

decision, too, represents one of the more curious and potentially problematic aspects of Kraszewski's translation. As he points out in his lengthy introduction to the text, the traditional order of *Forefather's Eve* is a counterintuitive one, beginning with Part II, proceeding to Part IV, and concluding with Part III, followed by the various scenes of life in Russia that reflected Mickiewicz's own experience there as an exile in the 1820s. By altering this traditional order and presenting as whole what was originally disjointed and fragmentary, Kraszewski's translation risks giving English-speaking readers a false impression of Mickiewicz's Romantic masterpiece. Part of what makes *Forefather's Eve* a compelling work is the challenge it presents both readers and directors of reconciling its confusion of space and time, captured most clearly in the changeable character of Gustaw-Konrad. The lack of unity in terms of space and time underscored the extent to which *Forefather's Eve* was, at heart, a work in progress. What is more, as Mickiewicz later explained in his lectures on Slavic literature at the Collège de France in the 1840s, Polish drama was not only one of the most powerful artistic realizations of poetry, but it was also transcendent, prophetic, and difficult to realize. In essence, Mickiewicz created an open work that eschewed the orderly and the rational in favor of the visionary and the miraculous. The two different publications of *Forefather's Eve*, moreover, provides some insight into the evolution of the Polish Romantic imagination, not to mention Mickiewicz's own creative development and personal experience. *Forefather's Eve*, in many respects, is a living document of the chief interests of the Polish Romantics in its combination of the irrational, the love of ruins (the play itself being a kind of a collection of fragments), the personal, and the collective.

With that said, Kraszewski's translation represents a continuation of the tradition of revisiting Mickiewicz's drama by his successors. As a work that Mickiewicz himself acknowledged had to wait until the future for its full realization, *Forefather's Eve* is a work that appears again and again in the Polish imagination in varying forms and for different reasons. Kraszewski's reordering of Mickiewicz's original work represents a re-reading of Mickiewicz that is in keeping with the efforts of Polish directors and artists in the last few years to imagine Mickiewicz's *Forefather's Eve* anew, such as Michał Zadura's fourteen-hour staging of the play in its entirety, for the first time, at the Polish Theater in Wrocław, the Dziady Recycling Festival, which combined past and present productions of *Forefather's Eve* with Afro-Haitian voodoo ceremony, and Piotr "Pianohooligan" Orzechowski and the High Definition Quartet's jazz interpretation of Part II of *Dziady* in Kraków. Add to this the exporting of Mickiewicz to foreign audiences in the form of Zadura's staging of *Forefather's Eve* in Beijing in 2015 and the recent release of *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* with its "Forefather's Eve Quest," and it is clear that Kraszewski's translation is not only timely, but also a necessary part of the growing interest, in Poland and abroad, of realizing Mickiewicz's monumental vision in fresh ways for a new, global audience.

JOHN MERCHANT
Loyola University, Chicago

Strangers in Berlin: Modern Jewish Literature between East and West, 1919–1933.

By Rachel Seelig. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016. xiii, 225 pp.

Notes. Bibliography. Index. Photographs. \$56.00, hard bound.

doi: 10.1017/slr.2018.35

The American academia has an issue with PhDs focused on one writer. Such dissertations are usually considered to be "narrow" and therefore unworthy to be pursued.

Some, though very few, established scholars allow themselves the “luxury” of writing on *an* author. As a result, there are significant—or simply huge—lacunae in academic biographical studies. In the field of Yiddish literature, for instance, serious monographs or collective volumes on leading writers can be counted on the fingers of two hands. Meanwhile, doctoral students often lump together several writers, making their research (really or ostensibly) broader. Creation of a “group portrait” demands a theoretical framework, which explains and justifies the construct, especially if the protagonists never met in their entire life, and never mentioned each other’s names in their writings and correspondence.

Rachel Seeling’s PhD-based monograph illustrates this trend. It is a well-researched and well-written study that assembles under the same roof four poets of the same generation: Ludwig Strauss (1892–1953) who wrote in German and, after emigrating to Palestine, also in Hebrew; Moyshe Kulbak (1896–1937), a poet of Vilna, and later a prominent and tragic figure in Soviet Yiddish literature; Uri Zvi Greenberg (1896–1981), a Yiddish and Hebrew poet, and a rightwing Zionist activist; and Gertrud Kolmar (1894–1943), a German poet deported to Auschwitz. They may give the impression of being a rather disparate lot, but Seeling finds a common denominator that, she argues, unites them. It is the time (between a lifetime and a short sojourn) spent in Berlin, which became for them “a temporary threshold between past and future homelands, between a lost origin and a longed-for destination” (16).

In addition, and even more significantly, the four poets—who “differ dramatically in terms of language, aesthetics, and politics”—“share a crucial characteristic: they all looked toward an imagined ‘East’ as the wellspring of an authentic Jewish national culture” (16). Thus, Kulbak’s native *Lite*, or historical Jewish Lithuania (which incorporates Belorussia), falls into the same “eastern” category as Palestine, or the Land of Israel. As a result, Avrom Nokhum Stenzel appears in the book only as an extra, despite his strong credentials as a poetic member of Berlin literary circles. It seems, however, that his poetry does not reveal a look toward any east, and he himself ultimately wound up in London rather than in the Jerusalem of Lithuania, as Vilna was known, or Jerusalem proper. Incidentally, David Hofshsteyn, who also spent a short spell in Berlin and later a longer time in Palestine, could be a more logical figure in this collective portrait.

Weimar Berlin was a tough place for immigrants, particularly for Yiddish writers who (like Kulbak) failed to find a source of a journalistic or other sufficient income. Still, it is hard to agree with the statement that “even the most well-adjusted migrant writers treated Berlin as a temporary home, a ‘transit-inn’ (transit-kretshme), in the words of the critic Daniel Charney, from which they would soon be ‘released into the wider world’” (42). Charney—who was a poet, memoirist, and essayist, but least of all a “critic”—certainly did not want to leave Berlin and wrote about it, including a piece on his going to a reception thrown for foreign journalists by Joseph Goebbels. His friend David Bergelson was also well settled in the Weimar capital and only Adolf Hitler’s coming to power forced him to flee to Copenhagen and, a year later, to Moscow. The same can be said about a number of other Jewish literati, who arrived in Germany following the violent disintegration of imperial Russia and established themselves there, on the “threshold,” rather comfortably.

In all, this is a book that contains original and insightful chapters on the four poets, but some readers may have problems figuring out why these chapters are bound into one volume, under the same title.

GENNADY ESTRAIKH
New York University