

Red Vienna, White Socialism, and the Blues: Ann Tizia Leitich's America. By ROB MCFARLAND. Pp. viii + 214. Studies in German Literature, Linguistics and Culture. Rochester NY: Camden House. ISBN 9781571139368

The general topic of McFarland's study are images of and debates about America, American influences and 'Americanisation' in inter-war Austria. He has chosen to tell this story through the prism of an important, but largely forgotten mediator of such images, the writer, journalist and popular historian Ann Tizia Leitich. In 1921, aged thirty, Leitich, a budding journalist, moved to the U.S. where she worked as a housekeeper and nanny, then as an office clerk for an insurance company (first in Chicago, then in Des Moines, Iowa), before moving to New York City to work as a secretary. From 1923, she used her Viennese contacts and started reporting from America for the *Neue Freie Presse*, the most important and well-respected Austrian newspaper. McFarland has located and studied all of Leitich's texts that deal with 'America', broadly conceived, which in addition to regular reports on American culture and society include several semi-autobiographical novels she published during her stint in the U.S.A. A thirty-page bibliography of these texts is appended to the book. Leitich's discussion of American culture and civilization show her as a typical, and fairly unremarkable representative of the educated European middle-class. Her reviews, essays and *feuilletons* covered the standard themes and topics of inter-war European travel writing about the United States. A concern about the growing influence of 'Americanism' in Europe, or the 'Americanisation' of European culture, give these texts their urgency. The meaning of 'mass culture', in particular Hollywood films and jazz music mattered much to European intellectuals, as they saw the entertainment industry and 'common people' encroaching on their domain of 'culture' and thus undermining the position of the educated classes within society. Of course, Leitich informed her Viennese readers about the specifics of American business models, the effect of rationalisation and mass production, and the importance of Fordism and Taylorism for the success of the American economy: these themes were the most important reasons for a European 'infatuation' with America, and seen as the key to understanding American society as a whole.

Leitich's views on Americanism, the Americans and Americanisation were exposed clearly when she commented on a debate between two heavy-weights of Austrian public life, Stefan Zweig and Franz Salten. In 1925, Zweig had published an article on the 'monotonisation' of the world in the *Neue Freie Presse*, in which he assumed the role of the cultural pessimist and blamed America for the decline of contemporary culture with the

success of Jazz music, the radio, and Hollywood films. The only salvation of the educated elite in Europe was the retreat into the self, Zweig suggested. His assessment, with its uncanny resemblance to the anti-Americanism of the conservative right, was rejected by Felix Salten, who reminded his colleague that the processes he bemoaned hardly originated in America, and that technology and rationalization had made the world more colourful and interesting, not more uniform and boring. Leitich wrote her own rebuttal of Zweig's tirade and reminded him of the elitism of his position. European high culture, whose apparent destruction Zweig decried, had only ever been available very few educated people. The mass age demanded a different form of culture, Leitich maintained, which was accessible to the majority of people, and in this respect America could indeed serve as an inspiration for Europe. Leitich's views were informed by her understanding of Henry Ford's 'White Socialism': similar to other conservative writers, she hoped that the effects of Fordism would provide an alternative and a defence against Socialism and Marxism.

A comprehensive study on Austrian images and perceptions of America in the first half of the twentieth century does not exist: so far, Austrian authors have most often been treated as part of 'German culture'. McFarland's book tries fill to this gap, but succeeds only partly, because of his exclusive focus on Leitich's life and works. He shows that Austrian authors, not only Ann Tizia Leitich, contributed greatly to the debates about Americanisation in the inter-war period – next to Zweig and Salten, Adolf Loos, Otto Bauer or Roda-Roda come to mind. Still, these contributions did not produce a peculiarly Austrian image of America. A more thorough contextualization of Leitich's writings on America could have shown to what extent she repeated well-established views and clichés that could be found not only in German travel literature and journalism, but throughout Europe. Surprisingly, McFarland makes little use of the specialized secondary literature – German-language studies on Americanisation and Americanism are not listed in the bibliography –, and thus missed a chance to establish a more comprehensive, comparative perspective on his topic.

McFarland focuses mostly on the 'American' career of Leitich, which ended with her return to Vienna in 1939, somehow against the current at the time. But her life after her return Europe makes her case even more interesting. Back in Austria under Nazi rule, she quickly established herself as an expert in the cultural history of Vienna and during the Second World War published several popular books on the topic. This new career turned her into the 'doyenne of Austrian cultural history and successfully eclipsed the memory of her American career'. (p. 152) After the war, and despite her continuous career during the Nazi era, she presented herself as an anti-Nazi folk heroine. Her studies of 'Old Vienna' easily fit in the

emerging myth of Austria as the 'first victim' of Hitler. Leitich presented herself, and the majority of Austrians, as engaged in an 'inner resistance' against the Nazi regime, which appeared as alien and un-Austrian. Without scruples, her cultural histories served as evidence for Austrian opposition to Hitler: 'The same prose that had extolled Vienna's deeply German heart, the passionate *Heimatliteratur* that had made Leitich's books acceptable to the Nazi censors, was instantly recast as decidedly anti-Nazi in its ideology.' (p. 155) Leitich thus became a highly successful author of popular (Austrian) cultural history after the second World War. Her style of decidedly non-academic non-fiction that appealed to wide audiences was maybe the only legacy of her American experience, which she did not mention much since her return to Austria. She now produced the kind of literature that Americans liked and read, she was convinced: accessible, interesting and entertaining non-fiction. McFarland addresses this biographical turn clearly, but devotes only a short epilogue of his study to it. Since he makes it abundantly clear that Leitich's works have little literary value and are only of interest as documents of cultural history, the non-American, later life of Leitich after her return to Austria would have deserved more space in this useful study.

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