

last saw his mother and brother. Dispatched to a satellite camp named Blechhammer, the author recalls perversely that the slave labor battalion he joined “instead of trying to sabotage the operation, we decided to act as an elite workforce.” As he describes the process of miraculously surviving the Nazi death machine, he comes to the conclusion that “survival feels less like a heroic act than having won a lottery against truly astronomical odds.”

There are many Holocaust memoirs and there are several famous ones that deal with the experience of the death marches. For those familiar with these accounts the story related here will not be altogether new. However, the author’s matter-of-fact presentation and his rumination on life so close to death provide an important narrative and one that researchers and those interested in Jewish or European history, especially students, will find immensely compelling. Acknowledgments, appendix, foreword, preface. SJF

## Holocaust Literature: A History and Guide

David G. Roskies & Naomi Diamant  
Brandeis University Press, 2013  
Paperback 368 pp. \$35.00 [e]  
ISBN: 978-1611683585

**H**olocaust Literature: A History and Guide is the first major attempt to define and catalog the full range of Holocaust literature in all languages and genres, from the “Memory Books” that began to appear in the first weeks after the war up through the beginning of the twenty-first century. The co-authors, David Roskies and Naomi Diamant, begin with a capacious definition of their subject as “All forms of writing, both documentary and discursive, and in any language, that have shaped the public memory of the Holocaust and been shaped by it.” They state matter-of-factly that they will study Holocaust literature “as literature,” a position that is by no means obvious and which allows for some interesting and original observations. Roskies and Diamant usefully separate the wartime writers living in the “Jew-zone” (anywhere in occupied Europe, where, as the authors trenchantly put it, any Jew still alive by 1943 was “a statistical error”) from those in the “free zone,” primarily the United States and Palestine—a division that does the service of bringing together all the Yiddish-speaking writers of the ghettos (Abraham Sutzkever in Vilna, Yitzhak Katznelson in Warsaw, and so on). The book’s chronological approach has the salutary effect of demonstrating just how much of this literature was created either during the war or in the years immediately following it, a corrective to the conventional wisdom that

tends to regard the decade or so after the war as a literary gap.

The book’s second half is devoted to a “Guide to the First Hundred Books,” which Roskies and Diamant present as a “suggested reading list... on an even playing field, with equal time given to all:” each book receives about a page of description and criticism. There are some interesting inclusions—and exclusions. I was glad to see the authors making a claim for the lesser-known Yiddish writers, as well as championing some of the more difficult and controversial fiction of the Holocaust, especially Piotr Rawicz’s 1961 novel *Blood from the Sky*, a brilliantly surreal work of fiction. On the other hand, I take issue with the inclusion of *Suite Française* by Irène Nemirovsky, which the authors point out rightly has the feel of a “collaborationist novel,” and which, despite the well-known circumstances of its discovery and publication, does not in any way describe the experience of Jews in France. And the authors are harder on Jerzy Kosinski, author of *The Painted Bird*, which was once thought to be an autobiographical novel, than they are on Benjamin Wilkomirski, whose pseudomemoir, *Fragments*, has been thoroughly discredited. Finally, I would have liked to see a work by a member of the “third generation,” the survivors’ grandchildren, such as Jonathan Safran Foer’s *Everything Is Illuminated*. As Roskies and Diamant perceptively observe, the literature of the Holocaust “unfolds both backward and forward;” previously unknown works will undoubtedly continue to appear, and those still to be written will have a new perspective on the ever-evolving significance of the Holocaust in our culture. RF

## Landscapes of the Metropolis of Death: Reflections on Memory and Imagination

Otto Dov Kulka  
Ralph Mandel, trans.  
The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013  
Hardcover 102 pp \$23.95 [e]  
ISBN: 978-0-674-07289-3

**O**ttto Dov Kulka, a distinguished Holocaust scholar, presents here his own experiences as a survivor of Theresienstadt and Auschwitz. In a vivid memoir that is at times achingly beautiful, he recounts horror and death. The voice of the young Kulka provides emotional distance, enabling the reader to appreciate his lyrical prose and even the haunting photographs.

In 1978, while in Poland for a conference, he journeyed (returned) to Birkenau. Later, fifty years after the War, he began revisiting sites and recording his memories and impressions. When he was eleven, he had been part

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