

Book Reviews

ensorship, even if they are not even certain of its reasoning, for fear that they will be excluded, banned, and themselves become subject to censorship. Hence biographies must become hagiographies. The heroes must remain heroes and the villains remain villains. Nuances in behavior and thinking that are part of the real world disappear, and all holy men always act holy, however that may be defined.

Regarding the latter, Shapiro offers two extended chapters on Orthodox rabbis—Samson Raphael Hirsch and Abraham Isaac Look—whose nuanced lives and beliefs have been particularly subjected to such Orthodox censorship. He makes clear that they are not unique—even Maimonides has been treated the same way—but they are exemplary. This means that a variety of writers have “taken liberties” with not only what these men wrote and did, but have even been willing to distort their legal decisions when it comes to Jewish law. The fact that Shapiro demonstrates that even Halakhah—to which he devotes a full chapter, although it is referenced throughout the book—is subject to censorship and distortions, of course raises questions about one of Orthodoxy’s core principles. Orthodoxy has from the outset distinguished itself by its scrupulous fidelity to Jewish law, in contrast with other Jewish groups and denominations whom the Orthodox have claimed take liberties with this law or ignore it altogether. But what Shapiro shows is that when there are nuanced and even more permissive positions in that law taken by otherwise respected rabbinic authorities from Maimonides on down, some Orthodox censors have taken it on themselves to hide, distort, or change those positions in ways that make a mockery of the Orthodox claims to be loyal to Halakhah. In shining the light on these crimes against the truth, Shapiro has done us all a service, but one suspects, he will soon (if he is not already) be censored by these very Orthodox.

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Kim Wünschmann. *Before Auschwitz: Jewish Prisoners in the Prewar Concentration Camps*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015. 376 pp.
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In November 1938, Moritz Carlebach met his long-lost son Emil in the Buchenwald concentration camp. Emil, who was a Communist, was arrested in 1934 and spent the next eleven years in concentration camps; his father, a businessman in Frankfurt am Main, was arrested during the Kristallnacht. With help from the Communist underground in the camp, Emil arranged for his father to be sent to the sick bay, a relatively protected place. When father and son, scions of an eminent family of rabbis, stood face to face, Moritz’s first reaction was to reproach Emil for getting himself to such a place. Emil replied: “You don’t seem to notice that you are here yourself?” Their encounter is illuminating in portraying two types of German Jews in the prewar concentration camps: the political leftist

and the 1938 deportee. Moritz saw himself as innocent: his being in Buchenwald did not count, but he believed his son, arrested for a “real” reason four years earlier, was guilty. Kim Wünschmann shows how the concentration camps criminalized their victims, creating a stigma.

Her prize-winning study offers an original, thorough analysis of the Jewish prisoners in prewar camps, which remain a difficult topic because of their relative obscurity, overshadowed by the camps that served mass murder in the 1940s. In comparison, the early camps were small, holding only hundreds of prisoners. The prewar camps have been the topic of an array of recent, often regional scholarship, which tends to be descriptive and hard to digest. To her credit, Wünschmann synthesizes an impressive array of this scholarship and demonstrates formidable archival mastery. Some of her sources are particularly inspiring, such as a pathological report from the Berlin Charité Hospital.

Wünschmann discusses the place and function of the camps in Nazi Germany and how the camps contributed to the emergence of the Final Solution. In bringing enemies to a discrete space and subjecting them to extreme violence, the Nazis could create their societal domination. Specifically for Jews, the author shows how the camps and the brutality that took place there served social exclusion and later emigration. That the period between 1933 and 1939 was one of Jewish “social death” is well known, but Wünschmann demonstrates that everyday antisemitism was not all; it was the combination of violence, arbitrary arrests, occasional murders, and, after a release, the criminal stigma that the released encountered, that created the social distance.

The brutal first phase of the early camps was from 1933–34. We often read about the camps as faceless foreign horror or as backdrop to redemptive stories. *Before Auschwitz* shows the familiar and terrifying in this place of no justice, where the bad guys won, tortured at length, and murdered, their crimes never avenged. It is important to be reminded of this outrage, which may have slipped from our focus when thinking about Nazi Germany. These passages, especially the first chapter, are a page-turner.

From the beginning, Jewish prisoners were singled out for the most extreme punishments and were the first inmates murdered. In the prisoner community of the early camps, Jews were at the bottom, together with homosexuals. For instance, only very few Jewish doctors became camp physicians. One of the merits of Wünschmann’s book consists in her measured, analytical discussion of extreme violence and torture. *Before Auschwitz* describes instances of extreme violence without falling into pornographic gaze; Wünschmann’s protagonists retain their dignity, even as we learn about torture methods and grievous bodily injuries.

The book is written following Saul Friedländer’s call for integrative history, systematically combining perspectives and voices. Wünschmann also includes the prisoners’ paths after the camps. Many of the Jewish protagonists died in the annihilation camps in the early 1940s, demonstrating that while the early camps pushed for forced emigration, not everyone could leave Germany. In writing about those who perished, Wünschmann brings in these long-dead “little” people, like the sixteen-year-old Eva Mamlok, arrested for anti-Nazi activity,

who continued resisting even in the women's camp Moringen. After her release, Mamlok created her own resistance group. Deported to Riga in 1942, she perished in December 1944 in Stutthof.

Jewish prisoners were only a small minority of the population of early camps, about 5 percent. In 1937, the population in each camp was in the hundreds, and even in 1938 Buchenwald contained less than 5,000. Altogether, some 40,000 Jews were incarcerated in the early camps, usually middle-aged men. Most of them were released, while 2,000–3,000 were murdered in the camps. Only relatively few women were incarcerated in the early camps. They were sent to the former workhouse Moringen, the first concentration camp for women, later replaced by Lichtenburg and, in 1938, Ravensbrück. The author shows that women were often treated relatively better and without almost any physical violence. The prisoners' former class status affected the camp commandant, who treated middle-class women with respect, while maltreating sex workers and women arrested for "racial disgrace."

In addressing prisoners' masculinities, Wünschmann joins ranks with historians of German Jewish masculinity, including Paul Lerner, Benjamin Maria Baader, Maja Suderland, and myself, and shows how keeping up masculine identity became a crucial part of their self-assertion. How masculinity was performed changed. Rather than fighting back during a beating, the inmates relied on confirmation of their male worth through the prisoner community. Also among the Jewish prisoners were men arrested as homosexuals, confirming another Nazi cliché of the effeminate, sexually perverse Jew. Wünschmann offers a real contribution to existing research on the persecution of gays in Nazi Germany, showing the agency of these men who, as gay Jews, were at the absolute bottom of camp society. Simultaneously, she notes that the survivors who mentioned homosexual fellow prisoners always accompanied their statements by a demarcation "of course, I was not homosexual." Wünschmann's compassionate discussion of the marginalized in the prisoner community also includes sex workers, "asocials," and people arrested as sex offenders. Most of these people were murdered in 1942 in one of the euthanasia institutions.

Wünschmann, who studied with Nik Wachsmann, writes from the perspective of Nazi German history rather than Jewish history. Nonetheless, *Before Auschwitz* makes many contributions to Jewish history: the legalism frequent among German Jews in their reactions to being incarcerated; the "making" of Jews out of Jewish Germans, by incarceration, violence, and introduction of yellow badges—in the camps, even "half" and "quarter Jews" were seen as Jews; finally, Wünschmann's examination of the Nazi cliché of the Jewish Bolshevik brings our focus the German Jewish leftist activists. Refreshingly, Wünschmann takes the German Communists seriously rather than dismissing their political views as a folly. Importantly, Wünschmann also shows that apart from exceptions, the camp society created no common Jewish identity. The Jewish inmates were of too different political and social backgrounds. In this respect, the heterogeneity of the Jewish prisoners is an important reminder about central European Jewry.

Wünschmann's careful research and eye for detail offers a wealth of original contributions to existing fields of research, including suicide, homosexuality, prisoner functionaries, constructions of criminality, and the function of concentration camps in Nazi Germany. The book will be a welcome addition to the reading list for those teaching modern Jewish or Holocaust history.

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Carol Zemel. *Looking Jewish: Visual Culture and Modern Diaspora*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015. 198 pp.
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A handful of scholars in the field of modern Jewish visual culture found their way to Jewish studies after a start as “mainstream” art historians. Some were motivated by personal experience or epiphany to move between the mainstream and the field of Jewish art and visual culture, taking a diasporic road less traveled. I think of Margaret Olin’s powerful *The Nation without Art: Examining Modern Discourses on Jewish Art* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001) and her declaration at the beginning of the preface: “It began against my will, in the margins of the notes for my dissertation on the Austrian art historian Alois Riegl....” (xvii). Her scholarship took shape as she encountered deeply rooted antisemitism in the discipline of art history, enmeshed with nineteenth-century nationalism. She and others, including Carol Zemel, have set a high bar for scholarship in modern Jewish art.

Zemel is known for *Van Gogh’s Progress: Utopia, Modernity, and Late-Nineteenth-Century Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). But once that project was completed, her interests shifted, triggered in an Amsterdam bookstore—“a site of recovered Jewish memory”—by an encounter with the photographs of Roman Vishniac and of the less well-known Moshe Vorobeichic. This motivating experience was reinforced by her “long-held interest in my family’s history,” she has written (ix). Their roots were in Romania and the former Russian Pale of Settlement, but Zemel grew up in an acculturated middle-class Jewish family in Montreal. Since then, she has worked with ideas related to the challenges of Diaspora and its relationship to the “uncertain place” of Jewish visual culture “in the histories of modern art.”

In her introduction, Zemel invokes R. B. Kitaj’s *First Diasporist Manifesto* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989). She considers Jewish artists and their largely Jewish subjects not as fixed in relation to a majority culture, but interactively, with a character that is “unfixed and fluid” (2). Her introduction traces “Diaspora” from its Greek origin to its cultural evocation of home and nation and, in particular, Diaspora’s encounter with modernity via Haskalah. She looks at the myth of wholeness in opposition to the fragmentation and loss in Diaspora,