

Shit and politics

The case of the Kolig-debate in Austria

Bernhard Hadolt

“Inter faeces et urinas nascimur – moriamurque”
Between urethra and anus we are born –
and in faeces and urine we die.
Augustinus, *Confessiones*, amended with the word
moriamurque by Cornelius Kolig

Dit artikel is een verkenning van de betekenis en de politieke toe-eigening van poep als publiek symbool in Oostenrijk door middel van een analyse van krantenartikelen over het Kolig-debat. Dit debat werd gevoerd over de vraag of de kunstenaar Cornelius Kolig, die onder andere faeces gebruikt voor zijn kunstobjecten, een ruimte in het Karintisch provinciaal parlamentsgebouw mocht herontwerpen. In de loop van een jaar polariseerde dit Koligs aanhangers en tegenstanders in hoge mate. De auteur beargumenteert dat het symbool van poep ‘vuil’ belichaamt en als zodanig hoogst verwerpelijke en ‘besmettelijke’ eigenschappen heeft. De auteur laat zien hoe poep wordt gebruikt in identiteitspolitiek als een sociaal spanningspunt om de morele mensen van de amorele mensen te onderscheiden. En tegelijkertijd discriminatiepraktijken toe te laten en te legitimeren.

[poep, faeces, excrementen, vuil, politiek, identiteit, verschil, identiteitspolitiek, stigma, Cornelius Kolig, Oostenrijk]

When in March 1998 the Austrian tabloid *Neue Kronen Zeitung* ran a cover story about the planned redesigning of a conference room in the Provincial Parliament of Carinthia by the object-artist Cornelius Kolig, the *Kärntner Kulturkrieg* (Carinthian culture-war), as it came to be referred to in the media, reached its first peak. It lasted until February 1999 and in its course polarised Austria. This public controversy centred on a hall in the *Kärntner Landhaus* (Carinthian Provincial Parliament), the so-called *Kolig-Saal*, named after Cornelius Kolig’s grandfather Anton. Anton Kolig, a renowned Austrian expressionist, had created the frescos of the Kolig-Hall, which were destroyed as ‘degenerate art’ by the Nazis after the *Anschluss* in 1938. As a symbol of reparation, and because Cornelius Kolig was in possession of his grandfather’s archive, he was invited by the Carinthian government to redesign the Kolig-Hall. When in February 1998 the

Carinthian Provincial Parliament convened to officially commission Kolig to carry out the project, the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) raised major objections, arguing that the project had not been put out to tender. The issue, however, was made into a scandal by the *Neue Kronen Zeitung*, which forcefully brought the existing elements of the political dispute to the wider public. In its cover story, the *Neue Kronen Zeitung* inveighed against Kolig because of his usage of human faeces – among other substances – for his object-art. Pleading for an end to the *Kultur-Skandal* (cultural scandal), the tabloid published photos showing Kolig's art objects made of shit as well as machines used for defecation and implied that he would use shit to redesign the *Kolig-Saal* (which he never planned). In the article Kolig was even brought into connection with child abuse. What followed was described by one side of the debate as a fascist manhunt and malicious campaign, and by the other side as a disgusting violation of decency and a grave act of disrespect of public opinion. The *Kulturkrieg* was fought by means of articles, public statements and letters, petitions, readers' letters, support committees, TV confrontations, resignation of expert bodies and the like. After a jury decision, Kolig was officially commissioned with the project and the *Kolig-Saal* was reopened in September 1998, just in time for the Austrian chairmanship of the EU. When in December, Kolig readjusted one of his objects in the *Kolig-Saal*, the FPÖ and the *Kronen Zeitung* again smelled faeces and instituted proceedings against him because of damage of property. Kolig restored the original condition of the object at the end of January 1999.

It is quite obvious – and not even the FPÖ denies this – that the Kolig-debate was fought and kept alive as part of the regional election campaign, rather than because of conflicting conceptions about taste and justice. The parties' goal was not so much to keep Kolig out of the *Landhaus*, but to get more of their members into the *Landhaus* as elected representatives. What nevertheless primarily remains to be explained, is the fact that the symbol of shit could be instrumentalised as a political means in order to meet this goal. How can the topic of shit become such a major public affair, in its course polarising ever more people? What is it which makes shit so discrediting and powerful in public discourse?

When following the Kolig-debate in the media last year, I was most astonished by the fact that seemingly no one challenged the view that shit could be anything else than dirt. There was hardly any attempt to understand or explain Kolig's work on shit. The common tenor put forward both by opponents and supporters of Kolig was: "shit is shit, and you'd better not get too close to it, because otherwise you get dirty".

The same non-reflective association of shit with dirt became obvious when I discussed this topic with colleagues. Although most of them did not react with anger and disgust – as did some non-anthropologists who I talked to –, they were usually astonished and most often amused when they first heard about my plan to write this article. Our conversations always started with a cautious, sometimes nervous mutual appraisal of attitudes and opinions, which concerned not so much the topic of shit itself, but first of all talking about shit. We lowered our voices, looked around for others who might possibly overhear us and hesitated when it came to saying the word *Scheiße* (shit) out loud. Only when we had agreed that *Scheiße* is a topic worthy of academic discussion, did the atmosphere of the talk relax. What we did in these first moments was to create a

certain distance from shit as matter and from its usual connotations of dirt and disgust by transforming it into an academic topic. In contrast to kinship or religion, where I never had such a problem, shit is obviously not a common topic for academic discussion. But it also shows that dealing with shit is a risky business. Shit – as the topic of sexuality perhaps was in academia thirty years ago – is dirty and sticky matter and as such is prone to spoiling one's (academic) 'symbolic capital' (Bourdieu 1984). One colleague even warned me not to get linked with the topic of shit, so as not to share Kolig's fate. In the preface to his remarkable book *Life is like a chicken coop ladder* about the role of shit in German culture, Alan Dundes (1985) also notices his colleagues' disapproval of shit as subject-matter for research. Shit thus obviously has 'infectious' properties – and not only from a physiological point of view.

Another related problem permeating most discussions with colleagues – and one which I am still struggling with – concerns the difficulty in finding an appropriate language. Besides all kinds of metaphoric descriptions, talk about shit seems to fall into two realms: on the one hand, the realm of vulgarity and obscenity, bad language and ribald jokes, on the other hand, the realm of natural science and biomedicine with its strong tendencies toward the medicalisation of bodily products and processes. There is no convenient language of shit, which would make it easy to envision domains of meaning beyond these two spheres. Therefore, when exploring shit from an anthropological point of view, one has to be careful not to be drawn into one or the other realms of meaning.¹ Since the meaning of texts is of course produced between text and reader, the lack of a suitable language also requires the reader to be open to alternative meanings in order to transcend the conventional connotations of shit.

Both the symbolic infectiousness of shit and the lack of an adequate language may partly explain the scarceness of social science literature on shit. Researching shit has been risky, provided that it was seen to be important at all. This situation has not changed much since Dundes' (1985) call for more cross-cultural research fifteen years ago. There are still only a handful of social science monographs and articles discussing shit as their central theme (Loudon 1977, Laporte 1978, Dundes 1985, Ndonko 1993, Faber 1994) and 'shit' continues to be seldom found in subject indexes of books or data banks. As far as I know, there is no comprehensive review of the literature on the topic. If at all, shit remains a side-issue, both as an ethnographic category and in anthropological theorising.² Given the prominence of other bodily products in anthropology, especially semen and menstrual blood, and the recent explosion of literature on the body (see Lock 1993 for a review), the absence of the topic of shit is all the more indicative of its discrediting and risky qualities.

That shit has hardly been studied, however, does not mean that it would be irrelevant to do so, as I will show in this paper. My overall theme is the meaning and appropriation of shit as public symbol in Austria. I will seek to clarify this relationship by exploring some of the cognitive, bodily, emotional and moral referents of shit and the ways by which these referents, as they are condensed in the symbol of shit, are made effective in social processes. By analysing newspaper articles about the Kolig-debate, my particular aim is to show how shit is used as a public symbol in political dispute. The paper, however, is not about shit as a phenomenon in itself or about the experience

of defecation. Nor will I discuss here Cornelius Kolig's works of art in detail. My argument in this paper is that shit, when brought into the public, symbolises 'dirt' par excellence and as such carries both highly discrediting and symbolically infectious attributes. Together with its reference-concept of cleanliness, the notion of shit as epitome of dirt constitutes both a key symbolic domain and a powerful means for fashioning personal and corporate identities. As a social marker, shit is used in identity work to differentiate the moral people from the amoral ones, thereby authorising and legitimising discriminative social practices.

The Kolig-debate and its participants

Before describing the Kolig-debate in more detail, let me introduce its main participants. *Cornelius Kolig*, after the events of the last year, certainly is one of the best-known (and hated) contemporary artists in Austria. In the art scene he ranks as one of Austria's most distinguished object-artists. He is particularly known for his *Paradise*, a spacious and complex architectonic area in the Gailtal in Carinthia, which he has been building since 1980 and where he lives, creates and stores his paintings, installations, objects and machines. As a central theme of his artistic work, Kolig has chosen the everyday aspects of existential human being by celebrating and closely examining e.g. desire, eating or defecation. He became known outside of the sphere of the art world, because he used blood, urine and shit, among other substances, for his pictures and objects. In 1985, on the occasion of an exhibition of Kolig's work, an outraged Kriemhild Trattnig, former grand dame of the FPÖ, coined the insult *Fäkalkünstler* (faeces artist) for him. In the vernacular, as a Carinthian told me, Kolig is referred to as *der Scheißer* (the shitter). More about Cornelius Kolig, the *Paradise* and his art objects and installations can be found in Kolig 1990 and 1994.

The FPÖ (*Austrian Freedom Party*) cannot be discussed without its charismatic leader *Jörg Haider*, who within the last fifteen years changed the FPÖ from a 10% grouping to the most important opposition party in Austria. Among other things, the FPÖ is usually associated with xenophobia and its close historical and ideological relationship with National Socialism. Because of his aggressive and emotionalising diction, Haider has been accused of being a demagogue and right-wing populist. 250,000 people demonstrated against hostility to foreigners after he had initiated a petition for a referendum against foreigners in 1993. Abuse of artists has also long been part of the FPÖ's highly controversial political repertoire. Outside of Austria, Haider mainly became known for his statements which downplayed the atrocities of the Nazi period. In order to forestall its exclusion from the *Liberal Internationale*, the FPÖ declared its withdrawal in 1993. 1998 seemed to have been the FPÖ's worst year of the Haider era; one scandal within the party followed the next. However, in the recent regional elections in Carinthia in March 1999, Haider's party re-emerged as victorious and even became the strongest party in an Austrian province for the first time in its history. In the Kolig-debate, the Carinthian branch of the FPÖ with its representative *Karl-Heinz Grasser*, and later *Mathias Reichhold*, amongst others played a major part

in the fight against Kolig's *Landhaus* project. Jörg Haider entered the debate later in its course.

Austria's other two major parties are the *Austrian Socialist Party (SPÖ)* and the *Austrian People's Party (ÖVP)*, which have been in coalition both at the federal level and in the province of Carinthia. The SPÖ, a social democratic centre-left party which provides the Federal Chancellor Victor Klima, had long had an absolute majority of votes in Carinthia. During the last decade, though, the Carinthian SPÖ lost more and more of its voters, culminating in a serious defeat in the recent elections. Its leader, deputy governor of Carinthia and *Landeskulturreferent* (provincial representative for cultural affairs) *Michael Ausserwinkler* invited Cornelius Kolig to redesign the *Landhaus-Saal* and throughout the debate was his most important political supporter. He became the target of attacks by the FPÖ and the *Kronen Zeitung*. The ÖVP, a Christian democratic centre-right party, which provided the head of the government of the province of Carinthia *Christof Zernatto*, followed a zigzag course in the Kolig-debate.

The *Neue Kronen Zeitung* (the '*Krone*' in everyday speech) is a daily tabloid paper with the highest circulation in Austria. Known for its page five nude, the *Krone* is regarded as highly influential in the formation of popular opinion and is feared for its 'campaigns' against particular politicians and other prominent figures. Writing against migrants, asylum-seekers and artists, and using diction and arguments similar to the FPÖ, the *Krone* is said to support Haider and the latter. The *Krone* appears throughout Austria, but in its different regional editions has a strong focus on local affairs. In the Kolig-debate, its Carinthian regional edition, the *Kärntner Krone*, was most important for bringing the issue to the wider public.

The *Kleine Zeitung* (the '*Kleine*'), appearing in Styria and in Carinthia, is Carinthia's second most important regional daily. It is the newspaper which most clearly defended Kolig against the *Krone* and the FPÖ, and which gave voice to other supporters of Kolig.

The following description of the Kolig-debate and its analysis is ethnographically based on newspaper articles concerning the subject matter. Its reliability is therefore restricted to these sources. When possible, I have tried to overcome the obvious shortcomings of media reporting concerning 'facts' by cross-checking several accounts of the same matter in different newspapers. The sometimes grossly contradictory descriptions of events and in particular what was left out of reporting, though, were also most revealing and informative.

The media documents were investigated in the newspaper database of the Austrian Press Agency, which includes most of Austria's major print media and can be searched full-text. The search word 'Kolig' resulted in 541 hits, ranging from news headlines, short notes, guest commentaries and columns to full-length articles and cover stories. It also included some multiple hits of one and the same article (e.g. appearing in morning and evening editions of a newspaper), notes about exhibitions and short references to Anton or Cornelius Kolig in articles which were unrelated to our topic. About two thirds of the relevant material stemmed from the Carinthian editions of the *Kleine* and the *Krone*. The rest was contributed mainly by the dailies *Kurier*, the *Standard* and the *Presse*, followed by the weeklies *Profil*, *News* and *Format*.

Heute, Dienstag, Krisensitzung wegen Vergabe oh...

Kolig-Skandal: „Beug...

ig-Saal wird

Erhält der „Fäkalkünstler“ Cornelius Kolig ohne Ausschreibung einen Millionen-Auftrag des Landes Kärnten? Trotz der Proteste bleibt Kulturreferent Ausserwinkler stur: „Ich halte an dem Kolig-Projekt fest!“ „Wir werden uns dem Diktat Ausserwinklers nicht beugen“, kündigt die FP an. Die VP bemüht sich um Schadensbegrenzung.

Im Zuge des Umbaus im Kärntner Landhaus wurde von allen drei Parteien auch die Neugestaltung des „Kolig-Raumes“ beschlossen. Die von dem bekannten Kärntner Künstler Anton Kolig gestal-

ten Fresken waren im Dritten Reich vernichtet worden. Der sozialistische Kulturreferent Michael Ausserwinkler verzichtete jedoch auf eine

Ausschreibung den Enkel K Kolig, mit de ligs Vorstel Kombination Entwürfen u seines Gr nach dem V rund drei ling verwir „Wir w Diktat Au beugen, Ladenh die nie

olig-Saal im Landhaus wird zum Kriminalfall. n Cornelius Kolig während der Weihnachtsfeie gegenmächtig sein „Kunstwerk“ verändert hat, die FP Anzeige wegen Sachbeschädigung. auptmann Zernatto ist verärgert: „Eine uner Veränderung, durch nichts erklärbar.“

an den tag vö nic tete

VC

Aus: vore Kun schli Ko Kron zemb „Nac Werk „Das Besit, wurde, stimm nicht; Septem

Das verkauft Cornelius Kolig als Kunst – so entstehen seine „Kotbilder“. Auch wenn er damit den Kärntner Landtag nicht beglücken will, zeigt es doch die Grundeinstellung des Enkels des großen Kärntner Malers Anton Kolig. Es stellt sich die Frage, ob unter dem Mantel Kunst alles erlaubt ist.



VON

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WIR PROTESTIEREN

„Ohne Ausschreibung darf der Auftrag nicht vergeben werden!“

Der Bericht in der „Kärntner Krone“ über den Millionenauftrag für den „Fäkalkünstler“ Cornelius Kolig ließ die Wogen hochgehen. Geht es nämlich nach Kulturreferent Michael Ausserwinkler, sollte Kolig einen Raum im Landhaus erhalten. Daß die Aufträge...



Herbert Jamnig (25), Koch: „Bin kein Kunst-Freak, aber ohne Ausschreibung geht gar nix. Es sollte danach der kompetenteste Künstler den Auftrag erhalten.“

Max Kör

Morgen, Die Kärntner Landtag zu f... Künstler... geschang; seine ist... das beste In... des Verbandes der... Partner und Elmas... Bahnhofsstr... 5463/54 2 98, täglich... 00 Uhr

Kein Fäkalkünstler im Kärntner Landhaus



Werke von Cornelius Kolig

Läßt sich Kö...



As already mentioned, Anton Kolig, the grandfather of Cornelius Kolig, created the frescos in a conference hall in the Carinthian Provincial Parliament. He had been invited to do so on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Carinthian referendum in 1920, by which the border between Carinthia and Slovenia had been re-established after World War I. Soon after the completion of the frescos in 1930, representatives of the NSDAP and of the nationalistic *Heimatblock* demanded their removal on the grounds of their expressionistic style and some nude portraits. The frescos were eventually destroyed as *entartete Kunst* (degenerate art) after the *Anschluß* in 1938, even though they made the union of Germany and Austria their central theme.

Sixty years later, in 1996, the *Kärntner Landtag* (Provincial Parliament of Carinthia) passes a unanimous resolution to redesign the Kolig-Saal as a form of *Wiedergutmachung* (reparation) for the *Kulturschande* (crime against civilisation) perpetrated by the Nazis. The 2.5 million ATS project is planned as part of the renovation of the *Landhaus*. In his function as *Landeskulturreferent*, Michael Ausserwinkler invites Cornelius Kolig to work out a concept for the redesigning based on the photos and diaries of Cornelius Kolig's grandfather. On the basis of Kolig's concept, the *Kulturgrremium*, a legally appointed advisory body of art experts for matters of cultural policy, recommends the *Kärntner Landtag* to commission Kolig with the carrying out of the project at the end of 1997.

The issue is brought to the first row when in February 1998 the *Landtag* convenes to decide on the commissioning of the Kolig-project. Karl-Heinz Grasser and other politicians of the FPÖ raise major objections because Ausserwinkler has not put the project out to tender, which from a legal point of view however, he is not obligated to do for a project totalling less than 3 million ATS. In addition, Grasser in his function as *Hochbaureferent* (representative for structural engineering) claims that the *Kolig-Saal* falls into his area of responsibility. It becomes known that Grasser, responsible for the rebuilding of the *Landhaus*, had not put this 40 million ATS project out to tender either. The FPÖ calls for an artistic competition. The *Landtag* decides on handing over the issue from the *Kulturgrremium* to the *Kulturausschuß*, its own committee for cultural affairs consisting of politicians. The art experts of the *Kulturgrremium* are disavowed and confirm their recommendation of Kolig in an open letter (*Kleine*, 6.3.98).³ In a legal report the *Verfassungsdienst* (constitutional section) decides that the competence for the *Kolig-Saal* lies with Ausserwinkler's *Kulturreferat*. Grasser does not recognise the report and announces that he will set up his own art competition for *the Kolig-Saal*. A non-partisan supportive committee for Kolig consisting of about 70 prominent artists, scientists and businesspeople is formed.

The day before the *Kulturausschuß* of the *Landtag* is to decide for or against an artistic competition regarding the *Kolig-Saal*, the *Kronen Zeitung*, which until then has stayed in the background, launches its campaign against Kolig. Up to this point, the opponents in the debate have predominately accused each other of being fascists. The supporters of Kolig have been presenting the *Verhinderungskampagne* (prevention campaign) of the FPÖ as an assault on the freedom of art, closely associating their opponents with Nazi iconoclasts. Baseline of the diction: the Kolig-project is a contribution to the process of Carinthia's coming to terms with its fascist past, the FPÖ tries to

prevent this, because it has still not overcome this past. The FPÖ reverses this argument and accuses Ausserwinkler and his supporters of being authoritarian, non-democratic, nepotistic, intolerant and even dictatorial (e.g. *Standard*, 17.3.98), because they do not want to have a public discussion about the issue, are not interested in a fair invitation of tenders and disrespect the will of the people. In reality this attitude is responsible for the *radikale Gedankengut* (radical body of thought) and not the critical thinking of the FPÖ, which cannot be stopped by the *Faschismuskeule* (fascism cudgel) wielded by the *linke Kulturschickeria* (left-wing artist scene).

The campaign of the *Kronen Zeitung* marks a major change in the discussion. Although sporadically and quietly already present in the discussion (*Kurier*, 25.2.98; *Standard*, 4.3.98), it was the *Kronen Zeitung* which confronted the wider public with Kolig's work on shit and which made the highly insulting term *Fäkalkünstler* into Kolig's most important denotative and identifying attribute.⁴ Headlining "*Fäkalkünstler* is supposed to collect millions: End the cultural scandal in Carinthia!" on the front page, the cover story is written by an anonymous H.D. – which most commentators assume to be Hans Dichand, the editor of the *Kronen Zeitung* (*Krone*, 16.3.98). "Does Carinthia put up with that?" he asks his readers, showing on two pages some of Kolig's art objects made of shit. Informing his readers that Ausserwinkler will make sure that Cornelius Kolig receives a *Millionenvertrag* (contract worth millions) for designing *the Kolig-Saal* "in his manner", he writes further: "What the manner of that artist is, becomes obvious from the works, which we publish here." One picture e.g. shows Kolig using one of his defecation machines, another one a shit garland on the head of the artist. A drawing by Kolig, showing a half-naked baby girl and hands manipulating her genitals, is published with the comment: "What happens to this baby? Is this still art?" As Kolig explains later, the drawing shows his wife putting cream on their daughter while changing the nappy. Most of the text of the article however is about Anton Kolig and the events in the thirties. H.D. regrets that Anton Kolig has not been done justice to by decorating *the Kolig-Saal* with his paintings, one of which is also published in stark contrast to C. Kolig's works. Instead, so he implies, the *Kolig-Saal*, the public and the remembrance of A. Kolig is threatened to be defiled by Cornelius Kolig's shit. The *Krone* campaign continues in the same style for the following days. Enraged public opinion is presented in form of reader's letters and an opinion poll done by a team of *Krone* journalists, all expressing disgust and indignation and applauding the *Krone* and the FPÖ for their courageous struggle against this *Frechheit* (impudence), *Unverschämtheit* (outrageousness) and *Schweinerei* (downright disgrace). "My breakfast has got stuck in my throat", the *Krone* quotes one of its readers as being representative of the public opinion and publishes Ausserwinkler's telephone number for those who want to complain. More of C. Kolig's works with shit are published and contrasted with A. Kolig's paintings. "Anton Kolig would turn in his grave if he could see and smell some of his grandchild's works of faecal art", another *Krone* columnist writes on the day of the meeting of the *Kulturausschuß*.

On March 17, the *Kulturausschuß* decides on opening an art competition for the *Kolig-Saal*. The *Krone* and the FPÖ celebrate their success and call it a *Sieg der Vernunft* (victory of reason). Commentators in other media and some politicians are

appalled at the *Diffamierungskampagne* (smear campaign), *Medienhetze* (media propaganda) and *Menschenhatz* (manhunt), and draw parallels to the Nazi period. They meet the *Krone*-campaign by writing background stories about *entartete Kunst* and on the function of art in society, and by publishing opinions of art experts and reader's letters who take a stand for C. Kolig and his project (e.g. *Kleine*, 18.3.98; *Standard*, 18.3.98; *Kurier*, 18.3.98). A representative of the *Kulturghremium* hands in his resignation and after a row between the leading parties' spokesmen for cultural affairs and the *Kulturghremium*, the *Kulturghremium* stops its work until further notice. In the middle of April the heads of the SPÖ, FPÖ and ÖVP nominate their respective art experts for the jury and the competition is opened with a submission deadline at the end of June. Cornelius Kolig takes part in the competition.

The next chapter of the drama unfolds at the beginning of July. The jury of five announces their unanimous vote for Cornelius Kolig's project. Eighteen other submissions for the competition, which has cost ATS 100,000, have been handed in. Contrary to the parties' agreement to accept the jury's decision, the Carinthian FPÖ with Mathias Reichhold, who replaced Grasser as its leader, doubts that the competition has been carried out correctly and quotes an artist who complains of being put under pressure to let Kolig win. Jörg Haider, who until then has stayed in the background, enters the arena. Calling Kolig's work *Schweinerei*, which would substantially offend *religiöse Gefühle* (religious sentiments), he announces a petition for a referendum in order to let the people of Carinthia decide if they would want *Fäkalkünstler* Kolig in the *Landhaus*. In a later interview (*Standard*, 29.7.98) he asserts that those who support people like Hermann Nitsch, Otto Mühl or Cornelius Kolig would also support violence.⁵ The *Landtag* however decides on commissioning Kolig with the votes of the SPÖ and ÖVP, and the adaptation of the *Kolig-Saal* is begun at the end of July. Reichhold announces he will set up another competition, open to all artists except Kolig. In the middle of August, Haider and the FPÖ start a petition against Kolig's *unappetitliche Fäkalkunst* (disgusting faecal art), which is titled "No *Fäkalkünstler* in the Carinthian *Landhaus*!" and accuses Kolig of offending "the sexual integrity of children" and *religiöse Gefühle*. The latter accusation refers to one of the sculptures of Kolig's project, which becomes known as the *Flieger* (flyer). The sculpture is an upright-standing naked man with his upper body in a T-form box, which Cornelius Kolig explains is an aviator symbolising the destructive male qualities of war. The FPÖ prefers to interpret the *Flieger* as a crucifix with *überdimensionalen Genitalien* (oversized genitals). The petition is promoted by a leaflet campaign and by advertisements in newspapers. The former is stopped by a court injunction two days after its start, because the leaflets show photos which have been published without the permission of the photographer. The FPÖ prints new leaflets and continues collecting signatures for its petition.

At the beginning of September, the FPÖ demands a special parliamentary session, because Kolig announces his plan to supplement his project with the words *Tat* and *Ort*. *Tat* (action, deed or crime), according to Kolig, stands for the destruction of his grandfather's frescos, *Ort* (meaning place, but in its diminutive form of 'Örtchen' is also used for the toilet), which he wants to see fixed over the door to the toilet, stands

for the smear campaign against his person. Putting *Tat* and *Ort* together, *Tatort* means scene of the crime. The FPÖ accuses Kolig of abusing the *Landtag* for his personal revenge. During the session, which is overshadowed by a bomb threat, the *Landtag* decides for *Tat*, but against *Ort*. The planned 20,000 signatures, which Haider has planned to present to the *Landtag*, turn out to be only half that number – too few to start a referendum. On the occasion of the reopening of the city theatre of Klagenfurt in the middle of September, Kolig takes the first opportunity to present his project to a broader public, whose response is overwhelmingly positive, gratifying Kolig and his supporters. A few days later, Jörg Haider visits the newly-finished *Kolig-Saal* and Cornelius Kolig explains to him the objects and paintings. In an interview before this meeting Haider acknowledges the *Kolig-Saal* as a ‘democratic decision’ and that there will be no *Bildersturm* (iconoclasm) as far as the FPÖ is concerned (*Kleine*, 17.9.98). The affair seems to subside and the commentators begin recapitulating the whole issue. At the end of September, the *Kolig-Saal* is presented to dignitaries from politics and the Church, who all express their esteem. In October the *Kolig-Saal* is opened to the public, which again is mostly warmly appreciative. Only the *Krone* continues to polemicise against the Kolig-project, and H.D., the day before the opening of the *Kolig-Saal* to the public, writes among other things that “this odd decoration is not much better than the faecal art of Cornelius Kolig” (*Krone*, 11.10.98). In contrast to his article a half year before though, this has no major effects.

However, when in January 1999 it becomes known that at the end of December Kolig has adapted his project by supplementing the *Flieger-Skulptur* with two buckets hanging from the T-structure and with a copper painting, another outcry shakes the media. The *Krone* sees its fears confirmed: “In the end Cornelius Kolig has got his faecal art in the Carinthian *Landtag* after all”, and further: “Now a brown sauce is running out of the naked man’s orifice, as if he has diarrhoea” (*Krone*, 7.1.99). Kolig explains the buckets as symbolising the burden of life. The FPÖ sees its reservations against Kolig confirmed and institutes proceedings against Kolig because of property damage. The head of the government Christof Zernatto stops the paying out of the rest of fee and demands restoration of the original condition. Kolig removes the buckets and announces that he will hand over one bucket to the FPÖ as art award for coining the term *Fäkalkünstler*, the other one to the editorial staff of the reader’s letters section of the *Kronen Zeitung*. In view of the coming elections, he declares the project unfinished, yet withdraws from it.

The political use of shit

It may be astonishing how the matter of shit could occupy political discussion and the public interest for a whole year, even though it was clear to most people that the political target of the FPÖ and the *Krone* was Ausserwinkler and the SPÖ rather than Kolig himself. For the *Krone*, marketing strategies may have also been relevant. The debate is all the more surprising, because Kolig’s original model for the *Landhaus-Saal* did not include the slightest reference to the topic of shit at all. Had it done so, certainly no one

would have supported his project right from the beginning. Kolig's invitation was based on the fact that he was the grandchild of Anton Kolig, because he owned an archive with photos of the original frescos, and because this was understood to be the best means of *Wiedergutmachung* (reparations) for the Nazis' destruction of A. Kolig's frescos. The issue was begun as a debate about Carinthia's coming to terms with its Nazi past and the topic of fascism.

The symbolic domain of shit could enter the political arena and be made a political weapon because Kolig, via his former artistic work, could be easily linked to shit. The *Krone* simply had to present some of Kolig's objects out of their artistic context and let the photos speak for themselves. The same process of translating art back into shit was accomplished at a personal level by reducing the artist Cornelius Kolig to the *Fäkalkünstler* Kolig. It thereby came to be suggested that not only Kolig's art is shit, but also Kolig himself, and by implication any of his future works of art – like the project for the *Landhaus*. This is why a serious discussion about the Kolig-project, as regards its actual content and not persons, could be prevented for at least half a year. The 'who' of the artist was discussed as being equivalent to and determining the 'what' of the project. Put the other way around, had it been exactly the same project, but not Kolig who proposed it, the issue would probably have turned out quite differently.

The symbolic domains of fascism and shit certainly were central in the Kolig-debate. However, it was their interweaving with several other fields of meanings which made them so powerful in political discourse. First of all, the Kolig-project concerned the *Landhaus*, the seat of the Carinthian Parliament, the foremost institutional and spatial manifestation of the will and power of the people, and not any other less significant location. As such, the *Landhaus* is the key public symbol for Carinthia and its citizens. The supposed imminent defilement of the *Landhaus* can thus only be understood as a major open assault on the integrity of Carinthia and its people themselves. Contrasted with the noble meanings represented by the *Landhaus*, shit is rendered all the more defiling and outrageous.

Another important theme, which emerged again and again, is condensed in the mythical figure of the *Steuerzahler* (tax-payer), who is invoked in many political discussions. The *Steuerzahler* is you and I, who work hard and upright in order to make our livings and to support our families. He is the one whom the politicians, civil servants and the unemployed live off of and who is fleeced of his *sauer verdiente Groschen* (hard-earned money), only to see it squandered on subsidies for artists and intellectuals. With the theme of the *Steuerzahler*, public expenditure is individualised and 'consumerised' by envisioning every individual person as paying directly for any single object or service paid for by public expenditure. Like any other consumer, the *Steuerzahler* sees it as his right to decide himself how his money is spent. He also expects that he not be 'cheated' – *beschissen werden* or *verscheißert werden* or in the vernacular, which have the same root as *Scheiße* and the German idiom of *Beschiß* (swindle). *Verarscht werden* (from the German *Arsch*, arse) also has the same meaning. Concerning the Kolig-debate, the upright *Steuerzahler* was seen to have the justifiable right, even the duty, to prevent the waste of 'millions' of tax-money on Kolig's shit, in order not to get *beschissen* – in both senses of the word. In view of Austria's budget-

cutting policies of the last years, the *Steuerzahler* is outraged enough about his *beschissen dran sein* (another German idiom, meaning ‘having a hard time’). In the following reader’s letter the *Steuerzahler* writes:

It would be impudent even to support such a ‘*Fäkalkünstler*’ like Cornelius Kolig for his ‘art’ and to commission him with a contract worth millions. It is a *Schweineerei* to spend money which is fleeced from the *Steuerzahler* on such people (*Krone*, 18.3.1998).

The *Steuerzahler* is accompanied by the *Kleine Mann* (the man in the street) – most often they are the same –, who is powerless, exploited and disregarded by complacent politicians. However, the *Kleine Mann* is a voter and at the next elections, together with all the other voters, he will give those in power a *Denkzettel* (warning) and avenge everything. *Wahltag ist Zahltag* (election day is payment day) is one of Haider’s often-used phrases in this context. The *Kleine Mann* is also suspicious of experts, because he has his own opinions and does not need arrogant intellectuals to explain the world to him. He is especially suspicious of experts who are employed by the state, because those ‘so-called’ and ‘self-appointed’ experts just try to mute his will as a voter. Both the *Steuerzahler* and the *Kleine Mann* draw a sharp line between state authority (and the parties in power) and the public (and the opposition parties), whereas the public is always in danger of being cheated by the state. An advertisement in the *Krone*, financed “neither through tax-money nor by party donations” as the subtext informs, reads as follows:

Stop C. Kolig’s *Fäkalkunst*. Not even one thousandth of the Carinthian population takes a stand for Cornelius Kolig, who made pictures out of faeces. (...) A small clique of people tries to talk us into believing that this is art. Do not let us tolerate this. Let us give the answer at the next elections. Do not let us support political forces that try to damage the culture and morals of our country. We also should not read newspapers that support ‘artists’ who instead of using colours, simply crap onto the canvas. This is an insult for all Carinthians. Let us show at the elections that we have had enough! (*Krone*, 7.9.1998).

Regarding the Kolig-debate, the man in the street sees shit as what it so obviously is, and neither politicians, nor artists, nor experts can fool him about that fact. And they will see what happens at the next elections should they try.

What becomes apparent in this complex web of references and meanings is a struggle over identity. In my opinion, this is the key to the understanding of the whole debate. But before exploring this strand of argument further, allow me to further explore the topic of shit.

Dirty shit

At least since Mary Douglas’ (1966) classical work on pollution and dirt, it is a commonplace in anthropology that dirt is a culturally constructed category. What counts as dirt, therefore, differs from one cultural context to another. Although I did not expect this insight to have found much attention in the wider public in Austria, I nevertheless

was surprised about the unquestioned view of shit as dirt in the Kolig-debate. The supporters of Kolig handled the topic of shit and its stigmatising qualities in several ways. Most often they simply ignored the issue by focussing on the *Menschenhetze* of the FPÖ and the *Krone* instead. Others downplayed the significance of faeces in Kolig's recent work or argued that Kolig experimented with shit in a former 'short phase' of his work, but had transcended this a long time ago. Some also stated that only posterity is entitled to judge Kolig's art. Those very few supporters of Kolig who actually discussed shit, presented shit as a 'natural' and 'deeply human' thing, which every one of us has to deal with every day. This argument again took shit out of the context of art. Talking about shit was left almost entirely to Kolig's opponents. In their highly polemic and insulting style, backed up by pictures showing Kolig's art works out of context, and by invoking the *Steuerzahler* and the *Kleine Mann*, they had no problem getting their opinion across that shit is simply shit and not art. The fiercest attacks however can be found among the many readers' letters. Here is one by an anonymous writer:

First of all, I have to apologise to the reader for using this frowned-upon word *Scheiße*. In the present case, however, I cannot avoid it. In our beautiful Carinthia there is an artist who declares shit to be art; instead of colours he uses human faeces. And this Fäkal-künstler got high subsidies for his shit-art. In addition, he is supposed to redesign the *Landhaussaal* in Klagenfurt (the capital of Carinthia) now. So the question is if the Carinthians want to tolerate this. (...) Those politicians who support this Fäkal-kunst in their complete ignorance about art, *auf diese werden die Kärntner bei den nächsten Wahlen auch scheißen* (the Carinthians will shit on them at the next elections (...)). (*Krone*, 12.6.1998).

The diction of shit however was not restricted to Kolig's opponents. Quoting Haider with "If an artist does not shit in front of his subsidy-giver's door, he will not be noticed", one commentator accused Haider himself of using *deftige Fäkalsprache* (ribald faecal speech) and of engaging in *Fäkalpolitik* (faecal policy) (*Kleine*, 11.8.98). These commentators were certainly right to argue that in their campaign, the FPÖ and the *Krone* produced exactly the dirt that they were marching against. Concerning their diction though, these writers reproduced the same conflation of shit and dirt similar to their opponents, thereby also contributing to the view of Kolig and his work as being dirty.

Shit seems to be so obviously dirty that this very fact remains unexamined. To call something *Scheiße* is perhaps the most devastating appraisal one can make in Austria. There is nothing that is more dirty than shit, not even *Dreck* (dirt) itself. Shit epitomises dirt, shit is dirt par excellence – shit is shit. For many people shit is so deeply connected to disgust, horror and repulsion, that this is more bodily felt, rather than thought. In this regard shit is what Victor Turner called a *dominant symbol*, linking bodily experiences, strong emotions and extremely discrediting values. This may partly account for the grimness with which the Kolig-debate was fought.

Besides this unquestionable *given* of shit as dirt, there may be another reason why the symbol of shit was not examined: shit (both as matter and as a symbol) is sticky. It therefore is not only difficult to get rid of it once one is already defiled by it, it also eas-

ily spreads, expands and threatens to defile anything or anybody that comes too close to it. One form of transmission is to directly connect somebody else to shit – as happened to Kolig. Here the idiom of *bescheißen* comes in again, but there are also other ones like *jemanden ans Bein pinkeln* (to pee on somebody's leg) or *jemanden mit Dreck bewerfen* (to throw dirt at somebody).⁶ Defilement is also transmitted through implication, i.e. by symbolic association with someone or something already defiled – as happened to Ausserwinkler. This may be the more often-used and perhaps more successful way of defiling someone. The sticky quality of shit may explain both why so many people got involved in the Kolig-debate and why, on the other hand, other people were so visibly absent. The former became affected, because they were symbolically linked to the debate via their (intersecting) identities as Carinthian, *Steuerzahler*, *Kleiner Mann*, politician, artist and the like. As they were already polluted or imminently threatened with becoming so, they had to struggle to rid themselves of defilement or to keep their distance. Beyond the imminent sphere of possible defilement, the latter people avoided getting drawn into the issue, even though they could have been expected to take a stand in the debate. As far as I know, Federal Chancellor Viktor Klima for example did not give his opinion on this matter a single time, even though he had officially made cultural affairs to his personal area of political responsibility when he became Chancellor.

However dirty and sticky shit may be, these qualities are fully unfolded only in the public. Shit as a public symbol gains its force from its seemingly paradox property, that it is not supposed to be public matter. Its adequate sphere is the toilet, lavatory, bathroom, water-closet, privy or however it is called. In any case it is the most private place in every Western house.⁷ The most common Austrian terms for toilet are *Toilette*, *WC* and *Klosett*. Older people may still use *Ort* (place) to refer to the toilet in Austria. Its diminutive form *Örtchen*, a more flowery form for toilet, and *Lokus* (from the Latin *locus*, place) are also widely used. These terms indicate that shit has a locus, even 'the' locus (like the Bible, from the Greek *biblion* for book, is 'the' Book). It is the place, secluded from the rest of the world, where every one of us can safely and daily perform our most private activity in a proper way (or who of us would or could shit in the presence of others?),¹ where shit can be contained and safely disposed of. This seclusion is also expressed by *Abort*, another term for toilet in Austria (the prefix *ab-* means of, away).

When shit is brought from the private into the public though, it breaks free from its spatial and habitual boundaries and cannot be contained anymore. By transgressing boundaries, public shit loses its defining locus and therefore can easily be made to stick anywhere. It indeed becomes 'matter out of place', as Mary Douglas (1966: 35) defined dirt. As any other symbol, public shit by definition must also include a communicative dimension, and the transformation of (private) shit into a (public) symbol must necessarily be seen as an intentional act; and because of its discrediting properties this can only be understood as an assault on the public. In the Kolig-debate, the symbol of public shit was further charged by that fact that the *Landhaus* is one of the most 'public' places.

Identity politics

What basically was at stake in the Kolig-debate was a struggle over identity. In my view, this is the key to the understanding of this issue. At the beginning, the struggle had mainly concerned politicians, but in its course and by way of the threatening attributes of public shit, more and more other people became involved. The debate took as its primary contested zones the symbolic domains of fascism and shit, which were closely interlaced with themes like democracy, intolerance, freedom of speech, the will of the public, the *Steuerzahler* and the *Kleine Mann*. Its crucial question was “Is this art, what Kolig is doing?” Depending on what answer was given, one side could accuse the other of being fascist or perverse respectively.

It is important to note that both sides of the struggle used strong negative value judgements in their identity politics. Both aimed at degrading or soiling their opponents identity, rather than putting their own positive qualities to the fore. One reason for this emphasis on the “negativity of the Other” (Grossberg 1996) may be found in the fact – as any glance into the newspapers shows – that scandals, catastrophes and the like can more easily be sold to the public than positive messages. Negative events seem to be more sensational, have more importance and produce a larger response in the public than positive ones. By presenting Kolig as a *Fäkalkünstler*, both the *Krone* and the FPÖ could successfully sell the issue of the *Kolig-Saal* to their readers and potential voters respectively.

Another reason for this negativity has to do with the formation of collective identities (see Cerulo 1997 for a recent review on this topic). As a relational category, identity is based on processes of identification and distinction (Cohen 1985, Moore 1994, Hall 1996, Woodward 1997). It can be fashioned by stressing what one *is*, but also by stressing what one *is not*. Although always mutually constructing each other, the former means of definition focuses more on the inside and the own, the latter looks at the outside and the other. In both modes of identity construction, however, the *We* requires a relationship to the *Others* in order to become visible. This relationship is basically a hierarchical one, because representations of Others always take place within social power relations (Woodward 1997).

In the political competition for voters, this hierarchical relationship is also of central importance to the parties and their representatives. Only when they can transmit the message to the voters that they are *better* than their political rivals, can they expect to get elected. In order to achieve this, it is apparently much more efficient to emphasise one’s opponent’s negative characteristics, rather than to stress one’s own positive qualities. The worse the Others can be credibly presented, the better the *We* stands out against the Others, and the sharper are the lines of difference.

Grossberg (1996) together with others pointed out that the logic of difference in modern thinking creates binary oppositions, which as constitutive differences define the Other merely through their ‘negativity’; i.e. identity of the *We* is forged in terms of a strict delimitation from the Other. In this logic *Otherness* is reduced to a binary relationship of mutually exclusive identities.

This is what happened in the Kolig-debate. As epitome of dirt, the symbol of shit was used to polarise the public and to draw sharp lines of distinction between Kolig's supporters and opponents. Using shit in its identity politics, the FPÖ with the help of the *Krone* was able to discredit Kolig and his supporters at the same time as it could present itself as the Clean Party. The FPÖ also used shit in order to deeply engage the wider public in the debate by presenting the *Landhaus* – and thereby Carinthia and its citizens – as being in danger of imminent defilement. This caused a crisis of identity, an “epidemic of signification” in Treichler's phrase (1988), which by way of the infectious qualities of shit seized more and more people. As the participants in the debate struggled not to get dirty, identity work – “protecting or reformulating self boundaries, reinforcing images or re-imagining the other” (Crawford 1994: 1348) – became unavoidable. That it was the *Krone* and the FPÖ, rather than Cornelius Kolig, who brought shit into the public remained more or less unnoticed, since Kolig could easily be linked to shit via his artwork. However, in the search for their political stance, people found themselves having to choose between basically two options: 1) against Kolig and his shit in the *Landhaus* on the side of the FPÖ, or 2) for Kolig and his art in the *Landhaus* and against the fascist iconoclasts of the FPÖ and the *Krone*. There was hardly any middle ground between these two positions. In any case, it would have been unthinkable to take a stand both for Kolig and for the FPÖ at the same time. Alternatively, it was impossible to be against Kolig, yet also against the FPÖ. By associating shit with the *Landhaus*, the FPÖ polarised the public and made itself the advocate of the group against Kolig. Those who saw Kolig's art work as shit were thus closely linked to the FPÖ. That this process of voters' identification with the FPÖ worked well, is indicated by the impressive victory of the FPÖ at the recent regional elections in Carinthia.

In effect, the FPÖ successfully offered itself as solution for a crisis of identity, which the FPÖ with the help of the *Krone* had produced beforehand. The collective identity of the FPÖ and its supporters is therefore in part built on shit.

Concluding remarks: Dirt matters

Dirt rarely enters the political arena so obviously, and takes up such a central role both as a disputed symbolic domain and as means of dispute, as on the occasion of the Kolig-debate. In the main, it was the linkage between shit as epitome of dirt and the *Landhaus* symbolising the public that accounted for this. The Kolig-debate thus provides an excellent opportunity to explore the political production and appropriation of dirt. However, it is striking that despite the significance of shit in this case, the usage of dirt as a public symbol was so poorly reflected upon. It is no wonder then, that the workings of dirt in other more ‘hidden’ occasions are even less noticed. Yet a closer look reveals the political manipulation of symbols of dirt to be rather common.

The FPÖ has long been using metaphors of dirt in its repertoire of political polemics, and dirt in its widest meaning has been one of its central political themes. Besides corrupt politicians and ‘dirty’ foreigners, who are envisioned to bring drugs, crime and

unemployment to Austria, other targets of the FPÖ have been artists and intellectuals. The scandals surrounding writers and artists like the *Nestbeschmutzer* (denigrator of one's own country; verbatim *one who soils the nest*) Thomas Bernhard, Gerhard Roth, Urs Allemann, Elfriede Jelinek, Otto Mühl, Hermann Nitsch or Cornelius Kolig all were caused by and with the means of 'dirt' in one form or another. All these social groups can be represented as dangerous and dirty, because they transgress or manipulate boundaries (social, sexual, juridical, ideological, moral, national, cultural, spatial and the like), because they are somehow 'out of place'. In contrast to those dirty people and those politicians who have *Dreck am Stecken* (who are corrupt), the FPÖ likes to depict itself in terms of cleanliness. They see themselves as the political *Sauber männer* (squeaky-clean brigade) of Austria, those with a *saubere Weste* (clean slate) and a *reines Gewissen* (clear conscience), who stand for *Ordentlichkeit* (tidiness), *Ordnung* (order) and *Transparenz* (transparency), and who *Dinge in Ordnung bringen* (tidy things up) and *den Saustall ausmisten* (muck out the pigsty).

From some distance, the Kolig-debate may seem amusing, odd and even ridiculous. Yet it shows that dirt can serve as a powerful symbolic marker for forging collective identities and differences by which not only political wars can be fought and elections won. Alan Dundes (1985: 111 ff) has described in detail the century-long association of Jews with dirt, e.g. in the form of the metaphor of the *Judensau*, the *pig of the Jews*, which imagines Jews as dirty eaters of pig-faeces. This aspect of anti-Semitism found its most destructive manifestation in the Nazi ideology of a *judenreines* Fatherland (free, 'clean' of Jews) and the cleansing of the German *Volkskörper* (people's body) when in the Third Reich, Jews were forced to clean up the pavement with tooth-brushes and were murdered by millions in the showers of concentrations camps.

Metaphors of dirt and of the necessity of cleansing have also been invoked by dictators. In the name of national interest and common weal, millions of people became victims of political *purges*, which in the best case meant detention and exile, but often meant torture and death. Or consider the ongoing crimes and atrocities which are committed in the all-too-real program of 'ethnic cleansing' in former Yugoslavia, where symbols of dirt enter into policy and are made effective in a way that serves to justify the uprooting, rape, torture and murder of hundreds of thousands of people.

It would be naïve of course to suggest that these atrocities and the diverse and complex historical, political or social phenomena they are based on could be explained merely in terms of dirt. Many recent studies on identity (Cerulo 1997) stress that identities are seldom monolithic and stable categories, but usually are 'hybrid' and 'fractured' ones, which have to be constantly reproduced and reconfigured in particular contexts. As the Kolig-debate shows, dirt may be only one aspect among many in cultural repertoires (Somers 1994) by which identities are forged, and has to be understood as intersecting with other symbolic domains. Regarding the above examples, it can however be expected that dirt plays a major role in the production of *collective moral righteousness* (Aho 1994), by which the destruction of the Others becomes legitimated in many conflicts. However, I am convinced that a closer examination of the meanings and the role of dirt and its reference concept of cleanliness in identity politics will prove them to be more relevant than the paucity of literature on the topic suggests.

In this regard, the concepts of dirt and cleanliness are clearly under-theorised and additional ethnographical material is needed.

Identity and difference are produced in and by power relations, and as such they have social effects. For those who come to be made dirty, the consequence of these discriminatory practices of social inclusion and exclusion are often disastrous. Indeed, dirt matters.

Notes

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1. Schiefenhövel (1988: 25) was caught in this trap when he described in great detail the events and conversations surrounding a birth among the Eipo. At a certain point during the birth, the woman who was giving birth asked her mother-in-law what Schiefenhövel translated with “*Hab ich defäziert?*” (“Did I defecate?”). In order to avoid the obscene meaning of ‘shitting’, he ended up using a highly scientific word which nobody would use in ordinary speech. I remember that I had to look up *defäzieren* in the dictionary for its meaning when I read this passage ten years ago. That I still remember this quotation after so many years also speaks for the oddity of this expression.
2. Lawler (1991) discusses in some detail excreta and dirty work in her ‘somological’ analysis of nurses’ management of bodies of other people.
3. Newspaper articles are quoted with the name of the newspaper and the date of publication.
4. As the Kolig-debate begins to again fall into oblivion, more and more people I talked to do not know Cornelius Kolig any more, but they still know the *Fäkalkünstler* Kolig. In July and August 1998 the Kolig-debate was overshadowed and further emotionalised by the *Kultur-Skandal* which was created around the artist Herman Nitsch and his *Sechs-Tage-Spiel*, a six days long mystery play and ritual feasting in his *Orgien-Mysterien-Theater* involving hundreds of performers, musicians and guests. Nitsch, one of the best known representatives of *Wiener Aktionismus*, has been fought for decades now for ritually slaughtering animals and using blood and innards for his performances and pictures. In the summer of 1998 not only the FPÖ was up in arms against Nitsch, but also the Catholic church and in particular animal rights advocates. When Kolig is discredited as a *Fäkalkünstler* and associated with shit, Nitsch is discredited as a *Schlächter* (slaughterer) and associated with public blood. Though the cross-references of public shit and blood and the ways of talking about it are certainly important for our topic, the restricted space however does not allow me to follow this trail.
5. See also Dundes (1985) for a number of other German idioms concerning shit.

6. Dominique Laporte (1991) describes in his excellent book *Eine gelehrte Geschichte der Scheiße*, how during the last centuries in Europe shit became an object for state intervention and thereby was *domesticated* in the true sense of the word by making it a private matter of the *domus*, the private house.
7. Pissing is certainly a different matter.

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