

**Simone Gigliotti, Jacob Golomb and Caroline Steinberg Gould (ed.), *Ethics, Art and Representations of the Holocaust: Essays in Honor of Berel Lang*, Lanham; Boulder; New York; Toronto; Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2014; xxi + 305 pp.; \$42.99 pbk; ISBN: 978-0-7391-8195-9**

*Ethics, Art and Representations of the Holocaust* is a specialist edited collection which would be of particular use to scholars and postgraduate students engaged in literary, philosophical and historical study of the Holocaust and its representation since 1945. This anthology is dedicated to exploring the influence of American Jewish philosopher Berel Lang on the fields of philosophy, ethics and aesthetics, particularly in relation to the representation of the Holocaust and genocides. An essay by Lang at the beginning is useful in contextualizing the collection, reminding the reader of his distinctive approach to the ethical representation of the Holocaust. Lang developed this approach over five books which he wrote on the subject between 1988 and 2009. For Lang, ‘It does not minimize the enormity of the Nazi genocide to place it firmly within human history: human motives, human actions (and inactions), human consequences. As a historical event, it is thus not at all unspeakable or incomprehensible, at least no more than other complex historical events.’ (p. xiii)

Lang’s very human and historical approach to Holocaust representation is both explored further and challenged in the first section on ‘Art in Theory and Practice’. Michael L. Morgan uses the tradition of skepticism to understand Emmanuel Levinas’s declaration of the ‘End of Theodicy’, while Sarah Liu employs the aesthetic philosophy of Wittgenstein to contest Lang’s claim that artistic Holocaust representations are fundamentally reliant on, and subordinate to, historical representations. Elsewhere, Caroline Steinberg Gould offers a compelling analysis of Bernhard Schlink’s *Der Vorleser* (1995), rejecting a reading of the novel in ethical terms and instead focusing on the construction of the voice of Michael as an

‘unreliable’ narrator. Given the title of the anthology’s first section, it would have been pleasing to have had more art historical essays, in a similar style to Shelley Hornstein’s chapter on Christine Borland’s, *L’Homme Double* (1997). However, the creative imagination finds alternative outlets such as Howard Needler’s fantasy dialogues, ‘Philosophical Fancies’ which include a pleasingly pointed and paranoid, ‘Heidegger’s Nightmare’ (pp. 78-81).

According to the editors, part two of the collection explores, ‘the individual’s embeddedness in history and culture.’ (p. xviii) Once again, the responses to this theme are broad from Jacob Golomb’s analysis of the contested influence of Nietzsche on Hebrew writers Ahad Ha’am and Berdichevski, to Colbert Nepaulsingh’s critiques of Benedict Anderson and Homi Bhabha and Gary Shapiro’s meditations on ‘Thoreau’s Philosophical Saunter’. Nonetheless, three essays in this section particularly stand-out for their examination of the individual in relation to society. Susan D. Pennybacker’s analysis of the role of diaspora Jewish communities in opposing South African apartheid is fascinating; particularly the part played by émigré Jewish Communists. Equally, Weaver Santaniello’s essay on the American reception of Nietzsche in the 1940s, and his dissection of Crane Brinton’s crude reading of Nietzsche as ‘half a Nazi’ is essential reading for scholars grappling with the relationship between fascism, modernism and modernity. Finally, Steven J. Zipperstein critically reflects on Israel and the idea of utopia, and also offers some sensible and balanced thoughts on the role of Israel in contemporary politics.

The anthology concludes with a section devoted to ‘The Holocaust in History and Representation’, though in reality this theme is interwoven throughout the book. Essays on poetry are offered by Victoria Aarons on Primo Levi’s ‘Shema’, and by Michael Mack on the representation of Nazism in Sylvia Plath’s ‘Daddy’. Elhanan Yakira’s chapter on philosophy and the Holocaust is illuminating in providing an introduction to not just the ideas of the ‘usual suspects’ on this subject (eg. Theodor W. Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Hannah Arendt,

Jean-François Lyotard, Emmanuel Levinas), but also discusses a range of thinkers whose ideas are sometimes forgotten in contemporary Anglophone debates on Holocaust representation. These include Hans Jonas, Jean Cavallès and John Rawls. Perhaps given Lang's emphasis on the importance of historical representation of the Holocaust, it is appropriate that this section contains three historical essays. Dalia Ofer analyzes the 'History of the Police in Ghetto Villiampole (Kovno)', a unique war-time account of the Kovno Ghetto by a group that still provokes historical controversy, the ghetto's Jewish Police. Anna Ziębińska-Witek reconstructs the State Museum at Majdanek's history of exhibition and display since 1945, including the 'aesthetics of horror' (p. 269) and use of waxworks which characterized the first exhibition. However, given the ethical focus of this anthology, perhaps most notable of the historical essays is Joanna Beata Michlic's chapter on Polish women who chose to be 'dedicated rescuers' of Jews during World War II. Using diaries, memoirs and post-war letters to Jewish organizations, Michlic paints an unsentimental picture of the motivations, hardships and quiet, stoic heroism of this extraordinary group of women.

This anthology is a fitting exploration of the intellectual influence of Berel Lang. It is a particularly useful volume for philosophers, literary scholars and historians concerned with the ongoing controversies and questions provoked by the representation of the Holocaust and its legacies since 1945.

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