Review
Reviewed Work(s): Wirklichkeit als Versuchsanordnung. Postavantgardistisches Schreiben in der österreichischen Gegenwartsliteratur des Postmilleniums am Beispiel von Thomas Glavinic by Nora Boeckl
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the volume. While commendable, it is sometimes overwhelming and dull, most noticeable if the reader intends to read the volume from cover to cover, rather than to dip into individual chapters. It also foregrounds description at the expense of critical analysis that I felt was lacking in some contributions. In general, a clear definition of *Sprachenpolitik* was needed, and this could have been provided in an introduction, which is missing from the volume. The volume editors contextualise the aims of the volume in the foreword, but, at two pages, this is not long enough to establish key theoretical, ideological and political concepts that emerge in the volume.The inclusion of the 'Klagenfurter Erklärung 2011' in the Appendix (pp. 341–47), however, makes for a strong conclusion to an ambitious, broad and detailed review of *Sprachenpolitik*, and brings together many of the key theoretical, argumentative, political and practical issues raised in the individual chapters. Moreover, it does not just rest on its laurels in having accumulated a detailed survey of language policy over the last ten years, but rather it looks to the future, concluding with some clear, systematic recommendations. Overall, this is a valuable resource for for applied and sociolinguists, critical discourse analysts, and for anyone with an interest in contemporary debates on language policy and politics in Austria.

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Wirklichkeit als Versuchsanordnung. Postavantgardistisches Schreiben in der österreichischen Gegenwartsliteratur des Postmilleniums am Beispiel von Thomas Glavinic. By Nora Boeckl. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann. 2015. 203 pp. €29.80. ISBN 978–3–8260–5647–5.

Nora Boeckl's study and published doctoral thesis, *Wirklichkeit als Versuchsanordnung*, is an ambitious and generally well-researched discussion of two phenomena in the context of literary production in Austria, that, in fact, could have filled two interesting separate books. On the one hand Boeckl presents us with a thorough, 116-page-long critical evaluation of the recent history of the often fervently contested term 'Österreichische Literatur'. On the other hand, she only devotes the exemplary second part of her book to the work of the Styria-born novelist Thomas Glavinic (*1972).

Overall, Boeckl's study is engagingly written and contains numerous passages and sub-chapters that demonstrate the author's expert insight into the complex of categorical, historiographical and ideological problems in the context of literary works produced in Austria after 1945, as well as her scholarly skills. But the title of the book, already eagerly alluding to several key ideas ('Wirklichkeit', 'Versuch[...]', 'Postavantgarde', 'österreichische Gegenwartsliteratur', 'Postmillenium') at the very beginning, seems to suggest a methodological conflict of interest and, a slight dilution of focus. And indeed, it is the study's macro-structure that forms the book's biggest drawback, as it would have benefitted from the streamlining of the core argument — Thomas

Glavinic's works are representative of a postmillennial, paradigmatic change in Austrian literary narrative strategies — and of the five chapters, with twelve sub-chapters each, into fewer. The detailed literary-historical elucidations make for a slightly laboured read, as they mix original insights with well-known facts, and the overview of the discursive history of an 'Austrian literature' after 1945 could have been reduced to a shorter introductory section. For Boeckl's readers will, in all likelihood, be academics in the field and generally aware of the canonical and terminological problems in relation to an Austrian literary history after the 'Stunde Null'. At least they will know that twentieth century literature produced in the Second Austrian Republic has generally been subsumed into the West-German — and later *bundesdeutschen* canon — by German-speaking and foreign critics alike. The book would also have benefitted from a more distinct focus on Glavinic's poetics from the beginning onwards, and from integrating the methodological meta-discussion into the hermeneutic analysis. For what Boeckl has to say about a narrative turn in postmillennial literature from Austria is original and very interesting.

The study contains many pockets of useful analytical overview of the status quo in literary theory of post-, and post-postmodernity. Boeckl's main angle is that contemporary fiction writing from Austria, which has been recognized by critics and an international audience, owes its success to the fact that it no longer subscribes to avantgardist critique of language, or, in fact, the postmodern scepticism about the 'grand narrative'. It rather employs epic narrative strategies in order to present a new kind of story-telling that puts the 'große Geschichte[n] anstelle der Vielzahl postmoderner Diskurse' (p. 163). It is her ambitious goal to transcend the pitfalls of scholarly discussion of an 'Austrian literature' which, in her view, is trapped between asserting the dialectical relationship of continuation and rupture in the literature of the Second Republic on the one hand, and the critique of a complete absence of reality-referential qualities on the other. Boeckl states that Germanists should acknowledge 'die Möglichkeit eines dritten ästhetischen Weges' (p. 15), and sets out to re-evaluate the critical discourse about literary production from Austria around the turn of the twenty-first century in favour of some kind of '(Post-) Austrian literature', so to speak. By this, I mean the way of placing the narrator's existence into a globally uniform setting and still remaining 'Austrian' in the manner in which language-criticism is shifted to narrative suspicion. Boeckl certainly is to be commended for the thorough research of available material on this meta-discussion, and the second chapter of the book, a 'Bestandsaufnahme' of Austrian literature between 2000 and 2010, as well as chapter three, that contains an overview of German-speaking reactions to the tectonic political shifts in Europe in 1989, provide an excellent resource for those seeking insight into literary scholarly positions and dominating discursive paradigms.

However, readers have to wait until chapter four to finally learn more about Thomas Glavinic's poetics and authorial strategies, and until rather later to

get to the core of Boeckl's argument, namely that Thomas Glavinic's work is 'postavantgardistisch' in its straightforward, uncritical and epic use of language, thus transcending the generally accepted view of Austrian writing as something that traditionally represents utter suspicion for the word. What would require further discussion here is the fact, that, apart from the epic dimension of Glavinic's writing, most of the poetological 'Distinktionsmerkmale' (p. 159) that Boeckl defines for Glavinic's work — the aleatoric approach to reality, the topical use of the phantasmagorias, the uncanny and the surreal, as well as the fictional exploration of various models of reality — seem to be still firmly anchored in a distinctly Austrian literary tradition, from Alfred Paris Gütersloh to Heinrich Steinfest, with a long detour via the *Wiener Gruppe*. She is also right when she states that Glavinic's radical approach to concepts of reality and self-referentiality are new, in their central focus on the narrator. But what the implications for a 'post-avantgarde' in Austrian literature actually are, and whether these findings can also be applied to other contemporary writers with an Austrian background, so we can speak of a paradigm shift, is not yet answered by Boeckl. In this respect, Nora Boeckl's study still leaves some questions open, but can be considered a valuable contribution to the scholarly debate about the distinctive place of 'Austrian literature', that helps enhance the status of hermeneutic bestseller-analyses in German literary studies.

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