

from the shared landscape when only their physical traces remain?” (S. 13). Dass die Friedhöfe von Menschen geschändet und vermüllt werden, deren Nachkommen das Land verlassen haben, sei keine polnische Besonderheit, sondern ebenso in West-Deutschland, Israel und Palästina vorgekommen (S. 134 f.).

Die Entwicklung im ländlichen Raum in Polen war seit 1945 bestimmt von der antijüdischen Wahrnehmung der vorangegangenen Jahre, die sich in einer Bewegung von unten niederschlug, die auf eine rasche Neuregelung von Besitzverhältnissen und Verfügungen drängte. Sie sollte im kommunistischen Polen die Oberhand gewinnen. W. beschreibt die Haltungen der lokalen Behörden mit der gebotenen Zurückhaltung, nie anklagend. Am Ende hofft er, dass die Zeit nicht mehr fern sein möge, in der auch die betreffenden Landgemeinden ihren Frieden mit den früheren jüdischen Nachbarn machen und sie zu betrauern imstande sind.

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**After Memory.** World War II in Contemporary Eastern European Literatures. Hrsg. von Matthias Schwartz, Nina Weller und Heike Winkel. (Media and Cultural Memory / Medien und kulturelle Erinnerung, Bd. 29.) De Gruyter. Berlin – Boston 2021. 479 S. ISBN 978-3-11-071373-2. (€ 82,-.)

The title *After Memory*, inspired by *Nach dem Gedächtnis*, the German title of Maria Stepanova's *Pamyat*, *Pamyat* refers to the current status of the history of remembrance in post-socialist countries. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the official collective memory of World War II became discredited in the successor states. Societies deprived of the ideologized rituals sustained for half a century now needed new, alternative ways to remember and commemorate the past. This void opened opportunities to explore many previously marginalized, hidden, or distorted family histories that led to abundant autobiographical writing reporting on authors' searches for their roots. But it also presented prime opportunities for post-socialist governments, quite a few of which gravitated towards some form of authoritarianism, to impose their historical policy. Literature could act as an aid or a hindrance to this, either consolidating desired models of national self-identity or impeding them by obstinately returning to subjects deemed taboo and offering a counter-narrative to state-controlled versions of history.

The geographical scope of the book transcends the somehow limiting category of "Eastern European Literatures" used in its subtitle, as it provides studies of literary works from Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Romania, Ukraine, Latvia, Estonia, ex-Yugoslavian countries, and Russia. The authors mainly study untranslated novels (and only occasionally poetry or, for comparative purposes, films). The vast majority of this literature was published in the 2000s, and it is presented as a privileged means to understand memory wars in the region. The book, composed of sixteen chapters arranged in four parts, is enriched with photos from the *bellu&bellu* art project "Growing in the Cracks: On Ecologies of the Margins" that document "coincidental memorials"—the fruit-laden cherry plum trees growing on the sites of the former Jewish ghettos in Vilnius, Minsk, Warsaw, Kraków, Rzeszów, Lviv, and Ivano-Frankivsk.

The first part, titled "Imaginary Adoptions: Family History and Personal Legacies," focuses on literary representations of the third generation's efforts to reconstruct missing family memories. More traditional studies—such as Kris Van Heuckelom's comparative reading of *Pensjonat* (2009) by the Polish writer Piotr Paziński and *Marcel* (1997) by the Belgian author Erwin Mortier—are bookended by two contributions that offer an innovative methodological approach. The opening chapter, by Stephenie Young, is a masterly analysis of the Croatian-American author Courtney Angela Brki's novel *The Stone Fields: An Epitaph for the Living* (2004). Young reflects on the forensic turn and its application to cultural production. Aside from documentation and human witness testimony, forensic evidence has been entrusted with the highest degree of reliability. The obsession with

human remains has gone beyond the courtroom to influence popular culture and impact how we approach the past. Brkic's literary work weaves an account of the author's experience as one of the archaeologists excavating mass graves of the victims of the 1995 Srebrenica massacres and a reflection on the history of her family during World War II to illustrate that memories, like bodies, need to be exhumed—dug up from the complex strata of the tumultuous history of Yugoslavia. In the chapter closing this section, Ernst van Alphen reflects on the usefulness of the frame provided by post-memorial studies, generally focused on the experience of the Holocaust, for analyzing how representatives of first-generation and second-generation survivors write about the Gulag. Close readings of Dmitrii Bykov's novel *Opravdanie* (2005) and Andrei Zviagintsev's film *Vozvrashchenie* (2003) convincingly show the limits of such a procedure. The author concludes that in the case of the Gulag survivors, the dynamic between the generations is very different: It "is not determined by mourning and by the identification of later generations with the first generation. Instead [it] is shaped by shame and suspicion, and the generations after the second one now look back with nostalgia to the Soviet Empire of which their ancestors were victims" (p. 129).

The second and third parts, "Revisionist Appropriations: National Belongings and Collective Identities" and "Fictional Interventions: Alternate Narratives and Subverted Mythologies," contain the most innovative studies, demonstrating how literature has the power to amplify or, on the contrary, impair an invented national past.

Nationalist reinterpretations of history seek to create new collective identities. To this end, they idealize a nation and suppress any narrative that could show its members other than as brave heroes or innocent victims. The Polish example, in which the PiS Party infamously attempted to silence Holocaust scholars, may appear as the most textbook case. Joanna Nizyńska presents it at length in the chapter "Delectatio Morosa: Reflections on Affective Compensation, Conflation, and Fantasy in Polish Memory Culture," and her account is complemented by Aleksandra Ubertowska's "Spectral Stories: Fictional Re-Inventions of the Holocaust in Contemporary Polish Literature." Novels such as *Noc żywych Żydów* (2012) by Igor Ostachowicz, a work that uses the tropes of popular culture to explore the possible consequences of the sudden return of Jewish victims in the form of zombies, engage in the discussion on the unprocessed traumatic past and its impact on contemporary Poles.

The article by Roman Dubasevych reveals similar mechanisms that work to create the modern Ukrainian identity. The author presents in detail Iurii Vynnychuk's efforts to guarantee, in his novel *Tango smerti* (2012), a soothing vision of the Ukrainian–Jewish cohabitation in prewar Lviv that gained the author both popular and critical acclaim. It came, however, at the price of a stereotyped othering of those Galician Jews who did not dedicate themselves to the Ukrainian cause and were silent about the nationalists' involvement in destroying the multiethnic city. The nationalist metanarrative culminates in the writer's exculpating Ukrainian perpetrators and blaming Jewish victims, most notably by resorting to the antisemitic cliché of Judeo-Bolshevism.

The unwillingness to acknowledge the role of local populations in the Holocaust is also marginally addressed by Stephan Krause, who offers a perspective on literary images of the Holocaust in Hungary after the death of Imre Kertész, and in the chapter by Dana Mihăilescu, which is devoted to the autobiographies of Romanian Jewish survivors.

While prewar antisemitism and complicity in genocide seem to constitute the most disputed topics in the contemporary memory wars of the Central European countries (the only article dedicated to another controversial aspect of their local histories is Davor Beganović's "Chetniks and Partisans: Conflicting Narratives in Contemporary Serbian Literature"), the conceptualization of World War II as the Great Patriotic War is at the center of Russian national identity.

Maria Galina and Brigitte Obermayr give an overview of the alternative histories of the outcomes of World War II that started to appear in the late 1990s. Galina focuses on

time-slip novels that offer readers opportunities to relive the victory over Nazi Germany and indulge in imperialist revanchism as a form of consolation for the traumatic collapse of the USSR. Obermayr takes quite a different tack and looks at examples of works that, if not actually dismantling the mythology around the Great Patriotic War, at least pose the question of how an outcome without victory could have affected Russian national identity. Nina Weller provides a detailed account of literary representations of the Siege of Leningrad that have increasingly deconstructed the propagandist version. This process aiming to include “the horrific aspects of the blockade, the traumatic experiences, and individual unheroic behavior” (p. 304) culminated with Andrei Turgenev’s controversial novel *Spat i verit* (2007).

The last part, “Imaginative Reconfigurations: Average Heroes and Ambivalent Subjectivities,” contains two examples from the Czech literary scene. The first of these is an interpretation of Radka Denemarková’s novel *Peníze od Hitlera* (2006) by Heike Winkel (who also offers a more extensive overview of the conflicted memory and literary representations of the expulsion of the Sudeten Germans—including Jewish survivors—to create a homogenous nation state in 1945). It is followed by Madlene Hagemann and Gernot Hownitz’s analysis of the graphic novel *Alos Nebel* (2003), by Jaroslav Rudiš and Jaromír Švejdík. As the only chapter in the volume that deals with the phenomenon of historical graphic novels, it adds essential observations on the effects of specific artistic possibilities, such as a consistently maintained clash between graphical and textual narrations that can help to convey inherited trauma and the mechanisms of post-memory. This part of the book also features the sole chapter dedicated to Baltic literature. Tiina Kirss and Rutt Hinrikus examine the successive German and Soviet occupations of Latvia and Estonia, not through the habitual lenses of masculine heroes but rather through the hitherto ignored female protagonists and their everyday lives.

The book closes with an article by Matthias Schwartz that reflects on subversive historical novels such as the Polish novel *Morfina* (2012) by Szczepan Twardoch. Schwartz assigns these works to the genre that he sees as having the greatest promise as a means of undermining dominant memory politics because it specifically addresses historical-political clichés.

The study of Twardoch’s antihero, drastically different from the traditional paragons of patriotism and sacrifice that have populated Polish historical novels, ultimately confirms the unique capacity of literature to offer a nuanced picture of the past, all the more important in the region where “it was often difficult to distinguish clearly between victims and perpetrators,” where “convinced Stalinists ended up in the Gulag; national resistance fighters participated in the Holocaust; ordinary peasants collaborated with the Nazis” (p. 5).

Oldenburg – Paris

Lena Magnone

**Franz Sz. Horváth: Kommunist – Jude – Ungar?** Leben und Werk des heimatlosen Philosophen Ernő Gáll. (Forschungen zu Südosteuropa, Bd. 20.) Harrassowitz Verlag. Wiesbaden 2023. VIII, 237 S., Ill. ISBN 978-3-447-12019-7. (€ 58,—)

Franz Sz. Horváth ist durch mehrere Publikationen über die ungarische Minderheit in Rumänien hervorgetreten. In seiner 2007 publizierten Dissertation<sup>1</sup> untersucht er die intellektuellen Eliten in Siebenbürgen in der Zwischenkriegszeit. Die vorliegende Biografie ist dem Philosophen Ernő Gáll gewidmet, dessen insgesamt elf Bücher seit 1958 in Rumänien und Ungarn erschienen. Politische Bedeutung erlangte er 1957–1984 als Chefredakteur der Zeitschrift *Korunk* (Unsere Zeit), die in Klausenburg (Cluj, Kolozsvár) herausgegeben wurde. Um die Entwicklung von Ernő Gáll rekonstruieren zu können, analysiert H. außer

<sup>1</sup> FRANZ SZ. HORVÁTH: Zwischen Ablehnung und Anpassung. Politische Strategien der ungarischen Minderheitselite in Rumänien 1931–1940, München 2007.