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HUMANITIES
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The Literature of destruction: Jewish responses to catastrophe, ed. by David G. Roskies. Jewish Publication Society, 1989. 652p bibl indexes ISBN 0-8276-0314-2, \$34.95

The appearance of this book is most imposing, and its contents are a fair match. The arrangement of the book reminded this reviewer of Nadré Schwarz-Bart's epic novel, *The Last of the Just* (1960), which also chronicles the history of Jewish exile and persecution from biblical times to the Holocaust. Unlike Schwarz-Bart, however, Roskies's emphasis is on the Jewish response to catastrophe; his research concludes that the cyclical nature of violence paradoxically brings Jews comfort in the "repeatability of the unprecedented." The book is divided into 20 historical epochs ranging from "Galut/Exile" through "Oracles of Kishinev" to "Return." Each has representative literature by both obscure and famous writers; Isaac Bashevis Singer, winner of the Nobel Prize in literature in 1978, S.Y. Agnon, winner of the Nobel Prize in literature in 1966, and Sholem Aleichem are among the latter set. Genres included in these sections are lamentations, parables, epistles, songs, poems, sermons, and tales. Ancillary discussions touch upon problems facing the compiler of such esoteric materials, namely, the "tyranny of translation" and the chauvinistic nature of these early pieces, all of which are the products of male writers. This rich text includes sources, biographies, an index of biblical cita-

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tions, and maps of Jewish Eastern Europe and the Warsaw Ghetto. It is designed for a very specialized readership and would be appropriate for graduate libraries.—J. A. Dompkowski, *Canisius College*

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