



Mark Glickman, *Stolen Words: The Nazi Plunder of Jewish Books*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016. 344 pp. Hardcover #29.95.

In *Stolen Words: The Nazi Plunder of Jewish Books*, Mark Glickman explores the journey of books confiscated from European Jews during World War II through their eventual rehoming as the community strove to recover.

Beginning with the history of Judaica and Jewish printing, Glickman first seeks to clarify the position of honor books have held within Jewish society and the degree to which the Jewish people regard the written word of all forms, even housing damaged or worn out books in *genizahs* rather than destroying them. Much like the Jewish people themselves, Judaica had been victim of censorship of one form or another for centuries, and many of the surviving volumes bear scars from a variety of organizations, some long before they found their way to the Jewish Cultural Reconstruction (JCR). Due to the archival nature of Judaica collections, the historical pathway is neither simple nor straightforward, and Glickman does an admirable job ensuring that the reader truly comprehends the complexity of the sometimes contradictory situations through which the books travelled. While doing their best to destroy the Jewish people, the Nazi Party strove to preserve Jewish literature and culture to be studied in perpetuity, but found themselves quickly overwhelmed by the sheer volume of material, as would all of the restitution efforts that followed. Given the estimated enormity of the original collection and erstwhile destruction by man, bomb, or otherwise, the amount that survived is somewhat astounding.

Glickman's prose reads less like a dry historical record and more like a scholarly discussion one might overhear in a *beit midrash* (house of study) or one of the many institutions he heralds in their pre-war finery, such as the Strashun Library in Vilna, Lithuania. Edging toward the colloquial at times, Glickman's writing is approachable and practical, rife with asides the modern reader may recognize, such as noted JCR executive secretary and political theorist Hannah Arendt's potential to call herself "Frau Blücher" which Glickman notes "sadly seems to have been lost on Mel Brooks fans everywhere" (264). Clearly, these books have meaning for Glickman. The journey he describes is fraught with meaning, and the people who helped or hindered them on their way are living, breathing individuals, rather than simply names and dates.

Overall, *Stolen Words* is a fascinating look at the rich saga of Jewish books throughout European history. Glickman helps the reader negotiate restitution and the rebuilding of a culture so destroyed in the horrors of the Holocaust. It is a worthwhile read for serious scholar and casual student alike.

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