but it also serves as a model for an alternative possibility of community" (31). And this different type of interaction is best exemplified by the creation of the *Ungargassenland*: "In order to preserve her alternative interaction, the narrator establishes a new community that she calls 'Ungargassenland,' consisting of the street on which she and Ivan live. Although her creation of her Ungargassenland appears to dramatize the setting of boundaries and use of domination in the formation of a nation, her new 'land' emerges as being in-between national signification" (35).

12. Many scholars have commented on the peculiarly literary quality of Bachmann's treatment of the "Haus Österreich" trope. Manfred Jurgensen vividly writes that "Das 'Haus Österreich' erweist sich als Metapher, als Sprachbild, in dem die Dichterin zu beheimaten versucht. Es ist also eine Literarisierung Österreichs [. . .] . Wie immer bei Bachmann, gewährt die Literatur Schutz. Ihre Einbildungskraft läßt sie Nutznießerin einer Geschichte sein, an der sie selbst nicht (mehr) teilgenommen hat" (159–60). Most recently, Reitani concurs that Bachmann is more at home in a literary tradition than in a political one.

13. Malcolm Spencer discovers a similar *Anschluß* in *Drei Wege zum See*, one that is again linked to an anxiety regarding tourism: "Klagenfurt is being Germanized: the castle in the woods has been turned into a hotel for German tourists and its café serves coffee in the German rather than the Austrian manner. Herr Matrei no longer visits a 'Lokal' that dared to call 'Topfenkuchen' 'Käsesahnetorte.' The vast camping sites are full of German visitors [. . .] . Bachmann's *Novelle* about the Second Republic pointedly includes a new kind of Anschluss. For Herr Matrei Klagenfurt is a town occupied by German tourists: 'Den Krieg hatten sie verloren, aber nur scheinbar, jetzt eroberten sie Österreich wirklich, jetzt konnten sie es sich

kaufen, und das war schlimmer'" (220). Reitani also compares the tourism of *Besichtigung* to "Drei Wege zum See": "In einer Tirade, die an die satirischen Töne des Prosatexts *Besichtigung einer alten Stadt* erinnert, schimpft Elisabeths Vater gegen die 'Deutschen', die das Land besetzt und es zur Unkenntlichkeit verunstaltet hätten" (40).

14. As Helen Finch has noted, Jelinek's work "aggressively oscillat[es] between a hatred for Austrian culture and complicity in it" (155). It was the author's polemical play *Burgtheater* that first garnered Jelinek the pejorative title *Nestbeschmutzerin* that has continued to haunt her to this day. Only performed abroad for the first two decades following its Bonn premier, *Burgtheater* can be seen as a precursor of the *Aufführungsverbote* that Jelinek instituted in protest of Jörg Haider's far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ), banning performances of her plays on Austria's state-sponsored stages and pushing her polemical take on Austrian politics *outside* the country's borders. It is fitting, then, that *Gier* would be her "Nobel novel," as Finch has put it (151): one of few of the author's recent works to be translated into English and the first novel written after the FPÖ entered the Austrian government, its politics and presentation seem more tailored to the Swedish academy than to a domestic readership.

15. Wigmore's opposition of the house and Heimat in a distinctly Austrian literary tradition to a notion of postnational "deterritorialization" recalls the perpetual derritorialization and reterritorialization that characterize Deleuze and Guattari's notion of a minor literature, which might take on a new inflection in the current context: perhaps positioning Bachmann's and Jelinek's writing, like Kafka's, both in relations but also *in opposition to* the transnational "literature of totality" represented by the broader German-language canon.

16. As Wigmore insists, "The implication of the Gendarm's craving for 'houses' therefore extends beyond Austria as it epitomises selfish western greed in general" ("Crime, Corruption, Capitalism" 280).

17. Tourism has been an important issue for Jelinek from the earliest stages of her career. The author first emerged as a truly contentious figure in Austrian culture with her television documentary "Die Ramsau am Dachstein" (1976). Commissioned to draw tourists to the region, this installment in the series "Vielgeliebtes Österreich" instead became the platform for an often vicious critique of tourism still centrally present in the writer's grapplings with globalization. The residents of Ramsau were incensed, and the Österreichische Volkspartei (ÖVP) rallied against the Österreichischen Rundfunk, demanding that the broadcasting service establish "ein Klima der Selbstzensur" and "Berufsverbote für fortschrittliche" (quoted in Janke 163). Already the author found herself at odds with those whose culture she sought to portray and to protect against the encroaching threat of globalization in the guise of the tourism industry.

18. Perhaps the recuperation of the place name Purkersdorf into a foreign tongue could be read along the lines of what Jacques Derrida, in another context, has called the "impossible property of language [*l'impossible propréte d'une langue*]" or perhaps more pertinently the impossibility of a language *qua property*: an "originary 'alienation' [*'alienation' originaire*]" that "institutes every language as a language of the other [*qui institue toute langue en langue de l'autre*]" (121).

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