ditions. Paradoxically, it seems that perpetrator studies move us away from the perpetrators themselves towards the contexts they are operating within.

Colchester Felix Schnell

Katarzyna Matul: De la résistance à l'autonomie. L'affiche polonaise face au réalisme socialiste, 1944–1954. (Politique et échanges culturels, Bd. 522.) Alphil. Neuchâtel 2023. 200 S. ISBN 978-2-88930-480-6. (€ 22,–.)

This book monograph (based on a PhD thesis) about posters made in Poland between 1944 and 1954 seeks to explain why there was a boom in the production of this type of art during this period. The book offers the explanation chronologically, starting with favorable conditions in the inter-war period, the frequent use of posters by the underground movement during World War II, to the establishment of dedicated workshops (in Lublin under Soviet tutelage and in Łódź) in the early post-war period. But for Katarzyna Matul the major factor was the massive investment in movie posters in the second half of the 1940s. The state-sponsored cinema organization "Film Polski" took the important decision not to simply reproduce foreign posters, but to create its own; it was thanks to cinema that the poster industry really took off, as illustrated by the examples of the poster for *Citizen Kane* (released in Poland in 1948) and for the French movie *La Symphonie Pastorale* in 1947. Here there was a real artistic interest, which M. analyzes well: the project was to make posters that were different from the "American style," which the Polish artists considered "bad taste" and, implicitly, to make posters that also veered away from the Soviet examples. The ambition to forge a "Polish style" in this field motivated the artists.

The book references interesting unpublished and unknown documents, such as a stenogram of a debate in 1951 at the Zachęta National Gallery (preserved at the National Museum in Poznań in the collection of the artist Szymon Bojko, the author of the 1972 book *Polski plakat współczesny*). The stenogram shows different expectations surrounding the poster art, but all interlocutors shared the aim of creating a unique and successful product.

Three main points can be discussed. Firstly, posters for movies about the Holocaust raise questions about the connection between poster art and the postwar memory politics. This is the case with Wanda Jakubowska's film *Ostatni etap*, whose poster depicts a broken flower put against the backdrop of a concentration camp uniform. The poster was judged by some to be formalist, which led to a discussion about what formalism meant (a recurrent question at the time). Another film that gave rise to controversy is *Ulica Graniczna*, a re-enactment of the Warsaw ghetto and the 1943 uprising; in this case, the debate set director Aleksander Ford against the poster artist Eryk Lipiński and focused on the appropriateness of showing "figures burning in destroyed houses." These interesting cases raise the question about the ways we connect the history of the poster and the history of the visual memory of the Shoah in Poland. This question links the book to the 2023 exhibition *Pomniki oporu: Sztuka wobec powstania w getcie warszawskim (1943–1956)* (Monuments of Resistance: Art and the Uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto), dedicated to the visualization of the Shoah, which took place at the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw.

Secondly, M.'s hesitations surrounding the word "socialist realism" can be questioned. The author states in her introduction that she wants to showcase creativity throughout the period 1944–1954. Still, the core of the book is based on a conventional chronological division. In 1944–1948 the poster format boomed, then it was interrupted in 1949–1953, to make a great comeback during de-Stalinization. The author associates the term "socialist realism" negatively, with the dark period of low creative output. This leads to an unresolved question whether posters from the 1944–1948 period functioned outside the realm of socialist realism. Or should we consider them as within the realm of socialist realism? This ambiguity reveals the persistent hesitation surrounding this very term, which continues to encumber researchers.

Thirdly, there is a question about the uniqueness of Polish posters in the Communist Bloc. M. does not explicitly discuss this point, but she implicitly suggests it, by claiming that there was a "Polish style" in poster design. The exceptionality argument already appeared in the 1950s. From that time on, Poland organized poster exhibitions in other socialist countries, where their specific style was discussed, contributing to their growing reputation. Poland also succeeded in creating "big names" in poster design, such as Tadeusz Trepkowski, who was revered after his death in 1954, which led to the general appreciation of the Polish poster industry. We might add that, in 1968, the founding of a museum specifically devoted to posters in Wilanów contributed to the further association of posters with Poland. Posters created in other Soviet Bloc countries did not have a similar aura. And yet, if we consider posters by György Konecsni in Hungary, or even anonymous Czechoslovakian, Romanian, and Bulgarian posters, the thesis about the exceptionality of the Polish style in poster art is less obvious. Also, the strict division between the 1944–1948 period and the 1948–1953 period seems less obvious. Though it is not exactly the author's aim, this book points about the transnational history of posters from across the whole Socialist Bloc, and invites to a more critical history of Poland's poster art as a distinct brand.

Créteil Jérôme Bazin

No Neighbors' Lands in Postwar Europe. Vanishing Others. Hrsg. von Anna Wylegała, Sabine Rutar und Małgorzata Łukianow. Palgrave Macmillan. Cham 2023. 422 S., 14 Ill. ISBN 978-3-031-10856-3. (€ 139,–.)

In their conclusion to the book under review, Sabine Rutar and Anna Wylegała cite Ernest Renan's 1882 lecture "What Is a Nation?" Speaking at the Sorbonne, Renan opposed the mainstream primordial-organic definition of a nation, contending instead that a nation is a collective spirit bound together as much by shared *forgetting* as by the forging of shared memories. This constructed, modern definition of national belonging inspired Benedict Anderson to coin his influential term "imagined communities" in 1983. Considering Eastern Bloc territories ravaged by mid-century population policies, Rutar and Wylegała take this selectivity of national identity in a dark direction: social cohesion after 1945 rested upon forgetting how millions of former neighbors had been excluded, plundered, abused, expelled, and subjected to mass murder. Applying Rogers Brubaker's theory of "ethnicity without groups," the collection's articles show how the "event" of forced migration and mass murder solidified ethnic groupness as an experienced reality and forged homogenous nation-states based upon "forgetting" the multiethnic past.[1] National identity relied on absence (whole social castes killed or deported) and abundance (seemingly endless objects appropriated from vanished neighbors). For example, "the locals, long-term residents and new arrivals alike, wanted to forget that any Germans had ever lived in these areas, and their marginalization in memory is part of an ongoing reluctance to acknowledge and remember multiethnic local histories—as doing so would entail the voicing of difficult and multilateral issues bound up with responsibility and with trauma" (p. 410). Cleansed settlement regions became culturally and economically poorer than before, their seeming stability based upon silences and primordial-national mythologies that have outlived the communist regimes that fostered them in pursuit of postwar legitimacy.

Assessing archives, trial records, and interviews, the contributors offer micro-historical fieldwork, whose grassroots insights inform decades of analysis about the era's population upheavals. Back in 1989, Jan Gross's watershed article established that postwar communist regimes solidified their authoritarian rule thanks to the destruction of pre-war social

1 Rogers Brubaker: Ethnicity without Groups, Cambridge, MA—New York 2004.