

Żydowska Warszawa-żydowski Berlin. Literacki portret miasta w pierwszej połowie XX wieku. By Alina Molisak. Warsaw: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN Wydawnictwo, 2016. 365 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. zł 35.00, paper. doi: 10.1017/slr.2018.36

The newest monograph in the field of comparative Jewish-Polish-German studies is a rigorous analysis of the multi-lingual literary production in east central Europe during the interwar period of the past century. The linguistic scope of Alina Molisak's study encompasses literary works by Jewish authors written in Polish, Yiddish, and German, but not in Hebrew. The book explores two capital cities—Warsaw and Berlin—as prominent sites of the multilayered cultural production fused with religious and socio-political activities and the oft-antagonistic and competitive relationship among members of their respective Jewish populations. The genealogy of this conceptual framework harks back to the Levi-Straussian view of cultures as developed along binary oppositions. Molisak maintains the binary perspective through concepts such as contrast, while persistently interweaving the two poles of Warsaw and Berlin as complex scenarios of interactions occurring among both cities' Jewish inhabitants. The manner in which she proceeds is to foreground the residents of Jewish Berlin and Jewish Warsaw against the backdrop of the tumultuous politics, religious life, and economic stratification of the time. The east European Jewish population, largely Litvak or Hasidic, immigrating to or through Berlin to their destination points in America or Palestine, stood apart from the assimilated and better-off German Jewry; political, economic, and religious differences were a source of antagonisms and tensions between these two groups.

Berlin's Scheunenviertel and Warsaw's Nalewki Street (with its adjacent environs) were the neighborhoods where Jews of the diaspora lived and built their networks of houses of worship, mikvahs, religious schools, and small kosher shops geared to their religious needs. Along with the commonly-used Yiddish language and the prevalence of the traditional Jewish code of dress, these factors co-created the visible intensity of street life and a sense of neighborhood, of its familiarity, which Molisak aptly calls *swojskość* (roughly, familiarity).

Using Sander Gilman's concept of a boundary, the author describes the oft-invisible and permeable delineations of Jewish space, as both Jewish neighborhoods were "ghettos with open gates." In her comparative readings of Berlin and Warsaw's topographies, Molisak does not strive to find exact similarities, nonetheless she describes a rather persuasive likeness between the main thoroughfares of Krochmalna Street and Grenadierstrasse. It is Mary L. Pratt's concept of a contact zone that proves to be most instrumental in Molisak's study of the *miejsca wspólne* (common sites), among which she includes apartment buildings, public parks and gardens, night bars and seedy restaurants where the poor Poles and Jews conducted their criminal and illegal activities. It is through her culturalist analysis of these sites that the multilayered phenomenon of a neighborhood is enhanced.

Bridging three languages, Molisak recreates multiple points of reference to Warsaw and Berlin in the literary works by Jewish writers of that time. Her sources are not only taken from the sphere of belles-lettres, but also from travel writing and journalism, especially reportage. The fictional and non-fictional representation of the urban spaces of Warsaw and Berlin has its own history that begins with writers of Yiddish literature: Scholem Aleichem, Sholem Asch, Israel J. Singer, David Bergelson, and Fischl Schneerson. It also includes Polish-Jewish writers such as Jakub Appenzlak and Bernard Singer, as well as Polish writers such as Maria Kuncewiczowa, Helena Boguszewska, and Wanda Melcer, among others. Molisak's thorough purview of the interbellum Jewish-German literature foregrounds Alfred Döblin's innovative *Berlin*

Alexanderplatz and his *Travel to Poland* in which he touched—in an almost epiphanic way—the pulse of east European Jewish authenticity.

Because of its multidisciplinary, Molisak's title, which translates as *Jewish Warsaw-Jewish Berlin: A Literary City Portrait in the First Half of the 20th Century*, can be aligned to an interesting group of works that map the built environment of both cities. I would mention in this context Michael Meng's 2011 monograph *Shattered Spaces: Encountering Jewish Ruins in Postwar Germany and Poland* and the studies of post-war developments, especially those occurring during the post-communist period. Examples include, for instance, Agata Lisiak's "Berlin and Warsaw as Brands" (2009) and Ewa Korcelli-Olejniczak's "Berlin and Warsaw: In Search of a New Role in the European Urban System" (2007).

Supported by solid archival and historical research, as well as readings in the theory of Jewish identity and space, this study is more than a foray into a literary sphere of topical urban strategies of representation. Rather, it is an informative reconstruction of the intricate texture of the Jewish world, which was erased from the map during WWII. Subsequently, this valuable monograph and its wide-ranging interventions contribute to the discourse of the less-studied aspects of international modernism.

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Studies on Socialist Realism: The Polish View. Ed. Anna Artwińska, Bartłomiej Starnawski, and Grzegorz Wołowiec. *Studien zur Kulturellen und Literarischen Kommunismusforschung*, Bd. 3. Trans. Maja Jaros, John M. Bates, Stanley Bill, and Kalina Iwanek. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Edition, 2016. 471 pp. A. Index. €85.95, hard bound.

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"National in form, Socialist in content"—this formula, or variations on it, was propagated by the Soviet Union to promote the formation of a unified socialist Soviet culture. After the Second World War, this idea was applied during the implementation of Socialist Realism as cultural doctrine in the countries belonging to the Soviet region of influence. The idea of literature that is socialist in content and national in form is evoked by the title *Studies on Socialist Realism: The Polish View*, heading a collection of papers edited by Anna Artwińska, Bartłomiej Starnawski, and Grzegorz Wołowiec. The title seems to announce a present-day assessment of the post-war situation of Polish literature, written in the era of Socialist Realism, adhering to the well-known doctrines of party-ness, folksiness, and understanding for the masses. How did Polish writers address these demands? How did writers who implemented Socialist Realist doctrines fare after the Thaw and de-Stalinization?

While these aspects are touched upon, they are not at the core of the study, so in this respect the title is misleading. The editors aimed at presenting the Polish assessment of the comparatively short episode of Polish Socialist Realism (1949–1956) over the time span from the early 1980s to today. The papers show how from a distance of twenty-five and more years, Polish literary research comes to terms with the period of *Hańba domowa* (civil disgrace), 1986, to quote the collection of interviews conducted by Jerzy Trznadel with protagonists of Polish Socialist Realist literature.

The editors may have decided to opt for publishing a study on the meta-text because of the common negative attitude toward the quality of Socialist Realist literature. They may share the assessment of one of their authors, Anna Zarzycka, who