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postcolonial-queer: Erkundungen in Theorie und Literatur by
Anna Babka (review)

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World War I in 1917. Unlike Tor 1, the Kultusgemeinde gained the rights to run the Tor 4 section autonomously. The ceremony hall was completed in 1926, destroyed by the Nazis in 1938, and finally restored and rededicated in 1967; it is still in use today as Tor 4 is the currently active Jewish cemetery in Vienna. This is a complex history in itself, as Tor 1 remained active in the interwar period parallel to the Tor 4 and a Jewish memorial for the World War I was established at Tor 1 as well, as Corbett explains in Chapter 6.

The remaining four chapters of the book provide an enlightening history of the administration of the cemetery from the nineteenth century to today. The decisions that shaped the development of the Jewish cemeteries in Vienna were a reflection of the historic realities in the city. During the Holocaust the Nazis planned to destroy the cemetery in the Seegasse in 1941 to turn it into a playground for “die deutsche Jugend” (540), but luckily they did not succeed in their plans. The Nazis exhumed and cleared Jewish graves at the Währinger Friedhof for a planned air raid shelter, though some Jews who were still in Vienna managed to privately exhume their family’s graves and rebury them at the Zentralfriedhof.

The neglect of Vienna’s Jewish cemeteries in the decades following the Holocaust is the focus of the book’s final chapter. Corbett provides a remarkably concise depiction of the situation, in which the tiny Kultusgemeinde had to deal with the huge heritage of the cemeteries, while dealing with inner Jewish conflicts in Vienna. A general lack of interest on the part of the federal and city governments delayed necessary repairs. In fact, the future and repair of the Währinger cemetery, a legacy of the Holocaust, is still an unresolved issue in Vienna as Corbett describes it as “Kristallisationspunkt der österreichischen Vergangenheitsbewältigung im 21. Jahrhundert” (947).

This book is a must-read for anyone interested in the history of Jewish culture in Vienna, and it is also an important contribution to Holocaust Studies in Austria.

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Anna Babka, *postcolonial-queer: Erkundungen in Theorie und Literatur*. Vienna, Berlin: Verlag Turia + Kant, 2019. 304 pp.

Anna Babka’s *postcolonial-queer* is one of those monographs that elicits gratitude, as it is broad in scope, informative, gracefully written, and well worth

revisiting because of the author's pronounced ability to synthesize and exemplify a wide range of contemporary theories and exemplary scholarship. The chapters are drawn from earlier publications, but they have been woven together to form an original contribution to today's cultural-theoretical feminist discourses.

The volume starts with an introduction that tracks the intersections between today's gender, queer, and postcolonial studies as the driving interdisciplinary site appropriate for today's academic literary and cultural studies, starting with cogent definitions of the assumptions associated with these bodies of theory:

Eben das, was Derrida fragend anspricht, das, was *zwischen* den Disziplinen geschieht, wird im hier vorliegenden Band durch die genuin transdisziplinären Gender-, Queer und Postcolonial Studies *einer* möglichen Lesart, *einer* möglichen Perspektive zugeführt. Entlang zentraler Ansätze poststrukturalistischer Theoriebildung, wie der *écriture féminine* oder maßgeblicher Konzepte der Gender-, Queer- und Postcolonial Studies, wie etwa Identität, Alterität, Zentrum, Peripherie, Hybridität, "dritter Raum" / "drittes Geschlecht," wird die Verhandlung verschiedener Achsen der Differenz reflektiert und literarisch erkundet. (29)

The six chapters in the volume's first part following this introduction offer solid, nuanced discussions of the most influential voices in these major areas of contemporary scholarship, offering succinct overviews of how these scholarly projects have evolved, principally in US and Germanophone contexts.

The first chapter, "Zur Verwobenheit von Gender Studies, Queer Studies & Postcolonial Studies," makes the brave choice of working conceptually instead of chronologically. In consequence, Babka's work starts with the newest generation of hybrid theory that combines race and gender, starting with Kimberle Crenshaw and Kien Nghi Ha in German, but then proceeds to differentiate it carefully from postcolonial gender studies, the latter of which is much more pronounced in European feminist theory than in US/UK ones. In this chapter, Babka shows off her work's great strength: in all cases, she cites foundational literature in theory (e.g., Donna Haraway, Patricia Hill Collins, the work of the Combahee River Collective) and then brings the individual project forward into the newest generation. In this sense, *postcolonial-queer* can serve as a research guide—particularly important for US *GermanistInnen*, because their work is all too often done without reference to foundational

terminology in anglophone feminist studies, particularly by theorists of color, or to the Marxist contexts of much first- and second-generation African-American theorists. Similarly, Babka always explains how terms have mutated between disciplinary contexts and within national projects and tracks how terms have crossed national lines as well.

Subsequent chapters are then classified into conceptual clusters: “Denkräume” (discussing Spivak and Othering), “Denkfiguren” (Derrida, Butler, and Bettine Menke, reading in one chapter Derrida and Nietzsche so as to evolve a broader idea of the feminine, and then in another Butler’s performativity and “colonial Mimicry” in Homi Bhabha), and then once again “Denkräume” (this time about Trinh Minh-Ha and postcolonial feminisms). The first section closes with a discussion of postcolonial and queer theory in Germanistik, speaking about textual canons in literary studies and the need for ongoing self-interrogation of criticism. In all cases her relating of gender identity and cultural positioning is exemplary—a fine reading of two bodies of theory, astutely combined to reframe our contemporary understandings of inherited problems in gender theory.

The second large section of the book is devoted to case study readings that show the potential of newly posed approaches to textual reading over queer and postcolonial theory. The first series of cases represents texts from early modern German literatures: Kleist’s *Marionettentheater* is read queer, Karl May’s *In den Schluchten des Balkan* (1892) is read postcolonially, as are then Robert Michel’s *Die Verhüllte* (1907) and Else Lasker-Schüler’s *Der Prinz von Theben* (1914) (the latter with specific reference to Expressionism and oriental miniatures). The second series of case studies deals with modern, post-*Wende* literature. Josef Winkler’s *Friedhof der bitteren Orangen* (1990) and *Domra: Am Ufer des Ganges* (1996) are discussed, each in a chapter unto itself, in terms of cultural alterity (gay and ethnic). *Vergiß Ägypten* (2008) by Barbara Frischmuth is read in terms of “postcolonial ruins.” Chapter II.9, under the title “Aspekte einer allo-écriture (feminine) in Texten Elfriede Jelineks (nach Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray und Julia Kristeva),” shifts to discussing the construction of the feminine in so-called French feminist theory (“so-called” because the main authors are not actually French) and as refracted into the literature of Elfriede Jelinek. And finally, Semier Insayif’s novel *Faruq* (2009) is discussed in terms of the tension between Vienna and Baghdad that structure the novel.

In all cases, theoretical perspectives are combined with close passage readings that track how texts construct subject positions for self, other, and alterity—cogent, pithy examples carefully explicated for the implications of their discourses in terms of identity, positionality, and word art. The need to read differently is reemphasized in the “Coda: Blau/Schwarz—eine Durchdringung,” which offers a kind of word poem of the theoretical and cultural languages that have permeated the book. Add to this a fine bibliography, which will furnish anyone in today’s gender studies in *Germanistik* new impetuses for a culturally and textually oriented feminist study of literary and theoretical texts, and the result is a must-read. Don’t miss it.

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Wolfgang Straub, Hrsg., *Alpensagas und Modelldörfer. Heimatbesichtigungen in Literatur und Film*. Innsbruck: Studienverlag, 2020, 260 S.

Der von Wolfgang Straub herausgegebene Sammelband beginnt mit der Bemerkung, dass die Attraktivität des Begriffs “Heimat” seit Jahren nicht abnimmt (9–10), was seinen Ausdruck in der großen Menge von rezenten Publikationen findet. Das Buch, in dem 14 deutschsprachige Aufsätze veröffentlicht sind, ist Resultat einer Konferenz, die im September 2019 anlässlich des 75. Geburtstags Peter Turrinis im Archiv der Zeitgenossen in Krems stattfand. Der Band ist in vier Hauptkapitel gegliedert. Das erste “Symbolfiguren und Außenseiter” konzentriert sich auf die literarischen Werke, in denen das Motiv einer verlorenen, verhassten oder neu entdeckten Heimat dominiert. Die Beiträge im zweiten Kapitel “Modelldörfer” bieten eine interessante komparative Analyse vom Dorf als Schauplatz des Antiheimatromans an. Das dritte Kapitel “Regionalität—ein neuer Heimatdiskurs?” beinhaltet zwei Texte, die die Frage der Regionalität mit dem Krimi-Genre verbinden. Im letzten, vierten Kapitel werden vier Beiträge über “neue Heimatfilme” gesammelt, obwohl das Adjektiv “neu” im Kontext von manchen, hier dargestellten Filmen aus den 1970er Jahren ein bisschen merkwürdig erscheint. Trotz des breiten thematischen Umfangs und immer zunehmender Literatur über Heimat und Anti-Heimat scheint die von Wolfgang Straub bearbeitete Einleitung, obwohl inhaltlich fließend