

**Vansant, Jacqueline.** *Austria Made in Hollywood*. Rochester: Camden House, 2019. Pp. 208.  
doi:10.1017/S0067237820000442

At its beginnings, as Jacqueline Vansant writes, “the American film industry quickly came to associate particular stories with specific countries and their nationals” (2). Her excellent study *Austria Made in Hollywood* explores the favored character types, the preferred settings, and the characteristic narratives that Hollywood associated with Austria. The fidelity of these associations to the actual country Austria, as with fidelity more generally, has been highly contingent. Indeed, Hollywood films about Austria, as Vansant suggests, are best understood as a chronicle of contemporary circumstances, issues, and debates taking place in the United States. From this standpoint, Hollywood’s Austria has much to tell. It speaks not only of the relationship between the domestic film industry and historical contexts, but about “changing American mores and gender relationships . . . shifting American attitudes toward foreigners as well as the role of the United States on the world stage” (19). The Austria imagined by Hollywood was a projection. To study this projection, Vansant brings together historical scholarship on Austria, material from studio archives, as well as reception history, genre theory, and critical content analysis. Of course, the actual country Austria is also capable of turning Hollywood’s projections of Austria to its own ends. As a character in a Wim Wenders film once observed, “the Yanks have colonized our subconscious.” Test it. Try to think of Austria without Hollywood.

Following a stand-alone “Introduction” that surveys Austria and Austrians in Hollywood films over the last century, *Austria Made in Hollywood* arranges its material into five chapters. These chapters are shaped equally by thematic and chronological considerations. Chapter one is thus devoted to early Hollywood and the silent period as it unfolded after the turn from shorter to longer narrative films in the 1910s, while chapter two examines the theme of cross-cultural romance—with both Austria and Austrians—from 1932 to 1960. Chapter three attends to veiled critiques of National Socialism in films set in imperial Austria after the March 1938 Anschluss but prior to the entry of the United States into the war in 1941. Chapter four traces the Hollywood turn to the war propaganda of 1941 and 1942, even as such propaganda was tempered by the profit imperative of the industry. Chapter five considers the cinematic portrayal of the Anschluss in the 1960s, a decade marked by industry change and political and social upheaval, and sees this portrayal as presenting possibilities for “confronting and escaping history.” Each chapter proceeds following a similar template, in which one motif in Austria’s Hollywood is elaborated through the analysis of between two and four films. Chapter one, for example, explores post-1918 attitudes to Austria through the films and figure of the Vienna-born Erich von Stroheim. Challenging the prevailing critical consensus that Stroheim’s films should be read as a compensation for his own personal failure in Vienna, Vansant situates the actor/director Stroheim at one point, or vertex, of a dynamic triangle, where aspects of Austria’s Habsburg past occupies the second point, and American projections of Vienna and its inhabitants the third. Thus, the actor/director Stroheim could, at times, retail a powerful form of Habsburg nostalgia that affirmed Hollywood projections. But as Vansant shows, he could also mobilize aspects of Austria’s Habsburg past that deeply problematize such nostalgia.

Erich von Stroheim notwithstanding, *Austria Made in Hollywood* is not about émigré and exile directors in Hollywood. Indeed, the book is marked by its sustained interest in the Hollywood studio system as opposed to the achievements or antics of particular celebrity directors. Chapter two, for example, introduces films by John Cromwell, a director born in Toledo, Ohio, together with the Kentucky-born Stuart Walker. Like Cromwell’s *Champagne Waltz* (1938), as Vansant shows, Walker’s *Evenings for Sale* (1932) considers romance as a catalyst for broader forms of cross-cultural exchange. Meanwhile, both films also nod to contemporary American realities. The

down-at-the heels Austrian Count Franz von Degenthal of *Evenings for Sale* echoes the souring employment outlook of American males during the Depression, just as *Champagne Waltz* affirms the value of (Austrian) immigrants to the United States at a time when public opinion had turned against them. To be sure, celebrity émigré and exile directors are not excluded. Billy Wilder with *Emperor Waltz* (1948) and Michael Curtiz with *A Breath of Scandal* (1960) figure largely for chapter two's theme of cross-cultural romance. But Vansant approaches these two notable sons of Austria-Hungary no differently for their provenance. Wilder and Curtiz mark a new phase for the Austria of Hollywood. Each director registers a rejection of a melding of cultures and an idealization of the Habsburg Empire. Each film presents a sharpening, distinctively postwar critique of Austria.

Hollywood's Austria was tied to Austria. But as *Austria Made in Hollywood* shows, this Austria was decisively shaped by American fantasies and American realities. Chapters three and four on the representation of the Anschluss underscore just how complicated these realities and fantasies could be. For if Hollywood had been reluctant to produce anti-Nazi films before the United States declared war on Germany in December 1941, two new trends concerning Austria emerged in the 1930s. One trend was to highlight cultural traditions, such as music, that supposedly distinguished Austria from Germany; another was to increasingly celebrate the Habsburg monarchy. These two trends converged in *The Great Waltz* (1938), where the great emperor Francis Joseph meets the great waltz king Johann Strauss Jr. "The filmmakers took great liberties with historical reality," writes Vansant. "However, their version of the events is more than simply Hollywood's disregard for historical accuracy, because it drew parallels with the contemporary situation" (73). *New Wine* (1941), likewise, mobilized Franz Schubert to turn Austria's musical heritage into a vehicle to convey humanitarian and political messages. Meanwhile, *Florian* (1940) recruited a Lipizzan stallion to suggest that World War I put a definitive end to the old-world traditions of the Habsburgs. The future of the stallion, as well as his "refugee" trainers, was the new world. For Hollywood, the postwar 1918 pointed to the contemporary prewar of 1940. Indeed, it was not until 1941 that Hollywood produced a film in which the Anschluss figures as a subject. Here, *Austria Made in Hollywood* reads three films—*So Ends Our Night* (1941), *They Dare Not Love* (1941), and *Once Upon a Honeymoon* (1942)—as allegories of American wartime dilemmas. To be sure, one might well ask if the studios really understood the war in Europe as the primary reference point for a film about a misplaced horse. But here Vansant excels, and her use of studio records is compelling. Of *Florian*, an MGM document instructs, "No hand kissing, no courtly bows . . . . We want it to be completely acceptable and easily understood by American and English audiences. Dialects are to be avoided." Bosley Crowther may have been clueless about the broader context for Hollywood films—he omitted any mention of the situation in Europe in his review of *Florian* for the *New York Times*. But MGM sure knew.

*Austria Made in Hollywood* illuminates how the studios shaped a Hollywood Austria that could entertain American and English-speaking audiences while also speaking to contemporary social and political issues. Its strength is to show how films, both major and minor, were structured by a certain, consistent Hollywood logic. Not surprisingly, one discovers that there is no auteur of the subject "Austria" who imposes his or her idiosyncratic vision of the country across several films. At the same time, I found myself missing a clear case in the book where it is demonstrated that the critical method on offer can provide a powerful rereading of a canonical film. Vansant excludes the American-British coproduction *The Third Man* (1949), for example, because "American input and context had minimum impact on the film" (19). Yet, in his well-researched monograph on that film, Charles Drazin concludes that producer "[David O.] Selznick made an enormously important contribution to the pre-production of the film." Of course, scholars need not agree on such matters. Still, if *Austria Made in Hollywood* can be charged with lacking boldness, this is partly because the book generally manages to find its way around controversy. One exception is in chapter five, where the book presents a much more emotionally invested reading of *The Sound of Music* (1965) and its "escape" from history.

Whether or not such a critique from history is at odds with the overall perspective of a book that proceeds from an understanding that Hollywood “filmmakers took great liberties with historical reality” is open to question. In any case, it is a bit jarring to see Vansant now highlight “the falsification of historical events leading up to and including the *Anschluss*” (124) as a greatly problematic dimension of *The Sound of Music*.

*Austria Made in Hollywood* would be an excellent addition to a syllabus for a history course on Europe and the United States, or as a country case study for a film course. This is the definitive book on the image of Austria and Austrians in American film. Fascinated by the descriptions of lesser-known Hollywood films concerning Austria, such as *The Strange Death of Adolf Hitler* (1943), readers may also find themselves wishing to seek out these films to watch. *Austria Made in Hollywood* concludes by noting the decline of interest in Austria by Hollywood in recent decades, and it is an interesting question to consider if this is a positive or a negative development. Simple professional interest serves as a weak reason why the United States is worse off for considering Austria less. The extraordinary achievement of Jacqueline Vansant in showing how much both Hollywood and the United States have gained from representing Austria and Austrians serves as a strong one.

Michael Burri  
Bryn Mawr College

**Nagy, Zsolt.** *Great Expectations and Interwar Realities: Hungarian Cultural Diplomacy, 1918–1941*. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2017. Pp. xvii + 341.  
doi:10.1017/S0067237820000454

Zsolt Nagy’s *Great Expectations and Interwar Realities* examines Hungary’s attempts to promote Hungarian culture abroad during the interwar period. After World War I, Hungarian leaders blamed the country’s significant territorial loss on the failure of outsiders to understand Hungary. As a result, politicians sought to assert Hungary’s role as “‘first among equals’ in the field of cultural achievement in East-Central Europe” (9). Nagy analyzes these activities, which he somewhat inconsistently terms “cultural diplomacy,” to answer two questions: What value did these activities have in a country with diminished political power? And, perhaps more compellingly, how did the need to project a specific type of “Hungarianness” shape Hungary’s national identity in the face of the new geopolitical reality?

The book comprises five chapters that fall into two groups. The first two chapters provide an overview of Hungarian politics and the debates surrounding Hungarian national identity. Chapters three through five examine Hungarian cultural campaigns in three different areas: cultural and academic institutions, tourism, and radio and television. These latter chapters are at the heart of Nagy’s analysis and offer a thoroughly researched, detailed account of Hungary’s external-facing cultural activities. Nagy chronicles the Hungarian government’s efforts to sway the opinion of different international publics across various cultural landscapes. After losing a significant portion of their territory to neighboring countries, the reactionary right regime of Miklós Horthy pursued a foreign policy focused almost entirely on irredentism. Due to internal upheaval and the circumstances of the moment—Hungary’s ratification of the Trianon Treaty, desire to join the League of Nations, and need for international loans in the wake of the world war—the Hungarian government could not overtly pursue a revisionist policy, although they supported many organizations that did so (52). Rather, the government promoted Hungarian culture to brand Hungary as a Europe-oriented country with a rich history that made it more capable of leading than its neighboring countries.