



Gazeta

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Interior of the restored synagogue in Łańcut, Poland, 2012.
Photograph by David Kaufman. Used with permission.

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Message from Irene Pipes

President, American Association
for Polish-Jewish Studies

Founder of *Gazeta*

Dear Members and Friends,

Greetings from Cambridge, Massachusetts, where I am sitting out this unprecedented crisis. I hope you are comfortable and safe and that we shall soon be able to resume normal activities.

We are determined to carry on our important work. It is amazing how much one can do with podcasts and Zoom. We have been very impressed by the podcast series organized by the Global Education Outreach Program of the POLIN Museum in Warsaw, *What's New, What's Next? Jewish Studies in the Time of Pandemic*, which is intended lead up to the international conference "What's New, What's Next? Innovative Methods, New Sources, and Paradigm Shifts in Jewish Studies," scheduled to take place at the POLIN Museum in October 2021. Also impressive was TJHTalks, a series of virtual discussions organized by Taube Jewish Heritage Tours. One discussion featured Antony Polonsky in dialogue with Marcin Wodziński, and in another, "Creating Community: Jewish Recipes and Stories," Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett led a conversation about Jewish foodways and the innovative cookbook *The Community Table*, produced by the Marlene Meyerson JCC in New York City.



Irene Pipes

Volume 33 of *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* should be published by the end of the year. Among its editors was Ada Rapoport-Albert, who died shortly after the volume was submitted to the publishers, and to whom a moving tribute is to be found in this issue of *Gazeta*. The volume seeks to advance our understanding of all aspects of Jewish religiosity in the Polish lands, including the history of Hasidism, women's history and the use of gender theory in the analysis of religious texts, and the religious life of the liberal segment of Eastern European Jewry. Other areas examined are the egalitarian aspects of religious life, including the vernacular religious beliefs and practices of ordinary people, the material history of Jewish religious life in Eastern Europe, and the recent shift of emphasis from theology to practice in the search for the defining quality of religious, especially mystical, experiences. We are hoping to organize a launch of the volume in collaboration with the Polish Cultural Institute in London in January 2021.

With best wishes,

Irene Pipes
President

Message from Tad Taube and Shana Penn

Chairman and Executive Director,
Taube Foundation for Jewish Life
& Culture



Tad Taube



Shana Penn

The three feature articles in this issue of *Gazeta* inquire into history's might-have-beens. They encourage us to ask questions about what would have happened if, for example, nationalism had played out differently in Poland and other East European nations, or if the Communist regime had not imposed a Stalinist model on the architects who designed the post-war Muranów district of Warsaw.

Our first feature story draws from an important new book by John Connelly to ask why the history of Eastern Europe seems to run on its own unique track. Two more articles, by Kamila Radecka-Mikulicz and Beata Chomątowska, are both related to a new temporary exhibition at the POLIN Museum and discuss the reconstruction of Warsaw's Muranów district after World War II, including the government's decision to scrap imaginative and historically sensitive rebuilding plans in favor of an approach inspired by socialist realist doctrine.

Yet not all might-have-beens result in a problematic ending, as Erica Lehrer shows in her account of organizing a successful fundraising campaign to save Kraków's Jarden Jewish bookstore from almost certain closure owing to the effects of the pandemic. She found the experience inspiring and affirming for the community – a ray of hope in a difficult time.

Similarly, we hope you find in this issue of *Gazeta* a glimmer of hope in trying times. Take a look at our new Poetry section and our Of Special Interest section. If you need cheering up, try the story about *Szancer, Imagine That!*, an exhibition at the Galicia Jewish Museum. It celebrates the work of Jan Marcin Szancer, an imaginative illustrator whose art has brought books to life for generations of Polish children and their families. His work shows that some things, like joy, transcend language and culture.

Tad Taube and Shana Penn
Chairman and Executive Director

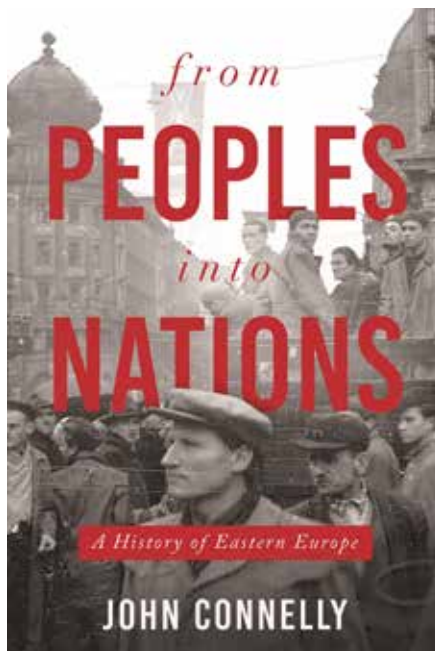
FEATURE ARTICLES

From Peoples into Nations: A History of Eastern Europe

John Connelly

Editors' Note: This article is excerpted from Professor Connelly's book presentation at the National History Center, Washington, DC, July 28, 2020.

Why another book on Eastern Europe? My hope was to explain to readers what makes the region distinct, interesting, and instructive. In excellent recent work, the trend has been to say that Eastern Europe is a creation of outsiders, of Western travelers who “imagined” the region in particular ways. Yet from my first visits in the 1970s, it struck me that East Europeans themselves were imagining their identities in particular ways. Above all, they seemed united by seismic sensitivity to history, feeling that events of earlier times mattered in ways I had not encountered. History was akin to a personality that might intervene in the life of one's family, knocking at the door, and becoming the guest seated in the living room who never leaves.



John Connelly's book, released this year by Princeton University Press.

Earlier this year on sabbatical in Belfast, I discovered this kind of sensitivity is not unique. Northern Ireland shares three things with Eastern Europe:

1. Two ethnic groups living in the same space that each considers their own;
2. One of these groups portrayed as post-imperial (in Ulster those are the “loyalists”);
3. Both groups sensing that their community's fate was at the mercy of larger forces.

Unusual in Eastern Europe is how this sensitivity, of being small peoples subject to the whims of larger peoples, is reproduced across a band of earth: Eastern Europe is a series of Ulsters stretching from the Baltic to the Adriatic.

A second question is why the book is so long, especially if most of the historical action occurred relatively recently, in the twentieth century's age of extremes, when wars, social movements, and political ideologies came to a focus in Eastern Europe more than anywhere else. So why start the book in the 1780s?

When I attempted to limit the focus to the twentieth century, I soon found that the century did not make sense in terms of itself. The problem usually related to nationalism. Why did the new nation states constructed as democracies

after World War I fail to work out? Why was Slovakia a problem for Czechoslovakia, or Croatia for Yugoslavia? Why was Hungary so “irredentist”? Why was there so little regional cooperation? This conundrum was impossible to explain without looking further backward. The long introduction to the past century kept growing, from one long chapter into ten.

The 1780s form a starting point because it was then that the Austrian monarch, Joseph II, inadvertently awakened nationalist anxieties among Hungarians and Czechs by attempting to make them use German as a language of administration and education. Petitions rained upon the court in Vienna. One Hungarian county evoked the fate of the Etruscan city of Veii: Like the Etruscans, the Magyars would disappear from history, becoming just another group of Central Europe’s German speakers. Joseph had “touched some deep nerve,” yet was insensitive to all pleas (see Éva H. Balázs, *Hungary and the Habsburgs 1765–1800* [Budapest, 1997], 206–209). Within decades, the concern

*The problems of
Eastern Europe created
after World War I
were not inevitable.*

over national disappearance had spawned movements first striving for cultural rights, then for forms of political autonomy.

Eastern Europe is thus a place of shifting boundaries between empires—German, Russian, and Turkish—where generations of political classes have stoked a special fear: that their nations might disappear from history, nations understood as peoples united in culture and a shared past, a past supposedly with no beginning.

Germans have a special place in the story because Germans lived throughout the region, and the region learned what it was to be national from German thinkers. Here I think of the young Slovak theologians who imbibed romantic nationalism at German universities in the early nineteenth century and brought ethno-cultural understandings of nationhood back to their homelands. The soul of a people, they had learned, was its language.

But at that time there were no dictionaries and thus no standard languages. The most admired patriots were not military commanders, but linguists. But could the languages they made really make peoples? The painful answers came after World War I, when later patriots inspired by this linguistic nationalism created states called Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, unfortunately failing to ask whether people living in these territories felt themselves to be Czechoslovaks or Yugoslavs.

Which brings us to the “age of extremes.” Three episodes stand out: 1918/19; 1933; 1945. What do we make of creation and then breakdown of nation states? Was Eastern Europe a breeding ground for fascism as Paul Krugman and others have claimed? Was Communism an imposition on an unwilling region? In sum: are East Europeans history’s victims?

The Habsburg monarchy was not “brought down” by nationality problems. More accurate is that its leaders became obsessed with nationalism as an ideology,

and took their state into war because they believed conflict between Teutons and Slavs was inevitable. Still, without the highly unlikely assassination in Sarajevo of June 28, 1914, the monarchy would have carried on in some fashion.

Similarly, the problems of Eastern Europe created after the war were not inevitable. Given the erosion of the monarchical principle by 1918, an order based on a new principle—national self-determination—seemed inevitable, but this new order would have been sounder without the extraordinary ignorance, idealism, and naiveté on the part of the creators, above all the US delegation at Paris in 1919. Only one person in President Wilson’s fact-finding team knew anything about the region where the new nation states would emerge. He was Robert J. Kerner, later a professor at UC Berkeley, who happened to be a Chicago Czech and an enthusiast for the ideas of T.G. Masaryk. Rather than warn Wilson of the impossibility of drawing boundaries that would separate the region’s nationalities,

If Eastern Europe seems home to strong ethnic nationalisms that is because it’s a region wedged between empires—empires that have threatened the coherence of ethnically understood nations.

Kerner projected new entities—like Czechoslovakia or Yugoslavia—not only as good but also as necessary, calling the Yugoslav people a “scientific fact.”

Still, fascism was a marginal force even after the democracies declined, gaining mass popularity only in two places, Romania and Hungary. The region produced remarkable resistance to totalitarian rule. In 1939 and 1941, Hitler tried to gain elites in Poland and Yugoslavia for cooperation against the USSR; yet leaders in both places, with broad support, said no. Hitler unleashed furious attacks upon these countries by land and air, but the damage was done: defiant Poles and Yugoslavs had made his war un-winnable.

What about Communism? Few East Europeans had wanted Soviet-style rule, which was violently imposed at the cost of tens of thousands of dead as well as deportees and political prisoners running into the millions. Many East Europeans justly considered themselves victims.

Yet the Soviets were thin on the ground in postwar Eastern Europe, and it fell to locals to implement the new system. Thus we find hundreds of thousands of accomplices, effective self-Sovietizers, making Warsaw or Prague resemble Moscow by 1955, and producing a range of national Communist regimes adapted to local circumstances.

Decades after the revolutions of 1989, we see that the foreign implants went very deep; Polish philosopher Józef Tischner spoke of *Homo Sovieticus*, a widespread personality type among East Europeans not willing to take responsibility for their own deeds, not able to think independently, “always ready to blame others, sickly suspicious, consumed by unhappiness.” Today’s

populists reduce Cold War political realities to “them” (the Communists) pitted against “us” (the virtuous people), but Vaclav Havel, Adam Michnik, or Roland Jahn, dissidents who paid for opposition with prison sentences, say that everyone, including them, helped prop up Communism. In some way, the system involved everyone. Former Solidarity activist Władysław Frasyniuk reminds us that Poland’s Premier Mateusz Morawiecki, who helps erode the independence of Poland’s judiciary saying judges are “holdovers” from the past, is himself a creation of Communism: he “completed communist schools, studied at a university of People’s Poland. In other words, he is a communist bastard. And his children and grandchildren will be post-communist bastards. We are a generation educated and shaped by the former system: we now know that it is easier to win the freedom of borders than to become free human beings.”

Conclusion

If Eastern Europe seems home to strong ethnic nationalisms, that is because it’s a region

wedged between empires — empires that have threatened the coherence of ethnically understood nations. But ethnic nationalism is alive and well elsewhere, for example Ulster, and we even find it in societies characterized by “civic nationalism,” like the US or the UK, where populists promise to make “the people” great again, “people,” understood as the white working-class.

How should opponents of those populists respond? Eastern Europe shows that human beings, like Slovak theologians, make nations. It also shows that nations are not figments of imaginations. Politics in fact is a field of struggle about what the nation — the people — should be. Or to echo Renan, if the nation is a plebiscite, there are choices on the ballot. Which nation does one celebrate: one that relies not upon fear but upon inspiration, that is curious about other nations rather than hostile to them, that relies upon culture as a way to unite rather than divide; that endeavors to break down walls rather than build them?

Clearly progressives have nothing to fear from this

contest. Why should they not be concerned about culture and ethnicity; about poetry, songs, symbols, the deep and more proximate common stories that hold a people together? Nationalism was originally left of center, and its causes — for liberation, for rights, against fascism, for democracy — are by no means conservative. And there is no other choice. Those who insist nations are fictions, figments of imaginations, will discover that for people taking part in this unavoidable plebiscite they are not. ■

To view Prof. Connelly’s talk at the National History Center in full, please visit:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5MIJo_YXupw&feature=youtu.be.

John Connelly, PhD, is Professor of History at the University of California, Berkeley. He is author of *From Enemy to Brother: The Revolution in Catholic Teaching on the Jews and of the newly released* *From Peoples to Nations: A History of Eastern Europe*, Princeton University Press, 2020.

Here Is Muranów: A District That Grew Beyond the Rubble

Exhibition at the POLIN Museum
June 26, 2020–March 22, 2021

Editors' Note:

The following essays by Kamila Radecka-Mikulicz and Beata Chomątowska are excerpted here, with permission, from the exhibition catalogue, *Here Is Muranów: A District That Grew Beyond the Rubble*. Copies of the catalogue are available in e-book format via the museum's website: <https://www.polin.pl/en/here-is-muranow>.

Rubble of the Warsaw Ghetto and Rapoport's Monument to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, 1948.
Courtesy of the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute.



Muranów: Layers of Life, Layers of Memory

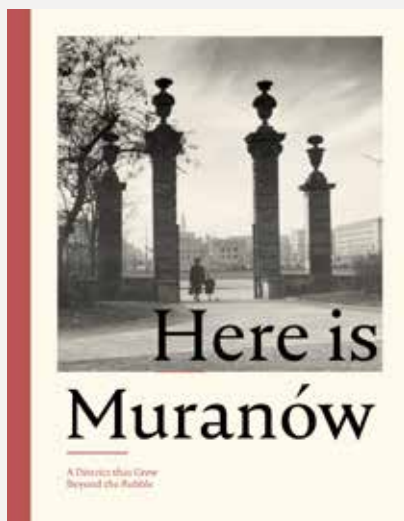
Kamila Radecka-
Mikulicz

“It’s so quiet, as if the whole universe has ceased to exist,” noted Mordechai Canin while wandering across ruined Muranów right after the war had ended. His words conjure up a massive, terrifying void, especially when juxtaposed with the pre-war hustle and bustle of the district that was still so fresh in people’s memory.

Exhibition

The exhibition and accompanying catalogue are the POLIN Museum’s first to focus on the historical context of the museum’s location. Muranów’s *genius loci* is the point of departure for the exposition. Through it, we reveal the multi-layered history of the district, from its beginnings until the present day, including its architectural and existential complexity. However, first and foremost, we tell the story of Muranów’s residents.

The silence described by Canin is ominous and brooding. It symbolizes the irresistible force of a history steamroller that swept



Cover of the exhibition catalogue. Courtesy of the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews.

through the squares and courtyards of the district, obliterating the sense of feeling at home, the cozy daily existence, and drawing the local community — against its will — into the political machinery. Today, the same steamroller could wipe out another layer of the palimpsest, in order to make space for a new one.

And yet, the silence can sometimes be comforting as well. I. B. Singer wrote about the peaceful pre-war Nalewki Street on a holy day. Today’s residents

of Muranów, those who settled here after the war, appreciate the peace and quiet of the district’s green courtyards.

We use the name “Muranów” fully aware of its incoherence with the present administrative nomenclature. For the sake of the exhibition, we delineated Muranów’s borders along the streets: Solidarności in the south, Okopowa in the west, Stawki in the north and Miodowa in the east, thus referring to its historic territory (e.g., as further exemplified in Małgorzata Karpińska’s contribution to this catalogue, “The Residents of Muranów”).

The team working on the exhibition sought to present the history of the district through the prism of the lives of its residents. Our goal was to demonstrate their diversity and the various aspects of the district’s history. We made sure to include the *herstoric* threads, such as the women involved in raising post-war

Muranów, or contemporary female activists; to keep the balance in presenting stories of both famous residents and “common people”; and to include the memoirs of children and youth in the exhibition narrative.

From the curatorial viewpoint, the tale of Muranów’s most vital element was to demonstrate its different layers in such a way that the audience’s attention would be drawn in equal measure to each layer and to each historic period, as well as to the people inhabiting it. We also wanted to focus on aspects such as nature, architecture, and biographies of Muranów’s streets. The district’s past and present occupy two separate narrative threads.

The exhibition is addressed not only to Muranów’s residents, both contemporary and former, including their descendants. It is addressed to the residents of Warsaw as well as other towns and cities, to the people interested in Warsaw history and in social urban history in general, as well as in architecture and urban planning. We do hope that it will prove interesting not merely due to the personal stories it presents, but also

Today it is a cozy residential district for some; for others, it is a place they visit in order to commemorate their murdered relatives.

due to the fact that it touches upon universal issues such as social change, losing a home, migration, urban utopias, post-war building industry, and, finally, the question of a local community, civic activism, and the nature of cities.

Palimpsest

Palimpsest is the main category that organizes the narrative and shapes the way we think about the exhibition. The term is derived from textual studies and signifies a parchment from which the text has been scraped or washed off for re-use. This process, as well as the term itself, may serve as a metaphor for the history of Muranów. Before the war, the Northern District was inhabited mainly by Jews (this marks the first period in the exhibition narrative: until 1939); transformed into a ghetto during wartime (the second period: 1939–45) and subsequently razed to

the ground. The district was rebuilt after the war and settled by people from all over Warsaw and Poland (the third period: 1945–89). Today (the fourth period: post-1989) Muranów is a home to various groups, communities, and milieus, to non-governmental organizations and foundations, and to people coming from the most remote corners of the globe.

Topography

After the war, many streets in Muranów changed course, and houses were rebuilt in different locations (or not at all), so even though the addresses often sound similar, they do not necessarily correspond with their pre-war location. Presenting the topographic changes in a legible way while focusing on the histories of people residing in the area at a specific time was the greatest challenge faced by the exhibition team’s authors and designers.

Muranów is a special case among the “former Jewish quarters” in Europe: it is the only residential estate raised on the rubble and of the rubble, with almost none of the old buildings surviving. Today it is a cozy residential



Muranów in 1945 and 1963.

Courtesy of the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute and Wikimedia Commons.

district for some; for others, it is a place they visit in order to commemorate their murdered relatives. The paths of the residents and tourists cross at times; at other times they run along each other, showing the two equivalent faces of Muranów—the

living place and the place that once was, a memorial site. The parallel existence of these two independent orders that rule the district began right after the war, when a new residential estate was being built on the rubble of the old quarter. As one of

the Muranów residents said in the 2007 survey on the district's identity and memory: "Muranów is the area of the former Jewish quarter ... While wandering around this place, so beautiful, green and friendly, one cannot help but think about those who used to live here, about the life that was broken by the war, lost forever." Another resident added: "What we walk upon is hidden beneath a layer of soil. We see the buildings here, built on the hills, as it were, but those hills have not always been here—somewhere here the streets ran, and it was all razed to the ground, and the rubble was partially evened out in order to raise these houses, so it is by no means a natural landform."

We do believe that both faces of Muranów—the residential estate and the memorial site—are equally true and valid. ■

Kamila Radecka-Mikulicz
is a curator, museologist, and doctoral candidate at the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences. She was part of the curatorial team for the Holocaust Gallery of the POLIN Museum's core exhibition.

Muranów: A Laboratory for a New City

Beata Chomątowska

Several yellowish pages, handwritten in pencil. The handwriting dates back to the times when calligraphy was an obligatory subject at school. Title: *Muranów—a grand and splendid task*. “Grand, for it is a city for nearly 50,000 people ... Splendid for it goes beyond the wildest dreams of young architects from the time when they were still envisaging their future professional career.”

These are hand-written notes of Bohdan Lachert, Muranów’s chief architect, retrieved from the archive of the Museum of Architecture in Wrocław.

“Muranów transpired in our imagination as an image of a new reality. In the space above the rubble, the district turned into a vision—unique in the history of mankind—which possessed such a historic background, such an ocean of possibilities that could form a truly special layout,” wrote Lachert. The layout is inscribed in the landform. In 1949, when the decision to build the Muranów housing estate was



Aerial shot of Muranów, Warsaw.
Photograph by Maciej Margas. Used with permission.

made, the former Northern Quarter was a vast—if not homogeneous—sea of ruins left of the ghetto. The architect and his associates debated whether to remove all the rubble and construct buildings on the pre-war ground level or perhaps to remove some of the rubble and leave the rest. They delineated an experimental section and tried to assess which option made more sense. Even though the decisions were made due to practical reasons, the project was driven by remembrance. The memory of the ghetto was symbolized by the canyons of former streets and bright-

red rubble; the level of rubble mounds themselves symbolized a new life, a new reality.

The structure, featuring a carefully selected color scheme (surfaces of red, pink, grey, and white), was traversed by different levels which pointed to the new sequences of movement within Muranów, in compliance with the Unistic sculpture theory developed by Władysław Strzemiński and put into practice by Katarzyna Kobro. Both artists together with Lachert had co-founded and headed an avant-garde group called Praesens.

From the artistic perspective, Muranów was to follow the slogan “break up the volume,” used by Lachert in one of the interviews in reference to spatial layout. The slogan served as an inspiration and a departure point for developing this section of the exhibition. The square surrounding the POLIN Museum plays a vital role here, as it was envisaged as a center of the district in which various objects aimed at meeting social and cultural needs were to be located.

The vision of the square evolved. At the final stage of work on the project, the designers from Lachert’s studio—themselves a target of severe criticism—decided that it would be best to gather all the necessary functions in one large communal center which was to dominate over the rest of Muranów. It was to be located on an undeveloped plot between today’s Anders and Zamenhof streets, its scale comparable with the surviving Volhynia Barracks. Alas, the project was never realized—monumental socialist realist blocks were constructed at the spot in the second half of the 1950s, after Lachert’s idea had been abandoned.

Focusing on the original idea of the Square of Youth

A leitmotif of the content displayed on the exhibition’s mezzanine level is the fact that it poses questions without implying answers.

(namely the immediate surroundings of the POLIN Museum) and using architectural models of buildings, we encourage visitors to the exhibition to “break them up,” to look inside them searching for hidden content, to have fun seeking options to use this content, or simply to relax in the space which is aimed to encourage relaxation and reflection, partially thanks to its plain aesthetics. The content, developed in various forms, refers to the issues touched upon directly in Lachert’s spatial layout of the district, which was envisaged by the architect on the scale of a small town. (The first urban layout draft, prepared in the Warsaw Reconstruction Office, estimated the number of Muranów’s residents at 36,000; today this number has almost doubled.)

As for the living conditions—at the time of the People’s Republic of Poland, small, predominantly one-bedroom

apartments of southern Muranów had to accommodate families with two or three children. Today, such apartments are sought after by students or increasingly turned into “residences” for tourists, a trend which exerts a great impact on the district’s social tissue and the comfort of its permanent residents. Meanwhile, new developers’ investments stir intense emotions, mainly related to the fact that they encroach on the so far undeveloped green areas.

A leitmotif of the content displayed on the exhibition’s mezzanine level is the fact that it poses questions without implying answers. For all the questions pertain to the unknown, to the future over which we may merely ponder: what will Muranów look like, what will happen to it in the coming decades? While presenting Muranów’s public space, the mezzanine level exposition also acts as a private territory, furnished with building volumes in a macro scale; a territory which can easily become the scene of varied social interactions between visitors who acquire new information and share their insights and observations.

In socialist propaganda, Muranów was the first working-class district in Warsaw city center. In the documents dated as early as 1948 there is an annotation handwritten by Stefan Ossowiecki in the collection of the Museum of Architecture in Wrocław: “It is vital from both the social and cultural perspective[s] that we ensure the district’s population is from the very start not fully uniform with regard to their occupation.” Therefore, Muranów was envisaged as a socially diverse place, yet shaped with a view to the needs of the working class.

In line with Bohdan Lachert’s ideas, a traditional quarter dominated by private entrepreneurship is being transformed into a social place. Communal space encouraged interaction between the inhabitants. That is why, in his notes written as a reaction to the criticism of the estate, Lachert defends the deck-access type of apartment blocks. He writes that even if Polish society were not used to this type of buildings, inhabitants would soon come to appreciate them and more such blocks would be constructed. Older residents of Muranów recall positive neighborly interaction

on the shared corridors with balconies—even if they were, so to speak, imposed by the architecture.

Lachert’s idea of a spatial layout of “the housing estate that is also a memorial” was ahead of its time and proved completely illegible to his contemporaries, including fellow architects. Once socialist realist doctrine had been introduced, even the most ardent critics admitted that the project was by all means ambitious. As far as the aesthetics is concerned, opinions varied.

The experiment was carried out at the worst time possible. Lachert’s notes, along with other documents concerning the construction of Muranów, are a record of his desperate efforts to salvage the original idea while trying to respond to the increasing—and often mutually exclusive—demands of the commissioning party, the Communist administration.

Lachert’s project was never brought to life in its original version, and it remains unfinished. Buildings constructed of breeze-blocks made of concrete and rubble were plastered, thus erasing their purpose of ghetto remembrance. Meanwhile,

more and more memorials appeared in the district, not always linked to the local context. Generations of residents are deeply aware of living in a memorial park which manifests itself in a symbolic division of the shared space—often against historical facts—into a residential zone and a memorial zone which is addressed predominantly to tourists. The memorial zone is closely linked with the square next to the POLIN Museum—the communal center of the district that was never built.

Muranów itself—despite being set firmly in a specific typology as the “former Jewish quarter,” the “post-ghetto-site,” and the only housing estate-memorial in the world—advances from a local to an international dimension. ■

Beata Chomętowska is a journalist, novelist, and Chairwoman of the Stacja Muranów Association. Her books include Stacja Muranów (2012).

Long Live the Jarden Jewish Bookshop!

Erica Lehrer

I had never organized a fundraiser before. But this spring, as Poland closed its borders and imposed a far-reaching lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Jarden Jewish bookshop—a tiny, big-hearted institution in Kraków’s Kazimierz neighborhood—was in peril. A shoestring operation in the best of times, I knew it could not survive if cut off from the influx of summer tourists that are its bread and butter. I checked in with its founders and owners, Zdzisław and Lucyna Leś, who confirmed my fears. I began to fret. The shop had meant so much to me both personally and professionally for almost thirty years. I could not sit by and let it go down without a fight.

I had wandered into Jarden in the summer of 1994, four years after the end of the Polish People’s Republic and since my own first encounter with Kazimierz in the spring of 1990. By



Zdzisław and Lucyna Leś, the owners of the bookshop.
Photograph by Konrad Obidziński. Used with permission.

Jarden emerged unexpectedly as a crucial part of Kraków’s “Jewish space.”

the time I stepped blinking from Szeroka Street into the cool dark of the massive stone façade that housed the little bookshop, I had already changed my college major to anthropology and plunged into East European and Jewish Studies. I was returning like an aspiring

Zora Neal Hurston (African American anthropologist and writer)—eager to plumb the roots of “my culture,” but in a place which, as a diligently assimilated American Jew, I had never thought much about until the Iron Curtain fell. I found myself each summer in the early 1990s picking around Kazimierz, feeling both quite conspicuous, and unexpectedly at home.

This was the decade and a half before Kraków’s Jewish Community Center

was established in 2008, when Chabad Lubavitch still held to Rebbe Schneerson's injunction against setting up shop in blood-soaked Poland, and while foreign Jewish tourists mostly made a beeline to Auschwitz. These were heady days, full of angst and amazement for the few Jews from abroad who stumbled upon Kazimierz and lingered, and of anxious first steps out of the closet for the city's proto-Jews, many of whom had denied or quietly managed their identities until then; others who had not known were beginning to find out. The filming of *Schindler's List* in the quarter in 1993 had put Kazimierz "on the map" of Jewish heritage, kick-starting international Jewish tourism. Jarden played a more grassroots role. Zdzisław and Lucyna, although not Jewish, felt a calling to expand the public's sense of what counted as Poland's heritage, and to help educate about Poland's Jews.

As I described in my 2013 book *Jewish Poland Revisited: Heritage Tourism in Unquiet Places*, the 1990s confluence of local and foreign Jews and

Many bookshop visitors met new friends—often even the first Pole or Jew they had ever spoken to—at Jarden.

their allies—aided by a couple of couches, an electric kettle, and the owners' eagerness to listen and help—turned the bookshop into a singular destination, deeply entangled with Poland's rediscovery of its continent- and generation-spanning Jewish soul. Overwhelmed with emotion, tourists (like myself) showed up, unable to make sense of the swirl of unanticipated experiences. With the newly democratic country's lack of communal infrastructure, local Jews were also hungry for places to feel safe and to ask difficult questions about the more intimate past. Jarden emerged unexpectedly as a crucial part of Kraków's "Jewish space," serving in capacities that far outstripped what a bookstore typically advertises.

Many bookshop visitors met new friends—often even the first Pole or Jew they had

ever spoken to—at Jarden. The bookshop served as the *de facto* textbook source for students and scholars of the country's emerging discipline of Jewish studies. Many a master's thesis was shaped under Zdzisław and Lucyna's tutelage. Artists and filmmakers stored their equipment there while surveying the neighborhood for picturesque angles and interview subjects. Zdzisław and Lucyna offered—and still offer—whatever their patrons need: a chair and the day's newspaper for a local denizen, a Band-Aid or doctor's referral for a young backpacker, even a makeshift space for Hasidic pilgrims to pray.

Aside from myself, three other university scholars working on Jewish-related subjects got their start at Jarden as young tour guides, a service the bookshop added (and personally trained) to meet visitors' needs: Anna Cichopek-Gajraj, Associate Professor of History at Arizona State University, Agnieszka Legutko, Lecturer in Yiddish at Columbia University, and Ewa Węgrzyn, Lecturer in

Jewish History at Kraków's Jagiellonian University. Other former employees include the documentary filmmaker Paulina Fiejdasz and the archivist Krzysztof Adamiec. They all recall Jarden being much more than a bookshop. Adamiec called it a "Beit Midrasz, a place of knowledge, of study, of encounters." Some of those encounters were with the Leś's themselves. Zdzisław, in particular, is recalled fondly for his irreverent frustration when customers would come in and disrupt his voracious daily newspaper reading or his conversations with local intelligentsia. Lucyna is the informal genealogical expert, listening to personal stories and jumping online or pulling reference books off the shelves to show visitors how easy it was to find their town, maybe their ancestors.

It is moving to see that after almost three decades, Jarden's books and tourist services, but more importantly its good humor and endless wise counsel, still resonate. The GoFundMe campaign I created last April to help save the bookshop raised

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\$14,263 (CAD) (a bit over the modest original \$14,000 ask). Topped up by a special grant of \$2,000 (USD) by Tad Taube's foundation, and another \$6,000 from a long-time friend of the Jarden Bookshop, the non-Jewish Texas photographer Charles Burns, the bookshop now has the cushion to survive the lean winter season. Already recognized as among the top five independent bookstores in Kraków, Jarden is revamping its website, with easier access to the stock via mail order. Zdzisław and Lucyna's daughter Eryka is helping to ramp up the Facebook page, developing a series of book recommendations and reviews, interviews with authors, artists, and other

friends of the bookshop, as well as virtual tours.

Doing the fundraiser was an inspiration and a pleasure. It not only helped me feel useful during the COVID-19 lockdown, but the outpouring of support and sharing of memories was a great solace to Zdzisław and Lucyna, who saw their life's work affirmed. I was reminded, as the poet Ross Gay wrote, that a "good little bookstore...is a laboratory for our coming together." ■

Erica Lehrer, PhD,
is Professor in History and Sociology-Anthropology at Concordia University, Montreal.

REPORTS

Library of Ada Rapoport-Albert in Wrocław

Wojciech Tworek and
Marcin Wodziński

The Jewish studies community has been deeply saddened by the untimely passing of Professor Ada Rapoport-Albert. Ada, as she was known by her friends, colleagues, and students, was truly an exceptional person. She is remembered as an author of works that transformed the study of Hasidism and Sabbatianism, a meticulous editor, and a uniquely generous scholar, always ready to share her time and expertise with colleagues and students. Her scholarship and mentorship have shaped much of modern Jewish studies. (For more about her life and work, see the obituary in this issue of *Gazeta*.)

During the past two decades, Ada remained very much involved in the burgeoning Jewish studies scene in Poland. Perhaps no other Polish academic institution benefited more from her wisdom and generosity than the Taube Department of Jewish Studies at the



The library of Ada Rapoport-Albert arrives at the Taube Department of Jewish Studies, Wrocław University.
Used with permission.

University of Wrocław. Ada collaborated on many projects with Marcin Wodziński, hosted Agnieszka Jagodzińska and Kamil Kijek as postdoctoral fellows at University College London (UCL), and was Wojciech Tworek's doctoral supervisor. Ada visited Wrocław in 2004, and we hoped she would come and visit us again in the summer of 2021.

Several years ago, Ada generously offered to bequeath her working library to our department. The collection contains some 5,000 volumes, predominantly primary sources and secondary literature reflecting Ada's lifelong interests: Jewish history, mysticism, Hasidism, Sabbatianism, and gender studies. Other volumes in the collection include Hebrew literature, reference works,

and, last but not least, doctoral dissertations by students and colleagues.

We were delighted to accept her gift, at the same time hoping we would not see the books any time soon. Unfortunately, in June we learned the sad news. The COVID-19 outbreak deprived her friends, colleagues, and students of the possibility to travel to London to say good-bye properly. Her library, however, does travel. Thanks to the invaluable help of Ada's children, Saul and Maya, we have arranged for the shipment of the books from London to Wrocław. Now, a long process of unboxing, shelving, inventorying, and cataloguing has begun, carried out under the supervision of the departmental librarian, Monika Jaremków.

Simultaneously, we are making Ada's books accessible for our faculty and students. We have designated a separate room in our beautiful eighteenth century building in the historic old town of Wrocław to host Ada's collection. The room, furnished with period furniture and decorated with

Ada Rapoport-Albert's scholarship and mentorship have shaped much of modern Jewish studies.

contemporary art, currently hosts seminars and faculty meetings. History buffs may be interested to know that it is the same room in which the Nazi commanders of the so-called Festung Breslau (the last bastion of the Third Reich) took counsel from March to early May 1945. The complete collection will be stored together, marked as Ada's bequest, and each volume will bear a commemorative bookplate. Once the collection is processed, the room will serve the dual function of seminar and reading room.

As Ada's friends, colleagues, and students, we are immensely proud to be the custodians of her book collection. We remain grateful to Ada for her gift and to her family for their assistance with the shipment. We are delighted that our students and the entire academic community will now be able

to benefit from Ada's erudition and kindness, just as so many of us did in the past. ■

Wojciech Tworek, PhD, is Assistant Professor in the Taube Department of Jewish Studies at the University of Wrocław.

Marcin Wodziński, PhD, is Head of Department and Professor of Jewish Studies at the University of Wrocław.

A Report from the Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland Foundation

Adam Schorin

Over the last decade, thousands of people have visited Poland through Taube Jewish Heritage Tours (TJHT), the flagship program of the Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life. They explored the towns where their parents or grandparents grew up, visited concentration camps and sites of memory, and participated in local Jewish community events.

With the onset of COVID-19, the Taube Center was forced to cancel most of its in-person programming for the year, including many tours for international visitors. “Since people couldn’t visit Poland, we decided to bring Poland to them,” said the Taube Center’s executive director, Helise Lieberman.

Perhaps more than most types of tourism, Jewish heritage tourism in Poland relies on a visceral connection to the place: it is not just about learning or seeing, but actually, physically being

Jewish heritage tourism in Poland relies on a visceral connection to the place: it is not just about learning or seeing, but actually, physically being here.

here—in the towns and cities where our ancestors lived for centuries, in the camps and killing fields of the Holocaust, and at the Shabbat dinner tables of the growing Jewish communities here today. How could we facilitate these critical, complicated, and emotionally compelling experiences for people who aren’t actually here?

“We developed a three-pronged approach,” said Lieberman. “Engage former and potential tour participants, support partner organizations, and develop our educational programs and resources, both locally and abroad.”

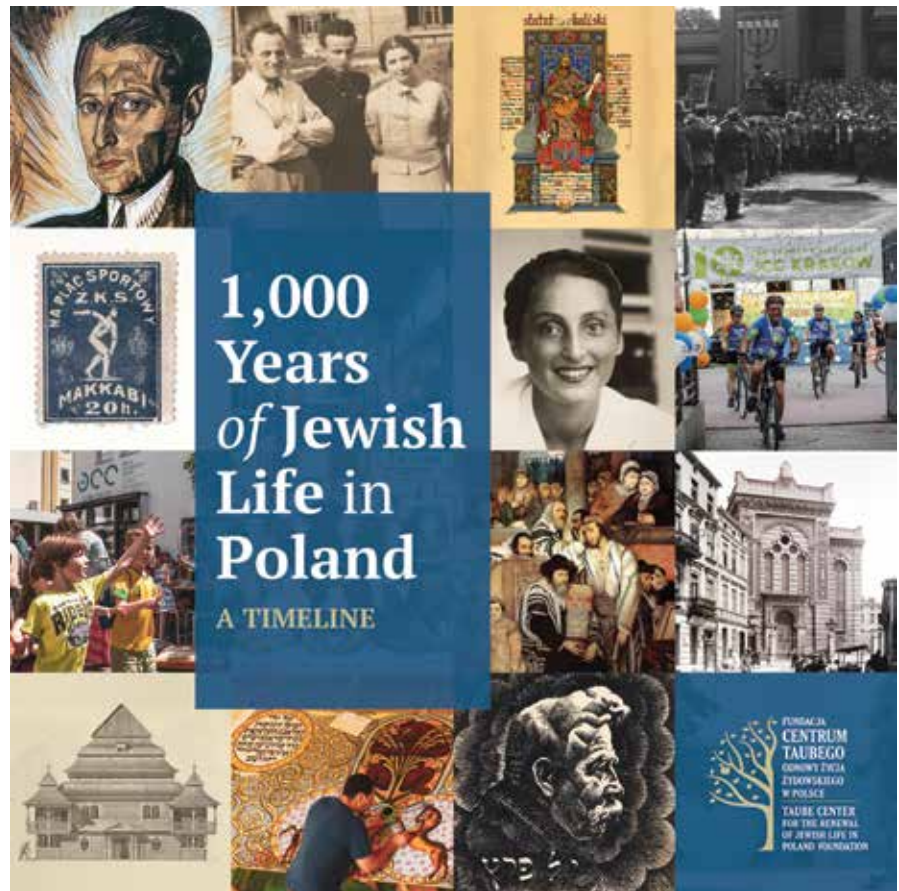
In April 2020, the Taube Center launched TJHTalks,

a series of monthly webinars that brings together luminaries of the Polish Jewish world to discuss critical issues in the field, both contemporary and historical. The series, which will continue even when travel is possible again, offers our growing global audience intellectual access to Jewish Poland. Special guests have so far included the Chief Rabbi of Poland, Michael Schudrich, and Professors Deborah Lipstadt, Dariusz Stola, Samuel Kassow, Antony Polonsky, Marcin Wodziński, Natalia Aleksy, Glenn Dynner, and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett. Topics have ranged from contemporary Holocaust denial to the resilience of Jewish museums, from gender in Polish Jewish studies to resistance in the Warsaw Ghetto. The first TJHTalk drew an audience of eighty-eight attendees, and more than 900 people attended the talk in July. This rapid growth speaks not only to the quality of the conversations, but to the

profound interest participants have had in them.

A more recent initiative, Insights in Sites, will function as a companion piece to TJHTalks, featuring informal interviews with local community leaders, educators, and cultural activists. This series will focus on a less theoretical element of the Polish Jewish field by introducing participants to the people on the ground whose work drives preservation and heritage initiatives, community institutions, and cultural projects that bring Polish Jews and non-Jews together.

Working hand-in-hand with the Hillels at Columbia/Barnard and Northwestern universities, the Taube Center just completed a pilot distance tour program called Passport to Poland. The four-week program, tailored to fit students' schedules and interests, included a virtual meeting with journalist and Warsaw Jewish community leader Konstanty Gebert, a presentation and discussion with FestivALT co-director and Taube Center team



1,000 Years of Jewish Life: A Timeline.

Courtesy of the Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland.

member Adam Schorin (also a contributing editor of *Gazeta*), a pierogi-making workshop with former Wrocław Rebbetzin Danielle Basok, and a virtual tour of the POLIN Museum. Professors Agi Legutko and Karen Underhill led students in a closing conversation. Passport to Poland offered participants a way of engaging with contemporary Jewish Poland that was both informative and

emotionally resonant, with speakers sharing both their professional expertise and personal experiences.

On the local front, the Taube Center began its second edition of Yerussha, a development program for professionals in the Polish Jewish field. The year-long program is unique in that it takes place in Polish and all workshop facilitators

are based in Poland. This year's cohort consists of ten individuals from Jewish cultural and educational institutions across the country, including representatives from JCC Kraków, the Galicia Jewish Museum, the POLIN Museum, and the Jewish Community of Wrocław.

In cooperation with the Northern California Board of Rabbis (NCBOR), the center has developed Minyan Makers, a text-based learning program for professionals from Jewish partner institutions in Poland. Taught by members of the NCBOR, each learning cycle includes three sessions focused on a current issue, with the texts serving as entry points into both traditional and contemporary responses. The first cycle ended in August. The second, with a new cohort recommended by the participants of the first, will begin in the fall. The next cycle will focus on leadership attributes and group challenges, as presented in the source texts.

The Taube Center has also updated its educational resources and publications, among them the *Field Guide to Jewish Warsaw*, *Field*

The Taube Center launched TJHTalks, a series of monthly webinars that brings together luminaries of the Polish Jewish world to discuss critical issues in the field.

Guide to Jewish Kraków, and *Field Guide to Jewish Łódź*. The center plans to publish a field guide to Jewish Lublin and environs by the end of the year. The field guide series serves as a crucial resource for first-time visitors to Poland as well as for seasoned veterans looking to refresh their knowledge. The publications can be used for a variety of educational purposes and are valuable in both formal and informal settings. With the support of a grant from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Taube Center has updated its *1,000 Years of Jewish Life in Poland: A Timeline* with a greater emphasis on the roles of women in Polish Jewish history. The grant also supports the translation of the *Timeline* into Polish and German.

Looking forward to 2021, in addition to preparing for the return of in-person visitors, the Taube Center has partnered with the European Association for the Preservation and Promotion of Jewish Culture and the Union of Italian Jewish Communities to launch an Italian edition of *Mi Dor Le Dor*, the center's successful heritage education and community-building program that ran from 2012 to 2016.

"We don't know when it will be safe to travel again," said Lieberman. "In the meantime, we invite you to join us for our many online programs and to check out our collection of educational publications. When you're ready to visit, we'll be here to welcome you!" ■

Adam Schorin is a contributing editor at Gazeta.

EXHIBITIONS AND MUSEUMS

Szancer, Imagine That! New Exhibit at the Galicia Jewish Museum

July 1, 2020 – July 30, 2021

Jakub Nowakowski

On July 1, 2020, the Galicia Jewish Museum opened the door to imagination. The new exhibition *Szancer, Imagine That!* invites you into the fairytale world created by the famous Polish illustrator of Jewish origins, Jan Marcin Szancer.

In the world of Polish children's illustration, Jan Marcin Szancer is an institution within himself, known to all who were raised on the poems of Julian Tuwim and Jan Brzechwa, lost themselves in the adventures of Mr. Kleks, or grew up with the characters of Andersen's fairy tales. Drawn with a precise line, meticulously accurate and at the same time whimsical, characters and places came to life by the skill of Szancer's hand. The master's paintings spoke to the imagination of subsequent generations of Poles, not only allowing them to move into unknown worlds, but also from an early age shaping



Szancer, Imagine That! promotional image.
Courtesy of the Galicia Jewish Museum.

their sense of aesthetics and visual taste. Therefore, the need to honor a great illustrator is completely understandable and I am glad that it fell to our institution to do just that. One of the museum's goals is to show the history of Polish Jews from a new perspective.

About Jan Marcin Szancer

Although Jan Marcin Szancer is known primarily from multi-colored illustrations, kept in a fairytale atmosphere, his biography is far from a fairytale.

Szancer was the youngest child born into a Polish Jewish family in Kraków. He graduated from the Kraków Academy of Fine Arts. He was the editor and cover illustrator for the children's magazine *Świerszczyk*. Around 200 illustrated books, including Henryk Sienkiewicz's *Trilogy*, Adam Mickiewicz's *Pan Tadeusz*, and Jan Brzechwa's *Pan Kleks* series made Szancer famous.

Szancer survived World War II mainly in Warsaw. He sketched propaganda posters for the Home Army. During

the Warsaw Uprising he was deported to a transit camp and then to a labor camp in Maków Podhalański.

Despite the war, Szancer didn't stop drawing. His most colorful illustrations were created during the darkest periods of his life.

He also wrote fairytales and created theater and film set designs. After the war he became the first artistic director of Telewizja Polska (the Polish broadcasting company).

Szancer was, for my generation, a mainstay. He produced illustrations or decorations for theaters, which we would see every day or every week. Andrzej Rojek, the originator of the exhibition and who grew up in Poland during the 1960s, says, "Poland was a pretty gray place ... Szancer brought color! He brought dynamic movement! He brought fantasy!"

About the Exhibition

Using Szancer's colorful characters, the museum has transferred the biography of the



Szancer, Imagine That! promotional image.
Courtesy of the Galicia Jewish Museum.

artist into a fantastic, sometimes dreamlike, narration. The exhibition teaches and encourages children to use their imagination. Visitors are able to feel like the heroes of a fairytale, created by the museum and based on important events in the life of the artist. We invite our guests to the world of Szancer: first little Jan, who is just learning

how to draw, older Janek, taking his first steps on the path of his illustrative career, and finally the esteemed Mr. Jan, who even as an adult did not lose his childhood imagination. Exhibition curator Paulina Banasik explains that "the exhibition is entirely tangible, which allows not only for seeing it, but also for participation." In addition to several dozen out of thousands

of the most important and beautiful drawings by Szancer, the museum also features analog installations specially prepared for the exhibition. "I think there is still a place for analog exhibitions and for the appreciation of seeing art firsthand and experiencing it, standing with the art, looking at it... I think we will miss that if we eliminate it completely," says Elizabeth Szancer, Jan Marcin Szancer's cousin and herself an art curator.

While on a basic level the exhibition is devoted to younger audiences, it also includes a special narration for adult visitors, focusing on Szancer's story and the history of Polish Jews in the second half of the twentieth century. In this time of growing anti-Semitism and nationalism this positive story seems to be more important than ever. Thanks to Szancer's biography and work, the exhibition becomes a perfect tool for highlighting the scale and the input of Polish Jewish influence on the identity of contemporary Poles.

The exhibition was created in cooperation with a range of Polish and international

cultural partners and includes Szancer's original works, as well as books, postcards, and children's and youth magazines, all with Szancer's illustrations. It opened at the Galicia Jewish Museum in July 2020 and will be on display through July 2021.

It is accompanied by an exhibition of children's works entitled *What Were You Thinking?*, and a richly diverse program of events for visitors of all ages.

The program focuses on Szancer's biography and work, and uses it as a starting point of a much wider discussion about the influence of Polish Jews on Polish culture and art in the second half of the twentieth century.

The story of Jan Marcin Szancer shows that it is the rich imagination which helps us to survive difficult times.

I have been travelling to Poland and specifically to Kraków and Tarnów for many, many years. I started to come in the '70s with my mother. My mother was born in Kraków, and both my parents studied at Jagiellonian

University and were married just before the war in Kraków. So, the city has great meaning for me and for my past ... For me, the fact that the Jan Marcin Szancer exhibition is about him, about the family, and is taking place in Kraków means very much.

Szancer, Imagine That! was created thanks to the engagement of a number of individuals and foundations from the US, UK, and other countries. Almost 100 contributors from Poland supported Galicia Jewish Museum's crowdfunding campaign. The project is also co-financed by the city of Kraków and it is under the honorary patronage of Jacek Majchrowski, mayor of Kraków. ■

For a detailed interview with Elizabeth Szancer, please see:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WQDZzKogDC-g&t=20>.

For more about the Galicia Jewish Museum, visit: www.galiciajewishmuseum.org.

Jakub Nowakowski is Director of the Galicia Jewish Museum.

The Posthumous Landscape: Jewish Historical Sites in Poland and Western Ukraine. David Kaufman Photographs on Exhibit in Toronto

Julian and
Fay Bussgang

For almost thirty years, Toronto-based photographer and filmmaker David Kaufman has been documenting Jewish heritage sites in Eastern Europe. Kaufman made his first trip to Poland in 1992 to make *Hidden Children*, a documentary about child survivors of the Holocaust. A decade later, he visited Poland to make films about the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and about the Łódź Ghetto.

He has since returned to Poland multiple times to photograph memorial sites—including Jewish cemeteries, synagogues, former Jewish neighborhoods, and other sites related to the Holocaust. His work now extends to areas once in Poland but now in Western Ukraine.

Kaufman was captivated by the beauty of the many memorial buildings and objects that he found in

Eastern Europe. He was also struck by the realization that although few Jewish inhabitants remain there, the quantity and quality of the material culture is vast, while the ability to preserve many historical sites is inadequate. He feels that it is therefore important that they be documented. In partial fulfillment of this mission is the recent traveling exhibit, *The Posthumous Landscape: Jewish Historical Sites in*

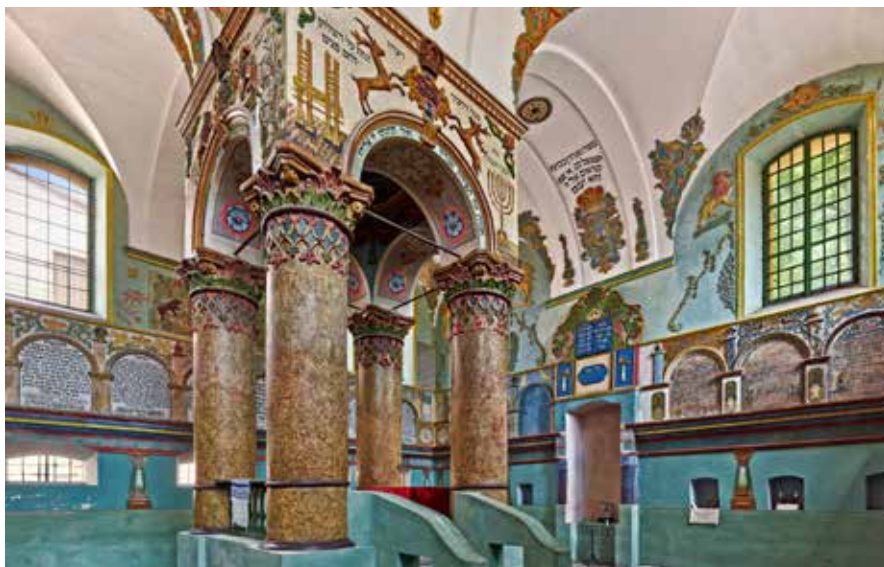
The ruins of the Great Synagogue of Brody, Ukraine, 2016.
Photograph by David Kaufman. Used with permission.



He was struck by the realization that the quantity and quality of the material culture is vast, while the ability to preserve many historical sites is inadequate.

Poland and Western Ukraine, most recently at Congregation Darchei Noam in Toronto (through August 2020).

Kaufman's photos and films about vestiges of Polish-Jewish life are detailed and moving. In the exhibit, Warsaw is represented by photos of the Jewish cemetery and of lesser-known views of the ghetto wall on Waliców Street and of run-down Brzeska Street in the former Jewish district of Praga. Unlike Warsaw, many more vestiges of Jewish life can be seen in Łódź, as only a small portion of the former ghetto area north of the city center was destroyed. A significant portion of the buildings in Bałuty, the poor district at the heart of the former ghetto, remain intact and substantially unaltered. The photos of Łódź



Interior of the restored synagogue in Łańcut, Poland, 2012.
Photograph by David Kaufman. Used with permission.



The palace of Izrael Poznański in Łódź, Poland, 2013.
Photograph by David Kaufman. Used with permission.

show the Bracka Street Jewish cemetery, the Poznański Palace, and the Radegast railway station, where the exodus of the final liquidation of the Łódź Ghetto took place. Displays include photos of restored synagogues from

Łańcut, Bobowa, and Kraków (the Progressive Tempel Synagogue) as well as monuments from the cemetery in Ożarów. ■

Julian and Fay Bussgang are longtime contributors to Gazeta.

Online Exhibitions:

Kraków During the Pandemic. Photographs by Edyta Gawron

Galicia Jewish Museum and San Francisco-Kraków Sister Cities Association

The online exhibition, *Kraków During the Pandemic*, offers a striking visual tour of the city from its lockdown in March to its gradual re-opening this past summer. Created from photographs and text by Edyta Gawron and curated by Tomasz Strug of the Galicia Jewish Museum, the show opened on August 24 and continues online at <https://adobe.ly/2PVgMAF>. Co-hosted by the Galicia Jewish Museum and the San Francisco-Kraków Sister Cities Association, the exhibit was inspired by the presentation of Gawron's photos of Kraków during the lockdown in the spring 2020 issue of *Gazeta*.

Edyta Gawron is a historian and Assistant Professor at Jagiellonian University, Institute of Jewish Studies. She serves as the President of the Management Board of Galicia Jewish Heritage Institute Foundation (Galicia Jewish Museum). A curator



Kraków During the Pandemic promotional image.
Courtesy of the Galicia Jewish Museum.

and co-author of several exhibitions, she loves photography and cycling.

Commenting on the exhibit, Jonathan Webber, social anthropologist and co-founder

of the Galicia Jewish Museum, notes: “All the photos are superb, in different ways, and collectively they shine excellent light on this city, and how it has been affected by recent events. You really went to a lot of trouble to put together a very wide-ranging and comprehensive collection of photos; and their order and captioning here of course enhance them very well. The photos of the main Market Square at its different stages were particularly effective.”

Shaul Stampfer, a Hebrew University professor specializing in nineteenth century Jewish Lithuania,

discusses the first photo in the exhibit: “This could so easily be a static and boring photograph but it is not. Why? The pillar is just a bit off center to the left. Symmetry makes a view ‘heavy.’ The ‘imbalance’ gives it movement and life. But there is balance. On the left is a big tree and it is dark. It is offset by the view to the right—distant slender trees and most importantly, the illuminated building next to the right border. The illumination of the building—and just one building, is perfect. It is the antithesis to the trees in many ways but it, and only it, reflects the sun.

This is important because the sign is in black. In short, the photograph is full of movement and the eye that looks at it never rests, but the focus is where it should be. Brilliant.”

Viewers are invited to upload photos of daily life in their neighborhoods and surrounding environs during these pandemic times onto the Facebook pages for the Galicia Jewish Museum and the San Francisco-Kraków Sister Cities Association. ■

YIVO Bruce and Francesca Cernia Slovin Online Museum Launches

This summer saw the launch of the YIVO Bruce and Francesca Cernia Slovin Online Museum, an interactive, virtual museum of Eastern European Jewish history. The museum will use YIVO’s expansive archives to teach about this history through the life stories of actual individuals. The first

exhibition, *Beba Epstein: The Extraordinary Life of an Ordinary Girl*, contextualizes hundred of artifacts from the YIVO archives through the story of Beba Epstein, who was born in Vilna in 1922 and whose autobiography was discovered in Lithuania in 2017. The exhibition, like all the exhibitions planned for

the online museum, combines written text, animations, videos, archival images, artifacts, interactive 3-D environments, and games to engage visitors in a learning experience specially designed for the Internet. You can visit the first exhibition now at <https://museum.yivo.org/>. ■

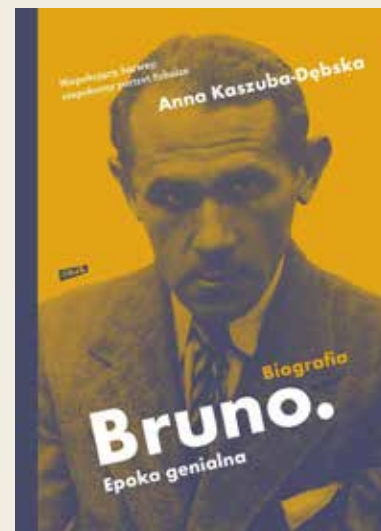
ANNOUNCEMENTS

Books

Bruno. Epoka Genialna (Bruno. The Age of Genius)

By Anna Kaszuba-Dębska | Znak Publishing, 2020

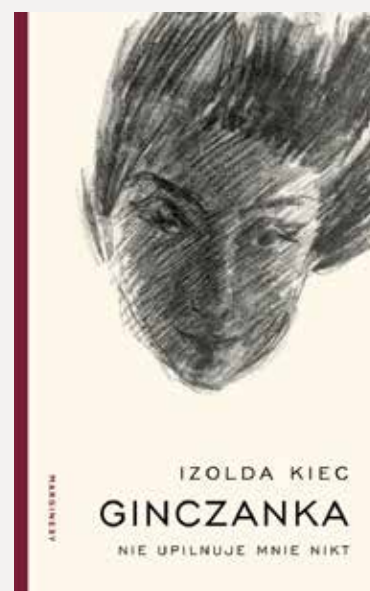
Anna Kaszuba-Dębska's *Bruno. Epoka Genialna* (Bruno: The Age of Genius) is a massive biography of Polish Jewish writer and artist Bruno Schulz. Born in 1892 in Drohobycz, in modern-day Ukraine, Schulz rose to prominence as a gifted fabulist in dream-like short story collections, *The Street of Crocodiles* and *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass*. In 1942, he was murdered in the Drohobycz Ghetto, leaving behind the legend of an unfinished novel, *The Messiah*, which has never been found. ■



Ginczanka: Nie Upilnuje mnie nikt (Ginczanka: No One Will Watch Over Me)

By Izolda Kiec
Warsaw: Marginesy, 2020

In late 1930s Warsaw, she was already a famous poet and a legend of the bohemian cafés. During World War II, she escaped to Lviv (Lwów), and from there to Kraków. In 1944, after denunciation, she was arrested and shot a few months later, probably in the concentration camp in Płaszów. Although Zuzanna Ginczanka's life was cut short by tragedy, Kiec's biography shows the contexts of the time and places where Ginczanka lived, giving us an enriched view into her life. Highlighted with illustrative materials, the book includes photographs that reflect the realities of the epoch, documents about the poet herself and her relatives, and unique, previously unknown portraits of Ginczanka. We can get to know her as a poet, a woman, a Jew, and a Pole, and a person with creative impact on the literary world. If only we could have known her longer. ■

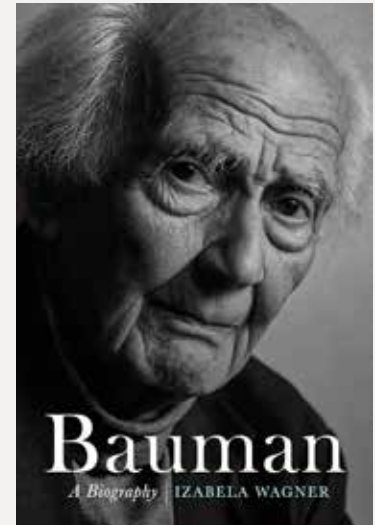


Bauman: A Biography

By Izabela Wagner

Polity Press, 2020

Zygmunt Bauman (1925–2017) was an influential Polish-born scholar and intellectual who wrote about changes in contemporary society, with a special focus on poverty and its effects. Forced to leave Poland during the 1968 anti-Semitic campaign, he relocated to Israel and then to the UK, before taking a position at the University of Leeds. One of his best-known books is *Modernity and the Holocaust*, which argues that modern industrial and bureaucratic paradigms made the Holocaust imaginable and feasible. ■



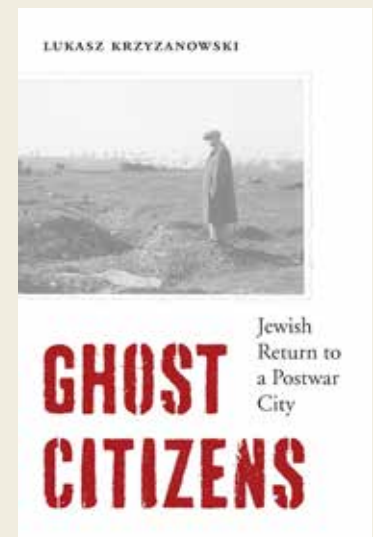
Ghost Citizens: Jewish Return to a Postwar City

By Łukasz Krzyżanowski

Translated by Madeline G. Levine

Harvard University Press, 2020

Łukasz Krzyżanowski recounts the story of a largely forgotten group of Holocaust survivors who returned to their hometowns in Poland and tried to start their lives anew. Focusing on Radom, an industrial city about sixty miles south of Warsaw, he tells the story of what happened to returnees facing massive political, social, and legal change. Confronted with ongoing anti-Semitism and hostility from non-Jews, bureaucratic hurdles and violence—including by members of Jewish gangs depriving returnees of their pre-war property—many Jews left. Those who stayed created a small, isolated community. Drawing on a rare collection of documents—including the post-war Radom Jewish Committee records, which were discovered by the secret police in 1974—*Ghost Citizens* is the moving story of Holocaust survivors' agency and their struggle to restore their lives in a place that was no longer home. ■

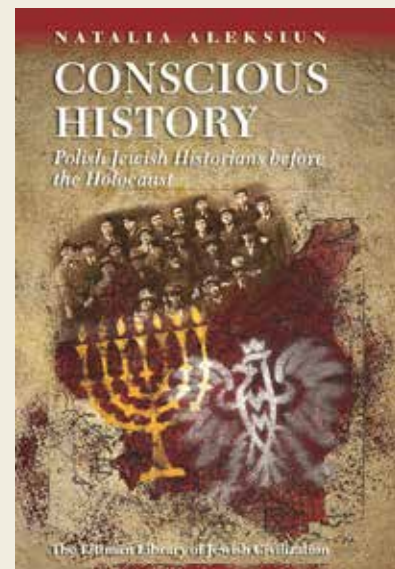


Conscious History: Polish Jewish History Before the Holocaust

By Natalia Aleksion

The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization in
Association with Liverpool University Press
Oxford University Press, 2021

Aleksion's book examines the political and social context of the historical scholarship of Polish Jewry during the inter-war years, when a group of Jewish scholars sought to create a sense of Polish Jewish belonging while also fighting for their rights as an ethnic minority. The political climate made it difficult for intellectuals to pursue an academic career; instead they had to continue their efforts to create and disseminate Polish Jewish history by teaching outside the university and publishing in journals and magazines. As public intellectuals, they also sought to provide a narrative that would establish Jews as an essential component of Polish life and history, and thereby protect them against growing anti-Semitism. ■

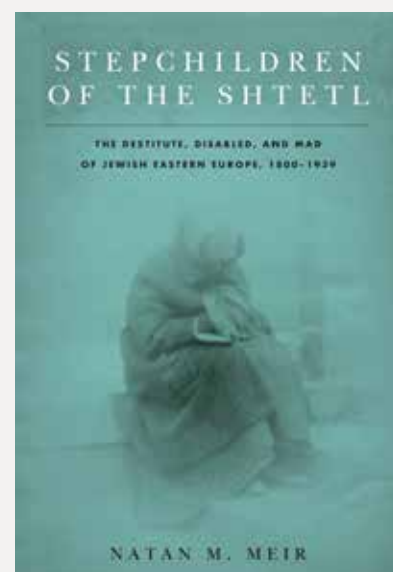


Stepchildren of the Shtetl: The Destitute, Disabled, and Mad of Jewish Eastern Europe, 1800-1939

By Natan M. Meir

Stanford Studies in Jewish History and Culture
Stanford University Press, 2020

Meir describes the lived experience of Jewish society's outcasts and their fate during the centuries of modernization in Eastern Europe, including Russia. Extending his investigation from shtetl poorhouses to slums and insane asylums, he argues that poor, orphaned, and other marginalized Jews often became scapegoats in crisis situations or symbols of degradation or decline ready for uplift by reformers or nationalist political leaders. ■



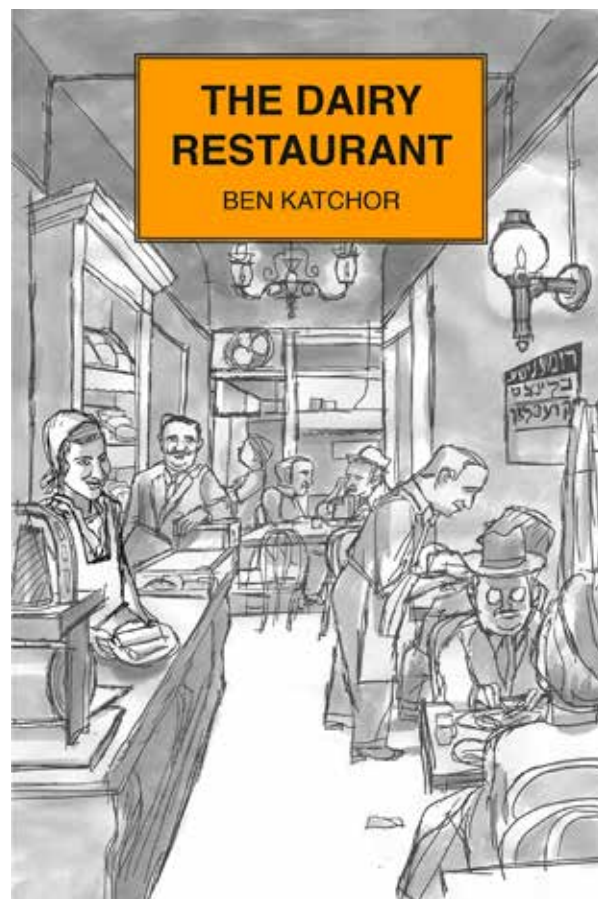
Ben Katchor's *Dairy Kitchen* and the Polish Milk Bar

Adam Schorin

The Dairy Restaurant by Ben Katchor is a graphic-novel history of that rarefied institution. Katchor situates the now mostly extinct Lower East Side dairy restaurant in a much longer lineage, going all the way back to that first vegetarian eatery (complete with misbehaving patrons), the Garden of Eden.

While Jewish dairy restaurants owe their dietary restrictions to the laws of *kashruth*, they also functioned out of economic imperative, making it possible for poorer Jews to eat out. Likewise, the milk bar, the Polish corollary to the Jewish dairy restaurant, though not subject to any religious guidelines, grew out of similar financial necessity. Though its roots go back to a restaurant founded by a dairy farmer in the late 1800s, the modern Polish milk bar most recalls the Communist era, in which these cheap, no-frills establishments were often the only eating-out option for most families. Today, they occupy a curious crossroads in Polish dining: both a government-subsidized necessity for low-income diners, and a hipster tourist attraction rich in Communist kitsch, a speedy lunch spot for businesspeople and a bastion of home-cooked nostalgia. Some of Warsaw's milk bars have operated continuously since the 1950s (and do actually serve meat as well). Others have been resurrected in their former sites, and others still have been opened in recent years, either made to look retro or taking on a fresh, modern aesthetic.

On the following page are snapshots of just a handful of the city's milk bars. Occupying different neighborhoods, dressed in different styles, they all serve a wide range of clientele. ■



The Dairy Restaurant by Ben Katchor, published by Schocken in 2020.



All photographs by Adam Schorin, 2020. Used with permission.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Conferences

Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies

The Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies is holding its annual conference, November 5–8 and 14–15 this year. The convention will be virtual, and sessions have been reduced to ninety minutes to prevent “Zoom burnout,” but otherwise the ASEES will still have its traditional exhibit hall, film screenings, and affiliate group meetings. The 2020 theme will be *Anxiety and Rebellion*, and the convention invites panelists to examine the sources of rising anxiety in East European and Eurasian countries, the politics driving the region, rebellions and counter-rebellions, and “the discourses and forms of artistic expression that reflect, amplify or stoke sentiments and motivate actions of the people involved.” For conference and registration information, please visit:

<https://www.asees.org/convention>. ■

Association for Jewish Studies

The Association for Jewish Studies conference, which is the largest annual gathering of Jewish studies scholars in the world, will be held online, December 13–17, 2020. The AJS is hopeful about digital possibilities to promote scholarly collaboration and networking, and still plans to include its traditional programming format, such as the plenary sessions, “AJS Honors Its Authors,” and the Jordan Schnitzer Book Awards. There will even be virtual coffee breaks and book exhibits! Register for the conference by December 6 by visiting:

<https://www.associationforjewishstudies.org/2020-annual-conference>. ■

ANNOUNCEMENTS

In Brief

GEOP: Global Education Outreach Program of the POLIN Museum

GEOP International Conference: “What’s New, What’s Next? Innovative Methods, New Sources, and Paradigm Shifts in Jewish Studies”

Given the coronavirus pandemic, the international conference “What’s New, What’s Next? Innovative Methods, New Sources, and Paradigm Shifts in Jewish Studies” is postponed by a year to October 2021. Call for applications will remain open until December 31, 2020.

GEOP invites scholars working in Jewish studies to propose panels and Ph.D. students to submit proposals for the poster session for the international interdisciplinary conference.

For more information on the conference: <https://www.polin.pl/en/whats-new-whats-next-2020>.

During the intervening months, we are inviting distinguished academics to explore the conference

themes in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Published every two weeks, online podcasts in the new GEOP series “What’s New? What’s Next? Jewish Studies in the Time of Pandemic” will precede and introduce the conference. As a lead-up to the conference, the podcasts will demonstrate the kinds of presentations we would like to encourage.

We invite you to listen to five new podcasts available on Spotify, Spreaker, and the POLIN Museum website:

- **Prof. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett** – New Sources: Collecting the Pandemic
- **Prof. Maciej Münnich** – Epidemics in the Bible
- **Prof. Jeremy Brown** – Pandemics in the Talmud
- **Dr. Marek Tuszewicki** – Epidemics in Jewish Folklore and Folk Medicine: The Role of Magic

- **Prof. François Guesnet** – Negotiating Jewish Communal and State Responses to Cholera in nineteenth century Poland

In the upcoming months new podcasts will be published. Professor Shaul Stampfer and Prof. Natan Meir will focus on the history of Jewish responses to applying historical and contemporary perspectives to epidemics in the Warsaw Ghetto and to epidemics and anti-Semitism.

Dr. Gerben Zaagsma, Professor Marcin Wodziński, and others will consider the future of digital research and Jewish studies in light of these uncertain times.

The series will conclude with podcasts devoted to what’s next, and how Jewish Studies will change. Will we turn to new methods? Are we facing a paradigm shift?

Podcasts are posted periodically on the POLIN Museum’s website, Spotify, and Spreaker.

Books Published by GEOP Fellows Awarded

Within the GEOP Fellowship Program, the participants—academics from all around the world—actively participate in the academic life of Jewish studies in Poland.

Thanks to the Global Education Outreach Program it has been possible to support many significant academic works.

Two GEOP Fellows received awards for their publications, which were completed through the GEOP program at the POLIN Museum and the Jewish Historical Institute.

■ **Dr. Alicja Maślak Maciejewska**, Institute of Jewish Studies of Jagiellonian University, *Those Who Prayed in the Temple: Kraków Progressive Jews in the Nineteenth Century: A Socio-Religious Study*, Jagiellonian University Press, 2018.

In 2019 the book won second prize in the competition of Józef A. Gierowski and Chone Shmeruk.

■ **Dr. Mariusz Kałczewiak**, Chair of Central and Eastern European Culture

and Literature, University of Potsdam, *Polacos in Argentina: Polish Jews, Interwar Migration, and the Emergence of Transatlantic Jewish Culture*, University of Alabama Press, 2020.

Best Book Award of the Latin American Jewish Studies Association (LAJSA) in 2020.

(See Awards Announcement in this issue of *Gazeta* for more about this award-winning book.)

More about the awarded books and GEOP Fellows here: <https://polin.pl/en/news/2020/06/10/books-published-global-education-outreach-program-fellows-awarded>.

GEOP Doctoral Seminar Online

In June 2020, the fifth edition of the GEOP doctoral seminar came to an end. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the second term of the GEOP Doctoral Seminar was held online. We express our sincere thanks to the members of Polish academic community who supported and helped the seminar participants in these troubled times!

The call for the sixth edition was open until September 2020. The first term will be held online.

The GEOP Doctoral Seminar was established in 2015. In partnership with members of the Polish academic community, GEOP organizes a seminar devoted to the history and culture of Polish Jews. The seminar convenes once a month at the POLIN Museum in Warsaw.

The Taube Department of Jewish Studies at the University of Wrocław is a partner in the museum's ongoing Doctoral Seminars project.

GEOP Online Activities and Initiatives

GEOP joins the movement of supporting the academic community during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We invite all those interested in Jewish studies and Jewish history and culture to browse the GEOP online repository at: <https://polin.pl/en/geop-online-activities-and-initiatives>. ■

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Awards

Dariusz Stola Named 2020 Irena Sendler Memorial Award Recipient

Taube Philanthropies instituted an annual award in 2008 that recognizes Polish nationals for preserving and revitalizing the country's Jewish heritage. The award is named in memory of Irena Sendlerowa (Sendler), a social worker who saved hundreds of Jewish children from the Warsaw Ghetto during the Nazi occupation. She was identified by Yad Vashem as one of the Righteous Among the Nations, and the Irena Sendler Memorial Award has become recognized as a significant honor within Poland and among the world's Jews.

Awardees in 2018 were Ola Bilińska, a Yiddish language and culture researcher and acclaimed musical artist who has done exemplary work in preserving and celebrating Yiddish music, and Norman Conard, a renowned educator from Kansas who, together with his high school students, brought the untold story of Irena Sendler to public view.



2020 awardee Dariusz Stola. Photograph by M. Starowieyska.
Courtesy of the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews.

In 2019, the honors went to Zuzanna Radzik, a public intellectual and activist recognized for her research, writing, teaching, and advocacy on issues such as Catholic-Jewish relations, and Adam Bartosz, an ethnographer and museologist who, thirty years ago, founded the Committee for Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Tarnów.

This year, the awardee is Professor Dariusz Stola, highly respected director of

the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews from the opening of its permanent exhibition in 2014 until February 2019, during which time the museum won multiple international awards.

Nominations for the Irena Sendler Memorial Award are reviewed by a panel of Taube Philanthropies advisory board members and Jewish cultural leaders in Poland. ■

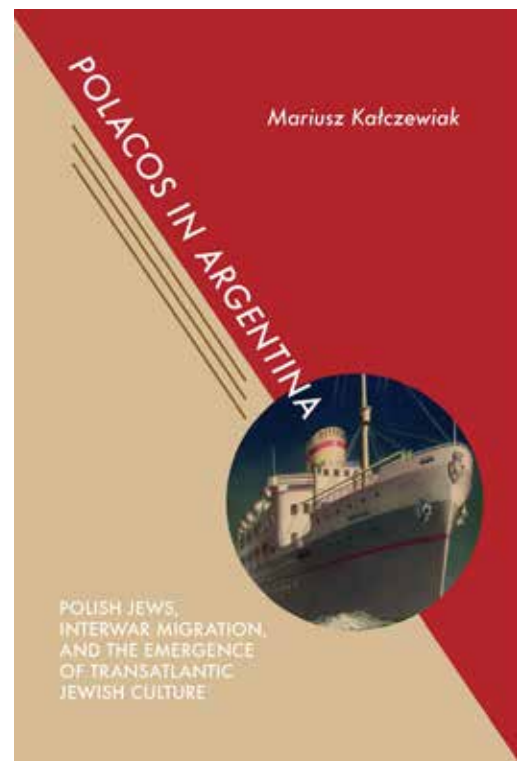
Polacos in Argentina Receives 2020 Best Book Award from Latin American Jewish Studies Association

Mariusz Kałczewiak, a senior researcher and lecturer in the Slavic Studies Department at the University of Potsdam, has constructed an in-depth narrative that sheds light on marginalized aspects of Jewish migration from Poland to Argentina between the 1890s and 1930s. In the period between 1918 and 1939, sixty thousand Polish Jews established new homes in Argentina. They formed a strong ethnic community that quickly embraced Argentine culture while still maintaining their unique Jewish-Polish character. This mass migration caused the transformation of cultural, social, and political milieus in both Poland and Argentina, forever shaping the cultural landscape of both lands.

Based on archival research, Yiddish travelogues on Argentina, and the Yiddish and Spanish-language press, this study recreates a mosaic of entanglements that Jewish migration wove between Poland and Argentina.

Most studies on mass migration fail to acknowledge the role of the country of origin, but this innovative work approaches Jewish migration to Argentina as a continuous process that took place on both sides of the Atlantic. Taken as a whole, *Polacos in Argentina: Polish Jews, Interwar Migration, and the Emergence of Transatlantic Jewish Culture*, enlightens the heterogeneous and complex issue of immigrant commitments, belongings, and expectations. Jewish emigration from Poland to Argentina serves as a case study of how ethnicity evolves among migrants and their children, and the dynamics that emerge between putting down roots in a new country while also maintaining commitments to the country of origin.

Polacos in Argentina was published by and can be purchased through the University of Alabama Press. ■



In the period between 1918 and 1939, sixty thousand Polish Jews established new homes in Argentina. They formed a strong ethnic community that quickly embraced Argentine culture while still maintaining their unique Jewish-Polish character.

Documentary Filmmaker Roberta Grossman Receives Taube Philanthropies 2020 Jewish Peoplehood Award

Noted filmmaker and writer, Roberta Grossman, has been selected to receive Taube Philanthropies' 2020 Jewish Peoplehood Award. The award honors Jewish men and women who have worked to foster pride in Jewish identity and heritage for new generations, making a uniquely Jewish contribution to global culture. The award was created in 2011 by the Taube Jewish Peoplehood Initiative. In creating this honor, Tad Taube, chairman of the Taube Philanthropies, remarked: "Jewish Peoplehood is part of our shared heritage, values, and attitudes. It's part of the DNA of Jewish life—not only American or Israeli, but rather inclusive of all the nations of the earth."

The Taube Jewish Peoplehood Award has three past recipients: the formerly Hasidic reggae musician Matisyahu; the board chairman of the Association of the Jewish Historical Institute Piotr Wiślicki; and a co-founder of Warsaw's post-communist Jewish community, Dr. Stanisław Krajewski. The award includes a \$10,000 gift.

The 2020 award recognizes Grossman for her ground-



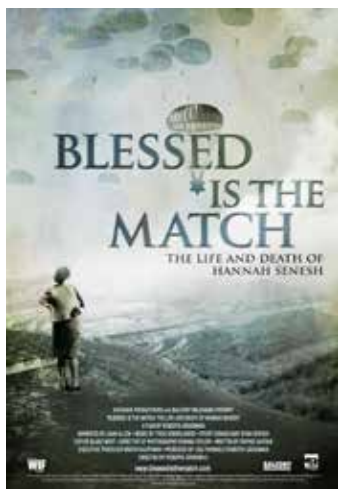
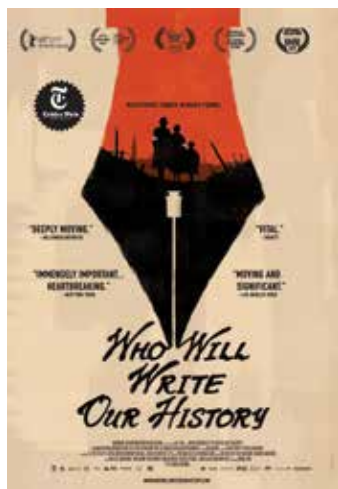
Roberta Grossman.
Roberta Grossman's personal collection.
Used with permission.

breaking feature-length documentaries made on Jewish historical subjects that shed light on important twentieth century histories, and that were otherwise little-known to a multi-generational public. Notable among her films (produced under the auspices of the non-profit production company Katahdin Productions) are *Blessed Is the Match: The Life and Death of Hannah Senesh* (2008), which tells the courageous and tragic wartime experience of Hannah Senesh, a World War II-era poet and diarist who made *aliyah* to British-mandated Palestine from Hungary, enlisted as a volunteer parachutist in the

British Special Operations Executive in 1943, and returned to Nazi Europe parachuting behind enemy lines in an aborted mission to rescue Hungarian Jews, her mother among them. This film won the audience award at thirteen Jewish film festivals, was broadcast on PBS, nominated for a Primetime Emmy, and shortlisted for an Academy Award.

Together with Sophie Sartain, Grossman produced *Hava Nagila: The Movie* (2012), a feature-length documentary that traces the cultural journey of the popular song, *Hava Nagila*, from Ukraine to YouTube. Released theatrically and screened at eighty Jewish film festivals, *Hava Nagila: The Movie* was either the opening or closing night selection at more than half of those festivals.

In 2015, Grossman directed producer Nancy Spielberg's feature-length documentary, *Above and Beyond*, which spotlights the Jewish American World War II-era pilots who volunteered to fight for Israel in its 1948 War of Independence, also



establishing the Israeli Air Force. Interviews with pilots who flew these missions are among the highlights of the film.

In 2018, Grossman wrote, produced and directed a powerful hybrid documentary/dramatic feature about the secret archives of the Warsaw Ghetto during World War II, and which were assembled under the leadership of historian Emanuel Ringelblum. The film, *Who Will Write Our History*, was executive produced by Nancy Spielberg and is based on the acclaimed scholarly work of the same title written by historian Samuel Kassow and published in 2007.

Taube Philanthropies co-sponsored the Discovery Channel's global broadcast of *Who Will Write Our History* in commemoration of International Holocaust Remembrance Day, January 27, 2020, which marked the 75th anniversary of the libera-

The committee commends Roberta Grossman on her decision to share compelling twentieth century Jewish narratives through the widely accessible art form of feature-length documentary film.

tion of Auschwitz-Birkenau by the Soviet Red Army.

Said Tad Taube, "Roberta Grossman has given the world a treasure trove of Jewish historical narratives that enrich our understanding of our history and deepen our sense of cultural pride."

Upon receiving the Award, Grossman stated: "Receiving this award is deeply gratifying, in part because it has allowed me to step back and see that there is an observable arc, a body of work that I've created with my long-time collaborators. I believe that film is the most powerful medium in

which to tell historical stories, and to me, very few histories are as compelling as the Jewish story. To receive this award from Taube Philanthropies is especially meaningful, not only because they have been so supportive of my work, but because we share our deep commitment to the Jewish people in all its messy and beautiful complexity and diversity."

Grossman initially considered pursuing a doctorate in history and embarking on an academic career, but ultimately regarded filmmaking, and especially documentaries, as a more effective way to engage with historical subjects and convey historical knowledge to broad and diverse audiences. The committee that unanimously selected her for the 2020 award commends her decision to share these compelling twentieth century Jewish narratives through the widely accessible art form of feature-length documentary film. ■

OF SPECIAL INTEREST

Mississippi. Yiddish Translation of 1930s Play Finds New Relevancee

Alyssa Quint

Editors' Note: The following is an excerpt from a longer article published in July 2020 in *Tablet* magazine, for which the author serves as editor of the history section.

Mississippi was the brainchild of the Polish Jewish intellectual Mikhl Vaykhert (Michał Weichert, 1890–1967), who spearheaded an acting studio and avant-garde theater called Yung Teatr in inter-war Poland, and Leyb Malakh (né Leyb Zaltsman, 1894–1936), an established Yiddish playwright by the time of their meeting in 1933. It was not long after the men had met that they decided to work on a theatrical project about the Scottsboro Boys, nine African Americans falsely accused of raping two white women in 1931 in Scottsboro, Alabama. The Scottsboro Boys (ages nine to twenty) were initially sentenced to death, but the case was retried numerous times throughout the 1930s, during which time the Communist Party of the



A poster advertising the 100th performance of *Mississippi*.
Courtesy of YIVO.

United States of America (CPUSA) and the International Defense Alliance (also a Communist organization) took on the defense of their case.

Malakh, in an essay published in the Warsaw magazine *Literarishe Bleter*, recounts that the topic lodged in his

head after his trip to the United States:

I itched to write something with a social theme ... Having just been [in America], I had attempted to represent in dramatic form a tragic event, the incident of Scottsboro. The tragic lynch-sentence of nine black boys. The event is well known to everyone. But the living drama is so big, that my first attempts at capturing it struck me as lifeless ... But seeing the youth of Yung Teatr ... brought the Scottsboro tragedy back to my head.

By 1933 Vaykhert was equally enthralled by the Scottsboro trials, spurred, in part, by the attention they had attracted from writers and artists. In Europe, the Scottsboro Boys had become a focal point of anti-American sentiment on the part of Communist agitators; the string of injustices inflicted so publicly on the Scottsboro Boys all but confirmed the sanity of the Communist cause.

For many, the unwillingness of more mainstream political organizations to match the outrage on the Left was itself outrageous.

The Scottsboro affair was an apt illustration of the struggles of the working class (more than, say, race) as the Depression and its epidemic of joblessness created the economic circumstances of the boys' arrest. Malakh explores this in Act I. A rather long first act takes place in a moving freight car where the African American young men and boys (Malakh reduced the number of boys from nine to seven) get to know each other as they travel between Chattanooga and Memphis, revealing their backstories to the audience. It is 1931, and they sneak on and off a slow moving freight train, looking for day labor. Tensions rise after the conductor (not knowing about the presence of stowaways) sneaks two white women into the same boxcar. They rise all the more when, a few stops later, two white men enter the car. The white men get into a fistfight with one of the African American boys, who throw them off the train. When the train reaches its final stop, an angry lynch mob surrounds the boxcar and the

While it raises the banner of class conflict, the play also shows racism in different forms and from different angles.

sheriff reveals that the white men had called the station, accusing the boys inside of raping the women. The sheriff can barely restrain the mob as it cries: "Pull them out! Lynch the devils!" The women corroborate the white men's stories until, after a trial puts the boys and men on death row, one of the women retracts her account.

While it raises the banner of class conflict, the play also shows racism in different forms and from different angles. In one scene, for instance, members of the racist Lily White Movement lavish gifts and sympathy on the boys' female accusers, and in another scene one of the boys in prison recalls the ugly racist chant of the Ku Klux Klan as he was forced to watch them set a man on fire. Yet another scene sheds light on the social reverberations of this tragedy: a woman calls over an African American boy to shine her shoes on the streets of New York. He can't, he replies, as he doesn't want to be accused of rape.

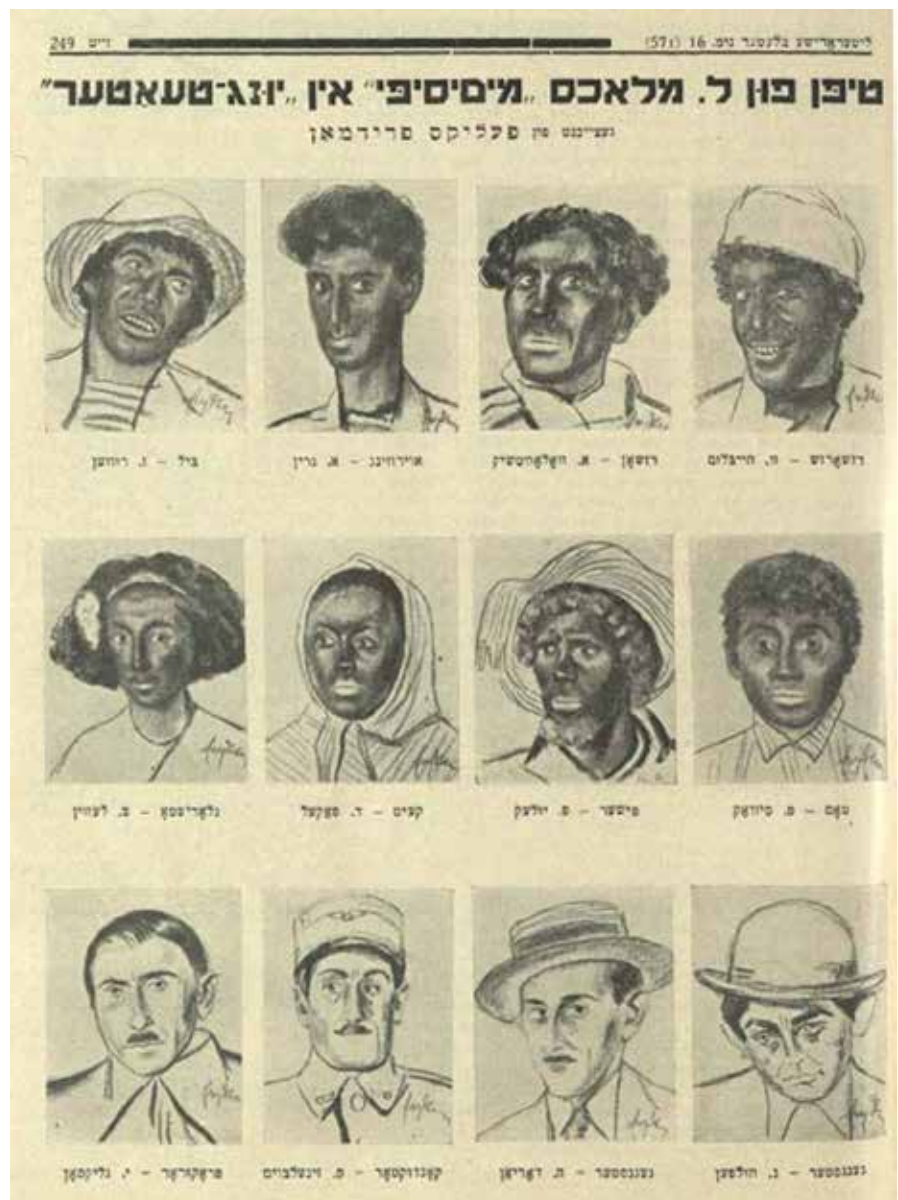
The play goes far in humanizing its subject and conveying a sense of what its producers imagined as authentic African American culture. One character, for instance, is a former decorated soldier in the US war against the Sandinistas, while another's life was shaped by the Great Migration of African Americans and now lives in Harlem. Moreover, the script is embedded with an array of original Yiddish songs by Henekh Kon (1890–1970), who composed in diverse musical traditions, including jazz, gospel, and African American spirituals. One makes reference to the enslavement of African people, and another refers to the part former slaves took in the Union army fighting in the Civil War.

Other aspects of the play have not aged as well and, by today's standards, might feel clichéd, examples of cultural appropriation, or worse. (The dated word "Negro" appears frequently, and racist characters use the n-word.) A cabaret singer in a Harlem nightclub sings a Yiddish-language song described in the script as "half-jazz, half-sentimental" that begins,

"I am a brown Venus from Atlanta." Actors wore black make-up with the clear objective to become their subjects and even, perhaps, to educate the mostly Jewish and Polish audience as to what an African American actually looks like. The play hardly meets today's standards of political correctness. Nonetheless, it sought empathy with and curiosity about the texture and history of African American life and it succeeded in invoking this from its audience. As the journalist Y. Gotlib wrote after seeing a performance of *Mississippi* in Kraków:

The greatest wickedness of our time is the relationship of white people to black people ... There is a way to put it in Jewish terms: *shfikhes damim*, murder, literally, the spilling of blood. The white spills the blood of the black, not in one fell swoop, but drop by drop, with every gesture and every glance. When one is in America one often thinks to oneself that the heart of a black man must resemble a gaping wound.

For the full version of this essay, please visit:



Sketches by the artist Felix Fridman of some of the actors of *Mississippi* in costume as published in *Literarische Bleter*.
Courtesy of the Jewish Historical Press via The National Library of Israel.

<https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/arts-letters/articles/yiddish-mississippi-mikhl-vaykhert>. ■

Allysa Quint is the Leon Charney Visiting Fellow at Yeshiva University. She is the author of The Rise of

the Modern Yiddish Theater (2019), a finalist for the National Jewish Book Award, and is a co-editor of two forthcoming volumes on the Yiddish theater: Women on the Yiddish Stage and a critical edition of the Yiddish operetta Shulamis.

The March of Remembrance: 77th Anniversary Commemoration of the Treblinka Uprising

Aleksandra Sajdak

The 2020 March of Remembrance took an unusual course this year. Due to the pandemic, it was done individually. On July 22, the director of the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute, Professor Paweł Śpiewak, together with the Deputy Program Director, Anna Duńczyk-Szulc, laid a wreath at the Umschlagplatz Monument. Among those present were the Israeli ambassador to Poland, Alexander Ben Zvi, the Chief Rabbi of Poland, Michael Schudrich, the Director of the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, Zygmunt Stępiński, and the Vice-President of the Institute of National Remembrance, Mateusz Szpytma.

Prof. Śpiewak walked through the area of the former Warsaw Ghetto to 20 Chłodna Street, where Adam Czerniaków, President of the Judenrat, lived until his suicide on the second day of the Great Deportation in July 1942.



Chief Rabbi of Poland Michael Schudrich and Professor Paweł Śpiewak at the Umschlagplatz Monument in Warsaw during the March of Remembrance in July 2020.

Courtesy of the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute.

The first Ribbons of Remembrance with the names of murdered Warsaw Jews were pinned on the art installation.

On August 2, 1943, prisoners of the Treblinka death camp launched a long-prepared uprising. They overpowered or killed many of the Ukrainian guards, set fire to the barracks, and blew up a petrol tanker, causing a fire in the camp. About 200 of the 800 uprising participants escaped to freedom. It is estimated that

between seventy and 100 people survived the uprising, compared with the approximately 800,000 people who were killed at Treblinka from 1942 to 1943. A few weeks later, the Germans destroyed the camp and removed almost all traces of its existence.

On August 2, 2020, ceremonies in the Treblinka camp museum commemorated the rebellion. Spokespersons from state and local authorities, diplomats, and

representatives of the surrounding towns paid tribute to all those murdered in the former death camp. Rabbi Oriel Zaretsky from Warsaw opened the ceremony with the *El Male Rachamim* prayer.

Actor Waldemar Barwiński read an excerpt from the report of Abram Jakub Krzepicki (a fugitive from Treblinka), which was written by Rachel Auerbach of the Oneg Shabat group in 1942. Prof. Śpiewak then added, “This is a book that everyone

“This is a place that speaks in silence. Otherwise it is unable to speak.”

—Paweł Śpiewak,
Director of the Jewish
Historical Institute

should read in full, should come back to. This is a place that speaks in silence.”

A letter from Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki was read by Dr. Edward Kopówka, Director of the Treblinka Museum:

Today, none of the survivors of the camp are alive. And this puts even more responsibility on our shoulders. It obliges us to document the historical truth and pass it on to those who will come after us. But the memory of Treblinka’s hell is not only about recalling the facts about this unimaginable crime. It is also a reflection on its sources, a reflection on the destructive power of hatred, on the contempt for man and his inalienable rights, on



Commemoration of the 77th anniversary of the prisoners’ revolt in Treblinka, held on August 2, 2020. Courtesy of the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute.

what was the basis of the twentieth-century catastrophe of our civilization.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, fewer people took part in the commemorations than in previous years. Ada Krystyna Willenberg, widow of Samuel Willenberg (who died in 2016 and was the last participant of the Treblinka uprising), could not attend. Prof. Śpiewak read her letter:

Your presence and the ceremony taking place will not allow the memory of Treblinka to be forgotten. For me, Treblinka is a holy cemetery with the ashes of my mother and numerous members of my family. Here, too, my late husband endured ten months. His last dream was to build a magnificent building worthy of this place, in which you can imagine everything that happened here. Because in Treblinka, during and after the uprising, all traces of what happened here were obliterated. My husband did not live to see this moment, and I am not so young either, but I hope that I will

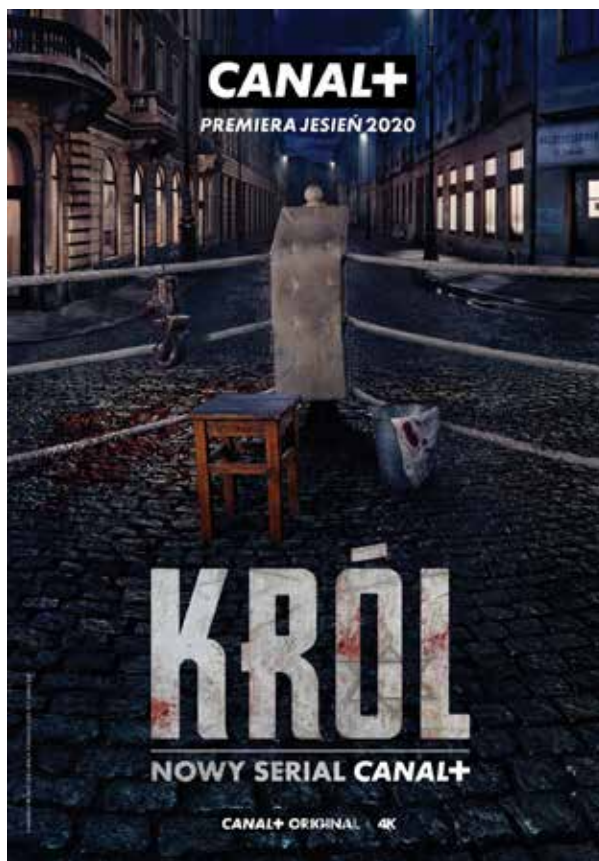
live to see the moment when the authorities will finally grant permission to start work. Maybe next year I will be able to witness this event with you ... Thank you all again for not forgetting about Treblinka. See you soon!

At the end of the ceremony, prayers were said, wreaths were laid, and candles were lit. ■

Aleksandra Sajdak, an assistant editor at Gazeta, is Senior Program Manager and Genealogist for the Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland Foundation/Taube Jewish Heritage Tours, and researcher at the Genealogy Department of the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute. She is a doctoral candidate at the Polish Academy of Sciences.

Szczepan Twardoch's *Król* Adapted for Polish TV

Fans of Szczepan Twardoch's novel *The King of Warsaw* (reported in the spring 2020 issue of *Gazeta*) don't have long to wait to catch it on the small screen. *Król* (Polish for "king") will premiere its first season of eight episodes on Friday, November 6, on the channel and streaming service Canal+. The series, starring Michał Żurawski and directed by Jan P. Matuszyński, follows Jakub Szapiro, a Jewish boxer-slash-mob enforcer in 1930s Warsaw. As Szapiro navigates the city's seedy underbelly and the Jewish boxing circuit, the competing factions of socialists and fascists tear apart Warsaw's political landscape. In the trailer, included below, we catch glimpses of still-existing synagogues and of political rallies featuring symbols like the *falanga*, a green-and-white flag still used by the Polish far-right today. The series promises compelling, lurid action while engaging with issues of identity, ethnicity,



Szczepan Twardoch's *Król* has been adapted for Polish TV. Promotional materials.

Courtesy of Canal+ Polska.

and nationalism that are front-and-center in contemporary Poland as well.

You can watch a trailer at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PYtzDb5rfwE>.

Viewer discretion is advised for sex and violence. ■

POEM

Editors' Note: With this issue, *Gazeta* introduces a new section of poetry. We welcome submissions for review or poem recommendations. Please note, that while all submissions and suggestions are welcomed, we cannot reply to each query.

Stara Bóznica

Cicho
pusto
złoty świecznik błyszczy
jak oko lisa

niewidzialny rebe
śpiewa beztrosko
jego śpiew unosi się powoli
jak dym

pejsaty chłopiec
jingł wus mot em ungeszlugn
śmieje się z obrazu
wyciera krople krwi z czoła

moi dziadkowie
kiwają do mnie z bimy
jeszcze nie wiedzą że im korona
spadnie na głowę

przykryty tałesem
ze srebrną atarą na ustach
krzyczę
wołam
ale nikt mnie nie słyszy

ulica Szeroka
jest coraz węższa

nie przecisnę się tędy już nigdy

The Old Temple

By Julian Kornhauser

Silent
empty
the golden candleholder gleams
like the eye of a fox

an invisible rebbe
sings untroubled
his song rises slowly
like smoke

a sidelocked boy
yingl vus mot em umgeshlugn
laughs down at me from a painting
wipes the drops of blood from his forehead

my grandfathers
bow to me from the bima
they do not yet know that their crown
will fall onto their heads

covered in my tallit
its silver atarah on my lips
I cry out
call out
but no one hears me

Szeroka Street
is becoming narrower and narrower

I'll never manage to squeeze through that way again

Julian Kornhauser, born in Gliwice in 1946 to Jewish and Catholic parents, is a leading voice in contemporary Polish poetry. He was a key member of the Polish New Wave, a group of poets who stood in opposition to Communist authorities and rejected the period's literary trends. He is the father of the contemporary poet and critic Jakub Kornhauser and Agata Duda, the First Lady of Poland.

OBITUARIES

Ada Rapoport-Albert (1945–2020)

Marcin Wodziński

Ada Rapoport-Albert, an Israeli-British historian who died in London on June 18, 2020, was exceptional in many ways. Ada bridged oppositions in a way nobody else did. She was Israeli and British, and a woman who became a guru in the male-dominated field of Jewish religious studies. She was an intellectual historian who contributed significantly to the social revaluation of Jewish mystical movements. In a world of oppositions, she was a model of integrity.

Born in 1945 in Mandate Palestine and raised in Tel Aviv, she was proudly Israeli, sun-addicted, and deeply immersed in Israeli culture with its mixture of anti-clerical secularism and fascination for all things religious. Her studies emerged from this fascination. Sincere in her secular outlook, she never turned her studies into an identity quest for religious roots from a postmodern or a New Age angle. But, at the same time, her scholarship was always filled with a deep understanding and appreciation



Professor Ada Rapoport-Albert,
Photo by David Assaf.
Wikimedia Commons.

for the spirituality of her historical protagonists and a sincere curiosity about their worlds. Her work displayed intimacy with Jewish history and culture, in particular with Hebrew humanism. It was also, however, deeply committed to the deepest calling of historiography, namely the interest in things unlike us and the recognition of the complexities of past and distant peoples and cultures.

Together with her intense “Israeli” character, she remained quintessentially

British, even if ironic about British self-illusions. Educated at University College London, she defended her doctoral dissertation under the supervision of Joseph G. Weiss and later Chimen Abramsky. Ada remained loyal to the memory of her teachers, highlighting her intellectual roots in British academia, and eventually situated her whole academic career with her alma mater. In 2002, at the peak of her career, she became the head of the Department of Hebrew and Jewish Studies at UCL, and led it until retirement ten years later, turning it into one of the world’s leading centers of Jewish studies.

Ada was a very sharp critic, reviewer, and adviser, who was never afraid to point out inconsistencies, weak points, or errors of facts and interpretation; she was straight to the point, clear and precise. Co-editing texts with Ada was a lesson of modesty and scholarly rigor, a lesson I will never forget. But even more than rigorous, she was generous.

Her sharp criticism was never cruel. Tenderness, according to the writer Olga Tokarczuk, is “the most modest form of love,” and that was her way of transforming academia into a better place. As one of her close friends and colleagues noticed, she was perhaps the only scholar without enemies. Her criticism was always matched with deep interest and tenderness. She spent hours and days on end reading and editing her students’ and colleagues’ writings. I remain deeply grateful for so many big and small amendments she brought to my own work.

Ada was also a model for the golden rule that “less is more.” Even before I met her, I had been deeply impressed by her rare quality of writing on only important subjects. In the academic world, where the rule is “publish-or-perish,” Ada managed to publish relatively few books and articles. For the university administrators, this might have been an issue. But for the scholars of Jewish religion, this established a golden standard. Virtually every one of her articles turned out to be a paradigm-changing contribution to the field. Ada will be remembered for her pioneering studies on the social structure of Hasidism,

Virtually every one of her articles turned out to be a paradigm-changing contribution to the field...[S]he will be remembered for her scholarship deconstructing the range of cognitive stereotypes created within and about Hasidism.

on Bratslav and Habad Hasidism, the role of the tsadik, on the gender structure of Sabbatianism, and of the role of women in the Hasidic movement.

Most of all, she will be remembered for her scholarship deconstructing the range of cognitive stereotypes created within and about Hasidism. Never satisfied with dominant assumptions, Ada revolutionized our understanding of much of Jewish religious life in Eastern Europe. She demonstrated how to look critically, how to combine wealth of evidence with clarity of narration and nuance of argumentation with boldness of argument. Her volume, *Hasidic Studies*, will no doubt be a foundational

cornerstone for the study of Jewish religious experience for many decades to come.

Ada educated a number of doctoral students from Poland, some of whom, most notably Wojciech Tworek, returned to Poland and contribute now to the international success of Polish centers of Jewish studies. Others continue academic careers abroad. Ada also eagerly cooperated with Polish scholars, co-edited volumes and co-authored texts, thus extending the network of academic cooperation to many of us.

I vividly remember her assistance in navigating the academic world that she extended to me and so many others. Without her support and intercession I might have never published my first book in English. More than that, her scholarship will remain with us here in Poland not only in its intellectual realm, but also in the most material way, as she donated her library to the Taube Department of Jewish Studies at the University of Wrocław. (See my article with Wojciech Tworek in this issue of *Gazeta*.)

Ada was a model for so many of us in so many ways. We will miss her. ■

Tadeusz Kuźmiński

(1955–2020)

Creator of the Living Shtetl Museum

Jewish Heritage Europe

Tadeusz Kuźmiński, who rebuilt a wooden synagogue and created a “living shtetl” open-air museum in southeast Poland, has died after a long illness. He was 65. Kuźmiński was a businessman and local philanthropist in Biłgoraj, a town that was a thriving Jewish center before the Holocaust but a place where no Jews live today. He built a full-scale version of the destroyed wooden synagogue of Wolpa (now in Belarus), standing in a replica Jewish marketplace aimed at anchoring a cultural-commercial-residential development designed to evoke a pre-World War II village.

Kuźmiński called his project “City on the Trail of Borderland Cultures,” and his dream was to create a complex that reflected the multicultural character of pre-war Poland that would serve as a cultural and commercial venue and a tourist attraction.



Tadeusz Kuźmiński outside the replica of the Wolpa synagogue in 2016.

Courtesy of Jewish Heritage Europe.

“He was a wonderful and very special person, a creative dreamer,” remarked Emil Majuk, project manager of the “Shtetl Routes” initiative at the Grodzka Gate NN Theatre in Lublin. “His passing away is a great loss for the Lublin region. I hope that there will be some people to continue the work he started in Biłgoraj.”

The development of the City on the Trail of Borderland Cultures is overseen by the Biłgoraj XXI Foundation, which was established in 2005. During a visit to the complex in 2016, Kuźmiński told Ruth Ellen Gruber, Director of Jewish Heritage Europe (JHE), that each building replica was based on old photographs found in pre-war shtetls. One building on the square houses a small museum exhibition space dedicated to the Nobel Prize-winning Yiddish author Isaac Bashevis Singer, who spent his childhood in Biłgoraj.

Adapted with permission from Jewish Heritage Europe (JHE) <https://jewish-heritage-europe.eu/2020/07/19/poland-rip-tadeusz-kuzminski/>. ■

Maria Janion

(December 24, 1926–August 23, 2020)

Maria Janion was a literary scholar who specialized in the analysis of the romantic literary tradition in Poland and Europe. She was the author or co-author of more than twenty books as well as the editor of a large number of key Polish romantic texts. While initially she stressed the liberating and redemptive character of the works of the great Polish romantic poets, she became increasingly aware of the problems which martyrological and messianic views of the Polish past have caused for the creation of a pluralistic, open, and tolerant society in Poland. She was, indeed, one of the most eloquent advocates for liberal and democratic values in the country.

Born in Mońki in Podlasie, northwest of Białystok, she grew up in Vilna where she was an active member of the Home Army during World War II. Subsequently, she studied Polish literature at



Maria Janion.
Courtesy of Taube Philanthropies.

the University of Łódź where she came under the influence of Stefan Żółkiewski, a key figure in the radical literary weekly *Kuźnica*, in which she published articles and reviews. In 1948 she was appointed to the Institute of Literary Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences, and in 1951 became an assistant professor (*asystenka*) at the University of Warsaw where she obtained her master's degree in the same year. Subsequently she also taught at the Higher Pedagogical School in Gdańsk and its

Antony Polonsky

successor, the University of Gdańsk. She continued to work at the Institute of Literary Research, where she was made docent in 1957, until her retirement in 1996.

In her initial studies of romanticism, she stressed its character as an intellectual revolution which, by its break with classicism and its highly limited view of tradition, made possible a new view of humankind, nature, and history. Central to this was the importance assigned to individuals, each with their own unique character. The loss of independence made this romantic view of the world particularly attractive to Poles, who were drawn to the new type of hero which it established and the way it validated alternative national visions of culture. As she argued, the “romantic-symbolic” style of culture came to dominate Polish intellectual life in the nineteenth century, a dominance which, unlike the

situation elsewhere in Europe, continued throughout the twentieth century and which has not been successfully challenged even in the present day. In its Polish variant, this perspective endorsed armed insurrection in support of national independence and stressed the messianic and martyrological elements in the nation's history. Janion set out these views in her first book, an analysis of the work of the romantic poet Lucjan Siemieński, in the *Antologia romantycznej poezji krajowej 1831–1863* (Anthology of Polish Romantic Poetry 1831–1863) which she edited with Maria Grabowska, and in her studies of the three principal Polish romantic poets, Zygmunt Krasiński, Adam Mickiewicz, and Juliusz Słowacki. She showed how much these writers, widely regarded as antediluvian and lacking relevance, had to offer the contemporary reader. Perhaps her most important work in this field is *Gorączka romantyczna* (The Romantic Fever), an investigation of the complexity of the phenomena of romanticism, which explains both the

Janion was strongly attracted to the use which could be made of the Polish romantic tradition to challenge what she increasingly saw as the oppressive and stultifying nature of the Communist regime in Poland.

reasons for the spell it cast, particularly in Poland, and the bizarre character of many of its manifestations, such as vampirism, whose Polish manifestations she elucidated, including the use made of this topic by Mickiewicz. Although her principal interest was in Polish literature she also wrote perceptively on Goethe, Rousseau, Chateaubriand, William Blake, and Gunther Grass. Her last essay was devoted to Goethe's concept of *Bildung* (self-cultivation). She was also passionately interested in film.

Initially, Janion was strongly interested in using the Polish romantic tradition to challenge what she increasingly saw as the oppressive and stultifying

nature of the Communist regime in Poland. She had joined the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR) in 1949 but was quickly disillusioned. Her lectures were very popular among students, and in the wake of the repression which followed the events of March 1968 she resigned from the PZPR and was dismissed from her position at the Higher Pedagogical School in Gdańsk. This did not slow her, and in the 1970s she was one of the founders of the independent Association for Academic Courses (*Towarzystwo Kursów Naukowych*—the Flying University) and was involved in the organization of unofficial teaching on the history of Polish literature. In the relatively liberal Gierek years, she was appointed to the Philological Faculty of the University of Gdańsk, where she received the title of professor (*Profesor zwyczajny*) in 1973. She strongly supported the Solidarity movement and in August 1980 was one of sixty-four intellectuals who wrote an open letter supporting the

strike in the Lenin Shipyard. In December 1981 she participated in the Congress of Polish Culture, whose proceedings were interrupted by the establishment of martial law. In her address, she appealed to the participants in what she described as the “national uprising” (*narodowy zryw*) to make use of its energy to facilitate a major intellectual transformation.

This moving speech, which forms the core of Agnieszka Arnold’s film *Bunt Janion* (Janion’s Revolt, 2005), was a reflection of her growing awareness of the negative consequences of the dominance in Polish life of the romantic view of the world with its glorification of martyrology. As she put it, “We have not succeeded in building our community on civic values, but rather on national myths.”

After the negotiated end of communism in 1989, she became actively involved in the promotion of the values of civil society and stressed that such a society would require the romantic paradigm to be transformed. She was

particularly alarmed by what she described in a letter to the Congress of Polish Culture in October 2016 as “the centrally organized return to the ideas of the played-out epigones of romanticism—a canon made up of national and religious stereotypes and centered on Smoleńsk as a new messianic myth.”

Much of her work was now devoted to the “posthumous life” of Polish romanticism and to the work of such writers as Tadeusz Konwicki, Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, and Jarosław Rymkiewicz. She became a prominent member of the Society for Humanism and Independent Ethics (*Stowarzyszenia na Rzecz Humanizmu i Etyki Niezależnej*) and of the Polish Writer’s Association and the Polish PEN Club. Between 1997 and 2004 she served on the jury of the Nike Award, holding the office of chair between 2000 and 2004.

She became a strong critic of the Polish Catholic Church. In her *Niesamowita Słowiańczyzna: fantazmaty literatury* (Uncanny Slavdom: Literary Phantasms), she attempted, not wholly

successfully, to use Edward Said’s concept of Orientalism to demonstrate that in the Middle Ages, Poles had been effectively colonized by the Roman Catholic Church. In 2012, in an extended interview, *Janion. Transe—traumy—transgresje* (Janion. Trances—Dreams—Transgressions) she openly proclaimed her gay identity. Now in her eighties, she wrote strongly in support of Polish feminism, both political and literary. An important product of this was her *Kobiety i duch inności* (Women and the Spirit of Otherness), an examination of the lives of a number of women and the way that women have been transformed into symbols in literary works and in the collective imagination.

She also fought against homophobia, racism, and anti-Semitism, about which she wrote prolifically. Many of these central tenets are found in *Do Europy tak, ale razem z naszymi umarłymi* (To Poland, Yes, But with Our Dead), in which her main argument is that if Poland is to become culturally part of Europe, it will have to come

to terms with its own complex past, including its legacy of anti-Semitism. In her last publication, *Bohater, spisek, śmierć: wykłady żydowskie*, (Hero, Conspiracy, and Death: The Jewish Lectures), she again underlined the danger inherent in the heroic myth with its alarmingly attractive force, and set out to dismantle the intellectual roots of Polish anti-Semitism through an analysis of how Holocaust issues have been discussed in memoirs and literary works.

Janion's students were devoted to her, referring to her as "the master" (*mistrzyni*). On the occasion of her seventieth birthday in 1996, she was presented with a Festschrift with the title *Romantyzm. Janion. Fantazmaty* (Romanticism. Janion. Fantasms), edited by Dorota Siwicka and Marek Bieńczyk. In 2006, on the occasion of her eightieth birthday, her pupils produced *Księga Janion* (The Book of Janion), which contained a detailed bibliography of the many theses she had supervised, organized into a genealogical tree with more than a thousand entries.

In her last publication, she again underlined the danger inherent in the heroic myth with its alarmingly attractive force.

The obituary gives only a superficial account of the complexity and richness of the work produced by Maria Janion. It is unfortunate that so little of it is currently available in English, and one only hope that her death will stimulate greater efforts to translate her most important works. She was one of the great figures in Poland in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries and clearly has an ongoing relevance in the struggle to establish a pluralistic and open society in Poland. One can only hope that her many pupils and admirers will carry on her work and propagate her values. ■

Antony Polonsky, PhD, is Chief Historian at the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews.



Window in Kraków featuring promotional materials from the Galicia Jewish Museum's exhibition *Szancer, Imagine That!*. Photograph by Paulina Banasik. Used with permission.

If you would like to suggest an author or article for the next issue of *Gazeta*, or submit one yourself, please email: info@taubephilanthropies.org. The submission deadline for the next issue is **November 30, 2020**.

We accept queries and submissions for feature articles of no more than 1500 words, and up to 500 words or less for all other announcements or reports.



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