
HOLOCAUST STUDIES

Reflections and Predictions

Peter Hayes

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JOSEPH AND REBECCA MEYERHOFF ANNUAL LECTURE
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THE JOSEPH AND REBECCA MEYERHOFF ANNUAL LECTURE honors excellence in Holocaust research and fosters dissemination of cutting-edge Holocaust scholarship. Generous philanthropists, Joseph and Rebecca Meyerhoff of Baltimore, Maryland, provided support to organizations world-wide, focusing on Jewish learning and scholarship, music, the arts, and humanitarian causes. Their children, Eleanor Katz and Harvey M. Meyerhoff, Chairman Emeritus of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council, endowed this lecture.

Good evening, and thank you all for coming. Thanks, too, to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum for the honor of being invited to speak here tonight. I particularly want to express my gratitude to two people: Director Sara Bloomfield, who is an alumna of Northwestern and who, I am proud to announce tonight, will receive an honorary degree from the university next June, and Nicole Frechette, who did much of the heavy lifting behind the scenes for this event.

Those thanks said, please permit me to begin with a confession. When I accepted the invitation to speak this evening on this topic, I may have been in the grip of hubris. Having just co-edited *The Oxford Handbook of Holocaust Studies* with John Roth—a task that involved each of us reading and emending each of the 47 chapters multiple times—I seem to have overestimated my command of what has become a vast and manifold subject. At least that’s the way things looked to me while actually writing this lecture. The pertinence of the phrase “the sea is so wide, and my boat is so small” occurred to me more than once over the past few months.

And then there is that daunting final word in the subtitle, “predictions.” It’s my own fault, but in choosing it, I apparently forgot something that I’ve often had occasion to say: I am a historian, and the only thing I regularly predict is the past, which is difficult enough. The future is not my department, and assaying it is even more perilous. It is, I can’t help observing, full of what a former secretary of defense rather infamously referred to as “known unknowns” and “unknown unknowns.” Under the former heading—known unknowns, the things we know we don’t know—come the advances that specialists already see that we need, but that no one has managed to make. Peering ahead, it is hard to discern the forms these advances will take, but one can at least state the problems they will address. Under the latter heading come breakthroughs that juxtapose pieces of existing and new knowledge in entirely unanticipated and intuitively

persuasive ways, which is precisely why they seem like field-changers. Only their brilliantly creative authors can see them coming.

Perhaps the distinction will become clear if I refer to two recent books that seem to me to epitomize each category and to demonstrate the vitality and potential of Holocaust studies. By singling out works of history, I do not mean to imply that my own discipline is where all or even most of the action is in this disparate field of study. I do believe that in Holocaust studies, historians have special responsibilities and duties, to which I will return toward the end of my remarks tonight, but right now I am merely taking my illustrations from the territory I know best.

As an example of the first form of breakthrough book, the one that addresses a known unknown, that meets a long recognized but elusive desideratum, I think of Wendy Lower's fine and brand-new work, *Hitler's Furies*.¹ For at least thirty years, scholars have sought ways to bring gender into the story of the Holocaust in consequential fashion, and a few works have achieved a measure of success in this regard, particularly in revealing distinct women's responses to persecution.² Yet the goal remained unfulfilled until Lower's remarkable book, which tells in breadth and depth the story of the involvement in the Holocaust of the more than half a million German women who served as secretaries, nurses, radio operators, receptionists, teachers, and the like in the occupied German East. Why does Lower succeed better than previous aspirants? Above all, because she found—and in some cases through interviews actually created—sources that most scholars did not know were present, and then she embeds these pieces of evidence into broader historical context. The result is a book that operates deftly and simultaneously at the micro and macro levels of experience, conveying German women as individuals yet as products of credible collective processes. Only someone steeped for decades in the study of the Third Reich's barbarous eastern operations could have pulled this off.

My case in point with regard to the second category, a field-changing book whose contribution I and most other specialists did not anticipate, but which most of us instantly recognized as powerfully and productively recasting much of what we have thought about the Holocaust, is Tim Snyder's *Bloodlands*, published in 2010.³ Snyder starts from a well-known but underappreciated fact, namely that 75% of the victims of the Holocaust lived within the prewar borders of three countries: Poland, Lithuania, and the Soviet Ukraine. He juxtaposes to that a less generally familiar but to historians of Eastern Europe well known fact, namely that these same places were the settings in the 1930s and again in the interval between 1939 and 1941 of enormous carnage carried out at Stalin's behest, most of it rooted in ethnic mistrust. And then he shows in heart-breaking detail what these two facts had to do with one another.

The result is an excruciating tapestry of suffering, but also a spin of the interpretive kaleidoscope. The German assault on the Jews becomes part and parcel of a multi-dimensional, multi-sided vortex of ethnic animosities in a particular place. This not only decenters antisemitism as the driver of what happened and relegates it to being one among multiple causes, but also encourages a somewhat uncomfortable empathy with some of the non-Jews caught in the tragedy that the vortex created. Snyder is a careful, measured writer; even so, his argument, like many initial statements of a thesis, strikes some people as having overshot the mark. Nonetheless, there can be no going back after his book. Henceforth the study of the Holocaust in Eastern Europe, where it was for the most part played out, will no longer be two- or even three-dimensional—no longer seen as a story of relations between Germans and Jews or Germans, Jews, and the predominant local population—but rather as deeply embedded in the complicated and multivalent particulars of that time and place.

So you see my problem with that promise to make predictions. The best new work often falls under either of two headings, works that address known problems in hitherto unanticipated fashion or works that identify wholly new problems that no one but the author had recognized. Given these difficulties, is it any wonder that I am going to take refuge for the next few minutes in the soothing comfort of the past in order to trace how far the field of Holocaust studies has come?

II

In doing so, I am going to start, in defiance of Lewis Carroll and Alice, not at the beginning, but at the end, with a glance at where we are now, or at least where one astute author placed us very recently. In 2005, in the epilogue to his brilliant book *Postwar*, Tony Judt described how far awareness of the Holocaust as a subject has come since 1945. The arc is dramatic. Judt traces the transformation of the assault on Europe's Jews from a topic virtually no one wanted to hear about after World War II to one whose discussion has become, as he puts it, the required national "entry ticket" to the European Union, and whose occurrence is recognized as "the dark 'other' against which postwar Europe was laboriously constructed."⁴ Instead of the world of the 1950s and 1960s, when Primo Levi, Elie Wiesel, and Raul Hilberg had difficulty finding publishers, the world of the twenty-first century is one in which pertinent titles pour from the presses. We can all recite the milestones in this process, so there is no need for me to do so more than cursorily: The video ones include *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *Exodus*, *Judgment at Nuremberg*, *The Pawnbroker*, *The Sorrow and the Pity*, the TV miniseries *Holocaust*, Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*, and, of course, Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List*. Since the 1970s, the output of significant films arguably has slackened a bit, while that of books has increased

exponentially. I'm told that the Library of Congress now contains more than 16,000 titles on the Holocaust. Among them are the giant achievements that no one interested in the topic can do without—Hilberg's volumes, Saul Friedländer's *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, and Christopher Browning's *The Origins of the Final Solution*—along with numerous affecting memoirs and fictional accounts, of which Viktor Klemperer's *I Will Bear Witness* and the writings of Charlotte Delbo, Imre Kertész, and Levi and Wiesel probably have had the widest reception and will have the longest shelf life. And then, there are this building and its location—and the similar edifices and placements in London, Paris, and Berlin—as testimonials to how central Holocaust studies have become to modern consciousness.

What has happened in the space of only the past thirty-five years, I maintain, is a radical shift in historical optics. In 1945, and for several decades thereafter, the Holocaust did not stand out in popular or historical memory from the general destructiveness and carnage of World War II. To some degree, especially in Europe, the inattention was self-serving, as claims that “we all suffered in the war” and refusal to recognize the extremity of what had been done to Jews allowed non-Jews to downplay their passive and active collusion in it. The “Vichy Syndrome” hardly was confined to France, though it was most mendacious there. But, the inability to see the Holocaust in high relief was also an authentic product of the massive shock that World War II administered to Europeans. After all, thirty-six and one-half million of them had died from war-related causes between 1939 and 1945, over half of them civilians. At least fifty million Europeans had been made homeless. By 1943, thirty million inhabitants had been uprooted and transplanted, and that was before the Red Army's advance toward Berlin set millions more in motion. The Nazis had pillaged on a scale never before seen, so much so, in fact, that what they plundered from non-Jews, including from the national treasuries that fell into German hands, was at least nine times greater than what they stole from Jews. As the war came to an end, transportation collapsed almost everywhere under hails of bombs and shells, food supplies slumped, currencies became worthless, workplaces went dark, infections spread, and a return to prosperity appeared inconceivable. Moreover, when that return came, it did not happen overnight. Amidst seemingly endless devastation and suffering, many people simply could not recognize the distinctness of the Nazi onslaught against the Jews.

Nowadays, the rubble is not only long gone, but also forgotten. Imagining Auschwitz in 1944 is easier than imagining Cologne or Coventry in that year for the simple reason that Auschwitz remains, though not exactly as it was, whereas the wreckage of Europe's cities lives on only in faded photographs. As recently as twenty years ago, when I lived in East Berlin shortly after the fall of the wall, I could walk along the Oranienburgerstrasse and see buildings

still pockmarked from the street fighting of April and May 1945. Today this is one of the trendiest and glitziest parts of a revived capital city. Is it any wonder that the current optic is the mirror image of 1945? My students, along with most interested younger people nowadays, cannot fathom the enormity of World War II because what the Nazi regime did to the Jews now, thanks, in part, to the cultural products to which I've referred and to museums like this one, not only stands out from, but also literally overshadows everything else that happened between 1939 and 1945.

So, the triumph of the Holocaust, and thus of Holocaust studies, has been its recognition as an injustice of distinct and instructive importance almost worldwide. My classes fill at 200 students annually, and so do the classes of my colleagues in the U.S. and Europe, whatever their size. Museums long deferred now get built; reparations that people sought in vain for fifty years now flow; deniers still babble, but they also now risk punishment in court; and resentful complaints about "the Holocaust industry" and "Shoah business" scarcely dent the general consensus that the murder of the Jews was the emblematic crime of an extremely bloody twentieth century, the very heart of darkness in the "age of extremes."

Along with this achievement has come a string of subsidiary ones of great importance. Three stand out from my admittedly partial vantage point. First, Holocaust awareness and study have made an enormous difference to the political culture of the country I have spent most of my life studying. The Holocaust is an unavoidable memory in Germany, above all in its capital city, where everything from paving stones to street signs to subway steps to plaques on houses and public buildings to vertical granite pillars in the city center calls attention to the viciousness that Germans meted out in the name of racial purity. The shameful recollection of the brutality of one's ancestors is now embedded in Germans' *Verfassungspatriotismus*, their "constitutional patriotism." To remember in humility is regarded as the best protection, not only against repetition, but also of democracy. The German parliament meets annually on the anniversaries of Crystal Night and the liberation of Auschwitz to hear meditations on those events and their continued relevance. Take a moment to consider the significance of that. How many nations memorialize their most shameful actions like this, let alone annually? How many nations, including my own, would be better places if they did?

Second, the growth of Holocaust awareness, now sustained by Holocaust studies, has contributed greatly to an under-noticed phenomenon of tremendous importance that is not confined to Germany. Many people worry today that antisemitism is on the rise and lament that Holocaust studies have done little to stem this supposed trend. I don't agree with either perception, at least with regard to the Atlantic world, but I want to make a slightly different point

here. Holocaust studies have done a great deal to foster *anti-antisemitism*. Within the European Union and North America, making overtly biased remarks or actions toward Jews disqualifies a person or party from being taken seriously or deserving a hearing. The Hungarian government is right now learning how costly flirting with antisemitism can be. This is a tremendous improvement upon the world before 1945. For some perspective on how far we have come, consider the contrast between the poisonous atmosphere whipped up following financial scandals in late nineteenth-century France and Germany that involved a few Jews and the complete absence of such agitation in the United States following the financial meltdown of 2008, in which quite a few Jewish bank leaders played a central role. To students of antisemitism, the silence was deafeningly welcome, as it was a demonstration of the salutary constraints on ethnic generalization that knowledge of the Holocaust has helped engender in this society.

Third, among Germans and among the historians who study them there and elsewhere, the enormous research strides of the past thirty years have wrought a decline in excuse-making. Among historians, the once popular concept of “functionalism” presented the crimes of the Nazi state as products of an infernal competitive spirit that operated like a ghost in the Nazi machine to drive it onto ever more destructive paths. This sort of abstraction was always—though not always intentionally—a sophisticated form of exculpation, and it is now definitively the wave of the past. It has given way to the subtle analyses of the mental worlds of perpetrators (*Täterforschung*) produced by Michael Wildt, Harald Welzer, and Thomas Kühne and to what Neil Gregor has called aptly the “voluntarist turn” that emphasizes the breadth and enthusiasm of most Germans’ participation in the injustices of Nazism.⁵ Though I think the current swing of the pendulum in the latter respect has been too wide, it is nonetheless preferable to the apologetics of the 1950s and ’60s. They are not dead, of course. One can still encounter them in Bernard Schlink’s *The Reader*, albeit more so in the written than the cinematic version, and in some of the defensive reactions, including Schlink’s, to the recent report of the Historians’ Commission on the complicity of the German Foreign Office, in which I took part.⁶ But, overall, the state of analysis and reflection is infinitely more subtle and penetrating than in the infancy of Holocaust studies. The prevalence, indeed ubiquity, of Primo Levi’s concept of “gray zones” is eloquent testimony to this.

III

Even victories have costs, and so it is with the study of the Holocaust. With visibility can come vulgarization, with ubiquity, reductionism. Paul Levine has noted a growing “gap between scholarship and public memory” about the Holocaust and called it a veritable “clash between ‘town’ and ‘gown’.”⁷ Michael Marrus observes, “as acknowledgement of the significance of the

Holocaust has increased globally, an unfortunate accompaniment has been a loss of respect for detailed knowledge of what actually happened.”⁸ Historians seem doomed henceforth to do with the Holocaust what they have to do with every subject: patrol the boundaries of accuracy and debunk the misconceptions and simplifications. To quote Tony Judt again, “Impossible to remember as it truly was, [the Holocaust] is inherently vulnerable to being remembered as it wasn’t.”⁹

Levine noticed the gap because he was writing about Raoul Wallenberg, so venerated a figure that I’m speaking tonight in a building located on a street renamed in his honor. In researching Wallenberg’s actions, Levine was struck by how little most people knew about their origins, more specifically how seldom people appreciated that his deeds in Budapest were the culmination of a two-year-long process by which Sweden gradually had extended the reach of its diplomatic protection to ever wider groups of Jews threatened in Europe. For all his heroism, Wallenberg initiated almost nothing; he applied the tools that his predecessors had developed in the forms of protective documents and residential placards. Indeed, the most effective of those tools was neither his nor even a Swedish invention; the *Schutzbrief*, the official-looking but bluffing protective letter, was the creation of Carl Lutz, the Swiss vice-consul in Budapest

I have developed an hour-long lecture called “The Holocaust: Myths and Misconceptions,” which concentrates on nine widely held beliefs that historians constantly encounter and try—largely futilely—to correct when they address lay audiences. Some of these are variations on the fallacy of *post hoc, ergo propter hoc*, if a development followed another, it must have done so because of that other. For example, many people insist, against overwhelming evidence to the contrary, that antisemitism played a decisive role in bringing Hitler to power, and that Hitler planned to murder the Jews from the day he took office, if not from the day he entered political life. Some of the myths are tenacious expressions of wishful thinking, such as the view that the Allies could have done much to impede the killing once it began or that the Jews themselves could have reduced the death toll significantly if they had resisted more or at least acquiesced less in German demands or that the killing of the Jews undermined or seriously impeded the German war effort. And some of the myths are just elaborations of half-truths into full ones, such as the view that the slave labor system was propelled by corporate greed or that most perpetrators of the Holocaust escaped punishment after the war or that the Holocaust was a product of modernity, even though the killing places were extraordinarily primitive and the pseudo-science that drove the process was barnyard animal husbandry.

And those are just the popular historical distortions; Saul Friedländer, Alvin Rosenfeld, and Lawrence Langer have pointed out countless examples of the kitschy, the trite, and the

solipsistic works that claim to offer artistic or literary or cinematic insights, but end up twisting what happened or distracting from it.¹⁰ Arguably, those who work in such fields have to deal with expository problems that are much more complicated than a historian's. Normally, mixing fact and fiction is permissible in art; so is a measure of playfulness and a concentration on technique. But when deployed in relation to a subject of such overpowering pain and seriousness, these qualities test the boundaries of taste and respect. Yet we need attempts at new artistic representations of the Holocaust to continue, for one thing because they provide the route into the subject that most people find. Even I came in that way, in the late 1950s and early 1960s watching those films that I mentioned earlier and somehow relating them to the civil rights movement happening around me and to the lives of my Jewish friends.

A final downside to the success of Holocaust studies is the temptation, apparently irresistible to some people, to appropriate the horror for their own contemporary purposes. LaRocheffoucauld said that hypocrisy is the homage that vice pays to virtue. Well, instrumentalization is the respect that politics pays to history. Or, to make the point more harshly, one might say that once common people learn of something significant in the past, they will use it to common purposes. As a rhetorical trump, the subject will be invoked where it is disproportionate to the matter at hand and to serve arguments and causes that the victimized would never have countenanced. We have a lot of that in America, and, however unseemly, it will not go away. Attempts to steal the Holocaust will continue. They are the price we pay for the rhetorical power that the concept "Holocaust" has obtained.

These tendencies toward distortion and disrespect are what have prompted Alvin Rosenfeld to write eloquently of a possible "end of the Holocaust," by which he means "that the steady domestication of the Holocaust will blunt the horrors of this history and, over time, render them less outrageous and ultimately less knowable."¹¹ He has a point, and anyone who has watched German junior high school groups traipse, distracted and giggling, through Buchenwald or Sachsenhausen or the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin knows what he means. But, captive audiences aside, I am less concerned. Perhaps because I am a professional historian, I have come through long experience to accept inexpert and self-serving views of history as fairly common among the general public, especially when the subject at hand arouses emotions or touches on group identities. To expect that with regard to the Holocaust, scholars will not constantly have to show how lay people or writers or directors or politicians refuse to let the facts get in the way of their good stories is to sacralize the Holocaust in unrealistic fashion. In this respect, the Holocaust is a piece of the past like every other, and specialists remain cast in

the unenviable role of walking with the proverbial broom behind the elephant. It is dispiriting, but it is one of our reasons for being.

IV

So, what is the outlook for the future? Can the Holocaust stand up to the multiple impulses to reduce its recollection to cliché and, even worse, error? Will Holocaust studies disappear into genocide studies and the significance of the Nazis' choice of primary target become lost in the social sciences' pursuit of abstract covering laws? I am more optimistic than pessimistic on these matters, again perhaps because I am a historian. My kind has been around since Herodotus, at the latest, and the reports of our obsolescence have been both frequent and, *pace* Mark Twain, greatly exaggerated. We understand that most people learn best through narrative, not PowerPoint, and that the great stories survive, especially if they seem pertinent to current events. In the Cold War era, faculty and students flocked to the history of the Peloponnesian and Punic Wars and the origins of World War I, looking for insight into dynamics of great-power rivalries. Over the years, courses and books on the American and French Revolutions show no slackening of public interest, and they won't as long as people remain moved by the challenges and pitfalls of popular sovereignty and self-government.

In the twenty-first century, the Holocaust will enjoy, if that is the right verb, instructive status. It will be seen as *the* object lesson of what happens when a society suppresses internal diversity, rejects ethnic cooperation, condemns internationalization, and glorifies its homogenous self. In other words, Nazi Germany is the negative horror story or *Schreckbild* of an increasingly interdependent and interwoven world. Moreover, the country that perpetrated it was the kind that most states aspire to be: modern, educated, well organized, and, at least for a time, democratic. The warning embedded in these attributes will be inescapable and troubling to ever wider circles of people in an ever expanding number of places. For all her missteps, Hannah Arendt hit on an essential truth when she observed that the murder of the Jews was “an attack upon human diversity as such.”¹² And the conscientious study of that attack is, conversely, a defense of that diversity. The Holocaust has become, in other words, precisely what it did not seem to be in the immediate postwar decades, a “useable past,” and Holocaust studies is recognized as a field that tells people things they need to know in order to deal with the present.

So, Holocaust studies has a future, but what is it likely to look like? Where are we going? Peering “though a glass, darkly,” I venture the following guesses.

- First, we are going back to context. More studies and representations of the Holocaust will do something like what Timothy Snyder did—situate it tightly in time and place. That will mean rebalancing the optic to which I referred earlier and acquiring a kind of

binocular vision that enables historians to see both stories, the war and the murders, simultaneously and more closely in relation to each other. Gerhard Weinberg deserves renewed credit for turning historians' attention in this direction about twenty years ago, and his efforts are now yielding returns.

- Second, we are going east to where most of the murders happened and where most of the new sources are; the Bloodlands will be the terrain of discovery and their languages the medium of it in the next two decades. The lingering relative *terra incognita*, however, is Hungary, on which we have the works of the indefatigable, but nonagenarian Randolph Braham; the untranslated German study by Götz Aly and Christian Gerlach; and until this year, very little else.¹³ Much more needs doing, and the newest volume in the Documenting Life and Destruction series, published under the auspices of the Museum's own Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, is a major step forward.¹⁴
- Third, more attention, again both in histories and representations of the Holocaust, is going to focus on victims more than on perpetrators in the coming years, probably primarily because the reverse has been the case up to now, so we have more to learn about the people under attack. The USHMM's own series Jewish Responses to Persecution is a trailblazer and harbinger in this respect, as well as a reminder of how heart-rending the process will be.
- Fourth, we are going toward comparison, but not homogenization. As Yehuda Bauer used to point out repeatedly, comparison is usually as much about differences as similarities, and the study of genocides side by side is unlikely to disprove his rule. The more scholars look at the Holocaust in relation to other massacres of the twentieth or other centuries, just as the more one looks at the Nazi assault on the Jews in relation to the Nazi assaults on other populations, the more the distinctive obsessiveness of Nazi antisemitism stands out, even amidst the common, fundamental processes of dehumanization.
- Fifth, we are going toward multi-disciplinarity, precisely because more fields of study are appreciating the relevance of the subject. But here I want to reiterate a cautionary observation: historical facts are like the elements of the periodic table. They're multivalent, and they therefore may and can combine in many different ways and be turned to many different purposes. But, again like elements, historical facts are not omnivalent, and the job of pointing out the difference is likely to fall to historians, just as in the natural sciences, it likely does to chemists. We are the killjoys of creativity gone overboard, the wet blankets of uncontrolled inventiveness, and it is necessary and valuable work. My teacher Tim Mason once wrote, at the end of a scathing review of

A.J.P. Taylor's rather perverse book *The Origins of the Second World War*, that, although historians cannot necessarily agree about what happened in the past, "good works of history are informed by a sense of what could not have happened."¹⁵ That remains true; it explains why so many of us disparaged the egregious film "Life Is Beautiful"; and it summarizes one of our main obligations as disciplinary approaches to the Holocaust multiply.

Permit me to cite the *Oxford Handbook of Holocaust Studies* as one indicator of the field's future and its direction. The book has 47 chapters: 24 deal with the aspects of the event itself, its origins, participants, and settings; but almost as many—23—deal with representations and aftereffects, that is, with ways in which the subject lived and/or still lives on. If the number is an emphatic confirmation that the subject *does* live on, the range of the ways in which it does is equally reassuring. And so is the gist of so many of these chapters, which recurrently stress the dialectic that drives the field, the tension between fidelity to what happened and the urge to render it somehow anew. Overemphasis on either of these goals at the expense of the other will prove damaging, but I see no sign that the conversation between the claims of authenticity and those of outreach is shutting down. Whether the chapters focus on cultural manifestations—i.e., literature, film, art, and music—or on effects on religion, academic disciplines, and political entities or movements, one sees the same central and vibrant debate over how to apply knowledge of the past without corrupting it. As long as people think this is worth arguing about, false moves will get corrected, and Holocaust studies will be alive and well.

Finally, Holocaust studies will continue, even after the survivors all have left, to be a field in which history and memory contend in challenging, instructive, and sometimes vexing ways. History and memory are, of course, not the same thing, though this, too, is a matter on which the town and gown also frequently diverge. History is a process of sifting evidence in search of truth, memory one of preserving and transmitting lore or heritage. The former is, at least in theory, equally skeptical of all sources, whereas the latter privileges certain ones. As a result, history is open to modification, but memory often resists it.

For a painful exploration of the gap between history and memory, and one not unrelated to the subject of the Holocaust, I recommend to you Ari Kelman's excellent book entitled *A Misplaced Massacre*.¹⁶ It is about the Sand Creek Massacre of November 29, 1864, when a Colorado militia unit set upon and slaughtered a village of Cheyenne and Arapaho people who thought they were under the protection of the U.S. Cavalry at the time, and about the contending memories of that event on the part of its victims and perpetrators and their respective

descendants. I happened to read this book this year because the massacre occurred while one of the founders of my university was the territorial governor of Colorado, and I was named to the committee that is examining both his role in this ghastly event and whether the university benefited in any way from its consequences. Kelman shows in painstaking detail that, as his title says, the oral traditions of *both* white and native descendants located the attack erroneously. It actually occurred about a mile away from the traditionally recognized site, as proven by the multiplicity of physical evidence, including arrows, rifle balls, and howitzer shells, that turned up in 1999 just beneath the surface of the ground at the newly suspected location, but not at the old one. Discovering this changed little about historians' evaluation or interpretation of what happened at Sand Creek, but it drove a deep wedge between Native Americans who have accepted the new evidence and those who have dismissed it as an affront to their historical epistemology. The National Park Service is caught in the middle, and if you visit the site, as I did last August, you will find that the Park Service's guides and signs equivocate to this day on the location, lest a faction of the tribes feel insulted.

This is an excellent illustration of the competing claims of memory and history and of the difficulty of resolving them. Such claims continue, even now after all the effort and money that have been devoted in recent decades to Holocaust restitution, to bedevil the issue of recompense for insurance policies. Should the nations of Eastern Europe ever truly face up to their responsibilities in this regard, the state of the documentary record will make the gap between what families remember and what they can establish yawn wider than ever before. Meanwhile, in the academic realm, I think I can discern some of the recalcitrance of memory in a number of the most vigorous critiques to Tim Snyder's *Bloodlands*, the book to which I referred at the beginning of these remarks.

V

The events of the Holocaust and their interpretation raise profound and enduring questions. Amidst all the death, the questions are, in fact, deathless. We have recently wrestled in this country with one of them: who will defend whom? Where are the boundaries of a nation's responsibilities in the face of inhuman acts committed by another country against its own citizens? The same question confronted Franklin Roosevelt and the leaders of every country outside Germany from 1933 to 1939. And, on the whole, they gave the same self-centered answer that the American public just gave and for very similar reasons. Every time choices arise, such as those surrounding intervention in Syria, the recollection of the Holocaust will be present and its meaning and implications will be debated. How could it be otherwise? Thank you all very much for your attention.

NOTES

¹ Wendy Lower, *Hitler's Furies: German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013).

² Notably, Marion Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), and Elizabeth Harvey, *Women in the Nazi East* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

³ Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010).

⁴ Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2005), pp. 803, 830.

⁵ See Harald Welzer, *Täter. Wieausganznormalen Menschen Massenmörder warden* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 2005); Thomas Kühne, *Belonging and Genocide: Hitler's Community, 1918-1945* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010); Michael Wildt, *An Uncompromising Generation: The Nazi Leadership of the Reich Security Main Office* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009); and Neil Gregor, "Nazism—A Political Religion? Rethinking the Voluntarist Turn," in Neil Gregor (ed.), *Nazism, War and Genocide: Essays in Honour of Jeremy Noakes* (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2005), pp. 1-21.

⁶ See William Collins Donahue, *Holocaust as Fiction: Bernhard Schlink's "Nazi" Novels and Their Films* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). For Schlink's appalling response to Eckart Conze, Norbert Frei, Peter Hayes, and Moshe Zimmermann, *Das Amt und die Vergangenheit: Deutsche Diplomaten im Dritten Reich und in der Bundesrepublik* (Munich: Karl Blessing Verlag, 2010), see Bernhard Schlink, "Die Kultur des Denunziatorischen," *Merkur*, 745 (June 2011), pp. 473-86.

⁷ Paul A. Levine, *Raoul Wallenberg in Budapest: Myth, History and Holocaust* (Portland, OR: Valentine Mitchell, 2010), pp. 12-13.

⁸ Michael R. Marrus, "The Lessons of the Holocaust," unpublished manuscript, pp. vi-25.

⁹ *Postwar*, p. 830

¹⁰ See Saul Friedländer, *Reflections of Nazism: An Essay on Kitsch and Death* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984); Lawrence L. Langer, *Using and Abusing the Holocaust* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006); and Alvin H. Rosenfeld *The End of the Holocaust* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011).

¹¹ Rosenfeld, p. 12.

¹² Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), pp. 268-69.

¹³ See Randolph L. Braham, *The Politics of Genocide: The Holocaust in Hungary* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2000), *Studies on the Holocaust: Selected Writings*, volume 1 (Boulder: Social Science Monographs, 2000), “A Post-Mortem of the Holocaust in Hungary,” Monna and Otto Weinmann Lecture Series (Washington, DC: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2012); the monumental *The Geographical Encyclopedia of the Holocaust in Hungary* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2013); and Christian Gerlach and Götz Aly, *Das letzte Kapitel: Der Mord an den ungarischen Juden* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2002).

¹⁴ Zoltán Vagi, László Csősz, and Gábor Kádár, *The Holocaust in Hungary: Evolution of a Genocide* (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2013).

¹⁵ T. W. Mason, “Some Origins of the Second World War,” *Past & Present*, 29 (1964), reprinted in Esmonde M. Robertson (ed.), *The Origins of the Second World War* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1971), p. 125.

¹⁶ Ari Kelman, *A Misplaced Massacre: Struggling over the Memory of Sand Creek* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

PETER HAYES is the Theodore Zev Weiss Holocaust Educational Foundation Professor in the Department of History at Northwestern University. He is the author of *From Cooperation to Complicity: Degussa in the Third Reich* (2004) and *Industry and Ideology: IG Farben in the Nazi Era* (1987). He is the editor of *Lessons and Legacies III: Memory, Memorialization, and Denial* (1999) and *Lessons and Legacies I: The Meaning of the Holocaust in a Changing World* (1991), and the co-editor, with John K. Roth, of *The Oxford Handbook of Holocaust Studies* (2011). His volume *How Could This Happen? A Reader on the Holocaust* is forthcoming in 2014. Dr. Hayes currently serves as a member of the Academic Committee of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council.

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