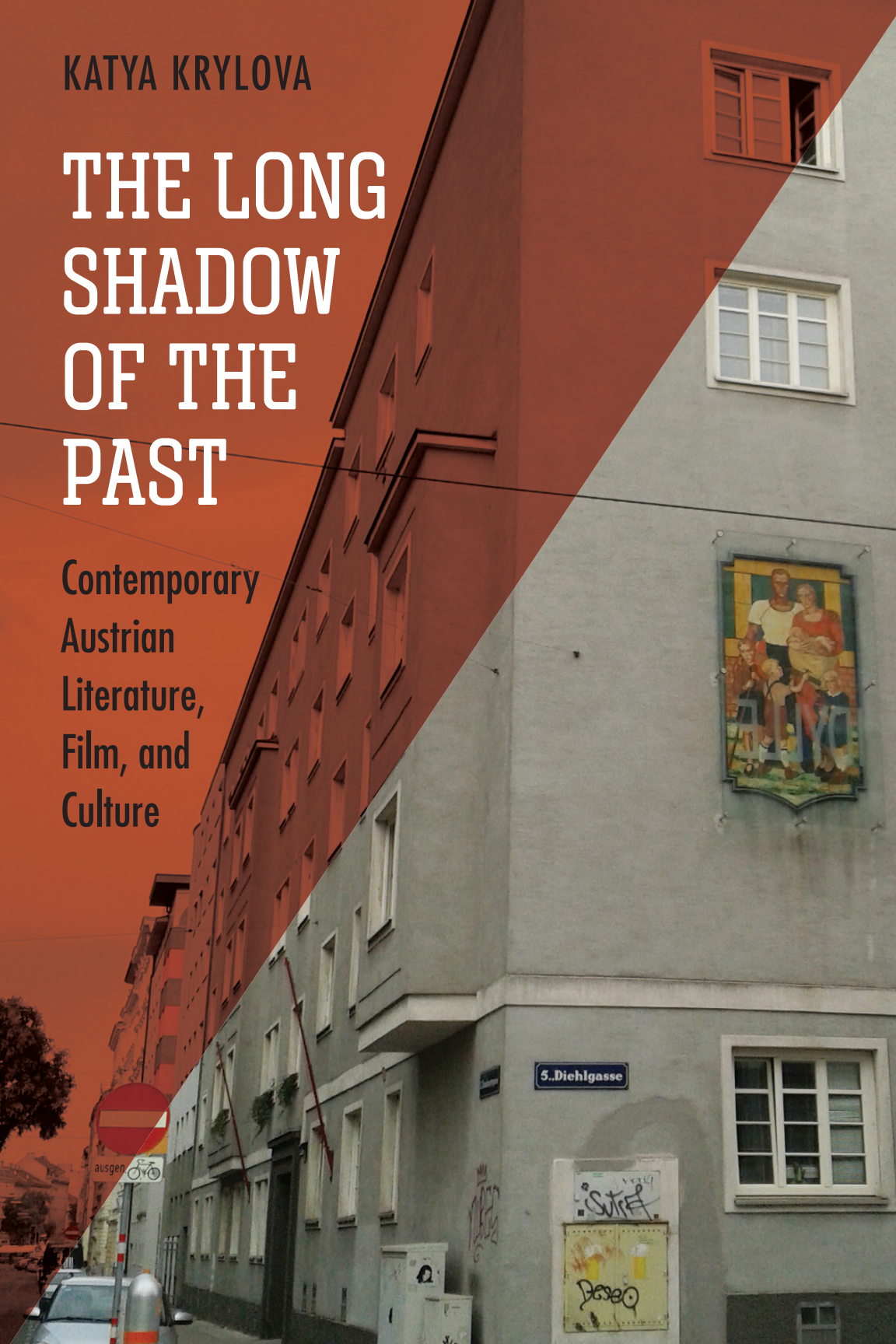


KATYA KRYLOVA

THE LONG SHADOW OF THE PAST

Contemporary
Austrian
Literature,
Film, and
Culture



The Long Shadow of the Past

Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture

The Long Shadow of the Past

Contemporary Austrian Literature, Film, and Culture

Katya Krylova



CAMDEN HOUSE

Rochester, New York

Copyright © 2017 Katya Krylova

All Rights Reserved. Except as permitted under current legislation, no part of this work may be photocopied, stored in a retrieval system, published, performed in public, adapted, broadcast, transmitted, recorded, or reproduced in any form or by any means, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

First published 2017
by Camden House

Camden House is an imprint of Boydell & Brewer Inc.
668 Mt. Hope Avenue, Rochester, NY 14620, USA
www.camden-house.com
and of Boydell & Brewer Limited
PO Box 9, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 3DF, UK
www.boydellandbrewer.com

ISBN-13: 978-1-57113-939-9
ISBN-10: 1-57113-939-7

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Krylova, Katya.

Title: The long shadow of the past : contemporary Austrian literature, film, and culture / Katya Krylova.

Description: Rochester, New York : Camden House, 2017. | Series: Studies in German literature, linguistics, and culture | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2017008224 | ISBN 9781571139399 (hardcover : alk. paper) | ISBN 1571139397 (hardcover : alk. paper)

Subjects: LCSH: Holocaust, Jewish (1939–1945), in literature. | Holocaust, Jewish (1939–1945), in motion pictures. | Holocaust, Jewish (1939–1945)—Austria. | Waldheim, Kurt—Influence.

Classification: LCC PN56.H55 K76 2017 | DDC 830.9/3584360522—dc23 LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2017008224>

This publication is printed on acid-free paper.
Printed in the United States of America.

For my parents, Elena and Victor

Contents

List of Illustrations	ix
Acknowledgments	xi
List of Abbreviations	xv
Introduction: Confrontations with the Past	1
1: Melancholy Journeys to the Past: The Films of Ruth Beckermann	25
2: Reconstructing a Home: Nostalgia in Anna Mitgutsch's <i>Haus der Kindheit</i>	49
3: Silencing the Past: Margarete Heinrich's and Eduard Erne's <i>Totschweigen</i> and Elfriede Jelinek's <i>Rechnitz (Der Würgeengel)</i>	63
4: Historicizing the Waldheim Affair: Robert Schindel's <i>Der Kalte</i>	79
5: Missing Images: Memorials and Memorial Projects in Contemporary Vienna	96
Conclusion: Living with Shadows	135
Notes	143
Bibliography	173
Index	191

Illustrations

Fig. 1. Ulrike Lienbacher, <i>Idylle</i> , 2002.	103
Fig. 2. Ulrike Lienbacher, <i>Idylle</i> , 2002, on the wall of Brandmayergasse 27, Vienna.	104
Fig. 3. Maria Theresia Litschauer, <i>transcription</i> , 2010.	106
Fig. 4. Maria Theresia Litschauer, <i>transcription</i> , 2010, on the wall of the Thury-Hof, Marktgassee 3–7, Vienna.	107
Fig. 5. <i>The Vienna Project</i> stencil spray.	111
Fig. 6. Vienna Regional Court building.	114
Fig. 7. Detail from Catrin Bolt’s <i>Alltagsskulptur</i> in the Hermann-Gmeiner-Park in Vienna’s first district.	119
Fig. 8. Further detail from Catrin Bolt’s <i>Alltagsskulptur</i> in the Hermann-Gmeiner-Park.	119
Fig. 9. Platform five on the Vienna West Station, with one of Catrin Bolt’s <i>Alltagsskulpturen</i> (everyday sculptures) visible on the platform.	121
Fig. 10. Detail from Catrin Bolt’s <i>Alltagsskulptur</i> (everyday sculpture) on platform five of the Vienna West station.	121
Fig. 11. Ruth Beckermann, <i>The Missing Image</i> installation positioned in front of Alfred Hrdlicka’s figure of the “street-washing Jew.”	125
Fig. 12. An explanatory plaque, attached to the side of Ruth Beckermann’s <i>The Missing Image</i> installation.	128
Fig. 13. Iris Andraschek and Hubert Lobnig, <i>Turnertempel Erinnerungsort</i> , 2011.	130
Fig. 14. Detail from Olaf Nicolai, <i>Denkmal für die Verfolgten der NS-Militärjustiz</i> , 2014.	141
Fig. 15. Olaf Nicolai, <i>Denkmal für die Verfolgten der NS-Militärjustiz</i> , 2014.	142
<i>Photographs by author.</i>	

Acknowledgments

THIS BOOK WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE without the generous support of the Leverhulme Trust, through their Early Career Fellowship scheme. I was very fortunate to be awarded this fellowship for a research project that would result in this monograph. The research fellowship was held in the Department of German Studies at the University of Nottingham between 2012 and 2015, which provided a stimulating environment within which to work on this project. I am grateful to colleagues in the Department of German Studies at Nottingham, in particular Dirk Göttsche, Nicola McLelland, Franziska Meyer, Rachel Palfreyman, Matthias Uecker, and Roger Woods, for their support and engagement with my project. Membership of the Memory Studies and the Politics of Memory research cluster, based in the Department of German at Nottingham, allowed me to workshop ideas that would eventually find their way into this book, and the German Studies Research Seminar provided a great forum for giving papers and soliciting valuable feedback from colleagues. Developing and teaching a final-year undergraduate course at Nottingham on “Confronting the Past in Contemporary Austrian Literature and Film” and supervising dissertations arising from the same, allowed me to clarify my thinking on issues of Austrian contemporary culture with groups of enthusiastic students, eager to learn more about a country most associated in the Anglophone world with *The Sound of Music*.

Two research visits to Vienna, Austria, undertaken in the summers of 2014 and 2015, made possible with the generous support of the Leverhulme Trust, allowed me to carry out vital research in libraries and archives and also to meet some of the writers and artists who are the focus of my monograph. I am most grateful to the staff in the Documentation Center for Modern Austrian Literature Vienna (where I worked extensively with the Newspaper Cuttings Collection) and at the Austrian National Library for their helpful assistance. Working on living writers and filmmakers offers a wonderful opportunity to interact with the “subjects” of one’s research. I am greatly indebted to Ruth Beckermann for being such a generous correspondent and conversation partner, for her hospitality in Vienna, and for being a wonderful special guest at the “Contemporary Austrian Literature, Film, and Culture” international conference that I organized at the University of Nottingham with the generous sponsorship of the Leverhulme Trust and the Austrian Cultural

Forum London in 2015. Thank you very much also to Frederick Baker for the generous supply of his books and for sharing his memories as an eyewitness in the 2000 anti-Haider protests in the context of a screening of his film *Widerstand in Haiderland* (Resistance in Haider Country) at the same conference in Nottingham. I would like to thank the conference committee, the keynote speakers, special guests, and all delegates, for their participation in the conference and for the warm exchanges that have extended beyond the confines of the three-day conference to form a veritable community of contemporary Austrian studies scholars around the world. Thanks are also due to Robert Schindel for taking the time to meet and talk about his most recent novel with me at his *Stammcafe* in Vienna in August 2015. I am grateful to Karen Frostig for the conversation we had at a performance connected to her *Vienna Project* in the summer of 2014. Thank you to Eduard Erne for patiently answering my questions and for his interest in my work. Thanks are also due to Nora Höglinger at Kunst im öffentlichen Raum Wien (Art in Public Space Vienna), who kindly met with me and provided me with all manner of leaflets and publications about recent memorial projects sponsored by the organization.

I am fortunate to have been able to present my research at numerous conferences in the United Kingdom and abroad, including the Modern Language Association Annual Convention held in Boston, Massachusetts, in 2013; the German Studies Association conference in Washington, DC, in 2015; the Association for German Studies in Great Britain and Ireland conference, held in Manchester in 2014; the Women in German Studies conferences in Sheffield in 2013 and Cambridge in 2014; and the European Cinema Forum, held in Edinburgh in 2013. National and international networks provided further opportunities, through their annual symposia, to gain valuable new perspectives on my research from scholars working both in related and diverging disciplines. These included the German Screen Studies Network, based at King's College London; the Picturing Austrian Cinema research symposium, based at St. John's College, University of Cambridge; the Domestic Imaginaries Network; the AHRC-funded research group Reverberations of War in Germany and Europe since 1945 at University College London; the Transnational Holocaust Memory network at the University of Leeds; the Genre Studies network at the University of Birmingham; the Embodiments Research Group based at the University of Liverpool.

I am grateful also to Sarah Bowden, Martin Brady, Erica Carter, Ben Schofield, and Catherine Smale in the Department of German at King's College London, where I held a Teaching Fellowship in 2016. Their collegiality and support provided a welcome diversion as I approached the final stages of work on this study. I would like to thank Andrew Webber of Churchill College, Cambridge, who kindly commented on the

earliest drafts of research proposals that would eventually develop into the Leverhulme-funded project and result in this book. I would also like to thank Jim Walker at Camden House for expertly seeing this monograph through to its completion and for his patience in answering my many queries. I am grateful to the Leverhulme Trust and to the University of Nottingham for supporting the publication of this book through their generous contributions to the publishing subvention.

Finally, my debt of gratitude to my parents, Elena and Victor, is one that I can never repay. I am deeply grateful for their unconditional love and support and for creating an environment in which this study could be completed. It is to them that this book is dedicated.

Earlier versions of material in this volume have appeared elsewhere. Parts of chapter 1 appeared in “Melancholy Journeys in the Films of Ruth Beckermann,” *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 59, no. 1 (2014): 249–66; parts of chapter 3 in “Genre and Memory in Margareta Heinrich’s and Eduard Erne’s *Totschweigen* and Elfriede Jelinek’s *Rechnitz* (*Der Würgeengel*),” in *Genre Trajectories: Identifying, Mapping, Projecting*, edited by Garin Dowd and Natalia Rulyova (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 66–85; and parts of chapter 4 in “Disturbing the Past: The Representation of the Waldheim Affair in Robert Schindel’s *Der Kalte*,” in *Reverberations of Nazi Violence in Germany and Beyond: Disturbing Pasts*, edited by Stephanie Bird, Mary Fulbrook, Julia Wagner, and Christiane Wienand (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 107–23. I wish to thank Oxford University Press, Palgrave Macmillan, Bloomsbury Academic, as well as the editors of these works, for their kind permission to reprint.

Katya Krylova
West Bridgford, Nottinghamshire
March 2017

Abbreviations

<i>DK</i>	<i>Der Kalte</i> (The Cold One, 2013)
<i>H</i>	<i>Homemad(e)</i> (2001)
<i>HdK</i>	<i>Haus der Kindheit</i> (House of Childhood, 2000)
<i>HoC</i>	<i>House of Childhood</i> (2006, translation by David Dollenmayer of <i>Haus der Kindheit</i>)
<i>PB</i>	<i>Die papierene Brücke</i> (The Paper Bridge, 1987)
<i>R</i>	<i>Rechnitz (Der Würgeengel)</i> (Rechnitz: The Exterminating Angel, 2009)
<i>T</i>	<i>Totschweigen</i> (Deathly Silence; in English as <i>A Wall of Silence</i> , 1994)
<i>WR</i>	<i>Wien retour</i> (Return to Vienna, 1983)

Translations are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

Introduction: Confrontations with the Past

What happens when we forget to remember?

—Karen Frostig, *The Vienna Project* (2013–14)

ON MAY 24, 2016, SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARY HAPPENED. Austria was on the front pages of several British national newspapers, including the *Times* and the *Guardian*.¹ The reason was the narrow victory of Alexander Van der Bellen, an independent candidate and former leader of *Die Grünen* (Austrian Green Party), against the *Freiheitliche Partei Österreich* (FPÖ, Austrian Freedom Party) candidate, Norbert Hofer, in the second round of the Austrian presidential election, held on May 22, 2016. Van der Bellen had won the election by the narrowest of margins, by only 30,863 votes, getting 50.3 percent of the total vote, with Hofer polling at 49.7 percent.² The election was effectively decided by the 759,968 postal voters,³ making up almost 14 percent of the electorate,⁴ whose votes were counted on the day after the Sunday, May 22, election. For an Austrian presidential election to be decided by postal votes in this way was a highly unusual occurrence. Ordinarily, the winning candidate is able to gain enough of a majority for the postal vote count on the following day to be largely a formality, with the winner announced already on the Sunday evening. On this occasion, the end of the election day saw Hofer lead at 51.9 percent (with Van der Bellen at 48.1 percent),⁵ while pollsters from the SORA Institute for Social Research and Consulting predicted the final result (including postal votes), to stand at circa 50 percent and 50 percent for the respective candidates, with everything still to play for.⁶ The presidential election saw the candidates of the ruling political parties, the Social Democratic Party of Austria and the Austrian People's Party, eliminated in the first round, with Norbert Hofer, the far-right Austrian Freedom Party candidate, winning this first heat with 35.1 percent of the votes.⁷ It was an election that polarized the country, rural against urban areas, male voters against female voters, young against old, and divided those communities where the vote reflected the national picture of a near fifty-fifty split of votes for the two candidates.⁸

Van der Bellen's narrow victory left liberals in Austria, and in Europe more generally, breathing a sigh of relief that the election of the first far-right head of state in contemporary Western Europe had been

averted, “edged out in knife-edge Austrian poll,”⁹ and that Austria had “pulled back from the far-right abyss.”¹⁰ However, the relief was very short-lived. No sooner had Van der Bellen made his first speech as president-elect on May 23, 2016, than accusations were being raised in the Austrian Freedom Party about possible electoral malpractice, with a formal suit submitted to the *Verfassungsgerichtshof* (Constitutional Court) on June 8, 2016.¹¹ While, initially, it did not seem that these allegations could gain much traction, on July 1, 2016, Austria’s Constitutional Court announced that the final round of the presidential election would be rerun, largely due to early counting of postal votes in a number of municipalities, affecting 77,926 votes in total.¹² Considering the narrow margin by which Van der Bellen had won, it was decided that this could have altered the outcome of the election. The Constitutional Court also criticized the premature announcement of results via social media.¹³ The date for the rerun of the presidential election was later set by the Austrian Council of Ministers as October 2, 2016.¹⁴ The saga did not end there, however, as the already postponed rerun of the final election round was further delayed in September 2016 due to faulty glue on postal ballot envelopes, a case that became known as “Klebergate” (glue gate).¹⁵ The final election round was thereby once again postponed, to December 4, 2016. During this time, the election campaign continued to polarize the country, with Norbert Hofer coming under fire for using the words “So wahr mir Gott helfe” (So help me God; a religious affirmation, which may be spoken as part of the presidential inaugural oath)¹⁶ on his election posters, thereby drawing criticism both for his assumption of electoral victory and, from church leaders, for misusing religion for political gain.¹⁷ A video, originally posted on Alexander Van der Bellen’s Facebook page, in which an 89-year-old Austrian Holocaust survivor, identified only as “Gertrude,” criticized the divisive rhetoric of the Austrian Freedom Party and urged voters “vernünftig [zu] wählen” (to vote sensibly), was viewed over three million times by the December election.¹⁸ Moreover, endorsements from leading politicians, such as the outgoing Socialist president, Heinz Fischer, as well as the leader of the conservative Österreichische Volkspartei (ÖVP, Austrian People’s Party), Reinhold Mitterlehner, arguably turned the tide in Van der Bellen’s favor.¹⁹ In this final round of a yearlong election process, the independent candidate Alexander Van der Bellen substantially increased his majority, defeating Hofer by 348,231 votes with a 7 percent margin (in contrast to 30,863 votes in the May election), to gain 53.8 percent of the total vote, with Norbert Hofer polling 46.2 percent of the vote.²⁰ Many political observers, both in Austria and abroad, once again breathed “a sigh of relief” following Van der Bellen’s election win.²¹ As a number of commentators noted, the far-right threat had once again been “staved off”²²—the question is for how long.

“The Waldheim Affair Changed Austria from the Ground Up”²³

The 2016 Austrian presidential election reopened the familiar fault lines, between left and right, between cosmopolitan attitudes versus “Österreich zuerst” (Austria first),²⁴ that had emerged in Austrian society since another Austrian presidential election took place almost exactly thirty years ago, namely the presidential election that saw Dr. Kurt Waldheim, the Austrian People’s Party candidate, elected president on June 8, 1986. The 1986 presidential election gave rise to what became known as the Waldheim affair of 1986–88, during the course of which it emerged that the former UN Secretary General (1972–81) had lied about the extent of his involvement in the Nazi war machine, which did not stop him becoming president. The Waldheim affair marked a turning point in Austrian society, sparking the beginning of a belated process of coming to terms with the country’s National Socialist past. The Waldheim affair saw a young generation of artists and intellectuals (among them many of the writers and filmmakers who are the focus of this study) lead a protest movement against the presidential candidate, who had first tried to whitewash his Nazi past in his autobiography and then, when it was eventually brought to light, denied any wrongdoing, asserting that he, like hundreds of thousands of Austrians in the Second World War, had “only done his duty” as a soldier.²⁵ Many of those dismayed by Waldheim’s election campaign were involved in the formation of the *Republikanischer Club–Neues Österreich* (Republican Club–New Austria) in 1986, which aimed to shed light on and prompt an engagement with Austria’s Nazi past:

Der “Republikanischer Club–Neues Österreich” wurde gegründet. Sein erstes Ziel: Wir—in Österreich—hätten die Aufgabe, die Vergangenheit aufzuhellen, wir selbst, wir in Österreich, unsere Vergangenheit, von der wir kaum mehr zu wissen hatten, dass es einen gewissen Hitler (auch Österreicher) und eine Befreiung gegeben hatte, 1945 durch die Alliierten, 1955 von den Alliierten . . . Nazi? KZ? Pogrom? Vernichtung? Eichmann? Kaltenbrunner? (beide auch Österreicher) . . . na ja.²⁶

[The “Republican Club–New Austria” was founded. Its primary aim: We—in Austria—had the task, of shedding light on the past, we ourselves, we Austrians, on our past, where we hardly remembered anymore that there had been a certain Hitler (also an Austrian) and a liberation in 1945 *by* the Allies, in 1955 *from* the Allies . . . Nazi? Concentration camp? Pogrom? Annihilation? Eichmann? Kaltenbrunner? (both of them also Austrians) . . . indeed.]

The club's mascot became a wooden horse (designed by architect Alfred Hrdlicka), clothed in an SA cap (added to the design by caricaturist Manfred Deix), which served to draw attention to the "Trojan horse" of Waldheim's Nazi past, "ein Holzpferd, ein trojanisches, aus seinem Bauch sollten die Gespenster der Vergangenheit kriechen" (a wooden horse, a Trojan one, the ghosts of the past should creep out of its stomach).²⁷ Waldheim, who had repeatedly denied having been a member of the SA, was found, during the course of the 1986 election campaign, to have been part of the *SA-Reiterstandarte* (SA riding unit) between 1937–39, while a student at the Consular Academy in Vienna.²⁸ This was parodied by then Austrian Chancellor Fred Sinowatz as follows: "Wir nehmen zur Kenntnis, daß Waldheim nicht bei der SA war, sondern sein Pferd bei der SA gewesen ist" (Let us then register the fact that Waldheim was not in the SA, but his horse was).²⁹ Hrdlicka's wooden horse became a key fixture of the Republican Club's demonstrations against Kurt Waldheim, both during the election campaign and during the course of Waldheim's presidency, "accompanying" the president, for example, on visits to the Salzburg Festival and to the Vatican.³⁰ Subsequently, the symbolic value of the mascot has repeatedly been acknowledged in public exhibitions in Austria.³¹ It was most recently exhibited in the Wien Museum (Vienna Museum) between March and May 2016, in conjunction with a series of events marking the thirtieth anniversary of the Waldheim affair.³²

The so-called Waldheim affair lasted from the 1986 election campaign until February 1988 when an International Historians' Commission, set up to investigate Waldheim's wartime record, had concluded that Waldheim could not be deemed a war criminal as such, but that he "clearly must have known" about crimes perpetrated in *Wehrmacht* units in the Balkans and in Thessaloniki, where he had served as an aide-de-camp.³³ However, the Waldheim affair was less about Waldheim himself than about the processes that his candidacy and presidency unleashed. For some Austrians, as Barbara Tóth and Hubertus Czernin argue,³⁴ Waldheim was a proxy "father figure" through which to confront one's own family history: "Viele von ihnen setzten sich mit ihm anstelle ihrer Großväter oder Väter auseinander, weil auch in ihren Familien über die eigene Kriegsvergangenheit nicht gesprochen wurde." (Many of them grappled with him rather than with their own fathers or grandfathers, as the war past was not spoken about in their families.)³⁵ For the first time in the history of the Austrian Second Republic, "ein geradezu verstörender Generationenkonflikt" (a well-nigh disturbing generational conflict) broke out.³⁶ The so-called *Wehrmachtsgeneration* (Wehrmacht generation) was defensive about what it saw as the "defamation" of their generation (who, like Waldheim, had "only done their duty"), both by young liberals and intellectuals in Austria and by foreign powers, euphemistically referred to as the "Ostküste" (East Coast). For Waldheim's

supporters, this was anti-Semitic code for “gewissen Kreisen in Amerika aus dem jüdischen Element” (certain circles in America from the Jewish element), as the nascent Austrian Freedom Party politician Jörg Haider put it in an interview conducted during Waldheim’s election campaign.³⁷ Nevertheless, the Waldheim affair was of profound significance for the Second Republic, with commentators subsequently calling the events of 1986–88 “einen Epochenbruch in der Geschichte Österreichs nach 1945” (an epochal break in Austria’s history after 1945),³⁸ “der Beginn einer vergangenheitspolitischen Zäsur in Österreich, die . . . bis heute noch nicht abgeschlossen ist” (the beginning of a historical-political caesura in Austria . . . that has not been completed to this day),³⁹ and “das Ende der Nachkriegszeit” (the end of the postwar era), as the writer Robert Schindel has asserted.⁴⁰

The Waldheim affair destroyed the Second Republic’s founding myth of having been “Hitler’s first victim,” as stated in the Moscow Declaration of 1943.⁴¹ Waldheim’s assertion of having done his duty raised questions regarding to whom this duty was performed. One had to conclude that this duty was to the Wehrmacht, the same army that, according to the Austrian postwar *Lebenslüge* (life-sustaining lie), had “invaded” Austria in 1938. As the historian Walter Manoschek has asserted “Waldheim war insofern wichtig, als er durch sein Verhalten und seine Aussagen ungewollt den österreichischen Opferstatus in Frage gestellt hat.” (Waldheim was important insofar as that, through his behavior and his statements, he unintentionally called Austria’s victim status into question.)⁴² Thirty years on from the beginning of Waldheim affair, the news weekly *profil*, which, through the work of its investigative journalist Hubertus Czernin, was instrumental in bringing Waldheim’s past to light thirty years earlier, recalled the role it had played in the Waldheim affair with a title story entitled “Als Österreich erwachsen wurde” (When Austria grew up).⁴³ Here, the Waldheim affair is presented as a shift away from the false naïveté of a nation seeing itself as a victim of National Socialism, rather than as an active accomplice and perpetrator. While Austrian historians differ in their analysis of the effects that Waldheim’s candidacy and presidency had on Austria,⁴⁴ eyewitnesses and artists are often effusive in their assessment, viewing the Waldheim affair as “transformative,” as can be gleaned from the titles of edited volumes and cover stories.⁴⁵ For the documentary filmmaker Ruth Beckermann, the fallout from the Waldheim affair constituted nothing less than the second foundation of the Republic of Austria.⁴⁶

What most incensed intellectuals and liberals about Waldheim was not his Nazi past per se (which, as Waldheim rightly pointed out, was not dissimilar to that of hundreds of thousands of Austrians of his generation), but rather Waldheim’s continued inability to see any wrong-doing in his actions more than forty years earlier. In Waldheim, the eyewitness