

APPROBATIONS

***Handbook of American-Jewish Literature: An Analytical Guide to Topics, Themes and Sources*, edited by Lewis Fried; Gene Brown, Jules Chametzky and Louis Harap, advisory editors. New York: Greenwood Press, 1988. 539 pp.: Bibliographies, Index.**

Reviewed by:
David Kranzler
Brooklyn, New York

Purpose and Scope

The proliferation of American Jewish literature and the constant reevaluation of past works in light of literary, historical, psychological and sociological insights, make it imperative to provide a handle on this subject for both scholar and layman alike. This is all the more urgent in view of the new perspectives offered in feminist and ethnic studies.

Handbook of American Jewish Literature goes a long way toward meeting this need. It provides a superb collection of fully documented critical essays by literary specialists, covering eighteen different themes: some obvious, some familiar, and others enticingly new. The obvious include survey chapters on American Jewish literature from 1880 to the present (including drama, poetry, and Yiddish literature), all placed into historical context. The familiar deal with American Jewish autobiography, images of Eastern Europe in American Jewish literature, as well as fiction and historiography of the Holocaust. More novel, at least to this reviewer, were the chapters on Yiddish women poets, on "American-Jewish Fiction: the Germanic reception," and the more tangential sections, dealing with makers of modern American theology and Zionist ideology.

In his introduction, the editor provides an excellent survey of the major social, moral, and political concerns that have moved American Jewish literature, concerns that are more fully delineated in the essays that follow. All of these disparate essays are masterfully woven into the broader fabric of American Jewish literature and the culture that fed and still feeds it. Rather than sounding dissonant notes, these selections provide different perspectives and voices throughout. After all, the same themes and issues that concern writers of fiction or drama inspire the historian or critic as well.

Among the issues explored by the authors within their broader schemes is the ques-

tion of identification, from the days of assimilation and the melting pot to the more recent forging of multiple loyalties, and the relevance of the diaspora to the problems of alienation and reconciliation. Each fully documented essay is enhanced by a bibliography as well as a list for further reading. The final chapter, "Guide to European Bibliography," written by the author of the chapter on the Germanic reception of American Jewish literature, is a bibliographic essay. Following the text, in a series of brief appendices, is a unit titled "Selected Reference Materials and Resources," which is of special importance to librarians. It includes a briefly annotated list of relevant journals and magazines, serials, bibliographies, and reference books, along with the names of a few important libraries and archives. An index completes the volume.

Critique

Despite the volume's overall excellence, there are a number of minor reservations. One of these is the mislabeling of some of the chapters. For example, the essay "Zionist Ideology in America," by Rabbi David Polish, a historian of the Reform rabbinate, does not deliver what it promised. Instead of exploring the rise of Zionist ideology, a real desideratum, the author attempts to resuscitate the ideology of several early Reform rabbis such as Casper Leviaas, Bernard Felsenthal, and Richard Gottheil, showing their support of Zionism in the face of vehement antipathy by most of their colleagues. To a lesser degree, though without integrating them fully, Polish deals with slightly more current individuals—such as Horace Kallen, Ludwig Lewisohn, and Mordecai Kaplan—and their ideological relationship with Zionism.

Even within the confines of the author's narrow perspective, one is hard pressed to understand the omission of the Reform Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, the most famous American Zionist, and American Jewry's

foremost leader for four decades (as well as a student of Gottheil). Issues such as the Social Gospel, and Justice Louis D. Brandeis' relationship to Wise and his Reform colleagues, would have enabled the reader to understand the milieu of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. His mention of Wise in a mere half sentence, in an analysis of early American Zionism, is surely inadequate by any standard. (The index erroneously features a second page reference, which properly belongs to Isaac M. Wise).

Rabbi Arnold Jacob Wolf's chapter, dealing with the "Makers of a Modern American-Jewish Theology," sheds much light on the modern American Jewish tradition as developed by four twentieth-century thinkers. These are: Mordecai Kaplan, founder of Reconstructionist Judaism; Richard L. Rubenstein, the "Death of G-d" philosopher; Eugene Borowitz, leading Reform theologian; and Emil Fackenheim, a philosopher in the "Frankfurt" Buber-Rosenzweig tradition—all original thinkers. One questions the omission of such towering figures as Abraham J. Heschel, among Conservative thinkers, or the Orthodox Rabbis Joseph B. Soloveitchik and Isaac Hutner. They are, however, included in the bibliography, and Rabbi Soloveitchik is mentioned in the introduction. (Ironically, in a footnote, Wolf cites Fackenheim's "introduction to the thought of Isaac Hutner.")

As with the chapter on Zionist thinkers, this essay is more descriptive than critical, and lacks the historical grasp displayed by some of the others, such as Saul Friedman's analysis of six major histories of the Holocaust. Incidentally, Yeshiva University's library is not even listed among seven other relevant institutions.

The Librarian's Perspective

From a librarian's point of view, however, the most inaccurate title is that of the book itself. It is not really a *handbook*, which
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Some Recent Holocaust Bibliographies: A Review

Avraham Greenbaum

University of Haifa
Haifa, Israel

Introduction

The explosion of Holocaust literature in recent decades has naturally led to a need for bibliographies of the topic. What follows is a description of several among a growing number of Holocaust bibliographies to have appeared since the mid-1980s.

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usually consists of a series of articles written in a relatively popular style that clarify a broad range of topics for the layman. That is not the style of these scholarly essays. Nor is the book really "an analytical guide to topics or sources," except in a very limited way. In fact, the only themes that are readily accessible to the reader (and librarian) are those reflected in the titles of the eighteen chapters. One would have hoped for a guide to the myriad specific issues covered so well by the essays, such as identity, alienation, *Yiddishkeit* (and its various definitions), and dual loyalty. Such a tool could have been provided through a good analytical subject index.

Perhaps in a second edition, which this work certainly deserves, the publishers will see fit to add such an index and rectify some of the above-mentioned lacunae, thus providing a more useful reference tool.

Until then, one can enjoy the otherwise outstanding essays, thereby gaining a great deal of knowledge, along with new insights and perspectives on American Jewish literature. Thus, despite minor reservations, this book is highly recommended to both the librarian and the researcher in any field of twentieth-century Judaic Studies.

Dr. David Kranzler has recently retired from Queensborough Community College (CUNY) where he was professor, chief of the Social Science library, and director of its Holocaust Archives. He is the author of five books and many articles on the Holocaust, including the now classic, Japanese, Nazis and Jews: the Jewish Refugee Community of Shanghai, 1938-1945 (Yeshiva U. Press, 1976, reprinted by Ktav 1988). He is currently completing a manuscript on American Jewry and the Holocaust.

We should start by noting that Holocaust bibliographies list not only books and articles (most of them only books), but also memorial sites, program resources, organizations, and literature related to the Holocaust. The last-named category is flexible and may, depending on the compiler or sponsor, include histories of the Jews, discussions of modern antisemitism, the Armenian holocaust, and other items tangential to the main topic. "Holocaust denial" literature, normally a product of neo-Nazism, poses a special problem, but it tends to be included as a distasteful subject which is nevertheless of legitimate interest. We are reminded of the decision by the *Jewish Encyclopedia* at the beginning of the century to give entries to prominent antisemites; this practice has been adopted by serious Jewish encyclopedias ever since.

Reviews

Cargas, Harry James. *The Holocaust: An Annotated Bibliography*. 2nd ed. Chicago: American Library Association, 1985. 196 p.

By a "Holocaust-obsessed Catholic," as the author describes himself. Lists about 500 English-language books, selected for university libraries and large public library and high school collections. Copiously annotated. Indexed by place, concentration camp, and title. In terms of organization and relevance of material, an outstanding work. Cargas has apparently read many of the selected books himself.

Edelheit, Abraham J.; Edelheit, Hershel. *Bibliography on Holocaust Literature*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986. 842 p.

Though a poor piece of bookmaking—reproduced from typescript, crowded, and lacking running heads—this is by far the most extensive of recent Holocaust bibliographies, with over 9,000 books and articles in English. Includes historical background, some articles in popular magazines, and much material from the Holocaust period itself. One of the many subsections is devoted to "revisionist" literature. The Edelheits have produced a fairly closely classified list, indexed by author only. An index by place is sorely missed.

The Holocaust in Books and Films: A Selected Annotated List. 3rd ed. New York: Hippocrene Books, 1986. 158 p.

English-language only. Aimed at librarians and teachers. About 475 entries. Sponsor is the International Center of B'nai B'rith's Anti-Defamation League. All entries are either annotated or, if collective works, have contents displayed. Well done, though in this reviewer's opinion, the controversial aspect of Raul Hilberg's *The Destruction of the European Jews*, should have been noted under the entry for that work.

The bibliography includes some directory information and a small section called "analogies," which lists books on the Armenian holocaust and other comparable events.

Laska, Vera. *Nazism, Resistance, and Holocaust in World War II: A Bibliography*. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1985. 182 p.

By a survivor of Auschwitz, who does her best to provide a scholarly bibliography. The book includes 1,907 entries, mostly in English, with occasional, brief annotations; the general lack of annotations sometimes makes it read too much like a library subject catalog. Index by author only causes a problem; as a minimum, an index by concentration camps and cities should have been provided. Especially useful are the subsections on pre-1945 knowledge of the extermination program and on women in the Holocaust—the latter a subject on which the author is an expert.

Sable, Martin H. *Holocaust Studies: A Directory and Bibliography of Bibliographies*. Greenwood, FL: The Penkeville Publishing Co., © 1987. 115 p.

Since an extensive bibliography of Holocaust bibliographies is hardly necessary as yet, this section of the work is small—and insufficiently annotated at that. An unusual feature is the inclusion of Hebrew and Yiddish bibliographies, although no attempt is made to arrive at a scholarly transliteration of titles. This work is mainly useful as a directory, not only of organizations (including "Holocaust deniers"), but also of memorial sites. The geographic breakdown causes a jarring note to be struck when all one finds under "Virginia" is the American Nazi Party! The indexing of this reference work is good.

Dr. Avraham Greenbaum, now retired from the Haifa University Library, is currently associated with the Dinur Institute for Research in Jewish History, Hebrew University, Jerusalem.