



UNDERSTANDING ATROCITIES: REMEMBERING, REPRESENTING, AND TEACHING GENOCIDE

Edited by Scott W. Murray

ISBN 978-1-55238-886-0

THIS BOOK IS AN OPEN ACCESS E-BOOK. It is an electronic version of a book that can be purchased in physical form through any bookseller or on-line retailer, or from our distributors. Please support this open access publication by requesting that your university purchase a print copy of this book, or by purchasing a copy yourself. If you have any questions, please contact us at ucpress@ucalgary.ca

Cover Art: The artwork on the cover of this book is not open access and falls under traditional copyright provisions; it cannot be reproduced in any way without written permission of the artists and their agents. The cover can be displayed as a complete cover image for the purposes of publicizing this work, but the artwork cannot be extracted from the context of the cover of this specific work without breaching the artist's copyright.

COPYRIGHT NOTICE: This open-access work is published under a Creative Commons licence. This means that you are free to copy, distribute, display or perform the work as long as you clearly attribute the work to its authors and publisher, that you do not use this work for any commercial gain in any form, and that you in no way alter, transform, or build on the work outside of its use in normal academic scholarship without our express permission. If you want to reuse or distribute the work, you must inform its new audience of the licence terms of this work. For more information, see details of the Creative Commons licence at: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

UNDER THE CREATIVE COMMONS LICENCE YOU **MAY:**

- read and store this document free of charge;
- distribute it for personal use free of charge;
- print sections of the work for personal use;
- read or perform parts of the work in a context where no financial transactions take place.

UNDER THE CREATIVE COMMONS LICENCE YOU **MAY NOT:**

- gain financially from the work in any way;
- sell the work or seek monies in relation to the distribution of the work;
- use the work in any commercial activity of any kind;
- profit a third party indirectly via use or distribution of the work;
- distribute in or through a commercial body (with the exception of academic usage within educational institutions such as schools and universities);
- reproduce, distribute, or store the cover image outside of its function as a cover of this work;
- alter or build on the work outside of normal academic scholarship.



Acknowledgement: We acknowledge the wording around open access used by Australian publisher, **re.press**, and thank them for giving us permission to adapt their wording to our policy <http://www.re-press.org>

Introduction

Scott W. Murray

This collection has its origins in a modest, multidisciplinary conference—“Understanding Atrocities: Remembering, Representing and Teaching Genocide”—held at Mount Royal University in Calgary, Alberta, in February 2014. The conference brought together leading experts, emerging and established scholars in the field of genocide studies, as well as undergraduate and graduate students, secondary school teachers, community members, and policy-makers in order to share new scholarship and new teaching perspectives on the global, transhistorical problem of genocide. Inspired by the goal of creating a forum bridging scholarly and community-based efforts to understand genocide, the conference aimed to augment the important specialized contributions of academic scholarship with insights and perspectives from teachers, non-profit groups interested in peace and conflict studies, members of Indigenous communities, and other interested members of civil society. Concerned with the automatic—and often, therefore, unexamined—identification of genocide with atrocity, our aim was the investigation of how this historical relationship frames and complicates possibilities for the understanding and prevention of genocide.

A key feature of the scholarly study of genocide has been a steady broadening of perspectives, beginning with efforts to look beyond the universality of the Holocaust as *the* genocide. When the journal *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* was established in 1986, its commitment to carrying out a scholarly, multidisciplinary examination of the Holocaust included a willingness to consider the subject of other genocides, but it explicitly excluded

the publication of “memoirs, literary, dramatic or musical efforts.”¹ Over a decade later the *Journal of Genocide Research* (JGR) continued to supplement what were once primarily historical studies of genocide worldwide with other social science perspectives, while leaving room for contributions to a “Poet’s Corner” and an “Art Gallery” (although it has since reverted back to being primarily a historical journal).² Today the subject is studied from every possible disciplinary perspective in the social sciences and humanities, and it includes genocides that have occurred throughout history and across the globe. The breadth of the contributions to this volume reflects this remarkable evolution in our thinking about genocide, while also affirming its status as an essentially “contested concept.”

One challenge we face today, therefore, is to find ways of making this immense, complex, ever-expanding body of scholarship accessible to non-academic audiences, a need stemming from growing pressure to educate people about genocide, primarily with an eye to prevention. It was with this aim in mind that the International Association of Genocide Scholars (IAGS) and the International Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies (IIGHRS) teamed up in 2006 to create *Genocide Studies and Prevention* (GSP), which, in promoting the development of “new ideas on the prevention of genocidal death-making,” aimed to “go beyond safe, approved, and established paradigms of scholarship and science,” and was “open to the unusual, the daring, and the courageous.”³ Similarly, the didactic promise of emerging scholarship on genocide and its power therefore to shape policy-making was a key theme at a 2012 symposium revealingly entitled “Imagine the Unimaginable: Ending Genocide in the 21st Century,” held at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) in cooperation (also revealingly) with the US Council on Foreign Relations and CNN.⁴ At this same symposium, polling revealed by the USHMM showed that two-thirds of Americans believe that education is key to genocide prevention, while also displaying what historian Timothy Snyder identified as a lamentable lack of historical awareness about almost all other instances of mass atrocity other than the Holocaust.⁵

The conflict in Darfur, Sudan, which raged most devastatingly between 2004 and 2010, was vital in stimulating this new activist interest in genocide more broadly, which in turn helped precipitate the growing distinction between what Jens Meierhenrich has described as the predominant “vocational imperatives” at work in genocide studies today—advocacy and

scholarship.⁶ The former, which animated the work of such early scholars in the field as Israel Charny and Gregory Stanton, regards the academic study of genocidal violence in such places as Cambodia, Rwanda, the former Yugoslavia, and Sudan as sterile unless it gives practical, policy-focused application to the Holocaust-inspired slogan “never again.” Consequently, the IAGS, in addition to organizing conferences and publishing *GSP*, has passed a series of resolutions since 2005 condemning the conduct of such states as Syria, Iran, Turkey, and Zimbabwe, while also calling for military intervention in Darfur.⁷ According to Dirk Moses, this movement toward awakening the “consciousness of the scholarly community,” as well as the winding down of divisive debates over the uniqueness of the Holocaust, have opened up a discursive space “for a non-sectarian, non-competitive, and non-hierarchical analysis of modern genocide.”⁸ Nevertheless, the IAGS’s controversial advocacy concerning Darfur, which belonged to what some described as an ill-informed humanitarian effort that damaged efforts to find local solutions to the crisis,⁹ highlights concerns over what Meierhenrich called the “continued prevalence of moralism in the study of genocide studies.”¹⁰ This in turn has helped to strengthen, therefore, the position of the second of genocide studies’ vocational imperatives—i.e., scholarship. Manifested in the labours of Jürgen Zimmerer, Donald Bloxham, Dan Stone, Ben Kiernan, and Alexander Hinton, among others—and expressed organizationally through the formation in 2005 of the International Network of Genocide Scholars (INOGS), which publishes the research-focused *JGR*—this emphasis on scholarship over advocacy has, according to Meierhenrich, placed genocide studies on a more solid theoretical and empirical footing, and represents a “maturation” of the field.¹¹

Far from achieving anything like a consensus, genocide studies scholars continue to spar over the *raison d’être* of the field—and *pace* Moses’s prediction of accord, *GSP* was relaunched in 2014 as *Genocide Studies International* (*GSI*) in order to address renewed concerns that the latest scholarship on genocide studies has been similarly unsuccessful in influencing policy-making in order to aid with prevention. Echoing the lament of Gabriel Schoenfeld almost twenty years ago regarding the “academicization” of Holocaust history, the editors of *GSI* now argued that “esoteric discussions of abstractions using vocabulary that turns off the public” are emblematic of a “genocide industry” that, through a combination of disciplinary navel-gazing and a stubborn resistance to seeing the enormous

complexity of genocidal phenomena, consistently fails to transform scholarly rhetoric into “concrete, effective policy.”¹² And so it goes.

In a limited but sincere effort to transcend these debates and divisions within the field of genocide studies, the organizers of the “Understanding Atrocities” conference aimed to raise public awareness, stimulate new kinds of teaching and learning on the subject, and, if possible, positively affect public policy by selecting a universally held assumption about genocide—namely, that it is an atrocity—as the centre of gravity for wide-ranging discussions about the nature and consequences of this “ongoing scourge.”¹³ Deliberately broad in scope and intellectual ambition, the conference asked participants to consider such questions as: Why is genocide carried out with such viciousness and cruelty? How, if at all, does the demonization of perpetrators of atrocity prevent us from confronting the complicity of others, or of ourselves? What are the limits of the law, of history, of literature, and of education in understanding and representing genocidal atrocity? What are the challenges we face in teaching and learning about extreme events such as these, and how does the language we use contribute to or impair what can be taught and learned about genocide? Dan Stone, in asking whether it can even be said that a discipline of genocide studies exists, argued that scholars in this field, rather than engaging solely in comparative studies of genocide, “must attempt to develop general, empirically informed, theoretical statements about genocide as such—what it is, when it happens, who supports it, and so on.”¹⁴ The routine identification of genocide with atrocity surely constitutes just such a statement—and so our concern, therefore, is with the *effects* of this identification on contemporary understandings of genocide, as both a phenomenon and an experience.

One example of these effects that will be familiar to anyone who has taught Holocaust history is how deeply students are affected by the subject matter of such courses, and how often this generates a strong, largely unreflective sympathy for arguments regarding the Holocaust’s uniqueness. Because no other mass atrocity in history has been so thoroughly investigated and made visible to the public in every media imaginable, it is very difficult getting students to problematize even basic historiographical claims like uniqueness, even though doing so is necessarily preliminary to understanding the astonishing complexity of the Holocaust as a historical phenomenon. Confronted—indeed, battered—by their encounters with

the Holocaust via popular culture, students become resistant to perspectives they believe might diminish the rhetorical power of the Holocaust story to teach us such lessons as “never again,” the “triumph of the human spirit,” and “all it takes for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing”—discursive strategies whose commemorative function also, unfortunately, complicates the scholarly project.¹⁵

The power of the language of atrocity, therefore, to frame debates and proscribe judgments on phenomena such as genocide is considerable. Consider an episode from nineteenth-century European history in which “atrocitarian” language raised concerns among contemporaries about the effects such rhetoric had on the public’s ability to judge properly either the events themselves or their government’s response to those events. At issue was the April 1876 uprising of Bulgarian nationalists against the Ottoman Empire—a revolt put down brutally by Ottoman forces, who destroyed whole villages and killed upwards of ten thousand people in a short five-week period. Unsurprisingly, the Ottomans’ conduct generated strong reactions from people throughout Europe—prompting, for example, British Liberal Party leader William Gladstone to write a best-selling pamphlet entitled the *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*, in which he exclaimed:

There is not a criminal in a European gaol, there is not a cannibal in the South Sea Islands, whose indignation would not rise and overboil at the recital of that which has been done, which has too late been examined, but which remains unavenged; which has left behind all the foul and all the fierce passions that produced it, and which may again spring up, in another murderous harvest, from the soil soaked and reeking with blood, and in the air tainted with every imaginable deed of crime and shame.¹⁶

The British prime minister at the time, Benjamin Disraeli, condemned Gladstone’s use of such rhetoric on the grounds that it seriously complicated his government’s efforts to respond to the broader European crisis arising from the slow demise of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁷ “The first and cardinal point, at the present moment,” Disraeli wrote to Sir Strafford Northcote, the chancellor of the exchequer, “is that no member of the Government should countenance the idea that we are hysterically ‘modifying’

our policy, in consequence of the excited state of the public mind. If such an idea gets about, we shall become contemptible.”¹⁸ The ascription of the label “genocidal” to the group known variously as ISIS, ISIL, the Islamic State, and Daesh almost immediately after it began committing atrocities against prisoners in 2014, and the overwrought response of some Western states to the domestic threats this group poses, is a contemporary example of the same phenomenon.¹⁹

The need to distinguish, therefore, between genocide and atrocity seems clear, and is preliminary to Amarnath Amarasingam and Christopher Powell’s application, in their contribution to this volume, of the concept of “proto-genocide” to the current situation in Sri Lanka. Amarasingam and Powell, extending the scholarship of Zygmunt Bauman, Ben Kiernan, Mark Levene, and Richard Rubenstein, among others, are concerned with genocide as a systemic feature of the modern sovereign state.²⁰ Their notion of proto-genocide, drawing on both Gregory Stanton’s model of the ten stages of genocide, and Tony Barta’s argument that genocide must be understood with reference to “*relations of destruction*” rather than policies and intentions, conceives of genocide as a distinctively modern phenomenon connected with the success of the nation-state.²¹ Consequently, the steady growth of Sinhala nationalism since the end of the Sri Lankan Civil War in 2009, and the concomitant suppression, socially, culturally, and economically, of Tamils’ collective identity, may be prefatory to a more coherent program of cultural extermination and therefore of genocide. The widespread atrocities committed by the Sri Lankan government against the Tamil minority, and the ongoing exclusion of Tamils from what Helen Fein terms “the universe of obligation,” indicates that some, but not yet all, of the conditions under which genocide will likely occur currently exist in Sri Lanka—a situation that merits attention from the international community.²²

Further evidence of the proto-genocidal threat existing in Sri Lanka is that government’s conduct in the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC), which operated in northern Sri Lanka between 2009 and 2011. Dismissed by Amnesty International as a “dangerous charade,” and criticized by, among others, the Canadian government and the European Union for its lack of accountability and balance in apportioning blame for the atrocities of the civil war, the LLRC nevertheless participated in the construction of what Alexander Hinton has called a “transitional justice

imaginary” in which “violent pasts are delimited and narrowed, erasing historical complexities and suggesting an essentialized notion of regressive being.”²³ According to Laura Beth Cohen, whose chapter examines the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial Center and Cemetery to the Victims of the 1995 Genocide, transitional justice mechanisms may collide with the ways in which, at sites of atrocity, local memory persists and intrudes upon the present. Scholars such as Hinton, Roger Duthie, and Priscilla Hayner all argue for the importance of transitional justice initiatives, which nevertheless function uneasily alongside efforts to commemorate sites of atrocity—parallel processes which, as Judy Barsalou and Victoria Baxter have shown, remain highly politicized because they occur in changing frames of time relative to the events being commemorated.²⁴ Thus, as Cohen demonstrates, atrocities like the Srebrenica genocide, when mediated by transitional justice mechanisms, may become anchored in a persistent, ongoing present that prevents the construction of what Hinton describes as teleological historical narratives that frame the atrocities in terms of pre- and post-conflict states.²⁵ In other words, genocide-as-atrocity elides both the broader historical frame to which the genocide belongs and the ongoing effects of the violence in post-conflict societies, such that time itself becomes “uncanny,” allowing the traumatic legacy of the genocide to persist.

Consider, by way of contrast, the situation in Canada, where the first paragraph of the 2015 report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) identifies the “cultural genocide” of Indigenous peoples as both a goal and an outcome of Canada’s residential school system, among other instruments of settler colonialism in North America. The TRC report, in asserting that “reconciliation must become a way of life,” unambiguously identifies the effects of Canada’s genocidal legacy on both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples, and situates the atrocities of the residential school system within an explicit historical framework intended to resist evasion and forgetfulness.²⁶ Moreover, the transitional justice imaginary performed in the report of Canada’s TRC depicts reconciliation as “an ongoing individual and collective process,” rather than simply a short-term, interim mechanism for Canada’s transition to an idealized post-conflict future.²⁷ Unsurprisingly, however, the TRC’s conclusions also revived a long-running debate over the nature of genocide—namely, whether it requires the physical extermination of a people or can subsist solely in the destruction of a group’s social and/or cultural existence.²⁸ This

same topic is examined further here by Adam Muller, who reassesses the impact of settler colonialism on Indigenous peoples in Canada in light of Raphael Lemkin's original conception of the crime of genocide.²⁹ On the one hand, what Muller calls "the partial and political character" of the 1948 UN Genocide Convention refers in part to its silence on the matter of cultural genocide, despite Lemkin's own view that such a thing exists and that it is often an outcome of European colonialism. On the other hand, both Lemkin and the convention identified the "intent to destroy" as an essential element of genocide, which, in assessing the genocide committed against Indigenous people in Canada, has proven to be highly problematic. Muller, drawing on the work of such disparate authorities as the German jurist Kai Ambos and the Canadian genocide studies scholar Andrew Woolford, proposes a more nuanced understanding of intent in the commission of genocide—one that extends culpability beyond simply those who act with a specific genocidal purpose. In so doing, he not only makes a powerful case that the treatment of Indigenous people in Canada was indeed genocide, but also challenges the kind of forgetfulness that cultural historian Peter Burke, with whom Muller opens his chapter, described as a luxury enjoyed by history's victors.³⁰

The prevalence and persistence of historical amnesia operates, however, in various ways, arising in some instances from the atrocities that constitute the tissue of the genocide itself. Outright denial is both the most common and the most extreme example of this—extreme in the sense that genocidal atrocity strikes us as something that ought to be undeniable, but which, thanks in part to what Stone calls "the merry-go-round of definitional debates," is in fact all too common.³¹ Consequently, several papers in this volume speak to this issue directly by challenging denials. Only one concerns events—the Armenian genocide—that belong to the "canon" of genocides, while two others grapple with more contested atrocities—namely, the enslavement of black Americans, and settler-colonial genocide against Indigenous peoples in Canada. Raffi Sarkissian's study of the Toronto District School Board's struggle to integrate the history of the Armenian genocide into its high school history curriculum highlights the intractability of denialist arguments, while echoing the work of Geoffery Short and Samuel Totten in arguing convincingly for the broad educational value of teaching students about genocide and crimes against humanity using various examples, including that of the Armenians.³² Steven Jacobs's

essay below on William Patterson's 1951 petition to the United Nations, entitled *We Charge Genocide: The Crime of the Government against the Negro People*, traces the unfortunate fate of this remarkable document, and urges us to reconsider its significance for the field of genocide studies. Little studied (like the broader theme of North American slavery and genocide), this unsuccessful petition belongs nonetheless to the legacy of both Lemkin's denial that the African-American experience entailed the "destruction, death [and] annihilation" that distinguished genocide, and his views on Africans more generally.³³

But it is Kristin Burnett, Lori Chambers, and Travis Hay's relentless interrogation of the media discourse concerning the 2012 state of emergency declared in several northern Ontario First Nations' communities in response to housing crises there that confronts most directly how historical amnesia and, in this case, deeply racist and sexist stereotypes help facilitate the denial of mass atrocities, such as the ongoing genocide of Indigenous peoples in Canada. Frankly acknowledging their own settler privilege (and, I would add, that enjoyed by every contributor to this volume), Burnett, Chambers, and Hay draw on the post-colonial arguments of Sherene Razack, Joyce Green, and Emma LaRocque, who have shown that the rhetorical strategies of settler colonialism have long been dedicated to the construction of Indigenous difference in order to dehumanize and marginalize Indigenous peoples; as well as Indigenous feminists such as Paula Gunn Allen and Andrea Smith, who locate the type of sexist and racist discourse used to describe Chief Theresa Spence's widely publicized 2012 protest in a larger constellation of gendered, heteropatriarchal thinking.³⁴

Straddling the contested space between definition and denial are the histories of smaller groups (nations, peoples, etc.) who, while on the margins of events, can often get caught up nonetheless in the maelstrom of violence genocide unleashes. Israel Charny and Tessa Hoffman, drawing on the once contentious debate over just how widely the boundaries of the "Holocaust" should be drawn when it comes to identifying non-Jewish victim groups,³⁵ have both argued that genocide studies should adopt a more inclusive approach to the study of the victims of mass atrocity, including groups incidental to the genocidal project itself.³⁶ It is this perspective that informs Andrew Basso's contribution to this volume, in which he comparatively reassesses the Turkish destruction of Greek and Assyrian Christian

minorities alongside the Armenians, and the victimization of Hutu and Twa populations in the Rwandan genocide. In so doing, Basso reveals that it may not always be perpetrators who engage in denial through the distortion of collective memory, as victims of genocide who assume control of post-conflict regimes may also seek to distort the historical record for their own political ends.

Representations of genocide provide us with perhaps the most direct means for investigating the genocide-as-atrocity formulation. The genocide studies literature described above considers historical, sociological, and anthropological representations of genocide, primarily with an eye to understanding how genocide happens, while the last three chapters in this volume consider the problem of representation from an artistic perspective, thereby aiming to bring us closer to understanding the *experience* of genocidal atrocity. Sarah Minslow, who has developed an undergraduate course on the subject of war and genocide in children's literature, struggled with how to get her students past the atrociousness of genocide to a place where they could to assess whether children's literature about genocide is "good" or "bad"—a task accomplished by complicating ideas of the "child," and then by locating the moral dilemmas faced by literary characters and how they respond to these within the specific, complex contexts in which they find themselves. In so doing, Minslow confronts the challenges of representing atrocity artistically, which, while necessary in children's literature,³⁷ is much harder to accomplish there than representations of genocide—and this latter fact, I would suggest, raises important questions about the necessity of their pairing in other genres. Lorraine Markotic's chapter on Bernhard Schlink's bestselling novel *The Reader*—a book, like the film *Schindler's List*, that's widely used to teach high school and university students about the Holocaust—argues that it is not enough to simply remember and represent atrocities past. Instead, we need to think about *how* we are remembering and representing, reflect upon what thoughts we might be excluding, what conceptions we might be considering only in a restricted or limited form, and how our thinking might, even in small ways, echo the very thinking of the time period of the atrocities. Schlink's writing here and elsewhere, like the *Historikerstreit* (or "historians' quarrel") of the 1980s, postwar filmic representations of German history such as *Heimat* (1984), and responses to *Europa Europa* (1990), indicates that coming to terms with their country's troubled

past—*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*—remains a challenge for Germans.³⁸ What Markotic reveals is that *The Reader* effectively denies its readers the possibility of thinking outside the frame of its narrative structure, thereby circumscribing thinking itself in a way that not only mirrors the thoughts of the novel's main protagonist, but is also disturbingly reminiscent of the Nazi perspective both during and after the war. Markotic's analysis of *The Reader* illustrates the importance of thinking about how we think about the past, something the novel—despite its reflective protagonist—insidiously forecloses.

Over thirty years ago Lawrence Langer proposed that only artistic representations of the Holocaust “can lead the uninitiated imagination from the familiar realm of man's fate to the icy atmosphere of the death camps”—an accomplishment that becomes “ever more necessary as that event recedes in time and new generations struggle to comprehend why a civilized country in the midst of the twentieth century coolly decided to murder all of Europe's Jews.”³⁹ It remains to be seen, however, if this is true. On the one hand, we're now more than twice as distant from those events as was Langer when he made his plea for this “necessary art,” and so the poignancy of his remarks increases with the passing of the last few remaining survivors of the Holocaust. On the other hand, as genocidal atrocities have continued to occur, and as we've gradually come to recognize and acknowledge past atrocities as genocide, new arguments have emerged regarding the seductive power of art to represent violence in ways that history cannot.⁴⁰ Patrick Anderson and Jisha Menon, for example, claim that the spectacular quality of violent acts deepens their cultural impact, and they warn therefore that performative representations of violence may become constitutive of “the context in which violence is rationalized and excused.” This resonates with Shoshana Felman's claim that trial testimony often re-enacts the trauma of violent acts, which can never truly be disclosed fully either through testimony or any other means.⁴¹ Informed by this scholarship, Donia Mounsef examines here how some contemporary artistic performance, contrary to longstanding assumptions about both decorum on the stage and the dramatic unrepresentability of traumatic violence, is able to effect remarkably dense encounters with the ethical problems of atrocity. While the tension between atrocity and representation is as old as the *Oresteia*, the artists Mounsef discusses

take their audiences beyond the trauma of atrocity to its survival, with the spaces of their performance thus becoming important sites of resistance.



Langer, introducing a collection of essays dedicated to challenging the irrepressible human desire to find redemption in the horrors of the Holocaust, wrote:

Our age of atrocity clings to the stable relics of faded eras, as if ideas like natural innocence, innate dignity, the inviolable spirit, and the triumph of art over reality were immured in some kind of immortal shrine, immune to the ravages of history and time. . . . As a result, the habit of discussing the past with a familiar discourse continues, while new models for dealing with mass murder intellectually, morally, historically, and philosophically do not proliferate.⁴²

A dispiriting prediction indeed—and one that rings true when we consider how contemporary popular culture continues to fiercely resist facing up to the unsettling implications of the twentieth century’s confrontation with what Primo Levi called the “Gorgon.”⁴³ However, the essays contained here—and indeed, the expansive state of the field of genocide studies generally—give the lie to Langer’s subsequent claim that scholars and activists working in this field are paralyzed by the darkness of their topic, becoming like Dante’s fictional Dante, who can never again “return to the light” should he choose to look into the face of atrocity.⁴⁴ What follows is just such a confrontation—and the results, I would suggest, are both disquieting and encouraging, but never timid. In a similar vein, Susan Sontag, like Hannah Arendt, regarded the Holocaust as incomprehensible, and that ultimately “the only response is to continue to hold the event in mind, to remember it.”⁴⁵ The goal of understanding atrocities, like efforts to understand the Holocaust, while aspirational, will surely remain as elusive as the USHMM’s goal of ending genocide in the twenty-first century. Nevertheless, as with the study of the Holocaust, we understand the composition, causes, consequences, and experience of genocide better today than we did even just a decade ago, and this broader understanding of the

phenomenon derives in large part from the adoption of new disciplinary perspectives and investigative methodologies. Our aim in this volume is to contribute to that project in the spirit of scholarly collaboration, and in so doing to continue to hold these tragic events in mind, and to remember them.

NOTES

- 1 Yehuda Bauer, "Editor's Introduction," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 1, no. 1 (1986): 1.
- 2 "From the Editor: *Apologia Rationalis*," *Journal of Genocide Research* 1, no. 1 (1999): 9–10.
- 3 Israel W. Charny and Roger W. Smith, "Why GSP?" *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 1, no. 1 (2006): i–ii.
- 4 "Imagine the Unimaginable: Ending Genocide in the 21st Century," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 24 July 2012, <http://www.ushmm.org/confront-genocide/speakers-and-events/all-speakers-and-events/imagine-the-unimaginable-ending-genocide-in-the-21st-century/complete-symposium> (accessed 1 July 2014).
- 5 Mark Penn, "Imagine the Unimaginable."
- 6 Jens Meierhenrich, "Introduction: the Study and History of Genocide," in *Genocide: A Reader*, ed. J. Meierhenrich (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 7–10.
- 7 "Resolutions," International Association of Genocide Scholars, <http://www.genocidescholars.org/resources/resolutions> (accessed 15 July 2015).
- 8 A. Dirk Moses, "The Holocaust and Genocide," in *The Historiography of Genocide*, ed. Dan Stone (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 547. For a similarly optimistic assessment of the state of the field, see Adam Jones, "Diffusing Genocide Studies, Defusing Genocides," *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 6, no. 3 (2011): 270–278.
- 9 See, for example, Mahmood Mamdani, "The Politics of Naming: Genocide, Civil War, Insurgency," *London Review of Books* 29, no. 5 (8 March 2007): 5–8.
- 10 Meierhenrich, "Introduction," 9.
- 11 Ibid. See, for example, Jürgen Zimmerer, *Von Windhuk nach Auschwitz? Beiträge zum Verhältnis von Kolonialismus und Holocaust* (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2011); Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game of Genocide: Imperialism, Nationalism, and the Destruction of the Ottoman Armenians* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Dan Stone, *The Holocaust, Fascism and Memory: Essays in the History of Ideas* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Ben Kiernan, *Blood and Soil: A World History of Genocide and Extermination from Sparta to Darfur* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007); Alexander Hinton, *Why Did they Kill? Cambodia in the Shadow of Genocide* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).
- 12 Gabriel Schoenfeld, "Auschwitz and the Professors," *Commentary* 105, no. 6 (June 1998), <https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/auschwitz-and-the-professors/> (accessed 1 October 2015); Herbert Hirsch, "Preventing Genocide and Protecting Human Rights: A Failure of Policy," *Genocide Studies International* 8, no.1 (2014): 4–5.
- 13 Charny and Smith, "Why GSP?" i.

- 14 Stone, "Introduction," *The Historiography of Genocide*, 2.
- 15 Doris Bergen, "Studying the Holocaust: Is History Commemoration?" in *The Holocaust and Historical Methodology*, ed. Dan Stone (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012), 158–159; Gavriel Rosenfeld, "The Politics of Uniqueness: Reflections on the Recent Polemical Turn in Holocaust and Genocide Scholarship," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 13, no. 1 (1999): 28–61.
- 16 William Gladstone, *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East* (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1876), 31.
- 17 While Gary Bass has used the term "atrocitarian" to describe policy-makers inspired to intervene in international affairs on humanitarian grounds, Disraeli himself did not, as far I know, use the term to describe those whom he variously called the "infuriate and merciless humanitarians" and the "priests and professors" who rallied to Gladstone's call to action. Gary Bass, *Freedom's Battle: The Origins of Humanitarian Intervention* (Toronto: Random House, 2008), 6; as cited in George Buckle, *The Life of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield* (London: MacMillan, 1920), 6: 62, 194.
- 18 As quoted in Buckle, *The Life of Benjamin Disraeli*, 6: 61.
- 19 At the time of writing, the United States had declared that ISIS was "responsible for genocide against groups in areas under its control, including Yezidis, Christians, and Shia Muslims." John Kerry, "Remarks on Daesh and Genocide," US Department of State, 17 March 2016, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2016/03/254782.htm> (accessed 1 July 2016). See also John Kerry, "To Defeat Terror, We Need the World's Help: The Threat of ISIS Demands a Global Coalition," *New York Times*, 29 August 2014; "Religious leaders say Isis persecution of Iraqi Christians has become genocide," *Guardian* (London), 9 August 2014; Stephen Harper, "Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada on passage of second ISIL motion in Parliament," Government of Canada, 30 March 2015, <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2015/03/30/statement-prime-minister-canada-passage-second-isil-motion-parliament> (accessed 15 October 2015).
- 20 Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991); Ben Kiernan, *Blood and Soil*; Mark Levene, *Genocide in the Age of the Nation-State*, Vols. 1–2 (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005); Richard Rubenstein, "Afterword: Genocide and Civilization," in *Genocide and the Modern Age: Etiology and Case Studies of Mass Death*, eds. I. Wallimann, M. N. Dobkowski, and R. Rubenstein (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1987), 283–298.
- 21 Gregory Stanton, "The Ten Stages of Genocide," Genocide Watch, 2013, <http://www.genocidewatch.org/genocide/tenstagesofgenocide.html> (accessed 1 October 2015); Tony Barta, "Relations of Genocide: Land and Lives in the Colonization of Australia," in *Genocide and the Modern Age: Etiology and case studies of mass death*, eds. I. Wallimann and M. N. Dobkowski (New York: Greenwood, 1987), 237–252.
- 22 Helen Fein, *Accounting for Genocide: National Response and Jewish Victimization during the Holocaust* (New York: Free Press, 1979), 4.
- 23 "When Will They Get Justice? Failures of Sri Lanka's Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission," Amnesty International, September 2011, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA37/008/2011/en> (accessed 1 September 2015); John Baird, "Minister Baird Comments on Final Report of Sri Lanka's Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission," Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, 11 January 2012, <http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?nid=650369> (accessed 1 September 2015); "EU Declaration on Sri Lanka's Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission," European

- Union Delegation to the United Nations, 23 February 2012, http://eu-un.europa.eu/articles/en/article_11881_en.htm (accessed 1 September 2015); Alexander Laban Hinton, "Transitional Justice Time: Uncle San, Auntie Yan, and Outreach at the Khmer Rouge Tribunal," in *Genocide and Mass Atrocities in Asia: Legacies and Prevention*, eds. Deborah Mayersen, and Annie Pohlman (Abingdon, Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2013), 87.
- 24 Alexander Laban Hinton, ed., *Transitional Justice: Global Mechanisms and Local Realities after Genocide and Mass Violence* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010); Priscilla B. Hayner, *Unspeakable Truths: Transitional Justice and the Challenge of Truth Commissions* (New York: Routledge, 2010); Judy Barsalou and Victoria Baxter, *The Urge to Remember: The Role of Memorials in Social Reconstruction and Transitional Justice* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, January 2007). See also Paul Harvey Williams, *Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities* (Oxford: Berg, 2007).
- 25 Alexander Hinton, "Introduction: Toward an Anthropology of Transitional Justice," in *Transitional Justice*, 1–22. See also Hinton, "Transitional Justice Time," 94.
- 26 The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (2015), 240.
- 27 *Ibid.*, 6.
- 28 On the TRC and cultural genocide, see Letters, "Setting the record straight on the TRC," *National Post* (Toronto), 5 June 2015, <http://news.nationalpost.com/full-comment/letters/letters-setting-the-record-straight-on-the-trc> (accessed 15 September 2015); David MacDonald, "Five reasons the TRC chose 'cultural genocide,'" *Globe and Mail* (Toronto), 6 July 2015, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/five-reasons-the-trc-chose-cultural-genocide/article25311423/> (accessed 15 September 2015). On "cultural genocide" generally, and its application to the treatment of Indigenous peoples specifically, see Lawrence Davidson, *Cultural Genocide* (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2012); Israel Charny, "Toward a Generic Definition of Genocide," in *Genocide: Conceptual and Historical Dimensions*, ed. G. J. Andreopoulos (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 64–94; William Schabas, *Genocide in International Law: The Crime of Crimes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); *Colonial Genocide in Indigenous North America*, eds. Andrew Woolford, Jeff Benvenuto, and Alexander Laban Hinton (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014); Andrew Woolford, "Ontological Destruction: Genocide and Canadian Aboriginal Peoples," *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 4 no.1 (2009): 81–97; David MacDonald and Graham Hudson, "The Genocide Question and Indian Residential Schools in Canada," *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue canadienne de science politique* 45, no. 2 (2012): 427–449; Ward Churchill, *Kill the Indian, Save the Man: The Genocidal Impact of American Indian Residential Schools* (San Francisco: City Lights Publishers, 2004); Robert van Krieken, "Cultural Genocide in Australia," in *The Historiography of Genocide*, ed. Dan Stone (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008): 128–155; "United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples," 13 September 2007, http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf. (accessed 1 September 2015).
- 29 The scholarship on Lemkin, once a neglected figure, is growing quickly: Raphael Lemkin, *Totally unofficial: the autobiography of Raphael Lemkin*, ed. Donna-Lee Frieze (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013); "Special Issue: New Approaches to Raphael Lemkin," *Journal of Genocide Research* 15, no. 3 (2013): 247–338; Steven Jacobs, *Lemkin on Genocide* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012); Dominik J. Schaller and

- Jürgen Zimmerer, eds., *The origins of genocide: Raphael Lemkin as a historian of mass violence* (London: Routledge, 2009); John Cooper, *Raphael Lemkin and the struggle for the Genocide Convention* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); "Special Issue: Raphael Lemkin: the 'founder of the United Nation's Genocide Convention' as a historian of mass violence," *Journal of Genocide Research* 7, no. 4 (2005): 443–560; Samuel Totten and Steven L. Jacobs, eds., *Pioneers of genocide studies: confronting mass death in the century of genocide* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002).
- 30 Kai Ambos, "What Does 'Intent to Destroy' in Genocide Mean?" *International Review of the Red Cross* 91, no. 876 (2009): 833–858; Andrew Woolford, "Nodal Repair and Networks of Destruction: Residential Schools, Colonial Genocide, and Redress in Canada," *Settler Colonial Studies* 3, no.1 (2013): 61–77.
 - 31 Stone, "Introduction," *The Historiography of Genocide*, 2. I do not mean to suggest that scholars engaged in legitimate academic debates over the nature of genocide, which have been ongoing since Raphael Lemkin coined the term (and have arisen in part because of inconsistencies in Lemkin's own usage), are promoting genocide denial—but simply that deniers unflinchingly seek to exploit differences among scholars as "proof" that the phenomena itself is fabricated. While the denial of specific genocides—the Holocaust and Armenian genocide in particular—have generated a large scholarly response, genocide denial as an activity has received relatively little scholarly attention, except from social justice organizations concerned with combatting genocide. See, for example, Israel W. Charny, "The psychology of denial: A contribution to the psychology of denial of genocide," *Journal of Armenian Studies* 4, nos. 1–2 (1992): 289–306; Israel W. Charny, "A classification of denials of the Holocaust and other genocides," *Journal of Genocide Research* 5, no. 1 (2003): 11–34; Gregory Stanton, "The 12 Ways to Deny a Genocide," Genocide Watch, 15 June 2005, <http://www.genocidewatch.org/genocide/12waystodenygenocide.html> (accessed 15 July 2015); Human Rights Watch, "Genocide Denial: Incitement or Hate Speech?" *HRW World Report 2007*, www.hrw.org/wr2k7/essays/shrinking/4.htm (accessed 15 July 2015); Yair Auron, *The Banality of Denial: Israel and the Armenian Genocide* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 2003); Sonja Biserko and Edina Becirevic, "Denial of genocide—on the possibility of normalising relations in the region," Bosnian Institute, 23 October 2009, http://www.bosnia.org.uk/news/news_body.cfm?newsid=2638 (accessed 1 June 2015); Deborah E. Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory* (New York: Free Press, 1993).
 - 32 See, for example, Geoffrey Short, "Learning from Genocide? A study in the failure of Holocaust education," *Intercultural Education* 16, no. 4, (2005): 367–380; Samuel Totten, *Teaching about Genocide: Issues, Approaches, and Resources* (London: IAP, 2004).
 - 33 Raphael Lemkin, "Nature of Genocide; Confusion With Discrimination Against Individuals Seen," *New York Times*, 14 June 1953. On *We Charge Genocide*, see Ann Curthoys and John Docker, "Defining Genocide," in *The Historiography of Genocide*, 15–21. On American slavery and genocide, see L. M. Thomas, *Vessels of Evil: American Slavery and the Holocaust* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993). On Lemkin's "inappropriate and racist" views of Africans, see D. J. Schaller, "Raphael Lemkin's view of European colonial rule in Africa: between condemnation and admiration," *Journal of Genocide Research* 7, no. 4 (2005): 531–538.
 - 34 See, for example, Sherene Razack, *Looking White People in the Eye: Gender Race, Class and Culture in Courtrooms and Classrooms* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press,

- 1998); Joyce Green, "The Complexity of Indigenous Identity Formation and Politics in Canada: Self-Determination and Decolonisation," *International Journal of Critical Indigenous Studies* 2, no. 2 (2009): 36–46; Emma LaRoque, *When the Other Is Me: Native Resistance Discourse, 1850–1990* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2010); Paula Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986); Andrea Smith, *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide* (Brooklyn, NY: South End Press, 2005).
- 35 See, for example, Michael Berenbaum, ed., *A Mosaic of Victims: Non-Jews Persecuted and Murdered by the Nazis* (New York: New York University Press, 1990); Linda Altman, *The Forgotten Victims of the Holocaust* (Berkeley Heights, NJ: Enslow, 2003); Israel Gutman and Shmuel Krakowski, *Unequal Victims: Poles and Jews During World War Two* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1986); Guenter Lewy, *The Nazi Persecution of the Gypsies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).
- 36 Israel W. Charny, "The Integrity and Courage to Recognize All the Victims of a Genocide," in *The Genocide of the Ottoman Greeks: Studies on the State-Sponsored Campaign of Extermination of the Christians of Asia Minor (1912–1922) and Its Aftermath: History, Law, Memory*, eds. Tessa Hofmann et al. (Scarsdale, NY: Melissa International Ltd., 2011), 21–38; Tessa Hofmann, "Cumulative Genocide: The Massacres and Deportations of the Greek Population of the Ottoman Empire (1912–1923)," in *The Genocide of the Ottoman Greeks*, 39–54.
- 37 Lawrence Langer, *The Holocaust and Literary Imagination* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1975); Kimberley Reynolds, *Radical Children's Literature: Future Visions and Aesthetic Transformations in Juvenile Fiction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Susan Honeyman, *Elusive Childhood: Impossible Representations in Modern Fiction* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2005); Adrienne Kertzer, "'Do You Know What 'Auschwitz' Means?' Children's Literature and the Holocaust," *The Lion and the Unicorn* 23, no. 2 (1999): 238–256.
- 38 On the *Historikerstreit*, see Charles Maier, *The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust, and German National Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988); Richard J. Evans, *In Hitler's Shadow: West German Historians and the Attempt to Escape from the Nazi Past* (New York: Pantheon, 1989); Peter Baldwin, ed., *Reworking the Past: Hitler, the Holocaust, and the Historians' Debate* (Boston: Beacon, 1990). On postwar German film, see Eric L. Santner, *Stranded Objects: Mourning, Memory, and Film in Postwar Germany* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990); Anton Kaes, *From Hitler to Heimat: The Return of History as Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989); Małgorzata Pakier, *The Construction of European Holocaust Memory: German and Polish Cinema after 1989* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang 2013). Schlink's other works that reflect his efforts at *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* include *Guilt about the Past* (Brisbane: Queensland University Press, 2009) and *Homecoming* (Toronto: Random House, 2008).
- 39 Lawrence Langer, "The Americanization of the Holocaust on Stage and Screen," in *Admitting the Holocaust: Collected Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 174–175. Langer later broadened his view to include recorded testimony, diaries, and memoirs as helping us "to interpret the various layers of memory through which the event was experienced by its victims and survivors." The key element here is "experience." See Langer, "Introduction," *Admitting the Holocaust*, 7. For a counterargument, see Inga Clendinnen, "Representing the Holocaust: The Case for History," *Michigan Quarterly Review* 37, no. 1 (1998): n.p.

- 40 Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History* (New York: Routledge, 1991).
- 41 Patrick Anderson and Jisha Menon, "Introduction: Violence Performed," in *Violence Performed: Local Roots and Global Routes of Conflict*, eds. Patrick Anderson and Jisha Menon (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 5–6; Shoshana Felman, *The Juridical Unconscious: Trials and Traumas in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).
- 42 Langer, "Introduction," *Admitting the Holocaust*, 5.
- 43 Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, trans. Raymond Rosenthal (New York: Vintage Books, 1988), 83.
- 44 "Turn your back and keep your eyes shut tight;
For should the Gorgon come and you look at her,
Never again would you return to the light."
Dante, *The Inferno*, trans. John Ciardi (New York: New American Library, 1954), canto 9, lines 52–54.
- 45 As cited in Michael Alan Signer, *Humanity at the Limit: The Impact of the Holocaust Experience on Jews and Christians* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000), 40.