This book has been a long time in the making and I have accrued many debts along the way. The first is to Stephen Kotkin, who inspired the questions at the heart of this project. He encouraged me to think big, pushed me to find the devil in the details, and believed in my work even when I felt lost. Jan Gross and Anson Rabinbach were expert guides to Polish and German history. Their enthusiasm, patience, and wisdom have been invaluable over the years. When I was still an undergraduate, Laura Engelstein supervised my first attempt to write about culture as politics. It is largely thanks to her that I set out to become a historian.

At Princeton, I was immersed in an extraordinary community of scholars and friends. This project took shape through countless conversations with Pey-Yi Chu, Franziska Exeler, Mayhill Fowler, Michael Gordin, Irena Grudzińska-Gross, Jeff Hardy, Elidor Méhilli, Anne O’Donnell, Serguei Oushakine, Ekaterina Pravilova, and other members of the Russian kruzhok. It also benefited from the advice and support of many graduate school colleagues, including Henry Cowles, Rohit De, Will Deringer, Catharine Evans, Evan Hepler-Smith, Zack Kagan-Guthrie, Jamie Kreiner, Ronny Regev, Padraic Scanlan, Margaret Schotte, Chris Shannon, and Annie Twitty. The Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies, the American Council of Learned Societies, and the Charlotte Elizabeth Procter Fellowship provided funding along the way.

Research in Kraków was made possible by a grant from the International Culture Center and its director, Jacek Purchla. Andrzej Chwalba generously invited me to participate in his doctoral seminar, and I am grateful to his students for their feedback. Special thanks go to the incomparable Szczepan Świątek, who insisted I prove myself before letting me into the archive—and then showed me everything it had to offer. My
time in Leipzig was supported by the German Academic Exchange Service and Leipzig University’s Center for the History and Culture of East Central Europe. I am grateful to the Center’s Stefan Troebst and Frank Hadler, as well as Beata Hock, Lars Karl, Hannes Siegrist, and Václav Šmidrkal. Thomas Höpel kindly shared his deep knowledge of Leipzig’s cultural bureaucracy before, during, and after my stay in the city.

I was fortunate to spend a year at the Mahindra Humanities Center at Harvard, where I learned a great deal from Homi Bhabha, Steven Biel, Jonathan Bolton, and Claire Edington. At the College of William and Mary, Bruce Campbell, Frederick Corney, Emily Gioielli, Laurie Koloski, Alexander Prokhorov, and Elena Prokhorova provided feedback on my work and made me a far better teacher and scholar. For the past six years, I have been privileged to call the University of Virginia home. I am particularly grateful to my colleagues Manuela Achilles, Fahad Bishara, Claudrena Harold, Andrew Kahlrl, Mary Kuhn, Erik Linstrum, James Loeffler, Jeffrey Rossman, Jennifer Sessions, and David Singerman. A grant from UVA’s College and Graduate School of Arts and Sciences funded additional archival work in the summer of 2017.

I have presented research from this book in more venues than I care to admit. Thank you to Patryk Babiracki, Rüdiger Bergien, Jadwiga Biskupska, Andrea Bohlman, Chad Bryant, Nicole Burgoyne, Paul Bushkovitch, Holly Case, Kathryn Ciancia, Alon Confino, John Connell, Carol Anne Costabile-Heming, Sarah Cramsey, Andrew Demshuk, April Eisman, Malgorzata Fidelis, Scott Harrison, Jeff Hayton, Francine Hirsch, Seth Howes, Mariana Ivanova, Lisa Jakelski, Krzysztof Jasiewicz, Polly Jones, Zachary Kelly, Padraic Kenney, Pavel Kolář, Anna Krylova, Katherine Lebow, Maike Lehmann, Alice Lovejoy, Norman Naimark, Malgorzata Mazurek, Natalie Miteravich-Carroll, Agnieszka Pasieka, David Petruccelli, Mackenzie Pierce, Andrew Port, Benjamin Robinson, Nicholas Rutter, Juliane Schicker, Leonard Schmieding, Edith Sheffer, Marci Shore, Pavel Skopal, Thomas Sliwowski, Keely Stauter-Halsted, Dariusz Stola, Berenika Szymanski-Düll, Kiril Tomoff, David Tompkins, Katie Trumpener, Eric Weitz, and Katharine White for their helpful comments and suggestions.

Special thanks are due to those who read all or part of this manuscript. I am profoundly grateful to Rachel Applebaum, Cristina Florea, William Hitchcock, Simon Huxtable, Piotr Kosicki, Allan Megill, and Molly Pucci, as well as two anonymous reviewers.
I have had three wonderful editors at Cornell University Press. Roger Haydon first took a chance on this project, Emily Andrew steered it through review and approval, and Bethany Wasik carried it to the finish line. Thank you also to Karen Laun, Bill Nelson, Mary Petrusewicz, Mia Renaud, and Sandy Sadow. The publication of this book was aided by a subvention from UVA’s College and Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. A version of chapter 1 appeared previously under the title “Reconstruction as Revolution: Cultural Life in Post-WWII Kraków and Leipzig” in *East European Politics and Societies* 30.3 (August 2016): 475–495.

Sarah Milov read every draft of every chapter and made every one of them better. Her kindness, generosity, curiosity, and insight have improved my work and my life in countless ways. I owe her more than I can say and am grateful every day for her love and companionship. Our children, Vivi and Lenny Kun-Milov, have been a welcome distraction from this book as well as an impetus to complete it.

When I was growing up I dreamed of being an academic because that was what passed for normal in my family. My father, Mikhail Kunakhovich, taught me to trust my gut and keep exploring. My stepfather, Krishan Kumar, continues to model what scholarship looks like. My mother, Katya Makarova, has been a source of support, encouragement, and inspiration my whole life. These are the people most responsible for this book, and it is dedicated to them.