

the scholarship on Austrian memory, to which Bischof has contributed elsewhere. The final article in the section offers a concise discussion of the Austrian State Treaty, based on Gerald Stourzh's seminal work.

The third section wrestles with Austria's diminished significance in American affairs. Austria, once at the center of Cold War Europe, moved to "Western Europe" after 1989, attracting far less attention than the former Eastern Bloc nations of the new "Central Europe." Austria's refusal to join NATO and its move from neutrality to EU integration further contributed to its decreased geopolitical importance. The next essay examines the limited impact of the ÖVP/FPÖ coalition of 2000 on American perceptions of Austria. The final essay looks at the career and mythologizing of Arnold Schwarzenegger. Bischof uses the "Governator" to interrogate the meaning of American and Austrian identity. He presents Schwarzenegger as a product of the "Coca-colonization" of postwar Austria and the opportunities of 1960s America. Bischof highlights the irony that Schwarzenegger, who benefited from relaxed immigration laws in 1960s America to achieve his American Dream, played a pivotal role in foreclosing that same dream to future immigrants.

Like many essay collections, the quality varies from article to article. The first essays in each section are invariably the strongest and best researched. The essays on public opinion and POWs offer tantalizing ideas for future investigation. Only the piece on American empire feels out of place, since it includes only passing reference to Austria or Austrian-American relations. Overall, the book is a welcome addition to the field. With its excellent notes and helpful bibliography, the book is a useful starting point for individuals interested in contemporary Austrian history. Its clear prose and judicious blend of history, politics, and biography will make it an engaging text for academics and students alike.

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Regina Standún, *Das österreichische und irische ländliche Volksstück des 20. Jahrhunderts als Ausdruck nationaler Selbstdarstellung auf der Bühne: Ein Vergleich*. Konstanz: Hartung-Gorre Verlag, 2013. 242 pp.

In the summer of 1999, Regina Standún experienced one of those juxtapositions that sometimes inspire years of scholarship. Attending a drama festival

in Austria, Standún noticed that one of the plays to be performed was Felix Mitterer's German adaption of J. M. Synge's Irish classic, *The Playboy of the Western World*. What in the world, Standún wondered, had Ireland to do with Austria? Standún's answer was that what Ireland and Austria have in common is the *Volksstück*. In *Das österreichische und irische ländliche Volksstück des 20. Jahrhunderts als Ausdruck nationaler Selbstdarstellung auf der Bühne: Ein Vergleich*, Standún meticulously compares and contrasts the Austrian and Irish *Volksstück*; as she explains, her interest is in the "Genreentwicklung im sozio-historischen Kontext, insbesondere im Nationalliteraturkontext" (10). In this exhaustively researched contribution to comparative literature, Standún demonstrates that the hoary old peasant play is capable of some new tricks.

Standún divides her work into six large sections. The first two carefully define the *Volksstück*. While the *Volksstück's* roots can be traced back to the Middle Ages, the *Volksstück*, or "peasant play," enjoyed its greatest successes in, ironically, the eighteenth and especially nineteenth centuries. The genre's success was ironic because the plays began to enter the Austrian, and later the Irish, stages precisely at the time when real peasants were exiting the historical stage. Peasant plays were typically comic and nostalgic. To be sure, sometimes they included a little bite. Often they asserted Austrian and Irish national identities in opposition to those nations' powerful neighbors, Germany and Britain, respectively. While the plays poked fun at the country bumpkins and their odd clothes and funny speech, they also occasionally allowed the country bumpkins to outwit the arrogant city slickers.

Standún is interested, though, not simply in the history and variety of the peasant play/*Volksstück* as in its surprising revival in the twentieth century. To get at the twentieth-century versions of the old genre, Standún carefully compares three pairs of plays. Her discoveries are surprising and provocative. Standún first compares J. M. Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907) to Karl Schönherr's *Erde* (1908). Both Synge and Schönherr surprised audiences by resurrecting what seemed to be an exhausted genre; Standún compares the plays in great detail and considers not only plot, characters, and themes but also costuming, dialects, and reception. The two plays would have entirely different careers. Synge's play provoked ferocious opposition at first but quickly became a major part of the Irish theatrical repertoire, suggesting that the Irish long retained an interest in rural-themed peasant plays. Schönherr's play, to the contrary, aged quickly and disappeared from Austrian stages.

Standún next compares Richard Billinger's *Rosse* (1931) to T. C. Murray's *Michaelmas Eve* (1932). Both plays demonstrated the continuing vitality of the

Volksstück in clerical-conservative Ireland and Austria. Neither play aged particularly well though; Billinger's *Rosse* in particular demonstrated the dangerous ways the peasant play could intersect with politics. *Rosse*'s rural themes could, on the one hand, appear to be an evocation of an "Austrian" rather than a "German" rural world; at the same time, the play's focus on peasant life paralleled some of the themes of the Nazis' "völkisch" ideology. No wonder, then, that after 1945, few Austrians expressed much interest either in *Rosse* or in the *Volksstück* in general. Meanwhile, by the 1950s, Ireland was slowly awakening from a generation-long clerical and rural conservatism. One might well have assumed, then, that in both Austria and Ireland, the peasant play genre had run its course.

Yet, as Standún demonstrates in her third comparison, the old genre had plenty of life left. Standún compares Peter Turrini's *Sauschlachten* (1972) to Tom Murphy's *Bailegangaire* (1985). Both plays are set in rural worlds in which peasants speak in jarring dialects. Both plays are peasant plays, but both radically reinvent the peasant play genre. Turrini and Murphy mobilize the familiar tropes of the peasant play to launch searing critiques of their own times. In the late twentieth century, the peasant play in Austria and especially in Ireland had become, in hands of a new generation of playwrights, an ideal vehicle for social commentary and criticism.

Standún's sixth and final section asks "Wohin mit den Bauern?" (203). By the early twenty-first century, Standún reports, in Austria, the *Volksstück* has largely retreated to provincial theaters; the genre "hat in Österreich an nationaler Identifikationskraft verloren" (204). In Ireland, though, the peasant play remains integral to Irish theatrical life.

Like any fine work of scholarship, Standún's thorough study raises a host of questions to be addressed by further research. Ireland, for instance, is a bilingual nation; one wonders how Gaelic writers handled the peasant play. Set out in the countryside, one wonders too how rural ecology shapes and is expressed through the peasant play. Standún concludes that the *Volksstück* is "ein internationales Phänomen" (203), and certainly this seems true based on her Irish-Austrian comparison. One wonders just how widespread this international phenomenon is; perhaps this book's greatest achievement, then, is that it provides an intriguing hypothesis for future scholars to examine. Compelling, original, and innovative, Standún's book is an important contribution to and a fine example of the discipline of comparative literature.

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