

ing literary interpretation of Christian Jewish relations but ends without a direct, satisfying application of this commentary for understanding Polish-Jewish relations, leaving it to the reader to assume or deduce connections between Asch's examination of medieval antisemitism in Rome, Asch's own experiences of antisemitism, and modern Polish-Jewish relations more broadly. Such connections are broadly obvious to those well-versed in Polish Jewish studies, but the author does not lead the reader to it and the effect is that the chapter feels underdeveloped within the context of the broader collection. By not firmly grounding his literary analyses within such historical and scholarly contexts, Ż. unfortunately weakens the impact of individual chapters.

This series of nineteen short sketches is therefore best understood as a broad impression of the many threads of Polish Jewish 're-remembering' rather than a comprehensive one, and the most significant intervention of this collection lies in the paths it offers for future 're-remembering.' Ż. argues that transfiguration and subversion are necessary and useful developments in Polish language Holocaust literature, ones that shed light on the absence of Jews in Poland from non-historical perspectives and "bring the bitter truth of the Holocaust to the next generation of viewers, making them aware that is inscribed [...] in every day and comprises a component of their cultural identity" (p. 373). Rather than see these developments as derisive or empty, Ż. shows how the next generations of authors inscribe new meanings and relevance in the Polish Jewish past and present.

On the surface, *Polish Jewish Re-Remembering* is a study of Polish Jewish relations. On a deeper level, however, this collection presents a vision of how literature and literary studies can be harnessed to grasp at a painful and contested past and promote dialogue and cross-temporal and cross-cultural understanding. Though the collection is disjointed, it offers enough in its collage of sketches to be of interest to scholars working on Polish, Jewish, and Israeli literatures and post-memory studies.

Warszawa

Frankee Lyons

Josette Baer: *The Green Butterfly*. Hana Ponická (1922–2007), Slovak Writer, Poetess, and Dissident. Ibidem. Stuttgart 2022. XXIV, 244 S., Ill. ISBN 978-3-8382-1426-9. (€ 24,90.)

In her book, Zurich-based political scientist and Slavonic studies scholar Josette Baer focuses on the Slovak writer Hana Ponická, who was persecuted by the communist regime in the 1970s and 1980s against the background of global politics. The fact the book focuses on Ponická is certainly worthy of appreciation. Unfortunately, however, it does so in a questionable way.

B. herself refers to the method she has chosen for the work as "Contextual Biography" (p. 6). However, she has not managed to keep the book's components in balance: the context as a whole has far outweighed the portrait of the writer. At the same time, the context is not presented as conceptually coherent analyses or comparisons with existing historical accounts, but rather with misleading generalizations which B. intersperses within the main interpretation: "Under the aristocracy, people were used to not having a voice, to obeying and conforming to whatever the ruling class deemed appropriate" (p. 36); "Hana was born a feminist, like all young women growing up in Masaryk's First Republic" (p. 196). Alternatively, historical context is replaced by the input of other researchers with reference to the "oral history" method.

The first section which uses this method, "Slovak and Czech Dissidents under the Normalization régime: Oral History Interview with Dirk Matthias Dahlberg," is one I find questionable. In fact, it is not an interview on the subject, but a carefully referenced study whose focus lies in Dahlberg's existing research work. B. does not further elaborate on the interview, does not comment on it, does not critically evaluate the information. With minor editing, this could be a chapter of its own. Similarly, the interview with Mary Šámal in-

formatively summarizes not only the essential contacts of the Czechoslovak exile, but also Ponická's place in the environment of dissent.

The second pitfall of this book is the way in which Ponická's work is handled. Ponická is the author of a number of prose texts for children and adults, poems and journalism (see the bibliography of her works from 2002), and B. only deals with a few of them here. The problem is that she stays with description, retelling Ponická's ideas, as in the case of the article devoted to health education for rural women (pp. 42–44). This is particularly problematic when interpreting the events of the late 1970s and 1980s in Czechoslovakia. Here, B. relies on Ponická's book *Lukavické zápisky*¹ quite uncritically and incorporates Ponická's recollections into her own scholarly interpretation. Without confronting her interpretation of the events and the specific reality that depicts (for example, through other memoirs, or better still, historical research), she adopts Ponická's assessment and version of events in Slovakia and presents it as a historical reality. Memory studies emphasize the constructive character of memories (Harald Welzer) and their social anchoring (Maurice Halbwachs), while literary research pays attention to the level of fiction and the processes of literary communication. One cannot work with memories without a corresponding reflection.

Thus B., in the course of her own interpretation, states that "Vasil Biľak [...] compared the Charter 77 members in his simplistic fashion to 'saboteurs, who poison our wells, infecting us with cholera and leprosy'" (p. 69), as Ponická's book states that "Vasil Biľak declared [...] of the Charter signatories that they were saboteurs who 'pour poison into our wells, spreading plague, cholera and leprosy'."² The reference to the source or the designation of the whole as a quotation is missing.

B. continues, "The authorities were reacting in such hysterical fashion that Hana, following the daily news, neglected her writing. She remembered why she had moved to Lukavica: to escape the increasingly stressful and depressing post-1968 atmosphere in Bratislava, living a simpler and freer life in the countryside. She admitted to herself that the very reasons she had moved five years ago had sought her out in Lukavica. One could not escape by moving away. But since her move to the mill, she had grown stronger, physically and mentally, because of the hardships of country life" (p. 70). This clearly interpretive text is entirely consistent with Ponická's personal notes.³

The book is full of admitted and unacknowledged speculations: Was Janko Novák Ponická's first love (p. 55)? Did she write for her family (p. 64)? Did she vote for Mikuláš Dzurinda (p. 168)? The research questions B. asks are firstly: "what was the source of Ponická's resistance and mental strength? [...] Second, what type of government did she advocate after 1989? [...] And third, what type of feminism did she support after 1989; was she an outspoken activist for women's rights in an emerging market that was slowly replacing the centralist economic structures of the former regime?" (p. 9). B. answers these questions in the conclusion, but the line of argumentation that leads her to her conclusions is not clear.

The main merit of the book in the context of *Ostmitteleuropaforschung* remains the space it has managed to create in the competition of research topics: a space dedicated to Hana Ponická, a significant female figure in Slovak dissent; a space for meeting people who deal with the period (Dirk Matthias Dalberg, Juraj Marušiak, Norbert Kmet', Mary Hrabík Šámal, Vlasta Jaksicsová, etc.); a space for questions of Czechoslovak normalization and life under communism.

Praha

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1 HANA PONICKÁ: *Lukavické zápisky* [Notes from Lukavica], Toronto 1989 [1985].

2 Ibid., p. 16.

3 Ibid., pp. 20–21.