

The canon established on eradicating, counterfeiting, and officially covering up the creativity of women, as if it was something disgraceful for the community, has in the past hundred years been conserved in an even more rigid form by the strengthening of the notorious dogma that creativity worth remembering is produced solely by men.

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The Portrayal of Jews in Modern Bielarussian Literature. By Zina J. Gimpelevich.

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Zina Gimpelevich bases her argument that “anti-Semitism in general isn’t a stain on the Bielarussian conscience” (ix) on the work of a dozen writers, writing primarily in Bielarussian, mostly from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. She uses writers’ biographies, detailed summaries, and translations of poems to show that Jews were viewed as an integral element of the Bielarussian landscape. During World War II, some 90% of Belarus’s Jews were murdered, while 50% of the total population was killed or forcibly relocated, making the region, as Timothy Snyder notes in *Bloodlands* (2010), “the deadliest place in the world between 1941 and 1944” (cited in Gimpelevich, 32). Most of the surviving Jews and their descendants emigrated by the early 2000s, and these absent Jews have become symbols of a lost past of ethnic tolerance, communal warmth, and Bielarussian cultural autonomy.

Gimpelevich’s argument is strongest for recent texts. Her final chapter addresses Georgii Musevich’s 2009 *Narod, kotoryi zhil sredi nas* (People Who Used to Live among Us), which focuses on the cities of Kamianiec-Litoŭsk and Vysoka-Litoŭsk. Relying on written sources, his own prewar childhood memory, and interviews with current residents, Musevich described this area’s Jewish history, Jewish migration, migrants’ return visits, and locals’ memory of Jews. Gimpelevich concludes on an elegiac note, hoping that once Musevich’s readers “understand the truth about the common past of Bielarussians, they will want to preserve it and to pass it to future generations” (338). The penultimate chapter considers a similar work, the poet Ryhor Baradulin’s 2011 *Tolki b habrei byli! Kniha pavahi i siabroustva* (If Only Jews Were Here: Book of Respect and Friendship), with essays about individual Jews (some of whom he knew), poetry translations from Yiddish into Bielarussian, and original poems. Gimpelevich translates additional Baradulin poems in an appendix, including one with these lines:

Even the shtetl dogs have stopped responding to Yiddish.
Sparrows do not chirp in Yiddish.
Now even they don’t remember: the sparrows have forgotten
That Bielarussians jokingly called them Jews.
No more Jewish schools,
No more students.
Just a few words dropped along the road
Found their way to the warm hands of the Bielarussian language (375).

This image of abandoned Yiddish words recuperated by Bielarussian evokes the remarkable 928-page Yiddish-Belarussian dictionary published by Aliaksandar Astravukh in 2008, recent evidence of the Jewish-Belarussian cultural connection that Gimpelevich describes.

Does this material support Gimpelevich's argument against significant antisemitism in Belarus? Like other east European places where Jews once lived, Belarus knew pogroms and blood libel trials, microaggressions and genocide, as well as peaceful coexistence and cultural synthesis. While an argument can be made that Belarus saw fewer pogroms than Ukraine and Jews there were more readily accepted into partisan units during World War II, Gimpelevich devotes little space to these details. A Jew wanting to take offense could do so based on the material she examines, including depictions of Jews as untrustworthy merchants or victims needing to be rescued; Jewish women as exotic love objects for Christian men; Jewish characters instrumentalized as opportunities to philosophize about Christianity. Gimpelevich asserts repeatedly that if there is evidence of antisemitism in Belarus, non-Belarusians—Russians, Poles, the Soviet as well as the Nazi regimes—are to blame. She conflates earlier descriptions of Jews with recent ones and asserts that the notion of Jews' cultural and social isolation is "a fiction that was concocted by tsarist and Soviet historiography" (14), as though Jews too had not produced a historiography that notices isolation. She does not use Hebrew or Yiddish sources, and confuses some Yiddish terms (for instance, she presents "Bund" as an acronym). It is a pity that she did not devote even more attention to a phenomenon she describes sensitively: the appeal of the memory of Jews to Belarusian linguistic activists who, as she notes about herself, became "converts" to the revivalist cause through the writing of authors such as Uładzimir Karatkievič and Vasil Bykaŭ (235). One might assume it was a lack of strong local nationalism in Belarus that accounted for its relative absence of antisemitism; in that context, Gimpelevich could reflect at greater length on the surprising connection between Belarusian linguistic nationalism and tolerance in her own experience and that of her generation.

These quibbles, though, are minor. Overall, Gimpelevich has produced a useful study that provides access to rich, interesting texts that readers of English, and Russian, are unlikely to know.

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Dogs and Others. By Biljana Jovanović. Trans. John K. Cox. London: Istros Books, 2019. 189 pp. Bibliography. \$9.99, paper.
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Biljana Jovanovic (1953–1996), a writer accomplished in several genres, grew up in socialist Yugoslavia. She wrote poetry and plays as well as novels and was a feminist and peace activist, especially in the last years before she died of a brain tumor in 1996—a difficult time in the Balkans. Her fans especially appreciate her three novels, of which the second, *Dogs and Others*, has now been translated into English by John K. Cox. *Psi i ostali* first appeared in Belgrade in 1980. Though not so successful at first publication, it has become a cult favorite with some readers. Jovanović's theoretical and critical work is represented in some translated anthologies of Yugoslav feminist writings, but this is the first substantial version of her prose fiction. (Cox has also published an excerpt from her 1978 novel *Avala is Falling* in *World Literature Today*.)

Lidia, the heroine and narrator of *Dogs and Others*, is not very likable; she has difficult relationships with everyone—and almost everyone else in the book is dreadful too. Every conversation seems to turn unpleasant, if not outright hostile. Lidia emerges from a horrible past, enduring what we now call gaslighting by her grandmother, and neglect and then abandonment by her mother. Her younger brother slashes his wrists in mental hospital and bleeds to death, waiting for someone to come