roles played by the cross throughout Polish history, from "protest symbol" (204), to "tool of domination by a colonizing power" (104), to "shorthand for Polish ethnic nationalism" (304). The cross is both a symbol "beset by contradictions" (306) and the centerpiece of "the visual canon of a nation-in-the-making" (20).

Cross Purposes is at once narrative-driven and diachronic. Waligórska serves up concise, grippingly written mini-histories woven into a larger argument about memory, forgetting, nationhood, and modern politics. Following social scientists who have theorized powerfully from the Polish example (notably, Geneviève Zubrzycki and Jan Kubik), Waligórska also engages pioneering Polish-language scholars (Andrzej Leder and Joanna Tokarska-Bakir) to underline "the interethnic violence, antisemitism, and misogyny that have long undergirded the Polish nation-building project" (23). Ch. 2 (on interwar Poland) and 5 (the post-Communist 1990s) show that the cross could, and did, augment state power; Ch. 1 (1860s), 3 (1960s), 4 (Solidarity), and 6 (the presidential plane crash of 2010) recount grassroots defenses of crosses against perceived state illegitimacy. Waligórska amply documents the cross's function as a "border marker," establishing and sustaining an "internal boundary between 'us' and 'them'" (104).

Some key insights may be less accessible to readers not already well-versed in Polish history. The diachronic approach leaves significant narrative gaps—especially following Waligórska's decision to skip over World War II, the Holocaust, the Soviet takeover of Poland, and Poland's Stalinist era. In all fairness, antisemitism is extensively treated throughout the book—note especially the "cross-Jew dyad" discussion in the Conclusion—but chronological lacunae occasionally leave the reader feeling that certain arguments lack adequate support. Waligórska plausibly contends in the Introduction that "new political articulations of the symbol could only truly unfold after the traumatic earthquake that the war-related violence brought with it" (23–24)—but this claim is impossible to assess fully, since Ch. 2 ends in the 1930s while Ch. 3 starts in the 1950s.

Historians of Catholicism will note the near-absence of Pope John Paul II. An iconic figure whose visage gazed from hanging portraits and lapel pins for decades, throughout Solidarity and post-communist eras alike, he nonetheless appears in *Cross Purposes* only in passing.

These concerns notwithstanding, the originality of Waligórska's work, the force of her prose, and the power of her argumentation assure *Cross Purposes* the status of one of the most important historical studies of modern Poland. From nineteenth-century protests against the Russian tsar to twenty-first-century campaigns by the Law and Justice government tarnishing liberal, Jewish, Muslim, LGBT, and Ukrainian "Others," Magdalena Waligórska offers a powerful paradigm for making sense of how protest and persecution, solidarity and hatred, co-exist within the politics of the cross.

Anna Müller. *An Ordinary Life? The Journeys of Tonia Lechtman, 1918–1996*.

Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2023. xix, 376 pp. Notes. Index. Photographs. Maps. $50.00, hard bound.

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Reading this book, I could not help but think of Heda Kovaly, the Czech Jew who survived World War II only to have her new family torn apart when her husband, a devout Communist,

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was arrested and executed as a defendant in the infamous Slánský Trial of 1952. "Three forces carved the landscape of my life," she writes at the start of her memoir, "Two of them crushed half the world. The third was very small and weak and, actually, invisible."[1] Kovaly identifies the first two forces as Adolph Hitler and Iosif Stalin; the third was a tiny bird hidden inside her. Tonia Lechtman, the subject of *An Ordinary Life? The Journeys of Tonia Lechtman, 1918–1996*, might have uttered something similar. A member of Kovaly's generation, her life was dominated by the same brutal historical forces epitomized by these two dictators. Unlike Kovaly, Lechtman, a Polish Jew, managed to remain outside the grasp of the Nazis—she survived World War II in Western Europe. While Kovaly regarded the communists with suspicion even before they destroyed her spouse, Lechtman and her husband were both communists; he, however, was killed at Auschwitz, while she was later imprisoned by her own comrades.

Anna Müller provides a comprehensive, doggedly researched account of the life of Tonia Lechtman (referred to throughout as Tonia). Her framing resonates with Kovaly's depiction of her own life, though Müller poses a dichotomy between an "ordinary" and "extraordinary" life. Müller sees Lechtman as ordinary both because she existed on the margins of the societies in which she lived, and her life was shaped by historical forces and events that violently transformed the world around her. Lechtman's biography, like Kovaly's, is truly a twentieth century European tale. But all such stories are different, "extraordinary," Müller reminds us, due to the unique personalities and behaviors of individuals. In this telling, the "tiny bird" that kept Lechtman alive sprang from her identity, her varying affinity with and understanding of Polishness, Jewishness, communism, and motherhood.

Born in Łódź, Poland, Lechtman was seventeen when her family left for Palestine in 1935. After only two years, she was expelled from the Mandate, along with her new husband, due to illegal communist activity. They chose to settle in Paris, from where her husband left to join other left-wing idealists to fight in the Spanish Civil War. Meanwhile, Lechtman herself had a difficult time, giving birth to two children, supported by money from her parents and assistance from a network of foreign communists. After the start of WWII and the fall of France, she faced increasing threats from the authorities because of her Jewishness—an identity that seems to have meant the least to her. Her husband faced direct peril from the Nazis. Interned in France after fighting in Spain, he was deported to Auschwitz, where he died in January 1945.

To avoid her own internment, Lechtman fled to Switzerland. There, in 1944, she received training in relief work, which resulted in a job with the Unitarian Service Committee and close ties with its leader, Noel Field. Initially this position brought her expanded opportunities and meaningful work, sending her back to Poland in 1946. But in 1949 she was arrested by Polish authorities, most likely because of her connection to Field, who was placed at the center of a fabricated espionage network used by East European Stalinists to implicate "enemies." Lechtman spent over five years in prison, which devastated her health and her family, but did not destroy her faith in the Party. Only the wave of antisemitism unleashed by the Polish state in 1968 did that. Müller poignantly explains why that betrayal felt worse than the 1949 arrest: "The year 1968, however, singled her out not for what she did but for who she was . . . a Pole of Jewish origin. That attack came from those she believed were called to protect people like herself and her children against the threats of fascism" (266). She subsequently left Poland and she spent the rest of her life in Israel, until her death in 1996.

The book is as much about the author's journey to uncover Lechtman's story as about that story itself. It is a very self-conscious rendering of the lives of Lechtman and her family, with frequent discussions of the sources—their content, context, and physicality. Müller regularly puts herself into the narrative, sharing her motivations, research process, and reflections. Some of this material is quite moving (particularly regarding interviews with Lechtman's children); other offers important considerations about the reliability of various documents or interpretations. Some, though, would be better placed in footnotes. Do we really need to be told, in the text, which of Müller's research assistants found certain

[1] Heda Margolius Kovály, *Under A Cruel Star—A Life in Prague 1941–1968* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986), p. 5.

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information (62, 144), the archives in which she hoped but failed to find documents (55, 77), or with which historians she consulted (93, 115)? The expansive discussion of sources, ruminations on possible interpretations, and speculations to fill in gaps make for an uneven pace and flow of the narrative.

Müller draws on an impressive array of sources to present the story of this fascinating woman, doing it with tremendous empathy. Equally important, I think, is her sensitive and insightful exploration of the impact of Lechtman's communism and mothering on her children. These are all essential twentieth-century tales.

Agnieszka Mrozik. *Architektki PRL-u: Komunistki, literatura i emancypacja kobiet w powojennej Polsce*.

Warsaw: Instytut Badan Literackich PAN Wydawnistwo, 2022. 532 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Photographs. €13.30, paper.

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This is a book I waited a long time for. Probably not even fully knowing how much it was needed. Agnieszka Mrozik's work addresses parts of history without which it is difficult to imagine a complete vision of the People's Republic of Poland, or even state-socialism as a project in general. Mrozik reclaims the role of women in building state socialism. The female architects, "Architektki," were systematically belittled in history, often reduced to partners, daughters or wives, not to mention that the whole fields of their activities were marginalized in political and economic history. Mrozik reminds us about the bold postwar modernization project and reveals the history of state socialism and state feminism nationwide.

The author strenuously digs out a history of women building state-socialism, with Kristen Ghodsee's *Second World: Second Sex* (2019) and Zheng Wang *Finding Women in the State* (2017) as important reference points. Despite as famous Polish communist as Wanda Wasilewska (whose biographies serve as a source of discourse analysis), most of protagonists need to be found again, and their role in socialist modernization project, Polish history and global feminism needs to be reclaimed. Some names might sound familiar to readers like Zofia Dembińska, Żanna Kormanowa or Eugenia Krassowska, but so many need to be properly heard: Fryderyka Kalinowska, Halina Koszutska, Wilhelmina Skulska, Anna Lanota and many more. From politicians, writers, activist, to teachers, librarians and sexual educators, Mrozik reconstructs female biographies, but most importantly she focuses on a broader social context and changing realities of state-socialism (also outside of Poland).

Mrozik examines emancipatory polices with their failures and contradictions, but also successes. She analyses popular TV series, movies, letters to the press, but also memory policies that marginalized many of her protagonists. The "feminine" interests and problems like children's rights, education, divorce regulations, reproductive rights, as she argues deserve to stand in the center of postwar change. She claims that communism, offering emancipatory narrative and a promise of feminist modernization can be seen a essential generational experience especially for women.

All this helps Mrozik to escape the danger of focusing on a few, fairly elitist biographies and shift the book's optic to issues often marginalized from the perspective of the political history.

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