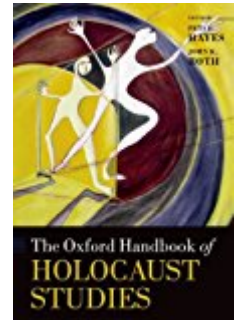


**Peter Hayes, John K. Roth, eds..** *The Oxford Handbook of Holocaust Studies*. Corby: Oxford University Press, 2010. 704 pp. \$150.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-19-921186-9.



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The catalogue of the Library of Congress currently lists more than sixteen thousand books on the Holocaust, two-thirds of them published in the last two decades. Among them are excellent encyclopedias that provide concise and reliable information about basic facts, events, individuals, organizations, institutions, ideas, and developments. Hayes and Roth's *Handbook* does not compete with these. It surveys, evaluates, and structures the state of Holocaust-related research across the humanities and social sciences, mapping the enormous disciplinary variety this field encompasses. One does not need to agree with each of the forty-seven articles to admit that this book, as a whole, is simply impressive. What makes it a unique achievement, at least for the time being, is that it not only covers the history of the Holocaust as a "three-dimensional," "perpetrators, victims, and bystanders"-entailing event but also surveys equally thoroughly the huge amount of research on its aftermath, its short- and long-term consequences, its representations, its memorialization--the various ways the Holocaust has constituted

and affected past decades, and increasingly, the present (p. 3).

The book is divided in five parts. The first introduces the ideological and political conditions of the Holocaust. Refraining throughout from establishing automatic or unavoidable developments, Richard Levy, Patricia Heberer, Eric Weitz, Dirk Moses, and Doris Bergen analyze "enablers" of the Holocaust: the development of organized antisemitism, the chasms of racial and eugenic science, nationalism as a force for demographic engineering, colonialism as a model of warfare and occupation, the racist elements of both German Nazism and Italian fascism, and the impact of the two world wars. Nazi Germany appropriated these models in its own way and used their destructive potentials, yet all of them were common European phenomena or shaped significant parts of Europe; none of them defined a German peculiarity. This contingency is addressed in each article, but recent research has stressed the European context of the Holocaust more deliberately than these accounts reveal. An article evaluating, com-

paring, and weighting (or dismissing) the competing long-term explanations of the Holocaust would have been a useful addition.

The second section, "Protagonists," suggests new categories in order to fathom agency, choice, and responsibility and "to disaggregate the conventional interpretative categories of perpetrator, victim, and bystander" (p. 6). Not an easy task for a handbook that cannot be organized against but rather needs to accommodate established research patterns. Christopher Browning examines "problem solvers" rather than functionaries or bureaucrats; Edward Westermann surveys German and non-German "killers" rather than perpetrators; Paul Levine analyzes the complicity of European states and the United States as "on-lookers" rather than the passivity of bystanders. (The ongoing dispute on the crucial yet underresearched role of individual bystanders or "on-lookers" as opposed to states and organizations is not covered in this handbook, unfortunately.) Do categorizations like these help us fathom grey zones of choice, agency, and responsibility, or do they just put old wine in new skins? The answer is not always clear. It may be kept in mind that the primary job of a handbook of this kind is not to revolutionize established research and research categories but rather to order them.

In mapping the state of Holocaust perpetrator and bystander studies Hayes and Roth's *Handbook* reflects the exhaustion of a field—the editors themselves address the "Holocaust fatigue" (p. 740)—that all too often has lapsed into descriptive and documentary narratives or into recycling again and again the same old simplifying models of explanation: antisemitism, greed, sadism, role behavior, group pressure, obedience to authority, etc. New categories alone won't do it; new concepts, or the innovative implementation of old concepts, are missing. Whereas concepts of gender studies have been successfully deployed to deepen our understanding of coping strategies used by Jewish women and men during the Holo-

caust (excellently examined by Leonore Weitzman in this volume), no serious attempt at studying perpetrators and bystanders (or problem solvers, killers, and on-lookers) in a similar fashion has been made, notwithstanding a long and often controversial dispute on the role of (non-Jewish) German women during the Holocaust. But gender studies are not only about women and femaleness, but also about men and maleness.

Even less attempt has been made to profit from sociological rather than only (social) psychological models when examining the interaction of killers and bystanders. This is even more surprising since for two decades now a new sociology of violence has offered fruitful suggestions on how to examine the construction and process of social engineering through violence. Wolfgang Sofsky's certainly problematic yet still pivotal and inspiring book on the concentration camps, *The Order of Terror* (1997; German 1993) is not mentioned once in this book, not even in the otherwise solid chapter by Karin Orth on the concentration and death camps or in James Waller's account on the contribution of the social sciences to Holocaust studies (the latter in section 5 of the book). One of the directions future research might take is indicated in the third part of the book, on spatial settings. This section includes chapters on "Greater Germany" (Wolf Gruner), "living space" (Wendy Lower), the occupied and satellite states (Radu Ioanid), the labor sites (Mark Spoerer), the ghettos (Martin Dean), and, as already mentioned, the camps (Orth).

Whereas the book succeeds in covering all types of "protagonists" of the Holocaust, including persecuted children (Nickolas Stargardt), the two major Christian churches (Kevin Spicer; Robert Erickson), the Allied powers (Shlomo Aronson), and the Sinti, Roma, homosexuals, and Slavs (John Connelly), it could have included a more detailed picture of recent inquiries into Jewish resistance against the Holocaust. This research has corrected Hanna Arendt's and Raul Hilberg's influential

(and detrimental) marginalization of Jewish agency. Deborah Dwork's excellent and empathetic chapter examines the diversity of forms of aid deployed by different types of rescuers of Jews. No special chapter on Jewish resistance, however, is included in this book. Rather, attention to the topic is dispersed through various contributions, among others one on Jewish responses to the Holocaust at large (Dan Michman) and the above-mentioned article on the ghettos and the camps. Jewish resistance appears once again as a marginal phenomenon that was limited to spectacular events like the 1943 Warsaw ghetto uprising; the Jewish partisan movement in the Soviet Union is barely mentioned at all (pp. 195-196, 347).

The second half of the book surveys research on representations and aftereffects of the Holocaust, a useful distinction as the former began during the Holocaust. The chapters by Peter Fritzsche ("German Documents and Diaries") and Amos Goldberg ("Jews' Diaries and Chronicles") are indeed limited to this time. They do not include the various types of memoirs, trial testimonies, and oral histories which have shaped our view of the Holocaust much more than anything else. Including these would have allowed a synthetic examination how the Holocaust has been represented in subjective documents at different times. Whereas Henry Greenspan's article reports on subjective recollections of the victims, the parallel *ex post* representation of the Holocaust by members of the perpetrator societies, whether killers or on-lookers, is not pictured at all. The rest of the section on representations includes surveys on Holocaust literature (Sara Horowitz), films (Lawrence Baron), art (Dora Apel), music (Bret Werb), and memorials and museums (James Young). Whereas Young, drawing from his groundbreaking monographs, consequently compares different national identity constructions and Baron highlights the cosmopolitan impact of Holocaust movies, most of these contributions are

based on relatively narrow regional or cultural foci.

The last section, "Aftereffects," explores the economic, political, legal, cultural, religious, and scholarly consequences and lessons of the Holocaust and pays particular attention to the impact of the Holocaust on national identities and international relations. Naturally, this section includes rather different contributions. Not surprisingly, Peter Hayes, the leading specialist on the economic history of the Holocaust, provides an authoritative long-term, cross-national analysis of the Nazi plunder from the Jews and the only partially successful efforts to recompense it. Internationally and transnationally wide perspectives are also observed in the surveys on the destiny of the Jewish Displaced Persons after World War II (Arieh Kochavi), the fights against Holocaust deniers (Deborah Lipstadt), the Holocaust's impact on human rights discussions (David Jones), and the Holocaust trials (Rebecca Wittmann); the latter might have profited from considering how competition between the post-WWII nations on the one hand and the East-West confrontation during the Cold War on the other hand propelled or impeded the judicial reckoning with the Holocaust.

Particularly persuasive are those chapters that evaluate the impact of the Holocaust on cultural identities, doubtlessly one of most important and challenging fields of current Holocaust studies. Jeffrey Shandler inquires into changes in Jewish culture under the influence of the Holocaust as the moral paradigm. Boaz Cohen looks at the twisted road of Holocaust memory in Israel; Jeffrey Herf at Germany's convulsive efforts to come to terms with its genocidal past; Jan-Werner Mueller at how the Holocaust has been deployed in European identity politics since 1990. In addition to these regional perspectives, a number of authors evaluate philosophical and religious discourses on the Holocaust in inspiring chapters that radiate John Roth's vibrant authority in these fields. Michael Berenbaum shows how only with

the changing perception of Holocaust survivors since the 1960s has the Holocaust shaped Jewish theological thought. Stephen Haynes tracks the major issues in Christianity's unsettling reflection on the Holocaust. Scrutinizing topics and goals of Holocaust education in Europe and America, Simone Schweber rightly points out that research on these efforts is still underdeveloped.

Whatever one might articulate as a critique of this book--in fact, any critique is or would be more about the state of Holocaust studies than about the book--cannot and should not distract from its outstanding quality. The forty-seven chapters of this volume are, throughout, impressively concise, informative, and up to date; any scholar who has ever edited even a smaller volume knows how difficult it is to achieve a consistently high level of thoroughness throughout all the contributions. If I had to limit my own library to ten out of those sixteen thousand Holocaust books, this would be one of them. And the next time graduate students ask me for help in grasping the often confusing diversity of the field, I shall urge them to read this book and to keep it within reach on the desk--or to bookmark the welcome electronic version the press has provided and equipped with an excellent navigation system.

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