

ing Moscow romance with the poet Alesksandr Tvardovskii or Soviet writers' continually frustrated requests for more contemporary Polish literature in translation.

Babiracki is especially interested in individuals whose positions between cultures and systems made them both particularly qualified to interpret Soviet soft power and particularly vulnerable to Stalinist depredations. This includes Soviets of Polish descent (notoriously, Marshal Konstantin Rokossovskii), and Jewish Communists like Berman or the sympathetically portrayed Jerzy Borejsza. As Babiracki shows, antisemitism, too, contributed to soft power's downfall, as Jewish Communists like Berman, driven by fear, advocated the Sovietization of Polish culture not out of conviction, but to save their skins.

Ultimately, Babiracki argues that "Sovietization" is a flawed model for understanding the dynamics of Stalinist cultural influence in communist eastern Europe, for it describes the monochromatic end-result of a process, but not the process itself. As he writes, Soviet cultural imperialism in Poland was a "mélange of aggressive overtures, tactful involvement, and plain inaction" (95). If the vision of soft power held by so many of his protagonists—that of a stable empire built on long-term cultural influence—failed, it was not because of some eternal antagonism between Poles and Russians, but because there was "nothing soft about Stalinism in the Soviet Union" (236). Babiracki's book is not for the faint of heart—only the strongest undergraduates will follow his winding narratives of failed encounters, misunderstandings, and missed opportunities to the bitter end—but for those who stay the course, it richly rewards.

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***Jewish Space in Contemporary Poland.*** Ed. Erica Lehrer and Michael Meng. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015. vii, 299 pp. Notes. Index. Illustrations. Photographs. Figures. Tables. Maps. \$35.00, paper. \$85.00, hard bound.

This innovative and important volume focuses, theoretically as well as empirically, on the intersection of memory and space in the Polish-Jewish context on the territory of Poland since 1989. The book's expressed goal is "to shed light on the role of the material world in the complex, unfolding encounter with the Jewish past in contemporary Poland, in spaces that conjure up ambivalent, often conflicting memories and emotions" (4). Following the lead of historian Diana Pinto, who penned the epilogue, the "Jewish space," the title is not understood as the realm of contemporary lived Jewish practice (of which there is little in contemporary Poland); rather it lies in the built environment, in the public domain, where Poles encounter the remaining signs (including synagogues and cemeteries, some invisible to all but the initiated) of what once was thriving Jewish life in the Polish lands.

As presented in the strong introduction, penned by editors Erica Lehrer and Michael Meng, the book sheds light on the "how" and "why" of Poles embracing the country's Jewish heritage and of their nostalgia for the Jews no longer in their midst. Witness, for example, the seemingly improbable yet real "I miss you Jew!" graffiti campaign as well as Jewish-themed festivals and especially the renovation and/or reconstruction of elements of the built environment. The "how" is demonstrated in numerous empirical treatments of Jewish spaces ranging from the ever-central realm of Auschwitz; big cities such as Warsaw, Kraków and Łódź; down to smaller provincial towns and villages. The "why" is seen by some as a sign of a longing for a different, less nationalistic, more pluralistic Poland, while a healthy relationship to the

Jewish past in Europe is postulated (by Diana Pinto and others) as a touchstone for liberal, pluralistic, democratic societies and polities more broadly.

Representing a broad spectrum of intellectual engagement (ranging from historians, sociologists and social anthropologists through practitioners and activists), the thirteen authors provide insight into the interaction with spaces—synagogues and cemeteries, to be sure, but also urban districts and even entire shtetls or villages—associated with the historic, thousand-year Jewish presence in Poland, including the Holocaust. The majority of the chapters are richly theorized, dealing with space and memory but also nostalgia, heritage, and other concepts, to which this brief review cannot do justice.

The individual chapters fit well into the book as a whole. Geneviève Zubrzycki discusses at length and with nuance the recent dissociation of the terms “Auschwitz” and “Oświęcim,” the former increasingly “de-Polonized” and “Judaized” in Polish minds, with the latter now standing—after having been the operative word for the concentration/extermination camp complex in communist times—solely for the Polish town. The intricacies of restitution legislation, reactions to claims, and the activities (or not) of the relevant Jewish organizations are ably laid out by Stanisław Tyszka.

The next three articles progress from a meditation on the ruins of Muranów, the former Jewish district of Warsaw (Michael Meng), through a look at how the city of Szczecin is discovering, through performance art, its Jewish and German past (Magdalena Waligórska), to the provincial town (shtetl) of Chmielnik whose enthusiastic embrace of its Jewish heritage has brought it renown and relative prosperity (Monika Murzyn-Kupisz). The social anthropologist Sławomir Kaprański reminds us that not all provincial towns are equally engaged in the process, while categorizing localities in accordance with a grid of “ideal types.”

Should we think of this renaissance of interest in the Jewish past in Poland as leading solely to “virtual Jewishness”: a form of Jewish culture by and for non-Jews? Erica Lehrer, in covering the phenomenon of Kraków’s former Jewish district of Kazimierz, argues otherwise. By contrast, Winson Chu sees “virtual Germans” in his study of Łódź, where good relations with Germany/Germans are given priority over a coming to terms with the more problematic parts of the Polish-German-Jewish past of that city.

Robert L. Cohn extends images of Jewish space to the realm of photography and the internet. Polish-Jewish activist Konstanty Gebert gives a historically-informed guided tour to the palimpsest that is the built environment of modern-day Warsaw. Gradually, Jonathan Webber shows how one can successfully, if gingerly, restore memory of its Jewish past to a small community (here, a unprepossessing village with a tombstone-less Jewish cemetery that had literally been invisible to outsiders). Yet another success story is presented by Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, the program director of the core exhibition of the Museum of the History of Polish Jews, who provides insight into that wonderful new addition to Jewish space in Poland.

In contrast to Omer Bartov’s *Erased: Vanishing Traces of Jewish Galicia in Present-Day Ukraine* (Princeton, 2007) of a decade ago, *Jewish Space in Contemporary Poland* fills one with hope—for Poland as well as for the field of Jewish Studies. Indiana University Press is to be commended for a fine, and well-edited book. Although few and irregularly spaced, the black-and-white illustrations and maps have on the whole been chosen for maximum effect. The index is helpful, as many authors deal with similar themes and theoretical perspectives. This book should be required reading for those in the fields of Jewish and Polish Studies, yet it can be profitably read by those in German Studies, central and/or east European Studies, or indeed anyone who studies any part of Europe since 1989.

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